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Goldilocks



‘After 40 years, I could exhale’

LaVonne Meyer reflects on 40-year career

By ELI LUTGENS
Publisher

New Richland resident LaVonne Meyer, former publisher of the *New Richland Star*, remembers that, after ending up as the paper’s owner essentially by default in 2003, she felt pressure to move forward with the paper’s 120-some-year legacy and do everything she could to help that legacy continue.

But it was an overwhelming task.

She recalls that, when she sold the paper to Jim Lutgens in June of 2005, it was a tremendous relief. “After 40 years,” she recalls, “I could exhale.”

Meyer graduated from New Richland High School in 1959 and was hired by the *Star* in 1962. Referring to then-publisher Margaret Engesser, Meyer describes being uncertain about a job with a newspaper. “When Margaret asked me to work at the *Star*, I said ‘No. No. No.’ But she said ‘Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes.’”

Meyer remained on staff for decades, despite what most would consider a very rocky start. “My first assignment was reporting on a dead body,” she claims. “There was a car accident out on Highway 13 and I had to go take a picture. Talk about getting ‘real’ real fast!”

Given the small staff and the many different tasks called for at a newspaper, Meyer became thoroughly acquainted with the day-to-day operation of the business—from the mundane to the sensational, working side by side with Engesser.

All this while she and her husband, Richard, raised their family, which consisted of sons Brad and Bruce and daughter Brenda (now Dobberstein). Also during the sudden loss of her husband after 25 years of marriage—the news of which she received while on the job at the paper.

During the late 1990s as Engesser gradually withdrew, Meyer stepped into her shoes bit by bit, observing that, “When you work for a newspaper, every day is the same, but different. You have to take the bad with the good.”

In 2003 when Engesser officially retired, Meyer was, perhaps, the only choice to take the

Meyer continued on 3

A word from
The Word

Everything is possible for the one who believes.

Mark 9:23

A paper to be proud of

By DEB BENTLY
Staff Writer

“We plan to find at least one story for every edition that makes the whole year’s subscription worthwhile. We know we won’t have everything for everybody in every edition, but we will definitely have something for everyone.” —Eli Lutgens, publisher

This issue of the *Waseca County Pioneer* is the first edition of a weekly paper which will cover the whole county, focusing on the town of Waseca.

It is the brainchild of Eli Lutgens, publisher of the NRHEG Star Eagle, and Michael Roy, three-year writer and jack-of-all-trades for both the Janesville Journal and the Star Eagle. It has been more than a year in conception and development. According to Eli, its purpose is simple: “Bringing the same small-town special feeling to a Waseca paper as the one we have in the Star Eagle.”

“We want to produce something that not only we can be proud of, but something that the community can take pride in: a paper that truly records and represents life in Waseca County.”

Michael agrees. “A paper’s priority is serving the people of its community, giving them the news and information they want: covering the people, families and events that are part of their lives.”

In addition to serving as writers and reporters themselves, Eli and Michael have recruited—and continue to recruit—writers and reporters from the area. Some will write full time, others will produce occasional pieces. Some are new to the industry, others have decades of experience, but Eli observes that nearly all have

one overriding qualification: “They’re local. They have lifelong roots in the community.”

Readers of the *Pioneer* can expect to find news from all four of Waseca’s city councils as well as county government. The sports section will focus on Waseca teams and games, with highlights from JWP and NRHEG events. Breaking news will come from across the county. Area businesses will be featured regularly.

When it comes to human interest, the stories of characters and innovators from all around the area will ap-

pear weekly. Their experiences and observations will be shared with the energy and originality they deserve.

Advertising will make readers aware of the services and goods available in the area and keep them up to date on specials and short-term opportunities.

“Every community has three pillars,” claims Eli. “People want to keep up with what’s happening in their schools, businesses and churches.”

Pioneer continued on 20

Timely ending

Tim and Becky Dennis retire

By DEB BENTLY
Staff Writer

For more than 40 years, the concept that death could come for us at any time has had a double meaning for Tim and Becky Dennis.

As owners and operators of four different chapels offering funeral and cremation services in Waseca, Waterville and Janesville, they have been “on call” any time day or night since entering their profession in the early 1980s.

“People are often surprised when we arrive in the middle of the night dressed in a suit and tie,” observes Tim. “We do that every time, regardless of the time of day. It’s our way of showing respect to the deceased and their families.”

It has also meant, of course, being prepared to stop any and all activity in other facets of their lives—regardless of the time of day. That often entailed sudden announcements to family and friends that one or both of them had to leave. But it was always a sacrifice they were willing to make.

“It’s what we do,” says Becky. “We serve our community by providing support at a sensitive time. We want to express our thanks for our years serving the Waseca, Waterville, and more recently, the Janesville communities. We feel blessed.”

The couple takes pride in having served so many people from so many different circumstances, always to the full extent possible. “People have expressed gratitude for everything we could do to help them,” says Tim. “They’ve been



ON CALL SINCE 1983 - On July 1, 2022, Tim and Becky Dennis will officially be retired. Since 1983, they have been ready, able, and willing to respond to emergency calls at any hour, arriving in professional wear sometimes at 3 a.m.

Pioneer photo by Deb Bently

pleasantly surprised by how many facets of the preparations and planning we could take off their plate.

“It feels good to know we’ve made this difficult time easier for so many people and families.”

Tim finished his Bachelor of Science degree in Mortuary Science and began working for Walt Kinder at the Kinder Home for Funerals in 1983. Becky moved to Waseca at the time of her marriage to Tim in 1985, when she was also able to join the Kinder staff. Both have been here ever since, while their lives expanded on both the personal

and the professional sides.

As for their family, they have raised four daughters, now in their late 20s and early 30s and have become grandparents. Their family includes Erica and Adam Troyer, with grandchildren Lukas, 3, Shepherd, 18 months, and Lainey, one month; Kjerstin and Josiah Durie and their 3-month-old daughter, Karter; Corinne and Jacques Perrault and Caleigh and Jacob Walter.

Since the Dennis family lived in the residence attached to the chapel, all four daughters grew up well acquainted with the day-to-day opera-

tion of a funeral home; as young children they would make “drums” of some of the flower stands and put on performances for Mr. Kinder and their parents.

The Dennises took ownership of the Third Street facility in 1993 when Walt Kinder retired. They recognized that they were the benefactors of a long tradition, since the business they bought had been in operation since 1867. As their daughters reached suitable ages, the

Dennises continued on 3

CNA fired after sexual abuse of resident

MN Department of Health finds evidence of abuse “substantiated”

By ELI LUTGENS
Publisher/Editor

A June 3 report by the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) reports “substantiated” instances of sexual abuse against at least one New Richland Care Center (NRCC) resident perpetrated by one Care Center employee.

An anonymous tip from a reader along with numerous corroborating circumstances point to nine-year Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) and 2001 Waseca High School graduate Sarah Marzinske, 30, as the subject of the report. Care Center administrator Dave Dunn confirms that he received reports of possible inappropriate sexual contact on the part of the CNA during April. He

says his office placed the CNA on immediate suspension, carried out an investigation, and then terminated her employment.

The report from MDH documents inappropriate touching of the CNA’s breasts and a five-minute long hug in the resident’s “very large bed,” all of which were confirmed after MDH interviewed several residents and employees. After the death of an 85-year-old NRCC resident, Marzinske posted his obituary on her Facebook page along with the message that “Words can’t even describe how much I am going to miss you. You were the sweetest, kindest person I know. You had the most amazing smile. I absolutely loved taking care of you. You will greatly be missed.” The official report mentions severe

“Two separate witnesses observed the alleged perpetrator engaged in sexual contact with the resident.”

— MN Department of Health

emotional trauma for the resident, who told investigators that the alleged perpetrator “might be crucified,” if people found out.

“Two separate witnesses observed the [alleged perpetrator] engaged in sexual contact with the resident,” the MDH report reads. “The first witness observed the [alleged perpetrator] leaning over the resident in his wheelchair, allowing the resident to touch the [alleged perpetrator]’s

breasts. The second witness observed the [alleged perpetrator] in the resident’s room with her arms around the resident, kissing the resident on the mouth.”



Marzinske

Abuse continued on 6

For the first time

An area on the front page of each edition of the *Waseca County Pioneer*, typically the left- or right-hand column, will include “brief” informational notices to share upcoming happenings, announcements, and local accomplishments or milestones. Much like Facebook or an announcement calendar, these notices are meant to help you make plans and decisions about social opportunities.

Readers are encouraged to email The *Pioneer* with information they would like to share with members of the community.

Readers are also highly encouraged to participate in this newspaper. The role of a community newspaper is to be a tool and sounding board. This can only be possible if we hear from you.

Email:
news@wasecacountypioneer.com

Mail:
Waseca County Pioneer
P.O. Box 578
Waseca, MN, 56093

Physical Address:
103 S. State Street, the office space behind Blair and Blaine Nelson’s office, next door to Matt Petsinger’s American Family Insurance office.

Telephone: 507-837-6767
Readers in New Richland and Janesville can also visit the local *Star Eagle* and *Janesville Journal* offices for drop boxes or to sign up for subscriptions.

* * *

How to subscribe to the Pioneer

To subscribe to the *Waseca County Pioneer*, simply stop in our office with your address and \$40 or mail a check to:

Waseca County Pioneer
P.O. Box 578
Waseca, MN, 56093

Beginning the afternoon of June 30, and through the weekend, the *Pioneer* has temporary office space courtesy of Matthew Petsinger, located at 101 S. State Street, Waseca.

Our permanent location is scheduled to open July 5, next door at 103 S. State. Over the weekend we will be renovating our new office space; readers are invited to stop by and subscribe, or to simply say hello.

* * *

Newsstand locations

Newsstand locations will, once finalized, be at Casey’s and Kwik Trips in Waseca, Janesville, New Richland, Mankato, Owatonna, and Waterville.

Other locations will likely be arranged for and will be listed in upcoming editions of the *Pioneer*.



Well, like I said...

by Michael Roy
copyright © 2022 by Michael Roy

I hope you like what you're seeing so far

If you've made it this far into the paper, I hope it means you're liking what you've seen so far.

Any of you from Janesville may recognize me from the Janesville Journal and already know I have a column called "Mike's Corner" in it. Folks from other towns may not know me as well. So, I want to take some time to introduce myself and tell you how I started my journey into becoming a business owner with NRHEG Star Eagle publisher Eli Lutgens.

Let's start at the beginning. I was born in Mankato and lived there for about five years. When my parents divorced, my dad stayed in Mankato while my mom, my siblings, and I bopped between Mankato and various area towns. We lived in Madison Lake, then moved back into Mankato, then to St. Clair, and then back to Mankato. My mom and I finally settled in Janesville in 2006.

In mid-April of this year, I had called Janesville my home for almost 16 years before getting my first apartment, located in New Richland. Despite having moved, however, I still consider Janesville home—unless the listener doesn't know where Janesville is; then I just say it's Mankato.

When I graduated from JWP in 2016, I began attending Gustavus Adolphus College with the intention of acquiring a degree in music with an emphasis on composition. I loved rock music, and also wanted to compose pieces for wind orchestra and symphony orchestra. But after two and a half years, God had other plans. I couldn't afford to keep going to Gustavus. Of course I had known it would be expensive, since it's a private college. But I hadn't realized it would get to the point of bankrupting me or my parents.

So there I was in February of 2019, no longer attending college with no job and no money. I felt like an abject failure. I thought I had ruined my life by making poor financial decisions and that I was going to be stuck with a job that I'd hate the rest of my life. I felt as if I had set myself back dozens of steps.

So, how did I come to be here, on the pages of the new Waseca

"It was nearly dizzying how quickly it all happened."

— Michael Roy
Publisher

County Pioneer?

I'm going to be real with you. I had no intention of going into the newspaper business. Even when I thought about making writing a career, newspapers never entered my mind. It just...kind of happened. The Janesville Journal was looking for writers one day, and a family friend who knew the publisher there knew that I could write. From there, I went from being a college dropout to being a prolific writer.

Now, I'm going to be a part owner in this new endeavor. It's nearly dizzying how quickly it all happened despite the months of preparation it took to get to this point, sharing a product we take genuine pride in.

People say the newspaper business is dying: I used to believe it myself. After some consideration, though, I've come to believe that if papers are dying, it's because they don't reflect the activities, personality and character which make their communities unique.

From our bustling county seat to our smallest town, the Pioneer has opportunities to seek out untold stories. And that's what we want to do: We want to provide a quality paper that will not only help the community see what it has to be proud of, but will stand the test of time.

I am excited for this next step in my journey. And we at the Waseca County Pioneer are excited to provide various pieces of content that you, the reader, can enjoy. Sit back and enjoy as we bring you everything from columns like this one to business spotlights, from human interest to area government and politics.

Thank you for joining us: This is going to be one fun ride.

Life is short and full of complications. It's the stories that survive.

Based on what I know of Pioneer publisher Eli Lutgens, that's what I believe its readers will find to be one of the newspaper's greatest strengths: its dedication to sharing people's stories.

Some of you may remember me as a writer who worked for the Waseca Weekly for 5 or 6 years back in the 1980s. Some of you may also know that, after a few years writing for Walter Mishek's Arabian Horse Times in the late '80s, I became a teacher and joined the staff at NRHEG, where I have now been teaching nearly 30 years, for a while in the German department, but mostly in English.

I bring all this up only to let you know how "wise" I must be by now, or at least, how much opportunity I have had for growth. Oh, and so that I can mention Eli was among my students, graduating from NRHEG in 2016. In case you're doing any mental math, yes, the lad is 24 years old. He tells me that, having become publisher of the Star Eagle at 23, he is/was the youngest newspaper pub-



In My Humble Opinion

by Deb Bently
copyright © 2022 by Deb Bently

lisher in the U.S., shy only by one year of being youngest on the continent.

I guess it also gives me the chance to mention that I worked with (then) sports writer Jim Lutgens at the Weekly in the '80s. Unlike mine, Jim's path never strayed far from journalism: after leaving the Weekly, he went on to work for two larger publications before becoming the owner of the New Richland Star and the Ellendale Eagle. He combined the two into the NRHEG Star Eagle in 2007 and was the paper's publisher until 2021.

But back to my original point. While being an English teacher is a vastly different calling from being a reporter, I hope it's easy to see the bridge which joins them: stories.

So, although my work as a teacher

and activity advisor is time consuming and demanding, my love and appreciation for recording and sharing the occasional story sometimes draws me back irresistibly to my roots in journalism. I tell my students that the opportunity to share someone's story is both a privilege and a responsibility.

The "privilege" rests in the opportunity to speak richly with others about their experiences and observations. The "responsibility" lies in recording and sharing that story with character and integrity: in honoring the trust inherent in the process.

Eli gets that.

On those occasions when I have time to write for him (translation: summer), Eli never simply takes the text and publishes it. He reads it first.

He responds to it. He allows himself

to connect with the people and the experiences. He takes genuine delight in being the first to learn the story.

So that's why I'm writing this column. To tell you to expect great things from this fellow. He's already shown, of course, that he is energetic, driven, determined. That he can overcome difficult odds. This newspaper is proof of that.

But what I want to share with you is that, darn it, he's a sensitive, considerate, caring fellow. From what I can tell, his first priority for this publication is to provide a service to the community, to find and record its stories. The business aspects, selling the subscriptions and finding the advertisers, are really just a means to that end. So, in my humble opinion, that's what you can expect from Eli, and from his kindred spirit Michael: You can expect to be seen not only as an advertiser or subscriber, but as an individual with an individual, yet somehow universal, story. A story that, unless you somehow evade them, they would love to tell sometime.

Learning the trade as an upcoming journalist

As a kid, I loved to write. Although it may sound a bit cliché, it's true. I remember sitting in the car on the drive to my grandparents' house and starting my own newspaper—"The Girl's Gazette." It was only one issue, written thoughtfully into my soft, zebra-print-covered, hand-sized steno notepad. No one read it but me, but that's all that mattered at the time. I had written something that I thought had value.

Flipping through my yearbooks a while ago, I came across my fourth-grade yearbook from Sacred Heart. As a graduating fourth grader, I got a spotlight in the yearbook. What stunned me the most is that under what I wanted to be when I grew up, I had put "author." How had I already known at that time that I wanted to write?



To Be Determined

by Amelia Roessler
copyright © 2022 by Amelia Roessler

I knew then—as I knew last year when I graduated high school—that enjoy writing. My problem was that I didn't want to teach, I didn't want a desk job, and my parents said I couldn't immediately jump into being a book writer (too risky). So I turned my attention to journalism. The field seemed to suit me: I love talking to people, I could get to travel, and my days would be filled with variety. Since then, I've also

learned that there's a lot of free food involved.

As things heated up in Ukraine, I thought of the good I could do as a news reporter on the front lines; I added "foreign correspondent" to my list of possible careers within journalism.

All of this sounded fun and enticing, something brave and new compared to the small town life of my childhood. I had dreamed big city

girl dreams from the big University of Minnesota campus. But when I came back home for the summer and got a job working for the NRHEG Star Eagle, I realized I may have lost touch with the wholesome, good, brave people carrying out what may be seen as small town living, but aren't small town lives. The people I have had the chance to interview have full, rich experiences, and exude confidence and love for the people and community around them.

I am glad not only for the perks of free food and entertainment, but for the connections that I was not expecting to find. Even before I got to try out being a journalist, I should have anticipated the joy it would bring to interview one of my favorite high school English teachers or a wizened fellow band nerd.

So many thanks, but let's start with Dad

The story I want to share really begins with my father, Jim.

My dad began his journalism career at the age of 20 after his buddy said, "Hey, you like sports, why don't you come be a sports editor?"

That guy worked for the *Waseca County News* in the '80s when it was locally owned. Dad went on to work for two larger publications before settling down at the *Albert Lea Tribune* for nearly 15 years.

In 2005 the *Tribune* hired a new editor whose philosophy my father could not agree with. So, he called LaVonne Meyer and told her he wanted to buy the *New Richland Star*. And he did.

Two years later the owner of the *Ellendale Eagle* asked my father if he was interested in her newspaper. He bought it.

During those days I was an infant, going to "day care" first in the back halls of the *Tribune* and later the *Star Eagle*. I guess you could say I liked what I saw: When I turned 15, I asked my parents for a job. Thus began my journalism career.

Although I began writing soon after joining the staff, the first time I felt truly invested in a news story was when I wrote about a fundraiser being held for the father of one my friends: he had been diagnosed with cancer. It was the first time in my life I felt meaning. The spark, the excitement, the glow I felt as I wrote that first meaningful article stays with me today.

I still get that feeling when I'm writing or interviewing folks to this day. This past Saturday I interviewed



STAR GAZING

by Eli Lutgens
copyright © 2022 by Eli Lutgens

Rick Sobroack who runs the little kid tractor pulls at all the local fairs. The glow was back, the intensity I feel as I realize I am about to share an inspirational story.

That's what I've tried really, really hard to do during my journalism career. Capture that spirit, that fire, that's within each and every one of us, which comes under the spotlight when we pursue our gift.

"Your gift is the thing that can make you great. Your gift will make room for you. Now what is your gift? It's the thing that you do the absolute best with the least amount of effort. That's your gift... Identify what you're gifted at and do that."

I heard this online the other day listening to Steve Harvey. I reference this because on Saturday I got to spend half an hour with Rick, who is following his gift. He told me Bill Gates ain't got nothing on him because he does what he loves.

I feel the same way: I get to do what I love at the newspaper.

I've been at it surprisingly long, perhaps, for someone who isn't yet 25 years old. I became the editor of the *Star* at 19, after my father's health prevented him from working. In 2019 I helped my mother start the *Janesville Journal*. Then, two years

ago, my dad's health sat him down fully and it was my responsibility to take over the entire newspaper. After a year as editor, I purchased the *Star* from him and became its publisher in April of 2021.

I have many, many stories I look forward to sharing with readers, and after having drafted and redrafted this introductory column four times, I decided the short version would suffice for now. As they say, and as my favorite English teacher once said, "We've got time."

Acknowledgements

I have to thank several people for helping me get to where I am today. My father is number one. I will write about him again, one day soon.

Deb Bently is a local English teacher with expansive writing and editing skills who has joined our staff at the *Pioneer*. Her contributions are invaluable.

Our staff. I have been blown away by our two new young journalists who have been working in the office. I don't have words.

Michael, my co-publisher. He has a heart of gold and the work ethic of a horse.

Melanie. She is a *Star Eagle* writer/editor who has been with me, and the paper, since I was seven

years old. She has had my back and the paper's that whole time. When I bought the paper, besides our local columnists, it was just me, her, and the next person on my list.

Reed Waller. A famous artist, who gets mad if you say "kinda famous," whom I have known just a little bit longer than Melanie. Reed was included in the purchase of the *Star* in 2005 and at 72 is as fiery and creative as he's ever been. I do not have words for the value I place on our friendship. He is family, through and through.

My family: My mother, brother, and sister. You have been by my side through thick and thin. Every fit, every overflowing toilet caused by my sister (but blamed on me), and every noogie that Nathan gave me growing up. It can't be said enough how much each and every person named here means to me, along with the many, many other incredible people in my life who are too numerous to list here. (But here are a few more anyway) Kyle, Anastasia, Jake, Mark, and many more.

And lastly our readers.

There wouldn't be a newspaper to put out if it were not for you.

