

# THE BROWNFIELD NEWS

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12 PAGES - PLUS SUPPLEMENTS

VOLUME 108, NO 97

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2012

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Parent Teacher Organization volunteer Rosie Jimenez, left, shows 8-year-old McKenzie Perez some gift selections. Oak Grove Elementary School's Candy Cane Holiday Shop will be open the remainder of the week, including a Family Night shopping event from 6-8 p.m. Thursday.

## Boys and Girls Club selects board members

The Boys and Girls Club of Brownfield's second year of operation will contain a new set of bylaws, the board of directors determined Monday night.

The board voted on criteria they will require from their fellow board members, to include attending at least three-quarters of the monthly meetings, paying their \$300 annual dues within the first three months of the year and participating in as many fund-raising events as possible.

Board members serve three-year terms. Those whose terms officially ended Monday - the organization's last meeting of 2012 - are Michelle Cooper, Lupe Serna, Ruby Moultrie, Darrel Williams, John Fields and Enola Harrell. DeeDee Charlebois is currently the interim secretary, a position formerly held by Williams.

The board voted on a list of names of poten-

tial new candidates they will ask to replace those spots, many of whom are already active in other community organizations. They will ask them if they're interested, then formally elect them during the January meeting if they are.

Talk of a Boys and Girls Club chapter in Brownfield began in fall 2011. Volunteers then took the next steps to complete the paperwork to incorporate the BGCB as a nonprofit organization, and selected officers. Leaders from other BGC chapters have served as consultants.

The club was officially named in early January, and its board of directors now meets at 6 p.m. the first Monday of each month. Their next meeting is set for Jan. 7.

Upcoming fundraisers include Christmas in the Park Dec. 14-15 at Coleman Park and Half-Court Shot Jan. 29 at Cub Gym.

## Community input sought in superintendent search

Brownfield Independent School District's search for a new superintendent has officially begun, and the board wants your help.

A community-involvement meeting is set for 5 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 11 in the board room of the administration building, 601 Tahoka Rd. School staff, parents and others with an interest in the superintendent selection are invited to attend to voice their thoughts about the qualifications and characteristics they wish to see in a new superintendent.

Texas Association of School Boards representative Kathee Lupton - whom the board hired during its Nov. 26 meeting to

assist with the search - will be on hand to facilitate discussions and answer questions.

The community is also invited to respond to a survey containing the following questions:

1. What do you consider to be the two or three most significant strengths of the district?

2. What do you consider to be the two or three most important issues or concerns facing the district?

3. What professional characteristics should the board look for in the next superintendent?

4. What personal characteristics should the board look for in the next superintendent?

The questionnaire is available at the administration build-

ing, and can also be completed and submitted online at [www.brownfieldisd.net](http://www.brownfieldisd.net).

The new superintendent will replace longtime BISD administrator Jerry Jones, who announced last month that he will retire at the end of the school year.

Lupton told the board Nov. 26 that she will soon begin advertising the position and collecting resumes with accompanying standard applications, cover letters and school transcripts. After the Feb. 13 application deadline, the board will review them during a lengthy executive session, then select a half-dozen or so candidates to interview.

## County chemical plant fire still under investigation

The cause of a major fire Saturday at a Terry County chemical plant remains under investigation, according to Fire Chief Dennis Rowe.

First responders from the Seagraves Volunteer Fire Dept., Seagraves EMS and Gaines County Sheriff's Dept. were dispatched to Venture Chemicals in relation to the fire call shortly before the 10 a.m. hour Saturday morning.

The plant, which produces chemicals used in oilfield, water treatment and agricultural purposes, is located just inside the county line off the Old Seagraves Hwy, just north of U.S. 62/385.

The fire, which was battled through mutual aid efforts from volunteer fire departments from Brownfield, Wellman, Seagraves and Seminole, was contained to just one outbuilding at the plant.

Rowe said damage to the building was extensive.

"Part of it was totaled for sure, but it was a big building so they might be able to salvage the other half of it."

One Venture Chemicals employee was injured in the blaze and was transported by ambulance to Brownfield Regional Medical Center.

The patient suffered from smoke inhalation and resulting cardiac symptoms, but ambulance personnel had him stabilized upon arrival at BRMC.

According to emergency radio traffic, two explosions were observed as the structure burned.

Eirain Vieras, an employee at the plant, said in a comment on the *Brownfield News* Facebook page that the explosions were caused by propane tanks in the building.

"Our heat room and break room is what caught on fire and the explosions were due to some pro-



pane tanks that were in our heat room used to melt down some of our material that we use," he said on the site.

Rowe said first responders exercised caution in approaching the plant because of the chemicals produced and stored there.

"We knew there were chemicals and we knew some were hazardous and some weren't," he said. "But we didn't know which ones were located where the fire was the heaviest."

