

# SEWARD COUNTY PROGRESS

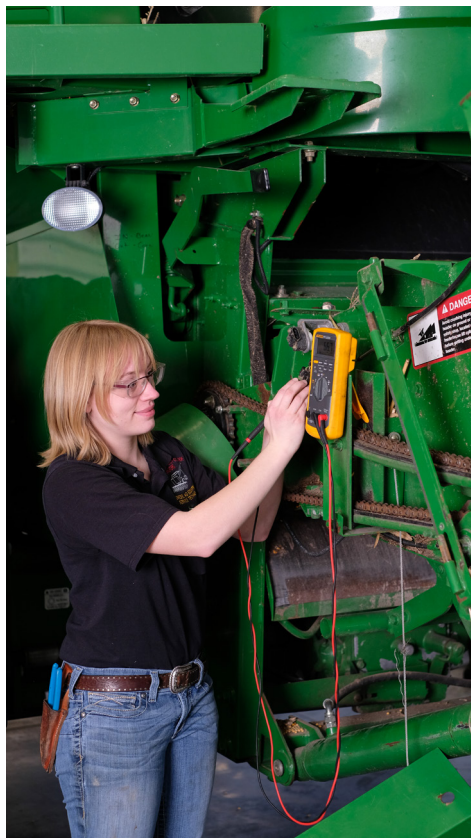
SEWARD COUNTY INDEPENDENT | THE MILFORD TIMES | NOVEMBER 25TH, 2020

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## Transforming SCC

# One building at a time, Milford, Beatrice, Lincoln campuses seeing positive changes



Far left, Meadow Hall, the second new residence hall on the Milford Campus, is scheduled to be completed in 2021. Middle and right: The new Crete Carrier Diesel Technology & Welding Center on the Milford Campus provides students state-of-the-art training equipment they'll use in industry.

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*All local schools, businesses, groups and entities have been impacted by the coronavirus.*

*The onset of COVID-19 in March shut down businesses, schools, sporting events and most aspects of a functioning society – at least temporarily.*

*Some never recovered.*

*Through the first pandemic in a century, Seward County businesses moved forward with development, renovations and even expansion. At the heart of that growth is the Seward County resident who reinvests into their community.*

*Those listed in this Progress section, and those not mentioned, all adapted.*



BRADY OLTMANS/SCI

**The new Timber Creek subdivision in Milford has begun phase one of implementation. There are two additional phases before the project is completed.**

# Petsource largest business investment in century

by Brady Oltmans  
editor@sewardindependent.com

What started under a secret codename with hand-shake agreements by third parties has ended in Seward's largest business investment in nearly a decade. And it's finally arrived.

Scoular shopped locations for its first Petsource, a facility that manufactures freeze-dried pet food ingredients, location under the pseudonym "Project Superior," because of the company's origins in Superior, Nebraska. That's the name City of Seward officials worked with to bring the first tenant to its long-built Seward Rail Campus innovation.

This is Scoular's first, and currently only, Petsource facility.

Petsource General Manager Amy Patterson said the company considered multiple factors in its site location process. Seward met all of those standards.

"Location, vicinity to ingredient suppliers and customers, community presence, city and state incentives, and available talent," Patterson said. "Those data points led Scoular to choose Seward.

"Yet, the most important factors have proven to be true every day: we are thankful to be located in Seward County because of the people and the community spirit which we've found here. We love Nebraska and we love being part of Seward County."

In total, Scoular's investment was a \$51.2 million facility that covered 105,000 square feet and would eventually employ 100 people. According to the Seward County Chamber and Development Partnership, LB 840 covered \$225,000 of the funding.

The project broke ground in

August 2019, five months after announcing its impending arrival. Patterson said Scoular leadership has developed a deep sense of pride in the projects progress over the past 14 months.

"What had been a field of corn the prior year became a dirt field prepped for the foundation last summer, then a shell of the building in December, and finally equipment installation the past summer," Patterson said. "We are most proud of the development of our Petsource team; Petsource employs more than 50 team members and will continue to grow in the coming months."

She said the company started running production for new customers in October.

Petsource held its ribbon-cutting ceremony in early September, which featured speaking appearances from Patterson, Gov. Pete Ricketts, Rep. Don Bacon, Seward Mayor Josh Eickmeier and State Senator Mark Kolterman among others. Guided tours were given of the facility, giving community members a first-hand viewing of Scoular's massive investment.

Local officials took that ribbon-cutting as an opportunity to talk about plans for the Rail Campus. The project's already been more than a decade in the making before the first tenant opened its doors. Scoular officials said they're excited to be that first resident on the rail campus and they're excited to welcome Levander Body Shop – the rail campus's second tenant – when that auto-body repair shop opens in 2021.

"This is a great location for businesses new to Seward and those looking to build new working space for their growing business,"



COURTESY PHOTO

Construction on the 105,000 square feet of the Petsource facility was completed in late summer. A drone photograph shows its finished exterior.

said Chris Rutt, director of human resources. "The location and easy access to Highway 15 are convenient and close to the vibrant downtown businesses."

Scoular officials said they've been welcomed by the Seward County community throughout the process. They've hired some local workers and participated in the SCCDP's

"coffee and contacts" event during the spring. Petsource Director of Operations Jon Heussner said they'd love for more members of the community to visit the facility but visitations are currently limited due to the company's COVID-19

(continued on page 29)

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# Third story brings hope to MCHS during trying year

by Brady Oltmans  
editor@sewardindependent.com

Memorial Health Care Systems has experienced a turbulent year.

In March the hospital began preparations to care for patients who contracted the novel coronavirus. The spread threatened in waves before crashing into the Four Corners Health District in early November.

Outside of the pandemic, however, has come the silver lining of progress. On the other side of the coronavirus waits a promising future for Seward County's hospital.

MHCS started plans for adding a third level in 2014. The speciality clinic already existed on its lower level and the second level centered toward cardiac/pulmonary treatment. At the time there wasn't a need for a lot of space, but to ensure future progress could be made if space became necessary, the outpatient area was built so it would allow for a third level.

As the hospital has seen increase in demand for therapy services, expansion of Physical Therapy Services was deemed necessary. Discus-

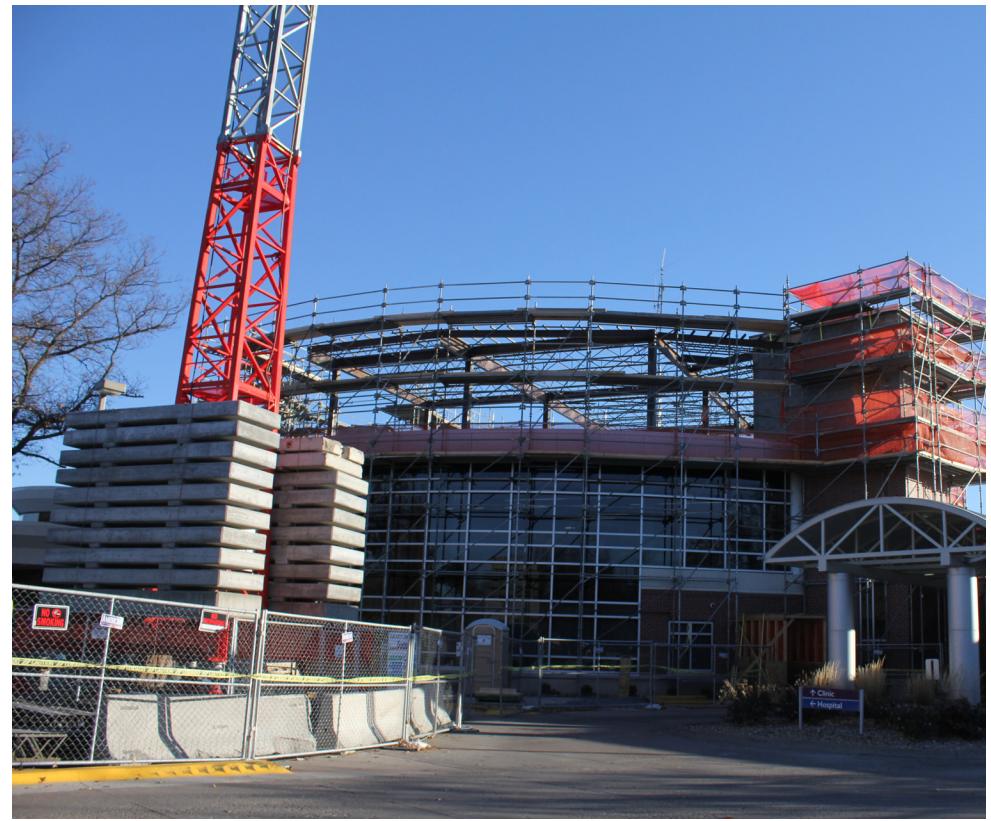
sions and design plans began in Fall 2019.

"We took time and investigated many ways to try and accommodate physical therapy on the third level, but it just does not have the square footage needed to house this growing department," MHCS CEO Roger Reamer said. "So, we explored moving other departments near PT's current location so PT could expand where it is. This led to the community outreach and education spaces being relocated and built on the third level."

This latest addition is part of a goal to service community members' needs. And through that, MHCS has stood apart from other rural hospitals in Nebraska.

An MHCS representative said the hospital's pursuit of keeping technology, equipment, facilities and staff well-equipped is constant and has provided patients with a modern, technically-advanced health care system with so many services in Seward. That's brought new equipment and facilities, as well as strong

(continued on page 25)



STEPHANIE CROSTON/SCI

Framework for the eventual third story of Memorial Health Care Systems is laid out by construction crews.

