



Rock County STAR HERALD

Rock County's oldest business, printing since 1873

Thursday, December 31, 2020

Reflecting on 2020

Star Herald pages chronicle historic year of surviving and thriving in Rock County

By Lori Sorenson

This year in Rock County started out in the usual way with local headlines about business developments and school activities and the annual fishing derby at The Lake.

But after March, there isn't one Star Herald edition untouched by news relating to the COVID-19 pandemic.

It started abruptly with the March 19 paper that splashed several breaking stories about the pandemic closing schools, restaurants, salons, businesses, churches, recreation facilities and all other places where people might gather.

Health professionals urged residents to stay home and immediately

began preparing for PPE (personal protective equipment) and for staffing a potential "surge" of sick people.

Leaders encouraged people not to panic, but many people were afraid.

These March headlines ushered in countless more news stories about lives and livelihoods affected by the pandemic.

COVID-19 impact on business

Each week the paper went to press, it carried more news of pandemic impact. Local businesses especially suffered.

In July Skyler Hoiland announced he had to close his Bluestem Restaurant, which had been the darling of local eateries, owned and operated

by the "local boy done good."

He focused instead on his catering business, and other restaurants similarly pivoted to outdoor dining and carryout and delivery.

But their overhead costs continued accruing while revenues became pitifully anemic.

Small businesses received government aid to stay afloat, and local disbursements of federal CARES Act dollars helped cover important gaps.

CARES stands for Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security. Congress passed the \$2.2 trillion economic stimulus bill on March 27.

CARES became a household name as its funds made their way to local governments and then to

recipients. Another round is on the way in 2021.

Rock Countians, however, aren't known for sitting back on their heels to wait for handouts.

In November the Luverne Chamber teamed up with the Star Herald and KQAD to launch "Rock Solid Together — Take Out Challenge."

The local promotion sold a surprising \$250,000 in local gift cards that went directly to local businesses.

COVID-19 impact on farming

The work of farmers is never "shut down" due to a pandemic or any other sort of disaster, but COVID-19 did leave its mark on the ag community.

Livestock producers — swine

especially — took a hit when meat processing facilities had to shut down due to the illness spreading among workers.

The impact was immediate and devastating.

The Star Herald carried stories of Rock County farmers making impossible decisions to euthanize herds that had nowhere to go for processing.

These were among the darkest days many could remember in farming, on the heels of several years of declining farm income.

Mental health professionals weighed in on discussions, urging farmers to take care of themselves

Year in Review 2020/see page 2

Pandemic creates new normal for students and teachers

By Mavis Fodness

The coronavirus pandemic's full force hit local schools in mid-March when Minnesota officials closed buildings to lessen the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

School closures in South Dakota and Iowa soon followed.

The empty school buildings in Luverne, Hills and Beaver Creek became day cares for essential medical workers, and food service workers prepared hundreds of free, to-go meals for students.

Teachers and administrators had two weeks to figure out how they could teach from home.

The 2019-20 school year ended in late May under a distance-learning model, still an unfamiliar concept at the time.

All spring school activities were postponed and later canceled as the school year closed out.

Students waved goodbye to their teachers in a year-end parade, and 2020 seniors graduated in virtual ceremonies.

School resumed in September and not much had changed.

Luverne High School teacher and part-time Star Herald reporter Jason Berghorst shared his pandemic observations.

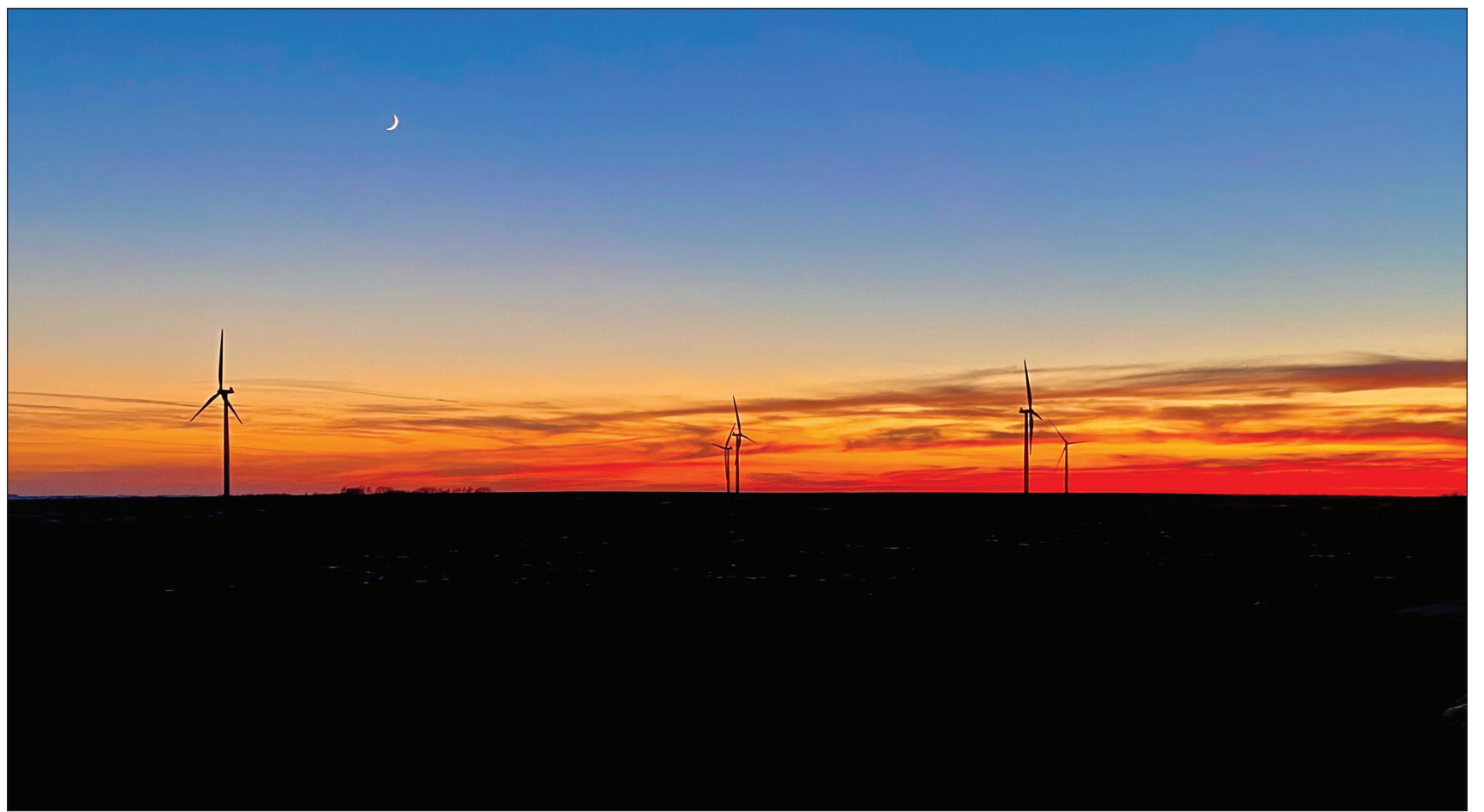
"The situation was going to be temporary," he wrote. "If we took the appropriate, difficult steps then, we'd be back to normal relatively soon."

New normal

Six months after schools first heard of the pandemic, mask wearing and social distancing were common practices in school.

Parents completed simple health screenings on their children at home before sending them to school.

Teachers, students/see page 3



Lori Sorenson photo/1231 beaver creek wind turbines

The now defunct Beaver Creek wind turbines are silhouetted against a setting sun this fall. Those seven turbines will be removed as part of NextEra's requested construction permit submitted to the PUC. NextEra purchased the wind rights from previous Renewable Energy Systems (RES) in 2019.

Public hearing Jan. 5 addresses Walleye Wind Farm

By Lori Sorenson

NextEra Energy will begin construction next summer on 40 or more turbines in western Rock County if plans are approved for the Walleye Wind Farm.

A remote-access public hearing is set for Jan. 5 for the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission to share information and accept comments about the 109.2 megawatt project.

The \$150 million project footprint includes Beaver Creek Township and portions of Springwater and Luverne townships with up to 44 turbines each producing 2.32 to 2.82 MW for Northern States Power.

Over the past several months, the company has been meeting with landowners about potential sites for the turbines.

Lease payments to landowners are expected to generate approximately \$34 million over the life of the wind farm.

With 40 turbines operating for what could be 50 years, payments would be roughly \$17,000 per turbine per year.

'Haves and have-nots'

For those who sign, they're guaranteed farm income that's hard to turn down, especially after the past several years of poor commodity prices and global trade wars.

Tim and JoEllen Benson have land that's been identified for alternative wind turbine sites. They voiced mixed reactions to proposed plans.

"We were apprehensive about the disruption the process may cause in the spring with planting and fall with harvest during the construction phase," Tim Benson said.

"If we opposed the project and it moved forward, we would still potentially have a windmill nearby without the financial benefit of a wind lease."

They said an additional source of revenue for their farming operation appeals to them, but they also support the community gains — roughly \$20 million in tax revenue over the first 30 years for Rock County.

"In addition to the benefit of the project for the participating landowners, this opportunity

offers a potentially significant revenue source for the county and the township," said JoEllen, who is the Beaver Creek Township Board clerk.

"Our hope would be that local businesses would benefit and employment opportunities would increase."

She also said the turbines' effect on scenery is a small thing, considering clean energy benefits.

"We feel everyone should play a role in contributing to the preservation of our environment for future generations," JoEllen said.

The Bensons spoke candidly, but many in Beaver Creek Township declined to be quoted on the record.

"We know there are some who are against wind farms, and we know there are some who wish they had a turbine, but weren't selected," one said.

"The last thing that anybody wants is animosity in the neighborhood among those who

Walleye Wind Farm/continued on page 5

COVID-19 vaccine distribution continues in Rock County

By Lori Sorenson

Local public health officials say Rock County's vaccine rollout is going according to plan.

"Right now we are in the midst of Phase 1a for COVID vaccination," said Jason Kloss of Southwest Health and Human Services.

The people prioritized to receive the vaccine in this phase include health care staff, EMS personnel, and workers and residents of long-term care facilities.

"Hospitals and clinics in our region have received their first shipment of vaccine and started to vaccinate their staff," Kloss said.

"SWHHS has also received our first shipment of vaccine and will be offering the vaccine to EMS personnel starting this week."

He said long-term care facilities in the region have signed contracts with approved pharmacies and are

COVID-19 vaccine/see page 3

Dec. 23 blizzard delivers white Christmas with zero visibility and sub-zero wind chill

By Lori Sorenson

After several weeks of brown winter conditions, a Dec. 23 blizzard delivered a white Christmas for much of the region, leaving several inches of snow in its wake.

Along with the snow, the storm brought high winds, with gusts up to 70 mph, causing driving conditions to deteriorate rapidly Wednesday afternoon.

Sub-zero wind chills resulted in readings of minus 20 to minus 35 degrees in rural areas, prompting warnings that frostbite could occur after only minutes of exposed skin in the elements.

By 3:30 p.m. the Minnesota Department of Transportation closed I-90 from the South Dakota

border to the Highway 60 juncture at Blue Earth.

No travel was advised in 12 southwestern Minnesota counties, and by 5:30 p.m. MnDOT advised that it was pulling snowplows off the roads due to zero visibility conditions.

When daylight broke Thursday morning, snow had stopped and winds had subsided to reveal cars in ditches after poor visibility and slick roads contributed to crashes and stranded vehicles.

Winter temperatures in the week since then preserved snow cover in Rock County, and more snow was in the forecast for mid-week the final days of 2020.



COVID CORNER

County	Total Cases	DAILY average in last 7 days	Percent Change
Rock	1011	1.3	+0.6%
Pipestone	863	0.6	+0.4%
Nobles	3,504	5	+0.8%
Minnehaha (SD)	24,663	85.6	+0.7%
Lyon (IA)	1234	6	+2.4%

14-day case rate in Rock County per 10,000 people:

Date Range	11/8-11/21	11/15-11/28	11/22-12/5	11/29-12/12
Rate	261.34	249.65	199.72	151.92

Vaccine Status: Phase 1a

- Health care personnel
- Long-term care residents

For more Covid-19 vaccine information, please visit: <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/vaccine.html>

School Status

LUVERNE - Elementary: In-person | Middle/High School: HYBRID
HBC - Elementary: In-person | Secondary: In-person/HYBRID
 Current data as of December 29, 2020. Sources: MDH & The New York Times

Sponsored by: Rock County Emergency Management



The city of Luverne \$5 million improvement and expansion of the pool and fitness center made the list of top stories in 2020, but it will be a bigger story in 2021 with construction and in 2022 as it's completed. Plans include an outdoor splash pad, 24-hour fitness access, flat space for group exercise, remodeled locker rooms and more.

Star Herald offers year in review of 2020/continued from page 1

and to seek help when things felt overwhelming.

By midway through the year, however, things began looking up. Government COVID-19 relief checks arrived, on top of aid for previous disasters and trade losses.

Decent growing conditions produced better than expected crops, and by year's end many farmers were in better financial shape than they'd seen in years.

According to December data from the USDA, farm income is expected to increase by 43 percent above 2019 levels. The 2020 net farm income is now estimated at the highest since 2013 (adjusted for inflation) and is 32 percent above the 20-year average.

However, the 2020 net farm income is greatly inflated by the highest level of government farm program payments in decades.

Government farm program payments accounted for 39 percent of the net farm income in 2020, which was an increase from 26 percent in 2019, and compared to 9-16 percent in most other years from 2011 to 2018.

COVID-19 impact on human celebrations

Meanwhile the pandemic prompted organizers to cancel or modify town celebrations to prevent people from gathering in crowds.

There was no Buffalo Days or Arts in the Park, no Fourth of July at The Lake and no Rock County Fair, Tri-State Band Festival, Halloween Trunk 'N Treat or Winterfest.

Still, community members found ways to connect safely.

Local 4-H families met for in-person livestock shows, and Minnesota 4-H conducted a virtual state fair showcase to celebrate excellence. Racing enthusiasts took to the track and food vendors brought a taste of the fair to town for limited hours of operation.

The Chamber office, volunteers and other creative organizers designed drive-through and drive-by events, such as the Buffalo Days Friday Night Cruise-In, the Halloween Street of Treats, and there's nothing like well-staged fireworks show to stir community pride and build human connection.

Thanks to generous donations and commercial sponsors, the skies over Luverne lit up with spectacular explosive displays for the Fourth of July and holiday "Love the Lights" kickoff at the park.



Premium Minnesota Pork launched operations in May in the former Gold'n Plump facility and by August was operating at full capacity and making a big impact on the local economy.

COVID-19 impact on milestone celebrations

For graduation, Luverne school leaders arranged for meaningful video-recordings of parents handing diplomas to their seniors.

Hills-Beaver Creek graduation was outdoors, socially distanced and also recorded for online viewing.

Graduates in both districts were celebrated in festive parades around town. Heartfelt community cheers, colorful signs and balloons offered an appropriate, upbeat close to a difficult senior year.

Despite pandemic cancellations, these events preserved the spirit of the occasions while keeping citizens connected to each other — at a safe social distance.

High school seniors weren't the only ones robbed of traditional celebrations.

All milestone events, such as weddings and funerals, were also restricted by social distance requirements.

COVID-19 impact on schools - classrooms and activities

While beloved local festivals were missed, there were few things more disappointing than empty stadiums and gymnasiums and the absence of school activities altogether.

Cardinal field in the center of town remained dark and quiet, as did gymnasiums.

Communities that would normally buzz with school activities and related post-game stops for gas and food and drink were also more quiet than normal.

Schools and their teachers and families were perhaps hit the hardest by the pandemic. (See the related story).

COVID-19 impact on health professionals

As it turned out, early efforts to keep people from mingling with each other did go a long way toward "flattening the curve" of COVID-19 illness in Rock County.

Public health professionals tracked the virus as local numbers of positive cases grew from single digits to the current tally at nearly 1,000 cases so far and 10 recorded deaths.

Rock County's first recorded death was on Sept. 25 when Luverne's Tony Miller passed away from complications related to the virus. Incidentally, his wife, Sharon, was among the first Sanford Luverne staff to receive the COVID-19 vaccine when it arrived Dec. 18.

