

## Farm to Family: A Labor of Love

In Hay Springs, Nebraska, customers stream into the Farm to Family cooperative grocery store. Kids in swimsuits looking for a snack, farmers grabbing a cold drink, and parents picking up the last items for dinner come and go from the little store on main street.

This scene is the mission of Farm to Family come to life. Farm to Family is a cooperative grocery store, meaning that members buy into the business model and participate in the operation. The store was renovated with hard work and sweat equity from community members. When Hay Springs started the store, people came out to help, doing everything from stripping the wood floors to donating items for the storefront.

Community members still help today by unloading trucks and supporting the store. It's clear that Farm to Family is more than a place to buy groceries, it's a part of what make Hay Springs home. High school students run the counter, local produce fills the shelves, and staff members even run sandwiches out to neighbors in town. Farm to Family is a labor of love for the members of this community.

USDA Rural Development helped as well. Farm to Family received a [Rural Energy for America Program](#) grant to purchase energy efficient coolers. They also accessed the Rural Business Development Grant Program and the Rural Cooperative Grant programs to help promote the membership and business model.

The Rural Energy for America Program is available to help rural grocery stores and other businesses save on their utility bills. The program offers grants for up to 50% of the total eligible project costs for energy efficiency improvements such as cooling and refrigeration units, lighting, doors and windows, and more. Funds may also be used for new renewable energy projects such as solar and wind generation. Loans are also available.

USDA is proud to consider ourselves a part of the extended family of Farm to Family and the Hay Springs community. Reach out to USDA to talk to us about your grocery project today! Contact your local USDA Rural Development office for more information. Contact information available at [www.rd.usda.gov/ne](http://www.rd.usda.gov/ne)



Pictured: Jen Young, Manager, Jessica Heesacker, Board President