

2026 Governor's Showcase Community Award Clearwater, NE

FUN FACTS

- ▶ Clearwater is the FIRST NNTC community to receive the Governor's Showcase Community Award!
- ▶ NNTC has proudly served Clearwater since 1958.
- ▶ With a population of just 380, Clearwater is the second smallest community ever to earn this honor; second to Farnam (2009).
- ▶ Since 2000, 28 other communities have received this award.
- ▶ Clearwater is in Antelope County, 10 miles northwest of Neligh.



Governor Pilleen with Sheridan and Schindler (right)

A Big Win for Clearwater

"I jumped up and down," said Economic Development Director Lauren Sheridan, recalling the moment she learned Clearwater would receive the Governor's Showcase Community Award. "I texted LuAnn, 'Call me ASAP.'"

"She said, 'We won,' and I went, 'WHAT?!'" added Economic Development Chairperson LuAnn Schindler. "I did a car dance while I was driving and screamed."

During a visit to celebrate the honor, Governor Jim Pilleen shared why Clearwater stood out.

"I remember being in this hall just four years ago, and holy cow, it's just a little bit different. It's absolutely incredible what everybody's done to make this happen, along with countless other improvements up and down the street in Clearwater," Governor Pilleen told the crowd.

Honoring Veterans

\$750,000 was raised in months to revamp the American Legion and Son of the Legion Hall and to create a veterans park, both dedicated to local veterans.

A telehealth room, open to all residents, was also added at the library, funded in part by a community grant from NNTC and the Foundation for Rural Service.

"The idea was to help older veterans who drive all the way to Norfolk for a telehealth visit with someone in Omaha," said Clearwater Clerk Angie Hupp.

Preserving the Past

In 2021, the Clearwater Historical Society was established. Their first project transformed a 1928 service station into a museum featuring historical items from Clearwater.



The Telehealth Room (left) and "Returning Home", a bronze statue at the Clearwater Veterans Park.

2026 Governor's Showcase Community Award "Clearwater's Calling You Home"

Business Growth

"Clearwater's Calling You Home" is the slogan introduced by the Economic Development Department to attract new businesses to town. "The business growth is huge. Fourteen new or transitioned businesses in eight years," Schindler said.

From the community coming together to save the local grocery store to Two Bills Steakhouse opening as a premier destination in 2024, the momentum in town is palpable.

Village Improvements

A \$4.85 million lagoon project was recently completed in Clearwater. The community has also formed its own investment group to build new homes, helping support future growth.

The Clearwater Rodeo

Since 1967, Clearwater has hosted the "Clearwater Rodeo" at the end of every June. The three-day event draws around 7,000 visitors each year.

"I don't think people in Clearwater know how to say 'can't'. It is always 'how can we?'" added Sheridan.

Looking Ahead

Looking to the future, Sheridan and Schindler plan to continue downtown revitalization, including updated facades, strategic retail development, and Edison style string lights above Main Street to create a welcoming atmosphere.

"Most of the time in Nebraska, we do not brag, so it is important that we come out and celebrate. It is an important time to recognize all the work that has been done here and give yourselves a pat on the back," said Gov. Pillen. In Clearwater, progress is built by the people who call it home.



Main Street in Clearwater

Watch Governor Pillen's Clearwater visit on our Facebook page for a chance to win \$50 in Clearwater 'Chamber Checks' to spend locally!

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