



2021 PEOPLE, PLACES & PROGRESS OF WASHINGTON COUNTY

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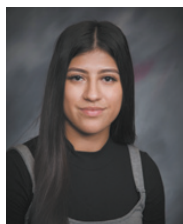
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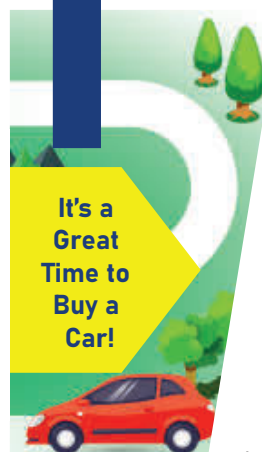
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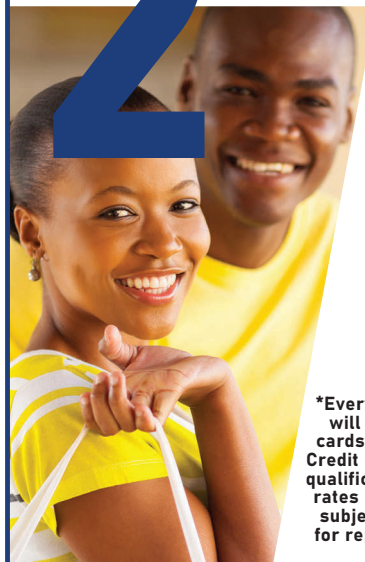
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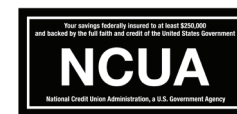
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LEEANNA ELLIS | MANAGING EDITOR



Leeanna Ellis is the managing editor at Enterprise Media Group. She has nearly 20 years of newspaper experience, including nine years in Blair and six years at the Fremont Tribune. She also served as a producer for an Iowa television for six years.

Ellis graduated from St. Ambrose University in Davenport, Iowa, with degrees in journalism, radio and television.

When not at work, Ellis and her husband, Brett, enjoy attending Creighton University basketball games, concerts, traveling to Las Vegas and spending time with their dog, Kelsey.

CHEYENNE ALEXIS | REPORTER



Cheyenne Alexis is a reporter for the Pilot-Tribune and Enterprise.

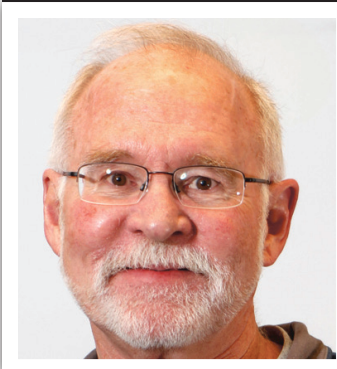
Alexis graduated from the University of South Dakota in Vermillion with a bachelor's in media and journalism and minor in English in 2018.

Prior to Enterprise Media Group, Alexis worked for Suburban Newspapers in Bellevue as a reporter for two years.

Alexis interned at the Reader in Omaha, and for USD's PR department.

Other than writing about the people in Washington County, Alexis enjoys crocheting, origami, staring at her lipstick collection and spending time with her cat, Kemi.

JOE BURNS | PHOTOGRAPHER



Joe Burns has worked as a freelance photographer and reporter at Enterprise Media Group for 16 years.

Burns has 44 years of teaching experience at Omaha Public Schools and Metropolitan Community College. He has a master's degree in English and education from the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Burns' passion is for making photos that tell the stories of the people of Washington County.

ELIZABETH A. ELLIOTT | ASSISTANT EDITOR

Elizabeth A. Elliott is the assistant editor of the Pilot-Tribune and Enterprise and editor of the Arlington Citizen. A graduate of Creighton University with a bachelor's in journalism and music, as well as an MFA in creative writing, Elliott joined the Enterprise in November 2019.

Prior to returning to Nebraska, she worked as a staff writer at the Arlington Catholic Herald in Virginia for three years.

While in Virginia, she took full advantage of the opportunities to travel as much as possible and could often be found driving to different states along the east coast.

Elliott looks forward to traveling more in the Midwest and getting to know parts of the state she hasn't yet explored.

Elliott is a musician who has played flute for more than 20 years. She also is a published poet.



GRANT EGGER | SPORTS EDITOR



Grant Egger is the sports editor at Enterprise Media Group, visiting gyms and athletic fields in Blair, Arlington and Fort Calhoun every week. He's a lifelong sports fan who grew up in Humphrey before attending the University of Nebraska at Omaha from 2008 to 2012.

Egger worked part time at the Omaha World-Herald before moving to Wyoming to work at the Gillette News Record, where he learned to become a storyteller of those on and off the court. He returned to his home state for a new challenge with Enterprise Media Group in 2016.



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A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

DEAR READERS,

Every issue of our annual People, Places and Progress of Washington County includes local stories. This year, as we continue to deal with the coronavirus pandemic, we focused on those who have been affected by it, including a first responder, healthcare worker, educator, essential worker and a survivor.

As it has been a favorite among readers, the 2021 edition will include historical features, including a look at three historical homes in the county, the story behind one of the oldest communities in the state and those who portray history at Fort Atkinson.

We profile former athletes who have found their calling as coaches.

Washington County residents with classic farm equipment will also be profiled.

We also name our 23rd Volunteer of the Year.

We hope you enjoy the 2021 People, Places and Progress of Washington County.

Leeanna Ellis

LEEANNA ELLIS
MANAGING EDITOR

FORT ATKINSON VOLUNTEERS FIND PASSION IN LIVING HISTORY

EVERY SUMMER, children and adults alike take a trip to Fort Calhoun and visit Fort Atkinson, the town's official historical marker.

The fort, which was built in 1819, was reconstructed so people can walk around and learn about its history and the more than 1,000 soldiers and family members who lived there for a short period of time.

While visitors can stop by the fort at any time to walk amongst the log buildings, the summers provide a little something extra, with volunteers dressing in historical gear and clothing to talk about what life was like at the fort.

Living History Days, held the first weekend of the month from May until October, shape the fort and provide people a sneak peak at what life at the first army base in Nebraska was like.

Andrew Gaghagen is
in the rifle regiment
at Fort Atkinson.

ANDREW GAGHAGEN FIRST RIFLE REGIMENT



Andrew Gagghagen is a private in the First Rifle Regiment. In his fourth year of volunteering, Gagghagen said military history has always fascinated him.

"I read all these soldier accounts, and to actually put on the uniform and do what they did adds more to it," he said. "As we do this, more and more makes sense about the things I'm reading and why they did what they did. I keep learning and keep bettering our impression of soldiers."

Gagghagen does not play a particular character, and simply tells stories and gives facts to visitors who stop by to chat with him.

"I stay away from names and dates because I don't want to bore people with that kind of stuff," he said. "What I focus on is kind of the down and dirty of soldier life — mundane things soldiers did every day to be presentable on parade or drill out in the field, handling muskets —that's what I focus on."

One memorable moment at Fort Atkinson has been a 10-mile march that would have replicated what soldiers in the 17th century would have gone on.

"For me, doing that really brought a lot of

"I WANT VISITORS TO WALK AWAY FROM HERE WITH MORE OF AN INTEREST ON NEBRASKA HISTORY BECAUSE OUT HISTORY IN NEBRASKA — WE DON'T HAVE A LOT BEYOND NATIVE AMERICAN HISTORY. I JUST WISH PEOPLE WERE MORE INTERESTED IN THEIR OWN LOCAL HISTORY — THE FORT. THIS WAS 200 YEARS AGO AND IT WAS MANY FIRSTS WEST OF THE MISSISSIPPI. I HOPE IT SPARKS AN INTEREST IN PEOPLE."

— Andrew Gagghagen

things together, like how the gear was worn," he said. "Doing that actual 10-mile march knowing what they went through, the shoes are really uncomfortable, and seeing that and how miserable soldier life would have been back then, that was very interesting."

Gagghagen said he enjoys interacting with younger audiences.

"I like when a kid will come up to me and ask questions and they show that genuine interest of what's going on," he said. "I just hope they'll remember that as they get older and maybe that will spark some interest later on down the road and keep this going."

Despite being in the heart of Fort Calhoun, Gagghagen said many people don't know about Fort Atkinson and he would like to see that change.

"I want visitors to walk away from here with more of an interest on Nebraska history because out history in Nebraska — we don't have a lot beyond Native American history," he said. "I just wish people were more interested in their own local history — the fort. This was 200 years ago and it was many firsts west of the Mississippi. I hope it sparks an interest in people."



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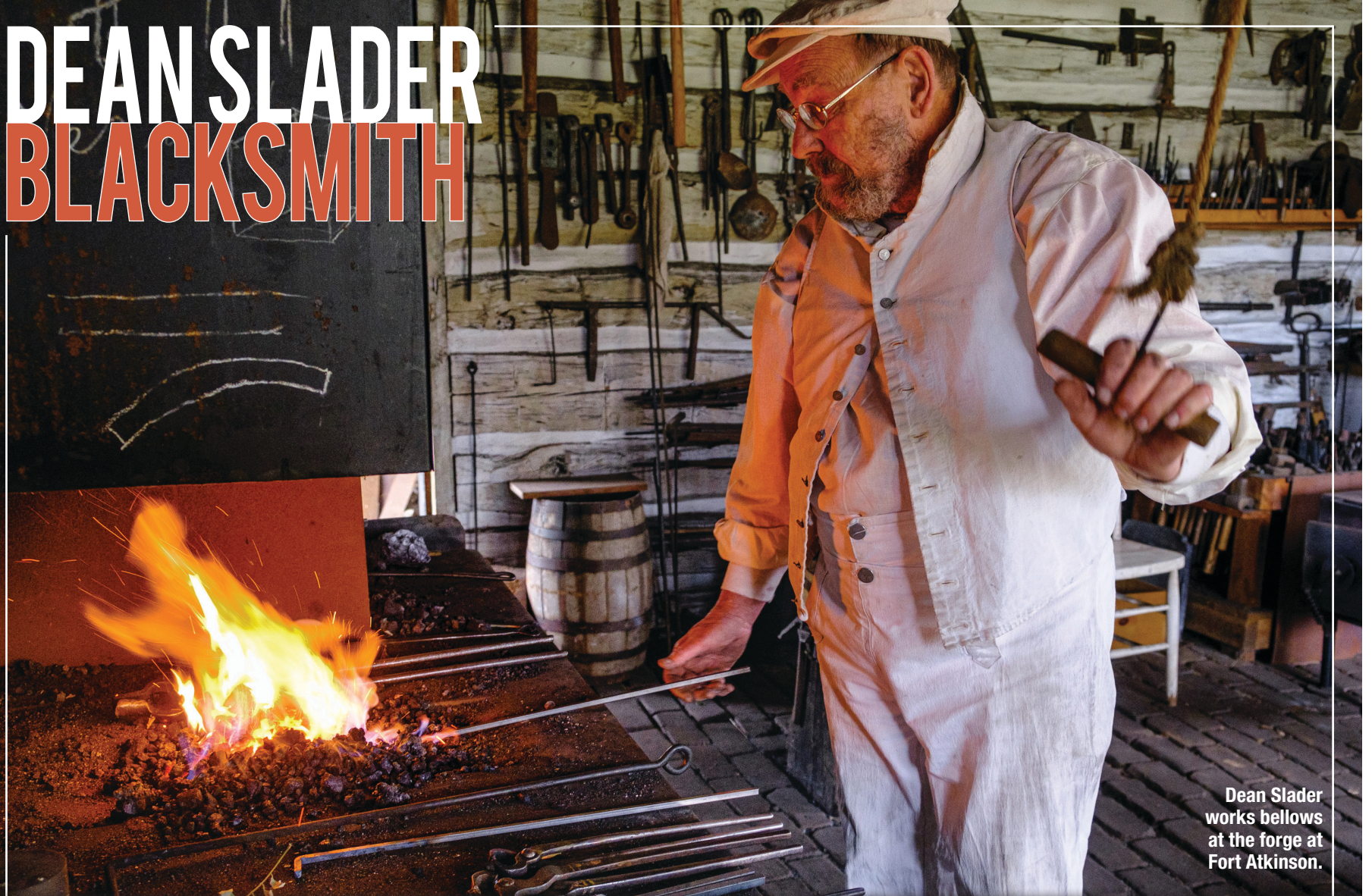
- New Social Studies Curriculum has been implemented
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- The elementary is utilizing a weekly online newsletter called S'more

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DEAN SLADER BLACKSMITH



Dean Slader works bellows at the forge at Fort Atkinson.

Dean Slader, who portrays Elijah Evans, a blacksmith, started at the fort around 1976, and was part of the Fort Atkinson muzzleloaders, the bicentennial wagon train that came through the fort.

Though there was not a formal Living History back when Slader started, he did some reenacting before he and two others began the Living History Organization, or Friends of Fort Atkinson.

Slader has found many artifacts from the fort — including chinkers from the original fort, a fork, a candleholder, lead pewter, butter knife, brass and musket pieces, among many others.

"That's what's exciting," he said. "You start learning about the items. You find parts and pieces that were around here at the armor shop. Surface stuff comes up a lot. That's the joy of it — what else can you find and can you identify what it was."

Slader begins his Living History days by starting his fire, which he "cheats" by using a match and cedar wood chips.

"I could start it with flint and steel and all that stuff, but after you get breakfast in the morning, you got to get up and rolling," he said.

Slader's love of Living History has kept him going after more than 40 years.

"I grew up with an involvement at Fort Atkinson," he said. "My mother, Genevieve, was one of the people who founded the Fort Atkinson Foundation in the original group to come up with a purchase price for the land. I have a natural affinity. I also taught social studies for 35 years."

Slader said Fort Atkinson was like finding a second family.

"You become so steeped with the history of Fort Atkinson that it's something in your pores," he said.

The fort, Slader said, is more than just reenacting.

"Reenacting is what they do at Gettysburg — it's an event, two or three days," he said. "The difference is we're doing living history. This is every day life out here at Fort Atkinson."

Making history fun is important to Slader.

"I try to tell more than just the basic story," he said. "Doing living history here, you are living in the same weather conditions and climate conditions they were in. You vary what you're working on so you can survive."

Much like blacksmithing, Slader has found a passion for Living History.

"We're sharing what life was like for people at the time," he said. "You're learning, discussing stuff that deals with the fort. We encourage other people to come out and share with us, stay, find out, learn and absorb. That is a pretty healthy commitment for people to get into it."



ELLA VANCE LAUNDRESS

Ella Vance is laundress at Fort Atkinson.

"I GREW UP LOVING THE 1800S. I LOVE TEACHING PEOPLE THAT THIS WAS SOMETHING REAL AND IT WAS SUCH A DIFFERENT TIME. THE KIDS ARE VERY GOOD ABOUT TEACHING OTHER KIDS, TOO. TEACHING THEM THAT THE LAUNDRY HAD TO BE DONE BY HAND AND WOULD TAKE ALMOST A WEEK IN THE 17TH CENTURY." — **Ella Vance**

Ella Vance is a laundress at the fort, and has volunteered for three summers. Her character is married to a sergeant. "I would have done laundry for 17 men and made about 50 cents per man per month," she said. "So, about \$8.50, which was actually pretty good." Vance said her character was "not a very upstanding lady," and was encouraged to marry a sergeant because "it would calm her down a little bit." Getting into character is something many volunteers do differently. Some volunteers pick a real life character to interpret, or some play a generic one. "Some of us have actual names for characters, some do not and some just play themselves in that era," Vance said.

Along with doing laundry, Vance also brings her daughter along to experience the weekend. For preparing to get into character, Vance arrives at the fort and changes into her costume for the weekend. Originally, Vance did not have any desire to start reenacting at the fort. "My 8-year-old daughter visited with us as a family, and she really wanted to do this," she said. "I kind of pushed it off for almost a year and in March she said, 'Aren't we going to go do that?'" Vance said she was given costumes to wear until she could get her own, and stayed because her daughter pushed her to participate. "There's a few of us like that — the kids wanted to do it and if they're 16 they have to have a parent," she said.

A love for history ultimately kept Vance at the fort. "I grew up loving the 1800s," she said. "I love teaching people that this was something real and it was such a different time. The kids are very good about teaching other kids, too. Teaching them that the laundry had to be done by hand and would take almost a week in the 17th century."

Getting to know visitors is another plus of Living History Days. "They're interested and they want to know all the little details. It's fun," Vance said. Vance said she's found a second family at the fort. "When you're out here and you don't have your phone and you don't have electricity — the girls will usually have a slumber party if we end up staying the night and they'll read stories by candlelight, run around and have a blast," she said. "If they were at the house it would be a totally different thing."



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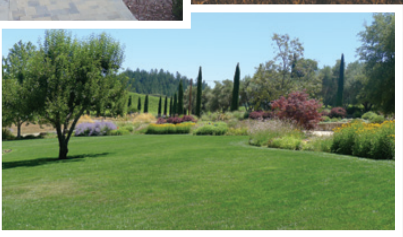
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Kris Ericson is an officer in the Sixth Infantry, who recently moved from sergeant to lieutenant.

Ericson started volunteering around 30 years ago, when he was a teenager and his mother would volunteer.

"My mom started doing things up here in the spinners and weavers area, and I was a young teenager and I started seeing guys running around shooting guns and playing soldier and what young boy doesn't want to come play soldier?" he said. "It hooked me and I started learning the history and what people did out here, how they survived and it intrigued me."

Because he enjoys speaking about the history side of the fort, Ericson said he plays a general character.

"I do that because it gives me a wider breadth of things to talk about — I can talk about all lieutenants in the organization of the Sixth Infantry and what they would do depending on what role they were in," he said.

Ericson has many different talking points depending on his audience.

"Here at the fort, I work out of a room (lieutenant's quarters)," he said. "One of the talking points is what do I live in, how do I live, where do I work, what do I do in that job. A lot of the talking points is the general history of the fort."

Many people, Ericson said, are intrigued with the vast history of Fort Atkinson.

