

Maurer



COMMUNITY COMES TOGETHER - Volunteers across southern Minnesota came together for a clean up day in New Richland. Crews worked collectively over 180 hours of service, cleaning houses and the community.

Volunteers answer the call for New Richland Cleanup Day

NEW RICHLAND, Minn. — More than 50 volunteers from across southern Minnesota came together in New Richland for a volunteer cleanup day, helping residents continue the difficult work of recovering from recent flooding. Collectively, over 180 hours of service was completed.

The City of New Richland partnered with the Waseca Exchange Club to organize the effort, with the two organizations working hand in glove throughout the planning and cleanup. The Exchange Club rallied and coordinated volunteers, while City staff identified residents who were still in need of debris removal, demolition and cleanup assistance.

Volunteers came from throughout the region, with some traveling from as far away as the Twin Cities metro and Red Wing areas to lend a hand. The bulk of the volunteers arrived first thing in the morning with trucks, trailers, tools and work gloves ready, while others continued to arrive throughout the day.

Four volunteer crews were dispatched to homes that still faced significant cleanup.

At one of the hardest-hit homes, floodwater had filled the basement and risen approximately four feet into the main floor. Volunteers spent the morning hauling out wet boxes, totes filled with belongings that could not be saved, damaged appliances and other debris. Crews also tore out damaged drywall and building materials as they worked to help the homeowner move another step closer to recovery.

“We were so fortunate to have some carpenters and contractors who volunteered to help. They knew exactly what to do and how to do it,” said Ann Staloch, project co-coordinator. “At their own expense, some volunteers went and purchased lumber to build a new wall for a resident. It’s special to see what people are willing to do for complete strangers.”

The cleanup effort brought together not only individual volunteers, but organizations from across the area. The Waseca County CERT Team assisted with volunteer check-in and helped staff the city dump. Southern Baptist Disaster Relief–Wisconsin/Minnesota provided mold mitigation assistance as part of the day’s work.

Keeping hardworking volunteers fed was also a community effort. Some individuals dropped off food throughout the day, while the Waseca and Steele County

Clean continued on 5

Clarks Grove Historical Society Potluck Picnic Oct. 8

The Clarks Grove Historical Society will hold its Oct. 8 meeting at 6 p.m. at the museum in Clarks Grove with an indoor potluck picnic. Bring a dish to pass. All are welcome to attend.

Soil Water Conservation District (SWCD) Board Meeting Oct. 8

The SWCD will be holding its monthly board meeting at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, Oct. 8. The meetings will be held in the SWCD offices located at 300 North State Street - Door 4.

Bingo at Ellendale Community Center Saturday, Oct. 10

The Ellendale Area Heritage Society will sponsor Bingo at the Community Center starting at 6 p.m. Saturday, October 10. Twenty games and Blackout for \$20. Food items are available for purchase.

Pasta Dinner and Bake Sale at Zion Lutheran Church Sunday, Oct. 11

There will be a pasta dinner and bake sale at the Ellendale Zion Lutheran Church from 11 a.m. thru 1 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 11. Celebrating 140 years, will have garden spaghetti, chicken alfredo, coleslaw, bread, pickles and homemade pies.

Farmers Fuel Coffee brews near Hartland

By DEB BENTLY
Staff Writer

Andrew Phillips discovered coffee during college. The 2023 NRHEG graduate was recruited to play baseball at South Dakota State University, where the simultaneous demands of the Agricultural Technology degree he was pursuing, coupled with a rigorous physical regimen, brought him to rely on the brew

Coffee continued on 7



AG ENTREPRENEURSHIP - Andrew Phillips, founder and leader of Farmers Fuel Coffee near Hartland, shows a map that indicates where his company’s products are sold. Nearby is one of the displays available for use at retail outlets.

Star Eagle photo by Deb Bently

Muff announces write-in campaign for NR mayor

By ELI LUTGENS
Publisher/Editor

Larry Muff, 63, of New Richland has announced a write-in candidacy for Mayor of New Richland.

After the recent flooding, Muff said he was approached by a New Richland resident saying he spoke for a group of individuals who wanted him to run for Mayor.

“I have been at city council meetings for five years, pounding them,” Muff told the Star

Eagle. “They sit back and wait for someone else to fix it.”

After thinking about the request, Muff has started a “write in” candidacy for mayor, since the deadline for filing has passed, asking members of the community to write in his name for Mayor on November 3, 2026.

Muff, currently a candidate for the Waseca County Soil and Water Supervisor District 3 position,

Campaign continued on 10



STRONGER THAN WATER - At left, Dan and Amber Lewer, owners of Neighbor’s Meats in New Richland, are grateful to their employees whose work and dedication helped make it possible for the company to be back in operation only three days after flood water receded from their building. Right, New Richland Auto Repair owner Isaac Kofstad, left, with company employee Andrew Hoelscher, in front of equipment and supplies which had to be placed on elevated surfaces to protect them from rising flood water.



Star Eagle photos by Deb Bently

Vigilance, resilience allow quick response at businesses

By DEB BENTLY
Staff Writer

The pictures—and the rumors they spawned—implied complete ruin.

New Richland businesses Neighbor’s

Meats, owned by Dan and Amber Lewer, and New Richland Auto Repair owned by Isaac Kofstad, were both completely surrounded by water during the flooding that hit the community the morning of Sept. 19.

Both also had their doors open and were serving customers within 2 to 3 days after the water’s retreat, though rumors had suggested they would be forced to close their doors forever or move to alternate locations.

At New Richland Auto, water levels eventually reached about 30 inches. The

Business continued on 4

A word from The Word

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God [...] will guard your hearts and your minds.

Philippians 4:6-7



FenceLines

by Mark Bernard

Suckin’ on a chili dog outside the Tastee-Freez

The scurs had the Weather Eye programmed for sunshine and we received. Does our luck hold or do we see an about face? Starting Thursday, mostly sunny with highs in the mid-60's and lows in the mid-40's. Mostly sunny Friday with highs in the upper 60's and lows in the mid-50's. Sunny on Saturday with highs in the upper 70's and lows in the low 60's. Sunday, mostly sunny with a modest chance of evening showers. Highs in the mid-70's with lows in the low 50's. Mostly cloudy on Columbus Day with a fair chance of rain. Highs in the low 60's with lows in the low 40's. Tuesday, cloudy with highs in the upper 50's and lows in the mid-40's. Cloudy Wednesday with a good chance of rain. Highs in the low 60's and lows in the mid-40's. The normal high for October 12th is 61, and the normal low is 39. The scurs will take Columbus Day off. Then, of course, they take every Monday off.

Soybean combining commenced in earnest over the weekend. Not everyone went full bore, but by Monday afternoon it was game on. Moistures were acceptable after lunch once the dew came off. Reported yields in the 70 - 80 bu./acre range have proven soybeans the sleeper crop some thought it might be. Amazing what can happen when Mother Nature co-operates. When the wind blows, most can go well after dark and start earlier in the morning.

They're also running 35' - 40' soybean platforms as opposed to the 20 - 25 footers they grew up with. Some of us who are really old were combining with 6' pull type machines. Sitting on an open station 30 hp tractor eating dirt and dust all day, you could take two 36" or 38" rows. Three when you happened to catch the guess row. Good times.

After a September to remember (or forget), we were hoping the October weather would be more favorable. It couldn't have been much worse in this part of the world. Ellendale reported 12.58" while New Richland had 12.93" while making the national headlines with all the flooding. NOAA's upcoming Fall Weather forecast appears to offer up a kinder, gentler October and beyond. That forecast released Sept 30th is showing better than even odds of above normal temperatures and better than even odds of below normal precipitation. The three month October - December forecast also appears to be reasonably favorable with better than even odds of above normal temperatures and even odds of above or below normal precipi-

tation. That forecast was released on September 17th, so it is due to be updated in the not too distant future. Stay tuned.

Another fall car cruise has come and gone. The weather gods smiled upon us. Sunny with perfect temps. We wound our way through SW WI towards Black River Falls. An impromptu stop between there and the border to wet our whistle in Melrose at Fob's and we were good to go. Once in Black River Falls, my copilot and chief navigator suggested a stop at a couple antique stores, one of which had a beautiful mural outside of old cars and scenes from the past. It was all done with cans of spray paint, not unlike some of the art displayed on railroad cars. The owner came out to see our collector automobiles and visited for quite some time before deciding he'd probably better get back at it. The visit to the casino was relaxing as the women gambled and we boys visited, telling many stories, all of them true.

On our return run, we encountered the roundabout fiasco in Winona. Once the dizziness subsided we worked our way to Chatfield, MN and the small Dairy Queen, reminiscent of the Dairy Queens of my youth. A welcome stop. Of course, we couldn't eat at the Tastee-Freez in Chatfield anymore. It was located on the south end of Chatfield's main drag where U.S. Hwy 52 and MN Hwy 30 intersect across from the park. I can remember going there as a kid and having a sundae in our old '57 Buick. The building today houses a barber shop. How quaint to be driving a '59 Studebaker Silver Hawk past the location and dredging up old memories. Tastee-Freez likely pulled out of Chatfield in '63 or '64 after the company filed Chapter 11. Studebaker stopped making cars in March of 1966. A lot of things changed in that timeframe. Those were just two of them.

<https://www.mashed.com/730063/the-untold-truth-of-tastee-freez-ice-cream/>

The hummingbirds were last seen at the ranch on October 2nd. They had another good, long run, first spotted in our backyard this year on May 8th. They hung around longer than most years. Usually by the end of September, they're on their way south to Central and South America. I'd cleaned out their feeders and evicted copious numbers of Asian ladybeetles from one of them, replacing it with a feeder they couldn't get

Fencelines continued on 10



In My Humble Opinion

by Deb Bently

Unanticipated pleasures all the better for the surprise

At my family's cabin near Akeley, I sat up in surprise on Sunday morning. I wondered whether what I had just heard was the call of a loon, but I was searching in my head for what other bird or animal it might be. After all, the four loons who had spent the summer on the lake had already left.

But then it came again, and there could be no doubt. The wistful call was definitely a loon.

Around 9:30 a.m. there was no resisting the lake. The sky was lightly overcast, the temperature was in the low 50s. The water's surface was mirror smooth.

I had no expectation of catching any fish, but what I did end up catching was vastly better: My brother and I were floating quietly along, the pontoon being pulled by its fancy self-guiding trolling motor. Only feet from the boat, an adolescent loon came splashing noisily to the surface. Then it stayed nearby—as though we, rather than it, were the attention-grabbing curiosity.

