

—SUMMER READING PROGRAM DRAWS CROWD—



ABOVE: Some of the 38 children and 24 adults that gathred in the Sterling Free Public Library basement Tuesday morning for a special program by Smoky Hills PBS.



LEFT: Students listen to “Curious George Discovers the Rainbow.” Each child was able to take home a copy of the book at the end of the day.

BELOW LEFT: Hannah Langford (left) helps her sons with the glue and Hosanna Wilson (right) begins her craft project.



BELOW: Leo and Jenna Wright work on their rainbow collage projects.

Show—

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want the audience to see the music being made in the moment,” said Director Dennis Dutton.

With an instrumental palette of guitar, violin, cello, bass accordion and piano, the music becomes a living, breathing part of the storytelling—woven into the emotional rhythm of the characters and their small-town world.

“We are blessed to have some first-rate musicians with us for this one,” Dutton said. James Pope will be on keyboard, with Melanie Mann on violin, Anna Cortez on cello, Ben Decker on bass, and Andy Brown on accordion.

Local guitarist Randy Key, who joins the on-stage band for this production, brings decades of experience to the role.

“I have been playing professionally for fifty years. I have played 23 different musicals—

sometimes more than once,” Key shared. “The music for Spitfire Grill is very down home. I think it’s very approachable for most people. The most challenging aspect of the music is just playing the ink—making sure you play what’s written. It’s always exciting for me to play for people. I’m very proud to be able to be a part of this. Audiences will love it because it has really good music and it’s a great story.”

According to conductor Bryce Wilson, the show’s musical challenges are also part of what makes it so rewarding.

“The music visits many subgenres within the country/bluegrass style. Audiences will enjoy everything from slow, lyrical bluegrass ballads to fast folk rock, with additional references to polka, march, sea shanties and other styles,” Wilson explained. “It contains no percussion or winds; all

of the rhythmic drive and harmonic material come from keyboards and strings.”

Wilson noted that the show draws complexity from both the country/bluegrass and musical theatre traditions:

“From country and bluegrass, we inherit complex syncopated rhythms, blazing tempos and new instruments. From musical theatre, we inherit numerous key changes—often to unpleasant key signatures—countless vamps, and quick, often instant transitions between songs. But these aspects combine to make for a challenging performance even more rewarding!”

The songs in The Spitfire Grill are earthy and expressive, ranging from foot-stomping folk to achingly beautiful ballads. The show opens with “A Ring Around the Moon,” a haunting melody that introduces the town and its rhythms. “Out of the Frying Pan”

brings bluegrass energy and playful banter, while “Ice and Snow” paints a vivid soundscape of winter in Wisconsin.

One of the most powerful moments in the show is “Shine,” a joyful, uplifting number in a gospel style that fills the theater with harmony and hope. Other standouts include “When Hope Goes,” a quietly devastating ballad of loss, and “The Colors of Paradise,” a tender expression of rediscovery and wonder.

With Valcq and Alley’s emotionally resonant score and a visually integrated band providing live music in full view, The Spitfire Grill promises to deliver a unique theatrical experience—intimate, moving and musically rich.

Tickets are \$15 for adults and \$5 for students and will be available at the door before each performance.

KDADS awards emergency grant to support senior nutrition

The Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services (KDADS) has announced an emergency grant of \$100,000 to the South Central Kansas Area Agency on Aging (AAA) to ensure continued delivery of home-delivered and congregate meals for older Kansans in response to a disruption in services from the current provider.

The emergency funding was authorized following Everfull’s notification that It could no longer meet its contractual obligations due to unexpected financial challenges. Everfull had been providing critical nutrition services to older adults in the region under contract with South Central Kansas AAA. The agency serves a 10-county region that includes Chautauqua, Cowley, Elk, Greenwood, Harper, Kingman, McPherson, Reno, Rice and Sumner Counties.

“Nutritious meals are a lifeline for many of our seniors, supporting both their health and independence,” said Secretary Laura Howard of KDADS. “This emergency grant allows the Area Agency on Aging to respond quickly to maintain essential meal services while a long-term solution is developed.”

The funding will allow South Central Kansas AAA to immediately secure alternative meal providers, cover increased food and delivery costs, and ensure there is no interruption in service for older adults who rely on daily meals for their well-being.

South Central Kansas AAA Executive Director, Jodi Whitmore, expressed appreciation for the state’s swift response, “We are incredibly grateful to KDADS for stepping in with this emergency support. Our top priority is the seniors we serve, and this funding ensures they will continue to receive the meals they count on every day.”

KDADS and the South Central Kansas AAA will continue working together to identify sustainable service models and support partners to restore long-term stability to the region’s senior nutrition program.

Commissioning service held for SC mission teams

New Covenant Presbyterian Church in Hutchinson welcomed members of the Sterling College community on Sunday, April 27, for a special Commissioning Service during its morning worship.

The service included prayer, music and words of encouragement for mission teams preparing to depart for service trips to Mexico and Japan.

Several Sterling College alumni played meaningful roles in the service. Larry Long a 1961 graduate introduced the mission teams and offered words of support, while Glenda Riley, a 1963 gradu-

ate, and Andy and Lesa Brown, both of the class of 1997, participated in the service and helped lead the congregation in blessing the students.

Their involvement reflected the lasting connection between Sterling alumni and the mission of the College.

“We are incredibly grateful to New Covenant Presbyterian Church for hosting this commissioning service. Their hospitality, prayer, and partnership reflect a beautiful expression of the body of Christ encouraging one another in mission,” said Jose Carrillo, Sterling College campus pastor.

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