



## SPRING AG EDITION TUCKED INSIDE

News, information and updates on everything agriculture-related are included in the annual spring ag edition, tucked inside this issue.

INSIDE



# JACKSON COUNTY PILOT

THURSDAY, MAY 14, 2020

130TH YEAR/ISSUE 20

## COVID-19 PANDEMIC

### Council urges governor to reopen state

by JUSTIN R. LESSMAN  
Publisher

The Jackson City Council is urging Gov. Tim Walz to lift the statewide stay-at-home order and allow restaurants, hair salons and other places of public accommodation to reopen as quickly as possible.

Council members last week unanimously approved a resolution supporting Jackson businesses and urging the governor to expedite the reopening of Minnesota's economy in a manner that "better balances economic and public health needs." Approval of the resolution came at the request of a group of Jackson business owners who told the council they cannot hang on much longer under the governor's current set of executive orders.



Brandon Finck

"On March 16, our world was shuttered," said Rebecca Nestegard, owner of the Coffee Nest in downtown Jackson, referring to the date Walz ordered her business and others closed in an attempt to stem the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19. "Our governor has decided our future for us; we are being denied our

See **COUNCIL** on **A3**

### Virtual ceremony for MnWest grads

by JUSTIN R. LESSMAN  
Publisher

More than three-dozen local students are in line to graduate from Minnesota West Community and Technical College this week in a way no other MnWest student ever has.

Virtually. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, MnWest plans a virtual commencement ceremony this Friday. The ceremony will be streamed live on the college Facebook page starting at 6 p.m. It will also be available for viewing online at mnwest.edu.

During the virtual commencement ceremony, each graduate's name will be announced. Congratulatory packages, including a cap, diploma cover, tassel with charm, cord, program and other memorabilia will be mailed to each graduate in late May; diplomas will follow in June.

The college is also as-

See **MN WEST** on **A3**



PHOTOS BY  
JEN TEWES

Above: Members of the Andy and Angie Titus family gather on their front porch. Family members include (front, from left): Brixton Hillmer, dog "Harley," Matt Strom, Samara Hillmer and Blayne Hillmer. Back: Andy and Angie Titus. Right: Sarah Stewart pulls son Aiden in for a hug.



## COMING TOGETHER

Local families grow closer in time of social distancing

by JUSTIN R. LESSMAN  
Publisher

Board games, baking, bike rides and meals together — though the COVID-19 pandemic has pulled Jackson area families away from their normal routine, it has also drawn them closer together.

In a time of social distancing, local families have bonded like never before through a whole host of activities that often fell by the wayside in the normal hustle and bustle of pre-pandemic life.

Some have dusted off that old Monopoly game.

Others are finally getting around to that long-neglected home-improvement list.

A few have rediscovered the thrill of home cooking, even while making a point to keep supporting local restaurants with regular takeout orders.

All are adapting to a new normal that, while challenging in some respects, is also proving a welcome breather from lives being lived at full throttle.

### Close to home

In the past, Ethan, Kristy, Molly and Audrey Thurmer spent weekends visiting family, or Ethan and Kristy may have hired a babysitter and slipped away for a night out on the town.

Now the family is finding things to do together while at home. That includes watching TV, baking, gardening and playing with their canine companion, "Larry."

See **TOGETHER** on **A7**



Left: Jeff and Steph Beranek are enjoying family bike rides, walks and picnics with their boys, Brad (second from left) and James, while spending more time at home in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Right: When the weather doesn't allow outdoor activities, Mike and Kayla DeJong are working on building a new Lego set with son Lucas.



## JCC FFA members to be honored virtually

Five will receive state FFA degree

by JUSTIN R. LESSMAN  
Publisher

Members of the Jackson County Central FFA Chapter will be honored during a virtual state FFA convention scheduled to take place over three days next week.

The virtual convention replaces an in-person convention that had been rescheduled from its original April dates to early June. As part of the change, all career development event competitions — including remaining regional competitions necessary to qualify for state and all state-level competitions

See **FFA** on **A3**



Jackson County Central FFA Chapter members in line to receive the prestigious state FFA degree next week include Parker Benda (from left), William Pell, Sam Johnson and Jon Hall, along with Bryn Anderson (right). Pell is also a finalist for the Minnesota State Star Farmer Award. With the state degree recipients is fellow JCC member Mackenzie Henning (second from left), a regional proficiency award finalist.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

## County's rate of new cases slows

Fourteen have recovered; 19 remain active

by JUSTIN R. LESSMAN  
Publisher

After two weeks of exponential growth, the rate at which new lab-confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Jackson County are being confirmed slowed this past week.

As of Tuesday, the county had recorded 33 lab-confirmed cases of the disease, up just eight from last Tuesday. That comes after

a tripling and quadrupling of case numbers the two weeks prior.

Kelsey Andrews, public health director and community health administrator with Des Moines Valley Health and Human Services, reported Tuesday 14 of the county's 33 lab-confirmed cases have recovered; 19 cases remain active. To date, none of the confirmed cases in the county has required hospitalization.

The number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Jackson County quadrupled

See **CASES** on **A2**

