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Weekender

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Saturday, May 23, 2020

bemidjipioneer.com



Photos by Annalise Braught / Bemidii Pioneer

Above: Steve Jewett, former commander of American Legion Post No. 14, places an American flag on a lamp post along Minnesota Ave. NW on Thursday evening in downtown Bemidji. Below: Randy Stebe, left, and Andy Staudt, former commander of American Legion Post No. 14, prepare to place an American flag on a lamp post along Minnesota Ave. NW on Thursday evening in downtown Bemidji.

Raising flags to Ralph Gracie Post puts honor the fallen in downtown Bemidji

By Annalise Braught abraught@bemidjipioneer.com

olunteers from Ralph Gracie American Legion Post No. 14, along with a few of their family members, put up 120 American flags on lamp posts in downtown Bemidji on Thursday evening ahead of Memorial Day.

"It's just one of the many things we at Ralph Gracie do as a service to our community and to honor our veterans," said Steve Jewett, a former commander of the Ralph Gracie Post. "We will also be putting out around 1,000 flags at veteran's graves in Greenwood Cemetery on Saturday for Memorial Day."



Leading the way Bemidji United Way

meets local needs, inspires state

By Annalise Braught abraught@bemidjipioneer.com

BEMIDJI — When the global pandemic hit the world earlier this spring, many around the community were sent reeling.



to help. And not only are they pitching in on a local level, much of what they are doing is helping organizations around the state.

"We are leading the way on how we are approaching things on a state-wide perspective," said Denae Alamano, executive director at the United Way of Bemidji Area.

As a member of the state board for the United Way of Minnesota she is able to connect with others and share

"I get on our state board calls sometimes hoping that I can get some ideas of things to do here," Alamano said. "It seems like we are continually the ones bringing the ideas, which is great, I'm just kind of surprised at that. But it's good, because that way we can help the whole state and that's good for everybody.

The three main things they have been focusing on are: response, recovery and rebuilding.

One of the major ways they have been responding to local of the pandemic have been things like their Emergency Fund, which was established back in March to help local businesses in Bemidji and surrounding areas. So far they have received more than \$160,000 in funding, and issued over \$104,000 to area organizations.

They have also been collaborating with Community Resource Connections and the community resource helpline

"When people are wondering things like 'when is the food shelf open?' or 'what are the new hours for Northern Den-tal Access Center?' Or things like that," Alamano explained.

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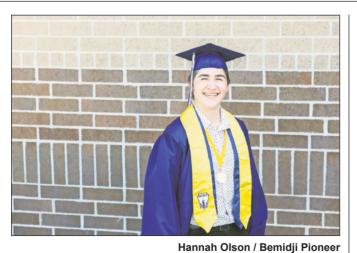
'A logical path to follow'

BHS grad reflects on high school music career

By Hannah Olson holson@bemidjipioneer.com

BEMIDJI — It is pretty safe to say that anyone who has been to a Bemidji High School event in the past four years, has probably heard Ben Fagerstrom on the trombone.

The musician has filled his high school schedule with over an hour and a half of music instruction per school day — he's involved in concert band, show choir band, jazz



Ben Fagerstrom is graduating as a member of the Bemidji High School class of 2020.

band and a brass quintet. Fagerstrom is graduat-

ing as a member of the is also proud of himself Bemidji High School Class of 2020, and reflecting back on his high school career, he is proud of himself.

Academically, he is proud of his 4.1 GPA,

which he said, "took a lot of hard work." But he for figuring out where he belongs and finding his niche, he said.

"I was really involved in music in high school, I've

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Roy: 'It's not just about me'

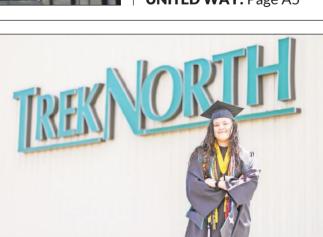
TrekNorth grad wants to give back

By Hannah Olson holson@bemidjipioneer.com

BEMIDJI — Victoria Roy loves to lead. During her time as a student at Trek-North, she was president of the student council, president of the national honor society and president of the Bemidji Youth

advisory commission.

