

News

Edge informs Rotarians about GRADD services, programs

By Karah Wilson Messenger-Inquirer

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Blake Edge, director of community and economic development for the Green River Area Development District, was the guest speaker Wednesday at the Owensboro Rotary Club meeting on the campus of Kentucky Wesleyan College.

Edge said anytime he gets the chance to talk about GRADD and what it offers, he welcomes it.

“When I started at GRADD four years ago, I had absolutely no idea what we did,” he said. “I came from the private sector, and I learned the very first day that I had absolutely no idea what we did, and we needed every opportunity to explain to people and show the impact that the (area development districts) have on the Commonwealth of Kentucky.”

The mission of GRADD, Edge said, is to “afford local governments and citizens a regional forum to identify issues and opportunities; and to provide leadership in planning and implementing programs to improve the quality of life in our district.”

“We work with our cities, with our counties and provide them with an extended staff,” he said. “Some of our cities are so small, they don’t have a full-time mayor or a full-time city administrator.”

Aging, social services, community development, economic development, transportation planning and workforce development are some of the areas GRADD provides services in.

During the meeting, Edge touched on how GRADD has impacted Owensboro and Daviess County.

“In community and economic development, our main goal, what we do mostly, is to direct and channel federal and state funding into our local areas,” he said.

One thing Edge said he has been proud of is the work GRADD has done is providing assistance to Oasis — a women and children’s shelter — in moving locations.

“Oasis came to us early last year, and they had leased their building for years,” he said. “The landlord was looking to expand their operation, and Oasis needed to move. We were able to get them \$1.1 million to relocate their women’s shelter.”

Edge said GRADD was able to give the City of Whitesville a little over \$500K to supplement necessary upgrades to its “aging” sewer system, lowering what the rate increase would have been by 50% to the rate-payers for sewer service.

“Another program we were really pleased to be a part of, as part of the CARES Act, they had specific block grant funding through the state that provided utility assistance to people,” he said. “We’re now up to \$78K that we’ve provided in utility assistance, people that were past due on their utilities as a result of COVID.”

To learn more about GRADD and the services and programs offered to the community, visit www.gradd.com.