

New Thomas County Deputy Begins Duties



COURTESY

William Joseph Smith III was sworn in as a full-time Thomas County Deputy Sheriff on Monday, April 1. Brenda Cochran, Thomas County Clerk Magistrate, performed the ceremony and is pictured swearing in Deputy Smith.

Thomas County Sheriff Gary Eng has announced a new deputy has been hired to assist him.

William Joseph Smith III was sworn in as a full-time deputy at the Thomas County Courthouse, Monday, April 1.

Deputy Smith was previously a senior explosive

ordnance disposal technician in the military. He has a bachelor's degree in legal studies and a master's degree in criminal justice.

He and his wife, April, previously lived in Dunning. The couple has purchased a home in Thedford and will be

moving there after school dismisses for the summer. They have four children ages 15, 11, eight and one.

"I am looking forward to my new duties as deputy sheriff and serving the people of Thomas County," Deputy Smith said.

Changes in March at Central Sandhills Extension

Johnston takes new position; Pearman retires



TERRI LICKING PHOTO

Sue Pearman is pictured above with her husband, Don at her recent retirement party. Pearman was honored at a reception on March 29 at the Thedford Extension office. The Norman Rockwell print in the above picture is of "The County Agent."

Central Sandhills Extension has seen changes in March. Bethany Johnston, who has been the Beef Systems Extension specialist at Central Sandhills Extension since October 25, 2004, has moved with her family to the Sitz Angus Ranch at Burwell to help her parents, Mike and Deb Sitz.

"When I came here, Central Sandhills had five counties, four county fairs, three offices in two times zones, and one extension assistant," Johnston said.

While living here she married her husband, Joel Johnston, and they have one daughter, Jordée.

Johnston has taken a new position, Nebraska Grazing Lands Coalition Ranch Transition Manager, and she will work from her home.

"I will be doing more one to one ranch transitioning. People find it hard to open up with strangers at those workshops, so hopefully I can help them on a more personal scale," Johnston said.

During her tenure at Central Sandhills, Johnston wore many hats, including assisting Sue Pearman, youth extension educator from Mullen with 4-H and other youth activities, helping with range judging contests, and educating at the annual ranch

practicum at the Women in Agriculture Conference. She helped where needed during county fair time in Blaine, Thomas, Hooker and Grant counties, and the Nebraska State Fair.

Sally Sawyer, CSE office manager hosted a reception in honor of Johnston on March 19. Johnston's drive from her home, now 55 miles north of Burwell, was a little longer due to the flooding and washed out roads in the area. They are home schooling Jordée for the remainder of the school year.

"The last thing I will do

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Upper Loup NRD Welcomes Two New Board Members

The Upper Loup NRD has welcomed two new board of directors.

Representing Sub-District 2 is John Kraye of Mullen. Graduating from Mullen High School and later Kearney State, John has lived in Mullen his entire life. As a rancher, hay, and seed stock producer John has been a part of the FSA Board, Rural Fire Board, Mullen Community Foundation Board, and NE Cattlemen Sandhills Affiliate Board.

Representing at-large is Patrick Wright of Mullen. Patrick was raised 10 miles Northwest of Mullen. He graduated from South Dakota



John Kraye

School of Mines with a BS in Geological Engineering. He stayed in the petroleum industry for 20



Patrick Wright

plus years and retired in 2000 when he returned to the family ranch.

Public comments sought for Community Wildfire Plan Update

The draft Central Sandhills Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) for Blaine, Custer, Garfield, Greeley, Logan, Loup, Thomas, Valley, and Wheeler Counties plus the northeast corner of Lincoln County, is ready for public review. Review copies are available at public libraries in these areas. Comments will be accepted until May 15.

This plan is intended to enhance collaboration and communication among the various agencies and organizations who manage fire in the central Sandhills region, and to help them effectively prepare for and re-

spond to wildfire.

Landowners in counties that adopt the plan will be eligible to apply for federal and state cost-share funds for vegetative fuels reduction and other hazard mitigation efforts in at-risk areas within the CWPP boundary. The plan may also provide increased opportunities for counties, municipalities, and rural fire districts to seek grant funding for activities related to fire protection.

The plan, part of a statewide network of Community Wildfire Protection Plans, provides information useful to both

local emergency responders and those from outside the area who provide mutual aid. The CWPP consolidates and relays critical information needed for responders in unfamiliar terrain.

The draft plan is also available online at <https://nfs.unl.edu/documents/CWPP/Central-Sandhills.pdf>

Comments will be accepted via email to sben4@unl.edu or they may be sent via US Postal Service to the Nebraska Forest Service, Attn: Sandy Benson, PO Box 830815, Lincoln, NE 68583-0815.

Annual Easter Egg Hunt Set For April 21 In Thedford

The Easter egg hunt, sponsored by the Thedford Service Club, will be Sunday, April 21 at 2:00 p.m. CST on the Thomas County Courthouse lawn. Participants need to be there and ready to go by 1:45 p.m.

Everyone will meet on the street side of the Thomas County Library. Age groups will be di-

vided up there and sent to their area to gather Easter eggs. Arrangements have been made as in previous years, to move the Easter egg hunt indoors in case of inclement weather.

All donations to the Easter egg hunt are greatly appreciated. Monetary donations can be dropped off with Michelle McIntosh at the County

Salon or placed on the Service Club account at Ewoldt's Grocery. Candy donations can be dropped off with Michelle McIntosh at the County Salon.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Michelle McIntosh at 645-2585 or Kevin Hood at 645-2504.

Upper Loup NRD To Cost-Share Well Decommissioning

Do you have one of these?

If so, the Upper Loup NRD has a deal for you!



COURTESY PHOTOS

For every old, unused well on your property, we'll give you as much as \$150-\$400. Of course, there's a catch; you must have it properly sealed after receiving approval from the Upper Loup NRD Well Decommissioning Cost-Share Program.

It's easy to do, either go to our website (www.upperloupnrd.org) click on cost-share programs and then well decommissioning where you can print the application or you can

call our office at 308-645-2250. Once you receive approval, you must hire a contractor or well driller who is licensed to properly close wells. Domestic and livestock wells are eligible for 75% cost-share up to \$150 and irrigation wells are eligible for 75% cost-share up to \$400.

Abandoned wells are any well that has served its usefulness and is no longer needed. If not properly sealed, they are a direct link for contamination to our groundwater.

Not only does an abandoned well pose a threat to our water supply, but it also poses a safety hazard for humans and animals. Many times, they are disguised with vegetation, rotting wood planks, cement chunks and rocks, or simply a bucket or other covering. Dollars are just waiting to line your pocket, so contact the Upper Loup NRD today to submit your application.

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Superheroes Of The Sandhills

The annual Superheroes of the Sandhills Cancer Fundraiser is April 14 at Thedford High School.

See inside this issue for a complete list of events, and plan now to attend and help this worthwhile cause.

Thedford Bloodmobile

The American Red Cross Blood Drive will be held Monday, April 15 at the Thedford High Old Gym. They will be taking donations from 12:00 to 6:00 p.m.

This is the final scholarship blood drive, so help them meet their goal.