

2025 Mitchell County Conservation Edition

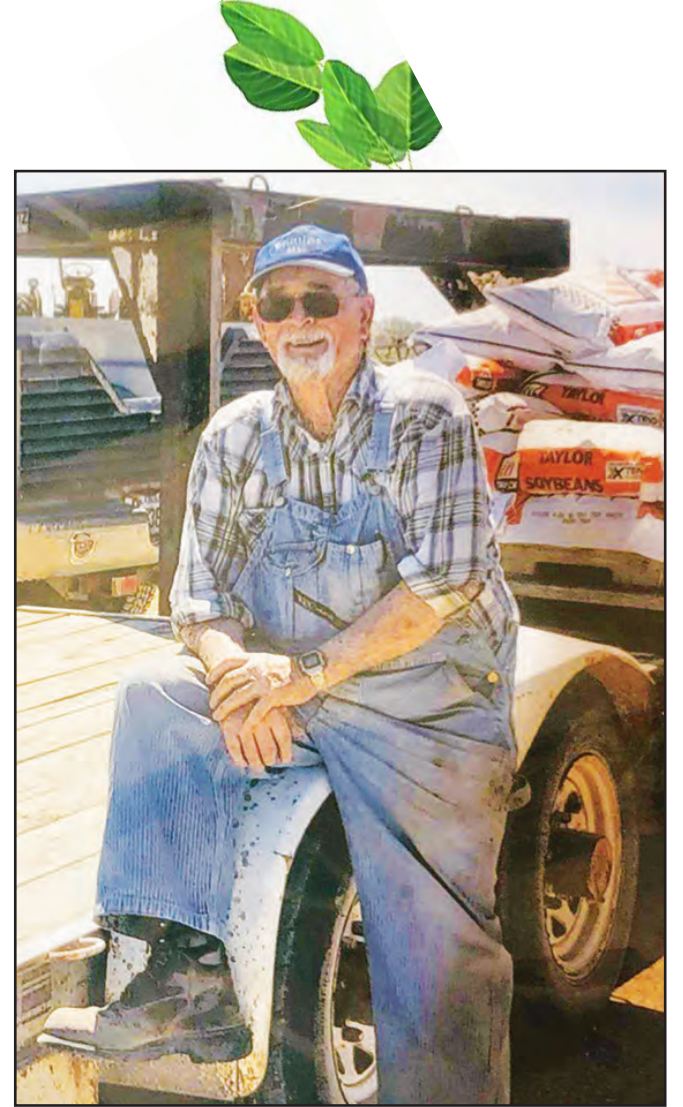
Mitchell County Conservation District Annual Meeting

5:30 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 26 at Fort Hays Tech | North Central Technical College, Severance Student Union
Meeting at 5:30 p.m. – 6 p.m. meal – Awards presentations and guest speaker



Erick and Buffy Kadel earn Water Quality award

Drilling crew work on drill rig for solar pump through Associated drilling out of Olsburg, Kansas



Marvin Brobst earns Carl Jordan Friend of Conservation award



Greg & Annabeth Nicholson earn Soil Conservation award



Solomon Valley Vet Hospital/Luke family earn Energy Conservation award



Chris & Kim LeSage earn Windbreak award

Brobst earns Carl Jordan Friend of Conservation Award

Soil conservation for the younger generations is what it is all about

BY SHARON SAHLFELD
CALL EDITOR

The Carl Jordan Friend of Conservation Award will be presented to Marvin Brobst on Sunday, Jan. 26, during the Mitchell County Conservation Annual Awards Banquet, at the Fort Hays Tech | North Central, Severance Community room. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. with the meeting starting at 6 p.m.

Marvin Brobst has been working with soil conservation since he was 14 years old and just recently celebrated his 90th birthday.

“If you think anything of your children or grandchildren, you better take care of your farm ground now, through planting grass on your terraces, etc.,” said Brobst. “What we think of our future generations, is what it is all about.”

Brobst knows too well what family means, growing up in a family of 16 children, born and raised by his dad Nathan (Nate) Brobst, and mom Ida (Robison), just a mile and a half from Auburn, southwest of Topeka, in Shawnee County. He was raised with 11 sisters and five boys.

“I feel a lot of people deserve this special award, but I have done a lot of soil conservation work and believe in it wholeheartedly. My dad in 1947, taught me about this, and I have carried it on,” Brobst said. “I started running a dozer in 1949, in eighth grade, in a country school. Our machinery was smaller back then and it took a little longer to get things going, unlike today.”

“Terraces help stop the erosion,” said Brobst. “Take a long slope and the farther it goes, the worse it gets. Put grass in the waterway and it slows down the erosion.”

