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DIANNE GIRMUS/Tribune

Sadie Birky (left) and Claire Kimbrough, of the Strang 4-Bar H Club, are shown with the barn quilts they created to adorn the Fillmore County Fairgrounds 4-H and FFA Show Arena building.

Going to the wall

FILLMORE COUNTY 4-H'ERS
DRESS UP FAIRGROUNDS
WITH BARN QUILTS

DIANNE GIRMUS
tribune@hastingstribune.com

GENEVA — Fillmore County 4-H members who traveled to Washington, D.C., in 2018 for the Citizenship Washington Focus week have enhanced the Fillmore County Fairgrounds with an eye-catching service project. Sadie Birky and Claire Kimbrough, of the Strang 4-Bar H Club, each created a wooden barn quilt that now adorns the 4-H Show Arena building. The two quilts represent the organizations that serve the building. The green, white and black one, created by Kimbrough, is for the 4-H organization; and the blue, gray and gold one stands for FFA and was made by Birky. The Citizenship Washington Focus week is billed as a life-changing week that empowers 4-H'ers to take their leadership skills to the next level for themselves and their communities. The annual learning experience for teens age 14-19 has been held at the National 4-H Youth Conference Center for more than 50 years. It teaches youth the importance of civic and social responsibilities to become more engaged, proactive citizens and leaders; to exchange ideas, practice respect and form friendships with other 4-H youth from around the United States; and to live in a global economy by improving public speaking, problem-solving and professional skills. Birky and Kimbrough, both 16, will be juniors in high school and have seven or eight years of 4-H experience. Along with 4-H member Clint Oldehoeft of Exeter, the girls left Nebraska June 21, 2018, in anticipation of seeing how laws were made. They were gone for nine days. They visited New York City and Philadelphia three days before their week in Washington began. Both girls said they enjoyed seeing "The Lion King" on Broadway, the 9/11 Museum and the One World Observatory that included an elevator ride to the top that concluded with a 360-degree view of New York City.

Their days in Washington were packed — beginning at 7 a.m. and most ending at 10:30 p.m. They were a mixture of workshops, committee meetings, tours and special events to attend. The girls said they had a great time and learned a great deal about the federal government. "We learned what each branch of government does," Birky said. "And we became aware of how hard the government branches have to work to turn a bill into a law." A special event planned for them was the opportunity to meet 3rd District U.S. Rep. Adrian Smith, R-Neb., and listen to him speak. "We got to eat breakfast with Congressman Adrian Smith and we also got photos with him by the Capitol," Kimbrough said. New opportunities the 4-H'ers got to experience included the chance to do something life-changing, experience summer leadership, learn from 4-H role models, stay at the national home of 4-H, and join a legacy of 4-H citizenship.

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HU: Response to outage 'really good'

BUT MANAGER SAYS
AUTOMATED SYSTEM
COULD KEEP
CUSTOMERS BETTER
INFORMED IN FUTURE

TONY HERRMAN
therman@hastingstribune.com

Even though most Hastings Utilities customers who lost power during the storm that occurred overnight June 20-21 were back on quickly, there is room for improvement in emergency response. That was the message HU Manager Kevin Johnson shared during a post mortem update about the effects of that storm as part of the Hastings Utility Board meeting Thursday. "I thought we did a really good job," he said. Johnson said while about 3,500 HU customers lost power, about

3,300 of those were back on "fairly quick." "Because we knew where to go and what feeders to hit when we got to the service lines," he said. Staff members assembled for a quick response. "I feel like there's always opportunity for us to look back in hindsight and see where we can get better," Johnson said. Hastings Utilities is still too paper-based when it comes to storm response, Johnson said. He said HU director of operations Lee Vrooman, HU manager of customer accounts Brian Strom, HU director of marketing and energy supply Derek Zeisler, as well as Kevin Schawang, who is information technology

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Utility customers to receive information about solar options

TONY HERRMAN
therman@hastingstribune.com

Hastings Utilities will soon play host to customer informational meetings about the city's 6,000-panel 1.5 megawatt AC solar project. Derek Zeisler, HU director of marketing and energy supply, told members of the Hastings Utility Board during their regular meeting Thursday the project is on schedule to go online in early September. He said racking and panels for the project should go up next week. "The rain is a nuisance, but hasn't seemed to slow them down much, so we're

pushing forward with that," he said. The first phase of the solar project will include 6,012 panels within three arrays just west of Hastings Municipal Airport. Pamphlets with information about pricing for participation in the project will be sent out with customer bills. "We're excited to get this out," Zeisler said. "Now that we have the rates set we'll have something we can work with the customers." A bill-forecasting tool should soon be available at cityofhastings.org/solar.

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Questions about Nebraska execution drugs may go unanswered

CORRECTIONS
DIRECTOR WON'T HAVE
TO TESTIFY BEFORE
LAWMAKERS ABOUT
THE STATE'S LETHAL
INJECTION PROTOCOL

GRANT SCHULTE
Associated Press

LINCOLN — Nebraska's corrections director won't have to testify before lawmakers about the state's lethal injection protocol or how prison officials obtained the drugs used in an execution last year, the state's top court ruled Friday.

The Nebraska Supreme Court sided with the state corrections department, which sought to block a subpoena from the Legislature's Judiciary Committee that would have required corrections director Scott Frakes to answer questions about his department's lethal injection practices. The Judiciary Committee ordered Frakes to appear at a public hearing last year, months before Nebraska executed its first inmate by lethal injection. Committee members issued the

subpoena in response to a complaint from state Sen. Ernie Chambers, a death penalty opponent who wanted to question Frakes under oath. The court declared the issue moot because the committee's membership has since changed. Most of the senators on the original committee aren't in office now because they declined to seek re-election, lost their seat to challengers or were forced out by term limits. "Even if we were to agree with the senators' legal position, we could not grant the relief they

seek," the court wrote in its collective opinion. "This prevents this court from reaching the substantive issues raised by the parties." A spokeswoman for Nebraska Attorney General Doug Peterson said state attorneys were pleased with the ruling and will continue to review it to see if any further steps are necessary. Peterson, a Republican, supports capital punishment, and officials in his office have said lawmakers didn't consult them before they issued the subpoena to Frakes.

Chambers said he hadn't yet read the opinion and wanted time to review it before commenting on it. Peterson filed the lawsuit on the corrections department's behalf, setting up a rare legal battle between the state's legislative and executive branches. Frakes is an appointee of Republican Gov. Pete Ricketts. A Lancaster County district judge struck down the subpoena after the attorney general's office challenged it in court, prompting an attorney for the sena-

tors to appeal the case to the Nebraska Supreme Court. A phone message left with the senators' attorney, Patrick Guinan, was not immediately returned. Guinan argued that the subpoena should have remained in force even though the committee's membership changed. In a separate, concurring opinion Friday, Justice Lindsey Miller-Lerman said many questions about Nebraska's execution protocol remain unanswered, including whether the

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weather

90 TODAY Mostly sunny. South wind 5-10 mph.
68 TONIGHT Mostly clear. South-southeast wind 5-10 mph.

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