



Gov.-elect Walz turns down Trump invitation. **A3.**

It's Cards vs. Cards at Willmar pool. **B1.**

WILLMAR, MINN.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2018

\$1.00

HOME FOR THE HOMELESS

Family Promise grows but needs continue

By Carolyn Lange
clange@wctrib.com

Willmar

It was the fall of 2014 and Jill Zimmer and her young son, Jordan, were sleeping in a van in the 10-hour parking lot in downtown Willmar.

On the coldest night the temperature was a bone-chilling 4-degrees above zero.

Wearing snow pants and coats inside their sleeping bags, Zimmer said she'd wake up when it got cold and let the vehicle run for about 20 minutes to warm up the interior so they could sleep a little more.

The van in the parking lot was their home for three months before Zimmer was able to secure an apartment she could afford with the salary from her job at the time.

This fall the mother and son again found themselves homeless when Zimmer said it was no longer safe to stay in their rodent- and cockroach-infested apartment after nearly walking in on a "suspicious death" that occurred in the shared laundry room of the building.

But this time, instead of sleeping in their van, they sleep in area churches at night and spend the day at the Family Promise day center on the second-floor of the First Presbyterian Church in Willmar.

"It's an amazing program," said Zimmer, as she watched Jordan - who is now 5 years old - hang ornaments on the Christmas tree in the living room of the center.

"It helps families get back on their feet," she said of Family Promise, a faith-based program that was launched in 2015 in Kandiyohi County with a dozen area churches and other community partners.

"This is a good organization. It's a safe, warm, secure place," she said. "They make it feel like home."

A home for the homeless

When Family Promise started in 2015, it provided short-term housing to nine individuals through its program that utilizes a partnership with area churches, social service agencies, non-profit organizations and businesses.

The program has steadily grown each year and by November of this year had already served about 70 individuals in 2018.

Some of the people who come through the doors "have never asked for help" before," said Nate Erickson, the new director of development at Family Promises.

Sometimes it's unexpected medical



TOP: Marlin Breems of Family Promise opens the door to the building in Willmar. As the temperature drops, the need for a place to stay becomes dire for people who are without homes. **BOTTOM:** Jill Zimmer helps her son Jordan, 5, put on his jacket before they go outside at Family Promise.

Photos by Erica Dischino/Tribune

ills, loss of a job or divorce that can send families "into a tailspin" and leave them without a place to live, he said.

Erickson, who also works with homeless individuals as the "Getting Ahead Program" manager for the local Salvation Army, said there are people in Willmar right now who sleep in storage lockers they rent to store their possessions.

Some homeless people will park their vehicles in parking lots of businesses that are open 24-hours a day because "nobody will mess with them there," Erickson said.

Family Promise, which is geared toward families with children, but will also accept single women without children, provides a safe place for people to sleep, eat and save money while they make plans for long-term housing, education or employment.

During the day, guests can hang out in the

HOMELESS: Page A2



Bomb threat targets include rural Minnesota and the Dakotas

By Anne Polta
apolta@wctrib.com

A wave of phony bomb threats that spread across the U.S. Thursday extended into rural Minnesota, where businesses in Appleton, Alexandria and St. Cloud were among those who were targeted. Similar threats were received at South and

See related story. Page A8

North Dakota locations as well.

The Appleton Police Department and Swift County Sheriff's Office said they received word at

about 2:20 p.m. Thursday of a possible bomb threat at Appleton Area Health Services. Law enforcement met with hospital staff at the scene and proceeded to clear the entire facility, including Apple Ridge Estates, Appleton Nursing Home, Appleton Clinic and the Appleton Hospital.

Authorities learned

during the search that a similar threat was received at other hospitals and businesses across Minnesota. Similar threats were received on college campuses and businesses across the U.S.

It was believed to be part of a "phishing" or spoofing scam in an attempt to obtain Bitcoin, a form of

electronic currency traded and transported via the internet.

Authorities don't believe the communities or the businesses that were targeted are in danger but they have asked the public to remain vigilant and report any suspicious activity to local law enforcement.

The Alexandria Police Department was called to several businesses to investigate the threats, which were all made through email.

In a news release, Police Chief Rick Wyffels said the threats seem to be a phishing or spoofing scam

THREAT: Page A6

Minnesota facing change on presidential primary voter info

By Dave Orrick
St. Paul Pioneer Press

ST. PAUL - Do you like the idea of everyone being able to know which party you vote for in a presidential primary?

That's the way Minnesota law reads now. And yes, that's new.

And no, not everyone likes the idea.

"We've never had party registration in this state, and this

looks like a back-door system of party registration," Secretary of State Steve Simon said Wednesday as he amped up his push to change the state law.

