

## Ladies Night Out

The event brought in 105 toys and \$395 for the Santa's Helpers of Sibley County program. P. 4

## Street closure

Le Sueur's newly-reopened Main Street will be closed for the first time for a special event on Saturday. P. 4

## State Cross Country

LS-H senior Hailey Juarez wrapped up a successful career at the state meet on Saturday. P. 9



# The Henderson Independent

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Thursday, November 11, 2021 - VOL. 150 - NO. 45 • Henderson, MN 56044 (ISP 240020) • 10 pages in 1 section • \$1.00

## LS-H to perform SHREK!

By Rachel Miller  
Editor

During adventure, a damsel in distress, an unlikely hero and his faithful donkey friend....Le Sueur-Henderson theatre students will take you on a thrilling and hilarious adventure when they bring "Shrek" to the stage on Nov. 19-20.

Le Sueur-Henderson senior Keegan Straub has been cast as Shrek, a gruff and misunderstood ogre who just wants to be left alone, but finds himself on a mission from King Farquaad to rescue Princess Fiona from her dragon-guarded tower.

Along the way, Shrek meets Donkey, played by Austin Kleinschmidt, who manages to break through Shrek's gruff exterior with his boundless optimism and hilarious punch lines.

As Shrek tells Donkey, "ogres are like onions, they have layers." One aspect Straub really loves is Shrek's transformation from someone who hates the world to someone who embraces it, and his fellow fairy tale creatures.

Along those same lines, Princess Fiona (played by Alexa Olson) is forced to confront her own inner dragons and embrace her true identity. But her insecurities don't stop her from steadfastly pursuing her dreams.

As Olson described Fiona, "she is very headstrong and resilient, and she knows

what she wants and is not afraid." After a year of changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Director Jennifer Weick said this year's cast is very excited to be back in front of a live audience, and without restrictions.

This year's production showcases a lot of experienced talent, as

SHREK

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5



PHOTO BY RACHEL MILLER

Austin Kleinschmidt, playing Lord Farquaad, sings "The Ballad of Farquaad."



PHOTO BY RACHEL MILLER

EMR students Caroline Tuck and Keegan Straub see what it is like riding inside the medical helicopter, while flight paramedic Keith Witte shows students the stretcher that just fits in the middle of the 'copter. Taller patients may have to bend their knees to fit, because as White put it, "we are built for speed, not comfort."

## Making every second count EMR students visited by air ambulance

By Rachel Miller  
Editor

Last Thursday, Le Sueur-Henderson students enrolled in the district's Emergency Medical Responder (EMR) class received a special, in-person visit from a North Air Care medical helicopter, which landed on the school's football field.

The visit was a real eye-opener for the 15 students taking Hovick's course. North Memorial Flight Paramedic Rob Pearson educated students about the medical helicopter's role in patient care while the helicopter was in-flight.

From a call coming in to the helicopter taking off is approximately seven minutes during the day, and 10 minutes at night. During this time is when helicopter staff are calculating fly time and checking the weather

not only in their area, but where they are responding to and where they will be transporting a patient.

For example, last Thursday, North Memorial Air Care staff checked the weather in Faribault (takeoff) and Le Sueur (where going). The helicopter averages 160 miles per hour, so it took roughly 15 minutes for the helicopter to arrive after departing.

Since it can take 20 or more minutes for a helicopter response, ambulance and paramedic response is still critical. In the interim, ambulance staff on the ground are still expected to stop external bleeding, secure any fractures, administer a sedative or narcotics for pain, if possible, and use extra tape to secure the patient for flight.

The medical ambulance is set up for speed, not comfort. There are two seats in the cockpit, and two seats in back, with just enough

room for a stretcher between the two medical personnel. Although there is space for the stretcher, a tall patient may need to bend their knees during flight.

Due to the small space in back, medical personnel must meet a weight limit to staff the 'copter, and are weighed every couple of months. Keeping their weight down allows them to transport a patient up to 400 pounds.

However, Pearson said that the pilot, flight paramedic and flight nurse all have a say in weather the helicopter flies. If any one of the three do not feel safe flying, the helicopter stays grounded.

EMR CLASS

LS-H's EMR class is in its second year, and the skills students are

EMR CLASS

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## What next? School board mulls next steps for referendum

Six days after Le Sueur-Henderson residents soundly rejected a referendum that would have provided K-3 elementary school students with a new building, and addressed educational and deferred maintenance needs at Hilltop and the Middle/High School, members of the LS-H School Board began trying to piece together what another referendum request would look like.

The board canvassed the election results, which were as follows:

689 votes in support of the building referendum, vs. 965 votes against

482 votes in support of building a fieldhouse, vs. 1,153 against

In total, the election had a 36% voter turnout, with 1,654 residents casting a ballot, out of

4,598 registered voters.

With the failed referendum, the board now needs to see if they can find a more palatable option. Doing nothing is not really an option, as Park Elementary School has multiple

problems, including boilers that have failed multiple times in recent years, a leaking roof which also contains asbestos, and water issues that have impacted both the gymnasium floor and the kindergarten/pre-

school wing.