When cases began spiking just before the holidays, data showed Sioux Falls ICU beds were 93 percent filled.

Sanford Luverne doesn't have ICU services, so this number mattered to those who were paying attention.

Most people who contracted COVID-19 were only mildly ill or even asymptomatic, but those (young and old) who did get sick often needed medical attention, and the hope was that it would be available if and when needed.

The COVID-19 vaccine arrived in Rock County the week of Dec. 15, allowing a glimmer of hope for a return to normal, whatever that turned out to be.

Medical professionals were the first to receive the vaccine, and they were openly emotional about the turning point in COVID-19 care.

"I cannot even express how meaningful it is," Dr. Judy Chesley said about receiving her COVID-19 vaccination Dec. 18. "Tears of joy. Really."

Presidential election of historic proportion

Amid all the upheaval caused by the pandemic, Rock County voters participated in a 2020 presidential election of historic proportions.

A contentious Donald Trump-Joe Biden campaign paved the way for high voter turnout.

But the real story of the 2020 election is the integrity of the American election system and dedication of local election officials nationwide.

Due to pandemic social distancing, record numbers of voters participated in the 2020 election via mail ballot or early voting.

Rock County's voter turnout in the 2020 presidential election was 94.94 percent, a record as far as chief election official Ashley Kurtz can recall.

Yet, Rock County was the second county in the state to be 100 percent reported on Election Night, a testament to efficiency of local election workers.

Kurtz said the 2020 election was significant for many reasons, but she said the most important message to voters is that everyone who properly submitted ballots had their votes counted in Rock County.

Premium Minnesota Pork

While the pandemic touched nearly every aspect of nearly everyone's life, progress continued in Rock County on other fronts.

For example, Premium Minnesota Pork launched operations in May in the former Gold'n Plump facility and by August was operating at full capacity and making a big

Year in Review/see page 5

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Meetings

Beaver Creek Township Board will meet at 7:30 p.m. Monday, Jan. 4, in the township hall in Beaver Creek. Springwater Township Board will meet (with social distancing) at 1:30 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 12, in the township hall.

'Read with McKenzie' by Zoom

A work study student is available to help individual students with reading skills in 10-minute sessions on Wednesdays from 4 to 5 p.m. via Zoom. The literacy program is called "Read with McKenzie." Contact the Rock County Library, 507-449-5040. The Zoom link is on the library facebook page.

Community Ed offers activities

Call the Luverne Community Education office, 507-283-4724, for registration information.

Basketball for grades K-2 begins Jan. 9 for six sessions. Fee is \$15.

Men's Basketball meets Wednesday evenings from January through March. Fee is \$30.

Defensive Driving 4-hour refresher classes are scheduled for Jan. 21 or Feb. 11.

Distance Learning with Clay - for all ages (1-10). Pick up a chunk of clay the week of Jan. 25 and in your own home, with instructions from Jerry Deuschle, build your creation. To then apply paint and for drying and firing, make appointment at the studio. Fee is \$20.

Register for Student Driver Education. Luverne school students grade 8 and older may register for February or June session for \$340, which includes 30 hours of classroom instruction and 6 hours of behind the wheel instruction.

The February option begins on Feb. 1 and will be virtual, so list your child's school gmail address when you register.

How to play chess for students grades K-8 after school; three sessions Feb. 2, 9 and 16. Fee is \$15.

For adults, 55 years and older, a **10-week health and wellness Aging Mastery Program** developed by the Minnesota River Area Agency on Aging. Class is virtual through Zoom on your computer or iPad. On Feb. 4 they will teach you how to use Zoom if you have not done it before! Class begins on Feb. 11. Fee is \$5.

Register by Feb. 6 for for the ACT Prep Class that will begin Feb. 22 virtually. Fee is \$125 and includes taking a practice test and an individual conference with the teacher to review the test and tips for taking the actual test. Fee is \$125.

School of Fish with Mike Frisch, TV show host and pro angler, will be Feb. 6 for students grades 3 through high school. Participants get a rod and reel, tackle box with tackle, gift card, snack pack and workbook. Each participant may bring an adult fishing buddy. Fee is \$30. Dress for the weather.

The event takes place at The Lake. Participants will be ready to compete in Luverne's Ice Fishing Derby on Feb. 20.

Input sought for digital readiness

A pilot program through Purdue University aims to increase civic digital engagement in Rock County and a community survey will help the group develop an engagement plan.

Paper copies of the survey are available at the Rock County Library, city offices and the Rock County Courthouse.

The 10-minute survey can also be completed online at <https://purdue.ca1.qualtrics.com/RockCountyDigitalSurvey>. Surveys are accepted through Jan. 12.

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Luverne School District gets positive audit report

By Mavis Fodness

The Luverne School District received a clear opinion from auditors at the Dec. 17 School Board meeting, continuing its history of receiving the highest audit rating possible.

Conway, Deuth & Schmiessing has been the longtime auditing firm for the Luverne School District.

CDS representative Brenda Parsley noted the combined fund balance of \$25.9 million was down from \$38.3 million from the previous school year.

The \$12 million decrease is attributed to the district's ongoing building construction, which had \$13.5 million in expenditures.

"Almost half of the building fund has been spent down, which is good — we're progressing," district business manager Marlene Mann said about the construction budget.

Aside from building construction, auditor Parsley outlined the balances in the four district funds of general education, food service, community service and debt service.

In the general fund, the district spent \$14.2 million out of \$14.8 million in revenues, bringing a fund balance forward of \$676,861 into the current school year.

The larger-than-expected balance was primarily due to an unfulfilled bus purchase that didn't take place before June 30.

The food service fund had a deficit of \$13,953, spending \$543,312 from revenues of \$529,359.

From late March through May, no income was generated due to the coronavirus closing school buildings and no meal sales were completed for more than two months.

"COVID-19 closed schools in March so that (deficit) is a big part of that reason," Parsley said.

She commented that the community service fund almost broke even over the 2019-20 school year with \$520,555 of expenditures and \$521,018 in revenues.

"This is really good considering the pandemic had a really detrimental effect to other districts," Parsley said.

To service the district's debt, \$2.066 million was spent during the 2019-20 school year from the \$2.154 million generated in revenue.



Mavis Fodness photo/1231 School Build Commons Facing South

Two days before the Christmas break, Gil Haugen Construction workers were busy preparing the new Luverne Middle-High School commons floor for more concrete as the HVAC system is installed in the new media center on the second floor. A railing will be installed on the second floor so that students, staff and visitors can see down into the commons area.

Board approves terrazzo upgrades for commons

By Mavis Fodness

Luverne School Board members agreed to dip into savings to make the new school commons area more impressive.

At their Dec. 17 meeting, they voted to add \$70,000 to the original base bid of \$250,000 for the flooring.

Board members approved spending up to \$70,000 from the fund set up in 1994 with the consolidation of the Magnolia and Luverne districts.

Prior to the floor upgrade purchase, the consolidation fund balance was at \$800,000.

Six months ago, the Luverne School Board agreed to place terrazzo flooring in the new commons currently under construction.

The flooring is similar to the terrazzo in the hallways first installed when the school was built in 1956.

Originally the base floor bid would have matched the brown, yellow, orange and tan-colored aggregate.

The upgraded terrazzo will incorporate the school's red and white colors.

Red glass and mother-of-pearl aggregate brightens the look and improves first impressions when walking into the new entrance to the middle-high school, said board member Katie Baustian, who serves on the building committee.

"Personally, the 'wow' factor is well worth the money," she said. "That's the first place people see."

Board members (minus board chairman Jodi Bosch, who was not at the meeting) agreed to pay for the



Mavis Fodness photo/1231 School Building PAC

Welders continue work on the second floor balcony seating (center), and brick layers (far right) complete the back stage wall on Dec. 22 in the new Luverne Middle-High School performing arts center.

upgrade in aggregate from the consolidation fund.

Originally, the consolidation fund was earmarked for technology.

However, due to the district's need to upgrade technology on a regular basis, district business manager Marlene Mann suggested the floor upgrade would be a better use for the consolidation funds.

"It's a good use for one-time purchases rather than just put it in the general fund — we're not going to regenerate those funds again," she said.

The district made purchases of \$219,000 for new Chromebooks and smart boards this school year. The new equipment and technology was paid for using coronavirus relief dollars.

Rock County levy to increase 2.5 percent

By Mavis Fodness

Rock County Commissioners voted unanimously Dec. 22 to increase the 2021 levy by 2.5 percent.

The local levy increase will add \$154,937 to the county budget for a total local contribution of \$6.345 million. The county's overall budget is \$12.8 million for 2021.

State aid accounts for \$562,744 in the county's general fund, an increase of \$425 from this year.

Included in the levy are \$101,273 for reserves and \$75,000 for capital outlay.

Commissioners discussed the importance of both funds at the county's Dec. 8 Truth in Taxation public hearing and finalized the levy at their last meeting of 2020 on Dec. 22.

No one from the public attended either meeting.

County Administrator Kyle Oldre advocated for more funding in reserves.

"I think there are going to be a lot of things looked at

from the state level that may adversely impact how we budget," he said.

"I think state aid is long-hanging fruit and, if the state cuts this in half, it doesn't affect how the state operates — basically passes it (shortfalls) on to us."

The state auditor recommends that counties have a five-month expenditure reserve.

For Rock County the reserve amount budget falls a couple of weeks short of the recommendation.

Earlier this year, an examination of county facilities revealed over \$2 million in needed improvements over the next eight to 10 years.

Oldre advocated a systematic approach to these upgrades rather than complete the improvements all at once.

Also in the 2021 budget are funding promises to two local non-profit organizations, the Rock County Historical Society and Generations, the local senior citizens group.

Pandemic creates new normal for students, teachers/continued from page 1

Learning models were regularly adjusted, and "hybrid learning" joined "distance learning" and "in-person learning" in regular vocabulary.

Luverne opened the 2020-21 school year with in-person elementary classes, and hybrid learning debuted at the middle-high school level.

Hybrid learning split each of the sixth- through 12th-grade classes in half, and they took turns meeting in person every other day. When not in school, students attended classes online.

H-BC elementary and secondary students began the school year in person and followed health recommendations from the Minnesota departments of health and education.

The recommendations limited contact between student groups, stepped up cleaning practices, and students and staff wore masks at all times.

At first fall activities were canceled, but Minnesota State High School League officials devised shortened football, cross country, volleyball and tennis seasons.

Winter sports have been postponed until January 2021.

Additional bus routes were added to keep to half the normal

capacity to meet social distancing guidelines. Everyone riding in buses to school or to activities wore masks, and students sat in assigned seats.

School districts traced positive cases and discovered that contact with the virus was occurring outside of the school setting.

By November, however, positive COVID-19 cases accelerated within the communities, forcing Luverne Schools to change learning models that would continue until the winter break.

Elementary students moved to hybrid learning and the middle-high school switched to distance learning.

Learning and teaching

Distance learning in November proved to be vastly different from what had been experienced in the spring.

Luverne Middle School teacher Jodi Rops shared with the Star Herald in a Dec. 3 story about how her classroom has changed.

She said in March she video-recorded herself presenting math lessons and communicated with students using the Google Classroom app.

Under the hybrid method, Rops would teach the same math

lesson two days in a row for each of her student groups.

The repetition forced her to change how she taught, and she embraced technology to bring a somewhat "normal" feel back to teaching.

"Three weeks into school, I decided to go 'live' with all students. That meant those at home had to log in at their normal math classtime to get the lesson," she said.

"This has gone much better for me, and students say they like that, too — more structure for all of us."

In a Dec. 24 article elementary teachers said they developed a more structured schedule under a hybrid model.

When students are not in school, they complete practice lessons on paper they take home daily in a folder.

"We focus on more instruction in the classroom with more of the practice being done when they are at home," said second-grade teacher Lori Nath.

"I feel like our day is similar to how it is when all the students are here."

The changes that the pandemic prompted for education have been challenging.

"I never imagined we would be teaching this way," said second-

grade teacher Laura Louwagie, who is in her 23rd year of teaching.

As the calendar turns to 2021, optimism is developing as elementary students return to in-person learning and the middle-high school returns to hybrid instruction.

If positive COVID-19 cases continue to drop, all students could soon be back to in-person instruction, which is the preferred learning model.

The LHS Class of 2021 has only met once as a group this current school year.

No more snow days

Due to the success that the Luverne District has experienced with distance learning, board members recently adopted an e-learning plan that would eliminate the need for snow days in the district.

When weather conditions make traveling to school hazardous, both the Luverne and Hills-Beaver Creek schools (who passed a similar e-learning model earlier) can use technology to teach up to five snow days at home.

Vaccine/from page 1

scheduled to have residents and staff vaccinated starting this week through the early part of January.

"... I hope, depending on how much vaccine the applicable pharmacy received," Kloss said.

"We will be moving to these subsequent phases as more vaccine becomes available." Phase 1b includes frontline essential workers, teachers and persons 75 years or older.

Phase 1c includes other essential workers as more vaccine becomes available and persons 16 to 64 years old with high-risk medical conditions.

"Keep in mind that this is only the first of a two-dose vaccination," Kloss said. "The second dose must be given within about 30 days of the first dose."

This means health care and EMS personnel and long-term care facilities will need to be given another dose in about 30 days to receive full protection from COVID-19.

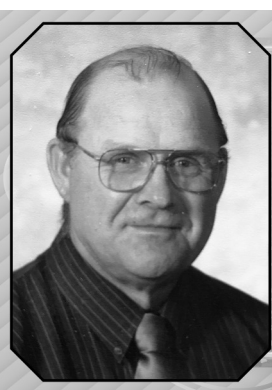
"This will likely delay the progression to the subsequent phases," Kloss said.

There have been 138 doses of the vaccine administered in Rock County as of Monday.

Public Health received another 200 doses last week that it will begin to dispense to EMS personnel starting this week.



Happy 90th Birthday
on January 15th!
Send Birthday Greetings to:
Jeane Swenson
5501 W 46th St
Apt #115
Sioux Falls SD 57106



Happy 80th Birthday
for John Klarenbeek
on January 2nd!
Send Birthday Greetings to:
102b Christensen Drive
Luverne, MN 56156

Drive-Up Luverne Youth Wrestling SIGN-UP

January 4th

6:00 p.m. - Pre-K through 2nd Grade
7:00 p.m. - 3rd through 6th Grade
Location - Old band doors (east side of the school)

For more information contact
Jeremy: 507-220-0904
Austin: 605-201-8597

'Hopes and fears of all the years ...' are still met the same way in 2020

What's your favorite Christmas song?

"Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" is my favorite to sing with others.



IN OTHER WORDS

By Jason Berghorst, reporter

Instead of the congregation singing my favorite carol, it was recorded in Norway for our service by great-nieces of two of our congregation's last living members born in Norway. A very 2020 way to keep that tradition alive.

"O Holy Night" is my favorite to listen to soloists, duets and choirs sing.

"Silent Night" might be the most beautiful, especially a capella in candlelight.

I also love "Oh Come All Ye Faithful," because it means the start of my favorite hour of the year.

To say that the Christmas Eve service at church means a lot to me is an understatement.

And that leads me to my last two favorite Christmas carols.

While the melodies are nice, it's the words within "O Little Town of Bethlehem" and "I Am So Glad Each Christmas Eve" that mean the most to me.

"The hopes and fears of all the years are met in Thee tonight" are the final words of the first verse of "O Little Town of Bethlehem."

Those words, written almost two hundred years ago, are still true for me every Dec. 24.

For almost all of my 42 Christmas Eves, I have been in the same room at the same time.

No matter what good or bad things have happened in my life, or in my family, or in the world around me that year, Christmas Eve is the same.

The words, the songs, the people, the message and its meaning never change.

Christmas Eve at church is my yearly opportunity to reflect on the past, hope for the future, and know and feel that my faith is with me and my family through it all.

Indeed, I meet the hopes and fears of all my years during that hour on Christmas Eve.

And that leads me to my overall favorite Christmas carol: "I Am So Glad Each Christmas Eve."

As a child, it was the first verse of "I Am So Glad" that interested me the most, because the congregation (even to this day) sings it in Norwegian.