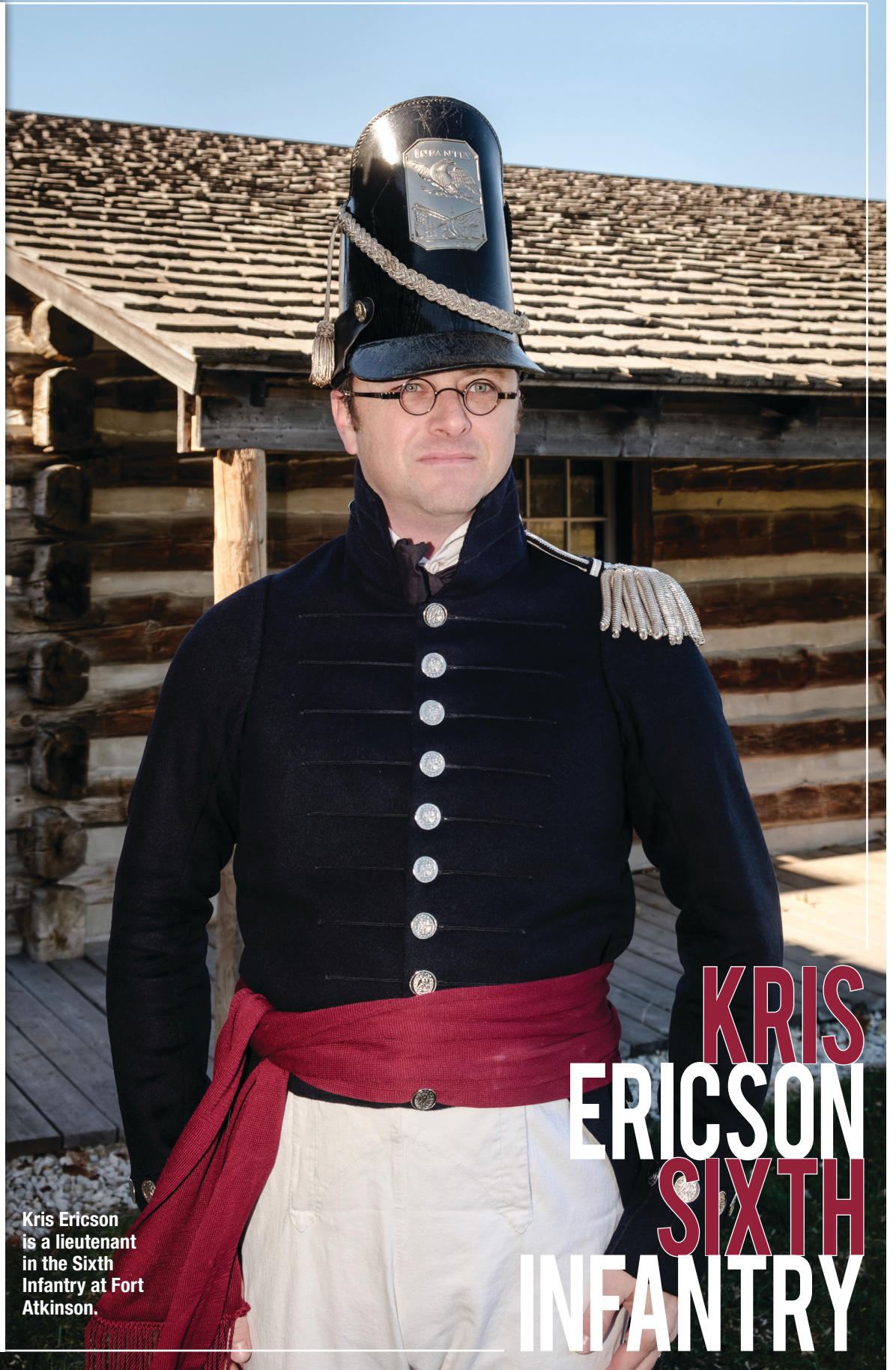
"People don't realize — they see the modern army and they see massive military bases and they know there's thousands of people working in that base. That's not how this period worked," he said. "There were much smaller forts — we were 80 to 120 guys at a fort. We had 800 here. That is massive compared to everywhere else in the U.S."

Ericson has a plethora of talking points to gauge people's interests.

"You can kind of tell in some people they don't care about a topic," he said. "There's some people, they'll hook one or two people and they'll stand there all day. I've been here long enough and heard enough stories, listened to enough of the other guys, that yeah I could stand here all day and talk about different things and feed one thing into another."


Ericson said he enjoys Living History because of the knowledge he and others gain from it.

"Living History weekends are the most exciting for the public because you have that one-on-one and group interactions with people who know the history of the fort," he said. "Every day, we're adding to that knowledge base and how we're giving information to the public."



Kris Ericson is a lieutenant in the Sixth Infantry at Fort Atkinson.

**KRIS
ERICSON
SIXTH
INFANTRY**


 A photograph of Morgan Cummings, a woman with a warm smile, standing in a rustic wooden building. She is wearing a dark blue velvet dress with white lace trim at the collar and cuffs, and a light-colored straw bonnet with a red flower. Her hands are clasped in front of her. The background shows shelves with various historical items and a wooden ladder leaning against them.

MORGAN CUMMINGS SUTLER STORE

Morgan Cummings runs the Sutler Store at Fort Atkinson.

Morgan Cummings has helped run the counter at the Sutler Store since 2007. Cummings has a history with historical reenacting.

"My sister actually introduced me to the fort itself, because I didn't realize it was up here," she said. "I moved from the eastern side of Iowa and she and I had both done reenacting before. I was basically born into it, road around in my mother's cradle board.

Cummings was looking to involve herself in reenacting, and that's where the fort came into play.

Getting into character isn't something Cummings is able to really focus on while running the store.

"The minute the store opens, we have guests coming in, purchasing candy, toys and goods," she said. "We really don't get a lot of time to do

character roleplaying. We do a lot of information-giving regarding the Sutler Store itself, the people who were here with the store, just the history of that aspect of the fort."

Cummings said the greatest aspect is the guests.

"It's really great getting to see people come back year after year," she said. "It's usually a lot of families and some of the older visitors as well. Seeing them come back every year, I can tell you exactly what type of candies, what things they'll order and ask for. Just seeing them come back year after year, I really enjoy that."

Children coming up and asking her questions is also a plus.

"I don't always get to see that," she said. "Sometimes it's really nice when kids get really interactive and families make it a tradition to come back and see what we've done and what's

new, what's the same."

Cummings enjoys running the store, where she purchases the items herself.

Some items families can purchase include Fort Atkinson hooks; lanterns, cups and tinware from the tinsmith; bucket-makers; honey from hives, hand-dipped beeswax candles and historical pottery.

"I really love researching items we sell because we've really tried to make it as historically accurate as possible within the time-frame," she said. "It's items that are made by the craftsmen here at the fort, items made locally or regionally, it's period-correct toys and books on the period and we have replica books that go into cooking, baking, pottery. I love researching the products, I love getting them into the store and I love when people enjoy them."

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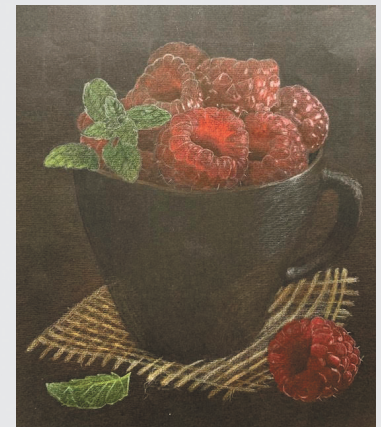
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THOSE AFFECTED TELL THEIR STORIES

THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC has touched every aspect of our lives — some more than others.

There are those who have contracted the illness, surviving due to the care of those frontline healthcare workers.

There are those first responders who have supported agencies who have had to face the surge of COVID-19 deaths in some of the most populated areas.

And there are those whose everyday life changed due to the pandemic, including essential workers and educators.

These are their stories.



RESPONDING IN THE FACE OF A PANDEMIC

As a member of the Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Team (DMORT), Kevin Willis has been deployed to Joplin, Mo., following the devastating tornado in 2011 and Puerto Rico after the island was ravaged by Hurricane Maria in 2017.

Those deployments saw Willis and his team identifying human remains following natural disasters.

In 2020, the team was deployed to support the nation's response as the coronavirus pandemic spread to the U.S.

"It's totally different from our normal," he said. "This changed

Sheriff's deputy deployed 4 times to help in national response

our mission."

In February 2020, Willis was deployed for two weeks to Travis Air Force Base in Sacramento, Calif., to help screen American citizens returning from Wuhan, China, where the COVID-19 virus was first identified.

It was the first of four deployments Willis, who also serves as chief deputy for the Washington County Sheriff's Office, would face amid the pandemic.

DMORT, which is one of four specialty teams that are a part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services National Disaster Medical System, worked with the Disaster Medical Assistance Team (DMAT).

"This is the first time we really started working closely with DMAT members," Willis said. "Our job there was to screen people coming off that plane to see if potentially they were carrying or had been infected with

COVID-19."

The people returning from Wuhan were quarantined in a hotel on the base. The hotel was surrounded by a barricade and guarded by the U.S. Marshals.

"It was very scary for them. Here they are coming in and they can't go home," Willis said. "They have to stay confined to the base. All they have is what they have with them. We were doing everything we could to meet their needs."

Willis said they also helped the families pass the time.

"We would start playing games with the kids. We organized that sort

Above, Kevin Willis, a member of the Region VII Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Team, stands on a pier in Brooklyn with Manhattan behind him. Willis was deployed four times to help with the coronavirus pandemic.

COURTESY

of thing once a day,” Willis said. “Some of them would go out on the sidewalks and take chalk and draw different things. They were some very good artists.”

To provide some levity, Willis kept a stuffed dog in his shirt to entertain the children. One 10-year-old girl named the dog Max. An interpreter wrote the name in Mandarin on a name tag.

“I had this one adult who said, ‘I know you’re wearing this for the kids, but every time I see your dog, it just puts a smile on my face,’” he said.

“Thank you,” he told them. “I really needed to hear that.”

In March, Willis was again deployed to Travis Air Force Base — this time to screen travelers from the Princess Cruise Lines.

“This was on a much larger scale. There were more people,” Willis said.

People who showed signs or symptoms were immediately identified and got medical attention.

“Many of the people were very thankful. They were so appreciative. They knew, even though

“Many of the people were very thankful. They were so appreciative. They knew, even though they were quarantined and had to stay there, they were very appreciative of what we were doing and thanked us a lot.”

they were quarantined and had to stay there, they were very appreciative of what we were doing and thanked us a lot,” he said.

From March to April, Willis was deployed in place to provide virtual planning and response assistance to regional emergency coordinators. He serves Region VII, which includes Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas and Missouri.

“My role was to work with state and local governments to assess current and future fatality management needs and help close gaps the states may have for forensic and mortuary services,” he said.

Willis’ final deployment was to New York City in May. There, as acting deputy commander, Willis

worked on a Brooklyn pier that housed three refrigerated warehouses in a secure area where human remains were kept and processed.

“Funeral homes would come and pick bodies up as they could,” said Willis, who specializes in forensics and death investigations. “It was a 24/7 operation.”

DMORT members were assigned hospitals each day to transport those who had died to the warehouses.

Dealing with such tragedy and sadness can take its toll, but Willis said team members have to learn to compartmentalize it.

“You put it in its place and wait to deal with what you have to deal with until you get home,” he said. “You just take time and process it all.”

Willis’ team was the second to last to close out the mission in New York. He recognizes the importance of the work his team has done.

“It’s sad to see what happened, but it’s rewarding to serve and help people get back home,” he said. “That’s what it’s all about.”

-KEVIN WILLIS



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NEW NURSE TAKES ON COVID-19 PATIENTS

Toebben graduated from nursing school during the pandemic

When Tiffani Toebben graduated as a nurse in March, she thought she was going to work on a different set of patients. Instead, she went straight into the hardest medical situation to face the world in a century.

Toebben, an Arlington graduate, has firsthand experience working with COVID-19 patients as a nurse on the COVID-19 floor at Methodist Hospital in Omaha. She took the accelerated program from January 2019 to March 2020 and took a position at the hospital at the end of April.

"We were hired before we passed our boards because the hospital was scared about the surge," she said. "We were trained three or four weeks before the boards."

Toebben works the night shift on a closed unit. She dons her personal protective gear outside the unit and wears it during her entire shift.

Toebben was taught how to take

care of the regular patients that she would normally have, but had to switch to COVID-19 patients after orientation.

"COVID-19 has become a specialty now, so it's kind of on the job training," she said. "But the staff has been super helpful and supportive. Being a new nurse is kind of scary."

Toebben said she's been able to visit her family and they are smart about visiting.

She said the job is stressful.

"Some nights are good with good patient outcomes and happiness," Toebben said. "Other nights you have difficult conversations and it makes it really difficult."

Toebben said she knows everyone handles the stress differently. She said she finds support from her family, fiancé and the staff.

"It's been really hard on everyone," she said.

Depending on patient acuity, Toebben works with two to four patients a day.



COURTESY

At right, Tiffani Toebben, an Arlington graduate and nurse at Methodist Hospital, is dressed from head to toe in protective gear for her work on the COVID-19 unit.



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Connie Vitek

Connie has owned the APT Store for 38 years and has 47 years of experience in the business. The APT Store was named so, because the previous owner's children's names are Amy, Pat and Todd. The initials spell the word APT. The APT Store sells and services new and used sewing machines and vacuums. In stock are accessories, notions and sewing furniture. Sewing lessons are offered. Scissors are sharpened here, also.

Connie enjoys serving her customers. She is a member of St. Timothy's Church, has 8 grandchildren and enjoys camping, traveling and gardening.

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"There are lots of high highs and lows. It's a whirlwind of emotions," she said.

Despite the challenges, she said she enjoys being a nurse and likes the interaction with the patients and hands-on work.

"I am praying the vaccine helps and we take steps forward this year and keep progressing," she said.

Toebben has had first-hand experience with COVID-19 as she was diagnosed with it before Thanksgiving. She said in a way it's given her new perspective.

"My symptoms were never bad enough to require hospitalization, but I know what the dry cough, fatigue, body aches, headache and congestion are like," she said. "I think it has given me more patience and understanding with my patients. I also think that the patients find a sort of comfort in finding common ground with their nurses. I feel truly honored and so blessed that these patients are letting me care for them and that these families are trusting me with their loved ones."

Toebben said everyone on her hospital floor talks about what nursing used to be like.

"I am a new nurse and have no idea what it used to be like," she said. "I am used to wearing a mask every day and working on a covert floor is the new nursing world."

"I am a new nurse and have no idea what it used to be like. I am used to wearing a mask every day and working on a covert floor is the new nursing world."

-TIFFANI TOEBBEN

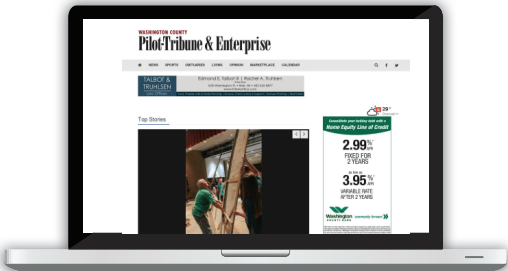
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'YOU'RE NOT PROMISED TOMORROW'

Arlington woman tells her story of survival

Donnette Bastian and her family had done everything to protect themselves from COVID-19 — wearing masks, using hand sanitizer, even changing clothes and showering after work.

But in early October, the Arlington woman's youngest daughter, Maddie, a physical therapy student, tested positive. The family had been together just a few days before.

"We all quarantined and none of us got it," Donnette said.

On Nov. 5, Donnette awoke and didn't feel well. She stayed home from work and got a rapid test at Maddie's suggestion. The test came back negative.

The next day, Donnette was tested through Test Nebraska. Before her positive result came back, the 58-year-old's symptoms worsened.

"My body ached, I had a fever. I just didn't feel good," she said. "All I did was rest."

Donnette continued to feel worse and contacted her doctor, who sent her to the respiratory clinic. It was determined she had developed pneumonia along with COVID-19.

Donnette isolated from her family, but her 87-year-old father, who lives with her, became ill a week after his daughter. Maddie and her sister, Charlsie, who returned from

LEEANNA ELLIS | ENTERPRISE PUBLISHING

Donnette Bastian of Arlington with her dog, Bo. Bastian was diagnosed with COVID-19 in November and spent six days in the hospital, including intensive care. She was able to return home, but still required oxygen.

Chicago to help care for her grandfather, took him to the hospital, assuming he had an infection of some sort.

It turns out he had COVID-19. He was kept in the hospital.

The next day, Donnette worsened.

"I was afraid to move. I hurt so bad," she said. "If I moved, I'd cough. I couldn't breathe."

Maddie called a friend, who is a nurse at an Omaha hospital. She advised to get Donnette to the hospital.

Unable to walk down the stairs from her bedroom, her daughters called the rescue squad and she was taken to Methodist Fremont Health. She was immediately placed on oxygen.

"I've never been so sick in my whole life," Donnette said.

The next day, Donnette received her first dose of remdesivir and an infusion of donor plasma.

"By Monday morning, I assume

things were worse because they moved me to intensive care," she said.

The Arlington woman said she doesn't remember much about her stay in the ICU. What she does remember frightened her.

"I remember being scared," she said. "I remember thinking we don't have wills, I don't have power of attorney set up, (my husband) Chip doesn't do the bills, he has no idea where our life insurance policies are."

When she was initially admitted to the hospital, Donnette was allowed to get up to use the restroom on her own. But that caused her oxygen level to drop significantly. A portable commode was set up next to the bed, but even then doctors didn't want her getting up. Instead, they wanted to Donnette to have a catheter.

She refused.

"I'd rather try to do this on my own," Donnette said.

The nurses gave her the harsh reality.

"We want to catheterize you to get you ready to go on a ventilator," they said.

"I just said no," she said.

As she realized what they were telling her, Donnette thought of her family.

"All I could think was I need to call Chip, I need to call the girls, I need to tell them stuff that they need to know and kind of say good-bye," she said. "I knew it couldn't be good if they put you on the ventilator."

Donnette said she hardly slept while in the hospital.

"I was afraid to sleep because I was afraid I might not wake up again," she said.

Nights were also difficult as she heard what was going on throughout the hospital floor.

"They'd keep the door shut, but you could hear alarms going off, so you were wondering what was happening around you," Donnette said.

After four treatments of remdesivir, additional plasma and six days in the hospital, Donnette was sent home. However, she still required oxygen.

Her father spent a few days in the hospital before being transferred to Nye Legacy. After two weeks, he improved. He was discharged in mid-January.

Donnette's husband, Chip, also tested positive for COVID-19, though his symptoms were mild.

Prior to contracting the virus, Donnette was healthy, only having issues with high blood pressure and being overweight.

Donnette noted how important it is to value every day.

"You're not promised tomorrow. You're really not," she said. "Take care of yourself. Be nice to you. Put yourself first sometimes. Don't worry about what everyone else needs."



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Store manager surprised at grocery stores being **CONSIDERED ESSENTIAL**



ELIZABETH A. ELLIOTT | ENTERPRISE PUBLISHING
Bob Trant, store manager at Family Fare, stands in one of the aisles that saw much traffic during the coronavirus pandemic — the toilet paper aisle.

The grocery store is an essential place, though Family Fare store manager Bob Trant said that came as a surprise during the coronavirus pandemic.

“I don’t think anyone in the grocery business thought of themselves as essential,” he said. “It is good work and work that needs to be done, but I had never thought of it as essential to the public until something like this happened.”

Yet, the doors remained open to customers and some weeks their business went up 50 percent from the year before.

“We did our best to get everything,” he said. “We feel like we need to be here. Normally, I don’t know if you think of grocery places being an essential place. It turned into that and we’re happy to be here to serve the community.”

He saw purchasing increase when restaurants closed.

“A lot of people were scared as you could see by the buying,” Trant said.

The grocery store, like many others, struggled to keep different staples such as toilet paper on store shelves.

“There wasn’t enough truckers



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“We feel like we need to be here. Normally, I don’t know if you think of grocery places being an essential place. It turned into that and we’re happy to be here to serve the community.”

-BOB TRANT

and the supply chain got disrupted,” he said. “Big manufacturers adopted a just-in-time inventory. There are still a few categories that are behind but for the most part we are not in danger of not getting paper towels or toilet paper.”

He said the hardest part was waiting for the trucks that could show up to 14 hours late.

Trant said employees had mixed reactions. “Some employees were a little cautious and afraid, while others didn’t think enough of it,” he said. “Others were in the middle, and some during that time were afraid to go to work but glad to have a job. I think everyone is happy to be working.”

