



## Kids + cash = growth

City grants \$2,000 per household member to entice young families to buy selected lots

By Lori Ehde

With talks of recession looming on the horizon, Luverne is getting more creative with efforts to attract more residents.

A new promotion offers \$2,000 for each household member that occupies a new home built in Evergreen and Veterans additions.

For example, a family of four would receive an \$8,000 grant if they build a new home on a qualifying city lot.

"The program would hopefully draw more young families to the community," said Luverne Economic Development Director Jill Wolf.

"It would potentially get more

kids in the school, and the families would be more likely to get involved in the community and make Luverne their home."

The LEDA approved the promotion at their Tuesday morning meeting.

The offer is available for the two remaining lots for sale in the

Veterans Addition and for 13 lots in Evergreen 1<sup>st</sup> Addition.

"Many of the lots have been on the market for 15 years, and it is time to get them developed and paying taxes," Wolf said.

The average price of the developed lots is about \$16,000, but the new housing promotion could bring the

price as low as \$4,000 for qualified buyers.

Buyers interested in participating in the program have until Sept. 1 to apply, and they have until Nov. 1, 2009 to complete construction.

Once construction is completed

Lot sale promotion/see page 3A

## Back to drawing board

County rejects bids for Heartland Express building project

By Sara Quam

Rock County Commissioners Tuesday rejected all bids for the new Heartland Express building addition to the Highway Department.

The low bid of \$478,900 was way over the architect estimate of \$317,000.

The architect and engineer were confident at the time of advertising for bids that the prices would come in at or lower than the estimate.

The bid didn't include moving a transformer and millworks or cabinetry in the building, so the county would have had even more expenses for the project.

Commissioners came up with an alternate plan for Heartland Express, which is now located in the Rock County Family Services building.

The county will now bid for a 60-by-105 foot steel building with a front office and garage space. The new plan means Heartland Express will not be connected to the Highway building, as originally planned.

It will be a separate building on county property near the Highway Department.

In other business the board:

•Received a property value report from County Assessor Tom Houselog as property owners are receiving their statements.

One of the items of interest is that in 2008 agricultural property in the county has a value of \$1.12 billion. The total value of all types of properties in the county last year of \$1.5 billion.

•Received an update of yearly activities from Land Management Director Eric Hartman.

In 2007, the LMO granted 116 land use permits, worth a total of \$13.44 million.

Of the permits, 14 were dwellings; 17 were home additions; 18 were livestock facilities; 18 were grain storage bins, and 12 were pole sheds.

The county permitted 38 septic system installations.

Hartman told the board that the county has to update its septic system ordinance by 2010 in order to meet new regulations.

•Was introduced to new full-time dispatcher Joan Foote, who replaces retiring Betty Deutsch. Foote has been with the department on a part-time basis for eight years.

## New life for old truck



Lori Ehde photo/0410 fire truck

This 1923 Luverne fire truck has been fully restored and will make its way to the Berkley Corporation headquarters next month to be displayed in the lobby in Greenwich, Conn.

## Restored Luverne fire truck heads for East Coast lobby

By Lori Ehde

It was completely dismantled — every last bolt and every piece of metal — and then cleaned up, repainted and put back together.

The result: a fully-restored 1923 Luverne Fire Truck, which has been Tri-State Insurance Company's mascot for the past 30 years.

The truck will soon make its way to Greenwich, Conn., to go on permanent display in the lobby of W. R. Berkley Corporation, parent company of Tri-State Insurance.

Berkley Corp. insures more than 2,000 fire districts nationwide, and it also insures roughly 50,000 antique and collectible automobiles.

So, CEO Bill Berkley thought it would be appropriate to display the Luverne Fire Truck as a mode of advertising for those lines of business. "We're pleased to have it," Berkley said. "It helps to tell the story of Tri-State Insurance, one of our oldest property and casualty divisions."

Luverne Fire Truck/see page 8A

## Airport bids come in at half price

By Lori Ehde

Thirteen companies submitted bids for Phase I of Luverne's airport runway expansion project, resulting in a low bid of half the engineer's estimate.

