

# 2025 *HAPPY NEW YEAR* OBSERVER ADVOCATE

*Serving the Mountain Lake and Butterfield area*

OUR 130<sup>TH</sup> YEAR

JANUARY 1, 2025

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—YEAR IN REVIEW 2024—

## Whew, what a year!

Region says farewell to 2024, a year of change

■ The year 2024 had its share of good and bad news for Mt. Lake area residents.

As 2024 wrapped up for the area, the year may be remembered for a number of things, both positive and negative.

The year had its share of tragedies in the community during the spring months. While the community was hit hard with the tragedies, Mother Nature struck another blow and drenched the area with non-stop rain, resulting in replanting and

- 2024**  
Top News Stories  
1. Local tragedies  
2. Weathering the storm  
3. Floods impact crops  
4. New MLP school sup.  
5. Hotel/EDA news

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EAGER YOUNGSTERS LINED DOWNTOWN STREETS as Mt. Lake firefighters tossed candy at the Pow Wow

parade. After a rainy morning, skies cleared making for a comfortable and exciting community gathering.

## Hotel project moves forward

■ Developer says hotel could break ground in Mt. Lake by this spring.

By JEREMY BEHNKE

Mt. Lake's hotel project looks like it will break ground sometime in spring 2025, according to Rod Hamilton, the Economic Development Authority director.

"It's been a long road," Hamilton said, "but David Harchanko, the developer from Apollo Development, recently gave an update on the hotel to the EDA board, the project is supported financially by private investors in the area."

"It was very enlightening. This project has been in the works for two and a half years and Apollo Development said they have verbal commitments from investors for the money necessary. They also received a term sheet from a bank," Hamilton said. "Harchanko told the EDA board he believes



Rod Hamilton

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## Scott Raabe's impact felt in many ways

■ Mt. Lake Christian teacher Scott Raabe has been with the school for 39 years and says he looks forward to coming to school every day.

By JEREMY BEHNKE

Growing up, Mt. Lake Christian teacher Scott Raabe loved history because his family members were history buffs.

Raabe graduated from South Dakota State University, where he received a Bachelor of Science degree. Not sure what to do with that degree he decided to become a teacher instead. That decision proved to be the right one for him and his future students.

Raabe is MLC's longest-tenured teacher. He's been there for 39 years, starting in 1986. He teaches history, literature, Bible and life skills and sometimes dabbles in commencement speeches at the end of the year.

While he comes across as a natural in front of his classroom and students, he admits he's far from it outside of the classroom when he delivers speeches.

Raabe and his wife Joan



Scott Raabe



7/10 Sizzler 88  
MICHAEL PESCHGES gives all of his effort in the boys 12-16-year-old division of the pedal pull at the Butterfield Summer Sizzler in July. Despite the threat of rain for parts of the weekend, everything went on as scheduled and large crowds were present Friday and Saturday at Voss Park.



8/14 Thursday/Show Prep 10  
ABIGAIL NICKEL (left) and Rebecca Nickel try to move an uncooperative calf as they worked to prepare their animals for the 4-H Beef Show during the Cottonwood County Fair.



THE FRESH ice cream at the Butterfield Threshing Bee proved to be a hit and Wren Cooper of Humboldt, Iowa was eager to get a taste. She finished the cone but left quite a mess behind.



9/4 Plow Day 009  
TWELVE-YEAR-OLD Maverick Penner of Mt. Lake helps plow an 80-acre wheat field by using his Ford 5000 during Plow Day held Monday afternoon outside of Delft.



JEREMY BEHNKE 6/26 OA flood 22  
COTTONWOOD COUNTY received over 12.5 inches of rain over the course of a week in July. Fields were flooded and crops lost. This Midway Farm Equipment lot was covered from rainwater.

SEE RAABE  
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## BRIEFLY

MT. LAKE / CHRISTMAS SEASON STARTS



KAY GOHR  
ASHLYN PFEIFFER tries to put up a shot while drawing contact during Friday's game at Springfield. The Wolverine teams will both be in action at home in the coming week.

## Looking for victories

The Wolverine girls and boys basketball teams will continue their search for the first wins of the season when they take the court at home in the coming week.

The Wolverine boys host Red Rock Central Friday in Mt. Lake. MLAC then heads to Comfrey Tuesday for a home contest against Truman/Martin Luther/Granda-Huntley-East Chain.

Meanwhile, the Wolverine girls will face Adrian-Ellsworth Thursday in Ellsworth. MLAC then will be on the court in Comfrey Monday, hosting Martin County West.

## Butterfield to host soup-off

As part of the Winter Reading Program at the Butterfield library, the library is kicking off the program with its sixth annual Soup-Off.

The event will be held Monday, beginning at 4 p.m., at the Butterfield library.

Participants are invited to whip up their favorite homemade soup, along with the recipe.

The public is then invited to come, taste-test all of the soups and take the recipes home to try for themselves.

Other upcoming events at Watonwan County library branches include:

**• Winter Reading Program:** All five branches of the Watonwan County Library will start the winter reading program on Monday. The program is open to all ages. Participants just need to stop in at their local library branch, pick up a reading log and return it when it is full. Prizes will be given throughout the contest, which runs through Feb. 28.

**• Puzzle Challenge, Monday at St. James, 6 p.m.:** Adults are invited to form teams of four to take on a puzzle challenge, with the team that finishes first receiving bragging rights.

**• DIY Pantry Staples, Jan. 9 at Darfur, 4 p.m.:** The Darfur library will host a session on how to make your own pantry staples, such as chicken bouillon, Bisquick, pancake mix and even Hamburger Helper. These are items you can keep in Mason jars in your pantry or give away as gifts. Everyone will leave with a jar of ready-to-make Hamburger Helper. To register, call (507) 877-5010 or (507) 375-1278.

**• Family PJ Day, Jan. 10 at St. James, 3:30 p.m.:** Families are invited to find their comfiest pajamas, build a fort, listen to a book and enjoy hot chocolate at the St. James library.

## Library seeks metalsmith

It may be winter, but the Mt. Lake Public Library is already starting to plan for summer.

As part of plans for a fantasy-themed summer reading program, the library is looking for a metalsmith, blacksmith or forger who would be interested in putting on a program for children. The program does not need to include participation of children, as it could be dangerous.

If you are a metal worker or know of someone who is, e-mail to mtlakepubliclibrary@gmail.com.

## Webinars available for farmers

Minnesota farmers have an opportunity to follow the webinar series "Strategic Farming: Let's Talk Crops."

This live, online program will provide up-to-date, research-based information to help optimize your crop management strategies for 2025. Sessions will be held over Zoom, which can be accessed via your computer, phone, or other mobile device, and will run from 9-10 a.m. Wednesdays, Jan. 8 through March 26.

Sessions will be very informal and open to all interested. Each session will start with a brief presentation by the discussion leaders for the day, followed by discussion framed around farmer/participant questions on the topic.

## BQA training will be online

The University of Minnesota Extension will host Beef Quality Assurance trainings in the 2025. Producers attending any of the free workshops will receive a three-year BQA certification.

BQA certification is voluntary, but many major industry buyers require BQA certification.

Online BQA training sessions will be from 7-9 p.m. on Jan. 7, Feb. 13 and March 20. To pre-register, call the Pipestone County Extension Office at (507) 825-1190.

## From boredom to fun

Sitting at home with nothing to do can be challenging, especially for children and teens.

A small town like Mt. Lake offers limited options for entertainment, which makes it difficult for families to stay engaged and active. As a result, many are left searching for ways to occupy their time.

To help residents we need more entertainment options, activities that benefit the community and funding to make these ideas a reality.

Even though Mt. Lake is a small town, people in the community still want access to fun activities. The nearest city with multiple entertainment options is Mankato, which is about an hour's drive away—simply too far to travel for many looking for something to do. This lack of local entertainment presents a particular challenge for young people, who cannot drive themselves.

For parents with young children, the situation can be even more difficult since they are not just looking for entertainment, but also for activities that are safe and age-appropriate.

Local entertainment options not only provide convenience but also promote physical activity and social interaction by encouraging kids, teens and families to get out of the house and engage with their community. Providing more local entertainment options would give everyone from young chil-



LANDEN REMPEL  
STUDENT VOICE COLUMNIST

dren to teens and parents a chance to get out, stay active and enjoy their town.

Activities like swimming, going to movies and golfing offer enjoyable experiences for the entire community and can help bring people together.

A public pool would encourage people to get outside and enjoy the fresh air and sunshine while also serving as a gathering spot where neighbors can connect and socialize.

Another great option would be a movie theater. Whether it is snowing, raining or sunny, a movie theater provides a family-friendly activity that allows parents a way to entertain their children while still offering an engaging experience for all ages.

Lastly, a driving range at the Mt. Lake Golf Course would be a valuable addition that would help people improve their golf skills while also encouraging physical activity since golf involves

walking and spending time outdoors.

Overall, these entertainment options not only promote recreation but also support health, social interaction and a sense of belonging within the town.

In order to bring entertainment to Mt. Lake, residents will need funding and ways to raise it.

One option is to increase sales tax at local stores and restaurants, which would provide steady revenue over time.

Another idea is to sell the plots by Highway 60 to companies at a reduced price, letting companies invest more money into the project while potentially boosting local growth.

Finally, we could seek investors to fund part of the building or entertainment. A mix of these strategies could raise the needed funds without relying too heavily on one source.

In conclusion, these ideas, activities, and funding, can turn Mt. Lake into a fun, welcoming place for everyone.

With careful planning and community involvement, we can create a town where families, young people and visitors can come together, have a good time and build real connections.

**Editor's note:** Landen Rempel is a student in the College and Senior Writing Classes at Mt. Lake Public High School.

## Cottonwood SHERIFF'S REPORT

### Dec. 24

• 11:08 a.m. Deputies assisted the Windom Police Department with a disturbance at Windom Area Health.

### Dec. 27

• 10:02 p.m. A disturbance was reported at a rural Sanborn address. After investi-

gation, deputies determined it to be a verbal argument and parties agreed to separate for the evening.

### Dec. 28

• 5:32 a.m. Deputies received a report of a suspicious party in rural Windom, who was knocking on the

reporting parties' door. After investigating, a 30-year-old male from Mt. Lake was arrested for a warrant out of Renville County and also possession of stolen prop-

SEE SHERIFF • PAGE 3

## ECHOES OF THE PAST

### 10 YEARS AGO

Dec. 31, 2014

Municipalities across the country are saying goodbye to officials leaving office and getting ready to welcome newcomers. In Mt. Lake, a new mayor and council members are looking forward to serving. Incoming mayor Mike Nelson is anxious to build on the foundation already in place and listen to residents' concerns. New council member Dana Kass is eager to work together to move the city forward.

