

# Winnett Times

~Winnett Montana Community Newsletter~

Volume 1, Issue 2

June 2021



**Original Lepper Memorial Hall. Source: Flatwillow Vertical File, Petroleum Co.**

## “Flatwillow on FIRE!”

*By Terry Lewis*

The 1926 May sky melted orange against the midnight darkness. Sparks like winking fireflies spiraled skyward through the thick shawl of smoke wrapping both the inferno and the people who watched helplessly as flames destroyed Lepper Memorial Hall. The volunteers had done what they could, but it was clear the fire was going to win this one. Clusters of onlookers choked back tears as they asked each other, “why?” “how?” Their beloved site for dances, plays, card parties, and potlucks was a mere five years old. Built with their own donations, materials, labor, its grand opening had taken place on July 4, 1921. And now it was collapsing into a smoldering pile of rubble.

As dawn broke, members of the 150 or so families living along Flatwillow Creek that came to help or watch were discussing the “why”. Many pointed fingers at Henry Hawkins and his small group of supporters. Small wonder; in the fall of 1925, a

riled-up Henry actually brought in the law. He was righteously determined to shut down the Saturday night dances – well, at least close the Hall’s doors at midnight. His platform was the somewhat-shaky “Sunday Dance Law” which prohibited dancing on the Sabbath. Retaliating, the Hall board posted a notice stating this ruling did not apply since the Hall was designated as a playground-entertainment center. And besides, no liquor was sold on the premises.

Hawkins continued to simmer and threaten. In 1926 he had Bob Bessay, secretary-treasurer of the Hall’s board, arrested for violation of the law. And he notified Jim Wilson, on whose land the hall rested, that he should order that the Hall be removed from his place to avoid any legal responsibility. The close-knit community was unraveling a bit around the cuffs. A trial was held.

Witnesses for the defense greatly outnumbered those for

the accuser. When the jury’s votes came in, it was five to one in favor of the defense. All charges were cleared. Case closed. But hold on... After the Fire Marshall took a look, it was determined the fire had indeed been set by one or more unidentified individuals. Naturally, suspicion was directed at Hawkins and his bunch. But where was the proof?

There was one other possibility. What about the owner of the dance hall in Winnett? Could..

## HIGHLIGHTS

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➤ Josh Hobbs

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# Community Spotlight

*Josh Hobbs*

## Few details about yourself and your family?

Well, I am 44 years old and woke up to the fact that I am not getting younger and if I plan on following a dream of relocating to one of the “Western” states Montana, Wyoming or Idaho I had better get going. I began at very young age reading the Fur Fish and Game magazine and decided before I even reached high school that someday I would move NW where the game and public land was plentiful. I do not have kids but I am engaged to Sara Kay Carrell, a Naturalist for Kansas Wildlife and Parks at Little Jerusalem Badlands State Park and Scott State Park in Western Kansas. We met in college in 1995. One of these days we will find what we love to do in the same location. My brother and I have served on the Kansas State Association of Kansas Watersheds for many years and all of my family has been heavily involved with conservation and water our entire lives.

**“I prefer small communities and the personalities that go along with them.”**

**~Josh H.**



**Bull Elk taken in Gunnison. CO**

## Education & other skills?

BS in Biology and Chemistry from Oklahoma Panhandle State University, with many great life skills including mechanical, welding, heavy equipment operation and construction.

## Current Job and duties & other job history?

My current position is Coordinating Wildlife Biologist with Pheasants Forever and many other partners including Winnett ACES.

In speaking of Oklahoma Panhandle State University, I was an instructor there for several years teaching Biology I and II, Intro to Wildlife and Fisheries, Intro Zoology and associated labs. While in Goodwell, Oklahoma I was the assistant Fire Chief for the Goodwell District, Fire and Life Safety Coordinator for the College.

Another position I have held for many years also was an active board member for the Kansas State National Wild Turkey Federation, when I left the board to come here, I was the Vice President. A very good group of volunteers that I will miss.

