



RIVERSIDE STUDENTS HONORED

Nearly a dozen Riverside Elementary School students have been honored as Terrific Kids for the month of January by the Jackson Kiwanis Club. Details, B8



JACKSON COUNTY PILOT

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2020

130TH YEAR/ISSUE 6

LEGISLATIVE PREVIEW

Rosen, Gunther have bike trail on their minds

by JUSTIN R. LESSMAN
Publisher

Sen. Julie Rosen and Rep. Bob Gunther are heading to St. Paul next week with a mountain bike trail on their minds.

That's the top local bonding priority for Rosen, R-Vernon Center, and Gunther, R-Fairmont, who both represent eastern Jackson County in the state Legislature, as the 2020 legislative session gets under way Tuesday.

"We need to get that bike trail in Jackson County," Gunther said.

That's the off-road trail proposed for Belmont Park, which both Gunther

and Rosen see as an economic development tool for the county.

"The potential economic impact of this trail to the county is significant," said Gunther, citing the possibility of it attracting Minnesota State High School League-sanctioned tournaments and other similar rides to the county.

Rosen said such a trail would be unique to southwestern Minnesota and could be a boon to tourism.

The planned 6.2-mile trail has been professionally designed, and the first leg of it — about a half-mile worth — has already been carved out of the

See **BIKETRAIL** on **A3**



Sen. Julie Rosen



Rep. Bob Gunther



Above: Sophia Lovell is covered with "snow," signifying her being named Jackson County Central Winterfest queen at Monday night's coronation, while candidates Cali Cranston (left) and Bea Guggisberg (right), homecoming queen Jordann Schneekloth (second from right) and master of ceremony Gage Mekosch join in Lovell's excitement. Right: Winterfest king Bradley Buhl (left) is congratulated by king candidate Colby Ringeisen.



CROWNING MOMENT

Photos by Dan Condon

Weber, Hamilton prioritize tax relief

by JUSTIN R. LESSMAN
Publisher

Sen. Bill Weber and Rep. Rod Hamilton see the state's estimated \$1.3 billion budget surplus not as an opportunity to add more spending, but as a mandate to provide tax relief to the people of Minnesota.

They said that will be their top priority as they head to St. Paul Tuesday for the start of the 2020 legislative session.

"While it's certainly good news that we don't have budget problems — unless, of course, you count those

budget problems created by the mismanagement of certain state agencies — legislators must be careful to think we can go back to St. Paul and add a whole new round of substantial spending," said Weber, R-Luverne, who represents western Jackson County in the state Senate.

"This budget surplus does not belong to bureaucrats; it belongs to the taxpayers of Minnesota."

Hamilton, R-Mt. Lake, who represents western Jackson County in the state House of Representatives,

See **TAX RELIEF** on **A3**



Sen. Bill Weber



Rep. Rod Hamilton



Above: King candidate Colby Ringeisen and queen candidate Cali Cranston strike a pose during coronation introductions Monday night. Right: Bradley Buhl and Sophia Lovell reign over Jackson County Central Winterfest.



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

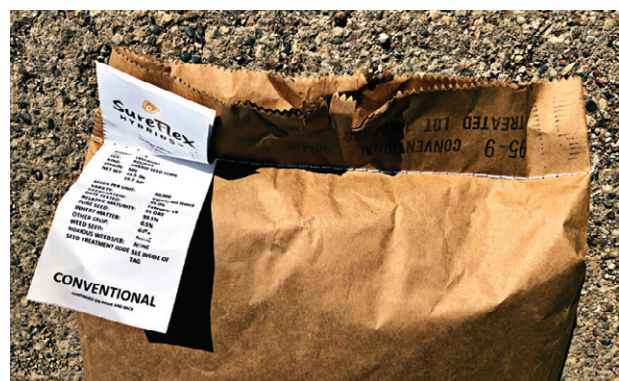
Mitch Rowe, founder of Jackson-based SureFlex Hybrids, is working to redefine the seed industry from company headquarters in the former Dekalb Seed facility.

Local man brings seed corn production back to Jackson

by JUSTIN R. LESSMAN
Publisher

Mitch Rowe has brought seed corn production back to Jackson.

Jackson-based SureFlex Hybrids operates from the site of the former Dekalb Seed facility on Jackson's south edge. Founded four years ago, the company began offering hybrid seed corn commercially last year, nearly four decades



SureFlex Hybrids' trademark plain brown seed bags are indicative of its unique no-frills business model.

See **SEED CORN** on **A3**

Pilot named one of state's best

The Jackson County Pilot has been recognized as one of the top community news media organizations in the state of Minnesota.

The Pilot, Jackson County's top source of local news and information for the past 130 years, earned several major awards at the 153rd annual convention of the Minnesota Newspaper Association last week in Brooklyn Park — both for traditional newspaper excellence in areas such as reporting and photography and for new media excellence in categories such as best website.