Trant said the grocery store hired more people during the time, with the company allowing them

to speed up the process and hire immediately on the condition of background checks and I-9 forms.

“We were lucky enough to get people that were let go of somewhere else,” he said. “We did our best when trucks would come at other times than normal to have people stock the shelves.”

Trant said they do a lot of stocking overnight but some of it came during the day during the pandemic.

“Toilet paper was loaded onto pallets and sometimes disappeared before it hit the shelves,” he said.

The store does its best to keep things safe for shoppers.

“We added on cleaners to take care of the touch points of store — including door handles and carts

etc. — and a professional company comes in once a week spraying everything,” Trant said. “There’s plexiglass wherever there are registers and we provide gloves and masks for the associates.”

Trant said they set 7-9 a.m. for older customers and those with preexisting conditions, ramped up the Fast Lane pickup service where customers don’t have to sign for the bags anymore. They stopped having popcorn and self service things.

“I don’t know if it will ever come back but it is gone for now,” Trant said.

The steps taken have kept employees in their positions.

“We are below the national average on having employees out sick,” he said.

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CHEYENNE ALEXIS |
ENTERPRISE PUBLISHING
**Lindsay Benoit, a third
grade teacher at Fort
Calhoun Elementary, ends
her school days with
different mindfulness
exercises for her students
to remain positive amid
the COVID-19 pandemic.**

EDUCATOR EXERCISES MINDFULNESS, POSITIVITY AT SCHOOL

At the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, when schools were closed indefinitely until the next semester, educators were left wondering how to create the most normal space for students as possible.

Lindsay Benoit, a third grade teacher and instructional leader at Fort Calhoun Elementary, feared students would be set back academically and not adjust to health protocols, but quickly learned to tackle those challenges.

"We see a learning gap when they're gone for two-and-a-half months, well, now it's been three more months," she said. "I think we

tackled it just like we do anything. We knew we were going to meet the kids where they were, and we had to move forward.

In 20 years as a teacher, Benoit said she and her fellow educators at Fort Calhoun Elementary had to think of a plan when school shut down in March of last year.

"We had an inservice that Friday before, and there was maybe a little conversation about things possibly coming down the pike and then we got that call," she said. "I think, initially, it was sad. Just because you build these relationships and bonds with the kids, and you expect that closure at the end."

Though there were hopes of returning to school before the year was up, that never came.

"You just immediately go into that panic of, 'What am I going to do?'" she said. "Everything we do around here, we do as a team."

That team-oriented atmosphere helped the students and teachers respond to the last few months of school at home, with packets being sent home for students to work on with their families.

Many Zoom calls occurred to maintain that semi-close contact with students, albeit from far away.

"It was a challenge," Benoit said. "The kids did not have their own

devices at the time, so a lot of our activities we sent home were project-based. If they had devices at home, we have an online platform we use, Seesaw, that they were very familiar with that, so they were able to send videos or pictures of their work to communicate that way with us."

Fort Calhoun returned to school in August, and students and staff were required to use masks while social distancing to avoid exposure.

A few students at the beginning of the semester also opted for E-learning, though that is not offered at the district any longer.

"We had a plan in place for those learners. I think it says a lot for our

administration as far as they left that option of being able to learn from home open if people didn't feel safe sending their kids," she said. "They got the curriculum and videos and we sent those throughout the week and did activities that way. We would Zoom with them whenever they needed it, at least once a week."

One other piece Benoit and the rest of the team had to account for was quarantined students, who had to stay home after possible exposures to the virus.

"That threw somewhat of a challenge," she said. "I think probably the biggest thing that we kept reminding ourselves was we have to stay as positive as we can. They had the work and we would communicate with them what they needed until they came back."

With the school year in full swing,

"Finding the positives and not dwelling on negatives, we've focused a lot on that. With a positive attitude, we can get through whatever we need to get through."

one piece Benoit put an emphasis on in her curriculum was teaching her students mindfulness.

"Finding the positives and not dwelling on negatives, we've focused a lot on that," she said. "With a positive attitude, we can get through

whatever we need to get through."

Benoit's students watch videos, write positive messages and end their days writing about what they're thankful for.

As the school district has been open since the beginning of the

school year, Benoit said some days are hard, but it's been a learning experience for all.

"Not being able to be close to each other and not being able to hug them, the setup of the classroom has changed, that has been hard," she said. "I have learned that you can prepare and prepare for something, but until you're in the situation, you go with the flow. The anticipation of things is almost more painful than actually doing something."

The adjustments, such as wearing masks, have been relatively easy for the students, Benoit said.

"Man, if this does not show how resilient kids are, I don't know what does," she said. "They just really from the beginning bounced back. We're here, we're going to do what we can and move on."

-LINDSAY BENOIT

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GRANT EGGER |
ENTERPRISE PUBLISHING
**James Bilsend is the
current Blair Senior
Legion baseball coach
and primary caretaker
of the town's historic
ballfield, Vets Field.**



A brief history of 70-plus years at Vets Field

ENTERPRISE FILE

Vets Field hosted an American Legion Junior Regional baseball tournament in 2008 with teams from seven states taking part. The Blair Dawgs and a Kearney team represented Nebraska.

Baseball has long been played where Butler Street meets U.S. Highway 75. “They did move the outfield fence in,” American Legion coach James Bilslend said. “Left field, at one point in time, was 357 feet. Moved in 21 feet.”

The Blair man had just been on his hands and knees, working on the infield grass next to the basepath between second and third. Looking out over the hometown ballpark, Vets Field, he continued.

“The field was a lot bigger than what it is now,” the coach noted. “Fence used to be 8-feet tall and now we’re down to 6.”

Bilslend started with Post 154 Legion baseball in 2006 as a volunteer assistant. In 2016, he took over as head coach and decided it was time that Vets Field would be maintained how he saw fit.

The Bears' coach takes great pride in the diamond that's been the home of Blair baseball for decades. He strives to keep it in as pristine of condition as possible for his players.

“If you give them something nice to play on, something they can be proud of, in my opinion, it just enhances the way the kids play,” Bilslend said. “(It enhances) how they conduct themselves, take care of their business.”

Vets Field may be next to a busy highway, but it is very much apart of its neighborhood. Folks can watch games from their back patios and one of Bilslend's former players lived right next to it.

“It's a community thing,” the coach said.

It's not uncommon to have folks driving by honk their support. On game days, many of those same people sit under the many shade trees and watch.

“It's just a picturesque ballpark,” Bilslend said. “A lot of good players came through here.”

TO HONOR WWII VETERANS

Vets Memorial Athletic Field history starts in March 1945.

The Blair American Legion Post assumed responsibility of a fund

collection to construct a memorial honoring the veterans of the ongoing World War II. Like many Legion Posts around the country, the fund's sum would go toward a useful memorial to serve “a community purpose for years to come so that each time it is used our citizens will think of the men now so gallantly fighting all over the world to preserve our liberty and our lives.”

Through cash and war bonds, officials hoped for \$100,000 going toward

one of four potential projects — an athletic field and stadium among them.

Two months later, the Legion Post announced its decision to go forward with a sports facility. Plans were exorbitant. They called for a concrete stadium, tennis and horseshoe courts, built-in loudspeakers, flood lighting, dressing rooms and the ability to hold sporting and community events.

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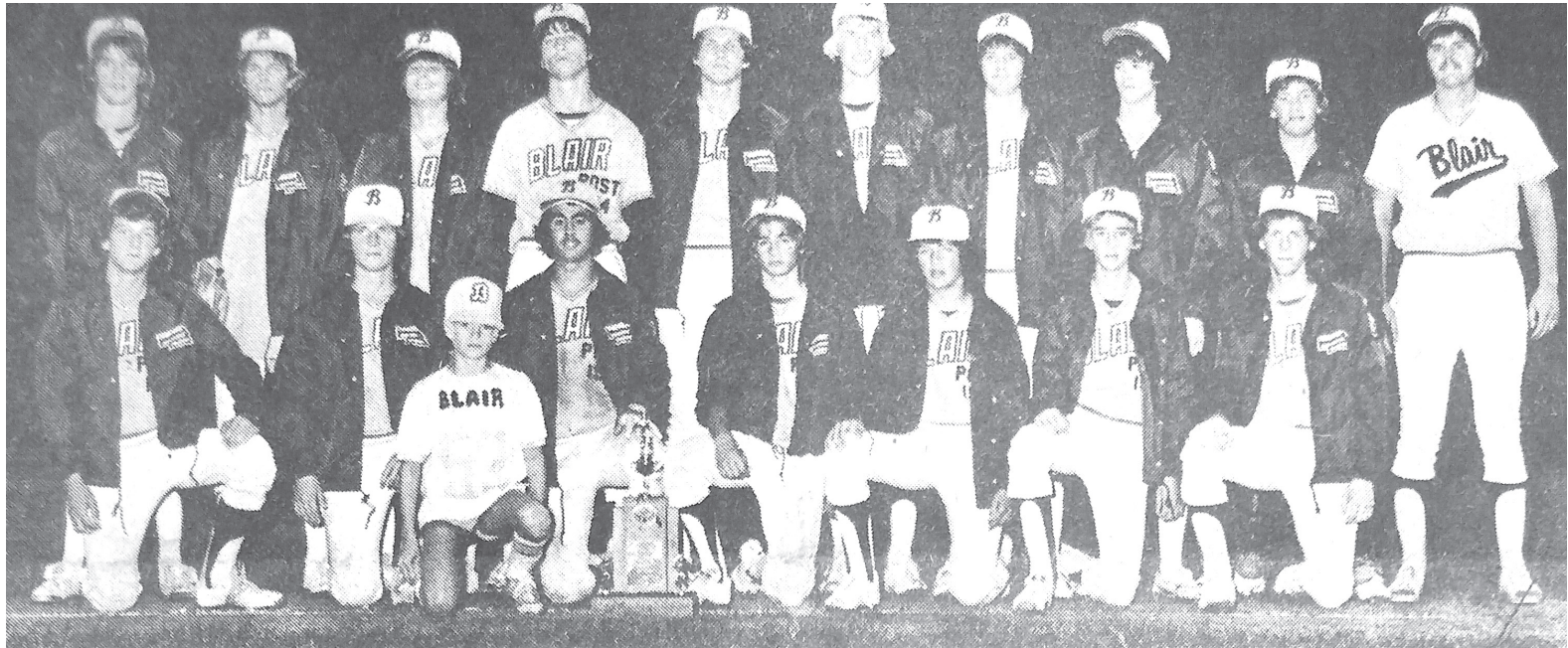


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VETS FIELD PROFILE



ENTERPRISE FILE

James Bilslend is the current Blair Senior Legion baseball coach and primary caretaker of the town's historic ballfield, Vets Field. The first state champion American Legion baseball team to call Vets Field home was the 1980 Blair Midgets. Front row, from left: Jeff Combs, Kerry Cooper, bat boy Mark Robinson, Mike Story, Greg Lehl, Tim Kruse, Shawn Wederquist and Rick Jordan. Second row: Jay Nielsen, Paul Seevers, Chip Duden, Kent Ogle, Maris Deklavs, Bob Truhlsen, Brad Lippincott, Todd Robinson, Scott Nicholson and coach Barry Olson.

and business owners began contributing to the fund. Hancock Implement Company of Herman, Central Gas & Electric Company, Henry A. Ruwe and Washington County Bank were the first \$500 contributors.

Donations by Clifton N. Robinson, Lund & Guyer, O'Hanlon & O'Hanlon, Mrs. Mae Allen Lazure and Martin O. Kuhr were reported on June 28, 1945. In the same edition, the Enterprise noted Fourth of July events, including a baseball game to be played at the "ballfield just two blocks east of the swimming pool."

The Blair Legion's Reed O'Hanlon went to

the City Council in October 1945 and asked that the existing ballfield become the site of the memorial stadium project.

COMING TO FRUITION

As 1946 and 1947 came and went, Vets Field didn't make many headlines.

Internally, plans themselves were becoming less extravagant.

Finally, in April 1948, work began. The field lights — on 10 80-foot poles with eight holding up 12 1,500-watt lamps — would cost \$9,000 of the \$14,000 raised in 1945.

"The lights will provide illumination for

both a baseball and football field and will give Blair one of the best lighted fields in this section of the country — outside of the major league parks," the Enterprise wrote.

Harry Morris and John Sutton led field plans, and grading started soon after coach "Duck" Krause's Pioneer Nite League team started practices for the 1948 season.

The Enterprise newspaper regarded the decision to move forward with Vets Field plans would bring a "new sports era" to Blair. The town's first night game under the new field's lights was July 13, 1948. Nine hundred fans attended as Blair lost an 11-5

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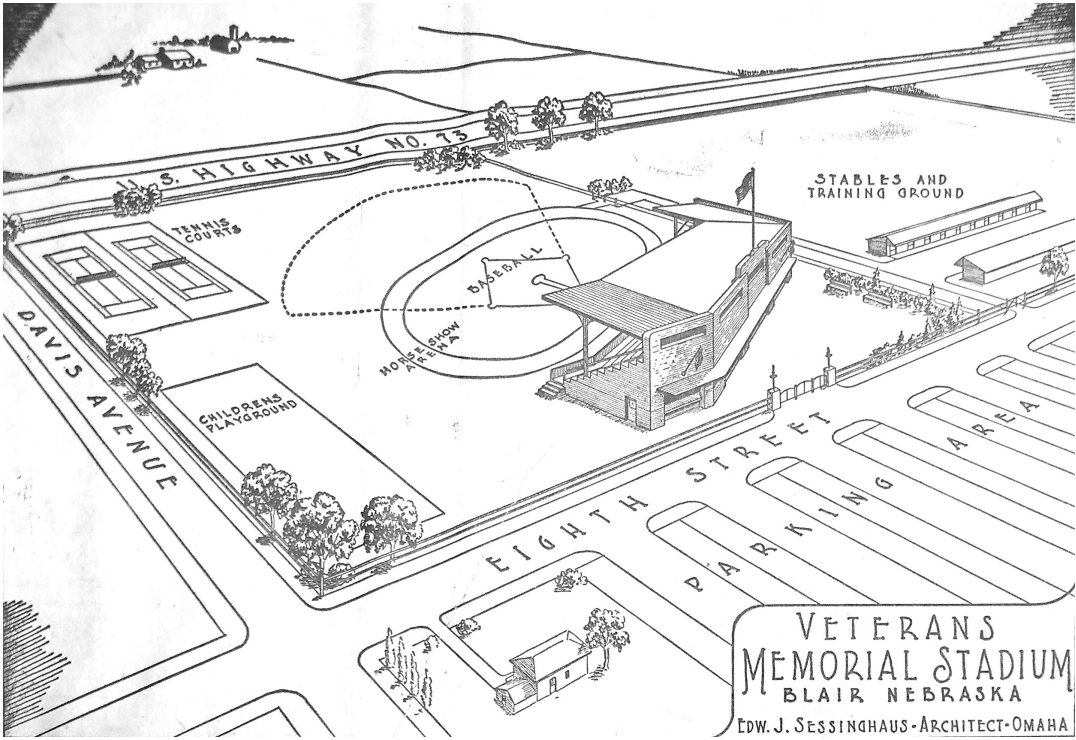
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VETS FIELD PROFILE



The first drawing of the contemplated Veterans Memorial Stadium project included much more than just a ballfield in the Prairie Park Addition.

game to Pender as announcers V.F. Bellows and Neil Stanley called the action over the public address system.

Months later, the Blair High School football team played to a 0-0 tie with Decatur in its first game under the lights. Then, on Sept. 24, Art Sorensen scored Dana College's game-winning touchdown against Tarkio College on Vets Field. Tickets cost 60 cents apiece.

A GATHERING PLACE

Vets Field became the place to be in Blair for decades. Baseball games, football tilts, pro wrestling matches and boxing bouts were all contested in the space. Community events were regular occurrences, too.

"It was the place to go for something to do," Scott Nicholson said.

He remembers visiting Vets Field for Dana College games as a child, hanging around the scoreboard as numbers were flipped.

Nicholson started his baseball career in Little League, learning how to play on dirt fields near the high school. Kids in those days didn't dream of playing at Vets Field because of its conditions — it was a beat up field from so many games — but because of what it meant. The spotlight was on high school sports.

In 1980, Nicholson was a member of the very first

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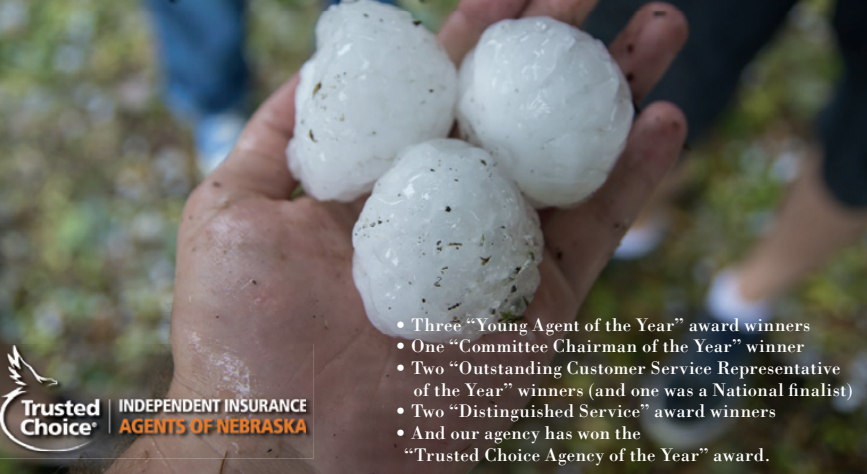
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VETS FIELD PROFILE

Blair Legion baseball team to win a state title. The Midgets — which is now the Junior Legion division — defeated Aurora in York, finishing with a 27-4 record.

Post 154 went on to dominate the 1980s at Vets Field. Blair squads won state championships in 1981, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987 and 1989.

The '87 Post 154 lineup even won its title on the home diamond.

“Most fans I ever saw at Vets,” former Blair coach Mark Gutschow recalled. The 3-0 win against Elkhorn — and future MLB pitcher Jason Samuel Christiansen — was the first memory that came to mind when he was asked about the home field.

Nicholson was there, too, returning to coach alongside Gutschow, who initially brought him back to his hometown ballpark to umpire. The longtime Legion baseball coach said he can remember people lining every inch of the chainlink outfield fence for the Elkhorn title game.

Post 154's success on Vets Field continued into the 1990s and 2000s. It won state championships in 1992, 1998 and 2002 before hosting an American Legion Junior Regional Baseball tournament in 2008. Teams from seven states, including coach Jeff Nelsen's

Blair Dawgs, participated.

By that point, Vets Field had long become baseball-only — aside from YMCA flag football. It stands out as a classic ballpark in eastern Nebraska.

Nicholson said opposing coaches “raved” about the field as he built schedules, inviting them for games up through the 2010s. Blair Legion baseball has a home at Vets Field.

“I don't think it should ever move,” he said. “Not in my lifetime.”