I was always amazed at how many people could speak a language I only heard once a year.

While it's true in the 1980s there were more native Norwegian speakers at Grace Lutheran, by the time I was a teenager, I realized that the vast majority of us were just winging that first verse.

About the same time, I began to focus much more on the last verse.

"And so I love each Christmas Eve, and I love Jesus too; and that He loves me every day, I know so well is true."

There it is. That sums it all up for me.

For about the last 15 years, I've been in the choir on Christmas Eve. We sit behind the altar

facing the congregation.

Each year during that verse, I look at the stained glass window in the back above the full congregation that includes my family and just reflect on what it all means to me.

As I've gotten older, I often don't get through the verse with a clear voice or dry eyes.

This year, of course, was different.

Because of the pandemic, there would be far fewer people and only pre-recorded music.

But there was still a service. I was still in the same room at that same time and I still heard the same words and message.

The hopes and fears of the most unusual year of my life were still met in Him that night.

Instead of the congregation singing my favorite carol, it was recorded in Norway for our service by great-nieces of two of our congregation's last living members born in Norway.

A very 2020 way to keep that tradition alive.

And when the Norwegian musicians got to the last verse, they sang it in English.

"And so I love each Christmas Eve, and I love Jesus too; and that He loves me every day, I know so well is true."

As I sat in my unusual spot next to my 7-year-old nephew, I very quietly sang along under my mask and turned briefly to look back at the same window I do every year.

Even though so much has changed in the last year, so much has stayed the same.

As we end 2020, we all have so much to reflect on, to be thankful for, and even more to be hopeful for.

How did we fare in 2020?

It depends on how we respond to those challenges in 2021

STAR HERALD EDITORIAL

The Star Herald news writers each year at the end of December consider and recap top stories that filled the pages throughout the year.

We thought 2019 was a rough year, with a continued depressed farm economy, destructive flooding and tru Shrimp's broken promise of a \$100 million development.

We turned the calendar page into 2020 with hopes for brighter days ahead.

Little did we know we'd face one of the biggest challenges in recent history.

We watched as the COVID-19 pandemic wreaked havoc on lives and livelihoods worldwide and saw it as another tragedy that happened "elsewhere" to "other people."

But it made its way to Rock County and affected our people just as it had on the other side of the world.

It struck the most vulnerable among us — nursing homes, and it affected the youngest among us — school children sent home to learn "remotely" in front of computer monitors.

This in turn affected parents who were already adjusting to working at home and employers who were adjusting to quarantined workers and shrinking revenues.

In our news stories, we found ourselves using terminology like

"shelter in place," "social distancing" and "flatten the curve."

And as 2020 unfolded, we at the Star Herald struggled to keep up with COVID-19 victims — restaurants, bars and retail closures. Shuttered meat packing plants and agriculture commodity backlogs.

We shared heartbreaking stories of Rock County farmers making impossible decisions to euthanize herds that had nowhere to go for processing. These were among the darkest days many could remember in farming, on the heels of several years of declining farm income.

And eventually, we shared news of our first human lives lost to the deadly virus.

Rock County also wasn't spared from national unrest over issues of race as our local State Troopers and National Guardsmen traveled to the front lines of violent protests that left entire Minneapolis neighborhoods in ruins.

Amid all this, we participated in an historic and contentious presidential election and a national

Census count, which, in themselves, were top stories of the year.

Meanwhile, we at the Star Herald were pleased to report on Rock Countians showing their true spirit of resilience and generosity through it all.

One of our proudest moments this year was the "Rock Solid — We're in this Together" promotion that sold over \$250,000 in local gift cards that went directly to local businesses.

We couldn't have our usual town celebrations, but our Chamber director creatively designed drive-through and drive-by events that captured the essence of the occasions while keeping us connected to each other — at a safe social distance.

Among the many things we're reminded of in a year like 2020 is that we're defined not by the tragedies that befall us, but rather by how we respond to them.

Happy New Year, dear readers. May 2021 be the year we build on our challenges to be stronger and better than ever.



Do-over sought for Luverne Bucket List

I don't want you to think I am photocopying my column for this week, but I kind of am.

Last year at this time I had come up with what I was calling my Luverne Bucket List. Simply put, the aforementioned bucket list included things I challenged myself to do in 2020 right here in Luverne.

Well, as you can imagine, COVID-19 shot a bunch of holes in my bucket.

What you're about to read is my 2020 bucket list and how I fared in checking off the list.

First on the list was to wash a load of clothes at The Laundry Room Laundromat. I did accomplish this with a load of towels.

Second on the list was to get at least one haircut in a minimum of five different salons in Luverne throughout the year.

Well, the governor's early COVID-19 shutdown closed the salons for the better part of three months, and when they were allowed to open, it was under restrictions. I was only able to get to



FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH

By Rick Peterson, general manager

one salon.

Third was to actually swim in The Lake. I did get this done, albeit it was more like wading than swimming, but I am counting it.

Fourth on the list was to attend a school board meeting. I blew this by not attending a meeting on Zoom that would have been so easy, but it is still on the list.

No. 5 was to attend at least one of these three events: a Cardinal girls' basketball game, a Cardinal wrestling meet, or a Cardinal gymnastics meet. I did make it to a girls' basketball game before the governor shut down school sports.

Sixth on the list was to go to a movie at the Palace Theatre. Again

COVID-19 and the governor put a halt to this one as well.

No. 7 was to drink a glass of clean water at Blue Mounds State Park. It didn't happen, but maybe in 2021.

The eighth entry on my Bucket List was a little out of my character, but I was willing to try to attend at least one Sunday service (weddings and funerals don't count) in each of 12 local churches over the 12 months of 2020.

Well, you guessed it. COVID-19 and the governor didn't help on this one either.

So I am asking for a do-over for 2021, if that's OK with you.

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Rock County
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The *Star Herald* encourages letters to the editor expressing the opinions of readers and intends to print all letters. Letters not meeting the guidelines will not be printed. The *Star Herald* will verify the authenticity of all letters. Letters must have the name of the writer, a signature and address.

Unsigned letters will not be considered. The *Star Herald* will edit for grammar, spelling and clarity. Any letters containing offensive language, libelous or slanderous material, or misleading or false information will be rewritten before being published. The *Star Herald* will not publish letters written with the sole intent to advertise or serve as a thank-you. Letters with more than 300 words may be edited. The deadline for letters is Monday 10 a.m. They may be delivered or mailed to the editor, *Rock County Star Herald*, P.O. Box 837, 117 W. Main St., Luverne, Minn. 56156.

ON THE RECORD

Dispatch report

Dec. 18
 •Complainant on 171st Street, Luverne, reported a break-in.

•Complainant east-bound on 243rd Street, South Dakota, reported a pursuit.

•Complainant east-bound on 41st Street, Ihlen, reported a pursuit.

•Complainant on 181st Street, from Highway 23 to the South Dakota border reported road closed.

•Complainant on Edgemoor Street reported kids skating on the creamery pond.

•Dispatch reported phone outage.

•Erratic driver reported at location southbound on Highway 23, mile marker 16, Jasper.

•Suspicious activity was reported on S. Kniss Avenue.

Dec. 19
 •Suspicious activity was reported at location on Redbird Field.

•Complainant on N. Freeman Avenue reported a driving complaint.

•Complainant on E. Luverne Street reported a noise complaint.

Dec. 20
 •Complainant on W. Main Street reported theft.

•Complainant on N. McKenzie Street reported she lost her vehicle tags.

•Complainant on Interstate 90, mile marker 17, Luverne, reported a driving complaint.

•Complainant on County Road 8 and Highway 23, Garretson, reported a couch on the side of the road.

Dec. 21
 •Complainant on Mead Court reported an open vehicle.

•Complainant on County Highway 4, Beaver Creek, reported suspicious activity at location.

•Complainant on N. Lindale Street reported threats.

•Complainant on Highway 75 and 131st Street, Luverne, reported a vehicle for poor driving conduct.

•Complainant on E. Warren Street requested a deputy.

•Complainant on W. Maple Street reported an assault at location.

•Complainant at E. Main Street reported threats and drugs.

Dec. 22
 •Complainant on E. Luverne Street reported trespassing.

•Complainant on E. Main Street reported vandalism and property damage.

•Report of property being found.

•Complainant on S. Kniss Avenue reported damage to vehicle.

•Complainant on County Road 4 and 170th Avenue, Magnolia, report-

ed an abandoned vehicle.

•Complainant requested to speak to the sheriff.

•Complainant on Edgemoor Street reported theft.

Dec. 23
 •Complainant on N. Cottage Grove reported suspicious activity.

•Complainant on E. State Street, Magnolia, reported a vehicle break-in.

•Vandalism was reported at location on S. Freeman.

•Complainant on 150th Avenue reported theft from motor vehicle.

•Blizzard warning was issued for Rock County.

•Report of a hit and run.

•Complainant in Lyon County reported subject with Rock County warrant.

•Suspicious activity was reported on Oak Drive.

•911 outage reported at location.

•State patrol issued road closure on Interstate 90 from South Dakota border to Blue Earth.

•Report of hit and run on County Road 4 near Premium Pork.

•An accident was reported at location of Premium Pork.

•Complainant on S. Kniss Avenue reported a vehicle did not pay tow bill.

Dec. 24
 •Complainant on S. Kniss Avenue requested a Salvation Army voucher.

•Complainant on Highway 75 and 171st Street, Hardwick, requested lights for tow pullout.

•A residence check was requested at location on N. Lindale Street.

•Complainant on E. Warren Street reported a parking issue.

Dec. 25
 •Complainant on E. Oakland Avenue reported theft from vehicle.

•Dispatch reported phone outage.

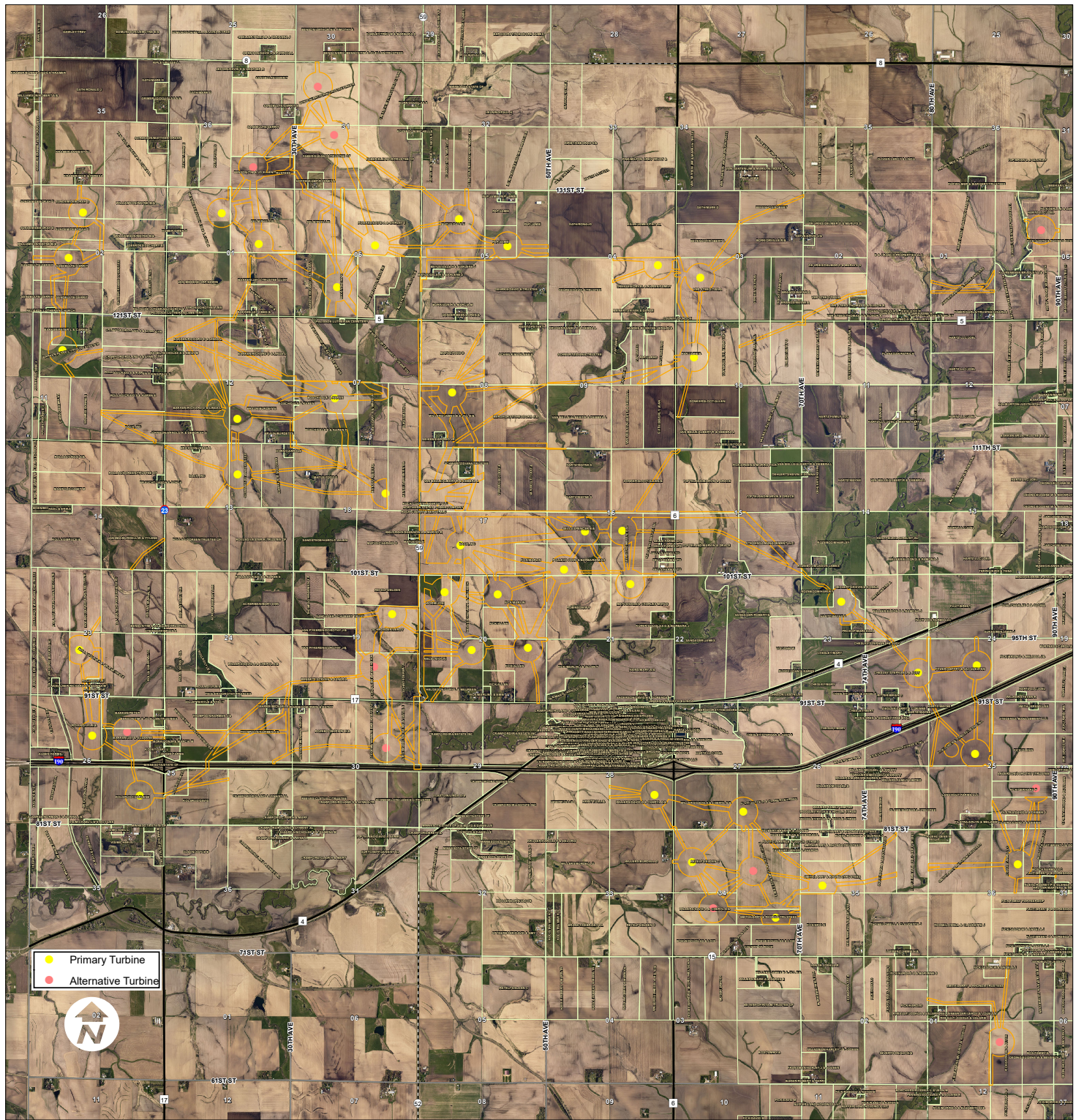
•Complainant on 115th Street, Luverne, reported water issue.

In addition, officers responded to 5 motor vehicle accidents, 7 vehicles in ditch, 1 transport, 7 escorts, 15 ambulance runs, 1 paper service, 2 animal complaints, 3 fingerprint requests, 3 burn permits, 1 background check, 4 alarms, 23 purchase and carry permits, 5 stalled vehicles, 6 traffic stops, 8 abandoned 911 calls, 3 tests, 5 welfare checks and 2 follow-ups.

Reward remains

The Rock County Sheriff's Office continues to seek information regarding vandalism to the Christmas displays at Luverne City Park during December.

A reward of \$1,000 has been offered for any information leading to an arrest. Sheriff Evan Verbrugge can be reached at 507-283-5000. Sheriff Verbrugge also urges the public to be watchful and report any suspicious activity.



NextEra's proposed sites for wind turbines are shown as white dots on this map of the Walleye Wind Farm footprint.

Walleye Wind public hearing set for Jan. 5/continued from page 1

have and those who have not." Some don't trust the process; others don't want construction and turbines to interfere with current farming practices.

"I didn't work this hard for this many years to get half-mile rows only to have a turbine parked in the middle of a field," said one who declined a wind contract.

The lease agreements are for 50 years, commencing after the wind farm becomes operable, and they're adjusted for inflation.

Annual payments vary, but roughly speaking, it's a better deal to take the lease payments than to farm the ground.

"I can put \$700 into an acre of corn, or I can get the same income for a lot less work," said a farmer who's negotiating for three turbines on his land.

Plus there are attractive signing bonuses, and farmers may use the access roads to the turbines, which require roughly 1.5 acres each.

What the company will and won't do

On its website, NextEra touts the benefits of the project to Rock County and its residents.

In addition to local government tax credits and landowner payments, Walleye Wind will create up to 200 construction jobs and three

to four good-paying, full-time jobs for maintenance and operation.

The project will also provide indirect income to local businesses, including hotels, restaurants, caterers and other companies.

The company has addressed several key concerns among local officials and landowners.

•A road maintenance agreement calls for roads to be returned to the current or a better condition than prior to construction.

•There will be no blinking lights atop the turbines. A radar system will activate red warning lights when an aircraft approaches the wind farm.

•Electricity collected in the project substation will be directed to Northern States Power and delivered to Minnesota Municipal Power Agency for use in the southwestern part of the state.

•For bird safety, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife and Minnesota Department of Natural Resources is surveying the wind farm area to mitigate impact on wildlife.

•Plans and funding are in place for decommissioning the turbines when the time comes.

Decommission plans

Walleye Wind Farm developers have assured Rock

County officials they will not abandon the renewable energy source at the end of its life expectancy.

A decommissioning agreement states that NextEra will remove turbines and related equipment at an estimated cost of \$89,000 per turbine in 2020 dollars.

