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Geneva Mums

Hartland Steak Feed returns

By ELI LUTGENS
Publisher/Editor

It's hard to believe it's been five years since the Hartland Fire Department held its annual steak feed.

Fortunately, that changes this weekend.

With steaks supplied by Neighbors Meats, spring salad and potato salad by Superior Catering of Ellendale and much, much more, the Hartland Fire Department Annual Steak feed returns this Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 from 5 to 7 p.m. at their new location 513 Broadway Street in Hartland.

Delicious side dishes at the feed will include pull-apart bread from Hy-Vee in Albert Lea, assorted bars from local bakers, sweet corn, and lemonade.

"A lot has changed since our last one," Hartland Fire Chief Gage Flatness told the Star Eagle. "The last one was in September 2021, and then the tornado hit in December. The Community Center became the post office, so we just didn't have a place to hold our steak feed."

"We're finally able to bring it back! We're especially excited that this will be our first steak feed in the new Community Center. We've missed getting everyone together for a steak, some sweet corn, and a good night with friends and neighbors!"

The entire fire department will be on hand for this tremendous event. All folks are encouraged to attend and donate; the cost is a free will donation. Takeouts are also available. To go orders can be placed on Sept. 19 between 5 and 7 p.m. by calling 507-845-2469.

PJ Storytime at New Richland Public Library Sept. 17

There will be PJ Storytime at the New Richland Public Library at 6 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 17. We'll get you ready with stories for bedtime. For ages 0-5.

Hartland Fire Department Steak and Sweetcorn Feed Saturday, Sept. 19

The Hartland Fire Department will have a Steak and Sweetcorn Feed from 5-7 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 19. This will be at the new Hartland Fire Hall and Community Center. Join us for salad and desserts as well. Free will donations accepted.

A word from The Word

He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea

Micah 7:19

2026 Royalty



CROWNING ROYALTY - The NRHEG Homecoming kicks off next week, with coronation set for Monday evening. Part of the homecoming royal is, back from left, Jack Bartlett, Brendan Schmidt, AJ Deen, Ryan Schlaa and Brooks Gilliland. Front, from left, is Izley Boerner, Keira Hutchens, Kylie Olson, Olivia Berg and Ariel-Star Anhalt.

Homecoming Parade is Sept. 25

Coronation to be September 21 at 7:30 p.m. in high school gym

The NRHEG Homecoming 2026 kicks off next week. Coronation is set for 7:30 p.m. Monday, September 21 at NRHEG High School, when royalty will be crowned based on a vote of the student body grades 9-12.

The new king and queen will reign over homecoming activities, including the parade scheduled to begin at 12:30 in Ellendale and 2:15 in New Richland on Thursday, September 24. The homecoming football game will be at 7 p.m. Friday against Lewiston-Altura.

Queen Candidates

Ariel-Star Anhalt, daughter of Anita and Randy Anhalt

Olivia Berg, daughter of Shane and Brooke Berg

Izley Boerner, daughter of Beau and Ashley Boerner

Keira Hutchens, daughter of Rob and Stacy Hutchens

Kylie Olson, daughter of Erik

Royalty continued on 10

Sixth-graders react to AI info session

By DEB BENTLY
Staff Writer

Shortly after attending the Gruvy Education session about artificial intelligence (AI), NRHEG sixth-graders Lydia

Students continued on 4



AI LEARNING - NRHEG Sixth-graders (from left) Lydia Louks, Avery Mollenhauer, Dyna Hanson and Brendan Koopal shared their thoughts after learning about the ways artificial intelligence can touch people's lives.

Star Eagle photo by Deb Bently



REMEMBERING CHARITY - Hartland University's Fourth Annual Ride to Remember took place on Saturday, Sept. 12, 2026. Pictured from left: Brett Bair, Peggy Kopischke, John, Kylee, and Brandon Bair were just a few of those who took part.

Star Eagle photo by Ben Revermann

Hartland University raises thousands for charity

By BEN REVERMANN
Staff writer

Justin and Sheila Arndt of the Hartland University Bar held their fourth annual Ride to Remember on Saturday, Sept. 12, complete with a 50/50 raffle, silent auction, and, of course, the prize for the winning hand. A combined donation of nearly \$5,800 was raised for the Free Flags for Veterans charity. The total came about thanks to the riders, the raffle and auction held the day of the ride, and donations both from individuals and from the Hartland Fire Department and the Wells American Legion.

Close to 40 participants took part in the ride, which began around noon. According to Sheila, "There's no starting gun to get everyone going, they can just leave at their

Ride continued on 5



Gruvy Education presenter Luke Cumbee shared information about artificial intelligence with NRHEG students on Sept. 9.

NRHEG students given expanded intro to AI

By DEB BENTLY
Staff Writer

All students at the NRHEG Secondary school attended a one-hour session on Sept. 9 that was meant to help them recognize the two-faced nature of "artificial intelligence," the fast-advancing ability of machines to accept and analyze information in a way that, until the past few years, only human brains could.

Students attended in two groups, grades 6 to 8 and then 9 to 12. Presenter for the day was Luke Cumbee, formerly a teacher at Roosevelt High School in Sioux Falls, S. Dakota, who now works for Gruvy Education, a company which provides training for teachers, and, beginning this fall, for students in locations all around the country.

Prior to his presentation, Cumbee noted it is inevitable that artificial intelligence (AI) will continue to advance and expand because of the many benefits it provides on the personal, industrial, and commercial levels. "It's not going to go away," he said. "So we want to help students recognize the impacts it can have for them, and maybe give them a few tools to use as they make some important choices."

As the ideas in Cumbee's presentation developed, students were challenged to determine whether 8 items were produced "live" or with the use of AI tools: items included photographs, songs, and videos that featured people dancing, engaged in conversation, and participating in a classroom environment. All students stood up, and as the elements were displayed, were asked to indicate whether they believed them to be "real or AI"; those who chose wrongly were asked to sit down. By the eighth item, only two students remained standing.

Cumbee pointed out that many of the "votes" were divided nearly equally, and suggested that division indicates AI does such a good job of mimicking reality that the best a typical person can do is guess. During a quick question-and-response survey, students indicated they already knew people can use AI to mimic their voices or create images which show them doing things they have never done.

"There are people who want

AI continued on 5



FenceLines

by Mark Bernard

Oh, I want to get away

The scurs have the Weather Eye behaving with seasonal weather once again. Are we continuing down this path or taking the fork in the road? Starting Thursday, sunny with a fair chance of rain. Highs in the low 70's with lows in the mid-50's. Partly sunny Friday with a fair chance of forenoon rain. Highs in the upper 60's with lows in the mid-50's. Mostly sunny on Saturday with a slight chance of rain. Highs in the low 70's with lows in the low 50's.

Sunday, cloudy with highs in the upper 60's and lows in the low 50's. Cloudy on Monday with highs in the upper 60's and lows in the upper 40's. Tuesday, mostly cloudy with highs in the low 70's and lows in the low 50's. Partly sunny Wednesday with highs in the upper 60's and lows in the low 50's. On September 17th we'll start losing daylight at two minutes and 59 seconds per day. That will continue until Oct. 2nd. On the 21st we'll see our sunrise at 7 a.m. CDT. On the 22nd we experience the autumnal equinox, ushering in astronomical fall. The normal high for September 22nd is 71, and the normal low is 48. It soon will be time for the scurs to locate their long winter gatkes.

Hopefully we will continue towards harvest without soil conditions suddenly becoming an issue. It's been a few years since we've had a wet September, so one could say we are due. Looking back, since 2019 we've only had above normal Sept. precip in 2019 based on the normal precip recorded at the SROC. We have developed a pattern of drier Septembers. Several of them have also been hallmarked by above normal temperatures and growing seasons extending well into October. There are never any guarantees, but data doesn't lie. This has been advantageous to starting harvest in a timely fashion and being able to sustain the push through October without major delays. Are we due for a departure from that pattern? We shall see.

My recent trip north through MN revealed few surprises as far as crop progress. Just as with the local crops when I left, one could only surmise that there were some major differences in planting dates and maturities in both corn and soybeans. Just as advertised, there were areas that hadn't been nearly as blessed as we were in the rainfall dept.

Particularly in the corn, the ears were tipped down, giving the indication that harvest was nearer there than other areas. As the Pro Farmer Crop Tour indicated, MN is still likely to lead the way corn yield-wise nationally, thanks in large part to the southern third of the state. Not that there won't be any issues. We've seen more stalk rot, which wasn't unexpected after doing numerous yield checks. Soybeans are always a crap shoot, but they seem to have held their

own. We'll know more when combines start to roll on both crops.

This edition comes to you from my fortress of solitude in suburban Flanders, ON. Sometimes I've got to get away.

After dealing with people and their problems for a growing season, it's imperative to take a deep breath of fresh air and exhale. Dusting off the confuser and blowing the Corgi hair off of it is always the first order of business. After that it's anybody's guess what might exude from my fingertips. This has been a lengthier stay than some with fewer outdoor chores than others, thanks in large part to a chainsaw that refused to commence. That's OK. As I learned back in my days living in North Dakota, it'll be there tomorrow. And likely the day after that. No one else is apt to tangle with it in our stead. I just appreciate the opportunities I've had to visit such a beautiful place and recharge my batteries.

The flora and fauna in this area of Ontario are always a treat to observe. This trip I was introduced to a dock spider, sometimes known as the fishing spider. Large spiders are capable of getting up to 3+'' across. They're noted for catching and preying on small fish, tadpoles or insects. They are harmless to humans. This particular model was only 2'' across, but it was on the loose in the cabin. The only fish it might encounter there would be kipper snacks.

We captured the large arachnid and released it outdoors where it would be more likely to find prey before the weather becomes inevitable. We've also been on the lookout for hummingbirds. The last one at the feeder at the camp was Sept. 10th. That was the same day a monarch butterfly was spotted in Atikokan. That one will need to hustle. Before I left the ranch, there were monarchs gathering in the trees. Fall has started to leave its imprint.

It seems like an eternity since I've seen Poppy, even though she wasn't exactly on my Christmas card list when I left for points north. That early morning there was a thunderstorm moving through Bugtussle and environs. Her reaction to thunderstorms has become more intense and less than amusing. It had taken me a while to get to sleep that night, trying to remember everything before finally dozing off. After three hours of sleep, I was in no mood for her antics, especially since I had a column to finish and several other tasks to complete before hitting the road. Nevertheless, time heals all wounds. It looks like thunderstorm chances upon my return are minimal. That's good for all concerned. Besides, it's hard to stay mad at someone whose primary function is being that cute.

See you next week...real good then.

Teach a kid to hunt small game during Take a Kid Hunting Weekend

Getting youth outdoors in pursuit of squirrels, rabbits and other small game is the focus of Take a Kid Hunting Weekend. On Saturday, Sept. 19 and Sunday, Sept. 20, adult Minnesota residents accompanied by a youth younger than age 16 may hunt small game without a license, although they must comply with open seasons, limits and other regulations.

Hunting small game is a great way to introduce kids to hunting. Kids learn how to tell

where wildlife have been, how to properly and safely handle firearms and how to access hunting land. Anyone who wants to learn how to hunt can find helpful how-to guides on the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources learn to hunt webpage (mndnr.gov/go-hunting). Small game hunting season details and regulations are available at the Minnesota DNR small game hunting webpage (mndnr.gov/hunting/smallgame).

People watching at the Renaissance

I know where Waldo was last Saturday. As anyone who recognizes the allusion will expect, he was wearing a red and white striped shirt and hat and mingling among a large crowd of people dressed in every color imaginable and each carrying or wearing items that helped represent who they were and what they were doing.

I also rubbed shoulders with Fred Flintstone, Dumbledore, and a goat-footed satyr or two.

We were all at the Renaissance Festival, wandering about and seeing what there was to see.

We could not have been more fortunate when it came to the weather—temperatures in the 70s and no wind to speak of.

I enjoyed many things while I was there. Sat in on a show or two. Ate wild rice soup in a bread bowl. Saw some capybara, elephants and an albino snapping turtle. Enjoyed the company of family and friends.

