

Lakes Area Review

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2026

KICK TEAM ADVANCES TO STATE
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GIRLS LOSE FIRST GAME OF SEASON
 see page 13



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VOL. 139, NO. 7

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AROUND THE LAKES

Tuesday's Table

SPICER—Tuesday's Table, a free community meal co-sponsored by The Link, will be held at Faith Lutheran Church on Feb. 17, starting at 6 p.m. Everyone welcome. The church is located at 310 Medayto Drive.

SAIL class

NLS AREA—S.A.I.L. (Stay Active and Independent for Life) exercise classes open to seniors 65+ in the New London-Spicer community. The free class focuses on strength, balance and fitness. Classes each Monday and Thursday, starting at 9:30 a.m. Glen Oaks Village Apartments in New London, and Each Tuesday and Thursday starting at 10:15 a.m. at the Dethleff Community Center in Spicer. Everyone welcome.

Food drive

WILLMAR—Hope For Our City grocery distribution, each Wednesday starting at 5:30 p.m. Hope For Our City is located at 1020 Hwy. 71 NE, across from the Flags of Honor memorial. Suggested donation \$1. Everyone welcome.

Doodle Romp

WILLMAR — A Doodle Romp takes place this Sunday, Feb. 15, at 1 p.m. at the Willmar Dog Park at the Lions Park, located at 1230 22nd Street SW. The romp starts at 1 p.m. All doodle enthusiasts encouraged to bring their furry friend out to socialize with other doodles.

Vintage snowmobile show

LAKE LILLIAN — On Saturday, Feb. 21 Lake Lillian hosts the Vintage Snowmobile Show and Ride, starting at 9 a.m. The day's events include free riding on lake and trails, a sled lineup from oldest to newest and group rides. In addition, the rides break down into older, slower sleds to newer, faster vehicles. The day also includes a lunch. Admission to the event is free. The ride is located at Tracks USA, 10340 67th Avenue SE.

INSERTS

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Photos by Shannon Urban & Terri Robichon

Bundled in hats, gloves, and plenty of grit, participants spanning multiple generations made their way through the Frozen 5k course Saturday in Spicer.

Chilled to the bone, but fast to the finish

Runners of all ages bundle up and lace up for Spicer's annual Winterfest Frozen 5k along Green Lake

By Shannon Urban
 Staff Writer

Dozens of runners braved winter temperatures Saturday morning to take part in Spicer's Frozen 5K, a community road race that has become a highlight of Spicer's Winterfest calendar.

The event, held on Feb. 7, started at 9 a.m. at Zorbaz on

Lake Avenue, where participants lined up at the crosswalk before heading east for the 3.1-mile course. A pre-race meeting was held inside Zorbaz's north room just ahead of the start.

Runners of all ages and abilities were welcomed, with competitive divisions for men and women ranging from

youth categories to 85 and up. Each participant registered by January 25 was guaranteed a race T-shirt, and all finishers were treated to snacks and beverages at the finish line.

Awards took place on the north stage at Zorbaz, with medals presented to the top male and female overall finishers and the top three in each

age group.

In the men's race, Landon Eliason, 17, claimed the overall title with a time of 18 minutes, 24 seconds, followed closely by Mason Kurr, 15, in 18:30, and Seth Conklin, 32, who finished third in 19:31. On the women's side, Kari Eckhoff, 38, led the field in 23:02, edging out Stephanie

Sathre, 38, who crossed the line in 23:11. Chloe Hanson, 14, rounded out the top three women with a time of 23:20.

Organizers said the Frozen 5K continues to grow as part of the region's winter event lineup, combining healthy competition with community spirit in the heart of Kandiyohi County.



Photos submitted

The John Deere Enduro Team raced in 1976, the only year the Liquidator, the sled Nelson raced into history on, was made.

More Than a Machine

Fifty years after a legendary comeback, a rebuilt John Deere Liquidator snowmobile carries Brian Nelson — and an era of winter racing — back into focus.

By Shannon Urban
 Staff Writer

On a cold winter morning nearly five decades ago, Brian Nelson lined up with hundreds of other riders, not knowing if his snowmobile would survive the race — much less win it.

For this race, finishing was victory enough.

Snowmobiles in the 1970s were still evolving, prone to breakdowns and pushed to their

limits in endurance races that stretched hundreds of miles across frozen lakes, logging roads and open farmland. The Winnipeg-to-St. Paul International 500 — known simply as the Winnipeg 500 — stood above them all. It was the sport's crown jewel and its proving ground.

More than a machine
 Continued on page 7

Paid family leave reshapes work in Minnesota, sparking celebration and concern in equal measure

By Ralph Dickerson
 Editor

In January of this year the Minnesota Paid Family Medical Leave act took effect. Supporters of the law say the law provides basic security for all workers, levels the playing field and benefits all employers. Critics call it a one-size-fits-all government run program that places a burden on small businesses, adds to the current labor-force shortage, and reduces the competitiveness of Minnesota's businesses. Critics also say it negatively impacts local governments in terms of the tax levy and increases costs on local governments.

Supporters of the law say the law provides security for employees because it eliminates the fear of an employee losing a paycheck to care for family members.

The law covers most of the workers in the state of Minnesota. The law requires that an employee work for an employer with Minnesota covered wages and the employee meets a minimum income level, regardless of the size of the employer.

The law allows family and medical leave to allow someone to bond with a new child, either through birth, adoption or foster care, to care for a seriously ill family member, to deal with the employee's own medical health issue and for safety related incidents such as domestic abuse.

The law expands the definition of family member beyond the confines of immediate family (spouse and children). It covers other close relationships that supporters say more clearly defines modern families. Paid leave allows a person to take up to 20 weeks of leave per year.

Local state Representative Dave Baker,

state Senator Andrew Lang and Matthew Hilgart with the Association of Minnesota Counties expressed concern over the scope of the bill, and its impact on both business and government.

"Overall, it's a very noble program," said Baker. "But it was not written well at all."

Baker said he does not oppose the law, but said the state crafted an overly broad and costly program that hits small businesses the hardest. Baker said the law includes an expansive definition of family that goes beyond immediate members such as a spouse or children. It also includes an expansive list of eligible conditions.

The expansive list of family members and conditions covered makes oversight and verification difficult, said Baker. He acknowledged the law mandates verification steps to ensure only eligible people use the program, but worries the broad brush strokes with which the state crafted the law, combined with typical human behavior creates an incentive for people to take advantage of the program's benefits by taking longer leaves, which places a strain on small businesses. He fears employees taking the maximum time allowed not out of medical necessity, but due to feeling entitled to the time due to paying for the benefit.

"We're going to find a very large expansion of people (who) are going to look for reasons to do this instead of using their PTO (paid time off)," said Baker.

In a small business, sometimes only one employee knows how to perform a specific job task, said Baker. Trying to find someone

Paid family leave
 Continued on page 5

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HAPPY PRESIDENTS' DAY



Bill of Rights

Congress of the United States,

*begun and held at the City of New York, on
Wednesday, the fourth of March, one thousand seven hundred and eighty nine.*

Who Wrote the Bill of Rights?

The first ten amendments to the Constitution make up the Bill of Rights. James Madison wrote the amendments as a solution to limit government power and protect individual liberties through the Constitution. For example, the Founders saw the ability to speak and worship freely as a natural right protected by the First Amendment. Congress is prohibited from making laws establishing religion or abridging freedom of speech. The Fourth Amendment safeguards citizens' right to be free from unreasonable government intrusion in their homes through the requirement of a warrant.

power to remain with state and local governments and favored a bill of rights to safeguard individual liberty.

Madison, then a member of the U.S. House of Representatives, altered the Constitution's text where he thought appropriate. However, several representatives, led by Roger Sherman, objected, saying that Congress had no authority to change the wording of the Constitution. Therefore, Madison's changes were presented as a list of amendments that would follow Article VII.

When was the Bill of Rights Ratified

The House approved 17 amendments. Of these, the Senate approved 12, which were sent to the states for approval in August 1789. Ten amendments were approved (or ratified). Virginia's legislature was the final state legislature to ratify the amendments, approving them on December 15, 1791.

— Information from billofrightsinstitute.org

Why was the Bill of Rights added to the Constitution?

The Bill of Rights was added to the Constitution because the Constitution lacked limits on government power. Federalists advocated for a strong national government. They believed the people and states automatically kept any powers not given to the federal government. Anti-Federalists wanted

Note: The following text is a transcription of the first ten amendments to the Constitution in their original form. These amendments were ratified December 15, 1791, and form what is known as the "Bill of Rights."

Amendment I

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

Amendment II

A well-regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed.

Amendment III

No soldier shall, in time of peace be quartered in any house, without the consent of the owner, nor in time of war, but in a manner to be prescribed by law.

Amendment IV

The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

Amendment V

No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime, unless on a presentment or indictment of a grand jury, except in cases arising in the land or naval forces, or in the militia, when in actual service in time of war or public danger; nor shall any person be subject for the same offense to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb; nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.

Amendment VI

In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury of the state and district wherein the crime shall have been committed, which district shall have been previously ascertained by law, and to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation; to be confronted with the witnesses against him; to have compulsory process for obtaining witnesses in his favor, and to have the assistance of counsel for his defense.

Amendment VII

In suits at common law, where the value in controversy shall exceed twenty dollars, the right of trial by jury shall be preserved, and no fact tried by a jury, shall be otherwise reexamined in any court of the United States, than according to the rules of the common law.

Amendment VIII

Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted.

Amendment IX

The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people.

Amendment X

The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the states, are reserved to the states respectively, or to the people.

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ARTS & CULTURE

Porchfest 2026 is on!

After uncertainty, community-wide support for Porchfest prevails

By Shannon Urban
Staff Writer

For a time, it wasn't clear whether Porchfest would have another encore.

The homegrown music event, hosted by the Little Theatre Auditorium and built around neighbors, front porches and local talent, ended its most recent season with a question mark hanging over it. Rising costs and logistical hurdles had left the Little Theatre's event organizers unsure whether the community-loved event could realistically continue without additional support or logistical changes.

That uncertainty lingered over the winter as New London council members heard from the community that while the enthusiasm for Porchfest hadn't faded, the financial realities for the Little Theatre of putting it on had become harder to manage as it currently was. In late 2025, Little Theatre Executive Director Bethany Lacktorin approached the city to ask whether there might be ways to make the event more feasible moving forward.

That conversation addressed small ways the city could help support the event, like waiving the fee for use of the stage as well as kicking in a donation to help cover expenses the city required for the event, such as the addition of porta-potties down by the Bill Gossman stage. The result of these conversations came to a turning point at the February 3 council meeting, when the City Council approved a permit for Porchfest to return to the streets of New London on Saturday, June 20.

With the permit in place, the event that transforms or-

dinary porches and street corners into informal stages and streets into gathering spaces will return in 2026, moving its place on the community calendar to another date, at least for now.

Maria Novak, Event Director for the Little Theatre, said the decision to move forward came after several conversations behind the scenes.

"We knew there were a couple of steps that were going to go into making this decision," Novak said.

The first was speaking with the Gossman family, as the event has traditionally centered around Bill Gossman Day.

"They've been incredibly understanding about the complexity that goes into organizing Porchfest," Novak said. "Quite frankly, they were very gracious about whatever decision the theater made."

The Little Theatre board then weighed the future of the event more broadly.

"When we discussed it as a board, we discovered that the passion for it was still there," Novak said. "It really overshadowed the difficulty of putting it on."

One shift that helped clear the path forward was letting go of tradition when it came to the date. Last year, Porchfest coincided with Ribfest, bringing large crowds to town at once. While that energy was exciting, organizers ultimately reconsidered the timing.

"It was amazing to have so many people in town at once, but we ultimately found it was more beneficial to spread events throughout the summer," Novak said. "The more opportunities we can create to draw people to New London

for experiences, the better."

Porchfest has been more than just a music event since its inception. Though it originated from an event the city requested the Theatre to host to honor its late mayor, Bill Gossman, it's since become a celebration of locality — local musicians, local homes, and the kind of casual, walkable experience that invites people to linger and connect. All things that many would widely agree exemplify Gossman's passion and community focused values. Ever since, performers play short sets from porches and street corners while attendees wander from spot to spot, often running into visitors, neighbors and friends.

For many of the musicians themselves, the event has become something they're not willing to see pause.

"They expressed a really strong feeling about not sitting out for a year," Novak said. "They talked about how much they love it and that it's such a great experience, especially for musicians who are new to it."

But behind that laid-back atmosphere is a significant amount of planning and expense, from permitting and coordination to equipment and promotion. Lacktorin previously told city council members that those behind-the-scenes costs were increasingly difficult to shoulder without some form of ongoing partnership.

Novak said the Little Theatre's requests for modest assistance were met with support.

"Our requests were graciously met," she said. "We needed a little more financial help to continue putting it on

with some of the regular fees that go into making that day work for the community. That was super helpful, and we're really thankful."

The council's approval of supporting the event through the waiving of stage fees and an annual donation signals a desire to keep Porchfest going and helps remove some of the obstacles to Porchfest's future. While it doesn't solve every challenge associated with hosting the event, it gives organizers a small boost needed to move forward.

At the same time, the council also approved permits for Ribfest, which will be held June 6, as well as for the Autumn Equinox Puppet Parade, which will take place Sept. 19.

As planning begins again, Porchfest's return feels less like a routine event announcement and more like a small victory — proof that grassroots local cultural events can survive moments of doubt with community backing and cooperation.

Novak noted that the event remains largely volunteer-driven.

"Everybody working on this project is essentially a volunteer," she said. "None of our musicians are paid. They do it out of their love of music and New London."

If you enjoy having Porchfest in our community, consider supporting it through donations. Businesses can sponsor the event or make donations, and individuals can designate tax-deductible gifts specifically for Porchfest through the Little Theatre Auditorium. These donations help alleviate some of the costs of bringing Porchfest to the community and keeping the music alive.



Photos submitted

Last year's Porchfest featured many local musicians performing all around town including John Dokken & Dom Nash (top), Lilly Waters Jazz Jubilee (center), and Galactic Cowboy Orchestra on the Bill Gossman Stage (bottom).

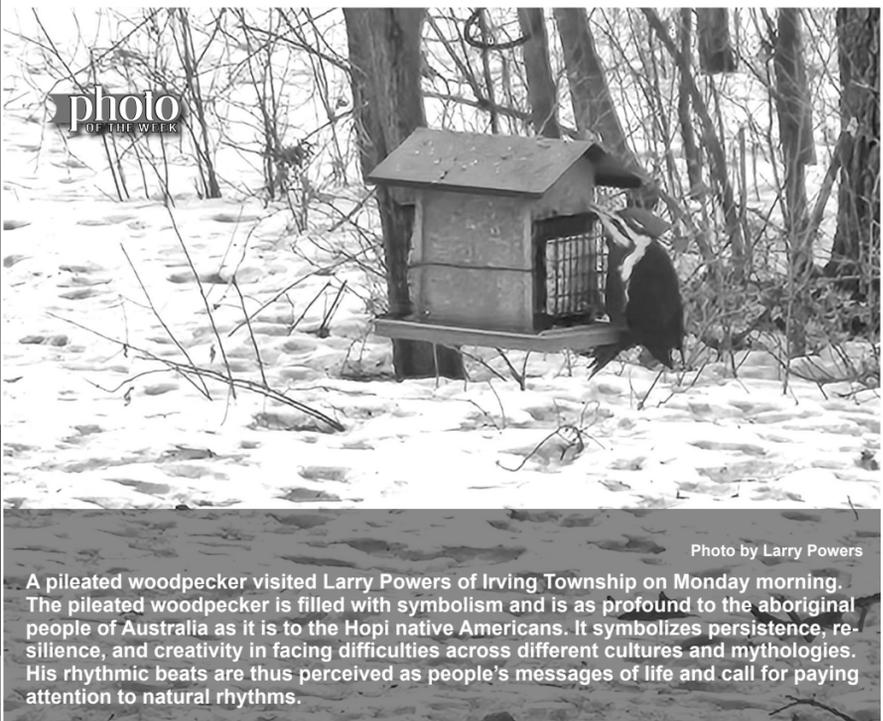


photo OF THE WEEK

Photo by Larry Powers

A pileated woodpecker visited Larry Powers of Irving Township on Monday morning. The pileated woodpecker is filled with symbolism and is as profound to the aboriginal people of Australia as it is to the Hopi native Americans. It symbolizes persistence, resilience, and creativity in facing difficulties across different cultures and mythologies. His rhythmic beats are thus perceived as people's messages of life and call for paying attention to natural rhythms.



Photos by Brooke Eischens



NLS 2nd grade displays art and performs to a packed room

On Wednesday, February 11 the NLS 2nd grade dressed in red for Valentines day and put on a program at the Prairie Woods elementary school singing songs about penguins, friendship and sailors. The hallway leading in featured walls full of their artwork.



Photo submitted by Jean Ruter

Sunrise Lions donate 80 packs of food

Thanks to the 5M4 Lion Mid-Winter Convention last weekend, Spicer Sunrise Lions were able to deliver 80 food packets for the NLS backpack program at The Link. Each packet contains 7 food items. The project was made possible by a community impact grant of \$3,500 from the Lions Foundation known as LCIF. Funds donated by the district's 53 clubs can be used in proportion to the district donations to the foundation. Participants from 30 clubs in attendance at the convention assembled the food packets which were then sent home with clubs for distribution. The Lions motto is *We Serve* and this time it was food for kids. Pictured, Lions Dale and Jean Ruter deliver the packages of food to The Link.

CIVIC NEWS

Appeals court ruling highlights repeated missteps in Chippewa County case

By Shannon Urban
Staff Writer

A recent ruling from the Minnesota Court of Appeals underscores a series of procedural and legal errors by the Chippewa County court in a contested adoption case that has now been sent back for further proceedings.

The ruling marks the latest setback in a case that has been repeatedly derailed by procedural errors, shifting county positions and misunderstandings of appellate guidance.

Its recent decision is just one in a series of mistakes involving this one case alone. Chippewa County sought emergency protective care almost immediately for the child, citing the biological mother's history of prior involuntary and voluntary terminations of parental rights, which she publicly refutes the validity of. Parental rights were later terminated, and the child was placed under state guardianship for adoption.

The child was placed with foster parents shortly after birth, where the child re-

mained for nearly three years. A letter was sent to biological relatives, from which a maternal uncle came forward as interested in adopting the child.

At various points, Chippewa County Family Services supported adoption by the foster parents, then reversed course when DCFS rejected the adoption application, citing mistakes made by Chippewa County in its handling of the biological relative option. Chippewa County then recommended placement with the uncle, dismissing its earlier concerns and ordering assessments that found both placements equally capable of meeting the child's needs.

The case first reached the Court of Appeals in late 2024 after the district court denied the uncle's adoptive placement request without holding an evidentiary hearing. The appellate court reversed that decision, ruling the district court had failed to follow the statutory process and ordering a hearing.

After a six-day evidentiary hearing, the district

court ruled that the county acted reasonably in denying the foster parents' adoption request and found placement with the uncle to be in the child's best interests. The foster parents appealed, arguing the decision rested on faulty legal reasoning.

The Court of Appeals agreed, finding that the district court relied on an inappropriate legal standard borrowed from a land-use zoning case—an analysis the appellate panel said was ill-suited to adoption proceedings focused on a child's welfare.

Additionally, the appeals court said the district court fundamentally misunderstood Minnesota's child-

placement statute by treating it as creating an automatic preference for relatives.

State law requires counties to consider relative placements first, the court explained, but does not require placement with a relative unless competing placements are equally qualified after a full best-interests analysis. By framing relative placement as a preference rather than a conditional tie-breaker, the district court misapplied the law, the panel ruled.

The opinion lays bare a record of inconsistent decision-making by Chippewa County emphasizing that relative status alone cannot substitute for a properly applied best-interests analysis and that

counties must adhere closely to statutory requirements when making placement decisions.

Because those requirements were not properly followed, the appellate court ordered the district court to reassess whether the county acted reasonably in denying the foster parents' adoptive placement request. The court said that reassessment could require reopening the record, noting that the child's circumstances and attachments have likely evolved during the lengthy proceedings.

