

editor's notes

Chris Rogers, editor, Winona Post

Why Winona parks are covered in green ribbons

Drive down Huff Street right now or pass Windom Park on Broadway and you'll see tree after tree wrapped with green ribbons. These ribbons aren't marking them for the chainsaw. Quite the opposite — the ribbon-wrapped trees are all ashes, doomed to die from emerald ash borer and be cut down in the coming years unless people like us care an awful lot.

In several of Winona's most beloved parks and boulevards, a huge percentage of the mature trees are ash. In retrospect, it was a poor decision to plant so many trees of the same species in a row, but here we are. Since the invasive, tree-killing emerald ash borer beetle came to Winona years ago, the city has invested thousands in treating ash trees with pesticides to keep them alive a bit longer and prevent them from all dying at once. But trees have to be treated every couple years indefinitely to remain protected. After delaying and spreading out the damage for several years, the City Council called it quits in a split vote last fall, deciding that it wasn't worth the ongoing cost to keep these trees alive.

The financial burden is substantial, but whole stretches of Winona parks could be bare in a few years with no action. Enter the green ribbons. Howard Krueger, Greg Olson, Kathy and Dave

Christenson, and several other citizens — the Friends of Winona Parks — have stepped up to raise money to keep treating some of these trees and plant a diverse mix to replace them. My hat's off to them.

As a kid, I loved climbing in trees, hopping over gnarly roots, and laying in beds of pine needles, but I never thought twice about whether they would be there next year. As I've gotten older, I've come to appreciate just how long it takes to produce a mature, shade-giving tree. Even years after clear-cutting, I've seen forests only starting to recover their former glory. When street reconstruction takes out mature boulevard trees, the pavement will need patching before new saplings can grow to full size to meaningfully replace them. I may be balding before today's transplants can shade my scalp. The mature trees we have are the only ones we're going to get this decade, so we should preserve them as best we can.

The Friends of Winona Parks are accepting donations to help preserve these trees via PayPal at [tinyurl.com/4nf23v54](https://www.tinyurl.com/4nf23v54) or by check at the Winona Community Foundation, c/o Friends of Winona Parks, 111 Riverfront, Suite 2 East Annex, Winona, MN, 55987.



letters

Party elites live in another world

From: James Clark
Winona

Just a caution to persons who are seeing all the stuff coming from party elites about how we need to change everything in the country. Remember that they are wealthy, live in special communities, if they have children, they go to special schools. If they wake up in the morning and want to go somewhere, a big, black SUV pulls up, often with an armed person to provide protection. If they need to go farther, they charter a plane or use one provided by the government. Their lives will never be significantly affected by any of their radical ideas, only the lives of "regular" citizens.

O climate! My climate!

From: John Grattan

Our climate is a changing, unfortunately not for the better.

We need to contact Congress with our cell phones or a letter.

Let's together work on this; mark this with an emphasis.

Do not delay; you can start today.

It's easy to communicate what you need to say.

I support the Energy Innovation Act. Here is a list of some of the facts.

An estimated 114,000 U.S. lives are lost each year due to carbon pollution.

Now is the time for a new solution.

In the first 12 years, we can reduce emissions by 40 percent,

if our efforts are truly focused with the right intent.

2.1 million jobs can be created in the first 10 years.

This dedicated effort on renewables would reach new frontiers.

This act will give the majority of Americans a financial benefit

In the form of a carbon dividend to be spent as they see fit.

According to a Pew Research Center survey,

Taken in June 2020, 79 percent of Americans say,

"The priority of our country's energy supply should be,

developing alternative sources such as wind and solar energy."

So, with bipartisan support across our country,

And even our friends to the North, the polar bears agree,

the Energy Innovation Act is a worthy cause.

We thank you for your help with this purpose and offer our applause.

Sincerely, with unity we hope to embody,

The Winona Chapter of Citizen's Climate Lobby

Ask a trooper: Can you wear headphones while driving?

From: Sergeant Troy Christianson,
Minnesota State Patrol

Question: Is it legal to wear earplugs or headphones driving a vehicle in Minnesota? Does the decibel rating matter?

Answer: State statute says that no person, while operating a motor vehicle, shall

wear headphones or earphones that are used in both ears simultaneously for purposes of receiving or listening to broadcasts or reproductions from radios or other sound-producing or transmitting devices. A hands free device, like a Bluetooth earpiece, is legal because it is only worn in one ear.

There are a few exceptions:

-The use of a hearing aid device by a person who needs the device.

-The use of a communication headset by a firefighter while operating a fire department emergency vehicle in response to an emergency.

-The use of a communication headset by an emergency medical services person

while operating an ambulance.

It is important for the driver to be aware and alert to everything that is going on around them. Listening to music with headphones or wearing earplugs while driving may block out an emergency vehicle's siren or another vehicle's horn, possibly causing a crash or reducing the response time for an emergency vehicle. The ability to hear a siren and see emergency lights, in a timely manner, will enable the driver to safety move over and yield to approaching emergency vehicles.

Remember to avoid all distractions while driving as your life and others depend on it.

