



INDEPENDENT ELLSWORTH COUNTY REPORTER

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Ehrlich earns Academic All-State cross country runner recognition

BY KAREN BONAR
Ellsworth County I-R

While cross country season concluded in the fall, junior Molly Ehrlich was recognized in January as a 2025 3A Academic All-State cross country runner.

"I was surprised," Ehrlich said. "I can do both (running and academics) at the same time and still do my best in both of them."

"I feel accomplished. I got somewhere I am proud of."

A runner for Ellsworth Jr./Sr. High School since seventh grade, Ehrlich said she began running cross country once she entered high school. She spent her junior high years running track and participating in volleyball. Currently a junior,

Ehrlich said she was aware of the award last year.

"I knew my sophomore year I had a chance to get this award," she said. "If I was a junior last year I could have gotten it because I placed (at state) and had a 4.0 (GPA)."

During her sophomore season, Ehrlich placed sixth at the state competition, held annually at Rim Rock Farm, Lawrence.

"I feel like Rim Rock is the course I love the best," she said. "The adrenaline is there. It has the hills — I like the hills — it gives me something to keep my mind on during the race."

"The first year was fun because it was raining and it was like an obstacle course."

It was also the time she finished around the 19-minute mark.

"That's what pushed me," she said.

During track season her sophomore year, Ehrlich said she battled through injuries. She took a break from running during the summer to allow her body to heal.

"It was a mindset of keeping my body healthy so I could do my best at state. Having a setback, it pushed me more," she said.

Ehrlich said she resumed running mid-summer.

"This year, I was wanting the state medal because I got it the year before," she said. "I wanted to make that goal again. I knew there were a lot of fast freshman coming in."

As it turned out, the entire team qualified for the state competition.

Ehrlich said running

helps both her mind and body.

"It puts me in a good mental space," she said. "I can put my mind off other things. It's a stress reliever."

"Also, having the adrenaline to do better each time. I'm very competitive that way. I want to beat my past self."

Head cross country coach Eric Coonrod said runners eligible for the recognition must be juniors or seniors, finish in the top 30 at the state meet and have a cumulative GPA of at least 3.75.

"In class 3A, there were only 21 boys and girls total who received this recognition," he said.

More than 220 athletes competed at state, so Ehrlich's recognition is noteworthy.

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Courtesy photo

Junior Molly Ehrlich displays the 2025 3A Academic All-State cross country runner award.

Lang's Acre plants itself downtown

BY KAREN BONAR
Ellsworth County I-R

Lang's Acre Bar & Grill officially opened for business on Friday the 13th. It was lucky customers didn't go away hungry.

"We literally sold out of a lot of things," said Chad Lang, who owns the establishment with his wife, Traci. "It was a surprise, but a great surprise."

"We closed down at midnight. I drove from here to KC to (go to) Sysco to get more food. I restocked on food and was back here for the opening on Saturday."

Prior to the March 13 opening, Chad said the restaurant and bar had a soft opening March 6-7.

"It was to see what would go, not go, get systems in the kitchen ironed out," he said.

The Lang's path to owning a restaurant and bar in the former Paden's location wasn't a straight line.

"I resigned from the



KAREN BONAR/Ellsworth County Independent-Reporter

Chad and Traci Lang opened Lang's Acre Bar & Grill this month in downtown Ellsworth.

post office and we started with a mobile bar," Chad said.

The couple was running The Waddle Wagon when they met Rick and Deanna

Soukup at the Fall Festival in Dorrance.

Traci said a few weeks later, the Soukups reached out with the opportunity to move into the downtown

Ellsworth location.

The couple briefly operated a food trailer, which was the step they needed to gain confidence to open a restaurant.

"Opening weekend went phenomenal," Chad said. "The support was absolutely amazing. Ellsworth and surrounding is amazing. The people coming in, thanking us for opening up. We had people standing in here, drinking a beer — the camaraderie — it felt like family."

