



The Gemeinhardt property includes a filter strip of native grasses around wetland areas. The strip was installed in 2011. Wetland enhancements were all installed through the Continuous CRP Program.

PAUL GEMEINHARDT / WILDLIFE AWARD

Father son duo build wildlife habitat

BY RYAN CARLSON  
A Wildlife Award received by owner Paul Gemeinhardt and his son Todd of Belton Missouri came as a complete surprise. Gemeinhardt said the 80 acre piece of property he received the award for was purchased by his father in the 1940s. However, his great great grandfather has farmed in the area since 1987. Cow creek runs through the parcel of land where Gemeinhardt's father used to grow crops. 18 acres at that time was used for pasture. "My father gifted me the land after college,"

said Gemeinhardt. Gemeinhardt said the journey to what the property currently is began in 2005 when he planted buffer. In 2010 he further developed the wildlife habitat with wetland enhancements. Today 28 acres is still in production and farmed by TriAg while the rest is used for either the CRP 23 or CRP 33 program. Gemeinhardt said he made the decision



Paul Gemeinhardt

to increase the wildlife habitat because of his love for wildlife and conserving natural resources. He said that his family enjoys being in nature and hunting. "We like to do habitat work," said Gemeinhardt. Gemeinhardt said his main concern is habitat for wildlife. He remembers as a boy that his fa-

ther's methods of farming are way different from those of today. For instance, in the 1940s summer fallow was quite popular because modern farm chemicals and fertilizers were not yet invented. Now with the advent of such farming methods as no till farming, habitat for wildlife is beginning to diminish. "I'm very concerned and want to create a home for the pheasant and other wildlife. I want to do my piece to sustain the land so I can give my grandchildren the same opportunities to enjoy the outdoors as I and my son had," said Gemeinhardt.

Conservation district annual meeting soon

Conservation District annual meetings are a significant event for a conservation district. The meeting is required by law to be held in January or February in order to provide full disclosure of financial affairs and district activities and to hold public election of supervisors whose terms expire. It also gives us the chance to promote the conservation ethic, make contact with members of the community, and acknowledge our accomplishments.

We extend an invitation to all county residents to join us at this meeting. The 72nd Annual Meeting will be held on Monday, January 25, 2016 at Henry's restaurant in Lyons. Registration will begin at 5:30 p.m. A meal will be served at 6:00 p.m. So that we can plan for all who will attend, we ask that you contact us for meal reservations. You may call Rena Billington, District Manager, at 620-257-3645 extension 303.

Rice County students receive awards for art

BY RYAN CARLSON  
Five Rice County children received awards for this year's Rice County Conservation District poster contest.

The top three winners are Sophia Schneider for first place, Judah Kuhn for second place and Kalyssa Patterson for third place. Gabe Riffel received an award for Best Message and Kyle Klassen received an award for Honorable Mention. Rice County Conservation District Manager Rena Billington said the top winner will go on to state to another competition. That competition is set to take place at the Kansas Association of Conservation District's Annual Meeting that is held in November. Finally, state winners advance to the National Contest. National winners are recognized each year at the NACD Annual Meeting.

their first Poster Award program in 1961 to 5th and 6th graders. In 2006, the poster program was introduced to 4th graders. The annual Poster Contest provides 4th grade students an opportunity to convey their thoughts about soil, water and related natural resource issues through art. It also highlights the educational outreach efforts of conservation districts and their state conservation associations, auxiliaries and agencies. Each year, the poster contest starts at the district level. District winners advance to the state level where they are displayed at the Kansas Association of Conservation District's Annual Meeting that is held in November. Finally, state winners advance to the National Contest. National winners are recognized each year at the NACD Annual Meeting.

Who were Rice County's first farmers?