Icy conditions may have been a factor in a crash that claimed the life of Mt. Lake native Alyssa S. Winters (formerly Radtke) at 9:15 a.m., Saturday. Winters, 35, was northbound on Blue Earth County Road 48 when her 1998 Chevrolet Malibu collided with a 2007 Toyota Prius at the intersection with Highway 14. The Prius was driven by Dyani L. Ladd, 31, of Mankato. There were reports that Winters may not have been able to stop for a stop sign due to icy conditions. According to the State Patrol, the Toyota was also carrying a 26-year-old passenger, Anthony M. Thomson of Brownsdale. Both Ladd and Thomson were taken to the hospital in Mankato. They were treated for injuries that the State Patrol described as non-life threatening.

### 30 YEARS AGO

Jan. 4, 1995

In the first regularly scheduled meeting of the Mt. Lake City Council, the first item of business on the agenda was the swearing in of the mayor and two council members who were elected or re-elected to their positions. Mayor James Flaming took the oath of office at the hand of City Attorney David Jungas first. Then council members Randall Kunkel and Dean Janzen were sworn in by Jungas. The remainder of the city's business for the evening included a lengthy discussion on the wages of promoted or transferred city employees. The AFSCME union contract says, "From the first day of work in a new position to which an employee has been promoted or transferred, employees will be paid the wage rate of

the new position." In question is the job currently held by Wayne (Bink) Hanson who will retire at the end of February. The job was posted according to union specifications to allow city employees to have first chance at the job. In the posting the wage rate was quoted at \$12.19 per hour. Kevin Krahn applied for the job and was accepted by the council but his pay had not been determined.

The goal for the Dec. 28, Bloodmobile drive in Mt. Lake was 50 pints and for the first time in quite a while, the drive netted 56 pints of blood. Co-coordinators Lola Klassen and Nancy Stoesz were pleased with the turnout of donors. "We want to thank all the workers who donated time to the Bloodmobile drive, also," said Nancy Stoesz. Those who helped with the drive included: Marie Hienitz, Wilma Lindstrom and Kay Refsal, who served as greeters. Evie Oeltjenbruns helped serve the lunch and Lloyd Refsal helped with setting up for the drive.

Kristy Hudson painted the drive's signs. The City of Mt. Lake donated the use of the Senior Citizen's building for the drive. Three first time donors were recorded as:

Lisa Wollman, Kevin Nickel and Casey Letellier.

The 1994 Holiday Tournament action really heated things up in Butterfield on Dec. 29 and 30 as the Mt. Lake-Butterfield-Odin Wolverines defeated Cedar Mountain 47-32 and then went on to defeat Comfrey 39-35 to win the tournament title. The Wolverines also had two players voted to the All-Tournament Team. MLBO's Missy Berg and Kim Hovdet joined Cedar Mountain's Jenny Madson, Westbrook-Walnut Grove's Staci Martius, and Comfrey's Sarah Evers on the 1994 All-Tournament Team.

In the first day of the tournament started out with the Comfrey girls defeating Westbrook-Walnut Grove by a score of 57-46. MLBO then came out and beat Cedar Mountain 47-32. The next day in the consolation game W-WG came up with a 52-49 win over Cedar Mountain to claim third place. MLBO won the tournament title by a 39-35 score over Red Rock Conference rival Comfrey.

### 35 YEARS AGO

Jan. 3, 1990

Mt. Lake's Community Hospital is eagerly awaiting its first baby of the 1990s. It was 21 months ago that the last baby was born at the hospital. The first baby isn't expected to arrive until February, though. With the advent of the new birthing room and the expected "baby boom" with Dr. Brian Tilby at the helm, new life is expected to provide new joy to the staff at the hospital, as well as the parents, and the entire community.

The maroonmen's best shooting of the season, coupled with a strong defense, gave them a solid 65 to 47 win over Sleepy Eye in the first round of the Wolverine Holiday Tournament. The Lady Wolverines were also victorious in the opening round of their own holiday tournament in Butterfield Thursday night, pounding Ceylon 62 to 32.

### 50 YEARS AGO

Jan. 2, 1975

The ice at the rink on Fifth Avenue, east of the public school, is ready for skaters. Cory Grev, Scott Nystrom, Dan and Paul Molitor and Margaret Fast were the first to get "ice time" on the rink. There was also enough snow for a trio of adventurers to mold a snowman. Dean Sawatzky, his brother Randy and John Harding built their giant snowman in front of the Sawatzky residence.

Mr. and Mrs. John L. Stoesz closed the doors of their Hi-Way 60 Gift Shop on Dec. 24 after expanding the inventory and adding a snack bar and gift line over their four and a half year tenure. Stoesz attributed the closing to the long hours he and his wife were forced to work which, he said, were not worth the investment in the store. He will continue his "John's Sewing Center" which he started two years ago in conjunction with the store. He will operate the sewing center out of his home. Negotiations are now underway to put a new retail business into the building on Butterfield's main street. John is now working for Land O'Lakes, Inc. in Mt. Lake.

## Watowwan SHERIFF'S REPORT

### Dec. 24

• 6:44 p.m. Watonwan County deputies responded to a report of a verbal domestic in the rural Butterfield area. According to the report, a mother and son were having an argument. It was determined not to be a physical altercation. The mother left the home to stay elsewhere.

### Dec. 25

• 8:30 a.m. Deputies assisted the Madelia Police Department with a verbal domestic. There were no arrests. The female party and children left the home to stay elsewhere.

### Dec. 27

• 3:38 p.m. Deputies assisted St. James police officers with a car accident involving injuries. The two-vehicle crash occurred at the corner of Fourth Avenue and Fifth Street in St. James.

### Dec. 28

• 4:07 a.m. A resident reported that a party in Rosedale Township was burning old furniture and other prohibited items without a burn permit. The resident was not cited, but was told what items are burnable without a permit.

### Dec. 29

• 3:23 p.m. A driving complaint was reported in Rosedale Township. According to the report, four or five mini-bike drivers were driving recklessly down the road. The parties were found near the courthouse in St. James and received a verbal warning.

### Dec. 30

• 3:20 a.m. Watonwan County deputies were contacted by Martin County authorities regarding a one-vehicle rollover in their county. The deputies were asked to interview the male driver and a female passenger who were, at the time, at St. James Mayo Clinic Health System for treatment. It is believed icy roads were a factor in the crash. Information was gathered and provided to Martin County authorities.

## Mt. Lake SENIOR MENU

Each meal includes low-fat milk, bread and dessert.

**Thursday:** Asian chicken, steamed rice, broccoli and cauliflower, wheat dinner roll

**Friday:** Beef shepherd's pie, roasted butternut squash, cherry crisp

**Monday:** Chicken fried chicken, cream gravy, mashed potatoes, green peas

**Tuesday:** Beef roast with gravy, scalloped potatoes, sliced carrots, herb butter roll

**Wednesday:** Beef chili, broccoli florets, peach crisp, cornbread

**Thursday (1-9):** Oven roasted turkey with turkey gravy, mashed potatoes, whole kernel corn

For reservations, call Windom before 8 a.m., 831-6161; or toll free, 866-985-8516 or St. James: 375-5995. Contact the Butterfield City Clerk for home delivery meals.

## Butterfield SENIOR MENU

**Thursday:** Frozen meal

**Friday:** Frozen meal

**Monday:** Chicken fried chicken, cream gravy, mashed potatoes, green peas

**Tuesday:** Frozen meal

**Wednesday:** Frozen meal

**Thursday (1-9):</**

## Watowwan

**COUNTY COURTS****From week of Dec. 23**

**Speeding:** Wendy N. Floss, Mounds View, \$140; Taulo Vannabouathong, Mt. Lake, \$120; Julian T. Perez, St. James, \$220; Chase A. Burgess, New Hope, \$120; Sophia L. Fett, Trimont, \$130; Edwin Perez Ambrocio, St. James, \$120; Julio C. Ramirez Meza, St. James, \$140; Nicholas J. Schoper, New Ulm, \$120; Sam L. Stevenson, St. James, \$120; Jessica K. Travis, Maple Grove, \$120; Todd R. Welch, Fairmont, \$120; Travis D. Wilaby, Mankato, \$120

**Public nuisance:** Danny P. Kalstad, Madelia, \$80

**Driving without a valid license for vehicle class or type/failure to stop at stop signs or stop lines at entrance to through highway:** Walter A. Perez Lopez, Madelia, \$230

**Driving after cancellation/failure to obtain new driver's license after**

changing name or address/driver must carry proof of insurance when operating vehicle: Armando Rodriguez-Zamora Jr., Madelia, \$500

**Driving after revocation:** Ezequiel Cuellar Ruiz, St. James, \$180; Veronica Ramirez Gomez, St. James, \$280

**Expired registration:** Michelle J. Ott, Mt. Lake, \$110

**Duty to drive with due care:** Ho L. Pham, Mankato, \$120

**Failure to drive in single lane:** Jeremy L. Bobo, Holmen, Wis., \$130

**Driving without a valid license for vehicle class or type:** Carolina Carmona, St. James, \$180

**Speeding/driving after suspension:** Pueblo A. Hernandez Rodriguez, Butterfield, \$340

**Instruction permit violations-persons 18 years or older:** Omar F. Ambrocio

Garril, St. James, \$130  
**Child passenger restraint system-age 4 or older:** Norma E. Andrade Delgado, St. James, \$130

**Driving after suspension:** Robert C. Lopez Perez, Butterfield, \$280

**DWI-operate motor vehicle under influence of alcohol:** Amy L. Wyman, No address listed, \$505, local confinement 90 days, stay 90 days for one year, supervised probation one year, complete chemical assessment, follow recommendations and pay all fees incurred, you must sign up for this service within 30 days, sign releases/share results, no possession or use of alcohol or drugs with the exception of prescribed medications prior to completing chemical use evaluation, random testing, at request of law enforcement or probation, sign releases of information as directed, attend MADD Impact Panel, follow recom-

mendations and pay all fees incurred, follow all state and federal criminal laws, contact your probation officer as directed, tell your probation officer within 72 hours if you are charged with any new crime, if you change your address, employment or telephone number, or if you have contact with law enforcement, credit towards fine up to \$150 for chemical dependency evaluation and up to \$250 credit for payment towards driver's license reinstatement fee, proof of completion and payment must be provided to court administration, may perform Sentence to Service/community work service hours that may be credited against the fine of \$400, should the defendant decide to complete Sentence to Service/community work service for the fine this work service must be completed within 1 year

**COUNTY COURTS****From week of Dec. 30**

**Speeding:** Angela J. Paulson, Sioux Falls, \$140; Terry L. Davis, Lewisville, \$120, Liliana K. Diaz, Fairmont, \$140

**Speeding/no Minnesota driver's license:** Jayden A. Cardenas, St. James, \$220

**No front plate foreign state if state requires it:** Diego A. Flores, Sioux Falls, \$180

**Driving without a valid license for vehicle class or type/duty to drive with due care-speed greater than reasonable:** Sofia C. Bartolon Sebastian, Madelia, \$220

**Driving without a valid license for vehicle class or type/failure to stop at stop signs or stop lines at entrance to through highway:** Leybi S. S. Hernandez, Madelia,

\$230

**Require/permit of fence by another:** Merlin N. Sierra Hernandez, Madelia, \$180

**Instruction permit violation (18 years or older):** Gerardo Granados Bacillo, Bloomington, \$130

**Engage in cellular phone or video call:** Tanya D. Eason, Woodbury, \$130

**Window restrictions-windshield tinted or glazed/window restrictions-tint too dark:** Alex J. Hauglid, Windom, \$180

**Driving after suspension:** Yudi A. Mazariegos Mencia, Madelia, \$280

**Driving without a valid license for vehicle class or type:** Luis M. Ortega Y. Ortega, Fairmont, \$180; Oscar J. Perez Gamboa, Denver, Colo., \$180

**Mt. Lake POLICE REPORT****Dec. 23**

• 1:29 a.m. A traffic stop was made at the intersection of Third Avenue and Ninth Street. A verbal warning was given.

