

HIGH-TECH TRUCKS

ND to test autonomous truck system to protect highway workers, BUSINESS

The Forum

OF FARGO-MOORHEAD



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FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2020

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ND records its youngest COVID-19 death

17-year-old remembered as devoted daughter, sister

By Michelle Griffith
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PARSHALL, N.D. — Seventeen-year-old Elvia “Rose” Ramirez wanted to be two things when she grew up: an artist and a cat mom.

After completing her senior year at Parshall High School on the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation in the spring of 2021, she planned to

marry her boyfriend of four years and possibly go to college.

But COVID-19 cut Ramirez’s life short.

She died on Tuesday, Oct. 6, at the Sanford Children’s Hospital in Fargo. She is the youngest person to die from COVID-19 so far in North Dakota.

As one of nine children, Ramirez loved to help her siblings and other people, said Susan Three Irons, Ramirez’s mother.

“If any of her friends were having problems,

Elvia would always be there for them,” said Three Irons, an enrolled citizen of the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara Nation. “Just to be a sounding board and just for them to have someone to talk to.”

Around Sept. 16, Three Irons said her daughter started to experience headaches, so she recommended Ramirez get tested at a drive-thru testing event in Parshall. Ramirez and her boyfriend tested positive for

RAMIREZ: Page A3

State ignores own criteria for COVID-19 risk levels

By Jeremy Turley
Forum News Service

BISMARCK — As North Dakota suffers through the harshest days of the pandemic to date, Gov. Doug Burgum again declined on Thursday, Oct. 8, to bump up the COVID-19 risk level for a handful of counties with high infection rates and case counts.

The lack of movement on risk levels defies the Burgum administration’s own criteria, and critics are calling the governor’s color-coded system “unscientific” and “totally arbitrary.”

Five rural counties currently in the “yellow” risk level — Emmons, Dickey, Golden Valley, Grant and McHenry — meet or exceed two of the three main criteria of the “crit-

ical” risk level, which comes with a stay-at-home order if implemented.

Another nine yellow-designated counties, including Stark and Williams, meet or exceed two criteria for the “high” or “orange” risk level, which would mean closures of bars, nail salons and gyms and a suspension of in-house service at restaurants and bars.

Burgum said last month he would closely watch Williams County, which includes Williston, and even noted the county was approaching a higher risk level. Since then, active cases per capita and the rate of positive tests have shot up even further as the county remains in the yellow designation.

RISK: Page A3



Ramirez



Special to The Forum / Sanford Health

An architectural sketch of the \$43 million to \$46 million new heart and vascular center that will be built adjacent to Sanford Medical Center in Fargo. Infrastructure and site preparation work is scheduled for fall of 2021, with groundbreaking in the spring of 2022 and completion by fall of 2023.

‘Growing and growing and growing’

Sanford moves ahead with plans for new heart center, orthopedic center upgrades

By Patrick Springer
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Fargo Sanford Health is moving ahead with plans for major construction projects in the next few years that include a new heart center and continued

renovation of its orthopedic specialty center.

Price tags for the two planned projects will be roughly \$43 million to \$46 million for the new heart and vascular center, which will be built adjacent to Sanford Medical Center, and roughly \$35 million to

\$40 million for renovation and equipment upgrades at its orthopedic center at Sanford’s South University campus.

“It’s not about the buildings, it’s about what’s going on inside the buildings,” which will bring new and expanded services to a growing population of patients, said Bryan Nermoe, president of Sanford Fargo.

SANFORD: Page A4

Personal trainer sentenced for sex crime involving fake medical study

By April Baumgarten
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MOORHEAD — After pleading guilty to a sex crime that involved recruiting a woman for a fake medical study, a personal trainer was sentenced to four months behind bars and will not be allowed to train women or children for at least a year after his release.

David Edward Saylor, 29, was sentenced Thursday, Oct. 8, in Clay County District Court on a fourth-degree felony of criminal sexual conduct.

In addition to 10 years of supervised probation, Judge Michelle Lawson ordered Saylor to spend 120 days in the Clay County Jail, despite a plea by defense attorney Daniel Hopper to allow Saylor to serve 90 days on electronic home monitoring instead. Saylor also will have to register as a sex offender.

“This is a case that

requires jail time,” Lawson said.

The sentencing settles one of two sexual conduct cases in the Fargo-Moorhead area involving Saylor’s claims to women he was conducting a medical study. In the Clay County case, the owner of Summit Fitness told a woman he was recruiting people to help with a study on Parkinson’s disease, according to court documents.

The woman initially declined but later agreed to help after Saylor kept asking her to participate. Over the course of several months in 2018, Saylor would either have the woman stand in front of him and press her buttocks against his groin while he held her hips, or have her straddle his groin so he could put his hands on her buttocks, according to court documents.

The woman told Lawson that she felt shocked, violated and belittled by Saylor. She also noted how he lied about the study so easily.