While declining to say which placement should ultimately prevail, the Court of Appeals underscored the cost of repeated legal errors

in child-protection cases.

The panel acknowledged the "length of time of these proceedings" and stressed that achieving permanency is a paramount consideration for children in foster care. Yet the ruling means the case will return once again to district court, prolonging uncertainty for the child at the center of the dispute.

The decision does not determine the final outcome of the adoption. Instead, it returns the case to the district court for further proceedings consistent with the appellate court's guidance. The court made clear that its role was not to choose between parties, but to ensure that the law is applied correctly.

Kroll resigns from Spicer council, city declares vacancy

By Ralph Dickerson
Editor

After a little more than one year as a member of the Spicer City Council, Ted Kroll tendered his resignation at the Feb. 2 council meeting. Kroll resigned due to his impending move to Florida. The council accepted his resignation.

When asked if he decided to move to Florida for a new job opportunity, Kroll said no. Instead, Kroll said he decided to move to Florida, "just to move." The city announced his resignation via resolution 2026-07.

"The city council accepts John (Ted) Kroll's resignation," said Spicer Mayor

Robin deCathelineau. "The city council declares that a vacancy exists on the council effective at 12 a.m. on February 4, 2026, adopted by the city council of Spicer, Minnesota on this the third day of February, 2026."

Now that Kroll tendered his resignation, the city needs to appoint someone to fill his term until the next election, which occurs in November of this year. The city accepted Kroll's resignation and declared a vacancy.

In other action, the council accepted the Sheriff's Report for January, 2026. The department answered 51 calls and worked 105.75 hours. The

council also approved Resolution 2026-01 which updated official designations for 2026 which included the addition of the city's new law firm and a financial municipal advisor.

The council also approved Resolution 2026-05 which amended the 2026 rate schedule to include the recently approved water and sewer rates. Resolution 2026-06, also approved by the council, accepted a \$1,000 donation to the Spicer Volunteer Fire Department. The council also approved the annual liquor license permit for the Green Lake Baseball Association.

Public Works Supervisor Chad Lien approached

the council about making the frontage road in front of Snap Fitness' new location a one-way road. He also discussed constructing a new retaining wall at Saulsbury Beach and adding an ADA compliant beach access.

Lien also suggested the city examine purchasing additional winter-themed decorations for downtown Spicer, and also purchasing memorial benches for the newly renovated Westside Park. Also, the council approved the payment of the bills in the amount of \$28,417.21.

Do you want to comment on this story? Email ralph@nslakesareareview.com.

BOARD & COUNCIL MEETINGS

February 16, 2026

- Kandiyohi City Council meeting, Kandiyohi City Hall/ Civic Center, 432 Atlantic Ave. 7 p.m.
- Prairie Pothole Association meeting, Zorbaz in Spicer, 7 p.m.

February 17, 2026

- Kandiyohi County Board of Commissioners meeting, 9 a.m. Health and Human Services building second floor meeting room, 2200 23rd St. NE, Willmar.
- Spicer City Council meeting, 5:30 p.m. Dethlefs Community Center, 217 Hillcrest Ave. Spicer.
- Irving Township meeting, 7 p.m. 15282 195th Ave NE, Hawick.

February 18, 2026

- New London City Council meeting, 5:30 p.m. 10 Ash Street SE, New London..

February 23, 2026

- Green Lake Township meeting, 6 p.m. Prairie Meadows School, 650 County Road 10W, Spicer.

February 24, 2026

- Lake Andrew Township meeting, 7 p.m. 3453 150th Ave. NW, New London.

When is it actually considered a snow emergency? The New London Council reviews ordinances to better uphold them

By Shannon Urban
Staff Writer

A recent discussion at the New London City Council table made one thing clear: while the city has a snow emergency ordinance on the books, when — and how — it applies is not always well understood by residents or consistently followed.

The conversation emerged during new business as council members considered winter parking issues on Mayfair Avenue, a narrow street behind the London Dairy Apartments that Sig Holme of New London's Public Works described as one of the most difficult areas in town to plow. After receiving complaints from nearby residents about vehicles consistently parking on the street and remaining there, the council unani-

mously approved seasonal no-parking signs on the south side of the street from November through April.

What began as a street-specific fix quickly broadened into a deeper review of the city's snow emergency ordinance and how it is enforced.

According to city code, a snow emergency is automatically in effect once two inches or more of snow have accumulated. During that time, no vehicles may be left on city streets until plowing is completed curb to curb. A declaration may also be issued by the mayor, city administrator or another designated official, but council members emphasized that the ordinance applies even without a formal announcement once snowfall reaches the 2 inch threshold.

Council members noted that, despite the ordinance, vehicles are frequently left overnight during snow events, especially near apartment buildings, forcing plows to make multiple passes or return later to finish the job.

The Mayfair Avenue discussion highlighted those challenges. Council members Steve Slominski and Tony Shaeffer noted that cars are likely often parked along the apartment side of the street overnight to shorten walking distance from the parking lot, and sometimes because residents have visitors. While the city has the authority to tow vehicles that violate the ordinance, Mayor John Dahl acknowledged that enforcement has historically been lenient.

"I think we've been really generous in the past," Mayor

Dahl said, noting that towing is allowed but rarely used.

In approving the seasonal no-parking zone, the council aimed to strike a balance between maintaining access for nearby homeowners and apartment residents, and improving winter maintenance. Members pointed out that the apartment complex has ample off-street parking and that restricting one side of the street during winter months should significantly improve plowing efficiency.

The discussion was a starting point for improving how snow emergency ordinances are communicated and upheld, with the council suggesting that everyone keep in mind that anything over 2 inches of snow fall requires vehicles to be off the streets until plowing is complete.

Regal considers a community fund to leverage dollars to improve city

By Ralph Dickerson
Editor

The Regal City Council held a discussion concerning creating a community fund containing \$20,000 with the Willmar Area Community Foundation at its Feb. 3 meeting. The money for the fund, if created, comes from a donation of \$10,000 from the Regal Baseball Association, and \$10,000 from the city, taken from the city's tower account. The council decided to postpone a decision on the fund until a later date.

"It's a pretty bulletproof thing, like we talked about several months ago," said council member Jeff Magnuson.

If created, the Willmar Area Community Foundation takes a fee of 1.5% per year, taken out quarterly, from the fund.

After three years if the city does not pursue any projects with the funds in the account, the Willmar Area Community Foundation closes the account and sends the city a check for the amount in the fund, plus any interest accrued.

Several council members met with representatives of the Willmar Area Community Foundation on Tuesday, Feb. 2, and said creating the fund offered several benefits to the city. First, if the city creates the fund, the foundation bundles the money placed in the account by the city with monies from other funds in order to earn a higher interest rate on the proceeds. If the pooled money earns an interest rate of 2.5%, then each separate fund receives 2.5% in interest, based on how much money exists in each community fund.

Next, the foundation possesses a network of anonymous donors that give money for various reasons, such as funds for communities with strong baseball associations. This network provides a ready pool of money to help these community funds.

Also, the foundation also offers matching grants to cities that open up a community fund. Regal City Clerk Larry Fleck said the foundation already sent Regal a \$1,000 check. The council intends to formally vote on the creation of the fund at its March council meeting.

Possible projects for the city to pursue, if it approves the community fund, include an outdoor AED. A committee of four people, two city members and two from the baseball association, decide on which

projects to pursue, and bring those recommendations to the council for consideration.

In other action, City Clerk Fleck confirmed the city's Board of Appeals meeting date. He said the meeting takes place on April 14, 2026, at the Eagle's Nest starting at noon.

Fleck also informed the council the city now possesses an official address. He said the city used the address of its tower lot at 14460 293rd Ave. NE, Belgrade, as the official address.

Fleck also presented the financial report. It showed a checkbook balance of \$13,531.53, and \$28,306.73. The two Magnifi investment accounts contain \$43,200.22 and \$60,000 respectively.

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Five years of data confirms most maternal deaths are preventable

Minnesota Department of Health press release

The latest maternal mortality report from the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) found that 95% of maternal deaths occurring in the state were preventable. The Minnesota Maternal Mortality Report - 2017-2021 (PDF) calls for Minnesota to prevent deaths by addressing lack of access to care, disconnected care and a lack of follow-up, as well as needed additional emotional, physical and mental health support before and after pregnancy.

Based on the data from the Maternal Mortality Review Committee the state's 2021 pregnancy-related mortality ratio was 34.1 deaths per 100,000 live births, slightly above the national average of 33.2. Most maternal deaths occurred after childbirth, a trend consistent with national

findings.

In Minnesota, having a baby is much more life threatening for American Indian and Black parents. From 2017-2021, the statewide maternal death rate was 17.9 deaths per 100,000 live births. The maternal death rate for American Indians was over 12 times higher than the state rate (217.7 deaths per 100,000 live births compared to 17.9), and the rate for Black parents was 2.3 times higher (40.3 deaths per 100,000 live births compared to 17.9). The report highlights how stark racial disparities impact American Indian and Black parents in Minnesota. A healthy pregnancy, birth and time after birth requires that basic needs be met in a safe and stable environment, free from harm, according to the report. This includes safe and consistent housing, nutri-

tious food and freedom from substance misuse.

"These findings are deeply troubling and underscore the urgent need for action to ensure every family receives the supports and services required for a safe and healthy pregnancy," said Minnesota Commissioner of Health Dr. Brooke Cunningham. "Addressing the racial disparities outlined in this report will require the collaboration of multisector partners, community organizations and state leaders."

The report was the work of the Minnesota Maternal Mortality Review Committee, whose members include health care providers, experts and community members. The committee reviewed the 162 maternal deaths that were recorded in Minnesota between 2017 and 2021. The committee's in-depth review

of each death found that 59 of the deaths were directly connected to pregnancy. The top five leading causes of death were mental health conditions (including substance use disorders), injury, infection, hemorrhage (loss of blood) and cardiomyopathy (diseases of the heart muscle).

"By studying maternal mortality data across Minnesota, we can better understand the challenges mothers face and create stronger, evidence-based solutions to keep them safe and healthy," said Jennifer Almanza, review committee co-chair, midwife and advanced practice nurse specialist at HealthPartners/ Park Nicollet Family Birth Centers. "These insights help guide families, health care providers, systems and community services in supporting mothers throughout their reproductive years. Ongoing

review of this data ensures we continue making smart, targeted improvements that protect the health and wellbeing of Minnesota families for generations to come."

The report focuses on recommendations for preventing future maternal deaths. Several key actions are noted, including providing more follow-up and support to families after pregnancy; improving access to basic needs like housing and transportation; strengthening mental health support before, during and after pregnancy; incorporating care that responds to cultural considerations; better referrals for people in crisis and new policy initiatives.

The Minnesota Maternal Mortality Review Committee reviews cases of pregnancy-associated deaths and makes recommendations aimed at improving policies, programs,

systems, practice guidelines and health care provider services. The multidisciplinary committee was established by Minnesota statute and is comprised of diverse representation from the maternal health field, public health and community organizations.

"I appreciate the hard work of this committee, which has identified important opportunities to reduce preventable mortality surrounding pregnancy," said Dr. Cresta Wedel Jones, M.D., committee co-chair and associate professor in the Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Women's Health at the University of Minnesota Medical School. "I call upon our state leadership to examine possible opportunities to integrate the recommendations in working towards more optimal outcomes for Minnesota families."

Judge's order removes imminent threat of Minnesota losing federal child care money

By Matthew Blake MinnPost

Minnesota child care providers and parents have problems right now. But upcoming interruptions in federal assistance is not one of them.

On Friday, U.S. District Court Judge Vernon Broderick granted a preliminary injunction for Minnesota and four other states that sued the Trump administration when it suspended payments for low-income parents seeking child care.

Broderick's ruling does not dismiss for good the White House's efforts to end child care assistance in Minnesota, California, Colorado, Illinois and New York. The judge must still rule on the case's merits.

However, it gives months of breathing room to child care centers and low-income families.

And, if the past is prologue, a granted preliminary injunction could be a sign the Trump administration's efforts to freeze funding are petering out. For example, a judge enjoined the administration's effort to cut Minnesota K-12 funding based on DEI policies before the case was quietly re-

solved in favor of the state.

"Today's order further protects Minnesotans from Donald Trump's devastating and unlawful cuts to childcare services," Attorney General Keith Ellison said in a written statement. "This is a tremendous relief for parents across Minnesota, as these cuts would have devastated our childcare system and forced low-income families to choose between going to work to pay the bills and staying home to provide childcare."

A message left with the U.S. Health and Human Services Department, which administers federal child care payments, was not returned.

To review, the federal government announced the first week of January that it had suspended child care payments to Minnesota so as to investigate fraud.

The announcement came one week after self-described citizen journalist Nick Shirley posted a YouTube video that revived prior accusations of

Minneapolis day care centers collecting government assistance but not caring for children.

The Minnesota Department of Children, Youth, and Families said Shirley's video was inaccurate, and that the day care centers profiled are, in fact, in operation and legally compliant.

Nonetheless, Health and Human Services' wrote to the aforementioned five states demanding comprehensive information on the families who

received child care. The HHS letters focus on the possibility of undocumented immigrants accessing child care money, not providers scamming the federal welfare system.

Ellison and the four other state attorneys general sued on the well-trod grounds that a presidential administration cannot freeze money already authorized by Congress.

The legal dispute over funding comes as North Star State child care providers also deal with staff and families hid-

ing in their homes due to prolonged federal immigration enforcement actions.

Clare Sanford, chair of government relations for the Minnesota Child Care Association, said in an interview Monday that providers are more worried about immigration agents than any effort to strip child care assistance funds.

"Just because we've gone three weeks without someone being murdered by ICE doesn't mean the fear has dissipated," Sanford said.

Funding available to restore and protect Minnesota's peatlands

Minnesota Board of Soil and Water Resources press release

The Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) is now accepting applications for Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) conservation easements to restore and protect previously drained peatlands.

Approximately \$9.5 million is available for peatland restoration from the state general fund and funding from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Minnesota contains almost 7 million acres of peatlands, the most in the Lower 48 states. Peatlands are a type

of carbon-rich wetland ecosystem characterized by permanently saturated organic soils. These peat soils, also known as histosols, form wetlands such as bogs, fens and wooded swamps.

Peatlands hold some of Minnesota's largest carbon reserves but can release carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases as they dry and decompose. Restoring previously drained peatlands will reduce these emissions, restore carbon stocks, and can also increase floodwater storage, improve water quality and enhance wildlife habitat. BWSR has developed

a Potentially Restorable Peatlands mapping tool to assist in identifying histosols.

"This funding creates opportunities to restore and protect an abundant yet sensitive resource across Minnesota," said BWSR Executive Director John Jaschke. "Restoring our peatlands with conservation easements offers a number of ecological, climate and conservation benefits."

BWSR is working on other potential partnerships with federal agencies, Tribal Governments, nongovernmental organizations and others that will further the purpose and goals of this

peatlands initiative.

BWSR staff held a webinar on peatland restoration opportunities on Jan. 6, 2026. A recording of the webinar is available.

How to apply: Landowners who have restorable peatlands on their property are encouraged to enroll their land into this program. Landowners will receive a per-acre payment and retain private ownership of enrolled land. Landowners should work with their local soil and water conservation district staff to assist with peatland identification and application preparation and submittal.

Paid family leave Continued from page 1

to cover for this employee from 12-20 weeks presents a major challenge. Baker said many businesses already encounter difficulty filling job openings now, finding someone to cover for an employee for only 12 to 20 weeks makes a tough situation that much tougher, said Baker.

Fear of abuse and cost structure

State Senator Andrew Lang said he opposed the bill due to its one-size-fits-all format, and the state of Minnesota's poor track record of preventing waste and fraud in safety net programs. He does not know if the state learned a lesson from the waste, fraud and abuse that happened over the past few years.

"One specific concern is that the definitions of who qualifies for care are too vague, which could open the door to fraudulent claims involving people who are not actually family members or dependents," said Senator Andrew Lang. "The program is now law, so this isn't about repeal; it's about closing loopholes, strengthening oversight and protecting the program's integrity."

Matthew Hilgart, with the Association of Minnesota Counties, expressed concern

that the new state benefit sits on top of existing paid time off or sick leave banks already provided to public employees, and that the new benefit does not allow local governments to replace or change these structures without employee consent. Hilgart said many counties already offer generous PTO benefits, and that the current state paid leave only offers a percentage of an employee's pay, not full salary replacement.

In addition, not only do counties, through their collective bargaining agreements which provide a PTO benefit, pay for an employee's paid time off, it now needs to pay a premium for the state program. This situation forces a county to pay double for these benefits. It creates a situation where not only do all workers in the state pay into the paid leave system, county residents also potentially pay a higher tax levy to cover the cost of this benefit local governments need to provide for its employees.

"Local governments will be impacted just like other businesses or business owners, paying a new payroll tax for these benefits that will add additional operational costs,"

said Hilgart. "For local governments, that is going to necessitate more budget dollars to cover this mandated benefit which will in turn come from raising the levy."

Financial impact

Supporters of paid leave say the state program levels the playing field by allowing workers at large or small employers to take advantage of paid family leave. Supporters say research shows that paid family leave reduces turnover and training costs. In the long run, a paid family leave program helps employees keep their jobs.

Supporters also claim the shared funding model splits the cost between the employer and employee, and the state intends to review the program periodically to ensure the program stays on firm financial footing. Supporters say a growing number of states offer these programs, putting Minnesota in the growing list of states offering such a benefit to its residents.

Baker cited Washington state which implemented such a program several years ago. Since the program launched, the legislature increased the premiums charged three times, yet the program continues to

run into financial problems. He envisions the same thing here due to the generous benefits offered, and the duration of the leave offered.

The law does allow employers to opt out of the state run program if the company offers benefits equal to or better than the benefits in the state plan. The company needs to petition the state, and receive approval, to opt out of the program. Baker said this creates part of the financial problem facing the program because more companies chose to opt out of the state program than anticipated.

"They were not thinking it was going to be 20% to 25% of the market," said Baker.

When the state developed the premium rate of .88% to fund the program, it calculated a higher rate of participation from state businesses. Baker said in the long run either the state needs to increase the premium rate, shrink the benefits available or both.

"Our benefits are so rich, we have the most progressive and expansive benefits of anybody out there," said Baker. "There's nothing that will backfill this program if it goes down to a level that they need more money in it."

Impact on job growth

When it comes to how the law affects the state's business climate, supporters and critics do not agree. Supporters say the law helps employers by helping them retain workers, which lowers a businesses' overall costs. Critics say the law hurts small businesses because of their smaller pool of workers, and often their lack of an administrative office to handle the increased paperwork associated with the program.

"Even though the state approves leave requests, businesses still have to manage parts of the process, which means more paperwork, more time and more cost," said Lang. "It's additional work that doesn't generate revenue and wasn't something businesses asked for."

Baker pointed to a study from the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce that ranks the state 42nd in job growth. He said the state already possesses high taxes and mandates on businesses, such as the Earned Sick and Safe Time enacted a few years ago.

He said this forces businesses to look elsewhere when

thinking of expanding. Baker then cited Polaris and Medtronic. He said Polaris started to build its vehicles in Alabama, while Medtronic moved its research and development operations out of Minnesota.

"Our job growth has plummeted over the last two years," said Baker.

According to a compilation of various statistics drawn from a variety of sources, from 2021 to 2024 the US averaged 4.175% in job growth per year. In the same time period, Minnesota's year over year job growth totaled just 1.4%. Baker worries about the impact of Minnesota's paid family leave act on the state's already low job growth.

"I just worry greatly about the future of Minnesota's economic engine, which is private industry; I'm just worried about what will Minnesota look like in 10 or 15-20 years when we slowly lose these jobs," said Baker. "We're going to wake up someday...and we're going to wonder what happened to the bigger employers, what happened to the expansions? Why isn't Minnesota growing as much as other states?"

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COMMUNITY NEWS

STUDENT NEWS

NDSU College of Science announces fall 2025 dean's list

North Dakota State University's College of Science recently announced its fall 2025 dean's list. To qualify for this honor, a student needs to obtain a grade point average of 3.5 or higher while enrolled in at least 12 credit hours of study. Locals on the list include: Jordan Kurt Herickhoff of Belgrade, Sarah Rylyn Kraemer and Brode Charley Lydick of Spicer, Karlee Danielson of Sunburg and Leah Marie Smith of Willmar.

