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# NRHEG Star Eagle

SERVING THE NEW RICHLAND-HARTLAND-ELLENDALE-GENEVA AREA

No. 52 Vol. CXXXV \$1 Office in New Richland, Minnesota 56072 Thursday, December 24, 2020

**Inside**

Merry Christmas  
from all of us at  
Star Eagle  
Bringing you warm wishes  
from all of us  
to all of you!

**Christmas**

## Star Eagle won't publish next week

As we have done the last couple years, the Star Eagle will not publish a newspaper the final week of the year.

Publication will resume with the Thursday, Jan. 7, 2021 edition.

\* \* \*

## Ellendale Historical Society meeting Jan. 9

The Ellendale Area Historical Society will be having its first meeting of the year Jan. 9 in the Ellendale Community building. The meeting will start at 9 a.m. and public is encouraged to join us. Masks are required and social distancing guidelines will be followed. People will be spaced out in an effort to keep people safe.

\* \* \*

## Fire department seeks donations

It is that time once again when the New Richland Fire Department asks for your monetary help to allow it to continue to provide the best fire and rescue service that it can to the community. Donations are collected through their annual calendar fundraiser for the department and education programs for the community. Calendars were recently mailed to New Richland residents.

As of today, the department consists of 25 local volunteers, who have dedicated themselves to helping around the clock in situations of fire, rescue, medical assistance, and severe weather. The department also helps surrounding towns when mutual aid is needed. The department meets and trains monthly, so firefighters are prepared for any situation. The department owns two pumper and tanker trucks, a rescue truck, boat, and a grain bin rescue trailer that is fully stocked at all times.

Please consider a donation today. Past proceeds from this fundraiser have greatly helped the department become what it is today.

Send your donation in the envelope enclosed with your calendar, or send to: NR Fire Dept. Relief Association, PO Box 87, New Richland, MN 56072.

\* \* \*

## MAT announces 2021 scholarships

The Minnesota Association of Townships (MAT) is proud to announce its 2021 Scholarship Program, which will award up to five \$2,000 scholarships to high school juniors. All students currently enrolled in 11th grade and attending a Minnesota public, private, or parochial school, or a home-study program, are eligible to apply for this program. Since its inception in 2001, the MAT Scholarship Program has had over 2000 submissions and 87 winners.

Applicants should submit a written essay using critical thinking on the topic of land use by May 1, 2021. Winners will be chosen by an independent panel of judges and will be notified by September 1, 2021. They will also be invited to attend MAT's annual conference in St. Cloud, Minnesota in September 2021.

**A word from The Word**

Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.

**Luke 2:11**

# CARES Act money mishandled

## Southern Minnesota cities use loophole to avoid following regulations

By ELI LUTGENS  
Editor

Of nearly \$7.5 million distributed to eleven southern Minnesota cities to support struggling persons and businesses, roughly 17.5 percent (\$1.3 million) was awarded to local businesses according to federal guidelines. The remaining funds appear to have been used to pad city checkbooks.

Many southern Minnesota cities have used a loophole to allow the use of money from the Federal CARES Act program according to their own discretion. Cities are taking these funds and using them for previously budgeted safety salaries. Doing this allows these cities to take the funds previously allocated for

public employee salaries and deposit them, as one director remarked, "Right into the bank account."

According to federal guidelines, Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) funds may only be used to cover costs that were incurred due to the public health emergency caused by the coronavirus between March and November.

CRF funds may not be allocated for previously budgeted expenses or to replenish lost city revenue. Despite these clearly stated guidelines, one director defended city spending, saying, "The city lost a significant amount of revenues due to shutdowns. We're using those freed up funds to add to our fund

balance."

According to the Department of Treasury, "Local governments should weigh these factors and decide if a given expense is necessary and due to COVID-19. The decision-making process and justification for eligibility should be well-documented for use in the event of an audit."

By using CRF funds for previously budgeted salaries, a city could, in turn, use those funds previously allocated for public safety salaries for any reason. One clerk said the city purchased new winter jackets for the police department. The North Mankato Finance Director reported the city spent \$100,000 for brand new computers, monitors and iPads for everyone working in the city

office. The City of Pemberton used half of their city's CRF funds to build a new entrance to the City Clerk's office.

New Richland's City Clerk Wayne Billings described how a city avoids using CRF funds according to federal guidelines, "It [The CARES Act money expenditures] doesn't have to be reported to the state because it was reported as being used for budgeted public safety salaries. If I didn't get the use of the funds reported used by Nov. 15, it [the CARES Act money] had to go back to the state. It's reported, so we got to keep it. Now that it's in the general fund, the city can decide what to do with it."

CARES continued on 3

# NR's newest mayor

## Get to know Gail Schmidt

By ELI LUTGENS  
Editor

The Star Eagle has been considering bringing back a section from years ago: Meet your Neighbor. In its place this week, a story version called: Meet your new Mayor: Gail Schmidt.

