



HUSKIES WIN SECTION TITLE

The Jackson County Central wrestling team won the Section 3A championship Saturday, then beat Kenyon-Wanamingo in the state quarterfinals the same day.

Stories, B1



JACKSON COUNTY PILOT

THURSDAY, MARCH 18, 2021

131ST YEAR/ISSUE 11

County sees a rise in serious, violent crime

by JUSTIN R. LESSMAN
Publisher

Instances of assault, burglary, domestic disturbance and theft were up in Jackson County in 2020 when compared to the year prior.

The Jackson County Sheriff's Office responded to 118 reports of theft in 2020, up 32 from the year prior and the highest number in at least the last half-decade. Jackson County Sheriff Shawn Haken said nine of those theft reports involved stolen vehicles.



Shawn Haken

The local sheriff's office responded to 67 domestic disturbances in 2020 and 19 reports of burglary — both up by eight from the year prior — along with 14 reports of assault and a half-dozen reports of sexual assault — up two and one, respectively, from 2019.

Despite the uptick in serious and violent crime across the county last year, the number of total calls

for service to the local sheriff's office in 2020 fell by nearly 600, or 8 percent, from the year prior. The bulk of that decrease came in the area of civil process, the sheriff said.

"A sheriff's office is mandated by law to serve civil process, the handling and serving of legal and court documents," Haken said, adding civil documents are served on behalf of individuals, private attorneys, the court, county departments and agencies and include everything from summons documents and civil and criminal subpoenas to eviction notices and documents related to dissolutions of marriage.

Haken's office served 230 fewer such documents in 2020 than in 2019.

Also down in 2020 when compared to the year prior was the number of traffic stops made by the local sheriff's office — nearly 150 fewer. The number of traffic accidents — both with injuries and without — also fell in 2020, and Haken said he was happy to report his office responded to no fatal accidents last year.

See **CRIME** on **A3**

Inside...

A3 Nearly half of the calls to which the Jackson County Sheriff's Office responded in 2020 pertained to incidents occurring within Jackson city limits.

Vaping is on the rise among local students

by JOSHUA SCHUETZ
Staff Writer

Youth use of electronic tobacco products has risen in Minnesota over the past five years and is a growing problem in Jackson County schools, according to student surveys and testimonies from school officials.

The 2019 Minnesota Student Survey, undertaken by the Minnesota Department of Health, found 43 percent of 11th-grade girls in the county had used e-cigarette products, includ-

ing vaping products, while 51 percent of 11th-grade boys had done the same. For ninth-graders, those numbers were 33 percent for girls and 25 percent for boys. Among eighth-graders, it was 7 percent of boys and 14 percent of girls.

The numbers contradict an overall decline in tobacco, alcohol and drug abuse. In fact, more students admit to vaping or using other electronic tobacco products than do

See **VAPING** on **A3**



PHOTOS BY DAN CONDON

Above: Jackson County Central sophomore Megan Olsem dribbles the ball up the court during a game of wheelchair basketball with the C-squad boys' basketball team last week. Right: Olsem puts up a shot during the scrimmage, which was put together by art teacher and C-squad basketball coach Blaise Jacobsen.



Above: Megan Olsem makes a pass during a drill at the beginning of basketball practice last Tuesday. Right: With all eyes on her, Olsem shoots a free throw during a drill at the end of last week's C-squad basketball practice.

WHEELS IN MOTION

Wheelchair game a wish come true for JCC student

by DAN CONDON
Sports Editor

Megan Olsem is one of a kind.

And she's proud of it. "I was born with 19 different diagnoses," the Jackson County Central sophomore said. "I'm the only person in the world like me."

Olsem has had 31 surgeries on her legs and feet so far, and No. 32 is expected in the next few months.

"Some were on my hips,

some were on my knees, some were on my calf, some were on my feet," she said.

The next, likely planned for this summer, is to repair a nerve that was hit during the latest surgery that makes her foot numb.

That surgery took place last December and was a big one.

"My bones curved by themselves," Olsem said. "That was making me fall and trip more. So, they cut out a piece of my bone and they straightened both of my legs."

Olsem is able to walk, but will never do so normally.

"I can walk, but I can't

See **WHEELS** on **A3**

Inside...

B3 COMMENTARY: Hats of to Blaise Jacobsen and his C-squad boys' basketball team for going the extra mile to give one student a day to remember.



PHOTO BY JOSHUA SCHUETZ

Stained-glass art created by Deb Stade (from left), Laura Marker, Kim Barnett and Janell Johnson is on display at the Jackson Center for the Arts.

Local artists show stained glass at JCA

by JOSHUA SCHUETZ
Staff Writer

Eight years ago, Kim Barnett developed an interest in stained glass and decided to do something about it.

So, she started taking classes at Sleepy Eye Stained Glass, a stained-glass shop in Sleepy Eye owned by artist Michael

Mason. Now, she and three friends who are taking classes with her are featured artists at the Jackson Center for the Arts.

"I started going to Sleepy Eye and, through the years, I talked the other girls into joining me," Barnett said. "I drove by myself for two years and then they came into my

life." Laura Marker, Deb Stade and Janell Johnson joined her over the years and began working on their own projects, some of which are featured in the art center's gallery.

"I've always been intrigued by glasswork," Marker said. "I really got my inspiration to start

See **ARTISTS** on **A8**

Local students respond to man injured in tumble

by JOSHUA SCHUETZ
Staff Writer

For one group of Jackson County Central Middle School students, what started out as the end to an ordinary Tuesday ended in an act of kindness and heroism that has won the students recognition from teachers, their families and others in the community.

Alexa Gonzales, Lily Schoenrock, Isabella

Costello, Gage Dahlsten, Kendall Matt, Samai Patel and Dylan Hilpibre were waiting for the bus to come pick them up at the end of the school day.

Then, everything changed.

"There was this nice, older couple walking across the street and the man had his hands full of groceries," Matt said. "He tripped and fell, and we were all like, 'This is not good.'"

The gentleman, Arlin Mattison, caught his foot on the crosswalk's gridding and struck his head during the fall.

"He had a 2-inch laceration on his temple," Gonzales said.

The students rushed in and began taking care of Mattison's wounds.

"We tried to tend to it the best we could," Matt said. "It was pretty scary."

See **STUDENTS** on **A3**

Local Meals on Wheels program sees increased need for drivers

by JOSHUA SCHUETZ
Staff Writer

Jackson's Meals on Wheels program, operated through Lutheran Social Services, is continuing to see an increased need for its services one year into the COVID-19 pandemic.

Inside...

A3 The impending merger of Lutheran Social Services and Twin Cities-based Lifetrack isn't expected to affect the local Meals on Wheels program.

"All of our in-person dining has transitioned to curbside pickup and home

delivery," said Sarah Anderson, the organization's

See **MEALS ON WHEELS** on **A3**