WASECA COUNTY PIONEER

LOCAL COMMUNITY-DRIVEN NEWSPAPER SERVING ALL OF WASECA COUNTY

No. 49 Vol. IV $2 Office at 111 Elm Avenue West, Waseca Thursday, December 4, 2025

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State bound

In the November 27 issue of the Waseca County Pioneer, it read that the Mankato Riverbend Brass Choir concert was to be held at 7 p.m. on Dec 7. This is inaccurate; the concert will be held at 2 p.m. Dec. 7. We apologize for any confusion.

Waldorf Community Christmas Dinner Thursday, Dec. 4

There will be a Community Christmas Dinner at the Waldorf Community Center on December 4 at noon. The menu includes turkey and all the trimmings for $10. Please order takeouts ahead by calling Susan Kipp at 507-420-8973. Takeout pickup is at 11:30. Walk-ins and everyone are welcome!

Neighborhood Service Center open house Thursday, Dec. 4

The Waseca Area Neighborhood Service Center invites all to a "The street's open!" open house from 4 to 6 p.m. on Thursday, Dec. 4. Come see our Thrift Store's facelift, enjoy some fun surprises and register for door prizes! Then head to our Food Shelf for some community education on healthy food, taste some samples, and pick up some recipes.

Holiday Lighting debut visible all along State Street Dec. 4.

The newly acquired holiday lights will be lit for the first time beginning at 6 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 4. Anyone along State Street in the downtown area will be able to watch as the lights come on one block at a time.

Christmas Cocktails with My Famous Friends at The Mill Friday, Dec. 5

The Mill in Waseca will be holding a Christmas Cocktails with My Famous Friends from 7-11 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 5. A funny multi-media rock 'n' roll experience. Ugly sweaters encouraged, adult beverages available.

Home for the Holidays Concerts Friday and Saturday, Dec. 5 and 6

The New Richland Area Foundation is sponsoring three performances of a "Home for the Holidays" concert at 7 p.m. Dec. 5 and at 2 and 7 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 6. Hometown talents Gavin Berg and Adam Moen will have beautiful music and humorous highlights at Trinity Lutheran Church of New Richland. All proceeds benefit the Foundation.

Holiday Lights at the Waseca County Fairgrounds Dec. 5 and 6

There will be a Holiday Light show at the Waseca County Fairgrounds from 6-9 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 6. Non-perishable food items will be collected for the Waseca Food Shelf.

A word from The Word

Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone.

Colossians 3:13

READY TO TROT - Participants lined up waiting for the 10 a.m. start at Farmamerica's third annual "Turkey Trot" 5k walk/run on Friday, Nov. 28, 2025. About 130 people of all ages, including even a few children in a stroller, took part. Pioneer photo by Deb Bently

Farmamerica Turkey Trot draws 130 trotters

By DEB BENTLY
News Editor

The temperature was 16 degrees and there was a medium breeze from the west, but some of the runners at Farmamerica's third annual "Turkey Trot" were sweating as they worked their way around the 5k course that takes participants past–and in one case, even through–the organization's historic locations.

About 130 participants signed up for the family friendly walk or run which began at 10 a.m. on Friday, Nov. 28. The first two finishers, Devin Sickler of Kasota and 13-year-old Keenan Collins of Waseca, completed the course in 22 minutes. They were followed two minutes later by Bryan Boyce of Waseca. Others, including families with strollers and young children, took their time and decided after each lap whether they would continue; the course took participants around the Farmamerica loop 3.5 times; some took about an hour to finish at their more leisurely pace.

Program director Kari Wadd and communications director Morgan Mudgett cheered participants on as they finished each loop. Wadd mentioned that this is the first time there has been snow on the grounds during the Trot, and stated she preferred the brisk cold to last year's weather, which had included such strong winds that some walkers who had worn detailed turkey costumes had trouble moving both when encountering a headwind and a tailwind.

The registration fee–participants had preregistered–included numerous amenities. Among them were warm drinks, fruit and doughnuts, and individualized packets with a turkey-shaped medal and a Turkey Trot T-shirt.

The 2024 presidentially pardoned turkeys, Peach and Blossom, supervised the dining area of the visitor center, gobbling repeatedly, apparently undisturbed by the commotion.

FIRST PLACE TROTTER - Devin Sickler of Kasota finished the 5k "Turkey Trot" walk/run at Farmamerica in 22 minutes with 13-year-old Keenan Collins of Waseca coming in only seconds behind him. For their efforts, Sickler took home a frozen turkey. Collins and third-place runner Bryan Boyce of Waseca each received a package of turkey sausage. Pioneer photo by Deb Bently

PARDONED - Turkeys Blossom and Peach were pardoned by President Joe Biden in 2024. Now retired, they currently reside in their own private shed at Farm America and receive top notch care.

Celebrity turkeys Blossom and Peach survive another Thanksgiving

By BEN REVERMANN
Staff writer

Since shortly after being pardoned by former President Joe Biden last year, Waseca County's famous resident turkeys, Blossom and Peach, have been living the high life at Farmamerica. They even get special attention from the facility's Program Coordinator, Kari Wadd.

"With the changing of the season, the drop in temperature can be hard on them, so we have to move them into a special heated shed in the winter," Wadd said, then clarified that "cooler temperatures" are "anything below 55 degrees." Since the high-profile birds are of such interest to the public, they are usually a part of just about everything that goes on at the farm. "We include them in all school tours and make them available to every visitor who comes out here because they've brought life to the turkey industry. They're walked every day, and when they're not otherwise occupied, they can just roam around the grounds if they wish." According to Wadd, the whole team out at Farmamerica pitches in on the turkeys' care, but the primary caregiver is Wadd, who pointed out that she also earned a spe-

Turkey continued on 4

Competitive swimmer

Waseca graduate Tyler Jellum choses Gustavus

By DEB BENTLY
News Editor

Although he was a member of the Waseca Community Education competitive swim team for six years, 2025 Waseca High School graduate Tyler Jellum notes many of his classmates didn't even know the team existed.

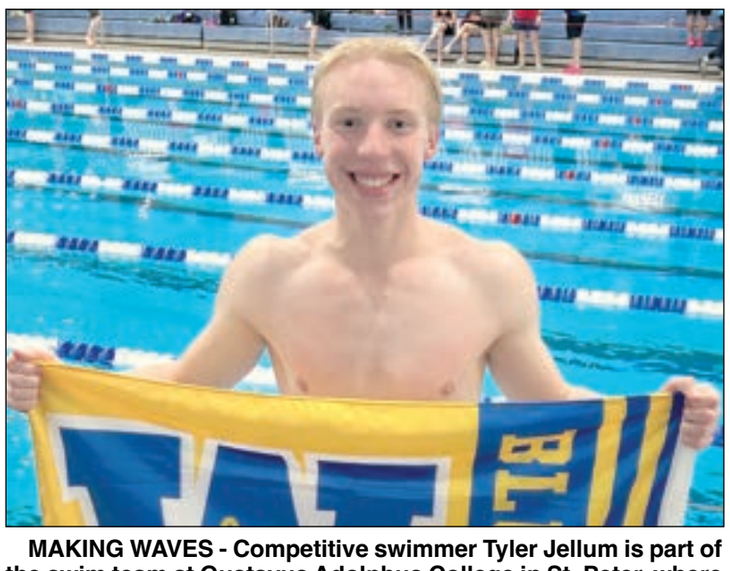
That didn't bother him, though. He wasn't in it for notoriety.

"Racing's fun," he says of the sport. "I like testing myself and finding ways to get better at what I do."

Jellum's success and dedication did not go unnoticed: during his senior year he was contacted by a number of colleges interested in recruiting him for their swim teams. He chose Gustavus Adolphus in St. Peter: He explains he likes the small campus, the coaches, and the pleasantly short drive to come home for visits.

And, as much as he enjoyed and appreciated his participation with community education, he has been discovering new aspects of competition now that he is part of a more cohesive team.

Swimming continued on 5



MAKING WAVES - Competitive swimmer Tyler Jellum is part of the swim team at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, where he is a freshman, having graduated from Waseca in 2025. Tyler participated for six years with the swim team coached by Jeanne Sexton and sponsored by the Waseca Community Education Department. Pioneer photo by Deb Bently

Local food cooperative committee researching options

By DEB BENTLY
News Editor

"There's a lot of energy and excitement surrounding this," says Waseca resident Jim Boerboom, who is part of a steering committee to form a Waseca area food cooperative. "People are interested in a retail model that supports local growers and allows them access to locally raised meat and poultry.

"Along with that, it brings the community together, gives them a shared interest and a gathering place where they can collaborate and learn from each other."

Investigation into the viability of a local food cooperative began about a year ago after Boerboom, retired in 2016 from being deputy commissioner for the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, was challenged to make a difference.

Building on a longstanding community interest in having a grocery store, Boerboom concluded, "The corporate retailers have dismissed Waseca as a viable market." In other words, if the region is going to have a grocery store, it will be because the people of the area made it happen.

He began looking into the steps it would take to open a food cooperative in Waseca. There is now a 14-member steering committee. The initiative has its vision statement and articles of organization in place, and has completed a preliminary market assessment.

"It's a process that takes a lot of patience," Boerboom observes. "The earliest we might actually see a store is about three years from now."

The differences between a typical retail store and a cooperative, he explains, rest in the types of products offered and the ownership model.

Food co-ops emphasize locally produced, natural and organic goods which have experienced limited processing. The stores must conform to food safety and inspection rules, so they are not like a farmers' market where items are purchased directly from growers and home producers.

Cooperatives are owned by people who invest in the business by purchasing shares–and thus provide money which helps pay start-up and organizational costs. Owners elect a governing board which oversees store operations, but occasional major decisions are returned to the full ownership for a vote. Based on information gathered so far, Boerboom says the cooperative would need at least 500 members to be financially viable. He estimates at least $1million will be needed to get it started, but points out low-interest loans and even grants are likely to be available.

Anyone can shop at a cooperative, but in exchange for their support, owners receive benefits which might include special discounts or offers.

Boerboom and others have toured four other cooperatives and received advice regarding topics from pricing to parking lots. Some of the most emphatic

Food continued on 2

Compostings

by Al Batt

Stress cannot exist in the presence of a pie

ECHOES FROM THE LOAFERS' CLUB MEETING

I was cleaning the attic when I found my old flutophone. I began playing it.

I'll bet that brought back some memories.

It sure did. I remembered how bad I was at playing the flutophone.

DRIVING BY BRUCE'S DRIVE

I have a wonderful neighbor named Bruce. Whenever I pass his drive, thoughts occur to me. I've been privileged to ring Salvation Army bells for many years at a few Hy-Vee stores. It's always a pleasant experience, but not without its thrills and chills. A man, doing his shopping with the aid of an electric cart, was obviously a new driver, because he zoomed past me at high speed, or at least whatever the highest speed one of those units can attain, and hit a wall with a larruping good lick. I looked around for a state trooper as the excessive mph made me think I must have been ringing the bells on a highway. After I'd stumbled back to reality, I asked if he was OK. The man was not a happy camper. He muttered a discouraging word and left with his bag of food. I was grateful to have avoided a bell-on collision with a motorized shopping cart.

SNIPPETS FROM STORIES

We had pumpkin pie with whipped cream. David Mamet said, "We must have a pie. Stress cannot exist in the presence of a pie." The foods that led up to the pie had a pinch of this and a pinch of that. Both pinches were delicious.

Let it snow. Let it snow. Make it stop. I sneezed while brushing my teeth. I don't recommend that. Am I suddenly allergic to toothpaste or snow, or just a sneezing fool?

The fellow told me he deserts Minnesota for Arizona in the winter. He does that because warm weather improves his mood.

My mother told me about the carpenter's ruler my grandfather had used. Grandpa was a builder of houses. The ruler had been worn beyond easy reading, and someone had used it to stir paint, but Grandpa still used it. Mother asked him how he could measure anything with that ancient ruler when it was nearly impossible to see the marks. He replied that he'd used it so long, he remembered where the marks had been.

I talked to a guy in Tennessee. I told him that he lived in a beautiful part of the world. He said, "It might be, but I wouldn't know. I've lived here all my life."

I once read a poem from Rod McKuen's book, "Listen to the Warm" to the goats. They needed guidance. "For every star that falls to earth a new one glows. For every dream that fades away a new one grows. When things are not what they would seem you must keep following your dream." It didn't help. They still acted goatish. I should have read it to the chickens. My favorite poet is the late Mary Oliver, who penned these words, "Instructions for living a life: Pay attention. Be astonished. Tell about it." I got a shingles shot and, being a cautious sort, I got a vinyl siding shot, too.

BAD JOKES DEPARTMENT

I told my doctor it wasn't my fault that exercise and extra fries sound too much alike.

If George Washington were alive today, what would he be most famous for? His age.

My wife called me to tell me she'd seen a coyote on the way to work. I asked her how she knew the coyote was on its way to work. She hung up on me.

NATURE NOTES

If you have a bird feeder, watch for motionless woodpeckers, with their bodies held parallel to a tree or feeder, waiting for a predator to pass. That's a red-alert pose. I try to imagine what the bird is going through. I want to put myself in its feathers, but I can't, but I keep trying. I anthropomorphize to demonstrate kinship.

The tamarack tree, a Minnesota native, is a deciduous conifer with bright green needles that turn yellow in the fall and drop off.

A flying squirrel has a membrane that connects its front and back legs, and is called a patagium. Spreading its limbs allows it to glide, not fly, between trees. Minnesota has two species of flying squirrels, not counting Rocky. The northern flying squirrel weighs 2 to 4.4 ounces and is 10 to 12 inches long (tail included). The southern flying squirrel is 8 to 10 inches in length and weighs 1.6 to 2.2 ounces.

MEETING ADJOURNED

"If the only prayer you say in your life is thank you, that would suffice."—Meister Eckhart. Be kind.

In My Humble Opinion

by Deb Bently

Grateful for the snowy days

These ideas are being written down on Saturday evening, after a day of snowfall which covered everything outside with five or more inches of shiny white snow. By the time you read it on Thursday, the whole world will have changed again in some new, wintry way.

Today, though, I am willing to say I am grateful for snowy days like this one.

For one thing, we all hunker down in our homes and let go of the idea of going anywhere–all without any guilt about missed appointments or carelessly disappointing others. Once the horizon disappeared, none of us really want to go anywhere any more.

What struck me most today is that time seemed to be moving differently. I have spent eight or more hours writing my numerous news pieces for this week's edition, but I didn't really feel the passage of time. Rather than minutes, the day seemed to be measured in snowfall.

I would look outside and watch the birds coming to my feeders for a while, then return to my work. When I looked again, the tops of the feeders would have somewhat taller caps of snow, the feeders would seem somewhat emptier, and the birds would still be coming and going.

Somehow the snow has managed to perch on even very small surfaces, including some lightcatchers hanging in my pergola.

The snow resting on them seems as bright as light itself, and I can't help speculating how the word "lightcatcher" has suddenly taken on additional meaning.

Even now, after dark, the yard light is enough to make the snow sparkle. The sidewalk in front of the house, conveniently shoveled by someone other than myself, has gone from being a suggestion regarding the path to take to a somewhat rigid rule, since creating my own path across the yard will have my shoes and clothing damp up past the height of my ankles.

The black field across the road no longer soaks up all color, but is now serenely reflecting the moonlight.

I know that the numerous rabbits who like to munch on the dropped seeds under my birdfeeders will be leaving record of all their comings and goings as long as the snow stays as impressionable as it is right now. It's deep enough that they will be leaving indentions the size of their whole bodies as they bounce forward across snow deeper than they are tall–except for their ears, of course. I remember from past years, those rabbit-body impressions look almost like human footprints coming across the yard.

So for now, I am enjoying and appreciating the snow. I know my feelings are likely to change tomorrow when I have to relearn how to drive.

SPARKLING - One of Deb's sun catchers caught light in a different form when it acquired a cap of sparkling snow.

Delayed flight but undaunted spirit

To Be Determined

by Amelia Roessler

My flight got delayed home for Thanksgiving on Wednesday. For seven hours, I was stuck in the airport yawning and tired, trying to convince myself to do work. So I decided to do what airports are built for: people watching. Here is a list of my thoughts and when they occurred. I arrived at the airport at 6 a.m. to find my flight was delayed until 12:15 p.m. Which was then further delayed until 1 p.m., when we finally took off.

6:25 – I learned recently in my other job that moms have a hard time traveling with breast pumping equipment. Something about security not trusting it or liking it. I saw a mom with a bottle of breastmilk for her child in the line to security and I felt bad for her.

6:43 – It's important to say thank you to people you interact with. Even to the crabby TSA person checking IDs.

7:31 – In a Colorado airport, it's funny to see who dresses "granola" or not. I was told by a Denver native that anyone dressing granola is fake. Real outdoorsy, healthy-focused people don't project into the world the Patagonia jackets, tie-dye clothing, and hiking backpacks. From what I've seen, more "real" outdoorsy Colorado people just wear jeans and cowboy boots. Some wear cowboy hats, but it depends on the person whether that's for show or not. So I always wonder when I see these granola people in the airport – are you from Colorado? Did you just dress that way to come here? Did you really go hiking?

I also did see, on two separate occasions, people wearing Vikings jackets. While this made me smile as a Vikings fan myself, it of course came with the thoughts of "you poor, poor fan."

7:47 – I love to watch all the babies and young kids. While I think it would be a pain to travel with small children, they are adorable to watch. Whether it's the baby curled up on momma's chest or the toddler fascinated with the walking escalators, it's fun to see their childlike wonder as the rest of us are either tired or stressed to be in the airport.

8:36 – The sun is shining! I arrived in the dark, but the shadows couldn't steal my spirit.

8:54 – Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy said that we should stop wearing sweats or pajamas to the airport and show more respect while traveling. I'm still seeing a lot of very comfy, borderline pajama outfits. Then again, some people come to the airport dressed to the nines. Personally? I prefer a classic jeans and sweatshirt outfit.

9:24 – Smelly people near you are the worst. I'm sorry, but that's the truth.

10:05 – Shout out to those people I saw running toward their gates in the airport. You stress me out, I hope you caught your flight.

10:13 – Flight got delayed another half hour. At this point I might as well get cozy and make the airport home.

10:47 – Finished all my work for the day. Checking foster lists to see which pet I want to bring home when I come back to Denver.

10:51 – My gate finally reads "Minneapolis" as its destination. Making progress.

