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# MONTICELLO Times

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Covering the cities of Monticello and Big Lake, and Wright and Sherburne counties \$1

## DAY FOR GIRLS



Jeff Hage / Monticello Times

Monticello Interact Club members Gracie Guertin (left) and Noelle Bad Heart Bull put strings on bags that will hold elements of a Day for Girls hygiene kit during a Day for Girls sew-a-thon Jan. 23 in Monticello.

### Woman shares with Monticello teens the plight of girls in remote corners of the world

BY JEFFREY HAGE  
MONTICELLO TIMES

Judy Johnson didn't mean to change a part of the world.

But every once in a while, a fire is lit under somebody that results in unexpected consequences.

For Maple Grove Rotarian Judy Johnson, that fire was lit in 2015 at the Rotary International Convention in Sydney, Australia.

Johnson never imaged the turn her life would take because of a chance stop at a Rotary project information booth.

She also didn't foresee that five years later, she



Judy Johnson

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Jeff Hage / Monticello Times

Monticello Rotary Club President Mark Klaverkamp demonstrates to Monticello student Hanna Torres how to put snaps on a girls hygiene kit during the Jan. 23 Day for Girls sew-a-thon in Monticello.

### Addiction treatment facility eyed for Big Lake

BY JEFFREY HAGE  
MONTICELLO TIMES

Big Lake could soon be home to a new residential treatment center.

The City Council on Jan. 22 reviewed a planned unit development (PUD) concept plan for the treatment center being proposed by Nystrom & Associates.

Nystrom, one of the state's largest providers of counseling services, opened an outpatient clinic in Big Lake in 2017 at 207 Jefferson Boulevard.

The proposed treatment center would provide inpatient and outpatient care to people with addiction struggles who would live and get treatment in an apartment-like setting.

Developers say the center would bring to Big Lake 40 to 50 high-end jobs.

The center is being proposed for 3.3 acres on a 12-acre parcel at the intersection of Forest Street and County Road 43 South, which is currently vacant agricultural land.

The Nystrom facility would be built on a 3-acre outlot created by a land split from a 12-acre parcel on which Kueper's Construction is proposing an apartment complex.

Nystrom & Associates' proposed facility would be south of the Big Lake Park-and-Ride and the Northstar Train Station. The site is adjacent to the Station Street Apartments-a proposed 105-unit apartment complex for which the Big Lake City Council approved on Jan. 8 a PUD, preliminary plat, rezoning, and preliminary site and building plans.

In documentation provided by Nystrom & Associates to the City, the facility will include 25-30 shared residential units including both single- and double-occupancy units, shared interior spaces for treatment and recreation, and exterior amenities such as a shared walking path, landscaping, and sports facilities such as a basketball court, shuffleboard court and horseshoe pit. The facility would have surface parking.

The company said there is an identified need in the Big Lake/Sherburne

Treatment / See page 2

### Students dig deep in their pockets for those in the land down under Coin drive is assisting students in Australia

BY JEFFREY HAGE  
MONTICELLO TIMES

Students at Little Mountain Elementary School in Monticello were working hard last week to help their fellow students in Australia affected by the Australian wildfires.

And they're doing it one day at a time and one coin at a time.

For five days, from Jan. 27 to Jan. 31, each of the Little Mountain classrooms had a bucket that students put their coins in. On Monday they were asked to donate pennies. On Tuesday, it was nickels. Wednesday was the day dimes were

collected, and Thursday was the day students brought quarters. To end the week of giving, students brought any and all coins of their liking.

The fundraising activity was the brainchild of Little Mountain's Student Activity Committee, a group charged with finding activities to boost school spirit.

When searching for a January activity, committee members came across an interesting fact: Sunday, Jan. 26 was National Australia Day- the day that commemorates the anniversary of the 1788



Jeff Hage / Monticello Times

Little Mountain Elementary students contribute dimes to a coin drive at the school in Monticello as part of a campaign to raise money for an elementary school in Australia affected by brush fires in its area.

Coin Collection / See page 2

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## Coin Collection : Students moved by learning that smoke from fires is keeping counterparts inside

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arrival of the First Fleet of British ships at Port Jackson, New South Wales, and the raising of the Flag of Great Britain at Sydney Cove.

Committee members saw a perfect opportunity to take the celebration of Australia and do some good for the victims of the bushfires that have been plaguing Australia, said Third Grade Teacher Sarah Vagle, a coordinator of the coin fundraiser.

Money raised by Little Mountain students will go specifically to a school in Australia whose students have been touched by the fires.

The school was identified with the help of teacher Liz Barnes, whose best friend from childhood is married to a na-

tive Australian, Vagle said. A friend of that couple is a teacher at the Australian school that will benefit from the fundraiser.

One third grade student noted that she wanted to help the students in Australia because there is so much smoke near their school that they can't go out for recess. Another said she wanted to help because the student's musical instruments were damaged and her donation could maybe go towards replacing instruments. Another student hoped that the money could help the Australian students get new supplies.

The class that collects the most money for the fire victims in Australia gets a Popsicle party, Vagle said.



Jeff Hage / Monticello Times

Sarah Vagle is pictured with her third grade students, who are holding letters that spell out the phrase. "Coins for Australia."

## Treatment: Nystrom & Associates opened a Big Lake office in 2017, looks to add treatment center

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Drawing: City of Big Lake

Pictured above is an architect rendition of what the proposed Nystrom & Associates residential treatment center could look like in Big Lake.

