



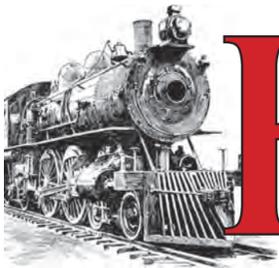
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**BOYS
FALL
TO CMCS**
PAGE 7



**TAX
SEASON
IS HERE**
PAGES 12-13



TRACY AREA HEADLIGHT HERALD

BRINGING YOU YOUR NEWS WEEKLY SINCE 1879

OUR 141ST YEAR – NO. 5

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 29, 2020

\$1.50



NOLAN GERVAIS AND EVELYN BUYCK pet Bunny, a rescue dog that was brought to St. Mary's School last Wednesday by Cathy Nelson of Tracy Area Animal Rescue. SMS students are raising money for TAAR as part of Catholic Schools Week.

Photo / Per Peterson

BUNNY IS IN THE HOUSE



St. Mary's School students had a very special visitor last week as part of a Catholic Schools Week fundraising activity for Tracy Area Animal Rescue

BY PER PETERSON
EDITOR

Last Wednesday morning was anything but normal for Students at St. Mary's School.

For starters, they didn't have to arrive at school until 10 a.m., as school was two hours late. And when school did start, they all made a new friend: Bunny.

Not that kind of bunny. This Bunny was a rescue dog brought in by Cathy Nelson of Tracy Area Animal Rescue. Nelson was there to educate the kids, not just about Bunny, but about TAAR and the reality of the homeless animal situation in the area.

Nelson told the kids that Bunny's owners had moved and, she needed a new home.

"She loves people," Nelson said. "And

she really loves kids."

Of course, the kids took to Bunny immediately. But Nelson wasn't just there to let the kids pet a dog; she wanted to let them know how important it was that TAAR is there to rescue pets that have been abandoned and to remind them of where their "Pennies for Pets" fundraiser money will go.

"That's just wonderful," Nelson said of the school's drive to raise money for TAAR. "We love to get kids involved. A lot of the kids today had no idea that puppy mills exist, or that there's so many unwanted animals that are euthanized daily."

BUNNY
CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

A NEW WRINKLE FOR 2020 ELECTION

Council updated on presidential nomination primary procedures

BY PER PETERSON
EDITOR

This year's election will be a little different than those in years past.

Diane Campbell, who was appointed Deputy Clerk at Monday's Tracy City Council meeting, addressed the council on major changes for the 2020 election. In 2016, legislation was passed creating a presidential nomination primary, and, as Campbell stated, such a primary has not been held since 1992.

"Prior to that it has only been held three times: 1916, 1952 and 1956," Campbell said.

The presidential primary will take place on March 3.

Campbell said anyone who wants to vote this election year will have to designate their party. Election judges will ensure that voters' party affiliation will be private to other voters, but it will be available to the party chairperson after the election.

"When they come to vote, their party affiliation will be very private," she said. "The judges will handle it in such a way that the people behind them will not know what ballot

KEY ELECTION DATES

FEB. 11: Voter pre-registration for presidential primary

MARCH 3: Presidential primary

MARCH 10: Township elections

JUNE 26: Vote by mail or in person

JULY 21: Voter pre-registration

AUG. 11: Primary election

SEPT. 18: Vote by mail or in person

OCT. 13: Voter pre-registration for general election

NOV. 3: Election Day

they get. Once the election takes place, their party affiliation will be made public to the chairperson of the parties."

Absentee voters will receive two ballots — one DFL and one Republican, Campbell said. Voters need to vote on one of the ballots and destroy the other.

"We just want to make sure the public knows that when they get these ballots, they will only be voting one on ballot," said Campbell.

Pre-registration ends Feb. 11. Voters who pre-register with the

ELECTION
CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

LAND VALUES HOLD STEADY



LYON COUNTY

Source: U of M Extension; Headlight Herald photo and illustration

Values dropped in Murray, Redwood, increased in Lyon

• Southwestern Minnesota farmland values decreased .2% in 2019

BY PER PETERSON
EDITOR

A survey of farmland signs in 14 southwest Minnesota counties shows that farmland values in the region are slightly down — .2% — in 2019.

"We were going down for quite a few years — 2014, '15, '16, '17, we were up in '18," said David Bau, Extension educator with the University of Minnesota. "In 2018 we were up in eight (counties) and down in six; now in 2019, we're half up and half down. Overall, we're down slightly. It varies in each county."

The survey on farmland sales in the 14 counties has been conducted for the last 25 years. It reports bare farmland sales to non-related parties for the first six months of each year. Land values had been steadily increasing until 2014. After reaching record high prices in 2013, the upward trend was broken as prices declined in 2014 and continued down through 2017, according to the University of Minnesota. The trend changed to an increase in 2018 and remains constant in 2019. The summary report for this survey is

County	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Chippewa	\$7,011	\$7,286	\$5,699	\$6,378	\$6,460	\$6,336
Cottonwood	\$8,790	\$6,400	\$6,450	\$7,266	\$7,322	\$8,064
Jackson	\$7,984	\$7,311	\$6,825	\$7,399	\$6,671	\$6,361
Lac qui Parle	\$4,251	\$4,765	\$4,191	\$5,111	\$5,105	\$5,049
Lincoln	\$6,661	\$6,432	\$4,482	\$4,415	\$5,312	\$5,806
Lyon	\$7,918	\$6,078	\$6,538	\$6,057	\$5,358	\$5,607
Martin	\$9,341	\$7,513	\$7,744	\$6,370	\$6,120	\$6,915
Murray	\$6,722	\$6,207	\$6,890	\$6,135	\$6,406	\$3,446
Nobles	\$7,347	\$8,200	\$8,828	\$7,132	\$8,548	\$8,132
Pipestone	\$7,433	\$6,315	\$7,651	\$5,478	\$6,211	\$6,914
Redwood	\$9,023	\$7,283	\$6,439	\$6,852	\$7,114	\$6,600
Rock	\$9,353	\$11,148	\$10,753	\$7,545	\$8,656	\$8,851
Watonwan	\$7,549	\$6,681	\$6,749	\$6,588	\$7,373	\$6,006
Yellow Med.	\$7,154	\$5,387	\$5,325	\$5,830	\$5,584	\$5,959
Average	\$7,556	\$6,929	\$6,731	\$6,340	\$6,589	\$6,576

Average land prices by year

available at the county extension offices in Chippewa, Cottonwood, Jackson, Lac qui Parle, Lincoln, Lyon, Martin, Murray, Nobles, Pipestone, Redwood, Rock, Watonwan and Yellow Medicine counties. This year the decrease across the 14 counties averaged .2%. Southwest Minnesota land prices peaked at \$8,466 per acre, then declined through 2017 to \$6,340 until increasing in 2018 to \$6,589 and declined slightly to \$6,576 in 2019.

VALUES
CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Springfield's Salonek low bid on high school job

BY TARA BRANDL
PUBLISHER

The District No. 2904 School Board on Monday moved forward with the next step of the secured office entry remodel at its regular board meeting.

Bids were on Thursday, Jan. 23. After review by MLA Architects and the building/grounds and health/safety committee, the board voted to award the base bid to Salonek Construction, Inc. of Springfield. The low base bid from Salonek Construction, Inc. was for \$789,946. The board also awarded Salonek Construction, Inc. the alternate

No. 2 bid for in floor heat in the vestibule for \$3,600.

After discussion and opinion from the building/grounds and health/safety committee, the decision to add the canopy died due to lack of a motion, meaning there will be no canopy on the new entrance. The bid for the alternate No. 1 bid for the canopy was \$66,049.

"(It's) \$66,000 and I'm not 100% sure how much it's going to help," board member Matt Surprenant said. "My only thought was, like (TAPS Supt.) Chad (Anderson) alluded to,

was shorten the walk up there a little bit, it's going to protect some from the rain, snow and ice and maybe make it easier for the grounds keepers to keep the sidewalk clear in that area. Granted, you're still going to have the wind going through there and it's going to be relatively high. But you're still going to be outside and you're still going to have the wind, so is it worth \$66,000? Probably not."

Alternate No. 3 bid for metal around

HIGH SCHOOL
CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

BALLARD JOINS STAFF

The Tracy Area Headlight Herald welcomes Erin Ballard to the staff. Ballard will be working mostly in the front office during her time at the paper, but will also be covering various news and sports events in and around Tracy.

