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Juneau Independent

The True Local Newspaper of Alaska's Capital City

September 6, 2026

Vigil for two lost teens at YDHS



Pictures of Zoey Clark, left, and Leotis Phillips, both 16, are displayed at a candlelight vigil for them at the Dzantik'i Heeni campus on the evening of Tuesday, Sept. 1, 2026. (Mark Sabbatini / Juneau Independent)

More than 150 family and school-mates gather to remember Zoey Clark and Leotis Phillips, both 16, a day after they were found dead in nearby woods Monday

By MARK SABBATINI, Editor

There were memorable moments shared by relatives and classmates. Many tears and many embraces. And an immense sense of loss and unanswered questions about why Zoey Clark and Leotis Phillips, both 16, were found dead together in the woods with a gun hours after they were reported missing.

"I can't imagine the pain they were in to make this decision," Aariah Clark, a cousin of Zoey Clark, said during an evening candlelight vigil Tuesday, one

See Vigil on Page 16

Joel Jackson, president of the Organized Village of Kake and longtime tribal leader, dies at 70

Lifelong Kake resident was a tribal council member for more than 35 years, and advocate for Indigenous rights, environmental protection and cultural healing

By MARK SABBATINI, Editor

Lifelong Kake resident Joel Jackson, who served as president of the Organized Village of Kake for the past eight years and a tribal council member for more than 35 years, died Saturday at Mount Edgecumbe Hospital in Sitka, according to family members and tribal officials.

See Jackson on Page 13

Assembly vote opts to delay consideration of making five-ship limit mandatory

Concern expressed as city attorney says lawsuit is certain if agreement with cruise industry turns into a law; supporters of change say it ensures the city controls ship limits

By MARK SABBATINI, Editor

Making Juneau's limit of five cruise ships a day a city ordinance rather than a voluntary agreement with the industry was put on hold by a 5-4 vote during a Juneau Assembly Committee of the Whole meeting on Monday night.

Supporters of the change said the limit has been popular among residents since it was imposed in 2024 and enforcing it via an ordinance will ensure

the city, rather than the cruise industry, determines limits on traffic.

"We have seen the numbers from our surveys, that our community wants it to be Juneau that sets that limit of how much tourism, how does it grow?" said Christine Woll, one of three Assembly members proposing the ordinance. "The survey every year says the majority of people from Juneau really appreciate

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About the Juneau Independent

Editor: Mark Sabbatini

Managing Editor: Jasz Garrett

Sports Editor: Klas Stolpe

Reporter: Ellie Ruel

Advertising Manager: Douglas Drazkowski

Volunteer Coordinator: Lori Thomson

Graphic Designer: Leo Kotlarov

Mailing Address :

Juneau Independent

130 Seward St., Suite 509

Juneau, AK 99801

Telephone: (907) 957-2306

E-mail: editor@juneauindependent.com

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Judge Marianna Carpeneti, in historic first, does not get yes/no retention advisory from Alaska Judicial Council

Attorneys and jurors give Juneau Superior Court judge high ratings; peace and probation officers give her low marks in performance evaluation

By MARK SABBATINI, Editor

The Alaska Judicial Council, in an apparent first, is not making a recommendation on whether voters should retain a judge, issuing a mixed performance evaluation on Wednesday for Juneau Superior Court Judge Marianna Carpeneti.

Carpeneti is facing her first retention election this fall after being appointed to the Juneau Superior Court in December 2021. The judicial council has previously recommended against retaining judges 12 times since it began issuing recommendations in 1976, but there is no known instance of the council not issuing a recommendation.

"Attorneys and court employees rated Judge Carpeneti's impartiality and fairness as excellent. Social service professionals rated her impartiality and fairness as good. Peace and probation officers rated her as poor," a performance summary published by the council notes.

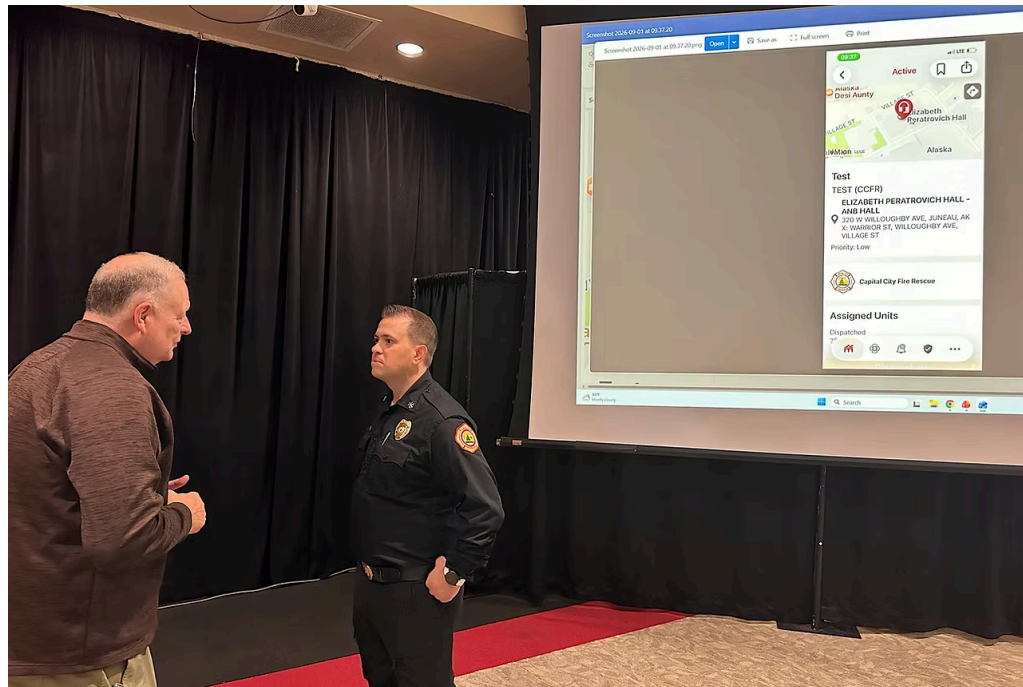
Nearly identical assessments of Carpeneti were offered in the categories of legal ability, integrity, judicial temperament, and diligence and administrative skills.

Attempts to contact Carpeneti for comment on Friday morning were not successful as of midday.

Susanne DiPietro, the judicial council's executive director, said in an interview Friday, said four of the council's seven members need to concur on a recommendation. The votes for Carpeneti were three do not retain, two favoring retention and two abstaining.

See Carpeneti on Page 6

App that alerts CPR-trained individuals to nearby cardiac incidents goes live in Juneau



Andrew Pantiskas, right, division chief of emergency medical services for Capital City Fire/Rescue, talks to Juneau resident Greg White during an event explaining the local debut of the PulsePoint Respond app at Elizabeth Peratrovich Hall on Tuesday, Sept. 1, 2026. (Mark Sabbatini / Juneau Independent)

PulsePoint Respond is a 911-connected app intended to provide quick aid to people in need of help until emergency responders arrive

By MARK SABBATINI, Editor

An app alerting people with CPR training about somebody nearby experiencing a cardiac arrest emergency is active for public use in Juneau as of Tuesday, according to officials at an orientation event.

PulsePoint Respond is a 911-connected app that, when implemented by local safety agencies, alerts users when a person needing CPR is nearby. That could make a lifesaving difference since the average response for a Capital City Fire/Rescue call is six to nine minutes, said Andrew Pantiskas, the department's division chief of emergency medical services.

"Every minute that we don't do CPR on someone who's truly in cardiac arrest is a 10% decrease in survival," he said during a presentation about the app at Elizabeth Peratrovich Hall.

Offering a personal testimony to the

potential value of the app was Peter Metcalfe, a longtime Juneau resident who suffered a cardiac incident in 2021 on the Kaxdigoowu Heen Dei (Brotherhood Bridge Trail) a mile from the trailhead. He said his sister, Kim, called 911 and the dispatcher guided her through 14 minutes of emergency care until responders arrived, and he ultimately was brought to an Anchorage hospital.

"There could have been somebody walking ahead of us by 30 seconds who would not have known the drama happening right behind him," Metcalfe said. "He could have turned on his heels or her heels, and come back and assisted if we'd had this PulsePoint app."

Metcalfe said he learned about the app because his wife has a niece who is a vice president of communications for the PulsePoint Foundation, which released the software in 2011. The foundation's website states the app is active in 5,775 communities as of Sept. 1, 2026.

Getting funding to implement the app in Juneau took a couple of years of effort, Metcalfe said. Implementation for

the current fiscal year that began July 1 is being funded with \$8,400 in Marine Passenger Fees, according to the City and Borough of Juneau.

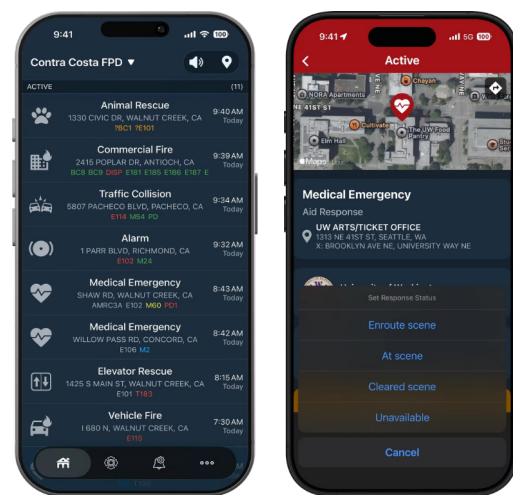
Pantiskas said the app only alerts users within a short distance of the person in need of help — perhaps a quarter-mile or so, with the exact distance being fine-tuned during initial use — and if people with the app choose to be notified.

"No one has to download this if they don't want to," he said. "No one has to go give CPR if they feel unsafe. No one has to go into someone's home or go down weird alleyways, but the people who want to and feel safe to do it can truly save someone's life. This is a free app to use. You can silence the notifications all you want. It is only going to notify you if you're close."

There is a companion app, the Near National Emergency AED Registry, which is a database of all automated external defibrillators in communities, Pantiskas said. He said a recent check showed 163 of the defibrillators in Juneau.

Local CPR classes are available from Bartlett Regional Hospital, Southeast Alaska Guide Services and as part of more extensive training by the American Red Cross for lifeguard certification.

• *Contact Mark Sabbatini at editor@juneauindependent.com or (907) 957-2306.*



Sample screens from the PulsePoint Respond app. (PulsePoint Foundation photos)

Governor's race moves from 'Likely Republican' to 'Toss Up' at election-forecasting website



The Office of the Governor at the Alaska State Capitol in August of 2025. (Jasz Garrett / Juneau Independent)

Republicans being unwilling to support more than one candidate on ranked choice ballot cited as factor by Sabato's Crystal Ball

By MARK SABBATINI, Editor

A major shift in the predicted outcome of the race for governor in Alaska, which last elected a Democrat in 1998, occurred Thursday when the election-forecasting website Sabato's Crystal Ball changed its rating from "Likely Republican" to "Toss Up."