County area to provide residential drug and alcohol treatment for adults. Nystrom & Associates proposes to fill that need with the construction of a sober residential treatment program that will deliver group therapy, individual therapy, educational groups, family involvement, and more.

The length of stay at the facility will be 45-60 days.

The facility will not be what's referred to as a "wet house," meaning ogram is NOT a "wet house." meaning there will be no alcohol kept onsite, Nystrom officials in attendance at the Jan. 22 meeting told members of the City Council.

While the land on which the proposed facility is zoned agricultural and would need to be rezoned, it could be a perfect fit among other developments in the area.

The property is located in the City's

Transit-oriented Development (TOD) district and its Station Zone.

Within this zone, transit-oriented commercial uses and high-density apartment-style housing are intended to be the primary features, according to city staff.

The Big Lake Planning Commission reviewed the Concept Plan at their meeting on January 6, 2020.

The Nystrom project cannot move forward until the Station Street Apartment complex gets final approval of its land-split and creation of the outlot on which the treatment center would be built.

A final plat application for Nystrom's project site to replat from an outlot to a buildable lot cannot be reviewed or approved by the City until the plat application made by Kueper's Construction has been approved, according to City staff.

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## Day for Girls: Judy Johnson was inspired to help girls around the world after attending convention

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would visit a hotel banquet room where she spent three hours on a Thursday night in January with two dozen Monticello teenagers creating feminine hygiene kits for young girls in third-world countries like Bangladesh, Guatemala, and Uganda.

The teens were from the Interact clubs at Monticello Middle School and Monticello High School. Supported by a local Rotary Club, an Interact Club is a school-based club of 12 to 18 year-olds that allows the teens to develop leadership skills and participate in community projects under the Rotary International mantra, "Service Above Self." The Monticello Rotary Club connected Judy Johnson and the local Interact clubs.

The program for which Johnson volunteers is called "Day for Girls." Day for Girls was founded in 2008 by Celeste Mergens, who was working with a family foundation on the outskirts of Nairobi, Kenya at the time.

There was a nagging question that troubled Mergens: What are girls doing for feminine hygiene?

She sought out an answer to that question that bothered her so and reached out to the director of a local orphanage.

The answer she received was quite simple.

"They do nothing. They wait in their rooms," responded the orphanage director.

The idea of the first Days for Girls Kits were born with the idea of making available to the girls a washable, long-lasting pad.

Judy Johnson has been a loyal supporter of the Days for Girls program.

So much so, that she has held 130 sewing events like the one that January night in Monticello.

Through those 130 sewing events, 4,800 washable hygiene kits have been distributed in 22 countries throughout the world, Johnson said.

When Judy Johnson visited that Days for Girls booth at that 2015 Rotary Convention, her eyes were opened.

"It made me pissed off," Johnson said

of learning about the plight of many of the young girls throughout the world.

Johnson is a staunch believer that woman are future leaders- whether it be in the United States or third-world countries across the globe.

Girls and young women deserve equal opportunities to those of boys and young men, Johnson says.

But girls and women are being denied equal opportunities in most of these poor, undeveloped countries where they spend time sitting on cardboard for several days each month, often going without food and becoming ill.

In Monticello, with a captive audience of two dozen teenage girls- and one boy- a handful of Monticello Rotarians and some community volunteers, Judy Johnson discussed the need for the Day for Girls kits a little more intimately.

Obviously, girls in remote corners of the world can't go to a Target, Walmart, Walgreens or CVS to buy feminine hygiene projects when the need arises, Johnson said.

"So instead, the girls sit on cardboard, grass, rocks, or even dung," Johnson said bluntly.

"They often have to skip school for weeks. The girls get so far behind that they drop out of school," she said.

That brings upon the girls another problem.

"Once they drop out of school, they're available for marriage- and once they're married, they're not wife number 1, but number two, three or four," Johnson said.

Marriage can then lead to pregnancy.

That's why the hygiene kits are key.

"They keep them in school. They give girls a chance," Johnson said.

=It wasn't hard for Judy Johnson to see that she could play a role in the future development of these girls- these potential future leaders.

"All I have to do is sew a kit so they can have a better life," Johnson said.

"I can do that," she said.

Johnson's first venture helping girls through Days for Girls became a reality through working with the Brooklyn Park



Jeff Hage / Monticello Times

Monticello Rotary Club member Jill Agosto sews hygiene kits during a Day for Girls sew-a-thon event coordinated by the club on Jan. 23 in Monticello.

Rotary Club.

"They were doing a project for Bangladesh, and it occurred to me that the girls in Bangladesh need this," Johnson said of the Day for Girls kits.

Steve Laible, international service chair of the Brooklyn Park Rotary Club took Judy Johnson's first kits to a school in Bangladesh, she said.

"They were well received," she said. Johnson is also proud of playing a role in establishing a sewing center at a refuge camp in Uganda.

For Johnson, the Day for Girls project grew through word of mouth.

"People at my church heard about it and wanted to help, as did Rotary Clubs throughout the District," Johnson said.

Today, it's a regular occurrence for people to show up on Judy Johnson's

doorstep looking for fabric to make kits, delivering new and completed kits, or looking for kits to take on their journeys across the globe.

"And Rotary Clubs throughout the District make generous donations of fabric," Johnson said.

Johnson has also given more than 30 speeches or programs on the Day for Girls project, in addition to hosting the 130 sewing events like the January event in Monticello. Coming up on the agenda is the Minneapolis City of Lakes Rotary Club "Days for Girls Sew-a-thon", to be held from 8:30 a.m. to noon at Northeast United Methodist Church, 2510 Cleveland St. NE in Minneapolis.

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