

# NORTHERN VIEW

## Larimore choir honored by Burgum

By Pamela Knudson  
Grand Forks Herald

The Larimore (N.D.) High School Senior Choir has been selected as the 2021 Governor's Official State Choral Program.

In his announcement, Gov. Doug Burgum also said the Bismarck Legacy High School Wind Ensemble has been selected as the Governor's Official State Band Program.

Burgum congratulated both groups on "their outstanding representation of their schools and communities," he

said in a news release. "Music and the arts are important elements of our schools and communities, and these two accomplished groups embody the tremendous musical talent within our state."

The Larimore High School Senior Choir, under the direction of Jack Boyer, consists of 46 students in grades 10 through 12. In addition to concerts, the choir performs at events and in competitions across the nation.

"It's a really big deal," Boyer said of the recognition by the Governor's Office. "It

means that all of the kids' hard work paid off."

The choir competes with Class A schools to achieve this honor, he said, "so it's a big deal. We're really excited."

In the past five years, the choir has achieved numerous accomplishments and garnered recognition including the 2018 Outstanding Performance at the state music competition. The choir received invitations to the 2018 Performance Tour in Denver and Colorado Springs and the 2020 Festival Chorus

at Carnegie Hall.

The Governor's Band and Chorus were selected from applications submitted by school and civic groups across the state. The selection is based on musical talent, achievement and community involvement. The Larimore High School Senior Choir may be invited to perform at official state functions throughout the year, according to the Governor's Office.

Boyer will be leaving the Larimore School District next school year to teach in the Emerald, N.D., K-8 school, he

said. He plans to attend graduate school to earn a master's degree in music education in a distance program offered by the University of South Dakota.

"I was looking for a position that had less extracurriculars (teaching obligations)" to allow time for graduate studies, Boyer said, noting he also wants to spend more time with his wife and their first child, born in January.

Knudson is a features reporter at the Herald. Call her at (701) 780-1107, (800) 477-6572 ext.1107 or email [pknudson@gfherald.com](mailto:pknudson@gfherald.com).

## Endless war brought a new family in N.D.

Many years from now, when historians assess our long involvement in Iraq, Afghanistan and the

rest of the Middle East, judgment is likely to be harsh. Motives, policies and practices will be examined,

questioned, and perhaps condemned.

But a fair assessment also will take account of generous, unselfish and even noble actions, especially by individual troops and units who may have wondered about the overall mission but truly believed they were over there to do good.

Among the noble: Men and women of the North Dakota National Guard who 16 years ago embraced an Iraqi family led by a woman they called Mrs. M.

Her husband, Majid Al-Abase, had invited the soldiers into their home, gave them food and warned them about IEDs, improvised explosive devices, that Iraqi insurgents had planted on nearby roads.

When Majid was killed by insurgents in January 2005, shot in retaliation for helping the Americans, members of the 141st Engineer Combat Battalion resolved to do whatever they could to protect his widow and their six, soon to be seven, children. It was fulfillment of a pledge

that had been made by one of the battalion's officers to Majid, sealed with a handshake.

I've been thinking about Mrs. M and her children as I read about U.S. plans to leave Afghanistan. We are leaving, declaring an end to America's longest war, and in addition to all the uncertainty and wounds we leave behind are thousands of Afghan people who trusted and helped us and who now will face reprisals by a resurgent Taliban. Interpreters and other civilians who worked for the U.S. government or NATO can get what is known as a special immigrant visa, but the numbers are limited and the application process can take years.

Ayazudin Hilal, who worked as an interpreter for U.S. and NATO forces, was turned down when he applied for one of the scarce special visas, according to a report this week in The Diplomat.

"We are not safe," the 41-year-old father of six said. "The Taliban is calling us and telling us ... we will kill all of you guys."

That was the threat Iraqi insurgents made after killing Magid Al-Abase, whom the North Dakota soldiers called "M" in their communications, hoping to protect him from reprisals. Magid was ambushed Jan. 16, 2005, pulled from his truck not far from his home and shot 30 times in the arms, legs, chest

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CHUCK HAGA



Photos by Eric Hylden / Grand Forks Herald

Margie Estad, left, and Sharon Laaveg have opened Farm Charm Antiques and Blossoms on the Estad farm near Crystal, N.D. They repurpose items for decorating as well as sell greenhouse plants and flowers.

