



FFA honored
FLAHS branch
named Top 10
in state
Page 7



Hartsy & hockey
Forest Lake
resident wins
national
award
Page 9

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March held in Forest Lake against racism

Death of George Floyd sparked four recent high school graduates to march against racism

Hannah Davis
News Editor

On the evening of Monday, June 1, Mika Peterson, Megan Palmer, Tommy Maurer and Txuqi Lee all hopped on a Zoom call together. The four Forest Lake residents, all recent high school graduates, decided they wanted to march in protest of the death of George Floyd, who was killed by a Minneapolis police officer who knelt on his neck, and to speak out against racism.

They made a decision to hold a march in Forest Lake to create a safe space for people to peacefully protest and bring awareness to the people in the area.

"Forest Lake is very much a bubble, and it is easy for us to ignore what's happening in the cities. But it's also important to acknowledge in the community there is racism and racial injustice that happens here," Peterson said.

"I think it's important to call attention to the systemic racism in the U.S. right now, and if we can help from the small town of Forest Lake and show support by doing our part, it's our duty to do it," Maurer said.

By midnight that night, they started posting about the event on social media, but they didn't expect to gather so many people.

"We expected it to just be us and a couple of our friends," Peterson said.

Instead, by the next morning, they had dozens of messages pouring in from members of the community asking if they could join. Forest Lake Superintendent Steve Massey and Forest Lake Area High



Photos by Hannah Davis

A protestor pleads for help from the community to fight against racism at Lakeside Memorial Park in Forest Lake on Thursday, June 4. Protestors shared their experiences of racism.

School Principal Jim Caldwell saw the posts on social media about the march and reached out to the organizers. Shortly after that, a meeting was arranged between the Forest Lake Police Department, Caldwell, and the organizers about developing a route and plans.

At 11 a.m. on Thursday, June 4, roughly 300 people, mostly young adults and teenagers, but some older adults and young families, gathered for the march, walking from the high school to Lakeside Memorial Park via the Hardwood Creek Trail, holding signs and chanting sayings like "black lives matter" and "no justice, no peace."

John and Karla McCarey, of Scandia, came out and participated in the event. John said: "It's a terrible thing that happened [to George Floyd], and we really believe that silence is complicity and it's time to take a stand. We've got to make a change."

Grant Maxfield, of Forest Lake, said, "I'm here to help spread awareness [of] the amount of injustice blacks go through every day."

Tensions were raised a couple of times on the march as young men sat in trucks displaying the American flag and a flag for President Trump. At one point along the march, Police Capt. Greg Weiss made the decision to park a fire engine, which was being used as traffic guidance during the march, to block the two groups from each other to calm tensions, noting each group's right to use their First Amendment rights. At one point, some of the protesters walked around the fire engine to protest at those in

the trucks, with at least one water bottle being thrown at a truck by a protester.

"They were following us the entire time, which I didn't appreciate, but they can also have their opinions and make their voice heard. It charged us up as we were marching. It proved why we need to have marches like this in Forest Lake to show our black community and non-white community that we support them," Peterson said.

Those who marched gathered at Lakeside Memorial Park for a moment of silence



Community members march along U.S. Highway 61 on Thursday, June 4 protesting the death of George Floyd. According to the event organizers, some people came from White Bear Lake.

in respect to Floyd, followed by an open mic, during which people discussed racism both across the country and as it pertains to the Forest Lake area.

A moment that stood out for Peterson was when Nicolette Wooden Shegstad shared how she was unaware of the march, but saw the march and went to the park to see what was going on. She started to cry when she realized it was a march against racism, and she spoke about how she was grateful to see so many people in Forest Lake attend.

Many participants decided to divert from the organizers' plan and take Highway 61 back to the high school for more visibility. Peterson said while that wasn't the organizers' intent, nor did she go that route herself, she said it was "exciting" and "more power to them," also adding a thanks to the police department for helping.

Weiss said that while the use of Highway 61 wasn't in the organizers' plans, he did have backup plans in place, so he utilized the patrol units to block key intersections so the protesters could walk back. Weiss and Peterson both stressed that the safety of the protesters was their focus.

More tensions were raised as roughly 40 of those protesters stopped at the Forest Lake City Center.

