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WEATHER OUTLOOK

Saturday: Mostly cloudy, high near 81

Sunday: Sunny, high near 80

WEEKEND EDITION

OBITUARIES

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THE WESTERN NEWS

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Libby, Montana

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Election questions swirl as officials hope to restore faith in process

By **SCOTT SHINDLEDECKER**
The Western News

Can it be trusted?
The latest problems with a Lincoln County election are raising serious questions about the integrity of the process and whether it can be trusted.

In Lincoln County, absentee voter packages were mailed May 8 to registered voters who requested them. It didn't take long before multiple mistakes were discovered.

Those who received a ballot package from the department, led by Election Administrator Melanie Howell and assistant Sierra Gustin, also received a

note that instructed them to sign their ballot. Not only is the direction incorrect, but it raises the issues of revealing a voter's identity and whether the ballot would be accepted.

Other mistakes have surfaced, including leaving ballots out of the mailed voter packets. Registered voters are supposed to receive ballots for the Republican, Democrat and Libertarian parties.

But some voters reported receiving ballot packages without all the ballots.

In primary elections, registered voters may only vote with their party.

For example, if a registered

Republican voter receives a voter packet with three ballots, they are to vote only for Republican candidates. The other ballots are supposed to be thrown away.

Longtime Libby resident and attorney Ann German spoke passionately about her concerns during the public comment portion of the May 20 county commissioners meeting.

German, who has served as an election judge in the past, is currently certified to do so, but has chosen to opt out of acting as a judge for the primary. She explained that she does not want to create a conflict of interest if any legal action is undertaken

as a result of the erroneous ballot information.

She asked commissioners Brent Teske, Jim Hammons and Noel Duram what they intended to do about the situation.

"What are you going to do about the illegal notice sent out by your Election Department and what are you going to do to assure voters this election is secure?" German asked. "This is a huge problem and I've had a lot of people contact me about it because they aren't sure what to do."

"What you should've done first thing Monday morning is

See **ELECTION, A5**

MEMORIAL DAY



A team of U.S. flag planters worked diligently and through a heavy rain Wednesday, May 20, 2026, at Libby City Cemetery to decorate the graves of United States military members who served their country. From left, are Harper Melby, Deborah Kissinger and Jeremy Melby. The effort was part of a combined group organized by the Libby Unit 97 American Legion Ladies Auxiliary and Veterans of Foreign Wars Harper Erdman Post 1548. (Scott Shindledecker/The Western News)

Serving those who served their country

By **SCOTT SHINDLEDECKER**
The Western News

For the love and defense of their country.

They are the motivating factors that led so many to volunteer to serve in the U.S. military, be it Army, Navy, Marines or Air Force.

Locally, the VFW Harper Erdman Post 1548 in Libby and the American Legion & Auxiliary Austin Reedy Post 97 are teaming up in an effort to better support area veterans, their families and recognize their sacrifices.

"We're all here for the same reason, to honor and support our vets and their families," said Kari Boardman. "I'm proud to partner with the VFW, we're all about the same mission."

Boardman is a relatively new member of American Legion

See **COUNTRY, A7**

COMMUNITY FOCUS

Libby eighth-grade science fair challenges young minds

By **SCOTT SHINDLEDECKER**
The Western News

Libby's eighth-grade students learned the value of questioning their own hypotheses and predictions in the pursuit of truth and accuracy.

The Libby Middle School Science Fair, held May 7 in the high school gymnasium, gave nearly 100 students the opportunity to showcase their reasoning skills as they sought knowledge and information.

It also was meant to challenge their perceptions of what they thought they knew about a particular subject.

Eighth-grade teacher Shannon Ostrowski has run the fair for the last three years and been involved with it for a decade. Her involvement in the fair

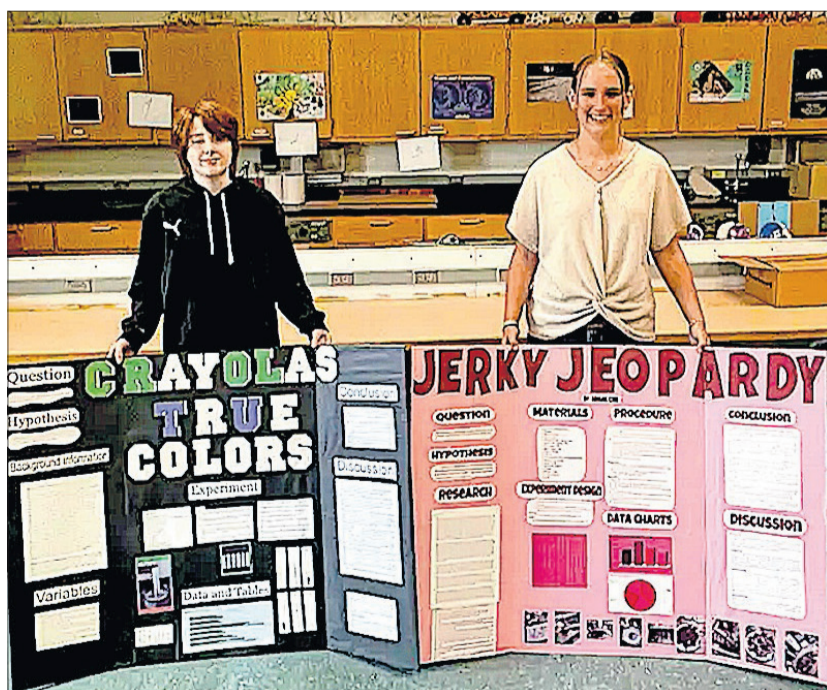
began with high school science teacher, Renee Rose.

"Renee is a true mentor to me and so many of our students," Ostrowski said. "We want the kids, while doing their projects, to ask questions, to encourage scientific inquiry, test their preconceived ideas."

There was no doubt that occurred for the 74 students who entered projects. They were judged by 20 individuals of all ages. The goal was to make the Top 10, which follows below.

Teagan James: News Check
Simeon Shattuck: Ripeness on Hold
Sawyer Wofford: Petrified
Nolan Winn: Sink or Stay

See **SCIENCE, A10**



Here are two of the 10 winners in the Libby Eighth Grade Science Fair, held Thursday, May 7, in the Libby Middle High School. From left, are Kaylee Jellessed: Crayolas True Colors and Abigail Kirk: Jerky Jeopardy. (Courtesy photo)



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