

OPINION



PILOT EDITORIAL

Mental Health Awareness Month offers opportunity to advocate and support

May is Mental Health Awareness Month and, as such, a good time to talk about it.

There's a strange stigma around mental health, as though some people choose to experience mental health issues or simply want attention for their suffering.

One of the challenges faced by people who struggle with their mental health is the lack of resources available, especially in areas like ours. The closure of the Southwest Mental Health Center's Jackson campus last year was a body blow to mental health services access in the county and, because telemedicine is heavily regulated, it's often impossible for someone in South Dakota — at the Sanford Psychiatric Clinic, for example — to visit with a patient virtually.

A second problem is while our modern age is far more comfortable than what our ancestors enjoyed, it's also very good at leading us to exaggerate threats, project doom where there is none, worry ceaselessly and stew in negativity.

But I think one of the biggest challenges to helping those of who struggle with mental health is how different every case is. We find ourselves speaking in truisms like, "It'll get better," and, "It'll be OK." Both of those things are true, as a general matter, but when one's own mind seems desperately bent on torturing itself in the worst possible ways, they can be painful to hear.

We need more therapists, more psychiatrists and more people working in mental health care as a whole. It's also important we teach kids to understand the world is not as dangerous as the headlines make it seem. In our zeal to protect children from danger, we run the risk of convincing them the world is so unspeakably awful that there's no way to navigate it successfully.

Everyone — young people, middle-aged people and elderly people — will likely struggle with their mental health at some point in their lives. That is a statistical fact. Fortunately, we live in a society that has made tremendous advancements in learning how to treat both mental health issues and mental illnesses. We should take advantage of that by pushing for greater access to services and encouraging young people to pursue careers in psychology, psychiatry and other mental health-related fields.

But at the end of the day, millions upon millions of Americans — including many Jackson County residents — struggle with their mental health. We ought to end the stigma around those who struggle, advocate for ways to improve access to mental health care and support our friends and families in the challenges they — and we — may face.



LAST WEEK'S ONLINE POLL

Q: Which outdoor task is worse?



Source: Jackson County Pilot Website

THIS WEEK'S ONLINE POLL

Q: What's your favorite thing to grill?

Vote online at jacksoncountypilot.com.

MnWest a vital institution in the community

It's cap and gown season in Jackson County once again.

Each spring, local high school and community college students "spring" into a new phase of life. Whether working, starting a business or continuing their education, young people move forward into the weird and wonderful real world.

The Jackson campus of Minnesota West Community and Technical College graduates around 130 students this week, most of whom will receive certifications in technical programs. Some will go on to further their education, while others will move into the workforce.

We ought to appreciate these students — and the community college that serves them.

MnWest is a vital part of our community's infrastructure, especially as it relates to workforce development. Welding, farm business management and electrical work are just a few sectors in which the college offers training. What's more, community college offers students a chance to move into a specialized career sooner and at a lower cost than a four-year university.

Community colleges — and the education they provide — are underrated in 21st-century America.

Yet, it's clear they offer social mobility to the people who need it most. For many working-class kids, community college offers a pathway into the middle class and even toward entrepreneurship. For many people seeking a second career, enrolling in training courses at a community college is far more accessible than going to a four-year school.

More students should be encouraged to attend community college, as should people who are dissatisfied with their careers and looking for a change.

So, hats off to the members of the 2022

MnWest Jackson graduating class. Your accomplishments benefit not only you and our families, but the rest of our community as well. We are lucky to have you, we are proud of you and we look forward to seeing how you chart the courses of your futures.



JUST JOSHIN'
Joshua Schuetz

Troopers with state patrol are turning up the HEAT

Question: I have heard some talk about HEAT patrols being conducted by the Minnesota State Patrol. Can you explain what this is?

Answer: HEAT stands for Highway Enforcement for Aggressive Traffic. Motorists will see a significant state patrol presence on freeways around the state through August as troopers focus on excessive speed enforcement and criminal activity. The patrols began in the Twin Cities metro area and have continued in Greater Minnesota.

In addition to troopers on the freeway, the state patrol will increase its

aviation support during the HEAT patrols to ensure a driver attempting to flee from a traffic stop will be located and held accountable.

"The first HEAT patrols last month were successful in stopping speeding drivers and, with the help of our aviation resources, we were able to catch people who chose to flee police," said Col. Matt Langer, chief of the Minnesota State Patrol. "We will continue this effort around the state through the summer. In addition to state patrol troopers, we hope to have local agencies working with us to increase

the presences of law enforcement on Minnesota highways and freeways."

The new HEAT patrols will also focus on traffic safety, while also providing an increased law enforcement presence in areas with public safety concerns.

The HEAT patrols are one way the state patrol is expanding its efforts to support local law enforcement agencies as they address crime in their communities.

You can avoid a ticket — and a crash — if you simply buckle up, drive at safe speeds, pay attention and always drive sober.