And just maybe I was a bit

“loony.” My brother turned off the motor, but the loon left us feeling as if we were still in motion. I pulled out my phone, opened the camera, and began pivoting in every direction trying to get a good angle. The loon obliged, not only staying near, but circling us, sometimes disappearing under water and then popping back up to the surface like a visual version of the word “surprise!”

I was mesmerized when it swam directly beneath me, its neck stretched forward and its feet extended far behind, all easily visible in the clear water, but too fast-moving for me to line my phone up for a picture.

Instead of the dramatic black and white markings of adults, this adolescent was in elegant shades of gray which blended with the water. The subdued light reflected gently on the rippling surface, as though nature were painting with a carefully chosen palette.

I wish you could have been there, because even the photo



SURPRISE! - Deb and her brother caught sight of an adolescent loon only feet from their boat at their cabin near Akeley.

Star Eagle photo by Deb Bently

doesn't do the moment justice.

Another deluge of delights awaited us at the “Lost 40,” a trail in Itasca County located inside a 144-acre area that was mislabeled by surveyors in the 1880s, and so never made available for logging. As a result, some of the trees there date from the 1700s—researchers have determined the area started over then after a major fire cleared what stood there before. It was one of the most relaxed walks I have ever taken because I kept stopping to be amazed.

There were many trees I could not close my arms around. There were some that four people could probably not have made a large enough ring to encircle.

Looking upward, the treetops seemed miles away. Around me

on the ground, the tree roots seemed to own the earth, with knobs and long runs so prevalent, a person had to alternate quickly between checking the ground for hazards and eying the sky for wonders. In a few hilly spots, tree roots actually provided footing.

Between the trees, the colored leaves, the intriguing mushrooms and the winding trail, it seemed like it would have been a sufficient outing simply to stand in one place and spin.

Adding greatly to the pleasure was the solitude.

We followed the one-mile version of the trail, and encountered no more than 10 people as we walked. That was as it should be: As far as I'm concerned, marveling and distraction do not mix.

The key to a happy life includes meaning



Just a Thought...

by Eli Lutgens

On Thursday of last week, I finished a two week course of antibiotics intended to fix my gut health. After two weeks I can report I still have pain in my gut, the usual kind. However, within three days of the antibiotic, my back, which had not healed over 10 months, was about 50% better. By the end of week two of this treatment, my back was 90% healed. I am back to walking 10,000 plus steps a day and energy I didn't know I had anymore has returned. Apparently chronic gut health issues can cause inflammation and malnutrition (i.e. being tired and not feeling yourself). The back and leg pain was inflammation in my back pushing against the sciatic nerve going into my leg, making me miserable.

As someone who feels the need to make the most of every day, my version of that, these past almost four years now, since the chronic gut pain started, has looked different than the fairytale version I dream up. Speaking with people these past two weeks does not feel like a chore. I am participating in the com-

munity and honestly, to me, most importantly, moving again. Three weeks ago I found myself simply saying prayers asking for the ability to enjoy one more walk outside on a nice day.

I am told even after taking this antibiotic for two weeks, it will still take my gut a couple weeks to recover from the damage done by the bacteria it killed off. To be frank, I am not hopeful nor do I believe it will fix the pain I am experiencing. I believe what was treated was something wrong with my GI, but likely not the entire problem. My physical therapist told me I am problematically optimistic because I'm always like, “it will get better.”

We are told as people to let tomorrow worry for itself. That doesn't mean we shouldn't work towards making tomorrow

better.

I have follow up appointments and more tests to figure out this stomach stuff. I am praying that this energy that I haven't felt since the first 18 or so months of running my Waseca newspaper is here to stay. One truly doesn't know how good they have life until they lose something important. I have never been happier to walk in my entire life. Throughout these past two weeks, I was so happy to be able to walk without pain that I quite literally wanted to run. (I didn't do that for health reasons.)

As someone who doesn't particularly enjoy staying in and watching television or playing video games, these past almost 10 months have been particularly difficult. I enjoy people and meaning. Sitting and doing nothing feels unfulfilling and not at all relaxing.

My real message here is to people in good health. Enjoy walking. And also, enjoy being able to sit not in pain either, because that was also a literal pain in the butt.

I think the keys to a happy life are to have a job or role in life that gives a person meaning, have friends and family and community; and finally have a self care routine, exercise, eating right, quality alone time and being a friend to your future self. Let tomorrow worry for itself and don't stress about the little things.

On Sept. 27, I was approached by a New Richland resident who said they and other

Residents have been talking and they wanted me to run for Mayor. This wasn't on my radar since I have filed for Re-Election to the SWCD. They said they would vote for me as a “write-in vote.” I said I would think about it.

As I attended the City Council meeting September 28th, I was thoroughly disgusted by the City's not paying attention to the water situation, which resulted in late reaction times.

911 was notified at 9 and 10 p.m. that water was backing up into basements on South Broadway. 911 said they had notified parties about it. I drove around town every two hours that night looking for City response. It wasn't immediate. Sounds like a 4 hour span since the 8 p.m. 911 call.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Send your letters of comment to:
Star Eagle, P.O. Box 248, New Richland, MN 56072
or email us at steagle@hickorytech.net.

Elected officials didn't think to notice the heavy rain and went to sleep, instead of monitoring the water level.

In your Commissioners report, it was stated the (3rd) Flood Control Design south of town is designed for a 100 Year Flood event. I sat on the first Flood Control Design and when the Engineer stated that the design was for a 100 year flood, I asked him what was a 100 Year Flood rainfall. He stated it was 7 inches of rain in 24 hours. I replied that 2010 and 2016 was a 7 inch rain fall event in 12 hours. He replied that was considered a 500 year flood. I asked why then wasn't it

designed for what we actually had, a 500 year flood.

He ignored me and moved on. Plan (2) was scrapped because of calculation errors I called out. And now Plan (3) is calculated for only a 100 year rainfall event when we just had 7 inches of rain in 4 hours? There are two of your Council members on this newest study and they didn't call this out?

All this added to all the technical design issues in Boot Creek in which I have been speaking up to the Council about over the past 5 years that needed to be fixed to reduce flooding and no sign of the City Council having

the ability to address these issues was the final factor for me.

All I see is the City Council blindly sitting back and letting someone else and Plan (3) Project solve the problem. I have already identified a flaw in it. If you accept everything an Engineer Firm says as 100% correct, you will regret it. I have found too many errors in Research Proposals and Engineer Designs to blindly trust them.

So I told the resident who asked me to run that, “I was in.” So I am announcing my Candidacy for Mayor of New Richland as a Write-In Candidate. I have checked and it is legal for me to serve both the SWCD and as Mayor if Elected. But I won't serve both. If elected to both, I will step down as SWCD Supervisor and focus on New Richland Mayor responsibilities.

Thank you, Larry Muff

NRHEG Star Eagle

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PHONE: 507-463-8112

FAX: 507-463-0504, email: steagle@hickorytech.net

USPS No. 382-040, address: 128 North Broadway

Mail: PO Box 248, New Richland, MN 56072

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GOLDEN LINK: Previous Friday

ELI LUTGENS
MELANIE PILTINGSRUD
AMELIA ROESLER
DEB BENTLY
JIM LUTGENS
TERESA ROSACKER
PAYGE ROSACKER

Publisher
Copy Editor
Editor
Staff Writer
Sports Editor
Advertising Sales
Editorial Assistant

Contributors: Al Batt, Bob Hanson, Mark Bernard, Mark Domeier, Dick Herfindahl, Barb Mrotz, Brenda Dokken, Judy Tweeten, Rachael Jaegar, Tristan Gehring, Ben Revermann, Payge Rosacker, Darin Reese, Rachel Laverink

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Compostings

by Al Batt

Let’s see how far I can kick this bucket

ECHOES FROM THE LOAFERS’ CLUB MEETING

I broke 60 on the golf course last week.

Wow!

Yeah, those golf carts really move.

DRIVING BY BRUCE’S DRIVE

I have a wonderful neighbor named Bruce. Whenever I pass his drive, thoughts occur to me. It’s the launch of the “lower our expectations weather” season. I stopped at a rural cemetery to honor a lost loved one. A lofty wind turbine spun nearby. Wind turbines are like lutefisk; people either value them or detest them. Some say they are defacing the Earth, and others say they are saving it. A friend considers them turn-and-earn. Even gradual change is right quick. There are days when they seem to be everywhere. We have inherited the wind.

I find them astonishing. It’s my job. Mary Oliver wrote, “Let me keep my mind on what matters, which is my work, which is mostly standing still and learning to be astonished.”

It reminds me of this astonishing conversation: “Look at that flock of cows.”

“Herd of cows,” came the correction at a gallop.

“Of course, I’ve heard of cows. That’s why I’m pointing out that flock of them to you.”

We had Holstein cattle that were recognizable by their distinctive black-and-white markings, which were as unique as human fingerprints. The cows had names. One coworker/cow was called Montana because she had a marking that looked like Montana, only much smaller than the actual state. We had another cow that was named Bob. It’s an odd appellation for a cow. Visitors asked why a cow (not a bull) was named Bob, and whether it was short for Roberta or Bobby. I told them a story. A neighbor named Bob went to the junkyard. He was supposed to be throwing things away, but part of going to the landfill is picking things up. He did that, but there was free junk available to grab, and he picked up a lamp. It was a dirty lamp, so he took out his red handkerchief and shined it up a bit. There was a “poof,” as a genie appeared from the lamp and offered Bob one wish. The standard offer used to be three wishes, but budget cuts had reduced it to one. Bob was stumped and asked for a few days to decide. The genie said he was a busy genie and required a prompt answer. He offered Bob a helpful suggestion. “People always want to be who they aren’t. You can become anything you want, but it must be something you

can see from here. You stand there for a minute and then give me your wish. Think long and hard before deciding. Bob was concentrating when he heard a cow moo. He turned to look. Surprised to see a bovine there, he said, “A cow!” That’s how Bob became a Holstein cow.

I’VE LEARNED

If I could get all these multi-colored lady beetles to pay rent, I’d be sitting pretty.

I am one of the few people who keep gloves in the glove compartment.

The first 3 letters of “Sweden” and “Denmark” spell out “Sweden.” The remaining letters spell out “Denmark.”

To all those wonderful classmates who wrote “Stay cool” in my high school yearbook, I’m sorry to disappoint.

BAD JOKES DEPARTMENT

Hamburger Helper works only if the hamburger is ready to accept that it needs help.

I made a belt out of old watches. My wife called it a waist of time.

I’ll never forget the last thing Grandpa said before he kicked the bucket. “Let’s see how far I can kick this bucket.”

