

Country Neighbor

Agriculture and Rural Living Quarterly



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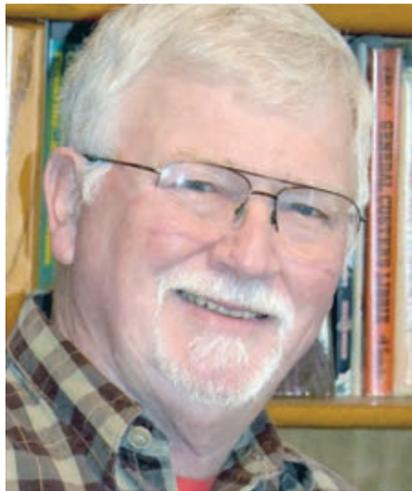
A new stillness on the prairie

The air on my tiny swatch of Buffalo Head Prairie is now uncommonly still in the early morning hours before songbirds begin their chorus.

No roosters crow at daybreak, no hungry calves bawl at the pasture gate.

It seems strange that nothing beckons me past my back door, save the scratching of my old dog at the garage door after he hears me stirring in the kitchen to make my coffee. He may keep me up late at night barking at unseen boogers creeping in the shadows outside the reach of our security lights, but he seldom awakens me at daybreak.

Blame it on my dairy farm youth, I still tend to fall out of bed at milking time; never mind that I've not held a milk bucket between my knees since the 1960s. I'm generally up before the chickens — or at least I was until a few weeks ago. I don't know when my



JIM HAMILTON

chickens arise today. I gave them all to a lady who wanted them more than I did and turned my chicken house into a garden tool shed.

I didn't really need a new tool shed, but I did need to discourage myself from getting a new batch of chickens. This just makes it a little harder to backtrack on my poultry dispersal. I never really needed chickens, anyway. I just got the first half-dozen for my granddaughter when she was a little and, but she outgrew them long before I did.

I even bought more — several times. But, after a few years I reckoned I had to look at the practical side of keeping more than 20 layers, spending a lot more than the proverbial "chicken feed" for scratch grains and crumbles, and never collecting a dime for the eggs unless someone insisted on paying. In short, chickens became costly and restrictive entertainment.

So, now the chickens are gone — gone just like the steers I've fattened for family freezers year after year. The final pair went to the processor late last summer, and I never replaced them. The longer they're gone the less I miss getting out twice a day to feed them, keep the water tank full and spray for flies in summer.

I'll probably miss them a lot when I get to the bottom of my freezer, but I won't miss the twice-monthly trips to the feed store that put the beef in that freezer.

Yeah, I still have a Missouri Cattlemen's Association sticker on my truck, but I'm not even a hobby cattle farmer today.

I'm just a used-to-be, and chances are that's all I'll ever be.

I'm slowly getting used to my early morning stillness on Buffalo Head Prairie.

Still, I'm not quite ready to put my corral panels or stock tanks on E-Bay, and those tools can come out of my former chicken house just as quickly as they went in.

Time will tell.

Copyright 2024, James E. Hamilton; email jhamilton000@centurytel.net. Jim Hamilton is a freelance writer and founding editor of Country Neighbor.

SLIM RANGLES

Home Country

That thick old hide shifted beneath me as I got my handhold in the bull rope. I watched his horns. Looking straight ahead in the chute.

So far, so good. You know, just like the jumper said as he passed the 26th floor.

And then you find yourself asking the big question: if I take a little more time here in the chute to get set on him, will he start chute fighting? Men have been killed by bulls who fight in the chute.

The guys who have had this bull before say he behaves himself pretty well. He's known to spin to the right about one full jump out of the chute, but I think I can handle that all right.

Okay, I'm as set as I'm going to be, so I nod my head and I hear the hinges of the gate squeak as they swing open and I'm climbing. Going up, and when I get up about as high as I should, I follow this horned monster down. Down to the right as he starts his spin. I loosened just a bit on that first spin, but I hooked that left spur and tried to make it back to where a bull rider belongs.

He just spun faster on the next jump and I tasted dirt without even having the knowledge I'd been bucked off. The bull fighters had him busy with them and it gave me time to get up and limp to the gate.

Let the next guy do it. Bull riding the way I do it works out pretty well. I'm safe here in my recliner at home watching the television. Have my dog in my lap and a cold one sitting on the stand next to me. My shirt isn't even dirty. I've done it the other way, a long time ago, and this is much better. And the best part is, my dog doesn't even know I bucked off.

Support professional bull riders. Heaven knows they can use the help. (877-940-4248.)

...

"This whole election process just doesn't work for me," Dud said, sipping his coffee. "There's no way we can tell

who is best for the job."

Doc, being the senior member of the Mule Barn truck stop's world dilemma think tank, looked kindly at Dud. "Well, haven't you been reading what each guy stands for, Dud?"

Dud shrugged. "Sure. But I firmly believe they only tell you what you want to hear. They're the best, and the other guy is going to take you straight to ruined aspirations."

"Ruined aspirations?" piped up Steve, the cowboy with the owlish look of pure bowlegged intellectualism. "That's why I've always thought we need a contest. A real contest. Have them put their aspirations where they'll do the most good."

"A contest?"

"Bull riding," said Steve, nodding sagely. "Just put them on bulls and the first one to fall off loses."

