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Small Town Hospitality Shines *Columbus Hosts Fundraising Bike Riders*

With a couple days notice, Susan Kihle and Darla Westernness of Columbus put together a feast for two bike riders who were passing by the area on a trek across North Dakota.

Matthew Morken and Michael Kohlmann of Cedar Rapids, IA are raising funds for a church in Santiago, Dominican Republic. In his twelfth year, riding bike across selected states, Morken chose North Dakota for his 2025 destination.

The two bikers started in Westby, MT on Saturday, spending Sunday night, Aug. 17 in the Columbus golf course clubhouse. The two men boasted about the meal (spaghetti, broccoli, garlic bread, as well as carrot cake and angel food cake for dessert) which was made and served by Kihle and Westernness.

The ladies also invited the bird dog trainers who are in the area from Oklahoma, Mississippi, and Alabama to join in partaking of the meal.

Columbus mayor, Chris Kihle and his dad, Robin Post, who is visiting from Elko, NV, stopped in at the clubhouse to welcome the guests. It was a wonderful visit sharing adventures amongst new friends.

"We have been blessed," smiled Morken. "It was so nice not having to set up our tents."

the route

Morken and Kohlmann chose to cross the state of North Dakota using Highway 5 as their route. They have planned to complete the 370 miles in six days, starting in Westby, MT and concluding their travels at the Red River.

"The open plains are just



Matthew Morken and Michael Kohlmann of Cedar Rapids, IA were overnight guests at the Columbus clubhouse last week.

beautiful, but I thought it would be flatter," stated Morken.

Both men stressed how respectful the drivers have been towards them as well as super kind and helpful. Several have pulled over to ask if they need anything, such as water.

fund raising

Morken has biked sponsored miles in the state of Minnesota three times with his wife, border to border; the state of Missouri with his oldest son; Wisconsin with his middle son; and his youngest biked Michi-

gan.

The entire family biked from Cincinnati to Lake Erie when his youngest was just eight years old. In five years his family has trekked from the Canadian border to the Gulf of Mexico (one state each summer).

"My family is kind of fried on it now," shared Morken. "I'm so grateful my church friend, Michael decided to join me this year."

A Facebook page "Ride for the Dominican" displays photos,

videos and an update on their travels.

As of last year, his family has raised over \$110,000 to support various needs for the ministry in Santiago, Dominican Republic. This has helped fund teachers for a school, the construction of a church building for deaf Christians, a church kitchen, and a theological training course that provides books and teacher support.

The two are aiming to raise \$5000 for this year's ride, earning about \$3200 thus far.

County School Enrollment Remains Stable

by LISA THOMAS

The three schools in Burke County have managed to hold their own with enrollment numbers for the 2025-2026 school year.

Last year, Burke Central was the only school to increase its student population while this year it looks to be Powers Lake with the growing population.

With a total of 394 students attending school in Burke County, the numbers remain the same as the previous school year.

BOWBELLS

Bowbells School is welcoming back the same number of students, 90, with enrollment steady across all grades from kindergarten through twelfth grade.

The elementary students, which are comprised of kindergartners to sixth graders, add up to 49, while the junior high, or seventh and eighth grade students together, are a body of 14. The high schoolers, freshman, sophomores, juniors and seniors, there are 27 with a graduating class of four.

Bowbells' first day was Wednesday, Aug. 20 and students enjoyed a day of swimming at the local pool to celebrate the "new beginning."

BURKE CENTRAL

Burke Central School enroll-

ment dropped from 95 to this year's 87, but the elementary school numbers stayed the same with 52 kids.

The junior high and high school currently have 35 students but there are two new students expected to join soon. Eight seniors will be graduating next spring.

Burke Central was the first school to welcome students back, with their first day of class starting on Aug. 14. They invited the Burke County Sheriff's office and Stanley Police Department to host "High Five Friday" to kick off their first Friday of the school year.

POWERS LAKE

Powers Lake School showed the highest population and growth for the new school year growing from 209 to 217.

Kindergarten through fifth grade have 93 kids attending while the middle school students, grades six, seven and eight, have 59 students. The ninth through twelfth grade make up 65 with 15 of those students being seniors.