Firefighters spent about two hours on the scene and the blaze was extinguished when they left.

Rowe said his investigation remains open, as well as inquiries from the Railroad Commission, which regulates the chemicals involved in the incident.

The facility is operated by Venture Chemicals, Inc., based out of Lafayette, La. The Seagraves manufacturing facility is described as having "extensive chemical processing capabilities," according to the company's website (<http://www.venturechemicals.com>).

## Lesser prairie chicken could make endangered list

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced this past Friday it is considering formally listing the lesser prairie chicken as a threatened species.

The announcement begins a year-long review that will include public meetings in four of the five states where the member of the prairie grouse family lives.

Fish and Wildlife said it made the decision based on evidence that the bird and its habitat are in decline.

"The lesser prairie chicken is a species that is in peril and has been for some time," said Fish and Wildlife Director Dan Ashe.

The chicken's range includes parts of New Mexico, Texas (including Terry and Gaines Counties), Colorado, Oklahoma and Kansas. Nearly 85 percent of its grass and brush-land habitat has been affected by ranching and farming. Most of its habitat is on private land.

Ranchers, farmers and wind farm operators worry about a listing because it could increase regulations. Wind turbines, oil wells and fences are among the culprits scientists say have caused the chicken's decline.

Washington Rep. Doc Hastings, chairman of the Natural Resources Committee, said the listing "could significantly disrupt traditional and renewable American energy production and delivery, as well as agriculture."

"Energy projects, including renewable wind energy, would be placed in jeopardy, facing inevitable delay and uncertainty due to new layers of regulatory red tape," Hastings said in a statement Friday.



Federal authorities sought to ease those concerns.

"We know that we cannot restore, protect and reconnect the habitat ... without the help of private landowners," said Benjamin Tuggle, Fish and Wildlife's southwest region director.

Conservationists will work to "keep farming and ranching families on the land," he said.

The review meetings will be in February in Woodward, Okla.; Garden City, Kan.; Lubbock; and Roswell, N.M.

"I'm disappointed in the Fish and Wildlife Services' decision to move towards listing the Lesser Prairie-Chickens as a threatened species,"

said Randy Neugebauer (R-Lubbock), District 19 Congressman. "This decision could drive ranching families and energy producers out of business."

"It's clear that the Endangered Species Act has grown out of hand and is being driven more by litigation than science. In Texas, public-private partnerships have proven successful at maintaining habitat for wildlife while still allowing productive use of our resources. I hope the Services reconsider this listing and choose a more cooperative approach."

The lesser prairie chicken has feathered feet and a stout build. Males display brilliant yellow-orange eye combs and reddish-purple air sacs

during courtship displays.

A final decision on the chicken listing is expected by November 2013.

Earlier this calendar year, a multi-state collaborative effort estimated the first range-wide population for the lesser prairie chicken at 37,170 birds.

"After the worst single year drought in recorded history, we still have an estimated 37,000 birds on the ground range-wide, and that tells us that opportunities to recover this species are better than what many people expected," said Sean Kyle, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department wildlife diversity biologist in Lubbock in a July story published by the *Seminole Sentinel*.

Aerial surveys this past spring detected several previously unknown breeding areas, known as leks, despite severe drought conditions across the region last year. They also discovered leks in Kansas beyond what was thought to be the northern limit of the historic range of the species.

Lesser prairie chicken numbers have been largely increasing in Kansas for the last 15 years, while populations have declined in parts of the southern portion of the range, including Texas. Biologists believe this expansion may represent a northward shift in the population of the species caused by climatic conditions associated with changing precipitation patterns.

"Historically, we saw habitat conditions like we are observing now in the 1930s, and we thought the species went extinct," said Bill Van Pelt, grassland coordinator in Phoenix for the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies' (WAFWA) Grass-

land Initiative.

"However, with habitat conservation programs being implemented through various Farm Bill programs and Candidate Conservation Agreements under the Endangered Species Act, we are seeing lesser prairie chickens maintaining themselves and even expanding into new areas in some parts of their range," said Van Pelt. "This definitely boosts our confidence in coming up with a plan to maintain this species."

The WAFWA Grassland Initiative collaborated with the Lesser Prairie Chicken Interstate Working Group, which is composed of biologists from state fish and wildlife departments within the range of the species, the Bureau of Land Management, and West Ecosystems, Inc. of Laramie, Wyo., to conduct a large-scale, helicopter-based survey of lesser prairie chicken leks across all five states this past spring.

See PRAIRIE CHICKEN...Page 4

### SANTA'S MAILBOX

Deadline for turning Santa Letters in to the Brownfield News:

Friday, DEC 14 at 5:00 PM

Wed 12/5	Thu 12/6	Fri 12/7	Sat 12/8	Sun 12/9



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