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WASECA COUNTY PIONEER

LOCAL COMMUNITY-DRIVEN NEWSPAPER SERVING ALL OF WASECA COUNTY

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Legacy

Murder suspect arrested

Police have charged Jason Lee Horner, 38, in the shooting and killing of Sabrina Lee Schnoor, 25, of Elysian, who was found dead under the I-35 overpass in Owatonna the night of Tuesday, May 30. According to police reports, she died of a gunshot wound in what was believed to be a “targeted attack.”

Horner was identified Friday, June 2, and taken into custody Sunday morning from an apartment building in Waseca. Horner has been booked into the Steele County Jail on charges of suspicion of second-degree murder with intent (not premeditated). Because he was convicted of a 2018 felony burglary in Mower County, Horner is also ineligible to possess a firearm, and so he has also been charged with illegal possession of one. His criminal history includes convictions of domestic assault and aiding and abetting second-degree assault.

Stacia Schnoor, mother of Sabrina Schnoor, issued a statement early Saturday, June 3. It reads:

“First our family wants to thank all of the people who have reached out to us. Thank you for the outpour of love, kindness, and prayers.

“We also want to thank the Owatonna police department and all involved in the investigation. You have been working so

Suspect continued on 13

Thirty-third annual FCA Sports Camp set for Aug. 1-3

The thirty-third annual Waseca Fellowship of Christian Athletes Jr. Sports Camp is set for August 1-3, 2023 for athletes entering grades 3-8. Registration online at www.minnesotafca.org/waseca-jsc.

Pat Utz benefit June 24 at Purple Goose

Pat Utz cancer benefit beginning at noon Saturday, June 24 at Janesville’s Purple Goose.

Cash donations can be submitted to GoFundme - Utz Cancer Benefit. Donations also accepted at Elysian Bank - Pat Utz Fundraiser.

Fire Department fish fry June 24 at 4 p.m.

The Waseca Firefighters’ fish fry and fundraiser begins at 4 p.m. Saturday, June 24.

Fish served until 7 p.m. or gone.

Use north doors of Waseca Fire Department, 303 S. State Street.

Waseca County Farmers Market opens June 3

Waseca County Farmers Market at 409 8th Ave. NE in Waseca will be open Saturdays from 8 a.m. until noon until October.

A word from The Word



I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Philippians 4:13

Mayor charged with perjury

By ELI LUTGENS
Publisher

On May 31, 2023, Waseca Mayor Randy Zimmerman was charged in Waseca County Court with two felony counts of perjury. The court complaint alleged that Zimmerman committed perjury by signing his name to a voter registration form which included false information, implying that he was maintaining a residence within city limits, thus making it legal for him to run for a city office or vote in the registered district.

The court complaint states that Zimmerman did not live within

“It’s really unfortunate. I knew from the get-go that it wouldn’t be an easy process.”

— Mayor Randy Zimmerman

Waseca city limits 30 days before the 2022 general election, during which he was elected as the city’s mayor, an office he still holds.

Zimmerman maintains he did nothing wrong. “It’s really unfortunate,” he said. “I knew from the get-go, that [getting elected] wouldn’t be an easy process. The fact that I [was] tells me that the community wants and deserves progress. I put myself out there to try and deliver that.”

Zimmerman said he is cooperating fully with the investigation and is awaiting legal advice.

Charges originate from a form filed in early October of 2022; Zimmerman filed a change of address with the United States Postal Service

stating his new address would start October 5, 2022 at 313 4th Ave. NE, Waseca, a property owned by his mother. His previous address was located in Woodville Township.

A memorandum distributed to city council members Friday states that the mayor has a right to a presumption of innocence,

Zimmerman continued on 4



Zimmerman

WHS class of 2023

‘We did it’ Bluejays celebrate graduation

By MICHAEL ROY
Editor

“We made it” was a central message echoed by all four 2023 graduates who spoke during the June 4 commencement ceremony: Avery Madsen, Jenaro Delgado Jr., Lindsey Kopetzki, and Aubree Hansen.

Of the 143 students who received their diplomas on Sunday, 83 were honor students.

One of the underlying themes of the commencement was that the Class of 2023 went through a lot to reach that stage, from dealing with construction in Junior High to going through a pandemic for the first half of their senior high career. And while they congratulated each other on making it through those tough times, their class motto is, “We have come a long way, but not half as far as we will go.”

“This class has been through a lot,” said high school principal Dr. Jason Miller. “In seventh grade, they had to receive lessons at the Central building because the high school was under construction. In eighth grade, everyone had to get used to the new layout of the completely different high school building. Then in ninth grade, the world shut down, and everything changed.”

But through it all, they came out better people. “Every single year, you dealt with change. And what I’ve noticed in each and every one of you is your resilience. Being resilient does not mean pursuing perfection. It’s toxic to do that on a daily basis.



Graduates toss their caps up during the Waseca Class of 2023 commencement Sunday, June 4. Pioneer photo by Michael Roy



After graduate Erika Bowers received her diploma from her mother, Alyssa, the two shared a hug.

It’s better to pursue excellence.”

Miller then shared a quote he heard recently. “Every moment gives us a choice and gives us the opportunity to choose again. If we aren’t on track, we get to choose again to get back on track. There is no one on this planet that walks with integrity and perfection all the time. But the more we practice resilience, the more the impact we have on those around us.”



Ruweida Osoble hugs her sister outside the high school after commencement. Pioneer photos by Michael Roy

Class Speakers

Senior Class President Avery Madsen, who was first of the four graduating speakers, acknowledged the accomplishments of this year’s seniors. “We did it. We made it.

“We grew up,” she said.

She then shared a few memories, including when the class worked on

Graduation continued on 12



Robert Sleep of the Gideons International shared that free pocket Bibles were available after the Waseca baccalaureate program on Wednesday, May 31. Pioneer photo by Michael Roy

A journey to maturity Waseca holds baccalaureate service

By MICHAEL ROY
Editor

Around fifty Waseca students participated in the annual baccalaureate service in the Performing Arts Center Wednesday, May 31. The event brought together several Waseca students of various churches to be both honored and encouraged to continue their faith journey after high school.

Pastor Andrew Isker of Fourth Street Evangelical Church led the service. He focused on two passages

of scripture: Proverbs 2:1-22, which encourages Christians to uphold and keep the faith, and 1 Corinthians 16:13-14, where the prophet Paul says, “Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love.”

After that, Isker shared a hard-hitting message for the baccalaureate students. “One of my favorite questions is, if you only had one word to describe the Bible, what would it be?”

Some of the answers thrown out by the audience were “love,” “faith,” and “truth.” However, the word Isker was thinking of was “maturity.”

“If it were about love or faith, it would be a very short book,” he said. “But it’s a very long book. Salvation is important of course, but the whole theme of the book, the bible, is the story of the maturation of humanity.

Service continued on 10

WASECA CITY COUNCIL

Gaiter Lake project approved

By DEB BENTLY
News Editor

“I understand there are risks,” said city council member Mark Christiansen as he defended his motion that the City of Waseca become the “developer” for about 52 acres of city-owned property within its southeast city limits.

“We’ve got to do something.”

Council member Stacey Schroeder, who seconded the motion, was adamant. “If we don’t grow, we die.

“We need to get more housing, more jobs, more businesses.”

When the motion eventually passed with 4 in favor and 3 against, it was after nearly an hour of heated discussion among council members and occasional disruptive muttering from 5 or 6 community members in attendance.

Council members James Ebertowski, Jeremy Conrath and John Mansfield, who eventually provided the three dissenting votes, spoke against the idea of taking a leadership role in developing the property, and even against developing it at all.

“With how complex this would be,” said Ebertowski, “I don’t think we would be wise to take it on.”

Conrath, Ebertowski and Mansfield all suggested that the property should either be retained as farmland and rented out, or sold. “The DNR restrictions make some of the lots undesirable,” Ebertowski claimed: DNR restrictions imposed on property within 1,000 feet of the lake’s historic high water line require that they keep at least 75% of their surface area “permeable,” to facilitate water movement.

The city has owned the Gaiter Lake property since 2016, when it was acquired because of DNR requirements surrounding city water management. Since its acquisition, the city has taken numerous steps to determine how it will be used. Public engagement hearings in 2018 led to a set of priorities that included senior housing, parks and trails, and a reduced number of buildable lots.

Concept plans were developed by not-for-profit agency Southwest Minnesota Housing Partnership and shared with the city

Council continued on 4



Compostings

by Al Batt
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Easy to carry &#%!@?!

ECHOES FROM THE LOAFERS’ CLUB MEETING

It was a significant victory. I went into a room and remembered why I’d gone there.

Why did you go there?
Go where?

DRIVING BY BRUCE’S DRIVE

I have a wonderful neighbor named Bruce. Deep thoughts occur as I drive past his drive. The pounding sun had brought enough heat that my hat showed my sweat as I waited for a taxi. Inside the cab, my seatbelt refused to click. I tried again and again. No clicking. The driver spent little time sorting his words. According to him, the dispatcher gave him the worst fares (he probably classified me in that category) because she used to date his brother and their breakup wasn’t amicable. His story had been practiced. I looked out the window. We hadn’t gone far before I noticed repeated restaurant brand signs. Whoever made the city should have made it smaller.

He let me off outside my hotel. I tipped him enough that he was willing to continue the story of his brother and the dispatcher, but I exited quickly and left that threat dangling. At the hotel, a woman in a bridal gown belted out “Sweet Caroline” at a wedding reception. Maybe she was a Boston Red Sox fan, as good times never seem so good as when the Fenway Park sound system plays Neil Diamond’s recording of “Sweet Caroline” in the middle of the 8th inning. Fans sing the “So good, so good, so good!” portion of the song with excessive enthusiasm. That tradition began when an employee in charge of ballpark music played “Sweet Caroline” because someone she knew had just had a baby named Caroline.

I found my room and crashed on a bed slightly too short for a long drink of water like me. I could hear, “Sweet Caroline. Bum, bum, bum. Good times never seemed so good.”

MEANWHILE, AT THE POST OFFICE

I was at the post office. A fellow I knew must not have picked up his mail for a few days. He was no longer nimble-fingered and dropped nearly all of it. He swore a bit. No, he swore a lot. A hush fell over the crowd. He’d picked up the habit of excessive cussing during his many years at a factory and he’d practiced it to imperfection. Maybe he wasn’t aware he was so loud. I made a note to look up some of the harsh words he’d

used when I got home. He was particularly hard on the slippery magazines his wife had subscribed to. “It’s easier to carry &#%!@?! bullheads.” He threatened to deposit the glossy periodicals in the trash can, but he didn’t. I helped him pick up his mail. He thanked me. I said, “You’re welcome, pastor.” He laughed his way out the door.

REMEMBERING FONDLY

I walked around a couple of cemeteries telling the dearly departed that I love and miss them. Their lives went from seed to flower like a time-lapse video, but I hoped some died with a smile, like a cowboy dying with his boots on. My father died with a smile in a hospital, even though he’d wanted to die on the farm. His last words were, “Well, Robert.” Robert was his beloved brother who had died young from a ruptured appendix.

I WONDER

If I tell a dog to sit, does it expect bad news?

Is a retired fly a flew?

If we’re not supposed to eat midnight snacks, why is there a light in the refrigerator?

NATURE NOTES

House wrens nested in my mother’s clothespin bag and another nested in my blue jeans hanging on a clothesline. Simple joys weren’t denied as young wrens fledged in unrehearsed flights from both sites. One year, there was a crow that plucked off the clothespins. It did nothing more than drop them to the ground, caw several times and fly away.

I saw a red-winged blackbird on a street sign. I’d love to see one on a street sign reading “Broadway.” It’d be great to hear that bird singing on Broadway.

