Apps for Conservation Program Being Taken

Applications for funding opportunities with the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) are currently being accepted at the Gaines County NRCS office.

NRCS in Texas has received its initial allocation of EQIP funding for 2013 and will begin ranking and obligating EQIP contracts after February 15. All agriculture producers interested in submitting an EQIP contract application for 2013 should do so before this ranking deadline.

EQIP is a voluntary, continuous sign-up program that allows landowners or operators to apply for financial and technical assistance for the application of specific conservation practices. Applications are approved for contracts periodically depending on budgetary allocations. Applications made after the deadline will be considered in the next funding cycle. Higher priority will be given to those applications that address national, state and local priorities and provide higher cost efficiency.

NRCS encourages any person interested in participating in their programs to contact their local field office, located at 1301 South Main in Seminole, TX.

EQIP offers technical and financial help to install or implement numerous structural, vegetative, and management practices that can benefit the soil, water, air, plants, livestock, and wildlife. Common conservation practices in which NRCS provides financial and technical assistance within Gaines County include:

• Replacing 20-plus year old center pivot irrigation systems with either new center pivot or drip irrigation systems.

• Converting inefficient center pivot irrigation systems to high efficiency systems through converting nozzle packages and drop spacing.

• Removing invasive brush such as mesquite using mechanical or chemical methods.

• Planting existing cropland to native grass mixes or improved pasture grasses.

• Improving grazing distribution through drilling livestock water wells and/or installing livestock watering facilities.

Financial and technical assistance is also available for, but not limited to:

• Developing nutrient management plans

• Planting cover crops

• Converting to no-till, mulch-till or strip-till operations

• Converting electric submersible livestock well pumps or windmills to solar pumps.

Last year, NRCS in Texas funded over 4,000 EQIP contracts with $76 million on 2.1 million acres across the entire state. In addition to helping our environment, Farm Bill conservation program funds support rural communities. In Texas, it is estimated that each dollar of NRCS and private matching expenditures on NRCS conservation programs generates an additional $2.54 in sales of goods and services.

For more information, including eligibility requirements, call the Seminole USDA Service Center at (432)758-3722. Additional program information can be found on the Texas NRCS Web site at www.tx.nrcs.usda.gov

Xcel Energy Warn of Scam in Area

AMARILLO – Xcel Energy officials are warning customers of increased incidences of scams targeting utility customers. The scams generally involve attempts to illegally obtain payments for ficticious utility bills.

Individuals impersonating Xcel Energy representatives or collection agency personnel are utilizing a variety of techniques to gain access to customers' funds, usually by indicating a customer has an outstanding debt and is about to immediately lose service.

Most of the recent incidents have occurred in Xcel Energy service areas outside of Texas and New Mexico, but area residents have been targeted in the past. The only legitimate door-to-door or phone solicitation at the present time involves contractors working on behalf of Xcel Energy to provide energy efficiency services. But only approved vendors are able to offer these services to Xcel Energy customers, and the list of these vendors may be found at www.xcelefficiency.com. Customers may check that list or contact customer information at 1-800-895-4999 for verification.

In many of the fraudulent cases, an impersonator directs the customer to go to a local retailer and purchase a pre-paid cash card. The impersonator then persuades the customer to provide the card number over the phone.

In some cases, impersonators provide a fake employee name and/or a fake ID number, and offer to come to the customer's residence to pick up the payment. Impersonators also appear to have "spoofed" an Xcel Energy telephone number, thus making it look like the call is from the company.

There have been variations to obtaining the bogus payments, including requests over the phone for payment by credit card or personal check.

Impersonators also have used different stories, such as telling a customer he or she has overpaid a bill, so that the company needs personal bank account or credit card information to be given over the telephone to refund the money.

Impersonators have shown up at customer homes and told customers that their meter is broken and immediate payment is needed for repairs. Customers are told that the utility later will refund the money.

The reports of billing scams in Xcel Energy service territory are consistent with what other utilities are reporting across the country. Xcel Energy investigates all reported impersonations, and it recommends customers also contact their local law enforcement agencies.

Xcel Energy always advises that customers should only use authorized methods and proven banking practices to pay their bills. Credit card numbers and any personal information should not be provided to suspicious callers.

