



HONORS!
Midwest Electric recognized as July Chamber Spotlight.
Page 5



BALL TEAMS!
Summer ball team photos to wrap up the season.
Page 8

IN BRIEF

GRADUATION: Perkins County Schools will hold their graduation ceremony for the class of 2020 on Saturday, August 1 at 1 p.m. in the Pritchett Gym. The event will allow ticket holders in only. See last week's issue of the Tribune, or visit the school's website for more details.

CRUISE NIGHT: The Perkins County Chamber and the City of Grant have decided against hosting the annual Cruise Night that was scheduled for August 7. The Chamber is looking into a later date and will release more information if and when it is available.

OUTSIDE



Looking Ahead

Thurs.: Scattered Thunderstorms, 76/57
Fri.: Partly Cloudy, 83/57
Sat.: Sunny, 89/57
Sun.: Mostly Sunny, 83/58
Mon.: Partly Cloudy, 81/57
Tues.: Partly Cloudy, 81/58
Wed.: Partly Cloudy, 83/59

Source: weather.com

Looking Back

Date	High	Low	Moisture
July 21	85	57	0.09
July 22	93	64	0.26
July 23	93	66	0.21
July 24	96	67	1.68
July 25	93	65	0.83
July 26	76	66	0.05
July 27	83	67	

Source: weather.com

INSIDE

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RUSS PANKONIN | JOHNSON PUBLICATIONS

Things get "hog wild" at the fair

The Perkins County Fair wrapped up last week and while there may not have been any hired entertainment, that didn't stop all the fun. Getting a picture of the hogs with their exhibitors after the swine show can sometimes be an adventure. That's why Tanner Burge, (inset), is equipped with feed pan and a water sprayer to keep the hog's attention while Olivia Gengenbach poses for the camera. Adding some fun to the effort, Storm Peterson does his best imitation of a hog while Burge does his best to keep his attention during the photo.

PCHS COVID-19 cases holding at 22

Nine employees, 13 residents infected thus far

BY RUSS PANKONIN
GRANT TRIBUNE-SENTINEL

COVID-19 cases of Perkins County Health Services residents and employees stands at 22 as of Tuesday, July 28.

PCHS CEO Neil Hilton said 13 residents at Golden Ours Convalescent Home have tested positive for the coronavirus since the outbreak was first reported July 14.

In addition, nine employees of the home have tested positive from July 14-22.

The last positive test came back Saturday, July 25, marking the 13th resident to test positive.

Hilton said the outbreak among patients has slowed but they aren't backing off any precautions to limit the spread of the virus.

The first four Golden Ours residents tested positive on July 17. The situation began to peak Wednesday, July 22 when four more residents tested positive, followed by four more the following day.

The unknown of whether more residents might test positive created a great deal of stress and strain among the staff.

"It was starting to wear on everybody. You betcha," he noted. Hilton said things began to look up when no one tested positive Friday and only one Saturday.

Hilton said they had cleared the seven rooms in north wing of the home to specifically house coronavirus residents.

When the number of cases began to explode last week, Hilton said they knew they had to begin transferring infected residents to other hospitals. Of the 13 who tested positive, seven were transferred, five remain at Golden Ours while one resident in his late 90s passed away.

Hilton said they transferred four residents on Wednesday, one on Thursday and two on Friday to hospitals in North Platte, Ogallala and McCook.

Hilton said the residents were transferred to give them the best opportunity to overcome the virus.

TESTING CONTINUES

Hilton said every resident in Golden Ours and Park Ridge assisted living has been tested twice, the results of the second test pending as of Tuesday.

If those results come back negative, Hilton said the current wave of infections could be subsiding.

He added they have tested more than 70 additional employees, some more than once. Thus far, there have been no positive tests among them. Testing will continue weekly for the time being, he added.

The most recent positive employee test occurred July 22. Between July 14-22, a total of nine employees tested positive. Eight of those employees have been in quarantine at home while one has been hospitalized in Grant.

Hilton said it takes 10-14 days of quarantine to ensure the virus is no longer communicable. If no more positive tests come back on employees, he said everyone infected could be back to work by Aug. 5. No visitors are allowed at Golden Ours or Park Ridge at this time.

People visiting the clinic or hospital are asked to keep accompaniment to a minimum, when possible.

Temperatures will be taken at the door and masks are required when in the two facilities.

Spray plane goes down, pilot dies

BY RUSS PANKONIN
GRANT TRIBUNE-SENTINEL

A 31-year-old Tennessee man perished Saturday when the aerial spray plane he was piloting went down in a cornfield south of Grant.

Perkins County Sheriff Jim Brueggeman identified the victim as Alex Tuttle of College Grove, Tennessee.

Brueggeman said Tuttle was a contract pilot flying for Aurora Cooperative when the accident occurred. The plane was owned by Aurora Co-op.

The call came in at 12:05 p.m. His office, along with the Grant and Madrid fire departments, were dispatched to scene.

Brueggeman said another pilot spraying nearby lost sight of the plane and efforts to contact Tuttle were unsuccessful.

After finishing the load, the pilot flew over the field and spotted the downed plane in a cornfield seven miles south and a half mile east of Grant, off Road 753.

Brueggeman said they believe the plane went down somewhere between 11:40 to 11:50 a.m. Perkins County Coroner Rick Roberts pronounced Tuttle dead at the scene.

An autopsy was ordered since it was an unattended death.

Investigators with the National Transportation Safety Bureau and Federal Aviation

Administration were on the scene Sunday, according to the sheriff.

CHASE COUNTY CRASH

Ironically, a single-engine plane went down around the same time shortly after takeoff from a private strip south of Imperial. The aircraft was a fixed-wing VANS RV-6.

The pilot and his passenger were transported to the Chase County Community Hospital where the pilot was treated for minor injuries and released.

The passenger sustained serious, non-life threatening injuries and was transported to a medical facility in Colorado, according to the Chase County Sheriff's Office.

