

AN ECHO PRESS EDITORIAL

Write a letter to the editor in 2021

Here's a resolution for the New Year that will make you feel good, is easy to do and could very well make a difference in your community.

Write a letter to the editor. It's a great way to share your opinion, spark other viewpoints and engage others to join in a respectful discussion of issues that strike at the core of everyday life here in Douglas County.

But as with just about anything, there are some "dos and don'ts" to follow. Keep these six tips in mind before putting pen to paper or fingers to keyboard:

1. Don't launch personal attacks against private individuals. That's not allowed under the Echo Press Opinion page guidelines. Stick to issues, not individuals. The rules are a bit different if you're writing about those who hold public offices. They expect to take some heat – it comes with the job and courts have determined they open themselves up for pointed criticism when they choose to seek the limelight of the office. Still, try to keep your message tuned to a topic, not just trying to score political points.

2. Do remember the basic guidelines of submitting a letter. The letter must include a name and an address (only the name of your town will be printed). A phone number is also helpful if the newspaper has to check on something in the letter. The newspaper does not print anonymous letters. Keep your letter fairly short – 300 words or less. Submit your letter to aedenloff@echopress.com or mail it to Echo Press, P.O. Box 549, Attn: Al Edenloff, Alexandria, MN 56308. Remember all letter-writers are limited to one letter every 30 days. This allows more voices to appear on the Opinion page.

3. Don't assume that because your letter isn't immediately published that the newspaper is conspiring against you or censoring your views. The newspaper isn't some sort of cabal that only

prints letters that fit with some kind of secret agenda. We print virtually every letter we receive, even if we completely disagree with it. Your opinion is a precious right – one we wouldn't mess with. There are many reasons why a letter may not get in: There could be a backlog of letters (it sometimes can take a couple weeks or more before it's printed), there are no names on the letter or an address or phone number (see tip No. 2), the letter is way too long, the letter ended up in spam or was never received. If your letter isn't printed after a couple of weeks, send an email or give us a call to find out what happened.

4. Do stick to local topics. A letter should address topics that mean something to people here in Douglas County, not New York or LA. The issue can still be of statewide or national interest but try to connect it to our area. This is not required, of course, but the letter would be much more effective and well-read if the topic was localized.

5. Don't quote long passages from other sources – magazines, books, other newspapers, etc. A letter should be your own personal views, not just parroting others. And such material may be subject to copyright laws as well. So if a book or a news clipping strikes a chord with you, just briefly summarize the point it made and add your views on the subject.

6. Do make a point. Just rambling on about a problem won't be nearly as effective as suggesting solutions, coming up with different approaches or making a call for action. Remember, this is your chance to make a difference and to be persuasive. Focus on shedding light on an issue instead of just heat.

The Echo Press is looking forward to printing lots of insightful, meaningful and thought-provoking letters to the editor in 2021. Add your voice to the mix.

COMMENTARY

The pandemic, from a restaurant owner's view

By Kent Kopp,
Founder of Pike and Pint Grill,
Alexandria, MN

Maybe if I explain this another way it might make sense to those who wonder why we are so upset.

We are being asked to sacrifice in order to save lives. That is a concept as an individual I can get behind. No problems with that. What other businesses are contributing to the effort to save lives in this pandemic?

Pharmaceutical companies have pushed the boundaries of science to get us vaccines in order to save lives. They are not doing this for free. They will be paid for their efforts.

Manufacturers of PPE have done an amazing job ramping up production of much needed materials. They are not doing it for free. They are getting paid for their efforts.

Medical equipment manufacturers rallied to quickly manufacture items like ventilators in order to save lives. They are not doing it for free. They are getting paid for their efforts.

Restaurants have been shut down in order to save lives. But

we are supposed to wipe out our life savings or completely shut down and lose everything for our efforts.

The other industries are not being asked to take pennies on the dollar for the gigantic investments they are making in the name of public health. Personally, this shutdown will require me to invest well over \$100,000 to save lives. I am told I should be happy to receive a \$20,000 grant in compensation for my investment. I am not asking to profit on my investment. I am asking for government to compensate restaurant owners enough for us to be able to see the other side of this tragedy without wiping out everything we have.

So, I ask for everyone out there to exercise patience as restaurant owners pull out what little hair we have left. Most of us have been patient. Most of us have taken it all in stride and have also contributed above and beyond to help our communities. Most of us do have your safety and health firmly at the front of our minds. Most of us do understand that our guests are doing their best to support us. Love and peace to you all!

IN THE KNOW

Some good news came out of 2020

By Abby Strom
Happy New Year!
Have you ever



Strom

wanted to hear those three words more than now? As we start a new year, we cannot help but look back at 2020 and pick out some of the good that came out of a year that most of us want to forget.

The mission of the Alexandria Area Economic Development Commission (AAEDC) is promoting prosperity and optimizing opportunity in the Alexandria region. Development and growth continued throughout the year, and our office continued to support new and existing businesses in the region, assisting eight new projects, which will create 64 new jobs in Douglas County. Old buildings were torn down and new buildings continue to break ground.

Digital meeting spaces became the new normal for all to keep up to date and in the loop with what was happening around us and continues today. The AAEDC partnered with community members and organizations to bring a series of informational webinars focusing on resources for businesses and the challenges many were facing trying to keep their doors open. As shutdowns continued, so did those conversations through the year.