NATURE NOTES

Jerry Viktora of Ellendale wrote, “Al. We have had a screech owl making lots of racket the last few early mornings. Starts talking about 3 until the sun rises. Hollers about every 2-3 minutes steady. Would think it would get hoarse and slow down after a while. Noisy, yes, but cool. Thoughts.” Eastern screech owls are socially monogamous and generally stay with the same partner for life, with some exceptions, usually involving the need for divorce lawyers. Pairs often use the same tree cavity, old woodpecker hole or nest box for consecutive breeding seasons. Adult screech owls call in the fall to defend territories and to reconnect with mates. Autumn is a secondary peak period for their vocalization when both adult and young owls stake out and defend their home ranges before the harsh winter weather hits. Mated pairs use smooth tremolo “bounce songs” to stay connected, reinforce pair bonds, and confirm boundary ownership. Descending whinnies and barks warn off rivals or intruders encroaching on established territories. Hatch-ear owls are learning the ropes. Their calls can sound unprofessional as they practice becoming professional owls.

MEETING ADJOURNED

“I’ve been searching for ways to heal myself, and I’ve found that kindness is the best way.”—Lady Gaga.

Despite appearances, Maurer house escapes damage

By DEB BENTLY
Staff Writer

Rudy Maurer probably never imagined he would be launching his pontoon in the wee hours of the morning—or in the middle of the street. But that’s exactly what happened not long after sunrise on Saturday, Sept. 19.

Rudy and his wife Becky, in their mid-sixties, have lived in the blue house adjoining the New Richland Care Center, 220 First Street Northeast, for the past three years. They have been enjoying the increased comforts of some remodeling work they completed over the summer and always enjoy having the grandkids over for some fun. Some of their adult children live nearby, including right in New Richland.

Overnight from Sept. 18 to 19, Rudy received a call from his daughter about midnight asking for help because water was coming into her basement. He went over to help; when he returned about 3:30 a.m., he saw there was water coming into his basement, too.

He and Becky grabbed a shop vac, and afterwards an extra pump. Family members came over to help and brought or borrowed equipment.

Volunteers began delivering sandbags, both to the Care Center and to the perimeter of the Maurers’ house, but by the time a perimeter was created, water was already inside the sandbag wall. More pumps were found, more family members and friends came to help. A trench caught the water and a pump sent it outside the wall.

Everything was under control at the Maurer household, but next door at the Care Center, staff and volunteers were working hard to get residents evacuated as access to the building, and the building itself, began to fill with water.



BOAT OF SERVICE - Rudy and Becky Maurer in their pontoon which carried medical equipment and supplies out of the New Richland Care Center as it was filling up with water. Some staff members, but no residents, rode on the pontoon with the last load of equipment as members of the high school football team pushed the craft through sometimes chest-high water.

Star Eagle photo by Deb Bently

With everything under control at home, Rudy stepped over to help.

He helped push some of the last residents—those who were bedridden—out to waiting transportation. Though the hospital-type beds were cranked up as high as they would go, Rudy remembers that water was up to the level of the mattress in the bed he was pushing. He, of course, was up to his hips.

With the last residents evacuated, staff expressed concern that certain pieces of medical equipment and some supplies would be needed as residents were cared for at the middle school gym.

That’s when Rudy thought of his pontoon. He was able to back it on its trailer to the end of his driveway and out into the street, where he scissored it down to the water. Volunteers—famously, members of the high school football team—pushed the pontoon over to the Care Center building. Care Center staff loaded on the needed equipment, and the volunteers pushed the boat back to its trailer. Rudy drove it to the school, it was unloaded, and returned for another load.

Though stories have been shared that residents rode on the pontoon, Rudy clarifies that, when the

water had risen so high inside the Care Center that no more equipment could be brought out, some of the facility’s staff members climbed onto the pontoon for the last of the three trips the boat made. But all the residents were evacuated before the pontoon was even launched.

Back at the Maurer house, six pumps were in operation, keeping water from reaching the exterior walls. Then the household got the news the electricity needed to be turned off—their house was on the same circuit as the Care Center; authorities had determined it would be unsafe to leave the power on in the flooded building.

Still, the Maurers’ network of assistance held.

To keep the six pumps running, four generators were found.

Becky remembers watching the fire hydrant across the street. At its highest, the water left only the large nut on the top visible. At that point, water had surrounded their house on three sides, had come all the way up the driveway, and was begin-

Maurer continued on 5



HARVEST HELP - Another Feed a Farmer event took place at the LeSueur River Lutheran Church over the lunch hour on Sunday, Oct. 4, 2026. Volunteers are pictured from left: Keira Hutchins, Judy Kortz, Stacy and Rob Hutchins, Lori Routh, Sandy and Bobbi Tollefson, Jim Kortz and Jim Tollefson.

Star Eagle photo by Ben Revermann

LeSueur River “Feed a Farmer” donates for local flood relief

By BEN REVERMANN
Staff writer

The LeSueur River Lutheran Church held its sixth Feed a Farmer event on Sunday, Oct. 4. This was a to-go food service held for farmers in the middle of harvest, with the intent of giving them a chance for a quick and hearty meal out in the field. Event organizer Leanne Hojberg said, once costs were covered, LeSueur River was able to raise more than \$2,000 for the New Richland Disaster Response Fund.

Farmer continued on 5



HELPING HANDS - Alliah Rosacker, Sophia Johnson, Hailly and Killian Sanchez, Jovanny and Domingo Huerta were the running helpers for the Feed a Farmer event.

Star Eagle photo by Ben Revermann



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OBITUARIES

Helen Steins

Helen C. Steins, age 98 of Clinton, Iowa and formerly of Rochester, Minnesota, passed away on Saturday, September 19, 2026, with her family by her side at her daughter's home in Clinton.

Helen was born on June 20, 1928 in Waseca, Minnesota to George and Mary (Dinneen) Demmer. She grew up attending school in Rochester and graduated from Rochester High School in 1948. She married Vincent Steins on June 30, 1948 at St. Francis Catholic Church in Rochester and they later divorced.

Helen lived in Rochester where she raised her daughters and was employed as an assembly worker at Waters-Connelly, currently Telex in Rochester, for 43 years. She also repaired hearing aids and did Audiology training.

She belonged to different bowling leagues over the years, and enjoyed spending time doing counted cross-stitch, ceramics, going dancing, and was a member of the Tops Club. In her later years, she moved to Clinton to be near her family.

Helen is survived by her two daughters, Sharon (William) Buske of Clinton, Iowa and Sheila (Roderick) McElroy of Bellingham, Washington; seven grandchildren, twelve great-grandchildren, and six great-great-grandchildren. She



Helen Steins

was preceded in death by her parents, ex-husband, Vincent Steins on July 11, 2004, one brother, and two sisters.

The Funeral Mass for Helen will be held at 10 a.m. on Saturday, October 10 at Co-Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church in Rochester, with Father Bob Horihan officiating. Friends and family may visit one hour prior to the service at the church. The burial will be at 2 p.m. on Saturday, October 10, at Calvary Catholic Cemetery in New Richland, Minnesota.

Arrangements entrusted to Schleicher Funeral Homes, Plainview Chapel, the guest register may be signed at www.schleicherfuneralhomes.com.

William Caron

William "Billy" Fredrick Caron, age 62, of Faribault, passed away on September 27, 2026.

Billy was born on July 5, 1964 in Faribault, Minnesota to William Johnson and Sandra Caron. He was raised in Faribault, where he attended high school before continuing his education at Vo-Tech, studying small appliance repair.

Throughout his working years, Billy held a variety of jobs, including positions at Land O'Lakes, Cybex, and Geneva Appliance. He was a hardworking man who took pride in providing for himself and those around him. As his health began to decline, he eventually had to step away from the workforce.

Billy faced his first battle with cancer in 2023 when he was diagnosed with salivary gland cancer. After completing treatment, he proudly rang the bell on August 14, 2023, marking an important milestone in his journey. In the fall of 2025, Billy was diagnosed with brain cancer and continued to face his health challenges with courage and strength.

In 2011 Billy met Tracie Rosacker and moved in with her. He then found great joy and pride in farm life. He loved tending to his large garden, where he grew an abundance of fresh vegetables and beautiful flowers. His 19 free-range chickens were another source of pride, and he cared for them diligently, making sure they were tended to at all the right times of the day. Billy also enjoyed caring for the 26 outdoor cats he and Tracie shared, each one becoming part of the family.

He looked forward to his weekly games of FanDuel sports, enjoyed reading Scripture from his Bible, and was a devoted fan of the Minnesota Vikings and Minnesota Wild. In his younger years, Billy also enjoyed playing



William Caron

on a softball league for years in Faribault. Whether he was in the garden, caring for his animals, cheering on his teams, or simply enjoying the things he loved, Billy found plenty of ways to make life interesting and enjoyable.

Billy leaves behind his beloved partner in life, Tracie Rosacker; mother, Sandy (Dan) Barker of Medford, MN; daughter, Mallory (Sean Weinberg) Teigen of Cape Coral, FL; grandson, Max; Tracie's children, Nathan Lutgens, Matthew (Katie) Rosacker, Eli Lutgens, and Jessica Lutgens; Tracie's grandchildren, Nevaeh Rosacker and Aria Nowak; Tracie's mom, Kathryn Richardson; his half-sister, Cheryl Bickness; nephew, Devin Meyer; and his beloved cat, RU.

He was preceded in death by his dad and grandparents.

A memorial service will be held on Thursday, October 8, 2026 at 1 p.m. at the State Street Chapel of the Dennis Steffel Omtvedt Funeral Home in Waseca; Pastor Sarak Krolak will officiate. Billy's family will greet guests at a visitation held one hour prior to the service at the funeral home. A private Interment will be at Oak Hill Cemetery in Clinton Falls, MN.

Lois Wasmoen

Lois Ingrid (Evenson) Wasmoen of Albert Lea, Minnesota, passed away on Tuesday, September 29, 2026 at The Waters of Highland Park in St. Paul. She was 94 years old.

A Funeral Service will be held at 11 a.m. on Saturday, October 10, 2026 at First Lutheran Church in Albert Lea, with visitation one hour prior to the service. Pastor Ryan Stevenson-Cosgrove will officiate. Burial will follow at LeSueur River Lutheran Cemetery near New Richland, Minnesota.