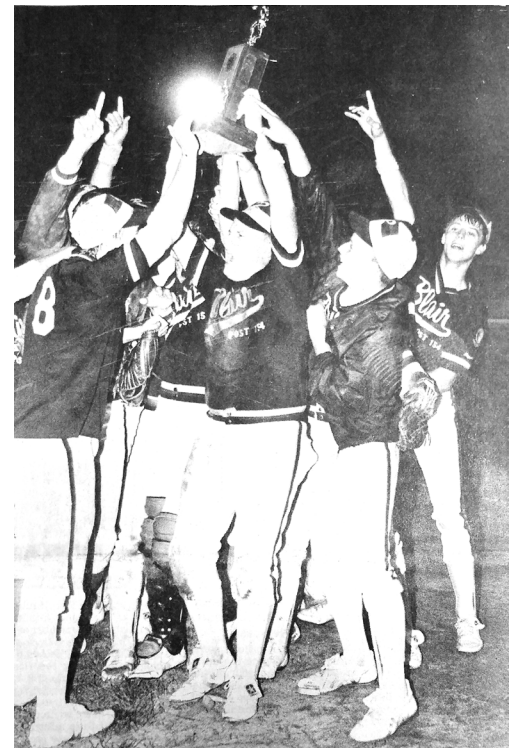
BLAIR'S BALLPARK

Today, it's Bilslend who keeps an eye and maintains the historic diamond in Blair. The coach tediously checks the grass and works the infield dirt, making sure its ready for play even if the spring and summer are months away.

“My daughter sent me a picture of a little boy once,” he said. “He was raking baselines and it said, ‘You give a baseball coach a rake and a baseball field, and he'll be out there for hours.’”

The coach cracked a smile.

“You ask him to do it at his own place and it won't get done,” he noted. “And as much as I hate to admit it, it's true.”



ENTERPRISE FILE

The 1986 Blair Midgets celebrate winning a state championship in York.

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Your Natural Resources District

The Papio NRD is governed by an elected Board of Directors and is well equipped to address a broad range of soil, water, wildlife, recreation and forestry issues. The Papio NRD area is the most populated in Nebraska and includes all of Sarpy, Douglas, Washington and Dakota counties; plus 60% of Burt and Thurston counties. The many projects of the Papio NRD are handled by a qualified staff of resource experts who work cooperatively with other government agencies, city entities and conservation-minded landowners.



Papio NRD Field Office and Staff

Papio NRD staff will assist landowners with conservation needs at the USDA Service Center, 1060 Wilbur Street in Blair. For more information on programs that are available call 402-426-4782. The NRD Staff is co-located with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, USDA Wetland Team #7, USDA Farm Service Agency and the NRD Washington County Rural Water. The Service Center and Staff – Terry Schumacher (Land and Water Programs Coordinator), John Zaugg (Field Office Representative), Kyle Madsen (Watershed Coordinator), Darlene Hensley (Program Assistant) and Kalani Fortina (Conservation Program Support Specialist) - offer services for landowners and others in need of natural resource conservation planning and programs. They can be contacted at (402) 426-4782.

Working with Washington County Landowners

- 226 requests for staff to assist landowners with conservation programs and practices.
- 55 landowners ordered 4,275 trees and shrubs. 16 landowners received cost-share on their practices.
- 10 landowners requested and 6 received \$3,331.07 cost share funds to abandon their wells.
- 35 landowners requested and received \$219,417.42 cost share for terrace systems.
- 217.6 acres of land with native grasses and pollinators planted through NRD programs.
- 20 WHIP five-year contracts at \$6,531.50 a year in payments for Washington County participants.

Papio NRD Tree Planting Program

The Papio NRD Tree and Shrub Program begins in the fall each year. This is the time to plan and order bare root seedlings to establish a windbreak, shelterbelt or habitat area for Spring. Seedlings are available at \$22.00 plus 5.5 sales tax for a bundle of 25 of one species. The seedlings vary in size from 8 to 20 inches tall. Cost share funds are available for plantings that meet NRD guidelines. Landowners can order from November 15 through March 20. Order forms and a species list are available at the NRD Field Office, 1060 Wilbur Street, Blair or contact the NRD staff at 402-426-4782. Packets will be sent upon request. NRD staff are also available to visit your site, assist with planning and selection of species. The hand plant seedlings arrive mid-April. The machine plants are stored in the tree cooler at Chalco Hills until staff plants the seedlings.



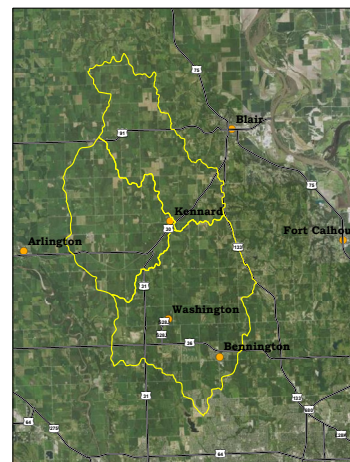
NRD Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program (WHIP)

Farm and acreage owners with small areas of land (2 acres to 20 acres) in Washington County, could be eligible for this habitat program. The program is administered locally and provides cost share funds to landowners that establish and improve wildlife habitat on their rural lands. Five and ten-year contracts with a yearly program payment of fifty dollars per acre is available to qualified landowners. The landowner will be reimbursed for planting a combination of native grasses or legumes, wildflower, and pollinators; or a shrub planting, as specified in the site development plan. Pollinator seedlings are encouraged. Contact John Zaugg, NRD Field Representative, ext. 105, or Darlene Hensley and Kalani Fortina, NRD Program Assistants at 402-426-4782 for more information.

**The NRD Well Abandonment Program began in Nebraska in 1994.
Since then the Papio NRD has abandoned 494 wells at a cost
share of \$245,857.89 in Washington County.**

319 Papillion Creek Watershed Incentive Program

Incentives include cost share for agriculture conservation practices within the Papillion Creek Watershed. Goals of the program are to reverse watershed impairment through the reduction of nutrient, sediment and E-coli loading. Practices include terraces, waterways and upfront funds for plantings such as CRP buffer strips. Also offered are stand-alone cover crop programs and a septic system upgrade program. To see if your land lies within the watershed and you would qualify for any of these programs go to <https://arcg.is/058Dim> and search by address. You may also contact Kyle Madsen NRD Watershed Coordinator at (402) 350-3695 or email kmadsen@papionrd.org.



Washington County Rural Water System

The Papio NRD operates the Washington County Rural Water System that provides customers with a safe, reliable and high-quality water source. Each year the system purchases over 170 million gallons of treated water from the Metropolitan Utilities District and the City of Blair. The system distributes water to customers through a network of 75 miles of pipe and mains. A total of 1,000 rural properties, the City of Fort Calhoun and Lakeland are served by this system. This clean and dependable water service has been essential in helping Washington County grow.



WCRW Staff (left to right) Bruce Sill and Kyle Winn

9 WHO SHINE

NINE STUDENTS from across the county are exemplifying what it means to be involved. These students take pride in joining activities, achieving in academics, volunteering their time, competing in athletics or lending a helping hand whenever they can.

Despite hefty time commitments, these students are dedicated to their work and activities. Students do more than just study, and these 2021 "9 Who Shine" candidates show what it takes to participate in activities and lead.

Charlie Hendry

AGE: 17
SENIOR, ARLINGTON HIGH SCHOOL

Helping out isn't a second thought for Charlie Hendry.

Since she was in middle school, Hendry has been at the forefront joining different organizations and volunteering her time.

Hendry is in golf and Future Business Leaders of America, but has also been in student council.

Hendry has also volunteered at the elementary school inside classrooms to help out with younger students.

"Any teacher can choose if they want me to go into their classroom," she said. "I just help out with whatever the teacher wants."

Hendry, who will attend Midland University after graduation to study education, also helps out with her mother's business, Kid Keep'r Home Day-care, and volunteers at the Vacation Bible School at St. Paul's Lutheran Church.

Hendry said volunteering and helping out came naturally to her.

"I like doing it — it feels good to just help out, especially because I don't like seeing people stressed out because they can't get something done," she said. "If I can help, I'll do it."



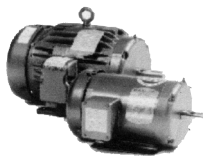
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Claire Allen

AGE: 18
SENIOR, ARLINGTON HIGH SCHOOL



Arlington senior Claire Allen joined band in fifth grade as a clarinetist, and always wanted to involve herself with music.

Along with playing the clarinet, Allen has been the band's drum major since she was a freshman.

"To lead the band during our parade in Arlington and at the state fair, and I thought it would be a cool opportunity," she said.

Allen has several primary duties while guiding the band, including teaching the upcoming junior high school students how to march during summer band camp.

While in band, Allen has had solos during district music concerts, where she placed high her freshman and sophomore years.

She was also nominated for conference honor band, where she sat at the second chair for all three years she's played.

Additionally, Allen plays volleyball and runs track, and participates in National Honor Society, Future Business Leaders of America and student council.

"I like to be busy and I like to be in a lot of activities," she said. "I also like to have leadership roles in those is also what I like to do."

Though Allen doesn't plan to pursue music at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln after high school, she intends to play her instrument for fun while studying pre-health.





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Elizabeth Bray



AGE: 14 EIGHTH GRADE, OTTE BLAIR MIDDLE SCHOOL

An eighth grade student has been involved with many activities since she was younger.

Elizabeth Bray has been involved inside and outside of school. She plays multiple sports at school and also dances at Blair Dance Academy.

Bray said she enjoys staying involved in many activities.

"It keeps your options open and it helps you gain teamwork skills and leadership skills," she said. "It also helps you learn there's no 'I' in team and you have to work together with your people."

With dance, Bray not only

takes lessons, but also assists with classes.

"I love dancing and I do different types of dance," she said. "At dance, I help teach a class, help first and second graders in hip-hop, and it's so fun to see them grow as a person."

Bray is passionate about meteorology, and wants to pursue it as a career, and job shadowed at WWT 6 to learn firsthand what the job entails.

"I learned that it's hard to become a meteorologist, but it definitely pays off if you have a lot of fun with your coworkers, and you can keep people safe," she said. "You're kind of on the job 24/7 because if there's severe weather overnight, you have to be there."

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Emma Cada

AGE: 18
SENIOR, BLAIR HIGH SCHOOL

Blair High School senior Emma Cada is heavily involved both inside and outside of school, and attributes this to her being a "people person."

One of her biggest involvements is music. Cada is in concert choir, show choir, a capella, marching band as a percussionist, Tri-M as vice president and concert band.

Cada said she enjoys show choir and concert choir the most.

"Show choir in particular isn't really prevalent in a lot of places other than the Midwest," she said. "I joined in seventh grade, thought I was going to quit because I was scared of wearing sequins and then

fast forward six years, I'm the captain and I love it."

Cada said she has found camaraderie through music.

"We truly have some of the nicest kids in choir and show choir," she said.

After high school, Cada will study political science and attend law school. In the midst of this, she said she hopes to continue music in some facet.

Along with music, Cada is also the class president, president of National Honors Society, vice president of Future Business Leaders of America, in Spanish club, was in yoga club, competed with the speech team, a homeroom mentor, B-Club member, a volunteer at her church, played four years of varsity volleyball and three years of soccer.

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Ethan White

AGE: 17

SENIOR, FORT CALHOUN HIGH SCHOOL



One Fort Calhoun student has taken his talents to the national level.

Ethan White is on the Elite Cheer Eclipse team and has competed across the United States.

White started off with gymnastics, which he's been doing his entire life.

"I decided to take a break and thought about other sports, but I thought I should stick to the gymnastics path because I was good at it so I started doing cheer and have for the past two years," he said. "It's been going really well."

"This year, we're looking to go to an international competition in Florida. We're trying to get out there because our team is really, really good this year."

White tried out for his team and originally landed at a lower-level team first, before he got better at stunting and was promoted.

"It's been a really nice experience," he said.

Along with cheer, White is also a state officer for DeMolay, a young men's organization that focuses on community service.

After high school, White intends to continue cheering and competing at the national level, along with taking classes at Metropolitan Community College.

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Hannah Fitzgerald

AGE: 17
SENIOR, FORT CALHOUN HIGH SCHOOL

Training and showing horses has been a longtime passion of Fort Calhoun senior Hannah Fitzgerald.

Since she was 11, Fitzgerald has shown horses and competed at local and state levels.

"I started at the local level showing around Fort Calhoun and Omaha," she said. "I worked my way up to state shows and I now show Nebraska Quarter Horse."

Fitzgerald has always been around horses, as her family farm always had them, but it wasn't until she started taking riding lessons she started to fall in love with it.

Fitzgerald's horse showing season begins in March. She normally performs all shows in Lincoln, but she has done bigger shows in Oklahoma at the national level. She hopes to one day compete at the international level.

Fitzgerald has one several awards for horse showing, including a 2018 Pinto World Show competition where she placed 10th in English equitation and then third in the zone competition.

Fitzgerald said it takes lots of patients training horses.

"Sometimes you don't always know what's going on or what's wrong," she said. "It's about not getting too heated in the moment, calming yourself and getting things figured out."



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Joe Doyle

AGE: 15

SOPHOMORE, FORT CALHOUN HIGH SCHOOL

A quiet hobby has become entrepreneurial for Joe Doyle.

A woodworker since eighth grade, Doyle has become passionate about creating intricate pieces for many people to enjoy, most notably, handmade wooden flags.

"I was in eighth grade wood works one quarter and decided to make a flag," he said. "I really enjoyed it, so I started making them outside of school.

"A lot of people thought they looked nice so they started ordering them and I started making them for people as gifts."

Over Christmas, Doyle was busy making the handmade flags for customers and created around five or six.

"Depending on how big the work is, it only takes me a couple hours sometimes, but I have to stain all the wood and that takes a couple days to set in itself," he said.

He intends to put himself out there to garner a bit more interest.

Along with creating flags, Doyle has also taken a construction class and redone his grandmother's ceiling for her.

"I like the quietness of me being by myself," he said of woodworking. "And the tools are fun to use."



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Josh Miller

AGE: 18
SENIOR, ARLINGTON HIGH SCHOOL



Josh Miller has kept his academics and athletics balances throughout his years of high school.

Miller has participated in football, wrestling, track and baseball while at Arlington High School, though he's played sports since he was a child.

"You can only do sports for so long in high school, so I figure, why miss out on the opportunity when you can only do it for so long?" he said.

With wrestling as his primary sport, as he was coached by his dad starting when he was 3, Miller was ranked at the top for wrestling his senior year, and has

remained in the top four at the state level since his freshman year.

"I love how it's an individual, yet a team sport," he said. "You're out there on your own, it's just you and another guy. But it's also about being able to turn around and watch your teammate wrestle, cheer them on."

Since he's wrestled for so many years, Miller said one thing he loves is helping younger students and seeing them succeed, as well.

Miller is also in Future Business Leaders of America, is vice president of student council and is president of National Honor Society.

Miller will either attend the University of Nebraska-Lincoln or Kearney and study pre-med.

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Zach Anderson

AGE: 14
EIGHTH GRADE, OTTE BLAIR MIDDLE SCHOOL

Eighth-grader Zach Anderson has taken strides into his preferred career and given his all to stay on top of his academics.

Since he was young, Anderson has played in band as a trombonist.

"I've been playing since fifth grade, so about three years," he said. "I go to band, practice at home and I have solos during concerts. I like jazz band a lot more than concert band because it just sounds cooler and it's more fun to play."

Though the COVID-19 pandemic did halt many of the performances, Anderson has been involved in All-State band.

"I auditioned and made it and I was excited," he said.

Along with band, Anderson has a passion for math, as he wants to be an engineer.

"I just like patterns, and set rules," he said. "I take classes at the high school — it's a lot more homework, but it's not that bad."

Anderson also posted the highest score of his MathCounts Program team when he was in seventh grade at an invitation. In the competition, Anderson places 28th out of more than 150 students.

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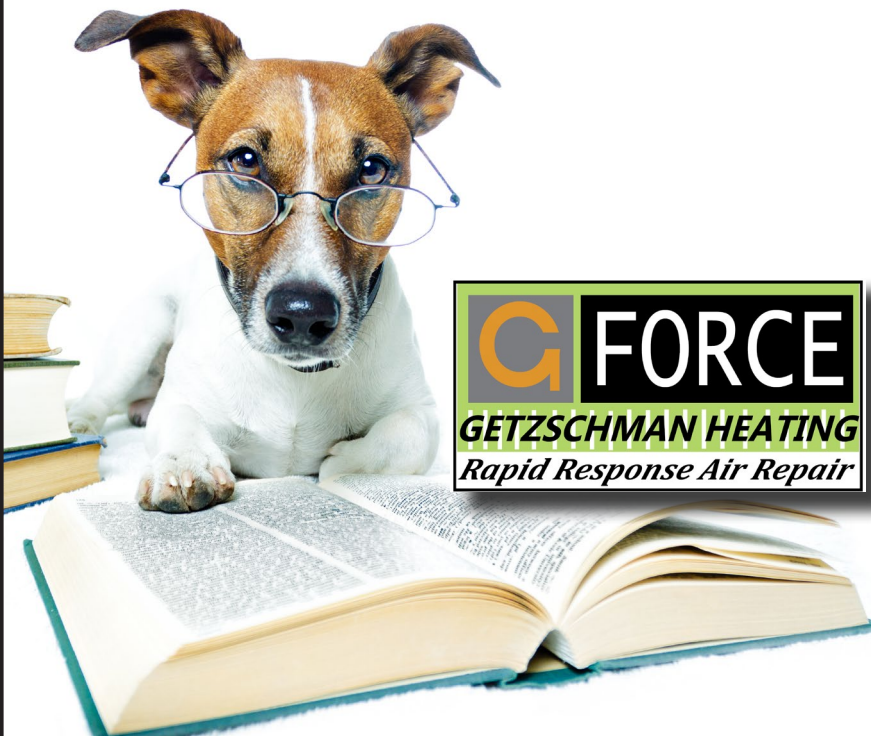
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A HISTORIC COMMUNITY

FONTANELLE IS ONE OF OLDEST TOWNS IN NEBRASKA



JOE BURNS | ENTERPRISE PUBLISHING

This home in Fontanelle was built in 1880 and was owned by Albert Sprick.



COURTESY WASHINGTON COUNTY MUSEUM

At the Albert Sprick home on May 22, 1938, in Fontanelle. Pictured, from left: William Curdt, Luther Monke, LeRoy Bisbee, Clyde Allen, Henry Rohwer, John McDonald and Frank Adams.

Tucked in the Elkhorn River Valley in western Washington County is one of the oldest communities in Nebraska. While not much remains of the now unincorporated village that at one time boasted a college, Fontanelle's pioneer history can still be found.

Selecting a town site

Fontanelle, though not spelled the same, is named for Logan Fontenelle, an interpreter and Omaha chief. In 1854, the Nebraska Colonization Company was formed in Quincy, Ill., to secure its members and their families home in the Nebraska Territory.

That summer a group of "colonists" trav-

eled to Nebraska to view the land, traveling through Iowa by wagon and through Omaha before reaching what would become their final destination in what would become Washington County.

It is easy to see why the members of the Quincy Colony chose this area of the county to settle from a description in the book "History of Dodge and Washington Counties, Nebraska and Their People."

Streams, including Bell Creek, Brown Creek and the Elkhorn River coursed through Fontanelle Township.

"This part of the county is one of nature's real garden spots and man has made it one of beauty and intrinsic value by tilling its fertile soil, erecting its many handsome

farm houses and constructing its scores and hundreds of wagon-bridges and culverts after modern specifications," it said. "To be a landowner in this township is to be known as an independent, contented and happy person who should be thankful that his lot was cast in such a goodly place."

