WASECA COUNTY PIONEER

LOCAL COMMUNITY-DRIVEN NEWSPAPER SERVING ALL OF WASECA COUNTY

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Sports

Winter wonderland

Mr. and Mrs. Claus make third annual trip to Starfire

By MICHAEL ROY
Editor

This past weekend, the Starfire Event Center transported many area children to a winter wonderland. Saturday, Dec. 3, 10-11:30 a.m. and from 2-4 p.m. and Sunday from 3-5 p.m., children and families could move among a variety of stations designed to be memorable and entertaining.

The event featured arts and crafts activities, cornhole games, Christmas movies, and snacks. It kept the children and their families busy. Some even had the opportunity to book a private photo session in one of the event center's back rooms with Mr. and Mrs. Santa Claus and enjoy the magical scene around them with trees that stand tall and snow that is "warm and never melts."

The Winter Wonderland event has been a staple of the Starfire Event Center for three years. Started by owners Gene and Bonnie Miller, it brings in hundreds of children per year, usually averaging about 100 per day.

"We love doing Christmas stuff," Gene shares. "It's a lot of fun for us to dress up as Mr. and Mrs. Santa Claus."

Wonder continued on 8

CLAUSES - Mr. and Mrs. Claus (also known as Starfire owners Gene and Bonnie Miller) visited the Starfire Event Center last weekend, sharing arts and crafts, games, movies, and snacks.
Pioneer photo by Michael Roy

OATH - New councilwoman Stacey Schroeder took the oath of office prior to the Dec. 6 meeting of the Waseca City Coucil
Photo by Eli Lutgens

Swearing in, taxes, and an extension

By ELI LUTGENS
Publisher

Monday night's city council meeting began with the swearing in of new council member Stacey Schroeder and was highlighted by a truth in taxation meeting and a completion date extension approved for SX construction, preventing thousands of dollars in fines for the late completion.

The final tax levy, including an effective tax rate increase of 1.5% is expected to be approved at the council's final meeting of 2022, on Dec. 20.

The night's consent agenda included meeting minutes from the Nov. 15 meeting and work session; payroll and expenditures; payment to Met-Con for the Clear Lake Park Improvement project, and a resolution for residential tax abatement for 1121 11th Ave. SE.

Two representatives were present to discuss the 2022 Sanitary Sewer Pipe and Manhole rehabilitation projects which are behind schedule. The sewer pipe project is expected to be completed by Dec. 16; the manhole rehabilitation is on hold until May of 2023. Controversy arose prior to the approval of the extension of the completion dates. The company HK solutions was technically violating its agreed-upon schedule and, per the contract, owed the city $1000 for every day past the original completion date of Nov. 25. With the approval of the extension, the city essentially forgave more than $21,000 owed. In exchange, HK Solutions offered an extension on each warranty by 2 years. With a lot of prodding, council member John Mansfield was told the approximate dollar value of the is $25-$30 for each of the 8,000 feet of sewer pipe. Without the deadline extension, HK Solutions claimed the quality of the installation would have suffered because it would have been put in place under det-

Council continued on 10

A word from The Word

And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

Acts 4:12

Man of the hour

New building not possible without Britton

By DEB BENTLY
News Editor

Jim Britton clearly does not seek the limelight. Instead, his motive for putting in more than 2,000 hours of volunteer time this past year with the Waseca Area Food Shelf is far more altruistic.

"The way I look at it, we're here to help the people who need help."

He tells the story of arriving at the food shelf one day to find a nervous woman pacing back and forth on the sidewalk outside. "Can I help you?" he asked. She was slow to respond, but after a bit of reassurance shared that she was at her wits' end regarding how to feed her family.

The smile on Britton's face is warm and genuine as he says simply, "So I got her inside and got her what she needed."

Of course, Britton is quick to point out, that single incident is far from the only one that could be shared. Supported by donations and grants, and by sales at the Neighborhood Service Center thrift store at 203 Third Avenue NW, the Waseca Area Food Shelf has been in operation since the 1970s and serves 150 families or more each month from all over Waseca County.

What's new about the food shelf is that it has a just-finished home of its own, connected directly to the Neighborhood Service Center. As a custom-built home should, it has all the features its builders could hope for–at least nearly

With about 1,600 square feet of space all on one level, the new structure is more accessible than the temporary facility the food shelf has been occupying for about the past year, at St. John's Lutheran Church. It has a wide-open public space where items can be set out and sorted, and where occasional tasks such as putting together holiday baskets or holding an open house can be accomplished. It is connected to the Neighborhood Service Center, so staff can move freely between the two establishments, thus manning both at once. There is a double-wide delivery door for bringing large shipments in or out. It also features a large, walk-in freezer which Britton points to appreciatively and claims, "We can store everything we need to right here."

TOGETHER - Volunteer Jim Britton next to the walk-in freezer at the Waseca Area Food Shelf's new facility. After months of work, the Food Shelf's components are all in one place, rather than scattered across town. stands in front of a new freezer inside the new Neighborhood Service Center building, officially unveiled Dec. 8, 2022.
Pioneer photo by Deb Bently

And, Britton's fellow food shelf governing board members are quick to emphasize, none of it would be in place right now without his 2,000 hours of work and dedication.

As a now-retired plumbing contractor, Britton used his knowledge, experience and connections to help arrange for the financing and design for the structure, then went on to manage and oversee its construction.

There were numerous complications...nearly all of which Britton had a hand in overcoming. It was he who communicated with lawyers and planning agencies about meeting the legal requirements to consolidate the newly-acquired lot and the one where the Neighborhood Service Center stands into a single legal property, thus making the construction possible. When complications with that process occurred and delays

Service continued on 8

WASECA CITY COUNCIL

Truth in taxation

By ELI LUTGENS
Publisher

Waseca finance director Alcia Fischer summarized the city's 2023 budget during a legally required "truth in taxation" meeting held the evening of Monday, December 6, 2022.

Fischer used a PowerPoint presentation to present an overview and numerous details regarding city taxes, the 2023 budget, tax levies, and impact on property owners.

Work on the 2023 budget began in Nov. of 2021 with staff work on the capital improvement plan. In spring of 2022, city staff began budget paperwork and started reviewing city services with council members. In July, city departments began preparing preliminary budgets. A month later the council began holding work sessions and meetings between the city manager, finance staff and department directors. During a September meeting of the city council, a preliminary levy of $5,732,593 was approved, an 11.2% increase, with an effective rate of 4.5% due to the ConAgra development project. Since that time, there has been one more work session, concluding with the Truth In Taxation meeting Dec. 6. In that time, the levy increase was lowered to 7.6%, with the effective rate at 1.6%. The final budget is expected to be approved at the Dec. 20 city council meeting.

This year's final levy expects to total $5.5 million, up about $400,000 from last year's. Compared with similar sized cities,

Taxes continued on 4

HANDS ON - From left, Ali and Willy Malecha; Dave and Paulette Krampitz. After 34 years of service to the Waseca area, Dave's Body Shop has changed hands. Described by their wives as "brothers from different mothers," Dave and Willy have developed a close friendship. The shop's name will remain the same, as will the great service. Dave will continue working the shop now owned by Willy and Ali Malecha.
Pioneer photo by Eli Lutgens

A new chapter

Dave's Body Shop changes hands

By ELI LUTGENS
Publisher

After 34 years in business, Dave's Body Shop of Waseca is changing hands.

A handshake agreement nearly a year ago set in motion the decision by Dave and Paulette Krampitz to sell their business to Willy and Ali Malecha.

"Dave wouldn't have sold to anyone else," Paulette smiles. "We needed someone who had the passion to carry on the legacy. These two will do that."

"We shop guys do a lot of stuff by gut feeling," Dave said. "I knew at the end of our first conversation together that this would work out."

A banker in Faribault who knows both parties was the link. The mutual friend was chatting with Dave one afternoon about a body shop owner looking to build another shop. "I told him, why build another shop when he could just buy mine?"

Maybe it was a joke, but maybe not. The mutual friend asked Willy if he would be interested in purchasing the Waseca business. The two met for lunch at the Pheasant Cafe and afterwards visited Dave's shop. Within an hour Dave and Willy had shaken hands.

"Our first purchase agreement was handwritten on notebook paper; Ali couldn't even read it," Dave laughed.

"We would have used a napkin if

Shop continued on 12

Compostings

by Al Batt

Precious memories, swishes come true

ECHOES FROM THE LOAFERS' CLUB MEETING

Guess who I bumped into on my way to my first eye exam in years.

Who?

Everyone.

DRIVING BY BRUCE'S DRIVE

I have a wonderful neighbor named Bruce. Whenever I pass his drive, thoughts occur to me. It gets late so early now. Some people have already deserted us for the warm south. We'll see you in 50°, they say. Thanksgiving had been a keeper. I delighted in opening my book to this chapter and spent it with good company and asparagus pickles.

A couple of months ago, an ambitious wind blew a small branch onto our roof. It was too small to do damage and I figured another wind would move it to the ground where I could catch it and move it to a brushpile. The stick has resisted all the efforts of the winds to relocate it. It's a sticky stick. What do you call a boomerang that doesn't come back? A stick.

I enjoyed poutine in a cafe in Alberta. Poutine is french fries and cheese curds smothered in gravy. It was a delicious cardiac event on a plate. I made it a healthy meal by declining a Nanaimo bar, which is layers of chocolate, coconut and nuts glued together by a creamy yellow custard.

I've been ringing the bells for the Salvation Army. I donated my earmuffs or ear warmers to the Salvation Army. I had hoped my ears would be rejoicing in the warmth the ear covers would provide, but they were too small for my fat head. They were in pristine condition, worn only once, and I'm certain another will have toasty ears thanks to them. The only thing they did for me was to keep me from hearing the bark of trees.

A LIFETIME OF RECOLLECTIONS

I need to learn how to use chopsticks. I thought I was taking chop class in school, but it turned out to be shop class, involving woodwork and metalwork.

A Chihuahua was my dog. He was loving, faithful and small. I encountered a fellow one day who looked at my canine companion and asked, "How small will he get?"

I'VE LEARNED

I love ice cream cones in the cold of winter because the ice cream doesn't melt.

Pets fill the awkward pauses.

Procrastinators don't live longer.

BAD JOKES DEPARTMENT

Before the crowbar was invented, crows drank at home.

What should I do when I come to a spork in the road?

World champion tongue twister is arrested and given a tough sentence.

In Star Wars XV, Luke needs a walker.

PRECIOUS FAMILY MEMORY

Joey Batt was presented with a commemorative basketball for scoring 1000 points by Coach Emilee Thiesse of the Minnesota State Mavericks. Swishes do come true.

NATURE NOTES

I want to notice everything. If you notice you aren't noticing everything, is that noticing everything? I digress. Bodies of water become leaf soup in the fall. I miss seeing the NASCAR birds, turkey vultures, flying in circles. In Roman mythology, Romulus and Remus, twin sons of a princess and the god Mars, are the founders of Rome. The brothers quarreled over the location of their new city. Romulus wished to start the city on Palatine Hill, while Remus wanted to put it on Aventine Hill. To settle their disagreement, they agreed to consult augury, a type of prophecy in which birds are observed and examined to determine which twin the gods favored. Each brother prepared a sacred space on his respective hill and watched for birds. Remus saw six vultures, while Romulus saw 12 and began to dig trenches and build walls for the new city on Palatine Hill.

I'm looking for a Christmas hawk. That's what I called the handsome rough-legged hawk when I was a lad. It's an Arctic breeder in Alaska and northern Canada and comes south to places like Minnesota and Iowa in the fall/winter. "Rough-legged" refers to feathered legs, which provide warmth. It, the ferruginous hawk and the golden eagle are the only American raptors to have legs feathered to the toes. Roughlegs perch on thinner branches than red-tailed hawks do and hover while hunting, with lemmings being the favorite prey in their breeding range. They're feeding on voles and mice here. Roughlegs come in light or dark morphs. Studies show dark raptors hunt more successfully during cloudy days and light-colored hawks flourish when the sky is bright. I watched a northern harrier, once called a marsh hawk, skimming low over an open field as it hunted; propelled on languid wingbeats with wings raised in a dihedral when gliding. It forages in a teetering side-to-side flight. A female harrier's plumage is dark brown above and buff below. The male is pale gray above and white below.

MEETING ADJOURNED

Be kind to everyone. You never know who might not be here next year.

When is the news at its slowest?

Music to my Ears

by Michael Roy

We have reached the point in the year where things are starting to wrap up, ramp up, and pushing a sort of breaking point. The holiday cheer is in the air, and many people - including us - are trying to get as many things done as possible before Christmas hits.

For us, it's churning out as much content as possible and stockpiling what we don't have room for until Christmas hits and we allow ourselves that one week to recharge before hitting the grindstone again in 2023.

There are two different opinions I've heard about when things slow down in the newspaper. Tracie, publisher of the Janesville Journal, believes that the first few months are slow because after that push for Christmas and the new year, it feels like nothing is happening and you start at square one like everybody else. Eli, your friendly neighborhood publisher, agrees to a certain extent. Advertising especially slows down after the holidays. He also believes late spring-early summer is additionally slower because there aren't as many events going on and we assign feature stories.

I see both points of view. There's not too much to write about around the area (that I know of) until February when Waseca Sleigh and Cutter arrives. However, January is when the sports season really kicks into high gear. Conversely, the summer months provide a few more opportunities to cover events and give us time to do feature stories and human interest pieces. But then you lose that busy sports season when the schools come out. My opinion? It's always busy depending on what content you're writing.

I feel like I've grown as a person since being in the newspaper. Many situations have forced me to get out of my comfort zone. Well, the paper in general has put me out of my comfort zone many times. I'm an introvert, and this job is definitely not one that allows you to be an introvert often. You deal with people all the time.

If you told me that at one point, I was an owner of a newspaper, I would have laughed in your face. But it's something that I can claim. Even now, I am an editor here at the Pioneer and I've become the manager of all the sports stuff at the Janesville Journal.

Both Tracie and her son Eli have taught me a lot of things in my three-year career in the newspaper industry. I am thankful for their wisdom, hard work, and patience with me as I learned the ropes (and still do with some things).

It's been a journey to go from someone not sure of himself on anything over three years ago to doing everything that I do today. It's been a blessing providing for the community that I graduated from, and I hope to do even more in the future. It's been great to cover Waseca sports in the past year, first at the Star Eagle, and now here at the Pioneer. Coming from a JWP graduate, they have a great school. My favorite place has to be that hockey arena. It's small, but come on. It's hockey, man! Grab a pretzel from the concession stand, eat it during breaks between periods, and enjoy the show. There's nothing better, in my opinion.