Now, with that extracurricular presidential experience under her belt and a myriad of honor cords to prove it — Roy is graduating as a member of TrekNorth's Class of 2020, ready to help others.



Hannah Olson / Bemidji Pioneer Victoria Roy is graduating as a member of TrekNorth's

She was a part of the United States and Mexfirst class of sixth-graders to enroll at TrekNorth in 2013, and she credits a lot of her success in leadership and desire to help others from service trips she attended through Trek-

Class of 2020.

North. A service trip to the

ico was most influential for her, there she saw the positive changes social workers could make in minority communities.

"Going on these trips really secured me in what want to do," she said.

Texas border between the **ROY:** Page A5



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Sanford officials say upcoming MNA demonstration is a negotiating move

Bv Matthew Liedke mliedke@bemidjipioneer.com

BEMIDJI — The Minnesota Nurses Association is planning an informational picket out-side of Sanford Health's Bemidji facilities next week to represent employees who're seeking protection from the coronavirus.

officials Sanford Health though, say it's an expected action as negotiations are underway between the provider and the

"We're in the middle of our contract negotiations with MNA, which come around every three years," said Joy Johnson, vice president of operations for Sanford Health of Northern Min-

UNITED WAY

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"People can call 211 and

get that information and

other questions they need

those immediate responses

When focusing on

recovery, the team zeros

in on how they can help people function and get

them back to work. One program they recently joined is the Step Up to

Sit program, which helps

to coordinate sitters with

families who need child-

care heading into summer.

just one person come into

your home might be a

better option than bring-

ing your child to daycare or a bigger facility where they will interact with a lot more people," Alama-

So far, they have 14 sit-

"Hopefully it can give

jobs to some college and

high school kids who have

come back to the commu-

nity and maybe don't have

their service job they were going to do," she said.

"And also to help parents

get back to work by having

Their goal with the pro-

gram is to fill a gap where

they've seen a need, not

to replace daycares or take

away from other available

"We know safety is

so key right now," she

said. "Our whole goal in

to be looking forward a

bit, rather than simply

responding to immediate

things and provide the

community with another

Those interested in

becoming sitters or fam-

ilies who may need child-

care can contact the Unit-

ed Way and they will pair

people up based on coor-

dinating schedules and

specific needs. After con-

necting the pair, it's up

to the sitter and family to

work out the details such

The United Way has also

been a big player in the

community Gifts of Hope

Fund program, thanks to

a donation of \$100,000

from Steve and Jill Hill.

The funds were divided

evenly between the Bem-

idji Alliance for the gift

certificate program and the United Way for a sep-

"With the gift card

rounds that the communi-

arate program.

as scheduling and pay.

Gifts of Hope

initiatives

option."

this program was

a sitter come in.'

ters signed up and ready

no said.

"The reality of having



Johnson

thing like this, it's kind of in their playbook. It's consistent everywhere in the state."

According to a release from the MNA, the picket will include nurses "protesting retaliation against workers who

The event is scheduled from to 6 p.m. on Tuesday, May 26. The MNA said that the event is specifically inspired by Bemidji Sanford nurse Tonya Moss, who was placed on administrative

from the coronavirus."

have tried to protect themselves

nesota. "They will leave for trying to arrange alter- been interested in providing us usually do some- native housing for health care help at the time we might need workers.

"When we get complaints raised about an employee, we'll put that person on full-paid administrative leave," Johnson said. "Then we'll do an investigation of the complaint. It's a way to remove the person from the situation, and gives Sanford the opportunity to investigate."

Johnson also said Sanford is considering alternative housing. However, as the Bemidji location has not had any COVID-19 patients yet, she said it's too early to start reaching out.

"We've certainly had conversations with hotels, and they've be practiced.

it," Johnson said. "But, at this point, we have not asked for any specifics from them because we don't have any positive patients, so it's somewhat of a non-issue."

Additionally, Johnson said Sanford has held weekly town hallstyle meetings for employees to answer questions.

