



■ Inside:

- 6-9 - Letters to Santa
- 11 - Library crafts
- 12 - GOP candidates
- 12 - Obituary
- 13 - NRHEG Music
- 16 - Sports
- 17-20 - Christmas

■ Page 3



Cookies with Santa

Star Eagle will not publish Dec. 25

As we have done for several years, the Star Eagle will not publish a newspaper the final week of the year.

Publication will resume with the Thursday, Jan. 1, 2026 edition.

New Richland Public Library Giving Tree Winter Gear for NRHEG

Through the month of December, the New Richland Public Library will be accepting donations of new or gently-used hats, mittens, gloves, scarves and warm socks on behalf of students at NRHEG. There will be a Giving Tree in the main lobby of the library displaying paper mitten ornaments. Contributions will stay local.

Waseca County Winter Winter Farmers Market at Farmamerica Saturday, Dec. 20

There will be a winter farmers market at Farmamerica from 8 a.m. till noon Saturday, Dec. 20. Find locally grown, baked and made while supporting our local producers. Farmamerica is located at 7367 360th Ave., Waseca.

42nd annual Geneva Cancer auction Friday and Saturday, Jan. 9 and 10

The forty-second annual Geneva Cancer auction will take place at 7 p.m. Friday, Jan. 9 and 2 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 10 at the Geneva Bar and Grill. The drawing will take place on Saturday, Jan. 17 at 8 p.m. For donations, bring to Geneva Bar and Grill or call 507-383-7462.

42nd annual Geneva Cancer auction Friday and Saturday, Jan. 16 and 17

The forty-second annual Geneva Cancer auction will take place at 7 p.m. Friday, Jan. 16 and at 2 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 17 at the Geneva Bar and Grill. The final drawing will take place Saturday, Jan. 17 at 8 p.m. For donations bring to Geneva Bar and Grill or call 507-383-7462.

CredibleMind offers free mental health resources

All area residents are eligible to use free online access to mental health resources available at MNPrairie’s “CredibleMind” website. The site offers interactive, evidence-based ways to explore local and national mental well-being resources. Free and anonymous at www.mnprairie.crediblemind.com

Shepherd’s Robe Free store Tuesdays from 1-3 and 5-7 p.m.

The Shepherd’s Robe free store offers clothing, supplies, and much more for free to all interested parties. The store is located at Vista Covenant Church, 14679 275th Avenue, New Richland.

A word from

The Word



Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

Matthew 11:28

New powerline under consideration

By DEB BENTLY
Staff Writer

A cooperative project being undertaken by numerous regional power companies is underway to build a new 765 kiloVolt (kV) powerline intended to extend across most of southern Minnesota. Representatives from two power companies appeared at the Dec. 2 meeting of the Waseca County board of commissioners to share information about the project, for which construction would likely not begin until 2030, with transmission beginning first in 2034.

The line will be located in the vicinity of the I-90 corridor, but its exact route is not yet specified because, spokespersons explained, “We’re very much in the early stages.”

Matt Ellis of Great River Energy and Mike Frank of ITC Midwest explained that, though they do not work for the same company, they began leading almost daily open house sessions together in southern Minnesota early in November. The public sessions are a required part of the application process.

The two explained four companies are cooperating to apply for and eventually use the powerline: Great River Energy, ITC Midwest, Otter Tail Power Company and Xcel Energy. The companies have determined that transmission needs are increasing, and so have begun a process toward having the line approved and then built. It would begin in South Dakota and lead to a connection with another major line in the area of Rochester.

New powerlines are under the authority of the state public utilities commission (PUC), which has the final say in where the lines will be located. Thus, “We can’t tell you what route the line will take,” explained Ellis. “But the only part of Waseca County likely to be impacted is the very southeast corner.”

The project, named “PowerOn

Powerline continued on 10



SIGNED - Senior Jacob Karl, an anchor of the NRHEG Cross Country team, signed on to join the CC team at Crown College, located at the southwestern edge of the Twin Cities metro area during a short ceremony the afternoon of Dec. 12.
Star Eagle photo by Deb Bently

Jacob Karl signs with Crown College

By DEB BENTLY
Staff Writer

NRHEG Senior Jacob Karl, son of Tony and Melissa Karl of rural Ellendale, signed on to run with the 2026-’27 Crown College cross country team during a brief ceremony held the afternoon of Dec. 12, 2025.

District athletic director Dan Stork described cross country (CC) as a “rugged” sport which is not for the faint of heart, then went on to call Karl a staple of the district’s CC team, which he joined already as a seventh-grader. Stork also complimented Karl’s dedication, saying he has earned numerous 100- and 200-mile medals.

Coach Larry Nydegger shared memories of seeing Karl socializing with fellow runners during meets, and commented that he shows the perfect combination of an outwardly relaxed demeanor and hardened determination for the sport, one which tends to have more competitors than observers because “watching people run for a long time” does not tend to build high excitement for fans.

Regarding his decision to join the Crown College Polars, Karl mentioned he had received persistent contacts over the past few years from the university’s CC coach, Grant DeWitt, and had eventually followed through on DeWitt’s invitations to visit the Christian college located at the southwest edge of the Twin Cities metropolitan complex in a town also called Crown College. “I took a tour and I liked it,” stated Karl. “So I decided to sign up.”

Karl says he intends to earn a business finance degree. He explains the CC “season” is essentially all year, with fall and spring seasons outdoors and winter competitions on indoor tracks. He mentions that he likes the clarity and relaxation that come from extended exertion.

Karl told the Star Eagle, “I would like the thank my coach Larry for pushing me to become a better runner and a better person, my mother and father Tony and Melissa Karl for being supportive parents and showing up to all of my meets, my brother and sister Elizabeth and Graden for being there through all the tough times growing up, and my old and new



Jacob Karl with his parents, Tony and Melissa.
Star Eagle photo by Deb Bently

teammates for supporting me and pushing me to grow mentally and physically throughout the years.”

Workforce Development Center to serve region

By DEB BENTLY
Staff Writer

Numerous reports and summaries share what local employers already know: it’s growing harder and harder to find workers with specialized qualifications who are interested in making greater Minnesota their long-term area of residence.

The League of Minnesota Cities summarizes that there are “significant recruitment and retention challenges driven by generational shifts, resource constraints, and evolving workforce expectations.”

In other words, as older employees exit the workforce, it is difficult to find younger workers to replace them because members of the younger generations either don’t have the needed skills, or have difficulties finding housing and child-care in smaller communities—or both.

A Workforce Development Center that could potentially open in the first quarter of 2027 is aimed at helping workers who already feel connected to area communities acquire the skills they need to find and keep jobs without going elsewhere.

Funded mostly by a \$2.1 million federal grant, the project makes use of a space on the lowest floor of Waseca County’s Community Services building, located at 1000 W. Elm Avenue in Waseca. The building already houses the county’s public health and public assistance departments, but according to county officials, plans are underway to create dedicated parking, entrances and reception areas for about 10,000 square feet of currently unused space on the bottom floor.

With the intent that bids for necessary construction work will be let early in 2026, county leaders feel like a long-recognized need is finally on its way to being met.

When it is complete, the center will have flexible spaces suitable for anything from teams of a few people learning machining on a computer numerical control (CNC) device, or a group of 50 or more coming from a range of regional businesses to hear from a speaker or trainer on a specialized topic. A dedicated space will be set up for youth who might be attending a “day camp” about a science, technology, engineering or math (STEM) topic.

Area health care workers might attend courses led by an MSU faculty member to acquire new qualifications; very diverse groups might meet to strengthen their use of artificial intelligence in everyday operations.

Now the county planning and zoning administrator, Tina Wilson, has filled various roles in helping retain and attract new businesses to the area. She recalls talk about some sort of training center begun at the city level as early as 2018.

County administrator Michael Johnson remembers the project had moved to the county level by 2022. Knowing that the federal Economic

Center continued on 13

Steele County exits MNPrairie

By DEB BENTLY
Staff Writer

An agreement reached between Steele, Waseca and Dodge counties includes terms under which Steele County can withdraw from the joint powers agreement regarding the delivery of social services through an agency called Minnesota Alliance of Prairie Counties (MNPrairie). The Alliance was first formed in 2014.

In March, Steele County commissioners voted to terminate the agency, an action which could not be taken without the cooperation of at least one of the other member counties.

Discussion among Waseca county board members over the intervening time indicated both Waseca and Dodge counties find MNPrairie an effective way to share resources, and neither has a desire to see the agency dissolved. However, county administrator Michael Johnson observed during the Dec. 2 meeting of the Waseca County board, it seemed beneficial to allow Steele County to remove itself as expediently as possible. “It was unsustainable to draw it out,” Johnson stated. “It was not a good working environment.”

Among the numerous complicating factors is that MNPrairie manages funds which are provided by all three counties. Its 180 or so staff members each work out of any of three buildings located in the respective counties, and interact with clients in any of the three.

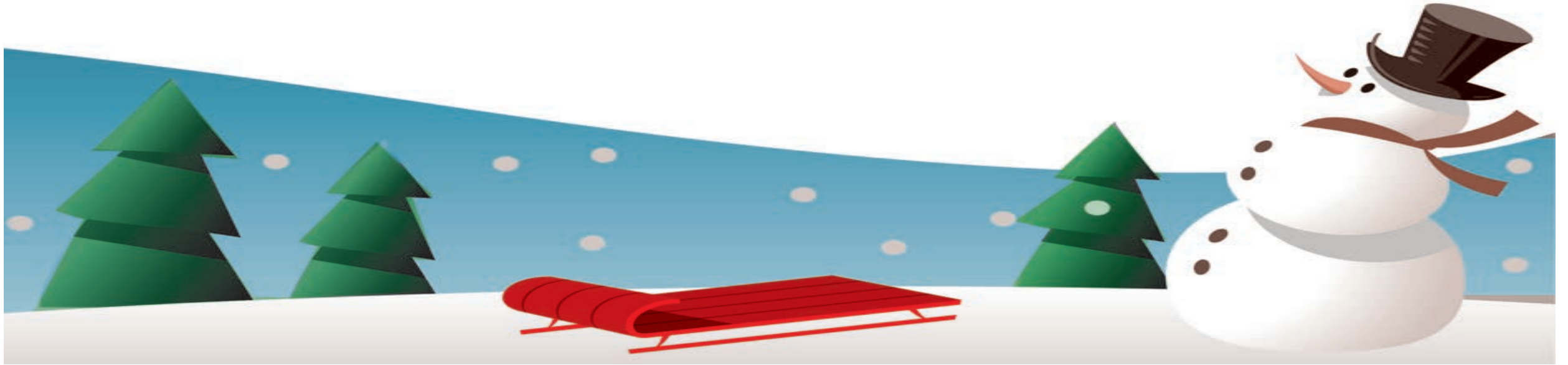
Under the newly reached agreement, Steele County will remain a member of MNPrairie through Dec. 31, 2026. Until then, it will continue to have representation on the MNPrairie board and will retain its voting rights; the board has six members, two of whom are from Steele County. In June of 2026, Steele County will receive just over \$3 million, its portion of MNPrairie’s equity fund balance. Another \$950,000 will be delivered in 2027. The agreement states that receipt of the money in 2027 serves as Steele County’s acknowledgement it has “no further right to the MNPrairie fund balance” after Dec. 31, 2026.

The agreement also stipulates that desks and chairs purchased by MNPrairie but located in Steele County will remain with Steele County, while computers, monitors and electronic equipment will be removed for use in Waseca and Dodge County facilities.

Beyond that, the agreement says the separation process will be overseen by the Steele County administrator and MNPrairie’s executive director, with final approval made by the respective county boards and the MNPrairie board; all parties agree to act “in good faith” throughout the process.

