

NEW LIFE COMES TO NYM

my office, I started out in Mills. I moved to Wadena to be a central location between Mills and Staples," said Wedde. "I had an office in Staples as well."

The Staples and Wadena offices have since closed, as Wedde stays busy helping the residents of Becker and Otter Tail counties with their accounting needs.

Wedde began her career journey when she obtained her associate's degree in accounting. She then moved to Minneapolis to continue her education and eventually earned her bachelor's degree in accounting, as well as a bachelor's degree in business management.

When Wedde, with her

husband Matt, purchased the Centennial building last November, they did so knowing that their family was close by.

"All of our kids go to school in Mills, so I decided to come back and it would be easier to go to all of their school activities and sports," said Wedde.

She is able to schedule appointments during the week at each office as she drives back and forth, which makes her life easier when it comes to planning other activities. For example, last week she was all set-and-ready to make the trip to the Twin Cities to watch her step-son wrestle at state.

Despite the proximity

between the offices, Wedde enjoys her time with her clients.

"I like the variety of people I meet. I started out in corporate accounting and I got bored, so when I switched to public accounting, it was a lot more variety," she said. "I get to do different things everyday instead of one very departmentalized task."

With the range of services that she provides, Wedde has plenty of options to keep her engaged within her profession.

"I do tax preparation, bookkeeping, payroll, bill pay," said Wedde. "Pretty much a wide variety (of services)."

With tax day quickly ap-

proaching, local taxpayers may want to utilize her local services. However, there are currently delays within the tax system.

Wedde said that there are different tax deadlines depending on whether a farm, corporation, or individual wants to file.

"Some people don't realize that there are different deadlines," said Wedde.

Luckily for her clients, the office is open year-round.

"I know some people didn't realize I did more than taxes. I can even help reconcile their bank statements," said Wedde. "My hours aren't always as long as this time of year, but I am available year-round."

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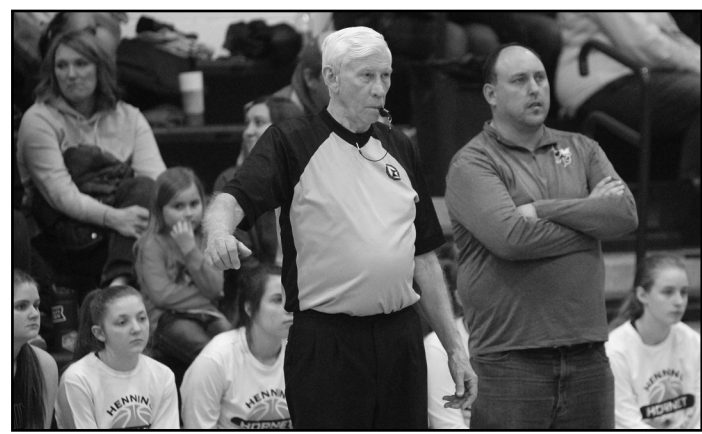


Photo by Chad Koerner

John Klinnert has been a staple at basketball games for the past 45 years.

WEARING STRIPES FOR 45 YEARS

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ketball, track and baseball recalled how the coaches taught him about hard-work, perseverance and more. The biggest lesson he carried with him through his career as an educator, coach, business owner and referee, has to do with working with a variety of personalities.

He explained no matter where one goes in life they will need to understand how to work as a team, even with those who have different views of the world. As a referee, the old lesson has been used time and time again.

Klinnert's referee career began in 1977

Klinnert began his referee career in 1977. The sports have seen some modifications, such as additions of a three-point line in basketball or stronger, and more skilled student-athletes all around as kids began specializing in specific sports. While little changes happened, one thing always remained constant.

"We need referees or else it is just phy. ed," Klinnert said, noting in the referee circuit he serves there was only one game when there were not enough officials.

This year, he worked with six new officials on their first year. He noted if a rookie sticks with the job for three years, then it is a good indication they will be in the black and white stripes for years to come.

"I did work with one first year official who already quit," he said. "It is not for everyone."

Being a referee may put one in the line of fire from a passionate coach or fan. Klinnert said those instances happen, but most coaches and fans understand the vast majority of referees try to do the best they can.

"I think it helps in those situations when you've been a coach," he said. "For a lot of coaches, that is their livelihood. They work hard all week and put in time at practice, so they come to the game to win. We owe it to them to do the best job we can and work hard."

When passionate words began to boil over from the bench onto the court, Klinnert said empathy allows him to understand their point of view and experience

has taught him how to handle it.

"Being a ref is about being a good communicator," he said. "I let them know I will watch for it (their concern) and let them know I understand and hear them. We won't always agree, but you can never take it personal."

