

Inside Today North Pole's Braidin Martin commits to Embry-Riddle University • Page B1

RAIN OR SHINE, IT'S STILL A FAIR

Time's running out to catch the Tanana Valley State Fair at 1800 College Road before it wraps up Sunday. Whether you're craving funnel cakes, checking out prize-winning veggies or just enjoying the quirky charm of Fairbanks' favorite summer tradition, there's still plenty to see and do. Don't miss the live music, livestock shows, local vendors and carnival rides while they last. The fair only comes around once a year — get out there and make the most of it.

ANN DIENER/NEWS-MINER

(Right) Arya Jensen's 17.8-pound cabbage won her third place in the adult category as well as the title of Junior Grand Champion at the Tanana Valley State Fair on Sunday.

JACK BARNWELL/NEWS-MINER (Below) Starchild and Richard Dalton of Stilt Circus chat with a young fan.







JACK BARNWELL/NEWS-MINER
(Above) Rabbit/cavy judge
Joseph Colucci measures an
American cavy (or guinea
pig) during one of the judging
periods on Wednesday. Colucci
came up from Ohio to help judge
the Tanana Valley State Fair
animal contests.

JACK BARNWELL/NEWS-MINER (Left) Even in the rain, riders jumped on the Space Sled ride.



JACK BARNWELL/NEWS-MINER

A vendor keeps himself occupied with a paper boat in a puddle during a downpour.



JACK BARNWELL/NEWS-MINER

A family of fair-goers huddle under umbrellas.

Former school CFO details alleged purchase in embezzlement trial

By Haley Lehman

A former school district financial officer testified Thursday that an employee facing embezzlement charges used a district credit card for a multitude of personal items, including hotel stays and airline tickets.

Lataushia Shajuan Blackmer, 50, is on trial for allegedly embezzling approximately \$35,000 from the Yukon-Koyukuk School District between July 2018 and June 2019.

Kristen Winters, the former chief financial officer for the school district, took the stand for more than six hours Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, and is expected to continue her testimony Friday morning.

Winters reviewed Blackmer's purchases using the school district's credit card with Gina Hrinko, Blackmer's supervisor, after the district discovered that Blackmer had reportedly bought airline tickets for herself and her significant other. Hrinko died in 2021.

Blackmer was hired as an administrative assistant in July 2018 and was paid hourly. Employees were required to submit original receipts for purchases made with the card, along with their manager's signature and a code indicating which grant the purchase was charged to.

Winters flagged receipts that appeared to be photocopied, lacked Hrinko's original signature, were for purchases made after hours or on weekends, or were dated when Blackmer was out sick. She also flagged purchases that were shipped to Blackmer's personal address instead of the school district, grocery items in quantities inconsistent with office use, and items that would not have been authorized.

Winters reviewed more than 100 receipts for purchases Blackmer is accused of making at Fred Meyer, Walmart, Joann, Michael's, Amazon, Home Depot, Lowe's, Pier 1, Office Depot, and Barnes & Noble.

In September, Blackmer used the district card to stay at the Extended Stay America hotel, Winters testified. The receipt listed Blackmer's home address, and the company was identified as "Fort Wainwright" or "Alaska Airlines" rather than the school district. The charge was coded to a grant for teaching supplies.

Winters testified that many receipts suggested Blackmer used the card for personal shopping, buying items like hair color, candy, cereal, clothing, pork chops, cod, DVDs, medications and decorations. She also testified that Blackmer bought a karaoke machine from Fred Meyer, a television from Walmart, and a Barnes & Noble membership.

"These were items that would not be purchased for the school district on a grant," Winters testified repeatedly.

In November, Blackmer reportedly used the card to buy pig decorations from Fred Meyer. Winters said

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Trump administration moves to pull restrictions in NPR-A

By Alex DeMarban
ANCHORAGE DAILY NEWS/

The Interior Department is taking additional steps to enable oil and gas drilling in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska, revoking Biden-era

documents that called for expanding "Special Areas" that receive extra protection and are known for their unique wildlife and subsistence values.

The move continues the yearslong back-and-forth that has seen both Trump

administrations take steps to loosen efforts by Democratic predecessors to limit oil and gas development in the reserve.

The 23 million-acre reserve on Alaska's North Slope is home to ConocoPhillips' giant Willow oil field on its eastern flank, and is the subject of growing oil exploration in recent years. The current Special Areas, representing more than half the reserve, are Teshekpuk Lake, Utukok River Uplands, Colville River, Kasegaluk Lagoon, and Peard Bay. A conservation group argued this week that the revocation of the documents makes a mockery of the Interior Department's ongoing public comment period that ends Monday regarding those enhanced protections for the areas.

But Alaska's Congressional delegation and a group representing elected Iñupiaq leadership from Alaska's North Slope said Tuesday they supported the Interior Department's actions.

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GOOD MORNING



The weather

Mostly sunny and beautiful. High today......78 Low tonight......52

> Sunrise: 4:51 a.m. Sunset: 11:01 p.m. WEATHER » A3

Sport fish hatchery hosts kids day
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SOURDOUGH JACK:

"Imagine how much

"Imagine how much Cabbage stew that can make. It would last me all winter!"



