

Thedford celebrates economic growth

Stories & Pictures
Terri Licking

While small towns struggle to maintain their vitality and visibility, Thedford, a village of 200, seems to be succeeding. Successes of the past year were celebrated Wednesday, December 19, when Nebraska Lt. Governor Foley; U.S. Senator Ben Sasse's director of community relations, Ryan Broker of Ord, and Congressman Smith's agricultural director, Sallie Atkins of Halsey, arrived in Thedford to help the community celebrate economic growth.

Ribbons were cut on several new businesses, and the new Thedford Volunteer Fire & Rescue building, located along Highway 2, was toured. All fire trucks and two ambulances are now housed in one building and there is ample additional space.

Foley praised the community on coming together to build a large and functional fire station at a cost of approximately \$700,000. He praised the volunteer firemen and called them, "a gift to the taxpayers."

Ribbon cutting ceremonies were held at Dollar General located at the junction of U.S. 83 north and Highway 2. The new business is conveniently located on the Sandhills Journey Scenic Byway. Kristi Giles, store manager, gave a tour of the new business. Mike Rancourt, new district manager, was also on hand to answer questions.

Rancourt said he and his family transferred three weeks ago to North Platte from Rhode Island. He covers quite a territory of stores in central Nebraska. His biggest adjustment has been the traffic, or lack thereof, and commute time.

"About the same amount of people live in both states, but seven Rhode Islands can fit into Cherry County alone," Giles said. "I learned that in fifth grade."

The group traveled west to the new C.A.R.S. - Crossroads Auto Repair Specialists facility. Mike and Janice Hodges are second-generation mechanics and they are not new to the business. The couple, along with Mike's brother, Dan and wife, Alice, purchased Hodges Conoco from Bill and Jane Hodges in 1991.

The original Hodges Conoco was located on the west side of town and concentrated on fuel, at the pump and bulk, as well as auto repair. The two couples, along with their children, built a new Hodges Conoco station



The ribbon cutting inside C.A.R.S., l-r: Thedford Service Club president, Virgil Uhrmacher, Lt. Governor Foley, and Mike and Janice Hodges.



Lt. Governor Foley seated in one of the Thedford Fire & Rescue trucks housed in the new fire hall on the east edge of Thedford.

east of town. They expanded into a convenience store offering snacks and fast food, along with the fuel and repair shop. When the families sold the business several years ago, Mike and his son-in-law, Chad McIntosh, kept the auto repair shop going and rented space. Dan and Alice became co-owners and helped build Kinkaiders Brewery in Broken Bow. Mike and Janice gave up renting and fixed vehicles from their home garage until the new shop was completed a week prior to the ribbon cutting.

"We will have an official grand opening when we have all the finishing touches completed," Janice said.

The next tour stop was Ewoldt's Grocery. The store has seen many owners and several names, but since 2009, Allen Ewoldt has provided a wide variety of groceries and more to serve the area.

"We are in a prime location, almost 30 miles from Mullen, which has the closest store, then it is

over an hour to Valentine, North Platte, or Broken Bow," Allen said.

He is a third-generation grocer, growing up in his grandfather's, then his father's store in Stapleton. Ewoldt's Grocery in Stapleton also offered meat processing.

"We get many tourists coming from the forest from Omaha and Lincoln and they are amazed at what we have to offer," Allen said.

The Ewoldts have worked hard and installed new coolers, new freezers, and bigger shelves to allow more variety. They are also the booking agent for Allen's son, Cay Ewoldt, and his Sandhills River Trips business. Sandhills River Trips offers tanking and tubing adventures on the Middle Loup River. The Ewoldts also pride themselves on community support, donating to many fundraisers throughout the year.

A ribbon cutting was then conducted at With Love Photography. Bridget Licking, a mother of

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Ewoldt's Grocery held a grand re-opening event to show off their store improvements. Pictured l-r: Virgil Uhrmacher, Lt. Governor Foley, Velma and Allen Ewoldt, Ryan Broker, Sallie Atkins and Jack Johnston.



The Dollar General east of Thedford held a Grand Opening and ribbon cutting. Pictured holding the ribbon, Virgil Uhrmacher and Jack Johnston. Front row, l-r: Courtney Dahlberg, Mike Rancourt, Kristi Giles, Lt. Governor Foley, Ryan Broker. Back row, l-r: Sallie Atkins, Ken and Artis Giles, Marilyn Essman, Bill Essman, Ken Clausen, and Loretta and Dave Hamilton.



The ribbon cutting held at With Love Co. Photography on December 19. Pictured, l-r: Virgil Uhrmacher, Lt. Governor Foley, Bridget Licking and her family, Russell and children, Katen, Heston and Grady, Ryan Broker, representing Senator Ben Sasse, Sallie Atkins, representing Congressman Adrian Smith, and Jack Johnston, Thedford Service Club member.



The ribbon cutting for Prairie Feed Supply now operating in the former Thedford fire hall. Pictured above, l-r: Virgil Uhrmacher, Sallie Atkins, Ryan Broker, Bobbi Scott, Pat Laird, Lorene Laird, Lt. Governor Foley, Shalee Morrison and Jack Johnston.

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- Thomas County Commissioners Notice Of Regular Meeting
- Thedford Rural Fire Protection District Notice Of Meeting

News Briefs

School resumes at Thedford Public Schools on Thursday, January 3, 2019.

Sandhills Public School students will go back to school on Monday, January 7, 2019.