"But what does bull riding have to do with taxes and warfare and education and all that stuff?" asked Doc.

"Nothing at all," said Steve, "but you can bet it will separate the serious candidates from the oh-what-the-heck guys."

"I like what I'm hearing here," said Dud, with a grin. "Only problem is, if they ride bulls, one of them might get killed."

Steve grinned, "Simplifies that ol' selection process, doesn't it?"

This year, vote for biodegradable candidates. And insist they prove it first.

...

Life in a small town means everybody knows what's going on, good or bad. Just take what happened to Dud the other day.

It was trash day, and the trash barrels were on the street waiting to be emptied into the weekly truck. Dudley Campbell was no different from his neighbors, having his cans at the curbside ready for a trip to the dump. His wife, Anita, had driven to the city to do some shopping, so Dud was home alone.

And probably that's why he felt se-

cure in going through his own garbage. First, he spread a tarp out on the ground next to the cans and then dove in. He resembled a badger trying to dig up a squirrel as he went lower and lower in the garbage can and the pile on the tarp grew larger.

Mrs. Miller lived just across the street from Dud, and was watching the whole operation. She made a horrified phone call across town to Mamie Dilworth, who then passed it along to Windy Wilson. Windy, she knew, was a man of action.

He'd know what to do.

And he did. The bags of groceries were put on Dud's porch when he wasn't looking. The used-but-clean clothing for both Dud and Anita were laid on the porch swing.

Anita discovered them when she got home and was the one who informed her husband of the porch treasure.

At supper that evening, Anita asked Dud if he'd done anything to warrant this largesse. I mean, Anita had been clothes shopping all day, so she knew it wasn't her.

And Dud said, "Hon, the only thing I did differently today was to find that little bronze horse statue I use for a paperweight. I had accidentally tossed it in the trash."

Brought to you by the bronze horse statues on Ebay, if you like really fancy stuff. Expensive, but they don't eat much.

...

You have to hand it to Windy. When Alphonse "Windy" Wilson chooses to speak, it is a bombastic sampling of creativity. Windy has yet to find a word he can't make better through his own unique methods.

Well, what got him fired up the other day was a meeting of the ladies of the garden club down at the nursery. Windy's been helping Dewey with his manure business on the one day a week he spends helping others. Today wasn't a helper day, but he couldn't pass up the audience.

They hadn't gotten through old business when Windy stood, smiled, and spoke.

"Dear ladies," he said, "what an operatune moment this is, finding you all coagulated here in an effort to beatify the yards of our fair town. And what, you may ask, brings me to this conflagration? It's the latest thing in gardening. Our chairman of the board refers to it as 'cow pasture tea' and it nutritionalizes plants right down to bedrock. As Dewey says, the only way to improve on cow manure is to liquidize it. Well, he hasn't said it yet, but he will.

"Now what exactly is cow pasture tea you're undoubtedly asking yourselves at this moment. It's a varietal combination of composted cow manure, water, and some acid we put in there to matriculate it properly into the life-giving succulence we require. Then we put it in a drum and pull the drum behind a tractor-like conveyance that looks an awful lot like an old riding lawn mower. We spray this on your lawn, and in ninjasseconds, this liquor of life perambulates deep into the rootiness of the grass and makes it want to grow."

He smiled at the group and noticed a lot of them were giggling in appreciation of his talk. He puffed up and continued.

"And what does the Dewey Decker Manure Combine charge for this in-compartible service? A mere \$10 for an average-sized lawn. Think about that, ladies. Ten dollars. Twenty fifty-cent pieces. Why you'd spend more than that on a wedding dress or a trip to the Bermudas!"

A number of the ladies clapped at that, thinking that might satisfy him, and it did. He smiled and sat.

He could get used to this corporate life. Maybe it wasn't too late to climb the ladder to success.

Make your own liquid fertilizer for free by going to [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com) and then getting your hands dirty. You're welcome.



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Bolivar's Farmer's Market

A Place for Education, Love, and Community



"WE'VE ALWAYS BEEN A FAMILY...WE SIT AND TALK, WE BUY FROM EACH OTHER, WE BARTER. IT'S A COMMITMENT AND WE WOULD NOT DO IT IF WE DID NOT LOVE IT."

A beautiful day to browse Bolivar's year-round farmer's market. BOLIVAR HERALD -FREE PRESS PHOTO BY LINDA SIMMONS

By Nicole Emmons
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Bolivar has the distinction of having Missouri's first year-round farmer's market which has been a staple in the community for 22 years. Though some things have changed, the concepts are the same: teach people about healthy life choices, show love and generosity, and create connections.

Today's market is the passion of C.C. Gulick, who took it on as a labor of love after her husband, Jim, passed six years ago. Since then, the market has changed some but still maintains the foundation of a family atmosphere that strives to be more than simply a place to conduct commerce.

The Bolivar Herald-Free Press recently sat with Gulick and fellow market vendor, Julie Hosman, to discuss what was, what is, and what will be for Bolivar's market and what they hope they can contribute to the community.

"She has a heart of gold," Hosman says of Gulick, "She's a connector, she knows everybody!" There is not much debating this statement as many are familiar with the Gulick name and its connection to serving others.

