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LOCAL COMMUNITY-DRIVEN NEWSPAPER SERVING ALL OF WASECA COUNTY
No. 32 Vol. V \$2 Office at 111 Elm Avenue West, Waseca Thursday, August 6, 2026



Soap Box race

Correction: Regarding last week's New Richland City Council story, a fee schedule was not set up for the dump. It was briefly discussed, but no action was taken. The proposal would have affected only non residents who still chose to use the dump, not residents. The proposal also would have potentially stiffened the penalty for residents who dump illegally.

Friday night's game between the Waseca Braves and Blue Earth was cancelled.

The Braves will automatically move on to the Region Tournament this weekend in Cannon Falls.

There will be no more home games this year for the Braves.

Power of Produce Club at Waseca Farmers Market every Saturday

The Power of Produce Club will be at the Waseca Farmers Market every Saturday from 8 a.m. through noon. Children ages 1 to 18 get \$5 POP bucks to spend at the market.

Marching Jays Garage Sale August 6 to 8 at Fairgrounds

A large-scale garage sale to support the Marching Jays will be at the 4-H Building at the Waseca County fairgrounds from 4 to 8 p.m. Aug. 6 (entry \$2 a person); 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Aug. 7, and 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Aug. 8 with a \$5 bag sale. See more information on page 12 of this edition of the Pioneer.

Free Tunnel Book class at Waseca Art Center Thursday, Aug. 6

Local artist Raine Robinson will teach how to construct a tunnel book, a 3D paper craft using multiple illustrated panels attached to an accordion style fold, creating a 3D scene at the Waseca Art Center from 2-5 p.m. on Thursday, Aug. 6. Supplies will be provided. Minimum of three, limit 10. Geared toward teens 13-18 years old, this class is free of charge.

Janesville's "Night Out" 5:30 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 6

Janesville's Community Night Out event will begin at 5:30 p.m. at Veterans Memorial Park. It will be in conjunction with the summer Songs in the Park series. Families are encouraged to come, join in the sense of community, and meet public safety workers.

Family Tradition at Pleasant Grove Pizza Farm Saturday, Aug. 8

Music trio Family Tradition will perform at Pleasant Grove Pizza Farm from 4-8 p.m. on Saturday, August 8. They play country, new and old, along with some rock and pop.

Marching Jays Parade Saturday, Aug. 8

The Marching Jays will hold a parade from 1:30-2 p.m. on Saturday, Aug. 8. The course will start behind Bomgaars in Waseca and end at the fairgrounds.

A word from The Word

For the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.
1 Samuel 16:7

Jakob Lehrke, "Studio Row" win Janesville Business Challenge

By BEN REVERMANN
Staff writer

Thanks to the Janesville Economic Development Authority, (EDA) the Janesville Business Challenge for 2026 has been completed. The winner of the \$20,000 business grant was announced during the July 8 Janesville city council meeting: Jakob Lehrke, who is planning a multi-business retail hub "Studio Row" soon to be located at 701 First Street East in Janesville, where the Casey's convenience store once stood.

There were three phases to the contest. For the final phase applicants pitched their ideas to the judges late in May. Results were forwarded to the Janesville city council and the winner announced during the regular July

meeting. Along with the grant, which Lehrke says he will use to make improvements to the property on East Main, he will also receive 250 business cards from Ginger P. Designs.

Katelynne Kratz has been the EDA director in Janesville since January of this year. Before joining the Janesville city staff, Kratz had worked in an advisory capacity with the EDA since March of 2025. Kratz said, "This has been tried with success in a few of the smaller towns scattered throughout Minnesota. Over the last few years, it has brought in at least eight different businesses, and not all of those were winners of the contest. Some of them had gotten so far

Business continued on 4



BUSINESS WINNER - A multi-business hub to be called "Studio Row" planned by Jakob Lerhke, pictured with his family in front of his business site, was selected to receive the Janesville Economic Development Authority's \$20,000 "New Business Challenge" grant for 2026. Along with the grant, he will receive 250 business cards.

Photo by Katelynne Kratz

Montgomery Gentry



OUTDOOR BASH - The music was legendary, the drinks were flowing and the entire town of Waseca could hear Montgomery Gentry featuring Eddie Montgomery performing to a full crowd at the Boxcar Bar in Waseca on Saturday night, Aug. 1, 2026.

Pioneer photo by Ben Revermann

Waldorf City Park improves, expands

By DEB BENTLY
News Editor

New all-accessible equipment including a central play structure, a merry-go-round, swings, seesaw, log crawl tunnel and fire engine and tractor ride-ons is being installed this week at the Waldorf City Park; installation began on Aug. 4.

With the addition of funds from a fundraiser meal sponsored by First Lutheran Church of Waldorf the evening of July 29, planners and organizers have received more than \$67,000 in donations. Fundraising efforts will continue until the goal of \$123,000 is reached.

City council member Missy Sorbo has worked extensively with the project, and says she believes the whole community will find the updated park an inviting



FUTURE FUN - Members of First Lutheran Church of Waldorf put together a meal served in exchange for free-will donations. At least 100 people attended; funds received are designated for the new all-accessible play equipment being installed at the city park this week. Servers for the meal included (from left) Jean Groskreutz, Sue Kipp, Melinda Flemming, Marlys Nelson, Donny Behrns, Cheryl Dobberstein, Neil Groskreutz and Missy Sorbo.

Pioneer photo by Deb Bently

place to spend time outdoors. She also wants to acknowledge the many grants the city has received toward the project. They include Taylor Family Farms Foundation,

\$25,000; Waseca Area Foundation Rosenau Legacy of Angels Fund, \$5,000; MinnWest Bank, \$5,000; Waldorf Fire Department, \$10,000; Crystal Valley Cooper-

ative, \$2,000; Thrivent, \$1,500; Waldorf First Lutheran Church \$661.20; Bollig Engineering, \$150; and St. Joseph's Catholic Church of Waldorf, \$2,500.

Redemption Project offers inviting formula

By DEB BENTLY
News Editor

Dwight Tostenson says that, in exchange for a one-time investment of \$11,300, he can save taxpayers up to \$64,000 a year. In fact, he's doing it already—by bringing The Redemption Project (TRP) to inmates at state and federal prisons and vastly reducing the number of them who return to incarceration within three years of being released.

Tostenson, who founded TRP in 2018, explained his math during a presentation at a meeting of the Waseca Exchange Club on July 28. The cost per year to retain an inmate at state prisons, he shared, is about \$64,000. At federal institutions, the cost is \$41,000. Statistics show that, within three years of being released, 38 percent of Minnesota state prisoners and about 68 percent of federal prisoners have returned to incarceration.

Among individuals who have taken part in the 16-week classes offered by TRP, Tostenson said, the recidivism rate is lower than 15 percent; the cost per participant in the TRP is just over \$11,000.

Tostenson shared materials which described TRP's four-part program. It begins with inviting incarcerated individuals to attend a course which encourages participants to examine four virtues: wisdom, courage, self-control and justice. Tostenson explained the course uses the "Socratic" method of teaching; the central tool is asking probing questions and then allowing participants to reach their own conclusions through discussion and debate.

"We've had whole conversations about whether it's possible to be an ethical drug dealer," Tostenson offered as an example. He went on to say it's gratifying to be present when someone who claimed maybe 10 minutes before that, yes, it is possible, gradually came to the personal recognition that it is not.

"We don't tell people what to think," said Tostenson, "we focus on teaching them how to think."

Along with asking participants to examine the moral and ethical importance of their personal choices, Tostenson continued, The Redemption Project helps them build relationships with mentors who will be available to them when they return to society. The mentors, Tostenson said, are an important anchor as justice-impacted individuals return to the settings and interpersonal relationships which were part of their lives prior to incarceration.

Very importantly, TRP has built partnerships with businesses that willingly employ former inmates and are willing to be flexible about obligations such as meeting with parole officers, random drug tests, and check-ins. Tostenson stated employment is a key element in preventing recidivism, since individuals who cannot earn a living wage are strongly tempted to return to former, usually illegal ways of acquiring necessities. Other support includes guidance in finding housing and navigating other needs upon release.

Tostenson said the Redemption Project has worked with more than 300 justice-impacted

Project continued on 4



Compostings

by Al Batt

Say the nice thing

ECHOES FROM THE LOAFERS' CLUB MEETING
How's your telemarketing job going?

I quit.
How come?
It wasn't my true calling.

DRIVING BY BRUCE'S DRIVE
I have a wonderful neighbor named Bruce. Whenever I pass his drive, thoughts occur to me. I was a major piece of the day's puzzle. I stopped at a cemetery to put things in perspective. A couple meandered through the cemetery looking for one name but finding many. The woman stopped at one gravestone and said, "So that's why I don't see him around."

Afterwards, I stopped at the Farmers Market. Great people and great produce are found there. There was a good-sized table holding nothing but beets. One customer bought them all. I supposed beet pickles were going to be made. The vinegary beets in my school lunches were canned and disliked. They were served sliced, cold and pickled. The beet juice frequently bled into neighboring foods, turning them pink. I didn't find that charming. Beets weren't high on children's culinary preferences, but the school didn't skip a beet.

A friend said beets have an earthy taste. A polite way of saying they taste like dirt. I've sipped beet juice, after being told it had a sweet and earthy flavor, and it did—like wet dirt. I've eaten a red soup called borscht. It had beets, cabbage, potatoes, onions and carrots in a broth with a dollop of sour cream on top. It was mighty good.

BUYING THE FARM TWICE
A friend gave me letters sent to a local banker in 1926. One letter confirmed that a farmer had paid off his mortgage. It was brimming with glad tidings. Not long after that, the correspondence shifted to sadness in a report of that farmer's death. He had bought the farm shortly after buying the farm.

I'VE LEARNED
Never play Twister with an octopus.
Frankenstein's monster was a people person.

If someone asks, "Do you know what your problem is?" There's no need to answer. They will tell you.

North Carolina has the highest rate of venomous snake bites per capita of any state.

BAD JOKES DEPARTMENT
A weasel goes into a bar. The bartender says, "Interesting. I've never served a weasel before. What can I get you?" "Pop" goes the weasel.
I struggle with Roman numerals until I get to 159. Then it just CLIX.

You never appreciate what you have until it's gone. Toilet paper is a good example.

NATURE NOTES
"Sometimes", said Pooh, "the smallest things take up the most room in your heart." I enjoy watching butterflies flutter past me on their meandering routes. Cabbage white butterflies, which aren't uncommon in my yard, flew here and there. They are native to Europe and Asia, and are an introduced species in the U.S. Their caterpillars feed on members of the cabbage or mustard family.

American white pelicans are fish herders. They hunt by herding fish into shallow water and taking part in a feeding frenzy, rather than diving like brown pelicans. White pelicans often fish together in groups, coordinating their movements by forming lines and driving fish toward the shore or other pelicans. They dip their bills into the water to catch fish in their throat pouches. Contrary to cartoon portrayals and common misconceptions, pelicans do not carry food in their bill pouches. They use their bills to scoop up food but swallow their catch before flying off. Pelicans feed their chicks by regurgitating partially digested fish from their gular pouches into the chicks' mouths or onto the ground. Yum! As the chicks grow older, they learn to reach directly into the parents' throat pouches to retrieve a meal. American white pelicans and double-crested cormorants frequently swim together and sometimes forage together. They do hunt at different depths—pelicans are surface-feeders and cormorants are divers and deep-feeders. Two pelican species are native to the United States: the American white pelican is commonly found inland and in freshwater habitats, and the brown pelican is primarily found along coastal areas, including beaches, lagoons and islands.

On warm, humid nights, the phenomenon known as "heat lightning" is commonly observed. The sky flickers with light, even on a clear night with a starry sky. No sound goes with the flash, although if you're listening to an AM radio, you will hear crackles of static when you see a flash. What we see is the light from a distant thunderstorm at a distance too far for the sound of the thunder to be heard. Thunder's sound rarely travels over 10 miles. The term "heat lightning" comes from the fact that it's most often seen on warm, humid nights during July and August, causing an association with sultry temperatures. The light from an intense thunderstorm can be seen as far away as 100 miles.