Ballard was born and raised in Tampa, FL, and received her English degree in 2016 from Northern State University in Aberdeen, SD.

Before coming to Tracy, she worked at the Aberdeen American News as a reporter, page designer, editor and digital media manager.



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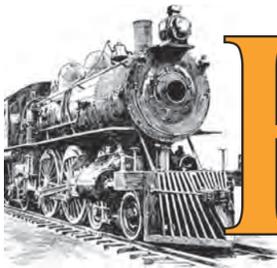
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Sailor

HOLIDAY EDITION
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INSIDE



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COUNCIL TO INTERVIEW CITY ADMIN. FINALISTS NEXT WEEK

BY PER PETERSON
EDITOR The Tracy City Council on Monday approved moving to the interview stage with finalists vying for the vacant city administrator position.

The finalists were chosen by an assigned committee made up of Mayor Anthony Dimmers, interim City Administrator Shane Daniels and council member Jeri Schons.

Dimmers was able to reach two of the three candidates Monday to inform them of their finalist status: Lory Young, city administrator in

Gaylord since January 2018, and Steve Berkner, former city council member and former mayor of Ortonville. A third candidate was unable to be reached.

"We have some qualified candidates," Dimmers said. "I'm looking forward to the interview process."

Dimmers said both candidates will be asked the same questions.

Interviews will take place at 6 p.m. on Tuesday, Dec. 10. After the interviews, the Council will meet in closed session to make its choice.

The City had offered the position to one of three finalists in October, but that candidate declined the offer.

Former City Administrator Kris Ambuehl resigned in July after a little more than a year in Tracy; he accepted the same position in St. Joseph, which is near his hometown of Bowlus and Little Falls, where he grew up.

...

Liquor store sales for October

COUNCIL
CONTINUED ON PAGE 14



SOMETHING TO 'REMEMBER'

SIXTH-GRADERS ADDISON KAINZ (left) and Aliyah Loftness get into the spirit while rehearsing "Feliz Navidad" for Monday's Tracy Area Elementary Christmas Concert titled "A Holiday to Remember." For more on this year's event, see Page 3. Photo / Peterson



RYAN CHUKUSKE and his new friend, Bailey, were travel buddies this past weekend. Submitted photo

Taking the Golden Rule on the road

Ryan Chukuske recently made a very important — and very impromptu — trip to help reunite a dying stranger with her dog

BY PER PETERSON
EDITOR Ryan Chukuske wasn't about to let his disdain for driving prevent him from helping someone in need.

Chukuske, a 1999 Tracy Area High School graduate, recently did something not too many people would even consider doing: drive halfway across the country at the drop of a hat for a stranger.

Chukuske made the trip with a pug named Bailey — a dog owned by a terminally ill woman who was moving to a friend's home out West to live out the last days of her life. The woman was told by the airline she was going to use to fly out of Minnesota that she wasn't able to bring the dog on the plane.

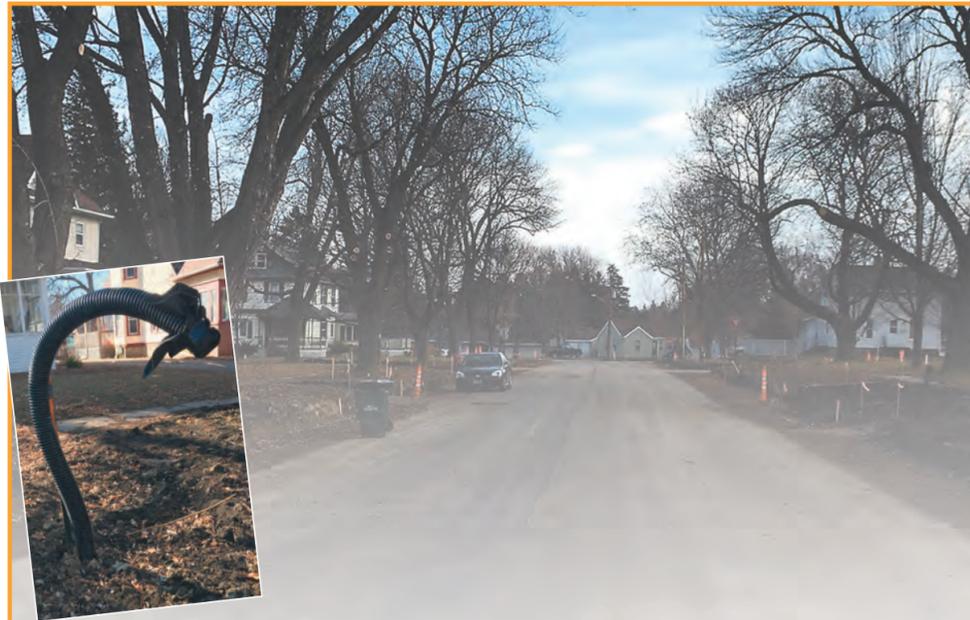
GOLDEN RULE
CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

MWA folds; new club in the works in Tracy

BY PER PETERSON
EDITOR The Minnesota Waterfowl Association has championed the outdoors and has raised money for habitat restoration and the promotion of the outdoors at the state and local levels for more than 50 years. That tradition, which has expanded to include younger generations, is now over.

The non-profit MWA, which began in 1967 in Albert Lea, has disbanded

MWA
CONTINUED ON PAGE 3



STILL IN THE CONSTRUCTION ZONE

Weather delays pushed back the start of the Phase 3A-1 project, leaving a lot of unfinished business



AN ORANGE SNOW FENCE graces an area on Emory St. in front of the Zion Lutheran Church. ABOVE, LEFT: large tubes protrude from boulevards on Hollett and Emory streets to mark sump pump services that will be hooked up next year. Photos / Per Peterson



BECAUSE OF DELAYS, curbs were not poured this year, as was planned. Curb work is one of a number of things that will need to be addressed in the spring as part of the Phase 3A-1 infrastructure plan.

BY PER PETERSON
EDITOR Infrastructure work under Hollett and Emory streets may be complete, but it's the situation above the surface that could potentially cause city residents and city workers headaches this winter and next spring.

The Phase 3A-1 project that began past the anticipated start date has resulted in new underground mains and services in these areas. The delay in the project, however — the construction crew battled rain during their work in Lambertton prior to coming to Tracy — has resulted in a lot of unfinished business on streets, intersections and in people's yards.

On the surface, one layer of asphalt was applied on Hollett and Emory, as were temporary asphalt driveway aprons. However, areas of sidewalks that were dug up to install services were not replaced (gravel was used to fill the areas) and the delay also meant workers didn't have time to pour curbs. That means the new roads have only gravel shoulders and, in some areas, steep drop-offs from the boulevard to the

ZONE
CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

EDA evaluates hit-and-miss Business Reward program

BY PER PETERSON
EDITOR The Tracy EDA last week worked to clarify the future of its Business Reward program.

The program, which offers a \$5,000 incentive to new businesses in town, has been a topic of conversation for some time, as the question of whether or not it has run its course has been debated.

The program, the EDA decided, will continue, but will not be physically advertised around town, at least for the winter. For the 18-months the program has been going, there have been "reward" signs posted around town, but those signs will come down, and a fresh campaign will likely begin in the spring.

EDA member George Landuyt asked why would they want to end the program if the fate of a \$5,000 reward lies with the board anyway.

"It's not costing you ... let's say a business comes and doesn't qualify — then they don't get it," he said. "It might not be working very well, but it must be working a little bit."

EDA chair Dennis Fultz chimed in by saying he has noticed how the posted advertisements have lasted in various businesses for so long.

PROGRAM
CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

TIF district likely to be in city's future

The EDA discussed a future Tax Incremental Finance (TIF) district in Tracy, as the need for such a district will likely be apparent in the future.

"It's a popular tool for cities that are wanting people to come in and do some building," EDA Director Jeff Carpenter said.

Carpenter said the addition of a TIF district — which essentially is a tax abatement — in town has been discussed for a couple of years.

"It's a great program," said Carpenter. "It doesn't hurt the city on taxes — it's just not going to increase the tax base for a certain amount of years."

