

Presented by the Buena Vista County Soil & Water Conservation District

IOWA SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION WEEK

APRIL 27-MAY 5, 2025

Donahoos named Buena Vista County Windbreak of the Year

*Protecting a century-old
farm of utmost importance*

Planting trees on the Donahoo farm wasn't just a necessity, it's a legacy. Bob and Christina Donahoo are the recipients of the Buena Vista County Soil & Water Conservation District's Windbreak of The Year.

In 1909 Bob's great-great-grandfather planted the very first windbreak on the family farm. Bob's newest windbreak will be the third grove planted on the farm. When an old ash tree came down, taking a lag wire and twisting an I-beam, Bob knew there was urgency in getting the old trees down and new ones back in.

After removing trees from the old windbreak, all that remained was a row of pines planted in the 1980s by his great-grandfather. After a lot of research on tree varieties, Bob added five more rows consisting of three different varieties. The first row consists of Autumn Blaze Maple. Known for their beautiful fall foliage, these trees

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

**Christina and Bob Donahoo with their
children Jack, Robert and Luke.**

**OUTDOOR
CLASSROOM
CELEBRATES
55 YEARS**

SEE PAGES 6-7





BUENA VISTA CO. SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT STAFF

From left: Kaitlyn Wagner, Urban Conservationist; Carrie Tolzin, North Raccoon River Watershed Coordinator; Ross Fredericksen, Wetland Specialist; Larrette Kolbe, District Conservationist; Gordy Miller, State Technician; Colleen Schwanz, Conservation Assistant/Educator.



BUENA VISTA CO. SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION COMMISSIONERS

FY2024 Commissioners from left: Charlie Hogrefe, Jim Foell, Rod Husman, Kris Ehlers and Trent Hatlen.

UPDATE FROM IDALS DIVISION OF SOIL CONSERVATION AND WATER QUALITY

BY SUSAN KOZAK AND WILL MYERS

As the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) continues to implement more conservation practices on Iowa's landscape, we are also working diligently to develop our staffing support in alignment with increased growth. At the county level, IDALS employs staff in the 100 USDA Service Center field offices. Our staff are integral to the greater conservation program delivery system alongside entities including the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and local Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs). This means that state, federal, district and other partner staff all work in collaboration to deliver conservation program assistance to landowners in their local areas.

We recognize that our ability to build and maintain relationships with our farmers and landowners through quality customer service directly impacts conservation implementation levels and program growth. In recent years, keeping field office staffing levels maintained and resource support needs met has increasingly become a challenge for all entities within our partnership. Unfortunately, these resource limitations often result in challenges to deliver practice and program assistance to our customers in a timely and



efficient manner. While we continue to assess solutions both within IDALS and with the greater partnership, we recognize that these challenges are often complex and must be addressed through multiple approaches.

Highlighting one aspect of building staffing support for the future is our summer internship program. This program is operated with partner support from both SWCDs as well as NRCS and provides for an intern to assist and support field office operations. This year, IDALS is implementing several changes to our field office internship program in an effort to alleviate some of the administrative burden on SWCDs while continuing to build a positive educational experience for the stu-

2024 DISTRICT ACTIVITIES

- In 2024 the commissioners held 10 regular meetings, 1 organizational meeting and 3 conference call meetings.
- Organizational meeting held. 2024 officers are: Charlie Hogrefe, chair; Kris Ehler, co-chair; Jim Foell, treasurer; Trent Hatlen, co-treasurer; Colleen Schwanz, secretary.
- Paid national and state conservation district dues.
- Held a district policies meeting.
- Donated to Iowa Envirothon, ISU Water Rocks and CDI Scholarship program.
- Held middle school essay contest, grades



K-6 poster contest, sixth grade outdoor classroom, high school scholarship program, 4-H barn quilt and photography contest.