As part of that effort, Simon, Minnesota's top election official, is pitching the idea of conducting the 2020 presidential primary almost entirely by mail. That would also be new.

This type of election stuff

can get surprisingly confusing. Here's what it's all about.

Only presidential primary

We're only talking about the primary for the president of the United States here - not the August primary elections for state and congressional offices, nor the November general elections.

The presidential primary will take place in February of presi-

dential years. It's different from the other elections in that it only guides Minnesota delegates in how to vote at national party conventions, where delegates actually determine which presidential candidates will appear on the ballot.

It's new for Minnesota, and starting in 2020, it would replace those quirky caucuses that Minnesota has had for decades where

folks file into school classrooms or other spaces and raise hands, scribble on scraps of paper and argue.

In recent presidential years, there's been blowback about the caucus system, largely because it forces people to give up several hours on a specific weekday evening in the winter.

VOTER: Page A6

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HOLIDAY EXPRESS



Photos by Shelby Lindrud / Tribune

TOP LEFT: Santa greets the crowd. **TOP RIGHT:** Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer dances with two girls at the Holiday Express' stop in Lake Lillian Thursday evening. **BOTTOM:** North Pole elves and characters wave to the crowd at the Lake Lillian Fire Department.

HOMELESS

From Page A1

day center where they can shower, wash clothes, use the computer to search for jobs, services and housing. Each family also has a small closet to store clothes and a few possessions.

Every night a bus takes the guests to a host church for that week. There, church volunteers serve a hot meal, along with conversation, playtime and help the kids with homework.

The churches also provide a place to sleep. Typically, airbeds owned by Family Promise are placed on the floor in a church Sunday school classroom.

In the morning the guests leave the church to begin their day.

Most of the Family Promise guests stay with the program for up to three months.

During that time they can receive other services, including classes that can help them make financial and life decisions.

That time to catch up can be crucial for families, said Marlin Breems, a board member and longtime volunteer with Family Promise. He said most of the past Family Promise families are now living independently and are able to support themselves and their families.

Zimmer, who is unable to work because of a chronic, debilitating disease, spent the last couple of months at Family Promise saving money, making contact with service agencies and making plans to move to a new, safer apartment.

Family Promise wasn't available the last time Zimmer was homeless.

Without Family Promise now, Zimmer said she and Jordan would likely



Erica Dischino / Tribune

Jill Zimmer, left, and Kathryn Redepenning, who both use Family Promise services, use the common space at the Family Promise building in Willmar.

have been sleeping in their van again.

Needs continue

There are currently 12 host churches taking turns hosting Family Promise guests – about half are in the city of Willmar and others are located in Prinsburg, Roseland, Svea, Lake Lillian and Spicer.

There are also churches that provide support with meals and volunteers.

Erickson said ideally they would like to have one more host church, which would mean each church would serve as host four times a year.

Breems said Family Promise is in the midst of its fundraising campaign, including raising \$25,000 for a matching grant. The Willmar Assembly of God Church, which is hosting its annual night of music, "Four Tickets to Christmas" this weekend, is donating all the freewill offerings from this event to Family Promise.

Because Family Promise doesn't currently allow single men into the program, Erickson

said there is a need in this community for more programs and safe housing for homeless men, as well.

And, because Family Promise is a stop-gap measure to address homelessness, Erickson said he'd like to see more "policy" work being done to reduce barriers to affordable housing – a barrier many people face.

For more information about Family Promise go to www.familypromiseofkc.org

Willmar 5-Day Forecast

Morning	Afternoon	Evening	
(7 a.m.) 22° Plenty of sunshine	(Noon) 32° Plenty of sunshine	(7 p.m.) 24° Clear	
WSW at 4-8 mph	W at 4-8 mph	VAR at 3-6 mph	
Tomorrow	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday
 39° 26° Partly sunny	 39° 18° Mostly sunny	 33° 20° Sunny to partly cloudy	 36° 23° Partly sunny
S at 7-14 mph	WNW at 8-16 mph	SE at 4-8 mph	S at 7-14 mph

Almanac

Willmar through 5 p.m. yesterday

Temperature
High/low 37°/23°
Normal high/low 26°/8°
Record high 49° in 1921
Record low -35° in 1917

