



## *Chamber Visions – May 2011*

### **Did You Know?**

Did you know that National Teacher Appreciation Week is designated for May 2-6? Did you know that the McCook Area Chamber of Commerce Education Committee will deliver 288 candy bars during that week to the teachers in McCook Schools to show our appreciation for the work they do? Teachers have an amazing influence on the future of our world as they help parents mold and shape our children. So many times when asked “What person do you know who had the most profound impact upon your life”, the answer is a teacher! We deliver Nestle’s \$100 Grand candy bars to symbolize their unparalleled value to our future.

### **Leadership Institute Graduates Eighteen**



The fifteenth class of the Southwest Nebraska Leadership Institute graduated 18 class members during a special banquet held on April 7, at the Keystone Business Center in downtown McCook.

Keynote speaker, former State Senator Tom Vickers, in stating that ‘leadership’ is not easy, offered words of encouragement to the graduates as they assume leadership roles in their family, their church, their workplace and their community. Scott Barger, class member, shared information about the class project which was a pancake supper with the Pantry and the Humane Society as beneficiaries.

Graduates pictured include (L to R): Lela Ladd, Sarah Wolford, Dale Brown, Sara Rippen, Dr. Kristin Fornander, Jody Rupe, Kim Holthus, Lea Ann Doak, Madison Koepke, Dannette Miller, Scott Barger, Jaci Saalfeld, Mike Brown, Jamie Mockry, Grant Wilcox and Spencer Skolout. Not Shown: Mark Sabata and Kyle Gaston.

## **Leadership Class of 2011-2012 Selected**

The Southwest Nebraska Leadership Institute Board of Directors has selected class members for the 2011-2012 year. Twenty individuals were selected from 30 applications. Selections were based on the following criteria:

- Individuals who express a desire to contribute both time and energy toward involvement in their community.
- An individual who has demonstrated prior volunteer involvement as well as desire and leadership.
- An individual who demonstrates an interest in and understanding of Southwest Nebraska.
- Individuals of diverse backgrounds, representative of as broad a base as possible, including sex, race, age and occupation.

The Leadership Institute Class of 2011-2012 will include the following individuals from the business community: Randy Andrews, Bison Newsletter; Jessica Bortner, Wilcox Insurance & Financial Services; Kristi Daum, Carpenter Breland Funeral Home; Evan Fisher, Wells Fargo Bank; Tim Garcia, McCook Public Schools; Michele Gill, Mid-Plains Community College; Nate Henning, WalMart Supercenter; Jackie Johnson, Pinpoint Communications; Dr. Melanie Jones-Weir, Bison Dental; Linda Maiden, State Farm Insurance; Craig Merrihew, McCook National Bank; Brad Osterhaus, Great Plains Communications; Jon Reiners, Community Hospital; Travis Rouselle, Plains Equipment Group; Donnetta Schafer, Nebraska Breeding Service and Brian Strauch, Red Willow County Extension Service. Students from McCook High School include Megan Rokusek and Gavin Harsh. Students from Southwest High School include Mattie Uerling and Allie McConville.

The class will attend an orientation on Wednesday, May 25, at the Keystone Business Center (third floor training room) from 4:00 – 6:00 PM where they will learn details about the upcoming year and the retreat to Lincoln in the fall. Southwest Nebraska Leadership Institute Board members include: President - Denise Ringenberg, Hillcrest Nursing Home Foundation.; Treasurer - Bill Burton, Wells Fargo Bank; Secretary - Pam Harsh, McCook Area Chamber of Commerce; Sara Rippen, Garrison's/McCook Lettering; Angela Wagner, McCook National Bank; Clark Bates, McCook Christian Church; Janet Weber, McCook Community College and Doug Joyce, Mid-Plains Center for Enterprise.

The Leadership Institute program would not be possible without the support of the sponsors. Sponsors for the 2011 graduating class were: Community Hospital, Don & Alice Harpst, Great Plains Communications, Inc., McCook Area Chamber of Commerce, McCook Community College, McCook National Bank, Mousel, Brooks, Garner & Schneider, PC, LLO; Wells Fargo Bank, Mid-Plains Center for Enterprise, First Central Bank and the McCook Optimist Club. Sponsors are being recruited for the 2012 graduation class. If you or your business would like to be a sponsor, please contact one of the board members or the Chamber office at 345-3200.