This week in music

Paul McCartney and Wings released Band On The Run, his fifth album since his departure from The Beatles. Two hit singles from the album – "Jet" (#7 UK, #7 US) and "Band on the Run" (#3 UK, #1 US) — made it McCartney's most successful album. It went triple platinum in the United States and platinum in the United Kingdom.

What to do with the luxury of spare time?

Looking in the Mirror

by Jonah Stafford

As the semester draws to a close, I'm looking forward to returning home for the holidays. But, the path to getting there isn't going to be the easiest. I have finals in less than 2 weeks, a myriad of projects due before then, and hard decisions to make regarding my career. With all of the demands in my life, it's challenging to satisfy all of them and still have time for myself. I guess this is what being an adult is all about. I'm glad that I'm growing up and getting closer to my dreams, but I'm starting to feel like things are becoming stagnant. When you don't see progress unfolding right before your eyes, it's easy to feel like your work is going towards nothing and with a few recent roadblocks, I have felt that way recently. Being career-focused is advantageous in the way that I'm committed to making the best resume possible, but I wish I didn't care so much about my work so I could just focus on having fun and being a college kid! I hope next semester, my schedule offers me a lot more freedom. Don't get me wrong: I like working (for the most part) but I want what I do to count and not be doing things just because I have nothing better to do.

That rationale is what ultimately led to my decision to drop Concert Band earlier this semester and I do not regret it one bit. But managing work/life balance is much more difficult than dropping a class.

I feel like, ideally, a mixture of newspaper work, tutoring, marketing, and college classes would suit all of my needs but right now, I am not getting much of the former. Column writing is better than nothing, but I wish I had time to go out into the field or just write stories based on press releases. Though I've mainly been pursuing other things, I'd like to pave the way for a return to journalism as the main focus of my career. I have time to grow in other areas, but it's easily what I'm best at so why not maximize my potential in that area? I don't know how exactly I'd go about this, but with the luxury of spare time and a little luck, I'd love to make things happen! And if all else fails, I'll still be returning to journalism this summer.

Deciphering the meaning of my dream

To Be Determined

by Amelia Roessler

Mine to roam: A mansion turned museum. A grand hall made of soft shades of hard marble with branches opening to royally decorated rooms.

I wander through room after room, walking across warm carpets and past rich furnishings on every floor, as I– and I alone–explore the lush surroundings.

A door leads to a small room, different from the high-ceilinged and expansive rooms of before. It is compact and bare, painted white with a small table and a chair. I look around and find that I am no longer alone.

The boy is small, around five years old with shaggy brown hair and a thin frame. When I find him, he is sitting against the wall near the back, his knees pulled to his chest. I walk up to him; he turns slowly toward me, his brown eyes unfocused, staring through me to his own world.

"Are you lost?" I ask softly, wondering how to find his parents.

The boy keeps looking at me with pooled eyes and says nothing. I notice something is strung around his neck and find a long note attached to it.

Kneeling next to him, I read the transcript of what seemed to be the boy's conversation with a woman at the front desk.

"Can you help me? I can't find my parents," the boy had said. After telling her his name, she looked it up.

"You're not going to be able to find your parents," the woman said. "They died when a building collapsed on them."

A picture flashes into my mind. I can see the bodies of his parents buried beneath a building's rubble. They are covered in the white dust of disaster, their forms barely recognizable. I am reminded of heartbreaking newscasts like those shown after many types of disasters.

I look down at the boy, now lost and alone. How can I help him? There is nothing I have to give him, no resources to help him.

Deciding the least I can do is take him with me, I bend to pick him up. When I stand, my arms encircle heavy stone and rubble. Sand falls between my fingers and around my arms.

I cry. Like his parents, the little boy has been lost to the stone. I cry more and hold back sobs of grief. I cry because I feel useless. I walk out, still holding the heavy stones and dust, to find myself stepping on desert sand instead of a shining marble floor. The mansion has been swept away, replaced by a desert expanse, open and bare. My feet sink into deep sand as I struggle to climb a dune, crying and clutching the stones.

As I think about this dream I wonder if it is saying we should reach out and help people whose suffering may be invisible, who look fine on the outside but are broken on the inside. We don't know what memories people carry with them. Sometimes we can be of no use to them.

My determination: "Being unwanted, unloved, uncared for, forgotten by everybody, I think that is a much greater hunger, a much greater poverty than the person who has nothing to eat." - Mother Teresa

Celebrating a special day, Dec. 5

STAR GAZING

by Eli Lutgens

It is Monday evening as I write this; it's my mom's birthday today. I don't know how old she turned, but it can't be a day over 30…40?

I like to say my first ever memory was me as a toddler. I remember throwing a fit in my crib and my mother coming upstairs, picking me up and rocking me back to sleep.

Growing up I had a terrible time getting to sleep. I mean god-awful. I'm pretty sure there was a two-year span of my life when I just didn't sleep–Now you know how I'm able to do so much writing.

My mother told me a story today from when I was three years old. My parents divorced shortly after I was born and so my siblings and I went back and forth a lot as kids. Mom told me about a stretch when, at 3 years old, I refused to sleep in my toddler crib. I think she just told me so she could say out loud what she was flashing back to as we talked over lunch. It was a cute story.

So, what did we do for Mom's birthday? Well we went to El Molino of course. We went to the Pheasant on Friday for lunch and we both felt like Mexican food. And, for the first time in my mom's life she tried fried ice cream. I asked her if she wanted dessert and she politely declined. And then, well, as I paid the bill, I asked if they do anything special when it's your birthday. And well, you know the rest. What you don't know is, they don't check your ID, so really, if you want free ice cream, now, you also know.

It was really good and it got me thinking, and us talking, about the first time I had fried ice cream. It was at the old diner in Hope. I used to tag along with Dad when he did the paper route for the Star Eagle and Hope was always my favorite stop. Krause's Feed, which I didn't even know the name of at the time, was my first favorite gas station. We'd always stop there and that was a treat. Sometimes we also got an actual treat at the diner in town. I still remember the day Dad asked me if I wanted fried ice cream. I couldn't have been more than 8 years old, but I remember thinking it was a joke. And then, the sweet, kind, lovely waitress brought me out my first-ever serving of fried ice cream. It feels like yesterday. I can still taste it. Although I might be confusing that with the fried ice cream I had today.

Anyhow this was supposed to be about my mother.

Mom, you have certainly frustrated the heck out of me. (But so has Dad…and Jessica, but not really… and Nathan, but not really him either, except when he and I lived together for a year.) I wonder if all kids fight with their parents throughout their teen years and into early adulthood. It's weird growing up. I like the new relationship we have as adults. But I do miss parts of when I was a kid. Kind of like you with the story you told me today. I miss the little things: car rides, your home cooking, movie nights, playing games on your computer, so many nights spent together watching football, grilling. Oh and who can forget Christmas, even if Jessica literally threw a fit every year. (She finally stopped.) But that doesn't stop you from asking her if everything is alright, even as an adult.

I can safely say I don't know another person who would literally kill someone for me, but you would. Maybe that's not the right analogy, but you get my point.

You hired me for my first job. And then you told me I wasn't fired at the end of my first day when Dad tried to fire me. And again when I moved out for the first time and he tried to fire me again.

You taught me a lot professionally, some of which I even use today.

You trained me on my first day. Taught me billing, accounting, tax evasion, grand theft auto and how to jump a car onto the church lawn.

Those last two, sorry three, were of course, a joke.

Happy Birthday Mom. You don't look a day over 50.

WASECA COUNTY PIONEER

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

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Bits and Pieces

by Dave Zika

Eagle Lake worth a spot on your list

I decided to travel over to the DNR fish headquarters in Waterville and get some fish growth information. Craig Soupir and his staff were more than accommodating and gave me a wealth of information.

The age of a fish is determined by removing the otolith from the ear. I observed some samples from a black crappie: the otolith chips resembled a large, rather bony scale. On the otolith, rings of growth can be counted similar to counting growth rings on a tree.

I also reviewed a survey report on bluegills taken from Lake Washington and Lake Francis. Several years were surveyed and what really caught my eye was that fish grow faster in Washington than they do in Francis. It also takes a bluegill a long time to grow to nine inches. In Washington, if you catch one, a nine-inch fish might be seven years old. In Francis, a seven-year-old fish might be six inches long.

Crappies run in cycles. The environment and spring water conditions can lead to a crappie bust or explosion during spawning season. After a few years, a good population of nice-sized crappies appears in one of our area lakes.

Fish grow faster in our area than they do in the northern tier of our state. Walleyes north of us have better spawning conditions than Walleyes in our area. Because walleyes take longer to grow up north, many lakes have rules and regulations to follow. In our area, we have more generous regulations. But because there is limited reproduction, the DNR does a wonderful job of stocking fry and fingerlings.

The Waterville hatchery gets eggs from the Pine River near Brainerd and Cut Foot Sioux, Grand Rapids. These eggs are from Mississippi strain walleyes. The hatchery also gets eggs from Lake Sarah, a western Minnesota lake. These eggs come from a lower Mississippi strain of Walleye. This strain is doing well in our area lakes. Both strains are being studied at the Waterville hatchery.

Walleyes in our area lakes grow fast and grow to fourteen inches in two or three years, a perfect size for the fry pan. Many of our area lakes are shallow, and if conditions are right they may freeze out. Maybe that's why we have a generous limit of six, with only one over 20 inches.

Eagle Lake is stocked annually with walleye fry which the DNR grow to fingerlings, netted in the fall. Eagle is shallow, so if it doesn't freeze for several years it can produce nice classes of walleyes. You might want to put it on your fishing lake list.

We talked about catch and release; if you so choose, the DNR has an excellent website on releasing fish. Be prepared, have your camera or phone ready for a picture. Stay out of the mouth and gills, put the fish back quickly, handle it as little as possible. Cut your line if the fish swallowed your lure. Make a visit to the website to save a fish.

With ever-changing technology, equipment, shelters, and ice vehicles available to anglers, maybe it's time to keep only enough for a meal and throw some back. It's time to preserve good fishing for future generations. If you're in your icehouse and your son or daughter catches a nine-inch gill, maybe you can be an educator. Explain to them how rare the fish is, take pictures for future bragging rights, and watch it swim away so it can grow to be a ten-incher for another lucky boy or girl.

Have a great, safe time on the ice this winter. Don't get caught napping on your bunk with your rattle reel going crazy, or in a cribbage game with friends as a school of monster crappies swims under your shack. Until next time, may your bobber go down–way way down.

Keen bank donates $5,000 to WAFS

Keen Bank recently made a $5,000 donation to the Waseca Area Food Shelf to help fund its building addition for the local food shelf. The Grand Opening will be held at the Food Shelf on Thursday, December 8 from 4 – 6 pm with a 4 pm ribbon cutting ceremony at 203 3rd Avenue NW, Waseca MN.

"The impact the local food shelf makes in our community is great," said Bernie Gaytko, President and CEO of Keen Bank. "Helping our communities thrive brings us great joy. As a locally owned bank, we take our responsibility of being a community bank very seriously. We care and are willing to support our communities."

The need to supply the Waseca community and surround communities continues to rise. Wages and benefits have stayed the same while the cost of living, including groceries, has dramatically increased. In 2021, about 75 families requested help from the food shelf each month. In 2022 the need has increased to 173 families per month.

"We have seen a steady increase in the need for food with all of our efforts from daily requests to holiday baskets and more," said Food Shelf Coordinator, Niki Schaffer. "The number of pounds of food alone doubled, jumping from 5,332 pounds per month in 2021 to 10,054 pounds per month in 2022. We have extended the application period to accommodate more families and provide more for those in our community and surrounding communities."

While the Waseca Area Food Shelf is open, there is still a need for donations to cover building costs with added inflation that was unavoidable after the project began. Without the infrastructure and building to house and distribute food to those in need, a food shelf would not be possible. To donate visit GiveMN.org and enter code

41-1452216, call 507.833.4119 or mail payment to 203 3rd Avenue NW, Waseca MN, payable to Waseca Neighborhood Service Center and note Building Fund in the memo line.

Long standing Waldorf tradition

By MICHAEL ROY
Editor

Waldorf started its Christmas celebration early with a dinner at the Waldorf Community Center Thursday, Dec. 1. On the menu were turkey and "all the trimmings" for $10. Dinners were also available to take home.

The community Christmas dinner has been a long-standing tradition shared by St. Joseph Catholic and First Lutheran Churches, with the two taking turns organizing it in alternate years, according to volunteer Fauniece Witt. "We always thought it was a great way to bring the community together," she said. In fact, the meal began as a social opportunity for seniors, but was expanded as more and more people showed interest. "We've seen a lot of people come through here," Beverly Janike claimed. "In the past, we'd be able to have about a hundred people come through per year."

Admittedly, the event has been less well attended over time, with the Covid-19 pandemic having a large negative affect. Still, about 50 purchased meals on December 1. .

For some added fun, a photo booth set up during the meal featured a sleigh decorated with Christmas trinkets. "We had similar decorations in past years and received positive feedback," Charles Barnes said. "We wanted to put them up again this year. If anything, it makes for great decoration."

Despite the cold, dozens of people braved the weather to enjoy a warm meal and good company. "It's great being able to still be able to do this every year," Witt said.

LETS EAT - First Lutheran Church of Waldorf organized this year's community Christmas dinner. Volunteering as servers, from left, were: Peg Sikel, Doris Waknitz, Gayette Beyer, Beverly Janike, Fauniece Witt, JoAnn Kelling, and Marlys Nelson. Below, Several people, such as Pemberton resident Ruby Isebrand, enjoyed the Waldorf Community Christmas dinner on Thursday, Dec. 1.
Pioneer photos by Michael Roy

Christian Rodriguez to play in All-Star Game

Although Big South Conference rival Fairmont ended the Waseca Football team's season in the Section 3AAA championship game, senior running back Christian Rodriguez will have an additional chance to represent the Bluejays.

Rodriguez will play with the best of the best of Minnesota on the South All-Star team for the 2022 Minnesota Football Showcase All-Star game at 6 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 10 at U.S. Bank Stadium.

The running back has a fitting resume for such an honor. Rodriguez led the team in rushing attempts (153), rushing yards (1,150), and tied senior quarterback Oliver O'Brien for most rushing touchdowns this season (15). He also converted seven of his ten extra point runs and averaged just over 7.5 yards per carry this season.

Rodriguez

It won't be the first time in recent years the Waseca team has representation in the All-Star game. In 2021, then-senior linebacker Jarrett Ahlschlager was on the South team. In 2019, Waseca head coach Brad Wendland coached the south team which also featured Bluejay lineman Justin Azure.

