

# Country Neighbor

Agriculture and Rural Living Quarterly



## From family farm to park, Page 14

As the city of Nixa makes plans for future parks and recreation areas, land from the century farm of the Eoff family has been donated to the cause, as a way to preserve the family's history.



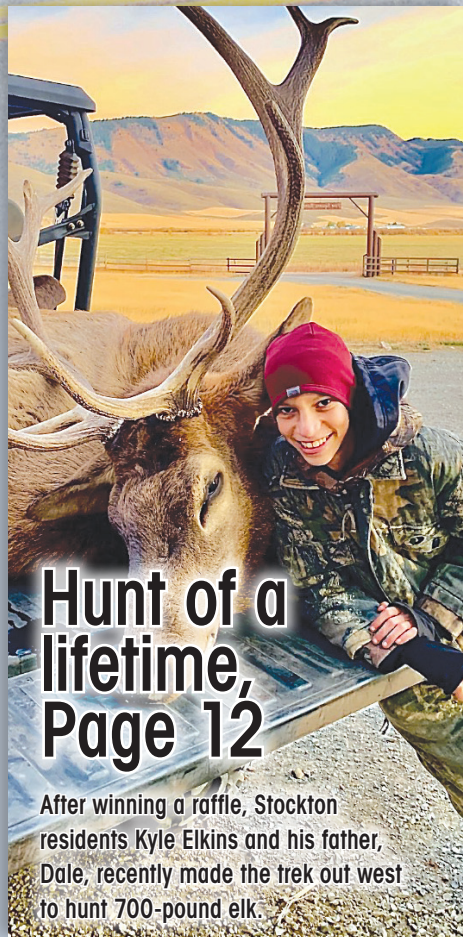
### Big-time recognition, Page 4

An 18-year-old aspiring blacksmith from Marshfield recently was recognized by one of the biggest names in bladesmithing — J. Neilson of "Forged in Fire."



### A little bit of everything, Page 6

Joe's Hardware in Buffalo hearkens back to the days of hometown stores with personal service and a cornucopia of products.



### Hunt of a lifetime, Page 12

After winning a raffle, Stockton residents Kyle Elkins and his father, Dale, recently made the trek out west to hunt 700-pound elk.



### Sweets for any season, Page 16

Just in time for Valentine's Day, Jennifer Crews of Polk County's Sweet Sensations discusses her confections business.

Also featured in this issue: the Mitchell Century Farm of Polk County, Stockton Saddle Club sees renewed interest, a visit to two bed-and-breakfasts in Webster County, and columns by Jim Hamilton and Slim Randles.

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Christian County Headliner News and The Marshfield Mail

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# SLIM RANGLES

## Spinning yarns

**A** new year. A new start. Who said I can't finish this book? Dud Campbell walked the frozen sidewalk and blew steamy breath out through his parka hood.

All I need, really, are a few ideas. Dud's been working on his novel, "Murder in the Soggy Bottoms," for several years now, and it has taken on different blends of seasoning, largely depending on what things were happening here in our little valley.

For example, the bizarre romantic connection between Dewey and Emily led to a rewrite of the part where the book flashed back many years to when the Duchess and the Truck Driver first met.

And when the Truck Driver's son met the Duchess's daughter, 20 some years later, it was the courtship of Randy Jones and Katie Burchell that he patterned that after.

What is still left to solve, however, is what happens when the Truck Driver and the Duchess discover that their children are sweet on each other, because the kids happen to be half brother and sister.

And then, the guys at the coffee shop wanted to know why the Truck Driver, an American truck driver, was there driving below the Duchess' castle in Europe. At first he was just calling it a special assignment, but the



guys wanted to know what the special assignment was, and did he have to change his name for it, and was he armed, and did theme music play when he shifted gears.

He'd already killed off a few characters early on in the book, so he believed he was under no obligation to bump off any more, but then the book is called "Murder in the Soggy Bottoms" (which his friends think sounds like wet diapers), and the soggy bottoms are back in the good ol' US of A, and how was he going to get the Duchess and her daughter across the foaming tide?

And as he walked and thought, he asked himself if really good writers like Balzac and Max Evans had to struggle like this. He nodded and smiled to himself.

Sometimes I'll bet they just wanted to sit down, open a beer and watch football.

Hey, not a bad idea.

Art does exact its price.

*In memory of my mentor, pard and good friend, Max Evans. He used to "fist fight for fun." Thankfully, not with me.*

# JIM HAMILTON • OZARKS RFD

## 100 pounds of feed and a tow sack

**I** haven't shouldered 100 pounds of dairy feed in a burlap bag — aka "tow sack" — since I was a teenage farm boy. That was a long time ago. I'm not sure I could heft one more than waist high today, and I'm certain I'm not going to try.

But, when I was a boy on the farm, I didn't have (or want) any choice. When I was small I watched Dad carry one bag after the other about 100 feet from the car to the barn. By the time I was 15 years old (maybe younger), I was toting my share of feed to the barn — not hauling it on a wheelbarrow, but balancing it on my right shoulder, just like Dad.

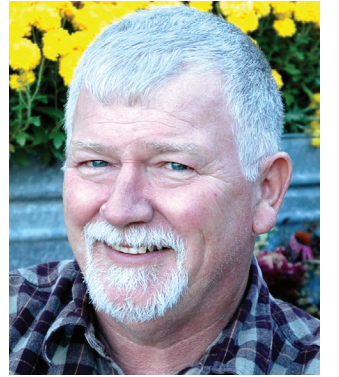
As I grew older and stronger, I unloaded more than Dad did. It made the chore a lot easier after we had a pickup and we could back right down to the barn. Still, the bags weighed 100 pounds, and were big around and bulky; but, we knew nothing different. Only dog food came in smaller bags. Besides, we treasured those coarse — often patched — burlap bags for many more uses than storing 18 percent dairy feed. We tacked some up inside the dairy barn to keep the wind

from blowing through wide cracks in the native oak walls. When I bought my first FFA project, a Hamp/Poland piglet, we carried her home in a tow sack. When we needed a large fish basket, a burlap bag beat anything the tackle store sold. If we needed to beat out a grass fire, a wet burlap bag did that, too. When we went camping on the river, burlap bags carried our blankets and cooking gear. When we had to keep 10-gallon cans cool on summer nights, setting them in tubs of water and covering them with burlap bags made a crude evaporative cooling system.

