



## TOP of the Week

### WEATHER

Ryan Eggleston - Official Weather Observer

	HI	LO	PR
April 5	60	37	.14
April 6	39	30	tr
April 7	41	24	0
April 8	35	19	0
April 9	52	20	0
April 10	55	19	0
April 11	40	16	0
2016 precipitation to date			1.68
2015 precipitation to date			.77

### City leases crop land

A special meeting of the Clark City Council was held Monday evening, for the sole purpose of a land lease auction.

The 320 acres, recently purchased by the city for the future site of the retention pond, was leased to Robert Campbell, for \$50.00 an acre. The lease agreement is on file at the city office.

Voting in favor of this action were council members Kerry Kline, Belinda Hanson, Dennis Larson, Vicki Orris and Louann Streff. Opposed to this action was Andrew Zemlicka.

The next meeting of the Clark City Council will be Monday, May 2.

### Municipal election results next week

Yesterday (Tuesday), was Municipal Election Day, in South Dakota.

At Henry, a \$300,000, 10-year opt-out election as well as a school board seat were voted upon.

Trustee positions were on the ballot at Garden City and Vienna.

Look in next week's edition for results, as press time will not allow for it to be in this week's Courier.

### Redfield music contest is Saturday

The Redfield Music Contest for the Clark fifth through eighth grade students will be Saturday, April 16 at the Redfield Public School.

The sixth grade band will perform for judges at 8:30 a.m. in the auditorium. The remainder of the morning will be filled with solos being performed. Clark will have 38 soloists and one ensemble competing. Solos for Clark students begin at 9:15 a.m.

Accompanists for the soloists are Miss Kalli Kistenmacher and Mrs. Susan Schmit.

### School board election filings

Clark and Willow Lake School districts will have school board elections in June, if necessary. Nominating petitions may be filed with the respective business managers from April 12 through May 13, 2016.

At Willow Lake, two three-year terms held currently by Julayne Thoreson and Cory Bratland are up for election.

At Clark, a three-year term currently held by Robert Steffen is up for election. A two-year term is also now available because of the resignation of Amy Sass.

Mary Nelson is the business manager at Clark School and Melissa Burke is the Willow Lake School business manager.

### Wind, wind go away, bring rain our way

One can only hope that all the wind we are receiving this week will turn into rain by the end of the weekend.

That is the forecast, as rain is needed and predicted for late Sunday into Monday.

## Westboro's loss = Clark's gain

▲ Cherished granddaughter of founder unfollows church

Realizing the limits of your own understanding and being open to learning from people, even those who you disagree with is the message that Megan Phelps-Roper of Clark is now spreading with public speaking engagements.

"If I can change completely and come around from my past, so can others," said Phelps-Roper. "The term 'Epistemological Humility' really resonated with me when I heard a professor speak recently on this subject. If you are so certain that you are right, like I was in my church's beliefs, it sets up barriers to learning empathy and compassion. This is where I was before. I can see the importance of that now and try to advocate that to others."

Where Phelps-Roper was before, was an active member of her own family's church - the Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka, Kan. where her grandfather Fred Phelps was the minister and established the church in 1955. It was an offshoot of another Baptist Church in Topeka and its congregation eventually came to be the descendants of Phelps, which numbered about 70.

Nine of Fred's 13 children belong to the church and many have large families of their own. Megan is one of 11 children in her family and was taught that obedience was one of the most important values. The smallest hint of dissent was seen as an intolerable act of rebellion against God, down to a look on her face or the tone of her voice could get her in trouble.

"In the 1990s when there was a huge push for gay rights, our church's first experience with picketing was to 'clean up' Gage Park in Topeka, a place where gays would meet. Some of the church's members were propositioned there so Phelps took it upon the church to try to do something about it. Megan was only five-years old when first starting to picket with church members. "We had a duty to comment on it from the scripture, we were taught. It was a way to get our message across in a non-violent way."

Counter protesters would appear at the 'pickets' and sometimes would attack the Westboro members, creating more of an 'us versus them' mentality, noted Phelps-Roper.



