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WASECA COUNTY PIONEER

LOCAL COMMUNITY-DRIVEN NEWSPAPER SERVING ALL OF WASECA COUNTY

No. 8 Vol. V $2 | Office at 111 Elm Avenue West, Waseca | Thursday, February 19, 2026

■ Pages 8-10

Sports

Mother-Daughter Book Club at the Waseca Public Library Thursday, Feb. 19

Geared for girls in grades 3-6 and a significant adult female, this book club features the latest children's books and fun activities. January's book club selection is Willowdeen by Katherine Applegate. Join in for a discussion at 6 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 19.

Open House at the Waseca Soil and Water Conservation District office Friday, Feb. 20

The Waseca Soil and Water Conservation District will host a Tree Day open house from 7 a.m. through 5 p.m. Friday, Feb. 20. Community members are invited to stop by, meet staff, and learn about tree planting, care, and local conservation programs. The event is free and open to the public. The SWCD office is in Waseca at 300 N State Street, Door 4.

Knights of Columbus Burger Fry, Feb. 20

Waseca Sons of American Legion will be hosting a burger fry fundraiser for the Knights of Columbus on Friday, February 20 from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m. at the Waseca Legion Club. $10 for a hamburger or fish sandwich with fries.

Mark Braun, Lauren Jacobson artist reception at Waseca Art Center Feb. 21

There will be an artist reception at the Waseca Art Center featuring artists Mark Braun and Lauren Jacobson from 2-4 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 21. Refreshments will be served afterwards.

On the Cover at the Indian Island Winery Saturday, Feb. 21

Musical duo On the Cover will perform at the Indian Island Winery from 5:30-8:30 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 21. Harrison and Jon are just a couple of dude who love to cover great music together.

Swing Dance at the Starfire Event Center Saturday, Feb. 21

An evening of Swing Dance at the Starfire Event Center begins at 6 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 21. Lessons by Lynette Dawley of the Bee Hop Club at 6:30, live music by the Waseca Junior Senior jazz bands beginning at 7:30. $7 adults, $4 for students. College students are free with ID. Tickets available at the door or in advance at 4-Seasons, Waseca Music Store and the high school. Refreshments included with ticket purchase.

Legion of St. Michael Membership Drive at VFW Sunday, Feb. 22

The Legion of St. Michael will be holding a membership drive at the Sweet-Sommers VFW from noon till 2 p.m. on Sunday, Feb. 22.

A word from The Word

Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.

1 Peter 4:8

BIG THANKS - A group of well wishers joined JWP school bus drivers (adults, from left) Jennifer Ziemke, Judy Lichtsinn, Nicole Bowman and Barry Olson in honor of bus driver appreciation day. A note from Nicole: "A big thank you to Marissa DeFrances for washing the buses!"
Pioneer photo by Deb Bently

Bus Driver Appreciation Day Feb. 18

By DEB BENTLY
News Editor

February 18 is Minnesota "Bus Driver Appreciation Day."

For the father and daughter pair of Barry Olson and Nicole Bowman, becoming a school bus driver was not a career they would have chosen. Now, though, it's one they wouldn't want to give up.

The two are employed by Palmer Bus Service and drive routes for the Janesville-Waldorf-Pemberton school district. Nicole has gone so far as to become the service's site manager for JWP.

Barry began about 10 years ago when former site manager Tim Engel learned of his retirement from an Owatonna job of 41 years and suggested he might use his open time to drive a van route, which does not require a commercial drivers' license (CDL).

Though he had to be asked twice, Barry gave the job a try and was soon taking the six-week training needed to earn a CDL and drive the bigger vehicles.

These days he's among the minority of JWP drivers who don't mind driving in the Twin Cities metro area. "Sometimes construction, or some other factor can throw a wrench in things," he admits. "But you always find your way out of it sooner or later."

Closer to home, however, the two say only a mail delivery worker knows the roads and residences of the area better than a typical bus driver.

Nicole decided to give the job a try in 2020. She stepped right onto the big buses, taking the permit test, doing the practice driving, and then testing on the road. She notes her road test was in the flat-faced bus, a vehicle which has certain eccentricities because the driver is actually sit-

Drivers continued on 4

COMMITMENT - Katie Gonzales recently won the Young Professional Distinguished Service Award presented by the Waseca Area Chamber of Commerce and Tourism.
Pioneer photo by Deb Bently

Katie Gonzales honored

By ANN STALOCH

At the Waseca Area Chamber of Commerce Community Awards Banquet on Jan. 28, Katie Gonzales was recognized as the recipient of the Distinguished Young Professional Service Award, an honor celebrating emerging leaders who demonstrate exceptional commitment to service, leadership, and community engagement.

Gonzales exemplifies those qualities through her extensive involvement across numerous organizations. She currently serves as a Executive Board Secretary, Ambassador Chair, and a member of both the membership and events committees for the Waseca Area Chamber of Commerce. She is also co-president of the Waseca Rotary Club, a member of the Southern Minnesota Pageant Committee, and a longtime supporter of the Waseca Marching Classic, now volunteering annually during the parade.

As Chamber President Mikhail Rastislavovich noted in his remarks, "Katie represents the very best of the next generation of community leadership. Her willingness to step up, take responsibility, and serve with both humility and excellence has made a measurable impact on our Chamber and our community. Waseca is stronger because of her."

Gonzales traces her willingness to give of her time back to her childhood. "My passion for service has been a constant throughout

Honored continued on 5

First Fishing with the Riders sees perfect weather

By BEN REVERMANN
Staff writer

The inaugural "Fishing with the Riders" youth fishing event held by the American Legion Riders of Waseca took place on Clear Lake during the afternoon of Valentine's Day, Saturday, Feb. 14. The weather reached temperatures of 50 degrees, but the ice was safe enough for the day, which encouraged around 45 children with their families to come out to the lake together from noon until 4 p.m. The young angler who caught the biggest fish was Hunter Hayes with a bullhead; he received a $25 dollar gift card from Dale's Marine out of Madison Lake.

Anglers arriving at the north end of Clear Lake on Saturday morning were greeted by plenty of sunshine and a light south wind. Nearly everyone walking out to the fishing contest on foot was greeted by Alex Ross on a side by side 4-wheeler. "I'm giving rides today to get people out to the holes as fast as possible, it cuts down on slipping and falling

Fishing continued on 12

FISHING FUN - The inaugural "Fishing with the Riders" youth fishing event was held the afternoon of Valentine's Day, Feb. 14. The contest was put on in the memory of Brady Anderson.
Pioneer photo by Ben Revermann

Broadband hookups to begin March 1

By DEB BENTLY
News Editor

An update presented during the Feb. 3 county board meeting revealed that homeowners will begin being connected to the newly laid internet fiber optic cable network in the southern part of the county beginning March 1; it is expected about eight connections will take place each day, weather permitting, with a total of more than 600 connections to be made.

A listing of services and prices offered by internet provider Bevcomm is available at Bevcomm.net.

Information was also shared regarding what can be done for people who are relatively near the installation area, but not within it.

Steve Kiana, who served in an advisory capacity as Waseca County applied for and eventually received about $7.5 million in grants through the state office of broadband development, summarized the "broadband line extension program" offered by the same department. He explained individuals can apply to have an extension laid to networks within one or two miles of their location. For those whose application is selected, the office of broadband development will cover the cost of the extension up to $25,000.

Conversation during the meeting suggested that property owners are more likely to receive the extension if a cluster of applications in an area makes it more financially practical to extend the line. Anyone interested in learning more about the line extension program can visit the state office of broadband development website at https://mn.gov/deed/programs-services/broadband/extension/. The line extension application is also available on the county website.

Identify Frosty for share of $1,500

It's time again for the annual Waseca Sleigh and Cutter Identify Frosty event. Continue reading for week two's clues.

Who is Frosty?

Identify Frosty and win some cash! Prize money totaling $1,500.00 is waiting to be won.

Frosty is a Waseca County resident chosen to be an ambassador for the Waseca Sleigh & Cutter Festival. Follow the clues and guess FROSTY'S name.

The grand prize is $500.00.

Frosty continued on 12

Compostings

by Al Batt

Wisdom is heavy

ECHOES FROM THE LOAFERS' CLUB MEETING

I have the memory of an elephant.

Really?

Yes, I remember seeing an elephant at a fair when I was nine years old.

ECHOES FROM THE LOAFERS' CLUB MEETING TOO

Folklore said if a woman saw a robin flying overhead on Valentine's Day, it meant she would marry a sailor. If she saw a sparrow, she would marry a poor man. If she saw a goldfinch, she would marry a rich person.

That's unfair nonsense.

Don't you believe in superstitions?

Not even one. Knock on wood.

DRIVING BY BRUCE'S DRIVE

I have a wonderful neighbor named Bruce. Whenever I pass his drive, thoughts occur to me. It was a nice day. People noticed. "What a nice day," they said. Yet the neighborhood was on alert. There's a belief that nice winter weather means nasty weather is coming. That fostered the opinion that the bitter cold was merely taking a short nap.

All the participants of my exercise class (it's rehab therapy) weighed in like boxers before the big fight. Apparently, wisdom is heavy.

Someone had asked me, "What kind of squats do you do in that class?"

"Doubly," I replied.

The rehab gym installed TVs on its walls. I used a recumbent cross-trainer while watching the Winter Olympics athletes do uncomfortable things.

The Olympics began in 776 B.C. in Olympia, Greece. It was held every four years to honor Zeus, the CEO of the Greek gods. Competitors were naked, and the sole prize for victory was an olive wreath.

I'm not sure what I observed on the TV screen was the genuine Olympics because no one was naked.

I saw aerial ski jumping where skiers launched themselves from a snow ramp like human cannonballs. In the air, they flipped like pancakes, twisted like pretzels, and landed like cats before letting their innards settle.

Then I watched a cross-country ski race, an absurd looking and grueling contest wherein all the participants emerged from one tiny car and attempted to ski uphill while wearing their clown shoes.

The final event of my viewing trifecta was the biathlon, which combined cross-country skiing and firing a .22-caliber rifle. The Summer Olympics biathlon combines shooting pool and some wrestling.

A friend tried a triathlon, which proved he wasn't good at swimming, cycling or running.

I hoped to snag a gold medal for watching the Olympics while using a NuStep, but we have our own local Winter Olympics. We shuffle along like penguins and are disqualified in the medal competition if we fall on the ice with a thud.

If you've remained upright, you are a world-class athlete. Congratulations. See you on the podium.

I'VE LEARNED

If you know who Captain Kangaroo was, your knee hurts.

The one who takes the photos for the menu is not the cook.

I'm renting a time machine next month.

BAD JOKES DEPARTMENT

I took the airline to court for losing my bags. I lost my case.

If a king sleeps on a king mattress, and a queen sleeps on a queen mattress, what does a prince sleep on? An heir mattress.

My neighbor thinks all politicians should serve two terms—one in office and one in prison.

The woman at the hotel's desk told me they had no rooms available. I told her my name was "Improvement," and there's always room for improvement.

"Do you have any favorite books?"

"Yes, 1984."

"Wow, that's a lot of books!"

NATURE NOTES

The DNR reported that the EagleCam pair has been spending more time at the nest, enhancing it by adding grasses and new sticks. This is a sign that they are preparing the nest for egg-laying. Over the coming weeks, you will see more courtship displays between the pair and increasing activity at the nest. In past seasons, EagleCam pairs have laid eggs in mid-February. Watch for an adult sitting in the bowl of the nest and not leaving—that is likely the female and a sign she has laid an egg. Female bald eagles lay one to three eggs over several days and begin incubating the first egg as soon as they lay it. Eaglets usually lay their eggs two or three days apart but can lay eggs up to five days apart. The parents share incubation duties. Eagle eggs hatch after 34-39 days of incubation, so if this season follows past years, there should be signs of a chick in the nest as early as mid-March. Check it out at mndnr.gov/eaglecam.

MEETING ADJOURNED

"Kind hearts are the gardens. Kind thoughts are the roots. Kind words are the blossoms. Kind deeds are the fruits."—Kirpal Singh

In My Humble Opinion

by Deb Bently

Network of caring in the community

I would like to take a few minutes to acknowledge some good things and the people doing them.

Let me begin by saying how fortunate I feel to be part of a small town community. I acknowledge we are not all angels, but an amazing number of the people I interact with have the good of others as one of their chief interests. I am speaking here about family and near-family who go out of their way to support and assist others. That network of caring is the foundation of our communities, and lays the groundwork for all the other good things we see being done.

I would like to acknowledge Jason Casey of New Richland who has a group of people looking into the possibility of helping farmers learn more about camelina, a small-seeded flowering plant, as a cash crop. Jason said at a meeting held in New Richland on Feb. 11 that he wants to serve as a catalyst in helping broaden people's horizons—as well as their bank accounts.

Camelina is valued for its high oil content which has the right genetic components to be made into sustainable aviation fuel (SAF). You can read more about the specifics in an article summarizing the event. What I am commenting on here is Jason's motive: just to make things better and possibly improve the local economy.

My compliments to Jason for carrying through on a beneficial idea.

I also want to mention the two ice fishing contests that took place in the area on Valentine's Day.

One, held on Clear Lake from noon to 4 p.m. was a kids' contest with fishing holes, bait, and even food and warm beverages provided. A good crowd attended, which must have been gratifying to the Riders of the American Legion, a group with the noble goal of supporting area veterans who chose to sponsor a wholesome event that encouraged children and families to get outdoors and enjoy the lifelong sport of fishing.

The other, sponsored by the New Richland and Fountain Lake sportsmen's clubs and Fleet Farm, took place on St. Olaf Lake near New Richland. The crowd there was probably 150 or more, spread out amicably near the public park. All ages were eligible to complete and thanks to a donation from Owatonna Motors, the prizes for the three largest fish were truly impressive: $500, $300, and $200.

Equally impressive was the $700 or more spent to acquire gifts for every child age 15 and under who attended. Items given away were outdoors-related, and included flashlights, fishing poles, and toys. New Richland Liquor and its patrons raised the $400 needed to buy a lifetime fishing license for the lucky winner of a youth prize drawing. An excited young 6-year-old had his hand shaken by County Sheriff Jay Dulas and his picture taken with some of the volunteers helping run the event.

If ever two fishing contests "deserved" good weather, it was the two sponsored by these area organizations. It is highly gratifying to me that they had such beautiful weather to carry out their heart-lifting plans.

Waseca County Sheriff Jay Dulas congratulated Abel Hernandez, 6, after it was announced Abel had won the lifetime fishing license offered at the fishing contest held on St. Olaf Lake near New Richland on Saturday, Feb. 14.

Pioneer photo by Deb Bently

Remembering good things despite the bad

To Be Determined

by Amelia Roessler

This past week I spent time reminding myself of the positive things in life. Like Valentine's Day, being able to spend the day on my couch working in my oversized fuzzy blanket hoody, playing four days of competitive volleyball, or just eating good food.

One of the things I enjoyed was getting coffee with a newer acquaintance. This acquaintance, Ava, works at a PR agency and likes to email me and give me story ideas for the magazine. She found me on Instagram and saw that, like her, I had recently graduated and moved to Denver. Ava is from Fort Collins and went to school in Boulder, but still new to living in Denver. We got coffee about a month ago and completely hit it off. It felt really good to walk away from the coffee shop with a giant smile plastered on my face, singing the catchy song the coffee shop was playing in the background under my breath, and being excited to finally have met a friend I just clicked with. It didn't take work. I didn't have to sit there and try to come up with questions to keep the conversation going – it just flowed. She made me laugh, smile, gasp, and more, it was so fun to talk to her. And it felt good to have made what I hope will be a true friend after months of not having one here.

So when she asked if I wanted to get coffee again last week, I was ecstatic. It meant she wanted to keep this friendship growing. Ava asked if she could invite her coworker Ryan, who is also the same age as us. I said of course (new friend!) and we all met up. When they walked in the door, though, there were three of them – turns out Ava had also invited Anna, yet another coworker of our age.

I was glad to meet more people who are cool and friendly. If Ava liked them, good chance I would too. So we sat and chatted and had a good time. It felt like a good group-until Ava dropped the words I had never expected. "I'm moving."

I was shocked and devastated and happy for her. The first coffee we got she told me she had never spent much time outside of Colorado. She wanted a life adventure, and now she was getting one in Charleston with a new job and her best friend at her side.