EDA member Tony Peterson said a busi-

TIF
CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



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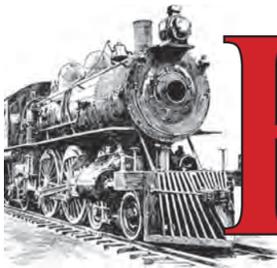
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WINDOW TO THE WORLD AT CITY HALL
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GERVAIS IN SELECT COMPANY
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WHAT LIES AHEAD FOR TRACY?

City leaders met last week to share ideas on how city can best move forward, prosper in the years to come

BY PER PETERSON
EDITOR

Is Tracy a "bedroom community" or a "business community?" How can the city be marketed better? How can the community grow over the next two decades?

These are just a few of the questions posed to city leaders at a budget workshop last Monday designed to set council priorities for 2021.

City Administrator Erik Hansen facilitated the forum and posed three questions to those in attendance: Council members Jeri Schons, Dave Tieg, Kou Thao and George Landuyt; Mayor Tony

Peterson; City of Tracy Office Manager Peggy Zwach; Deputy Clerk Diane Campbell; EDA Director Jeff Carpenter; Library Director Val Quist; and Tracy Police Chief Jason Lichty and Fire Chief Dale Johnson III.

The workshop was a result of a decision made in April when the budget schedule was adopted to allow the council an opportunity to provide direction to City staff on what the 2021 budget could potentially look like. Hansen said one of his goals of last week's workshop was to attain a list of goals for the future from the council and ascertain what the city's

priorities should be moving forward.

• One of the questions asked officials to give their idea of what Tracy's ideal future looked like. This is where the "bedroom community" conversation started.

"People think you're just not trying to be a city — that you're just looking that people are going to come here and that's where they're gonna sleep, that's where their house is gonna be," Schons said of the "bedroom community" label. "I think there's a positive side to that, because if they come here to sleep, their kids are gonna be here."

Schons said the fact that Tracy is considered a "bedroom community" isn't

TRACY
CONTINUED ON PAGE 3



CENTENARIAN GRACE CHILDS reacts as a parade of friends drives by O'Brien Court on Sunday, wishing her a happy 100th birthday. Photos / Per Peterson

HAPPY 100TH, GRACE!

BY PER PETERSON
EDITOR

The year was 1920. The League of Nations was established. Women gained the right to vote.

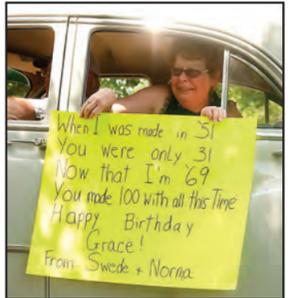
And a sales scheme was invented by a man named Charles Ponzi.

That was also the year Grace Childs was born, and today, June 10, she will celebrate her 100th birthday. On Sunday, three days prior to a planned group performance of "Happy Birthday" sung by her friends from Tracy Lutheran, Grace was honored with a drive-by parade led by the Tracy Police Department, Tracy Fire Department and Tracy Ambulance. Dozens of well-wishers followed, many delivering birthday cards.

"I'm overwhelmed," Grace said after the parade ended Sunday. "It was very unexpected, and the turnout was great."

Ken Lang, Grace's grandson-in-law, said the parade was a fantastic event.

"One hundred years — it's a good start," he said. So what exactly is Grace's secret to such longevity? "A lot of love and care — a lot of love from the family," she said. "I've had very caring people around me. And good genes; my mother lived to be 101. God's good to me."



NORMA CAMPBELL brought some humor to Sunday's parade.



CEARA LASLEY and recent fellow Tracy Area High School graduates Cora Leonard, Lindsey Horner, Jordan Kunkel and Brooke Christian knelt in prayer at last week's rally in Marshall in memory of George Floyd. Photo / Per Peterson

PEACE ON PARADE

In contrast to recent violent events in larger cities, hundreds of people gathered with a peaceful purpose in Marshall last week in the wake of George Floyd's death



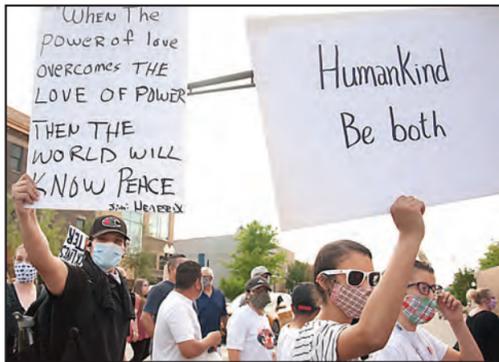
PEOPLE OF MANY RACES embraced the moment last week — and each other — with one common purpose. Here, Mercedes Hammond, a Marshall transplant from Minneapolis hugs a fellow protester. RIGHT: Many protestors used signs to share their feelings. Photo / Per Peterson

BY PER PETERSON
EDITOR

Ceara Lasley just felt like she needed to be there.

"I felt God (Wednesday morning) and knew I just needed to do something about this and get the word out there that everybody's life matters — black, white, American Indian ... I just want people to know that God is with everybody," said Lasley, who is Native American.

Lasley, who just last month graduated from Tracy Area High School, hopped in a car last Wednesday evening with fellow TAHS graduates Jordan Kunkel, Brooke Christian, Lindsey Horner and Cora Leonard, to be part of a rally to honor George Floyd, the African



American man who unjustly lost his life on May 25 in the now-infamous altercation with a Minneapolis police officer.

As a Native American, Lasley has experienced her share of racial profiling, and wanted to pay her respects to Floyd while helping spread the word about racial injustice in America.

PEACE
CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

Grading our roads

Preventative Maintenance Plan one step in addressing failing roadways

BY PER PETERSON
EDITOR

With a number of Tracy streets

getting a complete overhaul during the last few years, Tracy Public Works Director Shane Daniels on Monday updated the city council on the ones that aren't.

As part of a Pavement Maintenance Planning presentation, Daniels offered a glimpse of the condition of the city's roads — from those deemed "excellent," to the ones considered "bad."

Daniels said road maintenance has been an ongoing issue for decades in Tracy and was a talking point at last week's budget workshop.

"There is a lot of maintenance that needs to be done," Daniels said.

Roads were rated by their current condition:

Excellent — free from cracks, minimal surface wear, usually less than 5 years old (ex. 4th St. East)

There is a lot of maintenance that needs to be done.

— TRACY PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR SHANE DANIELS

Good — minor cracks, minimal surface wear, usually about 5-8 years old, due for crack sealing and seal coating (ex. 4th and Morgan)

Fair — Several cracks have formed, overdue in crack sealing, seal coating and chip sealing, about 12-20 years old with minimal maintenance performed (north 4th St. East)

Poor — starting to form "alligator" cracks, well overdue on maintenance, could be prolonged if immediate action is taken, could be a mill and overlay candidate if base is good, usually over 20 years

ROADS
CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

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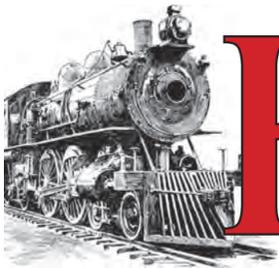
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ST. MARY'S
SCHOOL'S
SEND-OFF TO
6TH-GRADERS
PAGE 10



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TRACY AREA HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 2020

POMP & UNUSUAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Robbed of a traditional commencement, members of Tracy Area High School's Class of 2020 received their diplomas Sunday in a unique parking lot ceremony



TRACY AREA HIGH SCHOOL SUPT. CHAD ANDERSON slides Hayden Ankrum's diploma closer to the new graduate during Sunday's 127th TAHS Commencement, which was held in the high school parking lot. RIGHT: Brooke Christian, also honoring the school district's wishes by wearing a mask, reaches for her diploma. Photos / Per Peterson

BY PER PETERSON
EDITOR
Kicking sand in the face of a pandemic that robbed them of their final, precious months of their senior year, Tracy Area High School's Class of 2020 officially said good-bye to their high school days Sunday.

In a first-of-its-kind parking lot commencement, this year's TAHS seniors picked up their Ziploc-protected diplomas from the passenger side of a vehicle in drive-thru fashion as part of the school's 127th commencement ceremony; a total of 68 seniors received their diploma.

With no traditional walk across the stage in the gymnasium, this year's

seniors were truly honored in a most unorthodox way. Although it wasn't the first outdoor graduation at TAHS — it was held on the football field years ago — it was the first in the parking lot.

