



INDEPENDENT ELLSWORTH COUNTY REPORTER

We salute our
hard working farmers!
See Page A2



Volume 153, No. 48

www.indyrepnews.com

Thursday, July 3, 2025

\$1.50

Wheat harvest nears completion

BY KAREN BONAR
AND KYRA CASE

Ellsworth County I-R

A gentle, 15 mph breeze drifted across the Soukup field June 25 as combines crawled across the field, harvesting wheat.

"It's better than I thought it would be," Roy Soukup said of harvest.

He and his wife, Carol, surveyed the field, as hired hands assisted the family with harvest.

"We had some hail this year, but the yields are better than the past two years, even with the hail," the Soukups' son, Troy Soukup, said.

Harvest paused June 24

when humidity topped 60 percent.

"You can cut wheat, but too much stays in the head, so your efficiency goes down," Troy Soukup said. "Everybody in the county was holding off because they didn't want to put it back on the ground."

Craig Dinkel, Crop Production and Horticulture Agent for the K-State Research and Extension Midway Extension District, said ideal conditions involve 20 percent humidity or less.

"We've been above 20 percent, up to 50 percent humidity," he said. "That makes the grain be too

wet. Plus, the straw doesn't cut very well with combines; the combine doesn't process very well when it's humid."

Dinkel said harvest is approaching 80 percent completion.

While rain delayed the start of harvest, it also is hitting the back end. Dinkel said about a half-an-inch of rain fell Monday in Ellsworth.

"I know there are some variations — higher amounts — as you went west, it's a little bit more," he said.

Rain caused test weights to drop, Dinkel said.

"The first rain that came right before things



KYRA CASE/Ellsworth County Independent-Reporter

Frank Hlaus drives a combine near Wilson June 23 during wheat harvest.

really got started, it did hurt our test weights and some of our quality. We were below average on our test weights," Dinkel said. "As far as yields, we're sitting better at

what we have the last two to three years at least. It is highly-variable. A lot of it was wheat streak mosaic virus that was prevalent this year."

He doesn't have esti-

mates about how many acres in Ellsworth County were affected.

Overall, Dinkel said yields ranged across the

See HARVEST Page A6

Multiple generations protect, serve

BY ALAN RUSCH

Ellsworth County I-R

As the United States celebrates its 249th birthday tomorrow, Americans nationwide will pause to reflect not only on their independence, but on the hard-won freedoms that were fought for those two-and-a-half centuries ago.

One of those Americans is Jason Hicks of Holyrood.

"That's THE holiday," he said of the Fourth of July. "I remember when we used to sit at Top Side (a hill near the radio towers just south of Ellsworth) and we'd watch the fireworks and they'd be playing all the (patriotic) music. We were 18- and 19-year-old kids just sitting up there and bawling our eyes out. It was embarrassing."

Like generations of patriotic Americans before and after him, Jason served in America's armed forces — specifically as a combat engineer in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1993-97 — answering the call to defend the U.S. against all enemies, foreign and



Courtesy photo

Three generations of the Hicks family who have served their country. From left, Connor Hicks, Ron Hicks, Jason Hicks and Duncan Hicks.

domestic and doing his part to ensure America's freedom continues to endure.

But Jason isn't the only member of his family to serve in the military. His maternal grandfather, Errol Hunter, served in the U.S. Army during World War II. Jason's dad, Ron, joined the Army in 1969, trained as

a mechanic and served in Vietnam.

Most recently, Jason's two sons, Duncan and Connor, continued the Hicks family legacy of serving and safeguarding the nation by joining the Marine Corps.

"Connor said he wanted to follow me," Jason said. "They (the armed forces) really push edu-

cation now. I always told him that if you want a college education, you'd better get in the corps — they'll pay for it, I'm not."

Connor, who will receive training as a combat engineer, is currently attending boot camp at Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego, Calif. He graduates July 11.

"He's real proud of it," Jason said.

Jason said Duncan joined for the same reasons.

Duncan enlisted first, and while in boot camp, he got really sick twice and was discharged. Fortunately, he is eligible to reenlist, and plans to join the U.S. Air Force sometime this year to

become an aviation mechanic.

"He's getting his footing right now," Jason said. "I think that is super smart. Everybody kept telling him he should have went to the Air Force anyway, but he wanted to be like dad. I wish he'd gone to the Air Force the first time."

Jason said he is really proud of both boys.

"I know my dad was proud when I went in," Jason said. "And my grandpa actually cracked a smile when I got back from boot camp."

Jason didn't join the Marines until he was 22-years-old.

"I didn't quite get it," he admitted. "I didn't get it until I was older."

Jason said he remembers when his dad was discharged from the regular Army and then served in the Army National Guard along with the Kratzers and several others from Ellsworth.

"He'd come back from Guard and he'd have me and my sister, Teasha, out there marching around the yard," Jason said. "We always thought it was really fun."

See PATRIOT Page A12



KAREN BONAR/Ellsworth County Independent-Reporter

Kevin Colle talks with Ellsworth-Kanopolis-Geneseo USD 327 board member Cynthia Edgerle, left, and Superintendent Deena Hilbig, right, June 25 during the meet-and-greet at the Ellsworth Golf Course clubhouse.

Grow Ellsworth director greets community

BY KAREN BONAR

Ellsworth County I-R

On his third day on the job, Grow Ellsworth County's new executive director, Kevin Colle, met county residents and participated in the annual meeting.

"The board decided during the transition to push this meeting back until we had Kevin on board," GEC Board President Justin Lindsley told the assembled crowd.

Colle, who grew up on the family farm near Nickerson, greeted busi-

ness owners and community leaders.

"We primarily have cow/calf pairs," he said.

Growing up, the family farmed year-round, but these days, the family sticks to fall crops.

Colle and his wife are in the process of relocating to Ellsworth County from the Hillsboro area, where the duo were teachers.

"I taught high school social studies, coached cross country, track, debate and forensics," Colle said.

While he spent a few years in the classroom, he knew working in community development was his

longer-range goal. Colle spent two years working at the K-State Agriculture Rural Leadership Center. During that time, he wrote several grants, as well as coordinated with rural educators.

"We ran summer STEM camps in a hybrid format. It was a lot of fun," he said.

As Colle steps into his new position, he hopes to build on Ellsworth County's strength, but bring some of his experience with youth into the mix.

"People think, 'How can

See DIRECTOR Page A5



Ross Janssen's
Weather

July 2 - July 8

WEDNESDAY 90/66
Mostly sunny

THURSDAY 89/67
Partly cloudy

FRIDAY 90/68
Isolated storms

SATURDAY 92/70
Scattered storms

SUNDAY 90/71
Partly cloudy

MONDAY 88/70
Scattered storms

TUESDAY 90/70
Partly cloudy

OBITUARIES

A3

CLASSIFIED

A8

OPINION

A4

CHURCH

A9

NEWS A3, A5, A6, A13

PASSAGES

A10

LEGALS A7, A12, A13

KID SCOOP

A14