

# Modern pioneers lead the way

By Ron Wilson  
Huck Boyd Institute

Pioneers. They were the brave men and women who came west and settled the state of Kansas. Today we honor those pioneers, but we also honor the modern-day entrepreneurs who have pioneered modern approaches to agribusiness. One such entrepreneur has built a remarkable agribusiness enterprise in southwest Kansas.

Steve Irsik is an agricultural entrepreneur whose family has built a remarkable ag enterprise. His family has deep roots in western Kansas. In fact, it is a true story of pioneers.

"My grandmother came to Dodge City in 1880 on a stage-coach," Steve Irsik said. It sounds like a western movie, but it's true. The Irsik side of the family came west to Kansas in the 1920s. These pioneers settled in southwest Kansas and built homes and farms.

Steve Irsik's father served in the south Pacific during World War II and came back to the farm. Steve was born and raised near Garden City. He went to K-State, studied agricultural economics, and served in the U.S. Air Force during the Vietnam era.

When Steve came back to join his family in the farming operation, the irrigation and feedlot industries were beginning to be developed. The Irsiks were pioneers in this type of agribusiness.

"My dad bought a farm which had the second irrigation well in western Kansas," Steve said. "My father and two brothers

started feeding cattle in 1961. That was just the second or third feedyard in southwest Kansas."

Before that time, farmer-feeders had been raising a few head individually to be butchered or sold. Feedyards became a more efficient way to produce finished cattle. Then beef packing plants were built in western Kansas so as to be close to the source of production. The agribusiness complex boomed.

The Irsik family was a leading part of the agribusiness growth. Their first feedyard built in 1961 had a capacity of 2,000 head. Today that feedyard's capacity is 40,000 head.

Irsik Farms is now a dryland and irrigated farming and ranching operation with ranches in Kansas and Nebraska, including a 1,800 head cowherd. Irsik & Doll is a related business with feedyards and grain elevators across southwest Kansas. Irsik & Doll elevators are located in communities from Hutchinson to Sublette. The feedyards are in rural locations in southwest Kansas, near towns such as Garden City, Scott City, Cimarron, Hugoton, and Pierceville. Pierceville has a population of perhaps 300 people. Now, that's rural.

Part of the success of the Irsik family farming operation has been to integrate the various elements of the beef value chain.

"We go all the way from beef cattle genetic development clear to the meat cooler," Steve said.

Steve was also part of pioneering initiatives to market agricultural products such as the 21st Century Alliance grain

processing cooperative and U.S. Premium Beef. These farmer-investors bought a flour mill in Texas and an oat-milling company in Nebraska. "If you ate granola, you probably ate some of our oats," Steve said. "If you ate a tortilla in New Mexico or west Texas, the flour probably came from our flour mill."

In the process of building these businesses, Steve got to know private equity investors in Dallas and elsewhere. He joined them in other investments such as a steel pipe company in Vermont, a food manufacturer in Massachusetts, and a wholesale vegetable distributor in Florida. The food manufacturing company, for example, produces products that are marketed under major brand names such as Hersheys and Nestle.

"These companies want to market their brand, but they don't want to do the manufacturing," Steve said. So, this company produces the powdered chocolate drink, but it is sold under the Hersheys brand. These are innovative ways of marketing.

Pioneers. Those brave men and women came west and built the state of Kansas. Now modern pioneers such as the Irsik family are leading the way in innovations of modern production agriculture. We commend Steve Irsik and family for making a difference as pioneers of today.

And there's more. Steve Irsik was also a pioneer in another form of the cattle business - but not beef. We'll learn about that next week.

# Researching genealogy



The Norton County Genealogy Society hosted guest speaker Joan Hanlon from Colorado Springs, Colo., this past Monday. Hanlon talked to the small audience about tracking down one's family history. She had many hand outs, a slide show and talked about how to use ancestry.com to research information. Her advice was offered to make your search for family easier.