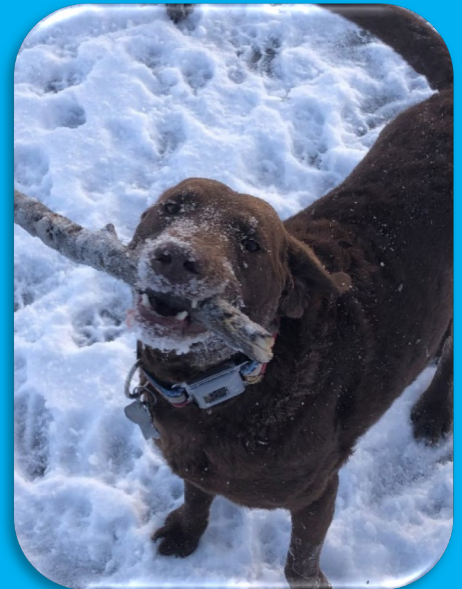
## What brought you to Winnett & why did you choose Winnett/School?

The chance of living in Montana, one of the states with the most public land and the recreational opportunities. The Biologist position with Pheasants Forever is combining my passions in life and desire to make a difference for conservation.

Continued on Page 3



**Josh's pups: Curly Bill, Robert Lee (R. Lee) and Meg**



# Community Spotlight Cont...

## Where did you grow up/hometown and what did your childhood consist of?

I was born and raised near Beloit, Kansas on the family farm where I developed my love of the outdoors and wildlife. My childhood consisted of working with the farm and cattle. Then of course fishing, hunting and working for the neighbors. On the farm our pay was that we ate and had a roof. Dad instilled in me a work ethic as he believed if we wanted things other than the basics- we had to work extra for them. We also ran a welding shop on the farm which I and my brothers welded for many years. We welded many Disks and harrow frames for Sunflower Manufacturing.

**“Dad instilled in me a work ethic as he believed if we wanted things other than the basics- we had to work extra for them.”**

## Interests, Favorite things to do and Hobbies?

Being Outside is what interests me the most! I have 3 Chesapeake Bay Retrievers that also go nearly everywhere with me. Just a note- two of them are overly protective of whatever vehicle they are in so please don't open my door! The other one will lick you to death! Favorite food is red meat, mostly wild game, fresh oysters and King Crab when I decide to afford it! My hobbies usually revolve around hunting but one other hobby I enjoy is working on antique John Deere tractors. I had a nice collection of Deeres that I sold before I moved. I also enjoy running...

dozers and moving dirt. I guess living on the farm and building everything ourselves helped me enjoy working with my hands.

## What do you like about our little community and what do you wish Winnett had to offer that is does not right now?

I love the size; the size is one thing I liked when I had a choice of work locations. I am not a lover of cities. I prefer small communities and the personalities that go along with them. Very impressed with the General store, it has nearly anything you would need. A laundry mat would be a great thing for the community, not only for the residents if they need it but this area has many



**Dan Hobbs Jr (my Dad), myself, Carl Hobbs (Uncle)**



**Hunting with Scott Linden (Wing Shooting USA) for the Sportsman Channel.**

sportsmen at certain times of the year that would sure use it.

## Hopes, Goals and Final Thoughts?

One thing that I am looking for in the area is; I would be interested in purchasing an old homestead with or without old buildings that had water and electric to build into my residence. This is a great area and having a place that was mine would be great!

## LOCAL COOKBOOK RECIPE HIGHLIGHT

### CREAM CHEESE JALAPEÑO HAMBURGERS

Tory Browning  
Mosby, MT  
Class of 2014

2 c Jalapeño Pepper, seeded and chopped  
2 (8 ounce) pkg Cream Cheese, softened

2 lbs Ground Beef  
8 hamburger buns, split

Preheat a grill for medium heat. When hot, lightly oil the grate. In a medium bowl, stir together the jalapeños and cream cheese. Divide the ground beef into 16 portions and pat out each one to ¼ inch thickness. Spoon some of the cream cheese mixture onto the center of 8 of the patties. Top with the remaining patties, pressing the edges together to seal. Grill for about 10 minutes per side, or until well done, taking care not to press down on the burgers as they cook. This will make the cheese ooze out. Serve on buns with your favorite toppings.

