

THUMBS UP/ THUMBS DOWN

VIEWS BY THE ECHO PRESS

Ripping off consumers during war

Thumbs Down: Even in times of war, scam artists try to rip people off. This week, the Better Business Bureau Wise Giving Alliance provided advice for those wanting to help relief efforts in Ukraine. Here's five tips to follow: 1. Can the charity get to the impacted area? Not all relief organizations will be positioned to provide relief quickly. See if the charity already has a presence in Ukraine. 2. Should you send clothing and food? Local drives to collect clothing and food to send overseas may not be practical as the logistics and timing to deliver and disperse such items will be challenging. Relief organizations are better equipped to obtain what is needed, distribute it effectively and avoid duplication of effort. 3. Does the relief charity meet BBB Charity Standards? You can verify a charity's trustworthiness by viewing an evaluative report completed by BBB Wise Giving Alliance. 4. Is the charity experienced in providing emergency relief? Experienced disaster relief charities are the best bet to help deliver aid as soon as possible. New entrants may have difficulty in following through even if they have the best of intentions. 5. Are you considering crowdfunding appeals? If engaging in crowdfunding, it is safest to give to someone you personally know and trust. Some crowdfunding sites do very little vetting of individuals or organizations that decide to post for relief assistance. 6. Does the appeal make exaggerated financial claims such as "100% will be spent on relief." Charities have fundraising and administrative expenses. Any charity claiming otherwise is potentially misleading the donating public. Even a credit card donation will have a processing fee.

Bank helps another bank

Thumbs Up: On Feb. 22, 1972, 50 years ago, Community State Bank opened its doors in Alexandria. Locally owned by nine local residents, it enjoyed a good run and was sold to Northwestern Bank, which later became Wells Fargo. A reader provided this memory: "On the day of the opening 50 years ago, the vault did not open. The bank president, Mike Lillehaugen, and vice president, Elroy Beliveau, had set the timer for 24 hours instead of 12. What to do? Bremer president Martin Haar stepped up to the plate and lent his competition the needed cash to open the doors. How gracious was that?"

Denying easy access to businesses

Thumbs Down: An Alexandria resident gives a "thumbs down" to business owners, managers and supervisors

who allow their employees to park in the best spots, right in front of their establishments. Those spots, he said, should be left for customers who may not qualify for handicapped parking but still have a difficult time getting around. "It also fascinates me when some high school kid parks right in front of a main door, denying access to those who actually need it."

Townships offer scholarships

Thumbs Up: Township elections were Tuesday. We hope residents did their part in contributing to this grassroots level of government. Townships do more than maintaining roads and bridges. They also provide scholarships. The Minnesota Association of Townships (MAT) will award up to five \$2,000 scholarships to high school juniors. All students currently enrolled in 11th grade and attending a Minnesota public, private, or parochial school, or a home-study program, are eligible to apply for this program. Since its inception in 2001, the MAT Scholarship Program has had over 2,000 submissions and 92 winners. Applicants should submit a written essay by May 1, 2022 to the question: "The Minnesota Association of Townships has the responsibility to promote public understanding of the heritage and future of township government and its role in the state and federal systems. What are some ways that MAT could promote awareness of township government and inspire township residents and boards to become involved?" Winners will be notified in August 2022. They will also be invited to attend MAT's annual conference in October 2022. For more information, call the MAT offices at 1-800-228-0296 or visit <https://www.mntownships.org/about/scholarship-program>.

A new way to be kind

Thumbs Up: Here's a new way to spread kindness around the area. Horizon Public Health and the Alexandria Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce are urging people to "be the reason someone smiles today." Drop boxes are set up where people can pick up a postcard next to the box, write a nice message and drop it into the box. The postcards will be delivered to healthcare providers, teachers and other community heroes. Drop boxes are located at Elden's Fresh Foods, the Douglas County Library and the YMCA. More postcards for businesses can be picked up at the Alexandria Chamber office. For more information or to print your own postcards, go to www.horizonpublichealth.org.