So it turns out she brought her coworker friends not only for me to just get acquainted, but to make up for the fact that she was leaving me. Here I was thinking I would finally have some consistent friends that I would enjoy hanging out with, and maybe I still will, but Ava will not be one of them. I haven't lately found myself with the desire to search for friends – between volleyball, hanging out with Jack and his friends, and going out to social places, I haven't really felt lonely. But hanging out with those girls getting coffee, I realized how much I missed just having a friend group all my own. I could just spend comfortable time with.

Until then, though, I will continue to look for the little things in life that bring me joy.

My Determination: "A noble friend is the best gift. A noble enemy is the next best." — C.S. Lewis, The Chronicles of Narnia

WASECA COUNTY PIONEER

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

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Child's History of Waseca County

Continuing CHAPTER VII, 1855. More settlers in March – Robbins brothers come with Chris Scott – "Bill" Robbins lost on the prairie, out two days and nights without food – A shooting affray

RECKLESS SHOOTING

A little matter occurred at this time that shows the recklessness of frontier life. Mr. Sutliel, while on his trip to Mankato in February, had sold on credit, a pair of young oxen to a man named Wentworth, and had taken as security a chattel mortgage on the team. He left the chattel mortgage with me and told me to keep an eye out for the cattle. When S. P. Child returned, he told me that Wentworth was sick of the country and would start for California as soon as the grass should grow. Wentworth lived about one and a half miles south of Mansfield and Callens. I went out to that place on foot, a few days after my brother's return, and stayed with Mansfield and Callens over night. They confirmed the report that Wentworth was selling off his personal effects and making arrangements to leave as soon as possible, and that he was trying to sell the Sutliel oxen. So, the next morning, I went to see him, supposing that he would pay for the oxen or, at least, give them up, as he had not paid anything on them. He very coolly told me that he should not pay for them nor give them up. He said the note was not due till a year from date and he should not pay it till then. He admitted that he should leave as soon as he could and take the cattle with him. I told him then that the cattle would have to be taken on the mortgage, and tried to convince him that he had no right to hold the cattle, either in law or equity; but talk was of no avail. I then went to the yard, put the yoke on the oxen, and started to drive them out through the bars. Wentworth stood in the barway with a club and drove them back. I then tore down the yard fence on the other side and tried to drive them out there, but Wentworth met them there and drove them back. For some time we drove the cattle back and forth; finally we came to a clinch. During the struggle, the oxen went out of the yard, and as soon as Wentworth could get loose and regain his feet he ran for the house; I ran for the oxen and started them east as fast as possible. I had not gone more than eight rods before Wentworth came out with a short gun and ordered me to stop or he would shoot. Well, matters were getting serious. I had no shooting iron. I didn't believe, however, that Wentworth would shoot at me, so I said "Shoot and be d–d." And sure enough Wentworth did shoot. I was badly scared, but I was satisfied that if I could get hold of Wentworth before the gun could be reloaded, I could soon put an end to the shooting business; so I made a run for the angry man, who ran into his shanty and barred the door before I reached it. Then I knew it was time for me to leave if I expected to leave at all, and I accordingly left as fast as my legs could carry me. Fortunately for me, the cattle had kept on in the track leading to the Sutliel settlement, and I soon overtook them and put them into a trot which was kept up for some distance. I saw Wentworth come out of his shanty with his gun and walk towards me a short distance, then turn back and disappear into his cabin. I kept a "weather eye" out for my consortant all that day, and for some days after my return, but I never again saw the man, who soon after left the Territory.

Editorial Note - Upon rummaging through the vast library of contents at the Star Eagle, I stumbled across a very old blue book titled, "Child's History of Waseca County Minnesota for Fifty Years, 1854-1904."

After thumbing through the first several pages it was determined this book was too interesting to go back on the shelf. So, it was used as a stand for a computer monitor. Several months later, after finding a more suitable stand, I opened the book to show a reader who stepped into the office. After reading about the Horse Thief Detective Association, I made the decision that this piece of history should not be lost to time. Since then the Star Eagle has included, "a little bit of this and a little bit of that," from the book.

Eli Lutgens

Sea Shell Watercolor two session class Tuesday, Feb. 24 and Wednesday, Feb. 25

There will be two sea shell watercolor classes from 1-3 p.m. on Tuesday, Feb. 24 and Wednesday, Feb. 25 at the Waseca Art Center. Cost is $40 for members and $45 for non-members. For questions call 507-835-1701.

Trinket Dishes at the Janesville Public Library, Feb. 26

Transform a simple dish into a sweet trinket holder by adding pretty paper to the surface at 4 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 26. This simple crafting technique turns basic into beautiful. Ages 13-18.

Canvas Bag Design at the New Richland Public Library Feb. 26

Transform a canvas bag into a custom tote that reflects you at 4 p.m. on Thursday, Feb. 26. Connect with other teens while you add vibrant patterns, intricate illustrations, or inspiring quotes. Ages 13-18.

Mitten Button Art at the Janesville Public Library Feb. 27

This project brings the cozy vibes to home decor. Use your vintage buttons to create a special art piece at the Janesville library at 6 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 27.

Waseca Sleigh and Cutter Dinner and Dance, Feb. 27

The Waseca Sleigh and Cutter Dinner and Dance will be Feb. 27 at the Waseca VFW Hall. Meal at 5 p.m.; music provided by Los T from 6:30 to 9:30.

Waseca Sleigh and Cutter Parade, Feb. 28

The Sleigh and Cutter parade will begin at noon, traveling from the Waseca County fairgrounds through downtown Waseca and back to the fairgrounds.

Winter Farmers Market at Farmamerica Feb. 28

There will be a winter farmers market at Farmamerica from 8 a.m. till noon Saturday, Feb. 28. Find locally grown, baked and made while supporting our local producers. Farmamerica is located at 7367 360th Ave., Waseca.

Annual Vintage Snowmobile Show/Ride/Ice Drags Saturday, Feb. 28

The Annual Vintage Snowmobile Show/Ride will take place on Clear Lake in Waseca by the Boathouse from 9 a.m. till 1 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 28. For questions contact Seth at 507-837-9230 or Marissa at 507-461-4501.

Murphy Brothers Band at Indian Island Winery Feb. 28

The Murphy Brothers Band will be performing at the Indian Island Winery from 5:30-8:30 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 28. They perform rock, blues rock, originals and covers.

Mike Filzen Poker Run, rain or shine, snow or no

By BEN REVERMANN
Staff writer

The twelfth annual Mike Filzen Memorial Poker Run took place during the afternoon of Saturday, Feb. 7 starting at the Waseca American Legion Hall. Signup started at 11:30 a.m. with a noon departure; the Legion also hosted the 7 p.m. return. Winners for the event were Brooke in first place for $100, she did not give her last name. Barb Ahlman in second for $75 and Jake in third place for $50. The goal of a $500 Scholarship was reached for one lucky student in Waseca County and participants raised $310 for cancer research.

In a "poker run," the object is one solid hand of poker, a single game that lasts all day. The destination is five bars in five different towns, each saloon equipped with a board that has a full deck of cards spread out on it like a giant dart board. At each stop every player gets to throw a single dart at the board with the start being the board in the legion. Wherever the dart lands is the card they are dealt with five cards total. There is one exception, "If you hit a card you already have, throw again."

Seth Langager, one of the members of the snowmobile club said, "We're doing this run for Mike and to aid in the scholarship at the school. Mike died of pancreatic cancer; all proceeds from today's run go towards cancer research." The treasurer of the club was also there, Jake Sopkowiak, "I got here at 11:20 a.m., we'll know how much we raised by tonight. This is a pretty good year, there might actually be more people here this year than last year. We used to have way more people when this was a snowmobile event, but with the weather the past few years we're sort of getting shortchanged on the powder lately. But doing this with snowmobiles was our original intent."

Chad Bjerke was nearby, helping with the signup and he said, "I am just a guy who knew Mike, I was friends with him for a lot of years. It is our twelfth year doing this, but full disclosure, we did have to take a year off when covid hit, but that wasn't by choice. It would be better with snowmobiles but if cars are our only option, so be it."

The poker players started off their mission at the Waseca Legion followed by the Willows in New Richland, Papa Ollie's out of Waldorf, the Thirsty Beaver in Elysian, and finally the Classics Pub in Waterville before heading back to the Waseca Legion with a full poker hand to regroup and mellow for a while. Judging and drinks to follow.

BULLSEYE - Payton Slattery threw a dart to find out which card she earned for the 12th Annual Mike Filzen Memorial Poker Run Ride on Saturday, Feb. 7, 2026. Pioneer photo by Ben Revermann

WINNER WINNER - Jake Sopkowiak, treasurer of the snowmobile club announced the winners of the 12th Annual Mike Filzen Memorial Poker Run Ride. Pioneer photo by Ben Revermann

Kopetzki, Keith named as Triple A Award winners

Waseca High School is proud to announce that seniors Allen Kopetzki and Layla Keith have been named this year's recipients of the Academics, Arts and Athletics (Triple A) Award.

Sponsored by the Minnesota State High School League (MSHSL), the annual Triple A Award recognizes students who excel in three key areas of school life: academic achievement, participation in the arts or activity programs, and involvement in League−sponsored athletics. To be eligible, nominees must be graduating seniors with a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher, participate in at least one League athletic program and one arts/activity program, comply with the MSHSL Student Code of Responsibilities, and be chosen as the school's nominated senior boy and senior girl.

Allen Kopetzki has distinguished himself both in the classroom and across the field of play. A dedicated student with strong academic standing, Allen has been an active member of Football and Boys Tennis, while also contributing to the Band and Choir. Teachers and coaches praise his work ethic, leadership, and the quiet confidence with which he supports teammates and classmates.

Layla Keith brings creativity and commitment to everything she does. Alongside a solid academic record, Layla has been deeply involved in Choir, and has competed for Waseca in Tennis, Gymnastics, and Track and Field . Her teachers point to her enthusiasm, collaborative spirit, and the positive energy she brings to rehearsals, practices, and the classroom.

"Allen and Layla represent the best of Waseca High School," said Justin Johnston, Waseca JSHS Principal. "They balance rigorous coursework with time−intensive extracurriculars and lead by example. We're proud to nominate them for this honor."

The school community is invited to join in congratulating Allen and Layla for their exceptional accomplishments. Their selection as Triple A Award winners highlights the value of being a well−rounded student and the strong culture of involvement at Waseca High School.

WALDORF CITY COUNCIL

Waldorf considering power generator

By BEN REVERMANN
Staff writer

During their meeting the evening of Monday, Feb. 9, members of the Waldorf city council discussed the possibility of purchasing a generator to supply power to city hall when other sources of electricity become unavailable. On Jan. 21, power was out for the town of Waldorf for about four hours; during that time, the city fire department could not leave the building because the electric door wouldn't open. That, and since city hall is the emergency management center for the town, prompted the city council's interest.

Council members learned the eagle statue for the Veterans' Memorial has not arrived yet. There are $100 engraved bricks available for the Veterans' Memorial walkway. Those interested can contact Charles Barnes (763) 286-2246 charles.barnes@barnecat.com.

Council members passed a resolution signing the city of Waldorf on to the Waseca County All-Hazard Mitigation plan, a step needed to be eligible for any Federal Emergency Management Agency reimbursement.

City maintenance inspected three trees within city limits which were regarded as being potentially hazardous. Only one was determined to be a nuisance and will be taken care of. Dan McGanon's dead tree was most likely due to construction and does not need to be removed.

Sheriff Dulas requested a map to properly address security during the Waldorf Days musical performance; Waldorf Days will be August 21 to 23 this year. One council member suggested asking for the Sheriff's posse, which would also help with underage consumption policing and crowd control.

Council members learned the city will now be paying 72.5 cents per mile to those who have approval to use their private vehicles for city business. The rate is 2.5 cents more than last year, and is based on the recently increased Internal Revenue Service federal reimbursement rate.

The next Park Committee meeting will take place on Thursday, Feb. 19, at 6:30 at the Waldorf community center, everyone is encouraged to join.

Ron Fischer from maintenance reported, "Everything's been cleaned up" regarding the creamery. He also fixed some loose bolts on some playground equipment council member Missy Sorbo had pointed out.

The water and sewer summary stated nearly $2,300 in water bills for city residents remained unpaid.

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OBITUARIES

Jacob Henry Papinski

Jacob Papinski

Jacob Henry Papinski, age 37 of Eagan, passed away on Monday, February 2, 2026.

Born on February 17, 1988 in Chicago, IL, Jacob was the son of Richard and Barbara (Possehl) Papinski. He attended NHREG High School.

Jacob had a deep love for all things artistic. Music was at the heart of who he was—he was rarely without his guitar, carrying it wherever he went. He especially enjoyed playing folk and festival music and shared his talents as a DJ at weddings. Jacob was also creative in many other ways; he owned his own tie-dye business and enjoyed attending music festivals, particularly those held at Harmony Park. Karaoke nights brought him joy, and he also had a fond interest in coin collecting.

A unique, complex, and free spirit, Jacob had a gift with words and a way of drawing people into conversation. He was a caring older brother who deeply loved and looked out for his younger brothers. He adored his mother and cherished the time they spent together. Jacob enjoyed being surrounded by friends and was known for his kindness and his heart of gold.

Jacob is survived by his father, Richard Papinski of Eagan; brothers, Jordan Papinski of Owatonna, Joshua Papinski of New Richland; and many other relatives.

He was preceded in death by his mother, Barbara Papinski.

Memorial service for Jacob will be at 11:00 AM on Saturday, February 28, 2026 at St. John Lutheran Church in Waseca. Visitation will be held one hour prior to service at the church.

Layla Keith sets school record as Waseca gymnastics defeats St. Peter

Layla Keith set a new school record on the floor exercise and led the Waseca Bluejays to a 132.225–123.600 victory over St. Peter on Tuesday night at the Waseca Intermediate School.

Waseca controlled the meet with balanced scoring across all four events, posting team totals of 35.15 on vault, 30.05 on bars, 31.175 on beam and a meet-best 35.85 on floor. St. Peter finished with scores of 33.4 on vault, 26.275 on bars, 31.675 on beam and 32.25 on floor.

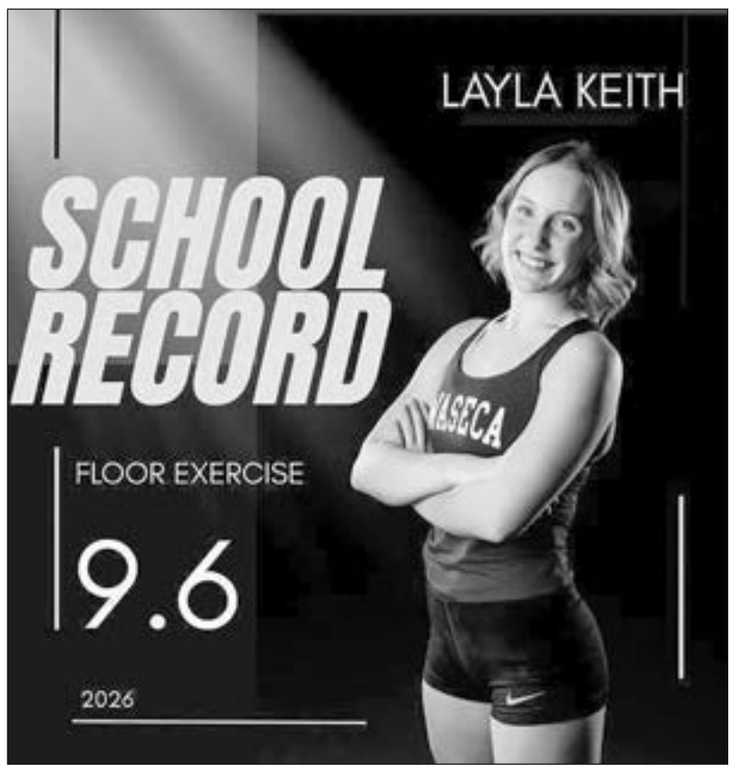
Keith captured the all-around title with a score of 34.875. Teammate Hannah Parks placed third with a 32.775, while Ellie Clark finished fourth overall with a 32.525, giving the Bluejays three of the top four all-around finishers.

On the vault, Keith paced Waseca with a first-place score of 9.05. Clark followed in second with an 8.825, and Katelyn Weber added a third-place finish with an 8.7.

Keith also claimed first place on the uneven bars with an 8.425. Weber finished third with a 7.25, and Parks placed fourth at 7.225.

Parks led the Bluejays on the balance beam, earning an 8.275 to top Waseca's performers in the event. Keith added a fourth-place finish with a 7.8.