BUSY WEEKEND

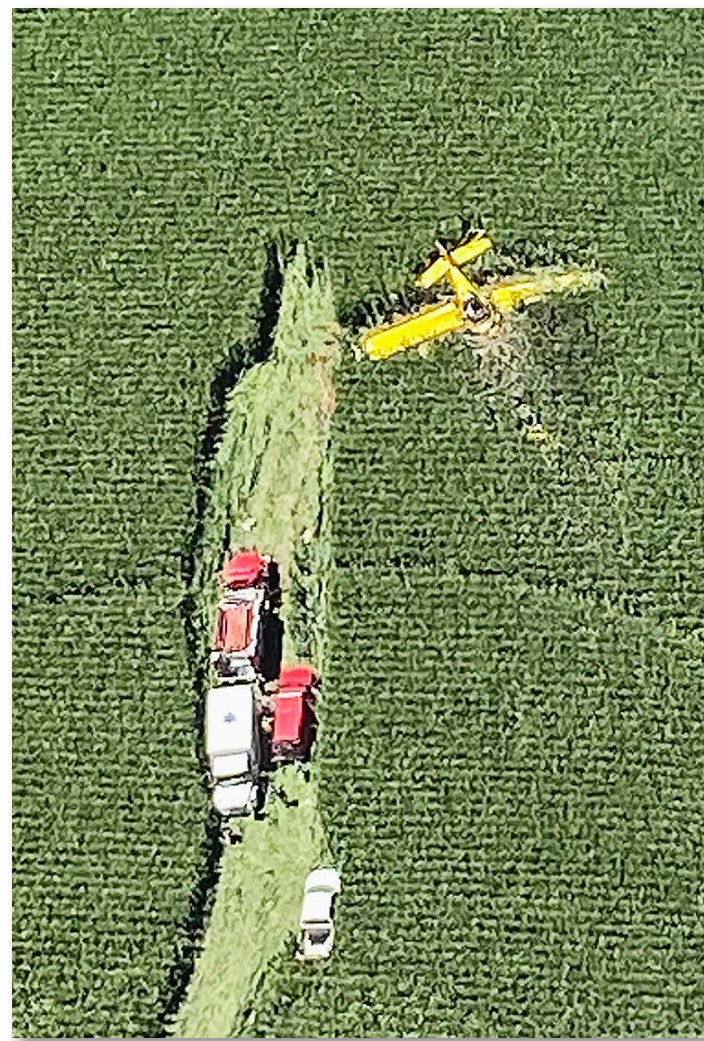
Sheriff Brueggeman said there was lots of activity over the weekend.

Severe weather conditions were experienced both Friday and Saturday night.

Firemen responded to a lightning strike that hit a home in Grant Friday night.

Late Saturday afternoon, another storm cell with high winds, rain and hail struck an area west and south of Brandon.

Winds as high as 75 mph destroyed a steel quonset and wind-driven hail totalled crops in the area.



CONTRIBUTED

Emergency vehicles drove through a corn field south of Grant to access a downed spray plane.

Wheatland Industries challenging constitutionality of tax refund law

BY RUSS PANKONIN
GRANT TRIBUNE-SENTINEL

Wheatland Industries, LLC, owner of the Madrid ethanol plant, filed a suit in federal district court challenging the constitutionality of a Nebraska tax refund law.

The suit names the county, several county officials and the taxing entities of Madrid, Perkins County Schools, Perkins County Hospital, ESU 16, Mid-Plains College and the Upper Republican NRD as defendants in the suit.

The property valuation of the ethanol plant and a subsequent ruling by the Nebraska Supreme Court serves as the basis for the suit. The 2017 valuation of the plant by the county, \$16.3 million, was challenged by Wheatland Industries.

The issue went before the Tax Equalization and Review Commission who concluded the valuation should have been \$7.3 million.

The county appealed that

ruling to the Nebraska Supreme Court and the ruling was upheld.

This meant the taxing entities in the county needed to refund nearly \$118,000 in taxes that were overpaid by Wheatland.

In this situation, Nebraska statute allows those taxing entities to take up to five years to repay the funds, with no interest accruing.

The suit alleges that those provisions make the law constitute an illegal taking of property.

The U.S. and Nebraska Constitutions both provide that private property shall not be taken for public use without just compensation.

The suit also contends that the five-year period the taxing entities have to pay back the refunds denies Wheatland Industries of due process.

Wheatland Industries noted the taxing entities had already held their money for two years before the case was settled by the state Supreme Court.

While some of the entities have already begun to budget for repayment of the funds, others have already repaid small amounts due.

Wheatland Industries said in the suit nothing compels the entities to pay back money before the five-year, Jan. 3, 2025 deadline provided for in the statute.

Perkins County Schools will repay the largest amount of tax money—\$44,252.13.

The Village of Madrid will be hit with a repayment of \$31,363.45.

Perkins County will take the next biggest hit at \$19,775.17.

In addition, Wheatland Industries has already paid their property taxes for 2018 and half of 2019.

The county's valuations of the plant for those two tax years has also been contested by Wheatland. The taxes for 2019 were based on a valuation of \$13.3 million.

If Wheatland is successful in their appeal, they will be

entitled to more property tax refunds for the 2018 and 2019 tax years.

If the statute remains in effect, those refunds would not be due for five years from the date of settlement.

Defendants named in the suit include Perkins County Treasurer Julie Sestak, Perkins County Assessor Peggy Burton, Village Of Madrid, Madrid Cemetery, Madrid Fire District, Educational Service Unit No. 16, Mid-Plains College, Upper Republican Natural Resource District, Perkins County Hospital, Perkins Board Of Equalization and Perkins County.

During last week's commissioner meeting, commissioners discussed that since this is a constitutional issue, it's possible the Nebraska Attorney General's Office could pick up the case and defend it.

However, no determination on that has been made by the state.

OBITUARY

Kevin Reichenberg

Kevin L. Reichenberg, age 60, of Grant, Nebraska, passed away, Tuesday, July 21, 2020 at his home in Grant.

Kevin was born November 20, 1959 in Ogallala to Lewis Harold and Mary Ann (Slobzewski) Reichenberg. Kevin met LeAnn Daly at Chadron State

College, where he played football for three years and wrestled for one year.

