

Lakes Area Review

SATURDAY, MARCH 14, 2026

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VOL. 139, NO. 11

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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 March 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 Dethlef 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.

Blood Drive
SPICER – The American Red Cross hosts a blood drive at the Spicer American Legion on Tuesday, March 17, starting at noon. To register, call 1-800-733-2767 or visit RedCrossBlood.org/Spicer to schedule an appointment. The American Legion is located at 155 Lake Avenue South, across from Zorbaz.

Whose Tracks are These?
NEW LONDON – On March 21 Sibley State Park in New London hosts a class called "Whose Tracks are These?" starting at 10 a.m. Participants meet in the classroom at the Interpretive Center. Activities for the day include making clay casts of animal tracks and exploring the unique qualities of each animal by examining its fur, skull and feet. For more information, contact Savannah Stephenson at 320.470.9588 or email savannah.stephenson@state.mn.us. The park is located at 800 Sibley Park Road NE.

We Fest Karaoke
SPICER – Each Friday in March the Spicer American Legion hosts a We Fest Karaoke Contest, starting at 8 p.m., with the contest finals on April 10. The grand prize is two general admission tickets to the We Fest music series and a chance to sing the national anthem on the main stage at We Fest. The legion is located at 155 Lake Avenue South.

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Teal's
Inserts may cover all or some of the total Review circulation as requested by the business placing the insert.

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Photo by Shannon Urban

Marv Calvin, interim director of Kandiyohi County Economic Development, stated that downtown Willmar businesses are seeing decreases as high as 70% in business recently.

Divides vs Dollars: economic uncertainty ripples through Kandiyohi County Businesses brace for impact in the aftermath of immigration enforcement

**By Shannon Urban
Staff Writer**
For many businesses in Kandiyohi County, the past few months have brought an uneasy sense that something has shifted — and that the full consequences may still be ahead.
When the League of Women Voters of the Willmar Area opened the March Hot Topics forum, the conversation was framed simply: "We

have business before ICE and we have business after ICE. There's always a before and after in all of our lives."
Guest speakers described a local economy navigating uncertainty following recent immigration enforcement activity. While the long-term effects remain unclear, business leaders have revealed how closely connected the community's economic fortunes really are.
James Miller, President

of the Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce since 2023, and Marv Calvin, former Willmar mayor now serving as interim director of the Kandiyohi County Economic Development Commission (EDC) — spent the next hour laying out the scope of what immigration enforcement has meant for a community that built its economy, in part, on its immigrant workforce and customer base.

What's yet to come
Miller told the audience that while the most visible events may have already passed, the economic consequences are only beginning to surface. He was direct in cautioning the audience against expecting a quick accounting of the damage. "In all reality, we've yet to see the true impact of what has happened over the last two months," he said. "We're still going to be

seeing it, probably for the next four to six months."
He cited early data from metro-focused research groups tracking revenue through January and February, noting reports of close to \$200 million in economic impact from immigration enforcement statewide. Greater Minnesota, he said, faces a comparable hit

Divides vs Dollars
Continued on page 7

County advances Hwy. 40 industrial access project, closes out Edwards Township bridge project

**By Ralph Dickerson
Editor**
The Kandiyohi County Board of Commissioners approved a detour agreement with the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) for the Hwy. 40 turn lane project near the Kandiyohi County Industrial Park in Willmar, slated to start construction this summer. The turn lane project on Hwy. 40 continues the effort to improve traffic safety in the Willmar area, and help promote growth in the industrial park, by separating rail and vehicular traffic to eliminate dangerous intersections, and to help traffic flow more smoothly.
Odens said the turn lane project "plays into the hand of expanding the industrial park to eliminate the conflict between train and semi."
The Hwy. 40 turn lane project takes place at approximately the same time as the construction of the \$9 million bridge project over County Road 55 to eliminate a rail crossing.
Odens called the detour agreement a "common process." The agreement allows MnDOT, for a fee, to use county roads for a detour during the

Hwy. 40 turn lane construction project. MnDOT agrees to pay the county \$2,362.68 for the wear and tear on the county roads during the detour phase.
"What they're going to be doing is closing Highway 40 beginning in July, and hopefully completing it in August," said Odens. "They will take Highway 40 traffic north up to Highway 12, east over to our County Road 5, and then southerly...back down to Highway 23 or 15, or wherever they so choose to go."
According to the MnDOT website, the project costs an estimated \$900,000, and the city of Willmar received a Transportation Economic Development grant to help fund the project. The county involvement in the project consists of agreeing to the detour with MnDOT.
Commissioner Corky Berg expressed concern about traffic congestion in that part of Willmar during the construction of both the bridge over County Road 55 and the turning lane on Highway 40. Odens agreed.
"There's some consternation

Hwy. 40 project
Continued on page 6



Photo by Shannon Urban

The Sunburg Fire Department is fundraising to update their 1981 tanker truck. From left to right: Nate Ruka, Mike Urban (Assistant Chief), and Darin Pierce (Chief).

From fields to fire calls Sunburg Fire Department races to replace an aging truck that's running on farmer ingenuity and borrowed time

**By Shannon Urban
Staff Writer**
"The shifter broke off during our last call."
That's not a metaphor for the challenges facing the Sunburg Fire Department. It's a literal account of what happened the last time their aging tanker truck rolled out to answer an emergency. The truck made it. It does, because Sunburg's firefighters are the kind of people who weld things back together in the shop and call it fixed. But everyone involved knows that fix has a time limit.
Then Sunburg Fire Chief Darin Pierce added, "And the tank leaks."

That's the short version of the case for replacing the department's 1981 tanker truck — a vehicle so old and so difficult to operate that it has become a liability in the moments that matter most. The Sunburg Fire Department is now raising funds for a new tanker-pumper combination truck at a cost of approximately \$150,000, and they're asking the communities they help serve — and protect — for help.
A machine that fights back
Ask firefighter Nate Ruka what it's like

From fields to fire calls
Continued on page 7

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ARTS & CULTURE



Photos by Shannon Urban

NL-S presents Gods of Comedy

Ken Ludwig's Gods of Comedy is a fast-paced farce built on mistaken identities, academic ambition and the unexpected arrival of Greek gods in the modern world. From the opening scenes, audiences were faced with rapid-fire dialogue, exaggerated reactions, and playful chaos. Top: Jason Warner played the god Dionysus and Autumn Foshaug played Daphne. Middle left: Autumn Foshaug as Daphne in a panic. Middle Right: Warner and Autumn Tortorella, who played the goddess Thalia were larger than life characters. Bottom: Carter Foshaug, who played Aristide.



Photo submitted

Duelly Noted

On March 7 the duo Duelly Noted entertained the crowd at the Performing Arts Center in New London. The group formed in 2015, and their act consists of song requests from the audience. It also features crowd participation and audience interaction.



Photo submitted

NLS band students get all "Superior" ratings at Region 5A Instrumental Solo/Ensemble Contest

11 NLS High School Band Students participated in either a solo or ensemble performance: Camden Arndt, Axel Eichhorst, *Abby Hjelle, Jett Hoffman, Caleb Kulset, Garret Leenstra, Jaden Peterson, *Cayson Plowman, *Ethan Wenke, Quinn Wenke, *Nora Westby (*students who participated in multiple performances).

Students selected their music in January and have been working individually or in small groups to prepare for this performance

All 6 events that NLS participated in earned Superior ratings (Superior is the highest rating for this contest):

Woodwind Ensemble: Nora, Quinn, Abby, Cayson, Ethan

Brass Ensemble: Jaden, Jett, Abby, Caleb, Garret

Saxophone Quartet: Camden, Axel, Cayson, Ethan

Flute Solo: Nora

Trombone Solo: Abby

Tenor Sax Solo: Cayson

Other schools participants this year included EVW, BBE, Kimball, St. John's Prep, ACGC, Paynesville, Litchfield, and St. Cloud Christian School.

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NLS Speech team gets 3rd at Wright County Conference

The NLS Speech team hosted the Wright County Conference speech meet, earning 3rd place overall as a team. 1st place: Harper Hoffman in Humorous & Nora Westby in Informative. 2nd place: Addie Buboltz in Original oratory. 3rd place: Autumn Tortorella in Informative & Stella Nordin in Original oratory. 4th place: Jason Warner in Storytelling & Olivia Westby in Extemporaneous reading. 5th place: Pailina Pentchev in Informative. 7th place Adres Rojas in Extemporaneous speaking. 8th place: Autumn and Carter Foshaug in Duo. Finalists: Ja'Kiah Hawkins in Discussion & Ava Barber and Ellen Swenson in Duo.

NLS announces winners of the Artist Showcase Award



Evie Simpson

Title: Monarch Butterfly
Medium: Colored Pencils

Description: The Monarch butterfly lives in the Americas. After about 10-14 days of eating, the butterfly larvae form a chrysalis. When it hatches, the bright orange markings ward off predators. It migrates thousands of miles every fall. Due to its life cycle, the monarch is associated with transformation and growth!



Lillian Saari

Title: Swallowtail
Medium: Colored Pencils

Description: The Swallowtail is the type of butterfly I decided to reference for this project because I liked the markings. This butterfly is commonly distinguished by the markings along the edges of the wings.



Autumn Foshaug

Title: Orchid Mantis
Medium: Colored Pencils

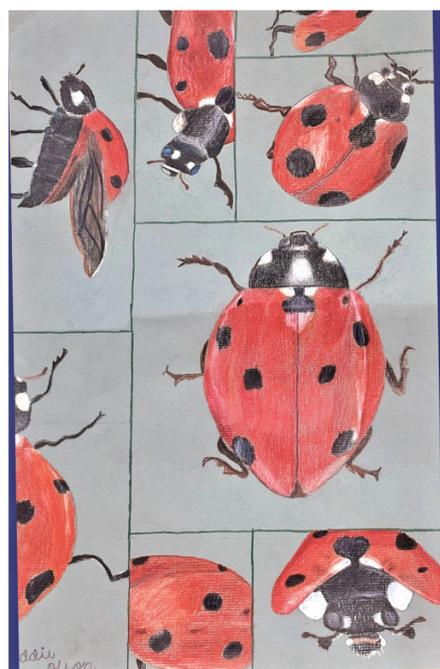
Description: The Orchid Mantis is from Southeast Asia, It's known for mimicking an orchid flower to ambush prey. When choosing a bug for this drawing, I immediately knew I wanted to do this!



Kiearah Teeuwen

Title: Lunar Moth
Medium: Colored Pencils

Description: The Lunar Moth is a striking sight in the night, with pale green wings and long flowing tails. It is a nocturnal creature that symbolizes beauty and transformation. They have a short life, making them enchanting to see.



Adeline Olson

Title: Ladybug collection
Medium: Colored Pencils

Description: This piece of artwork shows ladybugs drawn from different angles and positions. A ladybug is a small, round beetle with bright red or orange wing covers, usually marked with black spots. It has six legs, antennae, and hidden wings under its protective outer shell.

This group of young artists has demonstrated excellence in Visual Art completing recent assignments in their high school art classes.

For their most recent assignment they were to "dissect" an insect into a variety of images with multiple viewpoints. They were to study the Cubist painter Pablo Picasso and the insect they each chose.

NLS high school art students also recently finished a collaboration project with the elementary school by partnering with kindergartners to make art.



Photos by Ralph Dickerson

We Fest Karaoke Contest

The Spicer Legion kicked off it's first rounds of the contest starting on March 6th. Finalists from each round will move on to the final night, held on April 10th.

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SPICER AMERICAN LEGION POST 545

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CIVIC NEWS

State and local partnership launches study to test young children for exposure to harmful chemicals

By Ralph Dickerson
Editor

Kandiyohi County Public Health Manager Jody Ammerman approached the county board with a proposal for the county to join a study by the Minnesota Department of Health's Healthy Kids Minnesota program to examine the level of chemical exposure affecting children with the potential to affect development. The Minnesota Department of Health pays for the study, not to exceed \$13,954.53, and requires a joint powers agreement for the county to join the study. The board approved Ammerman's recommendation to sign the joint powers agreement.

"The Minnesota Department of Health reached out to the school districts in our region, so not only our county, the other counties in the region, and the school districts will have a separate joint powers agreement," said Ammerman. "Each year they will do a rural and then an urban

area. So, I believe they're going to be in northern Minnesota and then our South Central region for this year."

Ammerman said Healthy Kids Minnesota hopes to study up to 300 kids in this region this year. The study consists of a urine test conducted by the parent during the twice-monthly Early Childhood Screening conducted twice a month in the Willmar School District.

"They will send out a letter to the parents ahead of time informing them of this program," said Ammerman. "...The parent will actually take the child and privately into the bathroom and get the urine sample...Once the parent and the child leave the restroom, then the nurse will gather the sample."

Healthy Kids Minnesota conducts the screening on a voluntary basis. No child needs to undergo the screening as a requirement for the Early Childhood Screening process.

"The whole idea is to be testing for

chemicals in the environment that might delay (or) adversely affect early childhood development," said Ammerman. "They do get a \$40 gift card for participating in the program, and then a free well test (kit)."

Healthy Kids Minnesota intends to release the overall results of the testing in roughly one year. Ammerman said if a child's urine test shows the presence of chemicals that adversely affect childhood development, the organization intends to notify the parents of the results immediately in stead of waiting one year.

"They contact the parents right away and do some education and find out what is in their environment that would be causing these high results," said Ammerman.

The county's public health agency simply sponsors the study via a partnership with Healthy Kids Minnesota. Healthy Kids Minnesota hopes for a 60% to 70% participation rate in the study.

Glacial Lake Trail extension moves forward with easement progress

By Shannon Urban
Staff Writer

Planning for the Glacier Lake Trail extension along County Road 9 is advancing, with City Clerk-Treasurer Emily Thielen reporting verbal easement agreements from two area businesses as the project moves toward formal paperwork. The update was provided at the March 4 New London City Council meeting.

Thielen reported that City Administrator Jen Dahl had met with City Engineer Chuck DeWorlf and several Minnesota DNR staff to discuss both the trail extension route and the movement of utilities along County Road 9. Two businesses have verbally agreed to grant utility easements, and engineering firm Bolton & Menk will draft the formal easement documents.

What the Extension Is — and Where It Goes

The Glacier Lake Trail extension is tied to infrastructure changes required by the new Highway 9/40 bypass, which includes a roundabout and extended lanes in that corridor. The trail work is part of ensuring safe and continuous non-motorized access through the affected area.

Mayor John Dahl clarified at the meeting that this project is a trail extension along the Highway 9/40 corridor — distinct from a separate, longer-

discussed connection between Sibley State Park's trail system and the New London trail network, which would run from the corner of Highways 71 and 40. That connection remains a separate conversation.