The highlight of the meet came on the floor exercise, where Keith delivered a record-setting routine. Her score of 9.6 established a new school record and marked a new personal best, earning her first place in the event. Parks followed with a strong 9.0, and Clark recorded a personal-best 8.95 to place fourth.



The Bluejays will return to action on Thursday, February 5, when they host Blue Earth Area at the Waseca Intermediate School. The meet is scheduled to begin at 6 p.m.

County listening session addresses hunting change

By DEB BENTLY
News Editor

WASECA COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

A group of about 50 hunting enthusiasts shared their input regarding a change in Minnesota deer hunting regulations for the 2026 season during a "listening session" with county commissioners the evening of Feb. 5.

During the 2025 legislative session, an 84-year-old rule restricting deer hunters to using only shotguns in the southern half of the state was overridden. The law now allows "all legal shotguns and rifles" to be used anywhere in the state–unless an individual county chooses to retain the shotgun-only restriction.

At the time the session was scheduled, commissioners had been told their decision was needed by March 1 if they wanted the county's status listed in state publications summarizing deer hunting regulations for the 2026 deer season. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) had let it be known its officers would only be enforcing regulations included in that publication.

Only shortly before the Feb. 5 meeting, the DNR extended that deadline to May 5.

An introductory slide show produced by county administrator Michael Johnson summarized an array of information regarding the long-standing regulation. Although many interpreted the shotgun-only practice to be related to safety because of the firearm's shorter range, the DNR has released statements that it was related only to "herd management"--that because shotguns are somewhat less accurate, restricting hunting to their use would reduce the number of deer harvested. The DNR has stated it has no objection to the change, since deer populations across the state have reached levels which no longer require protection.

Johnson shared that the DNR did not initiate the new regulations, but that numerous lobbying organizations had approached legislators asking for the change. The DNR, he said, has taken a "neutral stance" when counties have asked for input regarding their local regulations. The department has requested, though, that counties provide "all or nothing" decisions–either the statewide standard or shotgun only–without any locally selected specifications.

Commissioners pointed out during the meeting that if they issue no local regulation, the county will automatically fall under the statewide rule, and thus "no decision is also a decision."

During some introductory statements, board chair De Malterer told those in attendance, "We are here tonight to listen and to learn. We know there are many thoughts and feelings surrounding this issue, so we are here to listen to what you have to say."

Thirteen people shared statements during the one-hour session: all but two indicated support for allowing rifles.

Tony Hanson of Waseca suggested that allowing rifles would be helpful when introducing young hunters to the sport, and in encouraging older hunters to continue since rifles do not have kickback and are not as loud as shotguns. Chad Groskreutz of Vivian Township commented he is in agreement with a change that will encourage youth.

A number of speakers observed that the deer population is apparently rising, leading to more vehicle accidents involving the animals and to related economic costs including repairs and insurance, so harvesting more animals would be beneficial.

One speaker seemed reassured that the statewide law continues to allow shotguns for those who prefer them. Another mentioned that, from the perspective of hunting as a sport, he prefers the extra challenges imposed by shotguns. In referring to the longer range offered by rifles, he stated those hunting on open fields can "sit in a deer stand and have a clear line of sight to any deer within 100 acres."

Comments from board chair Malterer had made it clear no decision would be made during the meeting, and that "any decision is not based only on information from constituents." She said the board would continue receiving information from numerous sources and work toward making its decision before the newly announced May 5 deadline.

'Ask a Trooper': Turning and Lane Changes

Question: I took my driver's training course many years ago. One thing I remember from my training is the steps that goes into making a right-hand turn, including:

1. Looking to my right to make sure no one/nothing is there.
2. Putting on my right turn signal.
3. Looking again for no obstacles.
4. Proceeding to move over to the curb to allow forward-moving traffic (behind me) to not be disrupted by my right-hand turn.

In my nearly 12 years back in the community, I could very easily count on both hands the number of people that have followed this method for making a right turn. Very few drivers, if any, move over to the right when making their turn, let alone use their signals. Can you provide clarification on this?

Answer: A traffic lane is a part of the street or highway wide enough for a vehicle or line of vehicles to drive safely. You are in a traffic lane whenever you drive on any street or highway. Lanes may not always be marked, but they exist whether marked or not. You must stay within a single traffic lane without weaving or straddling the lane markings. If it is a solid white line, you should not cross over it. Some areas have marked turning lanes.

Many highways and streets have pavement markings. White lines separate lanes of traffic traveling in the same direction.

◦ White dashes: You can change lanes where this marking is present.

◦ Shorter and thicker white dashes: The lane is ending.

◦ Solid white line: You should not change lanes. Solid white lines also mark crosswalks, stop lines

at intersections, parking stalls and the edges of a roadway.

◦ Double solid white lines: You must not change lanes.

◦ Solid white line with bicycle insignia: This area is for bicycle or electric-assist bicycle traffic only.

◦ If you are on a bicycle, you must travel in the same direction as adjacent traffic

You often need to change lanes to turn, merge with traffic or do other driving activities. Changing lanes can be dangerous and must be done carefully. To stay safe, make sure you have space to the side behind and ahead of your vehicle before moving into another lane. Turn your head to check the lane you are moving into for vehicles. Don't rely solely on mirrors; you may miss vehicles in your blind spots.

Drivers who turn improperly cause many traffic crashes. Move safely into the correct lane well ahead of the place where you will make the actual turn.

◦ Slow down before turning. Signal your intent at least 100 feet before the turn. Signals let pedestrians and drivers know what you plan to do.

◦ While waiting to turn, keep your wheels straight and your foot on the brake. If your vehicle is struck from behind, you are less likely to be pushed into oncoming traffic.

◦ Continue signaling until you begin your turn.

◦ Do not make sudden turns from the wrong lane.

◦ Watch for traffic or obstacles in the road you plan to enter.

◦ Always finish your turn in the correct lane.

◦ If the car ahead of you is signaling for a left turn, slow down and prepare to stop.

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

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

■ Drivers

from Page 1

ting a few feet in front of the front axle.

Each school day, JWP drivers pick up nearly 350 children–about half the district's students– across a wide area which Nicole describes as spanning from Waterville to Minnesota Lake. As site manager, Nicole arrives at 5:30. Other drivers are not far behind; they give their respective vehicles a pre-trip safety check and then head out on one of seven routes. From the time they arrive to the time they return their again-empty buses to the garage is about two hours.

However Barry and Nicole seem to feel the job of bus driver is not one to be measured in hours, but rather in connections and accomplishments.

"We're like an aunt or an uncle," says Nicole in an attempt to describe it. "The kids know us, they trust us, they rely on us. They know we'll be there and we'll get them where they need to go.

"We're the first and the last non-family person our kids see each day, and in some cases we spend more than an hour together."

With a decade of driving behind him, Barry observes, "It's a lot of fun watching the kids grow up." He mentions the difference between a shy or nervous kindergartener and the same child a few years later. "And then there are the younger brothers and sisters," he mentions. "Over time, we get to be there to see a whole family of kids as they move across the grades."

Nicole mentions that, as site manager, it is her job to arrange the bus routes. As families arrive in the district and as children reach school age, decisions have to be made regarding which route will be adjusted to pick up new passengers. The decision takes much more into account than most people might realize.

"Of course there's the location of the home and what routes go nearby," Nicole begins. "But then there's the age of the child." An important factor is the direction the bus will be facing as it arrives–whether the child will have to cross the street or will be able to step directly into the bus.

"Especially if it's a busy street," she explains, "we don't want a small child having to walk across it."

The nature of a bus driver's duties automatically make it a part-time job, with many typical route drivers working four hours each day. Many get additional driving hours by taking on field trips or transporting groups to various competitions and events. Once at the destination, bus drivers often get free admission.

Barry describes a set of tours designed by a JWP history teacher who has taken students to various locations in the region which relate to the subjects they are studying. Since he was present for much of the dialogue, Barry says the tours–which have included the First Nation History Center at Morton, the "Little House on the Prairie" area around Walnut Grove, and sites significant to the Jesse James manhunt around Northfield–have been enjoyable and informative.

"You just never know what this job will bring you," he says of each day.

It also helps build certain habits, the two drivers relate.

"It's gotten so I evaluate a vehicle automatically," says Barry of the pre-trip safety checks. "Pretty much any car I walk by, I'm sort of subconsciously checking to see if the tires are properly inflated or if there's anything hanging under the carriage." He laughs as he tells he must sometimes remind himself NOT to stop at railroad tracks and open the doors when he's driving his own vehicle.

Nicole acknowledges that the part-time nature of the job and the 40-foot length of a school bus are probably big factors in an ongoing shortage of bus drivers. She tells of individuals who have begun the training process by studying the procedures and rules, but gotten behind the wheel of a bus for their first practices and stated, "It's just too big." Others, though, have declared happily, "This is easy!"

Both she and Barry acknowledge there are elements of driving buses which can be intimidating.

"It maybe takes a certain mindset," Nicole says. "You have to be flexible. You have to be ready for a challenge or two.

"But it's also a lot of fun, and most of the 'surprises' are good ones."

She describes being out in public, hearing her name called, and having some of her daily passengers run up to her and give her a hug. Barry tells of families and children who make certain he is acknowledged for holidays like Christmas and Valentines' Day.

"Being a bus driver is being a part of each kid's education," observes Barry. "It also means you're part of their life. They may not always pay that much attention to you, but they know you're there."

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Students achieve academic recognition

Riverland Community College is pleased to announce the 2025 Fall president's and dean's lists:

Waseca, MN
Kyle Ahlschlager, Dean's List
Noah Anderson, President's List
Brittany Ball, Dean's List
Logan Bultman, President's List
Brandie Burdette, President's List
Barbara Chavez, Dean's List
Devon Ellis, President's List
Rachel Estey-LaFountain, Dean's List
Joel Frye, Dean's List
Nastassia Goff-Frees, Dean's List
Monica Harrington, President's List
Bobbi Heiss, President's List
Jaxon Hilley, President's List
Chanel Huff, President's List
Michael Kirby, Dean's List
Jaden Krause, President's List
Anisha Luna, Dean's List
John MacKay, Dean's List
Madelyn Malecha, Dean's List
Jeanna Masten, Dean's List
Ashlee Matthias, Dean's List
Amber Miller, Dean's List
Kiana Peterson, President's List
Jennifer Rath, President's List
Kamryn Rice, Dean's List
Krymzen Rose, Dean's List
Maricela Saldierna, Dean's List
Allison Schmidt, President's List
Brittney Seals, Dean's List
Kaylee Smith, Dean's List
Samantha Smith, Dean's List
Jennifer Stall, President's List
Alexander Stoltz, President's List
Paige Thurman, President's List
Alexis Velander, President's List
Jaqueline Williamson, President's List

New Richland, MN
Hazel Botten, Dean's List
Meela Budach, Dean's List
Amelia Duryee, President's List
Sierra Fish, Dean's List
Christian Huntington-Cully, Dean's List
Molly Johnson, Dean's List
Alexis Loken, President's List
Ryan Schlaak, Dean's List
Grace Starman, Dean's List
Aspyn Stenzel, President's List
Chloe Stork, President's List
Tatum Thibodeau, Dean's List

Janesville, MN
Cole Blomstrom, President's List
Emma Huelsnitz, President's List
Chloe Kaiser, President's List
Hudson Miller, President's List
Elijah Rangel, Dean's List
Grace Sanny, President's List
Paige Tish, President's List
Tori Ward, President's List
Jackson Winters, President's List
Mason Zimmerman, President's List

Waldorf, MN
Hannah Brunsen, Dean's List
Tayla Sandry, President's List

University of Nebraska-Lincoln Dean's List
April Konz of Waseca is a sophomore majoring in forensic science

University of Minnesota Rochester Chancellor's List
Jack Cahill of Janesville, MN
Sierra Krause of Waseca, MN

Saint Mary's Dean's List
Ella Krautkremer of Waseca

University of Minnesota Duluth Dean's List

Waseca, MN
Makenna Gare, Labovitz School of Bus & Econ, Pre Business
Ava Omtvedt, Education & Human Service Pro, Communication Sci/Disord

New Richland, MN
Eden Eads, Col of Arts, Hum & Soc Sci, Pre Studio Art

Janesville, MN
Abigail Sobolik, Education & Human Service Pro, Public Health
Benjamin Walechka, UMD-Sci & Eng. Swenson Coll of, Mechanical Engineering

St. Olaf College Dean's List

Waseca, MN
Cecelia Huttemier, Biology, John Huttemier and Kristi Hyink-Huttemier
Leah Scheffert, Grant and Sarah Scheffert
Emma Wieseler, Environmental Studies, Patrick and Tania Wieseler

University of Wisconsin, La Crosse Dean's List
Jacqlyn Mathern of Waseca, English Major: Writing and Rhetoric Studies Emphasis

University of North Dakota Dean's List
Andrew Skov, Janesville

History made

Russell sets career record

The Waseca Bluejays delivered a statement win Tuesday night and witnessed history in the process, as senior Deron Russell became the program's all-time leading scorer in a thrilling 61–57 victory over Janesville-Waldorf-Pemberton.

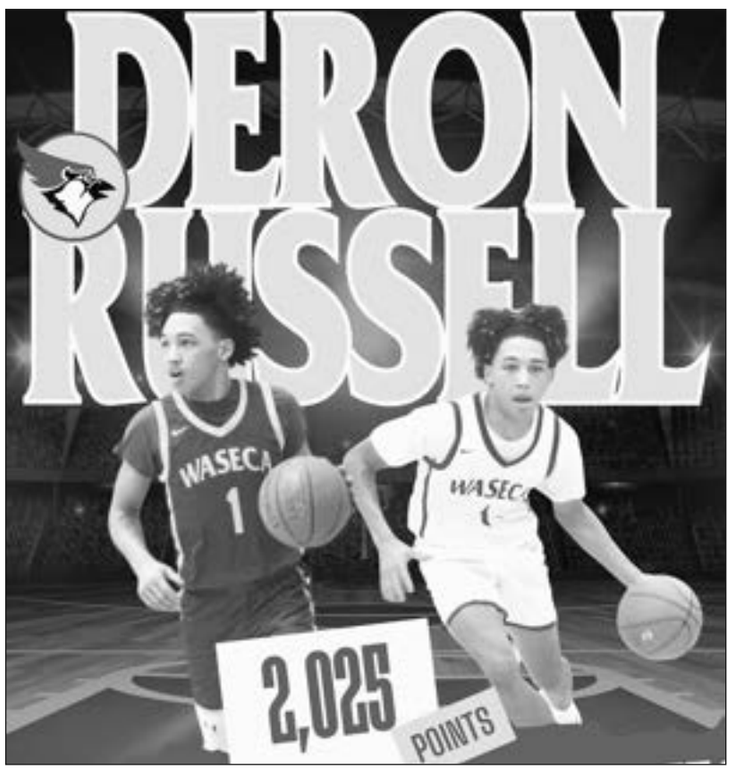
Russell poured in 25 points against the Bulldogs, who entered the game ranked No. 1 in Class A in the QRF and No. 3 in the Minnesota Coaches Poll. His performance pushed his career total to 2,025 points, surpassing the previous school record of 2,005 points set by Malik Willingham (2015–2019).

The milestone came in a highly competitive matchup, with Waseca holding off one of the top-ranked Class A teams in the state down the stretch. Russell's scoring effort was highlighted by timely baskets in key moments, helping the Bluejays secure one of their most impressive wins of the season.

Willingham's record had stood for several years as a benchmark of excellence in the Bluejay basketball program. Russell now takes his place atop a distinguished list of Waseca's all-time leading scorers, which includes Malik Willingham (2,005 points, Class of 2019), Nick Dufault (1,913 points, Class of 2016), Andrew Morgan (1,811 points, Class of 2021), Ryan Dufault (1,774 points, Class of 2021), Kyreese Willingham (1,516 points, Class of 2021), Damarius Russell (1,508 points, Class of 2025), Eric Wood (1,467 points, Class of 2001), Monte Dufault (1,461 points, Class of 1988), and Kellen Driscoll (1,412 points, Class of 2002).

With six games remaining in his senior season, Russell will look to continue building on his historic total while leading Waseca in pursuit of a strong finish to the year.

The Bluejays (13–7, 6–5 in the Big South Conference) return to action on Friday, February 6, when they hit the road to take on the Worthington Trojans (3–15, 1–8 in the Big South Conference), a team the Jays defeated 72–34 earlier this season.



Russell's achievement adds another chapter to the proud tradition of Waseca Bluejay basketball and places him among some of the most accomplished players in program history.

