

OUR TOWNS

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Lunch Program For Volin-Gayville Taking Shape

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VOLIN — Depending on the outcome of a grant process, residents of Volin and Gayville will have the chance to get free lunches during the summer, either on certain days, or all through the week.

The Summer Lunch Program has grown in part out of the success of the Volin-Gayville Food Pantry, which was established through the Horizons program.

"We were hoping to provide at least a little bit of assistance over the summer," said volunteer Barbara Egbert. "We were looking initially at maybe a couple days a week having a meal for anyone who would like a meal — primarily kids, but anybody who would like one."

Pick-up locations have tentatively been assigned to Gayville Lutheran Church and Volin Town Hall.

In April, Egbert filed for a federal grant which would allow the program to be available throughout the week, but she is still waiting on word as to its status.

"They said they're hoping to hear any day," she said.

That puts the planning "in limbo" for now, she said.

"I guess we'll move forward with what we had originally thought we would do — just one or two days per week," Egbert said. "And then, if it comes through, what we would do is extend it to sack lunches probably for the whole week."

Regardless of the number of days its available, the program will be the first of its kind for the Volin-Gayville area.

"They do have them in Yankton, and that's kind of where we got the idea," Egbert said.

The food pantry was also a factor and will provide part of the resources for the lunch program.

"We've got things pretty well established, and that would help alleviate some of the stress on families over the

summer," Egbert said.

Approximately 40 percent of the students at Gayville-Volin School take advantage of the subsidized meals the school offers, she added.

"There were some teachers who said they thought there was a need, and there have been several teachers who have offered to help," Egbert said. "But on the other hand, it's not a school-sponsored project. It grew out of the food pantry and the Horizons survey."

Apart from the lunches, program organizers also hope to provide some information to the participants.

"We're hoping if we get this grant to be able to supply some education about basic nutrition and expose them to a balanced diet — fruits, vegetables, that type of thing," Egbert said. "If we have a sack lunch, we would definitely want to have fresh fruits and vegetables included along with the sandwich."

She added that she hopes the Summer Lunch Program will become as successful as the food pantry.

"People have been very supportive. We have a steady input of food and a steady output of food," she said.

Donations have been sporadic but generous, she said.

"We've had periodic fundraisers where people will either donate food or money," Egbert said. "When we had our start-up last summer, we had a very generous response. We've been using a lot of that money still."

"Plus, I take advantage of the South Dakota Food Bank and (the Emergency Food Assistance Program), where you can also get food for free or for the cost of shipping," she said.

Egbert pointed out that the Summer Lunch Program started because it was something that different members of the community saw a need, and went about fulfilling it.

"Grassroots is a good way of putting it. It's been a grassroots process," she said.

For more information about the program, contact Egbert at 267-4336.

GETTING ACQUAINTED



Gracie Masteller, 2, shrieks with laughter after touching a painted turtle being held by her mother, Robin, at the Volin Turtle Races on Saturday. The Mastellers were among those who braved the rain to participate in the yearly event, which took place on Main Street in the community.

New Laws Benefit Veterans, Families

PIERRE — The South Dakota Department of Military and Veterans Affairs reminds all veterans of two new South Dakota laws that take effect July 1: property tax benefits to surviving spouses of certain disabled veterans, and expansion of the eligibility for the gold star special license plates.

Implementation of the property tax benefit legislation allows the surviving spouse of a veteran who was rated as permanently and totally disabled from a service-connected disability to receive the same property tax exemption that the veteran received prior to his/her death. If the director of equalization determines that the surviving spouse receives an exemption for the dwelling pursuant to this section of law, the surviving spouse retains that

exemption until such time as property ownership is transferred, the surviving spouse does not occupy the dwelling, the surviving spouse remarries, or the property has a change in use.

Expansion of the eligibility for the gold star special license plates permits any resident owner of a motor vehicle who is a parent, spouse, sibling, or child of a United States Armed Forces member who died while in service to this country or who died as a result of the service, as certified by the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, to receive a maximum of two sets of special license plates to honor the person as a gold star family member. Previously, state law only permitted parents to use the gold star plates. "Passage of this legislation was one

way to preserve the memories and sacrifices of our bravest citizens," said Steve Harding, deputy secretary of the South Dakota Department of Military and Veterans Affairs.

Harding encourages all travelers when following vehicles with the "gold star" license plates, to take time to reflect on those who've given their lives to defend our freedoms.

"We must never allow ourselves to forget that America, as we know it, exists because of the sacrifices of our veterans," he said.

Veterans and/or family members with questions about the changes are encouraged to contact their local County or Tribal Veterans Service Officer or the South Dakota Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (605-773-4981).

PUMP

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ness and offering a cleaner option, he added.

As of June 1, the nation had 157 service stations with blender pumps. South Dakota had 42 ethanol-blended pump locations, just behind Minnesota with 49.

But with the \$1 million grant, South Dakota will bump to the No. 1 spot when 49 more blended pumps are installed at fuel stations across the state.

According to a press release from the governor's office, one of the 42 stations that currently has a blender pump will be replacing it with a new model, so it is not counted among the 49 additional stations.

