



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

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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

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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.

RECYCLING UPDATE

The Henderson Feathers group asks that people continue to collect their plastic bags for a future recycling effort but to keep the bags at home for now. The required amount of plastic to finish the current project has already been collected and the bins have been removed temporarily from

the previous collection spots at Wagar's, MNCS and the Library.

If you have a group that would like to do one of these projects, please contact Beth Cornish at the Henderson Independent, 507-248-3223 for more information. Stay tuned for the next project.

REFERENDUM

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years and the district will have to figure out how to put a band-aid on Park Elementary School with its failing boilers and old and outdated systems. LS-H Superintendent Jim Wagner has said that if this referendum does not pass, he will not go out for another one for at least four years.

The Vote Yes Committee is obviously hoping the latter does not happen, as Committee member Erin Timmers wants her two young children to be able to attend school locally.

One of the biggest questions they get is, "Why should we build a new school if the district could not take care of Park?"

Prior to 2014, districts outside of the metro area had very little access to maintenance dollars. Metro schools were able to participate in the Alt Finance program and as a result were able to spend almost 5x more on deferred maintenance (\$2.79/square foot compared to 58 cents).

In 2014, all schools in Minnesota began to receive Long Term Facility Maintenance dollars, which for LS-H is around \$350,000 a year. Unfortunately, that is a drop in the bucket when compared to the total improvements necessary at Park alone, which number in the millions.

Furthermore, fellow Vote Yes Committee member Christa Luna said a "No" vote does not mean there will not still be a tax impact. If the district continues to lose enrollment, the amount of state funding will continue to drop, which will shift a larger portion of the school budget onto the taxpayers.

Luna can see a number of positives for building a new school. One of which is reducing utility and transportation

costs, and putting that money back into educating children. She compared Park to an old car that needs more and more fixes to stay running.

"It is time to trade in that car and get a new school and be proud of what we can offer our children," Luna said. "We should be able to offer a safe and healthy place for children to learn, and it is so hard with so many inconsistencies."

Luna also sees a new building as a way to draw in young families to the area.

"To keep the towns thriving, we need to attract the young families with children, and to do that we need a facility that is safe and healthy," Luna said.

Whether people want to admit it or not, there is a lot of school competition in the area.

"Open enrollment is an attractive thing to families where they can pick and choose what is best for them," Timmers said, adding that her family is going to be in a critical decision making time soon as her kids prepare to start school.

"Without building a new school, I don't know if we can get Park where it needs to be long-term," Timmers added.

WHAT ABOUT HILLTOP? Regardless of whether the vote passes or fails, Hilltop Elementary School in Henderson will be closing after the 2022-23 school year.

A recent contractor study found the soil surrounding Hilltop to be incompatible with a major expansion, and Hilltop in its current form is too small to house all the elementary school students.

However, the plan is to repurpose Hilltop as an Adult Learning Center. This can be done with the current school setup, and does not require additional funding.

The move will likely be a revenue generator for the district as students from neighboring districts may open enrollment into LS-H.

with an interest in technology could also find an engaging career in the trades.

More and more, technology is weaving itself within the trades. While on a recent site visit to RDO Equipment in Dayton, MN, DesMarais-Lanz learned about the software RDO uses to operate its heavy equipment, and met the two people whose job it is to program the mini-computers for the heavy equipment.

Project Build MN also offers school counselor and high school trade instructor resources, and provides a platform for trade businesses to post job openings.

DesMarais-Lanz said the attributes most employers are looking for is someone with a "positive attitude, someone willing to work hard and not afraid to get dirty."

One misconception DesMarais-Lanz said is going away is that trade labor is hard, rugged work that doesn't pay well.

"Most of the people I know make well into the six figures. They are doing very well for themselves, and they love what they are doing," DesMarais-Lanz said.

For more information on Project Build MN, its programs, or career opportunities, visit <https://projectbuildmn.org>.

TRADE POWER

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that is held during the school year. One Saturday a month is set aside to explore a trade career, such as concrete, electrical, landscaping, lumber, etc.

DesMarais-Lanz said three teens who went through Explorers Post in the past year were able to narrow their trade focus.

"There is an abundance of opportunity, especially entry level," DesMarais-Lanz said.

Many companies just require a high school diploma or GED, and may even pay for any additional schooling in exchange for a work commitment.

"If you show you are willing to work hard and learn and have a great attitude, those skills in trades will take you a long way. Employers are willing to invest in people who are willing to invest in their company," DesMarais-Lanz said.

Who might be a best fit for a career in the trades?

A career in the trades will be both physically and mentally stimulating, and will likely be a good fit for any physical or interactive learners, DesMarais-Lanz.

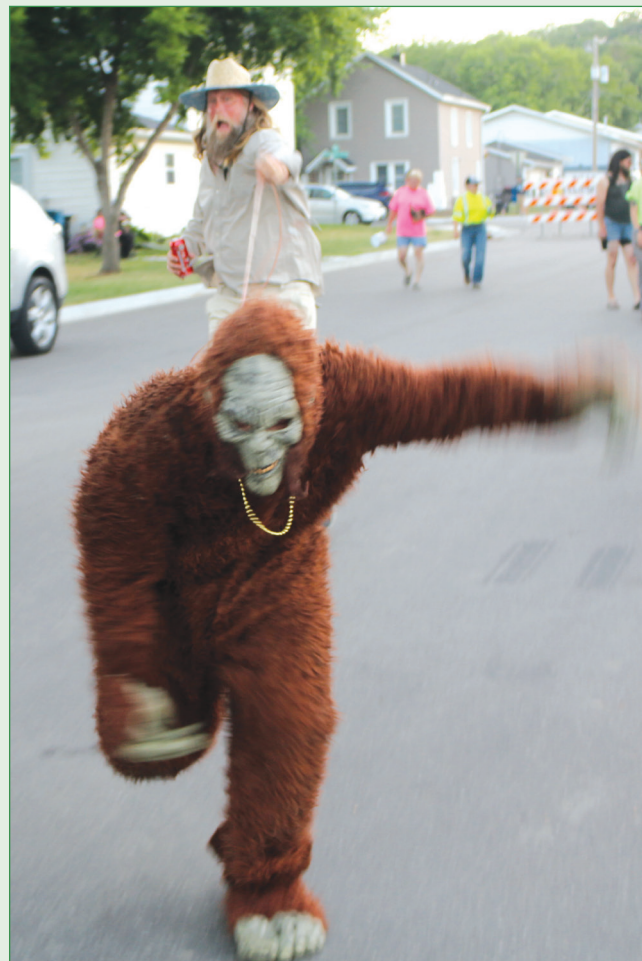
The up-and-coming generation is used to learning and almost living online, and kids

Yabba dabba doo!

More scenes from Henderson's Sauerkraut Days



UNLESS NOTED, PHOTOS BY RACHEL MILLER



Clockwise from top: The Henderson High School Class of '77 dressed up as the Flintstones for the Owl Parade; Grayson and Addie Jacobsen from Lakeville enjoy some rock prospecting, which was a new activity this year. The Jacobsen kids are pictured with grandparents Amy and Monty Braun of Le Center; Henderson Mayor Mike Swenson rides in the Grand Parade; Mike Bednar and Nathan Hrdlichka grill up brats for the hungry masses at Bender Park; Shaw Brothers was a hit with fans young and old on Friday night; cars take off in the Kraut Cruise; members of the SuFuDu Drumline performed Sunday after the Grand Parade at Bender Park; and Christopher Johnson tries to keep the Beast he is training in check during the Owl Parade.



PHOTO BY JOSH WILSON

