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JANUARY 22, 2025

Volume 22 • Issue 1

## Merchants Bank Announces Closure of Hampton, MN Branch

Winona, Minn. – Merchants Bank has announced the permanent closure of its Hampton branch, located at 23280 Main Street in Hampton, MN. The decision comes after a fire incident in October caused the branch to temporarily close. A thorough evaluation of the necessary steps to re-open, as well as the Bank's long-term business strategies, drove the decision to make the branch closure permanent.

Merchants Bank's commitment to providing exceptional banking services and meeting the evolving needs of customers remains steadfast.

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## Announcements

• **Randolph Food Shelf located at St. Mark's Church 28595 Randolph Blvd.** Monthly Open Hours: 1st Tuesday 8:00 - 9:30 am; 2nd, 3rd, 4th Tuesdays 4:30 - 6:00 pm. Questions call (507) 263-9182.

Do you have an announcement?

Email:

[hometownmessenger@gmail.com](mailto:hometownmessenger@gmail.com)

## Little Oscars in Hampton Expands Dining Hours

Little Oscar's plans to start evening hours in February this year. February 13th will kick off extended hours for your evening dining pleasure, with the restaurant open from 4 to 8pm on Thursday, Friday and Saturdays. Currently the hours are 6am to 3pm seven days a week.

Little Oscar's has been a roadside icon along State Highway 52 since 1964. Started by Oscar Palrud, who had owned the Dairy Bar

in Cannon Falls from 1949 until 1964, operated the restaurant until 1983. The establishment quickly became a favorite with locals and travelers. Palrud, a World War II pilot and train buff, turned the eatery into a destination for many diners.

One attraction which entertained kids and adults alike was the model railroad train, which chugged around the cafe on a suspended track hanging from the ceiling.



Breakfast served all day long was a favorite with truckers and shift workers as well. The selection of delicious pies kept the dessert crowd pleased too.

Little Oscars is located at 23470 Emery Ave in Hampton on the east side of Highway 52. Their phone number is 651-437-6327.

## Hot Dish Cook Off and Live Music part of Dennison Flake Out Festival Sat., Feb. 1st



The Devney Brothers

The Dennison Lions Club is planning the 2025 Flake Out Festival & Winter Parade for Saturday, February 1st.

The club is holding a raffle in conjunction with the days events to raise funds to support Lions Clubs activities, support other area non-profit entities and those in need, which the club donates to and supports throughout the year.

A \$500 1st Prize, plus other cash and prizes will be given away. Winner will be announced around 9 PM Saturday night at Fireside Lounge. (Need Not Be Present To Win).

Raffle tickets are available now, and can be purchased at 625 Bar & Grill, Dennison Depot, Fireside Lounge, Heritage Bank, or any Lions Club Member. They Make a Great Christmas Gift too!

The Annual Lighted Parade will take place at 6:30 PM, and anyone can participate. A Cash Prize will be given to the best float.

Other returning favorites include Euchre at Fireside Saturday morning, with 100% Prize Payout. Designer Purse & Gift Card Bingo at City Hall in the afternoon.

(continued on page 4)

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## Valentine's Day Specials

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## There's Hope



**BY Jon Dudek, co-founder of Isaiah Ministries, bringing Biblical teaching to help overcome life's everyday challenges.**  
[www.isaiahministries.cc](http://www.isaiahministries.cc)

Can you believe it is a new year? I am declaring a year of breakthrough, blessings, and abundance for both you and me. However, perhaps you think that maybe this year will just be another year of struggle. Another year of disappointment, conflict, and pain. If you feel this way, you are not alone.

These last few weeks and months I have wondered, what am I doing with my life? Why do I feel discouraged? Perhaps you're like me and your emotions can be all over the place, and sometimes you may feel lonely in the journey.

I know we may feel alone and even wonder what life is all about, but as a follower of Christ, we are not alone and there is a plan and purpose for our lives. It is so important for us to renew our minds with truth, and a great way to do this is to start the day by reading a few verses or chapters in the Word of God, the Bible. It will radically transform you and help turn that hopelessness to hopefulness.

I want to encourage you with a few verses that have spoken to me, and I hope they will minister to you. When we feel like we are all alone, a great verse that can bring comfort is, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5b). You and I are not alone in the adventures of life. You and I are not alone in the ups and downs. God is right there with us—even if we don't sense Him, the Word of God says He is. We don't trust in what we

feel, we trust in what the Bible declares.

Another verse of encouragement is Zechariah 4:6b, which states, "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit says the Lord." When we feel we need to fight with all of our might, we need to stop. Whatever is in front of us, we will not need to walk it out alone. Jesus will be with us every step of the way.

You and I are blessed to walk our lives with Christ. He will help us, direct us, listen to us, and hear us. As I was doing my daily devotional the other day, in the book of Proverbs I read, "Don't get sidetracked" (4:27).

Sometimes we get caught up in worldly things or watch what everyone else is doing in their lives. Stay the course. With God's strength, push forward in whatever challenges come your way. The enemy wants to discourage you and cause you to be fearful and anxious in life. Don't listen to him. The Lord Jesus sends us love, compassion, and what has been highlighted to me recently, supernatural peace.

Can you believe in Philippians 4:6-7 it literally tells us how to handle anxiety and how

we can have peace that is beyond our understanding? "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (emphasis mine).

During times of feeling fear and anxiety with all areas of life, God wants to overwhelm us with His peace. A peace that manifests during a storm. A peace that will calm our minds and hearts to make rational decisions during tough and challenging times in life. Have you ever experienced this?

I know in my life recently I have felt this peace. I don't quite know how to explain it, but it feels as if a calmness comes over you when the world around you is crumbling. When nothing seems to be going right, this peace settles your inner being to help you respond in a Godly fashion and not a fear-based reaction.

If you haven't experienced this, pray and ask the Lord to pour out His presence and peace that surpasses all understanding. May

the Lord bless each one of you, and may His peace calm you in every way. There is hope. If you have read this and are not a Christian but want to accept Jesus Christ in your heart, read, believe, and confess the following words.

"Jesus, I ask that you come into my life and my heart. I know I am a sinner, and I ask that you forgive me. I believe that you died on the cross for my sins and that God raised you from the dead. Jesus, I believe that you are Lord and Savior. Help me grow in my relationship with you. Thank You. Amen" (Romans 3:23, 1 John 1:9-10, Romans 10:9-10, Ephesians 2:8, Acts 3:26).

If you believe and confessed the above prayer, I believe that you are saved. You have made the best decision in your life and your new journey has begun. My recommendation is to find a church that teaches from the Word of God, get into the Bible, and find a Christian to mentor you. If you have any questions specifically about this prayer, you are more than welcome to reach out to me.

Blessings, Jon Dudek  
[Isaiahministries.cc](http://Isaiahministries.cc)



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 Questions? Call church office 507-663-1437

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 507-757-8043  
[www.christunitedmethodist.org](http://www.christunitedmethodist.org)  
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### STANTON UMC

Reverend Thomas Countryman  
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 Email your church announcements, schedule, etc.  
 to the  
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[hometownmessenger@gmail.com](mailto:hometownmessenger@gmail.com)

### AREA CHURCH DIRECTORY

#### Lightening Our Burdens

*At that time I said to you, "You are too heavy a burden for me to carry alone." — Deuteronomy 1:9*

Moses, the leader of God's people during their long time of wandering in the desert, learned that he could not carry the heavy burdens of the people on his own. The Israelites had grown in number. Bearing their problems, burdens, and disputes was too much for one person to handle. So he shared the workload with other leaders from among the twelve tribes of Israel, and they developed a system that worked for everyone. (See also Exodus 18.)

New challenges are a part of life, and we cannot keep doing what we are used to if it no longer works. We can talk to a pastor, family members, close friends, or other trusted persons when our burdens are too much for us—emotionally, physically, or spiritually. Many of us today face an overload of situations that are causing anxiety in our lives: family concerns, financial troubles, broken relationships, work dissatisfaction, career pressures, societal issues. Struggling on our own is not healthy, and eventually we need help. The Lord wants us to share one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2).

As followers of Jesus, we can make the right choice by lightening our burdens. Jesus invites us to receive rest for our souls (Matthew 11:28-30). We don't have to carry our burdens alone. We can give them to the Lord.

