

Masten Retires After 13.5 Years



Thedford Public Schools

Cindy Masten, center, is honored with a tunnel walk through the high school students and staff as she passes into retirement from Thedford Public Schools.

Masten has been the Thedford High School secretary for the past 13.5 years and is now making a move to be closer to her family, especially her grandchildren. Cindy and her husband Ron, will be moving to Arkansas. She will be substituting and a secretary substitute at a school close to her new home and Ron will be going back into business.

The staff, students and patrons of Thedford Public Schools want to congratulate her on her move and wish her well.

Lightning ignites four fires

An April 15 thunderstorm rolled in and lightning strikes ignited four fires that took 30 fire departments to bring under control.

Emergency manager Joseph Smith said two fires were in the Thedford, one in the Mullen, and one in the Purdum Fire Districts.

The biggest in what has now been deemed the "Thomas, Cherry, Hooker Complex Fire" has been named the "Old Blondie" fire. Originating on the Jim and Judy Johnston Ranch this fire threatened their buildings and burned 2,600 acres in a stretch of seven and one half miles.

"All structures were protected and no livestock lost," Smith said. "One power line pole was destroyed and Custer Public Power District had it replaced that night."

The "Old Mercer" fire

started north of Seneca and 370 acres of pastureland burned.

A fire originated near the Higgins Ranch in the Purdum Fire District burning 200 acres.

A fire that started approximately five miles east of Mullen burned between 700 and 800 acres.

Thedford Fire Chief Spencer Burk called in mutual aid as firemen were faced with winds gusting to 40 miles per hour. He served as incident commander on the north side of the "Blondie Fire."

"The wind hampered the use of airplanes to fight the fire," Smith said. "We are thankful for all of the fire departments who responded and this is why mutual aid is so important. We appreciate everyone for their assistance in helping protect structures."

Stapleton Volunteer Fire

Chief Frank Kramer served as incident commander on the south end of the "Blondie Fire."

Purdum Fire Chief Dave Masek was incident commander on the "Higgins Ranch" fire and Assistant Thedford Fire Chief Dan DeNaeyer was the incident commander on the "Old Mercer" fire.

Mullen Fire Chief Tyler Cash was incident commander on the Mullen fire.

Fire danger remains high, and in some parts of Nebraska the danger is extreme, according to a spokesman with the Nebraska Forest Service. This fire season is going to be longer than last year.

Historically, wildfires would pop up once every five years. Now it's becoming every year. Area residents are reminded to be extremely careful when working outdoors.

Andersen Receives State Level 4-H Recognition

Twenty-two adult volunteers, one 4-H member, and a family of volunteers are being recognized with 2024 Nebraska 4-H Volunteer Awards.

The Johnson and Harbin families from Burt County are receiving the Multi-Generation Family of Volunteers Award. Additional family members include:

Norman and Sally Johnson
Johnnie and Melinda Johnson
Jennie and Stewart Harbin
Will and Stephanie Johnson

This award recognizes a family with at least three generations of active 4-H volunteers.

Marissa Staben, 4-H member in Cass County, is receiving the Outstanding Youth Volunteer Award. This award recognizes a 4-H member, ages 14-18, who has made a meaningful impact on their local 4-H community.

Eleven individuals are receiving Emerging Adult Volunteer Awards. These awards recognize current volunteers who have served less than three years in their local 4-H community. One individual is recognized for each Nebraska Extension Engagement Zone. Recipients include:

Briana Robertson, Box Butte County
Jacey Andersen, Thomas



COURTESY

County
Blair Caraway, Dawson County
Tigh Renken, Gosper and Phelps County
Janelle Nielsen, Dakota County
Jennifer Wood, Nance County
Kerry Huntley, Washington County
Kearah Perreault, Lancaster County
Makinna Peterson, Thayer County
Cailyn Winkelman, Nemaha County

Eleven individuals are receiving Outstanding Adult Volunteer Awards. These awards recognize current volunteers who have served more than four years in their local 4-H community. One individual is recognized for each Nebraska Extension Engagement Zone. Recipients include:

Julie Schommer, Dawes County
Rhonda Cherry, Cherry County
Amanda Lott, Lincoln County
Pam Hamilton, Hitch-

cock County

Lisa Bousquet, Dakota County

Jeff Krivohlavek, Seaward County

Ann Gillentine, Saunders County

Marsha Prior, Lancaster County

Tom Person, Jefferson and Gage County

Dana Baltensperger, Nemaha County

The Nebraska 4-H Volunteer Awards honor individuals who are making meaningful and lasting contributions to their local 4-H communities.

"4-H Volunteers are truly integral for creating intentional and positive experiences for youth statewide. Their volunteer efforts enable youth to improve decision making skills, build leadership skills and help prepare youth to be ready for future careers. These volunteers generously give their time, energy, and creativity to help develop the next generation of leaders, and we are thrilled to be able to recognize their contributions," said Jill A. Goedeken, Nebraska 4-H Volunteer Extension Educator.

Recipients will be celebrated during a recognition ceremony at the 2024 Nebraska State Fair.

For more information about Nebraska 4-H Volunteer Awards, please visit 4h.unl.edu/volunteer-recognition.

Halsey-Purdum Easter Egg Hunt



The Halsey-Purdum Service Club sponsored its annual Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday, March 30 in Halsey. There were over 160 children in attendance this year and every child came with a look of excitement on their faces. Those who came early for the breakfast sponsored by the Halsey UCC, were able to see the Easter bunny and catch a ride on the "Wayne Train" driven by Halsey resident Wayne Rodocker.

The Service Club would like to thank all our generous donors. This event wouldn't happen without the support received from surrounding communities. Thank you to all who helped prepare eggs, baskets, and worked the event on Saturday. We had a great team this year and appreciate all the hard work. Lastly, thanks to all those who showed up to take part in our Egg hunt.

"We do this for all of you and love to see everyone come together and celebrate this special time of year."

Pictured above is the second - fourth graders lined up before the hunt. Middle photo is of Ariata and RyDell Scott of Thedford. They definitely won the most creative egg collecting "baskets" for the year. Their dad is the local vet.

At right is the Easter bunny who is a big hit every year!



Photo by Tim Buskirk

An April 3, 2024 prescribed burn at Bessey Ranger District was completed and mopped up successfully with 1,800 acres treated. A smaller burn of approximately 460 acres was conducted.

The Nebraska National Forests & Grasslands has been conducting prescribed burns in the Bessey Ranger District. Smoke from the burn was visible from Thedford, Dunning, Stapleton, Purdum, Highway 2, Highway 83 and other areas around the Middle Loup and Dismal rivers. The Bessey Ranger District thanked everyone who helped with prescribed burns in their

April 6 Facebook post.

Bessey successfully burned approximately 2,100 total acres. Without help from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, over five different nearby districts and National Forests, and the Volunteer Fire Departments on standby, the burn would not have gone as smoothly as it did.

These prescribed fires are critical to the mission of protecting the grass-

lands.

Contractors began working diligently to remove burned trees within the Bovee burn scar at the Nebraska National Forest in Halsey. As a reminder, falling trees and flying debris are definite hazards around the equipment. Please stay back at least 500 feet and be cautious when passing heavy equipment on roadways and trails.