



Gazelles Sweep Past Huron In Tuesday Volleyball Action • 8

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# County Budget OK'd

Department Heads Ordered To Cut  
Their Individual Budgets By 10%

BY RANDY DOCKENDORF  
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After a 10% across-the-board cut was defeated, the Yankton County Commission unanimously voted Tuesday to cut operational budgets by 10% for next year.

With the action, the commissioners finalized their 2026 budget ahead of the Oct. 1 deadline under state law.



Klimisch

Commission Chairman John Marquardt said the 10% cut in operational costs, which he supported, would reduce the 2026 budget by \$1,232,470.

However, the decision wasn't made before a heated discussion among the commissioners and between some commissioners and the county officials now tasked with cutting their

departments' operations.

During the discussion, Interim Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Director Troy Cowman offered to remain as the head of the ambulance and related services on a permanent basis.

"I have been in the interim position, off and on, for seven years," he said, adding the current search for an EMS director has already lasted five months.

Cowman estimated, to bring in a new director from the outside, would require an additional \$100,000 for a competitive salary that

COUNTY | PAGE 10



Mike Huether and his mother, Diane Reese, speak to a crowd of more than 50 at River City Domestic Violence Center's open house and tour Tuesday. (Jay Gravholt/P&D)

## Reese Makes A Pledge, Challenge To Aid RCDVC

BY JAY GRAVHOLT  
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"Giving While You're Living" was the mantra behind a \$250,000 donation to the River City Domestic Violence Center (RCDVC) Tuesday morning.

Longtime Yankton resident Diane Reese, along with her son, Mike Huether, announced the donation during an open house and tour of the newly renovated shelter and family exchange center.

Cassie Nagel, executive director of RCDVC, said the gift came at a time when they needed it most.

"When I stepped into leadership, our board and staff worked together to set a clear vision," she said. "We identified three major goals: strengthen sustainability so we can serve clients effectively and retain the incredible staff who walk alongside survivors every day; educate our community about healthy relationships and the role we all play in prevention; and expanding our services to meet the needs of clients and communities who often face barriers to care before and after the crisis has passed. Diane's gift became the catalyst to put those goals into motion.

"The irony was that while we were doubling our shelter capacity with this addition, cuts to our federal VOCA (Victims of Crimes Act federal funding) grants meant we were wrestling

REESE | PAGE 3

## Pillen Adds \$20 Million To Nebraska Property Tax Relief Funds

BY ZACH WENDLING  
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LINCOLN, Neb. — Nebraska Gov. Jim Pillen this week directed about \$20 million in unused property tax relief funds and higher-than-expected casino revenues to instead be distributed to taxpayers.

Pillen, in an executive order Monday, said the state had more casino gambling revenue and unused money in two property tax relief funds than lawmakers had anticipated when they passed the state's latest two-year budget in May.

Pillen ordered Nebraska Property Tax Administrator Sarah Scott to distribute the full increased amounts as she allocates tax credits in the coming months.

"Whenever possible, we must get bureaucracy out of the way and ensure that Nebraskans receive the full amount of property tax relief possible," Pillen said in a Tuesday statement announcing the order. "This is a common-sense, good government measure that will help Nebraska families across the state."

The combined result means an additional \$77 million state investment in tax credits to offset local property taxes compared to last year, according to the state budget.

The executive order states that "recent events, increasing revenues, appropriation limitations and transfer timing" meant certain funds had been retained and were not being disbursed in the manner that would "produce the maximum property tax relief" for taxpayers.

Before the additional \$20 million, the legislatively allocated total in the Property Tax Credit Cash Fund, with credits allocated to counties as a portion of statewide valuations, was \$422 million. Total state funding in

PILLEN | PAGE 10

## Setting Her Sights



KELLY HERTZ/P&D

Dr. Alex Kneeland stands in front of her new clinic located on the north side of town near First Dakota Soccer Park. To learn more about Meridian Eye Care (formerly Steckler Eye Care), see pages 6-7 for September's Minding Yankton's Business story.

## Missouri River Outdoor Expo To Celebrate 20th Anniversary

BY MARK MAHONEY  
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PONCA, Neb. — A weekend of family entertainment, exploration and education is waiting at the Missouri River Outdoor Expo's two-day 20th anniversary event set for this weekend at a scenic northeast Nebraska state park.

The 2025 edition of the expo — the largest event of its kind in the Midwest, according to the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission — will be open to the public from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday at the more than 2,000-acre Ponca State Park north of Ponca, Nebraska.

Visitors will have the opportunity to enjoy more than 100 outdoor activities, including wildlife encounters, fishing, kayaking, archery, camping skills, contests, mountain biking, rock climbing, shooting sports, food and goods vendors, cooking and craftsmanship demonstrations, local entertainment, a heritage encampment that will include a shooting cannon and much more.

"This is a really great event for people who have never tried an outdoor activity," Katie



COURTESY OF NEBRASKA GAME AND PARKS  
Tim Williams, a Nebraska Game and Parks conservation officer, works with children during a Missouri River Outdoor Expo fishing activity at Ponca State Park north of Ponca, Nebraska.

Leware, who was named Ponca State Park's superintendent in November last year, told the Press & Dakotan. "They can come in — and it's

EXPO | PAGE 3

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