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New light display

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CONTINUING A FAMILY TRADITION

By Jenny Kirk

Lynn and Kim Wichmann raised three children and thousands of beef cattle on a family farm south of Balaton over the course of four decades. And while it was a good way of life, the Wichmanns decided it was time to pass on the family farm tradition to the next generation.

"My dad (Lawrence) sold me some cows and we raised them for about 40 years," Lynn Wichmann said. "Kim has always been here to help me with the angus calves, whether it's fencing, helping pull calves or dragging calves out of the mud. And (our kids) Ryan, Shawn and Kara helped, too. We did everything together — the cows, the chickens, the pigs."

A transitioning phase has been in place for nearly five years now. Lynn and Kim moved off the farm and into Balaton — a home where Lynn's parents, Lawrence and Elenora, once lived — while their son, Shawn, and his wife, Nicole, along with their daughters, Hannah and Mia, have lived and worked on the farm during that time.

"The best part is just getting our kids involved with it," Shawn Wichmann said. "That's the reason why we wanted to get back here, for them to have that experience of growing up on a farm. It's nice to be able to come back to a place I grew up on."

Shawn said he considers the opportunity a luxury.

"We were up in Grand Rapids," he said. "We're fortunate to be able to take over — to raise livestock and keep the farm alive."

The Balaton farm earned Century Farm status in 2003.

"I came here as a freshman," Lynn Wichmann said. "My dad got this property in '58. It's a 100 year farm that has been in the family for generations, since 1903. It's kind of cool."

Lynn explained that the original Wichmann homestead is located where Jeff Schultz has lived for many years now. Wilhelm Wichmann had been born in Germany but changed his first name to William when he came to the U.S. He took up the homestead claim in Section 2 of Skandia Township in Murray County in 1872. A year later, he married Wilhelmine (Loeck).

"William did really well," Lynn Wichmann said. "He bought quarters of land for his sons and daughters. One son, Henry, had the quarter where my dad and I lived. So, the land went from Henry and Lena Wichmann to my parents, Lawrence and Elenora, then to Kim and I and now to Shawn and Nikki."

Lawrence Wichmann started raising registered angus back in the late 30s or early 40s.

"My dad also sold bulls," Lynn Wichmann said. "I sold bulls when I first came back here, but we just kind of gave up on that. You have to have another pen for them. Shawn has been selling a couple bulls every year. He has five heifer calves and two bulls he kept back. He'll continue raising them."

The Wichmanns sold 31 calves and most of their cows this past week. The calves went to Jerry Minett and the cows went to the Pipestone Auction Barn.

"We sell them to Jerry, and he fattens them up," Lynn said. "Then we sell quarters and halves when they get fat.



The Wichmann family has been raising beef cattle for generations. Lynn Wichmann, at right, recently transitioned out of the business as his son, Shawn, takes over the farm and way of life. Photos by Jenny Kirk



Shawn and Nikki Wichmann currently live on the 118 year old Wichmann farm in rural Balaton. Prior to that, Shawn's parents, Lynn and Kim Wichmann resided there after Lynn's parents, Lawrence and Elenora Wichmann retired and moved to town. Before that, Lawrence's uncle, Henry Wichmann, homesteaded the farm, which was originally purchased by Henry's father, William Wichmann.

Come January, we'll take the fat ones he bought last year and take them into the Buffalo Ridge Locker in Ruthton. Years ago, it was common

for the Wichmanns to have roughly 45 stock cows and 40 Holstein feeders.

"I just remember going out to the barn when Lynn was

checking a cow," Kim Wichmann said. "He said we had to pull it. I'd never done that before. Kara was about 2 or 3 years old at the time. I put Kara down and I helped him pull the calf. That happened quite often after that."

Wichmann said she recalls moving cattle back home being a stressful process.

"Lynn gets pretty jumpy then," she said. "Especially if one stays off."

Wichmann said she also helped stack bales for many years. Grandma Elenora would oftentimes watch the kids while she did that. But one day, Kim abruptly stopped helping with the hay.

"I'm scared to death of spiders and we were going to put some bales in the hay mound," she said. "Lynn said to go up there. I got to the second step and there was a huge barn spider looking right at me. I re-

fused to go up there. Lynn was mad and even told me to just move to town then. But I never went back up there again. Ever."

For the most part, Wichmann said she appreciated the great outdoors and all it had to offer, especially for the kids.

"They were outside playing every day," she said. "They played in the grove and all over. But all three kids also helped out a lot on the farm. There were many times we got up in the middle of the night. Sometimes we had to get the two boys to help. And it never failed, every time you planned to go somewhere, the cattle got out."

Despite the steady work involved, the family had a healthy routine which included a noon meal.

"We always stopped for a **Tradition:** See page six

Schools weigh options as COVID cases rise

By Jenny Kirk

As COVID-19 infection rates increase significantly in southwest Minnesota, local school districts are faced with difficult challenges of trying to balance education and safety.

