

Post-Gazette

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Planning Your Calendar

October 17-21

□ A free **storytime** for children and adults will be held at The Great Elkhorn Hills Pumpkin Patch, 20227 Veterans Drive, each day at 1 p.m.

Tuesday, October 18

□ The Valley Domestic Violence Task force will hold a **candlelight vigil** for victims/survivors of domestic violence at 7 p.m. in the lot across the street from Valley City Hall, 203 N. Spruce Street. Domestic Violence Awareness Week is October 16-22.

□ The **Bennington Lions Club** will meet at Keno Cabana in Bennington at 7 p.m. Dave Bressman from the Bennington Tree Board will be the guest speaker.

□ The **Bennington Public Library Book Club** will meet at 7 p.m. to discuss *John Adams* by David McCullough. For more information, call 238-2201.

October 19-20

□ **DC West parent/student/teacher conferences** will be held on Wednesday from 11 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. and from 5-8 p.m. and on Thursday from 1-5 p.m. The middle and high school will have open schedules, where parents can come and meet with teachers anytime during the designated periods. High school teachers will be in the cafeteria and media center. Notices will be sent home with elementary students of dates/times.

Thursday, October 20

□ The **GFWC Bennington Woman's Club** will host a wiener roast with fixings for their membership night starting at 6 p.m. at the Red Barn at 13333 Bennington Road. The club is community-oriented and everyone is welcome. RSVP by October 17 to Doris Ostronic, 238-2190.

□ The Western Douglas County Chamber of Commerce will host **Red Night with the Chamber** at the Elkhorn Eagles Club, 302 Douglas Street, starting with a social hour from 5-6 p.m., dinner from 6-7 p.m. and game films with Coach Mike Christianson starting at 7 p.m. RSVP to Jill at 289-9560 or jill@wdcc.org by Tuesday, October 18.

□ The **Elkhorn Valley Garden Club** will meet at 6:30 p.m. at the home of Ann Golda, 2312 N. 191st Avenue in Elkhorn. Guest speaker Roberta Ginavon of Traynor, Iowa will speak on growing orchids. She is a member of the Omaha Orchid Society. For more information, call 289-4910.

Friday, October 21

□ **St. John's Cooks 4 Christ** is sponsoring a community HOB0 Party at the St. John's Lutheran Church Fellowship Hall in Bennington at 5 p.m. The meal includes "bum" food like organs & leeks, slum gullion, sticks & twigs, gas in a can, wart bread, chopslap, bruised beauties, sweet dirt, muddy water, and "hooch" & brown cow. Everyone in the community is invited to come in your best "bum" attire for mystery prizes. If you can bring a mystery "gizmo" and if you stump the group, you will win a "bum" prize. Admission: used clothing for the homeless shelter. RSVP: 238-2659.

□ The Agnes Robinson Waterloo Public Library will be the setting for a **Haunted House Spooktacular Event** from 6-7 p.m. for ages preschool through second grade and from 7-8 p.m. for third graders on up. There will be a costume contest, temporary Halloween tattoos, monster makeup, games, stories and prizes. For more information, call 779-4171.

Saturday, October 22

□ The **Bennington Basketball Association** will hold a **free clinic** for Bennington students in grades 3-6. The clinic for grades 3-4 will be from 9-10 a.m. and grades 5-6, from 10-11 a.m. For more information, call Theresa Rischling at 315-9005, Tom Schumacher at 238-3382 or Mike Tomjack at 238-2220.

• continued on page 3

This column is meant to help readers plan their calendars for the coming week(s). To have an item listed here, call 289-2329, fax it to 289-0861 or e-mail it to editor@dpostgazette.com.

If you or your organization charges any type of fee for the event, including non-profit organizations, some form of paid advertising for the event must appear elsewhere in the paper. Simply, if you charge, we charge. If the event is free, so is its inclusion here. Items may be edited and will run space available at the editor's discretion.

Elkhorn couple, church aid hurricane victims

by Mary Lou Rodgers

Nearly everyone has heard about the devastation in New Orleans, but not everyone knows what Hurricane Katrina did to the smaller cities like Pascagoula, Mississippi. Elkhorn residents, Chuck and Joan Hackett, learned about Pascagoula from friends, and they set off last Wednesday to do what they could to help.

It will be Chuck's second trip to the Gulf Coast. He just returned from spending a month just blocks from the Mississippi Bay, with his friend, Tom Shaddy, who asked him to go to Eastlawn United Methodist Church and help set up a distribution center where people could get food, clothing and basic supplies.

Tom Shaddy's wife, who is a church secretary, heard about the plight of the people in Pascagoula from Duane Windham of Eastlawn Methodist Church in Pascagoula, who wanted to set up a distribution center. Tom and Chuck were the first to arrive to help, so they were put in charge.

When they got there on September 3 with a truckload of chain saws, gasoline, bug spray,

trash bags, sleeping bags and everything they would need to be self-sufficient, the tragedy was still fresh.

As they drove through the town, particularly near the coastline, they saw house after house with its entire first floor washed away and nothing but beams and rafters left. One empty foundation still had the bolts in it that once held the house, and a wood floor that must have been the hallway, but the entire house was crouched behind the foundation, broken. Another had nothing left but an elegant spiral staircase that hinted of the grandeur once there.

The church, farther from the shore, was still intact, but it had suffered the damage most homes in the area had. The surge of water had swept into the building up to three feet deep, soaked and ruined everything below that level, and then drained back out. The water line on the walls, doors and cupboards was as clear as a chair rail.