## BUSINESS BLOOMS ON FARM NEAR CRYSTAL

'Fun adventure' results in a rural antique store and greenhouse

By Ann Bailey  
Grand Forks Herald

Crystal, N.D.

With a creative eye, unbridled enthusiasm and an abundance of elbow grease, Marge Estad and Sharon Laaveg have fashioned an on-farm business designed for antique and gardening enthusiasts.

Farm Charm Antiques and Blossoms, about six miles northwest of the Pembina County town of Crystal, features an antique shop in a century-old wooden granary, and plants and hanging baskets in a newly built greenhouse.

"It's a little of this and a little of that," Estad said.

Estad, a nurse at First Care Health Center in Park River, N.D., and Laaveg, a retired First Care Health Center

receptionist, have talked for years about opening a shop and greenhouse. Last summer, they took the plunge.

"We both love gardening, and we both love tinkering with stuff, so we're a good blend," Laaveg said.

"I emptied out the grain bin next door. ... It was full of junk and we cleaned it out and added more junk," Estad said during a break from watering the plants in the greenhouse on a mid-May day.

Watering the plants, removing old blooms and waiting on customers keeps Estad busy from about 8 a.m. until at least 7 p.m. Laaveg also pitches in to help in the greenhouse, and the two women spend a lot of hours reupholstering and repurposing old items they find during



The owners of Farm Charm Antiques and Blossoms have cleaned out an old granary on a Crystal, N.D., farm and converted it into a shop.

road trips across North Dakota and Minnesota.

"We like going to antique stores and junk stores," Estad said.

Estad and Laaveg also are on the radar of friends who are downsizing their belongings.

"People, if they're going to get rid of stuff, pass them on to us," Laaveg said.

Meanwhile, Estad's cousin, Lisa Reilly, who lives in Estacada, Ore.,

loaded up her car this month and delivered various items, such as paintings, chairs and planting containers.

"I packed it up to the ceiling," Reilly said.

One of the keys to running a successful shop is to imagine how old items, or ones that someone no longer wants, can find new life. Case in point: An empty Monkey Grip Tire Patch container Estad found

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## Legion post plans Memorial Day event

By Pamela Knudson  
Grand Forks Herald

The American Legion Post 6 is planning a Memorial Day ceremony, which will be open to the public. Last year, the event was closed to the public, due to the pandemic.

The ceremony begins at 9 a.m. Monday, May 31, in Memorial Park Cemetery, in an area with three flagpoles, just east of the water fountain. The flags represent the United States, North Dakota and prisoners of war. The cemetery is located east of Columbia Road, between 10th Avenue North and Gateway Drive.

Masks are encouraged but not required at the event, which is

expected to last about 40 minutes, said Dennis Almer, who is coordinating the activities.

Post Commander Michael Brown, a former Grand Forks mayor, will serve as master of ceremonies. The Grand Forks City Band, under the direction of Don Langlie, will play patriotic music.

The American Legion Post 6 Color Guard and the Grand Forks Air Force Base Honor Guard will participate in opening ceremonies. The invocation and benediction will be read by Paul Robinette, chaplain for American Legion Post 6.

The keynote address will be delivered by Erica Claus-Numsali, a retired member of the U.S.

Air Force. She is a member of the GFAFB Commander's Support Staff.

Readings will be given by Alexis Kraemer, a high school junior and member of the American Legion Auxiliary Unit 6, and Jay Gunderson.

Presenting wreaths in memory of those who died in service to the country will be Joan Smith, representing the American Legion Auxiliary Unit 6, and Jackie Sadtler, for the Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary Chapter 2.

"Casting the Wreath Upon the Waters," a traditional part of Memorial Day ceremonies, will

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Korrie Wenzel / Grand Forks Herald

Wreaths that represent American wars and conflict are placed among memorial flags during the 2020 American Legion Post 6 Memorial Day ceremonies in Grand Forks.

**FARM**

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when she was cleaning out a farm shed could be a perfect little planter, Reilly said. "You can plant something in almost anything," she said as she admired the can. The new business has resonated with customers. Farm Charm Antiques and Blossoms held an open house in October 2020 that featured autumn decor. A couple of months later, a winter open house that

was scheduled for two weekends in December ended up being held only once – the shop sold out of its stock after just the first weekend. The greenhouse and antique shop grand opening was May 1, and Estad and Laaveg will continue their operation until they sell out of their flowers, bedding plants, baskets and planters. The antique shop then will be open by appointment, and the women plan to hold open house events this fall and winter.