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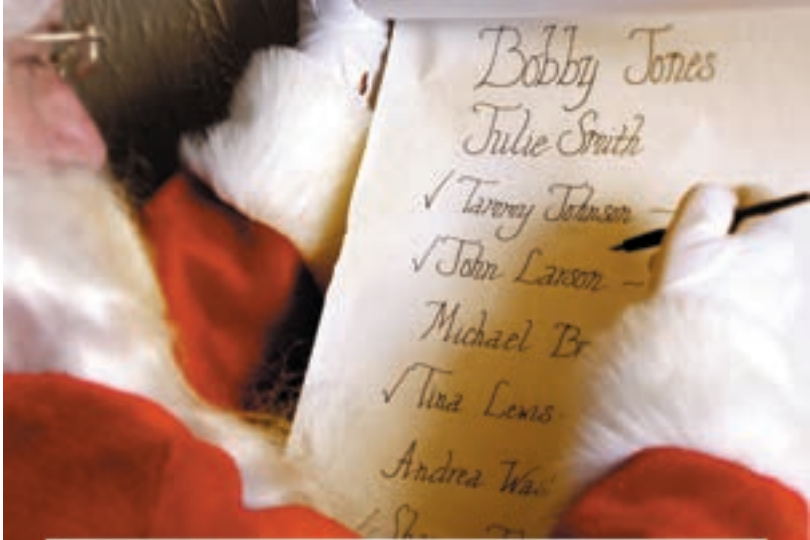
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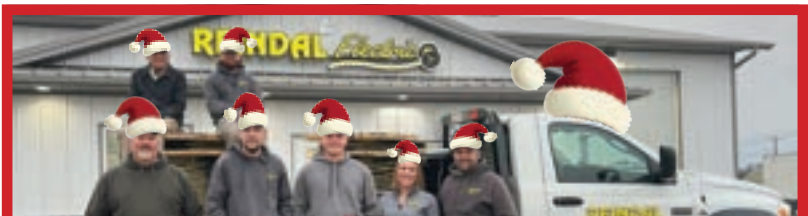


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LETTERS

What do you want from Santa this year? Second grade students at NRHEG Elementary school speak out in their letters to the Jolly Old Guy.

2nd Grade - Mrs. Larson

Dear Santa Claus,
My name is Paxton. I am in second grade at NRHEG. I have been very good this year by feeding the goats and baby brother. What do the reindeer play? I would like an alive Robo Raptor and the Elador Creatures Mega battle cave and the Crystal. Good luck on Christmas Eve.
Sincerely,
Paxton

Dear Santa Claus,
My name is Finley. I am in second grade at NRHEG. I have been very good this year by helping my mom with cleaning. How cold is the North Pole? I would like a teddy bear and a J. Lo. I hope you have safe travels on Christmas Eve.
Your Pal
Finley

Dear Santa Claus,
My name is Mabel. I am in second grade at NRHEG. I have been very good this year by being nice to my sister. I was wondering how elves fly. I would like a iPad, Puffy, and toys. I hope you have a Merry Christmas Eve.
Love,
Mabelis.

Dear Santa Claus,
My name is Fletcher. I am in second grade at NRHEG. I have been very good this year by being a good example at my house. What do your elves do when you are gone? I would like my own PS5 and two boxes of foot ball cards. I hope you have a Merry Christmas.
Sincerely,
Fletcher B.

Dear Santa Claus,
My name is Kinsley. I am in second grade at NRHEG. I have been very good this year by helping my mom cook and I've been a good friend. What is your favorite snack to eat, Santa Claus? I would like a puppy, dog, Gabby Dollhouse, and a friendship bracelet. Have a Merry Christmas!
Love,
Kinsley A.

Dear Santa Claus,
My name is Parker. I am in second grade at NRHEG. I have been very good this year because I help my mom cook and I help my dad mow. Why don't elves move in the morning? I would like a dirt bike and a toy scooter. Have a Merry Christmas!
Sincerely,
Parker S.

Dear Santa Claus,
My name is Abigail. I am in second grade at NRHEG. I have been very good this year by being nice to friends and helping Mrs. Larson sort potatoes. How cold is the North Pole? I would like Legos and a white Christmas. I hope you have safe travels on Christmas Eve.
Sincerely,
Abigail M.

Dear Santa Claus,
My name is Anaya. I am in second grade at NRHEG. I have been very good this year by helping with chores and cleaning my room. How can you stand the cold? I would like a gift card to Pet Expo. I hope you have safe travels on Christmas!
Love,
Anaya K.

Dear Santa Claus,
My name is Lincoln. I am in second grade at NRHEG. I have been good this year at keeping my clothes clean and being kind to my siblings. How do reindeer fly? I would like Madden 23, a necklace, and a Rashee Rice jersey. I wish you to have a Merry Christmas!
Sincerely,
Lincoln M.

Dear Santa Claus,
My name is Nash. I am in second grade at NRHEG. I have been very good this year because I been a good and helpful friend to others. What is Mrs. Claus's favorite cookie? I would like a game setup monitor. I hope you have safe travels on Christmas Eve.
Sincerely,
Nash R.

Dear Santa Claus,
My name is Isla. I am in second grade at NRHEG. I have been very good this year by helping with feeding my hamster cat and dog. I also like to help my mom bake. I want for Christmas perfume. Santa, What is your favorite snack? I would like perfume, a hamster ball, and a hamster dice for feeding Hammy. I hope you have safe travels on Christmas Eve.
Love,
Isla L.

Dear Santa Claus,
My name is Ellie. I am in second grade at NRHEG. I have been very good this year because I clean my bed. How do you go down chimneys? I would like a Barbie boat. Merry Christmas!
Your friend,
Ellie

Dear Santa Claus,
My name is Melody. I am in second grade at NRHEG. I have been very good this year by helping with cleaning and being kind to my brother. What do elves eat? I would like Mini Brands for Christmas. I hope you have a good Christmas!
Sincerely,
Melody J.

Dear Santa Claus,
My name is David. I am in second grade at NRHEG. I have been very good this year by being nice to everybody. What do the elves do on their saxof? I would like a dirt bike and a four wheeler. Please be safe on the sled!
Your Friend,
David R.

Dear Santa Claus,
My name is Conway. I am in second grade at NRHEG. I have been very good this year by taking the dishes out of the dishwasher and playing games with my Dad. How many Elves do you have? I would like a RC car and a Iron man mask. Have a holly jolly Christmas!
Sincerely,
Conway B.

Dear Santa Claus,
My name is Rex. I am in second grade at NRHEG. I have been good this year by listening to my teacher. Are you married to Mrs. Claus? For Christmas I would like a RC tank and a camera to take around my house. I love my family and my teacher. Merry Christmas to you, Santa Claus!
Your Pal
Rex K.

Dear Santa Claus,
My name is Liliana. I am in second grade at NRHEG. I have been good at helping my mom clean and being nice to my friends. How do your reindeer fly? I would like a giftcard that has Roblox, a dirt bike, and 100 dollars. I hope you have a Merry Christmas!
Love,
Liliana S.

Dear Santa Claus,
My Name is Sloane. I am in second grade at NRHEG. I have been very good this year because I made a bed for my elf and I helped my Dad work. What is your favorite cookie? I would like to have a new pair of gloves and a Squishie. Happy Christmas, Santa and I wish you a safe travel!
Love,
Sloane M.

Dear Santa Claus,
My name is Oliver. I am in second grade at NRHEG. I have been very good this year by helping cleaning up snow in the garages. How do your reindeer fly? I would like a skid loader, a dirt bike and a four wheeler. I hope you have safe travels on Christmas Eve.
Sincerely,
Oliver P.

TO SANTA

These letters are from the second grade students of Ms. Larson, Mrs. Kitzer, and Mrs. Lassahn.



2nd Grade – Mrs. Lassahn

Dear Santa Claus,

My name is Rylee and I'm in 2nd grade at NRHEG. I have been very good this year by helping my parents and new students by getting to know the class. How do you and the reindeer fly? Do you like candy canes? I would like a little stitch plush for Christmas. Merry Christmas! ♥

love, Rylee J.

Dear Santa Claus,

My name is Brennen and I'm in 2nd grade at NRHEG. I have been very good this year by making my sister laugh. I would like a Case I'll combine for Christmas. Merry Christmas!

YOUR Friend,
Brennen P.

Dear Santa Claus,

My name is Kenzley and I'm in 2nd grade at NRHEG. I have been very good this year by helping my parents and being a good student. Are Mrs. Clause's cookies good? I would like a weighted stuffed animal and a 3-D printer! I am so excited for Christmas! I hope you have a safe trip to my house!

Your friend,
Kenzley H.

Dear Santa Claus,

Hello! My name is Colson I'm in 2nd grade. I go to school at NRHEG and I have been very good. I want a PS4 for Christmas! How do reindeer get magic? Merry Christmas!

Love, Colson B.

Dear Santa Claus,

My name is Ashton and I'm in 2nd grade at NRHEG. I have been very good this year by helping my dad shovel the driveway. How do you and the reindeer fly? I would like a dog and a body warmer for Christmas. Merry Christmas!

Your Friend,
Ashton P.

Dear Santa Claus,

Hello! My name is Micah and I'm in 2nd grade. I go to school at NRHEG and my teacher is Mrs. Lassahn. I would love a Nintendo switch two and a Pet hamster. I hope you don't fall off your sled.

Your Friend,
Micah P.

Dear Santa Claus,

Hello! My name is Bowe and I'm in 2nd grade. I go to school at NRHEG and I have been very good this year by help my mom by making her bed. I was wondering how you and your reindeer fly? I would like piano and chocolate for Christmas. I hope you are safe! Sincerely,

Bowe R.

Dear Santa Claus,

My name is Dylan and I'm in 2nd grade at NRHEG. I have been very good this year by taking care of my dog. What are the sparkles on the reindeer? I would like cool lego sets and a track, and a lot of lego sets. safe travels!

Your Friend,
Dylan O.

Dear Santa Claus,

My name is Charlee and I'm in 2nd grade at NRHEG. I have been very good this year by helping telli take care of baby Ace. How do you and the reindeer fly? I would like and another camera. Merry christmas!

Your Friend,
Charlee H.

Dear Santa Claus,

My name is Knox and I'm in 2nd grade at NRHEG. I have been very good this year by being a good student and helping my parents. What if someone leaves the fire on in the chimmmney? I would like some Magic for Christmas. I hope you travel safe.

Your Friend,
Knox P.

Dear Santa Claus,

My name is Kinsley and I'm in 2nd grade at NRHEG. I have been very good this year by playing with my sisters. How do you and the reinder fly? I would like some Christmas socks. I would like some crafts for Christmas. Merry Christmas! I hope you travel safe! I wish you a Merry Christmas!

Your Friend,
Kinsley.

Dear Santa Claus,

My name is Rhylan and I'm in 2nd grade at NRHEG. I have been very good this year by being a good friend and taking care of my sister. Why don't I get an elf? How do reindeer get magic? What happens if you touch an elf?

your Friend,
Rhylan P.

Bring Home The Holidays

We wish you and yours the very best this holiday season.

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Holiday Cheer

Season's greetings to all our friends from:

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LETTERS

What do you want from Santa this year? Second grade students at NRHEG Elementary school speak out in their letters to the Jolly Old Guy.

2nd Grade – Mrs. Lassahn

Dear Santa Claus,
My name is Lorraine and I'm in 2nd grade at NRHEG. I have been very good this year by helping take care of my little brother. I would like a 3D printer and an American flag. I love ice cream trucks. Sincerely Love your friend Lorraine S. Now do els on the shelf more merry christmas!

Your friend Lorraine S.



Dear Santa Claus,
My name is Hunter and I'm in second grade at NRHEG. I have been very good this year by playing with my little sister Hailey. I also am being a good friend at school. Do you like French Fries? I would like a remote control car and some Dr. Pepper. Merry Christmas to you all!

