

# KINDERGARTEN

## Students of the week...

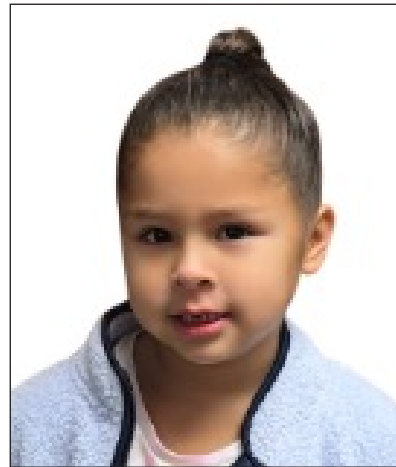
January 26 - 30, 2026



Leah Azure & Denise Kinney's classroom

**AMARII LONGIE**  
daughter of Cheyane DeCoteau & Christopher & Savanna Longie

Amarii is 5-years old and wants to be a Teacher when she grows up. Amarii's favorite things are; the color red, animal is elephant, food is hamburgers, book is Little Mermaid, and sport is cheerleading. Her favorite movie is Unicorn Movie and her favorite songs are by Taylor Swift. Amarii's favorite holiday is Christmas and her favorite subject is Science. Two goals for Amarii this year are to learn how to read better and get better at math. This year Amarii is excited about computer class!!



Jessica Poitra & Carlie DeCoteau's classroom

**ARIZONA KEPLIN**  
daughter of Joee Keplin & Lerrick Gourneau

She is 5 years old. Arizona's favorite things are the color blue, giraffes, playing with friends, and eating chicken nuggets with tator tots. Arizona says, "Spending time with her family makes me happy."



Crystal Short & Christy Demery's classroom

**PHYNLI LAFROMBOIS**  
daughter of Cody Morin & Lea LaFrombois

My favorite food is chicken nuggets & fries, holiday is Christmas, colors are pink & purple, animals are cats, subject is Roblox, movie is K-pop, song is This is what it feels like. This year my goal is to learn to read.



Josie Poitra & Nick Parisien's classroom

**MAKODE CHARBONNEAU**  
daughter of Barbie Azure & Earl Charbonneau

Makode is 6 years old and wants to be a youtuber when he grows up. Makode's favorite things are; the color green, animal is a horse, food is pizza, book is, and sport is basketball. His favorite movie is Bigfoot Family. Makode's favorite holiday is Christmas and his favorite subject is art. Makode's goal this year is to make new friends and learn sight words.



# Norsk Høstfest ceases operations due to rising costs, declining attendance

BY: MICHAEL ACHTERLING  
ND Monitor

The board of a Scandinavian heritage festival in North Dakota with a nearly 50-year history announced Thursday it has ceased operations and will not host a festival in 2026.

The nonprofit board of Norsk Høstfest said in a social media post the annual event in Minot had become "financially unsustainable," citing increasing costs and declining attendance.

"In recent years, the festival has faced significant increases in the cost of nationally recognized performers, as well as insurance, facilities, labor and logistics," festival leadership said in a statement. "At the same time, attendance levels have not rebounded to pre-pandemic levels, creating ongoing financial challenges that cannot be responsibly overcome."

The board indicated in the social media post that members and staff would not comment beyond the statement.

The Norsk Høstfest festival was founded in 1978 by Minot civic leader Chester Reiten and a group of his friends who wanted to celebrate Nordic heritage, according to the festival nonprofit.

Fred Walker, global marketing manager for the North Dakota Tourism and Marketing Division, said the festival was a time for Scandinavians and others to come together to talk about food, customs and try to keep the culture alive on the other side of the world from where it originated.

The event drew Scandinavian dignitaries and celebrities including the Norwegian royal family, actress Tippi Hedren and crab fishing captain Sig Hansen from TV's "Deadliest Catch," Walker said. Many of the high profile guests were inducted in the Scandinavian-American Hall of Fame that was established at the festival in 1984, he said.

Walker said many people in Norway knew about the festival in North Dakota and he also helped bring Norwegian media members to Minot to cover the event.

Dancers warm up for Norsk Høstfest demonstrations in 2024. (Photo courtesy of Visit Minot/ND Tourism) "I truly believe that the people of Minot and the people on the committee aren't trying to get rid of it," he said. "But things change and, unfortunately, that's progress whether we like it or not."

Stephanie Schoenrock, executive director for Visit Minot, said ending the festival will have an economic impact in Minot.

"For decades, the festival brought visitors, filled hotel rooms, supported local restaurants and retailers, and generated meaningful activity for our community," Schoenrock said in an email.