"We had tremendous interest in the job," said Luverne City Administrator John Call.

Companies from the Twin Cities to Des Moines, Iowa, bid on the project, which involves grading work for the new runway.

Bids were opened at 11 a.m. Thursday, April 3, and the low bid was \$456,495.25 submitted by Final Touch Excavating Inc. from East Bethel, Minn.

The other bids ranged from \$466,655

(Midwest Contracting, Marshall) to more than \$1 million (Runge Enterprises, Sioux Falls, S.D).

The engineer's estimate was \$922,458, so Call said the competitive process worked in Luverne's favor.

Project Manager Brian Meyer of Short Elliott Hendrickson Inc., Sioux Falls, told Call that in more than 20 years at his job, he'd never seen 13 bids on a project of this size.

"We definitely got a good price," Call said. "We saved some money for the federal government and for the city."

Short will send the low bid information to the FAA to request federal grant funding for the project.

Once funding is approved, the Luverne City Council will act on accepting the bid.

Overall, the \$3 million airport improvement project will be funded 90 percent by state and federal agencies.

The city of Luverne will end up paying about \$300,000 of the cost.

The grading work for the airport — Phase 1 — will begin this summer.

The new 4,200-foot runway will be built a bit to the west of the existing runway and will be extended further to the south.

Luverne Township road, 91<sup>st</sup> Street, will be closed, possibly as early as June.

The existing runway will remain in use during much of the work

Runway bids/see page 2A



Jordyn Olsen, 21 months old, was diagnosed with neuroblastoma when she was just more than 6 months old.

## Toddler's battle with cancer teaches young family valuable lessons in life

By Sara Quam

Luverne native Jodie (Smook) Olsen has had to learn a lot about hospitals and doctors in the past two years.

She can recite medical terminology like pro but has been forced to learn it because she is mother to 21-month-old Jordyn Olsen, who was diagnosed with neuroblastoma when she was just more than 6 months old.

Jodie is a 2001 Luverne graduate

and is the daughter of Randy and Vicky Smook.

Jodie and her husband, Justin, Pipestone, noticed a large bump growing on top of Jordyn's head.

Local doctors first thought the growth was either a birthmark or a subdural hematoma, but a second opinion revealed Jordyn was very sick with acute infections of the kidneys, bladder, urinary tract and ureters.

She was quickly hospitalized

and underwent the first of many surgeries.

The tumor in her head was then diagnosed as neuroblastoma, a rare form of cancer that strikes about 600 children a year. Jordyn's form is more rare than most. A doctor in Philadelphia requested a biopsy of her tumor in order to experiment with alternative treatments that didn't work in Jordyn's case.

Jordyn Olsen/see page 2A

## Luverne fire truck restoration/continued from page 1A

### Fire prevention started by insurance companies

He said insurance companies at one time owned fire departments to protect properties, so it's an appropriate focal point for the Berkley lobby — a 30-foot high, 25-by-80-foot glass enclosure against a black granite building.

"I think it will be a nice thing to have in our town," Berkley said. "There aren't many people who have old fire engines."

Tri-State Insurance Co., Luverne, bought the pumper in the mid-1970s from the Valley Springs, S.D., Fire Department.

They wanted it for the same reason it's going to Berkley headquarters next month: it represents the history of the company.

"Back when area towns were celebrating centennials, we would have this truck in the parades advertising our company and our local insurance agent," said Curt Bloemendaal of Continental Western Group.

In 2000, Tri-State Insurance Company of Minnesota, Continental Western Insurance Company and Union Insurance Company consolidated management of operations into what is now known as CWG.

The CWG companies provide insurance products to a wide range of businesses and public entities, including schools, municipalities and volunteer fire departments.

"It is interesting that Tri-State bought a fire truck to advertise its antique auto insurance program," Bloemendaal said, "and now we



Lori Ehde photos/0410 fire truck

Pictured in the Executive Touch Auto Center shop are shop owner Virg Hyronimus (center) and Luverne's Mike Rofshus (left) and Curt Bloemendaal (back) of Continental Western Group.

are part of a company that insures fire districts. It's kind of ironic."