MEETING ADJOURNED
Say the nice thing.

How do you prove it's not magic?

I love the pieces of shaped glass that bend light and create rainbows.

One can never learn enough about light: It seems perfectly appropriate that God created it first.

Science tells us that even at its inconceivable speed of 186,000 miles per second, light takes a bit more than eight minutes to reach us from the sun.

And while I trust those facts and the math needed to determine them, here's the thing: At the scale experienced in everyday life, a speed of 186,000 miles per second is instantaneous. The earth is 24,000 miles around at its widest. If it were possible to steer a beam of light on a chosen course, a laser beam I pointed at something nearby could travel around the earth nearly eight times and still strike its target in less than a second.

Regarding the distances between bodies in space, since the sun is always pouring out light, it's not as if



In My Humble Opinion

by Deb Bently

we have to wait eight extra minutes until our illumination arrives. It's always travelling in our direction.

I bring all this up because, as I sat down to write this column on Sunday morning, there were two perfect circles of light, each less than two inches across, dancing on the window.

Some of the light that had left the sun about eight minutes before struck a crystal I have hanging outside, turned a sudden corner, found itself projected onto the window and screen, and began sliding in gentle circles.

Recognizing the science behind it all did not disturb the allure and fascination I felt as I watched those two circles move and bounce, like two cheerful little fairies begging me to come outside and play.

As I watched them, I knew many things. I knew they would only be there a few minutes. After all, the sun is in constant motion and the angle of light hitting my crystal to make that particular bend in its path was changing as I watched. I knew I could not touch or hold the tiny, shining phenomena.
I knew they were lifting my heart,

inspiring contemplation, and bringing a spontaneous smile to my lips. They felt like a tenderly delivered gift.

All the science I know doesn't undo that.

The term "coincidence" is made up of root words that simply indicate a number of things happened at the same time. It does not say "it can't be magic."

A whole set of natural and explainable circumstances created the two circles of light. I saw them, was taken by surprise, and became delighted by their symmetry and the quality of their motion. I had the time and inclination to watch, enjoy, and genuinely consider them.

So yes, it was "coincidence." It was also beautiful, uplifting, and an inspiration to contemplate God's handiwork. And now, by coincidence and using the magic of the written word, you've had a few moments of contemplation as well.



To Be Determined

by Amelia Roessler

My life in Denver: a year in review

It's been a year now since I've moved to Denver and left the comforts of Minnesota.

So of course I sat down to reflect on what I've done, what I've learned, and how I feel.

First, the reason I moved out here. Jack and I have been together two and a half years at this point, with hopefully many more to come. When we met, we were only dating a handful of months before he moved out to Denver, back to his stomping grounds where he grew up. We then spent a year long distance, learning to communicate and express ourselves while enjoying the few stolen days we got together each month.

Once I graduated, I followed him out here, dragging my family across the country to help move me in. That was a year ago, and things have been overall great. Jack and I continue to communicate well and enjoy our relationship as we navigate living together in our shared apartment.

I moved to Denver with only my possessions, a love, and my job at the Pioneer (which Eli thankfully let me keep as I moved far from the coverage of Waseca). Now, I'd like to think I have that and more.

For one, I finally have friends. Some through volleyball and some through bookclub, although we haven't reached the point of hanging out consistently, but we'll get there. I stay active by going to the gym, playing volleyball twice a week, and then taking walks through the neighborhood, guessing the outrageous prices of the houses and dreaming of the day we'll own a house.

I've done so many fun things I probably wouldn't have done if I hadn't moved to Colorado. Hiking a 14er, traveling to new and fun places, fostering dogs, getting a job at the Colorado Parent Magazine.

And then there are the things that I've been able to do through my job at the magazine. Have free dinners at restaurants, spend a weekend at a resort, plan a weekend in a mountain town, meet caring parents and learn about organizations in the community working to support parents and families.

I've learned a great deal about what it takes to be a parent; with every conversation, I'm in awe of what parents go through. Like last weekend, when I manned a booth for the magazine at the 10th annual Col-



REN FAIR FUN - One of Amelia's most recent adventures include attending the Colorado Renaissance Festival. Here she stands on the far left with Jack's friends, who she has started to claim as her own friends.

Pioneer photo by Amelia Roessler

orado Breastival, a festival for breastfeeding. Basically, it was a way to get resources about breastfeeding, infant and mama health, and more to families. While my booth was obviously not the popular choice (most people only stopped by because I put out suckers), I learned that parents still need a lot of help and support, no matter what stage their child is in. They mostly told me about needing to find things to do with their kids because the Colorado Parent provides a calendar with those events listed, but I watched as moms and parents who had spoken with me for only a few minutes stopped by other booths for long periods of time to gain helpful information.

Getting back to the point though,

is that I've been in Denver a year, and I've learned a lot about myself, the community, and the lives around me. I've also learned how to be an adult—buying car insurance, preparing my own taxes, finding new doctor and dentist offices and scheduling appointments with them. It's been fun to feel adventurous, despite the lonelier days. It's adding to the lore of my life, so I can one day tell my family how I once lived in Denver when I was young.

My Determination: "Happy. Not giddy or overjoyed, but that low, steady level of happiness that, in the best periods of life, rides underneath everything else, a buffer between you and the world you are walking over." — Emily Henry, Beach Read

Painful loss: I am not on vacation

I was supposed to be on vacation this week. My plans were undone when I realized my health would neither let me sit in a car for extended periods nor go on any extended walks.

At 28 years old I'm not supposed to have this much pain.

I threw out my back picking up a frying pan last Tuesday. Even though I was taking care to bend with my knees, the motion of reaching out with my arms to lift the pan caused my lower back to slip out again. It still hadn't recovered from the previous injuries going back to January.

I'm angry, in pain, and out \$1,500 in non-refundable Air BNB costs. My friend Madi and I, after much discussion, had decided we would go to Wisconsin and Indiana. We intended to visit a handful of monasteries. Madi hadn't stopped talking about her desire to visit said places for months.

We spent hours researching where to stay and found two unbelievably nice places at decent prices. The plan was to visit the monasteries along with the National Park in Indiana, and any other scenic places—museums, parks, and the like.

When I realized my joints and



STAR GAZING

by Eli Lutgens

muscles would not let me take the trip, I encouraged Madi to go without me, then spent the next couple days essentially motionless on my couch, leaving only to get to my acupuncture and chiropractor appointments.

Madi decided she would do the first leg of the trip and arrived safely Monday evening. She sent me photos and we spoke on the phone for about an hour during her drive. The monastery was beautiful but the cabin we rented, Madi tells me, "was filled with freaky African and Indian masks." She also inserted a crying "emoji face."

I wish I had more positive events to write about in life this week. With the help of Ken at Heartland Healthcare, I have found a solution that helps me get through the day without too much discomfort. I have an appointment early in the week to see my primary care provider to refer me to a specialist for my GI

issues, also known as the burn-ing pain in my left side.

Leaving out details about several frustrating incidents and various time-consuming protocols, I don't understand why the people I keep asking for help from in the medical field don't help. They offer a potential idea for what might be wrong, and when that isn't correct, I get the sense they don't know what to do with me—leaving me in a sort of limbo. I felt defeated this week, all the while in lots and lots of pain.

I know my story is not unique. Everyone faces adversity in various forms. To the readers who have suggested potential ideas and paths forward, I wish I had just called those phone numbers and seen those providers sooner. My faith in the healthcare system back then was not as eroded as it is now. I expected to find help faster.

Locally, Ken has been great.

Michelle at Swanson Acupuncture has been very good along with the folks at Growing Roots. They're the only ones I have seen who I feel have actually done everything in their power to help. Really, as I think about it, my unproductive conversations with one lady in scheduling in Albert Lea are a huge part of my loss of confidence. Three different times I had to beg her to do her job and she didn't want to. In one case, I simply wanted a phone number because the people who were supposed to call to schedule my injection, didn't. The next time she lied to my face when I arrived late for an appointment. I asked her to please see if there was an opening or cancellation. She pretended to look at her computer and told me no. The next moment my physical therapist walked out and said she was really glad to see me. She then said the patient ahead of me cancelled, so she could see me. So as much complaining as I have done, it's really just that one person who I have had bad interactions with at Mayo Clinic in Albert Lea. Everyone else, truly,

Lutgens continued on 7

WASECA COUNTY PIONEER

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

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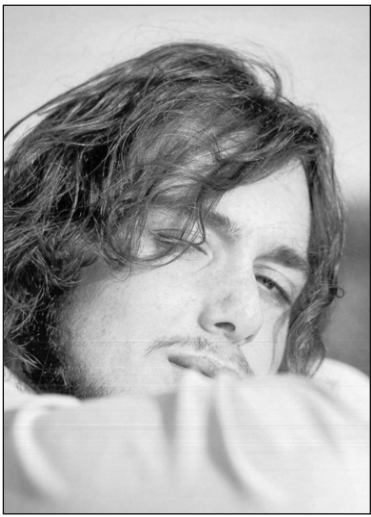
OBITUARIES

Rhett Oelke

Rhett Aaron Oelke, age 23 of New Ulm, formerly of Janesville, passed away unexpectedly in the early morning hours of Wednesday, July 29, 2026.

Rhett was born in Mankato on December 28, 2002, to parents Timothy and Jessica (Sandau) Oelke. He attended JWP schools and graduated with the Bulldog class of 2021. During high school, Rhett participated in football, wrestling, and baseball. While playing sports, he was a teammate that supported everyone around him while making sure there was plenty of fun laced in. Rhett was also very involved in Scouting, beginning in kindergarten and eventually earning the rank of Eagle Scout. Through Scouting, Rhett learned the value of hard work and the importance of seeing a job through to completion. He put these skills good use in college at the University of Minnesota Duluth Campus, earning a degree in civil engineering and making the Dean's List several times. During his time at UMD he made many lasting friends and was also a member of the Upsilon-Gamma Chapter of Tau Kappa Epsilon Fraternity, whose focus was on community outreach, specifically fundraising for St. Jude's Children's Hospital. Following college, Rhett began working as a civil engineer at Bolton & Menk, Inc. in Sleepy Eye.

His love for sports that began as a preschooler in the wrestling room and a third grader on the football field continued into adulthood. He enjoyed following the Vikings, Twins, and Timberwolves in his free time and often had strong opinions about each team that he shared freely. He also had a fondness for the outdoors, spending time in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCA) with relatives and time on Swan Lake with his grandparents at their cabin. He was an avid gamer and reader (only of books of 400+ pages though), enjoyed watching movies in the theater and UFC fights with his friends, and liked to spend time hunting with his grandfather in both the boat and the blind. Rhett has been an enthusiastic collector and builder of all things Lego his whole life; the ma-



Rhett Oelke

jority of those builds revolving around Star Wars. He and his family are long-time members of St. Ann's Catholic Church in Janesville, where Rhett was a mass server in his youth.

Rhett is survived by his parents, Tim and Jessie Oelke of Janesville; his younger sister, Rachelle Oelke of Janesville; his maternal grandparents Jerry and Julie Sandau of New Ulm; his paternal grandparents, Eugene and Shannon Oelke of Janesville; aunts and uncles, Tracy and Matt Crawford of Charlottesville VA, Todd and Tina Oelke of Mankato, Tricia and Dustin Lee of North Mankato, and Trevor Oelke of Eagle Lake; and cousins, Nixon Crawford, Tyler and Raeanne Oelke, Tiera and Takya Oelke, Aaron and Lauren Lee, Mia and John Frid, Cara and Dan Cheshire, Ella Lee, Hailey, Caitlin, Emily, and Hannah Oelke. He was preceded in death by his "Crazy Aunt" Bonnie Smasal.

Visitation for Rhett will open at 4:00 p.m. and conclude at 8:00 p.m. on Tuesday, August 4, 2026, at St. Ann's Catholic Church in Janesville, and will be open for one hour before the service at the church on Wednesday.