Interim update from Rep. Tom Sexton

Legislative Update

Greetings,

We are definitely getting ready for our session to start next week. As can be expected, we are meeting via Zoom with the Sergeant of Arms office concerning several new security requirements for access to the Capitol complex. Governor Walz issued an executive order in January 2026 requiring everyone entering the Capitol building to pass through a magnetometer or alternate security screening to check for weapons and contraband. Permit to carry holders are allowed to bring their firearm into the Capitol, but to successfully pass through security, they must have their physical permit to carry card and a government-issued photo ID. If you are carrying a firearm, please keep both your permit and photo ID with you the entire time you are visiting the Capitol. In summary, please expect some delays and allow extra time to follow the procedures as you enter the Capitol.

Closing in on Session

As you can imagine, the volume of calls and incoming email continues to increase as we prepare for the 2026 session. In addition, we have many visitors scheduled to see us at the Capitol during our upcoming session. As always, I look forward to seeing everyone, especially our high school and middle students visiting the Capitol and learning about our Minnesota history and the legislative process firsthand.

U of MN Alumni Gathering

Thank you to Julie Tesch and the University of Minnesota Alumni Association for cohosting a quick get together prior to the beginning of the 2026 session. We had the opportunity to talk about the potential for a bonding bill in 2026. Currently, we need to find $180M for debt servicing prior to contemplating as much as $1.2B in general obligation bonding. In addition, we received Governor Walz's bonding request for Higher Education Asset Preservation and Replacement (HEAPR) funds. Within the governor's overall bonding request, there is a total request of $74.8M for the University of Minnesota system and $74.8M for the Minnesota State University system. In addition, we will be reviewing $3B in county and local government bonding requests. The need is great and we will be working to address these needs.

Coffee with Tom

Please feel free to join me for next Coffee with Tom meeting in Waseca on Friday, February 13th at the Waseca Chamber of Commerce from 12:00pm-1:00pm.

In March, Coffee with Tom will be in Owatonna on Friday, March 6th at the Owatonna Chamber of Commerce building from 12:00pm-1:00pm.

Then, Coffee with Tom will meet in Waseca on Friday, March 13th at the Waseca Chamber of Commerce from 12:00pm-1:00pm.

The 2026 Legislative session will begin on Tuesday, February 17th at 12:00pm in the State Capital House Chambers.

Thank you for your support and feedback!

■ Honored

from Page 1

my life," she shared. "From volunteering at church as a child to participating in mission trips as a teenager, service was instilled in me early on. That commitment carried through college, into adulthood, and throughout my career. Serving others has always felt like a natural extension of who I am."

Her impact extends well beyond committee rooms. Waseca Football head coach Brad Wendland highlighted her contributions to youth programs, saying, "From the moment Katie Gonzales moved back to Waseca she became a wonderful asset to the community. Her impact is matched by her work ethic and kindness. Her creativity and support have helped young people in Waseca have a great experience, and everything she is involved in is better because of her." Gonzales has been a solid supporter of Coach Wendland's teams since she has taken assumed ownership of State Farm Insurance.

That same dedication is evident in her work with the pageant program. Jennifer Burt, a colleague on the Southern Minnesota Pageant Committee, shared, "Katie just jumped right in and got to work. She has a passion for helping young women succeed, reach their full potential, set goals, and prepare for a bright future. She has been an incredible asset to our small committee."

Despite her many commitments, Gonzales remains grounded in her priorities. "My family will always come first," she said. "But I want my children to see what hard work, dedication, and service look like in real life. If they grow up understanding the value of showing up and giving back, that's a win."

For Gonzales, the true reward of service lies in connection. "Serving alongside others and building meaningful relationships reminds me how powerful it is when people come together with a shared purpose," she said. "Even small acts of service can create ripple effects far beyond what we can see."

Gonzales's story in Waseca began long before her leadership roles and volunteer commitments.

> "My family will always come first, but I want my children to see what hard work, dedication, and service look like in real life."
> — Katie Gonzalez

Adopted from Korea as a baby, she was raised by parents who made Waseca her first home and foundation. Like many young people, her path took her beyond city limits as she followed her husband Andrew's military career, gaining life experience in the education field, perspective, and resilience along the way. Ultimately, Waseca called her back. Her return represents exactly what our community hopes for our own Bluejays: that they will go out into the world, learn, grow, gain wisdom, and then choose to come home. In doing so, Katie has not only returned to where her story began, but has invested her experiences back into the community that helped shape her, contributing in meaningful ways and thriving alongside it.

As she re-established herself professionally in Waseca, Gonzales credits Bob Hoffman with helping her see her own potential during a pivotal transition. After leaving education, she found herself questioning her professional identity. "Bob reminded me that teaching is education, and that education doesn't just live in one field," she said. "His encouragement helped me realize I could continue to educate, inspire, and make an impact in a different way." That perspective gave Gonzales the confidence to step into a new career path, one that still centers on empowering others and strengthening the community she calls home.

The Distinguished Young Professional Service Award recognizes not only what Katie Gonzales has already accomplished, but the lasting impact she continues to make through her leadership, generosity, and resolute commitment to Waseca's future.

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The Pastor's Column

Keep the fire burning

By PASTOR RICK WULF

The fire crackled, burning bright. I could feel the heat from where I was sitting. It was a crisp night—a perfect night for a fire. The family was roasting marshmallows, laughing as they tried to shove the whole s'more into their mouth. Half of the gooey marshmallow stuck to my son's cheek.

I love campfires. I can sit there and watch for hours and not be bored. And as I sat there this time, without even realizing it, after some time, the heat had dwindled. It was still hot, but not as it was. Then more time passed and there was more white than there were the bright reds, yellows, and oranges.

I know what will happen if I don't throw another log on. So, I did. And within minutes, the fire was hot and bright once again. As I sat there again, I thought of passion.

Passion. Now that's a word. When you hear the word, "passion", what comes to your mind?

Perhaps that word elicits a romantic thought for you. Or maybe a fiery person. Or one who stands up proudly for their cause. Whatever you think about, passion is necessary to avoid the lethargy, the complacency, the apathy of this life.

You and I weren't meant to live a life of complacency; we were meant for passion. So, what is passion? How do we find it? How does passion combat complacency?

First, passion is more than just excitement. Perhaps that's a modern-day synonym.

Someone might say, "He was passionate about that team." But that's not really the same.

Passion isn't just a strong emotion, fueled by likes or dislikes. Passion is a fueled desire that continues for a long time. That's right. Passion isn't a flash in a pan. It is consistent, it's a commitment. It's something you engage and don't let go. Passion is engaging what you love, enduring through the struggle and the pain, and staying committed to it.

The crazy thing is you don't "find" passion. I know we use that phrase. "You have to find your passion." But it's really not the truth. Rather, passion is forged. It's developed over time, by both positive and negative experiences. I know, crazy. Passion is actually formed through the good and the bad. Passion without the problems is actually a mirage. It's not really passion. We need the hard things of life, the uphill climbs, the difficulties and the desert seasons to shape who we are. In order to truly have a passion for something, we have to see the value in it. If something doesn't have value, we do very little to pursue it.

Think about that for a moment. Let's take Jesus' parables in Luke 15 for an example. The shepherd has 100 sheep, and 1 goes astray. What led the shepherd to leave the 99 to find the 1? Passion! A love for his sheep and a desire for no sheep to be lost. The woman has 10 coins, and one gets lost. What led the woman to search diligently to find the 1? Passion!

That coin had both monetary and intrinsic value, and she had passion that led her to search high and low for that coin. The father had 2 sons, and 1 goes prodigal. What led that father to search the countryside for his son? Passion! That son, made in the image of God, was lost and the father's love for his son was greater than the sin the son committed.

In His greatest sermon, Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Yes, Jesus was referring to money, but I believe He was teaching us wherever we invest anything, will ultimately impact our attentions and our affections-our mind and our heart.

The opposite of passion is complacency. Complacency is really just emotional and spiritual auto-pilot. Now, when you're cruising at 30,000 feet on a trip from MSP to, pick any city in the world, auto-pilot is great. The pilot can sit back, relax, talk to the cabin, read a book, even. Completely acceptable (the book, maybe not). Complacency causes that passion, that fire burning in you to cool, to fail to produce the result it once did. Auto-pilot.

Comfortable complacency is the bitter enemy of passionate love for Jesus. It's like sitting at the fire, just staring, wondering what changed. The truth is...you did. Not because you actively rebelled against God, but because you simply neglected stoking the fire.

So, we said we don't really find passion, we form it. So how do we "stoke the fire"? How do we forge the passion for God? We ask ourselves deep, important, and formative questions.

And we ask other people these same questions and we invite them to ask us. Here are some questions to get us moving: What am I feeding most? What am I thinking about most?

What am I investing in most? What am I pursuing most? Where am I spending the most time, money, energy, and attention? Be careful as you answer them, for passion follows these answers most closely.

So, with the little space I have left, how do we return to our first and highest passion-our love for God and our neighbors? First, engage in your relationship with God daily. Even one day is enough time for our passion to cool. Spend time with Him, pray, read His Word, study it, memorize it. Passion longs for daily presence, while complacency is satisfied with memory. Stay connected with Christ. Second, engage in your relationship with others regularly. You need spiritual community to keep the fire going. If you don't, you will cool very quickly. Third, point out areas in your life that you are neglecting, that are distracting, or that have become too busy. Confess that those things that are causing complacency and then return to our Father who has been searching for you.

And when you do these things, it's like throwing a log on the fire of your soul. That's how you keep the fire burning.

Waseca's Grace Luthern Offering 'Zentangle' session

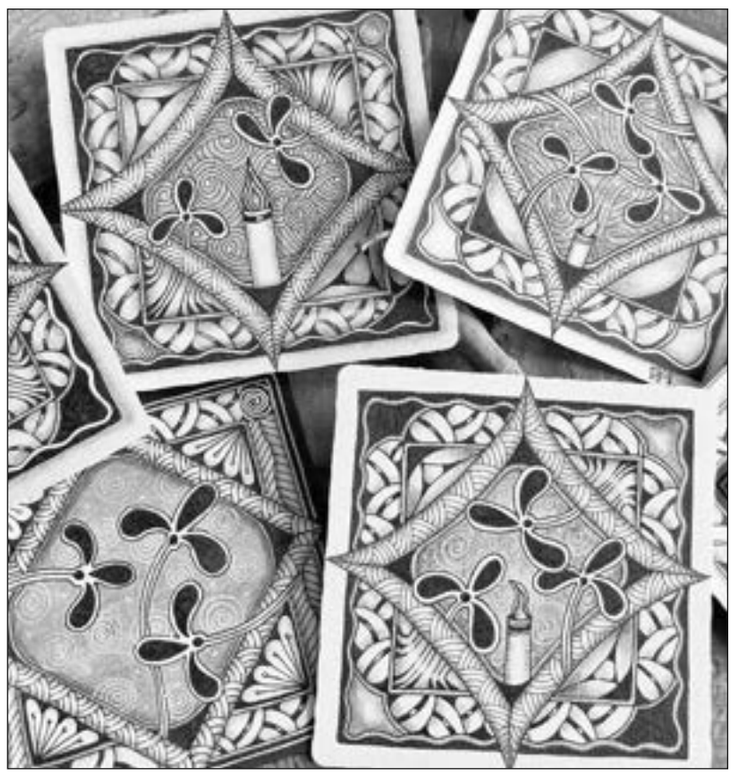
By DEB BENTLY
News Editor

As part of a Lenten series called "Tell Me Something Good," Grace Lutheran Church in Waseca is welcoming Diane Harpster, certified Zentangle teacher, to lead two public sessions from 5:30 to 6:15 and 7:15 to 8 p.m. the evening of Wednesday, Feb. 25.

Holden will also be a speaker at that evening's service beginning at 6:30 p.m., and will tell about the benefits Zentangle has had for her. Grace Lutheran is located at 300 Elm Avenue East in Waseca.

Zentangle is a non-representational and unplanned art form which uses only a writing utensil and paper; the intent is to focus on each stroke and not worry about the result. The Zentangle method can lead to beautiful art and also allows practitioners to enjoy heightened focus, creativity, self-confidence and an increased sense of well-being.

The sessions are free and open to anyone who can hold a pen. Free will donations will be accepted to support mental health resources in the Waseca community. The church asks that people planning to attend register in advance so that supplies can be prepared. Online registrations can made at https://gracelutheranchurch.breezechms.com/form/5b5b82



Diane Harpster got her Zentangle Teacher Certification training done in November of 2020 and now offers online and in-person classes.

Jasinski newsletter: New security procedures

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

The 2026 legislative session starts next week, on Tuesday, Feb. 17. In advance of the session, I wanted to make you aware of some important security changes as you plan your Day on the Hill or visit to the State Capitol or Minnesota Senate Building (MSB).

Starting the first day of session, additional security screenings will be required to enter the State Capitol and the MSB, as well as the Senate Viewing Gallery.

Please plan ahead and arrive at the State Capitol or MSB about 15 minutes earlier than you would have in years past to give yourself extra time to get through security screenings.

These procedures are brand new this year, and while I hope for a smooth rollout, it's best to be prepared for delays, especially when a large group or organization is visiting for a Day on the Hill.

State Capitol

On Monday, Jan. 26, Gov. Walz issued an executive order to implement weapons screening at the State Capitol. The screenings will start the first day of session. Permit to carry holders are allowed to bring their firearm into the Capitol, but to pass security, they must have their physical permit to carry card and a government-issued photo ID. If you're carrying a firearm, keep both your permit and ID with you the entire time you're at the Capitol.

Screening stations will be located at the main entrance of the Capitol (South) beneath the steps, and at underground tunnel access points. The Capitol's West and East entrances will remain locked throughout session.

If you exit the Capitol, you will be required to pass security when you re-enter.

Senate Gallery

Senate President Bobby Joe Champion (DFL-Minneapolis) issued a memo on Jan. 26 requiring the use of additional security screening for all members of the public entering the Senate Gallery. That memo also prohibits the carrying of firearms or other dangerous weapons (as defined by Minn. Stat. 609.02, subd. 6) by members of the public in the Senate Gallery, including for those who have a permit to carry. This prohibition does not apply to licensed peace officers or Senate Sergeants-at-Arms when they are performing official duties.

Members of the public carrying a firearm will be denied access to the Senate Gallery—there will be no weapons storage. In this case, you can watch Senate floor sessions on the TV monitors placed outside the Senate chambers on the second floor of the Capitol.

Minnesota Senate Building

The Minnesota Senate Building (MSB), where my office (# 2227) is located and where many Senate committee hearings take place, will also require security screening for members of the public. Screening will be located at the main entrance of the MSB (corner of University Ave. and Cedar Ave.).

If you exit the MSB, you will be required to pass security when you re-enter.

If you're visiting both the MSB and the Capitol, you will be required to pass security when you enter each building.

Prohibited Items at the State Capitol and MSB

Weapons: firearms (unless carried by a valid permit holder), knives, explosives, blunt objects

Contraband: illegal substances, alcohol

Protest items: balloons, spray paint/chalk, tape, candles/open flames

Accessible Parking

For vehicles under 8.2 feet: 20 disability parking spots are located in the Senate Office Building for no cost. Coming from Rice Street on Sherburne Ave., take a right onto Capitol Blvd. and then another right into the parking garage. Once parked, find and press the access button. Security will unlock the door and direct you to the screening checkpoint.

The distance from the parking elevator to the Capitol elevators is 425 feet, or approximately 3/4 of a city block. There are benches throughout the tunnel. The tunnel is open during Capitol hours.

You can find more information about public parking at the Minnesota Department of Administration.

A Final Note

Change is always difficult, but I'm committed to keeping the State Capitol—the People's House—as open to the public as possible, and to keeping the Minnesota Senate Building accessible so you can attend committee hearings and visit my office.

Senate Republicans didn't have a say in approving either the Governor's executive order or Senate Democrats' rule to ban firearms from the Senate gallery. However, we advocated for Second Amendment rights and voiced our concerns over Constitutional infringement as well as logistical challenges. We'll closely monitor these new procedures, provide feedback to Capitol Security, and push for changes or improvements where necessary.

Please contact Gov. Walz's office if you have feedback on the State Capitol entrance security, and Sen. Champion's office with feedback on Senate Gallery security.

I look forward to your visit this session. Please reach out to my office if you have any questions or feedback on your experience with these new procedures.

As always, please let me know if you have any questions. It is a privilege to serve as your state senator.