Lois was born on December 3, 1931 in rural Steele County to Oscar and Ella (Sunde) Evenson, the sixth of their children. She was baptized on January 3, 1932, and confirmed on May 19, 1946 at LeSueur River Lutheran Church in rural New Richland, Minnesota. Throughout her life, Lois' faith remained important to her as she attended Sunday school and church. When she was nearly four, her family moved to the Evenson family farm following the death of her grandfather. She became a

companion to her grandmother Maren and valued the time they shared. Lois grew up near New Richland, attended Ruth Country School, and graduated from New Richland High School on June 2, 1949. After graduation, she worked on the family farm before moving to Albert Lea, where she was employed as a bookkeeper at Queen Stove Works. On August 2, 1952, she married Richard "Dick" Wasmoen at LeSueur River Lutheran Church. Six weeks later, Dick was drafted into the U.S. Army during the Korean Conflict. After his training, Lois joined him at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, and they remained there for two years. They returned to Albert Lea, where they both worked. Dick's employment led them to relocate to Swea City, Iowa, where they welcomed three children: Marcia, Brian, and Alan. In 1970, Wilson's transferred Dick to their station in New Ulm, MN. Lois worked in the office at Pink's clothing store. In 1975, they returned to Albert Lea, where they settled.

Lois remained active in church life in every community where she lived.

She sang in the choir, participated in women's groups, and attended many Bible studies, including Bethel and Search Bible Studies taught by Richard. She valued time spent with family and friends, whether in person or by phone, and took great pride in her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

She is survived by her children: Marcia (Roger) Ahlgren, Brian Wasmoen, and Alan (Terri) Wasmoen; seven grandchildren: Jeremy (Angie) Ahlgren, Darren Ahlgren, Brett (Elisa Vicuña) Ahlgren, Judd Wasmoen, Jardy Wasmoen, Lara Wasmoen, and Reid Wasmoen; four great-grandchildren: Gabby, Anna-leise, Theodore, and Oscar; and by numerous nieces and nephews, friends, and loved ones.

Lois was preceded in death by her husband of 55 years, Richard Wasmoen (2008); her parents, Oscar and Ella Evenson; her siblings: Stuart (Dorothy) Evenson, Oswald (Marjorie) Evenson, Margaret (George) Ellis, Helen (Alvin) Mork, and Lenore (Robert) Johnson; her great-granddaughter Ella Ahlgren; and



Lois Wasmoen

Wasmoen family members; several nieces and nephews; and other family members and friends.

Memorials are preferred to : Peace and Power at First Lutheran Church or the LeSueur River Lutheran Cemetery fund.

Bayview/Freeborn Funeral Home in Albert Lea, MN, has been honored with assisting the family.

Delores Radke

Delores Alma Radke, age 96, of New Richland, Minnesota, passed away peacefully on October 2, 2026 at Lakeshore Assisted Living in Waseca, Minnesota.

Delores was born on August 11, 1930 in Waseca, Minnesota to Otto Radke and Carrie Stier-nagle.

Delores married Robert Eustice on October 25, 1948 in Waldorf. They later divorced. Delores later married Floyd

Johnson, and together they shared many years and became a part of each other's families.

Delores was a member of Trinity Lutheran Church.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Otto and Carrie; her former husband, Robert Eustice; her husband, Floyd Johnson; her daughter Jean's husband, Richard Schumacher; her daughter Virginia's husband, George Langlie; and many other beloved family members.

She is survived by her children, Jean Schumacher, Virginia

Langlie, Gary (Kris) Eustice, and Todd (Stacey) Eustice, along with her grandchildren, great-grandchildren, great-great-grandchildren, extended family, and friends who loved her dearly.

She also leaves behind members of Floyd's family, including Rodney and Joan Johnson, Pat Johnson, and their families, who became an important part of her life.

Delores will be deeply missed and lovingly remembered by her family and friends.



Delores Radke

■ Business

from Page 1

lower third of all plaster walls in the building is now stripped to studs. Cabinets and desks have been removed and scrapped, and Isaac estimates recovery costs could reach \$100,000. The company's most valuable diagnostic equipment, including some sensitive electronics, survived undamaged because Isaac placed what he could on one of the workshop's hydraulic lifts and raised it to maximum height. Shelving and a tall hay rack located in the workshop also held equipment high enough to keep it dry.

Wearing hip waders, he was able to remove the company's computer, complete with essential financial records, the morning of Sept. 19 as water continued to rise past levels he had experienced in prior flooding incidents.

At Neighbor's Meats, an estimated \$20,000 worth of meat products in the company's retail displays had to be discarded, along with some recently processed wild game. Dan estimates the lost product and any so far unrevealed repair needs for the building, wiring or equipment may cost the business up to \$500,000. Dan and Amber say that, despite the dire appearances on Saturday, their business was able to be back in production by Wednesday for four main reasons: Efforts to block water out held

rather well; where water did enter, drains continued to remove it. The power stayed on, keeping meat in unaffected freezers and coolers within required temperature ranges. No sewage infiltrated their space. And most of their 20 or so employees were quick to provide help. In one freezer where water did penetrate, Dan was able to adjust the temperature controls: had he not done so, there would have been not water, but ice, to remove along with the contaminated product.

The USDA Inspector visited their plant essentially as soon as it could be accessed and performed safety checks and tests, then offered guidance about how to proceed. Company equipment was not damaged, and was cleaned, washed and sanitized twice before being returned to use.

Asked how they managed their phenomenal turnaround, Isaac, Dan and Amber share stories that begin with watching the weather forecast and being prepared to respond.

In the case of Neighbor's Meats, Dan and Amber remember feeling torn—the weather forecast predicted less than three inches of rain. The two live outside of town, and could see and hear fierce thunder and lightning, and radar images showed red. A phone call alerted them the water in the creek that runs alongside their business was rising. "I was here every hour," Dan describes. A trip to town around 1 a.m revealed the creek was still inside its banks;

"We're taking some time as we plan how to move forward. We'll do what we can to be ready, because I'm convinced there will another flood." — Isaac Kofstad

nearby, a city employee was pumping water.

Around 4 a.m., Dan and some helpers used a pickup truck and skid loader to place heavy duty plastic at the business's exterior doors, then to weight it down with sand.

Shortly after sunrise when Amber took a pickup into town, she drove through water up to the floorboards on both Highways 13 and 30, but found that, although water was on the sidewalk out front, it had not yet reached their building.

With all the preparations they could make taken care of, the couple was in for a tense day of monitoring their property to see what would develop.

Isaac arrived at the auto repair building around midnight and took the precaution of lifting what he could as high as possible. Around daylight, with water high and still rising, he was able to move vehicles to higher ground, although parking spaces there were difficult to find. He left four vehicles that were scheduled to go to the salvage yard where they were.

Water levels continued to rise much of the day, finally leveling off late in the afternoon and then

beginning to recede.

At Neighbor's Meats, the water was no longer touching the doors at 10 a.m. on Sunday. That afternoon, they were able to remove the plastic and sand, open the doors, and let the building begin drying out. Dan and Amber express their gratitude to the Geneva Bar and to Midwest Refrigeration, both of which loaned them refrigerated trucks or vans to store product in as they cleaned.

In addition to having been able to protect or remove important equipment and records, Isaac is able to identify one small silver lining: "We're using it as a chance to go through everything and clean out what we haven't used in a while," he comments. Also, although the plaster walls will require time to repair, at least the tile flooring in his office spaces is undamaged. Out in the workshop, employee Andrew Hoelscher is able to do some vehicle repairs, in addition to being available to reorganize the workspace when cleanup is complete.

"We're taking some time as we plan how to move forward," observes Isaac. "We'll do what we can to be ready, because I'm convinced there will be another flood."



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Sportsmen’s Club holding tree initiative at St. Olaf Lake

By DEB BENTLY
Staff Writer

Within the past few months, 11 trees have been planted at St. Olaf Lake Park east of New Richland. Funds to cover the purchase and planting for nine of the trees were donated by area residents, many as a memorial to a family member. In addition to covering costs for some trees already planted, the Sportsmen’s Club has put forward funds for two trees with the intent of creating an opportunity for additional donors to cover the costs and have their loved ones listed on a plaque which will be posted on the pavilion at the park.

Those who donate trees may name a departed loved one, or may choose a brief message to be included on the plaque. So far, donors who have covered the cost of a tree include Pam Streng (2 trees), members of the St. Olaf Lake Association (2 trees), and the families of David Smith, Shawn Young and Jane Wagner, as well as the Sportsmen.

Club leader Lee Mendenhall shares that the Sportsmen’s Club put together a tree-planting initiative after learning 22 oak trees at the park

had died and been removed. He says the club regrets seeing the loss of the “savanna” style landscape the oak trees created, and is working to encourage the planting of new trees to preserve the park’s beautiful, peaceful atmosphere.

Replacement trees have trunks two to three inches thick, and have been selected for being suitable for the space and likely to thrive in the existing conditions. They were professionally planted by Rocks and Roots Landscaping of Hartland.

The cost to sponsor a tree is \$500. Anyone wanting further information can contact Lee Mendenhall at 507-475-1444.

The new trees are not oaks. Experts who were consulted about the dying trees admitted they could not identify a specific cause, but were at least able to eliminate oak wilt, a highly contagious airborne disease. Oak trees, experts said, have been dying in fairly large numbers throughout the Great Lakes Region for the past few years. Aging, highly variable rainfall from year to year, and susceptibility to insect infection created by stressful conditions are all possible causes.

■ Maurer

from Page 3

ning to lap a few inches into the garage.

She and Rudy remember feeling a surge of relief when the water first held at that height and then, what seemed like an eternity later, gradually began to reveal more and more of the hydrant’s red length.

In the midst of all that tension, the couple could not help being pleased when a hummingbird made its way across the flooded terrain and stopped to dine at the feeder hanging outside their front door.

■ Clean

from Page 1

Salvation Armies provided volunteers with a hearty smoked pork meal.

“We are so grateful for the partnership of the Waseca Exchange Club in their coordination of volunteers for us,” said Tyler Lendt, New Richland City Administrator. “Their efforts have been impactful for some of our hardest-hit residents.”

For the Waseca Exchange Club, the day was an opportunity to put the organization’s commitment to service into action and to bring people together from well beyond the immediate community.

“Exchange’s motto is ‘Unity for Service,’ and we are grateful we could bring together so many hands from a 70-mile reach to put in the meaningful work for our

Though it probably looked from the outside as though their home was deluged, Becky describes their experiences that day as a flood of blessings.

“What we went through, that wasn’t anything compared to everyone else,” she says firmly. “We’re grateful for the help from our family. We’re grateful for the volunteers who were willing to get us sandbags.” She particularly mentions area farmer Matt Holland who drove his skid loader through water to deliver the bags.

“We worked really hard and we had a lot of help.

“But still it seems like a miracle we had almost no damage,” she says. “We feel awful for people who lost so much, and we know we were blessed.”

Waseca County community,” said Mikhail Rostislavovich, President of the Waseca Exchange Club. “It is remarkable what can be accomplished when determination and compassion meet.”

While the physical work of flood recovery continues for some New Richland residents, the cleanup day demonstrated the impact that can be made when local government, service organizations, disaster-response groups and individual volunteers work together toward a common purpose.