Mass of Christian Burial began at 11:00 a.m. on Wednesday, August 5, 2026, at St. Ann's Catholic Church in Janesville, with Father James Fogal as celebrant. Interment followed at St. Ann's Catholic Cemetery in Janesville, with a luncheon that followed at the St. Ann's Parish Center. Dennis-Steffel-Omtvedt Funeral and Cremation Services handled the arrangements. dsfuneral.com

■ Business

from Page 1

in the preparation of their business plans that when the contest was over, they just decided to go ahead with their plans anyway. Either way it's a win/win."

Also in the contest were the Janesville Independent newspaper, A Bridal Boutique, an Indoor Play Place, and a dog grooming service. Continued Kratz, "I think it went great. We had a good variety of busi-

■ Project

from Page 1

individuals since its founding in 2018. TRP staff and volunteers have interacted with inmates from a wide variety of security settings—from maximum to minimum—all across the state, including an expanding program at the federal facility in Waseca.

As a non-profit entity, TRP is working to build its programs by recruiting volunteers to mentor inmates, employers to hire participants once they are released, and financial partners to fund its oper-

nesses, which gave the judges a lot to work with, and the contestants were all very qualified." Kratz said there are no more business challenges on the way, "But we do have the Storefront Enhancement Program; we have one of those each year, it all comes from EDA funding." She added that all four of the storefront contest applicants were approved this year.

This contest was sponsored by the Janesville Economic Development Authority, Waseca County and Ginger P. Designs.

ation. Tostenson cited that there are currently 2.4 million people incarcerated in various types of facilities across the U.S. at a cost of tens of thousands of dollars a year per person—and with recidivism rates hovering around 50 percent.

"Recidivism is a waste of lives and money," he said. "We should be helping justice-impacted individuals to change their way of thinking and then provide support as they reintegrate back into society."

Doing so, he suggested, would not only reduce crime, but also help returning citizens rebuild their lives with meaning and purpose and save taxpayers a great deal of money.



GENERATIONAL TRADITION - In attendance at the outdoor mission festival on Aug. 2 were about 50 people from as many as four generations. Pioneer photo by Deb Bently

Freedom Mission Festival tradition continues

By DEB BENTLY
News Editor

About 50 people gathered in a grove north of Waldorf on Sunday, Aug. 2, for an outdoor "mission festival" which has been a tradition at Immanuel Lutheran Church of Freedom Township for generations. Patterned after gatherings which began in a time before many area congregations had permanent buildings, the day included a morning and afternoon worship service and a potluck meal. Music was provided by a band of about a dozen musicians from as many as four generations.

Officiant for the two services was the Rev. Dr. Richard E. Carter, who first served in the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod mission field in Nigeria from 1981 to 1987. He has also advanced Christian projects in St. Petersburg, Russia; Chennai, India; and Mongolia.

Those in attendance either sat on wooden benches that were provided or brought their own seats.

The message during the morning service focused on the feeding of the 5,000. Rev. Carter pointed out how each incident in the summary includes a lesson to "pay attention to Jesus."



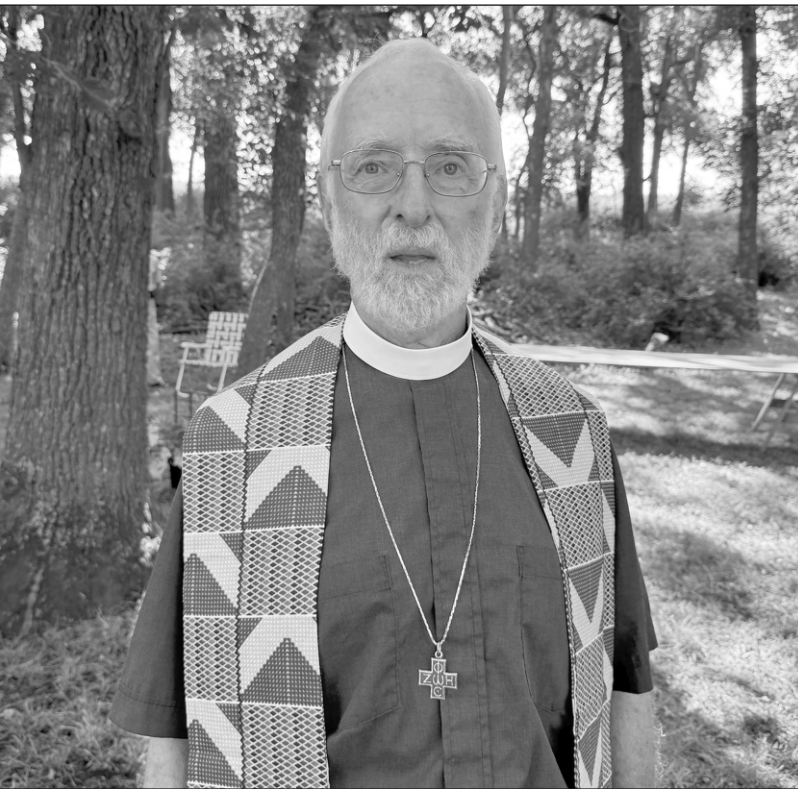
COMMUNITY MUSIC - Above, a band of about a dozen musicians accompanied the mission festival service. Instruments ranged from the flute to tubas. Below, Rev. Dr. Richard C. Carter wearing a stole given him by a congregation in India. Pioneer photos by Deb Bently

Carter highlighted how Jesus began the meal by praying over the five loaves and two fish, then breaking the food apart and handing it to his disciples, who then delivered it to the crowd.

"Imagine their surprise as they broke the bread, handed it away, and discovered they still had bread to hand to the next person," Carter said.

In much the same way today, he extrapolated, believers are delivered the good news with the expectation they will deliver it to others. Though we may be hesitant to take on the task, Carter suggested, we are likely to find ourselves surprised and delighted with what happens when we pass our faith along.

The potluck meal was a generous buffet that included inviting salads and entrees, with a spread of homemade pies and desserts.



Migrant workers appreciate housing

By BEN REVERMANN
Staff writer

Matt Holland, owner of Holland Agriculture in Ellendale, says he is pleased with his choice to hire 23 workers from South Africa through the H2A Agency of the US Department of Labor. "It's been great so far. These guys work so hard, they've been amazing."

He said the workers started arriving one by one over the last week of July and into August, but admits they should have come sooner: "We planted sweet corn early this year, it was ready to harvest by July 20. Usually we don't start harvesting sweet corn till August 1. So, it was a mistake to have these guys arrive as late as they did. I will not make that mistake next year."

Holland operates a farm which manages 10,000 acres of land where field corn, sweet corn, soybeans and peas are grown. Holland Ag provides manure

pumping services.

He says he hopes the migrant workers will return next year: "If I had known how great this would all work out, I would've done it five years ago. It has been difficult with hiring lately, we just can't seem to get dependable labor, but we don't have that problem with these guys." The workers have licenses which qualify them to drive farm trucks; they have also been performing general labor on the farm. Their work permits allow them to be in the U.S. through the agricultural season. Added Holland, "They get their drivers licenses through the USA Farm Labor agency, so they're all certified and good to go by the time they get to me."

New Richland residents and property owners Keith and Melisa Leonardo, in partnership with Holland Ag, were recently approved by the New Richland city council for bunkhouse housing for migrant agricultural workers.

According to Melisa, the building in question is a former laundromat that had stood empty for some time before the Leonardos purchased it in April of 2025. "It was empty inside and needed some work. We've leased that building to Holland Ag so the guys they hired from southern Africa have a place to stay. We looked into this, around southern Minnesota there are 12 other bunkhouses like this. This is really not a new concept, Waseca has done it and a few other local towns; this is really only new to New Richland."

The Leonardos own and man-

age 11 residential rental and two commercial properties—the Panther Power House Gym and a warehouse on Division Street—within New Richland city limits. Keith reports they have received only positive feedback from neighbors around their property. "The neighbors have been very nice to the migrants. The businesses in town they've visited have all had nice things to say. The men themselves have complimented us on how nice our property has been to stay in; they said it was the nicest they've seen."

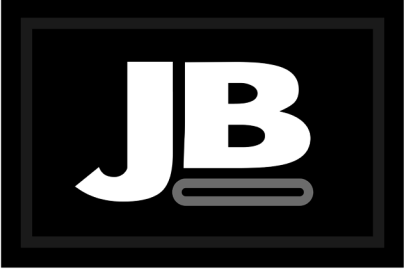


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GRADING AND LEVELING-A lot of earth is being moved at the site of 17 lots in the City of Waseca's Clearwater Preserve subdivision. Some locations will be as much as five feet higher than they were before excavating began.
Pioneer photo by Deb Bently



Water lines have been installed for phase 1 of the Clearwater Preserve subdivision at the southeast corner of Waseca. As this water hydrant shows, when sufficient earth and rock are brought in, some areas will be between three and five feet above their original level.

Clearwater Preserve moving rapidly forward

By DEB BENTLY
News Editor

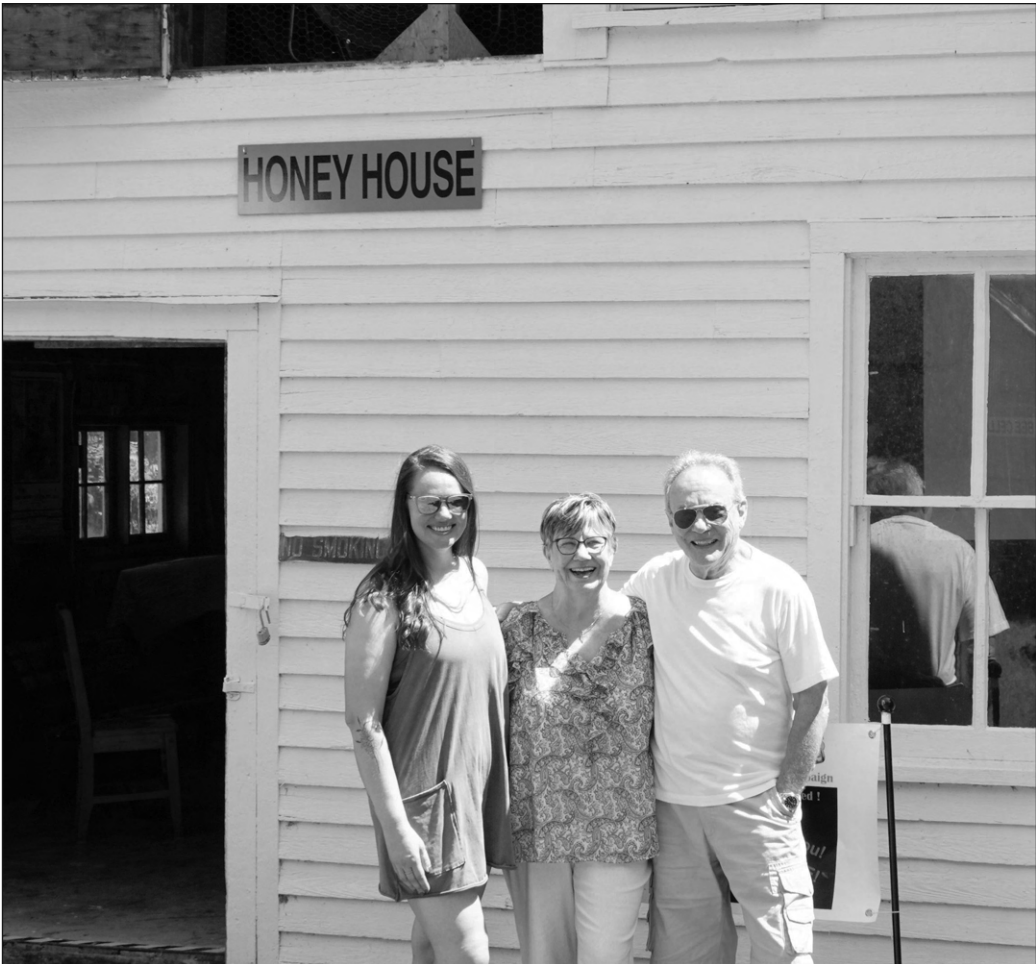
A lot of earth has been moving lately at the phase 1 area of the Clearwater Preserve subdivision near Gaiter Lake at Waseca's southeastern edge. The city council approved a \$1.5 million contract last September with W. Lorentz & Sons Construction out of Mankato. Work began in April, with substantial completion expected by Sept. 25. According to city engineer Nate Willey "substantially complete" means that infrastructure for water, sewer, storm drains and services will be in place, ground levels will be graded as proscribed in the engineering plans, and disturbed areas will be seeded. Along with that, the stretch of Eleventh Street Southeast which will join the 17 lots to current city neighborhoods will be graded, leveled and surfaced, with curb and gutter in place. The street will receive one additional layer of paving by the end of June of 2027.

