FFA'ers talk CDEs, speech

Two Career Development Event teams, speaker prep for state convention







Cottonwood County

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Battle tested

Girls drop final playoff tune-up

Page 13

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2022

WHAT'S INSIDE

WAMS to present show

Thirty-two students involved in 37 skits for annual production

Page 4

Hospital partners with TeleHealth

Hospital board identifies retaining medical staff as a strategic priority

ONLINE POLL

Last Week's Results

Have you ever tested positive for COVID-19?

had need to... 48% No, never

No, but might have had it.... 26%

Yes, a long 15%

recently...... 11%

Next Week

How concerned are you about Russia potentially invading Ukraine?

Vote at www.windomnews.com

DID YOU KNOW?

Winter sports

winding down

It may seem like the winter sports season just started, but the end of the winter season has already come for some teams and is drawing near for the rest.

Section individual wrestling is scheduled for Saturday.

Section boys hockey and girls basketball get underway this week. Playoff pairings for boys basketball will be determined Friday.

Brackets for the upcoming boys hockey and girls basketball tournaments appear in this week's Citizen sports section.

A look book

| A look back | | | | | | |
|-------------|----|----|---------|--|--|--|
| | Н | L | Р | | | |
| Tues. | 39 | 12 | _ | | | |
| Wed. | 24 | 0 | _ | | | |
| Thurs. | 16 | -1 | _ | | | |
| Fri. | 44 | 1 | _ | | | |
| Sat. | 33 | 0 | _ | | | |
| Sun. | 50 | 18 | _ | | | |
| Mon. | 24 | 3 | .10 sn. | | | |

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SAVER for every prescription transferred from another pharmacy.

another pnarmacy.

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The COVID fallout



GREG WARNER hands a surgical mask to a visitor at Windom The hospital has seen increased ER activity and longer wait Area Health after the visitor answered screening questions.

times during the COVID pandemic.

Windom Area Health navigates front line

The ER at Windom Area Health has seen a major uptick in activity.

> By JOEL ALVSTAD joela@windomnews.com

It has been two years since the first cases of the COVID-19 virus were confirmed locally.

In the time that has followed, the health care industry, worldwide, has been inundated. Workers at hospitals, clinics and pharmacies have put in long hours, trying to keep patients in the area healthy, while hoping to do the same for themselves.

COVID fatigue and apathy continue to be the largest sources of concern for



many health care providers—even as the number of cases again appear to be on the decline.

The issues being seen at health care facilities

in large cities ultimately trickle down to rural areas like Windom Area Health, which does not have an intensive care unit.

The pandemic also has

meant long hours and an "all hands on deck" mentality at all medical facilities, including the local hospital.

SEE FALLOUT • PAGE 2

Chamber to oversee Riverfest for 2022

■ The new Riverfest board is expected to hold its first meeting in the near future.

Plans are coming together for a traditional Riverfest on the second weekend in June. the kind people have grown to expect over the years.

There will be a parade, fireworks, music and more. However, behind the

scenes Riverfest will be far different in 2022. Earlier this month, the Riverfest Committee which operated Riverfest in recent years, handed the reins to the Windom Area Chamber of Commerce.

How did it come about? "Last year's Riverfest chairman, Clark Lingbeek, spoke with me in December and said it was a struggle getting new members on the committee," recalled Tyann Marcy, executive director of the Windom Area Chamber of Commerce. "He asked if we would ever want to bring it back to the Chamber."

Marcy spoke with her Chamber board and gauged interest from local entities.

We had our year lined up," Marcy said. "But in the end, we said we'd love to do it. We are excited for it."

Consequently, the past Riverfest board voted to dissolve. Roughly \$16,000 gained through fundraisers or direct donations to Riverfest will stay with Riverfest, according to Marcy.

Although the Chamber will coordinate Riverfest, the plan is to keep it separate from Chamber activities.

Marcy said in the transition Riverfest is a bit behind schedule for 2022. However. when the committee soon holds its first meeting, it will have 18 volunteers in place.

"Anyone who has volunteered for anything definitely appreciates when someone is willing to step up," Marcy said. "They (the former board) did a great job and they worked really hard with a small crew.

"Everyone is excited about Riverfest, from our staff, to our board, to the people who will be on this committee. We're looking forward to hearing from the public and hearing their ideas.'

Taking FFA to the next level

FFA President Franz looks to help Windom FFA grow, succeed

■Tayler Franz is upbeat about the Windom's young FFA officers.

Tayler Franz was just a youngster, maybe 8 years old, when she first got involved with FFA.

As the neice of then Windom ag instructor Darcy Dahna, Tayler helped out at the FFA Petting Zoo during the Windom Farm & Home Show. It's an experience she'll never forget.

"I knew then that this was where I would end up (as an FFA member)," Franz

She has helped keep the petting zoo well-stocked through the years, bringing cattle, sheep and goats to the

Franz, a senior at Windom Area High School, is the daughter of Todd and M.K. Franz of rural Bingham Lake. In addition to helping out at the family's small farm, she has worked at the State Theater in Windom, picked rock at Roll Farms and is currently employed at Smith Automotive.

In her spare time, she helps out at the family farm, does crafting and gardening. She is also active in the student senate, National Honor Society, band, choir, fall play, winter musical, Minnesota Youth Swine Series and she's part of the church outreach series at First Baptist Church. Also, she is president of the Loyal Lakers/Carson Climbers.

What made you decide to run for president?

FRANZ: I had a lot of hopes and ambitions for what I wanted FFA to become. I felt that I needed to step up to the job to see that those could be achieved.

What wo. 2 those goals? What were some of

FRANZ: Well, we were at the county fair last year with the petting zoo. I asked that we (the FFA chapter) step up and do that.

Through FFA I also want to see more childhood development with agriculture. Some of the other FFA members came up with some good ideas.

This week, we are going to

the second grade classrooms and doing demonstrations on how ag is important to their lives. On Thursday, we are demonstrating how to make butter.

What FFA offices have you held and what FFA degrees have you achieved?

FRANZ: The degrees I've achieved are my greenhand degree, discovery

degree and chapter degree. My freshman year, I was sentinel. As a sophomore, I was secretary and then vice president as a junior and now president.

What are some judging teams and career development events you've been

involved in? FRANZ: I

A started out in general livestock judging and veterinary science is one that popped up in the past couple of



years. Currently, I am doing ag sales. We just had an invitational (at Southwest Minnesota State University in Marshall) and did better than expected. Our team ranked fifth. Three out of our five members made it to the top 20 and all of us were in the top 30.

SEE FRANZ • PAGE 9

Marcy,

■ DISTRICT COURT

Speeding: Najma M. Abader, Savage, \$140; Aaron R. Borden, Primghar, Iowa, \$130; Ian G. Gill, Sioux City, Iowa, \$120; Jarrod W. Kuehn, Hudson, Wis., \$130; Dalton J.C. Lappegard, Slayton, \$120; Avery N. Luecke, Sioux Falls, \$130; Diana K. Madsen, Heron Lake, \$130; Casey L. Matthiesen, Minneapolis, \$140; Kent W. Sullivan, Ashland, Neb., \$130; Meghan R. Vishaway, West Jordan, Utah, \$140; Jose E. Martinez Solorzano, Sioux Falls, \$140; Raymond R. Pannone, Orlando, Fla.,

Failure to mail or deliver certificate of title to Department of Transportation within time frame specified: Abdulkadir Y. Barre, Mankato, \$280.

DWI: Isidro S. Encarnacio, Windom, \$610, local confinement 90 days, stay 90 days for one year, supervised probation for one year, remain law-abiding, report to agent as directed, pay for and complete chemical use assessment and follow all recommendations of evaluation.

Driving after suspension: Jacob R. Ackerson, Glencoe, \$280.

Speeding/weaving over lane lines: Abdullahi A. Ali, Minneapolis, \$190.

Speeding/uncased firearm in motor vehicle: Marisol Angulo, Perris, Calif., \$190.

Seat belt violation: Eli J. Bordewyk, Windom, \$105.

Speeding/operate vehicle subject to impoundment order: Lam P. Chuol, St. Cloud, \$440.

Speeding/no Minnesota driver's license: Edwin J. Rivera Huertas, Lamberton, \$230.

No Minnesota driver's license/no insurance driver: Julio C. Saavedra, Alamo, Texas, \$380.

No Minnsota driver's license/use hand-held mobile telephone while driving a commercial motor vehicle/no current medical certificate in possession while driving a commercial motor vehicle: Nelson E. Tacuri Cabrera, Brooklyn Center,

Speeding/driving after revocation/no proof of motor vehicle insurance: Latesha N. Thomas, Minneapolis, \$680.

