



**DeSoto County Historical Society**

PAST • PRESENT • FUTURE  
ARCADIA, FLORIDA

# DeSoto County Historical Society News

P.O. Box 1824 • Arcadia FL 34265 • 863-266-5774

[www.historicdesoto.org](http://www.historicdesoto.org)

April 2025

This issue sponsored by - **Arlene Conley** in loving memory of my husband, **Warren Conley**, and my parents, **Leo and Hazel Williams**.



**Pioneer Day  
2025  
THANKS**

Thank you to all who helped make our 21st. Annual Pioneer Day a success. From our title sponsor, Florida Power and Light company, to each of you who came out to enjoy the day, have some BBQ and Strawberry Shortcake, we could not have done it without you!

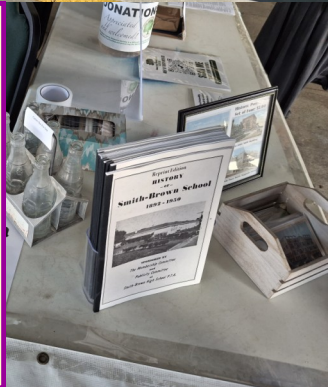
—Continued inside

Photos this page by Dylan Tindall



**Member Meeting:**  
**Monday, April 21**

**Krissy Constantino** will present a program on the history, restoration, and future of the **Historic Heard Opera House**. The program will start at 12:00 p.m. in the McSwain Meeting Room at DeSoto Memorial Hospital. Lunch is available for purchase at 11:30 a.m.



### Pioneer Day 2025 Thanks

We are grateful to Florida Power and Light for being our “title sponsor” and for giving away free tote bags, koozies, cow bells, hard hats for kids, pens, cell phone chargers, and more! We appreciate that they brought “Spot, the Robot” to the festival—and on the stage. Thanks to the FP&L personnel who attended the festival: Danielle Byrnes, Meredith Frey, Rachel Jackson, Matthew Silver, Mariota Theodoris—the “keeper” of Spot, the Robot—and Devaney Iglesias who accepted the centennial award and spoke briefly.

Thanks to those who help set up Pioneer Day: Kathy Apodaca, Nancy “Eric” Erickson, Kenny Gallt, Linda Keen, Vernon Keen, Jahna Leonard, Carol Mahler, Karen Smoke, and Dylan Tindall. We appreciate the JROTC cadets who helped on Friday with set up: Yandel Avila, Isabella Ayala, Arely Flores, Lexi Gallagher, Nayeli Garcia, Rachel Garcia, Laura Hirschy, Regina Hudson, Natalie Martinez, Juan Mendoza, Katherine Orozco, Lauren Ortega, Airis Paniagua, Lizet Velazquez, and Zhimora Wicks.

Special thanks to Nancy “Eric” Erickson who volunteered all day Friday during set up and then camped overnight at the Turner Center. She was up before 5:00 a.m. to check in the first BBQ vendors and worked a full day. We also appreciate that she prepared the

We are grateful to Bruce Neveau and Dennis Tyson who drove from Georgia—as well as Allen Reesor and John Super—who worked the gate. We also thank the following JROTC cadets for helping to park vehicles and working in the Hands-On History area: Efrain Antonio, Paige Auxier, Erick Cardenas, Shyanne Cox, Daniella Dominguez, Madison Fugate, Lexi Gallagher, Anna Hernandez, Laura Hirschy, Regina Hudson, Miguel Juan, Lee Jones, BreAnn Keene, Giovanni Lopez, Juan Mendoza, Serenity Mendoza, Selina Montes, Geovani Orozco, Katherine Orozco, Santa Quezada, River Rhodes, and Kathia Villa-Vazquez under the supervision of Col. Ron Baynes, U.S. Army retired.

We appreciate Kathy Bryce for organizing the Historical Society booth and for David Bryce, René Collins, Jeff Griffis and Mike Provau for helping her.