"In most cases, parents don't get to be right by their child when they get their diplomas, so that was pretty



WEARING SPECIAL TMB PROTECTIVE MASKS, TAHS officials, from left, Principal Kathy Vondracek and Supt. Chad Anderson, along with school board members Rod Benson and Shiela Siebenahler-Holland await the start of Sunday's graduation ceremony.



while others not so much, but we had it set up in a way that everyone could respect each other."

A makeshift stage was set up just to the south of the high school baseball field and facing the school building and dozens of cars, trucks and SUVs, each with this year's seniors in tow. Amy Vang's welcome speech blared over a loud speaker for

GRADUATION
CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

INSIDE
An unceremonious end to 6th-graders' run in elementary school / Page 2

TAHS graduation speeches / Page 7

Images from this year's commencement exercises / Page 14

MEMORIAL DAY



ABOVE: Mini American flags adorned the crosses of fallen soldiers at Bethel Cemetery for Monday's Memorial Day service. RIGHT: Veteran Gary Brinks received a Quilts of Valor quilt during the ceremony. Both Brinks and Chauncey Muedeking were honored with a quilt. Pictured with Brinks are his wife, Helen (center) and Susie Learing. Enjoy more photos on Page 8. Photos / Per Peterson

HONORING & REMEMBERING

BY PER PETERSON
EDITOR
The local area did its best under unusual circumstances to honor veterans on Memorial Day, and one ceremony paid special tribute to two of them.

At Bethel Cemetery, veterans Chauncey Muedeking and Gary Brinks were given quilts from the Quilts of Valor pro-

gram. Both men felt extremely honored to have been recognized.

American Legion Auxiliary 7th District Vice-President Susie Learing introduced both men on behalf of the Marshall Quilts of Valor group called "Pieces for Heroes."

MEMORIAL DAY
CONTINUED ON PAGE 8



MO' LIFE FOR A CURRIE LANDMARK

Ramona Lindberg is excited about her new store in an old downtown Currie building

RAMONA LINDBERG has opened her new consignment business in an iconic building in downtown Currie.

Photo / Per Peterson

ABOVE: This photo shows a thriving drug store in the building in the early 1900s. Submitted photo



BY PER PETERSON
EDITOR
To some, there's nothing better than a blank canvas. So many possibilities. So many options. So much future.

And Ramona Lindberg has proven she knows exactly what to do with one — even if that canvas is 135 years old.

"Even when I walked in, and it stunk like

mold, and it was freezing cold, it was ... such a blank canvas — I thought it could be anything," Lindberg said of the majestic, brick building at the intersection of First and Mill streets in Currie where last Friday she opened her new store, Mo' Than Antiques. "You either do something with

LANDMARK
CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

GRADUATION PHOTO REPRINTS

We have many photos that were not reproduced in the Tracy Area Headlight Herald.

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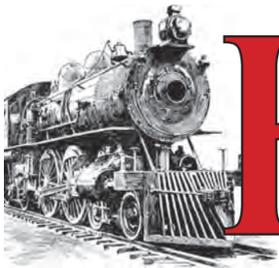
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CORONAVIRUS CONUNDRUM

SO CLOSE YET SO FAR

Social distancing has changed **AWAY** the way we all live, but for Jim and Wava Vickerman, separation has really taken its toll. Sunday was their 70th anniversary, but having to live in two separate facilities made it impossible to share the moment the way they would like.

BY PER PETERSON
EDITOR

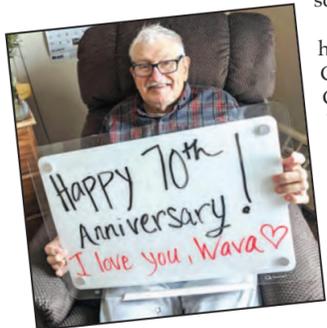
Jim and Wava Vickerman share a love for one another that has stood the test of time — and the outbreak of a virus.

Jim and Wava on Sunday “celebrated” their 70th wedding anniversary — only they didn’t get to share a warm embrace or a kiss on their big day.

Since the spread of the coronavirus has put all assisted living facilities and nursing homes on lockdown, it’s been weeks since the couple has spent time together — physically there for the other to hold the other’s hand or share a hug.

“The last time I was there I was told I better give him a big hug because I probably wouldn’t be seeing him again anytime soon,” said Wava.

The couple, together since high school, is separated by COVID-19: Wava at O’Brien Court, and Jim at Prairie View. Last October the couple made the difficult decision to move from



SEPARATED BY COVID-19, this is the only way Jim could communicate with his bride Sunday on their 70th anniversary. Facebook image



JIM AND WAVA VICKERMAN were high school sweethearts who as of this past Sunday have been married for 70 years. LEFT: Jim and Wava are shown stealing a kiss at their granddaughter, Jadie’s, wedding. Submitted photos

“The last time I was there I was told I better give him a big hug because I probably wouldn’t be seeing him again anytime soon.”

— WAVA VICKERMAN

the farm — and the house they built when they got married — to O’Brien Court. It was hoped that the move would be a temporary one, but three months later Jim was transferred to Prairie View because he needed more help than his wife could provide.

Daughter-in-law Pat Vickerman said while the move wasn’t easy for either of them, they were OK because they were

CLOSE
CONTINUED ON PAGE 3



Learning from a distance no small feat

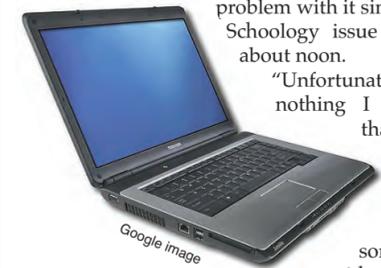
TAPS’ tech department had their hands full getting schools ready for a new way of learning

BY PER PETERSON
EDITOR

Aside from some small hiccups, distance learning seems to be moving right along.

One speed bump last week was with the learning platform known as Schoology — an online learning platform utilized by many schools. Last week, the system was overloaded when distance learning kicked in.

TAPS Technology Coordinator Craig Polkow said last Monday was quite an experience when his content filtering for Chromebooks became immediately overloaded; it was rebuilt about 9 a.m. that morning and he hasn’t noticed a problem with it since. Then came the Schoology issue that lasted until about noon.



Google image

“Unfortunately, there was nothing I could do about that as we purchase it as a cloud-based solution,” Polkow said.

“We still have some small hiccups with the platform. They

put out a post on March 31 saying that their usage in the past few days has seen nearly a 400% increase and the steps they are doing to mitigate this.”

“I thought our staff and students handled this situation great,” said Katie Gervais, technology integrationist with Tracy Area Public Schools. “There wasn’t anything we could do about it on our end but go with the flow. Once the word spread that it wasn’t an issue with (the students’) computers and it was a statewide issue I think that helped

LEARNING
CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

A CENTURY LATER: FROM FLU TO COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has nothing on a scourge from a past generation: the flu epidemic of 1918. Connie Anderson is well aware of just how bad it got, as her ancestors suffered tremendous loss and heartbreak.

It is estimated that some 675,000 people in the United States perished during the flu epidemic of 1918 (otherwise known as the “Spanish flu”). Some of them hold a special place in Connie Anderson’s heart.

In the fall of 1918, Daniel and Anna (Stohr) Keleher — Anderson’s grandparents on her mother’s side — had twins. Daniel and Joseph were born in the hospital in Tracy on Oct. 8.

The proud parents brought their boys back to their farm southwest of Tracy.

On Nov. 11, Daniel was found dead; according to the death certificate, he died of unknown causes. Then on Dec. 15, their 2-year-old son, Thomas died of diphtheria.

Because of a quarantine that lasted six months, the family had to bury the boys at night. Then, on Jan. 19, 1919, 1-year-old Patrick died, again of diphtheria.

Anderson said thinking back on her family and all they went through really puts what is going on today in perspective.

“It scares me, because I know what can happen,” she said. “This story has been told

FLU
CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

DANIEL and **ANNA** (Keleher) were parents to 11 children — three who died during the flu pandemic of 1918. Submitted photo



Businesses can benefit from relief programs

BY PER PETERSON
EDITOR

There’s not a business — large or small — in this country that hasn’t been negatively affected by the COVID-19 outbreak, and the federal government is trying to help.

The Small Business Administration and Treasury Department have initiated what the SBA refers to as “a robust mobilization effort of banks and other lending institutions to provide small businesses with the capital they need.”