I watched a couple of mallards napping on a dock next to three plastic owls. A reader sent me a photo of a starling perched on the head of a plastic owl. The effectiveness of the plastic statues is limited because even the most skittish bird quickly finds them no threat.

The eastern chipmunk with his cheeks stuffed with food has a burrow that could reach 2 feet deep and 30 feet long.

MEETING ADJOURNED

“Be the living expression of God’s kindness; kindness in your face, kindness in your eyes, kindness in your smile.”—Mother Teresa.

Learning to trust my intuition

This past week, I got a hard lesson on life.

No, I didn’t get humbled, although that’s certainly happened often enough. In fact, I received the opposite lesson, that maybe I do know what I’m doing more often than I think, that sometimes, I should rely more on my intuition or my gut to tell me that I am right instead of looking for validation or listening to others all the time.

I won’t get into the details of the latest episode of “life lessons with Mike.” It’s some drama that really shouldn’t be in a newspaper. But I will tell you of another time when I was taught—the very hard way—about self-confidence and trusting my instincts.

Many in high school won’t remember me for my writing. They remember me for being a funny, weird guy who was smart and liked music. Many members of my family think I’m the smartest of the bunch, that I have been gifted with brains—which is why when talk of college came around, I almost had to go.

I felt deep down inside that I shouldn’t be going to college. See, back in high school, my plan up until late into my junior year was to start a band with my best friend Eric, skip college, and go straight into the workforce until we inevitably became one of the biggest bands in the world like the Beatles. Our high school prophecies in our yearbooks literally said that we would sell out Madison Square



Music to my Ears

by Michael Roy
copyright © 2022 by Michael Roy

Garden.

But then, when Eric chose to go to college, I decided I had to do the same thing: practically out of the blue, I set my heart on Gustavus Adolphus to study music. When we toured there for a college fair during my junior year, we were shown the beautiful recital hall named after famous Swedish opera singer Jussi Björling. I fell in love instantly. And when it came time to decide, even though it was still between Gustavus and MSU in Mankato, I chose the former.

It wasn’t even sophomore year of college when I started questioning why I was there. I was going to be in so much debt for a degree that I really didn’t think I needed. Should I change majors? I thought about switching from a music major to political science because, for some reason, back then in the thick of Trump’s presidency, I enjoyed politics.

Well, God, or fate, decided for me. Nearly halfway into my junior year, I couldn’t afford to stay. Since Gustavus is a private college, it cost much more than MSU, which I didn’t fully know at the time. (Seriously folks, stick to public col-

leges if you aren’t rich.) Now I don’t have a degree at all.

What that taught me is that in the end, in a way, I was right: I didn’t need college. I’m a reporter at two newspapers and am content with the work I do.

See, the problem was back when I was in school, there was pressure to go to college. I remember teachers telling failing students, “If your grades don’t improve, you won’t get into college.” It was to the point that, if you didn’t go to college, you felt like a failure. I remember getting told, “You’re wasting your brain. Use it,” which to me translated to, “You are smart. Therefore you have to go to college.” I didn’t listen to my intuition due to lack of self-confidence.

Looking back, it almost felt like the only point of high school was to prepare you for college, not real life.

But can you teach real life lessons in a classroom? Sure, you can teach someone how to change a tire or file taxes correctly. But what about instilling self-confidence in them? What about that?

The problem is, you can’t quantify life lessons. You can’t create a

Cherishing shared memories together

Well, it’s been a week since Memorial Day, and my family decided to take a trip to the Cities this past weekend to do our annual cemetery run. Each year around this time, my sister, mom, grandmother and I drive up to the Cities, Stillwater, and Bayport to visit the cemeteries of some of our relatives (of that side of the family of course. I’m pretty sure everyone else on my other side is near Waseca or at least in southern Minnesota).

When hearing “cemetery run,” I imagine that one might think of sadness, even grief, as we visit the lost members of our family and remember their stories and who they were. But I enjoy this day.

Every year, I get the privilege of being with my family to visit people they have lost, people they once loved and now remember with intimate stories and small, shared smiles. I did not have the good fortune of knowing these people, but I feel privileged that I can still help as we not only visit the gravestones, but clean them. We spend time clearing the ground, tearing the edges of the grass that have folded over the old stone,



To Be Determined

by Amelia Roessler
copyright © 2022 by Amelia Roessler

scraping at the dirt, the weeds, the ants, so that the engraved names are again what are most noticeable. If there’s a designated spot for plants, we work up the ground and plant new ones. This feels not like grief, to me, but tenderness.

If there’s no dirt but a spot for pots instead, we replace the old pots (if they’re still there) with the new ones, ones that we have chosen specially with colorful and blooming flowers carefully arranged in the arms of the clay. It’s our tribute. It’s my way of showing my ancestors, people whom I never met, that they are still loved by the people who survive them. There are still people who care about their lives and their legacies.

I decided long ago that I am someday going to name my child

after one of these family members. I saw the name carved deep into the stone, placed many years ago under the shade of a pine tree in a cemetery I didn’t know. It was a unique name and one that I wanted to make part of my future. Every year I see that name again and smile to myself, wondering what it will take to convince my future spouse to hopefully like it as well.

As we dig and care for the new life we are planting, my sister, my mom, my grandma - we all enjoy each other’s company, being grateful for the time we still have. We comment on the other gravestones we see, the other flowers that result from the efforts of other peoples’ love. Some have fake flowers, others have the classic red geraniums. Some do not have flowers.

rubric to measure someone’s self worth and ability to be intuitive. You can’t grade the ability to cope with difficulty or failure. The whole point of school is to not fail.

I think the speakers from the Waseca Class of 2023 graduation are a prime example that wisdom doesn’t necessarily come with age. Lindsey Kopetzki said that her social studies teacher John Hanson taught the class that not only is having an opinion important, but having conviction and a rationale for that opinion is more valuable. As a 25-year-old Gen Z’er, hearing a younger person in my generation say that hit me.

Aubree Hansen then echoed those thoughts when she said that we have the chance to change the narrative, to “be our true selves.”

I think that’s what I’m learning. Even though I’ve been here for 25 long years, life seems to be getting shorter and shorter. So why hold ourselves back from what we love to do because we feel like it’s not the best choice?

I also hope that the culture change includes not pushing college so much, recognizing that other options are also valuable. I think that is happening more and more these days. There’s a reason why Mike Rowe makes millions of dollars showing people “Dirty Jobs.” Maybe you don’t need a degree to be successful. Maybe you just need to trust your intuition more.

Does no one come to visit? Are their relatives dead? Do they just not like flowers? Or do they, like mine, only have a few relatives that come each year to remind themselves to enjoy life before it slips away, before we’ve all grown?

This year, we started talking about what my grandmother wishes for her plans after life. Cremated, but where? Does she want to be planted as a tree? Does she want to be in a certain cemetery? If that’s the case, then we can’t plant flowers on her ashes like we do for the stones, something I feel she would like us to be able to do. It was a lighthearted conversation, but I had a feeling it was a bit strained as well. Thinking of death is not easy, and I’m sure planning for death is incredibly difficult as well. Hopefully I won’t have to deal with it soon, and I hope that none of you have to either.

My Determination: “Every day, every man has a choice between right and wrong, between love and hate, sometimes between life and death. And the sum of those choices becomes your life.” - Jamie Fraser, Outlander.

‘WAAAASSSSSEEEEECCCAA!’

It appears everyone has a Blair Nelson story. He had a way of making each person in his life feel special. That was reinforced Monday as I heard story after story before, during and after Blair’s funeral.

A story from Tenille about a Cubs game she attended with Blair was shared. It reminded me of a similar story he had from attending Wringley field with one of his kids or grandkids.

All the fans were gathered around during batting practice trying to get the player’s attention for autographs. Blair pats his daughter on the shoulder and says watch this.

I can still hear Blair’s voice as he tells the next part.

In his high pitched storytelling voice, Blair imitated what he did/yelled next.

“Waaaaaassssseeeeca!”

What came next made all the fans silent.

“Neeeclllllllssssson!”

Geno Glynn, Waseca native, was a base coach jogging off the field and immediately recognized Blair.



STAR GAZING

by Eli Lutgens
copyright © 2022 by Eli Lutgens

I loved that story.

I can’t recall how many times during the past year that Blain or Blair were telling a Blair story and Jon Butler would pop out of his office, either to hear the punchline or just listen.

Jon married Lyric Nelson, Blain’s daughter.

As I chatted with Jon today, he told me what matters is not how long we know someone, but about the connection we make with them.

I didn’t rush my friendship with Blair.

As a journalist out to write a story, I have become practiced at delving quickly into someone’s thoughts so I can quickly understand both a “big picture” and some intimate details for the sake of sharing a great story: I don’t

like to do friendships quickly. I take it slow and enjoy each and every moment. Nothing was rushed with Blair and I never felt any pressure to move the conversation. The stories came and went as I learned more and more over the recent 14 or so months.

Although I am in the process of buying and fixing up a new office space, I found myself dragging my feet: I enjoyed the free interchange with Blair and Blaine that my current location afforded. Whether I was there to exult or complain, he listened as much as he talked. Blair listened to several emotional rants from me over the last year. I never once felt anything other than compassion in those moments. Just love and compassion.

After learning about Blair’s

death last week, I wrote about what I called “the Nelson effect.” That empathy and understanding are what I was talking about. Blair’s son-in-law Chas described Blair’s personal style as “open the door and toss it in.” Some might say “winging it.”

As I listened to several members of the Nelson family share their “Blair moments” during the funeral, I found myself speculating how they probably never imagined themselves telling those stories to a crowd gathered for an occasion like that one. Then I thought back to one of my “Blair moments,” when he and I played catch in the office for “45 MINUTES” (please read that in Deanne’s voice).

I guess what I’m trying to say is we can all be a little more like Blair in those moments.

Slow down, don’t take life so seriously, and don’t ever forget to enjoy your Coca-Cola.

“The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation, and go to the grave with the song still in them.”

- Henry David Thoreau



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Crossing guard Leslie Wells stands at his post for the last time.
Pioneer photo by Amelia Roessler

25 years of service

Wells retires as crossing guard

By AMELIA ROESSLER
Staff Writer

For the past several years, a prominent sight along Highway 13 has been crossing guard Leslie Wells, who has been helping Waseca’s children cross the street safely nearly every morning and afternoon for 25 years. But not anymore.

Friday June 2, the last day of school, was also Wells’ last day of work as a crossing guard.

Wells said he took the job more than two decades ago when the local police force needed somebody at the middle school, now Central Intermediate School.

“I said sure, why not?” said Wells. “And here I am still doing it!”

Wells says he stayed with the job because he loved the kids and enjoyed talking with them while fulfilling his crossing guard duties. He is a Vietnam vet and brought a soldier’s perspective to the task, that he should continue “until my body cracks that I can’t do it.”

Now that Wells’ final school year has come to a close, he said he hopes “the weather cools down where I can get out and do some yard work.”

Wells believes the biggest reward of his job has been how much he’s enjoyed it. For anyone who might take his spot in the future, he warns the job is more demanding than it may seem.

Wells explained that although the scares were few and far between, he still turns gray when he remembers the moment a student stepped into the street and an oncoming car was not slowing down. Though no one was hurt, his memory of what might have happened has helped him be vigilant ever since.

Changes underway at Catholic parishes

By MICHAEL ROY
Editor

The current Communion of Saints Catholic Community, consisting of St. Ann in Janesville, St. Joseph in Waldorf, and All Saints in New Richland, is the smallest parish cluster in the Winona-Rochester Catholic diocese.

Because of this, the Communion of Saints Catholic Community will dissolve and the cities within it will join other nearby parishes per the wishes of Bishop Robert Barron.

Janesville will join the current second-smallest parish cluster in the diocese, St. Clair-Madison Lake, while Waldorf will join the Mapleton-Good Thunder-Vernon Center cluster and New Richland will become part of Waseca’s parish. The changes will be effective July 1.