The full Clearwater Preserve subdivision is slated to be completed in three phases; only the first phase, which includes a line of lots bordering

the western shoreline of Gaiter Lake, is under construction at this time—except that a substantial amount of grading which will support phase 2 is part of the current excavation work.

According to Willey, numerous truckloads of sand and rock have been delivered to the construction site recently, primarily for construction of a temporary access road from Fourteenth Avenue SE. Materials and equipment needed for the construction of Eleventh Street SE will utilize that new access.

Plans overall require a great deal of excavation: he explains a first step was to remove the topsoil and set it aside to be returned after house pads have been prepared and the lots graded. In addition, excavation was necessary all around the worksite to bury water, sewer, and stormwater lines. With some of that work now complete, there are areas of the plat being raised three to five feet above their original levels in order to comply with the development's overall grading plan and to meet specifications set by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.



The Bee Bash 4.0 took place at the Hofmann Apiaries on Saturday, Aug. 1, 2026. At left: Daughter Laura, with Jan and Larry Hofmann in front of the famous Honey House. Right, Waseca County Spelling Bee Champion Ava Place.
Pioneer photos by Monty Revermann

Bee Bash draws honey enthusiasts

By BEN REVERMANN
Staff writer

The 2026 Bee Bash 4.0 took place at the Hofmann Apiaries located just east of Janesville on Saturday, Aug. 1. The event was complete with music, food vendors, honey vendors, bees, tours and much more.

A group of teenagers who resembled guards at the two front drives to the Hofmann place were actually Law Enforcement Explorers, or in other words junior officers from the area, taking part in training in anticipation of the day they are old enough to become officers. Justine Fitzpatrick, Cara Darling, Emeria Kopischke, Kayden Sack and Noah Meeker, said Kopischke, "We are training to become officers; this is a volunteer gig. I don't know about the other guys, but I just wanted to help out." The group looked the part, dressed in uniforms and wearing neon orange vests. Since the parking was down the road a ways, causing some guests to have to walk a block or more to get to the apiaries, Kopischke was directing some of the less mobile visitors to closer parking spots and providing assistance where needed.

Buildings and work areas on the grounds were open for tours, the Wax Shed had equipment and moving equipment for bee boxes. There was a wax melter inside and other bee related items. A "Bee Cellar" was a room built into the ground to house and protect bees during the winter.

On display in the Honey House, where most of the honey extraction took place, were warmers, cleaning equipment, space to store honey, large pots to warm the honey and lots of room for storage. Around the grounds were beautiful gardens that helped to accentuate the flowers that helped to feed the bees, while also providing fruits and vegetables for the farmers. The owners of the farm also were kind enough to mow a walking path through the prairie nearby, giving all visitors the opportunity to see the many local flowers and fauna from the area.

Sun Honey LLC, owned by Jason Casey of New Richland, was one of the vendors. Also offering wares was Strand Honey, which has been in business since 1936. Edenvale Nursery was there, as was the University of Minnesota. Another type of product was offered by professional seamstress Granny Gin, who sells hand-sewn aprons and purses. Oak and Rye Farm, and the Soil and Water Conservation District out of Waseca also had displays.

The surprise guest for the day was spelling bee champion Ava Place. Children who thought they were smart enough were told to spell 20 different words, going against Ava for prizes. All 20 of the words were bee themed and the child with the best score by the end of the day would receive a plaque with his or her name on it. Live music by City Mouse band members Billy Steiner, Dave Pengra and Ron Arseneault serenaded the crowd.

ZED by Duane M. Abel



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The Sisters Brothers, a movie well worth your time

By BEN REVERMANN
Staff writer

The Sisters Brothers is a 2018 R-rated western film starring Joaquin Phoenix and John C. Reilly. Directed by Jacques Audiard, based on the novel written by Patrick deWitt, this shoot-em-up is plenty violent, but ironically closes with one of the most tender, kindest endings one could hope for. In 1851 Oregon three years after the start of the California gold rush, Charlie and Eli Sisters, are two gunfighters who work for a rich man referred to as "the Commodore."

The brothers are dispatched by the Commodore to meet up with a tracker named John Morris, played by Jake Gyllenhaal, who has captured Hermann Kermit Warm, a man who has invented a chemical that can expose gold. During their journey, the brothers are constantly held up by illness, in-fighting, and pitfalls of the wild. In the meantime, their accomplice Morris is learning about Warm's chemical formula and gradually convincing himself to befriend the chemist and join him. When the brothers finally arrive, the change in loyalties sets off a war on all sides and a race to the gold.

There are some interesting facts shared during this movie, for instance the first toothpaste wasn't paste, but powder. We see the comical first use of a toilet, and a first-ever hot water bath. The sets are beautiful and finely detailed; sometimes the nails in the boards are visible. The clothing design is another aspect which shows wonderful attention to detail. Both Charlie and Eli are filthy throughout most of the movie, so much so it is strange to see them cleaned up. The chemistry between Eli and Charlie, regardless of their constant fighting, is thick; they trust each other and you can feel it, their bond is cemented.

One thing I noticed was the only prominent female in this entire film is a woman named Mayfield, and she doesn't stick around long. The movie earns its rating with a high kill count, but nothing too gory. It didn't do so well at the box office, which is crazy given the A-level actors and the sheer beauty and artwork. The ending is so kind it might even bring a tear. This columnist gives *The Sisters Brothers* an A.



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The Pastor's Column

Pay attention

By PASTOR MIKE COGLAN

Years ago, when I worked in Chicago, I rode a bus each day between my office and the train station. The route went underground along Lower Wacker Drive, where homeless people often sheltered from the cold. I would wonder what it must feel like to lie on cold pavement while well-dressed people hurried past without noticing you.

One icy evening, after working late, I rushed toward a waiting bus. I sprinted past a line of people, only to realize at the last second it wasn't my bus. I tried to stop, slipped on the ice, and landed flat on my back, sliding across the pavement with my briefcase in hand.

For just a moment, I experienced what it was like to lie on the ground while others looked down at me. Then I heard a familiar voice. A coworker stretched out his arms like an umpire and shouted, "Safe!" Everyone laughed.

I laughed too. A little humility is healthy. But afterward I thought about the people who live on those streets. Many have fallen so often that they've stopped believing they can ever get back up. They've come to believe they are invisible, unwanted, and unlovable.

You don't have to be homeless to feel that way. Neighbors, coworkers, students, and even people sitting in church can feel unseen. We all long for attention because attention tells us we matter. From birth, we seek the faces of those who love us. Babies smile, cry, and laugh because they crave connection. Healthy attention helps them flourish. Neglect wounds them deeply. We never really outgrow that need.

Ultimately, though, what we long for most is God's attention. The Bible repeatedly speaks of the blessing of God's face turned toward us: "The Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you... the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace." (Numbers 6:25-26)

Nothing troubled the psalmists more than the thought of God hiding His face. But God has not hidden His face from us. He turned toward us in Jesus Christ. By giving His Son for us, God placed an immeasurable value on every human life. Our worth is measured by the cross. Every person carries the same price tag: "Worth the price of my Son."

Jesus consistently demonstrated God's attention toward people others overlooked. Throughout the Gospels He noticed individuals in the crowd—a tax collector in a tree, a woman who quietly touched His garment, a poor widow dropping two small coins into the offering.

One of the clearest examples is found in John 9. Jesus encountered a man born blind. Others saw a beggar, an inconvenience, or a theological debate. The disciples immediately asked, "Who sinned, this man or his parents?"

Jesus wasn't interested in assigning blame. He saw a person. The blind man had spent years being ignored. People had learned to walk around him without seeing him. But Jesus stopped. He looked directly at him. He touched him. He healed him.

The miracle happened on the Sabbath, which angered the Pharisees. They cared more about protecting their rules than helping a suffering man. Jesus vio-

lated their traditions because compassion mattered more than legalistic compliance. Where the Pharisees saw a broken rule, Jesus saw someone to love.

Even after the healing, people weren't sure whether this was the same man. That tells us how invisible he had been. They had passed him for years without ever really seeing him. Jesus saw what everyone else overlooked.

God not only delights in giving us His attention; He also desires ours. The healed man couldn't stop talking about what Jesus had done. Ironically, the Pharisees demanded, "Give glory to God," while refusing to acknowledge God's work standing right in front of them. Their eyes were open physically but closed spiritually.

Isaiah warned God's people about this condition: "You have seen many things, but have paid no attention." That warning still applies today. We are surrounded by noise, distraction, and endless activity. We can easily become too busy to notice God or the people He places in front of us.

Jesus lived differently. He regularly withdrew into quiet places to pray. He practiced silence and solitude because attentiveness grows in stillness. Our souls are like a pond. When the water is calm, even a small pebble creates ripples. But when the surface is whipped by wind and waves, nothing can be seen clearly. God often speaks in gentle whispers that are drowned out by our constant busyness.

David expressed this beautifully: "I have stilled and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother." A weaned child rests peacefully, trusting that his mother will provide what he needs. Spiritual maturity produces that same quiet confidence before God.

Jesus also taught attentiveness by pointing to creation. "Look at the birds," He said. They don't worry about tomorrow, yet the Father feeds them. "Look at the flowers." They don't strive for beauty, yet God clothes them more splendidly than Solomon. If God pays such careful attention to sparrows and wildflowers, how much more does He care for those created in His image?

Some people have been ignored so often that they assume God ignores them too. Nothing could be further from the truth. Jesus reminds us that every hair on our heads is numbered. God never loses sight of His children. You are not forgotten. You are deeply loved.

And those who have received God's attention are called to extend it to others. Love notices people. Love listens. Love remembers. Love serves. James wrote: "Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry."

Near the end of his life, C. S. Lewis wrote that to love at all is to become vulnerable. We can avoid heartbreak by locking our hearts away—but in doing so, our hearts become hard, cold, and incapable of real love.

God chose the opposite path. He risked everything by loving us. He sent His Son. He continues to pursue people who feel forgotten. No one who has ever walked this earth has been unlovable in God's eyes.

May we learn to pay attention as Jesus did—to God, to one another, and especially to those whom the world has learned to overlook. Love always begins by noticing.

Waseca Art Gallery welcomes Kathy Weed, Jay Schmit

By BEN REVERMANN
Staff writer

A gallery opening and artist reception at the Waseca Art Center, (WAC) on Saturday, Aug. 1, welcomed quilter Kathy Weed and wood turning master Jay Schmit.

Belle Plaine woodworker Jay Schmit has only been working professionally with wood for the past seven years. "I was getting close to retirement and I was asked, 'What will you do on your first day after you're retired?'" Schmit claims he works with nearly every type of wood he can find—cherry, maple and soft maple, walnut, cottonwood, rosewood and something he referred to as "vegetable ivory," which is from a palm tree. His pieces are containers, bowls with and without covers, remarkably delicate-looking wine glasses. Some of his items are painted. Schmit observed, "If you don't know whether a wood piece is painted or not, just think of it like this, if you can see the grain of your wood, then it's dyed. If you cannot see the grain of the wood, then it's painted." He acknowledges that lighter wood is far easier to dye.

He describes that during his first four years as a woodturner, he did mostly bowls, "Then I expanded into shapes." He claimed sometimes he begins working on a piece of wood with no idea what he will make: "I let the wood tell me where to go."

He names woodworking artists such as Rich-



REAL ART - The Waseca Art Center (WAC) held its gallery opening on Saturday, Aug. 1, 2026. Pictured from left: WAC Treasurer Katie Youngberg, Vice President Penny Vought, professional quilter Kathy Weed, WAC President Mikhail Rostislavovich, and woodturning artist Jay Schmit.
Pioneer photo by Ben Revermann

ard Raffan and Stewart Furini as people whose work has inspired him. One piece, which Schmit said was inspired by Indiana Jones, was painted gold on the inside, titled "Medieval Feel."