## Zabka-Perdue Funeral Home

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### *Togetherness*

The upcoming fall and Christmas gathering times are all about togetherness. They are times for family, friends and community. When you have experienced the loss of a loved one and a time of grief, these gatherings can be especially difficult. We are available to help at your time of need and into the future.

**Our Remembrance Service has been cancelled this year due to the pandemic. If you've lost a loved one this year, we invite you to stop by the funeral home to pick up a Christmas ornament in memory of your loved one Dec. 1st through Dec. 15th, between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.**

*We look forward to gathering together to share and care.*



Jill & Bradley Perdue and Greg & Dixie Zabka

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# Expanding horizons at Milford schools

*Additions to elementary, high school buildings offer options with increasing enrollment*

by Craig Jones  
craig@sewardindependent.com

We all know about the classic reference to the “3Rs” when referring to school curriculum – readin’, ‘ritin’ and ‘rithmitic.

But in today’s world, there is also 3-D printin’, screen printin’, robotic-in, broadcastin’, computin’, photographin’ and CNC manufacturin.’ For clarification, it is 3-D printing, screen printing, robotics, broadcasting, computers, photography and CNC (Computer Numerical Control) manufacturing, in which computer data is used to control, automate and monitor the movements of a machine, such as a milling machine, lathe, router, welder, laser or waterjet cutter, robot or many other types of machines.

These are course offerings that are fairly common in most schools today, but recent building expansion projects at Milford High School have raised the bar for students there.

The focus on space for the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) courses has offered Milford students a unique opportunity in a school of its size, according to grades 7-12 Principal Brandon Mowinkel. He said where once the specialized equipment was in a respective crowded corner of a room, it now has dedicated spaces for students to gain experience with the various new tools.

“The opportunity it gives our kids is just tremendous in fields that people don’t typically think of,” he said.



CRAIG JONES/SCI

**Kindergartners receive instruction from Tiffany Reynolds in one of the new expanded and remodeled classrooms in the new elementary school addition.**

The physical expansion at the high school consists of a new large middle school science room (1,500 square feet) and an ag education room (1,200 square feet). These new additions freed up other space for the specialized courses. With current Covid-19 restrictions in place, though, Mowinkel said the new spaces aren’t currently being used for their original intended purposes, but it has allowed faculty options to organize classes to allow for social distancing.

“I don’t know how we would be functioning given the need for social distancing without the addition,” said Superintendent Kevin Wingard.

Funding for the projects stemmed from an anonymous donation of \$1.7 million in the fall of 2018, according to Wingard. He said at the time, it was common knowledge among district patrons that space was always coming up as a concern. Contributing to the ongoing concerns about space was the fact that the Milford Public Schools’ enrollment is trending upward, from 695 to 795 students just from 2014 to this year.

“(The donation) was an extraordinary blessing for us,” he said.

In addition to the physical plant improvements at the high school, the elementary school also had a recent gain of 11,500 square feet to its separate structure as well as about 5,300 square feet of remodeled space. The new space includes four classrooms, a kindergarten room, a preschool room,



CRAIG JONES/SCI

**Milford Public Schools Superintendent Kevin Wingard, left, and Elementary Principal Cory Hartman stand at the hallway marking the beginning of new space at the elementary school that included four new classrooms, a kindergarten room, a preschool room, restrooms and lockers in the hallway.**

restrooms and lockers in the hallway.

Elementary Principal Cory Hartman said the new digs have allowed for the structuring of each K-6 class to be divided into three sections, with about 20 students per class. Similar to Wingard, she said the extra space in the elementary building has been essential given the current social distancing requirements.

“But one of the biggest things I’m hearing from the kids is (third through sixth graders) have their own lockers,” she said. “They now have their own individual space for their things like some of their bigger brothers and sisters in high school.”



CRAIG JONES/SCI

**A reconfiguration of space, in conjunction with the new additions at Milford High School, has allowed courses such as working with 3D printers a more efficient location.**

Looking at expected continued enrollment growth, Wingard said improving the kitchen spaces at both buildings will be among the potential needs to be addressed.

When asked how often he notices the benefits of the improvements to the high school, Mowinkel responded, “every period, every day.”

# Bottle Rocket seizes chance to 'Get our beer out of Seward'

by Stephanie Croston  
[scroston@sewardindependent.com](mailto:scroston@sewardindependent.com)

After five years, Bottle Rocket Brewing is growing. Owners Gerald Homp and Jason Berry are leasing the former Seward Youth Center building at the corner of Highway 34 and Fourth Street from a Nebraska investor and are using the space to expand their brewing capacity.

"We are excited about it," Homp said.

The building had sat empty for about five years. When the Seward Middle School moved to the northeast part of Seward, youth center operations moved to the new middle school in 2017.

As Bottle Rocket looked for a place to expand over the past three years, that was one of the buildings it considered, Homp said.

"Until you have a building, you can't apply for a license," he said.

Breweries go through a variety of agencies to obtain licenses – federal, Nebraska Liquor Control Commission, the state fire marshal, Food and Drug Administration and Nebraska State Patrol.

Homp said the state patrol interviewed him, Berry and Ryan Koch, their brewmaster.

With the added site, Bottle Rocket has to have two brewing licenses, one for each location, Homp said. That gives the business options in case it needs a back-up plan, he said.

The new site will house eight 30-gallon vats where the beer will brew. That increases the capacity from just 60 gallons in the taproom basement. A new canning machine will provide Bottle Rocket with the opportunity to serve its product outside of its Seward taproom.

"We've always thought we want to get our beer out of Seward," Homp said.

Since Prohibition, beer goes through three tiers when it's distributed – manufacturing, distribution and retail. They're separated to keep companies from price gouging, Homp said.

Bottle Rocket uses its product to promote Seward. Its labels include information about Seward.

"They're a little piece of tourism," Homp said.

The equipment in the brewery, which is what

(continued on page 23)

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Members of the Cross Creek Animal Health Clinic pose for a photo in late October. From left are: (front) Miles and Willow and; (back) Julie Phillips and Dr. Cori Stava.

HOPE MOURAL/SCI

## Cross Creek is here to help

by Hope Moural  
hope@sewardindependent.com

Cori Stava knows there's no place like home.

Not only is Stava the owner and operator of Cross Creek Animal Health Clinic in Staplehurst, but she is also the single vet of the facility and grew up in the town.

Entering the facility, both cats and dogs will greet you as if they've known you their whole lives, and that's the way Stava likes it.

Cross Creek is a "true mixed animal" operation, Stava said, and treats all animals from typical house pets like cats and dogs to those on the farm, specifically horses and cattle.

"Sometimes we'll get the occasional sheep or goats. It just depends on the season," Stava said.

She performs farm/house calls when needed, and her facility is large enough to run 30 head of cattle if necessary.

Stava started Cross Creek in 2005 in a more rural part of Staplehurst but moved to the building at 205 A

Street in 2014 and has been there ever since.

Cross Creek has people from all over stop in, including Lincoln, Seward and other surrounding counties, and the clinic is known for its loyal customers.

"I try not to be a salesman and give people what they need," Stava said. "I go into it with thinking of how I want to be treated at a business."

Stava grew up knowing she wanted to be a vet, always having that love for animals and knew that one day, she would have a clinic back home in Staplehurst.

She said there is no typical day, which is a perk to the job, in her opinion and that her team of three women know how to get work done.

Stava's favorite part of being a veterinarian is seeing the emotional connection people have with their pets or even farm animals.

"Over time, you get to see their children grow and their pets," Stava said. "It's just really neat to see that bond."



COURTESY PHOTO

Seward County Chamber and Development Partnership staff include, from left, Alexa Axthelm, Megan Kahler, Jonathan Jank, Leanne Miller and Zane Francescato.

## SCCDP experiences changes, marks off accomplishments

by Seward Chamber and Development Partnership

2020 has been a year of change for the world. The Seward County Chamber and Development Partnership (SCCDP) has experienced changes as well. Through these changes, progress has happened and the SCCDP team is excited to be able to share some of the major accomplishments they have been able to achieve in the last 12 months.

Several new faces and position titles have been added to the team. Megan Kahler transitioned to her new role as the SCCDP Membership Director, and Leanne Miller was added to the team as the Marketing and Events Coordinator, both in late 2019. Early 2020 brought in Zane Francescato as Development and Government Affairs Director, as well as the opportunity to staff a part-time Administrative Assistant. Alexa Axthelm filled that position in July. Jonathan Jank remains president and CEO, making the total staff five.

2020 began the first year of the SCCDP three-year strategic plan, which was developed based on membership feedback. This is helping the team advance Seward County in three major categories: quality growth, welcoming county initiatives, and workforce recruitment and support. Weekly meetings have been taking place

to specifically work on achieving goals in each category.

As March brought interruptions to normal operations, SCCDP staff navigated 13 full weeks of working remotely. Though away from the office, SCCDP team members were busier than ever supporting local businesses.

- Small Town Stimulus program offered an incentive of \$15 in Chamber Bucks for every \$50 spent at local retailers and restaurants. This program generated at least \$16,000 in local sales.

- TIME (Triple Impact Match Event) was a program funded by local LB 840 economic development funds (Milford, Seward and Utica) and the Legacy Fund for Seward County. These two funds matched gift card/certificate purchases at local Seward County businesses dollar for dollar up to a designated amount. The total economic impact from this program was \$207,977.97.

- 400 gallons of hand sanitizer was procured and distributed to local Seward County businesses. This sanitizer was donated by the University of Nebraska – Lincoln Food Processing Center. This equaled approximately \$20,000 in retail value.

