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# Free Tax Filing Service Offered in Dexter

FEBRUARY 03RD 2015 BY DEE LOFLIN

## Free Tax Filing Service Offered in Dexter

**Dexter, Missouri** - Local volunteers, Jack Norman and Earl Young, will be on hand every Monday and Wednesday from 8:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. through mid-April to prepare both Federal and State 1040s. Returns will be filed the same day they are completed in all possible cases.

These tax returns are FREE and are provided through the University of Missouri Extension Service in conjunction with the IRS VITA/TCE program.

The Regional Healthcare Foundation in Dexter has once again provided the volunteers FREE use of the Cox Corner building at the corner of Walnut Street and Business 60 for this service.

Appointments are not necessary. Forms are completed on a walk-in basis. Those taking advantage of the this free filing are reminded that with the new laws governing HEALTHCARE, they are asked at the time of filing whether they carry a health insurance policy; however it is not necessary to provide proof of that policy at the tie the tax returns are completed.

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## February is Earthquake Awareness Month

FEBRUARY 03RD 2015 BY DEE LOFLIN

### February is Earthquake Awareness Month

**Missouri** - Each February, Missouri observes Earthquake Awareness Month to educate the public about the very real threat of another catastrophic earthquake occurring in the state. On Feb. 7, 1812, one of the country's most powerful earthquakes on record struck in southeast Missouri in what is now known as the New Madrid Seismic Zone (NMSZ). While no one can predict exactly when an earthquake will occur, many experts agree that large earthquakes in the NMSZ still pose a threat to the region.

“The New Madrid Seismic Zone is one of the most active seismic zones in the nation and experts tell us to expect another major earthquake in the future,” said Ron Walker, SEMA director. “It’s important for Missourians to prepare now and Earthquake Awareness Month is an ideal time to learn about earthquake hazards and the importance of emergency preparedness.”

Useful information and resources for families, schools and businesses is available on SEMA's Earthquake Preparedness Web page. Included are fact sheets, interactive maps and informational videos that show what to do in the event of an earthquake. Go to [www.sema.dps.mo.gov/earthquake\\_preparedness](http://www.sema.dps.mo.gov/earthquake_preparedness).

**On** Oct. 16, 2014, more than 470, 000 Missourians participated in the annual Great Central U.S. ShakeOut earthquake drill. Each year the drill teaches participants to "Drop, Cover, and Hold On" – drop to the floor, cover under a desk or table and hold on in the event of an earthquake. Other simple earthquake safety steps that people can take, particularly those who live in or near the New Madrid Seismic Zone, are:

- Put together an emergency kit, including a flash-light, first aid kit, radio, drinking water and blankets.
- Develop a family communication plan. Identify a relative living at least 100 miles away; everyone can call to "check in" to tell family you're safe.
- Bolt bookcases to wall studs, install strong latches on cupboards and strap your home's water heater to wall studs—if it tips over it could start a fire or gas leak, and you could lose a valuable source of water.
- Know how to turn off your gas and water mains.
- Understand that earthquake coverage is not included in most homeowner insurance policies. It must be purchased as separate coverage, called an "endorsement." This type of insurance requires that the earthquake is the direct cause of damage to the property. The Missouri Department of Insurance has more:

**<http://insurance.mo.gov/consumers/home/EQTable.php>**

**Events** scheduled during Earthquake Awareness Month include:

- Feb. 5 – The Missouri Seismic Safety Commission holds its quarterly meeting at 1 p.m. at the St. Louis Science Center, 5050 Oakland Avenue, St. Louis.
- Feb. 6 – The Seismic Safety Commission, the State Emergency Management Agency, and others sponsor the "QuakeSmart Business Summit" from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at St. Louis University, Il Monastero Meeting Room, 3050 Olive Street, St. Louis. Local businesses are encouraged to attend this free event to learn about the importance of preparing now for earthquakes.
- Feb. 21 – Emergency Preparedness Fair from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Sikeston Latter Day Saints Church, 827 Euclid Avenue, Sikeston. The event is free and open to the public.
- Feb. 28 - "Shake and Quake: Earthquake Preparedness is in the Bag!" program at 11 a.m. at Onondaga Cave State Park near Leasburg. Representatives from SEMA and the Department of Natural Resources' Missouri Geological Survey will present a program about earthquake history, preparedness, and impacts on society. A video about