And, if we could spare them, we could always sell the best bags back for reuse.

All of those things and many more were made possible simply because dairy feed came in 100-pound burlap bags.

More than a half-century later, I could still find plenty of use for burlap bags; but, all my stock feed now comes 50 pounds in slick, reinforced plastic bags. They make pretty good trash bags, but not much else. Until recent years my stock feed came 50 pounds in heavy paper bags. They had drawbacks, such as



soaking up water. But, they did make pretty good weed barriers in the garden, and by the next season had mostly decomposed. They could hold trash, too; but green walnuts, not for long. They could also be burned without sending black smoke billowing into the atmosphere.

I reckon I'm better off today with the 50-pound plastic bags. They're strong and do a good job of protecting stock feed from moisture. Best of all, though, at age 73 I don't hurt myself loading or unloading them.

Still, they give me pause when 50 pounds seems especially heavy, and I ask myself, "How did I get so puny?"

Why, it seems just a couple of years ago I was packing 100 pounds on my shoulder and whistling a tune all the way to the barn.

Now, if I could just remember how that old tune went ....

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# Mitchells farm land for 100 years in Polk County



An aerial photo shows the Mitchell Farm off Route UU in Polk County.

Photo courtesy of Donna Mitchell

**By David Talley**

DAVIDT@BOLIVARNEWS.COM

Donna Mitchell remembers her father-in-law, Donald, as always being incredibly proud of his family's farm northeast of Wishart and the traditions built there.

According to Missouri Department of Agriculture records, the family originally acquired the land in 1920, and has held it for more than a century.

"He was so incredibly proud and wanted to ensure that we had registered our farm as a Missouri Century Farm," Donna Mitchell said.

She and her husband, Steve, now run the farm.

Donald Mitchell died more than a year ago in 2019, at 89.

The farm was recognized in March 2020 as a Missouri Century Farm.

According to his obituary, Donald Mitchell was compassionate and generously served his community. He served on the MFA Board, the University Extension Center Council, the Polk County Republican Committee, the Marion C. Early School Board, the Morrisville Volunteer Fire Department and as long as he was able, donated blood to the American Red Cross.

He served 45 years on the Morrisville Lions Club.

Steve Mitchell said his father bought the land in the 1960s. His great-aunt was the original owner.

He said he isn't sure what his great-aunt grew in those early years.

"I know they did some crops at some time or another," he said.

His father bought the land in the 1960s, Steve Mitchell said.

"At the time dad bought it, it had grown up," he said. "There were maybe 10 to 15 cows and a goat or two. We bulldozed it, built ponds and built fences, and put cattle on it."

Steve Mitchell said the 143 acres now supports about 60 head of cows.

He said he strictly farms grass and cattle now.



Photo courtesy of Donna Mitchell  
**Donald Mitchell**

The family had kids, he said, who grew up on the farm and have now moved away.

They're who will one day inherit the land, Donna Mitchell said.

"While ultimately we would love to see our children take over the farm, we also know that we live in an uncertain time," she said.

**About Missouri Century Farms**

According to the Missouri Department of Agriculture website, century farms and ranches have shaped the nation.

"Amidst every kitchen, behind every faded barn door, and in every soiled and calloused hand lie untold stories of those who feed our nation," the website states. "As an industry, we are called to discover these stories and share with consumers everywhere the contribution farmers and ranchers have made to our American heritage."

In 1976, the Centennial Farm project was initiated in Missouri to award certificates to people owning farms that had been in the same family for 100 years or more. Interest in the program continued, so the College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources and University of Missouri Extension planned a 10-year update in 1986 called the Century Farm program. The Missouri Farm Bureau joined as a program co-sponsor in 2008. This program has been sustained as a yearly event with over 100 farms recognized each year.

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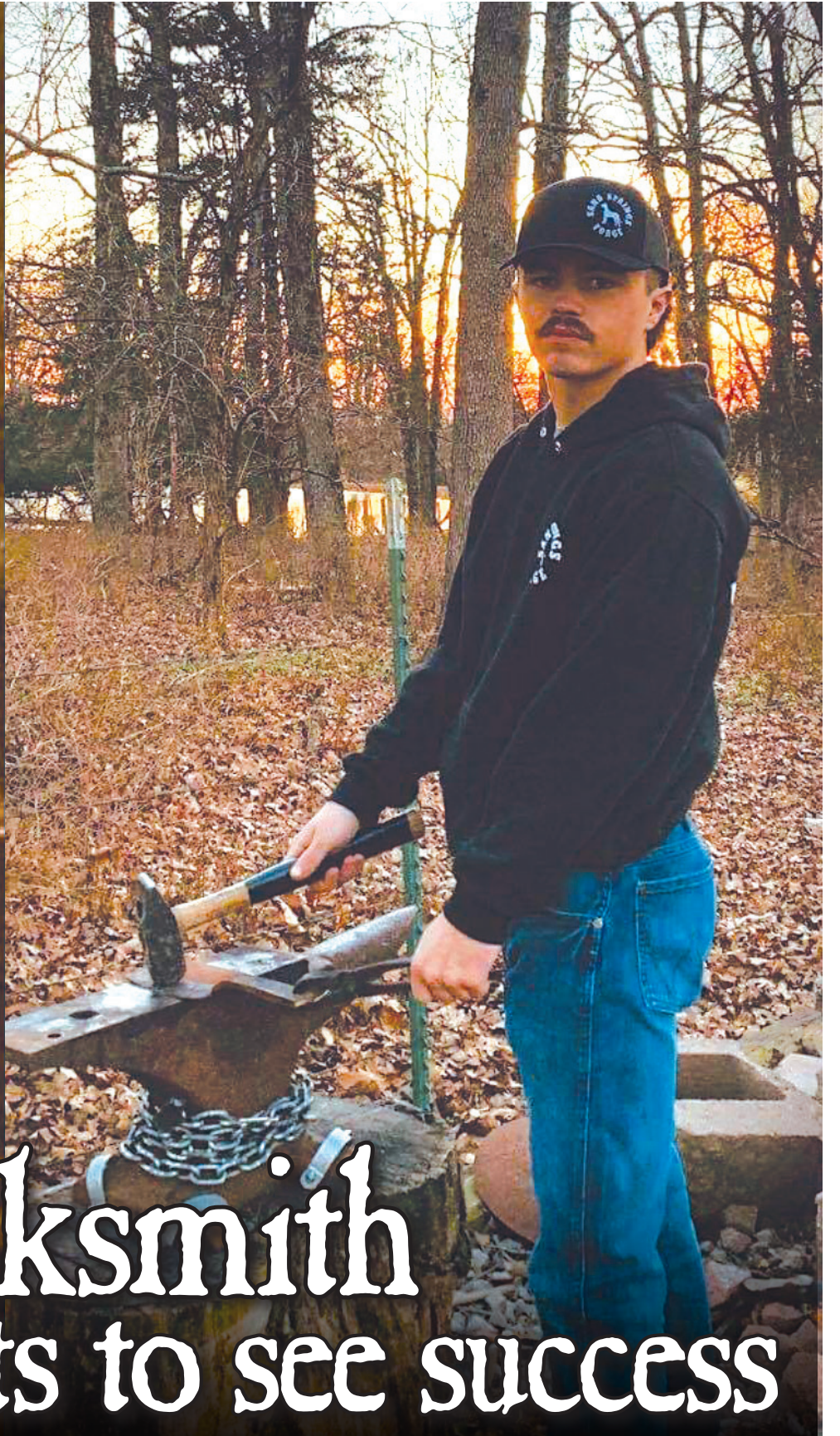
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# Aspiring blacksmith starts to see success

