

The year ahead

Never, in our lifetimes, has it been more obvious that each new year is full of surprises—some earthshaking.

This week, local boards are busy reorganizing and planning for 2021. Traditionally, we do the same, expressing our views on the coming year. A year ago in this space, we listed these key items for 2020: the Cemstone development; county building decisions; and November elections.

Nowhere did it say, “dealing with the nation’s worst pandemic since the 1918 Spanish Flu.” Like every other newspaper, we didn’t see that one coming.

Be that as it may, we will try again. This time we tread more carefully, less certain of what can be accomplished in 2021.

Windom housing efforts

Not long ago, Windom officials discussed priorities for the coming year and beyond.

Predictably, housing topped the list. In recent months, workforce housing has been the focus, specifically related to efforts by HyLife Foods, Inc. to boost production and employ 1,000 workers at its Windom plant.

It now appears likely that an 84-unit apartment complex will be built near the Windom Community Center. There are also signs the Guardian Inn will be converted into 35 apartment units.

On the housing side, Lindsey Cartwright and Jerry Bauer have launched Gove Acres—11 cottages and four townhomes targeted for people ages 55-and-older.

These are solid steps in the right direction. However, city officials cannot afford to loosen the reins.

Windom’s housing stock is aging, which is why projects such as Gove Acres and the Cemstone (Cottonwood Lake) development are so important to our future.

County, city building projects

In the recent budgeting process, we’ve seen a cautious approach,

NEWS & NOTES

■ A few new projects have eased housing concerns. More work is needed.

■ Local officials are correct in taking a cautious approach to projects.

■ Despite discord, we must support one another locally.

at the city and county level.

That approach has put two key projects in limbo—the county public works building and the city liquor store project.

A year ago, Cottonwood County Commissioners were considering a new public works building. By February, they seemed close to naming a site—and then the pandemic hit. Momentum was lost.

Meanwhile, the Windom City Council hired an engineering firm to study the potential of a new or expanded River Bend Liquor store. Results of the study are not yet known, but the store’s space shortage is obvious.

The caution in budgeting clearly stems from concerns about the pandemic and its economic impact. We’re not advising our leaders to throw caution to the wind, but it’s OK to be proactive and yet conservative—so long as they separate wants from needs.

We must stick together

Clearly, the United States is coming off a year when discord, mostly political, dominated the nightly news.

Of course, this is a concern, especially when it creates gridlock at the state and national level. However, it is nothing new for this country.

Through it all, our residents have managed to stay unified, pulling for one another, supporting one another—especially in the toughest of times. We must make sure it stays that way.

—Rahn Larson

LETTER

Citizens deserve to be better informed by city

In Windom Economic Development Director Drew Hage’s December guest column, “Residents can offer views on a new trail,” he advised residents to complete a survey on the city’s website regarding a pedestrian connection.

Not every citizen has access to the internet or a subscription to the Citizen. I hate to admit that “snail mail” still has its advantages.

Selection B and D were most cost-effective, and provide a safe crosswalk without ripping up Cottonwood Lake Drive. It also stated “as businesses grow and hire, demands for goods and services grows, as our population increases. This supports all kinds of businesses in Windom and the area.”

How so? If we did not have Hy-Vee and Dollar General, Windom would be a ghost town. God bless the hearts and hard work of all these exhausted employees, to continue to do their best for Windom.

Citizens are being forced to shop out of town for certain prod-

ucts. This decreases the income of our city and puts our remaining small business owners in another impossible position.

There was also mention that council meetings “draw very little public attendance input.”

My answer? The citizens’ attendance, input and thoughts are disregarded. The decisions have already been made by some—not all—to complete their own agendas.

Speak with your elected officials, if you can reach them. I looked through the 2020 phone book and most—but not all—are listed.

We’ve been told that feedback is requested for the decision-making process, or all the power rests with those who have access. The solution? Get the phone numbers on the website.

Can we concentrate on the health of our city for a change? We as citizens deserve to be respected, trust the council’s decisions, to receive honesty and to be kept informed. Our council deserves the same from us all.

—Phyllis Lindemann
Windom

OUR READERS RESPOND

“Which Minnesota sports team will have the best year in 2021?”