In the spring of 2019, a cracked pipe in the outside wall of the northwest corner of the gym caused high moisture issues, which necessitated a change in the school day and

activities that would normally have involved the gym and auditorium.

The district ran floor fans and dehumidifiers to try and lower the moisture level, but in the meantime half of the gym

had to be closed down as the floor was bowing.

Then on Christmas Day, 2020, the Le Sueur Fire Department was called to the school after a sprinkler head broke and sent water cascading down into the kindergarten/preschool wing. Repairs cost more than \$21,000.

As for the boiler failures, the school's two boilers are not only decades past their life



PHOTO BY RACHEL MILLER

School board members Steve Cross, Brian Sorenson, Joe Roby, Kelsey Schwartz, Chair Brigid Tuck, Superintendent Jim Wagner and board member Matt Hathaway raise their hands as they swear to uphold the Constitution and faithfully carry out the duties of the canvassing board.



## Valentine's Day

Think outside the chocolate box for the pet lover in your life this year. P. 2

## Girls Hockey

The Bulldogs earned the #3 seed for this year's Section 2A Tournament. P. 7



## Girls Basketball

The Giants snapped its losing streak with a 35-32 victory over the Wolverines on Friday. P. 8



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SUBMITTED PHOTO

## LS-H announces Snow Week candidates

Le Sueur-Henderson announced this year's Snow Week candidates on Monday afternoon. They include (back row) Stanley Brown, Mason Reinhardt, Dylan Novak, David Gupton and Zach Sullivan; and (front row) Darbi Dunning, Gracie Buesgens, Mia Schwarz, Lucy Kleschult and Caroline Tuck. The coronation will be held on Monday, Feb. 14 at 2:30 p.m. in the school auditorium. Next week's Dress Up Days include Red, White and Blue Day on Monday; Construction Day on Tuesday; Adam Sandler Day on Wednesday; and Country vs. Country Club on Thursday. There is no school on Friday, Feb. 18.

## One Act Play finishes third



PHOTO BY RACHEL MILLER

Le Sueur-Henderson One Act Play students brought the passion and drama of "The 146 Point Flame" to the Section 2A stage on Saturday in Wells. Director Mikhayla Clausen had no criticism of her students' performance, as she felt they delivered their best. LS-H wound up finishing third out of the six section finalists, behind Champion Belle Plaine and second place Mountain Lake.

In the above photo taken during the One Act Play Festival at LS-H earlier in the season, immigrants Lena (Ariel Ingles, left) and Yetta (Gabby Davidson) share a flashback when their father (Austin Kleinschmidt) teaches them English.



The above graphic shows the proposed Henderson trail system, complete with pedestrian/bike crossings (stars). The red line shows the paved regional trail, green is paved local trails, and blue is pedestrian improvements.

## Proposed Henderson trail gets green light

By Beth Cornish  
Independent staff

During a workshop meeting last week, the Sibley County Commissioners gave the Public Works Director, Tim Becker, and Bolton & Menk, the engineers/project managers, the green light to continue the bidding process, and to apply for permits and easements for County Road 6 north of Henderson to County Road 5 at Blakeley, including the new off-road biking/hiking trail to run along, but separate from, the Scenic Byway.

Bobbie Harder, County Commissioner for District 1 said, "The workshop went very well and was very informative. I hope that lots of people turn out for the public meeting to learn about the trail and participate in the survey. The county board approved a resolution on Tuesday, Feb. 8 regarding a county match for the DNR grant."

### PUBLIC MEETING

The Task Force will be hosting a public meeting on Feb. 15 at 6:30 p.m. in the lower level at the Henderson Public Library, 110 S. 6th Street. This is a great opportunity for local residents to see the proposed trail maps up close, including the future links to High Island Park, Rush River County Park, the Ney Nature Center and west State Highway 19. This plan puts Henderson at the hub

of a trail system and brings the possibility of more visitors to the city and parks, as well as increased tax dollars, that would in turn fund more park and trail development.

There will also be a community survey link available at the meeting.

### BACKGROUND

The Scenic Byway Trail Task Force and the city of Henderson are working with Sibley County to attain Regional Trail designation and development, including trail design and construction, facilities, signage and parking. The city has contracted with SEH, Inc. for assistance in a new north entrance design to include a trail head and park. These are also an opportunity to designate this trail as the "Henderson Hummingbird Trail" which coincides with the public perception of Henderson as the Hummingbird Capital of America due in large part to the Henderson Hummingbird Garden and the one-of-a-kind annual Henderson Hummingbird Hurray.

Becker stated, "Sibley County plans to reconstruct CSAH 6 in 2023 and 2024 from the City of Henderson to CSAH 5/6 intersection. The project includes raising the road above the 50 year flood elevation, and adding an on-road bike lane. The county is looking at options to construct an off-road trail at the toe of the slope."

Funding for this plan comes

from the county and the State Legislature 2020 Bonding. Bolton and Menk are representing the county as both lead engineers and project managers. The county's portion of the project costs includes the engineering, surveying, easements and part of the trail base.