If a customer has given credit card information over the phone to someone posing as an Xcel Energy employee, Xcel Energy recommends that the customer call his or her credit card company and follow the company's recommendations.

Customers should report incidents to Xcel Energy at 1-800-895-4999. Xcel Energy also provides information on its website on www.xcelenergy.com

Xcel Energy is a major U.S. electricity and natural gas company, with operations in eight Western and Midwestern states. Xcel Energy provides a comprehensive portfolio of energy-related products and services to 3.4 million electricity customers and 1.9 million natural gas customers through its regulated operating companies. Company headquarters are located in Minneapolis. More information is available at www.xcelenergy.com.

Applications Being Accepted for Gaines County Pageant Titles

Have you always wanted to make a difference in your community, but didn't know where to start?

All around Texas, women are finding that a crown can serve as a "megaphone" to promote a cause or issue.

The International Pageant System recognizes women of all ages for their accomplishments, and their desire to make a difference in their communities.

Applications are now being accepted for the titles of 2013 "Mrs. Gaines County", "Miss Gaines County", and "Miss Teen Gaines County."

These women will have the honor of representing her area at the Miss Teen Texas, Miss Texas, and Mrs. Texas International Pageant to be held at the Palace Theatre in Grapevine, April 12 – 14, 2013.

Mrs. applicants must be married and will be between the ages of 21 and 56 as of July 1, 2013. Miss applicants must be unmarried and between the ages of 19 and 29 as of July 1, 2013. Teen applicants must be unmarried and between the ages of 13 and 18 as of July 1, 2013.

The women selected as "Mrs. Gaines County", "Miss Gaines County", and "Miss Teen Gaines County" will become ambassadors from the ---- Gaines County ---- area with official title and sash!

The woman crowned Mrs. Texas/Miss Texas/Miss Teen Texas will each receive a prize package valued at over $15,000 and the opportunity to represent Texas at the 2013 Mrs. International, Miss International or Miss Teen International Pageant in Chicago in July.

The American Heart Association is the official charity of the Texas International Pageants. In 2008, the International Pageants joined the American Heart Association's Go Red For Women movement and each state titleholder will champion heart disease as a national platform in addition to promoting their own platform throughout the year.

Go Red for Women captures the energy, passion, and intelligence of women, to work collectively to wipe out heart disease – the No. 1 killer of women. While 1-in-30 American women die of breast cancer, almost 1-in-3 will die from cardiovascular disease. Our passion is to unite women in this fight. Our involvement in the movement can help save lives. For more information go to www.GoRedForWomen.org.

The current reigning "2012" Mrs. Texas is Rachel Hedstrom of Allen. Rachel has dedicated her reign, as Mrs. Texas, to the Honoring Our Veterans, through Honor Flight in honor of her grandfather: a World War II Veteran. The reigning Miss Texas is Savannah Sowell of Houston. Savannah has spent her year as Miss Texas raising awareness of Eating Disorders: an issue that is near and dear to her, as she suffered from anorexia as a teenager. The "2012" Miss Teen Texas is Briana Daughtry of Portland. Briana has championed Skin Cancer Awareness and Prevention.

Mrs. contestants will compete in Interview, Fitness Wear, and Evening Gown. Miss and Miss Teen contestants will compete in Interview, Fitness Wear, Evening Gown, and Fashion Runway.

Women living or working in Gaines County interested in applying, should e-mail the following address to request a bio.form:
Miss Teen, Miss, & Mrs. Texas International Pageant
Kristin@TexasInternationalPageants.com
More information can also be found at the following websites:
www.missteentexasinternational.com
www.misstexasinternational.com
www.mrstexasinternational.com

TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS AND PARTIES:

Archer-Daniels-Midland Company (dba Golden Peanut Company), has applied to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) for issuance of Air Quality Permit No. 108107, which would authorize construction of the Peanut Storage Facility located at 1308 North Main Street, Seminole, Gaines County, Texas 79360. Additional information concerning this application is contained in the public notice section of this newspaper.

Seminole ISD News

IDALOU -- The Seminole High School UIL journalism team took second place at the Idalou meet on Feb. 2.

In news writing, senior Ashley Blair was fourth and senior Aimee Krahn was sixth.

In feature writing, senior Crystal Fehr was fifth. In editorial writing, Fehr was second.

