

## Toys For Kids



SUBMITTED PHOTO  
Fourth grade students from Sacred Heart School are pictured with many of the toys that were collected at Sacred Heart School's annual Thanksgiving Mass held at St. Benedict Church on November 26. Approximately 200 toys were donated to the Yankton Toys for Kids program this year.

## USD Law School Graduate Joins Swier Law Firm

Swier Law Firm, Prof. LLC is pleased to announce the expansion of its nationally-recognized legal practice with the addition of Chris McClure.

Chris will be joining the Family Law Practice Group in the law firm's new Sioux Falls office and will focus his practice on divorce, child custody, child support, elder law, spousal support, property division, pre- and post-marital planning, and adoptions.

Before joining Swier Law Firm, Chris worked for the South Dakota Department of Social Services and served as lead counsel for South Dakota's Division of Child Support. In this position, he worked with top executives in state government and coordinated numerous child support attorneys.

"Chris has a wealth of experience and knowledge, which will make him a key addition to our firm," said Senior Partner Scott Swier. "His dedication to his clients aligns perfectly with the firm's commitment to providing exceptional legal representation throughout South Dakota," added Swier.

Chris graduated from Augustana College where he was elected Student Body President. He obtained his law degree from the University of South Dakota, where he was Managing Editor and a published author for the Great Plains Natural Resources Journal.

Swier Law Firm, Prof. LLC is a nationally-recognized law firm with offices in Avon, Corsica, Sioux Falls, and Winner. Swier Law Firm represents a wide array of clients, from individuals and families in rural South Dakota to small businesses, governmental entities and officials, and Fortune 100 companies with offices throughout the United States.



McClure

## Living Christmas Tree A New Tradition

BROOKINGS — For many, making a trip to purchase or cut a Christmas tree is a family affair.

"Decorating the tree as a family brings back fond memories from Christmases past when we were young and so looked forward to Christmas and the joy it would bring," said David Graper, SDSU Extension Horticulture Specialist and Director of McCrory Gardens.

A new tradition Graper said some are starting to consider is selecting a living Christmas tree.

"Today you can buy a potted, balled and burlapped tree and have that in your home for Christmas and then plant it after the holidays," Graper said.

He added that the only problem with this renewable scenario is the fact that most often the ground is usually frozen by early December, making it difficult to plant a live tree after Christmas and get it to survive.

"Folks in warmer parts of the U.S. can make this work but you can realistically only have the tree up for about a week before it starts getting pretty stressed out, decreasing the likelihood that it would survive to see another Christmas out in the yard," he said.

The best option Graper suggests for our Northern climate is getting Norfolk Island pines, a potted tree that can survive for many years inside the home. Norfolk Island pines are available in stores everywhere this time of year. They come in all sizes, from tiny little seedlings in a 4-inch pot to larger trees that may be 4-6-feet tall in a much larger container.

"They have nice, soft needles and flexible branches, which makes them nice to touch but can be a challenge to decorate with anything but the smallest and lightest decorations until they get some real size and firmer branches,"



COURTESY PHOTO  
Shown is a large Norfolk Island Pine in the lobby of the Education and Visitor Center at McCrory Gardens.

Graper said. "Some come pre-glittered, like some of the poinsettias that are being sold but I think is just wrong. After all, if I get one of these little trees, I want to enjoy it all year long, not just for Christmas."

Graper does add that unlike traditional, fresh cut Christmas trees, Norfolk Island pines do not have much of an evergreen smell.

### EASY TO GROW YEAR ROUND

Norfolk Island pines are easy to grow. They need to be in a location that gets pretty good sun exposure most of the time.

"The small plants will do great on a windowsill or if they are larger plants, sitting on the floor close to some windows or a patio door will work fine too," Graper said. "They need to be

## Enjoy The Beauty Of Holiday Plants Year-Round

BROOKINGS — During the Holiday Season, Christmas Cactus are on display in garden centers. David Graper, SDSU Extension Horticulture Specialist and Director of McCrory Gardens, shared some information about these beautiful plants as well as tips for extending their beauty beyond the season.

Although it is often sold labeled as Christmas Cactus or Holiday Cactus, Graper said there is actually a difference between the true Thanksgiving Cactus and the true Christmas Cactus.

