

Program to help conserve land

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack recently announced that farmers, ranchers and landowners committed to protecting and conserving environmentally sensitive land may sign up for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) beginning June 9. The Secretary also announced that retiring farmers enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program could receive incentives to transfer a portion of their land to beginning, disadvantaged or veteran farmers through the Transition Incentives Program (TIP).

"CRP is one of the largest voluntary conservation programs in the country," said Vilsack. "This initiative helps farmers and ranchers lead the nation in preventing soil erosion, improving water quality and restoring wildlife habitat, all of which will make a difference for future generations."

Vilsack continued, "The average age of farmers and ranchers in the United States is 58 years, and twice as many are 65 or older compared to those 45 or younger. The cost of buying land is one of the biggest barriers to many interested in getting started in agriculture. The Transition Incentives Program is very useful as we work to help new farmers and ranchers get started."

The Conservation Reserve Program provides incentives to producers who utilize conservation methods on environmentally-sensitive lands. For example, farmers are monetarily compensated for establishing long-term vegetative species, such as approved grasses or trees (known

as "covers") to control soil erosion, improve water quality, and enhance wildlife habitat.

Conservation Reserve Program consists of a "continuous" and "general" sign-up period. Continuous sign up for the voluntary program starts June 9. Under continuous sign-up authority, eligible land can be enrolled in the Reserve Program at any time with contracts of up to 10 to 15 years in duration. In lieu of a general sign-up this year, USDA will allow producers with general Reserve Program contracts expiring this September to have the option of a one-year contract extension. The U.S. Department of Agriculture will also implement the 2014 Farm Bill's requirement that producers enrolled through general sign-up for more than five years can exercise the option to opt-out of the program if certain other conditions are met. In addition, the new grassland provisions, which will allow producers to graze their enrolled land, will enable producers to do so with more flexibility.

The Transition Incentives Program provides two additional years of payments for retired farmers and ranchers who transition expiring Reserve Program acres to socially disadvantaged, military veteran, or beginning producers who return the land to sustainable grazing or crop production. Sign up will also begin June 9. Incentives Program funding was increased by more than 30 percent in the 2014 Farm Bill, providing up to \$33 million through 2018.

As part of the 2014 Farm Bill, participants meeting specific

qualifications may have the opportunity to terminate their Reserve Program contract during fiscal year 2015 if the contract has been in effect for a minimum of five years and if other conditions are also met.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency (FSA), which administers the Reserve Program, will coordinate the various Reserve Program program opportunities. For more information on Reserve Program and other Farm Service Agency programs, visit a local Farm Service Agency county office or go online to www.fsa.usda.gov.

Both the Reserve Program and Incentives Program were reauthorized by the 2014 Farm Bill. The Farm Bill builds on historic economic gains in rural America over the past five years, while achieving meaningful reform and billions of dollars in savings for taxpayers. Since enactment, the Department of Agriculture has made significant progress to implement each provision of this critical legislation, including providing disaster relief to farmers and ranchers; strengthening risk management tools; expanding access to rural credit; funding critical research; establishing innovative public-private conservation partnerships; developing new markets for rural-made products; and investing in infrastructure, housing and community facilities to help improve quality of life in rural America. For more information, visit www.usda.gov/farbill.

Farm-to-fork meeting set for June 24-25

The Kansas Rural Center invites Kansans across the state who are interested in growing policy and advocacy support for farms, food, and communities to attend Farm-to-Fork Summits in Concordia or Colby this month. The summits will take place in Concordia on June 24 at the American Legion, 506 Washington St., and in Colby on June 25 at the Colby Community Building basement, 285 E. 5th. Both events will take place from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The public is welcome to attend one or both meetings.

These two summits finish up a four-part series of meetings across the state that seek to provide information and acquire feedback on specific policies that could help shape the future for increased healthy food production and access in Kansas. The first summit, held in Greensburg, Kan., focused on community food and water policy while the second, held in Iola, Kan., focused on food policy council development.

To attend one or both summits, please register at kansasruralcenter.org/north-ks-farm-to-fork-summits.

The full-day summits in Concordia and Colby will provide the opportunity for participants to network with others who share similar interests or concerns for their farms and com-

munities, learn about local and state policy and advocacy for community food and health, and share and take back ideas to their own communities.

Each day will be focused on understanding specific policies that will help our state's farmers help make healthful foods, especially fruits and vegetables, the easy, accessible, affordable choice for all Kansans. Key themes among the summits will include cooperative, farmers market and value added processing development and their effect on local farm and economic development as well as the health of Kansans.

Represented at each summit will be a panel of Kansas farmers growing and marketing in the region, health professionals, Extension, and other community experts. Panelists will tell the story of the regional food system and community health, which will set the stage for late morning and early afternoon dialogue from participants about challenges in their specific regions.

Afternoon roundtables will encourage discussion and feedback around specific policy levers. This information will be used to help Kansas Rural Center develop policy priorities that will be included in a Statewide Farm and Food Assessment and Policy Recommendations pub-

lication that will be completed later this year.

Registration for each summit is \$15 per person, which includes lunch. Each lunch will feature ingredients from local farms.

These summits are part of the Kansas Rural Center's Community Food Solutions for a Healthier Kansas initiative that will seek to advance the farm-to-fork food system across the state during the next three years. This year Kansas Rural Center and its partners will help develop the Statewide Farm-to-Fork Assessment and Policy Recommendations. The Assessment and Recommendations will be used as a tool to help identify specific barriers, opportunities and policies needed to advance the farm-to-fork vision identified by state, regional, and local grassroots constituents working in all realms of the food system.

