

Hickman Community Foundation

hunting for the best mascot for city

By Gerry Baksys

It's eerily reminiscent of an old Looney Toons cartoon.

The Hickman Area Community Foundation Beautification committee is launching a contest for the town's new mascot. The committee is going to start selling concrete lawn ornaments of rabbits and ducks and whichever animal sells the most becomes the unofficial mascot for the city.

It's not that hard to imagine bugs, daffy and Elmer standing together shouting "Duck season, Wabbit season, open season ... FIRE!"

Much like the cartoon, the contest is all in good fun. Partly, it is to help the foundation raise money to pay for a variety of community improvement projects like the new welcome sign on the north edge of town and the planting barrels around town.

"The ornaments will cost \$20 a piece (plus tax) and the proceeds will go to benefit the Foundation and our efforts," said Linda Bryant, co-publisher of the *VOICE* and president of the Hickman Area Community Foundation. "We hope to sell between 50-100 all over Hickman and see rabbits multiply or ducks flock to everyone's yard."

Duck and Wabbit season will remain open until Hickman Hay Day, when the winner (or remaining) animal mascot will be announced. Sales of the winning critter will continue indefinitely, but there is a big push to get the town residents on board

by Hay Day so city visitors will notice all the critters in yards and at places of business.

Bryant said she got the initial idea for the contest while reading a newspaper article. "Bill (Bryant) and I were on our way home from Kearney and I was reading a story in the *World Herald* about this town that was doing a census count of garden gnomes and that they had adopted the gnome as their town mascot," she said. "I commented that Hickman needed a cute story to generate some positive publicity for a change. Someone had just made a comment to me in Kearney about Peter Rabbit (the horse) in Hickman. So I thought why not turn the Peter Rabbit story into something positive."

Of course, rabbits and ducks are plentiful throughout Nebraska in the springtime, but what Linda envisioned was something more permanent and something that would stay put. "Bill suggested Village

Green Concrete Statuary in Grafton," she said. "So we stopped on our way home and made a deal with the owner. I presented it to the Hickman Area Community Foundation Beautification committee as a fundraiser and they liked it."

But that's not all. In an effort to further get the Hickman community to buy into the scheme, buyers will get to vote to name the mascot. Later on, a best decorated duck or rabbit contest will be held. "We really want to see people buy into this idea and make it their own," said committee chairman Kevin Devalkenaere. "There will be an awesome prize for whoever is picked as the winner. Kansas City has the decorated cows, Lincoln has the bikes. Hickman will have rabbits or ducks"

Bunnies and ducks will be on sale through the *VOICE* office in Hickman, as well as at the Circus on May 15, at Hickman Hay Day July 31 and from Beautification committee members.

Hickman residents have been asked to choose a mascot for the city; a community building activity meant to foster goodwill and fun between neighbors, as well as positive media publicity.