What I appreciated most, though, was the people watch-



In My Humble Opinion

by Deb Bently

ing.

There were characters there from video games and current popular culture—though I could not have named them, I still appreciated the effort and creativity people had employed to make their elaborately shaped headgear or footwear or wings. Some folks were dressed as royalty or elite members of various cultures and widely divided times in history. Some were covered in layers of fabric, even leather and furs (both real and artificial), while others were barely dressed.

All these bizarre beings were mingling and weaving among each other in ever-increasing

numbers as the day's crowd continued to grow.

My group of four arrived on site around 8:15 after getting underway from Waseca shortly after 6:30—yes, I do mean a.m.

Since the gates don't open until 9, that might seem rather fanatical. But after the hilly, slightly dusty walk from our parked car, we were glad to be standing still for a bit. The people watching had begun already in the parking lot, where people got out of their cars in fairly ordinary clothing, then began to buckle on armor, drape capes over their shoulders and strap on weaponry. Others were pulling dresses over their heads,

wrapping scarves around their shoulders and waists, and setting flowered coronets on their heads.

Our walk to the main gate was behind a pair of glimmering dragons, who happened to be helping an older lady, their mother, as she worked to walk uphill. Beginning at the gate and throughout the day, we couldn't help noticing that mushrooms are "in" this year. People had made large rounded hats, usually red with white dots, although other color combinations did appear. Clever touches of all types had been used: strings of beads suspended underneath or along the outside edge. White buttons large and small scattered across the top. Clumps of moss on a dark-colored mushroom apparently meant to look threatening. I got hints that one was from a movie or video game. Parasols decorated to be mushroom tops. One group of friends who had made similar but not identical hats and looked like a matched set in an array of colors.

A whole lot of health updates

I don't have a whole lot of life updates or happenings to share this week.

Last week I did not write a column as it was simply too painful of a week. I aggravated my back/leg/sciatic nerve and spent the entire week, continuing to today, nursing a spasming calf muscle. Quite painful.

On a positive note, a new nerve blocking medication seems to be helping.

And on an even more positive note, I got results and a diagnosis of what was wrong with my left side pain/guts. I guess it's just simply a bacterial overgrowth in my small intestines, most likely caused by the antibiotics I was put on when my wisdom teeth were pulled almost four years ago, about a month or two before these terrible pains started. SIBO, as it's called, often goes undiagnosed or misdiagnosed for years because it's symptoms are so commonly misdiagnosed as IBS or a host of other stomach problems. I saw a specialist last month who ordered five different tests and had even more she could test for afterwards. But the breath test showed positive for this rare condition. It is easily treated with a two week course of, ironically, a special antibiotic that will kill that bad bacteria in my gut causing so much pain.

Reading about this condition,



Just a Thought...

by Eli Lutgens

it should not come back once treated. I am currently waiting for insurance to approve the \$3,000 prescription.

As I dove into this diagnosis further, I discovered I was doing nearly every "home remedy" suggested.

Listed as a mandatory treatment was fasting for 12 or more hours at minimum overnight.

I was doing between 16-20 hours lately because that reduced pain considerably. Going longer than that did not actually help. Although when I had to fast 30 hours for the endoscopy and colonoscopy, I did have the only day in the past 3 ½ years where my body felt normal for 24 hours.

Turns out starving a bacteria can help reduce/kill it.

Also listed on remedies was to wait at least five hours between meals, no soda/hi fructose corn syrup, and no snacking. I don't drink soda, nor do I snack, and finally, I really altered my diet to be a very small breakfast followed by one actual meal in the day. Because, about four hours

after eating I get terrible, awful pains. (Aside from the constant pressure.)

Learning these remedies over the past 48 months was very, very painful. Oftentimes, especially during the first year, I would lay curled up, thinking I was dying or having heart problems because of where the pain was.

At that time I had no idea what the solution was to the pain. I tried a no acid diet because the doctors told me it was acid reflux. It wasn't and they told me I was wrong when I shared my feelings. The medication they prescribed, I later learned for fact, despite my telling them, makes my situation worse. Acid blockers slow digestion which also means that bad bacteria has more time to wreak havoc. Those same medications also gave me bouts of mild gastritis that showed up on my endoscopy test.

I tried a gluten free diet. It didn't help either.

I lost 50lbs doing these horrible diets. Then when they

didn't work, I gained about half of that weight back.

And, per more research, I am told that internal pressure can also cause back problems. So I am hoping that resolving this will relieve some of the pains from my two bulging discs.

I was told by Natalie at Thrifty White in Waseca last week that she has no idea how I can do what I do.

I told her I have an incredible team/staff.

She repeated herself again and I went into more detail, bragging about Deb, Amelia, Melanie and Ben and also the game store staff.

And she just shook her head.

I am grateful for the tremendous amount of support and encouragement I receive regularly from these people I care a lot about.

Cribbage

In cribbage this week, I got the best of Dad, winning 14-6 with one skunk each. Our updated scores for the year follow:

Eli 180 wins, 17 skunks, Dad 150 wins, 27 skunks.

Lifetime

Dad 563, 88 skunks, Eli 517 wins, 56 skunks, I double skunk. (Dad and I played many games of cribbage virtually these past two weeks. He edged me in contests 37-31.)

NRHEG Star Eagle

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Compostings

by Al Batt

How deer communicate

ECHOES FROM THE LOAFERS' CLUB MEETING

My twin brother asked if I ever suffer from hallucinations. That was an odd thing to ask. Why is that odd?

I don't have a twin brother.

DRIVING BY BRUCE'S DRIVE

I have a wonderful neighbor named Bruce. Whenever I pass his drive, thoughts occur to me. Pumpkin spice always catches me off guard. This was in Larry Wakefield's obituary: "In honor of Larry, please have a hamburger, a Pop-Tart, some cranberry sauce, or some ice cream. Those four 'food groups' were part of the secret to his spunk and longevity." RIP, Larry.

I heard an auctioneer say this tongue twister without pause: "Betty Botter bought some butter, but, she said, this butter's bitter; if I put it in my batter, it will make my batter bitter; but a bit of better butter will make my batter better. So, she bought a bit of butter better than her bitter butter, and she put it in her batter, and it made her batter better, so, 'twas better Betty Botter bought a bit of better butter." He used this when he was practicing to become an auctioneer.

I built a metal detector once and I became a poor man's metal detectorist. I found rusty nails and pop tabs, and their nonmetal companions sherds and shards. In general, "sherd" refers to pieces or fragments of pottery, whereas "shard" may refer to broken bits of glass, metal, rock and ceramics. I dug up something I thought proved the Vikings (not the football team) had been here before generally believed, but it turned out to be a can of Copenhagen (an early Midwestern dessert) that had a hard life. I built a ham radio, too. My neighbor, Claude Bias, bought it. It was more ham than radio.

I'VE LEARNED

Every day of the year comes round but once.

I haven't done the Hokey Pokey in years. I guess I've forgotten what it's all about.

I was in a waiting area. A TV was showing "Gunsmoke." Marshal Matt Dillon was shot 56 times over the 20-year run of the show.

The only time incorrectly isn't spelled incorrectly is when it's spelled incorrectly.

BAD JOKES DEPARTMENT

Name a rock group with four men who can't sing. Mount Rushmore.

Did you hear about the three holes in the ground? Well, well, well.

When you're down by the sea, and an eel bites your knee, that's a moray.

The politician's talk ran long,

and when he asked if there were any questions, only one hand went up—the other attendees were eager to go home. The question was, "A horse, a cow and a deer eat similar things. Yet a deer excretes little pellets, a cow turns out a flat patty, and a horse produces clumps. Why is that?" The politician gave it a bit of thought, decided to say in his lane, and said, "Hmmm, I don't know." To which the questioner replied, "How can you be qualified to discuss the economy, healthcare and the cost of living when you don't know crap?"

What is a pirate's favorite musical instrument? The guitarrrrr.

The bartender says, "We don't serve time-travelers here!" A time-traveler walks into a bar.

NATURE NOTES

Janelle Tukua of Albert Lea asked how deer communicate. White-tailed deer have an advanced communication system. A deer in alarm or distress may forewarn other deer visually (stiff walking, foot stomping, alert ears, raised tail and head swaying), chemically (scent deposited from the interdigital gland between the "toes"), and vocally (a snort or grunt). The waving white flag of a deer's tail as it runs off is another example of visual communication, as are scrapes (bare dirt exposed by bucks pawing the ground with their hooves) and rubs (tree bark removed by a buck's antlers). Forms of body language used by deer include hair bristling, staring and head movements that are used to establish dominance and territory.

When Europeans first arrived in North America, there were somewhere between 3 billion and 5 billion passenger pigeons. In 1860 in Ontario, a flock of passenger pigeons 300 miles long flew overhead for several days. How could a species go from billions to none in a brief period? While loss of habitat made a dent in the passenger pigeon population, overhunting was the primary cause of its demise. Hunters reportedly shot up to a quarter of a million of them in a single day for food and sport in 1886. By 1914, they were extinct.

Researchers conducting a helicopter survey at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in Anchorage, Alaska, discovered a black bear sleeping in a bald eagle nest. The scent of left-over fish may have drawn the bear.

MEETING ADJOURNED

Matthew 12:34 says, "For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of." Fill your heart with kind words.

Geneva Mum Sale

helps in fight against cancer

By BEN REVERMANN
Staff writer

Thanks to the efforts of about 20 volunteers, brightly colored mum plants in shades of purple, burgundy, rust, lavender, red and yellow lined the sidewalk in front of the Geneva Bar and Grill the afternoon of Friday, Sept. 11. Priced at \$20 each, they were a fundraiser for the Geneva Cancer Auction, with a goal of bringing in \$2,500 in support of the group's efforts to help eradicate cancer.

The yearly sale has become quite a tradition since it began in 2011.

The flowers were set out in a line, so that buyers could easily pull up to the curb, make their purchases, and load them into their vehicles.

Barb Kuchenbecker had bright eyes and a mum in her hand. "We drove down to Iowa this morning and got the mums. There was a big donation from Thrivent which helped us pay for a lot of the cost. Other than that, we donated our own money to buy the flowers and then that goes toward the Geneva Cancer Auction." Kuchenbecker has been working with the auction since 2014.

Kuchenbecker mentioned people buy anywhere from one to 10 plants either to decorate their property or to give as gifts.

Kathy Wobschall, who has volunteered for the mum sale in past years, was in charge of the cash box. "I like mums because they're easy to work with," she observed. "They are not perennial, so plan on getting another one next year. I don't mind because things have gone well this year with our sale. We have dedicated people who like going to get the flowers and those same people like setting all this up. I already have 10 myself; some are gifts for people."

Kuchenbecker expressed her thanks to the volunteers who made the sale possible, including some who drove to Iowa to pick up the plants, the folks who loaned their truck and trailer for the drive, and those who donated money to augment the Thrivent grant.

She also mentioned that, for those who could not come by during the sale, there is a chance a few plants will be available yet at 101 W Main in Geneva, or by calling (507) 256-7278.



MUMS THE WORD - Top, Wyatt Grose stopped by the Geneva Grill and Bar's Mum sale on Friday, Sept. 11, 2026. Kathy Wobschall was one of the volunteers who helped with the purchase. Below, Hadley Wayne was sampling the smells of the mums she wanted before she made a purchase, with assistance from Jill Golhoffer. Star Eagle photos by Ben Revermann



CELEBRATING TOGETHER - Front Row: Yvonne Brekke, Ellen Moiser, Jeanette Jensen, Zetty Bailey, Iris Christensen. Back Row: David Jellum, David Nelson, Mary Lou Deml, Melvin Schewe, Keith Harty and Corlyn Paulsen

Ellendale High School Class of 1957 reunion

By KATHY PAULSON

The Ellendale High School Class of 1957 held a reunion of their school graduation at the Geneva Bar & Grill on Saturday, September 12. During the afternoon gathering, the class members, along with their guests, enjoyed some great food, a great deal of reminiscing about their days at EHS, as well as some great conversation about what has been happening in their lives.