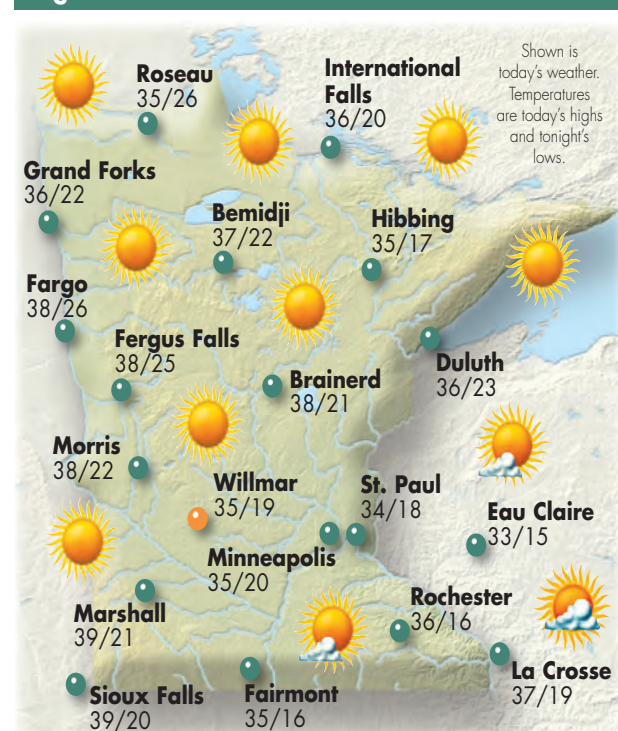
Precipitation
24 hrs to 5 p.m. yest. 0.00"
Year to date 24.89"
Normal year to date 29.04"

Sun and Moon

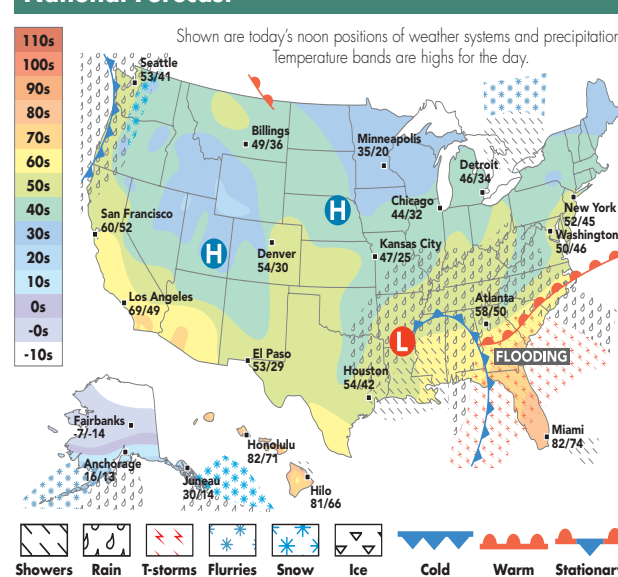
Today	Sunrise	Sunset	
Today	7:51 a.m.	4:39 p.m.	
Sat.	7:52 a.m.	4:39 p.m.	
Today	Moonrise	Moonsset	
Today	12:36 p.m.	11:44 p.m.	
Sat.	1:01 p.m.	none	
First	Full	Last	New
Dec 15	Dec 22	Dec 29	Jan 5

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National Forecast



National Summary: A potent storm will spread a swath of drenching rain from the lower Mississippi Valley to the Ohio Valley, eastern Gulf coast, southern Appalachians and the southern Atlantic seaboard today. Enough rain may fall to cause flooding of urban areas, small streams and some of the larger rivers in the region. Where there is deep snow on the ground at the start of the rain over the southern Appalachians, some roofs may fail under the added weight of the rain. Strong to locally severe thunderstorms will fire over the southeastern corner of the nation.

Forecasts and graphics provided by **AccuWeather, Inc.** ©2018

TODAY'S INFO

What's happening?

Do you know of something that might make a good story or photograph for the newspaper? Call at 320-235-1150.

Corrections

If you have a question about accuracy of information in a news story, please call 320-235-1150.

Lottery results

Winning numbers drawn Thursday night are:
Daily 3: 8-7-6
Northstar Cash: 5-6-8-11-30
Lucky for Life: 15-31-38-39-40
Lucky ball: 1
The lottery player hotline is 651-634-1111. The state's website also lists winning numbers. It is mnlottery.com.

West Central Tribune

A Division of Forum Communications Company

Steven W. Ammermann
Publisher/General Manager
sammermann@wctrib.com

Kelly J. Boldan
Editor
kboldan@wctrib.com

Tammie Brooks
Controller
tbrooks@wctrib.com

Christie Steffel
Advertising Manager
csteffel@wctrib.com

Nathan Schueller
Circulation Manager
nschueller@wctrib.com

News Department (320-235-1150)
Hours: 8 a.m. to midnight weekdays, 4 p.m. to midnight Sunday.

Business Office (320-235-1150)
Hours: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays, closed Saturday and Sunday.

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Hours: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays.
classifieds@wctrib.com
Fax: 320-235-6769
news@wctrib.com
[Website: wctrib.com](http://wctrib.com)

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