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Business trend takes exercise program to the next sizzling step, B1

Grand Forks Herald

SATURDAY, JULY 27, 2019

HOLOCAUST: NO REPEATS

Ex-Minn. official allegedly lobbied for husband

By Dave Orrick
St. Paul Pioneer Press

ST. PAUL — A senior Minnesota corrections official who resigned last week was under investigation for leaking the identity of a survivor of a sexual crime and for lobbying to get state funds for her husband's charity, state documents show.



Walker Sarah Walker, who was deputy commissioner of the Department of Corrections, was the subject of a number of complaints from fellow DOC employees, including allegedly leaking

WALKER: Page A7

Marijuana cash an 'incredible safety risk'

Two new bills would open banking services to legal cannabis businesses

By Wren Murphy
Grand Forks Herald

Legal medical marijuana dispensaries' security risks don't just include their cannabis — their lack of access to banking services is a problem, too. Two bills aim to change that.



Cramer The Secure and Fair Enforcement Banking Act of 2019, or the SAFE Banking Act, would forbid federal banking regulators from penalizing banks and credit unions for providing financial services to legitimate marijuana-related businesses. The Senate banking committee held a hearing for the bill on Tuesday, July 23.

This bipartisan bill, co-sponsored by Sen. Kevin Cramer, R-N.D., aims to "increase public safety by ... reducing the amount of cash at such businesses."

MARIJUANA: Page A5

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Kevin Carney, social studies and psychology teacher at Red River High School, teaches about the Holocaust as part of world history to Red River High School students. **Eric Hylden / Grand Forks Herald**

Congress considers supporting Holocaust education: Bill would make money available for teacher training

By Pamela Knudson
Grand Forks Herald

Sen. Kevin Cramer is among four U.S. senators who introduced a bipartisan bill recently to establish a special fund in the Department of Education to provide teachers with resources and training needed to teach about the Holocaust.

The sponsor of the "Never Again Education Act" is Jacky Rosen, D-Nev., a member of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions. Other co-sponsors are Marco Rubio, R-Fla., and Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn.

Earlier this year, a companion bill introduced in the U.S. House has more

than 200 bipartisan co-sponsors.

"The story of the Holocaust must always be taught so that the experience of the Holocaust may never be repeated," Cramer, R-N.D., said in a news release. "With antisemitism on the rise in certain parts of the country, even among some elected officials, increased education about this terrible tragedy is as important as ever."

Steve Hunegs, executive director of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Minnesota and the Dakotas, said: "We worry greatly about the rise of antisemitism" in this country.

Hunegs issued a public statement last week titled "Deploring the rising

tide of antisemitism, racism and xenophobia poisoning our politics."

Holocaust education is "critically important," Hunegs said in an interview with the Herald. "It informs consequences of bigotry and hatred — and because of the rise of bigotry and hatred, people need to know what that can lead to."

He noted that a poll commissioned by the organization Jewish Material Claims Against Germany found that two-thirds of millennials cannot identify Auschwitz or name a single Nazi concentration camp.

"So if you want to look at a baseline of need, there's a pretty stark illustration of the need for education," he said.

With the passage of time, fewer survivors and witnesses can attest to the horrors of the Holocaust, Hunegs said.

EDUCATION: Page A6

Hemp farming: The 'wild west' of agriculture

Chris Adams, of Adams Family Farm, described his experiences in what he called a chaotic industry

By Wren Murphy
Grand Forks Herald

The City to Farm Tour gave its attendees a crash course in hemp, a newly legalized and lucrative plant known more typically for its association with marijuana.

Chris Adams gave a talk about the Adams Family Farm's relatively new venture into the "wild west" of hemp agriculture. The owners of CBD of East Grand Forks also attended and showed samples of their CBD products to interested

Grand Forks and East Grand Forks residents. The Thursday, July 25, event was put on by the Chamber of Commerce of Grand Forks and East Grand Forks.

The cannabis plant, which is most famous for being the source of marijuana, has several different strains that can be classified as hemp or marijuana depending on the level of THC in the plant. THC is the psychoactive part of the plant. However, if the cannabis plant has THC levels below the 0.3% maximum set by the federal government, it is classified as industrial hemp instead of marijuana.

HEMP: Page A5

20-20

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Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa to raise flag at Peace Garden

By Natasha Rausch
Forum News Service



Forum News Service
The flag of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa.

FARGO — The Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa will be the first Indigenous nation to plant its flag at the International Peace Garden, located on the border of the United States and Canada.

The flag-raising ceremony on Saturday will be a “momentous” event in the Indigenous nation’s history, Turtle Mountain Tribal Chairman Jamie Azure said.