I didn't really have any other thoughts. I was just reading until they finally called us. But it's Thanksgiving, so I'm grateful just for the opportunity to fly home to visit my family. And I'm thankful to you, dear reader, for making the decision to continually read my silly columns and decide that you like them. Of course I'm also thankful for my forever supportive family and my family at the Waseca County Pioneer.

Writing about my favorite things

STAR GAZING

by Eli Lutgens

I'm grateful I have the opportunity to write about local sports. This past week I attended the NRHEG Fall Sports Banquet. The banquets are among my favorites to write about.

When I arrived at the athletic banquet Tuesday evening, I was surprised when I saw former teacher and my former coach Shawn Larson sitting in the front row at the end.

I told him it was weird, not seeing him up on the stage.

He started talking about wrestling and how he wasn't going to coach this season.

He sounded anxious, and I really wanted to try to put him at ease.

Larson was one of my favorite coaches at NRHEG and one of my all-time-favorite teachers.

I thanked him for his service dedication, and many hours he put into the program as a coach.

I'm glad that he's retiring from coaching and will have the opportunity to enjoy his time as a parent, watching his kids finish their athletic careers. Wyatt, his oldest is, a senior this year, and Josie is a 7th grader.

The other thing I cautioned Larson about was coming back too soon from burnout. Larson didn't say that was his struggle, but I felt comfortable enough to speak on my experience.

It's funny how burnout works. As soon as I started to feel a little better and tried to return to a specific area of work in my life, that feeling of burnout/dread came back strongly. Thankfully, it dissipated quickly, too.

Speaking with Larson was also a walk down memory lane.

Larson told me that I was the most difficult baseball pitcher in his coaching career to take out of games. He said he would walk to the mound thinking, "There's no way Eli is going to say something to stop me from taking him out of the game."

But I usually I did.

My favorite instance of this was a game in which we lost 8-0, a game in which our team registered no hits. (Except for me who was hit by a pitch, on my throwing shoulder in the 6th inning, in very cold weather.)

Larson tried to take me out of the game numerous times. Nearly every inning beginning in the second. I believe he stopped trying after the fifth.

During the third or fourth inning, I told Larson, "I just want to give us the best chance to win."

I remember the feeling like it was yesterday. I feel it in my chest as I recall the moment. It was powerful.

This may be selfish, but the difficult part wasn't really coming out of the game. The difficult part was watching somebody who didn't love the game, who wasn't going to cherish every second on the mound or in the field and in the batters box, which hurt. I loved every second I spent on a baseball diamond.

If anyone ever struggles with the value of local high school sports, please think about the lessons of hard work, dedication, love, community and camaraderie which are learned along the way.

Sincerely, thank you, Larson, for giving me a few more cherished memories on the mound.

Thank you to all of our coaches, assistants, stat keepers, bus drivers, proud Moms and Dads, and everyone who supports local student activities.

WASECA COUNTY PIONEER

SERVING THE WHOLE OF WASECA COUNTY
including the communities of Waseca, Janesville, New Richland, and Waldorf

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GOLDEN LINK: Previous Friday

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■ Food

from Page 1

advice offered is that the store should have products or offers which lead shoppers to come to the coop as their first stop.

Boerboom says he is encouraged by the dedication and goodwill he has encountered so far on the journey. "These are community-minded people who want to do good things well," he says. "They believe in the value of what they're accomplishing, and they're willing to help others along the way."

Boerboom says he welcomes the knowledge and talents each person brings to the process.

Interested individuals can get involved at the QR code to the right.

Got news?

507-837-6767

Holiday Cookie Dazzle at Waseca Senior Center Dec. 6

The Waseca Area Senior Citizens Center will host the Holiday Cookie Dazzle from 9 a.m. to noon on Dec. 6. A plate of 12 cookies is $8; other baked goods will be for sale. The event is organized by Achieving Dreams for Disabilities; all funding goes to support children and adults with disabilities.

Waseca County Winter Farmers Market at Farmamerica Dec. 6

There will be a winter farmers market at Farmamerica from 8 a.m. till noon Saturday, Dec. 6. Find locally grown, baked and made items while supporting our local producers. Farmamerica is located at 7367 360th Ave., Waseca.

Winter Wonderland at Starfire Event Center Saturday, Dec. 6

The Starfire Event Center will host a Winter Wonderland event from 10:30 a.m. till 3 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 6. Will include holiday craft show with a variety of local vendors.

Christmas Bazaar at St. Paul Lutheran Church Dec. 6

There will be a Christmas Bazaar at St. Paul Lutheran Church from 10:30 a.m. till 1 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 6. Enjoy hot beef sandwiches, sloppy joes, homemade pies and coffee for $10. Crafts, baked goods, Christmas cookies, lefse and horseradish, white elephants and candy shop.

American Legion Auxiliary Cookie Tray sale Saturday, Dec. 6

Members of the Waseca American Legion Auxiliary will be selling trays of mixed cookies of various sizes from noon until gone at the Legion Hall, 700 South State Street, on Dec. 6. Sales are available in person only with no orders accepted in advance.

Christmas Time at The Mill Saturday, Dec. 6

Christmas Time at The Mill from 1 to 7 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 6. Crafts, Santa, cookie decorating, letter writing, face painting, the Grinch, local choir and bands will be performing. This event is free for everyone.

Family Tradition at the Indian Island Winery Dec. 6

The Indian Island Winery will host music trio Family Tradition from 5:30-8:30 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 6. They perform old and new hit country music.

New Richland Lions Club Breakfast Benefit Sunday, Dec. 7

The New Richland Lion's Club is holding a benefit breakfast from 8 a.m. to noon on Sunday, Dec. 7 at the New Richland City Hall community room. Free will donations will be accepted. Menu items include pancakes, scrambled eggs and breakfast sausage. Funds raised will benefit four members of the NRHEG school district staff who are experiencing health difficulties: Cortney Kitzman, Paul Kampen, Moey McCornack and Kim Routh.

Santa Experience to help fund update of 1930s barn

By DEB BENTLY
News Editor

From 4 to 7 p.m. on Friday and Saturday, Dec. 12 and 13, Santa will be welcoming visitors in Farmamerica's classic hip-roofed red barn, originally constructed in 1913. Those wishing to stop by are asked to register online in advance for specific time slots so that lines and wait times are shorter. Included for children who speak with Santa is a professionally-taken photograph, the cost for which is being covered by the Katie Gonzalez State Farm insurance agency.

Also available to visitors that day is a walk through the 1930s farmhouse, which has been decorated for Christmas. The house was moved to Farmamerica from the Doyle farm near Waldorf. Visitors will find a number of options for warming themselves; numerous farm animals will be on display for visits.

Also part of the Santa Experience is a coloring contest. The picture, which appears on page 12 of this edition of the Pioneer and can also be picked up at Farmamerica, features Santa in flight over a classic barn. Anyone can enter the coloring contest, which has age divisions of 0 to 4; 5 to 8; 9 to 12; and 13 and above. There is no charge to take part. Completed sheets can be mailed to Farmamerica at 7397 360th Avenue, Waseca, or dropped off at the site during the event or during open hours before then.

FARMAMERICA SANTA EXPERIENCE - Santa will be greeting children in Farmamerica's 1930s era red barn the afternoons of Friday, Dec. 12 and Saturday, Dec. 13. Visitors will not only see Santa, but will receive a free professionally-taken photograph sponsored by the Katie Gonzalez State Farm agency. The 1930s farmhouse will be decorated and open for visits as well.

Winners will be notified using email addresses.

All of the attention to the barn, reveals Farmamerica's executive director Jess Rollins, is strategic. The siding on the building is beginning to deteriorate and thus is due to be replaced; anticipated cost is $90,000. Rollins points out fundraising has already begun, with a "Go Fund Me" page in place and the staff searching for individuals. organizations and grant programs likely to support the cause.

A smaller-scale form of support is the option to donate online while registering for Farmamerica events. Those who give $25 or more are eligible to receive a commemorative Christmas ornament.

Rollins comments that, when speaking about Minnesota agriculture, barns are still inseparable from people's concept of a farm. In use until just before it was moved to the site, the barn has been retrofitted with the stalls and stanchions it would have had in the 1930s, when most farms still had dairy cattle, kept horses as draft animals, and likely raised pigs or other animals for meat to be processed and preserved by the family. The giant "hay mow" up above stored fodder for the livestock and often served as something of a playground for children growing up on the farm.

"We are glad to be preserving elements of that history," says Rollins. "We will be grateful for any support people wish to provide."

The hope is to place new siding on the barn sometime in the summer of 2026.

PROMOTING AG - Representatives from businesses, organizations and agencies met for a networking session at Farmamerica the evening of Thursday, Nov. 20. Among those in attendance were, from left, Waseca County Administrator Michael Johnson; City of Waseca City Planner Jon Froke; county commissioner Doug Christopherson; Waseca Food Cooperative advisory board member Jim Boerboom, Greenseam economic development coordinator Holly Callaghan; county commissioner Brad Krause; and Farmamerica Executive Director Jess Rollins. Pioneer photo by Deb Bently

Greenseam event invites collaboration

By DEB BENTLY
News Editor

"You don't know who can help you or who you can help until you get out and have some real-world conversations," stated Greenseam director Sam Ziegler to a group of about 50 people attending a networking session at Farmamerica the evening of Nov. 20. Mentioning the event was the third one the organization–which is dedicated to attracting ag-related enterprises to southern Minnesota–has held in Waseca County, Ziegler continued, "It's good to see how our events have grown."

Invited to share some thoughts were Waseca County Board chair Doug Christopherson, Waseca city planner Jon Froke, and leader of the Waseca food cooperative initiative, Jim Boerboom. Speeches were kept brief to allow for more networking.

Christopherson highlighted the county-wide legislative listening session that had taken place earlier in the day during which numerous area leaders were able to hear the thoughts and priorities of state and national representatives and to share concerns about various policies and practices. A summary of that meeting appears in the Nov. 28 edition of the Waseca County Pioneer.

Christopherson highlighted an appeal made during the legislative session by county land and water department leader Chris Howard, who had encouraged legislators to repeal elements of a state law passed in 2024 which, if they should actually be allowed to take effect on schedule, will greatly increase costs for maintaining publicly-managed agricultural drainage systems.

Christopherson reported that planning is ongoing for the new county justice center, with the expectation construction will begin in August of 2026. He also mentioned the county Workforce Development Center currently under development. A purpose of the center, he stated, is to help prospective employees find local jobs and careers.

Waseca city planner Froke said his department works persistently to let developers know the area is "open for business." He briefly described the Marketplace and Clearwater Preserve projects and highlighted the importance of expanded housing opportunities. He mentioned improved infrastructure thanks to work now nearly complete on Second Street Northwest and on hopeful signs the city will acquire funding to replace the aging water tower next to City Hall.

Jim Boerboom, a Waseca resident who began an initiative to open a local food cooperative, mentioned the project was born thanks to a conversation at last year's Greenseam networking event. Since that time, he said a steering committee for the project has been formed, a vision statement has been written, and committee members have visited four food cooperatives in the state, including one in St. Peter. A market study has indicated the Waseca area can probably support a store of about 1,500 square feet.

Boerboom stated Region 9 and Greenseam have been "great partners" in the process, and commented on the appealing layout and design of an informational brochure produced with the help of Region 9 staff.

County-wide EDA to meet Dec. 17

By DEB BENTLY
News Editor

Members of the Waseca County economic development authority (EDA) discussed numerous ongoing projects and initiatives during their regular meeting the morning of Wednesday, Nov. 19. Tina Wilson of the county planning and zoning office updated members regarding the county workforce development center, various contacts from organizations considering locating businesses in the county, and plans by current business owners to expand their operations.

Board members agreed to a Dec. 17 joint meeting with EDAs from the cities of Waseca, Janesville and New Richland, and with representatives from the Waseca Area Chamber of Commerce and the town of Waldorf.

Because economic growth is vital to supporting and building communities, the state of Minnesota has funds EDA agencies can access to help with developing and growing businesses. Among these are low interest loans and grants. Projects recently supported by the county EDA are the Marketplace construction project, expansion at Morgan's Meats, remodeling at the American Inn Hotel, and ongoing work on the Workforce Development Center to be located on the lower floor of the Human Services building at 1000 Elm Avenue West. Collaboration with the county's three city EDAs and four city councils is ongoing, which leads to numerous projects in area towns. Mentioned during the Nov. 19 meeting were work with Trapper's Lanes in New Richland and a "$10,000 business challenge" in Janesville. Wilson proposed that, with a county-wide meeting scheduled in a month, her detailed summaries of such projects might best be presented when all parties were present on Dec. 17.

Members of the county EDA are Matt Harrington, District 1; Russ Frederick, District 2 and board chair; Charles Benson, District 3; Patti Schuch, District 4; and Brad Krause, District 5.

Patti Schuch suggested the county EDA might look into a brochure which could be made available to existing and potential business owners to streamline the information-gathering process. She proposed listing the various agencies businesses are likely to find helpful and providing names and direct contact information of key individuals.

Schuch expressed frustration that relatively few people seem aware of EDA programs and benefits.

"We could help them invest in the community, accomplish their dream of starting or expanding a business. They could make their facilities larger, get new equipment or beautify their buildings."

Tina Wilson can be reached at the Waseca County Planning and Zoning department, 300 State Street North, in Waseca. The phone number is 507-835-0650.

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OBITUARIES

Ruth Koenigs

Ruth Koenigs

Ruth Ann Koenigs, age 87, of Waseca, passed away on November 27, 2025, at Mayo Clinic in Rochester.

Ruth was born on December 17, 1937, in Swaledale, Iowa, the daughter of Harold and Thelma (Alcorn) Bartlett. She graduated from Clear Lake High School in 1956 and went on to attend St. Mary's School of Nursing in Rochester, where she earned her nursing degree in 1959. On June 18, 1960, Ruth was united in marriage to Roman Koenigs at Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Meyer, Iowa. Together they began their married life in Stacyville, later living in Owatonna before settling in Waterloo, Iowa, where they raised their four children.

Ruth worked as a charge nurse at St. Mary's Hospital in Rochester before devoting herself to raising her family. As her children grew, she continued part-time nursing and later worked at a law firm in Waterloo until her retirement in 1993. Following retirement, Ruth and Roman relocated to Waseca, Minnesota, to be closer to their children and grandchildren.

Retirement allowed Ruth to fully embrace her many hobbies. She created beautiful stained glass pieces, painted, knitted, and crocheted, gifting her handmade treasures to family and friends who will cherish them always. She tended her flower gardens with care, enjoyed playing bridge, golfing, bowling, and was an avid reader. Ruth was known for her boundless energy, always finding joy in staying busy and living life to the fullest. She will be remembered as a generous, loving, and forgiving woman, whose kindness and devotion to her family and friends touched many lives.

Ruth is survived by her children: Kevin (Lynn) Koenigs of Mankato, Carmell (Jim) Scott of Albert Lea, Chris Koenigs of Albert Lea, and Susan Johnson (Richard Stoesz) of Northfield; eight grandchildren; twelve great-grandchildren; brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law: Bonnie Koenigs, Deo (Joan) Koenigs, Jerry (Sandy) Koenigs, and Elaine Ramberg; along with many nieces, nephews, other relatives, and friends.

She was preceded in death by her parents; her husband, Roman; her daughter-in-law, Deby Koenigs; brothers, Robert (Marlene) Bartlett and Bill (Vonna) Bartlett; and brothers-in-law, John Koenigs and Dan Ramberg.

A Gathering of Family and Friends will be held from 2:00 – 4:00 PM on Sunday, December 7, 2025, at the Third Street Chapel of Dennis-Steffel-Omtvedt Funeral and Cremation Service in Waseca. Interment will follow at Calvary Cemetery in Waseca.

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SROC's Charlie Rohwer addresses garden club

By BEN REVERMANN
Staff writer

Members of the Waseca Garden Club held their monthly meeting with a potluck dinner thrown in on the evening of Monday, Nov. 24 at the University of Minnesota's Southern Research and Outreach Center (SROC). Before the meeting Charlie Rohwer, processing research employee at the center, spoke about how to plant and how to grow in an ever-changing Minnesota climate.

He had lots of tips, including that the ears of corn grow higher when you plant them closer together. Rohwer went on, "I know this isn't new information, but I'm just putting it out there. Boc Choy is also a great option for planting in the spring in southern Minnesota. When it comes to trees, the Iowa DNR has a large selection of trees to choose from."

He spoke of broccoli and of cross breeding, "There are new diseases popping up and we are trying to stay ahead of them, they affect the head and not the plant. With broccoli you just cut the head off and you're done. Burgundy and Montebello are terrible to grow around here." Black rot affects broccoli and attacks the plant when it gets too wet, said Rohwer, "Heavy rainfall causes it to spread very easily. Another bad one is Alternaria, a disease species that spreads easily and is hard to kill.

"Our climate is changing; we're getting warmer winter nights. We're getting wetter, but by 2050 it may be even dryer because it will be hotter. So, what should we plant instead? Sycamore trees are big and have a pretty bark, the university planted one to see how those trees will fare in the new Minnesota climate. Sassafras, a medium sized tree, has pretty fall colors with little berries, mitten shaped leaves and a minty fragrance." He asked whether anyone attending liked the soup gumbo. "Gumbo can be thickened with dried sassafras leaves; there are two planted on the university grounds but they're still very small." Wild Rosseyanka Persimmons have a unique, edible, plum-sized orange fruit that doesn't mature until after the leaves have fallen off. The fruit is very sweet and doesn't travel well, "If harvested too early, it's a very astringent taste and sucks all the moisture out of your mouth. When the deer start eating them in the fall, that's when they're ready, usually October through December."

TIPS AND TRICKS - Charlie Rohwer, researcher at the University of Minnesota Southern Research and Outreach Center, gave a talk on proper tree care and fruiting trees in southern Minnesota on Monday, Nov. 24, 2025.

Pioneer photo by Ben Revermann

The jumping worms problem, both Amynthas and Metaphire species were listed as prohibited invasive species in Minnesota in 2024, Rohwer said he was not an expert in that field, but said he informed his mother, "A grant has been given so they can start investigating this worm at the arboretum. But what I know is when they transplant something, especially on a hillside and it's been mulched, the worms eat all the mulch and the soil washes away. The university is keen on keeping those jumping worms out of the arboretum; people are looking into it."

As he finished, he summarized some of the SROC plantings scheduled for 2026. "We're planting onions, peas, sweet corn, some cauliflower, bell peppers. The tomato project from the last few years is done but we saved room just in case. We don't have a carrot project this year but there will be a good amount of watermelon."