- Commissions sponsor mid-contract management meeting.
- Attended North Raccoon 319 Project Annual Review.
- Hosted North Raccoon Soil Health Field Day.
- Commissioners award Nick Sennert family Conservation Farmers Of The Year.
- Commissioners award Greg Mattson and John Landgraf with windbreak awards.
- Commissioners hold annual tree sales.
- Bob Donahoo fills commissioner vacancy left by Rod Husman.
- Commissioners sponsor windbreak school.
- Commissioners hold annual fall tour and awards luncheon.
- NACD Rounds 5 & 6 are approved.

dents. In previous years, the IDALS supported interns were employed locally by the SWCDs. Starting in the summer of 2025, all field office interns will be employed by IDALS though the newly revamped and state-supported Internship Development Program.

The revamped internship program will continue to rely on the knowledge and expertise of local SWCDs, partners and staff to provide interns with meaningful, practical experiences. Our goal with this new intern program structure is to provide the interns with a clearer identity within the partnership

as well as offer potential options for future State employment upon completion of the internship. While this is just a single example of program improvements within our field offices, we remain committed to strengthening our valuable partnerships across all levels in support of advancing the collective conservation mission in Iowa.

Susan Kozak is Division Director of Soil Conservation and Water Quality for the Iowa Department of Agriculture & Land Stewardship. Will Myers is Bureau Chief.

NRCS tops \$100M in conservation funding to Iowa farmers

“Not only are practices like cover crops, no-till farming and tree planting good for air quality, but they can also benefit the soil, water quality and provide wildlife habitat.”

BY JON HUBBERT
NRCS State Conservationist

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) obligated a record \$112.1 million in conservation practice funding to Iowa farmers in fiscal year 2024 (FY24) through 1,960 conservation program contracts that will help treat natural resource concerns such as soil erosion and water quality on nearly 400,000 acres.

Conservation program contracts typically run three to five years, depending on the program. The obligated funds are about \$26 million more than the prior record of \$85.8 million in 2023, and nearly \$40 million more than the prior five-year average.

In Buena Vista County, NRCS and its conservation partners obligated about \$1,560,170.2 last year that will help treat resource concerns on 9,883.5 acres.

IRA VS FARM BILL FUNDING

Iowa NRCS staff obligated about 42% (\$47.2 million) of the FY24 conservation funding through the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA).

The IRA, signed into law in 2022, addresses clean energy and climate change. IRA conservation funding targets climate-smart agriculture mitigation and helps farmers build resilience in their operations.

Iowa NRCS State Conservationist Jon Hubbert said many of the conservation practices Iowa producers are adopting through the IRA offer stacked benefits. “Not only are practices like cover crops, no-till farming, and tree planting good for air quality, but they can also benefit the soil, water quality and provide wildlife habitat,” he said.

NRCS staff obligated the other 58% of its Iowa financial assistance program funding through the 2018 Farm Bill, which was extended another year. “We are thankful for the support from Congress that allows us to implement record amounts of conservation on Iowa's private lands,” said Hubbert. “With the importance of agriculture in Iowa, there is a strong need for a variety of conservation practices to help treat our natural resources and sustain agriculture for future generations.”

PROGRAM BREAKDOWN

NRCS provides conservation funding through four primary programs authorized

through the Farm Bill: Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), and Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP).

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP): CSP helps farmers build a customized plan to meet their conservation goals and needs. Iowa NRCS obligated \$29.2 million through new and renewed CSP contracts during the past year to 594 Iowa landowners who signed five-year CSP contracts. The CSP contracts will cover 204,743 acres.

In Buena Vista County, NRCS obligated \$749,443.00 through 11 new and two renewed CSP contracts that will cover 8,591.5 acres through five-year contracts.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP): NRCS contracted about 58% of new federal conservation funding in Iowa through EQIP — a voluntary program that promotes agricultural production and environmental quality, where farmers can choose from a conservation practice list developed at the county level to treat local resource issues.

Through EQIP, NRCS obligated \$65.5 million covering 164,073 acres through 1,212

contracts. Cover crops, brush management and practices to support livestock grazing such as prescribed grazing, watering facility, pipeline, heavy use protection area and fence were the most adopted practices in Iowa in 2024.

