

Holmes Lake’s  
boat rental  
business  
shutting  
down.

LOCAL, A3



Nebraska’s  
Rhule expects  
big improvement  
going into Week  
2.

SPORTS, B1

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# REPLANTING HISTORY



ARTHUR H. TRICKETT-WILE, JOURNAL STAR FILE PHOTO

A tree hangs snapped in the lawn surrounding the Nebraska State Capitol after overnight storms around the city on Aug. 9. This is one of two pin oaks, part of the original plans for the Capitol grounds, that will need to be replaced.

## Original Capitol trees to be replaced after windstorm

**CHRIS DUNKER**  
Lincoln Journal Star

Ernst Herminghaus watched as his vision for the Capitol grounds became a reality.

The late winter weather had allowed the planting of more than 160 trees — white firs and red cedars, elms, maples, lindens and birches — to start earlier than anticipated in 1934.

By mid-March, the final group



**Herminghaus**

“They were all set up after dark,” the paper reported on March 11, 1934.

Two of those pin oaks, part of

of trees, 11 pin oaks standing 25-feet tall, were delivered on truck bed from a nursery near Geneva, the Lincoln Sunday Journal and Star reported.

the original plans for the Capitol grounds drawn by Nebraska’s first licensed landscape architect, experienced substantial damage in the Aug. 9 windstorm that swept through Lincoln.

The trees — one near the northeast corner, another near the southwest corner of the building — had stood tall on the site for more than

Please see **TREES**, Page A2

### SPECIAL REPORT

## Nez Perce rez police in ‘chaos’

Attempts to fix tribal police met with resistance

**TED MCDERMOTT**  
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Kenton Beckstead didn’t know what he was getting into when he left his law practice in Twin Falls, Idaho, in 2016 and took a position as a tribal prosecutor 400 miles north on the Nez Perce Reservation.

But soon after he began working with Nez Perce tribal law enforcement, Beckstead had a striking first impression that the police department was embroiled in “chaos.”

“One of the big issues was just getting information from the police department to the prosecutor’s office to be able to review it and decide the charges,” he said.

Turf wars within the police department also meant that victim advocates were often sidelined, Beckstead said, because detectives seemed to believe those “advocates were meddling in their business or something like that.”

The “chaos” and dysfunction came to a head on Halloween night 2020 when a 28-year-old tribal citizen named Bessie Blackeagle was murdered by her boyfriend, Travis Ellenwood, Beckstead said.

The killing was a watershed moment for Beckstead.

Like many others within and outside the tribe’s justice system, Beckstead believes police could have done more to respond to allegations of domestic violence against Ellenwood before he murdered Blackeagle.

Please see **NEZ PERCE**, Page A5

# Flock system aids ICE in Nebraska

Sheriff’s offices utilize searches for investigation

**EMILY WOLF**  
Flatwater Free Press

When federal immigration agents arrested an alleged “MS-13 kingpin” in the Omaha area on July 9, they were quick to thank the local cops and other federal officials who helped crack the case.

But they didn’t mention one organization: Flock Safety, a private company whose surveillance cameras have quietly become an important piece of the Trump administration’s immigration crackdown in Nebraska and across the U.S.

Search logs obtained by the Flatwater Free Press through open records requests show Flock systems in the state’s two largest counties, Douglas and Lancaster, recorded more than 20 immigration-related searches, combined, from January through June. The records also show that multiple out-of-state agencies, granted access by

local law enforcement, have used cameras in Nebraska for immigration enforcement during that time period.

The searches appear to represent a growing use for the cameras, which local law enforcement agencies across the country have used for years to investigate car thefts, assaults, drug sales and traffic violations.

Authorities have long argued that the cameras are a valuable tool. The Douglas County Sheriff’s Office said searches of their system are always connected to criminal cases and not solely for non-criminal immigration violations. Among them: Flock searches that led U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s Homeland Security Investigations to Melvin Varela Perez, the alleged MS-13 kingpin.

“We have to use technology to our advantage, because the criminals are using technology to their advantage already,” said Douglas County Sheriff Aaron Hanson. “We can’t allow the criminals to use drones

Please see **FLOCK**, Page A2



DOUGLAS COUNTY SHERIFF’S OFFICE, COURTESY PHOTO

Douglas County Sheriff’s Deputy Matthew Baber pulled over Rene Escobar Ochoa on Interstate 80 in July for failing to signal. Law enforcement later used Flock Safety surveillance systems to monitor and arrest Escobar Ochoa, a suspected member of MS-13.

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FORECAST • B10

**Inside**

CLASSIFIEDS	B8	LOCAL	A3-A4, A6
COMICS	B7	NATION/WORLD	A9
CROSSWORDS	A2, B7	SPORTS	B1-B6

