

HENDERSON INDEPENDENT

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Below the fold

Paul Menne will serve another term as mayor; Amy Hardel and Steve Sellner will join the council.

A look back at 1947

Journals from Arline Karels provides a look back at rural Le Sueur life in the 1940s. P. 4



Holiday season kicks off with Ladies Night Out

Local businesses kicked off the holiday season last Friday. P.6



Harnessing the sun

PHOTO SUBMITTED BY NOKOMIS ENERGY

Green Isle farmer and IT Specialist Nathan Dahlke earlier this year decided to rent some of his farm land to Nokomis Energy for a solar garden. Now, part of the solar energy being generated is powering the Green Isle Community School, saving them money.

Green Isle farmer's solar garden powers community school

By Talia Milavetz
Special to the Independent

Two years ago, IT Specialist Nathan Dahlke decided to move his young family from their Twin Cities home to his family farm in Green Isle.

“To me this has always been the place to raise a family. I loved growing up out on the farm and seeing God’s miracles every day,” he said.

His grandfather raised six children by working on the corn and soybean farm, but by the

time Nathan’s father was ready to take over, he wasn’t able to make ends meet on farming alone.

“The farm economy just wasn’t what it

SOLAR FARM

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

Election 2020

Menne gets another term; Hardel, Sellner join council

By Rachel Miller
Editor

Although election results will not be finalized until later this week, unofficial numbers from the city of Henderson indicate that Paul Menne will serve another term as mayor.

Between absentee and in-person ballots, Henderson had 89.5 percent voter turnout, with 546 votes cast out of 610 registered voters. This included 39 new voter registrations on election day.

As of Monday, Nov. 9, incumbent Menne was leading with 308 votes, while challenger Robyn Geldner had 207. Five more votes were for write-in candidates.

Menne received 234 of the 378 in-person votes, and received another 74 votes when absentee ballots were added to the total. Geld-



Menne

ner received 139 in-person votes and 68 absentee votes.

Absentee ballots had to be mailed by Tuesday, Nov. 3, and have until Tuesday, Nov. 10 to arrive to be counted in the final tally. However, with a 101-vote lead and high voter turnout, final results in the mayor race are unlikely to change.

“My priority has always been



Hardel

and will remain focused on the agenda that the community set in 2016 though the Comprehensive Plan for Henderson and I will continue to defend the community’s vision against the contrary,” Menne said about his priorities for



Sellner

ELECTION RESULTS
CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

Virtual Veterans Day

No in-person services will be held this year, but LS-H has pre-recorded a virtual service with Jack and Megan Zimmerman. P. 4

COVID-19 cases skyrocket

The state added more than 30,000 cases in the last week, far beyond anything seen since the pandemic started. P. 5

City focuses on saving Hilltop

With flood mitigation funded at the state level, the Henderson City Council shifted its attention to Hilltop School. P. 9

Ladies Tourist Club turns 120

Henderson’s second-oldest organization is celebrating a big milestone this year. P. 9



Henderson holiday season begins with Ladies Night Out



PHOTO BY RACHEL MILLER

The Sibley County Ambassadors worked the door and donation box for Santa's Helpers. Pictured are Miss Sibley County/Miss Congeniality Emily Burns of Stewart (left) and Ambassador Morgan Stockman of Glencoe.



PHOTO BY RACHEL MILLER

Ladies Night Out is a perfect opportunity for some friendly female bonding. Le Sueur friends Ann-Marie Erickson, Michelle Kotasek and Adelita Pargas loved the free headbands Heart of Henderson offered to shoppers.



PHOTO BY RACHEL MILLER

Shoppers filtered into Henderson Classical Glass to enjoy treats and browse beautiful glass wares. In addition, owner Dee Thomas offered shoppers a free gift of either one of two glass ornaments or a mask.



PHOTO BY BRENDA KOTASEK

Shoppers enjoyed checking out the fun gift ideas that downtown business Picket Fence offers.

SOLAR FARM

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

used to be. He and my mom both worked full time jobs for many years alongside farming. Fortunately, they were able to still hold on to the farm," said Dahlke.

As his parents got closer to retirement, Nathan moved back to his hometown to farm alongside his father and brother. The siblings plan to eventually take over the 200 acres of land, though both will continue to work additional jobs.

"The farm income is never steady or known. It ebbs and flows and many years you lose money, many years you break even, and then there are a couple of years in there where you actually make a profit," he said.

Dahlke wanted to find a more stable way to profit off the land, so when Nokomis Energy reached out to him about installing a community solar garden on several acres of land, he was open to the

possibility.

"We work with local landowners and we first look at the grid and then speak to landowners that fit some qualifications," said Corey Orehek, Director of Community Engagement for Nokomis Energy. "Any landowner with five to seven acres of land is eligible to host a community solar garden. They can either sell that land or often they will lease it to us for the lifetime of the array, 25 to 35 years," he said.

The program is through Xcel Energy, but third-party developers like Nokomis Energy can build community solar gardens in Xcel Energy territory in the state of Minnesota.

Dahlke decided to lease his land to Nokomis Energy, allowing them to build the community solar garden on his property. He signed on for a term of 25 years, which would amount to \$300,000 of income for Nathan's family over the life of the lease, according to Clean Energy Economy

MN.

In April 2020, his community solar garden was fully operational.

While Dahlke was excited about this opportunity for his family, he wanted to see if it could benefit the community as well.

Dahlke reached out to the Green Isle Community School to see if they might be interested in partnering with him and subscribing their energy to his solar garden. Anyone can subscribe to a community solar garden if they live in the same or adjacent county. Subscribers receive credits that typically reduce their energy bills by 10 percent.

Dahlke felt a sense of responsibility to help the school in any way he could. He went there as a child and now his own children are enrolled there. So, he asked Nokomis for a favor, to upgrade the school's lighting for free, if the school subscribed its energy to his solar garden.

"Rural America doesn't really

have the population or the tax base to support our school structures," he said. "I think out here in rural America we try to take care of ourselves a little bit more, and that's out of necessity more than anything else."

Nokomis agreed to upgrade the lighting for free. Dahlke estimates that between the new energy efficient lighting and the solar garden subscription, the school is saving about \$5,000 a year.

"I think that really went a long way," said Dahlke.

In addition to benefiting his community, he's grateful that his renewable energy source will benefit the environment as well.

"Farmers are really the biggest advocates for conservation," he said. "I think also, in addition to that, having a steady stream of income to support the rural community is incredibly important. If clean energy is a part of that, I certainly am a proponent and advocate as well."

If you are interested in learning

more about community solar gardens, find Nokomis Energy here: <https://nokomisenergy.com/landowners>



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