



2022 PREVIEW EDITION

# Jackson County Fair

## County fair blends new, exciting with time-honored, traditional

by JUSTIN R. LESSMAN  
Publisher

The new and exciting meet the time-honored and traditional at next week's Jackson County Fair.

The 154<sup>th</sup> great Jackson County get-together runs Tuesday through next Saturday at the Jackson County Fairgrounds in Jackson.

Returning attractions at this year's fair include live bull-riding and barrel-racing action, the Freddie Justice comedy hypnotist show, live music by "Tripwire" and the "Johnny Holm



Terri Bargfrede

Band" and all the livestock and general project exhibits for which the fair is known.

Among the new attractions this year are a youth obstacle challenge, grilling contest, Minnesota history teller and a headlining performance by local native and Grammy Award-winning musician David Ellefson, who plans to reunite with his high

school band for a special one-night-only engagement in his hometown.

"It's shaping up to be a great lineup this year," said Terri Bargfrede, fair board treasurer. "There really is something for everybody."

The Los Moralitos Circus kicks off the fun on Tuesday with five big days of free shows planned.

"They were with us back

in 2019 and really drew big crowds," Bargfrede said. "We're looking forward to having them back again."

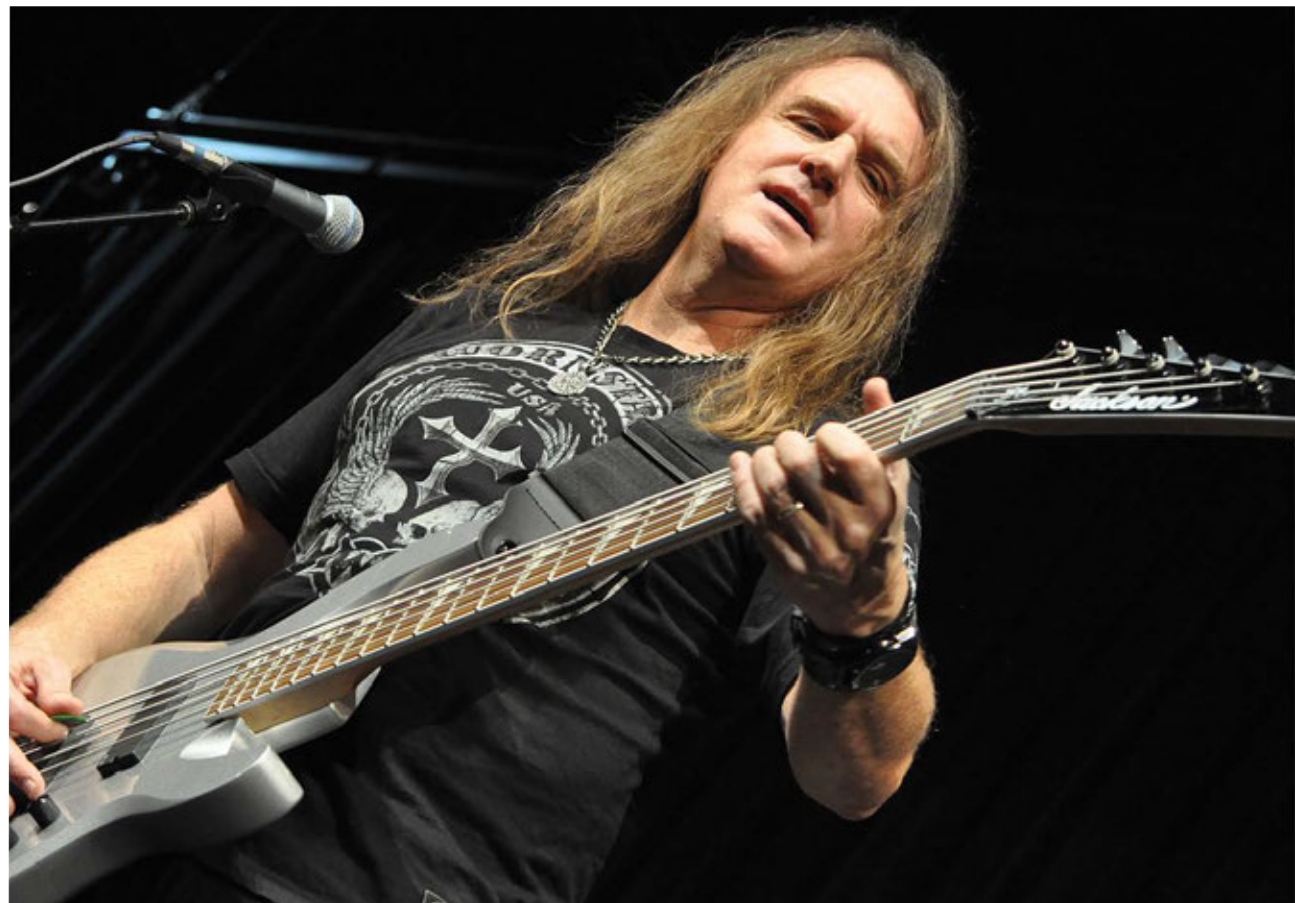
The highlight of the fair's Wednesday is free live bull-riding action courtesy of Rice Bull Riding Co. and AGCO Corp. Show time is 7:30 p.m. in the main grandstand area.