Love, Hunter P.

Dear Santa Claus, my name is Andrew and I'm in second grade at NRHEG. I have been very good this year by being a good student. I really love Rudolph! Does he fight to you? I would like a VR head set for Christmas. I hope I see you soon!

Your friend,
Andrew H.

Dear Santa Claus,
My name is Brooks and I'm in 2nd grade at NRHEG. I have been very good this year by helping my parents. How do you and the reindeer fly? I would like a drone that has a camera on the drone, and a robot. I hope you have a good Christmas.

Your friend,
Brooks J.

Dear Santa Claus,
My name is Jaycee and I'm in 2nd grade at NRHEG. I have been very good this year by helping my parents. How do you and the reindeer fly? I would like a horse and a dirt bike. Merry Christmas Santa.

Love, Jaycee T.

Dear Santa Claus,
My name is Alex and I'm in 2nd grade at NRHEG. I have been very good this year by helping working very hard to be safe in a house, being a good friend and helping my sister to make her bed. How do you magic? I would like a hot girl for my best friend because it is my best friend. I want a new teddy bear and a new teddy bear. Merry Christmas! I love you.

Love, Alex B.

Dear Santa Claus,
Hello! My name is Abigail and I'm in 2nd grade at NRHEG. I have been very good this year by helping people when they drop things. Why can't I be an elf? I would like three or two kittens and a TV in my room. Be happy all Christmas!

Love, Abigail K.

Dear Santa Claus,
My name is Owen and I'm in 2nd grade at NRHEG. I have been very good this year by helping dad farm and helping mom with the new puppy Teddy! What is your favorite cookie? I would like a microphone and a Dairy barn. I hope you have a safe trip to the Chicos farm. Merry Christmas!

Love your friend,
Owen C.

Dear Santa Claus,
My name is Oliver and I'm in 2nd grade at NRHEG. I have been very good this year by being a good student and working hard. Are the cookies for the reindeer? I want a toy John Deere tractor for this year! Make sure the reindeer are safe on Christmas Eve!

Love, Oliver M.

2nd Grade – Mrs. Kitzer

Dear Santa Claus,
My name is Sophia. I am in second grade at NRHEG. I have been good this year by helping Mom cook. Do you get your Elf on the shelf? I would like a magic wand and a unicorn. Love, Sophia S.

Dear St. Nick,
My name is Maci. I am in second grade at NRHEG. I have been good this year by listening to the teacher. Is there a real Rudolph? I really want a magic mix set and a LOL doll. Safe travels!

Love,
Maci

Dear Santa,
My name is Braxton. I am in second grade at NRHEG. I have been good this year by helping my friends and listening. I was wondering do reindeer like candy canes? I want colored pencils and a note book. I wish you a Merry Christmas.

Love
Braxton V.

Greetings, Santa
My name is McKay. I am in second grade. I am eight years old. I have been kind of good this year by doing my chores sometimes. Do reindeer like donuts? Could you please bring me a Cookie God plushie?

Enjoy your holidays.
Best wishes
McKay J.

Dear Santa,
My name is Jaxon. I go to N.R.H.E.G. I have been good by cleaning the floor with the vacuum cleaner this year. How old are you? I want a Justin Jefferson toy and a Jordan Addison toy please. I hope you have a happy Christmas.

Safe travels
Jaxon R.

Hi Santa,
My name is Kyr. I am a second grader at N.R.H.E.G. I have been very good this year by helping my baby sister. What do your reindeer eat? I would like a toy lizard that climbs on the wall and Minecraft blocks for Christmas.

Love
Kyr



FenceLines

by Mark Bernard

Turning to alabaster

The scurs and the Weather Eye have resigned themselves to the fact that Old Man Winter is here to stay. Or have they? Starting Thursday, partly sunny with a modest chance of snow. Highs in the low 30's with lows around 5 below. Partly sunny Friday with highs in the upper 20's and lows in the upper teens. Partly sunny on Saturday with highs near 30 and lows around 10 above. Sunday, partly sunny with a high in the mid-20's and lows in the mid-teens. Mostly cloudy Monday with highs in the upper 20's and lows near 20. Tuesday, mostly sunny with highs in the upper 20's and lows in the low teens. Mostly sunny on Christmas Eve Day with highs in the low 30's and lows in the upper teens. The winter solstice occurs on the 21st being our shortest daylight day of the year at 8 hours 54 minutes and one second worth. The normal high for Christmas Day is 24 and the normal low is 9. The scurs have the Festivus pole erected and all their Human Fund certificates sent. Mission accomplished.

So how is our winter coming after all the cold weather? Oddly enough, not as intense as one might imagine. There have been numerous pheasants picking at the garden leftovers. This past week I decided to place some corn in a corn crib aeration tube for them. I needed a way to anchor it though, so the deer and other corn consumers didn't knock it over. I had an electric fencepost handy, so for laughs I decided to see if it would go in the ground. It did and much easier than I expected. It made short work of the issue at hand. Now if the pheasants would find it, we'd be in business. Shortly after I put the feeder out, a red-tailed hawk appeared and the pheasants disappeared. Funny how that works sometimes.

I froze what would be the last of the squash for the season over the weekend. Like the carrots, there was a lot of variability not only in flavor but in texture as well. With the squash there were some odd looking markings in the flesh and when cooked, they were difficult to cook thoroughly. The flavor was off as well. One usually expects buttercup squash to be very sweet. These were bland and made good sheep feed. The carrots didn't follow the rules either. The carrots I'd dug in August were decent, those that didn't just rot in the ground from excess rainfall anyway. I got busy and left the rest, knowing that generally they get sweeter and better tasting later in the fall. Not the case this year.

One can only speculate that our unusually warm September and early October may have had something to do with both vegetable crops being subpar. It certainly had an impact on the corn crop and perhaps to a lesser degree on the soybean crop. A potential nod to the Canada wildfire smoke also. There were some months that solar radiation was compromised as well. There have been plenty of reports trickling in of white mold being found in the soybean samples. Not as bad as some years and not widespread heavy patches. Was there a delay in flowering in some cases?

We'll never know as replicating the conditions we had this summer would be next to impossible. Let's hope so for our sake.

So will this week warm us up as much as the NWS seems to think it will? We'll probably know by midweek as the forecast stands. There is still plenty of snow to our south and winds will tend to be blowing from the south across it.

Earlier south winds since the snowpack formed have felt anything but warm. The positive news is that the pack has shrunk some in northern Missouri

which could disperse the 1A snowpack more rapidly than anticipated. Starting with a clean slate for the New Year would certainly be a feather in our cap for those who have plenty left on their plate from fall to finish up. The abrupt halt made it difficult to finish many of those projects and a reprieve for a few weeks might be enough to get the job done.

Speaking of getting the job done, Monday was a typical Monday. Lots of delays and interruptions along with plenty of extra things dumped on my plate I was unaware of until the last minute. On top of that, I misplaced my phone for a spell, making a crazy situation even crazier. Now, I come from a generation where being available 24/7/365 wasn't important. When bag phones arrived that was fine. They could be left in the pickup where they belonged and with their power and range, they could make and receive calls from Mars. Today's cell phones do a lot more than just make phone calls. We're to the point where the phone is no longer our slave. They're your master. Don't think so?

Try losing one, then get back to me. By the way, I found the thing. Some days, I'd rather I hadn't.

Birds continue their winter festivities at the ranch. There have been more goldfinches at our feeders recently. What has been unique this winter so far is the number of juncos feeding on the thistle feeders, rather than picking up the seed spilled underneath. In the past they'd occasionally feed in the tray on the screen feeder, but this has been a new one. The cold weather definitely increased the number of birds using the suet feeders. The higher energy feed was just what they needed. Still no chickadees at the ranch, but have spotted a few in town. I see we also have neighbors to our south feeding the birds. The habitat for birds of all kinds is excellent there. The more the merrier.

Poppy is ready for Christmas, but then of course, Corgi's are always ready for Christmas. There are always dog treats to be had along with bunnies and squirrels to be chased. She's fortunate the rain reduced the snow depth and formed a crust that she doesn't break through anymore. Seeing her hung up in the snow is humorous for us, for her not so much. As the temps warm and the snow subsides even more, we should be able to spend more time outside with her.

It also means once we're back inside, it's time for popcorn, cocoa and a long winter's nap for all parties concerned.

See you next year...real good then.

It's possible to sail without using a boat

Back when I was teaching composition, my students would frequently say something like, "I can't write the assignment because I can't figure out how to start it."

My answer was "Don't start it then, just write it." I explained that, thanks to modern word processing, there is no need to craft the perfect beginning before the rest of the writing can proceed. It's often easier to write the start after one knows what path the rest of the piece follows.

Well, I am taking my own advice with this column, but for a rather different reason than all those students I advised. I can think of about a dozen ways to start this story, and I want to use them all.

So here's the story: Last Friday night—a remarkably cold and windy evening, you may recall—I was driving home on slightly unfamiliar roads. I headed down a street I believed I recognized and proceeded forward into the dark night as if I were on a somewhat familiar gravel road that provides a slightly shorter route to my house than the blacktop.

I can't say how fast I was going, although I'm pretty sure it wasn't much over 30 miles an hour, when I realized the road did not continue on, but instead came to a rather abrupt end.

I touched my brakes. My vehicle continued forward at the same speed as before.

It was only hours later, after the tow truck pulled me out, that I got to see just how shiny-slick that patch of road had been.

What I knew at the moment in question was that I had milliseconds to choose between various obstacles ahead of me. These included fences, trees, and a pile of snow probably five feet tall made when someone cleared snow from the road, probably with a tractor.



In My Humble Opinion

by Deb Bently

The snow was the obvious best choice.

I still shake my head in wonder that somehow, although I felt as if I had no control at all, I managed to miss a mailbox and turn my vehicle sideways so that I came to a stop broadside up against the pile of snow. A drift probably two feet deep had slowed me down as I slid, and my SUV was now surrounded partway up the carriage.

There was no way to open my door, and there was no way my vehicle would be able to drive out—but I was ecstatic. It's amazing how many forms of disaster can flash through a driver's head when she is careening wildly toward doom and destruction.

Instead, I was unharmed, my vehicle was undamaged, and the motor was still running. A kind gentleman with a tractor would have pulled me out if it had been possible, but with my car buried as deeply as it was, he saw no safe way to attach a chain.

"You're going to have to call a tow truck," he concluded.

I contacted Triple A, and Triple A sent me periodic electronically produced text messages assuring me everything possible was being done to assist. I was informed a "high volume" of calls was making it difficult to find a service vehicle to help.

Time passed. I played a word game on my smartphone.

Time continued to pass. Though I sat in my car for well over three hours, I could not make

myself impatient or angry.

Every now and then I looked at the pile of snow just outside my driver side window, shook my head, and laughed gently.

I was unhurt, though severe injury would not have been a completely unlikely outcome.

I had no one but myself to blame for my predicament.

Yes, my carelessness of having misidentified the road was an inexcusable and embarrassing mistake, but I was warm and safe and help was being procured.

At about 8:30 I was informed T&W Towing out of Owatonna had agreed to perform my "extrication." The tow truck driver, a rugged fellow named Pete, gave me a call and said he expected to arrive in about 30 minutes.

Right on time, headlights shone in my direction.

Pete popped out of his truck, walked through the snowbank and up on top of the snow pile near my driver's side headlight. I rolled down my window to hear what he had to say.

"It looks," he said brightly, "like you're in a bit of a pickle."

"I haven't decided whether it's a Gurkin or dill," he declared. "But it's definitely a pickle."

With that he turned on so many floodlights I thought I was on a football field, positioned his tow truck, and slid my car out of the snowbank, making me feel somewhat like a kid on a backward-facing toboggan.