Greg Hanefeld

■ WINDOM



who are continuously rebuilding.”

“I think it’s the Twins, without a doubt. I don’t see the Vikings improving a lot, I’ve never had faith in the Wild and then you have the Timberwolves,

Joel LaCanne

■ WINDOM



important to being successful.

“I think the Gopher basketball team is going to go far. I just think they are well-rounded and have great chemistry. Having good chemistry is so

Juhl Erickson

■ WINDOM



have a lot of things aligning.”

“I think, despite a tough schedule, it will be a bounce back year for the Minnesota Golden Gopher football team. With P.J. Fleck as coach, they

Brandon Pletcher

■ WINDOM



ing and it will make a difference.”

“This is going to be a great year for the Twins. I just think they are poised. If they can get a full season, they can get some momentum going and it will make a difference.”

QUICK HIT

Cory Regnier
Composition



2020 Hindsight

Good riddance. 2020 is finally behind us.

Last year was full of unfortunate events, infinite changes and surprises around every corner.

With all the bad, there were also quite a few silver linings—if you cared to notice.

Many people reconnected with relatives that they may not have seen or heard from in a while.

Individuals and businesses stepped up in times of need to try and help out their communities.

Some of the simple things often taken for granted were now cherished and appreciated.

My hope is that we might all try to focus on the things that made us better in the past year and continue to integrate those things into our everyday lives in 2021, regardless of what comes our way.

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YOUR VOICE COUNTS

We welcome letters to the editor of up to 300 words on any topic. We strongly encourage letters to be typed/emailed and may be edited for clarity and length and must include your name, address and daytime phone number. The deadline for letters is noon on Mondays.

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Holiday reflections

How were the holidays for you?

I’m sure they were much different than what you’ve been used to over the years, if not decades. Some of those family traditions may have needed to be put on hold this year. Perhaps you met via Zoom rather than getting together in person. The holidays might have been a quiet gathering for just you and the mister or missus.

Whatever your situation, I hope you considered the holidays a blessing rather than a bummer.

The holidays, for me, definitely weren’t what I’m used to. Normally, my family gets together with my mom and my brothers and their families on the Saturday after Thanksgiving for what we’ve come to call “Thanksmas” or “Christgiving,” whichever you prefer. Yes, we celebrate Thanksgiving and Christmas all in one holiday, reducing the need to find one more date to try to get all our families together—while also trying to dodge any December snowstorms.

This year, that didn’t happen. However, on the Saturday we normally would have gotten together, the weather was beautiful, so Donna and I played Santa Claus and traveled to Iowa to see my mom to drop off a gift or two. We sat outside with masks and conversed for a short time.

Then Donna and I traveled to Sheldon, Iowa, to see my brothers and their families separately, again to drop off gifts for the teens—again, staying outside with masks.

They were abbreviated visits, but happy visits nonetheless, and more than we expected.

We thank the Good Lord for perfect weather for the excursion.

A special Christmas

Christmas for our immediate family was the same as it always is.

The total bodies in our house were seven, plus a dog. Even though we represented four different homes, we had been around each other regularly, so we weren’t

concerned about catching or passing on the virus.

We dined on some Christmas goodies as usual and exchanged gifts.

But what was particularly special for me was that we really enjoyed each other’s company as an adult family. For whatever reason (perhaps the effects of COVID isolation), I noticed

that our children were adults and we held a conversation that didn’t seem like adults and children, but adults all the way around the room.

Everyone participated in two to three hours of nonstop conversation. It was the best Christmas present I’ve ever received and, yes, it warmed my heart. The conversation floated from current events to memories of past Christmases and, of course, thoughts and memories about Donna’s dad, who had passed away just a few days earlier.

As many bad memories 2020 has given us, this is one memory from 2020 that I’ll treasure.

Although we didn’t get together with Donna’s family for an “official” Christmas celebration, we did gather together for her dad’s funeral. While that might seem a sad Christmas, it was actually a get-together that was more than we would have had otherwise and a small celebration with just our families. Maybe it was Donna’s dad’s gift to us in a crazy 2020.