There are an additional 17 students in the preschool at Powers Lake School.

Powers Lake started the school year on Aug. 19 and hosted a "Back to School Bash" days earlier, serving pop-floats, hot dogs and chips for students and their families to meet their teachers and for the new families to find their way around the school.

First District Health Presents Annual Report to County Commissioners

Holly Brekhus with First District Health presented the annual report to the county commissioners at their regular meeting, Tuesday, Aug. 19.

Brekhus reported that Jeanine Jensen, who represents Burke County, is on the finance committee and does a fantastic job for them, using her expertise from being the county auditor for several years.

Brekhus shared information on the new mobile unit, which she stated, "was a good investment." Burke County used the unit in Powers Lake recently, vaccinating 15 youth.

Burke County Health Nurse, Stacey Schoemer stated that she was very impressed with the turnout.

In the county for 2024, First District Health conducted 22 food/lodging inspections, issuing 22 licenses; 36 Narcan distributions, 43 adult health encounters and 30 child health

encounters. Numbers for immunizations/titers (antibody) for adults increased from last year to 369, and 230 children received immunizations.

Brekhus also shared 2025 second quarter stats with 74 child immunizations. They did eight nuisance investigations in the county compared to zero in 2024.

Also, 49 individuals received senior center education, eight completed the Stepping On program, three enrolled for ND Quits and four tobacco compliance checks were done.

Highlighted totals for the entire district were as follows:

*units of Narcan distributed: 2,966;

*flu & covid vaccinations: 2,050;

*total vaccinations: 19,346.

Brekhus informed the board that First District is working on focus groups, coming up with community wide surveys to be requested soon.

The total dollars requested from Burke County for the 2026 Budget went down. First District is requesting \$63,942, down from \$66,023 in 2025.

Commissioner Rick Owings would like county employees to receive Narcan training. Chairman Jarret Van Berkom added a refresher course on Automated External Defibrillator (AED) use could be done at the same time.

custodian

Tracy Stover provided a list of the items sold at the county sale Aug. 8.

The sheriff department is having issues with humidity in their office. Discussion was held on possible ways to alleviate the situation.

The August 7th storm caused flooding in the hallway. Stover is looking into where the water may have entered the building.

The roof access construction has been delayed to mid September.

The commissioners requested Stover check into ventilation in the server room and monitor the temperature.

planning and zoning

Discussion was held on weeds in gravel pits. Chairman Van Berkom stated that he would like to see prior to a permit renewal, a mandatory weed inspection take place.

Jill Edwards, planning and zoning coordinator, will address the zoning board with the request for weed inspections.

The commissioners approved the gravel pit renewal for Dustin Ruud.

Powers Lake Berm

Shannon Holter reported the Burke County Water District has decided to remove the berm associated with Highway 7 culverts. After investigation, no permit has been found to put in the berm, thus the consensus is to pull it out, following the recommendation of the engineers.

other

Russell Terry with "Text My Gov" provided a demonstration for the board on Google Meets.

According to Text My Gov website it is "smart texting solutions that enable efficient, convenient, and personalized interactions between municipalities and their citizens. We offer 24/7 assistance to your residents via automated text messaging and eliminate the need for apps."

Auditor, Amie Vandegrift and tax director, Brandy Zepp believe it would be a good source for bill paying, administering surveys and reporting issues.

Chairman Van Berkom asked Vandegrift to check with Barry Jager to see if any of the county's other resources can be utilized in this manner, as not to double up.

Chairman Van Berkom was nominated as the county delegate with Brandy Zepp, the

alternate.

Jager reported issues with the county tower. After being in the area four times, Midstate has decided to replace the receiver.

The commissioners approved the purchase of portable scales with the funds taken from the highway dept. miscellaneous funds.

Two bore and two approach permits were approved for Dimond Resources; as well as a bore permit at three locations (Burke Co. 4, 8 & 12) for Steel Reef.

The commissioners agreed to become an associate member of Vision West.

Discussion was held on the two Battleview bridges. Van Berkom shared pictures of considerable amount of water under the bridges.

Commissioner Rick Owings would like to see a "bump ahead" sign placed on County Road 16 by Helde Lake.

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