



# Sidney Herald

SERVING RICHLAND COUNTY AND THE SURROUNDING AREA FOR 105 YEARS

**WEDNESDAY**

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105th year, No. 25  
Sidney, Montana  
www.sidneyherald.com  
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## Bulletin Board

### Good Friday service

The Richland County Evangelical Ministerium will host a community Good Friday service at 6 p.m. Friday at the Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church.

### School elections

School elections are set for May 7. If interested in running for trustee, contact your school district clerk for a nominating petition and oath of candidacy. Petition deadline is Thursday.

### Egg hunt

Egg hunts in Sidney Saturday include 10 a.m. at Lonsdale United Methodist Church, 10 a.m. at Watertower Park (Moose Lodge), 11 a.m. Quillings Park (Elks) and 11 a.m. Veterans Memorial Park (Assembly of God).

### Happy birthdays

The Sidney Herald wishes happy birthday this week to friends Rose Hayden, Janet Williamson, Pamela Armer, Jesse Opsal, Ryan Brown, Jake VanEvery, Kristina Kitzenberg, Karen Strangeland, Carol Swanson, Jamie Malsam, Ben Thogersen, Marcia Kopp, Mike Albin, Brian Harper, Kenny Swenson, Lisa Frank, Paul Severson, Michelle Byer, Courtney Smith, Susan Pross, Jeremy Jensen, Heather Scotson Taylor, Travis Hagen, John Francis, Tricia Rolfsrud, Logan Deming, Karen Barth, Shannon Stickler, Chandra Brown, Barry Mooney, Gina Mata, Taylor Miller, Justin McQuiston, Jolene Erickson, Deidre Berquist, Luke Kloker, Brady Gorder, Tracy Simard, Cathy Hancock, Jean Odenbach, Austin Jensen, LuAnn Steele Lunstad and Lisa Schmitz.

## Newsmaker

### Youth of the Month



Kylie Schoepp was selected by her fellow club members as the Youth of the Month at the Boys & Girls Club of Richland

County. Kylie is the daughter of Chris and Tonya Schoepp and the sister to Olivia and Sophia.

This is Kylie's first year as a Boys & Girls Club member, where she attends nearly every day. Kylie is a funny, courteous and independent club member. Her favorite activity to do at the club is make crafts. Kylie is a kindergartner in Mrs. Kessel's classroom at Central School. Kylie also stays busy participating in gymnastics and soccer.

## Deaths

- Donna Dennis, 57
- William "Bill" Dobias, 99
- Charles "Charlie" Dowse, 72
- Gene E. Miller, 91,
- Jean Torgerson, 79
- Walter S. Young, 93

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# Soldier surprises children

BY LOUISA BARBER  
SIDNEY HERALD

Three-year-old Kaden Koon was the first to notice the familiar face that emerged from the opposite end of the gymnasium. With a gasp and "Daddy!" the boy hurried as fast as his little legs could carry him over to a soldier dressed in camouflage who bent down, picked him up and squeezed him hard.

Then, more gasps. One by one, four small youngsters hurried from their seats in the Lambert School gym to the newly returned North Dakota Army National Guardsman Spc. Richard Koon, who'd been deployed to Afghanistan for 329 days (his wife, Beckah, has been keeping track) with members of the 818th Engineer Company out of Williston, N.D.

On Monday, in front of the student body and staff, Richard Koon surprised his six children, Kyson, 8, Kaden, Korby, 5, who everyone says looks just like his dad, Kaittee, 7, Kenleigh, 2, and Kodi, 10 months old, who was born a month after he deployed.

"It's been hard," Beckah Koon said, "for sure. Defi-



ELLEN WZNICK | SIDNEY HERALD

**Korby Koon rushes to his father, Spc. Richard Koon, after almost a year apart. The Lambert student body and staff look on during an assembly to surprise Koon's children. Sister-in-law Susan Wright holds daughter Kenleigh, 2. Watch a video of the reunion at www.sidneyherald.com.**

nately the hardest childbirth I've had out of six. We've missed him. I'm so glad he's home."

Richard was ushered in with a warm, patriotic

welcome. The school band performed, "When The Saints Go Marching In," followed by "You're a Grand Old Flag," sung by the first-grade class. Richard,

having been holed up in the school kitchen, appeared at the other end as Beckah held their youngest, Kodi, (the two have been getting to know each other and, reportedly, it's been rather easy. Kodi recognized his voice from phone conversations and through Skype).

The surprise was under wraps for at least a week. Beckah approached kindergarten teacher Sheri Moore about an idea, and Moore "just went with it."