I have been incredibly humbled by the kind words and encouragement I have received speaking with the hundreds of people who made this first edition possible. I feel we have reached a pretty high mark with this paper. With a little aid and direction from our readers, I believe we'll meet or exceed the standard in future editions.

I hope you'll tag along for the ride.



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

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DEB BENTLY	Copy Editor
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JONAH STAFFORD	Staff Writer
MELANIE PILTINGSRUD	Staff Writer
RACHEL LOVERINK	Staff Writer
BARB FINSETH	Staff Writer
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Students recognized as having made the A and B Honor Roll at Trinity Lutheran Schools in Janesville during the final quarter of the 2022 school year are:

Fifth Grade

A Honor Roll: Ava Anderson, Aiden Andreen, Bethany Benson,

Oliver Dimmel, Samuel Hoehn, Creidin Lee, Alivia Schuft, Ava Trahms, Ashlynn Wolff

B Honor Roll: Brekken Olson, Riley Winter

Sixth Grade

A Honor Roll: Landon Rutt
B Honor Roll: Claire Bartelt,

Olivia Eaton, Jacob Leiding, Aiden Truebenbach, Brennan Welvaert

Seventh Grade

A Honor Roll: Raylen Blasing, Morgan Dimmel, Jacey Jensen, Yale Johnson, Liviana Lee, Elsie Owens, Kurt Trahms, Stella Ziemke

B Honor Roll: Madison Donahue,

Hayden Stencel

Eighth Grade

A Honor Roll: Tiera Anderson, Victoria Blomstrom, Jayden Gehring, Jude Gehring, Travyn Schultz, Caleb Wolff

Honor roll listings for Waseca and NRHEG found on Page 7

Season tickets



Karen Simmons helps Jim Boerboom sign up for Waseca Braves season tickets through ticket handlers Eve Simmons and Rocky Nelson. Blake Nelson, Rocky's grandpa, serves as the coach of the Braves and his dad is a player. Because the field is city owned, there is no admission cost. The staff of the concession stand is hired by the city, and these "collectors" help raise funds to pay for umpires and other expenses associated with upkeep of Tink Larson Field. Karen Simmons shared details of the bucket, used as a collection bowl, calling it the "world's ugliest bucket." She purchased the item at an estate sale, and according to her, "It screams 1960," but, "It makes for the best collection tote." Interested persons can purchase "season tickets" for \$25 or simply donate as the kids come around with the bucket. Pioneer photos by Eli Lutgens

Meyer

from Page 1

reins, eventually buying the business for a token price. At that time, the paper was located in what is now the power and light building along New Richland's main street. It had only two staff members, Meyer and production manager Reed Waller—an artist and 1967 high school graduate with New Richland roots, whom Meyer had known since he was, she claims, "three-and-a-half feet tall." Waller had returned to the New Richland area in 2000 and was hired as a graphic designer by Engesser. The two were making do with antiquated equipment in a gradually deteriorating building. Waller admits, "We weren't able to produce that much of a paper." In addition to everything else, Engesser's death shortly after her retirement and the subsequent liquidation of family assets gave the paper no choice but to find a new base of operations. Still, perhaps out of determination to keep the publication's legacy alive, Meyer persevered. In her time with the paper, it had gone from using lead linotype equipment and literally "pressing" its images to designing ads and pages using computers. Photography had gone from bulky, box-like cameras that used black-and-white film to stream-lined "point and shoot" units that didn't need film at all. Bookkeeping had evolved from pencil and paper logbooks to computer spreadsheets. "And 'Poof!' went 40 years," she recalls. During her tenure, many workers came; nearly as many moved on. "Some people just aren't cut out for this job," she observes. Speaking of longevity, Meyer claims that the Star owes its survival to Reed Waller as much as to herself, saying he "deserves to be recognized by the community" for his dedication and commitment. Meyer says she considers herself very fortunate to have found a career in journalism, and takes pride in all she was able to achieve and accomplish. But she reveals with a smile as wide as her ears that,

when she sold the *Star* and retired at age 62, "It was a huge relief. A giant weight off my shoulders." In her words, the paper's 2005 buyer, Jim Lutgens, "Wouldn't take no for an answer." Meyer's love for New Richland and its neighboring communities is strong, as are her roots. When she and Waller got together to be interviewed for this story, they laughed over and over again about their experiences with the operation of a small-town newspaper, and perhaps especially about the Engessers themselves. Although Margaret ran the *Star* for decades on her own, she had originally shared its daily operations with her husband, Emmett, who died in the 1970s. Both Meyer and Waller share memories of earlier times, some even from childhood, of the Engessers. It was well known, for example, the Engesser children would sometimes exit the house via the roof in an effort to escape the couple's stormy "political discussions." It was well known in town that in front of the Engessers' house lay two animal sculptures, an elephant representing the republican party and a donkey representing the democrat party. Some mistook the figures for bipartisanship or an effort to remain neutral. The truth was Margaret was a Democrat and Emmitt a Republican. Supposedly their "discussions" could be heard from blocks away. "They could get in an argument here or there," Meyer jokes. "But there was no doubt the love those two had for each other was once in a lifetime." Meyer's parents were Jasper and Lola Hagen. Her three children have given her six grandchildren and an extensive family which, she believes, includes the Engessers. The families remain close. Meyer and Cheryl Engesser still get together for lunch at least once a month. Meyer's message to young journalists out there and really anyone is, "Follow your dreams. Follow your passion." Meyer extends a thank you to the *Star* readers for their many years of support, patronage and kind words. "We couldn't have done it without you," she says.

Meet your neighbor, John

Name: John Conway
Town: Waseca, **Age:** 64
Family: Parents were John & Verla; 7 siblings (4 living); 16 nieces & nephews; 21 "greats"
Occupation: Field Associate – Fellowship of Christian Athletes
Hobbies: Guitar, banjo, sports trivia, corny jokes
My dream vacation would be: Visit the "Center of the nations" (Ezekiel 5:5)
The best thing about small town living is: Town ball – Braves baseball
Last Good Book I Read: *BABYLON* (*The Bookends of Prophetic History*) – Andrew M. Woods
Favorite TV show: *KEYC Prep Sports Extra*
Favorite Food: Popcorn
All Time Favorite Movie: *Chariots of Fire*
Favorite Sports Team: GO Bluejays!
Favorite musical artists: The Dufault Brothers (quartet)
My favorite activities when I was growing up: Backyard/neighborhood sports competition
My biggest pet peeve: Ever-changing technology
The best advice I've ever received: To read and heed the Bible (Rev. 1:3)
If I could have lunch with any one person, living or dead: he Apostle Paul (Saul of Tarsus)
Something about me that would surprise people: I am learning to play mandolin



During a bible study nearly two decades ago *Star Eagle* Publisher Jim Lutgens told neighbor John he would like to incorporate faith more prominently in the newspaper, first by printing a piece of scripture each week. He asked John what he should call it. John's answer: "A Word from the Word." And that is the origin story of the bible verse featured on the front page of the *Pioneer* and *Star Eagle*.

Dennises

from Page 1

girls took on various duties, including greeting and serving mourners as they arrived at viewings and services, setting up flowers, driving the hearse, and much more. "For a time, our advertising theme was 'Our family serving your family,'" recalls Becky. "And it was a very accurate statement of the way things were." Just as the Dennises' family grew over their tenure, they have had opportunities to acquire additional facilities. They purchased the Prosch Funeral Home in Waterville in 1996

and the Waseca and Janesville locations of the Starkson and Steffel Funeral Homes in 2020. As they retire, they are selling their business to members of their current staff: Aaron Omtvedt has worked with the Dennises for the past 17 years and Sam Steffel for the past 2. Reminiscing over the many changes the past 4 decades have brought, both express gratitude for having been part of the Waseca community. "People are so dedicated and so considerate," comments Tim, thinking of the many faithful volunteers who provide support for grieving families at area churches and organizations. "From the people serving the food to the ushers to the musicians." In short, the Dennises know they are leaving their business and their

"We look forward to making plans that we know we can carry through on. We look forward to getting to know what that's like" — Becky Dennis

community in good hands as they let loose of the reins and begin their retirement as of July 1. As for their own plans, they plan to remain part of the Waseca community they have served for so long. Both expect to occasionally assist with business operations. Beyond that, however, they are still settling into the idea of retirement. "We don't know what it's like not to be on call," says Becky, recalling all the golf games, family gatherings, card parties and personal projects which were so suddenly—but never truly unexpectedly—interrupted. "We look forward to making plans that we know we can carry through on," says Tim. "We look forward to getting to know what that's like."

IN BRIEF

Hoffman, Hagen, Ignaszewski, Storvick graduate SD State
The following students graduated after the spring 2022 semester at South Dakota State University. The following students listed below completed all requirements for a degree and/or certificate program and those requirements have been verified by the appropriate college. Overall, students from 33 states and 20 nations graduated following the spring 2022 semester. More than 100 students received two or more degrees or certificates from a college. Ashley Jo Hoffman of Janesville, MN, has graduated with a Doctor of Pharmacy in SDSU's Graduate School. Lizzy Allison Hagen of New Richland, MN, has graduated with a Doctor of Pharmacy in SDSU's Graduate School. Lexie Jane Ignaszewski of New Richland, MN, has graduated Magna Cum Laude with two Bachelor of Science degrees in SDSU's College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences. Rachel Kay Storvick of Waseca, MN, has graduated with a Bachelor of Science in SDSU's College of Education and Human Sciences.

Harris, Ward receive degrees
This spring, more than 5,100 University of Iowa undergraduate, graduate, and professional students will earn degrees. There were two graduates from Waseca County. they are Klaire Harris of Waseca and Charles Ward of Janesville. Harris graduated with high distinction with a Bachelors Degree in Public Health, while Ward received a Bachelors Degree in Law.

Travis Nelson named to SNHU President's List
Travis Nelson of Waseca was named to Southern New Hampshire University's Winter 2022 President's List. Undergraduate students who have earned a minimum grade-point average of 3.700 an above are named to the president's list.

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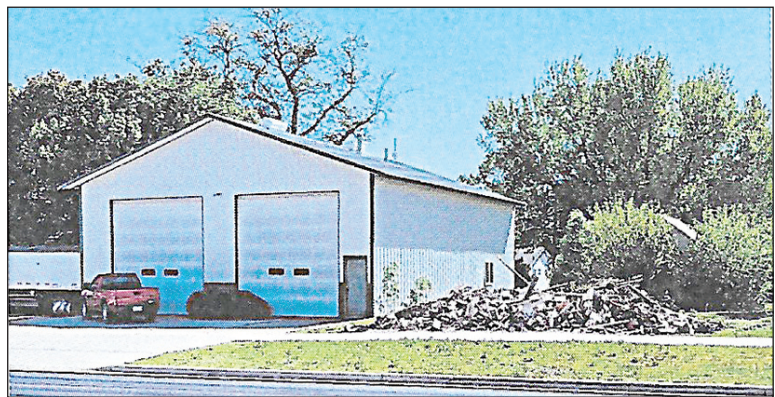
An archived photo of downtown Waldorf in 1947 shows the old Waldorf State Bank, the Kelling Building, and the Star Café. Photo provided by Clark Meyer



James Keller, former Waldorf Postmaster, stands in front of the Waldorf Post Office in 1998. Photo by Judy Joecks



BEFORE – A skidloader tears down an abandoned building near downtown Waldorf. Photo by Charles Barnes



AFTER - The same scene after the building was demolished. Photo by Judy Joecks

Waldorf, a historical place gets upgrade

By JUDY JOECKS
Contributing writer

As part of Waldorf's Cleanup and Improvement Plan, the old post office building has been taken down and hauled away. There is significant history to this building, and it served the Waldorf community very well for many years.

Actually, the first post office that served residents of the community and area was located on the Henry Bluhm farm, three miles southeast of Waldorf in Vivian Township.

Prior to 1908, there was no "Waldorf". The settlement was known as "Plum Valley" and had begun with the Plum Valley Creamery in 1895. Soon there were other businesses added near the creamery such as Veum Grocery, Tangeman's Hard-

ware, Engel Blacksmith, and Wilmington State Bank (later, Security State Bank). In the late 1890s, William Ewert, grandfather of Luvern Ewert, bought the Veum building where he opened a general store. Several years later the post office was moved from the Bluhm Farm to the general store in Plum Valley and Ewert was appointed postmaster. This began the 80-year, 3-generation history of an Ewert serving as postmaster: William Ewert, then August Ewert, followed by Lavern Ewert. In 1908, the Plum Valley business buildings, except the creamery, were moved a block or so south to the new area which then became known as Waldorf. This move provided better access to the new railroad coming through.



COMMITTEE OF FIVE – These five individuals make up the Waldorf Days Committee that made the Waldorf Potluck and Silent Auction possible. From left: Beverly Janike, Joann Kelling, Judy Koecks, DeAnn Britton, and Rob Wilkening.

Waldorf potluck is a success

An opportunity to let the rest of the county know they are still around

By MICHAEL ROY
Publisher

"Events like this are important to us," claims Waldorf resident Doris Karnitz. "We don't want this small community to be forgotten."

Despite having been on hold for the past couple of years because of Covid-19, the Waldorf community potluck dinner is (with luck) "annual" once again. About 40 people attended the June 22 event, and were among the first to learn that the city's official logo has been approved. The design features a colt, which recalls a time when the Waldorf-Pemberton school system had its own high school whose teams were the Colts.

Also announced was the upcoming September retirement of long-time city clerk DeAnn Britton. "We will sorely miss her helping run our city," said mayor Rob Wilkening. "She's done so much to help revitalize the city of Waldorf."

The potluck dinner is a precursor to Waldorf Days, a celebration traditionally held near the end of August. "This event helps us raise money to make Waldorf Days extra special," said Britton. "We use the funds raised to buy supplies like fire-

works." Toward that end, the potluck included a first-time silent auction, the brainchild of city resident JoAnn Koecks. "We've always had a community potluck prior to Waldorf Days," she states. "But I mentioned something about doing a silent auction to help raise some extra money for it."

Items up for bid ranged from a porcelain statue of an eagle to a small

"This event helps us raise money to make Waldorf Days extra special."

— Waldorf City Clerk
DeAnn Britton

model of a tanker truck. Also offered were a portrait made out of belts, care packages including both some food and a \$60 gas card, and other items from local businesses.

The picnic found the usual potluck fare such as pulled pork sandwiches, deviled eggs, potato and pasta salads, and a dozen options for desserts.

However, Mayor Wilkening stated the most important part of the potluck was the 40 people in attendance. "It's an essential fundraiser for us," Wilkening says. "We have the opportunity to grow this community, and Waldorf Days helps with that goal."

At the end of the night, \$166 in cash donations had been received and several bids had been made on silent auction items. That will help them in funding the many events that they plan to have for the returning festival.

The town of 200 may seem like a community that doesn't have residents involved in its future. However, that couldn't be further from the truth. "We are excited for Waldorf Days to come back," enthused



Martin and Darlene Tesch look at the Waldorf Days flyer shared at the potluck with Judy Joecks helping answer their questions about the events for it. Pioneer photos by Michael Roy

resident Charlie Barnes. "Since Covid, we haven't had much to celebrate. Now, we're seeing an outpouring of support from the area."

As evidence, he reports "We already have about 50 businesses interested in being part of our parade. That's huge for a small town like us."

Everyone in Waldorf is ecstatic for the return of the town's feature festival. Whatever comes of the days in August, one thing is certain: it will be a great comeback for the city, and will give residents an opportunity to let the rest of the county know they are still around.

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OBITUARIES

Paul Frantum

Paul Jasper Frantum, age 36, of rural Pemberton, died on Friday, June 17, 2022, due to a sudden accident.

Born on March 18, 1986, in Wells, to David and Kathleen (Coy) Frantum. He received his education at St. Clair Public School. Paul worked various jobs before working for Crystal Valley in 2017, where his current role was Lead Grain Operations. He enjoyed music, playing video games and cars. In 2010, Paul met Cynthia Hagan and together they have 3 children and made their home on the farm outside of Pemberton. Paul was a great provider and dedicated partner to Cyndi and father to his children.

Paul is survived by his significant other, Cynthia Hagan; children: Conner Frantum, Jasper Frantum, and Olivia Kinzel; father, David (significant other, Linda Kiecker) Frantum; siblings: Heather Frantum-Mathes, Melanie (Brian) Woller, and Amanda Frantum; several aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, other relatives, and many friends.

Preceded in death by his mom,



Paul Frantum

Kathleen Frantum; grandparents; cousin, April Kramer; and uncle, Jeff Coy.

Gathering of Family and Friends was from 3-7 p.m. on Tuesday, June 21, 2022, at the Janesville Chapel of Dennis Funeral & Cremation Services.

Burial was 3 p.m. on Wednesday, June 22, 2022, at Medo Lutheran Cemetery in rural Pemberton.

www.dennisfuneralhomes.com

Geraldine Mendenhall

Geraldine "Gerri" Janice Mendenhall, 79, of New Richland, passed away peacefully with her family by her side on Sunday, June 26, 2022, at Homestead Hospice House in Owatonna, MN.

Gerri was born August 1, 1942, in Ceresco Township, in Blue Earth County, the daughter of Alvin & Lydia (Klaus) Bergemann. She grew up in Garden City, MN and graduated from Garden City High School in 1960. She attended college in Mankato. She was married to Lee Mendenhall on September 12, 1964. They lived in St. Paul where she worked as a bookkeeper for Honeywell while Lee was obtaining his teaching degree. They moved to

New Richland in 1966 where she was a stay-at-home mom until her kids started school and then she got a job as the Office Manager at the New Richland Dental office. She worked at many dental offices before she retired. After retirement, she took a part-time summer job at the Riverview Golf Course. She spent 25 years there and developed many friendships.

Her hobbies and interests included going to the casino, playing games on her computer, shopping at thrift stores and nights out with friends. Some say she was a bit outspoken – that was Gerri. She looked forward to summer vacations to lakeside resorts where she loved the time spent with family. She loved shopping for Christmas gifts all year long as this was her favorite holiday. Her family and friends were her greatest treas-

ure.

She will be greatly missed by her husband of 58 years, Lee; daughters Brenda (Leon) LaRock of Breezy Point and Becky (Dennis) Hendrickson of Hayfield; son, Brian (Shelly) Mendenhall of New Richland; 9 grandchildren; 8 great-grandchildren; sister-in-law, Ronnie Bergemann; nieces and nephews; and special friends, Jean Greenwood and Tim Thompson. She is preceded in death by her parents; sister, Violet; brother, Erich; brother-in-law, Dean Putrah; and her nephew, Jeff Putrah.

A visitation celebrating her life will be held at Friedrich's Funeral Home in New Richland on Thursday, June 30, from 4-7 pm with a private family graveside service at St. John's Lutheran Cemetery Willow Creek North on July 1 at 10 am.



Geraldine Mendenhall

Judith Greeney

Judith Lou Greeney, age 80 of Waseca, passed away peacefully at her home on the afternoon of Monday, June 13, 2022.

Born on September 2, 1941 in Waseca, Judy was the daughter of Nels and Ruth (Phelps) Fostveit. She attended school in Waseca, and graduated with the class of 1959.

Shortly after graduation, on July 18, 1959, Judy married Jon Greeney at the Methodist Church in Waseca. Together they raised four children and lived their entire lives in Waseca. Over her working years, Judy was employed with Hansel & Gretel Preschool, Brown Printing in Waseca, McDonalds in Waseca, and most recently she worked at Walmart. She

and Jon enjoyed playing pfeffer with their card club, and Judy loved working crossword puzzles, gardening, sharing recipes with friends, traveling, and visiting the casino. She and her family were long-time members of Calvary Episcopal Church in Waseca before its closure, but also attended Episcopal churches in Janesville, Waterville, and Le Center.

Judy is survived by her husband, Jon of Waseca; four children, Jeff (Lisa) Greeney of Bloomington, Jim (Jackie) Greeney of Waseca, Jay Greeney of Ely, and Jayne (Larry) Schill of St. Augusta; ten grandchildren; thirteen great-grandchildren; sisters, Ruth Michaelis of Brainerd, Kay (Joe) Fitterer and Donna Mann, both of Florida; and sisters-in-law, Donna Fostveit of Waseca and

Dorean Sleen of Waseca. She was preceded in death by her parents; her parents-in-law, Dallas and Lola Greeney; brother, Nels Fostveit; and brothers-in-law, Bill Greeney, Richard Michaelis, and Ron Mann; twelve half siblings; and numerous nieces and nephews.

Funeral services for Judy were held at 1 p.m. on Sunday, June 26, 2022 at the State Street Chapel of Dennis Funeral & Cremation Services in Waseca, with Rev. Carolyn Doering of Faith Methodist Church officiating. Visitation was held from 11:00 a.m. until the time of the service at the funeral home. Private family interment will take place at Woodville Cemetery at a later date. dennisfuneralhomes.com



Judith Greeney

Deborah Wesley

Deborah L. Wesley, age 72 of Faribault died on Saturday, June 11, 2022 at Homestead Hospice at Owatonna.

Born on June 21, 1949 in Faribault, Minnesota, she was the daughter of Gerald and Deloris (Jensen) Wesley Sr. She graduated from Waterville High School in 1967 and went on to attend Faribault Vo-Tech for accounting. She worked at various places through the years and most recently worked at Little Six/Mystic Lake Casino in Shakopee for over 20 years. She also served in the U.S. Army Reserves for 35 years, retiring in 2009 as a Sgt. First Class. Deb enjoyed reading mystery novels, watching Minnesota Sports teams, playing Blackjack at the casino, and attending concerts.