When Brobst moved to the Mitchell County area



Marvin Brobst stands with a framed photo collage his daughter, Rebecca Jones, gave to him as a gift. It is printed on tin and shows his New D7 cab in 1956 that he still owns today. Other photos show him with his grandson, Kris Jones, and his late son Bryce Brobst.

in 1961, from Shawnee County, soil conservation was around 80 percent complete. Soil conservation had just gotten started around Mitchell and surrounding counties. Most of the farmers were working and didn't like to be interrupted, but in 1995, if in a government program, one had to participate in soil conservation. Farmers reluctantly started waterways and building terraces, so in 1990, it was decided to start protecting the erodible ground.

Brobst moved to Mitchell County, with his wife Carol Hackett, at that time, at the age of 26, and saw soil conservation just

starting up.

“In Shawnee County, I started building basements, ponds, etc. I always enjoyed working for the true farmer and when I moved to Mitchell County, that is what I did.”

While living in Mitchell County, Brobst lived in three different places and bought a farm in 1976. He then went to farming and doing soil conservation as well.

“Bob Gengler and I worked together from 1962 until he passed away 14 years ago. It was Brobst Construction and Bob just went by his name. I also worked with Jerry Wessling for around 25 years as well. I figured it

up one day that between Bob, Jerry, and I, we built at least 2,000 miles of terrace, and have around 55,000 hours of running a bulldozer.”

One of the most prominent projects Brobst remembers is 2.5 miles of terrace and a pond project.

“I have always enjoyed working for the farmer and if they were pleased with the work, that is what I enjoyed the most,” said Brobst. “I feel like 95 percent of them did so.”

On another project in 1958, he built on 20,000 yards covering 10 surface acres of ground.

“That was one of the largest stock pond projects I built,” said Brobst. “It

took over a month, and when I drive by it today and it is still operating, that is what I like to see. A project built to last.”

Marvin Brobst has a daughter, Rebecca Jones, and a late son Bryce Brobst, along with seven grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren. Family means everything to him, and soil conservation is a part of his legacy he wishes to carry on through the next generation.

“If you think anything of your children or grandchildren, you better take care of your farm ground now, through planting grass on your terraces, etc.,” said Brobst. “What we think of our future

generations, is what it is all about.”

What Marvin learned from his dad on how to work in all types of soil conservation, helping build terraces, ponds, clearing waterways, and otherwise, he hopes to carry on to others. He also ran a dozer in the Army for two to three years in Germany, from 1955-1958, and went to three different camps. Back then, terraces were built in a straight line.

“It is not as pleasurable work now, as it was back then, with my older body,” Brobst said. “But I will still get out there and help others if need be.”

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In 1958, Marvin Brobst and his dad, Nathan Brobst, attended a Caterpillar factory banquet and these small tractors were sitting at the tables to show them where to sit for the meal. He kept it as a keepsake. “When I went back in 1990, things had sure changed a lot,” said Marvin.

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Kadels to receive Water Quality Award

BY SHARON SAHLFELD
CALL EDITOR

The Water Quality Award will be presented to Erick and Buffy Kadel on Sunday, Jan. 26, during the Mitchell County Conservation Annual Awards Banquet, at the Fort Hays Tech | North Central, Severance Student Union. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. with the meeting starting at 6 p.m.

Erick and Buffy Kadel have installed a multitude of projects such as water pipelines, wells, solar pumps and panels, live-stock concrete pads, and water tanks to qualify for this award. They have also installed electric Richie Automatic waterers. Their recent solar-powered well and pump project started on June 1, 2024, and will end in February of 2025.

Erick's passion for farm/stockman has been in his blood and his life, starting from both sides of his family. His father Noel (Red) Kadel and his mother, Christine Gengler's family, immigrated to the States as farm/stockman.

Erick started his own farm/stockman operation in 1977.

The Kadels receive this Water Quality Award knowing they are improving water quality and grazing distribution for their livestock. Erick, Buffy and daughter Haley also have a mid-size cow/



Erick Kadel drives, while Gabriel Lopez and Dustin Ole help set the rural water electric pump with pipeline laid a quarter of a mile to the pasture.