"That's not an extension — that's a connection from the Sibley's Trail to the New London one," Dahl said. "The extension is for the Highway 9/40 corridor, which needed to be done because of the roundabout and extended lanes."

Easements: A Key Hurdle

Securing easements from private property owners and businesses is typically one of the most time-intensive parts of trail development, making the verbal agreements with two businesses a meaningful step forward. Bolton & Menk's work to formalize those agreements will be necessary before construction planning can proceed in earnest.

No timeline for construction has been announced yet, as the easement process and utility relocation work must be finalized first. The council did not indicate any opposition to the project's direction, and the update was received without further discussion.

Further updates are expected at upcoming council meetings as the easement documents are completed and utility relocation planning advances.

New London to upgrade city water meters this summer

By Shannon Urban
Staff Writer

New London residents can expect a city-wide water meter replacement project to begin this summer, with work anticipated to run from May or June through September or October, according to city staff. The upgrade, discussed at the March 4 city council meeting, will modernize the aging meter system and bring new digital tools for both the city and its water customers.

City Clerk-Treasurer Emily Thielen told the council that city engineer Chuck DeWolf has been working with city staff to develop a bid process, and that he will present further details at the March 18 council meeting. The goal is to have all work completed before winter. "Yeah, he was hoping to have it done before winter," Thielen said. "It's not a fun project to do in the cold."

What's changing — and why

The current meter system has been described as obsolete, making the upgrade a practical necessity rather than simply a convenience. The new meters are expected to significantly streamline the city's billing process and give staff faster, more accurate visibility into water usage across town.

Mayor John Dahl described one of the key benefits: the ability for city staff to detect unusual water usage far more quickly than is currently possible. "The city will know faster when there's a spike in usage,"

Dahl said. "If nothing else, Pam will get a reading stating that, 'Hey, you used 3,000 gallons over the weekend — there might be a problem,' and we'll be able to get a hold of you faster."

That kind of early alert could help residents catch leaks before they become major expenses — an issue that has been a challenge in the region. The city of Spicer, for example, dealt with significant unaccounted-for water loss over a period of years, and has recently had to replace meters, as well.

An optional app

Beyond the core meter replacement, the council discussed an optional smartphone app that residents could use to monitor their own water usage in real time and receive alerts directly on their phones. Dahl noted the app would function similarly to tools already used in conjunction with Kandiyohi Power.

Council members raised the question of whether historical billing data would carry over into the new system — something that could matter to residents who use annual water usage figures for tax purposes, such as those working from home. Dahl said that question would need to be answered before the project moves forward, noting it would be important not to lose that analytical history.

Dual meters: a cost for some homeowners

For residents who currently have two

water meters — one measuring total usage and a second tracking water used for irrigation or other outdoor purposes not subject to sewer charges — both meters will need to be replaced. The secondary meter, which is installed at the homeowner's request and used to reduce sewer billing for non-draining water uses, is the homeowner's financial responsibility.

Mayor Dahl confirmed the replacement cost for the second meter falls to the homeowner, as that meter is installed at the resident's choice for their own billing benefit.

A regional problem worth watching

The meter replacement comes against the backdrop of a broader water loss issue that both New London and neighboring Spicer have been trying to track. Recent data showed New London's percentage of unaccounted-for water loss briefly exceeded Spicer's — a reversal that caught the council's attention.

Council member Tony Schaefer noted the data fluctuates considerably from month to month, suggesting meter calibration issues rather than a true large-scale leak. "If it's a leak, why is it fluctuating so much? It doesn't go from super high to low — that's not a leak. That's usually a different issue."

The March 18 council meeting, where engineer Chuck DeWolf is expected to present the bid plan in full, will be an important next step for the project. The meeting is open to the public.

Spicer council approves purchase of new backup generator to operate sewer lift stations during power outages

By Ralph Dickerson
Editor

The city of Spicer approved the purchase of a mobile generator from Freetly Electric Inc. in Kerkhoven to power the city's lift stations during a power outage. The generator costs \$53,195.

"Anytime we get a storm, we're the last one to receive the electricity back," said Spicer Public Works Supervisor Chad Lien. "Instead of hiring a

company to come in and keep vacuuming out our lift stations, now we can just run it to the end lift station."

Lien said the generator provides the power to the lift station, and keeps the sewage moving during an outage. He said some power outages last up to 10 hours.

Lien said both three-phase and single-phase connections exist on the lift stations. Lien said this generator possesses

the connections for both types, which prevents crews from accidentally hooking a three-phase to a single-phase, and vice-versa. Both types utilize 240V connectors.

The city intends to pay for the generator out of its Local Option Sales Tax fund. Lien then told the council that crews found a water leak and contacted Crow River Construction to fix the leak. It cost the city \$4,900 for the repair. Lien said the city needed to spend an additional \$1,800 for restoration of the ground over the break.

Lien also discussed the purchase of holiday decorations for the city, brought before the council by the city's beautification committee. Lien said left-over money exists in the city's capital improvement fund budget from last year, which allows the city to use that funding to purchase the decorations.

Then Jen Beckler, the city's administrator, gave the council an update. She said the city received three applications for the vacant council position, and intends to present the applications for the council to consider at the March 17 meeting.

Beckler also said the build-

ing lease for Edward Jones in the old city building at the corner of Manitoba Street and Second Ave. expired. She said the city renewed the lease for five more years, but increased the rent \$50 to \$950 per month, and also updated the property taxes paid by the tenants.

Beckler said prior to this year, they paid property taxes based on the 2012 valuation of the building. The city updated the taxes to the 2025 property tax valuation.

Beckler said local law enforcement contacted the city about locating a license plate reader camera on a utility pole at the intersection on Hwy. 23 by Mel's. The funds to operate it come from the county, not the city.

"It's a live camera that, I think, that just sits on the desk at the law enforcement center and kind of pings it and grabs a drive-by (photo)," said Beckler. The camera possesses several public safety benefits, according to Beckler. It helps law enforcement locate a vehicle linked to a crime, helps locate stolen vehicles, and helps to find missing or endangered persons by help law enforcement locate their vehicle.

Beckler also informed the council of the Sheriff's Department Report for February. She said the department answered 59 calls in the city, and worked 121.5 hours for the month.

Finally, the council approved the minutes from the Feb. 17 council meeting, and approved the payment of the bills. The bills in February totaled \$41,201.04.

County board approves 2025 Gravel Tax Report, \$178,000 in revenue distributed

By Ralph Dickerson
Editor

Lisa Weiss, Kandiyohi County Auditor-Treasurer presented the 2025 Gravel Tax Report to the assembled board of commissioners at the March 3 county board meeting. Weiss said the tax collected \$178,419.61 in 2025 from 16 gravel pit operators in the county.

"State statute sets the rates for the gravel tax," said Weiss. "So those rates are 21-and-a-half cents per yard, or 15-cents per ton."

In 2025 the 16 gravel pit operators mined a total of 673,383 tons of aggregate in Kandiyohi County, with the largest pit extracting 227,202 yards of gravel. On average, each gravel pit produced 42,086.44 tons of material in 2025.

After announcing the total amount of the tax collected, Weiss then presented county board members with a breakdown of the tax's distribution to the respective townships, the auditor's office administrative costs, the amount for the county's road and bridge fund and the special reserve fund.

Weiss said the auditor-treasurer's office received 5% of the total tax collected, or \$8,920.98, to offset the office's administration of the gravel tax. Next, the all the townships with gravel pits collectively receive 42.5% of the tax raised, or \$72,036.92, of the remaining funds, allocated based on the tonnage mined in each township.

Genessee Township received the most funds with a distribution of \$27,213.57. New London received the smallest distribution, netting only \$61.47.

Weiss said the County Road and Bridge Fund also receives an allocation of 42.5% of the tax proceeds. For the year 2025, the county received \$72,036.92.

The remaining 15% of the tax goes into the Special Gravel Reserve Fund, which pays for the reclamation of abandoned gravel pits. This year the fund received a disbursement of \$25,424.80, which brings the total in the fund to \$369,449.16.

After hearing the report from Weiss, the board approved a motion to accept the report.

In other news, the county board approved the Auditor's Warrants and Claims report. The board approved claims of \$201,986.16 from the revenue fund, \$5,166.67 from the coronavirus relief fund, \$182,922.22 from the road and bridge fund, \$1,191.44 from the county building fund and \$11,602.60 from the ditch fund.

Other warrants and claims include \$4,081.79 from the library fund, \$387.92 from the Health and Human Services building fund, \$35,304.58 from the water and sewer fund, \$4,122 from the water and sewer bond fund and \$17,284.82 from the capital projects fund.

The final warrants and claims include \$341.82 from the computer/communications maintenance fund, \$226,859.59 from the capital equipment fund, \$101,590.17 from the sanitary landfill fund, \$82.74 from the forfeited tax sale fund and \$18,258.44 from the C.E.E VI task force, for a total of \$811,182.96 as recorded in the office of the Kandiyohi County Auditor-Treasurer.



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Regal approves \$10,000 investment with the Willmar Area Community Foundation to fund future city projects

By **Ralph Dickerson**
Editor

The city of Regal voted to create an account with the Willmar Area Community Foundation to help fund projects in Regal. The council also agreed to take \$10,000 out of its tower account to put into the Community Foundation account, with the Regal Baseball Association contributing the other \$10,000 in funds. Taking the money from the tower account means the city did not place any taxpayer monies into the fund, but relied on money paid to the city for the rental of the tower lot.

"I personally recommend it," said

Regal City Clerk Larry Fleck. "We give it a try for a couple of years; it appears to be a win-win. Nothing can go wrong."

Andrew Bromenshenkel made the motion to create the fund. After receiving a second, the council approved the measure.

The issue of creating an account with the Willmar Area Community Foundation arose when the city contacted it about the possibility of helping the city finance AEDs for the city. The foundation then told the city that the foundation offered accounts for various entities to help with various projects. The foundation bundles all

of the various account proceeds and invests it, and then divides the gain among all of the accounts, based on how much each one possesses.

As part of opening the account with the foundation, the city needs to create an oversight board, with two members representing the city, and two representing the baseball association. Regal appointed Jeff Magnuson and Andrew Bromenshenkel as the city's two members on the board.

Now the city simply needs to take the money to the foundation to place in the account. After three years, if the city does nothing with the account, the foundation closes the ac-

count and refunds the money plus interest earned back to the city and the baseball association. The foundation does take a small fee each quarter from the fund, but receives enough interest on the bundled money that the funds in the account continue to grow.

The council also discussed what it wanted to do with its two investment accounts that together possess over \$100,000 in it. Both mature on April 4 of this year.

The council agreed to revisit the issue during the April meeting, which gives the city time to shop around to see what rates exist on CDs. Cur-

rently, Magnifi Financial holds the two investment accounts, but if the city receives a significantly higher interest rate at another financial institution the council basically agreed to move the funds.

"Are we going to, is a thought, to just reinvest all of it, including the interest gained," asked council member Andrew Bromenshenkel. "Or are we going to take the interest gained out, put it in the checkbook or something, and then go with the \$60,000 and \$40,000 again?"

City Clerk Fleck said in the past the city pulled out the interest and just reinvested the original principal. Bromenshenkel asked because he said the interest earned almost equal the amount needed to invest in the community foundation account. The council agreed to keep all options on the table and make a decision at the April meeting.

The council then discussed the blinking street light on 293rd Avenue NE in the city. Fleck asked council members if a problem continued to exist with the light, and council members said yes. Some days it works fine, other days it blinks constantly.

The council, by agreement, authorized city clerk Fleck to again contact Xcel Energy about the problem. Fleck said he intended to go to the local office in Paynesville in an attempt to contact a technician and ask the technician to come to Regal and examine the light.

The council then approved a motion to authorize Fleck to pay the March bills when they come due. Normally that entails writing a check to Xcel Energy.

The council also approved the city's financial report. The city's checkbook account contains \$13,370.44, while the tower account contains an amount of \$29,151.48. The next meeting occurs on April 7, 2026, at the Fleck's house.

Minnesota Grocers Association presents 2026 MGA Legislator of the Year awards

Press release

The Minnesota Grocers Association (MGA) presented its 2026 MGA Legislator of the Year awards to Representative Dave Baker (R – Willmar) and Senator Susan Pha (D – Brooklyn Center) at its annual Legislative Dinner on February 24, at The University Club in St. Paul, MN. Each year, the MGA recognizes lawmakers who demonstrate exceptional leadership and commitment to Minnesota's food industry.

Senator Pha received the honor for her leadership in advancing the Minnesota Grocers Association Foundation's Carts to Careers initiative. As chief author of the Senate legislation, Sen. Pha championed the proposal in the Senate Jobs and Economic Development Committee and worked diligently behind the scenes to ensure the program was included in the final Jobs omnibus bill. Her efforts helped secure additional funding for the next two years, allowing the program to continue supporting workforce training and professional development opportunities for employees of MGA member companies.

Representative Baker also played a key role in securing passage of the Carts to Careers fund-

ing in the House. As Co-Chair of the House Workforce, Labor, and Economic Development Finance and Policy Committee, he recognized the program's importance to both the food industry and Minnesota's workforce. A former grocer himself, Rep. Baker has consistently been a strong advocate for Minnesota businesses and for policies that help create a welcoming environment where businesses and families can thrive.

"Senator Pha and Representative Baker are great examples of the kind of leadership that we should all value in St. Paul. They are thoughtful, collaborative, and willing to work across party lines to do good work for the people of Minnesota," said Patrick Garofalo, President of the MGA. "The MGA and Minnesota's food industry are grateful to have the support of such quality people and legislators. They are both extremely deserving of this recognition."

The Minnesota Grocers Association congratulates Representative Baker and Senator Pha on being named the 2026 MGA Legislators of the Year and thanks them for their continued dedication to Minnesota's food community.



Photo submitted

Representative Dave Baker (R – Willmar) and Patrick Garofalo, MGA President

FROM THE OFFICE OF MINNESOTA STATE REPRESENTATIVE DAVE BAKER

Press Release

We've wrapped up week two of the 2026 session, and I want to be direct with you: the deeper we dig, the more concerned we become. Our top priority this session is fraud—exposing it, rooting it out, and making sure it never happens again.

The state recently released a long-awaited external review of fraud risks within the Minnesota Department of Human Services, conducted by Optum. This review was supposed to shine a bright light on weaknesses in oversight and billing systems so we could identify vulnerabilities and implement real reforms to prevent future abuse.

But what Minnesotans received instead was a report that was heavily—and I mean almost entirely—redacted.