On July 12, 1980 they were united in marriage and recently celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary.

He went to school in Ogallala and graduated from Ogallala High School in 1978 and then went to Chadron State College.

After college he returned to Ogallala and worked for Goodall Electric Farmers Co Op. of Brule, Ogallala and Roscoe for 16 1/2 years. In 1997 he moved to Fremont and was a Grain Trader for Hansen Mueller of Omaha until 2004. They moved to Iowa Falls, where he worked for FC Co-Op.

In 2013, they returned to Nebraska, making their home in Grant where he worked for Frenchman Valley Co-Op.

Kevin was a member of the Knights of Columbus Council 5835 in Iowa Falls, Iowa, member of the Chadron State College Athletic Hall of Fame, loved Chicago Cubs Baseball and Cornhusker Football and enjoyed watching his grandchildren golf, play football, wrestle, and rodeo. He was an avid hunter and fisherman. Kevin worked in the grain

and agriculture industry for thirty-plus years. He was looking forward to retirement.

He was preceded in death by his parents; father-in-law, Art Daly; and grandparents, Henry and Esther Reichenberg, Peter and Frances Slobzewski.

Kevin is survived by his wife, LeAnn, of Grant; three children; Krista (Austin) Gaston, of Madrid; Bo (Holly) Reichenberg, of Harrisburg; Cain (EmmaRaye) Reichenberg, of Sutherland; five grandchildren; Kayla Reichenberg, Taylor Hubl, Ben McClain, all of Madrid; Wyatt and Wilbur Reichenberg, of Harrisburg; one brother, Rick (Lana) Reichenberg, of Council Bluffs, Iowa; one sister Diane (Richard) Schwasinger, of Wichita, KS; sister-in-law, LaRae (Kirt) Thompson, of Brady; brother-in-law, Mike Daly, of Sidney, Iowa; mother-in-law, Ilene Daly, of Tryon; six nieces, two nephews and numerous aunts, uncles, cousins and friends.

A rosary was recited, Monday, July 27, 2020 at 9:30 a.m., followed by A Mass of the Christian Burial at 10:00 a.m., Monday, July 27, 2020 in the St. Luke's Catholic Church with Father Bryan Ernest officiating.

Interment was Monday, July 27, 2020 at 1:30 p.m. C.T. in the Miller Cemetery, Tryon, Nebraska.

A memorial has been established in his name.

Online condolences may be left by clicking the Share a Memory or the Tribute Wall Button.

Both services were live streamed.

Draucker Funeral Home has been entrusted with arrangements.

OBITUARY

Douglas Patterson

Douglas L. Patterson, age 98, of Grant, Nebraska, went home to be with the lord, Friday, July 24, 2020 at the Golden Ours Convalescent Home in Grant.

Doug was born September 10, 1921, at Ansley, Nebraska, the son of Roy F. and Fannie (Tomsiceh) Patterson. Doug received his education and grew into manhood in

Ansley and graduated from Ansley High School in 1939. Doug was class president, both his junior and senior years.

On November 7, 1942 he was united in marriage to Evelyn Price at Grand Island, Neb. The couple lived in Ansley and Lexington before moving to Ogallala in 1956.

Mr. Patterson entered the armed services on September 29, 1943. He served in New Guinea and Okinawa and was awarded the Asiatic Pacific Service Medal, The World War II Victory Medal and the Good Conduct Medal.

OBITUARY

Loneta Olvey

Loneta L. Olvey, 80 of Alliance, passed away Tuesday, July 21, 2020, at the Highland Park Care Center in Alliance, Nebraska.

Loneta was born December 14, 1939, in Perkins County, Nebraska, to Carl and Gertrude (Pankonin) Mosel. She graduated from Grant High School with the

Doug and his brother LeRoy shared a World Herald Newspaper route in their early teen years. After graduation he helped his dad in the well/windmill and plumbing business and was a part time motion picture projectionist.

In 1941 he went to California and worked at Consolidated Aircraft Plant on B24 bombers. He left California in the fall of 1942. After his marriage in November of 1942, he and Evelyn moved to Omaha where Doug worked at the Glen L. Martin Aircraft Plant on B26 bombers. Doug was honorably discharged from the Army, January 11, 1946.

He went back to work with his dad, then a year with the Ansley Village Light and Power Plant, a short time with Boenig Aircraft in Wichita, Kan., a short Service Supply in Lexington as a plumber for two years. Doug then farmed for two years in Custer County prior to moving to Ogallala in 1956.

He was employed as a major appliance installer and repairman for ten years, was employed by the Water and Sewer Department for ten years. He then was employed by Province Plumbing of Broken Bow, Neb. for two

years and returned to Ogallala and was employed by Jirik Plumbing of Brule for four years. Doug then operated his own plumbing business for seventeen years until his retirement in 1999.

Doug was a longtime member of the Berean Church where he served on the Deacon board and as a Sunday School teacher. He spent many years as the maintenance man at the church located at West "E" and East "O" Streets in Ogallala.

As a young man, Doug enjoyed fishing and was always wanting to find out how things worked and how to make them work. He liked to repair most anything. Mr. Patterson loved his family and spent many hours with them, he even had a softball team. He and his family had many good times and a few bad times but always got along alright.

He was preceded in death by his wife of 70 years; his parents; two brothers, LeRoy and Richard; four sisters, Betty Jane, Hazel, Fanniebell and Veryl; and a grandson, Kevin Jacobsen.

Doug is survived by his eight children; Larrie (Patri-

cia) of Lincoln; Karen (Lowell) Jacobsen of Scottsbluff; Lucretia Johnson (Alvin Pankonin) of Grant; Dianne (John) Annable of Ogallala; Nancy (Joel) Miller of Queen Creek, Ari.; Tom Patterson of Sioux City, S.D.; Trudy Patterson (Kathleen Katra) of Mableton, Ga.; Laurie (Michael) Geier of North Platte; 22 grandchildren; 39 great-grandchildren; eight great-great grandchildren; and one sister, Marilyn (Keith) Hogg, of Ansley.

