

The Hebron **Journal Register**

\$1.00

Volume 146, Issue 4  
14 Pages, One Section, Plus Supplements



Wednesday, January 25, 2017

Serving the communities of Alexandria, Belvidere, Bruning, Byron, Carleton, Chester, Davenport, Deshler, Gilead, Hebron, Hubbell and surrounding areas

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## County benefits from bridge match

The Thayer County Commissioners were pleased with road superintendent George Gerdes's report Jan. 18.

In November, Gerdes took advantage of the first round in the County Bridge Match Program under the Transportation Innovation Act by applying for the repairs of five structurally deficient bridges.

Gerdes informed the commissioners all five were approved at the state's cost of 55 percent of the estimated \$380,000 to repair the bridges.

Of the 80 submitted proposals for 151 bridges from across Nebraska, 22 proposals for 68 bridges in 32 counties, including Thayer, were selected for funding.

Among the match program requirements, bridges had to be structurally deficient and not located on minimum maintenance roads.

In addition to the remaining 45 percent of \$380,000, the county may have to fund an engineering study on hydrology. The state will pay 70 percent of the 55 percent up front and the remainder will be doled out bridge by bridge.

But, Gerdes said the county will be able to throw its hours of labor spent on repairs into the 45 percent.

The five bridges selected are located at:

- 7000 and River Road
- 5200-5300 Road E
- 5300 between Roads S and T
- 7200-7300 Road B
- 6500-6600 Road W

Four of the bridges are timber and no longer useful.

"They're rated low enough a loaded semi can't go over them," Gerdes said. "We have had to repair all five of these in the last five years."

Gerdes narrowed his selection down to 11 bridges and chose the five from there.

He said new director Kyle Schneeweis at the Nebraska Department of Roads understands Nebraska's bridges are in need of repairs.

"There are some counties that have way more bridges and can't fund themselves, so they came up with this program.

A match selection criteria map shows most of the bridges are located on the east side of the state with a concentration in the southeastern corner.

Gerdes will try again for the match program next year and most likely, select a larger bridge.

He told the commissioners he believes the five were approved because the county is able to pour its own concrete slabs.

"Not too many counties do that," Commissioner David Bruning.

"I wouldn't be surprised if we have other counties come look at our slabs," Gerdes said.

Gerdes doesn't know other counties that pour their own slabs and just a few build their own bridges, he said.

"It saves money," he said. Pouring is just one way the county saved money.

Gerdes turned down a proposal from one firm to submit the forms. Instead, he applied himself.

"They wanted to charge the county," Gerdes said.

In other business, the commissioners heard from Nebraska Emergency Management Agency representatives and county emergency manager, Bill McPherson.

Earl Imler, NEMA operations sections manager and Bryan Tuma, assistant director for NEMA, provided the commissioners with a copy of the Emergency Management Act that defines how NEMA responds to emergencies in the state.

But as NEMA handles disasters, one of its primary rules is to limit interference in local operations. The "boots on the ground" in Thayer County is McPherson.

"He is the point man," Imler said. "Bill did a good job of sending incident status reports to us over the ice storm. It helps us to plan forward. We do not need to send a team."

"Bill has always been on top of it and is very proactive. He called me in Nebraska City and said they were going to have meeting about the ice storm," Bruning said.



Photo courtesy of Hebron Volunteer Fire Department

### Early morning fire guts home

The Hebron Volunteer Fire Department was called to First Street and Dove Road Jan. 21 at 7 a.m. Hebron Chief BJ Linton reported the homeowner was attempting to snuff the fire and a couple windows broke as fire fighters arrived. The family of four had exited the home, which was engulfed. Fire fighters were on scene until approximately 12:30 p.m., until after the state fire marshal's investigation that determined an extension cord lying underneath items had shorted out.

## Deshler in second round of funding to rehabilitate homes

The City of Deshler will use \$265,000 to rehabilitate eight homes for residents in Deshler as it was one of 10 entities awarded a Community Development Block Grant from the Nebraska Department of Economic Development.

The member communities were assisted by Southeast Nebraska Development District.

Deshler City Clerk Julie Buescher said it is the second time the city has received the grant. The first time was in 2013.

"We have lots of interest in it again and we had people re-apply," Buescher said.

The city was in need of additional applicants last week. Only Deshler residents are eligible to apply.

Buescher said they are waiting for NDE to send the signed contracts and then, SENDD will administer the grants. Recipients are kept confidential.

"The bids will go to the city council for approval. Once approved, the contractors can start," Buescher said.

Judi Meyer, program manager at SENDD, said the types of repairs range from nearly anything having to do with structure, health and safety.

She said functionality issues, such as electric and plumbing are also eligible, however, cosmetic repairs are typically not.

"Perhaps carpet that is terribly worn might be eligible, but it is basically about the structure," she said.

Buescher said the last round of grants included the installation of a bathroom for disabled people.

Residents applying must also meet the county income limit of \$38,750

for a two-person household. An eight-person household cannot bring in more than \$63,900. The income limit is established by Housing and Urban Development.

