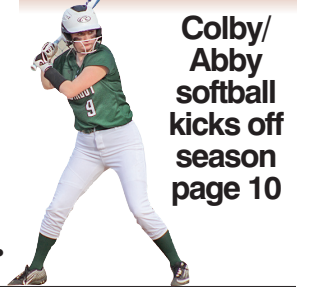


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INSIDE



Colby/Abby softball kicks off season page 10

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AbbyColby Crossings Chamber hands out awards Wiese family, Hanson, Abby County Market all honored

By Neal Hogden

Multiple chamber members were honored for their service in 2022 at the AbbyColby Crossings Chamber of Commerce annual banquet on April 15, held at the Abbotsford City Hall.

Business of the Year

A lifelong love of providing a service to people of a tight knit community has Dave Hediger and his family right where they want to be.

That love for serving people is why Hediger and his Abby County Market employees were named the 2023 AbbyColby Crossings Chamber of Commerce Business of the Year.

The store has served as a pillar of the community since the building was erected in 1957 by Clayton Afkend. The store was sold in 1960 to Howard and Vivian Kramer and later, owned and operated by Dennis Kramer. At that time, the store spanned 10,000-15,000 square feet but a large addition was put on in the fall of 1972 which doubled the square footage of the building. Today, the store resides at about 40,000 square feet.

When Hediger took ownership of the business in August of 2018, he said the part that made it so easy to take over from the Kramer family was the fact that the store already had its footprint and personality and being here for so long, Hediger got to learn about that



BUSINESS OF THE YEAR - Members of Abby County Market pose with a plaque at the 2023 AbbyColby Crossings Chamber of Commerce annual banquet. From left to right are Erik Tzinzun, Ashley Lueddecke, chamber representative Paul Jakel, Dave Hediger and Stephanie Hediger.

STAFF PHOTO/KRIS O'LEARY

personality.

"It was a 'key turn operation' for me," Hediger said. "I knew it. I understood it. I understood the community."

Hediger said Kramer's dedication

to the store still shows in its every day operations and its ability to cater to the Hispanic community.

"His work ethic and the way he built the store still goes on today," Hediger

said. "The best thing he taught me was to be open minded and to pay attention to the Hispanic community, because the Hispanic community was going to be on the rise. He really started that."

Today, the store boasts an entire aisle that is dedicated to ingredients used within the Hispanic community. For a smaller store with a limited amount of space, that is a major accomplishment in serving the people of the community. Hediger said the Hispanic community accounts for about 25 to 30% of the store's business so adding to the inventory of Hispanic ingredients made sense.

During the transition from Kramer to Hediger, Kramer worked as hard as anyone as he got the store ready for new ownership. Hediger said he thought out of everything that Kramer was involved in in the community, he thought the store would have been one of the toughest to give up.

At every successful grocery store's core is a management team that cares about not only the store, but the people who shop inside of it. Abby County Market's team of department managers have proven their commitment to Abbotsford and the surrounding communities by staying a part of the Abby County Market team. Since he took over in 2018, Hediger said he has had two department managers retire but said everyone else

See **CHAMBER AWARDS**/ Page 4

Abbotsford school board hears wind turbine discussion

By Neal Hogden

The Abbotsford School Board made time to hear out Clark County Supervisor Fred Schindler who spoke about the wind turbine project that is being proposed in Clark and Marathon Counties.

Schindler told the board some of the health and safety concerns that he had been notifying the public of at town hall meetings representing Farmland First. He asked the school board to motion for a recommendation that the district would give to the City of Abbotsford Common Council regarding the turbines.

Kraig Schindler made the motion saying, "For the health, safety and well-being of our students that the School Board of Abbotsford is in support of the City of Abbotsford, to enact any and all zoning ordinances to restrict the placement of all wind turbines and related equipment the maximum distance from the school and City of Abbotsford again for the health,

safety and well-being of our students."

Board member Yvone Vazquez said she hadn't heard too much about the turbine discussion and asked if there were any benefits to having turbines in the area. Fred Schindler said for the three percent of the population that sign the turbine contracts, there will be payments made from the company to those land owners. Schindler then said the other 97 percent are forced to deal with the adverse effects of the turbines.

The board voted in favor of the recommendation to the city by a vote of 8-1 with Vazquez as the only "nay" vote.

Health insurance switch

The district chose to go with their health insurance consortium's decision to switch health care providers for next year.

See **SCHOOL BOARD**/ Page 9



TAKING THE OATH - District Administrator Ryan Bargender (right) administers the oath of office to reelected board member, Eric Brodhagen.

STAFF PHOTO/NEAL HOGDEN



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School board

Continued from page 1

The consortium, made up of Marathon County Special Education, Edgar, Marathon, Athens, Spencer, Rosholt and Abbotsford, received a quote from the previous year's health insurance company, WCA, which reflected a 14% increase in rates.

In turn, they decided to send the insurance options out to bid. The consortium received bids from three companies, Aspirus, Security Health and WCA.

The consortium accepted a bid from Aspirus which included two options for staff to sign up for. They could choose the freedom plan which allows staff to sign up for the Aspirus Signature Network, where the district covers 84% of the premiums and the employee is responsible for 16% or the Aspirus Freedom Network, where the district covers 77% of the premiums and the employee is responsible for 23%. The two

plans reflect a 15% increase in rates for the district from last year or a 2% decrease from last year for the Freedom and Signature plans, respectively.

District Administrator Ryan Bargender said after hearing about the consortium choosing Aspirus as their next health insurance provider, WCA came back with a 7% increase proposal. He said the consortium chose to stay with Aspirus's proposal instead.

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