

Licking honored by state tourism industry

Marcia Hora

Terri Licking of Thedford was among those honored with a 2022 Nebraska Tourism Industry Award at the recent annual Celebrate Nebraska Awards Banquet held October 27 at Marriott Riverfront in South Sioux City.

Licking received the Friend of Tourism Award. Licking has been a long-time leader in the area and has promoted Thomas County's tourism, economic development and agriculture. She has served several times as president of the Sandhills Journey Scenic Byway and was instrumental in helping the route earn the National Scenic Byway designation in 2021. Licking was a charter member of the Nine Byways in Nebraska.

She is active in the Thomas County Historical Society, the Thedford Art Guild, and she has been a promoter and supporter of the Nebraska National Forest.

Marah Sandoz of Taylor received the Visionary Award. Sandoz is the architect behind the Taylor Villagers, one of the more creative and unique attractions in Nebraska.

Since 2003, she has used her artistic skills to fashion plywood cutouts of



COURTESY

Terri Licking, front center, is pictured shaking hands with Governor Pete Ricketts. Also pictured is, Senator Albrecht; Nebraska Tourism Commission director, John Ricks; Tourism Commissioner Chair, Roger Jason.

Award. Sandoz is the architect behind the Taylor Villagers, one of the more creative and unique attractions in Nebraska. Since 2003, she has used her artistic skills to fashion

plywood cutouts of villagers, representing people scattered throughout the town. New characters appear every year. This charming attraction

catches the attention of drivers passing by and has driven unprecedented visitor traffic into town as visitors search to find all of the plywood

people. The villagers have caught the attention of Nebraska and national media, including Atlas Obscura's top destinations. Sandoz is also ac-

tive in area economic and tourism development and runs her own businesses in Taylor, including Marah's Treasures.

Additional awards and honors:

2022 Henry Fonda Award: The state's highest tourism award representing leadership, vision and dedication to the tourism industry went to John Chapo, President Emeritus of the Lincoln Children's Zoo.

Outstanding Event Award for Communities with populations up to 9,999: Seward Nebraska 4th of July Celebration.

Outstanding Event Award for Communities with populations over 10,000: 2022 Kearney Cruise Nite in Kearney.

Outstanding Marketing Campaign Award: Grand Island Tourism's Grand Life Campaign.

Outstanding Tourism Attraction Award: Robber's Cave Tours, Lincoln.

Passport Champions Choice Award: Our Lavender Co., Big Springs.

Crystal Compass Award from Nebraska Travel Association: Andy Pollock, registered lobbyist with the state legislature and has been working with NETA since 2012.

'Here's to 50 more' at the Double T

Picture & Story By
Marcia Hora

The Double T Bar in Halsey observed its 50th anniversary with friends and customers stopping in to congratulate Reta Teahon on achieving the milestone.

Reta said she is thankful for the many friends and family who attended and for the cards, flowers and gifts.

Halsey has changed over the past 50 years and has seen a decline in population as most small towns in the Sandhills. According to Nebraska Demographics the population in 2021 stands at 64 residents.

It was quite different when brothers Leland and Bill Teahon, along with Bill's wife Val, purchased the business and opened on election day, November 7, 1972 as the Double T Bar. Lee's wife Anne (Barnes) Teahon had passed away in September of that year.

The bar opened up at 8:00 p.m. since it was election day and could only remain open until midnight. In spite of the shortened hours a lot of alcohol was sold.

Bill and Val ran the Double T during the day and Lee continued to work at the Ryman Brothers Ranch north of Halsey. Lee would drive to town and work the evening shift.

Lee married Reta Hardy on October 5, 1973. She had grown up seven miles north of Thedford and attended Antelope Valley School before graduating from Thedford High School. Reta worked at the Cowpoke and had dreams of going to Grand Island School of Business.



Reta Teahon behind the bar at the Double T in Halsey. She plans to carry on the restaurant and bar business and recently observing 50 years of serving area residents.