She is survived by one brother, Gerald "Butch" (Monica) Wesley Jr. of Clarkridge, AR, and one sister, Gatha (Richard) Mittelsteadt of Waseca; three nieces; two nephews; four great nephews; and one great niece.



Deborah Wesley

Funeral services were held on Friday, June 24, 2022 at 11 a.m. at Hope United Methodist Church in Faribault. Visitation was held on Friday, one hour before services at the church. Private family burial will follow at Sakatah Cemetery in Waterville. Dennis Funeral & Cremation Services of Waseca is handling arrangements. dennisfuneralhomes.com

■ Abuse

from Page 1

After its investigation, the MDH determined that "psychological harm occurred when the resident experienced increased worry and fears related to the incident."

The report goes on to describe an encounter in more detail, including an eyewitness account from an unlicensed staff employee who said "when she entered the resident's room the [alleged perpetrator] was standing in front of the resident, who was in his wheelchair. The unlicensed staff stated she saw the resident's left hand on the [alleged perpetrator]'s right breast. The unlicensed staff stated when the [alleged perpetrator] heard her ask the resident about a snack, the [alleged perpetrator] pulled away from the resident, and told the resident she (the AP) would be back later to help the resident bathe. The unlicensed staff reported the incident to a facility social worker the next day.

In another reported incident, the MDH document records that a second unlicensed staff member stated she entered the resident's room the

same evening and saw the AP with her arms around the resident, kissing the resident on the mouth. The unlicensed staff member reported her observation to a nurse, who reported the incident to a facility social worker.

The alleged victim told the social worker he and the alleged perpetrator were "good friends" and that he did not want to see her crucified for her behavior. The social worker also stated she received a report two months prior to the incident from a third unlicensed staff. During that incident, the unlicensed staff member (MDH witness number 3) observed the [alleged perpetrator] kneeling on the resident's bed and giving the resident a hug that lasted over five minutes.

During the interview, MDH witness number 3 also stated that the alleged perpetrator and victim must have leaned on the call light button, which prompted witness 3 to enter the resident's room and witness the hugging. The witness stepped out of the room and did not see the alleged perpetrator exit it until at least five minutes later; the witness found this suspicious and reported the incident.

The report also states that "multiple unlicensed staff stated the [alleged perpetrator] had a history of

"One employee's actions doesn't speak for the work of the other 85 employees." — Administrator Dave Dunn

leaving her scheduled area to go to the resident's room for up to an hour when not assigned. Two of the unlicensed staff stated the [alleged perpetrator] often volunteered to give the resident his bath, when not assigned to the resident. Several unlicensed staff reported their concerns to the nurse," who notified administrative staff via email.

New Richland Care Center Administrator Dave Dunn said as soon as he learned of the abuse, which he describes as "only a hug," he carried out an investigation which included interviews of 10 residents and 15 staff members prior to terminating the CNA.

Dunn reports that there have been no legal charges or filings against the Care Center as a result of the incidents, but states that the CNA's license has been revoked by the Minnesota Department of Health. "She will not be able to work in another healthcare facility," Dunn said, claiming that the CNA's actions endangered the reputation of the

NRCC and her fellow staff members. "One employee's actions doesn't speak for the work of the other 85 employees," he said.

Dunn maintains, "There's good people here."

Dunn also said he feels he acted promptly and appropriately upon receiving reports of possible misbehavior. Despite potentially suspicious posts made by the CNA on her Facebook page after the deaths of other residents in the past, he has no reason to believe inappropriate incidents occurred before those in the June 6 report.

Dunn says the recent announcement of his resignation, effective July 8, has "absolutely nothing to do with this situation." He said, "It's just time for me to move on."

Dunn, who was very well liked among staff, residents, and the community, shared when announcing his resignation from the NRCC that he plans to return to working in acute care and open his own private clinic.

Elaine Westrum

Elaine Rae Westrum, age 90 of Waseca, died on the morning of Sunday, June 19, 2022 at Foxdale in Waseca.

Born in Adams, Minnesota on February 19, 1932, Elaine was the daughter of Ewald and Hattie (Lewison) Tuchtenhagen. She grew up in Howard Lake and Albert Lea, graduating from Albert Lea High School with the class of 1949. She attended Minnesota Business School in Minneapolis before beginning her employment in the accounting department at Mack Truck in St. Paul for several years. Elaine married Richard Westrum at the First Lutheran Church in Albert Lea in 1950. In 1959 they moved to Waseca. Elaine served her community by volunteering with the Girl Scouts, 4-H, and by delivering hot meals for many years. She was a long-time member of Faith Methodist Church in Waseca where she worked in the church office and in many women's circles. She enjoyed homemaking, gardening, sewing, and sports such as golf, skiing, skating, and biking.

Elaine is survived by three children, Kate (Frank) Pruitt of Dillon, CO, Cheryl (Walter) Mischek of Saratoga, WY, and Kipp (Brenda)



Elaine Westrum

Westrum of New Richland; two grandchildren, Hailey and Mitchell Westrum; and sisters, Sharon Blackhawk and Mary Jane Buzay. She was preceded in death by her parents; her husband; her daughter, Julie Martin; and her brother, Harlan Tuchtenhagen.

Funeral services were held at 11 a.m. on Friday, June 24, 2022 at Faith United Methodist Church in Waseca, with Rev. Carolyn Doering officiating. Visitation will be held for one hour before the service at the church. Interment will follow at Woodville Cemetery in Waseca. dennisfuneralhomes.com

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The Twin Cities-based Innocent reggae band consists of lead singer Innocent, keyboard player Chilly, Lance the drummer, Thomas on guitar, and bassist Onesmo. All of the members except Thomas have been with the band throughout its entire 32-year history. Pioneer photo by Jonah Stafford

Summer concert brings reggae fun

By JONAH STAFFORD
Staff Writer

The Waseca Public Library's annual Summer Concert Series got off to an energetic start on June 7 as the Innocent reggae band delivered a dazzling performance to an ever-growing crowd in Waseca's Trowbridge Park.

The Twin Cities-based Innocent Reggae Band consists of lead singer Innocent, keyboard player Chilly, Lance the drummer, Thomas on guitar, and bassist Onesmo. All of the members except Thomas have been with the band throughout its 32-year history.

During the concert, Innocent explained that the band used to tour internationally in faraway countries including Japan and Qatar. At least for now, though, the group is playing only in the midwestern United States, usually in the summer.

The band's members have international origins with Innocent and Onesmo being from Tanzania, Lance from Trinidad and Tobago, Chilly from the US Virgin Islands, and Thomas from the United States.

The Innocent Reggae Band's drum kit was adorned with the face of the late Jamaican artist Bob Marley, a well-respected pioneer of the reggae genre, while the band's guitar straps were patterned after the Rastafarian flag.

Rastafari is a religious and social movement that originated in the 1930s in Jamaica and is closely associated with the reggae style of music.

As the concert began, the band was introduced by Afton Finley, who has worked as the Waseca Public Library's librarian for the past 3 years.

"I love it," Finley said of her job. "There isn't anything out there better."

Finley said she began organizing this year's summer concerts and events in the fall, and said she

"It was nearly dizzying how quickly it all happened."

— Michael Roy
Publisher

opted for musical performers from a "variety of genres to appeal to all audiences." She said this Tuesday was the first time a reggae band had performed as part of the Summer Concert Series.

The general audience appeal of library-hosted events aligns with Finley's belief that "libraries are for anybody and any age."

The Innocent Reggae Band's performance consisted of a combination of covers and original music, with selections from Bob Marley's catalog making up a majority of the set list.

During the show, Innocent said that one good thing about reggae music is that "no specific dancing style" is associated with it: He joked that even the seated audience members were "reggae dancing."

Innocent's eccentric facial expressions and humor reflected his lifelong love for the reggae genre.

While most audience members showed their engagement with the laid-back and easy-to-listen-to melodies by nodding along or tapping their toes to the beat, several people rose from their seats to dance and sway with the tune.

After an hour-long performance, the show concluded with passionate encore performances of Bob Marley's classic "Three Little Birds."

"Good night. We'll see you next time," Innocent said to the audience as he bade farewell, thanking the library for providing him the opportunity to share reggae music with a community he had never performed in before.

We are the Willows performs

Third concert in summer series

By JONAH STAFFORD
Staff Writer

On a breezy, comfortable day, orchestral pop band We Are The Willows delivered the third of the Waseca Public Library's summer concerts Tuesday night, June 21. This concert marked a return to the outdoor venue at Trowbridge Park after the Buffalo Galaxy performance was held indoors due to extreme heat.

It was a sunny evening, though not overwhelmingly so, with the sun glazing the faces of the band members as they sang and played.

Lead singer Peter Miller possesses a distinct counter tenor vocal range, effortlessly reaching high notes as he strums his guitar.

Hilary James, the band's cellist, has nearly two decades of experience on the instrument and also sings. Before the concert, James and her bandmates joined in a playful "Frost the Soundcheck" song to make sure their singing and playing was audible all across the park.

Wisconsin native Addelyn Strei is a lifelong musician who plays numerous instruments. At the concert Tuesday night, Strei played the flute.

Much of We Are The Willows' set



"We are the Willows," performs the third installment of the Waseca Public Library's summer concert series, June 21 at Trowbridge Park. Pioneer photo by Jonah Stafford

list came from their album "Picture (Portrait)," which was inspired by letters sent to each other by Miller's grandparents as they fell in love in the 1940s, including while his grandfather was serving in World War II.

After the show, Miller said he lived with his grandparents during college. That's when he learned about the letters from his grandmother. Later, he received them as a graduation gift and read them all while working as a touring musician. Miller adapted several of the letters into songs for We Are The Willows, a musical project that is celebrating

its 10th anniversary this October.

"Dear Ms. Branstner," one of the band's songs, recalled when Miller's grandfather worked chopping wood for his future wife's father, but got fired for spending more time talking to his lover than working.

Another selection, "We May Never Grow Old," was a sentimental love ballad.

We Are The Willows' sound was abstract and eclectic, painting a portrait of the lives of those in times prior. However, the song "Depressed and Anxious," touched on the timeless issue of mental health struggles,

as did "It's Hard To Have a Satisfied Mind." Both of these songs were performed by Miller alone, reflecting an intimate, emotional picture of what the experiences feel like to him.

The final song again featured all band members. "Footpath," is about actively seeking to improve for both yourself and those in your life.

We Are The Willows sold CDs and t-shirts after the show and chatted a bit with those in attendance, before returning home to the Twin Cities area.



Prior to their public performance, the Buffalo Galaxy bluegrass band enjoys reading at the Waseca Public library.

Buffalo Galaxy and bluegrass

Second concert in summer library series moved indoors

By JONAH STAFFORD
Staff Writer

A taped-off area inside the Waseca Public Library served as the staging area for bluegrass band Buffalo Galaxy, as the group delivered an out-of-this- on Tuesday, June 14.

Each member of Buffalo Galaxy is a singer who plays an instrument, with Zach Tave on banjo, Pete Whiteman playing bass, Jake Rohde on mandolin, and Johnny Kovarik serving as the guitarist.

Throughout the show, performers showed their enthusiasm with physical movements such as jumping and stomping; audience members tapped their toes and clapped along to the beat of the music.

The musicians also tended to close their eyes while singing and playing, losing themselves in their engaging, melodious performance.

The group's opening number was a highly energetic performance of the traditional bluegrass song "Hand-some Molly."

Buffalo Galaxy also performed original material, including their song "Like They Used To," with Kovarik announcing between songs that, "We are in the middle of recording our next record."

Songs from the band's next album, including "Baby Tell Me," were previewed throughout the performance.

While the air conditioned library served as a safe haven from the high temperature and humidity outside, the music inside heated things up in a more pleasant way.

"We probably would've passed out if we played that outside," Kovarik said after one particularly energetic number. Additionally, Rohde said that the band's "wooden boxes" would've been vulnerable to the heat



Band members from left: Pete Whiteman playing bass, Johnny Kovarik as the guitarist, Jake Rohde on mandolin, and Zach Tave on the banjo. Pioneer photos by Jonah Stafford

and humidity had they played outside.

Tara Murphy, who is Tave's fiancée, brought bottled water to the band's staging area mid-performance to ensure members were sufficiently hydrated.

Buffalo Galaxy's set wound down with a couple of well-known covers: "Not Fade Away" by Buddy Holly and Country Gentleman's "Fox On The Run."

The final number of the concert was a cover of "I Shall Be Released" by Bob Dylan, during which the band left their staging area and moved into the audience, delivering an up close and personal performance.

"Thank you all so much for hanging in with us on the hottest day of the summer.... so far," said Kovarik as he left the staging area for the final time.

Buffalo Galaxy has played together for nearly three years and is based in the Twin Cities area.

While the band is primarily influenced by bluegrass music, Tave said that the members' experience of playing in other bands has added folk, jazz, and psychedelic influence to Buffalo Galaxy's music and performance style.

After the show, CDs of Buffalo Galaxy's 2020 debut album "New Escape" were available for purchase, as were T-shirts and pins.

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Argus archives

1892

- An express train was held up on the Omaha road Friday night between Kasota and St. Peter by two masked men, who succeeded in stopping the train by covering the engineer with revolvers. They entered the express car and secured three hundred dollars from the safe. Fortunately a large amount of money was dropped behind the safe by the messenger, unobserved by the robbers. After securing their booty they disappeared in the woods.
- A very pleasant social feature of the week was a surprise party at the M. E. parsonage Friday evening, gotten up by members of the congregation on account of the thirty eighth birthday of Rev. W. V. Russell. About forty persons were present, but the numbers would have been largely augmented had it not been for the rain.
- Rev. Chas Remington arrived in Janesville Wednesday afternoon. He has completed his collegiate course at Harvard and after a visit of three weeks or more with his parents will be assigned work at West Duluth by Bishop Gilbert.
- New Richland has five hundred dollars left over from last year's receipts unexpended. The authorities of that village must be of the economical kind.
- Mr. E. Miller, of Freedom, one of the directors of the St. Clair Farmers Insurance Company, was in this place on Friday, and called at the Argus office. From him we learn that the company has just paid Albert Remind one hundred and ninety dollars on account of the loss of two fine horses by lightning. The mount was paid in four days from the date of notification which was on the day the horses were killed.
- Mr. Frank Fields, of Sanborn Iowa, was in this place, Tuesday, on his way from Elysian to Mankato. He informs us that immense quantities of water have fallen in Iowa to the detriment of the crops, although a fair crop of wheat will be harvested providing no further back sets are encountered.
- Alma City celebrated. There was quite a spirit of patriotism manifested. The program of all the states represented by 44 girls with crowns and recitation mottos was well rendered.
- In his speech at Waseca, Saturday, Mr. Fisk painted a picture of Andrew Carnegie sitting before his big iron safe, a big hose in his hand, squirting hot water. We listened a good while to find out where that water come from and where it was going to but the speaker didn't tell us.

1942

- Waseca County Food Preservation meetings will be conducted by Evelyn W. Sanal, Home Demonstration Agent, and Helen G. Johnson, Farm Security Advisor, Mankato. These meetings will be held in the Community Building, Waseca, July 7 at 1:30 p.m., High School, Janesville on July 8, at 1:40 p.m. and at the High School in New Richland on July 10, at 1:40 p.m. Some of the highlights of the program will include canning of non-acid vegetables and tomatoes and fruits without sugar the pressure cooker method.
- The Waseca County Republican convention, held at the city hall in Waseca, Saturday evening, saw the re-election of all of the former county officers. Those renamed were Donald C. Brown, chairman; Mrs. C. W. Spaulding, Jr., chairwoman; Herman Peterson, vice chairman; Mrs. L. W. Scott, Janesville, vice chairwoman; Dr. R. K. Hawley, New Richland, secretary; and C. P. Sommerstad, treasurer.
- Following the announcement of the June tax apportionment, County Auditor Art Brisbane that Waseca County is now out of debt. However, the county still has \$39,000 of ditch bonds still unpaid but they are to be retired by assessment against the real estate involved.
- Mr. and Mrs. Hugo Proechel were pleasantly surprised by relatives on both sides in honor of their 30th wedding anniversary, which was celebrated on Sunday, June 28. Those sponsoring the celebration were Mrs. Wm. Theelke, Mrs. Theo. Cowdin and Mrs. Muriel Cowdin. A two-tier wedding cake was baked by Mrs. Wm. Theelke and Mrs. Bernard Huelsnitz did the fancy trimming.
- It will not be long now until the dates for Janesville's Harvest Jubilee arrive. Wednesday and Thursday, July 22 and 23rd will be great days in the "old home town" and everybody is invited to enjoy the Art B. Thomas Free Shows with "FUN'S AFLAME" as the order of the day.
- The 1942 National Cornhusking contest, which was to have been held in Blue Earth County this fall, was postponed Thursday evening at a meeting of Enterprises Inc. local contest sponsors, for the duration of the war, says the Mankato Free Press.
- Interested in the progress being made in the construction of the Lake Elysian dam, a trip was made to its vicinity the first of the week. The concrete part of the dam was completed about ten days ago and work on the building of the riprap portion which will extend across the lake has been started.
- Word was received, says the Waseca Journal, by Dr. J. F. Lynn last week, informing him of the death of Rulif M. Martin, former editor of the New Richland Star. The letter from Mrs. Martin stated that Rulif had not been well for many years but that the illness which caused his death on May 11 was of but five days duration. Death was due, she said to acute heart seizure.

1972

- When Hank Myers started shearing sheep he got 15 cents a head for what often turned out to be a 10-minute wrestling match with a bull-headed old ewe. Forty years later his price is up to a dollar a head and he says, "It's a pretty good racket. Not all I need is for some young guy to come and take over."
- Representative Rod Searle, rural Waseca, filed for re-election this week with the Office of the Secretary of State. He is seeking to represent new House District 30B which encompasses all of Waseca County, townships of Deerfield, Meriden, Lemond, Berlin, Summit, and Blooming Prairie in Steele County, and the townships of Bath, Bancroft, Geneva, Riceland, Newby and Moscow in Freeborn County. Searle, who is filing for his ninth term, is considered one of the strongest rural voices in the Legislature.
- Dennis Eustice, son of Mr. and Mrs. Ben Eustice, has been accepted for the fall quarter at the University of Minnesota Technical College at Waseca, which begins September 25, 1972. The Technical College is designed to offer training for semi-professional, mid-management position in the broad fields related to Agriculture. Upon successful completion Dennis will be awarded the Associated of Applied Science Degree.
- The ninety-third annual Waseca County Free Fair will run Wednesday, July 19 through Sunday, July 23 at the fairgrounds in Waseca. It appears that it will be one of the most exciting fairs in the history of the event.
- The 35 teachers in the Janesville Public School System will receive a 3.98 percent salary increase, per year, for the next two school years. The new contract was approved by the school board at their regular monthly meeting Monday night.
- Mayor John Patton, Blue Earth, today officially filed with the Secretary of State, Arlan Erdahl, to represent district 30 in the Minnesota State Senate. The present Senator, Ernest Anderson, has announced his retirement.
- On June 26, 1972, President Nixon announced that quotas on foreign meat products would be lifted. He further stated that the lifting of this quota would not have and immediate effects. They would, however, help reduce our meat shortage problem. In reply to this, Charles Turnbull, candidate for Congress, stated, "The President's action regarding the lifting of meat quotas is a slap in the face at the entire farm population of the Second District and the Nation as a whole."
- If you're one of the nearly 400 members in the Smiths Mill-Janesville Sportsmen's Club, you'll want to set aside the afternoon of Sunday, July 16. That's the date that has been set for the annual Sportsmen's Potluck. So plan to bring along the family and a dish for the table. As usual, the Sportsmen

Archives

Star archives, New Richland

100 years ago (1922)

- Rev. and Mrs. J. E. Eriksson and two children, Harold and Ebba, will leave today from Waseca for New York City where they will board an ocean liner for Sweden to make their future home there. The many friends of Rev. and Mrs. Eriksson and family are grieved to see them leave this country, but wish them the best of success and health in their new home.
- New Richland friends will be pleased to learn of the marriage of Miss Celia S. Johnson and Mr. S. Birthen Sebersson which took place Wednesday at Albert Lea. The couple are both well known in New Richland and their many friends extend to them their heartiest congratulations.
- Mr. and Mrs. Geo. Bell are the proud parents of a baby girl, born to them Saturday, June 24, 1922
- The bake sale conducted by the All Saints Catholic ladies' aid society last Saturday afternoon netted the society about \$20. The sale was a splendid success and all the goods were disposed of in a short time.
- A meeting of the New Richland Community Club has been called for Monday evening, July 3, to consider a proposal to purchase the St. Olaf lake picnic grounds. The meeting will be held at the high school auditorium at eight-thirty. Everyone in this community in any way interested in this proposal is requested to attend.