A desire to be helpful is the foundation for the farmer's market. It started at the Gulick's home, just a few miles outside the city. There, people came to pick berries from their enormous patches, and vendors set up shop inside the large garage to sell their goods. They had annual open houses, inviting the community to buy, sell, and eat, with Gulick providing homemade country fare such as biscuits and gravy or beans with cornbread. The events provided means to bring the folks together, with around 500 showing for some of the open houses.

One of the vendors who sold at the Gulick dwelling during the open house events was John Lower, who grew his flowers and peddled them to willing patrons visiting the residence. It didn't take long for Jim Gulick and Lower to join forces with Alice McBee to move the market to town and on April 7, 2002, the Bolivar Famer's Market came to be. It has been to several venues, initially at the North Ward Museum, then moving to the Killingsworth Fire Station, before calling the COM parking lot home. Yet, the concepts and ideals of the market were constant - a community and family-based area to learn, shop, and interact with other people.

For Gulick, preserving her husband's legacy drives her to keep the market going. The duo were married for 38 years before Jim passed away in a tragic auto

accident six years ago. However, even long before the accident, he was forced to persevere through chronic pain but never lost his spirit for reaching out to those who needed help. It is important to Gulick that she keeps to Jim's initial concepts of being a good servant to others while coming to terms with a changing market. Hosman notes Gulick's struggle with modifying the market, "It's not Jim leaving, it's his dream coming full circle. I feel sometimes when the market kinda changes she feels, 'I'm losing that part of my husband.'" Gulick admits it's hard accepting alterations to the market since it's her way of holding on to, and honoring, Jim's generous spirit.

When it's said the market is not simply a place to sell one's goods, that is not hyperbole. Gulick explains her husband's guidelines for joining as a vendor, "Remember, don't come and set up and leave when you take down. Look around at your neighbors. We all take down, we pick up our trash, we do everything. We don't show up at the market, sell your stuff, then leave." It may seem strange to be responsible for cleaning up for another dealer, yet some were elderly or solo women with kids and the desire was to have a colony-type atmosphere where no one felt alone.

Because of this one-for-all mindset, sellers don't hesitate to bring their families to market and there is an obvious sense of pride in the close-knit relationships amongst all the merchants. Gulick elaborates, "We've always been a family." Hosman agrees, "We sit and talk, we buy from each other, we barter. It's a commitment and we would not do it if we did not love it." Gulick states, "Our vendors bring their families. A vendor's 9-10 year old comes to the market and she can leave the market and leave him right there, and he runs that booth for her." Keeping a watchful eye on the kids, and allowing the parents to step back, teaches the children some responsibilities and skills while providing them security and safety among those they trust. No doubt, Jim would have approved.

Providing life skills to the market munchkins is important. However, Hosman and Gulick are passionate about teaching the general public about the importance of food quality and the differences between homegrown and market chains. As Hosman claims, "So many people just go to a store and they're mindless when they shop, [but] you have these people at the market who are so meticulous." She laments how cautious and precise the market vendors are, from the soils used by the vegetable producers to the flours used by the bread makers. Gulick adds, "We need to educate these kids that you can eat the bread like [Hosman] has, you can eat jelly. You don't have to

have a candy bar and you don't have to have junk food all the time. We can work with them and teach them."

To educate, the market is finding ways to expand to more people by using technology and simplifying the shopping experience. "We have a ticket that you start at one market and you pay at the very end, you don't have to pay each vendor," Gulick explains. One can also buy gift cards for the market and they take credit or debit cards as forms of payment.

Gulick also created a benefit for those on EBT to help stretch the funds further and provide healthy food. She explains how it works, "We pay people to come to market and spend food stamps. Every time they come to market, we double [the amount they spend]. So, you buy \$25 on your food stamps, I'm going to give you \$25. Now, with the money I give you, you have to use it on fruits and vegetables. But with your food stamp money, you can buy bread, milk, eggs, or meat."

Variety is the spice of life, just as at the farmer's market. One can purchase meats of all types - from lamb to beef, pork to poultry. There are bakers with savory breads or sweet treats to satisfy any pallet. After getting a loaf of bread, head to Gulick's booth to get homemade jelly to go with it. Crafters are available for wonderful gift ideas. Homemade soap is sold too. Plants, both indoor and outdoor, are available for purchase as are fresh milk and eggs. If you would buy it at a grocery store, you can probably find it at the farmers market. Some vendors even offer bundle deals to save money if buying in bulk. Food trucks are known to make appearances for the hungry shopper and tables are arranged so one can eat, relax, or visit with fellow bargain hunters.

They want to expand but to do this, they need a permanent facility, something they have been praying for. As Hosman iterates, "We would love to have a building that had a commercial kitchen where I could have classes, make it like a fun thing. It's coming, I just don't know where it's at right now." Getting a permanent location is the next step on the market's journey, bringing Jim's vision to a complete full circle. It would be a dream for Gulick, who denotes, "I want Bolivar to realize we could have a beautiful farmer's market. We have a family who's looking for a home, and we have looked and looked and looked. The passions there." With such a passion, certainly, something permanent will come their way, but for now, the market can be found at Southern Hills Baptist Church every Saturday morning and Tuesday evening. Come to the market and talk to Gulick if you want to join the market family, they will accept you with open arms.

"JUST DIVE IN"

The Mills loves everything sourdough



Freshly baked white chocolate macadamia cookies made with fresh milled spelt and einkorn, another yummy creation made and enjoyed by the Mills family.

