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Submitted photo

Throughout her life, Joyce Kuske's daily goal was to make a difference in somebody else's life through simple and kind deeds. Pictured are (from left, Caleb, Joyce and Grant Kuske.

## Pioneers cross-country team runs for those who can't

By SHEILA BERGREN  
Staff Writer

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"We run for those who can't." That's the motto of the Pioneers cross-country team as each runner has dedicated their season to one person who cannot run for a variety of reasons. The idea started with a pair of slightly used running shoes Paul Kuske of Pierz donated to the Pierz Healy High School. The shoes belonged to his late wife, Joyce Kuske, who died June 27, after a three-year battle with breast cancer.

Scott Herold, school counselor and cross-country coach, said the slightly used pair of running shoes was Joyce's last pair that she had used. Rather than giving them away, the shoes now serve as a reminder of Joyce and how precious good health and life is and that everyone isn't able to run.

Joyce's son, Caleb, a senior at Pierz Healy High School, said he has dedicated his cross-country season to run for his mom. He knew how much she loved running.

"We used to go for runs together. She was the one who convinced me to join cross-country to begin with. Throughout this season, I've gone through a lot of tough times of just never doing as good as I wanted to, but thinking of the effort my mom put in to achieve things that never seemed possible really motivated me to push myself harder than I ever imagined," Caleb said.

Joyce's husband and Caleb's dad, Paul Kuske, said that was just who Joyce was as a person — always willing to help other people, believing in the power of making

a difference in people's lives through simple acts of kindness.

"That was her mission every day, to go out of her way to do something nice for somebody. She was always thankful for everything she had," Paul said.

The heart for helping others and being thankful was also something she instilled deeply into her twin sons, Caleb and Grant. Every evening at supper, she'd ask them to name something nice they had done for somebody that day and something they were thankful for, Paul said.

**"Every time I feel like giving up, I think of Derek and keep on running for him."**

— Carissa Andres

Senior Alyssa Gall has also chosen to dedicate her season for Joyce as both Caleb and Grant are good friends of hers. Knowing how much Joyce loved running and being outside has also made her want to run even harder and has helped her push herself this season, she said. "I loved the idea of dedicating our seasons to someone. It has also created a really strong bond between my teammates and myself," Gall said.

Junior Carissa Andres said she is running for Derek Marshik, a person in the community who was in an ATV accident and was paralyzed from the waist down.

"Having someone to run for this season has really pushed me to a whole new level, being out there and thinking and feeling like I can't keep running, just to remember that there are people who literally cannot do it, pushes me to keep going. Every time I feel like giving up, I think of Derek and keep on running for him," Andres said.

Connor Kruse, a junior at Pierz Healy High School, said he is running for his

Grandpa Lloyd Kruse. Although his grandfather had a stroke and died before Kruse was born, and as a result, he never had the opportunity to meet his grandfather, Kruse likes to believe that he is somewhere watching him run.

"I like to imagine that every time I race that he is there, cheering me on. This gives me strength to finish my race," Kruse said.

One thing Herold has noticed throughout the season is that once the runners feel like they have nothing more to offer on the course physically, they are reminded of why they run and end up running on pure heart. As a result, it has made for a great season.

After Joyce died, Paul started the Joyce Kuske Memorial Scholarship in her honor for a student who is going into the health care field.

"Joyce was always used to caring for others and when she was sick, so many people stepped up and offered her care. That just really impressed her, especially the people who came to our house to help her with stuff at home," Paul said.

In addition, Paul plans to donate a new pair of running shoes once a year that will be given to a student in need of good pair of shoes. It's also a way to promote exercise and healthy living — something Joyce was huge into.

"Joyce has a very generous spirit, so that's my way of keeping her spirit alive in things that she really liked," Paul said.

Paul remained Joyce's caregiver throughout her battle with cancer. She was a fighter. It was also not the first time she had been diagnosed with cancer, he said.

Paul said Joyce was first diagnosed with breast cancer in 2003. Shortly after her diagnosis, she discovered she was pregnant with Caleb and Grant. The twins were born prematurely and spent the first six weeks of their lives in the neonatal intensive care unit in St. Cloud.

"These two boys just cruised through life and they've been very healthy and Joyce was cancer free for 15 years. Then it came back in 2018," he said.

Throughout Paul and Joyce's lives, their faith in God and Jesus Christ has been a cornerstone through both good and bad times. By living out their faith, Paul said it cultivated a life-

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## Judy Justice decides outcome of dog attack

By SHEILA BERGREN  
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Little did Amber Mielke of Sobieski know at the time that the case of unleashed dogs attacking their horses during a trail ride in the Little Missouri State Park in Killdeer, N.D. in August 2020, would ultimately be decided by Judge Judy Sheindlin in the premiere of her new TV reality show, "Judy Justice."

The first episode will be streamed, Nov. 1, on IMDbTV.

The dog attack caused several of the riders, some of whom were young children of Mielke and her friend, Elayna Harsh of Bloomer, Wis. to fall off of their horses. As the horses' natural instinct set in to flee, the dogs then continued to chase the horses for a mile, including through a barbed wire fence.

While the riders and the horses were injured, Poppy, Mielke's son, Wyatt's gaming pony, was severely injured. If she had not been small enough to fit into the back of an ATV to be transported from the area they were in, Mielke said the horse would have had to be put down on the spot.