- SCCDP staff regularly communicated COVID-19 assistance grant opportunities and supported businesses in the completion of applications. Nebraska Small Busi-

**(continued on page 21)**



# Seward County businesses celebrating 2020 anniversaries

## **Our Redeemer Lutheran Church . . . . .150**

In order to grow the Kingdom of God, we are a Christ-centered, community engaged church and school that is intentional about building relationships and showing the love of Jesus to those around us.

## **General Federation of Women's Club. . . . . 120**

An international women's organization dedicated to community improvement by enhancing the lives of others through volunteer service. Part of 3,000 clubs to promote civic service.

## **Great Plains**

### **Communications . . . . .110**

A provider of telephone, cable television and internet services throughout Nebraska. Great Plains holds nine offices throughout Nebraska, including Seward.

## **League of Women Voters of Seward County . . . . .100**

An organization that promotes knowledge and access to voters of Seward County. The League welcomes members regardless of gender and hosts candidates and experts to speak on issues.

## **Earnest Well Drilling, Inc. 95**

A Milford-based, family-owned business helping Nebraska farmers and property owners with their water systems. Earnest specializes in well drilling and well repairs.

## **Briggs Feed Yard . . . . . 85**

A power genetics program feed yard that focuses on performance that results in high-quality beef. Briggs applies a hands-on management technique, utilizing advanced diagnostic technologies, custom rations and an under-

standing of value-based market concepts.

## **Eakes Office Plus . . . . .75**

A Nebraska-based provider of business products and solutions that has grown into 13 different locations. Eakes sells filing systems, office supplies, furniture, janitorial products, software and technology services.

## **Seward VFW Post 4755 . . . .75**

The local post to honor and serve veterans, military families and the local community. The VFW also books events and serves as a location for local fundraisers.

## **Memorial Health Care Systems. . . . .70**

A Seward County-based health care facility that offers three physician clinic sites in Seward, Milford and Utica, family physicians and physician assistants throughout the county. MHCS offers modern, technically-advanced health care services close to home.

## **Faith Lutheran Church . . . 55**

A local place of worship that spreads the help, hope and love of Jesus Christ. Located along Second Street in Seward, this church has provided a site for worshipers and good-will community gatherings.

## **R and R Refrigeration, LCC. DBA Lee's Refrigeration . 55**

Built upon basic standard of good principles, Lee's Refrigeration takes care of heating and air conditioning needs. Lee's provides both residential and commercial services.

## **Rotary Club of Seward. . . . 55**

A volunteer-led club whose

members share passions for both community service and friendship. Rotary brings together a global network of 1.2 million members to impact lives on a local and international level.

## **Blue Valley Behavioral Health . . . . . 50**

Nebraska's largest outpatient behavior health organization that provides a variety of professional health and mental health services including mental health resources, behavioral therapy, substance abuse treatments and medication management therapy.

## **Nebraska Public Power District . . . . . 50**

A publicly-owned utility and political subdivision of the State of Nebraska. NPPD serves Nebraska's energy needs by reaching into 86 of the state's 93 counties.

## **Randy's Studio . . . . . 50**

A photographic studio that specializes in portraits based in Milford. Randy's offers photo services for senior pictures, weddings and other portraits.

## **Roth Aerial Spraying, Inc. 50**

A full-service aerial application business. The family-owned business works with farmers to increase yields and overall plant health through safe, responsible application and top-tier customer service.

## **Seward Kiwanis Club . . . . 50**

The Seward chapter of a global organization of volunteers dedicated to improving the world through children in the community. Kiwanis organizes events giving back to the community and its youth.

## **Tabitha Elder Care Services45**

An industry-leading senior care expert that offers a variety of living options from independent, assisted living and short-term rehabilitation. Tabitha also offers skilled nursing, long-term and end-of-life hospice care.

## **Ayars and Ayars, Inc. . . . . 35**

A design-build leader focused on creating opportunities by building beneficial relationships, process and projects. They design and build construction solutions to satisfy customer needs.

## **Breeza Industrial . . . . . 35**

A Utica-based industrial business that builds and replaces fans, machining and fabrication. Breeza works to provide service and products, as well as delivery time, for every customer.

## **Fast Mart . . . . . 35**

A convenience store off Seward's Sixth Street that provides gas, diesel, soda, beer, snacks and the usual offerings from a convenience store. The store services Seward County and commuters from 5 a.m.-midnight most days.

## **Nebraska Equipment . . . . . 35**

An industrial operation that services and supplies products from some of agriculture's top manufacturers. Nebraska Equipment offers services for agricultural, acreage and construction equipment.

## **Pac 'N' Save. . . . . 35**

A locally-owned grocery store that employs community residents and offers premium groceries to community members at an affordable price. Pac 'N' Save also offers to-go lunches and meals.

(continued on page 10)

# Anniversaries continued

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(continued from page 9)

## **Seward County**

### **Public Transit . . . . . 35**

A state-provided service for all residents of Seward County regardless of age or income. The service also provides veterans transportation to Veterans Affairs-approved appointments for no charge, courtesy of volunteer drivers.

## **Farm Bureau Financial**

### **Services – Jack Russell . . 30**

Local branch of an insurance company that offers liability, auto, home, life and property insurance. Russell can customize coverage to fit specific needs.

## **Campbell Cleaning by ECES**

### **Inc. . . . . 25**

A veteran-owned commercial and residential cleaning company that also does Oreck maintenance and repair. Campbell Cleaning is also Institute of Inspection Cleaning and Restoration Certification certified, meeting the gold standard in cleaning.

## **Kirby Roth Insurance . . . . 25**

A family-owned and operated insurance agent providing insurance solutions to clients. The insurance team creates personal and commercial insurance policies designed to fit any need.

## **Krieser Drywall**

### **and Insulation . . . . . 25**

A local business that provides all aspects of insulation, drywall, AeroBarrier air sealing, energy upgrades, blower door testing, commercial framing, FRP and Acoustical ceiling installation and specialty coatings.

## **Lighthouse Pentecostal**

### **Church . . . . . 25**

An Apostolic church built to spread the message of and enrich lives of neighbors. The church's mission is to find God-given purpose and lead each person to their full potential.

## **Blue River Electric. . . . . 15**

A locally-based electrician and contractor that operates on both residential and commercial air conditioning, heating and plumbing as well as electrical needs.

## **Last Mile Networks . . . . . 15**

A wireless construction, microwave and network communications business. Last Mile specializes in installation and design of point-to-point systems that assure continuous operation.

## **Milford Physical Therapy . . 15**

An experienced and professional physical therapy practice based in Milford. Therapists there provide physical therapy as a vital part of the medical treatment and recovery from injuries and surgeries.

## **Montag Manufacturing. . . . 15**

A local agricultural machinery manufacturer based in Milford that specializes in fertilizer equipment. Their complete fertilizer application system helps reaping benefits of deep band fertilizer.

## **Seward County Extension . . 15**

An organization dedicated to making an impact in its community through youth, families, farms and ranches. Extensions provides research-based education to citizens of Seward County.

## **Meyer Automotive Inc. . . . . 15**

An automotive dealer that services vehicles, as well as sells new and pre-owned vehicles and trailers. Meyer sells and specializes in GMC, Chevrolet, Buick and Ford vehicles and equipment.

## **Advanced Association**

### **Management . . . . . 10**

A full-service management firm that offers multiple services ranging from board and committee support, exhibit hall administration, registration and housing, logistical management and more.

## **Image Inflators, Inc. . . . . 10**

A Bennett-based business that specializes in custom dye sublimation printing for banners, flags, decals apparel and more. Their services help customers stand out with their signage.

## **Living Word Lutheran**

### **Church . . . . . 10**

A Lutheran church that embraces a congregation holding the Bible as the inspired Word of God without error in its original writings as the infallible authority in all matters of faith and life.

## **Nebraska Cellular, LLC. –**

### **US Cellular Authorized**

### **Agent. . . . . 10**

A mobile phone carrier that offers technical support, in-store bill pay, cell phone repair, data backup, phone set-up and troubleshooting.

## **Seward Cross Makers . . . . 10**

A local business that carves and creates palm crosses with a multitude of designs, logos and carvings in the center of each cross for those who prefer it to worship.

## **Sid Dillon Crete . . . . . 10**

A new and used vehicle dealer that specializes in Chevrolet and Buick. There's sales and service departments that also offer vehicle accessories.

## **Bluestem Network, LLC. . . . 5**

A high-speed fiber internet to provide service for business and residential use. Bluestem aims to build connections and enhance rural communities with its service.

## **Bottle Rocket Brewing**

### **Company. . . . . 5**

Local microbrewery that offers a taproom experience for its own beer as well as other favorites. Bottle Rocket recently expanded into canning and distributing its beer.

## **Genesis Contracting Group. 5**

A development and contracting group that has helped create community structures in Auburn, Lincoln, and recent renovations at Raymond Central Public Schools.

## **GP Restoration and Blasting 5**

A family-operated media blasting and coatings company with an emphasis in industrial, agricultural and auto enthusiast use. GP has largely served Milford and its surrounding communities.

## **Olde Glory Foundation . . . . 5**

An endeavor to preserve the historic Olde Glory originally built as a church in 1873 and later renovated into a theater for plays, concerts and other events.

# "Our policy is caring."

## Meet our talented team:



Mark Suhr

Mark joined the Suhr & Lichy Insurance team in 1984 after graduating from the University of Nebraska Kearney. He has since achieved numerous industry awards and professional insurance designations, including the industry's top designation Certified Insurance Counselor.