The 1957 graduating class of 39

students had chosen, "Climb far, your goal the sky, your aim the stars" as their class motto, and Dale Johnson and Lyle Olson were Co-Valedictorians.

The Baccalaureate service for the class was held on May 19, 1957 and the Commencement was on May 14, 1957 in the gymnasium that had been added to the school.

Class of 1957 members in attendance for their reunion this year were: Zetty Bailey, Yvonne Brekke,

Iris Christensen, Mary Lou Deml, Keith Harty, David Jellum, Jeanette Jensen, Ellen Moiser, David Nelson, Corlyn Paulsen and Melvin Schewe.

The class members remembered DuWayne Anderson, Dale Bartness, Kermit Grosland, Marilyn Hanson, Laurel Hendrickson, Dick Jensen, Betty Jiroushek, Shirley Johnson, Janet Kenney, Edith Lund, Duane Olson, Mary Jane Peterson, Stanley Thompson, Michael Waage, Gerry Wagner and Lorena Zeman who are no longer with us.

Class members not in attendance for the reunion this year were Lyle Bowen, Sandra Disher, Darryl Flim, Jeanette Grimstead, Dale Johnson, Donald Johnson, Patricia More, Darrell Nelson, Lyle Olson, Ron Thompson, Ovanna Utpadel, and Howard Wayne.

The EHS Class of 1957 plans to once again gather for a reunion in 2027 and hope more of their former class members will join them.

Star Eagle

is for sale at these locations:

CLARKS GROVE - Gopher Stop

ELLENDALE - Casey's Lerberg's

GENEVA - Geneva Bar & Grill

HARTLAND - BP Gas Station

NEW RICHLAND - Wagner Foods Casey's

WASECA - Casey's Kwik Trip

HOPE - Krause Feeds & Supplies

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OBITUARIES

Odean Johnson

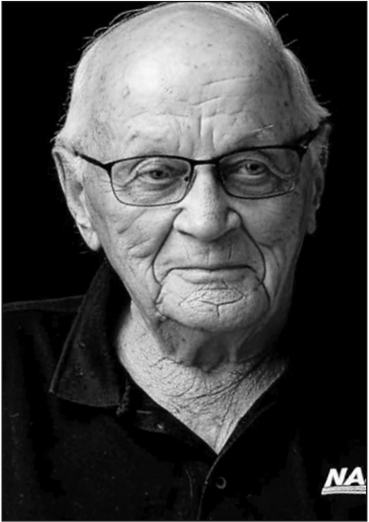
Odean Virgel Johnson, age 82, of Waseca passed away on Monday, September 7, 2026 at Mayo Clinic Health System in Mankato, surrounded by his family.

Odean was born on October 15, 1943 in Waseca, Minnesota, the son of Virgel Richard and Orella Lucille (Severson) Johnson. He attended New Richland Country School and graduated from New Richland High School, where he met his high school sweetheart, Andrea Langlie. The couple was married on December 20, 1963 in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and together built a life centered on faith, family, and farming.

Following in the footsteps of his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, Odean became the fourth generation to farm the Johnson family land northeast of New Richland. He was proud to be recognized as the first American Farmer Degree recipient from New Richland FFA in 1964. In addition to farming, Odean worked as a supervisor with USDA - NASDA, serving farmers throughout southern Minnesota for more than 39 years.

Odean loved what he did and found great satisfaction in his work. He especially enjoyed spending time with his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, attending their activities and celebrating their accomplishments. A lifelong supporter of agriculture, he enjoyed county fairs, farming, horses, and collecting tractors. At home, his collection of Minnesota Vikings memorabilia reflected his dedication as a loyal fan who followed the team through every season.

Faith played an important role throughout Odean's life. He was a lifelong member of Vista Lutheran Church, later Christ the King Lutheran and Grace Lutheran Church, and remained active in the congregation through the years. His prior-



Odean Johnson

ities were simple and unwavering: faith, family, and farming.

He is survived by his wife, Andrea Johnson of Waseca; children, Roxanne Johnson, Keith (Kim) Johnson of New Richland, Rochelle (Chris) Compart of Nicollet, Raeleen Johnson of Waseca, and Kyle (Amanda) Johnson of New Richland; grandchildren, Kelby Johnson, Kaleb Johnson, Kylee Johnson, Sara Compart, Dustin (Natalie) Compart, Taylor Bolinger (Amber Meyer), Riley Johnson, Arin Boese, Jaiden Johnson, Kendall Johnson, and Aurella Johnson; and two special great-grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by his parents.

The family extends their heartfelt gratitude to the staff at Mayo Clinic Health System for the compassionate care provided to Odean.

Visitation for Odean was from 4 - 7 p.m. on Thursday, September 10, 2026 at Grace Lutheran Church in Waseca. Visitation continued one hour prior to service on Friday at the church.

Funeral service was at 11 a.m. on Friday, September 11, 2026 at Grace Lutheran Church. Burial was at Vista Lutheran Church in New Richland.

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Annual fastpitch softball gathering

By KATHY PAULSON

Once again a great group for former fastpitch softball players gathered for a reunion to reminisce about those good old days on the softball fields here in Southern Minnesota. This year the event was held at the Geneva Bar & Grill on Thursday afternoon, September 10.

Terry Peterson organized the event this year and a total of 26 Fastpitch Softball Players, along with four spouses, gathered to reminisce about the days they played

fastpitch on the softball fields here in Southern Minnesota.

Among those in attendance were Terry Peterson, Hank Thompson, Bill (Jane) Disher, Tony Anderson, Scott Christensen, Steve Christensen, Dan Richards, Daryl (Kathy) Paulsen, DeWayne Jensen, Charlie Kjos, Gus (Julie) Currier, Brian Muri, Allen Lee, Lloyd Kaplan, Clete (Sharon) Glynn, Eldon Kath, Al Krietz, Don Overlie, Steve McCamy, Jim Burmeister, Jim Beech, Fritz Kendrick, Kurt

Erickon, Steve Roth, Marlin Kath, Fred Kinsche, Bruce Jensen and three of the former Kath Brothers ballplayers.

The Geneva Bar & Grill was more than happy to provide a place for the fastpitch softball players to gather, and served up a great assortment of food and refreshments for the ballplayers to enjoy.

Terry Peterson shared a few of his memories from his many years on the softball field, which I am sure also got many of the other

softball players thinking of many other stories that had developed over the years while the players were playing softball here in Southern Minnesota.

It is hoped that when many of the fastpitch players hear about some of the former players who have attended, and the memories shared at past softball parties, they too will want to come and renew old friendships, and favorite stories at the next reunion here in southern Minnesota.

Council sets preliminary levy increase

By BEN REVERMANN
Staff writer

The Ellendale city council met in the evening of Thursday, Sept. 10.

After looking at their budget and anticipated expenditures for 2027, members of the Ellendale city council set the city's 2027 "preliminary" property tax levy amount at 3.67 percent over 2026. Under Minnesota law, all agencies supported by property taxes must set a preliminary levy in September. The final levy amount, which can be set at a lower increase than the preliminary, but not a higher one, will be set after a "truth in taxation" presentation in December.

City maintenance leader Josh Otto has been receiving bids for road patching projects on Sixth Avenue, Fourth Avenue, Café Alley, Lerberg's Alley, Third Street and Highway 30. Council members accepted the lowest re-

ELLENDALE
CITY COUNCIL

sponsible bid for \$38,190 from Ulland Brothers. Otto also informed the council that a fluoride pump at the wastewater treatment plant needs to be replaced at a cost of \$1,100.

Brian Sarff of the law firm Bolton and Menk advised the council about the wastewater treatment facility and the ponds which need to be updated. Sarff advised Ellendale began exceeding its sewer capacity back in 2022, and told council members the ponds are undersized and the flow must be decreased. The city must meet a deadline of March 27 if it is to receive an extension permit to expand the wastewater capacity. The council asked for more time to review this issue.

Regarding work on the new fire hall, council members were told

final move-in is waiting for a couple small projects to be taken care of: a last cabinet has yet to be installed and a door still needs to be painted. A brief ceremony on Sept. 14 will feature a prayer and blessing for the protection of those who work out of the fire hall. The council okayed up to \$300 for new, state approved badges for the firefighters. It was also suggested the fire department should retool its locks, so that all can be opened using a single key.

It was mentioned that, of the two residences on Radel Court that were not in compliance with city code, one has completed the requested improvements. The other must still take care of some weeds and a problem fence; council members decided that, if those issues are not rectified by Sept. 17, a fine would be imposed. A residence on Eighth Ave. East has been given till Oct. 1 to fix issues on the property. A residence on

Fourth Ave. West has taken care of its issues and will receive no fine. The residence on Sixth Ave. East is slowly making progress; however, the council has received confirmation that a contractor will be finished with the roofing issues by mid-September, then make repairs to the house. As long as those repairs continue on schedule, the council will be satisfied.

It was reported that work on the city clerk's office is almost complete. Not yet taken care of are a review of the plans for the ramp and some wiring yet to be done by a contractor. All countertops have been received and installed.

Mayor Scott Groth said the grain elevator owner who also owns the first set of train tracks with the dilapidated bumper plates will sign off on whatever plan Ellendale presents to get rid of them. Groth said the railroad itself was also on board with the plan.

25th Annual Tri-State Drainage Research Forum features field tour and regional drainage research

OWATONNA (09/11/2026)—The University of Minnesota Extension will host the 25th Annual Tri-State Drainage Research Forum featuring an optional pre-forum field tour and a full-day research conference this fall. The event, presented in partnership with South Dakota State University, Iowa State University, and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, invites agricultural producers, drainage contractors, consultants, agency staff, and researchers to explore 25 years of drainage innovation and emerging water management practices.

The optional pre-forum field tour will be held from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., Wednesday, Sept. 30 at the UMN Southern Research and Outreach Center (SROC) in Waseca. The main research forum takes place from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Thursday, Oct. 1 at the Bass Pro Shop, 3900 Cabela Dr NW, Owatonna. Early registration is \$80 through Sept. 15 (\$99 after Sept. 15), and student registration is \$40 (\$20 for student

poster presenters), payable online during registration.

"Over the past 25 years, agricultural drainage in the Upper Midwest has evolved from basic field water removal into sophisticated, precision water management," said Gary Sands, UMN Extension professor and water resources specialist. "This milestone forum offers a unique opportunity to inspect field-scale conservation practices firsthand at SROC and connect on emerging technologies like automated controls and drainage water recycling."

Pre-registration is required. University of Minnesota Extension provides full program schedules and registration details at z.umn.edu/drainageresearchforum.

For more news from U of M Extension, visit www.extension.umn.edu/news or contact Extension Communications at extnews@umn.edu. University of Minnesota Extension is an equal opportunity educator and employer.

HERITAGE BITS



In this picture, the 1899 New Richland football team plays against Mapleton on November 4. Photo provided by New Richland Area Historical Society. (09/17/26)

■ Students

from Page 1

Louks, Dyna Hanson, Avery Mollenhauer and Brendan Kooal shared some reactions to what they had just heard.

Lydia pointed out she finds the in-home "Alexa" bot quite useful, but for the most part, all four stated they already knew it's im-

portant to be careful when sharing or using online information. They did express surprise at the many ways online elements can be targeted or manipulated. They stated that, except for some of the defaults like auto fill-ins in texts or occasional online searches, they seldom use AI. They commented they were completely taken by surprise that anyone might form a "friendship" with an online personality.

At about 12 years old, they

said they had not really given thought to their future careers or what effect AI might have on them, but felt confident their current ways of earning money—which included mowing lawns, babysitting, cleaning garages, and helping care for gardens—would probably not be affected.

Remembering some of the positive strengths of AI, Avery said he hopes it will help speed up the search for curing cancer. Lydia said that she hopes to be-

come a singer in the future, and speculated AI might help her in the process of writing songs—after all, the presentation had included an entire musical piece created using artificial intelligence.

The four said they were glad they had a chance to attend the session, and believed the information would be very valuable to them.



