

# HENDERSON INDEPENDENT

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*A Jessenland residence owned by Shawn and Lindsay Kluver was deemed a total loss in a Sunday morning fire.*

## Play ball!

*The Henderson Tigers dropped a close game, 2-1, to Gibbon on Sunday afternoon. P. 14*



## The ebb and flow of Henderson businesses

Henderson welcomed the reopening of two businesses last week — and the closing of a third. P. 6

## CSA farms get a boost from COVID

Demand for farm to table skyrockets amidst market uncertainty

By Rachel Miller  
Editor

Amidst all of the market uncertainties surrounding COVID-19, Little Big Sky Farm owners Jenny and Dan Kapernick are seeing their biggest season yet.

The Kapernicks run a CSA farm a couple miles east of Henderson. CSA, which stands for Community Supported Agriculture, allows people to buy shares of a farm's produce. It benefits the farmers by being able to get some of the money for supplies and improvements up front, and in exchange, the season's shareholders enjoy a box of locally-grown food every week, for 18 weeks.

"Our community is our livelihood and everything we purchase on the farm and everything we do to enhance or grow better or be better farmers is funded by the people who buy shares," Jenny said.

Little Big Sky Farm opened for its first CSA season in 2018. That first year, they sold 22 shares.



PHOTO BY RACHEL MILLER

Little Big Sky Farm owners Jenny and Dan Kapernick of Henderson saw demand for their CSA produce skyrocket this year due to market uncertainty due to COVID-19. Their farm has grown from selling 22 shares their first year in 2018 to 120 shares this year, with 30 more on a wait list. Pictured are Dan and Jenny Kapernick with their daughter, Mirah, 3 (in the striped dress) and niece Carmen, 4. The couple also have a son, Omer, 6 (not pictured).

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LS-H should consider disbanding

**Fix what is broken or walk away altogether? One school district resident thinks the district should scrap it all in a Letter to the Editor.**

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COVID-19 deaths decline

**The state saw a huge drop in COVID-19 deaths this week, the lowest in two months.**

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A refreshing summer dip

**Mark your calendars — the Le Sueur outdoor pool will reopen June 29.**

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Art walk for MS

**Lana Beck raised \$1,780 for multiple sclerosis research over the weekend.**

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Mall redevelopment

**A new developer is expected to take over Valley Green Square Mall on June 30.**

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## Jessenland home destroyed in Sunday fire

By Rachel Miller  
Editor

The Henderson Fire Department was called to an early morning residential fire at 32528 Scenic Byway Road in Jessenland Township on Sunday, June 21, at 6:59 a.m.

Upon arriving on scene, firefighters found the residence fully engulfed by fire. According to Henderson Fire Chief Randy Tiegs, the house was not occupied at the time of the fire, and its owners, Shawn and Lindsay Kluver, are currently residing in North Dakota.

The Henderson Fire Department worked with the Belle Plaine, Arlington, Green Isle and Le Sueur fire departments to battle the blaze, and Tiegs said it took until 3 p.m. Sunday afternoon to clear the scene.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

SUNDAY FIRE  
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The split-level home owned by Shawn and Lindsay Kluver of Jessenland Township is considered a total loss after catching fire Sunday morning.



CSA FARMS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Last year, they served 113 people between regular and half-shares, which Jenny said amounted to 80 shares.

This year, they were aiming to have 100 members and were close to that number by April. Then, as COVID-19 caused uncertainty about the food supply, their business email began to blow up as more people wanted a direct connection with their food supplier. Before they knew it, they had reached 120 members — their maximum for this year — and another 30-40 people on a wait list. Next year, they hope to be able to sell 150 shares.

This year, each member paid for a 3/4 bushel box that they will try to fill with eight to 10 different items every week, Dan said. The week of June 8 was their first week of deliveries to members, and shareholders received bok choy, green onions, a pound of spinach, purple and green kohlrabi, two heads of lettuce, kale, dill and salad turnips. Last week's delivery was a lot of the same, but pretty soon radishes and chard will be ready to pack.

Just down the road in Belle Plaine, Angie and Bernard Wel-

mers are in their fifth year of offering a CSA on their farm, Redemption Acres.

"We grow about 80 different varieties of vegetables," said Angie, who packed lettuce, kale, swiss chard, garlic scapes, arugula and snap peas into their first member boxes.

The Welmers family moved from Bloomington to Belle Plaine seven years ago. Their oldest son, Johan, has a number of food allergies, including five of the top eight allergens, Angie said, and she had to learn to cook everything from scratch.

Last year, the Welmers served 45 members; this year they scaled the operations back to 11 members to ensure they had members who loved being in a CSA and to guarantee enough food for members.

"I love meeting people that love vegetables," Angie said. "It is really fun and I love being able to serve other families."