"Often times we will see hybrids of these two different plants. Both of these plants have flattened specialized stems that are actually part stem and part leaf, called cladodes. Here is where some of the differences show up," he said, going on to explain that the Thanksgiving Cactus, *Zygocactus (Schlumbergera) truncatus*, has wider flattened stems with a few pointed projections or serrations to the tip of the cladodes.

"The flowers are usually bright pink, purple, white - often edged in pink or a golden yellow color. The true Christmas Cactus, usually *Schlumbergera bridgesii* have somewhat narrower stem segments with more rounded tips to the cladodes," Graper said, adding that there is also an Easter Cactus, *Rhipsalidopsis gaetneri*, with wider cladodes, tipped with a

fringe of several hairs.

Graper said all of these plants are photoperiodic, which means that they perceive the length of the night.

"When the night or dark period gets long enough, they initiate flower buds and bloom," he said.

According to Graper, the Thanksgiving cactus usually flowers earlier than the Christmas Cactus followed later by the Easter Cactus, as the nights start to get shorter again. In order to have them ready in time for the holidays each year, Graper explained that producers of these plants control the length of the dark period using either lights to shorten or shade cloth to extend the length of night.

"These holiday plants are members of the Cactus family, but they usually are associated with habitats that are more like jungles than deserts," he said. "They are native to South America where they are often found growing on rocks or tree trunks and branches."

He went onto explain that jungle cacti like these prefer to have regular watering as opposed to long periods of drought. However, probably the most common problem in growing these plants, Graper said is watering too frequently or letting the plants sit in water.

"This will usually result in bacterial or fungal infections of

the roots which will essentially shut down the flow of water from the roots to the rest of the plant. Grow them in a well-drained potting soil and let the soil dry out slightly before watering thoroughly," he said.

### YEAR-ROUND BEAUTY

Graper said that unlike some holiday plants, like the poinsettia, which are best recycled in the compost pile after its done flowering; the *Schlumbergera*, like these, can be long-lived plants that are quite easy to bring back into bloom for many holidays to come.

"I have relatives that have very large Christmas Cacti that are up to 4-feet across that they have had in the family for decades," Graper said. "These large plants can be covered with hundreds of flowers when they come into bloom."

For best results, Graper said the plants grow best in bright, indirect light or morning sun but should not be grown in full sun all day long.

"Some people will move these large plants outside during the summer but they can easily be kept on a sunny windowsill all year long," he said. "The key to getting them to bloom again is to place them in a cool location, maybe down to 60 degrees at night, and let them be exposed to the normal day/night cycle of light and dark. This way they will per-

watered on a regular basis, when the top layer of soil gets dried out add enough water so that it soaks up the whole root ball and the excess drains out of the bottom of the pot."

Graper said if you let them get too dry, you will likely see that the lower branches and twigs will turn yellow, then brown and finally fall off. He added that it is also a good idea to provide some houseplant fertilizer once in a while, especially during the spring to fall when they are usually going to be growing the most.

"Like other types of evergreens, they grow by putting out a new whorl of branches every few months. If light levels are too low, the space between branches can increase so that the plant looks very open or sparse. In many cases you will see that there are several seedlings in each pot, not just one big plant. This will give the plant a fuller look," he said.

Norfolk Island pines can survive and grow for many years, possibly growing up to the ceiling of your home, outgrowing their usefulness or available space. In their native habitat they can grow to well over 100-feet tall, Graper said.

"Unfortunately, you really cannot prune your tree very much to keep it small. If you cut the end of a branch off, it may not regrow. However, if you were to cut the top off, to reduce a plant's height, the lower branches would probably continue to grow," he said. "They are often used as an outdoor ornamental tree in the extreme southern part of the U.S. They are not frost tolerant however. So, you can put your tree outside during the summer but they will need to be brought back in before it gets too cold."

To learn more visit, iGrow.org.

## Gift To Contact Center



SUBMITTED PHOTO  
The staff of Avera Education & Staffing Solutions (AESS) and Yankton Rural Area Health Education Center (AHEC) recently presented a \$525 donation to the Contact Center. Pictured are Taylor Tramp, representing AESS (left), Pat Vavra, representing Yankton Rural AHEC (right), and Jennifer Adamson, representing the Contact Center.

