

Grand tour given



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FEATURES OF THE St. James Marketplace are discussed by Vickie Koch (from left), Mary Rose Pinkelman, Christian Hornbaker and Twyla Witt. The large room of the old schoolhouse served as a chapel for church services at the turn of the previous century.

Travel director gets to view stops along trail

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ST. JAMES — Recent rain made Rattlesnake Road off limits.

Nevertheless, the showers weren't enough to keep Christian Hornbaker, director of the Nebraska Division of Travel and Tourism, from getting an up-close-and-personal tour of Northeast Nebraska earlier this week.

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TWYLA WITT
BYWAYS & TOURISM
DEVELOPMENT

Mary Rose Pinkelman, the president of the Outlaw Trail Scenic Highway that follows Highway 12 through northern Nebraska, escorted Hornbaker from

one end of the byway to the other, beginning in South Sioux City and ending at Valentine.

As president of the organization, she arranged a three-day tour for Hornbaker.

"I've been in the area before but never at each individual trail site," Hornbaker said. "She's giving me the grand tour."

He was kept on a tight schedule but did take some time to eat a piece of lemon meringue pie at the St. James Marketplace before moving on.

Hornbaker was eager to see the gem that Pinkelman has been promoting in recent years — St. James Marketplace. He sees the challenges people face out here and was pleased to find the end result satisfying for the five rural

housewives.

Last weekend, St. James Marketplace opened for its ninth season. The five women — pioneers in their own right — took a chance and turned an abandoned school into a marketing tool for area vendors. They are seeing remarkable success for their 60 vendors.

"You are doing what you love. You are passionate about your work and you love to have fun," Hornbaker said. "What you say has so much more excitement and is more impactful."

Twyla Witt, a consultant for Byways & Tourism Development, also traveled on the trip.

"The more people we can talk into driving off the interstate helps the rural area," Witt said. "The more impact from travelers increases the wealth out here."

Although she lives in Thedford, she travels the byways and attends the meetings in the northeast corner of Nebraska at least once a month.

Tourism officials said they believe this year tourists may stay close to home. A few years ago, a travel company did a survey and the results were positive for Nebraska.

It ranked Nebraska as one of three least-expensive states to stay in for the weekend. The shocking truth showed how comfortable the traveling is in Nebraska and gave the state another bragging right.

The Wiseman Monument and the volcano near Newcastle were stops that Hornbaker hopes to photograph and place on the The Nebraska Tourism's Web site to entice people to the area.