"I came from a large family. I was the youngest of seven children and I knew it was going to be a struggle for my parents, Bert and Eva Hardy, so I took a job at the extension office in Thedford and worked at the Cowpoke. At that time we had 550 kids enrolled in 4-H in the Thedford District."

Reta quit the extension job in December of 1976 to help Lee at the Double T. Major renovations of the business were completed in 1977 and included the removal of a wall and repositioning the bar from the south side of the building to the north side.

Lee and Reta later pur-

chased Bill and Val's share of the business and continued to make improvements to the building, including the addition of a new kitchen and dining room.

The Double T became well-known for homemade meals and was known for prime rib on Saturday nights and special occasions. Reta's chicken fried steaks are extremely popular and the business became a gathering place for local citizens and hosted special events.

The Double T building has been around a long time. It was built in the early 1900's by a Mr. Dodd. It stood on the

main street of Halsey and housed a hotel and café. D.A. and Etta Rodocker purchased the business in 1922 and moved their family from a ranch north of town. The Rodockers ran the hotel and it sat in a prime loca-

tion next to the railroad tracks and a block south of the major highway.

Lester Harris purchased the hotel from the Rodockers and cut the bottom story of the building out and lowered the second story to the ground.

Everett Iverson purchased the one story building in 1948 and renovated it into a tavern. Other owners have been Bob Simonson, Earl Johnson, Vern and Joyce Dickman, and Fritz and Shirley Marten.

"Here's to 50 more," Reta said as she plans to continue on with the bar and restaurant she has worked in with her husband, Lee, for so many years. The business has

been their life and their home.

It has been hard since Lee's death on January 5, 2012, but she has had help from her three sons and she has been able to carry on. She is open seven days a week and still serves Sunday buffet with help from a friend, Marilyn Ladwig, 88, who drives up from Lexington. Marilyn waits tables and comes up on Thursday and goes home Tuesday mornings.

"The Double T's been good to me over the years and if I stayed home I'd miss seeing the people."

For now, Reta says she'll keep on working and serving the people of Halsey and the surrounding area.

Annual Seneca Turkey Dinner Continues

Photos & Story By:
Terri Licking

Seneca - The little unincorporated Village of Seneca sits on the line between central and mountain time zones. It is on the western edge of Thomas County, which is in central time and just west of town one enters Hooker County and the mountain time zone. It's

new motto "We're a little off...Nebraska 2," ties in well with the state's tourism campaign, "Nebraska...Honestly It's Not for Everyone."

What they are not off of is big time hospitality and it was shown again on the last Sunday in October. Fewer than a dozen

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Sandhills Fire Relief to aid ranchers, fire departments

The number of items donated for the Sandhills Fire Relief continues to grow and you may view items on the Sandhills Fire Relief Facebook "Event" page. Organizers say they are wrapping up donations so they may be properly advertised. The amount of donated items has far exceeded expectations. They are approaching 115 silent auction items and 17 live/silent auction items.

The fundraiser will be held Friday, November 11, from 5:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. at the Thomas County Fairgrounds event center, 83861 Highway 83, Thedford.

In addition to live and internet auctions, there will be a barbecue feed cooked by Slow Poke BBQ of Oconto. Borderline will provide entertainment and there will be a cash bar provided by the Thedford Volunteer Fire Department. Note the internet auction will close at 8:00 p.m.

All proceeds from the auction and barbecue will go to ranchers who sustained losses in the recent Bovee Fire and local fire departments.

To make a monetary donation you may send it to the Custer County Foundation, P.O. Box 304, Broken Bow, NE 68822 or Nebraska Cattlemen Disaster Fund, 4611 Cattle Drive, Lincoln, NE 68521.

Flag Retirement Ceremony

American Legion Post 230 will be holding a free will donation lunch Sunday, November 13, beginning at 12:30 p.m. at the Thedford Legion Building.

Along with the lunch, a flag retirement ceremony will follow. Bring weathered and used flags and they will be properly retired.