

# Disaster loan applications deadline drawing closer

The expiration date for filing applications for Emergency Disaster (EM) loans by farmers and ranchers in Norton and Phillips Counties is April 1, 2013, according to Pat L. Bohl, Farm Loan Officer, for the Farm Service Agency.

Bohl advised that those needing farm credit as a result of drought on July 24, 2012 and continuing and who think they are eligible for FSA assistance, should make their applications at the FSA County Office, 11506 Pineview Dr., Norton, Kansas, before the expiration date.

"Loans covering physical and/or production losses are scheduled for repayment as rapidly as feasible, consistent with the applicant's reasonable ability to pay," said Bohl. The current interest rate for March is 2.25 percent but is subject to monthly changes until the loan is approved.

FSA's Farm Loan Programs

staff is committed to new and existing customers, FSA customer goals and our rural communities. FSA's service extends beyond the typical loan, offering FSA customers ongoing consultation, advice and creative ways to make your farm business thrive. At the Farm Service Agency, we want to be your lender of first opportunity to overcome these adverse weather conditions and rebuild your operation to get back on track. FSA's loan staff can refer customers to other public and commercial financing sources that can serve as a blend with FSA's farm loan programs.

FSA loans covering physical losses may be used to replace installations, equipment, livestock, or buildings (including homes), lost through this disaster.

FSA loans covering production losses may be used to buy feed, seed, fertilizer, livestock,

or to make payments on real estate and chattel debts. "Funds can also be used for other essential operating and living expenses," Bohl said.

To be eligible for an emergency disaster loan, an applicant must be operating a family size farm or ranch, must be unable to get credit elsewhere, and must have suffered a qualifying physical and/or production loss from the disaster.

Farmers who suffered at least a 30 percent reduction to at least one cropping enterprise, may have a qualifying production loss. Emergency disaster production loss loans cover 100 percent of qualifying losses.

Farmers and ranchers that think they may be eligible should contact the FSA County Office in Norton, Kansas or call (785) 877-5156 for additional information and how to apply. USDA is an equal opportunity employer and provider.

# Technological initiatives in farming

By Ron Wilson  
Huck Boyd Institute

Let's go to southern California where a conference on social media is underway. Participants are learning how to utilize the new technology of social media. Remarkably, one of the speakers is a farmer from rural Kansas. He is a co-founder of a new entity which is helping thousands of people learn more about agriculture.

Darin Grimm is a farmer near Hiawatha, Kansas. He has always been interested in technology.

"As a high school student, I was interested in computers," Darin said. As a self-taught computer expert, he did tech support for a couple of local companies.

In 1995, he moved back to the family farm outside Hiawatha near the rural community of Morrill. "I live in the house where I was born," Darin said. He continues to farm with his father and partners while maintaining his interest in technology. In fact, for several years he did consulting on precision agriculture. Then his interest in technology led him to discover Twitter.

"As a technology person, I heard about Twitter early on," Darin said. "After I had been on Twitter for a while, a farmer in Ohio made a list of ag accounts on Twitter, four hundred or so. I converted that into a list that was searchable and sent it back to the farmer in Ohio."

The two started an online conversation. As unlikely as it may seem, these aggies started communicating on Twitter. They were on Facebook as well, along with a number of other farmers.

This growing interest in social media and agriculture culminated in the creation of a new group called the AgChat Foundation. Created in April

2010, the AgChat Foundation is a non-profit organization. Its mission statement is simple and straightforward: "Empowering farmers and ranchers to connect communities through social media platforms."

In practice, the Foundation educates and equips farmers and ranchers with the skill set needed to effectively communicate in this new world of social media. That means engaging on Twitter, Facebook, blogs, YouTube, LinkedIn and other social media services.

For generations, farm organizations have talked about the importance of telling agriculture's story. Social media give individual farmers new tools to tell their story first-hand more effectively than ever. Research shows that social media are a growing opportunity for farmers to have a stronger voice in educating people about the business of growing food, fuel, feed and fiber.

"Consumers have sincere questions about their food, and it's our goal to help farmers and ranchers answer questions about how food, fuel, feed and fiber are produced," said the AgChat website. "We also believe it's all of agriculture's responsibility to build that connection."

In August 2010, the AgChat Foundation sponsored its first-ever two-day conference on social media. Some 75 people attended, and it was so successful that it became an annual event. More than 100 people attended the most recent conference in Kansas City. AgChat is now doing regional training sessions as well.

Every Tuesday evening at 7 p.m. Central time, AgChat hosts an online discussion of time-

ly topics, from USDA school lunch policies to how to manage a farm during a drought. The organization's website is [www.agchat.org](http://www.agchat.org).

Will people discuss agriculture on social media? According to the AgChat website, when ag groups coordinated "Thank a Farmer" on Twitter during Thanksgiving 2009, it generated 6.7 million online impressions.

The AgChat Foundation is not a membership organization. It is supported by sponsorships from individuals and agribusinesses. The foundation has a national board of directors with members from Oregon to Florida. The president of the AgChat Foundation is Darin Grimm from the rural community of Morrill, Kansas, population 270 people. Now, that's rural.

"So many people have so little connection to the farm anymore," Darin said. "Social media is a way for people to interact with real farmers."

