By Carolyn Lee

The Imperial Republican

The Frenchman Valley Chapter of Ducks Unlimited banquet March 24 was a chance for members and the public to give to DU while having fun themselves.

Before dinner youth and adults had the opportunity to play many games, earning them prizes.

Following the meal, awards were given and an auction was held.

Gavin Wisnieski was presented with the Legacy Greenwing plaque by committee co-chair Jason Speck. The youth will be a member of DU until age 16.

The Greenwing Winner was Trace Helser.

Taylor Jablonski won the knock down game prize, while the high-low card game gun winner was Hanna Dubas.

Spencer Parker won the pick of the litter game and chose a Don’t Tread On Me deer sculpture.

Dinner gun raffle winners were Willie O’Neil, shotgun; Spencer Parker, rifle, and Lucas

Jablonski, pistol.

Committee co-chair Kelen Fortkamp said “DU can conserve an acre of wetlands with roughly $250.” Enough money was raised during the event “to conserve about 40 acres of wetlands.”

The mission of DU is to fulfill the annual life cycle needs of North American waterfowl by protecting, enhancing, restoring and managing wetlands, which are vital to their continued growth and survival.

DU has conserved about 55,643 acres in the state of Nebraska.

Fortkamp said the Chase County area is a flyway to the north for ducks. The local chapter helps improve habitat along the Platte River near Paxton and in rainwater basins in the area. DU has identified these areas as priority areas for conservation work. Both the Platte River and rainwater basins are key habitat for migrating waterfowl.

While many species of ducks and geese use these areas during the fall migration, they play a vital roll to a very large percentage of migrating waterfowl during the spring migration, Fortkamp stated.

Although Nebraska DU raised $1,009,598 in 2011, Fortkamp said, there was much more money spent in the state to help with conservation work.

With grassroots money from DU and help from state and federal grants, there was $21,576,022 spent to make sure migrating waterfowl have what they need to breed successfully.

“Even though we are unable to spend our funds in this area,” Fortkamp noted, “you can rest assured that Ducks Unlimited is making the best use of your donations.”

DU, which has conserved wetlands for the last 75 years, spends just three percent of expenses for administrative costs.

“We thank everyone for their support and we look forward to seeing the skies full of migrating birds in the fall and spring. If anyone has any questions about our habitat work, please feel free to call me,” he added.

Fortkamp may be reached at (308) 883-6338.