"Probably the majority of people are going to be retirees on a fixed income or people with a disability and single-parent households," Meyer said.

Dilapidated homes do not qualify.

The eight projects will be limited to 24 months for repairs from the time the grants are awarded," Meyer said.

She said if some of the repair costs are lower than expected, SENDD may be able to take on one more home than the eight originally specified.

"The Deshler grant is expected to do eight housing rehab projects at a minimum," Meyer explained. "We may do one more."

Deshler, along with Fairbury (\$331,250) and Fairmont (\$430,625) were selected for housing funding. For phase one downtown revitalization planning, Seward and York were each awarded \$30,000.

For phase two downtown revitalization, Brownville and Crete will receive \$350,000 each. In comprehensive development, Nebraska City and York will each receive \$30,000.

In addition to administering grants, SENDD will provide housing management and lead testing services.

"Benefits from housing rehab programs are many, beginning with the building itself," Deshler Mayor Naomi Grupe said. "For homeowners, it means freeing up finances for other needs, improving the neighborhood, as well as creating busi-

ness opportunities for construction companies."

The benefits reach beyond the brick and mortar portion of the project, Grupe added, even to improving the outlook for families and especially, children in school.

The City of Hebron participated in the program in 2014 and had productive results.

The city's Owner Occupied Rehabilitation program benefited owner-occupants with low to moderate incomes within Hebron's city limits.

A total of 16 applications were received with a program goal to rehabilitate eight properties prior to Sept. 30 of last year.

According to a SENDD newsletter, history has shown community members, city officials and housing committees boost the program, which took place in Hebron.

The city was able to assist 10 homeowners with \$260,757 in CDBG funds.

Several applicants commented to SENDD about the quality of work and professionalism of the awarded contractors.

Grant funds are also used for tourism to fund historic restoration, cultural sites and the removal of architectural barriers to attract elderly and disabled visitors.

A public works category includes streets, curb, gutter, sidewalk or storm sewer, public libraries and fire stations.

Successful grant projects begin with communities, which may conduct income surveys, blight studies or other issues and needs. Steps may take several months to complete.

### Tidbits

#### Hannah B's to cut the ribbon

Hannah B's on Lincoln Avenue will celebrate its opening with the Hebron Chamber of Commerce and a ribbon cutting Jan. 27, 11 a.m.

#### FFA Labor Auction after game

A labor auction will be held after the Thayer Central basketball game against Centennial Jan. 27, at approximately 9 p.m.

A total of 33 students will be auctioned to the highest bidders for six hours of labor.

#### Korff Fitness and Wellness Center dedication

The Foundation for Thayer County Health Services will hold a dedication and ribbon cutting ceremony Jan. 29, 3 p.m.

The public is welcome. Guided tours of the facility will be offered until 5 p.m.

The Foundation reception and annual meeting will then commence at the Stasny Community Center.

#### County meeting in Alexandria

The American Legion and Auxiliary County meeting is scheduled for Feb. 1, 6:30 p.m., at the Alexandria Legion building.

#### Library hosts Playful Penguin

Playful Penguin Story Time will be held at Hebron Secrest Library Feb. 4, 10 a.m.

#### Obituaries

- Koss, William, 58, Lincoln
- Parpart, Dean, 87, Muskogee, Okla.
- Smalley, Joseph, 68, Kearney



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JR Photo/Nancy McGill

### Inviting cheer

The Thayer Central Cheerleaders, (left to right), Senior Bailee Remmers, Freshman Kylie Pacht, Freshman Mickael Halverstadt, Sophomore Grace Souerdyke, Freshman Hannah Cooper and Sophomore MaryRuth Dodes, gave a performance during the Thayer Central Wrestling Invite Jan. 20. The school's cheerleading program made its debut last fall after being dormant for several years. The team is coached by Carlece Kenner and Wendy Helfrich.

## Chamber cook-off set for March 3

The Hebron Chamber of Commerce, City of Hebron and Hebron Community Foundation will hold its first annual Community Cook-off at the Stasny Center March 3. Social time begins at 5:30 p.m. with tasting at 6:30 p.m.

The cook-off will be held in conjunction with Nebraska's 150th birthday.

There are three divisions to enter: the Entree division using beef, chicken or pork for the main dish; the Side Dish division using Nebraska products, such as Dorothy Lynch and the Pie Contest division to showcase a favorite pie.

Entertainment will be available throughout the evening and Girl Scout Troop 904 will have Nebraska History on display.