It's time to leave California where a conference on social media is underway, featuring a Kansas farmer talking about the AgChat Foundation. We salute Darin Grimm for making a difference by pioneering this innovative form of communicating about agriculture through technology. The success of this rural technology initiative makes me all a-twitter.



# Norton woman competes



Lori Shields walked through the flowing ribbons in the evening gown competition of the Mrs. Kansas pageant. It was the final phase of the two-day event held in conjunction with the Mrs. Missouri pageant in Branson, Mo. Her children Darius, 8, Emmary, 2, other friends and family cheered her on from the audience.

— Herald staff photo

By Carolyn Plotts

Lori Shields of Norton represented northwest Kansas in the Mrs. Kansas pageant Friday and Saturday in Branson, Mo., where Kansas and Missouri hold their joint competition.

It came down to a final, nail-biting moment when it was only Mrs. Northwest and Mrs. Lawrence holding each other's hands on center stage, waiting the judges final decision as to who would become Mrs. Kansas 2013.

The title would eventually go to Elizabeth Stephens, Mrs. Lawrence, but Mrs. Shields' friends in the audience couldn't have been more proud.

"I'm glad I did it," said Mrs.

Shields. "It's something a lot of women don't have an opportunity to do, but it was lots of fun and I'm so fortunate to live in Norton. This community was just awesome in the way they supported me. I'm proud to say I had the biggest cheering section at the pageant."

Mrs. Shields, as first runner-up, would assume the title if for any reason Mrs. Lawrence cannot fulfill her obligations.

The entire pageant weekend was filled with activities for the contestants. Besides the standard swimsuit and evening-gown categories, Mrs. Shields was interviewed by the judges regarding her platform, "The Haven and helping families affected by incarceration."

The contestant manages the Haven in Norton, which provides weekend lodging at an affordable price for families coming to visit inmates at the Norton Correctional Facility.

In addition to the pageant itself, she had two cocktail parties, two luncheons and an awards ceremony to attend. At that ceremony, she was honored with "The Red Hot Chili Pepper" award for her "hot and spicy" attitude.

Mrs. Shields is married to Damien Shields. The couple has two children, Darius, 8, and Emmary, 2. She is a teacher aide at Eisenhower Elementary School in Norton.

For help with your advertising needs please give Dana a call 877-3361 email: [dpaxton@nwkansas.com](mailto:dpaxton@nwkansas.com)

ANNUAL  
**McMullen & Wyatt Auctions**  
*Farm Consignment Auction*

McMullen & Wyatt Auctions is now taking consignments for our Annual Spring Auction. Any farm related items, livestock equipment, tools, machinery, tractors, or trucks accepted for the April 20 auction. To consign or for more information, please contact Donald or Robert

785-877-3299 OFFICE  
785-877-2731 ROBERT  
785-877-2028 DONALD

# CORRECTION

Due to printing errors in our Rural Health section, the following information was incorrect. We hope that this did not inconvenience anyone.



- Number of Beds - 25 as Critical Access Hospital.
- Revenue 2012 - \$38,425,000.
- Net Income 2012 - \$530,387.
- Tax Support - None; operated as a private, nonprofit hospital.
- Doctors - three active physicians, four nurse practitioners, three physician assistants, one certified registered nurse anesthetist, 29 consulting physicians.
- Administrator - Kevan Trenkle.
- Phone - (785) 462-7511.

**SCHC**  
The Road to Wellness in Northwest Kansas  
SHERIDAN COUNTY HEALTH COMPLEX  
"The Road to Wellness in Northwest Kansas"

- Beds - 18 as Critical Access Hospital, 35 long-term nursing, eight assisted living apartments.
- Revenue 2012- \$6.5+ million. Fiscal report not available until March 1.
- Profit 2012 - Expected 6.1 percent profit margin. Have had positive profit margins since 2005.
- County money - \$936,312.
- Doctors - Cooperative agreement with Bluestem Medical in Quinter, Dr. Brewster Kellogg of Colby as chief of staff, one nurse practitioner and one physician assistant.
- Administrator - Steve Granzow.
- Phone - (785) 675-3281.

## It's A Celebration!

Please join us to celebrate  
Curt Luehrs' retirement.



We know Curt would like to see all his friends and co-workers **Wednesday, Mar. 20, 2013, from 2-4 p.m.**, in City of Norton Library's Community Room.

Please stop in, enjoy refreshments and wish Curt the best on his retirement after 33 years of service to our community!

Thanks, Curt, for your dedication and hard work. We'll miss your leadership.



**Midwest Energy, Inc.**

"A Customer-owned Cooperative, Making Energy Work For You"

# Options

(Continued From Page 1)

Commissioner R.A. Peterson agreed.

Dr. Peterson then asked if he could learn to drive one of the graders and was told that that would probably be possible.

The bottom line is the machines that the crews like best will have a decided edge, the commissioners agreed.

"We're going to rely heavily on your expertise," Commissioner Charles Posson told Mr. Richard.

The commissioners were also told that road grader operator Joe Wray assisted a woman, who had fallen outside her home. The woman lives by herself in the county, Mr. Richard said, and who knows what would have happened if Mr. Wray had not found and helped her.

"I think Mr. Wray is to be commended," Commissioner Posson said.