



Lowell Anderson / Echo Press

Public Works Director Bill Thoennes uses a bucket truck to put a mask on Big Ole in Alexandria on Thursday morning. The event was organized by city staff.

BIG OLE

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► Local police officers. One officer went to 12 day cares (who were the first to commit to making 20 hearts). The officer modeled social distancing and brought joy to each of the homes by letting the kids see the squad car lights in motion, Nielson said.

► The Alexandria Fire Department. Members were originally going to lift the mask and place it on Big Ole, however, the park department's equipment was better suited for the task. The fire department was still present to show their unity.

► Local mask makers. More than 20,000 masks have been made for medical teams, essential workers, vulnerable residents and the general community. Each mask carries a story and there's a "why" behind every stitch, according to



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Members of Helping Hands of Alexandria did the chalk artwork at the base of Big Ole in Alexandria.

Nielson.

► Helping Hands. The local organization continues to support community members every day and have been instrumental in communicating the needs of individuals and fulfilling them, Nielson said.

► The artists. The

chalk art representing "we are in this together" was designed and made with love, said Nielson. "The artist's work is displayed throughout the community and represents love and unity at the base of Big Ole," she noted.

► The speakers. "The speakers at the event

spoke from the heart," Nielson said. "Their love of our community goes deep and their words spoke of love for the students, our citizens and our community."

A video of the event can be seen on the city's Facebook page at www.facebook.com/AlexandriaMN.

NEWS BRIEFS

ALP Utilities is flushing hydrants

Attention ALP Utilities water customers: ALP will be flushing fire hydrants between 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. over the course of the next eight weeks, starting April 20.

Fire hydrants are flushed to remove mineral deposits and sediment from the water mains and to ensure proper operation for fire protection.

During hydrant flushing operations, it is not unusual for customers to experience discoloration in the water, and or pressure changes.

Rusty water does not pose a health issue, but may affect the aesthetic quality of the water.

Customers are encouraged to check their water for discoloration prior to using hot water or doing laundry, as rusty water may stain clothing. If rusty water is present, customers should flush their household cold water taps and flushing until clear.

Outdoor watering or using exterior hose

outlets can also flush customer piping while still using water efficiently.

Contact ALP with any questions at 320-763-6501.

Fire starts after woman burns woodtick

A house fire in Kimball started after a woman tried to burn a woodtick on Saturday, May 2.

At about 9:30 a.m., Stearns County sheriff's deputies responded to a house fire at 31 Elm Street South in Kimball. A neighbor called 911 and said the only occupant was out of the home.

The homeowner, Judy Anderson, 73, of Kimball, received minor injuries and was treated at the scene. Anderson told officers she was using a cigarette lighter to burn a wood tick wrapped in a napkin and some nearby paper started on fire.

The Kimball Fire Department extinguished the fire.

The home suffered extensive smoke and fire damage.

BUSINESSES

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"I've heard from many small business owners who have been forced for weeks to close their doors, even though they are able to implement plans to safely serve customers just like the big box stores are allowed to," Franson said. "Our community is home to many businesses who simply cannot survive being shut down for several more weeks. I urge the governor to take that into account, and for those businesses that can operate safely, I hope he will allow them to open as soon as possible."

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