Justice brings his brand of hilarious hypnosis back to the fair on July 28, with

three free shows planned, and "Tripwire" plays the beer garden at 8:30 that night.

Minnesota photographer and historian Doug Ohman will present on various historical topics at various times through the day next Friday and Saturday. Folks can listen to him free of charge in the Anderson building.

See **FAIR** on **C2**



Grammy Award-winning musician and Jackson County native David Ellefson will perform at this year's Jackson County Fair.

PHOTOS BY JUSTIN LESSMAN

## Fair fare will be far more than just fair

Baker's dozen of food vendors set to serve fairgoers

by JUSTIN R. LESSMAN  
Publisher

A baker's dozen of food vendors are ready to set up shop at next week's Jackson County Fair, serving everything from cheese curds and corndogs to egg rolls and wontons.



Jeff Fiala

Local fair board member Jeff Fiala said 13 different food vendors are on the menu for this year's great Jackson County get-together —

many longtime favorites coming back for a repeat engagement, and a handful of new ones excited to make their fair debut.

"We have a good variety of food vendors already signed up," Fiala said. "There are a lot of returning ones, but a lot of new ones too."

Returning vendors plan to serve up everything from traditional fair fare — cheese curds, corndogs, cotton candy and mini donuts — to the downright exotic — poutine, sweet corn nuggets and deep-fried cookies, just to name a few.

The pizza wagon is back again this year, as is the malt stand and fresh-squeezed lemonade booth.

New this year are two vendors specializing in

See **FOOD** on **C2**

## CRANKING IT UP

Famous native son Ellefson set to headline fair

by JUSTIN R. LESSMAN  
Publisher

Jackson County's most famous native son will headline the 154th Jackson County Fair.

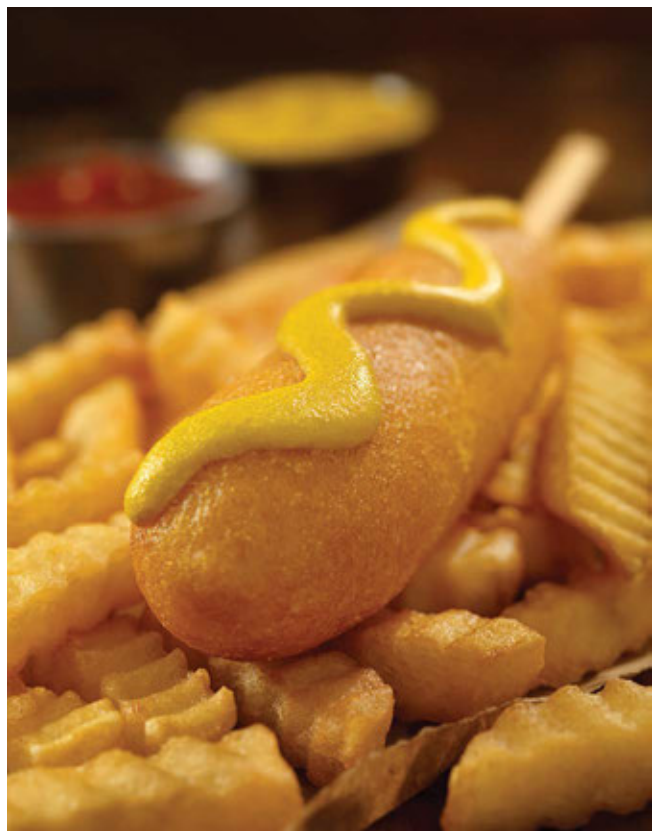
David Ellefson, co-founder of Grammy Award-winning heavy-metal band "Megadeth," will reunite with high school bandmates Greg Handevidt and Justin Neuenschwander and rock the fair's Friday night.