## **Area Ag Businesses Host Tour**

Several area ag-related businesses hosted the Chamber Ag Task Force Eighth Grade Ag Tour on Wednesday, April 6. Chamber members included on the tour were Olsen's Agricultural Lab and Heritage Hills Golf Course. Mark Friehe, Frenchman Valley Coop; Cherri Lashley, Farm Credit Services and Nikki Cappel, Terry Ellinger, CPA organized and facilitated the tour. Lunch for the students was provided by the school with additional treats provided by Pepsi Company and Farm Credit Services. The purpose of the Ag Tour is to share the various opportunities there are for students to utilize their career field right here at home.



Olson's Agricultural Lab



Heritage Hills Golf Course

### **Volunteer Luncheon Held at Pizza Hut**



It was a stormy day outside but everyone who attended the annual Chamber volunteer luncheon was comfortably enjoying their lunch and the conversation in the Pizza Hut meeting room on April 14. Two shifts were available from 11:30 to 12:30 and 12:30 to 1:30. The Chamber utilizes well over 100 volunteers throughout the year and looks forward to expressing this token of appreciation for the work they have done. April is National Volunteer Appreciation month.

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*The Chamber Visions is the official publication of the McCook Area Chamber of Commerce, published monthly throughout the year at 402 Norris Ave., Suite 203, McCook, NE 69001. The Chamber accepts no responsibility for editorial content submitted to Chamber Visions.*

## PRESIDENT'S LETTER



### Who Was Your Favorite Teacher?

How many of us owe our successes and careers to a teacher who taught us to love learning? I remember a particular teacher who inspired me to believe in my abilities and to channel my energies into goals for my future. It wasn't until later in my life but it made the difference in where I am today.

Growing up in a small town in the 60's many of my peers were the first generation to be college bound. Unfortunately, I was one of six siblings and female besides. Yes, we have come a long way, however back then the emphasis was in assisting my 3 brothers in pursuing higher education for their eventual breadwinner status in a traditional family. Quite honestly, my grade point average was better than theirs. Funny how certain little things are remembered over time.

Actually it wasn't just my family that neglected to encourage my sisters and me; it was the standard with guidance counselors, teachers and coaches at the time. So, the choice was to move off to the big city of Minneapolis for work. I will confess that it was a great growing period and I have never regretted the time as a single gal.....sort of a Mary Tyler Moore period of time....for those of you who remember the TV show.

However, I always had the feeling that I had missed something in my life. I went through a series of vocational professions that I enjoyed but the four year degree was still out there as an unfulfilled dream. Years later, when my children were in Junior High I decided to give higher education a try. I had been out of school for more than 16 years at the time. I started slow by enrolling in two classes, hoping to just survive. Within one semester, the old love of learning was back. Before long I was engaged in conversations with professors who recognized my interest in academia and encouraged me to pursue a degree. The rest is history.

And, that brings me to why this letter is focused on appreciating educators. May 3rd is National Teacher Appreciation Day. The Educational Committee through the Chamber will once again join Pam Harsh in distributing \$100 Grand candy bars to the teachers in our community. It is a very small token of appreciation for the influence they have on young people every day. This year I am looking forward to joining the group. My children did not attend school in McCook as they were both grown before I moved here. However, I have had the opportunity to mingle with many of the young people through leadership and other volunteer roles. I will first credit the parents for raising some great young people, but I can not neglect the role the educators have had on giving them the direction and encouragement I wish I would have had in my early years.

Soon the Educator of the Year Award will be given to a deserving teacher. This award was started and is funded by Allen Strunk. It has become a prestigious and coveted award. The Education Committee takes their responsibility in carefully reviewing nominations and selecting the recipient very seriously. This year's decision has already been made. However, I encourage all who have an appreciation for a special teacher who was a great influence in your life to consider nominating them for future consideration. What better way to say Thank You.

