

Kittson County Enterprise



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Pictured above, The candy scramble

was popular with little ones during the 8th annual Pumpkin Drop at Lancaster on Saturday, Oct. 23. The event raised funds, as it always does, to support Kittson County Literacy Council. See the back page for more pictures and how much money was raised.
(Enterprise photo by Anna Jauhola)

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'It's going to be upside down'

Local schools working to find different food suppliers

By Anna Jauhola

As the calendar creeps closer to November, many school districts in northern Minnesota are working to figure out how they will feed their students.

In early September, Cash-WA Distributing in Fargo executed its 60-day termination clause with the Northwest Service Cooperative, to which Kittson Central and Lancaster each belong. That clause ends the contracts on Nov. 2.

The company cited its inability to find enough truck drivers and other employees to load and unload trucks due to the national labor shortage. On top of that, in a letter to the schools, the company said the new Amazon distribution center in Fargo has drained the employee pool.

For Lancaster School, this means working with local connections and a food cost increase. At its regular meeting on Wednesday, Oct. 20, the school board heard from Superintendent Brad Homstad and Business Manager Mendy Coffield what alternatives are being put in place.

They met with Food Service Director Alana Scalse, Principal Nicole Thompson, and Jason and Shannon Langerud who own J&S Foods in Lancaster.

"We do have a possibility to contract with Mason Bros.," Homstad said, referring to the business that supplies the local grocery

store. "We also have possibilities with Henry's Foods."

He added that Scalse should still be able to order using her existing equipment, but the food will not be directly delivered to the school building. Instead, it will be delivered on a separate palette to the grocery store. Coffield said she is working to find someone with a forklift to pick up the palette and bring it to the school.

"We've been working on this a lot just trying to make sure our kids keep getting nutritious, delicious meals," Homstad said. "There's always the possibility we may come up short so we may not be able to follow the established menu, but we'll continue to pump out good, nutritious food for the kids. And they're doing just a great job of that."

Board Chair James Diamond asked about cost. Homstad and Coffield both said there'll inevitably be an increased cost for this year. Under the Cash-WA contract, the school was able to buy food in bulk.

"We were contracted, so our prices were low," Coffield said. "But that's not going to be anymore; it's going to be what it is. We're going to work on the budget for that in early December, once we see what November looks like (for cost). But it's going to be upside down."

At Kittson Central, Superintendent Bob Jaszczak said ahead of Monday night's meeting

that the district was able to secure a supplier, which includes milk. However, he chose not to disclose what company.

"It's kind of a tender situation, but we were able to secure food for the school," he said, adding he would also not disclose the company during the board meeting Monday, Oct. 25. "But I believe we have our supplies secured."

Jaszczak said Kittson Central has been scrambling to find suppliers, finding typical companies such as Sysco and US Foods - which already come to Hallock - could not take on additional freight. And other area suppliers, such as Mason Bros. and Henry's, were unable to help as well.

To add insult to injury, the Northwest Service Cooperative was unsuccessful in its request for proposals at the end of September, Jaszczak said. None of the vendors were able to take on additional accounts. Despite that, Kittson Central is prepared to continue providing nutritious meals for its students, although food delivery will be down to one day each week and supplies may not coincide with the planned menus.

"For many kids, this is the best meal they get all day," he said. "The menu will be subject to change based on availability. There may be an uncertainty in the cost structure too. But I won't know that until we get a bill."

All local dialing must now include the 218 area code

By Enterprise staff

As of Sunday, Oct. 24, residents around Kittson County had to start dialing local phone numbers including the area code.

According to the Wiktel website, the 10-digit dialing is now required by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) "in support of connecting 988 to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline." The use of 988 to direct dial this line won't go into effect until July 2022.

Several local cell phone numbers have the prefix of 988.

Any calls made with the regular seven digits will give the caller the message, "Your call cannot be completed as dialed."

You must now dial 218 before any local numbers you call.

According to the FCC website, "82 area codes in 35 states and one U.S. territory currently use '988' as their local exchange and allow seven-digit dialing."

According to a release

from Wiktel, other devices that rely on automatic dialing or are programmed to call seven-digit numbers must be reprogrammed. Some of these include life safety systems or medical monitoring devices, fire or burglar alarms, speed dialers, mobile or other wireless phone contact lists, call forwarding settings and voicemail services.

The release also states phone numbers will remain the same.

