



## 2021 in review, the first six months

How will 2021 in Clark County be remembered? After the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 will it be the year we tried to get back to normal?

In Clark County the pandemic effects are still probably out there, but either they are not so visible, or just taken for granted.

The coronavirus strain has gone from basic to several others including delta and omicron. Some are more contagious than others and some stronger than others.

Herd immunity is the goal, as almost three out of four adults in the state have been vaccinated and many have the booster shot as well.

As far as events, we keep our masks handy, trying to get back to normal - or at least what we think is normal.

### January

Willow Lake artist Charlene Fleming has two pictures on display at the Sioux Falls Regional Airport

Clark County Constitutional elected officers, who took their 4-year oath of office, include commissioners Chris Sass and Terry Schlagel, coroner Louann Struff, states attorney Chad Fjelland and treasurer Kay Mahlen.

Brandon Kottke is appointed to the Clark City Council to take the place of Terry Schlagel, who resigned.

Clark-Willow Lake assistant boys basketball coach Mark Prouty was honored for 40 years in coaching.

As the COVID-19 pandemic keeps the public on 'high alert' since March of 2020, a feature is done about how 91-year-old Louie Brush survived the pandemic.



Clark policeman Nate Nickeson, center, was presented the 'Lifesaving Award' by Clark police chief Jeremy Wellnitz, left and Clark Mayor Kerry Kline.

On July 24, 2020 officer Nickeson was dispatched to the home of Alan Forbragd, who was gasping for air with a weak pulse. With CPR and AED shock defibrillation, a life was saved.

After 37 years in the Clark educational system and seven years as school superintendent, Luanne Warren announces her retirement resignation.

The year 2020 netted almost \$40,000,000 in Clark County building projects. The largest was the Riverview Dairy Farm, LLP complex, at a cost of \$33,550,000.

C.H.S. One-Act Play, 'Double, Double' by Kathryn

Funkhouser is performed in the Region VI B contest, in Sisseton.

Clark hosted the Region 4 FCCLA meeting, on Friday, January 21. Elected officers were Region secretary Macy Steen and treasurer Sara Thonvold.

The Town of Willow Lake switches over to the Clark Rural Water System.

Local farmers supplied hay to drought-stricken West River. A large prairie fire area near Lemmon received the hay.

### February

Trinity Peterson, a senior at Willow Lake High School, was a Legislative Page in the legislature in Pierre, sponsored by Sen. Brock Greenfield. She is the daughter of Kyle and Jody Peterson.

Clark policeman Nate Nickeson was presented the 'Lifesaving Award' by Clark Police Chief Jeremy Wellnitz and Clark Mayor Kerry Kline. Nickeson was very instrumental in saving Alan Forbragd on July 24, 2020. He was called to the Forbragd home, as Alan was gasping for air with a weak pulse. CPR and an AED aided in saving Alan's life.

Clark High School 1936 graduate Urban Odson went on to star at offensive tackle for the Minnesota Golden Gophers and the Green Bay Packers. And, of course he was a standout in high school for the Clark Comets. A feature was written of Odson's athletic accomplishments also noting that he was inducted into the South Dakota Sports Hall of Fame, in 1980.

2021 saw several lake tragedies. The first was Carl Iverson, who apparently was a drowning victim, in Dry Lake #2. Iverson worked in the Clark Sheriff's



Jacob Prouty and his dad Mark Prouty pumped up the fans at a Cyclone boys basketball pepfest, prior to winning the 2019 South Dakota Class B Tournament. Jacob Prouty led the Cyclones to the title and was named to the All-Tournament team. Mark Prouty was an assistant Cyclone coach and now has coached 40 years. Congratulations Mark!

Department in the late 1970s and early 1980s. As he was fishing, because of dense fog, he could have become disoriented, causing him to drive his snowmobile into an area of open water, where he perished.

Year in review  
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## A good S.D. economy relies on affordable, high-quality child care

Bart Pfankuch

South Dakota News Watch

Gov. Kristi Noem wants to spend \$100 million to boost child care offerings across the state, but experts say it will take more than a one-time government investment to expand access to quality daycare for working parents in South Dakota.

