

Linebacker aims  
for healthy senior  
season, B1

# Grand Forks Herald

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 7, 2019

## GF puts \$375k toward skyway

By Joe Bowen  
Grand Forks Herald

Grand Forks is set to subsidize a skyway that would connect a pair of downtown redevelopments to a parking garage. City Council members, acting as the city's Jobs Development Authority, voted on Monday to spend \$375,000 on a \$715,000 skyway that would span South Fourth Street and connect a multistory garage on one side with the Selkirk on 4th Condos, Norby's Work Perks and The Argyle on the other. Those businesses would find another \$684,000 for the remainder of the skyway costs and a series of "connecting links" between the three businesses. The total project is expected to cost about \$1 million. Selkirk and The Argyle are beneficiaries of city-designated

SKYWAY: Page A8

## Carson's meeting in Grand Forks rescheduled for Wednesday

Herald staff

One of President Donald Trump's Cabinet secretaries will tour Grand Forks Wednesday. Housing and Urban Development Secretary Ben Carson will tour the community and then participate in a discussion with city leaders. According to a press release from U.S. Sen. John Hoeven's office, the visit is designed for Carson to see local housing projects. It also will give Grand Forks government and tribal officials at Spirit Lake an opportunity to provide input on HUD programs. Originally, the meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, but late Monday the event was postponed. Wednesday's tour will begin at 8 a.m. at LaGrave on First in

CARSON: Page A8



Mike McCleary / Bismarck Tribune

North Dakota Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem (left) speaks at a Pardon Advisory Board meeting at the State Penitentiary in Bismarck on July 10. In the background is board Chairman H. Patrick Weir and board member Carmelita Lamb.

## How will North Dakota balance budgets and criminal justice?

By Sam Easter  
North Dakota Newspaper  
Association

Editor's note: This series, sponsored by the North Dakota Newspaper Association and the Grand Forks Herald, aims to answer questions at the difficult intersection between budget crunches, criminal justice and the wellbeing of North Dakota's communities. As rising prison populations meet rising parole and probation caseloads, how will state leaders handle a system said to risk public safety?



office since 2001. That's long enough to watch that river of numbers shift and change as the state's fortunes have risen, both through the oil boom and growth in western counties and beyond.

And what Stenehjem sees is an unmet need.

"We're just seeing (an) incredible increase in the number of drug arrests. ... In 2013 we had about 3,400 and in 2018, 5,400," Stenehjem said. "I think that we're recognizing that, long term, people that become addicted, if we are not adequately and affordably addressing the addiction and treatment for the addiction, we're only going to see those people back in the criminal justice system time and again."

That's part of what's driving overall crime higher in the

**Saturday:** How corrections officials manage North Dakota's criminals

**Sunday:** The political sea changes that built North Dakota's prisons

**Monday:** North Dakota's

other housing problem

**Tuesday:** Is North Dakota's criminal safety net too thin?

**Today:** How will North Dakota balance budgets and criminal justice?

state, he said, as drug crime "reverberates" through other offenses, like burglary and assault. In 2013, his office reported that there were more than 5,560 Group A offenses around the state for every 100,000 people — a category that includes serious offenses like rape, murder, blackmail, arson, assault and larceny.

In June, his office released the latest figures, showing that the same number has since reached about 6,340. It's almost a 14% jump (though Stenehjem is quick to point out it has plateaued since 2015).

"We need to devote more resources to that treatment so that we can prevent (revolving-door prisons) —

not just because it's a cost-savings, but because it's the right thing to do for people who are addicted," Stenehjem said. "We've been addressing that, and the Legislature has, too, but not enough."

His comments go to the heart of criminal justice concerns facing North Dakota. As crime rates rise, the state is increasingly contending with more pressure on its prisons, where inmate populations have been outpacing North Dakota's population for years. As this series previously reported, tough-on-crime laws have helped feed incarceration rates in North

BUDGETS: Page A6

## Staff needed for new treatment center in Spirit Lake

By Sydney Mook  
Grand Forks Herald

FORT TOTTEN, N.D. — While the walls may be up and the beds may be set in the new addiction treatment center at the Spirit Lake Nation, leaders say there's still work to be done. Renovations were recently completed on the new 15-bed substance abuse treatment center.

