

After half a century, gnome comes home

by Dennis Dalman
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The gnome came home – a little rough from wear but just in time for Christmas.

When the gnome was just 5 years old, it disappeared 45 years ago from the yard of Jack and Suzanne Toftey, Sartell residents who lived in St. Cloud at that time. The name of the 4.5-foot-tall gnome is “Nisse,” which is Norwegian for “gnome.”

Once upon a time, almost 50 years ago, the Tofteys decided to make a gnome. Once it was completed, the jolly figurine was placed in their yard in St. Cloud long before they moved to Sartell. But one morning five years later, Suzanne looked out a home window and noticed

with a shock the gnome was gone (almost certainly stolen). The Tofteys gave up on ever seeing him again.

Nisse had been crafted from plywood by Jack, and Suzanne had painted him in a colorful way complete with gray boots, green jacket, white beard, a big red pointy hat, and a yellow sign Nisse was holding with the word “Velkommen” on it, which means “Welcome” in Norwegian. The Tofteys both have long been craft hobbyists; Jack was also the athletic director at St. Cloud Tech High School for years.

Nisse the gnome was created to display as a cheery welcoming figure to customers who would visit the arts-and-craft shows where Suzanne and others exhibited their works. It

then became a decoration in their yard.

Suzanne is a superb, world-known rosemaling painter. Rosemaling is a style of decorative folk-art painting that originated hundreds of years ago in the valleys of Norway. It's often used as colorful, often floral decorations on plates, cups, chairs, cupboards, boxes and – yes – gnomes. Suzanne's rosemaling items have been exhibited and sold in stores far and wide, including in Norway where her decorated wares are very popular. Suzanne (nee Larson) is Norwegian at heart from tip to toe.

The Tofteys' gnome had become a mere memory of the distant past. But then, flash forward 35 years to October 2017. One day, Suzanne and Jack had just had a bite to eat at Arby's in St. Cloud. Back at their car in the parking lot, Suzanne happened to glance across the street to a strip mall. Suddenly,

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Hansen steps down as high school principal

by Mike Knaak
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Sartell High School Principal Sascha Hansen resigned, the district announced Jan. 3 in an email to parents.

The Sartell-St. Stephen school district will begin a search for an interim principal immediately and will then conduct a search for a new principal in late winter.

Until an interim principal is named, Superintendent Jeff Riddlehoover will office at Sartell High School and will work with assistant principals Jason Menth and Amanda Holstrom and Activities Director Nick Peterson.

“We will miss Sascha's leadership at Sartell High School and we wish her all the best in her future endeavors,” Riddlehoover wrote in the email to parents.



Hansen

At its Jan. 3 meeting, the school board voted to accept her resignation.

Hansen was in the middle of her second year as principal. She joined the district in 2011 as a physical education teacher and served as an assistant principal.



Early Childhood Information Night:

Monday, Jan. 31

6-7 p.m. in the Oak Ridge Early Learning Center gymnasium
Parents/guardians are invited to this meeting to preview Early Childhood offerings for the 2022-2023 school year. Individuals will also have the opportunity to talk with staff, tour our classrooms, meet with members of the Boys and Girls Club about our KIDSTART program and leave with information necessary to register their child.

*Please note: this event is for adults only.

Kindergarten Information Night:

Monday, Feb. 7

6-7 p.m. in the Oak Ridge Early Learning Center gymnasium
Parents/guardians are invited to this overview of Kindergarten for the 2022-2023 school year. Individuals will also have the opportunity to talk with staff, tour our classrooms, meet with members of the Boys and Girls Club about our before and after school KIDSTOP program and leave with information necessary to enroll your child in the Sartell-St. Stephen School district.

*Please note: this event is for adults only.

Troop

from front page

in operations management, is employed by the Information Technology Services at his alma mater, SCSU.

He himself was a Boy Scout who earned an Eagle Scout Badge while growing up in Plymouth. His Eagle project was to build several hundred wood-duck houses, which were placed in the Plymouth Nature Preserve.

Dietz has been appointed to the leadership position recently held by Ben Amundson.

“We hope to grow the troop in the coming year,” Dietz said. “Officially, the organization is just (more than) 40 years old. We're always welcoming new Scouts and the costs are very, very reasonable.”

To find out how to join the Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts,

go to the website beascout.org

Scouts, which is led by boys, meet twice a month, plus one annual planning meeting. In addition, both Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts enjoy numerous trips, camp-outs and other activities throughout the year – but mainly in summer.

There's an old saying: Once a Boy Scout, always a Boy Scout. Dietz tends to believe that. Strongly, in fact.

Three of the retired Boy Scout leaders remain active in Scouting, including leader Ben Amundson, whose four boys were all deeply involved in Scouting.

Some former Scouts, even though they are up in age, love to keep involved in Scouting, Dietz said, because they keep getting to go on exciting trips and enjoying adventures like hiking, climbing, camping, canoeing, kayaking and immersing themselves in the great outdoors.

“It's exciting,” Dietz said.

“We have all kinds of things planned for next year. The secret of Scouting is to go into the outdoors and have fun.”

Among the Scouting activities in recent years are the following, Dietz noted:

Week-long camping trips at Many Points Scout Camp near Lake Itasca; kayaking by the Apostle Islands in Lake Superior and in Voyageurs National Park; backpacking on a trek through Isle Royal, also on Lake Superior; hiking in the Big Horn Mountains of Montana; a canoe trip every summer (last year down the Crow Wing River).

Dietz said it is gratifying the Central Minnesota Scouts Council office happens to be located right on Scout Drive in south Sartell.

Trina Dietz is proud of her husband and children and their tight connections to scouting.

“It's really the commitment of these men and adult leaders in our troop that allow the cool things to happen,” she wrote in an email. “With the exception of Eric, all of the children of these men (scout leaders) are no longer in Scouting, yet they still give of their time, talent and gear to allow young people in our community to grow.”

To find out more about Scouting or how to join, go to beascout.org

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