

Veterans Day

continued from page 1

While in Germany, I completed 24 combat sorties, which amounted to 132 hours of combat flight time. On our missions, we'd have anywhere from a handful up to 60-70 of wounded troops on the plane at one time.

We only had a crew of 3 flight nurses and 4 medical technicians. Despite having a large amount of patients on a 6-7 hour flight and only 7 of use to provide care, we worked well together to maintain our goal of getting these troops to the level of care they needed.

Taking care of our battle wounded troops was one of the most humbling and greatest experiences I have ever had. Being able to care for Americas greatest heroes, to return them home safely to their families, was deeply rewarding. To me, there was no better job in the military than that.

In 2011, I had the opportunity to complete a Humanitarian mission to the Democratic Republic of Congo, Africa. In the capital city of Kinshasa.

We deployed there with personnel that consisted of Medical Aircrew (flight nurses and medical technicians), pilots, cargo loadmasters, flight surgeons, interpreters (because they spoke primarily French there), security forces, and public affairs personnel.

In 2 weeks, we trained the Congolese medical teams on basic, advanced, and trauma care.; And how to do so while caring for wounded soldiers who need to be transported by Aircraft.

The goal of this training was to give a 3rd world country the knowledge to better care for their wounded troops who were still fighting a civil war that was tied to the Genocide that was occurring in the neighboring country of Rwanda.

When I reflect back on the time spent in Africa, I am once again

grateful for the sacrifices our veterans have made. To allow us to live in the greatest country in the world. Where we often take for granted some of the basic comforts that many places in the world do not enjoy.

Clean, running water. Warm water to shower and bath in.

Electricity.

Clothing. Especially shoes.

Food.

Proper shelter. Our homes.

Many of the 17 million people living in Kinshasa (which is twice the population of New York City) don't have clean water to drink, warm food to eat, proper shelter, and beds to sleep on.

If not for the many men and women willing to swear an oath to defend our country from our enemies, both foreign and domestic: It's very possible we'd be living like many of them, struggling daily just to have a drink of clean water, enough food to eat, and clothes to wear. We certainly wouldn't be gathered here today, feeling as safe as we do now amongst our friends and neighbors.

It's not hard to imagine that spending 6 years in the Air Force, that one wouldn't develop a love for flying and the thrill of being in the air at 40,000 feet above the ground. Even though I didn't fly the plane, I spent my time providing care to our troops in the back, it was still an amazing experience to have been on some of the most capable aircraft in the world.

C-130 Hercules.

KC-17 Globemaster

KC-135 Stratotanker

C-5 Galaxy

I am grateful to have had to opportunity to serve my country. To give back. To do my part. To support and care for those men and women who are truly sacrificing on the front lines. I am forever grateful for them. For what they do and have done. To keep you and I safe.

I would not have been able to perform my service in the Air Force without the support of my wife Sarri and my 3 children.

When someone decides to serve their country, they don't do it alone and their family makes sacrifices as well. And I certainly could not have done without their love and full support.

I'd like to leave you all with one of my favorite quotes about what a veteran truly is. This describes a veteran perfectly:

A veteran, whether active duty, discharged, or reserve is someone who at one point in his or her life, wrote a blank check payable to The United States of America for an amount up to and including his or her life.

To me, that is Honor. And there are way too many people in our country today who no longer understand that fact. Let us choose today not to be one of those people.

I am proud to be a veteran. I am thankful for those whom I have served with, for those who have served before me, and for those are currently serving today.

We give our thanks and appreciation to all veterans past and present. We live free in America because of their dedication and sacrifice.

Thank you!

Followed by the speech, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students sang the song "We Honor You." Robert Novacek, Oren Lund, and Miss Middle River and GMR student Bella Burkel then conducted the 13 Folds Presentation with a U.S. flag.

Concluding the program, GMR teacher Dave Blazek did an introduction of veterans, GMR alum Max Utter played "Taps" on his trumpet, and the local legions retired the colors as Martyn Novacek played another drum roll. Another Veterans Day program in Greenbush came to a close.

Badger School

continued from page 1

Snow Removal Bid:

The board approved a bid from Ridge Sales to haul away already made snow windrows. As Board Chairperson Jamie Isane reported at the October 11, 2021 board meeting, this bid included the following rates: trucks with operators per hour \$90 per truck, and tractor and loader \$110 per hour. This bid does not include plowing, pushing, or blowing newly fallen

snow, unless for special case-by-case situations (example: heavy snow).