It's a reunion of sorts for the three former locals, whose band, "TOZ," played the Jackson County Fair as teenagers in the

See **ELLEFSON** on **C3**



Greg Handevidt (left) and David Ellefson, two of the founding members of internationally known heavy-metal band "Megadeth," will reunite with high school bandmate Justin Neuenschwander to play this year's Jackson County Fair — more than 40 years after last doing so as teenagers.



FILE PHOTO

Corn dogs and French fries are on the menu of more than one food vendor scheduled to set up shop at next week's Jackson County Fair.

## County's finest critters will go under the gavel



PHOTO BY JEN TEWES

Auctioneer Scott Christopher calls the bid while Kie Anderson runs his swine project through the ring during last year's Jackson County Fair 4-H Livestock Premium Auction. This year's auction starts at 9 a.m. on Saturday, July 30.

Premium auction slated for July 30

by JUSTIN R. LESSMAN  
Publisher

Some of the finest critters in the county will come up for bid Saturday, July 30, during the 2022 Jackson County Fair 4-H Livestock Premium and State Fair Auction.

The gavel falls at 9 a.m. that day at the Olson Pavilion.

The money donated through the livestock premium auction benefits individual 4-H members and Jackson County 4-H as a whole, said Regan Mouw, Jackson County 4-H Extension educator, with 80 percent of any contribution going directly to the exhibitor and 20 percent used for the Jackson County 4-H program.

"Twenty percent of all auction proceeds directly

See **CRITTERS** on **C4**



## Golden Gophers set to honor gold medalists

JCC wrestling team in line to be recognized at county fair

by DAN CONDON  
Staff Writer

The state champion Jackson County Central wrestling team will be honored by the University of Minnesota during the Jackson County Fair.

Representatives from the Gopher wrestling team will be on hand Friday, July 29, outside the show pavilion at the fair for a meet-and-greet ceremony.

The idea for the event came from Kent Bargfrede, who thought back to when his kids were in high school. Back then, JCC was referred to as "Title Town" when the Huskies won state softball and baseball championships in the same spring.

Because the JCC volleyball team finished second at state and the wrestling team won the Class A state title, Bargfrede thought some recognition was due.

The volleyball ceremony fell through, but after a bit of a process, the wrestling celebration will take place.

"I brainstormed it myself," Bargfrede said. "I was just trying to do something; trying to bring some more excitement to the fair."

See **GOPHERS** on **C2**



# FAIR: Great county get-together is back

Continued from C1

Ellefson and his high school band, “TOZ,” will be in the beer garden July 29 at 6 and 10 p.m. — on either side of racing action at the Jackson Motorplex, which begins at 7:30 — followed by the Jeremy DeWall Band.

An all-new youth obstacle challenge hosted

by the Tri for Health takes place July 30 at 11 a.m., the inaugural BBQ contest takes place the same day and the “Johnny Holm Band” closes things out that night with a 9 p.m. performance in beer garden.

“He’s always been and continues to be a huge

draw,” Bargfrede said of Holm. “We’re excited to bring him back this year.”

Also making their return this year are the 4-H pork chop supper and 4-H steak supper, along with several popular food vendors.

“We have a good variety of food vendors al-

ready signed up,” said fair board member Jeff Fiala. “There are a lot of returning ones, but a lot of new ones too. Whatever people are craving, they should be able to find it.”

# Baumgarns to be honored as top farm family

by JUSTIN R. LESSMAN  
Publisher

She and her husband, Jeff, have a daughter, Jada, and live in Iowa.

The Marlene Baumgarn family of rural Round Lake has been named Jackson County’s “2022 Farm Family of the Year” by the University of Minnesota.

Marlene and Byron Baumgarn both grew up on farms in Jackson County — Byron near Sioux Valley and Marlene near Lakefield. The couple rented 160 acres in 1958 and started their farm.

They had two boys, Lowell and Timothy, who operate the family’s farm today. Lowell and Timothy Baumgarn graduated from the University of Minnesota with degrees in animal science. Both returned to the farm after graduation to start farming with their parents. Lowell Baumgarn began farming in 1980, renting 400 acres. Tim Baumgarn started farming four years later. Byron Baumgarn died four years ago; Marlene has been on the farm for 65 years.