With the split of the Communion of Saints, there will also be changes to the priests. Father Brian Mulligan will no longer be serving any of the churches in

Change continued on 5

Taste of the Farm

By MICHAEL ROY
Editor

Farmamerica and Farm Bureau Financial Services of Waseca collaborated on Thursday, June 1 to give everyone a taste of what farm life is really like and the importance of agriculture.

From 5-7:30 p.m., Farmamerica had plenty of farm-related expos ranging from informative to interactive. Activities included learning about different chemicals and how they are used in agriculture, statistics surrounding food production at local farms, playing Yahtzee for prizes while learning about pigs from Scott Singlestad, and plenty of other activities provided by Farmamerica.

Some fun facts: Nearly three billion pizzas are made and consumed in the United States every year. Minnesota pork is also sold all over the world; its three main exports are to Japan, China, and Mexico.

“Some may know that pigs are used for much more than food,” Singlestad said. “But they may not

know that pigs are used to make life-saving medicines, soap, paints, glue, and other things we use in daily life.”

There are also more than 5,000 Minnesota farm families producing pigs on their farms.

Aside from intriguing facts about agriculture, Farm Bureau Financial Services also gave tips on how to save money when buying food. Their source, CNBC, claims that Ameri-

Farm continued on 5



Waseca FFA members and local Waseca royalty helped serve dinner at the Taste of the Farm event at Farmamerica on Thursday, June 1. From left: Mandi Root, Allie Eldeen, Katie Eldeen, Bailey Hodgkins, and McKenna Eichhorn.
Pioneer photo by Michael Roy



68 NRHEG graduates shared a space for the final time Sunday June 4.
Pioneer photo by Eli Lutgens

‘Fail, learn, and then succeed’

By DEB BENTLY
Staff Writer

“We are meant to fail, learn, and then succeed,” suggested Tatum Smith Vulcan, one of three class speakers at NRHEG’s graduation ceremony held Sunday, June 4.

The Class of 2023 included 68 graduates, 36 of whom had grade point averages (GPAs) above 3.0. Three valedictorians were honored: Anton Domeier, Bree Ihrke, and Eva Wayne, all three for having earned perfect 4.0 GPAs. Two salutatorians, Erin Jacobson and Sidney Schultz, were announced.

Four members of the class, Samuel Christensen, Kara Doyle, Calvin Haun, and Jed Pfundt, were recognized for having joined a branch of the military.

The school’s gymnasium was filled nearly to capacity with family members and well wishers for the hour-and-a-half ceremony presided over by resigning secondary princi-

pal David Bunn, who told students that, just as they were headed out into a whole new world, so is he. “We’re in the same boat,” he commented. “Our lives are changing.”

The high school band performed “Earthdance” as its traditional “last song together,” that is, the final time the graduating seniors would be part of the group. A stirring number by composer Michael Sweeney, it imitates the arrival, passage and serenity of a thunderstorm. Likewise, the choir’s “I Am a Small Part of the World,” led by school choir director Krista Reeder, shared a message of cooperation and collaboration.



Grace Wilkinson presents a “parent appreciation” rose to her mother, Krista. Below Ethan Thompson hugs a family member.

Also among the three class members selected as speakers by their peers was Evan Beckmann. His speech recalled the spring of 2020, when members of the group were freshmen becoming gradually acclimated to being at the bottom of the “food chain.” He described memories of hearing about a far-away



NRHEG continued on 5

Nature settling into summer

Greetings from our cabin on Lake Tetonka. Had major problems with water lines at the cabin this spring. A friend, Ron Koble, also known as the handyman, fixed all of the leaky lines. We fired up the water heater, started the window air conditioner, and with some food and clean bed sheets we are all settled in.

At the lake cabin, it’s time for me to sit back and observe some of the wonderful things happening in nature.

After outfitting several of our birdhouses for his wife-to-be, our little wren finally called in his mate. She chose the house that I have never had a bird build a nest in. I was overjoyed and so was my buddy, the wren. He sits every morning on a post next to the bird house chattering away with joy, waiting for his family of little fledglings to arrive.

Swallows have built a nest under the canopy of my boat lift. I’m amazed at how they build a perfect clay pot made out of mud in a corner of the lift. They are welcomed guests and never leave cream stains on the carpet of the boat as they fly in and out hundreds of times a day.

No wood ducks in the wood duck box this year: A squirrel decided to raise her family in there. The box is attached 12 feet up on a light pole which I keep wrapped in tin with the plan that squirrels or other intruders won’t be able to climb past.

A limb of an oak tree is located about four feet from the box. To establish her nursery, the mother



Bits and Pieces

by Dave Zika

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squirrel has been jumping from the limb onto the box to enter the hole. A few days ago there they were; two bushy-tailed young squirrels running around the box, trying to get up enough courage to jump to the tree limb where their mother sat chattering away and flashing her tail.

After a half hour of commotion and baby squirrels running around the box, one by one they jumped to the tree. The good thing from my perspective is that they can’t get back into the box and so have moved on to a new neighborhood. With them gone, I decided to get on the ladder, clean out the box, put in new cedar shavings, and hope for a wood duck family next spring.

Lisa shared with me that a friend of hers—who will remain nameless—rescued a baby squirrel she found on their deck, and then contracted fleas. They had to come from the squirrel. Guess what, the box will remain just as it is until next year.

A bird feeder hangs just off our deck and I hang a couple of plastic dishes filled with grape jelly in holes in the feeder. We have a half dozen orioles, along with sparrows, catbirds, and grackles emptying the

dishes daily. I’ve observed nest materials stuck in the empty dishes when I go to fill them. One of the birds must be a great engineer, using jelly to stick the materials together, to form and shape a nest.

A mud turtle was swimming under the dock; I observed a large-mouth bass following it wherever it swam. This went on for a couple of days. Either the bass was feeding on food the turtle stirred up from the bottom, or it thought the turtle was another beautiful bass looking for a place to build its nest. Speaking of turtles, I’ve picked up two painted shell turtles off the road on my way to downtown Waterville. I’ve returned them to the water; I know our late, beautiful daughter “KT” would be oh so proud.

Every once in a while hundreds of cormorants are joined by a handful of pelicans to hunt for fish on the lake in front of our dock. When a cormorant comes up with a fish too big to swallow, a couple of pelicans will mug him and steal the fish for a tasty meal. I was fishing on Big Stone Lake with my family; we were catching big bluegills and perch along with a few sheephead. Sheephead are a large rough fish

and undesirable for eating. When squeezed, sheephead croak or make a “baa baa” sound; thus the name. A couple of pelicans were swimming close to the boat waiting for a meal. My grannies fed one of the pelicans two sheephead; the bird swallowed both of them head first, very entertaining to watch. We figured the pelican flew away with six pounds of fish in its belly.

We have a shed on our lake property. I observed a woodchuck standing behind it. After investigating, I found he’d burrowed a nice tunnel under the shed. The woodchuck could become a real problem, especially with our dog Sammy running around. I didn’t see him for a couple of days, but was planning on buying a live trap. My neighbor came over from a couple cabins down and asked me what I knew about beavers. She said that they had one burrowed up in rocks down by the lake. I replied, “Don’t think it’s a beaver, probably a woodchuck.” Good riddance to the woodchuck, glad the neighbors can deal with it!

In closing, just heard on the news this morning that the average wedding in Minnesota costs \$25,000. Baby Boomers, guess we paid for weddings for our children during the good old days. Might not be a bad idea for a couple nowadays to elope. Mom and Dad may consider giving them \$10,000 to do so! Enjoy your summer, enjoy the heat.

WASECA COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Harguth named new chair

Commissioners share favorite Nelson memories

By AMELIA ROESSLER
Staff Writer

Brian Harguth, previously the Vice Chair of the Waseca County Board of Commissioners was voted into the Chair position during the regular meeting held June 6. This took place as a result of the sudden death of previous Chair and commissioner, Blair Nelson. Chris Christopherson was voted into the Vice Chair position.

The meeting was then started by a welcome from Harguth.

“I appreciate the confidence from my fellow commissioners,” said Harguth, “for moving me into this chair for the remainder of 2023. However, I wish it was under different circumstances.”

Following a moment of reflection and respect for Nelson, agendas were approved and John Hanson, Waseca High School teacher and lifelong Waseca resident, gave a presentation to the commissioners about an addition to the “Explore Waseca” project. Hanson requested up to \$3,000 a year in funding to support a virtual historic tour of Waseca to be made with the help of students and the local government. Commissioner DeAnne Malterer made the motion that the county contribute funding, with the contingency that at least one other partner—either the Discover Waseca Tourism board or the City Council—also provides support. The motion was seconded and approved.

South Country Health Alliance’s officers Leota Lind and Scott Schufman provided a summary and report for 2022 and 2023. Schufman explained that 2022 was a good financial year for South Country Health Alliance with successful and clean audits and that they had a net income of \$17.6 million, versus their budget of \$3.8 million and compared to their net income of \$3.8 million in 2021. This year’s budget is positive and calls for a net income of \$3,005,000.

The meeting ended with an amendment to the 2023 Waseca County Board Committee Assignments, with commissioners filling in where needed to cover Nelson’s many assignments. As they said, it is a work in progress but all the bases are covered.

Got news?
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OBITUARIES

Wayne James

Wayne Orval James, age 65 of Elysian, died on the afternoon of Saturday, June 3, 2023 at the Fairview University of Minnesota Medical Center in Minneapolis.

Wayne was born in Waseca on April 4, 1958, to parents Donald Perry and Helen Florence (Powell) James. He attended school in Elysian then graduated from Waterville-Elysian High School with the class of 1976. In 1978 Wayne was married to the love of his life, Teri Ann Nusbaum at Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Waterville. Wayne loved working side by side with his wife and family on the farm and in his business, James Brothers Construction. He and his family began a business with one skid loader that has grown to become a household name in Southern Minnesota. Outside of his work, Wayne lived and breathed for his family and his community. He loved supporting small businesses in their endeavors, taking care of people in any way they needed, farming, going for country drives and wild ATV rides, preparing weekly breakfast feasts for his beloved grandchildren (and occasionally their parents), and stopping off for cheese curds or a glass of wine with his wife whenever they were “on the way home” from anywhere. He was a devoted member and volunteer for the Elysian Fire Department, the WEM FFA Foundation, the Elysian Chamber of Commerce, the West Bank Board of Directors, the Minnesota Onsite Wastewater Association (MOWA), was a talented and funny auctioneer, and an avid supporter of local schools. He and Teri were long-time members of Christ Community Church in Waseca. Wayne will be deeply missed by all who knew him, but all will be glad to have been a part of his life as he continues his journey “on the way home.”

Wayne is survived by his devoted wife of 45 years, Teri James of Elysian; four children, Shannon (Nate) Kuball of Morristown, Lisa (Elliott) Cage of Elysian, Justin (Stephanie) James of Waterville, and Jacob (Ellie) James of Elysian; fourteen grandchildren, Kelsey Kuball, Emma Kuball, Kyleigh Duffey, Keegan Kuball, Ethan



Wayne James

Cage, Kaden James, Isabella Cage, Mackenzie James, Isaac Cage, Kenadee James, Madelynn James, Weston James, Meredith James, and Miriam James; six siblings, Connie (Stewart) Dillon of Mankato, Deb (Bob) Kelley of Madison Lake, Steve (Barb) James of Waterville, Sandy (John) Reed of Florida, Carrie (Tim) Bengtson of Elysian, and Jason (Kim) James of Elysian; Father-In-Law, Ralph Nusbaum of Waterville; Mother-In-Law, Carol (Mike) Cieraszynski of Kentucky; Brother-In-Law, Mike (Melanie) Nusbaum of Florida; Sisters-In-Law, Laurie Danberry of Waterville and Deana Nusbaum of Kentucky; and many nieces, nephews, and other special relatives. He was preceded in death by both of his parents; a nephew, Jared Dillon; and two Brothers-In-Law, Curt Nusbaum and Doug Nusbaum.

