

## Health department update given

The Rush County Commissioners met with representatives of Rush County Memorial Hospital, former health department staff and community members to discuss the status of the health department on Monday, February 24. Concern had been expressed about the unavailability of the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and Vaccines for Children programs, which have not been available since December 31, 2024.

The commissioners decided in November 2024 to close the Rush County Health Department and merge it into Rush County Memorial Hospital. The intent was to transition all the programs smoothly into the hospital's health department, but that is not what happened.

According to the Rush County Commissioners, the state has communicated they were notified before the end of the year by health department staff that the health department and its programs were being "shut down."

Dr. Robert Ladd, CEO of the hospital, said the hospital is working to reestablish the programs. The VFC vaccine program should be available in March, but the WIC program is more difficult. Ladd said once a federal program is shut down, it is hard to restart. He said it could take six months or longer to restore WIC.

County residents can apply in surrounding counties for the program, and WIC vouchers will still be redeemed at the grocery store in La Crosse. Some of the people present indicated surrounding counties they contacted have a long wait time for appointments.

All those present agreed that lack of communication has caused problems. "What's past is past. At this point we have to move forward. We're not going to do any good blaming each other," said Commissioner Mitchell Blackburn.

Anyone needing the services of the health department can call the previous health department telephone number 785-222-3427.

## La Crosse to host music festival

The 75th Annual Music Festival will be held on Friday, March 7 at La Crosse High School. An estimated 360 fifth through eighth grade students are scheduled to participate.

Band Parents of USD 395 will be hosting the event beginning at 8 a.m., with La Crosse groups kicking off the performances. USD 395 classes will be dismissed for the day. The performances are open to the public.

Public and parochial schools represented include La Crosse, Ellinwood, Ness City, Central Plains, Kinsley, Ness City Sacred Heart, Dodge City Sacred Heart, Pawnee Heights, Otis-Bison, Central Kansas Christian Academy, Ingalls and Western Plains.

The entries will be in several categories, including numerous small and large ensembles consisting of vocal and instrumental performances and solos. Judges give oral and written comments to students and rate their performances.

All activities will be held at La Crosse High School, with performances scheduled from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. In conjunction with the day, the Band Parents will offer a concession stand from 7:30 a.m. to the close of the day in the school cafeteria. Members of La Crosse High School's music department will be assisting with various tasks during the festival, as well as district teachers.

The music festival started in 1950 with only Rush County schools invited to participate. The largest years for the music festival were 1965-67 when 2,800 students from more than 60 schools participated. At least 11 buildings were used for the performances in those early years, but now the schools attending are assigned space in the gymnasium for their home area, freeing up the classrooms for judging.

## Local Work Group planned for February 27

Farmers/producers who sign up for Federal or State Cost Share programs, those wanting to make an impact on natural resource concerns, those involved with wildlife or cattle or those who own their own business and work with ag producers are encouraged to attend a Local Work Group Meeting. The meeting will be held from 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Thursday, February 27, at the Township Hall, 220 Union Street, Rush Center. The date in last week's issue of the Rush County News was incorrect. A free soup lunch will be provided.

The information collected will be used to better prioritize conservation delivery at the local level. LWG meetings are held to get input at the local level. From these meetings, a detailed, ranked report is given to NRCS, as well as state agencies and local conservation districts, on priority natural resource concerns.

Those interested in attending should RSVP the Rush County Conservation District at 785-222-2615 ext. 101 or stop by the office at the USDA Service Center, 1515 Oak Street, La Crosse, KS 67548.



International Harvester Collectors Club President Ron Schmidt (left) presents Preston Ross a national scholarship from the International Harvester Collectors on Saturday, February 22. Preston is a member of the local International Harvester Collectors Kansas Chapter #3. The club will have a display of tractors at Mill Fest on Saturday, May 3 in Lindsborg. (courtesy photo)

# The Rush County NEWS



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Newly elected officers for the Rush County Historical Society are (left to right) front row: Vice-president Fred Lohrey, President Gerald Marvin; back row: Secretary Patricia Duffey and Treasurer Ron Sandstrom. (photo by Linda Kenyon)

## Historical society elects new president

The Rush County Historical Society met for its annual meeting on Saturday, February 22, at the Barbed Wire Museum meeting room. Officers were elected, with former president Lawrence Erbes asking to step down and Gerald Marvin agreeing to take his place. Board members Lawrence Erbes, Brad Penka and Maureen Georg were reelected for another three-year term, and Deanne Ficken was elected to fill the board position of Lester Seuser, who asked to be removed from the board.

Brad Penka reported on the Rush County 150th Anniversary events held throughout 2024 and declared them "overwhelmingly

successful." There were 18 different events during the year with some events planning on continuing in some form or another.

Penka also gave an update on the Post Rock Limestone Coalition. It is working on getting the St. Joseph Church complex in Liebenenthal listed on the National Historical Register. It is also assisting the Erb family with preserving a limestone fence along K-4 highway. The state was planning on replacing the fence with steel posts and barbed wire because of road construction in the area, but the road construction is now on hold partly because of the support of the coalition and Rush County Historical Society.

