By Russ Pankonin
The Imperial Republican

Looking to the next generation of hunters, kids 16 and under can attend this Friday's banquet of the Frenchman Valley Chapter of Ducks Unlimited (DU) for free.

The banquet will be held this Friday, March 27 at the Imperial city gym, 740 Court Street. A social will begin at 5:30 p.m. followed by the dinner and auction at 7 p.m.

Committee chair Kelen Fortkamp of Imperial said kids will be a large focus of the banquet. "Our conservation efforts of today won't do any good if we can't keep it going later with today's young people."

The chapter has coined their effort as "Kids for Conservation."

Committee member John Flood of Champion said this new generation of hunters will be the leaders of conservation in the future.

Fortkamp said the chapter will buy the kids' meal and pay for their "Greenwing" youth membership in DU.

In addition, all greenwings will be entered into a drawing at no cost for a youth DU gun. The greenwings will also receive a free mallard call and lanyard and will receive a lesson in how to call mallard ducks.

This fall, the chapter will offer one-on-one youth mentor duck hunts and will be building and installing wood duck nesting boxes.

To line up a mentor hunt or to assist as a mentor or volunteer, contact Flood at 882-4377.

Fortkamp said no organization is more efficient and committed to conserving wetlands than DU.

In Nebraska, DU has completed projects on more than 43,000 acres and Fortkamp said they are working to bring some project funds to this area.

Tickets are available at the door or from a committee member. A single is $35 with couples at $45. This also includes a $25 membership in DU.

This year's banquet will include an auction of both collectible DU art and memorabilia and other useful items for the hunter.

Flood will also be offering a three-day duck and goose hunt on Maryland's Chesapeake Bay next January.

The only cost to the hunter will be the plane ticket to get there and back.

Other committee members include Kurt Mann, Kendall Dubas, Jeremy Vlasin and Jake Banks.