Sincerely,

Senator John Jasinski

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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 traditional 8:30 a.m., 9:45 a.m. Sunday School/Fellowship; 10:45 a.m. contemporary service
* * *
ST. JOHN LUTHERAN CHURCH
401 3rd Ave NE, Waseca
507-833-1703
Sundays 9:00 a.m.
* * *
ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH
314 4th Ave NE, Waseca
507-835-2647
Worship Sunday 9:00 a.m.
* * *
FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
503 2nd Ave NE, Waseca
507-835-4548 (office email: 1cwaseca@hickorytech.net)
Worship Sunday 10 a.m.
* * *
GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH
300 E Elm Ave, Waseca
507-835-1709
Worship Sunday 9 a.m.
* * *
SACRED HEART CATHOLIC CHURCH
111 4th St NW, Waseca
Father Glenn Ferichs
507-835-1222
Worship Sundays 10:00 a.m., Tues. and Wed. at 8:30 a.m. and Thurs. at 7 a.m.; Saturdays at 5 p.m.
* * *
REAL LIFE CHURCH
620 W Elm Ave, Waseca
507-833-0017
Sunday worship 10 a.m.
* * *
CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST LATTER-DAY SAINTS
1001 9th Ave SE, Waseca
507-835-4640
Sacrament meeting 10:00 a.m.
* * *
GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH
1221 8th St SE, Waseca
507-835-2213
Sunday School 9:45 a.m., Sunday Worship 10:45 a.m.
* * *
CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLY
900 14th Ave SE, Waseca
507-833-1082
Sunday Worship 10:00 a.m., Sun Evening 6:00 p.m., Wed. evening 6:30 p.m.
* * *
ST. PETER EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
New Richland, Minnesota
Rev. Scott Williams, Pastor
Sunday - 9 a.m. Sunday School, Choir and Choir; 10:30 a.m. Worship
Monday - 1 p.m. Quilters
Wednesday - 7 p.m. Worship
* * *
ST. PETER EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
Otisco, Minnesota
Rev. Scott Williams, Pastor
Thursday - 6:30 p.m. Soup & Study
Sunday - 8:45 a.m. Worship
* * *
TRINITY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
New Richland, Minnesota
Pastor Mary Iverson
Sunday - 9 a.m. Sunday Worship, Sunday School; 10 a.m. Coffee
Monday - 9 a.m. Quilting
Wednesday - 6:15 p.m. Confirmation; 7 p.m. Council meeting
* * *
LESUEUR RIVER LUTHERAN CHURCH
New Richland, Minnesota
Pastor Dan Kordahl
Sunday - 9 a.m. Worship; 9:30 a.m. Sunday School
Tuesday - 8:30 a.m. Quilting
* * *
VISTA LUTHERAN CHURCH
New Richland, Minnesota
Pastor Dan Kordahl
Sunday - 10:30 a.m. Worship
* * *
VISTA EVANGELICAL COVENANT CHURCH
New Richland, Minnesota
Brian Schanil Pastor
Sunday - 10 a.m. Worship; 9 a.m. Sunday School
Tuesdays: The Shepherd's Robe Ministry, 1-3 p.m, 6-8 p.m.; Bonfires and Yard Games, 6 p.m. until dark
* * *
ALL SAINTS CATHOLIC CHURCH
New Richland, Minnesota
Father Glenn Ferichs
Friday - 10 a.m. on 1st, 3rd and 4th Fridays p.m. Mass
Sunday - Mass at 8 a.m.
* * *
FIRST LUTHERAN
Missouri Synod
Waldorf, Minnesota
Vacancy Pastor: Rev. Larry Sipe
Sundays: Worship 8 a.m.; 9:10 a.m. Sunday School and adult bible class
* * *
IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH
Freedom Township
Sunday – 9:15 a.m. Worship
* * *
ZOAR UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
Pastor Ava Adams-Morris
Waldorf, Minnesota
Sunday — 9 a.m. Worship
* * *
ST. JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC
Waldorf, Minnesota
Father Brian Mulligan
Sunday - 8 a.m. Worship
* * *
TRINITY LUTHERAN
Wilton Township
Rev. Larry Sipe, Pastor
Services 6 p.m. Saturday
* * *
THE CHURCH of JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS
Brad Donner, Branch President
Waseca, Minnesota
www.lds.org
Sunday — 10 a.m. Sacrament Mtg.; 11:20 a.m. Sunday School
Wednesday — 7 p.m. Youth Activities, ages 12-18
* * *
TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH
412 N. Main Street, Janesville
Pastor Jason Wolter
Wednesday, Saturday - 6:30 p.m. Worship
Sunday - 8 a.m.Worship, 9 Bible Class, 10:30 a.m. Worship
* * *
JANESVILLE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
401 N. West St., Janesville
Pastor Kathy King
Sunday - 8:15 a.m. Worship
* * *
BLOOMING GROVE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
43089 180th St., Morristown
Pastor Kathy King
Sunday - 8:15 a.m. Summer worship hours, (10:45 a.m. Worship, winter)
* * *
ST. ANN CATHOLIC CHURCH
307 W. 2nd St, Janesville
10 a.m. - Mass
* * *
FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH
300 Owen St., Janesville
Pastor Sarah Krolak
* * *
ST. JOHN EVANGELICAL CHURCH
Alma City, Minnesota
Pastor Robert Harting
Sunday - 10 a.m. Worship
* * *
TRINITY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
Smiths Mill, Minnesota
Pastor Robert Harting
Thursday - 7:00 p.m. Worship
Sunday - 8:30 a.m. Worship
* * *
NORTH WASECA LUTHERAN CHURCH ELCA
404 30 120th St. Waseca
Pastor Sarah Krolak
507-234-6463
Sunday - 8:45 a.m. Worship; Second sunday "Young at heart"
Wednesday - 6:30 p.m. confirmation
* * *
NOTE: CHANGES IN CHURCH CALENDARS MUST BE MADE BY NOTIFICATION FROM A MEMBER OF THE CONGREGATION TO THE WASECA COUNTY PIONEER.

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Janesville

25 years ago

- Two members of the Janesville-Waldorf-Pemberton High School Livestock Judging Team traveled to Sioux Falls, SD, last week to attend the Sioux Empire Farm Show. Mike Marquardt and Heather Swenson said they were interested in finding out more about judging animals before they enter another judging contest later this month. "I was especially interesting to see how they got the steers ready," said Marquardt. "I didn't realize how much work went into that."

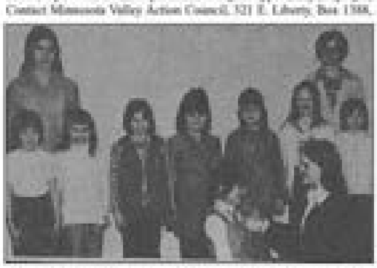
- Sara Prochel of Janesville has been awarded an academic scholarship for the 2001-2002 school year at Bethany Lutheran College in Mankato. These academic scholarships are awarded on the basis of high school rank, cumulative GPA and standard test scores and are renewable. Prochel is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Wayne Prochel of Janesville.

- Prairie Lakes Internet will be holding another class on the features of the popular Ebay Internet auction service, on Thursday, Feb. 8, 7 p.m. at its video conference center at 520 Stadium Road in Mankato. The class will walk through Ebay's buying and selling procedures, utilizing Prairie Lakes' 15-foot projection TV in a classroom setting. As a follow-up to its first Ebay class in early January, this weeks session will discuss both introductory as well as advanced Ebay buying and selling features.

50 years ago

- Mr. and Mrs. Michael Klampe, Waseca, are parents of an eight pound baby boy, Michael Joseph, born January 30, at Memorial Hospital, Waseca. The paternal grandparents are Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Klampe of Janesville. Mr. and Mrs. Bill Braun of rural Waseca are maternal grandparents. Great Grandparents are Mr. and Mrs. Percy Klampe of Owatonna and Mr. and Mrs. Art Schwarz of Janesville.

- Wanted: Permanent teacher aide to work with special needs children. 20 hours per week at $2.50 per hour. An Equal Opportunity Employer. Contact Minnesota Valley Action Council, 321 E. Liberty, Box 1588,



Mankato, phone 387-4155 or contact Waseca Headstart Center, Hartley Elementary School.

- Eight members of Brownie Troop 288 were invested at ceremonies held Friday afternoon. Receiving her Brownie pin, in front, is Staci Mittelstadt. The investing officer is Troop leader Mary Bendt. Other troop members, standing from left, are Kim Erdmann, Carrier Wiersz, Elaine Harris, Fay Abraham, Marie Lau, Amy Loeffler and Dawn Cowdin. Assistant leaders Darlee Ziemke and Susan Berndt are standing behind. The Brownie troop meets every Friday in the basement of Janesville Public Library.

- Wayne St. John, son of Mr. and Mrs. Alfred St. John and Jane Mittelstadt, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Gordon Mittelstadt, both of Janesville, are currently enrolled in the Food Industry and Technology program at UMW, Waseca. The Food Industry and Technology program at the University of Minnesota Technical College, Waseca provides technical level training for the food industry through its two majors—Food Marketing and Distribution and Food Products and Inspection.

75 years ago

- The following men are leaving Waseca county for induction into the armed forces on February 13: Maynard W. Sell, Waseca; Glenn E. Storjohann, Janesville; Carroll L. Raymo, New Richland; Lowell W. Schmidt, Waseca; Albert C. Johnson, Janesville; Harold G. Schwenn, Janesville; Robert F. Rudolph, Waseca; Earle R. Geary, Pemberton; Ronald Robinson, Waseca; John C. Wyman, Waseca. Marvin Lohmann, son of Mr. and Mrs. Louis Ohlmann, is now taking his basic training at Fort Riley, Kansas.

- The S.W. Alton Speedy Home Demonstrations Club met at the home of Mrs. Lester Priem and Tuesday afternoon, January 23, with twenty members present. The leaders, Mrs. Donald Lohman and Mrs. Walter Westphal, gave a very interesting lesson on good grooming. After a short business meeting a delicious lunch was served by the hostess.

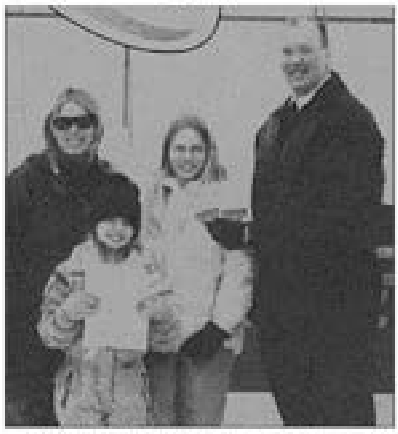
100 years ago

- A visitor at a certain fishing village asked the parson what was the principal diet of the villagers. "Fish, mostly," said the vicar. "But I thought fish was a brain food, and these are the most unintelligent fold I ever saw," remarked the tourist. "Well," replied the parson, "Just think what they would be like if they didn't eat fish!"

- A high ranking army officer, vain of his prowess at billiards, challenge a lieutenant to a game. The latter was a skilled player, but for the sake of policy, decided to let the other defeat him. He wanted to make the game close, however, and kept his score even with that of the high ranking officer's. Then the lieutenant had to make a shot that would decide the game. He, of course, intended to miss, but just as he was about to shoot, another lieutenant, who feared the consequences to his friend if he would win, twitched his arm, with the result that the shot went true and the lieutenant won the game.

Waseca

25 years ago



- The Medallion Hunt ended last Friday with the discovery of the medallion by Brianna Johnson. It is the second year in a row that the Johnsons have found the medallion. From left to right are Lucy Johnson, Brianna, Brooke Cassell and Randy Kruse of Hy-Vee.

- Jim and Judy Kozan of Waseca are pleased to announce the engagement of their daughter, Amber Jane Kozan, to Neal Schon of San Francisco, Calif. Amber attended Waseca High School and Minnesota State University-Mankato. She is also a distance runner and professional model. Neal is the guitarist and founding member of the band "Journey." Journey's new CD "Arrival" will be released in the United States this spring, and the subsequent tour will begin as soon as Amber and Neal return from their honeymoon. Their wedding will take place on April 28, 2001, in Minneapolis.

- Michael Roe, 16, son of Mr. and Mrs. Al Roe of Waseca, was hospitalized following a 100-foot fall Sunday afternoon. He was taken by ambulance to St. Joseph's hospital in Mankato. Roe and some friends and relatives were on his grandparents' (Charlie Roes) farm when the accident occurred. Roe was sitting on a high river snow bank when it gave out, causing him to fall 100 feet where he was stopped when he hit a log. Roe will have to spend at least a week on his back before a decision is made on the next course of treatment to follow.

- Jeff and Susan Stangler of Waterville would like to announce the birth of their daughter Kayleen Margaret Stangler, born on January 16, 2001 at the Waseca Medical Center. She weighed 7 pounds, 6 ounces at birth. She is welcomed home by two sisters, Kristin, age 11 and Karissa, age 8. Maternal Grandparents are Bernard and Betty Schwanke of Morristown. Paternal Grandparents are Shannon Stangler and the late Milton Stangler of Waterville.

50 years ago

- Mrs. Curtis Malecha wanted to do some babysitting in her home to pick up a little extra cash. But she didn't know how to locate the customers by herself so she placed an ad in the Journal classified section. In two days, Mrs. Malecha had a job and some lucky children had a babysitter. The Journal's classified ads help employers find employees and vice versa all the time. If you'd like to help in drawing up an ad, hop on down to the journal, or give Julie a call at 835-2238.

- Mr. and Mrs. Joe Fritz, 1208 8th St. SE, Waseca presented their infant son, Chad William for baptism at the Sacred Heart Catholic Church Jan. 11 with Rev. Eugene Bohn officiating. Sponsors were Louise Eiynck, Aron and Bill Fritz, Cincinnati, Ohio. Dinner guests at the Joe Fritz home were Mrs. Herb Smith, Mr. and Mrs. Gordy Smith and Wendy, Mr. and Mrs. Jim Eiynck, Herb Smith Jr., Mr. and Mrs. Don Fritz Kris and Patti Fritz, all of Avon and Michel Fritz, Waseca, sister of Chad. Chad was born Dec. 28.

- Joel Leslie G. Rew, born Nov. 30 to Mr. and Mrs. Leslie E. Rew, 408 19th Ave. NE, Waseca was dedicated at the United Pentecostal Church Albert Lea Jan. 11 by Rev. D. Stirneman. Sponsors were Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Horn, Waseca. Maternal grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Guadalupe Garza and daughter Anastasia, Racine, Wis., attended the service.

75 years ago

- Rev. Ernest Recht, a displaced minister whose home was originally in Poland and who has spent some time in concentration camps in Iran, Syria and India, will speak Sunday evening at Salem Evangelical United Brethren church in Waseca. The talk will start at 7:45 p.m. Rev. Ezra Budke, pastor of the church, announced that everyone is welcome to attend. The church is located at the corner of 3rd Ave. and 3rd St. NE in Waseca.

- F.L. Mundhey, city treasurer reports the receipt Tuesday of state checks totalling $3,300.20 for Waseca's share of the cigarette and liquor taxes. The apportionment from the state covers a six month's period from July 1 through December, 1950. Liquor taxes are apportioned on a per capita basis of 71 cents per person, totalling $3,139.60. Cigaret taxes were distributed 52 cents per capita to total $2,220.10.

- Stan Nelson, Waseca, was given a $50 suspended fine and placed under $200 peace bond for six months Tuesday when he appeared before Municipal Judge E.C. Spalding for sentence. Nelson had previously pleaded guilty to charges of being drunk and disorderly and resisting arrest.

100 years ago

- The Waseca Skating club flooded the ice on the skating rink at Clear Lake Monday evening and they now are enjoying a splendid body of ice to "strut their stuff". The boys in charge state that the ice is in the best condition they have known and extend a hearty welcome to everyone to come and enjoy themselves. It would be good to do so at the weather may change.

- Peter McLin is laid up at his home in the south part of the city suffering with a fracture of the hip which he sustained Saturday afternoon at about four o'clock when he slipped and fell on the lawn at his home. Although the injury is a very painful and serious one for a person of his years, he is getting along as well as can be expected.

- After Jessie had been to boarding school a few weeks she began signing her letters home "Jessica." Facetious Thomas, her brother, wrote in his reply:

Dear Jessica: Dadica and Mumica have gone to visit Aunt Lizzica. Uncle is buying a new machinica, but he doesn't know whether to get a Fordica or a Chevica. The old cowica had a calfica and I was going to call it Nellica, but I changed it to Jessica because it was a bullica. Your brother, Tomica.