In addition, Pilot staff members Justin Lessman and Dan Condon were each honored individually for excellence in journalism, photography and design.

Pilot staff members received the awards last Thursday evening during the annual Better Newspaper Contest Awards Banquet, a gala event sponsored by the MNA, an organization representing more than 340 newspaper and news media organizations across the state of Minnesota.

Prestigious awards
Chief among the Pilot's honors were one for general excellence. See **PILOT** on **A3**



FILE PHOTO BY JUSTIN LESSMAN

This photo of Adam Sandmeyer painting the dome of the Jackson County Courthouse, which ran in the May 16, 2019, Jackson County Pilot, ranks as one of the top news photos in the state of Minnesota.

Inside...

A3 The publisher of the Jackson County Pilot has been elected vice president of the Minnesota Newspaper Association Board of Directors.



BUSINESS BRIEFS

Jackson Motorplex offers local businesses discounted tickets

The Jackson Motorplex is offering local and area businesses discounted pricing on advance general admission tickets to a number of upcoming races. Jackson Motorplex General Manager Doug Johnson said the tickets, which have no dates and can be used for admission to any of several races throughout the upcoming season, are perfect for employees or customers. The advanced discounted tickets are available now from the Jackson Motorplex.

Donations being sought for dance

Donations are being sought from Jackson area businesses in support of the Jackson Women of Today's 10th annual father-daughter dance. The dance will take place the evening of Saturday, Feb. 15, at the Jackson National Guard Armory. The theme for this year's dance is "Winter Wonderland." Tricia Larson of the Jackson Women of Today said the organization is seeking both monetary donations and donations of items that may be given away as party favors or door prizes. All donors will be included on the list of donors and thanked throughout the evening. Those interested in donating may contact Larson at (507) 841-1861 or triciaannlarson@gmail.com. Last year, more than 220 girls attended the dance. It is open to all girls preschool through eighth grades and their fathers or other special gentlemen.

Exhibitor registration open for Jackson Farm and Home Show

Exhibitor registration is now open for the 2020 Jackson Farm and Home Show. The 39th annual farm and home show will take place from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 29, in the auxiliary gym at the Jackson County Central High School in Jackson. This year's show will feature an entertainment stage and vendor demonstration stage, new food options, a craft/vendor fair and a cash drawing. Registration forms are available at the Jackson Area Chamber of Commerce office or online at jacksonmn.com/farm-home-show-2020. Registration deadline is Feb. 7.

Business promotion opportunity available for a very limited time

Businesses can beat back the winter blues in January and February with high-impact advertising at steeply discounted rates through Livewire Printing Co.'s full-page advertising blowout. A limited number of full-page ads as much as 85 percent off regular prices are being offered the first two months of the year in the Livewire and the B section of the Jackson County Pilot and Lakefield Standard. Position, placement and color will be sold on a first-come, first-served basis. To reserve space, call 847-3771 or email info@livewireprinting.com.

JCC looking to partner with local businesses, promote Husky Pride

The Jackson County Central School District is looking for businesses interested in helping promote Husky Pride to the entire community. Elementary teachers at JCC are reaching out to local businesses willing to display Husky Pride posters they say will help students recognize Husky Pride can be shown throughout the community and not just in school. Husky Pride is the local school's positive behavior program that encourages students to behave appropriately. Businesses interested in displaying a Husky Pride poster are asked to contact the Jackson Area Chamber of Commerce office or email JCC teacher Missy Entriken at missy.entriken@jccschools.net.

PAWS to host Feb. 14 bake sale

The local Precious Animals Worth Saving organization will host a Valentine's Day Bake Sale fundraiser on Friday, Feb. 14, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. next to the Historic State Theatre in downtown Jackson. Funds raised are used for food, supplies and veterinary costs for locally rescued cats and dogs.

BIKE TRAIL: On mind

Continued from A1

leg of it — about a half-mile worth — has already been carved out of the hilly terrain of Jackson County's Belmont Park.

What's needed to finish it is about \$150,000. "Rep. Gunther and I have talked about this, and it's really not that much money," Rosen said.

Especially when one considers the state's estimated \$1.3 billion budget surplus.

"We feel we're in good shape," Rosen said of the state's financial situation.

Another of Rosen's top priorities this session is cleaning things up in the

embattled state human services department.

"When I look at all the infractions at DHS over the last year — it's very

"WHEN I LOOK AT ALL THE INFRACTIONS AT DHS OVER THE LAST YEAR — IT'S VERY FRUSTRATING. DHS HAS A PROBLEM, AND WE'RE GOING TO TAKE CARE OF IT."