Christmas Eve and Christmas Day were quiet, which we expected and that was just fine for Donna and I.

More quiet

We’re showing our age when it comes to New Year’s Eve.

Neither of us made it to midnight to send out COVID-ridden Father Time and to ring in the new year baby’s vaccine, but that shouldn’t come as a big surprise, given our age.

We enjoyed a delicious prime rib takeout dinner from Jack Slade’s and played a couple of games.

It was quiet—just what we hope 2021 will be.



DAVE FJELD
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A look ahead at the 2021 legislative session

This year’s legislative session started Tuesday and there are a lot of questions as to how the session will run and what are going to be the priorities.

First, I would like to mention that I have a number of new committees this year. I will be the chair of the subcommittee on Property Taxes and will also serve on the larger Tax Committee.

In addition, I will be vice chair of the Environment and Natural Resources Policy and Legacy Finance Committee. And, I will serve on the Rules Committee.

Smaller committees

Our committee sizes are smaller this year to allow for social distancing in the committee room.

By the end of January, it is planned that there will be zoom capability in the committee rooms to allow for committee participation for any member or testifier that is uncomfortable coming to an in-person committee hearing.

The smaller committees will keep me from being on the Ag Committee on which I’ve served

the past eight years. However, as I told someone who was disappointed that I would not be part of that committee, “you don’t have to be on the committee to be an advocate for Minnesota agriculture.” I fully intend to be that type of an advocate.

The deficit

One of the main issues that will occupy our time is how to cope with a projected deficit in the next biennium of over \$1.2 billion.

No doubt, there will be those who think we should raise taxes, those who will wish to take it all out of surplus funds on hand and a host of combinations of the two. I believe that it is first important to take a look at all state spending and determine where waste, double spending and unsuccessful spending is occurring.

Time and again, it is proven that simply throwing money at a prob-

lem doesn’t produce an acceptable solution.

I will oppose tax increases. Given the damage that has been done to our small businesses due to the state shutdown of many of them and unemployment that has resulted due to these shutdowns, there will not be the income to tax.

The shutdowns

Those businesses that have survived, do not need any type of tax increases and unless the governor gives up his powers soon, we will see more businesses shutter their doors.

Also, as one looks at states such as California, New York and Minnesota, we see that shutdowns do not protect people but rather add a host of other problems in terms of mental health, disruption of education and economic chaos. While people need to be encouraged to be careful and take precautions, shutdowns are not the solution.



BILL WEBER
GUEST COLUMNIST

Cheers and Jeers

Spring planting is in full swing as the May edition of Cheers and Jeers hits the newsstands, yet another sign that things are becoming a bit more normal.

Regionally, it appears spring field work has gone fairly well. Area farmers have reported receiving the right amount of precipitation, decent field conditions and ample time to get in the field.

We just need Mother Nature to continue to cooperate over these final few weeks of planting.

👍 Cheers go out to city officials for landing a \$426,000 grant that can help launch a housing development on the south side of Cottonwood Lake.

Phase one of the city-sponsored housing project calls for four lots bordering the south side of Cottonwood Lake, plus nine lots just up the hill.

A few hurdles remain. For starters, the city does not yet own the property. However, this grant, achieved through a major effort by city staff, is another step toward Windom's ultimate goal of expanding housing opportunities.

👍 Cheers go out to multiple area students for reaching the Minnesota state speech tournament.

The group of talented area students includes: Allison Letcher, Parker Alvstad, Makenna McNamara and Dora Larson of Windom, plus Jaden Scholl and Elizabeth Wiggins of the Westbrook-Walnut Grove/Red Rock Central speech team.

Scholl, a junior, wrapped up her stellar speech campaign with a second place finish in poetry in the 2021 Minnesota Class A Virtual Speech Tournament. Scholl performed "Girlhood: A Collection of Poems from 'New American Best Friend' & 'Life of the Party'" by Olivia Gatwood.

QUICK VIEWS

■ The Cottonwood Lake housing development calls for four lakeshore lots, plus nine more just up the hill from the lake.

■ Four students from Windom and two from Red Rock Central/Westbrook-Walnut Grove reached the Minnesota State Speech Tournament.