Roughly four hours after facing imminent disaster, my car's tires

were on a road and I could open my door.

Pete wouldn't even accept a hug—not that I felt offended in any way when he declined.

It was now, with the floodlights glaring off it, that I saw just how shiny that 30-foot-long patch of ice was. I shook my head and laughed softly.

Then, with Pete's tow truck leading, I drove back to the blacktop and silently vowed never to take another "shortcut" after dark. Ten minutes later I pulled into my driveway, opened my driver's side door, and walked into my house. I was not in a hospital. My vehicle was not in a salvage yard.

All's well, they say, that ends well. The increased caution I use when I see an icy road—and aren't they all icy just now?--is probably a very valuable thing, so all is, indeed, well.

Now you know the story.

Here are some of the introductions that entered my mind.

I have a story I wish I didn't have to tell...

In my case, "distracted driving" seems to be all in my head...

I learned the true meaning of "Minnesota nice" the other night while I was stranded in a snowbank...

Thanks to a recent experience, I have learned a few things about what artificial intelligence can... and can't...do...

It was a dark and stormy night...

My mother always told me to keep good winter gear in my car. I never doubted her, but I recently learned just how wise her advice was...

It turns out, it's possible to sail without using a boat...

No one should have needed to tell me that ice is slippery...

Have you ever felt as if you were flying?

■ Powerline

from Page 1

Midwest" must receive approval from the PUC first for a "certificate of need" and then for a proposed route. Ellis and Frank expect open houses regarding a proposed route will begin in the summer of 2026, with final route approval given in the summer of 2028.

The PowerOn Midwest proposal is that the line would be capable of carrying 756 kV, calling for steel towers up to 175 feet tall placed up to 1,300 feet apart—which means fewer than 6 structures in every mile of line. In response to a question from commissioner Doug Christopherson, whose district includes the county's southeast region, Ellis stated that even though rights of way for the towers are 250 feet, it is typical for farmers to be able to work land almost right up to the

structures. When it comes to acquiring land, he said, "It is always our goal to get voluntary participation."

The two spokespersons also explained the 756 kV line would be part of a massive grid. In comparison to more local lines, its capacity would be like "an interstate highway" in contrast to a two-lane road. They also explained that increasing the grid would expand the amount of power available in a five-state region, since it would allow power companies to switch seamlessly among the many types of power feeding into it.

"Electricity can't be stored," explained Frank. "So an individual area might be using power produced by a local wind farm or solar garden during one hour, then, with a change in the weather, might be accessing energy supplied by a nuclear power plant as far away as Manitoba or Michigan. "Consistency is built on diversity," he said.

Steele County Free Fair applications

Applications for the recognition of 2026 Century Farms in Steele County are now available at the office of the Steele County Free Fair. Century Farms will be recognized during the Steele County Livestock Hall of Fame program on Tuesday, August 18 th . Farms that qualify for the Century Farm recognition are those that are at least 100 years old in 2026 according to ab-

stract of title, land patent, original deed, county land records, court file in registration proceedings or other authentic land records. The family must have owned the farm for 100 years or more. Ownership must be continuous. To obtain application forms online go to MNstatefair.org or SCFF.org. Deadline for applications must be in the office by, Mach 2nd 2026.

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Compostings

by Al Batt

Best-laid plans of mice, men and winter days

ECHOES FROM THE LOAFERS’ CLUB MEETING
We had an Amish turkey for Thanksgiving.
What’s an Amish turkey?
It’s a turkey that’s never driven a car.

DRIVING BY BRUCE’S DRIVE
I have a wonderful neighbor named Bruce. Whenever I pass his drive, thoughts occur to me. I’d listened to Cassandra—the weather report. Scheduled appointments were postponed. The best-laid plans of mice, men and winter days often go awry. I walked in the early morning. Small mountains of snow had drifted onto the road. My shoes crunched. When the snow is warmer than 14 degrees, the pressure from my step creates enough heat to melt the snow. But when the temperature drops below 14 degrees, my steps don’t melt the snow. They crush the ice crystals, which rub against each other, producing a squeaking sound. It lets me know I’m making progress.

My wife and I used to go door-to-door Christmas caroling with friends. I don’t pretend to be a talented vocalist, but I’m loud. The Good Book tells us to make a joyful noise. I made a noise far from tuneful. One sweet lady turned off the porch light of her house as we began crooning. I talked to her a couple of days later. She told me she thought she was turning the light on. Right. She’d had time to come up with an alibi.

A fellow caroler asked what I’d done with all that money. I asked him what money he was referencing. He replied, “The money your parents gave you to take singing lessons.”

THE CHRISTMAS TIRE SWING
In the deepest parts of my memory, the Christmas preparations were in full swing. Mom had spent around \$87 on olives. Unopened, jarred olives stay fresh for up to two years. She had stocked up on her secret ingredient for making delectable Christmas foods—butter. We put a new tire swing up for Christmas. It was an odd time to do that, but the planets had aligned, and the perfect tire made itself available. It was a tire, a rope and a bad attitude hanging from a maple tree. I know what you’re thinking—it had replaced a flat tire. Well, you’re mistaken. It replaced a gunny-sack swing. A burlap bag filled with straw. We

replaced the old rope before the tire swing was put in place. The new piece of a poor man’s playground was like the new bull at a rodeo; it had never been ridden. Yup, pardner, it was just like that bull except for the tire and the tree. We never tired of it.

NATURE NOTES
Three young opossums fed on snow-covered ground on a gelid day. Opossums are omnivores and eat eggs, grains, nuts, fruit, birds, snakes, frogs, mice, carrion, berries, garbage, insects, crustaceans, pet food and bird seed. Claims of their eating large numbers of ticks are dubious. A group of opossums is called a passel. I cracked open a window of the house and tossed an apple gently in the passel’s direction. The apple hit the frozen ground and rolled into one of the three animals. After being bumped, the opossum jumped into the air and, upon returning to Earth and realizing it didn’t want to waste its life being bumped by things, scrambled off into the woods. The second opossum sniffed the apple and then ran away to safety. The third, noted for its critical thinking, used its 50 teeth to grab the apple and, smiling like an opossum eating an apple, ran off to that secret hiding place where it goes to eat apples. The three different reactions of the opossums reminded me that not everyone wants the same Christmas present. None of the opossums wanted money or gift cards.

I saw a muskrat. Muskrats don’t hibernate or cache food, and feed all winter. They spend time in a sleeping lodge, which they dig into a steep bank with an underwater entrance. In early winter, muskrats create small shelters called push-ups by chewing holes in the ice and covering them with a mound of mud and plant debris. These mounds are often 3 feet high and up to 300 feet from the main lodge. Muskrats can stay underwater for about 10 minutes and use the push-ups to catch their breath out of the weather and away from predators. Muskrats have stiff fur around their back feet and toes, which works like webbing to propel them through the water. Their front feet are smaller, and they hold them under their chins while swimming.

MEETING ADJOURNED
“Bless us Lord, this Christmas, with quietness of mind; teach us to be patient and always to be kind.”—Helen Steiner Rice.





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Pipe Cleaner Crafts unwrapped at library

By BEN REVERMANN
Staff writer

The New Richland Public Library led a Pipe Cleaner Crafts demonstration and workshop for children the evening of Thursday, Dec. 11. Pipe Cleaners are those bendable wires with the fuzz around them, originally used to clean tobacco pipes, but in this case, they’re being used for fun.

Kathy Kronebusch, head librarian for the New Richland library, had three big tables set up and said, “I got easy ornaments on a table for the younger ones, and two more tables getting harder the older the kids get. I didn’t want there to be a set time or anything, so the kiddos can come at anytime between 5 and 6:30 tonight.” On each table were thousands of large and jeweled beads, cranberry-colored beads, pine needle and forest greens, snow white beads and many more. The younger table had white and red striped pipe cleaner wires to make little candy canes to hang on the tree. The next table focused on making or-



GETTING CRAFTY - New Richland librarian Kathy Kronebusch showed Anora, 6, and Evan, 9, how to make pipe cleaner projects at the library on Thursday, Dec. 11.

Star Eagle photo by Ben Revermann

naments that looked like presents that go under the tree. Said Kronebusch, “The children can give these pipe cleaner ornaments away as gifts or hang them on their trees. I had a lot of fun putting all this together. I’ve been working on this for a couple of weeks now.”

There were little cups of white glue on the tables, when Anora, 6, and Evan, 9, entered the library. Anora ran to the table to make the pipe cleaner wire look like little Christmas presents. She was given a small brush to apply the glue. She didn’t know if she wanted to keep the ornament when she was done or if she wanted to hang it on a tree, “I haven’t decided yet, but I will when I get

home and the glue is dry.” Evan, who started with the wreath ornaments said, “I’m probably going to hang mine on the tree.” While he was speaking, Anora asked Ms. Kronebusch, “Can you stop helping Evan and come help me?” To which Kronebusch replied, “I’m on my way, honey.” When she was done, there were wipes to clean up the gluey, sticky fingers.

The beads had been sorted through for the night, there were even beads in the shapes of stars. The closer Christmas gets, the fewer activities there are to attend at the library, but as soon as the new year starts, “We’ll have much, much more for the kids to do,” said Kronebusch.

Coffee with Tom Sexton discusses fraud and corporate tax rates

By BEN REVERMANN
Staff writer

During his session of Coffee with Tom Sexton on Friday, Dec. 12, Representative Sexton spoke to a small group about the fraud in this state, citing former Minnesota Attorney General Andrew Luger, a Biden appointee, “Minnesota, you have a fraud problem.” AG Luger resigned in January of this year.

Minnesota corporate taxes have also gone to fraud; that money has been sent overseas. Sexton couldn’t help observing, “That’s not Minnesota nice.” An anonymous resident said, “It’s unbelievable to me that this amount of money could flow out and there was no one questioning it. I worked for a public school district for 30 years; our food service program received a heavy on-site audit every three years. These inspectors looked at. If there were 30 cans of tomato sauce, they checked to make

sure that’s what was there.” Sexton referenced some places that receive state grants or bonds: “There are people who are absolutely paranoid about spending state money. Like they’re going to go to jail if they do it wrong. That’s what we like, that it’s spent appropriately, and it’s well documented. That’s how we prevent fraud. No one wants that limelight on them.”

Minnesota’s fiscal year runs from July 1 through June 30. Said Sexton, “There are so many things out there that have been implemented, as much as we would like to cut the budget by \$17.8 billion of excessive spending that was done. Back in the 2023 session, a lot of things were implemented, and no one got a check back for those unused funds. That raised our budget by 40 percent.”

Sexton worries the tax revenue and the growth of the economy will not continue to increase as fast as in-

flation. He wants to reduce the budget even more to combat this. For the other side of the aisle, said Sexton, “We have enough revenue. We also have a spending problem. We’ve got to figure out how to spend within our own means.” A Minnesota Chamber of Commerce report states traditional corporations in Minnesota are not expanding in Minnesota. They’re not conducting research and development in this state because there’s no profitability. The highest corporate tax rates in the United States are: Iowa 12%, New Jersey 11.5%, Pennsylvania 9.9% and Minnesota at 9.8%. Sexton said, “Our 401Ks are all made up of corporations, who are shareholders as owners of that 401K. We need to look for areas to grow where we can be competitive such that we have shareholders and we’re basically paying our shareholders what they would get if they bought our stock

versus another stock.”

Paid Family Medical leave is going to be very difficult for a lot of these smaller companies to implement. Part of the 2023 surplus was used as seed money to pay the 400 employees who were hired to implement the Paid Family Leave program. “Many of the employers are going to a service to avoid penalties and to have this managed for them.”