75 years ago (1947)

- After living considerably longer than the average span of life, Henry C. Siffing passed away Tuesday, July 1, at the advanced age of 88 years, 1 month and 17 days. Complications incidental to old age together with a heart affection were the causes of death.
- Softball fans will get an opportunity to see some fast ball here, Friday July 11. The fast Northside Inn Colored team of Minneapolis, an entry in the National League will be here that date at 8:00 p.m. This outfit has played in several towns in the state and has defeated Crosby-Ironton, Stillwater, and several Minneapolis teams to date.
- Born prematurely, a daughter

born at 10 a.m. Monday at the Memorial hospital. Waseca to Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Schlaak, died at 5 p.m. Funeral services were conducted by Rev. W. J. Pilgrim of Waseca at the Tyrholm funeral parlors here Tuesday and the remains were interred in St. Peter's cemetery, northwest of town.

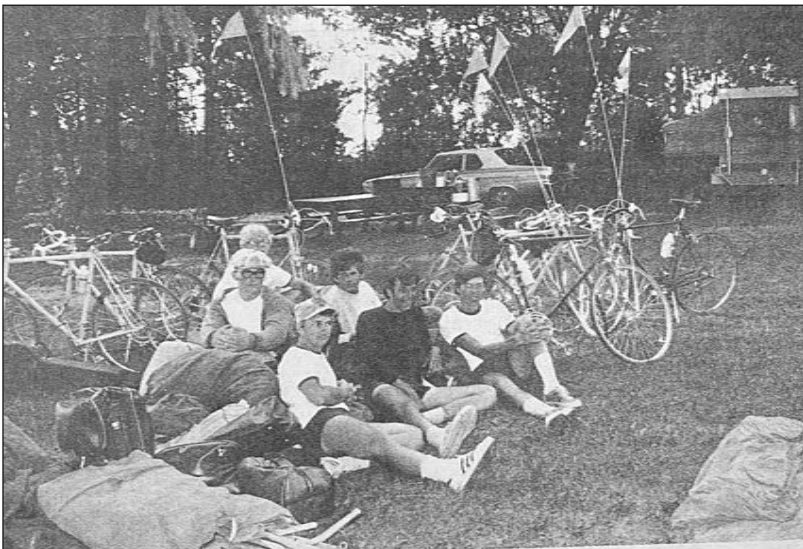
- It is the will of the council that no unlicensed dog should be permitted to live after July ends. Dogs without a license tag will be impounded and killed unless the owner obtains a license tag.
- Charles Butler, 22; John Ryan, 18; and William LErman, 20; of West Concord community received sentences of six months in jail and fines of \$100 for each when they pleaded guilty to wrecking rural mail boxes "just for the fun of it." The \$100 fines were suspended and the youths placed on probation for two years.

50 years ago (1972)

- A new dog ordinance was enacted by the Council of the village of New Richland at a recent meeting. All dogs must be licensed and owners of dogs must present evidence that their animals have had rabies shots within the past two years before they will be issued a license.
- The New Richland Hartland highschool band will play a concert at Hartland, Saturday evening, beginning at 8 p.m. Following the band concert, there will be an ice cream social at the Hartland Evangelical Synod Lutheran church at Hartland.
- New Richland will celebrate the Fourth of July with fireworks. A spectacular display of fireworks is planned for dusk that evening on the football field. Following the fireworks, some lucky person will win a prize of his or her choice. Given away will be a Resorter 14 ft. fishing boat valued at \$289, a Road Bike by Herter's valued at \$299 or a certificate worth \$275 in merchandise.
- Mrs. Lee Dillavou of Freeborn announces the engagement of Leann Bangert, daughter of Mrs. Dillavou and the late Harold Bangert to Glen I. Juveland of Albert Lea.
- Afternoon coffee guests at the Donald Robinson home Thursday were Mrs. Mary Wenzel, Mrs. Ha-



FOURTH COMING UP —Jim Bushlack, president of the New Richland Commercial club, Floyd Abraham, treasurer and Gary Littrell display tickets the club is selling to support the Fourth of July fireworks display at New Richland.



TIME OFF - This group of high school students rest at St. Olaf Lake after a full day of riding on their trip home to Wisconsin after a three week tour of the Black Hills. The boys, on a Youth for Christ sponsored tour usually pedaled 100 miles each morning and 70 miles each afternoon. Their faithful wheels can be seen in the background.

rold Echternach, Mrs. Mary Madden of Waseca, Mrs. Billy Robinson and Mrs. Joe Collins.

At 11 p.m., Monday evening, the New Richland ambulance took Mrs. Cora Baker to the Waseca Memorial Hospital.

1997 (25 years ago)

- The Black Sox lost to Water-ville 10-1 on June 18z but came back to defeat Cleveland 5-2, Sunday. They hold a 3-league record and are 4-8 overall. A clutch single by Tom Herman was the highlight of the Sox win over Cleveland.
- Jim and Tracie Lutgens advertise their business J.T. Photography,

located at 115 South Broadway in New Richland.

- In honor of the 50th wedding anniversary of Leo and Elizabeth Chicos, their grandchildren invite relatives and friends to an open house at the Medford Straight River Path Chalet on Saturday, July 5, with a reception and refreshments from 2 to 7 p.m.
- Fire your boss! You can operate your own profitable business. Call toll free for information.
- Internet at Home and Work! Prairie Lakes Internet is New Richland's Gateway to the Internet since August, 1996.

Waseca newspaper archives

100 Years ago:

- Residents from every section of Waseca county gathered at the Palace theatre last Saturday afternoon to attend the Eighteenth Annual Commencement of the rural schools of Waseca county. At this time a class of seventy-eight of our young people completed their education in our rural schools and were presented their diplomas by Superintendent H. C. Van Loh.
- The White & Myers Chautauqua program came to a close Tuesday evening and the general verdict was that this year's program was one of the best given in Waseca. The week's program opened with the Croatian Tamburica orchestra, whose musical numbers were both novel and interesting.
- Waseca won its first game in the Southern Minnesota league Sunday by defeating Blooming Prairie 6 to 2. The locals played a brand of baseball that will win most every time, hitting at the opportune time, fielding in great shape and playing "heads up" at all stages of the game.
- The Biblical admonition, "In the midst of life we are in death" was forcibly brought to mind at the Farm Bureau picnic last Thursday afternoon, when Charles Root, one of the most popular farmers present, dropped dead while pulling in a tug of war.
- (Items taken from the files of the Waseca Herald of June 18, 1897) P.H. Kenehan was appointed city marshal. The price of wheat was down to 64 cents a bushel; eggs were 7 cents a dozen.
- Albert Rieck and Fred Johnson, carpenters employed by Eric Sjosstrand, had a narrow escape from death last Saturday when they fell from a scaffold while working on the new residence of George Oesreich on Loon Lake avenue.

75 Years ago (1947):

- The Waseca Park will again have a life guard on duty at the Clear Lake Park swimming beach for the protection of swimmers, according to an announcement by the board.
- The three bids for the construction of the lagoon, sewer running from the canning factory to the lagoon and the relocation of the sanitary sewer at the lagoon site were rejected at an adjourned meeting of the city council last Thursday evening, June 13th.
- The recreation program by the city park board went into full swing this week with soft ball games and an announcement of the schedule for next week which carries a tennis tournament, soft ball midget team schedule and a story hour for small girls and boys.
- The Board of County Commissioners met in special monthly session in the county commissioners room, in the court house, Waseca, Minnesota at 9:30 o'clock a.m., June 4, 1946. Members present were Wm. A. Manthery, chairman; Fred Gray, Roy Arnfelt, Louis H. Pagel and Elmer Neltzel. On motion it was ordered that an appropriation of \$1,500 be made from the County Revenue fund for maintenance of the Waseca Memorial hospital.
- LeRoy— one of the nine Minnesota doctors to be admitted this spring to the Fifty Club of the State Medical Association is Dr. A. E. Henslin, 81, of this community. He began practice here in 1896, performed the first appendectomy in Mower county, and has delivered more than 1,200 babies.
- Since half of the anticipated fall enrollment of 21,000 to 22,000 students at the University of Minnesota will be veterans, early action on the part of veterans hoping to attend the state university is urged by Curtis

E. Avery, the university's director of veteran affairs.

50 years ago (1972):

- A twin-engine airplane carrying Indian high school students to their northern Manitoba homes for a summer vacation crashed Saturday, killing the pilot and all eight passengers.
- Stephen Malloy, former Waseca, recently won first prize at "Minnesota Artists '72", a month long art show in Rochester. Malloy won the first prize of \$300 in the sculpture division. His work was untitled and sculptured from painted fiberglass.
- June 12 Catholic Daughters met with a short business meeting. The entertainment was cards and four prizes were awarded. High bridge went to Margaret Zimmerman; low bridge, Frances Kunz, high pfeffer, Agnes Armstrong and low pfeffer, Lillian Mulcahey.
- The Kansas City Royals baseball club held their district tryout and testing camp at Community field in Waseca Friday and according to Dale McReynolds, upper Midwest Scouting Supervisor, it was a fine turnout. Forty boys from 13 different cities turned-out to show their baseball skills and try to make the big leagues. Boys from Waseca trying out were Craig Miller, Mark Dreager, Cur kMaki, Chuck Schumacher, Jon O'Neil, Mike McLaughlin, Blain Nelson and Denny Dahnert.
- Pets: Miniature Schnauzer's three litter, toy poodles, excellent blood lines
- Undesirable odors from a rubbish pile of burning straw and paper at the Mishek Supply disrupted Sunday morning activity in 8th St. N.E. area, resulted in complaints from the neighborhood and a call to the Waseca Fire Department.

25 Years ago (1997):

- Negotiations are still ongoing, but if Waseca Area Medical Center merges with Mayo Health Systems, it could mean a new clinic, no repayment of a major debt, more services and the continuation of 24 hour emergency service. "We're really pleased with the discussions," said WAMC administrator Mike Milbrath.
- Waseca's annual Happy Days celebration is set to kick off on Thursday when the newest addition to the festivities, the Alotta Amusements carnival, is set to roll into town.
- 3,000 celebrat Brown Printing's success: Brown Printing stopped its presses for the occasion, so employees could join officials, customers and other invited guests for speeches, a picnic lunch and plant tours that morning.
- At a meeting last week, Mark Flygare, Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) traffic engineer for District 7, told Waseca city staff that MnDOT would not prevent construction of a traffic signal on Highway 13 and 13th Avenue Northeast. City Manager Kris Busse informed the council of MnDOT's approval of the plan at the June 17 Waseca City Council meeting.
- Warm and dry conditions prevailed again this week. Air temperature averaged 68.4 degrees or 1.5 degrees above normal. Precipitation scattered over four days totaled only 0.26 inches, which was three-quarters inch below normal.
- The Minnesota Department of Economic Security reported November's rate of unemployment remained steady and low.

Compiled from news copy of the Waseca Herald, provided by the Waseca County Historical Society.

Goldilocks on Trial at the Waseca Performing Arts Center June 24, 25



Mia Mitchell



Olive Scheffert



The jury sprays silly string at the bailiff



Tomás Vásquez



Mateo Vásquez



Grace Bartz



Director Karen Pfarr-Anderson



Top Row Witnesses: Rayel Sammon, Mateo Vásquez, Gavin Riehm, Tomás Vasquez
Bottom Row Witnesses: Sadie Schimming, Maddie Halla, Andy Vásquez



Chloe Roemhildt and Mia Mitchell celebrate the show with bows



Jack Durisen and Gavin Riehm look at the porridge stats



Chloe as Goldilocks and Olive as bailiff



A bored jury waits



Jury, judge, and witnesses ready for the trial



Taking bows: William Mansfield, Jack Durisen, Maren Schimming, Grace Bartz



The Bear Family: Sadie Schimming, Maddie Halla, Andy Vásquez

Between a complicated trial, amusing flashbacks, jokes and a laughing audience, “Goldilocks on Trial” by Ed Monk and put on by Waseca’s Little Rascals was a joy. This traditional story of “Goldilocks” is shown with a twist– an excellent once upon a time trial. Bailiff Olive Scheffert and Judge Wallabee put on excellent performances along with the comic relief jurors and talented witnesses. With performances June 24 and 25 at the Waseca Performing Arts Center, director Karen Pfarr Anderson thanked and was thanked by performers and other graduated little rascals who helped with sound, lights, and stage crew, all putting on an amazing show.

Cast: Melina, the Bailiff - Olive Scheffert
• Judge Wallabee - Mia Mitchell
• District Attorney Muffinhead - Grace Bartz
• Assistant District Attorney

Potatohead - Maren Schimming
• Defense Attorney Wombat - Jack Durisen
• Defense Attorney Wallaroo - William Mansfield
• Goldie Wynn Locks (a.k.a. Goldilocks) - Chloe Roemhildt
• Papa Bear - Andy Vásquez
• Mama Bear - Sadie Schimming
• Baby Bear (Tiffanii) - Maddie Halla
• Detective Clorox - Rayel Sammon
• The Little Pig Who Was Not Eaten By the Wolf - Mateo Vásquez
• Dr. Cantaloupe -Gavin Riehm
• Merwin the Big Bad Wolf - Tomás Vásquez
• Jurors: Levi Behm, Hannah Egger, Brier Hayes, Luke Jeske, Dominik Mansfield, Max McShane, Keegan Rodriguez, Sophiel Weber

Pioneer photos by Amelia Roessler

NRHEG tracksters receive awards



EXTRA, EXTRA - More than 50 students, parents, and coaches gathered for the NRHEG track awards program Sunday, June 26, 2022. Top left, Gabby Schlaak accepts an award from Nick Seiler. Top right, Brittyn Anderson and Natalie Johnson chat. Bottom from left, state track participant Quinn VanMaldeghem, Evelyn Nydegger, Will Tuttle, Aiden Deyle, and Sam Prigge.



Braves coach Tink Larson calls a timeout to talk with catcher Chris Glynn and pitcher Erik Simmons. Pioneer photos by Michael Roy



Seth Anderson takes a swing at the ball after attempting a bunt while Cam Madsen practices his pitching.



Alex Feeney races against Waterville's first baseman to get the first single of the night for the Braves.

Braves' record falls to 6-8

The Waseca Braves' season has been nothing short of rocky this summer. After a big 8-5 win to start the season against cross-county rival Janesville on May 22, things have been up and down.

Blue Earth handed the Braves the first of six consecutive losses beginning on May 29. Minnesota Lake, Union Hill, Waterville, Morristown, and Wells were the other teams that have defeated the Braves with three losses via the 10-run rule.

After that, though, the Braves bounced back, getting their second win of the season against Eagle Lake and a revenge win against Wells. They blew out the Rochester Roadrunners 8-1 and then won a needed 9-0 road game against the Lake Crystal Lakers.

The five wins evened their record at 6-6. This week, they faced Owatonna and Waterville.

The road didn't treat Waseca well against Owatonna's Aces Wednesday, June 22. The Aces ran away with it early as the Braves could only scrap one run to Owatonna's 11.

It was more of the same as Waseca hosted Waterville for a rematch. Braves' pitcher Cam Madsen walked a few in the first inning, with Kelvin Nelson getting the team's first out in the top of the first inning. However, a line drive between shortstop Seth Anderson and third baseman Danny Cromer allowed the Indians to score two runs.

After initial issues resulting in eight runs within the first three innings, the Braves cleaned up on defense and only allowed one run the rest of the match.

However, Waterville didn't allow any runs throughout the game. Their pitching was quick, concise, and got the Braves off the field efficiently.

The two losses set the Waseca Braves back to 6-8. They hosted Cannon Falls on Wednesday, June 29 and will face Cleveland the following Wednesday.



Athletes who participated in the state meet, from left, front row: Alexis Olson, Abby Viktora, William Viktora, Aspyr Stenzel, Ciara Stenzel, Miranda LaCanne, Sean Beauvais, Justin Beauvais, JP Lynne. Second row: Keegan Peterson, Conner Louks, Dylan Schrock, Neela Wencil, Fynn Baumann, Eva Wayne, Keria Lenort, Reese Routh. Back: Adam Eustice, Clay Stenzel, Alden Dobberstein, Alex Dobberstein, Ashton Raimann, Rylee Gruenhagen, Trevor Lenort, Cale Flatness, Zander Flatness.

Clay target competes at class 7A state

Twenty-six members of the NRHEG Clay Target team traveled to Alexandria MN to compete in the State Class 7A Championship on June 19th. This is just one day of a nine day tournament that sees over 7,900 athletes from 340 high school teams compete from around the state. Each day is dedicated to one of the nine classes that the league breaks up into each spring. This is also the opportunity for each team to qualify for the MSHSL State Tournament which was held on June 24th.

The NRHEG squad did not qualify for the state tournament but did have a good day with most of their athletes shooting at or above their team average. This despite temperatures in the upper 90's and a heat index over 100

degrees! The team was lead by Ashton Raimann who, in his final high school competition shot a 96 out of 100 targets. This included a round of 25 straight and placed him 15th overall for Varsity shooters. In the JV division Adam Eustice shot a 93 out of 100 including a 25 straight which was good enough for 3rd overall in his division. Cale Flatness was another NRHEG shooter that received a 25 straight patch for his efforts on the day. In the Novice division it was William Viktora that lead the team with a 72 out of 100 good for 37th overall. Each division is determined by the athletes season average. The teams total rank was 13th for the squads competing that day with a score of 364. This event

wraps up the 2021-22 school year for these athletes where they saw a conference win in the fall and a second place finish in the spring. The team and coaches wish to thank the support of the Owatonna Gun club, our home for 11 years now, Waseca Pheasents Forever for hosting our raffle, the parents and other family members that support and encourage the athletes, and the following list of sponsors for making this sport affordable through their contributions.

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A groovy time



Leon Schoenrock and Dennis Dineen shake hands after Post 75 delivers a check for \$1,500 to make possible the Jazz summer baseball program.



From left, Gordy Loverink, Jack Pheffer, Dennis Dineen, Dan Economy, Rodney Hullopetter and Winston Evenson.



JAZZ - This summer's roster playing legion baseball includes: Hudson Chrz, Jackson Chrz, Alden Dobberstein, Alex Dobberstein, Aaden Hanna, Jace Ihrke, Jase Knudson, Daxter Lee, Carter Martens, Reese Routh, Aidan Schlaak, Benjamin Schoenrock, and Seth Staloch. The Jazz are managed by Leon Schoenrock and player-manager Alex Dobberstein who said he would prefer his spot be taken by a younger player since he has graduated. However, he is eligible to play, so he may see some action. Lee suffered a sprained ankle and is in a cast. He will likely miss the remainder of the summer as the prognosis is about a month for recovery.
Pioneer photos by Eli Lutgens

Jazz fall in opener 9-4

American Legion donates \$1,500

By ELI LUTGENS
Publisher/Editor

The opening game of the 2022 NRHEG Legion baseball season got under Friday at 7 p.m. The Jazz fell to JWP 9-4, following a short presentation of a check for \$1,500 from the New Richland American Legion to the program. A total of 14 businesses donated \$100 each and were recognized with their banners hanging along the outfield fence.

After the presentation and national anthem, the season opener got underway against JWP, who also were playing their first game.

An ugly first inning resulted in three unearned runs for JWP, which capitalized on a one out, two RBI double, with the JWP player leaving with a twisted ankle.

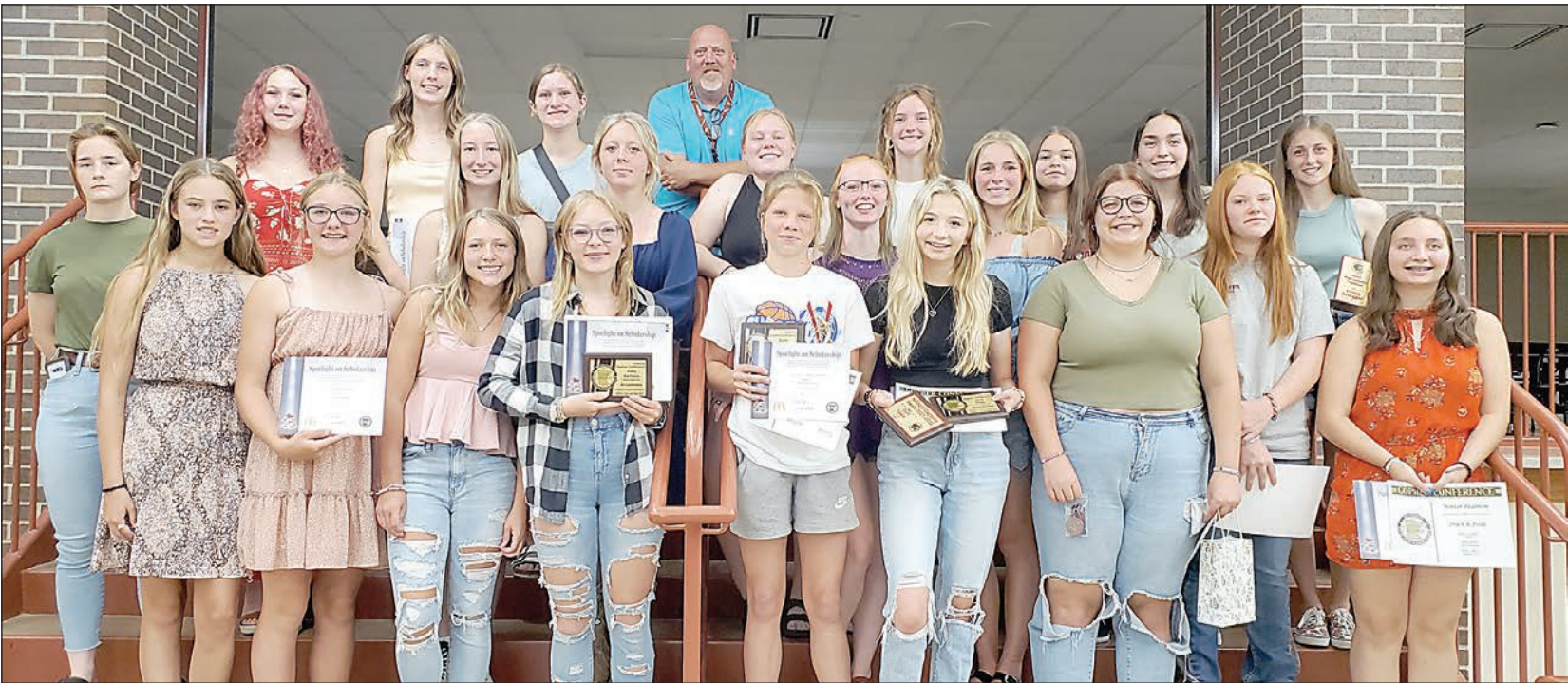
JWP tacked on another run in the second after two walks were followed by another double. The Jazz answered with three of their own in their half of the second after a leadoff single, was followed by a sac bunt, a walk and two RBI singles.