TRAINER: Page A4



Saylor

INSIDE TODAY'S FORUM

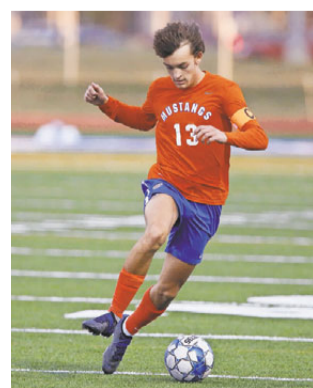
- Business C1
- Classifieds E1-4
- Comics B3
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- Life B1-2, B4
- Obituaries C4
- Opinion C2
- Sports D1

Today's weather



78°
39°

High clouds. Warm in the afternoon
Details, D4



SPORTS: ND state soccer tourney goes on with Sheyenne players exposed to COVID-19, **PAGE D1**

COMMENTARY

Poll: North Dakotans strongly support current initiated measure process

Fargo Careful, North Dakota Republican legislators.

The citizens you are continually trying to freeze out of the initiated measure process in order to give yourselves more power really, really don't like you messing with them.

That was overwhelmingly apparent in a recent statewide poll done to gauge North Dakotans' feelings on



MIKE MCFEELY
The Forum

the state's initiated measure process that is enshrined in the state's constitution.

More than 80% of respondents value the original intent of the process, view the initiated measure process as an important

tool to keep the legislature in check and believe the process affords citizens a way to address important issues not being considered by legislators.

Support for the current system cuts across party lines, finding nearly equal support from voters who say they will vote for either Republican Donald Trump or Democrat Joe Biden in the upcoming presidential election, the

poll found.

That, in political parlance, is a landslide.

The poll was conducted by Minnesota-based DFM Research for North Dakota Voters First. It was conducted Sept. 26-29, consisted of 460 North Dakotans and had a margin of error of +/-4.6%.

While none of the questions specifically

MCFEELY: Page A4

RAMIREZ

From Page A1



Special to The Forum

Elvia "Rose" Ramirez (back center) died from COVID-19 on Tuesday, Oct. 8. The 17-year-old is the youngest person to die from COVID-19 so far in North Dakota.

time of death, they let Three Irons say goodbye to her daughter over the phone.

Like many North Dakotans who have died from COVID-19, Ramirez had underlying health conditions, which in her case were asthma and high blood pressure.

MHA Nation Chairman Mark Fox said Ramirez's death has sent a shockwave through the community and many people are stunned and expressing sympathy and sorrow for her family, schoolmates and friends.

"It's not just a few elderly people in the late stages of their life that are dying here," Fox said. "It is impacting our young, and that means everybody that age or my age or to the oldest member we have, is at some sort of risk from this virus, and we need to take that seriously."

Three Irons said her daughter loved to draw Japanese anime characters and had a passion for helping people. Ramirez was like a second mom to her eight siblings and she helped many of them log into their distance learning classes at the beginning of the day, Three Irons said.

Even though Ramirez loved taking care of her little siblings, Three Irons said they prettily much dissuaded her

COVID-19 IN OUR REGION

North Dakota totals

New cases: 531
Active cases: 3,832 (+126 on 10/8)
Positivity rate: 8.09%
Currently hospitalized: 125
Deaths: 310 (+6)

Cass County totals

New cases: 137
Active cases: 687 (+66)
Active per 10K: 37
Deaths: 78 (+0)

Minnesota totals

New cases: 1,276
Deaths: 2,109 (+8)

Clay County totals

New cases: 34
Deaths: 42 (+0)

Note: As of 9 p.m. last night. For the most timely information, see InForum.com

Forum Design Center

from having her own children.

"Her little siblings were kind of more of a deterrent," Three Irons recalled, "and she said she only wanted to be a cat mom."

Ramirez was an enrolled member of the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community in Phoenix, Arizona, and her family plans to have a traditional burial for her there next week.

Readers can reach Forum reporter Michelle Griffith, a Report for America corps member, at mgriffith@forumcomm.com

NORTH DAKOTA COVID-19 ACTIVE POSITIVES

March 15 through Oct. 7



Source: North Dakota Department of Health

Forum News Service

RISK

From Page A1

When asked Thursday why the state is not following its own guidelines, the Republican governor said his administration "takes a look at things holistically, not just numerically, when we make these decisions." He noted some of the low-population counties don't have many cases of COVID-19 despite their high positivity rates.

"We're applying judgment to the framework, so that we, again, take action that reduces the most number of transmissible moments with the least amount of negative impact on people that probably aren't really involved in transmission," Burgum said. Shelley Lenz, who is running against Burgum on the Democratic-NPL ticket, said her opponent's refusal to follow the criteria he designed shows a lack of leadership in the face of an unchecked crisis. Lenz charged Burgum with eroding public trust in the government and confusing residents with arbitrary risk-level designations.

Mandan resident Jenn Kary is a frequent critic of Burgum's risk levels and has used her background in geographic information systems to share her own risk-level maps on a Facebook page called "North Dakota Covid-19 Statistics - unofficial."