Thomas Suhr

Thomas joined the Suhr & Lichy Insurance team in 2019 after graduating from the University of Wyoming. Thomas graduated with a Bachelors Degree in Agriculture Ecology.



Shelley Scheele

Shelley joined the Suhr & Lichy Insurance team in 2004. Shelley is a graduate from Doane University in Crete, NE.



Jodi Barry

Jodi brings over 20 years of experience to her role at Suhr & Lichy Insurance, where she has served clients since 1998.

## SOME OF THE LEADING COMPANIES WE REPRESENT:

### PROPERTY & CASUALTY

- Farmers Mutual of Nebraska
  - Largest writers of farm insurance in Nebraska
  - Suhr & Lichy is the leading agency in the Seward area
- United Fire & Casualty
- EMC Insurance
- Progressive
- First Comp
- Grinnell Mutual

### CROP

- RCIS - Largest writers of MPCI in the USA

### LIFE & HEALTH

- Blue Cross Blue Shield
- United Life
- EMC National Life



Diane Lichy

Diane joined the Suhr & Lichy Insurance team in 1988 after graduating from Nebraska Wesleyan University. She has since achieved numerous industry awards and professional insurance designations including the industry's top designation, Certified Insurance Counselor.



Tyler Lichy

Tyler joined the Suhr & Lichy Insurance team in 2014 after graduating from Nebraska Wesleyan University. Tyler is a graduate of Seward High School in 2010. He has since earned his property and casualty insurance license, crop insurance license and earned his designation as an Authorized Insurance Producer.

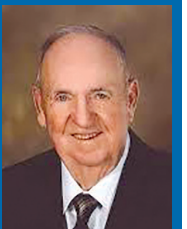


Liesel Pabian

Liesel is the newest member of the Suhr & Lichy family. She received her insurance license in September and is eager to learn the ins and outs of property and casualty insurance.



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# SCC-Milford building on its academic reputation

## New projects lead to increased enrollment

by Craig Jones  
craig@sewardindependent.com

“If you build it, they will come.”

Unlike the famous quote from the 1989 film, “A Field of Dreams” in which actor Kevin Costner’s character Ray Kinsella hears a voice encouraging him to build a baseball field, a more thoughtful process was employed regarding physical plant growth at Southeast Community College-Milford Campus.

A “space utilization analysis” was actually conducted, according to Ed Koster, Vice President Research, Planning and Technology and Milford Campus Director. He said that process involved looking at what improvements would need to be made on campus and what programs may need a new building/space to operate in.

“Basically it is a process of looking at industry standards for appropriate space needs in labs and classrooms by program type, looking at current and future enrollment projections and current quality and safety of

existing spaces to determine how and what programs best fit in a building like the Eicher Technical Center,” he said.

As a result, recent construction projects have involved the completion of the 60,000 square-foot Crete Carrier Diesel Technology and Welding Center. The \$13 million facility will provide more training space for the diesel technology-truck, diesel technology-construction and ag-tech and welding are the different areas of the building, including the new Truck Center Companies Diesel Lab.

In addition, Prairie Hall, a three-story residence hall, opened in time for the 2019 fall semester. This facility houses 152 students and the matching Meadow Hall is expected to open in June 2021. As well, after approximately \$1.5 million in renovations, SCC’s Professional Truck Driver Training program is now operating on the Milford Campus after being in Lincoln since it was started.

“Southeast Community College-Milford Campus has always had a history of being an excellent



CRAIG JONES/SCI

Ed Koster, Vice President Research, Planning and Technology and Milford Campus Director, stands outside the new 60,000 square-foot Crete Carrier Diesel Technology and Welding Center that faculty and students began using just this fall.

trade school that has responded to the needs of a large geographic area across the midwest,” Koster said. “The college has always had a great reputation in that respect, but the

housing issues were harming us.”

In the fall of 2018, enrollment at the college was 620 students.

With the completion of Prairie  
(continued on page 16)

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# League enters second century of voter information

by Brady Oltmans  
editor@sewardindependent.com

When plans for the Keystone XL Pipeline route first materialized, League of Women Voters of Seward County mobilized.

The route was slated to go under member farmland. They wanted to bring knowledge and awareness.

So LWVSC invited experts to the forefront. They hosted town halls, discussions and speakers to shine a spotlight on local issues.

Co-president Ellen Beck said that's how they got the nickname "Mighty Seward." With their small membership, they efficiently kept voters interested and informed on the issues happening in their own community. It's a similar mighty spirit to the one that built the LWV on a national scale in the first place.

Seward County women joined in organizing, lobbying and marching for the right to vote in the early 20th century. The county formed a temporary organization in 1913. In June of 1920, the Nebraska League of Women Voters formed. Two months later it pledged to be nonpartisan. Then, on the same day – Aug. 18, 1920 – the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified and the Seward League of Women Voters was formed.

That laid the groundwork. A century later, the LWVSC has continued to welcome members and encourage active participation in democracy.

It's nonpartisan and welcoming to anyone across the political spectrum. Beck said the county chapter has mainly included Independents, Republicans, Democrats and Libertarians. League purpose comes in the discussions and increased attention on issues. Some of those are core women's issues that existed 100 years ago while others are more modern issues like cyber security.

"We want to keep voters interested and informed," Beck said.

In advocating the importance of voting just like those who came before them, the League has also brought attention to issues that may hinder those from voting. That could be anything from voter identification laws to ensuring those with disabilities have access to polling sites and accessible ballots.

Beck said the League also lobbies the state government. She, and other members, have registered as lobbyists and met state officials for luncheons to learn key issues concerning upcoming legislative sessions.

Modernizing the League, which consists mainly of long-time members, has posed a challenge. That's partially where Emily Hemphill has helped. A two-year member of the League, she said she finally wanted to get involved after compiling election guides. Politics affects everything, she realized. One of her takeaways from getting involved with the League and advocating community members to reach out to their elected officials, is how easily constituents can reach out to representatives' offices. That's helped prove how mighty their League can be.

"You can see the ripple effect of what we can do when we all work together," Hemphill said.

She has provided social media and digital outreach for the League. She's also helped with the Vote411 website the League's implemented so voters can make side-by-side comparisons of candidates.

The coronavirus made a proper centennial celebration difficult for the League. Members were supposed to be honored at the Fourth of July parade that didn't happen. It also forced them to move speaking arrangements from Concordia to online avenues. Beck and Hemphill both thought those went

well.

Some League members volunteered to work polling places to ensure free and fair elections. And they'll keep doing so, just as those who started the League did 100 years ago. Beck said she's felt a responsibility to honor the women who came before her by continuing to inform upcoming voters.

"Women won it the hard way, a right to a free and fair election," she said.

The League welcomes all potential members, regardless of gender. Those interested can learn more at [lwnvnebraska.org](http://lwnvnebraska.org) and finding the Seward County chapter under local chapters, or by finding Seward League on Facebook ([facebook.com/seward.league.3](https://facebook.com/seward.league.3)).



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# Loyal customers benefit to Outlaw Steakhouse

## Prime rib staple at Garland establishment

by Craig Jones  
craig@sewardindependent.com

“We put our focus on the food.”

Given the unusual circumstances placed upon eating establishments due to the Coronavirus, the owners of the Outlaw Steakhouse and Saloon have made adjustments to make the best of the situation. Lisa Lintt and her husband, Mark, have owned the Garland landmark for 12 years, and Lisa credited their customers for keeping the business open during this “very challenging” time.

“We’re surviving because of our loyal customers,” she said. “It it weren’t for them, we wouldn’t be here. They’ve told us ‘we’re not going to let you go.’ They’ve been just amazing.”

So much so, that Lintt said the customers nearly double the population of Garland (about 200 people) on the nights the restaurant is open, coming from Seward County as well as neighboring towns and counties.

At the start of the pandemic, she said they followed the mandate of carryout only from March through June. As of this writing in early No-



CRAIG JONES/SCI

Lisa Lintt gets a glass of water for a customer at the Outlaw Steakhouse and Saloon.

vember, eat-in customers are served, but limited to eight people in a group which equates to about half the seating capacity.

The “Outlaw” – as it has been known since 2002 – is housed in a building originally constructed in 1889, and has been a restaurant since the 1920s. The Lintts are keeping up the tradition of the restaurant being

known for its prime rib specialty, though they have faced recent challenges due to the pandemic regarding supplies.

“Some things are available one week and not the next,” she said.

“We’re picky about the meat we get ... we get the highest quality and try to keep everything consistent, so we pay what we have to.

“We’ve made a lot of adjustments, but we’re getting through it.”



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CRAIG JONES/SCI

The Outlaw Steakhouse and Saloon in Garland is housed in a building that has existed on the village's main street since 1889.

# Church, school celebrate past, look forward

by Stephanie Croston  
scroston@sewardindependent.com

For 150 years, Our Redeemer Lutheran Church has served the people of Staplehurst and Seward County.

In the 1860s, the church met in Friedrich Hartman's cabin near Lincoln Creek. Hartman read a weekly sermon and led the singing, while a traveling pastor performed special services.

The parish adopted the name Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church in 1870. By 1888, a second German Lutheran congregation had formed in Staplehurst and dedicated Immanuel Lutheran Church in 1905.

Zion outgrew its small building and built a new building that was dedicated Nov. 4, 1917. Designed by Berlinghof and Davis of Lincoln, the church was built of red brick and included two steeples, stained glass windows and a pipe organ.