The shift occurred three days after the certification of the state's primary election that resulted in Democrat Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins facing Republicans Bernadette Wilson, Dave Bronson and Candice English. The Crystal Ball site states Alaska's ranked-choice ballot system that many Republicans oppose is a primary rea-

son for the change.

"Ballot exhaustion — in which supporters of the Republican candidates don't rank other candidates in the ranked-choice voting allocation — threatens Republican chances," the website notes.

Also, the website asserts the three candidates getting the most votes in the primary — Kreiss-Tomkins, Wilson and Bronson — aren't proven statewide contenders in a general election. English is even less known, since she was the low-profile running mate of former Attorney General Treg Taylor, who was disqualified from the ballot on Monday with English replacing him at the top of the ticket.

The Kreiss-Tomkins campaign, in a text message seeking donors, stated in response to the rating change "we're

only in this position because we did what Alaskans wanted and unified around what actually matters: ending the Dunleavy era of decline and building a movement that advocates for our schools, protects our fisheries, and empowers the working Alaskans who built our state."

The Wilson and Bronson campaigns did not immediately respond to inquiries by the Juneau Independent on Thursday afternoon.

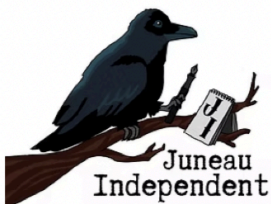
Another major campaign rating website, The Cook Political Report, still listed the governor's race as "Likely Republican" as of Thursday evening.

The last Democrat elected governor in Alaska was Tony Knowles in 1998. Republican Gov. Mike Dunleavy was elected to a second term with 50.3% of the first-choice vote, avoiding a ranked choice runoff. However, in a poll released in February he was the least-popular governor in the U.S., suffering a sharp drop in rating from just a few months earlier.

Kreiss-Tomkins won this year's primary with 22.5% of the vote, followed by fellow Democrat Tom Begich at 20.8%. Begich quickly dropped out and endorsed Kreiss-Tomkins, although their combined total was less than the more than 50% of votes split among 12 Republican candidates.

Wilson was the top Republican finisher with 10.1%, followed by Bronson at 8.1% and Taylor at 7.3%. Some party leaders urged the top contenders to unite around a single candidate, but they declined to do so.

• *Contact Mark Sabbatini at editor@juneauindependent.com or (907) 957-2306.*



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Peltola won primary by 8%, but new poll shows general election race tied with Sen. Sullivan



This photo combination shows Democratic Rep. Mary Peltola, Oct. 10, 2024, in Anchorage, Alaska, left, and Sen. Dan Sullivan, R-Alaska, Feb. 8, 2024, on Capitol Hill in Washington. (Bill Roth, Mariam Zuhair/Anchorage Daily News via AP/AP, file)

Former Democratic congresswoman lost 2024 general election after getting 50.89% in that primary; survey released Wednesday shows similar outcome possible this year

By MARK SABBATINI, Editor

One of this fall's most-watched U.S. Senate races is still a toss up despite Democratic challenger Mary Peltola finishing more than 8% ahead of two-term Republican incumbent Dan Sullivan, according to results of a survey released Wednesday.

The Alaska Survey Research poll of 1,495 likely voters shows Peltola prevailing in a ranked choice tally 50.6% to 49.4 for Sullivan. The margin of error is 3%, meaning the race is statistically tied, according to the poll results.

Both Sullivan and Peltola — and supporters of theirs — argued things are different in a general election compared to a primary, in which Peltola prevailed 49.5% to 41.4%.

"We are going to win this race... but we haven't won yet!" Peltola wrote in a campaign social media post after the results were certified on Monday. "This primary was just the first test of the most competitive and expensive race in the country."

Sullivan offered similar comments in a speech to an Anchorage crowd after the first primary results came in Aug. 18, claiming "my opponent, the Democrat, she's got unlimited money from Lower 48 billionaires and millionaires, and, you know, who the hell ever. We don't have that money, right? But we got you, and we're going to win the general election with you."

Peltola finished first in the U.S. House primary with 50.89% of the vote, but Republican Nick Begich III won the general election in November by a 51.3%-48.7% split when the ranked choice votes were tallied. Among the factors in Begich's favor was a higher general election turnout for a contest that included the presidential election and fellow Republican Nancy Dahlstrom dropping out and supporting Begich when she finished behind him in the primary.

The Cook Political Report and Larry Sabato's Crystal Ball both rate this year's Senate race in Alaska a toss up that could potentially decide which party controls the majority during the final two years of President Donald Trump's second term.

"Turnout is going to grow less from August to November in a midterm year than in a presidential year," Sabato's analysis notes. "For instance, the number of votes cast for House in November 2024 was about triple that of those cast in August. Back in 2022, the November vote was only about 140% of the August vote. That year's concurrent special election to fill the vacant House seat probably drove some additional turnout in August, but the change from August to November won't be as stark this year as it was in 2024. Best guess: Peltola."

Ivan Moore, owner of Alaska Survey Research, noted in a social media post that his full survey released Tuesday was of 2,063 registered voters, with 49.6% of those respondents offering a positive view of Peltola versus 41.7% a positive view of Sullivan — nearly identical results to their primary finish.

The reason for the deadlocked race a lower ratio of registered voters 18-34 and in rural Alaska who are considered likely voters, and those groups are Peltola's strongest supporters, according to Moore.

Sullivan got a pledge of support Wednesday from Trump, who said he
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PRIMARY

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will visit Alaska during the final month before the Nov. 3 election to support the incumbent and denounce the state's ranked choice voting that puts up to four candidates on the ballot. The third-ranked candidate in the race is retired Petersburg teacher Dan J. Sullivan, who got 2.47% of the primary vote.

Republicans, including Sen. Sullivan and Trump, accuse the Petersburg resident of being a sham candidate seeking to trick voters, which he denies.

"He was put up by the Democrats, and they don't admit it, but it's been so proven," Trump said, although no such link has been definitely established.

• *Contact Mark Sabbatini at editor@juneauindependent.com or (907) 957-2306.*

CARPENETI

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"To the knowledge of people in this office it has not it has not in the past happened that the council has tried to evaluate a judge and has not been able to come up with four votes, either yes or no," DiPietro said.

The previous "no" recommendations issued on 12 occasions were for nine individual judges, some of who were retained by voters before again getting a negative recommendation from the council, she said.

Recommendations for 21 judges up for retention this year were issued by the judicial council on Wednesday, with "yes" recommendations for 18 and "no" recommendations for Kenai judges Kelly Lawson and Martin Fallon. No Juneau judges other than Carpeneti are on the ballot.

The council states that Fallon, a dis-

trict court judge, "did not meet performance standards related to integrity, and diligence and administrative skills." The assessment of Lawson, a superior court judge, states she "did not meet performance standards related to judicial temperament and integrity."

Carpeneti, the daughter of former Alaska Supreme Court Justice Walter Carpeneti, was born and raised in Juneau, and was a private practice attorney in Homer when she was appointed a First Judicial District judge by Gov. Mike Dunleavy.

"The most satisfying parts of this work include interacting with citizens who report for jury duty, and working to ensure that everyone who comes into my courtroom feels respected and heard," Carpeneti said in an interview conducted by the judicial council as part of this year's assessment process. "I also enjoy the thinking this job requires, understanding what the parties need from the court, and providing decisions that allow litigants to move on with their lives...Mostly, performing in this role makes me feel grateful to live in this community."

A report card where attorneys, court employees, social service professionals, peace officers and jurors rated her in several categories on a 1 to 5 scale resulted in rankings ranging from 2.3 to 5.

The largest group of respondents were 108 attorneys who gave her cumulative scores of 3.7 for legal ability, 4.1 for impartiality, 4.3 for integrity, 3.9 for judicial temperament, 3.8 for diligence and 3.8 for overall performance. A survey of 28 court employees resulted in 4.6 overall performance score, 10 social service professions gave her a 3.5 overall score and 18 peace officers a 2.3 overall score.

Jurors, listed in a separate table gave her an overall rating of 5, with individual category scores between 4.8 and 5.

The council, in its summary of Carpeneti's non-recommendation, noted the process included "surveys and reviews from attorneys, court employees, jurors, and other user groups familiar with the judge's work, analysis of the judge's financial disclosure documents, analysis of how often the judge's decisions were affirmed on appeal, whether their pay was withheld for untimely decisions, how often the judge was disqualified from a case, whether the judge followed standards of ethical conduct and continuing education, input from the public, and the judge's demonstrated commitment to the administration of justice and the community."

Carpeneti, in a retention questionnaire for the council, stated "I think I am likely about where one would expect a judge to be four years into the job."

"Which is to say that I've learned an enormous amount, and know I have a huge amount still to learn," she wrote. "The most satisfying parts of this work include interacting with citizens who report for jury duty, and working to ensure that everyone who comes into my courtroom feels respected and heard. I also enjoy the thinking this job requires, understanding what the parties need from the court, and providing decisions that allow litigants to move on with their lives. Mostly, performing in this role makes me feel grateful to live in this community and hopeful for our community and state. I feel privileged to be in a role where people share with me the difficulties they face and trust me to make hugely personal decisions in their lives."

• *Contact Mark Sabbatini at editor@juneauindependent.com or (907) 957-2306.*

Juneau may get a break on cost of fast long-term flood fix, but still facing a big bill

Amendment to federal rule allowing city to pay 10% instead of 25% of project being pursued by Sen. Sullivan, city manager says, as local leaders consider tax and other options for rest



City Manager Katie Koester discusses funding options for flood-mitigation measures during a Juneau Assembly Committee of the Whole meeting on Monday, Aug. 31, 2026. (Mark Sabbatini / Juneau Independent)

By MARK SABBATINI, Editor

Juneau got encouraging news this week about possibly paying 10% rather than 25% of the cost of a fast-tracked long-term glacial flooding solution, but that still is an immense bill beyond the city's current means, Assembly members were told Monday night.

That likely means considering taxes of some sort for people living in flood zone areas and/or citywide, City Manager Katie Koester told the Assembly during a Committee of the Whole meeting. How much will be needed won't likely be known until December when the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is scheduled to finalize a preferred partner and project to be built.

The Army Corps, which previously was looking at long-term flood projects that might cost \$1 billion and take more than a decade to complete, over the past several weeks has said it is now seeking an industry partner for a faster and cheaper project. Because the accelerated process is occurring under the emergency authority provision, the city by default would be asked to pay 25% of the project's cost versus the 10% local officials were expecting under the conventional process because the project is on tribal land.

But Koester said there appears to be progress on efforts to work with Alaska's congressional delegation on amending the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) so the city can

avoid the higher cost share under the emergency provision.

"I got a phone call from Sen. (Dan) Sullivan's office today that they are working on amending the WRDA language to have that same 90/10 tribal lands cost share that applies to the kind of regular Army Corps of Engineers paths," she said.

