



Photos by David Samson / The Forum

Homeward Animal Shelter's Natalie Perhus and Junkyard's Michelle Juhnke are seen at the Cuddle a Kitten! event on Thursday at Junkyard Brewing Co. in West Fargo.

Purrfect night out

Kitten cuddling event a roaring success in West Fargo

BY MELISSA VAN DER STAD
The Forum

WEST FARGO

Kittens of every color packed into a local bar and people parked clear down the street to go inside and meet some new brew buddies during the Cuddle a Kitten! event in Junkyard West Fargo on Thursday, July 10. “We are cuddling kittens!” said Natalie Perhus, special events coordinator at Homeward Animal Shelter. “We’re so excited ... we have a lot of kittens right now and we’re here to get them some more attention and kind of share the cuteness.”

And it just so happened to land on National Kitten Day, Perhus said, which was a happy accident.

The shelter is currently being overrun by the tiny felines who, while adorable, all need to find new homes, she said.

Cats, in particular, reproduce very quickly, she said, which makes it vital to spay and neuter your pets.

Last year, Homeward rescued 1,300 animals in the metro, she said.

“That number just keeps rising every single year,” Perhus said. “We are overrun with kittens. This (the kittens at Junkyard) is not even scratching the surface of the kittens.”

All of the available animals are listed on Homeward's website, she said.

Well over 300 people packed into the Junkyard building for the event, a number significantly higher than the normal Thursday crowd, according to owner Michelle Juhnke.

This collaboration between Junkyard West Fargo and Homeward Animal Shelter came about organically, she said, with the goal of helping some adorable kittens get socialized and, possibly, find a forever home.

Volunteers were on hand to take adoption applications throughout the event.

Her team often partners with nonprofits to bring a good cause home, she said, like the



Patrons hold kittens at Homeward Animal Shelter's Cuddle a Kitten! on Thursday at Junkyard Brewing Co. in West Fargo.



Mitchell Dockter and Paige Ceesberg from West Fargo hold a cat named Hoot as Natalie Perhus from Homeward Animal Shelter visits during the Cuddle a Kitten! event on Thursday at Junkyard Brewing Co. in West Fargo.

upcoming “Throw Some Good Around” cornhole event that will benefit Furniture Mission, Mathew's Voice Project and Churches United.

That event is set for Tuesday, Sept. 16, inside

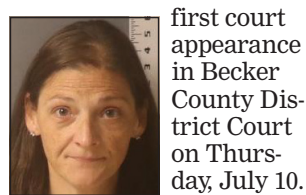
Junkyard West Fargo at 409 Sheyenne St. More information can be found online.

Readers can reach Forum reporter Melissa Van Der Stad at mvanderstad@forumcomm.com.

Former school district employee accused of theft appears in court

NEWS STAFF
Detroit Lakes Tribune

DETROIT LAKES — A former Detroit Lakes School District administrative assistant made her



Pettit

first court appearance in Becker County District Court on Thursday, July 10. Abby Lynn Pettit, 44, of Detroit Lakes, is accused of stealing more than \$10,000 in school sports and activities money. She has been charged in Becker County District Court with three counts of felony theft and two counts of misdemeanor theft.

Pettit appeared via video call before Becker County District Court Judge Gretchen Thilmony on Thursday morning. She is represented by attorney Todd Jay Kenyon of Minneapolis-based Metro Law Offices.

Thilmony set bail without conditions at \$20,000, while conditional bail was set at \$0, with conditions that include Pettit remain law-abiding, attend future court dates and remain in contact with her attorney. Pettit will remain out on conditional release. An omnibus hearing is scheduled for Pettit on Aug. 25 before Thilmony.

According to court records, the Detroit Lakes Police Department received a call from the Detroit Lakes Public Schools superintendent on Sept. 12, 2024, reporting theft of funds from Detroit Lakes High School.

Pettit abruptly resigned from her position earlier that day following questions about missing money. She had worked at the school for several years as the administrative assistant for the Activities & Athletics Department.

As part of her job duties, Pettit was in charge of collecting and

depositing funds paid to the school through fundraisers, concessions and other payments to athletics and student activities accounts.

A police investigator followed up with several school employees, coaches, parents and other witnesses. Several school activities accounts were identified as missing funds.

The investigator met with the school's activities director and Pettit's supervisor, who stated that Pettit's theft came to light during the first or second week of school in 2024, when the boys hockey coach told him that he discovered unauthorized transactions and missing money from the hockey activities account.

He said there were also questions in the spring of 2024 related to the girls basketball account. Only he, the principal and the two administrative assistants had access to the safe where cash and checks were kept. He alleged that Pettit also gave out season activities passes to her friends, with no payment to the school.

According to court documents, accounts for girls basketball, boys basketball, boys hockey, a target group and prom were believed to be affected over a period from 2022 to 2024.

Subpoenas were issued for Pettit's personal bank accounts for activity between April 1, 2022, to Sept. 20, 2024. During this period, there were 119 cash deposits into Pettit's two bank accounts, totaling \$89,277.