When entire sections are blacked out, it becomes nearly impossible to understand the true scope of the failures—and even harder for us as legislators to fix them. And here's what makes it even more concerning: the version released to the public was just 28 pages long. Twenty-eight pages. For a review that was expected to dig deep into systemic fraud risks across major social service programs, that's astonishingly thin. By all reasonable expectations, this should have been a comprehensive report—the kind that spans volumes, not something that feels like a brief summary.

Minnesota taxpayers spent \$2.3 million on this external audit conducted for the Minnesota Department of Human Services by Optum. That is not pocket change. When Minnesotans invest that kind of money for transparency and reform, they deserve more than a heavily redacted, condensed document that leaves more questions than answers.

Even more frustrating, the Walz Administration has not provided the full, unredacted findings to the public. At a time when our state has faced repeated, high-profile fraud scandals, withholding critical information only deepens public frustration and erodes trust.

Transparency shouldn't depend on who is in office. Accountability shouldn't be optional. If we are serious about preventing future fraud and safeguarding taxpayer dollars, we need full disclosure, real oversight, and the political will to confront problems head-on—not conceal them.

Calling All Business Owners!

I want to take a moment to speak directly to the incredible business

owners across Minnesota. Over these first few weeks of the session, my work on the Workforce, Labor, and Economic Development Finance and Policy Committee has focused heavily on the rollout of Minnesota's new Paid Family and Medical Leave law.

Here's the truth: this law operates largely as a one-size-fits-all solution—and anyone who knows Minnesota's diverse business community knows that "one size" rarely fits all. That's why your voice matters. I want to hear the good, the bad, and even the ugly about how this law is affecting your business.

I've put together a short survey to gather your feedback. Your insights will help us understand what's working, what isn't, and how we can fine-tune this legislation so Minnesota businesses don't just survive—but thrive.

Your experience matters, and your input will help shape policy that actually works for the hard-working entrepreneurs of our great state.

Minnesota, the Land of Opportunity

It was a pleasure to attend the annual Chamber of Commerce legislative dinner last week with the Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce. There's nothing better than being in a room full of local business leaders who care deeply about the future of our communities and aren't afraid to roll up their sleeves to make it stronger.

With the rollout of Minnesota's new Paid Family and Medical Leave program, conversations like these matter more than ever. Major policy changes don't happen in a vacuum they impact real employers, real employees, and real families right here at home. That's why it's so important to partner directly with the job creators in our district to fine-tune this legislation and make sure it works in the real world.

Our goal should always be clear: create an environment where businesses of every size—from Main Street shops to fortune-500 employers—have the opportunity to grow, hire, and thrive right here in Minnesota. And I'm grateful for every chance to sit down, listen, and work together to make that happen.

Honored by the Minnesota Grocers Association

It was truly an honor to speak to the members of the Minnesota Grocers Association and to be named their Legislator of the Year. Receiving that recognition from an industry that works tirelessly to serve our communities every single day means more than I can say.

As someone who also works in hospitality, I understand firsthand how vital this industry is—not just to our economy, but to the fabric of our neighborhoods. Grocery stores and hospitality businesses are often the heartbeat of a community. They create jobs, support families, sponsor local events, and show up when it matters most.

I'm incredibly grateful for the partnership I've built with the Grocers Association over the years, and I'm proud to continue advocating for them at the Capitol. Supporting the businesses that keep Minnesota running isn't just part of the job—it's something I care very deeply about.

Turning Down the Heat on Energy Costs

One of the biggest concerns I continue to hear from constituents across our district—and frankly from people all across Minnesota—is affordability. Groceries, housing, childcare, energy bills... it all adds up quickly.

When it comes to making life more affordable, there are really only a couple of ways government tends to approach the problem: cut programs or raise taxes. And correct me if I'm wrong, but raising taxes has never once made life more affordable for Minnesotans.

So instead of simply asking taxpayers for more, we should also be taking a hard look at existing laws and policies that may be standing in the way of lower costs.

Energy is a great example.

We just made it through another Minnesota winter—and if your household is anything like mine, your energy bill probably looked a lot higher than it did a few years ago. When families are already stretched thin, rising energy costs are the last thing they need.

That's why House Republicans—and members from the other side of the aisle—have begun serious discussions about lifting Minnesota's nuclear energy moratorium.

Sometimes legislation adds new language into law. Other times, it's about removing outdated barriers. House File 2002 falls squarely into that second category.

Right now, Minnesota law prohibits the Public Utilities Commission from issuing a certificate of need for a new nuclear power plant. In simple terms, the state has a moratorium that prevents even studying or considering new nuclear facilities.

HF 2002 would remove that prohibition and allow Minnesota utilities to at least explore nuclear energy as part of our future energy

mix.

As Rep. Spencer Igo (R - Grand Rapids) put it during committee discussion:

"One of the best forms of baseload power that we have available to us is nuclear power. We've had a moratorium that's prohibited even looking into and doing studies about what if our utilities want to host these types of facilities. A moratorium around ideas is a very archaic way of legislating."

And he raises a fair point. Banning the conversation entirely doesn't make much sense—especially when energy demand continues to rise.

Nuclear energy provides reliable, around-the-clock baseload powersomething wind and solar alone cannot do. If Minnesota is serious about its goal of 100% carbon-free electricity by 2040, nuclear power will almost certainly have to be part of the conversation. In fact, 31 countries—including the United States—have pledged to triple global nuclear energy capacity by 2050 as part of efforts to meet growing electricity demand while reducing emissions.

At the same time, we also need broader reforms to ensure Minnesota's energy policy keeps affordability and reliability front and center.

That's why I introduced House File 4023, the "A+ Energy Act." The bill is designed to make sure Minnesota's energy policy prioritizes three things:

- Affordability for ratepayers;
- Reliable baseload power for our growing energy needs;
- A practical path toward cleaner energy technologies.

The bill works to ensure that when utilities and regulators evaluate new energy projects, they consider all available technologies and the real-world impact on Minnesota families' utility bills, rather than limiting the conversation through outdated statutory restrictions.

Because at the end of the day, energy policy isn't just about technology—it's about the monthly bill sitting on the kitchen table.

Lifting the nuclear moratorium and advancing proposals like the A+ Energy Act doesn't mean Minnesota will build a nuclear plant tomorrow. What it does mean is that we can start having honest conversations, evaluate the full toolbox of energy options, and plan responsibly for the future.

And if those conversations lead to more reliable power and lower energy costs for Minnesota families, then they are absolutely worth having.

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BOARD & COUNCIL MEETINGS

March 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..

March 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..

March 18, 2026

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

March 20, 2026

- Norway Lake Township meeting, 9 a.m. Sunburg Community Center, 211 Isola Street, Sunburg

March 24, 2026

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

March 26, 2026

- New London Township meeting, 5 p.m., New London Town Hall, 16151 County Road 9, New London

THIS WEEK IN LAKES HISTORY

Compiled by Ralph Dickerson

The Early Years

New London Review, March 12, 1885

Opening of a Reservation in Dakota

The president has signed an executive order throwing open to settlement the greater part of the Winnebago and Crow Creek reservations in Dakota. There are 60,000 acres in the tract, and it lies east of the Missouri river and just south of Pierre. There are now about 400 Sioux Indians on these lands. Secretary Teller decided to open these reservations several weeks ago, but held the announcement of the matter back until it could be seen what

would be done with the pre-emption repeal in congress. The president and Secretary Teller are committed to the repeal of the pre-emption act, and preferred to have the Winnebago and Crow creek lands come into the market after the repeal should (it) be passed by congress. In that event it could only be open to homestead settlement. Lately they were satisfied by influential Western members that there was no hope for its passage and there was no occasion for its delay...

100 Years Ago

New London Times, March 11, 1926

POLICE COURT ITEMS

Knute Lofgren of Meeker county was arrested by Sheriff Bonde on a charge of illegal giving away of intoxicating liquor in the town of Harrison. Lofgren appeared in Municipal court before Judge Forsberg at 10 o'clock Monday morning, and demanded examination. He will appear for hearing this afternoon at two o'clock. Bail

was set at \$500.

Knute Lofgren was arrested on a charge of furnishing liquor to a minor in Willmar township. He was arraigned in Municipal court at 10 o'clock Monday morning and demanded an examination. He will have his hearing this afternoon at 2 o'clock. Bail was set at \$1,000.

75 Years Ago

New London Times, March 8, 1951

TWO TERMS FOR PRESIDENT

During the past week, the necessary state legislatures ratified the constitution amendment, providing for the limitation of two terms for any president of the United States. However, this amendment does not apply to President Truman, who can and may run again.

The object of the limitation is to assure a change in president at least every eight years. It is a good amendment regardless of the party. Two terms for any man, in this highly important office, is enough of a strain on any human being. In some cases, two terms may break down the man in office, for the strain is terrific.

50 Years Ago

New London-Spicer Times, March 11, 1976

House in rural Spicer gutted by fire

Firemen from New London and Spicer were called to a house on the road connecting Hwy. 23 with the Old Mill Inn Saturday evening at 11 p.m.

The house, which was vacant, was gutted by fire and estimated damage was from \$8,000 to \$10,000. The building was owned by the Burlington Northern Railroad.

Cause of fire was unknown and is being investigated by the State Fire Marshall. Firemen remained on scene until 1:30 a.m.

The New London Fire Department was again called Monday

evening to the New London Clinic where fire had started around an incinerator inside the building. It was quickly extinguished but some smoke damage resulted.

Steak supper rescheduled

Due to the snowstorm last Thursday evening, the Green Lake Conservation Club will hold their annual meeting and Steak Supper on Thursday, March 11 at the Spicer Legion beginning at 7:00 p.m. This is for paid up members or anyone else wanting to join.

The membership in the club costs \$3.00 per year and this includes the free super.

25 Years Ago

Kandiyohi County Times, March 12, 2001

Township residents pack annexation hearing

Cries of "What's in it for us?" and allegations of the city of New London "forcing" New London Township residents into the town were heard by the crowd that packed the city hall Wednesday, March 7, for the annexation hearing.

Questions and comments by those present—representing owners of the 96 parcels in the industrial triangle, Lundbergs Addition and Cedar Crescent slated for annexation—echoed ones heard at a township-sponsored meeting earlier this year.

Perhaps the biggest concerns expressed at the New London City Council meeting was higher taxes.

Next in line was the estimated \$15,000 to \$20,000 in assessments and taxes that each

resident will incur as a result of the city's action.

Representing Lundsberg Addition residents was James Molenaar. He noted the tax impacts, asked for more information on what exactly they would be and asked what he and his neighbors will receive in exchange for paying higher taxes.

Molenaar also asked if there were some services that township people might stop using in order to be more "equitable." This goes back to the city's position that they are using, and not contributing enough to, these services.

One man asked whether the annexation effort was "a bail out" for the city. Others joined in, asking if the city is in financial trouble, and why try to "drag" township people in to help fix these troubles....

10 Years Ago

Lakes Area Review, March 12, 2016

Marketing Concepts building for sale

The Marketing Concepts building on Lake Avenue North in downtown Spicer is for sale, but management isn't saying whether the business will remain in the area.

The Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission (EDC) Web site list Marketing Concepts as one of the county's major employers with 99 employees.

While some with the city of Spicer, including Mayor Denny Baker and City Administrator Leslie Valiant, said they were aware that the Marketing

Concepts building would be going up for sale, the city has heard nothing official from the long-time Spicer business, Valiant said....

According to "The History of Spicer on Green Lake" Marketing Concepts started out in Spicer as American Marketing in 1984. Current owner Diane Buzzeo took over the tele-marketing business and established Marketing Concepts in 1987.

Today, Marketing Concepts specializes in contract center support, marketing, catalog design and production along with internet campaign management...

COMMUNITY NEWS



Photo by Ralph Dickerson

The annual sloppy jo supper has become something of a tradition locally, with families returning year after year in support.

Sloppy Jo Supper: A community tradition 50 years in the making

By Amy Gronli
Features Writer

Barbecue. Dynamite. Manwich. Slushburger. No matter what people call it, the sandwich that will feature at the Sloppy Jo Supper on March 26 has an enduring appeal. Just as enduring is the support that the New London-Spicer community has shown for this event over the years.

2026 marks 50 years of community members coming together to support students and enjoy the warm, comforting, and slightly messy sandwich that delivers a heaping dose of fun in a bun.

"The Sloppy Jo Supper is one of the best known community events," Amanda Peterson, co-chair of the supper committee, said in a recent communication. "Many people mark their calendars as soon as they know the date, and it is something that clearly has stood the test of time running for 50 years."

Just as the night of the event draws community members together, all the behind-the-scenes work makes a team of residents passionate about supporting students in the New London-Spicer district. Peterson, who attended NLS for her junior and senior years, has worked at the district for nine years. Kelly Johnson, Peterson's co-chair for the second year, is in her fourth year of teaching at the NLS high school.

"As someone who is newer to the area, the Sloppy Jo Supper is something I've come to really appreciate," Johnson recently shared. "Not every community can say they've hosted an event like this for 50 years; that's special. It's incredible to see so many people come together over a simple meal to support our youth

at NLS, and I'm truly grateful to be part of a community that shows up like that."

According to Susan Westberg, who retired from the Sloppy Jo Supper committee in 2022 after a fifteen-year tenure, the event was brought back in 2008 by Tracy Dammernann and Satera Thompsen as a fundraiser with a dual purpose. Fourth-graders would be entrusted to sell tickets for the event, and the proceeds would be split. One portion would go towards Post Prom and the other would help offset the costs of busing to Wolf Ridge when the ticket sellers went on the trip in the following autumn. While selling tickets for a popular community event might sound like an easy task to an adult, it is a big step for a kid to take.

"I personally love that it teaches the 4th graders about paying it forward, (you're helping out the older students have a fun and safe prom night) and in the future, another group of 4th graders will do the same thing for you," Peterson said. "A number of the students also volunteer the night of the SJS, and we could not put on the event without their and their parents' help."

"It's a great introduction to volunteering for your community and how important it is to give back. They also receive funds from selling tickets for their field trips as well, but it teaches connectedness as a school community and doing something for the greater good beyond how you personally are benefiting from it."

Johnson agreed with this sentiment. "Selling tickets for the Sloppy Jo Supper gives students real-world experience in communication, goal setting, and follow-through. They learn how to confidently

start conversations, explain why the fundraiser matters, handle money responsibly, and represent our school well."

Peterson and Johnson oversaw the organization of student ticket books and the sales kick-off on February 11. Students will sell tickets until March 25, though community members can still purchase tickets at the door on March 26, if they missed buying a ticket from a student.