“As our flag flies along an international border and within the land of our ancestors, it is a show of respect, sovereignty, partnership and the strength of all nations,” the chairman said.

The International Peace Garden — which lies between North Dakota and Manitoba and was formed by the U.S. and Canada in 1932 — worked with the tribe for a year to coordinate the flag raising. Melinda Goodman, director of marketing and communication, said the flag will fly at the International Peace Garden among the United States of America, Canada, North Dakota and Manitoba flags.

Raising the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa’s flag was a “natural first step in rebuilding relationships and acknowledging first nations at the peace garden,” Goodman said, adding that the eventual goal is to have more Indigenous nation’s flags flying there.

“This is an important recognition of the role first nations played in the Turtle Mountain region and the building of the peace garden,” Goodman said.

The ceremony will also include the unveiling of a quote from Chief Red Thunder, which will be written on a wall inside of the Peace Chapel, alongside more than 60 quotes from presidents, prime ministers and religious leaders. The quote, which comes from Red Thunder’s speech during the McCumber Commission negotiations, is the first to represent the voice of the First Nations.

The ceremony will last from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the International Peace Garden on Saturday and will include lunch as well as several cultural demonstrations such as storytelling, dancing and drumming.

“The Native drum is the heartbeat of the Turtle Mountains. It’s important that the heartbeat is loud and clear,” Azure said. The ceremony, he said, “is another opportunity for our people to bring our culture out.”

HEMP

From Page A1

Industrial hemp produces seeds that can be consumed and are a good source of fiber and B vitamins. Hemp fiber can be used to make textiles, rope and industrial materials, and industrial hemp can be used to make plastic, insulation, fiber boards and concrete, as well.

The first industrial hemp pilot program launched in North Dakota in 2016, and Adams became licensed in North Dakota and Minnesota the following year. Adams started by planting 300 acres, but the number of acres continues to grow.

“We’ve been kind of keeping up with 10% of the state’s (acreage),” Adams said.

Since there is little regulation on industrial hemp, Adams said the industry is like the “wild west” and that he spends a lot of his information-gathering time “dodging bullets.”

“Be careful who you listen to. Be careful who you get information from and who you get your seed from,” Adams said. “Nine out of 10 people in the industry don’t know what they’re talking about.”

CBD, a cannabinoid in the plant with medicinal properties, is becoming a superstar. The new “craze” of CBD is one of the reasons why the plant is currently so lucrative, Adams said.

Justin LaRoque, a co-owner of CBD of EGF, said CBD is mainly used for hyper-activity and inflammation but that it provides relief for pain and mental illnesses, such as anxiety and PTSD, as well.

“The number of ailments it aids in is very broad,” LaRoque said. “Research on it is still ongoing so they’re finding new things almost daily.”

CBD of EGF sells CBD creams, tinctures, vape products, coffee, tea and candies, among other products. However, LaRoque said he wants it to be clear that there is more than just one type of CBD



Wren Murphy / Grand Forks Herald
Steve Adams, right, shows some of the Adams Family Farm’s hemp to Jordan Aakre and Tom Stinar.

product. Broad spectrum CBD products have no THC in them, but full spectrum CBD contains the federal legal limit of .3% THC.

“The addition of THC with CBD is for a little added pain relief,” LaRoque said.

“We always tell people we opened our store to help educate,” LaRoque said. “We can answer many questions, but we do refer people to doctors. We’re not doctors or lawyers.”

Bringing industrial hemp and CBD to the Adams Family Farm didn’t provide stress or anxiety relief to Adams, however.

Hemp was part of his efforts to make a mark in the family business and diversify the farm’s production, which includes dry beans, wheat and sugar beats, among other products. As a newly legal agricultural product, hemp farming requires a “big risk, big reward” mentality, according to Adams.

The industry combats misconceptions about industrial hemp and CBD. Many think there is no difference between hemp and marijuana, while others think that CBD products may make them test positive on a drug test. Neither is true, Adams said.

The plants themselves cause their own problems.

Industrial hemp requires careful watering. If a farmer overwaters, THC levels may rise above the maximum 0.3%; if a farmer underwaters, THC levels also rise. Industrial planters are not made for planting hemp because plants are less numerous per acre than others. This problem required some creativity from Adams, and the family members eventually were able to make it work so they would not have to plant by hand.

Since no pesticides are listed for industrial hemp, hemp fields are weeded by hand. Traveling through the fields can cause a hassle. If someone travels through a field and collects hemp pollen on their clothing or skin and carries it to another field, Adams said that can “ruin the whole field.”

Seeds are also expensive. Adams said they average about \$2 a seed, which makes for a hefty investment.

“When you have a \$50,000 an acre crop in a field, it’s kinda hard to sleep at night,” Adams said. “It’s fun. I’m learning something different and it has taken a lot of my time — a lot — but I’ve gotten something out of it.”