This is an amazing opportunity to build a safe walking/biking path through the Minnesota River Valley, located a safe distance from the roadway. The current configuration is only a narrow shoulder on the roadway that is virtually unusable for recreation due to traffic volume of about 1,200 motor vehicles per day, including gravel trucks hauling from three aggregate mining operations in the river valley. The only allowable vehicle access on the new off-road trail will be for snowmobiles in season. A catalyst for this project is the huge cost savings involved from including this trail with the reconstruction of the highway.

The project is moving along according to schedule. The easement process is about 30 percent completed and the project is on budget.



## School board

Board member Joe Roby has resigned from his post. P. 5



## MNCS News

MNCS held a Presentation Night last Thursday, while elementary students presented "The Wizard of Oz" last Friday. P. 10

## Sports Wrap-ups

This week's edition features the Winter Sports Wrap-ups: Belle Plaine Tigers, P. 7, LS-H Giants, P. 11

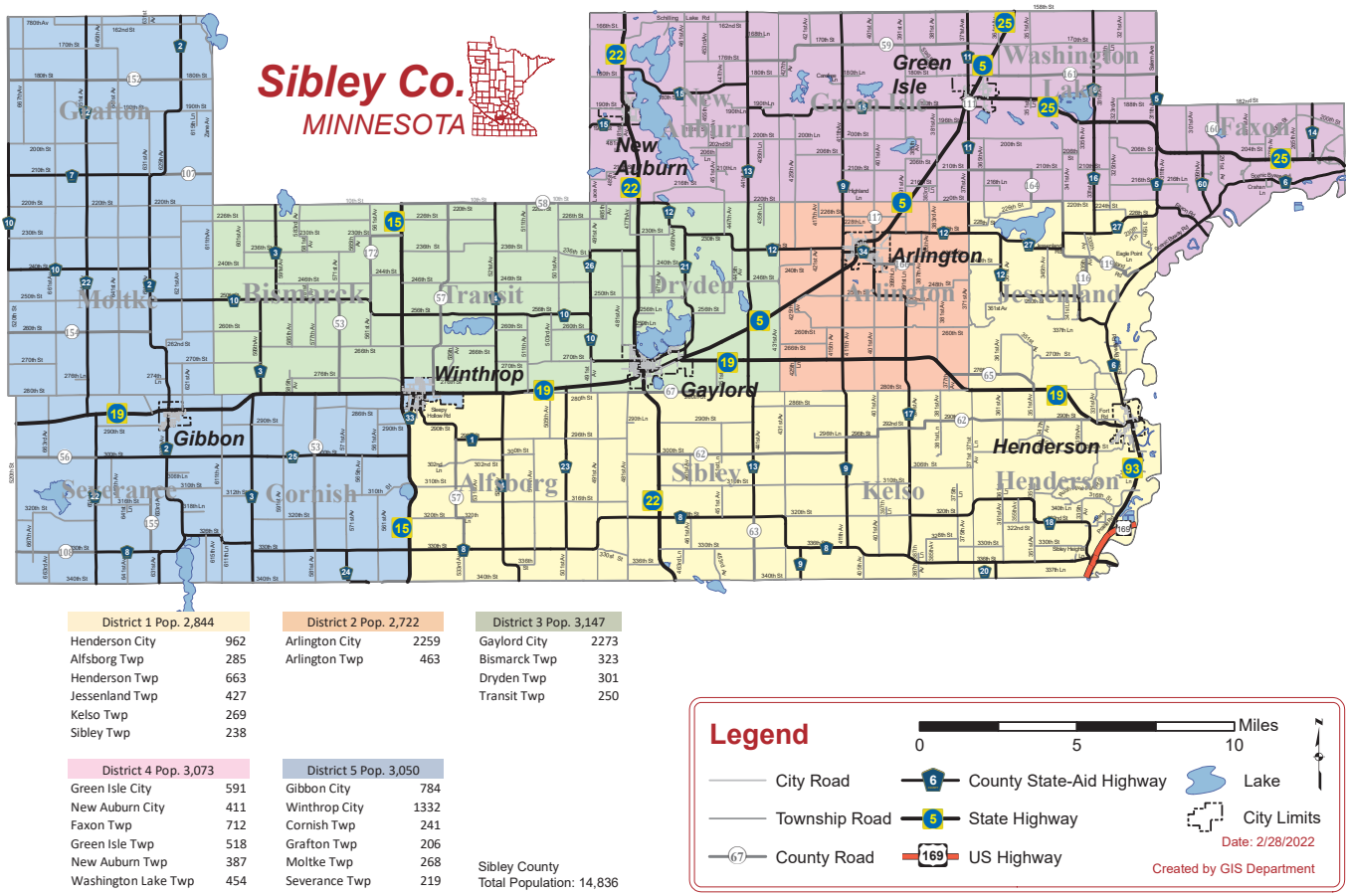


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## Sibley County Commissioner Districts



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Sibley County will have to change its district configuration as part of the redistricting process this year. A public hearing on the proposal will be held March 31. Chief among the proposed changes will be the removal of Washington and Faxon townships from District 1. Instead, Sibley, Kelso and Alfsborg Townships will join the City and Township of Henderson and Jessenland Township in District 1. The City and Township of Arlington will be on their own in District 2; Dryden, Transit and Bismarck Townships will join District 3; Washington and Faxon Townships will join District 4; and Grafton and Moltke Townships will join District 5.