Alton Dobberstein relieved Jackson Chrz, who tossed the first three innings. After striking out the side in the fourth, things got a little rocky for Dobberstein who almost pitched out of trouble in the fifth. After allowing the first two runners to reach, Dobberstein struck out two batters before a double plated two more runs. An error allowed a third JWP runner to score.

Ben Schoenrock, who recently signed on to play town ball for the Braves, pitched the final frame. Schoenrock also caught his first game for the Braves Sunday, catching seven of the game's eight innings in a 10 run victory.

The Jazz tacked on one more before falling 9-4.

A schedule is unavailable at this time as the Jazz will schedule games as they become available. The hope is that the Jazz will be able to play in at least one tournament before the season comes to an end.



GIRLS - Track award winners, from front left, Orianna Degan, Paige Johnson, Chloe Riewer, Holly Bartness, Quinn VanMaldeghem, Torri Vaale, Brittyn Anderson, Molly Johnson, Winter Pederson. Second row: Annabelle Petsinger, Olivia Vaale, Lexi McGannan, Mackenzie Mueller, Natalie Johnson, Olivia Kofstad, Lia Johannsen, Maddie Johannsen, Evelyn Nydegger. Back row: Ava Schember, Gabby Schlaak, Sierra Misgen, Mr. Ferber, Shelby Johnston.



BOYS - Track award winners, front from left: Eric Arvis, Devon Nelton, Jacob Karl, Harbor Cromwell, Nik Petsinger, Matthew Mueller, Anton Domeier, Sam Christensen. Back row: Gavin Sletten, Parker Bunn, Jaylin Raab, Levin Kitzer, Mr. Ferber, Will Tuttle, Sam Prigge, Conner Nelson, Aiden Deyle.
Pioneer photos by Eli Lutgens

‘Over the hurdles and boogie in between’
Spring track awards distributed

By ELI LUTGENS
Publisher/Editor

With the absence of an NRHEG Spring Sports Banquet, track teams celebrated with ice cream and speeches, their 2022 season together in the high school commons Sunday, June 26 at 3 p.m.

Veteran track coach of more than three decades, Duey Ferber, got things started by thanking his wife for putting up with him, not only during track season, but all year long. On a more serious note, Ferber emphasized that track participants and their parents are a special group of people. “Our sport is your sports punishment,” Ferber said. “If you want to be a star, you can put in the work and be a superstar. If you want to be a socialite, you can do that too.”

Ferber shared many heartfelt stories, and spoke about each and every single trackster on both the boys and girls teams.

“When we walked in the commons for sign ups this year, my jaw dropped,” Ferber went on, as he spoke about the increase of tracksters from 42 to 70 this year. “I really thought that some kids just wanted to get out of class... That was something special to see, so many Panther uniforms. It was the first time in 33 years that our track teams have needed two buses for road meets.”

The girls finished second in the Gopher Conference, the boys 4th out of ten teams. For the ladies, they sent 15 runners to the section meet, the most they have had in a very, very long time. Quinn VanMaldeghem qualified for state in the 800 meter, an event she didn’t start running until midway through the season. “What a great decision that turned out to be,” Ferber said. “I think of these kids as my own. I’m very proud of each and every one of them.”

Ferber spoke about some memorable moments from this year, including the “French Toast Mile” referring to Devon Nelton running his best mile time, shaving 14 seconds off his time, to get under five minutes, after a breakfast of french toast, something he enjoyed every morning before competition meets.

“This speaks to how young I am, but I coached Park Bunn’s dad, and he liked to say, about the 300m, ‘Just get over the hurdles and boogie in between.’ Well, Parker’s doing that now.”

“Jaylin’s a talker,” Ferber continued. “I had to shut him down once when he was talking with a Blooming Prairie starter and he called her baby. I said Jaylin, you can’t call her baby. You can’t do that.”

“Anton came out for track for the first time, much to the chagrin of his dad who wanted him to play baseball,” Ferber joked. “Connor Nelson. Conman. He just keeps chugging away and was a leader in that 4x8 group, and a pleasure to be around.”

Finally, to the seniors, Ferber thanked them for their dedication to Panther track. “You do this for the team. I’m very, very proud. We’re definitely gonna miss you and you leave some tough shoes to fill.”

Awards

Ferber had comments for each and every award, which follow, taken directly from his speech:

Rookie of the year Boys: Gavin Sletten, Gavin ran in the 4x800, and most of the long distance races. He was a great addition to our team getting better every meet. He missed sections by one place. Gavin scored 23 points this season.

Rookie of the year Girls: Sierra Misgen. Sierra found a place early running sprints. She was a member of the 4x100, 4x200, and 4x400. She also ran the open 100 and 200m. She is a very strong runner and a great fit to our team! Sierra scored 44 points this season.

Most Improved boy: Devon Nelton, Devon was a member of the 4x800 relay and the 1600m. I think my favorite race was when he ran the 1600m at conference and ran under 5 minutes! Devon will be a force in the future! Devon scored 32 points this season.

Most Improved girl: Annabelle Petsinger, Annabelle was our 3200m runner and a high jumper. She gutted out the 3200, consistently scoring for us. She ran even though she had a very painful knee. Annabelle scored



Seniors - front row, from left, Nik Petsinger, Eric Arvis, Matthew Mueller. Back row: Brittyn Anderson, Torri Vaale, Natalie Johnson, and Maddie Johannsen

27 points this season.

MV Track Events boys: Jaylin Raab, Jaylin was our top sprinter this year running the 100m, 200m, LJ and 4x400. Jaylin placed very high in all the sprints and LJ all season. Jaylin made sections in 4 EVENTS!!! He missed state in the LJ by 1.5 inches. Jaylin scored 116 pts this season.

MV Track Events girls: Quinn VanMaldeghem, Quinn had quite a season running the 4x800, 800m, 1600m, and 4x400. She set School Records in the 800m and 4x800. She was the Section 2A Champion in the 800m, and placed 13th in the 800m at the State Meet! Quinn scored 111 points this season!

MV Field Events boys: Sawyer Prigge. Sawyer ran the 4x400, 4x100, and the HJ this season. Sawyer finished 1st or 2nd in most of the meets in the HJ. Sawyer made 5’10 and scored 80 points this season.

MV Field Events girls: Anika Ladlie. Anika ran the open 400 and other sprints, but her best event was the High Jump. Anika officially made 4’10 this year, but I witnessed her making 5’1 in practice. She was very close to advancing to the state meet. Anika scored 43 points this season.

MV Track & Field boys: William Tuttle. William ran the 110HH, 300IH, HJ, and 4x400. He was in the top 2 or 3 in all the races. Will is on the verge of making the state meet in both hurdle events. Will scored 131 pts this season.

MV Track & Field girls: Evelyn Nydegger. Evelyn was part of the 4x400, 100HH, 300IH and TJ. She was Conf Champ in the 4x800 and Subsection Champ in the 100HH. She qualified for the section meet in both hurdle events. Evelyn scored 157 points this season.

Captains awards. This year’s Captains were Matthew Mueller, Nik Petsinger, Journey Utpadel, and Torri Vaale.

To be considered all conference you have to win an event at the Gopher Conference meet. This year’s all conference winners were: Journey Utpadel, Torri Vaale, Quinn VanMaldeghem, Holly Bartness, Gabby Schlaak, Evelyn Nydegger, Sawyer Prigge, Will Tuttle, Jaylin Raab

New School records:

A new school record was set in the 4x800. Journey Utpadel, Torri Vaale, Holly Bartness, Quinn VanMaldeghem ran a time of 10:25.85 beating the old record of Hannah Lewison, Emily Habeck, Jennika Jongbloedt, Danielle Krueger who ran 10:33.0 in 2009.

800m Quinn VanMaldeghem 2:25 beating Danielle Krueger’s 2009 record.

Following the awards, and many pictures, the crowd enjoyed ice cream provided by Isabel Petsinger.

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Waseca student honor roll, 7-12

Students who made the A and B honor rolls at Waseca High School and Intermediate School follow:

7th Grade

Straight A: Lauren Holmseth, Colby Hoof, Kaylie Morrissey, Violet Rohwer

A: Brandon Bartz, Madelynn Benzick, Grace Chawra, Lucas Danner, Noelle Drake, Brody Du-fault, Ryleigh Ebnet, Chelsea Ene-boe, Addison Epper, Josie Hagre, August Hansen, Jacob Harguth, Megan Hudak, Henry Huttemier, Trey Jenzen, Abigail Lapides, Taylor Markeson, Blake McElligott, Nolan McQuery, Belle Miller, Coy Miller, Tristan Nelson, Gahvin Nowacki, Kimberly Ochoa, Isaac Pfeifer, Owen Rupe, Otto Schoenrock, Tucker Thompson, Savanna Vagts, Katelyn Weber, Alexa Welander, Aera Zimprich

B: Gavin Anderson-Gehrke, Ale-jandro Avalos, Alexandria Barnes Sophie Benson, Alexander Breck, Nolan Breck, Makya Donovan, Ben-jamin Dougherty, Ilamay Draheim, Zoey Dunn, Lacey Frank, Isabella Garza, Kallen Glynn, Andrew Robran, Corbin Hanna, Eryn Harrison, Carson Harter, Gavin Hinton Elli Hoban, Owen Honstad, Tatyana Johnson, Isabella Jyrkas, Jack Kuhns, Landon Lewer, Angelica Lopez, Amilya Lynch, Cash Lynch, Josi-Ann Mann, Max McShane, Fushen Mei, Braiden Nelson, Mia Nesenson, Gavin O'Brien, Stella Omtvedt, Trenna Peterson, Daniel-J'kei Petty, Titan Rahe, Gabriel Reynolds, Troy Ryan, Savannah Schlueter, Avery Selvik, Jesalyn Weise, Owen Wieseler, Jonah Worke

8th Grade

Straight A: Brooklyn Anderson, Slade Barnett, Maximus Boden-weiser, Alexis Claybaugh, Paige Du-fault, Madilyn Larrabee, Kaylee Lawson, Vivian Mader, Corrick Me-dina, Pearl Moore, Catherine Olson, Jaiden Schafer, Sadie Schimming Andres Vasquez-Neigebauer

A: Brooke Bartlet, Natalie Berndt, Ava Bruhn, Ella Bulfer, Lauren Drexler, Kloe Fuller, Ella Hackett, Kody HESS, Hannah Heusinkveld, Ethan Hiller, Sophia Hillsman, Haley Kahnke, Layla Keith, Alyssa Kilmer, Allen Kopetzki, Jolee Lar-son, Jayden Mann, William Mans-field, Mia Mitchell, Remy Murphy, Logan Reger, Chloe Roemhildt, Wyatt Schroeder, Sharif Amin, Han-nah Teague, Ellery Waldron

B: Nalani Allen-Haas, Hunter Barnes, Andrew Bartlet, Liam Bid-dle, Ryan Borneke, Rylee Burt, Tea-gan Collier, Kelsey Draeger, Simon Eideen, Kaden Elias, Lauren Grant, Dylan Hansen, Ian Hollinger, Jenna Hudak, Emmalee Jes, Jordan John-ston, Anders Jorgenson, Izac Kaiser, NAtan Kaiser, Tallyn Kaput, Ga-briella Maas, Dakotah Marik, Con-nor Miller, Riley Mitchell, Boedy Mokoff, Madison Roessler, Jacob Root, Deron Russell, Paola Sando-val-Pliego, Roman Siler, Brady Tlougan, Jasmyn, Villafuerte Jas-myn, Maddison Wilker

9th Grade

Straight A: Adrian Androll, Natha-nael Andrs, Kendall Bowers, Sophie Chawra, Jack Chen, Collin Dettmer, Emma Donnay, Benjamin Hagen, Tanner HAnson, Isaac Kehler, Siri Kuhns, Lucia Mansfield, Elizabeth Manthe, Kyle McGuire, Hazel Moore, Lily Owens, Addison Pfeifer, Tauston Rupe, Kalea Satori, Leah Scheffert, Jackson Tesch, Luke Yoder

A: Hunter Anderson, Andrick Bal-deras, Alexis Brinkamm, Callie Du-fault, MaLanie Engel-Mueller, Aiden Groskreutz, Jennifer Heman-dez-Verde, BRayden Hesch-Priem, Brayden Hoof, Tyler Jellum, Elijah Johanneck, Lexi Kanewischer, Sierra Krause, Melanie Krueger Ei-neke, Jaya Kunkel, Natalie Loeffler, Katlyn McMurphy, Oz Meyman, Jacob Mlenek, Levi Root, Ashley Sanchez Pliego, Kenzie Sandborg, Katlyn Schueller, Takara Slattery, Dylan Swancutt, Aliyah Taylor, Molly Volovsek, Cody Weber, Solo-mon Wilson, Maxwell Wirtz, Kar-issa Yerhot

B: Owen Arnold, Ryley Bartz, Elias Crosby, Caden Danner, Brook-lyn Danner, Brooklyn Flatau, Avery Gaul, Lucas Groll, Liam Hagre, Car-ley Hamilton-Knopf, Nolan Hansen, Ellie Hoehn, Emma Ibarra, Peyton Kalbow, Mia Kanewischer, Addison Kelm, Emily LeMieux, Gabriela Lopez, Bennett Ludwig, Kennedy Lynch, Camila Marquez, Mason Matz, Lucas McQuery, Joseph Mix-

teco-Perez, Gracie Morgan, Oliver Mulcahy, Aayu Patel, Ashlarae Peters, Keegan PEterson, Erik Radke, Damarius Russell, Ezra Skains, Arianna Theobald, Zole Thompson, Nicholas Waldron, Henri Wobschall, Kendra Young

10th Grade

Straight A: Sage Barnett, Lylah Bauman, Noah Dahle, Eduardo Gal-legos, Daniel Kohler, Ella Krautkremer, Suzanne Kuhns, Han-nah LaCroix, Evelyn O'Brien, Oliver Rohwer, Norah Schimming, Trista Stienhart, Jacob Thompson, Noah Thompson, Lucas Vasquez-Neigebaur, Addison Wieseler, Isa-belle Willhelmi

A: Alex Anhorn, Maxwell Ar-mendariz, Grace Below, Cecelia Bjerke, Addison Bornsta, Mallory Bruhn, Tricia Cox, Tarun Ewest, Tegan Flatau, Emily Gordon, Dom-inic Grunzke, Sarah Haley, Kadynce Hansen, Mason Jes, Gaige Johnson, Emma Keith, Kymberly Lopez Huerta, Hady, Josie Madsen, Thomas Mens, Preston Miller, Ali-son Mumme, Ava Omtvedt, Patrick Ritchie-Brady, Andrew Robran, Elizabeth Roessler, Cody Sieberg, Emily Slattery, Cameron Stagman, Ethan Stenzel, Zachary Theobald, Lillianne Wulf

B: Charlie Androli, Kayla Breedon, Quinn Dahle, Seth Eaton, Allie Eldeen, Alexandria Eustice, Ahmed, Farooq, Makenzi Ferch, Tristin Gross, Erin Gunderson, Grace Guritz, Mckyla Hasselquist, Maria Hernandez, Erroll Hughes, Zachary Hulscher, Samuel Hyland, Kiera Landrum, Kaelyn Larrabee, Owen Link, Elijah Miller, Jose Mix-teco, Bobby Mortensen, Isabel Olson, Lily Peterson, Carter Roem-hildt, Colton Schroeder, Caitlin Slat-tery, Sebastian Teague, Cherlynn Thissen, Cody Vagts

11th Grade

Straight A: Kyle Ahlschlager, Sa-mantha Azure, Maia Bartlet, Lugan Bultman, Hailey Dettmer, Joseph Feidkamp, Cecelia Huttemier, Jacob Kehler, William King, Lindsey Ko-petzki, Sarah Robbins, Christian Ro-driguez, Miranda Siritral, Haylee Sommers, Hannah Wilder, Ethan Yeater-Crosby

A: Joseph Adamek, Ashley Bar-rientos, Miranda Breck, Jaydyn Gaul, Aubree Hansen, Charlet Har-guth, Eddie Herman, Alexander Honstad, Sydney Kofstad, Griffin Krautkremer, Thyme Lang, Avery Madsen, Madelyn Malecha, Jacqlyn Mathem, McKenna Miller, Elizabeth Mortensen, Kiana Sands, Stormie Schmidt, Chloe Schumacher, Regan Thompson, Kloe Wadd, Kyrie Walker

B: Emma Allen, Joshua Azure, Ella Bartlet, Brenden Brown, Corbin Connors, Ethan Davis, Jayde Dono-van, Mason Droog, Katrina Du-ciaume, Olivia Frye, Janeli Garcia, Payton Garza, Emilie Hackett, Ellen Hagen, Ava Hansen, Cierra Ingalis, Jacardi Jelium, Megan Kanewischer, Eva Keck, Samantha Kopecky, Grace Lapides, Ryan Leigh, Alexis Miller, Oliver O'Brien, Brooklyn O'Malley, Tyson Reger, Kaleb Ro-beck, Riley Ruedy, Jayme Sandbeck, Piper Srp, Hanna Thursdale, Abbey Titus, Emma Williamson

12th Grade

Straight A: Taylor Barber-Flatau, Lillian Dahle, Nicola De Jager, Mason Dekruif, Isaac DenOuden, Katrina Fuller, Joshua Harrison, Jai-dence Medina, Jadyln Olsem, Eliza Sakovitz, Ethan Skains, Brooke Tramp, Emma Wieseler

A: Alayna Akers, Miguel Beltran, Elijah Breck, Jack Conway, Morgan Ebnet, Michael Evans, Maxwell Gaytko, Jordan Hackett, Alleyce Huff, Sophiah Johnson, Aliyah Kahnke, Hannah Kilmer, Haylie Kmecik, McKenna Krull, Jenna LArson, Felicity Madsen, Ian Malis, Madison Mossler, Madalynn Mumme, Jack Nelson, Carlyann Pi-laceyznski, Justis Rothbauer, Calista Schuette, Heaven Thibedeau, Lucas Trumbal

B: Luke Bartelt, Cole Bjerke, Spencer Christiansen, K'Shawn Coleman, Josiah Dahle, Aluyssa Feeney, Matthew Haley, Michael Hjermstad, Aaron Kotz, Paige Male-cha, Carter McQuery, Ian Medlin, Brecken Neid, Cameron Parker, Jewel Paulson, Brandon Pena, Isaac Potter, Thomas Quintero, Juliana Ross, Jack Schumacher, Devin Thompson, Ethan Westphal, Jadyln White, Ryan Zimmerman.

Blooming Grove addition blessed

By MICHAEL ROY
Publisher

Members of Methodist congrega-tions in Janesville and Waterville took part in a joint celebration Sun-day, June 26, to commemorate the completion of a new addition at the Blooming Grove United Methodist Church in rural Morristown. While Minnesota bishop David Bard visited to help bless the new addition, the congregation spent time remember-ing the rich history of the church.

The congregation started 166 years ago in March of 1856 when a German Methodist missionary named Rev. Grotchenmeyer began preaching in the local area, which at the time was known as “West Prai-rie.” Grotchenmeyer preached dur-ing the Civil War when the prairies and farmland of today were almost entirely undisturbed forests.

From this gathering of Methodists, two Methodist congregations began: the German site named Bethel lo-cated in Blooming Grove’s current spot, and Immanuel, located 3.75 miles west in a Swiss settlement.

The Methodists built the first Im-manuel church in 1862. After 21 years, they sold the building and con-structed a new church, the bell for which was cast in St. Louis circa 1900.

Meanwhile, the Bethel Church was constructed in the early 1870s with the pulpit on the west end. At that time, a partition divided the seat-ing section with men occupying one side and women occupying the other. In 1909, the church was rebuilt with additions to the pulpit and the south side.

In 1951, the Immanuel and Bethel churches decided to combine due to low attendance numbers which re-sulted from fewer farms and smaller families. Both congregations agreed it was impractical to have two churches so close together if they could combine without any contro-versy.

However, instead of constructing a brand-new addition to the Bethel church to compensate for the large numbers of people, the congrega-

tions literally lifted the Immanuel church off its foundations and made it the front part of Bethel. There were a few bumpy rides along the way, as 1951 brought with it a wet spring and summer, making for slick conditions on the gravel roads at the time.

