

# Cancellations story of end of season for Home Federal

The Grand Island

EST. IN 1870



# Independent

Patchy clouds, High 82, Low 62

FRIDAY, JULY 31, 2020

www.theindependent.com call (800) 658-3160 to subscribe

## Northwest to have 100% in-person learning

### Restrictions will be based on risk level

By Austin Koeller

austin.koeller@theindependent.com

Northwest Public Schools plans to return to 100% in-person school Aug. 13 with restrictions based on COVID-19 risk.

In a Facebook Live announcement Thursday evening, Northwest Superintendent Jeff Edwards revealed the plan, which has two scenarios:

A. School is in session for all students.

B. Northwest will go to remote learning.

Scenario B will be implemented only in a mandated school closure that lasts more than two weeks.

Edwards said the return to school is based on a four-tiered model that correlates with the Central District Health Department's COVID-19 risk assessment dial.

The tiers are:

- 1 — No risk/low risk.
- 2 — Moderate risk.
- 3 — High risk.
- 4 — Severe risk.

Northwest said the school likely will move to remote learning if it reaches tier 4.

After the announcement, a parent asked in which tier Northwest will be Aug. 13,

the first day of school. Edwards said that would be determined prior to that date and communicated to parents.

"The determination of what tier we are on is going to include a multitude of data sources," he said. "It will include guidance from local public health officials, or the governor in the case of a directed health measure."

Under tiers 1 and 2 of Northwest's plan, students and staff are encouraged to practice social distancing if possible. In phase 3, the district said, social distancing scenarios likely will be incorporated into the school day.

In tiers 1 and 2, face coverings are optional for students and staff but are recommended. However, in tier 2, the district said, face coverings may be required on buses. In tier 3, masks may be required in classrooms and on buses.

Passing periods will stay the same under tiers 1 and 2, but may be altered in tier 3. In tiers 1 and 2, elementary recess will occur as usual, but in tier 3 it "may or may not occur," the district said.

In all phases except tier 1, visitors will not be allowed in school buildings.

■ turn to **NORTHWEST RETURNS TO SCHOOL**, page 2A



Independent/Barrett Stinson

Freshmen Mikayla Cirila (left) and Keegan Sharkey try their new lockers on for size during their first day of classes on Aug. 10, 2016, at Grand Island Northwest High. With coronavirus concerns still present, some aspects of school life will be different this year. Northwest Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Jeff Edwards shared the return-to-school plan for the 2020-21 school year late Thursday afternoon.

# Moving to Phase 4

## Loup Basin takes a calculated risk

By Jeff Bahr

jeff.bahr@theindependent.com

The director of the Loup Basin Public Health Department knows that COVID-19 still is present in Nebraska but thinks loosening health restrictions was the right move for his nine-county area.

Charles Cone said the number of positive COVID-19 cases in the district is manageable, and returning to largely normal conditions is worth the risk.

On July 24, Loup Basin became the first Nebraska public health district to

implement Phase 4 directed health measures.

Bars and restaurants in the district are able to return to business as normal in Blaine, Custer, Garfield, Greeley, Howard, Loup, Sherman, Valley and Wheeler counties. Not only are those businesses able to operate at full capacity, but also customers now may serve themselves at buffets.

Twelve days ago, the district had no active COVID-19 cases. As of Wednesday, it has eight. It's possible that the number might increase after Nebraska's Big Ro-

deo was held July 22-25 in Burwell.

But Cone thinks the number still will be manageable.

He said he respects the decisions made by other public health districts across the state, and he knows that moving into Phase 4 still presents some danger.

It'd be good that COVID-19 isn't out there, he said. But as long as the number remains under control in the Loup Basin district, "we're confident we've made the right decision," Cone said.

■ turn to **A CALCULATED RISK**, page 2A

## Economy collapses

### Record plunge, bleak jobs numbers reveal virus toll

By Martin Crutsinger and Paul Wiseman

AP Economics Writers

WASHINGTON — The coronavirus pandemic sent the U.S. economy plunging by a record-shattering 32.9% annual rate last quarter and is still inflicting damage across the country, squeezing already struggling businesses and forcing a wave of layoffs that shows no sign of abating.