The Garden Club expressed its thanks to the SROC, both for the use of its facility and for fruits and vegetables donated to the Waseca Area Neighborhood Service Center. The Waseca Garden Club is always on the lookout for new members, and offers that anyone interested in membership or more information can contact Dacia Hinkhouse at 612-644-4493.

Dieker presents affects from government shutdown

By RACHAEL JAEGER
Staff Writer

JWP SCHOOL BOARD

At their Nov. 17 meeting, members of the Janesville-Waldorf-Pemberton (JWP) school board heard from business manager Wendy Dieker who provided an update on how the delivery of state department of education funds was affected by the recent federal shutdown. Despite the chaos and uncertainty, Dieker added she wanted to highlight that JWP received a small rural schools achievement grant in September which amounted to $40,798.

"That money is secured and we have it for this fiscal year," Dieker stated. Annual funds for title one and special education are also secure, she reported. Some money toward reimbursing meal costs has been received, but other amounts were still pending at the time of the meeting.

She summarized that the district anticipates about $565,000 of federal money, nearly all of which is already secured.

Her report also included a discussion of the district's "annual daily membership" (ADM). The number is an amount used by the state to indicate how many students are present on a typical school day. Funds of about $7,000 per "member" are distributed to the district during the year. Students taking part in post-secondary enrollment option (PSEO) courses. These are classes offered either online or in person by universities and community colleges; JWP has 44 students who are not present at the school for all or part of the typical school day because they are taking part in PSEO. This affects the ADM count, and along with it the state funding.

Dieker showed board members data to be submitted through the Minnesota Automated Reporting Student System (MARSS), revealing there are about 606 students enrolled at the school, but if PSEO students are taken away, JWP rests around 579.

"Going forward until January, the government's opened and funded," Dieker said. "If they shut down again, we'll be on the same kind of, 'see when we get the dollars' kind of thing for meal reimbursement."

During the school board meeting, Future Farmers of America (FFA) high school students shared highlights from the 2024-25 school year and reported a total of 88 members when the goal was 80 since last year's number was 76. Recently, the JWP FFA chapter also partnered with the FFA chapter at the high school in Scales Mound in Illinois; the intent is to carry out an educational opportunity of spending time in each other's agriculture classes.

It was reported that the FFA chapter members were given a "superior" and "silver" rating for their national chapter application which signified that each activity JWP completed during the year could be used for a quality standard for activities.

One student reported that Isaiah Barron, an FFA student, won the regional talent competition and qualified for state convention since he placed in the top five as well. It was also reported that graduate, Sophia Kolsey placed first in extemporaneous speaking, earning a state trip.

Recently, it was noted, some students took part in competitions at South Central Community College.

"How has FFA affected your post-graduation plans?" School board member Kevin Born inquired of the three senior students present. "Has it had an impact on what you're going to do?"

One student shared she currently takes some classes at South Central Community College in Mankato and noted those programs relate a lot to FFA. She also stated her classes have helped give her insight as to how many people are involved in agriculture.

Another student said she also hasn't fully decided about her future, but her participation in FFA events has helped her think and provided her with topics she could write about for her essays.

The third student expressed confidence his experience with the organization would help him quite a bit on his college essays.

In other matters, the school accepted and approved the following donations: $50 from Over 50 Year FFA Grads for FFA, $875 from Caitlin & Lynette Oeltjenbruns, $1,000 from Steel-Waseca Coop Electric for a Scholarship, $200 from Golden Apple Teacher award for Elementary PE equipment, $50 from Precision Chiropractic & Wellness, for Sports Physicals, $3,000 from the Waseca Area Foundation for EF Johnson Scholarship, and various tools from Napa Auto Parts for CTE program supplies.

Waseca middle grades give concert at high school

By BEN REVERMANN
Staff writer

A band concert for students in grades five to eight was well attended the evening of Nov 24 at the performing arts center of the Waseca Junior Senior High School. Bands were directed by Anders Peterson for high school and Selma Kleinsmith for WIS.

For many of the students this large-scale concert was an exciting first-time event. Fifth-graders played the "First Winter Suite," which included the movements "Season's Sounding Fanfare," and "Escaping the Abominable Snowman." Their final number was "Roof Riffs."

Each grade was to play three songs each, most of the music selected was voted on by the students themselves, a few were selected by the band directors. The sixth grade's Christmas theme included "Up On A Housetop" and "Jolly Old St. Nick" arranged by Michael Sweeney and "Jingle Bells" by Michael Story.

The seventh-grade musicians chose Hollywood music. First was "Circle of Life" from the Lion King movie. Next was the Gravity Falls (Saturday morning cartoon) theme by Robert Longfield. The final song was "Oompa Loompa" from "Willy Wonka" by Chris Bernotas.

All four grades were able to perform their concert in under an hour. The eighth graders had a more mature selection of music starting with "Mamma Mia," an Abba song. Next was "The Sound of Music" followed by a song from the musical "Grease."

All musicians expressed their thanks to the school administration, the Waseca custodial staff, Chuck Pollack, the Waseca Band Boosters, the music department and the teaching staff. There will be a choir concert for grades 5 to 8 on Dec. 8; a high school holiday choir concert on Dec. 15; and an Alumni Pep Band/Chili Feed on Dec. 19.

■ Turkey

from Page 1

cial title over the past year, "Presidential Turkey Caretaker."

Since the birds arrived at Farmamerica there have been a few times they've been needed elsewhere, said Wadd, "The turkeys made their way to Waseca for the 2024 Waseca County Chamber Farm & City luncheon in March. They also get moved over to the visitor center for different events when we have them." The turkeys need their nails trimmed up to twice a year. Their bedding is kept meticulously clean so that their feathers and legs are clear of debris. Baby wipes are used to wipe feathers and skin, since their gentle cleaning liquids don't cause irritation or affect the bird's natural oils.

But the two "presidential" turkeys aren't the only celebrities. Farmamerica also has Georgie the Kune Kune Pig. Two female companion turkeys have also been added, Frankie, a two-year veteran turkey of the farm and Buddy, a second lady turkey who was added over the summer.

It may surprise some to learn that Minnesota is the turkey capitol of the United States with an output of 40 million turkeys annually. The typical lifespan of those 40 million farmed turkeys is no more than 24 weeks. In contrast, Blossom and Peach get to live out the rest of their natural days with no concerns about Thanksgiving. According to Willmar area farmer and 2024 chair of the National Turkey Federation John Zimmerman, who raised them, the anticipated lifespan for their breed is about four years. President Biden said Peach lives by the motto "keep calm and gobble on." Blossom's motto was "no foul play, just Minnesota nice."

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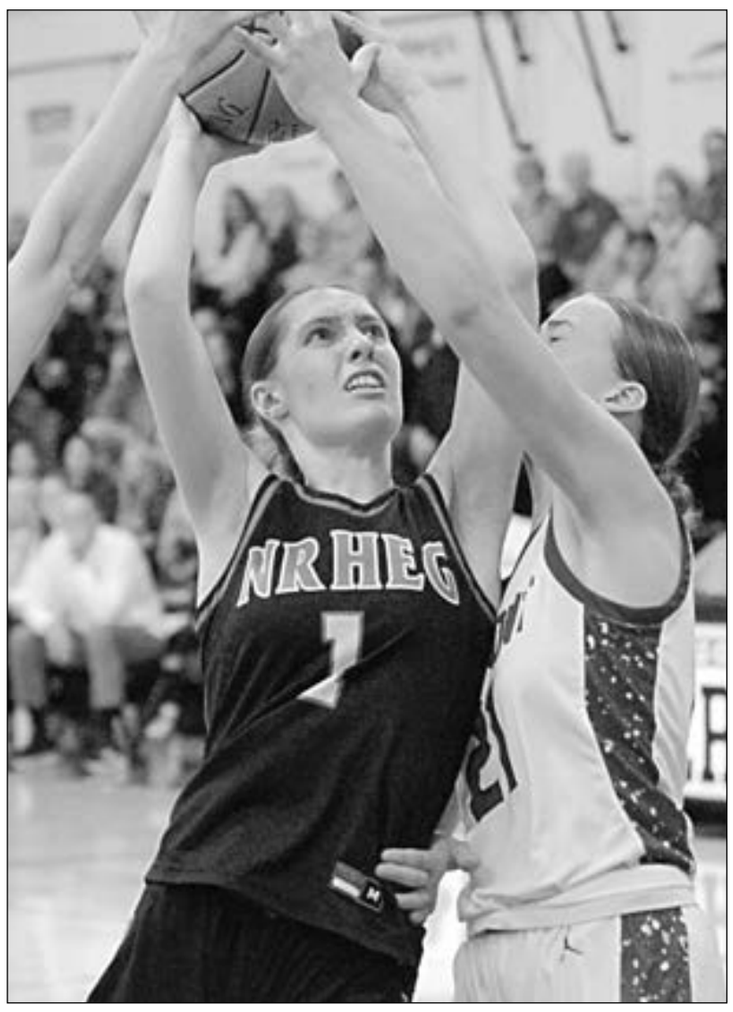

TOUGH LOSS — At left, the Panthers' Gabby Schlaak (1) looks to shoot as Fairmont's Bria Williamson (21) defends. At right, NRHEG's Ezra Boerner (2) drives the baseline past the Cardinals' Makayla Lowry. Pioneer photos by Jim Lutgens

No need to panic

Lady Panthers fall to 0-2 after close loss to Fairmont

It's too early to panic.

There's a lot of season left for the New Richland-Hartland-Ellendale-Geneva girls' basketball team, which saw its record fall to 0-2 after a 63-62 nonconference loss against visiting Fairmont Tuesday, Nov. 25.

"Last year we were 0-2 after playing Fairmont, but we are leaving tonight feeling a lot better about the game than we did a year," said Panthers head coach Onika Peterson. "Last year Fairmont shredded us. Tonight it was an all-out battle the whole game."

Although the Panthers led early, the Cardinals fought back to forge a 31-30 edge at the intermission.

The VanMaldeghem twins led the Panthers. Camryn finished with 25 points, seven rebounds, two assists, two steals and one blocked shot. Quinn, meanwhile, paced the Panthers with 17 rebounds, adding 17 points, two assists and one block.

Clara Buendorf also reached double-digits in scoring with 11 points. She grabbed three rebounds.

Others: Gabby Schlaak one point, three rebounds, three steals, one assist; Ezra Boerner four points, three rebounds, three steals; Chloe Stork four points, four rebounds, one block.

> "We have a lot of season left."
> **— NRHEG coach Onika Peterson**

The Panthers, of course, were without their 6-foot-2 junior center, Kylie Olson, who sustained an ACL injury in practice.

Peterson said it was no surprise the Panthers faced formidable foes to start the 2025-26 season.

"We knew the Pelican Rapids game and Fairmont games were going to be tough," said said. "The girls have made progress between the first two games and we have a lot of season left."

After hosting WEM in their Gopher Conference opener Dec. 2, the Panthers play Dec. 4 at Blooming Prairie, Dec. 9 at Maple River, and Dec. 12 at home against Bethlehem Academy.

■ Swimming

from Page 1

"In Waseca, team members were all different ages, so we didn't necessarily know each other very well," he explains. "Also, we each bought our own swimsuits, so at meets, I couldn't always tell my teammates from the other swimmers."

Now, though, thanks to color-matched swimwear, "I know which lane my team members are in, and I can cheer for them."

Of Jeanne Sexton who has been Waseca's coach for the past 9 years, Jellum says he is grateful for her guidance and support. "I wouldn't be where I am without her," he acknowledges.

With 49 team members and five coaches on the official roster of the college's men's swimming and diving team, the atmosphere at Gustavus is completely different.

"We practice pretty much every day," he points out. "The coaches set aside 15 minutes of one-on-one time with each team member every week.

"I've gotten tons of feedback from those."

There is also a sense of cohesiveness among team members, who attended a camp together at the start of the year and got to know each other. There are competitions most weekends; the majority are at Gustavus, but one was two hours away. One coming up in the near future will require a five-hour bus ride.

Also part of the team mentality is a certain amount of friendly rivalry.

Jellum mentions that, in his preferred competition, the 100-yard breast stroke, seven of the top 15 swimmers in the conference are on the Gustavus team. That includes the first-ranked swimmer, who has completed 100 yards in as little as 54 seconds; Jellum recently accomplished a time only 10 seconds higher, 1:04. He is currently ranked 12th in the conference.

That, too, is a regular component of practice: rankings are printed out and posted for all to see. There are competitions on most weekends, another factor which

Still, he says, he is grateful for the emphasis on personal responsibility and self-reliance he learned while competing with Waseca's team.

He mentions having also been part of the high school cross country team, a season which led directly into the swimming season.

"Running is good for endurance," he summarizes. "After all, you run to warm up, you take a seven-mile run, and then you run some more to cool down.

"But it doesn't really help with upper body strength."

Practices at Gustavus naturally include lots of swimming–Jellum mentions that by this point in the season, team members typically swims between 6,500 and 7,000 yards–as many as 140 crossings of a 50-yard swimming pool.

"We swim pretty much every day for two hours," he says of the practices. "We lift weights three days a week, and we do yoga two days."

Even though he is a very fit athlete, he acknowledges that the moves and stretches used in the yoga practice leave him temporarily sore. "But the next day I feel really good and ready to challenge myself," he says.

For most college swimmers, the season will continue through the conference meet in February; a few will go on to the Division 3 championships in March.

"I like being on the swim team, and I like earning points for my team," says Jellum. "I'm looking forward to finding out what the rest of the season brings."

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NRHEG School Board approves reports, sale

By DEB BENTLY
Staff Writer

During their Nov. 17 meeting, members of the NRHEG school board declared the garage associated with the residential property at 302 Broadway Avenue South, which the district purchased in September for $70,000, as "surplus property." The garage, at least 20 years old, has extended into property owned by the district since it was built.

With this official classification, Superintendent Michael Meihak is now authorized to offer the structure for sale. He informed the Star Eagle that his intent is to sell it at auction to the highest bidder, with the condition that it be removed and the ground where it's located be left clean and flat.

Board members heard a summary of "comprehensive achievement and civic readiness (CACR) goals from NRHEG coordinator of teaching and learning Mandra Peterson. The goals and a report are required by the state department of education and include specifications regarding students from pre-school all the way through graduation.

Under CACR, districts must set measurement standards in "All students are ready for school," "Preparing students to be lifelong learners," "All racial and economic achievement gaps between students are closed," "All students are ready for career and college," and "All students graduate from high school."

Approval was granted for a spring field trip to Costa Rica, organized by teacher of Spanish Joan Olson. Plans are ongoing, but board members were told as many as 40 students might be planning to attend.

Board members also approved the first reading of new policy 902B, which pertains to public use of the school's outdoor properties. Meihak named playgrounds, ball fields, and open areas owned by the district as the types of property covered under the policy. Among the restrictions associated with the new policy is that exterior organizations will not be allowed to use the outdoor spaces when they are needed for school programs. Along with that, there can be no disruption to the school day, no use of motorized vehicles on school property, and no damage to the facilities.

The district's required "Truth in Taxation" presentation is scheduled for 6 p.m. Monday, Dec. 15 at the secondary site in New Richland. A regularly scheduled board meeting will follow at 6:30 p.m.

The board's organizational meeting for 2026 will take place at 5:30 p.m. Monday, Jan, 5 in the Secondary school media center.

NRHEG livestock judges advance to state

By DEB BENTLY
Staff Writer

The five members of the NRHEG FFA livestock judging team won a place at this coming April's state competition during an October contest in Arlington, where 25 chapters were represented. Team members learned of their accomplishment after returning home; results of their contest, they explain, are not typically announced at the event.

Team members are Gus Bethke, Olivia Johnson, Paige Johnson, Abbie Viktora and Lauren Wakefield.

Scoring in their "Career Development" category consists of an averaging of the scores each of the five achieve on a test, and their individual success at evaluating six different classes of livestock. Competitors do not know until the animals appear which "class" of livestock will be brought before them. Among the options are market pigs, breeding heifers, dairy steers, breeding ewes, and "keep/cull," in which team members are shown eight animals and asked for their recommendations as to which should remain part of the herd and which should be sold.

LIVESTOCK JUDGES - Members of the NRHEG FFA Livestock Judging Team placed first in regional competition in Arlington during October and will be taking part in state competition in April. Team members are (from left) Gus Bethke, Lauren Wakefield, Olivia Johnson, Abbie Viktora, and Paige Johnson.

Among 105 competitors, all six team members ranked in the top 30, with respective placings of 1, 6, 9, 12 and 29.

During competition, team members are divided, so that no two of them are in the same session at the same time. They are shown live animals, but do not touch them.

"I didn't expect to do as well as we did," comments Abbie Viktora, who is competing in the category for her second year. "But I thought we'd do okay." Viktora says she is saving her nervousness about the state competition for a bit later in the school year, since the state convention isn't until April. "But we're really excited to be going to state."

Gus Bethke observes that evaluations of animal conformation have to rest on the intended use for the animal, but that certain elements, including skeletal structure, and muscle are the starting point for both. Bethke is in his third year in the category; he says competitions may involve some stress, but he also enjoys their social aspects, including meeting new people and making friends.

Paige Johnson, who achieved the first-place ranking, is competing in the category for the third year. She says the practice of averaging scores encourages team members to work together and build their skills as a group. "If someone is having a bad day, that can be moderated by other people's scores," she observes. She says the team works well together and supports one another.

Lauren Wakefield says she likes the competition category because, "you learn principles you can apply. Wakefield is a 4-H member and takes part in the same category there. She has taken show pigs to fair competitions and also lives on a farm where cattle are raised.

Man charged in fatal crash

By KAY FATE, STEELE COUNTY TIMES

The surviving driver of a fatal head-on crash near Hope earlier this month has been charged with felony criminal vehicular homicide.

David Ramirez, 26, of Owatonna, made his first appearance Monday in Steele County District Court, where he was also charged with two counts of gross misdemeanor DWL.

According to the statement of probable cause, Ramirez had a blood alcohol content of .20 after the Nov. 4 crash near the intersection of 37th Avenue and 93rd Street southwest.

Christine Possin, 71, of New Richland, was the other driver. The mother of nine and grandmother of 44 was pronounced dead at the scene.

When Steele County Sheriff's deputies arrived, they found a pickup diagonally on the road; an SUV was in the west ditch, facing north. Both vehicles had heavy front-end damage.

Ramirez was sitting in the driver's seat, as well as an open can of beer in the passenger side door.

A handgun was found next to the driver's seat in Ramirez's vehicle, as well, the statement says.

Christine Possin of New Richland died in the Nov. 4 head-on crash near Hope. The other driver involved has been charged with criminal vehicular homicide for allegedly being more than twice the legal limit for alcohol.

