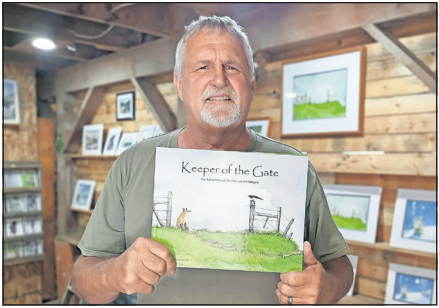


Boundary
County artist
releases
children’s book
/ A5



North Idaho
woman
catches
record
“doctor fish”
/ B1

BONNERS FERRY

HERALD

Thursday
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SPORTS

■ **PREP SOCCER:**
Badger girls advance in
Intermountain League
tournament / B1

Winter driving
classes return to
North Idaho

The first snowstorm of the season may still be a ways off, but frosty mornings and icy roads can arrive much sooner. The Idaho Transportation Department and Idaho State Police are helping North Idaho drivers prepare now, before winter weather catches anyone by surprise.

Registration is now open for free winter driving classes in North Idaho, with the first classes scheduled on Saturday, Oct. 10, in Coeur d’Alene and in Kellogg. A class is planned for Oct. 17 in Coeur d’Alene and a class in the Sandpoint area on Oct. 24.

Classes in Kellogg will be held at the ISP headquarters. In the Sandpoint area, the class will be held at the ITD maintenance shed, 25759 U.S. 2, Sandpoint.

See DRIVING, A2

Idaho Voter
Pamphlets
coming to homes

Idaho Secretary of State Phil McGrane is encouraging Idahoans to watch their mailboxes for the Official Idaho Voter Pamphlet, which is now arriving at households across the state ahead of the Nov. 3 General Election.

“Election season is underway,” McGrane said in press release. “Every Idaho household can expect to receive a Voter Pamphlet with the information you need to be ready to vote in November.”

See PAMPHLET, A2

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America’s Youth AI Festival’s student senators pose for a group photo.

Courtesy photo

Local students take seat at the table in AI policy debate

By CAROLINE LOBSINGER
Staff Writer

BONNERS FERRY — Ninety-eight students. Three days. Two local youth. One AI policy.

The students, part of the America’s Youth AI Festival, were tasked with developing a sweeping national framework for the responsible use of artificial intelligence in K-12 education. The act proposes protections for authentic learning, student privacy, fairness, human judgment and the relationships at the heart of education.

The first-of-its-kind gathering, held July 17-19 on the UMass Boston and MIT campuses, brought students

and school leaders together with researchers, artists, visionaries and others for a weekend centered on AI literacy, student voice, civic engagement and responsible innovation.

The student-authored proposal rejects an outright ban on artificial intelligence and its unrestricted adoption. Instead, event organizers said it establishes clear boundaries around when AI can support education and when original student work, professional judgment and human connection must remain paramount.

“As the STUDENTS FIRST Act of 2026 states, educators should avoid AI use in situations where ‘human

connection is irreplaceable in the learning environment,” officials said in a press release.

Among its recommendations:

- Require AI literacy instruction when students first use digital devices in school
- Prohibit students from using AI to complete artistic assignments or generate written assignments
- Starting in ninth grade, allow students to use AI, with teacher permission, as a supplementary aid for brainstorming, studying and editing
- Give students the right to appeal accusations of improper AI use and require meaningful human review

See AI DEBATE, A6

Habitat for Humanity: A foundation for the future

By CHLOE COCHRAN
Staff Writer

Surrounded by dirt piles and the sound of children playing across the street, two local families envisioned what their lives would look like on Quinns Road, an opportunity that wouldn’t have been possible without Idaho Panhandle Habitat for Humanity’s help.

On Monday evening, the Bulls and Morgan families got to meet with board members of IPHFH to celebrate the start of construction for their homes, after being selected through the nonprofit’s application process.

In a span of approximately nine months, the Bulls and Morgan families will get to move into their new homes.

“It’s not just building a safe

and affordable house,” IPHFH Executive Director Robin Rawlings said. “It’s a foundation for them, for their lives, and to make a better community. ... It’s a steppingstone to that next level in life.”

As part of the IPHFH program, officials from the nonprofit equip families to receive more than just keys once their home is complete.

Recipients of IPHFH homes are required to take financial courses to learn about mortgages, homeowners’ insurance, housing maintenance and other fundamental principles. In addition, they must show they can support a small mortgage, establish saving habits and be willing to put 300 to 500 hours of “sweat equity” into the home.

“Our builds are only made possible by donor support. We are a self-funded organization, supported by donor contributions, mortgage payments from Habitat homeowners, and proceeds from our ReStore. Building safe, affordable homes for local families takes a true community effort, and we appreciate all those that support us,” Rawlings said.

For the two homes currently under development, IPHFH partnered with Lexar Homes for construction, AGE Heating and Cooling donated the heating and cooling systems for the homes and Precision Roofing & Gutters donated the roofs.

See HABITAT, A2

Idaho’s big reading gains come with a caveat

By EMMA EPPERLY
Idaho Ed News

Many Idaho school districts saw significant gains in reading proficiency during the 2025-26 school year.

Some saw up to 54 percentage points of growth from fall to spring, with the statewide average at 14.48 percentage points.

But the growth isn’t a pure picture of student improvement.

See READING, A6

PHD leader outlines vision for health

Would like to see study on whether alternative care delivers better outcomes

By KAYE THORNBRUGH
Staff Writer

The interim director of Panhandle Health District told community members this week that he wants to conduct a five-year study on the quality and cost of “functional medicine” compared to “conventional medicine.”

“I have become increasingly convinced that there are strategies of healthcare, outside of allopathic medicine, that may, in fact, improve health for us all,” Dr. Thomas Fletcher told about two dozen community members Tuesday night during a public forum on healthcare at the Kootenai County administration building. “What would that be?”

See PHD, A6

Young adult scheduled for prelim. sexual abuse hearing

By CHLOE COCHRAN
Staff Writer

BONNERS FERRY — A Bonners Ferry man arrested earlier this summer on sexual abuse charges is scheduled for a preliminary hearing Friday, Oct. 9, to determine if there is significant enough evidence to move forward with the case.

Zachary Gardner, 23, is charged with two counts of rape and forcible penetration, felonies punishable by up to life in prison.

See HEARING, A2

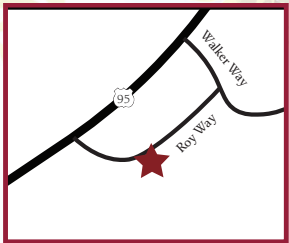
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