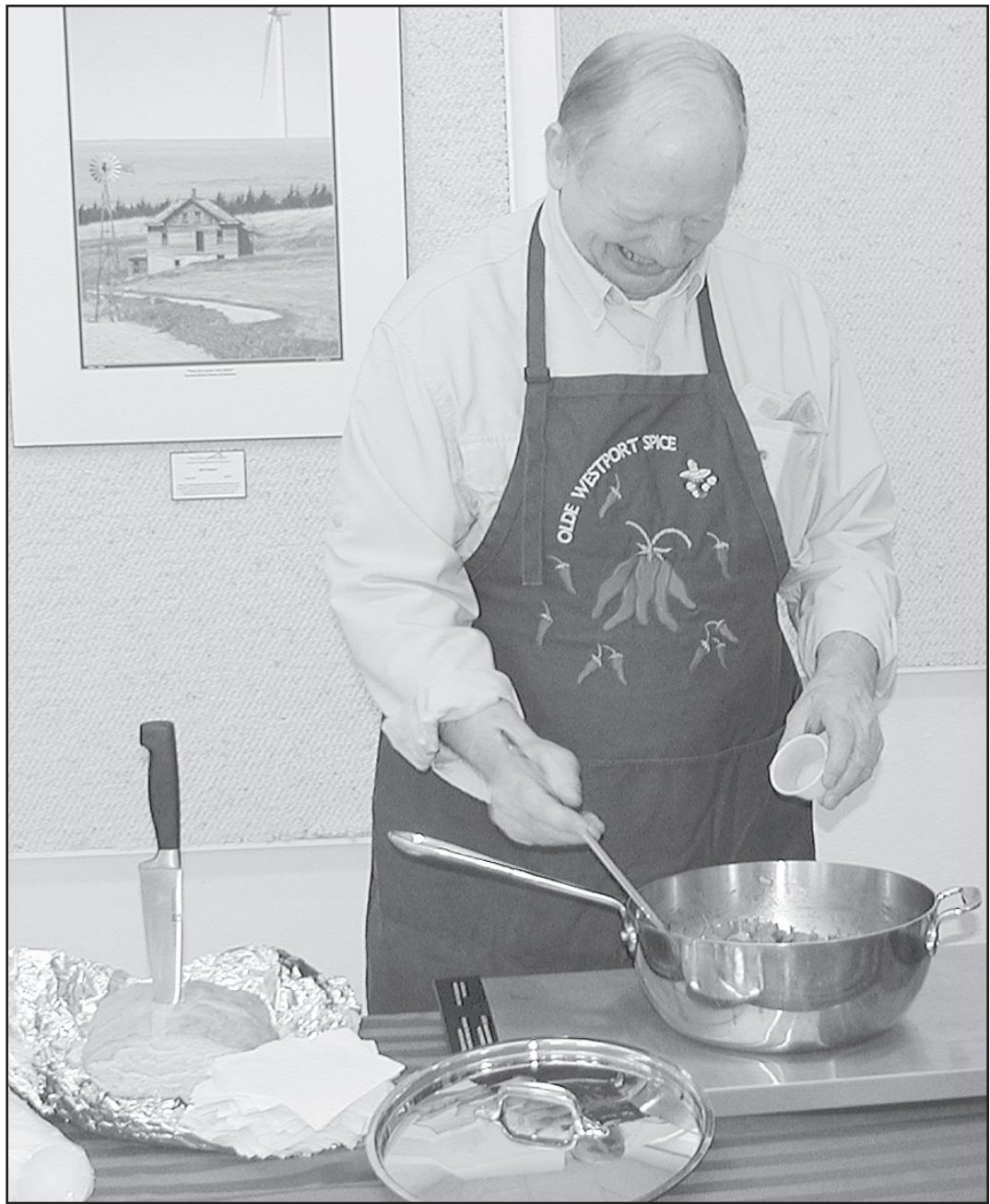


Ideas for St. Patrick's Day



Bill Petersen of Olde Westport Spice and Trading Company, 1218 Main, was at the Carnegie Arts Center on Thursday at noon for sack lunch Thursday. He had samples of his Irish soda bread and O'Doul's Irish beef stew for people to try.

Photo by Pat Schiefen/The Goodland Star-News

Public needs to watch for refund scheme

WASHINGTON – The Internal Revenue Service is warning senior citizens and other taxpayers to beware of an emerging scheme tempting them to file tax returns claiming fraudulent refunds.