Some area school districts like Marshall and Westbrook-Walnut Grove have already moved to full Distance Learning. Others are in the process of preparing for that. On Friday, Tracy Area Public Schools was on track to continue with In-Person Learning for all students, but all of that changed by Tuesday when 15% of the people at the school tested positive.

TAPS Superintendent Chad Anderson said the district had been able to continue using the In-Person mode because the spread had not been in the school and that there was enough staff to fill almost all positions. At that time, there were three students and/or staff out who

had tested positive for COVID-19 and 82 students/staff out of the building because of close contacts or having symptoms but not yet testing positive for COVID.

On Tuesday, Anderson addressed students, staff and parents via a video on the school website. He said the district would be pivoting from In-Person Learning to Distance Learning from Nov. 30 through Dec. 11.

"Tracy Area Public Schools has been very fortunate during the COVID-19 pandemic to remain fully In-Person Learning for the past 12 weeks," Anderson said. "The first six weeks of school, we had zero positive confirmed cases of COVID-19. However, over the last five weeks of school, we've averaged around 2-4 confirmed cases in the school per week. And as you know, there's been a significant increase in COVID-19 cases in Lyon County."

On Monday, Lyon County had a total of 1,928

confirmed cases and 10 deaths. On Tuesday, Lyon County reported 62 new cases and one additional death. The recent increases in the community and at the school were red flags at TAPS.

"The number of positive confirmed cases in the school this week has increased to 13 as of (Tuesday)," Anderson said. "According to our contact tracing, each case has been contracted outside of school. We have not had any spread within the school that we are aware of. The problem is that sometimes, students may be asymptomatic which means they do not have any symptoms of the COVID-19 virus."

The Russell-Tyler-Ruthton School District will be moving to full Distance Learning for its K-12 students on Monday, Nov. 30 after the school board made that decision at a meeting on Thursday morning.

"We're going to go to Distance Learning for

a couple weeks and then re-evaluate," RTR Superintendent Dave Marlette said. "Our communities are blowing up (with COVID-19 cases), but we haven't had a ton of it in the school until recently. I just saw the numbers for the counties and Pipestone is way up, Lyon is way up, Murray is way up. (Lincoln County) is actually one of the better ones and we're terrible. It's ugly out there."

On Monday, the Minnesota Department of Health reported 6,353 new COVID-19 cases for a total of 276,500 cases throughout the state. Lincoln County has a total of 311 cases and one death. Another 6,423 cases and 38 deaths were added to the state total on Tuesday.

"We had 18 staff members out last Monday and about 100 students," Marlette said. "Not that they all had COVID but had contact with

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Season finale sparks a lot of emotions

By Jenny Kirk

As Tracy-Milroy-Balaton student athletes processed the abrupt end to their football and volleyball seasons, six seniors also came to the realization that Friday marked their last fall game day ever. Emotions got the best of some of them.

In volleyball, seniors Kylie Hensch and Jadyn Lessman will be missed greatly. Hensch was a three-year starting middle hitter while Lessman was a three-year starting left front hitter for the Panthers.

"Six years of front row hit-

ting experience we will be losing with the graduation of these two," Coach Rick Haberman said. "Kylie plays with great intensity and aggressiveness. Her aggressiveness rubbed off on her teammates and set the tone for many of our matches this year. She has been a superb blocker on varsity for all three years and really improved on her attacking skills this year."

Haberman said Lessman also made major improvements throughout her three-year varsity career and that developing a variety of shots made her tougher to defend.



After a grueling five set match victory against Redwood Valley on Friday, the Panther volleyball players appeared to be overcome with a variety of emotions, from exhilaration to disbelief and sadness, especially for the two seniors for which the match was the finale of their career. Pictured (from left) are Margaret Dolan, Camille Dolan, Kiarra Danielson (No. 10), Kylie Hensch, Amber Hensch and Maddi Langerock. Underclassmen, coaches and managers give farewell hugs to the four seniors after Tracy-Milroy-Balaton's final football game of the season on Friday night. Pictured (from left) are Trayton Radke (No. 88), Noah Swenhausen, Jake Turner, Nathan Fultz (no. 78) and Matthew Munson. Photos by Jenny Kirk

"She was a go-to hitter for us often over the past two years," he said. "Jadyn is very competitive and willing to do whatever it takes to help her team do well, while still able to keep things loose when needed."

In football, the seniors include Touger Vang, Andrew LaVoy, Nathan Fultz and Trayton Radke.

"Touger came out for football for the first time this year," Coach Jason Kainz said. "He came out this year and wanted



to be a kickoff specialist for us. That's exactly what he did, he was our kickoff guy. He was dependable, not missing a practice and always willing to help out his teammates. It was nice to have a kid like Touger become part of our Panther

Football Family, as kids like him don't just come along all the time."

LaVoy was a four-year player for TMB.

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