• 1:33 p.m. An officer received a complaint about snowmobiles driving through private property. The incident remains under investigation.

• 1:38 p.m. Officers responded to a 911 hang-up near Mountain Power. Officers spoke to employees and could not locate the caller or any emergency.

• 3:07 p.m. Officers completed a mandated report on vulnerable adults, which did not need law enforcement involvement.

**Dec. 24**

• 8:30 a.m. An officer assisted the ambulance department with a medical call.

• 7:47 p.m. A traffic stop was made at the intersection of Sixth Avenue and Eighth Street. A verbal warning was given.

**Dec. 25**

• 1:06 p.m. Officers were asked to check the welfare of an adult female, who hadn't been heard from and had left her kids with grandparents. The party in question was located in good health. The

case will be referred to child protective services.

• 9:42 p.m. A traffic stop was made on County Road 27. A verbal warning was given.

• 9:50 p.m. A traffic stop was made at the intersection of Third Avenue and Seventh Street. A verbal warning was given.

• 3:50 p.m. A traffic stop was made at the intersection of Third Avenue and 11th Street. A 42-year-old St. James female was cited for driving after suspension.

• 3:53 p.m. An officer assisted the ambulance department with a medical call.

• 4:03 p.m. A traffic stop was made at the intersection of Third Avenue and Sixth Street. A verbal warning was given.

• 4:20 p.m. A traffic stop was made at the intersection of County Road 1 and Mountain Lake Road. A verbal warning was given.

• 4:35 p.m. A traffic stop was made at the intersection of Third Avenue and 15th Street. A verbal warning was given.

• 4:48 p.m. A traffic stop was made at the intersection of Third Avenue and Eighth Street. A verbal warning was given.

• 5:02 p.m. A traffic stop was made at the intersection of 11th Street and Fifth Avenue. A verbal warning was given.

Street. A verbal warning was given.

• 3:40 p.m. A traffic stop was made at the intersection of Highway 60 and County Road 27 East. A verbal warning was given.

• 3:50 p.m. A traffic stop was made at the intersection of Third Avenue and 11th Street. A 42-year-old St. James female was cited for driving after suspension.

• 3:53 p.m. An officer assisted the ambulance department with a medical call.

• 4:03 p.m. A traffic stop was made at the intersection of Third Avenue and Sixth Street. A verbal warning was given.

• 4:20 p.m. A traffic stop was made at the intersection of County Road 1 and Mountain Lake Road. A verbal warning was given.

• 4:35 p.m. A traffic stop was made at the intersection of Third Avenue and 15th Street. A verbal warning was given.

• 4:48 p.m. A traffic stop was made at the intersection of Third Avenue and Eighth Street. A verbal warning was given.

• 5:02 p.m. A traffic stop was made at the intersection of 11th Street and Fifth Avenue. A verbal warning was given.

was given.

• 7:39 p.m. An officer assisted the State Patrol in pursuit of a vehicle reportedly fleeing from an officer. The pursuit was later terminated by the State Patrol.

**Dec. 26**

• 5:22 p.m. A traffic stop was made near the east junction of Highway 60 and County Road 27. A verbal warning was given.

• 5:25 p.m. An officer assisted the ambulance department with a medical call.

• 5:30 p.m. A traffic stop was made at the intersection of Third Avenue and 11th Street. A 42-year-old St. James female was cited for driving after suspension.

• 5:33 p.m. An officer assisted the ambulance department with a medical call.

• 5:45 p.m. An officer responded to a report of a dog at large. The officer was unable to capture the animal.

• 5:54 p.m. An officer responded to a report of a dog at large near Casey's. The dog, which was the same one from earlier in the day, was captured and impounded.

**Dec. 27**

• 10:49 a.m. Officers assisted the ambulance department with a medical call.

• 3:45 p.m. An officer responded to a report of a dog at large near Casey's. The dog, which was the same one from earlier in the day, was captured and impounded.

**Dec. 29**

• 1:19 a.m. An officer assisted MnDOT and the State Patrol with a report of a vehicle that had lost a wheel and another vehicle that had struck a sign near the west junction of Highway 60 and County Road 27.

• 10:49 p.m. Deputies pulled over a vehicle for speeding on Highway 60 between Bingham Lake and Mt. Lake. After investigating, a 19-year-old from St. James was cited for open bottle and underage drinking and driving. The party was transported to the Cottonwood County sheriff's office.

**Cottonwood COUNTY COURTS**

**Speeding:** Tonia K. Latarewicz, Brandon, S.D., \$120; Mario M. Nieves, Sioux Falls, \$140; Satish S. Vanka, Madison, S.D., \$130; Tina L. Baumgartner, Foreston, \$140; Carlos M. Daniels Sr., Columbia Heights, \$130

**Driving without a valid license for vehicle class or type:** Astrid E. Matta Mejia, Minneapolis, \$180

**Owner who is not driver must later produce proof of insurance if required:** Lester A. Mayorga Ortiz, Minneapolis, \$280

**Driver must carry proof of insurance when operating vehicle/no driver's license in possession or fail to display upon request:** Kimberly V. Pinto, Minneapolis, \$300

**Driving after revocation:** Melissa A. Yaritz, Minnetonka, \$280

**SHERIFF/ Traffic stop made on Highway 60****FROM PAGE 2**

erty. The stolen property was a vehicle that was taken in the state of Louisiana. The case is still under investigation.

• 10:49 p.m. Deputies assisted the Windom police with an accident with

injuries at the intersection of Eighth Street and Third Avenue in Windom.

• 10:49 p.m. Deputies pulled over a vehicle for speeding on Highway 60 between Bingham Lake and Mt. Lake. After investigating, a 19-year-old from St. James was cited for open bottle and underage drinking and driving. The party was transported to the Cottonwood County sheriff's office.

**SCAM ALERT****Seeking personal info, pressure to act quickly are scammer tip-offs**

Scammers are constantly reinventing new ways to perpetrate old ploys.

Whether a person is contacted by phone, mail, email, text, or in-person, the following tips provide advice on how to spot a scam.

Look for these tell-tale red flags.

**Personal information**

The person is asked to provide personal or financial information.

Banks, government agencies and legitimate companies only ask consumers to provide personal information in rare circumstances and don't do so by phone, e-mail or text message. Scam artists impersonate these types of entities and use deceptive messages to lure consumers into providing their private information so that they can use it to commit fraud.

Never provide private

information in response to an unsolicited call, email or text message. Instead, call the entity at the number listed on its website or on the back of your card.

For example:

"Roberto" received a text message that appeared to come from his bank. It said he should call a toll-free number to reactivate his credit card. Roberto knew his credit card was working properly and didn't recognize the texter's number. He called his bank using the telephone number listed on the back of his credit card, which confirmed the message was a scam.

**Keep it a secret'**

You are asked to keep it a secret.

Scam artists may ask consumers not to tell anyone about the situation so that the consumer doesn't get advice from someone who might detect the scam. If you are asked to keep a transaction a secret, you should do the opposite—

immediately contact trusted family members or friends to investigate the situation and get their opinion.

"Delores" received a call from a man she thought was her grandson, "Mike." He said that he was in trouble and needed money fast. Mike claimed that he was embarrassed about the situation and pleaded with Delores not to tell anyone about the matter, especially his parents. After the call ended, Delores called her daughter, who said Mike wasn't in any trouble at all.

**Act quickly'**

The person is asked to act quickly.

Scam artists may say that there is a limited time to act in order to get people to pay money before they have time to think the situation through:

"John and Mary" were in the market to sell their timeshare in the Bahamas. They received a call from a supposedly local Bahamian company

that claimed it had found a buyer who wanted to buy the unit that same day, and asked John and Mary to immediately pay a large upfront fee.

When they asked for a few days to think about it, the individual claimed that they must send him the money that day or forfeit the opportunity. John and Mary let the "deal" go because they weren't going to send money before they had time to review the documents and research the company.

It's a good thing they did, because this was a scam.

**What to do**

In these situations, remember the following tips:

• Don't be afraid to say "no."

If something doesn't seem right, tell the person you're not interested. Don't be afraid to hang up the phone, or to not respond to future calls, text messages or emails from the person. Hanging up isn't bad manners if you think you're being scammed.

Ask a friend, family member or neighbor for their opinion.

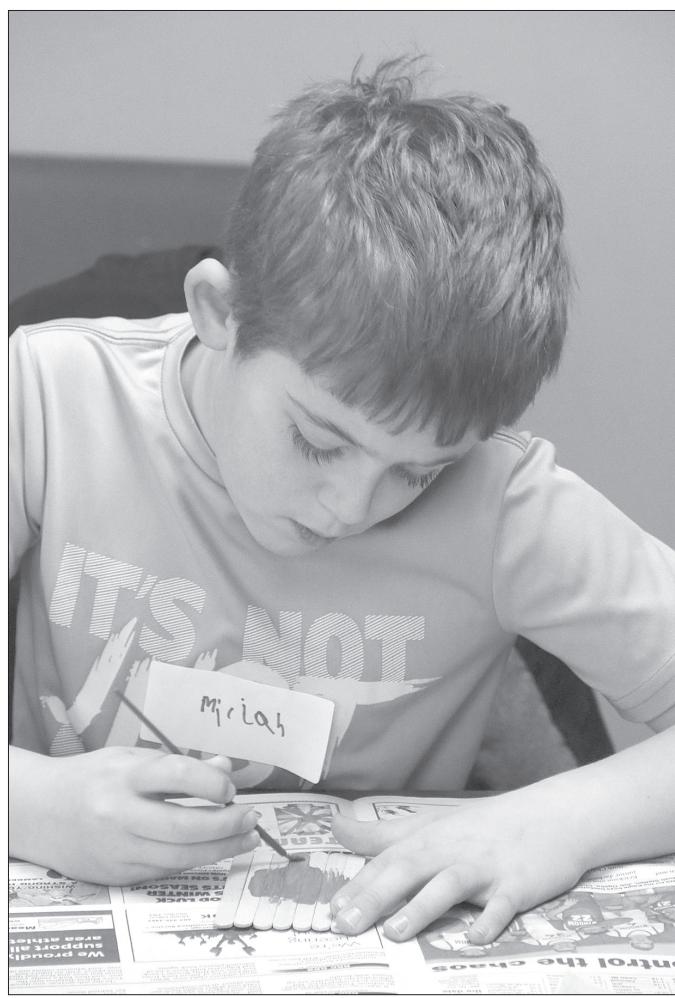
Scam artists don't have your best interests in mind. Asking a trusted friend, family member or neighbor about the situation may help you spot the scam and save you from being victimized.

