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In the know

SPORTS

After guiding Ponies to conference and section titles, Mike Huber is named Central Regional Coach of the Year by United Soccer Coaches.

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Andrew Rose and Katie Holder are among the Stillwater-area athletes who were making news 10 years ago this week.

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INSIDE



History - Gazette Columnist Brent Peterson details a history of one of Stillwater's oldest hotels.

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Your Voice - Chris Shaffer recaps 2020's significant weather events

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FROM THE GAZETTE FILES

License on soft drink places starts Jan. 1

Dec. 31, 1920 - One and possibly more soft drink parlors of Stillwater will go out of business on New Year's Day tomorrow when the city ordinance placing a license of \$10 per year on all soft drink establishments goes into effect.

PUBLIC NOTICES

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

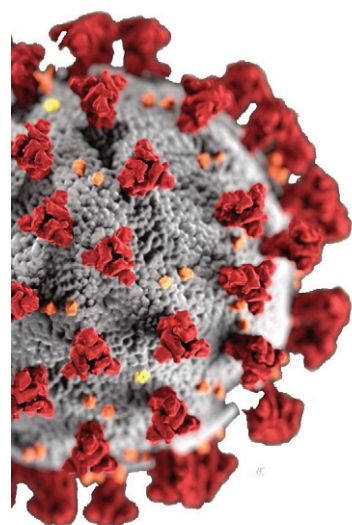
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Year in review

Ah 2020, these end of year end articles are generally a way for newspaper workers to fill in space to plan ahead as we take vacations, and as when news slows down to a trickle. This year, however, with the pandemic there has been no shortage of news in the world, in the United States and in Stillwater even during what's generally a slower news month. So recapping these stories isn't just a way to fill space, but to see what important news and events shaped the local community during one, certainly, unforgettable year. We are looking back of the past year - but not too fondly - and hoping a year like 2020 is one we will never have to repeat again.

Top stories of 2020



This illustration, created at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reveals the structure exhibited by coronaviruses when viewed with an electron microscope.

A new normal

While 2020 officially began in January, what we have come to learn as the "new normal" started in March when the coronavi-

rus, which was only worrisome in China, really hit home. The first confirmed COVID-19 case Washington County case was detailed in the March 16 online-only article: "First COVID-19 case in Washington County ..."

From the Story: "As of March 16, the Minnesota Department of Health has confirmed that there is one case of a person who has tested positive for the COVID-19 virus in Washington County. This is the first known case in Washington County since the outbreak of COVID-19 in the state of Minnesota March 6. The person who tested positive is in Woodbury. In a Facebook post, Washington County is preparing for additional cases."

Governor closes schools, businesses

As of the Gazette's deadline for the March 20 edition, the confirmed cases in the county had increased to three, which

This is our new normal. I think I would forecast for the press that this is more than likely a rhythm that we may get into. - Gov. Tim Walz in March 2020

was noted in the article: "COVID-19: Gov. Walz closes schools, businesses as virus cases spike in Minnesota" as we announced (likely with nearly every other publication in the state) that the governor was shuttering much of the economy probably for the first time ever.

From the story: "The response to the novel coronavirus COVID-19 escalated rapid this week as residents in Minnesota tested positive for the virus. As of press time on March 19, there are 89 positive cases in Minnesota - three positive cases in Washington County - with 3,038 patients tested by the Minnesota Department of Health. Just ahead of St. Patrick's Day March 17, Gov. Tim Walz

ordered bars and restaurants across Minnesota to temporarily close to customers who dine in. Delivery and curbside take-out services may continue to operate. The temporary closure also applies to other places of public amusement, including theaters, museums, fitness centers and community clubs. Affected businesses will close by 5 p.m. Tuesday. While the governor's order runs through March 27, he said he'll likely end up extending it. Supermarkets, pharmacies and other retailers are not affected.

'This is our new normal,' the governor said at an evening news conference ... 'I think I

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Craft brewers hindered by 'growler cap'

Six Minnesota beer producers form alliance calling for repeal of state law

During a tour with state lawmakers on Wednesday, Dec. 16, Lift Bridge Brewing Company CEO Dan Schwarz dumped out approximately \$30,000 worth of beer in retail sales.

Schwarz poured out the amber liquid because it was a winter seasonal, and he felt it was unlikely they would sell it in time. He needed to make room for the beer the brewery is currently producing.

The beer isn't selling because Lift Bridge has struggled during the pandemic and the state's two lockdowns. In addition to not selling beer in his own taproom, restaurants aren't ordering kegs while in-person dining is banned.

Schwarz said his business was able to maintain staff in the taproom, but with the Gov. Tim Walz latest shutdown, the craft brewery had to reduce staff and reduce hours and cut salaries.

"I really feel bad for everybody involved," Schwarz said.

Walz announced a four-week shutdown in November that shut-



Lift Bridge CEO Dan Schwarz opens the valve on Wednesday, Dec. 16, to empty out a beer distiller to make room for beer the craft brewery is brewing. (Gazette staff photo by Matt DeBow)

tered in-person dining at restaurants because of spiking COVID numbers in the state. He announced on Dec. 18 that the ban on in-person dining would continue until Jan. 10.