A Minnesota State Patrol reconstruction determined Possin was driving south on 37th Avenue and Ramirez was northbound when the collision occurred.

Residents in the area called 911 after hearing the crash.

November Virtue of the Month

GOOD STEWARDS - Sacred Heart school recognized students for the November Virtue of the Month - Stewardship - on Dec. 1. These young stewards were chosen for their continued selflessness, respect for themselves and others, and putting others above themselves. Congratulations to Everly, Nora, Leilani, Nash, Sophia, Henry, Alex, Michael, Mitchell and Owen.

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Our Lady of Guadalupe Celebration at Sacred Heart Catholic Church
Saturday, Dec. 13
Mass at 5:00 p.m.
Music continues 6-8 pm
Free & open to public

Music by Mariachi America from St. Paul, performing during the Mass and afterwards in the church hall from 6-8 p.m. Mexican meal following Mass, in the church hall provided by El Molino, Mexican Restaurant, Waseca.

This activity is made possible by the voters of Minnesota through a grant from the Prairie Lakes Regional Arts Council, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund.

Janesville Area Foundation

ONGOING GOOD - The Janesville Area Foundation Fund proudly distributed more than $12,000 in grants to support community projects and organizations last week. Board members and grant recipients alike expressed gratitude that the interest from invested funds can allow for such generous community support.

Exchange and Rotary clubs join forces to fund holiday meals

The Waseca Exchange Club and the Waseca Rotary Club came together in a powerful display of collaboration and community spirit, raising $2,750 in just two days to support the Waseca Area Food Shelf's Thanksgiving meal program. The funds were raised through friendly internal giving campaigns, with each club "filling up" their Tom the Turkey displays with colorful feathers representing member donations.

Thanks to the rapid and generous support of both Clubs, every Thanksgiving meal requested by local families has been fully funded.

Cindy Kolander, Executive Director of the Waseca Area Food Shelf, shared her excitement:

"This check put us over the top, all the meals have now been fully funded. This is absolutely wonderful. I cannot wait to tell our Board!"

Mikhail Rostislavovich, President of the Waseca Exchange Club, praised the joint effort:

"When service clubs come together with a shared purpose, the impact is immediate and extraordinary. In short order, we accomplished something that none of us needed to do alone. Collaboration accelerates compassion."

Katie Gonzales, Co-President of the Waseca Rotary Club, echoed the spirit of unity:

"Working alongside the Exchange Club was not only inspiring, it was fun. We didn't compete; we collaborated. And when we do that, the entire community benefits. This is what service is all about."

This partnership highlights the strength of Waseca's service organizations and their commitment to ensuring every family in the community has the opportunity to enjoy a warm and abundant Thanksgiving meal.

For more information on how to support the Waseca Area Food Shelf or to learn more about Exchange and Rotary service projects, please contact either organization.

GIVING - L to R, Exchange Club President Mikhail Rostislavovich, Food Shelf Executive Director Cindy Kolander, and Rotary Club Co-President Katie Gonzales.

Appeals Court judge arrested in Steele County

Minnesota Court of Appeals Judge Renee Worke of Owatonna is facing legal trouble after being arrested for suspicion of driving while intoxicated over the Thanksgiving weekend in Steele County.

The Steele County Sheriff's Office responded to a vehicle stuck in a snow drift at U.S. Highway 14 and Interstate 35 around 9 p.m. Saturday. A short time later, a deputy arrested Worke for suspected DWI and transported her to the Steele County Detention Center in Owatonna where she was booked and later released.

As of Monday, Worke had not been charged. Steele County Attorney Robert Jarrett was out of the office Monday and unavailable for comment about potential charges.

According to Kyle Christopherson, communications specialist with the State Court Administrator's Office, Worke will not be placed on leave. "If the judge is charged," he wrote, "the case will move through the court system like any other."

Worke was appointed to the Minnesota Court of Appeals in 2005, elected in 2006 and re-elected in 2012, 2018 and 2024. Her current term expires in January 2031. Prior to the high court, she served as a judge in Waseca County.

Renee Worke

Attend the Church of your Choice!

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2200 4th St NE, Waseca
507-835-2235
Service times 9:30 a.m.

* * *

4TH STREET EVANGELICAL CHURCH
605 4th St NE, Waseca
507-201-7293 (Pastor Andrew Isker)
Worship Sundays 10 a.m

* * *

FAITH UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
801 4th Ave NE, Waseca
507-835-3167
Worship Sundays 9:30 a.m.

* * *

CHRIST THE KING LUTHERAN CHURCH
309 6th St NE, Waseca
507-835-9176
Worship Sundays 9 a.m., Sunday School/Fellowship 10:15 a.m., Wednesday evening worship 6:30 p.m.

* * *

ST. JOHN LUTHERAN CHURCH
401 3rd Ave NE, Waseca
507-833-1703
Sundays 9:00 a.m.

* * *

ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH
314 4th Ave NE, Waseca
507-835-2647
Worship Sunday 9:00 a.m.

* * *

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
503 2nd Ave NE, Waseca
507-835-4548 (office email: 1cwaseca@hickorytech.net)
Worship Sunday 10 a.m.

* * *

GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH
300 E Elm Ave, Waseca
507-835-1709
Worship Sunday 9 a.m.

* * *

SACRED HEART CATHOLIC CHURCH
111 4th St NW, Waseca
Father Glenn Ferichs
507-835-1222
Worship Sundays 10:00 a.m., Tues. and Wed. at 8:30 a.m. and Thurs. at 7 a.m.; Saturdays at 5 p.m.

* * *

REAL LIFE CHURCH
620 W Elm Ave, Waseca
507-833-0017
Sunday worship 10 a.m.

* * *

CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST LATTER-DAY SAINTS
1001 9th Ave SE, Waseca
507-835-4640
Sacrament meeting 10:00 a.m.

* * *

GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH
1221 8th St SE, Waseca
507-835-2213
Sunday worship 10:45 a.m., 6:00 p.m.

* * *

CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLY
900 14th Ave SE, Waseca
507-833-1082
Sunday Worship 10:00 a.m., Sun Evening 6:00 p.m., Wed. evening 6:30 p.m.

* * *

ST. PETER EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
New Richland, Minnesota
Rev. Scott Williams, Pastor
Sunday - 9 a.m. Sunday School, Choir and Choir; 10:30 a.m. Worship
Monday - 1 p.m. Quilters
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

* * *

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 Glenn Ferichs
Friday - 10 a.m. on 1st, 3rd and 4th Fridays p.m. Mass
Sunday - Mass at 8 a.m.

* * *

FIRST LUTHERAN
Missouri Synod
Waldorf, Minnesota
Vacancy Pastor: Rev. Larry Sipe
Sundays: Worship 8 a.m.; 9:10 a.m. Sunday School and adult bible class

* * *

IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH
Freedom Township
Sunday – 9:15 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 Sammy Pothireddy
Saturday - 5 p.m. Worship

* * *

TRINITY LUTHERAN
Wilton Township
Rev. Larry Sipe, Pastor
Sunday – 8 a.m. summer worship; 10:45 a.m. Worship starting Sept. 1

* * *

THE CHURCH of JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS
Brad Donner, Branch President
Waseca, Minnesota
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
412 N. Main Street, Janesville
Pastor Jason Wolter
Rev. Timothy Contreras
Wednesday, Saturday - 6:30 p.m. Worship
Sunday - 8 a.m.Worship, 9 Bible Class, 10:30 a.m. Worship

* * *

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 - 8:15 a.m. Summer worship hours, (10:45 a.m. Worship, winter)

* * *

ST. ANN CATHOLIC CHURCH
307 W. 2nd St, Janesville
Father Robert Schneider
Sunday - 8:30 a.m. - Mass

* * *

FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH
300 Owen St., Janesville
Pastor Sarah Krolak

* * *

ST. JOHN EVANGELICAL CHURCH
Alma City, Minnesota
Pastor Robert Harting
Sunday - 10 a.m. Worship

* * *

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

* * *

NORTH WASECA LUTHERAN CHURCH ELCA
404 30 120th St. Waseca
Pastor Sarah Krolak
507-234-6463
Sunday - 8:45 a.m. Worship; Second sunday "Young at heart"
Wednesday - 6:30 p.m. confirmation

* * *

NOTE: CHANGES IN CHURCH CALENDARS MUST BE MADE BY NOTIFICATION FROM A MEMBER OF THE CONGREGATION TO THE WASECA COUNTY PIONEER.

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IN BRIEF

Minnesota Riverbend Brass Choir at Grace Lutheran Church Sunday, Dec. 7

The Minnesota Riverbend Brass Choir will be presenting a concert of sacred Advent and Christmas brass ensemble music at 7 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 7 at Waseca's Grace Lutheran Church. The concert is free and open to the public. Those in attendance will be invited to make a free will offering.

Coffee with Rep. Tom Sexton Friday, Dec. 12

There will be another installment of Coffee with Tom Sexton in Waseca at the Chamber of Commerce office from noon till 1 p.m. Friday, December 12.

Holiday Lights at the Waseca County Fairgrounds Dec. 12 and 13

There will be a Holiday Light show at the Waseca County Fairgrounds from 6-9 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 13. Non-perishable food items will be collected for the Waseca Food Shelf.

Santa Experience at Farmamerica Dec. 12 and 13

Santa Claus will be a Farmamerica from 4-7 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 13. Stroll or enjoy a wagon ride down to the farmyard, Santa will be waiting. Sip hot chocolate and meet friendly farm animals.

Mariachi Music at Sacred Heart Church Saturday, Dec. 13

Sacred Heart Church in Waseca is featuring Mariachi music from 5 to 8 p.m. on Dec. 13, as part of the Our Lady of Guadalupe Celebration. Mass begins at 5 p.m. Mariachi America will perform during Mass and afterwards in the church hall from 6 to 8 p.m. This event is free and open to the public.

Indigo Moon at Indian Island Winery Dec. 13

Indian Island Winery will host Indigo Moon from 5:30-8:30 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 13.

Pinnacle Pro Wrestling at The Mill on Saturday, Dec. 13

The Mill in Waseca will host Pinnacle Pro Wrestling from 6-10 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 13. Featuring Royal Flavuh, Paul Virk, Petey Brown, Joey Avalon, Tori Fox, Lonzo "The Chicano" Romero, Carlos Oliva, Calvin Kelly, "Outlaw" Sadie Belle, Manico, Kit Sackett, Garrison Creed and Eli Perez.

Waseca Community Education Brochure live online Dec. 15

The Waseca Community Education winter brochure will be live online beginning Dec. 15. Area residents can visit https://waseca.ce.eleyo.com/ to learn about and register for courses, activities, and events. More information is available from the Community Ed office at 507-835-5626.

Holiday Party at The Mill on Friday, Dec. 19

The Mill will host a Holiday Party from 6 to 11 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 19. Music from the Mud Dogs will highlight the evening. Part holiday party and part birthday party for community volunteer Mark Pehrson who is turning 75.

Holiday Lights at the Waseca County Fairgrounds Dec. 19 and 20

There will be a Holiday Light show at the Waseca County Fairgrounds from 6-9 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 20. Non-perishable food items will be collected for the Waseca Food Shelf.

Waseca County Winter Farmers Market at Farmamerica Dec. 20

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

'Ask a Trooper': pulling a trailer

Question: Is it illegal for a vehicle pulling a trailer to have a ladder or ramp hanging from the side of the trailer?

Answer: You are able to have ladders or ramps secured to the side of an enclosed trailer as long as you do not exceed the width of 8 feet 6 inches. This is the maximum dimension that may be operated on Minnesota roadways without a special permit. The maximum height is 13 feet 6 inches. If you exceed the height or width, then you would have to apply for an oversize permit.

A few trailer safety tips:

- Make sure the pulling unit of the trailer has the towing capacity to pull the trailer safely.
- Check the trailer tires for proper tire pressure and the conditions of the tires. If the trailer has not been used recently, check the tread and for any cracking on the side walls.
- Make sure you have the proper ball size required for the trailer.
- Be sure the safety chains are connected and all the lights are working properly.
- Adjust your mirrors so you can see behind the trailer when towing it.
- Adjust your trailer brakes according to the load. For example, if you're towing a heavy boat you would need to increase the brake press compared to pulling an empty boat trailer.

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

If you have any questions concerning traffic related laws or issues in Minnesota send your questions to Sgt. Troy Christianson – Minnesota State Patrol at 2900 48th Street NW, Rochester MN 55901-5848. You can also email him at: Troy.Christianson@state.mn.us.

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Waseca

25 years ago

What was the 5th grade class grateful for in 2000?:

Danny Waterhouse, Thanksgiving means to give thanks for what you have. I am thankful for my family, food, and my warm house. I am also thankful for everything else I have. I am thankful for what I am. I am also thankful for my parents. I think it is nice that someone puts a roof over my head. I am thankful for my safety. I am thankful for the people that teach me. It is really nice for them to take time out of their day to come and teach me. I am mostly thankful for being in Waseca.

Chelsea Eberline, Thanksgiving means family to me - and food! All our family gets together on the third Thursday of November, except for my aunt who lives in Hong Kong. We have turkey, ham, stuffing, mashed potatoes (my favorite), beans and stuff like that. But my favorite part about Thanksgiving is seeing my family. We really never get to see each other but only on Christmas, Thanksgiving, and our family vacation. So it is cool to see our family together. That's what Thanksgiving means to me.

Megan Dobberstein, Thanksgiving means to me, a time to get together with friends and family. A time to have fun. A time to remember the Pilgrims and Native Americans. A time to be happy, a time to remember things from the past. A time to be thankful that you're alive. A time to thank your family and friends. A time to feel good about yourself and what you've done. A time to be nice and thankful to everyone around you. A time to eat. A time to look into the future. A time to be thankful for everything that you own and know. A time to be thankful for everything that everyone has done for you. There are a lot more things that Thanksgiving means to me. Thanksgiving is one of my favorite times of the year.

- Bluejay swim team will have their home opener Monday at 4:30 p.m. when they host Montgomery. Front row left to right are: Allan Kuchenbecker, Greg Voenigs, Jeff Worke, John E. Conway, Marty Hofmeister and Steve Schroeder. Back row left to right are: team manager Brian Nelson, Peter Scheffert, Mark Hildebrandt, Dave Eckenrod, Craig Muedeking, Greg Ristau and coach Bill Zishka. Not pictured are: Scott Seewald, Mark Pontius, Jim Shoenhard, Mike Wirtz, Troy Warweg and Hahn Nguyen.

50 years ago

- Last week's blizzard had a total of six storm-related deaths across Minnesota. Three of those people were urban residents may avoid a similar fate as local Boy Scout Troop 85 has decided to take on a project to help out senior citizens. The scouts will shovel sidewalks for these people upon request. Many of the people who need this service are on fixed social security incomes and don't have the money to pay for the service. However, the scouts will not ask for money and any contribution will be voluntary.

- Russ Ingram, Northwestern Bell Telephone repairman for the Waseca office is a hero, or at least he is to two Waseca boys who came close to drowning in Icy Loon Lake Friday afternoon. But Ingram, who won't admit he is a hero, only says, "It was a case of being in the right place at the right time." The drama began shortly before 4 p.m. Friday when Ingram was repairing a case of trouble (a terminal on a telephone pole) in the Lakeview Trailer Court on West Elm Ave. The boys, 10 and 11, had been riding their bikes on the lake when the 10 year old boy fell through the ice. His 11 year old friend tried to save his buddy, but fell in himself after rescuing his friend.

- Waseca area families are needed to host English speaking European visitors as guests in their homes for a 10 day period during 1976 it was announced today by the American Host Foundation. American Host is one of the few non-governmental programs designed to show the American way of life to foreign visitors by pairing them with American families, and has been endorsed by the American Revolution Bicentennial Administration as a nationwide home hospitality program for the Bicentennial year.

75 years ago

- Mr. and Mrs. Leo Praxl received a letter from their son, Cpl. John F. Praxl, informing them that he has been wounded for the second time while engaged in the fighting in Korea. He states that he and the soldier with him were wounded by a hand grenade thrown by a Chinese communist soldier. A fragment of steel which had entered near his right ear was removed after he was taken to a hospital at Pyongyang, the Capital of North Korea.

- Eight men will leave Waseca today for induction into the armed services. Five more will leave for duty Dec. 5. The men will be sworn into the service. From there they will be assigned to duty with various units. Inductees leaving today include: Wilbert E. Yess, Melvin R. Weber, William L. Draheim and Herbert G. Gahler, all of Waseca. Robert G. Billing and LaVerne Seberson of New Richland, Lenard E. Erdman of Janesville and Joe Arriaga of Wichita Falls, Texas who has been employed here and will leave from the Waseca county selective service office.

- Joann Wilker, 14, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ernest WIlker, 308 3rd Ave. N.E. escaped with only bruises and broken glasses Monday afternoon when she was nudged by a car driven by Gorden Musel of Waseca. The mishap occurred near the post office at about 4:45 p.m. as she told the story Joann was crossing the street and apparently did not see Musel's car approaching. Her knee struck the bumper of the car which threw her into a car parked along the curb.

100 years ago

- George Wobschall was elected commander of Waseca Post 228 of the American Legion at the annual meeting held Tuesday evening of last week. Other officers elected were Max Opstein, vice commander; Arthur Pommerening, adjutant, and Arthur Alland, treasurer.

- Broadway, the community south of Waseca, has a bunch of boys and girls who have carried off some laurels in club work this year. William Echtersuch, whose picture appears on the farm page of this issue, hails from Broadway. Others from that community who are in club work are Nora Mochoff, a calf club girl who took first in a class of twelve on her grade Holstein; Helen Klessig, Ivan and Leonard Lange, Pearl and Ruby Lewer who have showed in.

- The annual meeting of the Waseca County Farm Bureau will be held at the Court House on Dec. 3, 1925, at Waseca. The meeting will begin at 11 o'clock in the forenoon. Mr. Frank Palmer of St. Paul and Pedar Pederson of the Iowa Farm Bureau will be the speakers of the occasion. Mr. Pederson is a very able speaker on Farm Cooperation. He is speaking at several Farm Bureau meetings in Southern Minnesota including Blue Earth county which is on the 2nd. Don't fail to hear him. Mr. Balmer, county agent leader, will discuss the progress of the work in Minnesota. Everyone is invited to attend this meeting. Free lunch will be served.