*Lord Jesus, thank you for bearing our burdens. We are not alone. You have given us people who love and care for us. Help us to find rest for our souls and strength to carry on. Amen.*

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## John Wallace Day

John Wallace Day died on Wednesday, December 18, 2024 at the age 87 from congestive heart failure. He was born on September 16, 1937 in Northfield, Minnesota to Donald and Dorothy (Wallace) Day. He attended Randolph Public School and graduated Class of 1956 salutatorian. After graduation, he attended the University of Minnesota School of Agriculture, Class of 1958. He returned home to farm the family Century Farm.

John married Patricia Temple of Northfield on December 28, 1967. John and Pat raised four sons on the family farm: Mike, Matt, David, and Danny, all of whom graduated from Randolph School.

John was involved in several area activities. He served 25 years with the Randolph Volunteer Fire Department and was active in Christ United Methodist Church, Randolph Area Historical Society, Lakeside Cemetery, Rice County Steam and Gas, and was elected to several terms on the County Committee for Dakota County Farm Service Agency. In 2008, John and Pat were named Dakota County Farm Family of the Year.

John retired from active farming in 2012. In retirement, he did volunteer activities and maintained the family farmstead. John and Pat enjoyed numerous vacation trips in their retirement. Pat passed away shortly after John

on Monday, December 23, 2024, at Evergreen Lodge on the Northfield Retirement Community Campus.

He was preceded in death by his parents, step-mother, Grace Day; son David; brothers and sisters-in-law, Noren Nelson, Norman and Helen Temple, Duane Temple, Bert and Bernie Reese. He is survived by his wife, Pat; sons Mike, Matt, and Danny (Rebecca); sister, Karen Nelson; brother and sisters-in-law, Dick and Sharon Engdahl and Ellie Temple; along with his much beloved Temple nephews and nieces.

A Celebration of John and Pat's Life was held at 11:00 AM on Saturday, December 28th at the Christ United Methodist Church of Cannon Falls. Visitation was held for one hour prior from 10-11AM. Interment will be held at a later date in Lakeside Cemetery of Randolph.

Arrangements are with Bierman, Benson & Langehough Funeral Home & Crematory. [www.northfieldfuneral.com](http://www.northfieldfuneral.com)

## Patricia "Pat" Day

Patricia "Pat" Day, age 87 of Randolph died on December 23, 2024 at the Evergreen Lodge at Northfield Retirement Center.

Patricia Ann Temple Day was born on October 31, 1937 in Northfield, Minnesota to Harold and Edna (Squier) Temple. She graduated

from Northfield High School and St. Olaf College. She earned her Master's Degree at the University of Minnesota. Pat taught Business at high schools in Stafford Arizona, Florence Arizona, Marshfield Wisconsin, and at Washburn High School in Minneapolis.

On December 28, 1967 she married John Day at Randolph United Methodist Church and began life as a farm wife. John and Pat raised their four sons on the family's Century Farm. While raising her family she did substitute teaching. She later worked at Castle Rock Bank and at St. Olaf College. In 2008, John and Pat were named the Dakota County Farm Family of the Year.

Horses were always a big part of Pat's life. In her youth, the family acquired their first horse Frosty, and soon thereafter Fox. While many other horses followed, Pat always maintained that Fox was "the perfect horse" and was the source of many fond memories. She was a charter member of the Rainbow Saddle Club and remained an active member and officer while raising her family. She was proud to be one of "the horse-crazy Temple girls" as fellow saddle club member Al Quie referred to the sisters.

Growing up, the family spent most of their summers at the family cottage on French Lake. Their horses were a major part of these summers at the lake and she maintained lifelong friends as part of the "Fearless Riders Gang".

At French Lake, Pat developed a lifelong love of swimming. While teaching at Washburn she served as girls' swim coach. Frequent trips to Lake Byllesby were an important part of her children's summers. While working at St. Olaf, many lunch hours were spent swimming in the pool.

As a young adult, Pat's interests included skiing and tennis. She enjoyed gardening and was active in Bridge clubs. Pat was a woman of strong faith and placed her trust in Jesus. She was an active member of Christ (formerly Randolph) United Methodist Church. She served in many capacities: Sunday School teacher and superintendent, lay leader, Bible Study leader, and many, many committees. The family's several station wagons shuttled many area kids through church activities, Cub Scouts, and 4-H.

In retirement John and Pat remained on the family farm. They enjoyed travelling and continued to be active in their community and church. For a few years in retirement, Pat worked part time at Dole Explosives.

Pat is survived by her sons Mike, Matt, and Daniel (Rebecca); sister Sharon (Dick) Engdahl; sisters-in-law Ellie Temple and Karen Nelson; and her nieces and nephews. Her husband of nearly 57 years, John, preceded her in death by five days. She was also preceded in death by her son David; parents Harold and Edna Temple; siblings Norman (Helen) Temple, Duane Temple, Bernie (Bert) Reese, and infant sister Nadine; Father and Mothers-in-Law Donald and Dorothy Day and Grace Day; and brother-in-law Noren Nelson.

A Celebration of John and Pat's Lives was held at 11:00 AM on Saturday, December 28th at the Christ United Methodist Church of Cannon Falls. Visitation was held for one hour prior from 10-11AM. Interment will be held at a later date in Lakeside Cemetery of Randolph.

Arrangements are with Bierman, Benson & Langehough Funeral Home & Crematory. [www.northfieldfuneral.com](http://www.northfieldfuneral.com)

## Come See the Movies the Media Is Not Promoting

**Thursday, January 23, 2025:**

### "Beneath Sheep's Clothing"

*"Beneath Sheep's Clothing" is a wake-up call to the American people to everyone with children in schools, to Christians, and to anyone who cares about freedom.*

To view the trailer, go to <https://beneathsheepsclothing.movie/>

**Thursday, February 27, 2025:**

### "UnMask the Truth"

*Award winning documentarian Jenner Furst seeks answers from Dr. Fauci about the origins of Covid-19, a bio-arms race with China and what could be the largest coverup in modern history in a real-life Oppenheimer meets Outbreak.*

**Movies will be shown at the the Grand Stay Hotel Conference Room, 32027 Alexander Court, Cannon Falls, MN**

**Time : Doors open at 6:00 pm. Movie starts at 6:30 pm.**

**Admission: Donations accepted to cover cost of promotion & venue.**

**These movies are not suitable for children.**

As Concerned Citizens, we feel as a community we need to learn and discuss the cultural issues that are headlines. Come watch these documentaries and movies.

We would love to hear your thoughts. Jack Schlichting 612-325-5528 or [jackschlichting@gmail.com](mailto:jackschlichting@gmail.com)

## Merchants Bank Announces Closure of Hampton, MN Branch

*(continued from page 1)*

While the decision was difficult, after careful consideration and analysis, Merchants determined that closing the Hampton branch is the best course of action.

"We are confident that we can continue to serve our valued customers in the region with minimal disruption," shared Greg Evans, President & CEO for Merchants Bank. "With three Merchants Bank branches located within a 15-mile radius of Hampton, our nearby bankers are ready to be of assistance."

The Bank remains dedicated to the communities it serves. Merchants plans to continue investing in initiatives and local organizations to ensure the well-being and prosperity of local communities in the Bank's footprint.

Merchants Bank is a full-service community bank with locations in southeastern Minnesota and west-central Wisconsin and a leasing division, Merchants Bank Equipment Finance, in Edina. Headquartered in Winona, MN, MFGI has more than \$2.6 billion in assets. Merchants was founded in 1875. Member FDIC.

## Share Your Good News!

**Submit your engagement, wedding or birth announcement.**

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**Hot Dish  
Cook Off and  
Live Music  
part of  
Flake Out  
Festival  
Sat., Feb. 1st**

*(continued from page 1)*



New this year, Cook up your best HOT DISH recipe and bring it down to city hall for judging, with a cash prize for 1st and 2nd place. Live music will also be a part of the evening festivities, with The Devney Brothers returning to Denison for the festivities!

If you have any questions, contact Lion President Diane at 612-532-0268. Final event details were being put together at press time, so Watch for a full schedule around town soon, in the Messenger and online.



2024 Flake Out Parade



2024 Flake Out Parade

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## Updated Minnesota Groundwater Protection Rule Map Now Available

*Restrictions begin  
September 1 of each year*

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) has published an updated map that will help farmers across the state comply with the Groundwater Protection Rule. The rule restricts fall application of nitrogen fertilizer in areas vulnerable to groundwater

contamination, and it outlines steps to reduce the severity of contamination in areas where nitrate is already elevated in public water supply wells.

