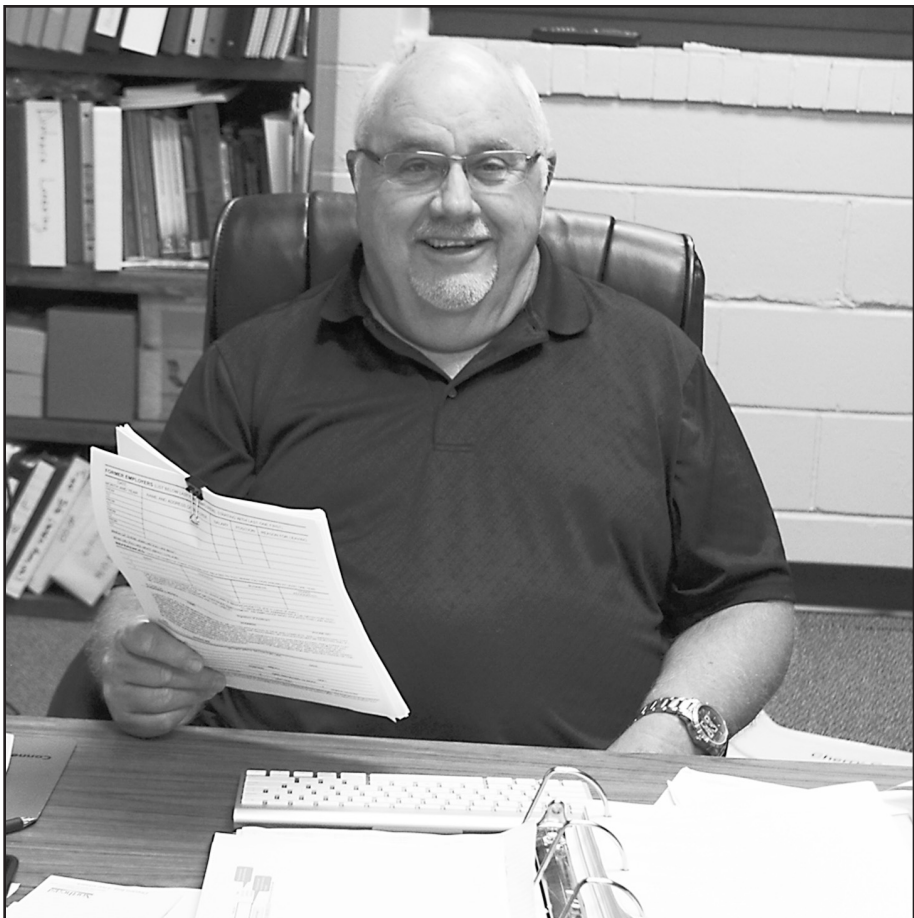


Interim Superintendent



JAMIE TAYLOR PHOTO

Gary Cooper has been hired for one year as the new interim superintendent at Thedford Schools. Superintendent Cooper, who was living in Bellevue, came out of retirement to take the position. He and his wife, Jerry, have moved to Thedford, where they are quite happy to be making their home back in the Sandhills.

Jerry (Moran) Cooper is a native of Grant County. Gary and Jerry met when Gary took his first teaching assignment in 1971 in Hyannis. From there the couple went to Dorchester and on to Gary's "hometown" of Sargent. His first administrative position came at Bruning where he was hired as the K-12 principal and football coach.

"I've always coached football, along with my teaching positions, and have coached some girls basketball," Superintendent Cooper said.

He retired in 2005 from Grand Island Public Schools where he was assistant superintendent and director of operations. He served in vari-

ous administrative positions in the Grand Island school system.

Along with his administrative assignments he has helped many schools in his educational facility planning consulting business. Superintendent Cooper has also served as an interim at other schools.

"I felt I could be of help in Thedford and enjoy working in small schools," Superintendent Cooper commented. "This should be a good match and I look forward to helping them through this transition period."

Gary and Jerry have three daughters and eight grandchildren.

Now that he is at home in Thedford he is enjoying fishing and getting acquainted with the people in and around Thomas County.

Superintendent Cooper is looking forward to the 2017-18 school year and the challenges and opportunities it holds.

"Men on the Mountain" to be featured at fairgrounds



COURTESY PHOTO

"Men on the Mountain," a gospel quartet from Arnold, will be featured this year at the Thomas County Fair. The quartet will be singing from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m., Saturday, July 29, at the Thomas County Fairgrounds. This will be followed by a free barbecue, 4-H livestock auction, Masonic sponsored watermelon feed, antique tractor pull, and cowboy mounted shooting. The beer garden and dancing to "Victory Underground," will be held from 9:00 p.m. until 1:00 a.m. at the Thomas County Fairgrounds Pavilion. See the special section feature inside this issue for complete Thomas County Fair information. Members of "Men on the Mountain," are l-r: Ed Tullis, lead; Irving Jennings, bass; Bob Hough, baritone; and Dale Fletcher, tenor. Melody Jennings is the accompanist. Their concerts feature humor, clapping, and singing from the heart.

Making Blaine County great again



Some of the Sandhills Heritage Museum board members, Carol Harris, Vicki Webb, Teresa Goedeke, Kathy Martindale chair, being presented a Taylor Juniper seedling by Hereford Crossroads member, Richard Brown. Standing are JeanAnn Teahon and Linda Teahon, who is also on the Hereford Crossroads committee and was instrumental in getting the Hereford display in this museum. The Taylor Juniper is unique to Taylor, Nebraska and the seedlings are shipped all over the United States.

Pictures & Story
By: Terri Licking

Rural Nebraska has many communities with dwindling businesses and residents. Once vibrant store fronts, now with board covered windows and busy streets, are void of shoppers.

For the residents of Blaine County, Nebraska, they refuse to accept their decline without a fight. This year's annual county fair has taken on the theme, "Making Blaine County Great Again."

Three communities sit within its boundaries - Brewster, Dunning, and Purdum. Brewster is the county seat, and although full research has not been conducted, it is probably one of the smallest county seats in the United States which does not have a post office.

Purdum's residents have fun with their status. Prior to entering one sees

the road sign "Purdum - Next 5 Exits." One exit includes the main businesses in town - Harsh Mercantile, which offers a wide array of supplies and feed for ranchers and their livestock, Western Nebraska Bank, and the UCC church.

Dunning is the largest community in the county with just over 100 listed in the 2010 census. It once had a thriving business community including a store, bank, and lumber yard. It is where the combined high schools of Halsey and Dunning consolidated years before it was trendy and formed Sandhills High School. A new school was built in the village. Today, Sandhills High School and Thedford, located twenty-seven miles to the west, have consolidated their sports so they can continue to play eight-man football, but still have separate schools.

Today's businesses besides the school include Norm's Sinclair station which was started in 1958 by Norval VanDiest and his bride, Marlene. Today it is owned by their son, Norm. Marlene put Dunning on the map worldwide years ago with her one-of-a-kind, hand crafted pottery.

"All my pieces are functional, not just for show," Marlene said. Now 80, she is still filling orders in her shop located adjacent to the family business. She had a gallery in her home where she sold items, but she now uses the service station and area galleries. In her younger days, Marlene was one of a few who tried to keep the town vibrant. She served on the village board, was one of the charter members of the Sandhills Journey Scenic Byway organization, Friends of the Forest, and was one of Dunning's Junk Jaunt co-

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Sandhills Heritage Museum volunteers, Marlene VanDiest and Wayne Bias, discussing the Hereford Crossroads display area.

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