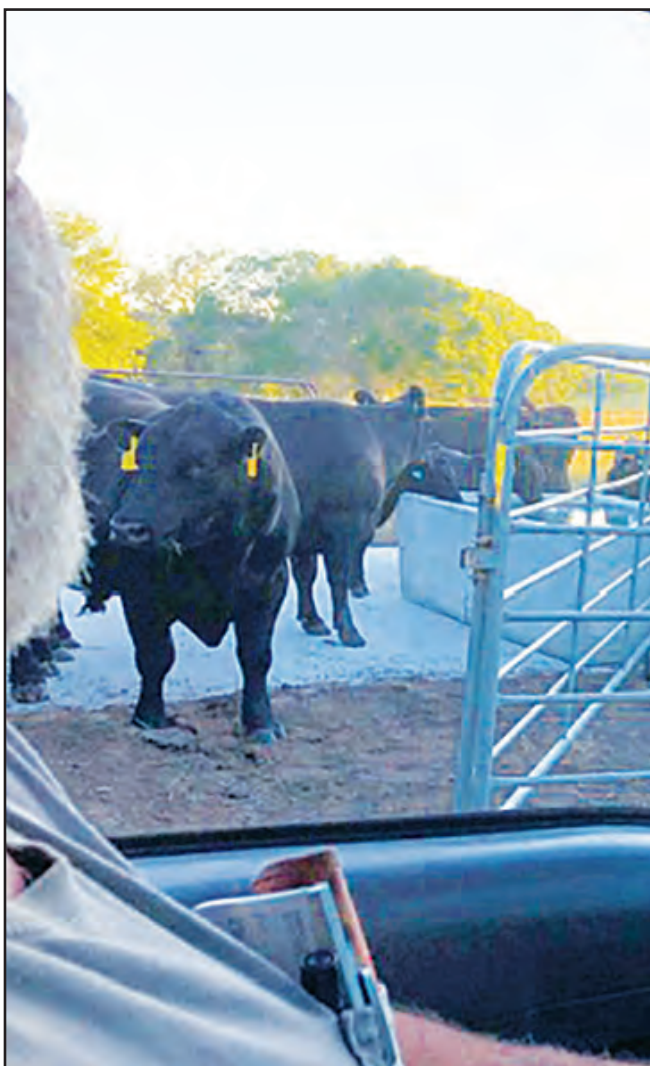
calf operation.

"I am proud to be a 4th generation Farm/Stockman in Mitchell County," said Erick. "Our mission and passion is that quality matters in every aspect of our operation including water."



Erick Kadel stands by the solar well and pump, supplying a 600 gallon concrete stock tank. The pad of 18x22 feet, was poured before the tank was set on June 8, 2024. The solar panel is above on the fence to the left.

Some solar pumps themselves should last between 10-20 years depending on use case and specific pumps. Some customers are running the pump 24/7, 7 days a week which will shorten the observed lifetime of the system. A total of 94 percent of ranchers that have switched to Solar Pumps last year reported saying they will never go back!



The concrete slab was poured big so the cattle can stand on concrete while they drink water.



From left to right: Erick Kadel, William Cockcroft, Alberto, Gabriel Lopez, Dustin Ole, help with the solar well and pump project on the Kadel's farm.

BUFFY KADEL COURTESY PHOTOS

Congratulations to all area farmers involved in the conservation effort and especially the Banker Award Winners of Mitchell County!

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LeSage honored to receive the Windbreak Conservation Award



Recently in the past extreme snow storm of 12 plus inches, the LeSage have experienced how important their windbreak provided excellent protection from the elements as it trapped a lot of snow accumulation.

BY SHARON SAHLFELD
CALL EDITOR

The Windbreak Conservation Award will be presented to Chris and Kim LeSage on Sunday, Jan. 26, during the Mitchell County Conservation Annual Awards Banquet, at the Fort Hays Tech | North Central, Severance Student Union. Doors

open at 5:30 p.m. with the meeting starting at 6 p.m.

“We feel honored to receive this award, but we do feel like there is more we could do to add more wind protection as well,” said the LeSages. “We would like to add plum thickets in the pasture and possibly an inner row of lilacs on the inside of the

main windbreak.”

Recently in the past extreme snow storm, the LeSages experienced how important their windbreak is, as it provided excellent protection from the elements as it trapped a lot of snow accumulation. With the couple being raised in a rural farming community in Kansas, they knew

that a windbreak was a necessity to help keep their property and animals (4H animals included) protected.

The LeSage couple purchased pasture ground off of Heidrick farms in 2014. They then built a storage building, which was completed in 2015. With their shop being located right beside farm ground, they knew they would need some protection from the wind and other elements, so in 2016 they decided to purchase cedar trees from the conservation office in Beloit.

With help from 3B cattle, the ground was ripped in preparation to establish the trees. In the early spring of 2016, with the help of their daughter, Brecken, two separate runs of trees were planted for the start of a wind break.

“The wind break has helped protect our shop and our house from wind damage during storms,” the LeSages said. “Also, the wind break has provided protection for wildlife, such as rabbits and quail. We typically have at least two pair of nesting quail in our yard during the spring.”

“We only had to water a



With the LeSage shop being located right beside farm ground, they knew they would need some protection from the wind and other elements, so they then decided to purchase cedar trees from the conservation office in Beloit in 2016.

few times as the following years were very wet years,” said the LeSages. “Since

that time, we have only lost a couple of trees and one left deformed from lightning.”



Brody, Kim, Brindle, Brecken, and Chris LeSage

Trees can be ordered from Kansas Forest Service

Conservation Tree Planting Program

The Kansas Forest Service's Conservation Tree Planting Program offers tree and shrub seedlings, as well as other items for use in conservation plantings. Plantings may function as wildlife

habitat, windbreaks, wood lots, timber plantations, or educational and riparian (streambank) plantings.