In addition, Alvstad and Letcher were among the 122 seniors from across Minnesota to be named to the Minnesota Speech Coaches Association All-State Speech Team.

👍 Cheers go out to the Windom robotics teams which now head to world competition.

After performing well in the Minnesota VEX Robotics State Championships, Windom's top teams did not get an automatic berth, but received an invitation to the VEX Robotics Live Remote World Championships, May 17-22.

Windom's 7192A team of seniors Philip Ackerman and Keith Swenson received an invite, as well as Windom's Masked Bandits sixth-grade team of Caelan Ralston, Blake Thompson, Mynor Mendoza and Jesus Guillen.

👍 Cheers go out to the cast and crew of Shrek for their resilience through a difficult year as they put on this year's production of Shrek.

It took 16 months, but Prairie Arts Continuum finally staged its 2020 musical "Shrek the Musical." The production was postponed several times before the group put on what many called an outstanding and entertaining production last month.

— Rahn Larson

Junk Week tradition is here

One of Windom's strangest traditions is underway — the annual spring clean-up.

Folks started thinking about "Junk Week" a month ago. Recently, a guy said to me, "I'm cleaning the garage." And with a twinkle in his eye, he added, "My junk pile will be impressive."

Lately, I've seen others rustling in their sheds and garages. Like children yearning for Christmas Day, a few residents just couldn't wait. They are already filling their curbs with old shelves, bed frames and the like.

Now that a few items have seeped into the public domain, the floodgates will open. Soon, our neighborhoods will display mountains of furniture, lamps, hoses and gas grills.

It will feel like a wall-to-wall rummage sale — which is not far off, except everything's free.

That's just how the scavengers like it. Of course, their arrival is another priceless tradition.

My guess is the trucks and trailers will start crawling through neighborhoods on Friday and Saturday. Deep down, some of



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these people know they are environmentalists, saving "perfectly good" bicycles and grills from landfills while repurposing countless other items.

Some of us will watch curiously to see if our junk holds any appeal. And, we'll celebrate our newfound "extra space," (which is really just a place for future Junk Week goodies).

May all your Junk Week dreams come true.

NEWS & NOTES

■ The detour for Worthington's Highway 60 roundabout reconstruction gets underway today.

■ There are a lot more details in the Windom Chamber/CVB's June 11 Hairball concert. Check future editions of the Citizen for details.

■ No word, officially, as to whether the Cottonwood County Fair is on for 2021.

OUR READERS RESPOND

It's Teacher Appreciation Week. Who was your favorite teacher when you were in school?

Marcia Hormig

■ WINDOM



"Carol Balvanz. We all called her C.B. She was my English teacher my senior year and inspired me so much. We wrote a journal all year."

Cheyenne Boeck

■ WINDOM



"In college, Shawn Lahr taught me that as you get older, you learn to love yourself and you find your best friends in college."

Val Halter

■ LAMBERTON



"My kindergarten teacher, Mrs. Ask. She made every student feel special."

Sonja Ptotter

■ JEFFERS



"Ken Kraemer. We got to make commercials in his class. He always had a way to make class fun."

Happy Mother's Day!

Hey, guys, I'm giving you a big heads-up — it's Mother's Day this weekend!

So, you sons and husbands who haven't gotten your mother or wife a card, gift, something (but probably not a new vacuum cleaner — and, no, I'm not passing along personal experience tips on bad gifts to give on Mother's Day) you've got most of four days to get the job done.

Don't be that guy who forgot Mother's Day. I'd hate to have your wife/mother say to you on Sunday, "Dave even gave you a heads-up on Wednesday."

Now that I've given fair warning to all the hubbies/sons out there, here's a very heart-felt "Happy Mother's Day" to all the moms/mothers out there — and a special "Happy Mother's Day" to my wife; and my mom back in my hometown of Primghar, Iowa. May you all have a wonderful day, hopefully with family.

But if family is unable to make it home and you've had your peace and quiet for the weekend already, I've got an alternative for you.

Pirates home on Sunday

The Pirates, Windom's amateur, or "town team," ball club, has its home opener on Sunday. They host the Ruthton Royals at 2 p.m., at Island Park.