The economy's collapse in the April-June quarter, stunning in its speed and depth, came as a resurgence of the viral outbreak has pushed businesses to close for a second time in many areas. The government's estimate of the second-quarter fall in the gross domestic product has no comparison since records began in 1947. The previous worst quarterly contraction — at 10%, less than a third of what was reported Thursday — occurred in 1958 during the Eisenhower administration.

Soon after the government issued the bleak economic data, President Donald Trump diverted attention by suggesting a "delay" in the Nov. 3 presidential election, based on his unsubstantiated allegations that widespread mail-in voting will result in fraud. The dates of presidential elections are enshrined in federal law and would require an act of Congress to change.

So steep was the economic fall last quarter that most analysts expect a sharp rebound for the current July-September period. But with coronavirus cases rising in the majority of states and the Republican Senate proposing to scale back aid to the unemployed, the pain is likely to continue and potentially worsen in the months ahead.

The plunge in GDP "underscores the unprecedented hit to the economy from the pandemic," said Andrew Hunter, senior U.S. economist at Capital Economics. "We expect it will take years for that damage to be fully recovered."

That's because the virus has taken square aim at the engine of the American economy — consumer spending, which accounts for about 70% of activity. That spending collapsed at a 34.6% annual rate last quarter as people holed up in their homes, travel all but froze, and shutdown orders forced many restaurants, bars, entertainment venues and other retail establishments to close.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average closed more than 200 points down — though earlier it had seemed set for a much bigger fall.

■ turn to **ECONOMIC TOLL**, page 2A



Independent/Barrett Stinson

Visiting from Florida, Yolanda Freese (center) and her husband, Charlie Freese, look over items for sale after eating lunch at the Sweet Shoppe restaurant in St. Paul. Howard County residents, and those within the Loup Basin Public Health Department area, have moved to Phase 4 of the reopening process due to coronavirus concerns.

## Sweet Shoppe customers glad to have their restaurant back

ST. PAUL — On Wednesday, customers happily were enjoying fried chicken at the Sweet Shoppe Cafe and Bakery, the only restaurant in St. Paul with a buffet.

Allan and Julie Lessig of St. Paul were enjoying their first meal at the restaurant in two months. They were joined by their friend, Becky Hongermeier of Cairo.

Other customers included Betty and Vance Christensen

of Boelus, who will celebrate their 65th anniversary Aug. 18.

Gathered around another table were Barb McKenney and Pauline Grooms of Ord, Carmen Ostrander of Clay Center and Dorrita Helm of Elyria.

Jhon Garcia of Grand Island was happily eating chicken with a coworker. Garcia, who works for Bigzby's Concrete, likes to eat at the

St. Paul restaurant whenever he's working in the area.

Sweet Shoppe owner Alice Osterman-Davis said customers are happy to be able to enjoy the buffet again.

But people still are cautious, she said. When the interior of the restaurant reopened, some customers weren't sure whether they could serve themselves.

Osterman-Davis is glad things have returned to normal.

All of the tables are back inside the Sweet Shoppe, and they are regularly sanitized. The waitress wears a mask. But Osterman-Davis still has a slight fear of "going backwards."

On Saturday, Loup Basin will be joined by the North Central District Health Department in moving to Phase 4. O'Neill is the headquarters of that nine-county health district.



Find great deals, values and information from local businesses in the **ginetwork** at **theindependent.com**

INSIDE TODAY: 2 SECTIONS, 16 PAGES

Advice ..... 8B  
Astrograph ..... 3B  
Comics ..... 4B

Crossword ..... 3B  
Editorial ..... 4A  
Entertainment... 8B

Legals ..... 5B  
Markets ..... 5A  
Record ..... 6A

Sudoku ..... 3B  
Weather ..... 8B

\$2 on newsstand  
call (800) 658-3160 to subscribe  
© Copyright Lee BHM Corp.  
doing business as The Grand Island  
Independent 2020. All rights reserved.



8 13917 00002 1