

Dairy nears finishing expansion

By Vera Sloan
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While most of the country is fighting to stay alive in a recession that has gripped the country for more than three years, the McCarty Dairy in Thomas County is near finishing a multi-million-dollar expansion which will make it a supplier of one of the nation's largest producers of yogurt and dairy drinks.

The dairy, southwest of Rexford, is building a plant slated to supply condensed milk to the Dannon Yogurt plant in Fort Worth beginning April 1.

"Never in our wildest dreams did we ever imagine anything like this would happen," said Judy McCarty, who owns the expanding dairy operation together with her husband Tom and four sons, David, Mike, Clay and Ken.

It was the wide open plains of Thomas County that lured the family from a land-locked area in Pennsylvania. The expansion happened. The family has been happy here, and after nearly 12 years, still expanding.

From the McCarty's beginnings in Kansas, the original herd of 750 cows near Rexford was soon expanded to include a facility near Bird City in Cheyenne County that houses an additional 2,200 head.

This past summer, the family leased a dairy north of Scott City. They began operations there with 500 head during the fourth week of November. And now there's more.

"It just sort of happened," said Judy, "The boys were talking to a consultant who works for Cargill. Cargill has a dairy division, and it was the consultant's dream to put something like this together because it had never been done before, and that's how it all started.

"Dannon is a huge corporation which produces yogurt and dairy drinks for shipment from three plants scattered across the country ... in Fort Worth, Jordan, Utah, and Minster, Ohio. The Ohio location is the largest, producing 230,000 cups of yo-

gurt hourly."

Dairying is more than just milking cows. There're newborn calves to tend to, heifers to be fed and prepared for breeding, manure to haul, feeding various rations to the various ages of animals, machinery and equipment to keep in working order, plus making sure it's all done by the clock. And there's never a day off when there are cows to be milked.

This all goes on daily while construction crews are busy with the expansion.

McCarty said many area businesses and agencies, including Midwest Energy, Jim's Electric, the Thomas County commissioners, Foley Equipment, Colby Implement, Colby Canvas and the Northwest Kansas Planning and Development Commission, to name a few, have been good to work with. She said the family workers on the project have given a boost to the area's economy with added business for restaurants and service stations and renting 80 to 90 motel rooms.

The Rexford dairy, she said, will add from 13 to 17 jobs for the new project, with the first product to be approved to go out April 1.

To fulfill the dairy's commitment to the Fort Worth plant, she said, the family needs to be milking 7,500 cows, so each dairy will have around 2,500 cows.

The Bird City dairy completed a new free-stall barn this year. Crews now are enlarging the milking parlor and maternity area at the Rexford dairy.

Milk from Scott City and Bird City will be hauled to the condensing plant near Rexford, McCarty said. They expect to ship out 3 1/2 loads of condensed product daily. And since milk is 87 percent water, the dairy will be able to reuse the water that comes off the condensing process, enabling it to use even less ground water than before.

"Dannon expects everything to be immaculate," McCarty said. "They are dedicated to meeting or exceeding all state and federal regulatory standards.... It's all about what's good for the



DAIRY COWS eating at the feed bunk. The dairy is close to completing a multi-million dollar expansion to become a supplier for the nation's largest producers of yogurt and dairy drinks.

Times staff photo by Norma Martinez.

environment, the employees and what's good for the business.

"The Dannon Company is very concerned about communities. They're especially concerned about their carbon footprint and about keeping the environment safe, and although they're really big, they are people just like us. The first time we all met, there was an instant connection, and we're really comfortable with it all. In fact, with no conference room here at the dairy. Every-

one, including the environmental people overseeing that end of the project, ended up using my kitchen for meetings.

"This," she said, making a sweep with her arm indicating the temporary modular buildings set up to house offices, project manager and environmentalists, "will all be gone and we'll actually have a real office."

McCarty said since they are a family dairy, the project manager encouraged them to incorporate

a family theme into their office decor. They will be using some of the rock from a rock quarry at the old Pennsylvania dairy and possibly some wood from Pennsylvania in parts of the new office area.