This estimate includes a partial offset from the salvage values of turbine components and electrical equipment.

Funding for decommissioning will be completed through a bond NextEra plans to purchase next year.

The bond amount, held by the state of Minnesota, is based on the wind farm's fair market value and is reviewed every few years.

Included in NextEra's requested construction permit submitted to the PUC is the removal of the seven non-operational wind turbines in Beaver Creek Township.

NextEra purchased the wind rights from previous Walleye Wind Farm developer Renewable Energy Systems (RES) in 2019.

"We recognize in the last two years other developers in the region have irresponsibly disposed of their blades in landfills. We do not do that," project manager Mike Weich told county officials in October.

NextEra, based out of

Juno Beach, Florida, has developed wind farms in 47 different states over the past decade.

"We've experienced a lot and we have learned along the way how to become good neighbors," Weich said.

What's next?

An office opened on East Main Street in Luverne where people can stop or call with questions. Weich's phone number is 561-694-3987.

To view documents filed with the Public Utilities Commission, go to mn.gov/puc, select "Search eDockets," enter the year (20) and the docket number (269 or 384) and select "search."

The Jan. 5 public hearing will begin at 6 p.m. For information on how to participate, call 651-201-2251. Written comments are accepted through Jan. 26.

The defunct Beaver Creek turbines will come down in the summer of 2021 at the same time construction is tentatively scheduled to begin on the 40 new turbines in western Rock County.

The PUC is expected to issue a ruling on NextEra's certificate of need and construction permit requests in mid-2021.

Construction on the wind farm is tentatively scheduled for August through December 2021.

Star Herald Year in Review of 2020/continued from page 2

impact on the local economy.

The family-owned PMP processes roughly 2,500 hogs per day in Luverne and employs roughly 250 people with starting pay at \$13 to \$15 per hour.

The company broke ground on a \$30 million project to retrofit and expand the 78,000-square-foot facility to the current 128,000 square feet, counting the enclosed monoslope hog barn.

As part of the agreement on the 17.5 acres, PIP acquired an option to buy an additional 28.75 acres (at \$5,000 per acre) from the Luverne Economic Development Authority.

By summer of 2020, the plant was already expanding. In August the company broke ground on a 10,000-square-foot \$7 million cooler addition that would allow the plant to double its capacity.

With completion next spring, the cooler will allow for 4,500 head per day, in response to market demand, and hundreds more employees.

Luverne invests \$14 million into wastewater project

Along the way, PMP negotiated a wastewater treatment agreement with the city of Luverne on a plan to improve the city's water treatment capacity.

The city, which was already planning to refurbish its 1950s equipment, approved a \$14 million wastewater treatment plant construction project, and Premium Minnesota Pork agreed to pay for nearly half, \$6.7 million.

Both parties were pleased with the outcome. Luverne got help with an expensive project, and Premium Minnesota Pork got the water treatment capacity it needed.

Construction continued on the city project throughout 2020 and at year's end is more than 95 percent complete.

With Luverne's plant improvements, PMP will be guaranteed a 200,000-gallon-per-day treatment capacity, which should more than ac-

commodate higher production goals.

School project almost completed in 2020

Another continued bright spot has been progress on the \$30 million school construction project in Luverne.

The pandemic boosted remodeling and construction work at the Luverne Middle-High School that started in March 2019.

A year later, students and staff couldn't return to the classroom to finish the 2019-20

school year due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Gil Haugen Construction took advantage of extra workspace and demolished the rest of the inside walls of the original two-story 1956 high school building.

Six months later when classes resumed for the 2020-21 school year, all but 10 rooms were ready for students and staff.

To accommodate teachers and students whose rooms

Year in Review/see page 12

Deutsch retires from board position after serving Luverne Schools for 20 years

By Mavis Fodness

The Dec. 17 Luverne School Board meeting was the last for Colleen Deutsch, who retired after 20 years in district leadership.

"Timing was good and we had others interested who have children in the district," Deutsch said. "I've really enjoyed my time on the board."

Deutsch was elected to her first term on the board just as grades K-5 moved into their new school building attached to the middle-high school from which Deutsch graduated 20 years earlier.

Now she leaves the board as the middle-high school building remodel and addition is in the final months of construction, set to be finished in mid-2021.

"This is a very exciting time. The facility looks wonderful," she said.

"(It has) increased security and safety, many new opportunities for staff and students with the new and updated classrooms, multi-purpose areas, weight room, new commons and performing arts center, increased technology, and dedicated areas for counseling and administrative team."

Building projects get attention, but board members make yearly budget decisions and make decisions to add or not replace staff in order to keep the district on solid financial footing.

Deutsch leaves the board as a new organizational chart, one of several issues the personnel committee she serves on delved into this year and was recently adopted.

The board faced an unprecedented issue this year with the coronavirus pandemic. The state's precautionary approach to COVID-19 totally changed how school is



Mavis Fodness photo/1210 School Board Deutsch 20 Years

Colleen Deutsch retires from the Luverne School Board after serving the district for 20 years. She leaves as the district completes a remodel of the middle-high school building and constructs a new commons and performing arts center on the school campus. Deutsch is an LHS Class of 1979 graduate.

conducted.

"No. 1 is keeping everyone safe and healthy," she said. "We have a creative, caring and great staff that have done an excellent job in providing education, health and counseling services, transportation, meals, safe and clean environment, etc., to all students during the COVID challenge."

Deutsch (nee Obermoller) started her education at the Hardwick Grade School with her six sisters and one brother. She transferred to Luverne Middle-High School as a seventh-grader and graduated from LHS with her twin sister, Jolene, in 1979.

"I took school seriously and tried to get the most out of my classes. I was hard-working, completed assignments on time — not a procrastinator — did well, on the A honor roll, and graduated as one of the co-salutatorians," she said.

"I was involved in volleyball, basketball and track. I did summer softball with the Hardwick team (and) worked at the Green Lantern."

She earned a Bachelor of Science degree in nursing in 1983 at Morningside College in Sioux City, Iowa, and now is a registered nurse with LifeScape in Sioux Falls.

The decision to run for the Luverne School Board in 1999 was an extension of her work through the Parents Partners in Education (PPIE), Girl Scouts and community and church activities.

She and her husband, Doug, have four children, Amber (LHS 2002 graduate), Caitlyn (2009), Derek (2011) and Dustin (2013). Amber and her husband, Ben, live in Roseau and have four children. She said their activities center around their family.

"I have always felt that Luverne Public Schools has provided a great educational foundation so

Deutsch, continue to page 8

CELEBRATIONS

Card showers

John Klarenbeek will celebrate his 80th birthday on Saturday, Jan. 2. Greetings may be sent to him at 102b Christensen Drive; Luverne, MN 56156.

Jeane Swenson will celebrate her 90th birthday on Tuesday, Jan. 15. Greetings may be sent to her at 5501 W. 46th Street, Apt. #115; Sioux Falls, SD 57106.

MENU

Monday, Jan. 4: Barbecued chicken breast, baked potato with sour cream, California Normandy, bread, gelatin with whipped topping.

Tuesday, Jan. 5: Salisbury steak with gravy, mashed potatoes, green beans, dinner roll, frosted cake.

Wednesday, Jan. 6: Chicken wild rice casserole, Oriental blend, peaches, bar.

Thursday, Jan. 7: Chef's choice, vegetable, fruit, bread, dessert.

Friday, Jan. 8: Beef chili with beans, creamy coleslaw, corn muffin, orange, cookie.

LSS Dining offers well-balanced and affordable meals for the community.

Call Lynette Hoiland at 283-9846 to arrange to pick up a dinner or for home-delivered meals.

Gift certificates are available at the meal site or online at www.lssmn.org/nutrition.

COLLEGE NEWS

Area students named to SE Tech dean's list

Several area students have been granted academic honors at the Southeast Technical College in Sioux Falls for the Fall 2020 semester. To qualify, students must be seeking a degree and earn a GPA of 3.5 or higher.

Recipients of academic honors and their area of study are as follows: Brody Debates, Luverne, electrician; Rachelle Schomacker, Luverne, medical assistant; and Carson Ehde, rural Garretson, agriculture business.

Scholarships open to high school juniors

The Minnesota Association of Townships (MAT) announces its 2021 Scholarship Program, which 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.

Applicants should submit a written essay using critical thinking on the topic of land use by May 1, 2021.

Winners will be chosen by an independent panel of judges and will be notified by Sept. 1, 2021. They will also be invited to attend MAT's annual conference in St. Cloud in September 2021.

For more information and application details, call the MAT offices at 800-228-0296 or visit www.mntownships.org.

1887: City of Steen original name was to be Virginia

The following appeared in *The Rose History* in 1911.

Rock County Village (continued from 12-24-20 edition of the Star Herald)

Steen

In the list of Rock county's unincorporated villages Steen ranks among the foremost, both in size and importance. It is located on the northwest quarter of section 32, Clinton township, near the southern boundary of the county, and is a station on the line of Illinois Central railroad connecting Sioux Falls with Chicago. Steen makes no pretense of metropolitan greatness but is content with being a prosperous and substantially built hamlet, surrounded by a rich farming country. Several lines of business are represented, including a bank, general store, hardware store, drug store, furniture store, hotel, blacksmith shop, harness shop, pool hall, lumber yard, two elevators, livery barn, fuel dealer and stock buyers. The town also has a town hall, two churches and a first grade public



BITS BY BETTY

By Betty Mann, president
Rock County Historical Society

school, employing two teachers.

The land on which the town of Steen is located was taken as a homestead in 1871 by John P. Steen. A brother, Ole P. Steen, filed a homestead claim to the quarter section adjoining the year before, and it was in honor of these two pioneers that the village was given its permanent name.⁴

The last few years of the eighties witnessed the founding of three towns in southern Rock county as a direct result of the construction of two new lines of railroad, the Illinois Central and the Sioux City & Northern. Included in this number was Steen, or Virginia, as it was originally known, on the Illinois Central,

which commenced laying rails on the extension from Rock Rapids to Sioux Falls in September, 1887. The station of Bruce, seven miles to the west in Martin township, was the first of these to be located, the site being selected in December.

Early in the year 1888 the Illinois Central authorities announced their intention to plat and develop a town on the line between Bruce and Rock Rapids, in Clinton township. A number of the residents of that precinct at once became interested in the project and lent their assistance in its furtherance. It was the offer of John P. Steen to donate twenty acres of his homestead for townsite purposes that influenced

the railroad company to locate the proposed station on his land.

The track-laying on the extension was completed so as to permit the operation of the first passenger train on June 2, 1888. In the course of the same month the townsite of Virginia was surveyed by J. F. Whalen. The plat, made to comprise thirteen blocks, was dedicated on June 13 by N. T. Burroughs, president, and W. A. Sanford, secretary, of the Cherokee & Western Town Lot & Land company, and it was placed on record September 3.

The farm house of John P. Steen was the only building on the Virginia townsite prior to the activities of the railroad company at that point. No sooner had the survey been completed than work was commenced on a depot building and a flat grain warehouse, and before the summer of 1888 was over, there were signs of a promising village.⁵ Two grain warehouses, one erected by John Butler, and the other by E. M. Dickey, had been established, and the pioneer merchant, C. C.

Bits, continue to page 8

REMEMBER WHEN

10 years ago (2010)

•Luverne High School Band Director Tyler Woods presented information about the summer band trip to Boston to Luverne School Board members at their Dec. 21 meeting.

Woods said that the East Coast experience will "allow the band students an opportunity to represent the school and community in two Independence Day parades."

The band will march to Randolph, Mass., and Bristol, R. I., during the trip June 29 through July 5.

Luverne band members have the chance to make a trip such as this every four years," Woods said.

"This year they will learn about or nation's early history as well," he said.

Board member Bill Stegemann agreed. "There's nothing like experiencing it firsthand," he said.

25 years ago (1995)

•Local theater organizers announced this week that they've booked the national a cappella group, Tonic Sol Fa, for a performance at the Historic Palace Theatre next spring.

Minnwest Bank and First Farmers and Merchants National Bank are sponsoring promotional expenses for the event on April 2 in Luverne.

The Blue Mound Area Theatre Board will release more details as information becomes available, but organizers have confirmed that Luverne High School choir members will perform

the opening act. ...

Tonic Sol Fa is self-described simply as "four voices and a tambourine," but The New York Times recently called the group a "vocal kaleidoscope ... unique to the human voice."

The quartet has sold over 1 million albums and recently won an Emmy Award.

50 years ago (1970)

•"We've wanted to enlarge the elevator for about two years now, only we never had room for any additions, now ... I guess, we've got plenty of room."

R. C. Juhl, president of the board of directors for the Beaver Creek Co-Op Elevator, reflected on Monday night's events after fire completely destroyed the three-part structure and most of its contents.

"We'll stay in operation," he said. "We're constructing a small office at the site and our customers can continue to conduct their business with us as usual. Area elevators will be helping us out on a few items for a while, but nothing has changed except for the loss of the building."

Plans for reconstruction were discussed by the board at a meeting on Tuesday morning, and they are hopeful that a new elevator can be started in the near future.

75 years ago (1945)

•Luverne property owners will pay 16½ per cent more taxes

on their non-homestead real estate this year.

The mill rate on non-homestead property in the city of Luverne for 1945, to be paid in the form of taxes in 1946, is 109.1 mills, as compared to 93.7 for the year just past, according to County Auditor Koehn.

100 years ago (1920)

•The fiftieth anniversary of the formal organization of Rock county will be commemorated at Steen on next Friday, January 7th. Appropriate exercises will be held in the hall and these will be followed by a dance and supper. All "old-timers" are especially invited to attend.

Rock county was formally organized on January 7, 1871, when the first elective county officers were sworn in, and the occasion was celebrated with an inauguration ball given at the home of the late Philo Hawes in Luverne. Ole P. Steen, one of the county's earliest pioneers and likewise one of the two brothers in whose honor the village of Steen was named, and Dudley Whitehead, of Rock Rapids, furnished the music for the inaugural ball, both making the trip to Luverne across the snow-covered prairies by ox team.

The violin used by Ole P. Steen, who died in 1903, for the dance in 1871, is now owned by his son, P. C. Steen, of Steen, and this instrument will be used, in connection with a four-piece orchestra, in providing the music for the commemoration ball to be given next Friday.

OBITUARIES

Lavonne Hansen

Lavonne Clarice Hansen, 97, Luverne, died Monday, Dec. 28, 2020, at the Good Samaritan Society - Mary Jane Brown Home in Luverne.

A funeral service will be at 1 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 2, with visitation beginning at 11:30 a.m., at the First Presbyterian Church in Luverne. Interment will follow at Maplewood Cemetery in Luverne.

Lavonne Wacker was born on June 10, 1923, to John and Clara (Clasen) Wacker on a farm southwest of Rock Rapids, in Lyon County Iowa. She was baptized and later confirmed at the Immanuel Lutheran Church in Rock Rapids. Her family moved to Minnesota in 1931 and Lavonne attended County School District 24, then two years of high school in Rock Rapids, and her last two years at Luverne High School in Luverne, graduating in 1941.



She attended the Lutheran Hospital School of Nursing in Sioux City, Iowa, graduating in 1944 as a registered nurse. She began her nursing career at the Vander Wilt Hospital in Rock Rapids.

On Jan. 26, 1945, Lavonne married W. Ray Hansen at the Immanuel Lutheran Church in Rock Rapids. The couple first lived on Ray's parents' farm before moving three miles north to Lavonne's parents' farm in Kanaranzi Township, Rock County, in 1951. There they farmed and raised their four children. After taking a few years off, Lavonne returned to her nursing career in Rock Rapids and later worked at the Luverne Community Hospital from 1972 until her retirement in 1992. She and Ray continued living on the farm. Ray died in October of 2008, and Lavonne continued

living on the farm.

Lavonne was a member of the First Presbyterian Church in Luverne and a member of the Rebekah Circle. She enjoyed sewing and gardening. She was also a member of the Luverne Lions Club.

