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**Chadrad Communications, Inc.**  
226 Bordeaux St - Chadron, NE 69337  
308-432-5545 fax 308-432-5601  
E-mail: [kcsr@chadrad.com](mailto:kcsr@chadrad.com)

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### **(Neb)-Hudson-Meng Celebrating Smokey Bear's Birthday Fri & Sat**

By: John Axtell Posted at: 08/07/2019 11:52 PM

HUDSON-MENG - U-S Forest Service icon Smokey Bear turns 75 on Friday and the Hudson-Meng bison bonebed Education and Research Center northwest of Crawford is hosting several special events to mark the occasion.

Among those are a 2-day birthday party running both Friday and Saturday with activities from 11-3:00 including birthday cake and visits by Smokey Bear both days at 1:00.

By sheer luck, Hudson Meng is the latest stop of a national tour of Smokey Bear portraits by artist Rudy Wendelin, the man behind the most popular portraits of the fire prevention icon. Hudson-Meng Director Ryan Means says he and his staff are honored to host the tour and thrilled and excited to have it on Smokey's actual birthday.

The traveling exhibit includes 16 pieces of artwork spanning decades from the National Agricultural Library. Some will be on display in the Hudson Meng lobby and others along the bonebed walkway. It will be there from today through Sunday the 18th.

Means says the Forest Service authorized creation of Smokey on August 9, 1944 and the first poster of him was delivered on October 10, starting the longest-running public service announcement campaign in United States history,

Artist Albert Staehle did the original poster, but Wendelin soon became the full-time artist and was considered Smokey Bear's "caretaker" until his retirement in 1973. He was the one responsible for the more humanized representation of Smokey with his ranger hat, jeans, and shovel.

The celebration also includes demonstrations and activities on wildfire safety and prevention by the Pine Ridge Ranger District fire crew and a special mission challenge with the Agents of Discovery Mobile game app.

Means says his staff developed a game that invites families and children to solve Smokey Bear challenges on their own mobile devices as they explore the site. The app is free for download in Google Play or iOS App store, and doesn't require Wi-Fi or data once downloaded.

The Hudson-Meng parking lot, trails, and grounds are open 7 days a week, but the bison bonebed enclosure with the Education and Research Center operates 5 days a week, Wed to Sun from 9 am to 5 pm and has admission fees.