Unsecure load: Shawn L. VanHeuvelen, Ocheyedan, Iowa, \$140.

Snow emergency parking violation: Gloria M. McKissick, Mt. Lake, \$25; Cesar O. Hernandez, Windom, \$34.

Failure to stop for school bus with stop signal extended, red lights flashing: Meridee A. Paulson, Mt. Lake, \$580.

Driving without a valid license: Cindy L. Carapia, Windom, \$180.

Failure to provide proof of insurance: Hector R. Felix-Ortiz, Windom,

■ THE RECORD

Feb. 16

•7:39 p.m. A Windom man reported that a female who was under a harassment order had violated that order by sending text messages to him. After investigating the matter, a 29-year-old female suspect was arrested by another law enforcement agency at her home in Martin County. The woman was then transported to the Cottonwood County Jail. Charges of violating a restraining order could be filed, pending a review by the county attorney's office.

•12:54 a.m. Officers were called to the area of Sixth Street and Sixth Avenue regarding a fight in progress between a man and woman who are related, but not married. Following an investigation, disorderly conduct charges are pending against a 51-yearold Windom female and a 46-year-old Windom male. The matter is under review by the county attorney's

office Feb. 21

•8:26 a.m. Officers were called to Lutheran Church of Our Savior regarding a suitcase that was found in the church entryway. Upon investigation, officers found a large suitcase containing clothing and various other items. Identification paperwork was found inside the

suitcase. It was decided that the suitcase would remain at the church, as staff waits to see if the owner returns. Meanwhile, officers noted that a lock box had received minor damage, but was not entered.

•4:02 p.m. Officers received a report of a box that was found beneath the Sixth Street bridge at the Des Moines River. Officers were able to retrieve the property, except for a few items that were frozen into the ground. Among the items found were a laptop computer and many clothing items. They can be claimed at the Cottonwood County Law Enforcement

Sheriff's report

Feb. 16

11:07 a.m. Deputies received a report of an attempted break-in at a rural Windom address. The reporting party stated that someone tried to break into their shed. The burglars were unable to enter, but caused damage to the door. Nothing was missing.

Feb. 19

•12:12 p.m. Deputies received a report of a possible harassment restraining order violation. The information was forwarded to the county attorney's office

FALLOUT/

Services have returned to WAH FROM PAGE 1

ER or not?

In a time of a global pandemic, few places have their finger on the pulse of health care better than a hospital emergency room.

At Windom Area Health, Director of Nursing Kelsey Andrews and Emergency Department Trauma/Stroke Coordinator Katie Bennett have both been on the front lines, while also coordinating staff to do the same.

Understandably, the ER at the hospital has been very busy the past two years, and especially in the past 5-6 months.

"The ER has definitely seen an uptick in activity in the last five months," Andrews said. "We typically budget 300 ER visits per month. The last five or six months, we've seen about 350 to 360.

"The patient floor ebbs and flows, and that isn't necessarily just because of COVID."

During the pandemic, many people have used the emergency room as their first option of treatment, which has caused delays and shortages throughout the system.

"If someone just wants to be tested for COVID, they should either contact their clinic or public health," Andrews said. "Most medical providers will only test people who exhibit symptoms. Home tests also are readily available now. What should come to the ER is shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, nausea or vomiting for multiple days, or chest pain.'

"Chest pain could be anything that could potentially throw a clot, like a heart attack or stroke," Bennett said. "And trouble breathing could be something like pneumonia or a number of other things. We're worked closely with the clinics, trying to raise awareness on what is an appropriate situation to use the ER or something like urgent care, versus seeing a primary physician.

"People have a primary care provider for a reason. They know your history. So it's essential that people who may have COVID symptoms go through their primary, rather than just going to the ER. They'll be able to tell you if they can treat you or if it's something more severe that would warrant a trip to the ER."

If a patient exhibits COVID symptoms, nursing staff will try to triage the patients after first putting on their own personal protective equipment.

But if a patient's symptoms are severe enough, they will be transferred to a facility with an intensive care unit. Even that has become more and more challenging.

We try to get them to a higher level of care, whether that be Sioux Falls or someplace else," Andrews said. Sanford, Mayo and Avera all have had times where their ICU beds were at capacity. We've been fortunate that if a person needs a higher level of care, we've been able to get them to a higher level of care, but it's been diffi-

"It's also been a staffing issue," Bennett said. "It hasn't been just a bed issue at any major facility. They all are seeing staff shortages, whether it's from fatigue. burnout or staff illness. But the larger facilities also reserve a certain number of beds specifically for transfers from smaller facilities, because they know there may be critical patients who need to transfer in.

While Windom Area Health does not have ICU beds, it has received stabilizing equipment.

The equipment we've gotten allows us to keep critical patients a little longer if there's something like a blizzard or if it's windy so we can't use the helicopter," Andrews said. "We've received a new ventilator about a year ago. We're also working on getting heated high-flow oxygen capability. But that's a gap filler to keep a patient stable while they're here, until we can get them where they need to be.'

But during recent COVID surges, finding ICU openings was difficult.

"Sometimes, patients were boarding in our ER for several hours," Bennett said. "As a patient, you have the option of where you would like to be transferred to, so what the patient wants is always our first option. But if that option tells us they have no beds available, we'll turn around and inform the patient and try another facility."

'We transfer behavioral health patients to Thief River Falls," Andrews said. "For most everything else, we're mostly transferring people to Sioux Falls, Rochester or the Twin Cities.'

Communication is key

When the pandemic first hit two years ago, many services at WAH were shut down or limited.

The Wellness Center was closed, as was the kitchen. Physical therapy services were limited. And nonessential surgeries were put

Over the past year, those services have all returned and WAH is functioning much like it did pre-pandem-

But, in some ways, WAH is operating more efficiently than it did before the pandemic—primarily because of the lessons learned by the staff.

"At first, scheduling was very hard," Bennett said. "But what the pandemic showed right away was where we lacked in communication with other departments—what we need from them and what they need from us. The nursing staff are the only people here 24/7, so we have to do things that are sometimes done by

other departments. We had to improve our communication with other departments and that's helped us work

"Fortunately, we have a great group of nurses and they really pull together," Andrews said. "We'll post when we have open shifts they all have each other's backs."

that the nursing staff has has had to make adjust-

"We have some people who do straight 12-hour shifts," Bennett said. "We have some who do eight-hour shifts during the week. Everybody does 12-hour shifts on the weekends. We have people hired on FTEs, so the number of hours per week kind of depends on what FTE they are hired for.

We have about 40 nurses who work the floor, but also "Right when COVID hit, we couldn't perform surgeries, on other duties.'

Despite the long hours and the adjustments to assist in a variety of capacities, the hospital has not seen higher rates of staff turnover in the

"I think everybody has a little burnout or fatigue," Andrews said. "Everybody is tired. And I think that's across all levels of health care. We've had some turnover, but the people who have left here have not left the industry.'

"We've had some people ties they enjoy," Bennett said. "But from a turnover standpoint, we've been pretty blessed that it hasn't been more turnover than we would normally see. We have a phenomenal group of nurses."

The mental health of the staff during such a stressful time also has been a frequent topic of discussion.

"We all try to encourage

booster subcommittee, which does activities to help the staff unwind, laugh and encourage each other."

"The hospital also has an employee assistance program available to anyone and their families," Andrews said. "The hospital also has done various special programs for the staff at least once a month.'

WAH's financial stress

Like many other businesscreated additional financial

> SEE FALLOUT • BACK PAGE

better together." available due to COVID and

Long hours

But it goes without saying experienced plenty of stress. As a whole, the staff at WAH

have outreach and surgery nurses," Andrews said. so some of those nurses took

past two years.

who have left to go to special-

each other to take the time off they need to address their mental health," Bennett said. "We don't want people to feel guilty about taking time off with their families, to re-energize and

"We created a morale

es, the ongoing pandemic stress for the hospital.

INSIDE EDGE

Farm & Home Show set to return

After a one-year COVID break, it appears the Windom Farm & Home Show will return in March.

Tyann Saturday, executive March 5 director of

the Windom Area Chamber of Commerce, announced recently that plans are moving forward for the show. The event, which is typically one of the largest community gatherings of the winter, will return to Windom Area Middle High School on March 5.

Windom Area Foundation gets \$5,000 donation

The Windom Area Foundation recently received a \$5,000 gift from Sanford Health.

The gift was placed in the Foundation's endowment fund, which is now in excess of \$300,000.

