

OUR TOWNS

Cedar County

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Business Gets Grant To Promote Healthy Foods

BY JUSTIN RUST
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HARTINGTON, Neb — A grant from the United State Department of Agriculture will help a business in Hartington provide healthy food to Nebraska schools.

The Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society in Hartington received \$99,000 from the USDA for the Farms to School program, which it will use to provide technical assistance and training to schools in southeast Nebraska in order to serve food grown and raised by local farmers for the schools' lunches.

The project will be a pilot program in Nebraska.

"The potential is there for a great project; the importance and urgency is there," said William Powers, executive director of NSAS. "We believe local foods are healthier for the community and environment, and we think it will increase the standard of health for the children."

Not only will the program help improve the quality of the food that kids would receive at their schools, but it would also have an impact on farmers.

"This would create and save jobs on



farms, because it's another source of revenue for them, and this is their livelihood," Powers said. "This would help cut out the middle man, so the farmers would make more money by directly selling their product."

The program may be somewhat new to Nebraska, but the success of the program has been seen throughout the region, according to Lynn Fallon, the

Farms to School Network Coordinator for the Midwest Region.

"Oklahoma has been leading the way, and things are going phenomenally in Missouri, Kansas and Iowa," she said. "We didn't have leads in Nebraska, South Dakota and North Dakota until recently, but now we have parents and superintendents who are coming out of the woodwork and we are seeing the

program blossom."

The schools that are being targeted are in the counties of Richardson, Pawnee, Johnson and Nemaha and Powers said he hopes the schools will start providing meals with food from local farms starting next year.

This next year, NSAS will work with the farmers and schools about how to prepare the food, and re-equip school cafeteria's so they can prepare the food the right way.

"The food isn't processed, so they will have to do a lot of preparation from scratch, which is different than just opening containers for most cafeterias," Powers said.

Making the transition from a regular cafeteria to an actual kitchen has been one of the most difficult projects of the program, Fallon added.

"One of the struggles in Iowa is that the kitchens are no longer fully operational kitchens, so they don't have the capacity to cook and store the food correctly," Fallon said. "Plus they don't have the culinary skills to work with the ingredients."

Fallon said the biggest problem is that schools are limited by budget constraints, but that could change in the future.

Legislation has been introduced that

would set aside \$50 million over five years for the Farms to School program that schools could apply for in order to equip their kitchens and hire the right people to train the cooks.

Schools could apply for grants of \$25,000 to \$100,000 if the legislation is enacted.

Fallon said training the cooks in the kitchen shouldn't take long.

"It's just a few lessons they would have to learn to get them familiar with the ingredients and how to use the equipment," she said.

Despite the hurdles, Fallon sees a lot of benefit in the Farms to School program.

"We are not providing our children with the appropriate nutrients, and they (the kids) have too many sugars in them," she said. "Either they are on a sugar rush and can't focus, or are sleepy and not concentrating. We need to provide them with a more balance lunch."

Powers said he is trying to create healthier lifestyles with the program.

"My wife and I will have children, and when they go to school, we want them to be eating healthy products," he said. "I feel the Farms to School program has been a lot of help in that regard."

FAIR

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grandstand or other entertainment, check out the exhibits."

The fair features both 4-H and open class exhibits. Steffen said she is amazed at the quality and variety of exhibits.

"We came up with a 'Sunrise, Sunset' theme for the photography contest, and we have some awesome pictures," she said. "I can't believe the talent we have in this county."

For more information, visit www.cedarcountyfair.net.

Other fairs are rolling out the red carpet in different ways.

Yankton County is expanding its Achievement Days to three days, Aug. 6-8, according to Extension administrative assistant Danielle McFarland.

"Sunday is our new day, and we have shifted a few things around to make it work," she said. "On Sunday, we are having the pancake breakfast, cowboy church service and ATV rodeo."

On Saturday, Aug. 7, the schedule offers the fashion review and style show in the afternoon, followed by the 4-H supper and the musical group Sweetwater, all open to the public.

Visitors can also check out the 4-H exhibits and see who qualifies for the South Dakota State Fair, McFarland said. "The kids do a good job, and this is kind of their wrap-up for the year," she said.

For more information, visit www.yankton4h.com.

The Union County Fair is marking its 80th anniversary during this year's event July 28-Aug. 1 in Alcester.