Another consideration for potential referees is travel time. Klinnert said the area he serves stretches the state of Minnesota, from Bemidji to St. Cloud. And, referees are assigned a job, so there is no picking events to cover.

While they are paid for each game, Klinnert said he earmarks the funds for fun expenditures, such as grandchildren birthdays or taking his wife out for a night on the town.

"If you're going into refereeing to pay for your mortgage, you're going in it for the wrong reasons," he said.

Klinnert has no plans on concluding his referee career. In fact, he hopes to keep the job as part of his life as long as he is healthy. When retirement day comes, he will have a log of every game he has taken the hardwood for as a referee.

"I kept track since my first year for basketball, not football," he said. "Then I just continued. I've worked about 3,000 basketball games and I'd guess 500 football games."

His dedication to the job earned him a reputation of having a keen eye and being fair. Eventually, that led him to being a referee at playoffs and state tournaments.

"Overall, in football and basketball, I've worked 39 high school and college state tournaments," he said. "It is a good feeling when you get called, and disappointed when you don't. There are a lot of good officials."

When asked what makes a good official, aside from accurate calls, Klinnert was quick to respond. He explained in all of his years being a referee, he never enters a game with a less than excited attitude.

"To those kids, that is the biggest game in the state of Minnesota that night," he said. "Going with that mentality, shows you are having fun too and that carries over."

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Photo by Tucker Henderson, contributed

Above: Mills Lanes and Lucky Strike Grill is now under new ownership in New York Mills. Below: Chad Rudolph and Tiffany Ruther are the new owners of Mills Lanes and Lucky Strike Grill.

NEW OWNERS AT MILLS LANES

mosphere at the bowling alley will largely stay the same.

Rudolph was looking for a career change and found that his interest in bowling lined up well with a new job.

"I do love bowling. Bowling helped my decision to (buy the business)," said Rudolph. "I was in construction and I needed a change. I couldn't physically do it anymore. My shoulders were bothering me so bad that I needed something different."

Rudolph joked that "Tiffany talked me into it." He also mentioned that he was somewhat versed in the restaurant scene before his time at Mills Lanes.

"I grew up around the restaurant business with my mom owning a restaurant when she was younger. She also worked at Eagles for many years," he said.

Ruther is a rural mail carrier during the day and works at Mills Lanes after delivery is over. She is

looking forward to meeting new customers and maintaining relationships with the regulars.

"Dolly and Owen have always told us that it's the people you meet. They come back and then they become friends," said Ruther.

Rudolph said that being in charge comes with different emotions, but he's glad to test the waters as co-owner.

"It has been a little overwhelming at times, but other than that it has gone well. The community is very supportive," he said.

Ruther agreed that the Tumbergs have been a large asset in helping with the transition.

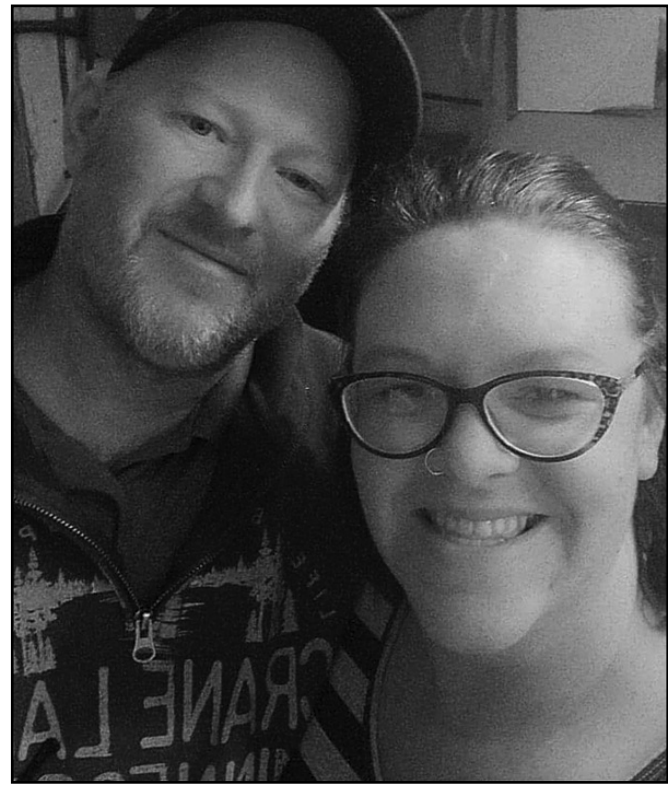
"Dolly and Owen are great mentors, we are very lucky to have them here," said Ruther.

"They are here during the transition to help out when we need them," said Rudolph.

He is also grateful to have the pair on staff.