Estad also hopes

to host other events, such as "girls nights" at the farm. A veteran gardener, she has a half-dozen perennial and annual gardens on her farmstead and plans to add a few more, which will be backdrops for the events. Another project recently unveiled is "Gardens on the Move," a portable wooden container built by Estad's father, Clyde Reilly. The containers have slits notched into the tops of the sides so customers who want to plant vegetables can place strings between them for rows. Farm

Charm is taking orders for the containers, which it will deliver to customers in the spring, and pick up in the fall. The containers will have potting soil in them, and customers can either plant their own gardens or have them planted at the greenhouse before delivery. Estad and Laaveg are undaunted about adding more hours to their busy workday. "I don't call it work. I thoroughly enjoy it," Estad said. "It's been a fun adventure for us," Laaveg concurred.

**LEGION**

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be Deb Moriority, VFW Auxiliary Post 1874, and reading the poem "Cover Them Over," another traditional ceremonial act, will be Diane Knauf, American Legion Auxiliary Unit 6. Aubriell Kraemer, an eighth-grader at Valley Middle School junior, and her grandmother, Diane Kraemer, of American Legion Auxiliary Unit 6, will distribute poppies. The Firing Squad Salute will be conducted by members of the Grand Forks Air Force Base Honor Guard. Herb Thomson, a member of the City Band, will perform Taps. Memorial Day ceremonies are dedicated to honoring the mem-

ory of those who died in U.S. wars and conflicts throughout the nation's history. The local American Legion is also planning a commemorative event to honor Grand Forks police officer Cody Holte, who was killed in the line of duty May 27, 2020. At that event, set for 10 a.m., June 19, at Veterans Memorial Park, Holte's family will be presented the Ray Atol Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award. For more information on American Legion Post 6 activities, go online to: [www.grandforks-americanlegionpost6.org](http://www.grandforks-americanlegionpost6.org) or <https://www.facebook.com/GFAMericanLegionPost6>. Knudson is a features reporter at the Herald. Call her at (701) 780-1107, (800) 477-6572 ext.1107 or email [pknudson@gfherald.com](mailto:pknudson@gfherald.com).

**HAGA**

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and head. His 11-year-old son was made to watch. The boy said he was told, "This is what happens when you help the Americans." A few months later, thanks to efforts by the North Dakota National Guard soldiers, then-U.S. Rep. Earl Pomeroy and others, that boy, six siblings and their mother, Mrs. M, arrived in Fargo, welcomed at the airport by many of those same soldiers. The bond was undeniable. A boy climbed out of the plane and ran to familiar faces. "Hi guys!" he shouted. Specialist April Rohr, a medic who had bandaged the children's cuts and cared for their ailments when the unit stopped at their home, cried as she embraced Mrs. M, whom she had cared for when Mrs. M was pregnant with her seventh child.

Mrs. M handed that baby girl to Rohr and told her, through an interpreter, that she had named her April. Pomeroy was on hand at the airport, too. "Welcome to North Dakota," he told Mrs. M through an interpreter. "Your family will have love and support here. We will never forget what your husband did for us." Lutheran Social Services sponsored the family and, with other agencies, helped with temporary housing, education and employment. Later, people and companies around the state contributed materials and labor to build a house for the family in West Fargo. The soldiers organized fundraisers in Fargo and Bismarck, where Pomeroy and then-Gov. John Hoeven grilled hot dogs and helped to raise \$100,000. Then, in 2008, the soldiers mustered again,

dressed in Army fatigues and boots, and flanked Mrs. M as they all placed hands on walls of that new house. In other rooms, the children joined in the ritual blessing along with a mayor, a congressman and a governor. We took care of Mrs. M and her family, as we were bound to do. "All the kids have done so well," according to a friend who has kept in touch. One of the girls was just 2 when she suffered a serious eye injury due to shrapnel from a car bomb as the family prepared to leave Iraq. Now she is on her way to college on a full scholarship. The oldest girl is a year from earning a doctorate in psychology. We are weary of endless war. We want out. We no doubt will continue to debate the legitimacy and purpose and results of all those years in Afghanistan. But surely, we have room

here for another family or two, refugees whose friendship and aid saved American lives. Chuck Haga had a long career at the Grand Forks Herald and the Minneapolis Star Tribune before retiring in 2013. He can be contacted at [crhaga@gmail.com](mailto:crhaga@gmail.com).

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