Owatonna signed a contract with their police for guaranteed pay raises every year to make sure to retain those employees. The city doesn’t want to lose its police officers to Northfield which now has openings, because some of those Northfield police officers left to go up to Lakeville and Burnsville, which had openings because Lakeville officers went up to Minneapolis and other big cities because there’s higher pay. Retirements also add to law enforcement shortages.

County advances Justice Center construction

By DEB BENTLY
Staff Writer

In a brief special meeting the afternoon of Wednesday, Dec. 10, county commissioners gave the go-ahead on general specifications regarding the justice center to be constructed west of the county courthouse beginning next fall.

County administrator Michael Johnson explained to commissioners that the special meeting was warranted because, with a Dec. 10 approval in place, the process and timeline for preparing and letting bids could be underway quickly enough to allow the first phases of construction to begin in August of 2026, thus allowing an enclosed shell to be in place, so that other elements of the construction could continue into the winter.

WASECA COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Johnson provided a summary of recent activity related to the justice center, remembering that a plan commissioners had seen during 2024 had caused “sticker shock” with a price tag of about \$42 million. By this September, the cost had been pared down to about \$25 million, mostly by decreasing the dimensions of the structure and some of its interior spaces.

Johnson mentioned he feels confident the overall cost of constructing the new justice center, including removing the current law enforcement building located at 122 Third Avenue Northwest and with the addition of a new generator, would be no more than \$28.8 million.

Johnson also reminded commissioners that Waseca County has a far lower load of debt than any of the state’s other 86 counties, meaning that the county is likely to receive very favorable financing rates.

The new justice center structure will be about 125 feet on a side, three stories in height, and will house the county’s courtroom and court offices as well as the county corrections, county attorney, sheriff’s and emergency management departments. The facility will include a “class one” jail—one authorized by the Department of Corrections to house prisoners for no more than 72 consecutive hours.

Though a general layout for the interior spaces of the new structure has been shared, Johnson suggested final approval of square footages and smaller details is likely to be an “on-

going process” as construction begins and continues. “Many of those can be addressed along the way,” he said. “The emphasis right now is approving the general plan, so that the needed timelines can continue to move forward.”

Commissioners expressed satisfaction that this official step has been taken.

Commissioner Brad Milbrath, who had been with the Waseca County sheriff’s department for 34 years and served as sheriff for 12 before retiring in 2022, recalled that discussion about replacing the county jail had taken place in 2002, at which time a new structure could have been built for \$7 million. Of the current plan, he stated, “We’re getting a good, secure, safe environment not only for our staff, but for our constituents.”

HOLIDAY HOURS

Wednesday, December 24th	Wednesday, December 31st
Open until Noon	Open until Noon
Thursday, December 25th	Thursday, January 1st
Closed	Closed



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OBITUARIES

Elizabeth Ratigan

Elizabeth Jane Ratigan, age 89, of Gainesville, passed away on Monday, December 8, 2025.

Mrs. Ratigan was born on August 13, 1936 in Albert Lea, Minnesota to the late Alvie Arnold and Thora Jensen Arnold. She was a homemaker. In addition to her parents, Elizabeth was preceded in death by her brother, Alvie Arnold, Jr. She celebrated her 70th wedding anniversary with Duane on October 16, 2025.

Survivors include her husband, Duane Ratigan, Gainesville; son and daughter-in-law, Bradley and Patricia Ratigan; daughter and son-in-law, Donna and Dwain Myers; grandchildren, Noah Curran, Joshua Ratigan, and Daniel Ratigan.

Graveside services are scheduled for 2 p.m. Thursday, December 18, 2025 at Yonah



Elizabeth Ratigan

View Memorial Gardens. Richard Beam will officiate.

The family will receive friends from 1 – 1:45 p.m. Thursday, December 18, 2025 at Barrett Funeral Home prior to the graveside service.

To share a memory or to leave an online condolence for the family, please visit www.barrettfh.com

Geneva tax levy at three percent

By BEN REVERMANN
Staff writer

Members of the Geneva city council decided at their Dec. 9 meeting that the city’s property tax levy for 2025 will be set at 3 percent. Truth in taxation is all about budgeting. Council members said among themselves that property values as determined by the county auditor are overly high. Since property value is a factor in the amount real estate owners must pay in taxes, the council members urged Geneva residents to attend the Freeborn County adjustment meetings held in April to dispute the values the county has assigned.

City maintenance reported there was a situation with the sewer line at Sorenson’s warehouse; it somehow became disconnected and was three-quarters of the way plugged with sand and rock. Empire Pipe cleaned and fixed the problem; city maintenance made the council aware of the bill that would soon arrive.

For the Sidewalk Project, there has been a pause on the lighting installation, which was to be completed by week of Dec. 8, but has been bumped to the following week, Dec. 15. These lights are being delivered from outside the country and there have been delays. Regardless of cold weather, they will be installed as soon as they arrive. Notifications have been sent to properties all served by lead, galvanized or unknown service lines. Bolton and Menk will continue to support the city with future grant opportunities to replace lead/galvanized lines and identify unknown remaining lines.

City resident Fritz Jensen visited with council members to request his property along the

GENEVA CITY COUNCIL

shore of Lake Geneva in the Lakeshore Addition be replatted. Jensen is considering selling the land and would like to see it divided into smaller parcels. He told council members new lot lines would “Make them look cleaner to the buyer. Anyone looking to buy at auction can do it all in one piece or individually.” Jensen brought surveyor Steve Thompson, who passed out drawings of the proposed new property lines and offered to answer any questions. Jensen also said he would donate three of his lots for public use if this issue passes. The council took Jensen’s request into consideration but has yet to issue a decision.

Geneva residents have asked for the community center to be open so they can walk/exercise during the winter months. There was also a request for dog fly ball practice. The council decided that since people pay to rent the community center, which is \$125 per use, that the request for dog practice and winter walking was denied.

Dobberstein Lawn/Landscaping and Snow Care Removal LLC. has retired and Geneva has needed snow removal services. For a limited time, Reese Brothers covered the job, but now Thiele Snow Removal will be the snow removal company in town.

Cory Bienfang will no longer be representing Geneva for city projects like the Sidewalk Project, on behalf of the law firm Bolton and Menk. Bienfang will now be working for the city of Mankato. The council said he will be missed.



LEADERSHIP - Scott Jensen, left, who was the GOP candidate for Minnesota governor in 2022, speaks to the crowd at a candidate forum last week in Owatonna. Also pictured on the dais beside Jensen are Rep. Kristin Robbins, Kendall Qualls, Patrick Knight and John Krhin.

Photo by Kay Fate

GOP candidates speak at Owatonna

The field of challengers hoping to unseat incumbent Gov. Tim Walz continues to grow – and nine of them made their way to Owatonna last week for a GOP candidate forum.

Hosted by the Steele County Republican Party, the Dec. 2 event included Lisa Demuth, Scott Jensen, Jeff Johnson, Brad Kohler, Phillip Knight, John Krhin, Phillip Parrish, Kendall Qualls and Kristin Robbins.

Attorney Chris Madel, who entered the race the day before, did not attend. Mike Lindell, CEO of MyPillow, filed his paperwork the day after.

Following a meet-and-greet with the candidates, nearly 150 people settled in to weigh the answers provided during a round-robin question-and-answer session moderated by John Havelka.

How would you show leadership to help prevent fraud and keep Minnesotans from leaving our state?

Demuth, who is Minnesota’s Speaker of the House, said she would make sure “each commissioner is held responsible for the work done within their agency; that is something we have not seen.”

Robbins, a state representative from District 37A, also vowed to hold commissioners accountable.

“We need a no fraud, no excuses culture,” Robbins said.

She is chair of the House Fraud Prevention and State Agency Oversight Policy Committee, as well as the co-chair of the bipartisan, bicameral Civility Caucus, which works to build relationships and trust across parties and between the legislative chambers.

Both women support an independent Office of Inspector General for the state.

They – and the other candidates – also suggested periodic audits, as well as reducing taxes and mandates on businesses, especially small businesses.

The topic of taxes came up repeatedly, with a focus on lowering or eliminating business tax, income tax, property tax, gas tax and sales tax.

The real issue, Qualls said, is that “we don’t want to keep (businesses) here; we want them to want to stay here. We’ve got to motivate them ... and create an environment here where our businesses thrive, unleashing the economic engine of the private sector.”

Parrish, who has had a career in education, called the fraud found in the state’s social services programs “organized crime.”

He claims he “blew the whistle”

on the \$250 million daycare fraud in 2018 and has filed a RICO referral with the federal government.

“I’m not waiting to take office,” Parrish said. “I have a plan that is going to start ending fraud before I even take office.”

If you could sign two new bills (or change existing laws), what would they be?

Demuth drew applause with her proposal to end taxes on Social Security; she also plans to sign a law for “better local control, less mandates on our schools ... to allow them to educate the kids on the basics: reading, writing and math.”

Jensen, the Republican gubernatorial candidate who lost to Walz in 2022, said he would pass a “Never Again” bill. He spoke of Walz’s decisions to lock down schools, nursing homes, businesses and more during the COVID-19 pandemic:

“We failed in 2020 to stop Tim Walz, and the insanity went on for literally two years,” Jensen said, adding frequently throughout the night that he “says the quiet thing out loud.”

He would also address term limits.

Robbins echoed Jensen’s “never again” sentiment, saying her first two bills would be to require a voter ID and to limit the governor’s emergency powers.

Both Kohler and Johnson said they would “bring back” the former Minnesota state flag; Johnson said we would also “get rid of DEI immediately” with an executive order.

Knight, a food company CEO, plans to focus on tax and regulatory reform for economic growth, as well as a law to institute literacy-based performance for third-graders and beyond.

How do we raise student test scores?

Kohler, a former UFC fighter, claimed “teachers are running wild with whatever they want to teach our kids ... we need to prosecute some of these teachers ... and the administration for allowing them to do it.”

Jensen took the opposite tack, saying “we, as a party, need to do a better job of respecting teachers.”

The three-legged stool analogy applies, he said, and must include teachers, students and parents working together.

Additionally, Jensen said, “we have been guilty of overselling college at the expense of all other options. We need to elevate the trades.”

Robbins said the state has “failed our kids, so the first thing we need to do is undo all the unfunded mandates ... The most important thing the

governor can do is give schools flexibility to use their funding how they want, and then empower teachers.”

Knight agreed with the removal of mandates; he also supports school choice.

Krhin, who spoke often of his faith, said the state “needs to make public education like it was in the (19)20s and 30s, when my father served on the school board.”

The superintendent “would have an employee fired if they were smoking on school grounds,” he said.

Parrish said the largest demographic at his events are teachers and state employees who “want to be whistleblowers, but they’re not quite ready to put their name on the whistleblowing document.”

A mindset change is needed, he said.

“Stop being afraid of these intellectually and morally broken people,” Parrish said. “They’ve gone too far and their own employees are coming to us, saying ‘enough is enough.’”

What makes you the best candidate?

Robbins capitalized on the fact that she has been elected four times in a purple district.

“I’m qualified, I have the experience, and I know how to win in a tough district,” she said. “Greater Minnesota is going to carry this election, but if I bring up our numbers in the suburbs and urban areas, that’s how we put together a statewide winning race.”

Qualls, who was also a candidate in 2022 before ceding the nomination to Jensen, stressed down-ballot performance.

He claimed Education Minnesota, the state teachers’ union, “had a cake to celebrate my defeat, because they felt I was the only candidate they would be concerned about on the ballot.”

Knight believes he can “win the middle” and be the candidate with “the conviction to make the hard decisions to peel away decades of bad policy and deliver for the people

of Minnesota.”

Krhin, who describes himself as a Constitutional Conservative, said he is going to be “the most pro-life governor that Minnesota has ever seen.”

He plans to go “into the heart of the Somali communities to address ... what citizenship is really about ...”

