

# The Verndale Sun

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**\$1.00**



## Sold out crowd for the rodeo

The 18th annual Bulls, Broncos and Barrels was held at the R&J Arena in Verndale on February 4 and 5 featuring a packed house each night. The event included bull riding, bronco riding, barrel racing and mutton busting for the kids. It was a fun show featuring Entertainer Jesse Larson who definitely kept the crowd entertained. Above, Will Gullickson held on tight as his bronco bucked through the air Friday night. See more photos on the back page.

### Wadena County Commissioners

## Three long-standing county employees retire



by Trinity Gruenberg  
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The Wadena County Commissioners held their regular meeting on February 1. Recognition of Retiring Employees

The commissioners recognized the retirement of three long-standing county employees. Bunni Olson, Extension Office manager, 35 years; Cynthia Pederson, Public Health director, 31 years; and Greg Malone, building maintenance, 27 years. Each were given a plaque.

County Coordinator Ryan Odden shared a few words about each employee retiring this month. Malone has worked in various areas, the majority of his time spent in building maintenance, specifically in Human Services.

"That department would claim him as one of their own, and we are very sad to see you

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The Wadena County Commissioners recognized their retiring employees at the February 1 meeting. Front row: Bunni Olson, Extension Office Manager of 35 years; Greg Malone, Building Maintenance of 27 years; and Cynthia Pederson, Public Health Director, 31 years. Back row: Commissioners Murlyn Kreklau, Bill Stearns, Jon Kangas, Mike Weyer and Sheldon Monson.

## Dogs and donkeys make it possible to protect livestock and coexist with predators



Lynn Minzer shared this photo of one of her Great Pyrenees livestock guardian dogs keeping a watchful eye over her sheep.

by Trinity Gruenberg  
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The Crow Wing River Basin Forage Council's winter meeting was held on Thursday, January 20 at the Verndale Community Center.

Lynn Minzer, Chengawatana Community Farm from Palisade, and Tim Nolte, Sebeka farmer, discussed the animals they use as livestock guardians.

Minzer has over 200 acres, half forested, the other is open pasture, hay and wetland with frontage on the Willow River. She owns cattle, pigs, sheep and chickens. In 2009, she got her first livestock guardian dogs. They were Great Pyrenees cross.

In 20 years, she's only lost one lamb to a predator, a bald eagle. She's surrounded by wolves, coyotes, cougars, foxes and bears. The dogs have kept her animals safe from predators.

The livestock guardian animals enable predator-friendly ranching as the farmers recognize

the predator's role in a healthy ecosystem.

The result of shooting predators can create an explosion of prey species. Coyotes will have larger litters in response to their packs being culled.

Livestock guardian dogs come in different shapes and sizes but tend to be larger animals. They are often mixed breeds who bond with the flock and wish to stay with them and protect them.

Some of the breeds are Great Pyrenees, Maremma Sheepdog, Central Asian Shepherd, Sarplaninac and Anatolian Shepherd. They are often white in color so they stand out from the predators. They usually don't make great pets.

The pups typically have no interest in playing fetch or chasing a ball. They learn to obey commands and usually have a calm temperament. They are focused on their work. They want to stay

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## Families mourn loved ones as Minnesota reaches highest number of traffic deaths since 2007; 497 lives lost in crashes in 2021

Yes, 497 is the highest number of traffic fatalities since 2007 when there were 510 traffic deaths, according to preliminary figures reported by the Minnesota Department of Public Safety Office of Traffic Safety.

Minnesota averaged 378 traffic fatalities a year from 2016-2020. Minnesota reported the first traffic fatality of 2022 on New Year's Day when a 51-year-old unbelted male driver was killed in Goodhue County. Alcohol and driving too fast for the conditions are suspected in contributing to the crash.

**Sadness and Anger**  
"I'm saddened knowing how many families lost a loved one in a traffic crash in 2021,"

said Mike Hanson, Office of Traffic Safety director. "With sadness, there is also anger. An-

ger that so many motorists are taking the privilege of driving for granted. Some drivers are

deliberately exceeding the speed limit, failing to put down the

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**Fatality Breakdown**  
Out of the 497 fatalities on Minnesota roads, 72 percent are male.

10 and under	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70	71+	Unknown
7 (1.4%)	48 (9.7%)	84 (16.9%)	86 (17.3%)	59 (11.9%)	71 (14.3%)	67 (13.5%)	74 (14.9%)	1 (0.2%)

**Minnesota Traffic Fatalities 2007-2021**

2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
510	455	421	411	368	395	387	361	411	392	358	381	364	394	497

\*\*\*2021 497 preliminary

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