Hope and excitement

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for the business' future surrounds their daily thoughts.

"I'm just excited to have a new adventure and having something that, if I don't decide to stay with

my full-time job, I can fall back on," said Ruther.

She added that working at the bowling alley doesn't feel like a job to her as she loves her time there.

HEPOLA REFLECTS ON LOCAL TIES

New York Mills, including being one of the very last babies born in the old hospital in October 1981. Memories of his formative years in the community still resonate strongly with Hepola.

"In the summers we went to the kiddie parade with my sister and cousins," said Hepola. "We would dress up and try to win the costume contest."

Their themes included "Save the Earth," "Three Blind Mice," and one year they even went as characters from "The Simpsons."

He also appreciated the special events held at city hall and fondly remembers the street dances held in his youth.

"After Camille and I got married in Florida, we did an event at the City Hall for the Minnesota crowd that couldn't make it to the wedding," said Hepola, noting that the location was based off of those memories.

Hepola mentioned that he was inspired by his uncle, Dean Simpson, who was a longtime mayor of New York Mills from 1979 to 2002 and also held a seat in the Minnesota House of Representatives from 2002 to 2008.

ways been one of my heros," Hepola explained. "I talked to Dean last summer about running for governor and he was so encouraging. He has always been an inspiration for me."

Another memory that Hepola holds near-and-dear to his heart, is one of his grandma, Frances Hepola, who lived in New York Mills until her passing in 2006.

"I have a very vivid memory of my grandma's house, turning around a corner there was a bulletin board full of newspaper clippings with stories about the good things people had done in the community," he said. "She said to me 'Just remember, when you're in the newspaper when you get older, make sure it is for something good and not for something bad.'"

Hepola has made an appearance on the front page of many a newspaper (and television screen) and he tries his best to live by his grandmother's wisdom.

"As a journalist, my whole goal was to tell people's stories, listen, and empower," said Hepola. "We were gathering each side of every issue."

He went on to say that as a

“Those are the values I took with me—we’re in this together. If you’re putting others before yourself, you’re making the world a better place. I’m in a position to do that, so I am going to do that.”

- Cory Hepola on the values he learned from his roots in Otter Tail County

journalist, "you work for the greater good of everybody."

Despite criticism from the Minnesota Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party regarding him as a "spoiler" and a "celebrity vanity candidate," Hepola said that this was the right decision and is confident that he will win the election.

"I think the spoiler comment is a bit dismissive," he said. "I'm going to earn my votes. We are going to go out there and meet people where they're at. We are going to win in November and unite the state. I will have to work harder, but I have always worked harder. That's how I have been shaped through growing up in Otter

Tail County. There's a better way and I'm going to prove it."

Hepola hasn't always been so sure of this idea, but said that he now holds total confidence in his abilities.

"Three years ago I turned to my wife, Camille, and said 'I feel called to public service,'" he said. "She was so supportive. It slowly grew from there."

Hepola also mentioned that, at first, he was unsure and wanted someone to talk him out of his decision to run. Instead, he met only full support from his family.

"It's a leap of faith," he said. "I couldn't say no. I would have regretted it. For me, this is not a job, it is a

calling."

While the gubernatorial candidate currently resides in the Twin Cities, he still calls this area of the state home. He places a lot of value in the helping-mentality of small-town Minnesota.

"People see the actions, they see how you live your life—you live by those morals everyday," said Hepola.

Having neighbors always willing to lend a hand and help in one's time of need stuck with him.

"Those are the values I took with me—we're in this together," he said. "If you're putting others before yourself, you're making the world a better place. I'm in a position to do that, so I am going to do that."

One of the shared commonalities between rural and metro areas is the importance of family and community. Hepola shared this importance and stresses his gratitude towards his upbringing.

"I won the lottery with my family," he said. "My parents are number one. They are my support system and have been since I was little. They taught me the qualities of perseverance, cre-

ativity, and ingenuity. There are others that I look up to, but none more than my mom and dad. The support from them never ends—I just love them so much."

Hepola told that his campaign team is made up of family members, noting that he and his father even came up with the logo together. He also mentioned his grandma's initial reaction to his announcement.

"When I told my grandma, she showed me total support and love," he glowed. Hepola's grandmother, Bernice Anderson, resides in New York Mills and endorsed her grandson wholeheartedly.

"Cory's faith is strong and he has excellent morals," she said.

Hepola shared that his faith shapes his choices and decision-making process.

"I would not be here today without my spirituality. It's the rock behind me and my family," he said. "I'm in constant communication. I'm always listening."

As Hepola begins his gubernatorial campaign, he promises to speak more about his platform and policies in the coming weeks.