## Rollover Auctions Raise Money For West River Ranchers

Nate Franzen, President of First Dakota National Bank's Ag Division, announced donations totaling \$12,000 for the relief fund to help the West River cattle producers that suffered large losses in the October blizzard of 2013. The Ag Loan Division had 100 percent participation from all Ag lending officers, raising \$6,000 amongst them. The Bank then matched their efforts with another \$6,000 for a total of \$12,000.

A rollover auction happens at local sale barns when one animal is sold several times over in order to raise money. First Dakota has taken part in these auctions at the sale barns in Mitchell, Yankton, Sioux Falls, and Platte.

"I am extremely proud to know and work with this team of Ag Bankers that care enough to personally give a great gift to help their South Dakota neighbors," said Franzen. "It's a large part of our Bank culture to lend a hand where needed. What a testament to this team's passion and commitment to the Ag industry."

First Dakota was founded in 1872 and holds the first bank charter issued in all of Dakota Territory. It has 16 full-service banking locations in 12 South Dakota cities. It also has six loan production offices throughout South Dakota and Nebraska.



Franzen

## Save Leftover Garden Seed For Next Year

BROOKINGS — Now that garden harvest is over, are you like many gardeners and have seed left over from last summer? If you are, Rhoda Burrows, SDSU Extension Horticulture Specialist, has some tips on which seeds can be kept over, which should be thrown out and how to best store seed so it's ready to plant spring 2014.

"Most types of seed can be kept for a year or more if stored at the proper humidity and temperature," said Burrows, referencing Chart 1 for vegetables.

Among the more common flowers that seed can be saved from one season to the next: poppy, stock, and zinnia seed can last five years; marigold, hollyhock, and petunia seed for two to three years. *Salvia* and *verbena* seed can be stored for only one year.

Burrows said seed should be kept in a cool, ideally below 40 degrees, and dry location.

"A refrigerator can work

well, as long as the humidity is kept low, or a deep freeze may be used. Ziploc freezer bags or other waterproof containers can be used to prevent seeds from absorbing any humidity released by fresh produce that you may have in your refrigerator," she said.

When seed is in cold storage, Burrows explained that it requires at a very low rate, so it doesn't need oxygen.

Prior to placing seed into storage Burrows said you can dry many types of seed to an optimal level by exposing them to 100 degree heat for six hours.

"Be sure not to exceed this temperature, or you may harm the seed and never use a microwave oven for drying the seed," she said. "If seed is over-dried - beans and peas especially - the seed may have difficulty absorbing water when planted. If this occurs, you may be able to overcome this problem by placing the seed in a humid atmosphere for two weeks

before planting."

In the spring, Burrows said, you can test the seed germination by placing eight to 10 seeds on a moist paper towel and keeping it damp at room (70 to 75 degree) temperature. Count and remove the germinated seed daily for up to two to three weeks. Burrows reminded readers that if you decide to test your seed, you will need to allow yourself at least a month to carry out the test and to obtain other seed if needed.

"If you collect your own seed, be sure to follow guidelines for harvesting and storing it correctly, and never collect seed from an unhealthy or ailing plant," Burrows said.

She added that it's also not a good idea to save seed from a hybrid plant, as it may produce plants quite different from the parent plant.

When planning to save seeds, be sure to handle them with care.

ceive the lengthening dark period and come into bloom, right on time for Thanksgiving or Christmas."

### SHARE THE BEAUTY

Propagation is quite easy with all of these plants, especially in the spring, Graper said. "Select healthy stem segments about 3 to 4-inches long. Use a sharp knife or just break them off the main plant. Let them sit out for a day or so, to allow the wound to callus a bit, then stick them into your potting soil, about an inch deep," he said.

Then he added to be careful not to water too much until the plant shows signs of new leaves growing out of the tips or there is resistance when gently tugging them out of the soil.

"It is usually best to plant multiple cuttings in a single pot to provide a fuller look and more flowers to enjoy for each plant. Fertilize your new plants with a half-strength houseplant fertilizer about once a month from spring until fall, then hold off on fertilizing again until the following spring," he said.

He added that if you are looking for that holiday gift that can keep on giving, consider a holiday cactus. These plants can usually be found in 4 to 8-inch pot sizes at a reasonable price.

To learn more, visit iGrow.org.