## Knife pro shouts out Marshfield 18-year-old

Photos courtesy of Josh Hartman  
 (Left) Pictured is Cole Hartman's great-great-grandfather John McVay. This photo was taken at his blacksmith shop in Marshfield. McVay also built the desk in the entryway of the old library, now at the Webster County Historical Museum.  
 (Right) Cole Hartman, blacksmith and owner of Sand Springs Forge, is hard at work hammering out material on his anvil.

**By Shelby Atkison**  
 SHELBYA@MARSHFIELDMAIL.COM

Marshfield native Cole Hartman sold his first knife while he was still a student in high school. A part-time hobby soon turned into a business, which afforded the now 18-year-old the opportunity to chase his dream of being a blacksmith. Flash forward three years and he's making knives worthy of shout-outs from one of the world's top bladesmiths.

"I've always really loved knives, and I figured I could try to make them myself — so I started when I was 15, and I made my first one with my grandpa," Hartman said. "Then I expanded, bought a forge and a grinder, and started making them ... people asked me to sell them, and everything grew from there."

Hartman graduated from Marshfield High School in May 2020, when he decided to continue chasing his dream. The business owner began studying

and further perfecting his craft. He credits his success thus far to his relentless process of trial and error.

"I've watched a lot of YouTube videos and the TV show 'Forged in Fire,' with J. Neilson. That's where I've learned technique," he said. "But you never know what works best for you until you just try it out."

"Forged in Fire" is a popular History channel reality show, streaming on Netflix, which brings forth world-class bladesmiths to re-create histori-

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Master Smith J. Neilson sports a Sand Springs Forge hat and two-knuckle paperweight in his post on Instagram @j.neilsonknives.

cal edged weapons that are then tested through competitions to determine a winner of the \$10,000 grand prize. The contestants are judged by some of the world's top bladesmiths, including Neilson.

"Being a full-time blacksmith, I needed to get opinions from people I looked up to in the craft, to see if they could help me better my product," Hartman explained. "J. Neilson was probably the person I cared about most about giving me feedback. He was really willing to test out my products, and he made a post about them."

Neilson has been making knives for over 20 years and was recognized by the American Bladesmith Society with the rank of Master Smith — a title held by just over 100 people worldwide. His assessment of Hartman is based off of knowledge and credentials of one of the world's top bladesmiths.

"I wanted to thank Cole Hartman for sending me a few items to try out," Neilson said in the Instagram post, "Cole's been making metal toys for adults & has added forged blades to his portfolio ... Check him out."

The post featured a photo of Hartman's handmade cleaver in action, chopping through a hearty piece of meat, as well as a selfie of Neilson with

the two-knuckle paperweight. Also pictured was a carrying case for the cleaver, a two-knuckle paperweight, a Sand Springs Forge hat and a bottle of knife oil to keep the blade clean, protected and to assist with sharpening.

"It means the world to me that he would post my knives and shout me out to his fans," Hartman said. "Hopefully someday he can judge my work in person on the show."

According to Hartman, he makes most of his knives out of recycled materials, including the cleaver he sent to Neilson.

"The blade was made out of a car leaf spring — which I heated up and banged out into shape before grinding it down and attaching its handle," he said. "I like the rustic look that it brings, and I like knowing that it's coming from another tool that I'm able to repurpose."

A variety of Hartman's bladesmith work can be found on Etsy and Instagram by searching Sand Springs Forge. For questions about his work, Hartman can be reached at (417) 812-3107.

"Blacksmithing and bladesmithing, it's really a lost art," he said. "But I think it's something that's coming back, and people are starting to enjoy and appreciate the handmade aspect of blades a lot more."



The Sand Springs Forge cleaver with case, hat, blade oil and two-knuckle paperweight that blacksmith Cole Hartman sent to Master Smith J. Neilson, photo via @j.neilsonknives.



Cole Hartman's handmade cleaver passed the test for J. Neilson, who was thrilled to share his new toys with his large social media following.

## Doing Business on Our Word and a Hand Shake

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# Buffalo HARDWARE STORE

honors tradition with a bit of everything, personal service

By Jim Hamilton

JHAMILTON000@CENTURYTEL.NET

**I**magine the first time you went with Grandpa to the hometown hardware, and you'll imagine Joe's Hardware in Buffalo. Though Joe's name has been on the door for only a year, step inside the store at Locust and Dallas and you'll find an array of classic hardware items, including all types of nails in rotating bins, bulk cases of wood screws, shelves deep with assorted paints, power tools on the wall, galvanized trash bins, new water heaters, garden hoses, rakes, shovels, charcoal grills, and arguably the most complete store of propane supplies in town — everything you might imagine in the same store 50 years ago. ▶

Photos by Jim Hamilton  
Sporting "old-timey" signage, Joe's Hardware in Buffalo is characteristic of small-town stores of another century. Joe and Trinity Carver have owned the former Bill Chapman Hardware since last January.



Trinity Carver works beside Joe throughout the store, as well as behind a front counter featuring a vintage scale and cash register dating to the early years of the Buffalo hardware store.

▶ Of course, you'll find a host of gadgets Grandpa never heard of, too, and what you don't find, Joe can get for you in short order.