Ho, Ho, Ho and a bottle of wine

By JORDAN CARRILLO
Contributing writer

As all the Thanksgiving leftovers have been consumed and the transition to the holiday season begins, what better way to celebrate than with Santa Claus, homemade goods, and wine? On November 26, Indian Island Winery hosted its annual "Santa's Sip and Shop" for all comers; the event has been held at the location on the outskirts of Janesville for years. In addition to a large selection of wine, the event featured 24 vendors selling an assortment of homemade goods ranging from baked treats, homemade salsas, woodworking creations, hand-sewn household items and much more. All were welcome to join the festivities, partake in the winery's selection of wines, and sip that wine while perusing the sales floor. Event manager Angie Winter, who has run the event for the past five years, was ecstatic with the turnout and the number of vendors who signed up. A total of 24 vendors took part: Winter remarked that many of their goods were "homemade jewelry and clothing." As a promotion, door prizes were donated by each participating vendor.

One display belonged to Mary's Angels–a brother/sister duo specializing in cookies, brownies, and pies of every flavor. The duo started their business to help promote awareness and raise funds for a cure to Alzheimer's shortly after the passing of their mother in 2012. This was their first year at Santa's Sip and Shop, but their "ninth year of baking for this cause." When asked who does the baking between the two of them, the brother chimed in with a "Oh that'll be me" while the sister laughed, "I just lick the spoon when he's done." When asked what they hope Santa will bring for Christmas, the duo knew exactly what to wish for: "A cure for Alzheimer's."

Bumble Beads was another vendor at the event. Owner Renae Trumbull has been selling her homemade bejeweled items for over a decade. It was her second year at the Santa's Sip and Shop, but she noted that "I used to run my own bead store in Waseca for a time." Her wares were a sight to behold: candles, bracelets, decorative stars, even pens had been adorned with colorful beads. When asked just how long it takes to bejewel each item, Trumbull stated "It takes time…the stars here took about a week because there were so many beads!" A labor of love no doubt. When asked what she was going to request of Santa, she smiled and said, "A million dollars."

Other vendors included Tim's Engraving–a business that specializes in woodworking projects, Linda's Decor & More, selling hand-sewn pot holders, aprons, and kitchen towels, and Hunnicutt Hollowae's Homegrown Canning.

Master gardener and canner Holly Hunnicutt was at Indian Island Winery for the first time, but she is no rookie to her craft. She has been "growing organic produce and canning for over 30 years." Hunnicutt says she started with "salsas at first" and over time expanded her business to hot sauce and an array of canned fruits and vegetables. When it comes to gardening, this grower could be considered a "Hunni…cutt" above standard. When asked what she would like from Santa this year: "Hmm. I do have a porch that needs to get finished."

As a centerpoint of the event, Mr. and Mrs. Claus were in high spirits as they spread Christmas cheer. Mrs. Claus speculated as to the source of the "Sip and Shop's" success: "What's not to love? There's wine, children, and Christmas spirit!"

Children seemed pleased to see Mr. and Mrs. Claus, and eager to share their annual requests with Saint Nick. One child, Sam, wore a smile on his face as he asked Santa for "a big red firetruck!" A small family introduced Baby Brooks onto Santa's lap; the initial reaction was tears quickly replaced with giggles. The baby's wishes are unknown, but Mom and Dad had a very practical wish: "a lifetime supply of diapers."

Another baby, Elora, sat in Santa's lap; first she simply seemed perplexed, but Mrs. Claus comforted her and a smile lit up the room. Elora didn't even want a present from Santa, she just wanted to meet him. Lastly, a child nicknamed Elfie and her baby sister sat with Santa; the baby was…less than thrilled to meet the jolly man but both Elfie and Mrs. Claus offered emotional support as Elfie asked Santa for "a pony."

Overall, the Sip and Shop event at the Indian Island Winery was an overwhelming success. It was an excellent start to the holiday season and many left the venue happy. Whether that happiness was because of the wine, their kids seeing Santa, or some Christmas shopping done early–it's anyone's guess.

While the adults enjoyed wine samples at Indian Island Winery in Janesville, kids enjoyed the company of Mr. and Mrs. Claus.

OBITUARIES

Kenneth Leet

Kenneth Leet

Kennth "Kenny' Leet. age 79, of Waseca died on Thursday, December 1, 2022 at Mayo Clinic Health System in Mankato.

Born on January 20, 1943 in Fairmont to Herbert and Lois (Small) Leet. Kenny grew up in Fairmont and attended Fairmont High School, graduating with the class of 1961. On December 31, 1963, Kenny was united in marriage to Jeanne Wolter at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Fairmont and together they lived in various communities throughout southern Minnesota before landing in Waseca in 1984.

Kenny's entire life revolved around work and family. He began his working career right out of high school hauling milk for the Welcome Creamery. After he was married, he drove truck for Blackowski Trucking before starting his own business buying and selling corn cobs from area farmers. After the market for corn cobs no longer existed, he worked in the fertilizer division at Standard Oil in Otisco which later became Amaco. In 1981, Kenny had the opportunity to purchase the business, owning and operating Cropmate Fertilizer until 1996. Kenny tried to retire for a short time, but the idea of relaxing didn't sit well. He started working into his later years for Krueger Trucking, Johnsons Concrete and Ag Partners. But through all of Kenny's career adventures he never forgot to put his wife and children first. Kenny and Jeanne spent 22 years wintering down south and he enjoyed going with his family to the Gopher State Tractor Pulls. He enjoyed grooming the local snowmobile trails and riding his motorcycle. Kenny was a member of St. John Lutheran Church in Waseca. He will be remembered by his family as a man of few words but a man of his word. Kenny was his children's best friend and a great mentor.

Kenny is survived by his loving wife of nearly 59 years, Jeanne of Waseca; children: Jerilyn (Terry) Kalis of Waldorf, Jodelle (Lane) Spies of Waseca, Joel (Christina) Leet of Otisco, and Jason (Jolene) Leet of Faribault; grandchildren: Tasha (Jeremiah) Frasher, Jerrick Kalis (Courtney Dahl), Annalesha Kalis (Fiance, Dillon Bolander), Janae Spies (Connor Phares) Jalyn Spies (Ben Schuler) Lanesha Spies, Nate Leet, Madelyn Leet (Dylan Bigelow), Connor Leet, Alex Leet; great grandchildren: William and Scarlett Frasher; sister, Arlyce (Richard) Wittmus of Fairmont; nieces, nephews, other relatives and friends.

Preceded in death by his parents and son, Jerick Joseph Leet; father-in-law and mother-in-law, Harry and Elsie (Harms) Wolter.

Funeral Service were 11 a.m. on Monday, December 5, 2022, at the State Street Chapel of Dennis-Steffel-Omtvedt Funeral and Cremation Service in Waseca. Interment followed at St. Mary Cemetery in Waseca. Visitation was one hour prior to the service at the funeral chapel on Monday.

Dennisfuneralhomes.com

Dennis-Steffel-Omtvedt Funeral and Cremation Service

Waseca ~ Janesville ~ Waterville

Florence Draheim

Florence Draheim

Florence L. Draheim, a beloved mother and grandmother passed away on Saturday, December 3, 2022, at the age of 88.

Born on July 6, 1934, to Fredolph and Lillian (Nelson) Hultgren. Florence was the salutatorian of her Waseca High School class and continued her education at Mankato Teachers College where she graduated with honors in 1957. She went on to teach elementary school in Glenville, Mankato, and Waterville up until the birth of her son, Michael, in 1969. She cared deeply for her students, many of whom kept in touch with her long after leaving her class.

In 1967 she was married to Lynn Draheim and they lived and worked together on a small farm in Waseca. They were married for 54 years before Lynn's passing in 2021. Her passion on the farm was caring for her many (up to 400) chickens each year, as well as helping Lynn tend their gardens. Her real joy however was with music and the church. For 50 years she served as choir director and organist for the former Evangelical United Methodist Church in Waseca. She and Lynn are fondly remembered for their annual Christmas decorations and music concerts at the church.

Florence was a selfless and caring mother and grandmother and is survived by her only son Mike, his wife Deb and their 3 children Jacob, Kaitlin and Meghan.

Preceded in death by her parents, husband, brother, Marvin Hultgren.

Funeral Service was 10:30 a.m. on Wednesday, December 7, 2022 at the Third Street Chapel of Dennis-Steffel-Omtvedt Funeral and Cremation Service. Interment will be in Woodville Cemetery. Visitation was one hour prior to the service at the funeral chapel on Wednesday.

Dennisfuneralhomes.com

Dennis-Steffel-Omtvedt Funeral and Cremation Service

Waseca ~ Janesville ~ Waterville

WCHS open house

By TRISTAN JENSEN
Staff Writer

The annual Holiday Open House at the Waseca County Historical Museum was held Saturday, December 3, 2022, with entertainment provided by students of Waseca High School.

The Holiday Open House is an event which Historical Society Staff look forward to each year. It features a special exhibit which centers around a theme: this year, inspired by the high school drama department's production, the theme is a "bookish, Little Women-centric" one. The exhibit, which will remain on display through the winter, includes not only items from the Historical Society's collection in storage, but also some donated specifically for the holiday exhibit. This year visitors are able to see a ceremonial robe used by the Odd Fellows in the early 1900s; the Santa costume worn by Allen Wolf, owner of Wolf & Habein's Department Store from circa 1948; old letters written to Santa Claus by children in Waseca County, and a photo of the cast of Little Women, once performed at the New Richland High School which includes Historical Society staff member Pauline Fenelon.

At noon, members of the Select and State Street choirs, directed by Tim Delnay, performed a program of winter and Christmas songs. Selections included "Somewhere in my Memory" and "Exultate Justi" by John Williams, "White Christmas" by The Drifters featuring soloists Lindsey Kopetzki and Lucas Vasquez, and a number of other songs and traditional carols. All the songs featured will be performed by the full choirs at their Winter Concert, to be held December 19 at 7 p.m. The concert will also include the traditional "Hallelujah Chorus" during which alumni are invited to share the stage with current students.

Members of the Waseca High School Select and State Street choirs perform at an open house at the Waseca County Historical Society, Saturday, Dec. 3. Pioneer photo by Tristan Jensen

Following the choral performance, the cast of the Waseca Drama Department's recently closed production of Little Women staged a vignette. Director Anna Pollock introduced the performance and thanked the Historical Society for its support. During the rehearsal period for the play, the cast visited the Historical Society to learn about the costumes, and about Waseca County during the 1860s when the play is set. The cast performed the Christmas scene, and even in a single scene the actors brought emotional depth and range to the stage.

The exhibit created for the Holiday Open House remains on display throughout the winter months, to allow as many people as possible to see this unique display of Waseca County history. The Waseca County Historical Museum's regular hours are from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Tuesday through Friday.

The Waseca High School drama department performed the Christmas scene from "Little Women."
Pioneer photo by Tristan Jensen

New Richland man charged in stabbing incident

By MICHAEL ROY
Staff Writer

Dylan Delbert Grossell, 30, is facing felony charges after allegedly assaulting an unarmed man, including stabbing him in the arm. Grossell was recently charged in Waseca County Court with one count of first-degree burglary and two counts of second-degree assault, both felonies under Minnesota state law. He is also facing a count of misdemeanor domestic assault stemming from a separate incident.

According to the criminal complaint, New Richland police were notified of an assault in progress with a weapon after noon on date; the type of weapon was not identified. Responding to the incident were the New Richland and Janesville police departments, and the Waseca, Steele and Freeborn County sheriffs' offices. Two victims - an adult and a minor - exited the home after law enforcement arrived.

The victims said the altercation began when Grossell punched the minor in the face. The adult victim defended the child by punching Grossell, who responded by hitting the adult victim in the back of the head with a toilet tank cover. According to the police, Grosell also stabbed the adult victim in the arm and attempted to stab both of them in the face, set them on fire, and hit both victims with a stairway baluster. Grossell was apprehended without incident.

Grossell

Court documents show that the victims sustained injuries to their faces; the adult was also wounded in the forearm.

Grossell was convicted in 2021 of making threats of violence and felony assault, and was taken into custody this past April for terroristic threats and fourth-degree assault toward a peace officer. Both incidents happened in Freeborn County.

FFA students visit Indianapolis

By MELISSA DUNN
Staff Writer

At its December workshop meeting, the Waseca school board heard from FFA advisor Savannah Zippel. The FFA students attended the national convention October 25-29 in Indianapolis, Indiana and shared transportation with other clubs from Janesville, Mankato, Albert Lea, Owatonna, and NRHEG as Zippel explained why area clubs travel as a region. "It's really nice having other advisors as support," she says. The FFA convention is a chance for students to see and talk with industry professionals, an incredibly valuable learning experience. "They also have one of the largest college fairs, so students are able to see all the agricultural departments from across the country."

On the way to the convention, the group made stops at Fair Oaks Farm, one of the largest hog and dairy producers in the country, and Ozark Fisheries where the students could explore one of the biggest koi and goldfish farms in the USA. Zippel reported that more than 65,000 registered FFA members from all over the country attend the annual gathering. "This is one of the largest youth conventions in the country. We take over Indianapolis for a week," she laughed. "Every restaurant is filled with blue jackets."

WASECA SCHOOL BOARD

Along with the expo and exhibits, attendees were able to attend an Indianapolis Raceway tour and a Mickey Guyton & Russell Dickerson concert. "The kids really enjoyed being out of official dress for a night," Zippel told the board. "They love the corduroy jackets, but after a while, it's nice to be able to change!"

Other items covered included a "clean" or positive audit report for the 2021-22 school year from financial consultants Clifton Larson Allen. This report will be covered in detail for the public at the "Truth in Taxation" meeting set for December 15. The board also briefly reviewed its performance goals for the 2022-23 school year. In keeping with the five-year strategic plan that can be found on the district website, board members had previously determined they would focus on goals of student and staff support, community engagement, school board training, and superintendent support.

"There's always something to be accountable for, but that's a good thing." Superintendent Eric Hudspith stated.

■ Taxes

from Page 1

Waseca rates relatively low on total amount of taxes levied, with the city of Baxter, population 8,800 levying more than $8 million.

The estimated tax rate capacity is down nearly 10%. Tax capacity is calculated as 1% of a home's median tax value: Depending on a homeowner's tax classification, that number can shift either up or down. The City of Waseca's tax levy comes in at 78% of that "tax capacity." For comparison, last year the tax rate capacity was 88%, 91% in 2020, and 92.6% in 2019. New Richland and Waldorf, also for comparison's sake, have preliminary tax rates at 107.5% and 141.5% respectively.

Factors that impact property taxes the most this year will be the assessed value. The impact of rising home values will result in a roughly 20% overall increase in taxes for City of Waseca homeowners. For comparison, if home values had not increased, the amount paid by Waseca homeowners would have gone down 11.5%. In dollars, that 20% increase translates to about $200 for a homeowner with a property valued at $159,000. These tax amounts include only the city's taxes, not the county, school board, and/or other special tax districts.

