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Fair's first 'Bacon Buddies' brings people together

CHANNING RUCKS
STAFF WRITER

OSKALOOSA — Swine exhibitors tried something new at the Southern Iowa Fair this year and helped out some very special community members in the process.

The Southern Iowa Fair celebrated its very first "Bacon Buddies" event on Thursday night. Bacon Buddies pairs individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities with a 4-H or FFA mentor and gives them the opportunity to take a pig into the show ring.

The event, sponsored by the Mahaska County Farm Bureau, Iowa Pork Producers and the Southern Iowa Fair Board, received an overwhelming response from the community.

"[The response] was huge," says Holly Padgett, a fair board member who helped organize the event. "We even had folks show up tonight that weren't even on the list, so it's been very well-received from the community. We had Farm Bureau partner with us on this, and then we've also had the sheriff's posse and other businesses want to help out next year, maybe grow the event."

The inaugural event drew a very respectable crowd. Between 20-25 4-H and FFA members served as mentors to approximately 23 participating guest exhibitors.

Mentor Meadow Hughes, age 12, says the event is a good way to get people involved with livestock.

"I just thought it sounded really fun," Hughes said. "It was an experience. It was fun to be able to help. [It's important] that you get other people involved, so that everybody gets a chance to be involved."

Merek Padgett, age 17, echoed Hughes and was glad to have the opportunity as a mentor to provide a new experience for those with intellectual or developmental disabilities.

"I just think for people that want to do it and have never had an opportunity to, I think it's awesome that they can come and ... do it. If I can help out, that's awesome," Merek said.

Guest exhibitor Aubree Kool, age 19, certainly enjoyed her time in the show ring.

"It's something amazing. I've never done this," Kool said.

The community organizations that sponsored the event said that their deep roots in the Mahaska County community make giving

See **BACON** on A2



Axel Vazquez | The Herald

The Southern Iowa Fair debuted its first "Bacon Buddies" event Thursday night, partnering 4-H and FFA members as mentors to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and giving them the opportunity to handle a pig in the show ring.



Photos by Ayrton Breckenridge | The Herald

Dave Prine stands beneath his heritage farm designation. To be registered as an Iowa Heritage Farm, a farm must be 80 acres or more and owned by the same family for 150 years or more.

The Prines: A homestead through the centuries

Dave Prine's fight to protect more than 150 years of family history from the South Central Regional Airport

CHANNING RUCKS
STAFF WRITER

Editor's note: This is the second of a five-part series on the status of the proposed South Central Regional Airport and the farmland where the government wants to build it.

Just off the Highway 163 corridor, on Independence Street, is an old white farmhouse shaded by trees. This is the Prine Heritage Farm, owned by Dave Prine, one of the four remaining landowners standing their ground against the proposed South Central Regional Airport.

The Prine family has been a fixture in Mahaska County since before it was officially Mahaska County. Originally part of the Perrin family from Normandy, France, the Prines left their home in Europe to make a new life in America in the late 18th century, fleeing the violence of the French Revolution.

In May 1843, the United States government opened what was called "The New Purchase" for settlement. There was a rush for land as westward-moving settlers staked claims on farmable properties to homestead. The Prines came during those early years when land was plentiful for the taking. They homesteaded several farms in the Oskaloosa area and quickly established what was known as "The Prine neighborhood."

"If we drive out west from



Landowner Dave Prine sits on his front porch showing pictures of his ancestors on his family farm through the years. The Prine family homesteaded the area west of Oskaloosa in the 1840s.

Oskaloosa on the Pella road, almost immediately on quitting the town, we will begin to enter what is known as the Prine neighborhood," writes historian Semira Ann Hobbs Phillips in her book "Proud Mahaska: 1843-1900."

Phillips describes this Prine neighborhood as being dotted with "fine houses and great barns," abundant with livestock, farmland and orchards.

"The old set of Prines — Henry,

Dan and Kin Prine — came in an early day when land was cheap," Phillips writes. "They bought large tracts of that beautiful rolling prairie, whereon was only the wild prairie grass and flowers. They broke the sod, fenced their broad acres, and in the course of time planted immense orchards, [built] fine houses and barns, and now their children and grandchildren are living and flourishing all about them."

Dave Prine, the great-great-

grandson of Dan Prine, tells the story of how his family came to live and farm in Mahaska County in his own words.