The farm currently consists of 1,900 acres of corn and soybeans. Lowell Baumgarn manages 16,000 pigs annually for Jackson-based New Fashion Pork and enjoys raising 20 cow/calf pairs as a hobby. His wife, Pat, remains supportive of his endeavors, though she no longer works on the farm due to health reasons. Tim Baumgarn works at JBS in Worthington and on the farm. His wife, Sherri, is employed at Merck in Worthington and helps with fieldwork in the fall. Marlene Baumgarn still helps with the operation; she hauled corn with wagons during harvest last fall.

The family has been active in 4-H for generations. Marlene Baumgarn’s great-grandchildren are current members of 4-H. Lowell and Tim Baumgarn showed cattle, swine and sheep when they were younger. Both were members of the Jackson County 4-H livestock judging team and, while in college, they were members of the University of Minnesota livestock judging team.

Lowell and Pat Baumgarn have one daughter, Angie.

Tim and Sherri Baumgarn have two daughters, Samantha and Amanda. Samantha and her husband, Travis, live in Brewster with their children, Bristol and Colton. Amanda and her husband, Jake, have three children — Abilane, Chisolm and Talen — and live in Lake Benton.

Byron Baumgarn was an active member of the Jackson County Beef Producers. He loved showing cattle and supporting 4-H. Byron and Marlene Baumgarn belonged to St. Matthew’s Lutheran Church in Worthington, Byron serving as an elder and Marlene a member of the ladies’ group. Marlene Baumgarn now participates in a widow’s group and the Round Lake Garden Club.

Marlene Baumgarn said her late husband would have been “very honored” to know he and his family were named Jackson County’s 2022 Farm Family of the Year.

The family will be recognized at a special ceremony during the 4-H Winner’s Circle program the Tuesday evening of the Jackson County Fair. The program begins at 5:30 p.m. in the Olson Pavilion.

The Baumgarns, along with all other top farm families from across the state, will be officially honored by the University of Minnesota at an Aug. 4 ceremony at the annual Farm-fest near Redwood Falls. Honored families are chosen, one per county, by local University of Minnesota Extension committees based on their demonstrated commitment to their communities and to enhancing and supporting agriculture.

“These farm families are a major driver of Minnesota’s economy and the vitality of Minnesota’s rural communities,” said Bev Durgan, dean of the University of Minnesota Extension. “The University of Minnesota is proud to recognize these farm families for their contributions to agriculture and their communities.”

### If you go ...

- What:** 4-H Winners Circle  
**When:** Tuesday, July 26, 5:30 p.m.  
**Where:** Olson Pavilion



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**Thurs.-Sat., July 28-30**

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★ **Tripwire**

**Fri., July 29**

★ **MSTS/MPS 360 Sprint Car Races**

★ **Jeremy DeWall and David Ellefson**

**Fri.-Sat., July 29-30**

★ **Minnesota History Teller**

**Sat., July 30**

★ **Antique Car and Tractor Show**

★ **Horse-Mounted Shooting**

★ **Youth Obstacle Race**

★ **Grilling Contest**

★ **Johnny Holm Band**

# GOPHERS: A salute

Continued from C1

ment to the community and for the fair.”

Bargfrede said he pitched the idea, and it was well received.

“I ran the idea by my friends and then contacted the University of Minnesota and that started it,” he said.

After getting approval from the University of Minnesota compliance department and going through a few other hoops — Bargfrede credits his daughter, Kylla Hummel, and Brad Baumgard for their help — the ceremony is set.

There has been talk of trying to get former Jackson County and U of M wrestlers Chad and Matt Kraft to the ceremony, as well as others.

The star, though, might be Goldy.

“Goldy doesn’t come to many functions outstate very often,” Bargfrede said.

The ceremony, which will take place from 3 p.m. until 4:30, will start with a brief announcement, then turn into a meet-and-greet and photo session.

Bargfrede said there will be pennants and pompoms there to get signed.

Watermelon and refreshments will also be available.

“We want to celebrate the wrestling team,” Bargfrede said. “Hopefully we can make it a fun day.”

‘Gopher Rally Day’

The celebration is dubbed “Gopher Rally Day” and is expected to feature plenty of fun.

Expected to represent the Gophers at the event are assistant coach Luke Becker, all-American Brayton Lee and Keaton



# FOOD: A wide variety

Continued from C1

Asian food, another who deals exclusively in mini donuts and another whose menu includes corn dogs, cheese curds, wontons and ice-cold drinks.

And, of course, the 4-H food stand is back and better than ever, with a full daily menu and the popular pork chop supper the

Wednesday of the fair and the steak supper the Friday of the fair.

It’s a top-notch lineup, Fiala said, one that should satisfy just about every hankering.

“Whatever people are craving,” he said, “they should be able to find it.”