Finance director Fischer explained where taxpayer dollars go per $100 collected.

In the model provided, $54.40 of every $100 in taxes collected from Waseca homeowners goes to general fund taxes: the police department ($19.26), administration ($8.87), streets ($7.43), recreation ($7.75), fire department ($3.82), engineering ($3.50), community development ($3.23), and $0.55 for other expenses.

The rest of that $100 goes for: capital levy ($29.48), debt services ($10.07), tax abatement ($4.15), and waterpark debt ($1.90).

The revenue collected by the city largely comes from the state in the form of local government aid ($3.1 million, 42.8%) and the rest from taxes and utility transfers.

The 2023 levy factors in 4 new residential tax abatements along with 1 commercial property: ConAgra will be levied for $300,000 in taxes not previously collected by the city. This is where the majority of the $400,000 increase over last year's levy is coming from. When the city describes the effective tax rate at 1.5%, that effective rate, that other $100,000, is where homeowners' additional taxes are going.

A couple residents asked questions and made statements during a public comment portion of the meeting. In response to one question, it was clarified that although the tax abatement project comes in as a special revenue expense for the city, it is not an expense because taxes collected from new homeowners are money the city was not previously collecting.

Director Fischer encouraged homeowners to contact Waseca County Assessor Brock Nelson with any questions about home value. She encouraged anyone with budget/levy questions to contact her or interim city manager Carl Sonnenberg.

Brock Nelson, Waseca County office: 507-835-0640; email brock.nelson@co.waseca.mn.us

Alicia Fischer: 507-835-9746; email:financedirector@ci.waseca.mn.us

Carl Sonnenberg: 507-835-9713; email: CarlS@ci.waseca.mn.us

Waseca Area Foundation Awards

WASECA PUBLIC LIBRARY received three grants, totalling $8,000 for the summer concert series, for tean events, and their annual water carnival. Afton Finley from the Waseca library accepted the grants on behalf of the library during the Waseca Area Foundation's annual awards program November 9, 2022. The first in the amount of $2,500 for the library's summer concert series. Last summer the concert series hosted different bands throughout the month of June. Each of these bands was featured with its own article in previous editions of the Pioneer. The second grant, also for $2,500 is for the numerous events offered by the library, this time, for teens. Included among these events are games, crafts, and snacks. Also covered under this grant will be the continuation of the "Get Lit Subscription Boxes" program. The final grant was for $3,000 to fund the community wide water carnival held at Trowbridge park. The event boasts several water themed activities throughout the park, including a dunk tank, water balloons, and next year, "Hopefully more! Expect to get wet if you show up!" Finley joked. "Thank you so much for funding these wonderful assets to our community.
Pioneer photo by Eli Lutgens

Waseca Area Caregivers received $3,667 for their caring hands program during the Waseca Area Foundation's annual awards program November 9, 2022. Kelly Boeddeker accepted the award on their behalf. For residents who have seen director Boeddeker out and about, have no doubt heard about the WAC's caring hands program which provides four hours of relief each week for family members of folks with mild to moderate dementia. The WAC provides entertainment from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. This gives caregivers time for doctor appointments, getting a hair cut, or, sometimes even more needed, a nap. Working as a caregiver is a stressful and Boeddeker passionately talks about the respite this program provides. These funds will help extend this program to Mondays, in addition to their Wednesday program. In addition, the Caring Hands Program helps aging adults downsize their homes in order to have a more manageable space. "We want them to live well at home by transitioning to a more manable space." Boeddeker also expressed thanks for last year's donation which funded the wheelchair ramp installed and built by local contractor Ben Byron. Pioneer photo by Eli Lutgens

Bethlehem Inn received $1,700 grant from the Waseca Foundation during its annual awards program Nov. 9, 2022, for a refrigerator/freezer. Roger Ashland accepted the award on their behalf. Bethlehem Inn is in its 4th year of existence. Their capacity is 16 people and they simply don't have enough fridge/freezer space for that many residents. This grant will go to purchasing a new fridge/freezer. Pioneer photo by Eli Lutgens

The Waseca Arts Council received a grant for $4005 for the creation of a ceramic arts studio. Jessica Stuckmayer accepted the award on their behalf during the Waseca Area Foundations annual awards program Nov. 9, 2022. The funds will be used in conjunction with the community education grant to help pay for the studio, the pottery wheels, a kiln, a dump sink, and the ceramics class going forward. The timeline has this project up and running by the spring of 2023. Pioneer photo by Eli Lutgens

WASECA HIGH SCHOOL principal Dr. Jason Miller accepts a grant on behalf of the school in the amount of $20,000 during the annual Waseca Area Foundation awards program November 6, 2022. It was the intent of the EF Johnson family to provide scholarships for local schools, with the majority going to Waseca. A total of $20,000 was awarded to Waseca high school seniors. Pioneer photo by Eli Lutgens

The SW Metro Transition Program received a $400 grant for a small business project. Diane Roesler accepted the grant during the annual Waseca Area Foundation awards program Nov. 9, 2022. The SW metro transition program is small business project new to Waseca and the surrounding community. This class boasts ten students ages 18-21 this year with teachers hired through the Waseca Public School system. Diane Roesler works with students to teach them about employment opportunities, independent living skills, as well as reaction and leisure activities. This winter the class plans to start a small business to give students a chance to see what it takes to start one. The class will work as elves at Christmas, working as present wrappers. This project is meant to act as a mini-start for a small business introduction. The funds from this grant will be used for this purpose. Pioneer photo by Eli Lutgens

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Waseca received a $7,500 grant for their mentoring support programs. Michelle Redman accepted the grant during the Waseca Foundation's annual awards program Nov. 9, 2022. Each match provided through Big Brothers Big Sisters costs just under $1,400 per year despite the participants volunteering their time. This grant will provide funds for professionally "matches" including background checks, as well as additional support throughout a participants match, which, goes throughout high school graduation, and post secondary education. "If you thought being a big, give the gift of mentorship this holiday season," Michelle Redman, executive director, 14-year member of Big Brothers, Big Sisters told those in attendance. Pioneer photo by Eli Lutgens

A six-hour event, a bell ringing challenge for the Salvation Army took place Saturday Dec. 3, 2022 outside of Walmart in Waseca. Shown here are photos of the three participating groups: the Waseca Police, Fire, and Sheriff departments. A total of $3,861.58 was raised, with the Waseca Police department, "winning" the challenge, bringing in $1,996 during their two hours of ringing.

Ringing the bell raises $3,800

Dear Waseca,

Some of you may have noticed a lot of red flashing lights at Walmart on the afternoon of Sat. December 3rd. Some may have wondered what was going on, were there emergencies or what? It was actually a Bell Ringing Challenge for the Salvation Army, The Police Department, Fire Department and the Sherriff's Department were having a friendly competition to see who could raise the most dollars during their assigned two hour block of time for Bell Ringing. During the change of shifts, there were plenty of jabbing and joking about who would win. But in the end the real winners were Waseca residents, during that 6 hour event, the departments raised a whopping $3,861.58. A great deal of thanks go out to each department as they braved the cold and rang the bells, they were a true inspiration to all of us. They gave each us the example to try to emulate. In addition to the departments, the shoppers that came to Walmart need to be thanked for their generosity in supporting the Salvation Army.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

But wait, who won the competition, here is the results:

Waseca Police Department
$1,996.08
Waseca Fire Department
$1.092.44
Waseca County Sheriff
$773.06
Total $3,861.58

"It was a great event and everyone seemed to have fun. I want to thank all you contributed and worked to make this event happen. There are still spots available for this year's ringing. Just go to registertoring.com to sign up."

Respectfully submitted by Representative John Petersburg, chair fo the Waseca County Salvation Army Committee

BACK POINTS — At left, the Bluejays' Jacob Root battles Zach Quast of WEM-JWP. At right, Waseca's Christian Rodriguez scores back points against Isaac Quast.
Pioneer photos by Michael Roy

Wrestlers win two of three at Medford

By MICHAEL ROY
Editor

Cross-county rivals WEM-JWP and Waseca collided in a Medford quadrangular for their first meet of the season Thursday, Dec. 1. Also competing was LeSueur-Henderson.

WEM-JWP took an early lead, but Jacob Knutson, Jacob Root, and Slade Barnett at 132, 138, and 145 respectively kept the Bluejays in it. Even with three forfeits working against them, quality wrestling from the other wrestlers like Christian Rodriguez at 170, Carter Ellis at 182 and Payton Garza at 195 kept it close.

After Matthew Veroeven fell to a quality wrestler in Keegan Kuball, it was up to Payten Haack for the Bluejays. He did just enough, defeating Max Davis 5-1.

After the 36-33 victory, Waseca found itself in another close dual with LeSueur-Henderson, which forfeited three weights to the Bluejays' two.

The Giants jumped to an early 18-point lead, but two forfeits and a win by technical fall for Jacob Root helped the Bluejays get back in it. A handful of matches later, Garza and Veroeven took wins by fall in the last matches, giving the team a 35-33 lead. Haack had the last victory by forfeit, making the final 41-33.

Their last match was the toughest. The host Tigers drilled Waseca 50-15. Garza at 195 won his match in 41 seconds, 220-pound Veroeven pinned his opponent in 34 seconds, and Haack finished a 8-2 decision victory.

Waseca had a dual in New Ulm Thursday, Dec. 8 and will travel to Jackson County Central for the Pizza Ranch Invite the following Saturday.

Kuball, Petry lead Grizzlies

By MICHAEL ROY
Staff Writer

It may not have been the start that WEM-JWP's wrestling program wanted as a team. But a lot of Grizzlies wrestlers can be proud of the week they had, especially sophomores Carson Petry and Keegan Kuball.

Medford Quadrangular

WEM-JWP traveled to Medford Thursday, Dec. 1 for a quadrangular with the Tigers, Waseca and LeSueur-Henderson. The Grizzlies went 1-2, coming up short against Waseca, losing to Medford and defeating the Giants.

After a double forfeit at 106, WEM-JWP had a good start when 113-pound Brady Murphy won by fall over Elijah Biehn. Petry and Carson James won by forfeit.

Waseca evened the score with three straight victories by fall. Junior Gavin Krause gave the lead back to the Grizzlies with a win by fall, with Lucas Morsching winning another match by forfeit. But the Bluejays once again stole the lead with three straight wins by fall. Kuball evened the score by a win over Matt Veroeven.

It was up to Max Davis at 285. Sadly, Payten Haack did just enough to overcome Davis, winning by a 5-1 decision and handing WEM-JWP a 33-36 loss.

Medford had an even bigger victory against the Grizzlies. Although the Tigers only won one match by fall, the team took nine of 12 matches for a 32-16 victory. Kuball and Davis won by fall while Petry took a 13-0 win.

WEM-JWP found success facing LeSueur-Henderson. WEM-JWP won four of nine matches.

Dick Maher Invitational

WEM-JWP traveled to Blue Earth Area on Saturday, Dec. 3 for an invitational.

Kuball and Petry came out of the tournament with plaques. Kuball earned the Dick Boran award while Petry earned the 2022 Outstanding Wrestler award. Three wrestlers also placed in the tournament; Petry was the winner in his division while Kuball took second place. Murphy took third at 113.

The Grizzlies traveled to Triton for a dual on Thursday, Dec. 8 before going to Byron for an invitational on Saturday.

WHS hockey boys off to strong start

Jays top Redwood Valley, Fairmont

By MICHAEL ROY
Editor

The Waseca High School boys' hockey team started their season far from home at Big South Conference rival Redwood Valley Saturday, Nov. 26.

It was a rocky start, with Cardinals scoring two goals within the first five minutes. Waseca did a much better job preventing any other scoring chances, keeping it 2-0 at the end of the first period.

Outside of one last goal by the Cardinals, it was the Bluejays' game the rest of the way. Senior forward Kyle Ahlschlager went off, scoring five of Waseca's six goals. His hat trick in the second period helped Waseca tie the game 3-3. With an additional goal by Solomon Wilson, the Bluejays won 6-3.

In addition to his goal, Wilson had an assist. Contributing more assists were Griffin Krautkremer (3), Lucas Groll, Hunter Anderson, Keaton Roeker, and Armando Balderas.

Waseca 6, Fairmont 5

The Bluejays' first home game was supposed to take place Tuesday, Nov. 29 against Winona. But the game was postponed due to weather. Instead, the boys played another Big South team in Fairmont.

Both teams were physical all game and combined for 24 penalty minutes. It came to a head in the second period when a scrum broke out. Waseca's offense was aggressive on the power play and the Cardinals felt they got too close to their goalie before the whistle was blown.

The rhubarb ended with two players from each team drawing minor penalties.

With a 1-1 tied game, Waseca soared to a three-goal lead less than five minutes into the second period. Fairmont replied with two straight in the second and one more three minutes into the third. The teams traded blows until Waseca came out on top late in the final period. Hunter Anderson scored the game-winner on a breakaway shot at the top right corner of the net on a power play. When the game ended, the teams had a few words to say to each other before shaking hands.

A majority of Waseca's offensive success came from the power play where they scored three of their six goals. Senior forward Griffin Krautkremer earned a shorthanded goal in the second period.

Ahlschlager again had a fantastic game with four goals. Lucas Groll contributed both his assists on two of Ahlschlager's goals.

Luverne 11, Waseca 1

Luverne has always been a tough team in the Big South, and the Waseca boys found out that is the case again this year when they traveled to their rink Saturday, Dec. 3.

Things looked promising in the first period when Ahlschlager scored the first goal of the game over two minutes in. However, the Cardinals shut them down the rest of the game, answering with four goals in the first period and seven in the second.

After getting a wake-up call from Luverne, Waseca continued going through the Big South gauntlet with a road trip to Worthington Dec. 6 and a home game against Windom the following Thursday. The Bluejays travel to New Ulm Tuesday, Dec. 13.

THE PUCK STOPS HERE — Waseca goalie Elijah Wetzel (40) turns away a shot during the Bluejays' home opener against Fairmont Tuesday, Nov. 29. The Bluejays won 6-5.
Pioneer photo by Michael Roy

IN-COUNTY CLASH — The Waseca High School girls' basketball team defeated JWP in its season opener Friday, Dec. 2. At left, the Bulldogs' Nevaeh Weimert (5) faces a smothering defense. At right, the Bluejays' Megan Kanewischer (4) blocks a shot by Lilli Strauss.
Pioneer photo by Michael Roy

Wadd, Bluejays shut down JWP

Senior center scores 37 points

By MICHAEL ROY
Editor

It was an electric atmosphere when Waseca faced JWP for its first game of the girls' basketball season Friday, Dec. 2. Both teams flashed their potential, but the hometown Bluejays downed the Bulldogs 65-46.

