

THE LEADER-NEWS

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The Leader-News welcomes letters from its readers. Letters must include writer's full name, city and state in which he or she lives and daytime telephone number.

Anonymous and unsigned letters will not be printed. Form letters and those from outside our circulation area may be printed depending on whether we judge the subject pertinent.

We will not print letters we judge libelous or of an advertising nature.

Letters should not be more than 250 words in length. Mail: Leader-News, PO Box 340, Washburn, ND 58577; E-mail: leadernews@nordaknorth.com or drop off your letter at 607 Main Ave., Washburn.



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 NORTH DAKOTA NEWSPAPER ASSOCIATION



Two die in head-on crash south of Wilton

Crash under investigation by the NDHP

BY KELLI AMELING
 ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER

The North Dakota Highway Patrol has released the names of those involved in a head-on crash on U.S. Highway 83 south of Wilton.

According to a press release from NDHP Lt. Jenna Clawson Huijbregtse, issued Feb. 9, Doreen Hexom, 80, of Williston, and Portia Mattiesen, 21, of Bismarck, both died after a head-on crash occurred about 6 miles south of Wilton on Feb. 8.

Clawson Huijbregtse stated Hexom was traveling southbound in the northbound lanes of U.S. Highway 83 in her 2021 GMC Acadia near mile marker 105 when the vehicle collided head-on with Mattiesen.

Mattiesen was traveling northbound in her

2016 Nissan Maxima, and it was reported a seat belt was not in use.

"Both drivers were transported to Sanford Medical Center in Bismarck and pronounced deceased due to injuries sustained in the crash," Clawson Huijbregtse stated.

The crash occurred at about 10:26 a.m. The road conditions were described as wet with weather conditions being foggy with visibility about 100 yards.

"The northbound lanes of U.S. Highway 83 were closed to non-residential traffic from the junction of N.D. Highway 1804/71st Avenue Northeast to Wilton from about 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

"The crash remains under investigation by the North Dakota Highway Patrol," Clawson Huijbregtse stated.

Blueprint points path forward for North Dakota's strained local newspapers

Strong public trust, willingness to support local journalism provides hope

BY MICHAEL STANDAERT
 NORTH DAKOTA NEWS COOPERATIVE

Shrinking profit margins, aging ownerships and headaches from factors beyond their control like postal delays continue to strain local newspapers across North Dakota.

While some of the 73 local newspapers in the state are in critical condition, the bigger picture is not one of dying out, but of hope for the future anchored by their importance to local communities.

A two-year effort to gather data called the Future of Local News Initiative, led by the North Dakota Newspaper Association and the Rural Development Finance Corporation, finds some reasons for optimism and several paths forward for journalism prosperity.

The effort, supported by a grant from the Bush Foundation, brought together journalists and publishers from across the state to gather a rare data set through surveying newspaper owners, journalists and consumers.

The group released a final report of their key findings on Jan. 29, with the data paving the way for pilot programs to address challenges going forward.

"This has been the most focused effort that the North Dakota Newspaper Association has ever done to quantify where we are at as an industry," said Cecile Wehrman, NDNA's executive director.

Trust in print

The data gathered includes finding that 9 out of 10 news consumers believe having a local newspaper is important, with a similar amount saying that losing a paper harms local communities.

Newspapers are also the most trusted local news source, according to the data gathered by research partner Coda Ventures.

Chris Gessele, a development specialist with the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives Cooperative who was involved with the effort, said that struck him most

about what the research found.

"People trust newspapers," Gessele said. "They view them as one of the more accurate media outlets or media forms out there."

Residents of the three counties where papers no longer exist - Sioux, Dunn and Slope - value papers even more, showing how those losses impact communities.

In those counties, 96% said having a newspaper is important, 87% said they

Newspaper cont. on 8



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