# Former 4-Her returns to fair in leadership role

Summer intern excited to be on ‘other side’ of county fair prep

by JOSHUA SCHUETZ  
Staff Writer

Not long ago, Abby Ignaszewski was preparing 4-H projects to exhibit at the Jackson County Fair. Now, as the Jackson County 4-H program’s summer intern, she’s helping prepare the fair itself.

A lifelong 4-Her, Ignaszewski started out as a Cloverbud, attending summer camps, showing livestock and building various projects.

“I showed swine and I did craft projects, like making tie blankets and pottery,” Ignaszewski said. “I was president and secretary of my club at one point, so that taught me a lot of leadership skills and helped me get out of my bubble.”

A forensic science major, Ignaszewski is currently studying at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Once she learned about the summer position in Jackson County, she decided to apply.

Planning day camps made up a great deal of her internship early on, though work soon shifted to helping prepare for the upcoming Jackson County Fair.

“I remember attending day camps when I was a kid and I wanted to be on the other side of that,” she said. “I will get things ready for the fair, making sure our 4-Hers have everything they need to take their projects to the state fair.”

As it turns out, the skills

Ignaszewski learned as a member of the county’s 4-H program have paid dividends as she learns how to help kids have the same experiences she did growing up.

It’s also given her new appreciation for the work 4-H leaders and parents put into helping the kids have a good year.

“You realize how much work goes into making these activities successful,” she said. “I really like learning about how things are done, so getting the chance to be on the other side and plan these activities is really eye-opening and enjoyable.”



SUBMITTED PHOTO  
Abby Ignaszewski, the Jackson County 4-H program’s summer intern, is busy helping prepare for this year’s county fair.

# ELLEFSON: Famous native son to headline Jackson County Fair

Continued from 1

1970s.

Elleffson, who moved with Handevidt to Los Angeles in the early 1980s and formed Megadeth with guitarist Dave Mustaine in 1983 prior to Handevidt’s return to Jackson, said he is honored to be asked to play his hometown.

“I’m always honored get the invitation to come back to Jackson and, in this case, to revisit playing the county fair, which — for me, Greg and Justin — should bring back some great memories of our performance there so many years ago when we were teenagers,” Elleffson said. “Summertime in Jackson, especially around the county fair, is one of my favorite memories growing up in the area. I’m proud to be going back to my hometown to celebrate

with my peeps.”

Elleffson said the song list for the evening will be right out of the sticky summer nights of the 1970s.

“We’re gonna break out some of the old songs from the vault that we used to play years ago,” he said. “So many of those were the soundtrack to our lives growing up and have now become classic rock. I’ve continued to play many of them in my own professional career when invited into all-star jams and things of that sort, so I think they’ll serve very well for our performance in Jackson.”

The reunion performance the Friday of the fair will be part of an action-packed night that will open with Elleffson telling the story of

his rise to international fame, starting at 6 p.m. on the beer garden stage. “I think one of the things people find the most fascinating is to hear stories about the journey that I’ve had since I left the area in 1983 after high school graduation,” Elleffson said. “So, I intend my talk to be focused largely on my professional experience in that journey, as well as lessons learned along the way, all in the arena of music and rock ‘n’ roll.”

Following the talk, Elleffson and his bandmates will join catch the fair’s sprint car races, prior to retaking the beer garden stage at around 10 p.m. to rock. After the set, the Jeremy DeWall Band will close out the night.

Elleffson said the event

## Long list of live music planned for 2022 Jackson County Fair

Grammy Award-winning musician David Elleffson leads a long list of live music makers scheduled to play this year’s Jackson County Fair.

Tripwire takes the beer garden stage at 8:30 p.m. the Thursday of the fair, the Jeremy DeWall Band will follow Elleffson and his high school bandmates Friday night and the Johnny Holm Band closes out this year’s fair with a Saturday night performance on the beer garden stage.

“He’s always been and continues to be a huge draw,” fair board member Terri Bargfrede said of Holm. “We’re excited to bring him back this year.”

came together as a result of an invitation from Jackson County Fair board member Tom Holthe. Holthe said he has been talking with Elleffson about a

possible appearance at the fair since last summer.

“I’ve wanted him to come to the fair for a number of years, but it hadn’t really ever come to fruition,” Holthe said Monday. “This year, it finally worked out. David Elleffson is coming home.”