A previous amendment to the act to include "riverine erosion" for Alaska projects in other parts of the state, allowing for a 90/10 rather than 65/35 split, was enacted in 2024 with effort from the state's congressional delegation.

Prospective partners for the long-term flood solution are scheduled to make their pitches at the end of September, with the Army Corps saying the type of project is open as long as it keeps Suicide Basin from rising above 1,100 feet and limits flood discharges to 1,000 cubic feet per second. Army Corps officials have also stated there is not a target budget for the project.

Deputy Mayor Greg Smith, who presided over Monday's meeting, spelled out the implications for the city if the selected project comes in far below the previous ones proposed by the Army Corps.

"If it's a \$400 million project and a 10% match that means we need to come up with \$40 million and if it's a 25% match we need to come up with \$100 million," he said.

Either will be a sizable fiscal puzzle since the current municipal budget already has an ongoing annual deficit of several million dollars that city leaders have been seeking to close via tax measures and program cuts. While discussion by Assembly members on Monday included options such as seeking state funds to cover some matching costs, Koester said a local commitment to the project will be important when seeking federal and other non-local funding.

"I think we have a much stronger

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FLOOD

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argument when we go and say ‘We need a big chunk of money for this project, Congress, if we have both our own bond for match in place and we have participation by our partners in different layers of government,’ she said. “And that’s a policy question for you guys. When do we take this question of local match for an enduring solution to the voters? And who are those voters? Is it the service area? Is it areawide?”

Among the local options Koester presented are a special service area with a separate mill rate, which voters in that area would have to approve, and a citywide bond proposition.

In the meantime, the Assembly is also facing millions of dollars a year in shorter-term costs such as maintenance of HESCO barriers, plus proposals such as compensation for owners of property with those barriers.

Smith suggested “a strike team of three Assembly members to just work closely with staff and maybe just try to sort through things” so the full Assembly has a more refined set of options to consider. Mayor Beth Weldon said she has similar thoughts and on Monday talked to members Neil Steininger, Nano Brooks and Maureen Hall about that possibility.

• *Contact Mark Sabbatini at editor@juneauindependent.com or (907) 957-2306.*

New mountain biking trails get rainy opening in Valley

Thunder Mountain Bike Park builds off Under Thunder trail

By ELLIE RUEL, Reporter

Bikers of all ages splashed through the mud to try out the new features at Thunder Mountain Bike Park during its official opening celebration on Sunday.

“I think the jumps were really fun,” said Parker Heard, 8.

The project was a collaboration between the Juneau Mountain Bike Alliance, Juneau Parks and Recreation, and Trail Mix Inc. JMBA president Reid Harris said the park took about five years and hundreds of volunteer laborers.

“The valley really needed a place where kids could go riding because 75% of our population is right here and a lot of families with younger kids,” Harris said.

All eight new trails are fed by the existing Under Thunder trail, and the main access point is located at a trailhead at the end of Jennifer Dr. Harris said the community of mountain bikers originally found the area and experimented there since the crushed shale from Thunder Mountain was ideal for biking.

“You have to engineer the trails to handle a lot of water. It usually requires a lot of wood features to bridge,

streams, chasms and other things like that,” he said. “Anywhere in Southeast it’s a jungle — you got three feet of spruce roots and vegetation and stuff — so you actually get down to any kind of dirt that’s actually good for building and holding a form. But right here it’s just right on the surface and that pile replenishes itself every year.”

Harris said they started constructing trails without official approval, but the city asked them to pause and formally organize. They formed a 501(c)(3) non-profit and signed a memorandum of understanding, moving forward with construction about five years later.

“Now we have a place that has a lot to offer our community,” said Deputy Mayor Greg Smith in a speech before the ribbon cutting. “A place with a good, healthy, positive outlook and activity.

It’s a place where you can build friendships and build skills.”

Harris said JMBA has run into issues with motorcycle riders using the trail and damaging it as well as endangering other riders. Pedestrians and motorized vehicles are banned on the bike park trails.

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BIKING

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“The surfaces are not hardened for motor use. They get torn up, and it's actual structural problems, and we can't be out here working right now, 'cause there's so much use happening,” Harris said.

He noted it's a life and safety issue for the motorized riders as well, since most of the jumps and features are designed for use at 15-25 miles per hour.

The total cost was about \$320,000, mainly funded by the Juneau Community Foundation and Rasmuson Foundation grants, according to Harris. He said the group brought in contractor Gary Paasch to professionally develop the trails with progressive levels, matched to difficulty.

“It's to help you learn to be a better mountain biker, like, you know, those of us that build these trails might just do black trails that are left to our own devices, 'cause that's what we like to ride,” Harris said. “But we want everyone else to learn to ride, also, so you need things like Dream Zone, Woody, the kids, and adaptables And then once you get comfortable on these you can start to step up to the blue trails, just two of those. We try to kind of split it evenly, three greens, two blue, three black.”

Some of the trails sport names like “Bob Gnarly” and “In the Gnome of Love.”

“There's a progression of the trails that goes about as high as you want to go when it comes to bike skills,” said Phil Moser. “But it's really nice to see that that's always an option that you don't have to do. There's always an alternative, there's always an opportunity to be creative about how you get down, you can be as safe or as up-in-the-air as you want to be.”



A biker breaks the ribbon across the beginner trail at the newly completed Thunder Mountain Bike Park on Sunday, Aug. 30, 2026. (Ellie Ruel / Juneau Independent)



A biker uses one of the wooden jump ramps on a black-level trail at the Thunder Mountain Bike Park on Sunday, Aug. 30, 2026. (Ellie Ruel / Juneau Independent)

Moser said he's been mountain biking around Juneau for years and now his sister's children are getting into the sport.

Many of the young riders were enthused by the muddy conditions, with Hollis Shanley, 6, saying it was his favorite part. His younger brother Logan concurred, adding that “jumping in the air” was also fun.

“Their dad bikes a lot, so they're supported,” said Christina Shanley. “They're pretty comfortable on this

trail, the beginner trail.”

Cordova Pleasants brought her two children to celebrate and explore the new trails.

“We've been here already, but we're here to celebrate and we'll find out more,” she said. “They're amazing. I'm from here, so I never had any of this at all, so to have this for my kids, I like it a lot.”

• Contact Ellie Ruel at ellie.ruel@juneauindependent.com.

City leaders considering third-party management of recreational facilities due to budget constraints

Options for groups and companies that could oversee facilities such as pools, ice rink, arboretum and field house to be presented to Assembly on Monday

By MARK SABBATINI, Editor

Closing city-owned recreation facilities to cope with a budget shortfall was considered and largely rejected by the Juneau Assembly this spring. Now they are looking at the potential savings of having a third party operate some of those facilities, but among the concerns are if that will result in users paying more.

Options for sites such as Juneau's two public pools, the Dimond Park Field House, Treadwell Arena and the Jensen-Olson Arboretum are scheduled to be presented to Assembly members during a Committee of the Whole meeting on Monday evening. Because it is a work session no public testimony will be taken and the Assembly cannot enact any official changes, although a decision to further pursue such changes is permissible.

A third-party agreement for one or more facilities is likely to be complex due to questions about the qualifications of interested parties and the city's legal responsibilities since it will still own the sites, according to Marc

Wheeler, parks and recreation director for the City and Borough of Juneau.

"There are significant challenges associated with third-party management of each of our Parks and Recreation facilities," he wrote in a memo to Deputy Mayor Greg Smith. "If we could secure adequate management without needing General Fund support, this would benefit the overall CBJ budget. If the Assembly wants to pursue a third-party model for any facility, it will likely take significant time to iron out details of a transfer, including who is responsible for capital maintenance, liability, and how to guarantee an adequate level of equitable public access. In the meantime, we must care for our existing staff and facility users to ensure continuity of operations and employee stability."

One of the primary challenges is the high fixed costs at each facility, Wheeler wrote. Using general funds to subsidize costs "allows us to provide services to the community at reasonably accessible rates and schedules."

"Giving up control undermines our ability to protect these public benefits," he added.

A range of parks and recreation fee hikes were implemented as of July 1 as part of the Assembly's efforts during the past budget cycle to close its budget gap. But Assembly members have

since noted the city is still facing an annual multimillion-dollar deficit with the budget as currently structured — along with major future costs such as glacial flood protection — and looking at a multitude of ways to resolve the gap.

The other major concern expressed by Wheeler is maintaining the facilities so they remain serviceable and safe.

"We have found enforcing contract provisions with even minor contracts, such as janitorial services, to be difficult," he wrote. "Without a serious commitment to taking management authority back for deficiencies, it would be challenging to ensure adequate facility maintenance to protect the lifespan of these public assets."

An assessment of individual facilities by Wheeler shows different levels of opportunities and challenges at each:

- Augustus Brown Pool and Dimond Park Aquatic Center: Juneau's two pools are among the highest-subsidized facilities, with user revenues covering about 25% of their cost. Operations require technical expertise and the facilities have significant deferred maintenance needs. The YMCA of Alaska years ago expressed interest in management, which the Assembly could revisit, and the Glacier Swim

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BUDGET

Continued from page 10

Club "may have the capacity to run this one pool at a very basic level."

- **Dimond Park Field House:** "There are a number of youth and adult user groups who use the facility. None of these organizations has the professional staff or organizational bandwidth to manage the facility," Wheeler notes. User revenues cover about 45% of its expenses. He notes that during this year's budget process "a community member interested in exploring taking over the Field House. At the Assembly's direction, we could revisit that conversation."

- **Treadwell Arena:** "The arena has the highest percentage of cost-recovery of any of the sports facilities – roughly 49%," Wheeler notes. "A number of youth and adult user groups use the facility. None of these groups have any professional staff or organizational depth to manage the facility."

- **Jensen-Olson Arboretum:** Several legal restrictions including a property easement and specifications on how commercial revenues can be spent make a third-party agreement difficult, according to Wheeler.

- **Eagle Valley Center:** The facility requires the least amount of general fund dollars, making it potentially appealing to third-party operators, Wheeler notes. Southeast Alaska Independent Living already has an agreement to operate an adjacent ropes course, and "has significant professional staffing and is a well-run nonprofit and may have the bandwidth to operate the facility."

The Assembly, as a separate agenda item, is also scheduled to get an update Monday about possible third-party management of the city-owned Eaglecrest Ski Area. City Manager Katie Koester, in a memo to Assembly members, states consideration of a partnership with an entity such as Goldbelt

Inc. should wait until the completion of a strategic plan Eaglecrest is developing with the consulting company SE Group, which is expected to be completed this fall.

- *Contact Mark Sabbatini at editor@juneauindependent.com or (907) 957-2306.*

Two armed men charged with impersonating SWAT officers

Adam Scott Murphy and Christopher Scott Johnson Jr. each facing a misdemeanor charge; city attorney says detained people may have been willing participants

By MARK SABBATINI, Editor

Two armed men in full SWAT-like tactical gear are each facing a misdemeanor impersonation charge after handcuffing and taking two people away from an area at Sandy Beach, according to court documents.