Poppy received continuous veterinary care to heal from her injuries. After nearly a year of rehabilitation, Wyatt was able to compete with her again.

**"That gave me no hope of any restitution. Then to find out that they dropped the charges because the state's attorney didn't show up."**

— Amber Mielke

Mielke said that he would pay for the veterinary costs. However, when it came down to it, he never did.

Because of the dog attack, Larranga was charged with disorderly conduct by the Dunn County Attorney's Office in September 2020. Mielke said that she had hoped that the court would award her compensatory damages to at least cover the veterinary expenses.

However, to Mielke's surprise, the case was dismissed in January by the court. She later found out that the reason the case was dismissed was because the prosecuting attorney had failed to appear at the hearing.

"That gave me no hope of any restitution. Then to find out that they dropped the charges because the state's attorney didn't show up. Yeah, I was pretty upset at that point," she said.



Submitted photo

Elayna Harsh, left, and Amber Mielke enjoyed their time at the set of Judy Justice. It was also an opportunity to get reimbursed for the veterinary expenses after unleashed dogs attacked their horses during a trail ride.

Mielke said she could have brought Larranga to Conciliation Court. While she was confident in being awarded compensatory damages, Mielke said she wasn't sure if Larranga would actually pay it. As a result, she contacted Judge Judy to see if she was interested in hearing their case —

she was.

Any restitution that is awarded in cases heard by Judge Judy is also paid by the producers and not by the person who is ordered to pay. Both the plaintiff and the defendant also receive an appearance fee.

"They paid for our flight too, so that was nice," Mielke said.

With the expenses paid, Mielke and Harsh flew to the Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) in July. Since they arrived early, the two rented a couple of scooters to do some sightseeing.

The following morning, they were picked up from their hotel by staff from the show and were brought on set. Before the hearing was filmed, both Mielke and Harsh were made "camera ready." Normally, Mielke said, both hair and makeup is done. However, because of COVID-19 restrictions, only makeup was applied. Because of the different COVID-19 precautions in place, the two were pretty much secluded to a small trailer for most of the time.

One thing that Mielke really appreciated was that the staff had all of the documents of the case that she had submitted and needed provided. It made things a lot easier on her part, she said.

Both the plaintiff and defendant were able to bring one witness with them. While Larranga brought his son, Mielke said she brought Harsh since she was the only other adult that was there when the dog attack happened. Harsh had also been brought to a nearby hospital by ambulance from injuries she received in the dog attack.

The hearing that was held by Judge Judy was very short, about 15-20 minutes, Mielke said. She also avoided looking at the defendant since she knew it would only frustrate her even more. The only practice they had before the hearing was walking up front.

Although the episode was filmed in July, all the parties have been asked to not to reveal the outcome until after the episode has aired. Mielke encourages people to watch it since it also includes a portion about dog owners and rules.

When it comes to walking dogs in the Little Missouri State Park, as well as other state parks, dog owners are required to keep their dogs on a leash. Some state parks offer areas and dog parks where people's four-legged friends can run around unleashed.

The dog attack has made a permanent mark on all of the riders. While they still

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(103121-KuskeShoes)

Staff photo by Sheila Bergren

Joyce Kuske's last pair of running shoes is a reminder of how precious good health and life is. Not everyone is able to run.

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(103121-WhyattMielke) Staff photo by Sheila Bergren  
Whyatt Mielke is happy that his gaming pony, Poppy, was able to recover from injuries she received in a dog attack last year.

**Judy Justice decides outcome of attack**  
(Continued from Page 1B)  
enjoy going on trail rides, Mielke finds herself dismounting her horse many times when walking past a potential situation. The children are also quite nervous about any dogs they encounter while they are riding. It has made them nervous, she said. It is something the horses can sense too.  
The group has not returned to the Little Missouri State Park to go trail riding since the dog attack. Mielke said she isn't sure if they ever will, given that the dog owner is a local resident and still own dogs. Running into him or his dogs is not something she wants to take a chance on doing again, she said.

# Classes offered in Pierz to focus on retirement

Pierz Community Education is working with Alicia Kapus of Thrivent Financial to host Financial Aid 101 Nov. 9, and Five Keys to Retiring Fearlessly Nov. 11.  
Kapus will share information, no products will be sold.  
For more information, times and location call the Community Education office at (320) 468-6458, ext. 7 or check online at [www.pierzschoolspayonline.org](http://www.pierzschoolspayonline.org).

**Pioneers cross-country team**  
(Continued from Page 1B)  
style that was very calm and peaceful.  
Besides about 30 cross-country team runners dedicating their season to someone who can't run, Herold said they also made a short video of each student holding a sign with the name of whom they were running for. Joyce's last pair of running shoes also made it into the video. The video is a great inspiration to both runners and their coaches, Herold said.

# Fall bazaar planned at Zion Lutheran, Nov. 6

Zion Lutheran Church will have a fall bazaar Saturday, Nov. 6 from 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.  
There will be Grandma's Attic, along with baked goods, crafts and books for sale. In addition, a soup, sandwich, and dessert luncheon will be served from 10:30 a.m. – 1 p.m. for a freewill donation.  
Zion Lutheran is located at 411 Third Ave. NE, Little Falls.

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