Visitation was held from 4:00 to 8:00 p.m. on Tuesday, June 6, 2023, at the Elysian Fire Hall, and will continue for one hour before the service at the church on Wednesday.

Funeral Services were held at 11:00 a.m. on Wednesday, June 7, 2023, at Christ Community Church in Waseca, with Rev. Chris Johnson officiating. Interment will follow at Cedar Hill Cemetery in Elysian, and then friends and family will gather for a luncheon at the Elysian Fire Hall. Dennis-Steffel-Omtvedt Funeral and Cremation Service in Waseca is handling the arrangements. dsf-
uneral.com

John Stenzel

John Edward Stenzel, age 69, of Waseca passed away on Tuesday, June 6, 2023 at his home.

Born on March 28, 1954 in Wells, MN, John was the son of Dominic and Evangeline (More) Stenzel. John grew up on a farm near Freeborn, MN with 10 siblings where he spent his early years farming and working construction with his father and brothers. It was during this time he developed the skills and work ethic he carried throughout his life. After high school, he continued working in the construction industry and was proud of the many homes and buildings he helped build/remodel. It was during this time that he met the love of his life, Roberta “Bert” Minkel. On October 19, 1974, they were united in marriage in Mapleton, MN.

In 1987 he began his 31-year career for Waseca Public Schools. He eventually was promoted to Director of Building and Grounds. He took pride in keeping the facilities and grounds in pristine condition. During the final years with the district, he was excited to be part of the team that led the high school renovation.

John was a people-person and enjoyed visiting with anyone and everyone. During his retirement you would find him on a motorcycle or a tractor. He loved taking motorcycle trips with his wife across the United States. Any spare time he would spend with his beloved family, attending every grandchild’s sporting event, concert, and graduation possible. He was the ultimate handyman and loved helping others – projects big and small, most notably building a house for his family. John was a member of Sacred Heart Catholic Church and the Knights of Columbus.

John is survived by his loving wife of 48 years, Roberta Stenzel of Waseca; children and grandchildren, Jason (Lisa) Stenzel of Waseca – Emma, Ethan, Myles,



John Stenzel

Henry, Amanda (Rich) Honstad of Waseca – Morgan, Alexander, Owen, Josh (Kaitlen) Stenzel of Savage – Aria, Joe (Tiffany) Stenzel of Savage – Mason, Olivia; siblings, Carol (John) Creswell of Linnecreek, MO, Dale (Brenda) Stenzel of LeCenter, Rick Stenzel of New Richland, Jane (Steve) Swehla, Jean (Greg) Yokiel, Nancy (Daryl) Kruger, all of Wells, Pat (Sheila) Stenzel of Freeborn, Tim (Lori) Stenzel of Pemberton, Jeff (Susie) Stenzel of Lakeville; mother-in-law, Emily Minkel of Mapleton; sisters-in-law, Peggy Stenzel of St. Peter, Kathy (Roger) Runge of Amboy; brother-in-law, Greg (Deb) Minkel of Chaska, MN.

He was preceded in death by his parents; brother, Jerry Stenzel; father-in-law, Donald Minkel; sister-in-law, Mary Stenzel; nephew, Sean Stenzel.

Visitation will be held from 4:00 – 8:00 PM on Monday, June 12, 2023 at the State Street Chapel of Dennis-Steffel-Omtvedt Funeral and Cremation Service. Visitation will continue one hour prior to the service at the church on Tuesday. Mass of Christian Burial will be at 11:00 AM on Tuesday, June 13, 2023 at Sacred Heart Catholic Church with Fr. The Hoang officiating. Interment Calvary Cemetery in Waseca.

JR High holds final concert

By AMELIA ROESSLER
Staff Writer

The Waseca Junior High Concert Band, consisting of musicians in seventh and eighth grades, had their spring and end of the year performance the night of June 2 at the Waseca High School performing arts center (PAC).

The evening’s concert, directed by Jay Downie, consisted of six songs introduced by eighth-grade band members.

To a decently filled PAC full of proud parents and relatives recording their kids, the band played “Aggressive,” by Randall Standridge as their



Waseca Junior High band students performed their final performance of the 2022-’23 school year June 2 in the performing arts center. Pioneer photos by Amelia Roessler

first song. Daniel J’kei Petty, the eighth grade tuba player, introduced the band’s second song, “Ex’s and Oh’s” arranged by Michale Brown and based on the hit pop song by Elle King. The third song was “Pirates of the Caribbean” arranged by Paul Murtha. “Dominion” by Randall Standridge was introduced by trumpet player Elliott Galle as the fourth song. “Blue Ridge Reel” by Brain Bal-mages, the fifth song, was introduced by clarinet player Katelyn Weber. The final song of the night was introduced by clarinet player Isabella Garza as “Japanese War March” arranged by Eric Rath.



■ Zimmerman

from Page 1

and further, that the council has no authority to change the mayor’s status. In fact, creating a vacancy in this case would require action from a committee of at least five city residents.

The investigation regarding Zimmerman’s official residence began roughly one week after November’s election when a complaint regarding his residency was received by the City of Waseca.

The complaint was forwarded to the Albert Lea Police Department for investigation. Among the evidence

gathered are numerous points surrounding the status of his residency, including that Zimmerman, his wife and his sons all have Minnesota driver’s licenses which indicate a location in Woodville Township as their addresses. The family also has four vehicles registered within the state of Minnesota, two registered to the defendant’s wife, and one each to the defendant and one of his sons; all four registrations show the Woodville location. Zimmerman is the owner of a business, R.L. Design, which shows its address to be the one in Woodville Township. Zimmerman’s wife voted in Woodville Township during the October election.

Zimmerman and his wife are listed as owners of the residence in Woodville Township. They also own an

undeveloped lot at 304 19th Ave NE within city limits; this property was purchased on October 6, 2022. During the investigation, Zimmerman reportedly told officers that his intent was to build a home at that address if his bid to become mayor proved successful.

The complaint further reads, “The defendant swore, by oath or affirmation, on his Affidavit of Candidacy and on his Voter Registration Application, that his residence was located at 313 4th Ave NE, Waseca. However, the defendant did not live at the residence.” It claims, “The defendant had no intention of moving...to 313 4th Ave NE. The defendant’s family maintained its residence at 36830 Lake Knoll Drive. Although the defendant may have intended to acquire a new residence when he

moved to 304 19th Ave NE, that was not enough to establish residence within the City of Waseca. Based on the language of Minnesota Statute § 200.31, the defendant’s residence, on November 8, 2022 and the 30 days prior, was located at 36830 Lake Knoll Drive in Woodville Township.”

The case was remanded to the Albert Lea Police Department because of potential conflict of interest; The Rice County Attorney’s office is prosecuting the case.

The penalty for Zimmerman, if convicted, could be no more than 5 years in prison and/or \$10,000 in fines.

Zimmerman’s hearing is scheduled for July 18 at 10 a.m.

■ Council

from Page 1

council in 2022. The city has been seeking “requests for proposals” essentially ever since, but no private developer has stepped forward to work with the city.

Numerous discussions regarding the property have taken place at recent council meetings, culminating in a request that city staff assemble a straightforward summary of council members’ options for the June 6 meeting.

City manager Carl Sonnenberg presented three choices: sell or continue renting the property as farmland; continue seeking proposals from outside developers; or initiate city-led action to put streets and utilities in place that will help create buildable lots.

“It all comes down to a question of how the council would like to manage any risk,” summarized Sonnen-

berg.

Defending her choice of the highest-risk option, Schroeder told of someone she knew who was looking for a house in Waseca. “There was very little available,” she said. “The real estate agent took him to Owatonna.”

City Economic Development Manager Tina Wilson had reported earlier in the meeting that an average of about 9 new homes are built in the city each year, and that only 3 building permits have been issued so far in 2023.

According to city engineer Nathan Willey, the council’s decision has authorized city staff to begin a planning process which will take considerable time to complete. Staff will begin by working with consultants to develop an action plan and timeline for the work. After that will come a concept plan that will include the layout of property lines, streets, and utilities for the city council to review.

Willey points out that the close vote by the council and the controversial nature of the decision indicate that the planning process will also

encounter controversy.

Water Tower
Council members authorized city staff to apply for possible state funding available for the eventual construction of a 1-million-gallon water tower in the area west of Loon Lake. In response to council questions, city manager Carl Sonnenberg responded that the expected minimum usable time frame for large assets such as water towers is 65 years, and that, with regular inspections and maintenance, up to 100 years is common.

Speaking of the water tower located near city hall, he said it is likely to last another 25 to 30 years, and so any “west” tower would not be meant to replace it. Instead, a tower to the west would be meant to support any expansion of housing, businesses, and industry that continue in that section of town.

Also authorized was a similar application for state money to support city work on its sewer “inflow and infiltration” system. The phrase refers to non-wastewater “inflows” into the sanitary sewer system.

Remote Cameras

Security cameras are already scheduled to be installed soon in Clear Lake Park. Action by the city council authorized spending an additional \$16,000 to potentially speed up installing similar surveillance in Northwest, Trowbridge, and University Parks. Under an original schedule, one park per year had been scheduled for the installations, but, according to Sonnenberg, the level of vandalism at the parks may make it financially advisable to speed up the process, especially ordering the needed equipment, which may take extra time to be delivered “post Covid.”

Juneteenth

In compliance with federal law, the city added Monday, June 19, 2023 to its list of authorized staff holidays. This means city offices will be closed that day, not only this year, but for all “Juneteenth” holidays going forward, since the occasion was recently declared a national holiday: it honors the date slaves were declared free after the end of the Civil War.

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A relaxed crowd enjoys the “American Roots” music performed by the Travel Ground band during the library’s Summer Concert series on the evening of Tuesday, June 6.

Pioneer photo by Amelia Roessler

Summer concert series debuts

By AMELIA ROESSLER
Staff Writer

The Waseca Public Library kicked off its annual Summer Concert Series Tuesday night with music from the Travel Ground Band; about 50 people were in attendance.

The concert series will be featuring bands from different genres at 7 p.m. each Tuesday in June at Trowbridge Park.

Travel Ground is an American Roots band that provides a combination of folk, blues, soul, gospel, jazz and roots rock traditions, with original and artful covered songs. Clark Machtemes and his son Mason, the two members of Travel Ground, hailed from Waconia to play at Trowbridge. Clark started the band many years ago and now the band has been together for 35 years. Machtemes traveled around with bands such as Crystal Gayle and

Juice Newton and opened for the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band in his youth before he decided to get his teaching license and teach social studies for 34 years. Machtemes retired in September and now travels around playing in his band with whatever members are available to play at the time.

Although he was in Waseca for his first time, Machtemes hopes to be welcomed back at some point. During the concert, he asked audience members whether they knew the meaning of the word “Waseca.” He explained he used to teach about Minnesota’s heritage and takes an interest in names. Fortunately, folks were able to tell him it translates to “fertile land.”

“It was really good,” said LeAnn Dahle of the concert. “We should take advantage of stuff like this in the community.”



Clark Machtemes strums the banjo and sings during the hour long performance.

Pioneer photo by Amelia Roessler

■ NRHEG

from Page 3

pandemic, of believing it would never travel to Minnesota all the way from China—and of how surprised everyone felt when it did and school ended up being closed down. He mentioned that many lifelong memories resulted when physical education instructor John Schultz assigned his students to get 30 minutes of outdoor activity each day; in response, Beckmann said that he and many friends would go on long, shared bike rides. “Those rides started with just going around town and then going home,” he said. “But then turned into riding to Hollandale, Geneva, Clarks Grove, Hope and New Richland.