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company a phone order. Call Toll Free: 1-888-740-8733. Telephone orders accepted using VISA, MasterCard, or Discover.

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All sales are final. No guarantee of survival after shipment or delivery is made. The plants are guaranteed to be the species and quantities ordered, fresh, and capable of growing. Claims must be made within seven days

of receiving the plants. No refunds less than \$5. The Kansas Forest Service does not warranty the survival of the plants and is not responsible for economic loss by the customer.



Layne Wilton joins staff

BELOIT – Layne Wilton joined the Beloit Field Office this summer as a Natural Resources Specialist. Layne is a recent K State graduate with a degree in Wildlife and Outdoor Enterprise Management. Layne grew up on a farm near Lincoln. During his time at KSU, he had internships with the Army Corp of Engineers and Nebraska Game and Parks. Layne enjoys hunting and fishing on his days off.

New Mobile app opens up the world of CoCoRaHS

<https://cocorahs.blogspot.com/>

CoCoRaHS has utilized a mobile app for a number of years now, both Android and iOS versions. They were developed and maintained by a volunteer who at the time was working on mobile app development. The volunteer's career moved on in a different direction and they no longer have the time to keep up with maintaining the mobile app. We were in a position that, if significant changes to either Android or iOS requirements were made and the mobile app no longer worked, mobile app users would be dead in the water.

The current mobile app has served us well. However, it was mostly a one trick pony. It was limited to entering, listing, and editing daily precipitation data. Some of the error checks that we use on the web site were not utilized in the app. If you want to report hail, significant weather, or condition monitoring you need to use the web site. In addition, observers who exclusively use the current mobile app are less likely

to visit the web site and take advantage of all the additional information available to observers.

We realized that the situation with the “CoCoRaHS Observer” mobile app was potentially a disaster waiting to happen. We needed to come up with something that could replace the current mobile app in case changes in operating systems or other issues rendered it unusable. This was a huge challenge. We could not afford to hire someone to develop a new mobile app and then monitor and maintain it. Dealing with the app stores and their requirements was a hassle at times. So, last fall we decided that we needed to come up with an alternative in case things with the current app went irreversibly south.

Mobile light & dark modes

The home page of the new mobile web app in the light and dark modes.

So here we are. The new mobile app is a mobile-enabled web application. It looks like an app, acts like an app, and you can down-

load it from either Google Play or the Apple store as an app. Our app will work across platforms (Android and iOS phones, tablets, computers) and browsers. This new app is full featured, allowing observers to enter data for any of our data types (Significant Weather, hail, etc.) and provides easy access to our current web site.

The development of this mobile app has been an iterative process with a great deal of input from hundreds of observers. When the basic app was ready, we released it to a small group of current and new mobile app users for testing and feedback. Bugs were found and fixed and usability issues addressed. Periodically we released it to additional groups of users for testing and feedback, and the process was repeated. So far, over 600 CoCoRaHS observers have tested this new mobile app. The new mobile app is now available for everyone to use.

What will become of the old app, “CoCoRaHS Observer”? Both the iOS and Android versions will

continue to be available as long as they work. They are no longer supported, i.e. there will be no bugs fixed or improvements made. If there are changes to the Android or iOS operating systems that render the app unusable, it will be removed from the Google Play and Apple stores. That will likely happen at some point-we just don't know when. We strongly encourage you to use the new mobile app.

This new mobile app is a significant achievement for CoCoRaHS, thanks to the imagination, knowledge, and skills of our very own Julian Turner. Julian's vision was for a mobile-enabled web site that would have the features of the web site (and then some), be easy to make changes to (no more having to update separate Android and iOS versions of apps), and be the foundation of a new web site structure for CoCoRaHS. We also want to thank the hundreds of observers who tested the mobile app and provided feedback to help improve it. Without you we would not be where we are today.

Nicholson's to receive Soil Conservation Award

BY SHARON SAHLFELD
CALL EDITOR

The Soil Conservation Award will be presented to Greg and Annabeth Nicholson on Sunday, Jan. 26, during the Mitchell County Conservation Annual Awards Banquet, at the Fort Hays Tech | North Central, Severance Student Union. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. with the meeting starting at 6 p.m.

The Nicholsons feel very honored to be chosen for this award. They have built acres of waterways and miles of terraces in the previous years.

Terraces and waterways are crucial components of soil conservation practices, primarily important for managing water runoff on sloped land by significantly reducing soil erosion, improving water quality by trapping sediment, and allowing for more efficient agricultural use of land, especially in areas with heavy rainfall or steep slopes.