Megan Phelps-Roper, former member of the Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka, Kan., who left the church in November of 2012, spoke to an extension group in Clark of her past experiences recently.

The church was established by Phelps-Roper's own grandfather back in 1955 and consists mainly

of his descendants with about 70 members. They gained notoriety nationwide in their picketing of military funerals.

Shown above with LaRue Sprouse. Phelps-Roper, on the right, currently lives in Clark.

The church members also believed that all manner of tragedies, war, natural disasters, mass shootings and even AIDS were curses or warnings from God to a doomed nation.

In 1994, Westboro launched a website to protest the increasing acceptance of homosexuality. They also picketed funerals of gay men who died of AIDS and later of soldiers killed in Iraq and Afghanistan. "God hates America," it was believed by the WBC, and the military is the representation of America. Protesting military funerals with signs that read "Thank God for Dead Soldiers" and similar sayings made the Westboro Church a global symbol of hatred. After 2008, they believed President Obama was the Anti-Christ.

Phelps-Roper attended a regular public school, as church members thought they could best preach to the wicked by living among them. However they weren't allowed to date and certainly not marry out of their church family. Being related to nearly everyone in the

church, Phelps-Roper pretty much resigned herself to a life of being single.

When a little older, Phelps-Roper spent a lot of time in Westboro's chatroom, sparring with strangers on the Church's website.

In 2009, she started to use a Twitter account and soon had many followers for the Church, representing their views and defending their beliefs, often getting responses back. She liked that she (they) could get their message out without the editing of a journalist or reporter. And in the responses received, they knew that people were reading their tweets. The Church liked publicity, even bad publicity was 'getting their word out', they perceived.

It was getting these responses, from the feelings of real people that slowly made Phelps-Roper question the Church's beliefs and become more empathetic to those she was hurting with her words.

So many tweets in return were angry, threatening or hostile when responding to her shocking state-

ments from the Church, similar to their picket signs.

One, however, stood out.

"He was more clever and particular in his manner of speaking. He'd make his point without threatening anyone," smiled Phelps-Roper. "There was just something about him. His intelligence, humor and kindness impressed me. We ended up talking about everything: current events, theology, music. I later had a dream about a tall, blond man - this guy from Twitter - and it scared me. That was a huge danger for me, so I told him we couldn't talk anymore."

Meanwhile while she was distracted exploring new music, literary fiction and her new relationship, the dynamics were changing at her church.

Her mother Shirley, who had had a primary role in the church formerly, was demoted to a degree and a group of all-male elders took control of the church affairs. The dynamic changed and decisions were made by the elders now versus the consensus of the church.

"It stopped feeling like this larger than life divine institution, ordained and led by God and more like the sniping and sordid activity of men who wanted to be in control," stated Phelps-Roper.

"WBC required the suppression of grief at tragedies of fellow humans. I remember saying 'awesome' in school when first hearing about the 9-11 tragedy and seeing the look on the other student's faces.

"If we questioned our stance, we would hear again the Bible verses and the lengthy interpretations that followed after each short verse. We were to suppress our doubt of all contradictory and illogical doctrines. We thought we were helping people for their own good."

Turning 26 years old in 2012, she tired of being treated like a child in many ways by the church. She slowly began to conclude that parts of Westboro's doctrine were wrong, while at the same time seized with terror that these thoughts were a test from God and that she was wrong. Eventually her doubts/conscience won out, and she and her younger sister planned to leave.

They'd grown up in a very sheltered WBC community encompassing an entire city block with all of their back yards connected - the Block - they called it. Although the students attended public school and Megan Phelps-Roper had a degree in finance from Washburn University and had intended to go to law school as 11 of her aunts and uncles had previously, she had to ask permission to go the grocery store. Isolation, obedience, shame and humiliation were some of the invisible chains intended to hold them at WBC.

Megan and her sister Grace left in November of 2012 after confronting their parents, who drove them to a motel and said their goodbyes. Church doctrine states once they leave, they cannot associate with their families anymore, a decision that was very hard for the girls to make. Two of their brothers have also left WBC.

