

‘Critterland and Petting Zoo’ open to animals and children

HOLCOMB (AP)—Feel free to call this home a zoo. That’s not just a figure of speech.

Ina and Jeremy Blue operate Critterland Petting Zoo, with many different types of wild animals, behind their house on eight acres of land outside Holcomb.

The Critterland barn is filled with assorted farm animals like llamas, potbellied pigs, sheep, goats, miniature horses and miniature donkeys, along with other not so common creatures, like a chinchilla (a thick-coated rodent from South America) or a coati mundi (a member of the raccoon family native to Central America).

Fortunately, these animals aren’t

“**They (foster children) feel they are taking care of something. They’ll work hard because they’re working for the animals.**

Jeremy Blue,
co-operator of Critterland and Petting Zoo

the only ones who have found a safe refuge in the Blue household.

Through their 12-year marriage, the Blues have taken in more than 40 foster children and currently are in the process of adopting two.

As they’ve discovered, the animals and the children essentially go

Showing the children all the animals is the easiest way to make them feel welcome, Ina said.

While the Blues have been planning on opening Critterland since they first moved into their home seven years ago, they weren’t able to actually start putting everything together until the beginning of the year.

“We moved in so to have more foster children and one day all the animals,” Ina said.

When they heard about an exotic animal auction taking place in Oklahoma in April, they decided the time was right.

“The biggest thing was going to see all of the things we could have

at the animal auctions,” Jeremy said. “That fired it off.”

Extended family Foster children are an especially important subject for Ina because she was once one herself.

“Before we got married, I told him I wanted foster children,” Ina said. “As I grew up, I knew it was something I was going to do. It became a way to help.”

The animals not only allow the children to feel more comfortable, they also can reinvigorate their sense of purpose.

“They feel they are taking care of something,” Jeremy said. “They’ll work hard because they’re working for the animals.”

Interacting with the creatures is

a way to teach the children lessons on how to interact with people, an aspect of their life which hasn’t always been normal, Jeremy said.

“For example, with the donkeys, (I say) ‘You can yell at them, you can swat them, but they don’t respond to that,’” he said. “Kids don’t either. When we take new children to see the animals, there is always an experience. It never fails; a kid will leave the gate open, and we all have to go out and chase the animals. That gives us an experience to share and laugh about later on.”

Quiet time with the animals also can provide the children with a mental diversion, Ina said.

“Especially after visits, or after courts,” she said. “We don’t have to talk about their feelings. We can talk about the rabbit.”

Since opening in June, the Blues have given an estimated 25 tours of Critterland and hope to give several more now that the school year has started. By the end of their year, the Blues hope to open a Critterland pet store in Garden City.

The zoo and the prospective pet store are just the first of several enterprises they plan to open under the title.

Car enthusiast says 1950s were the best years Thursday Night Cruisers give Salinans free car show

SALINA (AP) — For a classic car fan like Doug Hamilton, there was no better time to grow up than the 1950s.

It was the era of fiery Ford roadsters and chugging Chevy pickups, chrome-plated Cadillacs and candy red T-birds, souped-up speedsters and cool convertibles, whose owners came together each weekend to cruise up and down the main street of their hometowns to the energetic beat of that new rock ‘n’ roll music.

“Back then, I couldn’t wait to see all the new cars as they came out in the streets,” said Hamilton, 59, of Salina. “It was just the best time to grow up.”

Hamilton has owned five 1958 Chevrolet Impalas since he was a teenager growing up in Beloit. His current model is painted a shiny red and equipped with factory air, rare for its era.

Hamilton thought his cruising days were long gone until the formation in June 2003 of the Thursday Night Cruisers, an informal gathering of classic car, hot rod and street rod owners and aficionados. Every Thursday night from April through October, these men and women meet at a local Wendy’s and spend 30 to 40 minutes cruising Salina city streets, finishing at a

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Doug Hamilton,
Classic car fan

nearby Dairy Queen. Cruise organizer Darwin Henry said the idea behind the cruise was to give the many classic car owners in the area a place to come together on a regular basis and also provide the opportunity for owners to show off their cars.

“We try to take a different route each time,” said Henry, 59. “We go through at least one park and then along a residential area or cul de sac. It’s a lot of fun when a line of 15 or 20 cars drive down a street and kids wave at us and people mowing their lawns stop and look at us.”

At about 6 on a recent Thursday night, with a clear evening sky and mild temperatures, 26 cars pulled into the Wendy’s parking lot. The well-preserved and restored vehicles included a 1948 Willis Jeepster, 1955 Porsche speedster, 1974

gathered in the parking lot to begin the night’s excursion. Led by Henry, driving a 1969 Chevy pickup, the caravan of classic cars and trucks departed from the parking lot and headed south, eventually leading through several southeast Salina neighborhoods.

When leading a caravan of 20 or more cars, it is crucial to avoid stop lights and many left turns, Henry said.

“You want to keep traffic flowing, so we don’t get scattered,” he said.

The cruisers were greeted by homeowners doing yard work, people walking their dogs and wide-eyed children who stopped playing and watched the cars go by with dropped jaws and pointing fingers. The caravan eventually arrived at the empty lot just north of Dairy Queen. One of the first was a 1974 Corvette Stingray driven by Derek Wells who, at 16, was the youngest Thursday night cruiser.

Wells said the Corvette has been in his family about 18 years and has all its original parts except for the front and back bumper.

“It only has 37,000 miles on it, and this is the first time it’s been out of the garage in a long time,” Wells said. “It only comes out on special

occasions like this.”

