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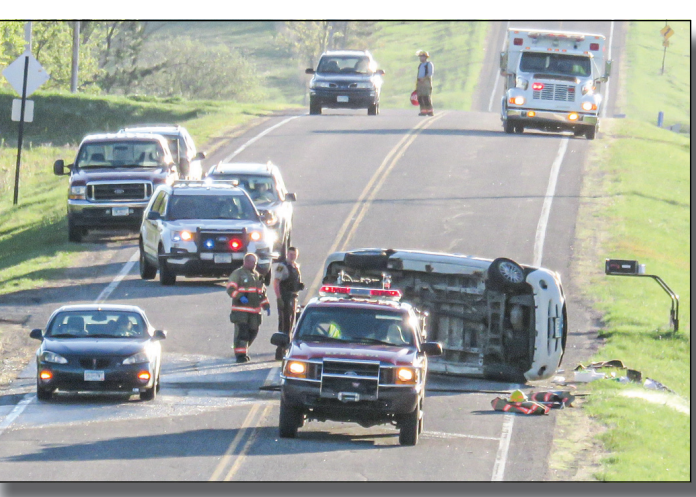


Not your ordinary graduation



The Bertha-Hewitt School graduated 28 seniors in the parking lot on May 21. Graduates and their families stayed in their cars and were escorted to their parking space that was reserved with a "little person" with a photo cut out of the senior from kindergarten. The outdoor, drive-in ceremony went well as the seniors were able to walk across the stage and get their diplomas. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Derik Kimber. Student speakers included Macie Fox, Megan McKnight, Katlyn Kyar, Kaija Weishalla and Shelby Bakken. The honored speaker was retiring teacher Steve Pauly. School Board Members Sharon Thiel and Russ VanDenheuvel handed out the diplomas. The Citizenship Award was presented to Derik Kimber and Shelby Bakken. After the ceremony was completed, the graduates were escorted through Bertha, Hewitt and Eagle Bend by all three fire departments for a parade of graduates. At top, Jared Kirscht gives a "thumbs up" after receiving his diploma. See more Bertha-Hewitt graduation photos inside this issue.

Rollover accident injures one



On May 19, at 7:09 p.m. a one vehicle rollover was reported on County Road 14 near 275th Avenue in rural Browerville. The driver was Mackenzie Theodora Amsden, 21, of Bird Island. Amsden was cited with duty to drive with due care-speed greater than reasonable and driving after revocation.

Updates from the Governor

Governor Walz announced the next phases in his Stay Safe Plan, including a cautious, strategic turn of the dial to allow limited outdoor dining at restaurants and bars starting June 1. The Governor also announced that salons and barbershops will be allowed to open that same day at 25 percent occupancy to ensure the safety of both the employees and the customers inside. In both industries, customers will be either strongly recommended or required to wear masks, make reservations, and adhere to social distancing requirements. Outdoor dining can begin on June 1, with restaurants maintaining social distancing and seating no more than 50 patrons at a time. Restaurants and bars will be able to continue to offer takeout, curbside, and delivery services, which have been permitted throughout the pandemic. While Minnesota has ranked first in the nation for takeout and delivery patronage, restaurants and bars have been closed for in-person dining since March 17. Governor Walz has stressed the importance of reopening cautiously and strategically. Also part of phase II will include the opening of campgrounds and other recreational activities. See chart on page 12 of this issue.

Testing taking place at Long Prairie Packing



The Long Prairie Packing Plant (part of American Foods Group) had two tents set up on Thursday and Friday, May 21 and 22, in the parking lot for COVID-19 testing that was taking place at the plant in cooperation with Lakewood Health System and Todd County Health and Human Services.

Todd County has seen an increase in confirmed cases of COVID-19. Testing has begun at Long Prairie Packing among employees of the plant. Todd County Health & Human Services is working in partnership with Lakewood Health System and Long Prairie Packing to test all employees for the SARS CoV2 virus, the virus that causes COVID-19. The purpose of the testing is to find those workers who are infectious with the virus and to isolate them by having them stay home to limit the spread of the disease in the plant and the community. To date, 170 employees were tested Thursday, May 21 and an estimated 160 more were tested on Friday, May 22. Employees who were tested received their results from Lakewood Health System within 48 hours. If their results were positive, they were required to isolate themselves until their symptoms have improved, it has been at least ten days from their first symptom, and three days without fever. Employees who tested positive, but have no symptoms, were required to isolate themselves for ten days from the test date. Their household contacts were advised to self-quarantine for 14 days and monitor for symptoms. Employees who tested negative may continue to work, but must undergo rigorous screening at the worksite. This screening includes a temperature check and a series of questions about COVID-19 symptoms. Plant officials have been cooperating fully with health officials on the response to cases in the plant. "The health and safety of employees is a concern for all of us," said Todd County Health & Human Services Director Jackie Och. "Our number one priority is the safety of our employees and the community of Long Prairie. We are thankful to Lakewood Health System and Todd County Health & Human Services for their support," said Jennifer Dibern, Public Communications for American Foods Group. Todd County staff continue to work with local partners and the Minnesota Department of Health staff on case investigations, contact tracing, business outreach, and essential service requests for individuals in isolation or quarantine. For more information go to: <https://www.co.todd.mn.us/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19>.

Hewitt assists at grass fire



At approximately 2:30 p.m. on Monday, May 18, the Deer Creek and Hewitt fire departments along with the Minnesota DNR Forestry Service responded to a call about a grass fire at the Allan Crooker residence (according to GIS) on 270th Street in rural Hewitt. The fire burned approximately five acres. The cause of the fire is unknown at this time.

Fire destroys barn



On May 19, at approximately 7:24 p.m., the Todd County Sheriff's Office received a report of a barn fire at the address of 36054 Otter Tail Road at the Loren Coyer and Donna Larson residence. They were burning grass around the barn and the barn caught fire. As a result of the fire, the barn was a complete loss and one individual sustained injuries. Assisting with this call was the Eagle Bend Fire Department, Clarissa Fire Department and Bertha Ambulance. —photo by Jakki Wehking/Parkers Prairie Independent