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WOLFFORTH -- Over 50 choir students qualified for state solo and ensemble contest on Feb. 2 at Frenship High School. State qualifiers included 29 solos and eight ensembles which will compete in San Marcos at the end of the school year.

Ensembles
Division I ratings(advanced to state)
Madrigal of "Shoot, False Love, I Care Not" by Thomas Morley–Blayne Childers, Haley Gann, Michael Garza, Trevor Greenfield, Alexis Hastings, Hope Hicks, Sawyer Jenkins, Kaley Johnson, Angelica Schmitt, Tammy Tran

Madrigal of "Shoot, False Love, I Care Not" by Thomas Morley–Elijah Becker, Jadon Hatley, Arin Hindman, Kourtney Kildow, Betty Loeppky, Desiree Neudorf, Davannah Philipp, Roman Ruiz, Easton Swinnea, Judy Thiessen

Madrigal of "Sing We and Chant It" by Thomas Morley–Pranav Dave, Joy Dove, Shauntell Hawkins, Madolyn Karr, Amairani Letkeman, Stacy Loewen, Andy Luna, Sam Shirley, Jesseca Sumpter, Bailey Waller

"Sing We and Chant It" by Thomas Morley–Jason Arrezola, Michelle Dyck, Josh Easterbrooks, Skyler Franklin, Cory Henning, Riley Clark, Tori Phillips, Sadie Solis, Sierra Talamantes, Alissa Wright

Quartet of "De Animals A-comin" by Marshall Bartholomew–Blue Franklin, Michael Garza, Trevor Greenfield, Jadon Hatley

Quartet of "Silver Swan" by Orlando Gibbons–Bryce Darby, Kenzie Ivins, Jasmine Ochoa, Corina Tonini

Quartet of "Silver Swan" by Orlando Gibbons–Aubrey Owen, Raquel Rivera, Brittany Quiring, Isela Zamora

Trio of "The Boat Madrigal" by Steven Porter–Kaley Johnson, Davannah Philipp, Judy Thiessen

Division II ratings
Quartet of "The Silver Swan" by Orlando Gibbons–Susie Enns, Krislyn Hallum, Savannah Neudorf, Kinzey Wolf

Trio of "The Boat Madrigal" by Steven Porter–Nancy Bergen, Judy Knelsen, Alicia Villarreal

Solos
Division I on Class I (advanced to state)
Jesseca Edwards, Betty Loeppky, Kourtney Kildow, Arin Hindman, Desiree Neudorf, Sierra Talamantes, Jesseca Sumpter, Tammy Tran, Haley Gann, Alexis Hastings, Angelica Schmitt, Joy Dove, Nancy Zacharias, Easton Swinnea, Michelle Dyck, Blayne Childers, Josh Easterbrooks, Sawyer Jenkins, Alissa Wright, Blue Franklin, Shauntell Hawkins, Jason Arrezola, Elijah Becker, Krislyn Hallum, Savannah Neudorf, Kendyl Waller, Raquel Rivera

Division I on Class II
Judy Klassen, Jasmine Ochoa, Bryce Darby, Christina Dyck, Kenzie Ivins, Sadie Wheeler, Corina Tonini

Division II on Class I
Cory Henning, Skyler Franklin, Tori Phillips

Division III on Class I
Aliyah Hawkins

City, SEDC Agree to Incentives Pkg for New Business

Seminole City Council members unanimously agreed of an incentives agreement between the Seminole Economic Development Corp. and a developing pizza restaurant, in Monday evening's regular semi-monthly meeting of the Council, held at Seminole City Hall.