**New version of a familiar store**

Owned and personally operated by Joe and Trinity Carver, Joe's Hardware is the latest reincarnation of a Buffalo hardware business dating to the early 20th century. Formerly located on North Maple Street, the venerable business was Bill Chapman's Hardware Store for more than 50 years. Bill retired and sold the business to Tim Jasper, another hometown boy, in 2012, who in 2016 moved the business to the present site on Dallas Street (Mo. 32). On Jan. 21, 2019, Joe bought the business from Tim, who had taken a full-time job with the U.S. Postal Service.

Vestiges of the old Chapman Hardware are still in evidence at Joe's 21st century store. In addition to odd remnants of Bill's inventory are an antique scale dating to the late 1800s, as well as a 1946 vintage cash register. They're both still at use on the front counter — just like in Grandpa's day.

Longtime Buffalo residents may recall Joe's Hardware site as the location of Kelly Franklin's Sears-Roebuck store from the 1970s, and later as a video rental store, an Oriental restaurant, another video store, a pawn shop and as the Jasper's Buffalo Hardware. Next door to some of those former businesses was a doctor's office and later a financial services office.



A panorama of a portion of Joe's Hardware reveals just some of the traditional "little bit of everything" offered by the locally owned business.

Joe's now includes those spaces on the west, as well as the old Sears store — including the physician's X-ray room that had to have lead removed from the walls before it could be remodeled to serve as a paint room.

#### He just 'watched and listened'

Ask Joe what qualifies him to run a hardware store, he'll answer, "Nothing, absolutely nothing."

Then everything he says about himself will contradict that assertion.

A 1991 graduate of Buffalo High School, he loved shop classes and "vo-tech," starting in junior high school and continuing through high school.

Among his notable mentors were his wood shop teacher Ray Bolin, as well as school janitor and skilled woodworker Homer Parris, who taught him much about the business side.

While under Homer's wing, he was able to sell his woodcraft wares at Nixa's Sucker Days and other venues. To help finance his passion for woodworking, Joe said, "I went out and picked up pop bottles just to buy sandpaper and other things I needed." And while other students were in study hall, he managed to spend that time in wood shop. He

also expanded his skills taking the automotive mechanics course at vo-tech.

Among his varied jobs after high school were stints working for O'Reilly Auto Parts in Buffalo and Bayless Auto Salvage in Springfield. He later worked extensively in remodeling and construction, both for other builders and on his own.

His education, he explained, was "I just watched and listened a lot while I was doing all that."

Similarly, leaning on experience working beside him in the remodeling and construction business, Joe's bride of the past five years, Trinity, has worked in the store full time since November, capably serving customers and answering their questions.

#### Some customers 'just need reassurance' — and paper towels and toilet paper

Like many businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic, Joe has faced challenges getting some merchandise, but also has been able to fill special needs for customers — such as paper towels and toilet paper when major stores' shelves were bare.

He's also come face to face with

competition from the "big-box stores," which can buy products in warehouse quantities, and may get the products first and at lower costs. Rather than compete purely on a cost basis, he strives to offer higher-quality products — from leaf rakes to power tools — that will outlast and outperform the cheaper brands.

He reiterated, "I can buy cheaper products, but I won't sell junk just so I can make more money on it. And I won't lie to them just to make a sale."

Regarding competition with "big-box" and cut-rate stores," he said, "I can provide service they can't — talk to people about what they need and help them. A lot of folks just need reassurance. They pretty well know what they're doing, but they may need a little guidance."

As an example during this interview, a gentleman came in with a threaded plastic pipe and a brass fitting. Joe assured him he had the right parts, then explained the most effective way to get a leak-proof seal with Teflon tape — just an everyday example of personal service, and a customer who will come back next time he has a question.

Whether through a communitywide service project (like the Back the Blue campaign) or one-on-one service to customers, Joe is dedicated to helping people.

"I have an obligation to support the community. I wouldn't be here if people didn't come in to buy from us. I have to give something back. What I like most is helping people."

In another nod to small-town business acumen, Joe notes he's likely to be closed for some community events. For example, rather than open the doors early on a recent Saturday, he drove his truck in the Buffalo Christmas Parade. And, when Father's Day weekend comes around, he'll take Friday and Saturday to go fishing with his dad, Ronnie Carver, just as he has for many years. Of course, the store is always closed on Sundays, too.

If that's not the store Grandpa took us to, it's mighty near the same, nuts, bolts, stovepipes, homespun values and all. All that's lacking is an old woodstove and soda pop machine in the back.

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# Steadily hoofin' ahead

Stockton Saddle Club shares plans for improvements, growth in 2021

## By Miles Brite

MILES B@CEDARREPUBLICAN.COM

As we leave 2020 behind us and look toward spring for clearer skies, warmer weather and better times, one local equestrian group in Stockton has taken it upon themselves to almost reinvent a long-standing organization rich with tradition, learning and friendship.

Enter the new crop of officers, board members, volunteers and sponsors making up today's Stockton Saddle Club.

"When this new group of volunteers got together and decided we all wanted to turn this club into something, everyone in this new group was really excited," Stockton Saddle Club Vice President Amy French said. "We had new people, new energy, and everyone wanted to go in the same direction. When you have that going for you, there's just no stopping it."

The recently restructured Stockton Saddle Club has galloped into the new year with motivation and ambition — and with a dedicated group of volunteers willing to lend their experience, skills and hours of personal time to a number of new infrastructure expansions and projects.

This passionate group of local equestrian experts and hobbyists have rallied together for no other purpose than to breathe new life into the Stockton Saddle Club from every aspect of the club's existence in Cedar County.

Be it chasing down donations, re-engaging with uninvolved or longtime members, bringing new volunteers on board and reaching out further into the community itself, the new zest infused into the organization has been noticed throughout all of Cedar County.

Looking into the early part of 2021, a complete revamp of the Stockton Saddle Club's arena facility already is under way — a move the entire board of volunteer members said is a much-needed boost to their operational capabilities and makes attracting new members and participants all the easier.

The club's facility, located at 14659 1674 Road in rural Stockton, recently had its old and dilapidated fencing removed from the arena's boundaries, and it is being replaced with new steel pipe fencing with the assistance of local volunteers willing to lend their efforts, time, machinery and skills to



From left, Stockton Saddle Club Vice President Amy French and board member Tom Rodgers share a moment of newfound success as they prepare to discuss the coming improvements to the Stockton Saddle Club's arena facility.

the greater cause.