• Don't be rushed.

If you are pressured to act quickly, take time to think things through. If an offer is good today, it will usually be available tomorrow.

• When in doubt, don't give it out.

If you question who is contacting you, don't give them any private information.



SUBMITTED

MICIAH BENNETT paints craft sticks to create a reindeer ornament during Cottonwood County 4-H Cloverbuds.

## Cloverbuds host Agventures program

The Cottonwood County 4-H program invites all youth in grades K-3 to participate in monthly Cloverbud "Agventures" gatherings where youth will learn about a topic tied to agriculture.

Cloverbuds will explore and learn by doing fun age-appropriate activities. In December, the group learned about reindeer, made a reindeer craft, did a

STEM activity, played winter bingo and read a book that they got to keep.

The next Cloverbud "Agventures" will be held on Jan. 11 from 10-11:30 a.m. at the Cottonwood County Extension Office in Windom.

For questions and registration, please contact the office at (507) 831-4022 or mohrh002@umn.edu.

## AREA WORSHIP

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507-956-2821, 450 2nd St.  
Butterfield Community Bible Church  
507-621-1546, 100 Chapman Ave.  
Facebook.com/butterfieldcbc

First Mennonite Church  
507-736-2632, 32040 650th Ave.

### DARFUR

Bethlehem Lutheran Church  
209 2nd St.

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Bethel Mennonite Church  
507-427-3075, 301 9th St. N  
bethelmountainlake.com

Center Point Church of the Assemblies of God  
507-427-2215, 810 3rd Ave.  
centerpointml.org

Community Bible Church  
507-427-2536, 500 Klein St.  
cbcmountainlake.com

Cornerstone Bible Church  
507-427-2208, 1019 Prince St.  
cornerstoneml.com

### First Mennonite Church

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Meet at Good Samaritan Village Chapel  
mennolink.org/cong/first

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1217 6th Ave., PO Box 485  
sites.google.com/site/mountainlakepresbyterian/home

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507-427-2046, 1002 10th St. N

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**COTTONWOOD COUNTY 4-H Ambassadors, from left:**  
Tyler Maras, Savannah Kleine, Renee Reith, Chloe Snyder and Colin Reith work together to make porch pots for the residents at Pine View Assisted Living.



SUBMITTED

## 4-H ambassadors make holidays brighter

■ Area 4-H ambassadors were busy making pine porch pots for residents at the Pine View Assisted Living facility.

The Cottonwood County 4-H Ambassador program is open to all youth in grades

6-13.

They gather throughout the 4-H year to offer leadership and civic engagement to 4-H members and their communities through service, promotion and education. They serve as role models

for other 4-H participants and serve as positive representatives of the 4-H program.

In December, ambassadors gathered to make pine porch pots for the residents at the Pine View Assisted Living

facility. They also played bingo with the residents.

Those interested in participating or have questions, please contact the extension office at (507) 831-4022.

## New technology trends continue to evolve

Information technology is a rapidly changing field that impacts every industry in Minnesota. Colin Miller, faculty director for information technology infrastructure programs in the College of Continuing and Professional Studies, answers questions about the changes and trends Minnesotans can expect to see in the tech industry.

### Q What is the state of the tech industry in Minnesota?

**A MILLER:** The information technology field in Minnesota is thriving, with strong demand across various sectors, including healthcare, finance, manufacturing and retail. Home to at least 16 Fortune 500 companies, Minnesota offers numerous opportunities for IT professionals across a range of roles, from software development to cybersecurity and data science. The competitive pay scale and opportunities for specialization make it an attractive field. Additionally, the rise of remote work has broadened access to tech jobs

statewide. However, there is a need for greater diversity within the industry to foster innovation and address complex tech challenges with a wider range of perspectives.

### Q What tech skills are the most valuable today?

**A MILLER:** As technology evolves rapidly, there's a growing demand for expertise in cloud computing, data analytics, cybersecurity and artificial intelligence. Additionally, professionals need to understand how to manage and integrate these technologies into existing systems. Beyond technical skills, there is a need for knowledge in areas like data privacy, ethical AI and digital transformation strategies. In addition, soft skills have become indispensable in IT—the era of working in isolation and simply handing off code is long gone. Skills like communication, teamwork, problem-solving and adaptability are now critical to success. Addressing these gaps requires a commitment to lifelong learning, interdisciplinary knowledge and adaptability

to keep pace with the constantly shifting technological landscape.

### Q How can rural communities remain competitive in the tech industry?

**A MILLER:** Investing in robust digital infrastructure, such as high-speed internet, is critical for rural communities—from supporting remote work and digital education to tele-health services. For example, initiatives like Minnesota's Border-to-Border Broadband Development Grant Program are actively working to close the digital divide by expanding internet access in underserved rural areas. Additionally, rural communities can foster local talent by partnering with educational institutions and tech companies to provide training in emerging technologies like AI, cybersecurity and cloud computing. Encouraging a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship can attract tech firms and remote workers, enhancing the community's economic resilience

and global competitiveness.

### Q What safety measures can I take to keep up with the changing tech industry?

**A MILLER:** We can all adopt new safety practices to stay secure in today's rapidly evolving tech landscape. With the rise of AI-generated content and sophisticated scams, individuals need to develop digital literacy skills to identify phishing attempts, deep fakes and other deceptive tactics. Best practices in cybersecurity, such as using strong, unique passwords, enabling multi-factor authentication, and staying vigilant about suspicious links, are essential. Additionally, understanding privacy settings on apps and social media platforms helps prevent unauthorized data collection. As technology continues to integrate into daily life, consistent learning and adopting proactive measures will be key to maintaining personal security.

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**There was a man sent from God.**

John 1:1-9 10-18

Jeremiah 31:7-14 Ephesians 1:3-14 Psalm 147:12-20

Revised Common Lectionary © 1992 by the Consultation on Common Texts for Sunday, January 5, 2025 Epiphany Sunday

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# Remembering those who passed in 2024

## 2023

**Eldin John Classen**, 89, of Windom, Dec. 21

## JANUARY

**John A. Baerg**, 85, of Mankato, formerly of Mt. Lake, Jan. 4

**Gerald 'Jerry' Haugen**, 80, of North Mankato, Jan. 12

**Erna M. Taillefer**, 99, of Minneapolis, Jan. 14

**Arlene S. Ott**, 89, of Windom, Jan. 18

**Louise Ellen Quiring**, 94, of Mt. Lake, Jan. 20

**Wesley Krahm**, 92, of Mt. Lake, Jan. 21

## FEBRUARY

**Bette W. Flater**, 100, of Saint James, Feb. 2

**David Baerg**, 89, of Mt. Lake, Feb. 5

**Marlene Krahm**, 87, of Mt. Lake, Feb. 10

**Evelyn Barge**, 70, of Windom, Feb. 18

**MaryLou Willard**, 92, of St. Cloud, Feb. 18

**Nettie Eytzen**, 90, of Mt. Lake, Feb. 24

**Janice Reimer (Pankratz)**

**Derkson**, 85, of Eagan, Feb. 28

**DeLyle William Pankratz**, 78, of Ely Lake, Feb. 29

## MARCH

**Catherine Martin**, 102, of Butterfield, March 3

**Darlene M. Meyers**, 93, of Mt. Lake, March 4

**Alvin David Kleinsasser**, 100, of North Mankato, formerly of Mt. Lake, March 6

**Harold H. Rickert**, 91, of Minneapolis, formerly of Carson Township, March 6

**Joanne Hoekstra**, 87, of St. Cloud, formerly of Mt. Lake, March 7

**Donna J. Peterson**, 66, of Mt. Lake, March 9

**Glen Edward Anderson**, 81, of Mt. Lake, March 17

**Ronald Allan Fast**, 75, of Butterfield, March 18

## APRIL

**Robyn Lynne Lundsten**, 57, of Mankato, April 10

**Madeline M Standerwick**, 91, of Mt. Lake, April 11

**Skyler M. Goulette**, 15, of Mt. Lake, April 15

**Harold Bauer**, 94, of Windom, April 17

**Pastor Marie Savage**, 39, of Mt. Lake, April 27

## MAY

**Sandra J. Root**, 69, of Long Prairie, formerly of Mt. Lake, May 11

**Jerry L. Evers**, 81, of Comfrey, May 13

**Beulah Tschetter**, 99, of Mt. Lake, May 27

**Maxine L. Faust**, 105, of Windom, May 27

**Dale W. Halvorson**, 81, of rural Butterfield, May 28

## JULY

**Eugene 'Gene' Richard Artner**, 90, of Mt. Lake, July 2

**Robert 'Bob' Rempel**, 86, of Windom, July 5

**Elizabeth Franz Fast**, 95, of Minneapolis, formerly of Madelia, July 6

**Dr. Dallas Donald Glick**, 95, of Battle Lake, formerly of Mt. Lake, July 8

**Eva L. Krueger**, 74, of St. James, July 19

**Jeanette Hale**, 98, of Mt. Lake, July 30

## AUGUST

**Elma Wolf**, 93, of Mt. Lake, Aug. 1

**Margaret Green**, 99, of rural Butterfield, Aug. 3

**Keith Buresch**, 61, of rural Windom, Aug. 12

**Alan Knutson**, 64, of Mt. Lake, Aug. 12

**Joseph 'Joe' Isaac Adrian**, 94, of Glencoe, Aug. 13

**Korey Radtke**, 47, of Mt. Lake, Aug. 19

**Janyce R. Anacker**, 88, of Mt. Lake, Aug. 23

## SEPTEMBER

**Rebecca 'Becky' Kremmin**, 67, of Mt. Lake, Sept. 1

**Lonny G. Eads**, 84, of Hudson, Wis., formerly of Mt. Lake, Sept. 13

**Dennis Carlton Luetgers**, 76, of Worthington, Sept. 15

**Dietrich 'D. Junior' Stoesz**, 87, of Mt. Lake, Sept. 16

**Sophie Bacon**, 5 months, of Mt. Lake, Sept. 23

**Roy A. Derksen**, 79, of Shoreline, Wash., formerly of Mt. Lake, Sept. 25

## OCTOBER

**Dale J. Rettke**, 72, of St. James, Nov. 7

**Howard Fremont Matz**, 96, of Delft, Nov. 11

**Harvey Henze**, 82, of Kimberly, Wisc., formerly of Mt. Lake, Nov. 12

**Leland C. Johnson**, 91, of Mt. Lake, Nov. 18

**John Holt**, 72, of Windom, Nov. 18

**Jack Carter**, 93, of Jeffers, Nov. 22

**Rosella 'Rosie' Friesen**, 89, of Windom, Nov. 23

**Ardyce Ann McCaw**, 79, of Panama City, Fla., formerly of Dubuque, Iowa, Nov. 27

## NOVEMBER

**Jeannine Lehman**, 93, of Cambridge, formerly of Mt. Lake, Dec. 6

## DECEMBER

# Hazard lights question

**Question:**  
I was driving on the freeway during the worst part of a recent storm. Just had a question—are people supposed to use their emergency flashers when they are driving? So many cars on the freeway were, and it



**TROY CHRISTIANSON**  
STATE TROOPER

shoulder of the road.