Adam Scott Murphy, 28, and Christopher Scott Johnson Jr., 21, were arrested by Juneau Police Department officers after observers reported what appeared to be suspicious detentions by the two men.

"Officers arrived at Sandy Beach, where several other witnesses pointed us in the direction of the subjects," a charging document in the case notes. "Witnesses said they observed the subjects...placing two other people in handcuffs and then walking them off the beach in those cuffs."

JPD officers located Murphy and Johnson, who were "wearing all black tactical-style boots, pants, belts, plate carriers, balaclavas, and what appeared to be ballistic helmets," according to the charging document. Both men were also carrying loaded Glock 40-caliber handguns in holsters on their tactical belts, pepper spray in hol-

sters and handcuffs in carrying cases. Murphy and Johnson were arraigned in Juneau District Court on Aug. 17 on a single charge each of impersonating a public servant, a class B misdemeanor. City Attorney Emily Wright said in an interview Friday that the city, as the prosecutors in the case, is basing charges on circumstances of the case that are still being fully determined.

"The information that the officers had is that the people that they were 'arresting' was it was people that they knew, and that it may have been a joke or it may have been play."

Wright said the case could be turned over to state prosecutors if it appears more serious charges may be warranted.

- *Contact Mark Sabbatini at editor@juneauindependent.com or (907) 957-2306.*

Motorcyclist transported to hospital after collision

By JUNEAU INDEPENDENT STAFF

The Juneau Police Department received a report of a two-vehicle collision in the area of Egan Drive across from Twin Lakes on Thursday at about 4:15 p.m., according to Deputy Chief Krag Campbell. A 32-year-old female driver of a Toyota RAV4 hit a motorcycle. The male motorcyclist, 62, was transported to Bartlett Regional Hospital due to injuries sustained in the crash.

"It is unknown how significant the injuries were at that time," Campbell wrote in an email to the Juneau Independent.

The cause of the crash is still under investigation.

- *Contact editor@juneauindependent.com or (907) 957-2306.*

SHIP LIMIT

Continued from page 1

ate tourism and the majority of Juneau wants the city to do more to manage it."

Making the limit a mandate hasn't been pursued before because Juneau and other cruise port cities were waiting for the outcome of a lawsuit in Maine involving the legality of local governments setting limits. A federal judge this May ruled the city of Bar Harbor can impose its limits of 1,000 passengers a day, but only during the peak months of July and August due to the extent of impacts during that peak period.

That limited ruling means the City and Borough of Juneau will have to justify a mandatory limit on cruise ships and/or passengers, according to City Attorney Emily Wright.

"Based on this case, the CBJ must comprehensively look at the burden versus the benefit of any legislation," she wrote in a memo provided to Assembly members before the meeting. "The Assembly should discuss whether there are less burdensome alternatives to legislation, and if you reject those less burdensome alternatives, you must explain why."

During Monday's meeting, Wright also noted "I will say there is no scenario where you don't get sued" and that she cannot predict the outcome of such a lawsuit.

Concern about disrupting a seemingly



Cruise ships and visitors in downtown Juneau on Tuesday, Aug 25, 2026. (Mark Sabbatini / Juneau Independent)

cooperative relationship with the cruise industry — which also has agreed to a daily passenger limit that began this year and other efforts to mitigate impacts — as well as the legal uncertainties were expressed by some Assembly members reluctant to move ahead on the mandate.

Mayor Beth Weldon proposed delaying consideration of the ordinance until recommendations are provided by a Visitor Industry Task Force, which was formed last December and is scheduled to present its findings to the Assembly this fall. She noted those recommendations may suggest additional "less burdensome" remedies that can resolve concerns residents may have without a legal fight.

"The (voluntary five-ship limit) is a

less burdensome option because it's a voluntary compliance and so far it has worked," she said. "And they are agreeing with the five-ship limit. They're agreeing to the passenger caps. This year we will see the first time that they have arrived later and there's no hot berthing. So so far they're doing all right with us."

"I think data is going to be important on this and we can keep it in the back pocket in case one of (the cruise lines) doesn't play well with others," Weldon added.

Assembly Member Alicia Hughes-Skandijs, who along with Paul Kelly co-sponsored the proposed ordinance, said the task force's list of issues to address didn't include the five-ship limit

See Ship Limit on Page 13

Text

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SHIP LIMIT

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— and in any case it's a matter that should be decided by the Assembly after residents have had a chance to weigh in with comments.

"This is the first time we've talked about legislating limits and had a draft of an ordinance that we could put before the public, and hear what the public thinks about that, and hear whether they think it's a good time to do that," she said.

Ella Adkison, an Assembly member who chairs the tourism task force, said she also favored advancing the ordinance to the full Assembly for public comment and consideration given the ruling in the Maine lawsuit.

"Now we have the opportunity to make this very popular public good ironclad and we're hesitating, and that seems to me like we were just wanting to kick the can down the road, like we're not wanting to make this official," she said. "We regulate every other industry. This is another industry, and this is something that everyone has agreed upon and has been time-tested."

Among the Assembly members supporting the motion to wait for the task force's recommendations was Maureen Hall, who said "it'd be good to be able to have these conversations in a collaborative instead of more combative role."

"I get that we can do this one-sided — the Assembly with several folks weighing in from the community — but we still need both parties to show up for our negotiations over the use of passenger funds," she said. "And I'm not saying we're bowing in to the industry. I'm saying I think we have a lot to gain by continuing with collaboration. So I would prefer to wait until we have more of the data, particularly the impact on the hospital."

Assembly Member Neil Steininger also supported the delay, saying Assembly members should have more information, including the task force's recommendations, before deciding on the mandate given its significant legal implications.

"I don't want to waste a lot of money on attorney work if we haven't done the homework ourselves before we jump into a decision," he said.

Hughes-Skandijs said she believes if the ordinance were to pass immediately that city officials will still be able to quickly gather information from Bartlett Regional Hospital, Capital City Fire/Rescue and other local entities to show sufficient impacts to justify the mandate. Also, she said, if the Assembly doesn't act on imposing mandatory limits she anticipates residents may attempt to do so through a citizens' initiative.

"I would welcome it at that point and I would probably help it as a community member myself," said Hughes-Skandijs, who announced earlier this year she is not seeking a third term in the Oct. 6 municipal election.

Attending Monday's meeting was Karla Hart, who is running for Assembly this year and has in past years helped lead unsuccessful ballot measures imposing cruise tourism limits. She said after the meeting she knows potential future measures have been discussed among like-minded supporters, but no specific proposal exists and she has no plans to pursue another ballot measure.

Among the future questions about the five-ship limit is whether it would apply to a two-ship private cruise port Goldbelt Inc. is proposing on land it owns along the west coast of Douglas Island. Concerns are being expressed about either possibility. Downtown businesses are worrying about having three ships instead of five each day at nearby docks. Some residents, meanwhile, are objecting to the impacts of

seven daily ships bringing well over 2 million passengers to Juneau each season.

Woll noted the ordinance wouldn't affect Goldbelt's proposed project since "this would be the exact same policy that we currently have in place," and the mandate wouldn't be permanent since it could be modified by the Assembly in the future.

Deputy Mayor Greg Smith, who presided over the meeting and cast the final decisive vote in favor of waiting for the task force's recommendations, said he doesn't want to disrupt the existing voluntary limits since they seem to be working.

"We are seemingly effectively negotiating and discussing, and having a positive relationship with the cruise lines, which I think is a good thing," he said. "If we're at war it will be messy for everyone. I guess I'm kind of like don't kick the dog if it's not misbehaving."

• *Contact Mark Sabbatini at editor@juneauindependent.com or (907) 957-2306.*

JACKSON

Continued from page 1

Jackson, 70, a member of the Kàach. àdi clan and a child of the Tsaagweidi clan, was diagnosed earlier this year with pancreatic cancer. His uncle, Ken Jackson Sr., who also has lived in Kake most of his life, said in an interview Sunday his nephew "had some good role models" growing up in a large family that led him being a memorable community leader.

"His father (Thomas L. Jackson) was probably the speaker of the community before Joel," Ken Jackson said. Joel Jackson's oldest brother, Tom Jackson Jr., served as police chief for the village before Joel Jackson filled that role for three years.

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JACKSON

Continued from page 13

"Joel listened a lot to the older ones," his uncle said. "He had an ability to listen and then make a decision. Sometimes that's really important if you're as notable as you are for giving information too. And he had a very analytic mind. He could figure things out."

Tributes to him were shared throughout the weekend by tribal leaders and others throughout the region.

"I think the thing when I think about Joel is just he was a fierce advocate," Chalyee Éesh Richard Peterson, president of the Central Council of the Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska, said in an interview Saturday evening. "He was often at every kind of consultation and meeting involving our way of life, and he was never afraid to stand up and say what needed to be said."

Kake Mayor Lonnie Cavanaugh, in an interview Sunday, said she remembers that when she was a teenager Joel Jackson was the police officer giving her her driver's test. Years later they both started getting in tribal council politics.

"With Joel the one thing that he always used to say is he didn't have all the answers, he didn't know everything," she said. "But one thing about Joel: when he believed in something, he was passionate about it. I mean, you could tell by the change in his voice, he would get very passionate

when he spoke about something. He would go in head first."

One of the most memorable projects he was devoted to was a cultural healing center in an old bunkhouse about 52 miles from Kake in Portage Bay, Cavanaugh said.

"He had a vision that he wanted it to be a rehabilitation place where people can go for healing," she said, adding "There were a lot of obstacles with that and he just he felt so passionately about that, that we needed some place like that for our people."

Efforts are now underway to complete renovation of the site, hire local staff, and fund ceremonial, food, and cultural programming, according to the project's website.

Mike Jones, president of the Organized Village of Kasaan, said in an interview Sunday he first met Joel Jackson about four years ago and they served together on the Southeast Indigenous Transboundary Commission, a coalition of 14 tribes working on sovereign rights issues.

"I think he's got just such a powerful presence that people are drawn to him, and once they are there's just an instant connection," Jones said. "I think he connected with an awful lot of people and he just had that in him, and we became quick friends."

Laaganaay Tsiits Gitanee, Joel Jackson's niece and a Kake resident who sponsored a GoFundMe to help his treatment, stated in a social media post Saturday that "He loved our Native peoples deeply and spent his final

night in the Tongass, his homelands where his spirit has always lived."

Joel Jackson described his own childhood in a narrative about healthy forests published in June by the advocacy nonprofit Salmon State.

"When I was a young kid — about 10 or 12 — me and my cousin, who's the same age, we went fishing with our uncles," he said. "Where we went there's two salt-water-fed lakes, as well as fresh water coming down from the hills. You've got to go in there at a certain tide in order to get up into the lakes. And what we were there for was chum salmon, dog salmon, in the fall time. Me and my cousin, we thought it was just the greatest thing to be with our uncles, going on an adventure."