Visitation will be Wednesday, July 29 from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the Draucker Funeral Home Chapel. Funeral Service will be Thursday, July 30 at 9:30 a.m. M.T. from Grace Point church with the Rev. Curtis Tschetter Officiating.

Burial will be at 1 p.m. C.T. in the Fort McPherson National Cemetery, at Maxwell Nebraska. Military Honors by the Keith County Honor Guard.

A memorial has been established to Golden Ours Convalescent Home in Grant. Funeral Services will be live streamed.

Draucker Funeral Home has been entrusted with arrangements.

class of 1957.

On June 20, 1959, Loneta was united in marriage to Merrill "Ollie" Olvey, in Lincoln. Their union was blessed with three children, Toni, Tammy, and Merrill Jr.

Loneta was a woman of great faith, which shaped the kind of wife and mother she was.

It was important to Loneta that she impart the faith to her children, and live the faith as best she could in life.

Loneta loved spending time outdoors, traveling and camping. She also en-

joyed sewing, quilting and a good book.

Loneta was preceded in death by her husband, Merrill "Ollie" Olvey; and son, Merrill Olvey Jr.

Survivors include her daughters, Toni Flohr of Alma, Kan., Tammy (Tom) Lore of Alliance; eight grandchildren; thirteen great-grandchildren; brother, Larry Mosel of Grant; along with many nieces, nephews, other relatives, and friends.

In lieu of flowers, memorials are suggested to the Trinity Lutheran Church in Ogallala; 32695 Road 768,

Ogallala, Nebraska, 69153.

Condolences may be shared at bullocklongfuneralhome.com.

Services will be held on Friday, July 24, 2020, at 10 a.m. at the Trinity Lutheran Church south of Ogallala with Pastor Wayne Pick officiating. Interment will be in the Trinity Lutheran Cemetery.

Bullock-Long Funeral Home of Grant is in charge of arrangements.

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Tesla trial through Tri-State, Midwest Electric offers electric car experience

BY RUSS PANKONIN
GRANT TRIBUNE-SENTINEL

Midwest Electric's power supplier, Tri-State Generation and Transmission, wanted its customers to get exposure to electric vehicles.

To do so, Tri-State purchased six different electric vehicles to loan to their members, who in turn could share with their customer base.

On July 1, Midwest Electric manager Jason Bishop drove a Tesla 3 back to Grant for a month-long trial.

Elon Musk's vision of a mainstream all-electric car for the masses has made the Tesla one of the most popular and recognizable electric cars in the country.

Bishop said the ingenuity of the Tesla, as well as the performance of the vehicle, has surprised those who have taken a test drive.

He said Midwest employees were able to take the car home overnight to test it out, as well.

One of the biggest surprises, Bishop said, occurs when the driver steps on the foot pedal and the sheer acceleration sets them back in their seats.

The dash looks nothing like that of a regular car. In fact, most of the features in the car are controlled through a large touch screen in the middle of the dash.

Bishop said the car's bat-



RUSS PANKONIN | JOHNSON PUBLICATIONS

Midwest Electric has been home to a Tesla 3, an all-electric car, for the past month, thanks to Midwest's electric supplier, Tri-State Generation and Transmission.

tery, which sits in the undercarriage of the vehicle, can power the car for up to 300 miles.

Tesla has installed charging stations around the country, in cities and along interstates, for Tesla customers.

One such station is located just off the interstate in Ogallala, east of McDonalds.

The station has eight charging banks and can recharge the vehicle in 30-40 minutes at a cost of around \$7.

Other stations in out-state Nebraska include Sidney, Gothenburg and Grand Island, plus Lincoln.

The car can also be charged at home with either a 110-volt or 220-volt outlet. He said it charges faster on 220 volts vs. the 110.

Bishop said each time he takes the car to Ogallala to charge it, there are always

other Tesla owners who have stopped to charge their vehicles.

Tri-State is in the midst of a major transformation as it moves to more green energy production through solar and wind.

Tri-State has relied on coal-fired generation in Colorado and New Mexico. However, both states have passed legislation that bans all coal-related generation by 2030.

Tri-State sees electric vehicles as a new market down the road, Bishop said. Loaning out the electric vehicles gives people exposure to green alternatives to fossil-fueled vehicles.

Bishop had planned to offer test drives during local events. However, due to COVID-19, most of those events were cancelled.

Lightning strike damages home

BY RUSS PANKONIN
GRANT TRIBUNE-SENTINEL

Had he not been home Friday night, Jack Karre doubts he'd have a house anymore.

According to Fire Chief Rick Dreiling, lightning struck the roof of the Jack and Pat Karre home located at 520 Hall Avenue in Grant.

Fire departments from both Grant and Madrid responded to the call.

Dreiling said there was smoke coming from the attic area.

He said they used a thermographic camera to identify an area where insulation was smoldering.

A hole was cut in the roof so the smoldering material could be extinguished and removed.

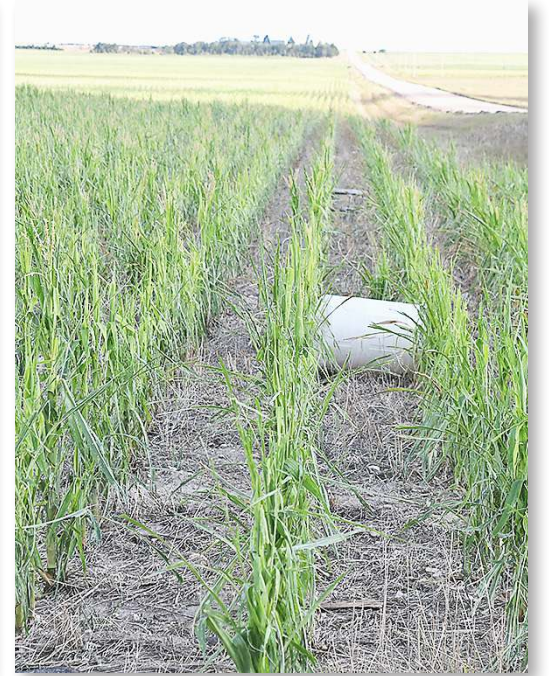
Dreiling praised his roof team for using as little water as possible to keep from

damaging other areas of the home.