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### 4-H FOOD STAND

**Wednesday, July 27 - Friday, July 29:**  
7:00 a.m.-8:00 p.m.  
**Saturday, July 30: 7:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m.**



**Wednesday, July 27**  
**Pork Chop Supper**  
5:00-7:00 p.m.



**Friday, July 29**  
**Steak Supper**  
5:00-7:00 p.m.



**Saturday, July 30**  
**Made-to-order Omelets**  
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### JACKSON COUNTY 4-H RIBBON AUCTION AND PREMIER SHOWMANSHIP CONTEST

**Saturday, July 30, 9 a.m. 12 noon at Olson Pavillion**

80% of bid is kept by 4-H members and 20% is retained by your local 4-H program to provide educational opportunities for Jackson County youth. The Radio Works/JBS Pork Auction follows the 4-H Premium Auction and provides financial support to all Jackson County 4-Hers going to the Minnesota State Fair. Highest bidder will receive 100 lbs. of pork!



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# New 4-H club on the block at this year's fair

Hustlers select fair village for first community pride project

by JUSTIN R. LESSMAN  
Publisher

There's a new 4-H club on the block at this year's Jackson County Fair. The 154<sup>th</sup> great Jackson County get-together is the first for the new Rost-Sioux Valley Hustlers 4-H Club. The club formed earlier this year, a merger of the Rost Rustlers and Sioux Valley Work and Win 4-H clubs. Club leader Melissa Ackermann said talks about possibly combining the two clubs began late last year, prompted by declining membership numbers and a wave of younger members in both clubs. "Both clubs lost large numbers of older mem-

bers to graduation and were looking at memberships made up of mostly of younger members," she said. "That, and smaller numbers overall, seemed to make a merger make sense." Members of both clubs were asked to come up with options for a name for the new club. "We had a whole long list of lots of different options," Ackermann said. "Hustlers" quickly rose to the top. "We thought about 'Work and Win,'" she said. "That's all about hustling and getting it done. And it's not too big of a jump to go from 'Rustler' to 'Hustler.' We put it to a vote, and the club chose the name 'Hustlers.' I think it keeps the spirit and history of both clubs alive." The new club, which is about 30 members strong, has been rotating meeting locations between rural

Lakefield and Sioux Valley. Ackermann said the club has been active in its first year. "It's a good club," she said. "Though our members are young, they are active and engaged and there's a lot of potential there for growth." The club's inaugural community pride project involved landscaping work at the Jackson County Fair Village, an effort that brought families with deep histories in each the old Rost and Sioux Valley clubs together to work toward a common purpose. "It was a great bonding experience," Ackermann said. As for the upcoming county fair itself, Ackermann said club members are busy preparing — "both with our own projects and with club projects. And we're already looking ahead to next year's club projects too, with a



Members of the new Rost-Sioux Valley Hustlers 4-H Club finish up landscaping work at the Jackson County Fair Village recently. Members include (front, from left): Liv Larsen, Addison Ackermann, Abby Ackermann, Alivia Ackermann and Connor Voss. Middle: Lincoln Larsen, Liam Larsen, Keegan Zishka-Cavness, David Ackermann, Cade Voss, Simeon Peterson, Gage Mendelkow and Eleanor Milbrath. Back: Jackson Voehl, Carter Milbrath, Maddilyn Mandelkow and Kylie Zishka. Missing: Aaron Ackermann, Ben Ackermann, Lucas Ahrenstorff, Mason Ahrenstorff, Walker Christoffers, Layden Larsen, Brock Nissen, Paisley Nissen, Gage Rasmussen and Shane Rasmussen.

## CRITTERS: County's finest set to go under the gavel on July 30

Continued from C1

support educational opportunities for over 200 Jackson County 4-H members by financially supporting Livestock Quality Assurance and Ethics pro-

gramming, scholarships, after-school programming and other individual, club, county and state opportunities," Mouw said. "Support will stay local and

impact positive youth development for Jackson County 4-H members." Meta Tewes, who has participated in many auctions over her years as a

member of the Middle-town Livewires 4-H Club, said the money bid by generous donors on her livestock over the years helped her continue to invest in her projects — and her future. "Being in 4-H has let me explore different careers and let me

figure out what I want to do in the future," Tewes said. Piggy-backing on the livestock premium auction that Saturday is the state fair auction, which takes place annually as a means of gathering financial support for all Jackson County 4-H mem-

bers who will participate in the Minnesota State Fair — whether showing livestock, horses or dogs; exhibiting a general project; or participating on a judging team — to help pay for travel and participant expenses. "4-H members work hard on their projects year 'round," Mouw said. "These auctions specifically recognized achievement, excellence and growth of Jackson County 4-H members."