The scheme carries a common theme of promising refunds to people who have little or no income and normally don't have a tax filing requirement. Under the scheme, promoters claim they can obtain for their victims, often senior citizens, a tax refund or nonexistent stimulus payment based on the American Opportunity Tax Credit, even if the victim was not enrolled in or paying for college.

In recent weeks, the IRS has identified and stopped an upsurge of these bogus refund claims coming in from across the United States. The IRS is actively investigating the sources of the scheme, and its promoters may be subject to criminal prosecution.

"This is a disgraceful effort by scam artists to take advantage of people by giving them false hopes of a nonexistent refund," said IRS Commissioner Doug Shulman. "We want to warn innocent taxpayers about this new scheme before more people get trapped."

Typically, scam artists falsely claim that refunds are available even if the

victim went to school decades ago. In many cases, scammers are targeting seniors, people with very low incomes and members of church congregations with bogus promises of free money.

The IRS has also seen a variation of this scheme that incorrectly claims the college credit is available to compensate people for paying taxes on groceries.

The IRS has already detected and stopped thousands of these fraudulent claims. Nevertheless, the scheme can still be quite costly for victims. Promoters may charge exorbitant upfront fees to file these claims and are often long gone when victims discover they've been scammed.

The IRS is reminding people to be careful because all taxpayers, including those who use paid tax preparers, are legally responsible for the accuracy of their returns, and must repay any refunds received in error.

To get the facts on tax benefits related to education, go to the Tax Benefits for Education Information Center on IRS.gov.

To avoid becoming ensnared in this scheme, the IRS says taxpayers should beware of any of the following:

- Fictitious claims for refunds or

rebates based on false statements of entitlement to tax credits.

- Unfamiliar for-profit tax services selling refund and credit schemes to the membership of local churches.

- Internet solicitations that direct individuals to toll-free numbers and then solicit social security numbers.

- Homemade flyers and brochures implying credits or refunds are available without proof of eligibility.

- Offers of free money with no documentation required.

- Promises of refunds for "Low Income – No Documents Tax Returns."

- Claims for the expired Economic Recovery Credit Program or for economic stimulus payments.

- Unsolicited offers to prepare a return and split the refund.

- Unfamiliar return preparation firms soliciting business from cities outside of the normal business or commuting area.

This refund scheme features many of the warning signs IRS cautions taxpayers to watch for when choosing a tax preparer. For advice on choosing a competent tax professional, see Tips for Choosing a Tax Return Preparer on IRS.gov.

Strategic planning key in farm transitions, growth

By following six steps, farm operators and small business owners can develop a plan to chart the course for future growth and sustainability, according to Michael Langemeier, professor in Kansas State University's Department of Agricultural Economics.

Langemeier outlined the process of strategic planning in a three-part feature in the Kansas Farm Management Association newsletter, available online at <http://www.agmanager.info/kfma>.

Strategic planning, which should be an ongoing process, is most important during times of transition, he said. When an operation is bringing on a new family member or hiring new employees, those are vital times to devise or reevaluate the strategic plan.

"Formally or informally, the discussion needs to take place between family members so everyone knows their role," he said.

Once that discussion begins, the most important topic is assets, he added. Farm operations have many assets that should be used efficiently. It is important for farmers to monitor their past performance, compare themselves to competitors and determine if growth or staying the same size will be the most financially responsible.

Langemeier cited six steps that can be beneficial for farm operations.

Step 1 - Develop an effective mission statement. Consider what makes the operation unique, business values and what the business should be recognized for. Motivating employees and focusing efforts are two benefits of a clear mission statement.

Step 2 - Formulate goals and objectives for the business. This means

having specific, measurable, attainable, rewarding and timed smart goals which will provide strong reference points for decision making and measuring progress.

It is important to have specific goals. Instead of wanting the farm to grow, specify you want the farm to grow by a certain profit or acreage each year. Measurable goals let you look back in five years and see if you grew by a set amount."

Using a SWOT analysis investigates the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats associated with the business in the third and fourth steps.

Step 3 - Focus on firm resources. Strengths and weaknesses reflect the internal components of the business. Contemplate human, physical, financial, technological and consumer resources. The important thing to do is think about changes that may occur in the near future that would impact your farm's ability to compete or changes that could lead to profitable endeavors.

Step 4 - Evaluate opportunities and threats in the external environ-

ment of the business. Survey the current and future business environment centers around competitors, markets, powers of suppliers and buyers and the operating environment. Ask such questions as, "What are the key factors to competitive success?" "What are the industry's dominant economic traits?"