— Telegram photo by Dana Paxton

## NEW ALMELO NEWS

By BETTY OTTER

Thursday in the first week of April, Marilyn Otter accompanied her daughter, Emily Kessler, Lakin, to Denver, Colo. Emily had some meetings to attend. They also visited Marilyn's sister Hilaria Huff.

Quentin and Charlotte James, Jacob and Bridger and Charlotte's parents, Rawlins, Wyo., came to the home of Tom and Gayle James to take in the spring turkey season.

On April 12, a cook out was held at noon at Monica Conroy's place and then everyone went to the Senior Center in McCook, Neb., to surprise Cecilia Kotschwar on her 90th birthday. Cecilia and her sisters, Hilaria Huff, Wilma Farrell, Donna Roth, Marilyn Otter, brother, Don Hickert, sister-in-law, Claudine Hickert, brother-in-law, Marion Otter visited brother-in-law, Tom Conroy, at Willow Ridge that Saturday.

On Monday, he fell and is in a nursing home in McCook, Neb. Persons attending the surprise birthday party were Cecilia's children, Ronald and Sheryl Kotschwar and family, McCook, Neb.; Diane Miller and family, Lincoln, Neb.; Joanne Bernard and son, Nick, Grand Island, Neb.; Mike and Sandy Kotschwar, Stephanie and Brett, McCook, Neb.; Alan and Jeannie Kotschwar, McCook, Neb., and families, Nathan, Kansas City; Adam, Washington D.C.; and Brandon, Marion and Barry Richards and family, Derek, Zack, Beau, Hayes Center, Neb.; Tim and Connie Kotschwar, Minden, Neb.; and families, Melanie, Jessica and Jennifer. Other family attending were, Marion and Marilyn Otter, New Almelo; Frank Otter, Clayton; Gary and Emily Kessler, Lakin; Donna Roth and Joan Sullivan, Marion, Iowa, and Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Monica Conroy, McCook, Neb.; Wilma Farrell, Mesa, Ariz.; Jim Far-

rell, Golden, Colo.; Patty Price, Parker, Colo.; Claudine Hickert, McCook, Neb.; Galen Hickert and family, Amber, James, and Dalton, McCook, Neb.; Roger and Linda Dome, and boys, Branigan, Brady, and Bryce, McCook, Neb.; Don Hickert, Indianola, Neb.; Michelle Larkins, Republic, Kan.; Bill and Sheri Levendofsky, Delphos, Kan.; Sherie Mahin, Courtland, Kan.; Fred Levendofsky and Nicholas, Republic, Neb.

On the evening of April 13, the St. Joseph Parish had a pot luck meal to celebrate Father Vincent's 27th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood. Linda Becker made a special cake to honor the occasion.

Jessica Ninemire of St. Joseph Parish joined the Catholic Church at the Holy Saturday Night services in Norton. Missy Rumback was her sponsor.

Ray and Ardith Scheetz, Jefferson, Colo., attended the Holy Saturday Night service in Norton where their son-in-law, Troy Collins, joined the Catholic Church. Troy's wife, Sara (Scheetz) and girls were in attendance as were Jared and Stacy Scheetz and family, Chris and Julie Scheetz, Kayla Brockelmen, North Platte, Neb., Michelle and Alan Goldsby, Hudson, Wis., Tyler Goldsby and McKenzie, Salina; Heather Goldsby and Sophia, and friend, Shelby, Wichita; Sharon Thibault, Phillipsburg. On Easter, everyone gathered at the Scheetz farm home for Easter dinner.

Brian and Stephanie Kirk and Luke arrived at their New Almelo home from Broussard, La., on April 18. On Easter, they joined Renee and Jack Cella and family, and Darin and Joanie Wintokel and Brooklyn at the home of their parents, Roger and JoAnn Long.

Easter guests at the home of Russ and Marcia Aumiller were Jeremy and Missy Rumback

and family, and Josh and Sarah Vahling and family.

Family celebrating Easter at the George and Vickie Gassmann home were Randy and Beth Gassmann and family; Alice and Wes James and family, Ellis; Jackie and Chuck Wright, Lenora; and Dorothy Mindrup.