By Alana Hindman

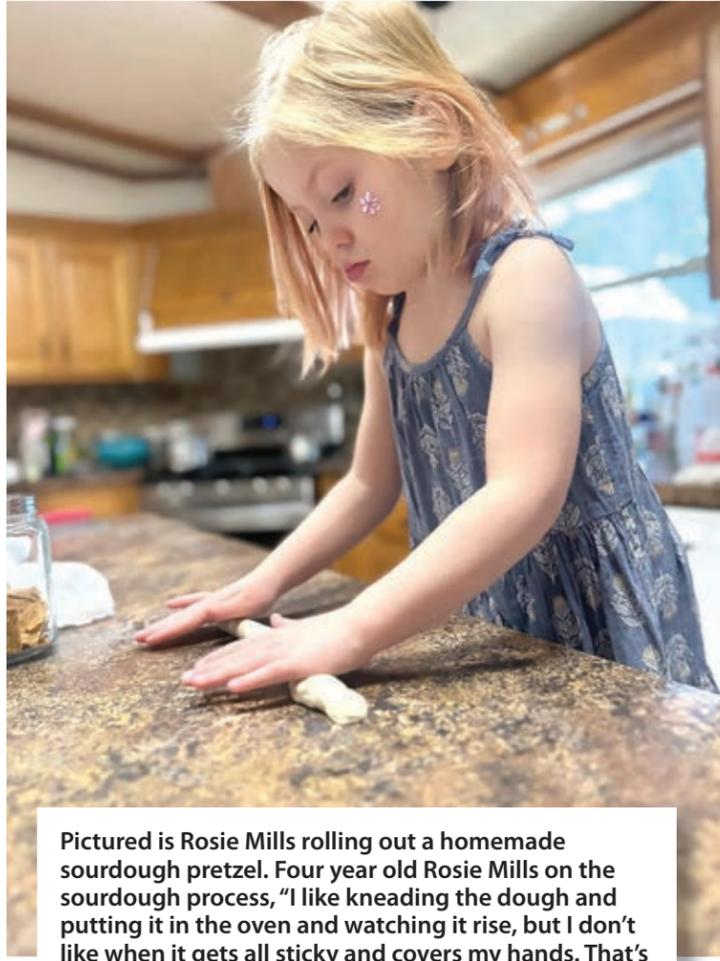
Anjuli Mills and her family from Greene County love reaping the benefits of homemade, from-scratch recipes. They have been perfecting their sourdough baking process over the last four years.

"Food from scratch not only tastes far better than their commercial counterparts, but I feel more confident in consuming foods from scratch because I know each ingredient used to create our whole food is the freshest and highest quality possible," said Mills.

She added, "I am in control, and everything I make is without preservatives or fillers, and absolutely no harmful or toxic ingredients like dyes. I appreciate that my family is being fed food with a short list of ingredients I can actually pronounce."

Although Mills jokingly called the sourdough process a beast, she added that it doesn't have to be scary. Her sourdough journey has been self-taught through lots of trial and error and experimental flops, failures, and successes.

"It's been a fun process to experiment with the different kinds of wheat berries and flours and learn tips and tricks. Like I discovered excessive stretch and folds actually aren't necessary in sourdough which is made out



Pictured is Rosie Mills rolling out a homemade sourdough pretzel. Four year old Rosie Mills on the sourdough process, "I like kneading the dough and putting it in the oven and watching it rise, but I don't like when it gets all sticky and covers my hands. That's the very worst part, ick!" CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

to be so much more complicated than it needs to be," revealed Mills.

While describing her process, she said, "It's quite simple, really. Feed your starter, let it double. I do this by creating an offshoot of my starter called a leaven, which I measure precisely how much total starter I will need... I'll then feed my mother starter and place him back in the fridge. His name is Lazarus."

About 4 hours into the leaven rising, she measures out wheat berries. The Mills family indeed mills their own flour, which comes next in this process. Once the milled flour is mixed with the appropriate amount of water, it's allowed to autolyze.

"This is an important step for fresh milled flour, especially to allow the flour to absorb the liquid and the bran and germ to soften," said Mills. She will then mix the readied

leaven starter with all the dough ingredients. She lets the dough sit for about 35-45 minutes.

Then, she kneads the dough and covers the bowl with a disposable shower cap to ferment for about 8-10 hours, depending on temperatures and humidity levels. Once it's fermented, it's turned out onto a lightly floured work surface, pre-shaped into a boule, and left to bench rest for about twenty minutes.

The last few steps are to laminate or pull the dough out flat to shape. She scoops it up with a bench scraper and places it seam-side up in a floured banneton. Then she covers it to let it sit for another hour or so.

"Preheat the oven to 475, with a large ceramic coated cast iron, to preheat. Turn out from the banneton and score the top to allow control of escaping steam, then take the boule and place gently inside the very hot Dutch oven, replace lid, and bake about 25-30 mins. Take off the lid and bake for another 15-20 minutes until the top is browned to your liking. Remove from oven, take out of Dutch oven, and turn out on a cooling rack for at least two hours or longer to cool before cutting it open," said Mills.

She encouraged those trying the sourdough process. "Just don't give up. You can do it. Your family's health is worth it. Have fun, and don't allow mistakes to be discouraging. Bake it even if it looks like a flop. Sometimes you'll be super surprised...even "ugly" bread tastes amazing. Don't overthink the process and remember that over proofed dough makes GREAT focaccia."

