

# *Top Producer* magazine picks northwest Kansan

**By ANDY HEINTZ**  
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Sitting at his desk answering questions while a biography of President Jimmy Carter blared in the background on the History Channel, Lon Frahm, Colby, looks like a picture of confidence. He had good reason to be, since he was named Top Producer of the Year by *Top Producer*, a magazine devoted to the business of farming that bills itself as “the *Fortune* magazine” of agriculture, in a contest sponsored by Agco Challenger tractors. The publication said contestants were judged on: entrepreneurial originality, financial and business progress and industry or community leadership. Frahm said this was the first year he has entered the contest for

While he was growing up, Frahm said, he always said he didn't want to be a farmer. His family moved off the farm to Topeka so his father could go back to school when he was only 4. They lived there until he was 13. While much of his early years were spent in a classroom in the capital city, he said he spent time in the summer, on weekends and after school on the farm working with his grandfather. Frahm said his granddad, Albert Frahm, overpaid him enough to keep him interested, but his dreams of buying a motorcycle trumped the tasks his Grandpa was teaching him.

Then much to Frahm's chagrin, when his guidance counselor in high school gave his class a work skills and preference test, his

results recommended he become a farmer. Invisible forces seemed to be giving him signs about what lay ahead in his future, he said, adding that he still has the score sheet somewhere.

Frahm attended Kansas State University in the late 1970s, majoring in business and agriculture. After college, he said, he decided to return to the farm and work for a couple years with the intention of eventually going to law school. His whole life changed when his dad died of a heart attack in 1986.

"My goals changed completely after that day," he said. "They were now, 'Hold the farm together, provide financial security for my mother and siblings, and settle the estate without losing assets in

Frahm said he took over during a stressful period for American farmers. In the 1980s, farmers were hit by a drop in demand and a decline in land values and income. Thousands of farmers were forced to auction off their land. But Frahm managed to keep the family farm going.

Turning obstacles into opportunities and problems into profits has been one of the keys to his success over the years, he said.

“The wheat freeze in 1982 and the corn freeze in 1992 were opportunities to become an expert in risk management, insurance and government programs,” said Frahm. “The person who was quickest to adapt — the first one to figure things out — is the person

who is now still in business.”

One of his favorite quotations is from Eleanor Roosevelt: “We should learn to find opportunities in our difficulties, rather than difficulties in our opportunities.”

Frahm said he is a big believer in making information open to all his staff. When his operation is buying machinery, he said, he has the salesman make copies of the deals and alternatives and hands them out to all his employees.

“Some of the best moves I’ve made have been deals that one of the boys heard about and brought to me,” he said. “It takes a lot of ears to the ground to keep current on bids, prices, trends, rents, opportunities, you name it.”

This strategy seems to have paid dividends, he said, because he has

not had any of the three career people quit.

Frahm tries to stay educated on the newest trends and latest technologies in agriculture. You have to figure out what is out there so you can pick up the technologies that work and stay away from the ones that don't, he said. He said he is a big believer in no-till farming and he uses genetically modified seeds in many situations.

Even though Frahm's operation is over 14,000 acres, he said he still considers it a family farm. He and his employees still do all the spraying, planting, fertilizing, harvesting, drying and grain storage. He said his crew has harvested between 1.3 and 1.5 million bushels each year with just two combines.

# Oberlin's Golden Age Center hits financial snag

After looking over the money for the project to build a new Golden Age Center, county commissioners discovered Tuesday, it looks like two of the amounts for county money had been counted twice, putting the project off by a few thousand dollars.

Greg Lohoefer, a member of the Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp. board who is leading the project, talked with the Decatur County commissioners last Tuesday about the money. A handout he gave the men included \$35,000 out of the Golden Age fund, \$17,000 in insurance money for the roof and \$1,570 for money raised by the Thrivent Financial for Lutherans group.

Commissioner Ralph Unger said they looked at the numbers and the \$17,000 and the \$1,570 are included in that \$35,000 as best they can tell.

That means, said Mr. Lohoefer, that he's off and will need to do some more fund raising or get that from money the corporation

Mr. Unger said it looks like the Golden Age group also spent more money last year than it had the year before.

There have been extra bills lately for the Golden Age Center for the refrigerator, a storage unit and other things, said Clerk Colleen Geihlsler.

If the group exceeds the amount it gets from the county property-tax levy, said Mr. Unger, money is going to have to come out of some fund to pay the bills or out of the group's kitty.

Right now, said Mr. Lohofener, they have enough money to complete the Golden Age Center and cinema, including the inside. He said he's short about \$90,000 to finish the entire project, including the bowling alley with electronic scoring.

There are some bills that need to be paid, he said, including one to the architect for \$2,417 and \$200 for the lot south of the center that was deeded to the county. Mr. Lohofener said he would use

some money from the corporation to cover those bills, since that organization is holding a little over \$140,000 that's been donated for the state tax credit program.

At the beginning of March, said Mr. Lohoefer, Sappa Valley Construction will need some money. He asked about the general obligation bonds the county will issue.

County Attorney Steve Hirsch said that transaction won't close until Thursday, March 19, so there won't be any money until after that.

With the Golden Age Center being a county building, said Mr. Unger, that part will have to be nonsmoking. Mr. Lohoefer said he thought the whole building will be nonsmoking. He said he will have to address that with the corporation's board.

The concern is if there's smoking allowed in the building, is it

sending the right message to kids?" said Mr. Unger.