MARIJUANA

From Page A1

A similar bill co-sponsored by Rep. Kelly Armstrong, R-N.D., is awaiting a vote in the House.

Currently, banks and credit unions fear repercussions for working with federally illegal businesses. So, a majority of banks do not offer their services, including loans or bank accounts, to cannabis businesses. This means that many legal marijuana dispensaries operate entirely in cash.

Rachel Pross, a representative of the Credit Union National Association who spoke at the committee hearing on the bill, said about half of cannabis dispensaries have had cash stolen. As a result, legal marijuana businesses spend a significant amount of money on security.

John Lord, the CEO and owner of LivWell Enlightened Health, testified at the hearing and said there were “incredible safety risks” involved with the large amount of cash at

certain dispensaries.

In 2016, marine veteran Travis Mason was killed by robbers at a legal dispensary in Aurora, Colo. In an attempted armed robbery of a Los Angeles dispensary, a security guard died and three others were wounded. This incident took place about a year after a security guard was shot and killed at the same dispensary, said the Los Angeles Police Department in a CBS Los Angeles interview.

Though the federal government has not tried to prosecute states for legalizing medical or recreational cannabis and has not gone after legal marijuana users in those states, banks and credit unions still face the possibility of losing their federal insurance or facing penalties. Alerus Bank does not currently provide banking services to legal marijuana businesses and does not have any plans to do unless legislation or guidelines emerge.

“We had to consider that conflict between state and federal law,” said Karin Taylor, the chief risk officer of Alerus Bank. “We also had to consider what

the available regulatory guidance was on the topic and whether we could get comfortable with that conflict and the limited guidance that is out there right now. Ultimately, in the current environment with the conflict and the lack of guidance, we just could not get comfortable.”

Kyle Kingsley, a medical doctor who is the CEO of Vireo Health, a medical marijuana company operating in multiple states, said that his company was able to find banks that would provide services to them. However, credit cards cannot be accepted and the business still deals with an above-average amount of cash.

“We should no longer be a cash business,” Kingsley said. “Our security is completely over the top and that’s how we mitigate any potential risk of the cash ... It just adds additional expense on top of the security that’s already there. Cash handling is dangerous — you know, transferring the funds to the bank — all these things add up cost-wise and that gets passed on to our consumers.”

One of Vireo Health’s subsidiaries, Minnesota Health Solutions, operates in Minnesota with stores in Moorhead and other cities. The company’s high revenue and reach made it easier for the company to access banking services, Kingsley said, but smaller companies find it much harder to find banks willing to work with them.

Strive Life, a medical marijuana dispensary in Grand Forks, refused comment on the issue, and the Botanist, a dispensary in Fargo, did not respond for comment.

Another issue for the cash-only nature of the industry is it offers an impediment to collecting taxes by the government.

“Keeping those dollars out of banks means we lose the ability to trace where the dollars go,” said Sen. Cory Gardner, R-Colo. “It also means that it’s harder to ensure that all taxes are being paid. It makes it easy for criminals in the illicit market to pose as legitimate, and it leaves hundreds of millions of dollars in cash in the state.”

Because of these issues, the attorneys general of

38 states and territories, including North Dakota Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem, signed a letter in support of the SAFE Banking Act.

However, there was a voice of staunch opposition at the Tuesday hearing. Garth Van Meter, of Smart Approaches to Marijuana, a group opposed to the legalization of marijuana, said his group was concerned that the bill would allow the expansion of the marijuana industry and increase the amount of high-potency products marketed to young demographics.

“By skipping ahead to a technicality over banking rules, the marijuana industry is hoping to gain many of the benefits of federal legalization without a debate over the public health effects,” Van Meter said. “But make no mistake, a policy change around banking would have massive public health ramifications.”

He also had harsh words for banks and credit unions.

“Banks currently want to have it both ways,” Van Meter said. “They say

that they are not taking a position on legalization, but they want to profit by depositing federally illegal proceeds.”

Several senators said that they found Van Meter’s arguments compelling, but they want to try and support what their constituents want.

“I tend to fall into the same camp as Sen. Gardner on this in that the people speak and we are representatives of the people so we should move forward,” said Sen. Jon Tester, D-Mont. “Not that I’m any big supporter of it, because I’m not, but nonetheless, we are representatives of the people.”

Kingsley, of Vireo Health, called the SAFE Banking Act one of the most “common-sense” pieces of legislation that he had seen about regulating marijuana.

A committee vote on the SAFE Banking Act has not yet been scheduled for the Senate version of the bill, and the House of Representatives has not scheduled a vote for its version of the SAFE Banking Act.

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