The MDA has made changes to the Fall Nitrogen Fertilizer Application Restrictions Map which is available on the MDA website. The Ellsworth municipal Drinking Water Supply Management Area (DWSMA) was removed from the map due to a change in water source for the community. Additional information on the fall application restrictions and exceptions to the restrictions can be found on the MDA's website.

While no new municipal DWSMAs were found to have elevated nitrate, two non-municipal wells were found to have elevated nitrate based on new information from the Minnesota Department of Health. The Brookhaven Development and the Mobile Manor DWSMAs, both located in Scott County, will be added to the list of Mitigation Level 2 DWSMAs under the Groundwater Protection Rule, meaning the MDA will form a local advisory group to recommend farming practices that can reduce nitrate levels in groundwater. Additional information can be found on the MDA's Mitigation Level Determination page.

The restriction of fall application of nitrogen fertilizer on these acres will begin September 1, 2025. Farmers are encouraged to check the new map prior to fall 2025 to determine if their fields are subject to these restrictions.

For more information on the Groundwater Protection Rule visit [www.mda.state.mn.us/nfr](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/nfr).

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# The Importance of Time Spent Outdoors for Children



By Brian Kettering, Director of Day Camps at Camp Victory Zumbro Falls, MN

The concept of designated “outdoor time” is a mostly recent phenomenon. Some folks born in a year that starts with the number 19 can remember a time where your mother gave you a designated inside time, one that was typically tracked by sunsets or streetlights. With the rapid rise of technology, specifically the advancements of the smart phone, social media, and video games, the tides have turned drastically. Gone are the days where the after-school activity was to ride your bike to the park, throw a baseball in the yard with dad, or

skip stones at your favorite creek or pond. Now have come the days of digital homework assignments, unlimited movies and television streamed to your home, and online video game stores with flowing discounts that seem to keep the wallet of a gamer ever so light. With all the great reasons to stay inside, why would anyone bother going outside? Perhaps an even more specific question is necessary: as a parent living in the middle of the digital revolution, why should I send my kids outside more often?

As an avid outdoorsman, I can think of about 20 good reasons to go outside, but I’ll keep it simple and offer three reasons every child should spend some time outside nearly every day.

- A study in Denmark showed that significant time spent in “green spaces” (ones with natural plant life) had been shown to decrease mental health diagnoses in adolescents. We live in an unprecedented age when it comes to our awareness of mental health, especially for our younger generations. Every little piece of our lifestyle influences our mental health, and most studies agree that time spent in nature can have a very positive influence on it.
- Time spent outdoors can work wonders for you and your child’s physical health just as well. Regular time spent in nature can improve your cardiovascular, respiratory, and muscular health, as well as strengthen your senses by working out your eyes, ears, and nose!
- Time spent outdoors allows your mind a

place to imagine. Imagination deprivation is deteriorating the joyful, youthful spirit of our adolescents today. In the book *The Coddling of the American Mind* by Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt, the duo explores the psychological and sociological damage that can (and does) exist when children are deprived of unsupervised, unstructured play time. There is absolutely no better space for the cultural remedy of imagination deprivation than in the great outdoors.

Perhaps you know all of this, but you’re wondering, “where do I start?” It can certainly be difficult to cultivate a lifestyle that creates space for outdoor time from scratch, especially in urban environments. Here are some tips for easing into it:

- Start small. Consider taking a short walk every other day as a family during pleasant seasons and playing in the snow for thirty minutes during colder ones. Nothing is too small to try!
- Find community-oriented, family-friendly sports options. I once played with a regular ultimate frisbee group against children as young as 10 years old and adults as old as 70, all on the same field. It was casual enough to be safe but competitive enough to be fun. It was also a great opportunity for multi-generational engagement.
- Consider adding an outdoor hobby to your family that provides natural rewards, like gardening, foraging, or fishing. There are numerous books, YouTube channels, and podcasts about all three things, and Amazon has all the tools you need to get started afford-



ably.

- Consider attending a family retreat or family camp at your local summer camp! Perhaps I’m biased towards camping as a camp professional, but I have seen, heard, and experienced wonderful family development and outdoor engagement happen at camps all over the country.

I hope you feel encouraged to start including regular outdoor time into your family rhythm. Get out, get moving, and watch your child’s mental, physical, and imaginative health improve!

Denmark study source: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6421415/>

SUMMER CAMP 2025

# Camp Victory

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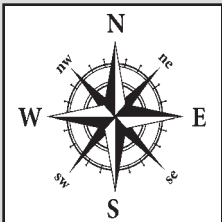
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## Changes in Latitudes, Changes in Attitudes

# I Can Fix Most Anything



By Terry Campbell

*This column is written by Messenger editor and Minnesota native Terry Campbell. Terry now splits his time between Minnesota when it's warm here and Tennessee when it's cold here.*

Spending my life as a farmer I have learned to repair most types of equipment. To begin with it was a necessity. Farming in the mid 1980's was a survival mode existence. I took it for granted, if it broke you ran it into the shop and made it unbroke. Most farmers shops are a testament to that. There are parts saved and stored from the past fifty years, because one day you are certain you will need it to fix something. Or just create something new to fit an application the market hadn't come up with yet. There is a magazine called Farm Show, which is full of inventions from farm shops made by creative farmers across the country.

Often times I would think on it over night to come up with a solution. I find that the longer one mulls a project over in their mind, the more likely it is to work. And more than not there are multiple designs to get it to work right. But I often surprised myself with creative ways to rebuild something.

Someone who didn't grow up with a father who farmed may not have any idea that probably nothing is unfixable. We come from a society which throws things away rather than repair them. But I am glad I have enough influence from previous generation

to do otherwise.

My step-daughter brought something home from the big city this summer. It was a collapsable grocery cart. Living in the city, it is simpler to walk to the market and back, than to drive and look for a parking spot on the busy streets. Wheeling bags is much easier than carrying them. It had collapsed, but not in the way the makers intended for it to. She assumed it was not fixable but brought it home to me because it had four perfectly good wheels on it. I was told I could have it for the parts. She had seen the covered parts graveyard I called the shop. She knew it would have plenty of company here. It was a tangle of metal tubes, chrome plated steel basket material, rods and wheels.

I looked at it and visualized how it was constructed to neatly fold up and stow away and yet instantly deploy into a usable cart again. I guess kind of like a transformer to the younger reader. Imagining the way it was intended to function, I realized the pivoting rivets had simply given up holding it together. Eyeballing the size of the hole that was left, after I extracted the cheap Chinese connectors, I went to the bolt drawer and brought back some #12 x 2" stove bolts and locking nuts. A couple minutes later it was as good as new.

She was quite surprised to find that the little cart was ready for a new life. It went back to the big city to help with domestic chores when she returned. For me it was just another day of fixing things.

This fall she sent back something she found



in her apartment. She saved it for me and thought it would have some value. It was a 5/16" flange nut and a 3/8" fender washer on a 3" carriage bolt. She probably doesn't know that I use flange nuts and fender washers all the time. Flange nuts have a wide washer attached to the base of the nut and fender washers are super wide washers, atleast four times the width of standard washers. When working with wood or metal with oversized holes one needs the extra washer width. But she knows I can fix things. And I have the affirmation that someone from a younger generation acknowledges that. And that is quite satisfying for an old guy to see.

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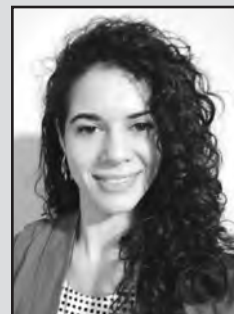
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## A Minnesotan: Sledding



By RosaLin Alcoser

2025. How can it already be 2025? It feels like not too long ago we were ringing in the new decade. I could take the time to talk about the first five years of the 2020s, but instead I'm going to talk about sledding. More specifically the first time that I went sledding.

Recently my mom was telling me about how her neighbors were taking their one-year old grandchild out for their first time sledding. Which got me thinking about the first time my sister and I went sledding.

We moved to Minnesota from Arkansas the fall of 1999; meaning that I was old enough to remember the first time that I ever saw snow. Which frankly TV Christmas specials did not prepare me for. It turned out to be cold, wet and we learned the hard way that there's a difference between powdery snow and wet snow.

That first snow in 1999 we had no idea what we were doing when it came to playing in the snow. So after our mom bundled us up in our new snow gear, told us not to breathe through our mouths so our lungs wouldn't freeze, and sent us out the door. We decided to try our hand at sledding.

