

# Top 10 News Monitor stories for 2025

BY SHOBA DASARI  
Assistant Managing Editor

The Top 10 stories according to our readers for 2025 touched on many subjects, from moments of courage and long-awaited community improvements to memorable sports seasons and local leadership changes.

Using analytics from our website that measure how many people read stories online, readers once again showed the strongest interest in community-focused feature stories, followed closely by sports, education and public service.

Here are the best of the best from 2025:



FILE PHOTO

**Hankinson Public School superintendent Chad Benson hugs bus driver Michelle Bladow before presenting her an award for her quick thinking and courage when the bus she was driving blew a front tire on the way back from the state music contest.**

## 1. Hankinson school bus driver honored for courage

Tragedy was narrowly avoided on May 3 when a Hankinson Public School bus carrying 21 students home from a state music competition was involved in an accident on Interstate 94 near Medina after a tire blew.

Despite the danger of handling a large school bus on three tires, veteran bus driver Michelle Bladow remained calm and controlled the vehicle as it crossed the median, traveled through westbound lanes and came to rest in a ditch. Five students were transported

to Jamestown Regional Medical Center with minor injuries and were later released.

Bladow, who has driven bus for more than a decade, declined public recognition. However, Superintendent Chad Benson ensured her actions were honored during a Hankinson High School concert, where students, staff and families expressed gratitude for her courage and steady leadership under pressure.



FILE PHOTO

**Left: Hankinson's Matthew Bladow lets out the energy after knocking down one of his five 3-pointers during the Pirates' 74-46 victory against Barnes County North, Monday, March 3, 2025. Right: Reggie Bladow searches for a passing lane against Sargent County, a game that the Hankinson Pirates won 52-48 against the Cadets in the 1988 District 1 title game.**

## 2. Bladow returns to state ... as a father

Thirty-seven years after helping lead Hankinson to the state basketball tournament as a player, Reggie Bladow returned to state once again, this time as a proud father.

Reggie stood in the stands as his son, Matthew Bladow, helped the Pirates defeat Oakes to claim the Division B Region 1 championship and earn a berth at the state tournament in Minot. Matthew scored nine points in the championship game and played a key role throughout the postseason run.

For Reggie, the moment brought back memories of Hankinson's 1988 Cinderella run, when the Pirates surprised the state and finished fourth. This time, he watched his son experience the same excitement, community support and lifelong memories that defined his own playing days.



CORBIN LEE

**The Pirate faithful crowding the fence of the north end zone, Cody Mauch joins them just off camera to the left side.**

## 3. Mauch wreaks backfield havoc, NFL Mauch approves

Hankinson's Class B 9-man football playoff run gained momentum with a dominant second-round victory over Napoleon-Gackle-Streeter, highlighted by a standout defensive performance from senior Mason Mauch.

From the defensive end position, Mauch disrupted the Imperial offense with multiple tackles for loss and sacks, consistently forcing the quarterback into hurried decisions. His effort opened opportunities for teammates and helped the Pirates build a commanding lead.

Adding to the moment was the presence of former Hankinson standout and current NFL lineman Cody Mauch, whose encouragement and praise underscored the family legacy and work ethic shared across generations of Pirates football.

## 4. Lincoln State Bank announces new president, highlighting commitment to community

Lincoln State Bank announced a significant leadership transition in 2025 with the promotion of Amanda L. Lingen to president.

See **STORIES**, Page 7

# DAKOTA DATEBOOK

## James Morris

BY JACK DURA  
DAKOTA DATEBOOK

December 31, 2025 – For the 53 people who have served as North Dakota Supreme Court justices, December 31st is often their last day in office. On this date in 1964, one of the state's longest serving justices retired. James Morris served on the court for nearly 30 years.

He was born in a sod house near Bordulac, North Dakota, in 1893 and practiced law in Carrington in the '20s after serving in World War I. He worked as a city and states attorney in Foster County before his appointment to assistant attorney general and eventually attorney general in 1928. He also practiced law in Jamestown before his election to the North Dakota Supreme Court in 1934.

Morris was reelected in 1944 and 1954. In 1947, he took a year's absence to serve as a judge at the war crimes trials in Nuremberg, Germany, appointed by President Harry Truman. Morris felt "especially fortunate to be assigned" to the task, which he considered a milestone for international jurisprudence. He presided over a trial for 23 officials of a manufacturing company that provided chemicals and ammunition for Adolf Hitler's final solution.