Key functions of terraces and waterways:

- **Erosion control:** Terraces act as barriers, slowing down water flow and preventing soil particles from being washed away by runoff, thus minimizing soil erosion on steep slopes.
- **Water management:** By capturing and channeling runoff water, terraces allow for better water infiltration into the soil, improving soil moisture levels and potentially increasing crop yields.
- **Sediment reduction:** As runoff water slows down on terraces, sediment particles settle out, preventing them from reaching waterways and contributing to cleaner water quality.
- **Flood mitigation:** Terraces can help regulate water flow, reducing the risk of flooding in downstream areas.
- **Improved agricultural productivity:** By preventing soil loss and optimizing water availability, terraces enable farmers to cultivate steeper slopes more effectively and maintain crop yields.



The primary purpose of a waterway is to provide a stable outlet for runoff. Primarily, maintenance consists of mowing, but may also include haying, seed production, and careful grazing. Manage to promote a vigorous, dense sod, and minimize extra maintenance needs.

Waterways can be designed with vegetation or other structures to further trap sediment carried by runoff water.

Important considerations:

- Design and maintenance: Proper design and maintenance of terraces
- Sediment traps:

and waterways are crucial for their effectiveness.

- Slope and soil type: The type of terrace design should be adapted based on the slope and soil characteristics of the land.
- Integrated approach: Terraces are most beneficial when used in combination with other

conservation practices like contour farming and cover cropping.

"We would like to proceed with the soil conservation projects that protect our natural resources," said Greg Nicholson. "Also, we hope that others see the benefits of soil conservation."

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Mitchell County Conservation District Poster Award Winners!



Kindergarten 1st place Corbyn Schroeder, Lakeside



Kindergarten 2nd place Catryn Mondero St. Johns



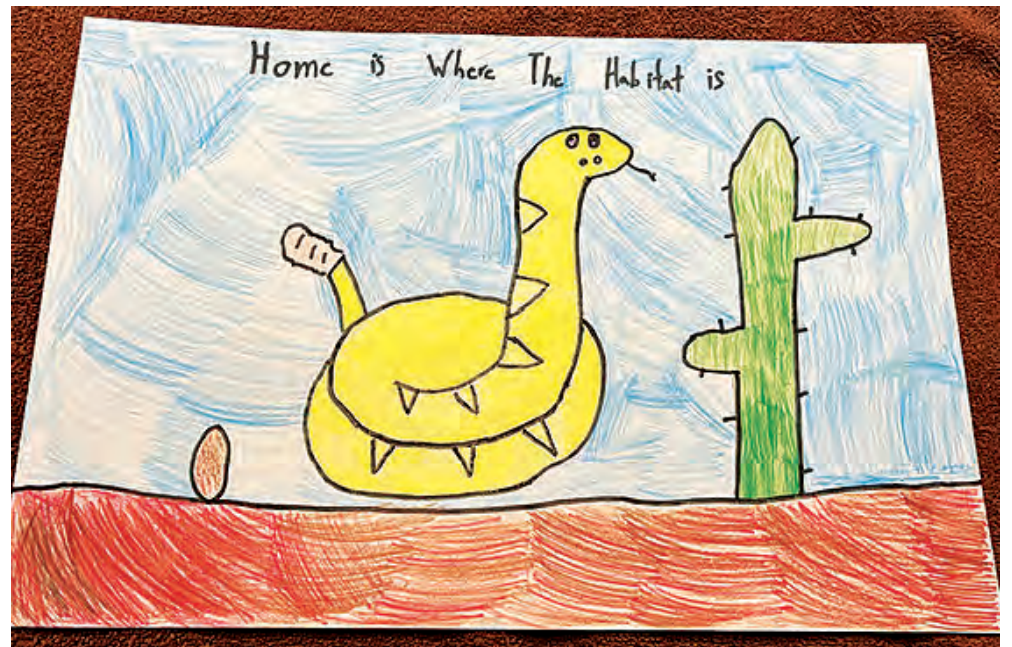
First grade 1st place Audrey Knappert St John's