Parrish acknowledged the others as “a wonderful team ... that will come together and form a unified front,” but said he “outworks them, outwits them” and has out-planned them.

Wearing a purple tie, he said, “is to tell you a message. This isn’t about left and right anymore. This is about right and wrong, period.”

Johnson, who “stood alone on refugee resettlement” while on the St. Cloud City Council, said he has “that bulldog attitude that wants to do the right thing.”

Demuth championed her record at the state legislature, including the negotiation of a \$5 billion reduction in state spending and the end of “illegal immigrant taxpayer funded health insurance.”

Kohler said he has been spending a lot of time in “the areas that we’re very blue in,” including attending Black churches and Hmong festivals, and visiting with Vietnamese and Cambodian communities.

Jensen had a litany of descriptors about himself, but focused on the fact that he “plays offense” and builds consensus.

As a state senator from 2017-21, all seven of his sponsored bills passed unanimously, “because I went to every Democrat and I told them why I was doing it, and why (they) should vote for it.”

“That’s who I am.”

About the race

The 2026 Minnesota gubernatorial election is Nov. 3.

The filing period runs from May 19 through 5 p.m. June 2.

Walz is hoping to be elected for a third term, something no Minnesota governor has done since the adoption of four-year terms in 1962.



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‘Ask a Trooper’: winter driving

Question: I’ve seen the traffic safety information you share on your X account when it comes to dealing with winter weather and slippery roads. Can you write about winter driving safety here for all of us? I’d like for you to share some basic winter driving tips. Thank you and be safe.

Answer: While summer months are the deadliest on Minnesota roads for fatal crashes, wintertime leads to the most crashes and poses its own safety risks and hazards. Stay safe while on the road in the winter.

Avoid unnecessary travel if conditions are too poor.

Buckle up and make sure child restraints are secured tightly. We recommend you use bulky clothes and blankets on top of the child restraint harness, not beneath, to ensure harness restraints fit properly.

Drive at speeds that are safe for the road conditions and provide for plenty of travel time.

Leave plenty of space to stop between vehicles.

Use extra precautions when driving around snowplows by keeping at least 10 car-lengths behind plows.

If you start to skid, remain calm, ease foot off the gas and turn the steering wheel in the direction you want the front of the vehicle to go.

If vehicle has an anti-lock braking system (ABS), apply a steady firm pressure to the brake pedal. Never pump ABS brakes.

Clear snow and ice from vehicle windows, hood, headlights, brake lights and directional signals.

You must turn on your headlights when it is snowing or sleeting.

Do not use cruise control on snow, icy or wet roads.

Equip vehicles with a scraper/brush, small shovel, jumper cables, tow chain, and a bag of sand or cat litter for tire traction. Blankets, heavy boots, warm clothing and flashlights are also important, as are storing high-energy foods such as chocolate or energy bars.

Be sure cell phones are charged for long trips, and inform your family or friends of your travel plan and schedule.

If you get stranded, stay in the vehicle.

Parents of teen drivers should make sure they experience snow and ice driving in a safe environment, such as an empty parking lot.

For weather-related road condition information, call 511 or visit www.511mn.org

You can avoid a ticket — and a crash — if you simply buckle up, drive at safe speeds, pay attention and always drive sober. Help us drive Minnesota Toward Zero Deaths.

If you have any questions concerning traffic related laws or issues in Minnesota, send your questions to Sgt. Troy Christianson — Minnesota State Patrol at 2900 48th Street NW, Rochester MN 55901-5848. (Or reach him at Troy.Christianson@state.mn.us)

■ Center

from Page 1

Development Administration (EDA) “looks favorably” on projects which help with workforce training and retention, county planners began looking for a way to satisfy local and regional needs that would receive positive attention in the competitive federal grant process.

Among the appealing aspects which helped the project receive funding, he summarizes, are that it is designed to meet a range of needs, makes use of an existing flexible space, and is centrally located among numerous regional cities. Johnson and Wilson name a long list of agencies, organizations and businesses that have expressed an interest—and even excitement—about a dedicated space that can be booked both during and outside of typical business operation hours. When the grant was submitted in fall 2024, Johnson mentions, it was accompanied by many letters of support from area businesses and organizations expressing a need for a setting where both hands-on and classroom-type learning could take place.

Wilson suggests the space will also be valuable for activities and events meant to help area youth recognize they can find fulfilling employment and careers at local businesses and organizations, rather than focusing their plans for the future elsewhere.

As work on the center moves forward, Johnson says the plan is to accommodate as many ways as possible the facility can meet local and regional needs, get it built, and then hand over its day-to-day operations and scheduling to an agency yet to be determined.

“It doesn’t matter whose name is on the door,” says Johnson, suggesting area colleges are likely candidates. “What matters is that the space will be here and ready for use by our constituents. Local and regional needs will be met and we’ll be helping support local economies and businesses.

“The prospects are truly exciting.”

“If you are a local or regional business and you can see a way this training center will be useful to you,” comments Wilson, “we want to hear from you.”

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How a blizzard ruined family plans

How did a blizzard ruin family holiday plans?

Genie and I left Walker, Minnesota Tuesday morning November 25, 2025, heading home to Albert Lea, Minnesota. We ended the day staying that night in Crosby, Minnesota due to a blizzard plus a car problem. (The overnight caused us to miss Thanksgiving service Wednesday, November 26, 2025 at Central Freeborn Lutheran Church.) (The blizzard dumped four to eleven inches of snow between Walker, Minnesota and Mille Lacs Lake, Minnesota.

We left Crosby, Minnesota early Wednesday morning November 26, 2025, arriving home to Albert Lea Wednesday night November 26. In taking the short way to our house in Albert Lea, the car stopped and wouldn't start at the stop sign in Clarks Grove, Minnesota just off the freeway.

Julie Ehlers picked up Genie and took her to our house in Albert Lea. I



"If you repeat what you have read here, it may be used against you."

FACT OR FICTION

...you decide

by Bob Hanson, Emeritus

rode with the tow truck as our car was towed into Hanson Tire and Service in Albert Lea.

We left the car at Hanson Tire in Albert Lea. The next day was Thanksgiving day, so the car sat til it could be looked at Friday, November 28. A blizzard was predicted Saturday, November 29. Our Hanson Family annual Thanksgiving day dinner plus sister Barbara Birthday was scheduled for the 29th of November in St. Peter, Minnesota.

Being old, cautious, play it safe

family members, the family gathering was cancelled and rescheduled for the 27th of December 2025.

The forecast blizzard hit with a total of 9.4 inches in Albert Lea, setting many area records.

In one week's time, Fountain Lake in Albert Lea went from about 4,000 geese on open water to 19 ice fishing houses. (Sunday, November 30 to Sunday, December 7, 2025.)

I know many of you readers also had your family plans ruined as did Genie and I.

December 21 is supposedly the first day of winter, except in 2025!!

This may be your last chance to share up with Santa. Call him at his home at the North Pole. 1 9512623062. I have received info as to Lutheran Night at the Twins Baseball game being August 11, 2026. The cost will be about the same as 2025 of \$65.00 per person with money back if the bus is full. This amount will be \$10.00 + bus prizes.

A benefit for something is the most important thing. If at all possible, don't schedule it to end at noon on Sunday. (People with their Church service ending at noon just may not attend; if the ending time is 1 p.m., the person may attend.)

Bob is a retired AAL (Aid Association for Lutherans) agent, currently working on his master's degree in Volunteering. His wife, Genie, is a retired RN, currently working on her doctor's degree in Volunteering. They have two children, Deb in North Carolina, and Dan in New York. Bob says if you enjoy his column, let him know. If you don't enjoy it, keep on reading, it can get worse. Words of wisdom: There is always room for God.



Above: Members of the NRHEG high school choir delighted instructor Krista Reeder when they appeared on stage in colorful, fanciful holiday attire. Below: Saxophonist Alexis Olson stands for a solo during the band concert, while fellow brass section musician Sophia Williams looks on.

Star Eagle photo by Deb Bently

NRHEG Music presents Dec. 8 concert

By DEB BENTLY
Staff Writer

In back-to-back concerts presented the evening of Dec. 8, the vocal and instrumental music departments at NRHEG shared an array of lively holiday tunes performed by students in grades 6 through 12.

The instrumental department, directed by district music instructor Seth Schaefer, presented fourteen tunes performed by five combinations of musicians.

The Jazz Band played “Hometown” and “Georgia on My Mind.”

The chairs were then handed over to the sixth-grade band, who entertained the audience with “Embark,” “Gingerbread Men on Parade,” “Frere Jacques” presented in rounds, and the energetic piece “Dragonblood.”

Grades 7 and 8 presented “Air of Nobility,” “In Search of Yeti,” and “Winter Morning” before being joined by the high school band for a few familiar holiday tunes.

The final five numbers of the band concert were played by musicians in grades 9 to 12: “Flashpoint,” “Silver Bells,” “Softly Speaks the Night,”

“Pure Imagination,” and “Winter-tide.”

The vocal portion of the concert also featured combinations and re-combinations of musicians, with vocal music instructor Krista Reeder both playing the piano accompaniment and directing.

The Senior Select Choir began with “O Come, O Come” and “Long Ago.”

They were then joined by the additional members of the Senior Choir for “Winter With You” featuring Christian Cully playing the viola, “Snow on Snow,” and “A Celtic Silent Night,” featuring Faith Phillips on the violin.

The Senior Chamber Choir performed “How Many Kings.”

Members of the Junior Choir took the risers to perform “Snow,” “Carol of the Bells,” “On a Snowy Evening,” and “Take You on a Sleigh Ride.”

The Treble Choir presented “An Irish Cabin” and “Mary Sat A-Rockin’.”

Senior Sophia Williams acted as guest conductor as the Junior Chamber Choir sang “Sleep, Little



Baby, Sleep.”

The Senior Choir returned to the stage, this time without their robes and instead dressed in brightly colorful Christmas attire, including elaborate hats and other headgear. Director Krista Reeder burst out in delighted laughter before seating herself at the piano keys to continue accompaniment, this time for “African Alleluia” with Christian Cully and Paige Johnson featured as percussionists. The senior choir sang “Sing of a Merry Christmas” before being joined by the junior choir and even some vocal music graduates for “A Very Merry Christmas.”

During a brief pause between performances, members of the NRHEG Music Boosters brought out two handcrafted quilts which are the

prizes in a long-term raffle. Tickets were for sale before and after the concert for those wishing to support the music program’s project to acquire new choir robes; the red and white ones currently owned by the school district were acquired in the 1980s. Raffle sales will continue at upcoming events until a drawing takes place later in the semester.

The program for the Dec. 8 concert also listed upcoming music department events. These include a “Merry Bandmas” event on Dec. 22; caroling during the Dec. 23 school activity day; the Gopher Conference fine arts showcase on Feb. 6 and 7; the Feb. 26 mid-winter junior high concert; and music contests and showcases set to take place in March.

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It's beginning to feel a lot like Christmas

Can you smell it? The aromas of cinnamon and pine are floating through the air in many stores, while Christmas music can be heard almost everywhere you go. I really love Christmas music, choirs singing and, to me, the sound of little children singing Christmas carols is always something special. Top it off with a little snowfall and this is the season of Christmas.

Looking back at my youth, I can remember the excitement of going to town during this joyous season, looking in the various store fronts and having that feeling of excitement that only a kid can get when anticipating Christmas. It really wasn't Christmas until the Santa in the Skinner Chamberlain Department store window was up and waving at passersby.

