



**WDC picks off Parkers Prairie, A11**

**Student leaders meet to discuss sportsmanship, A2**



# Wadena Pioneer Journal

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Nicole Stracek / Wadena Pioneer Journal

Freshwater Education District in Wadena recently welcomed a new four-legged student affectionately named Buckie, a golden retriever and trained comfort dog to their school district. Pictured is Trent Becker, behavior specialist and Jena Osberg, Freshwater Academies Site Facilitator.

## Freshwater Education District welcomes new comfort dog

BY NICOLE STRACEK  
Wadena Pioneer Journal

**WADENA**

Students and staff at Freshwater Education District in Wadena recently welcomed a new four-legged student this year — a golden retriever affectionately named Buckie by students. Buckie is a certified and trained comfort dog and will assist the district with a wide range of

needs including helping students who are struggling with behavioral issues or experiencing stressful circumstances during the school day. This past May, Jena Osberg, who serves as the Freshwater Academies site facilitator, set out to raise funds to purchase a comfort dog after a chance encounter with a lost puppy in the school's parking lot left a lasting impression on both students and staff. Osberg

said the reaction to the puppy by students was very positive and inspired her to learn more about the benefits of a comfort dog in a school setting. Osberg said students were aware the district was raising funds to purchase a comfort dog that would be arriving in the fall and the dog would need a name. "Our mascot here at school is the Bucks and so one of the students said the dog's name

should be Buck for sure," Osberg said. However, the dog was a female and the next best thing was to name her Buckie to make it more feminine, she said. "We do a thing here where every new student puts their hand print on the wall and it shows that they are part of our school now. The same student that named her also said that Buckie needs to

**WELCOMES** on A14

**2024 ELECTION**

## Candidates make their pitches to voters at Verndale forum

BY FRANK LEE  
Wadena Pioneer Journal

VERNDALE — Voters heard from candidates running for elected office at a forum hosted by Todd-Wadena Electric Cooperative in Verndale. Sylvia Tappe, a Verndale wife and mother of three, turned out for the Sept. 10 public forum at the Lions Community Center. The 77-year-old Republican is a school volunteer.

"I wanted to see the candidates and find out their views as much as possible," Tappe said after exiting the building. All state and federal candidates were invited to the Verndale forum, which occurred the same night as the first presidential debate between Donald Trump and Kamala Harris. Tappe said of Trump, "He did a terrific job

**ELECTION** on A15



Contributed / Lisa Brokop

Lisa Brokop will perform at 7 p.m. Sept. 22 at the Wadena Memorial Auditorium as part of the Wadena Area Concert Association's 2024-25 season.

## Wadena Area Concert Association starts season with legendary country music

BY FRANK LEE  
Wadena Pioneer Journal

WADENA — The Wadena Area Concert Association kicks off its 2024-25 season at Wadena Memorial Auditorium with Lisa Brokop's "Legendary Ladies of Country" tribute. "It was a simple kind of music but yet eloquently done. And I just love that," Brokop said of the era. The Canada-born, Nashville-based musician will share heartfelt stories and perform hits

"It was a simple kind of music but yet eloquently done. And I just love that."

LISA BROKOP

from country music pioneers such as Tammy Wynette, Loretta Lynn, Barbara Mandrell, Emmylou Harris, Dolly

**MUSIC** on A12

## Foundation started in memory of Brainerd man has wide reach in central Minnesota

BY NICOLE STRACEK  
Wadena Pioneer Journal

BRAINERD — In January 2019 Corey Borg-Massanari was skiing the Kachina Peak in Taos, New Mexico when an avalanche broke and he was buried in it. Four days later at the age of 23 he would tragically pass away as a result of the accident. Borg-Massanari had deep ties to central Minnesota, and following his death his family

established a foundation in his name to aid organizations throughout the area. Born in Colorado in 1996, at the age of 5 Borg-Massanari moved with his mom Bobbie Gorron, older brother Seth and younger sister Karlee to Brainerd. Borg-Massanari was a 2015 graduate of Brainerd High School and an avid skier and outdoor enthusiast. His passion for snowboarding and skiing would lead Borg-Massanari to move to Vail, Colorado after graduating high school to live with his dad Mark Massanari where he would attend Colorado Mountain College. "Corey was fun-loving and had the biggest heart and just the best sense of humor. Everyone that met him never forgot him and it's something we hear from people all the time,"



Contributed

Corey Borg-Massanari.