For more information about the Kansas Rural Center visit www.kansasruralcenter.org.

For more information about Kansas Rural Center's Community Food Solutions initiative visit kansasruralcenter.org/community_food_solutions or contact Initiative Coordinator, Natalie Fullerton at 402-310-0177 or nfullerton@kansasruralcenter.org.

Pool

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to make their own arrangements for the mud volleyball pit to be dug, rather than city employees doing the work.

-Jeff Wolf reported on the status of property abatements and weed notices at the Public Safety Committee meeting. Fire Chief Mitch Jones told the committee about a leak in the fire station roof.

-Dan Bainter thanked the mayor and the council for approving the purchase of the ce-

ment saw. He said its been delivered and will be very useful.

-amended the first paragraph of the May 21 council meeting minutes to include that Council President Jerry Jones presided over the meeting and Mayor Corns was absent, and approved the minutes as amended.

-approved Appropriating Ordinance #11 as a whole.

The following building permits were presented:

- Norton Theatre - \$47,000, re-roofing at 215 East Main
- Bill Peterson - \$1,300, demol-

ish shed at 812 N. Grant

Pat Clark - \$5,000, re-roofing at 301 S. Kansas

John Sanders - \$500, re-roofing at 111 E. Wilton

Valley Hope - \$26,000, re-roofing at 103 S. Wabash

Valley Hope - \$3,500, re-roof maintenance shed on W. Holme/W. Crane

Marla Persinger - \$4,300, construct porch at 605 Sun Ave.

Richard Martin - \$1,000, demolish structure at 1003 N. Wabash, Lot 3

OK Kids

(Continued From Page 1)

Park Manager Toby Kuhn said, "We greatly appreciate all of the great sponsors the local media, all the volunteers and the

World of Wheels program for making this day such a success, we couldn't do it without them."

The event has grown bigger every year but it is believed that the cool morning kept the

numbers down a little bit. Along with this event the park had free fishing and park entry for the weekend to encourage everyone to get out and enjoy the great outdoors.

Coffey fundraiser



A fundraiser was held for Norton resident Michael Coffey at the Eagles Lodge on Saturday. Michael is at the Kansas City Province Acute Care Center where he will finish treatment and rehabilitation for Pancreatitis, according to his wife, Amy. Those in attendance enjoyed pulled pork sandwiches, salads, a potato bar with all the fixings and desserts. Amy Coffey said, "He is doing well and recovering. Thank you for all your prayers and encouragement."

-Telegram photo by Mike Stephens

Renewable biomass energy supported

The U.S. Department of Agriculture recently announced support for agriculture producers and energy facilities working to turn renewable biomass materials into clean energy. The support comes through the Biomass Crop Assistance Program, which was reauthorized by the 2014 Farm Bill and will resume this summer.

The Farm Bill authorizes \$25 million annually for Biomass Crop Assistance Program, requiring between 10 and 50 percent of the total funding to be used for harvest and transportation of biomass residues. Traditional food and feed crops are ineligible for assistance. The 2014 Farm Bill also enacted several modifications for Biomass Crop Assistance Program, including higher incentives for socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, and narrower biomass qualifications for matching payments, among other changes.

"This initiative helps farmers and ranchers manage the financial risk of growing and harvesting energy biomass at commercial scale," said Farm Service

Agency Administrator, Juan M. Garcia. "Investing in agricultural and forestry producers who cultivate energy biomass and supporting next-generation bio-fuels facilities make America more energy independent, help combat climate change and create jobs in rural America."

Biomass Crop Assistance Program employs three types of biomass assistance. For growing new biomass, Biomass Crop Assistance Program provides financial assistance with 50 percent of the cost of establishing a perennial crop. To maintain the crop as it matures until harvest, Biomass Crop Assistance Program provides an annual payment for up to five years for herbaceous crops, or up to 15 years for woody crops. To collect existing agriculture or forest residues that are not economically retrievable, Biomass Crop Assistance Program provides matching payments for mitigating the cost of harvesting and transporting the materials to the end-use facility.

"For forest residues, this year's matching payments are targeted for energy generation

while reducing fire, insect and disease threats on Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management lands," said Garcia. "Agriculture residues for energy are also eligible for matching payments."

"The potential to achieve transformational progress on biomass energy in rural America and generate tremendous economic opportunities is very promising," added Garcia. "Energy crops occupy the space between production and conservation, providing opportunities for marginal land, crop diversity and more energy feedstock choices."

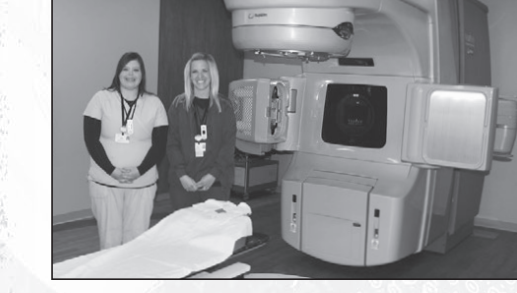
The USDA Farm Service Agency, which administers Biomass Crop Assistance Program, will coordinate Biomass Crop Assistance Program enrollments. Information on funding availability will be published in an upcoming Federal Register notice. For more information on Biomass Crop Assistance Program and other Farm Service Agency programs, visit a local Farm Service Agency office or go online to www.fsa.usda.gov.

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