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Seward County Independent



STEPHANIE CROSTON/SCI
Braxton Bishop, age 2, is ready to take to the fields on this John Deere tractor.

Look inside for more Fourth of July coverage.



STEPHANIE CROSTON/SCI

Going out with a bang

Despite flooding earlier in the week, fireworks filled the sky above Plum Creek Park to cap off the July 4 festivities.

ANDRES LOPEZ/SCI

Griffin Jordan, 17, of Norfolk set a new personal record at 15 feet at the annual pole vault competition during the Seward Fourth of July celebration.

Pole vaulters celebrate Fourth with flight

BY ANDRES LOPEZ
reporter1@sewardindependent.com

The 34th Annual Street Pole Vault Competition was held outside of Bottle Rocket Brewing Company throughout during Seward's Fourth of July celebration. This year saw 45 pole vaulters fling themselves over the bar, competing in open class, a middle school, high school and college level class and masters class, according to event organizer and Concordia pole vaulting coach, Jason Berry.

Berry, who has been a part of the pole vaulting competition since its founding, said over the years, there have been several top-tier athletes from all over the country. With this year being an Olympic year, Berry said there were no Olympic-level pole vaulters participating in this year's event.

However, Berry said there were some of the best pole vaulters who came from places as far as Arizona and as local as Nebraska.

The winner for middle school boys was Jace Knott from Seward. For high schoolers, Lilly Nichols from Broomfield, Colorado, took first for girls and Dash Wason from San Tan Valley, Arizona, won for boys.

In the college division, Amira Cummings from Concordia University took first place for the women and Zach Zohner, a fellow Concordia student, won first place with the men. Finally, Julius Dickmader from Crete won the open/master class division.

In total, there were seven personal records, one meet record and one division record.

Even though there were winners for this competition, most of the vaulters participated because of their

See POLE VAULT, page 3

First Nebraska Infantry stands guard at National Guard Museum

BY ANDRES LOPEZ
reporter1@sewardindependent.com

The First Nebraska Volunteer Infantry Regiment Company A spent the night on July 3 to spend the following day speaking with guests outside of the Nebraska National Guard Museum in Seward.

The infantry is a group of civil war reenactors dedicated to providing accurate information and learning the history of this moment in America.

Having spent the night before, the reenactors shared how they loved the museum and that it's one of their favorites.

"It doesn't come alive like the movies tell you," said Paul Lahowetz, captain of the infantry. "We've spent many nights in this museum and it's always a treat."

Lahowetz said this is a way he and many others show their respect and dedication to America.

"The most important thing to me is it's a way for me to show my patriotism," Lahowetz said. "I was unable to join the military, so this is how I serve."

The National Guard Museum is not their only stop along the way. Lahowetz and the rest of the reenactors said they



ANDRES LOPEZ/SCI

Reenactors from the First Nebraska Infantry, from left, Jack Eager, Gage Stermensky, Tyler Howard, Jeanette Fangmeyer, an unidentified group member and Paul Lahowetz, stand outside the National Guard Museum on July 4 after spending the night.

have traveled far and wide across the continental United States in rain, sun and even snow. Last year, the group went to a reenactment in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

With varying weather conditions this Fourth of July, Lahowetz said no weather condition is perfect for wearing thick wool. However, the solution to overheating comes by wearing a linen shirt under the wool jackets so when a breeze comes by, you get a sense of relief.

"When you're in formation and a wind comes down, you know it's coming because you hear the sighs coming down the line," Lahowetz said.

Even when the rain began in the morning, Lahowetz and the rest of the infantry huddled under their tent.

"There's nothing like wet wool," Lahowetz said.

Putting aside the hot or wet outfits, Lahowetz said one of his favorite parts about days like the Fourth of July is getting to talk to people interest-

ed in knowing more.

"We're here to help teach people about the history - little things you wouldn't even think about," Lahowetz said. "Since we pretty much live it and learn it the hard way, it's fun to pass along those little trinkets."

The group is always looking for new members. Regardless of age or gender, anyone can suit up and reenact alongside them, according to Lahowetz.



STEPHANIE CROSTON/SCI

Bump, set, splash

Plum Creek left its banks July 2, leaving behind flooded areas like the sand volleyball court at Plum Creek Park and forcing organizers to cancel the July 4 Freedom Run. This year's route was to follow the Plum Creek Hiking/Biking Trail, but the trail was under water in places. They hope to reschedule the race for later this month.

Elected officials prep for budget, tax discussions

BY LORI SHRINER
For the Seward County Independent

Editor's note: This is the first in a two-part series.

Most Seward County residents associate summer with fun times, but county, city, school and other officials elected or hired to run tax-supported entities know summer is budget season.

Between now and October, all tax-supported entities in Nebraska will be finalizing their budgets for the 2024-2025 fiscal year.

Taxpayers seeking information about the budgets can attend any of the public meetings these boards and councils schedule, but there are specific opportunities to see how the 2024-2025 budgets and tax impact are shaping up:

- Regular meetings - Starting in July, many governing boards will give final considerations to potential programs and budget lines to be included in their submitted budget.

- Public budget hearings - Those same governing boards will schedule public hearings to review their proposed budget.

- "The Postcard Hearing" - A

See BUDGET, page 3

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There's no time like now to plan for tomorrow.

ERA program keeping Seward County homes intact

BY HANNA CHRISTENSEN
sciporter@sewardindependent.com

Assistance from the \$48 million Nebraska Emergency Rental Assistance program is being put to use throughout Seward County, and money is still up for grabs.

This is the second round of the program, funded by the 2021 American Rescue Plan Act.

Nebraska ERA provides financial help for past-due and future rent payments and past-due utility and internet payments to income-qualified Nebraskans who experienced financial hardship during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Robin Ambroz, deputy director of programs and marketing for the Nebraska Investment Finance Authority, said it has helped people stay in their homes and avoid eviction.

“People still feel the impact of the pandemic – whether it was a change in their job, whether they lost their job or whether they had to transition to a different type of job where they lost childcare, I mean, there’s all sorts of things that have had kind of trickle impacts to people,” Ambroz said. “I think a lot are still dealing with that, and this program has helped with bridging that gap that people are still experiencing so that they can stay in their house.”

Ambroz said more than 11,000 applications have been filed throughout Nebraska this round and NIFA had to adjust its staff and processes at the start of the program due to unexpectedly high demand.

Seward County residents filed 72 ERA program applications this round, 32 of which were duplicates, incomplete, withdrawn or denied. Thirty of the applications were from the city of Seward, 20 were from Milford and the rest of which were from the rest of the county, the Southeast Nebraska Collective said.

As of July 2, the program has paid 10 applications in Seward County.

“The vast majority of the people that we’re working with are working and they are helping themselves. Sometimes there’s an idea that it’s just a handout or it’s encouraging people not to work, and that really has not been the case. Our data has shown that we really are helping people help themselves.”

Collena Laschanzky, executive director of the Southeast Nebraska Collective

According to NIFA, the program has distributed more than \$64,000 of assistance in Seward County, for an average of \$6,401 received per household.

The remaining applications are in the review or payment process.

Collena Laschanzky, the executive director of the Southeast Nebraska Collective, said rent payments are the most common type of assistance people request, followed closely by utility payments. Budget assessments of the household’s need determine the amount of rent assistance the program provides.

Ambroz said NIFA works with community collaboratives that help people fill out their applications and act as case managers when necessary. Additionally, Legal Aid of Nebraska will help advocate for people facing eviction who are set to go to court.

“The biggest impact is probably keeping people in their homes and giving hope in terms of mitigating ways to manage their budgets so that they can continue to be housed while they’re working,” she said. “And, keeping power on for people who came out of the winter with large bills and need to get caught up or had their hot water shut off.”

Laschanzky said most people the program serves are members of the working poor, and she is grateful for the opportunity to bring hope and help into their lives.

“The vast majority of the people that we’re working with are working and they are helping themselves,” she said. “Sometimes there’s an idea that it’s just a handout or it’s encourag-

ing people not to work, and that really has not been the case. Our data has shown that we really are helping people help themselves.”

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She said helping with the program has been a reminder of the importance of working together to help one another. She and her colleagues have learned more about local families, deepened their connections with the communities they served and helped connect providers through the program.

If the program spends 75% of its funds this round, the remaining 25% can be put toward creating a new, affordable housing development, Ambroz said.

To qualify for assistance, applicants must

have experienced a financial hardship during the COVID-19 pandemic, have an income at or below 80% of the area median income, rent their primary place of residence in Nebraska and be a legal resident. Renters in Douglas and Lancaster counties have separate assistance programs and are therefore not eligible.

Ambroz said she encourages anyone who might qualify to apply, and funds will be distributed up until September 2025 or until they run out. They do not need to be paid back. To learn more or apply, visit NebraskaRentHelp.org.

“The ERA program has helped so many families get past a really difficult time, especially in rural communities where housing is in short supply,” housing navigator Sandy Nation said in a press release. “I’ve spoken to people who think they may not qualify, but I always say, you don’t know unless you apply. The ability to get caught up on past-due payments and build a cushion for future needs relieves a lot of stress and provides a sense of stability.”



ANDRES LOPEZ/SCI

Roger Dobesh stands outside the bandshell before a Seward Municipal Band performance. He has performed with the group for 42 years.

Making music for decades

Roger Dobesh celebrates 42 years in Seward Municipal Band

BY ANDRES LOPEZ
reporter1@sewardindependent.com

From the center back row of the bandshell, Roger Dobesh has dedicated a large chunk of his life to music, playing in various polka bands and ensembles.

However, there is one music venture that Dobesh has loved more than anything else – The Seward Municipal Band.

For more than four decades, Dobesh has been the group’s baritone saxophone player, an instrument he said he fell in love with ever since his band instructor told him to play it his sophomore year of high school.

Dobesh lived through many challenging feats. Having worked for the Department of Roads and Highway Maintenance for 37 years in David City as well as helping run his family’s farm, Dobesh was always helping out somewhere.

“It was hectic, but you just did what you had to do,” Dobesh said. “(It was) long hours, but it worked out.”

With a busy life, Dobesh said he turned to music as an escape from life’s monotony.

“Every spring, you need to plant. Every fall, you need to harvest. Cattle – there’s always a fence to make. It’s a very routine thing,” Dobesh said. “Here (the Seward Municipal Band), you play different kinds of music.”

With only two hours of preparation time for band members, Dobesh said he loves the thrill of having to learn new music and perform it quickly afterwards, and it has been that way ever since he joined. During his time in the band, Dobesh served as the group’s president, a responsibility his daughter now takes on.