The windows were imported from Germany. The organ is a Hinners pipe organ, built by the Hinners Organ Company in Pekin, Illinois.

The organ is a 12-rank instrument with 679 pipes. According to history provided by Dr. Jeffrey Bleresch from 2010 when the organ was last refurbished, it was the largest instrument available from Hinners. In 1968, the organ was converted from mechanical action to electric action.

(continued on page 23)



Our Redeemer Lutheran Church and School in Staplehurst broke ground July 12 for its new ministry center. Pictured wielding the shovels are, from left, Paul Duer (committee chair), Vivian Schluckebier (kindergarten graduate), Darin Blair (architect), Zoe White (kindergarten graduate), Jason Hulsebus (project manager), Saylor Wood (kindergarten graduate), Principal Harlan Anson, Aria Elmshausen (kindergarten graduate), Rev. Shawn Kitzing, Beau Alloway (kindergarten graduate), Scott Prochaska (Board of Education chair) and Mackenzie Rempel (eighth-grade graduate).

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# SCC renovations

(continued from page 12)

Hall, the fall enrollment the next year was 786 and this fall, the first with the new diesel tech building in operation, SCC-Milford boasted 844 students in its 21 various programs.

Two students from different locations had the same draw to SCC-Milford. Anthony Ryals of Savannah, Missouri, and Dakota Jones of Plattsmouth both said in doing research for their secondary school destination, many people they were in contact with simply said the place to go was "Milford." So Ryals looked up the school in Milford, Nebraska, and liked what he saw in the SCC-Milford offerings.

A second-year, third-semester student in the diesel ag-tech department, Ryals said a lot of programs were associated with a specific company, and it was his goal to have a more general education that could be applied to different job opportunities.

"SCC-Milford just happened to have that," he said.

The new Prairie Hall residence facility was a bonus feature to Ryals. He said he is among the first students to use it, and likes the amenities it provides. He is in a four-person apartment, but double rooms and Americans with Disabilities Act suites are also available. There is a campus cafeteria but on weekends when it is not available, Ryals said a kitchen area is available on a lower floor so students can bring their own groceries and cook meals, thus not being tied to fast-food locations.

SCC-Milford building on its academic reputation

Jones, a second-year, third semester student in the diesel tech-truck program, said in doing his college research, he found that "SCC was a great college to go to," he said. "They have an outstanding reputation of putting students in jobs and staying there."

Gaining experience in coursework in the new diesel tech building was "more than I expected," Jones said. "Getting experience with to-



CRAIG JONES/SCI

There are 30 booths in the welding area of the Diesel Technology and Welding Center. Thirteen programs offered by SCC-Milford have welding as part of the curriculum.

day's new equipment is essential."

In walking from building to building on the day of this interview, Koster was asked if, by chance, there were SCC-Milford graduates working on the various construction projects. He said that, yes, for exam-

ple one was the site supervisor for the current Meadow Hall project.

"It's great to see former students come back and be involved," he said. "We have a strong relationship with (former students) in all the fields we teach."



CRAIG JONES/SCI

Dakota Jones, a second-year, third semester student in the diesel tech-truck program, works on aligning the steering axle of a diesel truck.

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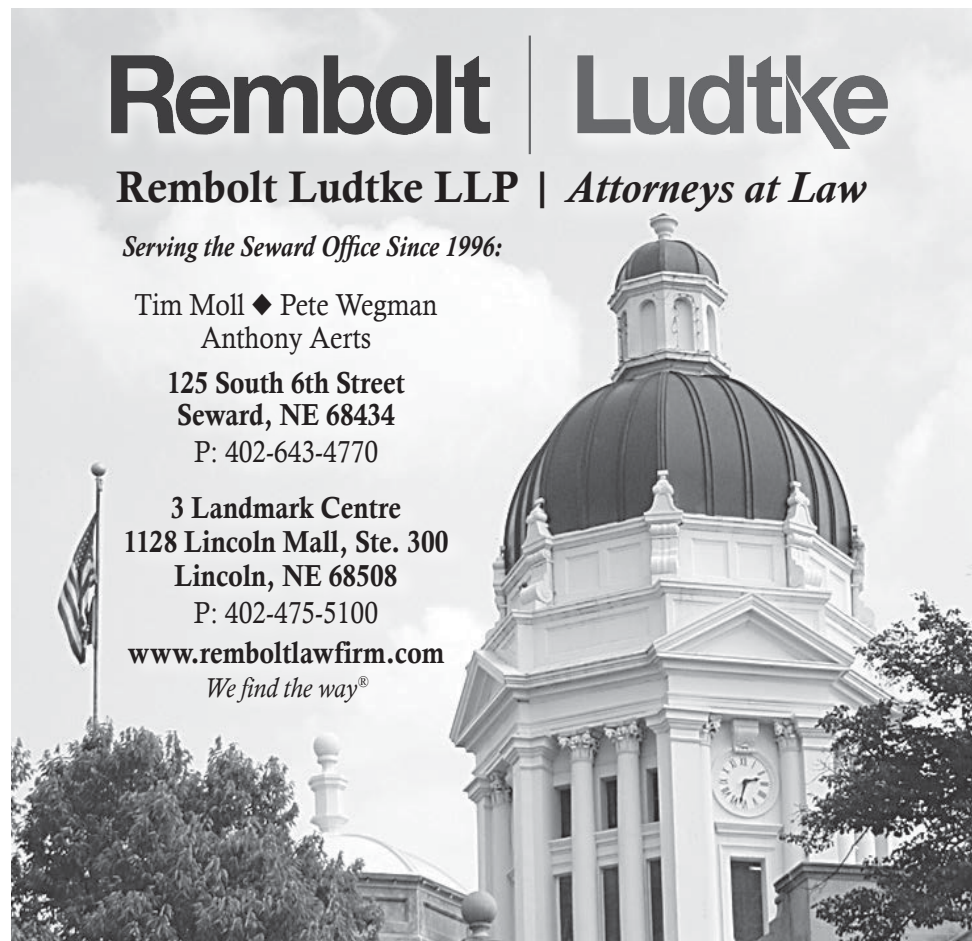
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# Chez Bubba Cafe: Business suits and irrigation boots

by Craig Jones  
craig@sewardindependent.com

“We take our food and service seriously, but not ourselves.”

That is the basic reasoning Matt Howe offers in the name of the restaurant of which he is the co-owner and general manager, Chez Bubba Cafe. The logo that appears on the front of the Goehner establishment shows the “Chez” – which he said means “House of” – in a cursive-type font and the “Bubba” in a more block-style appearance.

“Our customers range from people that come in with business suits on to others who are wearing their irrigation boots,” Howe said. “We’re kind of classy, but mostly Bubba.”

Matt and his wife, Julie, opened the business almost 10 years ago, in January 2011, with former co-owners Brennan and Patty Lavelle who later sold their share of the business to Jeff Schoepf in late 2013. During that time, they have developed a regular clientele that come in on a regular basis to I-80 travelers seeking a new spot to whet their appetite. Their signature dishes involve smoked-barbecue brisket, pulled chicken, pulled pork, pork loin and spare ribs.

“We also have some unique sandwiches,” he said, “where employees have made unusual combinations as specials and the customers asked for it to be on the menu.”

As with other businesses, COVID-19 has caused a change in the operation of Chez Bubba. Howe said

in mid-March, their business was limited to curb-side pickup. He said the customer response was “tremendous” and thanked them for their support.

In early June, the inside dining area was re-opened to 50% capacity. Employees are self screening daily and wear masks “because we want people to feel safe,” he said.

Another financial assist came from the Triple Impact Match Event (TIME) Promotion, a joint initiative of Legacy Fund for Seward County, Milford/Seward/Utica LB840 Economic Development Programs and the Seward County Chamber and Development Partnership. The various entities matched dollar for dollar the value of any gift card or certificate purchased from an eligible Seward County business, including Chez Bubba.

The goal was to stimulate retail sales and generate a financial bridge for businesses during the pandemic. Howe said that promotion ran from May 1-13, which was extra beneficial to his business as it was closed around that time due to self-quarantine. Jonathan Jank, SCCDP president and CEO, said almost \$208,000 was raised through the promotion for 75 participating businesses.

“(The public’s) generosity was overwhelming,” Jank said. “It just affirms to me how our community members came together to support each other in these times.”

Howe agreed.

“It’s just awesome that we have that kind of support in Seward County,” he said.



CRAIG JONES/SCI

Matt Howe cuts up some brisket in the kitchen of the Chez Bubba Cafe in Goehner.

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# One year later: Malcolm Galley ‘feels like home’

by Hope Moural  
[hope@sewardindependent.com](mailto:hope@sewardindependent.com)

During one-act season, Malcolm Public School speech and drama teacher Tami Maytum gets to the Galley early.

Around 5-5:30 a.m., she turns on the lights as soon as she arrives to the building, located in the north section of the campus parking lot, checks that props, costumes and any other used items are placed in their places properly before letting students in for morning practice. After all, Maytum wants to make sure things are taken care of in a building that is so cared for itself.

In 2018, Maytum was awarded an educational \$10,000 grant through NBC R.I.S.E America, with the idea of building a storage and rehearsal space. Community support for the building came through donations, and last summer, a 48x80 foot space was constructed. Not only that, but Maytum said funds for the project are still coming in.

“With money still coming in, we are able to buy our own things now instead of borrowing from the band,” Maytum said.

Some examples include new sound equipment and replacement props, if applicable to the play chosen.

This year’s performance of “Dante’s Inferno” will be the third that is prepared through use of the Galley space.