On Dec. 16, Lift Bridge hosted the lawmakers at the brewery to convince state legislature to repeal a Minnesota law that limits a breweries' ability to sell beer to go once it produces more than 20,000 barrels of beer in a year.

"For Lift Bridge, we were just under that cap," Schwarz said. "Due to COVID, we won't go over that this year. So we'd like to see that cap get raised so that every brewery in Minnesota can sell growlers."

Rep. Shelly Christensen (D-Stillwater), Rep. Jim Nash, Sen. John Jasinski and District 39 Sen. Karin Housley (R-St. Mary's Point) attended the Lift Bridge tour

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Board hires Lansfeldt

BY MATT DEBOW THE GAZETTE

On a 6-1 vote, during a special board meeting on Dec. 23 the Stillwater Area Schools Board of Directors awarded interim superintendent Malinda Lansfeldt a one-year contract that will start at the end of her current term in June 2021.



Lansfeldt

Board member Tina Riehle was the sole dissenting vote.

In previous meetings board members strongly disagreed on giving Lansfeldt a three-year contract, Jennifer Pelletier, Bev Petrie and Allison Sherman voted against those terms. While board members Mike Ptacek, Sarah Stivland, Tina Riehle and Liz

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# GROWLER

(Continued from page 1)

Wednesday, Dec. 16.

## Growler lifeline

The ability to sell growlers has been a bit of a lifeline for Lift Bridge during the pandemic — especially when in-person dining has been banned.

“It’s been very important to us when the taproom’s been closed,” Schwarz said. “So we could at least sell growlers to go. We can maintain our connection with our customers with tourists coming to visit Stillwater. It’s been really huge to continue to do that.”

Filling growlers also is a way for the brewery to test the market before Lift Bridge ales hit store shelves.

“It’s a really nice way for when people visit us to try those beers, take a growler home and share with them with friends and neighbors,” Schwarz said. “It’s huge for tourism; it’s a nice add on for breweries.”

Schwarz requested that people reach out to their legislators and urge them to alter the growler cap law. If promoting the issue on social media, he said Minnesotans should use the hashtag #savethegrowler.

Schwarz said the higher limit should align with what a craft brewery taproom can reasonably produce in a year, which is



Lift Bridge CEO Dan Schwarz stands behind the bar at the taproom while speaking with Minnesota state legislators. Lift Bridge has joined forces with five Minnesota breweries urging lawmaker to remove a Minnesota law that limits a breweries’ ability to sell beer to go once it produces more than 20,000 barrels in a year.

about 250,000 barrels.

“So if you can have a taproom, then you can sell growlers,” Schwarz said.

There are only five craft breweries in the state hindered by the law.

Lift Bridge has joined forces with those five beer makers to form the Alliance of Minnesota Craft Breweries. The Alliance’s mission is to remove the

growler cap.

The five breweries are Fulton, Surly, Castle Danger, Indeed and Schell’s.

## Lawmaker’s take

State Sen. Housley has pushed to change the legislation before, but it hasn’t passed.

“What the government is doing right now is not letting these brewer-

ies grow,” Housley said. “Once you hit that cap of 20,000 barrels, you have to make a choice: Either stop selling growlers or stay under that cap.”

It’s a double whammy for the five breweries in Minnesota that are over that cap because they can’t sell beer in-person because of the shutdown and they can’t sell beer to go from

the taproom because of the cap.

Castle Danger Owner Lon Larson joined the Lift Bridge tour with the state legislators. His business actually took a bigger hit by going over the cap than by staying under the 20,000-barrel limit.

“When we hit the cap in October 2019, we saw an immediate 30% decrease

in sales from our taproom,” Larson said.

The most common response from consumers who are denied a growler fill at Castle Danger is: “What to do you mean you can’t fill growlers?” Larson said. “Our staff tells them why in a very delicate way — for the thousandth time — and the consumer says ‘that’s dumb.’”

Larson said he agrees with the consumer, but his hands are tied.

With the dual hit, Castle Danger was forced to furlough about half of its full time staff.

Housley noted Lift Bridge is getting close to a similar situation.

“Lift Bridge is getting to that cap,” Housley said, “and what’s to stop a company from just pulling up, and moving out of the St. Croix Valley or Minnesota and going over to Wisconsin where they don’t have this cap.”

Housley said efforts to change the growler-cap limit has only failed by a few votes in the past.

“Let’s get this done early next year so we can help these businesses to grow, and to continue to sell growlers,” Housley said.

At Lift Bridge, legislators showed a bit of bipartisanship as Democratic House Rep. Christensen agreed with her Republican senate counterpart about repealing the cap.

“I fully support what they’re doing here,” Christensen said. “... They are victims of their own success. They are beloved in the St. Croix Valley.”

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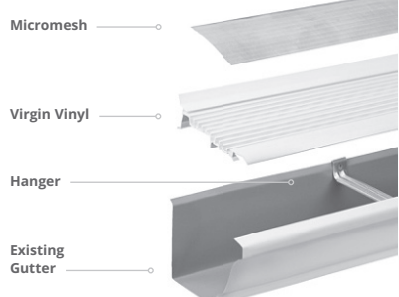
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