For the homeowners who watched strangers arrive with trucks, trailers and tools and simply ask where they could help, the day was also a reminder that they are not facing the work of recovery alone.

If you would like to contribute to the recovery for residents, consider donating to the Waseca Area Foundation’s fund for New Richland’s Disaster Relief.



REUNION - Front Row: Michael Rossing, Chuck Lund, David Friestad, Lester Casterton, David Neckanicky. Middle Row: Robert Cook, Kaye (Grunwald) Allen, Pauline (Kasper) Fetterley, Renee (Swearingen) Holmes, Carla (Aronson) Scripture. Back Row: Tom Broskoff, Mark Foster, Garlyn Bergdale, Daryl Paulsen, Gerald Ellis.

EHS Class of 1966 celebrates reunion

By KATHY PAULSEN

The Ellendale High School Class of 1966, which graduated 60 years ago, June 2, gathered at the Blooming Prairie Cue Company and Pizza Cellar on Wednesday, September 16, 2026.

The 1966 Graduating Class from Ellendale High School numbered 48 students and Kaye Grundwald Allen and Gerald Ellis once again organized the class reunion this year and they were pleased to have 15 members of the class in attendance.

Class members in attendance, along with their guests, included Carla (Aronson) & Burt Scripture of Motley; MN; Garlyn Bergdale, of Tempe, AZ; Tom (Sybil) Broskoff, of Albert Lea, MN; Bob (Carol) Cook of Harris, MN; Gerald Ellis, Inver Grove Heights, MN; Mark (Carol) Foster, Ellendale; MN; Dave (Marta) Friestad, Mesa, AZ; Kaye (Grunwald) Allen, Otsego; MN; Pauline (Kasper) & Richard Fetterly, of Faribault;

MN; Chuck (Linda) Lund, of Ironton; MN; David & (Jody) Nechanicky, of Albert Lea; MN; Duane Nelson of Sarasota, FL; Daryl (Kathy) Paulsen, of Geneva; MN; Mike (Renita) Rossing, of Minnetonka; MN; and Renee (Swearingen) & Tony Holmes, of Ellendale, MN.

This year a dinner of roast beef, mashed potatoes and gravy, tossed salad, green beans and dinner roll was served, along with a dish of sherbert and an ice cream cookie for dessert.

Following dinner, Gerald Ellis asked his classmates to share information with him if any of their addresses or telephone numbers had changed this past year.

The class members in attendance for the reunion also remembered and shared memories about class members no longer with them, including Ellen Berg Hanson, Bob Burslem, Earl Cleven, Bob Crabtree, Tom Goodonature, Brent Ingvaldson, Alice Johnson, Roger Knutson,

Brian Langlie, Tom Misgen, Charles Montayne, Alvin Olson, and Pat Phillips,

Classmates not in attendance for the reunion this year were also remembered, and included: Phyllis (Bryant) Loe of Minneapolis; MN; Carol (Burslem) Putrah of Good Thunder, MN; Helen (Crabtree) & Lyle Swearingen of Blaine, MN; Beverly (David) & Henry Barron, of Minneapolis, MN; Floyd (Judy) Davidson of Tower, MN; Steve Gothman of Longville, MN; Jennelle Haberman of Hastings, MN; Sally (Halverson) & Greg Trytten of Albert Lea; MN; John Hanson, of Maple Grove; MN; Lynn (Hanson) & John Suess of Loveland, CO; Larry (Elaine) Howell of New Prague, MN; Kathy (Jensen) & Steve Roth of Lake Crystal, MN; Lynda (Jensen) & John Oldenburg, of La Mesa, CA; Jeff (Sharon) Lageson of Geneva; MN; Roger (Joyce) Larson of Ellendale; MN; Eileen (Lindsay) Langford, Waseca; MN; Teresa (Ne-

chanicky) & Peter VonRuden, of Algona, IA; Duane (Diane) Nelson, Sarasota, FL; Merlyn (Butch) Ottesen and Gail (Sorenson) Ottesen; of Delavan, MN; Merlyn Paulson, Fort Collins, CO; Barry Ribbe of McKinney, TX; Tom Roberts of Austin; MN; Dennis Vogelsang, Albert Lea; MN; Diane (Weseman) & David Leeds, Reading, PA; Peggy (Whalen) Whales, Motley, MN; and Sharon (Wittmer) Hemenway, Albert Lea, MN.

Before the afternoon reunion came to a close, the EHS Class of 1966 decided to gather again next year, which will be the 61st Anniversary of when they graduated. They plan to meet on Wednesday, September 15th at the Blooming Prairie Cue Company and hoped that the class members would put it on their calendars and hoped that they, along with other members of their graduating class, make plans to attend next year.

■ Farmer

from Page 3

The suggested donation for each meal was \$16, but many paid more for the sake of a good cause.

Judy Kortz, one of the main organizers for the day, was in the church basement giving directions and pushing out a large order with the assistance of six youthful helpers, children of parishioners. They had something of a production line, passing styrofoam containers along to be filled with roast beef, real mashed pota-

toes and gravy, green beans, dinner rolls and Rice Crispy bars. Said Kortz, “We have 10 volunteers here and six kids helping. That big order we just sent out is going to Randy Lewer; he bought 15 meals for his workers.”

Kortz explained the event is a joint effort between LeSueur River Lutheran and Vista Church. “A large number of the people ordering are from our church, but we do have a lot of non-members ordering as well. By the end of the day, we will have fed over 190 farmers from this area.”

It was close to noon and the kitchen was beginning to prepare a reward of lunch for everyone who was giving their time. There

“Once the cost of the food is covered, then we can donate the rest of the funds to the New Richland flood victims.”

— Leanne Hojberg

had been some concern as they seemed to be running low on buns, but it looked like they would be okay. A poster board summarized which church members were donating food and the time they had signed up to deliver it. Also visible was a list of volunteers who had signed up to help for the day.

Hojberg said, “Once the cost of the food is covered, then we can donate the rest of the funds to the New Richland flood victims. Usually it goes back to the church, but with the heavy rain, that changed our plans.” While the intent was that meals were “to go,” Kortz mentioned there was space available. The LeSueur River Lutheran Church is located at 16650 250th Ave. Vista Lutheran Church is located at 15035 275th Avenue.

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Panthers nipped in double OT

NRHEG football team takes No. 3 Redwood Valley to the brink

Redwood Valley, ranked No. 3 in the state in Class AA, strolled into its game last Friday with a perfect record, and they left with the same. They eked out a 50-42 double-over-time victory over the Class A New Richland-Hartland-Ellendale-Geneva Panthers at Redwood Falls. The final result isn't all that surprising considering the Cardinals' considerable advantage in MaxPreps' Minnesota football rankings (they are ranked 21st, while the Panthers are ranked 117th).

The Cardinals had a 28-20 lead at halftime, but the Panthers did not back down and showed Redwood

"A lot of good thiungs happened, but a lot of things that are also left to be desired."

— NRHEG coach Devin Lockerby

Valley that they weren't a team that could be taken easily. It was an example of how improved NRHEG is from last year. After a losing season, they turned things around under first-year head coach Devin Lockerby and are making strides in Section 1A. The Panthers' offense has been excelling, as they are so far the only team to score more than two touchdowns against Redwood Valley. The Cardinals gave up just 12, 14, 7, and 12 points in their first four games of the season.

"It was a hard fought game

against a really good opponent," said Lockerby. "Redwood Valley is a top-ranked team for a reason. It was a fun game on a beautiful night. A lot of good things happened, but a lot of things that are also still left to be desired."

Redwood Valley's win bumped its record up to 5-0. As for New Richland-Hartland-Ellendale-Geneva, the defeat dropped its record down to 3-2.

The Panthers play this Friday at 7 p.m. at Fillmore Central, host Medford Oct. 14 and finish the regular season Oct. 20 at home against Maple River.



RUNNING HARD — Sean Lassahn runs the football during the previous week's NRHEG Homecoming football game. Photo by Jim Lutgens

NRHEG spikers fall to JWP

The New Richland-Hartland-Ellendale-Geneva High School volleyball team traveled to Janesville last Thursday to face Janesville-Waldorf-Pemberton for the Bulldogs' Homecoming match.

It was a battle, but the home team prevailed 3-0, winning 29-27, 25-21 and 25-16.

The Panthers came out strong, taking a 9-0 lead in the first set, but the Bulldogs came from behind.

"There were many good rallies and a lot of scrappy volleyball throughout the match," said Panthers head coach Bethany Tennis. "We need to clean up our offensive attacks and stay consistent throughout games in order to see success. We look to next week for two matchups against Kenyon-Wanamingo and Alden-Conger."

NRHEG statistics vs. JWP: Ezra Boerner five digs; Izley Boerner three digs; Clara Buendorf three blocks; Sierra Fish two kills, one dig, one block; Aubrey Hendrickson one kill, 13 digs, one set assist; Jovey Knudson one kill, three digs, three blocks; Anika Ladlie seven kills, two dogs, one block, one ace serve; Brooklyn Sommer five digs; 11 set assists; Emmy Stadheim two digs, three kills, one block; Clara Stenzel six digs.



VOLLEYBALL ACTION — Above left, the Panthers' Jovey Knudson sets the ball against Hayfield in a recent home match. Below left, Izley Boerner bumps a shot. Above, Ezra Boerner delivers a spike. Photos by Jim Lutgens

Wobbrock, Jewison again lead CC teams

The New Richland-Hartland-Ellendale-Geneva cross country teams always look forward to Janesville's annual Pie and Cookie meet, held last Thursday at Prairie Ridge Golf Course.

The top five finishers for varsity get a choice of pie, and the next 10 finishers receive a large cookie.

Mankato Loyola/St. Clair/Cleveland won the girls' meet, scoring 25 points. Blooming Prairie was second with 49, followed by Maple River with 65, WEM/JWP at 98 and Randolph 135.

Julieann Wobbrock again led the NRHEG girls, finishing second overall with a time of 20:00.5 for 5,000 meters. Violette Botten placed 36th in 25:56, Rylie Cromwell 41st with a time of 29:10.

Loyola/St. Clair/Cleveland finished first in the boys' varsity, totaling 45 points, followed by



STRIDING OUT — All members of the NRHEG cross country teams bettered their times from a year ago at JWP last Thursday. From left are the Panthers' Colton Lermom, Kasey Jewison and Rylie Cromwell. Photos by Larry Nydegger

Blooming Prairie with 56, WEM/JWP 75, Martin County West/Butterfield-Odin 108, United South Central 118, Maple River

134, Randolph 170 and Blue Earth Area 194.