The fourth-graders have a goal of selling 2,000 tickets: one that might be in easy reach given total ticket sales of nearly 3,000 last year. In addition to funds being raised for Post Prom and the Wolf Ridge trip, the Student Council will also benefit from proceeds of a kids' carnival in the middle school gym while supper is served in the cafeteria.

Games such as bean bag toss, connect four, and ladder ball will be available for children ages 10 and under. Each game requires a ticket, and one dollar will buy three tickets for carnival-goers.

Carnivals such as this have provided side entertainment in the past, as have "book sales, Girl Scout cookie sales and the Robotics team demonstration," Westberg replied to a request for information on the supper's history.

"For many years the Lions would have their talent show in the gym right after the supper, so it was a full night of family fun!"

With a purpose to support other traditions that create so many memories for students, it's easy to see why people have supported the Sloppy Jo Supper for so many years.

"You see community members unconnected to the school who make an effort to either come, or make a donation, as it serves a good cause across a wide range of students," Peterson stated. "Even during COVID, the Sloppy Jo Supper did not stop: they

served the meals via drive-thru only. It is one of those core memories, that even during that time, this community event went on as best it could to support this long standing tradition.

"I cannot imagine it not going on for another 50 years. Going for the first time as a high school senior, I was floored at the number of community members who came to the supper. It shows the unwavering support our community has for the students, and our school.

"If you've never been before, I encourage you to go as it shows how much support our small community has for one another—plus it's a great time to see friends, and the food is good too."

Buying a ticket, sharing a meal, and even volunteering are all ways people can contribute to this event that has benefited the community in many ways over the years.

"I remember cleaning tables at the event when I was in 4th grade," Westberg shared. "The NLS area has come out in the sun, rain and snow! Attendees love to find friends to sit with, catch up and enjoy the meal."

"In the past, many people would just buy an entire book of ten tickets and only use two just to be able to support the fundraiser. I stayed on for all those years because I believed in what we were doing."

"It was a great feeling the year my daughter Brea went to prom in 2015 because that meant the work the kids did while they were in 4th grade to help Post Prom attendees have a great night had now come full circle."

The annual Sloppy Jo Supper will take place Thursday, March 26 from 4:30 - 7:00 PM in the New London-Spicer Middle School/High School cafeteria. Tickets are \$8 each and are sold by NLS fourth-graders or at the door.

Hwy. 40 project

Continued from page 1

on the phasing of all this," said Odens. "But it's also the money has to be there to do the projects."

The state expected to construct the turn lane last year, but delayed the project to this year, which leads to the overlapping construction in the area, and the concern about traffic congestion.

After a few more minutes of discussion, the board voted to accept the detour agreement. The board then turned its attention to the final payment for the Edwards Township bridge project. A little over one year ago, the county closed a bridge on 75th Avenue in Edwards Township, one of three bridges closed in the county. The county awarded the contract for the Edwards Township bridge in May of last year.

The contract bid went to Ashwill Companies out of Cokato for an estimated cost of \$381,513.71 to replace the timber structure with two 12-foot by 10-foot box culverts.

Work started in October of 2025, and finished in November, with the total cost of the project coming in slightly under budget at \$380,029.72.

Per standard operating procedure, the county held a percentage of the contract bid amount back until the road department accepted the project as finished. The final payment to Ashwill Companies totaled \$3,800.30, which the board approved.

Last year the county closed three bridges in Kandiyohi County, including the Edwards Township bridge. The county permanently eliminated one bridge, fixed the Edwards Township bridge, with one bridge left to repair.

Last year the road department identified a number of timber structure bridges in the county that it needs to replace, including the timber bridge on County Road 31 immediately outside of New London. The county developed a plan to replace a number of these bridges in the coming years.

NLS POST PROM & 4TH GRADE FUNDRAISER

SLOPPY JO SUPPER

50th Anniversary

Thursday, March 26, 2026

4:30-7:00 pm
NLS MS/HS
Cafeteria

\$8/ticket

Sold by 4th graders or at the door

Dine In, Carry Out,
or Drive Thru!



Divides vs dollars Continued from page 1

— but spread across a much smaller, less nimble population that lacks the recovery capacity of the Twin Cities.

“The bigger concentration of what I will call, for lack of a better term, big box stores — the Targets, the Walmarts — those businesses can weather economic turmoil like this much differently than local small businesses can,” Miller said. “The impact is going to be on those smaller businesses, and really the employees, and then all of the cyclical stuff that comes out of it.”

Miller described a domino effect: a worker afraid to leave home doesn't collect a paycheck. Without a paycheck, rent goes unpaid. A childcare provider with no children coming in sends its own employees home. “This cyclical impact,” he said, “is going to take four to six months before we see things.”

Downtown Willmar: ‘down 70 percent’

Calvin, who has been walking downtown businesses and asking owners directly how they're faring, reported numbers that were sobering. “Some of them are telling me their business is down 70 percent,” he said. “Most all of them are saying that their businesses are down at least 25 to 30 percent. And those are big numbers.”

Even businesses not primarily serving immigrant communities have felt the effects. Miller said that one major box retailer in town — which he declined to name publicly — was down 20 percent in January and close to that figure in February. “The smaller businesses aren't go-

ing to be able to recover from that,” he said.

Calvin recalled a specific incident that illustrates the ripple effect: a local business he visited received phone calls on a Thursday and Friday from customers asking whether protests were planned. “They didn't want to come to town to spend money in Willmar if there was going to be a protest,” he said. “So you think on one side that you're doing good work here, but on the other side, there's a flip side of that.”

Calvin described downtown evenings that once had steady foot traffic now going quiet. “It used to be that downtown was a hopping place at night,” he said. “Now you could walk through downtown and you would probably not see anybody. That isn't good for our downtown businesses. That isn't good for our community.”

But the numbers tell only part of the story, Miller continued. In smaller communities, economic disruptions rarely stay contained to a single business or industry — they ripple outward.

“If the employee isn't able to go to work because a business decides to close or people stay home, they're not getting paid,” Miller said. “That means they're maybe not able to go out and shop, not able to pay their rent.”

Daycare providers may see fewer children if parents stay home from work. Landlords may face missed rent payments. Restaurants and retailers see fewer customers. In a place like Kandiyohi County, where businesses, workers

and families are tightly connected, those changes can cascade quickly.

Agriculture at risk: the county's top sector

At the same time, the conversation revealed how deeply the local workforce itself is tied to immigration.

Both panelists highlighted the agricultural sector as particularly vulnerable. Calvin noted that Kandiyohi County is the top producer of turkey eggs and turkey poult in the nation, and that the entire supply chain depends on workers showing up — workers who are now afraid to do so.

“When the people don't go to work,” Calvin said. “That egg doesn't go into the hatchery, that doesn't produce the hen, which is then processed and used to feed protein to the world. When you have people that are afraid to go to work, that has a negative impact — and that has long-lasting impacts.”

Miller pointed to a larger dairy operation west of Willmar that is already anticipating the loss of 40 to 50 seasonal workers from South America who typically come to the area — and who are now unlikely to make the trip. “How are we going to continue to bring those people into our community and want them to come here and feel safe and supported?” he asked.

Miller also cited a broader state context: one in 12 Minnesota residents is an immigrant, and one in nine employees is an immigrant. “They're our neighbors, they're our friends, they're family for a lot of us,” he said. “And that's an important factor to think about.”

Those neighbors, coworkers and business owners are part of our local economic ecosystem, Miller said — one where fear or uncertainty can influence daily decisions about whether people feel comfortable going to work, shopping or participating in the community.

“The rhetoric in general has been so negative that it's made it hard for people to want to get out,” Miller said. “They're fearful.”

Schools, tourism, and the erosion of trust

Miller noted that roughly 1,200 children stayed home from Willmar schools during the enforcement period — a figure he said could have educational consequences that take years to understand. “Whether or not my friends are going to be here tomorrow, where their families are going to be safe and secure — those are things that erode trust,” he said, “whether it's in a business or an institution or just in people in general.”

And for a region where tourism is the second-largest economic driver that hesitation can have far-reaching consequences. Visitors deciding whether to travel, conferences choosing locations and workers considering whether to relocate all factor into the health of the local economy.

Miller said ICE operations across the state have negatively impacted visitor traffic, including the postponement of a major retail conference that had been slated for the Twin Cities. Businesses have been asking: “Do we bring people here? Do we not bring people here?”

A separate incident at a local motel, where tires belonging to visitors — not immigration enforcement — were slashed by individuals who mistook them for ICE vehicles, added another layer of reputational damage. “That's a black eye on this community,” Miller said. “Are you going to tell your friends to come to Willmar and stay overnight at a hotel?”

Relief efforts and what's coming

Miller said the chamber has been proactively sharing information with businesses about their legal rights during enforcement activity, and about options for supporting workers in uncertain situations. He praised Jennie-O and other employers for telling workers, in his paraphrase: “Do what you need to do to protect you and your family.”

On the financial relief side, the Minneapolis Foundation has assembled funding to assist impacted businesses in both the metro and outstate areas. The governor has proposed a \$10 million forgivable loan program, though details remain unclear given competing pressures on the state budget. Miller said he is also exploring smaller foundations for targeted support.

Throughout the forum, both Miller and Calvin returned to the economic multiplier as the clearest argument for community investment. “73 cents out of every dollar spent at a local business stays local,” Miller said. “It turns over here. It supports all the things that happen here.” With that cycle interrupted, he added, the effects will continue

compounding long after the immediate enforcement activity has faded.

But Miller and Calvin also emphasized that the discussion isn't just about business or politics.

It's about community. A community shaped by diversity

The county, Miller said, has long been shaped by its diversity — a characteristic that has fueled population growth and economic activity in recent decades.

“We're such a unique community because of the diversity in Willmar, which is a strength,” he said, adding, “In the last several years, our growth has been in bringing in new Americans to our community.”

Moments of tension can challenge that sense of connection, but they can also reveal how dependent residents are on one another. “When trust gets eroded, it takes time to rebuild that,” Miller said.

In the meantime, Miller and Calvin urged residents to remember that the local economy is not made up of abstract markets or distant corporations. It is made up of neighbors — the worker on a shift, the shop owner unlocking the door each morning, the family deciding where to eat dinner.

In communities all around Kandiyohi County, they said, those choices matter.

Because ultimately, the health of the local economy depends on the same principle that holds communities together in the first place: the understanding that we as a people rise — or fall — together.

From fields to fire calls Continued from page 1

to drive the old truck to a fire and he doesn't mince words.

“It's very tough shifting. A lot of people struggle with it,” he said. “It's a five-speed with high and low gears — a difficult machine to run. It is slow. Underpowered. Way underpowered.”

So difficult, in fact, that many younger oncoming members struggle to drive it. Assistant Chief Mike Urban joked that the truck also has a ‘40-acre turning radius’ — meaning tight rural driveways, the kind that are common across the department's coverage area, can become a significant obstacle in an emergency. The water tank has been welded multiple times already to address leaks. That means the truck is literally losing water on the way to a fire.

Modern fire trucks, by comparison, drive more like a pickup or a car. The shift to automatic transmissions alone has been a significant safety advancement, ensuring any volunteer can get the truck moving quickly without wrestling a manual transmission under pressure.

“Being underpowered — it's slower to get water. It slows everything down,” Pierce said.

One truck, 125 miles

The stakes of a truck failure extend well beyond Sunburg itself. The department covers a 125-mile area but is also a regular mutual aid responder for many neighboring communities including New London, Pennock, Kerkhoven, and others throughout the region.

“We cover such a big area,” Pierce said. “If our pumper goes down, it could take a half hour to get another one here. If it's a life-and-death situation, that's big.”

Right now, the department has only one pumper that was upgraded in April 2025 through fundraising efforts. If it fails — on the road, at a scene, or in the shop — there is no backup. This fact also limits the department in mutual aid calls to neighboring communities. If the one and only pumper is already out on a mutual aid call, it leaves the community at home vulnerable. A new tanker-pumper combo truck would not only replace the aging 1981 tanker vehicle but give the department a second functional pumping unit, strengthening both their own response capability and their ability to support neighboring fire departments when called.

“It also benefits our surrounding towns,” Pierce said, “because we can send better mutual aid. Right now, we can't

really mutual aid our pumper because we only have one. If they request it and we have another one, we could go.”

The department responds to roughly 25 to 28 calls per year. Those calls run the full spectrum — structure fires, grass fires, automobile accidents, and mutual aid. The 26-member volunteer department often even has a waiting list of people who want to join, which, in such a small rural community, is a testament in itself to the department.

What it takes to show up

Volunteering for a rural fire department in 2026 is not what it was a generation ago. The training requirements have grown substantially, demanding mandatory monthly meetings, regular practice burns, and weekend commitments that stack up across the year. “It takes a lot of time — a lot more time than people would think,” Pierce noted.

For the farmers who make up a significant share of Sunburg's roster, that often means making a choice during the most critical windows of the agricultural calendar.

“The toughest thing is leaving in spring and fall when you've got a rainstorm coming and 50 acres left to do that day,” Ruka said. “But you've got a structure fire you have to go to. We signed up for that.”

Despite the demands, the department's culture is strong. Pierce described a team that genuinely enjoys working together — and that shows up when it counts.

“We have an excellent group of guys who enjoy being together and working together. When a call comes in,” Pierce said, “everyone shows up ready to help.”

“It's just a good feeling at the end of the day when you help save someone,” Ruka added. “We're all a team.”

Asking for help in lean times

The fundraising effort is being coordinated with the help of Pat Berg, a community member who previously helped the Sunburg ambulance service raise \$66,000 for vital pieces of new equipment. Berg brought that experience — and those community relationships — to the fire department's cause.

Since its start in April 2025 the fundraising committee has raised \$61,350 through grants and donations so far. That leaves a \$88,650 gap to close.

The original goal was \$100,000 for a quality used replacement tanker. But after a truck salesman reviewed the



Photo by Shannon Urban

The truck, a manual with a shifter and tank that's been welded multiple times, is too outdated for some members to drive.

department's fleet and noted the vulnerability of having only a single pumper, the decision was made mid-campaign to aim for a tanker-pumper combo truck at approximately \$150,000 — a bigger ask, but the right one.

Between 25 and 30 grant requests have been submitted since the campaign began. But the current economy has made the going harder than expected — donors who gave \$10,000 without hesitation during the ambulance campaign are now offering \$5,000 or stepping back altogether. But Berg remains resolute.

“It's not if we meet our goal — it's when we meet our goal,” she said.

Upcoming fundraising efforts include a community mailing reaching local property owners across the townships — including out-of-state landowners with ties to the area — as well as a turkey bingo event and several pending grant decisions, one from the Willmar Area Community Foundation. A matching gift has already been secured from Clark and Paul Vollen of Lake Region Bank, providing at least \$5,000 in matched donations, with potential for more.