*Terri Shipshock*

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## SPOTLIGHT ON BUSINESS

### Golden Plains Realty - Service Since 1999

In December of 1999, I purchased the local Century 21 real estate franchise in McCook and began doing business as Golden Plains Realty. Our office started with one agent plus myself. In 2009, I decided to drop the Century 21 franchise and do business as an independent broker in Southwest Nebraska. Currently, the office hosts two active sales agents, Christi Evans and Connie Kamla, one associate broker, Beth O'Dea, and myself Melanie Goodenberger, broker.

Through the years we have sold real estate from Benkelman to Arapahoe, and everywhere in between. Our major market consists of residential real estate, but we also offer commercial and farm real estate service to our customers. Our objective is to take the worry out of selling your property. We strive to make one of the biggest financial decisions you'll ever have as simple and stress free as possible. We utilize all the latest tools available to market your property including: The Internet, 360° Virtual Tours, Facebook, Open Line, and the list goes on and on. Our office is a member of the National Association of Realtors, a professional real estate organization whose members agree to adhere to a higher ethical standard.

I love it here, and wish to stay involved in my community through my church, the Chamber, and through Rotary. I love the simpler lifestyle offered by living here, and I want that lifestyle available for years to come for myself and my family. McCook is my home, and I want anyone who is thinking about moving here to feel like family.

*Melanie Goodenberger*

### Big Bank or Local Bank, Great Western is the Best of Both

Great Western Bank was founded in 1907 as a hometown, community bank. Now a regional leader with nearly 200 locations and over 20,000 surcharge-free ATMs, Great Western has grown dramatically, but retains their position as a hometown bank in the communities they serve.

The Bank provides consumer and business banking services in 130 communities in seven states across the Midwest and Arizona. The McCook branch, located at 211 C Street is open to serve your needs from 8:30 to 5, Monday thru Friday. Karmon Coleman is the Branch Manager.

The seventh largest ag lender in the country, Great Western has over \$8 billion in assets and over 1500 employees but still remains focused on Making Life Great in their local communities. Supporting families and businesses--large and small--as they work towards accomplishing their dreams, as well as donating time and dollars towards community efforts are important parts of the bank's mission.

For more information about Great Western Bank, visit [www.greatwesternbank.com](http://www.greatwesternbank.com)

*Julie Manes*

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## Nebraska Travel and Tourism Facts

- Tourism is Nebraska's third largest earner of revenue from outside the state after agriculture and manufacturing.
- Travelers spent almost \$3.8 billion in Nebraska during 2009 on trips away from home with overnight stays in paid accommodations and on day trips to places 100 miles or more away. Annual spending in Nebraska on these trips has increased by over \$2.1 billion since 1990.
- Jobs attributable to travel spending in Nebraska totaled 45,300 in 2009.
- Each dollar spent by tourists in Nebraska is respent in the state to produce an additional \$1.70 in business and income, creating an overall economic impact of \$2.70.
- Nebraskans and visitors to Nebraska together made 18.7 million trips in the state in 2009 to destinations 100 miles or more away from home. For trips by visitors, the leading states of origin were, in order, Kansas, Iowa, Colorado, Missouri, South Dakota, Illinois, and Minnesota.
- The average nonresident traveling party visiting Nebraska by highway during the summer consists of 2.4 persons who stay 2.2 nights in the state and spend \$435. Over a third of the nonresident traveling parties go to attractions or events, and for each attraction or event visited, they average a half-day longer in Nebraska, spending an additional \$100.
- Among the nationally recognized and/or best attended Nebraska attractions in 2009 were: Agate Fossil Beds National Monument (12,700), Arbor Lodge State Historical Park (120,000), Ashfall Fossil Beds State Historical Park (22,000), Boys Town (100,000), Buffalo Bill Ranch State Historical Park (47,056), Calamus Reservoir State Recreation Area (476,806), Durham Museum (150,000), Eugene T. Mahoney State Park (1,120,200), Fort Robinson State Park (335,046), Golden Spike Tower (36,000), Harlan County Lake (505,934), Hastings Museum/Lied Super Screen Theatre (61,759), Homestead National Monument (66,000), Indian Cave State Park (146,515), Henry Doorly Zoo (1,561,279),
- Joslyn Art Museum (177,037), Lake McConaughy State Recreation Area (892,815), Lauritzen Gardens (160,000), Niobrara National Scenic River (68,058), Platte River State Park (697,894), Ponca State Park (835,500), Scotts Bluff National Monument (67,235), State Capitol (92,470—tours only), Strategic Air and Space Museum (132,600), Stuhr Museum of the Prairie Pioneer (67,284), and University of Nebraska State Museum (68,482).
- Over 60 percent of the nonresidents visiting Nebraska during the summer stay at hotels or motels. The state has over 28,000 hotel, motel, and bed and breakfast rooms, which had an average annual

