



Watertown, Aberdeen Central seek state tourney berths

SPORTS, 1B

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Gift cards help keep money in Aberdeen

A.J. Kaufman

Special to the Aberdeen News
USA TODAY NETWORK

On the Aberdeen Area Chamber of Commerce's website, they claim that shopping local keeps the city and surrounding rural areas moving forward. And to that end, the Chamber is currently running the "Aberdeen Gift Card Program" to drive local spending and support member businesses.

The Chamber operates the gift card program as a

strategic way to keep local dollars circulating within the community. Unlike traditional gift cards, the Aberdeen Gift Card can only be redeemed at participating Chamber member businesses, which number nearly 200 across the community.

According to Aberdeen Chamber CEO Gail Ochs, "this ensures that every purchase directly benefits the businesses that invest in, support, and help grow Aberdeen."

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Downtown Aberdeen is shown.
PROVIDED BY ALICE MANNETTE



From left, Garrison Steele of Alden, Minnesota, Jose Del Angel of Milbank, South Dakota and Mason Anthony of Nicollet, Minnesota will compete in the NJCAA Call of Duty Warzone championship for Lake Area Tech. PROVIDED BY LAKE AREA TECH

LATC esports team heads to nationals

Milbank student is on the roster

Charles Rankin

AI-assisted reporter | USA TODAY NETWORK

Lake Area Technical College is heading to its first-ever national esports championship.

The school's Call of Duty Warzone team will face USC Sumter in the Call of Duty Warzone 2v2 NJCAA National Championship at 5 p.m. Dec. 12.

The team includes Jose Del Angel of Milbank, South Dakota, Garrison Steele of Alden, Minnesota and Mason Anthony of Nicollet, Minnesota.

The team had a strong regular season with only one loss and a Region 13 Championship win. They advanced to the national semifinals, where they defeated Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College 2-1.

After losing the second match of the series, Coach Bryce LeBlanc rallied players Del Angel and Steele with a simple message: "Win and move on or lose and go home."

The players responded with a decisive performance in the final match to secure their spot in the national finals.

The championship appearance reflects the rapid

growth of the Lake Area Tech esports program, which began as a small student club and now has more than 30 students competing in nine game titles across two collegiate leagues.

Students in the program represent a wide range of academic fields at Lake Area Tech.

"Gaming was one of the few avenues I had to compete growing up," Anthony said.

Due to technical issues, Anthony stepped back during the regional rounds, and alternate player Garrison Steele stepped in alongside Del Angel. The two have since formed a strong competitive duo and remain the starters for the national championship.

Del Angel said competing in the national finals has been the highlight of his season.

"To be successful Friday, I need to stay focused, communicate well and play aggressively," Del Angel said.

Steele added that his performance in last week's semifinal, including ten eliminations, was especially meaningful.

"Being in my final year here, earning a national title would mean a lot," Steele said.

The esports program is coached by LeBlanc and Levi Olson, both former collegiate esports players. LeBlanc said this fall has been the program's strongest season to date.

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SD revs up for the future in Biotech

Molly Wetsch

SOUTH DAKOTA NEWS WATCH

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. — In the northwest corner of Sioux Falls, an 80-acre campus opened its first building this year dedicated entirely to expanding the state's life science and biotechnology research industry.

After nearly 30 years of planning and development, the University of South Dakota Discovery District now provides lab and office space to emerging and established companies that specialize in those promising areas of growth.

It's representative of the collaboration working to ensure that, as these emerging technology fields seek to expand nationwide, South Dakota is atop the list.

Dozens of companies and universities are part of the budding industry, including health care giants Sanford Health and Avera Health, Rapid City-based innovation company Phylloceuticals and POET, the world's largest biofuel producer.

According to Built In, an online tech community, "biotech is the intersection of biological, engineering

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Google: These were the state's top trending searches for 2025

Chris Mueller

Sioux Falls Argus Leader
USA TODAY NETWORK

Taylor Swift's "Wood," "67," and Pittsburgh Steelers jerseys were among the top trending searches for 2026 in South Dakota, according to Google's Year in Search.

Google's data, taken from Jan. 1 through Nov. 25, looks at the "moments, people, topics, events and places that captured the world's attention this year." The lists reflect trending topics and shouldn't be confused with the most searched by number of searches, as "those tend to change very little year to year," USA TODAY reported.

"By looking at top trending searches, we're identifying topics that saw huge spikes in 2025, which means they're unique to this year compared to last year," Google explained.

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