The endowment fund drive is important because the endowment is the heartbeat of the Windom Area Foundation. The endowment not only safeguards a person's donation, it forever lifts up Windom, allowing the Foundation to use interest income to assist projects many times over.

Although the Foundation recently completed a fall/winter fund drive, people, businesses and organizations can donate to the Foundation year around.

For more information about the Foundation, go to windomareafoundation.com, or check out "Windom Area Foundation" on Facebook.

Smedsrud named street foreman

At Tuesday's Windom City Council meeting, the council officially named Jim Smedsrud to be the city's next street department foreman.

Foreman, who was already serving on the city's street maintenance crew, takes

a position that had been vacant since Jon Ketzenberg was named interim street superintendent in December Ketzenberg was then appointed permanent street superintendent when Brian Cooley resigned from the job on Jan. 1.

WINDOM

Ketzenberg said Tuesday night that the city street department still needs to add one more maintenance position, filling Smedsrud's former position, in the coming months. At Tuesday's meeting the city council authorized Ketzenberg to advertise for the position.

Windom man faces child porn charge

■Suspect faces up to 10 years in prison and a \$10,000 fine for each count.

Darin Keith McGuire, 55, of Windom faces multiple charges related to child pornography, including two charges of possessing pornographic work of a minor under 13.

McGuire also faces three felony charges of possessing pornographic workcomputer disk/electronic/ magnetic/optical image with porn. The charges stem from a

cybertip local police received

on April 6 from an agent with the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension special agent for predatory crimes. According to the complaint, the tip contained two images of minors uploaded from a Microsoft One Drive

client on Jan. 4, 2021. The complaint says both photos show the minors' partially clothed, or nude, and shows their private parts. The complaint states that a forensic search of Mc-Guire's computer revealed

additional photos of young

FELONY CASES

children which showed their

private parts. The maximum sentence for possessing child pornography is 10 years in prison and a \$10,000 fine. The maximum sentence for the possession of pornographic work-computer disk/electronic/magnetic/optical image with porn is 3 years in prison and a \$5,000 fine.

Mt. Lake man charged with assault by strangulation

A 12:25 a.m. report of a domestic disturbance resulted in a charge of assault by strangulation against Cristian Samir Trochez, 20, of Mt. Lake.

According to the complaint, the Jan. 28 incident started with an argument between Trochez and another resident over what time Trochez should go to bed. The argument escalated and eventually became physical, according to the complaint.

What followed was some pushing, shoving and hitting, according to the

complaint. Police identified injuries to a resident's neck and, after both parties were interviewed by police, Tro-

chez was arrested. The maximum sentence is 3 years in prison and a \$5,000

Local man faces false imprisonment charge

A 9:19 a.m. incident at a Windom apartment on Jan. 25, led to a felony false imprisonment charge against Jacob Cory, 21, of Windom.

According to the complaint, both Cory and the alleged victim have their names on the apartment's lease. The victim had been gone for a few days and returned for an in-home visit the two had scheduled with a nurse. At that point, the complaint alleges there was an argument which became physical and Cory blocked the exit.

apartment and went to the police station to report the incident. The maximum sentence is 3 years in prison and a \$5,000

The alleged victim eventu-

ally was able to leave the

Thank You, **Bus Drivers!**

Minnesota Bus Driver **Appreciation Day is** Wednesday, Feb. 23



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| Michael Wojahn | 27 years | Andrew Klassen | 1 year |
| Kevin Heggeseth | 25 years | Steven Mau | 1 year |
| Jerry Bauer | 23 years | Blake Spinks | 1 year |
| Lindsey Cartwright | 14 years | Dana Wallace | 1 year |
| Michael Young | 12 years | Michael Johnson | 1 year |
| Beth Kalash | 7 years | Isaac Larson | 6 months |
| Kevin Patterson | 3 years | Ryan Evers | 6 months |
| Jacob Johnson | 3 years | Mitchell Gindelle | 4 months |



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Website: www.palmerbusservice.com

FALLOUT/

Pandemic created financial stress at hospital

FROM PAGE 2

Much of that financial stress has to do with additional supplies.

WAH Materials Manager Jeanna LaCanne said the hospital has seen a major surge in purchases of personal protective equipment.

"In 2019, we ordered seven cases of surgical masks,' LaCanne said. "In 2021, we ordered 27 cases, which are 3,500 to 13,500 masks per case. Now that guidelines have changed, that number will certainly go up.

"Before COVID, we didn't inventory N95 masks. We kept them on certain isolation carts and maybe went through a box per size per year. Now, we keep multiple boxes of each size in stock and go through two or three boxes of each size per month. We have three sizes of N95 masks and staff is fitted to which one will work best.

"In 2019, we ordered 16 cases of isolation gowns, with 100 gowns per case. In 2021, we ordered 34 cases."

LaCanne added that certain IV solutions and tubing also have increased in usage.

"A high-usage tubing went from 37 cases in 2019 to 55 cases in 2021," LaCanne said. "An IV solution went from 126 cases in 2019 to 148 cases in 2021.

"In general, I keep more stock on hand of high-use items than I did prior to 2020. I never know exactly what will go on backorder, so I set my reorder points pretty tight to make sure that I can get through a backorder if it happens. Sanford also has been very diligent in keeping track of what is on backorder and coming up with substitute items if they know something will be on backorder long-term.'

LaCanne's efforts have been appreciated by the nursing staff.

'Jeanna has really been on top of what the staff wants as far as PPE is concerned," Bennett said. "She's asked what the staff likes, what the staff doesn't like and has really done a great job of keeping everything stocked. She really wanted to

know what worked for us." To help fund the additional purchases, Chief Financial Officer John Peyerl said that the facility has been

fortunate to receive support from the federal and state levels.

"Funds have been received to cover expenses associated with the pandemic and also to reduce the effects of lost revenue," Peyerl said. "Most of the funds received have fallen into this general distribution category. WAH also has received targeted funds for more specific purposes, such as supporting vaccination and testing efforts."

Peyerl added that health care facilities as a whole have had new challenges when it comes to insurance.

"Because of the variety of insurance products available, it has been difficult to specifically determine what is covered and what isn't," Peyerl said. "Some insurances have covered COVID-related expenses very well, while others have not. It really depends on the individual insurance products."

All hands on deck

Throughout the pandemic. the hospital has had something of an "all hands on deck" mentality.

Early in the pandemic, several areas were closed to general service such as the fitness center and the cafeteria. As a result, employees in those areas were temporarily given other assignments.

Abby Kipfer is a registered dietician at the hospital. However, throughout the pandemic, she also has been in charge of scheduling screeners.

"The screeners are really the first line of defense for the hospital," Kipfer said. "Things have evolved so much since we first had to screen. With COVID, the speed things have changed is pretty amazing, and it's been

such a learning curve. "When we first began screening, the Wellness Center was closed, so those employees served as screeners. We had only one door to the facility open. We also borrowed staff from the kitchen. My office location, which is fairly close to the main entrance, and the fact my staff were involved basically is how I ended up being put in charge of the screen-

"Once our Wellness Center reopened and things started getting more back to normal, we hired part-time

help to be screeners. Kipfer added that when the hospital began doing testing and vaccinations, that put even more stress on screeners and the staff as a whole.

The hospital currently no longer administers vaccinations. And people seeking a general COVID test are referred to primary providers or to public health.

Meanwhile, Kipfer added that all health care facilities are still required to screen people entering the facility.

"As much as the screening process can be annoying and a pain for our patients and visitors, it is required and important," Kipfer said. "It makes sure we are communicating and helping keep people with COVID symptoms as isolated as possible. Those people are shifted differently, to different waiting areas and are more isolated.

"There are still a pretty significant number of people who are very concerned about COVID and the screening process helps those people feel a little more comfortable.

"But the list of possible symptoms for COVID is very long, and can resemble any number of other ailments. You could think to yourself you ate something that didn't agree with you and you have a stomach ache, but it could be a COVID symp-

The frustration factor

Kipfer added that there are many people who have had the sense of fear from the pandemic wear off. And that has led to anger being directed at the screeners.

"As a health care facility, we're required to screen people coming in, and people coming in are still required to wear face masks," Kipfer said. "We know it's frustrating. We know people are getting tired of COVID. People feel so strongly about their opinions and beliefs. On a daily basis, the screeners get some level of harassment. But our staff is just trying to do their jobs and follow the guidelines we're supposed to as a health care facility."

That frustration from patients has also trickled into the ER at times.

"There's been unruly patients even before COVID, but now we're seeing some instances where people don't want to wear a mask in the ER," Andrews said. "People have their beliefs on what works and what doesn't, and

they are very vocal in those beliefs. We're just trying to follow the rules that are imposed on us, so we can keep our doors open. Everyone here is just trying to do a job.'