Mills suggested finding someone who can share a starter and just start baking.

"Sourdough and fresh flour baking is a ton of fun, and the health benefits are unmatched to anything you can find on the shelf. It really doesn't have to be intimidating and hard. Just dive in," Mills concluded.



Maple oat sourdough sandwich loaves fresh out the oven.



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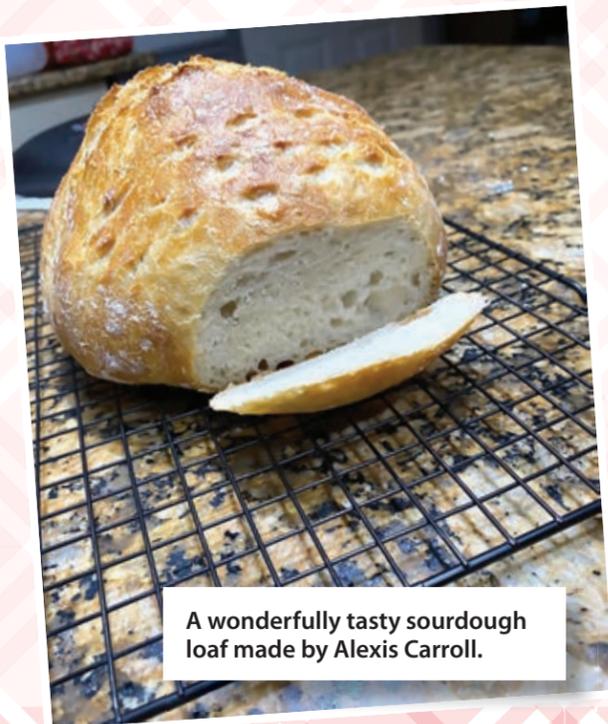
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Stockton local joins the Sourdough bread craze

By Alana Hindman

Anyone perusing social media sites has probably noticed that the making of sourdough bread has grown in popularity again, especially in Cedar County and beyond.

Meet Alexis Carroll, a Stockton local who embarked on a unique bread-making journey about a year ago. Recently, she delved into the world of sourdough, a skill she acquired through self-teaching and a little guidance from TikTok videos.



A wonderfully tasty sourdough loaf made by Alexis Carroll.

"I enjoy creating my own food from scratch because it makes me feel empowered that I can create something from nothing and know it doesn't have all the added chemicals, artificial dyes, and preservatives in it. Also knowing that my kids enjoy the foods I make, makes it even better," said Carroll.

For Alexis, every sourdough loaf is a new lesson, a testament to her determination to perfect her craft. The most challenging part for her has been maintaining the starter at the right hydration point, a crucial factor that influences the dough's outcome.

From what she has learned, Carroll shared, "My tip for the sourdough loaves is that patience is key. I have tried the same-day loaves, and I have done the ones where they sit all night long. I feel, in my experience, that the longer the waiting period, the better the loaf turns out. It's easy to want to rush it, but I have found with this type of bread that you have to be patient. Also, don't be afraid to try different recipes until you find one you like. I went through several different recipes until I came across one that worked for me."

Her sourdough baking process starts by adding all the ingredients together to create the dough.

"I let it sit for a couple of hours and then do



Alexis Carroll's homemade sourdough loaf with cheddar and jalapeño fillers. CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

about three to four stretches and folds every thirty minutes. Then, the dough sits overnight. In the morning, I stretch it out, add my fillings if I want any, and roll it up. Let it sit for another hour, and then it is ready to bake," she revealed. Some fillings she has used are jalapeno and cheddar, as well as cinnamon with brown sugar.

Receiving a dehydrated starter as a Christmas gift prompted her to try the from-scratch sourdough process.

"I was very intimidated at first, but once I got started, it wasn't that bad. Don't be afraid to jump in, even if you are a little scared. You may fail, but every loaf is a new beginning to try again," concluded Carroll.

Apply for MU Extension Century Farm program by May 1

If your farm has been in your family since Dec. 31, 1924, you can apply to have it recognized as a Missouri Century Farm.

To qualify, 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 present-day farm must consist of at least 40 acres of the original land acquisition and farming on the land must make financial contribution to a family's overall farm income.

A \$140 fee covers processing costs, one certificate, a booklet and one two-sided, 2-foot by 2-foot metal sign, for approved applications. The staff of the Christian County MU Extension Office presents these items with a yearly recognition ceremony.

Details and online application are at <http://extension.missouri.edu/programs/century-farms>. The deadline to apply is May 1.

University of Missouri Extension, the MU College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources, and the Missouri Farm Bureau sponsor the Missouri Century Farm program.

