



TARANTULAS WIN OPENER

A new 18-and-under baseball team provides a chance to play ball this summer. The team, called the Tarantulas, won its opener Monday. Story, B1



JACKSON COUNTY PILOT

THURSDAY, JULY 9, 2020

130TH YEAR/ISSUE 28

County may not have any use for building after all

Structure has sat empty since 2017

by JOSHUA SCHUETZ
Staff Writer

The county may not need the building it purchased in 2017 after all.

Jackson County bought the former Accent building in Jackson's industrial park nearly three years ago with an eye toward relocating various government offices there. It has sat empty ever since.



James Eigenberg

County officials now say the building may no longer fit into their plans and may, in fact, be put back on the market.

Change of plans?

The county paid \$329,000 for the property at 160 Industrial Parkway — a 7,700-square-foot building on 2.68 acres of land — in December 2017. At that time, county officials said the plan was to move Des Moines Valley Health and Human Services public health and fiscal offices, along with Family Services Network offices, to the building at some point.

The building has remained vacant for nearly three years, and more than \$14,000 has been spent on upkeep in the intervening time.

County officials point to several reasons for the lack of action. One is a hesitancy of DVHHS officials to split services in Jackson County between facilities.

"They'd prefer to have everything in one facility," See **COUNTY** on A3



Above: Travis, Landon, Reid, Dawson and Ellie Carter are dwarfed by corn in a field west of Petersburg on July 4. Right: Greg, Megan and Blake Tusa check out the corn at the home farm in Wisconsin Township.



MORE THAN KNEE-HIGH

Submitted photos



PHOTO BY JUSTIN LESSMAN

The future of the county-owned building at 160 Industrial Parkway remains uncertain.

Local census rate just below state's

Final reminders set to go out by end of the month

by JOSHUA SCHUETZ
Staff Writer

Jackson County is trending close to Minnesota overall in terms of census response rate.

The county currently has a 69.8 percent response rate, against a Minnesota rate of 71.3 percent. Both county and state numbers are higher than the national average, which is just exceeds 60 percent.

"Overall, the census is going well in Minnesota as a whole," said Andrew Virden, director of census operations and engagement in the state. "We

currently lead the country in response rates. Given the pandemic, economic fallout and unrest, I would say that Minnesota is doing very well."

Jackson County is trending just below Minnesota's response rate.

"We're a little bit behind the response rate of Minnesota," said Jackson County Coordinator Steve Duncan. "We're getting close."

The highest response rates were found in Okabena and Lakefield, with 74.4 percent and 74.1 percent of residents responding, respectively. At the bottom end was Alpha, with just 58.1 percent of residents responding. The eastern parts of Jackson County had a slightly lower See **CENSUS** on A3



Left: Jack and Sydney Sadusky measure 5-foot corn in Section 31 of Middletown Township on July 4. Right: Marilyn Plumhoff and granddaughter Jae Bretzman check out the corn near Alpha this past Saturday.



Inside...

A8 Check out corn height across the county as of the Fourth of July via reader-submitted photos taken this past Saturday.

Campers enjoy safe, socially distant Fourth

by JOSHUA SCHUETZ
Staff Writer

Campers in Jackson County parks enjoyed a safe and socially distant Fourth of July.

That's the word from Jeremy Bartosh, county parks and trails supervisor, who said the busy holiday weekend went off nearly without a hitch.



Jeremy Bartosh

"It went well, and we had no issues, much like every other year," Bartosh said. "It was good to see people coming out."

Just more than 100 campground sites were occupied over the holiday weekend, not including remote designated and undesignated tenting sites.

Bartosh said campers

were safe and maintained their distance throughout the weekend.

"I've been surprised," Bartosh said. "Everyone's been pretty much adhering to that and keeping their distance."

Bartosh said some sites that do not normally experience as much patronage were occupied during the weekend, signifying opportunities for the campgrounds to make upgrades. Of those, Sandy Point was the one that stood out the most.

"Sandy Point is one campground we've been looking to improve in the near future," Bartosh said. "It was good to see people at that spot."

The site needs electrical and water upgrades, Bartosh said, as well as a shower facility and storm shelter.

"If we got those upgrades done, the next step would be to increase capacity,"

Bartosh said. "There's a lot of room there for that potential."

No official events took place at any of the sites, though some private reservations have been made for small anniversary celebrations and the like.

"We did not run any events," Bartosh said. "We're just trying to keep people coming to the campgrounds."

Bartosh said the campgrounds are being improved, adding the pandemic-driven shutdowns earlier this year allowed that work to progress unimpeded.

"This spring we did an electrical upgrade at Anderson Park," Bartosh said. "Now we have 20-, 30-, 50-amp capacity at every site."

More sites were also added in anticipation of the coming surge.

"We added nine new sites and they have been filled See **CAMPERS** on A3

County notches only one new case for second straight week

Two new cases in past 16 days

by JUSTIN R. LESSMAN
Publisher

For the second consecutive week, Jackson County has just a single active case of COVID-19 within its borders and has recorded

just one new case within the last seven days.