Dobesh said he was introduced to the municipal band through a friend who told him he should join. For the first two years, Dobesh played a very old and well-used horn. Later, Dobesh came across one in better condition.

“We’ve been together for 40 years,” Dobesh said.

Dobesh said that even during his time serving the country in the navy during the Vietnam War, he found ways to incorporate music into his life by picking up bits and pieces of guitar playing.

“We’d (those serving with Dobesh) get together and I teach them a little something and they’d teach me some stuff,” Dobesh said.

While serving, Dobesh worked as an aviation electronic technician. He worked heavily with communications and navigation systems that, at the time, were highly secretive.

“Most of it was classified, highly top secret at that time,” Dobesh said. “Now it’s like caveman stuff.”

Still running his family farm, but now retired, Dobesh has been able to spend more time on music and said he recognizes how much the band has grown over these last several decades.

Dobesh said when he joined they were lucky to have 30 to 35 members playing at one time and that a majority of the music was simple. However, in recent decades, the band has nearly doubled and the music has become much more complex.

The changes in the band haven’t only been for the group, Dobesh said the group’s changes have incorporated his family members. Dobesh gets to perform on the stage with his daughter and granddaughter – three generations altogether.

“It was something we could do as a family, at practice and here at the concert,” Dobesh said. “It was just enjoyable to be able to be in the group with the kids.”

Dobesh said he wants to continue pursuing his passion for the band as long as he can and as long as he feels comfortable playing.

Joanie Brecka, Dobesh’s daughter and president of the Seward Municipal Band said her father inspired her to keep music in her life.

“He’s the reason I’m here,” Brecka said.

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Cement handprints fill sidewalk outside Seward Memorial Library

BY ANDRES LOPEZ
reporter1@sewardindependent.com

Dozens of children left handprints in cement in an area outside of the Seward Memorial Library on July 3 as a way to commemorate the highway construction and for some great memories.

Dozens of families and daycares stood in lines and started placing their hands in the cement starting around 10:30 a.m.

Each child was allowed to place one hand in the cement while a construction worker helped write down their first two initials alongside the handprint.

The hand-cementing project was sponsored by Constructors Inc. with concrete donations coming from Gerhold Concrete Company and management help from the Nebraska Department of Transportation, according to Mike Oneby, Seward's city engineer.

On top of a fun event for families approaching the Fourth of July, the cement ceremony allowed families to remember a moment as the town continues to grow.



Ben Gremel (left) watches his son, George, place his hand in the cement outside of the Seward Memorial Library on July 3 alongside those of hundreds of other kids.

ANDRES LOPEZ/SCI

"Seward continues, unlike many Nebraska cities, to grow at a nice, steady pace," Oneby said. "At this point and time, there's a lot of construction activity that has to match that growth in population."

Oneby said a moment like this between families and construction workers is also a way to remember a major part of Seward's

history in recent years – the highway construction.

"This is just a nice commemoration," Oneby said. "We don't have the highway repairs but every 50 years, so when we do it, it's nice to be able to set aside a marker of some kind."

Ben Gremel of Seward brought his 2-year-old son, George, to the event

and said a day like today is one he and so many parents will be able to come back and remember.

"It'll be cool to see it decades later to show him the day he was here," Gremel said. "Almost all these kids can do the same thing – decades later see their handprint and show their kids their handprint."

Budget

Continued from 1 state-required joint public hearing for entities exceeding their allowable growth – a percentage based on the increase in total property values from the prior year – that must be scheduled and publicized by a mailing between Sept. 14 and Sept. 23 by County Clerk Sherry Schweitzer. Each entity involved must have a representative attend to present their budget plans.

Final public budget hearing – The Seward County Board of Examiners' (comprised of the Seward County Board of Commissioners) will schedule a final public hearing on the 2024-25 budgets and the tax rates required to support them.

Having been through a few budget cycles, Seward County Commission Chair Misty Ahmic, Commissioner Raegan Hain and Schweitzer, said individual taxpayers are often focused on the total tax rate they pay. To impact that, individuals could attempt to lower their own property valuation and assessment but that happens months prior to the public budget hearings.

Seward County Commissioners anticipate the dozen or so tax assessment protests they received prior to the June 30 protest deadline will be heard during their July 9 and 16 meetings.

Taxing entities discussing budgets now

Ahmic and Hain also encourage taxpayers interested in the varied entities' budgets to start learning about their situations and timelines before the public hearings. The two commissioners have been compiling a list of public entities who are scheduling time in their public meetings to talk about budget items.

The information is listed here by month, but residents should confirm dates, times and locations in the places where these boards usually post their meeting notices to comply with the Nebraska Open Meetings law.

Often they list meeting schedules and agenda on their websites. Budget discussions are anticipated on these dates:

- July – Seward County Commissioners, 16th and 23rd; Seward County Ag Society, 15th; Upper Big Blue Natural Resources District Board, 18th; Milford City Council, 22nd and 23rd; Pleasant Dale Village Board, third week in July; and Seward City Council, July 30

- August – Goehner Village Board, 6th; Educational Service Unit #6, 14th; Lower Platte South Natural Resources District Board, Aug. 14; Milford School Board, second meeting; and Seward School Board, last week in August

- September – Garland Village Board budget hearing, 3rd; Utica Village Board, 9th; Seward School Board public hearing, 9th; and Beaver Crossing Village Board,

11th The Bee Village Board, Centennial School Board, Cordova Village Board, Rural Fire District, Staplehurst Village Board dates were not yet available. This list does not include the Seward Airport Authority, cemeteries, special tax funds for buildings and projects, and other taxing entities that may be specific to a taxing district.

School districts, cities and the county budgets are typically the largest items on taxpayers' tax statements.

Ahmic said the county board has asked its departments to target zero increases in their proposed budgets for 2024-2025. The board has been reviewing program and department budget proposals during recent regular meetings and will begin looking at its total budget picture on July 16.

Seward City Manager Greg Butcher said the city's tax process is somewhat routine, beginning with the council's public work session on July 30 followed by regular and special meetings to discuss budget items as necessary.

At this point, he anticipates discussion of the city's 1- and 6-Year Plan for improvements at the Aug. 6 city council meeting and further discussion of budget details Aug. 20, but other meetings may be added to devote time to topics specified by city council members.

The city's public hearing date for the budget is set for Sept. 3, with a second meeting to handle any changes following that hearing tentatively set for Sept. 17.

"You have to anticipate that you are not going to show up and approve everything," Butcher said.

Likewise, he said Mayor Josh Eickmeier calls a special meeting in the days following the "postcard hearing" to finalize and adopt the budget to be sent on to the state.

Butcher said it's difficult to pick one meeting to attend if a taxpayer is interested in a certain category of expenditures. From July to September, some part of the budget will be on council agendas.

Timeline complex for school budgets

Seward School Superintendent Josh Fields said school district budgets and the budget-setting timeline create some challenges.

The district's fiscal year starts Sept. 1, but the budget being set for the 2024-2025 year will be approved after that and the district operates six months in arrears as the tax cash flow comes in.

That means when they discuss projects and maintenance for budget items, they are projecting a year ahead. Salary and insurance budget items are discussed much earlier than summer as required by the state.

Pole vault

Continued from 1 passion for the sport, Berry said.

"They just want to come out and just jump," Berry said.

The day's big winner was Lilly Nichols, who is committed to Arkansas. Nichols set a new Fourth of July record for the women's division at 14-2.5. On top of this record at the competition, this was also a personal and division record. Nichols has dual citizenship in the United States and Poland and at a sanctioned meet, she would have made the Polish Under 20 Division National Record, according to Berry.

"We will keep an eye on her future. We may see her vaulting at the Olympics some day," Berry said.

A competitor who brought smiles to the faces of onlookers was Concordia University's Mayson Ostermeyer, who jumped 15 feet while dressed as movie character Forrest Gump.

"Not only can Forrest run, but he can also fly," Berry said.

The most important part of the day was getting to see the vaulters' faces light up after doing what they love, according to Berry.



STEPHANIE CROSTON/SCI

Griffin Jordan focuses on the bar during the pole vault July 4 in Seward.

"During the event, seeing the smiles on the faces of the kids and having fun and the community is the best part," Berry said.

Berry said he is thankful for all the help in preparation for this all-day event.

"A special thanks to the Seward Fourth of July Committee for allowing us to yet again pole vault on the streets of Seward, to Concordia University for the continued support through the use of the landing mats and equipment and a massive thank you to all the volunteers that helped in the set-up and the tear-down of the equipment and also helping to run the event," Berry said. "Without them, we could not do this every year."

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Five initiative petitions returned for signature verification for the November general election ballot

The Nebraska Secretary of State's Office received five initiative petitions for signature verification. The deadline to return completed initiative petitions for signature verification was July 3.

The graphic shows a list of initiative petitions filed and returned to the Nebraska Secretary of State's Office.

Five additional initiative petitions were authorized for circulation but were not returned for signature verification. Referendum petitions are not due back until July 17.

"Nebraska law outlines a thorough process for verifying signatures on petition pages," Secretary Bob Evnen said. "County election commissioners and county clerks will be vigilant about ensuring each signature accepted will be that of a Nebraskan currently registered to vote in our state."

Petitions seeking to



create a constitutional amendment needed to collect valid signatures from 10% of registered Nebraska voters. Petitions

seeking to create a new state law needed to collect valid signatures from 7% of registered Nebraska voters.

Every petition needed to meet the distribution requirement – valid signatures from at least 5% of registered voters in 38 counties. The percentages will be based off a voter registration list processed by the Nebraska Secretary of State's Office on July 5.

It will take several weeks to verify signatures. The Secretary of State's Office will paginate each petition page and distribute petitions to county election offices. Upon receiving petition pages, county election offices will have 40 days to verify signatures.

Once the signature verification process is completed, county election offices will send petition pages back to the Secretary of State's office. The Secretary of State's office will total the number of valid signatures and determine if constitutional and statutory requirements were met.

Troopers arrest LRC escapee after foot pursuit on coal train

Troopers with the Nebraska State Patrol, with assistance from Butler and Seward county deputies, have arrested a man who had escaped from the Lincoln Regional Center on July 2.

At approximately 7:15 a.m. July 4, the Butler County Sheriff's Office reported that they believed Justin Daro was present at a residence in Ullyses. About 10 minutes later, deputies reported that Daro had left the residence and fled as they attempted to make contact.

Butler County deputies pursued Daro's vehicle as he fled into Seward County, where the vehicle became disabled near a railroad crossing just west of Tamora, south of

Highway 34. Daro then climbed onto a coal train and began running on top of the train cars, which were loaded with coal. The train was stopped. An NSP K9 was deployed onto the train and Daro jumped onto another stopped train on an adjacent track.

