

Swishers Making A Difference In Dunning

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Dunning residents Jodi and James Swisher have seen opportunities in the area and are moving forward to find ways to fill those needs.

Just over a year ago, they along with the late Alice McFadden, purchased a house at 306 Cowles in Dunning and made it into A & J's Bed & Breakfast. Just this last July they opened a coffee shop called Lil Bits in what used to be a recreational room at the same location. Both businesses have been busy.

Jodi and James recently bought Norm's Sinclair at the junction of Hwy 2 and Hwy 91 on the north side of the North Loup River just outside of the Dunning city limits. The business has been renamed 'The Spur.'

Future plans include a café with daily luncheon specials and a buffet on Friday and Saturday evenings. Gas pumps with card readers are also planned. A wide selection



Jodi and James Swisher standing in front of 'The Spur.' The Swishers see opportunities in the area and are filling needs.

of groceries have been ordered as well as an assortment of spirits.

Soon Lil Bits coffee shop

will be relocated to The Spur.

The ever-popular Sandhills Pottery will continue

to be offered as long as Marlene VanDiest keeps making it.

The Swishers have lived in the Sandhills all their married life, raising three children and now enjoying ten grandchildren. Daughter, Pebbles will work in both the café and convenience store.

Daughter April will provide treats from her Thed-

ford business "Sweets by April." Son Casey will assist on special occasions.

Currently the business employs three extra people along with the Swisher family members.

A Grand Opening is planned for September 1st. The Sandhills Heritage Museum in Dunning will host the ribbon

cutting.

Dunning is located in the middle of the Sandhills Journey National Scenic Byway which is Hwy 2 stretching from Grand Island to Alliance. It is the west end of the Loup to Loup Byway coming from Ord. The Spur will be a convenient stopping point for travelers.



A small sampling of a few of the items offered in The Spur for the convenience of locals and those traveling Highway 2.

'Aggie of the Year' out on the range

Mary Crawford
NCTA NEWS

In her second year of college in Curtis, Maddy Carr settled into her comfort zone outdoors on the range.

Often, she rides vast rangeland as cattle graze pastures in Hayes and Frontier Counties. Or, at the shooting range of the Curtis Gun Club.

Both are settings where Aggie students from the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture learn, work, compete and bond with classmates.

For Carr, a 2020 graduate of North Platte High School, she found her initial interest in veterinary medicine shifting to livestock industry management. Largely, due to the experiences she had as a student employee on the NCTA ranch crew.

"I feel livestock industry management is going to better suit me for a career path than being in a clinic setting as a veterinarian," Carr said. She prefers to be outdoors, working with livestock.

The NCTA ranch crew handles chores at the campus farm, assisting with the NCTA cow-calf herd and feedlot cattle during the school year, and at the Leu Ranch in

Hayes County mainly during the summer.

Her favorite work is with her big white horse, Maggie, processing, roping and moving cattle, often with the assistance of her Red Heeler-Border Collie dog, Mae.

"Mae goes with me everywhere and does everything with our ranch crew," Carr said.

The athletic cowgirl who played softball in high school was active in 4-H, particularly with livestock projects.

She was influenced greatly by the Sandhills ranch life of her grandparents, Leon and Rosalea Gift of Thedford, and by family and friends.

Natural Fit

NCTA was a natural fit for her college career.

Carr joined the Aggie Shotgun Sports Team coached by Alan Taylor, and then was hired for the Aggie ranch crew.

Over spring break of 2021, she spent a week at the University's Gudmundsen Sandhills Laboratory near Whitman, helping with spring calving.

"That was a great experience to stay up there and gain some hands-on experience," she says.

In the spring of 2022, Carr competed in her first collegiate shotgun sports

contests. When five members of the team traveled to San Antonio, Texas for the national clay target championships Carr joined teammates for the start of their trip, in a warm-up session at the Whittington Center near Raton, New Mexico.

As the team and coaches proceeded to Texas, Carr and teammate Nathaly Dragoo of Lincoln returned to Curtis because of their responsibilities with the campus ranch and farm crew. They had livestock chores to do.

Aggie of the Year

An end-of-semester announcement at the student awards night in May caught her by surprise. Carr was named Aggie of the Year, a selection by faculty and staff for her outstanding representation as an NCTA Aggie.

She stayed in Curtis again this summer for fulltime employment on the NCTA ranch crew. Last week, they weaned spring calves and moved them to the feedlot at campus. They also moved yearlings and the main cow herd from the Leu Ranch summer pasture back to campus.

The Aggie ranch crew enjoyed the camaraderie of summer work, particularly after long hours in hot, drought conditions of



NCTA Dean Larry Gossen presents the Aggie of the Year plaque to Maddy Carr in May. (Crawford / NCTA photo)

southwestern Nebraska. Often, they started their days for big projects such as fencing or construction at 6 a.m. to avoid the warm afternoon temperatures.

"We had some very fun times together with pool parties, cookouts with team roping, and movie nights," Carr shared.

"Memories like these we won't forget!"

This fall, as NCTA's fall semester started August 22, Carr has a full load of classes in Range Management, Nutrition, Livestock & Carcass Evaluation, Ag Economics, Success in Animal Sci-

ence, and Human Relations.

She is on track to graduate with an associate of applied science degree in December 2023. First, however, she plans many hours working or competing outdoors. As an Aggie out on the range.

Women in agriculture workshop to provide tools to manage anxiety

A two-part virtual workshop hosted by Nebraska Extension's Women in Agriculture program in September will focus on managing and working through anxiety.

"Breaking Down Anxiety: Tools to Help You Live a Less Anxious Life," will hold its first session from 1 to 3 p.m. Central time on Sept. 8. The second session is scheduled for 1 to 2 p.m. Central time on Sept. 29.

It will be facilitated by Ashley Machado, a mental health consultant who works primarily with agricultural professionals and their families.

"Sometimes anxiety can

feel all-consuming, like you're on a train you don't want to be on and you don't know how to get off. Other times it can feel like there's a light at the end of the tunnel, but you keep getting stuck on a hamster wheel," Machado said.

The workshop will discuss how anxiety shows up, why it can be a reaction to uncertainty, and offer advice for developing skills to manage anxiety and its effects.

Machado is an advocate of rethinking the ways that we support mental



Maddy Carr aboard Maggie, left, roped a cow which needed doctoring out on open range of the Leu Ranch. The NCTA student ranch crew has hands-on learning while at work. (Alan Taylor / NCTA photo)