There were two problems with this idea. The first was we had not idea how to sled. The same TV specials that hadn't prepared us for snow also hadn't given clear instructions on how to sled. The second problem was that we did not own sleds.

Not having sleds didn't really stop us from going sledding though. Instead we tried a couple of things. First we tried using cardboard boxes, which as you might imagine did not work at all. To this day we agree it was our worst attempt in this endeavor. After that we tried using our plastic alligator teeter totter and toddler rocky horse. Both of which worked better than the boxes.

Neither of which worked out well for my three-year old self. Or at least not as well as they did for my older sister. When she tried it she went down the hill, However, when I tried it I just fell over into the snow. So I ended up deciding that the best option would be to simply roll down the hill. Which really wasn't so much of sledding as it was just rolling down a hill.

I think soon after that first attempt our parents did get us saucer sleds and those worked way better then anything that we had tried to use as sleds. Once we had sleds and got the hang of sledding it did become a favorite winter activity for the Alcoser sisters.



## That's the Latest Corn(y)



By Emery Kleven

*Emery is now a retired farm broadcaster after starting at KDHL in Faribault in 1987. He's a 1971 graduate of West Concord High School. You can view past columns at his website RoadFarming.com. You can email him at emery@roadfarming.com.*

My wife and I were looking up the hibernation facts about squirrels on Google the other day. Google will then give you suggested other questions. One suggestion was squirrel hospitals near me. First off, I didn't know squirrels had their own hospitals and secondly, I was not looking for one near me. I'll feed them but I'm not making doctor appointments for them.

The meme going around on Facebook is that some people have their ducks in a row. But I have squirrels and their all over the

place. I don't think my squirrels hibernate. From dusk to dawn, I don't see them, but once the sun is up, there out there looking for food and knocking on the door, waiting for more acorns that I collected all fall. Either that or they need me to drive them to the hospital.

The 300 year old red oak in my back yard had a bumper crop this year. I had about 90 pounds of acorns in our chest freezer until I was told to remove them. The weather had turned cool enough they could be stored elsewhere. So needless to say, I have enough for my squirrels and the several down at the nearby park.

Speaking of memes, here's a couple of my favorite ones I've seen recently. 'Studies show cows produce more milk when the farmer talks to them. It's a case of in one ear and out the udder.' The other recent one that made me say; 'Ain't that the truth?' 'When you're an adult, spilling your coffee is like losing your balloon when you were a kid.'

Eight years ago when I was broadcasting ag news and ag markets for the Iowa Agri-Business Network, we would also put some of the information on social media. I found this market update that I had posted on Twitter. First here's what the info looked like:

Crude oil +76¢ to \$53.01. USDA 2016 corn 174.66bpa = 15.1B bu. Soybeans 2016 52.1bpa = 4.31B bu. Iowa corn 203bpa. Iowa beans 60.5bpa

That's clear enough right? Well if you follow ag markets and crop reports it does. To others it may look Greek. Twitter on the other hand, put underneath this tweet, click

to translate from Indonesian. Evidently I was multi-lingual and didn't even know it. I can go to Indonesia and get along just fine.

I've mentioned before that I still follow the Ag news, I just don't have to follow-up with interviewing someone and writing the story. Here's a story that recently made news. The state of Illinois now has an official state bean. The Illinois Legislature passed HB 4439 which designates the soybean as Illinois' official state bean. Not many pressing issues going on in Illinois I guess. Illinois is the number 1 soybean-producing state as it grows 16% of the nation's soybeans so it's been the unofficial state bean for some time.

Another item that is always of interest is the National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) corn yield contest. The highest yield in 2024 was 490.6276 bushels per acre (bpa) grown by David Hula of Charles City, Virginia. This is the 13th time he has won the contest. Now that 490 sounds high and it is, but just the year before, Mr. Hula won with a yield of 623.8439 bpa in the strip-till irrigated division. So indeed, the growing season was not as good in 2024.

The state winner in Minnesota this past year was Dale Fabian of St Charles with a yield of 340.0355 bpa in the conventional non-irrigated division.

To wrap this up, getting away from agriculture, I found this list entitled Kids Say the

Darnedest Things. Not an original title as Art Linkletter was saying this way back when. Here are some samples from the list; Never trust a dog to watch your food, Patrick, age 10. When you want something expensive, ask your grandparents, Matthew, age 12. Never try to hide a piece of broccoli in a glass of milk, Rosemary, age 7. When your dad is mad and asks you 'Do I look stupid?' don't answer him, Heather age 16. Never try to baptize a cat, Laura, age 13. And finally; Listen to your brain, it has lots of information, Chelsey, age 7.

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## Planks for Spinal Health



By Shauna Burshem, D.C.

When it comes to spine health, planks are one of the best exercises you can integrate into your routine. I've worked with countless individuals who struggle with posture issues and lower back pain, and often, the root cause lies in weak core muscles. Planks are brilliant because they engage your entire core, including the deep abdominals that support and stabilize your spine. Unlike crunches or sit-ups, planks put minimal strain on your spine while effectively building strength in the muscles that keep your back aligned. What I love most about planks is their versatility—they're accessible whether you're a seasoned athlete or just starting your fitness journey. Holding a proper plank position trains your body to maintain a neutral spine, which is crucial for standing, walking, and even sitting. I can't stress enough how this translates into everyday life. Think about it—every step you take, every chair you sit in, benefits from a steady foundation. Over time, strengthening these core muscles through planks can reduce back pain and improve your posture dramatically. Beyond just physical benefits, planking is a mental game too. It's about holding still, focusing your breath, and staying present. For many of us, experiencing back pain can feel physically and emotionally draining. Planks are a way to fight back—both strengthening the areas involved and empowering you to take charge of your spine health. Remember, consistency is key. Start small, even if it's just 20 seconds a day, and watch your spine and entire core grow stronger over time.

New RSV vaccine update: Moderna halted its clinical trial of experimental mRNA vac-

cines for respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) in babies after the shots were linked to severe side effects. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) disclosed this week in a briefing document that rather than protecting babies as anticipated, the vaccine likely caused higher rates of severe RSV illness among the vaccinated babies enrolled in the Phase 1 clinical trials. The FDA document also stated that enrollment is now on hold for all investigational trials for RSV vaccines for infants and toddlers under age 2 and children ages 2 through 5 who haven't previously had RSV illness. Among the children who developed symptomatic RSV disease, 26.3% in the vaccinated group progressed to severe disease, while only 8.3% of those in the placebo group did. The illnesses were attributed to vaccine enhanced respiratory disease (VAERD) — a phenomenon that occurs when vaccination promotes immune responses that exacerbate the disease caused by subsequent infection with the germ the vaccine was meant to protect against. At this time, vaccine makers are developing 26 different RSV vaccines or monoclonal antibodies for all age groups.

Echinacea has been used for generations as a natural remedy to support the immune system, especially during cold and flu season. Modern studies now back up what others instinctively knew for so long - echinacea is packed with compounds that help bolster the immune response, making it easier to fend off common illnesses. What makes echinacea so special is its ability to increase the activity of white blood cells, our body's natural defense army. Think of it as a booster for your immune system, encouraging it to work harder when you're feeling run down. Whether taken as a tea, capsule, or tincture, echinacea has shown promise in reducing the severity and duration of colds when used at the first sign of symptoms.

It is important to care for our bodies naturally, especially during the colder months when colds and fatigue seem to be lurking around every corner. If you're not already reaching for echinacea when you're feeling under the weather, I'd say it's worth giving it a try as it is a big help boosting immune system function.

*\*Information and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and may not reflect those of The Messenger.*

## Side Effects



By Noel Aldrich, PhD, CNS  
Licensed Nutritionist

What are the results of the choices you and I make? In this season of reflection and re-setting, we can see how a choice made last year or a few years ago resulted in a specific outcome. Some outcomes lead to regret, other outcomes lead to surprises. It is a unique quality of human life to be able to reflect on the past and to make choices for the future. As you look toward the new year before you, I want to provide some thoughts to help you make wise choices for your health goals.