Gail and her family have called New Richland home since 1979. She married her husband Joe, in 1975, and four years later they moved to New Richland.

New Richland residents might wonder what draws new residents to call New Richland home.

"It was a halfway point for us," said Gail. "Joe worked in Hartland and I worked for EF Johnson. I knew New Richland and I liked it. We knew it would be a good place to raise a family." Gail and her husband have been married for 45 years and have one son, Dan, daughter-in-law, Tina, and two grandchildren: Taylor and Brendan. The two of them provided foster care from 1986 until 1994.

After growing up in Pemberton, and moving here in '79', Gail quickly became involved in the community. Schmidt has 47 years of accounting experience and worked as New Richland City Clerk for 12 years before passing the reigns to current and outgoing city clerk Wayne Billings.

The list of Schmidt's work in the



**PRIDE AND JOY** - Gail and her husband Joe Schmidt are pictured above. Their family has called New Richland home since moving here 41 years ago. Photo by Pam Agrimson

community is long. In 2009 the Waseca Area Foundation approached New Richland about starting their own Area Foundation. Schmidt was recommended to spearhead this plan and 12 years later is trying to find someone to pass the torch to.

If a person were to ask Schmidt what project she is most proud of, her response would be New Richland's Memorial Garden.

"That's my pride and joy," remarked Schmidt. "When I was clerk, a family came to me with \$5,000 and said they wanted to do something for the community, in the community. That's when we thought of the mural on the post office. A lot

"I knew New Richland and I liked it. We knew it would be a good place to raise a family."  
— Gail Schmidt

of those people pictured there donated. The Red Tractor in the mural is where it started. When Dave Budach died, his wife was the one who came forward and that's where the tractor came from. It was Dave's."

Schmidt twice served on the Trinity Lutheran Church Council. Schmidt also worked on the Park and Recreation Board. Schmidt also served as the chairman for the New

Richland Center Care Advisory board for six years, in a position whose term normally lasts two years.

Another activity Schmidt is involved with include the Junior Achievement program through NRHEG high school and elementary.

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# Time to hang it up

## Hartland township supervisor, Paul Lynne, retiring after 38 years

By MELANIE PILTINGSRUD  
Staff Writer

After serving as a supervisor on the Hartland township board for 38 years, Paul Lynne has decided it's time to retire.

It's the board's job to maintain the country roads around Hartland, such as mowing ditches and grading roads in the clement months, and plowing during the snowy months. It's also the township board's job to find election judges in their precinct.

Some of the work, like grading and plowing, the board has hired

Rodney Bartness to do for the past four decades. Other tasks, the board undertakes themselves. "Since we own our own road grader, we put the wing on ourselves," says Lynne. "Then we have to take it back off again. If something breaks on the machine, you gotta either fix it or find somebody to fix it for you."

The township board ensures that road signs are maintained, too. "Some of them get broken down," says Lynne, "or they get old - they don't reflect anymore. You have to keep them up, so people can see when the corners come - that type

of stuff. "You're the township weed control man, too," Lynne continues, "so you gotta make sure you're not getting a bunch of noxious weeds growing somewhere."

With 26 miles of road to maintain, the board has its hands full. "You have to learn how to screen your calls, because some of these people are really upset with you," says Lynne. "Everybody liked their road always cleaned out. If they work at two in the morning, or four in the

Lynne continued on 6



Paul Lynne, chairman of Hartland Township, retired after 38 years of dedicated service to the township. Supervisor Darwyn Olson (left) presented the plaque showing the town board's appreciation.

**NRHEG School Board**

# Winter sports return

By REED WALLER  
Staff Writer

The NRHEG Board of Education met again last Tuesday, Dec. 15 to decide on the Learning Model and Winter Activities schedule.

The Learning Model Update was presented by Supt. Dale Carlson.

"We have tonight our Principals, members of our District Support Team, and Donna Olson our Nurse, available for questions.

"We are here tonight to decide on two items. They are:

"1. Extending the current distance learning period for both buildings to at least Friday, January 8, and a return date of no earlier than January 11 for some or all grade levels. County Health has confirmed that we still have elevated numbers.

"2. Determining the Winter Activities start date."

**Learning period**

"It's especially important," said Carlson, "for the elementary staff to know before December 21 whether the current distance learning period will be extended, to prepare students and families and have more than just the two days after Dec. 21.

"Last Friday (Dec. 11) it was said that the Governor would share an update on the winter start date. It is now planned for tomorrow (Dec. 16). But whenever that happens, we are prepared to have a recommendation to the board for a date on which we believe winter activities should start.

"We don't want to go back to Hybrid Learning only to discover that we still have a virus spread and quarantines within our students and staff. If the board would extend the Distance Learning at least through Jan. 8, then the board could consider at its Jan. 4 Organizational Meeting any additional measures at that time.

"Though we are hopeful that we can make a smooth transition back to Hybrid Learning for both schools, extending the Distance Learning to Jan. 8 would provide us with more time to assess the situation. Also principals will be able to decide

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