The board tabled this bid back at its October 11 meeting due to wanting some questions answered first related to what the bid entailed.

Next Meeting: The board's next regular meeting takes place on Monday, December 13 at 7:30 pm.

GREENBUSH MIDDLE RIVER SCHOOL

VACANCY NOTICE

**Greenbush Middle River School
Independent School District No. 2683
401 Park Avenue West
Greenbush, Minnesota 56726**

Position: Custodian. Full-time position.

Qualifications & Duties: The duties of the custodian, in addition to the generally accepted work included in cleaning, also consists of boiler operation, general maintenance, and any other duties that may be assigned in connection with this employment by the School. Successful candidate must be able to effectively communicate with others.

Rate of Pay: \$12.50 - \$16.00 per hour depending on experience

Application Deadline: As Soon As Possible or Until Filled

Apply To: Josh Kern - Supervisor of Buildings & Grounds

Application forms may be obtained from the District Office (782-2232) or from the Supervisor's Office (782-2232 ext: 242) or on-line at <www.middleriver.k12.mn.us> click "Our District" and scroll down to "Employment Opportunities".

- An Equal Opportunity Employer -

(November 17 & 24, 2021)

Like us on

facebook

SEARCH FOR

The Tribune • Greenbush, MN

Schools facing food distribution issues

Ryan Bergeron
ryanb@wiktel.com

Wondering why that school menu is changing sometimes? There's a reason for it.

Jeffrey Lund, Marshall County Central Superintendent and Tri-County interim Superintendent at the time, mentioned at an October 20 Tri-County School Board meeting how both the Tri-County and Marshall County Central schools, along with other schools, belong to a purchasing co-op that had an agreement with Cash-Wa Distributing. In early September, Cash-Wa gave schools a 60-day notice that they would no longer be providing food to school districts.

Lund reported how Northwest Service Co-op worked diligently to find food vendors for these impacted schools.

"Long story short, they did get a few list of contractors who are willing to service schools and gave phone numbers out to food service managers across the co-op," Lund said.

Area food service departments are adjusting to this distribution issue, meaning the potential for changing menu items. Karyn Lutz, a Consultant Dietician for Northwest Service Co-op, and a couple area school food service directors—Janet Pierce at Greenbush-Middle River School and Jody Randall at Badger School—discussed this issue, including the reasons behind it, its impact, actions being taken to get through it, and the importance of getting through this issue.

Through the Northwest Service Co-op—a service schools pay for—Lutz and another dietician, Amanda Ryan, go into northern Minnesota schools to assist food service directors with whatever they may need help with in their food service programs. Lutz and Ryan have about 15 schools each.

Their work includes ensuring schools are meeting federal and state guidelines, menu writing, looking at the systems that are in place (the service line) and recently helping school food service departments navigate through COVID.

Tri-County and Marshall County Central utilize the Northwest Service Co-op's dietician program, while Badger and Greenbush-Middle River do not. Regardless, as Lutz explained, most northern Minnesota schools do belong to the Northwest Service Co-op and Lutz and Ryan would often share food-related updates to their co-op member schools through superintendent meetings.

Asked about the food distribution issue, Lutz said food availability issues started making it difficult to meet federal nutritional standards as far back as last year.

"But this year, it became more of an issue, actually, right after school started," Lutz said.

She then referenced Cash-Wa's 60-day notice that it was ending its contract with Lake County Co-op, a body that collaborates with other co-ops, including Northwest Service Co-op. She mentioned how 90 plus schools in northern Minnesota and North Dakota are impacted by this.

"We have a lot of small school districts that really don't have the personnel to put in the time to write those requests for proposals themselves looking for a prime vendor, or a food distributor," Lutz said. "It's something I do for some schools, but for many schools, it's been easy for them to sign on with the co-op."

Cash-Wa could no longer supply these impacted schools' food service needs by November 1.

"That really put a lot of schools that were using Cash-Wa into a frenzy looking for a new distributor," Lutz said. "And because of the supply line interruptions from COVID, other distributors really limited their availability to pick up some of these schools."

According to Lutz, Cash-Wa stepped out of the school business due to their Fargo distribution center being short staffed by eight to ten employees—individuals who would stock trucks at night for delivering the following day.

"One of the reasons they gave is that they could not find employees, and they didn't have any hope of finding employees," Lutz said, "because Amazon will be having a distribution center opening in Fargo within the next few months. And so they were not getting applicants and continuing to lose employees to Amazon."