He said it was one of his earliest memories of going out with his uncles, and because of challenges they experienced during the outing "I think it was kind of an initiation for us to go with them, and they wanted to see how we'd react to being in a cold, tough situation."

Joel Jackson became a commercial fisherman with his father and other family members early in his working career, and in his later years "he still was a fisherman because you're a fisherman for life," Ken Jackson said. He also worked as a road builder for the Kake Tribal Corporation for 22 years.

His advocacy included protection of the Tongass National Forest, subsistence and other Indigenous rights, obtaining an apology from the U.S.

See Jackson on Page 15

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JACKSON

Continued from page 14

Navy in 2024 for its 1869 bombardment of Kake, and Alaska Native cultural healing projects.

"He had a lot of direction from people that were before him, but he was a good speaker," Ken Jackson said. "Joel's voice carried. He had that baritone calm and there were times when that voice was the one everybody wanted to hear. You know, some people they make speeches and people walk out, walk around, look at their phone. But even those guys, if (Joel) talks to you, he'd look you in the eye and watch you. And you'd sort of put your phone down, and watch and listen and learn from him."

Jones said that in addition to major Tongass issues such as preserving the Roadless Rule to protect against adverse impacts of industry, he remembers Joel Jackson advocating for recognition of forest assets such as cultural trees.

"Cultural trees — like canoe trees and totem pole trees," Jones said. "These old-growth red cedars are really intertwined with our culture and who we are, and especially as we're the original totem pole people. So what are we without our old-growth trees? And he was just really passionate about our culture and hanging on to the way we live."

Cavanaugh said another project in Kake that bears Joel Jackson's imprint is a newly planned visitor center.

"Just about a year ago we had this one building that you know was empty," she said. "It was a city property and I was just talking to him and I said, 'Joel what can we do with this building? I need something that represents Kake, and he just nonchalantly threw it out there. He goes, 'Do a visitor center — you know, put a coffee shop in it,' and so guess what? That's



Organized Village of Kake President Joel Jackson speaks to a Juneau crowd about the importance of the Tongass National Forest on Sept. 13, 2025. (Jasz Garrett / Juneau Independent)

what we're doing."

Peterson, when asked what advocacy by Joel Jackson first comes to mind, said "I think first and foremost was probably trying to protect our lands — he was very staunch on the roadless issue and trying to retain the roadless protections. But he's also very concerned about healing and I know it was one of his goals to see a healing center built."

Tributes to Joel Jackson included praise for an ability to interact with a wide range of people and situations ranging from political gatherings to coordinating emergency response efforts in the community to trying to expand cultural awareness to diverse audiences.

"I think he was there for everybody, big or small, it didn't matter who you were, what your struggles were, what your background was," Jones said. "He was advocating for everybody, tribal or non-tribal."

Joel Jackson could be an imposing presence and so "maybe for a new per-

son, I think he could be intimidating," Cavanaugh said.

"You meet Joel and look at him, and there's this big guy," she said. "He kind of can look gruff sometimes. I think he could be intimidating. But once you start talking to him, he really cared deeply about his community and he actually was a softy once you got to know him."

Jones said he considers Joel Jackson a mentor as a village tribal president and many others have gained from his leadership as well.

"He was just a pillar of a man," Jones said. "He's just a legend, even in his in his own time, and he's going to be missed really bad. Voices like that for our land and our way of life are really hard to come by, and I hope some of us can pick up that slack."

• Contact Mark Sabbatini at editor@juneauindependent.com or (907) 957-2306.

VIGIL

Continued from page 1

day after they were found. "And the only comfort I think any of us can find at this point is that they weren't alone and they found peace in those last moments together."

"They wouldn't want any of us to continue to suffer because that was not their goal and intention."

More than 150 family, friends, teachers and others attended the vigil in the sheltered outdoor court at the Dzantik'i Heeni campus, where Zoey Clark attended Yaakoosgé Daakahidi High School. The two teens were found Monday afternoon in a wooded area near the campus.

The Juneau Police Department stated Monday teens died of gunshot wounds and that the incident remains under investigation. JPD Deputy Chief Krag Campbell said Wednesday the two youths were the only people at the site when the deaths occurred, but an autopsy to determine the circumstances will take some time.

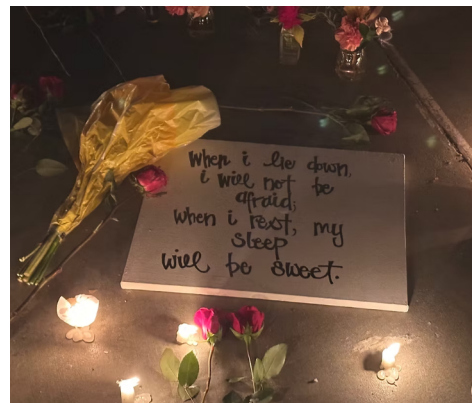
Those at the vigil spoke on the premise the teens took their own lives. Speaking to the crowd without a microphone in an open space, and often struggling with grief, much of what was heard was fragments of memories about each of the teens such as culinary school ambitions, artistic talents, and robotics camp.

Prayers, as well as appeals to people to reach out to others to cope in times of grief, were expressed throughout the hour-long vigil.

"I heard the news about the loved ones that we lost," said Eli Phillips, Leo Phillips' uncle. "All day then my heart is heavy. I feel like a hard grief, hard to think, and just wandering around and don't know what to say or think. But think about all the family here, all those parents for all these families, friends...who are right here. Every time you see someone, even if you're disagreeing with them, always



People gather for a candlelight vigil for Zoey Clark and Leotis Phillips at the Dzantik'i Heeni campus on the evening of Tuesday, Sept. 1, 2026. (Mark Sabbatini / Juneau Independent)



Signs placed along with candles and flowers near portraits of Zoey Clark and Leotis Phillips during a vigil for them at the Dzantik'i Heeni campus on the evening of Tuesday, Sept. 1, 2026. (Mark Sabbatini / Juneau Independent)

make sure you tell them you love them, even when you're upset with them, disagree with them, always make sure you say you love them. You just never know about something like this."

Statements of sympathy for the families of the lost teens — and encouragement for other youths experiencing distress to seek support — are being shared by a wide number of people and organizations in online messages.

The Zach Gordon Youth Center, where family of Leotis Phillips said he spent time, stated Tuesday on its Facebook page that staff "are deeply saddened by the tragic loss of two of our precious teens. If you or someone you know is struggling with suicidal thoughts, please get help. Call or text 988 and please tell an adult."

NAMI Juneau, in a similar post, noted it offers a 24-hour crisis line at 907-463-3303, SEARHC has a 24-hour

helpline at 877-294-0074 and the Juneau Mobile Crisis Team is available from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily by dialing 911. NAMI is also hosting a suicide prevention awareness community picnic from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 12, at Savikko Park shelter no 1. In addition, the nonprofit is partnering this month with the Juneau School District for a Signs of Suicide (SOS) program that includes working with middle and high school students, and a presentation for parents and caregivers from 5-6:30 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 17, at the Floyd Dryden Building.

A GoFundMe has been established on behalf of Leotis Phillips' family to help with funeral and travel costs. One has also been established for Zoey Clark's family.

• Contact Mark Sabbatini at editor@juneauindependent.com or (907) 957-2306.

Voices

Crooked path may be only straight answer for gas pipeline

By LARRY PERSILY

President Donald Trump has a lot of irresponsible ideas: Igniting a trade war with Canada because I figure he never liked hockey; declaring that Lake Ontario should forever more be called Lake America because it's easier to spell; and taking much of Venezuela's oil because no one can stop him and he loves the idea of the U.S. government owning shares in private businesses.

But rather than criticize the guy, the president's actions give me an idea: The state needs to go full Trump if it is ever going to get a North Slope gas pipeline project built.

Clearly, trying to make the uneconomic project magically economic by giving it free gravel from state lands, billions of dollars in property tax relief, and not taxing the corporate profits of the private developers hasn't worked.

Nor has the more than \$1 billion the state has spent on the effort in the past quarter-century changed the outcome.

And we aren't alone in spending money: North Slope oil and gas producers have spent hundreds of millions of dollars too, searching for an economically viable project to sell the gas to customers somewhere, anywhere. The companies gave up in 2016 and turned over the project to the state.

The state's decision to give away 75% ownership of the stalled project for free to a private developer in 2025 has not resulted in much more than pledges, promises and promotional press releases.

To use one of the president's favorite

words, the state needs to leverage the remaining 25% stake it holds. We need to think like Trump, just without the obscenities and insults in his social media posts.

I propose a two-front war, using that word because it appeals to the president's love for fighting, whether he uses the U.S. military or watches cage fighters on the White House lawn.

First, the state offers a share of its 25% stake in the project to the president's sons, in-laws, friends, whatever it takes to buy their support, much like the Trump family has embraced deals with Middle East oil and gas producers the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

That 25% share isn't doing the state any good anyway. Alaska's profits from a gas pipeline could more easily come from taxes and royalties and jobs, without the risk of ownership. So why not donate much of our stake to the Trumps to buy political favor.

The second part of my proposal is that Alaska win the president's attention by making his enemies our enemies.

We let Trump know that if Alaska does not get a gas pipeline, utilities in the Anchorage-dominated population center may have to import natural gas from Canada for heat and power. No way he could let that happen. Maybe he would commit the federal treasury to invest in the gas line just to deny Canada. Spite is a strong motivating factor with the guy, so we should play to that emotion.

Of course, the Trumps may decide they don't want an ownership stake in the losing project, even if it's free. And the president may have moved on to a trade war with someone else by the time Alaska can get the idea of Canadian gas into his head.

But what if Alaska plays its trump card and the president imposes a tariff on Canadian natural gas imported into

the U.S., same as hockey sticks? The risk may be worth it. Nothing else has worked to get the pipeline built. We need to start thinking like Trump.

• *Larry Persily is the publisher of the Wrangell Sentinel, which first published this column.*

Protect voter choice, vote no on 2

By ERIC TROYER

I encourage everyone to vote no on Ballot Measure 2. You will be saving your right to choose.

Ballot Measure 2 would revive the old method of primary elections. As described in the state's ballot summary, this is what would happen if the measure passes: "voters would choose a party's ballot, unless prohibited by the party's bylaws. They would only vote for candidates on that ballot."

Under the old primary system, each party gets to choose who can vote on its ballot. So, the state – that's all of us – pays for and runs the election, but each party gets to choose who will be allowed to vote on its ballot. How is that fair? It's not.

What would be fair? Before the primary, each political party could hold its own election to choose its own preferred candidate. The winners could be labeled as the "official" candidates for those political parties.

Then we could hold an open primary paid for and run by the state – that's all of us. There would be one ballot, and we would all get to vote on it. No political party leaders restricting our choices. That's what we have now. Let's keep it.

That's fair. Please vote no on Ballot Measure 2 and preserve your right to choose.

• *Eric Troyer - Fairbanks*

What has Senator Sullivan done for you?

By FRANK BERGSTROM

Good question. Check it out.

