

Dunning Making Forward Progress



Story & Pictures By:
Linda Teahon

The small Sandhills town of Dunning sits pretty much in the middle of Nebraska. Dunning is best known for the two rivers that border it. The Middle Loup River on the north side and the Dismal River on the south. It is also home to the large Burlington Northern Railroad bridge that passes over Highway 2 and the Dismal River, at the same location.

The 272-miles of Highway 2, known as the Sandhills Journey National Scenic Byway, from Alliance to Grand Island, borders the east side of town and the Loup Byway that starts in Ord ends at Dunning at the Highway 91 and Highway 2 junction.

The last six years have shown some progress in the town founded in 1887. The Sandhills Heritage Museum organized in 2000 became a reality in May 2017 when the museum opened in the Home State Bank building at 416 Jewett Ave. downtown. The museum is also home to the Hereford Crossroads exhibit.

In the past five years new businesses opening have included Brando's Bunkhouse, A&J B&B, T's Creative Designs and Goedeke Welding in the

former Bowen Oil building. The Sinclair station was purchased last September and new owners James and Jody Swisher also opened a restaurant there called The Spur.

Norms Auto remains as does Sandhills Pottery, a staple of the Dunning community. Sheets Haying headquarters is located just south of town across the Dismal River.

Dunning is also home to the Sandhills Community Church and the Open Bible Church.

Most recently and most noticeable is the new 10,368 square foot activity building located just north of the Sandhills Public High School football field. It has been 50 years since the school's campus has been updated.

The process to build this structure started with the school board discussing what would serve the community. Questions and ideas were raised. What would serve the school economically best? Having the building would eliminate the liability of sending students off campus for certain activities.

The new building will house wrestling, a weight room, concession stand, restrooms and practice gym.

Many ideas were brought forth by a special community meeting in

the summer of 2021

How to afford such a structure? Traditionally people vote on a bond. The goal was \$650,000 Actual cost will be closer to \$900,000 as costs rise. A lease purchase plan rather than a bond was decided on. The OCPUF Bond for HVAC has ended and the funds moved over to a special building fund.

Plans are to have enough of the structure done and usable, for this fall football season. The actual completion will be ongoing over several years with the addition of bleachers and scoreboards to make the gym usable as a secondary competition space.

Superintendent/Principal JD Furrow said, "We have a lot to offer here at Sandhills Public Schools. A great combination of exposure to activities and educational opportunities. We have a caring staff to the students and communities we serve." He also added, "Thanks to the educational board for being progressive and the community for sharing their thoughts and concerns."

The contractor is Greenland Construction of Arcadia.

Little by little, Dunning is moving forward, aiding the citizens and promoting our pristine Sandhills area of central Nebraska.

The End of an Era



After 46 years Marlene VanDiest threw her last Sandhills Pottery coffee mug. At age 87, Marlene has decided to retire from making pottery.

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After 46 years, Marlene VanDiest is retiring from her business known as Sandhills Pottery.

Started in a shop at her home in Dunning, Marlene created many different pottery pieces. Asked how many coffee mugs were made with the iconic windmill, her answer was "Thousands." People all across Nebraska and many other states collect Sandhills Pottery. If not for themselves as gifts.

At one time Marlene employed up to three local ranch ladies to help with the growing business. She attended merchandise markets and sold to gift stores and other businesses that marketed the pottery in their gift lines.

It soon became known, as her pottery business grew, that to find the most recent patterns and designs one had to stop at Van's Ranch Service in Dunning, located in central Nebraska.

Marlene and husband Norval opened Van's Ranch Service in 1961 Son, Norm bought the station in 1993. Last October he and wife Chris sold the convenience store to James and Jody Swisher, but still operate their auto repair shop at the loca-



Marlene VanDiest pictured above with one of the thousands of coffee mugs she made with her iconic windmill design.

The store and restaurant/bar are now known as The Spur.

Marlene, at age 87, plans to continue volunteering

in the Dunning community and enjoys working in her garden and yard.

Her many Sandhills friends wish her well.



Pictured above is the new activity building located just north of the Sandhills High School football field in Dunning. The new building is under construction and it is hoped that it will available for use for fall activities.

Fair Just Around The Corner

The Thomas and Blaine County fairs are just around the corner. The Thomas and Blaine County Style Review will be held on July 24 at noon with the Thomas County Small Animal Show to be held that same day at 8:00 a.m.

On July 25 the Blaine and Thomas County Horse Show will get underway at 9:00 a.m.

The Thomas County Livestock Show will be held on July 26 at the Thomas County Fairgrounds with the show to begin at 9:00 a.m. with the Static Entry day to be held on July 27 at 9:00 a.m.

Static Entries will be taken on August 1 at 9:00 a.m. for the Blaine County Fair. The Blaine County Livestock Show will be held on August 3 at 9:00 a.m. and the small animal show will also be that day at 11:00 a.m. at the Blaine County Fairgrounds.

NEWS

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JUNE 26-30, 2023

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