Census takers can expect full-time employment for several months. Good pay, reimbursement for mileage. Call the North Platte U.S. Census Bureau at 308-221-3040 or the national toll free number 1-866-861-2010 to receive an employment test.

By Jan Rahn

Managing Editor

With the census count just four months away, recruiting and testing helpers is getting underway.

Operations were officially launched all over the country last week, with such an event also held in North Platte.

According to Vic Gentry, manager of the U.S. Census Bureau's North Platte office, there will be 12-15 people hired in Perkins County for each operation taking place— which means up to 50 workers are needed.

Anyone interested in a temporary job with good pay is urged to apply now to become a member of the census team needed in Perkins County.

Thus far, approximately five people are lined up to help with the county's census.

Those hired can expect the jobs to last anywhere from two to six months.

About the Census

The census is a count of everyone residing in the United States. All U.S. residents must be counted—both citizens and non citizens.

Questionnaires will be received in March 2010 either by U.S. mail or hand delivery. Some people in remote areas will be counted in person.

Households should complete and mail back their questionnaires upon receipt.

Households that do not respond may receive a replacement questionnaire in early April.

Census takers will visit households that do not return questionnaires to take a count in person.

By law, the Census Bureau cannot share an individual's responses with anyone, including other federal agencies and law enforcement entities.

What Do Census Takers Do?

The census taker will locate a household, explain the census, ask 10 non-invasive short questions of the occupants and record the responses.

Census takers usually work in their own neighborhoods or communities and must work varied hours to catch people when they are typically at home, which includes evening and weekend hours.

The Importance of Census

The U.S. Constitution requires a national census once every 10 years to count the population and determine the number of seats each state will have in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Every year, the federal government allocates more than $400 billion to states and communities based, in part, on census data.

According to Gentry of the North Platte bureau, the cost to taxpayers for every 1 percent of non-response across the nation is $90 million. He said in 2000 the response rate was less than 65 percent.

Census data is used to determine locations for retail stores, schools, hospitals, new housing developments and other community facilities.

Census data determine boundaries for state and local legislative and congressional districts.

History of Census

The first census took place in 1790 to determine the number of seats each state would have in the U.S. House of Representatives.

The census also was created to gain a better understanding of where people lived and to establish patterns of settlement as the nation grew.

The Census Bureau was established in 1902.

Today, in addition to administering the census of population and housing, the Census Bureau conducts more than 200 annual surveys, including the American Community Survey, the Current Population Survey and economic censuses every five years.