The CARES (Coronavirus, Aid, Relief and Economic Security) Act established a \$349 billion Paycheck Protection Program to provide relief to small businesses struggling to pay their employees. Employers can

also use the money to cover other expenses, such as rent, mortgage interest and utility costs over the eight-week period after the loan is made. To qualify, employee and compensation levels must be maintained.

Funds are provided in the form of loans that will be fully forgiven when used for the aforementioned items (at least 75% of the forgiven amount must be used for payroll). Forgiveness is based on the employer maintaining or quickly rehiring employees and maintaining salary levels; forgiveness will be reduced



CARPENTER

if full-time headcount declines or if salaries and wages decrease. Loan payments are deferred for six months. No collateral or personal guarantees are required, and neither the government nor lenders will charge small businesses any fees.

Tracy EDA Director Jeff Carpenter said federal agencies have been doing the right thing since COVID-19 emerged, essentially out of nowhere. He said the trick over the last couple of weeks has been how frequently things change.

“It’s like a moving target,” he said. “When programs came out right away, I would send things out, then three days later something

PROGRAM
CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

COVID-19 cases in region: 10

Southwest Health and Human Services said Monday it was notified by the Minnesota Department of Health that a person from Murray County and one from Redwood County have both tested positive for COVID-19, bringing the total number of cases in the area to 10.

Also, the total number of Lyon County residents who have tested positive for COVID-19 went to four Monday.

The MDH said Sunday that a person from Pipestone County tested positive for COVID-19.

There are also confirmed cases in Lincoln (two) and Yellow Medicine counties.

“We know it’s already been circulating, and that

CASES
CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



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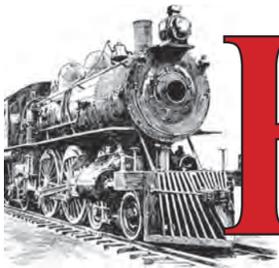


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ELECTION 2020 BREAKING
DOWN SUPER
TUESDAY
PAGE 5



TMB
TRACK &
FIELD PREVIEW
PAGE 6



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DOOR SLAMMED ON HOSPICE HOUSE

Efforts to construct a facility in Tracy have ceased due to census, resources

BY PER PETERSON
EDITOR
Hospice of Murray County has announced the move to bring a hospice house to Tracy has officially ended.

Tom Klein, chairman of Hospice of Murray County Board of Directors, told the *Tracy Area Headlight Herald* that although the financial support was there for Our House of Tracy, neither the current census, nor the future prospects to fill beds, was enough to justify the ongoing commitment toward the construction of the facility.

"We just can't put that kind of investment in it if we don't have people using the program," Klein said. "Unfortunately, we can't build it and just hope they will come."

Klein said the land that was to be used for the hospice house will be returned to its original owners, Larry and Bonnie Buysse. The Buysse

on Sunday expressed sadness over the fact that the facility won't be built.

"We feel so bad," said Bonnie. "There was such a good intent, and it would've been just a wonderful thing to have here. We feel bad it didn't work out, but we totally understand what happened."

Larry said the decision to hand over the land was an easy one.

"It was really easy for me," he said. "We've had people we know on hospice and knew of the exceptional care they get. The location was perfect, and we really wanted to help make it happen. We wanted to see it come up out of the ground."

On Oct. 9, 2019, Klein and Jessie Jorgenson, administrator at Hospice of Murray County, hosted a public forum in Tracy concerning the future of Our House of Tracy. Both expressed



THE PROPOSED OUR HOUSE OF TRACY hospice house will not be built because of census and resource issues. Photo / Per Peterson

optimism for the future, despite various hurdles facing a project that would've built a 6,100 square-foot, four bedroom residential house on a one-plus-acre plot northeast of Sanford Tracy, near the intersection of Fifth St. East and State St.

At that time, it was hoped that groundbreaking would take place sometime in 2019, but that never happened. Some infrastructure work at the site did take place in November 2017, but, aside from fundraising, that's as far as the project got.

"I'm very disappointed," Klein said. "You
HOUSE
CONTINUED ON PAGE 7



TOM KLEIN

CORONAVIRUS CONUNDRUM

CLASS DISMISSED

Schools plan for the worst after governor shuts them down

School district continues to work on the fly in response to virus outbreak

BY PER PETERSON
EDITOR

It certainly wasn't business as usual at Tracy Area High School on Monday morning, but that doesn't mean there wasn't plenty of important business to take care of, with more to come, as District No. 2904 reacts in real time to the effects of the coronavirus outbreak.

TAHS Supt. Chad Anderson led a meeting of teachers, para-professionals and other school staff concerning the school's reaction to the coronavirus outbreak and its ever-changing effects on every corner of the state, country and world.

"As we go through this, each and everyone of you will be doing things differently," Anderson told school



TRACY AREA PUBLIC SCHOOL'S SUPT. CHAD ANDERSON led a Monday morning meeting of all teachers and para-professionals concerning the future of the schools in light of the coronavirus outbreak. Photo / Per Peterson

employees. "We all have to work together; we're all in this together. These are uncharted waters, and we're going to be doing some things differently. We'll get through this."

As an example of how fluid the issue is, Anderson noted that it was only a week after

school officials were told by the Minnesota Department of Health that schools would not close — because people ages 19-and-under were not susceptible to coronavirus — that the governor officially closed all public schools.

"They're doing this to slow

the spread down, to stop it, as we move forward," Anderson said.

Schools were mandated to close by Wednesday, March 18; TAHS decided not to wait that long and closed the doors

CLASS
CONTINUED ON PAGE 18

TAHS SPANISH STUDENTS BID 'ADIÓS' TO SPAIN TRIP

BY PER PETERSON
EDITOR

Tracy Area High School Spanish students have been grounded.

As a result of the global pandemic known as coronavirus (COVID-19), this year's trip to Spain has been cancelled by Language & Friendship, the organization the school works with on overseas trips.

"It's not something that we are happy about — we're very sad that this has happened," high school Spanish teacher

Pamela Anderson told students and their parents at a meeting about the trip last Thursday.

The deciding factor on the issue was President Donald Trump suspending all travel from Europe to the United States, effective at midnight on March 13 and lasting for at least 30 days. That means the eight TAHS students who have spent years in Spanish class did not board a plane for Spain on

TRIP
CONTINUED ON PAGE 12



TRACY AREA HIGH SCHOOL Spanish teacher Pamela Anderson had the misfortune last Thursday of telling the eight TAHS seniors that their trip to Spain has been cancelled. The students and their chaperones were to leave for Spain this Tuesday. Photo / Per Peterson

Virus fallout a crushing blow to restaurants

BY ERIN BALLARD
REPORTER

In a drastic effort to stop the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19), Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz announced Monday the temporary closure of the state's bars, restaurants and other venues that serve dine-in guests.

The order went into effect at 5 p.m. Tuesday and extends until March 27.

But many restaurant owners are bracing themselves for a much lengthier interlude.

"I think it's going to go out longer than 10 days," Bonnie and Clyde's owner Mike McDonald said. "I have no idea what I'm going to do. This is such a shock to us."

The measure extends statewide, but is especially devastating to small businesses in rural areas like Tracy.

"It's unbelievable what it's going to do to our economy."



DOORS TO ALL restaurants and bars have been shuttered thanks to the coronavirus outbreak. Photo / Erin Ballard

In a city of our size, it's going to close doors," said Diane Fiegen, one of four people who co-own The Caboose. "There's a lot of restaurants that aren't going to bounce back from this. It's like a punch in the stomach and it's scary."

The required shutdown is the latest in a string of blows to The Caboose as a result of the coronavirus scare.

Over the last month, as fears have ramped up

RESTAURANTS
CONTINUED ON PAGE 18

Officials meet to get ahead of pandemic issues; Multi-Purpose Center closes

BY PER PETERSON
EDITOR

One of the first places Tracy's new City Administrator Erik Hansen spent time at before starting his new job was the Multi-Purpose Center in downtown Tracy. On Friday, he made the difficult decision to temporarily close it over ongoing concerns about the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19), which has taken a stranglehold on not only the country, but the world.

"Out of an abundance of caution and to ensure that our most vulnerable populations are protected, the City of Tracy has decided

to close the Senior Center for the public for the next two weeks," Hansen said.

The closure went into effect March 14. Those who depend on the noon meal can still receive Meals on Wheels.

