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Wet the Hay?? Page 2

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Periodicals: Time Valued

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IT'S THRESHIN' TIME!



Steam engines made agriculture life a lot easier when they were introduced to farmers in the late 1800s. The Will County Threshermen's Association strives to preserve that history as they share their interest and passion for engines, steam engines, tractors and machinery at their annual Antique Tractor & Steam Engine Show, postponed last year due to the pandemic, and held again this year at the Steve Spiess Farm in Manhattan. Union soldier Joseph Powell, Cypress Company, right, soothed Shiloh's nerves after steam whistles sounded during the WCTA steam show. Below, stacked bales of straw formed a tunnel and a play area where kids could run and climb and burn off excess energy at the show. (Photos provided. See story on Page 4)



ETA for Lewis FAA Tower? Early 2022

By Nick Reiher

Chris Lawson generally is a pretty happy guy, but he has more reason to cheer these days when he pulls onto George Michas Drive leading to Lewis University Airport.

He can see the new \$6 million control tower under construction down the road in front of him.

"That just brings a smile to my face," said Lawson, longtime Director of Aviation at the airport. "We've been working on this since 2006."

Airport officials have said Lewis is the busiest of the regional airports in Illinois without a Federal Aviation Administration-approved control tower.

There are 110,000 to 120,000 takeoffs and landings at the airport in Romeoville each year, Lewis officials said, with diverse aircraft: small jets; small craft and those used by the growing Lewis University aviation program.

That's more than 20,000 takeoffs and landings between the next-highest regional airport, Southern Illinois in Murphysboro, with 86,389, according to FAA statistics.

Part of the traffic is due to takeoffs and landings by Lewis aeronautics students. But officials say many people don't realize how many corporate jets bring in officials to Will County to

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Annual Threshermen's Show a Snapshot of Old-Time Farm Life

By Karen Haave

The Will County Threshermen's Association's Annual Antique Tractor & Steam Engine Show always feels like a trip back in time, a testament to just how hard farm life was centuries ago.

Modern machinery can make the work easier now, but the steam-powered engines introduced in the late 1880s still inspire awe in visitors of the show, this year held at the Steve Spiess farm in Manhattan.

For once it didn't rain, but the grounds left spongy from storms the week before meant no field work demonstrations.

The pandemic cancelled last year's event entirely.

Still, there were plenty of activities, great food, crafts and a flea market, Rob Thompson the Funny Magic Guy, horse and wagon rides, and corn shelling during the association's 59th show.

Special features this year were George Schaaf's Avery collection, a Civil War Living History demonstration, and a performance by the Frankfort Brass Band.

"We usually get around 3,000 visitors," said event Chairman Brad Eike. "Thirty years ago, we would get 10,000 people."

This year, on Saturday

alone, more than 1,000 visitors came through the gate.

"It started as a group of neighbors who got together to talk about steam engines. Somebody said, 'We ought to do this as a show.'"

"It used to be just a steam show," he added. "But now

which makes farms like the 1,200 acres Steve Spiess owns, more manageable.

"Steve volunteered to have the show here," Eike added. "He loves the show. He was happy to have it here."

But the lack of young members in the WCTA is cause for some concern among the Association.

Jess Crane, an Elwood business strategy consultant working with the WCTA this year, said long-time members want to ensure the group continues in years to come.

"The goal," she said, "is to get the younger generations involved. WCTA needs a future. If they don't get younger people in, there will

be no one to continue the club's purpose of honoring and preserving America's agricultural legacy, specifically in Will County, Illinois."

At the same time, WCTA wants to know what visitors liked about the show, what they would like to see added, and if they had "any problems or areas that could be improved."

The anonymous survey, along with information on joining WCTA, can be found on their website. To contact them directly, email WillCountyThresh@gmail.com.

Karen Haave is a freelance reporter.



Torin Werner gets comfortable on that tractor as grandpa Don Werner Jr. watches proudly. He and his sister Lilliann had a great time with the fun events at the show.

(Submitted photo)

it's a tractor and steam show. We're trying to add things so there's something for everybody. We want everybody to just come out and have a good time, and learn about our past."

Eike noted that the event is not a fundraiser, except "to make enough to keep the show going" and "pretty much just to have fun."

But it also helps to tell the story of farming in the past, "to make people aware of how it used to be, when you worked from sun-up to sundown."

Bigger, more powerful -- and expensive -- machinery makes the job easier, safer and quieter, he pointed out,

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Springfield Comes to Manhattan



State Sen. John Connor, D-Crest Hill, answers a question about one of several state issues brought up at the Will County Farm Bureau Barn Meeting on July 28 at the Kestel Farm in Manhattan. To his left, state Sen. Linda Holmes, D-Aurora, and state Reps Anthony DeLuca, D-Chicago Heights, and Janet Yang Rohr, D-Naperville, also had their turns on the hot seat to address issues including the state budget, COVID-19 spending and the energy bill.

OUTSTANDING IN THEIR FIELD...

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Sure enough, Wednesday morning brought a surprise rain. Mother Nature beat me again.

The old joke was, "How is a puppy different than a farmer?" I have changed it to myself since I cannot speak for other farmers and certainly do not want to generalize all farmers in the same category as myself. "The puppy will eventually grow up and quit whining." I hope to whine for another 30-plus years.

I may whine until the day I die, but I do have to admit, at 57, the boys on my crew

can physically beat me in a 12-hour day of hard physical labor. I can beat them at experience, but they could probably work me into my grave. I think a couple days ago, we came a little too close for comfort. Some changes are in order for next year.

By the way, I love Tillamook cheddar cheese or any aged cheddar. It goes great after a day of whining. Incidentally, aged cheddar is very dry, the way I like it.

If you have any questions or comments, send them to kiefnerfarms@att.net

PUZZLED? DON'T FRET!
Our Puzzle Page
Will Return Next Week