She added the economic impact has steadily declined over the past 10 years as fewer people attended the festival, which she said mirrors national trends in group travel and changing audience demographics.

Sara Otte Coleman, director of the North Dakota Tourism and Marketing Division, said the department was sad and disappointed to learn this legacy event in the state was shutting down.

"We have been consulting with them for the last five or six years on how to really try to appeal, and diversify, and market, and it's just been a little bit of a struggle," Otte Coleman said. "Consumers are changing and expectations are kind of shifting. Dollars are tight in this economy and people don't have as much discretionary income as they once did for entertainment."

She said the department did not have any funds available to help support the event.

"We're just really hopeful that the Scandinavian Heritage Foundation and the people of Minot will figure out another way to embrace that Nordic culture because it really is what

sets them apart," Otte Coleman said. "And maybe it just needs a little breather and it'll come back in a different way that appeals to different and unique audiences. That's our

hope." North Dakota Monitor reporter Michael Achterling can be reached at [machterling@northdakotamonitor.com](mailto:machterling@northdakotamonitor.com)

## Dakota Attitude

**Dorothy (Burns) Kjera**

Interview: Sept. 23, 2017  
County: Bottineau  
City: Maxbass

**Loved job, but loved her husband more**



Dorothy was born in 1929. Her dad was with the railroad, moving the family to Maxbass in the fourth grade. "It was a very poor town at that time," Dorothy remembers, "and my dad was very generous, because he always had good money coming in. I remember him buying fuel for some of the people in town."

"I remember the [railroad] bums that used to come to town. My mom fed 'em good, right out in the yard. I remember that and thinking back of all of the good people that lived here."

After high school and training, Dorothy worked as a stenographer. "Oh, I loved it!" she laughs. "But then Mel, [my future husband], came home from the service." He served with the North Dakota 164th Infantry Unit in the South Pacific. "I liked him better than I liked my job, so I moved [from Minot] back here. We got married in 1950." Mel was able to purchase farmland south of Maxbass at a reasonable price.

"But [the land] was sandy. He worked hard, and during some winters, worked out of state. Well, he got the crop off [one] year, and I was thinking, 'Oh, I'm going to have a flush toilet, a real nice bathroom.' And he said, 'No, we've got to pay up our bills, and then next year you will get [those] if the money's there.' So I waited a year, but I always remember that lesson: 'If you don't have the money you don't get it.'"

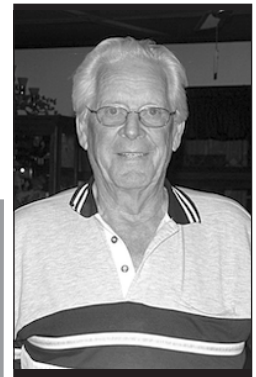
"Then I went to work for Bottineau County for 26 years." Mel died in 1999. Their four children are Joel, Timothy, Nancy, and Barbara.

Dorothy remembers, "My oldest boy always said, 'Mom, you had more trouble with those two girls than you had with all four of us.' Which was true. One night someone thought he was knocking on my daughter's bedroom [window], and it was our bedroom. You should have seen my husband get out of bed. That kid went down the road fast," she laughs.

Dorothy now says her cat, Maddie, keeps her going. She also reads at least 10 books, mostly history, every month.

**Louis Rieke**  
Interview: Sept. 12, 2007  
County: Cass  
City: Erie

**Peanut Brittle and Gratitude**



Louis Rieke, 74, has lived in the Erie area most of his life. He is a contract mail carrier and groundskeeper at the local cemetery and the city park. People ask Louis how he can handle driving the mail route every day. "I watch the crops grow," Louis says. "I watch the animals and birds. In the morning, I watch the deer, look at the stars and the moon is out. God gave me all these things."

Louis deeply appreciates these daily experiences and strives to share their spirit with others. He achieves this by sharing his renowned homemade peanut brittle, which he prepares from scratch and gives to those in the community he thinks could use a lift. He'll often visit under-the-weather neighbors

or nursing home residents.

People encourage Louis to start a business and market his peanut brittle, but he sees things differently. "I would rather give it away," Louis says. "It is a wonderful feeling, when people appreciate something I did for them." Is the recipe a secret? Louis responds, "Love is what makes it good."

Not everything is perfect, and Louis admits having made many mistakes, including alcohol abuse when he was younger, and does not like to give advice. "If someone asks me for some [advice], it is important that I give them an honest answer. I also just tell them my experiences, hopefully that would help them. If people want to change their life, they have to change themselves."