“Some of my favorite memories were made on those bikes: Those rides lasted until the end of the [school] year and into the summer.”

Class speaker Ethan Thompson spoke of the uncertainties presented as this school year ends and everyone’s future lives begin. Plans, he

“Time is a thief.” — Tatum Smith Vulcan

warned, have a way of changing or even being abandoned altogether. “If you keep doing what you believe in and you truly feel like you are making a difference,” he encouraged, “that is what matters.”

Early in the ceremony, superintendent Michael Meihak told the students it was time to admit their parents and grandparents have been right all along: Time DOES fly.

When Tatum Smith Vulcan took the stage a bit later, she inadvertently followed his instructions. “All of that time, and it only felt like one minute. I blinked and it was over. I never fully believed that my school years would go by this fast, until this moment speaking to all of you as we prepare to cross this stage.

“We take time for granted, and if there’s one thing I want you to get out of this, it’s that time is a thief, and we spend too much of it wishing it away.”



NRHEG graduate Thomas Cliff celebrates his accomplishment during the ceremony on June 4.

Pioneer photo by Eli Lutgens

■ Farm

from Page 3

cans spend an average of \$5,174 per year, or \$431 per month on groceries.

Tips to save on food included having a grocery list and sticking to it, buying whole items like apples instead of anything prepack-

aged, buying wholesale or in bulk, and many more

A burger dinner was provided by Farmamerica with the Waseca County Dairy Princesses helping to serve the food.

“We are more than happy to be hosting the event,” said Farmamerica Executive Director Jessica Rollins. “Any time we get a chance to help people learn more about local agriculture, we’ll take it.”

■ Change

from Page 3

the Communion of Saints once the changes take place.

At the Sunday Mass in Janesville on May 7, he announced with a heavy heart that he will be leaving the parish starting July 1 to help aid Bishop Robert Barron in his goal of doubling the number of seminarians already in the diocese: twenty are completing the training to enter the Catholic priesthood.

“There are currently about a dozen seminarians not quite ordained,” Mulligan added. “And there are about eighty-some parishes in Minnesota who are in need of a priest.”

So, why is Father Mulligan leaving when there is such a demand for people like him? He has been called upon by Bishop Barron to be a recruiter at Minnesota State University of Mankato in the Newman Center. He told the Janesville congregation that he will be doing further recruitment outside of the university to increase the numbers of the diocese.

“It has been a pleasure serving you and celebrating baptisms, marriages, and even funerals these past few years,” Mulligan said. “I’ve gotten to know many families during my time here.”

Father Robert Schneider, who is part of the St. Clair-Madison Lake churches, will be in charge of the masses at St. Ann instead while assuming his duties at St. Clair and Madison Lake.

Along with the departure of Fr. Mulligan, Fr. Th   Ho  ng of Sacred Heart in Waseca will also be leaving. He announced this at a mass in May as well as through the bulletin. Bishop Barron is assigning him to St. Mary’s of the Lake in Lake City and St. Patrick’s in West Albany in southeastern Minnesota in the beginning of July. Fr. Glenn Frerichs will be in charge of Sacred Heart in his place while adding All Saints of New Richland to his parish duties.

In the May 14 issue of Sacred Heart’s bulletin, Father Th   said,

“I have been so fortunate to have been your pastor these three years. They were good and formative years. I am so blessed to be at a parish where the faith and family values are still strong. This is what makes our priesthood so beautiful when we can witness our people growing closer to Christ through the sacraments that the Catholic Church has to offer.”

Father Andrew Vogel, who currently serves the tri-parish of Mapleton-Good Thunder-Vernon Center, will depart from his position at the beginning of July when the community adds Waldorf. He has been asked to serve the southeast Minnesota city of Caledonia which has a K-8 Catholic school with 140 students; he will be adding the nearby town of Brownsville.

He noted that he is excited for Swaminatha “Swamy” Porthireddy to take his place. Porthireddy currently serves Sacred Heart of Owatonna. “He is a great priest,” he said.

In addition to adding Waldorf, the tri-parish cluster will be separated from the Newman Center at MSU.

As these parish clusters add more to their plate, mass times will change. Janesville masses will now take place at 8:30 a.m. on Sundays instead of 10 a.m.; Madison Lake will keep its 10 a.m. slot on Sundays, while St. Clair will still hold services on Saturday at 4 p.m.

As of now, Fr. Frerichs will follow Fr. Th  ’s original plan of holding masses at All Saints in New Richland on Fridays at 10 a.m. and on Sundays at 8 a.m. These additions currently do not affect mass times for Sacred Heart in Waseca.

As of Monday, June 5, there has not been an announcement by the tri-parish of Mapleton-Good Thunder-Vernon Center as to where St. Joseph in Waldorf will fit into the mass schedule. Currently, there is a mass in Mapleton at 5 p.m. on Saturdays while the location for 9 a.m. Sunday mass switches between Good Thunder and Vernon Center every other week.

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Waseca High School Class of 2023 Graduation



Joshua Azure



Eddie Herman and Abbie Hermel with Katelynn Hodgkins behind them



Destiny Woitas



The Class of 2023 listening to Class Vice President Jenaro Delgado Jr. speak. Bottom row: Katelynn Hodgkins, Grady Hoffman, Alexander Honstad, Kya Hoof, Cecelia Huttemier, and Cierra Ingalls. Second row: Arianna Krogseng, Thyme Lang, Grace Lapides, Ryan Leigh, Avery Madsen, Madelyn Malecha, Nathan Markeson, Jacqlyn Mathern, and Kevin McGuire.



Superintendent Eric Hudspith with Charlie Priebe, Alyssa Bowers, and Julia Anderson



Jacob Kehler, William King, Lindsey Kopetzki, and Sophia Krause were among a handful of students recognized for graduating Summa Cum Laude (earning a 3.9 or higher GPA). Kehler and Kopetzki were also two of seven students who achieved 4.0 or higher.



Graduates Samantha Azure and Ashley Barrientos



Jalysa Acevedo escorted during her walk



Class President
Avery Madsen



Katrina Duciaume and Ella Dufault smiling



Lexi Spielman and Haylee Sommers



Ava Norland and Max Neaves



Class Vice President
Jenaro Delgado Jr.

Pioneer photos by Michael Roy

DJ

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Waseca High School Class of 2023 Graduation



Class escort John Hanson shakes Leo Harguth's hand as he prepares to receive his diploma



Among those in the crowd graduating Magna Cum Laude were Haylee Sommers, Avery Madsen, Alexander Honstad, and Michele Menghini.



Student Council President Aubree Hansen



Italian foreign exchange student Michele Menghini



Joseph Feldkamp



Members of Waseca's select choir (which included many seniors) performed "The Awakening" by Joseph Martin and an arrangement of "Found/Tonight" by Jacob Narverud during commencement.



School Board Representative Lindsey Kopetzki



Cecelia Huttemier pushing Hussain Bhatti



Alyssa Bowers embraces daughter Erika after presenting her with her high school diploma



Thyme Lang smiles as she shakes class escort John Hanson's hand



Ruweida Osoble hugging her sister outside the high school after commencement



Principal Dr. Jason Miller



Janeli Garcia



Among the honorable guests for commencement were teachers and class turns Dan Sharpsteen (left) and Brenda Nelson (middle).



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The Pastor's Column

Our choices affect others

By PASTOR KEN ANDRS

My ankles are itching. It is annoying, I don't know when or how, but my ankles were assaulted by mosquitos. These mosquitos were able to extract a full measure of blood and leave my ankles wanting daily attention. I have shown some restraint, but my ankles are still itchy.

I know what you are about to say, "Just go get an itch stick, or Benadryl, or anything!" I know that I should, but there is always something else going on when I think about how itchy my ankles are. Then I get home from the long day of ministry, and I don't want to go out anymore when I remember or feel how much my ankles itch. I chose willpower over going to the store, but I am getting close to losing the battle of not itching my ankles.

I know what I should do, but I am not doing it. I think that if I wait long enough the itching will go away on its own. The effects of the mosquitos can't last forever, but then again, they are lasting long enough. A lot of times we don't think about the effects of our actions or inaction, rather we hope they won't bother us too much. Isn't that the case with a lot of things in life? We don't slow down to think through the implications of our choices and how those choices affect our future.

Galatians 6 reminds us that the choices we make have implications in this world and for all eternity.

7 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what

he sows.⁸ The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.⁹ Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.¹⁰ Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

The choices we make in this world affect every aspect of our lives. If we are mean, hateful, or bitter in our interactions with others we get broken relationships, sour dispositions, and end up questioning and blaming God for our life situation. If we demonstrate love, show compassion, and practice mercy we will receive a rich reward in heaven and produce a harvest that is a blessing.

How can we sow and reap the blessings God has for us? We can do so by doing good, it is our willful choice. We must choose to do the good that God has in front of us and allow Him to be concerned about the harvest. He is at work in the choices we have to make, and our choices reflect on the faith we have in God as well as who God is to us.

Let us continue to do good, don't give up doing it. Make the choice to follow God and not our sinful nature. Sometimes we need to be reminded that when everything is annoying and painful, don't lash out at others and whatever you do, don't itch the mosquito bites.

Waseca Class of 1953 Reunion



On Thursday, May 18, eleven members of the Waseca Class of 1953 gathered to celebrate the 70th anniversary of their high school graduation. Class members were joined by their husbands and wives; The groups was very pleased with the turnout at Oscar's Restaurant in Waseca. The eleven members of the class present at the reunion included Donna Gehring, Violet Yerhart, Dick Papke, Pat Lyon, Norm Wolfe, Liz Smith, Lyle Root, Dick Wright, Helen Weckwerth, and Maynard Bruck.

Service from Page 1

It begins in the garden, and the Bible ends with the fully mature man — Jesus and his bride — reigning over the garden city. We go from a garden to a garden city.

"It's about God maturing humanity from a baby, to a child, to an adolescent, to a fully grown and mature man. He is maturing His people. The plan was always for man to grow to full maturity. Jesus's death on the cross not only saves us from sin, but it saves us to maturity and become heirs of the entire world."

He then directed his message to the Waseca seniors in the audience. "The young people here...God has brought you to a new stage of maturity," he said. "You've been instilled

with virtues by your parents and others.

"Years ago, I graduated from Waseca and had the same teachers as you did," Isker continued. "Jesus said that a student shall be like his teacher. This is true. But to all the teachers here, feel free to not listen for the next 30 seconds — I don't remember a single lesson from any of my teachers from Mr. Hansen or Mr. Nelson's class. But the curriculum didn't really matter, because the actual lesson was Mr. Hansen. I remember more than two decades later the many virtues that these teachers demonstrated every day, from patience to kindness."

Isker said that God had placed people to "cultivate virtue within you," which he claimed was the point of maturity. "Those who will be faithful in little will be faithful in much," he said.

He then told students that their faith will be tested in the world.

"C.S. Lewis once said that courage isn't simply one of the virtues, but a form of every virtue at the testing point, which means the highest point of reality.

"You're coming of age in an era of moral insanity," he continued. "It's the world you are inheriting. Your Christian virtue will be tested in a way my generation or any others before me did not have to experience. You'll enter a world where actually being a Christian — not just in name, but one who believes the entire Bible — that is something that can be very costly."

He reminded them that their faith in Christianity is not their parents', but their own. "You will have to ask yourself, 'Do I want the easy, comfortable life that I feel entitled to as the birthright of an American? Or will I choose to devote the one life that God has given me to fight the evils before us to build the great kingdom of God?' You're out of the

frying pan and into the fire. The time to choose is now."

The congregation was invited to sing two hymns, "Amazing Grace" and "It Is Well With My Soul," with accompaniment provided by Susan Poepping of the Waseca Christian Assembly.