It didn't take long for them to realize that many families needed more than supplies; they needed a way to clear the debris from their property so they could start



Donations from Peace Presbyterian Church in Elkhorn made it possible for a member to take this Bobcat to Pascagoula, Mississippi to help residents clean up the debris from their homes.

repairing their home or build again. What they lacked was the right equipment.

Chuck, who heard how much good a man did by bringing in a Bobcat for a week, took the idea to the Hacketts' church in Elkhorn, Peace Presbyterian. The church members donated money to lease a Bobcat for two months, and Chuck hauled it to Pascagoula on a trailer behind his pickup truck. As a retired software developer, he had very little experience with a Bobcat, but he learned quickly.

Between September 20 and October 7, he put in about 70 hours snatching up the remains of crushed homes and their contents with a grapple and piling it by the street, where semi-sized, open-topped trucks with grapples of their own picked up the piles every night.

At the distribution center, even before all the mud was removed from the vinyl floor, dozens of people from several states arrived to offer their services. A human chain quickly moved supplies from trucks to the floor of the gym and soon the distribution center was ready. A couple of local women were hired to run the center, paid out of donations.

"The biggest problem is clothes," Chuck said. "We had so much, and we had to turn clothes away because they weren't sorted, and we didn't have the manpower to do it."

He urges any groups sending clothes to sort them by size and gender, pack them in boxes, and label the boxes.

When he and Joan went to Pascagoula last week, they took art supplies with them that former Elkhorn student Sarah Wamsat had collected for the children there. Schools are just starting to reopen. Joan called stores in Pascagoula to see if they would be able to buy the supplies they would need there locally to help the economy, and they were assured they could. Before Chuck left the first time, Joan was able to secure 50-percent discounts from several stores for supplies that Chuck and Tom took with them.

"One of the things I hope to do is talk to people from different areas on how this is impacting them," Joan said. "Do they have hope? What gives them that hope? I suspect it's their deep, historical faith."

Chuck said he was beginning to

see a change in the people he met.

"I could see a transition from running on adrenaline to 'this is going to be a long-term recovery,'" he said. "I could see it sinking in - when am I going to get this and that back?"

For some, like the couple he met who lost all their pictures of their son who had died in a car accident, the most precious things are lost forever.

Physical recovery is underway, the water is now drinkable and most places have electricity.

"The biggest need is labor," Chuck said, "people to go in and take out drywall."

Peace Presbyterian Church is accepting donations for the Bobcat rental, and anything leftover will be used to buy gift cards for the people to purchase supplies for rebuilding their homes or everyday needs. Those who wish to help can call the church at 289-1104. For more information on providing labor, call the Hacketts at 332-4460.

Chuck Hackett has found the experience of helping people very rewarding: "I probably felt the most useful I ever have in my life. We can only fix a little piece, but we can help some people."



Chuck and Joan Hackett of Elkhorn are in Pascagoula, Mississippi, helping hurricane victims.



The distribution center at Eastlawn United Methodist Church in Pascagoula has been busy since early September, providing food, supplies and clothing to people in the area.



(At right) The main floor of this 2-story house was swept away, leaving the top floor intact but unsteady. Homes near the shore were destroyed. Others have water damage up to three feet high.

(At left) Finding a particular home is a difficult task for insurance agents or for agencies like FEMA. Residents in Pascagoula have spray-painted their addresses on scraps of wood along with their FEMA number. Cars are also painted with the name of the insurance company.



Bennington marks trail completion

by Mary Lou Rodgers

As Bennington Elementary School dedicated its remodeled building on October 9, a separate ceremony outside marked the official opening of the Bennington trail connecting the elementary school to the new secondary school along Bennington Road.

The mile-long concrete trail on the north side of Bennington Road runs from five to 10 feet wide, providing safe travel for walking or biking, and connects to the trail at 168th Street that winds around the lake. The project was a joint effort of the City of Bennington, the Bennington School District and the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District.

"The NRD is very pleased to be able to contribute one third of the funds," NRD Director Rich Tesar said. "It is a wonderful trail. It will be used heavily by the entire community."

Bennington School Superintendent Dr. Terry Haack said the trail is a good example of how municipalities, organizations and public

entities can get together to do something for the community.

"A lot of people worked very hard to secure the grants," Dr. Haack said. "We couldn't have done it without that."

A state highway transportation grant paid 80 percent of the cost of the trail, with the three entities splitting the remaining 20 percent. The trail, beginning at 156th Street, continuing to 168th, going around the lakes, and back to 156th Street, is about five and a half miles long.

Mayor Skip Wolff commended JEO engineers, City Clerk Minda Laaker, former mayor Dave Clark, the school administration and the NRD for their input on the trail project. He noted that benches and lights will still be added to the trail, and the Bennington Jaycees are working with school staff members, Gary Sather and Ryan Rischling, on landscaping plans for the trail that could be done as a student project.

Mayor Wolff said that one of the goals of Bennington is to have all new developers tie into the trail system to provide a safe route to school.



Papio-Missouri River NRD, Bennington city and school representatives cut the ribbon on October 9, signifying the official opening of the mile-long trail that connected the elementary school to the new secondary school along Bennington Road. The project was a joint effort of the three entities. Participating are: (front row, l-r) 2nd grader C.J. Segebart, Superintendent Dr. Terry Haack, Mayor Skip Wolff, NRD Director Rich Tesar, City Council member Terry Loftin, and 1st grader Kaylyn Segebart. In back are Bennington City Council members Wayne Andersen and Lisa Bliss.