

STILL UNBEATEN

Ponies reel off three more wins [Story on page 10](#)

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In the know

SPORTS

The Stillwater boys and girls alpine ski teams extended long Suburban East Conference winning streaks.

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In a boys swimming and diving meet that produced eight pool records, two conference records and two Stillwater school records, the Ponies hand East Ridge its first loss of the season.

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The No. 2-ranked Stillwater wrestling team cruises to a comfortable victory over sixth-ranked Waconia.

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INSIDE



History – Brent Peterson writes about the life of Charles Jackson an early Black pioneer who lived in Stillwater.

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Your Voice – Letter writer thanks us for our great sports reporting.

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FROM THE GAZETTE FILES

Feb. 16, 1921 – Local members of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, No. 1, Stillwater enjoyed a cafeteria supper served in the dining hall of their new home on Chestnut Street, the supper being attended by about 20 members of the organization from Marine-on-St. Croix. With the opening of the lodge, first degree work was conferred.

PUBLIC NOTICES

Legals – Keep up on the latest notices in your area.

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Lansfeldt updates board on students' return

District hopes to return 'On the Dial' learners to in-person instruction by April

BY MATT DEBOW
THE GAZETTE

On Feb. 10 — with the exception of Stonebridge

Elementary — all students in district primary schools returned to the classrooms for four days of in-person instruction a week.

During the Independent School District 834 Board of Directors' meeting on Feb. 11 Superintendent Malinda Lansfeldt updated the board on the district's efforts to bring back students to in-person learning who are enrolled in the district's On the Dial Program. Kindergarten through second grade

students returned to classrooms on Jan. 27.

On the Dial means the school board can change the learning model as COVID-19 numbers fluctuate. When COVID numbers spiked in November 2020, the district sent all learners to remote instruction.

The district started the

2020-21 school year with On the Dial students learning in a hybrid model, alternating in-person instruction on different days.

All families have the option of learning 100% online for the 2020-21 school year, and can switch to

See Return, Page 7

Seniors connect with kids

Even during the pandemic Lake Elmo seniors, children find ways to socialize

BY MATT DEBOW
THE GAZETTE

LAKE ELMO — Shortly after Wunder Years, a local daycare in Lake Elmo opened a few years ago, seniors living at Arbor Glen assisted living facility found a way to connect with the kids.

Resident Margo Schnieder said it is an enjoyable connection.

"They would come once a month, and we would do art; treats; we played games and we got to know of the children," Schneider said. "That's how we got to know everybody."

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, residents could no longer leave the building, but they found a way to still connect such as sharing video messages back and forth between older adults and kids' the children decorated the courtyard for Christmas and visited the patio to sing songs to the residents through the window along with sharing cards, drawings and crafts each week.

Resident Jackie Boorman has often connected with the kids.

See Seniors, Page 6



In this photo taken before the pandemic, Arbor Glen resident Margo Schnieder creates art with Wunder Years child Owen Malmquist. Since residents now have to stay isolated because of the pandemic, they now use Vimeo to read books to the kids at the day care. (Courtesy photo from Arbor Glen senior living facility)

District exploring online-only learning model option

BY MATT DEBOW
THE GAZETTE

The Stillwater Area Schools board is looking into possibly offering a 100% online teaching model for the 2021-22 school year for students who request that option.

Superintendent Malinda Lansfeldt said during a board meeting on Feb. 11 that the COVID-19 pandemic forced school district's to rethink learning models.

"When the governor mandated that districts provide a fully online learning option to families during the pandemic it forced us all to reconsider how we provide instruction

both now and into the future," Lansfeldt said. "We currently have about 25% to 27% of our students participating in our 100% online learning model this school year, and for some of them it's been a really good fit."

Other students in the district have alternated between in-person and hybrid learning in the 2020-21 school year as part of the district's "On the Dial" program.

In the fall about 12.5% of the students taking courses completely online said they are interested in an online learning option for next school year.

"District administrators are having a lot of conversations about what online options for

next year could look like to meet the needs of our students and families," Lansfeldt said.