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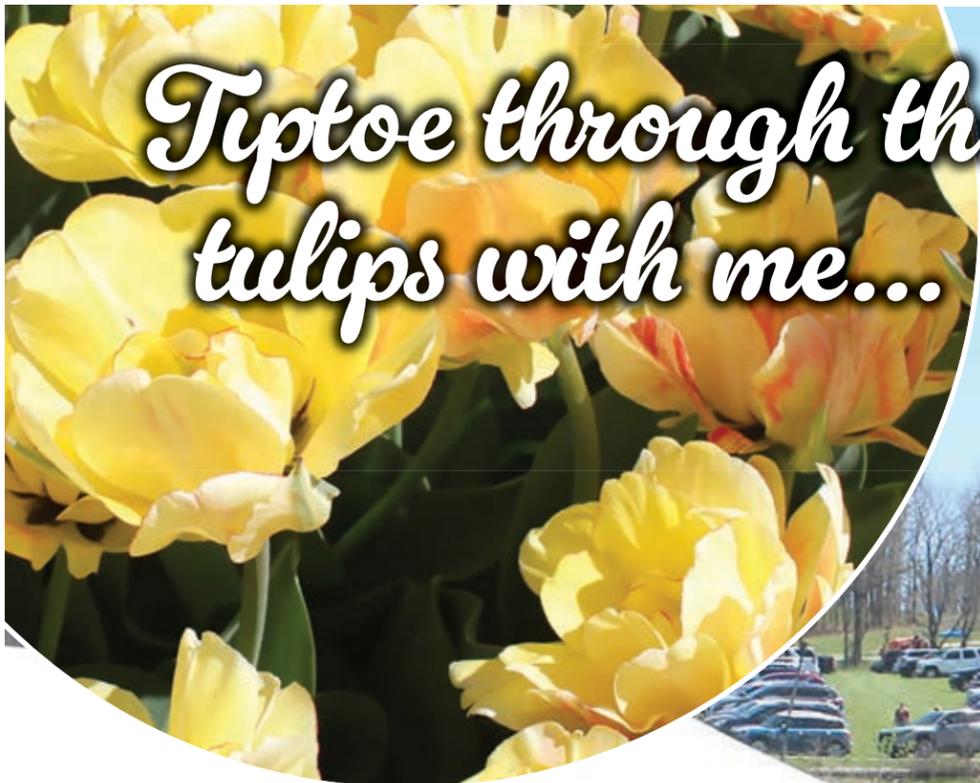
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Jeremy McCarthy





Tiptoe through the tulips with me...

...at Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds



The Tulip Festival at Baker Creek Seed Store attracts thousands of visitors who come to see the multiple colors of tulips and other spring bloomers. BUFFALO REFLEX PHOTOS BY JOY BEAMER

By Joy Beamer
joyretires@gmail.com

The Tulip Festival at Baker Creek Seed Store, near Mansfield, attracts thousands of visitors who travel to see the multiple colors of tulips and other spring bloomers. I heard at least five languages during the spring tulip festival and saw humans from newborns to the 90s.

A parking pass was required, and it was pre-purchased for attendance. The company runs out of parking places, so reservations are required. Last year, when I came to shop for my seeds, it was a different experience. Ten of us walked around a quaint, quiet, wholesome little community with less than 50 people on the property.

The flowering courtyard and store in downtown Baker Creek were swarmed with gardeners of all expertise levels. One 30-something mother counted out 75 varieties of seed packs, a dedicated gardener and canning expert. Next in line was a set of col-

lege girls debating which two packets they wanted to grow on their balcony. Yet, a third set of people were only there for the food trucks and famous cinnamon rolls from the Baker Creek bakery.

Music set a happy mood for the festival participants. Music was in every corner of the property, on porches, grass and several stage areas.

Baker Creek grounds

In the valley and at the tulip festival's entrance were food trucks and long white tents full of artisan crafts, plants and gardening wonders.

Children enjoyed running between the flower beds in the courtyard with various pansies. Many wagons, strollers, wheelchairs, and electric scooters dotted the paths. A man on a Segway happily rolled up and down the hill from the main street to the vendors.

Couples and families would find a space on the luscious grass to take a second breath and enjoy the spring atmosphere. A colossal sand pile filled with treasures was beside a picnic area for the

little ones to run off energy and come home with a trinket.

Every corner of the property has a flowering surprise. A sea of daffodil varieties stood tall and proud. Greenhouses were scattered beyond the festival area, growing varieties to make and send seeds worldwide.

Spring Planting Festival

The next festival is from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on May 12 and 13. Admission is free, but parking is \$15 per car and must be purchased before the event because there is limited parking.

Baker Creek invites musicians to enter the old-time music contest. They will have expert speakers, greenhouse and garden tours, vendors and food for all as the festival celebrates heirloom gardening in Missouri.

History and mission

Two goals are prevalent at Baker Creek: maintaining a sustainable food supply for all and

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At the recent Tulip Festival, the courtyard and store in downtown Baker Creek were swarmed with gardeners of all expertise levels.



Music can be found around every corner at the festivals, with several stage areas. Jammers sat on porches picking and grinning while groups set up on stage and played sets ranging from country to bluegrass music.



All walks of life strolled Main Street and the vendor tents in the valley. Vendors offered soaps, jams and lotions. In addition, artisans sold their hand-crafted items.

maintaining heirloom varieties for future generations.

They want growers to save their own seed and believe it is the right of the growers. They encourage seed savers to share and trade seeds to preserve seed diversity. Baker Creek is a philanthropic organization that works with non-profit organizations. They donate a portion of their profits to people abroad and in the U.S. Those donations help with emergency aid, sustainable development and education. Baker Creek provides free seeds to education groups each year, too.

Baker Creek is the largest provider of 19th-century

heirloom seeds from Europe and China. Jere Gettle, founder of Baker Creek Heirloom Seed Co., began this venture in 1998 as a hobby. The growth and passion have not stopped, and now it is North America's largest heirloom seed company. A second store is located in Petaluma, Calif.

