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Grand Forks Herald

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 15, 2020

Surge plan includes UND Wellness Center

North Dakota unveils details for dealing with a worst-case scenario

By Kimberly Wynn and Jeremy Turley
Grand Forks Herald

The UND Wellness Center has been named one of six facilities in the state to act as field hospitals in a worst-case scenario — a situation that Gov. Doug Burgum said is unlikely since

there are more than 2,000 hospital beds already available.

“We are well-positioned and well-prepared,” said Burgum during a daily briefing held Tuesday, April 14. “We have been hard at work the past three weeks to increase hospital capacity.”

The governor’s Chief Operating Officer, Tammy Miller, also spoke Tuesday about the state’s plans for handling a surge in hospitalizations due to COVID-19. The Fargodome and the University of Mary’s fieldhouse in Bismarck have been set up as field hospitals,

called tier two accommodations, in case the state’s hospitals are overwhelmed by an influx of patients. Both Miller and Burgum repeatedly said they didn’t anticipate that the extreme contingency plans would be necessary.

“It is our responsibility in government to prepare for the worst,” Burgum said.

The UND Wellness Center has been designated as a tier three facility to be used only if all other hospital beds were to be filled at any given time.

PLAN: Page A3

Red River at Drayton hits crest

By Hannah Shirley
Grand Forks Herald

Major flooding is continuing for the Red River north of Oslo, with the river at Drayton cresting Wednesday, and Pembina set to crest Sunday and Monday. The Sheyenne River at Kindred also crested in moderate flood stages on Tuesday, and all other tributaries are now receding.

Drayton is expected to crest at 43.3 feet in major flood stages on Tuesday and was observed at 43.23 feet Tuesday afternoon. The river is expected to drop into moderate flood stages around April 19-20.

Oslo remains in major flood stages, but on a slow downward trend. The river was observed Tuesday afternoon at 37.65 feet and is expected to return to moderate flooding by April 20. The Minnesota National Guard was deployed to Oslo last week for flood assistance, and Tuesday, Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz said he expects the National Guard will be disengaged Friday or Saturday.

The Red River at Pembina was observed Tuesday afternoon at 48.92, just below the 49-foot threshold for major flooding. The crest at Pembina is projected for April 19 at 51 feet, and river levels are expected to remain steady for at least the next two days after the initial crest.

In Grand Forks, the river was observed Tuesday in moderate flood stages at 44.13 feet and is expected to drop below the 40-foot threshold for minor flood stages around April 18-19.

Colder temperatures throughout the week will continue to slow remaining snowmelt. Temperatures are expected to rise by the end of the week, and the National Weather Service’s two-week outlook favors continued cool and dry conditions.



Eric Hylden / Grand Forks Herald

Vittorio Cassini, an exchange student from northern Italy, is staying with his host family, Tammy and George Rockwell, in Larimore and, on the advice of his family in Italy, where Vittorio’s father is a medical doctor, will be extending his stay due to the coronavirus crisis in Italy.

LONGER-LASTING EXCHANGE

Coronavirus pandemic results in extended stay for Italian student

By Ann Bailey
Grand Forks Herald

Larimore, N.D.

As the coronavirus pandemic rages in Italy, Vittorio Cassini is grateful to be living in a small town in the middle of the prairie.

Cassini, a foreign exchange student from Valenza, a city of about 20,000 in northern Italy, has been living in the western Grand Forks County town of Larimore since the beginning of the school year. Cassini, who is participating in the ASSE International Student Exchange

Program, is living with Tammy and George “Rocky” Rockwell while he is enrolled at Larimore High School.

Cassini had planned to leave Larimore in early June at the conclusion of the ASSE program, but now will stay until July because he doesn’t want to return to his native country until the coronavirus pandemic has quieted.

Cassini chose to stay the extra month at the advice of his father, a physician in Italy.

“He told me ‘You can’t even imagine the situation here,’”

Cassini said. “He told me, if I came back to Italy, I could get the coronavirus.”

“My zone is one of the worst in Italy. It has 20,000 cases,” Cassini said.

Since the coronavirus pandemic, Cassini daily has been keeping in touch with his parents through phone calls and texts.

“I’m worried about them,” Cassini said, noting that his parents, on the other hand, are relieved that he’s in a small town in a rural state that has not had a surge in patients

who have tested positive for coronavirus.

Though his dad’s specialty is anesthesiology, during the pandemic he is treating patients with coronavirus. Estimates are that Italy, which is one of the hardest hit areas of the world, has more than 130,000 positive cases of coronavirus and more than 13,000 deaths.

Northern Italy, where Cassini lives, is among the hardest hit areas of the country, and his

EXCHANGE: Page A7

Federal coronavirus money means adjustments to city budget

By Joe Bowen
Grand Forks Herald

Coronavirus, and a federal aid package designed to combat its effects, is sending a Grand Forks program a step or two back toward the drawing board.

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act apportioned up to \$5 billion in supplemental funding for Community Development Block Grant programs across the United States, and Grand Forks’ program is in line for \$268,000 of that. Those programs subsidize day-to-day work or larger-scale renovations and construction projects for homeless shelters, mental health centers, group homes and other institutions that help people with low or moderate incomes.

But the extra federal money has prompted a local re-think of sorts. It’s why Grand Forks City Council members, acting as the Committee of the Whole, voted unanimously on Monday, April 13, to table an April 20 hearing on the city’s 2020 plan for its block grant program. They’re set to formally make that move at a regular council meeting next week.

City Council members already gave a preliminary OK to their program’s 2020 spending plan in early March, when its budget was effectively \$643,000.

Tabling next week’s hearing gives the Grand Forks organizations that asked for financial help time to retool their requests, which have presumably

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Doesn't



for dinner sound like a good idea?

Be safe.

A PSA from the Grand Forks Herald



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