"And with the ERs being busier and busier, we have to try to triage patients as best we can, and some people are having to wait longer." Bennett said. "In Windom, it hasn't been common to wait hours in the ER. Sometimes. now, it might be because of the challenges we're dealing with—more people coming to the ER and a harder time transferring critical patients out. But if someone is waiting in the ER, that's probably a good sign that you're a more stable patient. If someone is waiting, it means that someone else has a more life-threatening condition that needs to be treated first.'

Meeting challenges

Likewise, the pandemic has brought several challenges to the staff at the hospital.

"There are many times we've been faced with challenges," Kipfer said. "Just recently, we had almost half of our nutrition department staff out sick. It's been cool to see different people step up. We've trained people in different areas to be ready to step into another area if needed. A lot of times, the staff in your department might work longer shifts or altered hours if someone else is out. Burnout is definitely a concern, especially at times we're short staff. But the hospital has done a very good job of taking care of employees and providing opportunities and resources.

"As challenging as it's been, it's been cool to see everyone step up and serve our purpose. But everybody out here, to some extent, has been impacted by COVID."

Editor's note: This is the first of a two-part series on the pandemic's impact on health care in the area. The next part will look at the impact on clinics and pharmacies.

Windom



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Jackson arm and Home Show

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EDUCATIONAL FORUMS

9:00 a.m.

How to Make a Modern Postage Stamp Quilt Block, Lori Kokoruda from Old Alley Quilt Shop

History of Jackson: What You May Not Know, Dr. Mark Titus 9:30 a.m. 10 "Rules of the Road" for investing and Retirement with Q&A,

10:15 a.m. Wyman and Rebecca Fischer from Edward Jones Informational CBD Presentation, Adam and Julia Weets from 10:45 a.m. Alpha's Alternatives

City of Jackson and Economic Development Q&A, 11:30 a.m. Matt Skaret and Dave Schmidt "Using Ice vs. Heat and All About Feet: Back Talk," Dr. Kerri

12:00 noon Henderson from Optimal Health Chiropractic & Acupuncture Who Pays the Bills After You're Gone?, Megan Heser from 12:45 p.m. State Farm Insurance



ENTERTAINMENT STAGE

-9:30 a.m.–

V Notes (Polka)

-11:00 a.m.-

Zoo Man

-12:00 noon-

Zoo Man

Rides from your Car to the Front Doors

Sponsored by Jackson County Fair Board Free Blood Pressure Testing 9 a.m. to noon

Sponsored by Sanford Jackson and Jackson Lions Club

Free Vision Screening for Kids (6 mos. & up) Jackson Lions Club – Sponsored by Lions Kidsight USA Free Pie, Ice Cream, Coffee, Milk Served all day

Vendor Craft Fair

\$250 Cash Drawing at 1:15 p.m. Sponsored by Bull Market Realty Must be present to win.

Thanks to our 2022 sponsors: AGCO, Bank Midwest, Bull Market Realty, Crystal Valley, Farmers and Merchants State Bank of Alpha, Henning Rental, Jackson County Dairy Association, Jackson County Fair Board, KKOJ, LaCanne Family Funeral Service, Livewire Printing Co., NextEra Energy Resources, Schrader's Computer Services, Sunshine Foods



MN School Bus Driver Appreciation Day-Wed., Feb. 23

On School Bus Driver Appreciation Day and all year around, we applaud the drivers who safely deliver our students to and from school and activities. We appreciate the care you take to transport each student in our district safely.





Windom Area Elementary 507-831-6925 1200 17th Street, Windom Windom Middle/High School 507-831-6910 1400 17th Street, Windom

thanks to your drivers!

.WINDOM.K12.MN.US

Tigermans in at **Shalom Hill Farm**

Idaho couple makes big move back to Midwest to head up local retreat







Cottonwood County

VISIT US ONLINE AT WWW.WINDOMNEWS.COM

High-scoring finale

Eagles put up 100 in

Page 9

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 2, 2022

WHAT'S INSIDE

Hage to leave **EDA** post

Windom Economic Development Director Hage to leave in April

Page 2

Windom speech bounces back

Windom sees strong turnout for speech program after pandemic

Page 6

ONLINE POLL

Last Week's Results

How concerned are you about Russia invading Ukraine?

concerned... 63% Somewhat

concerned... 11%

Next Week

Do you support sending U.S. troops to the Ukranian border in Poland?

Vote at www.windomnews.com

DID YOU KNOW?

Grain changes

in the county

Types of grain raised in Cottonwood County has changed over the years, according to a 1970 Citizen story.

After the breaking of prairie sod, the first crop was flax, followed by wheat. Little barley was found here and oats were only raised for horses.

Corn was introduced around 1900. Skeptical farmers tried just a few acres. Hastened by the two-horse planter and check wire, corn acreage increased. White corn was grown early on, but by 1910, yellow corn was more common.

Hybrid corn was introduced in the 1930s.

WEATHER

A look back

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| Wed. | 5 | -10 | | | | | |
| Thurs. | 6 | -7 | 1"sn | | | | |
| Fri. | 13 | 4 | _ | | | | |
| Sat. | 34 | 10 | _ | | | | |
| Sun. | 42 | 24 | | | | | |
| Mon. | 52 | 29 | _ | | | | |

HuVeepharmacy

5¢ FUEL **SAVER** for every prescription filled and receive a \$1 FUEL



prescription transferred from another pharmacy.

another pnarmacy.

Purchase of a transferred prescription from a non-Hy-Vee pharmacy is required. Limit one per household. Restrictions apply. See store for details. Fuel savings are limited to 20 gallons of fuel per purchase, per vehicle. Beneficiaries of government-funded healthcare programs, including but not limited to Medicare. Medicaid and TRICARE are not eligible for this offer. Beneficiaries of the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program are eligible, unless transferring a controlled substance prescription. Valid at your Windom Hy-Vee store.



Friday Olympic fun



stay a step ahead of Job Ogeka as the two sprint to the start of the relay's final event.

ONE OF THE last legs of

was doing a

while "riding"

horse. Drew

Rothenberger

(left) tries to

barrel race

the relay

a stick

JOEL ALVSTAD 3/2 Ag Olympics 33

Ag Olympics puts bow on festive FFA Week

Windom Area High School students assembled in the Blue Gym to wrap up FFA Week Friday with a special event.

Teams representing each class, grades 9-12, took part in the Ag Olympics relay

race to close out the day. The relay started with an egg-andspoon race, followed by a nut-and-bolt race. The next group had to find a crochet needle in a stack of hay. The fourth group had to "milk" a plywood cow cutout. Group five had to throw a hay bale from one side of the gym to the other. The sixth group rode on stick horses to run a barrel race, with the top two finishers in the barrel race having to ride a pedal tractor from one baseline of the gym to the other.

At the end of the event, the sophomore class took top honors, with each participant in the class receiving a small prize.

BUSS carefully carries a plastic egg on a spoon during the first leg of the relay.





BRYAN MACARIO (left) and Elham Yusuf work to put a nut on a



LANDON PILLATZKI winds up to toss a hay bale during the Ag Olympic relay last week.

Farm & Home Show returns for 38th year Saturday

■ After a one-year hiatus, the Windom Farm & Home Show returns pretty much intact on Saturday.

Until last year, it seemed as though only a few guarantees existed in these parts: death, taxes and the Windom Farm & Home Show.

However, like everything else, COVID came along and changed the rules. Ultimately, the decision was made to cancel the 2021 event. But this Saturday, the big show returns to Windom Area Middle High School, as good as ever.

The event runs from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. and will again feature such favorites as the Zoo Man, farm-related seminars, a robotics demonstration and, of course, great food.

'We are at 55 vendors, which is down about five or 10 from what's typical," said the show's chairman, Mike LaMaack. "But we typically pick some up in the days leading up to the show. They can get a booth right up to the start of the event."

Through the years, the show has been a big hit for youngsters, mainly because of an appearance by The Zoo Man, Brent Mielke, who owns the Adrian Zoo. Mielke gets children laughing and cheering as they get close-up views and even handle a few reptiles.

People rarely leave the event hungry. And, in the past few years the food has received rave reviews. This year's vendors

SEE SHOW • PAGE 7

Two from area advance to state

Two area wrestlers will head to St. Paul Friday for the State Wrestling Tournament.

Windom-Mt. Lake senior Micah Holmberg advanced to state after taking second at 182 pounds at Saturday's Section 3AA Tournament in Redwood Falls.