John T. Bell, whose father, James, was among the first settlers at Fontanelle and for whom Bell Creek is named, described the colony's decision to settle.

"Crossing the creek the colonization party pursued their way to the banks of the Elkhorn, and were so pleased with the surrounding country that they decided to locate there," he wrote.

The party proceeded to the camp of the

Omaha Tribe and held a “grand pow-wow with the purpose of securing its good will.” The colonists paid the tribe to protect their interests until members of the company could be sent out to establish their new town.

Within a year or two, there were more than 200 residents in Fontanelle.

A place of firsts

In the fall of 1854, the company sent Richardson to occupy the townsite on behalf of the company. The town was originally located in Dodge County and even served as its county seat until it was eclipsed by Fremont and the county boundary lines were changed in 1860.

However, initially Richardson, who represented Dodge County in the territorial Legislature, was pushed to located the capital at Fontanelle — an effort that did not succeed as Omaha was named the capital.

Fontanelle did, however, get a charter to establish a college, then known as Nebraska University. The college later was moved to Crete and renamed Doane College.

The village was also host to a few other firsts in the county, including the first school, which was taught by Emily Strickland in the winter of 1855-56 and the first church, Fontanelle Congregational Church, organized by Rev. Reuben Gaylord, in May 1856.

Encounters with Native Americans

The first deaths reported in Fontanelle were that of George Demaree and a Mr. Porter in July 1855.

Demaree, Porter and his wife were coming back from breaking ground near Bell Creek when they encountered Native Americans they thought were members of the Omaha Tribe.

It's unclear what tribe they were from as accounts differ. One, written by J.H. Peters, indicated they were Pawnee. Another, written by John T. Bell, indicates they were Santee Sioux.

As Demaree was riding by, one of the Native Americans took his hat. Unable to get it back, Demaree threatened to shoot the man, who in turn shot him and Porter.

Mrs. Porter, unharmed, ran back to Fontanelle for help.

“Perfectly frantic with fear and excite-



COURTESY WASHINGTON COUNTY MUSEUM

The Fontanelle Store, established in 1854, closed in 1959.



JOE BURNS | ENTERPRISE PUBLISHING

This marker marks the location of the Nebraska University and commemorates the settlement of the Quincy Colony in 1854.



JOE BURNS | ENTERPRISE PUBLISHING

Hartung Cemetery, which is located on Camp Fontanelle's property, is the final resting place to many of Fontanelle's early settlers.

ment, and the story she told upon her arrival led the settlers to believe they were in danger of being attacked by an overwhelming force,” Bell wrote.

However, there was no attack.

It was many months before the settlers considered themselves safe, Bell wrote. The territorial governor stationed a militia company near Fontanelle during the fall and winter.

Aimee Taggart Kenny, who came to Fontanelle with her parents as a small child, said they were warned that Native Americans would attack.

“In great fear we gathered in the schoolhouse and watched all night, the men well armed. But we were never molested,” she said.

A town dwindles

At its height, more than 800 people lived in Fontanelle, according to census records. The 1860 Federal Census showed numerous residents, including farmers, carpenters,



COURTESY WASHINGTON COUNTY MUSEUM

The first college building, Nebraska University, at Fontanelle in Washington County.

blacksmiths, clergymen and lawyers.

But the population dwindled to just a few dozen after the college was moved and the town failed to secure a railroad connection.

In October 1959, the village's 105-year-old Fontanelle Store closed its doors, according to an article in the Fremont Tribune. It was the last business in town at the time.

"Mrs. O.E. Wilkinson, operator of the store for the past eight years, said she is giving up

the business because she feels she is getting too old for the six-days-a-week routine behind the counter," the article said.

Wilkinson also operated the Fontanelle Post Office, which closed in November 1959.

"The post office has more or less held the town together," Wilkinson said. "Before the store closed the place was full in the mornings when parents who brought their children to Fontanelle School would stop in for

mail, a chat or provisions."

It was believed the post office was the second oldest operating in the state.

Fontanelle today

Today, there are a couple of dozen homes in the town that sits just south of state Highway 91. A few of the homes date back to the 1880s, including the former Albert Sprick home, a

brick structure located along Ninth Street.

Sprick's father, Henry, was an original member of the Quincy Colony. Both Henry and Albert served in the Nebraska Legislature. Albert was also a proprietor of the Fontanelle Store for a time, according to his obituary.

Fontanelle is home to two businesses — Nebraska Irrigated Seeds and the Fontanelle Orchard — and a church, Salem Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Just south of the village is Camp Fonta-

nelle, a facility of the Great Plains Conference of the United Methodist Church Camping Ministries.

Included in the property of the camp is Hartung Cemetery, where many of the first Fontanelle settlers are buried.

While not much remains of the original town, there are two nods to its history.

Located along Eighth Street is the Fontanelle Township Hall, which was built in 1896. It has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places since Sept. 9, 1982.

Just to the west of the building, where Nebraska Street curves around to Seventh Street, is a historic marker — a boulder with a plaque marking the site of the first college and commemorating the village's settlement.

“This native boulder marks the site, 225 feet south and 110 feet west of the first college in Nebraska, now Doane College, chartered by the First Territorial Legislature in 1855. It also commemorates the Quincy Colony settlement in 1854.”



The Fontanelle Township Hall was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982.

JOE BURNS | ENTERPRISE PUBLISHING

THERE'S A SAYING about walking a mile in someone's shoes in order to know them better. What about following a post-man on a walking route to hear about the encounters especially with snow on the ground. Or feel what it is like to walk 11,000 steps a day for work?

What about septic tank pumping? Did you know it takes a few hundred feet of pipes dragged through a yard to clean out the tanks, with buckets of water to clean the pipes?

A car stranded on the side of the road or crashed down an embankment can take patience and coordination on the part of a tow truck driver.

The opportunity to do on-the-job training can be eye opening. It can also provide a new appreciation for the things people got through at their jobs.

Follow a postal worker, a septic pumper and a tow truck driver on a day in the life of their work.



READY TO BE HOOKED UP

Jonesy's Towing helps drivers at their worst moments

Loren Jones of Jonesy's Towing received a call. A driver hit an animal crossing the road and the front end was damaged. He asked the driver what type of car they drive before deciding which of his tow trucks work best. He has a few options. Will he need a wrecker tow truck or a flatbed?

Jones decided on the flatbed. He didn't know what he'd encounter when he got to his destination. Will the car be drivable? Will it be somewhere in a parking lot that he'll have to maneuver around several vehicles. Armed with the description of the car, he headed to Oakland.

Jones tries to limit his tows to around a 100-mile radius, though he has gone as far as Sioux Falls, S.D., before.

Jones backed his flatbed up near the car and got out to inspect the damage. It wasn't that bad. He turned on the car and found that it was drivable.

Once he got the car lined up with the bed of the truck, he drove it onto the bed which was elevated backward as if he was driving it up a ramp. After the car is on the truck, he picked up the chains and placed them behind the wheels to secure the car before leveling the flatbed.

Then it was back to Blair to drop it off at a dealership for repair.

In his nearly 50 years of towing vehicles, Jones has seen cars and trucks in all levels of trouble.

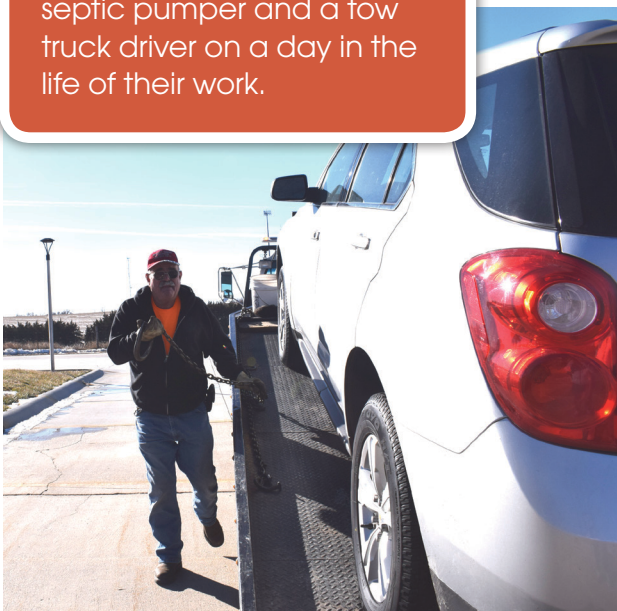
From engine trouble to cars of flipped and rolled into ditches and ravines, he never leaves a vehicle behind. Though some tows may take a brief time, some take upward of a few hours.

The controls used to hook up a vehicle are mostly on the outside of the truck and on the flatbed the mechanics can be reached from either side of the truck, making it safer to load the vehicle. But, he said, it can be a dangerous job having to pick up cars on the side of the interstate. Jones has had close calls with cars not seeing his truck despite all of the lights.

Jones has also been a volunteer firefighter for several years and has seen both sides of some of the car accidents — both medical rescue and removing the vehicle from the scene.

Over the years, Jones has seen changes with how things are done.

"Most of the time, if it's an accident or a ditch, I'll talk to whoever is there," he said. "I used to take it right away but now you have to wait. Insurance companies are different now. They ask a lot more questions."



Above, Loren Jones of Jonesy's Towing drives a car onto the flatbed tow truck in Oakland. At left, Jones attaches chains on his flatbed tow truck in Oakland to secure the vehicle.

Loren Jones secures the chains under the car's tires.

ON THE JOB

"Most of the time, if it's an accident or a ditch, I'll talk to whoever is there. I used to take it right away but now you have to wait."

-LOREN JONES



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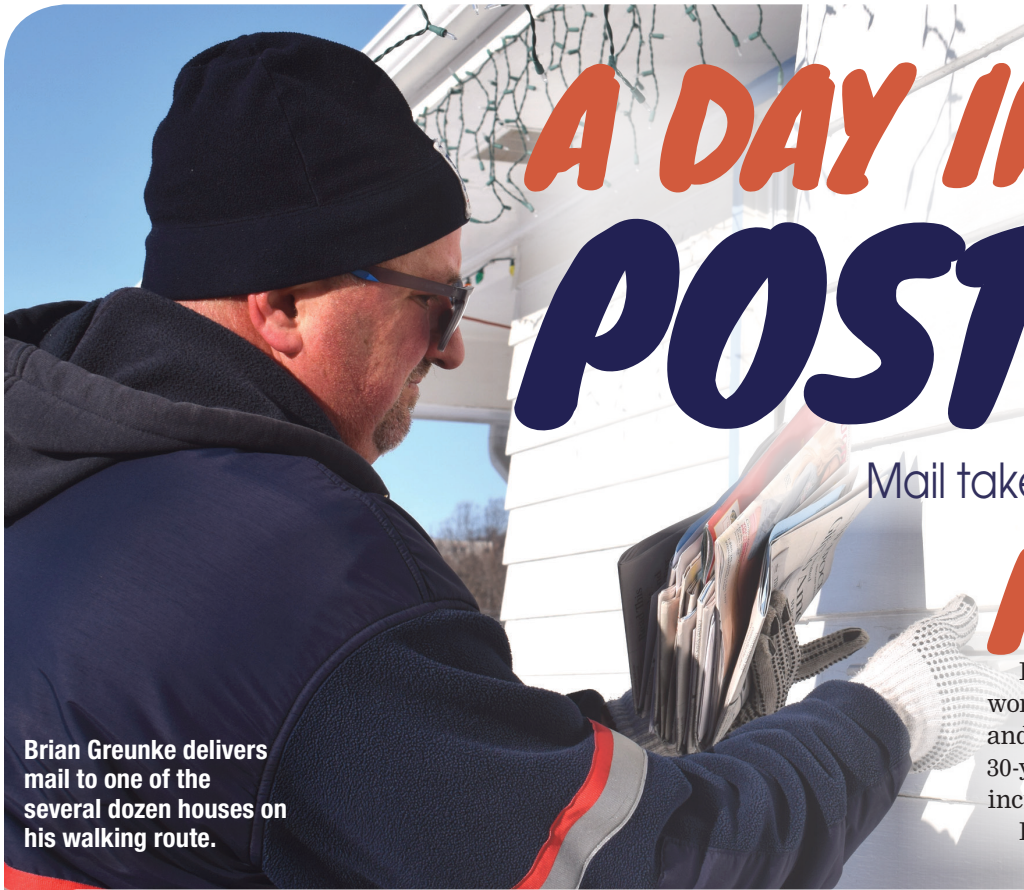
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Brian Greunke delivers mail to one of the several dozen houses on his walking route.

A DAY IN THE LIFE *of the* POST OFFICE

Mail takes many steps before reaching mailboxes

In a room behind the mailboxes at the Blair Post Office sits every type of mail imaginable — magazines, newspapers, letters, parcels and more. Somehow, through the work of mail clerks and carriers, it all gets distributed as more mail comes through the door.

It is a scene Brian Greunke, an Arlington native, is familiar with. He's worked for the U.S. Postal Service for 27 years. Through snow, sleet, rain and even the 2014 hail storm that left more than 50 dents on the roof of his 30-year-old truck, Greunke delivers. Like many postal workers, he has incurred a few dog bites along the way.

He starts his day by clocking in and doing a vehicle inspection. What faces him when he arrives is a tub of magazines, small parcels, letter mail and flat mail as he waits for the Amazon packages to be sorted.

The pile is larger in the winter.

"It's really not until you have been in here do you realize how much stuff we handle at Christmas time," he said.

Greunke started his career in Fremont as Christmas help.

Not only does he have to sort the mail, but has to manage address changes, holds and even new houses being built on his route. These changes are part of the 632 potential deliveries he makes each day. He gets a set of labels with the changes. For those who moved without leaving a forwarding address, the post office gives 10 days before they are sent back to the original sender.

Before he leaves the building to make his deliveries, Greunke sorts the mail into different bins. Once everything inside is collected, he loads his truck. Every inch of the truck is filled with packages and mail of all shapes and sizes. He has both walking and driving routes, but said he preferred the curbside delivery.

Greunke said they used to get done earlier with sorting so that the mail delivery could get done earlier before the temperatures got too hot. Now, the deliveries have a staggered start time during the pandemic.

Greunke said he likes the job for its stability.

"There's always mail even during a pandemic," he said.

Over the years, he has gotten to know addresses well.

"I go to parties with my wife and people will quiz me on addresses," he said. "I used to know every address. People would pull open a phone book and test me."

In addition to making sure the mail gets delivered to the



Brian Greunke's mail truck is filled with letters and packages for him to deliver.



Brian Greunke first has to sort the mail into these bins before he can start his deliveries.

ON THE JOB

correct mailboxes, Greunke had to contented with large snow drifts and slippery roads. He often cuts through yards in order to cut some time from his walking and delivery time.

One house on his route started a trend of sorts with their neighbors by plowing a path along their houses for him to walk through instead of needing to go all the way back to the street

to walk around. Most of the houses have mailboxes close to their doors, while a few on his route had them closer to the sidewalk.

Along the way dogs bark at him from inside the house or inside the yard. But Greunke hasn't escaped the canines all together. He said he's been bitten four times over the years.



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Above, John Archer, owner and driver for S&S Pumping, runs a hose through a septic tank on a place near Herman. At left, Archer, hooks up the hoses to begin work on a septic tank.

John Archer, owner of S&S Pumping, looked at his app for the first call of the day. He sits behind the large wheel of a large Mack truck with a 4,000 gallon tank attached, making his way to a house near Herman to locate a pump and septic tank.

To locate the tank, he drug a probe around several places in the yard. Once he located it, he dug around the tank and headed back to the truck where he connected 200 feet of hose and drug it to the septic tank. He ran the

pump and washed things out with water.

The next job was to find a tank near Fort Calhoun. He tried for almost an hour but was not able to find it. Employees keep records of where the pumps are located generally, pinning them on their maps for review down the road.

Employees drive to different jobs, fill up their tanks, which have a gauge that says how full they are. After they reach close to 4,000 gallons, they'll drive over to a dump site in Iowa.

Every morning the sched-

ule looks different for the employees at S&S Pumping. They'll access an app on their phone detailing open projects and select one. The app will be updated throughout the day as projects are added or completed.

"The app tells where they are all at and the status of the

project," Archer said. "Before I was trying to call everyone about each job."

The job, he said, changes daily.

"Some days you get dirty," he said. "Cleaning out meat lockers is no fun."

One of their main jobs is pumping septic tanks.

"It's not as bad as you think," Archer said. "It's not a porta potty. When you pump the septic all the stuff goes into the top and sinks to the bottom. You won't see much."

As far as smell, he said the bacteria breaks down the odor.

The job isn't always a typical 8 to 5 workday. They get



John Archer, owner and driver for S&S Pumping, drags the 200 feet of hoses back toward the truck after pumping a septic tank at a house.

ON THE JOB

calls at all hours of the day and night. "It is like we are changing oil on their septic tank," Archer said. "We are getting rid of everything so they can start fresh. If you don't pump a tank it could get thick plugging a pipe and if it plugs you were out \$5,000."

Aside from septic tanks, they clean the scales pump out of grain elevators and other places. They do commer-

cial hauling, mud and grease pits, septic pumping and septic inspections. Despite the frozen ground, he said it's easy to find septic tanks in winter because the ground won't freeze around them.

He said it usually takes about a half hour to pump the septic tanks. Some of their work is done after businesses close so the work hours will vary.

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BEING A COUNTY MORE THAN 160 YEARS OLD, it's clear Washington County has a plentiful history to offer. One way to indulge in the rich history of Washington County is the many historical homes around the area, which tell stories of all the people who first set foot in the county. From intricate architecture to famous first settlers, these National Register of Historic Places are a staple in Washington County. Three homes around the area have been renovated to replicate the original design or given to the county for all to take a step back in time and understand where it all started.

FRAHM

HOUSE

The Frahm House sits on a hill on 15th Street in Fort Calhoun.

The house was left to the Washington County Historical Association in 1994, and remains a popular spot for tours and other events.

Given as a gift to his wife, Sarah "Sade" Beales, Alfred "Fred" Frahm built the home in 1905 after purchasing the six blocks of land for \$850. The couple only had one child, Catharine, who passed away in 1994.

The home is unique in that it does not have a structural addition.

Inside the home is furniture and other items owned by the family.

Faith Norwood, curator at the Washington County Museum, said the house is always fun to visit because of its history.

"To me, the house reminds me of my grandparents' house," she said. "The family was so heavily involved with the museum."

One point Norwood enjoys about the house is it never left the family, and was given to the museum after Catharine Frahm passed away.

Fred Frahm was born in Fort Calhoun in 1871. He later owned the Frahm Mercantile Store, which was down the street from his home, until he sold it during World War I.

Sade Beales was born southwest of Fort Calhoun, and was a member of St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Blair. She was part of Fort Calhoun High School's second graduating class in 1894.

Catharine Frahm was an active member of the Washington County Historical Association, and served as the museum director.

Fred Frahm remained an active member of the community, serving as a councilman, on school board and as

Above: The Frahm House is located at 220 South 15th St. in Fort Calhoun. It was built in 1905 by Alfred "Fred" Frahm as a wedding present for his wife Sarah "Sade" Beales.

mayor. He died in 1949.

The home's ceiling was painted blue, which may have indicated a belief in ghosts. The blue-colored ceiling is supposed to represent water, which would seemingly confuse ghosts to not pass.