Thanks to Crystal Walter and Chelsea Palmer for handing out Passports-To-The-Past and to those who worked in the Hands-On History Area: Mariah Danforth, Zane Dyal, Cindy McLeod Ely, Kenny Gallt, Allie Jane Griffin, Dave Hutchinson, Linda Keen, Elizabeth Kenney, Jahna Leonard, Marie Niklas, Paul Niklas, Peter Niklas, Liz Pine, Tommy Parker, Karen Smoke, Keith Wallace, and Tonya Wallace. We appreciate the members of Interact Club who volunteered: Evelin Barrera, Erick Cardenas, Luz Hernandez, Rachelle Macedo, Rocio Munoz, Karla Sanchez, Yahir Reges-Velazquez, and Carol Valdes.

We are grateful to DeSoto County Fire and Rescue and the Support Team for holding the fire hose demonstration plus the Support Team for hosting a booth with information and give-aways.

### 2025 Pioneer Day Sponsors

Please Thank and Support our Sponsors!

#### Title Sponsor

Florida Power & Light Company

#### Bronze Sponsors

Millennium Physician Group  
Peace River Electric Coop (PRECO)

#### Event Sponsors

Adrian and Jane Cline  
Ames Agricultural Services, LLC  
Arcadia Centennial Lions Club  
Arcadia Stockyard  
Confederate Cow Cavalry, Sons of  
Confederate Veterans Camp  
#2181

Crews Bank and Trust  
Fender Auto Parts  
Kinard’s Tree Service  
Mid-Florida Credit Union / Kelli Ali  
People For Protecting Peace River  
Performance Automotive  
Rotary Club of Arcadia  
Sheriff Jim and Michelle Potter  
Team Arcadia  
Turner Realty  
Wellpath RS/FCC

#### Entertainment Sponsors

Allen and Linda Reesor  
Arcadia Abstract and Title Co.  
Before & After Beauty Salon  
Cowpens, LLC  
DeSoto County Democratic  
Executive  
Committee  
DeSoto County Republican Party  
E and I Family, LLC  
Keith and Cindy Keene  
Kiwanis Club of Arcadia, Florida

Linda and Vernon Keen  
Luis Velasco  
Maassen Oil Company  
Marshal Quinn Jones  
Paul Bennett Seusy  
Peace River Campground  
Peace River Tax Services  
René Collins  
Robert W. Heine, Jr.  
Ruth Reynolds Dunn  
United Country/Gulfland Real  
Estate  
Wingman Aviation

#### Pioneer Friends of the Society

Cindy McLeod Ely  
Parker Hall  
Susan Kuczenska  
Steve Hickox  
Karen Smoke

#### Friends of the Society

Arcadia Garden Club  
Arlene Conley  
Judy Wertz-Strickland  
Ruth Reynolds Dunn  
Williamson Group Realty

#### In Kind Donations

A+ Environmental Restoration  
Arcadia Printing  
Arcadia Computer  
Bryan Farm Supply  
Dakin Dairy  
Darrell’s Road & Wrecker  
DeSoto Sign Company  
Fussell Meats  
Joshua Citrus  
Peace River Shopper

## Pioneer Day 2025 Thanks

—Con't from previous page

Thanks to the JROTC Cadets for serving as “color guard:” Lee Jones, Selina Montes, Katherine Orozco, Sanora Quezada, and River Rhodes; to Dr. Sharon Goodman for singing the National Anthem; to the Rev. Louie Mabrey, Pastor of Trinity Methodist Church, for giving the invocation; to Carol Mahler for dedicating the 21st Annual Pioneer Day to Stella Parker, and to her son Tommy Parker for accepting the dedication certificate.

We appreciate Adrian Cline for narrating the history of West Elementary and for presenting the certificates of congratulations on the centennial anniversaries of the school to Superintendent Dr. Bobby Bennett and of the Florida Power & Light Company to Devaney Iglesias.

We are grateful to the musicians and legendary characters who performed at Pioneer Day, and to Luke Wilson for inviting them and organizing the entertainment schedule: John Bois, Lonnie Davis, Dennis Mader, Keith Mathys, Johnny Shannon, Vgo, and Rita Youngman; Miles Moreno for portraying James Mitchell “Acrefoot” Johnson and Spring Pace for impersonating Arcadia Albritton Coker and for singing “Beautiful Dreamer” by Stephen Foster.