In its release, MNA noted that the event is not a strike or work stoppage. No workers will leave their jobs to attend and no patient care will be affected. The program will take place outdoors and social distancing will



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"I want to go into nursing and social work so I can help other minority communities.'

In the fall, Roy plans to attend North Dakota State University to major in social work and nurs-

ing.
"I really like learning about the human
brain and human emotions and understanding why we perceive things the way we do," she explained. "I want to help people, and be able to understand why people are feeling these ways.'

Her dream job is to be a part of a non-profit organization that helps people with physical and mental health issues, like Doctors Without Borders, she said.

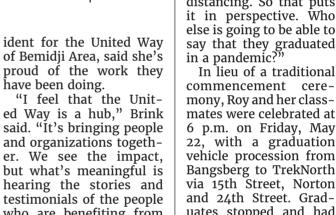
To date, her proudest accomplishment is her high school graduation. She is the first of her siblings to graduate and was determined to do so to make her family proud.

"It really means a lot to me, I want to do it for my grandpa — obviously for me too — but mostly for him and my grandma," Roy said. She is disappointed by

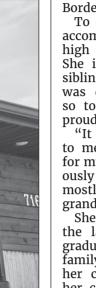
the lack of traditional graduation because her family won't get to see her cross the stage in her cap and gown, she said. But, she has a positive attitude about the whole situation.

"Throughout else is going to be able to

In lieu of a traditional their names announced and were handed their



be reached at 507-676-1101.



whole quarantine I've learned it's not just about me," she said. "I want my community to be safe and healthy, and in order to do that, we have to practice social distancing. So that puts it in perspective. Who

commencement ceremony, Roy and her classmates were celebrated at 6 p.m. on Friday, May 22, with a graduation vehicle procession from Bangsberg to TrekNorth via 15th Street, Norton and 24th Street. Graduates stopped and had

diploma. Hannah Olson is a multimedia reporter for the Pioneer. She can



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ANNUAL MEETING OFFICIAL NOTICE

CONDUCTED BY MAIL BALLOT ONLY WEDNESDAY, JUNE 24, 2020

ANNUAL MEETING MAIL BALLOT ONLY

DUE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, THE BUSINESS OF THE MEMBERS TO BE CONDUCTED AT THE ANNUAL MEETING WILL OCCUR EXCLUSIVELY THROUGH A MAIL BALLOT. ALL VOTES, TO BE COUNTED, MUST BE IN THE FORM OF THE OFFICIAL BALLOT PROVIDED BY THE COOPERATIVE. A PROPERLY COMPLETED BALLOT MUST BE RECEIVED BY THE COOPERATIVE NO LATER THAN 3:00 P.M. LOCAL BEMIDJI, MINNESOTA TIME, ON JUNE 24, 2020.

COOP CELEBRATION CANCELLED

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Cooperative celebration and fish fry has been cancelled.

Questions regarding the Annual Meeting by ballot can be addressed by contacting the Cooperative toll free at 1-888-586-3100.



Annalise Braught / Bemidji Pioneer

have been doing.

of Bemidji Area, said she's

proud of the work they

"I feel that the Unit-

and organizations togeth-

er. We see the impact,

but what's meaningful is

hearing the stories and

testimonials of the people

who are benefiting from

"When you step back

much has happened in

such a short period of time

to benefit so many peo-

ple," Brink said. "It's fun

to watch the community

come together and rally

around supporting each

other. It's not only excit-

Annalise Braught is the managing

editor at the Pioneer. She can be

reached at (218) 333-9796.

ing, it's inspiring."

United Way's help.

The front office windows at the United Way of Bemidji Area are decorated with paper hearts that spell out "live united."

Bemidji Alliance, 80 businesses will benefit from that program," Alamano said. "And there is another 20 that the United Way

has gotten to work with." With the portion of money they received, the United Way purchased gift cards from 18 of those businesses covering categories such as groceries, restaurants, gas, clothes, hair and something fun.

"We purchased \$50,000 worth of gift cards and to help our community." broke them up into \$500 partner agencies basically apply for families that are struggling — maybe they are already low-income families, but they are struggling even more now due to COVID-19."

two more restaurants -Bar 209 and Dairy Queen next week when they put on their "COVID-19 Caravan" set for May 28.