If you have any

questions concerning traffic-related laws or issues in Minnesota, send your questions to Sgt. Troy Christianson, Minnesota State Patrol, at 2900 48th St. NW; Rochester, MN 55901-5848. Or reach him at Troy.Christianson@state.mn.us.



ASK A TROOPER
Sgt. Troy Christianson

READERS WRITE

Support helps us help local animals

To the editor:

The people and animals of PAWS (Precious Animals Worth Saving) of Jackson wish to thank all the people who made the spring 2022 PAWS rummage sale fundraiser a resounding success.

Thank you to everyone who donated, as well as those who came out and shopped despite the uncooperative weather. A big thank-you also goes to the Jackson

American Legion for the use of its hall. Your support allows us to continue to help as many animals as possible in the general Jackson area. All funds raised go toward spaying/neutering/vaccinating, other necessary vet expenses and food and shelter.

Thank you so much for your support!

Janice Lepinski
PAWS president
Jackson

Thanks for the all the support

To the editor:

An open letter to the Jackson County Central community:

The JCC FFA Chapter would like to thank you for the continued support of our members. To experience the success we recently had at the 2022 Minnesota State FFA Convention truly takes a village. We are fortunate to have the very best guiding us, teaching us and cheering us on.

We would like to especially thank the Alpha, Jackson and Lakefield fire departments for the escort we received into town when we returned from the convention. To know our communities wanted to join in celebrating our success was much appreciated. We would also like to thank all of the parents for putting together the welcome-home meal and to Emily Anderson for coordinating the celebration.

We hope we have made you proud!

Meta Tewes
JCC FFA Chapter president
On behalf of the members of the JCC FFA Chapter
Jackson

More information is needed on proposed pipelines through county

To the editor:

I visited with a person from the environmental department. He is very concerned. The carbon pipelines are trying to move too quickly with many unanswered questions.

As this project moves along, landowners and rural communities need to be aware and cautious. These new pipeline projects have not been approved by the state. If a landowner signs a voluntary easement, it is legally binding if the project is not approved, or if the company goes bankrupt, or if the project becomes obsolete. As residents and landowners, we need more information about the risks, hazards and liabilities this project poses.

Out-of-state companies stand to make millions of dollars in profit over the years if these projects are approved, but they can't make money if they don't have access to our land.

Barb Pohlman
Lakefield

Concerned about the course of our country? Vote Benda

To the editor:

We have the unique opportunity to have a Jackson County native represent southern Minnesota in Congress. Matt Benda was raised on a farm between Jackson and Alpha, graduating in 1988. He obtained his law degree and has been a partner in a successful law firm for 25 years in Albert Lea, specializing in representing farmers. He is setting aside his career to run to be our next Republican congressman.

I want to speak to the moral fiber of my lifelong friend. I am not knowledgeable about the real character of many who are supposed to represent us in government; however, too often, many seem to be repeat offenders of a lack of integrity.

We all have made selfish decisions or been dishonest; the difference between a person with integrity and one without is not repeating this behavior. I believe Benda to not only have integrity, but also to be blessed with instinctive high moral

fiber.

Back in high school, we had a classmate who was getting picked on by several bullies from another town. Benda wasn't a big kid, nor did he have wrestling skills, but he took them on to defend our classmate. He got beat up, but he took a stand.

That's the kind of guy he is. He won't back down from what's right.

He is a devoted Christian with a strong belief in life, devoted husband to his wife of 22 years and excellent father to his son and daughter. He has been active in politics since he was a teenager and a strong community advocate of Albert Lea for decades.

He doesn't need the job, but I believe our country needs him. Join me in supporting Benda for Congress in the Republican special primary on May 24 — or vote earlier!

Jeff K. Johnson
Jackson

Proud to have your support, honored to earn your vote

To the editor:

Due to the unfortunate passing of U.S. Rep. Jim Hagedorn, a special primary election will take place to fill his seat on Tuesday, May 24. Early voting at your county elections office is open right now.

For 25 years, I have been working hard to represent southern Minnesota families, farmers and businesses. I am now ready to translate those legal/advocacy skills into fighting for our rural way of life in Washington, D.C.

My campaign has already brought me to homes and businesses in all 21 counties in our district. I have personally knocked on doors and sat at kitchen tables and in businesses to hear from you personally. It only makes sense that to be an effective member of Congress, a candidate needs to listen and learn what's important to constituents. As I like to say, "Common sense lives in the grassroots and on Main Street!"

As the outsider candidate in this race,

I am proud to have the support of so many commonsense voters who believe in our campaign's authentic message.

Several of my Republican competitors will receive endorsements from powerful special interest groups and lobbyists with no tie to southern Minnesota or the people who live here. In contrast, our campaign will continue to be homegrown and hardworking. Read the fine print and you will see which candidate is being propped up by these big-money special interests.

I will continue to take my campaign directly to you and look forward to hearing from you on your ideas to put our country on a course correction. I would be honored to earn your vote and welcome your help in spreading the word to vote for me in the special primary election on May 24. Vote Benda!

Matt Benda
Albert Lea

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