## Redistricting will result in changes to Sibley County's commissioner's districts

By Marilee Peterson  
Sibley County Auditor-Treasurer

Although the 2020 census revealed some population changes in Sibley County, they were not great enough to require redistricting of the county's five Commissioner Districts. State law requires

redistricting if the population in any district varies more than 10 percent from the average of all districts in a county. The total population went from 15,118 a decade ago, to 14,836 in 2020; however district populations stayed within 10 percent of the five districts' average of 2,967.

There is a different reason why the present districts are being considered for

changes. Commissioner districts must be drawn to meet statutory requirements found in Minnesota Statute 375.025, subd. 1. These requirements include:

Each county is divided into as many

REDISTRICTING  
CONTINUED ON PAGE 5



## Controlling the blaze

PHOTO BY RACHEL MILLER

Dark black smoke billowed high in the sky over Henderson late Saturday morning, March 19....just as planned. The Henderson Fire Department was joined by the Arlington, Belle Plaine and Le Sueur Fire Departments, as well as Le Center Ambulance, to conduct a controlled burn of the barn and smaller buildings at the property across the street from the 300 block of S. 9th Street in Henderson. Controlled burns are a great training experience for fire personnel, and Saturday's went off without a hitch. Firefighters wet the buildings in advance and continued to spray to keep the fire contained.



PHOTO BY JOEL KING

## Purple Rain bike joins Prince tribute

The Prince space now located inside Heart of Henderson, 501 Main St., welcomed a Purple Rain tribute bike last week, which was donated indefinitely to the Prince Legacy Henderson Project, Inc. from an anonymous donor. The Prince tribute space now includes the Prince statue (in the background), a new Diamonds and Pearls light, the Prince bench and various Prince posters.

## Election 2022

## Sheets joins race for 17B House seat

Shane Sheets of Green Isle is announcing his candidacy to run for the Minnesota House of Representatives 17B seat.

He is a current council member for the city of Green Isle and has vested leadership experience as a medical examiner's office director. He holds a Master of Business Administration (MBA) from St. Mary's University of Minnesota and an undergraduate degree in criminal justice from Liberty University. During his career, he has held positions in healthcare, law enforcement, death investigation, and government administration. He is driven and eager to be the voice of the conservative community and has a unique investigative mindset that incorporates objective thinking, viewing topics from all sides, assessing the pros and cons, followed by making a firm decision that will benefit the region long-term.

Sheets has established leadership and experience working with local, state, and federal governmental agencies.

In 2019, he streamlined and helped create a new planning and zoning commission in Green Isle. Today, the commission is overseeing their very first comprehensive plan to help prepare the city for growth and prosperity.

Numerous unit citations and



Shane Sheets

accolades for overall leadership practices, including commendable management of high-profile situations, and project completion to an extent that goes above and beyond expectations.

Highly skilled and educated in crisis negotiation, police management/supervision, open-source intelligence gathering, interviewing techniques, and overall strategic communications and business management.

His political priorities includes the following:

1. Promoting economic prosperity for the local regions
2. Preservation of civil rights
3. Protection and enjoyment for Minnesota's natural resources.
4. Improvement and support for education while ensuring American values and ingenuity remain in place.

He can be reached at 320-420-8991, by email at ShaneSheetsMN@gmail.com, or by mail at PO Box 133, 500 McGrann St. S., Green Isle, MN 55338.



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## Strobel anniversary

Don and Betty Strobel recently celebrated an incredible milestone: 70 years as husband and wife. P. 6



## Softball

Le Sueur-Henderson Giants won four games in the past week. P. 8



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Henderson City Council

## Changing of the chiefs

Henderson bids farewell to 4th police chief in 11 years

By Beth Cornish  
Independent staff

The Henderson City Council on Wednesday, April 20 approved the resignation of Police Chief Dmitri Ikonitski, who has been with the city since Jan. 1, 2020. Ikonitski has been hired as a police officer outside the Twin Cities, and his last day with the city of Henderson was Monday, April 25.

The council approved hiring current part-time police officer Eric Karels as an interim police chief. Karels plans to retire from his full-time position at the St. Peter Hospital as of July 1, 2022 and expressed that he shared the hope of Mayor Keith Swenson that he become the full-time chief after that time.

The council also approved a resignation from full-time police officer Michael Nunan, which was effective April 15.

Karels' salary and a replacement for Officer Nunan will be addressed in a special meeting of the Personnel Committee.



INDEPENDENT FILE PHOTO

The Henderson City Council approved the resignation of Henderson Police Chief Dmitri Ikonitski, and the subsequent hiring of Eric Karels as Interim Police Chief. Ikonitski's final day as chief was Monday, April 25.