A trooper then deployed a bean bag round, which brought Daro to a stop. Daro continued to resist arrest, but he was taken into custody on top of the coal train. Seward County deputies assisted as well.

Daro was medically cleared at the hospital in Seward and has been lodged in Lancaster County Corrections. Charges are pending.

HAPPENINGS

JULY 10

JULY FUNDRAISER: The Milford Senior Center will host its July fundraiser from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Wednesday, July 10. Sloppy joe sandwiches, salads and desserts will be available for a \$7 minimum contribution.

SCIENCE ADVENTURE WEEK: The Seward Memorial Library will host Potions Between the Pages at 1 p.m. Wednesday, July 10, for grades K-5, no registration or limit. Participants will make their own potions with the help of science teacher, Laura Goracke.

JULY 11

SCIENCE ADVENTURE WEEK: Name coding and exploding sticks will be offered at 1 p.m. Thursday, July 11, at the Seward Memorial Library for grades K-5, no registration or limit. Learn how to code your own name into beads and build popsicle stick blasters. Practice releasing them and see if you can hit your target.

JULY 11 AND 17

FREE MOVIE: The Seward Memorial Library will show motion pictures on Thursday, July 11, and Wednesday, July 17, both at 1 p.m. Feel free to bring snacks and a drink. Visit sewardlibrary.org for more information.

COUNTY REPUBLICANS HOLD MONTHLY MEETINGS: The Seward County Nebraska Republicans invite any registered Republicans to attend monthly meetings on the second Thursday of each month at 7 p.m. (subject to change). Meeting locations may vary. Each month, meeting information and location will be posted on their Facebook page at www.facebook.com/SewardNEGOP and their website at SewardGOP.org.

INVITATION TO MEET AT THE GATHERING TABLE: Make plans to meet at The Gathering Table (Milford Mennonite Fellowship Hall at 920 F St). The table is set on the second Thursday of each month for this complementary meal. Come anytime between 5:30 and 7 p.m.

JULY 13

FUN RUN: The Malcolm Cross Country team will host the Brie Walklin Fun Run Saturday, July 13, at Larry Murray Park in Malcolm starting at 9:30 a.m. Entry fee is \$15 for adults and \$8 for kids for a one-mile walk/run or a three-mile run. Proceeds go to the Breast Cancer Research Foundation.

JULY 14

POTATO BAKE: The Utica Senior Center will host a potato bake Sunday, July 14, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

SEWARD MUNICIPAL BAND: The band will provide music at its weekly concert at 7:30 p.m. at the bandshell.

JULY 16

CONSTRUCTION ADVENTURE WEEK: There will be a LEGO™ Brick Challenge at the Seward Memorial Library with the Lincoln Children's Museum at

1 p.m. Tuesday, July 16, with a repeat session at 2 p.m. There is a limit of 25 participants in each time slot, which will be enforced. Registration is required. Only sign up a K-fifth grader if they will be available to attend. A waiting list will be maintained if needed. Notify the library if your plans change.

SUPPORT GROUP MEETING: The quarterly support group meeting for diabetics and their family members will be Tuesday, July 16, at 5:30 p.m. in Memorial Hospital's meeting room A. The event will feature a round table discussion with Brenda Roth, Diabetic Educator. Bring your questions and share solutions about diabetes management. RSVP by July 12 by calling (402) 646-4667 or register online at www.mhcs.us. Enter through the hospital front doors and take the elevator or stairs by the Specialty Clinic to the third floor meeting room.

ALZHEIMER'S SUPPORT GROUP TO MEET: The Seward County Alzheimer's Care Givers Support Group will meet at Kinship Pointe the third Tuesday of every month. Meetings begin at 7 p.m. If you are interested in attending, contact Cass at (402) 258-3700.

JULY 18

CONSTRUCTION ADVENTURE WEEK: Big Truck Exploration is planned at 1 p.m. Thursday, July 18, at the Seward Memorial Library parking lot for families of all ages. There is no registration or limit.

CAR CLUB: The next meeting of Seward Good Life Car Club will be at 6 p.m. Tuesday, July 18, at City Slickers in Dorchester. If you want to cruise to Dorchester, meet at the east side of the Seward square at 5:30 p.m.

ONGOING

G.I. CUP OF JOE: A veterans coffee will be every Wednesday from 7:30 – 9:30-ish at the Spare Time Lounge in Seward.

PEACHES AND PEARS: The Utica Lions are offering peaches and pears for sale. Peaches will be sold at 20 pounds for \$52 or 10 pounds for \$28. Pears are available at 20 pounds for \$40 or 10 pounds for \$22. To order, contact a Utica Lions club member or call (402) 641-5537, (402) 643-1150 or (402) 641-1122 before Saturday, July 29.

MUSEUM OPEN: The Seward County Historical Society Museum is open Thursdays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Sundays from 1:30 – 5 p.m.

REHEARSALS CONTINUE: Rehearsals for the Seward Municipal Band's 137th season continue on Thursdays from 7 – 9 p.m. at the Borland Center on the Concordia University campus throughout the summer. The band presents weekly concerts on Sundays at 7:30 p.m. at the bandshell.

OREGON TRAIL ESCAPE ROOM: During June and July, embark on the adventure of a lifetime with your wagon train in our Oregon Trail Escape Room at the Seward Memorial Library.

Participants must RSVP and sign up has begun. Time slots vary so call or come by the library to register. It is recommended that children 9 and under have an adult with them, but all ages are welcome.

READING COMPETITION: The annual Seward/York adult reading competition has begun. Each summer, the two towns compete to see who can read the most books. Patrons of all ages can participate. Read books and win prizes throughout the summer. Each person will have until July 26 to read as many books as possible.

GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY: The Seward County Genealogical Society is open Thursdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.; Fridays from 3 – 5 p.m. and the first Saturday of the month from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. or by appointment. A business meeting is the third Thursday of the month at 10 a.m. The organization is located at 233 Jackson Ave., Seward. Phone (402) 400-5250.

READING TOGETHER: This summer's All Seward Reads Together novel will be "The Reading List" by Sara Nisha Adams. Join Seward as we all read this heartwarming story about an unlikely friendship developed through a chance encounter at a library and a lost reading list found in the back of a book. Patrons will get a chance to meet and discuss the book at the end of the summer.

SCAVENGER HUNT: Pick up an Adventure Scavenger Hunt sheet through July 26 at the Seward Memorial Library to join this quest featuring iconic landmarks from around the world. Travel to Seward businesses to fill in your passport to far-off places. Return your sheet to the library to enter a prize drawing. The scavenger hunt is open to all ages.

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, AL-ANON MEETINGS: Alcoholics Anonymous groups will meet at the following times: Mondays at noon at Living Word Lutheran Church in Seward; Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m. at Faith Lutheran Church in Seward; Wednesdays at 7:30 p.m. at Living Word Lutheran; Grateful Nooners on Thursdays at noon

at the Living Word Lutheran Church in Seward; Thursdays at 7:30 p.m. at the Bellwood Mennonite Church in Milford; Fridays at 7:30 p.m. at Living Word Lutheran; Saturdays at 7:30 p.m. at Living Word Lutheran; and Sundays at 9 a.m. at Living Word Lutheran in Seward and 7 p.m. at Faith Lutheran Church in Seward. Al-Anon meetings are scheduled at 7:30 p.m. Thursdays at the Bellwood Mennonite Church in Milford and at 7:30 p.m. Fridays at Living Word Lutheran in Seward.

CHAIR YOGA: A 15-25 minute Chair Yoga class will be offered at the Utica Senior Center on Thursdays at 9:30 a.m. Contact the Senior Center at (402) 534-3435 for more information.

COFFEE AND FELLOWSHIP: Come for coffee and fellowship Monday through Friday from 8 to 11 a.m. at the Milford Senior Center. Coffee, tea, pastries and other treats are served.

LUNCH SERVED AT MILFORD SENIOR CENTER: Lunch is served Monday through Friday at noon at the Milford Senior Center. Reservations must be made one day in advance by calling or leaving a message at (402) 761-3367. Meals for seniors ages 60 and older have a suggested contribution of \$7 for regularly scheduled meals. Meals for guests under age 60 are \$8. All are welcome.

YOGA CLASSES: Different yoga classes are offered weekly at the Milford Senior Center, led by Kelly Haney. Offerings include: Adaptive Yoga on Mondays at 9 a.m.; Assisted Yoga on Wednesdays at 9 a.m.; and Next Level Yoga on Fridays at 9 a.m.

TAI CHI CLASSES: Join Tai Chi classes on Tuesdays at 10 a.m. at the Milford Senior Center. Enhance your muscle strength, flexibility, balance and aerobic conditioning.

TOPS MEETS WEEKLY: TOPS (Take Off Pounds Sensibly) meets weekly on Thursdays at the Living Word Church, 1300 Hillcrest, south door. TOPS is a weight management support group. Weigh-in begins at 11:15 a.m. and the meetings are from noon to 12:30 p.m. The initial meeting is free.

Centennial BOE sets improvements in motion

BY STEPHANIE CROSTON
scroston@sewardindependent.com

If you're a Centennial Broncos fan, it will cost you a little more to get into activities in 2024-25.

At its May meeting, the Centennial School Board approved increases in ticket prices. Single game admission will be \$5 for students and \$7 for parents. A year-long pass for an individual will be \$65.

- approved a bid of \$9,829 from No Sweet Fencing Company in Columbus to install new fencing on the east side of the football field;
- approved a bid of approximately \$10,000 from Prime Secured for door controls and monitoring equipment;
- updated the signers on the accounts at First Bank of Utica;
- approved the 2024-25 Colt's Corral agreement that includes the use of the small gym, cafeteria, kitchen, playground and parking lot for the supervised before- and after-school program;
- at its May meeting, accepted a bid of \$26,600 from Midwest Sound and Lighting to improve the acoustics in the west gym;
- at its April meeting, approved the addition of junior high girls' wrestling for the 2024-25 school year.

REUNION

Fritz reunion

The Fritz reunion will be Sunday, July 28, at 12:30 p.m. at the 4-H Cottage on the Seward County fairgrounds. Remember William, Anna, Walter, Maria, Mandy, Alvina, Alma, Emil, Albert, Ernie, and Iven? Your grandparents and great-grandparents? Let's get together as they did every summer and have some fun. Bring you family's table service, a main dish and a salad or a desert.

