



# Tribune *Hastings*

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ERIKA SHEA/Tribune

**Dan Deffenbaugh (right) shows a group two bee hives at the Prairie Loft Center Monday evening.**

# Buzzing with interest

WORKSHOP AT PRAIRIE LOFT  
HIGHLIGHTS NEW BEE HIVES

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**H**ow to best interact with honeybees and to collect their honey was the focus of a workshop at Prairie Loft Center for Outdoor and Agricultural Learning Monday evening. Three bee hives have been placed on the Prairie Loft grounds since May.

Dan Deffenbaugh, associate professor of religion at Hastings College, led the workshop. Deffenbaugh is relatively new to caring for honeybees, but was recently able to secure funding to start up a social entrepreneurship beekeeping program at Prairie Loft.

Funding came through HC, using a grant from the Kemper Foundation. The project received \$1,500 of the grant, part of which Deffenbaugh used to purchase bees and hive boxes. The remainder he wants to spend on a high-grade honey extractor, which uses centrifugal motion to spin honey out of the comb.

"I'd like to buy a fairly nice extractor and then make it available to people," Deffenbaugh told workshop participants.

Participants included Prairie Loft Director Amy Sandeen, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension

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**Dan Deffenbaugh shows part of a hive during a workshop on bee keeping at the Prairie Loft Center Monday.**

# Prairie Loft: Agriculture workshop highlights new bee hives

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Educator Ron Seymour and four Hastings residents.

Extractors cost several hundred dollars, he said. Providing one that bee keepers in the community could use would be part of the social entrepreneurship element of the program. That way, groups or individuals in the community would only need to purchase beehive kits and bees to get started making their own honey.

"So, it makes it easy to get into beekeeping, because your initial investment would be fairly cheap," he said.

Deffenbaugh told workshop participants that only .000001 percent of U.S. residents are beekeepers. The activity seems to not appeal to the American mindset of individuality, he said. Bees shouldn't be thought of as individuals, but as a group.

"They're not 10,000 individuals, it is a colony. It is an organism of itself," he said. "You kind of have to just listen and watch and see what they're doing."

Deffenbaugh relayed some of the adventures he's had in beekeeping since starting the hives at Prairie Loft. He started out with two hives, he said, but both swarmed. Swarming happens when bees find that they will not have room in the hive to place both brood — developing bees — and honey. The bees decide to split, sending half out to find a new hive.

Deffenbaugh was able to catch one set of his bees after they swarmed, he said, and created the third hive for them. However, beekeepers can prevent losing their bees to a swarm by supplying them with empty frames in which to store brood and honey.

Deffenbaugh showed his class a frame, which is a plastic tray, covered in a thin layer of beeswax and framed by wood, that bee keepers place inside their hives. Beehives usually have several boxes. The bottom becomes the brood box, where the queen bee stays to lay her eggs, and the higher, or "honey super" boxes are where worker bees store their honey.

After some discussion, Deffenbaugh led workshop participants out to see the hives at Prairie Loft. One hive, containing 10 frames, is now full of honey and weighs about 80 pounds, he said.

Currently Deffenbaugh is the only one to care for the hives at Prairie Loft, he said, but he wouldn't mind sharing that responsibility with another beekeeper.



**Dan Deffenbaugh leads a workshop on beekeeping Monday evening at Prairie Loft Center.**

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