# The Winnett School Students were busy in May!



**PLAY DAY  
in ROY**



## Elementary Field Trip to the Billings Zoo



Photo Credit: Kate Johnson & Nicole Tholt

## BATTLE OF LITTLE BIG HORN Field Trip

7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Class



Photo Credit: Sheryll Cuartero



**8th Grade Graduates**  
McKenzie Smith, Zurry Moore &  
Alizae Howard  
Not Pictured: Riggins & Wyatt Meckel



**Dash for Tash Women's Run**  
Photo Credit: Tara Murnion

# Student Art Show



Guest Artist Instructors were Diana Brady, Chelsea Hollender and Terry Lewis



Gracie G.



Jace D.



Matthew W.



Hayley S.



Arianna H.



Cy Nunn



Madison S.



Easton H.



Emily B.



Regan S.



Manny R.



Shani B.



Derrick Z.



Cooper D.



Walker D.



Parker H.



Kaitlyn C.



Kambri S.



Erika B.



Wyatt M.



McKenzie S.



Trey J.



Shaylie A.



Zurry M.



Fenton S.



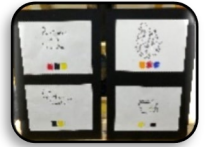
Riggan M.



Danner H.



Alizae H.



Logo Designs



5th & 6th Grade



7th-12th Choir



Kindergarteners



1st-4th Grade

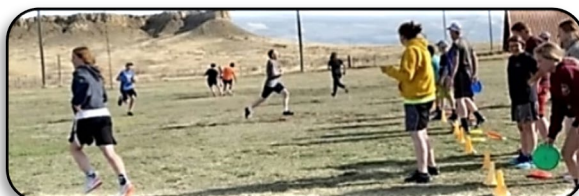


7th-12th Grade Band

# JH & HS TRACK TEAM

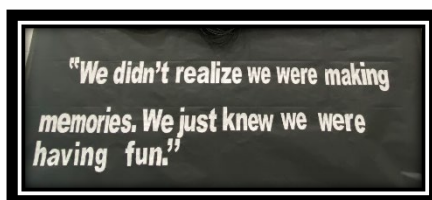


Team Photo by Tara Murnion



→JH & HS Track Meet Photos (including Districts, Divisionals & State) will be in the July Issue←

# WIMMETT GRADUATION- CLASS of 2021



Commencement Speaker Kale Sandman  
Salutatorian Derrik Zimmerman  
Valedictorian Matthew Weller  
Photos by Carol Ann Schaeffer



Graduates:  
Derrik Zimmerman,  
Matthew Weller,  
Manny Rodriguez,  
& Madison Skinner

# AWARDS BANQUET



Derrick Zimmerman is the 2021 recipient of the Jim Bohn Memorial Award presented by Superintendent Lindsey Wilkerson.  
Photo by Carol Ann Schaeffer



Highschool Boys' Football Awards



Highschool Boys' Basketball Awards

Basketball  
All-Conference  
All-State Recipients  
Walker D., Brady B.,  
& Derrik Z. -Photo by  
Carol Ann Schaeffer



Highschool Girls' Volleyball Awards



Academic All-State Awards

# Kid's Korner

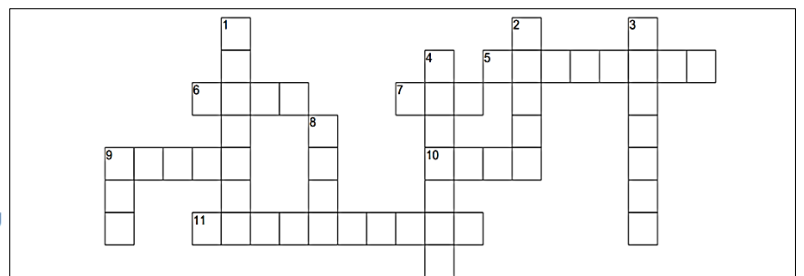
## SUMMER DAYZ

CDVFCCHOTDOGSVP  
 PRKRIWAOHGBVHCO  
 ZOIXNSTMFAWNSUO  
 MPPROPHTPOLDHBL  
 MOSSRQSINIQT PAC  
 WOSWI IOMNHNZERA  
 HRUQICGNOIGTBM  
 ISSUMLAORELREP  
 CFUODIMETPEQOQF  
 ESHNLOTISILSLUI  
 CTIWSSOONENDIER  
 RAKARHTRSGQGAJE  
 ERIRIMIISGCMHES  
 ASNMEEKNCCHAULGU  
 MTGQYYTYEEETGU