Lavonne is survived by her four children, Karen Hansen of Ames, Iowa, Eileen (Alon) Hemme of Hardwick, Rhonda (Paul) Jorgenson of Winner, South Dakota, and William (Nancy) Hansen of New Brighton; six grandchildren, Erin (Dean) Frosilie, Kyle (Mica) Hemm, Ryan Hemme, Lonnie Jorgensen, Kendra (Kris) Jorgenson, and Heather (Dorn) Hamburger; and 18 great-grandchildren.

She was preceded in death by her husband, W. Ray; an infant son, Robert Ray; and her parents.

Arrangements are provided by Hartquist Funeral Home of Luverne, www.hartquistfuneral.com.

(1231 F)

Dean DePauw

Dean Clayton Matthew DePauw, better known as "Opa" or "Deano", age 71, passed on Wednesday December 16, 2020, at his home in Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin. Born January 6, 1949, in Luverne, Minnesota, the ninth child of 13 children to Albert and Cora "Lorraine" (Irwin) DePauw.

Dean grew up on the mean gravel roads and farms fields of Luverne and Ash Creek. He was a proud graduate of Luverne High School, class of 1967. Known as the "Banty Rooster" he wrestled for the Cardinals. Always dedicated to his alma mater, he helped plan reunions. Luverne was a constant throughout his life, visits with his brother Delbert being a highlight.

Dean was a free spirited, small-town, southwestern Minnesota boy who loved music, family and the outdoors. His love for music started in his youth, he could be found at Valley Springs, Hatfield, MN or later in life at Buffett concerts. Dean struck out into the world and started working at a very young age in a local filling station in Luverne. His next venture led him to traveling the Upper Midwest with a local carnival, setting up the Ferris wheel along with his two youngest brothers.

Dean met his bride-to-be, Caryn Lee Arnold during the summer of '68' at Blue Mound State Park near Luverne. Soon after, Dean was assigned to Fort Sill Oklahoma as a PV1 where he began his service to his country serving in the U.S. Army from 1968 to 1971. Prior to being honorably discharged, he earned the rank of Army RA SIG SP5. Dean, was extremely proud of his service to his country as a radio operator where his role took them to Germany.

During his service Dean was awarded the National Defense Service Medal & Good Conduct Medal. One of his proudest military accomplishments was earning a medal for Expert Marksmanship on the M14 and SS M16 platforms. This skill followed him through his life and translated into his hunting endeavors. Dean was an excellent marksman!

Dean and his bride returned to the states landing in Huron, South Dakota, where he worked with his brother Daryl "Butch" DePauw at Zip Feed Mill. He was very proud to be on the construction team for the first grain elevator in Huron. In the fall of '71 they brought Tara, their first child, into the world. Soon after Tara was born, they moved to Minneapolis, Minnesota, where Dean began his training in the tech field, at The Control Data Institute. It was here where he met a colleague who became his lifelong friend, Loren Hiegelke.

From Minneapolis the family moved to Marshfield, Wisconsin, where they welcomed Chad, their son, into the family. It was there that Dean started his career as a Computer Technician at Raytheon. Dean's career took the family to stops in Marshall, Wisconsin, Jacksonville, Flor-



ida, and ultimately landing in Sun Prairie, Wisconsin, where they raised their family. Once established, Dean continued his growth and development in his career by obtaining his degree from Madison Business College in 1984. This launched his long and distinguished career in software sales.

Dean being a consummate family man took immense pride in his children. From coaching Little League baseball, classy lassy, flipping pancakes at Sacred Hearts, volunteering at the VFW, and grilling chicken at the Merrimac Conservation Club, you could always find Dean at the ready to lend a helping hand. Dean was known to be a self starter, innovator, and a pioneer always supporting the community, the church, his friends but most of all his family. He was a leader and organizer from family outings, golf trips or the infamous "Deer Hunter's Ball". Whether it was hunting, fishing, singing karaoke (Crystal Gail "Chandeliers"), screen printing, classic cars, camping, boating or sharing a beer or a cup of coffee.

He was a traveling man, his job took him on the road where he met many people and touched many lives; however, nothing would keep him away from family events. From Wolford, North Dakota, to Key West, Florida, to Europe to sing with a choir. No one could plan a trip or outing better than Dean. His dedication to taking back roads may cause you to miss that outing, but you would never complain, as you had the time of your life.

Dean loved his children and that pride only grew as Chad, Kari, Tara and Jeff started families of their own. His pride and joy were his five grandchildren. As a father and a grandfather, Dean always loved the holidays with his family, no matter the distance or time of year. Being the favorite brother to 12 siblings, a favorite uncle to over 100 nieces and nephews was not an easy feat. A firm but fair man, Dean was always quick to open his home to a family member in need.

"A pirate rounds 71, he leaves us all back here, but asks us all to raise a glass and not to shed a tear. When you think of him simply smile as he would rather you give a cheer. The windshield is large, the rear view mirror is small, so go on with your lives but don't forget to call. He is among the stars and with the giants, he will forever beckon us all. But

beware out there somewhere the "Opa Santo" will come to visit us all!" - DePauw & Swalve Family's - December 19th 2020 "But there is one particular harbor so far, but yet so near. When I see the days as they fade away and finally disappear." "One Particular Harbor" - Jimmy Buffett 1983

He is survived by his two children, Chad (Kari) DePauw of Darlington and Tara (Jeff) Swalve of Waunakee; five grandchildren, Hunter, Cade, and Taylor Swalve, and Addison and Piper DePauw, Caryn Olyver, mother of his children; brother Denny (Julia) DePauw of Jacksonville, Florida; sister Sheila (Steve) Kluever of Worthington, Minnesota; Burdette (Maxine) DePauw of McHenry Illinois; two sisters-in-law, Barb DePauw, Huron, South Dakota and Joyce DePauw, Sioux Falls, South Dakota. He loved and cherished them all.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Albert and Lorraine DePauw, and his nine siblings, Delores (Delmore) Kasemodel, Eileen Roemeling, Albert DePauw, Keith (Dorla) DePauw, Delbert DePauw, Dale (Reva) DePauw, Marlys (Don) Engel, Darrel 'Butch' DePauw, Carol (Charlie) Henderson and his sister-in-law Carol DePauw.

A Catholic Service will be held at 11:00 a.m. on Wednesday, January 6, 2021, at Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary Catholic Church, 229 Columbus St., Sun Prairie, Father Lawrence Oparaji presiding. A visitation will be held at 9:30 a.m. until the time of Mass at the church on Wednesday. Following the service, a presentation of the American flag and service of military taps will be performed at the VFW in Sun Prairie to honor Dean's military service. Dean will be laid to rest in his home town of Luverne, Minnesota, in the coming spring of 2021. To view Mass via livestream, please visit Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/shjmp/>

In lieu of flowers or gifts, and to honor Dean's life, the family has requested any gifts be made to the Dean DePauw Military Honor Fund: By clicking the GoFundMe Check - made out to Chad DePauw DDMHFmailto:ChadDePauw215 S. Century Ave #160 53597.

Tuschen-Newcomer Funeral & Cremation Sun Prairie 608-837-5400 www.newcomerfh.com (1231 paid verbatim with photo)

Star Herald remembers loved ones who died in 2020

November 2019

Nov. 5: Helen Krogmann, 89, Luverne.

December 2019

Dec. 14: David Jauert, 70, Duluth.

Dec. 20: Donald Schellhouse, 76, Sturgis, S.D.

Dec. 21: Dick Van Hofwegen, 91, Hardwick.

Dec. 23: Nona Walter, 92, Brandon, S.D.

Dec. 29: Bryan Boelman, 62, Sioux Falls, S.D.

Dec. 31: Betty Cashin, 90, Albert Lea.

January 2020

Jan. 1: Jean Deutsch, 91, Ellsworth; Darlene Hessel, 85, Luverne.

Jan. 5: Lucille Belau, 89, Pipestone.

Jan. 6: Marvin Kroontje, 77, Magnolia.

Jan. 7: Arlene Monahan, 82, Nisswa.

Jan. 8: Audrey Gabrielson, 94, Luverne.

Jan. 9: Jamie Mohr, 59, Sioux Falls, S.D.; John Schoep, 87, Luverne.

Jan. 14: Helen Krogmann, 89, Luverne.

Jan. 15: Dorlan Olson, 76, Flandreau, S.D.; Mary Miller, 99, Hills; Irene Bowman, 79, Dunedin, Fla.

Jan. 16: Elizabeth Pitlick, 85, New Brighton; Thomas Raker, 60, Sioux Falls, S.D.

Jan. 20: Allen Nelson, 90, Northfield.

Jan. 22: Peter Gronewold, 88, Luverne.

Jan. 24: Edward Woodley, 88, Luverne; Henrietta Boeve, 90, Hills.

Jan. 25: Alyce Nelson, 92, Delano; James Kitchenmaster, 82, Luverne.

Jan. 28: Arthur Benson, 89, Hills; Harry Stuckenbroker, 91, Pipestone; Nels Benson, 89, Hills; Robert Lynn, 88, Lismore.

Jan. 29: Marvin Hawes, 86, Luverne.

Jan. 31: Lisa Gustafson-Hoftiezer, 55, Luverne; Barbara Winter, 91, Rochester.

February

Feb. 1: Henrietta Elbers, 87, Hills.

Feb. 2: Nancy Hoffenkamp, 76, Adrian; La Vonne Klaassen, 88, Luverne; Lawrence Leger, 87, Adrian; Frederick Augustad, 87, Luverne; Esther Eyberg, 97, Burnsville.

Feb. 3: Cleo Kjenslee, 100, Mankato.

Feb. 9: William Butzer, 67, Luverne.

Feb. 13: Elden Reyelts, 90, Beaver Creek; Bernice Aukes, 93, Hills.

Feb. 14: David Groen, 58, Kenneth.

Feb. 15: Richard Smook, 78, Luverne.

Feb. 16: Wayne Panning,

83, Belle Plaine.

Feb. 22: Charlotte Korthals, 98, Hills.

Feb. 23: Cecilia Galagan, 95, Sioux Falls, S.D.

Feb. 24: Dick Visser, 94, Ellsworth.

Feb. 27: Donald Halverson, 63, Kenneth; Suzanne Ness, 53, Monroe, S.D.

Feb. 28: Ryan Tofteland, 40, Orono.

March

March 1: Larry Tweet, 76, Luverne.

March 2: Shirley Christianson, 89, Luverne.

March 3: Charles Kerr, 61, Pipestone; Harold Ralfs, 92, Canton, S.D.; Horton Staeffler, 93, Gladbrook, Iowa.

March 5: Gary Petersen, 72, North Mankato; Carol Sels, 80, Sioux Falls, S.D.

March 10: Ramona Weinkauf, 85, Jasper; Jackson Facile, 4 months, Luverne; Linda Jordan, 67, Luverne.

March 12: Albertus "Bert" Van Westen, 96, Luverne.

March 13: Esther Olson, 98, Luverne.

March 14: Landon Rogers, 20, Wilmont.

March 20: Mildred Moen, 96, Luverne.

March 21: Arnold Callsen, 81, Hardwick.

March 22: Else Moldenhauer, 95, Pipestone; Michael Bonnema, 63, Luverne.

March 25: Alice Severtson, 93, Hills; Ronald Niessink, 77, Luverne.

March 27: Marvin Kindt, 91, Jasper.

March 28: Gregg Nath, 61, Luverne.

April

April 6: Erling Severtson, 88, Kenneth; John Buysse, 75, Granite Falls.

April 7: Alberta Kremin, 76, Ash Creek.

April 8: LeRoy Thompson, 76, Sioux Falls, S.D.

April 9: Esther Fodness, 102, Tucson, Ariz.

April 10: Eva Lu Hemme, 98, Luverne.

April 13: Jason King, 55, Luverne.

April 15: Steve Nath, 68, Luverne.

April 16: Julie Klomparsen, 48, Luverne.

April 17: Maxine Brown, 91, Hills.

April 18: Sheila Knebel, 66, Valley Springs, S.D.; Rae Peterson Selvy, 88, Indian Orchard, Mass.; Katie Ryan Mann, 59, Brandon, S.D.; Shane St. Clair, 55, Dell Rapids, S.D.

April 19: Dennis Johnson, 75, Ocean Springs, Miss.

April 20: Warner Muns, 89, Sioux Falls, S.D.

April 21: Matthew Franken, 44, Luverne.

April 26: Roger Taylor, 60, Lakeville; Jack Beyer, 81, Phoe-

nix, Arizona.

April 28: Paul Buss, 85, Ash Creek.

April 29: Pamela Abell, 65, Luverne.

May

May 4: Randy Kafka, 71, Roseville.

May 5: Anna Tilstra, 92, Luverne.

May 7: Mona Bosch Rozeboom, 96, Rogers.

May 8: David Hansen, 76, Luverne.

May 9: Elmer Veldkamp, 93, Jasper.

May 10: Jon Jordahl, 78, Iowa Falls, Iowa.

May 11: Norma Schneekloth, 91, Luverne.

May 17: Deane Greer, 71, Luverne.

May 19: Ann Bond, 73, Steen; Kim Larson, 66, Owatonna.

May 20: Deanna O' Toole, 94, Luverne.

May 21: Larry Griffin, 71, Luverne.

May 22: Herald Marske, 94, Luverne.

May 23: Jeannette Vos, 95, Luverne; Joyce Wessels, 91, Luverne.

May 25: Barbara Vander Poel, 96, Luverne.

May 26: Joshua Winselman, 34, Adrian; Steven Nelson, 66, Hawarden, Iowa.

May 29: Marlene Madison, 80, Sioux Falls, S.D.

May 31: Delores Dressen, 98, Ellsworth; Annalene Van Iperen, 83, Pipestone.

June

June 4: Kimber Siebenahler, (stillborn), Luverne; Pauline Beyer, 94, Pine River.

June 6: Irene Van Berkel, 94, Edgerton.

June 7: Henry Petersen, 75, Hardwick.

June 8: Mary Alsleben, 95, Hutchinson.

June 12: Robert DeNoble, 75, Hills; LaDonna Connell, Phoenix, Ariz.

June 13: Joyce Holm, 89, Luverne; Logan Nelson, 22, Adrian.

June 14: Kelly Hadler, 48, Sioux Falls, S.D.; Robyn Hemme, 57, Luverne.

June 15: Taylor Kelly, 27, Luverne; Dorothy Blair, 96, New Richmond, Wis.

June 16: Pauline Martin, 85, Luverne.

June 19: Donald Dinger, 82, Britton, S.D.

June 21: Eldon Walker, 86, Luverne.

June 24: Mary Guhin, 71, Sioux Falls, S.D.

June 25: Phillip Duffy, 80, Luverne.

June 28: William Kannenberg, 89, Luverne.

July

Deaths, continue to page 8

DEATH NOTICES

Henry Van Der Weerd

Henry Van Der Weerd, 94, formerly of rural Rock Rapids, Iowa, died Sunday, Dec. 20, 2020, at Dougherty Hospice House in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

A funeral service was Monday, Dec. 28, at the Steen Reformed Church in Steen. Burial followed at Eastside Cemetery near Steen.

Arrangements were provided by Hartquist Funeral Home of Luverne, www.hartquistfuneral.com. (1231 DN)

Gary Vanden Berg

Gary A. Vanden Berg, 73, Luverne, died Friday, Dec. 25, 2020, at Avera McKennan Hospital in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

Due to concern for public health, a private family service will take place, with interment at Maplewood Cemetery in Luverne. A public celebration of Gary's life will be at a later date.

Arrangements are provided by Hartquist Funeral Home of Luverne, www.hartquistfuneral.com. (1231 DN)

WRAPPING PAPER & GIFT BAGS

belong in your TRASH CAN

NOT RECYCLABLE

Luverne Love the life! **Rock County LAND MANAGEMENT**

The City of Luverne & RC Land Management wishes you a Green Christmas

Deutsch/ continued from page 6

foundation so the transition to school board was fairly easy," she said. "Some of the teachers that I had were still teaching."

Another one of Deutsch's priorities as a board member has been making sure all students, especially those with special needs, receive a good public education.

She understands learning techniques changed in the 20 years since she left LHS, and she supported those changes as a board member.

"Classrooms in the '70s were traditionally the teachers lecturing and everyone was assigned a desk," Deutsch said.

"Today the teachers incorporate many different learning styles, optional seating is offered and the increase in the use of technology."