The Kapernicks have some customers in the Twin Cities, but they noticed an uptick in Henderson and Le Sueur residents buying a share in their CSA farm this year. Part of that may also have been due to East Henderson Farm not offering a CSA this year, but Jenny Kapernick also thinks that



PHOTO BY RACHEL MILLER

Jenny and Dan Kapernick of Little Big Sky Farm of Henderson tend to the tomato and green bell peppers in their caterpillar tunnels. This year they added two caterpillar tunnels that each house 200 tomato plants and four green bell pepper plants.



PHOTO BY RACHEL MILLER

Bernard Welmers walks along the Redemption Acres CSA greenhouse to check that the plants are growing well.

COVID-19 has played a part, not just in the uncertainty surrounding food supply, but by revealing just how delicate the food system in the U.S. is.

Angie Welmers also credited COVID-19 for filling up their roster in March.

"I think COVID-19 played a part in wanting food security we could provide for them. I think

that played a part, definitely," Angie said.

The Kapernicks hope to grow their operation a little every year, and hopefully will be adding an egg share next year. They want to grow bit by bit each year, so they don't grow too fast. They have plenty of space to grow too. Although they have 10 tillable acres, right now they are farming the best

two acres.

The Welmers also enjoy hosting various classes throughout the year. They have a canning class coming up on June 27, a cheese-making class on July 25, and two more Family Day at the Farm events, on July 18 and Aug. 15, where families can tour the gardens, watch the chickens, feed the goats and enjoy a farm-fresh snack like crackers with goat cheese and jam.

They also offer other farm made items for sale, like a variety of homemade jams, rhubarb barbecue sauce, eggs, baby kale, braising mix and lettuce. Angie said she enjoys making pear ginger jam, but her favorite is bourbon peach, which she said tastes like peach pie.

Both farms follow organic practices on their farm, although they do not have the organic label because the process is expensive.

Redemption Acres and Little Big Sky Farm do not use chemicals on their crops, but Dan Kapernick did say they might use organic-certified pesticides if a specific bug is causing them grief. They use organic seeds to plant their crops, organic compost to help them grow, and till the land as little as possible, Dan added.

"We are more market gardeners than farmers," Dan said. "We do this with a walking tractor...it is really labor intensive with an emphasis on doing the best. It is about growing better and not bigger."



PHOTO COURTESY NOEMI PHOTOGRAPHY

Johan, Bernard, Simeon, Adelaide and Angie Welmers, tend to Redemption Acres CSA Farm just outside of Belle Plaine. This year, their farm is feeding 11 members.

## Henderson Independent Digital Recap: June 17

Here are the top digital stories from last week's *Henderson Independent*:

**1. Henderson levee is going to the bugs:**

The Henderson levee has been planted with native plants to provide a habitat for pollinators like butterflies, beetles and bees. This project was funded thanks to a \$2,500 grant from Bayer Corporation for the Feed A Bee initiative. Seeds were planted in 2019, and it takes about three years to fully manifest.

**2. Full-time police position comes with significant cost savings:**

The Henderson City Council narrowly approved shifting checks for the city's water and wastewater facilities to the Henderson Police Department. The move will add a full-time police position to the city, and existing part-time officer Alex Schmidt is expected to take on the majority of the duties, and will switch to full-time.

The city has been paying the city of Le Sueur roughly \$100 an hour to do the checks, and Schmidt will be paid \$19.01/hour to do the same work. Council members Randy Tiegs and Janet Boese voted against the staffing shift, which ultimately passed 3-2.

**3. Council support convinces King to keep Prince in town:**

The bronze statue of Prince will be installed in Henderson after all. The Henderson City Council on June 10 voted to give Joel King a \$3,000 economic development grant if he would keep the statue in town.

The grant is contingent on the statue being installed by July 4, and with the agreement it will remain in Henderson for no less than five years. King was considering giving the statue to the Minnesota Music Hall of Fame in New Ulm prior to the council action.

**4. Le Sueur-Henderson Little League practice begins:**

The Le Sueur-Henderson Little League teams began practicing June 11, even though games are not currently allowed. This year, 52 youth have gone out for Little League, and players are working hard on learning skills such as throwing, catching and batting.

**5. Roll-in Committee waits to get OK from the state:**

The Henderson Classic Car Roll-in Committee has a Preparedness Plan in place for when the state allows outdoor gatherings of more than 250 people. The plan includes no participant registration, door prizes or merchandise sales, and food vendors need a Preparedness Plan.

Pedestrian traffic will be limited to one-way on both sides of the street. People heading west will use the north Main Street sidewalk (RoadHaus side) while people heading east will use the south Main Street sidewalk (on the Toody's side).

**Le Sueur Family Dental**



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