In Buena Vista County, NRCS obligated \$810,727.20 through 16 new EQIP contracts that will cover 1292 acres. There are currently 55 active EQIP contracts in Buena Vista County that are helping to treat natural resources on 6500.8 acres.

Conservation Plans: NRCS staff also wrote 23,020 conservation plans during fiscal year 2024, which covers more than two million acres. Conservation plans help producers target and address natural resource concerns such as soil erosion, water quality, and wildlife habitat, in addition to addressing climate change and improving soil health.

In Buena Vista County, conservation planners wrote 234 new conservation plans covering nearly 38,577 acres. Overall, 402 conservation plans were applied in Buena Vista County on 108,726 acres.

For conservation planning and program questions in Buena Vista County, visit the USDA Service Center at 1617 N. Lake Ave., Storm Lake, or call the office at 712-732-3096.




JON HUBBERT

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Another record-breaking year for conservation in Iowa

BY MIKE NAIG

Iowa Secretary of Agriculture

Iowans have once again demonstrated a strong commitment to protecting our state's rich natural resources with yet another record-setting year for our state's conservation and water quality efforts. For the third consecutive year, the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, in partnership with Iowa's 100 Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs), farmers, landowners, and public and private partners, have set a record for the implementation of proven practices within Iowa.

This noteworthy achievement highlights the continued acceleration of the impactful work we do together. For the fiscal year ending on June 30, 2024, \$26.26 million was spent in state cost-share assistance, which leveraged a total investment of \$56.42 million in practice implementation. This was an increase of nearly \$3.8 million from the previous year, also a record. For every dollar invested by the state, farmers and landowners have matched it with \$1.15 of their own resources, proving their ongoing commitment improving Iowa's soil and water. But it's not just an increase in dollars, it's an increase in practices, too. Reimbursements paid by the state for cost-share are up over 900 from 2022, and up over 2,000 from a decade ago. Whether its cover crops and nitrogen inhibitors or terraces and grass waterways, these practices work, and we continue to see growing utilization by Iowans.

Notably, these record cost-share totals do not consider all other conservation and water quality financial assistance and funding paid by farmers and landowners, other government entities, and other private partners. They also do not factor in other programs including our water quality wetlands program,

batch and build projects for saturated buffers and bioreactors, our Abandoned Mine Land (AML) reclamation projects, among many others.

And this progress and these successes should be recognized. Our urban conservation program this year surpassed 125 urban conservation projects completed in the last decade. We announced an anticipated record year for water quality wetland development. Our AML program began seven more projects in southeast Iowa, including the largest in the program's 41-year history. We closed the last of the state's 195 ag drainage wells, concluding this program's work to protect groundwater that has spanned more than a quarter-century. We're con-

structing more grade stabilization structures, establishing more multi-purpose use oxbows, and are expanding our popular cattle and conservation working lands program. With nine batch and build agreements in place across 16 counties, hundreds of bioreactors and saturated buffers have been built and hundreds more are in the construction or planning phase. All of this work would not be possible without a wide range of dedicated partners.

And while these highlights are exciting, we also know there is much work to be done. As we continue to implement the state's Nutrient Reduction Strategy, it's important to recognize that the adoption of practices is a long-term effort that takes time, planning, resources, and commitment to show its full impact.

To ensure that Iowa's water and soil are protected for the benefit and enjoyment of future generations, I encourage everyone — no matter where you live — to get involved. The records we've set this year are proof that when we work together, we can achieve great things.

Let's keep working together to continue this momentum. I look forward to even more successes in the years ahead.



MIKE NAIG

CONSERVATION FARMERS OF THE YEAR

JAMIE & JENNY ADAMS

Our Conservation Farmer of the Year in Buena Vista County is Jamie and Jenny Adams.