Step 5 - Identify and select strategies to achieve goals and objectives set in Step 2. This step requires matches to be made between strengths and opportunities outlined in Steps 3 and 4.

Step 6 - Engage in continuous self-assessment and strategy refinement. Develop best practices to monitor success.

Langemeier said that farmers may need to make revisions if their monitoring shows undesirable outcomes from the strategic plan. He recommends reevaluating at the beginning or end of each year, adding that that it won't take much time, but is an important way to start or end the year.

Current estate tax law will undergo major adjustment

Without Congressional action, the current estate tax law will undergo a major adjustment on January 1. That's not good news for rural Kansas.

The equivalent current estate tax exemption is \$5,125,000 with a top tax rate of 35 percent. Unless Congress acts, the 2013 equivalent exemption will fall to \$1 million and the top tax rate jumps to 55 percent. With the recent run up of land prices, the new numbers could devastate Kansas farm families and land owners, taking away funds that might otherwise benefit local families and rural communities. A

combined value of a few hundred acres, a saving account and retirement fund could easily exceed \$1 million. Planning ahead is the key to limiting estate taxes.

Thomas County Extension and the Thomas County Community Foundation will be hosting an Estate Planning meeting, called "How to Survive the Death Tax" on Thursday, March 15, to aid citizens in planning for this possible change in estate tax law and recognizing essential elements to an Estate Plan. Make arrangements to attend this informative meeting designed for everyone regardless of your net

worth. The program will be at the Thomas County 4-H Building and will start at 4 p.m. (Mountain Time) with a meal. Everyone young and old can benefit from attending.

Addressing the ever changing estate tax laws and essential elements of an estate tax plan will be Attorney at law, Ken Wasserman. Reservations are requested by Friday by calling the Thomas County Extension office at (785) 460-4582. If you have questions or need more information feel free to call or email Clint Milliman, Thomas County Extension Agent at milliman@k-state.edu.

Dental camp to be held in June

Junior and seniors interested in becoming a dentist can apply to attend the first-ever dental camp at the Advanced Education in General Dentistry at Wichita State University. This is a three-day event, free to selected applicants. There are only 20 spots so you need to apply as soon as possible.

The deadline to apply is Sunday, April 15, and the camp runs from

June 13-15.

This dental camp offers high school juniors and seniors the opportunity to explore a career in dentistry. Through hands-on interactive experience and academic evaluation, this camp provides students a learning platform to gain knowledge of careers in dentistry.

One camper will be the recipient of the Ellis Foundation Scholar-

ship towards a career in dentistry. This camp is limited to 20 campers and applications are reviewed by the Wichita State Scholarship Coordinator. Not all applications are accepted. Those not accepted for the 2012 camp are urged to re-apply to dental camp in 2012.

Interested students should contact their counselor.

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.

Enjoy a night at the movies!!

TONIGHT 7 PM
The Woman in Black (PG-13)
Starts Friday 7 PM:
Star Wars Episode 1 3D (PG)

National Weather Service Storm Spotter Class

6:30 p.m. Wednesday
Murray Center
315 Eustis on the Northwest Tech campus.

NOTICE OF OWNERS OF TAXABLE PERSONAL PROPERTY

All owners of taxable personal property (including boats, jet skis, mobile homes, campers, snowmobiles, golf carts, mopeds, dirt bikes, trucks, non-highway vehicles, trailers, airplanes, business equipment and fixtures) MUST come to the appraiser's office to report ownership of such property. ALL Personal Property MUST be listed by March 15. Any questions concerning personal property items call 890-4825 Sherman County Appraiser's Office.

WE NOW PRORATE WATERCRAFT.
Owner of record is to notify the County Appraiser within 30 days of the acquisition or sale.

Boy Scout Chili Feed

Saturday, March 24, 2012
11 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Methodist Church Fellowship Hall, Goodland, KS
(12th & Sherman)

Tickets: Adult-\$6.00, Children \$3.00

Partnering To Bring Medical Specialists To Goodland

Goodland Outreach Clinic Schedule

Goodland Regional Medical Center
220 W. Second Street - Goodland

Cardiology
Dr. Christine Fisher
Monthly - (785) 625-4699

Urology
Dr. Kevin McDonald
Monthly
Dr. Wallace Curry
Monthly
(877) 312-1619 or (785) 628-6014



In partnership with Goodland Regional Medical Center
haysmed.com