### 'Amazing process'

Tri-State officials had the fire truck restored when they purchased it, but that involved only sandblasting

and repainting.

It was nothing like the restoration process that's unfolded over the past six months, according to Bloemendaal.

"This has been an amazing process," Bloemendaal said. "Every bolt was

taken off it and every piece of equipment was taken apart. ... It was the ultimate in restoration work."

CWG staff made arrangements for the work to be done by Virg Hyronimus at Executive Touch Auto Center, Sioux Falls.

Hyronimus and his staff are considered among the best in the region for vintage auto restoration, and they happened to have an opening in their lineup when the fire truck work was proposed last fall.

Hyronimus said it was a project like none other.

"It's been a really fun project for us," he said, "but I was a little nervous the first time we took it apart. This is the first time we've ever done a project like this."

Hyronimus has a long list of vintage, racing and muscle cars on his list of restoration projects, but not many fire trucks, and never one like the 1923 Luverne model.

"The scariest part for us was having the motor redone," he said. "Some of those old motors when you take them apart, you kind of just make them mad."

### Rebuilding from scratch

Fire trucks are built to specification, so parts replacement got tricky.

When a part needed to be replaced, there weren't many options for finding them — other than rebuilding from scratch.

"There were parts handmade by shops around the country who have that expertise," Bloemendaal said.

For example, the radiator metal had become porous and the core was shot, so it needed to be rebuilt of cast aluminum.

Southside Performance, G&H Radiator and successful local racer Doug Wolfgang all lent their expertise in the complete radiator rebuild.

The motor was rebuilt by CEHR Performance, Sioux Falls, which specializes in racecar motors.

Tires that were on the truck weren't original to the pumper, so Hyronimus made it a goal to find new ones that replicated the originals.

The back tires are 48 by 7 inches and the front tires are 36 by 6 inches, all with an oval diamond pattern in the rubber tread.

He was paging through a 4-year-old tire magazine and came across an advertisement for a company in Dallas that happened to have the right ones.

"I had looked and looked and looked. ... Someone knew I needed some help," he said glancing upward. "It was like, 'Thank you.'"

Body work presented other unique challenges. The gold striping had been hand-applied on the original truck, so that process needed to be replicated in the restoration.

Modern striping is machine applied with precision lasers, but that process wouldn't have reproduced the hand-applied look.

So, 150 feet of 23k gold striping was applied to the Luverne fire truck by hand.

The brass nameplate and other brass accents had discolored over time, but they were shined up and replaced on the truck body.

Workers photographed the entire process. One photo

shows the bare frame of the truck, with all its parts completely disassembled.

"When it was in about a million pieces, I thought, 'I don't know,'" Hyronimus said.

When asked if he grew attached to the fire truck through the process, he said, "When you restore old cars, you learn that the best part is to see them go."

That's how the Luverne staff at CWG feel about the truck going to Greenwich.

### To Greenwich on May 14

It had previously been up to Mike Rofshus, Luverne, to make sure the truck stayed in running condition. This meant firing it up for a spin around the block every few months.

"You'd have to pump the gas a bunch of times, make the levers go up and down until you found just the right spot," said Rofshus, CWG facility maintenance engineer.

"The carburetor wasn't quite working, and once you did get it started, it would overheat right away."

He also won't miss the manual steering.

"You had to wrap both arms around the wheel and really crank on the wheel," he said.

"The clutch was shot, so it would kind of grind when you put it in gear."

On May 14, the Luverne fire pumper will travel via an enclosed semi trailer to Greenwich.

Even though the truck is now drivable and operational, it will remain in the Berkley lobby.

The fire truck will be started and allowed to run periodically to keep the engine in running condition.

For the CWG personnel caring for it in Luverne all these years, it will be a relief to pass on those responsibilities, according to Rofshus.

"We were always worried about someone backing into it in the warehouse or dropping something on it," Rofshus said.

"Although I wouldn't mind driving it one more time, now that it runs well."



Fire trucks are originally built to specification, so parts replacement got tricky. When a part needed to be replaced on the Luverne fire pumper restoration, there weren't many options for finding them — other than rebuilding from scratch.

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