Maybe Louis doesn't like giving advice, but everyone likes receiving his peanut brittle. He also says he doesn't necessarily want to stop making peanut brittle. Louis clarifies, "If I had all the money in the world, I would give it away."

**Jim & Nettie (Olson) Smykowski**

Interview: July 16, 2014  
County: Sargent  
City: Cayuga

**Auctioneer, Farmer & Legislator**



When asked about his childhood ambitions, Jim Smykowski says, "I suppose I dreamt of farming, but knew that all of us couldn't farm because Dad wouldn't have enough acres to set up the whole crew [of eight]. Dad's farm was just across the road. We bought [my uncle's farm] in 1959. We had hogs and cattle. Didn't have much land."

Jim was born in 1934. A few years after graduating from high school, he met Nettie Olson, who was born in California. At first, Jim's mother was worried, he says. "I grew up a Catholic; Nettie was a Catholic. But my mother thought I was going with a Norwegian dancing girl," because of her name. The couple later wed. They have seven children, six grandchildren, and eight great-grandchildren.

If a neighbor who was a big cattle feeder hadn't suggested it, Jim says, "I never would have thought of being an auctioneer. He said, 'I'll let you sell my sale,'" but added Jim needed to get help from another, more experience auctioneer. Jim went to auction school in Mason City, Iowa, then auctioneered more than 40 years. He farmed even longer.

When asked which of the occupations he enjoyed most, he says, "I'd probably have to say the auctioneering, because it brought more people into the circle. It was a good run. It was interesting; I met a lot of people. When I won the state Senate election here, I won on a write-in campaign in the general election." Besides his stint as a state legislator, Jim's civic experiences include a term as school board president and 25 years as a director on a local bank board.

When asked about what's important in life, Nettie says, "You need to keep your faith but you need the education, too. And if you build them together, it's going to help you as an individual."

What's success in life for Jim? "Being able to support your family in good fair way, so they could have opportunities available and to have end up having something to live on when you quit."

(Editor's Note: The following profiles of North Dakota residents were collected by author James Puppe between 2004-2018, covering 617 subjects and 113,000 miles. He has given permission for his book to be serialized in North Dakota Newspapers at no charge. To find out how you can read the entire collection of Dakota Attitude profiles go to [dakotaattitude.com](http://dakotaattitude.com).)



**TURTLE MOUNTAIN HOUSING AUTHORITY, T.D.H.E.**  
A TRIBALLY DESIGNATED HOUSING ENTITY

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TELEPHONE: 701-477-5673 ADMINISTRATION OFFICE FAX: 701-477-0193

### MOBILE HOME REPAIR OPPORTUNITY

The Turtle Mountain Housing Authority (TMHA) is in the process of APPLYING FOR FUNDING under the HUD PRICE — Minnesota Housing Partnership (MHP) Native Nations Manufactured Housing Rehabilitation DREAM Initiative Program to support manufactured home repairs, rehabilitation, and safe housing for Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians members.

TMHA is seeking eligible MANUFACTURED HOME (trailer homes) OWNERS and CONTRACTORS interested in participating in this program, which aims to remove barriers to safe, healthy, and sustainable housing on the Turtle Mountain Reservation.

Tribal community members are encouraged to APPLY for this potential opportunity. IF TMHA is FUNDED for the DREAM Initiative, applications will be considered on a first-come, first-served basis. Applications can be requested by email or picked up at the HAF office (directly behind the TMHA Main Office) in Belcourt. Applications must meet income eligibility requirements and reside in the Turtle Mountain Housing Authority service area of Rolette County, ND.

For more information or to request an application, contact: Michelle at the Turtle Mountain Housing Authority, Phone: (701) 477-5673 x 271 or email: [haf@tmhousing.net](mailto:haf@tmhousing.net)



## Public Utilities Commission

P.O. BOX 490 - BELCOURT, NORTH DAKOTA 58316 -  
OFFICE 477-6159 -FAX 477-8292

### PUBLIC NOTICE AND NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING

The Turtle Mountain Public Utilities Commission (TMPUC) plans to submit Rural Utilities Water Grant applications to USDA Rural Development

The application being considered would request:

- \$4,000,000 for Belcourt Sewer and Water Improvements Phase 7 (Sewer)
- \$8,000,000 for TMBC Operational Improvements Phase 5 (Water and Sewer)
- \$4,000,000 for TMBC Operational Improvements Phase 6 (Water and Sewer)
- \$4,000,000 for the Three Mile Road to Dunseith Water Main Extension (Water)

A public hearing will be held on February 16, 2026 at 10:30 A.M. at the TMPUC Conference Room.

To obtain views and answer questions related to project economic and environmental impacts, or any other impacts to service areas.