Even though there have been no documented coronavirus cases in Tracy, or southwest Minnesota for that matter, Hansen decided to err on the side of caution when it comes to a facility that has grown to be a popular daily gathering place for numerous senior citizens.

ISSUES
CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

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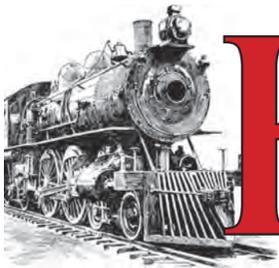
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PUBLIC SPEAKS
ON REFUGEE
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TMB BOYS
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PAGE 6



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TRACY CHAMBER READY FOR 2020

BY PER PETERSON
EDITOR

While the Tracy Area Chamber of Commerce looked back on 2019 at Saturday's Chamber Celebration Banquet, it was hard not to look ahead. In fact, this year's theme was "Looking to the Future."

"It fits Tracy so well," Chamber Director Lexi Erickson said as she opened Saturday night's event. "We have so much potential, and we as a Chamber are looking forward to all the success that will come, not only in 2020, but in years to come."

Numerous awards were given out Saturday, but before that, it was all business, as the Chamber wrapped up 2019 financially.

The total income brought in for 2019 was \$112,404.20, compared to \$103,769.70 in 2018. Revenue was up for income from Chamber Checks, memberships and the Prairie Women's Expo. Expenses were up from \$88,212.66 in 2018 to

\$105,449.83. Outgoing Chamber President Kyle Radke presided over the business meeting Saturday.

"Under my direction, we spent more money and we made more money," Radke quipped.



PAGE 2

See who received the Chamber's 2019 Diamond Award, as well as awards for Citizen of the Year, "Boss of the Year," "Farmer of the Year" and "Volunteer of the Year" for 2019.



KHYLE RADKE passes the gavel over to the new Tracy Area Chamber of Commerce President Mandy Hoffman at Saturday's Chamber banquet. LEFT: Chamber Director Lexi Erickson emceed at the event. Photos / Per Peterson

Radke noted that the changes in the beer tent (adding liquor) resulted in some higher revenue numbers.

"We've been blessed with having a substantial amount of money to do things with," he said. The 2019 Chamber finances

were approved by the audience. The Chamber board will remain the same, with the exception of Mandy Hoffman taking over for Radke as president.

Erickson said even though the

CHAMBER
CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

HEADLIGHT WINS 4 MNA AWARDS



PER PETERSON AND APRIL DESCHEPPER brought home a total of four awards at this year's Minnesota Newspaper Association Convention.

The Tracy Area Headlight Herald was the recipient of four 2019 Minnesota Newspaper Association awards, which were given out at the annual MNA Convention in Minneapolis last Thursday.

The Headlight Herald competed against other non-daily Minnesota newspapers with similar circulation (1,001-1,500).

April DeSchepper won third place in the Institutional Advertisement category with her National Night Out thank-you ad.

The Headlight Herald also won second place in Headline Writing, second in Editorial Page as a Whole and third in Sports Reporting.

SPECIAL CARE IN MILROY

Amber Snyder is filling a need in Milroy with her daycare services at the school

BY TARA BRANDL
PUBLISHER

On a typical Monday morning in any elementary school, it's not uncommon to find children putting together puzzles. However, in one corner of the Milroy Public School, this puzzle time is a little different.

The children are putting puzzles together on the carpet area of a large room. The large room also has a nap area, a small kitchen area, and lots and lots of toys. But the children hard at work on the puzzles are not school age — they are part of Amber's Daycare that operates in the school.

Amber Snyder opened her daycare in the Milroy school in late October 2019.

"I'm the third daycare provider to be in this room, but I feel like it's been different each

DAYCARE
CONTINUED ON PAGE 9



SOPHIA ELLISON, 2; CORA SNYDER, 1 1/2; AND JOHANNA ERNST, 5 MONTHS, pile on Amber Snyder's lap for a little fun during daycare. Photo / Tara Brandl



HISTORY HITS HOME

Dan Peterson strives to share Walnut Grove's past on the pages of his numerous books

BY PER PETERSON
EDITOR

Dan Peterson lives in a museum of his own making in Walnut Grove and his doors are open to anyone wishing to take a tour. If you're lucky, you might even leave with an artifact. But there's one thing that you for sure will walk away with: a new appreciation for Walnut Grove history

Peterson, a 1987 Walnut Grove graduate — yes, he's a Logger — has immersed himself in the history of his hometown. The former history teacher has compiled enough information to fill a number of books, which he gladly shares with anyone who asks.

"History is nothing but stories," Peterson says. "When people say that history is boring, I don't get it. 'History itself is stories of everything.'"

Peterson is drawn to everything historic. He has crossed paths with and got to know people like the late Bill Bolin and Leo Thorsness, as well as Jesse James and Tracy native Scott Thoma, himself a history buff of sorts (he wrote a book about Tracy's tornado). Peterson said his love of history



DAN PETERSON has written a number of books on the history of Walnut Grove, and is more than happy to share his works with others. Photo / Per Peterson

can be traced back to the research he did of his father after his passing.

"I wanted to learn about his family," he said. "They were a whole generation older than my mom's family. He was the youngest child, too. So I just got interested in family history. For historians like me, the fun of it is doing the research and solving all those old mysteries."

But Peterson's digging didn't stop with his father. He also researched his grandfather, Darlo Foster, who for more than 30 years owned the Masters Hotel in town. It was Darlo that turned out to be Peterson's main inspiration for putting together volumes of Walnut Grove history.

"He was just a master storyteller and had a memory like no one," said Peterson. "He remembered every story that had ever been told by his dad, so that made it so

HISTORY
CONTINUED ON PAGE 3



SWEET MOVES

LEFT: William Buyck takes down his much larger foe, Taylor Squires, as he shows off some wrestling moves at Friday's St. Mary's School Catholic Schools Week Talent Show. A number of SMS students showed off their talents, which ranged from piano solos, to ballet. Below: Connor Lanoue shows off his dribbling skills. Enjoy more photos from the talent show on Page 10.

Photos / Erin Ballard



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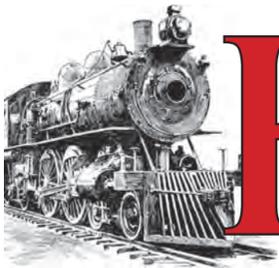
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PAGE 6



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KIDS FROM THE TRACY ELEMENTARY AFTER SCHOOL CHOIR got the "celebration" started on the right foot during Sunday's "Celebration in Song" at Tracy Lutheran Church. The choir sang "Candlelight Silent Night" and "Better When I'm Dancing." Enjoy more photos on Page 14. Photos / Per Peterson

What a celebration!

A large audience was treated to a wide variety of musical offerings at annual 'Celebration in Song'

BY PER PETERSON
EDITOR

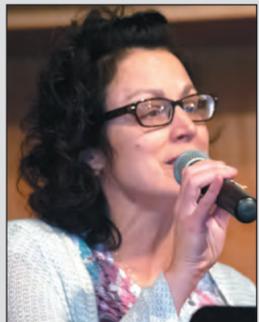
From the Sahlstrom sisters singing Sinatra, to an amazing family putting their own spin on "Amazing Grace," music rang through the sanctuary of Tracy Lutheran Church during the annual "Celebration in Song" Sunday.

The church was packed with music lovers, and no one walked away dis-

appointed. Musical selections ranged from songs by the Tracy Elementary After School Choir, to piano selections and two cello solos.

"It's fun to know there are so many people in this small town that are interested in music," said Tracy Area High School choir director Wendy Johnson, who also directs the South-

CELEBRATION
CONTINUED ON PAGE 14



SUE NELSON sings "Just Be Held."



TAHS SENIOR TRISTAN XIONG offers his rendition of "Hallelujah."

City admin. search resumes — yet again

City's latest choice to fill spot turns down offer, citing personal reasons

BY PER PETERSON
EDITOR

The search for a new city administrator has officially resumed — for the third time.

Tracy Mayor Anthony Dimmers announced at Monday's city council meeting that Steve Berkner has turned down the city administrator position he was offered in December. Berkner, who verbally accepted the city's offer right before Christmas, cited personal reasons for his decision.

"He's facing some family challenges, and I totally support his decision," Dimmers said in an interview after Monday's council meeting. "Anything that we can do to be of assistance to him we'll do. It's a justified withdrawal."