occupancy rate of 53 percent in 2009 and offered the nation's 7th lowest average room costs.

- The total budget of the Nebraska Travel and Tourism Division in Fiscal Year 2009-10 was approximately \$5.5 million, compared to an average of \$13.5 million among all state travel offices. A one-percent lodging tax provides much of the revenue for the Division “to generally promote, encourage, and attract visitors to and within the State of Nebraska and enhance the use of travel and tourism facilities within the state.”
- At the end of 2009, 74 of Nebraska's 93 counties had lodging taxes to collect revenues for promoting local travel and tourism. Including the highest concentrations of hotels, motels, and campgrounds in Nebraska, these 74 counties have almost 98 percent of the state's total commercial lodging sales. In addition, at least 10 Nebraska cities have occupation taxes on lodging sales, with most using the proceeds for attraction development.

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## RETAIL DETAILS

### **Ampride/Baskin Robbins**

We would like to invite you to stop and see us at Ampride and Baskin Robbins. We have a full service attendant Monday through Friday to help with the care of your vehicle. Let him fuel your vehicle while you come inside and visit with our helpful staff who will be happy to assist you with your purchases inside the store. We have the best hot dogs in town. Also check out our variety of fountain drinks.

Baskin Robbins has 28 different flavors of ice cream everyday. Stop in for a sample taste. Our clerks can also make a smoothie, blast, sundae, banana split and of course your favorite ice cream cone.

The full service shop can take care of your vehicles needs. If you need tires, a muffler, or an oil change stop in and see Dale, Don or Allen.

Jared or Scott can assist you with your propane or bulk fuel orders. We also have filled propane bottles for your grills and bagged ice ready for the lake or B.B.Q.

We invite you to come and see us for all your needs year round.

*Betty Rouse*

### **The Shorts Shoppe ~ We're The Name of the Game~**

Over the years The Sports Shoppe has seen a lot of changes, from new faces to new expanded inventory. At times we feel like we've gone “back to the future” as what was once old has become new again.

Some of the areas The Sports Shoppe has expanded to include Under Armour, Oakley, & K-Swiss. In the “gotta have it” brand of Under Armour we now have men's, women's, and kid's apparel with new items arriving every month. We have a fresh stock of Oakley sunglasses and everyone will want to check out our new K-Swiss Tubes. Even though we have expanded into new areas we still carry the brands that everyone has come to love Nike, Adidas, Asics, and Mizuno.

As Nebraska's popularity has increased we have happily expanded our Husker merchandise to accommodate our Big Red fans. While we once carried almost totally men's Nebraska apparel our women's apparel has grown to match it, from burn out tees to sweatshirts.

Many of you may not be aware that The Sports Shoppe does do screen printing at our McCook location. We do everything from custom uniform orders for high schools and colleges to screen printed or embroidered T-shirts, polos, and jackets for your workplace.

Our commitment to provide great service to our customers is our #1 priority. We have continued to remain open until 7:00pm on weeknights and seven days a week to provide shopping hours for everyone's busy schedules. Don't forget to check us out on facebook.

*Bob Elder*

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## MEMBER NEWS

### Willow Creek Meats Named as Honor Business



A large entourage of members of the McCook Area Chamber of Commerce and the McCook Cordials were on hand for the second quarter Honor Business presentation at Willow Creek Meats on April 7, 2011.