If you have a suggestion for a Thumbs Up/Thumbs Down, email it to aedenloff@echopress.com or mail it to Echo Press, P.O. Box 549, Alexandria, MN 56308.

LETTERS

Things you may find puzzling about media and government

To the editor: Do you find it puzzling that our media and government is encouraging Ukrainians to stand up and fight for their freedom? The same media and government that tried to force Americans to give up their freedoms the last two years? That does not minimize the plight of Ukraine. All freedoms are important. You can't pick and choose which ones to support or not.

Do you find it puzzling that our media and government are encouraging the defense and security of Ukrainian borders, when ours do not seem to matter?

Do you find it puzzling that we import over 10 million barrels of oil and petroleum from Russia, per month, which they then use to fund the war on Ukraine? All the while, we could produce all the oil we need by ourselves and not spend any amount of money on Russian oil.

Pay attention folks. It matters.
**DuWayne Paul
Alexandria, MN**

How well do you know your town?

Excuse me for being blunt, but when it comes to knowing about the place you live, you can be smart or you can be dumb.



AL EDENLOFF
Al's Turn

By dumb, I mean someone who isn't curious about their community, is clueless about its history and couldn't care less about its events.

By smart, I'm not talking about IQ or degrees. Rather, it's people who are genuinely interested about where they live and what makes the community tick. People who are at least a little knowledgeable about local government, what's happened in the past and what lies ahead.

So what camp are you in? Smart or dumb?

Maybe this little 12 question quiz that I just thought up will shed some light. The answers, by the way, can all be found in the newspaper over the last couple of months.

1. What is the name of the project at the corner of Third Avenue and Broadway in Alexandria? Bonus points: List three factors that have delayed it.

2. What were close to 1,400 people doing on Smith Lake on Feb. 19?

3. How much did the Alexandria Fire Department's new ladder truck cost: A. \$115,000 B. \$524,000 C. \$1.24 million D. \$2.5 million. Bonus point: Who is the Alexandria fire chief? Or if you don't live in Alexandria, who is the fire chief in your town?

4. What do the dates Feb. 22, 1922; March 3-4

1985; and Feb. 21-22, 2022 have in common?

5. Name the following people: Mayor of Alexandria; Alexandria Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce Director; Alexandria Police Chief; Douglas County Sheriff; one of the two state senators that represent part of Douglas County.

6. Which of the following statements are incorrect about Big Ole: A. He stands 28 feet tall. B. He weighs 16,000 pounds. C. He arrived in Alexandria in 1891. D. He was toppled over by vandals in 1967. Hint: There can be more than one answer.

7. Which gubernatorial candidate did Douglas County Republicans support at their caucus?

8. What three-story building will soon stand at the corner of Broadway and Fifth Avenue in downtown Alexandria?

9. Osakis students packed food items on Jan. 28 for which country: A. Canada. B. Norway. C. Nigeria or D. Haiti?

10. How much money has the Polar Plunge raised since it began 16 years ago? Bonus point: Where does the money go?

11. What is redistricting?

12. And one for the sports buffs. How many goals did the Alexandria boys hockey team score in this year's section quarterfinals: A. None. B. 12. C. 19 or D. 37?

The answers:

1. The Rune (1 point).

It's been delayed by a disagreement over monitoring wells, building supply shortages, and the rising price of steel (1 point for each factor).

2. They were ice fishing AND raising money to find a cure for cancer (2 points).

3. C (1 point). Bonus

point - Fire Chief Jeff Karrow (or if you know the name of the chief in your town, add a point, no cheating.)

4. They're all bad winter storms that hit Douglas County (1 point).

5. Bobbie Osterberg; Tara Bitzan; Scott Kent; Troy Wolbersen; Bill Ingebrigtsen or Torrey Westrom (1 point for each correct answer).