The lab and processing area will be headed up by Dr. Joe Gillispie of McCook, Neb. He will be responsible for all lab work, which will be under sterile conditions to comply with regulations. Ashley Sherman, a Colby

native, will stay on to handle tracking operations. Bill Adams, a certified public accountant from Colby, will be in charge of the day-to-day finance.

"We owe many people a lot of gratitude for stepping up to the plate," McCarty said, "and for that we are so very appreciative."

She said the family plans an open house sometime after everything is ready.

Business course offered by college

Northwest Tech has announced the partnership with the Small Business Development Center in Bird City to offer an introductory business course for aspiring business owners.

The Small Business Management Course is designed to educate and network business owners and entrepreneurs to help build a solid foundation for business management.

"The course is an excellent opportunity for entrepreneurs and existing business owners alike," said Diane Stiles, Northwest Tech assistant vice president for academic affairs. "The additional support through individual counseling by the Small Business Development Center ensures student success."

Classes are scheduled, month-

ly on Tuesday nights from 4 to 8:20 p.m. on the Northwest Tech campus. Participants in the class will receive a certificate from the Small Business Development Center and one credit hour from Northwest Tech.

Tom Clark will be teaching the course, and Megan Horinek will be the Small Business Development counselor.

Contact the Northwest Tech Admissions office for more information the course content, format, costs and enrollment information 800-316-4127 or admissions@nwkte.edu. To register for the course, please fill out the online registration form at: <https://nwkte.wufoo.com/forms/small-business-management-course-enrollment-form/>

Conservation awards to be given at meeting

By Karen Krien
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Four conservation awards will be presented on Monday, Jan. 30 at the annual meeting of the Cheyenne County Conservation District. This year's winners of the Banker's Awards are Tim and Robyn Raile, Soil Conservation; Glenn and Louanne Isernhagen, Wildlife; and Clint Bursch, Water Conservation. Tom and Donna Stevens are the winners of the Cheyenne County Grassland Award.

The awards meeting will start with dinner at 6:30 p.m. at the St. Francis Community High School

cafeteria, St. Francis.

A full report of the Cheyenne County Conservation District's activities and financial affairs will be made. The terms of two board members, Randy Rueb and Roger Orth, are expiring. An election will be held.

The winners of the conservation posters will also be announced.

Be sure and check the conservation special section inserted in next week's issues of *The Saint Francis Herald* and *Bird City Times*. It includes stories about the winners and is brought to readers by the advertisers.



GABRIELLE POCHOP enjoys swinging during recess.

Times staff photo by Norma Martinez.

County looking for members to fill hospital board

By Karen Krien
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Those people interested in serving as a member of the Cheyenne County Hospital Board need to make an appointment to talk to the commissioners at the Jan. 31 meeting. Call Terry Miller, county clerk, at 785-332-8800.

In the past, the hospital board has been active, having built on to the hospital and clinic. Other improvements need to be made in the future and responsible citizens are

needed to serve on the board.

Jane Young has served for the last four years and her term is expiring. To be fair to everyone, the commissioners agreed that they should give anyone wanting to serve the opportunity to interview.

The hospital board meets once a month in the basement of the clinic in St. Francis. Members presently serving are Erika Zimbelman, Kari Gilliland, Jane Young, Mike Bandel and Jerry Toler.

School Menu

Monday Breakfast: apple criptos, sausage link Lunch: cheesy potato soup, peanut butter and jelly sandwich	Thursday Breakfast: polish sausage supreme Lunch: barbecue pork rib sandwich, pepper fry
Tuesday Breakfast: scrambled eggs with cheese Lunch: lasagna, vegetable	Friday Breakfast: tornados Lunch: chicken pot pie, dessert
Wednesday Seventh grade lunch Breakfast: breakfast bites, yogurt Lunch: spaghetti with meat,	Breakfast is served daily with toast, cereal, juice and milk. Lunch is served daily with salad bar, fruit and milk.