By the end of this project, South Dakota will have 90 ethanol-blended fuel locations in 40 communities.

Later in the day, politics blended into the occasion when Democrat Scott Heidepriem, who is challenging the Republican Daugaard for governor, issued a press release that criticized the Rounds/Daugaard commitment to the ethanol industry.

"It is wrong and unfortunate that the energy policy director (Hunter Roberts) and Denny Daugaard would hold a press conference attempting to take credit for advances in the ethanol industry when they have such a checkered record in support of ethanol in the state," he said.

Among the criticisms, Heidepriem leveled the administration didn't support a bill he sponsored that called for installing blender pumps at Department of Transportation stations across the state.

Tony Venhaizen, Daugaard's

campaign manager, told the *Press & Dakotan* that Heidepriem was "trying to play politics with what we think is a very positive announcement for the state. I would think Sen. Heidepriem would be pleased about today's announcement."

Venhaizen added that Daugaard has always been a "big supporter" of the ethanol industry, "noting that Daugaard won a Friend of Ethanol award when he was a state senator."

Beyond the politics, the funds justified the decision to purchase ethanol blender pumps, said Terry Stucky, owner of Yankton's Double "T" Truck Stop.

"I had a pump that needed to be replaced," Stucky said, "and I had to do some upgrading because some of the equipment here was obsolete."

With the help of \$10,000 in grant funds, the hefty price of new ethanol blender pumps didn't seem as daunting. His station now sells fuel with 10, 20, 30 and 85 percent ethanol.

The price of ethanol-blended gas is significantly cheaper than regular gasoline, Stucky said.

"In this economy, people are looking for a bargain," he added.

Customers should be aware that unless they are driving a fuel-flex vehicle, they cannot take advantage of all the ethanol blends, said Rick Serie, an executive at Poet LLC in Sioux Falls. Serie also serves as a representative for the South Dakota Ethanol Producers Association.

People in the ethanol industry, like Serie, are working to change the Environmental Protection Agency's standards on what percent of ethanol can be used by vehicles that are not fuel-flex. Its current regulatory cap is destroying margins, stifling growth and conflicting with EISA 2009, according to the South Dakota Ethanol Producers Association.

Serie would like to see the

approved standard increase from the current level of 10 percent.

While flex-fuel vehicles have been manufactured since the 1980s, drivers may own one and not even know it. To find out, check the identification sticker on the car's fuel filler door or consult the owner's manual.

Some people who own flex-fuel vehicles may not even consider trying ethanol-blended fuel because they think it is hard on their vehicle's parts, said Serie.

"We'd like to encourage consumers to do a little trial on (the ethanol-blended pumps) and test it out for themselves," he said.

"Whenever something is new, sometimes it's confusing to people," Stucky added.

To help customers with any questions they may have about the new pumps, he has been available from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. at his service station, helping and training them.

The decision to purchase ethanol blender pumps is also good for local South Dakota farmers and businesses.

"The more ethanol we burn, the more corn is used up," Stucky said. "It's a good deal."

The new pumps have generated a lot of interest by customers. Because of the positive response, Stucky plans to add more blender pumps at his service station by the end of 2011.

FLOOD

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30,000 located about 90 miles northwest of Lincoln.

The river has been flowing at record-high levels, threatening towns the last few days as it rushed through the northeast part of the state.

"For most of the town, we're doing well but I know some businesses and industries are having problems," said Christian Ohl, the membership director for the Norfolk Chamber of Commerce. Ohl didn't have a damage estimate, but said several businesses may have been damaged on the city's south side.

Even with some damage near the southern part of town, residents were glad to see that a prediction from hydrologists that the river would top the levy by an inch didn't come to pass.

"It was close," said Mike Caldararo, who works for the city.

Water on streets in southeast Norfolk began receding at 4 a.m. and U.S. Highway 81 remained closed.

Downstream of Norfolk where

the heavy volumes of Elkhorn River water were headed, officials weren't expecting severe flooding problems.

But weather officials said more heavy rains could bring floodwaters back to levels that threatened towns and damaged infrastructure and agricultural land earlier in the week. The forecast for much of the region called for a 30 percent chance of rain Wednesday and a 20 percent chance Thursday.

"If there's just an inch or two of rain it will slow the recession," of the Elkhorn River, said Rick Sloan, a hydrologist with the National Weather Service.

"But if there's three to five, it will bring it up to where we were at."

Officials haven't reported disastrous flooding destroying large numbers of homes and businesses in towns across the state, but hundreds of homes have been

damaged to some extent. Some of the heaviest damage appears to have been in Schuyler and the villages of Clearwater, located west of Norfolk about 40 miles, and North Loup, in central Nebraska.

In those three towns, roughly 380 homes and businesses were damaged in recent days. Officials have said a handful in Clearwater may be a total loss, and possibly one in North Loup.

An unknown number of farmsteads and homes on the edges of other towns along the Elkhorn and other rivers have been damaged in recent days, and there have been many road and bridge closures and damage in a large swath of the state. Officials don't yet have an estimate of the damage, but 60 of the state's 93 counties are expected to request help cleaning up after heavy storms this month.

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