Sen. Julie Rosen

frustrating," said Rosen, who sits on the Senate's health and human services finance and policy committee. "DHS has a problem, and we're going to take care of it." Rosen is serving her fifth term in the Minnesota Senate; first elected in 1995, Gunther has announced his retirement following completion of this, his 13th term in the House.

TAX RELIEF: The goal

Continued from A1

agreed. "There's plenty of money in the state coffers," he said. "We should be looking at some relief for seniors and the working class."

Hamilton said the state is still taxing Social Security benefits, something he believes needs to stop. Weber agreed, and said he's also all for middle-income tax reduction and even open to reducing license plate tab fees.

Hamilton and Weber said the Legislature will likely pass a bonding bill for capital investments across the state this session, but even then, they said, the estimated budget surplus can pay a part.

"We recognize there are capital needs concerning state assets within our transportation system, our colleges and universities and more," Weber said. "There are many worthwhile projects across our state, including important capital projects right here

in our region; perhaps we can pay cash for those projects rather than adding excessive debt to the burden of the Minnesota taxpayer."

Hamilton also agreed with Weber's assertion of mismanagement of certain state agencies, specifically calling out the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

"An independent legislative auditor found over \$150 million of misappropriated spending, including \$30 million issued to people who are deceased," said Hamilton, who sits on the house health and human services finance committee. "We definitely need to hold some hearings around all that — \$150 million is a lot of money we're talking about."

Weber is currently serving his second term in the Minnesota Senate; Hamilton is in the midst of his eighth term in the House.

SEED CORN: Production back in Jackson

Continued from A1

after the Dekalb production plant closed.

"We're proud to have brought corn production back to Jackson," Rowe said. "Considering the history of the site, it's a pretty neat thing."

SureFlex Hybrids currently employs seven full-time workers — all Jackson folks with deep ties to agriculture. Rowe said he plans to hire around a half-dozen interns this summer and between 30 and 40 part-time de-tasslers.

And Rowe said that's just the start for the company, whose focus on high-quality, low-cost seed has resonated with farmers across the globe in a relatively short period of time and contributed to the fast-paced growth the company is experiencing.

"What we are doing is an entirely new concept in the seed industry," Rowe said. "We are 100 percent independently owned and we own 100 percent of our own seed. We develop the varieties, grow and package our own seed and sell it directly to the farm. We do everything from start to finish ourselves."

The unique business model eliminates corporate rules and regulations, trait royalties and seed licensing fees, Rowe said, along with layers upon layers of personnel costs.

"We've really sought to remove all the layers of fat in order to keep our prices low," Rowe said. "We have no district sales managers or dealers. We take it directly to farmers. That helps us be able to offer our seed for between \$60 and \$100 per bag less than the big guys."

And, in the current ag economy, that's proven popular with farmers.

"There is a huge amount of interest in our product," Rowe said, "and we have a competitive advantage in the marketplace. As we look at current market share and growth potential, the upside is just phenomenal. Already, we have not just a national footprint, but an international one."

And Rowe and his team are responding to the upswell of interest.

"We launched commercially last year with nine hybrids geared mostly for a northern grower base,"

Rowe's SureFlex Hybrids featured in latest issue of regional ag publication

Mitch Rowe's SureFlex Hybrids is featured in the latest edition of the Farm Market News, a regional ag publication reaching more than 18,500 rural homes and businesses across the tri-state area.

The Jackson-based company is the subject of the cover story in the Feb. 3 edition.

The Farm Market News is delivered free of charge to 18,700 rural homes and businesses across 15 counties in southern Minnesota, northern Iowa and eastern South Dakota and is available for free pickup at cafés and coffee shops throughout the coverage area. Extra copies are available for free pickup at the offices of Livewire Printing Co. in downtown Jackson.

The Farm Market News may also be read for free by article online at jacksoncountypilot.com and in its entirety online at farmmarketnews.com.

Rowe said. "We're offering 27 total hybrids in 2020 ranging from 81-day to 115-day. That can cover most of the growing areas in the United States. And we have another 54 hybrids in testing right now."

Rowe attributes the early success of his young company to two things — his product's price point and a growing disaffection among farmers with corporate seed giants.

"I think farmers are sick and tired of corporate America continually add-

ing to the cost of inputs," Rowe said. "What we offer is an alternative to that — a product that yields and will make farmers more money too. It's an alternative that's drawing a lot of interest."

And Rowe said he's proud the epicenter of his growing company is in his hometown of Jackson.

"We're proud to serve farmers across the country and the world," he said, "and proud to be able to do it all from Jackson."

PILOT: Named one of the best in the state

Continued from A1

eral excellence, the most prestigious of the awards given last week. Judges in the general excellence category praised the Pilot for its breadth of coverage, writing, "The Pilot's work excelled for its forward-looking depth. The Pilot offers good enterprise reporting without sacrificing the bread-and-butter stories."

