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Delivering the right answers

Litchfield Knowledge Bowl team qualifies for first state competition in program history

BY BRENT SCHACHERER
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The possible became a piece of history-making reality as a team of five Litchfield High School students qualified for the state Knowledge Bowl competition last week.

"I think this is the first time we have qualified for the state tournament," said Katie McGraw, LHS Knowledge Bowl coach for the past six years. "As a coach, I was incredibly proud of this team. The boys are looking forward to going to Cragun's (Resort, Brainerd, site of the state competition April 11-12) and representing Litchfield."

The team of Alex Carew, T.J. Christensen, Jacob Dietel, Garrison Jackman and Ben Olson earned second place in the Tier A Region 7 Knowledge Bowl March 12 a St. Cloud State University. Melrose won the regional competition with 107 points, while Litchfield amassed 91 points. The top two teams in each tier advance to state competition.

A state Knowledge Bowl berth has been a goal for the LHS team since last season, when the group narrowly missed qualifying, finishing one point out of second place. But in reality, McGraw said she's seen the group's potential for much longer than that — all the way back to middle school when they began practicing with McGraw.

Earlier this season, McGraw said the group of four seniors — Carew, Christensen, Dietel and Jackman — and junior Olson, had a special blend of academic talents that made them a formidable team.

In Knowledge Bowl, where competitors'

Competition to 6 ➤



PHOTO COURTESY RESOURCE TRAINING & SOLUTIONS

Litchfield's Knowledge Bowl Team A huddle together to answer questions in the written portion of the competition. The Knowledge Bowl regional also included five rounds of oral questions.



Litchfield Middle School students visit the food truck lineup in the lobby of the school. All of the school's students cast a vote for their favorite food truck idea after reading the menus and critiquing the designs and marketing by the eight trucks involved in the Food Truck Wars.

STAFF PHOTOS BY BRENT SCHACHERER

A truckload of learning

Food Truck Wars offer lessons in business, teamwork for Litchfield Middle School seventh-graders

BY BRENT SCHACHERER
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Bryce Barka and his crew figured there was nothing like the old-fashioned Americana of hamburgers to sustain a food truck business. Another team went more eclectic, letting pickles play a prominent role on his menu, while another decided tacos and other Hispanic food would fare best.

In the end, Baseball Burgers, with its all-American menu and wrapped-in-the-flag, red-white-and-blue marketing won the day.

But Litchfield Middle School teacher Riley Johnson hopes all of the seventh-graders in her family and consumer science, or FACS, class were winners in terms of the learning

Food Truck to 2 ➤

School parking lot plans move forward

Bond sale, advertising for bids receive board approval

BY BRENT SCHACHERER
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Long-delayed improvements to the south parking lot at the Litchfield High School-Middle School complex — as well as new tennis courts — received the go-ahead from Litchfield School Board last week.

The board offered unanimous approval March 11 for a bond sale necessary to fund the project, estimated to cost about $2.2 million, while also authorizing the advertisement for bids on the project.

Matt Hammer of Ehlers Public Finance Advisors explained for the board how $1.5 million in bonds will be issued to fund the project, with sale date for the bonds set for April 8.

The board approved the district's levy at 3.71% in December, which was aimed at creating an additional $1.5 million in deferred maintenance funding. The general obligation bonds are essentially "left over" from the building improvement taxing authority that district voters approved in

Parking to 2 ➤

Urdahl changes his mind

Republican representative announces he plans to retire at the end of his 11th term

BY BRENT SCHACHERER
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State Rep. Dean Urdahl

State Rep. Dean Urdahl announced Saturday he will not run for another term after all.

The Acton Township Republican announced during the Meeker County Republican Party's convention he planned to retire when his 11th term expires in January.

"I have served my area for 22 years in the Minnesota House, longer than anyone else in history," Urdahl said in a statement released by his office Sunday. "It is time to retire. I would like to spend more time with my wife and family and pursue other interests."

Urdahl was facing a challenge for the District 16A Republican endorsement from Meeker County Commissioner Steve Schmitt of Manannah. But he said that was not why he reversed course after announcing in February he planned to seek another term.

"I have been struggling with this decision about whether to retire for some time but, at one point, decided to run again this November," Urdahl said. "I have since reconsidered and, frankly, have grown tired of the politics and obstacles to doing what is right. My decision has absolutely nothing to do with being opposed within the Republican Party. That didn't concern me."

In fact, challenges from within his own party were somewhat common during Urdahl's two decades plus in office, especially over the past 10 years or so. The more conservative wing of the local Republican Party frequently put up challengers, sometimes on

Urdahl to 2 ➤

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