Developed in collaboration with the Spirit Lake Recovery & Wellness program, Tiospaye Okciyapi Tipi, which translates to "home for families helping families," will help expand

access to treatment services.

The project was made possible by a three-year, \$1.2 million grant from the United Health Foundation to Cankdeska Cikana Community College.

The goal of the facility is to provide treatment and support for adults in the Spirit Lake Nation who are dealing with drug addiction in a culturally sensitive environment. The project, which held a groundbreaking ceremony in August 2018, came a year after a community assessment found the No. 1 priority on the Spirit Lake Nation was the protection of the

health and well-being of the children, according to Cynthia Lindquist, president of Cankdeska Cikana Community College.

Lindquist, one of the leaders behind the project, spoke about the number of state and federal officials involved in making the facility possible and the continued collaboration between the state and the tribal nations.

"(It means) another beginning, hope," Lindquist said. "We know what we're doing; we have solutions to our problems and issues. We need help to do that and address it and the

representation today is exactly that. If we work together, we can get it done."

Gov. Doug Burgum and first lady Kathryn Helgaas Burgum were present for the ceremony, along with members of the Spirit Lake Tribal Council and the Cankdeska Cikana Community College Board of Regents. Also present were House Majority Leader Chet Pollert, Senate Majority Leader Rich Wardner, representatives from Sens. John Hoeven and Kevin Cramer's offices and many more state

CENTER: Page A6

Inside

Calendar: A2  
Classified: B4  
Comics: A7

Editorial: A4  
Obituaries: A5  
Puzzles: B3

Sports: B1  
Weather: A2

Year: 140 Issue: 38  
Copyright: 2019  
Newsstand price:

\$1.50





# Electric vehicle event coming to GF as ND reaches ‘tipping point’

**By Wren Murphy**  
Grand Forks Herald

The Plugged In to the Future event is bringing electric vehicles, their owners and dealers, information and more to Grand Forks on Thursday, Aug. 8.

“We’re trying to educate people about electric vehicles and let them know that this is a real option for them if they look at their future purchases in that area,” said Ben Fladhammer, the communications manager for Minnkota Power Cooperative. “We think there’s a big future for electric vehicles ... and we want to play a role in educating people and letting them know that they’re functional and they’re fun.”

The free event starts at 5:30 p.m. The first 200 guests will get a free meal ticket to local food

trucks and learn about electric vehicles in the state before an 8 p.m. outdoor showing of the movie “Back to the Future.” The movie is a drive-in experience, but due to limited space, the event’s sponsors ask guests to bring lawn chairs as well.

Plugged In to the Future, which will take place at Minnkota Power Cooperative on 32nd Avenue South, will allow local electric vehicle owners to show off their vehicles and take willing participants on a ride-along. The more daring can hop onto an electric mountain bike for a demonstration. Another centerpiece will be West Fargo’s all-electric school bus, which is the first of its kind in North Dakota.

So far, eight electric vehicle owners have signed up to bring their vehicles to the event, not including sponsor vehicles or the

bus, with several others local owners showing interest. Kaylee Cusack, the communications specialist for Minnkota Power Cooperative, said attendees can expect to see Teslas and Chevy Bolts, among other vehicles. Guests will be able to take a short ride in one of the sponsors’ Bolts.

“It won’t be super extensive — enough to feel what an electric vehicle feels like,” Cusack said. “Because they do feel a lot different from a gas-powered car. The acceleration and power is super smooth and super fast because it doesn’t need that rumbling engine that you would have with a gas combustion engine ... It’s just kind of straight power. They’re actually a lot of fun to drive.”

The event will host vendors who can discuss charging stations, purchasing an electric

vehicle and economic incentives for electric vehicle owners with interested guests.

Fladhammer and Cusack said that adoption has been slower in North Dakota compared to larger states, such as California, because of a lack of charging infrastructure and misconceptions about the vehicles’ winter performance.