The other artist for the day was quilting expert Kathy Weed, who grew up in Northfield. Weed is her married name, and she joked, "I married not a flower, but a weed." As she told about her career, she says her mother taught her to sew, leading to a lifetime of working with textiles. She told how a friend one day suggested, "Let's try quilting artwork." Once Weed got a taste of the art, she says she was hooked. She said she gave adhesives a try once, "But it just made everything a mess, so after that I threw all my adhesives away." She creates her pieces on sewing machines: "I start with a basic concept, I sometimes write it down or draft a picture," she pointed at her head and said, "But most times I have it up here." She said she uses

one-hundred percent cotton. "And I do whatever I can to frequent mom and pop quilt shops, boutique style." She tries to stay away from the corporate quilting scene. She joked that her husband knows that if she's in a quilt shop for less than a half hour, she hates it. "But if I'm in there for over a half hour, he has time to go get a beer and relax." The crowd laughed at that.

Weed said a bed-sized quilt will take 25 to 30 hours, but her pieces for display, which take up about the same space as a canvas painting, requires roughly 12 hours. "Sometimes I will start a piece, and after an hour I will get tired and take a break. I don't like doing that because sometimes when you come back, you've lost the feel that you had before." One of her more popular pieces that seemed to be gathering the most eyes was titled "Gooseberry Falls."

Both Kathy Weed and Jay Schmit's artwork will be on display at the Waseca Art Center until Sept. 4.

Waseca welcomes new wrestling coach

By JIM LUTGENS
Staff Writer

Waseca High School is pleased to announce the hiring of Tyler Buesgens as the next Head Wrestling Coach for Waseca Junior/Senior High School.

Buesgens brings a strong combination of competitive wrestling experience, coaching knowledge, and classroom leadership to the Bluejay wrestling program. He currently serves as an English Language Arts teacher at Waseca High School, where he teaches 10th and 11th grade students. Prior to joining Waseca Public Schools in 2025, he taught 11th and 12th grade English Language Arts at Belle Plaine High School from 2022–2025.

Buesgens has established himself as a respected coach and men-

tor. From 2021–2025, he served as a Varsity Assistant Wrestling Coach for the Scott West Panthers and a Junior High Football Coach at Belle Plaine High School. Since joining Waseca, he has continued that commitment as the Bluejays' Assistant Varsity Wrestling Coach and Junior High Football Coach.

A graduate of Jordan High School, Buesgens was a standout wrestler for one of Minnesota's premier wrestling programs before continuing his collegiate career at Iowa State University, where he competed from 2018–2021.

"We are excited to name Tyler Buesgens as the leader of our wrestling program," said WHS Activities Director Joe Hedervare. "Tyler has a deep understanding of the sport, a passion for developing student-athletes, and a genuine



commitment to building meaningful relationships with young people. Having already spent the past year working alongside our wrestlers and coaching staff, he understands the tradition and expectations of Bluejay Wrestling.

We are confident he will continue to build a program that emphasizes hard work, accountability, sportsmanship, and success both on the mat and in the classroom."

Buesgens is eager to continue the proud tradition of Waseca wrestling while investing in the growth of every student-athlete in the program. His experience as both a high-level competitor and coach, combined with his dedication as an educator, positions him well to lead the Bluejays into the future.

Please join Waseca Public Schools in congratulating Coach Buesgens as he begins this new leadership role. We look forward to the continued success and growth of Bluejay Wrestling under his direction.

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Tuesday - 8:30 a.m. Quilting
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12-18
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Sunday - 8 a.m. Worship, 9 Bible Class, 10:30 a.m. Worship
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Alma City, Minnesota
Pastor Robert Harting
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Sunday - 8:30 a.m. Worship
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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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HONORED - Senator Jasinski speaks from the podium at the CGMC dinner.

Sen. Jasinski named Legislator of Distinction

Minnesota State Senator John Jasinski (Faribault) was honored by the Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities (CGMC) on Thursday, July 23 as one of the organization’s Legislators of Distinction for 2026.

“I am so grateful to be honored by CGMC once again,” Sen. Jasinski said. “It’s hard to run a city in Minnesota, particularly these last couple years when so many expensive mandates and costs and have been imposed on them by the governor and the legislature. I used to serve as mayor and as a city council member, so I know what it’s like to face their challenges every day. When cities tell me what they need -- and just as important, what will make their lives harder -- I listen and take them seriously. I am proud of the work we have done together over the years and look forward to even more success in the future.”

In a press release, CGMC said: “A tenacious and consistent advocate for key Greater Minnesota programs, no lawmaker understands or advocates for the region’s Business Development Public Infrastructure (BDPI) program better than Sen. Jasinski. He consistently draws on his prior experience as a mayor to remind lawmakers why this key program needs adequate funding and to make the case for its impact on Greater Minnesota communities.”

The award was presented at the CGMC annual banquet in New Ulm on July 23.

The Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities is a nonprofit, non-partisan advocacy organization representing more than 100 cities outside of the Twin Cities metropolitan area. The Coalition also educates legislators about issues important to Greater Minnesota.

Community, craftsmanship and crisp crusts

By Jordan Carrillo
Janesville Journal

The mouthwatering aromas of wood-fired dough, melted cheese, and crispy pepperoni drifted across the prairie on Saturday, July 25, as Pleasant Grove Pizza Farm welcomed a buzzing crowd for its second annual "Stroll. A Saturday Evening Market."

Co-owners Emily Knudsen and Bill Bartz launched the event to highlight and support local female entrepreneurs. What began as a showcase inspired by close friend and jewelry maker Betsy Collins has blossomed into a signature summer gathering. "We wanted to highlight more female entrepreneurs and help build a network to support them," Knudsen shared, noting the phenomenal turnout. "It's a great busy night, self-sustaining, and another reason to celebrate."

A carefully curated lineup of women makers displayed a wide array of handcrafted goods. Highlights included freshly harvested honey from Hamali's Honey, custom charms and permanent jewelry from Lucy & Co., artisanal soaps from Nomada Soap Co., fresh cut flowers from Mankato-based Little Roots Flower Farm, and mouth-watering baked treats—including mocha cakes, Dutch apple pies, and peach cobbler cookies—from Waseca's AB Cookies & Cakery.

While attendees shopped and

mingled, musician Mal Murphy set a relaxed acoustic backdrop for the evening. Visitors strolled along grassy trails through prairie and woods, stopping to visit resident farm animals including goats Kenny and Georgia Pie and Lena the alpaca.

Guests also took time to explore the farm's lush garden, now roughly a decade old and bursting with colorful blooms, sweet corn, basil, tomatoes, garlic, and arugula. Many ordered wood-fired pizzas paired with drinks from "The Little Bar on the Prairie" or paid a visit to the event's special Garden Bar. The featured menu highlighted refreshing wine spritzers and sangrias prepared with Rosso sparkling wine and Moose sparkling wine out of Jordan, Minnesota.

Now in its 11th year of operation, The Pizza Farm continues to prioritize locally sourced ingredients and farm-totable community connections.

For those who missed Saturday's festivities, the farm is capitalizing on the event's glowing popularity with a second "Stroll" market scheduled for Saturday, August 29. Looking further into the season, Pleasant Grove will host its annual "Flavors of Fall" festival on weekends in mid-September, featuring fall-inspired pizzas with pumpkin and squash, horse and wagon rides, and seasonal brews and ciders.



LEGION PLAYOFF TEAM - Back Row: Todd Piepho, Levi Whiteside, Memphis Schlaak, Mack Gilliland, Dakota Schlaak, Brock Holland, AJ Deen, Bodie Newgard, Brooks Gilliland and Aaron Gilliland. Front Row: Carter Martens, Calvin Nissen, Sean Lassahn, Owen Schlaak, Tyler Piepho, Shane Service and Justin Schlaak (not pictured Ryan Schlaak)

New Richland Red Raiders see milestone season

The 2026 season marked an exciting milestone for Red Raiders New Richland Post 75 Legion Baseball, as the program fielded both Senior and Junior Legion teams for the first time. The season showcased the continued growth of baseball in the community and highlighted a promising future for the program.

The Junior Legion team finished the summer with a 3-8-1 record while continuing to develop throughout the season. The team earned key victories over Hayfield and St. Charles and played in the Rochester and St. Charles tournaments.

The Senior Legion team finished with a 7-6 record, earning notable wins over Blooming Prairie, Adams, and Lewiston-Altura. The Senior Legion finished 2nd in the St. Charles tournament and played in the Rochester tournament.

The Senior Legion team qualified for the



league playoffs as the No. 6 seed out of 11 teams. In the opening round, Post 75 hosted Blooming Prairie and earned an impressive 8-2 victory to advance to the double-elimination bracket. The team's postseason run ended after a pair of hard-fought one-run losses, falling 6-5 to Caledonia and 5-4 to La Crescent.

With the successful launch of both Junior and Senior Legion teams, the 2026 season laid a strong foundation for the future of Red Raiders baseball. The growth of the program, along with the commitment of its players, coaches, families, and community supporters, points to a bright future for baseball in New Richland for years to come.



Child’s History of Waseca County

Chapter XIV, 1855-6. Town site booming—Wilton village platted by Cornell and Abbott of Owatonna, and John and D. J. Jenkins and Child of Waseca County—Claim-jumping—House body torn down—Many settlers arrested and taken to Owatonna—Land suits at Winona—War on the LeSueur—Buildings torn down in Wilton.

The first year’s settlement did not pass without a town-site boom in this county. Speculators were abroad then as now. In October, 1855, A. B. Cornell and John H. Abbott, then of Owatonna, came to the settlement and prevailed upon D. J. and John Jenkins and the writer to join with them in platting a town site. Mr. Abbott was a surveyor and the parties proceeded to survey and plat the village of Wilton, the first-born city of the county. It soon became evident to John Jenkins and me that A. B. Cornell, the

moving genius of the firm, intended to get persons to come on from various places and take possession of all the land in the vicinity, and that, too, without regard to the rights of others. D. J. Jenkins sided with Cornell and Abbott, and it was quite evident that they proposed to jump claims if they could not get what they wanted in any other way. John Jenkins and I withdrew shortly after the survey was made, and men from Owatonna took our places.

D. J. Jenkins built, that fall, the first house on the new town plat, or, rather, adjoining it, and it was expected then that, like Jonah’s gourd, it would grow to almost a city in a day. But, unfortunately, the prime movers of the enterprise so managed their affairs that the settlers of the surrounding country, even up to the boundary line of the village plat, refused to countenance the building of the new city. As evidence of the feeling that existed at the time, a few facts will be given, which,

though not very creditable, perhaps, will show the extent to which men will sometimes proceed when thrown together promiscuously beyond the controlling influences of courts and law. In the latter part of January, 1856, the Owatonna proprietors of the Wilton plat hired some fellows to jump the claims of four settlers—Robert and Hugh McDougall and George and Bill Robbins—who had settled along the river, just east of the village plat. The claim jumpers commenced the erection of houses on these lands, and set up counter claims to them on the ground, as they said, that those young men had claimed more than 160 acres each, that because they were foreign born and had not declared their intentions of becoming citizens prior to their settlement. The former of these charges was false, the latter true. The men had not declared their intentions to become citizens simply because there was no court nearer than Mankato,

and also because they expected to so as soon as they could get to the land office at Winona.

Editorial Note - Upon rummaging through the vast library of contents here, 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 stopped 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 we have included, “a little bit of this and a little bit of that,” from the book.



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Waseca Garden Walk, August 1



A PLACE TO RELAX - Left, Volunteers (from left) Denny Neidt, Jolene Gundermann, Nancy Brekke and Kathy Oftedahl greeted people attending the "Garden Walk" sponsored by the Waseca Garden Club. Their booth at the Waseca Safety Building offered refreshments and provided maps to the five gardens that made up this year's event. Welcoming about 165 visitors this year were Stacey and Eric Weichert of Janesville and Waseca gardeners Mark Pehrson; Anne Gerber and Charlie Rohwer; Julie and Mike Peters; and Linden and Toni Bauleke. Right, Waseca Garden Walk participant Julie Peters and her dog Jade greeted guests the afternoon of Saturday, Aug. 1.