First grade, 2nd place Eli Peters St John's



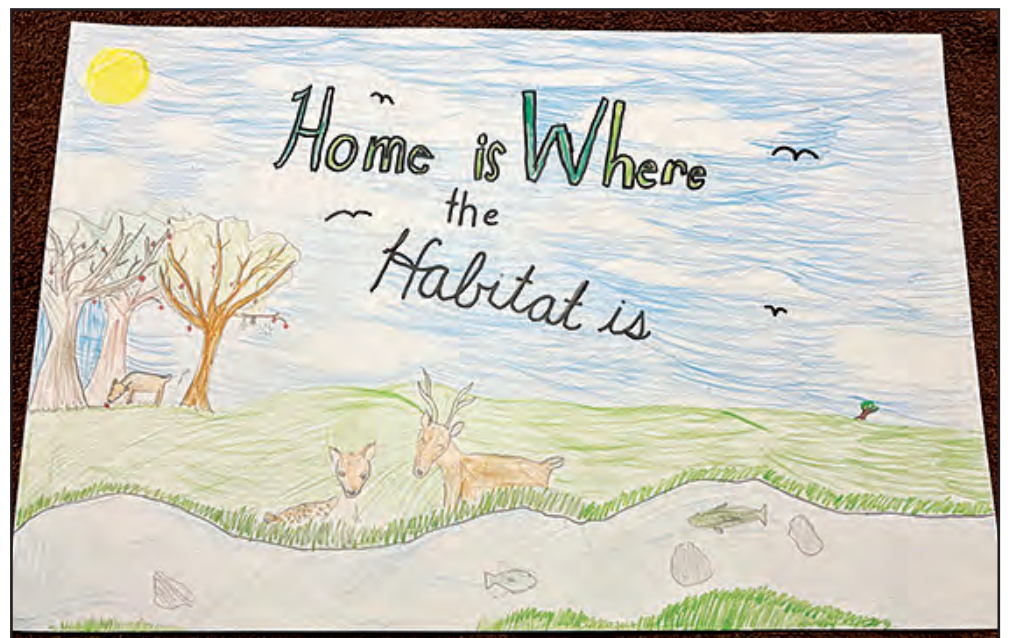
2nd grade, first place. Annabelle Phillips, Tipton



2nd grade second place Vale Remus, Lakeside

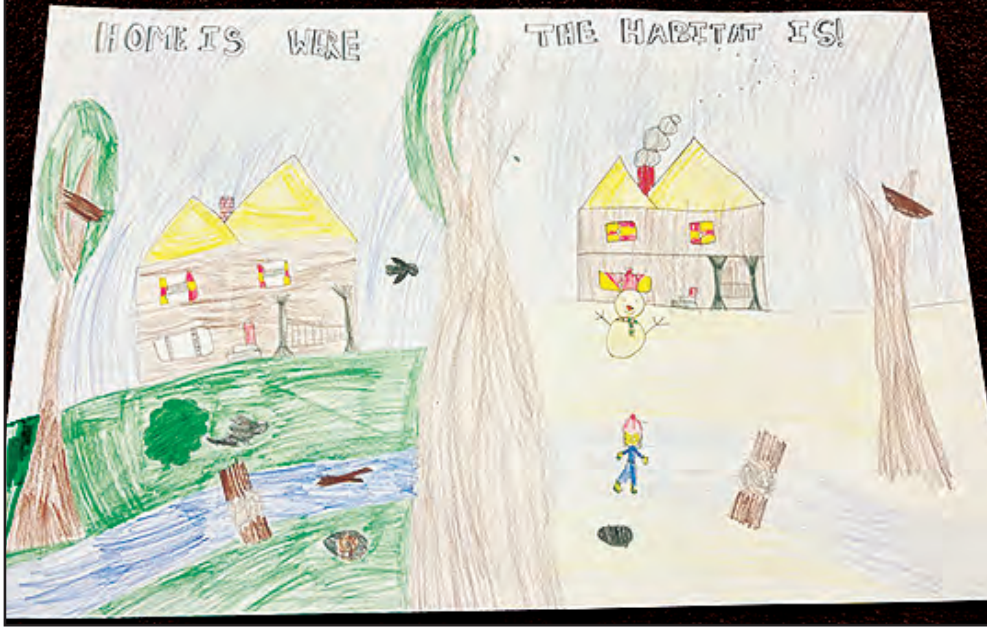


Third grade 1st place Emma Gengler St John's



Third grade 2nd place Gladys Clark St John's

Mitchell County Conservation District Poster Award Winners!



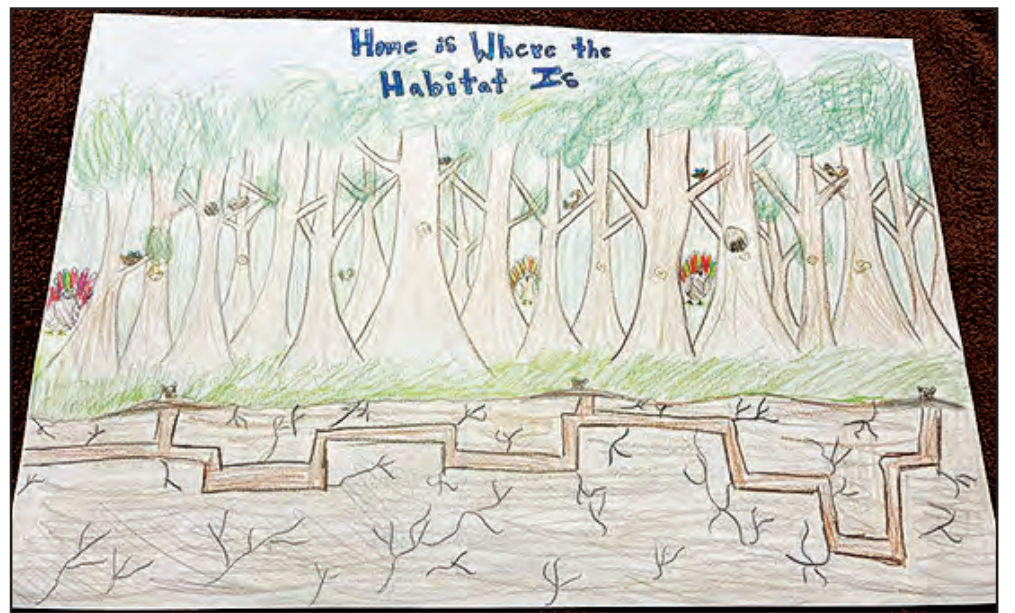
Fourth grade 1st place Chiara Lueger st John's



