



Inside Today

VOLUME 139
NUMBER 46

The Dakotas' Oldest Newspaper | **12 PAGES** | www.yankton.net

75¢
8 38894 00002 4

Wednesday ■ June 19, 2013



**Former Royal Returns
To Yankton For Clinic • 8**

YANKTON DAILY PRESS & DAKOTAN



KELLY HERTZ/P&D
Yankton County Commission Chairman Bruce Jensen reads a short letter of resignation from county auditor Paula Jones during Tuesday's commission meeting. Jones has been on medical leave since February. She has served as the county's auditor since 1999.

Jones Retiring As Auditor

Exit For Medical Issues Takes Effect June 30

BY NATHAN JOHNSON
nathan.johnson@yankton.net

The Yankton County Commission announced Tuesday that auditor Paula Jones will retire from her position at the end of the month due to ongoing medical issues. Commission Chairman Bruce Jensen read a brief letter from Jones, stating her resignation will take effect June 30.

Jones has been on medical leave since early February. Leading up to her unexpected exit, turmoil surrounded the auditor's office because property tax bills had not been provided to county taxpayers on time.

Jones declined to speak with the *Press & Dakotan* Tuesday evening when a call was made to her residence.

"She started in 1999 and was a hard worker," Jensen said of Jones. "People liked her. She was very personable. I got along well with Paula, and she would always help a person that needed help. I feel bad the way things happened."

The commission will hold a special meeting at 4:30 p.m. Friday in the Yankton County Government Center to officially appoint Jones' replacement. Jensen said Patty Hojem, the current deputy auditor, will serve the remainder of Jones' term, which expires March 1, 2015.

"She has worked in the auditor's office for 27 years," Jensen said. "She approached us, so we took it under consideration. She has really stepped up to the plate, as



Jones

everyone in that office has."

Hojem began serving as the deputy auditor May 1 following the retirement of Lois Eli.

According to Jensen, Hojem has told the commission that she believes the office can operate with three employees rather than four, meaning a new hire will not be made.

In other business Tuesday, the commission:

- was told by Highway Superintendent Brian Gustad that his department will begin mowing ditches because the grass length has become a safety hazard;
- heard a request from John and Janet Buckmiller for a temporary malt beverage license for a hog roast they will be holding July 26-28 to raise money for families in need. They live northwest of Irene along 296th Street.

JONES | PAGE 3

Trial Begins For Niobrara Couple In Arson Case

BY RANDY DOCKENDORF
randy.dockendorf@yankton.net

TYNDALL — By the end of this week, a Bon Homme County jury could decide the fate of a Niobrara, Neb., couple charged with burning down their Springfield steakhouse.

Charles and Kimberly Johnson have pleaded not guilty to second-degree arson and reckless burning in the October 2010 fire that destroyed Libby's Steakhouse. The blaze also destroyed another downtown Springfield business and damaged a third.

No one was injured in the fire.

The prosecution alleges the couple intentionally started the fire to collect insurance. If convicted of both Class 4 felonies, each defendant faces up to 20 years in prison.

The court proceedings began Monday, and Circuit Judge Glen Eng has scheduled a week-long trial, according to Bon Homme County Clerk of Courts Joanne Balvin.

"The courtroom has been booked through Friday," she said.

However, a verdict could arrive earlier than Friday, depending on the progress of the trial, Balvin said. Should the trial run longer than expected, the court must decide whether to continue on Saturday or recess until next week, she said.

Jury selection was completed Monday, Balvin said. "The jury selection began at 9 a.m. We had a large jury pool of 104," she said. "There was no other room for anyone (other than potential jurors) in the courtroom."

In the end, 12 jurors and two alternates were selected for the trial and seated at 2:30 p.m. Monday for opening arguments, Balvin said.

The jurors are treating the Johnsons as separate defen-

TRIAL | PAGE 2

A JOB WELL DONE



KELLY HERTZ/P&D
ABOVE: Members of the 842nd Engineer Company of Belle Fourche pose with Yankton officials and NFAA Easton Archery Center staffers during an informal reception held at the center Tuesday. The National Guard unit has been doing dirt work for the archery complex the past two weeks. BELOW: Lt. Seth Uschuk of the 842nd and Lt. Gov. Matt Michels point to areas of berm work during a tour of the construction site Tuesday.

Archery Complex Celebrates Work Of SDNG

BY DEREK BARTOS
derek.bartos@yankton.net

Local and state officials gathered Tuesday in Yankton to give several members of the South Dakota National Guard a big round of applause.