Area students named to University of Minnesota Rochester chancellor's list

Zoe Howe and Isaiah Klein earned recognition to the fall 2025 UMR chancellor's list. To qualify for this honor, a student needs to earn a minimum grade point average of 3.666 or higher while enrolled in at least 12 credit hours of graded classes.

Willmar resident on University of Alabama's fall dean's list

The University of Alabama announced that Kristina Wan Heuveln earned recognition on the university's fall 2025 dean's list. To qualify, a student needs to take a full course load of classes and earn a minimum 3.5 grade point average.

UW-River Falls announces fall dean's list

Piper Barney of New London earned recognition on the University of Wisconsin-River Falls 2025 fall dean's list. A student needs to earn a minimum grade point average of 3.5 to make the list.

ATCC dean's list

Several area students earned recognition to Alexandria Technical and Community College's fall 2025 dean's list. To qualify for this honor, a student needs to obtain a grade point average of 3.5 or higher while enrolled in at least 12 credit hours of study.

Local students named to the list include Belgrade residents Daniela Reyes and Taylor Young and Spicer residents Emma Madison and Breanna Shuck.

Larson earns gold star from The Citadel

Lydia Larson of Spicer one of 800 cadets and students recognized for their academic achievements during the fall 2025 semester. Gold stars are awarded to cadets and students at The Citadel who achieved a 3.7 grade point average or higher.

Cadets and students who achieve gold star recognition are also placed on The Citadel's dean's list. Those cadets may wear gold stars on their uniforms throughout the semester following their academic achievement. A gold star recognition certificate is awarded to non-cadet students who meet the requirements; veteran and active duty students are also awarded challenge coins.

UW-Eau Claire announces fall dean's list

The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire named New London resident Delaney Hanson to its fall 2025 dean's list. To be eligible, a student must:

- be in good academic standing.
- have a minimum semester GPA of 3.70.
- have completed at least 12 credits during the semester, with no incompletes, no courses below the 100 level, no repeats, and no Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory registrations (except in degree credit-bearing courses that are offered only on the S/U grading system in which a grade of S has been earned).

MSCTC dean's list

Minnesota State Community and Technical College recognized six area students to its fall 2025 dean's list. Named to the list include Belgrade residents Ryan Jensen, Taylor Oeltjenbruns and Joshua Walstrom. The list also included New London residents Zinia Jansen, Carson Savage and Garret White.

Eligibility requirements for students on the dean's list include a grade point average of 3.50 to 3.99 while completing a minimum of six college-level credits and 75% of the courses in which they enrolled for the semester.

NLS FFA competes in SMSU Ag Bowl Scholarship Invitational

Submitted by Madeline Prentice

FFA members competed at the SMSU Ag Bowl Scholarship Invitational held on January 30, showcasing their agricultural knowledge and skills against teams from across the region. Several teams earned strong finishes in a variety of career development events.

The Agronomy team earned an impressive second-place finish. Team members included Grant Henjum, who placed fifth individually, Ryder Pederson sixth, Rylan Altermatt ninth, and Carson Olson.

The Nursery and Landscape team also had a strong showing, finishing fourth overall. Team members were Maddie Prentice, who placed sixth individually, along with Abby Behl and

Emma Quisberg.

The Companion Animal Science team competed well, earning a sixth-place team finish. Members included Ella Knutson, KayAnna Gehrke, Kelly Knisley, and Claire Louwagie.

Other teams representing the chapter included the Milk Quality team, Shelby Miller, Reagan Regnier, Kari Iverson, and Ella Olson, as well as participants in Fish and Wildlife and Floriculture. Kaylee Iverson represented the chapter in Fish and Wildlife, while Heidi Taunton and Lanna Schaefer competed in Floriculture.

Overall, the competition provided students with valuable experience and helped prepare them for the state FFA convention this spring.



Photo submitted

New London-Spicer FFA members receive Greenhand Degrees

On February 9, members of the New London-Spicer FFA Chapter were honored with their Greenhand Degrees, the first level of achievement in the National FFA Organization. This degree recognizes students who have demonstrated a strong understanding of FFA history, leadership, and agricultural knowledge, as well as active participation in their local chapter. This year's Greenhand Degree recipients include: Anna Sukalski, Kelsie Swart, Ely Kalkbrenner, Reagan Regnier, Skylar Peterson, Logan McCann, Karissa Orsten, Jett Hoffman, Gus Hoffman, Parker Hjelle, Ben Kallevig, Tommy Kampsen, Ben Henjum and Liam Hanson. Pictured from back row left to right: Anna Sukalski, Kelsie Swart and Ely Kalkbrenner. Front row left to right: Reagan Regnier, Skylar Peterson and Logan McCann.



Photo submitted

New London-Spicer FFA members compete at Ridgewater Skills Fest

Members of the New London-Spicer FFA Chapter showcased their skills at the Ridgewater Skills Fest on February 6. Students competed in various welding and agricultural mechanics events, demonstrating both talent and dedication. Individual results included: Hunter Terning (1st) in TIG Welding, Grant MacCain (3rd) and Brock Bajari (7th) in Gas Welding, Brody Wileman (5th) and Layne Hartje (12th) in MIG Welding, and Carson Olson (8th) in Arc Welding. The chapter's Ag Mechanics team, consisting of Matthew Gehrke, Holton Hanson, Matt Jamma, and Russel Wieland, earned a 5th-place team finish. The Ridgewater Skills Fest gives students hands-on opportunities to apply their classroom learning in real-world competitions, preparing them for future careers in agriculture and technical trades. Top photo: Skills Fest Participants left to right: Brock Bajari, Grant MacCain, Brody Wileman, Hunter Terning, Layne Hartje and Carson Olson Bottom photo Ag Mechanics Team members from left to right: Matthew Gehrke, Russel Wieland, Matt Jamma and Holton Hanson.

Rewriting their stories: How Jacobson, Cammack and Dworshak turned addiction into a mission to help others

By Ralph Dickerson
Editor

Previously, the Lakes Area Review published two articles on Holly Jacobson, Patricia Cammack and Ashley Dworshak, three ladies in drug recovery, that detailed their lives before drug use, and their lives during active addiction. The final installment concerns how each of them started on their road to recovery, and left their life of addiction behind. Each of them credit the powerful recovery community in the Willmar area for their success.

While the path taken to recovery differed for each woman, a common thread does run through their stories: each one eventually ended up at Project Turnabout in Willmar not only for treatment, but also employment. Jacobson's journey to recovery started slowly.

"I was just tired and addicts, we go through...these phases of being tired of our rock bottoms, you know, but this time was different," said Jacobson. "I was exhausted and there was a desperation in my exhaustion that only an addict knows."

She became so exhausted and desperate that she tried to kill herself with an overdose of heroin. When that failed, she actually became angry, and complained to God. Jacobson said she now realizes God saved her to help people in addiction to recover, but that story comes later.

Jacobson realized she needed to leave the area to start on her sobriety, so she left Minnesota and went to Kansas to get clean. She stayed in Kansas to dry out from the drugs, and 30 days later came back to Minnesota.

Jacobson met with a friend, and both of them went to New Ulm. At first they stayed in her friend's van, and grabbed food from a local food pantry.

Later they met a man that told them of the New Ulm House, a homeless shelter for women. Jacobson said she lived there for three months, secured employment and started to turn her life around.

After three months she managed to save enough money to rent her own apartment, and stayed sober for three years. While she managed to stay sober during this time, she did not actually start on her road to recovery.

Jacobson said a difference exists between sobriety and recovery. Sobriety simply means abstinence from drugs, she said.

"Recovery is where you're actually working a program," said Jacobson. "For myself, I do a lot of church. I have a church community surrounding me. I also have a recovery community that I'm in contact with too."

Though she stopped using drugs, Jacobson said she maintained distance from her family to build a solid foundation for her sobriety. About one year later her son, also an addict, started on his road to recovery, and became director of The Fortress, a men's faith-based recovery program in Willmar.

At the same time, some instability started to occur in Jacobson's life. Her roommate started drinking and smoking marijuana, said Jacobson, so she made the decision to leave New Ulm and move to Willmar.

Prior to leaving New Ulm, Jacobson interviewed for a position at Project Turnabout in Willmar, and managed to secure employment. She then packed her bags and came to Willmar, and then her road to recovery actually started then as she worked with other

women struggling to overcome addiction.

"I didn't realize the worth and the value I had walking it out," said Jacobson. "...It kept me sober; it gave me the ability to speak hope and speak life into them."

Jacobson said she did not start the path to sobriety and recovery on her own power. She said it came from a higher power that used her previous lifestyle to help other addicts to change their own lives.

"I never knew that God would use this part of my life to help people to now come out of that lifestyle, to show them that you can," said Jacobson. "You don't have to be a drug addict. It's possible; you can be clean. You can have a new life; God can give you this."

Slowly, Jacobson's life started to turn around. She rebuilt the relationships with her family, starting with her sons first.

Jacobson said she and her sons engaged in a highly difficult, emotional conversation. When the conversation started, her sons remained wary of her intentions, but Jacobson pressed on and asked her sons to tell her exactly how she hurt them. Instead of defending herself, she actually listened to them, and asked for only one thing.

"Just give me an opportunity," she said to them.

This conversation started the healing process with her family. Now a grandmother, Jacobson expresses much pride in one thing regarding her grandkids.

"My grandkids have never seen me violent," said Jacobson. "They've never seen me on drugs, they've never seen me drunk. My boys have never, never, experienced that with me the last seven and a half years."

When looking back over her life, Jacobson said her active addiction came from an identity problem. She saw herself as a tough person, a roughneck that not only did not care about others, but also did not really care for herself. When she decided to change her identity, her life changed.

"I built such an identity on being a criminal," said Jacobson. "I built my identity of being a tough girl; I built an identity of being a drug dealer. When I gave my life to Christ, I built on Christ's identity in me that I'm still working on."

Patricia Cammack
Patricia Cammack's road to recovery started somewhat differently than Jacobson's. Cammack said it started from getting into legal trouble. At first, Cammack said she played the system by participating in probation and drug counseling, but continued with her old lifestyle.

She hung around with the same friends, went to the same places and kept using substances, in this case alcohol. This pattern kept her in trouble with the law, which resulted in her serving jail time due to her addiction. She eventually tired of the endless cycle of going to jail, abusing alcohol and ending back in jail.

"Finally, I just decided... I'm gonna be sober...and the rest of everything else will fall into place," said Cammack. "So I made that decision. I had like 10 months of drug court left, and I stayed sober the whole time. I advanced all the way through graduation and then from there I was like, 'I'm doing so good, I'm gonna stay sober,' and I just kept plugging away."

Recovery meant looking in

Rewriting their stories

Continued on page 8

More than a machine Continued from page 1

"Back then, just finishing the event was considered a major success," Nelson said. "A lot of people entered just to see if they could make it."

Nelson did more than make it. Having competed since his early teens, Nelson joined the pro ranks at the age of 22 on the John Deere Cross Country team in 1975. In 1976, riding a John Deere Liquidator, he turned out one of the most dramatic comebacks in the race's history — a performance still remembered wherever snowmobile racing stories are told.

For Nelson, snowmobiling wasn't just a hobby, it was a calling that would carry him far beyond the icy trails of his youth.

A race born of uncertainty

The Winnipeg 500 began in 1966, when snowmobiles were just beginning to capture the imagination of the Midwest. Machines were heavy, unreliable and often unpredictable. Riders carried tools, spare parts and more than a little luck.

By the early 1970s, when Nelson entered the race, snowmobiling had exploded into a cultural force.

"There could be over 400 entries some years," Nelson said. "But maybe 25 of them really had what it took to win. The rest were there to fill the field and chase the experience."

Winters were long. Entertainment options were limited. Snowmobiles offered speed, freedom and something to rally around. For many, the Winnipeg 500 wasn't just a race... it was the ultimate test of man and machine.

Nelson and longtime racing partner Hubert Fixsen built, tuned and raced snowmobiles for three decades, producing many winning sleds with a thoughtful, detail minded style perfectly suited to the multi-day events of the era. Nelson raced the event from 1972 through 1979, gaining experience with each passing year. By 1976, he and his team were prepared in ways few others were.

"It was a full-time job," he said. "All we did was work on machines, test ride, and prepare for the next race."

The comeback

The 1976 race unfolded over four challenging days. When the final leg arrived, a 140-mile stretch from Thief River Falls to Winnipeg, Nelson was far from the favorite.

He started the day more than 14 minutes behind the leader. But what followed is part of what cemented his win as legendary.

By the finish line, Nelson had erased the deficit and added 32 seconds of his own. "I made up 14 minutes and 32 seconds in 140 miles," he said. "The odds of doing that were almost impossible."

The victory stunned competitors and electrified fans. It was the kind of finish that



Photos submitted

Nelson raced in the 1976 Winnipeg 500, staging a historic comeback to win.

donor sled provided the base frame, but most pieces had to be tracked down: motors were rebuilt in Saskatchewan, crankshafts were custom-made, and rare fittings changed hands between collectors who'd never met.

"We had to start finding parts, and it's



Nelson raced professionally for the majority of his youth.

very difficult to find parts for these sleds," said Wyatt Kram, one of the project's organizers. "A lot got damaged or totaled over the years."

Kram continued, "I never thought it would turn out this nice from what we start-

piece, it's a fundraiser. With the restoration complete, the sled will be raffled off to benefit the Snowmobile Hall of Fame in St. Germain, Wisconsin on February 21st, following a John Deere reunion ride event that will bring the legendary John Deere team back together again.

"It's quite the deal," Kram said of the final product. "People can buy a ticket and own a piece of history — something that matters to a lot of us."

A life shaped by snow

Nelson's connection to snowmobiling reaches far beyond one iconic win. He began racing at age 12 and found himself perfectly aligned with an era when manufacturers invested heavily in competition.

Snowmobile racing became the framework for his life.

When one chapter ended, another followed. Nelson stayed involved — sponsoring racers, organizing long-distance events, promoting cross-country circuits and guiding snowmobile tours across the western mountains for years.

Though he took a hiatus from pro competition in the early '80s, his contributions to the industry continue to make their marks. Nelson has lived in nearly every role, from a dealer, to a team owner, to a consultant, to a tour operator. He even founded the USXC Cross Country Race circuit in 2012, becoming the premier cross country racing circuit in North America.

At one point, he spent entire winters leading groups through Wyoming, Montana and Idaho, logging thousands of miles in the saddle.

"All good things come to an end," he said. "But the sport never really leaves you."

Nelson remained an occasional competitor through the 1990s. His last race being the vintage leg of The I-500 in 2011, in that race Brian finished second, just behind fellow Hall of Fame inductee Joey Hallstrom.

Even today, Nelson continues to support young racers and grassroots events, believing deeply in what snowmobiling teaches.

"It teaches you how to work as a team, how to be competitive, how not to accept that something can't be done," he said. "Those lessons apply to everything — business, life, all of it."

Still moving forward

Snowmobile racing today looks different than it did in the 1970s. The crowds are smaller, the circuits more localized. But Nelson sees the same spark in the young riders lining up on frozen lakes each winter.

"That's where it starts," he said. "Grassroots racing is how kids learn the sport and learn about responsibility, dedication and respect."

As for the restored sled, Nelson sees it as more than metal and fiberglass.

"It's an honor," he said. "To have people remember what we did and take the time to recreate it... that means more than I can explain."

Fifty years after a last-day charge across frozen miles rewrote the odds, the story still runs strong — carried on steel runners, winter trails and the enduring pull of a race that once defined an era.



Nelson erased a 14 minute deficit over 140 miles, winning by 32 seconds

transcends the sporting world: the improbable becoming reality.

"It's like being down late in a football game and somehow pulling it off," Nelson said. "When nobody expects you to win, that's when it really means something."

The win marked the only major endurance race victory in John Deere's snowmobile history, Nelson explained the win amounted to a singular moment that elevated the brand, thereby proving it could be competitive in the market. It also cemented Nelson's place in racing lore.

Nelson went on to win the Winnipeg-500 again, becoming the only rider to do so on two different brands. After changing to Arctic Cat for the 1977 race season the Nelson-Fixsen team designed and built a cross country kit that was made available for the 1978 El Tigre 6000, driving it to his second win in 1978. He made his final I-500 run from Winnipeg in 1995 racing the senior class.

On January 20, 2000, Nelson was inducted into the Snowmobile Hall of Fame

Rebuilding what time erased

Decades later, that moment still mattered deeply to a dedicated group of snowmobile collectors and former racers.

In a shop north of Fargo, a team assembled to recreate the very model Nelson rode: the rare John Deere Liquidator. Only about 600 of these sleds were ever made, and most have long since been scrapped, rusted beyond repair or cannibalized for parts.

Finding original components proved a Herculean task. Volunteers spent months sourcing parts from across the country. A

ed with. But we got pretty tight here, and everyone brought something to the table."

Nelson himself was there, sleeves rolled up alongside the rest, offering memories and encouragement.

"I hadn't worked on or ridden one of these since 1976," Nelson said. "I left John Deere and went to work for another company in '77, so seeing this — and being part of it — that's emotional."

The restored sled isn't just a museum



Nelson, fresh off the track, during a season that would define his racing legacy.

THIS WEEK IN LAKES HISTORY

Compiled by Ralph Dickerson

100 Years Ago

New London Times, Feb. 11, 1926

WROTE CHECKS WITHOUT FUNDS

Valens Jarstrom formerly of Wheaton but who has resided in Willmar the last year was arrested last Wednesday evening by chief of police Victor Kligenbert on a charge of issuing fraudulent checks. He appeared before Judge

A. O. Forsberg, Thursday morning at 10 o'clock and pleaded guilty. His sentence was suspended for a term of good behavior, after he agreed to make the checks good. The checks were in the amount of \$5.00, \$1.50 and \$1.85. Jarstrom agreed to pay the costs.

75 Years Ago

New London Times, Feb. 8, 1951

Bob's Broadcast

The Veterans Administration has announced it will distribute a 685 million dollar live insurance dividend, starting in April. The dividends will average \$85.00 and will be paid on policies held at least 90 days from the policy date in 1948 through the 1951 anniversary.

... Hope we don't have another week as rough as

the past one. That below zero weather is no longer welcome around here.

... Carbon monoxide is a deadly killer. Avoid running motors when parked or in a closed garage. If the motor has been left running, make sure a window is partly open. Symptoms of this deadly gas are yawning, weariness, ringing in the ears and later, throbbing of the heart.

50 Years Ago

New London-Spicer Times, Feb. 12, 1976

Girls win first District Basketball Championship in NL-S history

People always say that girls and boys make a good pair and Coach Bob Knutson and his girls basketball team proved that statement by being the first basketball team (boys or girls) to be District Champions in the history of New London-Spicer High School sports as they walked over the Brooten Bucs 61-43 lat Saturday at Paynesville.

NL-S led by six points after the first period but saw their lead diminish to only one point at the half.

The Wildcats really turned it

on in the third frame outscoring their opponents 19-10 and 16-8 in the final frame to preserve a Wildcat win and Championship.

Cindy Haugejorde burned the nets for 38 points and with that, Cindy has scored 310 points in 12 games for a 25.10 average points per game.

Laura Holm had 11 points to add to the Wildcat scoring.

The Wildcats will go to Cold Spring at Rocori High School Thursday, February 12 to play Marshall University High School for the Regional Semi-Finals. There will be a spectator bus so if possible, please attend and cheer on the team to the state!

25 Years Ago

Kandiyohi County Times, Feb. 12, 2001

Prairie Meadows expansion project off

There will be no extra space added onto the Meadows Learning Center in Spicer-at least for now.

The NLS School Board was informed, at a special meeting held last Tuesday, that the district will not receive a matching grant for the estimated \$562,000 project.

NLS Superintendent Hank Lubbesmeyer announced the meeting that morning. Though it was not yet known at the time whether the grant was approved, action needed to be taken by the board to remain on the timeline for the facilities project.

Just before 5 p.m., the official word came in that the school would not be receiving the grant.

Due to the projected declining enrollment figures, statistics from the Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning and

"unknowns from the Legislature" regarding school funding, it was decided it would not be prudent to plan any construction now.