Thanks to Nancy Humphrey, Carol Mahler, and Karen Smoke for keeping track of the vendors, and to Karen Smoke for doing the layout and assigning vendors to their positions—plus making the program, the QR code for the program, and the attractive stage banners featuring all our sponsors. We appreciate René Collins, Cindy McLeod Ely, Nancy “Eric” Erickson, Jeff Griffis, Vernon Keen, Carol Mahler, and Karen Smoke for asking businesses, individuals, and organizations to be sponsors. We are grateful to Carol for keeping track of the sponsors and writing Facebook posts about them, and to Kathy Bryce for posting on our Facebook page.

We appreciate the Arcadian American Legion K Post 11 for holding the Antique Tractor and Hit & Miss Engine Show plus the Antique and Hotrod Car Show with assistance from the Punta Gorda Isles Car Club and the Peace River Car Club.

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### Contact Information

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## A Message From The President

Dear Sponsors, Society Members, Volunteers, Vendors, and Community Members:

We are thrilled to express our heartfelt gratitude for making the 21st Annual Pioneer Day, held on March 29, 2025, a tremendous success. Your unwavering support and dedication helped create an unforgettable event that celebrated our shared Florida/DeSoto heritage and DeSoto community spirit.

To our sponsors, your generosity laid the foundation for this special day. A very special thanks goes to the American Legion for sponsoring the remarkable Antique Tractor, Engine, and Car Show. Your contribution added a unique and vibrant touch to the event, and we are incredibly grateful for your commitment to DeSoto.

To our society members, volunteers, and vendors, your hard work and dedication ensured that every detail of the day went smoothly. From planning and organizing to executing each activity flawlessly, your efforts did not go unnoticed. We are inspired by your passion and willingness to give your time and energy to bring this event to life.

Finally, to our community members, thank you for joining us in celebrating Pioneer Day. Your enthusiastic participation brought joy and warmth to the event, making it a true reflection of our collective pride in our history and traditions.

Thank you all for making Pioneer Day a success, and we look forward to continuing to create memorable events together in the future.

*Adrian H. Cline*

President, DeSoto County Historical Society

### John Morgan Ingraham House Museum

300 N Monroe Avenue

#### **MUSEUM OPEN:**

9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Thursdays  
and on the second and fourth Saturday of the month.

### The Howard and Velma Melton Historical Research

#### Library in the Ingraham Seed House

120 W Whidden Street

#### **Open by appointment only:**

Research assistance available. 863-266-5774

## MARCH WRAP UP

### Arcadia Rodeo Parade

Thanks to the Cindy McLeod Ely for the rebuilding of the Society's "covered wagon" used in parades. We appreciate all those who contributed toward the PayPal fundraiser she started that netted \$221.93 towards the cost of lumber and other supplies and labor by Matthew Griffin.

Her efforts won the Society a "Best In Class" award in the Arcadia Rodeo Parade on March 8. We also appreciate those who walked in the parade with her: Carol Mahler and Karen Smoke for carrying the Society's banner; James Hampton for driving the vehicle to pull the wagon with Dakota Vargas, Jackie Hampton, Nancy "Eric" Erickson, and Cindy for giving out Pioneer Day flyers. We appreciate Dylan Tindall for taking photos of us in the parade.



### Leadership DeSoto: Art and Culture Day

We are grateful to Carol Mahler for giving the 2024-2025 Leadership DeSoto Class a guided walking tour of McSwain Park and downtown Arcadia. We appreciate Kathy Bryce for giving half the group a tour of the Museum while Carol shared history and artifacts with the other half. Then, they switched groups. Thanks to Carol for also meeting the class at Lake Katherine to tell the history of the lake and the T-33 aircraft mounted as a static display there.



