



## Kolden will play tenor sax at S.D. All-State Band

Clark High School will have a 2022 South Dakota All-State Band representative. Senior Chad Kolden will be part of the Clark Band at the 72nd All-State Band Grand Concert, Saturday, March 26, in Brookings. In 2006, All-State Band switched to two smaller bands, the Lewis and Clark Bands, rather than one very large band.

Kolden has been playing the tenor sax since fifth grade, and he almost didn't get a chance to try out in this, his final year as a senior.

He was sick on the February date of All-State tryouts in Watertown. Music teacher Amy Nelson had to pull some strings just to get Kolden a spot in the final auditions in Sioux Falls.

If one is familiar with the All-State Band audition process, there are different types of scales, an étude to perform, which was sent out in December, sight reading and a solo. Kolden's solo was Concerto in G-Minor. Kolden had tried out all four years of high school and feels that his confidence level was the difference. "When I heard I made it, I felt really relieved," he said.

This All-State Band acceptance is a career-changer for Kolden so to speak. He has committed to attend the University of Sioux Falls, next fall, but recently changed his major from criminal justice to music education. His long-range plan goal is



Chad Kolden was selected to the 72nd Annual South Dakota All-State Band. There are two bands, Lewis and Clark. Kolden will play tenor sax in the Clark Band.

All-State Band Concert is Saturday, March 26, at the Oscar Larson Performing Arts Center on the South Dakota State University campus.

## Grain bin rescue in Vienna is a 'Feel Good Story'

Nothing short of a miracle happened last Wednesday, in Vienna, in southwestern Clark County.

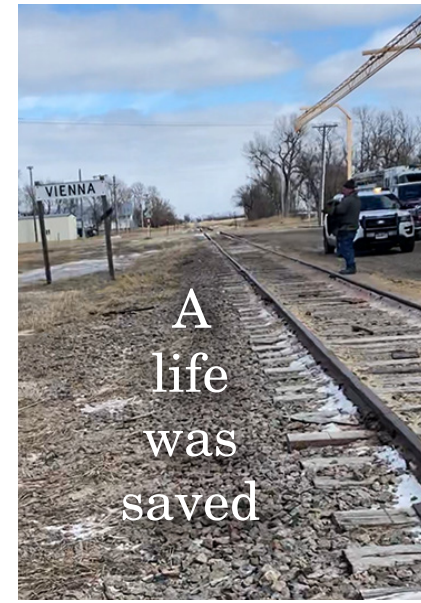
After three hours, rescue crews freed Nathan Wegleitner, 25, of Hayti.

According to Clark County Sheriff Rob McGraw, the call came in about 9:20 a.m. that a man was buried up to his chest in corn at the privately owned Vienna Elevator. Wegleitner is an employee of Joe and Nathan Lakness, owners of the grain bins in Vienna.

"He's really lucky," McGraw stated, and he praised the Willow Lake Fire Department for being first on the scene and stabilizing him until the Agtegra Technical Rescue Team from Bath/Aberdeen arrived.

The Clark County Sheriff continued that because of the amazing rescue response that Wegleitner is one of one percent who survive. "This is a feel good story!" exclaimed McGraw.

Fire departments from Vienna, Willow Lake, and Bryant responded, along with Clark Ambulance, Willow Lake Ambulance, Clark County Sheriff's Department, Clark Police Department,



and Clark County Emergency Management.

Rescue crews that included an Agtegra Technical Rescue Team that came in from Bath, South Dakota placed an extraction tube around the man to prevent compression injuries and to prevent him from being buried further.

An auger system was also used to remove corn from the bin.

Wegleitner was eventually freed around 12:30 in the after-

noon, was placed on a stretcher, and flown from the scene in an Avera Health System helicopter to a Sioux Falls hospital. McGraw said he was "alert and talking" at the time.

Clark Police Chief Jeremy Wellnitz says the rescue crews did "an amazing job," and that authorities are "grateful for the outcome."

Several members of the Willow Lake Fire Department have had extensive grain bin rescue training.

Agtegra Technical Rescue Team members included: Quenton Lau, Tracy Hutson, Justin Kluesner, Cole Vig, Beth Locken, Riley Ladwig and Cody Bonn.

In visiting with Nathan's mother Laurie on Monday of this week, one could still hear the emotion in her voice. Nathan is the son of Herman and Laurie Wegleitner.

"We are blessed," she said. "We are so thankful to all the law enforcement and first responders for being so accommodating and competent. Nathan just turned 25. He feels well, but really sore. But, he is alive!"

## South Dakota's 31,500 farms help celebrate National Ag Week

One South Dakota farmer/producer raises enough food to feed 155 people in the United States and abroad. South Dakota's 31,500 farms and ranches encompass more than 43 million acres and along with ag-related industries, employ over 115,000 people.

South Dakota is home to 31,500 farms with an average size of about 1,397 acres. Ninety-eight percent of farms and ranches in South Dakota are family owned and operated.

We're the nation's largest producer of bison and sunflowers and rank in the top 10 states nationally in the production of corn, soybeans, wheat, hay, oats, sorghum, dry edible beans, flaxseed, honey, sheep, pigs and cattle.

Whether one produces the food, fiber, feed and fuel we depend on or just consumes it, pride should be taken in American agriculture.

This week is deemed by executive proclamation to be National Ag Week from March 20 to March 26 for this year of 2022.

Sunday March 20 was the first day of spring.

The winter of 2021-2022 cannot be described by one word, like harsh, or mild, or moderate. The winter had a little bit of everything, warm, frigid, snow, and ice.

March to this point has been drier than normal with below normal temperatures. The forecast is to remain fairly dry, with above normal temperatures. South Dakota, for the most part, has had a dry winter to this point looks to stay on the dry side.