Lubbesmeyer cited the statistics predicting smaller numbers of people ages birth to 14 years, and of those in their "prime working years."

This decline is forecast for many outstate Minnesota counties, he said.

Though Kandiyohi County is growing, Lubbesmeyer said, it is largely in the older categories, rather than young families.

In addition, the Legislature is currently considering a budget presented by Gov. Ventura. In it is vely little appropriations for K-12 funding, amounting to "about 1.2 percent," Lubbesmeyer said.

This presents a Catch-22 situation for the schools, because the state mandates them to implement certain things--such as reduced class sizes--and then does not fund them, he said.

10 Years Ago

Lakes Area Review, Feb. 13, 2016

Little Crow board fires manager for alleged misuse of funds

Golf pro and general manager for Little Crow Country Club (LCCC) for 13 years, Sam Drodofsky's employment was terminated by the LCCC board of directors, effective Jan. 9.

Grounds for termination were the alleged misappropriation of an estimated \$100,000 in funds, according to emailed letters from the board of directors to LCCC members. The board is in the midst of an audit to find out if additional funds were allegedly misappropriated.

On Jan. 9, Drodofsky came forward and allegedly told then-board president Ross Baker that he had misappropriated \$96,000 in golf course funds, according to a letter to membership dated

Jan. 15.

Baker, a friend of Drodofsky, has since stepped down from the board. Karen Runstler is not the new president.

In addition to hiring auditing firm Christianson and Associates of Willmar to audit LCCC's finances to determine if more money may have been misappropriated, the board of directors has also hired attorney Brad Schmidt of Willmar-based Johnson, Moody, Schmidt and Kleinhuizen to represent its interest.

LCCC is also looking for a new general manager. Last year, the golf course opened March 31.

Since his termination, Drodofsky has paid back a total of \$100,000 to LCCC, according to a letter from the board to membership dated Jan. 25...

Darkhouse Anglers hoping to revive spear fishing

By Amy Gronli
Features Writer

On Tuesday, February 3, the event center at O'Neil's in Spicer buzzed with fish stories and ice reports as members of the West Central Chapter of the Minnesota Darkhouse Anglers Association (MDAA) held their final meeting of the 2025-2026 season. With the intention of promoting fish spearing and other outdoor activities, this organization allows sportsmen and women the opportunity to learn from each other and to encourage others to enjoy the outdoors all year long. Encouraging youth as well as adults to take up fish spearing is key to reinvigorating the activity's popularity. Since Minnesota residents ages 18 through 89 need a spearing license (in addition to an angling license) for darkhouse spearing, historical license sales data from the DNR sheds light on the interest in the sport over time. Fifty thousand and five hundred and

thirty four licenses were sold in 1957 (the first year with available data), and though the number of licenses sold experienced a boost after a dismal stretch from 1993 to 2013 (when only 21,000 or fewer licenses were sold each year), license sales have not returned to their historical highs. Here is a brief look at how the number of licenses sold changed each decade following 1957: 49,372 (1967); 37,849 (1977); 30,926 (1987); 19,834 (1997); 15,003 (2007); 23,044 (2017); 21,585 (2024).

During the social hour before the meeting began, the chapter's president, Jeremy Nelson, shared that good ice conditions and great water clarity helped make for an enjoyable fish spearing season. Throughout the season, the West Central Chapter held meetings in November, December and January for its sixty to eighty members.

The February meeting was the last in the season and also featured a spe-

cial guest speaker and a raffle drawing: the organization's biggest fundraiser of the year. Nelson reported that the funds are donated "to local groups that support bringing kids into any sport that gets youth into the outdoors."

According to the chapter's Facebook page, some of these groups include Let's Go Fishing®, and area youth trap teams. After the meeting began and Nelson reported on attending the MDAA's recent state meeting in Rice, MN, he mentioned another local event the chapter partners with to introduce kids to spearing: the kids' fishing tournament that was held on January 19 as part of Spicer's Winter-Fest.

"When it started, it was cold, but not windy," Nelson said. "By the time they finished, it was blowing like crazy out there. Kids were still having fun."

About 160 kids participated in the event and had the opportunity to walk through a darkhouse set up by chapter members and see an ice saw, decoy, and spear.

"They were just amazed, looking down the hole," Nelson stated.

For anyone unfamiliar with the purpose of a darkhouse, it blocks light from shining onto a hole cut into the ice, thereby allowing fishermen to clearly see fish and the lake bottom beneath them. Using a darkhouse while spearing for northern pike, catfish, and whitefish is a requirement in Minnesota.

After Nelson's report, chapter vice president Troy Heck reported on attending the North Country Icebreaker event in Breezy Point, MN, on January 24 with group member Scott Hjelle: owner of Hjelle-Arc Custom Spears.

"Our part was to teach darkhouse spearing all the way from creating a spear to cutting a hole, and the history of spearing decoys. After our seminar, we brought [participants] out on the ice. We let them cut holes. We let them spear out of a hub house. We let them spear out of a permanent-style house. At thirty-one [degrees] below, I didn't think we would get anybody out, but we had quite a few coming through the holes.

When we started cutting holes at thirty-one below, the augers were freezing up, the chainsaw was freezing up, but people still attempted to try and cut holes and experience what it was about."

After the Treasurer's report, Nelson introduced the meeting's guest speaker: Ron Mehr of Paynesville, host of the YouTube channel Outdoors AMEHRica. In his videos, Mehr gives advice and tells stories from his fishing and hunting adventures around the Midwest.

At the February 3 meeting, Mehr presented on how to strategize when spear fishing on a large body of water and used Devils Lake in northeastern North Dakota as an example. In his presentation, Mehr discussed how to take weather, water depth, and land



Photo by Amy Gronli

"Attendees of the February 3 meeting for the West Central Chapter of the Minnesota Darkhouse Anglers Association enjoyed an evening of camaraderie, learning, and prize drawings. Ron Mehr (left) of Outdoors AMEHRica, was the guest speaker. Eric Tollefson (middle) won the grand prize of a fishing spear designed by Hjelle-Arc Custom Spears represented by spear craftsman Loren Hjelle (right).

contours into consideration when spearing.

After analyzing how a certain area of a lake would provide deeper, warmer water for both prey fish and northern pike moving out of chillier water, Mehr concluded, "You're going to want to get in an ambush spot...just a small area where those fish are going to want to be. You can break down that entire area into little sections like this because, when you're spearing, it's not like you can control an entire lake and cover it. You have to look at exact ambush spots. There is a great ambush spot," referring to a specific point on the projected map of Devils Lake, "first of all, for a northern pike, but secondly, for spear fishermen."

After some more advice on how to decide where fish are likely to appear, Mehr answered questions from the audience and warned everyone to use caution when on the ice, especially as spring approaches.

Tickets for door prizes were then handed out to all attendees, and a variety of spearing gear and Outdoors AMEHRica merchandise went home with about a dozen lucky winners. The raffle drawing for higher tier prizes including a Yeti® cooler and an ice auger followed.

Tension mounted as the ticket for the most sought-after raffle prize of

the night – a six-tine fishing spear from Hjelle Arc Custom Spears – was drawn. After the meeting ended, the power of a shared interest refilled the event center with a happy hum of stories and banter.

The genuine camaraderie verified Nelson's answer when asked why he thought people get involved with spearing:

"I think it's a social activity. It's fun to get out there in nature and do things together like that." Nelson's description of the sport also leads to plenty of stories worth sharing: "You're luring the fish in, and it's a really quiet moment, and then there's a lot of action."

Anyone interested in learning more about darkhouse spearing can reach out to the group on the West Central Chapter Minnesota Darkhouse Anglers Association's Facebook page. Since spearing requires specialty equipment (a darkhouse, decoys, ice saw, spear, etc.), trying this activity with someone who already enjoys it is a good choice for a novice.

"We're more than willing to meet out on a lake somewhere and introduce people," said Nelson, referring to the members' willingness to teach others about spearing. People interested in trying fish spearing should act fast, though, as the season ends on February 22.



Photo by Amy Gronli

A Luminary Hike participant pauses at the boardwalk lit up with luminaries and a headlamp.

Sibley holds luminary hike

By Amy Gronli
Features Writer

As darkness descended on the evening of February 7, paper bags glowing with orange, flickering light guided visitors along Sibley State Park's Pondview Trail during the park's Luminary Hike event. The event had been rescheduled from January 17 due to adverse weather, and visitors arrived eager to walk the 0.7-mile loop lit up with its double row of paper lanterns.

Bundled up against the cold, guests – including a few leading dogs or pulling children on sleds – were warmly greeted by volunteers before starting down the trail. Attendance exceeded expectations: approximately 290 people hiked the illuminated trail that night, and, according to Sibley State Park's Interpretive Naturalist, Savannah Stephenson, previous luminary hikes had drawn only 250 participants.

Stephenson said she heard many positive comments from guests after the hike, and with agreeable trail conditions, the hike allowed for a fun winter experience. Sibley State Park's Improvement Association helped with setting up and taking down the luminaries, and they also provided cookies and hot drinks in the basement of the recently renovated Interpretive Center.

Helping with the Luminary Hike is just one activity for the Association. Throughout the year, according to the Association's treasurer, David Moody, its members clean up the roadside near the park, remove buckthorn plants, and work on purchasing amenities and land for the park that would not normally be obtained by the DNR. Anyone interested in learning more about becoming involved with the Improvement Association can email sibleyassociation@gmail.com.

Rewriting their stories Continued from page 6

the mirror and really seeing herself. Cammack discovered she needed to address the issues in her life that lead her to a life of addiction, which meant addressing some mental health issues caused by mixing alcohol and methamphetamine.

Cammack said she started mixing meth and alcohol when in her early 40s. At first she liked the combination because it allowed her to drink more alcohol, but it slowly took control away from her.

"I really wasn't in the driver's seat, I was just on autopilot," said Cammack. "The criminal brain took over or something."

She said the combination of meth and alcohol took her to a dark place, which signified extreme mental and emotional distress. Cammack said she felt like she lost the light in her life.

Eventually, Cammack realized she needed professional help to address her mental health struggles. Her doctor prescribed her medication to help treat the mental health issues.

"I had to want to, you know, get on the meds for the psychosis," Cammack said. "I had to want to, you know, take them regularly to come out of that state of mind, then I could make decisions about what else

I needed to do."

Cammack's road to recovery also included seeking treatment at Project Turnabout in Willmar. This stint at Project Turnabout represented her second try at recovery through the organization, but this time she voluntarily chose treatment at the facility instead of just going there by court order.

This time, Cammack took the whole endeavor seriously, progressing through various stages of programming with the organization and eventually completed the program. When she finished the program instead of leaving, Cammack decided to stay, which eventually led to her employment at the organization.

"I'm now working in recovery," said Cammack. "I'm a Human Services Tech here at PTAB now, so I'm working with other people in recovery."

Cammack said working at Project Turnabout keeps her grounded and connected to the recovery community. Working with other women struggling with addiction supports her own recovery journey, and gives her the strength to stay sober.

"I think it's helping me by helping someone else," said Cammack. "I think that's the key; to give back and be of service to others."

Cammack said she celebrated her second year of sobriety on January 14th of this year. Cammack said she felt blessed to not only work at Project Turnabout, but to also be connected to a strong recovery community.

Ashley Dworshak

Like Jacobson and Cammack, Dworshak started as a patient at Project Turnabout.

Dworshak's road to recovery started during the COVID pandemic. At the time she worked in the healthcare field, and abused the drug Adderall. When the pandemic hit, her supplier refused to sell her the drug.

"He was afraid of frontline workers," said Dworshak.

Though cut off from Adderall, liquor remained available, so she drank heavily. Eventually, the chaos of her life caused her to reexamine her situation.

Since she worked in healthcare, many of her drug friends came to her for medical attention instead of going to an emergency room. She basically became a "street nurse" to her friends.

"I would be attending the situation versus calling 911," said Dworshak. "So it got very stressful, so ungodly stressful."

In addition to this situation, she tried to quit cocaine on her own. It did not go well.

"I was actually hospitalized because I tried to withdraw from cocaine, and that didn't happen very nicely," said Dworshak. "So I ended up in crisis. I was hospitalized for over a week, I became very violent."

This and other situations caused Dworshak to realize she needed to change her life. Instead of enrolling in a program, Dworshak followed her own path to sobriety, and then to recovery.

When she lost access to drugs during the pandemic, Dworshak started to work on herself. She joined a women's hiking club, received support from her coworkers and listened to the life stories of addicts that visited the emergency room when in crisis, and one

man really touched her soul.

"He came in just sobbing that he wanted to get healthy again," said Dworshak. "It just made me sit there and think, 'I'm right there with you buddy.' Seeing his pain helped me understand mine, and that's when I knew something needed to change."

After this encounter, Dworshak joined the hiking club. She said it helped to ground her, and process all of her feelings associated with her situation. Eventually, hiking helped her find her spirituality.

It also helped Dworshak realize she did not like her career as a nurse. It made her depressed and disillusioned. While dealing with her own struggles, Dworshak decided to go back to school for a degree in health and wellness, which led her to discover she wanted to work with people in addiction.

"I really loved it," said Dworshak. "I really loved working for more focal issues."

After completing her degree, an ironic situation occurred. During her using days, Dworshak lived in an apartment complex located across the street from Project Turnabout.

While using, she often made fun of the organization. While searching for a new job, an opening at Project Turnabout popped up on her computer screen.

She applied for the job more as a joke than anything else. Project Turnabout called her back within the day, asking her to sit for an interview.

During the interview, she and the person conducting the interview discussed her younger brother. He also suffered

from an addiction problem, and went through a program at Project Turnabout to combat his addiction.

"We started talking about my younger brother...she started crying," said Dworshak. "And just—it made me feel at home. I'm like, 'this broad actually cares!'"

Dworshak decided to try the job to see if she liked it. She started as a tech and quickly learned she preferred the work at Project Turnabout.

"I loved it here so much," Dworshak said. "Even though it was like a \$10 (per hour) difference, I didn't even care."

Dworshak said her actual road to recovery started when she took the job at Project Turnabout. She said working at the organization helped her realize "I am an addict. I'm not just a pothead, I'm not just a drunk. No, I am an addict."

Dworshak said it helped her to realize addiction affected other parts of her life, and she needs to constantly stay vigilant against it. Now Dworshak works as a coordinator at Project Turnabout. In this role she helps women address barriers in their lives, be it trauma or grief, mental health issues or any other barrier they face. She works to connect these women with resources in the community to help them recover from their addiction. At the same time, the work helps Dworshak.

"From coming from a drug dealer from these streets to now pulling drug dealers into treatment and throwing them back on in the streets—in a whole different manner—it just helps me give back to the community that I once was destroying," said Dworshak.

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NLS High School announces second quarter honor roll

District 345 has announced students named to the high school's "A" and "B" honor roll and the middle school's academic achievers list for the second quarter of the 2025-26 school year. The "A" Honor roll was printed in last week's edition on February 7, 2026.

"B" HONOR ROLL

Grade 9

Gavyn Ahrendt
Carter Altendorf
Cole Althoff
Ava Andresen
Timothy Brouwer
Evangeline Dalton
Riley Edwardson
Axel Eichhorst
Wyatt Elliott
Chloe Felegy
Gustaf Hoffman
Ely Kalkbrenner
Elsie King
Jasper Kluver
Kaitlyn Lere
Wyatt Madsen
Austin Nieland
Jaxon Palmer
Nevaeh Phelps
Alexis Pomplun
Jacob Powers

Van Pulsifer
Owen Redington
Caiden Rheume
William Rosendahl
Jackson Slinkard
Boden Spears
Easton Swanson
Hayden Van Dyke
Isla Wachtler
Brenden Wicklund
Emily Wiechman
Evelyn Wright
Margo Zuroff

Grade 10

Bryn Adams
Logan Anderson
Ashton Dahl
Carter Foshaug
Mikiah Gale-Manselle
Boston Heminover
Indiana Johnson
Teagan Kavanagh

Ella Knutson
Magdalene Kotzenmacher
Isaac Kulset
Rylin Lindahl
McKenna McDowell
Ellianna Nash
Jeremiah Nelson
Madelyn Orłowski
Joshua Peterson
Caden Pfeifer
Jack Poverud
Shayla Sampson
Evalynn Swenson
Erik Tennant
Sydney Thorstad
Noah Wendlandt
Ariana Willprecht

Grade 11

Emma Adams
Rylan Altermatt
Delaney Baeth
Brock Bajari
Emerson Batterberry
Emmalee Caskey
Eli Engebretson
Colton Engels
Autumn Foshaug
Blaine Goracke

Adelie Greeley
Kathrine Haglund
Luke Hannig
Taya Hanson
Abigail Hjelle
Louden Johnson
Jack Keenan
Jackson Kotzenmacher
Kennedy LaBrie
Zachary Lageson
Madeline Leindecker
Rayah Lindquist
Chloe Mattila
Grant McCain
Lexi Meis
Payton Nygaard
Isaac Palmer
Ryder Pederson
Lucy Quisberg
Abram Snyder
Halle Steffensen
Madeline Stein
Elinor Westby
Shane Wiechman

Grade 12

Ayla Caskey
Palmer Dalton
Hayden Downey

Jayden Drexler
Lucas Engels
Mariah Fifield
Jowell Gamez
Lauren Hess
Mathias Jamma
Jasman Johnson
Asher King
Roxanne Klein
Caleb Kulset
Cole Laughlin
Kyra Lee
Garret Leenstra
Deagan Lindahl
Evan Palmquist
Addison Peltier
Lilli Peters
Jaden Peterson
Rylan Plumley Champagne
Blake Sampson
Andrew Sandau
Luka Schmidt
Trypp Slagter
Carson Smith
Logan Swenson
Kyeten Warner
Breonna Wicklund
Wyatt Wilson

NLS Middle School names second quarter academic achievers

Grade 5

Altendorf, Adalynn
Anderson, Claire
Anderson, Cullen
Asche, Taya
Ashburn, Isaac
Bakken, Echo
Barber, Reese
Basant, Malek
Baumann, William
Baumhardt, Emery
Becks, Elijah
Bengtson, Indi
Bertram, Ava
Bice, Collin
Bice, Emma
Bishop, Berkley
Boreen, Anorah
Borka, Christian
Bradford, August
Cervantes, Bea Louise
Clancy, Samuel
Daak, Kole
DeDerrick, Jonathan
DeSchopper, Anna
Dickerson, Adalene
Finstrom, Isla
Garcia, Camden
Gramstad, Cora
Graves, Nolan
Gravley, Caillat
Griffith, Connor
Hanson, Luella
Harberts, Maverick
Haugen, Beckett
Hellickson, Noah
Henslin, Lauren
Hernandez, Emma
Hinnenkamp, Kohlson
Hoflock, Ryker
Hofstad, Harper
Jacobs, Mari
Kallevig, Leah
Kamm, Bethany
Kershner, Crew
Klebe, Josina
Korsmo, Elliot
Kotrba, Maivry
Lieser, Appolonia
Lilleberg, Amelia
Luberts, Harper
Mackedanz, Parker
Madsen, Kasen
Mayen, Abenicia
Mead, Jenessa
Miller, Jolie
Minter, Roman
Moe, Emma
Moline, Cora
Munsterman, Adley
Narragon, Zayn
Nienaber, Lydia
Olson, Brodey
Ottoson, Kyla
Pawelk, Aubrie
Persson, Annabel
Peters, Ahria
Peterson, Maxwell
Plumley, Kyland
Poluka, Jaxon
Rambow, Adeline
Reck, Kobe
Revier, Madilyn
Ritter, Brylee
Rohloff, Theta
Rolffs, Quentyn
Rosemeier, Liam
Rutgers, Connor
Ryks, Benjamin
Sabol, George

Sampson, Piper
Sanchez, Wyatt
Schammel, Nora
Schmitt, Johnathan
Schoumaker, Chase
Schrotberger, Sean
Sietsema, Elijah
Skindeliën, Asher
Skindeliën, Elise
Slinkard, Sommer
Spears, Myka
Steinhaus, Harper
Stocker, Isabella
Swanson, Lumen
Templer, Damon
Thalberg, Noreen
Toutges-Nelson, Rogan
Twernbold, Eli
Van Dyke, Quinn
Veeder, Ryan
Wachter, Maya
Wallentine, Charleston
Walz, Xavier
Westby, Alessandra
Westby, Tatum
Willert, Breckyn
Wittman, Stella
Wood, Colton
Wright, Catherine
Ziemer, Alexandra
Zimmer, Aiden

