

**THURSDAY,
April 16, 2020**
Vol. 120, No. 3

**WHAT YOU
NEED TO KNOW**

**2020 MCC Relief
Sale canceled;
Schmeckfest
still up in the air**

Yet another summertime event in Freeman has been canceled for 2020. Organizers of the South Dakota Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Relief Sale have decided to postpone the annual fundraiser until 2021 due to coronavirus. The sale was scheduled for Saturday, July 11. The board is working on new and creative ways the public can contribute to the worldwide relief organization through the sale. Details will be forthcoming.

Other events scheduled in Freeman that have been called off for 2020 include the Freeman Citywide Rummage Sale the first weekend in June, the Freeman Fishing Derby scheduled for June 20 and the South Dakota Chislic Festival scheduled for July 25.

As for Schmeckfest, a final decision about what to do with the 2020 festival – scheduled for March 20-21 and 27-28 but postponed indefinitely – had not been reached as of early this week. Kathy Kleinsasser, president of the Freeman Academy Auxiliary Executive Committee, said she and other officials were meeting this week to talk about what to do about this year's Schmeckfest, including the stage production of "Matilda the Musical," of which rehearsals had been underway since the middle of January but came to an abrupt halt March 12 – eight days before opening night.

Updates about how the coronavirus pandemic continues to impact area communities can be found at freemansd.com.

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4 MUST-READS THIS WEEK

1. City of Freeman eyes opening of Valley View Page 2A
2. Three compelling comments from our readersPages 4-5A
3. Instructions about the June 2 Primary ElectionPage10A
4. Another Q&A with Dr. KirtonPage 16A

THE COURIER

Serving the larger Freeman & Menno, South Dakota communities



This is what the April 8 meeting of the Freeman Public School Board looked like as district leaders met via the online platform Zoom. Pictured are, top from left: Superintendent Kevin Kunz, board members Kerry Hofer and Slade Ammann; middle from left: Dean of Students Will Massey, board members Mark Miller and Corey Gall and board president Kyle Weier; bottom: Business Manager Debbie Goossen.

**Schools continue to
adapt to COVID-19**

Freeman Public to end formal instruction May 1; area schools considering alternative graduations for Class of 2020, families

JEREMY WALTNER PUBLISHER

It was just over a month ago, on Thursday afternoon, March 12, that Freeman Public Superintendent Kevin Kunz asked students in grades 7-12 to gather in the junior-senior high school gym for an unscheduled assembly. There, he told them that growing concerns about the coronavirus pandemic meant he had decided to suspend all non-essential school activities indefinitely, but that there were no plans to close the school.

Little did they know what was to come, and that it would be the last time they would gather as a student body — as classes — as friends.

Friday, March 13 was a scheduled day off for spring break, and that weekend, South Dakota Governor Kristi Noem asked schools to close their buildings the week of March 16-20. That turned into a mandate from the governor's office that schools close until May 1 and, early last week, for the remainder of the year.

Schools have responded to the closure by implementing various online systems of learning, using email, Google Classroom, Zoom and other forms of distance communication. At the elementary level, parents have been asked to pick up and drop off assignments for their children. The spring sports season has been canceled, prom remains a fleeting hope and

schools are figuring out how they're going to deal with graduation.

And now this: The Freeman Public School Board last week agreed to accept a recommendation from Kunz to formally end instruction for the 2019-2020 school year on Friday, May 1, with any unfinished work due Monday, May 11.

The last day was scheduled for Monday, May 18.

"This recommendation is not a matter of trying to abruptly bring an end to an unfavorable situation, but rather a logical plan as to how to best

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