At the end, the county will own 100 percent of the real property, including the building, said Mr. Lohofener, subject to a condo agreement. Mr. Hirsch said he thought the agreement was that the county was going to deed everything but the Golden Age Center back to the corporation and theater board.

That can be done, said Mr. Lohofener, but he thought 100 percent of the real property was going to be owned by the county.

What about a name for the building? asked Commissioner Gene Gallentine. There's been lots of discussion on whether to have a naming contest or something like that, but there hasn't been any decision made, said Mr. Lohofener. The paperwork for the grants, loan and other things have called it the Golden Age/recreation center. He said he's not sure if that's what

the name will be or should be in the end.

In other business, the commissioners:

- Talked with Jerry Lohoefer, who asked if they wanted the Masonic Lodge to have a cornerstone ceremony for the new building. Mr. Unger said he thought the commissioners should discuss that when all three were at the meeting.
- Commissioner Stan McEvoy was in Topeka for the day.
- Received a call from Helen

Gee, manager of the senior meal site, to say the door on the former cafe across the street rented to house the Golden Age Center was broken. County Attorney Steven Hirsch said he would call her.

Clerk Colleen Geihlsler said they called on Friday because there was an electrical problem and they wanted Bob Berls, courthouse custodian, to come fix it. She said she told them no because the building is rented, and the commissioners agreed.

**SubscriptionLines:**  
**(785) 877-3361, or 6908**

# JENNINGS NEWS

**By LOUISE CRESSLER**  
*Jennings Correspondent*

Seniors enjoying potluck dinner Feb. 10 at the Sunflower Senior Center were Stan and Ramona Shaw, Imogene Keenan, Rachel Carter, Eleanor Morel, Agnes Wahlmeier, William and Tommie Kump, Bob Tacha, Bud and Helen Rhodes, Pat Hall, Violet Foster, Jim and Wilma Mader and Louise Cressler. A short business meeting

followed.

Jennings and surrounding countryside received a nice wet snow last week. We really need the moisture.

The community extends sympathy to the family of Joyce Muirhead Christensen.

She is a sister to Keith Muirhead of Dresden. Joyce died in Arizona where they spent their winters.

# ALMENA NEWS

**By FLETA HANLON**  
*Almena Correspondent*

Good news to report from Evelyn Sanborn; she has a new great-granddaughter. Sophia Grace Switzer was born Feb. 4 weighing 7 lbs., 6 ozs. at the Central Kansas Medical Center in Great Bend. The parents are Eric and Dr. Michella Switzer of Great Bend.

Maternal grandparents are Sandy and Barbara Sandell of Great Bend (Sandy is still in Thailand but home is Great Bend).

Paternal grandmother is Judy Switzer, great-grandparents are Evelyn Sanborn and Ed & Pauline Gleason of Junction City.

Baby Sophia has a brother Nathaniel, 15 years of age and Josiah, 27 months of age.

Lonnie and Pat Shearer are soon to be grandparents again. Their son Scott and daughter-in-law Dana of Dighton, are expecting a son within the next month. He will have a 5-year-old brother to welcome him home.

Phillip and Valerie Babcock, Norton, are owners of one bull listed in the Spring 2009 Sire Evaluation Report published by the American Angus Association® in Saint Joseph, Mo. Issued in both the spring and fall, the new report features the latest performance information available on 5,175 sires, and is currently accessible at [www.angussiresearch.com](http://www.angussiresearch.com).

"This report provides both Angus breeders and commercial cattle producers using Angus genetics with accurate, predictable selection tools for improving their herd," said Bill Bowman, American Angus Association chief operating officer and director of performance programs.

Expected Progeny Differences are generated from the performance database of the American Angus Association, which includes information submitted by nearly 9,800 Angus breeders this past year through the Association's Beef Improvement Records program.

Expected Progeny Differences are listed for growth and maternal traits, as well as carcass traits that

integrate performance records from the carcass and ultrasound databases. Decision-making tools also include \$Values in the suite of bio-economic indexes, designed to assist commercial producers in simplifying the genetic selection process. In addition, the Spring 2009 Sire Evaluation Report includes updated research reports for docility and heifer pregnancy.

The semi-annual analysis for the Sire Evaluation Report contains more than 17 million measures used to generate more than 47 million EPDs for the Angus Breed. The American Angus Association, with headquarters in Saint Joseph, provides programs and services for nearly 33,000 members nationwide and thousands of commercial producers who use Angus genetics. More information is available at [www.angus.org](http://www.angus.org).



ANNUAL

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McMullen & Wyatt Auctions is now taking consignments for our Annual Spring Auction. Any farm related items, livestock equipment, tools, machinery, tractors, or trucks accepted for the March 28 auction. To consign or for more information, please contact Donald or Robert

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RCC reminds customers that, after Feb. 17, 2009, a television receiver with only an analog broadcast tuner will require a converter box to receive full power over-the-air broadcasts with an antenna because of the Nation's transition to digital broadcasting. Analog-only TVs should continue to work as before to receive low power, Class A or translator television stations and with cable and satellite TV services, gaming consoles, VCRs, DVD players, and similar products. Information about the DTV transition is available at [www.DTV.gov](http://www.DTV.gov). Information about subsidized coupons for digital-to-analog converter boxes is available at [www.dtv2009.gov](http://www.dtv2009.gov) or by calling 1-888-DTV-2009.

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