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County agencies observe September preparedness theme

The Le Sueur-Waseca Community Health Board (LWCHB) recognizes that September is National Preparedness Month. National Preparedness Month is an annual September observance to encourage Americans to prepare for disasters and emergencies that could happen anywhere and at any time. This year's theme, Americans Stand Ready, encourages preparedness at home to strengthen the resiliency of our communities.

Preparedness is not going to look the same for everyone. Factors like children and pets in the home, the areas you live and work, and disabilities will change the actions you should take to prepare yourself.

"Preparedness is a shared responsibility, and we all have a role to play," said Public Health Emergency Preparedness Specialist Sara Porter.

Not sure where to start? Consider taking these important steps to ensure your household is prepared.

Sign up for alerts and warnings with PHApp, Regroup (Waseca), or Everbridge (Le Sueur).

Make a family communications plan.

Practice emergency drills at home and work.

Safeguard important documents and keep extra copies in an alternate location.

Assemble a go kit with supplies like food, water, batteries, and a light source.

Learn more about National Preparedness Month and actions you can take to prepare for disasters at ready.gov and how local public health prepares at LeSueurCounty.Gov/790/Public-Health-Emergency-Preparedness-PHE or WasecaCounty.Gov/593/Public-Health-Emergency-Preparedness-PHE.

Contact Sara Porter at 507-357-8509 or sara.porter@lesueurcounty.gov with questions.

■ AI

from Page 1

to do harm and make the world worse," Cumbee said. "AI makes them more capable." Along with that, he told the group "AI hallucinates—it sometimes makes things up. And, right now, AI has more online traffic than people do."

All of those factors, he said, mean that everyone should be careful about blindly accepting any fact or piece of information. "The more important the fact is, the more important it is to verify," he said.

He went on to share an example of fake online news which claimed in May of 2023 that there had been an explosion at the Pentagon and was followed by a sudden dip in the stock market.

"People who didn't verify whether this was true or not sold their stocks and lost a lot of money," Cumbee stated.

"If they had checked other sources first, they could have saved that money."

His suggestion to students was that, when they see a piece of information online "instead of blindly trusting it, go to other locations." He suggested the "comments" section in a post is not a reliable source since, "Those are a bunch of people who are also guessing."

Showing an MIT report which claims false news spreads 20 times faster than real information, he advised, "Pause before you share. Pause before you believe."

Cumbee also let students know "AI keeps everything you give it. All of it. Forever. There is no delete button." For that reason, he said, they should not only be careful about obvious things like their address, social security number or phone number, but they should be aware that, if they

express their resentments, their temporary feelings of anger or a desire for revenge, those may also resurface sometime in the future.

"AI is powerful, and that's why using your judgment matters," he advised.

Cumbee also suggested that, while there are many ways learners can use AI to avoid difficult tasks like completing homework assignments, there are disadvantages to taking "the easy way."

"The learning your brain does is the learning your brain keeps," he said. "Doing homework is about changing you and building your ability to think."

"Learning might be slow, it might be difficult, and you will have to use effort."

"And learning is worth it. Life requires a well developed mind."

Cumbee's presentation also included information about a growing trend for people to be "friends" or even have "romances" with AI personalities in their phones or computers.

He suggested the trend is fueled by AIs built-in priority of "pleasing" people, and showed an AI conversation in which the bot expressed support for a plan to impress a girl by performing a "renegade" dance during a class, then singing "You are my Sunshine" saying it "showed confidence" and was "bold and clear."

Cumbee's suggestion: "Don't ask for blind praise or approval. Ask for feedback. Use questions like 'How can I improve on this plan?'"

As with academic learning, Cumbee suggested building social connections can be intimidating, confusing, and riddled with setbacks.

"But you build genuine connections that will have real meaning, and that may last the rest of your life," he went on. "In other words, it's worth it."

Child's History of Waseca County

Chapter XIV, 1855-6. Town site booming—Wilton village platted by Cornell and Abbott of Owatonna, and John and D. J. Jenkins and Child of Waseca County—Claim-jumping—House body torn down—Many settlers arrested and taken to Owatonna—Land suits at Winona—War on the Le Sueur—Buildings torn down in Wilton

The first year's settlement did not pass without a town-site boom in this county. Speculators were abroad then as now. In October, 1855, A. B. Cornell and John H. Abbott, then of Owatonna, came to the settlement and prevailed upon D. J. and John Jenkins and the writer to join with them in platting a town site. Mr. Abbott was a surveyor and the parties proceeded to survey and plat the village of Wilton, the first-born city of the county. It soon became evident to John Jenkins and me that A. B. Cornell, the moving genius of the firm, intended to get persons to come on from various places and take possession of all the land in the vicinity, and that, too, without regard to the rights of others. D. J. Jenkins sided with Cornell and Abbott, and it was quite evident that they proposed to jump claims if they could not get what they wanted in any other way. John Jenkins and I withdrew shortly after the survey was made, and men from Owatonna took our places.

D. J. Jenkins built, that fall, the first house on the new town plat, or, rather, adjoining it, and it was expected then that, like Jonah's gourd, it would grow to almost a city in a day. But, unfortunately, the prime

movers of the enterprise so managed their affairs that the settlers of the surrounding country, even up to the boundary line of the village plat, refused to countenance the building of the new city. As evidence of the feeling that existed at the time, a few facts will be given, which, though not very creditable, perhaps, will show the extent to which men will sometimes proceed when thrown together promiscuously beyond the controlling influences of courts and law. In the latter part of January, 1856, the Owatonna proprietors of the Wilton plat hired some fellows to jump the claims of four settlers—Robert and Hugh McDougall and George and Bill Robbins—who had settled along the river, just east of the village plat. The claim jumpers commenced the erection of houses on these lands, and set up counter claims to them on the ground, as they said, that those young men had claimed more than 160 acres each, that because they were foreign born and had not declared their intentions to become citizens simply because there was no court nearer than Mankato, and also because they expected to do so as soon as they could get to the land office at Winona.

As soon as it was noised about that claim-jumping had commenced, an impromptu meeting of the boys was held and they concluded to visit the claim-jumpers and inform them that claim-jumping would not be tolerated at all in the settlement. The agents of the "city speculators" were at the time putting up a log house on

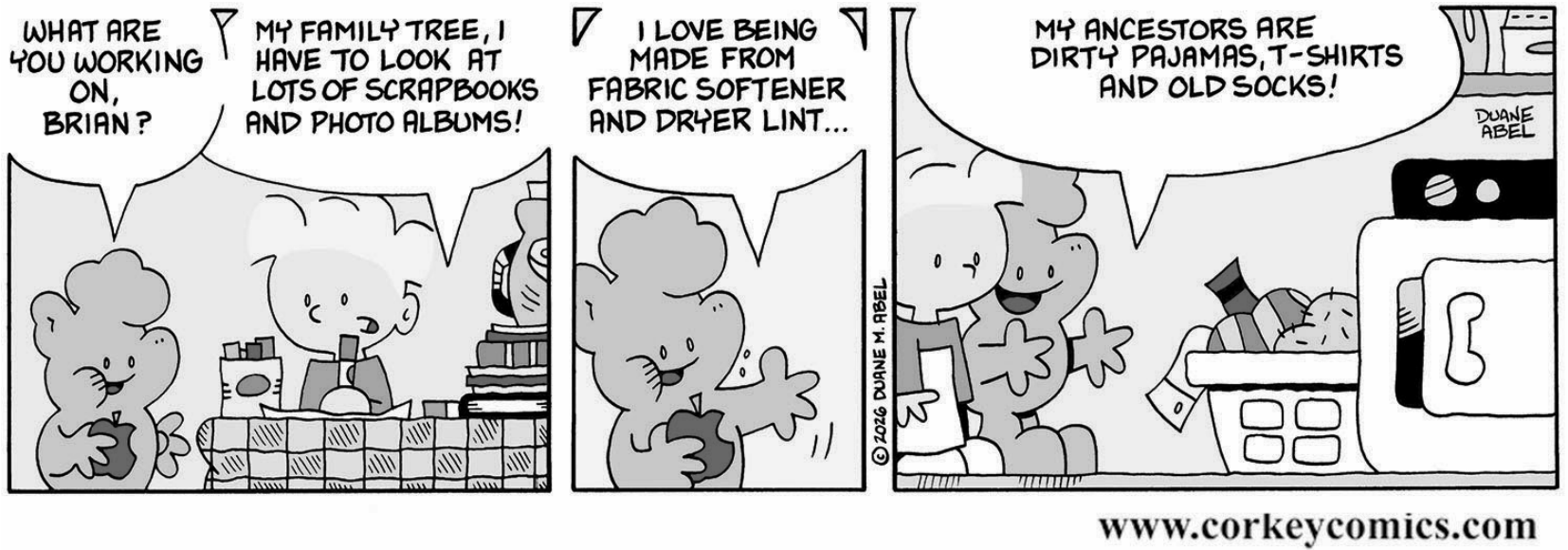
the claim since known as the O'Brien land. It adjoined the village plat, on the east, and lay immediately on the road leading to Owatonna. Nearly every man in the settlement was present at the meeting. They all proceeded to the place where the claim-jumpers were at work, and informed them what had been decided upon. The claim-jumpers were acting under the legal advice of Mr. Cornell and conducted themselves accordingly. They evinced none of that blunt, out-spoken honesty so common to western pioneers, but observed a studied purpose to overreach the boys in legal points and yet preserve themselves from physical harm. They showed no fight, but quietly stepped aside when told to do so, by the original claimants. The latter then proceeded to tear down the building forthwith. Cornell's gang quietly withdrew from the premises after witnessing the tearing down process. As soon as possible thereafter warrants were sued out before an Owatonna justice (this was then a part of Steele county) for the arrest of five of the men; to-wit: John Jenkins, Hugh and Robert McDougall, and George and William Robbins—all but Jenkins having an interest in the claims jumped. The charge was that of maliciously tearing down a building. Nearly all the other settlers on the upper Le Sueur were subpoenaed as witnesses. After a trial, which lasted three or four days, three of the five were found guilty and the other two were discharged on motion of the prosecuting attorney. The whole trial was a good deal of a farce. If one of the party was guilty of a crime, all were guilty. We asked to be allowed

to prove that the claim jumpers were committing willful and malicious trespass upon lands belonging to the arrested parties, and that only necessary force was used to expel the trespassers; the request was refused. Those found guilty appealed to the district court and were in due time discharged without costs on account of error in the proceedings before the justice.

Immediately after the justice trials, Cornell, through his satellites, commenced suit before the land officers at Winona, and the contesting parties and their witnesses were compelled to make several trips to Winona. After about a year of expensive litigation, the matter was compromised and settled, the McDougall brothers giving up one forty and taking another.

During the troubles that grew out of that affair there was actual danger of bloodshed. Some of the men went armed. Cornell became so alarmed that he did not show himself in the settlement for a long time. In early spring (1856) several house bodies were erected on the Wilton town-site, but on the night of the 19th of April, 1856, they were all torn down, literally razed to the ground. I remember the date, for that was the night of my wedding day, and some of the boys remarked that "They couldn't lay that deviltry onto Pat." As to who did the evil deed, probably no one knows, or ever knew, except those engaged in it. This occurrence and the general hostility of all the surrounding settlers to the Wilton speculators, prevented any further growth during the summer following.

ZED by Duane M. Abel



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■ Ride

from Page 1

own leisure." Counting Hartland University as stop number one, there were 11 stops: TB3's in Freeborn; VFW Post 1778 in Wells; American Legion Post 404 in Alden; Conger Bar; 26 Pit Stop Bar & Grill in Walters; Searville Bar; American Legion Post 317 and Good Shot Golf & Sporting Clay, both in Emmons; and Forever Berma's and Legion Post 454, both in Kiester.

Kevin Robran and Erin Rae were there to help out with the fundraiser. They were relaxing in the parking lot and making use of the "leave at your

own leisure" rule while enjoying snacks in their side by side vehicle. The goal of the game is to visit each bar and receive a stamp to prove they were there. Players also receive a playing card at each stop and upon returning to Hartland University, the best hand is the winner. They don't have to visit every bar, but more cards equal more chances at a better hand.