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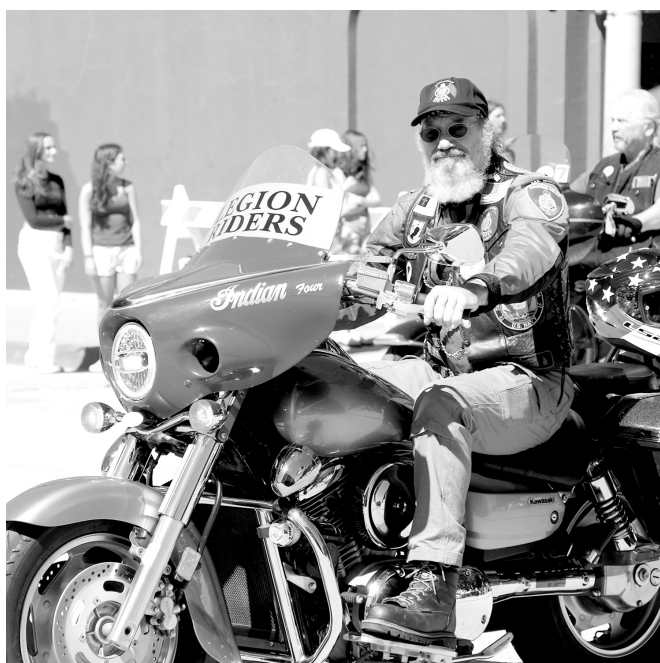


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PHOTOS BY ANDRES LOPEZ/SCI

A Legion Rider lets his engines roar.



Seward Mayor Joshua Eickmeier waves at onlookers.



Miss Nebraska 2024, Raechel Warren, front, and Miss Nebraska's Teen 2024, Janae Harris, wave to people along the parade route.

Awards announced for celebration's Grand Parade

The 2024 Seward Fourth of July Grand Parade is in the history books, and the winners of the parade have been announced.

The Seward July Fourth Celebration slogan was "Always Ready-Always There," honoring the First Responders-Law Enforcement, Fire Fighters and the National Guard.

The top award, the Best of Show, was awarded to H & S Plumbing of Seward for their creative and colorful float. The float was designed and created by Brian and Allyson Krohe of H & S Plumbing, their staff, friends and family. The Best of Show Trophy is sponsored by the Seward Fourth of July Celebration.

Other winners included:

- Cecil Drew Memorial Trophy, best horse drawn unit—Stava's Cross Creek Percheron team by Dr. Cori Stava.
- Mel Bolte Memorial Trophy, best live music entry—City of Seward Municipal Band.
- Dessalee Rouselle Memorial Trophy, the People's Choice Award—Anderson Construction of Seward and their World's Largest Firework.
- Luke Mohatt Memorial Trophy, best youth entry—The Middle Creek Mavericks 4-H Club of Seward County.
- Jim Orr Memorial Award, most patriotic entry—Cutting It Close Lawn Care with their giant Statue of Liberty.
- Florence Keller Memorial

Award, best business award—Alps Bark Park of Seward.

- Mary/Margaret Sweasey Memorial Award, best civic entry—Beatrice Homestead Monument.
- Merv Zillig Memorial Award, best horse unit in parade—Seward County Sheriff's Posse.
- Mayor's Award, best unit following the theme "Always Ready, Always There"—The Nebraska National Guard's "Weasel" that save many during the blizzards of '48 and '49.
- Dorothea Bek Memorial Award, best marching or walking unit—The Seward High Marching Band and Flags.
- Chairman's Award, the judge's favorite—The Wilber

Czech Alumni Band of Wilber.

The Parade Awards feature the new Seward Branding Logo and are all at the Nebraska National Guard Museum this year, as the Civic Center is closed. They can be picked up Monday through Friday between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m.

Parade Chairman for 2024 is Donna Hendrickson of Seward at the Seward County Chamber and Development Partnership offices. She was assisted by Collin Hain, Jonathan Jank, Tarah Thurber, Tim Thurber, Miley Thurber, Natalie and Jacob Taylor and Jordan Walton.

Judges for the parade were Melanie Nutt of Cozad and Teresea Wilson of Lincoln, with Riley Nuttleman serving as the

judges' coordinator. The parade Emcees were Gerald "Jerry" Meyer and Clark Kolterman of Seward.

The parade results will be listed on the Seward Fourth of July website at july-fourthseward.com

Members of the Seward High Future Business Leaders of America served as the parade banner carriers, chaired by Jena Eberspacher.

Steve Hambek of Seward coordinated the parade review facilities and Joe Ruzicka of Seward Electronics coordinated the public address system.



ABOVE LEFT, Jill Beisel, 50, of Seward won the bubble gum-blowing competition and ABOVE RIGHT, Steve Balboni from Melbourne, Australia, took the win for the collegiate age group in the pie eating contest, both during the annual Fourth of July celebration in Seward.

Coffin takes top honors for pie, Biesel for gum

Brian Coffin, the winner in the Seniors Division of the Seward Rotary Club Apple Pie Eating Contest, was named the State Apple Pie Eating Champion for 2024.

The annual event was held at the Seward Bandshell on July 4. He was presented with the new State Apple Pie Eating Champion Trophy. The contest was sponsored by the Seward Rotary Club.

Division winners were Kids/Pre-Teen Stella Mueller of Seward, Men's Division Dan Dobesh of Denver, Colorado (originally Seward), Teenager Division Josh Keller of Seward, "Real" Women Division

(Adult Women)Kayla Arneson of Lincoln, Collegiate Steve Balboni of Melbourne, Australia, and Open Class Mark Arneson of Lincoln, and Brian Coffin-Overland Park, Kansas.

The State of Nebraska Bubble Gum Bubble Blowing Championship was also decided at the Bandshell on July 4, with a contest sponsored by the Seward Rotary Club for all ages. There were three divisions, Pre-Teen, Teen and Adult. The state champion was Jill Beisel of Seward, who won the Adult Division.

Preliminary winners included

PreTeen Division Eleanor Curns of Omaha, Teen Ager Division Rose Laffa of Marysville, Kansas, and Adult Division-Jill Beisel of Seward.

The contests were sponsored by the Seward Rotary and judges were Rotarians Dr. Matt Dominy, Doug Gremel and Anita Foor. They were assisted by Rotarians Greg Zabka, Shelly Nitz and Rick Gray. Rotarian Jessica Kolterman served as the Scribe and Rotarian Clark Kolterman was the emcee. Helpers included Jocelyn Gray, Linda Kolterman, Dixie Zabka and Riley Nuttleman.



ANDRES LOPEZ/SCI

It's an Explosion!

LUXE Dance Academy's group, LUXE Explosion performs a contemporary clogging piece for the audience at the bandshell during Seward's Fourth of July celebration. Kiley Conway, the director of the studio, said its dancers have been coming to the Fourth festivities for 40 years. "Clogging and sharing that with the community has always been one of our favorite things," Conway said. "Everyone is so friendly, positive. We just love the atmosphere and it's super fun to be a part of it."

Fourth of July and Seward art appear in Red Path for festivities

BY ANDRES LOPEZ
reporter1@sewardindependent.com

Work from various artists was put on display at Red Path Gallery and Tasting Room to commemorate this year's Fourth of July Theme – Always Ready-Always There.

Owner and director Alison Koch said many of the pieces on display for this year's Fourth of July festivities revolve around Seward and Fourth of July imagery. She also said there is plenty of art created by first responders that is able to be purchased.

Some of the highlighted art pieces pointed out by Koch were from Pam Apley, Bill Shaffer and the Lincoln Artists' Guild.

Koch said that Apley's work consists of layered fabric mosaics that are later painted. All of the work done on the pieces is done freehand. One piece Apley has done is artwork of the Seward County Courthouse. Apley, a Lincoln native, has had her work on display at Red Path Gallery for several years, according to Koch.

Another artist's work that Koch suggested looking into was Shaffer's. For this year, Shaffer, also of Lincoln, made a collection of pieces depicting various locations within Seward. A lot of this work is done with pastels and uses various

forms of mixed media. "He has other of these graphic design prints that he's done," Koch said. "He has some of McCook, Lincoln – places people would know and recognize."

Hailing from several artists, the back room of the gallery was set aside for the Lincoln Artists' Guild.

This section of art is usually put inside the Civic Center, according to Koch, however, with it being under construction, it was moved to the gallery.

This art is being voted on and the winner will get to have their own show in the gallery in August, Koch said.

With the gallery being a potential stop for any Fourth-goer, Koch said she saw an even split for art sales and beverage sales. Koch said that in years past, she's noticed an increase in people who call asking about art for sale days after the Fourth of July has ended.

Even after caravans of out-of-staters make their way out of Seward County following the Fourth, Koch said she can guarantee that all the art in the gallery comes directly from people living in the state.

"The cool thing about our gallery is they're all Nebraska artists, so when you're buying from Red Path, you're getting truly a local piece of original artwork," Koch said.



ANDRES LOPEZ/SCI

Sue King admires the art of various artists, including mosaic fabric art of the Seward Courthouse done by Pam Apley inside the Red Path Gallery and Tasting Room.

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COURTESY PHOTO

The Raw Nerve played at the bandshell on June 8 to kick off this year's 5th Street Summer Music Series.

5TH STREET SUMMER MUSIC SERIES RETURNS

BY HANNA CHRISTENSEN
scireporter@sewardindependent.com

Seward's 5th Street Summer Music Series is back after rave reviews following its 2023 debut.

The series features free, family-friendly live music events at the bandshell once a month and was designed to be something all generations can enjoy.

The Seward Arts Council recently conducted a survey to determine what activities the community most wanted to see continue downtown, and the 5th Street Summer Music Series ranked number one.

The event is presented by the Seward Arts Council and funded by grants the area obtained through becoming a Creative District and by local sponsors, according to SAC president Jeanne Wiemer.

In addition to live music, the series features attractions such as face painting, food trucks and, new this year, carnival games. Local artist Lois Smith enjoys painting at the events and welcomes anyone who wants to watch.

"The art of music helps people, and I just think all creativity is very helpful for everybody," said SAC vice president Alison Koch. "If they see it in action, they are more apt to do it themselves."

Also new this year, the street in front of the bandshell is blocked off during 5th Street Summer Music Series events. Wiemer said alcohol and food vendors will be in the street, which will allow more space for people to set out their lawn chairs and convene on the grass.

"We expanded it into the street so that parents and everybody could have their kids out in the street and it's just a safer situation for everybody," Wiemer said. "And, overall, there's more space for everybody to enjoy the music."

Each event runs from 5-8 p.m., which Koch said makes things easier for people with children – herself included.

"I have a three-year-old, and seven o'clock is really close to bedtime, so I wasn't really ever able to take her to those events," she said. "It's been fun having this a little bit earlier so that she can go there. She loves danc-

"It's just been a very positive experience, and I think that's what the whole world needs right now - a place to relax and breathe a little bit and enjoy life."