Dimmers was clearly disappointed over Berkner's decision, but he chose to keep a positive attitude going forward.

"It's kind of like when you get all excited for Christmas morning to get that Transformer and you end up with a pair of socks,"

SEARCH
CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

You can choose to look at it negatively, or you can choose to say, 'How do we turn this around to our advantage?' That's kind of the course I'm taking.

— MAYOR ANTHONY DIMMERS

O'Brien sale imminent, but status quo sought

A new future awaits O'Brien Court, but that doesn't mean everything will change there.

A public hearing will take place on Jan. 27, concerning the sale of the Sanford-run and Tracy Economic Development Authority-owned housing facility; the city council must give the EDA the go-ahead to sell the building.

While the sale of the building has been in the works for some years,

O'BRIEN
CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

Will breakfast continue to be served at MPC? Council hopes so

The Tracy City Council on Monday discussed the future of the breakfast program at the Multi-Purpose Center.

Interim City Administrator Shane Daniels told council members that the City is losing about \$800 a year on the popular program.

"I hate to lose it," council member Jeri Schons said. "I think a lot of people use it."

BREAKFAST
CONTINUED ON PAGE 5



GO, ECHOES!

CAROLINE LANOUE (LEFT) AND EVELYN BUYCK cheer on the fifth- and sixth-grade St. Mary's School Echoes basketball team against True Light Christian School of Marshall last Thursday. Enjoy photos from last week's games on Page 10. Photo / Per Peterson

On refugees: information, education needed

SWHHS rep says Lyon County is lacking both when it comes to welcoming refugees



BETH WILMS of Southwest Health & Human Services spoke passionately about the refugee resettlement issue in southwest Minnesota during last Wednesday's Northern Community Leadership Team meeting in Marshall. Photo / Per Peterson

BY PER PETERSON
EDITOR

Beth Wilms could talk for hours about the refugee situation in the county and in Minnesota. The more she talks, the more passionate she gets, and the more frustrated she becomes.

Wilms, director for Southwest Health & Human Services, is fully ingrained in the refugee issue, which was featured under the public spotlight

REFUGEES
CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

INSIDE
Column: We need to open our arms to refugees. Page 4



THE TRACY FIRE DEPARTMENT is more than happy to welcome its newest member — an HV International pumper truck that replaces an old truck that was damaged in the 2018 flood. The new truck offers more mobility and some state-of-the-art features as well. Photos / Per Peterson

Fire department welcomes new truck

Fighting fires and making rescues along the highway is never easy, but the newest addition to the Tracy Fire Department will go a long way in making Tracy firefighters' job a little bit easier.

The fire department recently welcomed a new HV International pumper rescue truck to replace the one they lost to electrical damage during the flood of 2018. And while there might be less physical space from front to back on the new truck, there are important upgrades as well.

"It is shorter by about five feet," said Tracy Fire Chief Dale Johnson III. "There's less space on the new truck, because we wanted to be able to get it in a

field if we wanted to stabilize something. I wanted to be able to get down the railroad tracks if there was an issue. And it's still big enough to act as a barricade at a car accident."

Johnson said the most important quality the new truck brings — besides the fact that it's the only one in the fire departments' arsenal besides regular pick-ups that has four-wheel drive — is its mobility in rural areas. The truck is shorter in length than other fire department vehicles, which Johnson believes will benefit the fire department.

"It's more maneuverable," Johnson said. "Last winter when everybody was plowing

FIRE TRUCK
CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

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by Mary Chase

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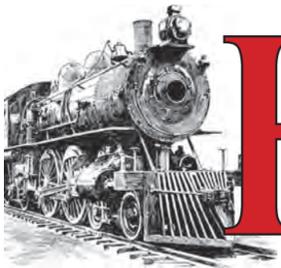
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**MIXING
FUN WITH
DANCE**
PAGE 2



**PANTHER
BOYS LOSE
FIRST GAME**
PAGE 6



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Christian, Tauer are 'Triple A' recipients



TRACY AREA HIGH SCHOOL "Triple A" recipients Jake Tauer and Brooke Christian.
Photo / Per Peterson

BY PER PETERSON
EDITOR

This year's "Triple A" recipients for Tracy Area High School are Brooke Christian and Jake Tauer.

The purpose of the program is to recognize and honor high school seniors who have excelled in the classroom, on the athletic field/court, and in the fine arts. To be eligible for the Academics, Arts, and Athletics Award a student must be a high school senior at the time of nomination; have a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher at the date of nomination; participate in Minnesota State High School League-sponsored athletics and fine arts activities; comply with the MSHSL's Student Code of Conduct; and complete the application form.



Triple "A" Award recipients are selected through a multi-level process

'TRIPLE A'
CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

↳ *This was the hardest thing I've ever had to go through, but it was the best thing I've ever gone through. It changed me into a better person. — RICK ATKINS*

WALKING A NEW PATH

When Rick Atkins lost his leg to a staph infection, he gained a new perspective on life. Today, having embraced his situation, the TAHS graduate looks ahead to a bright future, filled with a new appreciation of his family and friends.

BY PER PETERSON
EDITOR

Ricky Atkins' biggest loss has also likely been his most important gain.

As he leans on a cane that has literally and figuratively become an unwanted crutch in his life, the 1987 Tracy Area High School graduate looks back on the last couple tumultuous years of his life, not with anger or a sense of missed opportunities, but with a renewed sense of hope. This, after losing most of his right leg.

"You don't know what and when something is going to happen in your life — you just have to roll with it and if God deals you a bad hand, you don't give up, you just keep going."

Atkins' problems began rather innocently three years ago, when he hurt his finger while moving some shelving in his garage in Rapid City, SD. He thought so little of the incident that he decided not to go to the doctor. However, his wife disagreed, and after some time, Rick eventually would go to the hospital, where it was discovered that a staph infection had developed.

"The very next day, they took my pinky finger off," he said. That was only the beginning. The infection traveled through his blood stream, all the way down to

PATH
CONTINUED ON PAGE 3



LIFE HASN'T BEEN EASY for 1987 Tracy Area High School graduate Rick Atkins, who earlier this year had to have most of his right leg amputated after an infection spread, but his physical struggles have made him appreciate his life, his friends and his family more than he ever has before. Photo / Per Peterson



ABOVE: SANDY FULTZ shows off her Wonder Woman bracelet given to her by a close friend shortly after she was diagnosed with ovarian cancer last March. LEFT: Fultz today. Photo above, submitted

A STYLISH SURVIVOR

Sandy Fultz hopes her website will inspire fellow cancer survivors to feel good about themselves

BY PER PETERSON
EDITOR

Maybe none of us are indestructible, but that doesn't stop Sandy Fultz from feeling like she is.

And even if Wonder Woman might be nothing more than a fictional character, the way Fultz is living her life, she could easily pass as the comic book hero's alter ego.

Fultz is a cancer survivor. And more than that, she has taken on the task of helping fellow survivors deal with an important part of life after cancer as they recover and work to bring some sense of normalcy back to their lives — first physically, then emotionally.

"I have cancer, but it's in the

SURVIVOR
CONTINUED ON PAGE 13

2019 WEATHER: WET, WET AND MORE WET



IF YOU DIDN'T KNOW ANY BETTER, you would think these two images — captured only a couple miles apart south of Tracy — were taken at about the same time. However, that couldn't be farther from the truth. The photo on the left was taken after a nasty ice storm in mid-April, while the image on the right was taken just last week. Photos / Tracy Area Headlight Herald file photo (left), April DeSchepper (right)

Last year's weather will best be remembered for record-setting February snow and a nasty April ice storm

BY PER PETERSON
EDITOR

Local farmers can take their pick of which month to blame for such a wet 2019, and late planting and harvest season. But if they want to focus their ire on one four-week period in particular, they need look no further than the shortest month of the year.

February 2019 brought a Tracy record 34.72" of snow to

go on top of the nearly 20 inches that fell in January. And don't forget, all that moisture came after a very soggy 2018 that saw nearly 50" of precipitation in Tracy.