Friday night used to be the big night for shopping and, of course, Saturdays. Somewhere along the way someone decided that Thursday night would also be a good night to stay open late during the holidays. I can remember looking at the corner box on the front page of the Tribune to see when that magical day would be upon us. As I got older and had a family of my own, the little box on the front page took on a different meaning. All of a sudden my wife and I were responsible for making sure our little ones had a good Christmas. That was quite a change from my youth when all I did was sit back and dream about the toys that I hoped to be getting. Oh, there were some pretty lean years when Santa couldn't put much of anything under the tree, but that never made it any less exciting. Having a close-knit family more than made up for not having a lot of those things.

My mother would wrap Christmas presents on the old ironing board which she would set up in her beauty shop. I would be allowed to help her and thought that was a pretty big deal. I



Woods and Water

by Dick Herfindahl
Outdoors Writer

waited patiently for her to tell me that it was time for me to leave the room because that's when I knew that there was a present that she was wrapping for me! There was a no touch, no shake rule when it came to a present with your name on it. This, however, didn't stop a kid from making a quick weight and volume check when nobody was around.

The smell of Christmas was always one that I loved, that of pine from a real Christmas tree, candles scented with cinnamon and even the dreaded lutefisk as it was boiling on the stove. When it came time to eat, I really didn't give the fish too much thought as long as I was one of the kids sitting at a different table. Once I was old enough and brave enough to sample the first bite of my Norwegian heritage, things changed. I was anointed as a true Scandinavian fish eater and welcomed to the main table.

There is one Christmas early on that I can remember clearly. We were spending Christmas Eve, like always, at my Grandpa and Grandma's on Bridge Street. That evening Santa came to pay us a visit and us kids were excited to see him, of course, but for some reason to me he sounded an awful lot like Uncle Benny, who was mysteriously absent from the event. We received some presents from Santa, and to question it any further, even at a young age, would be looking the proverbial "gift horse in the mouth."

Christmas is still time for family and friends, although, like time, family passes and others step up to take their place, so the best you can hope for is to pass on some family traditions. Our son, Brad, has taken over the hosting of Christmas on my side of the family, and our family looks forward to the traditional Christmas Eve feast. I can say that I have gotten both my sons to taste the "sacred fish" known as lutefisk. This was an accomplishment in itself, and Brad, my youngest, does eat his annual lutefisk and lefse in keeping with family tradition. Brian, the oldest, however, tried a little of it a few years ago and said he was good to go. I guess he's living by the old "fool me once" theory.

My sister Judy, like Brad, will eat her token fish and call it good. When she first tasted, it she put ketchup on it! That could be considered sacrilege in Scandinavian circles. My brother-in-law, Mike, on the other hand, will eat his share like I do and his dad, Bernie, was a "real man" when it came to eating the fish. He would pile it on his plate, pour on the butter and dig in. It is definitely an acquired taste and when I eat it I like to put the fish on the lefse with some potatoes and pour the butter over it, topping it with a generous sprinkling of salt and pepper. If eating fish came with instructions, they would go something like this: after the lefse is loaded, roll up your sleeves, roll up the fish laden lefse, hold it over your plate and devour it, all the while trying to

avoid dripping butter on the front of your shirt or running it down your arm and up your sleeve.

I guess this means that I'll soon be trolling through the grocery store aisles in search of the elusive "lute" and most likely its cousins, herring and oyster. Got to have the fish for Christmas and we always top off our family gatherings with a bowl of oyster stew. My wife is the master cook when it comes to lutefisk, and her secret to making good stew is to let it simmer most of the day. Some naysayers may want to know how you could possibly "spoil" lutefisk, but, if you want it flaky, there is a trick. Years ago, it was shipped in salt brine and had to be soaked for a few days to get rid of the excess salt. I still soak it for about two or three days, and it seems to firm up when cooking. If you cook it wrong, it can turn to jelly and, although it won't ruin the taste, it is not as appealing to eat.

Over the last few years, I have tried to persuade the grandkids to "sample" it, so they can say they've partaken of "the fish," but its been a pretty hard sell. I do hope that one or two of them will come to their senses and decide to carry on the family tradition. If I use a little imagination, I can almost smell the lutefisk cooking on the kitchen stove right now. Um-um-good! It's making my mouth water just thinking about it. No matter what your family traditions are, take time to enjoy them and have a very Merry Christmas. In all the excitement of family gatherings and such, we mustn't lose sight of what the true meaning of Christmas really is.

Please keep our troops in your hearts and prayers during this holiday season. Remember that they are away from home serving our country, so that we can enjoy the freedoms that we have today.

LOOKING BACK

25 years ago



- Amy Sack and Kristin Jessen lit the candle of Character during the induction of new members into the New Richland-Hartland-Ellendale-Geneva Chapter of the National honor society, Wednesday, November 15 at the high school, here.

- A Spanish teacher at an Austin (Minnesota) High School, Barb Judd, former Spanish instructor in the New Richland-Hartland-Ellendale-Geneva School District, noticed last spring that many of her students had plagiarized an Internet source for a translation assignment. Judd decided to respond in a way that would inspire a broad discussion about ethics. For that and several other ethics lessons that struck Judd's peers and students as innovative, she recently won a \$10,000 Ethics in Education Award from the Minnesota Academic Excellence Foundation.

- In a great team effort, the Panther girls B squad defeated Maple River, Tuesday, November 28, here 37-28. The Panther Girls B basketball squad won their second game of the young season, Friday night, when they defeated Janesville-Waldorf-Pemberton 27-19.

50 years ago



- Guidance Counselor Robert Westland of the New Richland-Hartland High School presents Neal Linnihan with his appointment to take part in the house page program in the Minnesota House of Representatives. At the right is representative Rod Searle.

- Ewald brothers, Lynn, Guy and Jay, of Waldorf, exhibited one Short-horn and three Polled Hereford heifers at the Chicago International Livestock Show, December 2. The boys had the second place Polled Hereford Heifer which was also Reserve Senior Champion. Their heifers received a first in the summer yearling class of Polled Hereford and also a third in another class.

- A daughter was born to Mr. and Mrs. Lyle Loken (nee Joann Simonson) of LaPaza, Bolivia, South America, on November 10. The little miss weighed 6 pounds, 8 ounces and has been named Grace Ann. She has one sister, Heather, seven years old and a brother, Nathan, two years older.



- The Traffic Department of the simulated Lester Hill Corporation in the Business Education department at the New Richland-Hartland High School makes good use of the phone system recently installed by the United Telephone Co. Pictured are Kim Olson and Karen Truebenbach.

75 years ago

- Bob Westland is one fellow who practices what he preaches. The slender New Richland high school coach today holds the scoring lead in the City Basketball league with 73 markers to his credits. Westland, who plays center for the Morlea Dairy quintet, has built up his league leading royal on 27 field goals and 19 free throws. Westland's 19 free throws is tops in that department.

- Mr. and Mrs. Don Peterson of Emmons announce the engagement of their daughter, Kathryn Lois, to Marlin Sandsmark of Albert Lea, son of Mr. Oscar Sandsmark of New Richland.

- Mr. and Mrs. Richard Ische (Virginia Berg) of Hopkins are the parents of a daughter, weighing 8 pounds and 5 ounces, born at a Minneapolis hospital, January 5. Mr. and Mrs. Ische also have another son, Michael.

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Otisco, Minnesota
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New Richland, Minnesota
Interim Pastor Trish Reedstrom
Sunday - 9 a.m. Sunday Worship, Sunday School; 10 a.m. Coffee
Monday - 9 a.m. Quilting
Wednesday - 6:15 p.m. Confirmation; 7 p.m. Council meeting (first Wednesday)

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Tuesday - Council meeting

(First Tuesday) * * *
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Sunday - 9 a.m. Worship
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Adult Bible Study 10 a.m.
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Sunday - Mass at 8 a.m.

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Pastor Leandra Anderson
Sunday - 10 a.m. Worship (times vary for holidays)
Monday - 8:30 a.m. Quilting

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Pastor Kyle Smith
Saturday - 8 a.m. Men's Bible Study
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Monday - 7 p.m. Call to prayer
Wednesday - 9:30 a.m. Bible Study; 6 p.m. Confirmation; 7-9 p.m. Youth Group (No confirmation during summer)

ELLENDALE UNITED METHODIST
Ellendale, Minnesota
Randy Cirksema, Pastor
Sunday - Summer Service time is 9:30 a.m. Worship; 9:15 a.m. Sunday school. (No summer Sunday school)
Worship is at 10:30 a.m. beginning after Sept. 3. Sunday School from Oct through May from 9:15 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. Food shelf is open every Thursday from 3:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

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Rev. Neal Ooms
Sunday - 8:45 a.m. Worship; 9:20 Worship and kids church (now an eagle brook viewing church)

ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH LCMS
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Pastor Jesse Krusemark
Sunday - 9 a.m. Worship

* * *
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FILING NOTICE BYRON TOWNSHIP

Notice is hereby given qualified voters of Byron Township, Waseca County, State of Minnesota, that filing for town office will be held for a two-week period beginning December 31, 2025

Affidavits of Candidacy shall be filed with the Town Clerk (or designee) at 24734 80th St. New Richland, MN, between the hours of 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. from Dec. 31, 2025 to January 14, 2026. Filing will close on January 14, 2026 at 5 p.m.

Filing fee - \$2.00
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NRHEG boys rally to win at Bethlehem Academy

By JIM LUTGENS
Sports Editor

It has been said that Bethlehem Academy is one of the toughest venues to win in the Gopher Conference. The New Richland-Hartland-Ellendale-Geneva High School boys' basketball team pulled it off Friday, upending the Cardinals 66-65 for the Panthers' first win of the season.

"BA always plays tough in their home gym, and tonight was no exception," said NRHEG coach Dan Schmidt.

Thanks to some hot shooting by Brooks Gilliland in the first half, the Panthers jumped out to a 38-27 half-time lead. BA came out on fire in the second half, and took advantage of some turnovers and forced shots to come roaring back and took the lead.

Schmidt called a timeout with the Panthers trailing 60-52 with five minutes to play. It helped as started chipping away. A Calvin Nissen lay-up with 12.9 seconds to go made the score 65-63, BA. The Panthers got a turnover on the ensuing inbound. They got a good look at a three that rimmed out, but Brock Holland battled to secure the long rebound, kicked over to Brooks Gilliland on the wing, and he drained a three with 0.9 seconds remaining to win it.

"Brooks had a great game tonight to hopefully kick-start some things for him," said Schmidt. "He led all scorers with 24 points, going 6-for-12 on threes."

Individually for NRHEG: B.Gilliland 24 points, 3

rebounds, 3 assists, 1 steal; Nissen 13P, 2R, 1A, 1S; Dom Olson 9P, 2A; Brendan Schmidt 5P, 6R, 2A, 1S, 1 blocked shot; A.J. Deen 6P, 6R, 4A, 1S; Fynn Baumann 2P, 2A, 1S; Holland 5P, 6R, 3A; Sean Lassahn 2R, 1A, 1S; Olander Hanna 4R, 2A.

"Olson and Deen bounced back with great games tonight, providing a spark and battling on both ends of the floor," said Coach Schmidt.

The Panthers hosted a strong Maple River team last Tuesday and fell 79-42.

"We took on a Maple River team that continues to play with intensity on the defensive end and efficiency on the offensive end," said Schmidt. "They jumped us from the start, and we could never recover. It was a tough night on both ends of the court, and our inexperience showed. It gave us some obvious things to work on in practice the next few days, as we prepare for our next game."

NRHEG individual statistics: Deen 3P, 2R, 1A; Olson 1R, 1S; Nissen 13P, 2A, 2S; B.Gilliland 7P, 2A, 2S; Baumann 3P; B.Schmidt 5P, 1R, 1A, 3S; Mack Gilliland 2P, 2R, 3A, 2S; Holland 3P, 3R, 1A, 1S; Lassahn 6P, 3R, 1A; Hanna 1A, 1S, 3B.