Maytum said although the Galley has helped improve performances by allowing for more elaborate sets, she has not noticed a change in the way her students work.

“These kids here are involved in everything, but their work ethic has not changed,” Maytum said. “They like having a place to call home.”

Every item in the Galley has its own space, although Maytum said even after two performance seasons, she feels they are still moving in. But as with most things these days, students and volunteers are adapting.

“We would never have dreamed about our own building for the performing arts,” Maytum said. “but now (the Galley) is the new normal.”



HOPE MOURAL/SCI

Braxton Dahlton and David Swotek of Malcolm paint a set structure for a one-act performance in the Galley.



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# Beaver Hardware continues to prosper through adversity

by Brady Oltmans  
editor@sewardindependent.com

Kenny and Christy Pankoke have listened to their customers for nearly 30 years now.

Ever since Kenny and his late father purchased Beaver Hardware in 1992, Kenny has operated one of Beaver Crossing's most iconic downtown businesses. Through those years of operation, the Pankokes have built additions, raised four children and rebuilt after the 2014 tornado. This year, they've navigated a pandemic while continuing to offer services to those who need them.

"Products customers ask for and services they need, that would be our way of doing business," Kenny smiled. "I'm not Mr. Speaker, I'm just putting it in my own terms."

Starting from the original 1890 single brick building, Beaver Hardware first expanded with an addition to the east in 2000. Five years later came the addition to the west of the original store. Five years after that, the Beaver Bar fell, paving the way for a third addition.

Of course, that progress was threatened on May 5, 2014, when a tornado swept through Seward County and ravaged Beaver Crossing. Kenny said the storm lifted the roof of the building to the west and demolished a shed behind the store.

It also caused significant damage to the original store. Significant enough that they operated largely out of storage containers.

Kenny brought up the example of getting to his glass panels. Back then, he said, he'd have to move 500 pounds of animal feed just to get to the glass, then he'd maybe have to move a dozen boxes to find the size he needed. Then he'd have to put all that back. He'd probably have to do it all over again.

"It just made everything a lot harder," Kenny said. "Long-term, we're better off now than before the tornado. But for two years, it was hard to come to work even because you knew what you had ahead of you."

He has witnessed consumer change throughout all his years operating the store. With the internet's massive reach now, customers are more aware of where pricing on items should be, Kenny said. That places even more of an onus on competitive pricing. One customer walked up to the front desk to ask about chainsaw pricing. Kenny pointed out what distribution price was and where his retail price was. Kenny said there's not much margin on power tools.

Outside of pricing, the hardware store has to compete with the internet on shipping. While Beaver Hardware stretches far beyond its humble 1890 beginnings, the Pankokes still have to order items if a customer requests something specific. With no delays, Kenny told a customer he could call in the order on Wednesday and it would arrive the following Monday.

Outside of just purchasing goods, the store



BRADY OLTMANS/SCI

Kenny and Christy Pankoke pose for a photo among the Christmas display at Beaver Hardware.

also does repairs, which they offer through their diverse assortment of services.

"We're diversified," Kenny said. "I've worked on hydraulic hoses, irrigation stuff, windows and screens. That type of stuff you're not going to get online."

That has built them a thriving community of usual customers who knew where to turn during quarantine. Kenny said the hardware store didn't need to adapt much from the onset of the coronavirus other than put in extra work. For a month, he said, he worked more than 100 hours a week. The supply chain was open, customers wanted to do renovations while staying home and Christy mixed pallets upon pallets of paint.

Three decades of experience has also given them the experience necessary to know they can't get everything for the price others do. In those cases, they let the customer decide what they want.

They've also frequented trade shows to anticipate customers' needs.

That kind of dedication has made Beaver Hardware one of the premier hardware and home good stores in the region. In addition to a loyal group of repeated customers, word of mouth has also spread the store's reputations into cities with more resources.

Kenny welcomed a Lincoln couple into the store one day in October. They were just out for a drive on a nice day and heard about the store from

friends. Kenny thanked them for coming and they got to talking before the couple bought their goods and left. Four hours later, four new customers walked in to the hardware store. They met the previous couple eating at the same place in York simply by chance. Both groups were from Lincoln. The couple recommended stopping at Beaver Hardware on the group's drive home, so they did.

"We appreciate our customers," Kenny said. "You get people at the counter ready to check out, someone from out of town striking up a conversation, then you find you have mutual friends. Kind of interesting."



BRADY OLTMANS/SCI

Multiple buildings, all with stocked shelves, have come together to form the current Beaver Hardware.

# First (and hopefully last) virtual Fourth labeled success

The Seward Fourth of July Celebration Committee announced in mid-May that there would not be a live, in-person Fourth of July celebration in Seward in 2020.

The committee had been working on the 2020 celebration since July of 2019, and the schedule was set and ready to print, then had to be canceled because of COVID-19, community safety and social distancing.

The Seward Fourth of July Committee however continued to meet and decided to plan a virtual Fourth of July celebration and try to recreate or find events that would reflect the Seward Fourth and place them on the Seward Fourth of July Facebook page on July 4, as if it was taking place.

Everything that could have a virtual component had one, committee member Phil Bangert said.

"I was very nervous that it might not work but I liked the idea," said Clark Kolterman, longtime Seward Fourth of July Celebration Committee member. "I thought, what if we record all these wonderful presentations and then the whole thing crashes?"

"However, the virtual presentations didn't crash and were enjoyed by thousands on the Fourth of July.

Jessica Kolterman, Fourth of July

Committee member, took charge of scheduling and posting the 75 segments on the Facebook page. Riley Nuttleman recorded, edited and produced almost half the segments.

"It was really a community effort," Bangert said.

"The most popular segments on the Seward Fourth of July Facebook page were the older, converted recordings of previous Seward Fourth's, such as the one when the TODAY show visited Seward in 1988," Jessica Kolterman said.

Some of the segments were new, while others were revamped, she said.

"It kept people talking about the Fourth of July City-Seward and generated some great, positive publicity for the community of Seward and festival across the state and USA," she said.

This collection of recordings is a valuable, great library to archive and use as a resource, when we get requests for some footage of our celebration or a specific attraction in Seward County," Pat Coldiron with the Seward County Visitors Committee and July 4 Committee said.

Jerry Meyer, historian at the Nebraska National Guard Museum and member of the committee, praised the community for its help with the

Virtual Fourth.

There was at least one bright side, Clark Kolterman said.

"No massive clean-up on July 5, no staggering garbage bill and no funds were needed for portable toilets this year," he said with a smile. "The Seward Fourth of July Celebration Committee is REALLY looking forward to the big, live, in-person

festival July 4, 2021 celebration next year, promoting "Double the Fun.

Plans call for a "double event," incorporating many of the activities and salute to the Rivoli Theater's centennial scheduled for this year, along with the centennial of Hughes Brothers, Inc. in 2021, calling it "Double the Fun in '21."



## SCCDP

(continued from page 8)

ness Stabilization grants received in Seward County totaled \$2,508,405.

SCCDP purchased drive-in movie equipment in early July to fill a needed gap in safe entertainment for the community. Through generous sponsors and attending patrons, two movies were hosted at the Seward County Fairgrounds.

After receiving a Perkins Act grant, in partnership with Educational Service Unit 6, a Seward County career experience program is being built to address the growing issue of "brain drain" across the county. This program, recently named 'LAUNCH,' is designed to provide approximately 225 Seward County high school seniors with meaningful job shadowing, apprenticeship and internship experiences. The goal is

to introduce students to potential careers in their home communities and prepare them to lead successful professional lives.

"2020 gave our team a unique opportunity to assist local businesses as they faced unprecedented challenges associated with a global pandemic," Jank said. "I am proud that our staff has also continued to execute on SCCDP's three-year goals. This could not have been achieved without the support, investment, and involvement of SCCDP members."

This year has seen changes, both negative and positive. SCCDP is confident about the future of local Seward County communities because of their collaborative spirit and willingness to care about their neighbors. Seward County is stronger together.

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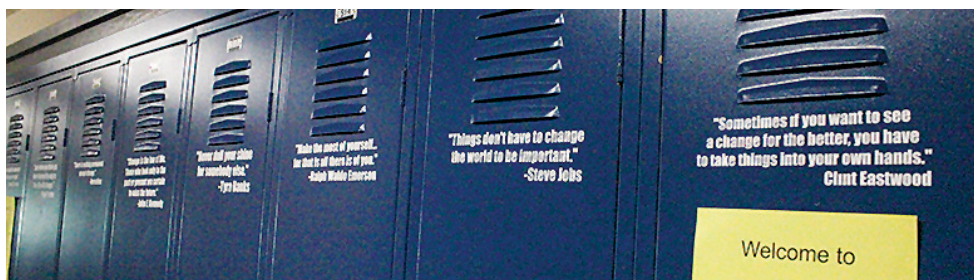
# SHS opens school year with new look spaces



Seward High School welcomed students in August with updated furnishings in its commons areas. The new spaces were furnished by the Seward Booster Club. Pictured left, Dr. Josh Fields shows some of the new pieces.

The SHS Family and Consumer Science room was also updated with new carpet, cabinets and other furnishings, as well. The restrooms across from the north gym were also updated.

Lockers at Seward High also received a new look, with positive quotations applied to each.

A Kenwood radio system featuring a car stereo with a digital display showing '15', a microphone, and a handheld walkie-talkie. A grey badge above the equipment reads "KENWOOD AUTHORIZED DEALER".

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STEPHANIE CROSTON/SCI

Bottle Rocket Brewing has moved its brewing equipment into a new building, taking over the former Seward Youth Center on Fourth Street.