Earthwork will commence and be completed — weather permitting — in the coming weeks, and volunteer workdays are usually announced with enough advanced notice for most members to attend regularly.

And, when it comes to the work that has been done, the group has continued to share collective praise and appreciation for the countless volunteers who have made the project's undertaking possible.

Once construction efforts on the arena itself are complete, French and Treasurer Anna Haselhuhn both noted the club's focus will shift to improving the cook shack facility to allow for expanded concessions to be available at coming events the new arena complex will allow them to host.

"We can't say enough about the people who volunteer to help us," French said. "There are so many people and organizations who have helped, it's almost impossible to list them all. We always make sure our volunteers know how much they are appreciated and never miss an opportunity to thank them."

Regarding the all-volunteer operation itself, French said the pay the members receive comes in the form of the involvement of area youths in all things equestrian.

"We're just blessed. This is an all-volunteer operation, but really, we're paid with all the big smiles from the kids who participate in the club's regular events."

As far as the rest of the 2021 calendar year, the group collectively said it plans to



### Current Stockton Saddle Club officers and board members:

**Chelsea Abercrombie**

— President

**Amy French**

— Vice President

**Kelli Davidson**

— Secretary

**Anna Haselhuhn**

— Treasurer

**Justin Burns**

— Board Member

**Tom Rodgers**

— Board Member

**Nikki Antonini**

— Board Member

**Melissa Tompkins**

— Board Member



"We're just blessed. This is an all-volunteer operation, but really, we're paid with all the big smiles from the kids who participate in the club's regular events."

— Stockton Saddle Club Vice President Amy French.

host more play days where timed trials can be run, barrel racing and pole-bending can be participated in, as well as health checks, vaccinations, dental screenings and shoeing all can be done in one place while learning, communicating and bonding with the local equestrian community and while supporting the Stockton Saddle Club.

Communication and availability also remain a focus of the refreshed group, with board members all confirming the group's communication and visibility are on the rise when compared with years past.

"We're all about networking, communication and encouraging more people to get involved," French said. "The events we host create opportunities for people to meet folks they might not otherwise know, and we get to showcase the talents of local farriers, veterinarians and specialist who enjoy participating in our play days, shoeing events and the activities we host. It also allows people who don't have experience to get on a horse and learn things from other experienced riders. There's no other way to do all of this than getting on board with a healthy, working saddle club in your area."

As the work continues, the Stockton Saddle Club also will host its annual awards celebration at the Activities Center of the Stockton Christian Church, located at 703 West St.

Awards will include first-, second- and third-place honors for classes spanning from peewee categories to adults, and according to French, the group uses the event to recognize outstanding achievements and contributions from its membership while showing the local equestrian community "what they're all about."

To view year-round activities or for additional information regarding upcoming events, membership inquiries and volunteer opportunities, visit the Stockton Saddle Club on Facebook.



Showing off materials — and some impressive strength, too — at the Stockton Saddle Club's arena, are, from left, Vice President Amy French, board members Melissa Tompkins and Tom Rodgers, and Treasurer Anna Haselhuhn, as the group lifts some steel pipe ready to be welded into new arena fencing.



# Checking into the B&Bs of Webster County

## Innkeepers offer their homes to travelers



**By Sarah Bicknell**

SARAHB@MARSHFIELDMAIL.COM

**I**n Webster County, The Dickey House, built by Samuel N. Dickey, was a well-known bed-and-breakfast where guests stayed.

Although the mansion is no longer in service, visitors in the area can find other B&Bs for a weekend retreat or a getaway. One of them is the Blackberry Creek Retreat Bed and Breakfast in Rogersville.


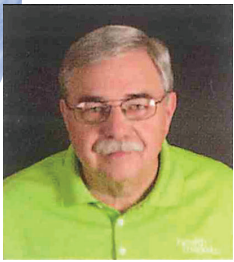
Continued on Page 10 ▶

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The retreat level of the Blackberry Creek Retreat Bed and Breakfast in Rogersville is a popular space for various events, such as bluegrass music concerts with The Finley River Boys.

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The Panther Valley room features outdoor-themed decor.



Mark and Dixie Dawson are the owners of the Blackberry Creek Retreat Bed and Breakfast.

"In this business, you never know who you're going to meet," said Mark Dawson, who operates the B&B with his wife, Dixie. "All sorts of people come through our doors from different places. That's why we enjoy it so much."

The Blackberry Creek provides lodging accommodations for family reunions, group retreats and other events. The Dawsons bought the property in 1992 and built a house the following year. The B&B facility was constructed in mid-2007.

"A lot of B&B owners live in their B&Bs, so having our house separate from the guest lodging is a bit unusual," Dawson said.

In the facility, there's a retreat level downstairs, which offers an open space for various activities.

"We built this room in hopes that it would, because we're in a rural area, lure people here to have family reunion or have a business meeting," Dawson said. "We've had some school meetings, church meetings and things like that."

The B&B level has four guest rooms with different themes. The Ozarks room includes several Ozarks music memorabilia and instruments. One of the rooms, Dixie's Garden, was remodeled in 2015 to better accommodate weekend events.

"It's named after Dixie, who loves to garden," Dawson said. "You'll find some of her things in the room, like gloves, dresses and garden decor. We've had a quilting club here for a weekend retreat, and they just loved the room."

On Spring Valley Loop in Marshfield is a house with a white fence and a lake. It's the home of Doug and Cheri Colson, owners of their B&B in Marshfield, The Swan Song Inn.

"During our travels, Doug and I tried to stay at different B&Bs," Colson said. "It was just cozy and an enjoyable experience for us. We decided to start one of our own, and we found the property in Marshfield on an auction. Everything else just fell into place."

There are five suites at The Swan Song Inn, which focus on a particular theme. Vinyl records decorate the walls of the Vintage Vinyl Suite, with painted silhouettes of The Beatles walking the crosswalk on Abbey Road.

"We really love the rock 'n' roll theme," Colson said. "We found the old records from a secondhand store. You'll notice in each of the rooms we have guitars in them. We encourage people to play them if they want. We even have a baby grand piano in the living room of our house, so guests can play that, too. If they want to dance or whatever, then they can."

In each suite, a journal sits on the nightstand or desk. Guests will sometimes chronicle their experiences on the pages. That's how Colson remembers them when they come through The Swan Song Inn.