Gorron said. However, it was his passion for the outdoors that left a significant impact on his family and friends when deciding to establish a foundation in his name. "Corey loved everything outdoors but when he started skiing everything kind of shifted for him and then all the

other outdoor things were just something to kind of keep him busy until ski season started again," Massanari said. Gorron said the Corey Borg-Massanari Foundation was initially started out of fear that his name would be forgotten and to

**MEMORY** on A14

**WEEKEND WEATHER**

H: 77  
L: 54  
FRIDAY



H: 66  
L: 51  
SUNDAY



H: 74  
L: 52  
SATURDAY



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# Region 5 receives \$2.5M in federal funding for clean energy projects

STAPLES — Region Five Development Commission was awarded \$2.5 million in federal funds from the U.S. Department of Energy through the Local Government Energy Program’s Communities Sparking Investment in Transformative Energy funding opportunity. The funds will provide inclusive clean energy

financing to four projects in rural central Minnesota, including a school solar project and a tribal electric vehicle project, and fill a financing gap for rural communities through lending options for the private sector. “We are excited about the ability this award gives us to regrant funds to communities that have

worked through energy and environment plans with us, and to offer lending to private sector companies to implement clean energy projects,” stated Region Five Executive Director Cheryal Hills, in a news release. “This will transform rural clean energy financing in our region, providing customized capital

solutions and technical assistance to empower communities, schools and businesses in their journey toward a sustainable, resilient future.” Subrecipient organizations include Little Falls Schools, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe Division of Resource Management, city of Motley, and Sebe-ka Public Schools.

Communities Sparking Investment in Transformative Energy is a new annual program from Department of Energy’s Office of State and Community Energy programs aimed at supporting tribal and local governments representing small to medium-sized jurisdictions, energy communities, and disadvantaged

communities to implement clean energy projects that spark investments and community benefits. Learn more about the other DOE selectees at [www.energy.gov/scep/local-government-energy-program](http://www.energy.gov/scep/local-government-energy-program).

## WELCOMES CONTINUED from A1

be included by adding a paw print to the wall,” Osberg said. In addition to individual contributions made through the district’s online donation form, Osberg sent out letters to

local organizations and clubs and attended area meetings with Lions, Elks, and Rotary clubs throughout the region. With the donations and grants the district received from the community, they were able to purchase a comfort dog from the Texas-based company Interquest

Cares. “It was really fun to see that generosity come out,” Osberg said. “We tend to be in our own little bubble here and you reach out when you have to, but this just created such a nice feeling of community and support,” said Osberg. “Numerous people reached out to

learn how they could help and made donations.” In addition to donations Osberg wrote and received grants to help fund the purchase and care of Buckie from Sourcewell, Astera Health Foundation and the Corey Borg-Massanari Foundation. Trent Becker, the

school district’s behavioral specialist, is Buckie’s handler and Osberg said the addition of a comfort dog will allow Becker to better serve students. “Trent, who is Buckie’s handler, unfortunately has to come in when kids are in a difficult place, so they are not always happy to see him but

when he comes in with Buckie, it has already had an impact and that is exactly what we wanted,” said Osberg. NICOLE STRACEK is a reporter for the Wadena Pioneer Journal. She can be reached at 218-631-2561 or at [nstracek@wadenapj.com](mailto:nstracek@wadenapj.com).

## MEMORY CONTINUED from A1

honor his memory. “I kind of realized not only was it about keeping his name out there but I still needed a way to be his mom so I think deep down that was probably the real reason for me, but I didn’t realize it at the time,” Gorrion said. Both Gorrion and Massanari said they struggled to get the foundation started, such as getting organizations to respond to their grant offers and raising awareness in the local community. However, a combination of connections with other foundations and individuals helped shape its mission. “We are very grateful for the support we have received from the community and the impact Corey’s story has had on others,” shared Massanari. Together Massanari and Gorrion established the Corey Borg-Massanari Foundation in November 2020 with a mission to enhance