The Adams family farm operation has been in operation for 26 years. They implement 100% cover crops on their row crop and cattle operation. They follow the recommended guidelines for nitrogen application. Jamie and Jenny continue to use multiple conservation practices such as no-till, cover crops, CRP, and conservation cover that provides habitat for many native species. The family remains conservation minded for the following reasons: they enjoy the benefits to the soil by increasing soil microbiology and having more worms

present, the use of cover crops provides feed for cattle and lessens expenses, and to minimize compaction with passes of farm equipment. The goal that Jamie and Jenny have set for themselves is to strive to do better with less, and they have accomplished that. Jamie and Jenny are willing to lend an ear for advice and a helping hand with neighbors when needed. Jamie advocates for soil conservation any chance he gets, especially if younger farmers have questions. The pair are both passionate about the way they farm and plan to continue implementing these practices for years to come.

Remembering Wade

BY COLLEEN SCHWANZ

Normally, finding someone to fill a vacancy on our board is a task. Everyone is busy, lives are crazy and people just don't have the time. Well, that changed when Wade Nehring came in and asked to be on our board.

Wade told us that his uncle, Keith Arends, was a big influence in his life. Keith was a soil and water conservation commissioner from 1981–1995. When things slowed down a bit, Wade always told himself he would get on that board. His uncle really enjoyed it and would tell Wade it was all about protecting our land, and Wade wanted to be a part of that. Wade filled out the paperwork and was elected a Buena Vista Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioner at the November election. In January Wade attended his first board meeting, but at the time, what we didn't know was that it would also be

Wade's last. Wade passed away on Feb. 17, at the age of 61.

Wade was a true conservationist, he utilized the CRP program, incorporating a wetland restoration project through farmable wetlands and a grassed waterway. He also was part of the EQIP prairie pothole program, and through CSP incorporated cover crops, pest management and no-till farming. Wade also did MRBI pasture and hayland plantings. More than all that, Wade was a friend. With his joking manner and genuine kindness, everyone looked forward to Wade walking through our door, he had a way of making your day feel pretty special. Wade was a big burly guy with a gentle and kind demeanor. The world lost one of the good ones on Feb. 17th.

He didn't have much time to make an impact on our board, but he had already made his impact on the soil he farmed and the way he treated us all.



WADE NEHRING

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION WEEK

APRIL 27-MAY 4, 2025

Iowa Soil and Water Conservation Week is an opportunity to recognize the important conservation work that has been placed on the Iowa landscape and bring attention to the ongoing work by farmers, landowners and urban residents to protect the state's soil and water resources.



Iowa Soil and Water Conservation Week this year is being coordinated with national Stewardship Week, which is sponsored by the National Association of Conservation Districts.

But what is a watershed? A watershed is an area of land that channels rainfall and snowmelt to creeks, streams, and rivers, eventually leading to outflow points such as reservoirs, bays, and the ocean. Those bodies of water are all connected, so every drop that falls be-

comes part of one water.

Watersheds can be any size and usually have some high points of land like hills, mountains, or ridges. When rain, sleet, or snow falls to the ground, the precipitation runs from those higher points to the lower points. Gravity pulls the water downhill until it reaches a body of water. If the land in the watershed is steep, the water usually runs off into rivers or streams. If the land in the watershed is level, the water will slowly flow into lakes or ponds, or seep into the soil and add to groundwater. If the watershed is close to the ocean, then tidal marshes, estuaries, and wetlands will be part of the watershed. From the top of the mountain all the way to the coast, it is all one water.

The severe erosion during the "Dust Bowl" years of the 1930s brought about the first efforts to prevent soil erosion, which also helped protect water resources. Iowa passed a law in 1939 to establishing a state agency and the means for soil and water conservation districts to organize. This legislation declared it the policy of the State of Iowa to: preserve soil and water; protect the state's tax base; and promote health, safety and public welfare of people of Iowa.

Today, Iowa is a national leader in the implementation of water quality and watershed projects, soil conservation and buffer programs. Iowa currently leads the nation in the continuous conservation reserve program buffer initiative with more than 600,000 acres. Iowa also has more than 60 active watershed and water quality projects across the state.



