



Remembering the fallen on Memorial Day

Above, a ceremony was held at the G.A.R. Cemetery in Eagle Bend on Memorial Day, May 31. Those who gave the ultimate sacrifice so that we may remain free were remembered and honored with a gun salute. Flags were lowered to half-staff. At left, the Memorial Day ceremony held at the Bertha-Hewitt School shows Karen O'Bar as she led the salute as *The National Anthem* was played. Those present saluted the flags and held their hands over their hearts.



Ellis surprised with graduation ceremony

by Trinity Gruenberg
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Bertha-Hewitt graduate Julie Ellis had practiced for weeks with her therapist to be able to walk across the stage for her graduation ceremony. Ellis has osteogenesis imperfecta, brittle bone disease. After much practice, she thought she would be able to walk with her classmates at her high school graduation. "I was determined to walk for graduation and walk across the stage to get my diploma," explained Ellis. Walking out at the beginning of the original graduation ceremony on

May 28, Ellis felt the tibia in her right leg snap. She steadied herself with her left leg. It fractured in two places in her left femur above the knee and fibula. Ellis collapsed to the floor and people quickly rushed to her aid. "I looked up and saw everybody and got embarrassed and I was like, just get me out of this place," shared Ellis. "She didn't cry. She didn't scream. She said 'I did it bad. I broke them both,'" said mother Mindy Ellis. In hopes of still participating in the ceremony, attempts were made to stabilize her legs, but the pain was just

too great and she had to be taken to the hospital. She had to miss her own graduation. Ellis was taken to Gillette Children's Hospital where her legs were splinted. As Ellis and her family worked on her health, the school worked on planning a surprise graduation re-do for her. On June 1, most of the Class of 2021

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At right, Julie Ellis raised her fist in celebration of receiving her diploma during the surprise graduation ceremony in her honor at the Bertha-Hewitt School on June 1.



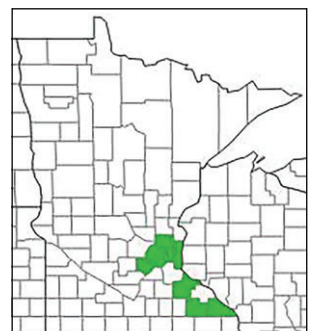
Beware: Jumping worms are invading Minnesota

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The jumping worm, native to Asia, resembles the nightcrawler and other earthworms. It is very damaging to the top soil, however.

A "new" invasive species has been found within the United States and has made its way into Minnesota. It is the jumping worm and can be a major problem, according to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR). A recent news release from the DNR states that they are cautioning gardeners and anglers to be on the lookout for invasive



jumping worms. These destructive worms can quickly degrade soils and damage garden plants and lawns. "Jumping worms are a relatively new invasive species in Minnesota and they are a threat to gardens and forests," said Laura Van Ripper, DNR terrestrial invasive species coordinator. "They make rich soil more like coffee grounds. They eat plant roots, damaging garden plants and sod." Jumping worms are a type of earthworm that looks similar to other common earthworms such as nightcrawlers. They are called "jumping worms" be-

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Circling the dance floor for 34 years

by Erin Ganz

A Polka Fest in Clarissa, Minnesota? Yes, you heard right! Tony and Marion Massmann bought the Clarissa Ballroom in 1985. They wanted to bring an added venue to the area which grew into something much bigger. Many social events including weddings and the annual Polka Festival have been held at the ballroom through the years. While talking with Marion, I asked her what had drawn her to the polka scene? She replied, "The Nite Owl Band had brought me into it. I had never heard of a polka fest before and nobody held one over the Memorial Day weekend." The Nite Owls played for this local festival for several years along with many other bands including The Leon Olsen Show, Julie Lee and the White Rose Band, and The Polkateers. During the early years, there was a couple who would bring polka outfits and hand them out to everyone to wear, which even got the kids involved. Roughly eleven years later, Becky (Massmann) and Jim Pratt bought the ballroom from her parents. The Pratts continued the yearly Polka Fest which is held over the Memorial Day weekend. It commences on Thursday evening and continues until late Saturday night. During this three day event, many travel far and wide from places such as Texas, North Dakota, South Dakota, and even Canada. I spoke with several couples who attended the Polka Fest this year. Larry and Elaine Larson from Elbow Lake and Mike and Maggie Holt from Wendell have been attending the festival for the past few years and they love it! I visited with another couple from Hallock and asked them what prompted them to get into dancing the polka?

They both agreed saying, "It was the nature of the music and we both grew up with it." On the final day of the festival there was a special dance held that was dedicated to the men and women in attendance who served in the Armed Forces. Those men and women stood in the middle of the dance floor while everyone else danced around them as a gesture to honor and thank them for their service. What a great way to pay tribute! As the Polka Fest came to a close and everyone said their goodbyes until next year, they danced one last dance to bid farewell to all. They also hope to see new faces next year as the tradition continues!



Andy and Toni Kukowski from Hallock were seen twirling around the dance floor.

Todd County COVID-19 Update:

- Total confirmed positive cases: 2852
- Total cases reported last week: 2846
- Total COVID-19 related deaths: 32
- People with one vaccine dose: 7280
- People with complete vaccine series: 6807

Wadena County:

- Total confirmed positive cases: 1612
- Total cases reported last week: 1598
- Total COVID-19 related deaths: 21
- People with one vaccine dose: 5825
- People with complete vaccine series: 5454