"It really wasn't purchased so much as it was homesteaded," he says. "They opened what they called the 'New Purchase,' which this was — they ended up stealing it from the Indians, but they said they bought it — anyway, that's when you could stake a claim. I

See **PRINES** on A3

Reynolds appeals injunction that blocks abortion restrictions from being enforced

CLARK KAUFFMAN
IOWA CAPITAL DISPATCH

As promised, Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds has appealed a judge's decision that blocks the state from enforcing a new law that seeks to ban almost all abortions after about six weeks of pregnancy.

The injunction was issued Monday, three days after Reynolds signed the measure into law. Because of that injunction, abortion up to 20 weeks of pregnancy is currently legal in

Iowa while a lawsuit challenging the new law's constitutionality works its way through the courts.

Within hours of the injunction being issued, Reynolds said she intended to "fight this all the way to the Iowa Supreme Court."

In announcing her decision to challenge appeal the decision on the injunction, Reynolds said Friday she will "never stop fighting to protect our unborn children and to uphold state laws enacted by our elected legislators."

The new law seeks to prohibit almost all abortions once embryonic cardiac activity is detected, which is typically around the sixth week of pregnancy, before many women realize they are pregnant. It is almost identical to a bill that Reynolds signed into law in 2018. Enforcement of that law was also blocked by a court-ordered injunction.

In the wake of this year's U.S. Supreme Court's decision that essentially overturned Roe v. Wade, lawyers for the state filed a peti-

tion in district court to dissolve the injunction. The court rejected that proposal, which led to an appeal that went before the Iowa Supreme Court, where the justices deadlocked on a decision and left the injunction in place.

That decision prompted Reynolds to call a special session of the Iowa Legislature earlier this month, during which lawmakers passed a virtually identical bill, triggering an immediate legal challenge by Planned Parenthood North Central

States, the Emma Goldman Clinic and the ACLU of Iowa.

The plaintiffs were able to persuade Polk County District Judge Joseph Seidlin that a temporary injunction blocking the law's enforcement was warranted since they were likely to succeed in their challenge of the law.

The plaintiffs argue the new law violates the Iowa Constitution because, in seeking to protect the

See **ABORTION** on A2

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WEATHER

Today:
▲ High of 93, ▼ Low of 73
Mostly sunny with a slight chance of thunderstorms.

INDEX

- News A2-4
- Milestones A5
- Sports B1-2
- Comics B3
- Public Notices .. B4-6

INSIDE

Newgarden completes an IndyCar Series weekend sweep at Iowa Speedway

Page B1

NEWS

PRINES

CONTINUED FROM A1

think then you had to go in and then register the claim in Fairfield and pay for it," he says.

Dave is proud of the fact that in all the time since that first Iowa land grab — six generations of Prines — no one outside of his family has ever owned the farm.

"This ground right here — my farm — nobody else has ever owned it except a Prine," he says.

Over the decades, the plot of land that Dave calls home has borne witness to some of the most pivotal moments in Iowan and American history.

In 1863, Dan Prine's son, Matthew Miles — Dave's great-grandfather — left the family farm to fight for the Union Army during the Civil War. He served in the 4th Independent Battery, Iowa Light Artillery.

In 1897, the Oskaloosa Herald published a story that Miles remembered from his childhood, 50 years before, when "2,000 Hollanders came along the road." The group of Dutchmen, who were much impressed by the City of Oskaloosa, attempted to purchase the Dan Prine farm. The Prines, unable to speak Dutch, were fearful of the large body of foreigners and sent them on their way. The "Hollanders" eventually found their way to a stretch of land about 20 miles west of the Prines.

They built a town there and called it Pella.

Today, Dave's farm, which is still being used to grow corn and soybeans, is registered with the state as an Iowa Heritage Farm. Being designated as a heritage farm is an honor for farms that are more than 80 acres and have been owned by the same family for 150 years or longer. The designation showcases Iowa's pioneering history.

With so much family history embedded into his plot of Mahaska County land, Dave says that it's difficult to explain his connection with the place that he calls "home."

"It's hard to put into words the feelings I have for this ground," Dave says. "It's not like we bought this, and the family's only lived here since grandpa, or even great-grandpa. When I first had to get the documentation to prove it was a Heritage Farm, the records at the courthouse didn't go back far enough. They only went back to the early 1850s."