A look at the final score gives no indication that it was a tight contest. At one point, JWP held a brief lead. JWP freshman Katie Olson found ways to score on Waseca, and it looked like at first, Waseca had problems keeping her quiet.

So, when in doubt, the Bluejays trusted the tallest person on the team: Kloe Wadd.

JWP had no way of keeping the 6-foot-2 senior center from scoring. Either Wadd made the ball unreachable on her first shot, she scored on her second, or she forced a foul. With the help of fellow senior Samantha Azure, the Lady Jays turned a 31-27 halftime lead into a decisive victory.

Wadd

Wadd scored 37 on the night. Azure finishedr with 15.

The team traveled to Triton Tuesday, Dec. 6 and host Fairmont Friday.

Shutting out to shut down: Waseca girls' hockey team splits

By MICHAEL ROY
Editor

The Waseca High School girls' hockey team got off to a fast start at Fairmont, and it held up until the finish.

The Bluejays put 14 pucks on the net and scored twice while shutting out the Cardinals Thursday, Dec. 1.

The Bluejays, who totaled 23 shots on goal, scored within the first 10 minutes of the opening period. Freshman forward Maddy Benson opened things up with a goal 3:30 into it, with 8th-grade forward Maizee Storey assisting. Senior forward Madelyn Malecha scored the second one with junior defenseman Isabela Slechta earning an assist.

It was a mostly quiet game after that. Neither team recorded any penalties, and Fairmont managed 17 shots on net. Eighth-grade Bluejay goaltender Ilamay Draheim recorded her first shutout of the season.

Luverne 6, Waseca 0

After shutting out a Big South rival, Waseca sadly got the same treatment on the road against Luverne Saturday, Dec. 3.

The Cardinals' game plan against Waseca was simple: use their speed, take as many shots as possible, and don't let the Bluejays get quality shots on net. It worked. While they took 20 shots and cashed in on three of them in the first period, Waseca couldn't even get a chance at the net. Waseca had three shots all game.

Despite allowing six goals, it was a great afternoon for goalie Draheim, who faced 57 shots and had a .895 save percentage.

The Lady Jays faced Minnesota River Thursday, Dec. 8.

Waseca boys off to 2-0 start

By ELI LUTGENS
Publisher/Editor

The Waseca High School boys' basketball team sailed to an easy victory Friday night in its season opener, defeating United South Central 77-44 at Wells.

"We really played hard," Waseca coach Seth Anderson said. "I think that was a major reason for our success."

The Bluejays put the game away in the first half, jumping to a 41-18 lead at the intermission.

Damarius Russell and Carson Ohnstad alone outscored the Rebels, combining for 46 points on impressive 17-for-27 shooting. Russell shot 50% from 2-point range and was on fire from 3-point range, sinking six from the distance. Ohnstad shot just as well, with all of his 18 points coming from 3-pointers.

"Damarius and Carson really shot the ball incredibly well from three-point land," said Anderson. "Making 15 three-point shots in a game is an incredible shooting night for our team. It was clearly Damarius and Carson's night."

The only thing coach Anderson said the team could do better is foul less and pass better.

"I really like how much we scrapped, won loose, balls and rebounds," Anderson said. "We had 10 guys rotating in and out and they all contributed something to help the team. We do have lots of guys who can get hot on a given night shooting the ball."

Anderson also said Tyson Reger played an all around great game.

Individually for the Bluejays: Damarius Russell 28 points, 5 rebounds, 4 assists, 2 steals, 1 block; Ohnstad 18 points, 2 rebounds, 1 assist; Reger 11 points, 5 steals, 4 rebounds, 3 assists, 1 block; Addison Sampson 5 points, 2 rebounds, 1 assist, 1 steal; Noah Thompson 4 points, 4 rebounds, 1 assist; Zach Hulsher 4 points, 4 rebounds; Deron Russell 2 points, 5 assists, 3 rebounds, 1 steal; Laird Keeton 2 points, 3 rebounds, 2 assists, 1 steal; Jacob Thompson 4 rebounds, 4 assists; Andrew Robran 4 rebounds, 2 steals.

If the Bluejays' first game wasn't enough indication of their offensive potential, namely their effectiveness from behind the arc, an 85-28 blowout win over Waterville-Elysian-Morristown Tuesday in Waseca should do it.

Russell and Ohnstad were hot from three-point land again, with Reger getting his turn to lead.

Again, the game was over at halftime. The Jays led 43-11. This allowed Anderson to rotate his bench, getting new players experience as the group figures out who will round out their starting five and rotation players.

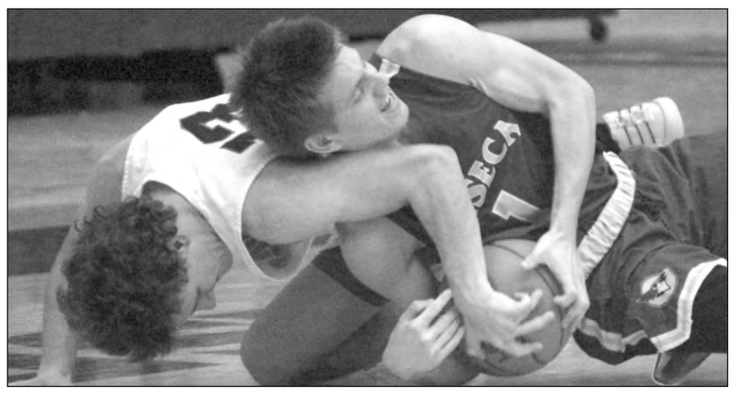
"We have a really young team with a lot of guys playing varsity minutes for the first time, but we do have a lot of guys who understand how to play hard and to lead by example," said Anderson. "We have a great balance of guys who can play right now. I wouldn't say we have a top five players by any means, because we have had 10 guys rotating in and out who have all had some really good moments so far early in the season. The starting five, or more importantly the five who end the game, will be constantly jockeying for position and whoever is playing the best that particular night will be in at the end."

Anderson praised the play of Ohnstad who, like Damarius Russell, is a sophomore.

"Carson has obviously played really well," said Anderson. "He's scored in double figures the last two times out, shot the ball well, and really has become much improved defensively. We do feel like we have a lot of guys who are capable of playing minutes for us on the varsity, and there are other guys who are knocking on the door and might deserve playing time at some point, but in basketball you can only play so many players. Playing 10 guys like we are right now in the regular rotation is certainly the most we have ever played during a season."

The Bluejays travel to Fairmont Friday, Dec. 9, and are at NRHEG in New Richland Tuesday Dec. 12. On Dec. 16 the Bluejays host Jackson County Central.

PLAYING HARD— The Waseca High School boys' basketball team is off to a 2-0 start after defeating United South Central and Waterville-Elysian-Morristown. Above left: Deron Russell drives to the basket. Above right: Tyson Reger goes in for an easy hoop. Below: Addison Sampson (1) battles WEM's Ivan Pratt (13) for a loose ball. Pioneer photos by Michael Roy



SEASON OPENER — The NRHEG boys' basketball team hosted Blue Earth Area in its season opener last week. At left, Jackson Chrz (1) goes in for a slam dunk. At right, Daxter Lee (3) drives around Abram Kokos (21). Pioneer photos by Eli Lutgens

NRHEG boys drop opener

Panthers fall 67-46 in Schmidt's head coaching debut

By ELI LUTGENS
Publisher/Editor

Anyone who had already constructed a set of expectations for the NRHEG boys' basketball team might be wise to set them aside for the time being. The Panthers lost their opener 67-46 at home to Blue Earth Area.

Short staffed, the Panthers basketball program, not just varsity, was missing 10 players to either injury, or academic ineligibility. The result? The game was not close.

The Panthers recorded only three first-half field goals en route to a 37-10 halftime deficit.

Junior Daxter Lee did most of the scoring for the Panthers, finishing with 25 points. Thrown off his game in the first half, Lee appeared a little rattled and a little nervous after physical defense from the Buccaneers.

"Blue Earth played a high pressure defense, and seemed like they were making every shot they took," NRHEG coach Dan Schmidt said. "We came out cold."

Lee scored the Panthers' first points with an old-fashioned three-point play after being fouled on a driving layup attempt five minutes into the first half. The converted free throw made the game's score the closest it would be at 5-3. Junior guard Samuel Olson sank a corner three-pointer for the Panthers to make it 10-6 a minute later. Lee converted two more three throws and a circus layup with a minute to go for the Panthers' only points in the first half.

Buccaneers coach Colby Swanson may very well have told his players to lighten up in the second half. The Panthers relaxed a bit and actually outscored their opponent 36-30.

"While it was a rocky first game, it felt good to get one under our belt," Schmidt shared. "I was very happy with our effort the whole game. We're throwing some new things at our players. With a new staff in place, I expect some hiccups while we try to find our stride."

In the coming days, Schmidt said the team will work on cleaning the mistakes from Friday night, shoring up their shooting, and looking at different defensive concepts.

Individually for the Panthers: Lee 25 points, 3 steals, 1 rebound, 1 assist; Olson 6 points, 4 steals; Jackson Chrz 5 points, 7 rebounds; Alden Dobberstein 3 points; Lukas Loverink 3 points, 5 rebounds; Jaylin Raab 2 points, 3 rebounds; Hudson Chrz 1 point.

"We have a good group of athletes, and I fully expect that we'll bounce right back and get to work in preparation for our game on Tuesday," said Schmidt.

The Panthers played Tuesday at home against St. James. On Friday they travel to Kenyon-Wanamingo before returning home to host Waseca the following Tuesday.

Panther matmen drop two duals

By ELI LUTGENS
Publisher/Editor

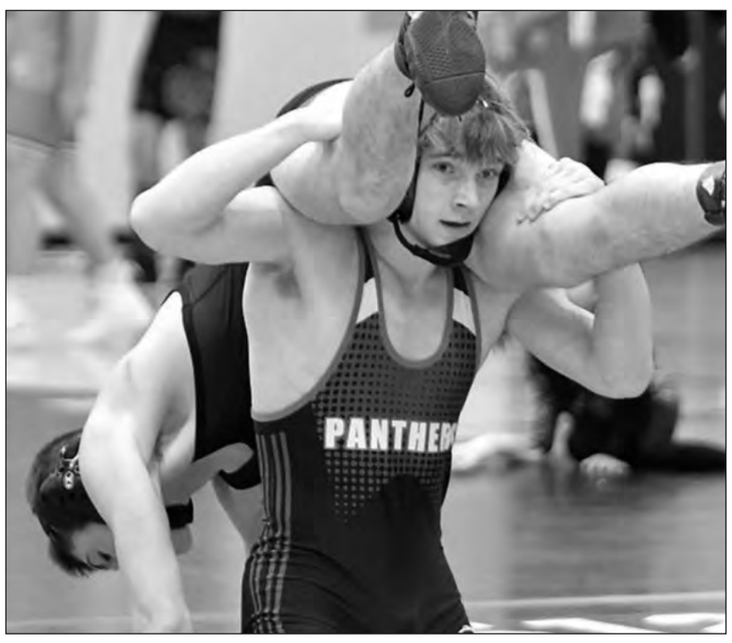
In their opening match of the season the NRHEG High School wrestlers dropped two contests, 71-11 to Watertown-Mayer/Mayer Lutheran and 72-6 to St. Peter on Thursday Dec. 1. On Saturday, Dec. 3 the Panthers traveled to Saint James for the Paul Krueger Classic, earning nine places en route to sixth place among eight teams, with Lake Crystal Wellcome Memorial claiming first.

The Panthers' only wins Thursday night came from Reese Routh, who earned a technical fall at 152 pounds against WMML, and Makota Misgen who finished the day 2-0 with a forfeit win against WMML. Misgen also earned a fall against St. Peter.

"There is not much to say about our team tonight, except for we have to get better," coach Shawn Larson said. "Both of the teams we faced tonight are good wrestling teams and they wrestled well. We are excited to be back out on the mat, and the good thing is that we have an opportunity to improve. Like the rest of the world, I do not like losing. However, I do love to have the opportunity to work with a team like this in order to make them better."

The Panthers turned around to compete Saturday in St. James. Sophomore Harbor Cromwell at 160 and senior Misgen at 285 were champions. Placing third were junior Annabelle Petsinger at 126 and eighth-grader Ryan Schlaak at 152. Placing fourth: Jacob Karl (113), Deven Parpart (138) and Cole Hutchens (195). Fifth place: Aidan Schlaak (145) and Aden Berg (195).

"The highlight of our day was having two individual champions," Larson said. "Harbor is only in his second year of wrestling and has come a long way and deserves this opportunity to get his first tournament win. Makota continues to demonstrate that he is one of the best wrestlers in the state in his weight class as he finished with two dominant falls on the way to his championship."



WORK TO DO — The NRHEG High School wrestling team opened the season with losses to Watertown-Mayer/Mayer Lutheran and St. Peter Thursday, Dec. 1, followed by a sixth-place finish in the Paul Krueger Classis Saturday. Above, Harbor Cromwell hoists his opponent in the 160 weight class Saturday at St. James. At right, Annabelle Petsinger pins her Mankato West opponent. Pioneer photos by Chris Schlaak

Larson said the Panthers have a lot to work to do as they put this tournament in their rearview mirror.

"We are a fairly young and inexperienced team, and that showed a little today," Larson explained. "Young and inexperienced is not an excuse for how we performed, because I know that we are capable of wrestling better than what we have shown to start the season. The good news for our team is we have dedicated athletes who are going to come into the wrestling room and work on making themselves better. We are in the beginning stages of a very long winter sports season and we are going to have to work a little harder to get to where we need to be."

Up next for the Panthers grapplers is a home meet with Kenyon-Wanamingo Thursday Dec. 8 at 7 p.m.

The Pastor's Column

Seeing God in all things

By PASTOR KEN ANDRS

How do you remember what God has done? In the Old Testament the people of God would build an altar to God and sacrifice upon it, or they would name a location for their descendants to remember God's movement. The people of Israel would tell each other, "Look there is Marah, the place of bitter water, but when Moses threw a stick in the water, we were all able to drink." (Exodus 15:22-25)

What do you do within your own families? How do you remember what God has done and how he has moved? In our family we do things a little bit differently than most. We have traditions to remember how God moved and acted in our lives.

When the kids were little, we had a snowstorm start early in the day and while it hadn't hit us yet, but it shut down I-35. Christmas was postponed and we didn't have food in the house except for a 50lbs bag of potatoes. Naomi and I quickly went to the store to make Christmas special when we were snowed in at home. The butcher had roasts on sale so we bought one and sliced it thin, knowing that we would have Christmas dinner in a couple of days once the roads cleared. Now whenever we are home for Christmas, we have Chicken Fried Steak and potatoes, usually three different ways.

