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Auxvasse Lions to offer chili lunch next Saturday

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Auxvasse residents can treat themselves to a luncheon of chili and charity this week. The Auxvasse Lions Club will hold a homemade chili and vegetable soup

jamboree from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. March 29 at the Auxvasse Community Center, 702 S. Main St. in Auxvasse. Besides chili and vegetable soup, the menu includes crackers, carrot sticks, celery sticks, dessert and drinks. The club would like to invite com-

munity members to come and have a meal with its members to welcome the warm spring weather. The meal costs \$10 for anyone 10 years old and above. Children under 10 years-old can eat for free. Event proceeds will be used for the

upkeep of the community center and the Auxvasse Lions Club's other charitable projects. The club supports projects including Saving Sight, Leader Dog, Eye Glass Recycling, Mid-South Sight and Hearing Rehabilitation and the Lions

Club International Foundation, an organization that offers relief to victims of natural disasters around the world. For more information about the event or the Auxvasse Lions Club, contact Donal Knipp at 573-386-5175.

State recovering from bird flu outbreak

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In January 2025, more than four million chicken, geese and other poultry across Missouri were killed following avian influenza outbreaks. That month marked the peak in a three-year-long outbreak that claimed the lives of more than five million birds from both commercial and backyard flocks across the state. The last identified case of avian influenza — also called bird flu — in Missouri was in mid-February. That month saw almost 160,000 poultry affected by the disease. Since the nationwide outbreak began in January 2022, more than 1,600 separate outbreaks have been reported, affecting more than 166 million birds. This outbreak has packed a particular punch, according to Missouri State Veterinarian Steve Strubberg. “Any previous outbreak similar to this was over by now — the virus went away or mutated to where it didn't affect the industry as much and worked its way out. But with this particular outbreak over the course of the previous few years, it has not done that,” Strubberg said. The disease is spread primarily by “migrating waterfowl — most of them, or many of them, have it,” he added. While birds’ migrations take them across all corners of the state, the

recent outbreak has hit southwestern Missouri particularly hard, Strubberg said, adding that it's unclear why that's the case. “Most of these commercial facilities have really good biosecurity. They keep their birds pretty well protected from wild animals, and wild birds specifically,” he said. “Unfortunately, (it) just (takes) a little bit of dust or maybe some bird droppings or something might get passed through a fan into a building — or, God forbid, on somebody's shoe, if they aren't taking good biosecurity precautions.” The outbreaks have postponed poultry and waterfowl auctions, shows and swap-meets in affected counties. As long as flocks in these areas continue to test negative, the department anticipates easing restrictions on those events in the coming weeks, according to MDA spokesperson Christi Miller. While other states have reported cases of cattle contracting the disease, there have been no such cases in Missouri, Strubberg said. The Missouri Department of Agriculture has been working with the U.S. Department of Agriculture to provide boots on the ground to raise awareness and help farmers improve their sanitation and biosecurity practices. MDA staff also monitor movements in and out of “control areas” — areas in which an outbreak has occurred — through the regular testing of flocks and poultry products.

“That's something that happens every couple of days to at (most) weekly in some of those nearby flocks just to allow them to continue business and make sure the disease is not spreading,” Strubberg said. While some humans have contracted the disease, the virus has not yet mutated to spread between humans very easily. Strubberg stressed that the chicken, turkeys and eggs making it to supermarket shelves are tested and, if cooked properly, safe to eat. **Navigating economic impacts** “Another really important thing is to know how safe our food is. We want to make sure people keep consuming healthy and safe food and continue supporting Missouri farmers,” Strubberg said. “They're our biggest industry in the state, and we need to do what we can to help support them, make them sustainable and help Missouri's economy.” When bird flu is detected, entire flocks are culled to ensure the virus is contained. Once a flock has been euthanized, disposal can vary from farm to farm, but the most common approach involves composting birds to turn them into fertilizer that, after a several-week quarantine, is considered safe to apply to fields. After that, farmers and their facil-

ities must go through a biosecurity audit to identify areas for improvement, “whether it's patching holes in their barn or having better methods of protecting their flocks from visitors or making sure visitors and vehicles that come into their facility are sanitized before they come in,” Strubberg said. The cost of destroying their flocks, disinfecting their facilities and bringing in new birds can have a detrimental impact on farmers' finances, but Strubberg said the USDA offers indemnity to farmers to offset the cost of their lost birds. The USDA also provides funding to help with disinfecting facilities so flocks can be reintroduced. “Recently, that (money) has fallen below market levels, so (farmers) are in danger of not surviving some of these outbreaks,” Strubberg said. “It has recently been announced by the USDA secretary that they are going to go ahead and try to increase some of those amounts and help to protect more of those producers.” The USDA last month announced its intention to invest up to \$1 billion in improving farms' biosecurity, providing more aid to farmers, deregulating the chicken and egg industries and more. Miller said it is not yet clear how much of that money will come to Missouri.