After a Tuesday game at Medford, the Panthers host JWP Thursday, Dec. 18 and Martin County West Dec. 22; they travel to Waseca Dec. 23. After the Christmas break they play Jan. 3 at St. Clair and Jan. 6 at home against United South Central.



TAKING IT TO THE HOOP — The Panthers' Calvin Nissen drives to the hoop during NRHEG's game against Maple River last Tuesday.
Photo by Jim Lutgens



WINNERS — Wyatt Larson, left, gets his hand raised by referee Neal Skaar after pinning his opponent at 215 pounds during last Thursday's home dual meet against Westfield. Owen Schlaak, right, throws his opponent at 107 during his 12-10 victory against Westfield. The meet drew the biggest crowd in recent memory for NRHEG wrestling. The Panthers took the consolation championship in Saturday's Cougar Duals at Lakeville's South.



Photos by Jim Lutgens

Good show NRHEG matmen battle Westfield

By JIM LUTGENS
Sports Editor

The biggest home wrestling crowd in recent memory turned out for last Thursday's dual meet between visiting Westfield and NRHEG in New Richland.

They didn't go home with a win, but they saw a good show.

The Razorbacks, a co-op between Blooming Prairie and Hayfield, defeated the Panthers 39-24 in a hard-fought battle.

"The wrestlers competed hard at every weight class and worked hard to score points," said first-year NRHEG coach Krey Cory. "I'm really proud of the effort they put forth and how well they attacked."

The Panthers' Owen Schlaak had a gritty 12-10 win at 107 pounds and Dakota Schlaak stayed in control of his match for a 5-1 decision at 139. Wyatt Hendrickson, 160, Ryan Schlaak, 189, and Wyatt Larson, 215, all had pins for the Panthers.

"Due to some injuries and open weight classes, we had to ask some kids to wrestle up a weight class and they did well," said Cory. "The energy from the fans in the gym was really great, and it was a fun dual to be a part of. We will look to continue to improve tomorrow when we head to Lakeville South for the Cougar Duals."

In the first round the Panthers fell to eventual runner-up team Goodhue 44-29.

"The whole team battled tonight," said Cory.

The Panthers got wins coming from Owen Schlaak, 107, fall 1:53; Tucker Flatness, 114, technical fall 16-1; Jacobson, 121, fall 1:14; Chase Johannsen, 139, fall 3:22; and Ryan Schlaak, 189, fall, 2:28.

The Panthers bounced back in the second round, defeating Westonka 39-36.

Match wins came from Riffiten Jacobson at 107 receiving a forfeit; Owen Schlaak, 114, tech. fall 19-2; Charlie Tufte, 127, fall, 1:20; Dakota Schlaak, 133, major decision 16-5; Johannsen, 139, fall, 0:55; Ryan Schlaak, 189, fall, 1:00; and Larson, 215, fall, 2:37.

In the final round the Panthers defeated Mankato West 44-30 to claim the consolation championship. Owen Schlaak, Dakota Schlaak and Johannsen all had falls for the Panthers. Hendrickson had a tech. fall and Jacobson, Tufte and Ryan Schlaak all received forfeits.

"The wrestlers continue to be aggressive and take chances and are finding new ways to score and get better every time they get on the mat," said Coach Cory.

The Panthers take the mat this Friday and Saturday at the Redwood River Riot in Redwood Falls.

NRHEG girls top Maple River

By JIM LUTGENS
Sports Editor

The New Richland-Hartland-Ellendale-Geneva High school girls' basketball team faced Maple River at Mapleton last Tuesday and, despite a rather slow start on the offensive end, finished strong, defeating the Eagles 68-45. NRHEG led 30-14 at halftime.

"We didn't shoot the ball extremely well to start the game, but a couple of huge offensive rebounds and put-backs, especially from Ezra Boerner, helped get us going," said coach Onika Peterson. "Our rebounding continues to be a major strength for us; when you can create multiple shot attempts on the offensive end, it makes a huge difference."

The Panthers pulled away heading into halftime.

"In the second half, more shots finally started to fall, helping us secure the win," said Peterson. "Defensively, we had moments where we were a bit off, but we have two days of practice to regroup, recoup, and get better as we prepare for Friday."

Camryn VanMaldehem led all

scorers with 31 points. Her twin sister, Quinn, pulled down 14 rebounds, Clara Buendorf 10.

NRHEG statistics: Boerner 7P, 7R, 1A, 1A; Q.VanMaldeghem 12P, 14R, 1A, 4S, 1 blocked shot; Buendorf 8P, 10R, 2A, 3S; C.VanMaldeghem 31P, 3R, 1A, 4S; Savannah Farr 7P, 7R, 1S, 1B; Chloe Stork 3P, 2R, 1A; Emelia Stadheim 2S.

The Panthers blasted visiting Bethlehem Academy 79-25 Friday in New Richland. It was 10-0 early and 44-16 at halftime.

"The team did a great job attacking the basket, and making the extra pass to their open teammate," said Peterson. "We at times had some sluggish moments on defense and we could have rebounded better. However, it was a great team win over a conference opponent. We're looking forward to playing Jackson County Central tomorrow in the Maple River Showcase."

Camryn VanMaldeghem had another big night, totaling 34 points, six rebounds, five steals, one assist and one blocked shot.

Others: Gabby Schlaak 7P, 3R, 1A; Boerner 6P, 2R, 1A, 1S;



INTENSITY — At left, the Panthers' Ezra Boerner (2) grabs a rebound against Bethlehem Academy. At right, Quinn VanMaldeghem (4) eyes the basket. The Panthers won, 79-25.

Q.VanMaldeghem 10P, 8R, 2A, 3S; Buendorf 10P, 3R, 3A; Farr 2P; Stork 5P, 1R, 1A; Julieann Wobbrock 2R, 1S; Stadheim 3P; Alayna Groskreutz 2R; Hadley Roeker 2P, 1S.

The Panthers defeated JCC Saturday 86-59. They led 47-26 at halftime.

"It's never easy to go back-to-back nights for games, let alone on a Saturday," said Peterson. "The girls worked extremely hard; we hit the boards hard tonight, with Quinn pulling in 12, Ezra 10, and both Gabby and Camryn eight apiece. That is huge for how we run our offense. Getting second and third-chance shot opportunities is key for us. We attacked their zone well and made the extra pass to find our open shooters. Our defense found our



Photos by Jim Lutgens

groove tonight, and we were able to create some havoc, causing them to turn the ball over 18 times."

Camryn VanMaldeghem scored a season-high 38 points, Buendorf 17.

Individual totals: Schlaak 6P, 8R, 3A; Boerner 9P, 10R, 1S, 4A; Q.VanMaldeghem 13P, 12R, 8S, 5A; Buendorf 17P, 4R, 1A; Kenley Gehrke 1R; C.VanMaldeghem 38P, 8R, 7S, 4A; Farr 1R; Stork 3P, 1R,

1S, 3A, 1B.

After hosting Lanesboro Tuesday, the Panthers, 5-2 overall and 3-0 in the Gopher Conference, play Friday at JWP.

"We have a challenging week ahead," said Peterson.

The Panthers host Waseca Dec. 23 and close out the year at the LCWM Holiday Tournament Dec. 29-30.

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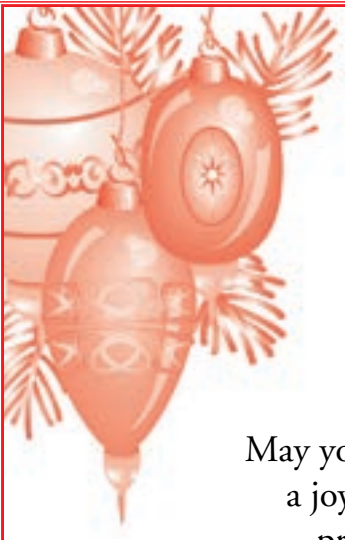
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Have a Very Merry Christmas
and a Joyous New Year



**THOMPSON
SANITATION**
507-256-4370
Locally Owned and Operated
Monday and Tuesday holiday garbage pick-ups
are on schedule - All others 1 day late

HAPPY HOLIDAYS



**JK ROUTH
CONTRACTING, LLC**
Ellendale, MN



Jesse Routh
507-383-7892 cell

› Demolition Site Work
› Pit Run › Screened Pit Run
› Concrete Removal

Building Contractor Lic # 20396072



Merry
Christmas
and Happy New Year

From
Residents & Staff
New Richland Care Center



Merry Christmas!



May your holiday season be blessed with dreams fulfilled and hopes renewed.

AGRO-ECONOMICS
MARK BERNARD
New Richland

BRUSH UP
ON CHEER!



Here's wishing all our patients
and their families a season
that's merry and bright.
We consider it a privilege to
serve you and thank you for
entrusting us with your
dental care.

Happy Holidays!

Main Street Dental Clinics
comfortable dentistry
Blooming Prairie • New Richland • Owatonna • Rochester

WARMEST
WISHES



Wishing you and your family
a safe and joyful season.



Bennett Schlaak
121 3rd Street NE Ste 1
New Richland, MN
507.465.0170



**FARM BUREAU
FINANCIAL SERVICES**

Farm Bureau Property & Casualty Insurance Company,* Western Agricultural Insurance Company,* Farm Bureau Life Insurance Company*/West Des Moines, IA. *Company providers of Farm Bureau Financial Services. PR-S-A (10-24)



Peace on Earth

NASINEC
Funeral Home & Crematory Wells MN

903 CALVERLY COURT
ELLENDALE, MN 56026

Whispering Oak Place
ASSISTED LIVING & MEMORY CARE

PHONE: 507-684-3026
WHISPERINGOAKPLACE.COM

Have a very Merry Christmas
and Happy Holiday Season
903 Calverly Court • Ellendale, MN 56026
Call 507 684-3026
whisperingoakplace.com

M·E·R·R·Y
CHRISTMAS
and Happy New Year

from
Janike Seeds
Layne Janike







merry christmas

From the Central Farm Service Team



Trusted Service. Cooperative Value.

Merry Christmas & Many Thanks!

Thank you to all my current clients
and new customers!



AGENCY, INC.
Troy Thompson
LUTCF

507-377-2852
www.troythompsonagency.com







Greetings

To our patrons who've
made our year extra
special, may we wish
you happiness and
fulfillment this
Christmas and in the
days to follow.
Our warmest greetings
and thanks to you all.





Since 1898

Bernie	Kristi	Matt
Colton	Jordan	Ann Gary
Sandy	Kelli	Kathy Vanessa
Jenny	Nik	Mary Diane
Dawn.	Jean	Jennifer

Member FDIC

Insured to \$250,000

NRHEG Music Concert, Monday, December 15, 2025



A stylized Christmas tree composed of many colorful hearts in shades of red, green, blue, and purple, with yellow star ornaments. It sits on a purple base.

The quotes are free, the peace of mind is priceless!

TOTAL SECURITY
OF SOUTHERN MINNESOTA

Monitored Security Systems
Digitally recorded camera systems
Lowest monitoring rates in area

Locally Owned • 30+ Years Experience

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MERRY CHRISTMAS
from your friends at
LERBERG'S

CAR WASH & COIN LAUNDRY

Full line of cardio, free weights, power racks, dumbbells, barbells, & circuit training machines!

Touchless Wash and Self Serve

FITNESS CENTER & TANNING

24 HOURS

507-684-2471
118 5th Avenue West
Ellendale, MN 56026

A red cardinal is perched on a pine branch. A large gold Christmas ornament is in the foreground. The background is a festive winter scene with snow and more branches.

Peace

MINNWEST BANK

WALDORF

A reindeer is wearing a red Santa hat with a white pom-pom and a red and black plaid scarf. It is surrounded by colorful Christmas lights.

Merry Christmas
from
FIRST IMPRESSIONS

HAIR/NAILS/TANNING/MASSAGE
NEW RICHLAND