The local Gideons, led by Robert Steen, then offered an "answer book" containing the New Testament, Psalms, and Proverbs. "Every day of your life will be a learning experience," he said. "But at times, we encounter situations or questions in the more personal areas of life. Sometimes, there are times we reach outside of ourselves."

Special thanks were given to members of the Waseca Ministerial Association, high school principal Dr. Jason Miller, the Waseca High School staff, and Susan Poepping for helping make the service possible.

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507-201-7293 (Pastor Andrew Isker)
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801 4th Ave NE, Waseca
507-835-3167
Worship Sundays 9:30 a.m.

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309 6th St NE, Waseca
507-835-9176
Worship Sundays 9 a.m., 10:15 a.m.
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ST. JOHN LUTHERAN CHURCH
401 3rd Ave NE, Waseca
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ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH
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Worship Sunday 9:00 a.m.

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Wednesday - 7 p.m. Worship

ST. PETER EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
Otisco, Minnesota
Rev. Scott Williams, Pastor
Thursday - 6:30 p.m. Soup & Study
Sunday - 8:45 a.m. Worship

TRINITY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
New Richland, Minnesota
Pastor Mary Iverson
Sunday - 9 a.m. Sunday Worship, Sunday School; 10 a.m. Coffee
Monday - 9 a.m. Quilting
Wednesday - 6:15 p.m. Confirmation; 7 p.m. Council meeting

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
New Richland, Minnesota
Pastor Pamela Jensen
Sunday - 10 a.m. Worship

LESUEUR RIVER LUTHERAN CHURCH
New Richland, Minnesota
Pastor Dan Kordahl
Sunday - 9 a.m. Worship; 9:30 a.m. Sunday School
Tuesday - 8:30 a.m. Quilting

VISTA LUTHERAN CHURCH
New Richland, Minnesota
Pastor Dan Kordahl
Sunday - 10:30 a.m. Worship

VISTA EVANGELICAL COVENANT CHURCH
New Richland, Minnesota
Brian Schanil Pastor
Sunday - 10 a.m. Worship; 9 a.m. Sunday School
Tuesdays: The Shepherd's Robe

Ministry, 1-3 p.m., 6-8 p.m.; Bonfires and Yard Games, 6 p.m. until dark

ALL SAINTS CATHOLIC CHURCH
New Richland, Minnesota
Father Brian Mulligan
Saturday - 5 p.m. Mass

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Rev. Michael Mathews, pastor
Sundays: Sunday School 9 a.m., Bible Study 9:20 a.m., Worship 10:30 a.m.

IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH
Freedom Township
Sunday - 9 a.m. Worship

ZOAR UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
Pastor Ava Adams-Morris
Waldorf, Minnesota
Sunday - 9 a.m. Worship

ST. JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC
Waldorf, Minnesota
Father Brian Mulligan
Sunday - 8 a.m. Worship

TRINITY LUTHERAN
Wilton Township
Rev. Larry Sipe, Pastor
Sunday - 10:00 a.m. Worship

THE CHURCH of JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS
Brad Donner, Branch President
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www.lds.org
Sunday - 10 a.m. Sacrament Mtg.;

11:20 a.m. Sunday School
Wednesday - 7 p.m. Youth Activities, ages 12-18

TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH
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JANESVILLE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
401 N. West St., Janesville
Pastor Kathy King
Sunday - 8:15 a.m. Worship

BLOOMING GROVE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
43089 180th St., Morristown
Pastor Kathy King
Sunday - 10:45 a.m. Worship

ST. ANN CATHOLIC CHURCH
307 W. 2nd St, Janesville
Father Brian Mulligan
10 a.m. - Mass

FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH
300 Owen St., Janesville

Pastor Sarah Krolak

ST. JOHN EVANGELICAL CHURCH
Alma City, Minnesota
Vacancy
Sunday = 1 p.m. Worship

TRINITY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
Smiths Mill, Minnesota
Vacancy
Thursday - 7:00 p.m. Worship
Sunday - 8:30 a.m. Worship

NORTH WASECA LUTHERAN CHURCH ELCA
404 30 120th St. Waseca
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Wednesday - 6:30 p.m. confirmation

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In 1973, Father W.D. Sullivan celebrated 33 years with St. Ann Catholic Church in Janesville.



In 1923, Janesville High School graduated 24 students, one of the bigger classes for the time.

Photo from Waseca Journal

33 years at St. Ann

1923

-E. L. Paddock was delayed somewhat this year owing to stress of circumstances and did not get to Janesville in the early months as customary. His Montana ranch required his undivided attention. But he did pull away finally and landed in Owatonna on the thirtieth, where for many years he has put in his time on Memorial Day. He states that crops are fairly good thus far in Montana and that unless some unforeseen circumstances operate to prevent, prosperity will attend the years' efforts.

-No prettier wedding was ever seen in Janesville than that at which on Monday, Jan 4th, at 2 p.m., Adelaide Elizabeth Miner, eldest daughter of Mr. And Mrs. F. A. Miner, became the wife of Louis R. Dossett. Rev. C. E. Brandt of Minneapolis was the officiating clergyman.

-Thursday afternoon well towards the latter part of the day a car driven by Lydia Wolfgram hit little Hope Schwandt and knocked her down. It was thought she was run over and badly injured, but after a short time the girl got up and appeared to be only slightly bruised. Miss Wolfgram was turning the corner on Main Street. The child was going in the direction of the Finley store. She suddenly turned and ran in front of the car. Those who saw the accident state that it seemed to be unavoidable and lay no blame on the driver. The owner of the car took the child home, where she is reported alright save a scar on her face and other slight bruises.

1948

-Janesville slugged their way to a win Sunday at Northside Park, in an uphill duel, by edging out Garden City in a nip-and-tuck affair by a score of 18-17. The homeguards collected 20 hits off Reuhl, who did the twirling for Garden city, while Art Cahill, local tosser, was rapped for a total of 13 clouts. John Fury and Corlie Hartwich were the leading swatters for Janesville, getting five and four hits, respectively.

-The petition of landowners for a soil conservation district in Waseca County was approved on May 27 by the State Soil Conservation Committee, according to Paul E. Miller, chairman. The committee took further action by arranging a referendum to be held on June 16.

-The annual Sonnenberg family reunion was held on Memorial Day at the home of Mr. And Mrs. Irvin Stankey in Smiths Mill.

-The The Janesville baseball team lost a 11-9 decision to the Mankato Eagles at Northside Par on Sunday afternoon. Costly errors played a big part in the defeat for Janesville. But on Memorial Day, Janesville traveled to Waldorf and tripped the latter by a score of 15-6.

1973

-Michael H. Walton, son of Mr. And Mrs. Harold Walton, St. Clair, will graduate with a Doctor of Medicine degree from the University of Minnesota at Northrup Memorial auditorium Friday, June 8. He will intern at Bethesda Hospital in St. Paul beginning July 1. Michael is a 1966 graduate of St. Clair High School. In 1969 he graduated Magna Cum Laude from Mankato State College with a major in chemistry and biology and minor in math. His wife, Pamela Gench Walton, is also a MSC graduate and is teaching in the Maplewood-St. Paul School District. The couple has one daughter, Lisa, 3.

-A brief word from the pulpit Saturday night was the only mention Father W.D. Sullivan made about his thirty-third anniversary as a Catholic priest. But, when you talk with him, you know his vocation is not something he takes lightly. He recalls it took him over 20 years to decide to be a priest. Once he made that decision, he has never regretted it.

-Parents who are interested in saving on Hay Daze rides this year should make a point to buy tickets in advance. Until Friday, June 15, tickets can be purchased at the rate of six for one dollar. Once the Al Merriam Show is set up, advance sales will be discontinued.

1998

-More neighboring is needed to preserve rural culture the way we would like to remember it, an Iowa sociologist said. Things are not well in rural America, and it is possible we are creating a rural culture in which no one wants to live, said Paul Lasley, a professor and extension sociologist at Iowa State University. "Rural areas get the worst of both worlds," Lasley said. "With all of the problems of urban areas but none of the advantages. Ironically, the rural areas where people are most satisfied are within commuting distance of metropolitan areas."

-On Sunday, June 14, Minnesota's Agricultural Interpretive Center, Farmamerica, will host the first of its annual 1998 festivals. An old-fashioned wedding from the 1930s is the day's theme. In addition, the Farmamerica historic sites will feature demonstrations, displays and activities for families and people of all ages.

-Area hospitals and libraries are helping parents introduce the world of books to children at an early age. The Traverse des Sioux Library System recently received a \$17,000 grant from the Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning for its new program, "Hug a Baby, Hug a Book." The program's goal is to enhance awareness of the importance of exposing infants and toddlers to reading. The grant will encourage families throughout the nine-county region to utilize services of public libraries during their child's important developmental years.

Chicken Day in Waseca

Waseca Journal, 1923

-Janesville has a high school which ranks high in a scholastic way. This year, 284 pupils attended the grades and high school and twenty-three will graduate this week. This is an unusually large class for a town of Janesville's size.

-People from all parts of the county and even outside of the county came to Waseca as guests of the Waseca Chamber of Commerce. The streets were crowded and later in the afternoon when the doors of the Palace theatre were opened the place was soon packed, every seat occupied and standing room was not to be had. The day was a success in every way.

-The city council met in an adjourned regular session last evening (June 5). Three bills totaling \$1,336.39 were presented by Rathdal and Curtiss for extra work in laying the northeast drain. \$100 was asked for extra labor in in digging through the dump grounds, \$1,170.24 was asked for extra labor due to changing route some 100 feet in order to avoid Mrs. Durand's strawberry patch and other gardens, the new route requiring deeper digging, and \$65.15 was asked for delay due to certain right of way not having been obtained.

Waseca Journal, 1948

-Overalls will be useful for the special "Chicken Day" here Friday. Joe Powell of the Overall Days steering committee announced that 50 chickens will be released at 2:30 p.m. "If you catch 'em you can have 'em," Powell said. They will be released from State Street store roofs.

-Ursula Reimler, 16, came back to her native land this week but she came back to a country she never knew. When Ursula left America she was only three years old, yet the fact that she was born here made her an American citizen and that permitted her to leave Germany to make her home in America. She came to Waseca Monday having been met in Chicago by her uncle and aunt, Rev. And Mrs. G. W. Malling. Rev. Malling is pastor of the Trinity Lutheran Church of Wilton and Ursula will make her home with them there. She plans to enter Waseca High School next fall but which grade will have to be determined later.

-Lee Hendrickson tossed no-hit baseball in a Memorial Day game at New Richland as his mates garnered two runs to defeat Ellendale of the Cedar Valley loop 2-0. New Richland plays in the Maple Valley league while Ellendale is a member of the Cedar Valley loop. Gordon



LONG CAREERS — In 1998, Tony Thomez (center) and Delency Sutlier (right) retired from Dean Foods in Waseca after 45 years of working there.

Johnson, losing pitcher gave up only two hits in the exhibition tilt.

Waseca Daily Journal, 1973

-A jury trial was ordered by the Minnesota Supreme Court today to determine benefits and damages from a proposed drainage ditch near Lake Elysian in Waseca and Blue Earth Counties. Natural Resources Commissioner Robert Herbst issued a permit for a dam as part of the ditch project, but then appealed when part of the project's cost was assessed against the state.

-Many Minnesota property owners will be getting a card from their local tax assessor soon. For a change, it'll have some good news. Tucked away in the big tax reform bill passed by the 1973 legislature is a provision that says assessments can't go up more than five percent a year. That means that many revaluation notices already mailed out by assessors will have to be redone and the valuations reduced.

-Percy Born and his son Larry have purchased the interest of Harold Born in Born Livestock Co., Waseca. The sale becomes final Friday (today). Harold, Percy's brother, has retired from the business due to health reasons. With Larry Born in the business it will become a fourth generation Born enterprise.