Kasey Jewison continued to pace the NRHEG boys, taking third with

a time of 17:51 for 5,000 meters. Colton Lermom was 39th in 21:33, Devlin McWilliams 46th in 22:28.

"Kasey continues to get himself in

the mix of the top runners in the area, which is fun to see," commented Panthers' head coach Larry Nydegger. "All runners today

improved their times over last year on this course, which shows that their commitment to the team and the process is paying off."

Applications open for 2026 Steele County Toys for Tots program

Big news for the 2026 Steele County Toys for Tots season: applications are moving entirely online! You can now fill out and submit your registration for toys directly on our website. Please note that we are no longer using paper applications, and only online submissions will be accepted.

Applications are available online on the Steele County Toys for Tots website <https://owatonna-mn.toysfortots.org>. Please go to the Request a Toy tab at the top of the website navigation bar. Click on the application and fill out all of the required fields. Once accepted, you will receive a notification about your specific pick-up date and time.

Applicants are encouraged to fill out the online application early to give volunteers time to sort toys and do their best to fulfill each family's request. Late applications will be accepted between Dec. 1-15, 2026.

For those needing a computer or internet access to reach the Steele County Toys for Tots website to fill out an applica-

tion, the Owatonna and Blooming Prairie Public Libraries provide free computer usage and open public Wi-Fi.

Parents/Guardians and children must live in Steele County. Children must be 16 and younger as of Dec. 31, 2026, and kindergarten and older must be attending school or home schooled. The application must be completed by the parents or guardians.

Toys for Tots of Steele County has been in existence for more than 40 years. It operates within the national U.S. Marine Corp Reserve Toys for Tots program, which began in 1947. Its objective is to collect and distribute NEW and UNWRAPPED toys to Steele County needy children at Christmas. Cash and gift cards received are used to purchase toys as per directives from our national organization.

For more information about Steele County Toys for Tots, visit the website <http://owatonna-mn.toysfortots.org> or go to the Steele County Toys for Tots Facebook page for updates.



SYRUP? - On Sunday, Sept. 20, the Geneva Fire Department held their annual Fall Pancake Breakfast at the Geneva Community Center.

Geneva Fire Department Pancake Breakfast

By KATHY PAULSEN

The Geneva Fire Department once again hosted their annual Fall Pancake Breakfast at the Geneva Community Center on Sunday, September 20 from 8 to 12.

The firemen served pancakes, hot off the grill, scrambled eggs, and ham links, along with orange juice, milk and coffee to over 180 supporters.

The FREE WILL donations that they received from the Pancake Breakfast will be used for additional training and equipment for the Geneva Fire Department, which in-

cludes a total of 14 firemen ON CALL, including Fire Chief Curt Boswell, Assistant Chief Alex Beenken, and Secretary/Treasurer Alex Beenken. Alex also serves as a Training officer and Justin Stieglbauer and Tyler Peterson serve as Captains.

The remainder of the department consists of Steve Bailey, Jim Beenken, Travis Broskoff, Garry Gordinier, Wyatt Gross, Mike Johnson, Tyler Peterson, Justin Stieglbauer, David Thompson and Shannon Wobschall.

The Geneva Fire Department also has two EMT's, Curt Boswell and Mike Johnson, as

well as seven First Responders, including Lonny Bartsch, Alex Beenken, Travis Broskoff, Wyatt Gross, Tyler Peterson, Justin Stieglbauer.

Both Seth Hartmann and Josh Scheffer of Hollandale assist Geneva as Daytime First Responders as well.

The Geneva Fire Department, along with their EMT's and First Responder's, offer a big THANK YOU for everyone who continues to support them during their annual Pancake Breakfast and Turkey Bingo events.

■ Coffee

from Page 1

prior to his early morning workouts.

"It had never really been part of my life before that," he recalls. "But it became part of my routine in college."

A member of the fourth generation to live on and work the land on what is now the Aaron and Jeanette Phillips farm east of Hartland, Andrew began to speculate about how his generation's search for a good cup of coffee could be part of his connection with agriculture.

"From what I could see," he describes, "the successful brands of coffee all seemed to have a mission—something they called attention to and supported."

Remembering numerous times when farmers in the region had stepped in to help injured or ill neighbors, he found the North Dakota organization "Operation Farm Rescue," which does exactly that—sends in equipment or crews to save family farms at financial risk due to circumstances beyond their control—frequently injury or illness.

"They're amazing," Andrew says of the people at the organization. "They find out about a farm or ranch that's having trouble, and they help. They save the farm."

According to the group's web

site, Farm Rescue was first formed in 2005 and has given assistance to more than 1,300 farmers. Services include planting, harvesting, making hay, feeding livestock, hauling commodities, and delivering hay to ranches hit by drought or other disasters. Assistance is focused on small to mid-sized family farms located throughout the upper Midwest including the Dakotas, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Illinois, and others.

A college sophomore at the time, Andrew sent off an email summarizing his idea: he would like to produce a line of coffee, some of the profits from which would help support Operation Farm Rescue.

"I got an email back," he says with a tone that still bears surprise. "They thought the idea had possibilities."

Having found his endorsement, Andrew proceeded to found his business. He navigated the steps to register Farmers Fuel Coffee as his business name. In partnership with his father, he purchased a small coffee roaster with a capacity of 500 grams—just over 1 pound. He created a web site and got the appropriate Federal Department of Agriculture (FDA) food preparation certification for a portion of one of the buildings on his family's property.

His first steps in producing roasted coffee beans were gradual. "I read a book, watched

some videos, and from there, it was trial and error," he remembers.

Quite a bit of trial and error.

"I started with a 25-pound bag of raw coffee beans," he says of his first tries. "I used up dang near all of it before I got something good."

Andrew explains that, although it would be nice if he could grow it on his farm, coffee thrives only in tropical climates.

Unlike the soybeans familiar to Minnesotans, the "beans" are actually the almost rock-hard, dried pit of a small cherry-like fruit. They are half to two-thirds the size of a soybean, have the greenish-brown color of dried grass, and are rough and pitted rather than being smooth.

Andrew tells that humankind has been refining its use of the bean since about the ninth century, when a farmer in Ethiopia reportedly noticed his goats had extra energy after eating the wild cherries that create the beans.

Producing grounds that will meet the demands of discerning coffee drinkers, he observes, begins with choosing the beans. Without going into too much detail, there are "robusta" and "arabica" families of coffee: robusta is prized for its higher caffeine content, arabica for its refined flavor. Farmers Fuel is produced using arabica beans.

The artistry of making coffee, Andrew goes on to explain, lies in roasting the beans, which must be brought to a temperature that

draws out the flavors coffee drinkers cherish; steps along the way are "light," "medium" and "dark" roasts.

"The next step," Andrew summarizes sardonically, "is charcoal."

Once roasted, the beans are either bagged whole or ground and immediately sealed.

In the two years or so since his first batches, Andrew's business has grown exponentially. The first retailers to carry Farmers Fuel coffee were Wagner Foods in New Richland, Lerberg's in Ellendale, and the Marketplace grocery store in Wells.

Andrew continued to look for outlets, reaching out to ag-associated retailers, including Scheel's in Mankato. After dropping off samples at some large retail chains, he reached agreements with both Bomgaars and the Iowa chain Norby's Farm and Fleet. Talks with additional companies continue, with some exciting possibilities in the wings.

Thanks to those retail agreements, he can now point to a map of the upper Midwest with so many pointer arrows on it that many of the boundary lines between the states are invisible. "You can buy Farmers Fuel coffee at all those places," he says with an affirming nod, explaining the arrows represent more than 400 stores. The seven different roasts he produces, one French vanilla flavored, can also be purchased directly from the

company website. Options range from light to dark roast, and include either whole bean or ground versions of "Barnyard Brew," "First Crow," "Rescue Roast," "Front Porch," "Bronco Bold," "Rolling Coal," and "Diesel Drip."

From that first 25-pound bag of coffee beans, his company now sometimes purchases thousands of pounds of beans at a time, roasting 100 pounds or more an hour. What was once an area of the building taped off on the floor has now become the entire building with FDA certification.

Andrew's initial studies in ag technology have become a degree in ag business.

Along with the growth of Farmers Fuel and the completion of his degree, Andrew says he takes pride in the mission which helped get it all started—continuing to support Operation Farm Rescue by donating about five percent of each sale. "They're great people," he says of organization leaders. "I love talking with them about the projects they're working on."

"Being able to help support that is incredible."

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- Minnesota Agriculture Fertilizer Research & Education Council
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- Waseca SWCD
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- Minnesota Soybean Growers Association - "Director of the Year"
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Woods and Water

by Dick Herfindahl
Outdoors Writer

Spending time with family is the best

I have always cherished time with family, and in the past week my wife and I were blessed with visits from all three of our great grandkids. My grandson, Taylor, brought his two girls, Avery and Illa, to the house for a visit. Both of the girls have red hair. Illa, the youngest, has flaming red hair and resembles both of the parents, as does Avery. It is sure fun to see Taylor and the girls.

On Sunday my grandson, Dylan, his wife, Kloe, and their son, Krew, came to Dylan's dad Brad's house for the day. We spent the late afternoon and evening there letting Krew entertain us. He is all boy with a motor that doesn't quit. That was another fun day for us.

I have heard that the fishing around the area is really going "great guns." I have heard that the crappies, walleyes, perch and northern are all very active in various lakes around our area. I can't remember when the fall fishing has ever been this active. I know a couple of folks that have always had luck in the fall, but from

what my source says the fishing is very good.

I am heading to the Minneapolis VA for a couple of appointments this week. After that my son, Brad, and I are heading to the cabin for a few days to close it up for the year. While there, we plan on doing a little fishing on top of doing a little relaxing. I hope the fishing is as good in the north country as it has been around here lately.

DNR reminds license buyers to make sure youth have their licenses early.

Minnesota offers a perfect opportunity for experienced deer hunters to share their knowledge and traditions with youth ages 10-17 during the statewide youth deer season.

The four-day season will take place statewide Thursday, Oct. 15, through Sunday, Oct. 18, and coincides with statewide teacher workshops, when many Minnesota schools are closed for fall break.

"Youth have this awesome opportunity that's set up just for them to



Shown here is a picture of four generations, left to right is Dick's grandson, Dylan, his son Brad holding grandson Krew, and himself.

succeed and get a great introduction to deer hunting," said Paul Burr, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources deer coordinator. "The season is popular, with around 20,000 youth participating each year."

Temperatures in the middle of October are generally warmer than those during the regular November firearm deer season. Snow hasn't typically fallen yet, and deer are moving more during the daylight hours. These factors create an ideal environment for youth interested in deer hunting.

