

Local Farm Bureaus To Host District 42 Candidate Forum

Those interested in learning more about the candidates running for the District 42 seat in the Nebraska Legislature are invited to participate in a candidate forum sponsored by the Lincoln, Logan, McPherson, Perkins, and Thomas County Farm Bureaus.

The candidate forum will be held:

Saturday, April 2 at 6:30 p.m. (CST) at McKinley Education Center, 301 W. R Street, North Platte, NE 69101.

The forum will provide an opportunity for the public to meet and ask questions of the candidates who are seeking to represent the district in the Nebraska Legislature. The event is free and open to the public. Doors will open 30 minutes before the forum begins to enable attendees the opportunity to meet the candidates and submit written questions for consideration at the forum. The forum will last 90 minutes.

All of the filed candidates seeking to represent



District 42 have been invited to participate, including Chris Bruns, Brenda Fourtner, and Mike Jacobson all of North Platte.

“Farm Bureau members appreciate the importance of elected decision-makers in all levels of public policy, and we look forward to hearing the candidates’ views and positions in this public venue,” said Craig Phelps, board member, Lincoln County Farm Bureau.

Legislative District 42 encompasses Hooker, Lincoln, Logan, McPherson, and Thomas Counties and a portion of Perkins County. The seat is currently

held by Sen. Mike Jacobson.

The Nebraska Farm Bureau is a grassroots, statewide organization dedicated to supporting farm and ranch families and working for the benefit of all Nebraskans through a wide variety of educational, service, and advocacy efforts. More than 55,000 families across Nebraska are Farm Bureau members, working together to achieve rural and urban prosperity as agriculture is a key fuel to Nebraska’s economy. For more information about Nebraska Farm Bureau and agriculture, visit www.nefb.org.

Gov. Ricketts Proclaims Sandhill Crane as State Migratory Bird

On Wednesday, March 16, Governor Pete Ricketts signed a proclamation designating the Sandhill crane as the official migratory bird of Nebraska during a ceremony at Rowe Sanctuary in Gibbon.

“Each spring, up to one million Sandhill cranes gather along the Platte River during their annual journey north,” said Gov. Ricketts. “The migration is a majestic sight that attracts tens of thousands of spectators to central Nebraska. Today, I’m declaring the Sandhill crane as the official State migratory bird in Nebraska. This designation recognizes the Sandhill cranes’ migration as one of Nebraska’s most amazing natural spectacles. It also recognizes the benefit of the cranes to the State’s tourism industry, which warmly welcomes out-of-state birdwatchers each year to marvel at their migration.”

Kristal Stoner, Executive Director of Audubon Nebraska, emphasized the importance of the Platte River as a wetland habitat for Sandhill cranes.

“The Platte River is a hard-working river,” said Stoner. “Nebraskans rely on the Platte River for irrigation, drinking water, and recreation. Every March, when the evening skies fill with soaring cranes and the rivers echo with their loud, rattling call, it reminds us that we are not the only ones that need this river. Keeping the river healthy requires active management because what is good for birds is good for people. Rowe Sanctuary has been



COURTESY

Gov. Ricketts holds up the proclamation designating the Sandhill crane as the official migratory bird of Nebraska

here for nearly 50 years working to make sure the river is open and flowing, and providing thousands of people the opportunity to see cranes on the river.”

John Ricks, Executive Director of the Nebraska Tourism Commission, noted that the cranes’ annual migration is a major driver of tourism, attracting travelers from all over the world to Nebraska.

“The annual Sandhill crane migration is a unique, spectacular, and true Nebraska gem, offering visitors from around the world the opportunity to be awed by Mother Nature,” said Ricks. “What

the migration looks like, feels like, and sounds like simply cannot be expressed in words; it has to be experienced.”

A research project led by the University of Nebraska-Kearney found that 46,500 people visited sites in central Nebraska for the 2017 crane migration. Ninety-three percent of the visitors were not local residents of central Nebraska. The study estimated that the crane migration had a \$14.3 million economic impact on central Nebraska in 2017, supporting the equivalent of 182 year-round jobs.

DHHS, Department Of Education Team Up For Project AWARE

For rural educators in Nebraska City, Lexington, and Valentine, mental health help for their students is on the way.

The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) and Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services - Division of Behavioral Health (DHHS-DBH) are collaborating with three Local Education Agencies (LEAs) of Lexington, Nebraska City, and Valentine to improve school-based mental health services.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 1 in 5 children (22 percent) living below 100 percent of the federal poverty level have a mental, behavioral, or developmental disorder.

“Early diagnosis and appropriate services for children and their families can make an enormous difference in the lives of children,” said Sheri Dawson, director of the Division of Behavioral Health. “By partnering with the Department of Education on this project, many children in Nebraska will receive the help they need.”

“The NDE is honored to be awarded an additional Project AWARE grant,” says Commissioner Matthew Blomstedt. “We are excited to build upon the great work being done by the LEAs participating in the first AWARE grant with the three additional LEAs partnering on this new grant.”

Nebraska’s Advancing Wellness and Resiliency in Education - State Education Agency (AWARE-SEA) 2.0 follows AWARE-SEA Project 1.0 from FY 2018, which brought these programs to Chadron, South Sioux City, and Hastings. FY 2022 Project will have the opportunity to build upon the successes and lessons learned from the initial grant.