An additional \$5,000 match has been committed through the Reynold and Eleanor Larson Fund, which is held at the Willmar Area Community Foundation. That means that an additional \$10,000 in support can be unlocked when \$10,000 in local fundraising efforts are reached.

A low tax rate, a high standard of service

One reason the department is turning to community fundraising rather than simply raising tax levies: they've worked hard to keep their tax rate exceptionally low for their community. The department currently assesses just \$250 per section of land, which is significantly lower than many surrounding areas.

The department does much of its own mechanical and maintenance work to keep costs down — including, yes, welding broken shifters back onto old trucks. Luckily, the department is also comprised of members with many professional skillsets, from welders to mechanics to maintenance workers. That spirit of self-sufficiency has helped them stretch limited budgets further than most, but even ingenuity has its limits when the equipment itself is aging out.

“Time and money are tight,” Pierce said, “but this is just something we feel benefits everybody.”

Berg echoed that sentiment with a challenge to the broader community: “I think the community has a lot of respect for the fire department and emergency services. If you don't ask, they can't show their support.”

You don't have to be a firefighter to help

There's a truth about rural fire departments that often goes unspoken: the services feel invisible until the moment you need them. And by then, what's already in the driveway is what you get.

“It's never important until

you actually experience a fire call yourself,” Pierce said. “You never think it's going to be you until it is.”

Berg put it simply: “They're helping themselves by providing you with the tools you need. You don't have to be a firefighter to help. Bottom line — it supports the community.”

Whether or not you've ever needed Sunburg's firefighters, there's a reasonable chance that someday — out on a gravel

road, in a farmyard, at a neighbor's place — you will. When that day comes, the last thing anyone wants is a truck held together with ingenuity, welds, and optimism.

####

To donate to the Sunburg Fire truck fund, checks can be mailed to City of Sunburg, Attn: Tanker/Pumper Truck, PO Box 84 Sunburg, MN 56289. Questions can be directed to Pat Berg at 320-366-3871.

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OPINION

AN OBJECTIVE STATE of MIND

Ted Here..... by Ted Almen

“What’s it like in their world?” Isn’t that a question a lot of us ask ourselves as we see how other people live and think. I mean, I was just recently watching an HGTV show where a mature couple -- not old, but not young either -- had decided that they had had enough of skiing the mountains of Colorado and so decided to relocate to Costa Rica for the surfing. The wife was the conservative one in this union... she only wanted to spend \$4 million on their new digs; the hubby was fine with \$5 million.

The same can be said for attitudes and opinions. Why doesn’t everyone agree with mine, for instance? I’m rational, do some due diligence by following the news of the day along with a bit of research, have a memory, and hold a certain ethical and moral code which I believe aligns with a fairly moderate midwestern life. I was raised to believe in God and justice, by parents who didn’t even necessarily attend to the same social or political tenets (they joked about canceling each other out at the ballot box). But in the end we kids knew right from wrong... or at least we thought we did.

We grew up knowing that we weren’t better than anyone else, nor worse. If anything we were told we should try live our lives to a higher standard, not for anyone’s sake but for our own dignity. Did we always meet expectations? I know for sure that I did not.

All in all, it was what I would describe as a fairly normal ‘Ozzie and Harriet’ lifestyle in the 1960s and ‘70s in a small rural community, with a few rollercoaster rides ‘thrown in for good measure.’ But didn’t we all have those?

The feeling of security is something which every family seeks, and for the most part we had that. Not so for the men and women I sat with for a couple of hours recently. These were children of poverty, many of them. They grew up in Mexico, amid conditions that didn’t favor a middle class lifestyle, that didn’t offer the advantages of being a white kid in a land of potential. Yes, they held the same dreams of good health and prosperity that people around the world long for but aren’t always possible. For that reason they made their way north, to the United States of America.

They came with the promises of good jobs and fair wages. They work hard and keep their noses clean. Of course, like all of society, a few will make it difficult for the whole by getting into trouble. That is not a racial thing... that’s a universal.

However in an atmosphere charged with distrust and animosity based mostly on one powerful man’s misguided personal conscience, these clean-living, diligent, authentic folks have to live under a radar of profiling, with the threat of unknown consequences for doing nothing more than living their lives

here.

These are people who are really not much different from most of us who were born and raised in this part of country, other than the pigmentation of their skin and possibly the language they speak (and by the way, many of them are bilingual, something I wish I could claim). In fact, many of these folks are also native-born U.S. citizens. They desire to be a part of the community, and to be given the same respect from not only their neighbors, but particularly from the one-tier system of justice which we claim to have.

I can tell you, the people I met with were gracious, and grateful... grateful to see the number of Anglo citizens protesting on their behalf, be it in Willmar or Minneapolis or anywhere else. That at least gave them a sense of community with the rest of us, latent immigrants all save for any tribal members of the Dakota or Chippewa or Winnebago. As one Mexican woman told me through a translator, “We are in moral debt to them.”

And so that brings me right back to the beginning of this missive: What is it like in the world of racial scorn, where it is more important to show loyalty to one man than love to fellow man? Why do we see things so differently when we’re looking at the same thing? I don’t get it, and I don’t think I ever will.

Maybe the difference is how we were raised. Thank you mom and dad.

How cats domesticated humans and other mysteries of the universe!

By Ralph Dickerson
Editor

According to researchers, humans domesticated cats around 10,000 to 12,000 years ago when grain stored by early human populations attracted rodents, which in turn attracted the Near Eastern Wildcat to human settlements to catch the rodents for a quick meal. The cats stayed by these settlements and, researchers say, slowly became domesticated and developed into today’s house cats.

The researchers got it wrong. Humans did not domesticate cats, but cats domesticated humans.

When humans domesticate wild animals, we do so to meet a need. For example, dogs often serve as herd dogs to help keep cattle, goats and other livestock in line. Cattle provide food and milk. Horses served as transportation.

House-cats—nothing. Instead, we serve them. Think about it. Cats get free homes, free food, toys, gifts and generally rule the home.

We humans serve them! My niece Mandy’s three cats, Loki, Zumi, and Arwen, serve as the perfect example.

My niece, nephew and I all live in my sister’s home here in New London, and they rule the roost.

Of the three Loki demands the least. He simply wants someone to pet him from time to time, otherwise he goes his own way. Zumi and Arwen, they act like little divas!

Shortly after Mandy moved back into the house, and brought her three cats, Zumi started to demand cuddles of the morning. I got up to use the bathroom, and found Zumi sitting outside my door, and blocked my path to the bathroom. I picked her up, cradled her in my arms like a baby and started to scratch her ears. Big mistake!

I picked her up and scratched her ears simply to get her out of my way. Zumi liked it, and now demands her cuddles several times per day. If I do not pick her up, she fusses at me until I do.

In addition, she fusses at me when something in the house upsets her. All three of them like to spend the morning in the living room. I need to put an aside in at this point.

When Mandy moved in, two other cats already lived in the house, Tippy, which belongs to my niece Amber, and Misha, technically my nephew’s cat. For some reason, no one knows why exactly, Loki turned against these two cats years ago even though he grew up around them. So now we need to keep them separated. To do that we close the doors to the dining room and upstairs to keep them separated.

When we want to let Tippy and Misha in the living room, we close the dining room door and open the upstairs door, and vice versa. Now, back to the rest of the story.

So, this morning Zumi as I started to get ready for work, Zumi met me outside my bathroom door and started fussing. Zumi likes her routine, and it got busted his morning.

First, Mandy reopened her coffee shop on

Mondays which meant she left for work instead of staying home on Mondays, which Zumi got used to happening. When she left for work she did not open the dining room door to let them into the living room due to my nephew taking the other two cats, Tippy and Misha, to the vet today. So, Zumi started to fuss at me about the situation.

I often refer to her as the Empress of the Universe due to her diva behavior. She does not deny it!

A couple of weeks ago I started down into the basement, and Zumi ran to get in front of me. I said, “after you my queen!” being snarky. She turned and looked over her shoulder at me and meowed, and then strutted down the steps—the diva.

I think Zumi figured out how to work my TV and watches horror movies during the day when I am gone. On quite a regular basis she sits at the landing to the stairs to the basement and stares; a flat, expressionless stare like something possessed her!

She sits at the top of the stairs about once a week just staring. I swear if she starts speaking I am out of there!

Lately though, little Arwen, whom Mandy calls her demon child, started to exhibit some diva like behavior. When I watch television, I sit in a comfortable chair with a footstool on which I rest my legs. I often pull a blanket over my legs because the basement gets colder than the rest of the house.

Arwen started to crawl under the footstool and basically treat it like a blanket fort. For some reason she only gets in the blanket fort when I sit in the chair.

A couple of weeks ago she crawled under the blanket as I watched television, and stayed there until around 9:30 p.m. and then got out and started poking around the basement. When I got up to go to bed, she ran up to me and started fussing, wanting me to sit back down in the chair. She even tried to block my path, running in front of my trying to keep me from walking to the heater and turning it off, and tried to block me from going to my bedroom.

The next day when I arrived home from work she met me at the door and started fussing. I told her I intended to go downstairs “in a few minutes.” I sat down and took my shoes off and told her I intended to go downstairs. She turned to go down the steps, but I went into the dining room to place the mail on the table. Arwen turned and ran behind me fussing at me for not going downstairs.

After I placed the mail on the table I then turned to go downstairs. I assumed she wanted her blanket fort. No, she did not. She simply wanted me downstairs for some reason.

Instead of getting under the blanket by my feet, she stood by my chair. I reached down and petted her head. She nibbled on my fingers, then climbed onto the cat tree by the window and cuddled up to sleep.

All of these interactions represent humans bending to the will of cats. Therefore, cats domesticated us humans to serve them; We think of cats as our pets, but in reality we serve as pets to cats that cater to their every whim!

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Trump does not understand tariffs

To the editor:

In his State of the Union address, I got the impression that President Trump does not understand how a tariff works. He seemed to be saying that the foreign country pays the tariff that is deposited into the US treasury.

The reality is that the importing US company pays the tariff (tax) on imported goods. The importing company is bringing the product into the US so it can sell it to the American consumer or company.

That importing company must decide what it will do to cover the added cost of the tariff. The importing company has two choices; it can absorb the added cost thus reducing its profits or it can pass the cost onto the consumer.

From the information I have heard, 90% of the tariff is passed on to the consumer and 10% of the cost is absorbed by the importer. Let me give you an example of how this works.

We have a grand daughter who is having a birthday soon. We have decided to give her a toy.

Many toys that Americans buy come from other coun-

tries. Let’s say that President Trump has decided to put a 50% tariff on all goods imported from the country where the toy we want to purchase is made.

Let us say the toy would normally cost the importer \$10. With the 50% tariff, the toy will now cost the importer \$15.

The importer must pay the manufacturer in the exporting country \$10 for the toy. They must also pay the US government the \$5 tariff (tax) calculated by taking the 50% tariff times the original \$10 cost of the imported toy.

Put yourself in the importer’s shoes. He needs to make a profit to stay in business so he will pass the increased cost caused by the tariff on to the consumer.

I will end up paying \$15 for the toy. As part of the \$15, I will also be paying for the \$5 tariff imposed by President Trump.

It is a hidden tax that has been imposed on me. What was even more alarming to me was when the President said he would like to use the tariff as a means of supporting the government and maybe eliminating the income tax.

The consumer of the goods

imported is most likely going to be a middle income American. The poor do not purchase many imported goods.

The wealthy can afford to pay Americans to produce the goods they feel they need. Those of us in the middle, the ones who purchase toys for our grandchildren, would pay the most to support our government.

We would be better off using a national sales tax if we want to eliminate the income tax. This would mean every American would be supporting the costs for all that the Federal Government provides for its citizens no matter where the product is produced.

Signed,

Ronald Van Nurden
New London Township

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THREE BUNS and a HURRICANE®

BY ALISON NELSON



I love to learn. If it was possible to get paid to go to school forever, I might make that my career. Nerd alert. While “continuing education” is part of my job, that never feels like a job to me. The National Art Education Association annual convention took place in Chicago last weekend, and I had been looking forward to it since I left last year’s in Louisville.

There are many reasons I love it - the learning, of course - but it’s also a chance to meet and visit with other people from across the country (even the globe) who can share insights, successes, or relatable frustrations with being an art teacher. And take in the sights of the area. Here’s the highlights of my experience:

- Got carsick bouncing around on the hour-long train ride from O’Hare to downtown, and arrived at street level having no idea which way to go in the foggy, rainy darkness. I think the key to successfully traveling alone is to act like you know what you’re doing, so I just started walking. Don’t worry, Mom, I made it.
- My high-floor hotel room had a nice view of the river except when it was foggy. The rest of the room was nothing to write home about, which was fine because it made me not want to spend much time there.

- The convention took place at the Hyatt, and the organizers planned for 3200 people attending. It turned out to be close to 5000, and they were clearly not prepared for that overflow at first. Lines were long to see the first keynote speaker, and it was 100 degrees in their basement convention center. I opted for the livestream of the presentation and found a comfortable chair with a good view of the skyline and the hustle and bustle of their beautiful lobby. That worked so well I did it the next two days, too.

- Art teachers can be wacky dressers, and while I viewed the livestream I people watched. The green hair, the sparkles, the mixed patterns, the clunky, colorful shoes and so much more . . . the fashion show that is the world’s art teachers is worth the whole price of admission. I was the weird one there in my sweatshirt and leggings.

- Visited the Art Institute of Chicago, where I had been a couple of times before but not for ten years. It is home to some world-famous art, including Grant Wood’s American Gothic, Edward Hopper’s Nighthawks, Georges Seurat’s A Sunday on La Grande Jatte - 1884, and a

newly acquired Norman Rockwell, The Dug-out. Teachers at the conference were treated to free gallery admission, but I would have gone and soaked it up even if I had to pay the \$20.

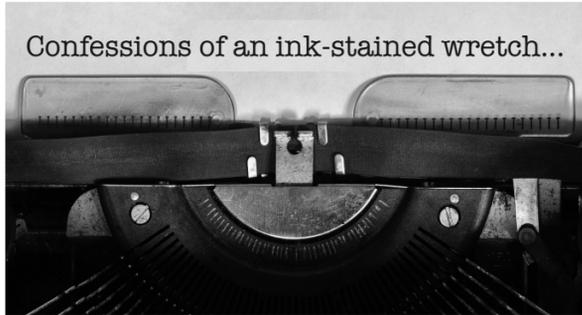
- Better late than never: I saw a touring production of Hamilton at a historic theater. My ticket was listed as “limited view,” but at a great discount it was worth missing a little side scene work to sit in the fourth row. It was every bit as good as the hype it’s received and I would go again tomorrow.