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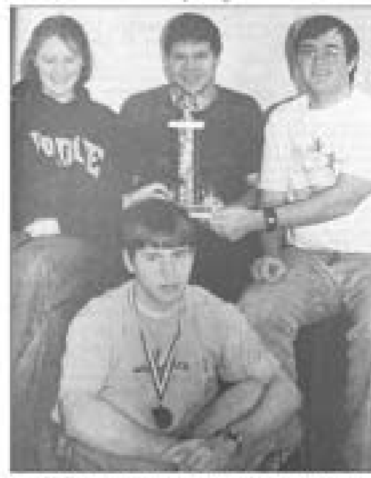
New Richland

25 years ago



- This New Richland-Hartland-Ellendale-Geneva Knowledge Bowl Team earned first place out of 51 teams at the 11th Annual Blue Earth Area Blizzard Invitational, last week. Members of the team are pictured here from the left., front, Paul Drube; seated, Megan Tapps, Darren Howell and Matt Xavier. A Fairmont team was second and Blue Earth Area finished in third place. The Knowledge Bowl Coach at NRHEG is Mary Sack.

- Army National Guard Pvt. James Brandt has graduated from basic infantry training at Fort Benning, Columbus, Georgia. Air Force Airman 1st Class Mindy Hancock has graduated from basic military training at Lackland Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas.

- One of the most exciting games that any New Richland-Hartland-Ellendale-Geneva athletic team has played this year was the girls B-basketball squads' 39-33 win in the contest with Waterville-Elysian-Morristown, Monday night, here.

50 years ago

- Rocking- Rocking- Rocking, but not to relax like grandma does but to make money for the New Richland recreation field and FHA activities. It turned out better than expected, when their efforts brought in $1,986.68.

- Edward C. Frederick, Provost at the University of Minnesota Technical College, Waseca, was recently elected Vice-Chairman of the Minnesota Council for Coordinating Education in Agriculture.

- Randy Meyer, son of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Meyer, New Richland, was named to the Honors List for fall quarter at Golden Valley Lutheran College. To be on the Honors List a student must have a scholastic grade point average between 3.0 and 3.49, which means not less than a B average.

75 years ago

- Pamela Jean Quarna, weighing 7 pounds and 2 ½ ozs. Arrived at 5:34 a.m. Monday, March 12 at the Memorial hospital, Waseca. She will make her home with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Quarna, northeast of New Richland. She is their first child.

- Creamery operators of District NO. 8, Land O' Lakes Creameries, Inc. won the Vendome Trophy for the second consecutive year at the 30th annual meeting of Land O' Lakes Creameries, Inc., Minneapolis, held March 7-9.

IN BRIEF

Farmamerica Red Cross Blood Drive March 2

There will be a blood drive at Farmamerica from 11 a.m. through 4 p.m. on Monday, March 2. One pint of blood can save up to three lives. Visit www.redcrossblood.org to set up an appointment.

Waseca World Day of Prayer Vigil at Grace Lutheran Church Friday, March 6

Join us at 10 a.m. on Friday, March 6 at Third and Elm Gathering Space at Grace Lutheran Church for the Waseca World Day of Prayer Vigil. Prayer times are organized in 20-minute blocks and continue through 10PM or until the last filled time slot. Participants can choose to walk the labyrinth or pray in multiple stations throughout the space.

Plant Bingo at Farmamerica March 8

There will be a houseplant Bingo event at Farmamerica from 1-3 p.m. on Sunday, March 8. Everyone receives a houseplant to start with and can upgrade to a bigger plant if you win. Purchase tickets here: https://farmamerica.ticketspice.com/plant-bingo.

4-H Bingo at Waldorf Community Center Sunday, March 8

The Waldorf Peppy Peppers 4-H Club will be holding a free Bingo event at the Waldorf Community Center starting at 2 p.m. on Sunday, March 8. Exciting prizes and homemade snacks.

Soil Water Conservation District (SWCD) 2026 Board Meeting Thursday, March 12

The SWCD will be holding its monthly board meeting at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, March 12. The meetings will be held in the SWCD offices located at 300 North State Street - Door 4.

SLAM DUNK — At left, the Bluejays' Deron Russell slam dunks during Waseca's win at Waterville last week. At right, Cyrett Long advances the basketball.
Photos by Cassie Rupe

Bluejays hold off Fairmont, defeat WEM

The Fairmont High School boys' basketball team entered last Thursday's home game against the Waseca Bluejays riding high, with a 19-2 record and the No 9 ranking in the state in Class AA.

For the second week in a row, the Bluejays left their opponents' building with an upset win.

After knocking off JWP - ranked No. 1 in the state in Class A - the Bluejays played tough in defeating Fairmont 57-54.

"It was a defensive battle all night," said Bluejays head coach Seth Anderson.

The Cardinals, boasting a 6-foot-10 inch center, assumed a 22-18 lead at halftime and stretched that margin in the second half.

But the Bluejays - buoyed by a 10-0 run, fought back and refused to fold, holding off a furious Fairmont rally in the final minutes.

Deron Russell scored 21 points to lead Waseca, including three three-pointers, along with two rebounds, five assists and a steal. Ethan Hiller scored 12, making four of four field goals, while totaling 10 rebounds, four assists and a steal.

Others: Cyrett Long 3A, 1S; Wyatt Hager 5P, 4R, 1A, 2S; Owen Honstad 9P, 4R, 3S; Owen Rupe 4P, 2R, 2A.

> "It was a defensive battle."
> **— Waseca coach Seth Anderson**

The win improved the Bluejays to 16-5 for the season.

Two nights earlier, the Jays had their hands full while winning 73-61 at Waterville.

"WEM played really well," said Anderson. "They gave us everything we could handle."

The Jays held a 33-30 edge at halftime.

Russell finished with 25 points, three rebounds, two assists and a steal. Hiller again shot well, going 5-for-5 on twos and 6-for-6 overall, totaling 16 Points, nine rebounds, four assists and three steals.

Also: Long 3P, 2R, 4A, 2S; Hager 2R; Honstad 3P, 1R, 3A; Brody Dufault 3P, 1A; Rupe 4P, 1R, 1A, 2S; Jeske 6P, 8R, 1A, 1S.

The Bluejays play at Hope Adademy at 7:30 Thursday. They play Feb. 26 at 7:15 at LeSueur-Henderson.

STANDINGS

Boys' Basketball

Big South Conference - Black

	Conf.	Ov.
Belle Plaine	9-1	16-4
Marshall	7-3	10-11
St. Peter	8-4	13-6
Waseca	**7-5**	**16-7**
New Ulm	6-6	11-11
Worthington	1-9	3-18
Tri-City United	0-10	0-18

Big South Conference - Gold

	Conf.	Ov.
Fairmont	12-1	19-3
Luverne	11-3	17-5
Jackson Co. Central	10-2	15-5
Blue Earth Area	8-5	14-6
St. James Area	6-8	12-9
Pipestone Area	3-11	6-17
Windom Area	2-11	9-13
Redwood Valley	1-12	3-20

Gopher Conference - West

	Div.	Ov.
Janesville-WP	**6-0**	**23-2**
New Richland-HEG	**4-3**	**5-14**
Waterville-EM	3-3	8-13
United South Central	2-4	3-18
Medford	1-6	5-18

Gopher Conference East

	Div.	Ov.
Triton	9-0	21-4
Hayfield	5-3	14-8
Blooming Prairie	4-5	14-5
Randolph	3-5	8-15
Bethlehem Academy	3-5	10-11
Kenyon-Wanamingo	1-7	9-13

Girls' Basketball

Big South Conference - Black

	Conf.	Ov.
Marshall	11-0	19-3
New Ulm	10-2	15-8
St. Peter	7-5	11-10
Tri-City United	5-6	9-14
Belle Plaine	4-6	10-12
Waseca	**2-10**	**5-19**
Worthington	0-10	2-21

Big South Conference - Gold

	Conf.	Ov.
Fairmont	13-0	23-1
St. James Area	11-3	20-5
Pipestone Area	11-3	20-3
Windom Area	6-8	16-8
Luverne	6-8	14-12
Jackson County Cent.	5-8	10-14
Blue Earth Area	3-11	7-17
Redwood Valley	0-12	1-24

Gopher Conference - West

	Div.	Ov.
New Richland-HEG	**6-0**	**22-2**
Janesville-WP	**4-2**	**17-7**
Waterville-EM	2-4	7-16
United South Central	0-6	7-16

Gopher Conference - East

	Div.	Ov.
Triton	9-1	17-6
Hayfield/Schaeffer Ac.	7-1	19-6
Blooming Prairie	6-3	14-11
Randolph	4-6	13-13
Kenyon-Wanamingo	2-7	8-16
Bethlehem Academy	0-10	8-15

Fairmont defeats Lady Jays

Loss snaps two-game winning streak for WHS

The Fairmont Cardinals showed the Waseca High School girls' basketball team why it has lost only once all season and are ranked No. 10 in the state in Class AA.

But it didn't happen until the second half.

The Bluejays played tough in the first 20 minutes before allowing Fairmont to pull away for a 75-35 decision on Waseca's home court last Thursday.

"We started the game very well at both ends of the floor," said Waseca head coach Brian Rupe, whose squad was within six points with about eight minutes remaining in the first half.

But Fairmont went on a scoring run to finish the opening stanza and took a 43-20 margin into halftime.

"Fairmont is very talented across the board," said Rupe. "They run the floor well and move the ball well. We just couldn't keep up with them for the entire game. They did a good job taking Ava out of our offense."

Adrianna Willingham and Hannah Sommers led the Bluejays in scoring eight eight points apiece, with Maren Schimming pulling down a team-high seven rebounds. Ava Miller led the team with six assists.

Waseca totals: Willingham eight points, one rebound; A.Miller 2P, 2R, 6A, 1S; Belle Miller 5P, 3R, 1A; Reese Rodriguez 6P, 2R, 3 blocked shots; Schimming 2P, 7R; Libby Miller 1P, 1R; Sommers 8P, 3R, 1A, 1S; Alexa Welander 2R; Shakiyah Powell 3P, 6R, 1S, 1B.

The loss dropped Waseca's season record to 3-20.

The Bluejays notched a second straight win at home Tuesday night, defeating LeSueur-Henderson 64-57 in a nonconference game to improve to 5-18 overall.

Waseca started strong, taking a 15-3 early lead, but the Giants closed the gap to 34-29 at halftime.

The Jays won the rebounding battle 51-36, thanks to 17 boards from Hannah Sommers.

Ava Miller led Waseca with 19 points.

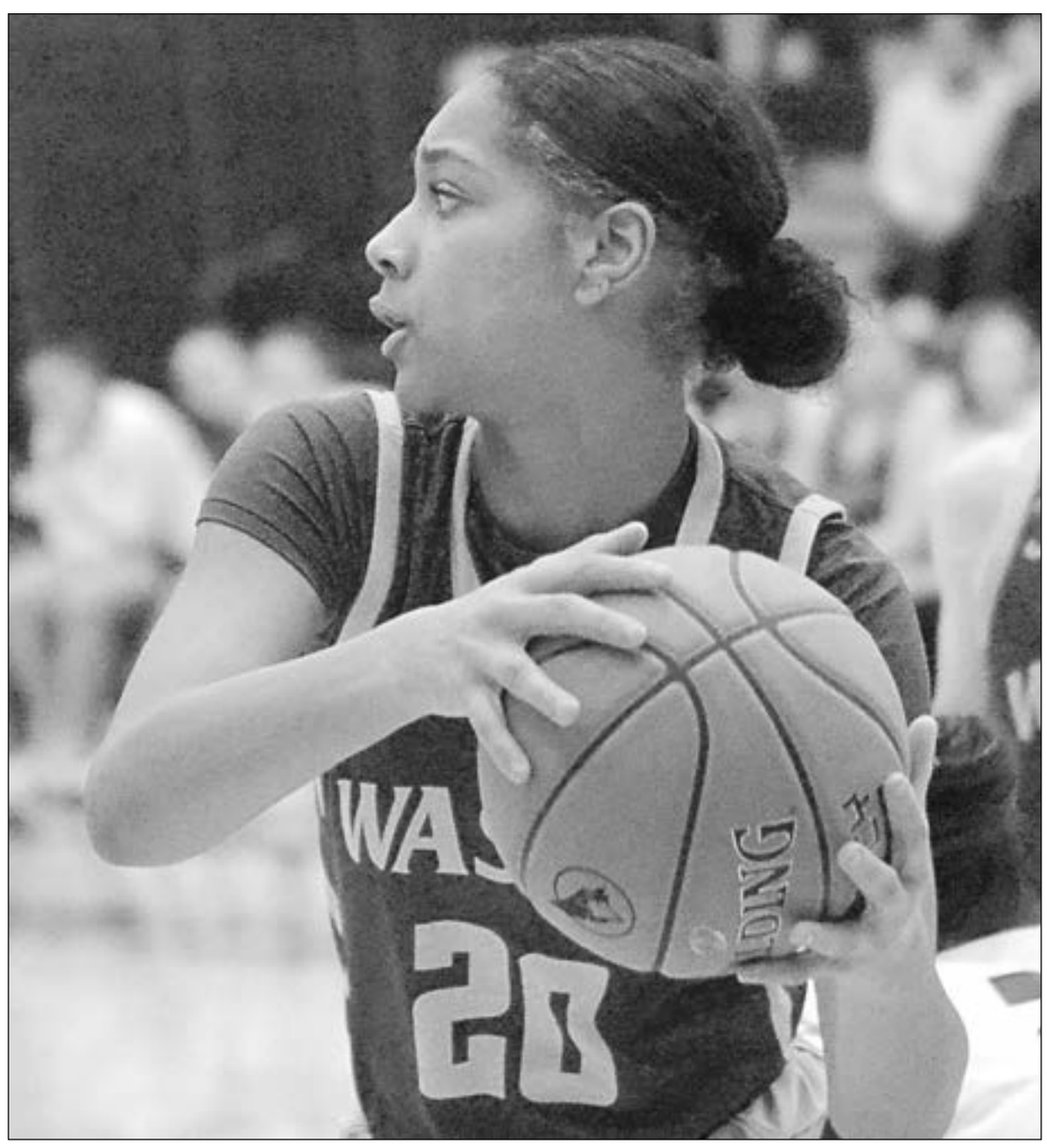
"She did a great job scoring, which she has been doing recently," said Rupe. "But she was also able to move the ball around, with eight assists. When the ball moves better, we just are a much better team on the defensive end."

> "We started the game very well."
> **— Waseca coach Brian Rupe**

Waseca totals: Willingham 10P, 2R, 1A, 1S; A.Miller 19P, 7R, 8A, 1A; B. Miller 1R, 1A, 1S; Rodriguez 11P, 3R, 1S; Schimming 8R, 1A; L.Miller 4P, 4R, 3A; Sommers 14P, 17R, 3A; Powell 6P, 4R, 1S.

The victory improved the Lady Jays to 5-19.

After hosting Janesville-Waldorf-Pemberton Monday and playing Tuesday at Maple River, the Jays are off until the Feb. 23 section preliminaries. The quarterfinals are Feb. 26.



REBOUND — Above, Waseca freshman Shakiyah Powell hangs onto a rebound during Thursday night's home game against Fairmont. Below, sophomore Maren Schimming eyes the basket.
Photos by Jim Lutgens

Bulldog girls sink Southland

JWP improves record to 17-7

It was back-and-forth all night, but the Janesville-Waldorf-Pemberton High School girls' basketball team picked up another big win last Friday, defeating visiting Southland 71-62 in a nonconfrence clash at Janesville.

With five players scoring in double figures, the Bulldogs, according to coach Brandon Goebel, simply refused to fold against a formidable foe.

"I was really happy with how the girls competed tonight," said Goebel. "It was an up and down game all night long, but we stuck with it."

Although the Bulldogs led 35-31 at halftime, they found themselves down by seven points as the game went on.

"It would have been very easy for the girls to give up and think it was over, but they didn't," said Goebel. "They continued to fight, and that is what I am most proud of. They kept up the energy and continued to work on both ends of the floor."

Freshman Ashlynn Wolff led the Bulldogs in scoring with 18 points, adding seven rebounds. Neveah Weimert had 14 points, 3 rebounds and 4 steals.

Others: Katie Olson 11P, 2R, 3A; Mikayla Wheelock 12P, 2R, 2S; Jacelynn Mulder 14P, 11R.

"With five girls in double figures, it is something that I will always be proud of," said Goebel. "It means we are playing together and playing for each other."