Seward Arts Council President
Jeanne Wiemer

ing, and she really liked the whole thing."

The Raw Nerve, a band of dentists out of Lincoln, performed on June 8

B Street Band will play on July 13 and is based out of Milford. Sunset Lounge Trio, led by the owner of Drum Outfitters, Phil Hendrickson, will perform on August 3.

Koch said she enjoys that the event supports local bands and fosters community engagement.

"We see people from all different walks of life, all age ranges, and everyone is just there to have a relaxing evening and enjoy the music," she said. "And, that's really what I was hoping for when planning it."

The idea for the series came to Koch when she was watching the Elvis movie at the Rivoli Theater. There is a scene in the movie where a young Elvis goes to a church revival and is inspired by the music and community experience.

"For some reason, that really stuck out to me," she said. "I was like, how cool would that be to have kind of a musical experience that kids can come see and that adults can come see and maybe feel a little bit inspired."

Wiemer said the community has supported the series well, and SAC hopes to continue it for years to come.

"It's just been a very positive experience, and I think that's what the whole world needs right now - a place to relax and breathe a little bit and enjoy life," Wiemer said.



COURTESY PHOTO

Music lovers from Seward and the surrounding communities fill the seats at the 5th Street Summer Music Series.

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Concert gets celebration off on right foot

BY GERALD D. "JERRY" MEYER
NENG Historian

The Nebraska National Guard Historical Society hosted its annual kick off for the Fourth of July in Seward July 3. The "Civil War Revue" was in honor of the museum's dedication of the "Nebraskans in the Civil War" Exhibit on July 4. The revue featured local talent and a special guest – Major Gen. Craig Strong.

The invocation and benediction were given by Pastor Scott Krohn of Living Word Lutheran Church in Seward.

Strong, the 34th Adjutant General and Commander of the Nebraska National Guard, gave welcome comments. He reminded the crowd that the heart of the Nebraska National Guard is in Lincoln (the headquarters) but its "soul" is in Seward (Nebraska National Guard Museum).

Following his comments, the program opened with a narrative for Part I – Nebraskans at War (1861-1862). The narrator talked about the role of Nebraskans at Fort Donelson and 35 other battles in the war.

The importance of Donelson changed the trajectory of the war with the victory for Gen. Ulysses S. Grant.

Part II was the Homefront (1862-1865) and covered what Nebraska National Guard soldiers did in the territory. Part III was Total War and Victory (1864-1865) and focused on Grant and his leadership in bringing victory to the Union.

Entertainment in each set consisted of the:

Firehouse Five Plus: "Yankee Fanfare," "Battle Cry of Freedom," "When Johnny Comes Marching Home," "The Blue and the Gray," "Gettysburg," "Akhokan Farewell" and "Civil War Echoes"

Blue River Men's Quartet: "Aura Lee," "Battle Hymn of the Republic" and "Shenandoah"

Rory Nolan: "Gettysburg Address" and "Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address"

The Firehouse Five Plus consisted of Naomi Ristvedt (flute/piccolo), Jessica Schreiner and Dan Murray (clarinet), Rebekah Lawton (alto sax), Jared Schreiner, Joanie Brecka, Christie Brecka and Kris Anderson (trumpet), Dave Wesley (French horn), Wendy Schultz and Dennis Haberstich (trombone), Dave Kasl (euphonium), Dan Hicks (tuba),



AMY HAUSMAN/SCI

Baritone Pete Jurchen of the Blue River Men's Quartet performed along with Jonathan Jank, Logan Walgate and Joshua Jurchen at the Civil War Revue on July 3 at Seward High School.

Curt Nelson and Xander Foulk (percussion).

The Blue River Men's Quartet consisted of Tenor Logan Walgate, Lead Jonathan Jank, Baritone Peter Jurchen and Bass Joshua Jurchen.

The revue was directed by Mary Meyer. Sound and lights were controlled by Jay Ferris. Logistics for the event were taken care of by Steve and Sharon Hambeck. Technical direction was provided by Clark Kolterman.

Programs and logistic sponsorship for the July 3 and 4 activities were provided by Dr. Van and Becky Vahle and Cattle Bank and Trust. Special thank you to Dr. Josh Fields and the Seward Public Schools staff for the use of the auditorium and facilities.

The Rally Song for the revue was "Stars and Stripes Forever" by the Firehouse Five Plus. The crowd clapped along to the song and left the program ready to celebrate the nation's birthday on July 4.



JEFFREY CALHOUN/SCI

Julia DeBoer (left) and Linda Sackschewsky wish each other well as they change shifts on the Jones Bank trolley.

Trolleys make the rounds during Fourth celebration

BY JEFFREY CALHOUN
reporter@sewardindependent.com

The trolleys that cart people around town on the Fourth of July have become a staple of the celebration, but these transporters are not able to make their rounds around town without the help of their volunteer conductors.

"I just make sure that the trolley comes to a full stop and then I step off

and allow people to get off that need to get off at each stop that we're on," said conductor Julie DeBoer. "I want to make sure whoever's on board is fully on before we depart and start driving again."

These trolleys also serve as sponsorship opportunities for different businesses in the community.

"We get some marketing on the side of the trolley, get our name

out there and we try to man the trolley ourselves with people that work at (Union Bank)," said UBT employee and conductor Holly Placke.

While the sponsorship does help them, supporting the community is the main goal.

"It's a community event, we're a community bank and we're here to support that," said Jones bank employee and conductor Linda Sackschewsky.



STEPHANIE CROSTON/SCI

Fourth of July ends with a bang

Fireworks filled the sky above Plum Creek Park to cap off the July 4 festivities.

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Everyone loves a parade ... and more

Hundreds line the streets of Seward the afternoon of July 4 to watch the Fourth of July parade and participate in the various events planned during the city's annual celebration.



The American Legion sets off the Fourth of July parade as they begin to make their way through downtown Seward.



Stephanie Croston of the Seward County Independent was the recipient of the Seward County Community Service award. Her mom, Elaine, rode with her.

PARADE PHOTOS BY ANDRES LOPEZ/SCI



Employees of Jones Bank handed out flags to parade watchers.



Kayla Albright, a drum major, helps conduct the Seward High School marching band along the parade route during Seward's Fourth of July celebration.



Philip and Monique Miller from Marysville, Kansas, are the 2024 tourist family. Their children are Grace (22), Isaiah (20), Silas (18) - (He did not attend), Nathanael (17), Sarah (16), Eden (14), Micah (11), Josiah (9) and Sophia (5). Philip is a pastor at Mount Calvary Lutheran Church (LCMS) in Marysville. They came to Seward with their daughter Grace who is attending Concordia as a K-12 Music Education major and getting her LTD (Lutheran Teacher's Diploma). They heard about the 4th from Grace and her fiancé Josh Hendrickson who lives in Seward. "It was a great experience and we really enjoyed our time. Sorry we weren't from somewhere more exotic," Philip Miller said. The boys especially enjoyed the car show, and everyone enjoyed being in the parade.



STEPHANIE CROSTON/SCI



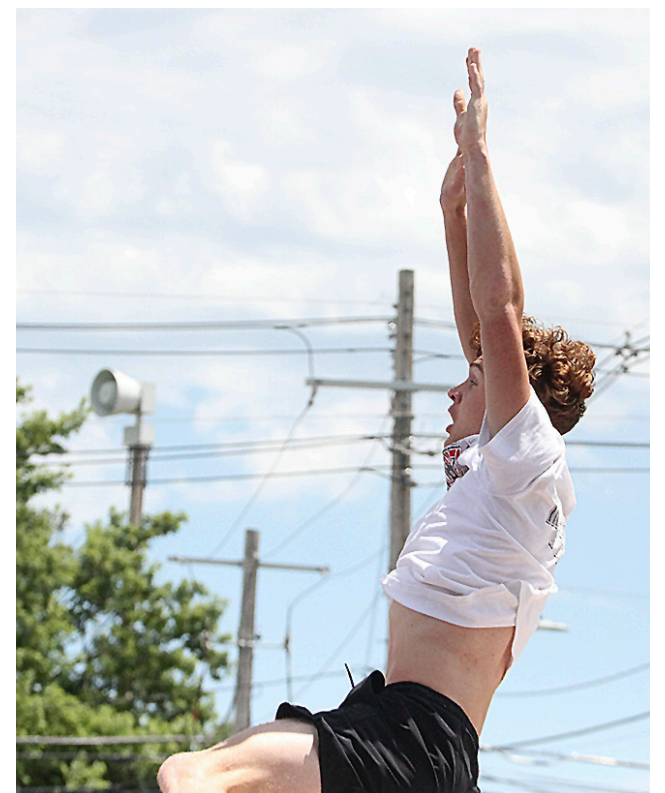
Volunteer fire departments from around the area participated in the annual July 4 water fights.

STEPHANIE CROSTON/SCI



One-year-old Reese Bogus didn't mind the raindrops during the bike parade July 4 at the Seward bandshell.

STEPHANIE CROSTON/SCI



Griffin Jordan shows his excitement at clearing a personal best of 15-0 in the pole vault July 4 during the street vault in Seward.

STEPHANIE CROSTON/SCI

Thank you to the Fourth of July committee and all of the volunteers who made this year's celebration a memorable one.

'To preserve the past for future generations'

Car sealed in pyramid in 1985 shown in Fourth of July parade

BY JEFFREY CALHOUN
Reporter@sewardindependent.com

Even though the world's largest time capsule is not planned to be opened until the summer of 2025, the pyramid that was sealed on top of it in 1985 was opened this year on the Fourth of July.

Over time, there has been growing concerns about the ability to open the lid to the time capsule come the 50th anniversary of its sealing next year.

"For the last 10 years, I have worried about this and for the last five years, I've lost sleep about this," said keeper of the crypt Trish Davisson Johnson. "It seemed to me that there was no way you're going to lift a 20-ton lid inside a pyramid."

When the capsule was constructed, Johnson's father, Harold Davisson, believed that technology would advance enough in the future to open the lid, but even with today's technology, the task of even opening the pyramid constructed on top served to be incredibly difficult.

"The pyramid door took about six hours to chop out by Troyer Concrete out of Milford,"



ANDRES LOPEZ/SCI

The car that was inside of the time capsule pyramid makes its way through the Fourth of July parade. In 1985, people could pay \$1 for a swing with a sledgehammer and then sign their dents. Signatures are still visible all over the car.

Johnson said. "I had numerous men back out on me because they couldn't figure out what to do, how to do it, how heavy it was going to be."

The door ended up weighing about 7,000 pounds and caused the forklift that was used to nearly sink into the dirt.

