

LOCALNEWS

Picking out the perfect pumpkins

BY SPENSER BICKETT
Staff Writer

A proper home Halloween decoration isn't complete without a carved pumpkin. Intrepid decorators went to Aitchison's Farm Saturday to pick out the perfect pumpkin, as well as take a hay ride or sip apple cider. Damp weather didn't dampen the spirits of visitors, as they deliberated size, shape, and weight of the pumpkins.



A family picks out some pumpkins to carve for the Halloween season.



Once a pumpkin was selected, a washing station was available to clean it off before you took it home.



Kids hop on a hay ride at Aitchison's Farm Saturday. There was a pumpkin patch, so kids could take home an orange orb to carve.

STAFF PHOTOS BY SPENSER BICKETT



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Gas prices continue to fall

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

Average retail gasoline prices in Minnesota have fallen 3 cents in the past week, averaging \$3.32 per gallon Thursday, according to GasBuddy's daily survey of 2,856 gas outlets in Minnesota. This compares with the national average that has decreased 5.8 cents per gallon in the last week to \$3.43 per gallon, according to gasoline price website MinnesotaGasPrices.com.

Including the change in gas prices in Minnesota during the past week, prices Sunday were 52.8 cents per gallon lower compared to the same day one year ago

and are 32.1 cents per gallon lower than a month ago. The national average has decreased 18.8 cents during the last month and stands 36.6 cents per gallon lower than this day one year ago.

"Gasoline prices continue to erode with twelve states that are seeing prices under \$3 per gallon, and more states will join in on that over the next seven days" said GasBuddy.com Senior Petroleum Analyst Patrick DeHaan. "While it's generally good news that gasoline prices continue falling, many Americans don't believe we're likely to see national averages drop under \$3 per gallon over the next year at the pump,"

DeHaan said.

GasBuddy surveyed over 10,000 motorists with two-thirds of respondents saying that the national average will remain between \$3 and \$4 per gallon through 2014. Perhaps in a sign of positive sentiment, just 13 percent of respondents said they thought that prices nationally would exceed \$4 per gallon, while 20 percent believed prices could go under \$3 per gallon.

GasBuddy operates MinnesotaGasPrices.com and over 250 similar websites that track gasoline prices at more than 140,000 gasoline stations in the United States and Canada.

Clean out woodstoves, boilers

BY DANAE SCHAFER AND
MATT WAPPLER
DNR foresters

Woodstoves, wood-fired outdoor boilers, and debris fires cause numerous and costly wildfires every year about this time. Minnesota's peak fall wildfire season typically occurs just after the first killing frost and continues until the ground is completely snow covered.

As hunting shack and house heating season arrives here are some tips.

Occasionally, woodstoves and boilers need to be cleaned out due to significant ash build-up. Ashes contain hot embers that can burn for days or even weeks at a time. Outdoor wood boilers often throw sparks from their chimney stacks during fueling. In dry and windy conditions these embers and sparks cause wildfires

every year.

When cleaning out a woodstove or fireplace, it's important to empty ashes in a metal container with a tight fitting lid. Let the embers cool by drowning and stirring the ashes with plenty of water and a shovel. Since embers can remain hot for days avoid immediately disposing of ashes in the outdoors unless the ground is completely snow-covered, or on bare ground such as a plowed field or tilled garden. Be sure to check for hot glowing embers as you dispose of them.

Outdoor wood boilers are another source of wildfires caused by the sparks from chimney stacks. It's important to remove all flammable vegetation surrounding the unit down to mineral soil. It is also recommended to install a chimney stack screen to prevent sparks and em-

bers from escaping. Lastly, make certain chimney stack height is sufficient for sparks and embers to cool; ask a local fireplace dealer for stack height recommendations.

The cost of putting a wildfire out as a result of improper ash disposal or sparks from chimney stacks will be billed to the responsible party. This also includes any situation where the responsible party burned debris in a burn barrel, on the ground in a pile, a field, or a warming or cooking fire. If deliberately burned material escapes and starts a wildfire the responsible party could be cited and liable for all suppression costs.

For burning permit requirements and the most current fire danger, visit http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/forestry/fire/firerating_restrictions.html.



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