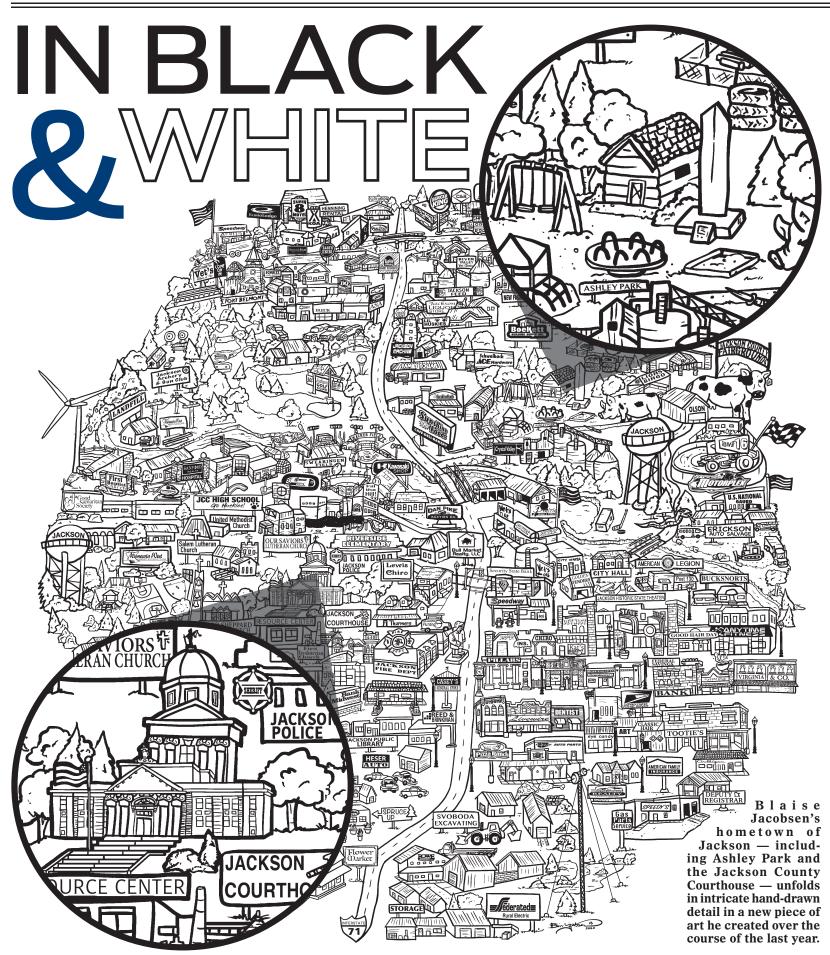


#### CHRISTOPHER THANKFUL FOR SEASON

Jackson County Central senior Cole Christopher is thankful he got a chance to play one final soccer season and was named his team's most valuable player. Story, B1



130TH YEAR/ISSUE 51



### Hand-drawn montage of hometown a labor of love for local artist

by JUSTIN R. LESSMAN Publisher

It's all there, in black and white. From the airport at the tip-top to Federated Rural Electric headquarters at the base, and from the Jackson campus of Minnesota West Community and Technical College on the left to the Jackson County Fairgrounds on the far right, Jackson — Blaise Jacobsen's hometown — unfolds in intricate hand-drawn detail on an 11-inch-by-

14.5-inch sheet of paper. Hundreds of Jackson businesses, churches, parks and other landmarks and locales — yes, even the city dump make appearances in Jacobsen's drawing, which he said he modeled after a similar work of art done three decades ago.

'I remember seeing one done back in 1990," Jacobsen said. "It was all hand done. I remember looking and looking at that, getting lost in the detail.'

The artist was Bruce Loeschen of Minneapolis, who began drawing city montages back in 1979.



PHOTO BY JUSTIN LESSMAN A masked Blaise Jacobsen terms his new drawing "one of the products of the pandemic."

Inside...