The move involved tractors and even an army tank retriever. Aside from the sloppy roads, volunteers had to spread bridge posts and cables along the roadway to make a wider path for the rolling building. After the moved structure arrived, it took some doing to combine the two churches together. The congregation started “The Lord’s Acre Project” where they rented land and helped put in crops with the proceeds going to pay off costs of the new construc-tion.

After construction finished on the building, the church became known as Blooming Grove Methodist Church from 1951-1968 before being renamed the United Methodist Church.

In 2019, Blooming Grove United Methodist Church underwent con-struction again. This time, it was an all-new addition to the front of the church, including a lift to allow handicapped individuals to attend services, a new bathroom, and a ground-level gathering space. On its southern side, the addition also fea-tures stained glass windows from the original Immanuel building.

Today, all three parts of the com-bined structure serve critical pur-poses. The original part of the church on the north side serves as a Sunday School area with an attic for storage; the middle part moved from Imma-nuel serves as the sanctuary. The new addition gives access to other parts of the church for all who wish to at-tend the services.

The United Methodist Church community of Janesville, Waterville, and Blooming Grove reminisced ex-tensively on the congregation’s history as the newest addition was blessed this past Sunday. The cele-bration of the addition began with the remembrance and blessing of the original building site at Immanuel at 10:00 a.m. The service of dedication



Pastor Kathy King greets the congregation as they begin their service June 26, at Blooming Grove United Methodist Church. King also serves as a pastor for the Janesville and Waterville Methodist Churches.

Pioneer photo by Michael Roy

for the addition took place at 11:00 a.m.

Pastor Kathy King led the congre-gation in the doxology before the presentation and reconsecration of the building. Fred Vanderwerf, Southern Prairie District Superin-tendent, aided in the presentation. Members of the church then talked about the history of Blooming Grove with former pastors sharing their stories about their time at the church.

“What a blessing it is to be here today,” King said before the doxol-ogy. “It’s a beautiful day outside, a beautiful service, and a beautiful time for our church.”

Minnesota Methodist Bishop David Bard and Vanderwerf then gave sermons and shared Bible verse Isaiah 43:19, which states, “See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am mak-ing a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.”

King, Vanderwerf, and Bard then led the congregation in the prayer of consecration to bless the new ad-dition and the whole building.

After the service, the congregation gathered for an outdoor sloppy joe lunch and enjoyed the gorgeous day.

The Blooming Grove United Methodist Church may be out in the country, but it’s a hidden gem filled with a ton of history to discover. Thousands of people have attended



Former pastor Charles Grose

services throughout the years, whether at the original site of Imma-nuel or in its current location. It is an exciting time for the congregation there, and it will be exciting to see what other memories they will make.

Waseca Summer Feeding Program

By AMELIA ROESSLER
Staff Writer

Chicken waffles, cinnamon rolls, chili and tater tots and nachos are on the menu at Waseca’s Central School Building through the “summer feed-ing program” this year in Waseca. The program offers a free meal to anyone 18 and under throughout the summer, now through August 26. Monday through Friday, anyone from Waseca or surrounding towns can come for breakfast from 7:30 to 9 a.m. and lunch from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the school’s cafeteria.

“It’s a lot of the same options that

we do during the school year,” says worker Victor Gilmore, who works at Hartley Elementary School in Waseca during the school year. “This year is a little different; we’re ac-tually trying to make some changes to next year’s school menu,” he ex-plains. This summer, new food items such as chicken waffles, cinnamon rolls, chili and tater tots will be a part of the summer feeding program’s menu as a test to see if kids will like them or not. According to Gilmore, the tests have been successful to date. “So far so good,” he says. :Kids love it.”



Victor Gilmore helping the kids who come in for the summer feeding program.

Star Eagle photo by Amelia Roessler

NRHEG Honor Roll

NRHEG students grades 6 through 12 who made the second semester A and B honor rolls’ are listed below:

6th Grade

A: Ezra Boerner, Scarlett Chance, David Deen, Kenley Gehrke, Mallory Groskreutz, Nathan Hager, Zander Hanna, Chase Hanson, Claire Hrtza-nek, Savannah Johnson, Blake Klim-mek, Jovey Knudson, Aaron Merritt, Gabrielle Nelton, Calvin Nissen, Alexis Olson, Enoch Possin, Makenna Reeder, Avary Riskedahl, Reid Sandry, Dylan Schroht, Brooklyn Sommer, Tru Tao, Lilian Welder, Noah Weller, Levi Whiteside, Olivia Wilkenson, Abigail Williams

B: Lilly Diel, Alexandra Estrada Mejia, Abrianna Goette, Alamae Gutierrez, Owen Habben, Michael Her-rian, Korbin Johnson, Remington Johnson, Sean Lassahn, Connor Louks, Devon Mattson, Hunter McMann, Mi-kael Nelson, Blake Olson, Corey See-dorf, Charles Tufte, Alexa Viktora, Mya Wilson, Mya Yokiel

7th Grade

A: Jack Bartlett, Finnegan Bau-mann, Izley Boerner, Jada Braund, Clara Buendorf, Addison Buenger, Caleb Burgess, Brooks Gilliland, John Lynne, Brendan Schmidt, Clara Stenzel,

B. Ariel Anhalt, Olivia Berg, Abigail Cosgrove, Alexander Deen,

Orianna Degen, Savannah Farr, Keira Hutchens, Brynna Ingvaldson, Paige Johnson, Shayna Kress, Anika Ladlie, Khaiden Madsen, Ryan Schlaak

8th Grade

A: Holly Bartness, Evan Berg, Jordan Brouwers, Meela Budach, Hud-son Chrz, Kaitlyn Dobberstein, Kyera Eustice, Olivia Johnson, Boden Kitzer, Jozie Klimmek, Wyatt Larson, Gavis Lewison, Chloe Riewer, Trevor Selover, Adalyne Stadheim, Cheyann Torres, Kayden Warke, Owen Wayne

B: Madison Bogue, Shya Diel, Kaleb Hughs, Jacklynn Kress, Alexis Loken, Gabrielle Schlaak, Tatum Thibodeau, Abigailye Viktora

9th Grade

A: Hannah Brunsen, Eden Eads, Wendy Garcia Gutierrez, Katelynn Grinnen, Bo McCamish, Sierra Mis-gen, Mellna Monrreal, Jay Muilen-burg, Taylor Sandry, Aidan Schlaak, Talon Smith Vulcan, Grace Starman, Rielly Weitzel, Grace Borchert

B: Owen Bartlett, Andrew Broitz-man, Alden Doberstein, Aden Hana, Aryana Howe, Cole Hutchens, Jace Ihrke, Jozlyn Johnson, Jase Knud-son, Laine Krohn, Colton Kruger, Madisyn Langfit, Lukas Loverink, Carter Martens, Megan Miler, May-son Paten, Cohen Riewer, Logan

Schiel, Malory Schlinger, Wila Sel-tun, Gavin Sleten, Seth Staloch, Aspyn Stenzel, Olivia Wencil, Geor-gia Zimprich

10th Grade

A: Kia Buendorf, Parker Bunn, Payton Bunn, Julia Churchill, Levin Kitzer, Jordis Kruger, Keira Lenort, Addison Loken, Kiyah Mikesell, McKenzie Mueller, Madison Mur-ray, Preslie Nielsen, Evelyn Ny-degger, Erin Peterson, Anabelle Petsiner, George Roesler, Tayler Schmidt, Elsie Schultz, Hallie Schultz, Brenna Sommer, Isabel Stadheim

B: Ned Bell, Gavin Briggs, Kyra Cain, Jackson Chrz, Dany Deniz-Clark, Sydney Lewer, Dacoda Mala-kowsky, Faith Nielsen, Samuel Olson, Jaylin Rab, Clay Routh, Rese Routh, Cayden Thorson, William Tuttle, Malona Wilson

11th Grade

A: Aidan Deyle, Anton Domeier, Bailey Ihrke, Bree Ihrke, Erin JA-cobson, Shelby Johnston, Malu Monrreal, Conner Nelson, Valerie Nelson, Sawyer Prigge, Sidney Schultz, Tatum Smith Vulcan, Trinity Smith Vulcan, Ethan Thompson, Will Utpadel, Eva Wayne, Noah Wilder-Gotland

B: Sean Beauvais, Aden Berg, Faith Borchert, Ayana Boyd, Haley

Breitbarth, Jared Cain, Thomas Clif, Kara Doyle, Sarah George, Wyat Groskreutz, Jackson Lageson, Ma-kota Misgen, Vada Nelson, Charlie Nisen, Andrew Phillips, Cody Reis-tad, Brady Schlak, Kaleb Schmidt, Mayla Soulisak, Brooklyn Strand, Josie Strom, Corie Warner, Gavin Wilkenson, Ashley Wobschal, Brad-ley Wobschal, Katelyn Zimerman

12th Grade

A: Autumn Combs, Alex Dobber-stein, Severin Eads, Linda Garcia Mejia, Cora Harpel, Jordan Horejsi, Madison Johannsen, Brenlee Knud-son, Cassie Kormann, Ava Kyllo, Matthew Mueller, Cameron Nich-olson, Ethan Peters, Anna Peterson, Brittney Rocha, Ralph Roessler, So-phie Stork, Journey Utpadel, Torri Vaale

B: Jaxon Beck, Hunter Bogue, Teagan Borwege, Bo Budach, Da-kota Katerling-Korman, Austin King, Kyle Kruger, Miranda La-Cane, Gabriele Ladlie, Trevor Le-nort, Lex LEwison, Tylar Malakowsky, Rhys Martin, Mathew Olson, Porter Peterson, Nikolas Pet-singer, McKena Schiel, Benjamin Schoenrock, Clay Stenzel, Nathan Vanek, Haley VanWinkle, Alisa Wi-tiko

Streets of Waldorf



Judy Joecks of Waldorf snapped some neat photos of the street crewing laying new roads in town, shown above.

A birthday party at the meeting

By JONAH STAFFORD
Staff Writer

At the Waldorf City Council Meeting on the night of Monday, June 13, small town friendliness and a need to get work done intersected.

The meeting started with a little excitement when Waldorf Mayor Rob Wilkening nearly dropped, but safely delivered a birthday cake for city clerk DeeAnn Britton.

After the birthday song was sung, Britton blew out the candles on the cake leaving one alight.

“She’s got one lover, that’s good Dave,” jested the Mayor.

“How old do you think I am?” Britton asked her fellow council members.

“21,” answered councilwoman Carrie Ferch, jokingly. It was in fact Britton’s 64th birthday.

Once cake was distributed to the council members and all in attendance, the meeting went underway as usual.

Motions Passed

Payments were approved for slightly more than \$545,000 in construction projects for road construction and city infrastructure.

A motion was made and approved by the council to adopt Resolution 2022-003, accepting the offer to purchase a \$3,439,000 General Obligation Revenue Bond from the United States of America.

The Waldorf Fire Department was granted an off-site gambling license for the raffle at its annual burger and sweet corn feed.

A resolution to pull overgrown



Waldorf City Clerk DeAnn Britton

WALDORF CITY COUNCIL

trees and bushes outside the community center was passed.

Other Business

After an unsealed drop box resulted in checks falling through the opening and onto the ground, the city council confirmed that the issue was resolved by sealing the box. This will help mitigate the issue of unpaid and partially unpaid bills. As of May 31, \$907.09 was not collected.

The city council is looking into artificial turf and pouring new sidewalks for the Community Center. Further action will be taken once accurate quotes and logistic information are available.

The city of Waldorf plans to close on June 24 for the Minnesota Rural Water Finance Authority Loan with \$3,571,040.40 due.

The city council is in the process of interviewing cleaning staff candidates.

The Waldorf Community Picnic to raise money for Waldorf Days took place June 22.

Dunn to resign

Care Center administrator last day July 8

By JESSICA LUTGENS
Staff Writer

During its June 13 meeting, the New Richland City Council approved the resignation of care center administrator David Dunn. In his letter of resignation, Dunn stated that “the Covid pandemic has taken a toll professionally and personally,” leading him to choose a different career path in healthcare. Dunn thanked the Care Center Advisory Board, the New Richland City Council, and the center residents and staff for his opportunity to serve as administrator. His last day of employment will be July 8. The council also moved to allow City Administrator Tony Martens and the personnel committee to begin recruiting a new administrator.

After the agenda and consent agenda items were approved, the council approved a request to close the 100 block of North Broadway from the hours of 7 p.m. to 12 a.m. on July 23. The council also heard from State Senator Gene Dornink, who has been introducing himself to communities in District 27 during the public input portion of the meeting.

Sara Jo Vulcan presented the ambulance report, stating that the New Richland Ambulance had gone on 83 runs so far this year. The ambulance has multiple events planned for this year’s Farm and City Days celebration, beginning with a 5k run at 8 a.m. on July 9, followed by roll-over/crash simulators and drunk goggles from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the city park. The ambulance recently welcomed two new crew members and thanks the local community for all its support. The report was approved.

“The Covid pandemic has taken a toll professionally and personally.”

— New Richland Care Center Administrator Dave Dunn

In the fire department report, it was stated that the NRFD had two medical calls and one fire call in May. A pancake breakfast will be held in the fire hall during Farm and City Days on the morning of Saturday, July 9 beginning at 7 a.m. The report was approved.

Police Chief Josh Knudtson presented the police report, stating that the NRPD responded to 130 calls in May, bringing the total for the year to 614. Seven ordinance compliance letters were sent during the month, for which follow-up will be completed when required, and POST licenses for four officers were renewed. Maintenance was done on the squad vehicle, and local residents are reminded that New Richland’s Night to Unite will be held on Tuesday, August 2 this year. The report was approved.

An update was given on this year’s swimming lesson program at St. Olaf Lake, as the initial number of lifeguards expected for the season has been reduced. The program’s start



New Richland Care Center administrator Dave Dunn

NEW RICHLAND CITY COUNCIL

was delayed by a week due to a lack of lifeguards, and the plan for providing concessions, which was discussed at a previous meeting, has been canceled as well. One lifeguard, Jessie Raimann, agreed to training classes and management of the Water Safety Instruction program for the

next few years, resulting in a motion from the council for the following: raising the pay for Raimann to \$18/hour and providing an hourly wage for time spent in training classes. The motion carried.

Financials for April, along with accounts payable and financials for May, were approved, along with Resolution 22-08 amending the city fee schedule. The meeting adjourned at 8:13 p.m.

Preliminary budget approved

By MICHAEL ROY
Publisher

The Janesville-Waldorf-Pemberton School Board adopted its preliminary 2023 fiscal year budget at its meeting on Monday, June 20. The 2022-23 projection for the general fund revenue budget was \$9,194,278, down 9.81 percent from the \$10,194,703 revenue for 21-22.

The only budget items that increased were basic formula by 0.15 percent and special education by 2.36 percent. Everything else decreased, with federal and miscellaneous local budget lines decreasing by 62.75 percent and 38.28 percent, respectively.

General fund expenditures also went down slightly by 1.72 percent. Although only two expense items decreased, they were significant enough to decrease the impact of increases in other categories.

Salaries across the board increased

by 4.64 percent. Teacher salaries increased least by 2.83 percent, while administrative salaries increased by \$45,000 and other salaries increased by \$100,000.

Capital expenditures decreased by 21.26 percent. The budget for the 2022 fiscal year included \$300,000 for ESSER III projects (Windows and Technology), \$200,000 for remodeling in the Family and Consumer Sciences (FACS) classroom, and \$100,000 for remodeling in the Life Skills department. 2023 fiscal year projections factor in \$261,000 for self-funded energy savings projects, \$40,000 for technology projects, and \$55,000 for seal coating the parking lot.

During the presentation of the adopted budget, the school board also discussed enrollment projections. The district anticipates 655 students in the upcoming year, down 21 from 2021-22.

JWP SCHOOL BOARD

The board also approved school policy changes after a third and final reading. Eleven separate motions were needed to implement changes policies covering complaints, public and private personal data, reporting of child neglect, drug and alcohol testing, school district testing, assurance of test security, and updates of URLs.

In new business, the board approved a resolution relating to the election of school board members and calling the school district general election. They also gave a green light to a second resolution establishing dates or filing affidavits of candidacy. The filing period opens on August 2 and will end on August 16, 2022.

After approving their membership

to the Minnesota State High School League, the school board approved an increased mileage reimbursement rate of 62.5 cents per mile effective beginning July 1. The board also accepted an agreement with Taher for food service management services for 2022-23 pending state approval of the contract.

The school board accepted donations totaling \$254,665.80. Box Tops for Education donated \$15.80 for the snack cart, while South Central Service Coop donated \$250,000 for the CTE FACS Grant. Other donations were from the Bulldog Backers for the JWP FFA Grant (\$500), Compeer Financial for the Agriculture Education Grant (\$4,000), and Medo Township for Community Education Expenses (\$100) and the Prom Committee (\$50). The meeting adjourned at 7:02 p.m.

Deficit spending continues, but on decline

By REED WALLER
Staff Writer

At the June 16 meeting of the NRHEG School Board, the District’s budget deficit was continued, amid needed facilities improvements and the rising cost of insurance.

Supt. Michael Meihak brought to the board the advantage of the discussed Elementary Lighting project. The project carries a price tag of over \$80,000.

The advantage of the retrofit project, though costly, has the advantage of coming with an estimated savings of over \$10,000.

Other important projects include the track resurface, the in-progress gym/lobby/activity entrance at the secondary school, and the proposed gym floor. These projects are all looking to be coming in under bid.

DONATIONS

Donations included: \$50 from Main Street Dental, \$25 from Sorenson’s Appliance, \$100 from Jensen Heating & Air, \$100 from L&D Ag Service, \$200 from Sequoia Landscape, \$75 from Matt Holland Ag, \$150 from Carr’s Tree Service, \$150 from Arcadian Bank, \$250 from Flexible Plastics, and \$100 from First National Bank Waseca, all for Eagle Bluff. \$500 for the Elementary Summer

School from Anonymous, two 5x7 U.S. flags from the Waseca American Legion, \$1,020.84 from Finly’s Wings at Work for TWINS Learning Day, \$1,974 from NRHEG Football Boosters for Sportscope, and \$194.14 from Artsonia for the Secondary Art Department.

Total: \$1,700.00
Total to date: \$98,489.72.

BIDS

Snow Removal Bid for Ellendale was accepted for Dobberstein Snow Removal, and Snow Removal Bid for New Richland was accepted for Moen Snow Removal.

Bakery Bid for 2022-23 was accepted for Pan-O-Gold Baking Company, at a 27.7 percent increase from last year.

Dairy Bid was accepted for Prairie Farms (formerly Dean Foods) at an increase of 53 percent from last year. Membership in Minnesota Rural Education Association was renewed. The Base Fee is \$1,100 and the Legislative Fee is \$924.00 per year for a total of \$2,024, a one percent decrease from last year.

WORKFORCE

Resignations: Heidi Jacobson – Elementary Para – 13 years; Karina Gaona – Secondary Para – 1 year; Olivia Erickson – 5th Grade Teacher – 3 years; Carma Pederson – Second-

School Board NRHEG

ary Para – 1 year.

Contracts: Colin Zidlicky – Head Cross Country Coach; Craig Kopezki – Elementary Principal; Kate Kruger – Elementary STEAM teacher; Katelyn McGowan – Early Childhood Special Education Teacher.

Certified Occupational Therapist Assistant (COTA): Naomi Elmhorst, in an agreement 50/50 with Janesville-Waldorf-Pemberton Schools. NRHEG will pay the salary and benefits, while JWP will reimburse NRHEG half of the costs.

OTHER ACTIONS

An MOU Agreement was drafted to allow the Community Ed Director to handle the VEBA/HSA part of payments.

The district renewed their Membership in the Minnesota High School League.

INSURANCE BID

A bid from the Jensen Agency in Owatonna for District Property, Liability, Auto, and Workers Compensation insurance was considered in the amount of up to \$151,547.44 for

the annual premium.

“We are waiting for the final quote,” said Meihak. “We are hopeful that the final numbers will come in closer to \$130,000.”

Members discussed the number and it was considered that they may go as low as \$122,000.

“I’d like to entertain a request for an approval at an amount not to exceed \$130,000 so that we can go ahead with negotiations,” said Meihak. The motion passed.

A standalone policy for cybersecurity is being discussed but not approved yet.

BUDGET

Business Manager Karla Christopherson discussed the 2021-22 Revised Budget and the 2022-23 Proposed Budget.

Items affecting the budget and keeping the district in the red are:

Higher bread and milk prices, food service, fuel prices (“We didn’t book enough fuel and we’re locked in until November”).

The purchase of two vans and bus. “We’re trying to get things back into place,” said Christopherson.

NEXT MEETING

The next regular meeting of the NRHEG Board of Education will be Monday, July 18, 2022 at the Secondary Media Center at 6:30 p.m.



Beth Hanson, owner of Unity Gifts in Waseca, enjoys her last couple days in the store. Photo by Amelia Roessler

Unity Gifts closes doors

By AMELIA ROESSLER
Staff Writer

In November 2021, Beth Hanson realized a lifelong dream in the form of her consignment store, Unity Gifts. Early last month, Hanson closed the doors for the last time.

