

**Tennis players  
return to the court**  
Sports, Page B1



# The Bemidji Pioneer

Wednesday, June 17, 2020

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## NO FAIR FOR BEMIDJI



The cancellation of the Beltrami County Fair was announced on Tuesday due to the continued threat of the coronavirus pandemic.

## Getting out of his comfort zone

Bug School grad  
found his voice

By Hannah Olson  
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BENA — From stuttering and being afraid to speak publicly at the beginning of high school, to speaking in front of a crowd of thousands at the end of his school career, Hunter Jackson found his way out of his shell. “In the beginning of high school, I used to have a speech impairment where I would stutter a lot,” he said. “It still comes up but that caused me to not be able to speak in front of huge crowds. By the end of my senior year, I had spoken in front of a crowd of 2,000 during one of my UNITY trips.”

Jackson is graduating on Thursday as a member of Bug-O-Nay-Ge-Shig High School’s Class of 2020, and after a full high school career, finding his voice and lobbying for change in high school, he is ready for more things to come.

His high school career has brought him all over the country through attending United National Indian Tribal Youth conferences — annual national gatherings for Native American youth.

“I’ve been to over about half the country with UNITY — a Native youth program that goes to different states and we have these huge gatherings of thousands of Native youth — I’ve been to three of them, one in Denver, one in Florida and one in California,” Jackson explained.

According to their website, UNITY’s mission is to foster the spiritual, mental, physical and social development of American Indian and Alaska Native youth, and to help build a strong, unified and self-reliant Native America through greater youth involvement.

**JACKSON:** Page A7



Hannah Olson / Bemidji Pioneer

Hunter Jackson is graduating as a member of the Bug-O-Nay-Ge-Shig School Class of 2020 on June 18.



Pioneer file photos

Currently, the Gold Mine Ranch Triple B Rodeo, scheduled for Aug. 14-15, has not been canceled or postponed.

### FAIR FOOD

For those disappointed about missing out on all the tasty fair food this year, be sure to check out the Fair Food Finder Facebook group, a place for people to share when and where vendors will be selling their concessions.

For example, Miller’s Concessions, a Beltrami County Fair regular that serves a variety of cheese curds, mini donuts and funnel cakes, can be found in St Cloud.

In the 20 or so days since the group was created, it has gone viral and now has more than 90,000 members. Vendors can pin their locations to the group’s Google Map, so folks can find fair food closest to them.

## Beltrami County Fair canceled for 2020

By Bria Barton  
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Summer just won’t be the same in Bemidji this year.

On Tuesday, June 16, it was announced that the Beltrami County Fair, set to happen Aug. 12-16, had been canceled due to the continued threat of the coronavirus pandemic.

The fair, which has been held every year since 1904, is now planned for August 11-15, 2021.

**FAIR:** Page A7

## Beltrami County unemployment rate highest since 2011

By Matthew Liedke  
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BEMIDJI — The unemployment numbers for individual Minnesota counties from April are available and the impacts from the coronavirus are apparent.

According to the state Department of Employment and Economic Development, Beltrami County’s unemployment rate for April was 9.1%, with 22,198 employed out of a 24,413 person labor force. In March, the rate was 4.6%, in February it was 5% and in January it was 5.4%.

Last year, the county’s lowest unemployment rate was 2.9% in September, while the highest was 6% in January. April’s rate is the highest since March 2011, when Beltrami County had an unemployment rate of 9.6%.

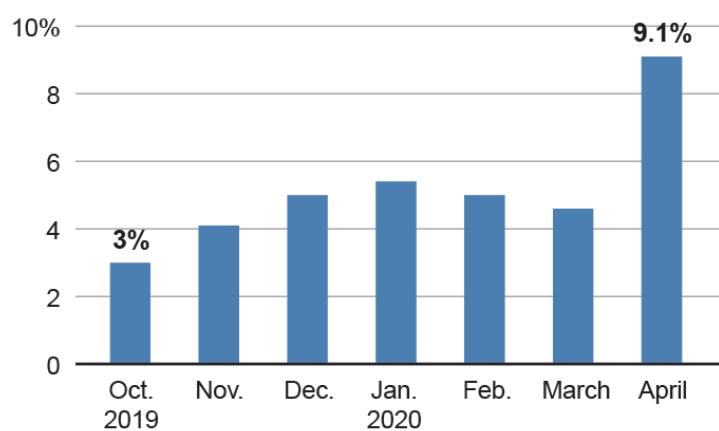
Before 2011, the rate also rose above 9% at the height of the Great Recession. In 2009, the county had an unemployment rate of 10.2% in February, 10.1% in March and 9.8% in April.

The April unemployment rates for surrounding counties include:

- ▶ Cass County, 13.2%.
- ▶ Clearwater County, 13.7%.
- ▶ Hubbard County, 10.4%.
- ▶ Itasca County, 11.4%.
- ▶ Koochiching County, 10.6%.
- ▶ Marshall County, 9%.
- ▶ Pennington County, 10.10%.
- ▶ Roseau County, 8.4%.
- ▶ Lake of the Woods County, 10.8%.

In nearby Mahanomen County, the unemployment rate was up to 17.4%. Across the state as

### Unemployment rate in Beltrami County



Source: Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development

Forum Design Center

a whole, the rate was 2.9% in March and 8.1% in April.

The unemployment claims began rising when Gov. Tim Walz made executive orders closing businesses to slow the spread of the coronavirus. This included retail stores, restaurants, bars and gyms.

Regionally, local organizations launched efforts to provide relief to businesses. Greater Bemidji Economic Development, for example, organized an emergency fund

offering loans of up to \$50,000. The organization invested \$250,000 and received funding from other sources, such as another \$250,000 from Beltrami County. The city of Bemidji, meanwhile, created its own program, offering \$25,000 loans.

Greater Bemidji was also designated by DEED to administer nearly \$1 million from a state loan program.

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\$1.50  
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