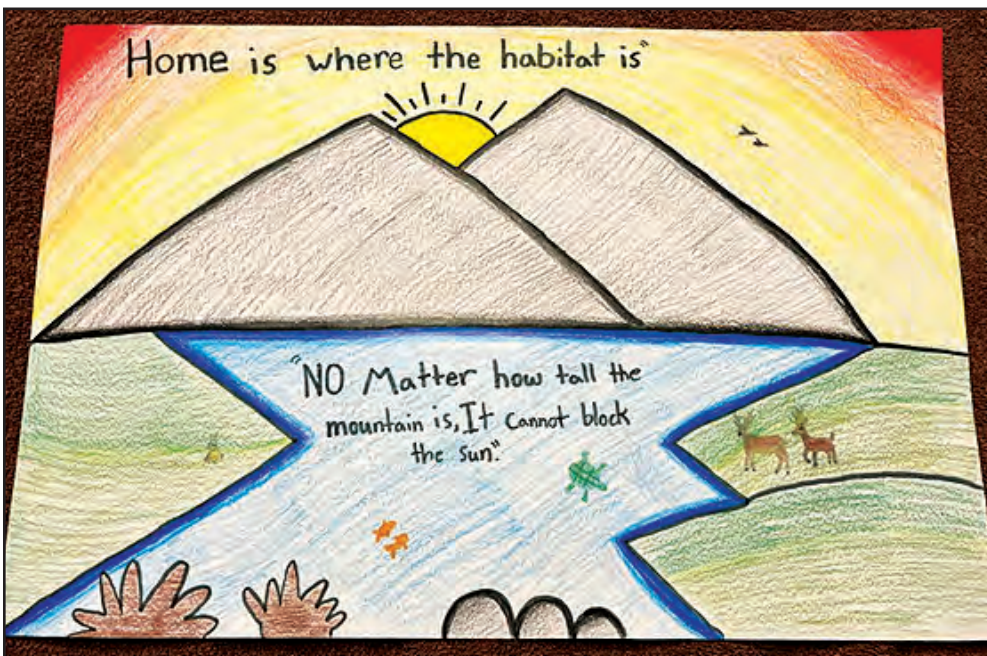
Fourth grade, 2nd place , Isaac Letourneau, St. John's



Fifth grade, 1st place Elsa Koops, Lakeside



Fifth grade, 2nd place, Bridget Clark, St. John's




6th grade, 1st place, Presley Hand, BES






Sixth grade, 2nd place, Ainsley Krier, BES

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Solomon Valley Vet Hospital/Luke families to receive Energy Conservation Award



The Solomon Valley Veterinary Hospital have installed solar panels – as seen on the out building – to the entire clinic, and include the homes of Charles and Brady Luke as well.

BY SHARON SAHLFELD
CALL EDITOR
The Energy Conservation Award will be presented to Solomon Valley Vet Hospital/Luke families on Sunday, Jan. 26, during the Mitchell County Conservation Annual Awards Banquet, at the Fort Hays Tech | North Central, Severance Community room. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. with the

meeting starting at 6 p.m. The purpose of this program is to stimulate a greater interest in the conservation of energy by giving recognition to those Kansas farmers and ranchers who have taken measures to reduce fossil-fuel based energy consumption on their farms and ranches. The vet clinic has installed solar panels to the

entire clinic, and also at the homes of Charles and Brady Luke as well. “We researched solar panels and decided they are a great way to decrease the electric bill and help our environment,” said Brady Luke. The basis of selection of individual awardees was determined on the following points:
a. Efficient use of ener-

gy in farmstead buildings, equipment, and operations, including but not limited to building insulation; heating and cooling such as ground source heat pumps; lighting; and striving for peak fuel efficiency in high energy consumption components such as irrigation pumping, refrigeration, power units for tillage, harvesting equipment, etc.

b. Production of energy from renewable sources including but not limited to solar; wind; biomass; biofuels such as biodiesel, methane, ethanol, etc.
c. Utilization of renewable energy sources including those mentioned above in b. as well as other similar sources
d. Cogeneration of energy such as internal combustion engine powered

generator with beneficial use of waste engine heat
e. Co-utilization of energy through combining processes such as heating one stream while cooling another by using a heat exchanger; cool milk while heating water for cleaning by using a heat pump; etc. “We are very honored to receive the Mitchell County Energy Conservation Award,” said the Luke family.