WINDBREAK OF THE YEAR

Continued from page one

display a brilliant orange red in the fall. The middle two rows consist of the workhorses of the windbreak, the Techny Arborvitae. Techny's remain a vibrant green all year long and have a very dense growth, which is perfect for protecting the building site and the livestock. The following rows are Hybrid Willows. These trees grow fast and will get started quickly in blocking out some wind. The willows only have about a 25-year life span, so eventually these rows will be replaced with either shrub rows or more evergreens, but they do a great job of blocking the wind and allowing the workhorse rows time to get established. While doing his research, Bob found that if you plant the willows next to the pines, the pines tend to grow 25% faster.

Planting this windbreak consisted of a 10-man crew, work-

ing for two days planting 481 trees. Their crew consisted of Bob's grandma Wanda all the way down to his then three-year-old son Jack. An assembly line system was set up for those two days, the first person pulled the flag that indicated where the tree was to go, the next person drilled the hole, followed by the tree being dropped in, the next person filled in the hole and the last person put down the mat and mulch. The mat and mulching help with weed control and will keep the soil wetter longer.

Watering was done with a rain bird irrigation system. There are five lines, one for each row. The past few years their watering rotation was, watering row #1 on Monday; row #2 on Tuesday; row #3 on Wednesday; row #4 on Thursday; and row #5 on Friday, then repeating this all over again on the following Monday.

Bob and Christina put the hard work in knowing that their kids and grandkids would get the most enjoyment out of this windbreak. Protecting this century old farm is of the utmost



importance and Bob and Christina wanted to make sure this legacy gets handed down a few more generations.

| BUENA VISTA COUNTY SWCD F.Y. 2024 REPORT ON ANNUAL USE OF DISTRICT FUNDS July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024 | | Balance June 30, 2024 | | \$27,402.39 | 2022 Summer Intern Miscellaneous Voided Checks | | \$2.88 |
|---|------------|----------------------------------|------------|-------------------|--|--------------|--------------|
| MONEY MARKET ACCOUNT | | MM-CD | | | TOTAL RECEIPTS | | \$110,024.66 |
| RECEIPTS | | CD RECEIPTS | | Beginning Balance | EXPENDITURES | | |
| Buena Vista Co. Auditor | \$3,500.00 | CDXXX4230 | \$344.51 | \$8,470.26 | Commissioner Expenses | \$3,352.40 | |
| Dr. Thomas Shea Memorial | \$1,500.00 | CDXXX4231 | \$1,856.94 | \$45,655.97 | Urban Conservationist | \$92,410.02 | |
| Interest | \$664.94 | TOTAL CD RECEIPTS | \$2,201.45 | \$54,126.23 | Water Quality Initiative | | |
| Income 4 | | | | | NACD Technician | \$10,000.00 | |
| Income 5 | | | | | Awards | | |
| Voided checks | | | | Ending Balance | Miscellaneous | \$212.80 | |
| TOTAL RECEIPTS | \$5,664.94 | CD EXPENDITURES | | \$8,814.77 | Education Expenses | \$894.92 | |
| | | CD Expenses 4230 | \$ - | \$47,512.91 | Outdoor Classroom | \$2,077.79 | |
| | | CD Expenses 4231 | \$ - | \$56,327.68 | Donations | \$400.00 | |
| | | TOTAL CD EXPENDITURES | \$ - | | Tree Sales | \$5,214.51 | |
| | | | | | Meetings & Field Days | \$2,140.69 | |
| | | | | | Annual Report | | |
| | | Beginning Balance – July 1, 2023 | | \$54,126.23 | 2021 Summer Intern | | |
| | | Receipts | | \$2,201.45 | 2022 Summer Intern | | |
| | | Total Receipts | | \$56,327.68 | Meeting Miscellaneous | | |
| | | Less Total Expenditures | | \$ - | Voided Checks | | |
| | | Balance June 30, 2024 | | \$56,327.68 | TOTAL EXPENDITURES | \$116,703.13 | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | REVOLVING ACCOUNT | | | Beginning Balance – July 1, 2023 | | \$21,954.85 |
| | | RECEIPTS | | | Receipts | \$110,024.66 | |
| | | Comm. Expense Income | | \$2,743.98 | Total Receipts | \$131,979.51 | |
| | | Interest | | \$327.14 | Less Total Expenditures | \$116,703.13 | |
| | | Donations | | \$2,589.81 | Balance June 30, 2024 | \$15,276.38 | |
| | | Tree Sales | | \$5,969.46 | | | |
| | | Water Quality Initiative | | | | | |
| | | Urban Conservationist | | \$77,153.92 | | | |
| | | NACD Technician | | \$20,000.00 | | | |
| | | Meetings/Field Days | | \$1,237.47 | | | |
| | | CDI | | | | | |
| | | 2021 Summer Intern | | | | | |