Red Rock Central junior Vander Mathiowetz advanced after finishing second at 182 pounds at Saturday's Section 3A Tournament in Wabasso.

Each will be making their state tourney debut.

A full recap appears in this week's sports.



JOEL ALVSTAD 3/2 wrestling 135

MICAH HOLMBERG was the lone Cobra wrestler to advance to the state tournament after placing second at 182 pounds in the Section 3AA Tournament.

Lingering frustration on the COVID front

COVID fallacies have created frustration for pharmacies.

> By JOEL ALVSTAD ioela@windomnews.com

The role of the local pharmacy during the COVID pandemic has increased greatly.

Rather than simply providing treatments and giving treatment advice, pharmacies have also been the primary source for people to receive the COVID vaccine

and subsequent booster. Pharmacists also have a unique perspective on the

pandemic, because they see the after-effects. They see the treatments that patients are receiving to treat the virus.

The frus-

tration has **Joel Luitjens** been with the level of distrust people have displayed regarding the vac-

Herd immunity?

Joel Luitjens, pharmacist at Lewis Family Drug in Windom, said the pandemic has slowed considerably over the past couple of weeks, but that the level of concern is still high. The pharmacy has 10

full-time and eight part-time employees. Since the start of the pandemic, five staff members have missed time due to COVID, with four of them in fairly short order in the early stages of the virus. "That was an absolute

nightmare," Luitjens said. "If we were down one more person, it would have been difficult to keep going. And, more recently, we had one get exposure through a non-vaccinated person away from work.'

Since the vaccine became readily available, it has been available at the pharmacy.

Luitjens noted that the goal of any pandemic is to achieve what is considered "herd immunity," or, basically, the level of immunization where it would be unlikely to has been shaky. contract an illness.

"Herd immunity is a term that gets thrown around and most people think that it's around 70%, but that number is actually a little low," Luitjens said. "Eighty percent is a more accurate indicator and is a standard we use all the time.

"For example, there are some kids who can't get the measles/mumps/rubella shot, but they're considered protected because just about everybody else does get the shot. There aren't enough people bouncing it around."

That's why Luitjens feels the vaccine has been important.

But, he adds, that public perception of the vaccine

"It's terribly frustrating to see the number of unvaccinated," Luitjens said. "On my staff, we've been administering the vaccinations. We never had any mandate to be vaccinated, but I think everyone could see what the vaccine was doing.'

Getting the facts

When people question the fact the COVID vaccine was developed so quickly, Luitjens is quick to point out that it really wasn't.

'Coronaviruses have been around for a long time," Luitjens said. "It's just that this strain became deadly. A lot of people question how

SEE FALLOUT • PAGE 7

■ REFLECTIONS

10 YEARS AGO Feb. 29, 2012

In the wake of last week's unveiling of Minnesota's new Congressional Districts, Windom and Lake of the Woods suddenly have something in common: The 7th Congressional District. The new district map moves Windom out of the 1st District, while follows Interstate 90 across the south half of the state and into the 7th District, which stretches from Canada to near I-90.

After more than 20 years as Windom city attorney, Dan McDonald has decided to retire. His retirement takes effect March 15.

The name hasn't changed, nor has the focus on service, but Windom Floor & Sleep is under new ownership. Jim "Crunch" Rosenkranz has purchased the business from his father, Jim Rosenkranz.

Ashley Watkins, an eighthgrader at Mt. Lake Public School, finished in third place at the 2012 Regional Spelling Bee held at South Central College in Mankato.

Sheri (Foth) Hall, a 1986 graduate of Windom Area High School, has knitted "Oscar the Slouch" hats that will be boxed and inserted into Oscars celebrities' gift bags at this year's Academy Awards.

Morgan Malakowsky's poster captured first place in the Community Day Poster Contest, while Samantha Hiniker's poster received second place. Both are sixthgraders at Windom Area Middle School.

Top speakers in Windom's third-place finish at he Martin County West Invitational include Brady Ysker-Giefer, first in poetry; Tom Hacker, first in humorous

and second in prose; Morgan Potter, second in drama and poetry; Emily Axford and Eli Yackel-Juleen, third in dramatic duo.

Rachel Wilson took first place in original oratory and informative speaking to lead Mt. Lake Christian to a third place finish at the Minnesota State University-Mankato speech tournament.

25 YEARS AGO March 5, 1997

The Windom Junior Midgets hockev team celebrated a 5-3 win over Moorhead to win the Outstate Regional Tournament in Worthington. The victory secured the team's sixth straight appearance in the state playoffs.

Lindsay Nesmoe, a fifthgrader at Mt. Lake Public School, advanced to the regional spelling bee after winning the school title. Finalists included: fifth-graders Brady Fast, Sarah Kratovil and Alison Gohr; sixthgraders Mitchell Schroeder, Stacie Krahn, Holly Dodge and David Bucklin; seventhgraders Jesse Hiebert, Nicole Hiebert, Dan Henze and Rachel Morin; and eighthgraders Justin Anderson. Amber Rinderle, Julie Nelson and Gretchen Krause.

Andrew Suderman, a Mt. Lake Christian School sixthgrader, was awarded second place in the Lions Club District Peace Poster Contest.

February's Terrific Kids at Windom Area Schools included Mike Temme, Ashton Pankonin, Dereck Whelan, Brady Towlerton, Jordan Struck, Mark Jenniges, Drew Riese, Sarah Ray, Jaclvn Stuckenbroker, Ashley Hopf, Scott Woizeschke, jenny Soutthivong, Sarah Pohlman, Sam Voth, Travis

Karschnik, Trista Goldie, Rachel Voehl and Trenton Anderson.

Ingrid Peterson, a senior at Windom Area High School, won the Region 9 sub-section Triple A title. She shares the title with Ander Kopperud of Westbrook-Walnut Grove.

Nicole Nesseth and Danielle Smith of Windom were winners at the Knights of Columbus regional free throw shooting contest in Redwood Falls.

The Windom Bowling Association held its annual Women's Nine-pin City Tournament at the Sun Bowl in Windom. Negen Construction won the team competition. Team members include Phyllis Ludvigson, Donna Bennett, Arlene Johnson, Evelyn Barton and Joan Negen. Laurie Behrens won the singles competition, while Tracy Arndt and Faye Green teamed up to win doubles and Diane Vellema was the all-events champion.

50 YEARS AGO Feb. 29, 1972

Don Reed, 38, of the University of North Dakota at Grand Forks, has accepted assignment as a Medex trainee with Dr. James Dokken at the Windom Clinic.

A Minnesota Highway Department survey crew is making a preliminary study for a new bridge over the Des Moines River in Windom. To be replaced are two old bridges over the river on Highway 62 (Sixth Street) between Island Park and Rolling Green.

A Cottonwood County state and federal aid highway project ranks as the best of such bituminous paving projects completed

in Minnesota last year. The lauded construction project is County State Aid Highway 8, from Highway 30 to the north county line, about a mile east of Comfrey. Sherm Wagnild, county engineer, and Hugo Schulz Road Contractor Inc., of Lakefield were presented plaques in St. Paul.

Topper Burgess, firstyear student at Pipestone Vocational School, reigned as the king of the school's winter carnival. Topper, a 1971 graduate of Windom High School, is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Ray Sartorius of Windom.

Members of the 1972 Windom boys basketball team who will represent the school in the District 7 Tournament include: Jim Bolin, Mitch Paulson, Steve Ratzlaff, Jim Larson, John Daggett, Randy Even, Travis Finstad, Mike Spielman, Dan Fossing, George Miller, Doug Miller, Mike Anderson, Lew Olson, Bruce Earlewine and Gary Erpestad.

SHOW/ Dairy Assn. to offer free milk

Saturday FROM PAGE 1

are Plaza Jalisco and Hy-Vee. In addition, guests will receive free milk this year, compliments of the American Dairy Association.

Among the big changes in 2022 is that the FFA petting zoo will not return. However, the robotics demonstration is back and there have been a few additions, including Eagle Path Manufacturing, which is located at Windom Area Middle High School. Guests will get a chance to tour the school's new manufacturing area and possibly even purchase

some of their items.

Another new event involves the Windom Fire Department which will do presentations geared toward children. Details of those presentations have not yet been ironed out.

Also returning for 2022 are a number of offerings from Windom Area Health, including:

• Glucose blood sugar testing.

· An inflatable walkthrough colon.

 Spirometry breathing and testing.

Admission to the event is free and people can enter through either the east or west entrance. At the entrance, there will be a tribute to longtime Farm & Home Show volunteer and board member Melvin Wojahn, who passed away in the summer of 2021.