## Bottle Rocket

(continued from page 7) they're calling the new site, is all USA-made steel. Koch, who is an engineer by trade, knew the quality of the work done by Crawford Brewing Equipment, and Berry was connected with the company, as well.

The machine was to be set up Nov. 18, with test runs done following. By March 1, Homp said, Bottle Rocket's canning business will be running full speed.

The basement of the

taproom, which is the company's original location, will become a lab in which new products may be created, Homp said.

The plan is to produce 1.2 million cans of its product annually, he said.

They also considered bottling their product but chose to go with cans because they're lighter, they don't break and they're less expensive.

Berry, who is a graphic artist by trade, is designing

the labels. Not only will each label include the beer name and information about Seward, it will indicate the color of the beer via a stripe down the side.

"We want to promote Seward," Homp said.

Visitors to the taproom will still be able to drink Bottle Rocket's signature brews – Bottle Rocket, WIT Willy, Stout Constitution, 1868 Smalltown, M-80 and Wicked Spark.



STEPHANIE CROSTON/SCI

Bottle Rocket Brewing is leasing the former Seward Youth Center to expand its brewing operation.



STEPHANIE CROSTON/SCI

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church is celebrating its 150th anniversary in 2020.

## Our Redeemer

(continued from page 15)

By the 1950s, the congregation sizes for both churches had shrunk so that they voted to share a pastor. In 1966, the two consolidated to form Our Redeemer. In 1981, all the services moved to the country church, located at 3743 Marysville Road.

In 1982, the church was added to the National Register of Historic Places. According to the register's description, the church is built in the Late Gothic Revival style.

"It is architecturally intact and is one of Nebraska's finest examples of an auditorium planned church used for corporate worship," the register said.

### School

The parish provided a school starting in 1888. The Rev. J. George Weller served as teacher until 1889 when the Rev. Michael Leimer took over.

After F. G. Miessler, who taught from 1892 to 1898, William Koenig began 41 years as full-time teacher at Immanuel Lutheran School.

Our Redeemer Lutheran School opened in 1966 in Staplehurst. An expanded school building was dedicated in 1967. The current school serves students in kindergarten through eighth grade.

In July 2020, the church and school broke ground on a new ministry center across the street from the current school.

The new building will cover 13,000 feet and will include classrooms, offices, a chapel, kitchen and commons area in phase 1 and a gym in phase 2. Total project cost is \$2.5 million.

As of the groundbreaking, \$1.435 million had been raised. The plan is to open the center for the 2021-22 school year.

# Half a century in the sky, Roth Aerial keeps the dream alive

by Brady Oltmans  
editor@sewardindependent.com

First came the jarring engine roar. Then came the hum of additional power. Only until that hum settled into a natural rhythm could the bright yellow plane be spotted down the runway before willing itself into flight.

About 50 years have passed between that flight and his first in high school. Technology, logistics and the staff have changed since then. But what hasn't changed is the dedication to the business that Roth Aerial Spraying Co. was born with.

Thanks to help from his older brother, Dave Roth graduated Milford high school (class of 1969) with his commercial pilot's license. That following summer he flew his first season. Dave and his other brother, Jerrel, purchased the business that following fall when their older brother moved to Idaho. And with that purchase in the fall of 1970, the business was born.

In reminiscing, Dave thanked Alan Dunlap, the business's banker at the time.

"He went along with our wildest schemes and loaned us money," Dave laughed.

Dave and Jerrel started with just one plane. Jerrel did the flagging – signaling spots in the field, typically in a truck, that needed spraying – at the time and Dave flew. It was just the two of them.

What started as the brothers-only operation has expanded to multiple locations involving five full-time pilots, 10 staff members and an estimated staff of nearly 25 (including temporary help) in the busiest points of the season from May through July. Customer service and interaction are hallmarks of the business.

"We wanted to do a good job and make a proper application, but our selling point through the year has been service and recognizing the fact that when the farmer books a job it's because he has a need out there that needs to be taken care of," Dave said. "And in most cases it doesn't need to be taken care of in five days, it needs to be taken care of now."

They work around weather and other obstacles, but they approach every job with the intent of completing as soon as they can.

Through the years the Roth team have sprayed for familiar faces, some even stretching for gener-



BRADY OLTMANS/SCI

A plane takes off on the runway at Roth Aerial Spraying outside of Milford. The company is celebrating its 50th year of business in 2020.

ations.

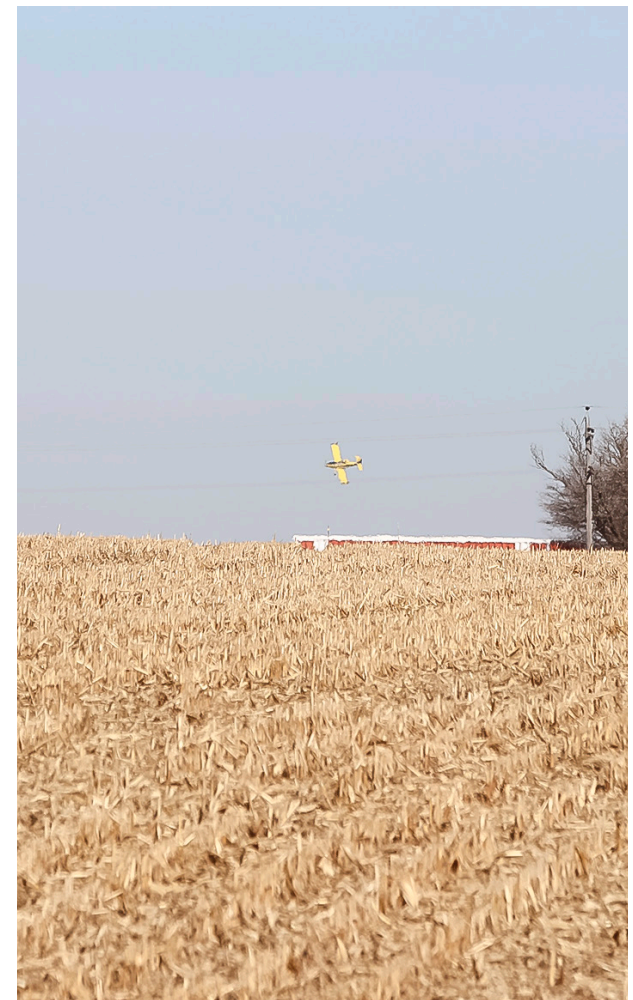
Another realization from their years of service is abundance of food harvested. Dave said he liked to think they've fed hundreds of thousands, maybe even millions of people, across the globe over 50 years.

After a half-century of service Dave said he's thankful for their loyal customers and his staff. He didn't know aerial spraying would have been his life's vocation all those years ago, even when he decided to ditch the calculus in school and stick to what he'd been doing for two years already at that time.

"It's been a good life and I have no regrets about it," he said.

BRADY OLTMANS/SCI

RIGHT: A Roth Aerial Spraying Co. plane starts turning back south as it surveys fields in the area for spraying.



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(continued from page 5)

benefits and a positive work environment, they said.

That crane looming over the hospital is to lift necessary supplies and construction equipment onto the roof so the hospital can be extended one more level.

Construction and logistics with adding another level have brought some difficulties. Planning called for a third story that's approximately five feet taller than approved height limits for buildings in the areas. So the hospital had to request an exemption on the height restriction. That required a public hearing with the planning commission in early March to gain permission.

The construction area has also created foot traffic changes between the hospital and clinic front doors.

Entrances to Memorial Hospital and Seward Family Medical Center will remain open throughout construction.

"We continue to monitor supply orders for this construction project as many products are less available or arrive slower with the pandemic,"

Reamer said. "We have been fortunate to stay on schedule and are hopeful no unforeseen circumstances prolong the project."

Equipment hasn't been the only complication that the pandemic has thrown construction. Those working on the area must adhere to the latest directed health measures. Basic COVID-19 screening has also been necessary for onsite staff and any construction crew who enter facilities. They're all screened through the standard entrance and asked to adhere to hand hygiene, as well as face covering protocol. MHCS personnel said that process has worked well.

Outside of complications, there has been benefit. Construction teams onsite could shift to help with more immediate needs associated with the pandemic. For example, some onsite have been asked to add more negative air pressure units to inpatient rooms, as well as install barriers.

As the hospital's prepared to treat COVID-positive inpatients or act as a swing bed, giving specialized treatment to those requiring post-hospital

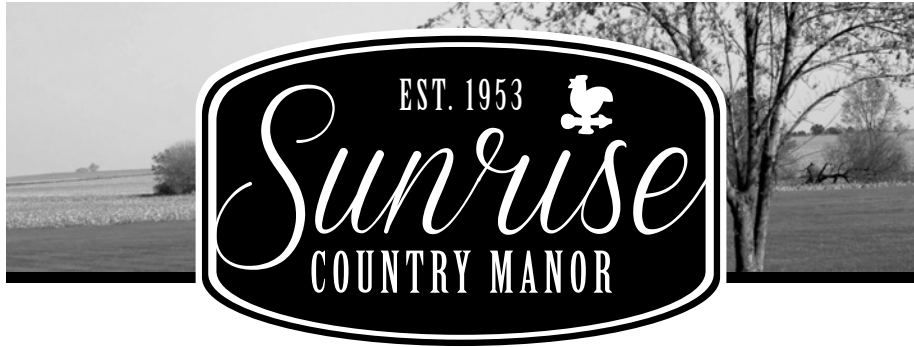
care, an optimistic future endures on the new top floor of Memorial

Health Care Systems.