Grade 6

Alvarado, Destiny
Anderson, Lucia
Anderson, Nash
Appleby, George
Asche, Lowen
Barber, Cassadee
Bazaldua, Khloe
Bendickson, Gannon
Bohner, Jalissa
Boreen, Elijah
Brown, Marie
Buboltz, Aubree
Carr, Magdalena
Christensen, Connor
Collins, Kailey
Dahl, Caleb
Dahl, Drew
Davis, Finley
DeJong, Nyla
DePaz, Ashly
Dimler, Rosalie
Du Plessis, Miane
Duenaz, Aiden
Elliott, Kallie
Erickson, Emersyn
Fredrickson, Stella
Gehrking, Livia
Goelz, Norah
Gramstad, August
Grotelueschen, Sophie
Haats, Griffin
Hannig, Meredith
Hanson, Anders
Hanson, Lenora
Hedman, Norah
Helgeson, Vivian
Hernandez, Lucian
Hoffman, Sullivan
Hooper, Brynn
Jeseritz, Brylee
Johnson, Eva
Johnson, Lincoln
Johnson, Maddox
Johnson, Piper
Kalkbrenner, Quin
Kase, Kaylynn
Keefe, Weston

Kleven, Elias
Knight, Wyatt
Koosman, Sophia
Kriese, Colton
LaBrie, Ryne
Lautenschlager, Lexi
Louwagie, Charles
Lucas, Hunter
Marks, Valen
McDowell, Drake
Meis, Zoie
Morales, Audrey
Neal, Cree
Nelson, Ava
Nelson, Jaeger
Nester, Emerson
Nguyen, Bao
Nguyen, Ngan
Noor, Kyler
Olness, Hadley
Olson, Celia
Palmer, Ryker
Panitzke, Rylee
Peterson, Jonathan
Pfeifer, Jack
Powers, Tate
Quam, Ryan
Ray, Josephine
Reinke, Graysen
Richards, Lincoln
Richter, Maya
Schneider, Kasch
Schueller, Lincoln
Slagter, Walker
Slinden, Ava
St Michel, Zoey
Strand, Emmett
Streling, Jayden
Swanson, Jaxon
Swart, Jayden
Sykora, Grayson
Tanner, Karsey
Thalberg, Cora
Thalberg, Hazel
Thompson, Bryden
Thorstad, Ty
Thygeson, Carmen
Triplett, Grant
Triplett, Maren
Turbes, Michael
Tuschen, Cora
Van Ort, Grace
Vick, Kinzie
Wall, Olivia
Wallentine, Burkely
Westby, Jameson
Westby, John
Zuroff, Brody

Grade 7

Adrian, Alexandra
Anderson, Elin
Barber, Ava
Berghorst, Nixon
Black, Grace
Boelter, Cecily
Bradford, Charles
Braegelman, Bryn
Brown, Archer
Caballero-Salazar, Kaley
Contreras, Manuel
Daak, Drew
Dahl, Bentley
Dragt, Jocelyn
Duenaz, Temperance
Eckerman, George
Ekstrom, Lydia Mae
Freeland, Beck
Gardner, Alyssa
Goebel, Leone

Gronli, Clara
Hand, Dasha
Hanson, Sadie
Hawkins, Ja'Kiah
Hebrink, Finley
Hentges, Colie
Hjelle, Austin
Hofstad, Hailee
Huisinga, Eliott
Johnson, Beckam
Kath, Kade
Keefe, Cristiona
Klein, Aubrey
Kotrba, Tenley
Larsen, Aubree
Larson, Leighton-Alise
Lee, Etta
Lenz, Diondre
Lindahl, Finley
Linder, Preslie
Louwagie, Caleb
Martinka, Lainey
McCann, Avery
Mead, Jocelynn
Monson, Cullen
Nelson, Daxten
Nelson, Jaxon
Nelson, Parker
Nelson, Theodore
Netland, Isaac
Olk, Liam
Olson, Tanner
Palmquist, Cayson
Petersen, Clara
Peterson, Carter
Peterson, Haley
Prentice, Ada
Redepenning, Aurora
Reinke, Micah
Rosendahl, Harrison
Saari, Oliver
Schmidt, Leo
Schmitz, Taytum
Schoumaker, Macee
Schoumaker, Mya
Schreiner, Demitria
Schrotberger, Hannah
Sietsema, Oliver
Simon, Kaylee
Sing, Violet
Skindeliën, Avery
Skindeliën, Kylie
Spears, Laddeus
Stueve, Zachary
Sutherland, Natalie
Swenson, Ellen
Teisinger, Paxton
Thomas, Rylee
Thompson Meissner, Evangelyne
Thompson, Preston
Thorson, Raelyn
Toutges, Grace
Tuschen, Jack
Van Beck, Kyle
Walz, Caleb
Westby, Gable
Westby, Olivia
White, Freya
Willert, Tady
Wookey, Tatum
Zimmer, Olivia
Ziwicki, Carson
Zvorak, Conner

Grade 8

Anderson, Tyler
Andreen, Emmitt
Barber, Elisen
Basant, Kalev
Bengtson, Jax

Bjonfald, Riley
Boelter, Nora
Bohner, aden
Borka, Laila
Braegelman, Ella
Carlson, Avvi
Christensen, Collin
Cornell, Kiley
Dahl, Cooper
Dimler, Charlotte
Dowdey, Victoria
Du Plessis, Johanne
Duchene, Claire
DuFrane, Liam
Eliason Mendoza, Evangeline
Fifield, Olivia
Fredrickson, Sophia
Gehrking, Myles
George, Kellan
Goelz, Anna
Hall, Liliana
Hanson, Kean
Haugen, Svea
Hedrick, Tanner
Helgeson, Oliver
Howard, Harper
Jacobs, Ellie
Johnson, Keira
Klebe, Hayden
LaBrie, Brooks
Lenz, Bianca
Lindahl, Reese
Lohn, Emmeline
Lozano, Kylan
Luna, Rebecca
Lungren, Brielle
Macik, Joren
Mattson, Sophie
Mead, Bryce
Moline, Audrey
Monson, Cameron
Morales, Amelia
Nash, Liam
Nelson, Hadley
Nelson, Maddex
Nelson, Oden
Netland, Ava
Nygaard, Paige
Olness, Harper
Olson, Carter
Olson, Kaden
Olson, Sidney
Ortega-Pena, Alondra
Palmer, Nathanael
Peters, Maxdon
Peters, Serena
Peterson, Zoe
Piipke, Owen
Radunz, McKenna
Rambow, Wyatt
Revier, Rya
Richards, Sage
Rutgers, Paycen
Scott, Abigail
Simpson, Bella
Skindeliën, Arianna
Skretvedt, Jillian
Steinwand, Gabriel
Strom, Alice
Swanson, Brenna
Taunton, Samuel
Thalberg, Jasper
Titus, Madelyn
Wallace, Abigail
Wallner, Brynlee
Westbrock, Jacob
Westby, Rebekah
Wig, Parker
Ziemer, Maxwell

OPINION

AN OBJECTIVE STATE of MIND

Ted Here..... by Ted Almen

The Trump Administration showcased more its effort to MAWA - Make America White Again - with last week's reposting of an outrageously racist video depicting former president Barack Obama and his wife Michelle as dancing apes. The timing couldn't have been any better for members of the old Ku Klux Klan as it appeared in the first week of Black History Month.

And on cue, the first official response was a blistering attempt to turn the responsibility back on the accusers as press secretary Karoline Leavitt tersely responded that any normal person (aka, non left-wing-radical -- it's all one word now) watching that video would have understood it to be a nothingburger in the realm of racism, but actually was a very adept portrayal of how Donald is king of the jungle while everyone else is lower down the food chain.

Of course what Leavitt may have miscalculated was that there actually are Black Republicans who saw the tired depiction of their race as less than human to be base degradation... the same White superiority which fueled centuries of brutal enslavement. In another lifetime Leavitt would have made a swell market influencer for the Antebellum Plantation Association.

But once again when it became obvious that the initial hope of trivializing such a scurrilous display of denigration wasn't working, Plan B was put into effect. President Trump would claim complete innocence, throw a lowly subordinate under the bus (he must have a whole cadre of people willing to fall on their swords), and refuse even to say a simple phrase which most conscientious folks rank right up their with 'please' and 'thank you': "I'm sorry."

Well, when you have never erred in your life, when you have never had to ask for forgiveness as Donald Trump claims, it's really no surprise that he would deny any involvement or responsibility, even though this disgusting post was put on his personal Truth Social platform. And Republicans wondered who was in charge when 'Sleepy Joe Biden' was president.

Now all of this talk of racism should really come as a surprise considering that Trump has vigorously wooed the title of the least racist president in U.S. history.

"...nobody has done more for Black people than I have. Nobody has done more." -- Trump speaking in 2020 to a group of African American leaders.

There are so many ways to fact-check that ridiculous statement, but let's just throw out one: Hello? Ever heard of Abraham Lincoln?

In his mind, Donald Trump thinks or at least claims he is as pure and free of racist ideology as Martin Luther King, Jr.... more so, actually. However if you are interested in

some insight which might take a little luster off that shine, try Google. But you better have plenty of time. The catalog of exceptions to his assertion is longer than Noah's feed store shopping list. I can't list them all, but here's a highlight reel:

- Going way back, being sued in 1973 for housing discrimination at the Trump apartment buildings when rental agents were told they were "...not allowed to rent to Black tenants." Nearly 50 years later, in 2020, he said he was considering the elimination of the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing law.

- After the 2017 'Unite the Right' rally in Charlottesville, sponsored by white supremacists, white nationalists, neo-Confederates, Ku Klux Klansmen and neo-Nazis, Trump said there were very fine people in that crowd. Former grand wizard David Duke spoke at the event: "We are going to fulfill the promises of Donald Trump. That's what we believed in. That's why we voted for Donald Trump, because he said he's going to take our country back." (BTW, that's news to Native Americans.)

- 2018, during an Oval Office meeting about immigration reform, saying that predominantly Black countries were "shitholes," and that the U.S. should instead increase immigration from "...places like Norway."

- Voicing support for the likes of Stephen Miller, who has a history of sending emails promoting white supremacy. (He's now a White House deputy chief of staff).

- In 2020 saying that the results of Abraham Lincoln's presidency were "questionable."

- Repeatedly calling Mexican men "bad hombres" and "rapists."

- Reposting a video of supporters yelling "White Power," and calling them great people.

- Supporting public Confederate monuments and symbols, and saying, "When people proudly hang their Confederate flags, they're not talking about racism."

- In January 2021, seeking to end enforcement of the Civil Rights Act. In 2026 he said that White people were "...very badly treated" because of the Civil Rights Act.

- Introducing the 1776 Commission in 2020 to re-write U.S. history by showing a sanitized view of slavery.

- In 2023 saying undocumented immigrants were "...poisoning the blood of our country."

- Calling Somalis "garbage" in 2025 remarks.

And the hits go on and on. Now, you can agree with everything noted above and actively pursue your right to be a white supremacist or even just a garden variety racist. That's called the First Amendment. There is nothing illegal about that, but man oh man there is definitely something despicably wrong with it.

A rose by any other name?

By Ralph Dickerson
Editor

Kentucky, being one of the oldest states in the union, possesses many unique place names such as Turkey Trot, Rooster Run and Monkey's Eyebrow. The county in which I lived for over 50 years also contained a uniquely named place: Tywhoppity Bottoms.

Tywhoppity Bottoms sits on Blackford Creek, which forms part of the western boundary between Hancock County, where I lived, and Daviess County. Blackford Creek drains into the Ohio River, and though Tywhoppity Bottoms sat several miles from the river, when the Ohio flooded each spring it stopped the flow out of Blackford Creek, which caused it to back up and spill its banks. According to some locals, the name Tywhoppity came from the sound water makes hitting the side of a boat.

On an aside, Blackford Creek possesses ties to a classic American novel, and I lived roughly 3/4ths of a mile from where the creek dumped into the Ohio River. As a youngster I helped a neighbor on his farm. One day he took me on an old dirt road and pointed out the ruins of an old cabin. By this time the cabin rotted away, and only the foundation remained. He pointed it out and told me it belonged to Josiah Henson. That name probably does not sound familiar to you because Americans know him by another name: Uncle Tom. Novelist Harriet Beecher Stowe based the character of Uncle Tom in Uncle Tom's Cabin on Josiah Henson.

Hancock County also possesses another unique place name: Muddy Gut, and a tie exists between that place and a US President. Muddy Gut sits along the Ohio River in the Troy Bend, where the Anderson River dumps into the Ohio immediately west of Troy, Ind.

In 1827 two men approached a young man that operated a ferry on the Anderson River, and asked him to take them to a steamboat anchored in the middle of the Ohio. The young man agreed, which caused a conflict between him and the Dill Brothers; these men owned the license to operate a ferry across the Ohio River.

The Dill Brothers took the young man to court claiming he infringed upon their business. The trial took place in the home of Squire Pate, located three miles east of Lewisport on the Kentucky side of the Ohio, the presiding judge of the area. The young man represented himself in court, and argued that he did not violate the Dill Brothers' ferry license because a ferry takes people across a river. He argued he did not cross the Ohio River, but simply went to the middle. The argument carried the day and the young man won his case.

The young man so impressed Squire Pate that he encouraged him to study law. At that time someone interested in a law career simply needed to study under a judge or lawyer and pass the test. The young man studied under Pate and eventu-



Photo submitted

Despite what you might think, this is not a photoshopped sign. This is an actual sign in Hardin County, KY, near Elizabethtown.

ally earned his law license. Later the young man moved to Illinois and went into politics. We know him by the name Abraham Lincoln, 16th president of the United States.

Though Kentucky possesses some highly unique place names, I think this place, a church actually, takes the prize for the most unique name ever! For a bit of history, this church, located in Hardin County, Kentucky dates to 1849, and almost 40 years ago earned a listing on the National Register of Historic Places. It sits in Howe Valley, roughly one half mile from the intersection of KY-220 and KY-1375. The church belongs to the Baptist denomination.

I actually learned of this church from my father. He lived outside of Custer, KY at the time, and I drove him to his doctor's appointment in Elizabethtown, KY. One day while driving to Elizabethtown my dad suddenly said "turn here." As we normally did not go that way to get to Elizabethtown I asked why he wanted to go that way. My dad said he wanted to show me something, so I turned onto the road and started driving. I asked him what he wanted to show me, and he said, "you will see."

After a few miles he told me to pull onto the side of the road. In Kentucky, most roads lack shoulders, and often also lack side markings. So getting off the road proved a little bit of a challenge, but I managed to get the truck, we took my dad's truck to his appointments, mostly off the road. My dad looked at me and pointed and said, "read that sign," and I looked in the direction he pointed.

When I looked over across the road and read the sign, I thought "what the crap were they thinking!" Who in their right mind picks this name for a church? The sign read, "Blue Ball Baptist Church, Established in 1849, Everyone welcome."

Mosquitos Uncommonly Troublesome

BY AMY GRONLI



A day without groundhogs

By Amy Gronli

On February 2, the world stopped whatever it was doing for a moment to care about the combination of sky conditions and an oversized rodent. At Gobbler's Knob in Punxsutawney, PA, event officials announced that the captive groundhog had seen its shadow, so we should all expect six more weeks of winter for, well, the next six weeks of winter.

The more literal-minded are immune to the predictions of the groundhog known as Punxsutawney Phil, since Groundhog Day always lands on the day halfway through winter. A cloudy February 2 might prompt some people to say Phil is predicting "an early spring," but nothing can budge the date on the calendar for the vernal equinox.

The first Groundhog Day celebration occurred on February 2, 1887, as a way for German immigrants in the U.S. to continue a tradition practiced in their homeland. The tradition can trace its origins back to the pre-Christian festival of Imbolc, which Celtic people celebrated as the beginning of spring, according to History.com's article "History of Groundhog Day," published on February 2, 2012.

Once Christianity became established in Europe, marking this midwinter celebration as Candlemas - the feast to commemorate Jesus' presentation at the temple in Jerusalem - became mainstream. Some Europeans believed that a sunny Candlemas meant another forty days of cold, snowy weather, and Germans incorporated animals seeing their shadows into the legend.

Since the badgers and hedgehogs used as weather predictors in Europe were not at hand in the U.S., a groundhog was chosen as a substitute animal to help carry on the immigrants' tradition. Though February 2 puts Punxsutawney Phil in the spotlight for a day, wild groundhogs across the country prefer to be unseen.

Groundhogs are true hibernators that remain dormant from late fall to early spring, according to the January 26, 2026 article, "Minnesota's Groundhog: Meet the Woodchuck (Marmota monax)" by Brookelyn Sams on Campfire Bay Resort's website. Capable of building their multi-chambered burrows in many different rural and even urban ecosystems, thickly furred groundhogs will spend winter curled up in hibernation chambers no matter which part of



Minnesota they call home.

With a body temperature near freezing and metabolism only at 4% of normal activity, you'd be hard-pressed to convince these sluggish creatures to wake up and poke their heads above ground just to check the weather. However, once spring arrives and groundhogs feel the instinct to emerge once more aboveground, Kandiyohi County residents can have a good chance of spotting one.

According to the website Minnesota Seasons' article on the groundhog, these mammals live for two to six years, enjoy a low-risk conservation status, and are spread widely through the state. Three types of groundhog live in Minnesota: the Canada Woodchuck in the north-central and northeast part of the state, the Southern Woodchuck in the counties bordering Iowa, and the Rufescent Woodchuck (with a distinct red tinge to its fur) in the rest of the state.

According to Kathleen Weflen's article "Born to Dig" in the March-April 2023 edition of Minnesota Conservation Volunteer, adult male groundhogs will emerge from hibernation in March to seek a mate in its territory. About a month after mating, female groundhogs will give birth to a litter of three to six young called pups, kits, or chucklings (definitely a contender for the cutest baby animal name).

Once reaching 4 to 6 weeks of age, the chucklings will venture from the burrow for the first time and exchange a diet of mother's milk for one of green plants.

Natural instinct to gain weight and have enough fat stores to live on through the winter will motivate groundhogs to eat 1 - 1 1/2 pounds of food each day and conserve energy by being

Groundhogs

Continued on page 11

ASK A TROOPER

By Sgt. Jesse Grabow



Question: Hi, I read your "Ask A Trooper" article regarding Winter Travel Survival Kit Essentials. You might reconsider recommending cat litter as an agent for traction. Traditional cat litter is made of small chunks of clay, when one attempts to use it for traction in winter conditions it quickly dissolves into a slippery mess, making traction less viable. That was my experience.

Answer: There are several effective alternatives to help regain traction if you become stuck in the snow. Options include sand, tire chains, snow socks, traction mats or boards. In emergency situations, some people have even used floor mats, cardboard, or branches/weeds with success.

- How to Use Traction Aids:
- Clear the snow: Dig out snow from in front of and behind your tires to give yourself room to move.
 - Apply material: Place your chosen traction aid (sand, mats, boards, etc.) directly in the path of the drive wheels.
 - Accelerate slowly: Gently apply the gas so the tires can grip the material. Avoid spinning the tires, as this can dig you in deeper.
 - If your vehicle has traction control, you may want to temporarily turn it off.
 - A gentle rocking motion (forward and reverse) can also help free the vehicle.

We still have a lot of winter left, and it's always best to be prepared for any winter travel emergency.

A portion of state statutes were used with permission from the Office of the Revisor of Statutes. If you have any questions concerning traffic related laws or issues in Minnesota, send your questions to Trp. Jesse Grabow - Minnesota State Patrol at 1000 Highway 10 West, Detroit Lakes, MN 56501-2205. (You can follow him on Twitter @MSPPJO_NW or reach him at jesse.grabow@state.mn.us).



