



## Born to Read children to benefit from grant

Allison Daise (right), daughter of Dr. Travis and Melanie Daise, opened a flap in the book Children's librarian Marcy Melia read during "Born to Read" last week at the Goodland Public Library and found a mirror. Throughout the book, children opened flaps to see who was behind them, and then behind the last flap to see who is in the book, they found a mirror and the words, "It's you!" The library received a \$1,000 grant from Smart Start Northwest Kansas for the reading program for children birth to age 3. Karen Merryman, professional development coordinator for Smart Start, said Melia's program deserves the grant because she truly understands and implements a good program for the tiny "readers." Melia said she plans to buy a circle rug for the reading circle to sit on and books.

Photo by Sharon Corcoran/The Goodland Star-News

# Couple spends year rebuilding hunting lodge destroyed by fire

By Karen Krien

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The charred rubble is now a steel pole building. The smell of smoke has been replaced by knotty pine planks and the burned stubble field has produced another crop.

It has been a long year, said Rex Murray, but we are back in business.

A year ago on Nov. 15, a fire started in the farm shop and hunting lodge owned by Rex and Sandy Murray, located halfway between Goodland and Wheeler. Rex had worked the month of October 2007 getting the lodge ready for hunters as well as a place to celebrate a large family Thanksgiving. Needless to say, Thanksgiving dinner wasn't held there and it was hard for Rex to recognize that there was something to be thankful for.

After the fire, he said that he just didn't think he would rebuild. However, that was before friends and acquaintances changed things around.

The Murrays run a pheasant hunting/dog business as well as raising Vizsla hunting dogs. Throughout the year, there are state and national contests hosted by the Murrays.

They had met many people through competitions as well as those who had come to stay, hunt and compete on their grounds.

Shortly after the devastation of the fire, friends and hunters, began showing up to help clear the damage. Then, with encouragement from many, the Murrays began to start planning to build.

Their son, Ryan, drew up the plans for a 42- by 104-foot pole building. Those plans were sent to a friend in Cheyenne, Wyo., who plugged them into a computer so they would know what materials they needed. The building consists of three main areas: the lodge/kitchen/office; the breezeway through in the middle; and on the east, a shop where Mr. Murray works on his farm machinery.

Because funds were limited, the Murrays, with the help of Ryan, their daughter Crystal and husband Travis, did the majority of the work themselves. They had contacted a mill in South Dakota where they bought the 12-foot long planks of tongue-and-groove knotty pine. The cement floor that was in the old building was used. When it came to refurbishing it, Betty and Robin Petersen, with Western Auction, notified them when furniture was going to be on an auction. They



Rex and Sandy Murray put up the mounted fighting pheasants given to them for their new lodge.

Photo by Karen Krien/The St. Francis Herald

also kept them informed on good tool sales as all of the tools had been destroyed in the fire.

Rex said there were also local people who donated tools, equipment and money to purchase needed items.

The day of the barn raising found some of their hunting buddies on hand to build as well as Tom Bandel with his tractor and scoop helping with the rafters. The pine paneling covers the walls and ceiling. The kids helped put up the ceiling

paneling while some other hunting friends helped with the sides.

The cement floor had holes in it, left from the heat of the fire. One day, some hunters came from Washington State and Denver. They asked Rex what he was going to do about the holes. He said he honestly didn't know what to do with them.

After a day of hunting, the guys went into town and picked up some materials. They were Quik-Crete concrete specialists and the holes were fixed before they went to bed that night.

Rex said it was hard to put up the building because there wasn't a tool left after the fire.

"I didn't even have a hammer or a screw driver or a saw," he said. Everything had to be purchased.

On Jan. 15, 60 days after the fire, the building was up. Today, the lodge has a "homey" atmosphere with several seating areas and televisions. There are tables and chairs where hunters and families can meet to eat and talk. There is a high ledge on the west side of the room which has antique memorabilia displayed

and, at the far end, is a tin washtub which displays the remains of the guns after the fire. The kitchen is open with an eating bar. The Murrays said they had to buy a new stove and television — the rest of the furniture and appliances were used when purchased.

They have had some mounted pheasants donated since the fire. Several weeks ago, a hunter who is also a taxidermist, brought two mounted pheasants in flight (they had been taken from Murray ground). They are placed on a log with Ringneck Country carved in it. It is one of the highlights in the room.