Rare Seed Catalog

The Baker Creek family publishes a seed catalog that includes garden favorites and rare heirloom seeds. The photos of the produce are professional and look like they could be picked up off the page and eaten.

I've ordered seeds from their catalog for years for my porch gardening. The service is fast and friendly. You can request a free catalog by going to the website www.rareseeds.com.

The seeds are also available online in over 1,200 varieties. Flowers and produce come from heirloom seeds passed down for generations. The packets of seeds have free shipping for orders in the United States.

If you have read about or seen a unique vegetable, herb, or flower, Baker Creek probably preserves its seeds: quinoa seeds, dragon fruit seeds, moonflower seeds or toothache plant seeds.

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Folk Lure Exchange, A NEW OZARKS ALIVE EVENT SERIES, TO BRING REGIONAL LORE TO LIFE



The Kindall Store was established in 1924 where Route Z and Olga Road meet in Forland. For 100 years, the store has brought the community together for events, and will continue to do so with the first in the Ozarks Alive Folk Lure Exchange series. CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

By Kaitlyn McConnell
kaitlyn@ozarksalive.com

Local history and culture will come to life in a new way in 2024 through Ozarks Alive's Folk Lure Exchange, an event series that explores popular topics related to the region's past – and how they integrate with the present.

“People want to connect with the region on a deeper level, and learn more about its history. It's also important to understand how that legacy connects to the contemporary Ozarks,” says Kaitlyn McConnell, founder of Ozarks Alive, a cultural preservation project that documents the region's history through stories, events and publications.

“It's my intention that these events will provide context, and connect the dots on topics that have influenced our past but also impact us now.”

This year's topics include:

April 19: A Legacy of Old-Time Ozarks Music

In this inaugural Folk Lure Exchange, come learn about and hear Ozarks music — primarily focused on old-time fiddle tunes — with musician David Scrivner and other guests. The evening also features information about local legacy musical names, and how we today can be part of the region's musical journey through recordings as well as the region's vibrant old-time music parties, jam sessions and events. Tickets have already sold out!

June 21: The Art of Foraging

Foraging is trendy today, but it's always been relevant in the Ozarks. The highlight of this event is foraging expert Rachael West, owner of Eating the Ozarks, who

The store and lawn will fill April 19 for Ozarks music, primarily focused on old-time fiddle tunes with musician David Scrivner and other guests.

will share more about this topic and common items to forage for in summer months. If weather permits, guests will also go on a short foraging walk on the property. Tickets go on sale soon. Watch ozarksalive.com for updates!

August 23: Notable Ozarks Women

The Ozarks has been home to many famous women with a foundation in the region. Ozarks Alive's Kaitlyn McConnell will share the stories of several who have made a significant impact on the world, some of whom have legacies that continue today. Tickets go on sale soon.

October 25: Ozarks Superstitions, Legends and Lore

In this spooky season, come learn about local legends, ghost stories and superstitions that have been part of the region's history for generations. Tickets go on sale soon.

Folk Lure Exchange events are limited to just 50 people, providing an intimate experience at a unique venue: The Kindall Store, a rural Ozarks stop that dates to the 1920s.

After a period of closure, the store reopened in 2023 to offer a step-back-in-time experience

through made-to-order sandwiches, pastries, old-fashioned goods and other wares. During the event, food and other goods will be available for purchase. Ozarks Alive has chronicled the story of the store; to read it, click [here](#).

“The Kindall Store is part of the experience,” says McConnell. “About half an hour from Springfield, the drive allows attendees to really immerse themselves in the surroundings before they even arrive for the event. I'm grateful to the Kindall Store for sponsoring this series.”

All events begin at 7 p.m. and cost \$12.50 to attend. Doors will open at 6 p.m.

OZARKS
ALIVE!



MO BEEF DAYS OFFERS OZARK MOUNTAIN DAREDEVILS CONCERT



Missouri's signature celebration of the state's beef industry, Missouri Beef Days, returns even bigger and better in 2024. The weeklong festival will conclude with a special When It Shines farewell tour concert in Bolivar on May 11 by The Ozark Mountain Daredevils. Tickets on sale at missouribeefdays.com. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

BOLIVAR, MO – Missouri's signature family festival combining fun activities with a celebration of the state's beef industry – Missouri Beef Days – returns to Bolivar May 4-11, 2024, with two full weekends of events including a concert by The Ozark Mountain Daredevils. Missouri Prime is this year's Missouri Beef Days' Exclusive Premier Sponsor.

Missouri Beef Days' full slate of events includes a two-night rodeo and market, a street festival with a corn hole tournament and beef cook-off, parade, ag expo, celebrity chef showdown, cowboy church with special guest LeAnn Hart, beef samplings, art show, a "Boots & Bling" banquet featuring the Missouri Cattleman of the Year awards with a scholarship auction, and much more. The third annual Missouri Beef Days continues the festival's ongoing mission

to educate, appreciate, and celebrate the beef and overall agriculture industry and all involved. Many of the events are free to the public, while others require tickets.

"This is our third year for Missouri Beef Days, and it will be the best yet," board president Matt Heneberg noted. "There will be so much for people to come and enjoy, whether they are connected to the beef industry or are just looking for a good time."