“There is some catching up to do in terms of charging stations in our area. However, we have seen a lot of new charging stations added in the last year, year and a half,” Fladhammer said. “The weather is a question we get constantly ... The range of the vehicle is impacted by the cold but not to a degree that most people would think.”

Cusack said that the event will be moved to a garage space if the weather turns foul but that it will offer the same opportunities as

the planned outdoor event.

Guests can get updates and free tickets at the Plugged In to the Future Facebook event, but Cusack said that guests without a ticket are still welcome to come.

The event is sponsored by Minnkota Power Cooperative, Lignite Energy Council, Rydell Cars, Scheels and Nodak Electric Cooperative.

“We think we’re approaching a tipping point here as the charging infrastructure in our area continues to get filled out, the cars continue to get more range, more efficient, cooler, better designs,” Fladhammer said. “So we think within the next few years we’re going to see a lot more electric vehicles in our area and we want to be at the forefront of that. We want to be helping people in our community understand the opportunities they have with electric vehicles.”

## CENTER

From Page A1

leaders, along with many Spirit Lake community members.

In his remarks, Burgum said addiction is a disease that’s touching every family, every community and everybody in the state and the entire country.

“To see all the efforts coming together from private sector foundations, tribal leadership, executive, judicial, legislative (leadership) to celebrate this new beginning ... is very much an exciting day and we’re honored to be a part of it,” he said.

Helgaas Burgum said she and her hus-

band want to see everyone in the state, including those in tribal nations, reach their full potential to help make the state stronger.

“I’m so grateful that they have this place where they can start healing generations of people so that future kids and the next generation of leaders have the opportunity to reach their potential,” Hegaas Burgum said.

Burgum said the project combines all three of his initiatives as governor: tribal engagement, addiction recovery and building healthy, vibrant communities.

“It’s about us working together government to government between the tribal nations and the state of North Dakota, serving all the citizens in the state and all

the members of the tribe,” he said.

While the opening of the facility is a milestone itself, Lindquist indicated there’s still more work to be done. The next issue is staffing the site.

Professional licensure remains an issue for North Dakota, Helgaas Burgum said. Licenses from addiction counselors do not transfer from out of state, making it difficult, and costly for licensed counselors to move and work in North Dakota.

“That’s just ridiculous, especially with the amount of people that need help in the state,” Helgaas Burgum said. “People don’t want to open treatment centers if they can’t staff them.”

The Legislature passed a “trailing spouses” bill this session, which makes it

easier for military spouses who have professional licenses issued by other states to receive North Dakota licenses.

The governor and first lady each gave a number of examples of situations where licensed addiction counselors wanted to work at the Spirit Lake substance abuse treatment center, but couldn’t because of licensing issues.

“Facilities are great, but you have to have the qualified people to do it and we’re putting up unnecessary barriers to allow qualified people that are certified in states that have great programs and great success. We’re putting up too many barriers to them here,” Burgum said.

## BUDGETS

From Page A1

Dakota and around the country for decades.

“There’s been an increase consistently over the years” in drug offenses, Dunn County Sheriff Gary Kuhn said in December. “It’s something that’s not going to go away, it’s something that continues to be a problem.”

While the prison system might “keep them sober for a while,” he said it’s easy for those with substance abuse problems to fall back into the habit once they’re out.

Over the past four installments, this series has outlined North Dakota’s answer. Faced with limited prison space and disinclined to pay for more, the state has turned to a suite of new policies, broadly dubbed “Justice Reinvestment” to take pressure off of the prison system. In 2017, the right to receive food stamps was restored for many offenders; for others, the possibility of “presumptive probation” was created, fast-tracking many first-time drug offenders away from incarceration and into the care of probation officers.