• An impaired driver or driver conducting dangerous behaviors.

If a line of traffic is moving along at the same speed, I am not sure it would be in the best interest for anyone in that lane to be using hazard lights. It is important to know which vehicle is moving at a slower speed than the rest of the flow of traffic or for those needing to make lane changes and needing to signal. As mentioned earlier, it's generally for the lone vehicle causing the hazard.

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 me at, [Troy.Christianson@state.mn.us](mailto:Troy.Christianson@state.mn.us)).**

## Ardyce Ann McCaw



**Ardyce Ann McCaw**, 79, of Panama City, Fla., and formerly of Dubuque, Iowa, passed away Wednesday, November 27, 2024, at home.

Visitation will be from 12:00 noon to 2:00 p.m. on Monday, December 23, at Westminster Presbyterian Church, 2155 University Ave., Dubuque, followed by a Funeral Service at 2:00 p.m. Rev. Daniel Emmert will officiate. Interment will be in Linwood Cemetery. Arrangements are entrusted to Egelhof, Siegert & Casper Funeral Home and Crematory.

Ardyce was born on December 22, 1944, in Butterfield, Minn., the daughter of Waldo and Erma (Ewy) Linscheid. She married Fred H. McCaw on July 24, 1971, in Butterfield, Minn. He preceded her in death on August 2, 2006.

Ann valued the power of education, and she became a master teacher. She received her BA in Social Sciences from Fresno Pacific College and teaching certification from Seattle Pacific College. She earned an MA from the University of Iowa in Education—El-

ementary School Counseling and an MA from Clarke University in Education—Learning Disabilities. Ann received her PHD in Education from Drake University in 1998. After serving

as a classroom teacher, she dreamed of helping students with educational challenges. Ann helped to prepare future educators by serving on the faculty of Loras College for 15 years as an associate professor, retiring in 2012. She also served as faculty at University of Dubuque and served as an education consultant for Key Stone Area Education Association specializing in learning disabilities.

Ann was always willing to follow her family on adventures, even when they seemed daunting or frightening, including hiking, backpacking, sailing, and canoeing. She loved international travel. She was

able to take students on trips abroad to China and Peru to study educational practices. She also did sabbatical studies in New Zealand and presented research in Namibia. In her retirement she

traveled extensively and hiked the Camino de Santiago Trail in France and Spain. Ann had a property on Madeline Island in Lake Superior and loved to relax in the north woods.

Ann loved following and supporting the careers of her three children: Shana and her husband, Brent, as visual artists, Lindsay as a puppeteer and musician, and Evan as an aerospace engineer. She recently moved to Florida to be near her grandsons Owen and Oliver.

Ann will be remembered as a kind and gregarious person, who made people feel welcome and appreciated. She had many good

friends in Dubuque, on Madeline Island, and in Florida. Her sweet nature, pleasant demeanor, and words of encouragement were appreciated and will be greatly missed.

Ardyce is survived by three children, Shana McCaw (Brent Budberg) of Milwaukee, Wisc., Lindsay McCaw of Detroit, Mo., and Evan (Hyo Jung Won) McCaw of Panama City Beach, Fla., two grandchildren, Owen and Oliver McCaw of Panama City Beach, Fla., two brothers, Lloyd (Jean) Linscheid and Richard (Charlotte) Linscheid, both of Butterfield, Minn., brother-in-law Frank (Anne) McCaw of Denver, Iowa, sister-in-law Sara McCaw of Dubuque, Iowa, as well as nieces and nephews.

In addition to her husband, she was preceded in death by her parents Waldo and Erma Linscheid and her father and mother-in-law, Warren W. and Georgia E. (Betty) McCaw.

Memorials can be sent to the Fred H. and Ardyce A.

McCaw memorial fund care of Sara McCaw, 2057 Carter

Road, Dubuque, IA 52001.

## The Cottonwood County Veterans Service Office

... is a primary point of contact for veterans and their families who seek assistance with local, state and federal veteran's benefits. Some of the services are assistance with federal VA disability/pension claims, VA health care enrollment and VA burial benefits and Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs benefits.

### VISIT OUR UPDATED WEBSITE —

[www.co.cottonwood.mn.us/departments/services/veterans/index.php](http://www.co.cottonwood.mn.us/departments/services/veterans/index.php) to find links to resources that may be of interest to veterans and dependents and answers to frequently asked questions.

### QUESTIONS? CONTACT VETERANS SERVICE OFFICER —

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This ad was made possible by the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs. For more information you may also call the Veterans Linkage Line at 1-888-LinkVet (546-5838).



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**Monster Cookies**

By: Tucker Knutson

- 1 1/4 cups butter
- 1 cup white sugar
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 2 tsp. vanilla
- 2 eggs
- 2 cups flour
- 1 1/2 cups oatmeal
- 1 pkg. mini chocolate chips
- 1 cup mini M&Ms

Creamed butter, sugar, eggs and vanilla. Add oatmeal and flour. Mix well, then add chocolate chips and M&Ms. Bake at 350 degrees for 10 minutes.

**White Cracked Sugar Cookies**

By: Carson Soderholm

- 1 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 1 cup butter
- 1 egg
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 2 1/4 cups flour, plus 2 Tbsp.
- 2 tsp. soda
- 2 tsp. cream of tartar
- 1/2 tsp. salt

Cream sugars and butter. Add egg, then vanilla. Stir in dry ingredients. Roll in balls and then roll in sugar. Do not flatten! They crack as they bake. Bake at 350 degrees for 8-10 minutes.



OBSERVER/ADVOCATE • JANUARY 1, 2025

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**Peanut Butter Stuffed Brownies** — By: Hudson Dardis**Peanut Butter Filling:**

1 1/4 cups creamy conventional butter (NOT natural)

- Brownies:
- 10 Tbsp. unsalted butter
- 4 oz. semisweet baking chocolate, chopped
- 1 cup granulated sugar

**Peanut Butter Filling:**

Place the peanut butter in a heat-safe bowl and microwave for 20-30 seconds or until pourable, but not super hot. Line a metal 8-inch square pan with parchment paper leaving an overhang. Spread the peanut butter into an even layer in the pan. Freeze for 1 hour or until solidified. Keep frozen while making the brownie batter.

**Brownies:**

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line the square pan again with parchment paper, leaving an overhang. In a large microwave-safe bowl, combine the butter and chocolate. Microwave in 30-second bursts, stirring between each burst, until the mixture is melted and smooth. Add the sugar to the hot butter mixture and whisk vigorously until combined. Allow to cool until just barely warm. Add in eggs, yolk and vanilla and whisk for about 1 minutes, or until very well

- 2 large eggs plus 1 egg yolk
- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder, sifted
- 1/4 tsp. fine salt

combined. Use a rubber spatula to stir in flour, cocoa powder and salt until just combined. Pour half of the batter into prepared pan and smooth out. Carefully place the frozen peanut butter sheet over the batter. Pour remaining batter on top, covering completely. Bake in the preheated oven for about 35 minutes, or until cooked through but still very slightly gooey in the center. Let cool in pan 30 minutes. Remove from pan and allow to cool for another 30 minutes before slicing and serving. Makes 9 or 16.

OBSERVER/ADVOCATE • JANUARY 1, 2025

Readers wishing to submit recipes should email them to: observer@mtlakenews.com.

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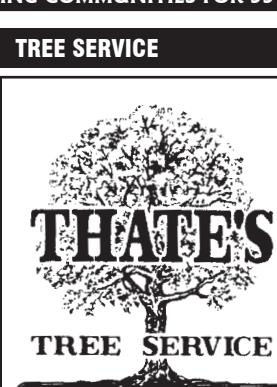
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# SPORTS

Wednesday, January 1, 2025 • 7



**JOEL ALVSTAD**  
Sports Editor  
[joea@windomnews.com](mailto:joea@windomnews.com)

## Bigger than sports

It isn't very often that a sports story finds its way into the list of top news stories of the year.

Such was the case this year, though.

When Wolverine football coach Tim Kirk was diagnosed with cancer, the aftershock was felt throughout the entire community and region, not just within the team.

Fund-raising efforts were seen throughout the area and every team in the sub-district wore a maroon-and-silver TK sticker on their helmets the rest of the season.

Kirk's diagnosis and battle united the community behind the team and the coach, with the goal of victory, on and off the field.

That's why, as we recap the year gone by, you'll find the story about the coach and his battle among the top local news stories—because it went way beyond the scope of sports.

As the new year begins, it's my sincere hope that Kirk is able to persevere in his battle with cancer and that, come fall, he'll be able to again help with the Wolverine football program in some capacity.



THE WOLVERINE CROSS COUNTRY teams had plenty to smile about in October, after both the girls and boys teams finished as Section 2A runners-up, earning a berth in the Class A State Meet. It marked the second year in a row both Wolverine teams advanced to state.

RILEY SCHROEDER

## A year of triumph and change



JOEL ALVSTAD 3/20 boys basketball 274

THE WOLVERINE boys basketball team celebrated after winning the Section 2A championship with a 57-55 overtime thriller over Lester Prairie. The Wolverines finished the season with a 27-5 overall record.

### Finishing strong

**1**

2024 Sports Stories

Entering the 2024 season, Mt. Lake Area cross country coach Kyle Blomgren knew his teams had big holes to fill, after both the boys and girls advanced to state in 2023.

But that didn't keep the Wolverines from becoming one of the most dominant programs in the area.

MLA's girls ended a nearly decade-long stranglehold by Murray County Central-Fulda for the Red Rock Conference championship.

Then, at the Section 2A Meet at Norwood-Young America's Baylor Park, the Wolverine girls and boys each captured runner-up finishes, with both teams advancing to the state meet for a second straight season.

At the state meet, the Wolverine girls finished 16th in the team standings, but sophomore Katie Johnson placed 16th, earning All-

State honors. The Wolverine boys had two top-50 finishers, capturing 15th in the team standings.

