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Palmer throws minor league no-hitter.

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North Suburban Center finds new home in Fridley.

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Blaine / Spring Lake Park / Columbia Heights / Fridley

ONLINE AT ABCNEWSPAPERS.COM



Dream Flights honored three World War II veterans Sunday, Aug. 22, at the Anoka County-Blaine Airport in Blaine with a ride an open-cockpit WWII-era Boeing-Stearman Model 75 biplane. Photo by Jeff Benson

Local veterans take 'Dream Flights'

By Paige Kieffer
Staff Writer

Dream Flights honored three World War II veterans Sunday, Aug. 22, at the Anoka County-Blaine Airport, in Blaine, with a flight into the skies in an open-cockpit WWII-era Boeing-Stearman Model 75 biplane.

The event was organized by Dream Flights and Presbyterian Homes and Services, who are hosting several rides in August and September.

The Dream Flights events are a part of the nonprofit organization's Operation September Freedom, a national effort launched on Dec. 7, 2020, which works to honor as many World War II veterans as possible with free Dream Flights in restored, open-cockpit World War II era biplanes during the months of August and September.

"Operation September Freedom is our last chance to honor our nation's World War II heroes for the service and sacrifice," said Darryl Fisher, founder and president of Dream Flights, in a statement. "Wherever World War II veterans are located, we'll find our way to their nearest airport and create a moment of magic they can relive until their last days."

Dream Flights are primarily sponsored by Sport Clips, which raises money for the events. Presbyterian Homes and Services is also a sponsor.

"As a veteran-founded company, we're deeply com-



U.S. Army veteran Hugh Lampert smiles after his Dream Flight landed Sunday, Aug. 22, at the Anoka County-Blaine Airport in Blaine. Photo by Jeff Benson

mitted to the work of honoring those who've served," said Edward Logan, president and CEO of Sport Clips, in a statement. "Members of this 'greatest generation' of service members are due our respect and gratitude, and giving them this flight of a lifetime is just one of the ways we're thanking them while there's still time to do so."

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Anoka-Hennepin to require masks for grades K-6 when cases are high

By Emilee Wentland
Staff Writer

The Anoka-Hennepin School District will require masks this school year for grades K-6 regardless of vaccination status.

The School Board amended the mask policy Aug. 23, following a lengthy discussion from residents prior to the vote, to require universal indoor masking for everyone in grades K-6, including teachers and support staff, according to the district website. The measure passed 4-1, with Board Member Bill Harvey dissenting. Board Member Anna Dirkswager was absent.

This policy is effective only when weekly case rates in Anoka or Hennepin counties are greater than 15 per 10,000 residents, per the Minnesota Department of Health. As of Aug. 23, Anoka County had 17 cases per 10,000 residents and Hennepin County had 15 per 10,000.

The board meeting was met with a divided crowd advocating for and against a mask mandate. Many boos and cheers were directed toward speakers.

The district will provide updates, if any, each Friday after the Department of Health publishes its weekly report of cases per 10,000 residents. Updates will be posted online at ahschools.us/covid-19.

The district still recommends the use of masks for students in seventh through 12th grades, but they are not required. This could be reconsidered if cases continue to increase, according to the district website.

Masks are required for student transportation, per federal requirement.

Superintendent David Law said while the district wasn't going to require masks this year, the plans have changed as case numbers rise in Anoka and Hennepin counties.

The mandate will last the entire school year, Law said, as to not require returning to the board for guidance several times.

Students will return to school Sept. 7 for full, five-day weeks, except for those who are taking online classes through Anoka-Hennepin Virtual Academy.

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LIFE

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Face masks

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For those interested in switching to distance learning, visit ahschools.us/virtualacademy.

Testing and vaccinations are not currently required by the district.

"We have no intentions to be giving vaccines on site or requiring testing for students," Law said.

Those who test positive for COVID-19 are recommended to quarantine for 10 days starting from when the first symptoms were detected, or, if they're asymptomatic, 10 days from the positive test date.

Families are asked to notify the district if a student tests positive.

The district won't conduct any contact tracing unless deemed necessary, according to the district website.

Anti-mask mandates

Prior to the vote, many spoke at the School Board meeting to voice their disagreement toward mask mandates in schools.

Tiffany Larsen called the move "tyrannical" and that of a "dictatorship."

"I will not bow to such control," Larsen said.

Shannon Anderson, a special education teacher at Jackson Middle School in Champlin, advocated for allowing staff and students to make their own decisions. Her speech was met with booing from the crowd behind her.

"Last year, no one was vaccinated," Anderson said. "This year, every district school employee who wants a vaccination, child or adult, has one who wants one."

Children under 12 are unable to receive COVID-19 vaccinations.

She told the board that since living through the

pandemic thus far, "we know more about it and we've learned how to protect ourselves from it."

Carol Ferhmann compared mask and vaccination mandates and critical race theory to Nazi Germany.

"If you don't destroy our children through indoctrination, you will destroy them mentally and psychologically with masks," Ferhmann said.

Pro-mask mandate

A high school sophomore, Aria Love, advocated for a mask mandate in schools. Her message was met with audible booing from other attendees.

"As an immunocompromised person, I am always at risk for coronavirus," Love said. "I am always fighting for my physical well-being, so the least you could do is mandate masks."

Kacy Deschenes spoke in favor of the school mask

mandate, stating that last year went well with masks and other pandemic-related regulations.

"We owe it to each other to come together as a community and work together to get through this," Deschene said.

Pankuri Hicks said schools are meant to be places that are safe and accessible for children, and masks are an effective way to protect students from the COVID-19 virus. For example, smoking is banned at school and the buildings are wheelchair accessible so people with disabilities can get into the building just like everyone else, Hicks said.

"We don't make students with allergies, smoke sensitivities or physical disabilities learn from home," Hicks said. "Instead we provide them a safe environment at school. I expect the school district to make the same commitment to our unvaccinated students."

Board deliberation

Board Member Nicole Hayes said she doesn't like to make public health decisions.

"There is no one in this school district, that I'm aware of, that is an infectious disease specialist, an immunologist, a research scientist or a physician that is currently ... treating COVID patients," Hayes said. "Absent of that, and because we have been put in the position that we are in, I will be abide by the guidance of those experts, and those experts are the CDC, the National Institute of Health, the Minnesota Department of Health, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the World Health Organization. My concern is I hope we are doing enough. I believe fundamentally that adults

should protect children."

Hayes said the board read hundreds of letters, some of which were disrespectful, regarding mask mandates.

"Honestly, I'd rather have a bunch of angry adults than have one family suffering heartbreak," Hayes said.

Board Member Bill Harvey, the only member to vote against the mask mandate, said he believes "parents are the child's first teachers."

"This has not been easy on families," Harvey said.

He ultimately voted no to protect "our sanctity and our freedoms," he said.

The final 4-1 vote was met with a mix of reactions from the attendees.

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