New Richland

25 years ago

- Kari Klug spent ten days as a People To People Student Ambassador in England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales in July. A contribution toward her expenses was made by the New Richland Lions Club. Thursday evening Kari shared her experience of the trip with Lions members. Lions members found her album of 400 photos very interesting. Seated is Lion Gary Lust. Other Lions standing are from the left: Earl Parriott, Bob Frisk, Stan Getskow and Dale Bayerkohler.

- More than 200 attended the 4-H Achievement Day dinner and awards presentations at FarmAmerica, Sunday, November 12. 4-H'ers, friends and donors celebrated the many accomplishments of the past year by Waseca county 4-H members. Michelle Singlestad received the 4-H Key Award, the highest recognition a 4-H member can receive statewide. She also earned the 4-H Spirit Award for outstanding leadership and involvement in the 4-H program. Matt Hines and Pam Kipp were awarded the "I Dare You" plaques given to emerging youth leaders in the county. Steve Scheffert, who directed the county Arts-in program received the Volunteer of the Year plaque.

- Plans continue to replace the New Richland Care Center resident van soon. Staff members at the Care Center have been assisting in various ways, including by holding fundraisers. Recently, a $1,000 check to be added to the funds was presented to Care Center Administrator Sue Johnson by Elmer VandenHeuvel from Geneva's Community Lutheran Endowment.

50 years ago

- Roy Johnson of New Richland points to one of the interesting stamps he has in his extensive collection. He has every issue from 1940 - to the present time in glass cases. That's 35 years of stamps under glass. Of course he has a large collection of older stamps, which is not complete. In the background is just one of the tool boards in his neatly arranged shop behind his home, here.

- Postmaster Tom Baynes announced this week the appointment of Donald L. Smith as rural mail carrier on Route 1, New Richland, replacing W.E. "Bud" Mertz.

- Lynn Ewald of Waldorf exhibited the champion Polled Hereford heifer in the junior show at the recent American Royal Livestock Show in Kansas City, Mo. Picture with KF Miss Boj Wdr 69, who topped the summer yearling class of the 33-head show are from the left: Lynn's brother, Jay Ewald; Judges Larry and Elizabeth Coon, Bethel, Mo.; and Lynn's brother Guy Ewald at halter. The winning heifer, a June 18, 1974, daughter of Gold Trophy Sire Kiyiwana New Trend, was bred by Kiyiwana Farm, Stormville, N. Y.

75 years ago

- Mr. and Mrs. Ray H. Miller announce the arrival of a son, Neil Alan, at the Memorial hospital, Waseca, December 21.The little fellow is the third child in the family and weighed in at 7 pounds, 10 ounces. Mrs. Miller and son were released from the hospital Christmas and returned to their home west of town.

- Heilman Brothers Garage, local GMC truck dealers were the successful bidders for the new school bus which the New Richland school board had advertised for estimates. The new bus will be a 2-ton GMC chassis fitted with a Superior 42-48 passenger body. Cost for the bus complete will be $4992.70 with delivery promised by April 1.

Don't count out the Waseca boys

Two starters return from state tournament runners-up

By JIM LUTGENS
Sports Editor

According to Waseca High School boys' basketball coach Seth Anderson, there's a laundry list of teams that could win the Section 2AA championship this season.

But don't count out his Bluejays.

Although Waseca graduated some very talented players, two starters return, along with two others who saw considerable varsity playing time.

And Anderson is no stranger to success, compiling an impressive 229-89 win-loss record in 12 seasons as a head coach. He's been at Waseca for 10 years. His assistants are Richard Guse, Austin Nagel and Devin Buendorf. Guse was recently named the state Assistant Coach of the Year.

The Bluejays, as most everybody knows, finished 32-1 last year after being rated No. 2 in the state in Class AA most of the season. The loss was in the state championship game to No. 1-ranked Albany, which edged the Bluejays and finished the season undefeated. The Jays were 10-0 in the Big South Conference.

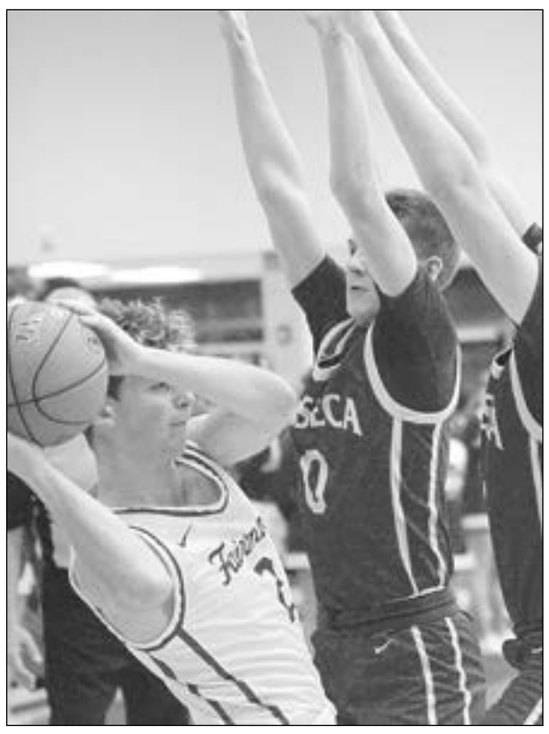
The Bluejays also reached the state tournament in 2024, winning the championship in 2021.

Graduated off last year's team were Damarius Russell, an all-conference guard who also played in the state all-star game while topping 1,000 career points; Carson Ohnstad, all-conference, two-year starter who also topped the 1,000-point milestone; Isaac Feldkamp, a starter and the team's leading rebounder last year; Caden Danner, the Bluejays' sixth man who started many games last year; and Brandyn Jascha, whom Anderson called an important enforcer off the bench.

Among the returnees is Deron Russell, a 6-foot-2 senior guard and the little brother of Damarius, who currently is at Washington State on a football scholarship. The Russell brothers and Ohnstad made the all-state tournament team last year. Some people believe Deron — a Minnesota Mr. Football finalist, could be a Minnesota Mr. Basketball candidate, especially after his play in last year's state tournament. Deron has accepted a football scholarship from North Dakota State.

Also back are Ethan Hiller, a 6-1 guard; Wyatt Hager, a 6-2 guard; and Cyrett Long, a 5-11 guard.

Coach Anderson is, as usual, optimistic.



RETURNING STARTERS — Deron Russell, left, and Ethan Hiller, right, are returning starters for the Waseca High School boys' basketball team. Pioneer photos by Jim Lutgens

"We have strong expectations for every season," he said. "We never know what the ceiling will look like, but it always starts to form as the year progresses. Winter is a long season and we want to make sure we are improving as the year goes on."

Anderson listed the Bluejays' strength as having four guys who played a lot of minutes last season.

His biggest concern is not having a dominant post presence.

The key to success for the 2025-26 Bluejays, according to Anderson, is whether they can defend at a high level and find a way to develop multiple scoring options.

"It's always fun to get the basketball season underway," said Anderson. "It's always hectic at the beginning of the season with all of the unknown with football playoffs and trying to assess injuries from the previous season. There's always a lot of optimism at the start of any season."

Anderson listed St. Peter, Jackson County Central, Belle Plaine, Marshall, New Ulm and Blue Earth Area as the favorites in the Big South.

The section is even more wide open, Anderson tabbing Belle Plaine, Glencoe-Silver Lake, Maple River, LCWM, Norwood-Young America and Blue Earth as teams that could the title.

"There are a lot of good teams in our section that could win it," said Anderson.

But remember, don't count out the Bluejays.

WHS matmen look to better last season

By JIM LUTGENS
Sports Editor

There's no lack of enthusiasm about Waseca High School wrestling for the 2025-26 season.

"I cannot wait for the season to begin to see how amazing these young athletes will do," said head coach Jake Janike."I believe they can do anything they set their mind to."

Last year's Bluejays did not have a great win-loss record, mainly because of several open weights, as they finished 5-19 overall and 3-7 in the Big South.

Janike enters his 14th year of coaching, ninth as a head coach, and is assisted by Tyler Buesgens, Bill Dwinells, Ben Janike, Blaine Nelson and Charlie Root.

The Bluejays return numerous varsity athletes, led by 160-pound senior Slade Barnett, a Section 1A champion who finished fifth in state tournament. He defeated nine ranked wrestlers last season.

The other seniors are Deven Parpart (139, 23-17 last year) and Lucus Selthun (189, 25-14).

Also returning are junior Matthew Veroven (215, 29-4, state qualifier), sophomores Jacob Knutson (133, 24-15) and Sam Selthun (152, 12-23), and freshmen Zander Rahe (107, 6-9) and Jackson Janike (121, 18-21).

"These wrestlers had success from last season," said Coach Janike. "Their records show the dedication they have and how they are constantly trying to improve. The others are wrestlers who had a good season last year, but just ran into quality competition last year in the section individual rounds."

The captains are Parpart, Barnett, Lucas Selthun and Veroeven.

The Panthers graduated Ben Hagen, 285, who finished 35-11 and advanced to state.

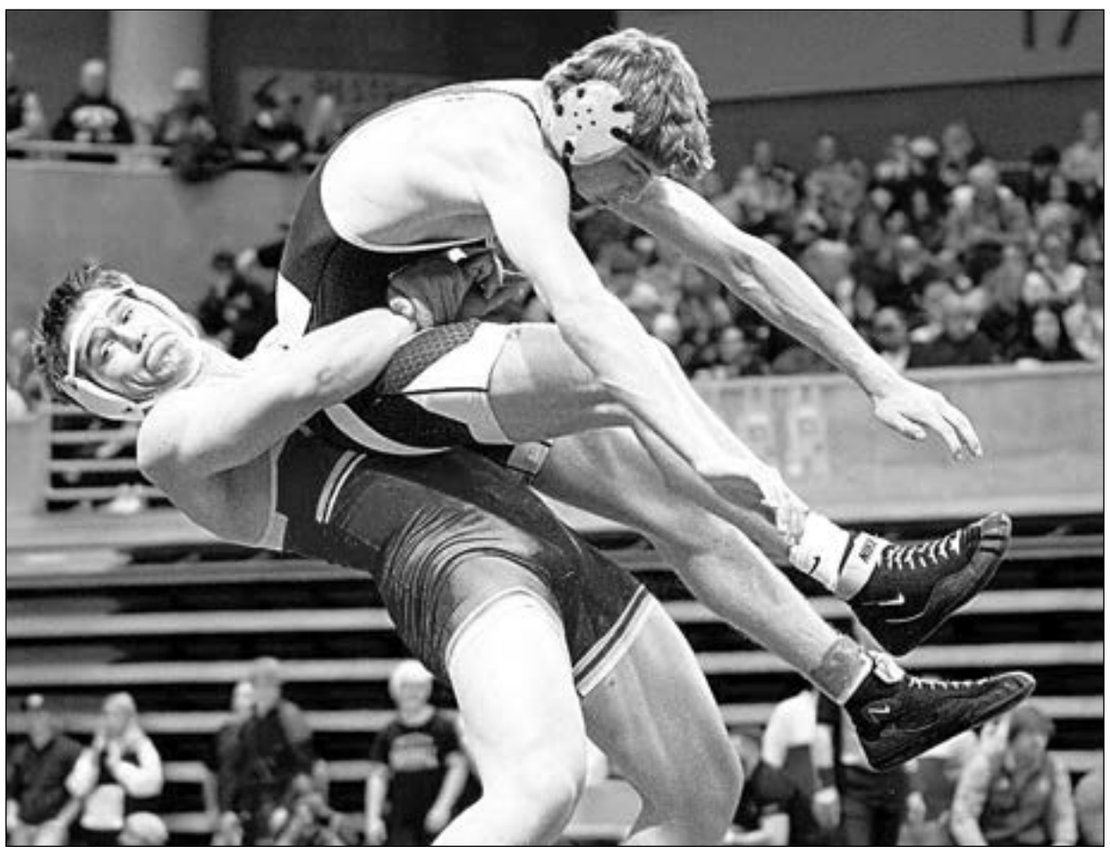
The rest of the roster by weight, with last year's record: 107 - Kole Nelson (30-7), Charlie Janike, Carson Roesler; 114 - Keegan Glynn (29-8), Carter Dickson; 121 - Archer O'Brien (1-24); 127 - Owen Sommers (17-25), Owen Arndt (3-7), Ian Farley; 139 - David Haley; 145 - Isaiah Dymeck, Nick Harguth; 152 - Braxton Nelson (22-3), Jacob Root, Oden Board (7-5), Carter Wernimont; 160 - Jaiden Schaffer (2-28), Jordan Rosenthal; 172 - Holton Howard (19-11), Oliver Staloch (14-9), Luke Jeske (10-23), Jose Viera; 189 - Jaxon Yenish, Ton Bethke (10-23), Kelton Pierce (13-16), Alex Bethke (14-4); 215 - Landen Madsen (5-2), James Quade (7-12), Michael Goodlander (12-21), Michael Victorino (16-14), Carlo Driessen; 285 - Jordan Neidecker (4-2), Colton Madson (3-18), Jordan Oviedo.

All the weights are subject to change as the season progresses.

Last year, for the first time ever, Waseca offered girls' wrestling.

Senior Kaiya Stagman finished 3-8, freshman Hailey Proehl 12-13, and freshman Sophia Bunn 8-14.

"All three of these young athletes were the first to compete at the section level for our Waseca wrestling girls' team," said Coach Janike.



STATE EXPERIENCE — Matthew Veroeven, left, hoists an opponent during last season's state tournament. He and Slade Barnett, who placed fifth, are both returning state entrants who look to improve the 2025-26 season for the Bluejays. Pioneer photo by Eli Lutgens

Joining the squad this year are junior Jazelle Neal and freshman Delilah Veroven.

Stagman is the captain.

Janike said the Bluejays have a motto for the upcoming season: "Do or Die."

"It means all of the athletes on the team need to work together winning matches, meets, and tournaments," explained Janike. "We need to get the best possible results we want. We are building champions who don't just show up to get everything they want. They show up to give everything they have."

Add it all up and it leads to optimism for Janike and his staff.

"We are very optimistic this season," he said. "We have a couple new coaches to help aid in pursuing greatness. These coaches have ideas on improvements. Many of the athletes worked all offseason to achieve growth. Also, there has been an increase in new athletes signing up wanting to wrestle."

Janike said it's clear his wrestlers have a desire to be successful.

"A strength that we have as a team is that we all want to win," he said. "We are all striving to become champions every time we step on the mat. We as Bluejay wrestlers realize we have to "Do" when the whistle blows. These athletes know they have to be offensive, scoring points for six minutes of relentless pursuit to become a champion."

The key to success for the Bluejays?

Said Janike, "Having the entire room working to become a champion both as a team and individually."

WHS icemen appear poised to challenge in Big South, section

The Waseca High School boys' hockey roster for the 2025-26 season includes seniors Avery Wetzel, Jayden Gehring, Max Bodenweiser, Jaden Hervey, Jackson Dahl and Jude Gehring, juniors Dawson Slechta, Avery Selvik, Henry Huttemier, August Hansen, Dawson Guritz, Otto Schoenrock, Cash Lynch, Owen Weiseler, Beckett Srp, Griffin Storey, Josiah Schmidtke, Brandon Bartz and Corbin Martens, and sophomores Ty Krautkremer and Nathan Hager.

Last year's squad had a great season, finishing second in the Big South Conference at 14-1-1, only one point behind first-place Luverne. The Bluejays were 21-4-2 overall, falling to Rochester Lourdes in the Section 1A semifinals. Two years ago, they were 15-12.

Graduated are Hunter Anderson, who finished second on the team with 59 points, which included 22 goals; goalie Carter Martens, who compiled a goals against average of 1.24 and a save percentage of .932; and Brayden Hesch-Priem, who registered 29 goals and 44 points.

Several players return from last year's squad, including Dahl, Jayden Gehring, Jude Gehring, Huttemier, Lynch, Schmidke, Schoenrock, Srp and Storey.

Storey led last year's Bluejays in scoring with 69 points, including 19 goals. Schoenrock led the team in goals with 31 while totaling 56 points. Jude Gehring had 26 goals and 48 points.

Schmidtke returns as goalie after posting a goals against average of 2.22 and a save percentage of .902.

The Bluejays are coached by Christopher Storey (Griffin Storey's dad), in his 12th year as head coach with a career record of 126-142-5. He's assisted by Brad Dushaw, Dan Pumper and Ben Srp.

The team is officially a cooperative program that includes Waseca, JWP, NRHEG and WEM.

The Bluejays appear poised to make a run at the program's first-ever section title and state tournament berth, as well as competing for the Big South crown.