We have grown up in a society that provides a variety of quick "solutions" to our problems. All the best results are presented, but the side effects are not discussed or rapidly by-passed. Warning labels may be added, but few people have taken the time to read the labels. Remember, the primary objective of marketing is to sell, and not to provide full disclosure. Consider the side effects of these popular options being presented in the current market:

**Ozempic:** A recent injectable drug designed to help those managing diabetes to maintain healthy blood sugar levels, this medication has become popular for "off-label" use as a medication to promote weight loss. Possible side effects stated on the official website for Ozempic includes - nausea, constipation, stomach pain, and vomiting. More serious side effects can include - inflammation of the pancreas, kidney problems, gallbladder problems, and an increased risk of thyroid cancer. Without insurance this medication may cost as much as \$1000 per month. The medication does not instruct

you on how to eat and how to build a healthy lifestyle for a long healthy life. Do you want to be dependent on this medication?

**Omeprazole/Prilosec:** A popular medication for providing relief from acid reflux. Common side effects include - body aches, loose stools, dizziness, muscle pain, sneezing, or unusual drowsiness. The medication is meant to decrease the amount of acid produced in the stomach; however, the medication moves through the entire body and will decrease the amount of energy that cells produce for daily activity, which can result in muscle spasms and tiredness. Additionally, the decreased acid in the stomach allows for increased bacteria and viruses to pass through the stomach into the intestines where imbalances will result in more severe health issues. The short-term relief provided by this medication has negative long-term results.

**Statin medication:** One of the most popularly promoted medications in the past 20 years for the purpose of lowering total cholesterol. The side effects listed by Mayo Clinic and known to be associated with statin medications include - muscle pain, liver damage, and increased risk of diabetes. Females are at greater risk of side effects, and individuals over eighty years old, as well as those who drink alcohol. Statin medications not only reduce the production of cholesterol, but also reduce the production of CoQ10, an important energy molecule essential for healthy cell activity. When you take a statin medication, you are slowing down the production of cholesterol, and many other activities in your body. As noted in a previous article on "Cholesterol Truths" the benefits of taking statin medication are about 1% improvement compared to not taking statin medication. Changes to what you eat and when you eat make a greater difference to your cholesterol measures.

To be fair, there are side effects associated with certain foods as well. However, these side effects are easily managed and often related to over consumption.

**Dairy** - overconsumption can lead to constipation

**Red Beets** - overconsumption can result in red colored stool

**Tomatoes** - may increase acid reflux. Balance with consuming celery stalks or celery juice.

**Vitamin C** - overconsumption can result in loose stools

**Magnesium** - overconsumption can have a laxative effect

Knowing the side effects places you in a better position to manage your life and your health goals. Your body genetics successfully operate on the nutrients provided on a daily basis. Your body is asking for more nutrients. Every health challenge you face in the year ahead has a nutritional answer to it. Your health challenge is not a result of a medication deficiency.

Contact me to discuss your health goals for the coming year. I can help you realize greater health freedom in 2025. You can contact me at [nutritionproportion@gmail.com](mailto:nutritionproportion@gmail.com), or check out my website at [www.nutritionproportion.net](http://www.nutritionproportion.net)

*\*Information and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and may not reflect those of The Messenger.*

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# Gratitude for Growth



**Tim Penny**  
So. MN Initiative Foundation

I like to pause and reflect on the work of Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation (SMIF) across our 20-county region. In no particular order, I would like to recognize some of the activities I am most proud of in 2024:

Young children received additional support: A year ago, extra funds allowed SMIF to approve additional Early Care and Education Grant awards. From supporting the emotional development of children in Byron to providing mobile trainings to child care providers in New Ulm, this grant was able to enhance the care that children receive in the region.

FEAST! was the biggest yet: The 11th annual FEAST! Local Foods Marketplace was brimming with businesses and attendees. More food and beverage businesses participated than ever before with 35% of the 215 vendors being new to the festival. The event attracted 25% more attendees than the previ-

ous year for a new record!

The Paint the Town Grant expanded: SMIF awarded 256 gallons of paint to brighten 10 communities across our 20-county region through murals, welcome signs and historic structures. This year, the grant expanded to accept applications for public art and creative placemaking (an effort to use art, culture and community development to enhance public areas or revitalize vacant spaces). One of the grants provided a fresh coat of paint for a 1930s building at Farmamerica in Waseca that will house the 2024 presidentially pardoned turkeys.

More books were distributed: In continuation of our mission to support early literacy, SMIF awarded 19,040 children's books to 53 organizations through our Early Literacy Grant Program. The books helped organizations support young readers through summer reading programs, library classes, literacy tutoring services and more.

Small towns received more support: SMIF's Small Town Grant, an effort to improve the quality of life in small towns with populations under 10,000, surpassed a milestone: more than \$1 million has been invested in the small towns of our region since the program began. On top of that, small towns received additional support from the Taylor Rural Improvements Grant and the Taylor Rural Child Care Grant, a pilot program started with a generous donation by Glen A. Taylor through the Taylor Family Farms Foundation. These grants helped start a mobile resource bus program in the Gibbon-Winthrop-Fairfax School District, replace an unsafe merry-go-round in Rushford Village, create an interactive, historical museum in Lake Crystal and more.

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Loan clients reached new heights: New loan clients—Cento, Woodfire Pizza in Albert Lea, The Rolling Cones in Blue Earth, Nick's Car Care in North Mankato and more—joined the SMIF family, and some went national. SMIF loan client, Busy Baby LLC, in Oronoco added their innovative silicone baby products to Walmart and Target shelves across the country.

SMIF's Community Foundations continued to make an impact: Between SMIF's 32 Community Foundations and 67 Designated Funds, a collective \$12 million has been invested to benefit southern Minnesota. To name a few projects, the Spring Valley Area Community Foundation helped fund an annual summer reading program and a new walking path at a school, while the Mapleton Area Foundation provided Community Capacity grants to fund city-wide projects including new signs and youth programs.

More Early Childhood professionals attended trainings: Early Childhood training attendance increased by more than 26% from the previous year. Our trainings, which range from understanding common child behaviors to encouraging imagination, strive to strengthen our region's Early Childhood professionals and equip them with the tools they need to support the next generation.


REV communities received a boost: Our new Rural Entrepreneurial Venture (REV)

communities have already seen great outcomes in their efforts to advance their small-town economies. This year, the REV communities received a special grant which provided REV communities with funds to reach out to entrepreneurs, connect entrepreneurs with critical business services, pay for training, develop a sustainable funding strategy and more.

Partnerships grew: We would not be able to accomplish all we do without the contributions of our partners. Some of our partners reach far into our history, such as our FEAST! Local Foods Network partner, Renewing the Countryside, and lending program partners like local banks and economic development agencies. We were able to get more books into the hands of young children thanks to our longstanding partnership with Capstone and ABDO Publishing. We are also grateful for our partnerships that are just beginning, such as the Taylor Family Farm Foundation, which will breathe new life into our small town efforts.

Last, but certainly not least, I am grateful to our donors and staff for their effort in strengthening our impact in southern Minnesota. The work we do today is creating the future we want to see for southern Minnesota.

As always, I welcome your comments and questions. You can reach me at [timp@smi-foundation.org](mailto:timp@smi-foundation.org) or 507-455-3215.



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**Nicole "Nikki" Anderson**

- 5' 10"
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- Last seen wearing a long grey sweater and camouflage pants.


Nicole Anderson was last seen in Randolph Township in Dakota County the morning of Saturday, July 6, 2024.

She was on foot and does not have her cell phone, wallet, or medications.



Last known image of Anderson ^ on 7/6/2024 at 08:54 hours.

The Dakota County Sheriff's Office is offering a reward of \$5,000 for information regarding Nicole Anderson's whereabouts or the prosecution of those involved in her disappearance. Private parties have pledged an additional \$40,000 reward to be distributed independently of the Sheriff's Office. Only tips received through the Dakota County Sheriff's Office or Crime Stoppers that lead to the location of Nicole Anderson or the prosecution of those involved in her disappearance are eligible for the reward.



Anyone wishing to provide a **completely anonymous** tip may contact Crime Stoppers at, 1-800-222-TIPS, or [www.CrimeStoppersMN.org](http://www.CrimeStoppersMN.org)

**Reference DCSO Case # 24-000819**

**1-800-222-8477**

**Dakota County Sheriff's Office | 1580 Highway 55, Hastings, Minnesota 55033**

**651-438-TIPS(8477)**

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## Ask A Trooper

By Sgt. Troy Christianson,  
Minnesota State Patrol



I wanted to share a message about distracted driving. Here is some information we recently shared on our Department of Public

Safety blog.

“It was supposed to be a routine trip for 20-year-old Megan Severson. On Oct. 17, 2019, Severson was driving from Preston in south-eastern Minnesota to visit her boyfriend in North Dakota. But when she reached Highway 52 in St. Paul, everything changed in an instant.