It is our tradition to remember that even when things don't work out the way we want we can at least have steak and potatoes, because God provides in special ways. How has God moved in your family? How do you remember His provision? What are your stories of His movement? When was the last time you sat with your family and shared those stories?

We must not forget what God has done and we need to share the stories. Let us bring to memory the stories of God's movement in our lives and ask God to continue to move. It is in telling these stories that our faith is encouraged, and others will be challenged to grow in their own faith and knowledge of God.

How God moves and continues to move should be a discussion point in our lives on a regular basis. It is these stories that are part of our heritage of faith. In telling these stories we relive the need of moment and the provision of God. In these stories we settle into the peace of God that passes understanding and have hope for the future.

These are the gifts that Christ brings on His advent, He comes to bring us Hope and in that Hope we are reminded of the Peace that He offers. Jesus speaks to us in John 14 of the Peace He gives:

25 "All this I have spoken while still with you.26 But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

After taking photos with Mr. and Mrs. Claus, many of the children played "in the snow." Pioneer photo by Michael Roy

WONDERLAND - Shown above is the forest surrounding Mr. and Mrs. Claus. Pioneer photo by Michael Roy

■ Wonder

from Page 1

It takes them a day or two to prepare for the event. The setup is easy, since all the supplies for the private photo room are on site. "We keep them in a storage room in the building," Gene explains. "It makes it less difficult to set things up."

All of their helpers dress like elves. The cool part? The Millers recruit special needs and handicapped children to help oversee the activities. Hiring them throughout all of their businesses as much as possible is something the Millers have focused on these past few years as a way to give back to the Waseca community.

"We wanted to provide them with actual real-life jobs," Bonnie says. "There is a stigma that they can't work. But they are more than capable."

One worker, Xander Spies, a grandson to the Millers, enjoyed himself on Saturday. "I have a lot of fun doing this," he said. "It's great working with the kids, and I just love Christmas! The photo room looks pretty cool, too."

Xander Spies was one of the helpers at the Starfire Christmas Wonderland.

For kids and families that haven't seen the Winter Wonderland yet, there is still time to do so. The event will happen on Saturday and Sunday, Dec. 10 and 11 from 10-11:30 a.m. and 2-4 p.m. both days. It is completely free to attend.

"It's been great doing it the past three years," Bonnie reminisces. "We've made a lot of great memories with this. We hope to make it an annual Waseca tradition for years to come."

Proud future firefighter

Schlaak to donate to 3 departments

By ELI LUTGENS
Publisher/Editor

NRHEG High School senior Brady Schlaak is doing something special for area fire departments: he's using fire hoses to make 24-square-foot mountable flags.

Inspired by a Tik-Tok video which showed how to use retired fire hose to make a large-scale flag, Schlaak decided to take on the project of making one for each of three area fire departments. Why? Maybe because his father's a firefighter, Schlaak suggests, or maybe, "That looks like something fun to try," he jokes. "It feels like setting an example for younger kids… Some days I was cussing and swearing at this flag, and other days I was really proud."

The flags Schlaak mentions are about four feet tall, six feet wide, and just long enough to be able to close the tailgate of his dad's, Bennett's, truck after completion in his high school shop/construction class.

"It got expensive quick," Schlaak shared. "A new roll of fire hose that size would cost $175."

But three local departments - Hollandale, Clarks Grove, and Geneva - donated expired fire hose. In addition to three-dimensional stripes created by attaching flattened strips of three-inch wide hose, a piece of quarter-inch plywood is needed to serve as the backdrop. Containers of "liquid nails" (three per project) and three cans of spray paint (two black, one red) are also needed. With that supply list, each flag costs roughly $50-$60 to make. And that's after the donation of the hose, and the use of "Dad's plywood lying around the shop.

"I went from making a tiny teapot holder for my grandma to this giant thing," Schlaak smiles, speaking of the projects he's made for his woodworking class.

NRHEG fans may recognize Schlaak as the 6'9" giant who towered over his teammates on the football field. Others might recognize the family name. Twelfth-grader Schlaak has three younger siblings who also attend NRHEG: Madeline, 14, is in eighth grade; Ella, 8, is a third-grader; brother Carter is a sophomore who just turned 16. Their father, Bennett, a proud dad, is an NRHEG graduate.

It takes Schlaak between three and four hours per flag, or about three or four days spent working over 45-minute shop class periods. Assisting Schlaak are classmates, fellow shop students Clay Routh and Bryce Mudgett. At the beginning of shop class, students partner up, so they can help each other when needed. While one project is being glued or drying, students assist their partners with their projects.

The glue drying process was one of the hurdles Schlaak faced as he worked on this assignment.

"That was the most frustrating part," he explains. "Four different types of paint and three different glues…. When I glued it and let it sit for two days, and then all the hose slipped off, that was most frustrating.

"Learning to take a step back, instead of just pushing and pushing," Schlaak continues. "That was a huge lesson for me. I don't think others thought I was capable of that, or that I would push through."

Helping him through these obstacles was the mastermind behind the original design, the Tik-Tok videographer who inspired Schlaak.

SHOP CLASS - Construction class students at NRHEG High School, from left, Bryce Mudgett, Brady Schlaak, and Clay Routh
Pioneer photo by Deb Bently

"I was so frustrated," Schlaak says. "I don't even know how I found it, but I found the guy's phone number and called him. He answered on the second ring… I told him, "'Hi, I'm Brady Schlaak and I saw your video.'"

The gentleman told Schlaak he loves to see young kids getting into unique, challenging projects. Schlaak was told that different problems happen with different materials. "It's all gonna depend on what you use… Just don't give up," the Tik-Toker told Schlaak. "I was about to give up three or four times, but I didn't and the end project is amazing."

With a little help, a few pauses for assessment and planning, and ultimately a lot of determination, Schlaak persevered.

He claims that, after the details are ironed out, the process isn't that complicated. Collect the materials, bleach the fire hoses to remove any chemical residue (sometimes for several days); paint the hoses and finally construct the flag.

"Maybe it's just a hobby," Schlaak says of the flags and his future in constructing innovative projects. "I really don't know what I want to do yet. I have definitely started looking at trade schools. I feel like I've always been a better hands-on learner. I understand things better when I can see them in front of me and adjust what I need to, so that things come together."

One thing for certain for this high school senior, who's already taking enough college courses to qualify as a full-time student, is his intent to follow his father. "Dad's a firefighter," Schlaak smiles and nods when asked if that's what he wants to do.

Next semester, Schlaak is taking that first step, enrolling in the college-level fire safety course required of all firefighters. After the course, Schlaak will earn his certificate and qualify to take the state fire certification test.

Schlaak's dad, Bennett, is an assistant fire chief in Hollandale, one of the three departments set to receive a flag.

Geneva and Clarks Grove Fire Department will also receive their flags during upcoming fire meetings and each will be inscribed with their own department's name. The first of these presentations took place at 6:30 p.m. on Dec. 5 at the Geneva Fire Hall, followed by Hollandale on Dec. 13, with Clarks Grove's date to be determined.

■ Service

from Page 1

kept contractors from being able to meet their original timetables–which would have had the building completed in September–it was Britton who found new time slots for work to take place. All the while, he was also giving generously of his time and resources to cope with the day-to-day tasks needed to keep the operation at St. John's running as smoothly as possible. For one thing, the space being rented there did not have a large freezer, so when frozen items had to be loaded into or fetched from the freezer space donated by Sacred Heart Church, it was often Britton who made it happen.

Phone call after phone call, text after text, solution after solution, his fellow board members credit Britton with having given beyond all expectations–perhaps even beyond reason–to cope with the complications and emergencies which arose both from the construction and from the necessarily piecemeal operations of the temporary food shelf at St. John's.

Yet, even as his fellow board members enumerate his contributions, Britton smiles shyly and shrugs his shoulders. "It just needed to be done," he says.

Instead, he compliments others whose skills, efforts and goodwill made progress possible. He names Trevor Kanewischer who, along with Sacred Heart, loaned freezer space. He mentions Bill Green at Keen Bank, City of Waseca Building Official Mike Benson, and others whose assistance he values. He goes on to name community members who operate programs like Santa Anonymous, commenting that, thanks to the work of Beth Krause and Becky Dennis, the recently-emptied food shelf space at St. John's is now filling rapidly with toys.

His eyes shine as he lists the efforts and dedication of others. "These folks bend over backward to make our projects happen," he says. "We couldn't ask for a more giving, more generous community."

In the meantime, Britton's fellow board members joke that he is a "man without social capital."

"He's called in so many favors over the past year," jokes food shelf committee chair Larry Sipe, "that he's in debt now."

Britton shrugs, almost as if to deflect the praise.

It is, of course, self evident that all food shelf governing board members are euphoric over the completion of the new facility. They speak excitedly about the many projects and initiatives which will be streamlined in the new space. But among the reasons for their excitement is the fact that their "man of the hour" can fade from the demanding central role he has occupied for the past several months.

Rather than simultaneously spearheading the construction and troubleshooting daily operations, Britton can meld back into the more everyday tasks of fundraising, public outreach, and occasional management decisions shared by the board as a whole.

On the to-do list right now are Christmastime distribution of food and gifts, seeking volunteer groups to help with the many associated tasks, and the never-ending search for funding–including covering some remaining costs for the new building.

"We're grateful beyond words for everything Jim has done," says Sipe. "And we're equally grateful he gets to stop doing quite so much of it."

Donation equals 229 local meals

On Dec. 7, Brad and Trudi Connors and the iWealth team presented a check to the Waseca Area Neighborhood Service Center, for funds raised during the iWealth 2022 Holiday Food Drive. Community donations totaled $6,365; combined with $3,000 donated by the iWealth Foundation, the total amount raised was $9,365.

Brad said, "The Food Drive was started several years ago by asking iWealth clients and the local community for monetary donations to provide the food necessary for local families to enjoy a Christmas meal. We saw there was a need to have this provided at this time of year."

Brad and Trudi Connors donated $3,000 through the iWealth Foundation. One percent of iWealth's net profits go into the foundation annually.

The funds raised will be used to provide Christmas meals for over 229 local area families. Food baskets will be packed Dec. 16 by Waseca High School students and other volunteers, and will be distributed Dec. 17 with help from Scouts BSA Troop 85. Excess funds will be used to help support the Service Center's Backpack Program, which provides meals to more than 150 local children each week.

Presenting a check to the Waseca Neighborhood Service center in the amount of $9,365 were, front row from left: Monica Odenthal, Beverly Herfindahl, Brad Connors. Middle row: Deb Deegan, Gretchen Priebe, Jim Britton, Trudi Connors, Patty Buehler. Back row: Reverend Ken Andrs, Shawn Pomeroy, Matthew Potter, and JP Eykyn
Pioneer photo by Michael Roy

More than 71 families and businesses donated to the drive this year, the thirteenth consecutive year iWealth has sponsored the Holiday Food Drive. Over that time, more than $105,981in donations have been collected.

Brad said, "At iWealth, one of our core values is to support our community, and we feel that is more important than ever. We are once again humbled by the community's support of this worthy cause."

Argus archives

25 Years Ago – Janesville Argus, December 3, 1997

- The Janesville Specialty Shops are sponsoring "Sleigh Ride Sunday" on Sunday, Dec. 7, beginning at 1 p.m. at Archway Antiques, Main Street. Your ticket to ride on a horse drawn sleigh is a donation or canned good for the Janesville Community Food Shelf.

- Janesville residents Maynard and Sandy Rauchman took advantage of the warm weather on Friday to decorate their front lawn. What makes these lawn ornaments special is that the Rauchmans made them. Maynard cuts out the pattern and Sandy paints them. Sandy said they started making their own lawn ornaments three years ago. "We just decided we needed something to do," she said. We have a good time doing this." Each year they add something new to their collection. So far they have a snowman, Santa in his sleigh, a toy shop, and Santa Claus and his reindeer. Sandy said the lawn ornaments are also something fun for their 3-year-old granddaughter.

- The Janesville-Waldorf-Pemberton wrestling squad won't be accused of slowly working themselves into shape. The Bulldogs breezed to three easy wins at Saturday's Mankato West Quadrangular. JWP shutout Byron 66-0, trampled Fairmont 66-7, and bounced hose Mankato West 39-17. The Dawgs outscored their three opponents by a 170 to 24 margin, won 33 of 39 matches during the day, and a 19-1 advantage in falls, and finished with eight undefeated wrestlers.

50 Years Ago – Janesville Argus, December 6, 1972

- The sale of Berndt's Grocery Store to Mr. and Mrs. Wayne Gowdin was announced Monday. The grocery and dried goods store, located on South Main Street, has been operated by the Berndt family for the past five years. This fall Mrs. Berndt accepted a job in the school lunch facility at Janesville High School and had to cut down on the store hours.

- Fred Lorentz, son of Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Lorentz of rural Janesville, has been accepted for the winter quarter at the University of Minnesota Technical College at Waseca, which begins January 3, 1973. The Technical College is designed to offer training for semi-professional, mid-management positions in the broad fields related to Agriculture.

- The Cub Scouts made these "can stilts" but couldn't match moms and dads when it came to racing on them last week. The idea was to mount the cnas, race from the flag in the background to a cookie jar on the table in the foreground, eat a cookie, sing Yankie Doodle, and race back. The Cub Scouts were faster than the parents but they usually got excited and fell off the cans during the race. Here, Chuck Kopischke and his son, Billy head towards the cookie can. [Photo, sent by text to Eli and Michael.]

75 Years Ago – Janesville Argus, December 4, 1947

- Junior leadership awards are being distributed this week for 4-H Club members. These junior leadership awards were announced at the 4-H Achievement Banquet and were given to the 4-H club members who have done the most in their club to promote club work. Their responsibility is to assist younger club members and help leaders with programs, demonstrations, and recreation. The top award of $5.00 went to Barbara Hagen for her outstanding work in the Palmer Sunbeam club. Second prize of $4.00 went to Robert Olson, Woodville Hustlers, and third prize of $3.00 to Lola Kanne of Thrifty Peppers.

- There were only 165 votes cast in the Annual Village Election held in Janesville last Tuesday, there being only one contest. In the race for Councilman, Hugo T. Ewert received 101 votes to succeed August Schraeder with 60 votes. E. D. Doss was returned as President of the Council, unopposed, with 119 votes. George Tetzloff received 23 votes to be elected as Justice of the Peace.