She also made sure her own education progressed in her new leadership role over her 20-year tenure by completing the annual trainings through the Minnesota School Board Association.

For her dedication, Deutsch was named a 2020 All-State School Board Member.

Her advice to incoming board members: "Be a good listener, make educated and informed decisions, ask if you have questions, and make sure that constituents are notifying all board members about issues/concerns."

Shelley Sandbulte finishes 10 years on the school board after deciding not to seek reelection this fall. Newcomers Jeff Stratton and David Wrigg were elected to the board unopposed.

Government payments enhance 2020 U.S. farm income

By Kent Thiesse,
Focus on Ag columnist

Based on the data in the latest 2020 Farm Income Forecast released by the USDA Economic Research Service (ERS) in early December, U.S. net farm income is expected to increase by \$36 billion or 43 percent above 2019 levels.

The 2020 net farm income is now estimated at \$119 billion, which would be the highest inflation-adjusted net farm income since 2013 and is 32 percent above the 20-year (2000-2019) average net farm income of \$90.6 billion. However, the 2020 net farm income is greatly inflated by the highest level of government farm program payments in decades.

In the recent farm income report, USDA estimated 2020 total U.S. net cash income for 2020 at \$134.1 billion, an increase of \$24.7 billion or 22.6 percent from a year earlier. Net cash income includes cash receipts from all farm-related income, including government payments, minus cash expenses for the year. Net farm income is accrual-based, which includes adjustments in the cash income for changes in inventories, depreciation and rental income. Generally, net farm income is a truer measure of overall profitability in the farm sector.

USDA 2020 Farm Income Report highlights:

•Overall, 2020 cash receipts for all commodities on U. S. farms are estimated at \$336.5 billion,

***** U.S. NET FARM INCOME (NFI) 2011-2020 *****

YEAR	Total NFI (Billion \$\$\$)	NFI from Net Crop & Livestock Receipts (Billion \$\$\$)	NFI from Government Farm Payments (Billion \$\$\$)	% NFI from Federal Program Payments
2020	\$119 B.	\$73 B.	\$46 B.	39%
2019	\$84 B.	\$62 B.	\$22 B.	26%
2018	\$81 B.	\$68 B.	\$13 B.	16%
2017	\$75 B.	\$64 B.	\$11 B.	15%
2016	\$62 B.	\$49 B.	\$13 B.	21%
2015	\$82 B.	\$71 B.	\$11 B.	13%
2014	\$92 B.	\$82 B.	\$10 B.	11%
2013	\$124 B.	\$113 B.	\$11 B.	9%
2012	\$96 B.	\$85 B.	\$11 B.	11%
2011	\$114 B.	\$104 B.	\$10 B.	9%

NOTE --- Data is based on USDA Economic Research Service (ERS) annual U.S. farm income estimates.

which is a decline of \$3.2 billion or 0.9 percent compared to 2019.

•Total 2020 crop receipts are expected to increase by \$3.3 billion or 3.3 percent over 2019 levels, primarily due to an estimated increase of \$2.6 billion in receipts for soybeans, as well as higher receipts from sugar beets, potatoes, fruit and nuts. Receipts from corn sales are expected to decline by \$2.5 billion, primarily due to reduced corn inventories following the 2019 crop year. Receipts from 2020 wheat and cotton production also declined from 2019 levels.

•Total cash receipts from livestock production in 2020 are expected to decline by \$9.7 billion or 5.5 percent, reflecting the market disruptions and price declines that resulted from the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020. As compared to a year earlier, 2020 receipts from cattle sales dropped by \$4 billion, hog sales declined by \$1.1 billion, and broiler sales fell by \$6.7 billion. Sales from turkey production and egg production increased in 2020.

•The biggest factor in the sharp increase in 2020 net farm income and net cash income levels was the major increase in the level of government payments to the farm sector during 2020. Direct government payments to farmers in 2020 was listed at \$46.5 billion in 2020, an increase of \$24 billion or 107 percent from 2019 levels. Ad hoc or one-time government program payments accounted for \$35.7 billion of the total payments to farmers.

•Total farm production expenses in 2020 are estimated at \$343.6 billion, which is a decline of \$5.2 billion or 1.5 percent from a year earlier. The 2020 total farm expenses are at the lowest level since 2011.

•Working capital, which measures the cash available after all farm expenses have been paid and all annual debt payments have been made, is expected to increase by 6 percent by the end of 2020.

•Even though net farm income is expected to increase in 2020, total U.S. farm debt is also expected to increase

by year-end. Total farm debt is projected to increase by 4 percent or about \$16.6 billion in 2020, raising the total U.S. farm debt to \$435.2 billion.

•The overall farm sector debt-to-asset ratio remains relatively low at 13.95 percent at the end of 2020; however, this is a small increase from 13.65 percent a year earlier. The debt-to-equity ratio increased to 16.2 percent in 2020, which is at the highest level since it was 17.6 percent in 2002; however, the 2020 ratio is still well below the record high ratio of 22.2 percent in 1985.

While the 2020 U.S. net farm income projections do show some dramatic improvement in 2020 as compared to the previous six years (2014-2019), a person does have to take a pause and "dig a little deeper" into the data behind that increase. The net farm income that resulted from crop and livestock sales was \$73 billion in 2020, which was the highest in recent years. The 2020 net farm income from crop and livestock receipts was comparable to 2015 income levels.

Bits/ from page 6

chant, C. C. Clemetson was actively engaged in business. A petition signed by residents in the vicinity of the new town asking for the establishment of a postoffice was granted, and before the year had closed an office was being operated in the store with Mr. Clemetson as postmaster.⁵

⁴At the time application was made for a postoffice at this point, in 1888, the name asked for by the petitioners was Virginia. This request the postmaster general would not grant because a postoffice previously established on the Iron Range in the northern part of the state bore that name. It was then decided to name the postoffice Steen. The station located by the Illinois Central, however, was designated as Virginia and was known as such for a number of years. The name of the station was then made to agree with that of the postoffice. The last mention of the town as Virginia in the local press was made in the summer of 1893. In July of that year reference was made to the town of Steen, and Virginia, Rock county, became an incident of history.

⁵Virginia, the new town in Clinton township, on the line of the Illinois Central, is getting to the front. It has two warehouses, a depot and a store." —Rock County Herald, September 14, 1888.

⁶Steen has been served by five postmasters since the office was established. Those who have succeeded Mr. Clemetson, in the order of their succession, are J. P. Steen, George J. Roan, C. H. Peterson and Chris Clemetson.

The story of the village of Steen will continue in the Jan. 7 edition of the Star Herald.

Donations to the Rock County Historical Society can be sent to the Rock County Historical Society, 312 E. Main Street, Luverne, MN 56156.

Mann welcomes correspondence sent to manmade@iuw.net.

Deaths of loved ones in 2020/continued from page 7

July 1: Lena Wiertzema, 95, Ellsworth.

July 6: Grant Bosch, 49, Hartford, S.D.

July 9: Augusta Ross, 96, Jasper.

July 10: John Metcalf, 72, Aurora, Colo.

July 11: Mary Slater, 88, Worthington.

July 13: Lorraine Van Nieuwenhuizen, 83, Luverne.

July 17: Fred Elbert, 86, Hills.

July 19: Curtis Adams, 69, Yankton, S.D.; Jeanne Van Malsen, 94, Hills.

July 22: Sandra Ben-nett, 69, Beaver Creek; Pearl Kephart, 91, Luverne.

July 26: Harland Strong, 71, Luverne.

July 27: Richard Leen-derts, 91, Hills.

July 31: Raymond Dorn, 93, Luverne.

August

Aug. 1: Joyce Fick, 73, Luverne.

Aug. 3: John Kroontje, 79, Kenneth.

Aug. 11: Nancy Vance, 73, Luverne.

Aug. 13: Gilbert Elbers, 89, Luverne.

Aug. 14: Ila Travis, 91, Perham; Bernard Clark, 90, Sioux Falls, S.D.; Robert Maher, 89, Las Vegas, Nev.

Aug. 15: Daryl Kruger, 82, Ellsworth.

Aug. 16: Michael Earl, 79, Clarks Grove.

Aug. 18: Shirley Nolte, 86, Ellsworth.

Aug. 19: Norbert Scheidt, 96, Adrian.

Aug. 22: Joan Goebel, 62, Magnolia.

Aug. 24: Mavis Jarchow, 85, Luverne.

Aug. 28: Veta Sandhurst, 65, Magnolia; Gertrude Benson, 93, Jasper; Patricia Dreesen, 67, Jasper.

September

Sept. 1: Mary Maroon, 73, Overland Park, Kan.

Sept. 3: Mary Buus, 97, Luverne; Ethel Ossefoort, 95, Luverne.

Sept. 4: Joel Smidstra, 58, Worthington.

Sept. 5: Dwight Lafrenz, 74, Luverne.

Sept. 9: Alyce McClure, 89, Alexandria; Doris Morland, 98, Clarkfield.

Sept. 11: Donald Loger, 86, Luverne; Dale Huber, 85, Harker Heights, Texas.

Sept. 17: Phyllis Bentson, 91, Luverne.

Sept. 22: Marguerite Smith, 98, Edgerton.

Sept. 23: Virgil Cook, 76, Adrian; Darrell Lorenzen, 70, Prescott Valley, Ariz.

Sept. 24: Jerome Wieneke, 81, Luverne.

Sept. 25: Anthony Miller, 66, Luverne; Pamela GoeskeKruse, 58, Everett, Wash.

Sept. 27: Jerry Benson, 72, Luverne.

Sept. 28: Priscilla Spykerboer, 91, Ellsworth; Jimmie Lafrenz, 82, Beaver Creek.

October

Oct. 2: Michelle McMurrey, 58, Hardwick; Marlene Bottorff, 85, Joplin, Mo.

Oct. 4: Dwight Ganges-tad, 72, Luverne.

Oct. 5: Judith Binford, 77, Hills.

Oct. 7: Henry VanWyhe, 96, Hills.

Oct. 8: Aleida Meyerhoff, 96, Hills.

Oct. 10: Dale Maranell, 71, Luverne; Dallas Marr, 77, Magnolia.

Oct. 11: Henrietta Haak, 85, Hills.

Oct. 13: Viola Uithoven, 87, Luverne.

Oct. 17: Harold Etrheim, 90, Hardiwick.

Oct. 19: Colleen Ostrem, 92, Luverne.

Oct. 20: Curtis Thorson, 56, Luverne.

Oct. 21: Gilbert Smed-srud, 98, Garretson, S.D.; Delores Hendrickson, 86, Luverne; Mary Ackerman, 94, Hills.

Oct. 22: Generose Bush,

90, Ellsworth.

Oct. 23: Jolene Hunt, 57, Yankton, S.D.; Bonnie Muller, 57, Luverne.

Oct. 24: June Webster, 92, Hills.

Oct. 25: Eugene Mann, 87, Luverne; Maverick Anderson, infant, Burnsville; Shannon Walgrave, 49, Beaver Creek; Herman Buys, 85, Hardwick.

Oct. 26: Michael Vance, 73, Luverne.

Oct. 29: Arlene Hoeck, 95, Hills; Donald Spease, 87, Luverne.

Oct. 30: Lena Marbus, 90, Hills.

November:

Nov. 2: Darrell Brown, 80, Hills; Jacquelyn Reverts, 90, Hills.

Nov. 3: Terrance Metzler, 65, Hills.

Nov. 7: Thomas Klein, 57, Luverne.

Nov. 15: Carl Holmgren, 71, Pipestone.

Nov. 16: Lois Tecken, 94, Steen; Darlene Blank, 87, Beaver Creek; James Mente, 88, Vinton, Iowa.

Nov. 17: Jolene Schneiderman, 46, Luverne.

Nov. 25: Darrell Heckt, 72, Centerville, Texas.

Nov. 26: Jim Van Santen, 67, Luverne.

Nov. 27: Marian Norell, 62, Darfur.

December

Dec. 2: Charles Feikema, 70, Luverne; Dorothy Kraay-enhof, 76, Luverne.

Dec. 8: Marcus Emery, 26, Luverne.

Dec. 11: Timothy "Don" Cashin, 91, Albert Lea; Pauline "Polly" Gorter, 61, Edgerton.

Dec. 12: Konrad Eidahl, 86, Luverne.

Dec. 13: Lilly Sammons, 87, Luverne.

Dec. 14: Marie Smeins, 87, Luverne.

Dec. 16: Carol Hender-son, 73, Worthington; Dean DePauw, 71, Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin.

Dec. 17: Mae Jean Oehlerts, 93, Canton, S.D.

Dec. 19: Beulah Floody, 97, Pipestone.

Dec. 20: Henry Van Der Weerd, 94, Rock Rapids, Iowa.

Dec. 25: Gary Vanden Berg, 73, Luverne.

Dec. 28: Lavonne Hansen, 97, Luverne.

(The above is the list of obituaries that were submitted for publication in the Star Herald in 2020.)

Happy New Year!

from all of us to you



From left, Renee Guy, realtor
605-359-7515
Sherri Thompson, realtor
507-227-6830
Gene Cragoe, broker/owner
507-920-3815
Emilie Boelman
administrative assistant



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HAPPY NEW YEAR!

HOLIDAY HOURS

Thursday, Dec 31
Closing at 4pm

Friday, Jan 1
Closed

Posting for 2020 will end at 3pm on December 31st.
All business after 3pm will be posted in 2021.



SECURITY SAVINGS BANK



Senior group leads the way for Luverne Cardinals hockey

Athletes share insights about upcoming season, each other

By Brennan Rupp

The Luverne boys' hockey team finished the 2019-2020 campaign with a 15-10 overall record. They defeated Marshall 4-3 in the opening round of the section tournament before losing to Hutchinson, the eventual section champions, 6-1.

The Cardinals figure to be in store for another solid season when the puck drops in 2021. Luverne will be led by four seniors, Cade Wenninger, Cooper Arends, Carlton Oftedahl and Shaïd Shearer.

With the four seniors leading the way, the Cardinals will look to build off the success they had last season.

Cade Wenninger

Wenninger has been playing hockey since he was three years old. He's been a member of the varsity squad since he was a freshman.

Last season as a junior, Wenninger finished second on the team with 11 goals. He finished the season with 17 points.

"Cade has such a great understanding of the game," Oftedahl said. "That understanding of the game allows him to be such a great playmaker."

Wenninger has been playing the game of hockey for 15 years. With all that experience there isn't a lot that can get Wenninger flummoxed on the ice.

"Cade's greatest strength would be his leadership," Shearer said. "He has good composure on and off the ice."

Last season the Cardinals upset the Marshall Tigers in the opening round of the section tournament. As Wenninger prepares for his senior season, he's looking forward to seeing how they can build off that success.

"I'm definitely excited to see how far we can make it this season," Wenninger said. "We want to win as many games as we can."



File photo

Cade Wenninger is one of four seniors for the Luverne hockey team. Wenninger and his fellow seniors will help guide the Cardinals through the 2021 hockey season.

Cooper Arends

Arends, like Wenninger, started skating when he was just three years old. He's been a member of the varsity squad since he was a freshman.

Arends finished last season with seven points (seven assists). Wenninger said that the senior defenseman has a great understanding of the game.

"He's a student of the game," Wenninger said. "His greatest strength is his knowledge of the game."

Shearer echoed that Cooper's greatest strength is his hockey IQ.

"He has such great hockey sense," Shearer said. "He can read where people are going and he makes hard plays look easy."

Carlton Oftedahl

Oftedahl finished last season with three assists. He's been playing on the varsity squad for the Cardinals since he was a sophomore.

Wenninger said that Oftedahl may have the strongest slap shot on the team.

"His greatest strength is his slap shot," Wenninger said.

A defenseman has to be willing to throw his body around. Shearer said that Oftedahl is not shy about using his strength to knock opponents off the puck.

"He's so strong," Shearer said. "He is a great defenseman. He uses his body to get people off the puck."

If the Cardinals are going to attain the goals they've set for themselves this season, they'll have to play together as a cohesive

unit.

"We need to be more consistent during games," Oftedahl said. "We need to work together as a unit."

Shaïd Shearer

Shearer has been playing hockey for 12 years and has been playing goalie for eight years.