As of Tuesday, Jackson County had recorded 55 total lab-confirmed cases of COVID-19, up one from the week prior. The county has recorded only two cases of COVID-19 within the last 16 days.

Local public health officials said 54 of the 55

locals who have contracted COVID-19 have recovered and are currently past their 10-day isolation period. Just one has required hospitalization.

The latest local to be diagnosed with COVID-19 is a 22-year-old, which continues a recent trend of 20-year-olds contract- See **CASE** on A3

Record-setting heat pushes month warmer than normal

by JUSTIN R. LESSMAN
Publisher

Kicked off by two days of record-setting heat, the month of June proved warmer — and bit drier — than normal.

Average high tempera-

Inside...

A2 See the full weather summary — including daily highs and lows, precipitation totals and historical averages — for the month of June.

ture last month was nearly 84 degrees, close to 3.5 degrees higher than the

average historical high. Average low temp last See **HEAT** on A2

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Business yearbook in the works

Production of the Jackson County Progress edition, the annual business yearbook of Jackson County, is currently under way.

The theme of this year's edition is "Back to Business," as it will offer an opportunity for local businesses to show how they are weathering the COVID-19 pandemic and are prepared to emerge better than ever.

Businesses interested in being a part of the 2020 Progress edition are encouraged to contact the offices of Livewire Printing Co. at 847-3771 or by email at info@livewireprinting.com to ensure their spot in the much-anticipated and highly read publication.

Deadline for inclusion in the Progress edition is July 31.

The 2020 Progress edition will insert into the Aug. 20 editions of the Jackson County Pilot and Lakefield Standard.

Local businesses are collection points for library used book sale

Two local businesses are collection points for gently used books and audiobooks, music CDs, movies, puzzles and games able to be offered for sale at the annual used book sale hosted by the Friends of the Jackson County Library.

Drop-off sites for donated items include Sunshine Foods and the Historic State Theatre in Jackson.

All donations are welcome, with the exception of magazines, encyclopedias, textbooks or books in poor condition.

The book sale will take place in September. Proceeds of the sale provide supplemental funds for programs, materials and other extras for the Jackson County Library System.

JCF makes a difference behind the scenes

Foundation gives \$3K-plus despite lack of ceremony

by JOSHUA SCHUETZ
Staff Writer

Though it may not have been able to host its annual gifting ceremony this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Jackson Community Foundation is still helping to support numerous organizations throughout the community.

Among this year's recipients of JCF grants are Fort Belmont, the Jackson County Library, Jackson County Central Community Education and the Jackson County Animal Protection Society. All are nonprofits located in Jackson County.

More than \$3,000 will be granted in total by the foundation this year.

"Normally, we'll have an annual meeting and banquet, usually the second Thursday in May, and then we'll hand the checks to the recipients at the meeting,"

said Dave Schmidt, chair of the foundation. "This year, that didn't happen."

Schmidt hasn't noticed a significant change in the number of organizations seeking grants over the years and said demand has been stable despite the pandemic and economic downturn, with no significant spike or decline in applications.

"We got about the same number of applications we would normally get," Schmidt said.

Some organizations regularly apply for grants, while others only apply once every few years.

"There are some organizations that will send an application in every year, and there are some that will send in an application when they have something going on," Schmidt said.

Despite the unusual circumstances, Schmidt said the foundation is continuing to advance its goal of improving the community and supporting local nonprofits.

Schmidt said this has been the foundation's goal ever since it was started.

"The Jackson Community Foundation was founded as a charitable organization in the city of Jackson

to help distribute funds to nonprofit organizations and help to make Jackson a better community," Schmidt said.

The foundation now manages the fund previously handled by the Jackson United Fund. While both funds distribute resources to nonprofits, they are structured in different ways.

"We actually manage two funds now," Schmidt said.

"We have our endowed fund, from which we only give the interest. We also have our unrestricted fund, and if anybody wants to make a donation and earmark it for the unrestricted fund, all of the money donated will be gifted out in our next cycle."

The foundation also manages the Kristie Elaine Teigen Scholarship Fund, which helps support graduates from JCC High School.

"It was established by the Teigen family in memory of their daughter, Kris-

tie," Schmidt said. "We grant the scholarship funds to JCC graduates. A lot of graduating seniors apply for it."

For donors, the different funds mean there are different ways to make a difference with their contributions, depending on their priorities.

"If someone wants to give long term, they give to the endowment. If they want to have an impact immediately,

they give to the unrestricted fund," Schmidt said.

Schmidt has been on the board of the foundation for four years and has served as chair for three years.

For him, serving with the foundation is a way of thanking the community.

"It's a great way and an easy way to give back to the community," Schmidt said. "Being able to grant donations and help organizations is a great feeling."

"IT'S A GREAT WAY AND AN EASY WAY TO GIVE BACK TO THE COMMUNITY. BEING ABLE TO GRANT DONATIONS AND HELP ORGANIZATIONS IS A GREAT FEELING."