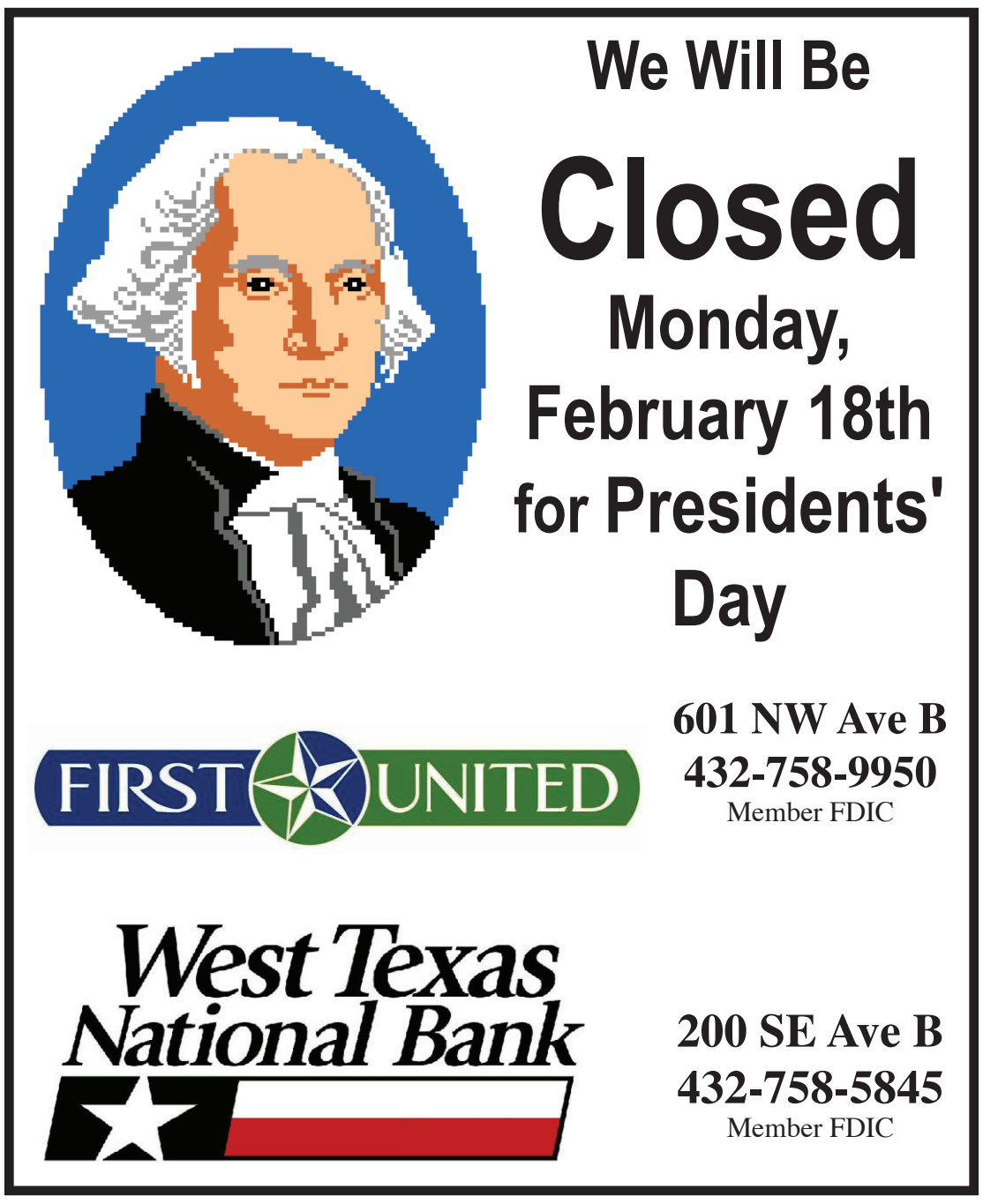
In their Jan. 28 regular meeting, members of the SEDC's Board of Directors unanimously approved of a motion to enter into a $15,000 loan agreement with BYOPizza, a "build your own pizza" eatery located in 1100 block of S. Main St., developed by co-owners Richie Brown and Robert Griffin.

The terms of the loan approved in the Jan. 28 regular meeting of the corporation will see the repayment of $10,000 at 3.25-percent interest paid over two years, beginning in the 2014 calender year. In addition, if BYOPizza is still in business by 2017, the remaining $5,000 portion of the loan will be forgiven by the corporation.

SEDC officials, with the approval, will now finalize the deal with BYOPizza officials, who are targeting a March opening.

In other business action on Monday evening, Seminole City Council members approved the following agenda items:

• a request to remove rubbish and weeds from 200 block S.W. 11th St at a price of $75 per hour.;

• a request to demolish a structure at 109 N.E. Ave. F at a flat fee of $200; and,

• a request to demolish a structure at 208 S.W. 11th St at a price of $75 per hour.