 Editor's note: This is one in a series of feature stories concerning organizations that benefit the Imperial area. Volunteering in a community, through organizations, is a way to pay back for the benefits that the community offers an individual.

By Carolyn Lee

The Imperial Republican

With a 23-year history in the Imperial area, Southwestern Nebraska Pheasants Forever is a big presence.

One of the chapter's most visible events is the fall Youth Mentor Hunt for those ages 12-15. Heather Francis of Pheasants Forever said the purpose of the hunt is to pair recent hunter safety graduates with a mentor for a day, to have the hunting experience and to be with other people with the same interests.

"It's for children who don't have the opportunity to hunt" with family or friends, she said.

"Hopefully what will happen is the adult will call the youth to hunt again."

Besides hunting, the day includes gun safety, gun handling and learning about landowner permission to hunt.

Pheasants Forever also contributes to the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service CRP programs, Corners for Wildlife and local habitat programs.

Pheasants Forever owns a 10 foot no-till drill that can be rented to landowners who want to plant warm season grasses and legumes such as alfalfa and clover. That eventually can become pheasant habitat.

The organization's main fundraiser is a banquet the last Saturday in February. Francis said a "big percentage" of the funds raised stays in the area and in Nebraska.

The over 100 members are led by President Joe Weiss, Vice President James Marlatt, Treasurer Joel Gockley, Co-Secretaries Francis and Gwen Springer and Youth Chair Todd Schrotberger. Francis is also habitat chairman.

Persons interested in becoming a member may contact Francis at (308) 882-6476.