

TODAY IS THE FIRST DAY OF FALL

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Andrea Belt is the 2015 H&H queen

Left: Andrea Belt was crowned 2015 Hootin an Hollarin queen Thursday night after entertaining the crowd with a talk featuring her singing dog Skamper. Andrea is the daughter of Michael and Sara Belt of Bakersfield. The 55th celebration of Hootin an Hollarin Thursday-Saturday drew large crowds to Gainesville to enjoy hillbilly music, contests and activities, crafts demonstrations and vendors, parades and plenty of diet-busting food choices under blue skies and weather that was sometimes hot but otherwise perfect.

Below: Queen Andrea Belt is shown with her court, including, from left, princesses Farrah Chambers and Sarah Markell, deputy queen Rya San Filippo, princess Casey Ritchie and Miss Sweetie Pie Rebekah Elledge.

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Morse acquitted of animal abuse charges

By Jessi Dreckman
jessi@ozarkcountytimes.com

William Morse, 50, of Brixey, was found not guilty of 15 counts of animal abuse during a Sept. 15 trial in Douglas County before Associate Judge Lynette Veenstra. The case, originally filed in Ozark County on April 22, 2014, was transferred to Douglas County on a change of venue motion on June 24.

Ozark County Prosecuting Attorney Tom Cline was originally the prosecutor in the case; however, on July 30, 2014, Associate Judge Cynthia MacPherson appointed Linda McKinney as a special prosecutor because "Cline [was] identified as a victim in another pending criminal case involving this defendant." However, McKinney withdrew as special prosecutor on Sept. 19, 2014, and special prosecuting attorney Michael Hutchings was assigned to the case. The defendant requested a change of judge on Aug. 18, 2014, and Veenstra was appointed.

According to online court documentation, six witnesses testified at the trial. The state called former Ozark County Deputy Robert Hathcock and Missouri Department of Agriculture (MDoA) veterinarian David Rybolt. The defense called Morse, Gainesville veterinarian Bob Main, Johnie Dabney and Lonnie Rulo.

The allegations in the case centered around a visit by Rybolt to the Morse residence on Highway 5 north of Gainesville on Jan. 29, 2014, after the MDoA received a report of neglected livestock on the property. Rybolt reported that he found a dead calf, and the rest of the herd was in poor condition, according to the probable cause statement. Morse reportedly told the men he had hired Main to care for the animals and provided the men with a receipt for a recent visit when Main had diagnosed the cattle with malnutrition and recommended supplementing the cattle with grain.

Rybolt returned to the farm on Feb. 10, 2014, to examine the cattle further at the request of Hathcock and reported that all but 12 animals in the beef herd showed effects of malnutrition and/or weather stress, according to the statement.

During the course of the investigation, the sheriff's department obtained a statement from Main, who said he had visited the Morse property on Jan. 24, 2014, to examine a herd of beef cattle at Morse's request. Main said that two head had recently died, and another was down and could not get up. Main told the officers that a high percentage of the herd was emaciated and was getting "no main supplementation," according to the statement. He also said the hay that was present appeared to be of marginal quality. Main diagnosed the herd with malnutrition and said that a fecal exam revealed a "moderately high parasite burden."

The charging document in the case says Morse "knowingly failed to provide proper nutrients and adequate protection from extreme weather" to the cows. However, in

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As the right-side tires wore off this heavily loaded trailer Friday morning, the rims emitted sparks that allegedly started at least nine fires alongside Highway 160 as the driver, who has not been identified, made his way to the Giles & Kendall cedar plant east of Gainesville. The truck had reportedly come from Arkansas. Emergency personnel working at Hootin an Hollarin booths on the Gainesville square noticed the smoke-and-spark-throwing vehicle just as the emergency radio dispatch went out.

Sparks-throwing trailer ignites brushfires along Highway 160

By Sue Ann Jones
sueann@ozarkcountytimes.com

Emergency personnel from Lick Creek Volunteer Fire Department were talking with agents in the Missouri Department of Conservation booth Friday morning during Hootin an Hollarin when a truck pulling a trailer filled with cedar logs on Highway 160 east of the square caught their eye. "Smoke and sparks were flying everywhere," said LCVFD chief Jerry Rowlett, one of the volunteers who noticed the trailer moving quickly up the hill toward the Giles & Kendall cedar mill, a huge plume of smoke and sparks in its wake. "We weren't sure if it was something from the exhaust or cedar dragging or what, but it was sure making a racket."

At the same instant the volunteers noticed the passing truck and its spark-emitting trailer, the emergency radio call came in, reporting brush files that had been started, reportedly by flying sparks, along the truck's path.

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Former Gainesville resident to host upcoming cooking competition series on KOZL

By Jessi Dreckman
jessi@ozarkcountytimes.com

What do you get when you mix inspiration from the Food Network, a little local flavor and a familiar face? Show-Me Chefs, a weekly cooking-competition series featuring eight Springfield chefs and former Ozark County resident Lakyn McGee as co-host. McGee is the daughter of Keith and Shannan McGee of Gainesville. The show will air each Saturday at 1 p.m. from Sept. 26 through Nov. 7 on KOZL, channel 27.

The series, inspired by the shows Iron Chef and Chopped on the Food Network, was developed by Deb Larson, associate professor in the media, journalism and film department at Missouri State University, and Shawn Gott, owner of the event center 319 Downtown in Springfield. The event center provided the location for filming, and Larson's advanced TV production class worked the set in different capacities including McGee's co-hosting duties.

"Show-Me Chefs has given me the opportunity to live my broadcast dreams earlier than I expected," McGee said Monday in an interview with the Times. "I've met so many people and made friends with other students who are trying to accomplish the same goals I am. I was able to lean on them for support when

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Former Gainesville resident Lakyn McGee, right, is co-host of Show-Me-Chefs, a Springfield cooking competition series set to air on upcoming Saturdays on KOZL, channel 27. McGee's co-host is Samantha Bowers, left. Daan Jansen, center, was the producer of the series.

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