"Unfortunately ... a select few individuals who became unruly, and that made it difficult to manage at the end of the walk," Forest Lake Police Chief Rick Peterson said. That behavior included throwing water toward police officers, shouting profanities and chanting for police officers to "take a knee." After roughly a couple minutes, when protesters realized the officers wouldn't do so, the group continued back

March see page 3

63-year-old man missing in First Lake

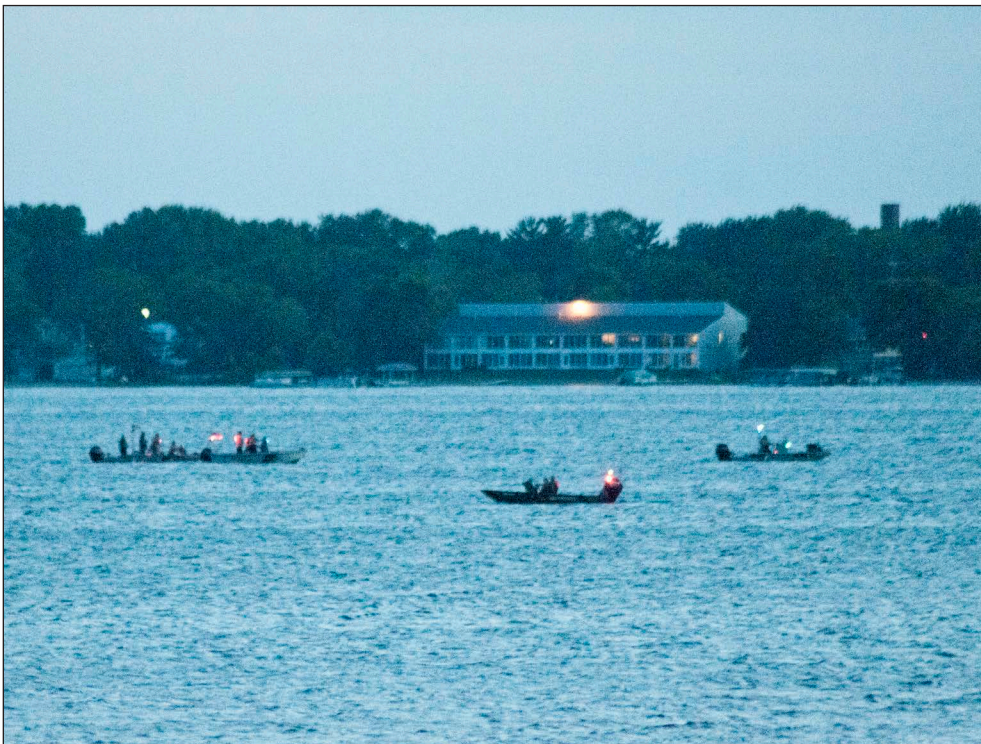


Photo by Hannah Davis

At 4:40 p.m. on Sunday, June 7, a 63-year-old man was reported as missing in the water of Forest Lake's first lake. The man went into the water with no life jacket on and was not seen thereafter. Dive teams from Forest Lake Fire & Rescue and Washington County were dispatched, and have also included teams from the Minnesota State Patrol. A search operation is still under way as of press time on Tuesday.

Walz announces gradual reopening of indoor dining, gyms

Phase three began Wednesday

Associated Press

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) — Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz announced Friday a gradual reopening of indoor dining, gyms and entertainment venues during the coronavirus pandemic.

Walz said the restrictions will loosen Wednesday, June 10 but customers and employees still will be either strongly recommended or required to wear masks to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. In a statement,

Walz said the state is "now in a position to carefully turn the dial toward reopening society."

Restaurants can offer indoor dining while maintaining social distancing, requiring reservations and seating no more than 50% occupancy. Gyms, yoga studios, theaters, concert halls, bowling alleys and museums may open at 25% occupancy.

Places of worship can increase their occupancy to 50%.

Minnesota Chamber President Doug Loon said businesses across the state welcome the progress. But Loon urged the Democratic governor

to accelerate the process and reopen all Minnesota businesses by June 19.

As of Friday, Minnesota has confirmed 26,980 cases of the coronavirus, up 712 from the previous day. The state recorded 33 new deaths Friday, bringing Minnesota's death toll to 1,148.

For most people, the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough that clear up in two to three weeks. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia.





News

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Fourth of July celebration canceled

American Legion discussing other options

Hannah Davis
News Editor

For the first time in 96 years, Forest Lake will be without its parade, carnival, and fireworks on Independence Day.

“It is with a heavy heart; [sic] we are announcing that the 2020 Forest Lake 4th of July Celebration will take on a different look and feel this year,” a press release

from the Fourth of July officials said.

The traditional celebrations, which are hosted by the Forest Lake American Legion, are canceled, but the American Legion is still considering options for food vendors and entertainment.

“For 96 years the Forest Lake American Legion, our City and its citizens have always supported this amazing event – it is just going to be a little different this year,” the press release said.

March

from page 1

to the high school. There were no injuries, arrests made, or citations given at the march. “I felt [my officers] were extremely professional, even though they were put in a difficult situation,” Rick Peterson said.

“I’d like to thank everyone who came out, and to the Forest Lake Police Department for keeping it safe, and the school district. They really helped out and made sure the day went smoothly,” Mika Peterson said.

The work, she said, is far from over.



A protestor lies prostrate during a moment of silence for George Floyd. The moment of silence was 8 minutes and 46 seconds, the supposed time Floyd was under the officer’s knee.

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