An outside view of the Blackberry Creek Retreat building.

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Cheri and Doug Colson are the owners of The Swan Song Inn.

"I purposely keep a journal in the rooms," Colson said. "People can tell their stories and what they liked most about staying here. Maybe they say they found an old mom-and-pop store in Marshfield and it was really fun. I encourage people to visit Marshfield while they're staying at our place."

In addition to vacations and getaways, The Swan Song Inn has been used for other events, including business meetings, weddings and murder mysteries.

"We have a murder mystery event here, which is a lot of fun," Colson said. "We assign different characters to people, and they get to play that role. There's a journal I have in the Country Cottage Suite with guests who wrote in the pages as their characters. It was really funny to read

some of the entries."

As for what she enjoys about the B&B, Colson said, "The part I enjoy is getting to talk to people. Everyone has a story, and it's so interesting to hear them. Also, it's nice to know you're providing a place where people can just let their guard down and relax. They really do need that."

Dawson said they enjoy the B&B business for the connections they make.

"It's a lot of work, but we got into this because we wanted to build a comfortable environment for people," Dawson said. "They come in as strangers, but by the time they leave, we become friends with them."

For more information about these B&Bs, go to [swansonginn.com](http://swansonginn.com) or [blackberrycreekretreat.com](http://blackberrycreekretreat.com).



The Swan Song Inn in Marshfield provides a scenic atmosphere, with a beautiful lake and comfortable suites for guests.



The lake offers a quiet place where guests can view the ducks and the swans.



Guests will find guitars in the rooms to play if they want, or they can use the baby grand piano.

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**By Kathryn Skopec**

KATHRYNS@CEDARREPUBLICAN.COM

**S**tockton residents Kyle Elkins and his father, Dale, are no strangers to the art of hunting. The pair have traveled through the years hunting the likes of iguanas, deer and more.

But when the chance came for them to hunt colossal, 700-pound elk across the country, it was an opportunity they simply couldn't pass up.

Kyle, a Stockton High School sophomore, received this opportunity for the hunt of a lifetime in October 2020 when his father entered a raffle — and won — a trip to a 6,000-acre ranch on the southeastern Idaho and Wyoming border for a non-guided youth elk hunt from the membership-based organization Huntin' Fool.

"Originally, I wasn't sure how it was going to interfere with my cross country season, because I was running at the time," Kyle said, describing his reaction to winning. "It was exciting ... everything kind of planned out. It was really exciting when my dad told me we had won."

# The hunt of a lifetime

Kyle Elkins poses for a photo after hunting a bull elk. The youth hunting trip was a prize won from a raffle.

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Photos courtesy of Dale Elkins

Kyle Elkins, left, poses for a photo after hunting down this roughly 700-pound bull elk.

### Heading out

To prepare for the big trip, Kyle and Dale packed backpacks, body scope, warm clothes and their rifle.

"It took us all-in-all about a week to drive up there," Dale said. "We spent three days, four nights, at the lodge."

On the day of the hunt, Kyle said he woke up bright and early, went downstairs to have breakfast, fastened on warm clothes and then headed out to the hunting land on a Ranger and a four-wheeler with friends of the property owner, while Dale stayed behind.

Dale noted one of the property owners' kids — who was about the same age as Kyle — was helping lead Kyle to the elk.

"It was two young men going out after this 650-700-pound animal," Dale said.

Kyle said the group went out to the ranch's spotting hill, got set up with their gear and waited for sunrise and for the elk to begin moving.

"We get a sight on one — a pretty nice bull," Kyle said.

After that, Kyle and the group began to descend on the spotting hill to go over and up the next hill.

"So we got up the backside of this hill, got up to this place where we thought we could get a shot, got set up, and the elk caught a whiff of us," Kyle said. "I never ended up getting a clear shot of him. I never pulled a trigger on that one, and he ended up walking away."

In the meantime, Kyle said, another kid and the actual property hunter were nearby hunting for mule deer; when Kyle and his group went up the backside of the hill, the property owner and the kid were on the other side of the hill, and Kyle's group ended up spooking the mule deer.

"So everyone was a little bit irritated because we didn't get an elk and we scared off the mule deer," Kyle said.

Kyle's group ended up heading back to the lodge and getting lunch — or rather, "a second breakfast" — since it was about 10 in the morning.

They relaxed throughout the day, and Kyle went back out to hunt again later that day with the landowner and the landowner's friend.

### The second chance

Back at the spotting mound hill, Kyle and his group looked around for a while as dusk quickly approached.

"We finally found an elk," Kyle said.



Dale Elkins, left, and his son Kyle.



At left, Kyle Elkins stands at a spotting hill on a 6,000-acre ranch on the southeastern border of Idaho and Wyoming as he hunts a bull elk.

"We hiked down the spotting hill and through a valley, and then we ended up going to the backside of a different hill this time — about a mile-hike down."

At this spot, they set up camp, and about this time, the bull elk was lying down on a bed of grass, so there wasn't a clear shot.

"We waited, and I got down into a prone position with the rifle on the elk," Kyle said. "All we were to do was wait and see what he would do, whether it be

he'd get up or it becomes dark and we have to go home."

The waiting continued until the moment Kyle was waiting for finally happened: The bull elk stood up and stretched.

"But we couldn't take a shot because of the chance of hitting another bull that happened to be laying just beside him," Kyle said.

Once again, there was more waiting for the precise moment of opportunity

at the distance of about 470 yards, as Kyle was beginning to feel shaky — until finally, the bull elk stirred.

"He lifted his head up, and I pulled the trigger on him," Kyle said. "I hit him in the lungs, right smack in the middle of the body ... That shot definitely killed him, but I ended up loading another round in there and giving it another shot in a similar spot, and that one took him down to the ground."

The bull elk ended up being the same bull elk Kyle had seen earlier that morning.

"Once that bull went down to the ground, it was just a great time from there," Kyle said. "Everybody was excited. There were hugs, high fives, woo-hoos."

Kyle and his group went down to the bull elk, took a few pictures and then loaded the prize up to take it back to the lodge.

### In retrospect

As for the bull elk's aftermath, Kyle said he and his hunting group skinned the elk and had it loaded into a cooler; its meat will be eaten for the next couple of years by Kyle and his family, and a shoulder mount is being worked on for the elk, as well.