After the 2024 glacial outburst flood the Army Corps of Engineers offered the city free access to its stock of HESCO barriers, which we all recognize now as felt-lined wire baskets filled with sandy gravel. That was the extent of their “emergency” response to a devastating recurring flood.

During Senate confirmation hearings, Sen. Sullivan laid it on the line for Adam Telle, now the assistant secretary for civil works for the Corps of Engineers. In May 2025, under direct televised questioning, Assistant Secretary Telle committed to fast-tracking solutions to the glacial flooding. Thirty million dollars later we have Hesco barriers and riprap most of the way up the river. Fixed? No, but without Sen. Sullivan’s adamant emphasis on the flood response, Phase 2 HESCOs may never have occurred. And it continues.

When I was in college (the ‘70s) the U.S. Coast Guard commissioned two new icebreakers — the Polar Star and Polar Sea. They were magnificent boats, and they were the last. Now as chairman of the Senate Commerce Subcommittee overseeing the Coast Guard, Sen. Sullivan has played the key role in securing the largest investment in the U.S. Coast Guard’s history — nearly \$25 billion. Through a specific request for information, we have learned that Sen. Sullivan made no less than 22 contacts and took steps with key Coast Guard leadership and Senate funding procedures, etc., to secure funding and authorization for new Coast Guard boats and other resources. As a result, not only the USCGS Storis, but an additional 87-foot Coastal Patrol Boat may be homeported in Juneau.

All told this will bring perhaps 300

crew and family members to our community, along with support work needed for such vessels. Juneau will become an Arctic player.

In 2024, the Marine Debris Foundation established its headquarters in Juneau at the University of Alaska Southeast. This nonprofit foundation was created by Sen. Sullivan and the White House’s 2020 Save Our Seas 2.0 Act widely recognized as the most comprehensive legislation passed by Congress to address the plastic debris crisis. Sen. Sullivan put Juneau first among responders to this waste menace.

Juneau was one of six coastal communities for which Sen. Sullivan secured funding for critical port and maritime infrastructure, including the Aurora Harbor Drive down Float Project (November 2024) at \$11.1 million to build a drive-down float and vehicle bridge plus two new five-ton electric cranes.

New FAA Medium Intensity Approach Lighting and Runway Alignment Indicator Lights were extended and ownership was retained by FAA, rather than transferred to the Juneau airport. This was a specific request by the Juneau airport requiring a regulatory fix, which Sen. Sullivan delivered.

Sen. Sullivan secured a provision in the National Defense Authorization Act (P.L. 118-31) for grant eligibility for funding electrification of shared-use cruise/cargo docks in Juneau. Sen. Sullivan also secured Army Corps participation in a wave attenuator project for Auke Bay navigation improvements — a project scheduled to be completed in 2028.

With assistance from Sen. Sullivan’s efforts, Alaska will receive \$3.5 billion in surface transportation funding over five years. This includes \$110 billion for road and bridge programs, and \$1 billion for Essential Ferry Service to serve isolated rural communi-

ties, plus \$250 million for an energy-efficient ferry pilot program.

Senator Sullivan co-introduced successful legislation to secure Medicare funding and payment to hospitals — including Bartlett — on the basis of “reasonable incurred costs” rather than the standard “prospective payment system”.

Following is a bullet list of other Sen. Sullivan-sponsored project funding for Juneau:

- DOT \$16,454,000 for final design and document development for the Juneau-Douglas North Crossing
- DOT \$7,264,000 CBJ vehicle storage and maintenance facility upgrades, plus electric bus charging infrastructure
- Alaska Native Ed Grants \$5,642,767 Sealaska Heritage Institute’s Arts Campus in Juneau plus other art education
- DOT \$653,520 Reconnecting Lemon Creek project and improving access
- NSF \$349,962 Sealaska Heritage Institute two-year research project documenting cultural practices regarding black seaweed

When you are considering who and how your government is supporting life in Juneau, reread this list. The competition pales by comparison.

• Frank Bergstrom is a 38-year resident of Juneau. He holds a master of science in Earth sciences from Colorado State University, and has worked in coal and hardrock mining as a corporate hydrogeologist, environmental manager, project manager, consulting scientist, and contract operator. He has also owned and operated two farming projects. As president of First Things First Alaska Foundation, the organization has produced several white papers on glacial outburst flood mitigation — including conceptual design of a flood detention dam at Mendenhall Lake.

Sports

Bella Connally runs up the JDHS record wall

JDHS junior honored with addition of 100 and 200 meter sprint times

By KLAS STOLPE, Sports Editor

Juneau-Douglas High School: Yadaa.at Kalé junior Bella Connally knocked another record — and another name — off the Crimson Bears track and field record wall.

This time it was her own as she continues to “prime up” to “run down” sprint records.

Connally was honored by JDHS track and field coaches Wednesday in a ceremony placing her name on the auxiliary gym wall for the 100 meters. Connally hit a 12.33 at last season’s Alaska School Activities Association State Track and Field Championships in Anchorage, losing in a photo finish to Dimond junior Nevaeh Watkins’ 12.32. Connally’s time beat her own previous record of 12.46 set at the state meet in 2025 as a freshman.

“It means a lot to me,” Connally said. “When I first started track my sixth grade year this was really a goal for me.”

Connally and now-senior Watkins, along with Chugiak High School sophomore Sienna Johnson and Bartlett High School sophomore Mya Smothers are expected to push those times even lower this season. Johnson finished third and Smothers fourth at state last season in 12.37 and 12.74, respectively.

Connally is chasing the 2015 state record time of 12.12 set by Mountain City Christian Academy junior Tanner Ealum in the 1A/2A/3A state championships and the Division I time of 12.27 set by Chugiak freshman Jih-sana Williams in 2024.

Connally also seeks to run down



Juneau-Douglas High School: Yadaa.at Kalé junior Bella Connally had her 100- and 200-meter school records added to the JDHS track and field record board in the auxiliary gym on Wednesday, Sept. 2, 2026. From left are mother Melissa Connally, brother James Connally, coach Karina Reyes, father Chris Connally, Bella Connally, coach Louis Tagaban, coach Zack Bursell and coach Sean Goertzen. (Klas Stolpe / Juneau Independent)

Alaska’s fastest known time of 11.95 set by Delta Junction junior Hailey Williams in 2018 at the New Balance Outdoor National Track and Field Championships in North Carolina. Connally’s current 100-meter time is 0.04 seconds shy of breaking into the top 10 Alaska all-time placings.

For Connally, however, the true honor is having her name next to her brother James’ 10.64 mark, which he set as a senior in the 2022 Guy Tibodeau All Comers Meet at then-Thunder Mountain High School.

“He means a lot to me,” she said of her brother. “Especially seeing how far he has gone in track. I want to make sure I make it as far as he does. He is a big inspiration to me as well. Helping me, pushing me to keep on going. He is a key part of my training also, helping me work out at the gym.”

James Connally ran track and field for Eastern Oregon University. He is still enrolled there but living in Juneau and studying online. He will travel to meets in the indoor and outdoor season to compete, but not for Eastern Oregon. He noted the biggest thing Bella must work on to reach the next level involves strength training.

“Probably just the gym,” he said. “The gym is the biggest thing. Getting stronger in the gym is just really important, and she has been doing that over the summer... It is super easy to train her because she is motivating herself. So you don’t really have to push her. She is just always wanting to learn, always wanting to do more, to work out more and better herself every day.”

Bella Connally noted the importance
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RECORD

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of seeing her brother set a school record.

“After seeing my brother break the school record for the 100, it was really just a big goal for me,” she said. “Especially for the 100, for me to break that and then adding on the 200 to the wall, that just means even more.”

JDHS also chose to put Bella Connally's Brian Young Invitational 200-meter time of 25.39 set last June on the record board, replacing the mark of 26.03 set by Janelle Billingslea in 1996.

Since the ASAA Track and Field season ended on May 30, times set after that are not official high school state, region or school records, per ASAA.

JDHS coaches noted they are placing the mark on the board per precedent, as a 400-meter mark of 49.30 set by Wilder Dillingham in the Brian Young Invitational on June 1, 2024, was previously acknowledged by the coaching staff. Dillingham does own the JDHS school record in the 200 meters with 22.20 set at the 2024 ASAA Track and Field Championships. Coincidentally, his previous 400-meter school record of 49.38 was set during a 2024 Region V ASAA-sanctioned meet.

Also, in May 2025, JDHS senior Nick Iverson set the boys' 800-meter school record of 1:55.27 at the Ketchikan Invitational. That season Iverson won the 800 and 1,600 at the ASAA DI state championships, earning male athlete of the meet.

The BYI is not sanctioned by ASAA, so times and marks set are not Alaska high school region or state records or official school records. They are recorded by USATF Alaska, however, which covers youth through adult athletes, and are registered as Alaska

times and marks.

The BYI allows athletes to qualify for national high school championships, and Connally competed at the 2026 Nike Outdoor Nationals and US-ATF under-20 championships June 18-22, at Hayward Field in Eugene, Oregon. Connally ran a 12.49 to place 32nd among 120 registered in her division. Dimond's Nevaeh Watkins — running for The Alaska Running Academy — ran 12.35 for 24th.

“It was really nice seeing competition from all over,” Bella Connally said. “And seeing how I compared to girls down south, and not just in Alaska. But it was a really big accomplishment for me, it was really good.”

Connally's 200 meter time is ninth among Alaska marks. Delta Junction's Hailey Williams established the leading time of 24.05 at the 2019 New Balance Outdoor Nationals on the campus of North Carolina A&T State University in Greensboro, North Carolina.

Alaska all-time track and field records have been kept over the years by former Kodiak coach Marcus Dunbar and now by former Kodiak runner Arielle Himelbloom. Both include any time that was recorded up until an athlete enters their freshman year of college, thus post-season marks can be included. Alaska's ASAA “state records” are really just state meet records and rarely are the top marks in Alaska prep history.

Bella Connally noted how difficult the tiny micro-seconds of improvement are.

“It is really hard,” she said. “There are just the littlest tweaks that you have to make in your running form and how you get out of the blocks and your reaction time. It is just the tiniest little things to take off those seconds.”

• *Contact Klas Stolpe at sports@juneauindependent.co*

Crimson Bears in the pool and on the boards

JDHS swim and dive team return ready to kick bubbles and take names

By KLAS STOLPE, Sports Editor

The Juneau-Douglas High School: Yadaa.at Kalé Crimson Bears swim and dive team will compete in their first meet of the season this Friday and Saturday at the Dimond Park Aquatic Center pool, hosting teams from Ketchikan, Petersburg, Sitka and Wrangell.

“I am so excited for our senior night this upcoming week and I am excited to just have a really fun senior season with my friends,” JDHS senior co-captain Kennedy Miller said. “We have a lot of seniors this year, and it is just a really great time to spend our last season together. It means a lot to me to be a captain, that my team has enough trust to put me out as one of their leaders. I feel like I am always here for them and I want to be someone that they can come to when they are having a hard time. And I am just really excited for this season...I swam club in the summer and was visiting colleges, getting ready to swim in college.”