- |            |           |           |           |
|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Irrigating | Popsicles | Mosquitos | Campfires |
| Ice cream  | Solstice  | Petrolia  | Outdoors  |
| Camping    | Fishing   | Barbeque  | Sunshine  |
| S'mores    | Stars     | Fawns     | Swimming  |
| Hotdogs    | Hiking    | Pool      | Warm      |

Puzzle Answers on Page 12



### FATHER'S DAY CROSSWORD

#### ACROSS

5. A favorite Sunday sport.
6. Opposite of female.
7. Narrow cloth worn around the neck.
9. Singular form of children.
10. Give Dad \_\_\_\_\_ and Kisses on Father's Day.
11. Outdoor Cooking.

#### DOWN

1. Dad's Father.
2. To fix things Dad needs his...
3. Sleep in a tent.
4. Outdoor activity that involves sitting in a boat.
8. Month of the year that we celebrate Father's day.
9. Mode of transportation.

## “Things Kids Say”

If you had a Million Dollars, what would you do with it?



“Buy a ranch, with a house!”  
~Carver



“I would buy cows and buy more money!” ~Brady



“I would buy a bunch of horses!” ~Hadlee



“I would buy a mansion!” ~Brody

## Flatwillow on FIRE cont...

...the competition have hired someone to drive out in the middle of the night to commit arson? It seems the truth will never be known. Apparently, there is no indication in The Winnett Times archives that anyone was ever arrested or convicted of the deed. Undeterred by this tragedy, the Flatwillow families rolled up their now-singed sleeves and got to work cleaning up the sodden mess. The insurance paid out \$3000, and donations raised another \$1000 toward a new hall. By July 1 of that year, building materials began arriving by wagon. Ted Svindland was hired as head carpenter and given the task of managing the volunteers offering their labor. They were determined to rebuild within a year.

This time the planners decided to locate the stage on the east side of the hall rather than across the end. The old stage had eaten up too much floor space. The new structure would include a full basement as well. Amazingly, the New Hall was finished ahead of the goal. By August 14, it was ready for its Grand Opening. An enormous crowd gathered to celebrate the “phoenix” risen from the ashes. The celebrators ate, and they danced – quite possibly until well after midnight. (One wonders if Henry Hawkins was present.)

By the 1940’s, the Hall sat on Nebraska Feed Company land, Wilson having sold out to them. The Flatwillow community tried unsuccessfully to convince the owners to transfer the deed to the Hall’s ground to the members. In 1983, the land was sold to First Continental Corporation. The “Hallers” felt they had a claim to their chunk of ground since they’d been paying the taxes on it for 60 years. FCC shareholder Mike Graytak negotiated a 99-year lease, and eventually the owners deeded the land to the Flatwillow



Lepper Memorial Hall, as rebuilt in 1926: Flatwillow Vertical File, Petroleum Co. Library

Members who in turn purchased memberships. The bills are paid from the interest on that investment.

The Flatwillow Hall served as the community’s hub. Back in the day, it wasn’t unusual to see the Hall’s lot sprinkled or flooded with vehicles several times a week. There were no babysitters to be had, so the kids came along, whooping and playing until they tuckered out. Sleepy youngsters bedded down on the basement benches under the clean-up ladies’ watch. Traditionally, members of the Hall gathered for a Memorial Day dinner and a clean-up-the-cemetery work session. Until the 1960’s, a Thanksgiving dinner pulled them together in the fall. Entertaining skits and lively card-playing followed the feast. In these hustle-bustle times, the annual meeting is still held then.

The Lepper Memorial Hall was named in honor of B.F. Lepper’s nephew. H.W. died of influenza in 1918, and his uncle offered to donate \$1,000 if the hall bore his

name. Nowadays it is known simply as “Flatwillow Hall”. It is both alive and well. As a matter of fact, Winnett and Grass Range held their Prom there in April. The decorations and firefly-like lights were glorious, the young men and women were splendid, and the old Hall fairly rocked to the music. The Winnett Booster club hosted a very successful fundraiser banquet there, too. The bidding and buying crowds were on fire – quite a different turnout and turn-around from the fire that started the birth of this century-old building.