REVIEW PERSONNEL

- Ted Almen.....PUBLISHER
- Ralph Dickerson.....EDITOR
- Bruce Strand.....SPORTS REPORTER
- Jonathan Hunter.....GRAPHICS/PRODUCTION
- Brooke Eischens.....GRAPHICS
- Ann Winge Johnson.....SALES/ADVERTISING
- Shannon Urban.....STAFF WRITER

The Lakes Area Review is published weekly at: 106 Norwood St. SW, New London, MN 56273
Phone: (320) 354-2945 • Fax: (320) 354-6300
Email: editorial@nslakesareareview.com

Volume 139, No. 7
February 14, 2026
A Village Ink Company Publication
Bulk Permit No. 838, New London, MN

FREE LOCAL PUBLICATION

The Lakes Area Review is offered as a free publication to residential and rural routes of New London and Spicer, also to rural route one of Belgrade, to rural route four of Willmar, and the rural routes of Pennock and Sunburg.

OUT-OF-AREA SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Single copies \$75; \$42.00 in Kandiyohi County; \$48.00 other counties in Minnesota; and \$59.00 out-of-state. Mail address changes to: Lakes Area Review - PO Box 838, New London, MN 56273 - or - email your subscription request to: graphics@nslakesareareview.com

THREE BUNS AND a HURRICANE®

BY ALISON NELSON



We had our now annual tradition of a small family Super Bowl party in our basement. This year instead of trying to cover all of the favorite appetizers people might bring and spend the whole day preparing them, we picked up a pizza and wings special from Green Mill and called it good. It was way less prep and almost no cleanup. I might be the real winner of the day.

Seattle has always been my second favorite team because my aunt lived there. Growing up she was the only person I knew who didn't live in Minnesota, and that gave us a special connection to that city. If I didn't marry someone from Kerkhoven, I would like to have lived there.

Anyway, I was originally torn about who I wanted to win. The Seahawks seemed like an obvious choice, but I didn't love that the Vikings gave up Sam Darnold after last season and now he was going to the Super Bowl when we clearly struggled all year. But I also didn't think the Patriots needed to win again (yawn). Plus, it wasn't Darnold's fault. So I made my choice and cheered accordingly. The game was extra dull - a bunch of field goals on one side and no points on the other for most of the game? Big whoop.

The game being so boring gave many people a chance to focus on the more interesting aspects of the broadcast... the commercials and the halftime. There were maybe three ads that I remember being interesting and funny. Most of the others were all about AI. I think they should consider a limit on how many AI commercials we have to watch during the game, though I suppose those are the people with the money. And then the halftime came.

I love all of the halftimes for the artistic aspects - the choreography, the sets, the costumes, the music. It's never been a time for me to go get more snacks or use the bathroom. As much as I enjoy football, that show is a real highlight.

There have been many memorable performances over the last 30 or so years - Prince singing Purple Rain in actual rain, Janet Jackson's wardrobe malfunction, etc. The NFL realized in 1993, after selecting Michael Jackson as the entertainment, that people turned out for that element alone. Since then they have selected popular artists that reflect current popular tastes.

It will likely not come as a surprise to you that I loved that halftime show. To think of the planning that goes into something like that, it's mind-blowing. I mean, they set up a whole sugar cane field, where the plants were people (an easy way to get the scenery on and off). And an actual wedding.

JJ Watt, NFL star, tweeted after the performance: "Did I understand a single word of it? I did not. Was it a vibe? It was." Same, dude. I know like three Spanish words, which is embarrassing, but I knew by watching that they were having a good time, emanating joy, and so proud of their heritage. Last year during Kendrick Lamar's show I felt very similar - not a clue what he was talking about but the performance was fantastic.

We've hosted five international exchange students at our house, so again, it is probably not surprising that our family enjoyed this cultural spectacle. The storytelling was powerful and moving, and if you could let go of not under-

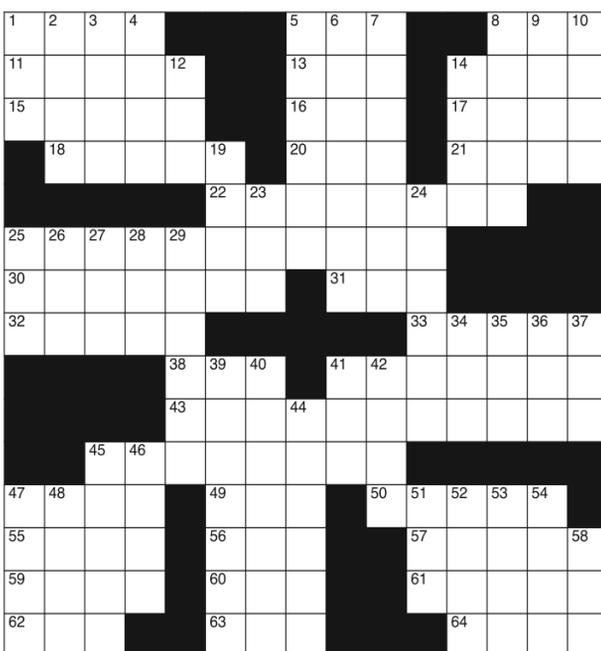
standing the lyrics, the music would help you get the wiggles out at least. Our boys also enjoyed seeing all of the flags (we have some flag enthusiasts in our house).

I'd never seen anything like it, and I think we are richer for it. I'm sad to say I know very little about Puerto Rico. One of my favorite people on the reality show Million Dollar Listing New York, Luis, is from there, and he had the most upbeat, infectious attitude toward life. Our first exchange student, Philipp, and I would watch that show together and he wanted to be like Luis when he grew up. The culture is also on full display in the musical movie In the Heights, which our family loves. It, too, is a real vibe. I've seen commercials recently for Puerto Rico tourism. Seems like it might be time to check it out.

As an occasional masochist, I took to social media after the game to see what other people thought. One of the most interesting complaints, which I'd heard a few times over the years, is that the Super Bowl is supposed to be a family-friendly event. Is it? I've never seen it advertised as that. When I was young, my parents went to an adults-only Super Bowl party and got us a babysitter, and that was before halftimes were a big deal. In my mind it is family-friendly - we watch it together every year - but I'm not sure it was ever intended to be a display of family values. It's a performance put on by a timely artist on a global stage, drawing fans from all over the world, and as I read in another article, it might be time that representation caught up to reality.

CLUES ACROSS

1. Breezed through
5. Consumer protection agency
8. Criminal syndicate
11. Moves back from
13. Satisfaction
14. Feel concern or interest
15. Monetary units
16. Congressman (abbr.)
17. Israeli city
18. Restaurants
20. 2,000 lbs.
21. Grandmother
22. North, South and Central
25. In an early way
30. Foes
31. Social networking platform
32. Early term for basketball player
33. Another name for sesame plant
38. Disallow
41. Provide greater detail
43. Inaccessible
45. Evoke emotions
47. Ancient kingdom near Dead Sea
49. Celtic punk rockers
50. A fencing sword
55. Actor Idris
56. Affirmative (slang)
57. Afflicted in mind or body
59. One point north of northeast
60. Born of
61. Social media hand gesture
62. Hong Kong food stall ___ pai dong
63. Opposite of beginning
64. Email function



7. Shrewdly
8. Rooney and Kate are two
9. Mediterranean port
10. Benedictine monk
12. Midway between south and southeast
14. Town in Galilee
19. Satisfy
23. Mice genus
24. Brass instrument
25. Chest muscle (slang)
26. Transmits genetic information from DNA
27. Records electric currents generated by the brain
28. Woman (French)
29. Short route aircraft
34. Pitching statistic
35. Pointed end of a pen
36. Popular sports league
37. Body part
39. Inoffensive
40. Yellowish cotton cloth
41. Feline
42. Does not tell the truth
44. Seduced
45. Spiritual leader
46. Abba ___, Israeli politician
47. Repair
48. Olive genus
51. Swiss river
52. Prejudice
53. C. European river
54. Keep under control
58. Father

CLUES DOWN

1. Sign language
2. Fashionable
3. Borough in Helsinki
4. Inability to hear
5. More quickly
6. An idea accepted as a demonstrable truth

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Rathionalizing

By Ashley Rath



When you're "off" and nothing is actually wrong

Last week was an emotional one for me. Not because anything dramatic or catastrophic happened—there was no big fight, no crisis, no bad news. It was just... a week. A normal one. And yet, I felt off.

If I'm honest, most weeks I feel pretty "on." I feel sharp, clear-headed, emotionally steady. I can handle stress well. I move through my days with intention and energy. Last week was not that week. I felt more irritable, more tired, more sensitive. Little things felt heavier than they should have. My patience was thinner. My emotions were closer to the surface.

And the tricky part? There wasn't an obvious reason.

Maybe my immune system was fighting something. Maybe I was more run down than I realized. Maybe my nervous system was overloaded in ways I didn't see coming. Or maybe—this is the hardest part to accept—this is just part

of being human.

We live in a culture that loves explanations and fixes. If you're not feeling great, we want to label it, solve it, optimize it. But sometimes, you don't need a diagnosis. Sometimes you're just tired. Or overstimulated. Or emotionally full. Sometimes your body and mind are asking for a little grace.

What I noticed most was how quickly my inner dialogue wanted to judge the experience. What's wrong with you? Why can't you handle this? You know better. But awareness has taught me something important: being "off" doesn't mean you're broken. It doesn't mean you're failing. It doesn't mean you're regressing.

It means you're listening. Emotional resilience isn't about feeling good all the time. It's about noticing when you don't—and responding with curiosity instead of criticism. Last week required me to slow down, lower my expectations, and take care of myself in quieter ways. Earlier bedtimes. Less noise. Fewer extra commitments. More space.

And here's the lesson I keep coming back to: growth isn't linear. Neither is emotional stability. You can do all the "right" things and still have an off week. You can be self-aware and still feel dysregulated. You can be healthy, successful, and fulfilled—and still need rest.

We often talk about resilience as pushing through. But sometimes resilience looks like pulling back. Sometimes strength is acknowledging that today, you're not at your best—and that's okay.

If you're reading this and thinking, That sounds like me this week, I want you to know you're not alone. You don't need to fix yourself. You don't need to force productivity or positivity. You might just need to give yourself permission to be human.

Because being "off" isn't a failure. It's feedback. And when we listen to it with compassion, it often leads us exactly where we need to go.

SUDOKU

9			2					
	8		5			1		
1		4			6			7
					9			
						5		
7				2			1	8
4			1					8
				4	3			9
		3		9			6	

Level: Advanced

Here's How It Works:

Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

HEALTHY HEART WORD SEARCH

F L A H O F F S E V L A V M N O U O V I
M A U O E K O R T S P V P H E A R T L P
M U S C L E D Q S C O R O N A R Y T U C
H S N P A N I C H O L E Q N K I X B L F D R
A I S P E H I C R O N E L E S T E R O M L B I U
H V I A E R O B I C I U R P F D R R M E
M F R D X E S I C R E X E R P B S T I Q
S S I S O R E L C S O R E H T A H K E F
D I Q X U N O I T A M M A L F N I Q S F
L X P I X H E A L T H Y L Q A H C E L D
E R K C A R D I A C R P H C S P O N U S
U N O I T A L U C R I C B E A I T S X P F
Q Y S C X R A L U C S A V O A T D R A C A
A X F M O T H Q Q V D N E V T O X A K R
L S T R E S S D H B I Y I M A T A P S T
P H B V V D X F V V D I L E T H V X Q E
D O O L B S Y F V F F A B A V K M Y Y R
S E Q T H Y P E R T E N S I O N N R I I
C M O C M C E C N A R U D N E L I N Q E
L H H A I M H T Y H R R A K B K P U S S

WORDS

- AEROBIC
- ARRHYTHMIA
- ARTERIES
- ATHEROSCLEROSIS
- BEATS
- BLOOD
- CARDIAC
- CARDIOVASCULAR
- CHOLESTEROL
- CIRCULATION
- CORONARY
- ENDURANCE
- EXERCISE
- HEALTHY
- HEART
- HYPERTENSION
- INFLAMMATION
- MUSCLE
- PLAQUE
- PULSE
- STRESS
- STROKE
- VALVES
- VEINS

Find the words hidden vertically, horizontally, diagonally, and backwards.

Groundhogs continued from page 10

active only during the cooler parts of the day and napping underground during the warmer hours.

With our backyard offering food, shelter, and a fair number of sticks and stumps that groundhogs can gnaw to keep their teeth a healthy length, it's little surprise that at least one groundhog has taken up residence near our home. Spotting a groundhog remains a rare treat, though.

Groundhogs spend much of their time underground in their burrows, even when they are not hibernating, and venture only up to half a mile from them. Since they are not gifted like their distant squirrel cousins that can scale a tree to build a home and escape predators, groundhogs

make the most of their strong paws, powerful back legs, and shovel-like heads to build subterranean homes to protect themselves from predators and extreme weather.

These burrows contain a few standard features: an entrance tunnel about eight feet in length, a defecation chamber, a hibernation chamber, a nursery chamber, and a turnaround chamber. A secondary entrance called a "plunge hole" is also included as a way to escape if the main entrance is unavailable.

Though they belong to the order Rodentia, they separate at the next taxonomic division from the rodents we normally set traps for in our house. Groundhogs are more closely related to squirrels than mice,

and their rounded features and bristly tails reveal their close connections to other marmots.

Though they might present themselves as pests by visiting a vegetable patch, they should be seen as an important part of Minnesota's biodiversity: aerating and mixing soil as they dig and supporting the survival of predators such as coyotes, eagles, and bobcats. Fences specifically designed to keep groundhogs from burrowing under or climbing over them can help protect gardens and keep resident groundhogs as welcome members of the neighborhood.

And if, indeed, these next six weeks prove especially wintry, remember that the good groundhogs of Minnesota had nothing to do with it.

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 Tuesday 6:00 p.m. Women's Bible study.
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 nordlandlutheranchurch.org
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 Pastor Shari Routh
 Sunday, February 15: Transfiguration of Our Lord- Holy Communion
 8am: Shrove Tuesday Pancake Breakfast at East, 8:45am Worship at East, 9:45am Sunday School at East, 11am Worship at First; Tuesday;
 February 17: 1pm "Gather" Women's Bible Study at East;
 Wednesday, February 18: 9am "Your First

Coffee" at First, 11am Strength & Balance Training at First, 5:30pm Meal served by the Parish Youth at First, 7pm Ash Wednesday Parish Worship at First - Imposition of Ashes - Holy Communion; Thursday February 19: 11am Newsletter Deadline.

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Please join us in worship and fellowship

OBITUARIES

James G. Sneer, 88

James G. Sneer passed away comfortably surrounded by his family on January 14, 2026, at his residence in Bloomington, Minnesota. James (Jim) was born in Mountain Lake Minnesota on May 27, 1937, to George and Marie Sneer. He spent his time being a loving and devoted husband, father, grandfather, great-grandfather, and friend to many. Jim was married to his loving wife, Susan (Sue) Sneer for a blessed 62 years.



James Sneer

Jim was preceded in death by Susan (wife,) George and Marie Sneer (parents,) Harrold Sneer (brother,) Richard Sneer (brother,) and Caroline Harrington (sister.) He is survived by son Stuart (Ann), daughter Jenny Johnson (Trent Shaw), grandchildren Sara Burroughs (Aaron), Emily Sieberg (Matt), Nicholas Johnson, Benjamin Sneer (Abigale), and Nathan Johnson (Julia Priem). He has five great grandchildren: Andrew Sieberg, Elijah Burroughs, William Sieberg, Henry Burroughs, and Allison Sieberg. Jim was also survived by sisters Betty Grams (Howard) and Jeanette Crispin. Jim's children and grandchildren will fondly remember his famous motto of, "Family First." Jim was dearly loved and will be greatly missed by his family and friends.

Jim's greatest joy was spending time with his family and friends. Jim and Sue rarely missed attending their children's or grandchildren's activities as well as a good family style meal. In his spare time, he enjoyed travelling with his wife and family, hunting, fishing, running, and fitness. One of Jim's many life accomplishments was to proudly run 27 marathons. Among his favorite marathon experiences was running into East Germany prior to the Berlin Wall coming down. Jim also ran marathons with his son and daughter. Jim also enjoyed gardening, volunteering at the University of Minnesota Landscape Arboretum, attending church, and helping others.

Jim lived the majority of his life in Mountain Lake, Minnesota, where he was an active contributor to the life of the community. Jim was a Mt Lake High School 1955 graduate and was an all-around athlete competing in football, boys' basketball, baseball, and track and field. He and his wife Sue became lifelong supporters of the MLHS athletics program contributing to the athletic facilities at MUNS field including the football field, track and baseball diamonds. Jim and Sue entered the MLHS Hall of Fame as contributors with the Class of 2016.

Jim carried on his love of athletics playing college football at Mankato State University, now know as Minnesota State University, Mankato. He graduated from MSU in 1959 and over the years stayed closely connected to the football program. Jim went on to become a benefactor for the Minnesota State University, Mankato football scholarship fund. If there was a home Minnesota State University football game, it was a safe bet he did everything he could do to be in attendance.

If Jim's greatest joy in life was his family, then it can be said that growing the family business was his passion. His faith filled vision and integrity laid the foundation of the United Prairie Bank, which he started in 1973. He was also a graduate of the Harvard Business School of Finance. Jim's 60 years of unwavering commitment to serving many southwestern communities with trust and excellence shaped not only the United Prairie Bank institution but also the lives of countless businesses, farms, and families across southern Minnesota. Jim and his accomplishments will be missed by the greater Minnesota banking community.

Memorial service is Saturday, April 11th, 11 am, at Wooddale Church, 6330 Shady Oak Road, Eden Prairie, MN 55344. Reception to immediately follow after the service.

Wayne Orson, 80

Wayne Orson, 80, of New London, died Wednesday, January 21 at Glen Oaks in New London. A memorial service was held 11:00 am, Friday, February 13 at Peace Lutheran Church in New London.



Wayne Orson

Visitation took place one hour prior to the service at the church. Arrangements are with Harvey Anderson & Johnson Funeral Home in New London. Wayne Sherman Orson was born on November 30, 1945, to Walter and Sadie (Hjelle) Orson in Willmar. He was baptized and confirmed at Trinity Lutheran Church in New London, Minnesota. Wayne attended school in New London and graduated in 1964.

Following high school, Wayne entered the United States Air Force, where he proudly served as a firefighter. During his service, he was stationed in Montgomery, Alabama, and at RAF Lakenheath in England. He was honorably discharged after completing his service.

Wayne worked for many years as an electrician, first alongside his father and brother Marlyn. He was a dedicated volunteer firefighter in New London for more than 20 years. Throughout his career, Wayne worked for Quade Electric, Northwest Airlines, and several other employers, all while being a proud and longtime member of IBEW Local 292.

Wayne had a deep love for his family and rarely missed an opportunity to gather with them. He also enjoyed collecting coins, flying as a private pilot, driving his pickup, and spending time doing the things he loved. He is survived by his brothers Wilbur Orson of New London; Marlyn (Jackie) Orson of New London; Ronald (Marsha) Orson of Phoenix, Arizona; and his sister Marlys Bjur (Ed Marklowitz) of Litchfield. He is also survived by his nephews Eric (Joy) Orson of Minneapolis; Christopher (Nicolle) Orson of Rice Lake, Wisconsin; Bryan (Jessica) Orson of North Branch; Clifton R. Orson of Phoenix, Arizona; and his niece Loen (Daniel) Reinhart of Phoenix, Arizona. Wayne is further survived by his grand-nephews Gavin, Ari, and Henry Orson; and his grand-nieces Ella, Vera, Winnie Orson, and Cora, Amelia, and Lily Reinhart. He was preceded in death by his parents, Walter and Sadie Orson; his brother Clifton S. Orson; his brother-in-law Dick Bjur; and many aunts, uncles, and cousins.

Does your church have an upcoming event?  **320-354-2945**
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Side With Love is the social justice leadership team of the Unitarian Universalist Association. From about Martin Luther King, Jr, Day through Valentine's week annually they help us celebrate 30 Days of Love with weekly education pieces, offerings of spiritual nourishment, political grounding, and shared practices of faith and justice. This week's theme of "Nurturing Community" reminded us how our actions, small or large, can influence our micro-community and ripple to affect others.

