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Bill: I want to welcome everyone to today's show.   With us today is Christi McReynolds U.S. Department of Agriculture rural development, state, here in the state working as an area specialist in water, somehow,   Christi can you explain what you do, exactly?

Christi: Sure, I'm an area specialist out of the Iola office for rural development and I work in water and waste water programs and community facility programs.

Bill: Well, we're today on-sight in Oswego talking about a recognition ceremony that is going on.   Can you tell us a little about that ceremony; exactly what prompted it to take place?

Christi: Patty Clerk, our state director for rural development, wanted to start recognizing across the state a lot of our infrastructure programs because people don't always see what is going on in the ground and they are very important to our communities.   And Oswego was one we have a current project with, we've got past projects and future projects and she came down here to recognize Oswego's dedication and their recognition of need in their community and addressing the infrastructure problems in this community.

Bill: Christi, just how significant of a project is this that is going on in Oswego now?

Christi: Currently we are doing their water distribution project.   Previously we had done a water plant project. If you count what we've done in the last eight years in Oswego, we've invested right at $9 million dollars in this community; half of that being in grant.   It is a significant dollars and we believe that it was well invested in a community that is growing.   We have a future project that hopefully go into construction next summer on string bank repairs and dam which FEMA has also got a piece of.

Bill: Christi, this particular project, how would you describe the impact on the people living here in town and the community, how would it impact some of them?   You know, you are digging up the town, you're opening up the streets and making some holes.

Christi: Making a big mess, yes.

Bill: Folks always get excited when that happens but surely there is an impact beyond that, isn't there?

Christi: Absolutely, everybody with construction is inconvenienced some way and they're going through it right now.   Their yards are a mess.   They've got bumps in the street but all of that will end.   The benefit that they get is an infrastructure system that doesn't leak, it is not corroded, it doesn't have lead contamination,   it is less expensive for them as an end user because the city doesn't have as many repairs and their operating is less. So, of the dollars that they take home they get to keep more of it home and not spend on leaking water or water that's not used in the community.

Bill: Well, suppose the community would have done this project on their own rather than connecting with the USDA and done it, would it of had a different impact on them?

Christi: Sure, if the city would of self-financed or even some of the other financing options that are available to municipalities to do work like this, would of cost them a lot more.   We kind of did a little bit of rough math on that.   Because half of the project was in grant and the other half that they had to borrow money on was a subsidized loan interest rate they saved about $32.00 dollars per month, per user.   So, if they had gone and

done it someplace else everybody's weather bill would have been about $30 dollars plus more a month then taking the steps that the city took the time to take and plan ahead to get the financing that they needed to protect the citizens of their community on the dollars that was spent.

Bill: You know, one of the things that kind of interests me in part of our program is called Resource Central, its helping folks recognize that there are resources out there and how do I connect with those agencies or those services to make those come together.   When you think about how that happened with the city of Oswego, connecting those resources with this entity the city, what do you think was part of what made that all work or come together?

Christi: With Oswego we have a very good relationship with Oswego and a long relationship.   So, it's been pretty easy here.   We'll be working on one project and they'll comment about, you know, we've got work to do on our city hall and it's like hey, we've got a program for that.   Or we can refer them to another partner agency that has it.   With other communities it really is dependent on outreach and just making sure people know that we're out there.   There are very limited financing sources for municipalities when it comes to their infrastructure and so that is one way, you know, they pretty much know we're there.   And through that piece we can help the community with other things and their needs.   Whether it is housing or fire stations or library's or hospitals or community centers, we can move those directions once we're in the door.

Bill: You used investment early on in the conversation, what is it that, perhaps, helps you recognize that this is a good investment for the area?

Christi: When you look at a community, and so often in our rural community we are facing declines, we're having a lot about migration, and proactive steps from that community recognizing not just the outside needs of housing and so many things that we know we have to do. But they've got to have their infrastructure in good shape and in place for their future generations.   That's a long term investment.   And having communities recognize that and work on it, it makes us as a federal agency say, you know, they've done their homework. You know, it's a good investment in their future and in the future of rural America and that's what rural development is here for, is to protect these small rural communities and a rural life style that we all treasure very much.

Bill: Thank you very much, Christi.

Announcer: We'll be back next week with another addition of Resource Central brought to you by SKILMedia.com.