FALLOUT/ **Pharmacist** explains how vaccine works

FROM PAGE 1

the vaccine came about so quickly. Well, a lot of the work to develop a vaccine has been done over years.

"The vaccine against shingles actually was tested on fewer people than the COVID vaccine. With COVID, it took so little time for people to get infected and get sick."

The job of the vaccine, he said, is to essentially teach the rest of the body how to protect itself against the virus. As a result, the actual vaccine itself is not in the body long-term.

"This vaccine doesn't stay in the body that long," Luitjens said. "Within a couple of weeks, there's no trace of the vaccine in the body. It isn't going to cause trouble down the road because it's not going to be in the body down the road.'

The vaccines also have helped lessen the severity of COVID with each different variant

"Even influenza changes every year," Luitjens said. "Basically, how our flu vaccine is made is they look at what happens in South America during our summer, because that's winter down there. That's their high season for influenza. And there are always mutations.

"We knew that COVID would mutate. Delta was a very harsh variant. Omicron isn't as potent, but it's been much more catchy, so the number of infections has gone up. The hope is that every mutation becomes less and less severe."

Lack of information

When it comes to the vaccine, Luitjens said most people have their minds made up.

He noted he's fielded very few questions about the vaccine from anyone who either isn't vaccinated or does not

want to be.. "It surprises me I haven't been asked more questions about the vaccine," Luitjens said. "I suspect people aren't asking their doctors about it, either. I don't know where people are getting their information. You're rolling the dice, and I don't know why people would take that kind of risk. There have been over 280 million doses administered in the United

States. If something was going to show up, it would have shown up by now.

"As a person working in health care, the frustration to me is so many people could have just helped themselves by getting a vaccine for free. That frustration is evident across the health care field. And the volume of people who are having treatment delayed because of the lack of

availability of hospital space is tragic. But the

pharmacy is often where the results of vaccinationversus nonvaccination are seen. "In the

pharmacy, we see the consequences of people not getting the vac-

cine," Luitjens said. "We're the ones who see people getting steroids. We've had some people getting ivermectin. Even though it's not been proven as a treatment, they're having their doctor write

prescriptions for it. "Then, those people are upset when it isn't covered by insurance. Insurance doesn't cover a medicine being used in a manner that isn't an approved use. I guess I don't understand the logic of not trusting the vaccine, but being willing to trust ivermectin.

"If someone has fairly $mild\ symptoms,\ they \'re$ probably just getting something over the counter. But if someone is coming in for imitrex or some kind of steroid, that means their symptoms were pretty severe. That's something the general public really doesn't

Luitjens said in a normal year, he sells six prescriptions of ivermectin, at most. In the past year, he's kept eight boxes of ivermectin on

hand at all times. Pharmacies are also seeing significant supply chain

issues. "We all know how difficult it was to get toilet paper when the pandemic first started. But over the last year, Tylenol has been very hard to get," Luitjens said. "We'll have stretches where we can't get it for a week and a half. Our cough and cold section sometimes looks like someone cleared off the shelves. Keeping over-thecounter medications in stock has been a major challenge."

Added stress

When a patient comes in to receive the vaccine or a booster, an employee takes their information, administers the shot and checks on the patient after 15 minutes.

"It adds stress to our staff," Luitjens said. "Things have slowed down a bit over the past month. Before

that, we were doing 20-plus vaccinations a day. On Fridays, we were doing over 40 against shingles vaccinations a day because actually was tested people would on fewer people have the whole weekend to than the COVID recover. Now, it's down to eight to 10 per day. But that's been an add-on to our work

JOEL LUITJENS LEWIS FAMILY DRUG PHARMACIST day, because

The vaccine

vaccine."

someone has to come administer the shot and check on the person 15 minutes later. They also have to do billing and report it to the state immunization website.

"You give out an immunization card to people, but the state also has an app so you can have a digital record of your vaccinations."

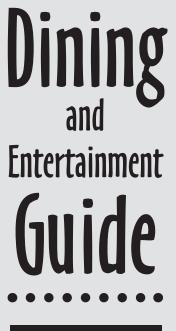
But Luitjens believes that the vaccine is doing what it's supposed to do, which is limit the severity of COVID.

"There's a wide range of medications that we've seen people get," Luitjens said. "Some people who aren't vaccinated have only mild cases. But we've seen that people who haven't gotten the vaccine are more likely to have a severe case.

"Typically, with a vaccinated person, the symptoms are mild. Maybe they lose their sense of taste or smell. Maybe they have an upset stomach. That might be the only thing that registers with them as a COVID symptom.

"The Sanford website lists the numbers of people hospitalized, in ICUs and on ventilators who are vaccinated versus nonvaccinated. The other week, it was 38 people in ICU who where non-vaccinated, and none who were vaccinated. That tells me the vaccine is working.'

Editor's note: This is the second of a three-part series on the pandemic's impact on health care in the area. The next part will look at the impact on clinics.







Movie Hotline 507-831-1641



Proceeds Designated for ER Trauma Monitors

Adults \$10 | Children 6-10 yrs \$5 5-years and under eat FREE!

Co-sponsored by Windom Area Health Foundation Prudence Lodge #97, and Thrivent Financial

WINDOM AREA HEALTH FOUNDATION





TASTE OF WINDOM EVENT

11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Food will be served by . . .

· Plaza Jalisco

• HyVee

•Milk from the Cottonwood County Dairy Association



60+ Exhibitors | Seminars Entertainment

SEMINARS

9:00 a.m. — Market update with Cliff Huot, POET Grain Regional Marketing Manager 10:30 a.m.— "Fair Isn't Always Equal" discussion on family farms with Cassandra Lustfield, Ford Law Office Attorney

- Windom Robotics Team Performances
- •\$2,000 in Robotics Raffle Prizes,

animals with

- including a BlackStone 36" Griddle!
- Fire Department Demonstrations • Health screenings with Windom Area Health
- Free milk
 - Family-friendly activities
 - See Hydee the HyLife Pig Mascot
 - •Tour Eagle Path Manufacturing

FREE ADMISSIO

SPONSORS: HyLife, Toro, Fortune Transportation, Bank Midwest, Citizen Publishing Company, HyVee Ag Builders, GDF Enterprises, Five Star Realty, KDOM Radio, Compeer Financial, Miller Sellner, POET, Cottonwood County Solid Waste Department, Hometown Sanitation Services LLC

Skaters ready for 'Monsters Rink'

Windom Figure Skating Club to present annual weekend Ice Show







WHAT'S INSIDE

Veterans memorial update

The Windom veterans memorial project remains \$12,000 short of its goal

Page 2

Robotics team gets World Invite

Windom's Pineapple Posse gets official invitation to World meet

Page 6

ONLINE POLL

Last Week's Results

Do you support sending U.S. troops to the Ukranian border in Poland?







Next Week

Should Minnesota add sports betting at casinos and online?

Vote at www.windomnews.com

DID YOU KNOW?

Enduring a chilly, but

dry February

It was an unusually cold February for Windom area residents.

The mercury averaged just 27 degrees for high month with an average low of 2 degrees.

While there were no high temps below zero, there were lows at zero or below on 14 days. The high temperature for the month was 50 degrees on Feb. 21 and the low was -14 on Feb. 2 and 3.

Despite the cold, the month stayed relatively dry with only 3.4 inches of snow falling during the month, with .31 inches of precipitation. Two of those 3.4 inches were recorded on Feb. 23.

WEATHER

A look back

| A look back | | | | | |
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| | Н | L | F | | |
| Tues. | 42 | 31 | _ | | |
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| Thurs. | 30 | 23 | _ | | |
| Fri. | 42 | 28 | tı | | |
| Sat. | 35 | 23 | .6 | | |
| Sun. | 29 | 16 | _ | | |
| Mon. | 33 | 17 | _ | | |

Hu1/00 pharmacy

5¢ FUEL **SAVER** for every prescription filled and receive a



prescription transferred from another pharmacy.

another pnarmacy.

Purchase of a transferred prescription from a non-Hy-Vee pharmacy is required. Limit one per household. Restrictions apply. See store for details. Fuel savings are limited to 20 gallons of fuel per purchase, per vehicle. Beneficiaries of government-funded healthcare programs, including but not limited to Medicare. Medicaid and TRICARE are not eligible tor this offer. Beneficiaries of the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program are eligible, unless transferring a controlled substance prescription. Valid at your Windom Hy-Vee store.



Area clinics seeing ripple effect

Pandemic puts preventive care on hold

■ Cancer and diabetes screening saw a decline due to COVID.