After opening the pyramid, a number of items were in poor

condition, but there were a few bright spots, including a box that was given to the president of the VFW auxiliary, Vicki Luebke, containing "a scrapbook compiled by Gladys Ost in 1975 and a history book compiled by Gladys Ost in 1975," Johnson said.

Another bright spot was a car that was pulled out and put on

a trailer to be sent through the Fourth of July parade.

Now that the pyramid has been cleared, Johnson is looking ahead to next year. Opening the capsule raises some concerns, and the possibility of demolishing the pyramid to get into the capsule has been considered.

"The pyramid itself weighs more than 70 tons and Meyer

Ford has a crane that will do 70 tons," Johnson said. "My construction guys at Troyer said 'that's not big enough, we need something bigger.'"

People have not responded well to the proposal of tearing down the pyramid.

"I had people last year up in arms when I said it," Johnson said. "It's a landmark."

Once the capsule is opened, there is a major concern about returning items to the original owners. While receipts were given out to people in 1975, most people have lost them in the nearly 50 years since the sealing, and the duplicates the Davissons had were presumably stolen.

"It was in a Hershey candy box, I can see it plain as day," Johnson said. "They were on a shelf down in the paper room, I went down after he died and the box was gone."

While she wants the box to return, her hopes are not high.

"Is somebody going to be stupid enough to show up with the box? Would somebody be kind enough to hand it back to us?" Johnson asked.

Despite all of the challenges, changes and setbacks, the goal of the capsule remains the same.

"There's a sign in the store that we'll pull up next year that is from the original that says 'to preserve the past for future generations,' and that's why (my father) did it," Johnson said.



JEFFREY CALHOUN/SCI

Darryl Wattier brought his trinket-filled Model A pickup to the Seward Fourth of July car show.

Model As and art displays

BY JEFFREY CALHOUN
reporter@sewardindependent.com

What do a metal cockatoo, a collection of wooden crosses and a woven basket full of koozies have in common?

Well, nothing, unless you are Darryl Wattier and you decide to attach these objects and many more to your 1930 Model A pickup truck.

Wattier's truck was always a little bit mismatched after he inherited it from his late father.

"It's not really original, it's a mix between '28 '29 and '30 parts, it's all

Ford parts," Wattier said. "When he got it, it didn't have any fenders and the wheels were mismatched, so I got all matching wheels and found fenders to put on it and made it into artwork."

After landing on bright purple wheels, the loud visuals ensued as he started attaching various trinkets to the car last winter. He decided to go through items he had collected over the years and show them off on his truck.

One of the most interesting parts of the pickup is actually the bars he uses to attach a large number of the trinkets

that used to be part of a piano.

"They hold the wires where they tune this piano, and I tore this piano apart," Wattier said. "Nobody wanted it, so that's why I put those bars on there and bolted things on."

What he decides to put on the car is not completely random as he does have a level of criteria for what gets put on display.

"It has to be family friendly, it can't be negative, I try to be positive," Wattier said.

There are a few specific display pieces that hold special significance to him

as all of the crosses are from the Cross Makers.

"My dad was part of the Cross Makers over here in Seward," Wattier said. "Dad was with them for years and he had a pile in his garage that he added or did stuff to and added growth to them, and I just put a couple on here."

So whether it is a rat hoisting a wrench in the air, an American flag, or a rock he took from a beach in Hawaii, there is always room for more on the art piece that is this vintage vehicle.

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STEPHANIE CROSTON/SCI

Ruger Webb of Utica-Beaver Crossing stretches to catch a throw from the catcher as Wilber's Carter Skleba steals second July 1.

Badgers get win on road

BY STEPHANIE CROSTON
scroston@sewardindependent.com

The Utica-Beaver Crossing seniors picked up their third win of the season July 5, beating Wymore Diller Odell 18-12.

UBC had to come from behind to get the win. The Badgers trailed 9-5 after the third inning but tied the score with four in the top of the fourth. Wymore retook the lead with a run in the bottom of the inning, but UBC jumped on top with four runs in the top of the fifth. The team added a run in the sixth and four in the seventh to put the game out of reach.

UBC had just three hits in the game but drew 16 walks and had five reach base after being hit. Devin Slawnyk doubled and drove in four runs. Keenan Kosek also drove in four, and Hurley

Harroun added two RBIs. The week started with an 8-3 loss at Wilber July 1. UBC had just one hit, a single by Ruger Webb. Webb, Slawnyk and Jackson Wellman drove in runs for the Badgers. Kosek pitched five innings and struck out for.

Up next for UBC (3-10) was a doubleheader against Cornerstone Bank (Geneva) July 8. The Badgers are on the road for their final regular-season contests – at Friend Saturday, July 20, and at Tri County Tuesday, July 23.

Wilber Post 101 8, Utica-Beaver Crossing 3

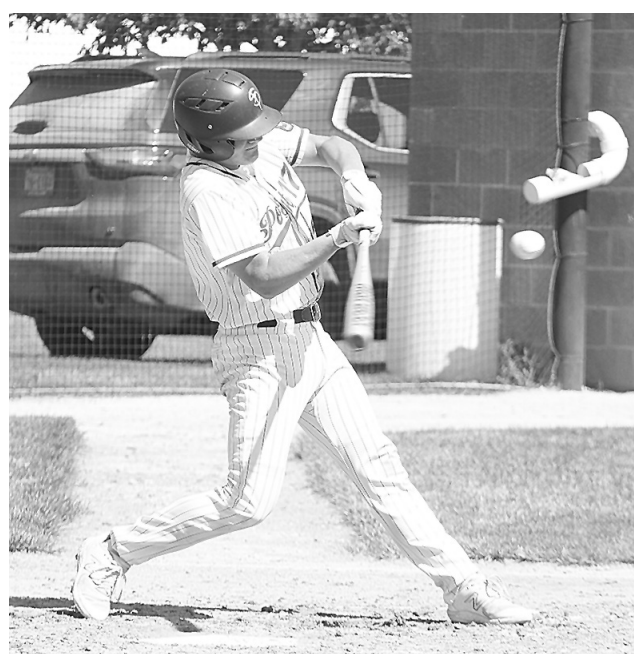
UBC	000	100	2	3	1	6
WIL	120	221	x	8	8	1

HBP—Slawnyk, Wellman, Rathjen. SB—Slawnyk 2, Stelling, Fehlhafer. RBI—Webb, Slawnyk, Wellman. K—Kosek 4, Stelling 2. Hit batters—Kosek 2.

UBC 18, Wymore Diller Odell 12

UBC	320	441	4	18	3	1
WDO	531	120	0	12	9	6

2B—Slawnyk, HBP—Wellman 2, Fehlhafer, Kosek, Richters. SB—Webb 2, Slawnyk, Harroun, Fehlhafer, Kosek, Richters, Rathjen. RBI—Kosek 4, Slawnyk 4, Harroun 2, Rathjen, Wellman. K—Slawnyk 2, Webb 2, Konken 2. WP—Webb. Hit batters—Slawnyk 2, Webb, Konken 2.



STEPHANIE CROSTON/SCI

Westin DeLong of Milford swings at an inside pitch against Crete July 6.

Milford 1-2 in week's contests

BY STEPHANIE CROSTON
scroston@sewardindependent.com

The Milford Post 171 juniors picked up their fourth win of the season July 3 at Wilber. Milford scored 11 runs in the final two innings to put the game away.

Milford pitchers held Wilber hitless, walking five and hitting two. Arthur Price struck out four in his five innings of work.

At the plate, Westin DeLong and Gabe Mach

see MILFORD, page 12



STEPHANIE CROSTON/SCI

Malcolm's Justin Wisnieski attempts to tag Seward's Bostyn Happ at first base during July 7's game.

Malcolm ties, beats Seward

BY HEATH KRAMER
Seward County Independent

Having moved past the fourth of July, the post-season is in sight for the Malcolm Legion baseball teams.

Postseason comes with the pressure of both the juniors and seniors teams being two-time defending state champions. This is when it gets serious.

"Our guys are the hunted," Malcolm head coach Tanner Soderberg said. "It's been like that for a while now. Opposing teams want to do everything they can to take us out."

In preparation for the C4 Area Tournament which begins Friday, July 12, in Malcolm, the juniors played road games on three consecutive days. Malcolm traveled south on July 5 and earned a 9-1 win at Adams. Miles McGill picked up his first junior-level win as he pitched four of the game's five innings, allowing no runs and just one hit.

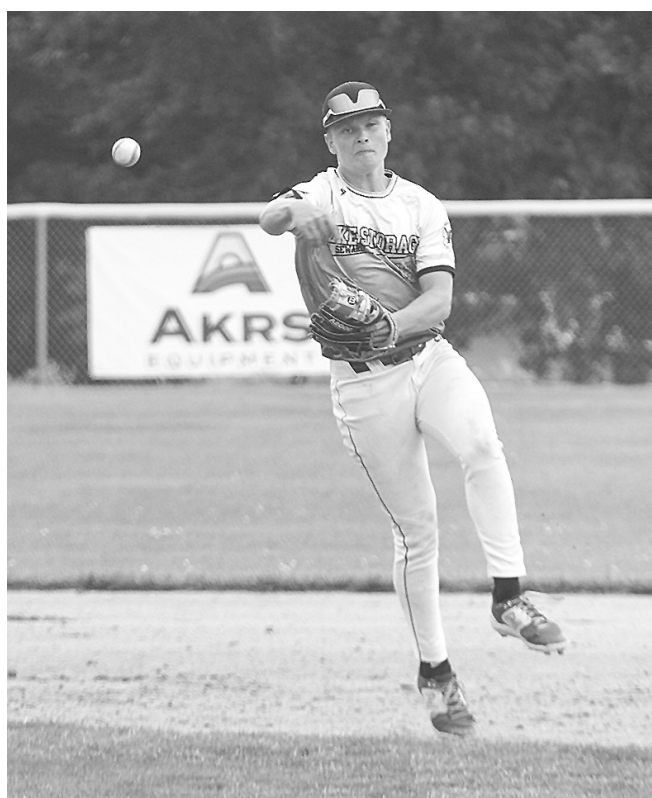
"Miles' growth can be attributed to the number of reps he's getting while playing on both the reserves and juniors teams," Soderberg said. "He's pitched 18 innings on the reserves team (with a 4-1 record). His demeanor and attitude has changed this summer. When adversity hits, he doesn't let one bad thing ruin an otherwise good game."

Malcolm went to Syracuse the next day and escaped with a 7-4 win. McGill had a big day at the plate, going 3-for-4 with a double and four runs batted in, while Brixon Meyer took care of business on the mound, improving his record to 4-0 with a six-inning, seven-strikeout performance.