Karre also noted how great of a job the firemen did, as well as limiting water use.

Dreiling said the amount of damage to the home is unknown at this time.

Karre said a portion of the electrical wiring in the home was fried by the electrical strike. In addition, electrical appliances plugged in at the time were also lost.



RUSS PANKONIN | JOHNSON PUBLICATIONS

High winds, hail hits Brandon area

An area two miles west of Brandon, stretching south three to four miles, got hit with high winds, rain and hail early Saturday evening. The southerly winds, clocked at speeds up to 75 mph, downed a quonset on the Bill McNerney farmstead and totalled crops in its path.

City reminds residents to be mindful of water usage

As many in the community know, Perkins County has had a dry year, which has led to various problems throughout the county.

What little storms we have had have only produced minimal rainfall. Heading into the historically hottest time of the year the City of Grant would like to remind citizens that if Municipal Well levels dip too far down, the Mayor can reinstate the water restrictions that we operated by in the past.

The City will continue to monitor the Well levels weekly from now on but ask that citizens make a conscious effort to ensure that we do not have to reinstate the restrictions.

This can be as simple as taking a shorter shower, ensure your washing a full load (rather than two small loads), turn off your water while brushing your teeth, turn off automatic sprinklers when it does eventually rain, use the dishwasher for full loads only (not partial loads), check for leaky toilets and faucets, etc.

Since April 15, Grant has only received roughly 6.5 inches of rain, whereas this same time last year (2019) we had received roughly 12 inches of rain, and in this same time frame for 2018 we had received 20 inches of rain.

Our five year average for this same time period (April 15 - July 24) is 12 inches. This shortfall of rain has led to the municipal wells being lower than normal. We don't say this to frighten anyone but merely ask that citizens take a more conservative approach when it comes to all aspects of water in the next 30 to 60 days.

Thanks to rainfall over the weekend of July 24 to 27, we received another nearly 2 inches of rain, increasing the amount of rain from 6.5 inches to 8.4 inches.

If water restrictions are needed the Mayor can and will place these into effect and then we will notify the public via the City website: www.grantnebraska.com, the City Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/CityofGrant1>, the Grant Tribune, and it will be posted at the Post Office, Pinnacle Bank, and the City Office Front Door.

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USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
APHIS Seeks Public Comment on Transition to RFID Official Identification Tags

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is seeking public comment on a proposal where APHIS would only approve Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) as the official eartag for use in interstate movement of cattle that are required to be identified by the traceability regulations.

An official eartag is defined as an identification tag approved by APHIS that bears an official identification number for individual animals. Regulations allow APHIS to approve tags that can be used as official identification, and both metal and RFID tags are current options.

A transition to RFID tags would support APHIS' ongoing efforts to increase animal disease traceability by more accurately and rapidly allowing animal health officials to know where affected and at-risk animals are located. While this would not prevent disease outbreaks, it would allow animal health officials to more quickly contain outbreaks early before they can do substantial damage to the U.S. cattle industry.

APHIS is also seeking comment on a proposed timeline for implementation, which the agency would use if this transition occurs. The timeline would make RFID tags the only option for use in cattle and bison requiring official identification on January 1, 2023. APHIS would "grandfather in" animals that have metal tags already in place on that date – their metal tags would serve as official identification for the remainder of their lifespan.

This transition timeline would not alter the existing regulations. The cattle and bison that must be identified will not change, nor will the option for animal health officials in shipping and receiving states to agree to accept alternate forms of identification, including brands and tattoos, in lieu of official identification.

Public comments will be accepted through October 5, 2020 at the following site: <https://www.federalregister.gov/d/2020-14463>. After reviewing all comments, APHIS will publish a follow up Federal Register notice. This notice will respond to any such comments, announce our decision whether to only approve RFID tags as the only official identification devices for cattle, and, if so, provide the timeline for such a transition.

Tribune deadlines:

News, Advertisements and Public Notices: noon Monday
Classified Ads and Thank Yous: 10:30 a.m. Tuesday
Inserts: Tuesday of the week it will run

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The Department of Economic Development (DED) and Nebraska Department of Labor (NDOL) have announced the **Nebraska Workforce Retraining Initiative**, which seeks to train unemployed and underemployed individuals in skillsets that create pathways to employment in high-demand careers and industries.

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Understanding Medicaid expansion

Nebraska voters passed Initiative 427 to expand eligibility for Medicaid services from the State. The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has been working hard to implement the expanded coverage, which will be called Heritage Health Adult. Thanks to the team's focus and effective management, enrollment will open as planned on August 1, and services will begin on October 1.



FROM THE GOVERNOR

Pete Ricketts
Governor

Reaching this point has taken a tremendous amount of work. As directed by the ballot initiative, DHHS filed the required state plan amendments with the federal government on April 1, 2019. Along the way, DHHS has been working to secure federal approvals for the new program, building the technology platforms required to manage the program, and pulling together the network of providers and doctors needed to deliver services.

DHHS estimates that about 90,000 Nebraskans will sign up for the expanded Medicaid program. Nebraskans with an annual income under 138 percent of the federal poverty level are eligible to apply. For individuals, the income threshold is about \$17,600 and for a family of four it is around \$36,000. People in this income bracket, ages 19 to 64, qualify for coverage through Heritage Health Adult.

Under our plan that meets federal requirements, folks who sign up will receive a robust and comprehensive package similar to private insurance that includes physical health coverage, behavioral health coverage, and prescription drugs. Nebraskans who are 19-20 years old, pregnant, or medically frail will receive the comprehensive package noted above, plus dental, vision, and over-the-counter drug coverage.

The State of Nebraska has submitted a waiver application to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). CMS communicated earlier this year that the waiver review is taking longer than originally expected due to their ongoing pandemic response. Once the waiver is approved, all Nebraskans participating in Heritage Health Adult can qualify for dental, vision, and over-the-counter drug benefits.