Unity Gifts was a consignment store which offered items made or upcycled by area vendors. The store was filled with unique gifts and handmade items available on only a very limited basis. At the high point, Hanson had upwards of 50 to 60 vendors selling things in Unity Gifts.

“I just wanted to give it a go and see if I could make it come true,” Hanson says, “and as we’ve gotten into it, we financially need more than just this.” So, the decision was made that Hanson could no longer keep Unity Gifts as her only source of income, and a full-time job was needed. “I had to be honest with myself that I didn’t want to juggle both,” Hanson explained, not wanting to commit to both the store and a full-time job.

Being honest with herself, Han-

son realized that “It’s not what I thought the dream would be.” The concept for Unity Gifts was born back in college, when her friend’s mom had a small consignment store that Hanson just adored. While she found that store appealing, the idea was truly cemented when Hanson traveled to a football tournament and saw a fabulous boutique, then learned it, too, operated on a consignment basis. That was when Hanson decided to start a shop of her own, and Unity Gifts was born.

Starting a small business is a challenging venture. Waseca is an excellent setting for small businesses, but because there are so many, it is difficult for the community to support all of them. Hanson realized this and is just grateful to be staying in Waseca, where the community is so supportive and strong. Although she is ready to move on, Hanson thanked everyone for supporting her and the store through bittersweet tears in a farewell video posted on Facebook.

Dispatch center remodel approved

By AMELIA ROESSLER
Staff Writer

During its June 21 meeting, the Waseca board of county commissioners approved \$198,025 to update and redesign the dispatch center in the county sheriff’s office.

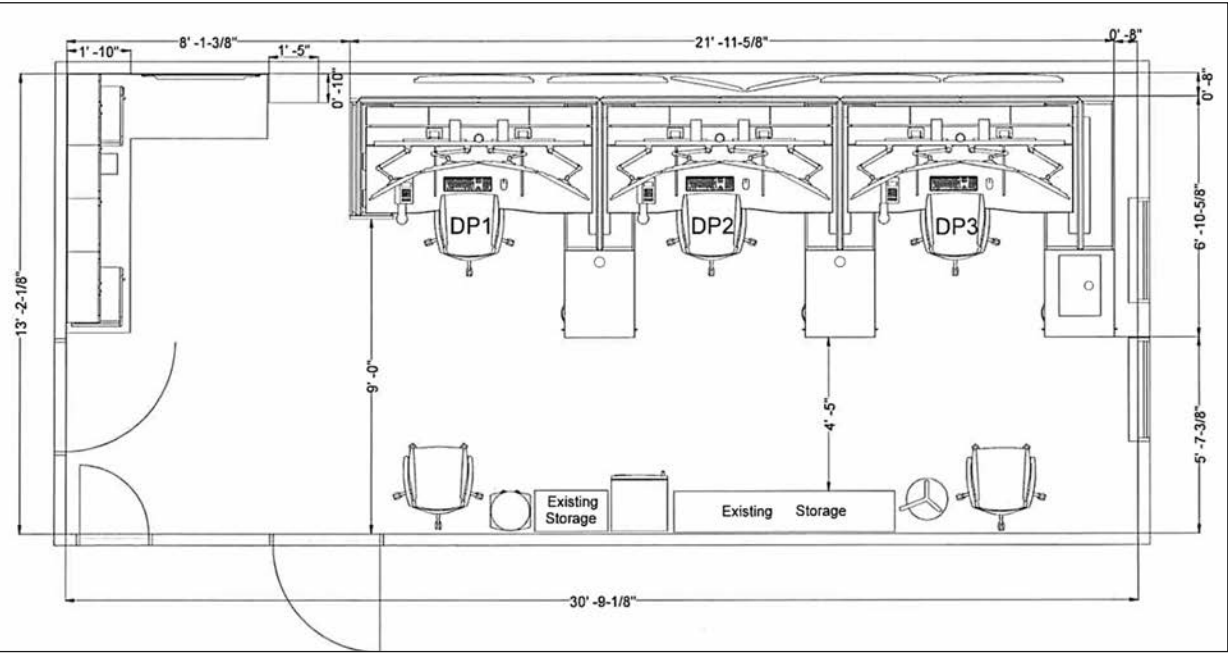
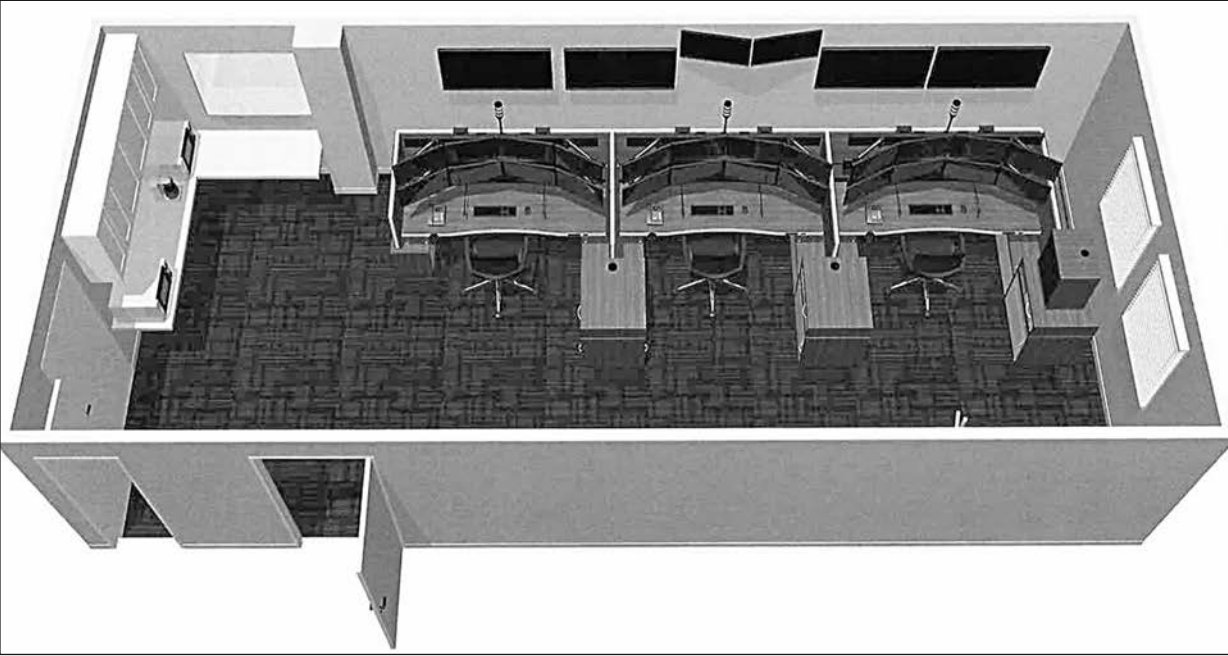
Sheriff Brad Milbraith told commissioners that the equipment currently in use dates from 2003 and receives round-the-clock use, so that some consoles require constant tinkering to remain functional.

In addition, Milbraith reported that the system used to receive and transmit 911 messages is outdated and undersized, even though that system was updated about 5 years ago.

Although the redesign, which will include not only new electronic consoles, but also new carpeting, paint and counters, was not previously budgeted for 2022, there is sufficient funding in the 911 budget to cover nearly the entire cost.

Commissioners learned that the harvesting of weeds on Clear Lake in Waseca has been completed for the year; recent heat and other conditions have made it impractical to continue harvesting. Of the 100 acres permitted for harvesting, 75 were.

A total of 230 tons (460,000 lbs) were removed from the lake. The board discussed allowing the weed harvester to be used on another body of water, but that requires a DNR



A computer generated image and detailed sketch of the proposed dispatch center.

permit as there is concern about the milfoil spread.

Commissioners approved the short-term closure of Broadway Avenue in New Richland during the town’s Farm and City Days celebration. The closure allows both for a parade and for a July 23 street dance

Progress at park

Janesville council member Jim Mulcahey was pleased to share news about the progress of Oelke Park in the Northwood neighborhood at the Monday, June 27 meeting. The Oelke family, who donated the land for the park, were pleased with its progress.

JANESVILLE CITY COUNCIL

“The Oelkes offered to pay for the signage at the park,” Mulcahey shared. “Not a single cent will come from the Park Board to pay for that sign. We are grateful to them and are happy to receive the help.”

Roughly 7’ by 4’, the sign will be located at the corner of Northwood and Oakwood Drives. Mulcahey was hopeful that the park’s features could include a half-court basketball area and a pickleball court.

Mulcahey also updated the council on the dog park proposed for Nelson Street. Public Works Manager Joe Ziemke estimated that the park would require 800 feet of fencing. “We plan on informing the neighborhood via letter about what we’re planning to do with the dog park,” Council member Mulcahey stated. “We hope to get feedback on that park through the public forum.”

Mayor Andy Arnoldt shared that some residents asked about the disposal of carp, an invasive species currently in Minnesota lakes. After a brief discussion, however, the council decided to table any further talk until they had more information on whether or not they could compost the carp.

Arnoldt shared that the Minnesota Health Department recently visited Whispering Creek Nursing Home for the first time since 2019. Although inspectors found seven maintenance deficiencies, they deemed those minor and gave the nursing home a pass.

The mayor informed the council that nursing home administrator Murray Finger will be resigning. Pete Madel will take his place. However, Arnoldt stated that Madel wanted to “absorb the position without absorbing the pay.”

“I think we need to give him

some kind of compensation for taking on the extra workload,” Arnoldt stated. He added that the Nursing Home Board would discuss compensation for Madel at the next meeting.

Council member Melissa Kopachek shared that the Personnel Committee looked through the League of Minnesota Cities’ personnel policy to see what changes the city needed to make to its own policies. “We had a lot of additions and revisions,” she said. “We had changes marked in red and yellow, and bright colors filled most of the pages.”

Department Head Report

Public Works Manager Joe Ziemke shared that the city completed the street maintenance projects included in its 2022 capital improvement plan; only a few “chip seal” projects remain.

“We did find a collapsed storm sewer pipe at the intersection of Nelson and 2nd Streets,” he stated. “That was an extra \$3,000 to \$4,000 expense we didn’t expect.”

Councilmember Jim Mulcahey then inquired about the weight limits on the North Street and Main Street intersection. “There is farm equipment on it all the time, and the road’s taken damage due to the traffic,” he said. “We need to get that traffic redirected somehow. Is that a ten-ton road?”

Ziemke replied that the intersection has a seven-ton weight limit.

Resident Ron Bruegger told the council that he discussed the matter with Police Chief Dave Ulmen. “He claimed that they don’t know whether or not they can enforce the vehicles,” he claimed.

Council member John Sprengeler explained that the true law was, “Every city street is considered a ten-ton road unless posted otherwise.”

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Clear Lake Weedeater



The weedeater, shown above on Clear Lake, was purchased last year and put into work this year. The weedeater is done for the year because the weeds have reached a point where they can no longer be harvested.

Enrollment down, budget trimmed

By AMELIA ROESSLER
Staff Writer

A subject of lengthy discussion at the June 16 Waseca School Board meeting was the 2022-23 “preliminary” budget. Planning was complicated by a drastic 100-person drop in student enrollment compared to past years, which will dramatically reduce state funding. The 2021-22 school year ended with enrollment of 1727, with 1708 students anticipated for the beginning of the 2022-23 school year.

In response to those concerns, the preliminary budget includes \$180,000 less spending in fiscal year 23 than in fiscal year 22. Total budgeted expenditures for 2022-2023 are \$33,166,276; for 2022-2023 anticipated total costs are \$30,937,464.

Superintendent Eric Hudspeth shared information about a variety of topics, including the district’s long term facilities maintenance plan. He let board members know that research into anticipated future costs indicates certain im-

WASECA SCHOOL BOARD

portant projects—including repairs and maintenance work—may lead to up to \$14.5 million in additional expenses over the next 10 years. Hudspeth’s report also included steps being taken to address traffic and parking problems at the Intermediate and Hartley sites.

Strategic planning for the summer of

2022 and beyond was discussed including topics such as 2021-22 vision cards and administrative data day, the 2022-23 district school year vision cards

During the meeting, board members recognized new student council representative Addie Wieseler. Other recognitions included Bill Kuschel, tech personnel at the school, athletes, Mrs. Pfarr, Mr. Pollock, and the principals. The school board’s next work session will be July 7.

Waseca clinic plans to add physicians

By AMELIA ROESSLER
Staff Writer

The Mayo Clinic facility in Waseca is a critical access hospital, which means that it must meet specific requirements to continue receiving certain funding. One such requirement is that the facility have no more than 25 beds; it has 12 and is considering increasing the number in the future. A presentation during the city council meeting included highlights of telehealth and emergency medicine and their meaning for the community. Also talked about was the list of primary care physicians for Waseca, Janesville, and Waterville. It was reported that Mayo has signed on two additional physicians starting this August; next Au-

WASECA CITY COUNCIL

gust the number of physicians is expected to increase from four to six for outpatient and inpatient settings. The presentation also included the building maintenance update that started in 2021 and continues in 2022: the emergency department expansion and renovation totaling \$4.2 million. Spokesperson Mackenzie Miller conversed with Mayor Srp about the good quality of service in Waseca and that “working in Waseca has been an absolute joy.”

Council members were thanked by one Waseca citizen that mowing had taken place along the shore of Gator Lake. Ironically, when city staff

members looked into the matter, they discovered the mowing was not actually allowed, but had been done by someone who did not realize that. In fact, it had originally been intended that the grass should grow long enough to be harvested as hay. Council members discussed ways the misunderstanding could be prevented in the future, including possibly making more official agreements with area farmers in advance.

Anita Nelson, Waseca citizen, advocated for Mykayla Clark, an 11-year-old girl paralyzed from the waist down who hopes to be able to swim in the city water park. Nelson requested that the city council review the ADA Title II pool disability access requirements and invest in an aquatic wheelchair, a portable pool

lift, and staff training that is up to code; she pointed out that several components for safe access are not in place at the park.

Mayor Srp responded positively to the request, saying “We are going to do what we need to do to get Mykayla into the Waseca waterpark.”

The Dairy Queen was granted a lane encroachment variance for its drive-thru lane, allowing the restaurant to reduce the usual 25-foot setback by 5 feet.

A renovation project for the Johnson Pavilion in Clear Lake Park was discussed, with a number of possible variations: the park board recommended a plan which rebuilds the pavilion wall in the hillside, but which does not include adding restrooms.

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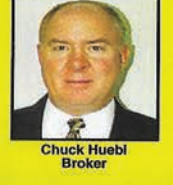
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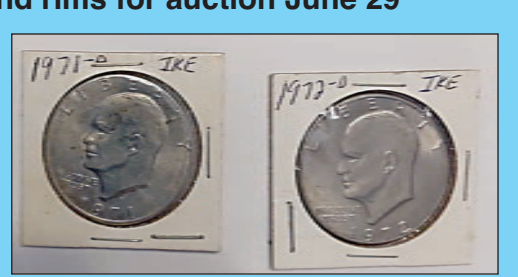
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A few brave men and Catholic Daughters

Annual fundraiser at Sacred Heart

By AMELIA ROESSLER
Staff Writer

Only a few brave men showed up at the Catholic Daughter's Luncheon at the Sacred Heart Church in Waseca last Friday, June 17. The luncheon was put on by the women of the Catholic Daughter's group. "This is our major fundraiser of the year," said region co-chair and president Pat Foley, who greeted people at the front door.

The luncheon included salads, sandwiches, and great service provided by the Catholic Daughters helpers and volunteers. As the lunchroom or cafeteria of the basement of Sacred Heart Church filled with supportive and smiling members of the Catholic Daughter organization, a delicious lunch was served.

The Catholic Daughters have been in Waseca for 75 years and they meet monthly, supporting different local organizations such as Pregnancy Options out of Faribault, the church's neighbor Bethlehem Inn, and during Christmas, a family that the Catholic Daughters adopt and buy presents for. Nationally, the group supports Habitat for Humanity, and at home, it helps provide funding for the Sacred Heart Church and school. But, "We also like to get together and have fun," Foley explains.

Now in her second term as president, Foley has worn many hats for the Catholic Daughters. First, a secretary for two two-year terms and a treasurer for two more, Foley doesn't plan to stop being involved with the sisterhood. "I don't have any sisters, but this is a great group of women that we can just share and understand each other," she says. With 103 members in this chapter of the Catholic Daughters, the only requirement to become a member is to be 18 years of age, a female, and Catholic.



Members of the Catholic Daughters enjoy lunch in the Sacred Heart Church basement during the Catholic Daughters' annual fundraiser, June 17.
Pioneer photos by Amelia Roessler



Pat Foley greets people at the door.

The next day, June 18, the organization inducted new members and officers during a special Mass. The Catholic Daughters induct new officers every two years, and this time was the Waseca chapter's time to host the Catholic Daughter chapters from both Owatonna and Medford.

The Catholic Daughters look forward to more events, including a speaker and yogurt bar June 25 to talk about grace and invite anyone who would like to become a member to join.



DEB TIMES TWO - Deb Perreault and Deb Wobschall

Hot beef and a slice of pie

By AMELIA ROESSLER
Staff Writer

A hot beef commercial drive-through was just what some people needed Friday, June 10, as they waited in line for pieces of delicious pie and hot beef commercial sandwiches from 5 to 7 p.m. at the St. Paul Lutheran Church in Waseca.

As kids delivered orders from vehicle drivers to the assembly line of students putting together meals inside, Mark Pehrson watched over it all. Being not only the president but also the janitor of the congregation, Pehrson was and is the man in charge.

Pehrson began arranging trips forty years ago for the high school wrestling program, putting together destinations and missions for the team. When his granddaughter asked him why their church didn't have any mission trips, he jumped at the chance. "2016 I started the mission program," he says. "I open it up to all churches - anybody that wants to come can join in as long as you work."

Paging through the booklet of pictures of past trips, Pehrson explains how last year the group went to Colorado to paint buildings. Flipping further into the past, he explains how he took a mission group to Louisville the first year of the program in 2016. This year, the mission trip is once again to Louisville, where group members will work at a kitchen feeding the homeless. Of the 28 people going, five have gone before, obviously happy with their experience last time. Smiling, Pehrson explains, "I have a lot of families bringing their grandkids."

"I open it up to all churches — anybody that wants to come can join in as long as they work."
— Mark Pehrson

With money raised during the hot beef commercial drive-through and other fundraisers such as the February bean bag tournament, the group set off Friday, June 17 on a charter bus headed for Louisville. The next few days were spent touring the city, visiting sites like the famous ark and other amusements before getting down to the hard work of making and bagging food.

The hot beef commercial provided excellent practice: by 5 p.m. the group had already served 100 people. Pehrson said he tries to keep the kids busy, but knows that "It's fun and kids enjoy it and we got it down to a system." Around 30-40 pies were brought in for the drive-through, each kid bringing their own, a few purchased, and Pehrson's wife making 13 or 14 of them herself.

Five years ago, Pehrson started doing this hot beef commercial at the American Legion in Waseca, hauling things like dishes, pies, and other food over himself. He plans to continue the drive-through at the St. Paul Lutheran church, saying that, "It's a great money maker and less



ON A MISSION - Students going on the mission trip to Kentucky put together hot beef commercial meals for the residents and delivered them via drive-through, shown above.
Pioneer photos by Amelia Roessler

work for me." It was started at the church after Covid. In the beginning, only 140 attended the beef commercial fundraiser at the Legion. But now, especially with the growing number of people attending, it's easier to stay at their own church.

Now, with a successful hot beef commercial drive-through and the resulting trip, everyone is excited. "It's a lot of work, but it's fun. I enjoy doing it," Pehrson says about setting up all the mission trips.



Mark Pehrson



The Pastor's Column

The hammock and chair are for rest

By: PASTOR KEN

I keep the trunk of my car full of the essentials. Now the essentials vary for each person and season, but there are a few things that never leave my trunk. I consider the things in my trunk necessary for my life and the situations I find myself in.

I have a hammock, a chair, pens and paper, a small tool kit, a few knives, a tomahawk, a slingshot, a bag of strawberry lemonade drink mix for 2 gallons, a variety of dice and a jeweler's loop. Seems odd doesn't it? Just a variety of things that may have been collected, but I assure you, they all have purpose and intention.

The hammock and chair are for when I need to rest. There is nothing like taking a nap in the shade of a tree in any season, and yes, in the winter I add a sleeping bag to the trunk for the same reason. I keep pens and paper to work on sermons and plan services when I find myself with spare time. The tool kit is not for any specific reason, but it is a tradition and just sticks around. The knives are for when I hit a deer, but the one time I hit one, I didn't have a knife with me, and I regretted it. The lemonade is from a food shelf I went to with a client, but they were diabetic and couldn't drink it, so now I have it ready for an impromptu party. The tomahawk, slingshot, dice, and loop are all for fun.

There is history to the items I carry with me. They have meaning and purpose to them. I am not necessarily attached to the items in my trunk, but I have good memories with them. I once took a two-hour

nap at a random rest stop in my hammock after throwing my tomahawk at a stump. I didn't want to drive the 75 miles home to just turn around and drive 90 miles to another client. I remember those times and the experiences that I had, but the tools I carry with me are not special, just necessary.

The tools I take with me allow me to engage in a life that matters and activities that meet my personal needs. In the spiritual realm we develop tools and use them to build our relationship with Christ. These tools help us develop an effective prayer life, study skills, and faith that helps in the toughest storms.