Who were the first farmers in Rice County? Who did what in Rice County? Of course, the Native Indians were first, however, they did not leave documents for our reference. Who were the first permanent settler/homesteader of Rice County? First to file claims or

buy land in Rice County is a most difficult thing to prove. We can only guess what others documented. Early deeds are difficult to trace. Beach Ranch, located at the Cow Creek Crossing/Santa Fe Trail was the first, except they never purchased any land. In the fall of 1858,

Ashel Beach and his son, Abijah Beach came to Rice County and started a ranch; the wagon trains called it Beach Valley. Their first of many Indian raids was on December 23, 1858. By June of 1859, they had built three houses, one of which housed the first Beach Valley Post Office. A toll bridge was built and pens were built for the cattle out of Buffalo Hide Strips. After June of 1866, there was nothing documented about Beach Valley, Beach Ranch or Beach Valley Post Office. Travelers passing through Beach Valley did not start a city there, so for that reason, the Beach's were forgotten as residents. The Homestead Act of 1862 has been called one of the most important pieces of Legislation in the history of the United States. Signed into law in 1862 by Abraham Lincoln after the secession of southern states, this Act turned over vast amounts of the public domain to private citizens. A homesteader had only to be the head of a household or at least 21 years of age to claim a

160 acre parcel of land. Settlers from all walks of life including newly arrived immigrants, farmers without land of their own from the East, single women and former slaves came to meet the challenge of "proving up" and keeping this "free land". Each homesteader had to live on the land, build a home, make improvements and farm for 5 years before they were eligible to "prove up". A total filing fee of \$18 was the only money required, but sacrifice and hard work exacted a different price from the hopeful settlers. Settlers came before Rice County had any government. In 1867, Theodore Sternberg came west for homesteading purposes, however land proof was not found. Records show that more settlers came in 1870. The first three families in February were John A Carlson, Andrew Johnson, and C.S. Lindel. In April of 1870, settlers August Johnson, John E Johnson, O.W. Peterson, and John P Johnson arrived. In August of 1870, A.J. Howard and J.E. Perdue

camped on the Little Arkansas River. They had several thousand head of cattle. Soon, Mr. Perdue located his farm there. We do not know if A.J. Howard ever settled in the county. He might be considered a transient in the county like scores of others that did not settle down to farm. Most of those were males that went back to families from the Eastern States. Some of the early ranchers didn't stay in this area for very long; nor did they own land. People from the Railroad town of Ellsworth came in search of Buffalo to sell hides and if that failed, they sold wagon loads of bones to those back east. Hundreds of people came in the spring, but could not survive the hardship of the winter. There were other locations on Cow Creek that were homesteaded in 1870. Three of those were Nelson Reed, Leonard Russell and John Q Adams. W.H. Rife, of the Mitchell area, also came. Leonard Russell later told people that when he came in November of

1870, that there were only 4 white men when he arrived at the mouth of Little Cow Creek. A year later, a group from Ohio was trying to form Union City nearby. George W Hodgson of Little River, laid claim to the county's first actual resident. George came to this area in October 1870 and "proved up" his homestead. His location was in Section 34 of Union Township. It is also believed that he was the first to break sod in November of 1870. Hundreds of settlers came by wagon and by train via Ellsworth in 1871. Reverend F.J. Griffith came to Rice County on March 14, 1871. He plowed on a Cow Creek claim north of the Chase area on April 3, 1871. He thinks at that time that there was not another furrow turned in Rice County. He tells the story as he goes around preaching. J.M. Muscott enters it into his county journal of facts. Many settlers hear both people saying the same thing. Rice County was not formed until August 18, 1871 by the order of Governor J.M. Harvey. The petition that counted the people had been padded with mule names to boost the numbers. This history detective cannot find each Homestead Deed, Railroad Deed, or Land Agent Contracts. So, if you send copies of your family deeds to the Rice County Historical Museum, you may be able to help figure out who came on some years. We need more legal facts if they were before August 18, 1871, the date when Rice County became a legal new county. Written by Ag-Spy.

Congratulations to this year's conservation award winners and thank you to all who practice soil conservation in Rice County



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