Last season Shearer finished with a record of 7-6. He recorded 307 saves and had a save percentage of .914.

"He is so good between the pipes," Oftedahl said. "He makes some unreal saves."

Arends said that one of Shearer's greatest strengths is his work ethic and attitude.

"He always puts in a full effort," Arends said. "He's such a positive person and a great leader for us."

Star Herald highlights top sports stories of 2020

By Brennan Rupp

The year 2020 will likely have its own history textbook when it's taught in school.

It was a year that started just like any other, then the COVID-19 virus hit in March and everything changed.

The pandemic hit the sports world in the United States on March 11 when the NBA shut down operations.

It then impacted the Minnesota prep sports scene when winter sports shut down right before some of the state tournaments were expected to start.

There were no spring sports in the state of Minnesota, forcing many prep athletes to miss an entire sports season.

Before those shutdowns, there were memorable moments in Rock County.

State tournament appearance

The Luverne girls' hockey team capped off a memorable season by punching their ticket to the state tournament.

The Cardinals lost in the opening round of the state tournament but still finished the season with a 20-4 record.

Pair of gymnasts appear at state tournament

Luverne's Amira Cowell and Ella Reisdorfer became the first LHS gymnasts to make a state tournament appearance since 2004.

Cowell earned her trip to the state meet by recording a score of 8.95 on the vault. She placed 38th at the state meet with a score of 8.9375.

Reisdorfer advanced to state by recording a score of 8.1 on the bars. She placed 39th at the state meet with a score of 7.8375.

Perfect H-BC football season

If it weren't for COVID-19, the Hills-Beaver Creek Patriots would have possibly been celebrating a nine-man state championship.

The Patriots cruised to a perfect 7-0 season that was capped off by a section championship victory over Mountain Lake Area.

The Associated Press recognized the Patriots as the top team in nine-man in

their final poll of the season.

H-BC dominated each team they faced this season. In seven games the Patriots outscored their foes 338-35.

Rex Metzger, the H-BC head coach, was named Coach of the Year by the Minnesota Vikings. Senior Gavin Wysong was named to the Minnesota Vikings All-State team.

Section champions

If it weren't for the COVID-19 pandemic, the girls' cross country team for Luverne would have competed in the state meet.

The Cardinals were one of the most dominant teams in Section 3A all season.

Luverne put an exclamation mark on a strong season by winning the section meet. The Cardinals had three runners finish inside the Top 10.

Tenley Nelson placed fifth at the section meet. Jenna DeBates finished sixth and Brooklynn Ver Steeg finished eighth, giving the Cardinals three runners inside the Top 10.

Comeback for the ages

The Luverne Cardinals football team enjoyed a successful 6-1 season that ended with a section championship.

The most memorable victory in the 2020 season was a 34-28 overtime victory over Redwood Valley.

Luverne and Redwood Valley both entered the Nov. 6 matchup with identical 3-1 records.

Redwood Valley jumped on Luverne early and looked to be the superior team. The visiting Cardinals led Luverne at halftime 21-6.

Luverne outscored Redwood Valley 28-7 in the second half and overtime period to pick up the 34-28 comeback victory.

Title game appearance

For the first time in 40 years, the Luverne girls' basketball team reached the subsection championship.

The title game against Windom ended with the Eagles breaking Luverne's heart by hitting a buzzer-beater to defeat the Cardinals 54-52.

The Cardinals return a strong group of players from last year's No. 1 seed team and could be in store for another long postseason run in 2021.

Spearing engages sportsmen of all kinds, including a North Dakota woman

I am not a big Facebook follower, but I was checking out a post I made on our chapter's local Nobles County Pheasants Forever Facebook site. As I was scrolling across the past few days on my regular feed, I saw a re-post from one of my longtime friends, Bob St Pierre, who is a Pheasants Forever national employee. He reposted a picture of a young gal who had taken up decoy carving.

There are those who carve ducks and songbirds and tons of other wildlife, but this was a gal who had recently taken up carving decoys used for ice spear fishing, primarily for northern pike. Spearing was a winter activity I took up about 10-11 years ago to pass those frigid winter days after the pheasant seasons had closed in the majority of the states in the Midwest.

The gal's name is Melissa Shockman. I wondered how this sport, like many other outdoor hunting activities that are normally dominated by men, had found Melissa and created a path to this unique craft. She lives in LaMoure, North Dakota.

I had a great call with Melissa, and she shared the history of her career in the Natural Resources arena. She graduated from Fargo, North Dakota, with a degree in wildlife and natural resources in 2014 and went on to work as a biologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This is like the Department of Natural Resources or Game Fish and Parks each state has, but on a national level.

She then transferred her talents



THE OUTDOORS

By Scott Rall
Outdoors columnist

to work as a Precision Ag and Conservation Specialist for Pheasants Forever and took a job in southeast North Dakota. This is where I made my Pheasants Forever connection to Melissa. This lady has been a member of a wildlands firefighting crew and as a result garnered an interest in the management of grasslands and pastures using fire as a management tool. In November of 2020 she returned as a contributing member of the family farm and began her own sheep operation.

She hunted and fished as a young gal, but it was when she took an opportunity to participate in a Becoming an Outdoor Woman event that she was able to go spear-fishing for the very first time. It was the exhilaration of seeing that big northern pike come sliding into view under the ice and only a few feet away that set the hook past the barb

on this challenging outdoor experience.

She was introduced to spearing decoys and decoy carving when she came to understand at this women's only event that many of the decoys used by others were actually hand-carved and painted individually. The curiosity and wonder of how something so beautiful could actually be created and used successfully began her immersion into decoy carving.

She was the lucky recipient of an 80-hour apprenticeship with a pair of well-known decoy carvers, Rick and Connie Whittier of Lidgerwood, North Dakota. During that apprenticeship she created 20 decoys, putting her at a total of 34 completed specimens over the past four years. She shared with me that those produced later were far better than the four she had attempted before she had some help and instruction.

Each decoy needs to swim in a tank and then in a lake in order to make sure they are weighted just right and swim in a natural motion. She made her first Facebook notification that she was in the decoy business and that she had some for sale that in almost no time she had orders that exceeded her inventory.

When you think about how you got started hunting and fishing, there is almost always someone who played a pivotal role in the introduction. Melissa has done just about as many male-dominated jobs as any males I know, and it is very cool to see women like her not only getting involved, but thriving in those types of occupations.

There is a very pressing need to involve more women, youth and non-traditional participants in the hunting and fishing world. The majority of these today are women.

Melissa Shockman (pictured, right) is a prime example of how gals cannot only participate but thrive in the great outdoors. If you are interested in looking at her decoys, I am now the proud owner of two. Check her out on Facebook. Her profile picture shows her with her dog and a sharp-tail grouse they harvested together. Melissa Shockman should be the model other gals use to get outside. I know she impresses me.

Scott Rall, Worthington, is a



habitat conservationist, avid hunting and fishing enthusiast and is president of Nobles County Pheasants Forever. He can be reached at scottarall@gmail.com or on Twitter @habitat_champion.

Star Herald CHURCH

Page 10 December 31, 2020

The Star Herald reached out to churches for their worship information in the absence of in-person worship services, due to coronavirus social distancing. Those that responded are listed here. Those that would like to have information posted here should call the Star Herald or email editor@star-herald.com.

St. Catherine Catholic Church
203 E. Brown St., Luverne
St. Catherine Ph. 283-8502; www.stscl.org
Monsignor Gerald Kosse, Pastor

Public mass will be celebrated with a limit of 50 percent capacity of the church. Masses: 9 a.m. Wednesday, 10 a.m. Friday and 8:30 a.m. Sunday. No mass, communion service or rosary at care centers at this time. 5 p.m. Saturdays and 8:30 a.m. mass will be live streamed on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/pg/stscluverne/videos/>. Visit www.stscl.org for more information.

Luverne Christian Reformed Church
605 N. Estey St., Luverne
Office Ph. 283-8482; Prayer Line Ph. 449-5982
www.luvernecrc.com — office@luvernecrc.com
Roger Sparks, Pastor

We are streaming Sunday services live on Roger Sparks' Facebook page at 9:30 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. Send him a friend request if you're not connected. You may also visit our website for delayed broadcasts. Also our services are on local cable TV at 5:30 p.m. on Wednesdays and at 6:30 p.m. on Thursdays. In all circumstances, may we joyfully declare: "Our help is in the name of the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth." Psalm 124:8.

First Baptist Church
1033 N. Jackson St., P.O. Box 975, Luverne
Ph. 283-4091; email: fbcluv@iw.net — www.fbcluverne.org
Walt Moser, Pastor

Sundays, 10:30 a.m. In-person worship service. Service is also on Facebook Live at 10:30 a.m.

Grace Lutheran Church
500 N. Kniss Ave., Luverne
Ph. 507-283-4431; www.graceluverne.org — graceluverne@iw.net
Ann Zastrow, Pastor

Thursday, Dec. 31: No activities. Friday, Jan. 1: Office is closed. Saturday, Jan. 2: 5:30 p.m. Worship service with Communion. In-person worship service in Sanctuary. Sunday, Jan. 3: 9 a.m. Worship service with Communion. 9:15-9:45 a.m. Drive-thru Communion. NO Sunday school. 10:30 a.m. Adult Bible Study via Zoom. Tuesday, Jan. 5: No activities. Wednesday, Jan. 6: 7 a.m. Men's Bible Study. 7-7:45 p.m. Confirmation for 6th-8th grade. Online, TV and Radio Worship options are still available. Online Sundays 9 a.m. on the church website www.graceluverne.org, click Worship tab or go directly to our Facebook page at Grace Lutheran ELCA, Luverne. TV: Vast Channel 3 will air our worship service Mondays at 4:30 p.m. and Fridays at 10 a.m. — NEW TIME! Radio: KQAD-AM Radio will air our worship service on Sundays at 8:15 p.m.

Bethany Lutheran Church
720 N. Kniss Ave., Luverne
Ph. 507-283-4571 or 507-449-0291 or 605-215-9834
pastorapalmquist67@yahoo.com
Andrew Palmquist, Pastor

Sunday, 10:15 a.m. Worship service; worship online as well. Monday, 6:30 p.m. Zoom Bible study. See our Facebook page, Bethany Lutheran Church (Luverne). Also visit els.org with our sister churches for online worship opportunities.

American Reformed Church
304 N. Fairview Dr., Luverne
Ph. 283-8600; email: office@arcluverne.org
Mike Altena, Pastor

Sundays, 9:30 a.m. indoor service. Worship services are also broadcast on Vast Channel 3 on Mondays at 6 p.m. and Wednesdays at 4 p.m. DVD's available upon request. To stay up to date on announcements, follow us on Facebook and Instagram @arcluverne.

First Assembly of God Church
1075 110th Ave., 2 miles west of Luverne on County Rd. 4

United Methodist Church
109 N. Freeman Ave., Luverne
Ph. 283-4529; email: luverneumc@iw.net

Thursday, Dec. 31: 1-3 p.m. Food Shelf curbside. Friday, Jan. 1: Happy New Year! Office will be closed. Saturday, Jan. 2: 8 p.m. AA meeting. Sunday Jan. 3: 9:30 a.m. Adult Sunday school. 10:30 a.m. Worship service — SD In-house worship service — Services held on radio and live on Facebook. YouTube will also have services posted. 4:30 p.m. Genesis to Revelation Bible Study with safe distancing. Monday, Dec. Jan. 4: 8 p.m. AA meeting. Wednesday, Jan. 6: 8 p.m. AA Meeting. Thursday, Jan. 7: 1-3 p.m. Food Shelf curbside.

First Presbyterian Church
302 Central Lane, Luverne
Ph. 283-4787; email: Firstpc@iw.net — www.fpcluverne.com
Jason Cunningham, Pastor

Worship services in-person and through Facebook Live Sunday 10:15 a.m.* Our Facebook page can be found under First Presbyterian Church of Luverne. We are also on the local Luverne cable station at 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. on Tuesdays and 10 a.m. on Thursdays.

St. John Lutheran Church
803 N. Cedar St., Luverne
Ph. 283-2316; email: stjohn@iw.net
www.stjohnlutheranluverne.org
Rev. Dr. Phil Booe, Pastor

Worship services Saturday 5:30 p.m. and Sunday 9 a.m. Limit is 75 people. Services will be available on the Vast channel 3 Sunday and online at the city website, cityofluverne.org.

Living Rock Church
500 E. Main St., Luverne
Ph. 449-0057; www.livingrockswmn.org
Billy Skaggs, Pastor
New Life Celebration Church
110 N. Oakley, Luverne
Ph. 449-6522; email: newlifecelebration@gmail.com

Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church
305 E. 2nd St., P.O. Box 36, Hardwick
Ph. (507) 669-2855; zionoffice@alliancecom.net
Jesse Baker, Pastor

Ben Clare United Methodist Church
26762 Ben Clare Ave., Valley Springs, S.D.
igtwb@WOW.net
Bill Bates, Pastor

First Lutheran Church
300 Maple St., Valley Springs, S.D.
Ph. (605) 757-6662
Laura Phillips, Pastor
Video worship via YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LHdQwVxFcU4>

Palisade Lutheran Church
211 121st St., Garretson, S.D.
Ph. (507) 597-6257 — firstpalisade@alliancecom.net
Laura Phillips, Pastor
Video worship via YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LHdQwVxFcU4>

First Presbyterian Church
201 S. 3rd St., P.O. Box 73, Beaver Creek
Ph. 507-935-5025
email: lorig.firspres@gmail.com
Thursday 10 a.m. worship service on VAST and Mediacom. 7 p.m. Sunday 10:15 a.m. worship service viewed live on First Presbyterian Church Facebook page. Tuesday 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. worship service on VAST and Mediacom.

Magnolia United Methodist Church
501 E. Luverne St., Magnolia
Ph. 605-215-3429
email: magnoliannumc@gmail.com
Nancy Manning, Pastor

Sunday, 9 a.m., in-person with livestream available on the church's Facebook site.

Steen Reformed Church
112 W. Church Ave., Steen
Ph. 855-2336
Jeremy Wiersema, Pastor

Sunday, 9:30 a.m. and 6 p.m. Worship service in-person with livestream available on Facebook and YouTube. Radio worship on KQAD Sundays at 9:30 a.m.

Bethlehem Lutheran Church
112 N. Main St., Hills
Ph. 962-3270

Sunday, Jan. 3: 10 a.m. Worship service at Bethlehem. No Sunday school. Worship will be streamed live to Facebook at Bethlehem of Hills. You can find more info on our website bchills.org.

Hills United Reformed Church
410 S. Central Ave., Hills
Office Ph. 962-3254
hillsurc@alliancecom.net
Alan Camarigg, Pastor

Light at the end of the tunnel

In 2015, while riding our bicycles across America, Beryl and I entered the Paw Paw tunnel on the C & O Towpath trail. We knew the tunnel was almost 3/4 of a mile long, and it was adjacent to the boat channel used to bring supplies from Washington, D.C., to Pennsylvania in the 1800s. The towpath was the path the mules walked on to pull the barges upriver.

As we entered the tunnel, we could not see the opposite end because of a curve in the tunnel's course. The farther we went in, the darker it got. But then there was a small light at what we assumed was the exit. The path was just wide enough for our bicycles so there was a sense of relief in seeing the light at the end of the tunnel.

Go back in world history four thousand years. People faced many of the same issues we face today. There was fighting between different groups of people. Certain ethnic groups believed they were superior to other races. Religious people believed they were better than other religious people. Everyone was looking for some light at the end of the tunnel of life. Birth, marry, work, paying taxes and die was what life consisted of. There had to be light at the end of the tunnel.

Jesus' birth is the light at the end of the tunnel. For people four thousand years ago, they were looking forward to Jesus' birth. It was the ray of hope that at times seemed microscopically dim, but Jesus did come to bring light into a darkened world.

The Apostle John said, "The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. ... But to all who did receive him, who believed in his

BUILT ON A ROCK

By Pastor Walt Moser
First Baptist Church,
Luverne

2020 will go down in the history books as a horrible year. But remember our hope is not on what a year has or does not have but on the light at the end of the tunnel, Jesus Christ.

name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God." John 1:9,12-13

2020 will go down in the history books as a horrible year. But remember our hope is not on what a year has or does not have but on the light at the end of the tunnel, Jesus Christ. Jesus has not changed; his care for you has not changed. His offer of abundant life has not changed.