Before plumbing, the Frahm family used an outhouse, and also had a two-story barn for their horse and carriage.

Behind the home, a hill sits where the family would get their water supply, which would travel into the kitchen and run through a stove to warm, then taken to the bathroom.

The inside consists of two floors, which has a small foyer and staircase. A parlor separates the foyer and dining room. The most modern piece in the house is a sink in the kitchen from the 1930s.

Upstairs, visitors will find three bedrooms. The two women slept in one room, and Fred Frahm slept in another, which also included a separate sitting room.

Besides tours, Norwood said the Frahm House can be rented for parties and other special events, and there are also descendants of the Frahm family who decorate on Christmas.

Norwood held one of her favorite events at the home, where she displayed vintage swimsuits and undergarments around the house.

The museum also held a walking tour

around the city, which had the Frahm House as a stop for those wanting to learn about the home.

HISTORICAL HOMES



A bedroom in the Frahm House on the second floor. The upstairs of the two-story house has three bedrooms.

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HISTORICAL HOMES



A typewriter sits in the dining room of the Frahm House.



The living room of the Frahm House. Most of the items inside the home are original to the family.



"To me, the house reminds me of my grandparents' house. The family was so heavily involved with the museum."

-FAITH NORWOOD

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A JOINT VENTURE OF DSM AND EVONIK

Located in the 1800 block of Grant Street, the Castetter House was built in 1876 for Abraham Castetter, a banker who arrived in Blair the year the city was founded in 1869.

Over the years, the house has undergone many changes, including several by Pat and Kathy Tripp, who purchased the house in 1977.

Pat said they spent around 15 years restoring the home, as it was in disarray when they first bought it.

"The prior owners thankfully did all the electrical work, so it was in great shape," he said. "Everything else probably had to be restored."

One thing the Tripps tried to make sure of was keeping the restoration work local, and hired painters, contractors and even a teacher in the area to help restore the home.

By 1989, the house was named to the National Register of Historic Places.

The Tripps sold the home after their second child was born, since they wanted to focus on the family and not restoring the home.

"When we sold our house, it was in a much better condition," Pat said. "An old house is a never-ending project."

Castetter originally settled in DeSoto, in the 1850s before moving to Blair. He owned Waubeek Bank in DeSoto before opening the Banking House of A. Castetter in 1898.

Castetter owned three or four lots on the street, two of which were used to build the Castetter House.

"What's interesting is, it started out in one style, and then through the fact that he had a child who was in a wheelchair, he went in and remodeled the house by cutting the west



Castetter HOUSE



ENTERPRISE PUBLISHING FILE PHOTO

Above: The Castetter House featured in February 1989. Pat Tripp restored the home around this time

CHEYENNE ALEXIS | ENTERPRISE PUBLISHING

Right: The Castetter House is located on the 1800 block of Grant Street.

HISTORICAL HOMES

one-fourth of the house and moving it to the west," Pat said.

The house had an interesting design, Pat said.

"The section in the middle of the house expanded the hallway in the dining room and gave them room for an elevator in the 1880s," he said. "It had an elevator, front stairway, back stairway, about 75 windows, 17 rooms and I believe they had servants because they had a servant call button.

"They had a pulley system upstairs with full knobs and chains that went into the attic and across the system of pulleys so they could ring for help upstairs."

Some unique pieces of the house includes the carriage house, which the Tripps could fit three cars in at a

time, as well as the round porch.

Another interesting piece Pat enjoyed was the attic, where he found the pulleys and chains for the hall system.

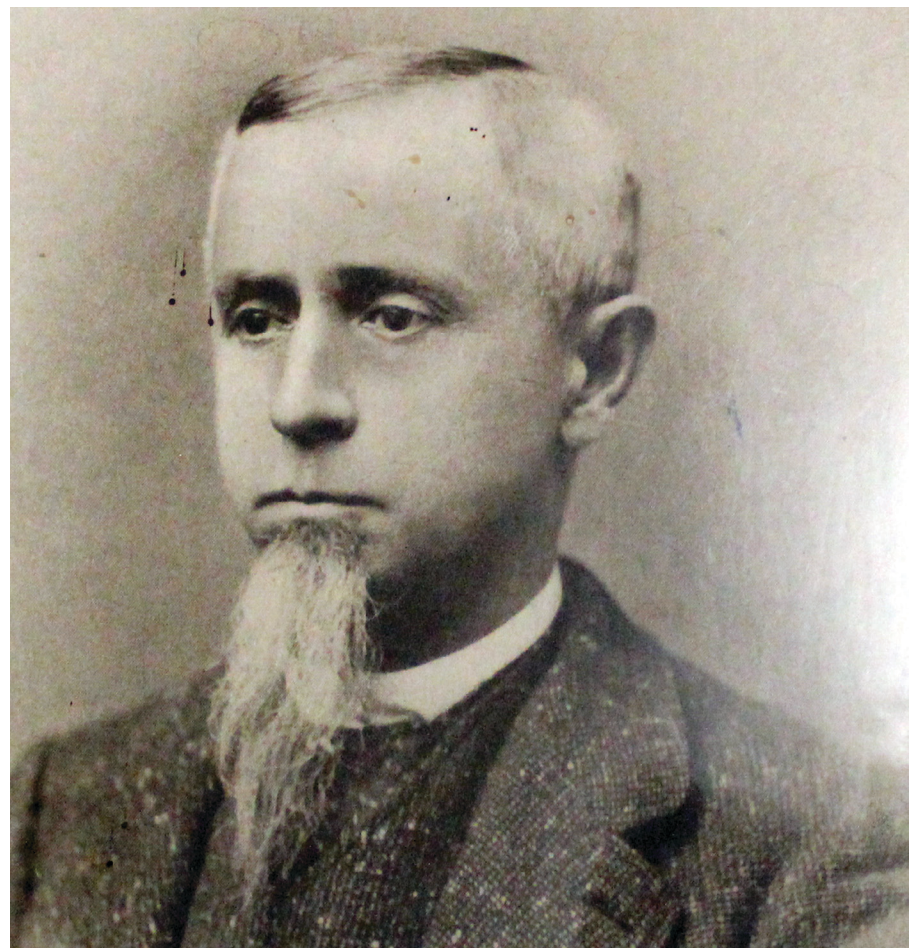
"The back stairway was interesting because that's where the servants could access the top floor," he said.

"One of the things we went through with the architect is looking through the basement and finding original basement walls and how the addition was added to the middle. In the dining room, you can see the original basement steps to the outside, which are three steps that go nowhere."

There are also large water cisterns made out of brick around 10 to 12 feet deep and 6 to 8 feet wide outside the back door on the west side. Cisterns were still there when the Tripps

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moved in, and a lot of piping to the house was still there.

"We actually filled the cisterns with sand with the idea that if we ever wanted to, we could pump sand out and have this really cool brick room down below, but we never got that far," he said.

Though they don't live in the home any longer, Pat said he feels great to be part of renovating history.

"Kathy and I spent a long time working on it," he said. "We still love the

house and hope it continues to be maintained."

The home's current owners declined to be interviewed.

HISTORICAL HOMES

"We still love the house and hope it continues to be maintained."

-PAT TRIPP



Pat Tripp restored the Castetter Home in the 1980s.

COURTESY PAT TRIPP



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The Old McDonald Farm's barn was completed in 1920.



The Old McDonald Farm was named on the National Register of Historic Places in 2013.



Old McDonald Farm

ENTERPRISE PUBLISHING FILE PHOTOS
The Old McDonald House
living room in 2013.

HISTORICAL HOMES

The Old McDonald Farm sits on County Road P26, about two miles south of Blair near Mill Creek.

Bill Kerrey purchased the Old McDonald farm in 2000, and renovated it to look like the 1898 version of the house.

"I purchased the 40-acre farm from the McDonald family, and it had been in their family since 1890," Kerrey said.

After purchasing the 40-acre lot for \$600, the house was built by John McDonald, his three brothers and wife, Anna McBride, in two phases: one in 1896 and 1898.

"When I bought the property 20 years ago, it had the house, a barn and it had a small brooder house and it had a larger brooder house," Kerrey said. "I decided to restore the main house and the barn. I did that in cooperation with the State Historical Society following their guidelines. They requested the Department of Interior put the 40-acre farm and the improvements on the National Register of Historic Places."

As far as restorations, Kerrey said everything seen on the house is new, aside from the windows.

"The porch light is an addition as is electrification, plumbing, heating and air conditioning," Kerrey said. "Also the brick

walkway and stoops were added; these bricks used to be on the streets of Blair."

Kerrey worked on restoration with Myrtle McDonald-Olson, the 10th of 11 children from John McDonald and Anna McBride.

"Following up on that conversation with Myrtle, we held family reunions the last four years where relatives of the McDonalds and the McBrides would come out for potlucks," he said.

All members of the family lived in the house with no electricity or running water.

The four daughters shared a room, while the seven boys slept upstairs.



COURTESY WASHINGTON COUNTY MUSEUM

The McDonald Family at their home in the early 1900s. Pictured back row from left, James, Al, George, William and John. Front row from left, Nellie, Belle, Lizzie and Kate.

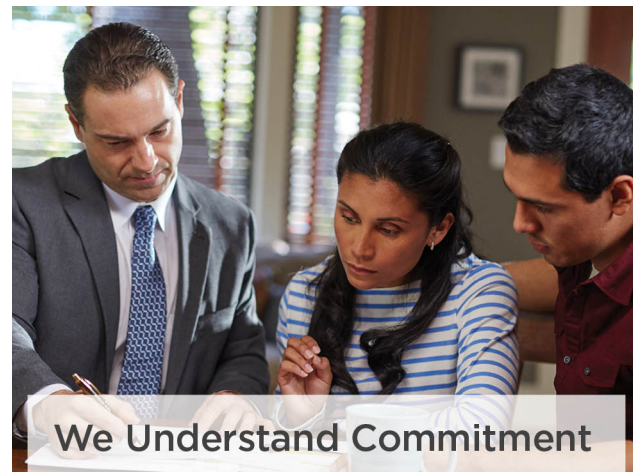
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HISTORICAL HOMES

The family retrieved water by a well and a rainwater catcher.

The barn was also restored, though not to historical standards.

"We restored it so it can be used on the first floor and second floor," he said.

The barn was also a place where the relatives would come out for barn dances, which is still going on today. Anna McBride would play the pump organ, which her sons would lift through the door.

Kerrey said he has obtained notes left by John McDonald and his brothers while renovating the home.

"As they worked on the house they wrote notes with pencils on the siding of the house," he said. "We found them when we moved the siding and plaster on the inside of the house. They all worked there together and somehow had the skills to do this, and did it without power, electricity and used all hand tools."

Kerrey said the family was

very frugal.

"When we tore the house apart on the inside, we found books and journals that John McDonald had kept and he kept records of his expenses," he said. "He spent less money in one year than most people spend in one day. They built that house with ingenuity and very few materials."

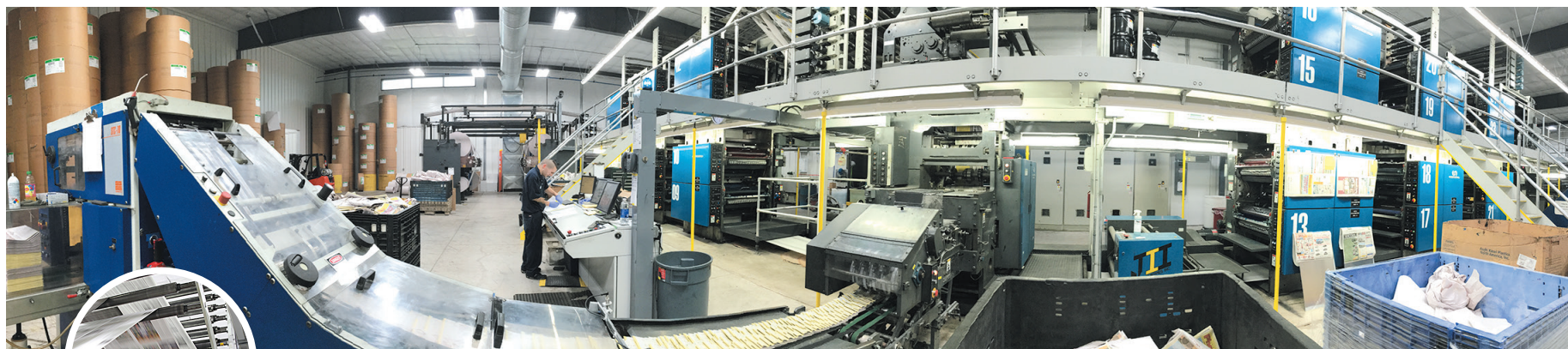
Kerrey said he's grateful to be part of this historical home.

"It was folks back in the late 1800s and early 1900s that brought their skills, commitments and really gave us what we enjoy today," he said. "I think a lot about that when I drive down streets in Blair, because a lot of the homes in Blair have been restored. A lot of the things we enjoy today are thanks to these people who came in with almost zero money, but with a lot of commitment and hard work. They created what we call Washington County, even what we call Nebraska."



COURTESY

The barn at the Old McDonald Farm was used for barn dances in the early 18th century, and is still used to host barn dance events today.



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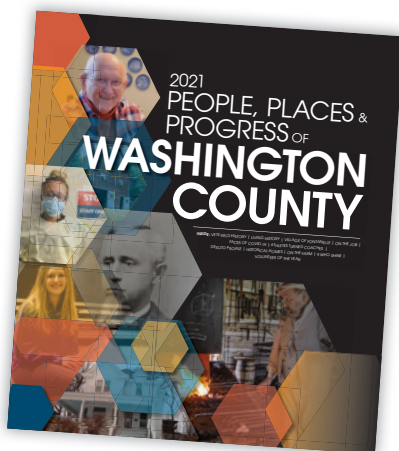
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COUNTY GRADS HAVE TAKEN WHAT THEY'VE LEARNED AND BECOME TEAM LEADERS

Students at Blair, Arlington and Fort Calhoun High Schools have the opportunity to join athletic teams in the fall, winter and spring every school year.

If they take the chance, student athletes can expect to practice, play and, most importantly, sweat. They sweat from hard work practicing new and old skills, developing team chemistry and learning their responsibilities.

Athletic lessons can stick, too. Through life, Washington County high school graduates carry with them their experiences as Bears, Eagles and Pioneers.

Sometimes, those former BHS, AHS and FCHS athletes take those experiences and pay them forward through coaching. They take their influences and teach the next generation of student-athletes, impacting the futures of those teenagers as well.

BROWN

TOOK COACHING LESSON FROM HIS DAYS AT AHS

Coach Ken Ritzdorf's basketball program was on fire when Clint Brown was growing up.

The Arlington Eagles won a state title in 1985 and, though he wasn't much younger than them, the 1990 AHS grad looked up to guys like Lonnie Graver, Lance Swanson, Brian Greunke and Troy Brainard. Brown participated in music and

plays, but sports are what his young life revolved around.

When he got to high school, the current Abilene Christian University defensive coordinator stood out on the football field. Still, his coaches — Brian Moeller and Steve Johnson — gave it to him straight.

"They're the first guys who sat me down and told me I could do more," Brown said.

The lesson upset the teenage him, but he's carried the point with him since. When he sits down and talks with Division I college football players now, he tells them the truth just like his Eagles coaches did.

Becoming a coach

After his days at AHS, Brown walked onto the Nebraska football



COURTESY JEREMY ENLOW

Abilene Christian defensive coordinator Clint Brown, right, an AHS grad, celebrates with a player in 2019.

team.

The linebacker worked his way up to second string during one of the best stretches in Cornhuskers history, but then saw himself drop down the pecking order. The reason, however, wasn't what he thought.

Brown's coaches saw plenty of value in the senior, but they saw it most in his ability to set an example and lead. They told him he could help them mold a young freshman recruit into the next Blackshirt star.

That freshman, Jay Foreman, went onto an eight-year NFL career.

"That's what got me," Brown said.

The Arlington grad's coaching career built from there. He became a student assistant, helped coach at Nebraska Wesleyan, became a grad assistant at the University of Nebraska at Omaha and then did the same at New Mexico State.

After a stint at Bethel College in Kansas, he returned to New Mexico State and, eventually, returned for a job in his home state at Wayne State.

"It was kind of a wild ride," Brown admits.

That ride slowed, however, when the defensive coordinator landed at South Dakota State in 2009. He stayed for 10 seasons, starting his family in Brookings. He no longer wanted to be the coach bouncing around the

country, subjecting his wife and daughter to the moves — until it was time.

Abilene Christian

Brown's run with the Jackrabbits was a success. The team became a regular FCS playoff participant.

Abilene Christian, though, was a good opportunity for a coach from Arlington to prove himself once again.

Brown believes in coaching loyalty from his days at Nebraska, but he also knows coaches today are judged by their progression. If someone stays in the same spot for too long, the outside perception is that they have nowhere else to go.

So, seeking a challenge, Brown made a career move after a decade at South Dakota State.

"I've never had an issue betting on myself," he said.

Now in Texas, the coach still carries his hometown with him, bringing a small-town, walk-on mentality to his job each day. In recruiting, Brown likes to find those diamonds in the rough — multi-sport athletes who made names for themselves in their community, but not far beyond it.

"I lived it," Brown said.

The Arlington grad knows how it works, and how the truth is an important tool to his career.

"I'VE NEVER
HAD AN
ISSUE BETTING
ON MYSELF."

— Clint Brown

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Phil Seevers surrounded himself with sports growing up during the 1970s and '80s in Blair.

Athletics were a family affair. His father, Gary, was a coach.

“Coaching is in the Seevers blood,” the 1985 Blair High School grad said.

Like his father, Phil wanted to be a coach, too.

Becoming a coach

Seevers' career on the bench and in the dugout was influenced by his family, Mike Lehl, Dave Warrick, Joe Unstad, Mark Gutschow, Concordia University coach Larry Oetting and many more.

It was Warrick and Unstad who let him work with younger kids growing up and Gutschow who brought him into the Blair American Legion baseball fold in 1988. He helped coach the Midgets for the first time during the summer between his junior and senior seasons on the Concordia football team, where he went on to have a hall of fame-worthy career.

Seevers always thought he'd go on to coach football — he was a star quarterback for the Bulldogs in college — but while teaching at Fairbury he earned the basketball job. His teams were tough, but never reached the Class B state tournament.

Instead, the Jeffs made the C1 bracket and in 1995 snapped Wahoo's 47-game winning streak during the first round of a runner-up run.

Seevers' top player at Fairbury was Jon Beerbohm, who went to play collegiate hoops at Boston College.

The BHS grad then coached at York in the late 1990s with future Nebraska Cornhusker football player Aaron Golliday as his standout. Soon after, though, Seevers gave up teaching and, subsequently, coaching for new career opportunities.

“I didn't get out of coaching because I didn't love it,” he said. His actions later in life proved it.

York softball

Seevers' wife, Danyel, got him back into a coaching role when she started the York softball program. Initially, he'd help out, but joined the staff full-time soon thereafter.

Danyel's team accomplished its first district title in 2012 just a few years after she started the program and overhauled how softball was done in York. Her husband was there alongside her, too.

Together, the Seevers were able to coach their daughters, Karlee and Abbey, with Karlee earning a spot on the Nebraska roster. She's currently a junior right-handed pitcher for the Huskers.