Rounding out the fun is a special When It Shines farewell tour concert by The Ozark Mountain Daredevils on Saturday, May 11, presented by Dusty Ross, Neighborhood Real Estate. Brian Lumley and Red Dirt Underground will also appear.

For a complete calendar of events and to purchase tickets, visit www.missouribeefdays.com or email info@missouribeefdays.com.

Heritage Tractor partners with OTC

Heritage Tractor, a local John Deere dealership, has joined forces with Ozarks Technical Community College (OTC) to aid in the education of diesel mechanics in the region. Heritage Tractor's five-year commitment to OTC's Diesel Technology Program includes financial support for programming and scholarships.

The global population is on track to hit 9 billion by 2050. This growth demands extensive urban development and a surge in agricultural production. Now, more than ever, there is a crucial need to maintain and repair agricultural and construction equipment to meet the demands of this growing world population.

"We are proud to be a small part of the large chain it takes to feed and fuel the world, and have always desired to develop and invest in our collective future," said Derick McGhee, Heritage Tractor's director of business development. "OTC is a top-notch and longstanding pillar in the Springfield area. The college's proximity to our locations makes this partnership a no-brainer."

"Heritage Tractor's investment in our diesel technology program helps the college update our equipment so our graduates are familiar with the latest tools they will use in the workplace," said Dr. Hal Higdon, OTC chancellor. "Plus, a portion of their donation will fund scholarships and the student emergency fund, which help to smooth out the rough spots in life that can derail a student's progress toward graduation."

In addition, Heritage Tractor worked with the team at OTC to help the school earn the designation of John Deere Dealer Partner School, which provides additional John Deere-specific tools and training to students within the diesel technology pathway.

With the ever-changing technology present in new equipment and the potential for remote machine diagnosis and repair, these additional training resources become even more important. The knowledge that students will gain with OTC as a John Deere Dealer Partner School will also make students' transition into the workforce much easier.

"It's important to us to provide highly capable technicians who keep our customers running, but we also have a desire to provide fulfilling, well-paid career opportunities for our communities," McGhee said.

To learn more about the program, visit HeritageTractor.com/Dealer-Partner-Schools.

The OTC Richwood Valley Campus is in Nixa. For more information, visit richwoodvalley.otc.edu.



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Graham family, a bunch of chicken tenders

The Graham family in front of the chicken coop mansion. From left: Afton, Casey, Bryson, and Asia Graham.

By Alana Hindman

Afton and Casey Graham are Stockton locals who started raising chickens in 2020 when egg prices reached astronomical numbers.

"The main benefit for me was the egg supply...and I thought it would benefit our family. I also love the taste of farm fresh eggs," shared Graham.

The Graham family jokingly calls themselves "chicken tenders." Together, they care for four roosters and twenty-three hens. The coop family consists of Silkies, Frizzles, Polish, Bantam Easter Eggers, Easter Eggers, ISA Brown, Barnyard mix, Austra White, and a Mille De Fleur.

"We have names for our special chickens. Delsie is named after a lady I took care of who has since passed away. Laverne is named after Casey's late grandmother. It was only appropriate since she had a lot of grey hair. Once we get a feel for their personality, we will name them after people we know," said Graham, laughing.

Delsie is their Mille De Fleur, the smallest and the

attention seeker.

Graham said, "Delsie rules the roost. We also have a rooster that seems to have some anger issues that we have to address on occasion."

The family has several Bantams, which are like miniature chickens. Bantams are perfect for smaller backyards; two bantams can easily fit into the space required for one standard chicken. Graham shared that she always uses two bantam eggs instead of a standard egg because of the size.

What's involved with raising chickens?

Graham explained, "Although we have an amazing coop for our chickens, it still has to be cleaned a lot. Chickens are just messy. They require a lot more cleaning than I expected. I haven't found a flower they won't eat. They love to dig in my rocks. We are



Delsie gets warm in her sweet winter hat. She is the most spoiled chic of the bunch.

filling holes in our backyard all the time. We feed them in the mornings, which they never think is enough."

The chicken feed is provided by a local mill, which is something the Grams love.

"With the research we've done, we feel it's good to know where it's made and the ingredients used," said Graham, who also feeds them leftovers. According to

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her, the chickens are very spoiled, and she hasn't found much they won't eat," she said.

Eggs are collected as the chickens are fed and watered. They have a heat lamp to lay under if it's cold because some of their breeds can't stand extreme cold temps.

The Graham family is grateful for their friends, the Graves family.

"One concern we had when thinking of getting chickens was that we are away a lot. Rachel and her girls take care of our chickens while we are away. They are always willing to help wherever needed, even if it involves getting messy. I wouldn't be able to have chickens if it weren't for them being willing to take care of them while we are away," said Graham.

Her favorite thing about raising chickens is listening to them talk in the morning.

"Chickens have over thirty unique vocalizations that they use to communicate a wide variety of messages to other chickens. Chickens also have great memorization. They are able to recognize over 100 different faces.... They are also fun to watch. If you let them, they will become very dependent on you and become like a family pet," Graham concluded.



Take a sneak peek inside the beautiful chicken mansion, made by Casey Graham and family...Pre-chickens of course!

INSET: Nellie May, the Grahams four year old silkie appreciates her specially made chicken hat.



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