

# THE LEADER-NEWS

Website: [www.nordaknorth.com](http://www.nordaknorth.com)  
 607 Main St. | PO BOX 340 | Washburn, ND 58577  
 Tel: 701-462-8126

**PUBLISHER**  
 Kelsey Majeske

**ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER**  
 Kelli Ameling

**OFFICE MANAGER/ADVERTISING**  
 Shelly Wallace

**NEWS REPORTER**  
 Phaidra Yunker

**SPORTS EDITOR**  
 Ethyn Williams-Calvert

**GRAPHIC DESIGN**  
 Hunter Kamrath

**OFFICE HOURS**  
 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Thursday  
 Closed Friday-Sunday.

**OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER FOR**  
 City of Washburn, Washburn Public Schools, City of  
 Wilton, Wilton Public Schools, Wing Public School,  
 and City of Wing.

**POSTMASTER:**  
 Periodicals postage paid at Washburn, ND, USPS 666-  
 920, published each Thursday. Send change of address  
 notice to The Leader-News PO Box 340, Washburn, ND  
 58577

All assisted content may or may not be utilized in  
 individual stories within this publication.

**LEADER-NEWS SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION**  
 1 Year Digital & Print Combo \$75  
 1 Year Online Only \$35 | 1 Year in State \$55  
 2 Years in State \$105 | 1 Year Out of State \$70  
 1 Year Out of State \$70  
 2 Years Out of State \$135  
 1 Year Snow Bird \$60 (includes seasonal address  
 change)

Subscription payment must be received first, no billing  
 due to postal regulations. Please allow two weeks for  
 new or restarted subscriptions and change of address.

**CLASSIFIED AND DISPLAY ADVERTISING**  
 Leader-News classified advertising deadline is 3 p.m.  
 on Monday. Regular advertising & public notice deadline  
 is 5 p.m. Monday.  
 The XTRA deadline is 5 p.m. on Wednesday.

**QUESTIONS OR IDEAS?**  
 To suggest a news story, video or photograph, call our  
 office during business hours. If you believe a news story  
 to be incorrect, please call the Leader-News.

**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**  
 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](mailto:leadernews@nordaknorth.com) or drop off your  
 letter at 607 Main Ave., Washburn.



**NORDAK NORTH  
 PUBLICATIONS**



# Coulee calling

Runners tackle Washburn's toughest trail

BY PHAIDRA YUNKER  
 REPORTER

What started as a homemade cross-country practice loop in the late '90s has grown into one of Riverboat Days' most beloved — and most brutal — traditions. The Coulee Trail Classic is a four-mile run that treats every hill like a dare, every dip like a test and every runner like someone who ought to know better by now.

This year's race is set for Friday, June 5, with registration beginning at 6 p.m. in the Washburn High School parking lot and the starting horn sounding at 7. Runners can sign up online or the day of, and awards will go to overall winners along with the top finishers in each age division.

The event is now in its 26th year, but its roots stretch back to the mid- to late 1990s, when Washburn native David Holland carved the original trail as a training loop for the high school cross-country team. He mowed it, mapped it and maintained it long before Riverboat Days adopted it as an official race in 2001.

"David drew out and mowed the trail shortly after he graduated," said organizer Gavin Hetletved. Hetletved oversees the race with fellow Washburn Cross Country alum Brandon Sem, who now lives in Underwood.

"The cross-country team used it all the time," said Hetletved. "We have amazing memories of running the trail, and we like that we get the opportunity to share it with others through the race."

That sense of shared history is part of what gives the Coulee Trail Classic its personality. The course is unapologetically direct — a mix of asphalt, grass, dirt and mud that can swallow a shoe if the spring melt cooperates.

"It's a unique trail with almost every surface you could imagine — from asphalt to mud more than two feet deep," Hetletved said.

Hetletved and Sem still joke about a comment from a runner at last year's finish line: "You guys don't believe in switchbacks, do you?" Hetletved admits the quote is fair. "The trail will take you directly up a hill even when an easier path is available."

One of the most talked-about sections sits near the corner of Main and Highway 83, a marshy dip known as the Everglades. Depending on the year, the water crossing can creep close to two feet deep, and it's almost always the first thing runners bring up when they're catching their breath at the finish.

Despite its difficulty, the race draws a wide range of participants — competitive marathoners, casual joggers and hikers who walk most of the course. Among the regulars is Charles Kaiser, who grew up in Washburn and now lives in Bismarck. He hasn't missed



**SUBMITTED PHOTO | CHARLES KAISER**  
 Charles Kaiser, left, and his son Noah, 10 at the time of the photo, show off their postrace grit after the 2025 Coulee Trail Classic — mud-splattered and scratched but smiling after conquering the rugged course.

a Coulee Trail Classic in years.

"I run the Coulee Trail every year for its unique challenge," he said. "It's a race where you feel like you're competing against the rugged course itself rather than the other runners."

Kaiser's son, Noah, now joins him for the Kids Run portion, which ends at the river, where a shuttle brings families back to the starting line.

"I really like that on the coulee trail, you can run off-trail and enjoy scenery at the same time," Noah said. "It's more enjoyable than running on the road or the sidewalk."

The Kids Run was added in 2024 and helped push last year's total participation to a record 114 entries. Organizers expect more than 100 runners again this year.

Behind the scenes, the race is a community effort. Hetletved, Sem, Tom Boysun and Jack Zent mow the trail the week of the event. Local sponsors — all Washburn businesses — help cover costs. Parents and spouses handle most of the race-day logistics.

"We can't thank our sponsors enough," Hetletved said. "They make it easy."

For organizers, the finish line is where the heart of the race shows itself. The chatter, the pride, the relief — it's all part of the tradition.

"It's clear that finishing this race is an ac-

Coulee cont. on 6

**3rd Annual**

## PLAY IN THE DIRT DAY!

**May 31st, 2026**  
**Hensler, ND**  
 Call 701-226-0891 with questions  
**Bring your tractors and come have fun!**  
**Free Admission**  
**Food on Site**

Hwy 200A Hensler Road  
 3 miles S. ND Highway 25  
 Hensler Road 7 miles N.