- Stopped in to the Chicago Architecture Center and admired their exhibits on its built history, a special display about Wrigley Field, and a 3D model of the whole city. They also had a temporary show of a UK artist who calls herself “The Disappointed Tourist,” creating a series of paintings of places that have been demolished and are no longer able to be experienced (e.g. the original Penn Station in New York, but also local gems). Look that up if you’ve ever felt like visiting somewhere that no longer exists.

- Ate at Lou Malnati’s pizza behind the Wrigley Building. It was possibly the best thin crust I’ve ever had, and I’ve eaten a lot of pizza. I love good pizza. Highly recommend. Also enjoyed a huge pretzel and house draft root beer at The Berghoff, a German restaurant that was close to the theater and has been since 1898. It wasn’t all fancy; I also ate lunch at Smash-Burger and had Garrett’s popcorn for supper one night.

- When I went back to the train station (this time in the daylight) I happened upon a group of people protesting the Iran situation. One of the most interesting parts of traveling to a major city is seeing things you don’t usually see in our rural area. I love to wander around and take it all in.

This was one of the best solo trips I’ve ever taken - an enriching conference experience, major museum visit, popular Broadway show, architecture tour, good food, and a room and bathroom to myself. I did spend much of the time thinking about how my family would have liked this or that, or I want to bring them back and share it with them. But that’s not going to prevent me from enjoying next year’s conference in New York on my own.



Attacks on Somalis harm all of us in the nation of immigrants

By Lee Egerstrom

The recent State of the Union (SOTU) message continued high-level attacks on Somali immigrants nationwide and especially on our neighbors here in Minnesota.

This old writer attended six SOTU annual messages in the U.S. Capitol Building in past years. Our opponents in the old Cold War were shown greater respect by Presidents Nixon, Ford and Carter.

This is painful for me because I am a World War II baby and grew up reading and writing during the Cold War. Because of those influences, I have heroes from both political parties in America who knew we are a nation of immigrants who rise up to protect each other when under stress from foreign and domestic assaults.

Since at least the year 2010 we've had the so-called "alt-right" white nationalism linking racism, bigotry, sexism and xenophobia with a global movement.

Wikipedia and different encyclopedias give different dates or origin. But people who fear the consequences of unified, multinational hate should take comfort in knowing that good people and political leaders have stood up to protect humanity and decency in the past.

Let me tell you about former Congressman Ancher Nelson (R-Minn.) He was a son of Danish immigrants. When Denmark's King Frederik IX died in 1972, President Nixon named Nelson to the official U.S. delegation representing our country at the king's funeral.

Onboard what was called Air Force One when the president was there were a handful of others who had either past ties to Denmark and the king, or held high-ranking positions showing proper U.S. respect.

They included Vice President Spiro Agnew, the son of Greek immigrants who was governor of Maryland before becoming vice president in 1969. Another was a Jewish holocaust immigrant in high political position whose name I can't recall. And still another was Allan Dulles who worked in national security intelligence in Europe during World War II and personally knew King Frederik.

A year later, when the House of Representatives was haphazardly working on an extension of a federal farm bill, I would meet with Nelson for a late dinner. His wife was hospitalized back in Minnesota. It was an emotional time for him and that prompted him to tell me about the night flight to Copenhagen.

He excused himself at one point and disappeared. After he went missing for a while, one member of the delegation went to check up on him. He was in the back of the plane crying.

Agnew, Dulles and the holocaust survivor gathered around him. He told them how 80 or so years earlier, down below their plane, his parents were in steerage in a cargo ship traveling to their new home in America. Now, the son of those immigrants, was traveling back the other way, in the presidential plane, representing the Nelson family's new country at the old country's royal funeral.

That, he said, was how he saw the beauty and promise of America!

Agnew, who had personal problems causing him to leave office later in a scandal, cried and hugged Nelson. He identified with what they had both achieved in one generation.

Dulles was also emotional, but he was no first generation American.

The spy master would serve as the second director of the Central Intelligence Agency. His older brother John Foster Dulles was President Eisenhower's secretary of state and an architect of America's response to the Cold War. They were eighth great-grandson descendants of William Brewster, a passenger on the Mayflower ship of original immigrants.

New and old America, together, enroute to pay homage to another hero of World War II - the king of Denmark.

The father, King Christian X, and Frederik were both technically under house arrest during the German occupation of Denmark. Both remained important symbols of Danish strength and resilience during that horrible time.

The father would ride proudly around Copenhagen on a horse. He was actually injured during a fall in 1942. Frederik took over as regent for his father in 1943 and succeeded as king when Christian died in 1947.

One of the greatest humanitarian efforts during the war and that horrible era of racism, bigotry, sexism and xenophobia of the past century was how Danish farmers and fishing crews rescued Danish jews, transferred them to Swedish fishing boats, thus finding ways to save their neighbors.

There are lessons from the Danes that should guide us all when Minnesota remains partly under siege by forces not exactly kind to ethnic and racial differences.

That was driven home to me by another event of the 1970s.

A founder of the American Indian Movement (AIM) from Minnesota, Clyde Bellecourt, spoke at a press conference at the National Press Club about white-indigenous relations. A reporter asked his thoughts about a racist congressman's call to round up the unhappy black African Americans and "ship them back to Africa."

Bellecourt pondered that a moment, then suggested it was a good idea if we did the same for all the "illegal aliens" living in North America. So that everyone might understand who that included, he suggested the roundup start with descendants of the Dulles family.

I may never have heard so much laughter at a press conference. Something like that would have helped at the State of the Union speech to support our Somali neighbors, and for all of humanity.

Kerkhoven native Lee Egerstrom, of Maplewood, is a mostly retired journalist and research fellow/author of books and research papers dealing with various aspects of economic development. He will write occasional pieces for the Banner, Herald and Review about his experiences covering politics and economics for Knight Ridder Newspapers.



Rathionalizing

By Ashley Rath

The wrestling mat and the tug-of-war in a parent's heart

We spent another weekend alongside the wrestling mat. If you've ever attended a youth wrestling tournament, you know it's an experience. The whistles, the cheering, the nervous pacing of parents, the quick bursts of action followed by the reset in the center of the circle. It's loud, emotional, and at times a little chaotic.

Wrestling is also a strange sport when you think about it. The entire goal is to turn your opponent onto his back. Getting there takes strategy, speed, strength, and incredibly precise technique. One small mistake can flip the entire match in seconds.

And if you're the wrestler stuck in a headlock or a tight half nelson, I can assure you it's not exactly comfortable.

Watching it as a parent creates its own complicated mix of emotions. Every instinct in me as a mother is wired to protect my kids. When they were babies, protection looked like holding their hand while they learned to walk or keeping them from touching a hot stove.

Now protection looks very different. Now it looks like sitting on the edge of a wrestling mat, watching them struggle.

And that creates a quiet tug-of-war inside a parent's heart. Part of you wants to rush in and rescue them when things get hard. You see their frustration when they lose a position, or the tears well up when the match doesn't go their way. Your heart aches a little. You want to tell them it's okay, that they don't have to do hard things.

But another part of you knows something important is happening. Wrestling is not just physical. In my opinion, it's about 90 percent mental. The athlete who stays calm, thinks clearly, and keeps trying often finds a way through.

And the same is true for life. My kids are still young, so there are still tears sometimes. Not from pain, but from disappointment.

Losing is hard. Feeling frustrated is hard. Re-

alizing someone else was better that match is hard.

But maybe those moments are exactly where resilience is built. Resilience isn't just about winning or climbing back to the top.

Sometimes resilience is simply getting back up when you're upset. Getting back up when you're tired. Getting back up when you didn't perform the way you hoped.

As parents, we walk a delicate line. We want to raise strong, capable young men who can handle adversity. But we also want them to remain kind, respectful, and compassionate.

The challenge is learning when to comfort and when to let them struggle. Because the truth is, strength doesn't grow in comfort. It grows in the moments when things are difficult and they choose to keep going anyway.

Watching from the sidelines isn't always easy. Sometimes the hardest part of parenting is not stepping in.

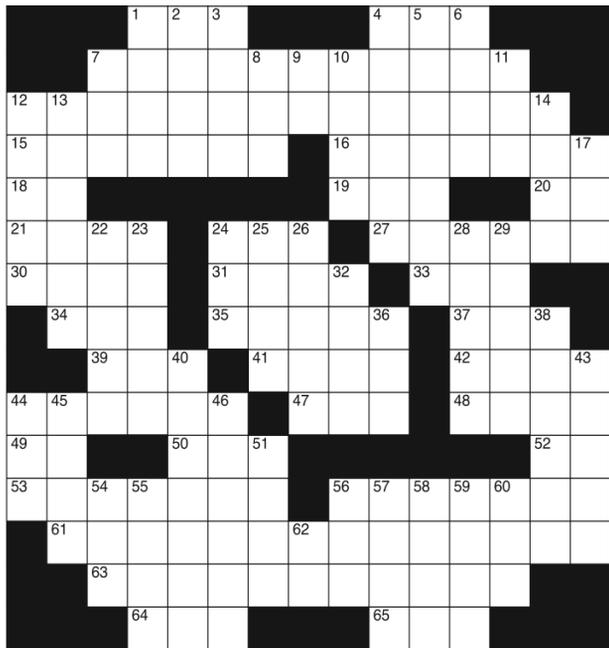
But maybe that's part of the lesson too. Life will put all of us on the mat at some point.

Our job as parents isn't to prevent every fall. It's to teach them how to stand back up.



CLUES ACROSS

1. Blockchain-based entity
4. A woolen cap of Scottish origin
7. Painted with glue
12. Legendary crooner
15. Structure made with strips of wood
16. Tropical fruits
18. Commercial
19. Comedienne Gastereyer
20. The Ocean State
21. Ancient Scot
24. Basics
27. Stated propositions
30. Scottish island group
31. Expression of annoyance
33. Large tree
34. Engine additive
35. Conspiracy
37. Drunkard
39. Someone who is morally reprehensible
41. Ancient Syrian city
42. Mild yellow Dutch cheese made in balls
44. Carry (slang)
47. Sweet potato
48. European river
49. The Golden State
50. Windy City ballplayer
52. New Testament
53. Possess spiritually
56. A treeless grassy plain
61. Popular historical novel
63. In a law-abiding way
64. A place to sleep
65. Criticize



- southeast
9. Chronic, progressive disease
 10. Chinese lute
 11. Not wet
 12. Moves wings up and down
 13. Communication devices
 14. Swiss river
 17. Female sibling
 22. Receive
 23. Relating to a type
 24. General's assistant (abbr.)
 25. Steep bank
 26. Taxi driver
 28. Moves into without difficulty
 29. Bicycle manufacturer
 32. Traditional rhythmic pattern
 36. Fugitives are on it
 38. Bitter-tasting organic substance

40. Die
43. Matched
44. Literary genre ___-fi
45. Cannot
46. Pounded
51. British rock group
54. Debt relief order
55. 2006 NL Cy Young winner
56. Green vegetable
57. Tough outer skin of fruit
58. ___ Spumante (Italian wine)
59. Ailments
60. Famed singer Charles
62. Camper

CLUES DOWN

1. Impression in a surface
2. Computer language
3. Relating to the ear
4. Occupant
5. Member of Great Plains people
6. Social media firm
7. Digital audiotape
8. Midway between east and

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

Fun By The Numbers

Like puzzles? Then you'll love sudoku. This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your sudoku savvy to the test!

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!

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E S R R N S N G M U A D P G K P V E D K
 R V V A I D T R S I D B W E W R P L D U
 W F L L W I R O D A E P D N T R R H K U
 E F L A U K J U V E N E E R I I E S R V
 R F A C V S S T S N J R U V L A F I B P
 H L R V F H B A C K S P L A S H R F V B
 D I D W U I R R S G P K M V M J L D O H
 C W A O G M K N W T M L W K F J J K S S
 C G L F E N I W J G A C J O I S T D J C
 S E K H B H I M F E T N W H O K T W C F
 V U S T G H B H P R O T C A R T N O C R
 S P H U D L L P S V V L G A W V H F D K
 P U O R E E A B W A J R S N S V T S D E
 M R B H P B G A S T L L P E I I D G O I
 E U A F R B L M I C H F W O P D N A I I
 U J C U L L J E D A A L U T G I L G O H
 C L C B S O L P I I H T U T W V P I U L
 W J E C V G O N N E L A H W I U H V U I
 F J U B E L L R G E L K V T I M R E P B
 M O L D I N G B T B G B L I M R A R H T

WORDS

- BACKSLASH
- BUILDING
- CASING
- CIRCUIT
- CONTRACTOR
- CURB APPEAL
- DRAIN
- FLASHING
- GROUT
- JOIST
- LOAD
- MOLDING
- OUTLET
- PERMIT
- PIPES
- ROUGH-IN
- SHIM
- SIDING
- SILL
- SOFFIT
- SUBFLOOR
- VALVE
- VENEER
- WALLS

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

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 Pastor Katherine Rood
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 David Dauk, Pastor
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 nordlandlutheranchurch.org
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 NordlandLutheranChurch

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 Pastor Shari Routh
 Sunday, March 15: Lent 4 - Holy Communion 8:45am Worship at First, 9:45am Sunday School at First, 11am Worship at East, 12pm Fist Communion

Instruction at East; Tuesday, March 17: 1pm "Gather" Women's Bible Study at First; Wednesday, March 18: 9am "Your First Coffee" at First, 11am Strength & Balance Training at First, 5:30pm Meal served by the "Norway Lake Bobbers" team at First, 7pm Midweek Lent 4 Worship at First; Thursday, March 19: 11am Newsletter Deadline.

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North 40 Campus
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 Deacon: Amanda Randall
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 Pastor Tony Ferreira
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 Saturday Church Service: 11 a.m.

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OBITUARIES

Baylor Michael Sietsema, 9-week-old

Baylor Michael Sietsema, beloved 9-week-old infant son of Brennen and Courtney (Edwards) Sietsema, was unexpectedly called home to heaven on March 3, 2026 at his home in Sartell. Visitation occurred on Monday, March 9, 2026 at Harvey Anderson & Johnson Funeral Home in New London from 5-7 pm. A private family service occurred on Tuesday with a burial at Our Lady of the Lakes Cemetery in New London. In lieu of flowers, memorials are preferred.



Baylor Sietsema

Baylor Michael Sietsema was born on December 26, 2025, in St. Cloud, the son of Brennen and Courtney (Edwards) Sietsema. Even before he arrived, he was deeply cherished. The day Baylor entered the world; our hearts grew with a joy we never thought possible.

