PHASE II OF REOPENING
Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) has received guidelines for the upcoming Directed Health Measures (DHM) that will be in effect June 1st to June 30th, 2020. This DHM will move the health district into Phase II of reopening, which includes increasing the gathering limit from 10 to 25. SWNPHD has also been notified of two additional persons from SWNPHD’s health district that have tested positive for COVID-19. The first is a female in her sixties who has a residence in Furnas County but is not currently in the health district. Cases are reported to local health departments based on residence addresses, which is why SWNPHD was notified of this case. The second new case is a male in his eighties in Furnas County, who is currently self-isolating at home. Both cases are currently under investigation. This brings the total to sixteen confirmed COVID-19 cases in SWNPHD.

PHASE 2 AT THE YMCA BEGINS TODAY
McCoy YMCA Executive Director Mitch Gross says there are excited to announce that we will begin Phase 2 of reopening today. The facility began a multi-phase reopening process with phase one on May 14th that involved the implementation of directed health measures to ensure the safety and well being of members and staff. A set of new policies and guidelines are in place to confirm that these directed health measures are being met in accordance with Local & State Health Departments, the CDC, Y-USA and our Board of Directors. Members are highly encouraged to sign in electronically prior to entering the facility using the reservation software link. If members do not have the capability to reserve a time slot using the reservation software link, they may call the YMCA directly at 308-345-6228 to reserve their space. Members choosing to show up without a reserved time slot may do so, however, they will only be permitted entry if space is available. Complete information regarding phase two is now available on our web site. For more information regarding the ED Thomas YMCA of McCoy and our reopening plan, please visit our web site at mccookymca.org and social media platforms.

HHS DISTRIBUTES PAYMENTS TO SNFs
The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced it has begun distributing 176 payments totaling $41,600,000 to skilled nursing facilities (SNFs) in Nebraska to help them combat the devastating effects of this pandemic. Nursing homes play a pivotal role in providing skilled care to our nation’s vulnerable seniors. During this pandemic, nursing homes have faced unique challenges as their population of high-risk seniors are more vulnerable to respiratory pathogens like COVID-19. This funding, which supplements previously announced provider relief funds, will be used to support nursing homes suffering from significant expenses or lost revenue attributable to COVID-19. “This funding secured by President Trump will help nursing homes keep the seniors they care for safe during the COVID-19 pandemic,” said HHS Secretary Alex Azar. “The Trump Administration is providing every resource we can, from funding and direct PPE shipments to regulatory flexibility and infection control consultations, to protect seniors in nursing homes and those who care for them.”
The playoff format for 8-man high school football in Nebraska will look a little different moving forward. At their meeting last Thursday, the Nebraska School Activities Association Board of Governors approved a format that, after the initial round of 32 teams, would see the bracket re-seeded, and not based on geography. For the years previous, the 8-man playoffs have consisted of two 16-team brackets, one east and one west, with the winner of each bracket meeting for the state championship. Instead, the first round of 32 teams will now be called a sub-state round, and it will still be based on the east and west geography. After that, the 16 winning teams will be re-seeded into a statewide bracket based on the NSAA power points system.

The club season is almost gone, but it appears likely summer leagues and team camps for the state’s high school volleyball programs will happen. At his daily COVID-19 news conference Thursday, Gov. Pete Ricketts listed volleyball along with tennis, golf and rodeo that will be allowed to resume with practices beginning June 1 and games on June 18. Early last week, Ricketts cleared the way for baseball and softball to begin practices June 1 with games 17 days later. The overarching theme? How schools, coaches and athletes approach social distance protocols in the summer will likely determine fall sports’ fate. “Hopefully this afternoon I’ll be able to sit down with staff and talk about the new directive health measures and put a plan together as how that’s going to look going forward in the high school facilities,” NSAA executive director Jay Bellar said about volleyball. “It’s something that we’re going to have to dive into pretty quickly.”