Lutz earlier mentioned how major food distributors, such as US Foods, Sysco, and Reinhart, are facing the same issues that Cash-Wa put in their 60-day notice.

Lund reported at the October 20 school board meeting that it sounded like Reinhart would be supplying both the Tri-County and Marshall County Central Schools.

Badger School uses US Foods, supplying them with a majority of their menu items. Jody Randall, the food service director there, said her school began having food service distribution issues right away in September, but she heard about the issue in August. She said that since then their "reps" have worked to find replacement items, but sometimes it doesn't work out.

"Shrimp poppers were discontinued and the replacement was raw shrimp," Randall said via email. "...one of the few times the replacement wasn't an option. Shrimp poppers was a big day for us too with over 50 seconds served, so we hated to lose that menu item."

She added how the school also hasn't been able to get holiday-shaped chicken

nuggets and cookies.

Greenbush-Middle River School also uses US Foods. Janet Pierce, the food service director there, said their distributor is trying to make the best out of the situation.

"US Foods have been great to do the best they can do. They have been making substitutes for products they don't have," Pierce said via email. "I have noticed when I have made my orders the last few weeks that I see less products available."

Food outages and shortages have been issues Lutz has been hearing about from schools more and more since the beginning of the year. It has led to, as these food service directors alluded to, some food option adjustments.

"Schools are supposed to serve, when they serve grains, like bread, hamburger buns, hot dog buns, those are supposed to be whole grain," Lutz said. "And what we're finding is that schools are having more and more of a difficult time finding those whole grain products, so they may have to look at non-whole grain products."

She added how schools are saying that even non-grain products are not available. Lutz also heard of meat products being difficult to find. Speaking of meat products, Lutz has found it staggering how much hamburger patty prices have increased—almost doubling in price.

"It's very basic things, very basic food items that the schools are used to serving on a regular basis that they're having a hard time getting," Lutz said. "And sometimes it may mean that it's just out of stock right now and it'll be coming in, or sometimes it's a really long (time), like months, we're not going to see that product."

Pierce added how she has had trouble getting special diet products, either due to not being able to get it at all or seeing large price increases. She mentioned how paper products are "impossible" to get.

"I get asked by parents why they see certain products uptown and maybe we don't have them on the menu," Pierce said via email. "Our contract is through US Foods and we feed 240 kids so again supply and demand."

Due to one major distributor stepping out of business, schools are not only struggling to get food in the door, but are experiencing another issue.

"They're also struggling with putting a menu out," Lutz said, "and being able to comply with that menu that they put out for families to know what they'll be serving."

Lutz and her co-worker Ryan are sharing template letters with schools to better help them communicate with their families on these distribution issues.

"Hopefully, students can understand that the menu may not be exactly as it's been posted," Lutz said. "And there's nothing the food service director can do about that. They have to make changes on the fly."

Randall said the Badger School has had to make a few changes to its menu, including not just shrimp poppers, but also cream of chicken soup, juices, egg patties, Unrustables, and certain pizzas.

As Pierce alluded to, this issue has led to a little creativity from food service department.

"So far I feel like we have been able to feed the kids great meals," Pierce said via email. "We just need to be creative and do the best we can do with what we have. We try (to) stay positive and hope this will change soon and things can get back to normal."

The distribution issue has led to a "huge" change for schools, according to Lutz, as many have had to go out and find a different food distributor. She added how most have found another distributor, but this issue is also putting pressure on all the food service companies that supply schools.

Through it all, Pierce and Randall expressed their appreciation to the public during this unique time.

"We have a great school with such understanding kids," Pierce said via email about GMR. "They treat the kitchen staff amazing and (I) couldn't ask to work for a better school!"

Randall also passed along her appreciation and a message via email.

"We would like all our kids and parents to know how much we appreciate all their patience and understanding through all this," Randall said. "And as Grandma would say 'This too shall pass.'"

As a dietician, this issue of food distribution to students is important to Lutz. Many students get a majority of their nutrition for the day from school.

"It's a critical part of what we're doing," Lutz said, "and as my husband often says, '... If they're hungry, they (students) can't learn, or they're not learning as much as they can.' So fueling their bodies helps fuel their brains."

She also commended the work and attitudes of school food service workers.

"People that work in school nutrition and in school food service programs really have a heart for kids," Lutz said. "And they want to make sure kids aren't hungry, and they want to be giving them the best nutritious foods that they can. So this has been a very difficult time for those employees, and they're going to do whatever they can to just keep feeding the kids. That's the most important thing."