RETURNEES — Otto Schoenrock (10) and Jude Gehring (34) are two of several returnees for the WHS boys' hockey team, which figures to contend for the Big South championshp. Pioneer photo by Jim Lutgens

SCHEDULES

Waseca High School
Boys' Basketball 2025-26

Nov. 29 vs. Pine Island, 1:30
Dec. 2 at Belle Plaine, 7:30
Dec. 5 vs. New Ulm, 7 p.m.
Dec. 9 vs. St. Peter, 7:15
Dec. 12 at LCWM, 7 p.m.
Dec. 13 vs. Minn. Valley Lutheran, 1:30
Dec. 16 at Tri-City United, 7:30
Dec. 19 at Marshall, 7:30
Dec. 23 vs. NRHEG, 7:15
Dec. 29 at Rochester Lourdes, TBD
Dec. 30 vs. Randolph at Rochester, TBD
Jan. 6 at St. Clair, 7 p.m.
Jan. 9 vs. Worthington, 7:15
Jan. 13 vs. Belle Plaine, 7:15
Jan. 16 at New Ulm, 7:15
Jan. 20 at St. Peter, 7:30
Jan. 22 at Glencoe-Silver Lake, 7 p.m.
Jan. 23 vs. Madelia, 7:15
Jan. 26 vs. Blue Earth Area, 7:15
Jan. 27 vs. Tri-City United, 7:15
Jan. 30 vs. Marshall, 7:15
Feb. 6 at Worthington, 7:30
Feb. 12 at Fairmont, 7:30
Feb. 19 at Hope Academy, 7:15
Feb. 26 at LeSueur-Henderson, 7:15

Waseca High School
Girls' Basketball 2025-26

Nov. 21 vs. Blooming Prairie, 7:15
Nov. 25 at Minn. Valley Lutheran, 7 p.m.
Dec. 2 vs. Belle Plaine, 7:15
Dec. 5 at New Ulm, 7:30
Dec. 9 vs. St. Peter, 6 p.m.
Dec. 11 at Worthington, 7 p.m.
Dec. 12 vs. LCWM, 7:15
Dec. 16 vs. Tri-City United, 7:15
Dec. 19 at Marshall, 6 p.m.
Dec. 23 at NRHEG, 7:15
Dec. 26 vs. Lake City at Winona, 4:30
Dec. 27 vs. PEM at Winona, 8:15 a.m.
Jan. 6 at St. Clair, 5:45
Jan. 9 vs. Worthington, 6 p.m.
Jan. 13 at Belle Plaine, 7:15
Jan. 16 vs. New Ulm, 7:15
Jan. 20 at St. Peter, 6 p.m.
Jan. 23 at Maple River, 7:15
Jan. 26 vs. Blue Earth Area, 6 p.m.
Jan. 27 at Tri-City United, 7:30
Jan. 30 vs. Marshall, 6 p.m.
Feb. 2 at Sibley East, 7 p.m.
Feb. 6 at Worthington, 6 p.m.
Feb. 10 at Medford, 7 p.m.
Feb. 12 vs. Fairmont, 7:15
Feb. 16 vs. JWP, 7:15

Waseca-Faribault High School
Girls' Hockey 2025-26

Nov. 11 at Rochester Mayo, 7 p.m.
Nov. 13 at New Prague, 7:15
Nov. 15 at Red Wing, 12 noon
Nov. 18 vs. Winona at Faribault, 7 p.m.
Nov. 20 at Fairmont, 7 p.m.
Nov. 22 at Marshall, 1 p.m.
Nov. 25 at New Ulm, 7 p.m.
Dec. 2 vs. Austin at Faribault, 7 p.m.
Dec. 4 vs. Fairmont at Faribault, 7 p.m.
Dec. 6 vs. Marshall at Waseca, 11 a.m.
Dec. 9 at Minnesota River, 7 p.m.
Dec. 11 vs. Worthington at Waseca, 7 p.m.
Dec. 13 at Luverne, 7:30
Dec. 18 at Windom, 7 p.m.
Dec. 29 at Winona Inv., 11 a.m.
Dec. 30 Winona Inv., 11 a.m.
Dec. 31 at Winona Inv., 9 a.m.
Jan. 6 vs. New Ulm at Waseca, 7 p.m.
Jan. 9 at Worthington, 7 p.m.
Jan. 13 vs. MN River at Faribault, 7 p.m.
Jan. 17 vs. Luverne at Waseca, 12 noon
Jan. 20 vs. Albert Lea at Faribault, 7 p.m.
Jan. 24 at Visitation, 12:30
Jan. 27 vs. Windom at Waseca, 7 p.m.

Waseca High School
Boys' Hockey 2025-26

Nov. 22 Scrimmage at Albert Lea, 9:30 a.m.
Nov. 25 vs. New Ulm, 7:30
Nov. 29 vs. New Prague, 1 p.m.
Dec. 2 vs. Mound Westonka, 7 p.m.
Dec. 6 vs. Marshall, 3 p.m.
Dec. 9 vs. Minnesota River, 7:30
Dec. 13 at Luverne, 3:30
Dec. 16 vs. Northfield, 7 p.m.
Dec. 18 vs. Windom, 7 p.m.
Dec. 20 at Farmington, 6 p.m.
Dec. 27 vs. Minneapolis, 7 p.m.
Jan. 3 vs. Southwest Christian, 1 p.m.
Jan. 6 at New Ulm, 7:15
Jan. 8 at Redwood Valley, 7 p.m.
Jan. 13 at Minnesota River, 7:15
Jan. 15 vs. Rochester Lourdes, 7 p.m.
Jan. 17 vs. Luverne, 3:45
Jan. 20 vs. Dodge County, 7 p.m.
Jan. 24 vs. Blake, 2 p.m.
Jan. 27 at Owatonna, 7 p.m.
Jan. 30 at Little Falls, 7:15
Jan. 31 at Pequot Lakes, 1 p.m.
Feb. 5 vs. Fairmont, 7:30
Feb. 7 at Marshall, 1 p.m.
Feb. 12 at Tartan, 6 p.m.

Waseca High School
Wrestling 2025-26

Dec. 4 at Worthington, 5 p.m.
Dec. 6 at Blue Earth Area Inv., 10 a.m.
Dec. 11 at JWP/WEM, 5 p.m.
Dec. 13 at Jackson CC Inv., 9:45 a.m.
Dec. 19 at Lake City, 5 p.m.
Jan. 3 at NY-A Inv., 10 a.m.
Jan. 8 vs. New Ulm, 5 p.m.
Jan. 10 at Marshall Inv., 10 a.m.
Jan. 13 at Maple River, 5 p.m.
Jan. 15 at Marshall, 5 p.m.
Jan. 17 at Hutchinson Inv., 10 a.m.
Jan. 22 Waseca Quad, 5 p.m.
Jan. 29 at PEM, 5 p.m.
Feb. 5 at St. James, 5 p.m.

Waseca High School
Gymnastics 2025-26

Dec. 5 at Worthington, 6 p.m.
Dec. 6 at Mankato East, 3 p.m.
Dec. 12 vs. Marshall, 6 p.m.
Dec. 18 vs. Byron, 6 p.m.
Dec. 23 vs. St. James Area, 6 p.m.
Jan. 3 at Fairmont, 10 a.m.
Jan. 8 at New Ulm, 6 p.m.
Jan 20 at Fairmont, 6 p.m.
Jan. 24 at Kasson-Mantorville Inv., 11 a.m.
Jan. 30 vs. St. Peter, 6 p.m.
Feb. 5 vs. Blue Earth Area, 6 p.m.
Feb. 12 at Mankato East Inv., TBD

GYMNASTS — The 2025-26 Waseca High School gymnastics team. Front from left: Aubrey Peterson, Adelynne Kruger, Lindy Bergdale, Sydney Hayes, Kyla Morgan and Lydia Bjortomt. Back: assistant coach Kat Kofstad, Miley Anderson, Nora Flatness, Layla Keith, Katelyn Weber, Hannah Parks, Ellie Clark, Avery Carda and head coach Kim Wendland.

Pioneer photo by Ben Revermann

WHS gymnastics coach seeks more of the same

By JIM LUTGENS
Sports Editor

Head coach Kim Wendland knows what she wants from the 2025-26 Waseca High School gymnastics team.

She hopes it's a lot like last year.

"The 2024-25 season was one of the most memorable and successful I have had in my coaching career," said Wendland.

With only seven gymnasts on the squad, it was also the smallest team.

"We were small in numbers, but mighty in performance," said Wendland.

The Bluejays had their best team score at section with a total of 134.25, the third-highest in school history.

Although the season record didn't show it, the Bluejays had consistent scoring and lost a couple very close meets.

"In my nine years as a head coach at Waseca, this is one of the most cohesive teams I have coached," said Wendland. "The girls showed up every practice and every meet, doing their best and supporting their teammates. We had a small team with a lot of depth, which enabled us to stay consistent with our team score, averaging 132 points per meet."

The Bluejays had strong leadership from captains Bella Wikan and Katelyn Weber, both of whom earned all-conference recognition.

The WHS girls capped their season with Wikan earning a trip to state in all-around while being named all-state. She also broke three school records. Brooklyn Flatau received honorable mention on the-all state team. They were the only two seniors on the team.

And the Blujays won the Section 2A academic championship.

This year's squad returns seniors Layla Keith, a state qualifier two years ago who did not compete last year, and Enja Francois Saint-Cyr, juniors Hannah Parks and Weber, and sophomores Miley Anderson and Avery Carda. Parks and Weber are the co-captains.

The rest of the squad includes senior Nora Flatness, junior Angelica Lopez, freshman Aaliyah Wyttenbach, and seventh-graders Liney Bergdale, Lydia Bjortomt, Sydney Hayes, Adelynne Kruger and Aubrey Peterson.

New coach leads WHS girls

By JIM LUTGENS
Sports Editor

The Waseca High School girls' basketball team is an overall young squad that's facing a very tough schedule.

What will happen?

That's anyone guess.

The Bluejays have a new head coach this year in Brian Rupe. He replaces Anthony Jackson, who coached the team for two seasons.

Rupe inherits a squad that finished 5-22 overall and 3-12 in the Big South Conference. The Bluejays' best finish over the past five years was in 2022-23, when they went 16-10.

The Bluejays graduated a host of seniors off last year's team, including Lexi Kanewischer, Callie Dufault, Gabby Lopez, Katlyn McMurphy, Mia Kanewischer, Gracie Morgan and Lily Owens. They took with them a lot of scoring.

Returning varsity athletes are junior guard Belle Miller, sophomore forward Reese Rodriguez, sophomore guard Maren Schimming, freshman guard Ava Miller and freshman post player Hannah Sommers.

Coach Rupe has guarded expectations about the 2025-26 season.

"We play a very tough schedule and we are a young team with not a lot of experience," said Rupe. "That can hurt us in some ways and help us in others. We just want to continue to work on what we need to do to keep improving throughout the season to put ourselves in the right spot to hopefully be playing our best basketball in February."

Rupe sees the Bluejays' strengths as unselfishness, ball movement and having a number of girls who can put the ball in the basket.

"We will be a very unselfish team and move the ball well," said Rupe. "We have several different girls that can shoot the ball with some success. We have a lot of athleticism that we hope to use in many different ways."

Just who will play the most minutes remains to be seen.

"We will be using different lineups early in the season to find what works the best," said Rupe.

The coach's biggest concern is height, or a lack thereof. That and inexperience at the varsity level. He's hoping hustle and athleticism will help make up for that, especially with rebounding.

"We will lack a little size and we will be young, so we will lack the experience," said Rupe. "Not a lot of girls have a lot of varsity minutes. We will need to work hard to rebound. With our lack of size, we will need to outwork other teams to rebound."

The key to success this season, according to Rupe, is how well the players can adapt to a new system.

"The girls are learning from a new voice this year, so buying into things will be the main thing," said Rupe. "Defensively, I feel like we can be a really good team, which can lead to more possessions and hopefully some easy baskets. We need to be able to use our speed and athletes and try to outwork teams on the defensive end."

So far, Rupe has liked what he's seen from the Bluejays in practice.

"These girls show up every day wanting to learn and improve, which makes it fun to coach," said Rupe.

GIRLS BASKETBALL — The 2025-26 Waseca High School girls basketball team. Front from left: Audrianna Willingham, Belle Miller, Maren Schimming, Anna Benson and Libby Miller. Row two: Hannah Teague, Ava Miller, Tyler Stagman, Alea Welander, Ahvah Maas and Reese Rodrigue Back: head coach Rupe, Delanie Holland-Moran, Hailey Kahnke, Hannah Sommers, and assistant coaches.

Pioneer photo by Ben Revermann

Coach Rupe, assisted by Tre Roberts at the junior varsity level and Kenny Johnson with the C-squad, picks Marshall and New Ulm as the top-tier teams in the Big South. He favors Tri-City United in Section 2AA.

Cheerleaders

The 2025-26 Waseca High School winter cheerleaders. Front from left: Isabel Berg, Jordan Hinna, Joscelin Ebnet and Mandi Root. Row two: Josie Ross, Savannah Schlueter, Lauren Grant, Reese Ludwig and Meraina Hiller. Back: Kaylie Morrissey, Ava Trumbull, Addison Epper and Ligaya Howe.

Pioneer photo by Ben Revermann

Flyers look for more offense

By JIM LUTGENS
Sports Editor

Chas Benson returns as head coach for the South Central Flyers, a combination of the Waseca High School and Faribault High School girls' hockey teams.

So do plenty of players.

Last year's Flyers compiled a win-loss record of 10-15, good for fifth place in the Big South Confernence. It was Waseca's best conference finish through the past five years.

Benson, in his fourth year as head coach, has a career recod of 32-36-3. He'll be assisted by Abbe Hoehn, Brad Lawson and Tony Schied.

Katlyn Schieler graduated off last year's squad. She was a captain and defensive leader last season, a five-year starter who was second in scoring for the team in 2024-25.

The Flyers return a good number of players for 2025-26, including seniors Maddy Benson (forward) and Kayle Lawson (defense), juniors Jayden Drager (defense), Emma Huelsnitz (forward) and McKenna Mortenson (defense), sophomores Savanna Conway (forward), Sadi Wagner (defense), Clara Nawrocki (forward) and Allison Drager (forward), freshman Ava Greden (defense), and eighth-grader Lila Pavlic (goalie).

This year's captains are Jayden Drager, Benson, Lawson and Wagner.

Though young overall, the Flyers have some varsity experience on which they will build.

"This year, we have a handful of multi-year letter-winners returning that we are looking at to take a large leadership role on an overall young team," said Coach Benson. "We hope to be competitive in the conference. The Big South will be a good test for us this year."

The team has improved on defense the past few years, according to Coach Benson, and the Flyers are looking to continue on that trend.

The coach is looking for more offense from more players.

"A key to success for year will be for our leaders to continue to generate offensive opportunities," said Benson. "If we can add in additional scoring from our younger players, we will have success this year."

According to Benson, Marshall and Luverne look like the teams to beat in the Big South. He feels Albert Lea is the Section 1A favorite.

The Flyers got off to a rough start on the season, falling 10 to Rochester Mayo, 15-0 to New Prague, 10-3 to Red Wing, 5-0 to Winona and 11-0 to Fairmont.

Draeger scored twice against Red Wing, Nawrocky once. Goalie Pavlik faced 44 shots.

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JWP girls seek more success

By JIM LUTGENS
Sports Editor

There sure has been a resurgence for Janesville-Waldorf-Pemberton High School girls' sports teams in recent years.

Basketball is no exception.

Last year's Bulldogs posted an impressive win-loss record of 24-4, 14-1 in the Gopher Conference.

Brandon Goebel enters his third year as the Bulldogs' head coach, and he brings with him a 44-11 record the first two seasons. Last year's season ended with a loss in the sub-section finals. Goebel is assisted by Emily Olson, Liz Kvebak and Andrea Kronbach.

"I'm really excited about this season," said Goebel. "We graduated a few key players who were a big part of our program, but we return a strong core group with valuable experience. We also have some talented underclassmen who I believe can step up and make a big impact. Overall, I think we have the pieces to be a very solid team."

Key player losses from last season include Presley James, Lilly Strauss and Hope Dimmel. James was the team's captain and Defensive Player of the Year while earning all-conference and Academic All-State recognition. She also led the squad in rebounding. Strauss was also a captain, earning and received the team's DAWG Award.

Returning athletes are Navaeh Weimert (5-foot-7 guard), Mikayla Wheelock (5-6 guard), Katelyn Olson (5-8 guard), Kwynn Krause (5-4 guard), Ellie Morsching (5-6 guard), and Aubrey Adams (5-10 forward).

"One of our biggest strengths this season will be our quickness and overall conditioning," said Goebel. "We're able to run the floor well and play at a fast pace."

The Bulldogs also look to be strong on the defensive end.

"Defensively, we take pride in competing at a high level," he said. "That will continue to be a big part of our identity."

Goebel hopes to overcome a lack of height, and listed communication as something to work on.

"We're not the tallest team, so we'll need to focus on rebounding and using our speed to our advantage," said Goebel. "Communication on the court is another area we're working to improve, along with continuing to play for each other and stay connected when we face adversity throughout the season.

The key to success for the Bulldogs, according to Goebel, are the areas he talked about in the squad's strengths and weaknesses.

VARSITY EXPERIENCE — Navaeh Weimert is one of JWP's returning athletes for 2025-26.

"We're looking forward to a great year," said Goebel. "I can't wait to see what the girls can accomplish.

Goebel sees JWP and NRHEG as the favorites in the Gopher Conference, with the Bulldogs, Norwood-Young America and Glencoe-Silver Lake as the teams to beat in Section 2A.

OPTIMISTIC — Daulton Bauer goes up for a layup during the 2024-25 season. He's just one reason the JWP boys' basketball team is optimistic. Pioneer photo by Jim Lutgens

Optimism reigns for JWP boys

By JIM LUTGENS
Sports Editor

There's no way the Janesville-Waldorf-Pemberton boys' basketball team cannot be optimistic about the 2025-26 season.

The Bulldogs return almost everyone from a squad that finished 25-5 overall and won the Gopher Conference championship at 13-1.

James, beginning his 10th season as the Bulldogs' head coach, has a career record of 132-108. He's assisted by Gabriel Hauer, with Conner Morton coaching the junior varsity, Matt Dahlberg handling the C-squad, and Lenny Kroll and Johnny Dascher guiding the junior high teams.

Key graduates for the Bulldogs were Landon Johnson (8.5 points and 3.7 rebounds per game as a starter, Ethan Born (3.1 points and 5.4 rebounds per game as a starter; and Isaiah Berndt, a top-notch defender and key rebounder.

The Bulldogs return a large group of returning varsity athletes, including seniors Daulton Bauer (5-foot-10 point guard), Caleb Quast (6-0 forward) and Zander Terbeest (6-0 guard), juniors Gavin Weedman (5-10 guard) Parker Gearity (5-11 guard) and Jeffrey Simonson (6-3 forward), and sophomores Jaxon Wolff (5-8 guard), Tyson Kronbach (5-11 guard) and Gavin Bauer (6-2 guard).

What does Coach James expect?

"To improve from the beginning of the season to the end," he said. "We also expect to compete for a conference and section title."

A definite strength for the Bulldogs is guard play.

"We should be strong in ball handling, shooting and speed," said James. "Our guard depth is very deep down throughout our program. We are hoping our defense is a strength that helps us create easy baskets."

The coach's biggest concern is size. He hopes strong rebounding will help them overcome it.

"We will be small, so rebounding will be a emphasis this year," said James.

The key to sucess for the Bulldogs is, according to James, how they defend and rebounds to finish possessions.

"That will dictate how well things go for us," he said.

James picks Triton, Kenyon-Wanamingo and Randolph as conference favorites. Springfield and Mankato Loyola look to be the favorites in Section 2A.

Grizzlies appear ready to roar

The WEM/JWP Grizzlies look ready to roar for the 2025-26 wrestling season.

With strong senior leadership and a host of talented underclassmen, co-head coaches Adam Roesler and Skyler Petry are hoping to field a strong squad.

Senior Brady Murphy, two-time state qualifier and one-time placewinner, will be the cornerstone of the lineup. Murphy leads returnees in nearly every statistical category, boasting 92 career wins, 57 pins, and a .748 winning percentage.

Among the underclassmen, junior Trey Richards and freshman state qualifier Brenden Masso are expected to play key roles. Richards, who was right in the mix to make his first state tournament, posted 35 wins last season with 15 falls and a .636 win rate. Meanwhile, Masso notched 26 wins and 17 pins in his debut season which landed him in the state tourney — impressive numbers that hint at major upside.