Blaise Jacobsen is making his latest work of art — a hand-drawn montage of the city of Jackson available to the masses.

"It was really kind of a cool idea," Jacobsen said. "I just wanted to see if

I could do it.' Jacobsen said he liked Loeschen's stacked approach to his montage of Jackson, but he decided to put his own spin on it.

"I wanted to capture sides of town, so I decided to incorporate my drawing into a globe-type of shape," Jacobsen said. "I thought it was an interesting, different approach."

Jacobsen said he started sketching out his montage this past February. Rather than drive around town with a sketch pad, as he envisioned Loeschen doing back in the '90s, Jacobsen toured the town virtually via Google Street View.

"Using that, I was able to get an idea of the structural details of the buildings I was including in the drawing and. from there, put my own spin on their appearance," he said. "I tried to keep everything to scale and in its proper position relative to the drawing.'

Jacobsen, who teaches art at Jackson

See ARTIST on A3

### **Good Sam** looks to halt viral spread

Four infected residents die: others positive

> by JOSHUA SCHUETZ Staff Writer

The Good Samaritan Society of Jackson is implementing aggressive measures to stop the spread of COVID-19 within the local nursing home facility.

Though successfully insulated from the novel coronavirus early on in the pandemic, the local Good Sam facility is currently experiencing a spike in the number of lab-confirmed cases of the illness.

"We currently have nine of our residents and two of our staff

members infected," administrator Paige Bloom said Monday. Four res-



idents who Paige Bloom

have tested positive for COVID-19 have died.

'While it's hard to say what exactly led to the death in each case, all of them had COVID," Bloom said. "It's been very difficult."

Bloom said the rise in number of cases at Good Sam in Jackson is part of a grim trend across the state.

"Looking at the numbers, 96 percent of Minne-

See GOODSAM on A3

#### **Deadly week for Jackson County**

Jackson County saw ts deadliest seven-dav stretch of the COVID-19 pandemic this past week.

As of Tuesday, the Minnesota Department of Health had reported three COVID-19-related deaths in Jackson County, two of which were reported within the last week. The county's first COVID-19-related death — that of a 59-year-old Jackson man — was reported Aug. 28. The second — that of a resident between the ages of 85 and 89, was reported last Wednesday. The third — that of a resident between the ages of 90 and 94 — was reported this past Sunday.

The two latest fatalities come during a week in which the county added 90 new lab-confirmed cases of COVID-19, the second highest one-week increase since the onset of the pandemic this past spring. The county notched a one-week-record-101 new cases of COVID-19 the week prior.

The cumulative caseload count in Jackson County as of Tuesday was 697.

### Duncan to step down as coordinator

by JOSHUA SCHUETZ Staff Writer

Jackson County Coordinator Steve Duncan has announced his plan to step down from his position.

Duncan intends to depart from his role in May 2021, which may change depending on county needs and his personal situation.

Duncan said he chose to announce his resignation early so as to give the county board time to decide how it want to structure the county government moving forward.

"I'm announcing it now so the board can take steps

#### Inside...

Evelyn Schaeffer is the new director of public health at Des Moines Valley Health and Human Services.

toward whatever organizational structure they wish to recruit for and implement," Duncan said Tuesday.

Commissioner Don Wachal thanked Duncan for that courtesy.

"I appreciate you bringing this forward early to we can react to it," Wachal

Commissioner Phil Nasby concurred and thanked Duncan for his work as coordinator.

"Thank you for giving us time," Nasby said. "I don't want to see you leave, but I appreciate what you've done."

Duncan has been with the county since November 2015.

In other action from Tuesday's county board meeting:

See COUNTY BOARD on A3



PHOTO BY JOSHUA SCHUETZ

#### **OMELETS TO GO**

Brent Whisney (right) leads a crew of fellow Jackson Knights of Columbus in cooking up made-to-order omelets for a drive-through omelet feed this past Sunday morning. Funds raised from the feed will purchase items for residents of the Good Samaritan Society of Jackson.



