

BRAINERD DISPATCH

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STARRY NIGHT

Steve Kohls / Brainerd Dispatch

A lone cloud in a starry sky provides a backdrop for a night exposure Friday, May 6 in the Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area near Ironton. After days of clouds and rain, Friday night provided a chance to enjoy moderate temperatures and a clear night sky.

School Board approves Hahn's superintendent contract

By Theresa Bourke
Brainerd Dispatch

BRAINERD — Heidi Hahn is officially on board to be superintendent of Brainerd Public Schools for the next three years.

School Board members on Monday, May 9, approved a contract with Hahn for the 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25 school years, beginning July 1 and lasting through June 30, 2025.

In the contract

Under the contract, Hahn will earn \$178,500 for the first year, \$182,070 for the second year and \$185,711 for the third year. The salary will be paid in 12 equal installments and may be modified but not reduced. The wages for the second and third years represent a 2% increase from the previous year and are the same wages current Superintendent Laine Larson earned during her last three years with the district.

Benefits include 30 days of paid vacation during the first year

and 27 days each of the next two years; 10 paid holidays; accrual of one paid sick day for every working month; a \$50 monthly cellphone reimbursement; and paid mileage for business use of a personal vehicle.

School Board members will oversee, direct and evaluate Hahn's performance as superintendent as they see fit.

Board thoughts

Though originally advocating for a different candidate for the superintendent job, board member Kevin Boyles said Monday he could not be happier Hahn accepted the job.

"My main reason for supporting Mr. Schneider was that I felt it would give the district an opportunity for a certain amount of grace and a certain amount of a honeymoon period to allow progress on certain things that I felt that maybe we'd be challenged with," Boyles said.

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Open for business this summer

Minn. festivals and events return in pandemic's wake

By Jess Myers
Brainerd Dispatch

BLOOMINGTON, Minn. — Sure, those take home do-it-yourself seed art kits were great fun. And driving through the Minnesota State Fairgrounds for a taste of the foods — the ones folks normally sample while walking around in shorts, with a fanny pack, in late August — was a unique experience. But the past two years and all the pandemic-related cancellations and changes have been a reminder that there is nothing like a true Minnesota State Fair-going experience.

While COVID is still "a thing" in some forms, and likely will remain so for years, there is a growing sense of a return to pre-2020 life in most corners of Minnesota, and that is a welcome development for the people who organize the region's events and festivals.

On a recent weekday morning, representatives from Explore Minnesota Tourism and some of the state's best-known special events gathered in a Mall of America atrium to, essentially, declare the state "re-open" for summer travel and tourism.

"It's coming back, and we have a lot of marquee events coming up. There's just so much to do this coming summer and there's pent-up travel demand and excitement," said Lauren Bennett McGinty, who took over as the state tourism director in November 2021. She cited a survey in which nearly 90% of respondents



John Autey / St. Paul Pioneer Press

Crowds fill the Fairgrounds on the opening day of the Minnesota State Fair in Falcon Heights in August 2019.

said they are ready to travel again in the summer of 2022. "We're ready for them and we're partnering with all sorts of associations and businesses to say, 'What do you have to offer, and how can we help?'"

After being canceled in 2020, the State Fair returned last summer, but masks were prevalent on-site and attendance was down as many remained wary of being among large crowds, especially with variants of the virus spreading in some circles. State Fair organizers did things like drive-through food events and the aforementioned at-home seed art kits, but having people on-site in Falcon Heights last summer was a huge step forward. Renee Alexander from the State Fair noted that the event had a \$268 million

annual impact on the Minnesota economy prior to the pandemic, and they are keeping an eye on virus spikes and other potential hazards while planning for a more normal State Fair experience in 2022.

"We are business as usual, cautiously optimistic and we'll pay attention to what's happening and how the landscape changes and adjust as we need to," Alexander said. "We're seeing healthy numbers come in as far as grandstand tickets go, which is kind of an early indicator of people returning. Our vendors are returning their license agreements and we're really hopeful that we'll see really strong numbers throughout the fair this year."

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Theresa Bourke / Brainerd Dispatch

Brainerd Assistant Superintendent Heidi Hahn speaks in front of a group of community members on April 12 as part of her interview to be the district's next superintendent.

Lightning strike injures 2 workers

ST. MATHIAS TOWNSHIP — Two workers were injured Monday, May 9, after lightning struck the crane on which they were working on County Highway 45 in Crow Wing County.

The Crow Wing County Sheriff's Office responded to the call, reported at 9 a.m., in St. Mathias Township, south of Brainerd. According to Operations Lt. Craig Katzenberger, the two men were guiding a load suspend-

ed from the crane when lightning struck the piece of equipment.

The injured workers were Luke Graber, 36, and Gene Weidendorf, 56.

One of the men was transported to a hospital with non-life-threatening injuries. The other suffered minor injuries.

North Memorial Health Ambulance assisted at the scene.

No other information was available Tuesday afternoon.



Contributed / Metro Newspaper Service

A photo illustration of a lightning strike.

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