

2020 Census: How Kay County is Spreading the Word

Communities across the state are working strategically to get the word out about the 2020 Census. One example is Kay County, located in north Oklahoma along I-35 near the Kansas border. The county's largest city is Ponca City and Kat Long of the Ponca City Development Authority is leading the charge to get a complete count in the community.

"In terms of economic development for Ponca City specifically, our community needs to be able to show growth over the past 10 years," said Long. "We have set a goal of counting 26,000 residents which would help us attract retail and restaurants interested in growing communities near major highways."

But the importance of the census extends beyond economic development opportunities. The Kay County effort is working with the area's more than 100 nonprofits who benefit from accurate census data when it comes to grants and developing new partnerships.

"I come from a marketing background where I learned that people need to see a message 9-13 times before it sticks with them," said Long. "I am out in the community talking to groups about the census often. From the vehicle I drive that's wrapped in census messaging to the pens, pencils and stickers we're handing out, we're doing our best to make sure people in the region know the census is just around the corner."



Long has reached out to numerous groups in her community, including businesses who employ those in hard-to-reach populations, churches and schools.

"Our educators are with students for 30 hours every week. They have relationships with parents," said Long. "These numbers impact us, especially the children in our community, for the next 10 years so it's important that we make sure parents know to make sure their kids are counted."

An additional group that Long has made sure to reach out to are real estate agents.

"These individuals are often the first point of contact for people new to our community," said Long. "By engaging them we can help spread the message ever further."

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