OUTDOOR CLASSROOM REACHES 55 YEARS

In 1970 the first group of sixth graders visited the Buena Vista County Park for a day of education, and it's been going strong ever since.

The outdoor classroom is an opportunity for students to receive environmental training from resource specialists. The district's goal is to help students more thoroughly understand the environment around them.

Students arrive at the park around 9:15 a.m. and will spend the day rotating between different sessions. Over the years many of the sessions have evolved, what once was a more lecture session will now be more of a hands-on learning opportunity.

Colleen Schwanz took over the outdoor classroom in 1999, when she started, she saw many of the students becoming bored rather quickly and reached out to the teachers for advice. They unanimously advised bringing in more interactive learning for the students and that is what Schwanz has done.

This year's sessions include: Iowa Corn Growers Biofuel trailer; Sanford Museum's Pottery Puzzle; Dick Bennet, Mountain Man; Bees by Boernsen Bees; ISU, Wetlands; BV County Conservation, Owls; IDNR, Cause & Effect trailer; IDNR, Prairies & Pollinators; Rachel Neuroth, Sq. Foot Gardening; and Water Safety by Brett Koppe.

This day also gives the students and teachers an opportunity to visit the beautiful county park. Many of the students never knew the park even existed before this day, and Schwanz will hear them saying they are going to bring their family back up there!

The Buena Vista County Park works hard to make sure all picnic tables are in place and lodges are available for use. They also spend a lot of time making sure the park is picture perfect for the kids. With the addition of the lodges and renovated shelter houses, it allows some instructors who may not want their displays out in the elements to be inside.

Schwanz herself remembers coming to the Outdoor Classroom back in 1974. "It was a beautiful spring day and there were so many kids there at the park, and I remember some of us getting into trouble for running down the big hill, it was just too tempting not to do it!" says Schwanz.

So, with the help of the Buena Vista County Conservation staff, Schwanz hopes this day will continue for years to come. Field days are important to students and who doesn't want to have a day of learning underneath the canopy of the trees?





Sioux Central students participated in the Buena Vista County Soil & Water Conservation District's middle school essay contest. The theme this year was "Keep Your Neighborhood Clean and Green."

Winners from left: Annabelle Christensen, third place, eighth grade; Brennen Block, second place, eighth grade; Maia Thomsen, first place, eighth grade; Rowan Ackerman, first place, seventh grade; Claire Garberding, third place, seventh grade; Colleen Schwanz. Absent: Cooper Shannon, second place, seventh grade.

Congratulations to these first-place essay winners featured below.

'Keep Your Neighborhood Clean and Green'

BY ROWAN ACKERMAN

Sioux Central, Grade 7

Help clean up to make my neighborhood a greener place. My 4-H group could get together to clean the neighborhood. By cleaning and picking up garbage I am protecting more animals from dying. We could clean the park or go up and down streets, the baseball diamonds, and even the pool. I can do many things to help make your community a greener place. When driving, wait to throw my trash into the garbage instead of out the window. By picking up garbage I am helping clean my neighborhood. I could consider using less plastic and more reusable stuff like bags, glass, bamboo, beeswax, and cloth to help lower the extinction.