While senior nights are usually the last home meet of the season, that meet is the Region V Championships this year (Oct. 30-31), hosted by JDHS and under Alaska School Activities Association rules, cannot be a home team's senior night.

“What has impressed me and the other coaches most is how hard the athletes have worked over the last few weeks and how quickly they have come together as a team,” JDHS head coach Amber Kelly said. “We have a great mix of returning athletes and newer athletes, and I have really enjoyed watching them push one another

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The 2026-27 Juneau-Douglas High School: Yadaa.at Kalé swim and dive team. JDHS' home meet begins Friday at 6 p.m. and continues Saturday at 3:15 p.m. with senior honors following at 6 p.m. (Klas Stolpe / Juneau Independent)

SWIM AND DIVE

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and support each other. Their effort, attitude and willingness to be coached have made for a really strong start to the season... We are really excited to open the competitive season at home. The athletes have put in a tremendous amount of work already, and this weekend will give us our first opportunity to see where we are, celebrate that work and identify where we can continue to improve."

The JDHS Invitational meet starts at 6 p.m. Friday and continues Saturday at 3:15 p.m. JDHS' 17 seniors will be honored on Saturday after the races.

"I am excited for regions and the team dynamic here," JDHS senior co-captain Lena "Maddox" Rasmussen said. "To prepare for that I have been swimming club year-round all offsea-

son."

She said being a captain "means to bring the team together in love and community."

Seniors on the JDHS team include Kaden Aldrich, Moira Bahn, Easton Berger, Alexander Davis, Joshua Edwards, Bailey Fisher, Chedi Giron, Amy Liddle, Miller, Brady Newport, Benjamin Pallenberg, Samuel Pallenberg, Rasmussen, Avery Smith, Riley Soboleff, Kaelyn Szeffler and Adeline Williams.

"I am excited to watch this team improve over the season," co-captain Edwards said. "I am excited for the meets, just watching people swim fast, try hard and just being their best self...Over the offseason, I swam club as much as I could, and I started lifting a bit more and I tried to eat a little better than I have in past seasons, just trying to better myself over the offseason so

I can be the best I can be...It means a lot to be a captain. I am really excited. I know a lot of these guys on the team. I know they have a lot of trust in me. I just really want to give back to this team I have been swimming on for a long time. I just want to show them my appreciation for being captain. I just want to do everything I can to better this team and make it the best team possible."

Competing at state were Aldrich (50 free), Edwards (200 IM, 100 breast), Fisher (50 free), Liddle (200 IM, 100 fly, 200 MR), Miller (100 fly, 100 breast, 200 MR), Rasmussen (200 free, 500 free), Smith (200 IM, 100 fly), R. Soboleff (200 IM, 100 breast) and Szeffler (100 free, 100 back). Liddle and Miller were part of a new 200 medley relay state record, and Liddle and Szeffler a 400 free relay state title.

Diving seniors Berger, Bahn, Davis and Williams competed at state, and this season they welcome classmate Newport and freshman Traeus Mateo to the boards.

"I am excited to see my fellow divers and swimmers just excel and do their best," co-captain Berger said. "I am just excited for regions and state. I want everyone to do well so that hopefully they can make it there, and I get to see them go to their max level. For me to be a captain means, like, equality and making sure swimmers and divers are getting the same things and are just working together and just being a team instead of two separate teams."

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- ✓ Registration closes for the November General Election on October 4

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GENERAL ELECTION

LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF JUNEAU

SWIM AND DIVE

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Juniors on the JDHS team include Axel Boily, Mae Ellen Crocker and William “Liam” Kiessling. Kiessling competed at state in the 200 IM and 100 backstroke. His back was the state’s fastest qualifying time across all regions.

“I am excited about the season because of the meets,” co-captain Kiessling said. “They are always a fun time. Regions and state will be awesome this year with a bunch of fast people coming up. I have prepared by swimming club in the offseason and making sure I ate a little healthier and a little more to bulk up for the season. Being a captain means the team really trusts me to lead them and to help them through the season. It really means a lot that they put their trust in me.”

Sophomores on the JDHS team include Saana Amundson, Sarah Anderson, Keagan Andrews, Katyline “Katya” Foy, Ellinore Higgins, Augustine Kvasnikov, Natalie MacKinnon, Madeline Rose “Maddie” Manlulu, Ila Mannino, Marian Morrison, Levi Phelps, Brooks Pinney, Hannah Rachel Plang, Cora Soboleff, Brook Taintor, Henry Thatcher, Clara Van Kirk and Annabelle Woodruff.

Competing at state were Foy (50 free, 100 back), C. Soboleff (200 free, 500 free), Phelps (200 free, 100 fly) and Woodruff (200 free, 100 fly).

Freshmen on the JDHS team include Genevieve Coleman, Josh Ely, Nyah Harris, Kaylin Janz and Traeus Mateo.

Dive coaches Savona Kiessling and Stig Cunningham return.

“We have a couple new people on the board so we have been doing a lot of fundamentals,” coach Kiessling said. “We have always spent quite a bit of time on fundamentals at the beginning of the season — even when you have seasoned divers like we have. But be-



Athletes from the 2026-27 Juneau-Douglas High School: Yadaa.at Kalé swim and dive team pose for a photo Monday, August 31, in the JDHS commons. The team will host their home meet this weekend. Swim times begin Friday at 6 p.m. and Saturday at 3:15 p.m. Senior teammates will be honored Saturday at 6 p.m. (Klas Stolpe / Juneau Independent)

cause we don't dive year-round they need to have some time to get back their balance, to get centered. I am excited about the season, because I have so many seniors graduating — and that is sad, but it is also really fun. This is their last chance to tackle dives that they have wished they had all high school. So this is our last chance. Sometimes that gives you that extra push to do it. One of our new divers is a senior, so this will be his only year doing it and that is exciting. But I have a freshman who is also just starting out and is already catching on really fast, and I am really excited about his potential on the team.”

Assisting head swim coach Kelly are 2020 JDHS graduate Mesa Moran and 2015 JDHS graduate Dakota Isaak. Kelly, a 2008 JDHS graduate, swam at the University of Arkansas Little Rock, Moran at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, and Isaak at Boise State. Isaak coached at Boise State, then at swim clubs in Idaho and Hawaii, and as a strength coach in Georgia.

“Preseason has been great,” Isaak said. “Throughout the summer we were doing team hikes and just getting to know one another. Then in early August we jumped right into intense training. They have been working really hard and we are just really excited to see that work pay off this season.. This is my first high school coaching experience. I always loved the high school season because of all the travel

and you get really close with your teammates. And you only have 12 weeks so everybody is just so gung-ho...Amber graduated about seven years before me. But when I was younger, she was the fast high schooler that I admired. So it is really fun coaching with her. And I swam with Mesa. She was five years younger, but we swam club together.”

The coaches have the Glacier Swim Club connection, in which older swimmers walk younger ones through the system. Amber shepherded Dakota, Dakota shepherded Mesa.

“Yeah, it is really fun,” Isaak said. “We mesh well and we have a lot of fun on deck, and I think the kids feed off of that energy...It is so fun. I always dreamed of coaching my home team. I just never thought I would move home. So to have the opportunities, honestly, is so amazing and I am loving every second.”

In 2014, Ciera Kelly, Isaak, Mia Ruffin and Rielly Walsh set the girls medley relay state record of 1:46.75. That record was broken last season by senior Valerie Peimann, Miller, Liddle and junior Lily Francis in 1:46.03. Peimann also took state in the 100 free, 100 breast and the 400 free relay (with Liddle, Szeffler and Francis) and was named Outstanding Female Competitor. Francis added a state title in the 50 free.

JDHS won both the girls’ and boys’ Region V team titles last season, and

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SWIM AND DIVE

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the girls went on to be runner-up at state and the boys placed sixth.

Kiessling, Edwards, Phelps and Aldrich are Region V 4x50 medley relay defending champs. Also defending Region V relay titles, Liddle and Miller were part of the girls 4x50 medley relay; Fisher, Foy and Woodruff part of the girls 4x50 free relay; and Liddle part of the girls 4x100 free relay.

Defending individual Region V titles are C. Soboleff (200 & 500 free), Liddle (200 IM, 100 fly), Bahn (dive) and Kiessling (100 back).

"We have a handful of returning Region V individual and relay champions, as well as returning athletes from our state championship performances last year," coach Kelly said. "While we are proud of what those athletes accomplished, I am really looking forward to seeing who steps up this season and makes a splash of their own. We have a lot of talent across both swimming and diving, and I would really like the focus this year to be on what we can accomplish together as a team rather than on any one individual."

JDHS will swim at Ketchikan, Sept. 18-19; at Petersburg, Oct. 2-3; at Sitka, Oct 16-17; and host the Region V Championships, Oct. 30-31. The state championships are at Anchorage's Bartlett High School pool, Nov. 6-7.

• Contact Klas Stolpe at sports@juneauindependent.com

Crimson Bears devour Cougars

47-12 in record night

Krew Ridle scores six touchdowns, Jaxin Jim earns 10 solo tackles



Juneau-Douglas High School: Yadaa.at Kalé senior Krew Ridle (14) breaks away on the Crimson Bears' first play of the game for a 62-yard touchdown run — his first of six — during the Crimson Bears' 47-12 win over the Service Cougars at Adair-Kennedy Memorial Park on Saturday, Sept. 5, 2026. (Klas Stolpe / Juneau Independent)

By KLAS STOLPE, Sports Editor

Juneau-Douglas High School: Yadaa.at Kalé senior linebacker Jaxin Jim led a hungry Crimson Bears defense and senior quarterback Krew Ridle whipped up an end zone full of desserts in a 47-12 feast over the visiting Service Cougars at Adair-Kennedy Memorial Park on Saturday.

"It felt great," Jim said. "It was a huge win for us. I feel like we still have to keep grinding, keep taking care of our bodies, because we have another big game next week against Colony. Our defensive coach told us the word of the day was 'violence.' Whoever the guy you hit, hit him with violence. Make them choose to run the opposite way."

While Jim and the JDHS defensive half were stifling the Cougars offense, Ridle was racking up yards and touchdowns with scoring runs of 62, 12, five, one, 11 and 64 yards. The output set a new JDHS record for most touchdowns by a Crimson Bears player in a game. The old mark of five was shared among Brian Felix, Alex Fagerstrom and Jayden Johnson.

"It is a very exciting feeling running through the hole that my O-line makes," Ridle said. "Following my lead blockers to find that open gap and charge down the field. It feels amazing getting that record and it happened because of my O-line, they had an amazing night and I kept running with

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IF YOU DON'T HAVE HEART,
YOU'RE IN THE WRONG BUSINESS.

ROUT

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a high motor all night."

JDHS coach Rich Sjoroos noted the hometwon energy.