Rex's office is still unfinished but, when he has time, it will be a place where he can conduct business. The breezeway will soon have four overhead doors and the area will be used for a number of activities.

People have been so good to us, he said.

In the fire, he lost all of his guns (some with sentimental value), trophies, pictures and a jacket he had received when he took first and second at the National Championship of the Upland Classic Series, a hunting competition. Of all the things he lost, he mourned the loss of this jacket as it could never be replaced (or so he thought).

Word of the destroyed jacket was received by one of the owners of National Upland Classic. In December, Mrs. Murray received a call asking if she remembered what the lettering was on the jacket?

"I said I could tell them as I had a picture of him and the jacket in front of me," she said.

In March, at National Upland Classic in Missouri, Rex was given a second jacket, a replica of the original.

Often times, as he talked, Rex's emotions were near the breaking

point and he said he has only thanks to give for what he has and for the many, many friends he has made and those who supported and encouraged him at his lowest point.

The Murray's still have most of their dogs but one of them died shortly after the fire. Two others suffered from smoke inhalation. The kennel was burned in the fire but he and a neighbor were able to save the dogs by stuffing them into a dog trailer, cars and pickups — anywhere that was safe. The two dogs which had smoke inhalation went on to win two national championships this year.

The three cabins used for hunters and guests were not destroyed in the fire. The cozy little cabins can sleep up to 12 people and have kitchen and bathroom facilities. In time, Rex plans to have a walkway from the lodge to the cabins which will make it more convenient.

The lodge is available to not only hunters but is an ideal place to hold meetings, small conventions and family gatherings. The cabins are also available.

For more information, contact Rex or Sandy at 785-899-5882 or e-mail ringneckcountry@yahoo.com or www.ringneckcountry.com.

The National Upland Classic, a division of the National Kennel Club, will be held Saturday and Sunday, Dec. 6 and 7, at Ringneck Country, located at Road 2030, north of Goodland and south of Wheeler. The Kansas State Pheasant Championships, the biggest doubles competition in the nation, will be held at Ringneck Country on Saturday and Sunday, Feb. 21 and 22.

People are welcome to stop by and see the action. Signs for these competitions are posted and the location is easy to find.

## corrections

The Goodland Star-News will correct any mistake or misunderstanding in a news story. Please call our office at (785) 899-2338 to report errors. We believe that news should be fair and factual. We want to keep an accurate record and appreciate you calling to our attention any failure to live up to this standard.

## American Cancer Society 2009 Relay for Life

Win a \$500 & \$250 Shopping Spree with a Walmart Gift Card

- \$2.00 donation=1 ticket
- \$5.00 donation=4 tickets
- \$10.00 donation=10 tickets
- \$20.00 donation=S-T-R-E-T-C-H

Drawing to be held at Walmart at 2 p.m. on December 13. Need not be present to win. Tickets will be sold at Walmart on November 15 and November 29 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. and December 13 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.. Or contact a Paw Wash Relay for Life team member.

(785) 899-5927  
(785) 890-3982  
(785) 821-3999



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JIMMY DEE BAND**  
*(THIS IS THE LAST YEAR TO SEE THE JIMMY DEE BAND PERFORM, SO DON'T MISS IT!)*

**AT THE THIRD ANNUAL CHAMBER  
CHRISTMAS DINNER & DANCE  
(DECEMBER 6, 2008)**

**GOODLAND ELKS CLUB  
1523 ARCADE ~ GOODLAND**

**TICKET PRICES:**

<b>\$30 MEMBERS</b>	<b>DANCE ONLY: \$20</b>
<b>\$40 NON-MEMBERS</b>	<b>OPEN TO PUBLIC</b>

**SOCIAL HOUR: 5:30 PM**  
**DINNER: 6:30 PM**  
**WREATH AUCTION: 7:30 PM**

**TICKETS AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE:**  
FIRST NATIONAL BANK, MEMBER FDIC  
WESTERN STATE BANK, MEMBER FDIC  
PEOPLE'S STATE BANK, MEMBER FDIC  
PRAIRIE ROSE FLORAL COMPANY  
KLIP 'N KURL SALON

HOLIDAY FAVORITES

We are looking for more recipes for the second round of Home for the Holidays 2008!

The categories are:

- Main dish
- Salad
- Drinks
- Appetizers
- Side dish
- Desserts

Please send recipes to:  
The Goodland Star-News  
1205 Main Street  
Goodland, Kan. 67735

DEADLINE IS DEC. 5!!!