earthquakes in the Midwest will be shown. Admission is free. Onondaga Cave State Park is located on Highway H, seven miles southeast of the Leasburg exit on Interstate 44.

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## MDC Cape Nature Center Hosts Maple Sugaring Program

JANUARY 28TH 2015 BY DEE LOFLIN

MDC Cape Nature Center Hosts Maple Sugaring Program

**Cape Girardeau, Missouri** - The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) Cape Girardeau Conservation Nature Center will host “Maple Sugaring” Saturday, Feb. 14 from 1-4 p.m. This program is all about the history, equipment and process of making maple syrup and sugar.

“This event is self-guided and partially outdoors so that we can show the entire process of backyard sugaring,” said Angela Pierce, a naturalist at the Nature Center. Pierce said maple sugaring has a long history in America, with earliest records of Indians using syrup for barter in the 1600s.

Though some think sugar maple trees are only found in Northeastern and North central regions of the country, the trees are also found in Missouri and have a rich history of use for maple sugaring.

Pierce said maple sugaring is a great way for people to discover nature in the cooler months. However, there are techniques that should be used to ensure the health of trees when they are tapped for sap.

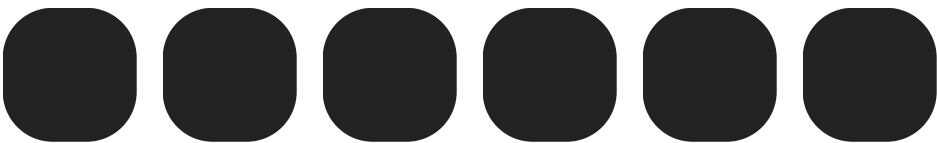
“This event will teach the appropriate conservation practices for successful backyard sugaring,” said Pierce.

The maple sugaring program is just one way the MDC helps people discover nature. All groups and ages are welcome and no registration is needed. For more information on this and other events at the Cape Girardeau Conservation Nature Center, call 573-290-5218 or go online to [mdc.mo.gov/capenaturecenter](http://mdc.mo.gov/capenaturecenter).

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## Northbound Fruitland Rest Area to Be Converted to Truck Parking

JANUARY 27TH 2015 BY DEE LOFLIN

Northbound Fruitland Rest Area to Be Converted to Truck Parking

**Fruitland, Missouri** - On Nov. 25, 2014, a fire at the northbound Fruitland Rest Area left the building unusable. The facility has remained closed since that time. The Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) will open the facility open Friday, Jan. 23 to primarily serve commercial truck parking.

"We looked at rebuilding the facility versus converting it to truck parking," said MoDOT Assistant District Engineer Matt Seiler. "The cost to rebuild the rest area, not including yearly maintenance contracts, would cost Missouri taxpayers more than \$115,000. We weighed that against the number of nearby private businesses offering 24-hour service to travelers. We feel converting the facility to truck parking is the best option for the taxpayers of Missouri."

Once fully converted, the site will offer more than 15 parking spaces for commercial trucks and vault restrooms. Until the vault restrooms are complete, portable restrooms will be available.

"Currently, the cost to maintain the Welcome Centers at Marston and Hayti, as well as the dual Fruitland facilities and northbound Bloomsdale rest area is nearly \$1,400,000," said Seiler. "Because of the reduced maintenance with the conversion to truck parking, we are

negotiating new rest area cleaning contracts. Any additional cost savings to Missouri taxpayers will be spent to repair roads and bridges."

