

Sunnie's survival

Local woman walks in fight against cancer at Relay For Life event

BY ELLARRY PRENTICE
STAFF WRITER

ST. CLOUD – Claudia “Sunnie” Richardson is a three-time cancer survivor. On Saturday, Sept. 18, she walks to support those who are still fighting.

For the fifth time since 2016, Richardson, who lives on the edge of Sauk Rapids in east St. Cloud, is participating in the survivor and caregiver walk at the Relay For Life of Central Minnesota event. This would have been her sixth year participating had last year's event not been canceled due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Saturday's walk takes place around Lake Francis outside the Sartell Community Center in Sartell. Richardson, who will be accompanied by her husband, Wayne, is not sure she can walk the full course, but she'll bring a wheelchair for Wayne to push her in if needed.

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PHOTOS BY NATASHA BARBER
Sauk Rapids and Rice firefighters battle a fire from multiple angles at the former King's Inn building in Watab Township Sept. 12. The fire is being investigated for arson.



King's Inn blaze investigated for arson

Building is total loss after Sept. 12 fire

BY NATASHA BARBER | STAFF WRITER

RICE – As traffic stalled and water tankers ran relays along Highway 10 Sept. 12, nearly 25 firefighters worked to put out the flames that had consumed the former King's Inn building in Watab Township.

In the end, the building was destroyed. The fire is being investigated as a suspicious fire or arson by the Sauk Rapids Fire Department, the Benton County Sheriff's Office and the state fire marshal. Sauk Rapids Fire Chief Jason Fleming said up to a \$5,000 reward is being offered for tips that lead to arrest. Those who have information about the fire can call the sheriff's office at 320-968-7201 or the arson hotline at 1-800-723-2020.

The Sauk Rapids Fire Department was

dispatched to the scene shortly before 9:30 a.m. Sunday. Multiple passersby reported the burning building, and Fleming said when the firefighters reached the intersection of County Road 29 and Highway 15 in Sauk Rapids, they could see the smoke from the fire. Knowing it was a confirmed fire with multiple reports, Fleming called for mutual aid from the Rice and Sartell fire departments.

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Parent calls schools' COVID-19 plan 'less safe'

District says protecting students, maintaining in-person learning are top priorities

BY ELLARRY PRENTICE
STAFF WRITER

SAUK RAPIDS – Parent Sarah Petitto is concerned about the Sauk Rapids-Rice School District's Safe Return to In-Person Learning Plan.

Designed to be flex-

ible and responsive to new information, the plan was implemented by the district this fall to mitigate the potential spread of COVID-19 and ensure school spaces remain safe and healthy.

Petitto said the plan is "less safe" in terms

of protection measures implemented last fall and almost an entire school was exposed to a positive COVID-19 case in early September.

Petitto shared with the Sauk Rapids Herald a close-contact notification from Rice Element-

ary School, sent to her via email Sept. 10. The message said the close-contact notification applied to all students in grades 1-5 who had been in the same room, but not within 6 feet, with a person who tested positive for the coronavirus.

That type of exposure falls under the second of two tiers the district is using to classify the close-contact notifications it sends to parents and guardians.

Second-tier notifications are sent to parents and guardians if their child was in the same room as a person who tested positive. First-tier notifications are sent to parents and guardians if their child was within 6 feet of someone who tested positive for COVID-19, and the close contact lasted for more than 15 minutes.

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