AWARE-SEA Project 2.0 addresses the high level of mental and behavioral health needs of school-aged children in rural schools, including depression, anxiety, suicidal

ideation, and trauma. Educators statewide have reported feeling unprepared to handle the severity of mental health issues arising daily in schools. Training programs for school staff to better address students’ mental and behavioral health needs have been requested by many school districts.

Each of the LEAs have strong, long-standing track records of successful collaborations with state and local partners, including mental health providers, community organizations, the business and private sector, and stakeholders, including students and families.

The project’s goals include:

Prevention of mental health and behavioral disorders among students by providing positive, supportive, and trauma-informed learning environments

Increasing student resilience and pro-social behaviors

Increasing availability of school-based mental health services

Increasing schools’ capacity to identify and immediately respond to the mental health needs of students exhibiting behavioral or psychological signs requiring clinical intervention

Increasing schools’ capacity to identify and intervene in bullying and aggressive behaviors of students which may contribute to school violence.

Through the implementation of evidence-based, trauma-informed practices in mental health screening, assessment, interventions, and treatment, up to 5,227 students will be served through the project each year. Selected practices to enhance school climate, student resilience and pro-social behaviors, such as Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), will be employed in each of the three districts, accompanied by Functional Behavioral Assessment and Cognitive Behavioral Intervention

for Trauma in Schools (CBITS).

Need to talk or get immediate help in a crisis? Help is available. If you or a loved one need assistance, please reach out to:

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255) for English, 1-888-628-9454 para Español

Your faith-based leader, your healthcare professional, or student health center on campus.

Nebraska Family Helpline - Any question, any time. (888) 866-8660

Rural Response Hotline, (800) 464-0258

Disaster Distress Helpline: 1-800-985-5990 (oprime dos para Español) or text TalkWithUs to 66746.

National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233 or text LOVEIS to 22522

National Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-4AChild (1-800-422-4453) or text 1-800-422-4453

National Sexual Assault Hotline: 1-800-656-HOPE (4673)

Niobrara State Park getting new river access

Work will be completed this spring on a new Niobrara River kayak/canoe access at Niobrara State Park.

This river access project includes a put-in/take-out for canoes and kayaks, a scenic overlook with interpretive signage and access road.

This project is a part of flood mitigation requirements for the construction of the new Mormon Canal Bridge on Highway 12 west of Niobrara. The previous bridge was washed out during the 2019 flood. Construction on the new bridge was completed in 2021.

The project was funded by Nebraska Department of Transportation in partnership with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Influenza Cases Increasing Throughout Nebraska

Vaccination, Antiviral Medication, Preventive Measures Critical

The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is reporting higher levels of flu and flu-related cases in Nebraska. The State is experiencing increased positive cases, school absenteeism, hospital visits, and hospitalizations. A total of 13 Nebraskans have died from influenza-associated illness so far this season.

As flu activity is currently elevated throughout the state, it is important to remind Nebraskans that the flu vaccine is the best protection against flu-related illnesses, missed work or school, and flu-related hospitalizations.

“The good news of declining COVID-19 cases is giving us some much-needed optimism,” said Dr. Matthew Donahue, State Epidemiologist for DHHS. “As influenza cases increase, it is important for Nebraskans to consider proven tools, like the flu vaccine and flu antivirals, to keep themselves and their families safe from sickness, hospitalizations, and death.

The most effective defense against this illness is the flu vaccine. The vaccine is safe and rigorously tested. The most common reaction people may experience from the shot is

soreness and redness at the injection site. After vaccination, it takes about two weeks for the body to build immunity. Nebraskans can safely get a flu vaccine at many locations throughout the State. Vaccines.gov is also a resource for finding flu vaccines near you.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends flu vaccines for everyone 6 months and older every year. Certain people are at high risk for serious complications, and it’s extremely important they receive the vaccine:

Young children
Adults 65 years of age or older
Pregnant women
People with chronic lung disease (like asthma and COPD), diabetes (type 1 and 2), heart disease, neurologic conditions, and certain other long-term health conditions
Residents of nursing homes and other long-term care facilities

In addition, antiviral drugs are also an effective way to treat the flu. Early treatment with antivirals can reduce symptoms, shorten the amount of time you are sick, reduce the risk of serious flu complications, and potentially decrease additional spread of the virus. An-

tivirals currently approved are: Rapivab (peramivir), Relenza (zanamivir), Tamiflu (oseltamivir phosphate, also available as generic), and Xofluza (baloxavir marboxil).

In addition to getting vaccinated, prevention measures can also protect against the flu:

Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue every time you cough or sneeze. Throw the used tissue in a wastebasket. If you don’t have a tissue, sneeze or cough into your sleeve.

Practice non-pharmaceutical interventions

After coughing or sneezing, always clean your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand cleaner.

Stay home when you are sick.

Do not share eating utensils, drinking glasses, towels, or other personal items.

Clean your hands often with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand cleaner.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.

Avoid close contact with people who are sick, if possible.

For more flu information, visit the DHHS website at www.dhhs.ne.gov/flu or the CDC website at www.cdc.gov/flu.