The juniors ended the weekend playing Seward to a 3-3 tie on July 7.

While Malcolm scored the game's first two runs in the top of the first, Seward scored the next three to go up by one.

Nolan Duzik opened



STEPHANIE CROSTON/SCI

Quin Berner of Seward throws to first against Malcolm July 7. The Class C Legion juniors defending state champion and Class B Legion juniors defending state runner-up played to a 3-3 tie.

the top of the seventh with a double before Carson Frank drove him in with an RBI-single.

Frank came on in relief in the bottom of the seventh. After a dropped third strike allowed Seward's Boston Happ to get on, Kyle Riley walked to put runners at first and second before Karson Dyer sacrificed both up a base.

Justin Wisnieski fielded a ground ball off the bat of Kolton Loos and threw out Happ to keep the winning run off the board. The game ended – due to time limit – when Brixon Meyer threw out Riley attempting to steal third.

"The winning run was 90 feet away with one out and our guys found a way to keep them off the board," Soderberg said. "Adversity like that will only help us the next two weeks."

The game was the only one of the week for Seward (14-10-3). Happ finished the game 3-4 with an RBI, and Dyer drove in two runs.

Malcolm (13-0-1)

was set to face Lincoln Southeast (17-15-1) July 8 before entering the area tournament as the top seed.

Sutton (16-4) is the No. 2 seed while Lincoln Lutheran (9-5) is third. Malcolm will play Saturday against the winner of No. 4 Wilber (6-11) and No. 5 Friend (2-8).

"Our guys have to handle the pressure," Soderberg said. "Four games in four days against four quality opponents was designed to help them get there. We'll be ready."

Seward is in the Class B Area 4 tournament at Elkhorn. In addition to ETC, the bracket includes Arlington, Ashland, Omaha Concordia, Wahoo and Waterloo-Valley.

Malcolm 3, Seward ZKE Storage Post 33 3

MAL	200	000	1	3	7	0
SEW	110	010	0	3	5	0

2B—Frank, Wisnieski, Duzik. HBP—Smith, Loos. RBI—Frank, Wisnieski, Little, Happ, Dyer 2. K—Smith 5, Robotham 1, Frank 1, Hammond 3, Salyer 1, Loos 1. WP—Smith 2, Frank, Loos. Hit batters—Smith, Berner.

Malcolm 9, Adams 2

MAL	202	05	9	7	3
ADM	000	01	1	2	2

2B—Meyer. SF—McGill. SB—Frank 3, Meyer 2, Little 2. A. Sykes, Smith. RBI Little 2, McGill 2, Kucera, Zegar, Duzik. W—McGill. K—McGill 1, Savicky 1. WP—McGill, Savicky. Hit batters—McGill 2.

Malcolm 7, Syracuse 4

MAL	010	221	1	7	12	1
SYR	010	001	2	4	8	0

2B—Frank, McGill, Duzik. 3B—Wisnieski. SF—Duzik. SB—Meyer 2, Sykes, Robotham, Little. RBI—McGill 4, Little, Duzik. W—Meyer. S—Savicky. K—Meyer 7, WP—Savicky. Hit batters—Meyer.

Seniors win two
The Malcolm seniors joined the juniors on the trips to Syracuse and Seward and made quick work of both opponents.

The seniors disposed of Syracuse with a 10-0 mercy rule win in five innings. Mason Wisnieski hit his sixth triple of the season on a 2-for-2 day. He also fanned nine Syracuse batters in three-and-two-thirds while earning his third win of the summer.

Maddox Meyer had a pair of doubles and drove in three runs. Luke Schmidt also added three RBIs.

For Seward, Finn Hochstein was 2-3 with a double. Kolton Loos and Ryley Hain singled for Seward's other two hits.

Conner Sveeggen took the loss, going three innings and giving up seven runs.

The next day, Wisnieski tripled at Seward as part of a three-hit day in a 9-0 victory. The senior-to-be is hitting .544 this summer with 16 of his 31 hits going for extra bases.

The game against Malcolm was the only contest of the week for Seward (13-9).

The Malcolm seniors (15-4) will visit Elkhorn North (23-13-1) on Tuesday before heading to Wahoo (10-7) Saturday, July 13.

Seward was scheduled to be at Fairbury Wednesday, July 10, for a 7 p.m. game.

Malcolm 9, Seward ZKE Storage Post 33 0

MAL	024	102	9	10	0
SEW	000	000	0	4	0

2B—C. Frank, McCreer, M. Meyer, M. Wisnieski, Hochstein. 3B—M. Wisnieski. HBP—Schmidt, Ernesti. RBI—M. Meyer 3, C. Frank 2, McCreer, M. Wisnieski, O. Little. W—M. Meyer. L—Sveeggen. K—M. Meyer 8, Sveeggen 2, Matzke 3. Hit batters—M. Meyer, Sveeggen.

Malcolm 10, Syracuse 0

MAL	252	01	10	10	2
SYR	000	00	0	0	4

2B—M. Meyer 2, England. 3B—M. Wisnieski. HBP—Sykes, M. Wisnieski. SF—Schmidt. RBI—M. Meyer 3, Schmidt 3, England 2, M. Wisnieski, C. Frank. W—M. Wisnieski. K—M. Wisnieski 9, Robotham 2. Hit batters—M. Wisnieski 3.

Quinn earns second team

Following one of the greatest seasons ever enjoyed by a Concordia Bulldog baseball player, Jaidan Quinn has landed another award.

On July 2, the NAIA First Team All-American was honored by College Sports Communicators as a 2024 NAIA Second Team Academic All-American®.

In early June, Quinn was honored as Academic All-District along with teammates Blake Benson, Brad Hallock and Ty Nekoliczak. There have been eight Academic All-America awards by the Concordia Baseball program during Head Coach Ryan Dupic's tenure.

The 2024 Academic All-America® Baseball Teams, selected by College Sports Communicators,

recognize the nation's top student-athletes for their combined performances on the diamond and in the classroom. Student-athletes must achieve a cumulative grade point average of 3.5 or higher in order to be nominated for this award. The CSC Academic All-America® program separately recognizes honorees in four divisions — NCAA Division I, NCAA Division II, NCAA Division III and NAIA — for each gender.

Named the GPAC co-Player of the Year along with teammate Joey Grabanski, Quinn enjoyed another stellar campaign in 2024 as he reset program single season standards for home runs (tied at 27), runs scored (81) and walks

(49). The Bonner Springs, Kansas, native batted .387 and posted impressive .535 on-base and .880 slugging percentages while starting all 57 games. He also drove in 75 runs while primarily batting out of the No. 2 spot in the lineup.

A three-time First Team All-GPAC honoree, Quinn has played in 173 career games as a Bulldog and has batted .360 with 200 hits, 214 runs scored, 37 doubles, 73 home runs and 205 RBIs. He was named a NAIA Second Team All-American in 2023, First Team All-American in 2024 and ranks as one of the top hitters in school history. Quinn majors in Exercise Science and has one season remaining at Concordia.

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B Street Band connects with favorite songs

Milford-based group to perform at Summer Music Series July 13

BY LORI SHRINER
For the Seward County Independent

Dave Miller likes it when people in the audience are nodding, singing and moving with the classic rock and country songs The B Street Band performs.

"I want to make sure people are familiar with the songs," Miller said, "The main goal is really to make that connection with people."

For the past 15 years, Miller, his wife, Tammy Miller, on vocals and percussion, Tom Troyer on bass, Craig Bontrager on percussion, Steve Hanson



COURTESY PHOTO

The B Street Band, which is rooted in Milford and plays classic rock and country music, performed in Seward's inaugural Fifth Street Concert Series in 2023 and returns to the bandshell stage Saturday, July 13, from 5 – 8 p.m.

on guitar and Phil Goddard on keyboard have comprised The B Street Band.

The band will be on the Seward Bandshell stage for the Seward Arts Council's 5th Street Summer Music Series on Saturday, July 13, performing from 5 – 8 p.m.

"I started as a kid playing music in a bluegrass

band," Dave Miller said. "Playing music has been a part of what I do whatever I am doing."

The band members first connected during the 11 years Miller served as pastor at the Bellwood Mennonite Church, which is on B Street in Milford. Troyer and Bontrager still live in Milford. A couple band members

were in the church's worship band and before long, Miller said, they decided to take their music out into the community. They soon had gigs at wineries and other venues.

One night about six years ago, the band was short a keyboard player and one of the bandmembers knew a guy in Lincoln from his hometown of

Imperial who could fill in. Brad Moline sat in with the band that night, and quickly connected with its members, Miller said. Moline, it turns out, is the founder and president of Allo Fiber Nebraska, and before long, Miller found himself joining the Allo team.

Part of his job as Allo general manager is connecting with the 35 Nebraska communities, like Seward, in which it now provides fiber-optic communication and internet services.

"One of the things we like to do is support things that pertain to music and the arts," Miller said.

He works with the company's sponsorship of the Live@ Telegraph Summer Concert Series near Allo's offices in the Telegraph District, which has featured local bands on Wednesday nights for the past six summers.

That made for instant interest when Allo was asked to help sponsor the Seward Arts Council's inaugural Fifth Street Concert Series in 2023, and The B Street Band was on stage to connect with the Seward audience.

Miller said Allo and the band are pleased to be coming back as a sponsor and performers in year two.

Allo is a bronze sponsor of the 2024 series, with Cattle Bank and Trust, Suhr & Lichty Insurance Agency, ASPYR Professional Group and Seward County Gives. Jones Bank and Jones Group Insurance/Financial Services are silver-level sponsors.

Miller said band members saw many familiar faces in the crowd last year and anticipate seeing friends, family and coworkers again this year.

Memorial Hospital addition to improve patient services

Information taken from archived files of the Blue Valley Blade and the Seward County Independent for the third week of July.

1924

The unveiling of the Soldier's Monument at the Seward County Courthouse will be July 23rd with appropriate ceremonies for such an occasion under the auspices of Seward Post No. 8, Grand Army of the Republic.

Four government men will be working in Seward County for the next two or three weeks. A large number of barberry bushes have already been removed from the county and the rust must be destroyed in order to get rid of the black stem rust.

1934

In talking with old residents who have lived here fifty years and more, they inform us that they have never known the hot weather to come so early and keep right at it every day without a letup. The reports coming to us Sunday were all the way from 105 to 119, and we know that it was hot.

Workmen are busy just across the street from the Blue Valley Blade office, digging, leveling and laying stone to build the beautiful Rose Bowl, Greek amphitheatre, band stand, or whatever you wish to call it. Anyway, it promises to be a beauty spot in Seward, and one that can be used in many ways for the entertainment of the people of the community.