Kary said Burgum's "holistic approach" to evaluating risk levels differently for each county doesn't follow a scientific method and sends unclear messages about the actual risk of COVID-19 to residents. She said the governor seems unwilling to move counties up to their proper risk levels because his main concern is keeping the economy open rather than maintaining public health.

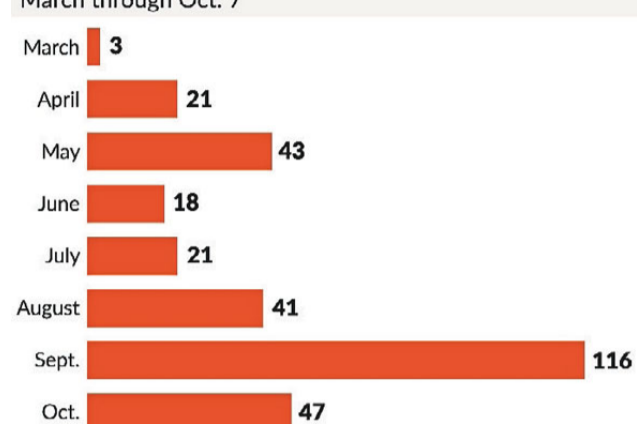
Burgum added Thursday that his office will change the state's guidelines for each risk-level designation next week to reflect that large gatherings, like sporting events and church services, are causing much more spread of the virus than patronage at hair salons and other personal care businesses.

State reports record active cases, youngest death

Earlier in the day, the North Dakota Department of Health reported six deaths from COVID-19 and record-high num-

NORTH DAKOTA COVID-19 DEATHS BY MONTH

March through Oct. 7



Source: North Dakota Department of Health

Forum News Service

bers of active cases and virus-related hospitalizations.

Health officials confirmed the state's youngest death of the pandemic: a Mountrail County female between the ages of 10 and 19 who had underlying health conditions.

Officials also reported the deaths of a Burleigh County woman, a Stark County woman, a Ward County woman and two Ward County men. All but one of the deceased residents was at least 80 years old.

The department says 310 North Dakotans have succumbed to the illness, and deaths have been mounting at a rapid pace over the last month. Wednesday brought news of 24 deaths across the state — by far the most announced in a single day. Burgum said Thursday he hopes this "painful week" marks the darkest days of the pandemic.

At least 190 of the state's deaths have come in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities, many of which

have been decimated by the virus in the last two months.

There are now 3,832 residents known to be infected with the virus — a new pandemic record.

The number of hospitalized residents with the illness rose on Thursday to 125 — a new pandemic high. Twenty-seven North Dakotans with the virus are in intensive care.

The state is battling through a shortage of available hospital beds as COVID-19 hospitalizations converge with strains on health care staffing and high non-coronavirus admissions. There are 30 available intensive care beds and 231 regular, inpatient beds in the whole state, according to the latest figures from the department.

The health department reported 531 new cases of COVID-19 on Thursday, including 137 in Cass County and 90 in Burleigh County.

Contact Jeremy Turley at jturley@forumcomm.com or on Twitter at @jeremyturley

BRIEFS

Body found behind Fargo gas station

FARGO — Officers say they were called to an area behind the M&H gas station off Main Avenue around 9 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 7, for a disturbance.

When they arrived, they found a body of a deceased man in a grassy area.

The investigating officers were not sure if the death was connected to the disturbance.

Investigators did not believe the death was the result of criminal activity.

Police said the people involved in the initial service call to the area are not cooperating with investigators.

Lake Agassiz Regional Library closed Oct. 12 for training

MOORHEAD — All Lake Agassiz Regional Library locations and LINK sites will be closed Monday, Oct. 12, for staff development.

Lake Agassiz Regional Library branches are found in Moorhead, Ada, Bagley, Barnesville, Breckenridge, Climax, Crookston, Detroit Lakes, Fertile Fosston, Hawley, Mahnommen and McIntosh. LINK sites are located in Cormorant, Frazee, Gonvick, Halstad, Hendrum, Lake Park, Rothsay, Twin Valley and Ulen.

For more information about Lake Agassiz Regional Library, visit www.larl.org.

Essentia Health offers additional mammogram appointments

FARGO — Essentia Health is offering additional appointment slots outside of normal hours to schedule mammograms. Appointments will be available Saturday, Oct. 17.

To make screening more convenient, Essentia Health is offering appointment times ranging from early morning through the early evening during the week and appointment times on Saturdays ranging from early morning through midday.

Call 701-364-8200 to schedule a mammography appointment. No referral is needed.

HOW HAVE YOUR PLANS CHANGED?

Help local businesses...

COVID-19 is impacting our community and local business in many ways. The business uncertainty over the next few months is one of many challenges. The economy and how we shop has changed, yet we do not know by how much or how long.

To help with some of the uncertainty, please take the time to start a survey about your current shopping needs.

This information will help local business and this newspaper get a better understanding of your needs and plans.

\$1,000 will be awarded by Pulse Research to one respondent.

Thank You!

Please start the survey here:

www.pulsepoll.com

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