#### Thursday, December 17, 2020

#### Jackson's two auto parts stores set to combine into one following sale

Jackson's Auto Value parts store and Jackson's Sturdevant's Auto Parts store will merge into one next year following the sale of Sturdevant's to Auto Value owner Automotive Parts Headquarters Inc.

The sale of Sturdevant's was announced Monday. Dan Maciej, marketing specialist with St. Cloudbased Automotive Parts Headquarters Inc., said Jackson's two stores will merge into one sometime in 2021. The location is yet to be determined.

At present, Auto Value is located at the south end of Jackson's Main Street; Sturdevant's is located on the north end.

Headquartered in Sioux Falls, S.D., Sturdevant's Auto Parts has been in business since 1922. Automotive Parts Headquarters was established in 1920.

#### Early deadlines take effect due to Christmas, New Year's Day holidays

Early advertising and news deadlines are in effect for several Livewire Printing Co. publications over the next few weeks due to the Christmas and New Year's Day holidays.

The copy deadline for the Dec. 27 Livewire is 3 p.m. on Dec. 22; deadline for the Jan. 3, 2021, Livewire is 3 p.m. on Dec. 29

Copy deadline for the Dec. 24 Southern Minnesota Peach is 10 a.m. on Dec. 21; deadline for the Dec. 31 Peach is 10 a.m. on Dec. 28.

Copy deadline for the Dec. 24 Jackson County Pilot and Lakefield Standard is 5 p.m. on Dec. 21. Deadline for the Dec. 31 Pilot and Standard is 5 p.m. on Dec. 28.

Classified and display advertising, as well as news items, may be submitted by emailing info@livewireprinting.com or calling 847-3771.

#### Main Street art center goes retail

The Jackson Center for the Arts dabbles in retail this month as it hosts its annual holiday market.

The holiday market — offering for sale gift items from local artists and creators, including jewelry, weavings, pottery, stained glass, handcrafted soaps, furniture, photography and handcrafted wood items runs through the month of December.

Hours are 2 to 5 p.m. Mondays through Fridays and 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturdays.

#### Prospective entrepreneurs invited to apply for '21 business challenge

Prospective entrepreneurs are encouraged to apply for the Jackson Business Challenge.

The challenge is a three-phase competition that seeks to attract new businesses to downtown Jackson by offering a prize package worth \$20,000. Applications for the 2021 Jackson Business Challenge will be accepted through Dec. 31.

The 2021 Jackson Business Challenge will follow the same guidelines as the 2019 and 2020 programs. The program aims to fill empty buildings in downtown Jackson and attract entrepreneurs to the community. The contest will consist of three rounds — business concept, detailed business plan and oral presentation.

Tom Nelson, Jackson's economic development coordinator, said the Jackson Business Challenge will look at the viability of applicants' business plans, as well as how they will enhance downtown. Entrepreneurs and current business owners in and out of Jackson are encouraged to apply to the program. Complete details and applications are available online at cityofiacksonmn.com/ibc.

#### Local businesses collection points for a holiday light recycling effort

Two Jackson businesses are collection points for the Jackson County Land Management Office's "Recycle Your Holidays" Holiday Light Recycling Program.

From now through Jan. 8, 2021, locals are encouraged to stop by Schwalbach's Ace Hardware or Thurmer's Plumbing and Heating in Jackson to drop off old electric cords, holiday lights and appliance cords for recycling. Cord adapters and battery packs cannot be accepted.

The effort is a local take on the Recycling Association of Minnesota's "Recycle Your Holidays" Holiday Light Recycling Program.

More details are included in the Sunday, Dec. 13, edition of the Livewire, Jackson County's largest circulation newspaper.





# BUSINESS BRIEFS Slow return to school at JCC

by JUSTIN R. LESSMAN Publisher

After two weeks of learning from home, most Jackson County Central students are back in school this week.