outdoor safety and protection for outdoor enthusiasts by providing equipment, placing and training avalanche rescue dogs, and sponsoring educational programs for schools, local governments, and nonprofit organizations. Gorrion said the focus on outdoor safety and avalanche rescue dogs became the motivation behind the foundation’s mission after Borg-Massanari’s accident. “The avalanche rescue dogs are the reason we had four days with Corey and I think had it not been for the dogs they wouldn’t have found him soon enough to donate his organs,” said Gorrion. After Borg-Massanari was found by a rescue avalanche dog, he was flown to University of New Mexico Hospital. While in the hospital the family was introduced to the Chris Klug Foundation, which inspired Gorrion and Massanari to learn more about establishing a foundation. The Chris Klug

Foundation was created by Olympic Bronze Medalist and liver transplant recipient, Chris Klug, who at 21 discovered he needed a transplant. Each year the Chris Klug Foundation holds a fundraiser banquet to help raise money and awareness about organ donation. “Mark and I were invited to their big fundraiser held in Aspen and we didn’t know Corey was going to be featured and we weren’t expecting that. It started conversations about establishing a foundation because being a donor was something Corey chose to do,” said Gorrion, who noted Corey was honored by hundreds of medical staff who lined the halls of the hospital as he was wheeled into his final operation to become an organ donor. The silent and profound gesture was the first time the University of New Mexico Hospital staff had conducted the “Organ Donor Walk of Honor,” which has now become a tradition for the hospital.

Since establishing the Corey Borg-Massanari Foundation they have helped provide much needed awareness on outdoor safety as well as grants to a wide range of organizations. Recently, the foundation provided a grant for an avalanche rescue dog for the Taos Ski Valley where Borg-Massanari loved to ski. The foundation also worked with the local organization Fire Kissed Golden to donate a trained avalanche dog to the foundation that was then placed at Grand Targhee Resort in Wyoming as well as a grant to the Lakes Area Shooting Sports organization in Nisswa. Gorrion said the foundation is also helping with funding for training for the Brainerd Fire Department this November. Recently, the Corey Borg-Massanari Foundation partnered with the Garrison-based organization Wild and Free in honor of Borg-Massanari’s birthday. “We matched donations

up to \$1,000 from Sept. 11 to Sept. 18 with the donations going to Wild and Free in Garrison,” said Gorrion, who noted Sept. 15 would have been Borg-Massanari’s 28th birthday. Gorrion also said that she hopes to become more involved by speaking to organizations that could benefit from a grant to let them know more about the foundation. “I think so many people think that we focus on avalanche dogs, but that’s not the case — we are all about outdoor safety. We have bought snowshoes for the outdoor adventure class at the Brainerd High School, funded training for Central Lakes Search and Rescue, which is based in Minnesota, and also issued a couple small grants for animal shelters in the area. I would love to do more for schools in the area if they have some type of outdoor adventure or outdoor safety course,” Gorrion said. Additionally, catching

the tail end of a radio interview on the Freshwater Education District’s need for funding for a comfort dog would lead Gorrion to reach out to Jena Osberg at the Freshwater Education District in Wadena to learn how the Corey Borg-Massanari Foundation could help. “And after talking to Jena and getting more information, we discussed it at our board meeting and it was a unanimous decision to issue a grant for \$1,000,” Gorrion said. Corey Borg-Massanari had an adventurous spirit, a love for the outdoors and even after his tragic passing through the foundation established in his name is still bringing people together. For more information on the Corey Borg-Massanari Foundation visit <https://www.coreysfoundation.org/>. NICOLE STRACEK is a community reporter for the Wadena Pioneer Journal. She may be reached at 218-631-2561 or [nstracek@wadenapj.com](mailto:nstracek@wadenapj.com).



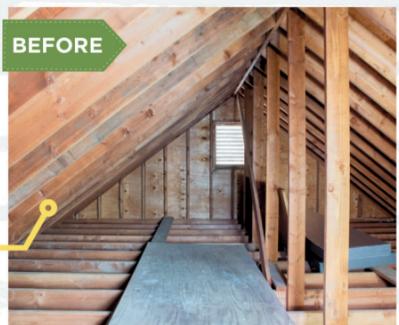
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