Photos above courtesy Carol Mahler, Right by Karen Smoke

### Historical Society Newsletter Sponsors

Jan. - **Alvie Davidson** in memory of his parents, **Ollie & Mary Lee Davidson.**

Feb. - **René Collins** in memory of **Terry and Evelyn Collins.**

March - **Dale, Patty & Sue** in loving memory of **our parents, Howard & Velma Melton.**

April - **Arlene Conley** in loving memory of **my husband, Warren Conley, and my parents, Leo and Hazel Williams.**

May - **Marshall and Hazel Whidden** in memory of **our parents, Marshall and Barbara Whidden, and our beloved son, Douglas Marshall Whidden.**

June - **Michelle, Dan, & Dow** in loving memory of **our parents, Eddie & Iris Garner.**

July - **Ruth Dunn** in loving memory of her late husband, **Rudolph Dunn.**

Aug. - **Charlotte Hill Carter** in loving memory of her husband, **Frederick Lawrence Carter.**

Sept. - **Marguerite & Tom Hankins** in memory of **Mr. & Mrs. T.J. Pipkin (Pip & Alison Pickard Pipkin.)**

Oct. - **People for Protecting Peace River.**

Nov. - **Betty Hall Wood** in memory of her late husband, **G. Pierce Wood, Jr.**

Dec. - **The McLeod children** in memory of their **Dad, Harold McLeod.**

### Out-Of-Town Tours

Thanks to Carol Mahler for giving a brief overview of the history of Arcadia and DeSoto County for the group from Haines City, Lake Wales, and other Polk County locations brought to Arcadia by C & D Tours while they had lunch at MyShelly's Kitchen on March 3. After lunch, most of the group went shopping, and a small group rode the bus to the Museum. We appreciate Kathy Bryce, Nancy "Eric" Erickson, and Karen Smoke for serving as docents. We are also grateful to Cynthia Hartline of C & D Tours for donating \$150.00 to the Society.

*Being a docent on tours involves welcoming guests and helping them understand what pioneer life was like. There are cards describing the artifacts on display.*



-Photos this page by Daniel Sutphin



*Pioneer Day 2025 - View from on high...*



-Photos this page by Daniel Sutphin





## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Suncoast Remake Learning Days 2025

#### I Spy DeSoto on the Magic School Bus

Saturdays - April 19, 2025 and April 26, 2025  
9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Two buses will make a loop with stops at each activity. One bus will start from DeSoto County Library, the other will start at Casa San Juan Bosco. Hop On!, Hop Off!

#### Sensational Florida Native Plants!

Wednesday April 23, 2025  
3 p.m. to 5 p.m.  
at Arcadia Housing Authority  
7 Booker T. Washington Road



CLICK THE ORANGE BUTTON TO VOLUNTEER!

## Sensational!

### Florida Native Plants That The Pioneers Used

**3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., Wednesday, April 23, 2025**  
Arcadia Housing Authority, 7 Booker T. Washington Ave.

When the pioneers arrived in Florida, they found no grocery stores or hardware shops or department stores. So they looked for what they needed in nature. This is your chance to see, hear, taste, touch, and smell native plants, and learn how the pioneers used them, and more.

*And take home a free Florida native plant!*

DeSoto County Historical Society  
863-266-5774  
www.historicdesoto.org

P.O. Box 1824, Arcadia, FL 34265  
863-266-5774  
desotocountyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com  
www.historicdesoto.org  
And we're on Facebook, too!

## HOP ON, HOP OFF

# I SPY DESOTO BUS

APRIL 19TH

### FREE TRANSPORTATION TO EVENTS 9 AM - 3 PM

## DESIGNATED STOPS

Park at one of the designated locations and catch the FREE transportation bus!