In addition to the team honors, the season brought a significant individual honor for Wolverine head coach Kyle Blomgren. Earlier this month, Blomgren was named the Class A State girls cross country coach of the year.

Windom sophomore Bryce Green also raced at the state meet for a second consecutive season, after qualifying individually in Section 3A. Green finished 27th in the boys state race, narrowly missing an All-State spot.

### Out on top

**2**

2024 Sports Stories

The Mt. Lake Area-Comfrey boys basketball team came into the 2023-24 season with high hopes and a ton of senior leadership.

After earning Red Rock Conference runner-up honors, the Wolverines picked up wins over Martin County West and Mankato Loyola in the Section 2A playoffs.

In the sub-section finals, the Wolverines used a fast start to build the lead, then held on for an 82-74 win over Springfield.

In the Section 2A championship, it was a pair of

clutch defensive stands that allowed the Wolverines to claim a 57-55 overtime victory over Lester Prairie, earning a place in the Class A State Tournament.

The state tournament didn't go as well for the Wolverines, though, as MLAC fell 78-54 to Nevis, then lost 83-65 to conference rival Russell-Tyler-Rutherford, ending the season with a 27-5 overall record.

One of the highlights of the state tournament came in the consolation game, when senior Carter Olson became the career scoring leader for Comfrey High School, surpassing Dylan Hillesheim, who was serv-

ing as an assistant coach for the Wolverines during the tournament.

### Medal hunt

**3**

2024 Sports Stories

The 2024 high school track season culminated with a thrilling Class A State Meet that featured four medal-winning performances from local athletes.

Mt. Lake Area-Comfrey senior Kody Wassman wrapped up his career with a sixth-place medal in the 800-meter run. After earning a spot in the finals with a

SEE 2024 • PAGE 8

## Wolverine girls, boys swept at Springfield



JULIA BRINKMAN muscles through contact to put up a shot during Friday's game at Springfield.



TANNER SCHULTZ leans in to put up a jumper during Friday's game at Springfield.

The Springfield girls basketball team used a similar plan as their male counterparts in the second half of Friday's boy/girl doubleheader with Mt. Lake Area-Comfrey.

The Tigers forced turnovers, dominated the paint and shot over 50% from the field on their way to an 80-43 victory over the Wolverines at Springfield, capping the doubleheader sweep.

The Tigers started the game with a 21-0 run before MLAC got on the board. Springfield continued shooting at a torrid pace in the first half, opening a 52-16 halftime advantage.

The Tigers were able to maintain a 30-point lead much of the second half, holding MLAC to 30% shooting from the field.

Julia Brinkman led the Wolverines with 16 points. Ellamae Peters added seven points.

**MLAC** ..... 16 27 — 43  
**MLAC (FG-FT-TP)**: Brinkman 6-4-16; Phouminvong 1-0-3; Peters 3-0-7; Pfeiffer 1-1-3; Boldt 1-0-3; Spener 0-0-0; GPeters 1-4-6; Janzen 0-0-0; Wasserman 0-0-0; Phommachan 2-1-5; Penner 0-0-0; Beyer 0-0-0; FG: 15-50 (30%); 3PT: 10-22 (46%); 3PL: 1-16 (19%); Fouls: 12. Fouled out: None. Rebs: 22. TOS: 14.

**Springfield (FG-FT-TP)**: NReiss 0-0-0; Thram 1-0-3; Novotny 5-1-11; JReiss 3-0-7; Krueger 4-4-12; Milbrath 7-2-16; Hauger 10-1-24; Winkelmann 2-1-5; Rothmeier 1-0-2; Davis 0-0-0; Dose 0-0-0; FG: 33-63 (52%); FT: 9-13 (69%); 3PT: FG: 5-13 (39%); Thram, JReiss, Hauger 3). Fouls: 15. Fouled out: None. Rebs: 47. TOS: 11.

### Tigers roll past MLAC

The boys game Friday saw Springfield lead wire to wire, rolling to a 100-51 victory over Mt. Lake Area-Comfrey.

The Tigers shot a sizzling 63% from the field in the game and dominated in transition and in the lane.

The Tigers scored 32 points off Wolverine turnovers and held a 66-24 edge in points in the paint.

The dominance started early, as the Tigers raced to

a 30-point halftime lead and built its advantage as high as 49 points by game's end.

Aidan Olson led the Wolverines with 13 points. Max Fast added 10 points in the

loss.

**MLAC** ..... 27 24 — 51  
**MLAC (FG-FT-TP)**: MFast 3-2-10; Evers 4-1-9; Schroeder 0-0-0; Klassen 2-1-5; Schultz 2-1-5; Olson 5-2-13; CFast 0-0-0; Hall 0-0-0; Falk 0-0-0; Garrison 3-0-6; Peters 1-0-3; Vazquez Fontanez 0-0-0; FG: 20-51 (39%); FT: 7-17 (41%); 3PT: FG: 4-18. Fouls: 16. Fouled out: None. Rebs: 27. TOS: 17.

(22% — MFast 2, Olson, Peters). Fouls: 9. Fouled out: None. Rebs: 24. TOS: 27.

**Springfield (FG-FT-TP)**: Helling 7-0-14; Fredin 7-2-19; Lentz 3-0-7; Buerke 10-1-21; Brown 1-0-2; Sturm 6-0-13; Kuehn 2-2-7; Simonson 5-1-13; Hovland 1-0-2; Horkey 1-0-2; FG: 43-88 (53%); FT: 6-8 (75%); 3PT: FG: 8-20 (40%); Fredin 3, Lentz, Sturm, Kuehn, Simonson 2). Fouls: 16. Fouled out: None. Rebs: 38. TOS: 17.

### SCHEDULE

**WOLVERINES BOYS BASKETBALL**  
HOME GAMES AT MT. LAKE OR COMFREY  
**Friday, Jan. 3**  
vs. RRC (at ML), 6 p.m.  
**Tuesday, Jan. 7**  
vs. T/ML/GHEC (at Comfrey), 6 p.m.

**WOLVERINES GIRLS BASKETBALL**  
HOME GAMES AT MT. LAKE OR COMFREY  
**Thursday, Jan. 2**  
at AE (Ellsworth), 6 p.m.  
**Monday, Jan. 6**  
vs. MCW (at Comfrey), 6 p.m.  
**Tuesday, Jan. 7**  
at MCC (Slayton), 6 p.m.

**EAGLES BOYS HOCKEY**  
HOME GAMES AT WINDOM ARENA  
**Thursday, Jan. 2**  
at Fairmont, 7 p.m.  
**Saturday, Jan. 4**  
vs. Morris-Benson Area, 3 p.m.  
**Tuesday, Jan. 7**  
at Redwood Valley, 7 p.m.

**EAGLES GIRLS HOCKEY**  
HOME GAMES AT WINDOM ARENA  
**Saturday, Jan. 4**  
vs. Morris-Benson Area, 1 p.m.  
**Tuesday, Jan. 7**  
at Austin, 6 p.m.

**COBRA'S WRESTLING**  
HOME MATCHES AT WINDOM OR MT. LAKE  
**Thursday, Jan. 2**  
vs. ACGC, Spectrum, Springfield (at Springfield), 5 p.m.  
**Tuesday, Jan. 7**  
vs. RRC (at Mt. Lake), 5 p.m.

**EAGLES GYMNASTICS**  
HOME MEETS AT WINDOM  
**Thursday, Jan. 2**  
vs. Pipestone, 6 p.m.  
**Saturday, Jan. 4**  
at Marshall County, 4 p.m.  
**Tuesday, Jan. 7**  
at St. James, 6 p.m.

## 2024/ Highlights and milestones from a memorable year

FROM PAGE 7

preliminary time of 2:00.32, Wassman ran a time of 1:57.84, which was good for sixth place.

• MLAC and Windom had gone head-to-head at the top of the standings in the boys 4x800 relay at the Section 2A Meet. At the state meet, MLAC's team of Cooper Evers, Zach Klassen, Ethan Schroeder and Wassman ran its way to a third-place time of 8:08.13.

• MLAC's boys 4x400 relay team fell short in its quest to repeat as state champions, finishing in 14th place with a time of 3:36.36.

• MLAC's lone girls' qualifier, Meghan Johnson, finished 16th in the 3,200-meter run (12:31.74).

### A lasting legacy

**4**

2024 Sports Stories

The 2023-24 season was a memorable one for the Mt. Lake Area-Comfrey boys basketball team, but also for its head coach, Shawn Naas.

Late in the season, a win over Red Rock Central gave Naas his 500th career victory.

The win over Lester Prairie in the Section 2A finals made this year's Wolverine team the fourth that Naas had guided to the state tournament.

But in late June, Naas announced that he would be stepping down as head coach of the Wolverines, allowing him more time to focus on his role as activities director.

Two of his former assistant coaches—Isaac Hildebrandt and Spenser Kipfer—were named co-head coaches for the program for the 2024-25 season.

### Stunning end, bright future

**5**

2024 Sports Stories

• The state wrestling tournament can sometimes see great wrestlers have their seasons end in a flash.

A first-round loss at the state tournament puts a wrestler at the mercy of his first-round opponent, with first-round losers needing their opening foes to advance to the semifinals in order to get a shot at the wrestlebacks.

Windom-Mt. Lake senior Preston Xayachak had been one of the higher-ranked wrestlers in the state at 114 pounds much of the season, after he had placed sixth at 107 pounds as a junior.

But Xayachak dropped

## THE CHAMPIONS OF 2024

### BIG SOUTH CONFERENCE

Wrestling: West — JCC; East — New Ulm

Gymnastics: West — Worthington; East — St. Peter

Boys Hockey: Luverne

Girls Hockey: Marshall

### RED ROCK CONFERENCE

Boys Basketball: SWC

Girls Basketball: SWC

Baseball: ESWC

Fastpitch: (tie) RTR, ESWC

Boys Golf (Tourney): SWCE

Boys Golf (Overall): MLAC

Girls Golf (Tourney): RTR

Girls Golf (Overall): RTR

Boys Track: HBC

Girls Track: HBC

Volleyball: (tie) RTR, SWC, WWG

Boys Cross Country: MCC-Fulda

Girls Cross Country: MLA

### SUB-DISTRICT

9M South Football (West): HBC

### SUB-SECTION

Boys Track (2A South): Maple River

Girls Track (2A South): NRHEG

### SECTION

Boys Basketball: 2A — MLAC

Girls Basketball: 2A — BLHS

Wrestling: 3AA — DB/LQPV/Montevideo United

Gymnastics: Worthington

Boys Hockey: New Ulm

Girls Hockey: Luverne

Baseball: 2A — Springfield

Fastpitch: 2A — New Ulm Cathedral

Boys Golf: 2A — JWP

Girls Golf: 2A — Sleepy Eye United

Football: 3 9-Man — HBC

Volleyball: 2A — Mayer Lutheran

Boys Cross Country (2A): Loyola-Cleveland-St. Clair

Girls Cross Country (2A): Loyola-Cleveland-St. Clair



JOEL ALVSTAD 2/28 wrestling 108 PRESTON XAYACHAK advanced to the Class AA state wrestling meet for the second year in a row.



