

# HILLSBORO Banner

Oldest Weekly Newspaper in North Dakota • HILLSBORO, NORTH DAKOTA 58045 • Established in 1879

Volume 143 • Number 13 • 12 Pages • Friday, March 26, 2021 • Single Copy Price: \$1

Online 24 hours a day at hillsborobanner.com



**TRACK TEAMS  
SET TO RUN**

— PAGE 8

## 'I DON'T WANT TO GIVE HIM ANOTHER PENNY'

City Commissioner Skager blasts former auditor's unemployment claim

By COLE SHORT

Hillsboro City Commissioner Shawn Skager delivered a fiery response Wednesday to a recently filed claim for unemployment insurance benefits by Hillsboro's former city auditor.

City officials received notification from Job Service North Dakota in a March 19 letter that former City Auditor Matt Mutzenberger filed a claim for unemployment benefits nine months after he left his job with the city.

Mutzenberger agreed in July 2020 to a severance agreement that gave him \$21,000 to exit his job after he had been accused of unprofessional conduct and bringing a handgun into his office at City Hall during his two-year tenure with the city.

In a letter to Job Service seeking unemployment benefits, Mutzenberger said he had been discharged by the city without being given a reason.

In addition, he reportedly said it was his contention that

he had been targeted for termination and forced to resign prior to his official departure from the city July 15, 2020.

City commissioners convened in special session Wednesday afternoon to discuss how to handle the unemployment insurance claim, which could cost the city \$14,482 if approved by Job Service.

Led by Skager, several commissioners took aim at Mutzenberger's request for funds.

"Quite honestly, I'm pissed

off that I'm dealing with Mr. Mutzenberger again," said Skager, a sergeant with the Traill County Sheriff's Department.

"I don't want to give him another penny."

Commissioners spent a portion of Wednesday's meeting peppering longtime city attorney John Juelson about the eligibility requirements for receiving unemployment benefits.

CITY  
Continued on page 2



Skager



Mutzenberger

## More than 42 percent of Traill given first vaccine

Burgum, state to expand vaccine rollout on Monday

By COLE SHORT

More than 42 percent of Traill County residents have received their first doses of COVID-19 vaccine.

Traill District Health Unit Director Brenda Stallman reported Tuesday that local health workers have administered COVID-19 shots to 4,072 residents in Traill County this year.

"We're ahead of the 35.5 percent average in the state and North Dakota is ranked at the top or near the top as far as (vaccination) rates nationally," Stallman said Tuesday. "We hope that continues."

Health agencies continued their rollout of vaccines in the area this week, holding vaccination clinics at large employers like American Crystal Sugar north of Hillsboro.

The North Dakota Department of Health recently moved to phase three of the vaccine rollout, which targeted essential workers and those with underlying health conditions.

"We're going to have to continue to work hard to help everyone understand why it's so important to get vaccinated."

— BRENDA STALLMAN  
Traill District Health

VACCINES  
Continued on page 3



PHOTOS BY CORY ERICKSON



## DOWN TO A FINE ART

By CORY ERICKSON

▲ Top left: Hillsboro freshman Kenzie Ketterl created a museum diorama featuring famous paintings along with her own artwork for Tuesday's art collaboration event at Hillsboro High School. Top right: Sophomore Alicia Kritzberger included a pair of hand-crafted teddy bears in Tuesday's event.

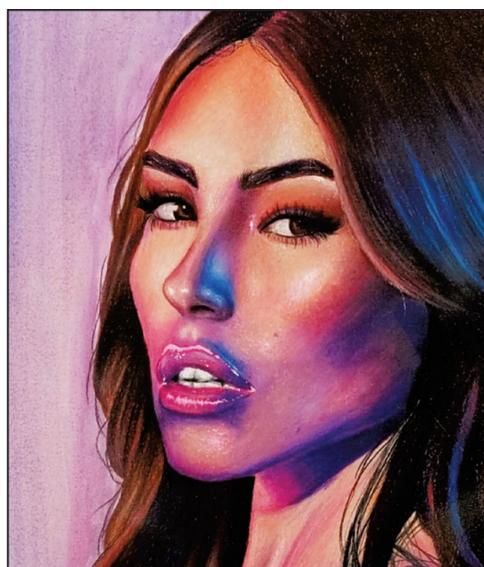
Hillsboro's young artists showed off their talents at an art collaboration event Tuesday evening at Hillsboro High School.

Selected pieces from the school's various art programs were on display at the event, spearheaded by art teacher Nolan Kern and community members Amanda Johnson and Nadia Robb.

Sophomores Jacoby Hannestad and Jora Leeseberg were awarded first place by a panel of community judges for their studio art pieces.

Freshman Lauren Spokely won an honorable mention for a quilt she made for FACS class and Jake Wright added an honorable mention for his photography.

Senior Morgan Chandler and seventh-grader Charlie Johnson earned a first-place finish for their vocal duet "Wild Mountain Thyme" and sophomore Clayton Jones earned an honorable mention for a stop motion animation video that he created with Legos.



Above: Hillsboro first-grade teacher Lindsey Nagel looks at artwork with daughters Emma and Callie and son, Rhett, Tuesday at the Hillsboro High School. Left: Hillsboro sophomore Jacoby Hannestad included this color pencil drawing in Tuesday's event.

## Finley-Sharon asks MPCG for co-op – this fall

By COLE SHORT

The Finley-Sharon School District has asked MayPort-CG for a sports co-op this fall.

Holly Stromsodt, Finley-Sharon's school board president, sent a letter March 17 to the MayPort-CG School Board and Superintendent Mike Bradner proposing a sports co-op this fall between the districts in all activities except football, which would wait a year and combine in August 2022.

Bradner and MPCG athletic director Adam Sola said Tuesday a decision hasn't been made on whether the Patriots should open their games and practices to athletes from Finley-Sharon.

However, Stromsodt's letter makes clear that the nearby district has zeroed in on MayPort-CG as its belle of the ball, rather than Hatton-Northwood.

"That's one way to put it," Bradner said. "We're the dance partner they want to go with."

SPORTS CO-OP  
Continued on page 2



Bradner



Sola

## Central Valley delays meeting on shake-up

By COLE SHORT

A Central Valley School Board special meeting slated Tuesday night to discuss a staff shake-up, which could include employee layoffs and the reassignment of duties of school administrators, was postponed.

School Board President Dave Seyfried sent an email to school officials Monday morning indicating that he felt the meeting was being rushed after consulting with a school attorney.

CENTRAL VALLEY  
Continued on page 3