- Three farm accidents have been reported this past week. Oris Hanson, Otisco township, has been hospitalized as a result of blood poisoning which was caused by an injury to his hand. This accident will prevent Mr. Hanson from doing his regular farm work. Willard Bathke of Iosco township suffered a broken leg when kicked by a horse. Willard will be unable to be about for some time to come. Ewald Kruger, Wilton township, was accidentally caught between the wheel of his wagon and a tractor. His leg was crushed, breaking a bone just above the ankle. These three farm accidents will prevent these men from performing their regular farm operations for some time.

100 Years Ago – Janesville Argus, December 6, 1922

- Tomorrow afternoon at two-thirty at the Town Hall Colonel Dan Morgan Smith will deliver an address. This address will appeal to every loyal, patriotic citizen. All will want to hear it. Colonel Smith was commander of the lost battalion in the great war. Doubtless he will give a thrilling account of his experiences.

- The animal husbandry division of the Minnesota College of Agriculture will carry out another baby beef feeding trial the coming winter. Sixty Shorthorn calves will be fed in six lots of ten each on six different rations composed entirely of feeds readily available in Minnesota. Records of the gains made, feed consumed, and cost of gains and profit from each lot will be kept, and the results given out on Cattle Feeders Day next spring when the calves are ready for market. The baby beef feeding experiments conducted by the division a year ago gave a noticeable impetus to the feeding of young stock in various parts of Minnesota.

- The fire alarm sounded again Sunday evening at about eleven o'clock. A blaze at the home of F. V. Reaney was the cause. Fire in a waste basket in the kitchen started the trouble. It burned to the ceiling, but was extinguished by Mr. Reaney before the fire department arrived.

Looking back in Waseca

25 Years Ago – Waseca County News, December 2, 1997

- The Sabongi Consulting Group, Inc. was unable to venture into the Brattrud building due to unsafe conditions. The Sabongi Group was hired to assess the condition of the Brattrud building in downtown Waseca. The building has been rapidly eroding, causing water damage to the adjoining buildings. Sabongi needs a few more weeks to complete its evaluation of the damages and put a price tag on the options the city may take to stop the damage the building is causing.

- Gary and Laurie Deml of Deml Ford intend to file petition with the city of Waseca to annex land near the high school. The official filing will not take place until the beginning of January; however, the notification of intent to file petition for annexation is set for tonight's City Council meeting. The land is located on 19th Avenue Northwest in Woodville Township. The amount of land the Deml's hope to annex is just under nine acres. City utility services will need to be extended for this annexation of land. The Deml's want to begin development of this land for the new site of Deml Ford.

- The Minnesota Chiropractic Association Board of Directors, on behalf of the Minnesota Chiropractic Association, has presented Dr. Bill Beschnett of Waseca with the distinguished service award for 1997. The award was given to Beschnett at the annual convention of the Minnesota Chiropractic Association in Brooklyn Center on Nov. 7. He was honored for serving his profession with unselfish loyalty and energy continuously for many years. Beschnett said, "I am honored to receive this award." Beschnett is quick to give the credit for this award to his staff members. "My staff has been great over the last 29 years of my practice in Waseca," he said. "Together we have serviced the aches and pains of over 15,000 people."

50 Years Ago – Waseca's Daily Journal, November 27, 1972

- The county-wide visit of the Red Cross Bloodmobile last week netted 329 pints of blood for the St. Paul Regional Blood Center. This exceeded the goal of 300 pints set for Waseca County by the Regional Center. The City of Waseca donated 158 pints, Janesville yielded 67, New Richland 62 pints and in Waldorf 42 pints were donated. During the Waldorf visit John Kelling of Janesville received a two-gallon pin and Armin Tesch of Waldorf earned a three-gallon pin.

- College scholarships totaling $111,000 will be at stake Tuesday, dec. 5 when seniors in Waseca High School and the Southern School of Agriculture join schools throughout the country in the written knowledge and attitude examination of the 1973 Betty Crocker Search for the American Homemakers of Tomorrow. This year, for the first time in the 19-year history of the educational program, boys are eligible to participate.

- Henry Neils, 54, Waseca, lost most of his four fingers and thumb of his left hand Saturday when his hand became caught in his corn picker. The accident happened just before noon Saturday as he was trying to see why one of the rollers on the picker wasn't working properly. He was alone out in the field, but his nephew, Robert Deppe, heard his shouts for help and took a tractor out to the field to see what was wrong. Neils said he pulled and pulled trying to get free, but was unsuccessful. He said his glove got caught in the roller. Freida Deppe, Neils' sister, told the Journal, "It could have been worse if that roller was working like it is supposed to."

75 Years Ago – The Waseca Heralds, December 4, 1947

- The Waseca county school boards with some 164 members present voted down the question, "Shall a County Survey Committee on School Reorganization be Set Up." Out of 261 school board members in the county about 100 were not present. The meeting was held at 10 a.m. at the Central high school auditorium and was mandatory under the new state law passed at the 1947 legislature. Voting against the plan to set up a nine member committee, composed of five members from the rural districts and four from the urban districts in the county, the group was close to being evenly divided. There were 164 votes cast with 76 voting for the survey committee and 88 voting against it.

- Four members of the city council and three members of Waseca Memorial Hospital board and Superintendent Marvel Curry listened to a list of request on nurses' hours and wages at a meeting Tuesday night in preparation to presenting the facts to the city council for action. Representing the nurses at the meeting were Miss Rose Talbot of the Minnesota Nures' Association with offices in the Midway in the Twin Cities. The discussion on requests by the nurses ranged from holidays, sick leave, number of hours, salary and extra pay for different shifts.

- The 1947 tax rate in mills for payment in 1948 were announced this week by County auditor Ar. Brisbane who completed the figures this week. The total mill rate in the four towns of Waseca county are up from 1947 and the increases range from one mill for Waldorf to 15 mills for Janesville with Waseca and New Richland riding between. The city of Waseca's total mill rate for next year is 136.28, an increase of 2.41.

100 Years Ago – The Waseca Journal, November 29, 1922

- The usual quiet of the small hours before dawn in the village of Pemberton was rudely broken by a fullisade of pistol shots in a gun battle between citizens of that hamlet and bank robbers who had broken into the Pemberton State Bank. One man who was daring enough to light a lamp and peer out of a window had a very narrow escape from being killed by two bullets shot thru a pane of glass near his head. One glass was shattered and pieces thereof fell about him like flakes of snow. As near as can be determined the robbers did not get into the safe of the bank but did get into the safety deposit department and rifled every box in it. It is believed that the bandits got away with a large amount of Liberty bonds and other valuable papers which were deposited there.

- A state-wide referendum is being taken by the Minnesota farm bureau federation to determine the position of its members on important issues affecting agriculture that are to come before the legislature and congress. F. L. French, secretary, has sent to all county directors and other local leaders, a supply of blanks, prepared in the form of a questionnaire, which when filled out, will give the Federation, especially its legislative committee, accurate information as to the desires of its membership.

- Smith and Williamson's Millinery was sold this week to Mrs. A. J. Schmer of Des Moines, Iowa, and Mrs. Schmer took possession immediately. In this transaction one of Waseca's oldest business firms is dissolved for Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Williamson have been in partnership for the past 25 years in Waseca. They have done fine work and their efforts have been rewarded with a large patronage. Mrs. Smith will go to St. Paul where she will make her home while Mrs. Williamson will make her home in Chwealh, Wash. Mrs. Scmer, the new owner, has had considerable experience in the millinery business and comes highly recommended. She plans on getting a new lot of hats from the east and will conduct it on the same high plane as it has been conducted.

Looking back in the Star

25 Years Ago – New Richland Star, December 4, 1997

- The New Richland-Hartland elementary students will usher in the Christmas season with their annual Christmas Concert, Thursday, December 4. According to vocal director Mark Rud, this performance will include some traditional favorites sung with a bit of a twist. One will have to listen to the fifth graders carefully to hear two different versions of "We Three Kings" presented as counter melodies within larger works, "Come Follow That Star" and "Patapan Noel." The Kindergarten "kids" will try to explain to their director that they would like to sing a song less traditional than those good old Christmas tunes. The third grade youngsters will sing about getting presents they want to that famous Gershwin Melondy, :"I Got Rhythm", while the fourth graders will dazzle the audience with a song called "Holiday Lights".

- The Waldorf City Council has scheduled a referendum vote on the sale of the city's municipal liquor store for Monday, December 8. Although the election is not an official election, it is being held to give residents of the city the right to express their views. The ballot asks: "Shall the City of Waldorf sell the Municipal Liquor Store?" At a regular meeting in November, the city council voted to sell the store since averaging out the net profit from the store over the past 16 years revealed the city was realizing an annual income of $375.

- The Janesville-Waldorf-Pemberton girls' basketball team buried St. Clair 69-39, Tuesday, November 24 at Janesville. As a team they pulled down 36 rebounds, stole the ball 25 times and had eight assists. Leading the way for the Bulldogs was Lindsay Wolff with 18 points, seven steals and seven rebounds.

50 Years Ago – New Richland Star, December 7, 1972

- photo, legion auxiliary packing gifts for servicemen, sent by text to Eli and Michael

- Winter came in Tuesday with a snowstorm of four inches and a record cold temperature for this time of the year of 17 below zero, Wednesday morning. Automobiles refused to start and snowmobiles roared up and down the streets of the village. Snow shovels and blowers were the order of the day.

- Debbie Prescher, Connie Supalla, Connie Poot, Lyn Budach, Kris Prescher, Janice Jacobson and Susie Routh, majorettes at the New Richland-Hartland high school attended the Upper Midwest Twirling championships at Coon Rapids, last Saturday. This contest is sanctioned by the United States Twirling association and is offered to twirlers of all ages. There were many girls and boys entered, some being only two years old. The New Richland-Hartland majorettes were not entered however. They went to observe the different types of baton twirling and to learn routines to teach the elementary and junior high twirlers. The majorettes are now interested in entering one student from each grade at New Richland in the next competition. The majorettes feel their students are just as good as many of those girls who were entered.

75 Years Ago – New Richland Star, December 4, 1947

- Eldo Schemmler, about 25 of Emmons, and employed by a contractor supplying gravel to Highway No. 30, barely escaped being crushed to death Tuesday morning. His head and parts of his body were crushed as the elevated truck body descended on him. Schwemmler and a companion were repairing the gravel truck which broke down at the Clarence Reese corner a few miles east of New Richland. The young man sat straddle of the cylinder which operates the hydraulic hoist when he foot accidentally released the hydraulic hoist. The box of the truck descended far enough to catch Schwemmler's head and shoulders when fortunately his companion shut it off just in time to prevent Schwemmler's life from being crushed out.

- Motorists will do well to watch their driving where disaster would require a tow car with hoist to bring them in. New Richland's only full-fledged wrecker, owned by Scott Bros. garage caught fire Thursday morning when a blowtorch being used to thaw out the cooling system ignited gasoline that leaked and followed a gas line around to the opposite side of the car.

- While the Northern States Power Co.'s new $200,000 power plant under erection here since late last spring, is not yet completed and will be in the hands of the J. F. Pritchard Construction Co., Kansas City, Mo., while the finishing touches are applied, the big Diesels have been tried out. No. 1 Diesel with a capacity of 1,300 h.p. was started Wednesday and operated satisfactorily. It is ready for operation in case it is needed. Its twin was started today. Manager S. V. Wilson and Assistant Manager Ed Chappui of the Faribault district were here Wednesday and informed The Star that a 16-hour tests of both engines will be made Friday and Saturday when every "bug" is expected to be eliminated and the power plant put in sufficient condition to be used if necessary.

100 Years Ago – New Richland Star, December 1, 1922

- Bandits forced their way into the Pemberton State Bank Saturday, broke open safety deposit boxes of individual patrons, seized the contents of these boxes and a small amount of the bank's cash and escaped towards Mankato after exchanging shots with several inhabitants. Before entering the bank, the robbers constructed a barricade in front of the building from shingles and tile, and cut all telephone wires leading into the town.

- A Troop of Boys Scouts of America is being formed under the leadership of Rev. G. M. Peacock, who has had three years' experience as a Scoutmaster. Under his direction a Troop at Ault, Colo., sold W. S. S. and Bonds to the value of thousands of dollars, helped on farms, held hikes, and staged summer camps. Much can be done here if the necessary support is forthcoming.

- The first number of the Community Club Lyceum course given lasts Monday evening was highly praised by the number who were in attendance. Ernest Toy, celebrated Australian violinist, and Eva Leslie Toy, pianist and contralto, gave those present a splendid program of high class selections. Their program consisted of violin, piano and vocal selections, including some heavy numbers. The course is being put out by the University of Minnesota Extension division.

The Pastor's Column

When people realize the earth isn't flat

My father loves stories and history too. When I was a kid, I remember that he would put on a radio program in the car every Sunday on the way to church, The Story of the World by Diana Uribe. Diana is an incredible woman with a natural talent for storytelling. I heard from Diana what I have never heard or read from anyone else: that blacks are the only people who did not choose to come to the Americas.

When the Europeans finally realize that the earth is not flat and that beyond their seas, there is not a wasteland of anything but more land, two opposite worlds meet. America became a land desired by the European crowns, not only for its abundance of riches, exotic landscapes, and climates but also because it was an opportunity to escape the upheaval of the Protestant Reformation, among other things. The kingdoms saw America as an opportunity to extend their dominions and/or to escape from the religious wars (how sad) and found in the African population the strength they lacked.

Those were times when slavery was not frowned upon, and segregation was not disguised because there was no reason. The crowns decided to start making their dreams come true in these new lands at the point of black force. Hence the words of Diana, that they, unlike the Spanish, French, Portuguese, Dutch, and English, did not come to these lands in search of a future, much less to fulfill dreams; they were happy, they lacked nothing, they carried their joy on their backs, their fertile and fruitful lands were enough for them, they came because it was their turn, they were not asked, they were forced.

The black force has survived all kinds of outrages, its joy has never been extinguished, its bodies, no matter how worn out, have not stopped, and its traditions are the very strength of the Americas. The sad centuries of slavery brought with them all kinds of legacies that we ignore, among them a particular grain known as coffee. Like any other fruit of the Earth, coffee has characteristics that allow it to be cultivated in specific places and conditions. I was born in one of those places where this small bean brought by the enslaved people, like many other beans, found one of its lost homes.

The coffee axis of Colombia is an area full of greenery of all kinds; the central mountain range crosses it and makes its latitude suitable for sowing coffee. I was born there, and my memories are those of two grandparents with calloused hands cultivating coffee; loving the green of its trees, mountains, and crops; of playing in the piles of millions of coffee beans with my sister. I was always proud of my land, but it wasn't until I traveled that I began to understand how beautiful it is. I mean: I naturalized the landscape and underestimated the beauty of the land of my birth until I missed it. Humans tend to normalize situations, places, and stories by repeating them. As we grow up, we lose the capacity for fascination.