Now, again, if you've got plans to be with mom for the day — be with mom! That's where you should be. But, again, if the family is unable to come home, or mom just wants a day of peace and quiet, or (better yet) if mom's a baseball fan, bring mom or take the kids/family to Island Park for the ball game.

The concession stand will be open. There's guaranteed to be at least hot dogs on the roaster and our resident ball park chef, Jim Garrison, says he hopes to be grilling up his delicious pork chops. Of course, there will be beverages, from water to pop to Powerade, snacks and you can enjoy a serving of your favorite flavor of Coldstone Creamery ice cream.

But, most importantly, you'll get your first peek at the Pirates. In



DAVE FJELD

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fact, if you don't check out the Pirates on Sunday, it might be a while before you see them again, unless you plan to hit the road. After Sunday's game, the Pirates don't return home again until the Sunday of Memorial Day weekend.

So, come out to the ballpark. The kids can chase foul balls, you can enjoy conversation with friends and

the weather is forecasted to be in the 60s and not even a slight chance of rain.

In case you missed it, the Pirates opened the season in Truman Sunday, routing the Fox Lake Foxes 16-0.

For more on the game, you can turn to the sports section for the details.

Loving amateur ball

When I was a kid, my hometown had an amateur baseball team for a few years — the Primghar Patriots. I thought it was really fun to see the guys who were anywhere from two to 10 years out of high school back on the diamond.

Sadly, the team didn't last long. Shortly after Northwest Iowa tried revitalizing the amateur game, slo-pitch softball quickly grew in popularity and amateur ball essentially died. In fact, today, amateur baseball in Smalltown, Iowa is played by only the diehard baseball communities — and there aren't many of those any more.

When I first interned at the Worthington Daily Globe and learned Southwest Minnesota had a robust amateur baseball league, I was excited. I got to cover the Gopher/First Night League playoffs when I arrived there and realized this was a brand of baseball much better than any I had seen in Iowa.

The baseball is still top-notch. In fact, I should remind you that two Windom Pirates pitchers, Collin Lovell and Ross Ackerman, were draftees on the Fairmont Martins state championship team last year.

That's the kind of baseball we play in this corner of the state.

Come check it out on Sunday and enjoy a day at the ballpark.

4-H youth spring into fair preparations

As the weather begins to warm up, farmers prepare for planting and farm animals are born.

The spring season brings with it a sense of newness and excitement. For 4-H youth, this is the season of scouting out potential fair animals and working on general projects because the county fair is only a few short months away.

While 4-H offers an array of community outreach programs that provide fun, educational and age appropriate activities year-round, the fair is often the highlight of the 4-H year. It is the culminating event that serves as one last hurrah before school starts.

Countless hours of work

Yet, months before that momentous occasion, youth spend countless hours working with animals and preparing general exhibits.

This preparation and dedication instills many life skills that youth carry with them long after their years in 4-H.

The groundwork for the ring begins at home, with family and sib-

lings with influence from mentors. It's not always a harmonious time, but it is a vital learning step of the process.

Done in a familiar environment, one learns how to pick themselves up, develop poise and grow on this journey. No matter how the end plays out, this is where the hard work, character, responsibility and a lot of memories are built.

More than meets the eye

Getting up early to get out to the barn for chores to take care of animals that one forms a connection with reaches much further than one sees on the surface.

I have fond memories loaded with laughter and chatter from daily walks and chores with my siblings and our pigs and cattle, along with an endless collection of stories that accompany the general

projects we worked on. The company and conversation made that time special, but it was also shaping my interests, beliefs and values.

As I watch my own kids prepare their 4-H animals and general projects, I can already see the learning, relationships and growth taking shape.

The accolades

The accolades at the fair are a humbling testament to the time spent in these early months and are a meant to be celebrated.

Yet, the ones spent behind the scenes are the moments that are meant to be cherished because eventually youth age out of the ring and those life skills polished along the way are needed to pave one's future.