Dale said when Kyle came back to the lodge with the bull elk, he was "really proud of him."

The father-son duo had never been to Idaho and Wyoming to hunt before. Additionally, on the trip, they had been able to go on a little bit of sightseeing, as well as Kyle getting to golf at Bear Lake Golf Course in Idaho.

Additionally, Dale noted that at the time of the hunt, Kyle was experiencing significant pain in his left leg; as a cross country runner, Kyle's doctor orders called for him to take some time off. After the hunt, they learned Kyle had a stress fracture in his leg.

But Kyle toughed the stress fracture out, and according to him, the hunt was "a very awesome time."

"I think we were very fortunate to get the chance to go out there," Kyle said. "I enjoyed time not only with my father, but with all the nature and scenery and all the people that were there with me."

As for the future of their hunting, Dale said he and his son are trying to put together an antelope hunt in the next year or two after being inspired by the antelope they saw on their way through Wyoming.



# Nixa's plan for future parks written with land donation in mind

By RANCE BURGER

RANCEB@CCEADLINER.COM

Nixa stands poised to effectively double the land inventory that makes up its public park system when the Eoff Family Century Farm Park opens in the future.

In December 2020, the Nixa City Council saw the introduction of a bill that will allow for the donation of 54.7 acres of land off of State Route AA from Eoff Family Farms to the city of Nixa. Coupled with a prior donation of 50.98 acres on the south bank of the James River in 2017, and Nixa will have almost 106 acres of land that will be developed over time as park space.

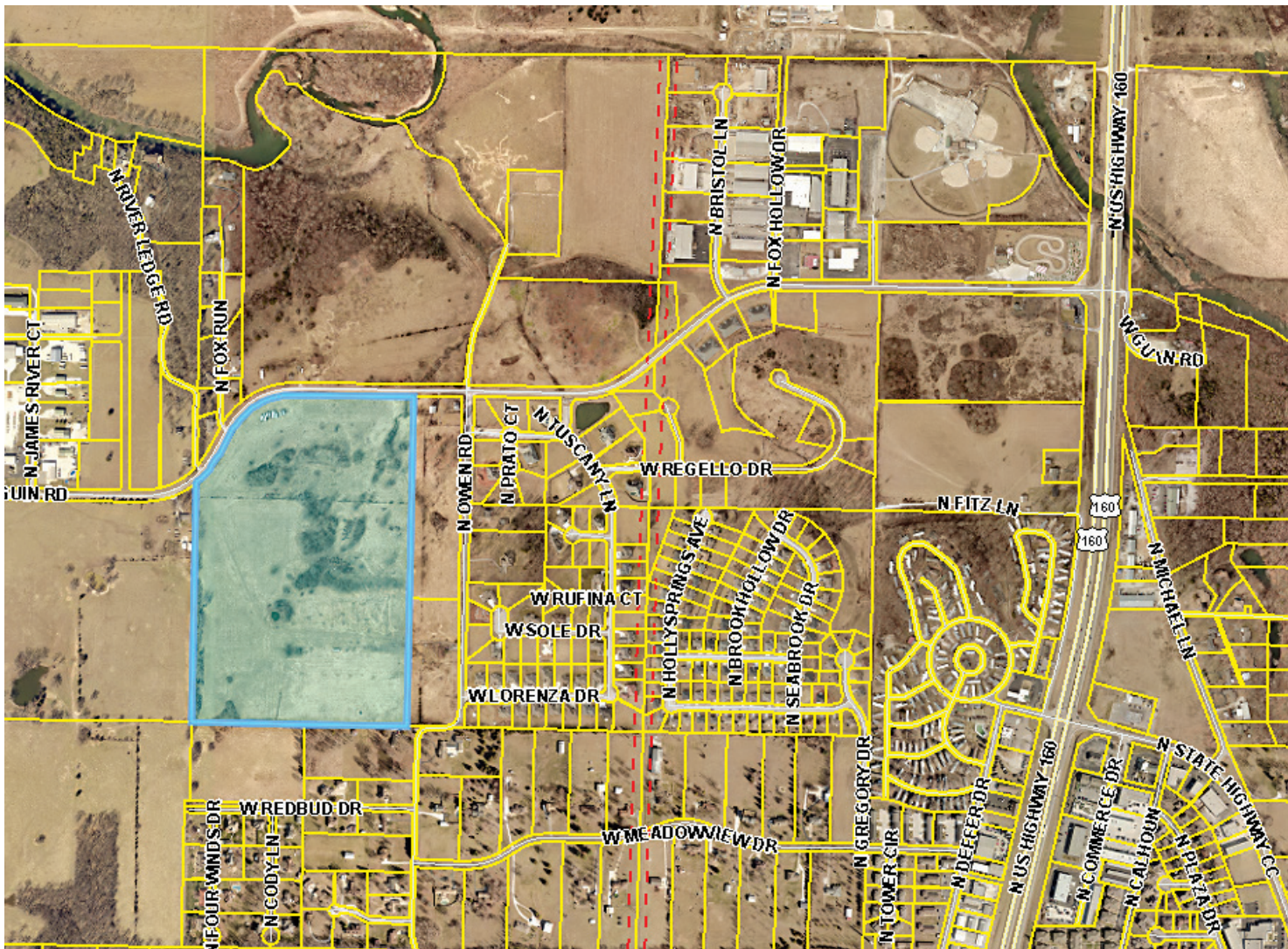
In 2017, Nixa Parks and Recreation received a donation of 50.98 acres from Eoff Family Farms LLC. Brothers Stephen and DuWayne Eoff donated the land from their grandfather's century farm as a way to preserve their family history in Nixa. The city officially acquired the land in 2018.

The land sits along State Route AA and includes pastures, hills, forest and the banks of the James River. It is on the far northern edge of Christian County, close to where Nixa's northern city limits meet up with Springfield.

On Nov. 23, the Nixa City Council received details on the plans for the southern half of the century farm park, which is better suited for some more active recreation amenities.

"This southern parcel provides a great opportunity for more active recreational amenities than our current property to the north. The southern portion of this property is relatively flat and would be great for baseball fields, multi-use fields and other amenities as illustrated in the new parks master plan," Nixa Director of Parks and Recreation Matt Crouse wrote in a memo to the City Council.