PASTOR'S CORNER

By Marilee Dorn, Chair
 Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Willmar

Social justice activist Dorothy Day wrote, "People say, what is the sense of our small effort? They cannot see that we must lay one brick at a time, take one step at a time. A pebble cast into a pond causes ripples that spread in all directions. Each one of our thoughts, words and deeds is like that. No one has a right to sit down and feel hopeless. There is too much work to do." Her acquaintance and fellow activist, Mother Teresa, echoed her beliefs, "I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples." "Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless." "We cannot all do great things, but we can do small things with great love." "True love isn't all romantic; sometimes it's simply being there for someone who needs you."

And, "While people are often content to criticize and blame others for what goes wrong, surely we should at least attempt to put forward constructive ideas. One thing is for certain: given human beings' love of truth, justice, peace, and freedom, creating a better, more compassionate world is a genuine possibility. The potential is there."

Love must also recognize justice. From Thomas Aquinas: "He who is not angry when there is just cause for anger is immoral. Why? Because anger looks to the good of justice. And if you can live amid injustice without anger, you are immoral as well as unjust." And, from Ruth Bader Ginsburg, "We live in an age in which the fundamental principles to which we subscribe - liberty, equality and justice for all - are encountering extraordinary challenges. ... But it is also an age in which we can join hands with others who hold to those principles and face similar challenges."

The bottom line? Choose Love. Not just because it's Valentine's Day—because it's the right thing to do every day and your actions will likely circle back to you. Show kindness to others by smiling, offering courtesy or assistance, listening, avoiding gossip, paying a favor forward. When you need to decide a course of action, truly consider what will nurture community and be on the side of love.

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OBITUARIES

Paul Allen Aasen, 68

Paul Allen Aasen, age 68, of rural New London, died Sunday, December 14, at Hennepin County Medical Center in Minneapolis. A private family service will be held at a later date.



Paul Aasen

Paul was born on August 24, 1957, to Harlan and JoAnn (Jacobson) Aasen in Willmar. He grew up in Lake Andrew Township and was baptized and later confirmed at East Norway Lake Lutheran Church. Paul attended New London Elementary and graduated from New London-Spicer High School in 1975. He continued his education at Willmar Vocational Technical School, where he studied to become a parts technician.

In 1979, Paul enlisted in the United States Army and proudly served both in the U.S. and in Germany until 1981.

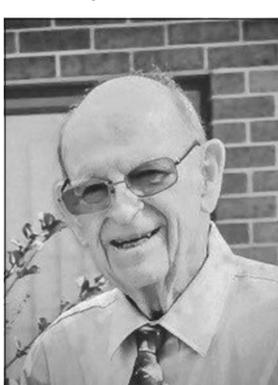
Paul enjoyed spending time with family, watching football, helping his brother with farm and construction work, and celebrating holidays and birthdays together. He had a great sense of humor, loved a good laugh, and was always willing to lend a helping hand to anyone in need.

Paul is survived by his mother, JoAnn; brother, Dean (Kathi) Aasen of rural Sunburg; nephew, Lee (Danielle) Aasen of rural New London; and nieces, Terri (David) Barrett of rural Murdock, Michelle (Dan) Youngkrantz of rural Lake Lillian and Melanie Rose of Atwater.

He was preceded in death by his father, Harlan; brother, Keith; and his aunt and uncle, Ruby (Ben) Tjernagel and Fritz (Alice) Aasen.

Harley E. Caldwell, 91

Harley E. Caldwell, 91 of Hawick died January 30, 2026 at GlenOaks Care Center in New London. A Celebration of Life will be announced in the spring with a graveside service at Roseville Cemetery in Hawick. Arrangements are with the Johnson Funeral Home in Paynesville.



Harley Caldwell

Harley Elmer Caldwell was born on 29 August 1934, at the Caldwell family farm, on Highway 23 near Hawick, MN. He was the second son of Virgil and Mildred (Farnum) Caldwell. Harley spent his early years on his parents' farm in Hawick and later moved back onto the Caldwell family farm as a teenager. He attended Paynesville High School, where he participated in track and field, graduating in 1952. Following high school, Harley worked various jobs while working on the family farm. In 1955, he enlisted in the United States Army, serving two years of active duty ending at Fort Carson in Colorado Springs, Colorado. His reserve obligation was transferred to the USAR MN Military District, which ended in 1963 with an honorable discharge. Harley liked the Colorado Springs area and chose to remain there, finding work in construction and the railroad. It was during this time that he met his future wife, Sandra Rison. The two were married on May 29, 1958, in Colorado. Over the years, they lived in Colorado, the Twin Cities, and Willmar before eventually returning to Hawick. There, they purchased the Caldwell family farm, allowing them to raise their four children on the land where Harley had spent much of his own childhood. In 2022, the Highway 23 four lane project required the purchase of their Century Farm home, so Harley and Sandy moved to independent living at Glen Oaks in New London. Throughout his life, Harley farmed and worked in construction. He was a founding partner in two asphalt contracting companies: C & S Blacktop, established in 1967 and still in operation today, now owned by his partner's daughter; and Superior Blacktop, which he started with his friend Sam Schreffler of Hawick. In 1974, Harley founded Caldwell Asphalt Company, which operated successfully for 44 years until his son Troy retired in 2018. Hard work was always part of who Harley was, and he believed strongly in encouraging others to find ways to make that work enjoyable. After retiring from the asphalt business, Harley continued working on the family farm raising organic vegetables. He and Sandy sold their produce at farmers' markets across the state and local grocery stores. Harley loved learning and was an avid reader, particularly non-fiction books and biographies. He had a strong sense of adventure and enjoyed new experiences. Winter vacations became a cherished family tradition - through many skiing trips and traveling to warmer places. After retiring, he and Sandy spent many years traveling the country in their travel trailer, visiting new places, visiting family, and going wherever the road led them. In later years, they wintered in Florida, welcoming visits from family and friends. They enjoyed finding local Eagles Clubs and heading to the Sportsman's Den in Lake Henry for a burger and a beer. Harley was a lifelong member of Hawick United Methodist Church and a member of the Eagles. He had a deep faith in God and drew strength from Psalm 23. He will be remembered as a loving husband, grandfather and devoted caregiver to Sandy before she moved to the nursing home in 2025. Family and friends will also remember Harley for his love of storytelling-especially tales of family history, life experiences, and casino adventures.

On Friday, January 30, 2026, Harley passed away peacefully at the age of 91 at Glen Oaks Nursing Home under Moments Hospice Care. He is survived by his wife of 67 years, Sandy; their four children and spouses: Karen (Bryan) Watkins, Troy (Brenda) Caldwell, Cheri (Waleed) Abdalati, and Rick (Carey) Liestman; ten grandchildren: Chris Watkins, Brandon Watkins, Alex (Ryan) Zurbuchen; Brittany (Eric) Frank, Jesse Caldwell, Tanner Caldwell; Olivia Abdalati, Jada Abdalati; Trevor Lang; and Brooke (Wyatt) Mergen; and seven great-grandchildren: Lily, Callen, and Meredith Watkins; Grady and Jordy Frank; and Dominic and Oliver Zurbuchen. He is also survived by his in-laws, Steve Rison, Priscilla Rice, and Judy (Wally) Eaton, along with numerous nieces, nephews, cousins, and friends.

Harley was preceded in death by his parents; his brother and sister-in-law Duane and Elaine Caldwell; and his sister and brother-in-law Marlene and Roland Radunz, along with many family members and friends who have gone before him.

PUBLIC NOTICES

MINUTES

NLS Agenda
Monday, January 12, 2026- School Board Organizational & Regular Meeting
District Conference Room and via Teleconference 4:30 pm

School Board Organizational & Regular Meeting Agenda

1. Convene - Call to order, Pledge of Allegiance. (Acting Chair)
The meeting was called to order by Board Chair Peterson at 4:30 pm.

Board Members in Attendance: Mark Peterson, Darryl Nelson, Laura Nelson, Kristi Barber, Karen Nelson, Margo Wookey, Del Brouwer

Others in Attendance: Disa Dausavage, Heather Teisinger, Brooke Lien, Diane Holmquist, Nikki Hofstad, Suzanne Hayden, Nicole Lydick, Jamie Boelter, Pam Harrington, Leah Zimmerman, Teresa Depuydt

Attendance via Zoom: Rebecca Bellman, Bonnie Spohn, Kate Sawatzky, Carla Vagle, Lisa Sieve, Tirza Ludwig, Tracy Tebben, Casey Alsaker, Cammie Holmquist, Stephanie Slagter, Connie Swanson, Heather Westby, Stacy Brisenidine, Sarah Goelz, Randall Juhl, Lesley Burandt, Jenny Marxhausen, Eric Terres, Grace Figueroa-Ghent, Ann Dobmeier, Malibu Sand, Michelle Stueve, Tricia Gramstad, Holly Carlson

2. Changes to the agenda. (Acting Chair)

3. Approval of the agenda for January 12, 2026. (Acting Chair) (Action)
Motion to approve agenda by D Nelson and seconded by K Nelson. Motion carries 7-0.

4. Election of the Board Chair (Action)

4.1. The "Acting Chair" will state: **"Nominations are now in order for the office of chair."** Board members will then make nominations. The "Acting Chair" will call two more times the following: **"Are there any further nominations for the office of the chair?"** The "Acting Chair" will close the nominations by stating: **"If there are no further nominations... (pause)... nominations for the office of the chair are closed."**

If there is only one candidate nominated for the chair, the "Acting Chair" may state the following: **"<<name>> is the only candidate nominated for the office of the chair, and I hereby declare <<him/her>> elected by acclamation and direct the "acting Clerk" to so record in the minutes."** If there are more than one chair nominated, voice or hand vote will take place.

Board Member L Nelson nominated Mark Peterson as Board Chair.

Mark Peterson was the only candidate nominated for the office of the chair and was declared elected by acclamation.

5. Election of Vice Chair (Action)

5.1 The "Chair" will state: **"Nominations are now in order for the office of vice chair."** Board members will then make nominations. The "Chair" will call two more times the following: **"Are there any further nominations for the office of the vice chair?"** The "Chair" will close the nominations by stating: **"If there are no further nominations... (pause)... nominations for the office of the vice chair are closed."**

If there is only one candidate nominated for the vice chair, the "Chair" may state the following: **"<<name>> is the only candidate nominated for the office of the vice chair, and I hereby declare <<him/her>> elected by acclamation and direct the "acting clerk" to so record in the minutes."** If there are more than one vice chair nominated, voice or hand vote will take place.

Board Member Peterson nominated Darryl Nelson as Vice Chair.

Darryl Nelson was the only candidate nominated for the office of the vice chair and was declared elected by acclamation.

6. Election of Clerk (Action)
 6.1 The "Chair" will state: **"Nominations are now in order for the office of clerk."** Board members will then make nominations. The "Chair" will call two more times the following: **"Are there any further nominations for the office of the clerk?"** The "Chair" will close the nominations by stating: **"If there are no further nominations... (pause)... nominations for the office of the clerk are closed."**

If there is only one candidate nominated for clerk, the "Chair" may state the following: **"<<name>> is the only candidate nominated for the office of the clerk, and I hereby declare <<him/her>> elected by acclamation and direct the clerk to so record in the minutes."** If there are more than one clerk nominated, voice or hand vote will take place.
Board Member Brouwer nominated Laura Nelson as Board Clerk. Laura Nelson was the only candidate nominated for the office of the clerk and was declared elected by acclamation.

7. Election of Treasurer (Action)
 7.1 The "Chair" will state: **"Nominations are now in order for the office of treasurer."** Board members will then make nominations. The "Chair" will call two more times the following: **"Are there any further nominations for the office of the treasurer?"** The "Chair" will close the nominations by stating: **"If there are no further nominations... (pause)... nominations for the office of the Treasurer are closed."**

If there is only one candidate nominated for treasurer, the "Chair" may state the following: **"<<name>> is the only candidate nominated for the office of the treasurer, and I hereby declare <<him/her>> elected by acclamation and direct the clerk to so record in the minutes."** If there are more than one treasurer nominated, voice or hand vote will take place.
Board Member K Nelson nominated Del Brouwer as Board Treasurer.

Del Brouwer was the only candidate nominated for the office of the treasurer and was declared elected by acclamation.

8. Comments from visitors. (Comments from visitors must abide by the criteria set forth in the Board Meeting Public Participation Policy 206.)

8.1 Comments from Visitors
 Reminder of Expectations

9. Recognition of Visitors, Open Forum, and Recognitions

9.1 Proud of & Above and Beyond

9.2 MSBA's 2026 Directors' Award - Del Brouwer Honored

10. Approval of the Consent Agenda (Action)

10.1 Approval of Minutes from December 8, 2025 School Board Meeting

10.2 Approval of Minutes from December 8, 2025 Truth and Taxation Meeting

10.3 Approval of Minutes from January 5, 2026 Special School Board Meeting

10.4 Approval of December/January Bills

10.5 Approval of Personnel Omnibus

10.6 Approval of Amendment to the November 10 Board Meeting Minutes

10.7 Approval of Lakes Area Review as our Official School Newspaper

10.8 Approval of Kennedy & Graven as our District's Legal Counsel

10.9 Approval of United Prairie Bank of Spicer as our District's Official Depository

10.10 Approval of the Federal mileage rate to increase from \$0.70/mile to \$0.725/mile

Motion to approve the consent agenda made by K Nelson and seconded by Brouwer. Motion carries 7-0.

11. Items Removed from the Consent Agenda for Consideration

12. Discussion and Approval of 2026 Meeting Dates and Times and Board Committees.

12.1 Approval of School Board Dates and Times (Action)

Motion to approve the School Board Dates and Times made by L Nelson and seconded by Barber. Motion carries 7-0.

13. Reports & Presentations

13.1 4th Grade PLT Presentation

13.2 Infinity Update
 13.3 Educational Foundation Update
 13.4 Labor and Transportation Update
 13.5 SAFF Update
 13.6 MASA Advanced Leadership Training
 13.7 Buildings and Grounds Update (Standing Item)
 13.8 Administrative Reports

14. Communications/Marketing & Stakeholder Engagement
 14.1 Approval of Three-Year Academic Calendars (Action)
Motion to approve the Three-Year Academic Calendars made by Barber and seconded by D Nelson. Motion carries 7-0.

15. Facilities & Finance
 15.1 Enrollment #'s as of January 6, 2026 (Standing Item)

15.2 Business Manager Update - Pam Harrington

15.3 Approval of Resolution Accepting Donations (Action)

Motion to approve Resolution Accepting Donations by Barber and seconded by Brouwer.

L Nelson - Aye Wookey - Aye Barber - Aye Brouwer - Aye Peterson - Aye K Nelson - Aye D Nelson - Aye Resolution passes 7-0.

16. Technology

17. Student Achievement & Student Support

17.1 Strategic Plan (Standing Item)

a. Row 4
 b. Row 6
 c. Row 7
 d. Row 11
 e. Row 13
 f. Row 14
 g. Row 17
 h. Row 19
 i. Row 21
 j. Row 24
 k. Row 25
 l. Row 28
 m. Row 29

18. Workforce

18.1 Approval of the Director of Communications and Liaison to the School Board and Superintendent Contract (Action)

Motion to approve the Director of Communications and Liaison to the School Board and Superintendent Contract by K Nelson and seconded by L Nelson. Motion carries 7-0.

19. Close School Board Meeting

19.1 Discuss Negotiations

Motion to close the Meeting to Discuss Negotiations pursuant with Minnesota statute 13D.05, subd. 3 at 6:24 pm by Barber and seconded by Brouwer. Motion carries 7-0.

Motion to reopen the Meeting at 7:30 pm by D Nelson and seconded by Brouwer. Motion carries 7-0.

19. Next School Board Meeting: School Board Regular Meeting-Monday, February 9, 2026, at 4:30 pm in the District Conference Room and via Teleconference.

20. Future Topics: PLT Updates (Ongoing), Strategic Plan Update (Ongoing), Enrollment (Ongoing), and Referendum Spending Update, Weight Room Tour, MCA Science Score Discussion, Cell Phone Usage Feedback by Building

21. Adjournment (Action)
Motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:30pm by Barber and seconded by D Nelson. Motion carries 7-0.

Respectfully submitted by
 Laura Nelson, Clerk

(Published on
 February 14, 2026)

PROBATE

STATE OF MINNESOTA
 COUNTY OF KANDIYOHI

EIGHTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT
 DISTRICT COURT
 PROBATE DIVISION

Estate of
 Randall J. Lipinski,
 Decedent

Court File No. 34-PR-26-8
NOTICE AND ORDER OF HEARING ON PETITION FOR FORMAL ADJUDICATION OF INTESTACY, DETERMINATION OF HEIRSHIP, APPOINTMENT OF PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE AND NOTICE TO CREDITORS

It is Ordered and Notice is given that on March 18, 2026 at 8:30 AM, at Kandiyohi County Courthouse located at 505 Becker Ave SW #100, Willmar, MN 56201, a hearing will be held in this Court at 505 Becker Avenue SW, Willmar, MN 56201, Minnesota, for the adjudication of intestacy and determination of heirship of the Decedent, and for the appointment of Roger M. Lipinski, whose address is 607 Donita Avenue, Marshall, Minnesota, 56258 as Personal Representative of the Estate of the Decedent in an UNSUPERVISED administration. Any objections to the petition must be filed with the Court prior to or raised at the hearing. If proper and if no objections are filed or raised, the Personal Representative will be appointed with full power to administer the Estate, including the power to collect all assets, to pay all legal debts, claims, taxes and expenses, to sell real and personal property, and to do all necessary acts for the Estate. Notice is also given that (subject to Minnesota Statutes section 524.3-801) all creditors having claims against the Estate are required to present the claims to the Personal Representative or to the Court Administrator within four months after the date of this Notice or the claims will be barred.

Dated: Feb 4, 2026 at
 3:10PM

BY THE COURT

/s/ Amy J. Doll
 Judge of District Court

Attorney for Petitioner
 Glen A. Petersen

Petersen Law Office PLLC
 225 North Tyler Street
 Tyler, Minnesota, 56178

Attorney License No: 0290506
 Telephone: (507) 247-5515
 FAX: (507) 247-5940
 Email: glenpetersen@woodstocktel.net

(Published on
 February 14 & 21, 2026)

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Mon. Feb 16	Tues. Feb 17	Wed. Feb. 18	Thur. Feb. 19	Fri. Feb. 20
Chicken & Dumplings	Chicken Broccoli Rice	Meatloaf	Diced Turkey & Gravy	Potato Crunch Fish Fillet
Green Beans	Casserole	Baked Potato	Mashed Potatoes	Mashed Sweet Potatoes
Diced Pear Cup	Sliced Carrots	Broccoli	Stuffing	Mixed Vegetables
Wheat Bread & Marg.	Gala Apple	Applesauce Cup	Whole Kernel Corn	Wheat Dinner Roll
Cheesecake Brownie	Dinner Roll	Margarine & Sour Cream	Diced Peach Cup	Margarine & Tartar
1% Milk	Margarine	Wheat Bread	Dinner Roll & Marg.	Sauce
	1% Milk	1% Milk	1% Milk	Snickerdoodle Cookie
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SPORTS



Photo by Ralph Dickerson

The NLS Dance Kick team advanced to state by placing third in the Section 2A competition Saturday at home. The Jazz team just missed out on state.

Blackcats earn state berth before home crowd at sectional

DANCE

By Bruce Strand
Sports Reporter

The payoff for all the work they've put in was earned by the Blackcats dance team of New London-Spicer on Saturday. They hosted Section 2A and qualified once again for a trip to the state meet.

"It went well. We made state in Kick for the fifth year in a row," coach Jenny Ziemer said. "Unfortunately we just missed out in Jazz getting fourth place."

St. Cloud Cathedral and Holdingford placed one-two in both High Kick and Jazz. Placing third (among 10 teams) for the last slot were NLS in Kick and Providence Academy for Jazz.

"The judges overall liked

our visual and routine effectiveness," said Ziemer about NLS's Brazilian-themed dance.

"Our music this year is super fun, and represents our Carnival theme from the streets of Brazil," said co-captain Brooklyn Behme, who will make her fifth trip to state before joining the St. Cloud State team next year.