This is how I perceive Mary's virginity at the time of conceiving Jesus, we have made it part of the landscape, and it seems to us a familiar story when it is not! I don't know when she stopped fascinating us, but we underestimate how miraculous she is (the story).

Let's think calmly that no man touched her, normal that Joseph wanted to flee, as crazy at the time as in our days would have sounded his statement: I am engaged, yes, but we have not slept together, I promise, I am pregnant by the Holy Spirit, an angel came and told me. Every way you look at it, it makes no sense. Read it well if it was unclear: a betrothed virgin is pregnant.

For months I have wondered why God would choose this particular way of coming into the world. We are talking about the creator of the universe, he could have come in any other way, but no, he chose to come into the world through a virgin woman who was not even married. She was young, a virgin, and engaged. That blows my mind.

Ours is a hypocritical society that judges teenage pregnancies and single mothers to such an extent that the normal thing has been to avoid the norm: condoms, planning, Post day pill, abortion, whatever it takes to avoid the shame of rejection; in our churches, we do not educate in the sexual area, it is still a taboo subject as if there is no better place to educate than the church, or do we not believe that sexuality is part of God's divine design? If the answer is yes, why does false morality abound in our spheres?

I confess that it saddens me to imagine Mary, the blessed among all women, seeing how they close the doors of the churches in her face because no one wants to have an unwed mother, a pregnant teenager, being part of her congregation; what a scandal! Just imagine the picture.

The birth of Jesus anticipates the miracle of His love and the human nature of rejection. A pregnant virgin, carrying the world's savior in her womb, should tell us more. Mary's present must have been a torture, just like Joseph's, I can't imagine them any different in our days, and that to me lets me see that we must still learn to look with the eyes of our Lord, who chose to be on the side of the marginalized from the very first moment, who decided that particular path to come to dwell among us.

Santiago Ramirez Ocampo

Lindfors speaks at Christmas dinner

By MICHAEL ROY
Editor

Celebrating the gift of Christmas was the mission of Christ Community Church in Waseca on Friday and Saturday, Dec. 2 and 3.

The event was a women's candlelight dinner. The crowd gathered in the sanctuary where decorations depicted nativity scenes related to the Christmas season. A walkthrough of the beautifully ornate setting opened at 6 p.m., with the meal following at 6:30.

In addition to the dinner, entertainment was provided by Gaye Lindfors, who "is not afraid to poke fun at her own mishaps" and will tell stories to "encourage the heart, feed the soul, and give something to giggle about."

Lindfors comes from St. Paul but grew up in the small town of Climax in northern Minnesota. She was a leader in a human resources department for a company with 11,000 employees and served as a special assistant to a university president. "I'm blessed to be where I am today," Lindfors said. "God has helped me through the good times and the tough times. And every time, he's shown up."

She loves talking about God at her many speaking events and in her books. "I travel around the midwest to share my experience with God," she adds.

BLESSED - Gaye Lindfors was a speaker during dinner at Christ Community Church Friday and Saturday, Dec. 2 and 3. She shared her journey of finding faith in God while talking about the meaning of Christmas. Below, dinner was served in a brightly decorated dining room.
Pioneer photos by Michael Roy

In addition to telling stories about her faith, Lindfors also had books available to purchase, including Getting My Ducks in a Row and God, Girlfriends, and Chocolate.

With a great dinner and Lindfors's entertainment, "Celebrating the Gift " reminded people that fellowship, praise, worship, and encouragement are important. "Christmas is a time of year when we come together and enjoy each other's company," Lindfors concluded. "It's also a time of year to remember the reason for the season."

■ Council

from Page 1

rimental weather conditions. Mansfield voted no on the extensions, which the council approved. The sewer must be done before the end of the year and the manhole completed by the end of May of 2023.

Council members expressed dissatisfaction that workmen from HK Solutions' construction crews have blocked streets and driveways. A company representative stated the crews overlooked the inconvenience their work might cause residents, commenting that workers could have taken up less space and been more considerate

The city received two responses from bidders interested in leasing the city-owned Lewer Farm property for a soybean crop in 2023. The higher bid was $13,328 from the Huber family. In a previous instance when the Hubers farmed the property, there were numerous complaints about corn stalks blowing into the city. Before they would officially accept the bid, council members requested that the Hubers attend the next meeting. Mayor Roy Srp said more than once that he felt the Hubers did not intentionally cause the mess the previous time; he suggested that, having been forewarned, they would not allow it to happen again.

The city routinely advertises acreage on the city-owned airport farm for corn, soybean, and

alfalfa. The current specifications are for a two-year lease, 2023-2024. Quotes opened on December

6 and the city approved awarding the bid to Pinedale Farms in the amount of $188,000, an amount $50,000 higher than last year's bid.

Final payment to Wencl construction for the North State Street trunk water main improvements was approved.

In the city manager's report, interim manager Carl Sonnenberg shared several updates:

1. Finance Director Alicia Fischer is the deputy city manager, and should be contacted in his absence

2. There have been no electrical outings

3. Waseca County intends to reinstate its tax abatement program for new homeowners

Council member Jeremy Conrath asked about snow removal and was informed the city bills the county for snow removal provided on county property. There is, however, no billing for leaf pickup. Conrath raised numerous concerns that property owners outside city tax zones sometimes take advantage of city services, including leaf pickup. Conrath also demanded, at least, in the tone of his voice, that the rural townships using the new fire truck pay $10,000 toward its purchase price. Cost to the city after receiving a grant for the purchase is $13,000; Conrath claimed the City of Waseca will only use the tanker "1%" of the time.

The fire relief board ordered three more friers after a successful test run in November. The department also approved $250 for "shop with a hero."

The park board report included news that the Clear Lake Park pavilion project will be completed in spring. Council member Mark Christianson announced that planning for the Gaiter Lake property is "not dead" and will be brought up in the new year. He also said he plans to encourage the city to sell the "downtown walkway." This presents several obstacles and will be an ongoing discussion in the new year. The next park board meeting will be the second Tuesday of January, instead of the first.

Congratulations were extended to new council member Schroeder. It was also mentioned that Tuesday, December 7, should be honored for its historic position as "A day that will live in infamy."

The meeting closed with a heartfelt message from Mayor Srp regarding his mother. An article dedicated to his mother, and Srp's impassioned message can be found in next week's edition of the Pioneer.

Attend the Church of your Choice!

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

* * *

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

* * *

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

* * *

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

* * *

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

* * *

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

* * *

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

* * *

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

* * *

SACRED HEART CATHOLIC CHURCH
111 4th St NW, Waseca
507-835-1222
Worsihp Saturday 5:15 p.m., Sundays 8:00 and 10:00 a.m., weekdays 8:30 a.m. Tues., Wed. and Fri., 7:00 a.m. Thurs.

* * *

REAL LIFE CHURCH
620 W Elm Ave, Waseca
507-607-8245
Sundays 9 and 10:30 a.m.

* * *

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

* * *

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

* * *

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

* * *

ST. PETER EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
New Richland, Minnesota
Rev. Scott Williams, Pastor
Sunday - 9 a.m. Sunday School, Choir and Choir; 10:30 a.m. Worship
Monday - 1 p.m. Quilters
Wednesday - 7 p.m. Worship

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

* * *

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

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

* * *

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

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

* * *

VISTA EVANGELICAL COVENANT CHURCH
New Richland, Minnesota
Brian Schanil Pastor
Sunday - 10 a.m. Worship; 9 a.m. Sunday School
Tuesdays: The Shepherd's Robe Ministry, 1-3 p.m, 6-8 p.m.; Bonfires and Yard Games, 6 p.m. until dark

* * *

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

* * *

FIRST LUTHERAN
Missouri Synod
Waldorf, Minnesota
Rev. Michael Mathews, pastor
Sundays: Sunday School 9 a.m., Bible Study 9:20 a.m., Worship 10:30 a.m.

* * *

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

* * *

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

* * *

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

* * *

TRINITY LUTHERAN
Wilton Township
Rev. Larry Sipe, Pastor
Sunday – 10:30 a.m. Worship

* * *

THE CHURCH of JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS
Brad Donner, Branch President
Waseca, Minnesota
www.lds.org
Sunday — 10 a.m. Sacrament Mtg.; 11:20 a.m. Sunday School
Wednesday — 7 p.m. Youth Activities, ages 12-18

* * *

TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH
412 N. Main Street, Janesville
Pastor Brian Johnston
Wednesday, Saturday - 6:30 p.m. Worship
Sunday - 8:15 a.m.Worship, 9:15 Worship w/bible Class, 10:30 a.m. Worship

* * *

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

* * *

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

* * *

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

* * *

FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH
300 Owen St., Janesville
Interim Pastor

* * *

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

* * *

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

* * *

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

Got news? 837-6767

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Open house for
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Saturday, December 17
from 1-3 pm
at the
American Legion
700 S State St.
Waseca, MN 56093

Pork sandwich meal.
PLEASE no gifts.

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New Listing
817 Minnesota Ave SE, Owatonna, MN - $239,000
4 bedroom, 2.5 bath home

New Listing
Xxxx 110th St, 80 acres - $699,000
80 acres of farmland in Iosco township. Approx. 15.49+/- acres of CRP. Approx 60.50+/- acres tillable.

New Listing
XXX HWY 14 E Owatonna $2,975,000
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BRING IN CONSIGNMENT ITEMS TODAY!

ONLINE AUCTIONS WEDNESDAYS at 8 p.m.
WaSeekers ONLINE AUCTION

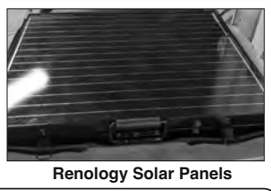
What is WaSeekers? A live auction website and shop for locals, by locals! Place your bids, view pictures and detailed descriptions of items in weekly auctions, or inspect any active auction items at our safe and secure physical location!!

Items we will sell: Just about anything! WaSeekers takes in consignment items from people in our community, lists the items on our auction platform, and displays all the items in our store.
Important notice: All items are subject to a 10% seller's commission with listing fees as follows: No listing fee for items selling for $25 or more; $5 listing fee for items selling for $24.99 or less; $25 reserve fee. Reserve Fee will not be charge if reserve is met.

NEXT ONLINE AUCTION DECEMBER 14

Contact Tina Mittelsteadt 507-351-4608
tina@waseekersonlineauction.com


Herters Mini Bike


Renology Solar Panels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SWEET-SOMMERS VFW POST 1642 CALENDAR EVENTS

December 2022 (◄ Nov 2022 | Jan 2023 ►)

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 7pm Bingo	2 Meat Raffle 5:30pm	3
4	5	6 BURGER NITE 5-7pm	7 PEARL HARBOR DAY 6pm Bar Bingo	8 7pm Bingo	9 Meat Raffle 5:30pm	10 Fire Dept. X-mas party
11 All you can EAT Breakfast VFW 8:00am to Noon Your Host Waseca Boy Scouts	12 7pm Post & AUX Meeting	13 U.S. National Guard Birthday BURGER NITE 5-7pm	14 6pm Bar Bingo	15 7pm Bingo	16 Meat Raffle 5:30 WALLEYE OR SHRIMP DINNER 5:30 to 7:00	17 Tom & Jerry nite 4:pm Meat Raffle 5:30
18	19	20 U.S. Space Force Birthday 2019 BURGER NITE 5-7pm	21 6pm Bar Bingo	22 7pm Bingo	23 Meat Raffle 5:30pm	24
25 CHRISTMAS	26	27 BURGER NITE 5-7pm	28 6pm Bar Bingo	29 7pm Bingo	30 Meat Raffle 5:30pm	31 NEW YEARS EVE 6pm Bar Bingo MEAL Available

HOURS of Operation.
Sun. - Mon. Closed
Tue. - Wed.- 3pm to 11pm Tue. is Lady's nite 2 for one - Men Busch Light $2.50 from 4 to 6pm.
Thur. - 1pm to 11pm
Fri. - Sat. - 11am to 1am
POST & AUX Meeting 7pm club open 6pm MEMBERS only. Mn. Gambling license number 00385

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■ Shop

from Page 1

we had one," Willy grins.

The similarities between Dave and Willy are striking. Their compatibility is a strong factor in the decision to move ahead with the transition.

"These two will bring new energy to Waseca," Paulette insists. "And Waseca will love them–if they don't already.

"God totally orchestrated this," Paulette praises. "He has totally blessed our business for 34 years. I met Dave at 16 years old and he was already married to his work."

In August of 1988 Dave started his own shop next to the one owned by his father, Dave Senior. A month later Dave and Paulette were married. The two generations ran businesses side by side for many years. A plaque hangs on the wall of the shop celebrating their first day in business. A more detailed story about Dave, his wife, and their time in Waseca will be featured in a later edition of the Pioneer.

Regarding how the business will be run once the changeover is complete, Willy observes, "The general public is really not going to see any changes. Really the only thing that will change is the technology that we have access to." Willy explains it's very important to him that jobs are completed by his staff, rather than being sent elsewhere. "We have the equipment to do everything in house. We want everything put back together to the manufacturer's specs. That's what makes us stand out in Faribault. We follow procedures. We do things the way they're supposed to be done. And we have the state-of-the-art equipment to do it."

Helping Willy is his wife Ali. "We worked side by side for the last five years and now we see each other passing on Highway 60," Ali jokes. The couple divides their time between their two businesses.

Willy and Ali own Malecha's Body shop in Faribault and are currently constructing a new building there to house that operation. Willy started his first body shop in the garage of his house in 2000 after having gotten his first taste for body work in 1995, as a junior in high school. In 2015 he and Ali moved the shop to its current location in Faribault.

Continuing to work in the shop will be Dave and his staff.

"We are blessed with great people," everyone agreed.

Both couples–Malecha and Krampitz–stated numerous times the importance of their technicians. "I don't even want to call them employees," Willy argued. "They're family."

Both Willy and Dave compared their right-hand men to an extension of themselves. "They can read my mind," both said at different points. Paulette compared the relationships they have with their staffs as similar to the connection Willy and Dave have. "They're like brothers from different mothers," Paulette says with a straight face.

Among the updates planned at Dave's Body Shop is a new paint booth being brought in to replace an older one. Beginning in January of 2023, the Malechas plan to have loaner cars available, free of charge to those whose insurance doesn't cover the cost, for their customers.

Otherwise, the same great service which has earned Dave's Body Shop numerous accolades, landing them as one of the top-rated body shops in Minnesota, will stay the same. As will the name, "Dave's Body Shop." The shop will continue to offer collision repairs, frame straightening, painting, calibrations– typical auto body services and repairs.

"There's no rhyme or reason to us body shop guys," Willy explains. "We just do what we gotta do to make it work."

As for the future of the business, and themselves, Dave and Paulette are flexible. "We'll go wherever God takes us."