Apply to become a census taker by calling 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. Good pay, mileage reimbursement.

By Jan Rahn
Managing Editor

It's the goal of the U.S. Census Bureau to count every individual residing in the United States by next spring. Thousands of people will be hired in Nebraska alone to accomplish this task.

Three census offices in the state are actively recruiting workers to accomplish the 2010 count.

The North Platte office alone, which covers the western portion of the state, is hiring 1,000 people.

So far in Perkins County, several of those being recruited for the position have been tested.

According to Vic Gentry of the U.S. Census Bureau in North Platte, recruiting help is the major focus right now.

"We need to recruit 5,000 people in order to hire 1,000 (of them)," said Gentry.

Anyone can request to get on the list to be tested by calling the North Platte census office at 308-221-3040 or toll free 866-861-2010. Applicants can even view a practice test online at www.2010censusjobs.gov

Once testing is completed and personnel hired, the training sites will be set up in December in western Nebraska and training will begin in January. Those hired can expect the jobs to last anywhere from two to six months.

The census of the nation is taken every 10 years. In the last census done in 2000, Nebraska was rated second in the nation with the response of 75 percent of its residents. Iowa was number one with 76 percent.

The goal for the state in 2010 is to be in the number one spot, said Gentry.

He said the pay as a census employee is good and those working with the census are paid mileage. Although no overtime is paid, workers are hired for a 40-hour week.

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.