County Sheriff Pat Nienaber will be invited to that meeting to discuss coverage for Henderson during off-times as there are now just four part-time officers on the roster, all of whom have full-time jobs elsewhere.

Nunan was considered full-time although 20 percent of his salary came from the sewer/water department as he was providing regular checks on

POLICE CHIEF  
CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Annika Doheny achieved her goal of making it to the state speech meet this year. Although she experienced some nerves, Doheny finished 10th in Poetry.

## A dream come true

By Rachel Miller  
Editor

A dream came true for Minnesota New Country School sophomore Annika Doheny, as she had the honor of competing in the State Speech Meet this past weekend.

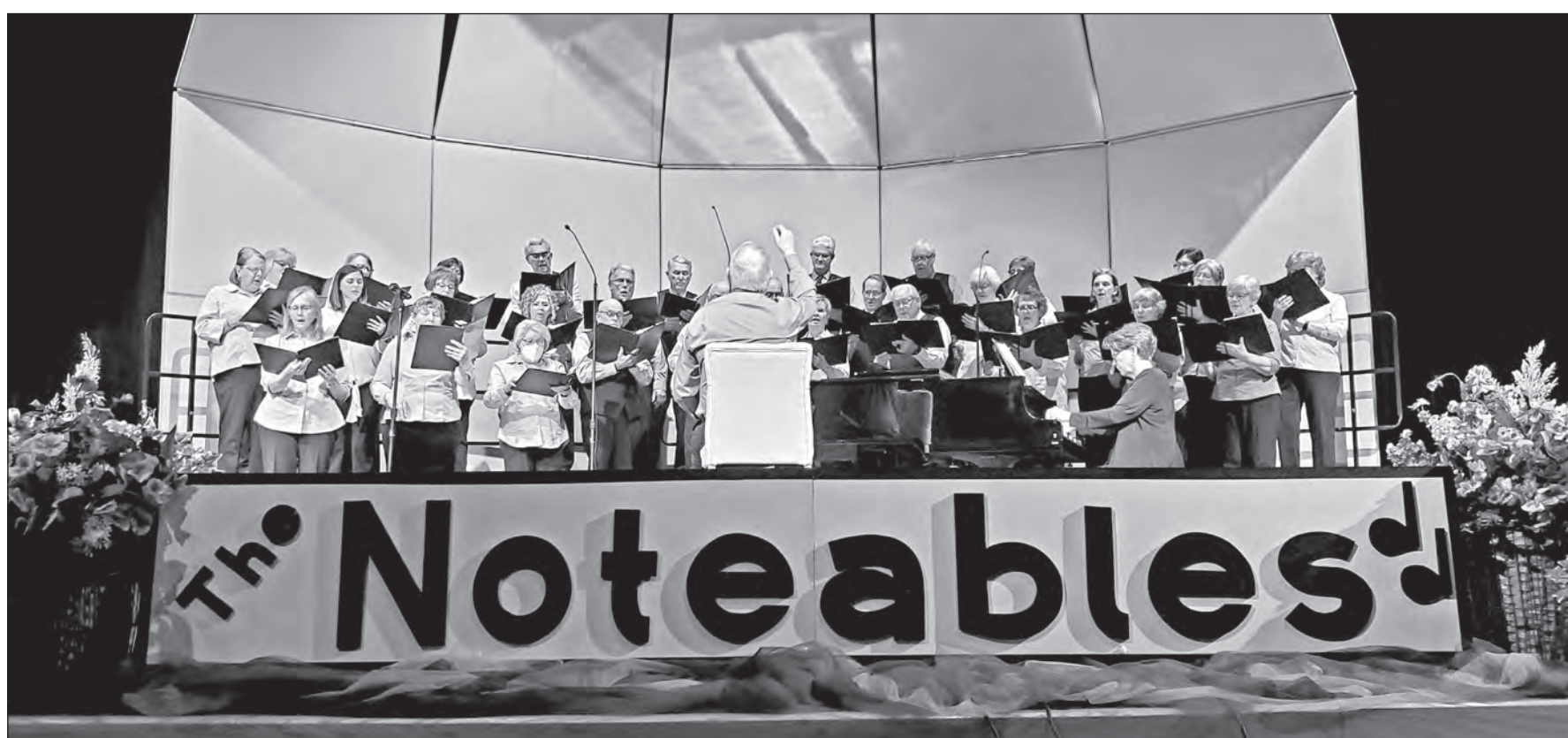
Doheny wrapped up her third complete season of Speech, as she chose to forgo the competition last year after realizing she did not enjoy the virtual only competition format.

STATE SPEECH  
CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

## Noteables shine in comeback concert



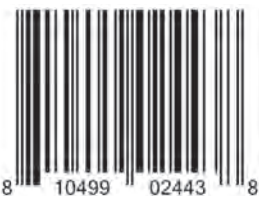
PHOTOS BY RACHEL MILLER



The Le Sueur-Henderson High School Auditorium played host to the Noteables in a delightful Sunday afternoon concert, titled "We're Back!" The group (left) performed a dozen songs between two sets.

