

A Look Back At 2021

As we bid ‘good-bye’ to 2021 and welcome the new year with optimism, we at *The Herald* take a look back at a year full of trials and triumphs.

Here is a look back at what happened in our community and surrounding area each month.

January
Thedford High School students recognized for being inducted into the National Honor Society were: Rhiannon Painter, Tenley Rasmussen, Summar Schaefer, Drew McIntosh, Cylee Jameson, Seth Scranton, Trae Hickman, Anthony Benschoter and Bralee Jepsen. This list also included students from 2019 that were also honored.

Over 55 units of blood were donated at the Red Cross Blood Drive held at Thedford High School.

Western Nebraska Bank, a locally owned bank, opened its new location at 39363 E Hwy 2, east of Thedford.

Reece Zutavern got his 100th wrestling win at the Sandhills-Thedford Knight Invite on Saturday, January 16 in Dunning.

Deaths: Larry Leon Gift, 70, of Thedford, passed away January 14, 2021; Daniel L. Evans, 69, of North Platte, passed away January 12, 2021; Gregory Wade Rhoades, 66, Comstock, passed away January 14, 2021.

February
The Sandhills-Thedford Knights ended the Mid-Nebraska Activities Conference tournament with a third place finish.

The Lady Knights were fourth in the MNAC Tournament.

Brenda Masek was elected the 2022 Nebraska Cattleman president.

Thedford’s Activity Director, Bec Ray, has been elected as the District 6 delegate for the Nebraska Schools Activity Association.

Brayton Branich got his 100th wrestling win at the Trumbull-Doniphan Invite.

Fifty-five babies were featured in the “Babies of 2020.”

Reed McFadden, Brayton Branich and Reece Zutavern were all crowned District Champions and are headed to the NSAA State Wrestling Championships.

Kyle Cox, Rilyn Moody and Mattee Zutavern were the top three spellers at the Blaine

County Spelling Bee.

U.S. Senator Ben Sasse announced Miriam Ganoung from Sandhills Public Schools, as a winner of his statewide Photography Contest.

Reece Zutavern and Brayton Branich were crowned 2021 NSAA State Champion wrestlers. Reed McFadden received fourth place.

On February 17, 2021 at approximately 3:00 p.m. a Thomas County Sheriff’s Deputy made a routine traffic stop in Thomas County. The Deputy discovered a girl from Indiana that had been abducted by her biological father. The deputy took custody of the child. The man was transported to Great Plains Health for a mental health evaluation and the young girl was returned to her mother.

The Lady Knights ended their basketball season in D2-10 sub-districts with a 7-11 record.

Death: Jackie Licking, 87, Mullen, passed away February 6, 2021.

March
The Sandhills-Thedford Knights basketball team ended their season in the second round of the D1-22 sub-districts with an 11-9 record.

Thedford High School senior spotlights were Ariel Bryan, Shaydon Andersen, Colton James Polske, Rhiannon Painter and Grant Ahlstrom.

Brayton Branich, Matthew Dailey, Jacob Furrow, Brett Downing and Madison Marten were in the Sandhills High School senior spotlights.

Security First Bank, with the help of their customers and employees, collected over 250 food items to benefit the Thedford Public Schools Food Pantry through their recently completed “Feeding Hearts” food drive.

The Sandhills Journey Scenic Byway members have awarded a \$500 grant to With Love Co. Photography.

The Thedford Community Blood Drive was held February 10 and 52 units were collected.

Thedford Public Schools Spelling Bee winners pictured were: Dominic Rowse, Tyson Hickman, Chandler Pettit and Katen Licking.

Grant Ahlstrom was pictured signing his letter of intent to play football at Doane University.



The Sandhills Speech team consisting of Charlsie Teahon, Miriam Ganoung, Becca Smith, Courtney Swisher and Lindsay Cody took runner-up honors at the District D2-5 Speech meet on March 8.

The Sandhills-Thedford girls track team members were: Brea Branich, Dayle Haake, Cylee Jameson, Tenley Rasmussen, Emily Leech, Taylor Weber, Becca Smith, Madison Marten, Ariel Bryant, Emily Martindale, Charlsie Teahon and LaTajanae Robinson.

Knights track team members were: Seth Scranton, Matthew Dailey, Brayton Branich, Tyson Stengel, Grant Ahlstrom, Reece Zutavern, Trae Hickman, Brayden Schaefer, Brayden Guggenmos, Andrew Furrow, Brady Dahlberg, Brodie Stengel and Jacob Reiser.

Members of the Sandhill-Thedford golf team were Preston Moschenross, Courtney Swisher and Brett Downing.

Deaths: Norma Jean Stevens, 82, Rapid City, SD, passed away March 1, 2021; Kent William Sierks, 55, Dunning, February 17, 2021

April
Two more Knights signed letters of intent. Brayton Branich signed to play football at Chadron State College and Brett Downing will play golf at Central Community Col-

lege.