A highlight is the parade at 4:30 p.m. Friday, July 30, in downtown Alcester, followed by the barbecue and Rapid City magi-

cian Keith Raymond at the grandstand. This year's fair also offers an expanded royalty contest.

Persons interested in entering the parade should contact Janelle O'Connor at 670-9144; Dana Wilson at 984-2208; Mark Dykstra at 934-2028, or the Extension office at 356-2321.

Parade marshals are Janet Lingle, marking her 29th year with the Union County Extension office, and Audrey Erickson, who has served as a 4-H club leader for 37 years.

The Union County Fair enjoys strong support from area residents and businesses, Lingle said. She noted the three rural electric cooperatives — Union County Electric, Lincoln-Union Electric and Clay-Union Electric — donate funds toward the barbecue.

The 4-H program in Union County has enjoyed a big boost recently, Lingle said.

"We have picked up 25 new members this year," she said. "Alcester has always done well. We are now getting more 4-Hers from the Dakota Dunes area, and we hope to increase the numbers down there."

Today's 4-Hers are entering a wide variety of exhibits beyond the traditional agriculture, Lingle said.

"We can just about come up with any project area. The kids are enterprising," she said. "If they want to use a science fair project from school, they could roll those over into a county fair project."

The Clay County fair, held Aug. 12-14 in Vermillion, is also trying new things this year, said Will Kennedy with the Extension 4-H/youth development program.

"We are really stepping up this year. We have a lot of support for the county fair. We are definitely on the upswing, and we invite people to check it out," he said.

"One of the things we are doing, our public speaking contest winners will speak at the fair.

Their topic will be 'Operation Military Kids And How To Support Our Military Families.' It's open to anyone 8 to 18, and it's a way to recognize what sacrifices these (military families) have made."

The fair provides a wide variety of offerings for all ages, and the public is encouraged to attend, Kennedy said.

"This is a public fair, and we want them here," he said. "There won't be a carnival (midway), but we are doing a kids' carnival with different games, crafts and a whole bunch of inflatables. We will also have local entertainment at the fair."

For more information, visit www.claycountyfair.net.

Other area events include:

- Charles Mix County Achievement Days Aug. 5-6 in Lake Andes;
- Douglas County Achievement Days Aug. 6-7 in Armour;
- Bon Homme County Achievement Days Aug. 9-10 in Tyndall;
- Knox County Fair Aug. 12-15 in Bloomfield, Neb.;
- Turner County Fair Aug. 16-19 in Parker.

CITY

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Commissioner Bill Ellingson were absent from Monday's meeting.

In other business during the brief meeting, the commission:

- introduced an ordinance regarding special events parking;
- directed staff to work on an ordinance that would expand the times during which off-sale liquor licensees can sell their products. A state law that took effect July 1 allows sales up to 2 a.m. instead of midnight. It also allows sales on Memorial Day. Communities are allowed to be more restrictive than the state law, but at least two commissioners indicated they would like the city to parallel the state law; and
- held an executive session to consult with legal counsel about labor negotiations.

EMS To Hold Workshop

HARTINGTON, Neb. — The Emergency Medical Services Program of the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services will offer a workshop on "Obese Patients" for emergency medical technicians and first responders. The workshop will be held at the Hartington Rescue Hall on Monday, July 26, running from 7-10 p.m.

The workshop is worth three continuing education hours. For more information, contact Carrie Crawford, Northeast Nebraska Emergency Medical Specialist, at 1-877-227-3609.

Dutch Oven Cookoff Set For Cedar Co. Fair

HARTINGTON, Neb. — A Dutch Oven Cookoff will be held at the Cedar County Fair in Hartington, Neb., Saturday, July 17, running from noon-4 p.m. The cookoff is sponsored by Boy Scout Troop No. 208.

Novice and seasoned dutch oven chefs are welcome. There will be main dish and dessert categories, with prizes for each category. Cooking starts at noon with judging at 3 p.m. Public tasting will be permitted after judging is completed.

To register and for a complete list of contest information, contact Beth at 402-254-3448.

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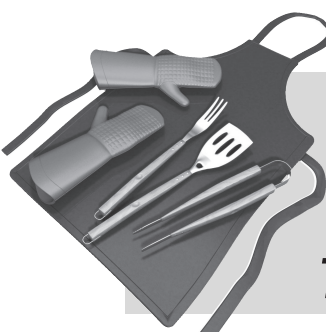
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