JOEL ALVSTAD 3/13 boys basketball 243

**SHAWN NAAS** gives directions to Carter Olson during a Wolverine playoff game. Naas surpassed 500 career victories, then retired after 31 years as Wolverines' head boys basketball coach. Olson, meanwhile, became the Comfrey High School career scoring leader during the state tournament.



JOEL ALVSTAD 6/5 golf 27 NEVEAH OTT rolls in a par-saving putt during the Section 2A Tournament. Ott captured section runner-up honors as an eighth-grader, earning a trip to the state meet.



SUBMITTED

THE WOLVERINE BOYS golf team was all smiles after capturing the Red Rock Conference overall championship, following the conference tournament in Worthington.



JOEL ALVSTAD 6/12 track 321 ETHAN SCHROEDER takes off after receiving the baton from Kody Wassman during the 4x800 relay at the state track meet. MLAC's boys 4x800 team finished third in the state, while Wassman finished sixth in the 800-meter run.

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OBSERVER/ADVOCATE

# Eagle boys post 1-1-1 record at home holiday tourney

The Windom Area boys hockey team turned in its best defensive showing of the season in Saturday's finale of the Windom Area Holiday Tournament.

The Eagles held Worthington to 17 shots on goal in the game, with few quality scoring chances.

Eagle senior Nick Espenson's hat trick gave the Eagles a 4-1 victory, capping a round-robin tournament that ended with a 1-1-1 record.

"We had a few good days of hockey," Eagle Coach Travis Janssen said. "We started to play well in the last period of the first game and carried it over. We played some of our best hockey of the season over the final seven periods of the tournament. We feel like we found some line combinations that will work for us moving forward, and hopefully we can

continue our momentum."

Espenson got the Eagles on the board 13:17 into the first period, off an assist from Keaton LaCanne.

Then, 1:48 into the second, Espenson netted his second goal of the game for a 2-0 lead.

Worthington cut the lead to 2-1, but the Eagles put the game away with back-to-back goals to close the second period. Jonah Lohse gave the Eagles a 3-1 lead, with Espenson scoring his third of the day with 57 seconds left in the second.

The teams skated to a scoreless third period.

Windom Area outshot Worthington 28-17 in the game. Kole Espenson finished with 16 saves in the win.

**Worthington** ..... 0 1 0—1  
**Windom Area** ..... 1 3 0—4

FIRST PERIOD: 1. Windom: Nick Espenson (Keaton LaCanne) 13:17. SECOND PERIOD: 2. Windom: N.

Espenson (Andrei Rivera) 1:48. 3. Worthington: Mason Omnen (Spenser Nickel) 4:50. pp. 4. Windom: Jonah Lohse (Rivera, Isaiah Adams) 9:15. 5. Windom: N. Espenson (Rivera) 16:03. THIRD PERIOD: No scoring.

**SUMMARY:** Shots on goal: Worthington 17, Windom 28. Power plays: Worthington 1-3, Windom 0-2. **Goalies:** Worthington, Brody Pederson (28 shots, 24 saves); Windom, Kole Espenson (17 shots, 16 saves).

## Eagles tie Falcons

Friday's game saw Windom Area and Faribault battle back and forth for 59 minutes, with the game officially ending in a 4-4 overtime tie.

For the sake of tournament standings, an unofficial tie-breaking shootout was held, with Faribault winning the shootout.

Faribault held an early lead, but the Eagles played beat-the-clock at the end of the period. Nick Espenson tied the game at 1-1 at the 10:38 mark, then, Jessy Gentry found the back of the net an instant before the final buzzer of the period, giving the Eagles a 2-1 lead.

Faribault tied the game 48

seconds into the second, but the Eagles regained the lead at the 11:49 mark on Espenson's second goal of the game. But Faribault tied the game at 3-3 going into the third.

The Falcons took the lead 1:40 into the final period, but Bodi Parker scooped up a rebound in front of the net for the tying goal at the 6:30 mark.

The teams then played a scoreless eight-minute overtime.

Faribault outshot the Eagles 31-29. Kole Espenson finished with 27 saves.

**Faribault** ..... 1 2 1 0—4  
**Windom Area** ..... 2 1 1 0—4

FIRST PERIOD: 1. Faribault: Nicholas Archambault (Tommy Ritzke, A.J. Wachowski) 5:21. 2. Windom: Nick Espenson (Andrei Rivera) 10:38. 3. Windom: Jessy Gentry (u/a) 16:59. SECOND PERIOD: 4. Faribault: Archambault (u/a) 0:49. 5. Windom: N. Espenson (Rivera, Jonah Lohse) 11:49. 6. Faribault: Wasilowski (Archambault) 15:17. THIRD PERIOD: 7. Faribault: Logan Vargo (Kunze) 1:40. 8. Windom: Bodi Parker (Lohse, Jackson Veenker) 6:30. OVERTIME: No scoring.

**SUMMARY:** Shots on goal: Faribault 31, Windom

Kennedy's Mason Biermaier gave his team the lead. Kennedy added two more goals in the second period, with the last goal by Tony Perkins beating the buzzer and the Windom Area goalie for a 5-2 lead.

Jonah Lohse scored 38 seconds into the third period, cutting the deficit to 5-3, but Windom Area got no closer.

Kennedy outshot Windom Area 32-27 for the game. Goalie Keagan Koster finished with 26 saves in the loss.

**Bloomington Kennedy** ..... 2 3 1—6  
**Windom Area** ..... 1 1 1—3

FIRST PERIOD: 1. Kennedy: Gustav Perry (David Wurst) 1:16. 2. Kennedy: Isaac Syrjamaa (u/a) 5:10, shorthanded. 3. Windom: Andrei Rivera (u/a) 13:50, pp. 6:42. 5. Kennedy: Mason Biermaier (Anourak Carlson) 6:42. 6. Kennedy: Perry (u/a) 15:20. 7. Kennedy: Tony Perkins (u/a) 16:59. THIRD PERIOD: 8. Windom: Jon Lohse (Jordan Molinari) 0:38. 9. Kennedy: Wurst (Calvin Danielson) 13:50.

**SUMMARY:** Shots on goal: Kennedy 32, Windom 27.

Power plays: Kennedy 1-2 (1 shorthanded), Windom 1-4. **Goalies:** Kennedy: Cooper Merten (27 shots, 24 saves); Windom, Keagan Koster (32 shots, 26 saves).

But just 16 seconds later,

# Eagle girls top Storm, finish third at MBA holiday tourney

Entering Saturday's third-place game of the Morris-Benson Area Holiday Tournament, the Windom Area girls hockey team had a renewed sense of confidence.

After an improved performance in Friday's opening loss to Mankato West, the Eagles turned in another strong offensive showing Saturday, this time against the tournament hosts.

Windom Area held an 18-2 edge in shots on goal after one period, with the offensive pressure helping the Eagles find the net six times in a 6-1 win at Morris.

"The last time we played



Mataya Hall Ella Dockter

had good offensive pressure. We came to play right away and were able to get the early lead and were able to keep it."

The offensive pressure came early for the Eagles, as Brekkyn Rossow put Windom Area on the board, redirecting a shot from Addison Schumacher for a 1-0 lead.

Later in the opening period, Ashlyn Koch picked off a clearing attempt and fired a shot past the Storm goalie for a 2-0 lead.

The Eagles padded the lead early in the second, as Mataya Hall took a drop pass from Ella Dockter and rifled home a shot for a 3-0 lead.

In the third period, the Eagles added to the lead on the power play, as Hall ripped a blue line bomb. Reagan Haugen and Dockter added goals for a 6-0 Eagle lead before the Storm scored the final goal of the game.

Windom Area outshot the Storm 33-17 in the win. Fiona Robillard finished with 16 saves.

**Windom Area** ..... 2 1 3—6  
**Morris-Benson Area** ..... 0 0 1—1

FIRST PERIOD: 1. Windom: Brekky Rossow (Addison Schumacher) 7:27. 2. Windom: Ashlyn Koch (u/a) 11:49.

SECOND PERIOD: 3. Windom: Mataya Hall (Ella Dockter) 2:41. THIRD PERIOD: 4. Windom: Hall (Lyvia McManigle) 3:40, pp. 5. Windom: Reagan Haugen (McManigle) 7:28. 6. Windom: Dockter (u/a) 14:23. 7. MBA: Grace Aarnius (Skyler Rammer) 15:51.

**SUMMARY:** Shots on goal: Windom 33, MBA 17.

Power plays: Windom 1-3, MBA 0-3. **Goalies:** Windom,

defense into the net.

But West's Penny Gorman took over the game from there, scoring four unanswered goals, including three goals in a 1:48 stretch in the third period.

West outshot the Eagles 31-29 for the game. Fiona Robillard finished with 26 saves in the loss.

**Mankato West** ..... 1 1 3—6  
**Windom Area** ..... 0 1—1

FIRST PERIOD: 1. West: Maleah Giesen (Penny Gorman) 3:03. SECOND PERIOD: 2. Windom: Lyvia McManigle (Ashlyn Koch) 8:53. 3. West: Gorman (Lyvia McManigle) 12:08. THIRD PERIOD: 4. West: Gorman (Maree Zimmerman, Giesen) 6:00. 5. West: Gorman (Giesen) 6:53. 6. West: Gorman (Giesen, Marleigh Jordan) 7:48.

**SUMMARY:** Shots on goal: West 31, Windom 29.

Power plays: West 0-0, Windom 0-0. **Goalies:** West, Alayna Smith (29 shots, 28 saves); Windom, Fiona Robillard (31 shots, 26 saves).

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## REVIEW/ A mix of good news and bad news

FROM PAGE 1

even a loss of crops for both Cottonwood and Watonwan county farmers.

Mt. Lake's school district said goodbye to a longtime superintendent and welcomed a new one and the hotel project gained some traction as the year ended.

As we look back at our top news stories of 2024, we reflect on the changes seen over the year and wish everyone a Happy New Year!

### 1. Local tragedies

The 2024 calendar year was one that residents may remember as a year of tragedy, especially during the span of about a month that saw three young people lose their lives.

Two teenage boys and a 39-year-old pastor died between April 15 and May 12.

Skyler Goulette, a 15-year-old from Mt. Lake, drowned in a boating accident on the night of April 15 and his body was recovered the morning of April 17 after an extensive recovery effort.

Goulette had been canoeing on April 15 with his younger sister, and reportedly their lone paddle fell in the water, so he jumped into the water to retrieve it.

The temperatures of the water are still very cold, and there was no life jacket in the boat. Goulette tried to swim back to the canoe, but the wind separated him from the boat and he was unable to swim to shore.