The majority of Nebraska's Medicaid benefits and services are provided through managed care organizations, also called Heritage Health plans, including for newly eligible expansion participants. Heritage Health plans assist participants with accessing services, providing reminders about appointments, and paying providers for their services.

To make expansion possible, DHHS has completed the significant technology buildout required to manage the new program. A great deal of computer coding was needed to prepare the DHHS legacy (1977) computer system for the new Heritage Health Adult population. These complex system modifications took lots of time to perform correctly and required close coordination between the DHHS programming and IT teams. DHHS has been working with Medicaid providers to test systems to make sure they continue to work properly.

Pulling together an expanded and robust provider network has also been a big part of Medicaid expansion. It's important that the Medicaid provider network has the capacity to handle the 90,000 newly-eligible Nebraskans. Historically, women and children have accounted for 73 percent of Medicaid recipients. However, many of the individuals joining the Heritage Health Adult Plan will be adults who did not qualify for Medicaid prior to expansion. This means we have needed to recruit more general practitioners and other specialists to serve this new population. DHHS has worked with health plans to expand provider networks in order to meet the particular health care needs of this new population of Medicaid recipients.

Nebraskans can enroll online for Medicaid expansion starting August 1st at ACCESSNebraska.ne.gov. The website will be the easiest and most efficient way for Nebraskans to sign up. Applicants can create an online account with ACCESSNebraska to sign up and check their application status. Nebraskans can also call 855-632-7633 to enroll.

As the enrollment period begins, we ask everyone to be patient. We expect there to be a lot of interest. To provide additional enrollment capacity, DHHS has hired and trained 68 additional eligibility staff to help with applications. The agency is also working with two vendors to provide additional assistance to maintain our high quality of customer service. With the potential for 90,000 people to sign up for Heritage Health Adult in the coming weeks, our team is going to be very busy. We will monitor performance and make adjustments to overcome any challenges that may arise.

If you have questions about Medicaid expansion, DHHS is the best way to learn more about the eligibility or services that will be offered through the Heritage Health Adult plan. The agency has provided information on Medicaid expansion on its website at www.dhhs.ne.gov/MedicaidExpansion. If you have questions on other matters, you can email me at pete.ricketts@nebraska.gov or call 402-471-2244.

Hughes' bills moving forward

The Nebraska Legislature reconvened the 2020 session on July 20 and in the first few days of session we were able to advance a number of bills that had



HUGHES' VIEWS

Dan Hughes
State Senator
44th District

previously been debated before we postponed the session in March.

Many of the bills that I wrote about recently in my previous articles were advanced to the next stage of debate.

LB 632, which includes LB 861, among others, is now on Select File. LB 803, LB899, LB931 and LB858, which includes LB 367, are on Final Reading.

Although I am happy that the bills that I introduced are moving forward, there is still a lot of important

legislation that we must pass before we adjourn for the year.

Before the legislative session was postponed due to COVID-19, the Natural Resources Committee conducted a number of hearings for gubernatorial appointments.

The Natural Resources Committee met on Wednesday of last week to confirm those nine appointments. They will be voted on by the full body later in this session.

Confirmation of gubernatorial appointments is a seldom-publicized but important responsibility of the Nebraska Legislature.

When the governor makes an appointment to certain boards and commissions, the appointee will appear before the relevant legislative committee for a hearing.

They respond to questions about the duties of the board or commission they are appointed to, as well as about their personal qualifications.

If the appointee is approved by a majority of the committee, the appointment will move to the floor to be voted

on by the full body. A majority vote is required to confirm an appointment.

The Natural Resources Committee has general oversight over a variety of boards and commissions.

These include Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, Nebraska Power Review Board, the Nebraska Environmental Quality Council, Nebraska Ethanol Board, the Nebraska Oil and Gas Conservation Commission and the Nebraska Environmental Trust, among others.

These entities regulate our state's natural resources. Individuals appointed to these bodies must appear before our committee for a hearing. Members of the public can attend confirmation hearings and may testify in support, in opposition, or in a neutral capacity for the appointee.

This process serves as an important check on the power of the executive branch and gives the public a chance to weigh in on the appointments. We are also preparing for our final confirmation hearing of this session,

which will be held on Aug. 4.

FORECASTING BOARD

The Nebraska Forecasting Board met on July 23, 2020, to revise the current revenue forecast for the State of Nebraska.

We were expecting the forecast to be lower, but it wasn't by as much as people were expecting. For the 2020-2021 fiscal year, the projection was lowered by \$50 million, which is about 1% of the state's total tax collections.

In Nebraska, we are faring better than other states. Still, we all must keep in mind that with this pandemic there are no certainties so we must remain vigilant and cautious.

I always enjoy hearing from the Nebraskans I represent. Please feel free to contact my office with any questions or concerns that you might have.

Read more about bills and other work of the Legislature at www.nebraskalegislature.gov. Click on the Live Video Streaming NET logo to watch sessions, hearings, and other Capitol events.

Delayed Nebraska Legislative Session resumes

The beginnings of the pandemic-delayed Nebraska Legislature were a microcosm of all that has transpired since the coronavirus reared its head in March.

Senators gathered in a George W. Norris legislative chamber that reflects many a public place with Plexiglas dividers, hand sanitizing stations and signage about what not to touch. Not all senators wore protective facemasks. Omaha Senator Meghan Hunt said 23 of the 49 were not wearing masks in the chamber, though some did some of the time.

As expected, Omaha Senator Ernie Chambers — one of two black senators — brought up a racist flyer the Republican Party sent out to encourage District 1 voters to support incumbent Julie Slama — a gubernatorial appointee — over her opponent Janet Palmtag. The flyer showed a photo-shopped picture of Palmtag standing next to Chambers saying she agreed with Ernie.

Slama countered that Chambers' comments were "sexist and disgusting." Chambers said Slama threw the first stone with the racist flyer and cautioned, "don't put me in your mess if you don't want me to respond."