All individuals interviewed stated that Pettit did not have another job from which she received income, let alone cash income. With the exception of one \$1,428 check from Pettit to the school district as reimbursement for a coach bus trip, she made no payments to the school, based on financial records and statements by district officials.

CORRECTION

MURAL STORY ERRORS: The Grand Forks Planning and Zoning Commission voted 6-2 on Wednesday, July 9, to support removal of a mural at the North Dakota School for the Blind. The vote total was incorrect in a story published in the Thursday edition of

The Forum (“GF commission votes to remove mural from ND School for the Blind,” A6). Also, the quote beginning, “It’s not a Where’s Waldo mural,” was said by muralist Trey Everett. The attribution was incorrect in Thursday’s story.

Fargo Air National Guard searching for Texas flood victims

STAFF REPORTS

FARGO — Relief efforts in flood-ravaged Texas are receiving support from across the country, including North Dakota.

A seven-person crew from the North Dakota Air National Guard's 119th Wing has been tasked with searching for flood victims in central Texas. Crews based in Fargo are flying a drone more than 1,300 miles away to assist in search efforts following the devastating flooding.

This marks the first time Fargo is using that technology to help in another state, and it required a quick

response.

“Their ability to execute on short notice truly embodies the National Guard's motto of being always ready, always there,” said Col. Kevin Dacy, 119th Operations Group commander.

Through collaboration with the Texas Air National Guard, operators in North Dakota are able to fly an MQ-9 Reaper drone in Texas from Fargo.

“Though our community is not impacted, somebody else's community is,” Dacy said.

The airmen flying the drone, known as the Happy Hooligans, are

conducting surveillance over areas hit hard by the flooding, including the Camp Mystic area. The drone was tasked with looking for items like clothing to pass along to search teams on the ground.

“They had been doing this now, for a couple of days already, so they already have the products and procedures in place to execute, so we had good communication with them, and they helped us out to make sure we had a smooth start,” Dacy said.

Dacy said the mission aligns with the kind of operations the crew

trains for throughout the year, with multiple MQ-9 drones housed in the Fargo hangar.

“There's not too much difference in our daily (operations) from here to there, it's just that we know that there's actual real lives on the line, and that it makes it a little more important to get the correct info to the correct people,” Dacy said.

According to Dacy, any evidence found during surveillance, even a small item, could help save a life or lead to recovering someone's loved one.

“It means a lot to be able to make a difference from here in Fargo,”



Evan Garcia / Reuters

A drone view shows the Guadalupe River and damage from flooding near Camp Mystic on Sunday, July 6, 2025, in Hunt, Texas.

Dacy said. “Even though you may not be able to transit down there, you can still make a difference here by pointing out something that may lead to saving a life or recovering someone's

loved ones.”

According to a release from North Dakota Gov. Kelly Armstrong's office, the floods in Texas have killed 120 people, with more than 170 still missing.

The Forum

OF FARGO-MOORHEAD

A division of Forum Communications Company
ISSN 0895-1292 (print) and 1641-967X (digital)
USPS 206-660 | Vol. 246 No. 161
Copyright 2025

www.inforum.com
701-235-7311 | 800-747-7311

The Forum is published twice weekly on Wednesdays and Saturdays by The Forum, 101 5th St. N., Fargo ND 58102. Periodicals postage paid at Fargo, N.D., and additional mailing offices.

CONTACT US

Administration

William C. Marcil
Chairman

Bill Marcil Jr., Publisher
publisher@forumcomm.com

Advertising

Classified advertising	701-241-5504
Farmers' Forum ads	701-241-5504
Employment	701-241-5500
All other advertising	701-241-5431

Newsroom Staff

Matthew Von Pinnon, Editor
mvonpinnon@forumcomm.com

Kaity Young, News Editor
kyoung@forumcomm.com

Thomas Evanela, News Editor
tevanela@forumcomm.com

Angie Wieck, Business, Features Editor
awieck@forumcomm.com

Rob Beer, Sports Editor
rbeer@forumcomm.com

State law requires certain public notices to be published in a legal newspaper. The Forum meets the requirements publishing legal notices in North Dakota and designation as a legal newspaper in Minnesota.

NEWS TIPS

news@forumcomm.com,
701-451-5734 or
701-241-5579.

TO SUBSCRIBE

Call 833-248-7802.

OFFICE HOURS

The Forum front office is open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

POSTMASTER

Send address changes to The Forum, 101 5th Street N. Fargo, ND 58102.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Wednesday & Saturday Mail Delivery
+ Digital All Access:
\$377.89 per year / \$34.99 per month

Digital All Access:

\$160 per year / \$14.99 per month

EXCEPT AS OTHERWISE STATED HEREIN OR REQUIRED BY APPLICABLE LAW, YOUR SUBSCRIPTION FEE IS NONREFUNDABLE. If you cancel your subscription, you are not entitled to receive any refund or credits for the time remaining in your Billing Periods, and you will continue to have access to your subscription until the end of your current Billing Period (unless we provide you with a refund or credit).