Yep, the old girl has turned 100! This July 2, the Flatwillow Hall will throw itself a 100<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration. The “Hallers” are planning a barbecue and a chance to dance your socks off to live music. Since alcohol is still not sold on the premises, it’s BYOB. And everyone is invited to help blow out the candles – carefully. No one wants to call out the bucket brigade again!

*Additional Flatwillow articles to come in 2021.*



The present day Flatwillow Hall. Photo credit: Kelli Roemer



*Looking Back Scrapbook*

## To Erect Community Hall as a Memorial to Popular Banker

Special to the Daily Tribune:

Lewistown, May 29.—Articles of incorporation of the Howard Lepper Memorial Hall association were filed here yesterday. The purpose of the incorporators is to develop a social organization and erect a hall at Flatwillow as a memorial to the late Howard Lepper, a popular and prominent young banker of Winnett, who fell a victim to the influenza epidemic when it first appeared. The directors named were Mrs. T. A. Berkin, Grace E. McAllister, H. M. Hawkins, T. F. Oliver and W. H. Co-burn.

*From the Great Falls Daily Tribune  
May 30, 1920*

To celebrate the payment of all indebtedness against the Lepper Memorial community hall at Flatwillow, near Winnett, a free dance was staged there Friday, November 13. The hall was built in 1921 as a memorial to Howard Lepper, who was a prominent and popular resident of the Flatwillow country.

*From the Belt Valley Times  
November 26, 1925*

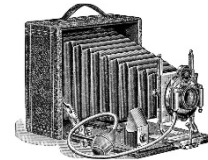




Fig. 4. 4-H Girls photographed outside of the Howard Lepper Memorial Hall. n.d.  
Source: Flatwillow Vertical File, Petroleum County Library.

# WINNETT COMMUNITY CALENDAR

June 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						
6 Methodist 1030am Baptist 11am Lutheran 4pm Mosby	7 7	8 1 VBS - Baptist Church PCCC Meeting 6pm	9 2 VBS - Baptist Church Ambulance 6pm	10 3 VBS - Baptist Church SENIORS Library Meeting 2pm	11 4 VBS - Baptist Church	12 5 Catholic 530pm Mass
13 Catholic 10am-Word Methodist 1030am Baptist 11am	14 14 FLAG DAY	15 8 Sheriff's Reserve Booster 630 Pet. Co Comm. 9am	16 9 Town Council 5-6 PET CO SEARCH AND RESCUE	17 10 SENIORS Rimrock Readers 7pm Vol Fire 7pm	18 11	19 12 Ice cream social 2pm at the Oddfellows Location Catholic 530pm Mass
20 FATHER'S DAY Methodist 1030am Baptist church 11 4H 1pm	21 21 Small Animal Clinic 4-7pm Emerg. Serv. Build. ACES Board 4-6	22 15 PCCC Meeting 6PM School Board 7PM	23 16	24 17 SENIORS	25 18	26 19
27 Catholic 10am- Word Methodist 1030am Baptist church 11am	28 28 Nicole Masters Work Shop -- Ladies Day on the Range PCCD Meeting 3-5	29 22 Nicole Masters Work Shop --Soil Health Overview	30 23			
						

All community meetings & Events may not be listed. Calendar will be updated as any new info is given. CONFIRM day/time of meeting or event before attending.

Please contact Patti at 429-5601 BEFORE WEDNESDAY to reserve a SENIOR MEAL.

# SPONSOR RECOGNITION

The Winnett Times is made possible by our sponsors – THANK YOU!  
We greatly appreciate your support!

## DIAMOND

Petroleum Co. Endowment

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Bronze \$25 - \$99  
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If you would like to donate to the Winnett Times Newsletter Project  
PLEASE SEND YOUR TAX DEDUCTABLE DONATIONS TO:  
Winnett ACES, PO Box 118, Winnett, MT 59087  
with "*Newsletter*" in the Memo.

Thank you to Winnett ACES for being our Non-Profit Sponsor. Winnett ACES has agreed to handle funds on our behalf. Without their support & the support of the community this project could not happen. Thank you!