Renee and Kirk Persinger joined Gary and Roberta Bruinekool for Easter dinner. On Easter Monday, Ceena and Frank Owens, and family, Hays, came for dinner with them.

Easter weekend guests at the home of Alfred and Betty Otter were Tina and Will Ritter and family, Olathe; Tom Otter, DeSoto; Jolene and Jim Moss and family, Cheyenne Moss, Benjamin, and David Shelton, all of Smith Center; Karl Otter, Great Bend. On April 26, Tom Otter took part in the Mark Runnion Poker Run.

On April 27, a reception was held during coffee and rolls after Mass in the Parish Hall for Rachel Koerperich, Taylor Wahlmeier, and Jessica Ninemire celebrating their confirmation. Linda Becker made them each a cross shaped cake decorated in white and red.

Grandparents, Tom and Gayle James and George and Vickie Gassmann, attended the First Communion of Emily James on April 27 at St. Mary's Catholic Church, Ellis. Emily is the daughter of Wes and Alice James. Also attending were her sisters, Maggie, Hannah and her brother Luke, her godparents, Jim and Becky Metzler and sons, Ellis; Randy and Beth Gassmann, and family, New Almelo; Terri Fischer, Ellis; and Ginger Schoendaler.

Jeremy and Missy Rumback and family attended the First Communion of their nephew, Zachary Fisher, at St. Bernard Catholic Church, Wamego.

## SCHOOL CALENDAR

NCHS  
Monday - Wednesday, May 5-7  
Jay Singer Auditions  
Monday, May 5  
Dance team fundraiser ends  
Varsity Golf at Hays, 9 a.m.  
Jay Singers, A.P.  
Tuesday, May 6  
Jay Singers, 7:30 a.m.  
Junior varsity golf at Norton  
Invite at PDGC, 3 p.m.  
Varsity Track at Oberlin, 3 p.m.  
Wednesday, May 7  
2014-15 KAY Board Meeting, 7:45 a.m.  
2014-15 Activity Physicals,  
Junior High Gym, 9 a.m. - noon  
MTSS, early dismissal, 1 p.m.  
MTSS Collaboration, 1:30 - 3:30 p.m.  
Faculty meeting 3:30 p.m.  
Thursday, May 8  
Jay Singers, 7:30 a.m.  
JV golf at Trego, 9 a.m.  
Spring Awards Assembly, 2 p.m.  
Kindness Unites Us at East

Campus, 6:30 p.m.  
Friday, May 9  
Registration deadline for June 14 ACT  
Cell phone etiquette/digital citizenship: Stull Gym, 8:30 a.m.  
SADD, A.P.  
Varsity golf at Hill City, 3 p.m.  
Varsity track at Russell, 3 p.m.  
Forensics End-of-Year Picnic, 6 p.m.  
Saturday, May 10  
Artist of the Year Selection  
NJHS  
Monday-Wednesday, May 5-7  
H.S. Jay Singer Auditions (Grade 8 only)  
Monday, May 5  
High school Dance Team fundraiser ends  
Tuesday, May 6  
Stuco, 8:05 a.m.  
Track at Plainville, 12:30 p.m.  
Wednesday, May 7  
KAY Board, 7:45 a.m.

2014-15 Activity Physicals,  
Junior High Gym, 9 a.m. - noon  
MTSS, early dismissal, 1 p.m.  
MTSS Collaboration, 1:30 - 3:30 p.m.  
Cheerleader Tryouts, Junior High Gym, 4:30 p.m.  
EES  
Monday, May 5  
5th and 6th grade Band rehearsal at East Campus, 8:30 a.m.  
5th and 6th grade Band concert at East Campus, 7 p.m.  
Wednesday, May 7  
2014-15 Activity Physicals,  
Junior High Gym, 9 a.m. - noon  
MTSS, early dismissal, 1 p.m.  
MTSS Collaboration, 1:30 - 3:30 p.m.  
Cheerleader tryouts, Junior High Gym (6th grade), 4:30 p.m.  
Friday, May 9  
Kindergarten field trip to Robison Farm, depart at noon  
NVHS  
Unavailable at time of publication