All students in preschool through sixth grade returned to full in-person learn-

day, with sevenththrough 12th-graders back on a parttime basis. The change

ing Mon-

Barry Schmidt

comes on the heels of the district sending everybody home for two weeks late last month due primarily to a shortage of available staff members.

Barry Schmidt, superintendent of schools at JCC, said at one time, 33 staff members were stuck at home either positive for

COVID-19 or in quarantine due to an exposure. Last week, that number was in the low single digits.

Schmidt said the district was able to transition this week from a distancelearning model of education back into a hybrid model due to low caseload numbers among students and staff even as caseload numbers across the county skyrocket.

"Our community numbers keep going high, but our numbers are low in the schools," he said.

Learning schedules that went into effect this past Monday mirror those in place at the beginning of the school year, though they represent a more restrictive approach than what JCC was following prior to the transition to full distance learning. As of Nov. 20, the last full day of school prior to the transition, seventh-, ninth- and 12th-grade students were attending in-person classes

four days per week, with eighth-graders in school three days per week. Now, all are in school only two days per week.

The fallback to start-ofschool restrictions not only conforms with a state preference for what Schmidt termed a "conservative" mode of learning upon return, but also with a prevailing sentiment from teachers, who union representative Rafe York said were split on the prospect of a return in the first

"Teachers are kind of split half and half," he said last week. "They are definitely more comfortable coming back how we were at the beginning of the year.'

Members of the JCC Board of Education last week said they supported the decision to get all preschool through sixth-grade students back in class full time and seventh- through 12th-graders back on a hybrid schedule.

"Distance learning for kids in first, second, third grades is really tough,' board member Eric Kruger said. "The attention span for that age of kids is really short.

Schmidt said the district intends to continue with the current model of learning following Christmas break, though he added that is dependent on caseload numbers among staff and students, as well as the community as a whole.

School board member Amy Voss concurred, adding the district's model of learning is really up to community members as a whole.

"Our communities are not following protocol and it has hurt our kids being in school," she said, urging all to do their part to reduce viral spread locally. "I know our kids want to be back."

### **ARTIST:** Hand-drawn montage labor of love

Continued from Al

County Central schools, said the onset of the CO-VID-19 pandemic and switch to virtual learning in March gave him a little more time to work on the drawing.

"It's really one of the products of the pandemic,' he said of his drawing.

One thing Jacobsen noticed as he thought back to Loeschen's montage and worked his way through his own was how much had changed in Jackson in the last 30 years.

"That really fascinated me," he said. "So much is different now than it was back then.'

But as Jacobsen continued to draw, he saw firsthand exactly how that happened.

"Even as I was drawing mine, things were changing," he said. "A bank changed names, a real estate firm moved into another building and then, right after I finished it, the Burger King burned down.'

Jacobsen initially tried to keep up with the chang-

es, but eventually gave up.
"I decided that, just like the old drawing, mine would be a drawing of Jackson at that moment in time," he said.

He also decided that at some point, he needed to

"There's so much going on in town that I couldn't possibly get it all in," he said. "I got in what I could and then I had to stop.'

#### Prints are now available for purchase

Blaise Jacobsen has made his latest work of art -ahand-drawn montage of the city of Jackson — available to the masses.

Prints of Jacobsen's drawing are available for purchase at Good Hair Day Salon in Jackson and also from the artist himself.

Jacobsen said he has been amazed at the public response to his drawing thus far.

"It's been awesome," he said.

As Jacobsen looked at his finished product — the result of countless hours of enjoyable work — he found himself getting lost in the detail, exactly as he had earlier when looking at Loeschen's montage.

"It's a drawing you can look at for a while and even see things in it you hadn't seen before," he said. "It's something to appreciate

more deeply than other artwork you can just take at surface value.

Jacobsen said his drawing was a "labor of love" in every sense of the term.

"It took me a long time to do," he said. "But I love my hometown and I'm proud to have grown up here and I wanted to show that through this artwork.'