Looking ahead

Strubberg told the News Tribune

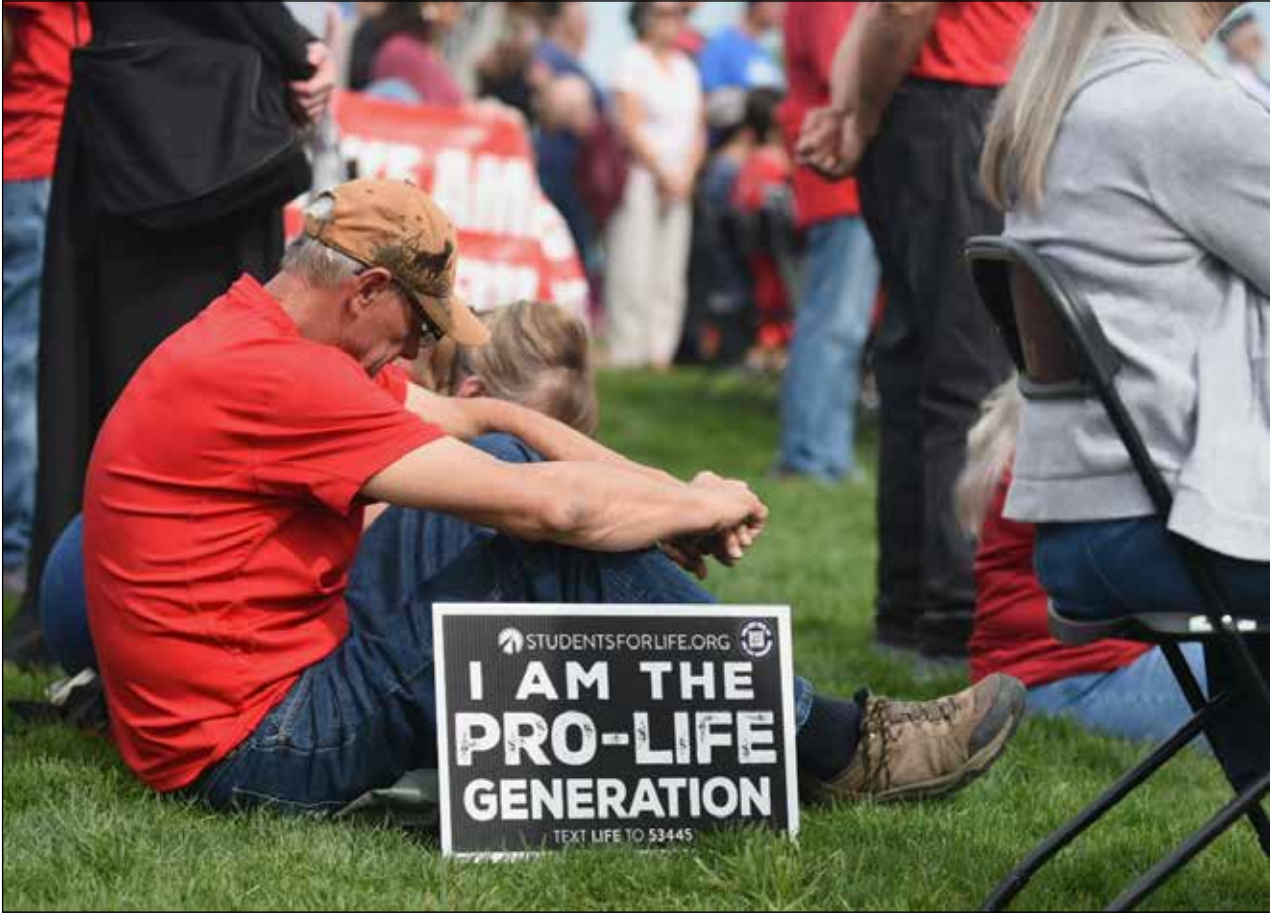
in late February that “we seem to be trending in a good direction.” “We haven't had any recent detections, and those facilities that have been affected are working toward getting back into production by getting their sanitization ... up and going,” he said. Miller told the News Tribune in a mid-March email that “All (facilities) are in the appropriate stage of composting and cleaning as they all move toward repopulating their farms with poultry.” “All producers are encouraged to continue strict biosecurity practices to protect their birds from avian influenza,” Miller wrote. “With the warmer temperatures, the spring bird migration will begin soon. Wild waterfowl is known to carry the virus.” To help farmers protect their flocks, MDA offers a service through which commercial poultry farmers and backyard flock owners alike can receive notifications about the movement of diseases around their region. “They (farmers) certainly are concerned, and we try and keep in touch with them and help them and their veterinarians be aware of where the virus is,” Strubberg said. To participate in the MDA program, animal owners must register their premises with the department through a form that can be found on the MDA website.