On April 27, a tragic accident took the life of local pastor Marie Savage of Mt. Lake as she was struck by a vehicle while jogging on a Saturday morning.

According to the Cottonwood County sheriff's office, deputies were called to the scene of an accident at 8:18 a.m. on County Road 3 near Bartsch Lake, which is northwest of Mt. Lake.

Savage was jogging with another party and they were both reportedly in the eastbound lane when she was struck and killed by a vehicle.

Savage was a pastor at Center Point Church in Mt. Lake and left behind her husband David and three children Ezra, Hannah and Abigail.

On May 12, another tragedy struck on Mother's Day as a 15-year-old Mt. Lake boy

drowned at Mound Creek County Park in western Brown County.

Camron Keosaykham had been with family before he went swimming. There, he began struggling, went under the water and did not resurface.

### 2. Weathering the storm

**2**  
2024 News Stories

Stunning news about a well-liked, highly-successful coach brought the entire community together this fall.

In the third week of football season, Mt. Lake Area coach Tim Kirk missed much of the week's practices due to illness.

Following the Wolverines' 49-22 win over Granada-Huntley-East Chain/Truman, Kirk informed the team that he had been diagnosed with stage 4 gall bladder cancer.

Kirk would continue as the head coach for the Wolverines the rest of the season, but much of the day-to-day duties for practices were given to assistant coaches.

The Wolverines' Week 4 game against Red Rock Central saw an overwhelming show of support from the community, with shirts, signs and stickers throughout Mt. Lake.

The outpouring of support even came from outside the community, as the RRC volleyball team also sold T-shirts to benefit the Kirk family. Additionally, every football team in the Nine-Player South West sub-district wore a maroon and silver "TK" sticker on the back of their helmets for the remainder of the season.

The Wolverines ended the season with a 7-3 record, with Kirk passing his former coach, Marty Skow, atop the career coaching wins list at Mt. Lake High School.

A 37-6 loss to Hills-Beaver Creek in the section finals ended the Wolverines' season. Following the game, Kirk informed the team that he was stepping down as head football coach, but intended to help with the program in any way he could going forward.

### 3. Floods impact crops

**3**  
2024 News Stories

The flood of 2024 made a huge impact on corn and soybean crops this year.

After a dry winter and spring, the month of May turned to be wetter than normal, resulting in floods and crop damage all over the county.

One area farmer estimated he was averaging a yield

of around 55 bushels per acre; an average year at best, but high when compared with other fields that were flooded earlier this summer.

Many farmers replanted in July to replace crops lost due to the standing water in the fields. Some chose not to replant because it was too late.

This was also a season that saw lower market prices, though those prices rose later in the harvest season.

Overall, this planting and growing season was a challenge.

"We started this year out perfect and it went downhill from there," said Ryan Visker of Bingham Lake. You can't do anything about it. It sucks, but what can you do?"

### 4. New MLP School Supt.

**4**  
2024 News Stories

Area residents saw major changes occur in the Mt. Lake School District, as longtime superintendent Bill Strom retired

and elementary principal Brandon Henning was hired as his replacement.

Upon learning of Strom's impending departure, the school board wasted little time with the new hire. At a special meeting in early-February, the board agreed to contract terms with Henning to serve

as half-time superintendent and half-time principal. In July, Henning officially replaced Strom after 25 years as superintendent and 38 total years as an administrator.

Heading into summer, Henning had served a total of two years as elementary principal at Mt. Lake. "I plan on starting my mornings on the elementary side, greeting students, connecting with staff and being present for all meetings that take place before school," Henning told the Observer/Advocate in February. "I'll spend time in the superintendent's office later in the day before ending my day back on the elementary side."

The Waterloo, Wisc., native said he'd had conversations with Strom about the superintendent position dur-

ing his first year in Mt. Lake. Consequently, he worked to get his superintendent license during 2023.

"I've really enjoyed my time here and the relationships I've made with the staff and students," Henning said. "It has been a perfect fit for me."

Brandon and his wife, Noelle, have four children.

### 5. Hotel/EDA news

**5**  
2024 News Stories

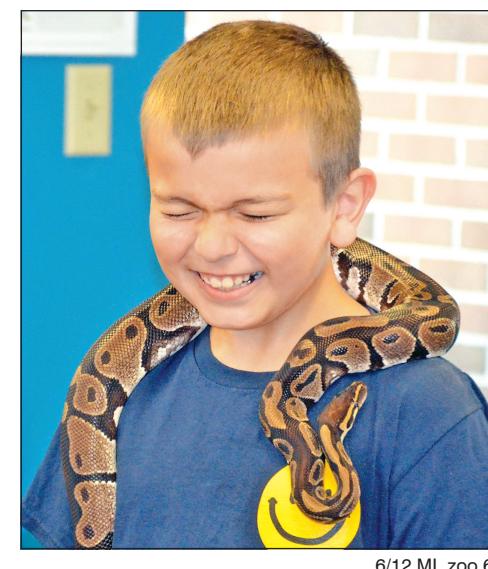
One of the biggest stories of 2023 resurfaced in 2024, but this time there were some hurdles to be cleared.

The hotel project never broke ground in 2024 due to a number of factors, including interest rates and raising enough money from investors to go ahead with the project itself.

Late in the year, news about the project resurfaced.

"This project will bring growth to the community. The estimated cost of the hotel project is \$5,750,000 and most of the investors are from Mt. Lake," Mt. Lake Economic Development Authority Director Rod Hamilton said earlier this year. "It will provide jobs for people in the community and a place to stay when people visit Mt. Lake."

New businesses also opened in town, including Abundance Coffee, SK Pho, H&H Storage and Latino Universal II Grocery Store.



6/12 ML zoo 64

**JAMES JENIGES** isn't sure what to think or how to react with a snake wrapped around his neck. The snake was part of a fun-filled day with the "Zoo Man" at Mt. Lake Public Library, in June.



8/7 Sunflower 26

**BECCA MYERS** (right) smiles as she was crowned by Khya Boldt, who received first runner-up earlier this year in the Miss Mt. Lake pageant. Myers and her sister were on hand to greet the Miss Mt. Lake contestants on their parade float at Sunflower Days.



6/12 Miss Mountain Lake 11



**COTTONWOOD COUNTY** Soil and Water Conservation employees Breanna Wagner (left) and Adriene Matthews plant a tree near the carwash and Casey's General Store in Mt. Lake. Crews planted around 90 trees in Mt. Lake during 2024.

## HOTEL/ New restaurants could also come to Mt. Lake

FROM PAGE 1

they can be moving dirt this spring."

Pioneer Bank of St. James is the bank that offered a term sheet. The total cost of the hotel is estimated at \$5.7 million and the developer raised about \$2.4 million in equity, so the investors will secure a loan to cover the remaining cost.

There are roughly 15 local investors, plus the developer himself. They're also working with the Southwest Initiative Foundation to help with various parts of the project.

Hamilton said the hotel will be an AmericInn hotel. Exact details of the hotel, such as a pool or community room, are still being worked out at this time.

"I asked the developer what's the next step, and he said getting all the investors together. They'll form an LLC and make those kinds of decisions," Hamilton said. "They will be meeting sometime in January."

Hamilton said the project

has been a roller-coaster ride for all involved.

"It just goes to show you to never give up, and as a community, we didn't," he said. "Everybody simply stayed focused on the goal. The credit goes to the city council, the EDA board, the local investors and the developer."

"This has been a community project right from the beginning. However, all of the heavy lifting has been done, and it's up to the developer to walk it across the finish line."

He said he's also been in touch with a couple of different restaurants that have expressed interest in coming to Mt. Lake because of this project.

### Apartment complex

Mt. Lake will also see a 12-unit apartment complex built beginning this spring.

Hamilton said the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency approved a \$1.4 million grant, which will help build the complex. The estimated total cost is \$3.7 million and it will be on the vacant corner lot next to the Latino Universal II grocery store.

He said the county will also allocate \$25,000 in Statewide Affordable Housing Aid toward the project.

## RAABE/Has delivered a few graduation speeches at MLC

FROM PAGE 1

have lived in Mt. Lake since 1986 and they have three children — Kari Ellis, Ben and Josh. He shares some of his experiences and thoughts in a recent question and answer session with the Observer/Advocate.

### Q How did you discover that you wanted to be a teacher?

**A** RAABE: My dad and uncles were history buffs, I was always interested in history because of them. Teaching was not on my radar but I didn't know what else to do with a history degree. With fear and trepidation, I sort of backed into the teaching profession.

I found that I love teaching. John Piper said that God is always doing 10,000 things in your life, and you may be aware of three of them, and those three may make no sense to you. I've learned that God is sovereign, he is wise, he loves us and I can

trust him when things aren't clear.

### Q You have delivered a few graduation speeches at MLC, do you look forward to that experience?

**A** RAABE: I am very comfortable speaking in my classroom, but I am very uncomfortable speaking outside of it. I don't relish the thought of giving graduation speeches, but I love my students so I say yes if they ask. I attempt to make my speeches worthwhile and I do everyone a favor by keeping them short.

### Q Do you have a most embarrassing moment when it comes to teaching?

**A** RAABE: When I first started teaching, our students were tasked with a monthly after-school activity for the whole school. In October they planned a walk-through haunted house experience in an old, abandoned house. I screamed like a baby and pulled one of the moms in front of me in every room we walked through, showing all of my students the real me. I always wondered what they thought of me after that.

### Q How has your teaching style evolved over the years?

**A** RAABE: I am more organized, a little harder to get pulled off-topic, less grade-oriented, more discussion-oriented.

### Q If you could go back in time, what would you tell yourself 20 years ago?

**A** RAABE: Don't try to change students' quirks, enjoy them, don't act like you know everything, don't be intimidated when a student knows more about a topic than you, celebrate student success, and work hard at creating a good classroom culture. In short, love your students.

### Q What has changed the most in your profession over the years?

**A** RAABE: Chromebooks, projectors, and smartboards have helped students be engaged in the learning process and help teachers find and provide information in new ways. However, attention span isn't what it used to be, technology is glitchy, and it's hard for students to be "unplugged" when they have screen time

at home and school. My favorite classroom technology is my overhead projector, which I still use. I'm old.

### Q What are some of your hobbies and interests?

**A** RAABE: I've enjoyed landscaping during the summer months and am proud my son Ben started his own landscaping business, BR Dirtworks. I enjoy woodworking projects, washing my car, and treasure time with my far above-average grandkids.

### Q What is the best part about being a high school teacher?

**A** RAABE: I get to be part of an amazing community, I get to stand on the shoulders of giants, people like Glen Letellier, John Newton and Dr. Kim Friesen. I can count many of my former students as good friends, who sometimes stop by my classroom to say hello. I have seen students go beyond expectations and parents give sacrificially. I look forward to my job every day, I experience surprises, laughter, excitement and creativity. It is a great job.

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