## **GOOD SAM:** Looking to halt the virus spread

Continued from A1

sota's nursing homes have an outbreak," Bloom said.

Given the current levels of community spread in Jackson County and the need to protect residents, Bloom said the local nursing home has worked with Sanford Health to develop mitigation and treatment strategies. And, while the COVID-19 vaccine is not yet available for residents and staff, Bloom said Good Sam is working on a vaccination plan to implement as those resources are distributed.

"The Good Samaritan Society and Sanford Health are working on vaccine plans and those have a high priority," Bloom said. "We're strongly encouraging all of our residents to get the vaccine when it becomes available.

Bloom said she's expect-

ing vaccine doses to become available within the next few weeks, but that may be subject to change.

Good Sam's COVID-19 strategy has evolved over the last two months, Bloom said, focusing on contact minimization, mass testing and implementing new treatments for symptomatic patients.

"We limit where employees are working so that they work on one wing,' Bloom said. "We have a designated hall called the 'red zone' for COVID patients."

The "red zone" has two sets of doors and a separate exit so employees who are caring for COVID-19 patients don't have to walk through the rest of the facility, minimizing exposure risk for other residents and staff.

Bloom said mass testing has allowed the facility to maintain a constant picture of how the situation is developing.

"The rapid tests we've

been using when COVID got into our facility have been implemented across the board, twice a week," Bloom said. "We've found a lot of success with the rapid testing, which can catch it before it becomes symptomatic."

PCR tests are used afterward to confirm positive

"We do PCR tests confirm and if someone has symptoms without testing positive or tests positive without symptoms," Bloom

And new treatment is being used to help patients struggling to fight the virus.

"We've had success with bamlanivimab treatments," Bloom said. "With symptomatic residents, we have a 10-day window to work with Sanford on it."

Once treatments are approved, the patient receives an infusion at the Sanford Jackson clinic. "It takes about an hour

and we monitor them afterward," Bloom said. "The rollout was last weekend."

Bloom said the coming vaccines and high level of community support for residents, which has included numerous fundraisers, leaves her hopeful for the near future.

"We've got a lot of hope," Bloom said. "With COVID, there have been so many unknowns, so just knowing we have treatments and a vaccine on the horizon makes us hopeful."

### **COUNTY BOARD:** Duncan out as coordinator

Continued from Al

#### **COUNTY TABBED** FOR RELIEF FUNDS

Commissioners learned the county will receive relief funds from the state to be used for businesses and nonprofits affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Ultimately, my understanding is that based on our per-capita population, we're going to get \$256,250," Duncan said adding the cap on administrative costs would amount to \$6,250.

Additional funds will be controlled and administered by the state, Duncan said, but the aforementioned amount is the county's to spend.

The board has until levy amount. March 15, 2021, to distribute the money. Commissioner James

Eigenberg said the funding should be directed toward the most affected industries, those being bars, restaurants and fitness centers in the county.

"We need to send it to the businesses that were shut down," Eigenberg said.

#### LEVY APPROVED

The board approved the county's final 2021 property tax levy.

The total increase amounts to 1.75 percent over the previous year's

#### **BOARD HONORS COUNTY WORKERS** Commissioners recog-

nized those county employees with milestone years of service. Among those honored

were Becky McCann, 25 years; Sonja Koch and Wes Liepold, 15 years; Heather Hummel and Cole Rossow, 10 years; and Chris Cain, Doug Dean, Mike Diekman, Duncan, Bryce Freking, Elyse Holm, Nicole Howard and Don Wachal, five years. Rod Paplow was also recognized for five years of service on the sheriff's reserves.

#### AIS PLAN OK'D

Commissioners approved the county's 2020 aquatic invasive species plan, which was brought before them by land management head Andy Gei-

While no aquatic invasive species have been found in Jackson County's waters, the connection of its waterways to infested waterways in Iowa has led to cause for concern, Geiger said. Counties are required by the state to have plans in place for aquatic invasive species if their waterways are listed as being infested.

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