There is light at the end of the tunnel regardless how dark it feels right now. Jesus is the light.

These weekly church page messages are contributed to God's Work through the Church and by these concerned and responsible citizens & businesses:

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City of Luverne property tax abatement hearing set for Jan. 12

CITY OF LUVERNE, MINNESOTA
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

REGARDING PROPOSED PROPERTY TAX ABATEMENTS

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the City Council of the City of Luverne, Minnesota, will hold a public hearing at a regular meeting of the City Council beginning at 5:00 p.m., on Tuesday, January 12, 2021, to be held at City Hall Council Chambers, 305 E. Luverne St. in Luverne, Minnesota, on the proposal that the City abate property taxes levied by the City on the property identified as tax parcel numbers:

PARCEL ID NUMBER

20-0021-000	20-1390-000	20-1862-100	20-1953-000	20-1984-000	20-2092-000	20-2125-000
20-0021-001	20-1391-000	20-1864-000	20-1954-000	20-1985-000	20-2093-000	20-2126-000
20-0021-002	20-1392-000	20-1869-300	20-1956-000	20-1986-000	20-2094-000	20-2127-000
20-0021-004	20-1393-000	20-1915-000	20-1957-000	20-1987-000	20-2095-000	20-2268-000
20-0021-005	20-1394-000	20-1916-000	20-1958-000	20-1992-000	20-2096-000	20-2269-000
20-0021-007	20-1395-000	20-1917-000	20-1959-000	20-1993-000	20-2097-000	20-2283-000
20-0021-008	20-1396-000	20-1918-000	20-1960-000	20-1994-000	20-2104-000	20-2284-000
20-0021-009	20-1397-000	20-1920-000	20-1961-000	20-1995-000	20-2105-000	20-2285-000
20-0021-010	20-1398-000	20-1924-000	20-1962-000	20-1996-000	20-2106-000	20-2287-000
20-0030-000	20-1399-000	20-1926-000	20-1964-000	20-1997-000	20-2107-000	20-2289-000
20-0031-000	20-1400-000	20-1927-000	20-1965-000	20-2065-000	20-2108-000	20-2289-100
20-1116-000	20-1404-000	20-1928-000	20-1966-000	20-2066-000	20-2109-000	20-2290-000
20-1137-000	20-1406-000	20-1929-000	20-1967-000	20-2067-000	20-2110-000	20-2290-100
20-1138-000	20-1406-100	20-1930-000	20-1968-000	20-2068-000	20-2111-000	20-2291-000
20-1139-000	20-1407-000	20-1931-000	20-1969-000	20-2069-000	20-2112-000	20-2291-100
20-1190-000	20-1409-100	20-1932-000	20-1970-000	20-2070-000	20-2113-000	20-2292-100
20-1373-000	20-1409-200	20-1933-000	20-1971-000	20-2071-000	20-2114-000	20-2293-000
20-1376-000	20-1409-300	20-1934-000	20-1975-000	20-2073-000	20-2117-000	20-2293-100
20-1378-000	20-1855-000	20-1936-000	20-1976-000	20-2078-000	20-2118-000	20-2294-000
20-1379-000	20-1856-000	20-1946-000	20-1977-000	20-2079-000	20-2119-000	20-2294-100
20-1380-000	20-1857-000	20-1947-000	20-1978-000	20-2086-000	20-2120-000	20-2295-000
20-1385-000	20-1858-000	20-1948-000	20-1979-000	20-2087-000	20-2121-000	20-2295-100
20-1386-000	20-1859-000	20-1949-000	20-1980-000	20-2088-000	20-2122-000	20-2296-000
20-1388-000	20-1860-000	20-1950-000	20-1982-000	20-2089-000	20-2123-000	20-2296-100
20-1389-000	20-1862-000	20-1951-000	20-1983-000	20-2091-000	20-2124-000	20-2298-000

The total amount of the taxes proposed to be abated by the City on the property identified above for up to a 20-year period is estimated to be not more than \$5,900,000. The City Council will consider the property tax abatement to assist with financing improvements and expansion of the City fitness center and pool.

All interested persons may appear at the January 12, 2021 public hearing and present their views orally or in writing.

(12-31)

Notice of public hearing for conditional use permit

Notice of Public Hearing for Conditional Use Permit
For Schwartz Farms, LLC

Pursuant to the Rock County Zoning Ordinance, notice is hereby given by the Rock County Planning and Zoning Commission that a public hearing will be held at the Rock County Law Enforcement Center located at 1000 North Blue Mound Avenue, Luverne, Minnesota at 7:00 p.m., Monday, January 11th. The purpose of this hearing is to rule on the application for Conditional Use Permit for the following:

Applicant & Property Owner:	Schwartz Farms, LLC
Location:	SE 1/4 of the NE 1/4 of Section 31 of Luverne Township, T102N, R45W, Rock County, Minnesota
Conditional Use:	Expansion and operation of an existing feedlot to more than 1000 Animal Units
Zoning District:	A-2, General Agriculture

The conditional use permit is for the expansion of an existing feedlot on the property described above. The existing feedlot consists of a total confinement barn housing 3300 head of finishing swine. The total capacity of the existing feedlot is 990 animal units.

The proposed expansion shall consist of increasing the number of head of finishing swine within the existing barn by 330 head, which will increase the total capacity by 99 animal units.

After the expansion, the site will house 3630 head of finishing swine. Manure from the total confinement barn is stored in a poured reinforced concrete pit under the floors of each of these barns. Total animal units after the expansion will be 1089 animal units.

To help mitigate the risk to public health by following the recommendations from the Department of Health and Human Services, along with Governor Walz' statewide response to the COVID-19 outbreak, the total number of attendees present at the meeting will be limited in order to meet the Governor's requirements of 10 or less. Masks will be required in the meeting room.

If you wish to offer comments relative to the public hearings being held and do not need to be present, we ask you to submit that those comments by 4:00 p.m. on Monday, January 11. Comments can be submitted in writing to the Rock County Land Management Office, located at 311 West Gabrielson Road, Suite 4, Luverne, Minnesota, or submitted by e-mail to: eric.hartman@co.rock.mn.us

If you wish to actively participate in the public hearing process itself from an off-site location, we are providing live access to the meeting through a teleconferencing service. To access the meeting, dial the following phone number: (425)436-6320 Then when prompted, enter the access code number: 108575

Dated: December 31, 2020

By Order of the Rock County Planning and Zoning Commission
Eric Hartman, Zoning Administrator
311 W. Gabrielson Road
Luverne, MN 56156
507-283-8862

(12-31, 01-07)

CARDS OF THANKS

The family of Marie Smeins would like to thank everyone for your love, support, phone calls, gifts, food, cards of sympathy and prayers during the illness and passing of our mother, grandmother and great-grandmother. Thank you to the Sioux Falls Sanford Hospice Foundation Cottage and Ava's House. Also thank you to Dingmann Funeral Home in Luverne for their support and professionalism.

Family of Marie Smeins
(12.31-1.2)

Thank you to all who have offered words of sympathy and for every gesture of caring during this difficult time as we've dealt with the loss of Marcus. A special thank you to the Midwest Fire family, members of the National Guard, to Jeff Hartquist, and to the Class of 2012. We are so touched and eternally grateful for everyone's kindness and support.

From,

The family of Marcus Emery
(12.31-1.2)

Thank you for all the kind greetings that made our recent 50th wedding anniversary so memorable and special.

Gail and Anita Johnson
(12.31-1.2)

EMPLOYMENT

New Prairie Insulation of Beaver Creek has full time insulation installer positions available. Monday-Friday; Health insurance, vacation pay, holiday pay, retirement plan, bonus, opportunities; will train. Call 605-376-3006. (tc)

HELP WANTED: Looking for a fun and rewarding job? Palisades State Park and Big Sioux Recreation Area are accepting applications for summer seasonal positions and Internships. Several positions available, salaries start at \$10.17/hr, and 40 hour work week (part-time could be considered). For job information and application please visit <https://bhr.sd.gov/job-seekers/seasonal/>. Applicants must be age 17 by date of hire. Interviews will begin in March, so get your application in quickly as possible. For questions, email palisadespark@state.sd.us or call 605-594-3824. EOE (12.19-1.14)

Ellsworth Public School is accepting applications for a Paraprofessional. Applications can be found online at <https://www.ellsworth.mntm.org/district/district-vacancies.cfm> or by calling the school office at 507-967-2242. (12.19-1.7)

EMPLOYMENT

First Presbyterian Church is hiring an Administrative Assistant/Financial Secretary. This role provides administrative support to the Pastor, maintains Church management software, processes accounts payable, and welcomes guests. The ideal candidate will have a strong Christian faith, exhibit high standards, have excellent communication skills, initiative, and the ability to prioritize daily tasks. **Qualifications:** •Computer proficiency, experience with MS Office, and an aptitude to learn the Church Management Software •Accounting/Financial experience with Accounts Payable, Payroll, Financial Statements, and overseeing the church's investments •A warm, welcoming personality for answering phone calls and greeting visitors who come to the church office Full job description is available upon request. Please submit Cover Letter and Resume to Pastor Jason at pastorjasonc2@yahoo.com to apply. (12.19-1.7)

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For Rent in Luverne: Two-bedroom apartment with central air, on-site laundry, includes water, heat and one-stall garage. No smoking and no pets. 507-920-0406. (12.12-12.31)

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Happy New Year!

City of Luverne Departments will close at Noon on Thursday, December 31 and will be closed on Friday, January 1.

Friday's Recycling Route (South of Dodge) will be picked up on Monday, January 4.



Year in review of 2020/continued from page 5

were yet to be finished, make-shift classrooms were constructed in the high school gym.

By the end of September all the rooms were ready. Construction was again helped due to only half the students attending in-person classes, as workers were able to complete some punch-list items during the school day.

Workers have since turned to constructing the new middle-high school commons and performing arts center.

The entire \$30 million project is expected to be finished in August 2021.

News to watch in 2021

Several other promising stories are brewing for Rock County in the near future.

- The \$16 million Minne-

sota National Guard Luverne Readiness Center will break ground next spring on 15 acres west of Papik Motors along I-90.

The new 47,902-square-foot facility is expected to be operational in December of 2022.

- Ellis and Eastern will begin a \$14 million improvement to the 41-mile local railway in 2021.

Work on the short line rail between Worthington and Manley will provide another avenue for moving products in and out of Rock County.

- The city of Luverne this fall approved a \$5 million improvement and expansion of the pool and fitness center. Plans include an outdoor

splash pad, 24-hour fitness access, flat space for group exercise, remodeled locker rooms and more.

Bid letting will be in January and construction will start in the spring.

Sportswriter retires from 35 years at Star Herald

And finally, on an "inside the Star Herald" note, longtime sports writer John Rittenhouse left the paper this spring, timing his departure with the pandemic shutdown of school sports.

He came to Luverne from Breckenridge, fresh out of college and dedicated his 35-year career to following high school sports in and around Rock County.

He said he and his wife, Astrid, had discussed the possibility of his retirement after their daughter Melanie graduated from high school in May of 2020.

The pandemic, as it turns out, put his retirement just ahead of graduation, and Rittenhouse bid farewell after his final edition on March 19.

Indeed, there were few high school sports to follow after March, and Brennen Rupp joined the Star Herald in September to resume coverage of the pandemic-altered sports scene.




Rittenhouse


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A note from Mayor Patrick T. Baustian *We're All in This Together*



As we celebrate the joy of Christmas may we look forward to the New Year with more hope and faith that 2021 will bring an end to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some COVID-19 vaccine has already arrived in Luverne and has been administered amongst essential health care workers. This is just another step in the right direction to beating the pandemic. Over the next couple of months we expect additional vaccine to arrive and widespread vaccination will be underway as soon as that happens. That said, continued precautions need to stay in place to slow and ultimately end the spread of COVID-19. Until then, please mask up, social distance and order some take out from our fine restaurants, bars and coffee shops.

Happy New Year

Metrics show signs of hope in Minnesota

From MPR News - Minnesota officials on Monday, December 21, reported another 22 COVID-19 deaths, continuing an already dreadful December. But other key metrics are showing definite signs of hope.

New daily caseloads and hospital admissions continue to retreat from their late November, early December peaks.

The Health Department posted 1,998 newly confirmed or probable COVID-19 cases — the lowest count since late October, part of more than a week of relatively moderate new caseloads. Officials expected a surge originating from Thanksgiving gatherings, but it hasn't happened yet.

The number of active, confirmed cases in Minnesota is down to around 21,000, the lowest since Nov. 4.

Vaccine arrives at Sanford Luverne

Excerpts from 12/24 Star Herald - The first of Rock County's COVID-19 vaccine arrived at Sanford Luverne last week, marking a pivotal moment in the community's response to the pandemic.

For many of them, the experience was emotional and celebratory. So far, more than 90 Sanford Luverne personnel received the vaccine since it arrived Dec. 18 and another 75 to 80 will be immunized between now and Dec. 30.



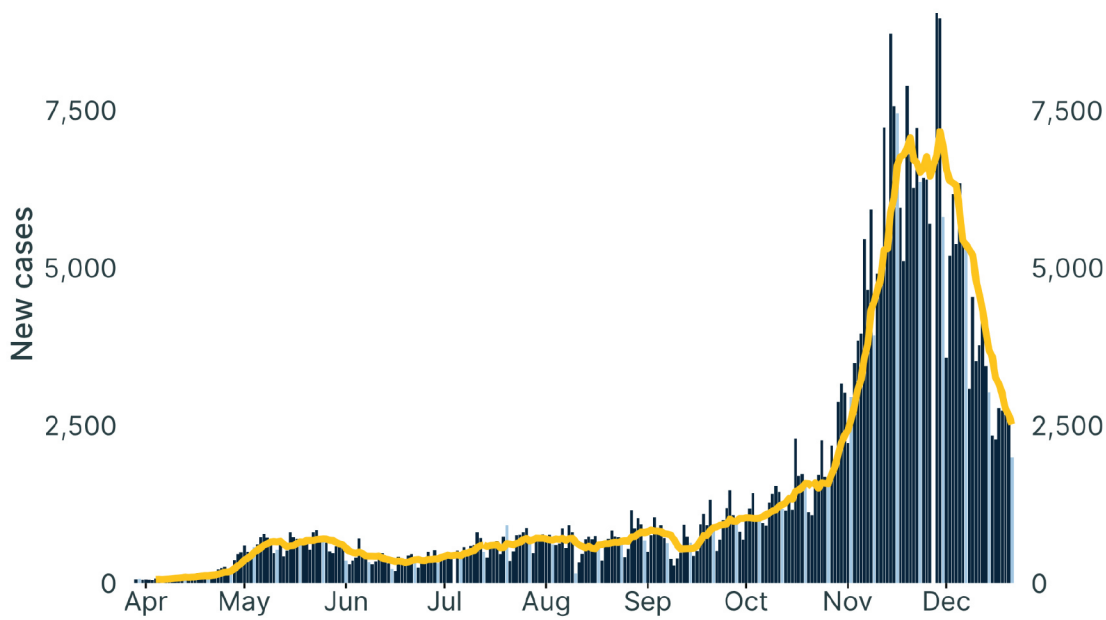
Dr. Austin Spronk getting the vaccine from nurse Danielle LaFleur.

"This is a big day for us, and a milestone moment in the fight against COVID-19," said Tammy Loosbrock, senior director at Sanford Luverne and Sanford Health Rock Rapids.

"We recognize this is only the beginning of a long process to vaccinate our community, but having a safe and effective vaccine is a huge step in the right direction to help bring the pandemic under control."

New COVID-19 cases in MN by date reported

Based solely on cases confirmed by the MN Department of Health. Line represents 7-day rolling average. Light blue bars are Mondays.



Source: Minnesota Department of Health. Graphic by David H. Montgomery | MPR News

MPRnews

Data as of December 21, 2020

STAY SAFE MN



I am confident that Luverne Area Residents, working together, will emerge from this pandemic much stronger as a community.

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Sincerely,

Patrick T. Baustian
Mayor Patrick T. Baustian