Waseca County News, 1998

-Waterville-Elysian-Morristown (WEM) Choir Director Duane Johnson has decided that now is the time to retire. Johnson has been directing the WEM choirs for the past 14 years, and he has been teaching for a total 37 years in various Upper Midwest school districts. "It seemed like now was the right time to retire," Johnson said.



In 1973, Harold Born (left) turned over the keys to the trucks of Born Livestock Co. to Larry and Percy Born. Percy Born's part-ownership made the business a fourth-generation enterprise.

-The Janesville-Waldorf-Pemberton School District is one of four school districts along with the Traverse des Sioux Public Library System that earned a \$203,861 grant to convert school records and load its records on the Tds/PALS regional catalog.

-Time has a unique way of entwining two lives. For Tony Thomez and Delency Sutlier, the rare accomplishment of working for 45 years on one

employer — Dean Foods in Waseca — is their connection. Thomez and Sutlier, who both confess to having done every job at the local food packager, are linked together not only by time, but also an unwavering dedication to their jobs."I have enjoyed working here," Thomez said. "Every sing I started, I have wanted to do whatever I could do to help."

Crabtree, Snyder make state meet

1923

-This year's graduation exercises mark the twenty-third annual High School Commencement in the history of the New Richland schools. According to the records, 202 young men and women have completed the course of study. With this year's graduating class this number is increased to 218.

-An addition to Naeve hospital, Albert Lea, will double the size of that institution. The cost will be \$71,170.

-For the first time in the history of the state, women have been members of the Minnesota legislature. Naturally, there is considerable speculation as to whether the experiment was justified by the results. After four months of observation, we would declare most emphatically that it was.

-Lloyd Grande is assisting Elmer Blowers through corn planting.

-The commissioners of Steele, Faribault and Freeborn counties voted unanimously in favor of a tuberculosis sanitarium. They went on record favoring a one and one-half mill levy in each county for the purpose of raising funds for the cost of the building which is \$100,000.

-Lost-Auto crank. Lost around loop on drive past Fred Laudert and J. F. Thompson farms. Kindly leave

at Farrell & Matz garage.

1948

New Richland baseball fortunes continued on the upturn as Wells was defeated in a torrid tilt by another 8 to 6 score. The sox now give evidence of poise which has been lacking in the earlier games when potential markers were not forthcoming when good opportunities presented themselves.

Evidently for varied reasons the 5 o'clock p.m. closing of New Richland stores has been deemed impractical and has been abandoned.

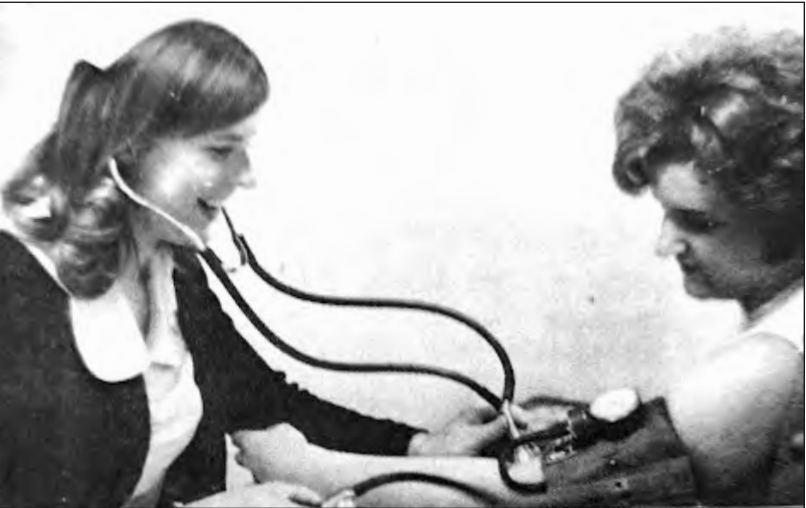
Frank Root thinks of confining his sports activities to fishing and mowing his lawn. He went out for softball Wednesday evening and came out of the game with a sprained left ankle.

Miss Ruth Miller entertained 14 guests at the home of her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Ray Miller, Wednesday evening in honor of Carrell Raymo who is entering the service.

"Good luck" is the verdict brought back by Seth Winegar, Harold Echtermach and Ethan Allen of this place, Floyd Stearns of Albert Lea and Owen Brisbane of Waseca who returned Friday from a few days' fishing at Lake Winnebigo-shish, way up north.

1973

-The Waseca County Commissioners hired five persons to canvas



In 1973, Mrs. Dennis Roesler took Mrs. Norman Eckart's blood pressure as she checked Mrs. Eckart's health record prior to Mrs. Eckart's donating blood at the visit of the Bloodmobile.

the county for abandoned motor vehicles and scrap metal at their meeting, Wednesday, May 17.

-A class of 50 Seniors will graduate from Waldorf-Pemberton high school, Wednesday evening, May 31. Commencement exercises will begin at 8 p.m. in the high school auditorium at Waldorf.

-The New Richland FFA Soils judging team took fifth in the postponed state soils contest, last Friday in St. Paul.

-Last Tuesday forenoon Mrs. Russell Swenson and Mrs. Hannah Espee were coffee guests at the Glen Johnson home in honor of Gretchen's birthday.

-Sherry Supalla, new Richland, spent Monday and Tuesday with her grandparents, the George Tukuas.

-Janelle Hill, Debbie Weyders, and Julie, Steve, Nicky, Kathy, and Shelly Weydert camped overnight at

Helmer Myre Park last Friday.

1998

-Academically heading the NRHEG Class of 1998 as valedictorian is Lisa Kyte, daughter of Joe and Bonnie Kyte of New Richland. Nathan Possehl, son of Rex and Susah Possehl of Hartland is the salutatorian.

-A seventh grade student at NRHEG Middle School, Michelle Carlson, received a \$150 cash award by writing a winning essay on the dangers of drugs and alcohol. Michelle was one of 39 contest winners.

-The NRHEG girls' track team will send two members to the Minnesota State meet: Heidi Crabtree, who placed first in the discus and Stephanie Snyder, who was second in the triple jump.



Kathy Kronebusch at her farmers market stand. Pioneer photo by Amelia Roessler



Alexis Myers and Amy Nelson of Waseca 4-H working a booth to publicize a new "PoP" program Saturday June 3.

Farmers market at fairgrounds

By AMELIA ROESSLER
Staff Writer

The Waseca Farmers Market had a successful start Saturday, June 3, at the fairgrounds as vendors set up from 8 a.m. to noon.

Available products ranged from wood creations to baked goods and fresh produce.

Area resident Kathy Kronebusch has been selling both garden art and homemade baked goods for the past three years.

"It's fun," said Kronebusch, "I love to come out and meet the people, that's the best part."

Kronebusch mentioned that this is the first time she has ever set up her booth so early in the season, but she was satisfied with the crowd and the number of people.

This year, the market has expanded to allow vendors outside of Waseca County to come in if they pay a \$10 fee.

■ Graduation from Page 1

a time capsule in sixth grade. The question they were asked then was, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" Madsen's answer at the time? "I wanted to be Justin Bieber's girlfriend," she answered. "But in the last six years, my dream has become...well...more realistic."

She mentioned that, in hindsight, the question seems a bit close-ended: "I challenge all of us to reevaluate the question, and ask instead, 'Who do you want to be when you grow up?' With the substitution of one word, the question takes an entirely new meaning. It frames our future around ourselves instead of allowing it to be defined in what others want us to choose. It reminds us that who we are is not set in stone by genetics or past actions. Who you are is a decision you get to make for yourself."

Madsen then reflected on her time at Waseca High School. "When I think of the past 13 years, I think of football student sections, screaming lyrics to songs in locker rooms before games, making TikToks in chemistry instead of actually doing work, going to state in girls' basketball, morning floor hockey, and taking the kindergarten on a trip through Africa in the hallways of Hartley."

Madsen had a wish for her classmates. "Whatever you decide to do, I hope each one of you experiences what it's truly like to live rather than just be alive. Congratulations Class of 2023. We grew up."

Senior Class Vice President Jenaro Delgado Jr.'s speech started the same way. "We did it. We finally did it."

"This was the goal from the first day of kindergarten, when we would walk in crying because we did not want our mom and dad to leave us. It was very hard on us apparently, because according to my parents, when they picked me up, Mr. Hofmeister would tell them I was crying all day."

"The only time I was happy was when I was at lunch. I guess some things never change."

Delgado acknowledged that each stage of schooling was tough, from the personality changes to the wacky hairdos and fashion changes. "Oh,

and maybe I should mention we survived a whole pandemic," he added.

He remembered when the students received two weeks off of school in March of 2020, two weeks that would change their lives forever. "Teachers had to learn how to use the internet more, and the students had to get up early for Zoom meetings," he said. "And trust me, it was way harder on the students, although Ms. Nelson would probably disagree with me."

Delgado claimed that the Class of 2023 was one of the most tested and pushed groups. "Mr. Wendland had always told us during football that we would have to face adversity when times were hard, and that's exactly what we did. We have been through so much and have proven time and time again that we can accomplish what is thrown our way."

Delgado ended by sharing some advice. "No matter what you do, where you go, never give up on your goal. Know that as a Bluejay, we're told we can accomplish anything. Lastly, know that we have a great community that shows love to all of us and that we will always be welcomed back."

"I like to think that Waseca is more than a town. We are a family. Everybody here cares for each other just like they are family."

"It's sad that our time with each other is ending. But I have the utmost respect and confidence in every one of you. I do hope that all our paths will cross again."

Lindsey Kopetzki, who served as student representative to the school board, shared that the class was gathered together not just to celebrate a milestone but to appreciate how much the Class of 2023 "has learned and grown throughout our years at high school."

"Up until my junior year, I thought achieving good grades was the most important aspect of being successful," she said. "But it wasn't until I turned in my final test as a high school student that I found myself thinking about what I learned throughout school."

Despite the tests, Kopetzki claimed that school's life lessons from certain very memorable moments were most important.

Kopetzki cited Mrs. Kaiser's computer skills class as an example. "Learning how to type quickly really helps when you're good at procrastinating," she joked.

Kaiser said at the end of each class was to be humble and kind. And I think that's something our class has taken to heart."

Ms. Nelson's algebra class also made an impact on Kopetzki. The teacher awarded chips to those who made progress in excelling in the lessons she taught. "She taught us more than solving for x," Kopetzki said. "She taught us how to set goals and high standards for ourselves and that we're capable of whatever we put our minds to. I think I can speak on behalf of my class when I say we achieved the highest scores in math while in her class."

Kopetzki then acknowledged Mr. Nelson, who she claimed greeted every student and sang the song "Championship."

The teachers she named were only a small fraction of those that influenced the class. "They have all taught us skills and important life lessons we can use outside of the classroom," she said. "Waseca High School has taught the Class of 2023 to have integrity, to be humble and kind, that we are capable of anything we put our minds to, to have convictions in our opinions, and, of course, to make good decisions."

"No matter where our class goes, be it college, the military, or the workforce, we will take these life lessons with us."

Student Council President Aubree Hansen was the last to speak. "I am feeling a lot of emotions," she admitted. "Last year, just in the bleachers, I sat with my best friend Avery and we recorded the two of us yelling with excitement that a year from now, we'll be up there, as we pointed to last year's graduating class."

"Time went faster than I ever imagined," she said. "Just as the wise woman Taylor Swift once said, I remember it all too well."

Hansen brought up the 1980s classic movie "The Breakfast Club," talking about the plot of the five characters from different walks of life who went through detention together.

However, Hansen said that the Class of 2023 couldn't be defined as rich, the outcast, or any of the other personalities seen in "The Breakfast Club." "We cannot be defined in a single word," she said. "We do have an opportunity to break these stereotypes that many try to put us in. As we enter the workforce, we have the opportunity to change the narrative, to be our true selves. You get to choose who you are and who you want people to view you as. This is the end of the decade, but the start of an age."