The crash - Severson glanced over at her GPS to see which exit she needed to take. “I looked down and I was speeding, so it felt a lot shorter than it actually was,” said Severson. “When I came to realize that the cars in front of me were stopped, I hit my brakes as fast as I thought I could.”

She couldn’t stop in time. Severson Walked away from the crash with her life. An innocent passenger did not. Severson rear-ended the stopped car in front of her, causing a chain-reaction crash involving multiple vehicles. A passenger in the car she hit, Anthony Kawino, 33, of Burnsville was killed. “I just

looked around at the scene that was in front of me,” Severson recalled. “It was horrific. I saw them pulling the blanket over the deceased, and at that point it clicked into my brain that this is bad. Very, very bad.”

Minnesota State Patrol Sgt. Daniel Dixon was the reconstructionist who documented how and why this crash happened. The answers were obvious, he said. Severson was speeding at 70 mph in a 55 mph zone just before she hit the car Kawino was in. “At that speed, if you’re looking at your GPS for five seconds to try to figure out where you would need to go next, you just traveled almost two football fields of distance,” Dixon said.

Somber anniversary - Severson was charged with criminal vehicular homicide because she was speeding and distracted at the time of the crash. She still remembers her lawyer explaining what this felony charge could mean for her future. “When he first said people normally get prison time, I went off the rails in my mind,” Severson added. “I didn’t know what to think. I was in a big state of panic. I mean, nobody wants to go to prison.”

Severson pleaded guilty to the charge. She was sentenced to around three months in jail and five years of probation. The judge also granted a request from Kawino’s family; having Severson report to jail on Oct. 17 each year – the anniversary of the deadly crash.

“It’s probably the worst day of the year for me,” Severson said. “Everything just cycles back as if it happened yesterday. All of it. The crash, Anthony, his family. What would he be doing? Would he have a family of his own? Married? Kids?”

Lessons learned - Severson hopes sharing her story will encourage other drivers to put distractions away when they are behind the wheel. “Don’t do it, because there are heavy consequences and it’s more than prison, jail or probation. It’s your whole life. It’s the



guilt, the pain,” Severson said. “We have to realize it’s not just us on the road. It takes just one wrong, slight move to end your life or another person’s life – and it happens fast.”

Across Minnesota, distracted driving was a factor in one in 11 crashes from 2019 to 2023. Distracted driving contributed to an average of 29 deaths and 146 life-changing injuries a year over that same time period. So far in 2024, distractions have been a factor in 27 (comes on Tuesday current as of 12/17) traffic deaths.

It’s frustrating for Dixon knowing something preventable is causing deaths on Minnesota roads. “It seems like as the cars get better, safer and smarter that drivers get more relaxed and less attentive to what’s going on out there,” he said. “It’s evident that the message is not getting across because people are still playing on their phones while driving all the time, as much as you try to explain that this is dangerous.”

As Severson works to move on from that tragic crash five years ago, she says she is taking this second chance at life seriously – knowing Kawino wasn’t as fortunate. “I’m not living for just myself. I’m living for two. The life that I took. It makes me want to push to be the best I can be.”

For more information and blogs please visit: <https://dps.mn.gov/news/blog>

**Question: I see the sign boards along the highway with different messages posted. Do they use these for Amber Alerts? I know I get the alert on my phone and was just curious.**

Answer: Message and lane-use signs on some freeways warn drivers of traffic crashes, stalled vehicles, or other traffic conditions ahead.

Message signs may also be activated when the state issues an AMBER Alert in response to a child abduction. The signs will provide information such as a vehicle description. Drivers who see a vehicle fitting the description, or who have other information about the missing child, will be asked to notify law enforcement. The best number to call is “911.”

**Question: Do you have any advice on what a person should do if they are driving along in the dark and their headlights go out?**

Answer: If your headlights suddenly go out, try using your parking lights, hazard warning lights or turn signals – one of them may work and give you enough light to guide you off the road. If your headlights fail on a busy or lighted road, you will probably have enough light to guide you onto the shoulder. If all your lights fail on a dark, deserted road, slow down and keep your vehicle on the pavement until you can move safely onto the shoulder.

You can avoid a ticket – and a crash – if you simply buckle up, drive at safe speeds, pay attention and always drive sober. Help us drive Minnesota Toward Zero Deaths.

If you have any questions concerning traffic related laws or issues in Minnesota send your questions to Sgt. Troy Christianson – Minnesota State Patrol at 2900 48th Street NW, Rochester MN 55901-5848. (Or reach him at, [Troy.Christianson@state.mn.us](mailto:Troy.Christianson@state.mn.us))

## Avoid Distractions

Avoiding distractions behind the wheel is always crucial, and the winter months can present additional challenges with unpredictable, dangerous road conditions. Snow and ice on the road mean vehicles take longer to stop, so quick reaction times are even more important. By staying focused and avoiding distractions, drivers can better adapt to sudden changes, like an icy patch or a car skidding ahead. A momentary distraction, such as glancing at a phone or adjusting the radio, can lead to losing control on icy roads or not seeing hazards like black ice, slower vehicles, or pedestrians.

Following these tips can help drivers avoid becoming distracted behind the wheel:

Put the phone away: Silence your phone and store it out of reach before driving. Use “Do Not Disturb” mode to block notifications.

Plan ahead: Set your GPS, queue up your playlist, or take care of texts and calls before you start driving.

Pull over safely: If something urgent comes up, find a safe spot to pull over before handling it.

Create a driving routine: Make driving a focused activity by committing to zero distractions during your trip.

Enlist passengers: Let passengers handle navigation, music or calls, so you can keep your attention on the road.

Secure loose items: Store items securely to avoid the need to reach for anything while driving.

Lead by example: Show others – especially young drivers – how to drive without distractions. Be the role model for safe driving.

Snow, ice and reduced visibility require a driver's full attention to navigate safely. Staying focused behind the wheel is one of the simplest yet most effective ways to prevent crashes and save lives. Together, we can drive Minnesota toward zero deaths.



## Headlights on When Snowing

Winter weather often means reduced visibility, especially during snowstorms. Your headlights play a critical role in keeping you safe and visible to other drivers. Blowing snow can quickly create dangerous whiteout conditions, so it’s important to remember a simple rule: if there’s any kind of precipitation, whether it’s snow, rain or even a light drizzle, turn on your lights. It is the law.

While many vehicles have sensors that activate lights automatically when it’s getting dark, they don’t always turn on your lights during precipitation, especially in daylight. Check your owner’s manual to learn how to manually activate your lights if needed.

Seeing and being seen can help reduce your chances of getting in a crash. Before hitting the road, take a moment to ensure all your lights are on and working properly. It’s a simple step that helps everyone stay safe this winter.





## Hampton City Council Meeting November 12, 2024

The Hampton City Council met on Tuesday, November 12, 2024, at Hampton City Hall for the regularly scheduled meeting. Present were Mayor John Knetter, Council Members Jerry Huddleston, David Luhring, and Nick Russell. Council Member Anthony Verch arrived at 7:03 p.m. Also present were Brad Fisher and Angie Smith of Bolten & Menk, as well as Chris Meyer, City Treasurer, Mike Slavik, Dakota County Commissioner District 1, and a few residents.

**Regular Meeting Called to Order** - Mayor Knetter called the regular scheduled meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

**Disclosure of Interest** – None

**Approval of October 8th, 2024, Regular Scheduled Meeting Minutes** – Motion by Luhring, seconded by Russell, to approve the September 10, 2024, regular scheduled meeting minutes. All voted in favor. None opposed. Motion passed 4-0.

**Approval of Disbursements** - Motion by Luhring, seconded by Huddleston, to approve the November disbursements. All voted in favor. None opposed. Motion passed 4-0.

**Public Comments:** Jim Pluth addressed the city council with several questions. He first asked if the City of Hampton had its own official website. Mayor Knetter explained that while they are currently building one, the existing website is not official. Pluth appreciated that the city council minutes were available online but inquired about where they are actually posted. Knetter clarified that once approved, the minutes are published in The Messenger, the city's official newspaper, and are also posted on the community board at City Hall.

Pluth then asked about special meetings and how the public is notified. Knetter responded that notices are posted in the official newspaper and on the display board outside City Hall. The notice timing varies depending on the type of meeting, with statutory requirements of 14, 21, or 30 days. Pluth also asked if the future city website would include a schedule of meetings. Knetter mentioned that this feature is likely under review, but currently, city council meetings are held on the second Tuesday of every month, and planning commission meetings are scheduled on Thursdays when needed. Pluth thanked the council for the clarification.