The father said it was difficult at times coaching his own children in such a competitive family, but “overall, it was a great experience.” His son Ryan was the Dukes' biggest fan, but both Danyel and Phil

'COACHING IS IN THE SEEVERS BLOOD'



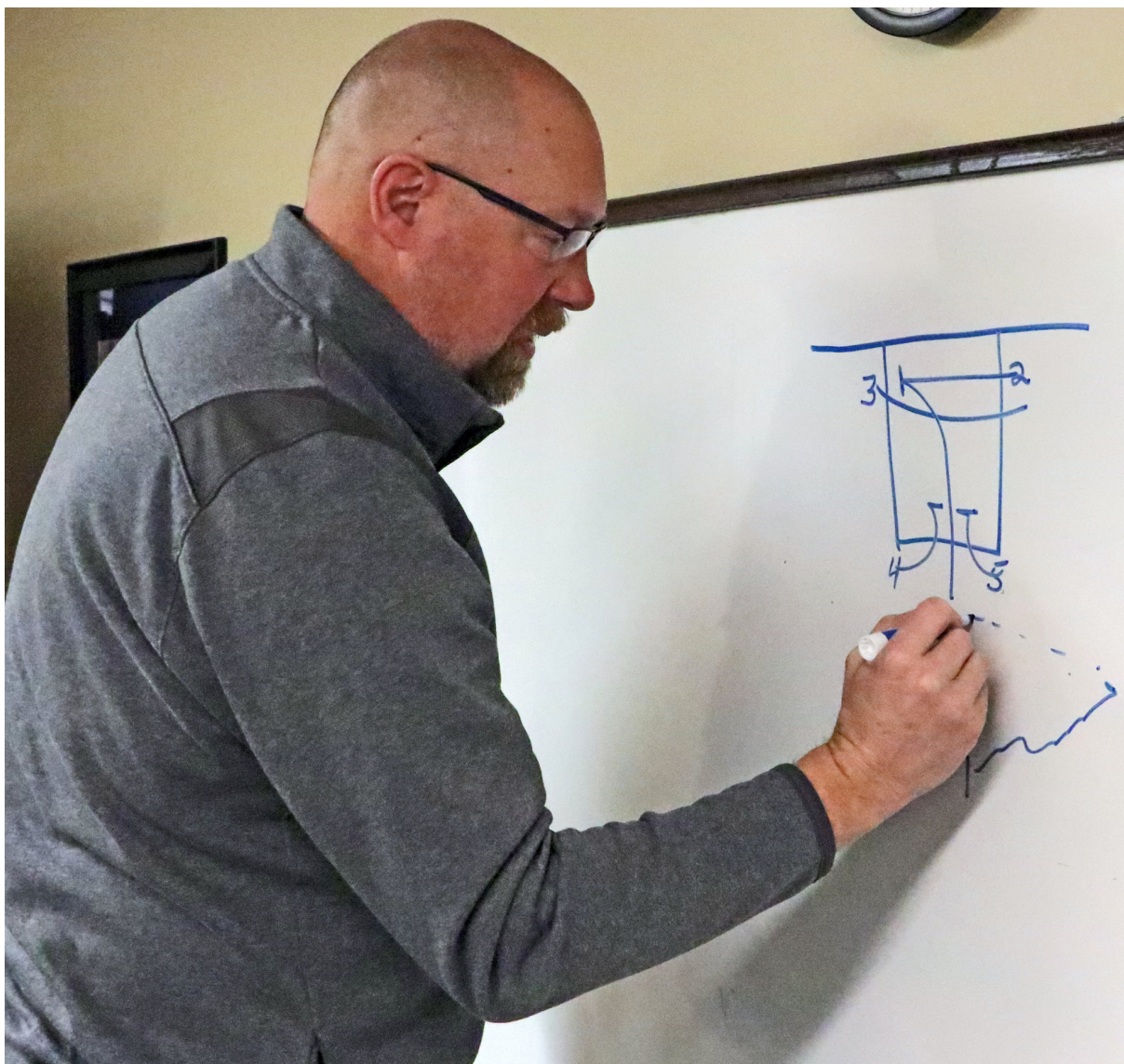
COURTESY PHOTO

The Seevers pose for a family photo after York's win in a 2016 district final. Phil, left, a BHS grad, is with Karlee, from left, Danyel, Ryan and Abbey.

stepped away from the program they built in 2019 to spend more family time together.

Seevers says his only regret, if he has one, was not winning a state softball title. That said, he's

still so thankful to have coached as long as he has and to have done it all through his influences in Blair during the 1970s and '80s.



GRANT EGGER | ENTERPRISE PUBLISHING

Scott Flynn has been a coach for nearly 30 years after graduating from BHS in 1986.

FLYNN BRINGS PARENT-TAUGHT WORK ETHIC TO COACHING

Blair High School sports participation was a big part of Scott Flynn's life during the mid-1980s.

It was also a way to get out of chores on the farm. If he had the choice between football or basketball practice and chores, he'd pick practice.

But Flynn's parents didn't raise a lazy kid. Far

from it. They instilled work ethic.

During one instance of Saturday chores, the future Otte Blair Middle School science teacher and coach complained to his father about his BHS playing time. His dad looked up and made his message clear.

"Earn your spot."

Becoming a coach

"I wanted to do something in ag," Flynn said last December.

After his high school graduation in 1986, the teacher moved on to Midland University, which had presented him the opportunity to play both basketball and football under coaches Rich McGill and Don Watchorn, respectively.

Soon after, though, Flynn realized doing both wasn't in his best interests. He chose hoops and McGill encouraged him to get an education degree.

The BHS grad agreed and eventually started a long career by tutoring at Arlington High School.

"That's when I knew," Flynn said.

It was a slow journey, but sports had led him to teaching and coaching.

"Coaching is teaching," the farmer's son added.

Through all of his coaching influences at Blair and Midland — his parents, Dave Warrick, Mike Lehl, Dennis Sellon, Watchorn and McGill among them — Flynn learned how to pull the best out of kids in the classroom and on the field. He started his coaching career with stints at David City Aquinas and Fremont, but returned to Blair in 1996 as a volunteer assistant on the boys basketball team.

"I wanted to come back to my hometown," the coach said. "It had that much of an influence."

Since, Flynn has served as the Bears' girls basketball coach, boys basketball coach and a football assistant for more than 20 years. His most recent assignment has been middle school hoops.

"It's really the purest form," he said of seventh- and eighth-grade basketball. "Everybody should coach it once."

Coaching highlights

Flynn's favorite part of coaching Otte Blair basketball is seeing a child who's never made a bucket score. The Bears cheer their teammate and the coach knows the kid has earned the acknowledgement.

More specifically, Flynn's favorite high school coaching moments involve Krantz Field and his 1998 girls basketball team. The latter squad reached state and his cousin was on the team.

The football highlights include state semi-finals berths in 2009 and 2010 as an assistant coach to another influence, Darren Harsin. But, most of all, he loved coaching a younger generation of Flynn's — his among them.

The first time Fort Calhoun wrestling's Drew Welchert remembers coaching was on the baseball diamond.

The 2002 FCHS graduate was helping his father instruct his younger brother Jake's youth team. The kids were about 11 years old.

Both Drew and Jake, a 2005 graduate, played sports year-round growing up. The younger Welchert thinks it probably kept him out of trouble.

The brothers were neighbors to longtime Pioneers wrestling coach Jim Meyer. Though his favorite sport was baseball, Drew spent a lot of time with Daniel Meyer, the coach's son, and developed into a state-championship level grappler.

In wrestling, practice partners help each other get better. The sport itself lends itself to teaching.

"We're here to learn wrestling and we're here to teach others wrestling," Drew said.

Jake believes lessons are passed down from coaches, but also fellow wrestlers.

"I know my brothers' group had an impact on our class," he said.

Becoming coaches

"I might still be working on that," Drew joked when asked when he started considering himself a coach.

That said, both Fort Calhoun wrestling coaches had plenty of experience leading youngsters on the mat before taking over the Pioneer program in 2016.

Jake first coached while a college sophomore in Lincoln. Through college intramurals, he was offered the opportunity to work with the Lincoln High wrestling program.

There, the younger Welchert brother learned about working with kids who grew up different than him. One such athlete had some legal issues while in high school, but eventually resolved them, graduated and went onto college.

Drew's last stop before coming back to his alma mater was at Omaha Northwest. The situation was



Brothers wrestled at FCHS NOW COACH THERE

GRANT EGGER | ENTERPRISE PUBLISHING

Fort Calhoun wrestling coaches Drew, left, and Jake Welchert took over the Pioneer program in 2016 when their coach — Jim Meyer — retired.

**"WE'RE HERE TO
LEARN WRESTLING
AND WE'RE HERE
TO TEACH OTHERS
WRESTLING."**

— Drew Welchert

similar to at Lincoln High — kids went through a lot more within their larger city than he had in Calhoun.

He said it was a great experience learning about and finding wrestling success with those Huskies.

Fort Calhoun wrestling was probably the only coaching job that could have gotten Drew to leave Northwest.

"It was an aspiration," Drew said. "But that was some big shoes to fill."

To follow the career of his coach, Meyer, he asked Jake to help him lead the next generation of Pioneers.

"I would only do it if you're willing to do it with me," Drew recalled thinking.

Coaching influences

Meyer is a big influence in how

the Welchert brothers lead the Fort Calhoun program today, but he isn't the only one. Drew said all of the coaches he's work with are, while Jake referenced Monte Christensen and Jim Ward, specifically, from his hometown.

Drew, who played saxophone in his FCHS days, said even band director Mark Jones had an influence on his coaching career.

Altogether, the Welcherts' experiences have led them in how they guide the program they grew up in.

"We compliment each other pretty well," Jake said, noting that the job has helped keep two brothers close as well.

Taylor Stewart's first game as head coach was stressful. "I'm not going to lie," the 2015 Blair High School grad said.

The first-year Tri County girls basketball coach admits feelings of nausea prior to the opening tip last December. Just five years removed from her high school graduation, and less than two after her final days at the University of Nebraska-Kearney, Stewart led the Trojans against Wilber-Clatonia and came up short.

"I was frustrated for several days after," she said. Her competitiveness built as a Bear couldn't let the disappointment go.

But, as the season went on, Stewart's young team responded to her coaching as she also learned her way. The first signs of progress were the Trojans' effort and positive attitude against a tough Diller-Odell squad.

"It's hard to lose," the new head coach said. "But we're still growing."

Growing up

Stewart was a three-sport athlete at BHS, competing in volleyball, basketball



COURTESY PHOTO

Blair High School graduate Taylor Stewart, right, is in her first season coaching the Tri County girls basketball team. She concluded her time as a Bear in 2015 before graduating from the University of Nebraska-Kearney in 2019.

MULTI-SPORT BEAR STARTS HER COACHING CAREER AT TRI COUNTY

and track.

The coach's upbringing in a sports family left behind many memories of shooting hoops from a young age. She recalls YMCA basketball games and club ball once she hit Arbor Park Intermediate School. Success during the annual Midwest Invitational Tournament — more prominently known as the MIT — in Lincoln stands out as a highlight.

In high school, Stewart's favorite sport was volleyball, but she believes her Bears basketball team was better than its record indicated. In track, Blair coach Bryan Soukup valued her as a pole vaulter and let her help lead athletes through the event at meets.

"He was preparing me to be a coach," Stewart said.

Becoming a coach

The 2015 high school grad attended UNK until her graduation in 2019, staying involved with intramural sports as she earned her teaching degree.

Stewart then landed her first job at Tri County, a rural school about 50 miles southwest of Lincoln, and had an "interesting" first year capped by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Going into her second school year, she received a phone call from her superintendent.

"I thought I was in trouble," Stewart joked.

Instead, he asked that she become the Trojans new head basketball coach. She accepted, though her schedule became hectic as she built up safe physical education curriculum and laid the foundation of her new hoops program. Support of her family and fiancé got her through.

Also, Stewart reached out to basketball minds from her days at BHS. Her former coach, Shawn Ekwall, and current Bears coach Matt Aschoff provided a helping hand as one Blair's own started her coaching career.

Together, Stewart and the Tri County Trojans are growing.

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It's a common line, and one uttered on farmland over and over again. While some who make their living from the earth do so with top-of-the-line machinery, others make do with classic equipment passed down through generations. They can do that because tractors were built to last and do across Washington County, Nebraska and the Corn Belt as a whole.

But there's more to the agriculture business than working the land, and harvesting corn and soybeans. Sure, it starts with a farmer and his Farmall, but it extends to parts, maintenance and, in some rare cases, an idea to fulfill the needs of local beer brewers.

At top, Josh Christensen of Christensen Hop Farm stands in front of his 1988 Wolf WHE 280 hop harvester, a German machine rare in the United States.



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It's what's written on a bright red sticker stuck to the side of Josh Christensen's towering, 33-year-old mechanism situated in a similarly massive building just south of Fort Calhoun off of U.S. Highway 75. The German script reads, "Check the belt run during commissioning," according to Google Translate.

The apparatus, meanwhile, is a 1988 Wolf WHE 280 hop harvester. The structure it resides in is the home of operations to Christensen Hop Farm.

Christensen started picking hops four years ago after a conversation with his brother-in-law about making beer. He started off with a few hop plants next to his home, but developed that start into a small farming operation where most of the work was done by hand.

"That isn't much fun, actually," Chris-

tensen joked.

Abe's Trash Service is the family business, but his grandfather was a farmer before his father, John, amassed a tractor collection of his own along the way.

Christensen, though, has the most rare farm equipment of all. As far as he knows, just two Wolf WHE 280s are operational in the United States. One is in Indiana, while the other sits on flat, Washington County farm ground that's also produced corn and a cotton crop in the past.

The 1988 harvester came from Michigan. Most hops are grown in the Pacific Northwest, but the Wolf WHE 280 seller operated in The Wolverine State.

It took two shipping containers to get the machine to Nebraska, and the Michigan man came along to help Christensen assemble it. It took little time with the right people.

"It's a simple machine," the Fort Calhoun man said.

Essentially, the harvester works much like a combine, reducing hop bines — or "vines" — to the cones, which are used by brewers to make beer. A series of belts and drums break down the plant, eventually sending the cones down a conveyor belt to the dryer. The process takes just more than a minute, but the dryer takes 16 hours to take the crop from a 79-percent moisture reading to just 8 or 9. The hops are then converted into bales and can be frozen.

The harvest season happens at the end of August through the middle of September with most of the in-field work done by hand with Christensen's kids playing a big role. The Fort Calhoun hop farmer built his own picking wagon for just \$2,000 and pulls it with a John Deere 4020 tractor.

Christensen has been to 100 breweries in the region and has built his business relationships face-to-face. Brewers generally appreciate local products as long as quality is what they get.

With Christensen's hops, quality is upheld. According to his website, the list of brewers who've used his product include Upstream Brewing Company, Benson Brewery and Farnam House Brewing Company of Omaha; Code Beer Company and Emphyrean Brewing Company in Lincoln; Jukes Ale Works of Elkhorn; Kros Strain Brewing in La Vista; Sandhills Brewing in Taylor; Loop Brewing Company of McCook; Lazy Horse Brewing in Ohio; HWY 14 Brewing Company of Albion; and Keg Creek Brewing of Glenwood, Iowa.



The Wolf WHE 280 hop harvester separates the hop cones from the plant itself.



Josh Christensen pulls his hop picking wagon with a John Deere 4020.



A VOW TO KEEP 'EM CRAWLING

Michael Van Der Hart and Shilo Schank are behind the day-to-day operations of Keep 'Em Crawling in Blair, specializing in John Deere crawler parts and restoration efforts.

Keepp 'Em Crawling, Inc., has connected Michael Van Der Hart to nearly every corner of the country.

Blair's John Deere crawler restoration and parts business once sent him to a suburb of Los Angeles. There he picked up a 430c tractor that had spent its years of service on a lemon orchard.

Van Der Hart took it all in. He learned about California dust, saw lemon and avocado production in person and recognized the necessity of citrus fenders on Keep 'Em Crawling's newest machine.

The fenders gave the crawler a "slick look," he said.

Van Der Hart's unique Washington County tractor business, largely ran by Shilo Schank and he, was all started by his father.

Business origins

"What guy out there doesn't want a bulldozer?" Van Der Hart asked. "A tractor?"

His dad, Mark, certainly did from the first time he spotted a John Deere crawler from a school bus window during the 1970s. From that point forward, the eventual Blair business owner decided he would one day own one.

Many years later, on a trip to Oregon, Mark came across a pair of 1952 John Deere MCs in the weeds. He talked to the owner, who'd only sell the crawlers together, and sent his wife information about what he'd discovered.

Michael remembers his brothers and sisters emphatically answering, "yes," when asked if they were onboard with the family purchase. So, it was made and the machines were loaded up

and hauled back across several states to Nebraska. That's when a second discovery was made.

As Mark began to restore the MCs, he found that replacement parts were hard to come by. The Van Der Harts had to reach out to Oregon once again to a supplier, who just so happened to be on his way out of the business.

The Nebraska family stepped up and bought the retiree's crawler inventory, which led to the formation of Keep 'Em Crawling, a sister company to C&R Automotive — the Van Der Harts' shop.

As tractor business grew, Michael took the reins from his father. Mark still offers his expansive expertise and has a large hand in paperwork, but his son — who has helped with the automotive business since he was kid — gives all of his focus to tractors.

2-person team

"Mike's the walking encyclopedia of (the business)," Schank said, sitting next to her colleague inside the Keep 'Em Crawling building on the corner of 10th and State streets.

Her family, meanwhile, moved to Blair in 2010, meeting Michael's after their arrival.

As the Van Der Hart business built its name in restoration and the manufacturing of new replacement parts for classic farm equipment, a need for someone like Schank developed. About 3-4 years ago, she stepped in and brought with her photography skills to help sell Keep 'Em Crawling parts to those unable to stop in.

Schank also serves in inventory and bookkeeping, her long-held interest in the outdoors and agriculture lending perfectly to the business. She was intrigued, too, by the creativity involved in tractor manufacturing of the past. Folks then seemingly had less resources, but somehow solved all of the problems they had in making machines that would last.

The same attention to detail has floored Michael. Today, people struggle to rebuild these decades old crawlers even with all of the technology they possess. He thrives knowing he can provide some of that old school knowledge to John Deere owners across the country.

Picking up skills

Michael speaks fondly of his father and what he's built with C&R and Keep 'Em Crawling.

He said his dad can pull out a screwdriver and fix a tractor that no one — whole shops included — can't. Business remains busy because the Van Der Hart's can fix cars, tractors, boats and airplanes.

Michael, however, continues to build his own knowledge as it pertains to classic crawlers. Though not many of these machines reside in the Midwest, he hears from folks from across the country asking him questions about them.

"I've been amazed by the high-end collectors that have called," the Tekamah man said.

Through countless conversations with people from California to Vermont, and business transactions with folks from 49 states and Canada, Michael has learned so much about the machines he helps rebuild. The crawlers served their purpose first on orchards, but then developed uses in mining, logging and construction, too.

Like how owners have pride in their tractors, Keep 'Em Crawling is a source of great pride for Michael and his colleague, Schank. It's that pride they want to continue to foster, connecting with people from across the county.

"My goal is to have every kind of crawler," Michael said. He's well on his way.