Dave Schmidt

CENSUS: Reminder

Continued from A1

response rate than the county as a whole.

"The eastern part of the county is a bit behind the rest of the county," Duncan said.

Data from the U.S. Census Bureau show a discrepancy between the cities in the county and outlying areas. That may reflect Internet speed and access, since a growing percentage of residents are filling out the census online.

For example, census tract 4801, which covers rural parts of eastern Jackson County, has a census response rate of 67.4 percent, but an Internet response rate of 23.7 percent. In other parts of the county, Internet response rates exceed 40 percent.

Because the census determines allocation of government resources and representation, Duncan said, it is important everyone be counted.

"It is very important for people to respond, especially with the redistricting," Duncan said. "The closer we get, the better we'll be represented in

Congress."

A low response rate might lead to the creation of a larger congressional district, he said, which would give southwest Minnesota less leverage in Congress.

Duncan said business decisions are also influenced by census data.

"It's a very good resource for businesses," Duncan said. "That information is used by businesses to decide to stay in Jackson or relocate to Jackson. It's important for businesses to know if there are 10,000 people here instead of 9,000."

Lawmakers, businesses, scientists, community organizations and researchers also all rely on census data to make informed decisions about programs, business planning, representation in Congress and the allocation of resources.

Households that have not responded to the census will receive reminder postcards July 22-26 before census-takers begin visiting the remaining households.

COUNTY: Building may not be used after all

Continued from A1

Jackson County Coordinator Steve Duncan said of DVHHS.

That will probably mean additional building onto the west side of the Jackson County Government Center near the county courthouse, Duncan said, rather than moving DVHHS offices to Industrial Parkway.

Jackson County Commissioner James Eigenberg said one reason the building at 160 Industrial Parkway was purchased was to be a backup in case personnel needed to be moved suddenly. In the intervening years, DVHHS and county personnel have been downsized and restructured, reducing the need for the building. That downsizing came mainly from the cutting of a home health service run by the

county until recently.

"We got rid of a home health service because there were enough private firms locally," Eigenberg said. "If you do the math, we have around 30 fewer employees because of the downsizing and restructuring."

With fewer employees and a reduced need for space, Eigenberg said, the county and DVHHS are less likely to need the industrial park building.

Also figuring into the equation is uncertainty regarding the timeline for construction of a new law enforcement center and jail in Jackson. Eigenberg said the county is working on a campus design for the government center that will include a new jail, since the current one does

not meet state regulatory requirements.

"The plan looks good," Eigenberg said. "There are two designs that we're working on."

The building at 160 Industrial Parkway is not currently a part of those plans, Eigenberg said.

Uncertain future

"It looks like the building doesn't have a use anymore," Eigenberg said of 160 Industrial Parkway, adding the county will keep the property until commissioners are certain it will no longer be needed.

"We're still holding onto it until we're darn sure that we don't need it," Eigenberg said. "Things have been changing so fast."

Duncan said the county has kept the industrial park

property because it doesn't want to give up the asset as it restructures services.

"Once the process is complete, the board will have to decide wither or not to move forward with the building," Duncan said.

Duncan said the building may be put back up for sale if the board chooses not to move forward with it.

Eigenberg said the situation surrounding the industrial park property has been weighing on him, adding he wants the community to be aware of what is going on, especially since years have passed since the building's purchase.

"It's been tough," Eigenberg said. "I do think the community deserves to know and needs to know what's going on."

CAMPERS: Big Fourth

Continued from A1

every weekend," Bartosh said. "It's very good that the county board approved that."

Efforts have also been made to address complaints about speeding in the campground area.

"We have implemented a few temporary speed bumps," Bartosh said.

He reminded campers of the rules regarding four-wheelers and golf carts.

"The use of four-wheel-

ers can only be for getting from point A to point B, not for recreational use," Bartosh said.

Permission and a valid reason are needed before anyone is allowed to use a golf cart in the area.

Bartosh said he is pleased with the turnout at the campground and added more people are buying and using campers, which bodes well for the area's future.

"The future is quite bright," Bartosh said.

"WE ADDED NINE NEW SITES AND THEY HAVE BEEN FILLED EVERY WEEKEND."

Jeremy Bartosh



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CASE: One in a week

Continued from A1

ing the disease. At least seven of the last 10 locals diagnosed with COVID-19 have been people between the ages of 20 and 25. Statewide, 20-somethings account for slightly more than 22 percent of the total COVID-19 caseload.

COVID-19 is a viral respiratory illness caused by a novel coronavirus that surfaced late last year. Since the first case was

reported in Minnesota on March 6, the state has notched a total 39,133 lab-confirmed cases of the disease. Nearly 1,480 Minnesotans have died.

Jackson County's first lab-confirmed case of COVID-19 was reported on March 20.



2020 JACKSON COUNTY

PROGRESS

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A special business edition
Published August 20, 2020
in the

JACKSON COUNTY PILOT

& JACKSON COUNTY PILOT.com

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published by
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PRINTING COMPANY

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