## SCHOOL MENU

**NCHS-NJHS**  
Monday, May 5  
Breakfast-French toast, syrup, bananas, grape juice and milk.  
Lunch-Hamburger on a bun, pickles, corn, lettuce and tomato, pears and milk or Chef salad and salad dressing.  
Tuesday, May 6  
Breakfast-Cherry frudel, pears, grape juice and milk.  
Lunch-Beef and bean tostada, picante sauce, sour cream, shredded cheese, lettuce and tomato, french bread, applesauce and milk.  
Wednesday, May 7  
Breakfast-Assorted cereal, toast with margarine, peaches, grape juice and milk.  
Lunch-Chicken Enchilada, lettuce and tomato, picante sauce, sour cream, Mandarin oranges, green peppers, corn, cheddar bacon baked fries and milk or Chef salad and salad dressing.  
Thursday, May 8  
Breakfast-Sunrise flatbread pizza, bananas, apple juice and milk.  
Lunch-Pepperoni pockets, green beans, Mandarin oranges or peaches, cottage cheese, vegetable salad, marinara sauce and milk or Chef salad and salad dressing.  
Friday, May 9  
Breakfast-Assorted hot cere-

al, Mandarin oranges or peaches, orange juice and milk.  
Lunch-Spaghetti, garden salad, radishes, peaches, garlic bread and milk or Chef salad and salad dressing.  
**EES Menu**  
Monday, May 5  
Breakfast-Monkey bread, apricots, orange juice and milk  
Lunch-Chicken fry, whipped potatoes, gravy, cucumber slices, mixed veggies, fruit cocktail and milk  
Tuesday, May 6  
Breakfast-Rolled-up sausage links, hash brown patty, oranges, apple juice and milk.  
Lunch-Western bean bake, cheese stick, corn, pears, cornbread and milk.  
Wednesday, May 7  
Breakfast-Scrambled eggs/ham, fruit cocktail, toast with jelly, grape juice and milk.  
Lunch-Pigs in a blanket, sweet potato french fries, dill spear, baby carrots, rosy applesauce and milk.  
Thursday, May 8  
Breakfast-Warm cereal with toppers, bananas, apple juice and milk.  
Lunch-Hamburger gravy, whipped potatoes, warm peas, peaches, cinnamon rolls and milk.  
Friday, May 9  
Breakfast-Banana bread, ap-

plesauce, orange juice and milk.  
Lunch-Cavatini, tossed salad, pineapple chunks, garlic bread and milk.  
**Northern Valley Menu**  
Monday, May 5  
Breakfast-Pancake on a stick, syrup, hash browns, yogurt and assorted cold cereal.  
Lunch-Chicken nuggets, mashed potatoes, seasoned beets, Krispie Treat and kiwi.  
Tuesday, May 6  
Breakfast-Cook's choice  
Lunch-Cook's choice  
Wednesday, May 7  
Breakfast-Breakfast taco, hash browns, fruit and assorted cold cereal.  
Lunch-Shaved turkey, bun, potato wedge, vegetable and fruit.  
Thursday, May 8  
Breakfast-Assorted muffins, eggs, links, juice and assorted cold cereal.  
Lunch-Cook's choice.  
Friday, May 9  
Breakfast-Cook's choice



## High Plains Mental Health is Happy to Introduce . . .

# Cassie Ost



Cassandra is a native Kansan, born and raised in Mankato. She attended undergraduate classes at Kansas State University and earned her Master's degree in Social Work from Washburn University. Cassie completed an internship at Homecare and Hospice while living in Manhattan, and completed her clinical training by providing crisis services at Pawnee Mental Health Center. Cassie is a Licensed Social Worker. She has been employed at High Plains Mental Health Center since May 2013. Cassie resides in Norton with her fiancé, Matt; both (but mostly Cassie) are busy planning a September wedding. They are excited to call Norton, KS their new home.

**TO MAKE AN APPOINTMENT WITH CASSIE, PLEASE CALL (800) 432-0333**