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# 4-H At A Crossroads

County 4-H Could Lose Official Status If  
Funding Isn’t Set By End Of September

BY RANDY DOCKENDORF  
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After more than a century in existence, the Yankton County 4-H program will end next month unless action is taken, according to a state official.

At its Aug. 19 meeting, the Yankton County Commission voted 3-2 not to continue funding the county’s 4-H position, which had become vacant with the Aug. 8 resignation of Katie Doty. She remained in the posi-

tion through the conclusion of the Yankton County Fair and has since taken other employment.

“We’re now the only (South Dakota) county without a state or county 4-H employee,” said Commissioner Ryan Heine, who voted against the motion and serves as the liaison with the Extension and 4-H programs.

However, the commission’s vote to not fill the



Tanner

4-H position breaks an agreement with South Dakota State University (SDSU), according to State 4-H Program Director Tim Tanner. The 4-H program falls under SDSU Extension, and his office is located on the SDSU campus in Brookings.

“The current Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Yankton County Commission and SDSU Extension says that they will provide county 4-H employee(s),” he told the *Press & Dakotan*. “Choosing not to maintain a county 4-H employee is akin to breaking the current MOU.”

The agreement’s dissolution means the end of

4-H | PAGE 3



CORA VAN OLSON/P&D

Disruptions and unlawful recording of court proceedings has prompted local officials to consider ways to keep cell phones safely out of the courtroom. Shown here is a recently installed bank of lockboxes at the Yankton County Courthouse, which allows individuals to safely lock up their phones before entering the courtroom.

## Training For Knox County Crisis Therapy Dog Program Continues

BY MARK MAHONEY  
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CENTER, Neb. — Austin Taylor can regularly be found with a four-legged furball of friendly energy these days while he is out and about in Knox County, Nebraska, for his job.

Knox — an eight-month-old, roughly 50-pound Goldendoodle named after the northeast Nebraska county — has become the regular work partner for Taylor, the Knox County emergency manager. The pair of them can often be seen riding together in Taylor’s white work pickup truck, with Knox sitting in the backseat, sticking his head out of one of the side windows and quietly panting as he enjoys the fresh air.

Taylor told the *Press & Dakotan* that Knox has been undergoing training this year to eventually become a “Crisis Response K9” for Knox County.

“He’s gotten used to the routine of waking up, getting the vest on (and) knowing he’s going to the courthouse to go to work, so it’s going well,” said Taylor, whose office is located in Center, Nebraska. “He’s still learning the procedures of commands, which will take time. He’s only eight months old, so it’s a work in progress with that, but outside of that, everything’s going well.”

Taylor is working on establishing a crisis response therapy dog team for Knox County without using taxpayers’ money. This program will feature him as the first-responder handler for Knox.

The Bloomfield, Nebraska, man has been taking Knox, whom he acquired in March, to the Red Hydrant Inn and Playground in Yankton for training.

“He’s going to have to get trained to be able



MARK MAHONEY/P&D

Knox County (Nebraska) Emergency Manager Austin Taylor stands with Knox, an eight-month-old Goldendoodle who has been undergoing training this year to eventually partner with Taylor to become a crisis response therapy dog team for the county.

to walk without a leash,” Taylor said. “He’s going to have to progress a little stronger on his ability to go over hurdles. He’s still finding his back legs. That’s one of the progression factors we’ve got to deal with, and then just continuing to build his confidence. ... He’s good at sitting and laying and stuff like that, and even the shake, he’ll give you a paw.”

The plan is for Taylor and Knox to eventually receive more advanced training toward becoming a crisis response therapy dog team, likely through an organization such as Crisis Canines of the Midlands, a nonprofit group based in central Iowa that facilitates and coordinates the implementation of crisis response therapy dog units in first-responder agencies.

“It’s definitely going to be after he’s a year old, so it’ll be after next March, for sure,” Taylor said. “Somewhere that spring or the summer (next year), I’m hoping to get him into that training.”

Crisis response therapy dog units provide peer support and animal-assisted crisis response within their communities to support the mental health of individuals affected by, and responding to, emergencies and disasters. This kind of team is defined as a nationally certified therapy dog with an additional crisis response endorsement, paired with a first-responder handler.

“Primary responsibilities are the after-action

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## Yankton Courts Install Lockboxes To Safeguard Cell Phones

BY CORA VAN OLSON  
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Yankton’s judicial and law enforcement authorities are thinking “inside the box” — literally — to ensure safety and security in the courts.

A new feature outside Yankton’s courtrooms aims to increase security and confidentiality by preventing the unlawful use of cell phones during legal proceedings.

Anyone visiting the Yankton County Courthouse will immediately see the new set of plexiglass lockboxes prominently installed opposite the stairs adjacent to Courtroom D.

Each of the 60 boxes has its own key and functions much like a gym locker: users power off or silence their phones, lock them in a box and take the key with them prior to entering the courtroom. Before leaving, users unlock the box, take their phone and leave the key in the lock for the next person.

For added security, the area of the boxes is subject to video surveillance. Bilingual English-Spanish instructions in large type are also posted prominently.

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KELLY HERTZ/P&D

The Bluestem Reserve apartments at 31st Street and Douglas Avenue. The apartment project is nearly complete, but three more will be going up across the street in phase two of the project. Phase one added 70 new housing units to Yankton and phase two will add 42 bringing it to a total of 112.

## First Phase Of Bluestem Reserve Nearly Complete

BY JAY GRAVHOLT  
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Most of the work is complete on the first phase of the Bluestem Reserve apartment complex on N. Douglas Avenue and 31st Street, according to owner/investor Andy Holst.

The complex currently consists of five apartment buildings with 14 units in each one, totaling 70 units, according to Holst.

He said construction was ahead of schedule all summer thanks to getting the basics completed before the heavy rains came in July and August.

“We have four of the five buildings open and being leased,” he said. “The fifth

building will be opened Sept. 15, completing the first phase of the project. I’m not a construction expert, but I think we were fortunate we got all the foundations, all the underground utilities, basically all the dirt-related things done before it started raining and raining.”

Bluestem is part of the investor group Mailbox Money, which also has locations throughout the state and region.

Some other projects weren’t as fortunate as the one in Yankton with that weather.

“Some of the projects they have going in Sioux Falls are having some delays because of the wet weather,” Holst continued. “We were really fortunate. Even our parking

lot — we got that in before the rains came.”

Bluestem started leasing in May and is currently at 63% occupancy, Holst said.

“We’ve had people moving in since May,” he said. “People really seem to like them. The leasing was going crazy fast right away. And then around the Fourth of July, everything slowed down, which I understand is kind of typical in the multifamily industry. It’s starting to pick back up.”

According to the master plan, the group, which has 75% local investors, will look to build three more 14-unit buildings to the south across 31st Street once the finishing touches are done with the first

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