STEPHANIE CROSTON/SCI

The new COVID-19 drive-thru testing facility in the west parking lot of Memorial Health Care Systems has been completed for winter use. It's now completed with a heated room for staff to operate from while those getting tested drive through as they did before.



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# Armory Park receives upgrades in 2020



BRADY OLTMANS/SCI

The final addition to Armory Park, a replica Jeep play set, was installed this fall.



BRADY OLTMANS/SCI

The playground at Armory Park, located just west of the Nebraska National Guard Museum, received an upgrade this summer with a playground designed in the shape of an Apache helicopter.



BRADY OLTMANS/SCI

The Apache helicopter-designed playground at Armory Park was installed over the summer on the same block as the Nebraska National Guard Museum.



BRADY OLTMANS/SCI

The new Jeep-designed play set at Armory Park completed the park's renovations.



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# Petsource

(continued from page 4)

protocols to protect its employees and the community at large.

Some community members will have to wait for their facility experience and a chance to see a massive \$50 million investment into their community. And, Petsource officials foresee a bright future for the company on that plot.

“We are fully committed to learning and growing within our new Seward facility, this includes growing our team and growing our customer base,” Petsource Director of Food Safety, Quality and Innovation Steven Moore said. “We know there is tremendous interest in freeze-dried pet food ingredients and we believe our Petsource team will bring critical value to the pet food marketplace.”

The first Petsource product made in Seward shipped to customers earlier this month.

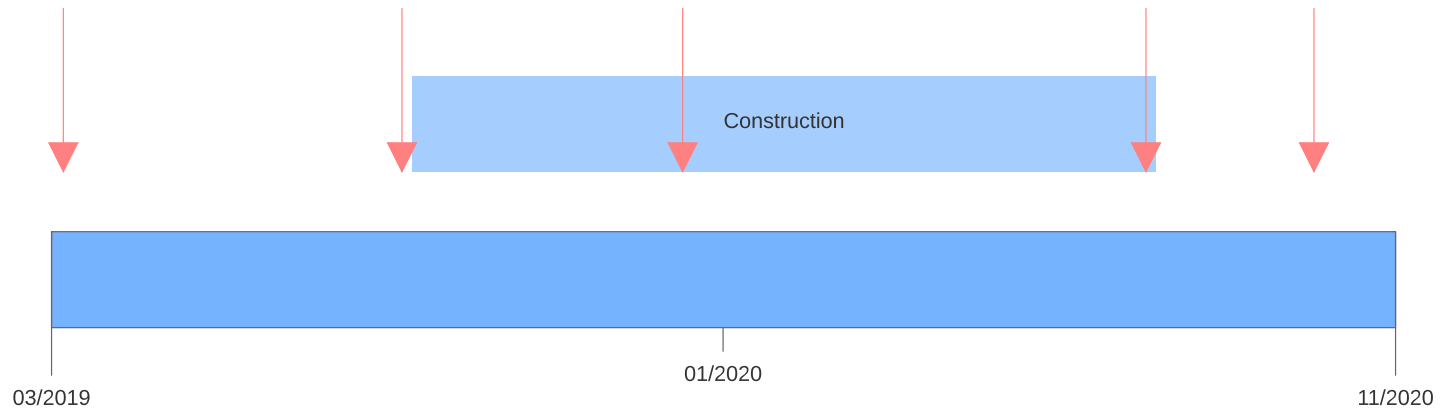
Omaha-based Scoular announces that an indirect, wholly-owned subsidiary of the company will build a freeze-dried pet food ingredient manufacturing facility at the Seward/Lincoln Regional Rail Campus. March 2019

Facility groundbreaking Aug. 2019

Scoular announces that its subsidiary will be named Petsource by Scoular. Dec. 2019

Petsource facility ribbon cutting Sept. 2020

Petsource begins full production Oct. 2020



BRADY OLTMANS/SCI

Nebraska Gov. Pete Ricketts speaks at the ribbon cutting ceremony for Seward's new Petsource facility on Sept. 1.

## Petsource timeline



*Marla Belitz Johnson, CPA, PC*

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# New stage adds to offerings at museum

by Gerald D. "Jerry" Meyer  
NENG Historian

The Nebraska National Guard's west property amphitheater now has a portable stage for events in the future thanks to a generous local donor.

Dr. Van and Becky Vahle gave the stage on behalf of their family members: Heather, Christopher, Nicole and Kourtney. The stage is surrounded by images on the amphitheater panels that were donated by the Cattle Bank and Trust.

The donated stage now gives the amphitheater an elevated platform for concerts and other events. The stage is portable, broken down to 10 panels, and it includes a rear safety rail and a step up. Though portable, it is sturdy and takes a crew of four about an hour to set up.

The stage was manufactured in California and

recently arrived at the museum. The platform panels can be loaded on a wheeled carrier for storage in the lower bays of the museum.

Among those helping with delivery and set-up were Hughes Brothers with a fork lift and crew getting the stage off the truck; Jacob Meyer for assembling the pieces at the amphitheater; Mike Leininger for work on the stage safety rail; and Chris Dobrusky for getting the place ready for the stage assembly.

During the COVID pandemic, the amphitheater has hosted several music events that were taped and shown on a virtual platform. Next year, 2021, hopes to see several outdoor presentations using the amphitheater and stage.

The stage can also be set up inside the museum for events. The museum is looking for additional items such as a baby grand piano. If you can assist in this area, call (402) 309-8763.



COURTESY PHOTO

Becky and Van Vahle sit on the new portable stage at the Nebraska National Guard Museum's Amphitheater. They donated the stage to the museum on behalf of their family. The images on the panels around the amphitheater were donated by the Cattle Bank and Trust.

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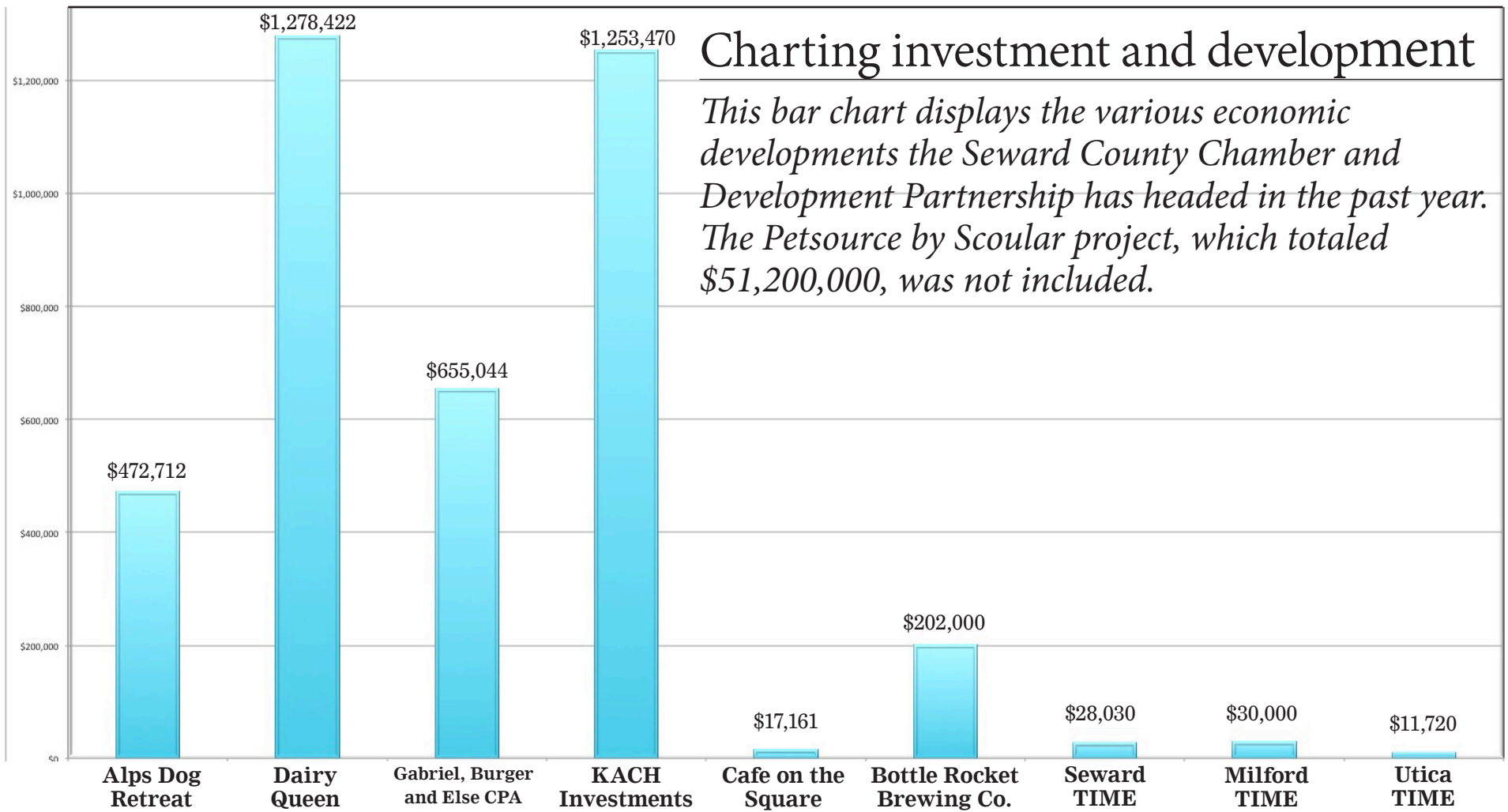
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