Top, left, Edrie Barton, Henderson's Jerry Van Oort and Phil Lee lift their voices; top, middle, Henderson's Beth Beuch was a featured soloist on "You'll Never Walk Alone" with "Climb Ev'ry Mountain"; and above, a group of sopranos sing.





## Sauerkraut Days

Check out the full lineup! P. 2

## COVID takes a dip

Good news! Both new cases and deaths declined in the past week. P. 5

## Spring Sports Wrap-up

The Le Sueur-Henderson Giants wrapped up another successful spring season! P. 11-12



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## Riverview Coffee is COMING SOON to Belle Plaine!

Soon, Riverview Coffee will be ready to perk up your day!

Anticipated opening date: August 1, 2022 (permits pending)



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# Kraut is king, and so is Bob Graham



PHOTOS BY RACHEL MILLER

Bob Graham receives a hug from daughter Veronica, 4, after winning the 2022 Sauerkraut Days World Kraut Eating Contest on Sunday afternoon at Bender Park.

By Rachel Miller  
Editor

The title of World Sauerkraut Eating Champion is finally back in Henderson where it belongs.

Henderson's Bob Graham captured the title on Sunday afternoon of Sauerkraut Days with a time of 4:25. Graham made great strides early on as he shoveled large mouthfuls of kraut in his face, but appeared to struggle toward the end as officials ensured he swallowed every scrap of food that had fallen on the table.

Finally, Graham succeeded in swallowing the last bite and yelling this year's Sauerkraut Days motto: "Where the kraut and gas are free!"

Graham managed to dethrone Mason Simon, last year's kraut king, for the title.

"I told Simon you don't have a chance, the title is coming back to Henderson," Graham said.

Graham is no newbie to the Sauerkraut Eating Contest; in fact this is his fifth attempt since 2012. Graham said he practiced

for the competition by eating sauerkraut once a week for the past year, and he plans to continue practicing so he can hopefully retain his title in 2023.

In addition to a fancy Sauerkraut Days hat, Graham received \$250 for his winnings, and he plans to celebrate it with a cook-out for his friends with brats, and of course, sauerkraut.

### OTHER FESTIVITIES

In other Sauerkraut Days news, this year's event was a rousing success, and the Kraut Stand served up 2,640 brats.

Some events, like the Kiddie Pedal Pull and Arm Wrestling Championship were absent, but arm wrestling is expected to return next year. The Mini Rods draws a large crowd to ? Street on Saturday, and a new children's feature was the addition of a gem prospecting activity.

The Henderson Fire Department team of Sam Hardel, Adam Arnst and Isaac Arnst successfully defended last year's water fight title with a championship victory over Belle Plaine. Find more photos on page 2 of this week's paper at [www.hendersonindependentnews.com](http://www.hendersonindependentnews.com).



Above, Asher Meyer, 4, mom Caitlin Meyer and daughter Aubree Meyer, 6, of Henderson wave to the tractors in the tractor parade.

Below, Henderson firefighters Sam Hardel, Adam Arnst and Isaac Arnst won the fire department water fight for the second year in a row. Can they get the trifect next year?



## Independent unveils new website; disbands paid election letters

Yes, you read that correctly. On Monday, June 27, the Henderson Independent launched a new website, [www.hendersonindependentnews.com](http://www.hendersonindependentnews.com).

Existing Henderson Independent E-editions have been transferred to the new site. The majority of the site is dedicated to Henderson and Le Sueur news, but the navigation bar at the top of the page includes a special tab for Belle Plaine, with a dropdown menu for News, Education and Community.

Soon, people will be able to subscribe online as well. "I am very excited to see the Henderson Independent online," said Publisher Rachel Miller. "This has been a long time coming,

and will allow us to better reach people with breaking news stories, playoff games, and important news that our communities care about, like the upcoming Le Sueur-Henderson school referendum."

### ELECTION LETTERS

In other news, Miller also wanted to share that the newspaper will be retracting its paid election letters policy that was enacted in May 2019.

Moving forward, residents will no longer be charged a fee to submit an election letter endorsing a candidate.

"I feel that everyone should have a voice in their elections, and want to tear down any barriers to that," Miller said. "With that being

said, all letters to the editor will continue to be screened and checked for any libel concerns. If we have concerns with a letter, we will reach out to the author to address those prior to publication. There is no 'good faith' exception for newspapers when it comes to libel/defamation accusations, so I like to tell people it is safest to share why you support a particular candidate instead of attacking another."

The election letter cutoff will be two weeks prior to the election, to ensure there is time for a response/rebuttal, if desired, the final week.

Candidates will still be required to purchase advertising to share platforms/campaign issues.

## Le Sueur man convicted on three felony theft charges

Kevin Hewitt swindled farmers out of almost \$400,000

By Rachel Miller  
Editor

Kevin Hewitt, a 61-year-old farm equipment dealer from Le Sueur, was convicted on three felony counts of theft in Le Sueur County Court on Friday, June 24. Nine other felony theft charges were dismissed.

