



Foreign students Asgar Nickelson of Finland (above) and Karen Moonen of Belgium (right) hold the flags of their countries that they exchanged with Student Council President Jason Cowan at graduation ceremonies of Goodland High School on Saturday, May 19. The exchange of flags is a tradition at graduation. Nickelson was hosted by the Philbrick family and Moonen by the Swager family.
Photos by Pat Schiefen/The Goodland Star-News



Do you want to share your life, home?

By Pat Schiefen
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Would you and your family like to share their life and gain an insight into a different way of living? The AFS chapter in Goodland is looking for families to host students that attend Goodland High School. At a meeting recently the former host families, Jeanne Irvin, Donna Swager, Jane Philbrick, Mary Porterfield and Nick Evert talked about their experience. Irvin said the relationship that is formed can last a lifetime. She said her sons still talk to the foreign students via Skype they have hosted. Philbrick said, "The students

were all really different that we have hosted but they were all teenagers." The group is still looking for families to host students and if you are interested can call (800) 876-2377 or Porterfield at 899-2500. Porterfield said since AFS has been bringing students to Goodland High School there have been around 90 exchange students and teachers. She said students are generally from 15 to 18 and most are older such as the Belgium student Karen Moonen. She said she will go to college in the fall after she returns to Belgium in July.

Moonen said that most wait until they have graduated from high school so they don't have to leave their friends before graduation. She said she didn't know she was coming until about two weeks before she left home. "I was thrown into it," she said. "And did not have a lot of expectations." It's like I'll never be ready to go back and have had two different lives, she said. "School was exciting because everything was different," Moonen said. Moonen was hosted by the Swager family. She said she has been

able to visit Connecticut, New York, Colorado, Nebraska, Texas, Oklahoma and California during her time here. Some of the trips were through AFS. Porterfield said usually the host family and the student have some time to correspond and get to know each other somewhat before the student arrives. Each student has a liaison that works with them. Evert said the student goes through stages after arriving. First everything is new and then it becomes ok. Then before they know it is time to go home. Philbrick said that her family learned a lot about how their family

worked. It is something a person grows up with and don't realize. Also ordinary things are extra ordinary to the students. Other like Asger Nickelson, who was hosted by Philbricks, will be a freshman in high school when he gets back. The AFS group has also sent three teachers and 10 kids abroad. Host families do not always keep a student for a full school year sometimes it is broken up into semesters, Porterfield said. One misconception is that it is expensive to host a student, said Porterfield. The local chapter has fundraisers to pay for the exchange

student's school fees and they have their own health insurance. The state department checks host families to make sure they can take care of the student. Moonen said it is quite costly for the foreign students but her parents thought the experience would be worth it. There is also information on the Internet for interested people at www.afsusa.org/hostfamily. Irvin said, "Hosting is a wonderful experience."

Customers can order fiber by the animal it comes from

By Ron Wilson
Director
Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University
When you want to re-order a particular variety of product, how do you ask for it? By lot number? Product name? Model number? Today we'll learn about an enterprise where customers ask for the product not by computer code or lot number, but by the name of the animal from which the product came. I'm referring to the high quality fiber produced by alpacas at Cedar Hollow Farm in rural Kansas. As we learned last week, Bob and Nancy Sines are co-owners of Cedar Hollow Foods. One day in 1999, Nancy came to Bob and said, "Why don't we buy an alpaca?" She had read about these animals and be-

come intrigued. Alpacas are known for their high quality fiber used for weaving into garments. "You can buy alpacas for different purposes," Bob said. "There are pets, medium grade, and breeding stock." Bob and Nancy decided that if they were going to get into the alpaca business, they were doing to try to get top quality breeding stock and do it right. They began to research what type of alpaca to buy. "We immersed ourselves in the alpaca business," Bob said. They drove to 22 different alpaca farms across the U. S. "Nancy became an expert on bloodlines," Bob said. In 2001, they bought their first animal and produced their first baby alpaca - called a cria. Now they sell fiber, garments and breeding stock. "One of the best things about alpacas is that they are easy to raise and care

for," Bob said. "They are a joy to be around." The trademark of the alpacas is high quality fiber for spinning and weaving. "For fine garments, cashmere and alpaca fibers mark the top of the line," Bob said. The fleece is shorn from the alpacas, cleaned and processed at various mini-mills around the country. Nancy felts, makes socks and weaves the fleece. She sells the fiber at trade shows and has a store in her home where yarn and various alpaca products are sold. Her products go to spinners and weavers guilds as well as individual spinners. Alpaca fleece feels light and fluffy, like a cloud. The fiber from the animal's legs and underbelly used to be discarded as less desirable, but a company in Texas found a way to use that fiber for wonder-

ful rugs. Nancy has sold yarn as far away as Florida. Her breeding stock has been sold to practically every state from Vermont to California. For more information, go to www.cedarhollowalpacas.com. One challenge about having alpacas in the middle of the beef belt was finding veterinarians who were trained and qualified to work with this unusual specie. Leading Kansas alpaca producers got together to create the Mid America Alpaca Foundation to help support educational and research programs in veterinary care of alpacas. The foundation works closely with the Kansas State College of Veterinary Medicine. Four founding farms were part of this foundation, including Cedar Hollow Farm and Bob and Nancy

Sines. Other founders came from Gardner, Paola and the rural community of Hoyt, population 573 people. Now, that's rural. As Nancy's fiber inventory grew, she needed a system to keep track of the various fibers. She started identifying the fibers with the name of the animal from which it came. This became much more than just a way to identify inventory. Customers began asking for the fiber which came from a particular animal. In other words, a spinner didn't want just any old alpaca yarn. They wanted the yarn that came from Sugar or Lena or Krystal or Top Gun. The spinners knew the alpaca that produced the particular type and quality of fiber they wanted and asked for them by name. When you re-order a product, do you ask for it by model number? Lot

number? In the case of this business, it is much more personal. Customers are asking for the alpaca fiber by name. We commend Nancy and Bob Sines - and Krystal, Lena, Kayla, and Pandi and more - for making a difference with this innovative business which is helping build the fiber of rural Kansas.

Questions about lightning answered

In her role as the director of the Kansas Weather Data Library, Mary Knapp answers many questions, including some related to lightning. One question she was asked recently was, "Can a bolt of lightning come out of a clear sky?" Knapp said, "The answer is yes. The phrase 'bolt from the blue' is often used to indicate surprise, as 'a bolt of lightning from a blue sky.'"

According to Phrase Finder, a reference for quotation, the earliest citation is Carlyle, 1837 - "Arrestment, sudden really as a bolt out of the blue, has hit strange victims," she said. "Sadly, that is still true. Lightning can travel more than 25 miles from the thunderstorm itself," said Knapp, who also serves as a delegate to the Extension Disaster Education Network. "There have been numerous cases of victims being surprised by lightning from a clear sky. That is why it is important to take cover when thunderstorms are in the vicinity - even if the rain has yet to arrive. It is also recommended to wait about 30 minutes

after the storm has passed to resume outdoor activities." In information about Kansas weather is available at www.ksre.ksu.edu/wdl/. "Weather Wonders" audio reports are available on the Kansas

State Research and Extension News Media Web site at www.ksre.ksu.edu/news/. In information about the disaster education network is available at www.eden.1su.edu.

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