**Petitions, Requests, and Communications:** Mayor Knetter asked the council if there was any opposition to moving the city council meeting to December 3rd, as he would be out of town. However, Treasurer Chris Meyer pointed out that the meeting had already been posted for December 10th due to the budget meeting, and it needed to be kept for public access. The Mayor agreed and decided he would attend remotely.

Sargent Bobby Lambert reported on a rise in daytime burglaries in Sunfish Lake and Inver Grove Heights, where burglars are entering homes by checking if anyone is home and breaking in through the back. He urged residents to report any suspicious behavior. Lambert also reminded the public about an ongoing phone scam where people impersonate law enforcement officers (such as Dakota County deputies or U.S. Marshals), and though the calls appear to come from official numbers, they are fraudulent. He men-

tioned that new hires are joining the police force, and new vehicles and equipment, including Wi-Fi-enabled PBTs, are being introduced. The department is also looking to hire park rangers. The council thanked Sargent Lambert for his service.

Chris Meyer provided an update regarding the prepayment of the 2019 bond series. He explained that some residents had paid their special assessments upfront, resulting in accumulated funds amounting to \$42,521. Meyer requested authorization to talk with Shannon about using these funds to reduce the bond's principal, which could lower future payments. He clarified that there were no penalties for early repayment and that a 30-day notice would be required to proceed. Meyer would return to the council with a resolution in December for the first payment, pending approval.

Angie Smith from Bolten & Menk updated the council on the Alternative Urban Area-wide Review (AUAR) process. She explained that after a 30-day review period for the scoping document, comments from both the public and agencies were received and have been addressed. Smith highlighted key updates, including geologic conditions on the property, additional intersections to be reviewed as part of the traffic study, and revisions to the permit language in line with state codes. She also emphasized that the AUAR is focused on potential development scenarios, not specific projects, and annexation is only required in Scenario 2 (not Scenario 1, which aligns with the city's comprehensive plan). Smith detailed the next steps, including submission to the Environmental Quality Board (EQB) for further review and a public comment period. A public open house is tentatively scheduled for January 7th. The final AUAR approval is expected around March 2024.

Councilmember Huddleston clarified that this step was part of an environmental study, and there would be multiple opportunities for public input as the process continued. Smith confirmed this, adding that the AUAR process would proceed in phases, with the next major step being the submission of the draft AUAR and mitigation plan to the EQB by December 17th.

Councilmember Verch congratulated Mayor Knetter on his re-election, as well as Councilmembers Jerry Huddleston and Nick Russell on their re-election.

### Ordinances and Resolutions:

Mayor Knetter led a discussion on the bids for a new water tower, particularly focusing on whether to remove or repurpose the old water tower. There was a \$10,000 price difference between scrapping the old tank or setting it up in a park. Councilmember Huddleston pointed out that this cost did not include the expenses of moving, planting, and fencing the old tower, estimating the total cost would be around \$20,000. He emphasized the challenges of maintaining a repurposed water tower in a park, including the potential for rust and weeds, and suggested that removing the tower might be the best option.

Knetter explained that the old tower could not remain standing because of safety concerns (unstable and prone to tipping) and due to regulations from the Department of Health regarding aging infrastructure. He noted that

repurposing the old tank would be expensive and wouldn't solve pressure or size issues, while a new tower would address these concerns with better elevation and increased capacity. Knetter also pointed out that the previous estimate for repurposing the tank, around \$1 million, would likely be higher due to inflation.

Councilmember Verch suggested auctioning the old tank to a collector, as there might be a market for it, noting local collectors like Steve Bauer and Joe Wagner. Knetter confirmed that he had contacted both individuals, but the process of removing the tank would require significant effort and equipment. Verch argued that if the city were to cover the \$10,000 cost of preserving the tank, they could potentially sell it to a collector, thereby reducing costs for the city.

Knetter confirmed that if the city found a buyer, they could adjust the plans. However, he stressed that the city had to award the bid for the new water tower within 60 days, and waiting too long could result in a loss of the bid price due to the public nature of the bidding process. Brad Fisher from Bolten & Menk clarified that the city needed to select an alternate option to proceed with the contract, but if a potential buyer was found, there could still be some flexibility with the contractor to adjust the cost. After some further discussion, Councilmember Verch made a motion to accept the resolution for the water tower bid, and the council moved forward with awarding the bid.

**Resolution 2024\_\_15 Resolution Accepting Bids and Awarding Contract** – 100,000 Gallon Elevated Water Storage Tank Project Alternate 2. Motion made by Verch, seconded by Luhring, to accept bids and award the contract. All voted in favor. None opposed. 5-0.

**Resolution 2024\_\_16 Resolution Approving the Issuance of General Obligation Water Revenue Bonds, Series 2024A;** Covenanting and Obligating the City to be Bound by and to Use the Provisions of Minnesota Statutes, Section 446A.086 to Guarantee the Payment of the Principal and Interest on the Bonds through the State of Minnesota Public Facilities Authority Credit Enhancement Program. Motion made by Verch, seconded by Huddleston. All voted in favor. None opposed. 5-0.

### Reports of Officers, Boards, and Committees:

**Engineer Report** – Brad Fisher, the city engineer, provided a few updates to the city council. First, he discussed the completion of the Lead Service Line project, which was submitted to the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) a couple of months ago. The MDH has published an inventory of lead service lines across the state, and Hampton was found to have no identified lead service lines. However, there were two self-reported galvanized lines requiring replacement and 56 lines with unknown materials. The next steps include certifying the results and eventually replacing lead and galvanized lines with funding that will become available in the future. The city is in compliance with all required dates.

Fisher also brought up the upcoming state cannabis licensing process set to begin in 2025. He asked the council if they had developed any ordinances in response. He

noted that without an ordinance, the city would have limited control over licensing, only being able to enforce state requirements. He suggested drafting an ordinance to regulate cannabis businesses, including limiting them to certain zoning districts. Mayor Knetter shared that the city was waiting for the state to finalize the ordinance to avoid spending resources on a local ordinance that might not align with state regulations. Councilmember Verch confirmed that the license application process would start in July or September 2025, giving the city time to develop an ordinance.

Finally, Fisher reminded the council of a motion needed for the AUAR (Alternative Urban Area-wide Review), which had been requested by Angie.

**Water / Sewer Report** – Working with Jake Pickleman, who is helping with the phosphorus management plan. We're working through that to make sure we are in compliance and meet our next step of the phosphorus management plan. Discharge is mostly done. We are evaluating the last pond and looking into the rainfall. Water is going according to plan.

**Park Report** – The graffiti has been removed from the parks.

**Street Report** – Nothing new to report, just waiting for the final street sweeping.

Mike Slavik, the Dakota County Commissioner for District 1, addressed the council, starting by congratulating those re-elected and thanking the election staff for their excellent work. He noted that Dakota County was the first large county in the state to report its election results without incident, following a complete overhaul of the election team after 2022.

Slavik then updated the council on upcoming projects, particularly the road construction plans. The long-awaited reconstruction of Highway 47, extending from the outskirts of the city limits to Northfield, was initially planned as a mill and overlay project but will now be postponed for a full reconstruction due to drainage issues and safety concerns. This will cost an estimated \$45 million and is set to be completed over two years, likely beginning in 2028-29.

He also mentioned the second phase of County Road 88 in Randolph Township, which involves realigning the road due to railroad issues. This construction work is ongoing, and no closures are expected from 56 to the east for now.

Slavik highlighted that property tax statements were mailed out and are available online for those who wish to view the proposed 2025 values.

In response to a question from Mayor Knetter, Slavik confirmed that two roundabouts are being planned for the intersection of County Roads 56 and 50. These projects are in partnership with the State of Minnesota and are scheduled for 2026. They are considering whether to complete both roundabouts in the same year or stagger their construction to reduce disruption to local residents and businesses.

Councilmember Luhring inquired about the completion of the roundabout at County Road 46, to which Slavik responded that the target completion date was November 27, but delays have occurred due to a federal safety

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Hampton City Council Meeting

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grant, which will cover 75% of the costs for all three roundabout projects.

Unfinished Business:

**Engine Brake Ordinance** – Tabled until the next meeting.

New Business:

Mayor Knetter asked for a motion to accept the Draft AUAR. Motion by Luhring, seconded by Russell. All voted in favor. None opposed. Motion passed 5-0.