Pioneer photos by Deb Bently

IN BRIEF

Acrylic Painting
Ethereal Landscape at
Waseca Art Center
August 13 and 20

Local artist Caitlin Roberts will teach how to paint an ethereal landscape over two sessions at the Waseca Art Center from 2-4 p.m. on Thursday, Aug. 13 and 20. Supplies will be provided. Minimum of three, limit 10. Geared toward teens 13 - 18 years old.

Waseca Freemason's
Soap Box Race
Saturday, August 15

The Waseca Freemasons are throwing their eighth annual Soap Box Race starting at noon till 3 p.m. on Saturday, August 15. The location is 4th St. NE, next to Tink Larson Field. For ages 8 and up, registration must take place before noon. Refreshments provided. The rain date is August 22.

Vista Covenant 150-
year anniversary
August 15-16

Vista Covenant Church located at 14679 275th Ave New Richland, will celebrate 150 years in God's service on Saturday and Sunday, Aug. 15 and 16. Games, treats and fellowship will begin at 3 on Saturday with a supper beginning at 5:30. R.S.V.P.s are requested to 507-465-8365 or on the Vista Covenant website. A 10 a.m. service on Sunday will feature the president of the Evangelical Covenant as officiant. Vista invites everyone to the celebrations, and especially encourages former parishioners to attend.

Rock'n Cars Roll-In at
Katie O'Leary's
Thursday, August 16

The Rock'n Car Roll-In will take place at Katie O'Leary's from 4-8 p.m. Thursday, Aug 16. Classic cars, motorcycles, food trucks, music and 50/50 raffle.

Trainwreck Duet at
Pleasant Grove Pizza
Farm Sunday, Aug. 16

The Trainwreck Duet will perform the Pleasant Grove Pizza Farm from 1-7 p.m. on Sunday, Aug. 16. Featuring Trent Shaw guitar and Tim Schommer on piano.

Bob Stephan at Indian
Island Winery Sunday,
August 16

Musician Bob Stephan will play the Indian Island Winery from 1-3:30 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 16. He performs country, blues, and 50s/60s music.



GREEN GROWTH - The Discover Waseca Tourism awarded a grant to the Waseca Garden Club to support their annual Garden Walk, a popular summer tradition.

Tourism awards grant to Waseca Garden Club

WASECA, Minn. — Discover Waseca Tourism is pleased to announce the award of a \$500 grant to the Waseca Garden Club in support of its annual Garden Walk, a popular summer tradition that welcomes gardening enthusiasts from across the region to experience some of Waseca's most beautifully maintained private gardens.

Each year, the Garden Club arranges a series of stops where local gardeners have consented to their gardens for visits from the public. The Garden Walk offers an opportunity to explore what these home-

owners have done while perhaps borrowing ideas for their own outdoor spaces. Throughout the event, homeowners and Garden Club members share knowledge, techniques, and experience with horticulture, creating an enjoyable experience that celebrates both creativity and community.

The event not only showcases the beauty of Waseca but also attracts visitors who support local restaurants, shops, and businesses during their time in the community.

"The Garden Walk is a wonderful example of the unique experiences

that make Waseca a destination," said Discover Waseca Tourism President Mikhail Rostislavovich. "It highlights the pride our residents take in their community while welcoming visitors to enjoy the beauty and hospitality that Waseca has to offer."

Discover Waseca Tourism's grant program supports events and attractions that encourage visitors to explore Waseca while strengthening the local economy.

"The Waseca Garden Club has created an event that inspires, educates, and brings people Together,"

said Diane Beckmann, chair of the Discover Waseca Tourism Grants Committee.

"We're proud to support an event that showcases the talents of our local gardeners and encourages visitors to experience one of Waseca's beautiful traditions."

The annual Garden Walk continues to grow as one of the community's signature summertime events, offering an enjoyable day for seasoned gardeners, new hobbyists, and anyone who appreciates the beauty of thoughtfully designed gardens.

‘Ask a Trooper’: vehicles with tinted windows

Question: I'm seeing more and more vehicles in Minnesota with dark tinted windows. I thought there was a law prohibiting dark tinted windows on both the driver and passenger windows but back windows can be dark. Unless the laws changed and I didn't know. Thank you

Answer: In Minnesota, you can have your windows tinted to a light transmittance of 50 percent, but not less. Light transmittance is the amount of light that is required to pass through both the window and the tint film. Before any tint material is applied to your windows, a vehicle comes from the

factory with tint already inside the glass material. No window comes from the factory at 100 percent light transmittance. My experience has been that most vehicles are already at 75 percent before any modifications.

No vehicle can have ANY tint to the front windshield.

Passenger cars are limited to 50 percent on all side and rear windows.

Pickups, vans, and SUVs are limited to 50 percent on the front side windows.

Pickups, vans, and SUVs are not limited on the rear side and rear windows. (Can be less than 50 per-

cent behind the front seat).

Squad cars, limousines, and vehicles used to transport human remains by a funeral establishment are not limited on the side and rear windows.

More people are getting prescriptions from doctors to have window tint darker than 50 percent. If people have any type of medical conditions which are affected by the sun, they are allowed to have window tint darker than 50 percent. The proper document will need to be in the vehicle to show law enforcement upon request. The document will need to specifically state the minimum percent-

age that light transmittance may be reduced to satisfy the prescription or medical needs of the patient.

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

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

JWP
SCHOOL BOARD

Resolution
adopting
10-year
LTFM Plan
accepted

By Ricardo Moreno Jr
Janesville Journal

The Janesville-Waldorf-Pemberton School Board met on Monday July 20th. Student Representatives were not present due to Summer Vacation.

Superintendent Erler stated that the custodial staff at JWP was doing, "an awesome job," preparing the school for the next term. An awning was set to be installed over the playground at the front of the school on Tuesday the 21st.

\$500 was donated by Susan Atkinson for the Darwin Lochner Scholarship and \$1,500 was donated by MIDCO foundation to improve access to AEDs. The donations were unanimously accepted.

In the Superintendent Report, Erler stated that gradebook overhauls were near completion and curriculum preparations were going well for the elementary school. They are also preparing to pilot, "two or three new math programs this fall and winter to adopt a new math curriculum," for the 2027 and 2028 school years.

Principal Rysdam has hired a long-term substitute teacher for the science department. The open full time position will be posted again before the start of the second semester in hopes of filling the position for the remainder of the school year. Supt. Erler stated that the high school is hoping to work with MSU on potentially hiring one of their graduates in December.

The high school is also working with South Central College on a contract that would allow students more options for PSEO classes. An inspection of the school's elevator was completed and it was determined that it does not meet current safety standards. Current standards require that elevators be able to automatically open to allow passengers a swift and safe exit in case of emergencies. The cost to meet this new standard is estimated at \$200,000. Business Manager Dieker stated that current Long Term Facility Maintenance funds could not be used to make the necessary changes. Dieker will continue to explore

School continued on 12

Got news? • 837-6767



Guests leave the Farmfest grounds in rural Redwood County on Tuesday, Aug. 5, 2025. Photos by MPR



Mark Gutierrez (left) engages guests during Minnesota Farmfest 2025 on Tuesday, Aug. 5. He's a small livestock farmer and feels that federal ag policies haven't adequately addressed family food producers and only helped industrial sized farms. He's concerned that his voice hasn't been heard by his representatives.

Politicians to court ag vote at Minnesota Farmfest amid drought, high costs and uncertain markets

By MPR

U.S. Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins was among those addressing farmers and others in the agriculture industry at the 2026 Minnesota Farmfest in Redwood County this week.

Attendees also heard from candidates for Minnesota governor, U.S. Senate and the U.S. House in candidate forums held just days before next week's primary elections.

The three-day Minnesota Farmfest took place this year at a challenging time economically for many of the state's farmers and agricultural producers, as diesel fuel and fertilizer costs skyrocketed this spring following the start of the war with Iran.

Many farmers are still reeling from falling crop prices and uncertain markets due to the Trump administration's trade wars with China and other countries that usually buy much of their corn and soybeans. In addition, the latest drought monitor report shows that almost all of Minnesota is abnormally dry, and most is in moderate to severe drought conditions, which could significantly reduce crop yields this year.

Minnesota Farmfest was held Aug. 4-6 in Morgan, Minn. on County Highway 13 in Redwood County at the Gilfillan Estate. The event connected farmers to vendors who displayed the latest equipment, machinery and technology, while several seminars aimed at educating the public about agriculture. This year's Farmfest featured over 400 exhibitors showcasing industry innovations on about 50 acres of land.

Farmfest usually draws about 24,000 to 26,000 people from all over the upper Midwest. This year some new events included a daily drone demonstration, ride and drive demonstrations and autonomous tillage demonstrations.

It also featured a new "2027 Profit Roadmap Seminar," said Nikki Jones, Farmfest marketing director, which is designed to help farmers help manage rising costs, market uncertainty and tighter margins. Attendees heard from economists, marketing specialists, and financial professionals on topics like cash flow

management, ag policy and lending strategies.

"They'll leave with really practical action steps and tools to help strengthen their operation moving forward into next year," Jones said, speaking in advance of the seminar. "So we're excited about that seminar this year. I think it'll be really [informative] for folks."

Farmfest Forums

Amid the backdrop of higher operating costs, lower prices and drought, attendees engaged with office holders and candidates running for Congress, Senate, and Minnesota governor ahead of the Aug. 11 primaries.

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins was the first featured speaker at the Farmfest Forums. Sec. Rollins addressed the audience gathered in the Wick Buildings Farmfest Center on Tuesday, Aug. 4, beginning at 10:10 a.m.

Immediately following the secretary's remarks, at 10:30 a.m., congressional candidates running in Minnesota's first and second districts faced off in a forum. Later Tuesday, from 1:15 to 2:15 p.m., a forum featuring candidates running for Minnesota sixth, seventh and eighth congressional districts was held.

On Wednesday, Aug. 5 at 10:30 a.m., there was an hour-long forum featuring candidates for governor, and a U.S. Senate candidates' forum was held at 1:15 Wednesday afternoon.

These forums focused on topics affecting rural America and the agriculture industry. Given the timing of Farmfest, so close to the primary elections, Jones thought the forums were likely to generate a lot of interest and have more attendees than usual.

"This year's forums are going to be pretty big for the first time in many years. Minnesota has no incumbent running in the governor or the Senate race, so we're looking forward to having big crowds for that," Jones said. "The best part I think for the folks that sit in the audience is that [candidates] do really focus on those ag and rural issues that are important to them ahead of their vote in primaries."

Healthcare costs have more than doubled for many farmers this year, on top of soaring expenses

By MPR

Ben and Paula Sue Steffen have been farming their whole lives in the small town of Humboldt in southeastern Nebraska. Over 40 years of marriage, they've seen good and bad times in the agriculture industry.

"It's always a balancing act," Ben Steffen said. "There have been years where you could make money falling off a tree in this business. There have been some of those years — just get up and plant it — and you walk home and make money."

"It hasn't been like that the last few years," Paula Sue Steffen added. "I don't even remember in recent years when that would have been."

This year is no exception. High diesel prices have added thousands of dollars to the yearly cost of running farm equipment. The Steffens had to cough up an extra \$50,000 for fertilizer to treat their fields of corn, soybeans, wheat and hay.

"This is the most expensive crop we've ever put in the ground," Ben Steffen said. "It's kind of breathtaking when you do this year after year, and you keep seeing those numbers go up."

Those extra costs have already put a strain on the farm's checkbook. But this year, a completely unexpected cost was added to the ledger: health insurance.

This year, the Steffens expect to pay \$32,000 for health insurance — more than double the about \$13,000 they paid in 2025 after the premium tax credit. Steffen said they could get a different income-based tax credit, but at this point they're unsure how much of their costs it will offset.

Paula Sue Steffen said they'll have to make space for the extra cost, especially in a potentially dangerous business like farming.