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Vicki Smith (from left),  
Dr. Clayton Lewis, Katelyn Schoeberl

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# A focus on kids at this year's fair

by JUSTIN R. LESSMAN  
Publisher

When Terri Bargfrede says there is something for everyone at this year's Jackson County Fair, she means everyone — even the youngest among us. "This year, we're really focusing on kids at the fair," said Bargfrede, current fair board treasurer. "We have lots of kids activities planned."

The children's barnyard opens at 10 a.m. the Tuesday of the fair and is open until 8 p.m. through Saturday, the Los Moralitos Circus offers free performances each day of the fair and inflatables will be set up on the fairgrounds'

midway each day as well. Balloon artist Kevin Lindh will roam the fairgrounds entertaining kiddos the Tuesday and Wednesday of the fair, a 4-H kids' medallion hunt begins at 9 a.m. Wednesday, Thursday and Friday and pony rides and laser tag will be available Wednesday through Saturday.

The kids' tractor pull takes place at 6 p.m. the Tuesday of the fair and the Jackson Center for the Arts hosts "Junk Art

for Kids" from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. the following day. A youth movie will show at 9 p.m. the Thursday of the fair, magic shows courtesy of magician Joseph Barnett are scheduled the Thursday, Friday and Saturday of the fair and the Prairie Ecology Bus will be on the grounds that Friday from 1 to 7 p.m.

A youth obstacle challenge takes place the Saturday of the fair from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

**"THIS YEAR, WE'RE REALLY FOCUSING ON KIDS AT THE FAIR. WE HAVE LOTS OF KIDS ACTIVITIES PLANNED."**

**Terri Bargfrede**

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A man in a blue plaid shirt stands at the front of a room, holding a book and gesturing towards a large projection screen. The screen displays a photograph of a large tree in a field. A group of seniors is seated in the foreground, facing the presenter. The room has a white wall and a small table with various items on the right side.

FII F PHOTO

Doug Ohman presents “Heart of the Farm: Barns of Minnesota” to a full house at the Lakefield library back in 2019. He’ll offer a repeat performance — plus a handful of other presentations — at this year’s Jackson County Fair.

# Speaker brings history to life

by JUSTIN R. LESSMAN  
Publisher

History will come to life at this year's Jackson County Fair, as historian, author, storyteller and photographer Doug Ohman presents a series of free presentations.

Ohman will offer four separate presentations the Friday and Saturday of the fair in the Anderson Building. His presentations will cover barns, county

fairs, pioneer life and state parks.

Ohman will present "Heart of the Farm: Barns of Minnesota" at 2 p.m. Friday. Those who attend will enjoy a rural journey across the state exploring the barn, what Ohman calls "the greatest of all rural icons."

“From the early days of statehood through the era of agribusiness, our barns tell a story,” Ohman said. “This story will bring you

back to the farm and explore the importance of our rural roots."

At 4 p.m. Friday, Ohman will present "Fair Time: The Story of America's County Fairs." Ohman said those who attend will enjoy fun and iconic photographs of and stories about everyone's favorite summertime highlight — the county fair.

On Saturday at 11 a.m., Ohman will present "Looking Back: Life in Minnesota

See **SPEAKER** on C7



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## SPEAKER: Brings history to life

Continued from C6

150 Years Ago." Ohman said he plans to share images of and stories about Minnesota during its early days, adding those who attend will learn what everyday life was like for the state's pioneers while enjoying a nostalgic look back at life on the Minnesota frontier 150 years ago. And at 2 p.m. Saturday, Ohman will present "State Parks of Minnesota."

"Minnesotans love their state parks," Ohman said, adding this presentation is like going on a visual vacation.

Ohman has visited all 67 state parks and has photographs, stories, history and personal adventures to share.

"This program has two main themes — the history of the oldest state parks, and the incredible recre-

ational opportunities just waiting to be explored," he said.

Ohman lives in Minnesota with his wife, Krin. He has spent the last 30 years uncovering and bringing Minnesota's rich history to life in a fun and casual style through his Pioneer Photography Speaking Presentations.

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# New obstacle course will provide a fun challenge

by **DAN CONDON**  
Staff Writer

A new obstacle course promises to bring fun and maybe a bit of a challenge to local youth later this month.

And it has a special meaning for its organizer, Jeff Johnson.

The obstacle challenge, put on by the Sanford Tri for Health, is for kids ages 5 to 18 and takes place July 30 at 11 a.m.