FREE RIDE  
FREE SNACKS  
FREE ACTIVITIES

<p><b>EMBC Community Easter Egg Hunt</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 am - 2 pm</li> <li>• 100 S. Orange Ave.</li> </ul> <p><b>Fun Family Gathering</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 am - 2 pm</li> <li>• 2274 SE Arnold Andrews Ave.</li> </ul> <p><b>Taco Fiesta</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 11 am - 3 pm</li> <li>• 1347 Hargrave St.</li> </ul> <p><b>AOA Family Fun Bash</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 11 am - 2 pm</li> <li>• 205 S. Luther Ave.</li> </ul> <p><b>Hands-On Heroes: Learning with Law Enforcement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 11 am - 1 pm</li> <li>• 208 E. Cypress St.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Color Me Beautiful - Easter Edition</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 am - 11:30 am</li> <li>• 125 N. Hillsborough Ave.</li> </ul> <p><b>Marble Towers &amp; Mazes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 11 am - 12:30 pm</li> <li>• 125 N. Hillsborough Ave.</li> </ul> <p><b>Boldly Color Your Vision</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 12:30 pm - 1:30 pm</li> <li>• 125 N. Hillsborough Ave.</li> </ul> <p><b>Spring Planting Palooza</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 am - 12 pm</li> <li>• 16 S. Volusia Ave.</li> </ul> <p><b>Easter Egg Hunt &amp; Mini Golf Challenge</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 12 pm - 4 pm</li> <li>• 1769 NE Livingston St.</li> </ul>
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**FUN, LEARNING & EXPLORATION FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY!**

Hop on the **FREE DeSoto Magic School Bus** for an unforgettable **I Spy Adventure** the whole family will love!

As you ride between exciting **Suncoast Remake Learning Days events**, you'll explore local history, uncover fascinating stories, and spot landmarks along the way.

## HOP ON, HOP OFF

# I SPY DESOTO BUS

APRIL 26TH

### FREE TRANSPORTATION TO EVENTS 9 AM - 3 PM

## DESIGNATED STOPS

Park at one of the designated locations and catch the FREE transportation bus!

FREE RIDE  
FREE SNACKS  
FREE ACTIVITIES

<p><b>Fancy Fabergé: DIY Decorative Eggs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 11 am - 12:30 pm</li> <li>• 125 N. Hillsborough Ave.</li> </ul> <p><b>My Neighborhood, My Community</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 am - 1 pm</li> <li>• 125 N. Hillsborough Ave.</li> </ul> <p><b>Plant Camp Deluxe</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 am - 1 pm</li> <li>• 1005 W. Magnolia St.</li> </ul> <p><b>Arts Fun and Learn</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 11 am - 1 pm</li> <li>• 304 W. Myrtle St.</li> </ul> <p><b>Life Safety Tools "CPR"</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 pm - 3 pm</li> <li>• 710 SW Martin Luther King Jr St.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Cake Creations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 am - 12 pm</li> <li>• 710 SW Martin Luther King St.</li> </ul> <p><b>Storm Ready Families: Preparing Together for Hurricanes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 am - 2 pm</li> <li>• 2358 SE Arnold Andrews Ave.</li> </ul> <p><b>Family Olympics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 12 pm - 6 pm</li> <li>• 1365 SE Hargrave St.</li> </ul> <p><b>The Art Of Stretching</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 am - 3 pm</li> <li>• 1365 SE Hargrave St.</li> </ul> <p><b>Elements of Horse Care</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Part 1:</b> 10 am - 11 am</li> <li>• <b>Part 2:</b> 1 pm - 2 pm</li> <li>• 122 N. 11th Ave.</li> </ul>
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**FUN, LEARNING & EXPLORATION FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY!**

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## MARCH WRAP UP — Con't

### Pioneer Day Banners And Signs

We are grateful to Carol Mahler to asking for permission for the Society to display our Pioneer Day banners and signs at various locations throughout Arcadia and DeSoto County and for hanging banners on fences—with help from Jeff Griffis at the Turner Center. We appreciate Keith Wallace, Tonya Wallace, and Kenny Galt for installing five banners with posts and plywood, and to Jeff Griffis and Dave Hutchinson for taking them down. Thanks to Kathy Bryce, Nancy “Eric” Erickson, and Carol Mahler for placing the Pioneer Day yard signs and to Carol and Jahna Leonard for collecting them all after the event.

### Pioneer Day Loading/Unloading and Cleanup

Thanks to Nancy “Eric” Erickson, Ralph Freshman, Kenny Galt, Jeff Griffis, and Carol Mahler for loading all the materials needed for Pioneer Day into the trailer on March 28—and to Cindy Ely, Jeff, Dave Hutchinson, Jahna Leonard, Carol, and Ralph for unloading the trailer on March 30. We also appreciate Jeff Griffis for hauling the trailer, and Kathy Bryce, Elizabeth Kenney, and Carol Mahler for packing all the items used at Pioneer Day and then unpacking and storing them.