The Free Flags for Veterans motto is: "Honoring those who served-one flag at a time." Any veterans who provide documentation of their service will receive an American flag free of charge. Anyone wishing to make a donation can send a check of money order to Free Flags for Veterans at PO Box 555, Waseca, MN 56093.



Spencer Tufte and Levi Arnold were among those participating in Hartland University's Fourth Annual Ride to Remember fundraiser on Saturday, Sept. 12, 2026.

Star Eagle photo by Ben Revermann

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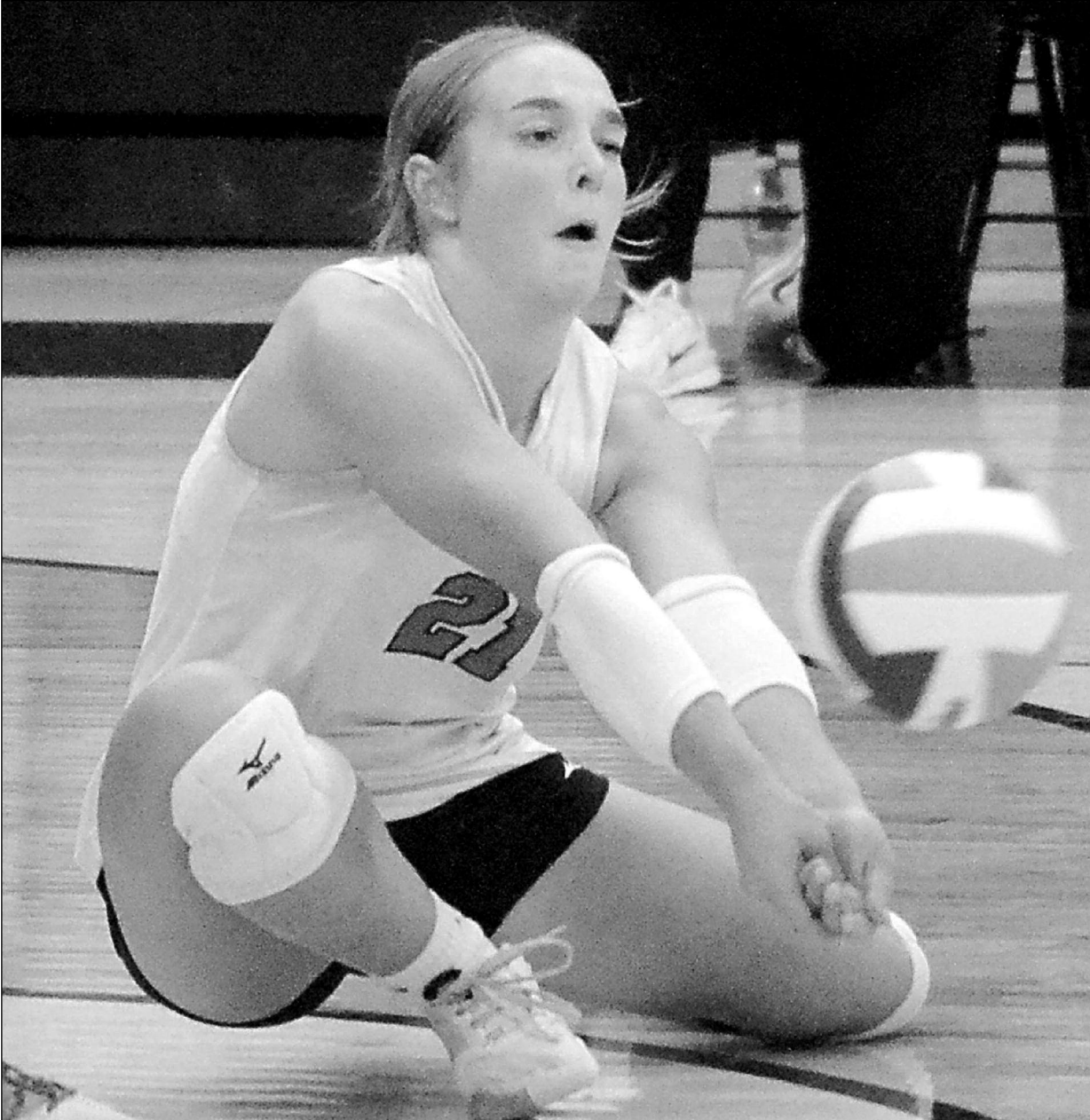
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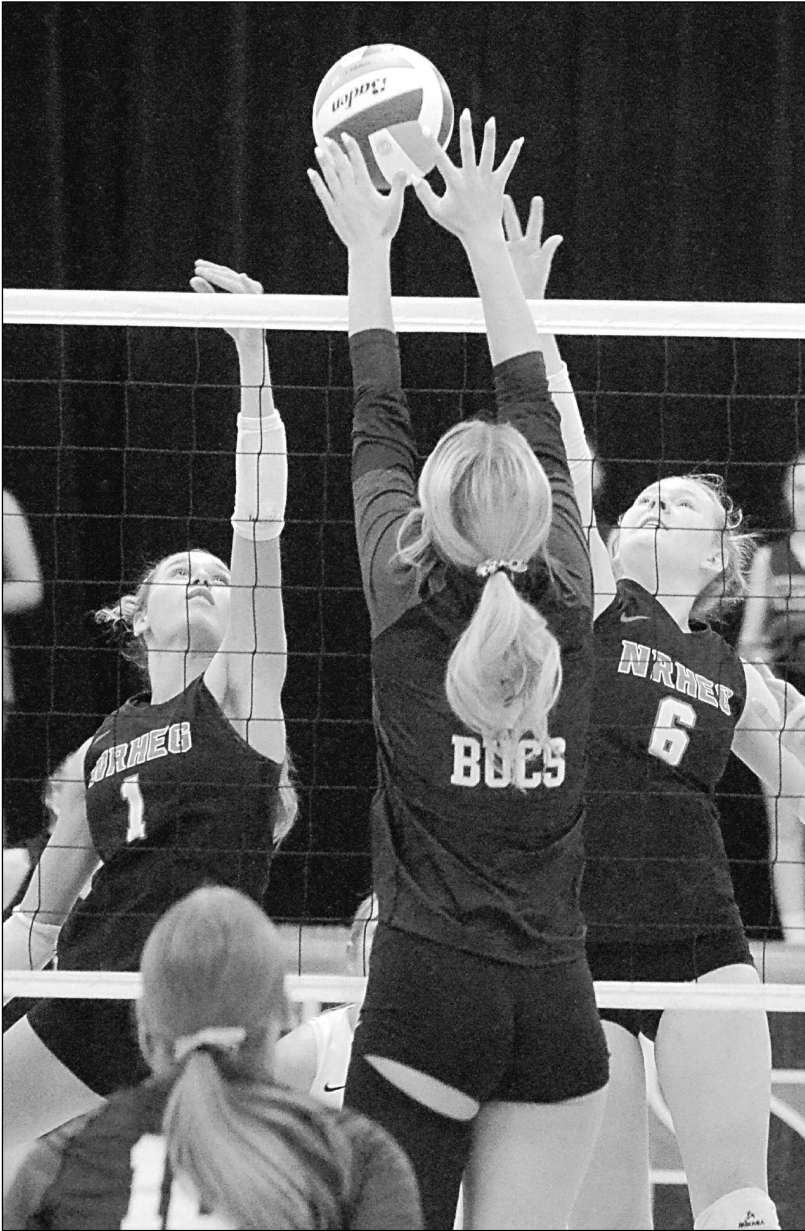
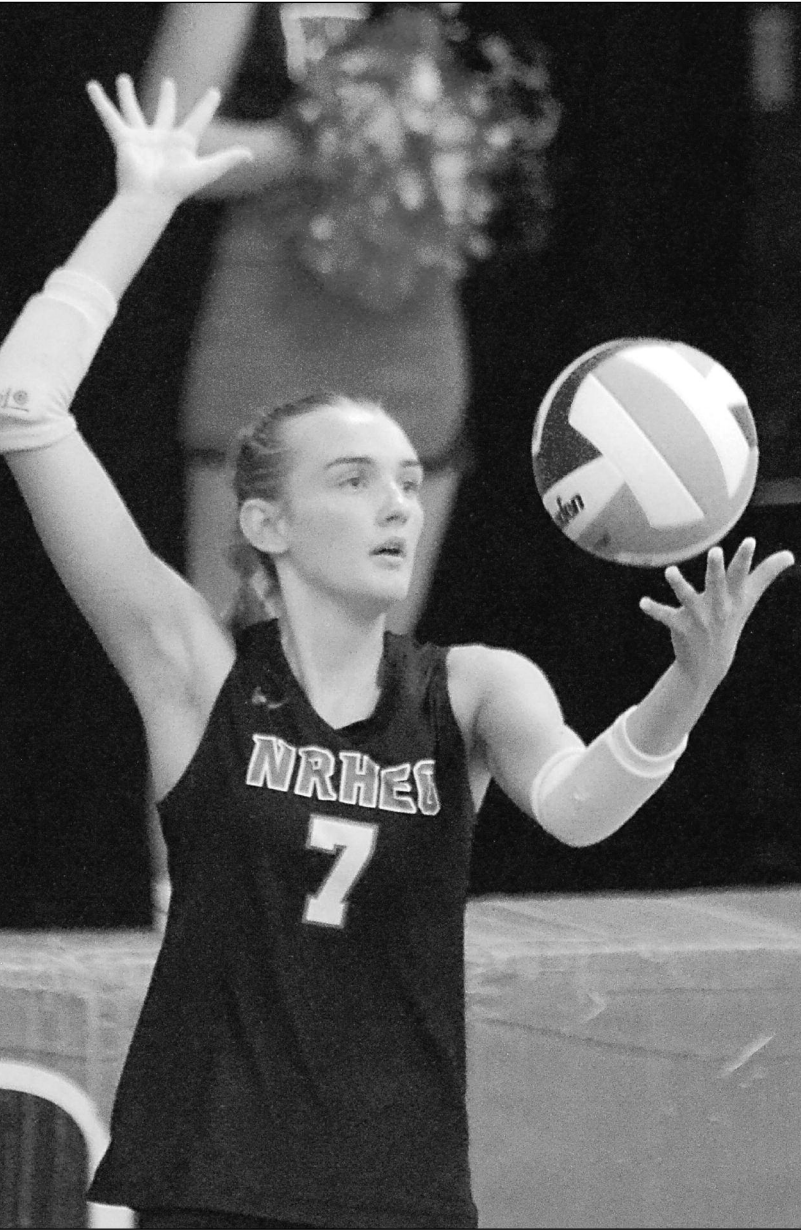
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HOME-COURT ACTION— The NRHEG High School volleyball team was in action against Waterville-Elysian Morristown Thursday in New Richland. At left, the Panthers' Ezra Boerner sends the ball over the net. At right, Aubrey Hendrickson goes to the floor for a dig. Photos by Jim Lutgens



TOUGH NIGHT — The NRHEG volleyball team fell behind early against WEM Thursday and could never catch up, dropping a 3-0 decision. At left, the Panthers' Clara Buendorf prepares to serve. At right, Ezra Boerner (1) and Sierra Fish (6) go up for a block attempt.