Us people have ruined this world with our actions. A world that used to be thriving is now getting destroyed every minute due to our choices. Our actions, like throwing garbage out the window and on the ground is killing. To start, help my community by picking up a piece of garbage lying on the ground and on sidewalks when I am walking. Since we ruined it, we need to fix it and rethink our choices. Starting new landfills and adding to the ones we already have is destroying the environment like our land, lakes, hills, rivers, deserts, rainforests, oceans, and even more. We need to drive less and consider other choices like bikes, riding with others so we aren't using as much fossil fuels, and even walking, depending on how close you are,

but consider your options.

Help stop deforestation and anything else that is causing this pollution in your area. Since people have started dumping garbage into the ocean extinction has increased by hundreds even thousands. We could start conserving energy, our water, and waste of food. We could also use the three R's Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle. One more way is to start using cold water and turning the lights off once you leave a room. Air pollution is not only harming the animals around us but humans and their health. The amount of pollution in the air is too much for the trees especially with us taking them down. Instead of taking trees down we need to plant them. Trees are helping us live by giving us clean oxygen. Help your community by doing something little every once in a while. Standing there and not doing anything isn't helping make it an even happier world.

BY MAIA THOMSEN

Sioux Central, Grade 8

Did you know that Bruno Mars isn't actually from Mars? Wait, what? You did? Oh well, I guess I better re-start then.

The world is hurting because of humans. Sea animals are dying because of plastic pollution in the ocean and land animals are dying because we've destroyed their habitats. We are also being hurt by, well, ourselves. It's pretty bad. Fortunately, we can help make our neighborhood clean and green.

One way you can help the world, and your community is by picking up a cup. Well, okay, maybe one cup won't make much of a difference, but picking up trash is one way to make your town look nice while helping nature. If not removed, then the plastic can be harmful to animals if they get tangled up or consume it. Lastly, when it rains, plastic somehow finds its way into our lakes and rivers, some of which we drink out of. As I have just explained, garbage shouldn't be outside, but on the off chance that there is some, it needs to be picked up.

Around one garbage truck worth of plastic gets dumped in the ocean EVERY MINUTE. All of those pictures of sea turtles dying by plastic definitely aren't fake, and other creatures are dying too. Along with the death of animals, plastic could be killing us humans. Microplastics are in some of the fish and water that we consume. They have also been found in an artery causing heart attacks. That means, unless people are eating plastic for fun, it's getting in through our food. We can prevent this by not using it or using biodegradable plastic. Clearly, we need to prevent plastic from getting into the ocean.

Understandably, some people can't or are scared to help on such a large scale, but there are deeds you can do that just impact your community. One way to make your neighborhood look better is to plant trees on each side of your roads. You would need to collaborate with neighbors for this one, but when planted, the trees would provide shade and animal homes. One bad thing about rain



Lillie Hoffman and Colleen Schwanz

BV Co. Soil & Water Conservation Dr. T.E. Shea Scholarship Winner

Each year the Dr. T.E. Shea family offers a \$1,500 scholarship to a high school senior that is planning to pursue further education in the fields of agriculture or natural resources. Dr. Shea was a very respected physician and anesthesiologist in the Storm Lake community until his retirement. Dr. Shea was also well known as a very effective conservationist, philanthropist, educator and naturalist. He belonged to such organizations as Isaac Walton League, Kiwanis Club and the Lake Preservation Association, of which he was a founding member.