By JOEL ALVSTAD

A full two years after the first cases were reported, the COVID-19 pandemic appears to finally be heading toward the ending stages.

Statewide and nationally, the number of cases of COVID have decreased significantly in the past month, raising hopes that the "endemic" point of the pandemic has been reached, society is limited.

But while the pandemic may be nearing its end point, the medical field is still, in many ways, playing catch-

up.
The pandemic has had several impacts on health care throughout the nation and locally, whether it be crowded emergency rooms, empty pharmacy shelves or short-staffed clinics.

But perhaps the most overlooked side effect of the pandemic is the impact

where the ongoing impact on seen at the area's clinics for routine preventive care.

On the back burner

Dr. A.J. Yusuf, a physician at Sanford Clinic in Windom, noted that the past two years have seen a decline in the number of routine preventive procedures.

Much of that was due to the nature of COVID. "Everyone was so con-

SEE SCREENING

• BACK PAGE



JOEL ALVSTAD 3/9 Sanford Clinic 07

DR. A.J. YUSUF (seated) and Registered Nurse **Natalie** Karschnik review a patient's file. Routine care is starting to catch up as the pandemic winds

Farm & Home sees busy Saturday

■The Windom Farm & **Home Show returned** after missing 2021, due to the pandemic.

The booths were buzzing with guests, just like old times, at Saturday's Windom Farm & Home Show.

The event, which was cancelled due to COVID in 2021, brought back many of the longtime favorites, including the Zoo Man and tasty food options.



RICHARD BARNETT 3/9 farmhome 08 AMONG THE POPULAR attractions at Saturday's Farm & Home Show was the giant inflatable walk-through colon sponsored by Windom Area Health Outreach.



AT THE ENTRANCE OF the show was a tribute to Mel Wojahn, a longtime event committee member who passed away in 2021.



MAN was a big hit for the youngsters at Saturday's Farm & Home Show, as

Election details begin to take shape

So far, two people have announced they will seek the area seat held by retiring Rep. Rod Hamilton of Mt. Lake.

The 2022 election is sill eight months away, but key details are falling into place, including candidates and districts.

In recent weeks, residents have learned: Longtime District 22B Rep. Rod Hamilton

of Mt. Lake will not seek re-election. · Two candidates have

already emerged for Hamilton's seat — Larry Liepold of Okabena and Mari Fogelman of Fulda.

Both are Republicans. In January, the District 22 line moves east, bringing the entire county under District 21

senate seat and splitting the county for the House. Windom, Bingham Lake, Mt. Lake, Butterfield and Odin will be represented by District 21B. The rest

SEE ELECTION

• BACK PAGE

Windom council calls for hearing on TIF spending plan

■Windom's new South Cottonwood Lake development is expected to be set in motion by April.

It appears the final pieces of the South Cottonwood Lake development puzzle are

falling into place. Agreements have been reached on the purchase of the south Cottonwood Lake property and also Cemstone's new site in North Windom Industrial Park. In addi-

tion, two developers are in place for both the apartments and housing section. All that remains is to finalize Tax Increment Financing for both aspects of the project. Last week, the Windom City Council took a big step in wrapping up final TIF

details voting 5-0 to call for a March 15 public hearing (at its regular meeting) on a TIF spending plan for the south Cottonwood Lake project. The proposed development is at the current Cemstone ready mix plant, which lies directly south of Tegels Park, across Cottonwood Lake Drive from Windom's east water tower. The overall plan calls for the EDA to

buy a 34-acre site for \$1.15 million. Voss Plumbing & Heating would then purchase the site from the city after agreeing to pay \$230,000 and develop the site at a projected cost of more than \$1 million (including sewer, water, street, electric and storm

Excluded from that part of the deal is an apartment project site, to be purchased by Apollo Development.

Voss Plumbing & Heating would develop and sell seven lake lots, plus six to The remaining undeveloped lots and

quarry area would be donated back to the city once the plat is finished. Doing it this way simplifies the process. Voss Plumbing & Heating requested

\$150,000 in TIF for property development, which includes development of a lift station and backup generator.

Apollo's TIF request for the 40-unit upscale apartment complex is \$594,000.

Award winner puts customers, employees first

■ HyLife's Windom plant has an annual payroll of roughly \$60 million.

The HyLife officials who accepted the Exceptional Achievement Award at last fall's Windom Chamber Gala didn't need to say a word.

Happiness and appreciation were written all over their faces.

It isn't often a company with one year of history in a community comes away with this award. This fact is not lost on Chief Financial Officer Tom Seigfreid and other HyLife leaders.

"We were thrilled about it and, at the same time, surprised," Seigfreid said. "Reflecting and thinking about others who were nominated,

AWARD WINNER

any of those would have been an excellent recipient of the award."

Now at 1,030 employees, HyLife is Windom's largest employer. The plant is at the northeast edge of town.

The company started in Manitoba, Canada about 25 years ago, when two family farms joined forces to share their knowledge and passion to produce the best pigs.

Headquartered in La Broquerie, Manitoba, HyLife operates in the following locations: Windom, Neepawa and La Broquerie, Manitoba; Salvatierra, Mexico; Shanghai, China; and a sales office in Tokyo, Japan.

How does HyLife try to have an impact on Windom and the surrounding area?

A SEIGFREID: To be engaged in the community has great meaning for us.

We are always looking for ways to support and be involved. Last year, we were involved in things like Riverfest, the county fair, Railroad Days in St. James, the Regatta in Worthington and other things.

The first big one we did was Riverfest in Windom. We had more than 200 employees, all in blue HyLife shirts. It was cool to see.

What is HyLife's payroll, What is locally?

A SEIGFREID: Our compensation is in excess of \$60 million per

year. What makes Hy-Life want to do so many good

Tom Seigfreid things locally?

SEIGFREID: One of our key things, going back to our mission statement, is that we take care of our employees, our customers and our communities that we live in.

The employees, our people, are a focus for us. Obviously customers are important, we need their business. The way to keep driving our business



SEIGFREID: It is around 75 A stiurners. The trucks per day.

That's hogs coming in and product going out. And then there are the materials, the packaging material and other supplies.

sions of the Gala after What were your impresseeing it for the first time?

SEIGFREID: The event is a celebration that comes together at the end of the

SEE AWARD

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SCREENING/

Regular visits decline for diabetic care

FROM PAGE 1

cerned about COVID that we saw a drop in regular preventive visits," Yusuf said. "People were hesitant to go see their providers because they didn't want to risk coming into contact with COVID.

"We saw the number of regular visits for diabetic care, high blood pressure screenings and procedures, like colonoscopies and mammograms, go down."

Much of that hesitance by patients was unnecessary because of safety measures put into place by the clinic, including drive-thru testing and protocols for patients exhibiting COVID symptoms.

"In our clinic setting, we've done our best to prove a safe environment for all our patients," Yusuf said. "Our testing for COVID has been drive-thru testing behind our building. It was a nurse-driven program with guidance from the providers. If a person either had symptoms or had an exposure, the nurse would put on their PPE and conduct the test out back.

"If a patient was symptomatic and sick, then we

If the symptoms are mild, we'll recommend taking Tylenol or ibuprofen, hydration and rest. It's viral and has to run its course. But if it settles in your chest, you can get pneumonia."

DR. A.J. YUSUF PHYSICIAN AT

SANFORD CLINIC IN WINDOM

would bring them into the clinic, but we would get them into an exam room right away, so they wouldn't be in the waiting room."

Now, Yusuf is optimistic that COVID numbers are heading in the right direction and that recent variants have been less potent.

"With COVID numbers finally trending in the right direction, hopefully we can get caught up on all of the screenings that have been missed over the last two years," Yusuf said. "We definitely hope we don't see another big spike in COVID, but hopefully it isn't too late to catch up on that screening and we don't see a big spike in cancer cases."

Echoing that sentiment was Josh Sammons, Clinic Director for Sanford Clinics in Windom, Mt. Lake, Westbrook and Tracy.

Sammons added that the fear of COVID has subsided greatly, which has prompted many to return to scheduling important screenings.

"I think what has been really missed over the past two years has been the various screenings and preventive care," Sammons said. "I understand that the fear of COVID kind of made it so people didn't want to go see their doctor for preventive care. But those measures—colonoscopies, mammograms, managing diabetes—are just as important as anything COVID-related. We're just now starting to see that care that was missed catch up.'

Unfortunately, Sammons said, some of the preliminary data is showing that the hesitance of some patients to undergo routine preventive screening during the pandemic is, indeed, leading to more severe diagnoses now.