Hewitt was convicted of theft-indifferent to owner rights, theft-firearm or property value over \$35,000, and theft-by check, and was sentenced to serve 60 days in jail each year from 2022-2027. He has also been ordered to pay restitution in the amount of \$391,052.46. Hewitt was booked into Le Sueur County



Kevin Hewitt

Jail on Friday, June 24.

Hewitt was facing 12 theft charges, as he swindled a number of area farmers and businesses out of almost \$400,000 between 2019-2020.

### According to the criminal complaint:

Hewitt, who was operating as Hewitt Drainage Equipment out of rural Le Sueur, swindled area farmers and businesses out of just under \$400,000.

Hewitt would negotiate the sale of farming equipment — frequently a Soil-Max Tile Plow — take partial or full payment, and then never order the equipment. The investigation revealed that Hewitt was cashing the checks and apparently used the funds to pay his personal debt.

Payments ranged from \$3,095 to \$6,000 for smaller pieces of equipment, up to

HEWITT THEFT  
CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



## Absentee ballots

Ballots are now available for the Aug. 9 primary election P. 4

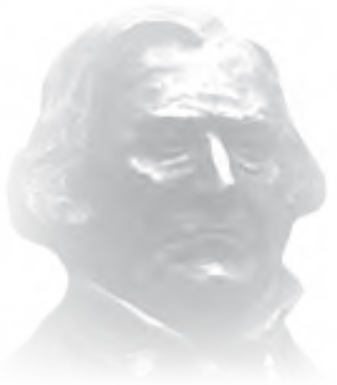
## Weather

Get ready for more hot weather ahead. P. 7



## Legion baseball

The Le Sueur-Henderson Giants smothered Cleveland before heading into a tough weekend tournament P. 7-8



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## Vote Yes

Committee ramps up final referendum efforts



Erin Timmers



Christa Luna

By Rachel Miller  
Editor

The Le Sueur-Henderson School District is just a few weeks away from a second and final vote on a school building referendum, which will chart the future of Le Sueur-Henderson Schools.

Should the vote pass, Le Sueur-Henderson will pursue a one-campus option for K-12 students at the Middle/High School site, and transition the Hilltop Elementary School site into an Adult Learning Center.

If the vote fails, there will not be another chance for

REFERENDUM

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## The referendum

The Le Sueur-Henderson School District is going to the voters with three questions on the Tuesday, Aug. 9 ballot.

The first and primary question is whether voters will support spending up to \$39.9 million to build a new K-5 school onto the Middle/High School site, including two gyms. Park Elementary School would be closed, and Hilltop Elementary School would be transitioned to an Adult Learning Center (no cost, can be used as-is). New construction is estimated to cost \$26.5 million, site improvements \$3 million, Park demolishing \$2.1 million, and another \$8.25 million is needed for fees, permits, testing, contin-

gency fund and bonding.

The school is also asking people to vote on two other questions, which can only be passed if the first question is approved.

Question 2 asks voters whether they will support spending \$6.14 million on deferred maintenance at the Middle/High School site.

The third question is whether the district should spend \$5.65 million for a third gym space that will allow recess and gym classes to be held simultaneously, and includes \$2.4 million to upgrade and expand Career and Tech Ed. Programming.

The referendum has received a positive review from the Minnesota Department of Education.



## Building a better future

*Editor's Note: This is the first article in a series the Henderson Independent has been working on regarding the need for skilled trade labor in our area and the region. Keep an eye on future issues of the Indy as we explore what businesses are seeing, what opportunities are out there, and how local schools are trying to bridge the gap. All articles in the series will be marked with the above "Trade Power" logo.*

By Rachel Miller  
Editor

America and Minnesota run on trade labor. From the motorized vehicle or public transport that gets you from Point A to Point B, the HVAC system that heats and cools your home, the electrician that keeps the lights on and the plumber who keeps your septic running smoothly, many of the daily activities we all take for granted would not be

possible without a tradesman or woman.

According to the Associated General Contractors of America 2021 Workforce Survey Results for Minnesota, 81% of responding businesses had unfilled hourly positions as of June 30, 2021, and 27% had more than 10 open positions. Among salaried positions, 57% reported unfilled positions.

project managers/supervisors among the salaried jobs; and carpenters, laborers, mechanics, truck drivers, and equipment operators-cranes, heavy equipment among hourly positions.

Project Build MN is a non-profit primarily serving the 13-county metro area, but Executive Director Joy DesMarais-Lanz has done virtual presenta-

“EMPLOYERS ARE WILLING TO INVEST IN PEOPLE WHO ARE WILLING TO INVEST IN THEIR COMPANY.”

- JOY DESMARAIIS-LANZ  
- PROJECT BUILD MN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Of the companies with open positions, 93% said they were having a hard time filling hourly craft positions, and 89% had trouble filling salaried positions.

The most difficult to fill positions included estimating personnel and

tions all over the state.

Project Build MN's mission is to bring Minnesota's young people into construction careers. One way they do that is through the Explorers Post program

TRADE POWER  
CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

# 93%

\*Businesses reporting open craft positions

# 63%

\*Businesses reporting open salary positions

# 70%

\*Businesses who increased pay rates

# 43%

\*Businesses providing incentives/bonuses for craft/salaried personnel

## Mayo Clinic Health System offering sports physicals for student-athletes

Mayo Clinic Health System will host several sports physical clinics across southwest Minnesota.