All youth in grades kindergarten through one year past high school are invited to participate in a vari-



CRYSTAL REITH

GUEST COLUMNIST

QUICK HIT

Joel Alvstad
Sports Editor



No fish for mom

This year marks a rarity on the calendar for many Minnesotans.

It's one of the few years where the annual fishing opener will not fall on Mother's Day weekend.

Mother's Day, as we know, is always the second Sunday of May. The fishing opener, typically, is two weekends before Memorial Day weekend.

This year, because Memorial Day falls on May 31, the fishing opener is not until May 15 — the weekend after Mother's Day.

I personally have never been much of an angler but many Minnesotans are. And for many, at least a portion of Mother's Day is spent on the lake.

That may still be the case for some, but they won't be able to legally catch a wall-eye for another week.

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Share your thoughts

Surprisingly, given what the community has faced over the past 12 months, Windom's finances look fairly solid heading into the fall budget planning season.

In a recent interview, City Administrator Steve Nasby said that in the fall of 2020, the Windom City Council budgeted for a 5% reduction in Local Government Aid. The council assumed, like many city governments, that the hardships of the COVID-19 pandemic would put a strain on state finances, causing a major reduction in Local Government Aid (the dollars sent by state government to assist city governments).

As it turned out, the state received some federal assistance and state revenues came through better than anticipated. Consequently, during the recently completed Minnesota legislative session, lawmakers decided to make no reduction in LGA.

"We were supposed to get \$1.5 million from the state (in LGA), but because we didn't think we'd get that, we backed it off and budgeted for \$1.4 million from the state," Nasby said. "Windom should get the full \$1.5 million now."

Interestingly, that still leaves the Windom City Council with some difficult decisions. Only this time it's a question of whether to cut taxes, or spend the "extra"

NEWS & NOTES

■ In the fall of 2020, Windom's city officials budgeted for a 5% drop in state Local Government Aid.

■ Thanks to federal and state support, Windom did not see any reduction in state aid.

■ Heading into the fall budget planning season, the Windom City Council has some key decisions to make.

money. Here are a few of many options the council may consider:

- Buying sorely needed equipment for the street department
- Paying off the second half of Windom's new fire truck (which the council had once anticipated would be paid by the townships).
- Bolster the tree program which was defunded this year and faces an emerald ash borer attack (ash borers were found in the county this year).

Clearly the council has plenty to talk about. And, as the current council has made clear multiple times, they will listen to the public's input. Now is the time to make your voice heard.

— Rahn Larson

I love you, Dad

This past weekend in Willmar, we laid to rest my father, Earl D. Larson. He was 94.

The "D" has always been notable, not just because it stands for Daniel, but because there were other Earl Larsons out there. Growing up, I recall occasional confusion involving other "Earl Larsons," and chuckles coming from my mother, Marian; sister, Joni; and brother, Kim. But of course, we knew Dad was one of a kind.

He was the Earl Larson who loved his church, family and the farm. Maybe others did, too, but how many were married 73 years? (Mom is also 94.) They were married at age 21. Dad was an excellent farmer and served as a county commissioner for 23 years. In 1984, he was elected president of Minnesota counties, serving well over 200 commissioners, something he always called a great honor.

Beyond that, family and friends would contend that Dad made a difference in countless lives, not just in big moments, but in everyday life.

As we planned the funeral, our hometown pastor, Dean Johnson, said, "If I'm having a bad day and am feeling a little crabby, I'd just go see Earl. It cheered me up."

A few people pointed out to us during Saturday's visitation and funeral that it is good that we've reached the point, at least in Minnesota, where we can comfortably hold visitations and funerals.

On Saturday, I felt, as a son, the immense value of funerals.



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It is impossible to describe how much the prayers, cards, flowers, thoughtful comments and visits help one get through this tough period.

A funeral not only reinforces positive memories of your family members, you learn things.

A friend came up to me in tears, saying, "I hope you don't mind me saying this, but when my dad died, your dad was like a father to me. Heck, I thought of him as a father. He spoke with me often, checked in to make sure I was OK."

A few former hired hands stopped to tell Kim the impact Dad made on their lives — not just as their first employer, but by being stern when necessary.