The Bulldogs improved to 17-7 for the season while the Rebels fell to 20-4.

The JWP girls finished the regular season with a Monday game at Waseca and a Tuesday home contest against Sibley East.

Story Idea? 837-6767

Third time's the charm for WHS hockey boys

Bluejays top Luverne for outright Big South crown

It has been said that it's difficult to defeat a good team three times in one season.

In that regard, the Waseca High School boys' hockey team has to be feeling good.

The Bluejays reversed the tables on Luverne last Friday at a packed Waseca Community Arena, avenging two earlier-season losses to the Cardinals with a 6-2 decision.

It gave coach Chris Storey's crew the outright Big South Conference championship and improved Waseca's record to 19-5-2, including 6-0 in the Big South Black.

It was the eighth consecutive victory for Waseca, which lost 5-4 to Luverne in overtime at WCA and 4-2 at Luverne in December.

Luverne's season record fell to 21-5-1. The Cardinals were 8-0 in the Big South Gold Division.

Friday night belonged to the Waseca faithful and the Bluejays, who were truly firing on all eight cylinders.

The Cardinals struck first, scoring at 7:29 of the first period, which saw Luverne outshoot Waseca 17-12.

The Bluejays quickly answered with a Jayden Gehring goal at 8:55, assisted by Jude Gehring. Griffin Storey made it 2-1 at the 16:54 mark on an assist from Jude Gehring.

After a scoreless second stanza, Otto Schoenrock scored on an assist from Henry Huttemier at 3:11 of the third. Luverne answered at the 4:32 mark.

Jude Gehring, with Huttemier assisting, put Waseca up 4-2 at 5:44 of the third. Storey and Dawson Slechta added empty-net goals in the final minutes.

For the game, Waseca outshot Luverne 43-40. Both teams took six penalty minutes in three infractions. The Bluejays were penalized one for two minutes.

Josiah Schmidt was in goal for Waseca.

A night earlier, the Bluejays survived a scare against nonconference opponent Tartan before escaping Oakdale with a come-from-behind 3-1 victory.

The first period was scoreless until the Titans scored at the 14:11 mark.

The score held until 2:27 of the third, when the Bluejays' Jude Gehring evened it with an even-strength goal assisted by Griffin Storey.

Ayden Kath put Waseca on top at 4:53, assisted by Huttemier and Schoenrock, and Gehring added an insurance goal at the 13:51 mark, assisted by August Hanson and Huttemier.

Schmidke went the distance in goal, totaling 20 saves as Waseca outshot Tartan 34-21, including 19-6 in the third period.

Each team served four minutes in the penalty box on two infractions apiece.

The win, the Bluejays' seventh straight, improved them to 18-5-2 for the season while the Titans fell to 8-15-1.

The Waseca roster includes seniors Avery Wetzel, Jayden Gehring, Max Bodenweiser, Jayden Hervey, Jackson Dahl and Jude Gehring, juniors Hanson Slechta, Huttemier, Dawson Gerdts, Schoenrock, Cash Lynch, Trey Jensen, Owen Weiseler, Beckett Srp, Griffin Storey, Schmidtke, Brandon Bartz and Corbin Martens, and sophomores Ty Krautkremer, Kath, Nathan Hager and Blake Klimmek. Coach Storey's assistants are Brad Dushaw, Dan Pumper, Ben Srp and Joe Burrage.

The section tournament began Tuesday with a play-in game. The section quarterfinals are tonight at a site to be determined. The semifinals are Saturday at the Rochester Recreation Center, with the championship game Wednesday, Feb. 25 at Rochester. The Bluejays are expected to be one of the top seeds.

BIG WIN — Otto Schoenrock scored the third goal of the night Friday as the Waseca High School boys' hockey team defeated Luverne 6-2 for the Big South Conference title.
Photo by Jim Lutgens

Bulldogs power past Medford

There was little doubt who would win as the JWP boys played at Medford Friday night.

It was all Bulldogs, who led 44-23 at halftime while cruising to an 84-42 victory, improving to 22-2 on the season and 12-1 in the Gopher Conference.

Individually for JWP: Daulton Bauer 27P, 6A; Gavin Bauer 14P, 9R, 6A, 5S; Quast 12P, 5A; Gavin Weedman 7P; Jaxon Wolff 8P; Jeffrey Simonson 8P

The Bulldogs snapped a brief two-game skid last Monday with a 72-60 victory at Sibley East. JWP was on top 32-28 at halftime.

Gavin Bauer led four scorers in double figures with 19 points to go along with five rebounds and five steals. Weedman scored 17. Daulton Bauer totaled 16 points, seven rebounds and six assists, Quast 14 points and 10 rebounds, Gearity 6 points and 6 rebounds.

"It sure felt good to get back in the win column," said JWP coach Nick James. "It was a ugly win, but we will take it. They (Sibley) played really well and hit some big shots. Gavin Weedman played well and hit some big shots down the stretch for us. He broke out of his slump, so we're hoping he can stay out of it. We still didn't shoot it well from three-pointers as a group."

The Bulldogs made seven of 26 threes.

Free throws were also a big factor as JWP made 15 of 17 to 5 of 6 for the Wolverines.

JWP held a 46-29 rebounding advantage.

Totals for JWP: Daulton Bauer 16P, 7R, 6A; Gavin Bauer 19P, 5R, 5S; Quast 14P, 10R, Weedman 17P; Parker Gearity 6P, 6R.

Next up for the Bulldogs is a home game Tri-City United Feb. 24.

TO THE BASKET — Caleb Quast of the JWP boys' basketball team drives to the basket for two points. Quast scored 14 to help the Bulldogs to a 84-42 victory at Medford last Friday.
Photo by Jim Lutgens

STANDINGS

Boys' Hockey

Big South Conference - Black

	Div.	Ov.
Waseca	**6-0**	**19-5-2**
New Ulm	3-3	13-11
Minnesota River	3-3	10-12
Marshall	0-6	7-18

Big South Conference - Gold

	Div.	Ov.
Luverne	8-0	21-4-1
Fairmont	6-4	7-13
Windom Area	5-5	7-16
Redwood Valley	4-7	6-17
Worthington	1-8	2-22

Wrestling

Big South Conference - Black

	Div.	Ov.
New Ulm	6-0	22-0
Marshall/Lakeview	5-1	19-4
Tri-City United	3-2	14-9
St. Peter	3-3	15-9
Worthington	3-4	6-16
Waseca	**1-5**	**5-14**
Martin County	0-6	7-15

Big South Conference - Gold

	Div.	Ov.
Jackson County Central	6-0	18-3
Windom/Mt. Lake	4-2	16-11
St. James-Madelia	4-3	15-11
Redwood Valley	3-3	15-13
Pipestone Area	3-3	16-6
Blue Earth Area	2-5	6-16
Luverne	0-6	7-16

WEM/JWP falls one win shy of state for 2nd straight year

The WEM/JWP wrestling Grizzlies they posted a 60-9 victory over Triton in Janesville last Thursday. WEM/JWP, seeded No. 3 in the bracket, faced GMLOS on Saturday for a spot in the section finals.

Winning for the Grizzlies against Triton: Brenden Masso, 121 pounds; Trey Richards 127; David Mielke, 133; Aiden Gruber, 139; Brady Murphy, 145; Parker James, 152; Ben Root, 160; Charles Adams, 171; Trenton Huber 189; Kavin Sheehy, 215; and Quinn Anderson, 245.

Scoring falls were Richards, Gruber, Murphy, James, Root, Adams, Huber and Sheehy.

Also wrestling for WEM/JWP were Jacksten Knish, 107; and Otto Root, 114.

The Grizzlies defeated GMLOS 40-31 in the semifinals behind wins from Knish, Root, Richards, Murphy, James, Adams and Huber.

The put the Grizzlies in the finals against Kenyon-Wanamingo, where they fell 52-21.

Winners for WEM/JWP were Murphy, James, Huber and Sheehy.

"We fell one dual win short of the state tournament for the second season in a row," said WEM/JWP co-head coach Adam Roesler. "Of course guys were down and out ,but we will have a short-term memory and will get back to work.

Next for the Grizzlies is Section 2 Class A Individual Section on Saturday Janesville at JWP High School. Wrestling Begins at 10 a.m.

Langford makes school history for wrestling Grizzlies

The WEM/JWP Grizzly girls' wrestling team competed at the Section 2 Tournament Feb. 6–7 at the Mayo Civic Center in Rochester.

The Grizzlies sent seven athletes to the tournament, and six returned home with medals—an impressive showing that reflects the tremendous growth this team made throughout the season.

"The strides these athletes took, both individually and collectively, were remarkable, and the coaching staff could not be more proud of their progress," said Grizzlies co-head coach Adam Roesler.

The program's first-ever girls' wrestling state qualifier is Kayle Langford at 139 pounds. Entering the tournament as the No. 2 seed, Langford exceeded expectations by capturing the section championship.

"Kayle trains daily with the boys in practice, a decision she made intentionally," said Coach Roesler. "As one of the most experienced and physically strongest wrestlers in the room coming into the season, she wanted to be challenged—to be pushed beyond her comfort zone rather than staying with partners she could easily handle. That mindset is not common, but it defines who she is as a wrestler."

Her toughness has been evident for years. Two seasons ago, during a practice in Janesville, Langford hit her head on a metal window frame. When concern was raised over her now-black eye and the possibility of injury, her response was simple and direct: she insisted she was fine and demanded to get back to work. That grit, resilience, and refusal to back down in the face of adversity are exactly what make her a champion—and the kind of competitor every wrestling room respects.

Other Grizzlies at section:

Bre Masso, 118 pounds, had an outstanding season. Seeded No. 2, Masso made the late-season decision to move up to 118 pounds due to weight-class adjustments across the section—a move she wanted and one the coaches fully supported. She wrestled with the same ferocity that defined her dominant season, but fell in a back-and-forth semifinal match that saw multiple lead changes. Masso responded the way champions do: she regrouped, focused on what she could control, and fought her way to a third-place finish. When the wrestler who defeated her lost in the finals, it officially sealed Masso's placement, but her resilience and competitive spirit were on full display.

> "Congratulations on an outstanding season and a historic weekend."
>
> **— JWP coach Adam Roesler**

Anaelyse Skidmore, 106, delivered one of the weekend's most impressive performances. Entering as the No. 6 seed, she upset both the No. 3 and No. 2 seeds to earn a spot in the finals against last year's 100-pound state champion from New Prague. After falling in the championship match, Skidmore wrestled again in the true second match for a state berth. Though she came up short, the weekend was a testament to how far she has come. By Sunday, Skidmore was already reflecting on her growth and setting her sights on next season—a mindset that often leads to future success. While the white ribbon of third place can sting, especially when the goal feels so close, it can also become powerful motivation and a valuable life lesson.

Said Roesler, "The remaining Grizzly wrestlers were all first-year competitors, yet they still earned medals and wins at the section tournament. Their rapid learning curve and steady improvement throughout the season culminated in strong performances on the awards stand, providing an exciting glimpse into the future of the program. Congratulations to all of the WEM/JWP Grizzly girls on an outstanding season and a historic weekend for the program."

NRHEG girls rout Vikings for overall conference crown

By JIM LUTGENS
Sports Editor

The NRHEG girls' basketball team did more than just shine Saturday night.

The Panthers dominated.

NRHEG captured the outright Gopher Conference championship, mowing down Hayfield 78-35 for their 23rd consecutive victory.

The Panthers started strong and never looked back, hitting a barrage of three-point baskets, taking a 10-0 lead while building it to 41-17 at halftime. They finished the season 13-0 in conference play. The Vikings were never really in the game.

"It was great to see the girls show up strong on a big stage to win the Gopher Conference championship," said Panthers head coach Onika Peterson. "Our defense was solid, along with our rebounding. We hit eight threess in the first half, which set a tempo and allowed us to hop out to a 41-17 lead."

Cameron VanMaldeghem came up big with 40 points and her twin sister, Quinn, again led the team with 11 rebounds.

NRHEG individual totals: Gabby Schlaak 7 points, 4 rebounds, 4 steals, 1 assist; Ezra Boerner 7P, 4R, 4S; Q.VanMaldeghem 7P, 11R, 6S, 5A, 1 blocked shot; Clara Buendorf 9P, 2R, 3S, 2A; Kenley Gehrke 1R; C.VanMaldeghem 40P, 7R, 8S, 3A; Savannah Farr 2P; Chloe Stork 6P, 2R, 1S; Emelia Stadheim 1A.

The Panthers overwhelmed Alden-Conger/Glenville-Emmons 76-29 Friday at Alden. They led 51-9 at halftime, allowing Peterson to subsitute freely in the second half.

Individually: Schlaak 18P, 2R, 4S, 1A; Boerner 12P, 3R, 1S; 4A; Q.VanMaldeghem 17R, 8S, 5A; Buendorf 13P, 3R, 1S; Gehrke 1R; C.VanMaldeghem 33P, 7R, 7S, 1A; Farr 1R, 2S; Stork 2R, 2S, 3A; Stadheim 1R.

"We had a lot of kids contributing tonight," said Peterson "We hopped out to a quick first half jump with Schlaak hitting four 3's, Boerner hitting two 3's, Camryn VanMaldeghem hitting two 3's, and Buendorf having one. The girls were in control the whole game. We shot the ball and rebounded well against a couple of nice sized Alden-Conger kids."

> "It was great so see the girls show up strong on a big stage."
> **— NRHEG coach Onika Peterson**

The Panthers took their 21-game winning streak and No. 2 Class AA state ranking to St. Clair last Tuesday and came home with a 79-49 victory.

NRHEG led 38-27 at halftime.

"It was a great team win," said Coach Peterson. "We had a lot of kids contributing tonight on the offense side of the ball. Defensively we were solid. We adjusted to where their shooters were, and were big on the boards. The season is starting to dwindle down."

Camryn VanMaldeghem had a big game with 32 points while Quinn VanMaldeghem pulled down an impressive 19 rebounds.

Individually for the Panthers: Schlaak 8P, 3R, 2S, 2A; Boerner 7P, 1R, 1S; Q.VanMaldeghem 11P, 19R, 4A, 4S; Buendorf 5P, 4R, 3S, 2A; C.VanMaldeghem 32P, 8R, 5A; Farr 2R; Stork 14P, 7R, 1S, 1A; Stadheim 2P, 1A; Aubrey Hendrickson 1S.

"We seed this weekend," said Coach Peterson. "Playoffs are just around the corner, and we host Sleepy Eye St. Mary's on Thursday, Feb. 19. It will be another fun test to see how our team competes against a great St. Mary's team."The Panthers overwhelmed Alden-Conger/Glenville-Emmons 76-29 Friday at Alden. They led 51-9 at halftime, allowing Peterson to subsitute freely in the second half.

Individually: Schlaak 18P, 2R, 4S, 1A;
Boerner 12P, 3R, 1S; 4A; Q.VanMaldeghem 17R, 8S, 5A; Buendorf 13P, 3R, 1S; Kenley Gehrke 1R; C.VanMaldeghem 33P, 7R, 7S, 1A; Savannah Farr 1R, 2S; Stork 2R, 2S, 3A; Stadheim 1R.

"We had a lot of kids contributing tonight," said Peterson "We hopped out to a quick first half jump with Gabby Schlaak hitting four 3's, Ezra Boerner hitting two 3's, Camryn VanMaldeghem hitting two 3's, and Clara Buendorf having 1. The girls were
in control the whole game. We shot the ball and rebounded well against a couple of nice sized Alden-Conger kids."

The Panthers took their 21-game winning streak and No. 2 Class AA state ranking to St. Clair last Tuesday and came home with a 79-49 victory.

NRHEG led 38-27 at halftime.

"It was a great team win," said Coach Peterson. "We had a lot of kids contributing tonight on the offense
side of the ball. Defensively we were solid. We adjusted to where their shooters were, and were big on the boards. The season is starting to dwindle down."

Camryn VanMaldeghem had a big game with 32 points while Quinn VanMaldeghem pulled down an impressive 19 rebounds.

Individually for the Panthers: Schlaak 8P, 3R, 2S, 2A; Boerner 7P, 1R,
1S; Q.VanMaldeghem 11P, 19R, 4A, 4S; Buendorf 5P, 4R, 3S, 2A; C.VanMaldeghem 32P, 8R, 5A; Farr 2R; Stork 14P, 7R, 1S, 1A; Emelia Stadheim 2P, 1A; Aubrey Hendrickson 1S.