South Dakota is facing a child care crisis in which working parents have few options for placing their children during the workday. At the same time, child care has become increasingly expensive and is out of reach for some parents.

The lack of reliable child care is forcing some parents to leave the workforce, exacerbating a worker shortage in the state and potentially slowing economic development and job growth.

Noem's budget proposal, which would require legislative approval, includes \$100 million in one-time federal funds to encourage employers to open daycare centers for their employees and for scholarships to help students train in child care fields. Department of Social Services Secretary Laurie Gill said \$60 million of the governor's proposed funding would initially go toward "stabilization grants" to aid existing daycare providers when they apply for state registration.

Rebecca Wimmer, formerly CEO of the Boys & Girls Club of the Sioux Empire, said daycare providers are grateful for the governor's spending proposal, but said fixing the broken child care system in the long term will require financial support as well as creative thinking and new partnerships among government, community groups, employers and daycare providers.

"Some of that one-time funding can help stabilize things in the short term, but if we're looking long term, though, we're going to need something that is a little more robust," Wimmer said.

Wimmer, who will soon take a child development position within the Sioux Falls school system, spoke as part of an online panel discussion hosted by South Dakota News Watch on Dec. 16.

Overall in South Dakota, there are about 73,000 children under age six, but only an estimated 34,500 child care slots, according to a recent analysis by South Dakota Kids Count, a nonprofit data research group.

The child care shortage is particularly challenging for families in South Dakota, where almost 75% of children under age six have both parents working. The reduced daycare access and increasing prices come as

the state is facing a workforce shortage, both inside the child care industry and among many other employers.

The lack of access to affordable, high-quality child care could stymie future economic growth, said Rich Merkouris, pastor of King of Glory Church, who sits on two Sioux Falls organizations that seek to improve child welfare.

"If our workforce shrinks, the new businesses that are coming to South Dakota are going to have to relocate somewhere else," Merkouris said. "If we want to provide an environment for businesses to flourish, we're going to have to provide good, affordable, safe and education-based child care." Merkouris suggested that employers, most who have resisted opening internal child care centers for employees, should try to find ways to create a child care benefit similar to health or dental insurance for workers.

"Employers at the end of the day are going to get creative in doing what they have to do to recruit talent," he said. "They're going to have to find some unique ways to potentially provide a child care benefit."

Merkouris said South Dakota elected officials must accept that government programs play a critical role in providing child care to low- to moderate-income families and likely will need to be expanded to end the crisis. "The reality is that the public is already involved in this space in South Dakota," he said. "Sometimes fiscal responsibility actually is providing a program that allows that child to become a contributor in the years ahead, rather than paying for that on the back end."

Pigeon Big Crow, who runs the child care program for the Oglala Sioux Tribe on Pine Ridge, said reservation communities are continually seeking ways to expand access to child care and improve the quality of early education for children.

Big Crow said tribal governments

### Child care (continued on page 12)

WEATHER				
Robert Cole - Official Weather Observer				
	HI	LO	PR	
Dec. 21.....	19	10	.01	
Dec. 22.....	24	6	0	
Dec. 23.....	37	16	0	
Dec. 24.....	44	27	0	
Dec. 25.....	41	11	0	
Dec. 26.....	20	11	0	
Dec. 27.....	29	7	.05	
2021 precipitation to date	24.59			
2020 precipitation to date	18.67			



## Cyclones split with Florence-Henry

Winter sports resume tomorrow, Thursday, December 30, with the Webster Invitational Wrestling Tournament and the boys basketball team playing Lower Brule in the Huron Holiday Classic.

In action from last week, in the final games before the Christmas break, Clark-Willow Lake battled Florence-Henry in a double header last Tuesday, at Willow Lake.

The Falcons won the girls game 61-36 and the Cyclones won the boys

game 58-50.

Cheerleaders showing off their Christmas socks, are left to right, Madison Pickrel, Jordyn Maynard, Macy Bochek, Hannah Heiman, Emma Rahm, Taylor Pickrel, Chasity Lewis and Soan Manac'h.

Left, Summer Seefeldt drives on Taylor Watson in the girls game. Right, Travis O'Neill protects the basketball on his way to the basket.

Photos by Heather Jordan