"We don't care about the fact that we may have to go to the doctor a few times a year or need a checkup," she said. "We just need to be covered, because if something does happen, the numbers are just crazy. You have to be covered or you're going to be in trouble."

The Steffens use an Affordable Care Act plan bought from the federally regulated marketplace. They're part of millions of self-employed Americans and part-time workers who are paying more for the insurance after Congress allowed tax credits that partially covered premiums to expire.

Premiums jumped 58 percent on average for all enrollees this year, according to the health policy organization KFF. However, premiums doubled or tripled for many middle-income Americans who relied on the expired "advanced premium tax credits."

The ACA plans — often called "Obamacare" — are a common choice for Americans who can't access healthcare through public benefits or employer-sponsored health plans. In 2025, about 22 million people across the U.S. got their coverage from an ACA plan, comparing and buying plans on healthcare.gov or state marketplace websites.

The majority of people who purchase plans through ACA are working, according to Matthew McGough, an ACA policy expert with KFF. He said some may be working for small businesses un-

able to provide insurance or working fewer hours than needed to qualify to receive health care benefits through an employer.

"It's sort of like the last catch to get people who don't have any other way of receiving health insurance coverage," McGough said.

A benefit to farmers

Farmers and ranchers are among many workers who've relied on ACA plans. The Congressional Research Service estimates there were 1.2 million self-employed agriculture workers in 2022. A KFF survey found that around 27 percent of agriculture workers are on plans — a high share compared to the general population.

Enrollment fell about 13 percent across all users after premiums spiked this year, and they could rise again next year.

Many enrollees downgraded their plan level, opting for a high deductible to get a lower monthly cost. The Steffens moved to one of the cheapest plans. It has a \$7,200 deductible.

"It's not a gold-plated plan where you get everything paid for," Steffen said. "It's the kind of thing that's not sustainable."

Health insurance wasn't always such a concern for the Steffens. Over the past few years, they've downsized their operation. As the business changed, so did their healthcare costs.

"When we operated our dairy, we began offering healthcare benefits to our employees," Ben Steffen said. "It was the right thing to do, and we tried to figure out a way to do it, so that we could help them, help our business and sustain them."

They paid about \$12,600 a year on the group plan. In 2022, the Steffens began selling off their milk cows when costs became too high to sustain their dairy operation. Now, stalls that once held hundreds of cattle are full of hay and the milking barn sits empty — and their health premiums have nearly tripled.

While variable costs and tough years are a part of farming, Nick Levendofsky, executive director of the Kansas Farmers Union, said the sudden shift in healthcare cost is something no one could have planned for.

"It's scary because it's cutting into their bottom line," Levendofsky said. "They didn't necessarily budget for this. They didn't plan for this, and so therefore they've got to make difficult decisions."

He said he's heard stories of people dropping their coverage altogether. Levendofsky's own premiums tripled this year.

"I was paying an amount that was very reasonable for my budget, and it meant that there was more money in my pocket," he said. "I could buy more groceries. I could do other things with those dollars, and that's just not the case now."

Picking and choosing

Having health insurance also provides a safety net for farmers, protecting them from farm-sinking medical debt.

Dina van der Zalm runs communications and outreach for the Missouri Rural Crisis Center, a group that advocates for family-owned farms and rural communities. She directed the organization's health policy efforts



in 2007 when it was advocating for the Affordable Care Act.

"We found a bunch of [farmers] were sending at least one person off-farm to get jobs to get health insurance, and then we also had a ton of people just not getting care, delaying access to care, and we were really, really alarmed by that," van der Zalm said.

This year, she said she's seeing the same patterns as farmers look to offset ACA costs. She said she's spoken to many farmers who are behind on bills, paying minimums and setting up payment plans for regular primary care doctor visits. Some farmers are putting off important health issues or only paying for emergency care until they turn 65 and can enroll in Medicare.

"There's so much that is on a razor-thin margin right now that going uninsured is something folks are not doing now as much as they were doing in those 2007, pre-ACA days, but it is a kind of constant juggle," van der Zalm said.

A 2024 study from the University of Nebraska Medical Center found farming injuries cost about \$11,000 on average in medical care and about \$5,000 in lost work.

Financial stress can contribute to more health problems, including mental health challenges — especially in an industry like farming, where people are already managing unpredictable variables, like weather or harvest outcomes.

"One of the things that makes working in agriculture so stressful is how many factors are out of the producer's control," said psychologist Mikela Spooner with Texas A&M University. "That is a chronic worry and concern that any of these things could happen or affect what they're doing at any given time."

Spooner works for Texas A&M's FarmHope program, which offers free mental health services. She said money comes up in many of her discussions with farmers.

"It might not always be at the forefront of folks' minds, or it might not be the exact reason that they're coming to see me, but it's always kind of related," Spooner said.

Spooner said financial stress can be tied to worries about holding onto their farms and maintaining their lifestyle.

"We are a combination of our thoughts, our behaviors, and our emotions," Spooner said. "When one of those becomes overwhelmed or out of sync to what helps us function at our best, it relates to all the others."

'We just keep waiting for something to give'

Affordable health care advocates have called for Congress to bring back the ACA tax credits, expand Medicare or Medicaid to wider populations, or consider system-wide healthcare reforms. Local groups of farmers and ranchers have also tried pooling resources in cooperative health plans, aiming to benefit rural areas.

In the short-term, farmers and

ranchers do have some options to access more affordable health care. Some farm bureaus, farm unions and livestock producer associations offer health plans. But they are typically limited, not required to accept all enrollees and only cover dental, vision or minor health costs.

Nick Levendofsky said the Kansas Farmers Union offers some coverage to members, which he uses for dental and vision.

"It's a member benefit that we have, but we're very honest with people that it is not insurance," he said. "It's just basically a supplemental plan that kind of helps save them some cost."

Levendofsky said the Kansas Farmers Union supported the ACA from the start, in part because it would give families more flexibility.

"It could allow both spouses the opportunity to stay on the farm, and that's the goal for a lot of farmers," Levendofsky said. "They can't do it alone, or they don't want to do it alone."

And for some farmers, sending someone to work off the farm for an employer that offers health insurance is unrealistic.

Becky Potmesil and her family own a ranch in rural northern central Nebraska. Finding a regular 9-to-5 job would mean an hour commute to the nearby town of Alliance.

"We're too far from town for us to do that. It's a long, bumpy drive," said Potmesil, who's 60 years old. "We are on the end of a road out here — so it takes us a lot longer to get there — but we have neighbors that are about 10 miles down the road that are a lot closer to the highway."

Potmesil's husband is on Medicare, so their ACA plan covers her and their son, who is 18. Their premium doubled to \$2,050 per month this year. Like the Steffens, the Potmesils are also dealing with high input costs. Drought and wildfires in the area have also compounded their issues.

"Really, our saving grace right now is that the cattle prices are still high," she said.

Potmesil said managing costs is still complicated, but she hasn't considered dropping her ACA insurance.

"We haven't gotten there yet, but if it keeps going the way it is — I mean, we just keep waiting for something to give," Potmesil said.

The Steffens, who are both 64 and healthy, are holding on until they can enroll in Medicare next year.

Even with the heavy healthcare costs, they still wouldn't trade their lifelong profession and family business for an employer-sponsored plan.

"The freedom to be self-employed is undervalued and underappreciated," Ben Steffen said. "To walk out in the morning and sit here and look at a crop that's growing, there isn't a better time of the year. Our corn's growing three or four inches every day, and you can just see the landscape changing. It's a hopeful season. It's a hopeful business, really."

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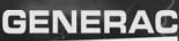
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For more infomation, contact Jeff Carpenter at 507-401-1389 or apply online at tracymn.gov

SWEET SOMMERS VFW POST 1642

August 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 QUEEN OF HEARTS D RAWING 5pm
2	3	4 COAST GUARD DAY	5 6pm Bar Bingo	6 7pm BINGO	7 Purple Heart Day Meat Raffle 5:30	8 QUEEN OF HEARTS DRAWING 5pm
9	10 7 pm Post & AUX. Meeting	11	12 6pm Bar Bingo	13 7pm BINGO	14 Navajo Code Talkers Day MEAT Raffle 5:30	15 QUEEN OF HEARTS DRAWING 5pm
16	17	18	19 6pm Bar Bingo	20 7pm BINGO	21 MEAT Raffle 5:30 Horse racing 6:30pm	22 QUEEN OF HEARTS DRAWING 5pm
23	24	25	26 6pm Bar Bingo	27 7pm BINGO	28 MEAT Raffle 5:30 Horse racing 6:30pm	29 QUEEN OF HEARTS DRAWING 5pm
30	31					

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

City of Waseca, Minnesota Annual Disclosure of Tax Increment Districts For the Year Ended December 31, 2025

TIF District Name:	TIF 27 Fox Meadows	TIF 29 Marketplace Apartments
Current net tax capacity	\$17,289	\$0
Original net tax capacity	\$133	\$656
Captured net tax capacity	\$17,156	\$0
Principal and interest payments due in 2026	\$18,407	\$0
Tax increment received in 2025	\$24,487	\$0
Tax increment expended in 2025	\$23,813	\$0
Month and year of first tax increment receipt	7 / 2013	7 / 2027
Date of required decertification	12/31/37	12/31/52
The total increased property taxes to be paid from outside the district if fiscal disparities Option A applies *	\$0	\$0

* The fiscal disparities property tax law provides that the growth in commercial-industrial property tax values is shared throughout the area. In a tax increment financing district, this value sharing can either result in a decrease in tax increment financing district revenue or a tax increase for other properties in the municipality depending on whether the tax increment financing district contributes its share of the growth. Amounts displayed here indicate that the district did not contribute its growth in commercial-industrial property tax values and represent the resulting increase in taxes on other properties in the City for taxes payable in 2025.

Additional information regarding each district may be obtained from-

Ms. Alicia Fischer, Finance Director
City of Waseca
508 South State Street
Waseca, MN 56093
(507) 835-9700

SECTION 00 1113 ADVERTISEMENT FOR BID

WASECA COUNTY MAINTENANCE GARAGE RE-ROOF

Contractor's sealed proposals for the construction of Waseca County Maintenance Garage Re-Roof will be received by the Owner in accordance with the plans and specifications prepared by:

ARCHITECT
WIDSETH
3777 40th Avenue NW, Suite 200
Rochester, MN 55901

SITE VISIT INFORMATION
Pre-Bid Meeting: 08-12-2026, at 10:00 A.M. (CST)
Location: 1495 5th St. SE, Waseca, MN 56093

BID DATE INFORMATION: AUGUST 28, 2026

Bid Time: August 28, 2026 at 10:00 AM (CST)
Location: Online via QuestCDN vBid
Attn: Jim Kollar, Public Works Director
1495 5th St SE, Waseca, MN 56093

at which time they will be submitted electronically via QuestCDN - vBID. Bids will be received and evaluated, the awarded bid will be announced on September 1, 2026 during the County Board meeting.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: Demolition of the existing roofing material to metal deck. Installation of new low-slope roofing system. Roof area is approximately 15,300 sf.

Each bid must be accompanied with a cashier's check, bid bond, U.S. Government Bonds (at par value) or certified check equal to five percent (5%) of the amount of the proposal. Security is payable to the Owner as a guarantee of prompt execution of the contract in accordance with the proposal and Contract documents, along with furnishing Payment and Performance Bonds of One Hundred percent (100%) of the bid amount acceptable to the Owner.

For electronic bid submissions provide a scanned copy of your Security bond with your bid. Provide a original copy to the Bid Recipient within five (5) days of bid due date.

This Bidder shall be required to execute the Agreement and obtain the Performance Bond, Labor and Material, Payment Bond and Project Insurance within ten (10) calendar days from the date when Notice of Award is delivered to the Bidder.