Ephesians 6:13-17 reminds us to take up the tools of faith to face the trials of this life. "13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

Are you putting on the armor? For the rest of summer we will be talking about the Armor of God in these letters and the usefulness of the tools for life and living. I look forward to seeing you again after our vacation!

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The Trinity Lutheran confirmation class of 1946, the last group confirmed in the congregation's wooden building. Back, left to right: Richard Bartelt, Orville Root, Ed Ross, Stanley Roeglin, Rev. Emil Wachholz, Lyle Cromer, Arvin Krassin, Maynard Schoenfeld, Norm Gehring, Orville Stanke. Front row: Irene Barnett, Vera Prechel, Violet Yess, Darlen VanLoh, Helen Ross, Lorraine Yess.

Standing the test of time

Local Lutheran church celebrates 150 years

By DEB BENTLY
Staff Writer

Trinity Lutheran Church of Wilton is celebrating its 150th Anniversary this year with quarterly events, one of which took place this past Sunday. A highlight of the day was having Rev. Dr. Lucas V. Woodford, the president of the Minnesota South District of the Missouri Synod Lutheran Church, as guest preacher at the 10 a.m. service, followed by that major Lutheran tradition: a pot-luck meal.

“Wilton” is one of Waseca County’s 12 “townships,” but it was once a bit more prestigious. In fact, from 1858 until 1870, it was the county seat, complete with courthouse and post office. But when it was learned that two railroads—one running east/west and the other north/south—would intersect somewhat to the north and east, the controversial decision was made to relocate the county government to a new community to be organized at that location. The new county seat would have the same name as the county itself.

Though the town of Wilton held on for a bit longer, it was destined to lose its businesses and its citizens to the commerce and industry made possible by the railroads.

A sturdy but well-worn record book still kept at the church lists the organization’s first official act: a baptism recorded in 1872. Trinity Lutheran had become the third church in the village of Wilton.

Driving by the location today, a casual passerby sees only the single structure, the organization’s brick building, constructed in 1950 to replace the aging wooden church which had been only 20 feet wide and 30 feet long. Perhaps because it is brick, the building seems somewhat ageless and outside time: Classic. Austere. Set apart.

But Norman Gehring begs to differ. Born in 1931 and now 91 years old, Gehring has seen how the seemingly austere building is and has been a hub of connection and activity—a place where lives are changed, milestones are celebrated, and stability is to be found. But not always in quiet and austere ways.

The oldest child of Chester (born 1903) and Effie (born 1911) Gehring, Norm lived only a quarter of a mile from the church throughout his youth. One of five children in his family, he remembers going to services at the wooden building—by then a lonely structure in the middle of what seemed to be open farmland—with families with names like Root, Yess and Ross who had 10 or a dozen children.

He smiles as he remembers being sent over an hour or so ahead of winter services to light the two coal-fired “pot-bellied” stoves which provided the heat. “Then you’d head home to change, hoping the fires wouldn’t smoke and choke up the place before everyone got there.” He also recalls particularly cold mornings when no amount of heat seemed sufficient, with members of the congregation crowding close against each other for warmth.



Norm Gehring, one of Trinity Wilton's oldest members at age 91, has lived much of the congregation's history. He is shown standing next to the baptismal font which was used for his own baptism in 1931.

He also remembers a time when the roads were all gravel and the people arrived by horse and buggy. “They came from every direction, from as many as 6 or 8 miles away,” he recalls, providing family names like Bahr, Rudolf and Lever, many of which still appear on the church roster. He also remembers times when church couldn’t be held because the gravel roads were either too soft or covered in snow drifts which there was no fast way to break. “One year we just barely got them open for Easter,” he recalls, describing a team of workers shoveling an opening by hand through drifts so that a pointed plow could be forced forward to press snow to the side. “It was the only way we had back then. We didn’t know how much things would change.”

Despite the hardships and complications, though, “People went to church,” says Norm. “You were raised that way, and it was just what you did.”

Chester’s mother, Amelia, lived with the family. Norm remembers that, not only did the older generations speak German among themselves when they wanted to keep secrets, they also attended an earlier Sunday morning service which was carried out in German. This was part of a gradual evolution from earliest times, when services were entirely and only in German, to a time in Norm’s early adulthood when they were only in English.

In the early 1940s, congregation members began to talk about replacing their wooden building. It was a highly controversial discussion, but eventually “folks got on board with it. The pledges were made and the work was begun.” Norm’s 1945 confirmation class was the last one whose confirmation service was held in the wooden building. It was also among the largest the congregation has ever had: 15. Copies of the picture are still owned by families attending the church today: on it, then-pastor Emil Wachholz stands dwarfed among his students who are lined up formally—some of them looking somewhat impatient—in front of the altar still used today in the brick structure whose basement was, at the time, under construction a few dozen feet away.

Land for the new structure had formerly been part of Chester’s farmland. Norm remembers that construction projects in the Wilton area during the first half of the 1900s tended to be complicated by old platting which still showed certain areas as being designated for public streets or other rights of way for the village which was, by now, only a memory.



Trinity Lutheran Church of Wilton, located several miles south of Waseca on county road 23, was founded in 1872, when there was still a town located at the site. The brick structure where services are held today was built in the 1950s.

Pioneer photos by Deb Bently

As soon as the basement was structurally suitable, services were moved there, as were the altar, pulpit and baptismal font—all still in use 75 years later. Long gone, however, is the organ Norm remembers from his childhood.

“It stood up near the front,” he recalls. “It had to be pumped to work.” Apparently lightweight, it was also occasionally moved outdoors for use during mission festivals or other gatherings.

The new brick church was dedicated in 1950, although finishing touches—including the building’s iconic stained glass windows—were still being added. True to their roots, church members saved money on work by providing some of the non-skilled labor. Norm remembers Chester being part of teams which helped finish wood-work and mount doors and windows. Norm wasn’t around to help much just then, having enlisted in the army in 1953, returning in 1955.

An organization known as “Walther League” was also part of Lutheran activities at the time. Intended for young people beginning with the year of their confirmation, the group held activities over a fairly wide area.

Norm’s first date with Donna, his wife, now, of 67 years, was a Walther League roller skating event held in Faribault: they had also first met at a Walther League event. Donna remembers that roller skating was “a very big thing” in the mid-1900s, with roller rinks all around the area. She also remembers it being so important to her that she had to sell a few possessions to acquire her own “real” skates, with wheels attached directly to the shoe.

When Norm and Donna married in 1955, Norm stayed a farmer, acquiring the property where he and Donna still live today, about 1.5 miles from the Wilton church. Across that time, the church remained a hub of social activity. The first news that there had been a death in the congregation was often the sound of the church bell tolling: the custom was to sound a somber tone for each year of the deceased person’s life.

As their children began arriving, the far less somber task of keeping them quiet during church services was a new challenge. But thanks to their nearby location, their sons Dennis, Dale and Doug were eventually called upon to shovel sidewalks or take care of other tasks at the church. Over the next decades, Norm served in a wide variety of roles: trustee, treasurer, usher, bell ringer. Donna taught Sunday School.

Social activities continued and church numbers grew so large that even the “new” building didn’t seem large enough. “That was a time when you stuck around,” remembers Norm. “You ran the family farm.”

Donna became a member of the “Ladies’ Aid,” a group which managed social events at the church and carried out fundraisers, especially for missions.

Norm joined the “Men’s Club,” a monthly gathering “just for the guys,” where the card game “Pfeffer” was a main activity.

As part of the “Dartball” team, Norm remembers fierce competition among several area churches. The game, which uses a dartboard featuring spaces marked with labels like “home run,” “single,” and “strike,” combines the elements of baseball with the ability to hit desirable squares using a dart.

Especially in the winter months, dartball team members met nearly weekly, either for games or practice. Team members came from as many as three generations. “Wilton never had any trouble fielding a team,” recalls Norm, who remembers going to many state tournaments, some of which had 80 or more teams competing.

Then times changed. Especially, farming changed. Large families and multi-generation operations became less and less important as the number of dairy farms began falling. Numbers shrank again as larger equipment made it possible for a single worker to manage a thousand acres and more.

“There was nothing to keep people here,” observes Donna. “They had to go other places to find work, and the numbers at the church just kept falling.”

Unlike a few decades ago, there are now always plenty of open seats on Sunday mornings at the Wilton church. “We certainly invite anyone who would like to come and visit,” observes Donna.

Still, the congregation has much to celebrate as it observes its 150th anniversary. Many of its pastors have served for 25 years and longer, bringing their talents and dedication. The building remains classically beautiful, a charming place to attend a gathering or a peaceful place for worship and introspection. Its members remain dedicated to the church’s goals and priorities.

In addition to this past Sunday’s visit from the synod president, another quarterly celebration is set for October 30. At that time, Jared, the now-ordained son of former pastor Glenn Korb, will be a guest preacher.

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FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH 503 2nd Ave NE, Waseca * * *	CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLY 900 14th Ave SE, Waseca 507-833-1082 Sunday Worship 10:00 a.m., Sun Evening * * *				NOTE: CHANGES IN CHURCH CALENDARS MUST BE MADE BY NOTIFICATION FROM A MEMBER OF THE CONGREGATION TO THE WASECA COUNTY PIONEER.



Pioneer writer Deb Benty helps with a fireworks display in northern Minnesota. The photo above is from a demonstration she helped with during a 4th of July firework display last year.
Pioneer photo by Deb Benty

Clear Lake fireworks to start at 10 p.m.

As it has been for some time, the City of Waseca July 4 fireworks display will be fired from two large pontoon rafts on Clear Lake. The show will begin just after 10 p.m. and will probably last just over 20 minutes.

According to Derek Miller of Lew’s Fireworks—the company which provides the product used during the show—viewers can expect a variety of aerial effects, all accented by the wide open visibility and the reflection provided by the lake. Perhaps particularly eye-catching may be the “water cakes,” a type of display which is fired into the air for one effect, and which, when it hits the water, fires itself again for a second, somewhat unexpected effect.

“We always like to bring something new to the table,” says Miller. “We work to layer the sky with displays in various levels, colors, and styles.”

A spokesperson for Discover Waseca Tourism, the agency which raises funds and coordinates the

show, suggests that some of the most popular places to watch the display include from a boat on the lake and from the various parking spots and parks located around the lake’s perimeter.

The Waseca Arts Council and Historical Society are sponsoring Lakefest at Clear Lake Park beginning at 3 p.m. Arts and crafts, puppets, food booths and more will be on-going throughout the afternoon. Local artists Pete Klug, Miller Denn, Luke LeBlanc and Erik Koskinen will be performing live. More information about Lakefest is available in an advertisement in this edition.

Discover Waseca Tourism accepts donations any time of year toward the annual display; area businesses including Kiesler’s Campground and Monarch have made generous donations, as have the City of Waseca and various other donors. Individuals who wish to make contributions may do so by dropping off a check or cash at City Hall, where the agency is located.



PUBLISHERS - Michael Roy, left, and Eli Lutgens
Pioneer photo by Deb Benty

■ Pioneer from Page 1

“We plan to be responsive to those interests,” he says, adding that people with suggestions for news stories—including events in the faith community—are invited to contact the paper with information.

While this is the first full edition of the Pioneer, it has been preceded by coverage of Waseca sports events Michael has been writing in the Star Eagle since November, 2021.

Both Michael and Eli have been asked whether newspapers have a place in today’s technology-based society, whether the printed word isn’t dying.

“How can you call something ‘dying’ when it’s in three-quarters of the homes in a community?” Eli asks, observing that the number of subscriptions to the Star Eagle has been growing steadily. As for the Journal, which began in 2019, Michael says community members are still thanking publisher Tracie Rosacker for founding it, since the town had been without a paper since the closing of the Argus more than a decade earlier.

“A community newspaper not only records what’s happening, it preserves it,” observes Michael. “People recognize that; they want to be part of it.”

Still, the “pioneering” of this

new publication is in its early phases. Assembling the writers, photographers and resources needed to put this issue in people’s hands has been an exciting, invigorating process, according to Michael and Eli, with many steps taken behind the scenes.

Eli reports that the people and businesses he has contacted in the Waseca community so far have responded with energy and enthusiasm. “I’ve had hundreds of conversations,” he says. “I’ve been absolutely blown away by their response.”

While this issue has been distributed free to the entire county, the next issue will be distributed to Waseca addresses only. After that, the paper will be available only by subscription or on the newsstand. For the first weeks, the introductory annual subscription rate will be \$40, after which a regular rate of \$55. More information about subscribing can be found in the informational box on page two.

From here, Michael and Eli expect an exciting ride.

“We’ve been preparing for this for quite a while,” says Eli. “We have everything in place on our end and we’re excited to be getting started.”

“From here, we want to respond to the community...it’s needs and interests,” says Michael. “Flag us down any time and let us know what you want: I’m in the blue Kia.”

“Tell us what you want us to do.”

Pioneers



STAFF- Most of the Pioneer staff is pictured above. From left, Jonah Stafford, Amelia Roessler, Deb Benty, Jim Lutgens, Eli Lutgens, Logan Piltingsrud, whose photos have been featured in the Star Eagle, held by Melanie Piltingsrud, Michael Roy, Chris Schlaak, and Reed Waller. Not pictured Barb Finseth, Jessica Lutgens, and Snickers the cat.
Pioneer photo by Pam Goehrig

From tear sheets to publisher

By DEB BENTLY
Editor

It’s easy to say that the Waseca County Pioneer is in the same family as the publications covering the county’s other three incorporated towns.

Pioneer co-publisher Eli Lutgens, is the son of Janesville Journal publisher Tracie Rosacker and long-time area sports writer and NRHEG Star Eagle publisher from 2005-2021, Jim Lutgens. Through much of Eli’s childhood, his two parents worked together putting out the Star Eagle, performing the many various tasks from writing and photography to sales and billing to printing and distribution.

At age 15, prior to his sophomore year in high school, Eli decided to take an interest in the publication’s day-to-day operations. He let his mother know he would like a job and was told to report the next Monday morning. He claims he then went on to surprise both his parents that day: his mother by showing up on time, his father by being there at all. It turns out Tracie had been uncertain enough about Eli’s commitment that she had never even mentioned “hiring” him to Jim.

Despite his parents’ uncertainties, however, he was there and given one of the most fundamental (and perhaps tedious) tasks of the newspaper business. “Tear sheets” are partial pages from the newspaper which are “torn” out and attached to bills to prove to advertisers that their requested ads were published and appeared in the specified issues of the paper. Because it’s a job few people want, pulling tear sheets is one of the tasks often assigned to beginning staff members.

After spending that first morning tearing papers apart, Eli received the gratification of an immediate \$25 paycheck. “There are benefits to working for your mother,” he comments. Then he sat down with Tracie at an office table for lunch. When Jim returned to the office to find his son sitting comfortably, his immediate reaction was, “That’s it. You’re fired. I don’t pay people for eating lunch.”

Turns out he would be fired a few more times—and for far larger indiscretions than eating lunch.

Throughout Eli’s high school years, his older sister Jessica was called upon as a reporter. His contribution remained simple: tear sheets. Among the first exceptions was when he wrote about a fundraiser being held for one of his classmates parents, Darin Reese. “That was when I began to understand the value of writing a story,” he says. “Where else could I have told people to come and help my friend?”

Beginning in 2017, some health problems that Jim had been battling for years began to interfere with the newspaper’s status as a business. With so many different jobs done by so few individuals, the persistent absence of even one individual can be

devastating. Eli remembers watching the imbalances that would occur when Jim was absent and considering what he could do to help stabilize things.

One weekend when Jim was away and the status of the next week’s paper was uncertain, Eli decided to take quiet action. “I waited until everyone was gone for the weekend, and I went in and I sat down at the computer,” he recalls. “I worked all day Saturday. I worked all day Sunday. No one even knew I was there, but I was figuring out how to put together the pages so the paper could be printed.”

On Monday morning, his mother, sister and graphic designer Reed Waller arrived in the office to find him, again, seated at the computer. When Tracie asked him what he was doing, Eli pointed at the assembled pages on the screen.

“It was the quintessential ‘proud mother’ moment,” Eli says. “She turned to Reed and said ‘Look here, Eli’s put the paper together.’”

“Then Reed walked over. I showed him the screen. ‘Wow,’ he said. ‘You did everything wrong.’”

“But we have something to work with.”

For the next couple years, Eli says his level of importance at the paper would rise and fall depending on the status of Jim’s health. Still, he had learned enough that he became editor of the Star Eagle while Jim remained its publisher. Then, in 2019, when his mother decided she wanted to break away and begin her own newspaper in Janesville, Eli was able to be of assistance. Thanks to growing connectivity, he could make contributions to two newspapers at once.

But after persistent absences due to his health over the last part of 2019, Jim’s health gave out completely in January of 2020.

“This time, I had to be everything: sales, editor, bookkeeper, bill payer.” On top of these many demands, the paper had come to be on shaky financial ground. So shaky, in fact, that Jim eventually suggested there were only two options: either go to the community asking for donations, or file for bankruptcy and close the doors.

Eli opted for a third choice. Without ever mentioning the paper’s financial woes—and without telling his father—he put together a “special section” on the topic of breast cancer. It was a risky choice, since producing it entailed extra cost. But the special stories and features also encouraged readership—and gave advertisers an incentive to take part.

Eli remembers that Jim was quite angry when he first laid eyes on that week’s paper. In fact, he fired Eli on the spot. Fortunately, Eli was able to show his father that the extra expense had been worth it, having led to higher income.

As the de facto publisher of the Star Eagle, Eli went on to produce additional special sections, gradually turning the paper’s finances around.

“Wow, you did everything wrong... But we have something to work with.”
— Reed Waller

And then Covid hit. Very little was happening to publish as news, and area businesses vastly reduced their advertising. “If we had been in a bad position before,” Eli observes, “this was worse.” Despite the many difficulties and his many duties, he still remembered the importance of following the news. When the federal government issued funds to towns and cities to provide financial support to suffering businesses, and when Eli heard it mentioned at a city council meeting that the funds had been allocated to the “safety” portion of the city budget, he made some calls to follow up. Quite a few calls, in fact.

He contacted budget officers all over southern Minnesota to ask what they had done with their allocated monies: With the exception of Ellendale, the cities had not followed through on the funding’s intended purpose. The story Eli produced brought statewide attention and led to similar investigative journalism in many other publications. An award from Minnesota Newspaper Association hangs on his office wall today for the December 2020 story.

Awards aside, however, Eli admits that the Star Eagle might not have held on through 2020 if it had not been for relief programs and assistance. He expresses rich gratitude to the operators of the New Richland State Bank who, he says, worked hard to help assure the survival of numerous area businesses.

In March of 2021, Jim offered to sell the newspaper to Eli, and by April it was official. At 23, Eli had become the nation’s youngest newspaper publisher—and perhaps its most versatile, since he and graphic designer Reed Waller were the paper’s only two full-time employees. Naturally, the paper had the support of many part-time workers, among them writers, photographers, columnists, and those who helped with delivering the paper. In this last group was Michael Roy, who had joined the staff of the Janesville Journal and began performing some of his tasks for both publications.

Eli says he has been frustrated for some time with the quality of news coverage the residents of Waseca are receiving. “I can’t tell you how many times I’ve been told I should buy the Waseca paper,” he says. He asked Michael, who was already writing sports stories for the Journal, whether he would be willing to begin covering sports in Waseca.

“The first step to doing anything is action,” Eli said. “And since this was the action available to us at the time, it was how we chose to start.” Thanks to Michael’s willingness, coverage of Waseca sports has been

appearing in the Star Eagle since December. “We’ve had a really positive response,” says Eli, who adds that a fair number of Waseca residents have begun subscribing to the New Richland paper.

In the meantime, the Star Eagle has been increasing its editorial staff. Eli takes particular pride in the fact that, thanks to having more writers, his publication was able to produce stories about every memorial day event held in the county. He is also pleased that he now has staff in place to cover all city council and county commissioner meetings.

All of that escalation has been in preparation for the launch of the Waseca County Pioneer. The paper will use the talents of new staff in combination with the resources already in place at the Star Eagle.

“It just makes sense,” says Eli. “We’re already covering two-thirds of the county, why would we leave out our area’s largest community?”

As the Pioneer’s offices and resources are finalized, Eli will take on at least one more range of duties. “We’ll be remodeling our offices (at 103 S. State Street) for a couple of days, and then everything will be set,” he says, explaining that he, Michael, and quite possibly Tracie will be there with paint and brushes in hand.

As this new venture moves forward, Eli and Michael believe they are working from a very solid foundation. They feel they have the support of the community, and will be able to bring in sufficient advertising and subscriptions to support the ambitious editorial program they have planned. “We’re excited for the possibilities,” says Michael. “We’re looking forward to having a newspaper in Waseca that is actually about Waseca. It seems like it’s been a long time since the community has had somebody to talk with and share their stories with.”

This time, despite having “fired” his son numerous times, Jim agrees. “With Eli moving operations into Waseca, it’s as if things have come full circle,” says Jim, remembering having been a carrier for the Waseca Journal as a child and later a sports writer for the Weekly. “Waseca has a history of having two newspapers, though in the end only one survives, and I feel Eli has the knowledge, expertise and experience necessary to build the Waseca Pioneer into something great. I am amazed.

“It’s so nice to hear the stories Eli tells me about how many Waseca people know me, and, I have to admit, those stories make me smile.”