Devastated by cuts to WSU Children's Center

From: Jennifer Anderson and Dave Crawford, Heather and John Casper, Marcy Faircloth and Caylan Larson, Diana Perez, Kathy and Brian Jicinsky, Allison Quam and Andy Bloedorn, Claire Richards and Sam Michael, Katie Subra, Meghan Booth and Jon Mauser, Heather and Patrick Reilly, Nicole Herold, Jessica Schmidt, Dylan Blumentritt, Dani and Joe Holtzclaw, Elizabeth Thiel and Travis Norman, Abby and Brian Kugel, and Joe West and Valeria Stepanova

It is with great pride that we send our children to the Winona State University (WSU) Children's Center, a childcare option representing everything early childhood education should be. Each classroom is led by a teacher with a four-year degree in early childhood education. These teachers earn a livable wage for their experience, skill, and heart. We are better parents for having the Children's Center in our lives.

We were shocked and devastated to receive an announcement — after 5 p.m. on a Friday — that all nine teachers at the Children's Center had been given notice their positions would not exist come fall. Due

to budget constraints, the Children's Center was being "restructured," and the nine teachers — who found out about the plan just a few hours before we did — would have to reapply to a Children's Center with only two head teachers and assistant teachers. Those lucky enough to be re-hired to the less-qualified positions could face a \$15,000 pay cut.

This decision clashes with the university's mission. The WSU administration alleges the decision is made based on finances but refuses to share the operating budget and has not provided the center an opportunity to sharpen its pencil. It ignores mountains of evidence that stress the importance of early childhood education. And it undermines the goals of the sparkling new Education Village, which promised to be "an inspiration for excellence in teaching and learning."

Visible to every future educator who enters Helble Hall is the Children's Center, established in 1973 to provide high-quality, comprehensive educational programming to our youngest children. Since then, it has provided mentoring and employment for the university's teaching majors and helped student parents finish their degree without stressing about finding — and affording — childcare.

At the core of the Children's Center success are the teachers. The nine current teachers are all working mothers. Seven of them are the primary caregivers for their children. Six are alumni of Winona State, all have four-year degrees and three have

master's. Together, they have 114 years of experience at WSU and 158 total years of experience in early childhood education.

It is appalling that Winona State would end the careers of these professionals without notice, discussion, or compassion. It is shocking that Winona State would say to its graduates and its education students, "you are not worth a livable wage."

We recognize that WSU is facing dire financial stresses and difficult decisions need to be made. But WSU should strive to be a leader in education, insisting that early childhood professionals are paid what they are worth. We should not "follow established norms and practices," but should instead, as the WSU mission says, "respond imaginatively and creatively."

Rural America is in a childcare crisis. The Children's Center should demonstrate what early childhood education should look like at a premier institution of higher education. It should be given a chance to prove what it can do in its home with its dedicated staff inspiring classrooms full of children during a normal, non-pandemic year. We urge the WSU administration to not follow through with the center's medieval restructuring and instead command the center to make innovative changes that move the bottom line in the best direction possible.

Future educators are watching.

Editor's note: WSU's statement about the center's restructuring is on page 3a.

Library

continued from page 1a

Like many aspects of reopening in recent months, the degree to which area libraries allow access varies from place to place. For example, Rochester's public library began an express browsing option March 11 where no appointment is necessary and patrons are allowed 30 minute time slots. The Blue Earth County Library in Mankato, Minn., has one-hour time slots, also with no appointment required. However, appointments are required if patrons want to visit the children's section, and only one family or group is allowed in at a time. The La Crosse library started its "intentional browsing" express program in mid-February. The time limit was unspecified but the library's website described the user experience as similar to going to the grocery store in that it should be "done with a clear purpose and for a short duration."

Several libraries have also removed chairs in order to prevent people from congregating.

Interviewed at WPL the day before it shut down, Samantha Berhow, adult services librarian, said when planning the reopening staff looked at how other libraries were handling their reopenings. However, WPL focused on what was right for Winona specifically. "It's time to get people back in the building," she said. "We're ready."

The path to reopening was not easy for the Winona library. Even as the pandemic

raged outside, they faced an internal crisis when their basement flooded, threatening the children's book section that had resided in that spot since 1921. Both maintenance staff and the librarians themselves worked to move 35,000 materials upstairs to keep them safe while the water intrusion issue was fixed.

Tricia Wehrenberg, youth services librarian, said this caused a delay in the planned reopening — before the library could be open for browsing, staff wanted to make sure there were organized books to browse in the first place. "We've been wanting [to reopen] for some time now, so we're happy that we're finally logistically able to make it happen in a way that can be safe for both our patrons and staff," Wehrenberg said.

Use of the new browsing system has been slow but meaningful, Wehrenberg said. The first day of reopening, a student came in looking for primary sources to help support a research paper — music to a librarian's ears. Library regulars who browse as a pastime have also gotten enjoyment out

of finally being able to return.

Donna Kamman, who came in to browse late Thursday morning, said she had waited for that moment since the pandemic began a year ago and that it was one of the happiest she had experienced since last March. Immediately after taking off her jacket she made a beeline to the new arrivals section to see what had come in lately.

Wehrenberg said that although they prefer patrons call ahead or schedule an appointment online, they will not turn away walk-ins. The library's commitment to service was also evident earlier in the pandemic, when they allowed brief stints of computer access to patrons. Those who are financially disadvantaged or otherwise don't have access to a computer depend on the library for using the internet and other tasks that are essential in the modern world.

Berhow said the Winona library is in the midst of planning a full reopening, to take place in the next several months.

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