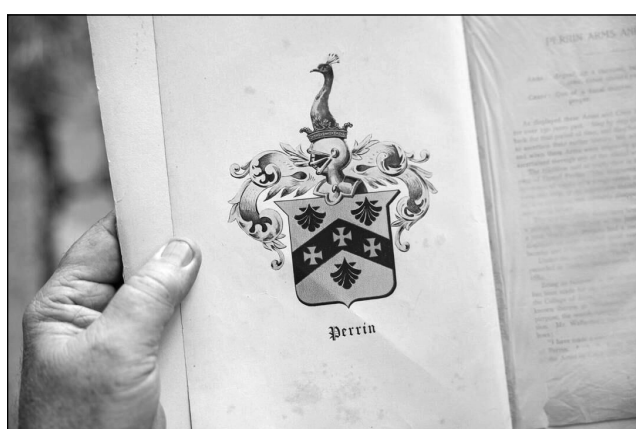
Prine contacted Hawkeye Realty and asked them to research the land records for him. Eventually, they were able to prove that the Prine family had indeed owned and farmed the land for over 150 years, and Dave now proudly displays his family's Heritage Farm sign on a post so that it's visible from the gravel road that runs by his house.

After the formation of the South Central Regional Airport Agency, also known as SCRAA,



Photos by Ayrton Breckenridge | The Herald

Dave Prine holds a picture of his grandfather, Homer Prine, on his horse in front of the Prine house. Dave estimates that the photo was taken in the early 1900s. Dave lives in the same house today.



Originally spelled "Perrin," the Prines came to America in the late 18th century, fleeing the violence of revolutionary France. Dave Prine holds a rendering of the Perrin coat of arms.

Dave received multiple offers for the purchase of his farm so that the proposed South Central Airport could be built. First the offers were for the airspace rights directly over his farm. When Dave, who is "totally against the airport," refused to enter negotiations for his airspace, the agency began making offers for the land itself.

On Oct. 24, 2020, Dave received an offer from Todd Muehlich, a consultant to SCRAA, offering \$145,700 for an "Acquisition of Surface and Overhead Avigation Easement" on 36.24 of his 148 acres of farmland. This type of easement prevents farmers from building tall structures on their land and waives their right to file a legal suit against the pilots or owners of aircraft.

The October letter informed him that if negotiations for the airspace could not begin within the next 15 days, SCRAA would "proceed with the [Federal Aviation Administration] requirement of acquiring Fee Title to the property."

On Aug. 9, 2021, Dave received another letter, this time offering \$446,500 for the purchase of the 36.24 acres of land, citing the fact that they had been unable to begin negotiations for his airspace.

Searle on multiple occasions. At one point, in the city's attempt to find an alternate route for farm-to-market road 220th Street, which would need to be closed for the airport, Dave says the replacement was slated to run right through his farm.

None of these offers have ever tempted him.

Now, unable to sway the landowners to sell their properties, representatives from the City of Oskaloosa and SCRAA have once more begun offering Surface and Overhead Avigation Easements to two of the four remaining landowners, including Dave.

"They're trying to divide and conquer us, because they've moved the airport Northwest," Dave says. "And now if they don't want any of my actual property, they want airspace. And if you look at the map, I am right under the northwest to southeast flightline."

He remains unconvinced by the offers and has no intention of "rolling over" on his fellow

landowners. With more than a century of his family heritage at stake, Dave says he can't even consider accepting an offer, airspace or otherwise.

"I've got to stick with my neighbors. That's all there is to it," he says. "All my Prine relatives are buried over here on the hill, and they'd haunt me to my dying day if I rolled over on the neighbors just for some money."

City of Oskaloosa officials, including Mayor David Krutzfeldt and City Manager Amal Eltahir, have continued to campaign for the airport, claiming that it is necessary to Oskaloosa's economic development.

Most recently, Dave says that the city has attempted to use this narrative to "guilt" him into selling the airspace above his land.

He says that he's not trying to hold up progress, but that he has to stick up for his rights and those of his neighbors.

"I got the very distinct impression that they were trying to guilt me into it; make me feel guilty about 'I'm withholding the progress of Mahaska County,'" Dave says. "I'm not trying to withhold the progress from Mahaska County, I'm trying to keep airplanes from flying over my house and trying to keep them from tearing up my

neighbors' ground."

And in spite of all the promises city officials have made in recent months, Dave says he still does not believe that the city will refrain from using eminent domain to build the airport if given the opportunity.

"The airport board still owns 379 acres of ground, and they're going to use every available tool in their toolbox to make it happen," he says.

In the end, Dave is digging into his heritage and refusing to move an inch toward helping the city do just that.

"There's several buildings around Oskaloosa that they have rehabbed, and they've got plaques about historical significance of. I've got my plaque right out there on the post; my heritage farm sign," he says. "I'm not asking the City of Oskaloosa to kow-tow, recognize me as anything special, but the Prine roots on this land — especially because it's the only Prine ground left — we go back before there was ever even airplanes designed."

"It's something that I want folks to say, that Dave Prine was not money hungry," he says.

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