

Norton County

Sports play big role in community

By VERONICA MONIER

Whoever said, "There's nothing to do in a small town," obviously never lived in a small town.

Norton is a vibrant, busy town with a wide variety of activities for residents and visitors.

First and foremost, it's a sports town. The Norton High School Blue Jays have excited their fans for many years with state-ranked football, basketball and wrestling teams. Any Friday night during the school year will find the stands packed with Blue Jay Boosters.

There's plenty of fine dining too. Norton is home to three nationally known fast-food franchises, a Chinese restaurant, two bar and grills, and several home-owned restaurants.

If you enjoy holiday lights at Christmas, county fairs, fireworks on the Fourth of July, Veterans Day parades and flowers in the spring, Norton is the town for you.

Cultural events are brought to the city by the Norton County Arts Council. Plays, a craft fair, a home tour and children's theater are some of the events sponsored by the council.

The highlight of the summer is Norton's county fair. It is always scheduled for the last full week of July so out-of-towners can plan their vacation. Set in beautiful, tree-lined Elmwood Park, the county fair has the perfect setting.

One of the new additions is the horse arena. The livestock barns are where 4-Hers display their animal projects.

Operated entirely with volunteers, the carnival and fair is an attraction that brings visitors from neighboring counties and Nebraska. Rides include a Ferris wheel, octopus, roller coaster, and kiddie rides. Game booths guarantee lots of winners. The fair provides inexpensive fun for the whole family. Grandstand shows run the gamut from gospel music to car races.

The Norton Recreation Commission offers everything from T-ball to adult softball during the summer. At the recreation building, aerobic classes are offered. There is also an indoor walking area and a basketball court.

In the summer the Norton Swimming Pool gives young people and adults a cool way to get a little exercise. Swimming lessons and water aerobics are available along with a kiddie pool where younger children can play under the watchful eyes of their parents.

Every year, Nov. 11 finds State Street in downtown Norton lined with hundreds of people watching the annual Veterans Day Parade. The parade has dozens of volunteers and hundreds of participants all assembled to recognize the men and women of the armed forces who fought for freedom.

Norton residents love parades and kids. The two come together each Halloween for a parade down State Street. The Chamber of Commerce sponsors the parade, followed by a wiener roast



BRICK AND STONE SIGNS WELCOME VISITORS to Norton and Norton County.

sponsored by the Norton City Fire Department.

Santa Claus has a home on the lawn of the Norton County Courthouse. Every holiday season Saint Nick arrives the Saturday after Thanksgiving. One of the highlights of the Christmas season is the sleigh rides made available during the holidays. Santa, his house and the rides are sponsored by the Norton Area Chamber of Commerce.

During the rest of the year, entertainment can be found all over the place.

Rainbow Lanes on West U.S. 36 offers bowling for leagues and individuals. Call them at (785) 877-3632.

The tennis courts and Norton City Swimming Pool are located side by side at 804 W. Wilton. The phone number is (785) 877-5080.

Elmwood Park has a new playground area for children. Part of the equipment was purchased by the local Lions Club.

A disc golf course in Elmwood Park will find

players sharpening their skills every Sunday afternoon at 3 p.m.

There is also a skate board park on the northeast side of Elmwood Park.

If you enjoy golf, Prairie Dog Recreation Association Golf Course offers nine holes with grass greens. This is considered to be one of the finest golf courses in northwest Kansas. Call 877-3643 for green fees and times.

Baseball diamonds are in Elmwood Park with summer leagues for all ages organized by the Norton Recreation Commission. Call them at 877-3087.

Norton Recreation Center, at 3 Washington Square, offers racquetball courts, basketball, a walking track, and aerobics. Call 877-3087 for more information.

Weightlifting is available to the public through the schools. The weightlifting room is at the East Campus, 877-3338.

The Norton Theatre, operated by volunteers,

features twin screens and a snack bar. Show times are Friday and Saturday, 8 p.m.; Sunday 5 p.m. and 7 p.m.; Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, 7 p.m.; closed Thursday. Call 877-2075 for information, or check page 2 of each issue of *The Norton Telegram* for movie information.

Fit-to-Go Fitness Center is the newest addition to the list of things to do in Norton. A circuit of exercise equipment is geared to provide you with an adequate workout in 30 minutes. Call owner Gloria Zwickle at 877-3666.

Even the most avid reader will be able to find enough material at Norton's Public Library to keep him or her busy for a long time. If you have any questions call them at 877-2481. If the Library doesn't have the book you want, let the Northwest Kansas Library System know at 877-5148 or toll free at (800) 432-2858. They can get most books to Norton in a few days.

Norton is anxious to show you ... Norton!

Lake, state park provide recreational opportunities

By KRISTEN BRANDS

Four miles west and one mile south of Norton lies the Norton Dam, impounding the Keith Sebelius Reservoir and about 2,500 surface-acres of water.

Adjacent to the reservoir is the 5,500-acre Norton Wildlife Area.

The reservoir, the wildlife area, and the park all offer fishing, camping, hunting, boating and wildlife-watching opportunities year-round.

Primary sportfish in the reservoir are wipers, saugeye, largemouth bass, crappie and channel catfish. Spotted bass, walleye, flathead catfish, blue catfish, and bluegill are also present. Special creel and length limits may be in effect for some species. Always check Kansas fishing regulations and all posted notices before fishing.

The Prairie Dog State Park offers

modern and primitive camping sites year-round. There are modern hook-up sites for campers, plus one log cabin, as well as seven designated primitive areas. Walk-in camping is allowed on the entire area. Pack your trash to take home.

Pheasant hunting opportunities are usually good in the wildlife area. Quail and prairie chickens exist, but in lower numbers. Hunting pressure is heavy on the opening weekend of November, therefore planning hunts after November or during the week may be more productive.

Both whitetail and mule deer are present in the wildlife area, and hunting pressure is heaviest during the firearms deer season. Turkey hunting and dove hunting are generally minimal.

Ducks and geese use the lake dur-

ing their migrations. Duck hunting is allowed on the lake while goose hunting takes place only on private land. To provide a secure resting area for migrating waterfowl, the middle fourth of the reservoir is designated as a waterfowl refuge, and closed to waterfowl hunting from October 1 to March 1.

Boating facilities include a two-lane boat ramp on the east end of the park and a large parking area.

The Prairie Dog State Park office winter hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Sunday through Friday. In mid-April, the hours change to 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. seven days a week. In mid-May office hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Sunday through Thursday and 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays through Labor Day.

BB gun shooters make their marks in competitions

By CAROLYN PLOTTS and DICK BOYD

Norton is the home of the state's only BB Gun Team Museum. It opened June 4, 2005, at 412 E. Holme, right on U.S. 36. The museum is open to the public every Saturday afternoon from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

The Norton Jaycees started the Shooting Education Program in 1964, and sponsored the BB gun team until 2005 when the organization disbanded. The Norton Rotary Club took over the sponsorship and established the museum. A centennial project of the

Norton Rotary Club, the museum is a showcase for all the memorabilia, state and international awards the team has accumulated over the last 41 years of competition. The museum houses a traveling international trophy that was won three times by Norton and has been retired.

The Norton BB Gun Team has won 36 of 40 state BB gun shoots and eight international championships, more than any other community.

Norton considers itself the BB Gun Capitol of Kansas, the United States and the world.