Mya Glidden, a second grader at Sandhills Elementary in Halsey, received second place in her age division of the National Ag Week Poster Contest, sponsored by the Nebraska Department of Agriculture. Her poster will be on display at the Nebraska Capitol Building.

Thomas County Sheriff Gary Eng has resigned his position effective April 30. He and his wife Lisa will be moving to Ogallala where Eng has accepted a position of lieutenant in charge of investigations for the Keith County Sheriff’s office.

Birth: Josh and Hope

Hansen, Gering, were parents of a daughter, Leona Ruth Hansen, born February 24.

Thedford High School senior spotlights were Lan Wilde, Anthony Benschoter and Tyson Stengel. Madison Glidden, Jakub Harris, Emily Martindale and Reed McFadden were in the Sandhills High School senior spotlights.

Emily Martindale has been chosen as the State FFA Vice-President.

Congressman Don Bacon made a stop in Purdum during a tour of western Nebraska.

A Cherry County resident was killed Sunday evening, April 18, 2021, in

a UTV accident southwest of Valentine. Charity Miles-DeLawyer, age 32, was driving a Honda Pioneer, on private property, when the accident occurred.

Deaths: Betty Jean Neal, 94, Broken Bow, passed away April 29, 2021; Charity Jean Miles-DeLawyer, 32, Valentine, April 18, 2021.

May
Graduation would be held May 15, 2021 at Thedford High School. Those graduating were: Grant Walter Ahlstrom, Shaydon Anthony Ander-

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Kovarik Retires From Service

Tech Sergeant Chase M. Kovarik retired on December 4, 2021 after 20 years of service to his country.

Chase entered the Delayed Entry program of the US Marine Corp on July 17, 2001, the summer before his senior year of high school. Upon his graduation, in May 2002, on June 10, 2002, he left for Boot Camp at San Diego, CA. He graduated as a full fledged US Marine on September 9, 2002.

In October 2003, after training in both North Carolina and Florida, Chase was stationed at HMX-1 at Quantico base in Triangle, Virginia. It was here, at the age of 19, Chase served as Crew Chief on Marine One under President George W. Bush. He stayed in Virginia until February 2008.

From there he headed back to San Diego, CA stationed at HMH-466. While there, Chase was deployed to Afghanistan from October 2008 to March 2009. His second deployment was with the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit from May 2010 to December 2010 on the Navy Ship the USS Peleliu.

Upon his return, he then moved to Dekalb, Illinois, where he was a Marine Recruiter from July 2011 to July 2014.

From Illinois, he traveled to Yukon, Oklahoma, where he transitioned from the US Marines to Air Force Reserves in Au-



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gust 2014, with the 931st AMXS. He was there through December 2016.

That month was his last transfer, when he went to Tinker AFB serving with the 507th MXS until his retirement on December 15, 2021.

Even having retired from service to his country, Chase’s heart for service continues. He is a police officer in Yukon, Oklahoma, having also served on their SWAT/Tactical team. He is also currently taking

classes to become a paramedic. His service definitely continues.

If you would like to offer congratulations to Chase you can send cards or letters to:

*Tech Sergeant
Chase Kovarik
617 Windy Lane
Yukon, OK 73099*

Chase is the son of Brad and Gayla Kovarik and the grandson of Mary Nichols and a 2002 graduate of Thedford High School.

January 4-H Featured Project: Leathercrafting

Happy New Year! When I think of these cold and chilly January days, I am reminded of the hours I spent on new hobbies the weeks after Christmas while waiting for school to begin again. Learning a new craft or skill is a terrific way to set the tone for an awesome year. This month’s featured 4-H project is Leathercrafting! Leathercrafting is a great project for all ages. Leather is one of our oldest natural resources; it has helped shape civilizations for over 34 centuries! By working with this medium, 4-Hers are taking part in a rich heritage of creativity and resourcefulness. This

project focusses on the fundamentals of preparing leather and creating pieces that are used in our everyday life. Youth will learn where leather comes from and how its uses have changed over centuries. Youth will also learn a skill they can use to create a lifelong hobby or even a career. There are leather workers all over the world and many opportunities that come from knowing this skill.

This project is different in terms of how it fits into State Fair. We have county level classes you can show in at your local fair, or if you want to take it further, we can help you place your item into cloth-

ing classes at the state level. Classes C221007- Beginning Fashion Accessory and C221008- Advanced Fashion Accessory would be good for projects such as leather earrings, shows, belts, bracelets, necklaces and so on. 4-Hers could also turn this skill into an entrepreneurship project where they learn how to market and sell the items they create!

If your 4-H’er is interested in working on a leathercrafting project and you want more information, please contact the 4-H Assistant Shaniya at s.albertus@unl.edu or call the office at 308-645-2267.