Vehicles will meet in the Sanford Center parking lot and caravan around the lake while listening to KZY 95.5 FM. Each registered participant will receive a link to a site where they can print off a free activity pack to play games during their trip around the lake. An event map will outline a Sanford Health swag pickup spot for participants to collect goodies.

"People can sign up and purchase a meal from 209 for dinner and if they complete their activity kit they get a free Dairy Queen Treatzza Pizza, Alamano said.

Community

involvement

'Our whole goal from start to finish has been based on meeting what our partner agencies have as gaps or needs, and that's who we always are," Alamano said. "For us, we feel like we are doing the same work we always do, but the need for it is so great right now there are more eves on us. We are just proud of what we can do right now

Volunteering in the gift card packages," she community has been a said. "Then we had our large aspect of one gap they have been filling. Since March 17, they have coordinated more than 500 volunteers who have worked around 2,300 volunteer hours in total. They have been helping at the They plan to help out Bemidji Community Food Shelf, with Ruby's Pantry distribution and more.

In partnering with Compass Rose, they have handed out an estimated 65 activities kits for children at shelters around

"We have also gotten in around 3,000 homemade face masks so far for service organizations in the school district," Alamano

Their Backpack Buddies program is now serving more than 1,200 children, rather than the usual 450 they were serving before the pandemic hit.

Next steps

"But as we look at rebuilding that's really what is coming next," she said. "Rebuilding is really about sustainability, and

how we at the United Way ident for the United Way can remain stable for our partners and our community, while also helping those partners see where they are in terms of stability."

One thing they are looking at doing is a stress test, which Alamano explained would include financial pieces, staffing, number of people being served, what services are provided and more. "Hopefully looking at all and look at the big picture,

these things would help it's like 'Oh my gosh,' so businesses and organizations internally, but also help us at the United Way to see what the gaps are that we can help fill," she said. "We can see if we should be looking to bigger organizations to ask for funds, or try to mobilize more volunteers to help, or whatever the situation might be."

She emphasized that without all of the people in the community donating and coming alongside the United Way, none of what they have been doing would have been possible.

"The big slogan for COVID-19 has been we're in this together, but the United Way's slogan is 'we can do more together than any one of us can do alone' and everything we've done has been such a testament to that," Alamano said.

"We have the words 'live united' in paper hearts on our window right now and I just think what a time to be living united together. It's just who we are and I'm so proud of that.'

Nikki Brink, board pres-

ty is aware of through the **FAGERSTROM**

From Page A1

never really been much of an athlete, so getting to my freshman year and being in show choir band was my first time being part of a team," he explained. "I spent pretty much all of my time in band or band extracurriculars.

"My highlight of high school has definitely been show choir by far," he added. "There's no feelsetting because emotions run so high."

himself as always being a 'hands-on' kind of guy he spent his childhood playing with LEGOs, working with wood and watching Mythbusters.

"I like to make things, I've always enjoyed being hands-on more than that 'fancy book learning,'" he said, laughing.

to attend Colorado State how significant this event University in Fort Collins, Colo. in the fall to study mechanical engineering.

ing like performing in that mindset of being able to book about this pandemic solve a problem by making something, it seemed it.'

Fagerstrom described like a very logical path to follow," he said.

His dream job is to work for NASA someday. Fagerstrom is bummed

he can't roll across the commencement stage in style — in his signature Heelys — but it is what it is, he said.

it's either a major bum-Due to this, he plans mer, or I'm just in awe of is," he explained. "It's like we're living through history, in 50 years, some kid "Seeing that sort of will be reading in a textand how we responded to

In lieu of a traditional commencement ceremony, Fagerstrom and his classmates will be celebrated with a vehicle procession and curbside diploma pickup on Saturday, May 23. At 8:45 a.m., students will line up in their cars in the Sanford Center parking lot. "On a day-to-day level At 9 a.m., a law enforcement escort will guide a procession of graduates through town, eventually ending up at Bemidji High School. Students will then drive up one at a time — never leaving their vehicles — to receive their diplomas from school board members.