Other teams competing were Melrose, Atwater-Cosmos-Grove City Minnewaska Area, PACT Charter, Belgrade-Broten-Elrosa/Paynesville, Litchfield and Rockford.

Ziemer was voted Section 2A Coach of the Year by the section coaches. "It is quite an honor for the team as well," said Ziemer, "a testament to their hard work and dedication."

NLS will compete at state on Saturday at Target Center, in a session from 11:30 a.m. to

1 p.m.

High-kick is one of the most grueling activities in prep sports. NLS's routine entails 44 high kicks that must be in unison with everyone else's in a space of two minutes and 43 seconds. Asked what goes into developing that level of endurance and artistry, Behme explained:

"Our team puts in three hours after school working on conditioning, stretching, and going over the counts of the music so we can be as in sync as possible. There is so much work put in behind the scenes to look effortless on the floor."

The choreography is developed a week before the start of practices by the senior captains — herself, Ava Baker, Olivia Paffrath, Jaelyn Renstrom, and Morgan Thein — along with the Leadership team of Caylee Leindecker, Sophia Schammel, and

"our amazing coaches" Jenny Ziemer and Alexa Vallejo.

The rest of the state-bound lineup are juniors Caylee Leindecker, Madeline Leindecker, Sophia Schammel, Brook Glauvitz, and Delilah Larsen; sophomores Zoe O'Brien, Taylor Rutgers, Emma Shea, Bristol Egge (who's injured and an alternate); freshmen Ella Schammel and Claire Lesteberg; eighth-grader Brenna Swanson; and seventh-graders Dasha Hand, Grace Toutges, and Etta Lee.

The girls were elated to perform before the home crowd in their biggest event of the year.

"It is so helpful to look in the crowd and see the people who have supported your dance career for years," Behme said. "It gives you an extra push to dance better and remember why you are still doing what you love."



Photo by Ralph Dickerson

Averie Turner, pictured on Senior night against Howard Lake Waverly Winsted, placed sixth in the floor exercise with a score of 8.525. She also placed third in the bars and second in the vault.

NLS gymnasts win dual finale; sectional Saturday

GYMNASTICS

By Bruce Strand
Sports Reporter

New London-Spicer closed the regular season with a win that put them above .500 at 4-3 on Thursday, racking up 133.475 points to beat Howard Lake-Waverly-Winsted/Holy Trinity's 124.175.

Next for NLS is the section meet at Willmar on Saturday.

Rylie Harrier, NLS senior, sparkled with a career

best 35.575 points to win all-around along with first places in vault and balance beam and second in the other two events.

Rylie just has been cleaning up her routines and working on her execution," coach Cindy Jacobson said. "She has put the work in and it is finally showing up with her scores. She is starting to peak and this is the perfect time, right before sections."

Delaney Barber won floor exercise with the high score of the meet for the second straight meet, a personal best 9.45.

"Delany has really been

hitting her floor routines," Jacobson said. "She has upgraded her first pass with a front full and has also really worked on her landings, getting rid of her extra steps from her jumps and leaps."

Delaney Baeth got her personal best score on the floor, 8.75, for third place. "She worked hard and got her full back in her routine," said the coach.

Averie Turner placed third all-around and was second on vault.

NLS 133.475, HLWW/HT 124.175

All-around — (1) Rylie

Harrier, NLS, 35.575 (2) Lilian Loge, H, 33.225 (3) Averie Turner, NLS, 32.575 (4) Madison Buehler, H, 31.40

Vault — (1) Harrier 9.025 (2) Turner 8.70 (3) Reese Baeth, NLS, 8.675 (4) Delany Barber, NLS, 8.65

Uneven bars — (1) Loge 9.075 (2) Harrier 8.35 (3) Turner 7.40 (4) R. Baeth 7.30

Balance beam — (1) Harrier 8.90 (2) Buehler 8.30 (3) Cooper Eastlack, H, 7.85 (4) Turner 7.85 (5) R. Baeth 7.6

Floor exercise — (1) Barber 9.45 (2) Harrier 9.30 (3) Delaney Baeth, NLS, 8.75 (4) Neve Kuznia, H, 8.55 (5) Loge 8.55 (6) Turner 8.525.



Photo submitted by Mandy Eckerman

Pictured in an earlier season game, the Stars celebrate a goal. The Stars lost three straight as the season closes.

Stars boys drop 3 games

BOYS HOCKEY

By Bruce Strand
Sports Reporter

River Lakes boys hockey co-op has lost three straight games heading into the regular season finale. The Stars lost to St. Cloud Cathedral on Thursday with Isaac Blaschko

and Jake Mackedanz scoring. They lost to Pine City 5-3 on Saturday with Eli McLellan, Calan Heying and Mackedanz scoring. They lost to Sauk Rapids-Rice 5-2 Tuesday with Logan Jones and Park Welz getting the goals. The Stars hosted Breckenridge/Wahpton on Friday to close the regular season. They will start sectionals on Tuesday.



Photo submitted by Marsha Meed

Addie Olson #2, plays defense against a Litchfield/Dassel-Cokato player in the Star's 3-1 win at home last Thursday.

Stars girls ousted in 2nd round of section

GIRLS HOCKEY

By Bruce Strand
Sports Reporter

The season ended for the River Lakes girls hockey team in the second round of sectionals last week. The Stars had 14-11 record.

River Lakes defeated Litchfield/Dassel-Cokato 3-1

on Thursday at home in Richmond. Sophie Olson, Peyton Roeske and Gretchen Wimmer had the goals, the latter two on power plays, as the Stars outshot LDC 42-15.

Minnesota River ousted the Stars 4-1 on Saturday on their rink in LeSueur. Abby Storms netted the lone goal, short-handed. Sparking Minnesota River was Macey Portner with two goals and an assist. They outshot the Stars 34-18.

UPCOMING VARSITY MEETS

- Saturday, Feb. 14**
- Basketball, girls — NLS at Minnewaska Area, 12:30 p.m.
 - Gymnastics — NLS at section meet, Willmar, noon.
 - Wrestling — NLS (if they win Thursday) Section 3AA semifinals vs Marshall or Hutchinson at Fairmont, 12:30 p.m.
- Monday, Feb. 16**
- Basketball, boys — NLS vs. Rockford Area, 7 p.m.
- Tuesday, Feb. 17**
- Basketball, boys — NLS vs. Minnewaska Area, 7 p.m.
 - Hockey, boys — River Lakes vs. TBA, section tournament.
- Thursday, Feb. 19**
- Basketball, boys — NLS vs Norwood Young America, 7 p.m.
- Friday, Feb. 20**
- Basketball, girls — NLS vs TBD, section.
 - Wrestling — NLS at section individuals, Hutchinson, 5 p.m.
- Saturday, Feb. 21**
- Hockey, boys — Stars at boys varsity section, TBA.
 - Wrestling — Varsity and JV individual section at Hutchinson High School, 10 a.m.

Sauk Centre shoots down NLS bid for unbeaten season

GIRLS BASKETBALL

By Bruce Strand
Sports Reporter

New London-Spicer's bid for an unbeaten regular season was derailed by Sauk Centre on Saturday. With a barrage of three-point shots, the Mainstreeters tripped the Wildcats 69-63 in the Winter Lakes Classic at Alexandria.

"It's been a really good season, but you get a little greedy. That was a very disappointing game," said coach Mike Dreier. "Sauk Centre shot very well. They were really hot. And we did not play very good defense. We were not getting out on their shooters."

NLS is 23-1 after beating Glencoe-Silver Lake 65-39 on Friday and New Ulm 85-36 on Tuesday, both at home. The coaches top-ten poll dropped Wildcats from third to sixth even though they still have the best record in Class 2A.

The victory over GSL capped a 14-0 season in the Wright County West and extended their conference streak to 58 games.

Another big plus this season is absence of injuries, especially after last year when their best player, Dakota Rich, was in and out with a troubled shoulder.

"So far, yes," said Dreier. "We've had a few injuries but nothing serious."

Two games remain in the regular season. NLS hosted Eden Valley-Watkins on Friday night and will play at their top section rival, Minnewaska Area (18-5) Saturday at 1 p.m.

NLS 65, G-SL 39

The six-footers led this win as

Korbin Tanner laid in 18 points and grabbed eight rebounds while Roxanne Klein logged 14 points and 10 rebounds. NLS held the Panthers (9-13) to 15 field goals. Brooke Mickolichcek had 14 points for Glencoe-Silver Lake.

Glencoe-Silver Lake statistics — 15-55 FG (4-21 FT), 5-6 FT, 30



Roxanne Klein, shooting a free throw, scored 14 points and snagged 10 boards as NLS pounded Glencoe-Silver Lake 65-39 at home. Klein also blocked four shots and made a steal.

Photo by Ralph Dickerson

rebounds, 19 turnovers, 15 fouls **Scoring leaders:** Brooke Mickolichcek 14, Abigail Schauer 11.

New London-Spicer statistics — 23-56 FG (5-20 3FG), 14-23 FT, 36 rebounds, 13 turnovers, 6 fouls ... **Scoring:** Taylor Munsch 8 (4r, 4a, 2s), Ayla Caskey 7 (3a, 2s), Kyla Vick 3 (2r, 2a), Ezri Boelter 3 (4r, 5a, 4s), Paycen Rutgers

4 (3s, 1a), Korbin Tanner 18 (8r, 2s, 1b, 1a), Katelyn Delzer 4 (6r, 1s), Harper Olness 2, Addison Peltier 2, Roxanne Klein 14 (10r, 4b, 1s), Brooke Barney 0 (1a), Sydney Thorstad 0 (1r) ... **3-pointers:** Munsch 2, Caskey 1, Vick 1, Boelter 1. **Halftime:** NLS 32, GSL 22.

Sauk Centre 69, NLS 63

ous high 61). Their ball-handling was solid as NLS's 11 steals was the least they've had.

For the Wildcats, Korbin Tanner notched 19 points and seven rebounds, Taylor Munsch 14 points, five assists and four steals, and Ayla Caskey 10 points and four assists.

Sauk Centre statistics 24-47 FG

FT, 34 rebounds, 12 turnovers, 11 fouls... **Scoring:** Taylor Munsch 14 (6r, 5a, 4s), Ayla Caskey 10 (5r, 4a, 1s, 2b), Paycen Rutgers 19 (3r, 2a, 1b), Korbin Tanner 19 (7r, 3s, 1b), Katelyn Delzer 5 (10r, 2s), Roxanne Klein 5 (2r, 1b), Kyla Vick 0 (1a), Ezri Boelter 0 (1r, 3a, 1s) ... **3-pointers:** Munsch 2, Caskey 1, Rutgers 2. **Halftime:** NLS 36, Sauk Centre 36.

NLS 85, New Ulm 36

One year ago, New Ulm handed NLS its lone regular season loss in overtime. The Eagles are pretty good again (15-7) but no match for the Wildcats this time. NLS sank 13 three-pointers, made 19 steals and dominated rebounds 47-17. Ayla Caskey logged 16 points and seven assists, Korbin Tanner 14 points and Taylor Munsch 12 points, and Roxanne Klein eight points and 10 rebounds. Twelve players scored.

New Ulm statistics — 16-47 FG (2-13 3FG), 2-7 FT, 17 rebounds, 22 turnovers, 12 fouls ... **Scoring leaders:** Riley Wilson 8, Brooklyn Lewis 10.

New London-Spicer statistics — 33-72 FG (13-33 3FG), 6-10 FT, 47 rebounds, 14 turnovers, 11 fouls ... **Scoring:** Brooke Barney 3 (4r, 1s), Taylor Munsch 12 (8r, 2a), Ayla Caskey 16 (6r, 7a, 4s), Kyla Vick 7 (2a, 1s), Sydney Thorstad 2 (1a, 2s), Ezri Boelter 6 (3r, 1a), Sydney Peltier 3 (1s), Paycen Rutgers 6 (2a, 2r, 4s), Korbin Tanner 14 (6r, 1b, 1s, 1a), Katelyn Delzer 6 (8r, 2a, 4s), Harper Olness 2, Roxanne Klein 8 (10r, 1a, 1s) ... **3-pointers:** Caskey 4, Munsch 2, Boelter 2, Rutgers 2, Barney 1, Vick 1, Peltier 1. **Halftime:** NLS 47, New Ulm 24.

*Box score key: r, rebounds; a, assists; s, steals; b, blocks.

NLS beats Rockford, loses to GSL, Lakers

BOYS BASKETBALL

By Bruce Strand
Sports Reporter

New London-Spicer generated a 50-point half in two straight games, in which they lost to Glencoe-Silver Lake 79-77 on Friday and beat Rockford 85-65 on Monday. Then Howard Lake-Waverly-Winsted cooled off the Wildcat 59-49 on Tuesday. NLS is 9-12 overall and 6-8 in the conference.

G-SL 79, NLS 77

Down 36-24 at halftime, the Wildcats erupted for 53 points in the second half but could not quite overtake the Panthers. "The Wildcats played an exceptional second half and we did just enough to hang on," said GSL coach Robert DeCorsey. Grant Henjum tallied 17 points, Zach Lageson 14, Ethan Nelson 12, Gavin Vick 10 and Loudon Johnson 9 for NLS, which was 20-for-27 at the line and out rebounded GSL 37-31. Ethan Sonju led GSL (15-6) with 29 points and Lincoln Busse with 17.

New London-Spicer statistics — 26-69 FG, 5-19 3FG, 20-27 FT, 37 rebounds, 15 turnovers, 18 fouls ... **Scoring:** Grant Henjum 17 (6r,

1s, 2b), Loudon Johnson 9 (4r, 4s), Zach Lageson 14 (7r, 3s), Ethan Nelson 12 (5r), Beckett Newman 6 (2r, 1s), Boden Spears 7 (4r, 1s), Griffin Thompson 2 (3r), Gavin Vick 10 (3r, 1s), Liam Macik 0 (1r), Kaden Shimek 0 (2r) ... **3-pointers:** Lageson 2, Nelson 2, Henjum 1.

Glencoe-Silver Lake statistics — 32-64 FG (5-13 3FG), 10-20 FT, 31 rebounds, 13 turnovers, 21 fouls ... **Scoring leaders:** Ethan Sonju 29, Lincoln Busse 17, Trevor Engelmann 15, Tyler Engelman 10. **Halftime:** GSL 36, NLS 24.

NLS 85, Rockford 65

NLS led 35-26 at the break and poured it on with 50 points in the second half, achieving their highest total of the season despite making just one three-pointer. The Wildcats cashed a season high 22 free shots in 27 attempts and shot 30-for-49 on two-pointers. Grant Henjum led with 19 points, shooting 8-for-11. Zach Lageson added 16 points, Loudon Johnson 15, Ethan Nelson 13, Griffin Thompson nine and Gavin Vick eight. On free shots, Thompson was 5-for-6, Vick 4-for-4, Nelson 3-for-3 and Henjum 3-for-4. Rockford (10-10) was led by Mason Mooney with 18 and Ethan Robran with 16.

Rockford statistics — 24-57 FG (5-24 3FG), 12-23 FT, 26 rebounds, 21 turnovers, 23 fouls ... **Scoring**



Photo by Ralph Dickerson

The NLS bench erupts during the game against Glencoe-Silver Lake. After trailing the Panthers by 12 at the half, NLS mounted a furious rally and closed to within one point with less than 15 seconds to go in the game. In possession of the ball, NLS turned it over, which allowed GLS to pull out the win.

leaders: Ethan Robran 16, Mason Mooney 18, McLellan 10, Miller 10.

New London-Spicer statistics — 31-60 FG (1-11 3FG), 22-27 FT, 29 rebounds, 14 turnovers, 18 fouls ... **Scoring:** Grant Henjum 19 (7r, 4a, 1b, 2s), Loudon Johnson 15 (3r, 2a, 3s), Zach Lageson 16 (1r, 4a, 3s), Liam Macik 0 (3r, 2a, 1s, 1b), Ethan Nelson 13 (4r, 4s), Kaden Shimek 3 (1r, 1a, 1s), Boden Spears 0 (3r, 1a, 1s), Griffin Thompson 9 (2r), Gavin Vick 8 (5r, 1s), Deagan Lindahl 2 ... **3-pointers:** Shimek 1.

Halftime: NLS 35, Rockford 26.

HLWW 59, NLS 49

After two high-scoring games, NLS made just 19 field goals against Howard Lake-Waverly-Winsted. Top scorers were Zach Larson and Boden Spears with nine points each and Ethan Nelson with eight. (Grant Henjum tweaked his ankle early and didn't score.) Leading the Lakers (11-8) were Alex Steuven with 17

points and Hunter Bush with 15.

New London-Spicer statistics — 19-54 FG (3-11 3FG), 8-12 FT, 27 rebounds, 11 turnovers, 23 fouls ... **Scoring:** Loudon Johnson 2 (3r, 2s), Zach Lageson 9 (1r, 1s), Liam Macik 2 (4r, 1s, 1b), Ethan Nelson 8 (5r), Kaden Shimek 4 (5r, 1s), Boden Spears 9 (3r), Griffin Thompson 2 (1r, 1s), Gavin Vick 9 (1s, 2r),

Brecken Westby 4 (3r) ... **3-pointers:** Lageson 1, Shimek 1, Vick 1.

Howard Lake-Waverly-Winsted statistics — 21-52 FG (4-19 3FG) 13-21 FT, 38 rebounds, 20 turnovers, 11 fouls ... **Scoring leaders:** Alex Steuven 17, Hunter Bush 15, Broden Niesen 10. **Halftime:** HLWW 30, NLS 22.

*Box score key: r, rebounds; a, assists; s, steals; b, blocks.

NLS second at Albany tourney; enter playoffs

WRESTLING

By Bruce Strand
Sports Reporter

In their regular season finale, New London-Spicer wrestlers placed second in Albany's Purple Pride Invitational on Friday.

Matthew Gehrke was champion at 215 pounds, heading a list of 12 Wildcats with podium finishes. Gehrke beat Zimmerman's Nathaniel Belair 10-6 in the finals.

The top three teams among nine were Paynesville with

201.5 pots, NLS 172.5 and Zimmerman 150.

Reaching the finals and placing second were Kellon Hanson at 121 pounds, Andrew Sandau at 127, Caleb Nelson at 172, and Garret Leenstra at 285.

Placing third were Jeremiah Nelson at 145, Ryan Plumley Champagne third at 160. Also placing were Joshua Lucas, fourth at 139; Jack Tuschen, fifth at 114; Luke Hannig, fifth at 189; Connor Hauptli-Pomplun, sixth at 133; and Alexander Meis, sixth at 152.

The Wildcats, 11-10 in duals, started Section 3AA on Thursday in Fairmont tak-

ing on Dawson-Boyd/Lac qui Parle Valley/Montevideo. The winner advances to semifinals Saturday, 12:30 p.m., probably against top-seeded Marshall.

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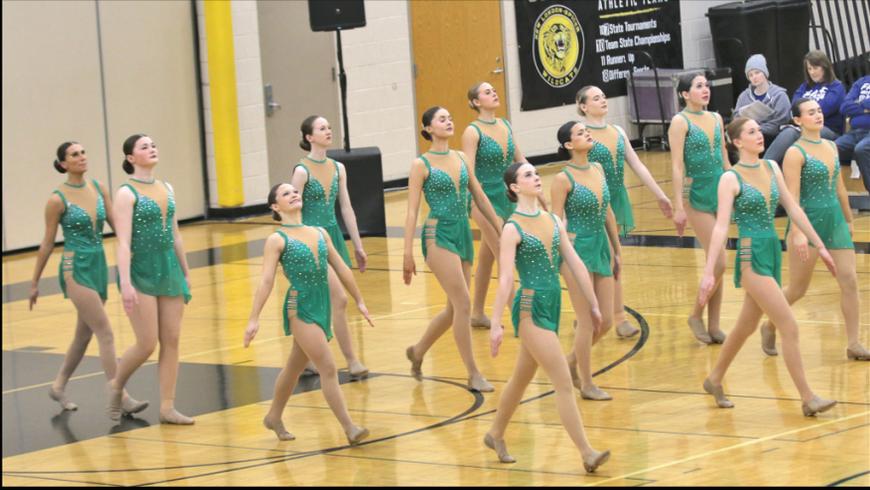
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