This year's scholarship winner is Lillie Hoffman of Storm Lake High School. Lillie was active in many extracurricular activities and volunteer programs throughout high school. Lillie is the daughter of Jason and Katie Hoffman. Lillie's academic pursuit includes a double major in biochemistry and molecular biology at South Dakota State University. Lillie hopes to work in the environmental science field applying microbiology and biochemistry to improve soil and water quality and sustainability of farming practices.

is, it goes down the gutters and carries trash and other random objects with it. One way to stop your rain from rolling right off your lawn is to plant a rain garden. Grass has such short roots, so it doesn't pull water into the ground. A lot of other plants, along with being pretty, do. You could even point your waterspout toward the garden. Doing both of these will make your neighborhood full of beauty as well as nature friendly.

I would love to mention more ideas, but I have gone on so long that I feel we have no choice except to conclude. I have talked about plastic pollution and the problems it presents. I also mentioned the sea and the pollution in it. Information about bettering your community was also shared. In closing, it is important to lend a helping hand to the world.



CONSERVATION POSTER CONTEST: Award assemblies have begun for the 2025 conservation poster contest. This year’s theme is “Home Is Where The Habitat Is.” K-6 grade students compete to win a plane ride around Buena Vista County. Pictured are winners from St. Mary’s Elementary School in Storm Lake, front row from left: Daleyza Zaragoza Vazquez, Lea Leon Urrea and Jade Andrade Acevedo. Middle row: Manuel Gomez, Lauren Berg, Leah Abraham, Finley Ellefson, Victoria Lopez Carranza and Amy Gomez Miramontes. Back: Colleen Schwanz (SWCD educator), Kristhian Ardon Rodriguez, Annet Morales, Chloe Bergan, Grace Beck, Owen Foell, Fletcher Friedrichsen and Lincoln Berg. Missing: Allison Viscarra and Amelia Carlson.

Lighting The Way

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Storm Lake Times Pilot

We salute all who promote and implement conservation practices, helping sustain and restore Iowa's rich soil and water resources.



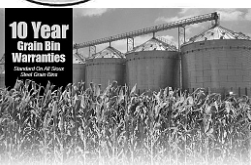
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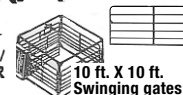
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UPDATE FROM OUR URBAN CONSERVATIONIST: SIOUX CENTER WET POND

BY KAITLYN WAGNER

The City of Sioux Center finished construction on the Bridge View Wet Pond in the spring of 2024. Wet Ponds maintain a permanent pool of water and treats a drainage area of more than 10 acres. We design Wet Ponds to at least meet the 1.25" storm event, which is the Water Quality Volume, but they can be designed to meet bigger storm events. The pond in Sioux Center meets the Channel Protection Volume up to 100-year storm event.

The City of Sioux Center gained funding for this project through the Urban Water

Quality Initiative (WQI) and SRF Sponsored Projects Program. Urban WQI awarded \$100,000 and SRF Sponsored Projects awarded \$1.5 million towards this Wet Ponds Project.

The Bridge View Wet Pond was designed with a sediment forebay, a multi-stage outlet structure, safety bench, and emergency spillway. The water enters the wet pond through the sediment forebay, where sediment is able to drop before going into the wet pond. The multi-stage outlet structure raises and lowers the water level in the pond. The safety bench is a shallow area around the perimeter of the

wet pond. Because of how deep the pond is, fishing habitat was added and soon after construction, the DNR stocked the pond with fish. In the case of very large storm events, there may be too much water for the outlet to handle, in which case the emergency spill way would be utilized. For this wet pond, the water would go over the emergency spillway and into the nearby creek.

This project is located just Southwest of the hospital in Sioux Center. The drainage area is in a new residential development area that spans 144 acres. The area for the entire wet pond site is 15 acres. This site includes

the pond, the sediment forebay, the native planting area around the pond, and a new walking trail that surrounds the pond. This practice is well designed, constructed, and maintained thanks to the City of Sioux Center, SRF Sponsored Projects, Sioux Center Land Development, Sioux Center Parks and Rec, DGR Engineering, IDALS Urban Conservationists, Vander Pol, Van Holland Lawn Service, and Lieber Construction. Come on out to see a great water quality practice in Sioux Center where you can walk the trail and even fish at the Bridge View Wet Pond.

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