North Platte Senator Mike Groene told Ernie to give up the 1960s. He referred to the busts of Nebraskans in the hall of fame, which are displayed in the Capitol hallways. "If you want to be in that hallway someday as a great Nebraskan, you've got 16 days to change your attitude and convince the state of Nebraska you're not a racist." Chambers is term-limited for a second time at the end of this year.

Senator Mike Moser of



Columbus, who was hospitalized for several weeks with COVID-19, urged his colleagues to wear masks, if not for themselves for their families and friends. "This is one of those times where I think that we should pay attention to science and don't take those chances." It's a small sacrifice that could save lives, he said.

Speaker of the Legislature Jim Scheer of Norfolk acknowledged the toll that their absence had taken by reminding people they will still have different philosophies and will not agree on everything. "That doesn't necessarily make the other person stupid or ignorant. It must mean they feel differently," he said. He advised his colleagues not to take things personally because they have a lot to get done in the fleeting days they have left.

In spite of themselves, senators were able to move 43 priority and appropriations bills on the first day. But there is plenty of big stuff left.

Expect a continuing push for property tax relief in spite of pandemic hits to the economy.

The Governor has declared Nebraska's economy on solid footing with news that final state general fund tax receipts for Fiscal Year 2019-2020 exceeded projections by more than \$10 million. He said that puts the state in a strong position to work on a few key initiatives, including property tax relief, in the remaining days of the legislative session. OpenSky Executive Director Renee Fry has a different perspective. She says tax receipts for the fiscal year barely outpaced the certified forecast, which was set a year ago, and they significantly trailed the February forecast that lawmakers were using for legislation proposed this session. The state will also lose another \$125 million in Fiscal Year 2021 if the Legislature doesn't choose to break from recent tax changes set out in the federal CARES Act.

Based on a recent panel discussion sponsored by the policy think tank, she says there is tremendous uncertainty about the pandemic's impact on our state and its economy. Therefore, legislators should

be cautious about passing new measures that increase the state's spending obligations for non-pandemic related purposes.

Tax collections — sales and personal and corporate income — had been strong going into the pandemic, which helped the bottom line. General fund net tax receipts finished the 2019-20 fiscal year at 0.2% above the state's forecast of \$4.929 billion. Net June receipts were \$509 million, 3.3% above the forecast. Corporate income taxes, however, were down 11.5%. The Legislature's Appropriations Committee Chairman Sen. John Stinner of Gering told a recent webinar sponsored by another policy group, the Platte Institute, that he also doesn't see much money being available for bills this session. He is unsure how much would be available for property tax cuts.

Stinner says a lot of Main Street businesses are just hanging on and how long the economic effects of the virus persist will make a big difference. Who knows how long the virus will persist.

Let wisdom prevail.

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Midwest Electric takes July spotlight

Jayson Bishop, General Manager of Midwest Electric presented at the Chamber meeting on July 16 after Midwest was nominated to be the July Business spotlight.

Bishop said several area residents including L.J. Pankonin, Dale Erlewine and Harold Velte met on March 20, 1945 to being an association that would develop into Midwest Electric. The first power was turned on in June, 1947.

The focus of Midwest was and continues to be providing a high-quality, reliable and competitively priced supply of electricity to our members.

As far as ownership of the business, Bishop explained, "anyone who has an active account is a member/owner of Midwest. There are currently 2,695 members with 6,768 total services and 8,384 accounts (including accounts split between two parties)."

Bishop said the company currently employs 30 people, and their target customers are "anyone in our service territory who would benefit from electric service."

The future of Midwest, Bishop says will look similar as it does now, and they will continue to provide reliable and affordable power to our members while keeping up with the changes that are happening in the industry.



Jayson Bishop of Midwest Electric accepted the traveling trophy in recognition of being selected as the business spotlight, from Chamber President Tawna Holmstedt at the monthly Chamber meeting on July 16.

"We will have the Touchstone Energy Hot Air Balloon available for rides at the Wallace Fall Festival in September," Bishop said. "Summer is a busy time with a lot of irrigation running – especially this summer – so we are busy making

sure everything is working smoothly," he said. The Grant office is located at 1st and Washington St. in Grant and can be reached at 308-352-4356. Visit their website at <http://www.midwestecc.com/> for more information.

Elsie Madrid blood drive surpasses July goal

The Elsie/Madrid Community Blood Drive that was held Friday, July 24 surpassed its goal that was set by the American Red Cross according to coordinators Michele Cutler and Rosalie Curtis.

The Elsie Legion Auxiliary prepared and served lunch.

Donors reaching their gallon achievements were:

- Pat Aerni-2 gallons
 - Adair Reese-2 gallon
 - Cheyenne Unruh-2 gallon
 - Michele Cutler-12 gallon.
- Katie Sis was a first time donor on July 24.

The following volunteers donated their time and resources to help make the blood drive a success: Susan Hanson, Jane Potts, Marianne Glunz, Julie Vak, Mark Hahn and Hatch's Super Foods



Red Cross staff Jenny (right) assisted Danielle Day (left) in her second ever blood donation at the Elsie/Madrid Blood Drive last Friday.

Raceway action continues July 31

Friday Night Lights action at Phillips County Raceway has provided great entertainment in Holyoke this summer, and the races return to town Friday, July 31, starting at 7 p.m.

Fan appreciation, concessions and the regular beer garden will be featured.

This will be the last night to catch the ASCS sprint cars at PCR this season. Action will also include stock cars, hobby stock, modifieds, sport mods, compacts and dwarfs.

There are still two nights of racing in September on the PCR sched-

ule: Fridays, Sept. 4 and 18.

Raceway promoter Joe Bellm indicated the potential for some August racing, but that has not yet been scheduled.

Bellm is grateful for the

opportunity to run the races and provide some entertainment at a time when so many activities and freedoms have been taken away due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Troopers Wrap up Operation Safe Driver Week

Nebraska State Troopers have completed Operation Safe Driver Week, resulting in dozens of citations for excessive speeding and more than 20 arrests for impaired driving.

