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SPECIAL NEWS RELEASE:

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Sara Davis, store manager, Nick DeKryger, vice president of business and finance, and Belstra Milling President Malcolm DeKryger do the honors at the groundbreaking for the Belstra Lawn & Garden store. It is being built on the property where a hotel once stood along US 24, east of Reynolds.

Photos by Cheri Shelhart

REYNOLDS — Belstra Milling Company of De- Motte broke ground on their planned feed and garden store where once a motel stood along US Hwy 24/421 east of Reynolds. The company plans to build a store and green houses on the site, opening in March, and hoping for a grand opening in April or May in time for gardeners ready to plant their next crop of vegetables and flowers, and do some landscaping.

Belstra Milling Co. started 70 years ago in 1954 by Albert “Bud” Belstra and is now owned by his son, Tim. Bud Belstra began with a feed mill, then branched out into hog production and opened a small feed store in front of the milling operation along State Rd. 10/US 231 in the small Jasper County town.

As DeMotte grew, the small feed store grew. Nick DeKryger, vice president of business and finance, explained the company began putting more effort into its small store, offering more than animal feed, including gardening items, plants and other “homesteading” items.

Officials gather for a photo op at the Belstra Lawn & Garden groundbreaking Friday morning. Pictured are Economic Development President Randy Strasser, Honey Creek Township Trustee Sharon Brooks, Belstra Milling Co. Vice President Nick DeKryger, Belstra Milling President Malcolm DeKryger, Reynolds Clerk/Treasurer Maureen Buschman and Deputy Clerk Treasurer Carol Hendress, a member of the Economic Development Board. During COVID, he said more people became interested in growing their own food, and soon the store had outgrown its space so they looked for another

location. Two years ago, the company Landscaping, also a DeMotte business, to open the Belstra Lawn & Garden Center, offering landscaping, trees, shrubs, outdoor and indoor plants, vegetables and a variety of garden flowers.

While traveling through White County, he said he “stumbled across a hotel that had burned down.” He saw an opportunity for further growth by adding another lawn and garden center in that location. He began doing research on the area and found it would be a great place for his vision.

His father, Malcolm DeKryger, president of Belstra Milling, had a long relationship with the David Davis family and knew Sara Davis well.

Malcolm said he spoke with Sara Davis and asked her to manage the new store, and she said, “Yes.”

Nick began the process of acquiring the property, and all the work that goes into preparations for buying, building and opening a store. They recently received their septic permit, and once the building permit is approved, plans are to start building in the first week of November.

“Our goal is to offer an experience where people come to shop and find helpful service and information on homesteading, growing home gardens.” They will offer wild bird seed for the bird watchers, animal feed for pets, chickens and other livestock.

White County Economic Development President Randy Strasser said they are always looking for people who want to expand their businesses. He introduced Nick DeKryger at the annual meeting of the Economic Development in May.

“It was very welcoming from the community,” Nick said. “We’re excited to be here.”



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