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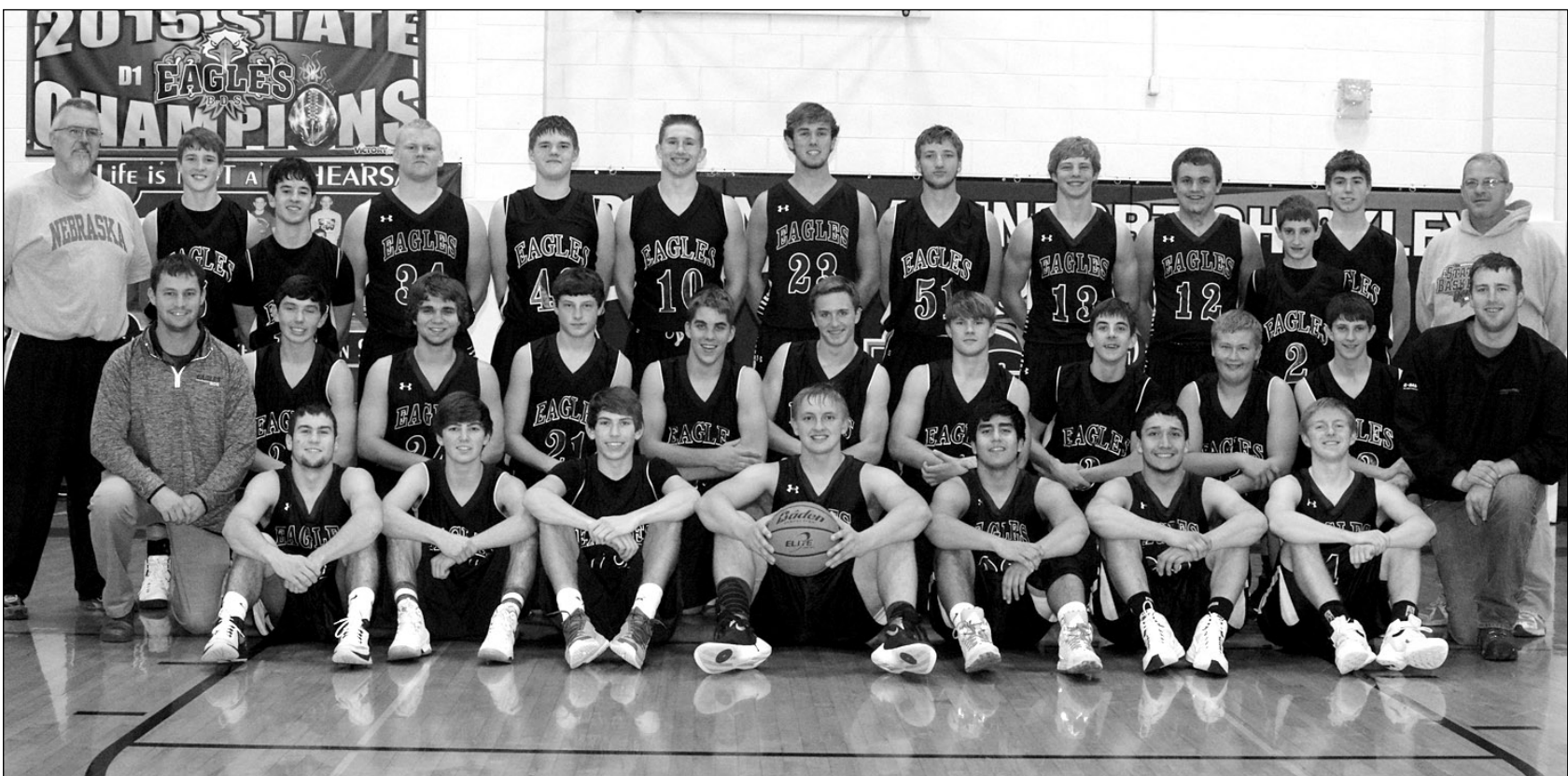
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The 2016-2017 Bruning-Davenport/Shickley boys basketball team members are (Front row, left to right) Kale Kleinschmidt, Tanner Johnson, Hunter Krehne, John Alfs, Noel Gines, Josh Hinrichs and Brett Holtzen. (Middle) Assistant Coach Greg Schroeder, Isaac Else, Caden Norder, Nolan Weber, Isaac Kamler, Kameron Dickson, Taylor Anderson, Josiah Kamler, Justin Stengel, Jacob Swartzendruber and Assistant Coach Brent Houchin. (Back) Head Coach Fred Kluck, Logan Schroeder, Jackson Grote, John Christensen, Kellen Reinsch, Karson Dickson, Anthony Beavers, Glenn Meyer, Garrett Schardt, Holden Stengel, Josh Swartzendruber, Zac Mosier and Assistant Coach Bryan Schardt.



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The 2016-2017 Bruning-Davenport/Shickley girls basketball team members are (Front row, left to right) Jady Kleinschmidt, Jo Degner, Colleen Wassom, Mashaya Dierking, Morgan Lowery and Sera Johnson (Middle) Student Manager Jessalynn Hudson, Raegan Fiala, Megan Grote, Lexi Kadel, Carley Elznic, Jennifer Holtzen, Skyler Knigge, Student Manager Bryn Kadel and Student Manager Malory Dickson. (Back) Assistant Coach Treva Nutter, Nicole Swartzendruber, Kim Ardisson, TaraLee Hudson, Kaylee Noel, Regan Alfs, Emilie Schardt and Head Coach Shana Gerberding. Not pictured: Student Manager Hanna Kadel.



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