"We had it tonight," Sjoroos said. "One thing the team is learning, like in week one against South they ran the opening kickoff back for a touchdown, but it didn't really phase anybody. Our team just shook it off, got off the mat and kept playing, and the same thing tonight. A credit to Service, that is what you want to do on the road, score early and they did in the first minute."

One of Service's two highlights came on the second play of the game. Service had to start with the ball on their own 22 as JDHS senior kicker Sonny Mazon backed up the returners.

On Service's first play Jim and the JDHS front line gave the Cougars a three-yard loss. But on the next play Service running back Edward Thompson scampered 81 yards to give the Cougars a 6-0 lead.

"I thought our guys did a great job, like, 'Okay, here we go, got to get it back,' and they did," Sjoroos said. "And we kept rolling from there."

The JDHS defense took over the game one second later, forcing a fumble on the Service two-point conversion attempt.

"They do a great job communicating with each other," Sjoroos said of the Crimson Bears defense. "They put good work in during the week, continue to work on their fundamentals as far as tackling, bracketing and pass coverage, and all the things you want from a defense. I feel like they appreciate each other doing their jobs and we get a lot of three-and-outs."

Crimson Bears senior Ethan Van Kirk took the kickoff to the 38-yard line and on the first play Ridle ran 62 yards to tie the game 6-6. Mazon kicked the extra point for a 7-6 lead that was never challenged the rest of the way.



Juneau-Douglas High School: Yadaa.at Kalé senior Jaxin Jim sacks Service quarterback Noah Cummings (20) as Crimson Bears junior Leonidas Taualo-Tasi (79), junior Helaman Aitaoto-Tele'a (49) and senior Jake Chambers (56) aid the play during the Crimson Bears 47-12 win over the Cougars at Adair Kennedy Memorial Park on Saturday, Sept. 5, 2026. (Klas Stolpe / Juneau Independent)

Mazon put the next kick into the end zone, backing up the Cougars and allowing the JDHS defense to take over. Crimson Bears senior linebackers Jim and Jake Chambers stopped the first play, Van Kirk the next, defensive back Avei Tuvaifale the third and JDHS took a punt on their own 49-yard line.

"During the beginning of the game Service left me untouched almost," Jim said. "And there was a giant gap that I just kept filling and making tackles. I just kept reading my keys and doing my job. I feel like our defense feels like home, we are all brothers for each other. We all do the most to prepare for a team. We always do film together."

JDHS went three and out, but Service was hit hard on their first run and Crimson Bears sophomore linebacker Carter Day recovered a fumble on the 12-yard line. JDHS' Ridle ran through traffic on the first play for a 13-6 lead and Mazon kicked the extra point for 14-6.

Both teams exchanged three-and-out possessions, with Service punting and JDHS fumbling on a field goal

attempt.

Service would get stifled again by Jim on their next possession. The senior recorded a sack and assisted on a tackle with junior linebacker Sylvion Washington, then, along with junior defensive lineman Leonidas Taualo-Tasi, forced two incomplete passes and JDHS took possession.

"Jaxin is our anchor in the middle," Sjoroos said. "He has been doing a great job all year with film study, making the defensive calls, getting everybody in the right spots and tonight was just another example of that. We have some challenges coming up, but tonight we definitely want to enjoy this one and it definitely was a big group effort. I thought the O-line had their best game and I said that last week too. So another week with another climb up the ladder as far as chemistry and being synchronized, getting on the blocks and winning at the line of scrimmage. You keep doing that and it puts you in a good spot to be competitive."

With the ball on the Service 31-yard line Ridle ran for three yards, Jim

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for six yards and Ridle for a first down to the 16-yard line. Van Kirk smashed in on the next play for a 20-6 lead. A Service penalty on the point-after try moved the ball the one-yard line, but a JDHS fumble ended the action.

The second quarter belonged to the Crimson Bears with Ridle scoring at 11:21 on a five-yard run, at 5:32 on a 1-yard run and at 1:38 from 11 yards out. And Mazon put the extra point through the middle of the crossbar after each one.

Mazon also blasted the kickoff to various points inside Service's own 20-yard line, setting up the JDHS defense to stop anything from passing the 50-yard line.

"To be able to put that ball in the end zone and the opposing team on the 20 is huge," Sjoroos said. "It gives our opponents no chance at a big play. If a team is struggling to get points on offense and you take away special teams from them too, that is tough...I thought we did the best we have in a couple years in returning punts and getting even better field position off of some of those kicks. Ethan (Van Kirk) and Avei (Tuvaifale) did a nice job of getting some good run backs. Our blocking was good, Andrew Sanders helped spring some runs... We are just starting to see some of that teamwork. We are definitely going to need it as we get into the second half of the season."

Service had their best drive of the night in the third quarter.

Starting at their own 20-yard line after JDHS' Mazon put a bruise on the pigskin, Service would run 13 plays, capped off by a Noah Cummings 13-yard pass to Hunter Davis. The Cougars' two-point conversion run attempt was smothered by JDHS defensive back Van Kirk.

JDHS' Chambers, Taualo-Tasi, Van Kirk, Carter Day and Jim all had tackles along the way.



Juneau-Douglas High School: Yadaa.at Kalé senior Ethan Van Kirk (3) runs over Service tackler Kegan Lennox (18) for a touchdown as Crimson Bears offensive lineman Leonidas Taualo-Tasi (79) and Cougars linebacker Andrew Stoffa (55) move in the play during the Crimson Bears 47-12 win over the Cougars at Adair Kennedy Memorial Park on Saturday, Sept. 5, 2026. (Klas Stolpe / Juneau Independent)

JDHS' only second-half score followed.

The Crimson Bears took possession at their own 20-yard line and Jim ran for two yards, Ridle for nine and a first down. Jim ran for a yard, junior Caleb Aube for six and Ridle for three and a first down. An incomplete pass and a penalty set up second-and-15 and Ridle burst through a hole and rocketed ahead of Service defensive standout Hunter Davis and could not be caught on his sixth touchdown run of the night.

"He has a nice burst of speed in the line," Sjoroos said. "He is probably a little tougher runner than people give him credit for. He is not the biggest kid out there, but he runs like he is 20 pounds heavier than he is. That long run he had at the end, that Service player is their fastest, but Krew found another gear. He took that guy all the way to the house."

JDHS' sophomore linebacker Carter Day, Taualo-Tasi, Jim, freshman Vance Tupou, junior Jarry Maghinay and sophomore Soren Young all

aided in second-half tackles.

Mazon would have a field goal hit the crossbar from deep with 7:06 left in the third quarter and 1:14 left in the fourth quarter, but each time he followed with a kickoff that put the Cougars back on their own 20-yard line facing a ravenous Crimson Bears defensive line.

Sjoroos also noted the substitution play of younger players including sophomores Parker Katasse (corner) and Soren Young (linebacker) and freshman Vance Tupou (line). Sophomore Henrik Van Kirk took over long-snapping duties for PAT's and field goals — giving Ridle a break as he is quarterback and defensive back. Others, such as freshman Kolten Krueger entered on kickoff plays to give Ethan Van Kirk and Sylvion Washington a break.

"It was a very long game," Sjoroos said. "A lot of plays. And we were definitely starting to feel it as far as cramping and a minor injury. We got a couple younger players in and, really,

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if you look at the game plan they were part of it but not to that degree and they went in and did a great job. I think that part went unnoticed, that this was the game we used the most players due to the length and the number of plays. It needed to happen to help us get to the finish line and the kids did a good job. It felt good to trust them all and they delivered.”

The final play of the game saw JDHS’ Jim read a play, make a call to his linemen, and Chambers and junior Andrew Sanders put the last Cougars running back to the turf and end the game.

“I am always looking to the sidelines for the signs our coaches are giving,” Jim said. “And I am yelling the calls. That is just all us guys doing our jobs. I can’t even choose who played the best for us tonight. Everyone played so well. Our linebackers have such good chemistry, we are all really good friends. Our D line did good today, our two safeties were really good, I am proud of our corners with our coverage, our O line and running backs and Krew... and our linebackers coming down and hitting Service with violence.”

Sjoroos noted that playing on the home field again was even more special with seeing the JDHS drumline, the cheer squad and inflatable bear tunnel.

“It is good to see the Crimson Bears having a nice little stretch here,” Sjoroos said. “It is going to be a short week. Starting Monday with school being a holiday. We have Colony Friday night. So we will travel up there Friday morning. Just a lot of things to get in order so we will take a day, decompress, reenergize a little bit, and then get back together on Monday and get going on Colony.”

Colony is first in the Cook Inlet Conference with a 3-0 record, 3-1 overall, followed by West Anchorage (2-0 CIC, 3-1 OA; South Anchorage



Juneau-Douglas High School: Yadaa.at Kalé junior linebacker Caleb Aube (23) and sophomore linebacker Carter Day (1) sack Service quarterback Thaden Berkley (19) during the Crimson Bears' 47-12 win over the Cougars at Adair Kennedy Memorial Park on Saturday, Sept. 5, 2026. (Klas Stolpe / Juneau Independent)

(2-1 CIC, 2-2 OA); JDHS (2-1 CIC, 3-1 OA), Bartlett (1-1 CIC, 2-2 OA), Service (1-2 CIC, 2-2 OA), Bettye Davis East Anchorage (0-3 CIC, 0-4 OA) and Dimond (0-3 CIC, 1-3 OA).

• *Contact Klas Stolpe at sports@juneauindependent.com*

INDIVIDUAL STATS

Rushing:

Krew Ridle, 21 rushes for 237 yards, six touchdowns; Ethan Van Kirk eight rushes for 51 yards, one touchdown; Sylvion Washington four rushes for 15 yards; Jaxin Jim, four rushes for 12 yards; Caleb Aube, one rush for five yards; Beckham Kasler, one rush for three yards; Andrew Sanders, one rush for three yards.

Passing:

Krew Ridle, 1-6 for 18 yards.

Receiving:

Sylvion Washington, one catch for 18 yards.

SCORE BY QUARTER

Juneau 20 - 21 - 0 - 6 = 47

Service 6 - 0 - 6 - 0 = 12

HOW THEY SCORED

1ST QTR

11:17 - Cougars - Thompson 81-yard run. 2-point conversion fails, fumble. 6-0.

10:59 - Crimson Bears - Ridle 62-yard run. Mazon PAT 7-6.

7:54 - Crimson Bears - Ridle 14-yard run. Mazon PAT 14-6.

2:37 - Crimson Bears - Van Kirk 16-yard run. 2-point conversion fails, fumble 20-6.

2ND QTR

11:21 - Crimson Bears - Ridle 5-yard run. Mazon PAT 27-6.

5:32 - Crimson Bears - Ridle 1-yard run. Mazon PAT 34-6.

1:38 - Crimson Bears - Ridle 11-yard run. Mazon PAT 41-6

3RD QTR

2:38 - Cougars - Cummings 13-yard pass to Davis. 2pt-conversion fails. 41-12.

4TH QTR

11:05 - Crimson Bears - Ridle 64-yard run. PAT fails, fumble. 47-12.