We are grateful to Col. Ron Baynes, U.S. Army retired, and JROTC Cadets Efrain Antonio, Paige Auxier, Erick Cardenas, Nicholas Casteel, Madison Fugate, Jason Hirschy, Laura Hirschy, Juan Mendoza, Selina Montes, Kathryn Orozco, and River Rhodes for cleaning up and re-stowing all the Pioneer Day items in the Museum and the storage shed plus washing windows in the Museum and doing some yard work on April 2. We appreciate Carol Mahler for organizing the tasks and to her and Kathy Apodaca for supervising and working with the cadets.

### Donations Report

Thanks to the following for their generous donations: Stephen and Martha Bartenhagen for assistance that Carol Mahler gave them with finding information about their family; Steven Brawner for research that Kathy Bryce did for him trying to find an obituary for Mary Ann Brawner who died on May 26, 1918, in Grove City, Florida; Ken Brown for the research that Kathy and Carol Mahler did for him because someone had found a person with the same name as Ken Brown’s mother living in Arcadia in the 1920 census, but Kathy Bryce was able to determine that the woman in Arcadia was not Ken’s mother.

We appreciate the following for their donations: Direlle Baird for old postcards of Arcadia and DeSoto County plus other memorabilia that he had on display at the Good Ol’ Boys and Good Ol’ Girls Annual BBQ on March 1; Jeff Griffis for repairing the irrigation system at the Museum and for leveling the “pump house;” Marilyn McConnell for an antique telephone—an important addition to show the evolution of the telephone to the West Elementary School students who visit the Museum to learn local history through hands-on activities; and Johnny Shannon for fixing the drip on the back-flow preventer at the Museum.

### Memorial Donations

Thanks to Cindy McLeod Ely for her donation of \$50.00 in memory of Raven Golden; Travis Parker for his donation of \$41.00 in memory of his mother, Stella Parker; and Lynn H. Mills for her donation of \$300.00 in remembrance of Stella Parker and Lewis Parker.

### WANTED: 6’ x 12’ CARGO TRAILER

Society volunteers enjoyed using the 6’ x 12’ cargo trailer—on loan from Darrell’s Wrecker and Road Service—to transport Pioneer Day supplies. Several have suggested that the Society invest in such a trailer, so if you have one to sell or donate, please contact Carol Mahler.



### In Memoriam: Raven Lynn Golden (2005-2025)

Born to Mike Livingston and Tammy Hill-Golden in Sarasota, Florida, Raven was raised in DeSoto County, graduated from Charlotte Virtual School and was finishing college to become a teacher while working as a teacher’s assistant at Memorial Elementary School.

She and her mom volunteered as docents in the Museum for the 2019 Holiday Tour of Historic Homes and Buildings, and Raven walked with the Society in the 2020 Arcadia Rodeo Parade. We extend our sympathy to her family. For more information or to leave online condolences, check online at [www.pongerkaysgrady.com/obituary/raven-golden](http://www.pongerkaysgrady.com/obituary/raven-golden)

PHOTO EXTRA - Thanks To Our Volunteers



Thank you to A+ Environmental Restoration for the sand and Bryan Farm Supply for the hay bales!

Fossil Dig at Pioneer Day was wonderful. Kids had a great time and the hay bales were a hit for adults to relax and watch the kids. At times we could have used a bigger sand box.



The sand was beautiful. Got so many compliments on it. Otherwise, I know it was lots of work, but the county has to be proud to have such an amazing event like this.

—Kenny Gallt



Marilyn McConnell donated an antique telephone—an important addition to show the evolution of the telephone in our Hands-on-History demonstrations.

—Photo by Carol Mahler



VOLUNTEER!

There are many ways you can help our Society!



Thank you to Dylan Tindall for taking these photos and more of us in the Rodeo parade.