The Wells family can’t afford to take the car out too much — during the cruise, which covered less than 10 miles, the Corvette ate nearly a quarter tank of gas. And it doesn’t take unleaded, either. “We can only put in regular, so we have to put a special chemical in the gas to get it to the right blend,” Wells said.

Salinan Bill Pierson parked his 1955 Porsche 356 Speedster under a tree while many of his fellow drivers headed to Dairy Queen. Pierson is local treasurer and newsletter writer of the 80-member German Car Club of Kansas, an organization of classic German car owners from throughout the state who often bring a dozen or more Porsches, Volkswagens, BMWs and Mercedes-Benzes to Thursday night cruises in a show of classic car solidarity. “Every Thursday, people in Salina get a free car show,” Pierson said. “It’s a fun way for us to get together, have fun and share our passion for German cars with the community. Eating ice cream next to his 1964 Buick Wildcat Sport Coupe, Salinan Doug Strahan said the great value of the Thursday night cruise was to bring together people who ordinarily might have little in common.

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Wheat test plot looks beyond too

By Tisha Cox

This year's harvest hasn't yet begun in this area, but farmers are already thinking ahead. Wheat producers found out what varieties they might want to plant next year during the annual wheat plot tour on Tuesday.

The tour took place at Mike Brown's farm south of Leoti, sponsored by the Thomas County Extension Council.

Kansas State University extension wheat specialist Jim Shroyer and Northwest Kansas Wheat Extension Center multi-county agronomist Brian Osborne were the guest speakers.

Thomas County's extension agent Doug Musick said the tour was better than last year's but a little lower (attendance) than year's past.

He also explained why the tour is important.

"It can help producers stay on top of the new varieties," Musick said, "and to help them make better planting choices in September."

He said the newest varieties are available, but if producers wait it they'll need to make an early decision as early as July or August.

Harvest here is expected to start within the next few weeks and Musick said some farmers in the area generally keep back seed from year to year to plant. This year is doing "OK," and he said some might want to keep back if it's shown a resistance to disease.

"Strain test has become a big theme," Musick said.

Both types affect the head of the plant, and can cause damage, he said. Damage, however, not affect photosynthesis, which in turn can reduce seed production. In some cases, severe damage can actually kill a plant.

Before going down to the test plots, Shroyer's pointed to a stripe rust, he said.

He pointed out that stripe rust, also known as barley yellow dwarf, is the most of the world, is identified by yellow pustules that can be found on wheat down to wheat leaves.

The disease "stikes," cool weather and warm is a problem until 2001. Occurrences were low and far between then and during a 30-year span, he said.

That, along with last year's, have present problems for the past few years.

Shroyer said companies and universities talk about resistant varieties, but completely avoiding the diseases isn't possible.

"Resistance isn't everything," he said. "Resistance means it's tolerant to it."

What is the reason Shroyer said more rust is developing.

He said last year's wheat was developed.

He added the wheat challenge is a "good" weather. Wheat he said during the tour was in the rotation.

What's more, he said, is that the wheat is also last year's.

"That Shroyer said Over the years, he said, it's been a problem."

businesses recognized at program in C

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Fort Hays State University, were made.

In choosing Horlacher Jewelers, it was noted that the store has been in Colby since 1927 and the owners travel to Belgium yearly to select diamonds for their customers. In addition, the store was congratulated for its sponsorship of Gold and Silver Achievement Awards for the local 4-H group during the last 50 years. The store was also honored for its community efforts in supporting local women's bowling teams, after-prom parties and graduation projects. The other Colby business recognized, J & B Market, established in 2004 and nominated by the Thomas County Economic Development Alliance, received praise for its donation of hams to all the Christmas concerts held in the area and contributions it made to local schools, organizations and other events. The market has fresh-cut meats, cut to order and a small line of groceries. The store also provides a few tables for customers to enjoy a noon meal of soup and sandwiches from its daily menu, according to information provided on the nomination.

Other merit awards in this region included: Hoxie Office Supply, Plum Creek Limited, both of Hoxie; Hometown Market, Bird City; True Value Hardware, St. Francis; Graphic Central, Smith Center; R&B Jewelry and Gifts, Osborne; American and the Dole, Specter Conference Center, Russell; Carmichael True Value, Plainville; Harzler Hardware Store, Alton; Insurance Planning, Inc., Hays; Plains Mountain Truck and Equipment, Sharon Springs; Sawyer's Ace Hardware, Phillipsburg; Stockton Pharmacy, Stockton; and Timeless Treasures, Downs.

Merit awards for service-type businesses included Howard Johnson Hotel, Lincoln; L. in Goodland; Crossroads Express, Oberlin; Mapes and Miller Certified Public Accountant, Phillipsburg; Cheyenne County Hospital, Poling; Chiropractic and Family Health Center and Zeno's, all in St. Francis; Shell, other Hays area; Regional a Coomes, Inc., in Norton; RANS, B. Ellis State R. Tech/Rural T. Manufacture merit awards: Russell Agri in Norton; Natoma Corp. City, Osborne; Construction, Inc., Phillipsburg.

Before the ceremony departs, Kristy Druss, Kansas Commerce Secretary Howard Fricke, said.

charges not new, Hildyard's attorney says

allegations of over-utilization based on averages of doctors who prescribe," he said.

"Dr. Hildyard is high, due primarily to his obesity and associated conditions."

O'Neil also addressed the rescheduling of his client's hearing, which was moved from February to June, now from June to October.

"Postponing the hearing was beyond our control," said Stacy Cook, attorney with the Kansas Board of Healing Arts in Topeka. "It was not

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