The 150th anniversary of the Volga Germans arriving in the area is in 2026, and the first Volga Germans traveled from the railroad in either Victoria or Hays to Liebenenthal on February 22, 1876. The historical society discussed ways to be involved in the celebration.

Obtaining brass plaques to commemorate Marshal Talbot, the only law enforcement officer in Rush County to die in the line of duty, and Post Rock Museum, an original homestead home, was discussed.

Clean-up day for the museum complex was scheduled for 8 a.m. April 26, with the opening day for the museums set for April 30.

## Lane-Scott Electric awarding \$1,000 grants in 2025

The Sharing Success Grant Program is an initiative created by CoBank to amplify the grassroots efforts of partnering organizations, such as Lane-Scott Electric. The program offers community organizations grants to fund projects or purposes for the betterment of community members and their rural economy.

Since the inception of the Sharing Success Program in 2012, CoBank and their partners have donated \$86 million to the initiative. Lane-Scott began participating in 2020, providing grants to various organizations within its 8-county service territory. Examples of awarded grants include



- building upgrades and repairs, handicap accessibility projects, upgraded technology, food banks, fire departments, school improvements, public library programs, child development programs, ministry programs, cemetery marker restoration, health center equipment, recreation commission projects, etc.

The project must benefit a community or communities who receive electric service from Lane-Scott Electric or who's purpose benefits members of Lane-Scott. The project must serve a public purpose. The project must be finished within 12 months of the award. Past recipients and the online or


printable application form can be found at: [www.lanescott.coop/cobank-sharing-success-grant-program](http://www.lanescott.coop/cobank-sharing-success-grant-program). The application requires a description of the organization, the purpose in which the grant will be used, and who will benefit from the grant. The deadline to apply is April 4, 2025.

"We look forward to another year of helping organizations improve their communities!" said Lane-Scott Communications Director Ann Jennings. "Please pass along this information to anyone who could benefit from this opportunity."

Call 620-397-5327 or 800-407-2217 with questions.



Lane	Ness	Rush
Walnut Creek Extension		



**Extension Education, Building Better Communities**

### INSIGHT WITH EXTENSION by Jared Petersille Agriculture Agent

With another extension of the 2018 Farm Bill, farmers are now able to make an election decision between commodity programs on their base acres for 2025.

The decision between Agricultural Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) needs to be made by April 15th, 2025, and will be for the crop harvested in 2025, with payment (if any) being made in October of 2026.

If a producer elects additional SCO (Supplemental Coverage Option), then the deadline is much sooner, so be aware. According to Robin Reid with KSU Ag Econ Dept, "the biggest difference in making the election decision in 2025 compared to previous years is higher reference and benchmark prices for both ARC and PLC." While these have separate formulas, both use Marketing Year Average (MYA) prices from 2019-2023, which contain historically high crop prices. At a time when current crop prices are dismal and outlook is uncertain, the higher reference and benchmark prices would lead one to conclude there is a higher likelihood of payments.

The big question is how low could crop prices go in the 2025/2026 marketing year and what program will provide

better protection and/or higher payment rates.

While the marketing year is a long ways off yet, several sources of 2025/2026 MYA prices are available, updated regularly, and compiled here: <https://www.agmanager.info/crop-insurance/risk-management-strategies/projections-and-sources-mya-prices-arc-and-plc-commodity>. Current projections are nearly even.

ARC-CO will pay at higher prices in the event of yield losses at the county level, and vice versa, where higher county yields will require lower prices to trigger an ARC-CO payment. If commodity prices do start falling below current levels, farmers may consider PLC for better price protection. Remember, PLC will keep paying until commodity prices hit the loan rate, whereas ARC-CO hits a maximum payment rate at 10% of benchmark revenue. This may be the biggest factor in making the ARC or PLC decision this year. Farmers should consider at what MYA price the PLC payment will exceed the ARC-CO maximum, which is a county and farm-level specific threshold. Reid has developed a great tool for assessing potential ARC-CO versus PLC payments at various MYA price levels and county yields. ARC/PLC Tradeoff spreadsheet found here: <https://agmana ger.info/ag-policy/2018>

farm-bill/tradeoff-between-20252026-arc-and-plc. The spreadsheet tool that is very easy to use, downloadable from the AgManager website, with pull down options for county, crop, and if there is an irrigated option.

For instance, in Rush Co. on dryland wheat, ARC program yield is 37.6 and the reference price is \$5.56 with an Olympic yield of 47 and an Olympic price at \$6.72 so PLC will equal ARC at \$4.71. The ARC max is \$31.88. KSU estimates that the MYA price will be \$5.50, so no PLC payment is expected. On wheat the 24/25 marketing year has 5 months remaining with about 25% of the weighted average affected. The predicted amounts with PLC are similar with narrow margins pertaining to PLC payments. Currently we do not expect a PLC payment for corn or sorghum, but there is 8 months remaining and 60% of the weighted average, so those numbers could change as we progress through the growing season.

The Kansas FSA office encourages producers to sign up early. Even if you opt for a change before the deadline, they still want producers to move now. They are expecting the roll out of several programs this spring and if personnel issues become a bigger issue, offices could be strapped for time and this is a decision that can be made to get ahead of the curve.