On The Road: Ashby

Coots Unlimited in busiest period

By Chris Reinoos
Daily Journal

Photo provided

Dane Ellingston and his father, Steve, were among those who assembled duck houses last year for the Coots Unlimited sportsmen's club. This is the busy time of year for the group, as they again assembled duck houses late last month and are preparing for their annual fundraising banquet, set for May 10 this year.

The Coots Unlimited sportsmen's club in Ashby started a second fundraiser last fall, selling 300 wall calendars for $100 each.

But club treasurer Dallas Rylander made no bones about the importance of their upcoming banquet.

"This is the majority of our money," Rylander said.

This year's 35th annual banquet is set for May 10 at the Ashby American Legion. The event will begin at 3 p.m. with food served at 5 p.m.

Weather permitting, Rylander said, there will be a 40-by-60 foot tent set up behind the Legion. Having this space means the club can sell an unlimited number of tickets to the banquet.

Tickets will be $20 per individual, $35 per couple or $10 for those 18 years of age or younger. A ticket also comes with a year-long membership in Coots Unlimited.

There will be door prizes, raffles, awards, games and a silent auction as part of the festivities. Past silent auctions have included homemade hats, food packages and decoys, among many other things.

The club hopes to have 250 people attend this year's banquet and gross between $10,000 and $15,000. That money will go towards a variety of projects, according to Rylander.

The club has built fishing piers and deer feeders and paid registration fees for children gun safety classes, and has also donated to the Ashby High School trap shooting team.

There are a few bigger projects the club is focused on going forward, too. One such project would be installing a filtration system in Sewell Lake, which has been discussed for several years now.

"A portion of it is lack of money, and a portion of it is lack of ambition," Rylander said. "Two or three guys can't handle that themselves, plus there's some landowners we'd have to get approval from."

The banquet is not the only thing going on with Coots Unlimited at this time of year.

The club just built 150 duck houses on March 29 for use throughout the city. The lumber from the duck houses was donated by Lakeside Lumber in Ashby, and the club got some help from several members of the Fergus Falls Greenwings.

Along with the 150 completed duck houses, Coots Unlimited also donated the material for 150 more to the Greenwings.

About 50 people have said they will come to the banquet next month. Although the club would like to lessen the importance of the banquet in future years with other fundraising aims — the calendars included — at this point it is vitally important to the health of the club.

Rylander said at the height of the club's popularity, 600 people would show up for the banquet. While he is not expecting near those numbers, he is hoping for a strong turnout.

McDonald: Family felt loved and cared for at the house

From Page 1

"That kind of popped into my head right away," Hannah said.

That was the immediate response, too, when the family found out they were nominated by Bell State Bank and Trust to "Pay It Forward."

Hannah wrote about memories of playing with younger sister, Grace, then age 3, in the Ronald McDonald House toy room, about drinking chocolate milk during the Thanksgiving meal, and about her little brother having trouble breathing, "which was really scary," she wrote.

"I hope people who stay at the Ronald McDonald House feel the love and support we felt when we were there," Hannah wrote, as the final sentence of her essay.

"It was really cool to see the impact it had on her at such a young age," Angie said.

Christopher agreed, and said it was a very touching story.

Today, Joe is a thriving 5-year-old who is excited to start kindergarten next year, his mom said.

Staying at the Ronald McDonald House during Joe's hospital stay was a financial burden that was lifted from the Polejewski family. However, more importantly than that was the unexpected care they received from those at the House, especially for the two girls. It was a homestyle atmosphere where they could sit down to dinner as a family, play with the girls and "just to be able to let them still be kids," Angie said.

They even had a Thanksgiving meal prepared for them during their stay.

"Just little things like that, you would just start crying," Angie said.

Having a child in the hospital is a scary time, she said, but the Ronald McDonald House does an amazing job of making families feel loved and supported, she said, for as long as you need to stay.

"It's just such a great ministry to families that have children in the hospital," Angie said. "It's a huge asset to the communities that have it, that's for sure."

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(First Publication April 8, 2014)

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Jon Eich
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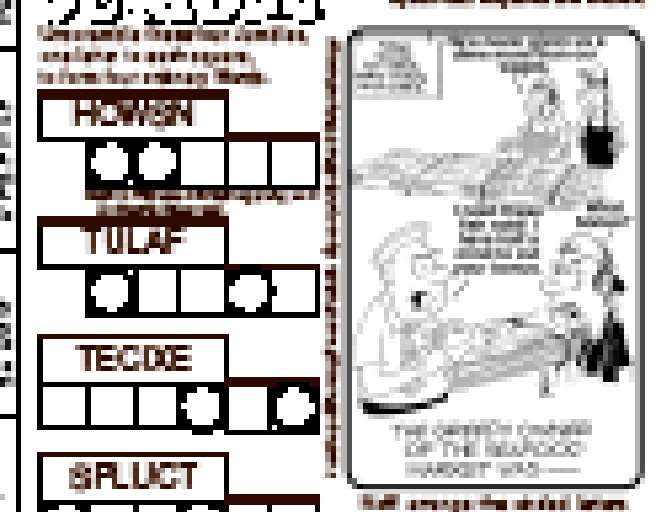
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