Kim, Joni and I each heard people say Dad's endless support and encouragement was a true gift and that he had a way of making them feel important and valued. We always felt it, too.

I cannot begin to explain the impact Dad had on my life, just in setting an example. We all learned the value of being a good father, husband and friend.

Dad loved the outdoors, so he took us on unforgettable camping trips. He got us interested in, fishing, hunting, ball games, golf, boating, our church, the value of family and anything Norwegian!

Dad showed us that the best things in life don't cost much — telling a story (which Dad was great at), a hearty laugh, a hug. That last big hug I had with Dad came just days ago. It will stay with me forever. I love you, Dad!

OUR READERS RESPOND

Today is National Hot Dog Day.
What do you like on your hot dog?

Chris Anderson

■ WINDOM



"I lived in Chicago for almost five years and I like a Chicago dog, which has onions, peppers, a pickle slice and mustard."

Jasmine Hall

■ JACKSON



"I like ketchup, because I don't like the smell of mustard, and pickles are sour."

Julie Speckmeier

■ FULDA



"Mayo and relish; is that bizarre or what? I have no idea how that started but it's my go-to for a hot dog."

Mesa Block

■ WINDOM



"Ketchup, mustard and dill relish, not sweet relish. It's the classic hot dog combination."

Third Thursday: great idea

If you didn't attend, or were unable to attend, or just weren't sure if you should attend, then I encourage you to mark Aug. 19, 4:30 to 7:30 p.m., on your calendar right now.

What am I talking about, you ask?

I'm talking about "Third Thursday."

It's a new concept drummed up by the Windom Area Chamber of Commerce. The first Third Thursday was last week and while the Square wasn't teeming with people, folks were milling around the Courthouse lawn and enjoying the beautiful weather, the great music and casual conversation.

OK, let me back up. The first Third Thursday was held July 15. The next one is scheduled for Aug. 19 and, if I'm correct, I think there's another planned for Sept. 16 (at least I hope there is).

What's planned for a Third Thursday event is music, food, vendors, games for kids and a classic car roll-in. There may be some other things planned for the next one next month, but even if there isn't, this is a great idea to get people out in the fresh air and just enjoy each other's company and listen to some great music.

On last week's Third Thursday, there were families enjoying the event. I saw a grandpa treating his grandchildren to some shaved ice at the Itsy Bitsy Farm stand. Others were coming up to the Summer Skhool Treats ice cream bus to enjoy an ice cream sandwich, or (might I recommend) the Orange Dream, an ice cream bar wrapped with orange sherbet. Mmmmmmm!

Kids were enjoying the bouncy house, painting some rocks and playing a couple of other yard games.

Initially, I thought the event was lacking one thing — a food ingredient; you know, like a cookout. But it's not lacking that at all. You have to retrain your brain a little bit



DAVE FJELD
Reporter
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and be a little more prepared, which, of course, I wasn't.

But I will be next time.

So, what I am I going to do different on Aug. 19? Provided I don't have anything going on, I'm going to pencil Third Thursday on my calendar. I'm going to finish my work for the day, then call or drive-thru one of our many fine food establishments in town and get my meal for the evening, to-go.

Then I'm going to load up my lawn chair, grab my meal from the restaurant, plant my chair in the shade on the Courthouse lawn and enjoy food and music.

Then, when I'm done and if the Summer Skhool Treats bus or shaved ice stand are there, or maybe some other tasty treat stand, I'll have my dessert and continue listening to the music.

If I'm still awake at 8:30 or 9, whenever the outdoor movie starts, maybe I'll come back to watch with others. Plus, there's concessions right next door at the State Theater.

I really think the Chamber has hit on a great idea here. The only thing we have to do is support it. If I don't have something come up that evening, join me on the Square for an hour or 90 minutes and let's enjoy some food, conversation and great music.

Here's a bonus: NO BUGS!

I don't know if the city has been spraying, or simply hasn't needed to, but mosquitoes, heavily prevalent at this time of year, are nowhere to be found (knock on wood). If that continues, it will be a great evening for a Third Thursday.

Bad joke entry

OK, I haven't lived up to my end of the bargain and shared the bad joke entries, so here we go (I got a "kick" out of this one):

"Two peanuts walked into a bar. One was a salted."