6. B, C and D are all false (1 point for each one).

7. Dr. Scott Jensen (1 point).

8. Creative Touch Boutique (1 point).

9. D (1 point).

10. More than \$1 million (1 point). Bonus point: The proceeds go to Special Olympics Minnesota.

11. Redistricting is the redrawing of legislative lines based on population shifts over the last decade (1 point if you came kind of close).

12. C (1 point).

So, out of a possible 25 points, how did you do? If you got 21 to 25 points, you get a gold star for closely following issues and events in your community. If you're in the 16 to 20 range, don't hang your head, you still know your community pretty well. If you got between 12 and 15, there's room for improvement.

Less than 12? I'm not going to be mean and call you the "D" word. Maybe you're new in town, have been very busy lately or quizzes just aren't your jam.

Try quizzing your family and friends. See how many points they score. And remember, it's never too late to learn about the place you call home - and your hometown newspaper is a good place to start.

"It's Our Turn" is a weekly column that rotates among members of the Echo Press editorial staff.

LETTERS

Thanks to support, we're very close to bringing Afghan refugee family here

To the editor:

We have once again experienced the generosity of the Alexandria area. The Lakes Area Sponsor Circle has been working to bring an Afghan refugee family to Alexandria and are so close to having this become a reality. It is with heartfelt thanks and due to the efforts of so many of you who stepped up to donate and help!

Many of you have asked to be updated on our efforts. We have done our research and fulfilled the requirements needed to host and support a family. Our application has been certified and we are waiting patiently to hear when we will be assigned a family.

We are connecting and updating government officials, veteran's groups and faith based groups, as well as organizations like United Way. You can follow our updates at Lakes Area Sponsor Circle on Facebook.

The next stage will begin once the family arrives. We have secured housing for the family and will continue fundraising to provide basic necessities and to alleviate transportation costs. We anticipate that the head of household will be ready and eager to find gainful employment in the Alexandria area.

We understand that the family may experience a sense of isolation; so, one of our main considerations is to connect them with other Afghan families nearby. We are also studying their culture so that we can connect with them in as many ways as possible. If you have suggestions or skills that you might share with us and them when they arrive, please reach out at lakesareasponsorcircle@gmail.com. You can also learn more about this humanitarian effort at <http://www.sponsorcircle.org>.

Again, thank you for your support. We look forward to having you join us in welcoming a family to Alexandria.

Members of the Lakes Area Sponsor Circle — Carol Wenner, Bonnie Schnell, Jill Sanders, Sarah Richter, Laura

Kremer, Wendy Hyatt, Cynthia Fuller, Sharon Bridges and Tracy Bogart

Join the effort to help protect groundwater in Minnesota

To the editor:

Any resource taken for granted is a resource at risk of being lost. That is why the Minnesota Water Well Association, the Groundwater Foundation, and the National Ground Water Association will be joining hundreds of organizations across the country in celebrating National Groundwater Awareness Week, March 6-12.

National Groundwater Awareness Week, now in its 23rd year, is an annual week of awareness, education, and advocacy focusing on one of the nation and state's most precious resources.

Minnesota depends on groundwater for nearly 65% of its public water. It also provides more than 465,000 private water wells in the state with fresh and clean water every day. The United States uses 79.6 billion gallons per day of fresh groundwater for public supply, private supply, irrigation, livestock, manufacturing, mining, thermoelectric power, and other purposes.

For those 1.18 million Minnesota residents who rely on private water wells, we encourage you to use Groundwater Awareness Week to test, tend, and treat your private water system. An annual inspection of your well and its water can not only save you thousands of dollars in potential damages but can also protect the health of your family.

To find a certified water well contractor in your area, you can visit: wellowner.org.

Whether it's writing a letter to your representative, educating children on the importance of groundwater, or having your own water supply tested and treated, please remember to take time this week and help protect groundwater in Minnesota!

**Dave Schulenberg
Executive director of Minnesota Water Well Association
Cottage Grove, MN**