Operation Safe Driver Week is an annual campaign, coordinated by the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance (CVSA). Law enforcement agencies throughout North America participate in the annual operation to raise awareness and focus enforcement efforts on issues related to commercial motor vehicles and traffic around those vehicles. This year, the CVSA identified excessive speeding as an issue of concern throughout the United States.

During the campaign, which ran from Sunday, July 12, through Saturday, July 18, troopers participated in a Trooper in a Truck event and performed high-visibility patrols throughout the state. Last week, troopers issued 34 speeding citations for drivers clocked at 100 miles per hour or more.

In total, troopers issued 624 citations for speeding. Troopers also arrested 21 people for driving under the influence of alcohol and performed 295 motorist assists throughout the week.

"The dramatic reduction in traffic due to COVID-19 response has led to fewer fatalities than recent years on Nebraska roads," said Colonel John Bolduc, Superintendent of the Nebraska State Patrol. "But as traffic volume increases, motorists needs to practice safe driving to keep the trend moving in the right direction and keep Nebraska roads safe."

The Nebraska State Patrol also partnered with the state law enforcement agencies of Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Arkansas this weekend to raise awareness of the dangers of excessive speeding. In the four months since Nebraska's first directed health measures were issued, troopers have cited 425 drivers for speeding at or above 100 miles per hour. That figure is 200 above the average of 225 similar citations issued during the same time frame from 2015-2019.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

- WEDNESDAY, JULY 29**
- Noon - Rotary meeting, PC Senior Center
- THURSDAY, JULY 30**
- No activities scheduled
- FRIDAY, JULY 31**
- No activities scheduled
- SATURDAY, AUG. 1**
- 1:00 p.m. - Perkins County Schools Graduation Ceremony, Pritchett Gym
- SUNDAY, AUG. 2**
- No activities scheduled
- MONDAY, AUG. 3**
- 8:30 a.m. - Perkins County Commissioners meeting, Perkins County Courthouse
- TUESDAY, AUG. 4**
- 9:00 a.m. - Upper Republican Natural Resources District meeting, NRD office in Imperial
- WEDNESDAY, AUG. 5**
- Noon - Rotary meeting, PC Senior Center
- All times mountain unless noted otherwise.
Disclaimer: Schedule is subject to change.*

MENU

- PC SENIOR CENTER**
- Meals can be ordered for delivery or carry-out by calling (308)-352-4236. Service will be provided from 11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. daily. Salad bar will be discontinued until further notice.
- Thursday, July 30:** Hot turkey sandwich, mashed potato, gravy, broccoli, fruit, roll, dessert
 - Friday, July 31:** Spaghetti, Italian veggies, tossed salad, garlic bread, fruit, dessert
 - Monday, Aug. 3:** Club sandwich, coleslaw, fresh veggies, fruit, dessert
 - Tuesday, Aug. 4:** Chicken Ala King, biscuit, mixed veggies, cucumber salad, cantaloupe, dessert
 - Wednesday, Aug. 5:** Ham, baked potato, broccoli, bread, watermelon, dessert

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Sports



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 The Grant 1 boys t-ball team includes (front row, l-r): Everett Deaver, Finley LaGrange, Parker Tjaden, Barrett Nodlinski and Corbin Cockerill. Middle row: Carson Potts, Karsyn Kyper, Tyrell McCoy, Kyler Richmond and Graysen McCormick. Back row: Coaches Ryan Potts and Eric McCormick. Not pictured is Duke Johnson.



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 The Grant 2 boys t-ball team includes (front row, l-r): Russell Johnson, Callum Mayer, Walker Gertsch, Huck Apolius and Kepler Sykes. Back row: Coach Brad Mayer, Jaxon Day, Bode Chamness, Cole Turner, Axel Vapenik, Phoenix Torres and Coach Colby Apolius.



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 The Grant 1 girls t-ball team includes (front row, l-r): Ally Goodell, Emelia Hill, Coralie Seger and Cheyenne Prosser. Back row: Coach Shana Kraus, Reagan Holmstedt, Lila Sainz, Paisley Holmstedt, Nikita Prosser, Molly Day, Alexa Kraus and Coach Ben Holmstedt.



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 The Grant 2 girls t-ball team includes (front row, l-r): Kylie Day, Abby Gengenbach, Abby Dodson, Karsyn Day and Cora Tjaden. Middle row: Lilian Saunders, Cora Dodson, Bella Gengenbach, Natalie Johnson, Cami Tjaden and Jordyn Tjaden. Back row: Coaches Mallory McClenahan, Liv Gengenbach, Tori Gengenbach, Jill Johnson and Carrie Dodson.



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 The Grant boys pony team includes (front row, l-r): Kipton Sauder, Craton Buller, Austin Kraus, Matthew Olson, Cyler Mecham, Andrew Goodell, Grant Gloy, Leighton Fryzek and Rhett Miller. Middle row: Cadge Uehling, Christian Fryzek, Luke Minster, Mason Minster, Porter Tjaden, Landon Nodlinski, Kolton Kuper. Back row: Coaches Todd Kraus, Chris Fryzek, John Goodell and Randy Minster.



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 The Grant girls pony team includes (front row, l-r): Olivia Gengenbach, Morgan Day, Paisley Mayer, Alyssa Laber and Lila Hill. Back row: Coach Brad Mayer, Hanna Colglazier, Addison York, Ryleigh Johnson, Gabby Bazan and Coach Shelby Mayer.



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 The Grant peewee team includes (front row, l-r): Job Sainz, Colton Ingold, Elijah Goodell, Ethan Swesey, Alex Cole and Levi Nolt. Back row: Coach Vic Perez, Coach Corey Potts, Logan Barry, Colson Uehling, Jet Peterson, Oscar Boldt, Maddox Lee, Ryder Potts, Coach Elliott Peterson and Coach David Barry.



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 The Grant junior team includes (front row, l-r): Kiley Palu, Charis Goodell, Haley Dunn, Tessa Uehling and Grace LaGrange. Back row: Coach Angela Goodell, Brenna Colglazier, Caitlyn Dolezal, Emily Cornelius, Maggie Fisher, Emily Wilson, Cecilia Putnam and Coach John Goodell.

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