From the very beginning, Baylor's bright, beautiful eyes lit up every room. As he grew, his sweet and calm personality began to shine through. His gentle coos brought so much joy to everyone around him. Baylor adored snuggles and sleeping in the arms of loved ones, and he would smile when he received kisses on his chubby cheeks from his adoring mom.

Baylor was often comforted by the warmth of his Dad, something they both had in common was that they run hot! Of all the experiences he had, the loving embrace of his parents was his favorite. The immeasurable love he experienced here on earth will forever be cherished.

Baylor was loved and adored by his big brother, Cohen. In his short time with us, Baylor was always snuggled, held, and kissed with so much love from his brother.

Sweet baby Baylor was pure happiness. He was the kind of baby every parent hopes for—full of light, gentleness, and boundless love. Each day he was surrounded by the warm embrace of his parents, his big brother, and his extended family. Baylor was taken too soon, and a piece of every soul he touched went with him. He will forever be greatly missed, deeply loved, and tenderly remembered by all who loved him and cared for him.

It is with heavy hearts that we honor and say goodbye to our precious baby boy. In the embrace of family and the arms of Jesus, baby Baylor is survived by his parents, Brennen & Courtney; his big brother, Cohen; his loving grandparents, Mike & Sue Edwards and Drew & LuAnn Sietsema; great-grandmother Carol Edwards; aunts and uncles Hailey Olson, Ethen & Brooke Sietsema, and Gaven & Laura Sietsema; cousins Oliver, Elijah, Emery, Emmett, and Piper; and many other family members and friends.

Though his time with us was brief, Baylor's life was completely filled with love.

"Let the little children come to me... for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." — Matthew 19:14

Jane M. Hedin, 80

Jane M. Hedin, 80, of New London, died Sunday, March 1st at CentraCare - Rice Memorial Hospital in Willmar. Her memorial service occurred 11:00 am, Saturday, March 14th at Bethel Lutheran Church in Willmar with visitation one hour prior to the service. Interment will be at a later date in Bethel Lutheran Cemetery. Funeral arrangements are with Harvey Anderson & Johnson Funeral Home.



Jane Hedin

Jane was born February 23, 1946, in Willmar, the daughter of Oscar B. and Phyllis (Lundquist) Augustson. She grew up in Willmar, graduated from Willmar High School and then continued her education at Gustavus Adolphus College where she graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education. She returned to Willmar where she taught for four years before staying home to raise her children.

On January 12, 1973, she was united in marriage to Paul Hedin at Bethel Lutheran Church where she remained a lifetime member. They lived in Willmar while raising their children. In 1992, they moved to Lake Andrew, the same lake where Jane had spent her summers as a child at her family cabin.

Jane was an avid exerciser, whether she was walking, snowshoeing, or cross-country skiing, she could always be seen out and about around Lake Andrew and Sibley State Park. Jane even earned the nickname, "Mrs. Sibley." She also worked for a short time at the Sibley State Park store. She and Paul shared a deep love of the outdoors. Whether hiking, skiing, snowshoeing, or enjoying peaceful evenings on the boat, they found joy in nature together. Though they traveled to wonderful places like London and Hawaii, one of their favorite getaways was the North Shore of Lake Superior. Their shared love of nature was a defining part of their life together.

While Jane's grandchildren shared many adventures with their grandma, some of their most treasured memories of her were the simple, everyday moments they spent together.

Zachary - "I remember grandma sitting at the kitchen table in the mornings, doing the daily crossword puzzle with her dictionary."

Benjamin - "I would sneak out of bed early when grandma stayed with us, so I could play cards with grams in the morning."

Sadie - "I remember drinking pineapple juice and eating fruit while grandma did her crossword puzzles. Grandma and I would play Gin Rummy and she gave me a block to hold all my cards in."

Jane is survived by her husband, Paul, of 53 years; children, Ryan (Jessica) Hedin of Sartell, Stephanie (Tim) Gross of Maple Grove; three grandchildren, Zachary (Mary) Hedin, Ben Whiteis, and Sadie (Max) May, one great-grandchild, Maverick Hedin. Also surviving are her sister, Joan Kodet of Willmar; brother-in-law, Don Heath of New London; sisters-in-law, Nancy Augustson of Spicer and Jackie Augustson of Willmar.

She was preceded in death by her parents; siblings, Judy Heath, Jerry Augustson, Jennifer Augustson, John Augustson; brother-in-law, Ron Kodet; nieces, Karin and Anne Augustson and son-in-law, Michael Whiteis.

Does your church have an upcoming event? Let us know!
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SENIOR MENU	Mon. Mar. 16	Tues. Mar. 17	Wed. Mar. 18	Thur. Mar. 19	Fri. Mar. 20
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Are We at War?
 "Among the calamities of war, may be justly numbered the diminution of the love of truth, by the falsehoods which interest dictates, and credulity encourages." Samuel Johnson [1709-1784] The Idler, no. 30.
 On the morning of this writing, according to our Secretary of War, over three thousand bombs or missiles have been fired into Iran. We have taken out their leader, Grand Ayatollah Khamenei, and large portions of his cabinet. Are we not at war? Our President has called it an excursion. It sure feels like war.
 I remember during the first Gulf War, preparing for possible deployment to the Middle East by putting on my gas mask and chemical suit, repeatedly. I remember how quiet St. Cloud State was as Stealth Bombers made their attack runs over Kuwait into Iraq. That felt like the start of war - even if it ended quickly. Are we not at war? It sure feels like war.
 I remember the start of the Iraq War in 2003. We were talking about regime change. Iraq was a long way from the Pakistani mountains where Osama Bin Laden was found. We went into Iraq anyway, with lightning-fast forces and took over the country. It was dangerous when I was deployed as a chaplain in 2008-2009. But we had hope! The Iraqi people voted for the first time while I was there. It

PASTOR'S CORNER

By Pastor Timothy W. Routh
 Faith Lutheran, Spicer

was amazing to witness. Isis collapsed upon the people of Iraq and their government after I returned. To recover from war is extremely difficult.

We are now living in the year 2026. Our fellow citizens and service members have served during this time of conflict. Some have died. I grieve deeply for them and their families. It sure feels like war.

I look forward to the day when God "makes wars cease to the end of the earth; breaks the bow and shatters the spear; burns the shields with fire," (Psalm 46). Until then, I pray for peace in our world, protection for our military, and honesty in our judgments.

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble," (Psalm 46).
 God be with you.

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OBITUARIES

Joann Ryks, 89

Joann would like everyone to know that her work here on Earth is done. She received a call from God on Wednesday, March 4, 2026; at the age of 89, while living at the Bethesda Grand in Willmar, Minnesota.

A graveside service will be held at 1:00 p.m. on Thursday, March 19 at the Fairview Cemetery in Raymond, Minnesota. Arrangements are entrusted to the Peterson Brothers Funeral Home.

Joann Beecroft Ryks was born in New London to Jerome and Rhoda (King) Beecroft on July 18, 1936. She was the oldest of nine siblings.

Joann met George Ryks while working at Jennie-O Foods in Willmar, Minnesota. They were married at the Christian Reform Church in Raymond, Minnesota on August 26, 1955, and lived in an apartment in Willmar.

In 1958, they moved to their first home in New London, Minnesota. Here they raised three children: James, Jeffrey, and Julie. Joann worked in several restaurants and was well-known for being a fine cook. She delighted in preparing tasty food to share with family and friends. Teaching herself to cook via her vast cookbook collection and newspaper clippings. She loved the outdoors, gardening, and yearly visits to We Fest.

In 1976, the Ryks moved to Norway Lake and here is where Joann retired. Joann was extremely family oriented and held a special bond with her numerous nieces and nephews. She spent time organizing family get-togethers for birthdays preparing favorite foods everyone asked for. If not surrounded by family, Joann's kind heart was apparent as she volunteered for the Wick Program in St. Cloud, Minnesota for several years.

Joann leaves behind sons: James (Carey Thompson) and Jeffrey (Julie Klint); sisters: Elaine Ceyson, Darlene Nielson, Susan Beecroft, and Lela (Wally) Carlson; brother: Wayne (Barbara) Beecroft; three amazing grandchildren: Chris (Courtney) Ryks, Nicholas (partner Cassie), and Jacob (Sarah) Hanson; and 3 delightful great-grandchildren: Harper, Oliver, and Freya.

United with husband, George; daughter, Julie Evans; brothers: Paul, William, and Tony.



Joann Ryks

PUBLIC NOTICES

NOTICE

UHF Television Inc. Annual Business Meeting
Thursday, March 19, 2026
7:00 PM
Willmar Municipal Utilities
700 Litchfield Ave SW
Willmar, MN 56201
All members are welcome.

(Published on March 7 & 14, 2026)

TOWNSHIP OF LAKE ANDREW

NOTICE OF MEETING DATE CHANGE

The scheduled Re-Organizational meeting of the Board of Lake Andrew Township is rescheduled from Tuesday, March 17 th to the regular meeting date of March 24th at 7 PM at the town hall.

Bonnie Watson, Clerk
(Published on March 14, 2026)

Township of Arctander Important Information Regarding Property Assessments

This may affect your 2027 property taxes

The Board of Appeal and Equalization for the Township of Arctander in Kandiyohi County, Minnesota, will meet from 1:00 to 1:30 p.m. on Thursday April 9th, 2026 at the E. Norway Lake Church (Fellowship Hall). The purpose of this meeting is to determine whether property in the jurisdiction has been properly valued and classified by the assessor.

If you believe the value or classification of your property is incorrect, please contact your assessor's office to discuss your concerns. If you disagree with the valuation or classification after discussing it with your assessor, you may appear before the local Board of Appeal and Equalization. The board will review your assessments and make corrections as needed. Generally, you must appeal to the local board before appealing to the county Board of Appeal and Equalization

Lynsey Pierce
Clerk of the Township of Arctander

(Published on March 14 & 27, 2026)

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

IMPORTANT INFORMATION REGARDING PROPERTY ASSESSMENTS

Notice is hereby given, That the Board of Appeal and Equalization of the City of New London in Kandiyohi County, Minnesota, will meet 5:30 - 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday April 8, 2026, at the New London City Hall, 10 Ash Street S.E. The purpose of this meeting is to determine whether property in the jurisdiction has been properly valued and classified by the assessor. If you believe the value or classification of your property is incorrect, please contact your assessor's office to discuss your concerns. If you disagree with the valuation or classification after discussing it with your assessor, you may appear before the local Board of Appeal and Equalization. The board will review your assessments and make corrections as needed. Generally, you must appeal to the local board before appealing to the county Board of Appeal and Equalization.

Emily Thielen
Clerk-Treasurer of the City of New London

(Published on March 14 & 21, 2026)

PROBATE

STATE OF MINNESOTA COUNTY OF KANDIYOHI DISTRICT COURT EIGHTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT Court File No.: 34-PR-26-17

In Re: Estate of Marilyn I. Sandahl, Decedent.

NOTICE OF AND ORDER FOR HEARING ON PETITION FOR FORMAL PROBATE OF WILL AND APPOINTMENT OF PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE

AND NOTICE TO CREDITORS

It is Ordered and Notice is given that on 4/22/2026 at 8:30 a.m., a hearing will be held in this Court at 505 Becker Avenue SW, Willmar, MN 56201, on a petition for the formal probate of an instrument purporting to be the Decedent's Will dated October 19, 1990, and for the appointment of Dale A. Sandahl, whose address is 4560 Kenaitze Ct, Kenai, AK 99611 as personal representative of the decedent's estate in an unsupervised administration.

Any objections to the petition must be raised at the hearing or filed with the Court prior to the hearing. If the petition is proper and no objections are filed or raised, the personal representative will be appointed with the full power to administer the decedent's estate, including the power to collect all assets; pay all legal debts, claims, taxes, and expenses; sell real and personal property; and do all necessary acts for the decedent's estate.

Notice is further given that, subject to Minn. Stat. § 524.3-801, all creditors having claims against the decedent's estate are required to present the claims to the personal representative or to the Court within four (4) months after the date of this notice or the claims will be barred.

Dated: Feb 27, 2026

BY THE COURT /s/ Amy Doll Judge of District Court

Kristal Dahlager (MN#0393602)
Anderson Larson Saunders
Klaassen Dahlager & Leitch, PLLP
331 SW Third Street
Willmar Minnesota 56201
Telephone: (320) 235-4313
Facsimile: (320) 235-8180

(Published on March 7 & 14, 2026)

STATE OF MINNESOTA COUNTY OF KANDIYOHI

DISTRICT COURT EIGHTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT PROBATE DIVISION

Court File No.: 34-PR-26-16

In Re: Estate of Wayne Sherman Orson, Decedent.

NOTICE AND ORDER OF HEARING ON PETITION FOR PROBATE OF WILL AND APPOINTMENT OF PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE AND NOTICE TO CREDITORS

It is Ordered and Notice is given that on April 15, 2026 at 8:30 a.m., a hearing will be held in this Court at Kandiyohi County Courthouse, 505 Becker Avenue SW, Willmar, MN 56201, Minnesota, for the formal probate of an instrument purporting to be the Will of the Decedent, dated September 24, 1999, and for the appointment of Marlys Bjur, whose address is 24601 CSAH 1, Litchfield MN 55355 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.

A charitable beneficiary may request notice of the probate proceedings be given to the Attorney General pursuant to Minnesota Statutes section 501B.41, subdivision 5.

Dated: Feb 25, 2026

BY THE COURT /s/ Amy Doll Judge of District Court

Attorney for Personal Representative
Dawn M. Weber
Attorney at Law P.A.
P.O. Box 303
New London, MN 56273
Attorney License No: 0306125
320-354-3330
attorneydawnweber@yahoo.com

(Published on March 7 & 14, 2026)

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SPORTS

Epic 24 point rally against Fairmont earns NLS a state trip

GIRLS BASKETBALL

By Bruce Strand
Sports Reporter

In the storied history of NLS girls basketball, there may never have been a more stirring rally than the one Thursday evening that landed the Wildcats in the state tournament.

The girls asked coach Mike Dreier about that, the next day, Taylor Munsch said. Did any of his teams before ever pull off a rally like that? He responded, Munsch reports, that it was one of the biggest comebacks he'd ever seen, period.

NLS trailed 23-6 early — yes, 23-6 — against a Fairmont team with a 28-2 record in the Section 3AA finals at Southwest State.

The Wildcats regrouped, and pulled within 31-25 at the half, but Fairmont and its brilliant senior Brylie Miller stayed in front most of the second half. After a Bria Williamson hook shot, Fairmont led 54-48 with just over three minutes left.