"My concern is that we're going to see a significant increase in the number of cases of colon cancer or breast cancer, because people weren't having those tests done the last couple of years during the pandemic," Sammons said. "Some of that data is already starting to come out. Hopefully, we're able to provide a safe enough

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JOSH SAMMONS

CLINIC DIRECTOR FOR SANFORD CLINICS IN WINDOM, MT. LAKE, WESTBROOK AND TRACY

experience that those people can have those preventive measures done."

The clinics' role

Throughout the pandemic, the role of a primary care provider at a clinic has been critical to treatment of patients.

Sammons noted that if a patient suspects they have COVID, calling their primary care provider is a necessary first step toward treatment.

"Typically, if someone suspects they have COVID, we would rather have them contact their clinic, rather than the emergency room," Sammons said. "The ERs can get overwhelmed at times, and that isn't to say that we haven't had an influx of patients. But contacting their primary care provider is the best first step someone can take."

And calling the clinic, rather than stopping in, has also been critical to the safety of other patients and staff.

"One of the things we implemented very early is that if someone suspects they have COVID, they call us instead of walking into the clinic," Sammons said. "That allows us to protect our other patients and our staff, and allows our staff to put on their PPE. That also allows us to set up to do a drive-through test behind our clinic. It just greatly reduces the risk of further transmission.

"Sometimes, providers want to see a patient, to listen to their heart and lungs. But we want to minimize the risk of transmission."

As a provider, Dr. Yusuf noted that with milder symptoms, providers typically recommend conservative treatment.

"If the symptoms are mild, we'll recommend taking Tylenol or ibuprofen, hydration and rest," Yusuf said. "It's viral and has to run its course. But if it settles in your chest, you can get pneumonia.

"So if someone is immuno-compromised, has other underlying conditions or is over the age of 65, we'd give them a home monitoring kit and would walk them through symptoms to watch for, with the main ones being chest pain or shortness of breath. That would require further evaluation with X-rays or, if it's more severe, it would warrant an ER trip. Most mild cases, we'll keep here to treat."

With the recent decline in cases, Sammons noted that Sanford Clinics have changed procedure, in that they no longer administer tests to people who are asymptomatic.

"Our leadership provides

We saw the number of regular visits for diabetic care, high blood pressure screenings and procedures, like colonoscopies and mammograms, go down."

DR. A.J. YUSUF

SANFORD CLINIC IN WINDOM

great communication on how things are changing and what direction we need to go, and we're just applying it at the local level," Sammons said. "But people have become accustomed to things changing rapidly."

The clinic also has been administering all makes of vaccines and boosters.

"There's a lot of work behind the scenes to make sure people are getting the correct dosage," Sammons said. "It's tapered off a bit, but we've really been pushing the boosters for our employees, our patients and our communities."

Relief is in sight

Sammons noted that if someone in a clinic shows symptoms or tests positive, others have had to pick up the workload.

"We've had staff who have been out at different times during the pandemic," Sammons said. "If they develop symptoms or have a positive test, they're going to stay out their recommended number of days. If you take a provider, a nurse or a receptionist out of one of our smaller clinics, we really aren't back-filling those positions. It may be double the work on someone who is there.

"I really give our staff a lot of credit. They realize how important it is to keep our doors open to meet our patients' needs. That has been the biggest challenge throughout this pandemic."

With the drop in cases also comes a bit of relief for the clinic staff.

That relief comes after a very trying six months, as the Delta and Omicron variants caused surges of COVID cases—a surge which also impacted health care staff.

"The stress level is definitely higher, particularly if people are out because of sickness," Yusuf said. "Everybody is putting in more hours. But people are resilient and have worked through to make sure we're able to provide care to our patients. And Sanford has been very supportive to its employees through this process, to try to keep these local clinics open."

Lions Club orders materials for shelter

■ Current plans are to begin construction on the new shelter at Tegels Park in late June, or early July.

Officials from the Windom Lions Club announced Friday that the Tegels Park shelter project is moving forward.

Erik Haken of the Lions Club told the Citizen that materials prices have increased substantially in recent weeks. Consequently, the Lions Club decided during a recent meeting to lock in a price. He added that the plan is to begin construction in late-June, or early-July. A four-week construction process is planned.

"This is exciting news and we know people want to know our progress," Haken said. "Fundraising is ongonig and we still have a ways to go."

The Windom Lions Club shelter fund drive continues to pick up donations as the public learns more about the project.

The 50-by-80-foot shelter, which is targeted for Tegels Park at Cottonwood Lake, would be designed to hold a stage and larger community events. Initial plans are to provide more cover and protection from the weather elements.

The goal is to raise \$250,000 for the project. So far, the Lions have collected \$147,500 in donations and pledges. Organizers say it will take about two months to build.

Once the project is fully funded, it will be owned and maintained by the city of Windom.

People can make donations at city hall, or by contacting Lions Club members. Watch for updates in the Shopper.

AWARD/

Segfreid: 'Our number of local employees has already grown'

voar

It's a wonderful opportunity to get to know the business owners and leaders of the community. It was a funtime.

Also, Tyann Marcy (executive director of the Chamber) does a good job. She is energetic and enthusiastic, a great ambassador for the city of Windom.

The We Care Team was a key addition at HyLife. Tell us about it.

A SEIGFREID: The We Care Team was developed in June of last year.

It is a way to strengthen the relationship with our employees, a way to support them. There are things that just naturally come up and with 1,000 employees, you can't get to every employee every day. The We Care Team is a small group, six total, and they are easy to find — they're wearing bright pink helmets and bright pink

vests.

If you (as an employee)
need help with something,
or if there is information
you need, or you have a
question, the We Care Team
can help. They can respond
quickly, sometimes in just
minutes and sometimes in a
day or two.

It's a team that helps resolve matters quickly. It has been greatly received by the employees. They are just thrilled to have that resource there.

I think this has helped employees realize their importance to the company and that we really do care about them as individuals.

In what ways do you see HyLife helping the community in the future?

SEIGFREID: We are going to continue to expand.

Our number of local employees has already grown. When HyLife started in Windom, our employee count was about half what it is today. We were able to double our number of employees and increase to

two shifts.

We were able to warmly welcome 375 employees from Mexico as well as from the Philippines. That has helped us get to the fulfillment of two shifts and now there are plans to grow our husiness even more.

business even more.
You will see some capital expenditures in 2022 and 2023 and we hope to also see an increase in capacity at the plant. We will also continue to support community through events and by bringing our We Care culture beyond the plant.

Editor's note: This is part of a series on local Chamber award winners that were announced at the fall Chamber Gala.

507-200-2015 SafeAtHome@RTMN.org

ELECTION/ Mt. I ake

Mt. Lake moves to 7th Congressional district

FROM PAGE 1

of the county will be under the District 21A House seat. Rep. Joe Schomacker and Sen. Bill Weber, both of Luverne, currently live in what will be the new District 21A and District 21, respectively.

• The U.S. House 7th District line also moved east, meaning Mt. Lake residents will fall under the umbrella of the seat currently held by Rep. Michelle Fischbach of Paynesville. Under the new alignment, all of Cottonwood County will now be in the 7th Congressional

District.

Meanwhile, city officials have learned that the population changes in Windom are limited enough that there is no need to adjust the lines for city precincts. Local resi-

dents will continue to vote in the same precincts for future elections.

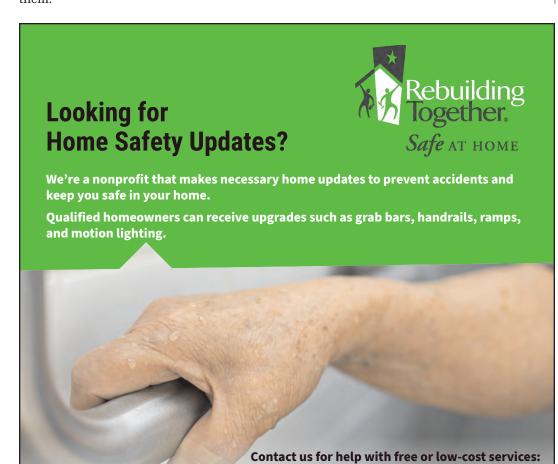
Cottonwood County's districts will change slightly, depending on what occurs at a public hearing scheduled for later this spring. At this point, it appears likely that Great Bend Township will move from the third district (represented by Donna

Gravley) to the first district (represented by Larry Anderson).

Watch windomnews.com and future editions of the Cottonwood County Citizen and Citizen eEdition for updates on candidates for all local, state and national races involved in the 2022 election.

Windom







• Our municipal liquor store contributed \$100,000 to the city to

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off-set general fund expenses