



## Fifty-one acres burned in grass fire

Verndale Fire Chief Mike Madsen observed the DNR helicopter dropping water on the swamp fire in Aldrich while relaying information to his firemen and other fire departments that responded for mutual aid. The fire occurred on July 17, at 12:30 p.m., east of Aldrich on the north side of the road. There were multiple start points along the road, spreading north into the swamp. The fire burned approximately 51 acres. No structures were damaged or lost in the blaze. The Staples, Hewitt, Wadena, Bluffton and Deer Creek fire departments along with the DNR provided mutual aid. They cleared the scene at 2:30 p.m.

## Tapping their way to victory

by Trinity Gruenberg  
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The dynamic duo of Brooke Goddard, 12, of Verndale and Mackenzie Wilds, 17, of Staples, tap danced their way to victory at the Masquerade National Competition at the Ames Center in Burnsville on June 15.

Brooke and Mackenzie became instant friends when they were first introduced and this was the first year they have danced in the same group.

Kristin Lawson, their dance instructor and Brooke's aunt, asked them and another girl if they would like to also compete in a trio and they said "YES". Unfortunately, the third girl suffered an injury and wasn't able to compete at Nationals.

Kristin re-worked the number for a duet, but it didn't give Brooke and Mackenzie much time to adjust their choreography to the song *Rubberband Man*.

The girls had four practices to get the tap dance routine just right before heading to Burnsville.

"These girls are very dedicated to dance, but like to push my buttons sometimes! They know when I'm mad," smiled Kristin.

The nearly week-long competition featured over 900 routines. The duo faced off against 20 other teen duos and trios.

The awards range from gold, high gold and platinum (be-

ing the top award). After they announce all the awards, they award the top five performances.

"I blacked out for half that dance. I was so nervous!" shared Mackenzie.

With the girls' moms and Kristin in the audience, the time for awards had come.

"The overwhelming thing was they were giving out so many high golds and you start doubting yourself" said Mackenzie.

"We were just sitting on stage waiting for the over-all's and another duo that danced to *Jolene*, had beat us before and they were called up for third place overall so we started thinking we would either get second or we didn't place at all," stated Brooke.

The duo tightly squeezed their hands together and their hearts dropped when second place was called and it wasn't them. They had lost all hope of winning.

As the tension thickened for first place, Brooke and Mackenzie's number was called. After a moment of shock, the girls hugged as family members were jumping for joy in their seats.

Then they announced the duo had received a "platinum!"

"We were so excited," said the elated girls.

"Ashley and Shelly (the girls' moms) were wiping tears from their eyes and Kristin was jumping and cheering," said Mackenzie. "Shelly was taping the awards and when they won, you can hear them all say 'What?' at the same time," she added.

"It was a tough competition," said their proud teacher, Kristin.

In regional competitions earlier this spring, the trio received platinum awards and placed in the top five both times (fourth and second place) and received a Judges Choice Award, "Fearless Footwork".

Their large group tap received platinums at both competitions and also placed in the top five (fifth and first) overall and they also received a Judges Choice Award at both competitions. The girls have had a great year!

The pair has been dancing for several years through Music General Dance Studio which has studios in Staples and Brainerd. Mackenzie has been dancing for eight years and Brooke nine years.

Kristin danced at the Brainerd Studio for 15 years and has been teaching dance since 2010, just after she graduated from Verndale School. By day she is a hair stylist in Verndale.

Once a week she teaches dance and currently has about 40 students of various ages from 3-18 between four different classes. Kristin has traveled around the state to teach groups, solos, duos and trios. She has instructed Mackenzie for the past six years and Brooke for the past two.

During the dance season, the older grades learn hip-hop in the fall/winter and tap dancing in the spring and the younger classes do jazz and ballet in the fall.

Both of the girls love to tap and hip-hop and plan to perform a duet again next season, which will be Mackenzie's last year in the program as she will be a senior at Staples-Motley School. She will also be performing a senior tap solo.

Brooke will be in seventh grade at Verndale School.

Mackenzie turned her hesitation of performing into something she now looks forward to. For her, dance has brought her closer to her friends, especially Brooke and Kristin.

Brooke enjoys the feeling of connecting more with her friends and performing on stage which shows their love for dance.

Both girls greatly appreciate Kristin for all her hard work which led them to victory and also her tolerance for their shenanigans!



Mackenzie Wilds, Kristin Lawson and Brooke Goddard celebrated their first place overall platinum trophy for Mackenzie and Brooke's tap dance performance at the national competition held at the Ames Center in Burnsville on June 15.

Verndale City Council

## Is prohibiting the sale of vaping products hurting local businesses?

by Trinity Gruenberg  
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The Verndale City Council held their regular meeting on July 12. Council Members Tony Stanley and Jim Runyan were absent.

### Vaping Product Sales

Brian Hagen, owner of The Pirates Den, discussed the sale of vaping products as he was told not to sell any of them. He is losing customers to the other gas station that supposedly is selling vaping products. The council had previously allowed current supplies to be sold as soon as the ordinance was adopted. Hagen asked who monitored that?

They will make it clear in the ordinance as they do not want vaping products sold in town. City Clerk Melissa Current said they previously discussed banning flavored products. Liquid packaging was prohibited. The ordinance didn't say they couldn't sell vaping products. They would have to adopt a ban on flavored products for vaping with exceptions for chew. The council's intention was to ban the vaping products. They will look at the ordinance revision at the next meeting.

Police Chief Cory Carr added it's just hurting local businesses to not allow them to sell it when surrounding communities sell vape products.

### Water Project

Moore Engineering presented par-

tial pay estimate five from Maguire Iron for \$169,907. Also partial pay estimate one from Dakota Supply Group for water meters and installation for \$86,467. Invoices for Moore Engineering of \$51,125 for the professional service agreement and an invoice of \$542 for surveying the property lines for the new water tower site were presented. All were approved.

### Maintenance

Supervisor Matt Uselman shared the county road paving project from Brown Street to 5th Avenue, from 1st Avenue to Brown Street and Butler and downtown Farwell will be done this fall.

They are moving the fireworks to the ball park due to a wedding at the community center the day of the town festival.

All but 19 water meters have been installed. The number on the fliers that went out to schedule appointments was incorrect. Many set up their appointments online. Training for the new meter system will be on July 19.

Uselman would like to change meter readings from the 25th to the first of the month and charge per 100 instead of per 1000 gallons. That would give better averages and make it easier for customers to understand their bills. Approved the new water policy, with a new due date of the 21st. Approved the water/sewer portions on the fee schedule.

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## Two vehicle accident



On July 17, at 2:26 p.m., a T-bone crash occurred in Verndale. Vehicle #1 was stopped at the stop sign on Farwell St. N. Vehicle #2 was going west on Highway 10 and turned onto Farwell taking a very wide turn striking vehicle #1 in the driver's side front and rear doors causing moderate damage. Vehicle #2 also suffered moderate damage.