Spikers fall 3-0 to USC, WEM

The New Richland-Hartland-Ellendale-Geneva High School volleyball team ventured to United South Central last Tuesday for its Gopher Conference opener. It did not go as hoped. The Panthers dropped a 3-0 decision, with game scores of 25-17, 25-18 and 25-17. "Overall, our mental game did not hold up to our standards throughout the match," said NRHEG head coach Bethany Tennis. Junior Brooklyn Sommer tallied 15 set assists for the Panthers, while senior Clara Buendorf recorded five blocks. "As a team, we still have a few things to smooth out early in the season," said Coach Tennis. "We are looking forward to facing off at home with WEM on Thursday at home with a much smarter, more disciplined and unified team." Totals against USC: Ezra Boerner two kills, seven digs, one set assist, three blocks; Izley Boerner three digs; Buendorf four kills, five blocks; Gia Cazares one dig; Sierra Fish two kills; Aubrey Hendrickson five digs; Jovey Knudson one kill, two blocks; Anika Ladlie six kills, three digs, one set assist, three blocks; Sommer six digs, 15 set assists, one block; Emmy Stadheim two kills, four digs; Ciara Stenzel

"We still have a few things to smooth out." — NRHEG coach Bethany Tennis

one dig. The Panthers hosted a scrappy WEM squad on Thursday and lost in three sets, 25-9, 25-17 and 25-21. The Bucs grabbed the momentum early and the Panthers could never quite hit their stride. "We know there are a few things we need to clean up on our side of the net," said Tennis. "Consistency will be a key to our success moving forward. We have the ability to compete, but we need to be more consistent in all areas of the game and take advantage of the opportunities we create." Panther totals: Ezra Boerner two kills, nine digs, four blocks; Buendorf three kills, three digs; Cazares three digs; Fish three kills, one block; Hendrickson 21 digs; Knudson one kill, three digs, two blocks, one service ace; Ladlie five kills, 14 digs, five blocks, one ace; Sommer eight digs, 13 set assists; Stadheim nine digs; Stenzel one ace.

NRHEG runners brave the heat at Stewartville

Wobbrock takes 20th out of 125

The New Richland-Hartland-Ellendale-Geneva High School cross country teams traveled to Stewartville for the Bill Glomski Invitational Thursday, Sept. 3. According to Panthers coach Larry Nydegger, heat played a factor in shortening the length of the races, with varsity runners covering 3,200 meters. The NRHEG girls were led by Julieann Wobbrock, who placed 20th out of 125 runners with a time of 13:36. Violette Botten finished 101st in 17:03, Rylie Cromwell 113th in 18:42. Leading the NRHEG boys was Kasey Jewison, who toured the

course in 11:17 to place 18th among 121 varsity runners. Colton Lерmon was 88th in 13:35, Devlin McWilliams 106th in 15:02. The Panthers' C-squad runners, Marvin Tolzman and Jordy Kloczek, running a 1,200-meter course, finished 75th and 76th, respectively, Marvin clocking 7:11 and Jordy 7:11. "It was another hot one in Stewartville," said Nydegger. "Races like this are as much a challenge of the runners' mental strength as well as their physical endurance. I am extremely proud of the effort these runners put into their races."



IT WAS HOT — NRHEG cross country runners in action at Stewartville are, from left, Colton Lерmon, Kasey Jewison and Julieann Wobbrock. Photos by Larry Nydegger

Planning already underway for next year’s fair

By KAREN JORGENSEN
Steele County Times

The 2026 Steele County Free Fair is barely history, but fair officials are already busy planning next year’s event.

Bright Lights & Blue Ribbons has been chosen as then theme for the 2027 fair.

In the past, fair officials asked for people to send in their suggestions and a winner was selected from those suggestions. This year, however, the fair board decided to try something different.

Rather than having a competition for the next theme, said Fair Manager Scott Kozelka, the decision was made to have “a bunch of people” brainstorm and come up with suggestions. This included fair officials, staff, department superintendents, basically anyone who had an opinion, offering ideas. There were some suggestions out there about 2027 being the 100th year of a free fair, but that caused concerns about some people thinking the fair itself is only 100 years old.

One thought that kept coming up, he said, was that just about everyone who commented said the fair seemed brighter this year. That, they decided, was probably because of the sling shot and the Big Wheel on the carnival.

So that is where the first part of the

new slogan, Bright Lights, came from. The second part, Blue Ribbons, is in recognition of the many ribbons given out during the fair for 4-H, FFA and Open Class entries.

The new banner was designed and made public on the side of the Grandstand during the 2026 fair. There have already been comments, Kozelka said, from people saying how much they like it.

While the final numbers are still being counted for the 2026 fair, he said, planning is already underway for next year’s big event.

Planning for an event the size of the Steele County Free Fair is really a year-long job, he said.

Next year’s activities will also highlight the fact that the fair will celebrate its 100th year as a free event, Kozelka said. The first fair was actually held on Oct. 17, 1860. Early prize winners included rewards for working oxen, locally made buggies, corn crops and butter churns.

After the 1860 fair, there is no record of any fair until 1871, likely because of the Civil War. The fair moved to its current location in 1918.

The Minnesota State Fair was also held in Owatonna in 1883 and 1884. And in case you want to know when the 2027 fair will be held, check out the fair’s website. The counter is already online.

Archery hunters set to begin season this weekend

It’s an exciting time of the year for archery deer hunters as they look forward to Minnesota’s archery deer season that runs from Saturday, Sept. 19 through Thursday, Dec. 31.

“Archery hunters benefit from having a long season to get out into the woods and fields, experience the change of seasons, and see deer and have opportunities to harvest them,” said Paul Burr, deer coordinator for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. “We encourage hunters to take advantage of opportunities to harvest antlerless deer, which are abundant in much of the state.”

Deer hunting is critical for deer population management. While parts of northern Minnesota continue to experience lower deer numbers than in recent decades, many areas need help reducing local deer populations. In the areas with an abundance of deer, hunters are allowed to harvest multiple antlerless deer.

“Hunting helps balance the size of local deer herds with the available natural forage and habitat conditions,” Burr said. “Early in the archery season is a great time to go out and harvest a doe or two.”

Many archery hunters do harvest antlerless deer. In 2025, 55% of archery-harvested deer were antlerless, and archery hunters were responsible for one-fifth of all antlerless deer harvested in Minnesota. Last year, 30,043 deer were harvested during Minnesota’s archery season, which is an all-time high for the state. Roughly half of those deer

were harvested with crossbows, and the other half with vertical bows.

ELS updates in effect this season

Archery deer hunters are reminded that changes in how hunters buy licenses, validate harvests and register harvests are in place for all hunters in all seasons with the new electronic licensing system the Minnesota DNR launched in June.

There are three ways to buy a license (mobile app, online, or in person from a license agent) and three ways to carry it (paper, PDF, or stored in the app). Customers can access the new system on the Minnesota DNR website (mndnr.gov/buyalicense) or by searching “Minnesota DNR Licensing” in the Apple or Google app stores. In-person license agents can be found on a map on the Minnesota DNR website (mndnr.gov/licenses/agents-map.html).

When hunters purchase their license, they will choose if they want to validate a future harvest using the mobile app, or a paper tag. Then they will be able to register the deer in person, online or using the mobile app.

“We are encouraging hunters to buy their licenses early and get familiar with the process of validating and registering harvests this year,” Burr said.

The process on how to validate and register a harvest is detailed on pages 28-29 in the regulations booklet (mndnr.gov/regulations/hunting). Hunters who are validating har-

vests using the mobile app are reminded to make sure they are logged into the app before leaving for their hunt. This allows the hunter to validate their harvest in the field even if they are out of cell service range. Once the hunter is back in cell service, the app will then send the harvest data.

CWD testing reminders

Hunters should check chronic wasting disease requirements, including new carcass disposal rules, and available sampling options for the deer permit areas where they hunt, on the Minnesota DNR CWD webpage (mndnr.gov/cwd).

Archery hunters should note that self-service sampling stations will only be available during the opening weekend of firearms deer season within the 2026 CWD surveillance block. And within the surveillance block, testing is mandatory for archery hunters during the opening weekend of firearms season. Information about the different ways to get deer tested for CWD is available on the DNR website (mndnr.gov/cwd/cwd-testing.html).

Blaze clothing requirements and safety reminders

Archery hunters are reminded that blaze orange or blaze pink clothing is required during the youth and early antlerless seasons from Thursday, Oct. 15, through Sunday, Oct. 18, and during any other open firearms deer season.

Since archery season overlaps with small game firearms season, hunters should wear an article of blaze clothing when hunting on public land to ensure they are visible to other hunters in the field.

Hunters are strongly encouraged to be safe when using tree stands, with more information on tree stand safety (mndnr.gov/safety/treestand/index.html) available online.

In addition, deer hunters, including archery hunters, who are hunting deer in a fabric or synthetic ground blind on public land must have a blaze orange safety covering on top of the blind that is visible from all directions, or a patch made of blaze orange material that is at least 144 square inches (12x12 inches) on each side of the blind.

Tips and information

Hunters can learn more about what to expect this deer season in an upcoming webinar at noon on Wednesday, Sept. 23. Registration is required. Register and find more details on the DNR website (mndnr.gov/discover). If you are unable to attend the live webinar, it will also be recorded and posted on that webpage. Registration is not required to view the recorded webinar.

Detailed information for every deer permit area, including last year’s harvest, hunters per square mile, public hunting ground, and land cover types, is available through the interactive deer map (mndnr.gov/deermap) by selecting “DPA Details.” Deer hunting regulations are available on the Minnesota DNR’s deer hunting webpage (mndnr.gov/hunting/deer) and in the hunting and trapping regulations booklet.

Early probation release dropped in Judge Worke DWI case

By ALEX MALM
Steele County Times

A Minnesota Court of Appeals Judge is reportedly dropping her request to be released from probation early.

Former Steele County Attorney Dan McIntosh earlier this summer accused Steele County of violating the Data Practices Act related to the high-profile case of Minnesota Court of Appeals Judge Renee Worke, according to court documents.

The accusation created legal wrangling in which McIntosh claims Steele County improperly released probation data related to Worke’s DWI case late last year.

Just who released the data is what still appears to be up for debate.

Current Steele County Attorney Rob Jarrett disagrees with McIntosh’s claims in the case that saw McIntosh defend Worke.

Original case

Worke of Owatonna was sentenced on Jan. 2 after reaching a plea deal. Originally charged with two gross misdemeanor counts of third-degree DWI, she pleaded guilty to an amended count of fourth-degree DWI-Operate Motor Vehicle-Alcohol Concentration 0.08 Within 2 Hours, a misdemeanor.

The remaining count was dismissed as part of the plea agreement; Worke was placed on probation for up to a year and received a stay of imposition. She had preemptively completed all conditions of probation prior to her first court hearing.

The data practices issue was first raised in June, when McIntosh filed a motion for Worke to be discharged from probation early, according to a court document filed in Steele County District Court.

In his filing, McIntosh pointed to Minn. Stat. §609.135, subd. 2(g) which states that a “probationer is discharged six months after the term of the stay expires.”

The terms of Worke’s probation said that “Steele County Community Corrections may exercise

their discretion and discharge the Defendant from probation early if they believe that it is appropriate.”

On June 8, just days after McIntosh filed his motion, Jarrett filed a motion, stating the county objected to Worke being released from probation.

Jarrett requested a hearing, and gave notice he would be calling witnesses from the community corrections program.

“Arguments of counsel for the objection and request to follow the Court’s original sentencing order will be provided at the hearing,” Jarrett wrote.

A court hearing was set for Sept. 1. However, McIntosh, in a late-night motion on Aug. 26, asked for the hearing to be canceled.

Change of plans

McIntosh, in his motion, said his client pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor DWI, and then asked to be discharged from probation “pursuant to Minn. R. Crim. P. 27.03, subd. 9 (granting the Court authority to modify an imposed sentence).”

“As the Court is aware, at the time of sentencing, my client had completed the active terms of her probation, as was acknowledged by the County Attorney,” he wrote.

McIntosh claimed that almost immediately after the motion was filed “the Steele County Attorney and Community Corrections began efforts that amount to retaliation against my client.

“First, there were efforts to improperly disclose my client’s confidential probation data, both in this court file and otherwise,” he wrote. “This was improper and unfair. Our need to address the breach may have left the public with an impression that my client had something to hide when, in fact, the issue was one of improper data disclosure regardless of the content.”

McIntosh said they then “observed what appears to be the County’s preparations to expand the scope of the hearing set on Sept. 1, 2026 beyond the motion that was filed.

“The purpose of our motion was

not intended to stir interpersonal conflict,” he wrote. “But the County’s responses suggest they have taken my client’s well-supported motion personally.”

McIntosh said after his client’s motion for early release from probation was filed, “it has become clear that there has been very little probation supervision actually occurring.”

“As a result, the impacts on my client have been largely mitigated,” he said. “My client continues to meet all the basic probation requirements, as she has throughout this matter.”