“The goal was to curb our runaway spending on prisons by reserving our prison space for those who committed violent and serious offenses,” state Rep. Karla Rose Hanson, D-Fargo, said. One of Justice Reinvestment’s marquee achievements is a program called Free Through Recovery. Launched in the 2017-19 biennium, it connects existing nonprofit services — on housing, job retention and the like

— to ex-offenders who need help keeping their lives stable. That includes more well-known groups, such as Lutheran Social Services, which offers help finding housing and employment. It also includes lesser-known groups, like a Christian home in Jamestown that connects recovering drug users to 12-step programs and helps them search for a job.

Pamela Sagness leads the Behavioral Health Division for the state Department of Human Services, which administers the program. She said Free Through Recovery is building a far-flung support network that goes beyond just medical care — which is deeply important in North Dakota, where medical attention is concentrated in urban centers, away from addicts in the countryside.

“I’m from the town of Bowbells. It was me and five other people that graduated (high school),” she said. “My hometown is never going to have a comprehensive behavioral health or addiction program. However, there are individuals every single day in my hometown church that have lived experience and have something to contribute to help others.”

But many observers — from local state’s attorneys to Stenehjem himself — feel the state has more to do. There’s the question of high caseloads for parole and probation recipients, where some state’s attorneys see a risk to public safety. And there’s

the question of expanding access to programs like Free Through Recovery, or the kind of medical treatment facilities North Dakota needs badly.

Sagness said that, in the last biennium, the state offered funding to expand Free Through Recovery beyond the formerly incarcerated, something she said “will be developed in the upcoming year,” with \$4 million in additional funding. But she also pointed out there’s more to the problem.

“Even if we have a million dollars tomorrow, we still only have three medication-assisted treatment centers in the state,” she pointed out. “And until they have the capacity to expand, more money doesn’t change that.”

This was underscored by state Rep. Jon O. Nelson, R-Rugby, who is the chairman of the interim committee on the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. In his part of North Dakota, residents face a kind of medical desert.

“We don’t have a psychiatrist in my legislative district,” he said. “And it’s five counties.”

In a phone interview, Gov. Doug Burgum declined to say how much more he’d be willing to spend on behavioral health in the near future, but said “we’re not spending enough.” He said he dislikes calling it “spending,” though, preferring to call it “investing” in a lower-cost system that will cut back on the carceral treadmill Stenehjem described — in which drug offenses “reverberate”

throughout North Dakota.

“We’re not investing enough and we’re not investing enough upstream. ... Spending is building prisons. That’s at the end of the system. That’s the highest cost, least effective,” Burgum said. “The root of a lot of this relates to, basically, a public health issue related to the disease of addiction, which is touching almost every family, every organization and every community in the state.”

Pressed on whether the state should invest more in parole and probation officers, Burgum said he’s “willing to invest more as warranted.” And he said the equivalent of more than 50 additional full-time positions were allocated to the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation for this biennium.

But a DOCR spokeswoman said that, as a result of both the 2017 and 2019 sessions, only seven full-time job equivalents were added to the department’s parole and probation division.

State leaders also point to other programs, like growing momentum for pretrial services for the incarcerated. Sagness and Hanson both pointed out that a new Medicaid program for behavioral health was passed in 2019 and launches in 2020.

“That’s a game-changer for providers. When we talk about there not being providers in rural areas, there’s not going to be providers if there’s no reimbursement for the service,” Sagness said. “We’re shifting from a mindset of behavioral

health being charity work or grant-based, to recognizing that we need to be professional, we need to know how to do business just like any other health care entity.

Cass County State’s Attorney Birch Burdick hesitated to weigh in on questions of state resources for his community. He deals with the cases that come through his office, he said, and was loath to speak out of turn about crime rates — which he said are more

of a local police matter — or parole and probation caseloads. But he offered thoughts that cut to the heart of North Dakota’s criminal justice woes.

“I think these are all good people trying their best to do that under circumstances where resources are necessarily finite,” Burdick said. “Are there enough resources? You know, I don’t know how to answer that. Because nobody has an unlimited number of resources.”



## This is the beginning of whatever you want.

For a limited time, rent a **1 bedroom apartment for the price of a studio!**  
Now thru August 31, 2019. Some restrictions apply.

 **Edgewood Parkwood Senior Living** 701.757.1519 | Grand Forks