The Panthers face Sleepy-Eye St. Mary's at 7 tonight in New Richland.

The section tournament starts Feb. 23.

SEASON SWEEP — The NRHEG girls' basketball team overwhelmed Hayfield 78-35 at New Richland Saturday to claim the outright Gopher Conference championship. Above, the Panthers' Quinn VanMaldeghem (4) passes the ball in transition while Hayfield's Kalei Tank (12) give chase. The Panthers' Ezra Boerner (2) trails the play. Below left, the Panthers' Gabby Schlaak takes it to the hoop. Below right, Camryn VanMaldeghem sets up for a three-point shot. Photos by Jim Lutgens

NON-CONFERENCE TRIUMPH — At left, , Brock Holland of the NRHEG boys' basketball team drives to the hoop during Friday's big 94-51 victory over Alden Conger. In the middle, the Panthers' Brooks Gilliland dribbles in the lane. At right, NRHEG's Fynn Baumann goes up for two. Photos by Jim Lutgens

NRHEG boys' basketball team wins 1 of 3

By JIM LUTGENS
Sports Editor

The Panthers hosted Alden-Conger/Glenville-Emmons Friday in a section matchup and won going away, 94-51.

After a somewhat slow start, as the NRHEG boys tried to find their groove, the visitors managed to keep it close as the Panthers started to score some points and settled in to a 37-28 haltime lead.

"We talked about some defensive adjustments at the half," explained Coach Schmidt. "And the boys set a goal to keep the Knights under 50 for the night."

The Panthers came out on fire in the second half, and they raced to 57 second-half points.

"I couldn't be more heppy with the way the guys played on both ends of the court," said Schmidt, who was pleased with his team's effort.

Five NRHEG scorers reached double figures and grabbed six or more rebounds.

"The guys did a tremendous job attacking the basket," said Schmidt.

Gilliland led the way with 19 points, six rebounds and five assists.

"He did a great job taking over in the second half and getting layups whenever he wanted," said Schmidt.

Olson had another big night, knocking down 17 points (including three 3-pointers). Nissen started slowly but ended with 16 points and 5 assists. Holland came off the bench to add 13 points and 9 rebounds. Brendan Schmidt had a good all-around game with 10 points, 7 rebounds, 3 assists, and 3 steals and a block. A.J. Deen and Reid Sandry each chipped in 6 points, with A.J. grabbing another 9 rebounds. Fynn Baumann added 5 points, and did a great job on the defensive end again. Sean Lassahn rounded out the scoring with 2 points.

Individual totals: A.J.Deen 6P, 9R, 1A, 1B; Olson 17P, 1R, 2S; Nissen 16P, 3R, 5A, 3S; Gilliland 19P, 6R, 4A, 1S; Baumann - 5 points, 2 rebounds, 1 assist; B.Schmidt 10P, 7R, 3A, 3S, 1B; David Deen 1R; Holland 13P, 9R, 2A, 1S; Reid Sandry 6P, 2R; Lassahn 2P, 2R; Levi Whiteside 1A.

The Panthers started the week Tuesday at a strong 17-3 Madelia team and lost 107-66.

"We took on a very good Blackhawks team that is currently third in our section," said Coach Schmidt.

Led by an extremely talented sophomore guard and a 6-foot-7 center, Madelia made things tough - especially on their home court.

"Both those guys create matchup nightmares, and this game was no exception," said Schmidt.

The Panthers also hurt themselves with turnovers on an otherwise good offensive night.

Defense was tougher.

"We had zero answers to anything they did," said Schmidt, whose team played in a tough environment on Madelia's Senior Night.

Nissen led the Panthers with 14 points, with Olson netting 14, A.J. Deen and Lassahn eight each. Gilliland added seven.

NRHEG totals: A.J.Deen 8P, 2R, 2A; Olson 13P, 1R, 1A; Nissen 14P, 2R, 4A, 1S; Gilliland 7P, 2R, 1A, 1S; Baumann 4P, 1R, 1S; B.Schmidt 1R, 5A, 2S; Holland 4P, 6R, 2A; Lassahn 8P, 1A; Whiteside 3P, 3R, 2A; David Deen 3P; Sandry 1R; Jewison 2P, 1R, 1A, 1S.

The Panthers play Friday at 7 p.m. at Waterville-Elysian-Morristown.

LEGAL NOTICES

STATE OF MINNESOTA
COUNTY OF WASECA
DISTRICT COURT
THIRD JUDICIAL DISTRICT
PROBATE COURT DIVISION
Court File No.: 81-PR-25-943
In Re: Estate of
MARK J. PAULSON,
Decedent
ORDER AND NOTICE OF HEARING FOR FORMAL PROBATE OF WILL AND APPOINTMENT OF PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE IN UNSUPERVISED ADMINISTRATION AND NOTICE TO CREDITORS

TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS:

It is Ordered and Notice is hereby given that on the 25th day of March, 2026, at 1:00 p.m., a hearing will be held in the above named Court at Waseca, Waseca County, Minnesota, for the formal probate of an instrument purporting to be the will of the above named decedent, dated November 17, 2025, and for the appointment of Sarah Marzinske whose address is 32088 20th St, Janesville, MN 56048, as personal representative of the estate of the above named decedent, in an unsupervised probate, and that any objections thereto must be filed with the Court. That, if proper, and no objections are filed, personal representative will be appointed to administer the estate, to collect all assets, pay all legal debts, claims, taxes and expenses, and sell real and personal property, and do all necessary acts for the estate. Upon completion of the probate, the representative shall file a final account for the allowance and shall distribute the estate to the persons thereunto entitled as ordered by the Court and close the estate.

Notice is further given that ALL CREDITORS having claims against said estate are required to present the same to said personal representative or to the Court Administrator within four months after the date of this notice or said claims will be barred.

Dated: 2/2/2026
/s/ Carol M. Hanks
Judge of District Court
/s/ Shannon Asselin
Deputy Court Administrator

PATTON, HOVERSTEN & BERG, P.A.
Ellie J. James, #505790
215 E Elm Ave, PO Box 249
Waseca, MN 56093
507-835-5240
ellie.james@phblawoffice.com
Published in the Waseca County Pioneer February 12 and 19, 2026

STATE OF MINNESOTA
COUNTY WASECA

DISTRICT COURT
THIRD JUDICIAL DISTRICT
PROBATE DIVISION
Court File No.: 81-PR-26-90

In Re: Marilyn J. Lund, a/k/a
Marilyn Jean Lund
and Marilyn J. Peterson,
Decedent

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

It is Ordered and Notice is given that on March 19, 2026, at 8:30 a.m. via zoom, a hearing will be in this Court at 307 N. State Street, Waseca, Minnesota, for the formal probate of an instrument purporting to be the Will of the Decedent dated May 6, 2014 ("Will"), and for the appointment of Matthew J. Lund, whose address is 9955 Killdeer St., Coon Rapids, MN 55433, as Personal Representative of the Estate of the Decedent in ☑an UNSUPERVISED ☐ a SUPERVISED administration. Any objections to the petition must be filed with the Court prior to or raised at the hearing. If proper and if no objections are filed or raised, the Personal Representative will be appointed with full power to administer the Estate, including the power to collect all assets, to pay all legal debts, claims, taxes and expenses, to sell real and personal property, and to do all necessary acts for the Estate. Please see Notice of Remote Hearing.

Notice is also given that (subject to Minnesota Statutes section 524.3-801) all creditors having claims against the Estate are required to present the claims to the Personal Representative or to the Court Administrator within four months after the date of this Notice or the claims will be barred.

BY THE COURT
Dated: 02/04/2026, 13:05:06 P.M.
/s/Carol M. Hanks
Judge of District Court
Shannon Asselin
Court Administrator
Attorney for Petitioner
Susan T. Peterson-Lerdahl
Henningson & Snoxell, Ltd.
6900 Wedgwood Road, Suite 200
Maple Grove, Minnesota, 55311
Attorney License No: 032159X
Telephone: 763-560-5700
FAX: 763-560-0110
Email: speterson@hennsnox-law.com
Published in the Waseca County Pioneer February 12 and 19, 2026

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
WASECA COUNTY BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT

The Waseca County Board of Adjustment will hold a public hearing at the Waseca County East Annex (Commissioner's Room), 300 N. State Street, Waseca, MN 56093 on Thursday, March 5, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.to consider the following item:

Calonett Venues LLC requests for the following variances for their parcel in Section 16 T107N R22W of Woodville Township.

I. Variance of 240feet to operate an agritourism related business 260 feet of a residence.
II. Variance to extend the hours of operation for wedding receptions to 12:00am.

The parcel is zoned A-1 Agricultural Protection, and the variances are pursuant to the requirements in Section 6.07(C) of the UDC.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
WASECA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

The Waseca County Planning Commission will hold a public hearing at the Waseca County East Annex (Commissioner's Room), 300 N. State Street, Waseca, MN 56093 on Thursday, March 5, 2026, at 7:00 p.m.to consider the following items:

A. Calonett Venues requests a Conditional Use Permit to use an existing building on their parcel (PID: 12.016.0300) as an event center. The parcel is in Section 16 T107N R22W of Woodville Township and zoned A-1 Agricultural Protection. The request is pursuant to the requirements in Section 6.07(C) of the UDC.
B. Lucas Routh (Lessor) and Dane Brower (Lessee) request for a conditional use permit to engage in cannabis cultivation on parcels with identification numbers 03.025.0310, 03.025.0300, 07.030.0900 and 07.030.0910. Two of the parcels are in Section 25 T105N R23W of Byron Township and the other two in Section 30 T105N R22W in New Richland Township. The project will encompass 1.5 and 3-acre plots to be subleased, all to be used for outdoor cannabis cultivation. The parcels are owned by Lucas Routh and zoned A-1 Agricultural Protection with portions in the Shoreland Overlay and Floodplain Overlay districts. The requested use will be pursuant to section 6.16 of the Waseca County Unified Development Code, MS 342 and MN Rule 9810.
C. Richard Schultz requests for a conditional use permit to construct a Single-Family Dwelling on his parcel in Section 17 T105N R22W of New Richland Township. The parcel is zoned I-General Industrial. The request is pursuant to the requirements in Sections 6.19(C)(23) and 6.17(C)(1) of the UDC.
D. Ryan Lee and Kimberly A. Kasl request an amendment to an existing Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for an agritourism-related business on their parcel. The amendment will remove their existing parcel from the 1988 recorded CUP and subsequent amendments.

The staff report on this item will be available at the Waseca County Planning and Zoning Office, 300 N State St., Waseca during regular business hours 8-4:30, and will be on the county website www.wasecacounty.gov at the agenda tab by March 2, 2026. Oral comments will be accepted at the meeting. Upon request, accommodation will be provided to allow individuals with disabilities to participate in all Waseca County services, programs and activities.

Maame Quarcoo, AICP, County Planner.

Published in the Waseca County Pioneer on February 19, 2026

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February 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3 Burger nite 5-7pm	4 6pm BAR Bingo	5 7pm HALL BINGO	6 MEAT Raffle 5:30 Horse racing 6:30pm	7
8 Breakfast VFW 8:00am to noon WASECA COUNTY VETERANS SERVICE OFFICE	9 7 pm Post & AUX. Meeting	10 Burger nite 5-7pm	119 6pm BAR Bingo	12 7pm HALL BINGO	13 MEAT Raffle 5:30 Horse racing 6:30pm	14
15	16	17 Burger nite 5-7pm	18 6pm BAR Bingo	19 7pm HALL BINGO	20 MEAT Raffle 5:30 Horse racing 6:30pm	21
22 BREAKFAST VFW 8:00am to noon	23	24 Burger nite 5-7pm	25 6pm BAR Bingo	26 7pm HALL BINGO	27 SLEIGH & CUTTER DINNER	28

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

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■ Frosty

from Page 1

masking at the Waseca VWF @8:30 p.m., on Friday, Feb. 27, 2026, you will win an additional $50.00. The first correct guesses from Janesville, New Richland and Waseca win $150.00; and if you are at the unmasking, you will win an additional $50.00. Only five names will be drawn for $100 – must be present to win.

Five names are drawn to win $50.00 – attendance at the unmasking is not necessary.

Contest rules Clues are published by the Waseca County Pioneer; NRHEG Star Eagle, Facebook; and Waseca County News; Waseca Chamber of Commerce; KOWZ/KRUE radio; Waseca Sleigh & Cutter Festival.

2. One guess allowed each week.

3. Each entry must have name and complete address of person making the guess. Entries without complete information are not valid.

4. Entrant must live in Waseca County and be over 18 years of age.

5. If there are multiple correct guesses, a drawing will be made to determine the winner.

6. If there are no correct guesses, a drawing will be made from all entries received.

7. Entries must be received before 3:00 p.m. February 27, 2026.

8. Submit entries to:

a. WASECA: Submit entry at Waseca Music; 111 South State, Waseca, MN 56093; or via mail.

b. JANESVILLE: Mail or drop off at Waseca Music; mark your entry as Janesville.

c. NEW RICHLAND: Drop off at NRHEG STAR EAGLE NEWS; or mail to Waseca Music - mark your entry as New Richland.

Frosty sponsors: iWealth – Brad Connors; Domino's; Latham Place; Mediacom; Lake Shore Inn; and Xcel Energy. Please thank these sponsors for supporting the 29th Annual Frosty Contest!

Frosty: Week 5 Clue

The medallion has been found
But Frosty clues continue
Who have you determined?
The guess is within you

With the MN heat wave
Frosty may have been around
Soaking in the sun or possibly
Indoors sweeping the frozen ground

Nights and Weekends can be spent
here or there, cheering on plays
Watching grandchildren on the ice and mat
Reliving their glory days

Virtue of the Month

GENEROSITY - Sacred Heart School would like to honor their January Virtue of the Month recipients! January's virtue was Generosity. These students were selected for their positive mindset, thankfulness and selflessness. Congratulations to Paxton, Natalie, Axton, Mary, Olive, Mason, Jacob, Calvin and Gavin!

SMALL FISHERS, BIG FISHES - The inaugural "Fishing with the Riders" youth fishing event held by the American Legion Riders of Waseca encouraged around 45 children with their families to come out to Clear Lake on Valentine's afternoon on Saturday, Feb. 14. Hunter Hayes was the young angler who caught the biggest fish, a bullhead, and received a $25 gift card from Dale's Marine out of Madison Lake.

Pioneer photos by Ben Revermann

■ Fishing

from Page 1

and it gives me something to do. Sanco Equipment out of Albert Lea loaned us the side by side, it's just for the day, we don't get to keep it, but it is sure helping to speed things up out here with all the coming and going."

Ryan Berg was out at the fishing spot, watching to make sure any kids who needed minnows as bait got them. For any who weren't certain about baiting their hooks, Berg also helped with that. "I'm the director for the Legion Riders, we're a new club and we would like to make this a yearly thing, so any way we can get the word out we're going to. We've got lots of donated prizes, free hot dogs and condiments, hot chocolate, chips and assorted cookies."

He went on to say money for the food was provided by the Minnesota Dark House and Angling Association, a statewide nonprofit organization aimed at protecting fishing heritage. After he was done speaking, Berg pulled out an ice cream bucket filled with red raffle tickets, fished around for one and called its number. Only seconds passed before Serena Luckylewis arrived with her ticket and was handed a brand-new wearable head lamp.

Phil Bufor was standing next to Berg, another organizer of the day's event, "We're excited to be new to the community, our club I mean. We are looking to create awareness for the Legion; people tend to forget it's there and take it for granted. Awareness for veterans, same as the Legion, people tend to forget. Awareness about fishing like this and seeing how it's done is also a great message for kids, and to get them interested." He was asked about the day's warm temperatures and the threat of thin ice and he replied, "We are all about safety, we had a guy out here yesterday checking ice thickness. Greener World Solutions was also out here just this morning when they drilled the holes, another great donation, we all checked and the ice is still a good and solid 6 to 8 inches thick. Too many warm days like this and we might've had to cancel, but for today we're good."

The American Legion Riders of America acknowledged the support of many area businesses through donations and volunteer work. Business named included NAPA Auto Parts of Waseca, Auto Value of Waseca, Ace Hardware of Waseca, Minnesota Darkhouse And Angling Association, Southside Marine and More of Waseca, Bomgaars of Waseca, Greener World Solutions, LLC, USA Branding Group of Madison Lake, Dales Marine of Madison Lake, Toby's Barbershop of Janesville, Sanco Equipment of Albert Lea. Watch for this contest next year. This contest was put on in the loving memory of Brady Anderson.