For the next few months, the sisters bounced around, living with different families and a cousin who had also left the church. Megan

Phelps-Roper  
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## Cyclone athletic co-op to end after 2016-17 school year

▲ Board member Amy Sass resigns

After eight years as an athletic co-op, the Clark-Willow Lake Cyclone co-op will be coming to an end after the 2016-17 school year.

The Clark School Board voted 3-0 with Trudi Gaikowski abstaining, to dissolve this athletic co-op, after the 2016-17 athletic seasons, at Monday's April board meeting.

Judging from wins and losses, the almost decade-long athletic co-op has been successful. So why is it ending?

The answer is many faceted, over several years and is impossible to explain with a sentence, or a quote, or an opinion.

The way the discussion transpired at Monday's meeting, was when C.H.S. athletic director Jerry Hartley spoke of the co-op board representatives and administrators meeting held in early March.

"After next year, concerning football, (with our new sports complex west of the high school) we wanted three home games to Willow Lake's one," said Hartley. "Willow Lake couldn't get away from that two and two number."

Much discussion then ensued regarding all the different facilities involved, participation numbers, needed compromises, co-op history

and extra-curricular plans going forward.

The athletic director asked the school board "what are we looking at down the road?", and explained that, regarding football, after next year a four-year contract for co-op purposes would need to be agreed upon.

The school board then approved ending the sports co-op after the 2016-17 school year.

The board meeting began with a 20-minute closed session held for personnel reasons. After the executive session, the board accepted the resignation of school board member Amy Sass. She was not at the meeting and no explanation was given for her resignation.

### In other business:

▲ The school board approved a one-year 2.6 percent increase in the Duenwald Transportation bus contract. Duenwald was in attendance at Monday's meeting and he requested that the board set up a five-year contract with his business, with a two percent annual increase.

▲ Health insurance, with an eight percent increase, was approved for the 2016-17 school year.

▲ Clark School will join the SDH-SAA for 2016-17.

▲ The lone gym bleacher bid of \$92,083, for 11 rows at 88' (and \$2,300 for removal of current bleachers) was approved. These bleachers will allow seating for 1,096 from Combined Building Specialties, of Sioux Falls.

▲ The Cyclone coaching handbook was approved.

▲ Superintendent Luanne Warren's resignation as All-School play director was accepted.

▲ In his principal/A.D. report, Hartley shared with the board that the sports complex, west of the high school, is getting ready for the fall football season, as well as getting ready for track meets. The score board will be located near the southeast corner of the track.

▲ The board went into executive session for 90 minutes following the public meeting to discuss the certified and classified negotiated packages. No motion was made following this closed meeting.

▲ Board members present included chairman Robert Steffen, Shannon Huber, Trudi Gaikowski and Todd Fjelland, along with superintendent Warren, principal Hartley and business manager Mary Nelson.



The Clark High School automotive class has completed their Student Learning Objective project for the year by awarding a car to LuAnn Jacobsen of Clark.

Jacobsen received the keys and title to her new car last Wednesday and is shown with the students, from left to right, Clay Wellman, Neil Spieker, Jocce Nelson Ryder Hallstrom, Jacobsen, Layne Stromsness, Dustin Reff and Jordyn Temple.

## Clark High School automotive class has special project

Dan Duenwald and his Clark High School automotive class started a class project at the beginning of the 2015-2016 school year.

This project was their SLO (Student Learning Objective) project for the year. The student learning objective is a teacher-driven goal or set of goals that establishes expectations for student academic growth over a period of time.

Duenwald and his students started their project by purchasing a 1993 Buick Century that had front end damage from a deer collision. Duenwald then found another car

that had a bad motor and that one was purchased for parts.

"When we were finished with the parts car we decided to completely disassemble that car and sell it for scrap metal. It was a good learning experience for the students as they learned just how many parts are actually in a car," said Duenwald. "They probably had the most fun tearing the parts car apart than rebuilding the new one."

Once they had all the new parts on the 1993 Buick and were ready

Automotive class  
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