Then NLS caught fire while Fairmont went cold. The Wildcats reeled off the last 13 points to overtake the Cardinals 61-54.

By winning a matchup of the two best records in Class 2A, the Wildcats improved to 29-1 heading into their 22nd state tournament.

"Everything seemed to go right the last two minutes. Why that was I really can't say," Dreier said. "They (Fairmont) had some good looks but couldn't make them."

The first eight minutes of the game, by contrast, were a disaster.

"All the points we made to the girls before the game seemed to never have been stated," Dreier chuckled. Captains Ayla Caskey and Munsch both admitted to a bad case of "nerves" at the outset.

"We were scared," Munsch said. "We had a time-out and we said, okay, it's all or nothing now. If we want to get to state, we have to start right now. We have to control the ball better."

Said Dreier in a halftime interview: "All of a sudden it dawned on them



Photo by Bruce Strand

NLS showed much grit and determination in coming from behind to clip Fairmont by seven points, 61-54 in the Class 2A Section 3A championship game. The win propels the squad to its 22nd state tournament appearance. Senior Ayla Caskey earned Class 2A 2026 All-State honors, as voted on by the Minnesota Girls Basketball Association.

that they were playing in a game that could get them to the state tournament."

That was definitely the case again at the end of the game.

Korbin Tanner started the 13-0 run with a basket from the lane. Munsch snagged a defensive rebound and flipped the ball to Caskey, who sped coast to coast for a layup. Paycen Rutgers swished a 3-pointer from the wing that gave NLS its first lead at 55-54.

After Fairmont missed a three, Caskey boldly launched a shot from several feet outside the arc. It was a bulls-eye to make it 58-54.

"Taylor set me up really nice," said Caskey. "I was open and I just let it fly. I knew it was going in as soon as I shot it."

Moments later, Tanner grabbed an offensive rebound with her back to the basket and gracefully twisted her 74 inches to flip in another field goal. Fairmont had to start fouling. Katelyn

Delzer sank one of two free shots for the final margin.

"By halftime," said Munsch, "we knew it was do-able, if we just worked together like we have all season."

Brylee Miller, a smooth, explosive 5-foot-11 guard signed by MN-Mankato, the best player NLS has faced all season, accounted for 24 points, 20 rebounds, six steals, six assists and three blocked shots. Williamson added 18 points.

"Miller a just great player," Dreier said. "Mankato State will be smiling when they get her." Added Caskey: "I've played with Brylee in AAU with Rise. She's a very funny, very nice, very caring person. And an awesome player."

For NLS, Tanner, 6-foot-2 freshman, scored 18 points with her remarkable agility in the lane. Caskey, swift senior guard, sank 15 points, mostly with darts to the hoop before the huge 3-pointer. Rutgers, eighth-grade forward, went 3-for-3 on three's in

the second half and finished with 12 points. Munsch added seven points, six assists, five rebounds and three steals.

"Paycen has played very well all year, but never with quite this much flair," said Dreier about her cool-headed contribution to the rally.

Caskey, asked about the junior-high talent, said, "Korbin and Paycen played a lot more AAU ball than most of the players, so I knew they could be very good. I expected a lot from them. I pushed them a lot in practice."

Fairmont was section runner-up last year, too, behind Minnewaska Area. Against NLS, things were going great until they came up empty their last seven possessions.

"I just felt like we got too tight in the end," Cardinal coach Sara Junkermeier told the Fairmont Sentinel. "We played loose the entire game, then down the stretch we just got real tight, and we sank both offensively and defensively. We gave up some

huge transition layups and three's, and you just can't do that with a team like that."

NLS 25 36 — 61
Fairmont 31 23 — 54

New London-Spicer Statistics — 25-61 FG (5-17 3FG), 6-12 FT, 37 rebounds, 14 turnovers, 12 fouls ... **Scoring:** Taylor Munsch 7 (5r, 6a, 3s, 1b), Ayla Caskey 15 (2r, 4a, 2s), Korbin Tanner 18 (8r, 1b), Katelyn Delzer 1 (10r, 1a), Roxanne Klein 2 (6r, 1a, 1b), Kyla Vick 6, Paycen Rutgers 12 (4r, 1a), Ezri Boelter 0 (2r) ... **3-pointers:** Caskey 1, Vick 1, Rutgers 3.

Fairmont Statistics — 21-52 FG (2-12 3FG), 10-13 FT, 32 rebounds, 13 turnovers, 16 fouls ... **Scoring:** Brynlee Miller 24 (20r, 6a, 6s, 3b), Gwyneth Schultz 8, Madilyn Thompson 3, Bria Williamson 18, Kaylee Kloeckner 2.

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

New London-Spicer outscrapes Minnehaha 53-48 at state tourney

STATE TOURNAMENT

By Bruce Strand
Sports Reporter

Minnehaha Academy, New London-Spicer's first-round foe in the state tournament Wednesday night, started a junior, sophomore, freshman and two eighth-graders, and while Redhawks may have been young, they were not the least bit bashful or timid.

The Minneapolis squad threw a fierce full-court press at NLS the whole game and

the Wildcats got off to a shaky start, trailing 18-12 at one point, but gradually wrested control from the Redhawks enough to pull out a 53-48 win at Maturi Pavilion.

Taylor Munsch, who supplied 16 points, mostly on hard-earned layups, and a terrific floor game, just two turnovers despite constant pressure, said NLS was never worried.

"We were behind 23-6 against Fairmont," the senior guard grinned. "We knew we just had to calm down and take care of the ball."

Korbin Tanner, jostled hard

by the Redhawks all game, frequently double teamed, tallied 17 points and 14 rebounds. She had five shots blocked, but was also fouled eight times and went 7-for-10 at the line.

"They were tall and lanky, and we knew they would play physical," the 6-foot-2 freshman said, "so we just had to play just as physical back."

The victory got NLS into the semifinals (and on state-wide television) against Duluth Marshall on Friday evening, with top-ranked Providence Academy facing Perham in the other semifinal. The championship will be Saturday, 6 p.m., at Williams Arena.

Ayla Caskey was scoreless for over 20 minutes but came up with eight points the rest of the way. Roxanne Klein added eight points on 4-for-6 shooting.

For the Redhawks, Briana Foster notched 13 points and three steals, Gigi Coleman eight points and six rebounds, Shea Watkins seven points, seven rebounds and five blocks, and Danasia Anderson nine points and five assists.

NLS usually has big edges in rebounds, turnovers and 3-pointers, but the Redhawks were dead even in the first two and went 6-for-14 on three's while NLS was skunked for the first time all season, going 0-for-8. NLS's edge came on free shots, going 15-for-24 to Minnehaha's 4-for-9. The Redhawks were whistled for 20 fouls and NLS for 12.

Redhawks coach Kendall Givens was complimented on his team's tenacity in contesting every shot, dribble and rebound. He nodded his head and smiled, "Yes, that's what we do. But it cost us tonight,



Photos by Bruce Strand

Top left: Taylor Munsch drives toward the lane with Redhawks defender on her. Munsch sank 16 points. Right: Korbin Tanner eyes the hoop before going for two of her 17 points.

in the foul count. But I'm not criticizing the referees. I don't do that."

NLS was up 33-32 when they started to pull away. Munsch made a steal and sped away for a layup. Moments later Tanner muscled up for a basket in the lane, and Paycen Rutgers rebounded a missed 3-pointer and scored, making it 41-35.

When the Redhawks closed to 43-40, Munsch made a highlight-reel play; she out-leapt a defender to catch a long inbounds pass near mid-court, then spun away and sliced through the lane to score on a soft layup. Another drive down the middle, this one by Caskey, made it 49-42 with 1:30 left. The Wildcats kept trying in vain to hit a big 3-pointer but made enough steals (15 in the game), rebounds and free shots to stay five to seven points ahead.

Coach Mike Dreier let Tanner and Munsch do the talking in the post-game press con-

ference. When finally asked his impression of the game, he smiled, shrugged and said simply, "I'm their biggest fan."

The Redhawks are 18-12, their schedule loaded with strong metro opponents, including Providence Academy twice. Givens said they have a hard time getting other Class 2A teams to play them so they face a lot of 3A and 4A.

"We would like to get another shot at New London-Spicer next year," Givens said. "We're hoping we can line up a game."

In the other quarterfinals, top-ranked Providence Academy blitzed Norwood Young America Central 103-68 with their megastar Maddy Greenway scoring 53 points; Perham edged Rochester Loures 66-63; and Duluth Marshall topped Sauk Centre 65-38 as super soph Chloe Johnson nailed 35 points.

Min Acad 21 27 — 48

NLS 23 30 — 53

Minnehaha Academy Statistics — 19-54 FG (6-14 3FG), 4-9 FT, 34 rebounds, 20 turnovers, 20 fouls ... **Scoring:** Gigi Coleman 8 (6r, 2a, 2s), Georgia Watkins 2 (5r), Shea Watkins 7 (7r, 4s, 5b), Briana Foster 13 (6r, 3s), Danasia Anderson 9 (4r, 5a, 1b), Addison Harris 6 (3b), Clarissa Ross 3 ... **3-pointers:** Coleman 1-3, Foster 2-4, Anderson 3-5.

New London-Spicer Statistics — 20-56 FG (0-8 3FG), 15-24 FT, 34 rebounds, 12 fouls, 19 turnovers ... **Scoring:** Taylor Munsch 16 (7r, 2a, 4s), Ayla Caskey 8 (2r, 4s, 1a), Korbin Tanner 17 (14r, 2a, 1s), Katelyn Delzer 2 (4r, 1a, 2s), Roxanne Klein 8 (4r, 1s), Paycen Rutgers 4 (3r, 1a, 3s) ... **3-pointers:** none.

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

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Photo by Ruth Schaefer

Crews recently started working on the Calhoun Lake Arch Rapids project to replace the existing dam structure on the lake. The project also entails installing a new bridge across the outlet.

Keeping our lakes clean! Middle Fork Crow River Watershed District promotes water quality

By Amy Gronli
Features Writer

Soft rains and rivulets of meltwater from icy patches and snowbanks are welcome sights as spring replaces winter. All that water is subject to gravity's rule, however, and the path of least resistance will be the chosen one as it flows from higher to lower ground. As water trickles downhill and seeps into the ground, it can unfortunately carry a host of things that can harm the world, including the lakes so cherished in our region.

"During the spring, we find that everything on our roads, our driveways, and ditches typically gets washed into our rivers and streams," said Erin Vruwink, Water Resources Specialist with the Middle Fork Crow River Watershed District (MFCRWD), during a February 27 interview. "That typically includes road salt, sand, dirt, trash, leaves, grass clippings, and much more. Each of these elements, when they get brought into our waterways can have a very severe impact."

Vruwink explained that salt is an especially harmful pollutant that can make the homes of aquatic life less inhabitable, and that one teaspoon of salt can permanently pollute five gallons of water. While winter might be technically over on March 20, Minnesotans know Mother Nature doesn't always pay attention to a calendar.

Sidewalks and streets must be cleaned up after spring snowstorms, but using "smart salting" techniques from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency can help mitigate nega-

tive effects of snow clearance on the environment. Early, physical removal of snow and ice with shovels, snow blowers, and scrapers reduces the amount of salt needed for further treatment.

Using the right amount of salt and applying it where it's effective is another strategy to minimize pollution. Applying salt to areas prone to icing over and not applying to bare pavement are good rules to follow, as is using only one pound of salt (what fits in a twelve-ounce coffee cup) over the area of ten sidewalk squares or one parking spot.

Using the right product, either rock salt when pavement is at least 15°F or magnesium chloride, potassium acetate, or calcium chloride at colder temperatures, is also recommended to make applications most effective.

Using sand as an alternative surface treatment to provide traction, no matter the temperature, is also a strategy for reducing the amount of salt introduced into the environment. How people respond to snow and ice has a major effect on the bodies of water that so many plants and animals depend on for their survival.

"How salt salinizes our lakes and streams has an impact on aquatic life because fish can't reproduce and live in waters that have excess salt and nutrients," Vruwink said. "That's why we push for people to clean up their lawns, use [as little] salt as possible, because if you have all those extra nutrients and salt going into waterways, you're not going to have

as many fish."

Vruwink explained that debris that enters waterways can overload the environment with phosphorus. An excess of phosphorus can promote the overgrowth of weeds and invasive species and increase the risk of algae blooms: conditions that can hinder recreational activities like boating, fishing, and swimming. Vruwink recommended that people check out the Adopt-A-Drain program to learn some helpful tips on how to keep harmful debris out of waterways as rain and meltwater start to flow down streets.

"It's really cool, because people can adopt a drain within their area, and it shows them how to clean up litter and helps keep sand, salt, leaves, grass clippings, and all that other debris out of your storm drains. It allows you to monitor your storm drain, clean it up, and then report back. At the end of the year, they'll give reports and show how much salt or trash has been cleaned up from our streams."

The program's official website (mn.adopt-a-drain.org) shows that several drains in New London and Spicer are still waiting to be adopted, and it provides easy instructions on how to adopt a drain and keep it clear. Even people who do not live near a lake, river, or storm drain can impact the health of waterways by being conscientious about how they treat their environment.

"Everything is interconnected," Vruwink explained. "How watersheds work is you have all this water that's draining from high points, and then it's going

to meet in a lower point. Eventually, all that water is going to meet up somewhere."

Picking up litter, applying chemicals around homes and businesses sparingly, and protecting storm drains are small steps people can take to promote water quality. Anyone interested in the health of local waterways and MFCRWD's ongoing projects, such as the New London Hydrogen Sulfide Survey, the installation of rock arch rapids and renovation of a bridge on Lake Calhoun, and bank stabilization along County Ditch 47, can attend the Lakes Area Conference on March 24 at the Dethlefs Center in Spicer.

At the event, local experts will discuss how to protect and enhance area lakes, and representatives from the Minnesota Land Trust, DNR, MFCRWD, and other organizations will be present. Question and answer sessions will follow presentations on case studies, and updates on local concerns like conservation easements, native habitat restoration, the impacts of wake boats, and starchy stone-

ware. "It's a great opportunity for lake residents and others who care about their lakes just to connect, ask questions, and then learn more about local efforts on how to protect our waterways," Vruwink said.

To learn more about the watershed's role in protecting waterways, people can visit mfcrow.org or call the MFCRWD office at (320) 796-0888. RSVPs for the event (preferably received by March 9) can be sent to ruth56288@gmail.com.



Photo by Leah Melges

Andy Johnson installed a "David Buoy" in the Middle Fork of the Crow River to measure oxygen levels in the water body. Low oxygen levels lead to the emission of hydrogen sulfide, which results in the "Mill Pond Stink" in the spring when the ice melts.

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