



A startup's big moonshot

Company to explore settlement on the moon

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Providing a spark

Michigan beats Colorado State

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Warrant issued for owner of fence company

Defendant charged with felonies for unfulfilled contracts

DAILY SUN STAFF REPORTS

A warrant was issued Wednesday for a fence contractor facing 13 felony charges after taking more than \$86,000 in area fencing contracts, but failing to do the work.

Travis J. Kechely, 34, was scheduled to appear in Gage County District Court for a pretrial conference Wednesday morning, but failed to appear.

District Court Judge Rick Schreiner issued a warrant for Kechely's arrest following the missed hearing, and set a new bond in the case at \$50,000 with a 10% deposit.

Kechely is charged with three counts of theft by deception valued at over \$5,000, nine counts of theft by deception valued at \$1,500-\$5,000, two counts of theft by deception valued at \$500-\$1,500 and one count of issuing a bad check valued at \$1,500-\$5,000.

All but two of the charges are felonies.

According to court documents, police began investigating Kechely in December 2020 after they were informed of a fencing company, Patriot Fencing, was taking deposits of at least 50% for jobs and then never starting the projects.

Police posted on social media asking anyone who had been a victim of fraud by the company to contact police. More than 16 alleged victims came forward.

The majority were determined to have paid deposits in the spring and summer of 2020 for fencing projects that were never started.

Arrest documents stated most cases followed a similar pattern, and noted that one person did receive a refund check for the project, however the check could not be cashed due to insufficient funds.

Documents stated the total Kechely collected from the victims was \$86,058.

Lewiston man dies after hospital release

Man died while driving, sheriff says

LEE ENTERPRISES

A 78-year-old Lewiston man died while driving near the southern Lancaster County line hours after he was released from a local hospital, according to the sheriff.

Terry Wagner said the man was dead when deputies arrived on scene after his car veered off Nebraska 43 near Pella Road at around 3:40 p.m. Wednesday.

Wagner said the man's vehicle suffered minimal damage. Deputies believe the man suffered a medical event while driving. He had been released from the hospital Wednesday.

The 78-year-old, who Wagner did not identify, had a number of cardiovascular issues thought to have contributed to his death, the sheriff said.

WAR IN UKRAINE | THEATER ATTACK

Rescuers search theater rubble

No reports of deaths; building had bomb shelter in basement

ANDREA ROSA
Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Rescue workers searched for survivors Thursday in the ruins of a theater blown apart by a Russian airstrike in the besieged city of Mariupol, while scores of Ukrainians across the country were killed in ferocious urban attacks on a school, a hostel and other sites.

Hundreds of civilians had been taking shelter in the grand, columned theater in central Mari-

upol after their homes were destroyed in three weeks of fighting in the southern port city.

More than a day after the airstrike, there were no reports of deaths. With communications disrupted across the city and movement difficult because of shelling and other fighting, there were conflicting reports on whether anyone had emerged from the rubble.

"We hope and we think that some people who stayed in the shelter under the theater could survive," Petro Andrushchenko, an official with the mayor's office, told The Associated Press. He said the building had a relatively modern basement bomb shelter

designed to withstand airstrikes.

Other officials had said earlier that some people had gotten out.

Satellite imagery on Monday from Maxar technology showed huge white letters on the pavement in front of and behind the theater spelling out "CHILDREN" in Russian to alert warplanes to those inside.

Russia's military denied bombing the theater or anyplace else in Mariupol on Wednesday.

The strike against the theater was part of a furious bombardment of civilian sites in multiple cities over the past few days.

In the northern city of Chernihiv, at least 53 people had been brought to morgues over the past

24 hours, killed amid heavy Russian air attacks and ground fire, the local governor, Viacheslav Chaus, told Ukrainian TV on Thursday.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called for more help for his country in a video address to German lawmakers. He also referred to the dire situation in Mariupol, saying: "Everything is a target for them."

Both Ukraine and Russia this week reported some progress in negotiations. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Thursday that some negotiators were breaking into working groups, "but there should be contacts today."



COURTESY PHOTOS

The Diller-Odell speech team took runner-up at their district speech meet. The team had nine qualify for state. Front row: Brennan Schultis, Callan McKinney, Kate Kostal, Alli Engelman, Preston Engelman, Jason Arnold. Back row: Maddie Parde, Jaedyn Hajek, Ashley Duis, Mikayla Krieger, Braeden Humphreys, Ellie Weers, Joely Weers, Dave Parde.

State speech offers challenge, reward to area

Students compete at state speech tournament this week

JOHN GRINVALDS
Daily Sun Staff Writer

Speech may not look it—with its suspender-fixed pants and colorful ties—but it has a lot in common with basketball, according to Tri-County High School Principal Ryan Clark.

Speakers and players both feel the weight of the world on their shoulders when crunch time comes; the key is not to crack, he said.

"They're completely different people when they're delivering their speech to a judge and a room of strangers they're competing against," Clark said. "It's like they're able to block out all extra noise and focus in on what they've been practicing on for months. So it's no different from a basketball player who is at the free throw line with four seconds left on the clock. There's no difference between the pressure that that athlete feels and these contestants for speech have on them."

More than a dozen students from local schools will face that pressure at this week's NSAA State Speech Tournament between Thursday and Friday in Kearney High School. Rounds last throughout the day with fi-



The Tri-County High School Speech Team. Tri-County took second at the district meet and qualified seven students for this week's state competition.

nals taking place in the afternoon. Diller-Odell speech coach Amy Coufal said eight of her nine students who qualified hadn't qualified before.

"There's definitely some anxiety, and there's a lot of unknowns," Coufal said. "But there's also a lot of excitement. This is such a good chance for them to see really strong competition... They're going against the best of the best, and they're right up there with them."

Coufal said she enjoyed building stronger relationships with her students and watch-

ing them grow throughout the season. Slowly, verbal fumbles taper to a point of purpose; students straighten their rhetorical spines and walk with a new air of confidence.

"The skills they develop in speech are like none other," she said. "They will be with them for the rest of their lives."

Diller-Odell qualified 9 students for 11 events and took the runner-up trophy at their district meet. The qualifiers were Alli Engelman, Jason Arnold, Kate Kostal, Preston Engelman, Callan McKinney, Ellie Weers,

Dave Parde, Mikayla Krieger and Joely Weers.

Tri-County also took home the runner-up trophy from its district competition and had seven qualifiers, including Gracin Hahn, Grant Lewandowski, Chaeli Taylor, MacKenzie Smith, Jackson McNiff, Payton Smidt and Morgan Stokebrand.

Freeman qualified seven students, including Jenna Husband, Zach Robeson, Grace VanEngen, Summer Buss, Carter Furstenaue, Catie Reed, Phies Richardson.

Lewiston qualified one student.



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