Communities throughout Douglas County are fortunate



NICOLE FERNHOLZ
In the Know

enough to have diverse industry, helping keep many residents employed throughout the pandemic. One of the big drivers for the economy in our region is hospitality, and those businesses continue to struggle. With support from the Douglas County Board of Commissioners, we were able to facilitate a relief grant program, awarding \$3.35 million dollars to Douglas County businesses and nonprofits affected by the virus.

In efforts to retain and increase the success of Alexandria area businesses and enhance our entrepreneurial ecosystem the AAEDC launched Develop with Douglas. This is a brand-new resource for local entrepreneurs, giving them access to business startup coaching, business management coaching, roundtable discussions, panel discussions and technical assistance.

The entrepreneurial lab will provide ongoing support and services to local startups and existing businesses at no cost to a resident of Douglas County. Entrepreneurs will get unlimited one on one demand coaching to help them move from a business idea to "open for business" through the business startup coaching. They will get help overcoming the

many obstacles that pop up along the way. Business management coaching helps established businesses overcome common challenges and develop clear goals to keep them focused on the things that matter.

Monthly entrepreneurial roundtables will expand their access to business owners from across the country and will help entrepreneurs tap into useful resources. The panel discussions will give entrepreneurs direct access to expertise in all the right areas to grow their business. The AAEDC partnered with the Rural Ideas Network to offer a growing selection of technical assistance classes to help small businesses manage and grow their business. We are thrilled to watch this program take off in the coming year.

Although looking back at 2020 none of us expected a year like that but it was encouraging to see our communities rally together. They continue to do so to support the businesses that make the Alexandria area what it is. Goodbye to unprecedented times, we warmly welcome 2021.

Abby Strom is the Community and Workforce Development Coordinator for the Alexandria Area Economic Development Commission. Nicole Fernholz is the director of the Alexandria Area Economic Development Commission. In the Know is a rotating column written by community leaders from the Douglas County area.

1911: Two wives petition for Milona man's estate

1996, 25 years ago: New Bed and Breakfast has colorful history – "Florian and Aggie Ledermann announced the opening of the Cedar Rose Inn, a bed and breakfast, located at 422 7th Ave. W. in Alexandria. The house was built near the turn of the century by Noah Ward, an Alexandria businessman, in an exclusive residential area in what today is called the Silk Stocking District. Over 60 years ago it was known as the Hostess House because it served as the site of weddings, celebrations and other functions. Under the Ledermanns, the home offers everything from country veterinarian calls to gourmet breakfasts."

1971, 50 years ago: Issuance of driver license learner's permits encased in plastic similar to the permanent driver licenses will be discontinued after the first of the year except for renewals, MN Public Safety Commissioner W.R. Hoaglund announced. Instead, the applicants for driver licenses will use their receipts for permits.

Donald Haseman, 35, of Evansville, has been chosen as the Outstanding Young Farmer of the Douglas County area for 1970. He was selected by a panel of agriculturalists from the county for the annual award which is sponsored by the Alexandria Jaycees. Haseman, who has been farming for 14 years, is a cash grain farmer. He uses modern practices of fertilization, chemical weed control and some minimum tillage for his crops of corn, oats, soybeans, wheat, flax and barley.

1996, 25 years ago: John Perino was sworn in as the new Alexandria Mayor and Bobbie Osterberg, new Ward V council member, was sworn in to replace Pat Pederson who decided to step down after serving 12 years. In terms of experience, the 1996 council is the newest in 16 years. Only one member, Harvey Weisel, has served more than one term. He was elected in 1979. The five other members of the council have served less than two years. They include newcomers Perino and Osterberg, along with Pat Heldt, Owen Miller and Art Hermes.

Alexandria optometrists Karl Bloomquist,



RACHEL BARDUSON
Observations
from the Archives

Roger Bakewell and John Gess are participating in a program to provide free eye examinations to low-income workers and their families. Part of a nationwide program called Vision USA, the effort is being sponsored by the Salvation Army and participating members of the Minnesota Optometric Association.

2011, 10 years ago: At the 74th Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts annual convention, the Douglas

County Lakes Association was presented with the 2010 Environmental Education Award. The award honors an individual or organization for creating innovative conservation education activities, reaching students and a variety of other audiences.

Paul Anderson, chair of the Douglas County Board for 2010, handed the gavel over to Norm Salto at the county board's reorganizational meeting. Besides approving Salto as the new chair, the commissioners approved Jerry Johnson as vice-chair and Douglas County Coordinator Bill Schalow as the secretary/clerk.

Just for fun 1911 – 110 years ago: Herman Mattke of Milona has two wives petitioning for his estate. The hearing has been postponed to allow the Oklahoma wife time to secure a copy of her marriage certificate. He had failed to divorce her before he married the second one. In 1910, there were 121 marriages and 10 divorces in Douglas County.

Sports trivia 1996 – 25 years ago: The Minnesota Twins, in conjunction with Midwest Sports Channel and MNN Radio Networks, will be making a stop in Alexandria during the 1996 Winter Caravan which will visit 75 communities throughout the Upper Midwest. Pat Meares, Jeff Reboulet and Al Newman will be joined by broadcaster Dick Bremer at the Alexandria Holiday Inn. Tickets are \$5 in advance from Sertoma members or Lakes Community Recreation Office, or \$6 at the door, including meal.

Rachel Barduson of Alexandria is a regular contributing columnist to the Echo Press Opinion page.