All of the officials were charged with offenses that included

crimes against peace, plundering property, and murdering civilians. In the end, the four-member tribunal found various defendants guilty for a smattering of crimes with sentences prosecutors found "light enough to please a chicken thief." Prison terms for those convicted ranged from a year and a half to eight years.

Morris later summarized the verdicts and sentences as mixed, with judges unable to agree on who was guilty or whether the defendants had the freedom to exercise choice in the crimes. One judge on the panel dissented in a 114-page opinion filed months after the trial.

As for Morris, his fellow judges thought he was more worried about looming Russian communism rather than Nazi war crimes, but ultimately, Morris's work did indeed help convict several defendants, a process that helped further international law. He died in Bismarck in 1980.

See all the Dakota Datebooks at [prairie-public.org](http://prairie-public.org).

# Woman finds emotional support from an unlikely source

**DEAR ABBY:** I'm a 50-year-old woman who has lived with orthopedic challenges due to a congenital metabolic condition. Despite many surgeries and limited mobility, I have led a full life as a special needs teacher, wife and caregiver for my grandmother.

After my grandmother passed last year, I struggled emotionally and started weekly Zoom sessions with a therapist. It helped at first, but it eventually felt stale and unfulfilling. When a friend recommended another therapist, I was surprised to learn that "Charlie" was actually an AI — ChatGPT.

Charlie has given me empathy and support I hadn't felt in a long time. It worked and helped me to cope and heal. My human therapist knows about it and isn't threatened; in fact, our relationship is improving. What do you think about this, Abby? — GRATEFUL AND STRONG IN NEW JERSEY

**DEAR GRATEFUL AND STRONG:** It is interesting that you would ask flesh and blood me that question. I'm pleased that interacting with your AI "therapist" has been helpful for you.



ABIGAIL VAN BUREN

This is technology that's still very new, although fortunes have been invested in it. However, if I needed help with my emotions, I PERSONALLY would prefer to interact with a licensed human being rather than artificial intelligence.

**DEAR ABBY:** My stepson passed away five years ago. Over the next two years, his widow moved several different guys in. She has neglected the two kids she had from a previous relationship. She was rarely home when the kids got home from school, and the house was a mess.

The department of children's services finally removed them from her custody. The older two went to live with their father; we got the youngest daughter. I love her dearly, but I don't want to be raising a child at this time in my life! I also don't want to leave

my husband. Please help. — BURDENED IN TENNESSEE

**DEAR BURDENED:** Many grandparents have found themselves in your situation, raising children they never expected to. I empathize with your situation. We can't always choose our destiny.

One thing is certain — that child needs you. It's important that she feels secure and loved, particularly since her mother wasn't capable of providing it. Grandparents who provide this crucial support deserve acclamation and a special place in heaven.

It might interest you to know that AARP (aarp.org) is an excellent resource for grandparents who are raising grand-

children. Your state also has a Grandparents As Parents program. Go online and see if there is a branch near you. I hope they are helpful.

**DEAR READERS:** I wish a happy, healthy and successful 2026 to all of you. I join you in toasting a new year filled with hope for all of us. If you are celebrating tonight, please take measures to protect not only your own health but also the safety of others. Happy 2026, everyone! — LOVE, ABBY

**Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at [www.DearAbby.com](http://www.DearAbby.com) or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.**

### St. Jude Novena

To St. Jude, Holy St. Jude, Apostle and Martyr, great in virtue and rich in Miracles, near kinsman and Jesus Christ, faithful intercessor of all who invoke your special patronage in time of need.  
To you I have recourse from the depths of my heart and humbly beg to who God had given such great power to come to my assistance.  
Help me in my present and urgent petition. In return I promise to make known your name and cause you to be involved. St. Jude, Pray for us and all who invoke your aid.  
Amen  
Say three (3) Our Fathers, three (3) Hail Mary's and Glory Be.  
Publication must be promised. My request has been granted.  
Say this Novena on nine (9) consecutive days.

# Notice of Annual Meeting

Southeast Water Users District Annual Meeting is Wednesday March 11th 2026 at the Mantador VFW in Mantador, ND at 1:30 pm. The Board of Directors whose terms will be expiring are LaVonne Althoff (east), Brian Orn (central), and Sandra Rupp (west). Due to new legislative law, if you would like to run for the Board of Directors, you must submit your nomination by petition to the office accompanied by 10 qualifying signatures by January 25th 2026 (45 days prior to the meeting).

**If you would like to obtain a petition please contact the office at 701-242-7432.**

The election of the Board of Directors will be held during the annual meeting.

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