The 842nd Engineer Company of Belle Fourche, part of the 153rd Engineer Battalion, has completed its two weeks of moving earth for the new addition to the NFAA Easton Archery Complex. The work was used as the platoon's annual training exercise.

The archery complex hosted an informal ceremony for the soldiers with lunch provided by Yankton's economic development corporation. Lt. Gov. Matt Michels, Yankton Mayor Nancy Wenande, City Manager Amy Nelson and city commissioners Brooke Blaaid and Jake Hoffner were among those on hand to show the platoon their appreciation.

"We'd like to thank you for everything you've



KELLY HERTZ/P&D

done," said National Field Archery Association (NFAA) president Bruce Cull. "It's frankly blown my mind."

Added Wenande, "It's such a great compliment, all the work you've done out there for the NFAA and Easton Foundation to not just further archery in our community, but also for all the people coming in from around the world. You're

having an international impact by the work you're doing here."

The exercise was part of the platoon's RESET year, which focuses on individual skills such as equipment operation and maintenance during training. During their time in Yankton, the 26 soldiers used 38 pieces of equipment to move approximately 6 million pounds of dirt.

"To have an exercise that's done that can keep them trained up for Iraq or Afghanistan or any other threat is pretty amazing," Michels told the *Press & Dakotan*. "I think it would stun people that they can do that right here in our hometown."

While the ceremony's aim was to show the soldiers appreciation for their work, 2LT Seth Uschuk, one of the project leaders, used it as an opportunity to thank the NFAA and the city for

SDNG | PAGE 2

Ag Gala Columnist Shares Funny Side Of Ranch Life

BY RANDY DOCKENDORF
randy.dockendorf@yankton.net

Amy Kirk has found times in life where, if you didn't laugh, you couldn't help but cry.

So instead of shedding a tear, she has turned the funny misadventures of her ranch family into a weekly humor column.

Kirk and her husband, Art, raise their two teenagers on a cow-calf operation near Pringle in the southern Black Hills. She combines her passion for agriculture, the outdoors and writing into her column entitled *A Ranchwife's Slant*.

And Tuesday night, she shared the funny side of life with others sharing her background at the eighth annual

Ag Gala at the Riverfront Event Center. The event is sponsored by the Yankton Area Chamber of Commerce's Agri-Business Committee.

Kirk called her talk "Connecting With People Through Agriculture and Humor." She shared her childhood memories of listening to family farm and ranch stories about Lyman County in central South Dakota.

"I knew then that I wanted to write about ranch life, and I started writing about our family's ranch mayhem in a journal," Kirk said. "It was a way for me to decompress the good, bad and ugly of our lifestyle."

In the process, she grew into a



KELLY HERTZ/P&D

Pringle ranch wife and humor columnist Amy Kirk shares both the humorous and unpleasant sides of agriculture during Tuesday's Ag Gala. The eighth annual event, sponsored by the Yankton Area Chamber Of Commerce, was held at the Riverfront Event Center.

GALA | PAGE 3

Rural Lawmakers Push For Farm Bill Votes In House

WASHINGTON (AP) — Farm-state lawmakers are scrambling to win bipartisan support for a five-year, half-trillion-dollar farm bill on the House floor this week.

The legislation would cut \$2 billion a year from food stamps while raising subsidies for several crops. Though it has support from rural lawmakers across the political spectrum, it is unclear whether Republican leaders will be able to gather the votes they need to pass the bill.

Many Republicans are seeking deeper cuts in the \$80 billion-a-year food stamp program and say they'll vote against the measure. They're backed by conservative groups who are lobbying aggressively against it.

Democratic support is equally shaky. Liberals are rallying against the measure because they say the food stamp cuts will take as many as 2 million recipients off the rolls. The White House has threatened a veto, saying more money should

be cut from farm subsidies and less from food stamps.

The bill calls for spending of almost \$100 billion a year on food and farm programs.

In an effort to push the legislation through, House Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio, said last week that he will vote for it, while making it clear that he doesn't really like it. He said he wants to get the bill to a House-Senate conference and that passing the bill is better than doing nothing. The legislation would cut around \$4 billion a year in overall spending on farm and nutrition programs.

Democratic leaders have said they will wait to see how the chamber votes on amendments but have so far signaled opposition to the measure. Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi of California is a "likely no" on the bill, according to an

VOTES | PAGE 3