General information about requirements for youth hunters and their accompanying adults is available on the Minnesota DNR youth

deer season webpage (<https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/hunting/deer/youth.html>). Firearms safety information is available on the Minnesota DNR firearms safety webpage (<https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/safety/firearms-safety.html>). General deer hunting information is available on the Minnesota DNR

deer hunting webpage (<https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/hunting/deer/index.html>).

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.

LOOKING BACK

25 years ago



- Each board of the barn on the Verna Schoenrock farm built in 1923 is being carefully removed by Richard Jefferies. Richard has been dismantling barns for nearly 25 years. The salvaged materials are used in a number of ways.



- First place in the Milt Opener at Lura Lake on September 15 was John Koziolk and Tom Koziolk. First place went to the team with the most pounds of gamefish. Here they are pictured with Milt Swenson, the honoree of the tournament.

- John Kunelius had seven receptions for 144 yards and three touchdowns, Friday night as Waterville-Elysian-Morristown defeated Gibbon-Fairfax-Winthrop 34-6 in Gopher Valley Conference Football. Brian Rupe threw the three touchdown passes of 55, 29 and 31 yards.

50 years ago

- Congratulations are to be given to Bunny Tesch on becoming an active member of Lambde Delta Phi Sorority, Gamma Chapter, on October 4, 1976. Ms. Tesch is a Sophomore at the University of Minnesota. Bunny is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Armin Tesch of Waldorf, Minnesota.

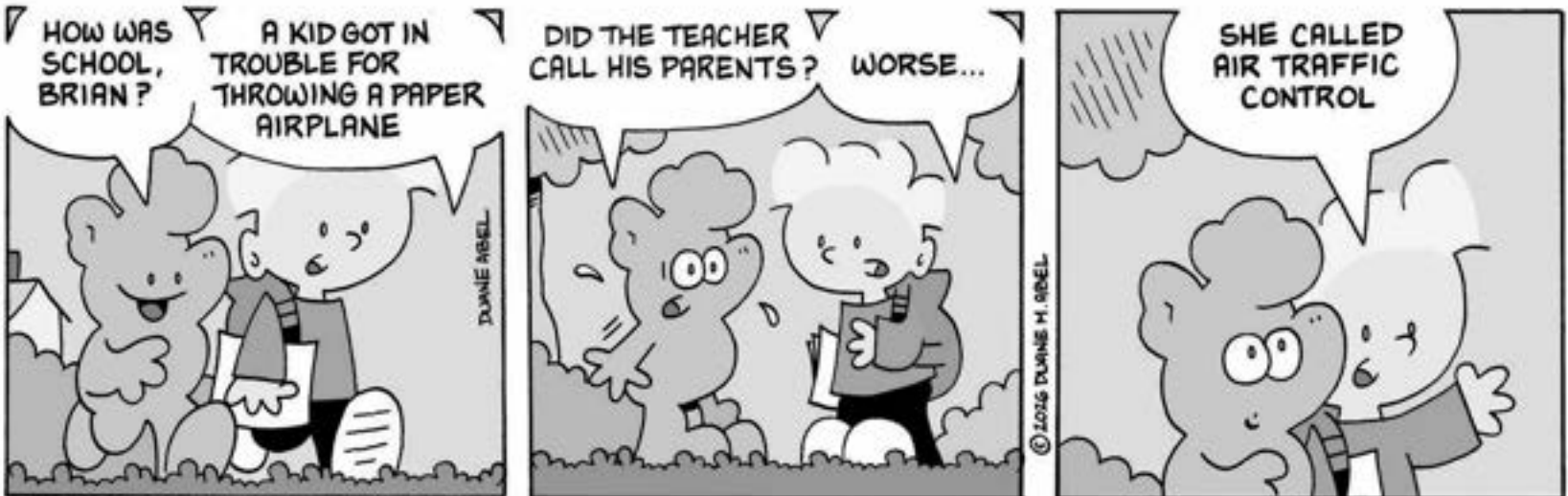
- During the Minnesota State Fair, the presidents of the various State Beef Associations met and elected Lynn Ewald, Waldorf president of the Junior Purebred Beef Heifer Classic Council, which involves Charolais, Angus, Horned Hereford, Polled Hereford and Shorthorn junior associations.

75 years ago

- Leo Parriott sold a truck load of turkey breeder hens a week ago Wednesday to one of the big turkey breeders at Lamberton. The Lamberton man is one of the big turkey raisers in the area.

- Mr. and Mrs. S. J. Root of Waseca announce the arrival of a grandson, born Saturday, October 21, to Mr. and Mrs. T. L. Crumb of Port Angeles, Washington. Mr. and Mrs. Crumb also have a three year-old daughter and another 22 month old son.

ZED by Duane M. Abel



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NRHEG Public Schools
Ind. School District No. 2168

Snow Removal Quotes

This is to notify you that the NRHEG Public School #2168 will be accepting quotes for Snow Removal for the 2026-2027 and 2027-2028 school years for the New Richland location only.

The Board of Education will be taking action on submitted quotes at the regular School Board meeting scheduled for Monday, October 19, 2026.

Please submit your quote to: Michael Meihak, Superintendent, 306 Ash Avenue South, New Richland, MN 56072 by 12pm on Monday, October 19, 2026.

Sarah Wacholz
Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent
NRHEG Public Schools
Published in the NREHG Star Eagle on October 8 and 15, 2026



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NOTICE OF GENERAL ELECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 2168
New Richland, Minnesota

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, that the general election has been called and will be held in and for Independent School District No. 2168, New Richland, State of Minnesota, on Tuesday, the 3rd day of November, 2026, for the purpose of electing four school board members for four year terms. The ballot shall provide as follows:

To vote, completely fill in the oval(s) next to your choice(s) like this: 

School Board Member 4 Year Term
Vote for Up to Four

☐

Amy Ihrke

☐

Troy Buendorf

☐

Pat Theuer

☐

Nick Budach

☐

John Misgen

☐

Justin Schlaak

☐

write-in, if any

The polling places for this election and the precincts served by those polling places will be as follows:

WASECA COUNTY
Wilton Township
Otisco Township
Byron Township
New Richland Township
City of New Richland

FREEBORN COUNTY
Bath Township

City of Freeborn
Freeborn Township
City of Geneva

Geneva Township
City of Hartland
Hartland Township

STEELE COUNTY
Berlin Township
City of Ellendale
Lemond Township
Somerset Township
Summit Township

31353 West Wilton River Road, Waseca, MN 56093
13243 290th Avenue, Waseca, MN 56093
117 Division Street East, New Richland, MN 56072
117 Division Street East, New Richland, MN 56072
203 North Broadway, New Richland, MN 56072

Mail Ballot Precinct/Freeborn County Government Center/
411 Broadway Ave S, Albert Lea, MN 56007
402 Park Street, Freeborn, MN 56032
402 Park Street, Freeborn, MN 56032
Mail Ballot Precinct/Freeborn County Government Center/
411 Broadway Ave S, Albert Lea, MN 56007
405 1st Avenue South East, Geneva, MN 56035
407 Broadway Street South, Hartland, MN 56042
407 Broadway Street South, Hartland, MN 56042

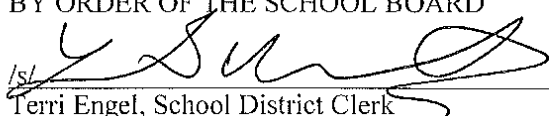
Ellendale Community Center, 507 2nd Street South East, Ellendale, MN 55026
Ellendale Community Center, 507 2nd Street South East, Ellendale, MN 55026
Lemond Town Hall, 7423 South West 74th Avenue, Ellendale, MN 55026
Steele County Trail Assn, 9028 South West 37th Avenue, Hope, MN 56046
Summit Town Hall, 1380 East Highway 30, Ellendale, MN 55026

Any eligible voter residing in the school district may vote at said election at the polling place designated above for the precinct in which he or she resides. The polls for said election will open at 7:00 o'clock a.m. and will close at 8:00 o'clock p.m. on the date of said election.

A voter must be registered to vote to be eligible to vote in this election. An unregistered individual may register to vote at the polling place on Election Day.

Dated: August 7, 2026

BY ORDER OF THE SCHOOL BOARD



Terri Engel, School District Clerk

Loren Schoenrath
acting as School District Clerk

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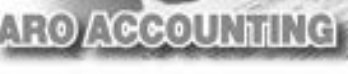


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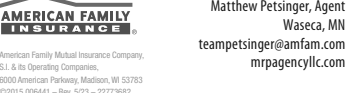


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Informal gathering forms amicable group

By DEB BENTLY
Staff Writer

“We go wherever they’ll take us,” jokes Nijole Aaseth. “We get together about once a month,” agrees Marilyn Meyer. “It’s a good chance to see each other and catch up on things.”

“Right now, we’re talking about the flooding in New Richland, because we care.”

A group of nearly 30 ladies gathered for lunch at the Red Leaf Cafe in New Richland on Wednesday, Sept. 30.

Meyer, Aaseth, and others seated nearby took a few minutes to explain their group is an informal gathering.

“Everyone is welcome,” observes Aaseth. “We encourage people to invite friends.”

The group has been gathering and growing since the Covid pandemic lockdown ended, glad for a chance to get together and visit. Those in attendance have their residences all around the NRHEG area, and have met at the Ellendale Cafe, the Geneva Bar, The Willows, and the Three-in-One in Hollandale.

The size of the group depends on who has time on the chosen day, but one clear predictor is the time of year, since a fair number of “snowbirds” are not in town during the winter months.

The typical procedure, they explain, is that one or two group members volunteer to be the planners for the next month. They choose a restaurant and speak with the owners about reserving the whole location for an hour or more. Much of the time, a single meal is chosen; group members are notified what the meal will be and what the cost will be, then let the organizers know in time to be sure the restaurant has supplies to feed the entire group.

Aaseth and Meyer remember that the largest number of people who’ve ever attended is 42.

“That was at The Willows,” recalls Aaseth.

“It was so loud in there, you had to practically shout, so people could hear you.”

Organizers also usually arrange for door prizes, which are given out as the meal winds



GAB SESSION - A group of nearly 30 area ladies gathered for a once-a-month gab session at the Red Leaf Cafe in New Richland on Wednesday, Sept. 30. Planners for the event were Dorothy Gonitzke and Cindy Coy.
Star Eagle photo by Deb Bentley

down. Their final task is to recruit their replacement to put together plans for the following month’s gathering.

“Then we usually visit until [the restaurant] kicks us out,” jokes Meyer.

Members say they enjoy coming because of the lively conversation, the tasty food, and the chance to do something a little outside the everyday.

Planners for the September gathering were New Richland

area residents Dorothy Gonitzke and Cindy Coy, who said they were glad to take on the task for many of the same reasons—as well as it being a chance to work together on a project, and a way to help continue the sessions.