These clinics are for student-athletes entering grades 7-12 in the 2022-2023 school year. The physicals provided at these clinics fulfill Minnesota State High School League

sports requirements.

Sports physical clinics will be held at these Southwest Minnesota locations:

### • New Prague

This clinic will be held July 26 from 4:45 to 6:45 p.m. at Mayo Clinic Health System, 212 10th Ave. NE, in New Prague.

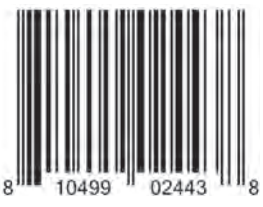
Call Mayo Clinic Health System at 952-758-4461 for

an appointment.

These sports physical clinics are open to all, including those who are not Mayo Clinic Health System patients. A parent or guardian must accompany those under 18. Athletes who wear corrective lenses must wear them during their examination. The physical costs \$20, which is payable by cash or check.

The sports physicals provided at this event are not intended to replace care or treatment from a primary care provider.

If student athletes have an underlying medical condition or concerns about issues that restrict participation in sports, they're encouraged to schedule an appointment with their primary care provider.



## Busy weekend ahead

Plan a weekend of fun! Both the Sibley County Fair and Giant Days are going on this weekend. P. 2



## Statebound!

The Le Sueur-Henderson Giants Legion team won the sub-state tournament and advance to state play this week. P. 8



# The Henderson Independent

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## PRIORITIZE THE PRIMARY: VOTE AUG. 9!

The 2022 Primary Election is this coming Tuesday, Aug. 9. Top of the ballot will be the Sibley County District 1 Commissioner race and the Le Sueur-Henderson School Referendum. Voting will be held in Henderson at the City Hall/Community Building, 600 Main St., from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. Le Sueur residents vote at Le Sueur City Hall (lower level), 203 S. Second St., also from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.



## TRADE POWER

## MNCS students discover passion in the trades

By Rachel Miller  
Editor

Many a student who did not fit the mold at traditional K-12 schools has found a home at Henderson's Minnesota New Country School, a public charter school that focuses on student-led learning.

Students have the opportunity to pursue their passions, and MNCS advisors will do what they can to assist.

From a young age, Belle Plaine student Ben Covington, 18, has had an interest in weapons. He said it sparked from the movies he watched as a child, like the Pirates of the Caribbean series, and he even asked Santa Claus for weapons for Christmas when he was 3 years old. Now, as an adult, he wants to pursue a career crafting them.

When Covington approached MNCS Advisor Paul Jaeger about doing his senior project on blade smithing, it did come with some challenges. Other trade-centered projects like building/construction work can be done on site, but knives posed a problem.

Covington reached out to five different blade smiths in



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Tejha Martin works on assembling a wooden bench that was part of her junior project. Martin made four wooden benches that were all donated to the Ney Nature Center this spring. She has a passion for construction and hopes to pursue a career in architectural design.

the area, and wound up connecting with Jason Kraus at Northstar Forge out of Carver. Having a professional show him the ropes helped immensely, and he said his attention to detail and precision

went up dramatically.

"You start to notice every little thing that is uneven, or if it has a light bend to it — it sticks out like a sore thumb," Covington said. "Keep a steady hand is another import-

ant thing I learned. Any type of little move or twist, you can see you messed up on the blade."

MNCS TRADES  
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PHOTO BY RACHEL MILLER

Honeywell Central Region Sales Leader Josh Hounsell and Senior Sales Representative Cindy Auld pitched two options to address some building maintenance needs at the Middle/High School and Hilltop Elementary School using energy and construction savings and long-term facility maintenance funding that is currently allocated for Park Elementary.

## A honey of a deal

Honeywell helps LS-H address building needs while saving money

By Rachel Miller  
Editor

The Le Sueur-Henderson School Board on Monday night took the next step in addressing some of the needs at the Middle/High School with-

out a referendum.

The school district has partnered with Honeywell Building Technologies to redirect the district's Long Term Facilities Maintenance money from

SCHOOL BOARD  
CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

## Locals represent at the Scott County Fair



PHOTO BY RACHEL MILLER

The Sibley County Fair is coming up this week, but some area residents made the drive to Jordan to participate in the Scott County Fair last week, July 27-31. From left, Tommy Traxler of Faxon Farms Pure Maple Syrup (located in Henderson) are selling their oh so sweet maple syrup in the Commercial Building; Le Sueur residents Linda Kunkel (purple '96 Ford Mustang) and Tom Kunkel (red '71 Chevy Nova) drove to participate in Sunday's Classic Car, Truck and Tractor Show; and Independent Publisher Rachel Miller gives her all in the All American Lumberjack Log Sawing competition at the Sunday, 3 p.m. show. Miller was selected as a crowd participant by Lumberjack Jimmy Anderson, and the pair emerged victorious against the other duo.



PHOTO BY RACHEL MILLER



SUBMITTED PHOTO