South Dakota State University Ex-

tension Agronomy Specialist, David Karki, Watertown, stated that historically planting is done south to north in South Dakota with small grains getting done by mid-April.

"It's dry now, but no predictions," Karki said of the upcoming days. "October rains gave us standing corn in the field at the time. It's

When asked what crops will be planted this spring, Karki, who specializes in small grains, opined that if producers went away from the normal row crops it would be to low input small grains such as oats. "Seventy percent of our oats get milled into hay," he said.

Karki understands that this nice



looking good here in mid-March, but in South Dakota things can change fairly rapidly."

Karki noted that with a dry spring producers can get chores done.

"Last year was a little strange as some producers planted early soybeans first. Usually the planting pattern is small grains, then corn, then soybeans."

The agronomist specialist said that comparative studies have shown the pros and cons of early planting, especially the risks with soil freezing and cold air temperatures.

"Most guys wait until May, and that make a lot of sense, but we always want the seed in the ground."

weather somewhat rushes people, regrettably so, into action, as far as getting the growing season underway.

Commodity prices aren't bad, input prices continue to rise, and with last fall rains, there is that mid-March optimism, he said. "We're always banking on those timely rains."

### Planting report

Karki also shared some statistics from the USDA Prospective plantings report released in March of 2022. It stated that corn planting in South Dakota was up 13% in 2021 at 5.6 million acres from 4.95 million acres the year before.

Soybeans were up 15% at 5.7 million acres in 2021 vs 4.95 million

acres in 2020.

In the US, corn planted area for all purposes in 2021 was estimated at 92.7 million acres, up 2 percent or 1.87 million acres from 2020.

All wheat planted area for 2021 was estimated at 46.7 million acres, up 5 percent from 2020. This represents the fourth lowest all wheat planted area since records began in 1919. The 2021 winter wheat planted area, at 33.7 million acres, is up 11 percent from last year and up 2 percent from the previous estimate.

Of this total, about 23.6 million acres were Hard Red Winter, 6.59 million acres were Soft Red Winter, and 3.50 million acres were White Winter. Area expected at time of survey, to be planted to other spring wheat for 2021 was estimated at 11.6 million acres, down 5 percent from 2020. Of this total, about 10.8 million acres were Hard Red Spring wheat. Durum planted area for 2021 was expected to total 1.48 mil-

### Ag Week (continued on page 9)

WEATHER			
Robert Cole - Official Weather Observer			
	HI	LO	PR
March 8.....	33	7	0
March 9.....	32	5	0
March 10.....	18	4	0
March 11.....	26	-4	0
March 12.....	12	-4	0
March 13.....	35	7	0
March 14.....	49	27	0
2022 precipitation to date	0.63		
2021 precipitation to date	1.96		

## School personnel incidents expose loophole excluding public comment

**Editor's Note:** This News Watch story, written by Stu Whitney is an important story for several reasons:

1. This is Sunshine Week. Sunshine Week is self-explanatory—the sun needs to shine in, not holding meetings in the dark—which is behind closed doors.

2. Author Stu Whitney is an award-winning, retired Sioux Falls Argus Leader reporter, well-known for sports and news reporting.

3. The Garretson Gazette owner, Garrick Moritz, referred to several times in the story, is the son of Jim and Jody Moritz, Faulkton and the grandson of the late Bert and Helen Moritz of Clark. Garrick is a fourth generation publisher.



Stu Whitney  
South Dakota News Watch

Two seemingly harmless words added to a state open meetings law in 2019 have sparked a debate over the rights of citizens to publicly comment at official government meetings in South Dakota, with several school boards at the center of the conflict.

The state open meetings law, enacted in 1965, was amended in 2018 by House Bill 1172, which required every official meeting to offer a pe-

riod for public comment under the discretion of the chair. One year later came Senate Bill 91, which clarified language and put public comment at the discretion of the entire body rather than just the chair.

As part of that process, the words "regularly scheduled" were added in front of "official meetings," which bore little scrutiny at the time but has launched a legal tug-of-war between public officials and advocates of community input. Some government bodies have used the language to create a legal loophole in which they have denied the public the right to speak at official meetings.

Different interpretations of the wording stirred controversy last month in the case of a Garretson High School principal and football

coach, whose contract was terminated by the school board after more than five hours of closed-door deliberations. Some community members felt stifled by an inability to address the board.

Across the state, an unsuccessful lawsuit against the Rapid City Area Schools Board of Education over the infringement of public comment has been appealed to the South Dakota Supreme Court, fueled by a group of parents who claim they were denied a voice as the board weighed disciplinary action last year against a high school wrestling coach and his staff.

House Bill 1255 was introduced in the 2022 South Dakota legislative session to clarify the principle that public comment must be permitted at all official meetings of

public boards. The bill was killed in committee, though opponents acknowledged that clarification in the language of the existing statute is needed to avoid open meetings violations.

"In the municipal world that I operate in, I would be very hesitant to not allow public comment at an official meeting," Sam Nelson, a lawyer and lobbyist for the South Dakota Municipal League, said at a House hearing on the proposed bill. "I think it's almost a blanket statement that I would never recommend that."

Critics of the existing law say that public bodies such as school boards, city councils and county commissions are being allowed to exclude public input because of a semantic loophole cited as justifica-

tion for doing public business without taxpayer input, and it comes down to those two words.

Garretson schools Superintendent Guy Johnson, in an interview with South Dakota News Watch, cited the "regularly scheduled" wording when asked why supporters of principal and football coach Chris Long were not allowed to address the board at a special meeting held Feb. 23 to determine Long's fate.

"I would refer people to the law, which deals with public comment at regularly scheduled official meetings," said Johnson. "This was a special meeting for a specific purpose, and the language does matter."

Sunshine Week  
(continued on page 12)