McIntosh in his motion characterized the county’s responses to his client’s motion as “unexpected and perplexing.”

“But at this time, rather than fan further discord, we believe there is no benefit to continuing to expend time and resources pursuing our good faith request of the court,” he wrote.

Instead, he said, to avoid “further controversy, my client has chosen to complete the short remaining time on probation and avoid further misplaced criticism of her or the judicial system.”

McIntosh did not respond to a number of follow-up questions for this story.

Jarrett did not respond to claims regarding the alleged improper release of data, saying, “Given the claims made by Renee Worke and Dan McIntosh, the county filed an insurance claim with MCIT (MN Counties Insurance Trust) for legal coverage.”

“MCIT assigned attorney Dyan Ebert of Resolute Law to represent the County,” he wrote.

Ebert did not respond to a request for comment for this story.

“Regarding the criminal matters, given Ms. Worke remains on probation, it is not appropriate for me to comment any further,” Jarrett wrote.

Audit trail

In a June 16 correspondence to Judge Adam Johnson, who is hearing the case, McIntosh said Steele County Community Corrections filed a document on June 10 that

he claims “was initially mislabeled as a ‘Memorandum’ and filed as a public document.

“It was, in fact, a probation recommendation to the Court and should have been filed as a non-public document,” McIntosh wrote. “The Steele County Court Administrator was able to change the document label and classification later in the day on June 10, 2026, but not before the document was publicly available for several hours.”

It is unclear if the document was ever downloaded by the public, and if so, how many times.

McIntosh sought the release of the audit trail data, and said in his correspondence that the document “contained information that never should have been accessible to the public and with which my client strongly disagrees.”

The correspondence to the judge went on to say that Jarrett made a comment that McIntosh perceived as a threat.

“The document was filed after the Steele County Attorney informed me on June 5, 2026, after my client filed her motion for discharge from probation, ‘If your client wants to continue with the motion, probation will be filing a public report early next week.’ I objected to this statement,” McIntosh wrote, “characterized it as a ‘threat,’ and reminded the County Attorney that probation data is highly protected under Minnesota law. Five days later, the public document was filed by Steele County Community Corrections.”

A judge on the same day approved the release of the non-public audit trail to McIntosh.

Jarrett disagrees with McIntosh’s assessment of the situation, and said Steele County Community Corrections uploaded the document appropriately.

“The County did not violate the MGDPA – probation filed the memo appropriately as ‘confidential,’” Jarrett wrote in an email to the Times. “Court administration refuses to provide data to show who changed the memo to (public) on the court’s end.”

Jarrett filed a motion June 22, also asking the Court to issue a “Judicial Determination indicating that State Court Administration may release the audit trail data to the State,” for the document in question – in other words, to track who did what with the document at the heart of the issue.

“Specifically, the County requests the following: what classification was submitted, what data was submitted, what actions were taken, and by whom,” he wrote.

A judge denied Jarrett’s motion on June 30.

Different classifications

When court documents are filed electronically – a common practice – there are different security classifications given to each type of document, said Kyle Christopher-

son, a spokesperson for the Minnesota Court Information Office.

“The security level of documents is applied in (the Minnesota Court Information System) after manual review by court staff,” he said.

According to a handout provided by Christopherson, memos are considered public, while probation recommendations are considered confidential.

Christopherson went on to say that “every person filing non-public documents with the court in public case types is solely responsible for identifying and designating them as non-public.”

While he said he could not speak on the specific case, Christopherson said “in general, court staff will not provide confidential information without a court order authorizing release.”

When asked Sept. 2 for further clarification about the allegations made regarding the improper release of probation data – and how it would be handled – Christopherson reiterated that a court order would be needed

“There’s nothing I can say that’s not in the public record of the case,” he wrote.



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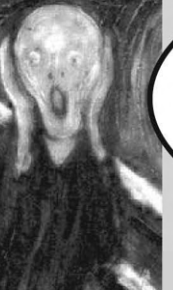
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Woods and Water

by Dick Herfindahl
Outdoors Writer

Another few days at the cabin

This past I was able to enjoy a few days with Brian and my grandson Trevor at Two Harbors. We fished on Lake Superior for two days and caught some lake trout. It was a great time spent with my son and grandson. On Tuesday Brian and I headed to the cabin while Trevor headed home.

Once we arrived at the cabin, we unpacked and were able to relax. Well, actually I relaxed while Brian found some things to do. When you own a cabin, there are always things to work on and Brian enjoys doing that. He did a lot of finish work on the inside of the cabin in a few days.

We had wanted to fish Spider Lake one day and we woke up early on Thursday, ate breakfast and headed for the lake. Spider is about a 40-minute drive to the lake from our cabin. As we pulled into the access, Brian walked down to the dock and checked the access. He said the lake was pretty low, so I watched the end of the ramp as he backed in and sure enough, we couldn't launch the boat without falling off of the end of the ramp. After contemplating our next move, we decided not to risk it and headed for a different lake.

We decided to fish Big Too Much lake, which is near our cabin, and, even though the lake

was also down, we were able to launch the boat. We caught a few fish that day and had a great time. And catching fish was a bonus.

Brian started a campfire again that night and burned up all of the scrap wood that we had left. I was pretty beat that evening, so I sat in the cabin in my easy chair, watching the campfire through the deck door, enjoying the nice breeze that was flowing through the cabin while listening to classic rock on the radio. It just can't get more relaxing than that.

Until next time: With the cooler weather that we are experiencing now, there is opportunity to enjoy time outdoors. I have often said that I enjoy watching wildlife in its natural environment. There are many parks and trails in our area to be enjoyed, whether biking, or walking on a trail in town or at the state park. We have many county parks in the area, along with WMA's Wildlife Management Areas that are all open to the public.

Please take the time to remember our troops that are serving now and those that have served before them. They are the reason that we have all of the Freedoms that we enjoy today.



ADVENTUROUS - Shown here is a picture of Dick's son Brian at the campfire. The two others are of the train that runs from Duluth to Two Harbors and back. One picture shows the people waving from the open door on the car.

LOOKING BACK

25 years ago



- This brand new GMC pumper truck was delivered to the City of Freeborn Fire department on Friday, August 10. Pictured with the new pumper are from the left; Assistant Chief Steve Seipp, first Captain Roger Merritt and Chief Bill Guggisberg. Recently a new fire hall was built to house the emergency vehicles.

- Colette M. Kern and Brian D. Burandt were married on April 9, 2001 at 3 p.m. in the Botanical Garden at Sandals Duns River Resort, Ocho Rios, Jamaica, the Rev. Adrian McLean officiating.



- Panther Cross Country team members are practicing for an improved 2001 season. Here they are starting their Indian Ladder run with Coach Art Barnett amidst the runners near the inside track.

50 years ago

- Bill Sutlief of New Richland is now the director of the Northwest Region of Lutheran Youth Ministries, stationed in Seattle, Washington. He graduated from Luther College in Decorah, Iowa with a major in business and accounting.

- Leslie Hagen of rural New Richland took second place on his ear corn in a new corn division at the Minnesota State Fair last week.



- The winning women's team in the tug-o-war at Waldorf Saturday was the group captained by Mrs. Dale Joecks. In the photo above is the winning men's team, captained by John Kelling, who looks happy after taking six pulls in two days.

- A daughter was born to Mr. and Mrs. Ed Cooley of New Richland Sunday at Waseca Memorial Hospital. The little miss weighed 10 pounds, 8 ounces and has been named Joanna Dorothea. She has a brother, Matthias, who is four years old.

75 years ago

- John J. Chics, engineman first class, has been assigned to the recently recommissioned U. S. submarine, "Dace" according to a news release from the Great Lakes naval station. John entered the Navy in 1942.

- Mrs. Art Spletstoesser has started what could be a thriving industry in New Richland: gathering many types of weeds and grass stalks in their fall condition as well as some flower stalks such as the goldenrod. Mrs. Spletstoesser takes them to a room at the rear of their restaurant and paints them. They make attractive winter bouquets.

- Mr. and Mrs. Rayman Brandt of near Waseca are the parents of their first daughter, born at Memorial hospital, Waseca, Monday October 8.

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NOTICE OF MORTGAGE FORECLOSURE SALE		Recorded on October 11, 2019 and memorialized upon Certificate of Title No. 550.0 as Document Number 2135; as modified of record by document recorded on October 25, 2021 as Document Number T2279 in the Office of the County Registrar of Titles of Waseca County, Minnesota.		Minnesota.		rendered therein has been returned unsatisfied, in whole or in part.		by 11:59 p.m. on April 29, 2027.	
THE RIGHT TO VERIFICATION OF THE DEBT AND IDENTITY OF THE ORIGINAL CREDITOR WITHIN THE TIME PROVIDED BY LAW IS NOT AFFECTED BY THIS ACTION.		ASSIGNMENTS OF MORTGAGE: Assigned to: Freedom Mortgage Corporation by assignment recorded on August 14, 2026 as Document Number T2464 in the Office of the County Registrar of Titles of Waseca County, Minnesota.		NAME OF MORTGAGE ORIGINATOR: BankVista		PURSUANT, to the power of sale contained in said mortgage, the above described property will be sold by the Sheriff of said county as follows:		THE TIME ALLOWED BY LAW FOR REDEMPTION BY THE MORTGAGOR, THE MORTGAGOR'S PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVES OR ASSIGNS, MAY BE REDUCED TO FIVE WEEKS IF A JUDICIAL ORDER IS ENTERED UNDER MINNESOTA STATUTES, SECTION 582.032, DETERMINING, AMONG OTHER THINGS, THAT THE MORTGAGED PREMISES ARE IMPROVED WITH A RESIDENTIAL DWELLING OF LESS THAN FIVE UNITS, ARE NOT PROPERTY USED IN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION, AND ARE ABANDONED.	
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN: That default has occurred in the conditions of the following described mortgage:		LEGAL DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY: Lot Two (2), Block One (1), Prairie Ridge Addition, City of Janesville, Waseca County, Minnesota .		RESIDENTIAL SERVICER: Freedom Mortgage Corporation		DATE AND TIME OF SALE: October 29, 2026 at 10:00 AM.		MORTGAGOR(S) RELEASED FROM FINANCIAL OBLIGATION ON MORTGAGE: None	
DATE OF MORTGAGE: October 4, 2019		REGISTERED PROPERTY		TAX PARCEL IDENTIFICATION NUMBER: 145510020		PLACE OF SALE: Waseca County Sheriff's Office, 122 3rd Ave. NW, Waseca, MN 56093.		Dated: August 28, 2026	
ORIGINAL PRINCIPAL AMOUNT OF MORTGAGE: \$233,333.00		STREET ADDRESS OF PROPERTY: 202 PRAIRIE LN., JANESVILLE, MN 56048		TRANSACTION AGENT'S MORTGAGE IDENTIFICATION NUMBER: 1004296-0007502213-5		to pay the debt then secured by said mortgage and taxes, if any actually paid by the mortgagee, on the premises and the costs and disbursements allowed by law. The time allowed by law for redemption by said mortgagor(s), their personal representatives or assigns is six (6) months from the date of sale.		FREEDOM MORTGAGE CORPORATION Mortgagee	
MORTGAGOR(S): Jesse Kwasniewski and Sarah Kwasniewski, Husband and Wife		COUNTY IN WHICH PROPERTY IS LOCATED: Waseca County,		THAT no action or proceeding has been instituted at law to recover the debt then remaining secured by such mortgage, or any part thereof, or, if the action or proceeding has been instituted, that the same has been discontinued, or that an execution upon the judgment		TIME AND DATE TO VACATE PROPERTY: Unless said mortgage is reinstated or the property redeemed, or unless the time for redemption is reduced by judicial order, you must vacate the premises		Federal law may require reporting to the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network for certain purchases of residential property by entities or trusts. A successful third party bidder may be required to provide ownership and identifying information as a condition to completing the transfer.	
MORTGAGEE: Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as nominee for BankVista								THIS IS A COMMUNICATION FROM A DEBT COLLECTOR. Published in the NRHEG Star Eagle on September 3, 10, 17, 24, October 1, and 8, 2026	
DATE AND PLACE OF FILING:									



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NRHEG Star Eagle

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Emergency Management Director

The city of Ellendale is looking for a person to fill the role of emergency management director. The role involves working with Steele County Emergency Management in overseeing, planning and organizing the necessary response for any emergency disasters that may occur in Ellendale. The role involves attending meetings with the Steele County Emergency Management Department and various organizations involved with disaster relief and recovery.