The Pilot also notched top finishes in the categories of general reporting, use of photography as a whole, sports reporting and headline writing.

"The Pilot stood out as the best for many reasons," judges in the general reporting category wrote, among them breadth of news coverage, strong design, captivating photography and an excellent sports section. "All in all, a very good paper that serves its community well."

Judges in the photography as a whole category praised the Pilot for "lots of good photojournalism displayed throughout the paper" and particularly strong sports photography. Those judging the headline writing category extolled the Pilot's "top-notch headlines" that grabbed readers' attention. And judges heaped praise on the Pilot's

sports section, singling it out for its breadth of coverage and fresh writing.

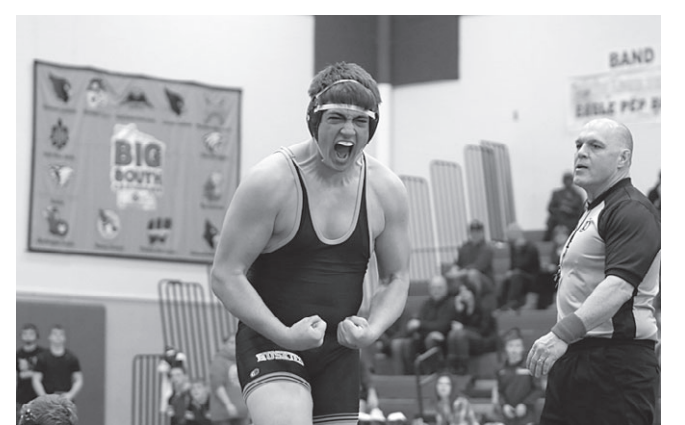
Judges also applauded the Pilot's recently redesigned website — jacksoncountypilot.com — citing its balance of news and advertising.

Individual honors

Lessman, editor and publisher of the Pilot since 2008, was honored as one of the top editorial writers in the state. Judges termed his editorial voice "unlike the others," extolling it as "brief, direct and self-assured."

Lessman also won top awards for his breaking news coverage of last April's ice storm, as well as his coverage of hard news, feature news, arts and entertainment news, news photography and use of information graphics and graphic illustrations. Judges praised his "persistent reporting" as "thorough and balanced," adding it served to keep readers and the community informed and up to date.

One article and one photo that graced the pages of the Pilot's award-winning sports section — the article on "hit king" Andy Wolf and a photo of Jackson County Central wrestler



FILE PHOTO BY DAN CONDON
This photo of Eli Edlin, which ran in the March 14, 2019, Jackson County Pilot, ranks as one of the top sports photos in the state of Minnesota.

Eli Edlin — were honored among the best in the state. "Overall strong story," judges wrote of Condon's article on Wolf, while judges termed his photo of Edlin "excellent."

REBAR FOR SALE!

The City of Jackson is taking sealed bids for the sale of new, unused rebar! The rebar is being bid in 6 parts as follows:

- A. 25 ft. curved, size #8 or 1 in- 17 pieces
- B. 1 bundle of 20 ft. straight, size #4 or ½ in- 140 pieces
- C. 1 bundle of 20 ft. straight, size #4 or ½ in- 140 pieces (same as B)
- D. 5 ft. pre-bent footings, size #4 or ½ in- 75 pieces
- E. 10.5 ft. angled straights, size #4 or ½ in- 14 pieces
- F. Misc. pieces of straight rebar 20-25 ft. long, size 4 or ½ in- 50-100 pieces

Bidders shall submit sealed bids marked "Rebar bid" on the outside of the envelope by 4:30 p.m. on Wednesday, February 12th to City Hall, 80 W. Ashley St., Jackson, MN 56143. On the bid the bidder shall include the bidders name, address, and phone number, along with the part of rebar being bid. Bids will be considered at the February 18th City Council Meeting. Contact Water/Wastewater Superintendent Tony Oxborough at 507-847-2723 with any questions.

The City of Jackson reserves the right to reject any and all bids.



If you can think it we can PRINT IT

- ★ **Business Essentials**
Designed specifically for your business.
- ★ **Marketing/Advertising**
Custom-designed to drive sales.
- ★ **Promotion/Signage**
Let the world know you exist.
- ★ **Quick Print/Copy Service**
Fast and easy.

Jackson • 507-847-3771
Lakefield • 507-662-5555
info@livewireprinting.com

Livewire
PRINTING COMPANY

We've Got Stacks!

The Livewire has all the paper you need.

Multiple Sizes • Multiple Weights
Matte and Glossy • Variety of Colors

Livewire
PRINTING COMPANY

Downtown Jackson • 507-847-3771
Downtown Lakefield • 507-662-5555
livewireprinting.com
info@livewireprinting.com

1793 JACKSON COUNTY 2X2