A highlight of the upcoming Seward County Fair will be a regular old-fashioned balloon

ascension and parachute jump. Professor Murphy will shoot into the sky with his 72 feet high balloon and return to earth by leaping at a height of 5,000 feet with a parachute. Old timers say that it has been about 20 years since a balloon ascension has been held in Seward.

1944

Seward and community has been quite lucky in receiving rainfall all during the present season, with several nice rains during the month of July. However, last Friday night we received a little more than we really cared for when 5.80 of an inch fell in about three hours. A drive west of Seward disclosed the low lands all flooded on both sides of the road, all of the flood water coming down Lincoln creek and backing up the Blue above the park.

The appointment of R.A. Summers as its ambassador of good will for Seward and surrounding territory has just been announced by Ak-Sar-Ben.

1954

State officers of the Junior Chamber of Commerce will be special guests of the Seward Jaycees next Sunday. The occasion will be "Charter Night" for the new Seward organization, when the official charter will be presented at ceremonies in Hughes Brothers cabin near Seward.

Representatives of the Milford Grange brought the oxygen air pressure lock, bought by the Grange for service in Memorial Hospital, to the hospital Monday morning.



Plans have been made to hold a Seward county irrigation tour on Aug. 10. Visits will be made to farms where members of the tour will see how irrigating is being done.

Seward's national guard unit is busy preparing for annual field maneuvers starting August 1, as the men go to Camp Ripley, Minn., for two weeks of training.

1964

The 1964 Seward School District Census shows a slight gain over last year. The 1964 figures show 2,720 children up to and including age 20, 93 more than a year ago.

Residents of the Seward area will have an opportunity to visit the recently completed facilities of the Anna Sundermann Nursing Home at the north city limits of Seward on July 19.

1974

The 1974 Seward County Fair will feature an RCA approved championship rodeo this year, according to general superintendent Dick Stillahn. The rodeo will offer the biggest prize purse ever for the fair – \$1,000 – and will include six events.

Clifton Foster, new superintendent for the Seward School District, says he hopes to make the district a AA-accredited system before he is done here. In an interview with the Independent, Foster said there are now 34 AA-accredited school systems in the state, "and I'd like to make Seward be 35."

1984

A photo caption read: Sue Beach of Seward purchases vegetables from Jason Herrold, 11, at the Farmer's Market held on the north side of the square on Seward Street on July 14. About 10 farmers gathered for the early morning sale, which included a variety of vegetables, fresh eggs and other items for the general public's purchase.

"My philosophy is to develop not brick and mortar but services to the community," said Doug Ellis, who has been administrator at Memorial Hospital, Seward, since January. Ellis was explaining the addition which the hospital hopes to have ready for use by spring 1985. The addition, to be attached on the north side of the building, will house a new radiology room, a radiology office and an emergency room garage. It will cost \$473,000.

1994

Milford will once again host the annual Lovefest Christian music festival. According to John Nellesen, co-chairman of the Lovefest steering committee, a year of preparation will draw to a climax when 10 individual singers and groups gather for the concert on July 23 at Riverside Park.

Seward High School students, many of whom drive to school daily, will find some changes in their parking lot this fall. And the changes will be student-instigated.

2004

Seward-area residents raised \$21,000 for the American Cancer Society during a Relay for Life event on June 4.

Seward County students acquitted themselves well at the national SkillsUSA competition in Kansas City. Lindsay Wallman was the top finisher from Seward High, earning third place in medical assisting.

2014

Carnegie Hall in New York City is a mecca for musicians. Not everyone has a chance to perform there, however. Dr. Rodney and Mrs. Laura Jean Hiser of Seward, however, are now among those who have. The two members of Lincoln Choral Artists were part of the choir on May 24 that performed "To Be Certain of the Dawn" by Stephen Paulus.

The Village of Utica held public hearings July 7 to determine the community perspective on a proposed local option sales tax.

New Malcolm principal strives to expand others' impact

BY STEPHANIE CROSTON
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The principal's job at Malcolm Public School was a homecoming, of sorts, for Simon Weidel.

Weidel student taught at Malcolm with Becky Densberger while he was a student at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Now he's back in the district as the principal.

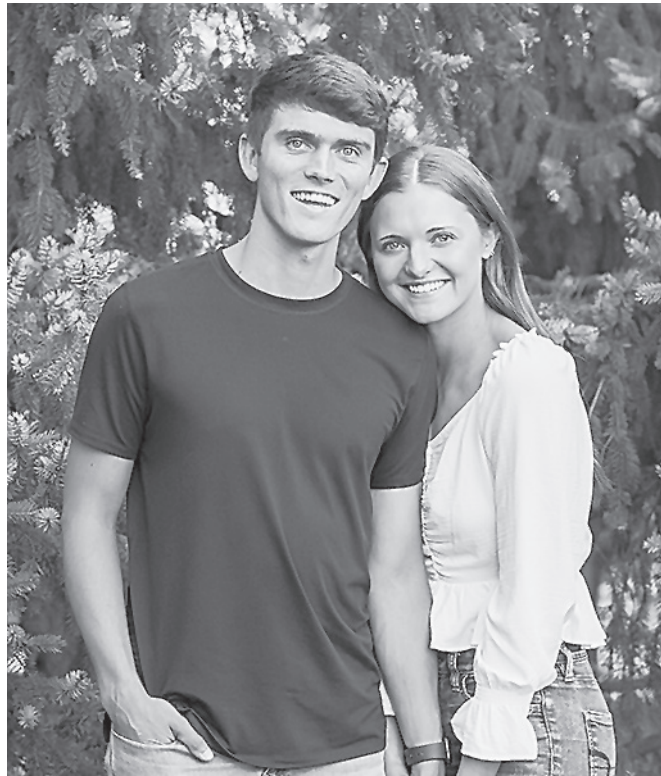
"I'm looking forward to it, to be part of the existing culture of excellence," he said.

The students he taught in Densberger's fifth-grade class are sophomores now, he said.

Weidel grew up in Hebron, the same hometown as his parents. Both were active in the community, and Weidel, who is the third for four kids, said that set a good example for him.

After deciding to leave the farm, his father became the principal at Thayer Central and his mother was the secretary.

"There was a lot of time



COURTESY PHOTO

Simon Weidel, pictured with his wife Abigail, is the new high school principal at Malcolm Public School.

spent at school," he said. "If we were not there, we were talking about it at home."

Watching how his

parents worked together – his dad had ideas and his mom put them together – inspired him. He didn't want to go into education

at first, however. With his interest in math and numbers, he decided to try engineering and architecture and design spaces. It wasn't quite right, though, so he changed to elementary education.

UNL provides a lot of practicum experience, and Weidel spent time in many different grades, he said. When he graduated, he was hired to teach fourth grade at Gretna. He ended up teaching third grade and loved it, he said.

"It was nice to find a home there," he said.

However, administration was always his goal. He earned his PK-6 administrative degree at UNL. He's finishing his 7-12 certification. Weidel said he is looking forward "to exploring the unknowns with middle school and high school."

Being a principal allows him to continue to teach.

"I can partner with teachers," he said, and that will allow both to expand their impact.

He wants to cultivate an

environment in which students can thrive. He wants teachers to push them and hold them accountable while providing structure.

Weidel ran short sprints (100 and 200) and long jumped for the track and field team at UNL. He coached track at Gretna, which gave him a different perspective.

He started officiating volleyball as a sophomore in high school but said he will not do as much of that now.

His wife Abigail is from Crete and works at Bryan Health in the cardiac intensive care unit. They have two golden doodles, Winston and Oliver, and are expecting their first child this fall.

This year will be a transition year for everyone – Weidel into an administrative role and the district adjusting to a new principal.

"I want to build on what's been done," Weidel said.

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PHOTOS BY ANDRES LOPEZ/SCI

Strike up the Municipal Band

ABOVE LEFT: Jessica Schreiner, director of the Seward Municipal Band, leads the group through a variety of instrumental pieces at a packed bandshell during Seward's Fourth of July celebration. ABOVE: The audience dances out the YMCA song with the Seward Municipal Band. ABOVE RIGHT: Jared Schreiner debuts his patriotic hat while playing his trumpet with the Seward Municipal Band.



STEPHANIE CROSTON/SCI

From left, Pedro DeLaPaz, plant manager, and Amy Patterson, president, of Petsource by Scouler and Major Gen. Craig Strong unveil the new exhibit at the Nebraska National Guard Museum recognizing the Nebraska soldiers who fought in the Civil War.

New exhibit at NNGM honors soldiers from Civil War era

BY STEPHANIE CROSTON
scroston@sewardindependent.com

It's been almost 160 years since the end of the Civil War, but the impact of that conflict is still felt today.

On July 4, the Nebraska National Guard Museum unveiled its newest exhibit honoring the Nebraska soldiers who fought in the Civil War.

Major Gen. Craig Strong of the Nebraska National Guard talked about the history and importance of the guard.

The history goes back to 1636 in Massachusetts Bay and the Minutemen, he said. At Lexington and Concord, the "shot heard round the world" was fired by one of the Minutemen, who were the forerunners of the guard.

In 1854, Nebraska was still a territory on the western frontier of America. In 1860, Col. John Thayer helped establish and solidify the Nebraska National Guard. The territory's population was less than 30,000, Strong said, but when the Civil War began, more than 3,200 men enlisted.

"Nebraska always punches above its weight class," Strong said.



STEPHANIE CROSTON/SCI

Major Gen. Craig Strong speaks at the dedication of the Nebraskans in the Civil War exhibit at the Nebraska National Guard Museum July 4.

Today, that percentage would be about 200,000 people in the state enlisting at one time. That equals the entire Army reserve, Strong said.

He served with the 67th Brigade, which trac-

es its service back to the Civil War. Each battle it was in adds a streamer to the brigade's colors. The brigade includes streamers for Fort Donelson, Shiloh and Missouri 1862 and 1863.

Donelson was the battle in which the Nebraska soldiers stopped the Confederate retreat and helped vault Ulysses S. Grant to national prominence.

When Strong stepped into the brigade's command and saw all the streamers, "that was powerful," he said.

Exhibits like the one at the museum will keep history from being forgotten — a history of strength and of honor, he said.

"This is our history as Nebraskans," he said.



JEFFREY CALHOUN/SCI

'Oh, say can you see'

Members of Scout Troop 256 salute the flag during their presentation of the colors as Brynlie Robbins sings the National Anthem during Seward's Fourth of July celebration.



PHOTO COURTESY MONICA (BARRY) BRENTANO

Capturing the spirit

A flag blowing in the wind taken July 3 frames the Seward County Courthouse prior to the city's annual Fourth of July celebration.



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