## Classifieds/Notices

Hoge's Service & Repair, LLC  
Spring Service Inspection on  
Haying Equipment  
Call Kalin 406-320-0494



### Ice Cream Social

The Winnett ACES Community Enhancement Committee invites you to an Ice Cream Social on the lawn of the new location for the Odd Fellows Hall! Bring your own lawn chair and join us from 2-4 in the afternoon on Saturday, June 19 for socializing and sharing about this place.

### Soil Health Workshops with Nicole Masters

The PCCD & Winnett ACES have partnered to bring **Nicole Masters**, internationally recognized soil expert, for two one-day workshops at Flatwillow Hall. **June 28th will be a Ladies Day on the Range.** We invite all you ladies to join us in learning about nutrient density in foods and what we can do to build healthy soils for healthy foods. Workshop will be held at Flatwillow Hall from 10-4, please bring a sack lunch. Registration is required. **Cost is \$20/person.** Find us on Facebook or contact Carie Hess at the Petroleum County Conservation District. **406-429-6646.**

**June 29th will again feature Nicole Masters and we invite anyone interested in learning about building soil health to join us from 1:00 pm - 6:00 pm at Flatwillow Hall.** The workshop will include a Soil Health overview with a rangelands and grazing focus, including how to manage for grasshoppers, tame grass pastures, and address annual grasses (cheat grass and Japanese brome). The workshop will be followed by a meal and social hour. Registration is required. Cost is \$35/person with a discounted rate of \$20/person for each additional person from your operation. Find us on Facebook or contact Carie Hess at the Petroleum County Conservation District. **406-429-6646.**

### LICENSED DAYCARE PROVIDER NEEDED

Winnett and the surrounding communities are in desperate need of a Licensed Daycare Provider. There is technical, monetary, and professional licensing assistance available. The Winnett United Methodist Church has handicap accessible space available for rent for the Daycare that includes a kitchen area and a yard that can be fenced. For questions and serious inquiries, please call Laura Kiehl at 406-429-5841, or 406-366-2120.

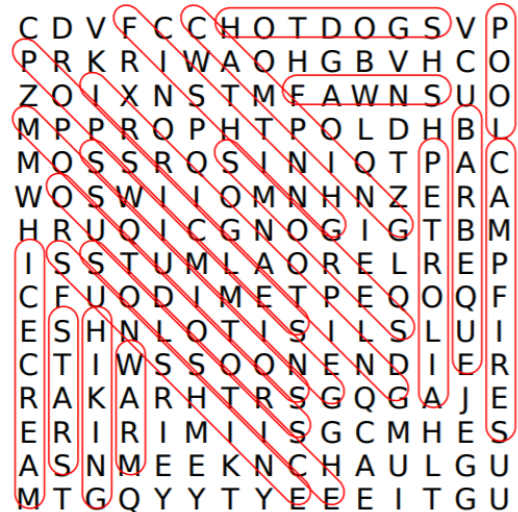
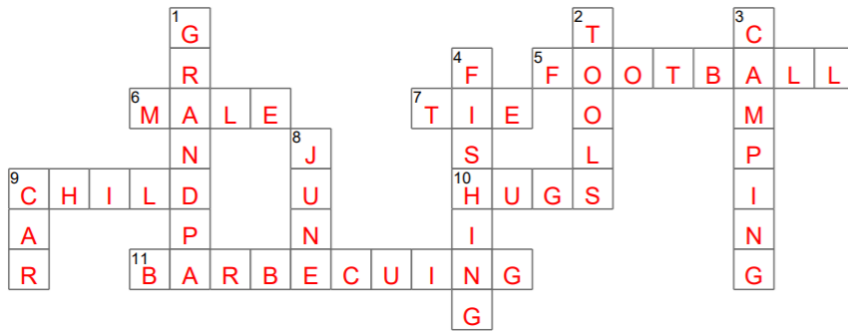
→Please submit your Classified Ad (For Sale/Wanted/Job Opening) or Notice by June 10<sup>th</sup> for the July edition←

# CONTACT INFO

**E-MAIL: [winnettimes@gmail.com](mailto:winnettimes@gmail.com)**

Find and Follow us on Facebook & Instagram

## Page 7 Puzzle Answers



**A huge THANK YOU to David Ponte, Publisher of "The Roundup Record Tribune & Winnett Times" for giving us copyright permission to use the old "Winnett Times" name on our newsletter. It has nostalgic value to our community and we appreciate your generosity!**

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