QUICK HIT

Cory Regnier
Composition



Kayak pride

The Windom Chamber, Convention and Visitor Bureau and the City of Windom have worked together to bring kayaks to Cottonwood Lake for the general public to use free of charge.

This is a great amenity to have in our community.

My hope is that other people also understand that this is a fantastic service and treat it as such. If people are respectful and take care of the kayaks, then we can all enjoy the new feature and share it with others for years to come.

Let's band together and make sure that a few bad apples don't ruin this opportunity for the others.

If we can show that we can take pride and ownership in this project, then we may well have more opportunities for things like this in the future.

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YOUR VOICE COUNTS

We welcome letters to the editor of up to 300 words on any topic. We strongly encourage letters to be typed/emailed and may be edited for clarity and length and must include your name, address and daytime phone number. The deadline for letters is noon on Mondays.

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Addressing food insecurity and supporting local

According to Second Harvest Heartland, one in nine people face hunger in Minnesota with one in six children facing hunger.

People facing hunger in Minnesota report needing an estimated \$2 million more per year to be food secure.

Through the Power of Produce and Market Bucks programs, Windom Area Health and University of Minnesota Extension are striving to decrease the number of people facing hunger and experiencing food insecurity within Cottonwood County while promoting healthy and fresh foods for all.

The Power of Produce Club is a familiar program to the Windom area. In fact, 2021 marks the fourth year of this program.

An incentive program

The Power of Produce Club, known as POP, is a farmer's markets incentive program for children. Children receive a two dollar token to spend on fresh fruits and vegetables allowing them to learn about and try healthy, locally grown foods.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an increase in individuals experiencing food insecurity. According to Feeding

America, in 2019 an estimated 460,000 Minnesotans were experiencing food insecurity. This number jumped to an estimated 630,000 in 2020.

Market Bucks

To tackle the increasing issue, Windom Area Health and University of Minnesota Extension decided to broaden the POP program. Previously, the POP program served children ages 4 to 12 and currently the program is offered to those ages 0 to 17.

This prompted the addition of the Market Bucks Program, a farmers market incentive program for adults ages 18 and up.

Both programs offer individuals a \$2 token or buck to use at the Windom Farmers Market or Mt. Lake Farmers Market on fresh produce. Bucks and tokens are given away, for free, at various community events and at the farmers markets on select dates.

The goal

The goal of these changes is to reach a larger population of indi-



ANNA SNYDER
Guest Columnist

viduals and families that may be experiencing hunger and food insecurity.

Understanding the needs of our communities allows us to work with local partners to create programs that fit the community needs as a whole.

All farmers market vendors have the choice of accepting tokens and bucks. If they choose to participate, they are reimbursed accordingly. The reimbursement of these programs is made possible through on-going grant dollars.

In the future, we hope to sustain the POP and Market Bucks Programs through local contributions and donations.

Fresh, healthy foods

Our goal with the POP and Market Bucks Programs is to promote fresh and healthy foods to individuals of all ages while decreasing the number of individuals experiencing food insecurity and hunger; to increase traffic to our local farmers markets and support our local

economy.

POP Tokens and Market Bucks can be used at the Windom or Mt. Lake farmers markets any time throughout the 2021 farmers market season. For the opportunity to receive a free token or buck and participate in fun activities, visit the farmers markets on one of these event dates:

- Windom — Aug. 10 and 14; Sept. 11 and 14; Oct. 9.
- Mt. Lake — July 28, Aug. 18 and Sept. 15.

Farmers markets

Here are the Windom and Mt. Lake farmers market schedules. Windom Farmers Market, located downtown on the Square: Tuesdays, 3:30-6 p.m. and Saturdays, 7:30 a.m.-noon.

Mt. Lake Farmers Market, located at Mt. Lake City Park: Wednesdays, 4-6:30 p.m. and Saturdays: 8:30 a.m.-noon.

If you have questions or are interested in getting involved, please contact Anna at 507-831-0671, or anna.snyder@windomareahealth.org.

Anna Snyder is the community health and wellness manager at Windom Area Health.