Together, Murphy's senior leadership and the emergence of young talents like Richards and Masso give the Grizzlies a strong foundation and competitive depth heading into the season.

The Grizzlies look to fill some massive shoes this season after graduating one of the most decorated senior classes in program history. Keegan Kuball headlines the departures as a three-time state champion and the program's career leader or close to it in nearly every category. Kuball had 172 career wins, 111 pins, and a .869.

Also graduating was Carson Petry, a 2025 state champion, three-time placer, and four-time state qualifier who contributed 139 career wins, 37 technical falls, and a remarkable 192 takedowns. Avery Fall, a two-time state qualifier, brought consistency and grit to the upper weights, while Maddox Moreno, a state qualifier himself, was a steady presence who tallied 57 career wins and 37 pins.

This senior class combined for more than 590 total wins, 3,013 team points and nearly 250 pins.

"Their leadership, work ethic, and ability to perform under pressure will be the biggest gaps to fill," said Roesler.

Seniors Parker James and Ben Root had their seasons cut short last year, but with a healthy return are primed to make major impacts. James already proved he can win matches in bunches with 28 victories and 16 pins, while Root picked up 10 wins after coming back in the last third of the season.

Juniors Kaven Sheehy and Trenton Huber will look to be key contributors in the upper weights.

Meanwhile, senior Avery Breyer steps into a crucial role as the team's new heavyweight.

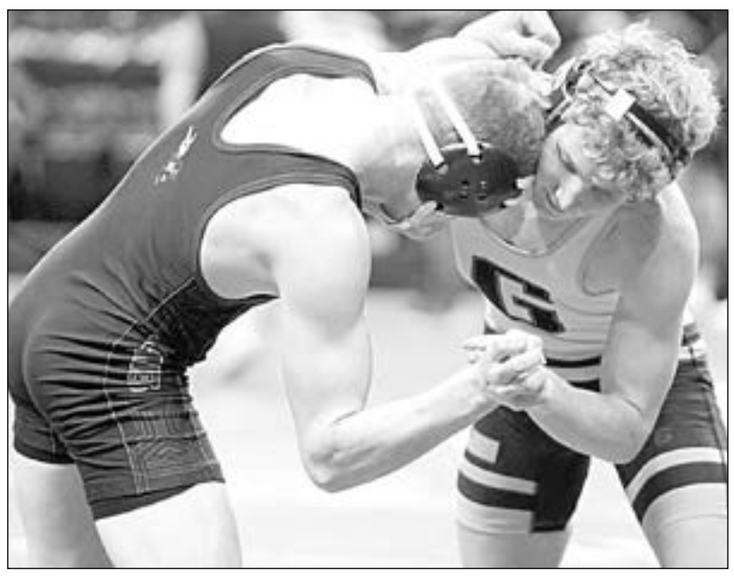
A dark horse to watch is senior Charles Adams, one of the hardest workers in the offseason.

"Young prospect Jacksten Knish, a freshman, gained varsity experience last year.

With a combination of returning talent, healthy veterans, and hungry underclassmen, the Grizzlies have several wrestlers capable of turning heads and making big jumps this season.

"I'm optimistic about the upcoming season," said Roesler. "We have a strong core group returning with valuable varsity experience, and our offseason work has put us in a good position to compete at a high level. Within the Gopher Conference, I believe we belong in that top tier alongside Kenyon-Wanamingo and Triton. We've proven we can wrestle with anyone when we're disciplined and healthy, and I expect us to be right in the mix for a conference title."

Looking at the Section 2A landscape, it's expected to be a battle.



CORNERSTONE — Brady Murphy, right, shown in last year's state tournament, is expected to lead the JWP/WEM wrestling team. Pioneer photo by Eli Lutgens

Kenyon-Wanamingo is always tough and well-coached, and Triton has a solid lineup, but the Grizzlies have the talent and mindset to contend for the top spot.

"Our goal is to be wrestling our best in February — both individually and as a team — and to make a deep run in the postseason," said Roesler.

Consistency and accountability are cruicial to the team.

"We have to emphasize the basics every day — positioning, conditioning, and finishing matches strong," said Roesler. "If our wrestlers can stay focused on the details and bring energy to every practice, we'll close the gap on the top programs. Staying healthy, making weight the right way, and building confidence in every kid from top to bottom will be key."

Roesler said the Grizzlies' expectations may be high, but they're realistic.

SCHEDULES

JWP Boys' Basketball 2025-26
Dec. 1 at Minn. Valley Lutheran, 7:15
Dec. 2 vs. LCWM, 7 p.m.
Dec. 5 vs. Randolph 7 p.m.
Dec. 12 at Kenyon-Wanamingo, 7 p.m.
Dec. 16 at WEM, 7 p.m.
Dec. 18 at NRHEG, 7 p.m.
Dec. 22 vs. St. Clair, 7:15
Dec. 26 at Bethany Inv., TBD
Dec. 27 at Bethany Inv., TBD
Dec. 29 at Bethany Inv., TBD
Jan. 3 vs. Springfield at Kasson, 1 p.m.
Jan. 6 vs. LeSueur-Henderson, 7 p.m.
Jan. 9 vs. Medford, 7 p.m.
Jan. 13 at United South Central, 7 p.m.
Jan. 16 vs. Hayfield, 7 p.m.
Jan. 17 at SW Christian, 11:30 a.m.
Jan. 20 vs. WEM, 7 p.m.
Jan. 23 at Blooming Prairie, 7 p.m.
Jan. 26 vs. NRHEG, 7 p.m.
Jan. 29 vs. Bethlehem Academy, 6 p.m.
Feb. 2 vs. Waseca, 7 p.m.
Feb. 6 at Triton, 7 p.m.
Feb. 9 at Sibley East, 7 p.m.
Feb. 12 at Medford, 7 p.m.
Feb. 20 vs. United South Central, 7 p.m.
Fb. 24 vs. Tri-City United, 7 p.m.

JWP Girls' Basketball 2025-26
Nov. 20 at Tri-City United, 7:30
Nov. 25 at New Ulm Cathedral, 7:30
Dec. 1 at United South Central, 7 p.m.
Dec. 5 at Randolph, 7 p.m.
Dec. 9 at LCWM, 7 p.m.
Dec. 12 vs. G-SL at Mapleton, 4:30
Dec. 13 vs. Jordan at Mapleton, 3:15
Dec. 16 vs. WEM, 7 p.m.
Dec. 19 vs. NRHEG, 7 p.m.
Dec. 22 vs. St. Clair, 5:45
Dec. 29 at Roch. Lourdes Inv. 1 p.m.
Dec. 30 at Rochester Lourdes Inv., TBD
Jan. 3 vs. MN Ac. at Kasson, 11:30 a.m.
Jan. 9 at Medford, 7 p.m.
Jan. 12 vs. MVL 7 p.m.
Jan. 13 vs. United South Central, 7 p.m.
Jan. 15 at Hayfield, 7 p.m.
Jan. 20 at WEM, 7 p.m.
Jan. 23 at Blooming Prairie, 7 p.m.
Jan. 26 at NRHEG, 7 p.m.
Jan. 29 at Bethlehem Academy, 7 p.m.
Feb. 6 vs. Kenyon-Wanamingo, 7 p.m.
Feb. 12 vs. Medford, 7 p.m.
Feb. 16 at Waseca, 7:15
Feb. 17 vs. Sibley East, 7 p.m.
Feb. 23 TBD at Janesville, 7 p.m.
Feb. 26, TBD, 7 p.m.

JWP/WE Wrestling 2025-26
Dec. 4 at Westfield, 7 p.m.
Dec. 6 at Blue Earth Area Inv., 10 a.m.
Dec. 11 vs. LeSueur-H, Wasca, 5 p.m.
Dec. 18 Triangular at Waterville, 5 p.m.
Dec. 23 Quad at Waterville, 5 p.m.
Jan. 8 MR/USC at Mapleton, 7 p.m.
Jan. 15 at NRHEG, 7 p.m.
Jan. 22 vs. Med. at Waterville, 7 p.m.
Jan. 24 at Sibley East Inv., 10 a.m.
Jan. 19 vs. Triton, 7 p.m.
Jan. 31 at Maple River Inv., 10 a.m.
Feb. 12 TBD
Feb. 14 TBD at Waterville, 2 p.m.
Feb. 21 TBD at Janesville, 10 a.m.

NRHEG Boys' Basketball 2025-26
Nov. 25 vs. WEM, 7 p.m.
Dec. 4 vs. LeSueur-Henderson, 7 p.m.
Dec. 5 vs. Blooming Prairie
Dec. 6 vs. Maple River, 7:15
Dec. 12 at Bethlehem Academy, 7 p.m.
Dec. 16 at Medford, 7 p.m.
Dec. 18 vs. JWP, 7 p.m.
Dec. 22 vs. Martin County West, 7:15
Dec. 23 at Waseca, 7:15
Jan. 3 at St. Clair, 7 p.m.
Jan. 6 vs. United South Central, 7 p.m.
Jan. 9 vs. Triton, 7:30
Jan. 13 vs. WEM, 7 p.m.
Jan. 15 at Granada-H-EC, 7 p.m.
Jan. 20 vs. Medford, 7 p.m.
Jan. 22 at Randolph 7 p.m.
Jan. 26 at JWP, 7 p.m.
Jan. 29 vs. Kenyon-Wanamingo, 7 p.m.
Feb. 2 at United South Central, 7 p.m.
Feb. 3 vs. Nicollet, 7:15
Feb. 7 vs. Cleveland at MSU, 7 p.m.
Feb. 10 at Madelia, 7 p.m.
Feb. 12 at Tri-City United, 7:30
Feb. 13 vs. Alden-Conger, 7:15
Feb. 17 vs. Mankato Loyola, 7:15
Feb. 20 at WEM, 7 p.m.

NRHEG Girls' Basketball 2025-26
Nov. 25 vs. Fairmont, 7:15
Dec. 2 vs. WEM, 7 p.m.
Dec. 9 at Maple River, 7:15
Dec. 12 vs. Bethlehem Academy, 7 p.m.
Dec. 13 vs. JCC at Maple River
Dec. 16 vs. Medford, 7 p.m.
Dec. 19 at JWP, 7 p.m.
Dec. 23 vs. Waseca
Dec. 29 at LCWM Inv., 5 p.m.
Dec. 30 at LCWM Inv., 5 p.m.
Jan. 6 at United South Central, 7 p.m.
Jan. 9 vs. Triton, 5:45 p.m.
Jan. 12 vs. St. Peter, 7 p.m.
Jan. 13 at WEM, 7 p.m.
Jan. 20 at Medford, 7 p.m.
Jan. 22 vs. Randolph, 7 p.m.
Jan. 24 vs. Houston, 6:30
Jan. 26 vs. JWP, 7 p.m.
Jan. 30 at Kenyon-Wanamingo, 7 p.m.
Feb. 2 vs. United South Central, 7 p.m.
Feb. 3 at Southland, 7:15
Feb. 10 at St. Clair, 7 p.m.
Feb. 13 at Alden-Conger, 7:15

NRHEG Wrestling 2025-26
Dec. 4 at Blooming Prairie, 7 p.m.
Dec. 6 at St. James Inv., 9:45 a.m.
Dec. 11 vs. Westfield, 7 p.m.
Dec. 12 at Lakeville South, 4:30
Dec. 19 at Redwood Valley, 4 p.m.
Jan. 2 vs. Blooming Prairie, 5 p.m.
Jan. 8 vs. Triton, St. Clair, 6 p.m.
Jan. 15 vs. WEM/JWP, 7 p.m.
Jan. 17 at Hayfield Inv., 9 a.m.
Jan. 22 at Waseca, 5 p.m.
Jan. 24 at Orono Inv., 9 a.m.
Jan. 29 at Kenyon-Wanamingo, 7 p.m.
Feb. 5 Home triangular, 6 p.m.

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NRHEG girls have lofty goals

GIRLS□BASKETBALL — The 2025-26 NRHEG girls□basketball team. Front from left: managers Alexis Olson, Libbie Mullenbach and Evelyn Schlaak. Row two: manager Mallory Groskreutz, Aubrey Hendrickson, Ezra Boerner, Izley Boerner, Camryn VanMaldeghem, Quinn VanMaldeghem, Clara Buendorf, Emilia Stadheim and Alayna Groskreutz. Back: coach Kayley Camerer, Hadley Roeker, Kenley Gehrke, Joey Rossing, Chloe Stork, Kylie Olson, Gabby Schlaak, Alexandra Estrada-Me□a, Savannah Farr, Julieann Wobbrock and head coach Onika Peterson.
Pioneer photo by □eb □ently

By JIM LUTGENS
Sports Editor

As far as the New Richland-Hartland-Ellendale-Geneva High School girls' basketball team is concerned, there's good news and better news when it comes to the 2025-26 season.

The good news?

The Panthers are coming off another very strong season in which they compiled a win-loss record of 23-7 while advancing to the state tournament.

The better news?

Nobody graduated off the 2024-25 squad.

It leaves head coach Onika Peterson and her assistants brimming with optimism.

Peterson, who has a 192-111 record in 11 seasons as the Panthers' head coach, is assisted by John Schultz, Kayley Camerer, Betsy Tweit and Larry Nydegger.After going 7-1 in their division of the Gopher Conference last season, the Panthers ran into tough competition at state, falling to eventual champion Providence Academy and Sauk Centre. The Panthers were 15-1 against section opponents last year.

"We're excited to get the season underway," said Coach Peterson.

The varsity roster includes seniors Gabby Schlaak, Quinn VanMaldeghem, Camryn VanMaldeghem and Chloe Stork , juniors Izley Boerner, Clara Buendorf, Savannah Farr and Kylie Olson, sophomores Ezra Boerner, Kelsie Gehrke and Alexandra Estrada, freshmen Julieann Wobbrock, Alyna Groskreutz, Emilia Stadheim, Joey Rossing and Aubrey Hendrickson , and eighth-grader Hadley Roeker.

"Last year, this team played its best basketball when it mattered most, making small-town history with a state tournament trip," said Peterson. "We return our full roster, but what's even more exciting is the group itself. These girls genuinely enjoy being together, They cheer for one another, celebrate each other's successes, and push each other to be better every day."

And Peterson doesn't mind if the schedule includes strong opponents.

"We face a challenging schedule, and we're eager to be tested throughout the year," said Peterson. "Our focus is to keep improving with every practice and every game so that we're once again playing our best basketball come playoff time. Last year was special, but this is a new season, and we're not settling. It's time to get back to work."

Peterson;s biggest concern?

Numbers.

"Unfortunately, numbers across the state are down for girls' basketball," said the coach. "Hopefully, we won't lose kids due to sickness."

Peterson said the Panthers' key to success is simple.

"Our key to success this season is playing Panther basketball," she explained. "We want to rebound and run the floor every chance we get, pushing the tempo and controlling the pace. Defensively, our goal is to create as much havoc as possible, staying aggressive and intense without getting into foul trouble."

Last year, the Panthers pulled down an impressive 1,347 rebounds, outrebounding opponents by more than 350.

Peterson said that while the Gopher Conference has some solid teams again this year, she hopes the Panthers would be in the top four with Janesville-Waldorf-Pemberton, Triton and Hayfield.

The Panthers are in a new section and class this year, Section 1A.

Cory takes over NRHEG wrestling

WRESTLERS — The NRHEG High School wrestling team. Front from left: Julian Naser, Rifften Jacobson, Owen Schlaak, Tucker Flatness, Bo Holland, Grahm Jacobson, Aaron Merritt, Charlie Tuffte. Row two: Zoe Wilson, Josie Tufte, Dakota Schlaak, Chase Johannsen, Eli Hendrickson, Wyatt Hendrickson, Adrian Naser, Jacob Naser, Hayden Ripka.Back: Coach Nate Jensen, Coach Krey Cory, Hunter McFarland, Wyatt Larson, Braxton Arnold, Ryan Schlaak, Noah Weller, Khaidon Madson, Cooper Cords, Coach Erik Olsen.
Pioneer photo by □eb □ently

By JIM LUTGENS
Sports Editor

The NRHEG wrestling team graduated some talented individuals from last year's squad.

But the biggest asence this season may be the Panthers' longtime assistant and head coach, Shawn Larson.

Larson has resigned from coaching wrestling and baseball teams, citing the desire to watch his own children compete in athletics.

Taking over as head coach is Krey Cory, a former Panther wrestler.

He, of course, starts clean with a 0-0 career win-loss record.

Last year's Panthers finished 1-19 overall and 1-5 in the Gopher Conference.

Among the graduates last year were Cole Hutchens and Harbor Cromwell, both of whom qualified for the state tournament but did not earn a medal there. Cromwell finished last eason with a 23-15 record while Hutchens was 8-25 but peaked at the right time.

Among the returning varsity athletes expected to show great leadership and lead by example, are 172-pound junior Ryan Schlaak and 114-pound eighth-grader Grahm Jacobson. Both qualified for state last year but did not place, though Schlaak did win a match in St. Paul. He registered an impressive win-loss record of 23-8.

Jacobson, as a seventh-grader, became the youngest NRHEG wrestler ever to qualify for the state tournament. He compiled a record of 21-22.

Schlaak and Jacobson provide experience at the state level.

The rest of the returning varsity matmen are senior Wyatt Larson (215 pounds, the son of Shawn Larson); juniors Chase Johannsen (133) and Khaiden Madson (145, 152); sophomores Charlie Tufte (121), Dakota Schlaak (127) and Noah Weller (160); and freshman Owen Schlaak (107).

Cory said that while the Panthers will miss Cromwell and Hutchens, he feels the the Panthers have shown the willingness to work and compete hard against what will no doubt be some tough competition.

"We want to compete our best every time we get on the mat, regardless of our opponent," said Cory.

Coach Cory said the Panthers' willingness to work hard will be one of the squad's strengths.

"We know how to work hard and aren't afraid to put in the work," said Cory. "We need to make sure we believe in what we are doing and that we are capable of competing with everyone."

The key to success for the Panthers?

"Make sure we stay consistent with both our training and in competition and believing in our ability when we step on the mat," said Cory.

NRHEG boys have drive to succeed

BO□S□BASKETBALL — The 2025-26 NRHEG High School boys□basketball team. Front from left: Brendan Schmidt, Levi Whiteside, Dom Olson, Mack Gilliland, Sean Lassahn, Calvin Nissen, Brooks Gilliland, Fynn Baumann. Back: coach Dan Schmidt, David Deen, Reid Sandry, Lavon Jewison, AJ Deen, Zander Hanna, Jackson McGannon, Brock Holland, Coach Aaron Gilliland, coach Tyler Schlaak.
Pioneer photo by □eb □ently

By JIM LUTGENS
Sports Editor

While the NRHEG boys' basketball team did not have a great deal of wins last year, the 2025-26 Panthers have something you just can't coach.