Kansas Land Improvement Contractors Association

JON L. UNGERER,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
You don't have to look far today to find businesses or industries facing difficult times and trouble finding employees. Especially where proper and specialized training is critical to completing a quality job while ensuring everyone on the jobsite is safe from accidents and injury. The Kansas Land Improvement Contractors Association (KLICA) recognizes the need to train and recruit quality

employees and is intensifying their efforts to benefit their members and the industry as a whole. KLICA has established an endowment scholarship with Fort Hays Tech North Central to benefit a student enrolled in the Heavy Equipment Operations program. An additional annual scholarship is funded annually for a student in the Heavy Equipment Operations program and for the 2024-2025 school year KLICA funded a scholarship for

a student in the Diesel Technology program. What is the Kansas Land Improvement Contractors Association (KLICA) and who are their members? KLICA is a non-profit association made up of conservation contractors, landscapers, and others involved in the land improvement industry, who promote quality work in land and resource protection across the state of Kansas. The Association is made up of Contractor Members, Associate

Members, and Special Members, each with their own place in ensuring a beneficial effect on Association Membership. In 2024, the Kansas Land Improvement Contractors Association was recognized by the National Land Improvement Contractors of America as the National State of the Year for their extensive efforts to benefit the industry and promote LICA in the state of Kansas. KLICA is working diligently to benefit their members and

the industry. If you are a contractor, landscaper, or involved with any aspect of land improvement involving heavy equipment it is likely they have something to offer you, least of which is acknowledging you are a part of an association benefitting the soil conservation and heavy equipment industry in the state of Kansas. KLICA holds an annual convention and business meeting every January. In 2025 the KLICA convention will be held at the Drury Inn, Wichita,

Kansas, January 26, 27, & 28, 2025. If you are a contractor or other heavy equipment owner, and would like to be our guest, we are confident you will enjoy your experience. To be a guest at our convention or for additional information about the Kansas Land Improvement Contractors Association check out their website at <https://kansaslica.com>, visit their Facebook page, or contact Executive Director Jon Ungerer at 785-221-8797 or jungerer@kansaslica.com



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USFWS proposes threatened status for Monarch Butterfly under Endangered Species Act PF & QF encourage quality pollinator habitat



Monarch Butterfly on Milkweed

Today, Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever (PF & QF) are encouraging private landowners and public land managers to help identify innovative strategies to restore quality pollinator habitat in the United States in light of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS or Service) proposed threatened status of the monarch butterfly under the Endangered Species Act. The proposal initiates a 90-day public comment period starting on December 12, with a final listing decision coming in the following year.

The proposed listing comes after years of thorough assessment of monarch butterfly populations, including a "warranted but precluded" status in 2020 due to higher-priority listing actions. Presently, eastern migratory populations of monarch butterflies have declined by more than 80% since the 1980s, and western

migratory populations by more than 95% in the same timeframe. Loss of breeding, migratory, and overwintering habitat, including food sources along established migration corridors and throughout the blooming season, remain among the top threats for monarch butterflies.

Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever's mission to create high-quality habitat for pheasants, quail, and other upland species directly intersects with the monarch butterfly. That very same habitat, filled with diverse grasses and forbs (flowering plants) is critical for all pollinators, but essential for the monarch. PF & QF have been among the nation's leaders in pollinator-friendly habitat, implementing 392,864 acres of high-quality habitat for pollinators and planting more than 1.3 billion milkweed seeds – an essential component for the monarch lifecycle and migration habitat – over

the past decade, following more than 42 years of grassland conservation efforts.

"Beginning in 1982, the mission of Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever has been to restore grassland ecosystems for the benefit of pheasants, quail, and other wildlife. When you consider the web of life, it's no coincidence our 28.8 million acres of wildlife habitat improvements have delivered tremendous benefits for monarchs and upland game birds," said Marilyn Vetter, President and CEO of Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever. "Moving forward, our commitment is continued focus on the intersection between private and public lands, with myriad private and public partners, for the conservation of America's grasslands. Likewise, our organization will continue to advocate for voluntary, incentive-based, grasslands-focused programs

for landowners, farmers, ranchers, and hunters as the number one strategy for recovering monarch populations."

The 90-day public comment period for the listing status will open on December 12, 2024, and close on March 12, 2025.

Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever encourage farmers, ranchers, landowners, hunters, and any stakeholders who value monarch butterflies and associated pollinator habitat to submit comments online (referencing docket number FWS-

R3-ES-2024-0137) to the USFWS on actions to help conserve this iconic species. This docket also includes information about how to attend two virtual public information meetings, and associated public hearings, about this listing proposal.

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