

Lifeguards: overseers of the pool and summer safety

By Mike Courson

Summer heat means fun at the pool but summer fun can turn to tragedy in the blink of an eye. The lifeguard is just that: the guardian of life at the swimming pool. Each summer, a handful of youth take on the task of keeping swimmers safe in Ellinwood.

"I feel like they stay alert and do what they're supposed to do to make it fun for the kids," said Tammy Sturn, one of the pool managers. "That's what it's all about is making it a fun place for the kids to come. We don't have a lot of discipline problems anymore. Things go really well."

This year, the pool has nine lifeguards. Each has completed a Red Cross Lifeguard Training Course that includes CPR certification. Lifeguards are required to re-certify every two years, and all the training comes out of their own pocket.

It's worth it for the lifeguards, who can take that life-saving knowledge elsewhere. Jordan Duvall is a relative newcomer to Ellinwood. He was a patron at the pool last summer and has moved to the lifeguard stand this summer.

"It prepares you to take on a situation," he said. "If you see something happening, you go through what you've learned about assessing a situation and how to handle it. That's been a pretty big help. I haven't had to use it, but it's been a big help."

Avery Pike is another student-athlete on staff at the pool. Back for a second summer, he started after seeing many of his friends lifeguarding. Aside from sitting on the stands, each lifeguard has multiple duties throughout the day.

"When we're not up there we're either skimming the water and making sure it's clean or (in the club house) helping the patrons," Pike said.

Like many of the other young lifeguards on staff, Pike has not seen an emergency incident at the pool. He's never even had to jump into the water for a near-emergency. "It's been a good two years," he said.



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As much as the lifeguards look out for the safety of others, pool management also looks out for the safety of its guards. The lifeguard stands each have an umbrella to shield the guards from the brutal summer sun.

"Sun safety is a huge part of working at the pool," said Bailey Baird, another second-year guard. "We tell the kids they need to be constantly applying sunscreen so we try to model that by doing it ourselves."

Fifteen-minute shifts on the stands give guards the opportunity for frequent breaks, and the short shifts keep them sharp. "Scanning a section for 15 minutes, we figure that's just enough time so they don't start getting sleepy or bored," Sturn said.

There are two stands at the Ellinwood pool, each covering half of the water. If more than 50 swimmers enter the water, a third guard is used in the water or on the side of the pool. While atop the stands, guards constantly scan the water for distressed swimmers.

"When I'm scanning the pool I look for kids who aren't strong swimmers," said Baird. "If they seem like they are tiring out easily or are scared to have their head underwater I pay closer attention to them because they have a higher likelihood of drowning."

Beyond Red Cross training, the lifeguards have an annual training session with Ellinwood EMTs.

"They run us through scenarios of likely events that might happen," Sturn said. "Usually, us managers stand back and watch how (the lifeguards) handle it. The EMTs act as if they're not there yet and let us do our thing, then they come and do their thing. It works well for us to do it together."

A child volunteer is often used as the "victim" during training sessions. Sturn's own son played the victim at a previous training session.

"They went through this whole big scenario where they said it didn't have a heartbeat," said Sturn. "He did a really good job up until the point they said they would have to shock him, then his eyes lit up!"

All the training has paid off. Sturn has been a manager at the pool for nearly two decades. Three other moms help manage the pool, and Sturn said the three who have been there the longest have each had to take a kid to the emergency room, but EMS has never been called to the pool. Injuries have been a result of falls, not swimming emergencies.

Another big change at the pool was the donation of lifejackets for any swimmers who want them. "That has significantly cut down the number of times our kids might have to jump in after someone, and it's improved the kids' swimming abilities," Sturn said. "That was a real blessing."



2016 wheat harvest mostly good to Kansas farmers

By Mike Courson

Fewer acres and some late rains may have kept Kansas farmers from a wheat record in 2016, but overall, the crop was a good one. Many farms around Kansas reported yields of at least 60 bushels per acre.

Things were looking especially bright in the first days of harvest around June 7. Things slowed down as rain moved into Kansas later in the month. On June 19, the Kansas Wheat Reports indicated yields of 60-61 bushels per acre in the Claffin area. Elsewhere around the area, yields near Stafford were 62 bushels per acre before a round of storms moved through.

Considerable rain has fallen throughout the state since. Farmers in the southern part of the state lucked out and many were able to cut fields before the rains came. As of July 6, many farms in the northwestern corner of the state remained uncut due to storms. As of June 30, cutting was estimated to be only five percent complete in the Goodland area.

Despite the rain, some farms southwest of Dodge City were reporting record yields, some exceeding 80 bushels per acre.



Duck Run season is here! See page two of this section for a full list of prizes in this year's run. (photo by Mike Courson)

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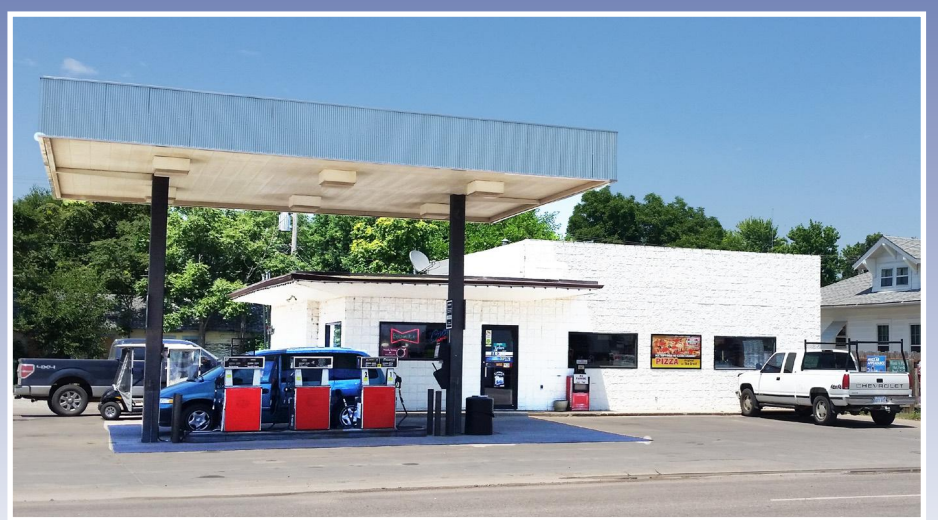


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