They have the drive to get better.

The Panthers, coached by Dan Schmidt, are coming off a season where they were 4-22 overall and 3-12 in the Gopher Conference.

The Panthers graduated some talent from last year's squad□Greyson Schaefer, Jase Knudson and Aiden Hanna.

Schaefer, the Panthers' Most Valuable Player last year, was the team's leading rebounder and a captain. Knudson, a three-year varsity player, was also a captain. Hanna was the third captain.

Returniees includedthe coach's son, Brendan Schmidt. Also back are Lavon Jewison, Dom Olson and Calvin Nissen.

The rest of the varsity roster includes seniors Deshawn Jones (shooting forward/power forward), Owen Wayne (point guard/shooting guard), Justin Beauvais (point guard/shooting guard), Hudson Chrz (point guard/shooting guard) and Gavin Lewison (shooting forward/power forward), junior A.J. Deen (6-2 power forward/center), sophomores Sean Lassahn (point guard/shooting guard) and □ander Hanna (6-3 power forward), and freshmen Mack Gilliland (point guard/shooting guard), Brock Holland (shooting forward/power forward) and Kasey Jewison (point guard/shooting guard).

With only four letterwinners back from last year, Coach Schmidt said the Panthers will lean heavily on two returning starters.

"We'll be an inexperienced team with just four letterwinners returning," said Coach Schmidt. "We do have two starters back, so we'll rely on them to help lead the way."

Game-by-game improvement is crucial for the Panthers' success.

"We're looking to improve as a team as the season progresses," said Schmidt.

The key to successs?

"How quickly we can adjust to the speed of the game," said Schmidt. "We want to get to run more than we have in past seasons, and playing with that pace should cover our lack of a big bruiser in the middle."

Schmidt also hopes to see his squad quickly learn the Panthers' offense.

"This group likes to play in transition, and because of their chemistry, they do a great job of moving the ball and finding the open teammate. Buying into the offensive and defensive schemes will be important."

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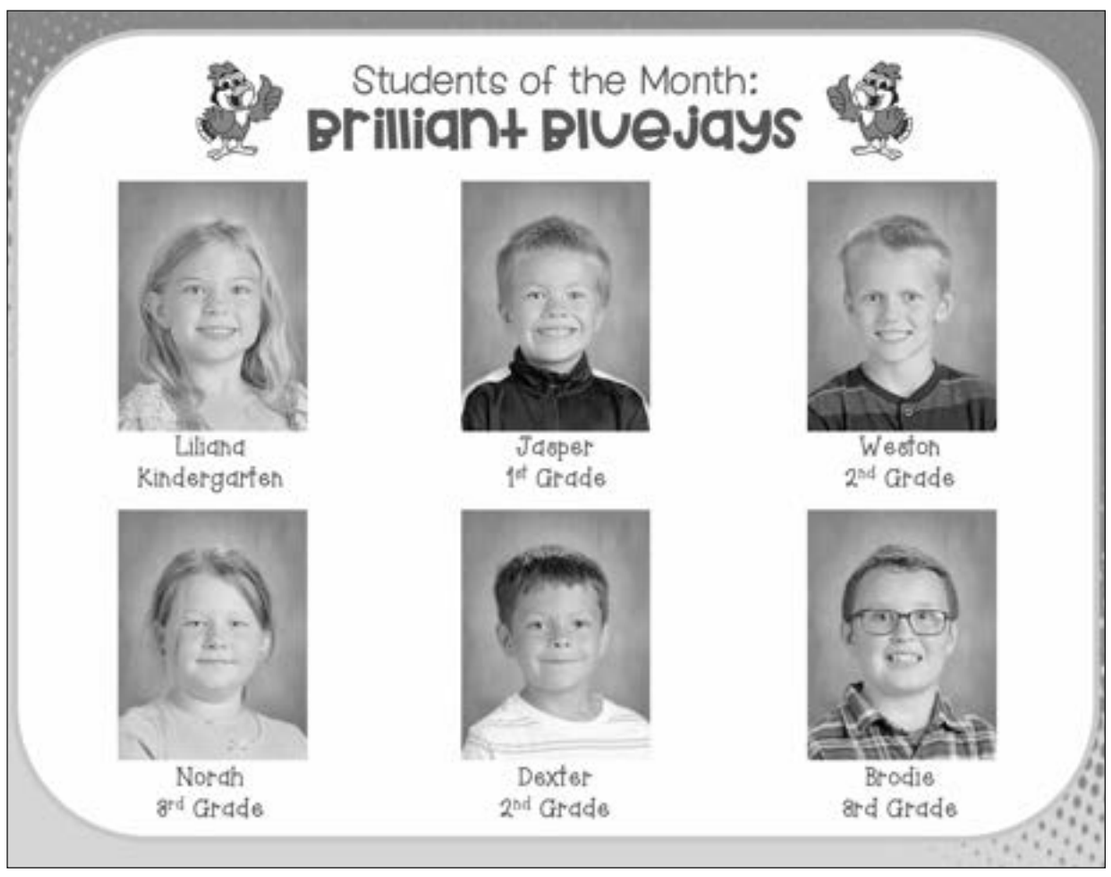
This year's Santa Experience promises to be the most magical experience of the holiday season. Reserve a spot to meet Santa in Farmamerica's charming red barn and enjoy a festive, authentic farm experience. Tickets for this event must be purchased online. farmamerica.org/events



Snow falls

SNOW WAY! Young rural Waseca resident Kaiden spent some time in the snow Sunday afternoon. The area collected about six inches of the white stuff over the weekend in a snowfall that lasted about 24 hours. Pioneer photo by Deb Bently

TOM THE TURKEY - A small crowd of children attended the New Richland Public Library's Storytime hour on Tuesday, Nov. 25, 2025. Pioneer photo by Ben Revermann

NR Library tells a turkey tale

By BEN REVERMANN
Staff writer

The New Richland Public Library held another Storytime Hour the foggy morning of Tuesday, Nov. 25. With the big kids in school, the little kids dominated the library grounds, but when it came time to pay attention, they did a pretty good job.

Librarian Kathy Kronebusch was in charge for the day; she had little toy cars and tractors and micro-farm equipment for the little ones to play with. Once story time started, however, the kids sat near the back of the library in rapt attention. The song was called, "Tom the Turkey" and it had to do with the colorful feathers turkeys have. Before Kronebusch read the book titled, "Run Turkey Run" she had the children say what they were most thankful for. One child shyly answered, "I'm thankful for candy." Another said, "I'm thankful for my mom and my grandma." One said, "I am thankful for food and I don't want to go to bed early at all." Each respondent gave the question serious thought before answering. The book was about how stressful the day before Thanksgiving can be for a turkey, the kids seemed to like it.

Afterwards each child was given a different colored feather for the art project that was part of the event. If they didn't like the feather they were given, they had an opportunity to cut a hand-drawn feather of their own design in any color they wanted. There was also brown construction paper for the turkey himself, glue sticks, crayons and markers to finish the job. If that didn't trip the kiddo's triggers, there was also a new type of corn on the cob game they could try, it was the kids themselves that were going to glue corn kernels back onto the cobs, so they could compare their work to a real corn cob full of corn and see which one was better.

Currently available at the New Richland Library through the end of December are Secret Santa Reads. Folks can browse the selected books, fall in love with the clues on the tags, pay and take their secret gift home, then unwrap under the tree at home (or do it there.) There's romance, mystery, fantasy, thriller, cozy or a holiday feel; for kids and adults. All proceeds help support the activities of the New Richland Friends of the Library.

ZED by Duane M. Abel

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LEGAL NOTICE

NOTICE OF MORTGAGE FORECLOSURE SALE

THE RIGHT TO VERIFICATION OF THE DEBT AND IDENTITY OF THE ORIGINAL CREDITOR WITHIN THE TIME PROVIDED BY LAW IS NOT AFFECTED BY THIS ACTION.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, that default has occurred in the conditions of the following described mortgage:

Mortgagor:
Dan Seidl, a married man
Mortgagee:
Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as mortgagee, as nominee for Quicken Loans Inc., its successors and assigns
Dated:
March 29, 2019
Recorded:
April 8, 2019
Waseca County Recorder
Document No. 317570

Assigned To:
Rocket Mortgage, LLC f/k/a Quicken Loans, LLC
Dated:
September 11, 2025
Recorded:
September 15, 2025
Waseca County Recorder Document No. A341302

Transaction Agent: Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc.
Transaction Agent Mortgage Identification Number: 100039034199912330
Lender or Broker: Quicken Loans Inc.
Residential Mortgage Servicer: Rocket Mortgage, LLC
Mortgage Originator: Quicken Loans Inc.

LEGAL DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY: Lot Seven (7), Block One (1), Hodgkins Addition to Waldorf, Minnesota according to the Plat thereof on file and of record in the Office of the County Recorder in and for Waseca County, Minnesota

This is Abstract Property.

TAX PARCEL NO.: 163260060

ADDRESS OF PROPERTY:
224 3rd Ave N
Waldorf, MN 56091

COUNTY IN WHICH PROPERTY IS LOCATED: Waseca

ORIGINAL PRINCIPAL AMOUNT OF MORTGAGE: $95,959.00

AMOUNT DUE AND CLAIMED TO BE DUE AS OF DATE OF NOTICE: $99,659.17

That prior to the commencement of this mortgage foreclosure proceeding Mortgagee/Assignee of Mortgagee complied with all notice requirements as required by statute; that no action or proceeding has been instituted at law to recover the debt then remaining secured by such mortgage, or any part thereof, or, if the action or proceeding has been instituted, that the same has been discontinued, or that an execution upon the judgment rendered therein has been returned unsatisfied, in whole or in part;

PURSUANT to the power of sale contained in said mortgage, the above described property will be sold by the Sheriff of said county as follows:

DATE AND TIME OF SALE: February 5, 2026, 10:00 AM

PLACE OF SALE: Sheriff's Main Office, 122 3rd Avenue NW, Waseca, MN

to pay the debt then secured by said Mortgage, and taxes, if any, on said premises, and the costs and disbursements, including attorneys' fees allowed by law subject to redemption within 6 Months from the date of said sale by the mortgagor(s), their personal representatives or assigns.

DATE TO VACATE PROPERTY: The date on or before which the mortgagor must vacate the property if the mortgage is not reinstated under Minnesota Statutes section 580.30 or the property redeemed under Minnesota Statutes section 580.23 is August 5, 2026 at 11:59 p.m.

MORTGAGOR(S) RELEASED FROM FINANCIAL OBLIGATION ON MORTGAGE: NONE

THE TIME ALLOWED BY LAW FOR REDEMPTION BY THE MORTGAGOR, THE MORTGAGOR'S PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVES OR ASSIGNS, MAY BE REDUCED TO FIVE WEEKS IF A JUDICIAL ORDER IS ENTERED UNDER MINNESOTA STATUTES SECTION 582.032, DETERMINING, AMONG OTHER THINGS, THAT THE MORTGAGED PREMISES ARE IMPROVED WITH A RESIDENTIAL DWELLING OF LESS THAN FIVE UNITS, ARE NOT PROPERTY USED IN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION, AND ARE ABANDONED.

Dated: November 19, 2025

Rocket Mortgage, LLC f/k/a Quicken Loans, LLC f/k/a Quicken Loans Inc., Assignee of Mortgagee

By: HALLIDAY, WATKINS & MANN, P.C.
Attorneys for:
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THIS COMMUNICATION IS FROM A DEBT COLLECTOR ATTEMPTING TO COLLECT A DEBT. ANY INFORMATION OBTAINED WILL BE USED FOR THAT PURPOSE.
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PUBLIC NOTICE

The City of Waseca will be operating an aeration system on the north shore of Loon Lake immediately south of Loon Lake Park as soon as December 17th, 2025, or as soon as ice conditions permit.

Extreme caution should be used when the system is in operation

Thin ice and open water will be created on the lake, especially in the vicinity of the area posted with "THIN ICE" signs. If there are any questions concerning this aeration system, please contact the City of Waseca Engineering Department at 507-835-9730.

Loon Lake is located within the City limits of Waseca, in Waseca County.

SWEET SOMMERS VFW POST 1642 December 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2 *Burger night 5-7pm*	3 *6pm BAR BINGO*	4 *7pm HALL BINGO*	5 *MEAT RAFFLE 5:30pm HORSE races 6:30pm*	6 VFW DISTRICT ONE MEETING 9AM
7 PEARL HARBOR DAY	8 7pm Post & AUX & Meeting	9 *Burger night 5-7pm*	10 *6pm BAR BINGO*	11 *7pm HALL BINGO*	12 *MEAT RAFFLE 5:30pm HORSE races 6:30pm*	13
14 VFW BREAKFAST CHEER LEADERS 8am to NOON Your	15	16 *Burger night 5-7pm*	17 *6pm BAR BINGO*	18 *7pm HALL BINGO*	19 WALLEYE OR SHRIMP DINNER 5:30 TO 7pm	20 TOM & JERRY NIGHT 4PM TO 7PM
21	22	23 *Burger night 5-7pm*	24 CLOSED	25 MERRY CHRISTMAS CLOSED	26 *MEAT RAFFLE 5:30pm HORSE races 6:30pm*	27
28	29	30 *Burger night 5-7pm*	31 *6pm BAR BINGO*			

HOURS OF OPERATION
SUN.-MON. CLOSED
TUE.-SAT.-1pm to 11 pm Tue. is Lady's night 2 for one-Men Busch light $2.50 4 to 6pm
POST & AUX. MEETING 7pm club open 6pm MEMBERS only. Mn. Gambling license 00385

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Waseca Chorale Spreads Joy

HE SHALL REIGN - The Waseca Chorale presented its holiday concert titled "Joy! He Shall Reign" to a crowd of about 250 people at Sacred Heart Church the afternoon of Sunday, Nov. 30. Both secular and religious numbers were included in the program. Pieces represented a variety of moods, from peaceful to wistful to energetically joyful.

The part of the concert prior to intermission consisted of individual numbers performed one after another. Instrumentalists augmented performances in numerous ways. For example, the opening number "The Angel Choir and the Trumpeter" was accented with brass instruments including a trumpet which trilled at various points in the music, played by Waseca Junior Senior High School band director Devon Lawrence. With him were fellow director Anders Peterson and Paul Davis. Cellist Jerimy Bohlman-Little accompanied the wistful song "River," written and originally performed by Joni Mitchell in the 1970s. The instrumentalists were joined by accompanist Noah Wilson on the a capella version of "We Three Kings," for which all four served as percussionists.

Emcee David Oraskovich provided brief introductions between the numbers. After the first half of the concert ended with a rousing version of "Jingle Bells," his commentary was incorporated into the 20-minute "Christmas worship experience" titled "He Shall Reign Forevermore."

A somewhat surprising element were a number of occasions when the words of familiar carols were sung to an alternate tune, causing listeners to pay closer attention both to the lyrics and the melody.

Performers were greeted with an enthusiastic standing ovation which continued even as they recessed from the front of the church. A reminder in the concert's program asked community members to put the Chorale's spring concert, titled "Surprise!" on their calendars for 7 p.m. May 16, 2026.

Pioneer photo by Deb Bently

JWP Football Awards

JWP FALL SPORTS BANQUET - Athletes who excelled in fall sports were recognized during the JWP fall sports banquet. ALL DISTRICT: Daulton Bauer, Caleb Quast, Gavin Bauer, Chase Gerdts. ALL DISTRICT-Honorable Mention: Rylan Rolfson, Rocco Scholl, Yale Johnson, Aiden Cummins. TEAM AWARDS: MVP - Chase Gerdts, Offensive Player of the Year - Caleb Quast & Daulton Bauer, Defensive Player of the Year - Chase Gerdts, Lineman of the Year - Yale Johnson, DAWG Award - Aiden Cummins, Special Teams Player of the Year - Ayden Peterson, Practice Player of the Year - Travyn Shoultz. JV TEAM AWARDS: JV MVP - Jett Sturdivant, JV Offensive Player of the Year - Jaxon Wolff, JV Defensive Player of the Year - Isaac Miller, JV Lineman of the Year - Quinn Anderson, JV DAWG Award - Ethan Elliott.

Child's History of Waseca County

Continuing Chapter III, 1855: Winter trip to Minnesota with ox teams – Venturesome crossing of the Mississippi on the ice – Climbing the bluff – First blizzard at Zumbro Falls – The liquor peddler and his grog – Mantorville the last house – Camping out in mid-winter two nights – Cattle with bleeding legs and without hay – Safe arrival at the Sutlief Shanty

About nine o'clock, they spread their hay beds upon the snow under the wagons, and laid themselves down for the night, covering up head and ears with quilts and blankets. All slept soundly until three o'clock the next morning when all hands were aroused by the cry of "fire!" coming from Mr. Sutlief, who had been warmed out. The wind had changed to the south in the night and, blowing briskly, had thrown the fire on Mr. Sutlief's bed. It took some time to extinguish the flames in the bed-clothing; and when that had been accomplished and the travelers had about recovered from the excitement caused by the fire, they discovered that the cattle had all left, taking the back track toward the settlement. The Child brothers started in pursuit with furious feelings and at a frantic rate of footspeed. The cattle were overtaken at the creek where the difficulty in crossing occurred the day before and were ordered back to the camp in the forcible language peculiar to the ox-teamster of the West. The two men returned to camp half an hour before sunrise, partook of a hearty breakfast with the rest of the company, and, just as the sun made its appearance, all hands started in a due westerly course. The day was intensely cold and much activity was required to keep warm. There was a hard crust on the snow, which impeded progress and cut the legs of the cattle to such an extent that blood was left in their tracks. Several deep snow drifts were encountered within the day. These caused some delay and much labor.

That night the emigrants encamped in a thicket of hazel brush and poplar trees, with some bur oaks intermingled. This was on the west side of Straight river and several miles south of Owatonna. It was an excellent place for a camp in winter, the brush and trees forming a thicket which was an admirable protection for both man and beast. The main difficulty of these pioneers was want of food for the cattle. No hay was left for them except what was in the beds, and only a small allowance of grain remained. That night the company took the precaution to secure the oxen with head ropes.

The men clearing away the brush and snow, soon made a cheery campfire, and Mrs. Plummer prepared a warm supper, which was eaten with a relish. No one complained of a lack of appetite.

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