She once again quoted Taylor Swift: "The scary news is, you're on your own now. The cool news is, you're on your own now."

Honors

Those who graduated with honors wore gold cords, while those who earned "cum laude" honors wore blue and gold, "magna cum laude" wore blue and white, and "summa cum laude" wore white.

Seven students received special recognition for achieving a 4.0+ grade point average: Leah Bartelt, Hailey Dettmer, Joseph Feldkamp, Cecelia Huttemier, Jacob Kehler, Lindsey Kopetzki, and Christian Rodriguez.

Minnesota Honor Society members received special recognition, too. They are Kyle Ahlschlager, Samantha Azure, Leah Bartelt, Maia Bartelt, Miranda Breck, Jenaro Delgado Jr., Hailey Dettmer, Ella Dufault, Joseph Feldkamp, Isabella Hadley, Aubree Hansen, Charlet Harguth, Alexander Honstad, Kya Hoof, Cecelia Huttemier, Megan Kanewischer, William King, Lindsey Kopetzki, Sophia Krause, Griffin Krautkremer, Thume Lang, Grace Lapidus, Avery Madsen, Jacqlyn Mathern, McKenna Miller, Camille Ring, Christian Rodriguez, Jayme Sandbeck, Chloe Schumacher, Haylee Sommers, Kloe Wadd, and Hannah Wilder.

Other notes

All 143 graduates were presented their diplomas by Superintendent Eric Hudspeth and Waseca School Board members Alyssa Bowers, Julie Anderson, and Charlie Priebe.

Members of the high school band under the direction of Devon Lawrence performed "Pomp and Circumstance" as the graduates walked into the gym; Steven Reineke's "River of Life" was played as they walked out. The high school choir, including senior members, performed a medley of "Found" and "Tonight" arranged by Jacob Narverud. The choir was directed by Tim Delnay.

As the class walked out of the high school for the final time, Dr. Miller's closing words resonated in all of them. "My sincere wish for each and every one of you, is that you embrace your resilience and you live a fulfilling life. We'll all be cheering for you along the way."

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11	12 7 pm Post & AUX. Meeting WOMEN VETERANS DAY	13	14 6pm BAR Bingo ARMY BIRTH-DAY U.S. FLAG DAY	15 7pm BINGO	16 MEAT Raffle 5:30 Horse racing 6:30pm	17
18 FATHER'S DAY	19	20	21 6pm BAR Bingo	22 7pm BINGO	23 MEAT Raffle 5:30 Horse racing 6:30pm COAST GUARD AUXILIARY BIRTH-DAY	24
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■ Suspect from Page 1

hard and keeping in touch with us on everything. We appreciate that you are taking it slow and doing everything right to catch this monster and help us bring him to justice.

“Sabrina was a beautiful young lady. Her heart was amazing. She had a pure soul and innocence that made her see only the good and best in people. She would quickly put herself out just to help anyone. She couldn't stand to see anyone hurt. She loved her son so very much. He filled her heart with joy. He was on her mind at all times. The whole world is now a darker, sadder place without her.

“Lastly, we hope that everyone (especially the media) will continue to respect my daughter and our family's privacy. Allow investigators to do their job. They will release information when it is appropriate. Our family will release a more public statement when it is appropriate. If anyone wants to do anything to help, prayers are best. Hug your loved ones. Or perhaps go to where she was found. Clean that ugly place up and leave something beautiful for her. This was the last thing she saw. Remove the ugly there and make it beautiful for her.”

Owatonna police are leading the investigation with assistance from the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, Steele County Coroner's Office, and the Southern Minnesota Regional Medical Examiner's Office. The department requests that anyone with information about the incident to call 507-444-3800, or detective Christian Berg at 507-774-7220.

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- Promote and educate customers on other banking services and refer business to other areas of the bank
- Have the ability to learn and understand various sectors of agricultural business including crop production and livestock
- Complete internal valuations and determine value of collateral which may include farmland and machinery
- Support and attend internal and external events such as customer appreciation events and community functions
- Perform other duties as assigned.

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Hundreds of photos peppered multiple poster boards on display during Blair Nelson's memorial and funeral service. Pioneer photo by Eli Lutgens

Hundreds attend Nelson's funeral

By DEB BENTLY
News Editor

"Dad would want this to be light," said Tenille Jennings during her father's funeral on June 5, before proceeding to tell about the numerous practical jokes she and her father shared, including the time she listed his car for sale on Craig's List for an April Fools joke.

About 500 people filled Waseca's Grace Lutheran Church to capacity for the June 5 funeral of Blair Nelson, 65, chair of the Waseca County Board of Commissioners and area real estate businessman since 1994; Nelson died suddenly on May 30.

Daughter Nikki Benson described Nelson's enthusiasm for sports, even to a point where she had to "shush" him from sharing his thoughts during games where she was coach.

Son-in-law Chas Benson told the story of a family shopping trip during which Nelson's secretive behavior got him accused of shoplifting—to an extent where his planned Christmas surprise was ruined when a police officer demanded to see what

"There wasn't a person with whom he wouldn't strike up a conversation, or a stranger he wouldn't befriend."

— Family message

was hidden beneath his jacket.

Story after story revealed Nelson's energetic and sometimes impulsive character, including the time he jumped into a lake fully dressed to "rescue" one of his grandchildren on a water float which was drifting away. There was also the time he and some family members spent an hour searching for a long-distance cyclist coming through town who, it was said, needed a place to spend the night.

Nelson has been part of the Waseca community since graduating from Waseca High School in 1977. He worked selling Farmers Insurance with his father and brother, Blain; was employed at Brown Printing for 20 years, began selling real

estate in 1994 and became co-owner of ReMax Real Estate with Blain in 2004.

He was elected to the Waseca County Board of Commissioners in 2010, has served on the board ever since, and was currently acting as its chair. According to his family, he took great pride in helping advance the veterans memorial now in place on the courthouse lawn, and in initiating acquisition of the "harvester" which is used to remove weeds in Clear Lake.

"Blair clearly was a people person and very kindhearted," states a family message. "There wasn't a person with whom he wouldn't strike up a conversation, or a stranger he wouldn't befriend."

Blair J. Nelson

Blair Jon Nelson, age 65, of Waseca passed away unexpectedly, surrounded by his loving family on May 30, 2023, in Waseca.

Blair was born on November 17, 1957, in Owatonna to Dwain and Marilyn (Denn) Nelson. An answer to Blair's prayers was meeting Deanne Smetana and they were united in marriage on November 25, 1983 in Pine City at the First Presbyterian Church. They were married for 39 wonderful years and blessed with four children.

Blair began working alongside his father and brother at the Farmers Insurance Agency in downtown Waseca. He worked at Brown Printing in Waseca for 20 years. Blair began selling real estate in 1994, and in 2007, he became co-owner of REMAX Masters in Waseca. Blair found his true niche when elected to District 3 Waseca County Commissioner in 2010. One of his proudest achievements was initiating the purchase of a weed harvester to bring Clear Lake back to its beauty and recreational use for the local community. Blair was also very proud to be part of the Waseca County Veterans Memorial project. He enjoyed networking with local, state, and national leadership, and always had Waseca County's best interest in mind. Blair was a sports enthusiast both on and off the field. He enjoyed coaching and officiating baseball/softball, football and basketball.

In 1977 Blair took the family's lemonade stand to the Freeborn County Fair. He loved fair time, meeting new people and visiting with his customers. With the help of his wife and daughters they continued the family tradition of selling Nelson's Lemonade until the family's retirement from Albert Lea in 2020.

The center of Blair's life truly was his family.

He was a devoted husband, father, and grandpa. Although he deeply missed his firstborn son, Tyler, his three daughters, whom he called his "trophy case," were his pride and joy and it was clear to all around him how much he adored and loved them. Blair was always involved in their activities. He followed them to every sporting event and never missed a life moment with them. Blair and Deanne enjoyed spending their summers at their cabin on Lake Washington in Madison Lake. Great memories were made and will be cherished forever. Blair and Deanne were looking forward to celebrating their upcoming 40th Wedding Anniversary, traveling, retirement together and watching their grandkids grow. Blair loved being a grandpa. He absolutely adored his five grandchildren, spending quality time with them, and spoiling them every chance he had. Blair was always there for his family. His love was unconditional. Blair clearly was a people person and very kindhearted. There wasn't a person with whom he wouldn't strike up a conversation, or a stranger he wouldn't befriend. Blair was larger than life. He will be remembered by all who knew him for his selflessness and willingness always to help someone in need. He will be dearly missed.

Blair is survived by his loving wife of 39 years, Deanne; children: Nikki (Chas) Benson of Waseca, Tenille (Tyler) Jennings of Elko New Market, Taylor (Chad) Ziemke of Mankato, grandchildren: Madalyn Benson (15), Annabelle Benson (12), Harper Ziemke (4), Carson Ziemke (20 months), and Jace Jennings (6 months); siblings: Blain Nelson of Waseca, and Blake (Robin) Nelson of Waseca; sisters-in-law: Cheryl (Chris) McHugh of Pine City and Debbie Smetana of Blaine; brother-in-law, Gary (Jill) Smetana of Pine



Blair J. Nelson

City; nieces, nephews, other relatives and friends.

He is preceded in death by his parents, infant son, Tyler, sister-in-law, Jody Nelson, father and mother-in-law: Eugene and Virginia (Flor) Smetana.

Visitation was from 3-7 p.m. on Sunday, June 4, 2023 at the State Street Chapel of Dennis-Steffel-Omtvedt Funeral and Cremation Service.

The funeral service was 11 a.m. on Monday, June 5, 2023 at Grace Lutheran Church in Waseca. Interment was in Woodville Cemetery.

Board honors Nelson's service

By AMELIA ROESSLER
Staff Writer

The Board of County Commissioners honored Blair Nelson at its June 6 regular meeting by taking turns talking about what Nelson meant to them. Each of them also set a can of Coca-Cola by their computers, just as Nelson always had. Commissioner Brian Harguth started the meeting by saying how heartbroken the commissioners are on losing a colleague and friend.

"We can't possibly recognize all the good that Blair has done," Harguth said among stifled sniffles and tears from the room. He said the commissioners will conduct business in a way that honors the community.

After a moment of reflection and respect for Nelson, Commissioner DeAnne Malterer recalled Nelson's sense of humor and his deep connections to the community, commenting that his influence can never be measured.

Commissioner Brad Krause commented on how he had always

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— Commissioner Brian Harguth

appreciated Nelson's support during his own tenure as board chair. "I could always depend on him," said Krause. "Although we did get into trouble every once in a while for talking."

Commissioner Doug Christopherson reflected on Nelson's determination to learn about people on a personal level - he wasn't just business. "He took interest in our personal families," said Christopherson. "We didn't always see eye to eye, but we always respected each other's opinions. We'll miss him dearly."

Most Sincere Gratitude

The family of Blair Nelson would like to share the most sincere gratitude for all the love and support shown with the loss of our beloved husband, dad and papa. Blair would be so humbled by the recognition of this wonderful Waseca community. Thank you to the Waseca County staff for the special tribute of lighting the courthouse and lowering of the flag in Blair's honor. His heart would be filled with pride, as we are. As a family we are so humbled and thankful to be a part of such a great community. He is going to be so incredibly missed but most by his family.

The outpouring of love and support is appreciated more than words can express to our family. The stories that have been shared with us have brought immense comfort and peace knowing he touched so many lives.



Thank you to the individual who called for assistance, and emergency responders for your quick response to assist Blair. We will be forever grateful.

Our hearts are broken for our loss.

— Deanne, Nikki, Chas, Tenille, Tyler, Taylor, Chad