The dialing change will not affect the prices of calls, coverage area or other rates and services. All other three-digit numbers can still be reached by just dialing those numbers - 911, 711, 211, 311, 411, 511, 611 and 811.

Until 988 is implemented, you can reach the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255).

For more information about this issue, visit fcc.gov/consumers/guides/ten-digit-dialing.

JDAI working to provide alternatives locally for troubled youth in county

County will likely begin paying for these services halfway through '22

By Anna Jauhola

By June 2022, Kittson County may have to begin paying for an existing juvenile justice reform program.

During the commission meeting on Tuesday, Oct. 19, the board heard from Kelsey Keimig, coordinator for the northern region of the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative. The northern region covers Cass, Clearwater, Hubbard, Kittson, Lake of the Woods, Mahanomen, Pennington and Roseau counties.

"This program is funded through June 2022 through a state grant," Keimig said. "At that point, we have to look at alternative funds. I'm going around to county boards, sharing what we're up to, where we're headed, and put it on everybody's radar that there is a cost that counties will start to incur if they would like to continue with this."

The cost for the second half of 2022 is estimated up to \$8,000 for Kittson County.

The Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative started in Minnesota in 1992, and was signed on in Kittson County by a previous board less than a decade ago. The initiative is meant to "eliminate unnecessary and inappropriate use of

secure detention for juveniles," according to the JDAI Minnesota website.

Keimig said there are times when secure detention is necessary for juveniles, but many more times than not, the situation calls for much less dramatic placement.

"A kid might not be able to go home right away, but that doesn't necessarily mean they need to be jailed. So that's what we want to do is build up some other opportunities," she said.

Rather than sending a child to the Bemidji Juvenile Detention Center, for example, Keimig said the JDAI hopes to implement foster home-type settings. This can allow for a situation to decelerate at home and avoid placing a child in detention.

For those who do need detention, the JDAI northern region collaboration allows for pooled resources. While member counties with lower populations, like Kittson, Roseau and Lake of the Woods, don't have enough kids to support local resources, together they can make that happen.

"The benefits JDAI communities have over time is they bring more resources to areas. They decrease detention and out-of-home

placement costs. They work with social services and schools, law enforcement, the courts, judges and administrators," Keimig said. "They get together and build up resources at the front end to create more opportunities to help kids and families before stuff gets to that point where we put them in detention and remove them from the home."

For Kittson, Roseau and Lake of the Woods specifically, Keimig said JDAI uses a multijurisdictional approach to help create resources to address issues.

This True North Collaborative helps provide resources locally to help keep kids in their own communities and schools instead of having to place them outside the county or area.

While the program will likely begin costing the county money next year, Keimig said there is a bright side.

"We're looking at expanding to some other counties up north here," she said. "And every time a new county comes on board, the cost to the county decreases. ... So it's something to talk about and get feedback from you and others involved."

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KITTSON CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS held a clean-up day on Wednesday, Oct. 20 around Hallock. Pictured here, students worked to clean up the pollinator garden around the gazebo in Centennial Park. Students also spread out across town to rake leaves in private yards.

(Enterprise photo by Anna Jauhola)

Lancaster sets case threshold for masking

By Anna Jauhola

With hesitation and mixed opinions, the Lancaster School Board agreed to a threshold for when students and staff should mask due to a COVID outbreak.

Major discussion centered once again around the coronavirus during the regular board meeting on Wednesday, Oct. 20. The beginning of October brought a small outbreak of positive cases in Kittson County, which led Kittson Central School to mask up for two weeks. Last week, Lancaster School saw its first positive COVID case and two students absent from school as a result.

"I had another webinar today and northwest Minnesota is the hotspot in the state (for COVID)," said Brad Homstad, superintendent. "I Zoomed with area superintendents this morning and there are two schools that are masking

right now - East Grand Forks and Thief River Falls. They've masked for a while now, and their number of cases dropped dramatically when they did go to a mask mandate."

Homstad added he found several schools in the area are using a 5 percent threshold to determine masking, meaning if 5 percent of the whole school - staff and students - tests positive, the remaining population will be required to wear masks. For Lancaster, 5 percent of its school population is 11 people that must be confirmed COVID positive at one time.

The board has largely been against a mask mandate this school year, and the board remained split on the issue Wednesday.

Board Member Lacey Lupien, who is also a registered nurse, made it clear the need for masking may be imminent.

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