**The event**

Johnson said he was contacted by Tom Holthe and Lee Porter about hosting some sort of event at the fair. Johnson had previously tried to attract a Spartan event, but had no luck.

So now he's creating a similar race.

"I wanted to bring an obstacle course to Jackson for some time," Johnson said. "I contacted Spartans a couple years ago because I thought Kilen Woods would be a great place for a Spartan event. In the meantime, Tom Holthe called me because they don't have a midway — they wanted some entertainment for the kids."



Sam Johnson (top) and Marcus Salzwedel work together to build an obstacle for this year's obstacle challenge at the Jackson County Fair.

Johnson said Holthe imagined something similar to a mud run; Johnson had another similar idea.

"I wanted to mimic a Spartan event and focus just on the kids this year," he said. "Next year, we can add the adults."

Races will be different lengths and have different obstacles based on age.

Those age 5 to 7 will have a half-mile course with "a half-dozen obstacles that are age appropriate," Johnson said. Kids 8 to 10 will have a one-mile course with a few more obstacles; those 11 to 14 will run two miles with more obstacles; and those 15 and older will have a two-mile course with even more obstacles.

"We really wanted to have a water pit for them to run through, so we'll likely have some sort of water," Johnson said.

The event will take place just to the west of the Jackson Motorplex. Terri Barg-

### If you go...

**What:** Obstacle challenge  
**When:** Saturday, July 30, 11 a.m.  
**Where:** West of Jackson Motorplex

frede has lined up insurance for the event and Doug Johnson and Tod Quiring from the Jackson Motorplex have been helpful in getting things organized, Johnson said.

**Special meaning**

Johnson trained for a Spartan event a couple years ago with his son, Sam, and Sam's friend Holden Broitzman.

"I trained them pretty hard," Johnson said.

After Broitzman died in 2020, Johnson said he wanted to host an event in his honor.

"It's grown into a really big deal for me personally with Holden

Broitzman," he said. "What these kids went through with COVID and everything is tragic in some ways. That's inspired me to make this thing as cool as I can."

The coolest part might be where the obstacles are coming from.

BoeKett Building Supply is donating all the materials and a grant from Positive Actions Towards Health has helped pay for a lot of other things.

Building the obstacles will be Sam Johnson and Clay Cranston — two of Broitzman's closest friends who both have a construction background — as well as others close to Broitzman.

"Holden's friends are going to build the obstacles," Johnson said. "We have two of his very closest friends in construction anyway. They're going to lead this."

The theme song for the event is "I Believe We Will Win," by Pitbull, which Johnson said was a no-brainer.

"A purpose of this event is to inspire overcoming physical and mental health obstacles we all have had to face the last couple of years," Johnson said.

Part of that is learning how to respond to failure. Those who cannot complete an obstacle will do burpees instead, but Johnson said that's perfectly fine.

"Ultimately, I want these kids to learn that it is OK to fail," he said. "Some will fail on these obstacles, but they just need to learn from their failed attempt, try again or ultimately do



PHOTOS COURTESY OF JEFF JOHNSON

Clay Cranston (top), Cole Osterberg (bottom left) and Dan Eggink build an obstacle to be used in the obstacle challenge at this year's fair. The obstacles are being built at the fairgrounds and have been tested by a few kids already.

their burpees and move on.

"It seems far too many kids and adults are so worried about failing that they don't do it, make excuses by not accepting failing, lose confidence or it triggers additional depression instead of learning from it to overcome it or the next obstacle. COVID amplified this mental illness and I hope this event will help change this culture."

**This year and beyond**

Johnson took pictures of obstacles he'd like to have built for this year's obstacle course and then others have helped.

"I sent pictures to Dave Pell, and he drafted them up," Johnson said. "I know exactly what materials I need — the length of all the boards."

The obstacles will be built in a way that they'll be able to be adjusted based on age and skill level.

"The challenging part is building the obstacles," Johnson said. "Not only are there differences in running distances, but we'll have different heights of obstacles. We've got to make a lot of obstacles or be really creative."

One such example is a wall to climb over that will

start short for the younger kids but have attachments to add for different age levels.

"These obstacles are going to be really good obstacles that are unique in that they can be adjusted," Johnson said.

**Raising awareness**

Any funds raised from the event will likely go toward mental health in some capacity, Johnson said.

"I hope I can put it toward mental health awareness," he said.

That makes the event even more worthwhile, he said, as the training is also good for a person's emotional well-being.

"I believe the best therapy for mental stress is physically challenging oneself," Johnson said, "especially if it can be done out under the sun."

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