While the building was previously Elle's Corner, and before that, Paden's, the Lang's decided to put their own stamp on the business.

They own an acre of farmland in Barton County, and applied the name to the business, hence, Lang's Acre Bar & Grill.

"Our vision was we let the building speak to us," Traci said. "We love to restore what is (already there). We cleaned it up and did some painting. We got rid of booths on the bar side, brought in new

tables. Chad's dad made a lot of the tabletops."

His parents, Fran and Diana Oster, are also silent partners in the family business.

"They're a big part of the backing in this," Chad said. "They're instrumental in making this happen."

Traci said a few changes were made on the restaurant side, too. Some booths were replaced with tables and chairs. They also added a salad bar.

"Chad wanted comfort bar food; I agree with him," she said. "We have a variety of that and appetizers."

"We have some specialty burgers named after kids and daughter-in-law and son-in-law. We've always been foodies. We gave them some input. It's kind of a family joint effort."

The couple's first goal is to solidify the menu.

"We want our systems to be spot-on, our food

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Errebo bound over following preliminary hearing

BY CATHERINE DOUD
Ellsworth County I-R

SALINA — Following a full-day evidentiary preliminary hearing in Saline County District Court March 10, Kayla Errebo, 33, Lorraine, who faces multiple charges in connection with a fatal crash that took place Aug. 8 in Saline County, received the judge's ruling on the morning of March 11.

Saline County Judge Amy Norton ruled there was sufficient evidence for Errebo to be bound over to stand trial. She's charged with second-degree murder, involuntary manslaughter while driving under the influence, aggravated battery, failure to stop at an accident, reckless driving, improper driving and operating a car without a required interlock device.

After hearing evidence, the judge bound Errebo over for trial on an amended complaint in CF-2025-CR-000497, which includes the added charges of interference with law enforcement and aggravated battery while driving under the influence.

According to the complaint, the crash happened at around 5:30 a.m. Aug. 8 at K-140 and Reese Road, just east of Brookville. The Saline County Sheriff's Office said Errebo was driving a Jeep Grand Cherokee westbound and entered the eastbound lane, where her vehicle collided head-on with a Chevy pickup. A passenger in the pickup, 55-year-old Deanna "June" Sommerfeld, Brookville, died at the scene. The 61-year-old driver, Mark Sommerfeld, was hospitalized with serious injuries, including a broken femur.

Norton took the bench at 9:30 a.m.

March 11, and gave lengthy reasoning for her ruling.

"The purpose of a preliminary hearing is for the court to determine whether or not the state has submitted sufficient evidence to establish probable cause as to each element of the charges listed in the third amended complaint," Norton said. "Because it is a preliminary hearing, the standard is that all inferences or discrepancies in the evidence must be resolved in the light most favorable to the state. Rather than going through each charge and each element, this court feels a better approach is to address this as a series of interconnected questions."

Norton stated the first question before the court.

"The first is that the state has established, as required, for several of the charges, that the defendant was driving under the influence that night. There is

no specific set of evidence, observation or level of intoxication or factors needed to be proven. Only, the state needs to establish sufficient probable cause that Ms. Errebo consumed alcohol to the point that she was unsafely able to operate a vehicle. Several witnesses testified and reported observing Ms. Errebo ordering and consuming multiple forms of alcoholic beverages from at least three different bars. It was testified that she consumed between four and eight drinks of being an alcoholic seltzer or a mixed drink with part alcohol in it. The alcohol was consumed for a period of approximately six hours or so and occurred in the hours before the collision. The testimony presented was that she texted multiple photographs of her drinks to different people. She responded

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Ross Janssen's
Weather

March 18-24

WEDNESDAY 79/42
Mostly sunny

THURSDAY 83/47
Sunny

FRIDAY 87/50
Sunny

SATURDAY 89/53
Mostly sunny

SUNDAY 63/48
Mostly sunny, windy

MONDAY 59/34
Mostly sunny

TUESDAY 70/39
Partly cloudy

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