Complete digital project bidding documents are available at <https://widseth.com>. Click "Bid Documents" in the top right corner of your screen or go to www.questcdn.com and enter the Quest project No. 10304183 on the website's Project Search page. Please contact QuestCDN.com at (952) 233-1632 or info@questcdn.com for assistance in free membership registration, downloading and working with this digital project information. You may download the digital plan documents electronically for \$25. An additional fee of \$45 will be charged to electronically bid the project. An optional paper set of project documents is also available from CES Imaging for a nonrefundable price of \$30 plus printing costs. If you choose a paper copy you will get all addenda as paper copies and will be charged for the printing costs. Please make your check payable to CES Imaging and send it to 1701 James Circle N, Brooklyn Center, MN 55430. Please contact CES Imaging Repro Dept at (763) 560-9098 or (800) 831-8587 for pricing and if you have any questions.

The successful bidder must be a "responsible contractor." The term "responsible contractor" means a contractor as defined in Minnesota Statutes Section 16C.285, subdivision 3. Any prime contractor, subcontractor, or motor carrier that does not meet the minimum criteria or fails to comply with the verification requirements is not a responsible contractor and is not eligible to be awarded a construction contract for the project or to perform work on the project. A prime contractor, subcontractor, or motor carrier that makes a false statement under oath verifying compliance with the minimum criteria will be ineligible to be awarded a construction contract on the project and the submission of a false statement may result in termination of a contract awarded to a prime contractor, subcontractor, or motor carrier that submits the false statement. A prime contractor shall include in its verification of compliance a list of all of its first-tier subcontractors that it intends to retain for work on the project. Before execution of a construction contract, a prime contractor shall submit a supplemental verification under oath confirming that all subcontractors and motor carriers that the prime contractor intends to use to perform project work have verified to the prime contractor, through a signed statement under oath by an owner or officer, that they meet the minimum criteria for a responsible contractor.

Bids may not be withdrawn within forty-five (45) days after the scheduled closing time for receiving bids without consent of the Owner. The Owner reserves the right to reject any and all bids and rebid the project until a satisfactory bid is received.

By: Jim Kollar, Public Works Director
Waseca County



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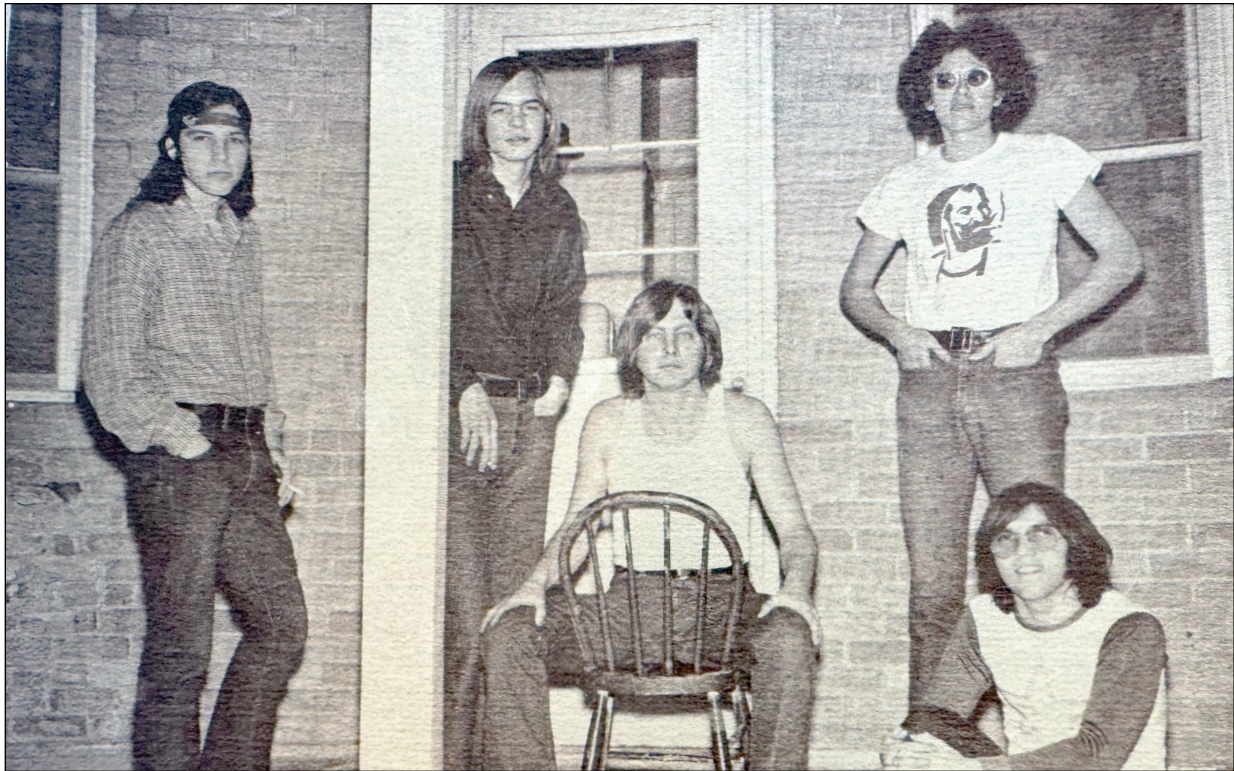
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TEEN CANTEENS - Left, the Cletus Hane band in 1970. From left, Dan Westphal, Keith Deike, Jerome Broughten, Jim Kozan and Steve McCloone. The group performed a few times in the early 1970s for the popular Teen Canteens organized by Sheriff Don Eustice. Right, the former State Street building which housed the Waseca police and fire departments. The "Teen Canteen" dances were first held upstairs in this building, and were later moved to what is now the 4-H Building on the county fairgrounds.



Jim Kozan remembers Teen Canteens

By DEB BENTLY
News Editor

Waseca musician Jim Kozan remembers being among as many as 400 area youth who would attend "Teen Canteen" dances held during the 1960s and '70s in Waseca.

The Canteens existed prior to the beginning of Sheriff Don Eustice's tenure from 1967 to 1976, but area residents who attended the dances intertwine his memory with the get-togethers.

For one thing, Eustice and other law enforcement officers were present at the dances to interact with teens while also serving as security.

Much more than that, Eustice took on the task of finding bands for the events. Still today, Kozan expresses how impressed he was at the quality of performers Eustice managed to procure. A number of the bands had recording contracts. The Royal Guardsmen, who came more than once, had national-level hits, among them "Snoopy vs. the Red Baron."

Eustice also made sure necessary details were taken care of when it came to setup and teardown, calling freely on the teenagers among his nine children to take care of tasks.

Kozan recalls being 14 years old when he attended his first Teen Canteen dance in 1964, at that time in a two-story brick building on State Street which served as both police station and fire hall. The events were moved to the 4-H building at the fairgrounds when the noise of dancing feet interfered with the safety agencies' ability to hear incoming calls.

The events are an abiding memory of his youth, Kozan says, and wagers any conversation about

them with area baby boomers (folks born between 1946 and 1964) will lead to many entertaining accounts of experiences and memories. "I realize now, I was really lucky to be growing up at that time," says Kozan.

Acknowledging the frequent dances were likely Eustice's way of keeping teens from seeking out less acceptable entertainment, Kozan describes a time when a small group of recent high school graduates made plans for a night of drinking in a rural area. "What was supposed to be 15 or 20," he remembers, "turned out to be—oh, maybe 100 or more...there were so many people."

When a neighbor saw the vehicles and crowd, he called law enforcement.

"Don and some other officers came driving right into the middle of it," Kozan describes. The sheriff then used a bullhorn to announce who he was and instruct, "Stay right where you are."

"Everybody disappeared into the woods," Kozan remembers with a laugh, mentioning he was among the group that did not have the chance to join them. "We got a talking to," he recalls.

At a Teen Canteen shortly thereafter, Eustice stepped onto the stage during a break and announced, "I know who all of you are who were out there," Kozan recalls. Eustice went on to say the owner of the adjoining property had experienced about \$75 in damages. He told participants to drop off their shares of the reimbursement either at the Waseca Music Store, which Kozan's parents owned, or at the sheriff's office.

"That's how Don was," re-



MUSIC CELEBRATION - This photo from the archives of the Waseca County Historical Society shows a band on the Teen Canteen stage during the City of Waseca 100-year anniversary celebration in 1968. Photo courtesy of Waseca County Historical Society

members Kozan. "He wasn't out to write tickets or arrest people. He just wanted to see people get along and keep the peace. Nearly everyone seemed to be on a first-name basis with him."

Of all the Teen Canteens Kozan attended, he remembers only one fight. "It was some guys from Mankato," he recalls. "I knew one of them, and I asked him why he was there."

"He said he and some of his friends wanted to see what 'these Waseca boys' were made of. 'I warned them not to,' Kozan describes. 'I told him these were farm boys, and they were made of some pretty tough stuff. But they tried it anyway.' A short fight ensued.

"It wasn't long, Don and his deputies had the Mankato guys face down on the floor. I guess they spent the night in jail, and Don probably sent them home the next morning."

In 1971, after his four years in college at St. Thomas, Kozan and some friends formed the "Cletus Hane" band. He and fellow members Jerome Broughten, Steve McCloone, Keith Deike and Dan Westphal chose the name because area property owner Cletus Hoehn

allowed some of them to live on a house on his property for only the cost of electricity and heat.

"In high school, I was all about sports," Kozan recalls. "But gradually I got more interested in music. I felt like I was rich because I could go out, play for a night, and earn \$25."

At least once, Cletus Hane was called on short notice when a Twin Cities band scheduled to play at a Teen Canteen had to cancel.

"It was a change, being there up

on stage," Kozan recalls. "But we played some good music and everyone seemed to have a good time. The baby boomers were there to boogie."

Kozan also recalls the wave of sadness and loss he felt when he learned of Eustice's death in September of 1976. "He was a good man doing his job exceptionally well," Kozan recalls. "He should have been able to keep doing it until he was ready to retire."

'Ask a Trooper': stop signs

Question: I have a question on stop signs procedures. Can you go over this? I think it would be good for everyone to be aware as I think some people forget or get confused. Thank you for all you do.

Answer: Yes, I can. That is a great topic and something that can and should be covered.

Stop Signs:

- Come to a complete stop at stop signs.
- If there is a marked stop line, stop before the line.
- If there is a pedestrian crosswalk, stop before entering the crosswalk.
- Yield the right-of-way to pedestrians, bicyclists and traffic before proceeding.

Obstructed View:

- If your view of the intersection is obstructed, be prepared to stop again for traffic or pedestrians in your path.

You must also come to a complete stop:

- Before entering a road from an alley, private driveway, parking lot or parking ramp. Always stop before crossing a sidewalk or crosswalk.
- At an intersection or crosswalk with a traffic signal displaying a red light. Wait until the light turns green and your path is clear before proceeding.
- At any intersection or crosswalk, marked or unmarked, where a pedestrian or bicyclist is crossing the road. Stay stopped until they have passed your lane.
- At a flashing red traffic light. Treat it as you would a stop sign.
- At a freeway ramp meter when the light is red.
- At a railroad crossing with a stop sign.
- When a flag person or traffic device directs you to stop.
- At a bridge that has been raised to open a path for boats.

■ School from Page 9

alternative sources of funding that may be available to the school to make the elevator improvements, "We'll keep an eye out because that is a significant cost to all school districts." Erler also gave a reminder that School Board election filing is still open.

Registration for Fall activities opened on the day of the meeting, July 20th, and Activities Director Malecha has made the switch to

Bound for activity related services. AD Malecha is also working on securing sponsorships for the upcoming school year and asked Supt. Erler for recommendations on community members that may aid her in securing more support for 26-27 activities.

Under New Business: a resolution adopting ISD 2835 10-year LTFM Plan was presented. Dieker explained that Revenue Projections associated with the plan are based on Adjusted Pupil Units in both the elementary and high school. They are projected to receive bond payments in fiscal year 2035, but due to the time frame, the funds the school will receive are solely projections. The

presented 10-year LTFM Plan was accepted unanimously by the School Board.

Two agreements with Waseca were approved by the school board. A B-2 Occupational Therapist and B-2 Speech/ Language Pathologist do not currently operate in Waseca outside of the school year. Supt. Erler stated, "This is an agreement for some summer work," allowing Waseca access to JWP staff. The two agreements were accepted unanimously.

The School Board will meet again on August 17th and the meeting was adjourned at 5:55 p.m.

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