Missouri began constructing rest areas based on criteria established in 1968. At that time, rest areas were constructed to provide travelers with restroom facilities and a place to stretch their legs. With private businesses now providing these same opportunities and better built vehicles, the need for rest areas is not as critical today. But there is a growing demand for commercial vehicle parking.

"Parking space for commercial vehicles is a nationwide concern," said Seiler. "Commercial vehicles comprise approximately 30 to 35 percent of the average daily traffic on our interstates. More parking will help commercial vehicle operators meet their USDOT requirements to rest and will reduce the current, unsafe practice of parking on ramps."

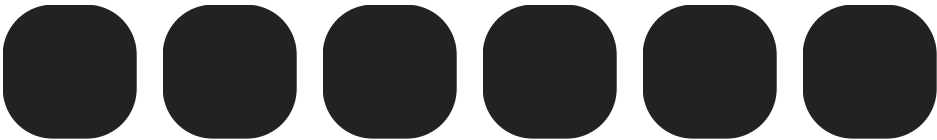
The Southeast District has previously converted four facilities to truck parking along Interstate 55. Those include the dual rest areas located in Steele, the northbound facility at Marston and the southbound facility at Bloomsdale. All feature parking for commercial vehicles and vault restrooms, while the Bloomsdale facility houses a weigh scale also.

For more information, contact Seiler at (573) 472-5340 or call MoDOT's Customer Service Center toll-free at 1-888-ASK-MODOT (1-888-275-6636).

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## Eagle Days at Duck Creek and Mingo Coming Soon

JANUARY 26TH 2015 BY DEE LOFLIN

Eagle Days at Duck Creek and Mingo Coming Soon

### **Missouri Department of Conservation to co-host Eagle Days at Duck Creek CA and Mingo National Wildlife Refuge**

**Puxico, Missouri** - Bald eagles are large birds of prey and in winter they follow waterfowl flocks that often settle on southern wetlands in large numbers. Together, eagles, geese and ducks provide a dramatic winter show. Hosted by the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Eagle Days event includes wildlife viewing opportunities outdoors and indoor nature programs Saturday, Feb. 7, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Pat Holloway, an MDC education consultant, said families and visitors of all ages can expect a fun, adventurous event that will help conquer cabin fever.

”Join us for an outdoor nature experience and discover cool facts about bald eagles, which were chosen as our nation’s symbol in 1782,” Holloway said, adding that visitors are encouraged to dress appropriate for outdoor winter weather.

Staff from Dickerson Park Zoo will present educational programs featuring a live eagle throughout the day. The Mingo National Wildlife Visitor Center will display items related to eagles. Several outdoor spotting scope sites on Mingo National Wildlife Refuge and Duck Creek Conservation Area (CA) will provide opportunities to view eagles, ducks and geese in the wild. Both Mingo and Duck Creek are expansive areas, so visitors are encouraged to pick up a brochure containing a map of the eagle viewing stations when



they arrive.

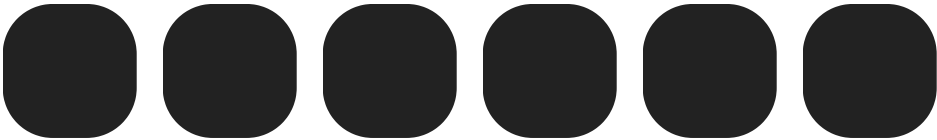
All Eagle Days activities are free. Mingo National Wildlife Refuge and Duck Creek CA are located along highway 51, north of Puxico. For more information about Eagle Days events, call Mingo National Wildlife Refuge at (573) 222-3589 or MDC at (573)290-5730. To learn more about eagles and places to view them in Missouri, visit the MDC website at [mdc.mo.gov/events/eagledays](http://mdc.mo.gov/events/eagledays).

Article by Candice Davis. Photo submitted by MDC.

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