The factors to consider include what it would cost to staff and operate a program along with what the district could lose if it cuts the option for next year.

The district sent out a pre-registration survey to find out how many students are "truly interested" in a fully online learning model and it will help to determine cost, and the information gleaned will be presented to the board at the end of February.

Contact Matt DeBow at Matt.DeBow@ap-gcm.com.

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SENIORS

(Continued from page 1)

With the pandemic while she said it's great to connect through Zoom, she is looking forward to the day when they can see the kids up close again.

"I can't wait until this pandemic is over where you can actually touch somebody cause it's really important," Boorman said.

The kids call the pair Ms. Jackie and Ms. Margo

"Children, of all people, need love," Schnieder said, "and who's best to give love than grandmas and grandpas. That's why it's so important to both Jackie and I."

Boorman is a pediatric nurse and explained that human touch is valuable.

"If you don't touch an infant it will die," Boorman said. "I mean actually die. So being personal with kids is super important."

The residents have gotten used to being stuck inside the building all the time, but the children bring a bright light to their days.

"It's like everything else, we don't get to see our families," Schnieder said. "We don't really get to see the little ones, but we can read to them, and we can talk to them through the phones. It helps us and it helps them. So it's a two-way street."



Before the pandemic, Wunder Years child Bradee Sargent plays "Say Say Oh Playmate" with Margo Schneider (Courtesy photo from Arbor Glen senior living facility)

Walz expands capacity limits in restaurants, elsewhere

BY MOHAMED IBRAHIM
ASSOCIATED PRESS/REPORT FOR AMERICA

Gov. Tim Walz on Friday, Feb. 12, said he would relax several restrictions in place due to the coronavirus as cases continue to ebb and vaccination efforts increase, including raising the maximum occupancy in bars and restaurants and at private events and celebrations.

Starting Saturday, top capacity at bars and restaurants and indoor entertainment venues will rise to 250 people, with up to 50 people allowed at private events and celebrations. The governor's order doesn't change the limit on capacity by percentage, meaning bars and restaurants still may not go above 50% of capacity.

The limit for indoor entertainment venues stays at 25 percent. Gyms and pools can also now have a maximum of 250 people, although percentage limits there

also remain unchanged at 25 percent of capacity.

Walz said during a news conference Friday that falling hospitalizations, lower test positivity rates and increased vaccination efforts across the state influenced his decision to lift some restrictions. The governor said input from small businesses affected by the restrictions and the consistency of the data also played a role in dialing back restrictions.

"This is very much targeted at those small businesses in the hospitality sector that have been incredibly hit," he said. "They've done what was asked of them. Minnesotans have done what was asked of them, and it makes sense now that the science shows that."

Minnesota has so far given almost 618,000 people a first shot of coronavirus vaccine. Almost 190,000 people have gotten both doses. The state on Friday reported a little over 1,000 new daily cases of the virus and 19



Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz speaks at a news conference on Friday, Feb. 12, 2021, during a visit to Parkview Center School to highlight a coronavirus testing program for educators. The Democratic governor on Friday announced the loosening of some restrictions on businesses, citing low positivity rates and increased vaccinations statewide. (Mohamed Ibrahim/AP/Report for America)

deaths.

Walz visited a school in Roseville on Friday to highlight a saliva testing program for edu-

cators that began as younger students returned to schools in early January. Walz said virus transmission in participating

schools has been 0.37% since the program began last month.

The governor said Friday that he plans another 30-day extension of his emergency powers, which were set to expire over the weekend.

GOP Senate Majority Leader Paul Gazelka, of East Gull Lake, said in a statement Friday that Walz's announcement less than two days before Valentine's Day gives businesses no time to prepare for what he said is a busy holiday for restaurant owners. While he said he's glad businesses can reopen further, Gazelka said the governor has "refused to work with businesses or the legislature to find a way forward."

"Continuing to go it alone with emergency powers and universal control over the dials is unwise," he said. "It leaves Minnesotans without clear expectations for future changes affecting their livelihoods and ability to support their families."

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