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EDEN VALLEY

WATKINS

# VOICE

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## QUICK HITS

### EVC4P to host bingo

Seniors and local preschoolers are invited to an intergenerational activity celebrating America's presidents on Friday, Feb. 22. Sponsored by the Eden Valley Citizens for Progress and part of the Hand 'N Hand program, the free activity will take place from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. at the Eden Valley Community Center.

### Library showing "Norm of the North"

Movies on the Big Screen will return to the Eden Valley Community Center on Friday, Feb. 22, with a free showing of "Norm of the North" at 6 p.m. Rated PG, this animated movie features the voices of Rob Schneider as Norm, a polar bear, and Ken Jeong as the wicked Mr. Greene. Norm travels to New York City to sabotage the shady Mr. Greene's development plans that would jeopardize the Arctic and finds some friends along the way. As one reviewer said, "a great kid's flick with a great message." A craft activity will begin at 5 p.m.

### Valley Tractor Club to meet

The Valley Tractor Club will have a meeting at 7 p.m. on Monday, Feb. 25, at the Valley Inn in Eden Valley.

### Kindergarten roundup coming to EV-W in March

EV-W elementary schools will have Kindergarten Roundup on Monday, March 4. Roundup will be from 10 to 11 a.m. at Watkins Elementary and from 7 to 8 p.m. at Eden Valley Elementary. It will include an informational session with parents and a get-acquainted session with children. For questions, call 320-453-6455, extension 2134.

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## EV-W

### SCHOOL BOARD

*School board wants public input when it updates goals*

## District policy aims for healthier snacking

By Ellarry Prentice

With the federal government having increased regulations on school meals and other food and beverages made available to K-12 students in recent years, red ink is dominating a wellness policy that the Eden Valley-Watkins School District is in the process of revising.

On Wednesday, Feb. 13, the district policy, originally adopted in 2006, made its way to the hands of Eden Valley-Watkins School Board members, who will review the document before they're asked to approve an amended version at their next regular meeting on Wednesday, Feb. 27.

In short, the policy – intended to “promote student wellness” and to “prevent and reduce childhood obesity” – prohibits making available junk food to students during the school day. Gone are the days of donuts, chocolate bars, and regular cola, for example.

Lunch and breakfast meals served by EV-W schools already comply with federal and state nutrition standards, but the revised policy will put in writing the district's commitment to ensuring that foods and beverages sold a la carte in the cafeteria, from vending machines and school stores, at snack bars, and for in-school fundraisers are also healthy and comply with nutrition guidelines set by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

“There's a lot of new language,” superintendent Mark Messman said.

District business manager Cathy Wuertz was recently designated wellness coordinator and is responsible for ensuring each school implements the policy.

The federal requirement dictating the policy is called Smart Snacks in School. It requires all foods and beverages sold during the school day that are not part of the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program meet nutrition standards set by the USDA. These standards apply to foods sold a la carte, and in school stores and vending machines. The school day, Wuertz said, is defined as the midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the school day.

“We can't sell anything that's not a 'Smart Snack,’” Wuertz said, but clarified that the regulations do not apply to vending machines in staff lounges.

Smart Snacks in School standards came into play in 2014-15, and, according to the revised policy, “aim to improve student health and well-being, increase consumption of healthful foods during the school day, and create an

## HOUSE FIRE



Photo by Ellarry Prentice

The interior of a house on the south side of Meeker Avenue in Watkins was destroyed in a fire on Thursday, Feb. 14. The family who was renting the home – Rusty and Tamra Staten and their three children – lost two dogs and nearly all their belongings.

## Community rallies to help Watkins family

*Rusty and Tamra Staten lost their home, two dogs, and cherished belongings in fire on Valentine's Day*

By Ellarry Prentice

For Rusty and Tamra Staten, Valentine's Day started sweet but ended in devastation.

The couple were taking their two older children to a special Valentine's Day dinner on Feb. 14 when they received a call that the house they were renting on Meeker Avenue South in Watkins was on fire.

The Statens rushed home, and, thankfully, found that their three-year-old daughter and her babysitter had escaped unharmed. Sadly, the family's two dogs perished in the blaze, and the house – containing several cherished belongings – was a total loss.

The fire was reported just before 5 p.m., with Watkins Fire and Rescue, the Eden Valley Fire Department, and the Meeker County Sheriff's Office responding. The cause of the fire remains unknown and is being investigated by the state fire marshal's office.

In the days following the tragedy, family and friends have rallied to support the Staten family. Tamra's mother, Juanita Spicer, recently started a Go Fund Me webpage to raise money to help rehouse the family and purchase food, clothing, and other necessities. The Red Cross has also stepped in to provide the Statens with temporary shelter at a hotel.

The need for assistance remains ever-present. The Statens were left with only the clothing on their backs, and the fire destroyed almost all of their personal belongings.

“It's pretty devastating to see the extent of the damage,” said Tamra, who saw the remnant of their home on Saturday, Feb. 16, two days after the fire.

Walking inside was not easy. “Seeing my wedding dress melted to the floor... Things completely gone with no trace of ever existing. Really hard to accept,” she said.



Photo from Statens' Go Fund Me page

The Staten family of Watkins – Rusty (back left), Tamra (back right), and their three young children – is grateful for the kindness being shown to them after their home was lost in a fire.

Among the items lost included tools Rusty used for woodworking and car repairs, and supplies used by Tamra for her work as a beautician. Their children lost beloved toys, including Legos and Barbie dolls, and Rusty lost several musical instruments, amps, and cords.

The Red Cross placed the family in a hotel the day following the fire, but their Go Fund Me page said the hotel stay is only short term, and the family will soon need to find other housing.

While the Statens are still reeling from the shock and devastation, their gratitude and faith are incessant.

“Thank you all for your love and support, all the donations,” Tamra wrote in a Facebook post last week. “It makes me cry every time I open something and see the kindness of people's hearts. I can't say enough thank-you's.”

“It's amazing to think how many things we need for a household of five to run smoothly,” Spicer wrote on the Statens' Go Fund Me page. “We are so grateful that most of what was lost can be replaced because they were 'just things,' but we also mourn the loss of the pups,” she added.

### How to Help

Monetary donations will help the family find new housing and purchase food, clothing, personal care items, fuel, and other necessities.

“The family would also like to give their fur babies a proper good-bye,” Spicer said.

To donate, visit [www.gofundme.com/f/tamra-amp-rusty-staten-house-fire-relief-fund](http://www.gofundme.com/f/tamra-amp-rusty-staten-house-fire-relief-fund) or simply search “Rusty and Tamra Staten's Go Fund Me” in a web browser. The link should appear at the top of the page. The link, made public, has also been shared

on Tamra's Facebook page.

Physical donations, especially clothing and totes/storage containers, are also appreciated. The family needs winter, spring, and summer clothing in the following sizes: girl size 10-12 pants, girl size large or 10-12 shirts, girl size 3 or 4 shoes, toddler size 3T or 4T outfits, 2T or 3T underwear, child size 10/12 shoes, woman size 5 shoes, woman size medium or large shirts; woman size 8 shoes, woman size large sports bra, woman size 3/4 or 29 pants, man large or extra-large shirts, man size 32/34 or 34/34 pants, man size 13 shoe, man size medium/large boxer brief.

Donations can be dropped off at 151 Meeker Ave. S. in Watkins. If no one answers the door, donations can be left on the porch, and someone will pick them up shortly.