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COUNTY MAN HAS LIFELONG APPRECIATION FOR TRACTORS



COURTESY PHOTO

At top, Robert Fuchs' family largely drives green John Deere's today, but he still has some red in his collection, including this 1954 Farmall Super H.

COURTESY PHOTO

At left, Robert Fuchs earned awards for his restoration of this John Deere 50 tractor.

“Ever since I was born.” Robert Fuchs has been a tractor guy for every one of his 77 years. As the Arlington man started his story, his wife Cheryl returned to the kitchen table with a photo album and two picture frames, spreading them out on top of the red-checkered tablecloth.

One of the two frames encapsulates an irreplaceable photo from seven decades ago, way before grain price updates were just a click away and farm equipment could be bought online. In the pic, a 3- or 4-year-old Robert sits on his father’s Farmall H.

Oswald Fuchs lived — and harvested corn and beans — on the same home place his son and daughter-in-law do now. Robert, meanwhile, started driving tractors when he was only 7.

“I plowed even then,” he said, chuckling about the block he used to reach the clutch pedal.

Robert always wanted to farm, and when his father retired he moved back into the farmhouse he’d grown up in. His whole life, Washington County was the place for him.

The Farmall tractors of yesteryear were “good ol’ rugged tractors,” according the Arlington man. But by the time the 3010 and



Robert Fuchs, 77, of Arlington has been interested in tractors since berth. He still has a framed photo of his 3-year-old self seated on a 1945 Farmall H owned by his father, Oswald.

GRANT EGGER | ENTERPRISE PUBLISHING

4010 John Deeres arrived and became staples, the Fuchs family switched allegiances from the red

brand. “Today, we’re basically green,” he said.

The 3010, which was first introduced in 1961 according to tractor-data.com, was a fine purchase.



Photo courtesy of Brenda Orr



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FONTANELLE PROFILE

“It’s just so handy,” Robert said. It was once his family’s largest tractors, but is now one of their smallest. “They’ll do what we need them to.”

Fuchs always appreciated driving and working with his farm equipment, but he also enjoyed restoration work on both cars and tractors. He’d make a tractor purchase from a farm sale, strip the machine down and sand blast it.

One of his prize John Deere restorations, a 50 tractor introduced in 1954, earned first-place honors at a 2-cylinder show in Iowa. The trophy remains among his model tractor collection in his

farmhouse’s basement.

“It was so nice,” Robert said of the 50, giving his son credit for his work on the tractor, too.

The John Deere is so nice that Fuchs doesn’t use it even today. It remains under a tarp in mint condition with every detail accounted for, including an authentic John Deere battery.

“You really couldn’t tell it from a brand new one,” he said.

Fuchs shared his skills for restoration, too. A Valley John Deere dealership would haul tractors to his shop for him to paint, switching out one project for another until Robert spruced up, he estimates,

100 machines.

For all of his years as a tractor connoisseur and farmer, Fuchs became a collector. He appreciates the machinery.

“If I thought I wanted one, I went out and got one,” he said.

And its for good reason Robert’s kept his classic machines all of these years. They were meant to last.

“Major companies that built the good tractors are still around today,” he said.

Fuchs hopes one day his family will inherit the tractors from him and keep them going still. He hopes they’ll have framed photos they’ll cherish, too.

“MAJOR COMPANIES that built the GOOD TRACTORS are STILL AROUND today.”

— ROBERT FUCHS



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Above, geese gather and float in the water along the lake shore at DeSoto NWR.

When the COVID-19 pandemic forced people home, finding ways to get sunlight and fresh air became important.

DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), located in both Iowa and Nebraska, served as a place for many of those who wanted to get out of the house.

DeSoto NWR, established in March 1958, provides trails, fishing, wildlife viewing and more. The visitor center, however, has not been open since March 2020.

The visitor center is home to a large display of artifacts of the Steamboat Bertrand of 1865. The Bertrand, which was on its way to Montana from St. Louis, Mo., hit a submerged log and wrecked in the Missouri River.

The wreckage was located on the



Trumpeter swans in the foreground eye a coyote and eagles at the edge of open water on Lake DeSoto at DeSoto NWR at sunup. The photograph was taken from Bob Starr Wildlife Overlook.

refuge by Sam Corbino and Jesse Pursell in 1968. The cargo was excavated by 1969 from 30 feet deep. More

than 250,00 artifacts were excavated from the buried steamboat. The artifacts are on permanent exhibition at

the museum.

"All those artifacts are housed there," Supervisory Park Ranger

Peter Rea said. “It’s amazing how pristine the conditions are.”

Employees of DeSoto NWR aren't letting the displays go into hiding.

“We’ve been doing weekly Facebook posts to highlight and give more background information on the Bertrand artifacts,” he said.

During the winter, not all the trails and things are open but there’s still plenty to see. April 15 is when the refuge opens up everything with more areas to explore.

One of the potential sites to see are birds of several varieties, elusive bobcats, coyotes, owls, turtles, otters and more.

“There is an assortment of stuff to see you,” Rea said. “It’s about being in the right place at the right time.”

While there is no guarantee what a person will see, migratory birds make their way through. Ducks, geese, trumpeter swans, bald eagles, deer and turkeys are possible.

Aside from watching birds, there are opportunities for hunting, archery, fishing and ice fishing if conditions allow for it. There’s even

Sun streams through trees covered with snow and ice along the Cottonwood trail at DeSoto Bend NWR on an early December afternoon.

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DESOTO PROFILE

mushroom hunting.

Rea said there's a lot of viewing that can be done while driving through and he suggested keeping a set of binoculars handy. There are three walking trails and a seasonal trail to a wetland that is open April 15 to Oct. 15 each year.

Rea said the refuge has seen changes over the years. Flooding in 2011 and 2019 change to landscape.

"A lot of trees died because of the flooding and a lot of younger trees just stop list after," he said. "The flood impacted roadways and some of the habitat has changed as well."

Rea said the refuge is anxious for things to get back to normal.

"We love the interaction with the visitors, but the safety of staff volunteers and visitors is of our most important to us."



Trumpeter Swans land on Lake DeSoto at DeSoto NWR.

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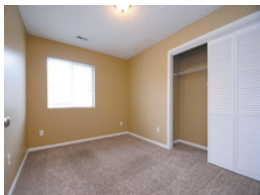
Fish Fry



Members of the Kennard Volunteer Fire Department, Front Row: Jen Munger, Chris Potter, Brian Nielsen, Kylee Nielsen, Maria Bottger, Taylor Clark, Chad Clark, Cord Hansen, Joe Burmood, Ann Allen; Back Row: Jacob Miszuk, Nick Miszuk, Will Rhea, Bob Potter, Jack Lorsch, Jason Lorsch, Mike McCaslin, Nick Bottger, Grant Lurvey; Not Pictured: Abby Allen, Aubrey Nielsen, Blake Wakefield, Jim Miller, Jim Nielsen, Mike Andreasen, Jeff Walford, Jamie Miszuk, Phil Duckworth, Dylan Morgan.



Left: Trumpeter Swans fly over Lake DeSoto at DeSoto Bend NWR. Right: Geese and swans enjoy the water at Bob Starr Overlook at DeSoto Bend National Wildlife Refuge.



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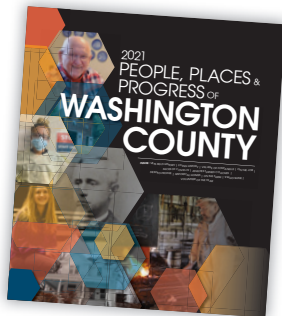
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- **2020:** Mark Hodson, Blair
- **2019:** Don and Dixie Trevarthen, Blair
- **2018:** Tom Macdissi, Fort Calhoun
- **2017:** Tracy and Mary Oliver, Herman
- **2016:** Lori Sandhoefner, Fort Calhoun
- **2015:** Tim Oelke, Fort Calhoun
- **2014:** Pam Mathiesen, Blair
- **2013:** Gary Lambrecht, Kennard, and Friends of the Blair Public Library
- **2012:** Girl Scout Troop 40186
- **2011:** Dr. Carol Weckmuller, Blair, and Fort Calhoun Enhancement Committee
- **2010:** Jim Miller, Kennard
- **2009:** Dee Stokes, Blair, and Friends of the Jeanette Hunt Animal Shelter
- **2008:** John and Maxine Shotwell, Blair, and Wayne Royuk, Arlington
- **2007:** Russell Cowley, Blair, and Arlington Youth Sports
- **2006:** Jim Morley, Fort Calhoun, and Blair Parents for Education
- **2005:** Lynn Edgell, Blair
- **2004:** Father Lyle Martin, Blair
- **2003:** Edith Solomon, Blair
- **2002:** Washington County Recycling Association
- **2001:** Chuck and Wanda Blankenbeckler, Blair
- **2000:** Joe Chapman, Blair
- **1999:** Dave Warrick, Blair

JOE BURNS |
ENTERPRISE PUBLISHING
Vaughn Christensen, 89, of Blair was selected as the 2021 Washington County Volunteer of the Year. Among his volunteer efforts, Christensen makes cookies for his church's weekly meal and for his neighbors.



A NEIGHBORLY VOLUNTEER

Christensen has spent life helping others

Vaughn Christensen was a young boy growing up in the early 1930s on a farm south of Minden when he learned about the importance of helping others.

"There was no money, but we had a little crop and we had animals so we had food," he said. "Some of our neighbors didn't."

If the neighbors needed help, Christensen's father was ready. If they needed food, his mother was there with a meal.

"We just grew up knowing that we helped other people," Christensen said. "If somebody needed something, you helped them."

Christensen used that lesson to

help others in his daily life, volunteering for various organizations, including the Washington County Recycling Association, Danish American Archives and Library, Joseph's Coat, MCH Auxiliary Sale and the Lions Club.

The 89-year-old has also served First Lutheran Church as a greeter, usher, communion assistant, a confirmation mentor and he bakes dozens of cookies for the church's weekly Wednesday night meal.

Christensen also continues to help his neighbors, assisting with mail, newspapers, garbage and even taking them to the doctor when needed. He is often the first to greet a new neighbor and gives

them cookies.

It's that dedication that has earned the Blair man the 23rd Annual Washington County Volunteer of the Year award from Enterprise Media Group. Christensen was nominated by his neighbors Betty J. Heinssen and Peggy Young.

"He is and has been for years a valuable asset to our community," Young said. "We thank him royally for his service to all of us."

"It's just something I do. People need help," Christensen said. "I've got great neighbors, great friends and they're not afraid to call me if they need something."

Christensen, who worked in education as a teacher, counselor and

VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

administrator for more than 30 years, first came to Blair in 1949 as a student at Dana College. That's where he met his wife, Clarice, who died six years ago.

After completing his education, he taught in Bassett, Newman Grove, Missouri Valley, Iowa, Griswold, Iowa, and Hastings.

In 1980, he returned to Blair to work in the admissions office at Dana College. He worked there five years before beginning his own business selling promotional items — a job he just gave up two years ago.

"When I turned 88, that was enough," he said.

Christensen has been a member of the Lions Club for nearly 65 years, joining in 1957 in Missouri Valley, Iowa. Christensen regularly collects eyeglasses for the club at several locations in Blair.

"I go around about once a month and pick them

"It's more fun to give than receive. You can see how you make people happy."

—VAUGHN CHRISTENSEN

up," he said. "I get at least 100 a month. It's amazing."

For more than 20 years, Christensen could be found every Saturday at the Washington County Recycling Center. He only stopped doing that two years ago.

Prior to the coronavirus pandemic, Christensen, whose grandparents immigrated from Denmark, volunteered at the Danish American Archive and Library in Blair.

"I was copying papers and books and whatever they had," he said.

For many years, Christensen and his wife volunteered with the MCH Auxiliary Rummage sale, running the toy department.

Lately, he can be found in his kitchen making dozens of cookies — he estimated between 75 to 150 — for First Lutheran Church's Wednesday evening meal. Christensen recently had three tubs of cookies — strawberry, blueberry and ginger snaps — waiting on his counter to deliver. He does this every week.

"I just think it's something that needs to be done," he said.

Christensen encourages others to volunteer as it can be rewarding.

"It's more fun to give than receive. You can see how you make people happy," he said.

2021 VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR NOMINEES

Enterprise Media Group received 18 nominations for the 23rd Annual Volunteer of the Year award. This year's winner, Vaughn Christensen, will receive a \$500 donation to the organization of his choice.

EMG Publisher Mark Rhoades noted the tough decision he had in choosing this year's winner.

"Picking the volunteer of the year is one of my favorite jobs of the year. It's fun to read all the entries, and it's great to honor someone who's contributed years of service to our communities," Rhoades said. "It's also one of my least favorite jobs because I have to choose just one, and there are so many other great candidates that all deserve to be recognized. I also want to thank everyone who took the time to send in nominees for this award. Without those nominations, this award couldn't exist."

Other nominees included:

• **Bill Smutko, Blair**, for his work as the unit president for the Washington County Salvation Army. Smutko works all year long to raise funds for those in the county who need financial assistance and children who need school supplies. He also heads up the Red Kettle campaign each year.

• **Judy Boyd, Fort Calhoun**, for her work as the president of the Fort Calhoun Enhancement Committee. She is also highly involved as a member of Abiding Faith Baptist Church, making up baskets for those in need. She also helped with the church's kitchen remodel and decorates

the church for each season.

• **Robert Tichota, Blair**, for his 53 years of service to the Blair Volunteer Fire Department. For many years, Tichota served as the Fire Prevention Committee Chair and would go to schools each October to talk to students for Fire Prevention Week. He is also a longtime member of Blair Rescue.

• **Carl Lorenzen, Blair**, for his commitment to the Jackson-Peck Post 274 American Legion in Herman and his work for the Veterans Tribute Plaza in Blair. He is also an active member of the Blair Kiwanis Club and is instrumental in working the Kiwanis pancake feed, lunch at the MCH Auxiliary Rummage Sale, a pre-Gateway Days barbecue in the park and the Halloween program.

• **Kevin Willis, Blair**, for his work with The Bridge helping victims of domestic violence. He also served as the DARE officer for Washington County, educating youth and bringing awareness to the dangers of drugs. He is a current board member for Joseph's Coat, previous member of the Blair Little League Board, served TeamMates of Blair and taught forensics at Blair High School for the SkillsUSA program. He also U.S. Air Force veteran and serves as a member of the Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Team. He is also a hospice volunteer.

• **Janine Carlson, Arlington**, for her work with Roots to Wings. She makes handmade tea towels for the organization and donates all the money made

from the towels. She also volunteers to help the farmers one to two times a week. She has also been actively involved in St. Paul's Lutheran Church with choir, praise team and creating a history book for the 150th anniversary of the church.

• **Emily Petersen, Blair**, for her work with multiple organizations, including Blair Bear Backers, Blair Area Community Foundation, Washington County Gives and outreach as an employee of Washington County Bank.

• **Jordan Rishel, Blair**, for her work through Blair Rotary Club, Blair Optimist Club and Washington County Gives.

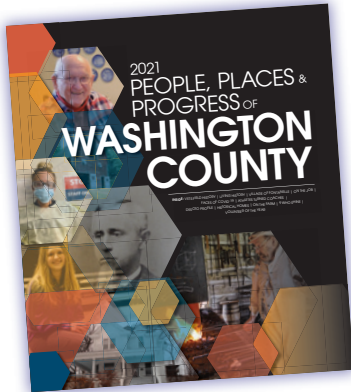
• **Loren Havekost, Blair**, for his 27 years of service to the Blair Airport Authority. He currently serves as treasurer of the Blair Area Community Foundation and as been involved with Washington County Recycling Association since its inception.

• **Blair Fire and Rescue Department** for its continued service to the community.

• **Bob Coffey, Blair**, for his work as president of the Dana College Foundation, Dana College Alumni and Friends Association and the Blair Area Community Foundation.

• **Jason Gillespie, Blair**, for his volunteer work with the Blair Police Department, Blair Special Olympics, checking on the elderly, maintaining the Healing Garden Railroad at Memorial Community Hospital and Health System and serving as a greeter at the hospital.

Thank You!



The Enterprise advertising staff would like to thank all the Washington County Area Businesses that made Progress 2021 so successful!

We're proud to bring you this special publication each year, but we couldn't do it without you!

The Enterprise news staff would like to thank the persons and firms in the area for their outstanding cooperation with this project.

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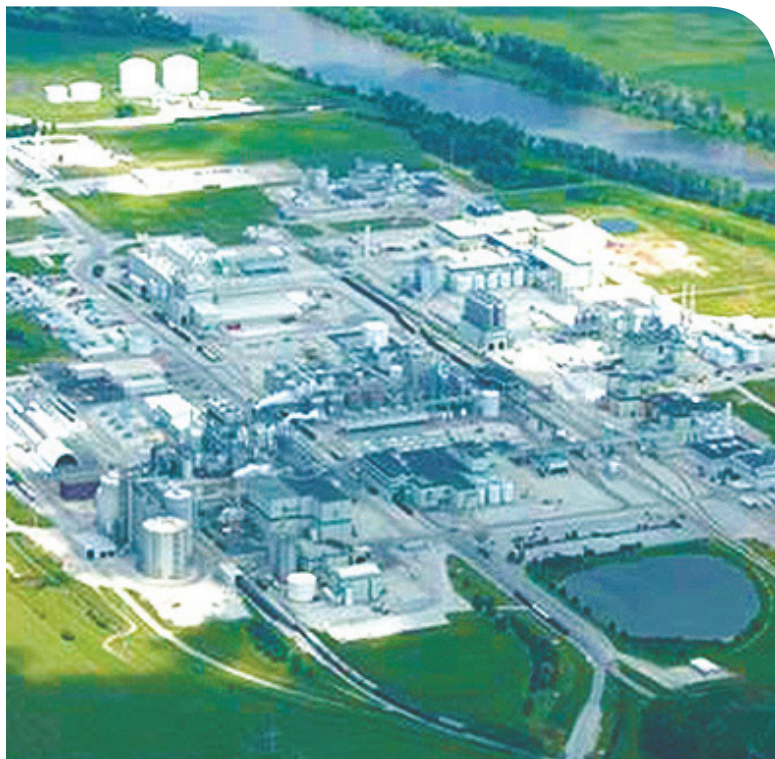
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2021 Chamber & Community Events:

Ladies Day Out (Retail Event) - First Thursday of Each Month

2nd Annual Washington County Show & Shine Traveling Car Show -
Thursdays, May 6-October 14

Washington County Chamber Golf Outing & Fundraiser - May 14 @ River
Wilds Golf Course

Yard of The Week - June-August

Gateway to the West Days - June 10-13

2nd Annual Business & Brews: Business Expo and Beer Tasting -
August 27, 6-9 pm

Innagural Wine Walk - September 25, 5-7 pm

Scarecrow Decorating Contest - October 1-31

Brightly Shining Residential Lights Contest - November 27-December 31

Small Business Saturday - November 27

Washington County Gives - November 30

Holiday Window Decorating Contest: Business Edition - December

*Monthly Chamber Coffee & Connections, Lunch & Learns, and
After Hours Networking Events listed on our website*



*"shall be a catalyst in the orderly
promotion of growth and community
development of Washington County"*

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Jordan A. Rishel, IOM, Executive Director
Jordan@WashingtonCountyChamberNE.com

Lisa Thompson, Marketing and Events Coordinator
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