Red Leaf owner Theresa Grubstad expressed her thanks to the group, saying she appreciated their confidence and support.

Albert Lea city wide garage sales return October 8 - 11

Albert Lea, Minnesota - Cooler temperatures, colorful leaves, and unbeatable bargains are all part of the season as the 2026 Albert Lea City Wide Fall Garage Sales return October 8 through October 11. Shoppers from across the region are invited to spend the weekend exploring neighborhoods throughout Albert Lea in search of unique treasures and incredible deals.

Each year, residents across Albert Lea host garage sales throughout the community, creating a citywide shopping experience filled with antiques, seasonal decor, clothing, collectibles, household goods, and hidden gems waiting to be discovered. Whether you’re searching for vintage finds, Halloween decorations, or practical everyday items, there’s something for every bargain hunter.

With sales happening throughout neighborhoods across the city, attendees are encouraged to

spend the weekend exploring Albert Lea while supporting community members and discovering one-of-a-kind bargains.

Residents interested in hosting a garage sale are encouraged to advertise through the Freeborn County Shopper and Albert Lea Tribune. Community members can contact the Classified Ad Call Center at 507-369-2742 for advertising information and garage sale listings.

As the seasons begin to change, the Albert Lea City Wide Fall Garage Sales offer the perfect opportunity to clear out, decorate for autumn, and prepare for the months ahead, all while enjoying one of Albert Lea’s favorite seasonal traditions.

The Albert Lea Convention & Visitors Bureau encourages residents and visitors alike to shop local, explore neighborhoods across the city, and enjoy a fun-filled weekend of garage sale adventures.

■ Campaign from Page 1

sition, says, if elected to both positions, he will resign his position with SWCD to dedicate his time fully to the mayoral position.

“There’s been no sign of leadership there (the city council),” Muff said. “This is not hard to figure out.”

Originally from North Springs, Iowa, Muff has been a New Richland resident since he moved to town in January of ‘89 for a job at Budach Implement. Muff currently drives semi-truck for BK Trucking out of Waseca.

A “letter to the editor,” from Muff can be found on Page 2.

■ Fencelines from Page 2

into. I felt no remorse when washing them out of the feeder with scalding hot water. It never hurts to have the feeders clean and full of fresh sugar water as the migrating hummers make their way through. Ditto with the birdbath. If there are any stragglers we don’t see, it’s all good.

October 8th marks the date four years ago we made our way to Missouri to pick up a Pembroke Corgi puppy. Poppy almost didn’t come to live with us. In late August we were sent several pictures from the breeder of potential puppies we might like.

We decided on a little tri-colored female fur baby. She still had a tail however, so we requested that it be docked like most Pembroke Corgi’s. Alas, the puppy was too old. We decided we’d wait for a tri-colored pup from a litter at a later date. We still had the picture. We felt some remorse about our decision. After all, what difference would the tail make other than appearance? Weeks went by and we were sure the puppy was likely spoken for. We received a call from the breeder asking if we’d reconsider as they still had the puppy. A day trip later and voila! Now you know the rest of the story.

See you next week...real good then.

Special meeting addresses flood, hears concerns

By BEN REVERMANN
Staff writer

Emotions ran high at times as 50 or more city residents attended a special New Richland city council meeting the evening of Sept. 28 to share their concerns and learn about the city’s planned response to the Sept. 18 and 19 flooding.

District 1 county commissioner Doug Christopherson, and Allison Farole, director of the emergency management division of the state department of public safety were speakers during the gathering.

Christopherson described some of the options proposed so far as studies have examined what it would take to keep water within safe channels even when flow is unusually high. He explained there are a number of proposed fixes which range from increasing culvert sizes and increasing the capacity of ditches by making them wider and deeper, to creating a separate channel which keeps much of the water from entering city limits.

“The only real fix was diverting the water, but it wouldn’t be a 100% fix,” Christopherson said. Creating a new channel for the water comes with numerous complications, including ensuring the rerouted system also performs the field drainage the ditches were originally built for.

The monumental cost of the project would require assistance from the state and even federal government; Christopherson said there are numerous steps needed to reconcile state drainage laws with the requirements and expectations associated with national-level funding.

“Minnesota has regulations that are not nationwide, so we have had to hire a ditch attorney to work with the federal attorneys. The federal economic development authority is assisting us to work out the details, so our application for these grants is acceptable and will pass all the quicker.”

Farole wanted area residents to know of important damage assessment surveys which would be taking place at the end of the week. She said

NEW RICHLAND CITY COUNCIL

this assessment would aid in learning whether the flooding qualified for a Major Disaster Declaration for Individual Assistance. “Please answer their questions. If you’re not home, you will receive a door hanger with information for submitting your damage assessment. We’re here to answer questions and they will be wearing clothes with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) logo, so look for them.”

Representative Tom Sexton told those in attendance he has been working with Gene Dornink on the Minnesota Senate. “We want to make sure the state helps, of course,” he commented, “but the next step toward funding is in regards to rerouting the ditch. Since I’m on the bonding committee, this will be something that I can do within the house and senate. I will be addressing this issue toward the long term as well.”

New Richland Mayor Janda Ferguson then opened up the meeting for public comment. She added that the council is there to listen and asked all residents to use proper etiquette, decorum and respect while addressing the council. Community members went on to share their observations and feelings until past 10 p.m.

Heather Johnson of Aspen Avenue said, “I’m two houses down from the drainage ditch. I’ve had some problems and probably water in my basement six or eight times since I moved here in 2002. We had our worst flood in 2010. That’s 16 years ago and we still have the problem. I don’t want to move. I’m 79 years old. I am wondering if anything has been done since 2010 to make our town safer.”

Larry Muff of Broadway Avenue stated, “The police report said they were notified at 6 a.m. on Saturday. On Friday night at 10 a.m. my neighbors told me they had water coming up in their basement. I knew it was happening in our neighborhood. My

neighbor called 911 at 9 p.m. that night, and he was told the city was notified. I drove around all night long, but not until 5 a.m. did I see city officials out. Where was everybody? Where is the breakdown of communications? “Where was the city’s response? I sat on the first flood control study and identified the flaws in it. Then we went to the second flood control study, and I will point out another flaw from Doug’s report. This design is for a 100-year flood, a hundred-year flood is 7 inches in 24 hours. We’ve been getting 7 inches in 10, 12 or 16 hours. This last one came in 4 hours. That calculation cannot handle the water flows we’ve been getting. This is not a 100-year flood, this is a 1,000-year flood. Why aren’t we using a 1,000-year flood plan in this town?”

A resident of South Broadway said, “Since 2019 we never had any water issues in our house until last year when the city did our street project and contractors cut our sump pump pipe to the street and faced it back to our home, so we had a total loss. Now this year we had another total loss again.”

Dave Wilderbee of Second Street Southeast commented, “Been in our house for 54 years and never had this problem. Now lately, it’s getting to be a normal thing. Creek floods our backyard and water comes up our drains. Our taxes keep going up. They’ve doubled in the last 10 to 12 years. I want to sell my house; I cannot get flood insurance on it. Who would want to buy my house when only a couple inches of rain and it comes up my floor drains? The city points their finger at the county; the county points their finger at the city. They dug out the creek behind my house a number of years ago, left a mess and it didn’t help a thing.”

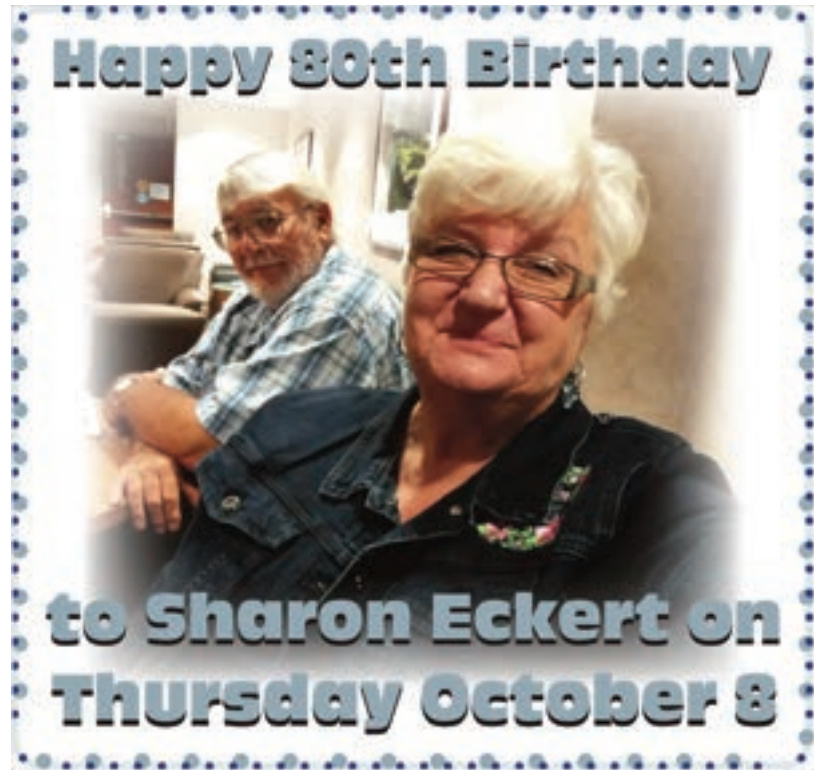
Doug Butchlot, South Broadway stated, “Since 2010 we’ve had five moderate to severe floods in this town. I have heard it will take 5 to 6 years to get a fix in place. Does that mean we can expect the city to flood three more times? I am assuming there are things that can be done that will expedite this process.”

“The amount of work it takes to get money pales in comparison to the work people in this town have done to recover from this. The people that have been helping are great, but that’s the first step. But how are we going to stop this from happening again?”

Shelby Priebe of Aspen Avenue asked, “I am directing this question to Allison Farole of Homeland Security. I have been told it’s up to FEMA if my house is condemned or not. If you want damage numbers and totals, should those workers be allowed to enter my home to assess that damage? I’m not a contractor; I don’t know the amounts or if it will be condemned.”

Farole replied, “Please have that conversation with FEMA when they come to your home. Their rules for condemning homes, I don’t know. But get all your evidence. That includes photos, documentation, receipts, everything.” Priebe was told FEMA officials would be at New Richland City Hall on Thursday, and she could come to them if needed.

In addition to other information that was shared, there were handouts for those with children affected by the flood, organizations for coping with the disaster. Parents were advised it is very important to make sure, once living spaces are clear of water, that they are cleaned properly, following proper debris removal guidelines. Residents were warned to watch out for mold and black mold, which thrive in wet conditions.



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