The 818th brought home nearly 100 soldiers who landed at Fort Bliss, Texas, on March 12. Two soldiers in the unit were killed during the mission, Sgt. 1st Class Darren Linde, of Sidney, and Spc. Tyler Orgaard.

On Friday, the returning soldiers were welcomed home by their families when they landed in Bismarck, N.D. Among them was Beckah and Kodi, there to welcome Richard home. From there, the soldier stayed at Beckah's mother's home in Buford, N.D.

"It feels awesome," she said, hugging her husband and fighting tears, "to have him home."

Now it's time to focus on

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# Area's alcohol compliance checks' results worst in years

BY LOUISA BARBER  
SIDNEY HERALD

Results from the latest round of alcohol compliance checks were so dismal it had Sidney Police Chief Frank DiFonzo worked up at last week's Sidney City Council meeting.

The 22 percent pass rating was the worst it's ever been, DiFonzo calling it "woefully bad." Just four out of 14 licensed establishments passed the checks which were conducted in January. "This is the worst I've ever had," he said.

Compliance checks are conducted three to four times a year; Richland County establishments are chosen at random and include any licensed facility that sells alcohol (i.e. bars, convenience stores, grocery outlets). Checks are conducted in an effort to prevent youth access to alcohol. They also serve as a reminder to owners, managers and employees to ask for an I.D.

The latest compliance rate is the worst record yet, which surprised law enforcement and their partners at District II Alcohol and Drug since recent rates have been in the 70-80 percent compliance range.

While DiFonzo told the city council he believed some employees aren't paying attention to what they must check, Ronda Welnel, Prevention Service director for District II later told the Herald that employee lack of training, employee negligence and staff turnover also contribute.

College students return to work and haven't been trained or brand new employees haven't undergone the training. Even so, she said, veterans of 20-plus years failed. "This falls back to the owners and managers to make sure employees are trained in a state-approved alcohol sales and service training and understand the consequences of illegal sales," Welnel said.

Retailers are given age-of-purchase calendars, but even those aren't enough sometimes. Welnel said 99 percent of failed compliance checks are because the server or clerk was "too busy" and didn't take the time to check.

Retailers are believed to be the first line of defense when it comes to preventing youth access to alcohol. However, law enforcement and prevention specialists also realize

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BILL VANDER WEELE | SIDNEY HERALD

## Mystery girls

Elise Torgerson, left, and Lexi Prevost go into the masquerade theme during Sidney High School's prom Saturday. For more Sidney prom photos, see page 1B.

# MSU ag research superintendent candidate shares vision for area

BY LOUISA BARBER  
SIDNEY HERALD

The MSU research station in Sidney could eventually be the ideal "playground for research."

Amongst ongoing challenges of budget constraints and urban sprawl encroachment, Sidney's MSU Eastern Agriculture Research Center is capable of being the "Eastern Agriculture Research Center for Visionary Studies," says Dr. Oliver Neher, Ph.D., a plant pathologist at the University of Idaho and candidate for the MSU-EARC superintendent position.

Neher was in Sidney for a

facilities tour and presentation Thursday, sharing what he envisions for the local research station, the barriers to reach those visions and some solutions to get there.

"We have to do something that's a little bit more proactive," he said. In the past, it's always been about trying to fix what's already broken, but now it's time to work to anticipate future problems, whether that means taking into account changing summers and winters or studying new and emerging pests by collaborating with other states and countries.

One of the main issues facing research facilities is urban sprawl. At the Uni-



LOUISA BARBER | SIDNEY HERALD

**Oliver Neher says staff is key to a successful research station.**

versity of Idaho Kimberly Research and Extension Center, Neher said, Twin Falls County, Idaho, is rapidly growing and essentially

crowding in on the research center; it's become difficult to expand research. "Urban development, I think, is our biggest enemy," he said.

So, how should one deal with it? Be proactive now, Neher urged. Becoming a visionary research station requires more land. Take advantage and enlarge the station, he suggested. Otherwise, the ability to do it later may no longer exist. And even if the land isn't needed at present, at least the station could lease it out to growers for the time being and use it later.

However, one of the major challenges facing both stations is budget cuts.

Facilities are understaffed because they can't be paid enough, as is true with the farm crews. Funds for newer farm equipment is hard to come by too, he said.

It takes money to operate a successful, thriving facility, and perhaps it's time to "cut a deal with the devil." The University of Idaho came close to shutting down a few of its research stations when it struck a deal with J.R. Simplot Company, the Idaho-based food and agribusiness company specializing in plant nutrition and food processing. Simplot agreed to fund the

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