Indeed, the winter of 2019 was another wet one. From October to April, Tracy received nearly 90" of precipitation —

WEATHER
CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

**'19 RAIN AND/OR SNOW
TOTALS BY MONTH**

January: 19.51"
February: 34.72" (Tracy record)
March: 10.9"
April: 17.4"
May: 5.13"
June: 21.08"
July: 4.67"
August: 4.38"
September: 3.88"
October: 4.74"
November: 4.36"
December: 8.7"
Total (snow and rain): 139.47"

OVERALL PRECIP.

January: 1.03"
February: 2.42"
March: 2.35"
April: 4.36"
May: 5.06"
June: 2.37"
July: 4.18"
August: 3.88"
September: 4.99"
October: 3.95"
November: 1.07"
December: .28"
Total (liquid form): 35.94"



2019 saw plenty of water — in the country and in town. Tracy Area Headlight Herald file photos



Tracy Area Chamber of Commerce
116th Annual Banquet ■ Sat. Feb. 1
at The Caboose, Hwy. 14 ■ Tracy, MN
5 p.m. Social ■ 6 p.m. Meal ■ 7 p.m. Awards
8 p.m. Entertainment featuring Tracy's own **"HALEY HEBIG"**
Tickets \$20 in advance ■ \$25 at the door
Available at the Chamber office, Tracy Food Pride and Minnwest Bank
OPEN TO THE PUBLIC — NEED NOT BE A CHAMBER MEMBER TO ATTEND.





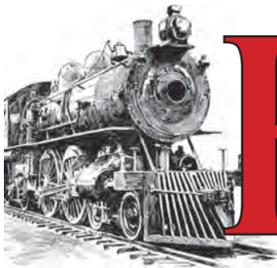
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**A WINTER
PRELUDE
SURPRISE**
SEE WHO IT
IS ON PAGE 2



**TMB GIRLS
PICK UP
FIRST WIN**
PAGE 6



TRACY AREA HEADLIGHT HERALD

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OUR 140TH YEAR – NO. 50

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2019

\$1.50



SHARING A LAUGH WITH SANTA

SEVEN-YEAR-OLD VICTORIA DURON enjoyed telling Santa Claus what she wished for this year for Christmas on Saturday. Everyone's favorite jolly man visited with children from the area at Greenwood Nursery; he was scheduled to be in town last week, but not even Rudolph could help guide him through last weekend's storm. Duron is a first-grader at Tracy Area Elementary School.

Photo / Per Peterson

Council interviews lone city admin. candidate

BY PER PETERSON Only one candidate was left standing by the time the Tracy City Council began the interview process Tuesday to fill the vacant city administrator position.

Candidate Steve Berkner went in front of the council Tuesday evening during a special meeting scheduled to find Kris Ambuehl's replacement. It was recommended unanimously that the council offer the position to Berkner.

The former Ortonville mayor fielded a litany of questions Tuesday, including if he saw himself as more of a commander or coach. He answered coach, stating it's important to work with others. He also said honesty is an important part of leading others in a management position.

Berkner grew up in Ortonville and served as mayor there for four years, to go along with his five years on the city council. Berkner, who served on Planning & Zoning for 15 years in Ortonville, said he's used to having a hands-on approach to city government.

Berkner said it's important to

work as a team within the city. He said his biggest weakness is taking on too much at a time, but he likes to see things through to the end to find a solution to an issue.

"But I don't have to take credit for seeing a project through to the end," he said. "It takes a lot of people to see things through to the end."

When asked how he would handle conflict with personnel, Berkner went back to his days as a restaurateur.

"I'll look someone in the eye and ask them, 'Why is it you're upset and what would you like to accomplish?'" he said. "It doesn't do any good for people to show up at a meeting and start pounding their fist. Everybody just has to give a little bit. Sometimes, you have to take a step back and look at



STEVE BERKNER

CITY
CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

Council drops levy to 3.3%

Preliminary budget had been set at 8.02%

BY PER PETERSON The Tracy City Council on Monday set the tax levy for 2020 at 3.33%, which is down considerably from the preliminary budget of 8.02% set back at the end of September.

Expenditures in the 2020 budget include \$2,667,122 in the General Fund, \$904,055 for Public Safety, \$623,416 for Public Works, \$571,808

for General Government, \$124,627 for Library, \$94,075 for Recreation and \$349,141 for "Other."

Another \$3,574,240 was levied for Public Enterprise: \$963,887 for Licensing, \$743,998 for Liquor, \$561,180 for Utility-Sewer, \$548,848 for Utility-Water, \$145,027 for Aquatic Center Operations, \$144,198 for Refuse Collection, \$92,887 for Orchard Lane Apartments, \$80,340 for Utility-Surcharge, \$47,677, for the Multi-Purpose Center, \$47,081 for O'Brien Court, \$9,000 for Parks Improvement.

The debt service and bond funds total is \$427,737.

The City Charter of Tracy requires a resolution setting forth the budget for the purpose of controlling expenditures by segregated departments for the operation of the City.

Tax levy dollars are collectible in 2020.

Also Monday, the council ... approved the sale of the building at 106 3rd St. (the old Asian Market building). EDA Director Jeff Carpenter will write up the purchase agreement that will be shared with the EDA board.

COUNCIL
CONTINUED ON PAGE 5



MMMM, MMMM GOOD!

TOVIN KAINZ (UPPER LEFT) AND WILLIAM BUYCK can attest to how good — and gooey — the lasagna was at St. Mary's lasagna dinner on Sunday. Photos / Tara Brandl

Grant will provide home rehab dollars to residents

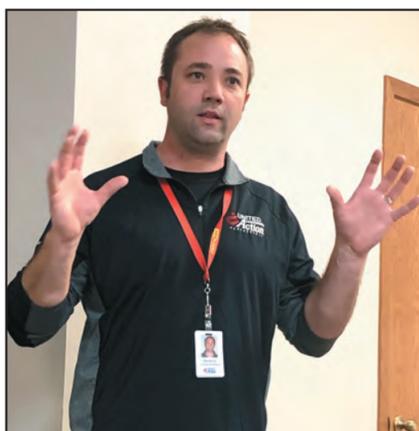
BY TARA BRANDL More than 30 Tracy community members gathered last Thursday evening for the kick-off of the Small Cities Development Program.

The program is run through the United Community Action Partnership. The Tracy SCDP award includes \$579,600 to be used toward 21 single-family homes in the target area. According to Jeff Buesing, housing rehab coordinator with UCAP, the average SCDP grant is \$24,000. This is an 80/20 program, in which the homeowner must pay 20% of the cost and the loan is the other 80%.

"Depending on how things go, we will probably do more than 21 homes," Buesing said. "That's our goal, to do 21 homes."

The SCDP grant area is split into two target areas. Target area A is from Craig Avenue to South Street and 2nd Street through 10th Street. Target Area B includes Center Street through 2nd St. E, and properties on E Morgan Street to E Hollett Street. Target Area B will not open until Aug. 1, 2020.

To qualify for the funds for the SCDP a resident must be living within the target area of the grant and it must be the principle place of



UCAP HOUSING REHAB COORDINATOR DARREN STRUCK explains the home inspection process during last week's Small Cities Development Grant meeting in Tracy. Photo / Tara Brandl

residence (at least six months of the year). In addition, you must be an eligible homeowner.

GRANT
CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

'NUTCRACKER'

2019 Prairie Dance Alliance version of the holiday classic features some familiar faces

BY PER PETERSON Everyone's favorite holiday classic, "The Nutcracker," is returning to the Schwan Community Center for the Performing Arts at the Marshall High School.

This year, there will be three Prairie Dance Alliance performances of the holiday ballet classic: 7 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 20, 1 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 21, and 1 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 22.

This year's cast is 99 strong, compared to 86 from two years ago.

"The cast is huge this year," said Breanna Thompson, one of the show's choreographers. "We make sure that everyone



FATHER-DAUGHTER DUO Addison and Jason Kainz will share the stage for "The Nutcracker" performances. Photo / Per Peterson

is included and never turn dancers and actors away. We added new roles to accommodate for the large cast like Icicles and Snow Maidens for the snow scene, Mini Butterflies for the flower dance, Rat Queen and Mouse King Assistants for the battle scene, Arc Angel to the Angel dance. And Clara has a little sister named Rose this year. The last Nutcracker in 2017 we added Butterflies to the flower dance, Snow Bunnies to the snow scene, Gingersnaps, Bakers and Gumdrops to the Mother Ginger dance, Butterfly Queen to the flower dance

'NUTCRACKER'
CONTINUED ON PAGE 15



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