Proposed tax credit boost may be lucrative for Missouri anti-abortion centers, donors

Anna Spoorre

Missouri Independent

When the Missouri House signed off on a \$1.3 billion tax cut package last week, it included a provision creating a 100 percent tax credit for donations to pregnancy resource centers, maternity homes and diaper banks. The credits — allowing up to \$50,000 in donations to be accepted in place of taxes owed — are seen by supporters as a way to increase aid to pregnant women in need following Missourians' decision to legalize abortion last November. “There's no time in the history of Missouri that I can recall where there's a better time to support life,” state Rep. Brad Christ, a Republican from St. Louis, said during a committee hearing last month. But pregnancy resource centers have proven controversial around the country, accused of providing women with inaccurate medical information in an effort to discourage them from seeking abortions. And critics have raised concerns that allowing Missourians to satisfy their entire tax bill by donating to anti-abortion organizations could create significant budget uncertainty. “Even if you view this totally in isolation and don't pay any mind through the mission of the organizations at hand here, this is egregious policy” said Carl Davis, research director at the left-leaning Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy. “There's no reason to do it this way.” The tax credit for pregnancy resource centers was set at 70 percent in 2021, up from 50 percent. Maternity homes also currently sit at 70 percent, and diaper banks are at 50 percent. Following the 2022 change, the Pregnancy Help Center of Central Missouri in Jefferson City saw a \$100,000



Anna Spoorre/Missouri Independent

Anti-abortion advocates gathered at the Midwest March for Life in front of the Missouri State Capitol on May 1, 2024, in Jefferson City.

increase in tax credit-eligible donations, its executive director, Leslie Kerns, told the House special committee on tax reform. The original bill's sponsor, state Rep. Christopher Warwick, a Republican from Bolivar, did not respond to an interview request, but during a House hearing he described the legislation as “a simple bill” that redirects the addi-

tional 30 percent the government has been getting to women in need. “We need to keep government out of a lot of things, and this is one of them,” Warwick said during the hearing in which he was asked if he would include a provision mandating oversight of how the donations are spent. “We need to be able to make sure that donors are getting their resources

directly to those that need it, and when we're talking about pregnancies and women who are looking for help, this bill allows that and puts donors right in front of those who need it most.” A number of tax credit programs in Missouri are built to incentivize donations to certain causes, including the Developmental Disability Care Provider Tax Credit, Domestic Violence

Shelter or Rape Crisis Center Tax Credit and “Champion for Children” tax credit. But the credit to pregnancy resource centers tends to get the most attention because of its involvement in Missouri's longstanding battle over abortion. Pregnancy resource centers are not medical facilities but rather provide services including free pregnancy tests, prenatal vitamins, parenting classes, ultrasounds and counseling. While 100 percent tax credits — meaning the donor reduces their tax bill the exact amount they gave — aren't unheard of, they are usually capped. What's different about this year's proposal is that while tax credit claims remain capped at \$50,000 per individual contribution, there would not be a cap at the aggregate level, meaning there is no limit to how many people can claim credits. Without an aggregate cap, it would take 200 people donating \$50,000 to cut into Missouri's budget by \$10 million. If 1,000 people took advantage of the full credit it would cost the state \$50 million. The state's total tax revenue in the most recent fiscal year was about \$14.2 billion. Sam Lee finds any concerns about the fiscal impact overblown. The longtime anti-abortion activist and lobbyist pointed to a January 2024 tax credit analysis by the Missouri Department of Social Services concluding that for every dollar redeemed by taxpayers with the tax credit, the state saves \$1.77. The report explained the savings by concluding the donations assist women with unplanned pregnancies “who may have, otherwise, accessed state assistance.” Last fiscal year, about \$7.5 million was claimed under this tax credit.

See Credit on page 2

CALENDAR

Post your public event at fultonsun.com/calendar or email news@fultonsun.com.

Today

• Let's Glow Crazy hosted by Team Velocity Speed Skating Team, 6-8 p.m., Sk8 Zone, Jefferson City.

Monday

• Family Story Time (ages 5 and under), 9:30-10 a.m., Southern Boone County Public Library, Ashland.
• Family Story Time (ages 5 and under), 10-10:45 a.m.,

Callaway County Public Library, 710 Court St.
• Falls Prevention Workshop: A Matter of Balance, 1-3 p.m., Holts Summit Public Library, Holts Summit. Register at events.dbrl.org/events.
• Food Pantry, 4-7 p.m., Catholic Charities of Central and Northern Missouri, Jefferson City.
• HCJ Educational Series: History of the Construction of Jefferson City's First Bridge, 6:30-7:30 p.m., N. H. Scheppers Distributing Co., Jefferson City.
• Ace of Spades, 7-8:30 p.m., VFW Post 2657, 505 Collier Lane.

Tuesday

• Central Missouri Veterans Coffee Talk, 9-10 a.m., Grand Prairie Fellowship Hall, Auxvasse.
• AARP TaxAide: Free tax service for low-income seniors, 9 a.m.-noon, Aging Best building, Jefferson City.
• Brick Builders (ages 5 and up), 9:30-11 a.m., Southern Boone County Public Library, Ashland.
• Genealogical Research Using Ancestry.com, 10-11 a.m., Southern Boone County Public Library, Ashland.
• Instrument Petting Zoo - With Higday and Mizzou, 10-11:30 a.m., Columbia Public Library, Columbia.

TODAY'S FORECAST



HIGH: 61
LOW: 40
SKIES: Light Rain