Owners, Scott Carlin, Leigh Hoyt and Cal Siegfried were pleased with the recognition and expressed their appreciation for the support they have received from the community.

Willow Creek Meats has grown rapidly and is widely recognized as a business that offers only the best products and services at very

competitive prices. They continue to introduce new products and exponentially increase their number of catering events. In addition, they look for ways to give back to their community. One of their latest programs is known as "Beefin' Up Our Heroes" which is a plan to send Willow Creek Beef Jerky to our soldiers overseas.

You'll find Willow Creek Meats located on the hill just South of McCook on Highway 83.

*Photo courtesy of McCook Daily Gazette*

### Horizon Bank Hosts Coffee Connection

The second quarter Coffee Connection, hosted by Jason Hauxwell and his staff at Horizon Bank on April 20, was well attended. The conversation was lively and everyone in attendance enjoyed the tidbits of knowledge they left with. The informal platform makes for an enjoyable time and allows everyone to 'come as they can and leave as they must'.

The next Coffee Connection will be held on July 20 at the Community Hospital Health Foundation office located in the Southview Plaza at 801 West C Street. The coffee begins at 7:30 a.m. and usually wraps up at

around 9:00 a.m. Mark your calendar and make plans to attend. All guests have an opportunity to tell about their respective businesses or to share what might be new and exciting in their world.



**CHAIRPERSON**  
**Jamie Mockry**  
**VICE CHAIRPERSON**  
**Kristie Winters**  
**SECRETARY**  
**Tamra Neel**

*“YPG is a group of young business and community leaders focused on the promotion, attraction and retention of young professionals in Southwest Nebraska. Together we create a voice to help build a professional community through positive networking.”*

## YOUNG PROFESSIONALS GROUP PLANS BBQ

Members of the Young Professionals Group (YPG) met on Tuesday, April 19, at the Keystone Business Center. Several items on the agenda were discussed. The YPG is planning an invitational family BBQ in June for those young professionals in the community who were nominated by their employers to become a member of the group. Plans are being made for approximately 50-75 guests. The evening will be spent networking and learning more about the group. More information will be available next month as plans become finalized.

The Chamber will utilize a follow-up e-mail for the nomination requests from Chamber member employers. The original letter, the nomination form and a request to complete the form will be included in the e-mail. There has been some success to date in receiving nominations.

The members also reviewed the Career Fair survey questions and approved them. The survey will be sent to area schools to determine interest levels and potential participation in a career fair tentatively planned for next fall. If the results are supportive, the YPG will host and facilitate the event with assistance from MCC.

If you are, or you know of someone who might be, interested in investigating the Young Professionals Group, please contact the Chamber at 345-3200 or [info@aboutmccook.com](mailto:info@aboutmccook.com).

## CHAMBER STATS

### Office

	Calls	Walk-In	Tourism Packets Mailed or Distributed	Relocation Packets Mailed	Misc. Packets Mailed
<b>2011</b>					
Jan	346	221	25	18	3
Feb	464	216	16	9	2
Mar	487	173	21	11	3
<b>YTD</b>	<b>1,297</b>	<b>610</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>8</b>

# Website

## Rolling 12 Mo Hits

## Specific Website Page Total Hits

Month	Total Website Hits	Business Spotlight	Business Directory Search	Member Directory Search	Community Calendar	Chamber Calendar	Chamber Newsletter
Apr '10	5,433	234	462	200	53	80	406
May	4,658	180	473	128	63	83	275
June	5,218	224	635	181	64	93	277
July	4,416	205	346	96	93	107	341
Aug	3,826	180	311	173	73	105	297
Sept	4,396	215	277	96	101	142	374
Oct	3,454	170	289	89	59	95	292
Nov	3,935	214	371	190	45	95	358
Dec	3,165	245	323	72	56	79	314
Jan '11	4,577	126	324	300	28	58	328
Feb	3,785	224	222	149	40	78	284
Mar	4,723	341	313	191	35	81	408
<b>Totals</b>	<b>51,586</b>	<b>2,558</b>	<b>4,346</b>	<b>1,865</b>	<b>710</b>	<b>1,096</b>	<b>3,954</b>