The position assists in placing citizens who are in need of shelter during emergency situations such as winter storms.

This a paid position with payment for meetings attended and mileage reimbursement.

Please contact the Ellendale City Clerk's office for more details
507-684-2681
office@ellendalemn.com

STATE OF MINNESOTA
COUNTY OF WASECA

THIRD JUDICIAL DISTRICT
DISTRICT COURT
ROBATE DIVISION
Court File No.: 81-PR-26-0147

Estate of
Harry Alfred Sotebeer,
Decedent

NOTICE AND ORDER OF HEARING ON PETITION FOR DESCENT OF PROPERTY

property be determined and a mailing a copy of this Notice signed by this Court to the heirs of the decedent at least 14 days prior sons entitled to the property to the hearing date. Any objections to the Petition must be filed with the Court and delivered personally at least to or raised at the hearing 4 days prior to the hearing date. 1. Notice shall be given to the heirs of the decedent, and no objections are filed or raised, the Petition may be granted.

IT IS ORDERED and Notice is further given, that the Petition will be heard on October 21, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. via Zoom by this Court at 307 North State Street, Waseca, MN 56093.

1. Notice shall be given to the heirs of the decedent, and no objections are filed or raised, the Petition may be granted.

BY THE COURT
Shannon M. Asselin
Court Administrator

A Petition for Determination of Descent has been filed with the District Court. The Petition represents that the Decedent died more than three years ago, leaving property in Minnesota and requests the probate of Decedent's last will. This Notice and Order is provided by law and by:

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(507) 835-3303
Email:



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Viva la Independencia: A celebration of heritage and community

Albert Lea, Minnesota - The community is invited to join in a vibrant celebration of freedom, heritage, and unity at Viva la Independencia on Friday, September 18, from 12 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the North Lot in downtown Albert Lea.

Across Latin America, the call of “Viva la Independencia,” meaning “Long Live Independence,” has echoed for generations as a powerful expression of pride, freedom, and resilience. Throughout the 19th century, many Latin American countries fought for and secured their independence, shaping unique identities rooted in culture and tradition. Today, those celebrations bring people together through music, food, and community spirit.

Albert Lea’s Viva la Independencia event will reflect that same energy and significance. The day will be filled with live music, delicious cultural foods, family-friendly entertainment, and activities in honor of Latin American heritage while embracing the diversity that strengthens our community.

The Albert Lea Convention & Visitors Bureau is proud to present this celebration with the generous support of Car-gill, whose partnership helps make this free community event possible and reflects a shared commitment to celebrating the cultures and traditions that enrich Albert Lea.

“It’s great to see events like this that celebrate the diversity of our community,” said Dalton Dahl, Events & Sponsorship Coordinator for the Albert Lea Convention & Visitors Bureau. “It’s been a pleasure to work alongside community leaders for a fun-filled day that everyone can enjoy.”

The event is free and open to the public. Attendees are encouraged to bring family and friends for a day of culture, connection, and community pride. Food will be in the North Lot starting at 12 p.m. Albert Lea Recreation will have kids activities from 4 to 6 p.m. during the craft sale. Following that, there will be live entertainment by DJ Panda/Robot.

Event Details:
Date: Friday, September 18
Time: 12 p.m. – 8 p.m.
Location: North Lot, Downtown Albert Lea

About the Albert Lea Convention & Visitors Bureau
The Albert Lea Convention & Visitors Bureau is committed to promoting the unique charm and attractions of Albert Lea. We organize and support events that showcase the cultural, recreational, and community assets of our beautiful city.

Area resident delighted by Monarch migration

By DEB BENTLY
Staff Writer

New Richland area resident Cindy Coy was both delighted and surprised when, as she drove her lawnmower under some trees on her property, a small explosion of Monarch butterflies surrounded her momentarily before scattering among the nearby branches.

“It was beautiful,” she recalls. “It made me feel lifted up.”

A U.S. Forest Service document titled “Monarch Butterflies Frequently Asked Questions” provides information from University of Minnesota Monarch expert Dr. Karen Oberhauser. The document shares that Minnesota Monarch butterflies which emerge from the chrysalis in August and later essentially begin migrating as soon as their wings are dry. Thus, the migration begins in early to mid August and often continues into early October, reaching peak numbers fairly early in September.

The butterflies migrate as individuals, but somehow tend to find each other and form groups, known as “roosts” as evening approaches. Oberhauser and others admit it is not known why Monarchs cluster together as they do: speculation is that they are seeking safety in numbers, or are simply attracted to similar areas. Many thousands of Monarchs are migrating southward at the same time, so roosts appear all over the state in many different sizes. As the sun rises and the air warms, Monarchs continue southward individually.

The USDA document states that, if roosts are occurring in the same spot on sequential nights, the butterflies taking part are almost certainly not the same ones who had been there the night before.

Monarchs overwinter in Mexico in a state of “semi-hibernation.” They do need water, often from dew, but do not need to eat.



A BEAUTIFUL FLIGHT - New Richland area resident Cindy Coy can barely believe her good fortune. Hundreds of Monarch butterflies have been gathering on her property for the past several evenings.
Star Eagle photos by Deb Bently

When temperatures begin warming in February, they head north, stopping in Texas where they mate and lay eggs, then die, having lived between six and nine months. When Monarchs arrive in Minnesota around May 10, they are the offspring produced in Texas—the year’s first new generation. Those arriving later may even be second generation, produced somewhere between Texas and Minnesota. The butterflies which arrive here proceed to mate and lay eggs, dying soon afterward. As many as four generations may be produced within the state. The first three live as adults for only 2 or 3 weeks, long enough to reach sexual maturity and reproduce.

As the number of nectar-producing flowers begins to decrease, Monarchs produce a final summer generation. This one is programmed to delay sexual maturity and use the energy that would have contributed to reproduction to fuel its flight southward.

The cycle is complete for another year.

While the facts are interesting and valuable, Coy says the best part for her is the good luck that her lawn, surrounded on the west, north and east by a windbreak that got its start in the 1800s, seems to be a gathering place for this year’s migration. For the past week or so, she says it has brought her great pleasure to sit on her deck as evening approaches: Her line of sight is peppered with Monarchs drifting past silently several feet above her head. At times, five or six will be gliding in the same area, circling and twisting past each other like a giant mobile without strings.

The “roosts” are difficult to spot against the dark-colored leaves of the maples, ash and elm trees, some of which are more than 100 feet tall, but every now and then she sees a small group together on the branches.

“Living in the country is great,” she says of the spectacle. “You get to feel like you’re part of nature, and nature is beautiful.”

■ Royalty from Page 1

and Sheena Olson
King Candidates
Jack Bartlett, son of Amie and Jason Bartlett
AJ Deen, son of Walter and Liz Deen
Brooks Gilliland, son of Lisa and Aaron Gilliland
Ryan Schlaak, son of Nathan and Lindsey Schlaak
Brendan Schmidt, son of Dan and Tina Schmidt
Junior Attendants
Hannah Flatness, daughter of Abby and Gage Flatness
Sawyer Root, son of Alicia and Steph Root
Schedule
Coronation ceremony 7:30 p.m. Monday, Sept. 21.
Monday: Dress Up Day – Pajama Day; Homecoming Kickoff

Tuesday, Sept. 22: Dress Up Day – Students dress as teachers, teachers dress as students; Volleyball tournament
Wednesday, Sept. 23: Dress Up Day – Adam Sandler Day; Olympic games; Royalty visits NR Care Center; Royalty lunch at the elementary school
Thursday, Sept. 24: Dress Up Day – Meme/TikTok; Marvel Madness
Friday, Sept. 25: Dress-up Day – Panther Spirit day; 8:45 a.m. Pep Fest K-5 in Ellendale, 12:30 p.m. parade in Ellendale; 1:30 p.m. Pep Fest in New Richland; 2:15 p.m. parade in New Richland
The Homecoming football game versus Lewiston-Altura begins at 7 p.m. Friday. Homecoming Royalty will be introduced at halftime. Homecoming Dance from 9 to 11 p.m. in the High School gym. Cost is \$3 per individual, \$5 per couple.

Become a Master Gardener: Apply by Oct. 1

ST. PAUL, Minn. (9/10/2026) — The University of Minnesota Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program is accepting applications now through Oct. 1, 2026 for its program, including the 2027 Horticulture Core Course, beginning Dec. 29, 2026. People in all of Minnesota’s 87 counties and of any experience level are welcome to apply.

In 2025, 3,498 certified Master Gardener volunteers across the state contributed 208,400 volunteer hours, reaching 143,650 Minnesota residents around the state. Through their broad and continuous public presence - and by their targeted educational efforts - Master Gardener volunteers helped their neighbors understand and effectively use science and research-based horticulture information.

Because of this volunteer-led work, people in Minnesota are learning how to grow food locally; plant pollinator-friendly gardens; create resilient landscapes that help manage stormwater runoff; improve plant biodiversity and access to natural spaces; and address climate change. Volunteers, meanwhile, enjoy exploring their specific passions and interests while helping their communities.

Tim Kenny, the statewide director of the Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program, said the program has hit record participation numbers in recent years, thanks in part to programming that includes

in-person experiences, hands-on learning, neighbor-to-neighbor engagement and more.

“How people get information has changed dramatically,” Kenny said. “Most of the work that we do now is engagement and learning by doing. I think that’s the future of the Master Gardener Volunteer Program.”

Applications for the 2027 training are due Oct. 1, 2026. The Core Course for the program begins online on Dec. 29, 2026, including optional weekly live Zoom Q&A sessions Tuesday nights through May with University of Minnesota

faculty and Extension educators.

To become an active Master Gardener volunteer, individuals are asked to complete the Core Course and 50 hours of volunteering in the first year. After the first year, volunteers are asked to commit 25 hours to annual volunteer work as well as five hours of continuing education.

Core Course topics include botany and horticulture; soils, composting and fertilizers; integrated pest management; plant pathology; entomology; fruits and vegetables; herbaceous and woody ornamental

plants; lawns; weeds; indoor plants; backyard wildlife; plant diagnostics; science communication skills; inclusive volunteering; and community engagement.

Note: Volunteers are especially needed to grow the Master Gardener Volunteer Program in Brown, Cass, Nobles and Polk counties in the year ahead.

Learn about the program at z.umn.edu/about-mgs. To apply, visit z.umn.edu/MGinfo, write mgweb@umn.edu or call 612-625-9864.

IN BRIEF

Ice Cream Social at Pontoppidan Church of Ellendale Sept. 20
The Pontoppidan Church of Ellendale is having their annual Ice Cream Social from 4-7 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 20. Pork burgers, bbq’s, potato salad, beans, pies and ice cream. Free will donation accepted. All are welcome.

Pumpkins and Apples papercraft at New Richland Public Library Sept. 23
There will be a Pumpkins and Apples papercrafting event at New Richland Public Library at 10:30 a.m. on Wednesday, Sept. 23. Learn how to make sweet apples and pumpkins out of paper. For ages 18 and up.

Ellendale’s Whispering Oak Place Fall Festival on Friday, Sept. 25
There will be an NRHEG Homecoming pre-celebration at Whispering Oak Place from 3:30-5 p.m. for their Fall Festival on Friday, Sept. 25. Music, desserts, yard games, pumpkin painting and plenty of time to visit. Located at 903 Calverly Court in Ellendale.

All You Can Eat Dad’s Belgian Waffles All Saints Sept. 27
All Saints Church of New Richland will hold their All You Can Eat Dad’s Belgian Waffles from 9-12:30 p.m. on Sunday, Sept. 27. There will be a raffle and country store. Cost is \$10.



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