The idea is to have passive recreation,



Photos by Rance Burger

A map from the Christian County assessor's office shows the 54.7 acres of property on the south side of State Route AA that will be donated from the Eoff family to the city of Nixa for further establishment of the Eoff Family Century Farm Park.

such as walking trails and gardens, on the north side of State Route AA, and active recreation, such as playing fields, on the southern half.

Some of the Eoff family's connection to the land will be preserved through two buildings still standing on the property.

The agreement for the southern acreage donation calls for the city to agree to renovate a house and a barn on the property.

According to records from the Christian County assessor's office, the house on the south portion was built in 1927, and the barn was built in 1950.

Per the terms of the agreement, the Eoff family will receive documentation necessary to apply for some tax credits for their donation, and some of the Eoff family members will be granted free use of the Nixa X Center fitness facility for the next 100 years.



The north side of the Eoff Family Century Farm Park in Nixa will be developed with passive recreation features, such as picnic structures and trails.



Owen Road runs along the eastern edge of a Nixa century farm set to be developed as a public park.

Land to the south and west of an old barn off of State Route AA and Owen Road in Christian County is slated to one day house playing fields and park space as part of the Eoff Family Century Farm Park. The barn in the photograph, however, will remain on private property.

The Nixa City Council is negotiating the final term of the agreement, a road easement on the extreme southern portion of the property off of Owen Road as a final term of the deal.

**Part of the plan**

Consultant Jay Wohlschlaeger of SWT Design presented the highlights of the parks master plan to the Nixa City Council on July 13, and revisited the plan's final draft on Nov. 9. The plan lays out priorities and a vision for Nixa Parks and Recreation, the city's parks department arm, to grow in terms of the facilities it maintains and the programming it offers.

Over a span of about nine months, consultants conducted a survey, held meetings with Nixa stakeholders, performed an assessment of the Nixa community and its potential as a market for recreation, and looked at some statistical benchmarks

for facilities and services in communities that compare to Nixa's population size and demographics.

"Two of the key things that we pulled out of this report that transitioned into the recommendations were, 'What were the programs and amenities that we heard from the community that were important to be part of the city-provided parks and recreation system?' and sort of list out those priorities that we heard," Wohlschlaeger said.

"And then we also asked, 'What are the benefits? What is the goal of the parks and recreation department? What does the community see as that, as far as that group goal or benefit for parks and recreation?'"

The century farm park development coincides with calls for expanded recreation services. However, the development

will be done in several stages over time as Nixa budgets to fund the development. There isn't enough money in the city's budget to develop 100 acres of land into a public park in one shot.

The consultant recommended that Nixa could speed up the process of funding parks and public works projects through a 1/2-cent parks and stormwater sales tax. Such a tax would require voter approval. The Nixa City Council has not taken any action to ask voters to install a new sales tax at this time.

**History meets economy**

Agriculture in Christian County is a \$25 million business. Farms of all sizes contribute to the local economy, although 90 percent of farms in the county are small, with gross cash farm incomes of \$250,000 or less, similar to the national average.

To qualify for Missouri Century Farm status, the same family must have owned the farm for 100 consecutive years. The line of ownership from the original settler or buyer may be through children, grandchildren, siblings, and nephews or nieces, including through marriage or adoption. The modern farm must be at least 40 acres of the original land acquisition and make a financial contribution to the overall farm income.

Since Missouri began the century farm program in 1976, more than 8,000 farms have been recognized. In 2008, the Missouri Farm Bureau joined University of Missouri Extension and the MU College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources as a program sponsor.

To learn more about the Missouri Century Farm program, go to extension.missouri.edu/centuryfarm.



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# Sweets for any season



A specialty of Sweet Sensations, chocolate-covered strawberries sit atop a cake.

(Top photos) A wide variety of Hot Chocolate Bombs are available.

**By Linda Simmons**

NEWS@BOLIVARNEWS.COM

Sweet Sensations of Polk County is locally owned and operated by David and Jennifer Crews. What started out as a way to make a little extra money turned into a sweet business because of the love the community developed for their products, the couple says.

Jennifer Crews sat down with the Bolivar Herald-Free Press to talk about the business. The following interview has been edited for length and clarity.

**What led you to do this kind of service for the community?** Our daughter was looking for fundraising ideas a few years ago to help with the cost of going to California with National Fine Arts with the youth group she was involved in at the time. She needed to raise a few thousand dollars, so we decided to do a bake sale fundraiser. It was an instant hit. As time passed, she had more activities through church and school where she needed to have those funds coming in, so we simply continued baking. Three years later, and we haven't slowed down. We have always enjoyed baking, but never imagined where we would be at this moment.

**How has the current situation affected your business?** Honestly, it has gotten even busier. Once in a great while, we will have a cancellation due to COVID-19 and the quarantines, but that cancellation fills up pretty fast. God always replaces it with another order. The Hot Chocolate Bombs, they are definitely the "new hot item." After seeing them online, we thought they would be worth a try, and turns out they were really fun to make. This was perfect timing as we are coming into the cool winter days, too. But any time of the year, there is always someone ready to enjoy fresh baked cookies or needing a special birthday cake along with other sweets to fit the situation.

**What's it like to operate a home-based business?** Because we do this out of our home, we don't necessarily have 8-5 hours. We do put in a lot of hours each week but love it, so it really doesn't feel like "work." It is definitely not a "one-man show." Several hands go into



Jennifer Crews enjoys her "sweet" job and always has fun going to the events that feature local vendors, especially around the holidays.

Contributed photos

making sure each order that goes out is to the best of our ability. Baking has always been a passion, but I never believed this dream would become our reality.

**Any plans for a brick-and-mortar location?** No, we don't plan on having a storefront but do plan on remaining an "at home" bakery. This allows us to work around family schedules. We pride ourselves in being able to keep our

prices as low as possible, so we are quite content working from home. We have a Facebook page, Sweet Sensations, so we are easy to reach.

**Overall, how would you describe what drives you?** We love doing a lot of donations to various community outreaches. At the end of the day, it isn't about the almighty dollar. It's about being able to be that person, be that business,

that people know they can reach out to. We have faced a lot of struggles over the last few years, but God has shown His mercy and grace in our favor, and continues to do so.

**How can customers contact you?** There are a few different ways to reach us. You can contact us at jencrews3@gmail.com or by calling us at (417) 399-3144.



Payton Bowling, daughter of Sarah and Jaron Bowling, and Briar Staback, daughter of Jennifer and Phill Staback, both are pretty sure their birthday cakes were the sweetest.