Chris Meyer, the treasurer, provided an update regarding the city's cash contribution for land purchase, noting that the current allocation is \$50,000. He explained that larger contributions, such as \$100,000 or \$150,000, would have minimal impact on the bond series, so it's more efficient to save that money for street and smaller projects instead of contributing more upfront. He also mentioned the bond schedule, where the council is set to award the sale of bonds at the next meeting, with the closing date for the bonds on December 23rd. Meyer offered to contact Shannon if any adjustments to the schedule were needed.

Councilmember Verch shared his efforts to secure additional funds, explaining he had reached out to various agencies, including the U.S. EPA (Region 5) and the Minnesota Public Facility Authorities, as well as individuals in the Drinking Water Capacity and Compliance Assistance Division. Despite some dead ends, he has found some resources and is still waiting to hear back from the EPA.

Mayor Knetter concluded the meeting by thanking the city clerk for her hard work during the November 5th election.

Adjournment - Motion by Verch, seconded by Russell, to adjourn the meeting. All voted in favor. None opposed. Motion passed 5-0. The meeting adjourned at 7:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Kelly Roan

\*\*\*

Hampton City Council Meeting  
December 10, 2024

The Hampton City Council met on Tuesday, December 10, 2024, at Hampton City Hall for a public hearing and the regularly scheduled meeting. Present were Council Members Jerry Huddleston, David Luhring, and Nick Russell. Absent were Mayor John Knetter and Councilmember Anthony Verch. Also present were Brad Fisher and Angie Smith of Bolten & Menk, as well as Chris Meyer, City Treasurer, Shannon Sweeney, Marlin Reinardy, Luke Nicolai, and various residents, and a few engineers from Kimley-Horn.

**Public Hearing Called to Order** – The purpose of the public hearing was to discuss the city budget and levy certification for the year 2025. Councilmember Luhring called the public hearing to order at 6:30 pm.

Chris Meyer presented the 2025 budget and tax levy to the council. The budget is balanced across various funds, including water, sewer, debt service, and general funds. To maintain this balance, a tax levy of \$326,059 was adopted, reflecting a modest 0.46% increase from last year. The general levy increased by 2.07%, while the debt service portion decreased by 3.67%. The city aims to maintain fund balances of 30-45% of annual expendi-

tures. The budget is largely unchanged from previous years, with minor adjustments made in September after the August review.

There were no public questions or comments.

**Adjournment** - Motion by Russell, seconded by Huddleston, to adjourn the public hearing. All voted in favor. None opposed. Motion passed 3-0. The meeting adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

Regular Meeting Called to Order -  
Disclosure of Interest – None

Approval of November 12th, 2024, Regular Scheduled Meeting Minutes – Motion by Russell, seconded by Luhring, to approve the November 12, 2024, regular scheduled meeting minutes. All voted in favor. None opposed. Motion passed 3-0.

**Approval of Disbursements** - Motion by Russell, seconded by Huddleston, to approve the December disbursements. All voted in favor. None opposed. Motion passed 3-0.

**Public Comments:** Councilmember Luhring recognizes a Deputy. He introduces himself as Josh and asks if anyone remembers last month being spoken to about the recent scam attempts. The council answers yes. He reiterates that the police will never ask you to pay or mail a warrant to them directly, especially if they are asking for payment in Walmart gift cards, bitcoin, or anything like that. If that happens – it’s a scam. He goes on to remind everyone that it’s now winter and to make sure that you have good tires and brakes as there were a bunch of crashes during that first snow fall of the year a few weeks ago. The council thanks him for his work and he leaves.

**Petitions, Requests, and Communications:** A request was made by Mayor Knetter to move January and February meetings to the first Tuesday of the month due to travel conflicts. No one had any issues with moving the city council meetings. Motion made by Russell seconded by Huddleston to move the January and February meetings to the first Tuesday. All voted in favor. None opposed. Motion passes 3-0.

Angie Smith from Bolten & Menk provided an update on the AUAR (Alternative Urban Areawide Review) process, along with two colleagues from Kimley-Horn, who have been assisting with the preliminary work. Smith clarified that tonight's motion is not an approval of the AUAR itself but is a request to approve sending the draft document forward for a 30-day public review period. This will allow the community to provide input before the AUAR is finalized. The public review will be from December 24 through January 23, and a public meeting or open house will be held during this period.

Smith outlined the draft schedule, noting that after the public review period, the draft AUAR comments will be presented to the city council in February, with the final AUAR tentatively scheduled for a March council meeting.

These dates could shift slightly depending on the timing of public comment responses, but March remains the goal for presenting the final document. Smith emphasized that the AUAR process is a first step in a larger planning process, not a detailed development proposal. The draft document looks at the potential environmental impacts of two development scenarios: one aligned with the

city’s comprehensive plan and another for a technology park. No specific designs or plans are included at this stage, as the document focuses on identifying potential impacts and mitigation measures.

The AUAR assesses various environmental factors such as land use, water resources, fish and wildlife, noise, and transportation. Smith highlighted the water resources section, which includes a detailed analysis of wetlands, surface water, groundwater, and wastewater use. For the technology park scenario, wastewater generation is expected to peak during the warmer months (April to October) due to cooling needs. Smith pointed out that while the document addresses water use and capacity, it doesn't yet account for peak demand levels.

A key concern is that the area is within the Hastings Drinking Water Source Management Area, which is classified as a high-vulnerability zone. This means that protecting the region's drinking water is a priority, and any potential groundwater or contamination impacts will need careful management.

Smith also explained that while the draft AUAR covers many environmental factors, it is still an overview. Detailed studies, such as noise assessments, cannot be completed until specific site plans are developed. Noise, for example, will be assessed later once designs are in place.

The draft AUAR, along with any necessary edits, will be posted on the official website, hamptonAUAR.com, starting December 24 for public review. Smith requested approval to move forward with publication, with the understanding that some revisions will be made before it is finalized. Councilmember Huddleston acknowledged the complexity of the document, particularly the water-related sections, and emphasized the importance of allowing the public to review and comment. Smith responded that this is part of an ongoing process and that further details would be provided as the project progresses.

Smith also apologized for missing a public comment that had been submitted earlier and assured that it would be added to the official record. Once the council approves the draft, the document will be available for public review and feedback.

David Luhring facilitated a discussion regarding the time and date for the AUAR open house. He proposed maintaining the originally suggested date of January 7th, with the open house held before and after the City Council meeting. After further discussion, it was agreed to schedule the open house prior to the City Council meeting on January 7th, from 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., with the City Council meeting to follow immediately afterward.

Luke Nicolai addresses concerns about the proposed Data Center project, emphasizing the need for more careful consideration before making decisions. He expresses frustration with the rushed process, particularly the fact that the council is being asked to approve documents (like the 80-page scoping packet) after only having had a couple of days to review them. He suggests tabling the decision until the next month so everyone can thoroughly read and understand the material.

Nicolai is worried that the project, while promising in terms of tax revenue, could end

up causing unexpected costs for residents, particularly regarding infrastructure and potential impacts on property values. He voices concerns about the local community, particularly those living near the proposed site, which includes key figures like the mayor and council members. He fears the project could lead to noise, light pollution, and other nuisances that might lower property values and hurt the neighborhood.

He urges caution, citing the rapid pace of the project and the lack of full involvement from all stakeholders. Nicolai also highlights the risks of too many similar data centers being developed within a short radius, suggesting that the community should wait and observe the long-term effects before proceeding. While he has more concerns, he holds off from discussing them further in the absence of the full council and mayor. Ultimately, he hopes that the process will remain fair and that the community can remain united throughout the decision-making process.

Erik Porten voiced concerns about the proposed Data Center project and sought clarification from City Council members and city officials on several important aspects, particularly regarding non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) and wastewater management. Porten's inquiries included whether any NDAs had been signed related to the project or any other city development initiatives. In response, Council members Luhring and Russell both stated that they were unaware of any NDAs involving the mayor or the city council.

Porten also raised questions about the wastewater management plan for the Data Center, particularly regarding the large amounts of industrial wastewater that could be generated. He referenced estimates ranging from 300,000 to 1 million gallons per day and asked how these figures could be determined without a finalized building design. In response, Smith acknowledged the complexity of the issue and referred to Kimley-Horn, the engineering firm overseeing the project, for more details. Kimley-Horn explained that the facility’s wastewater treatment system is designed to handle specific volumes of water depending on the project scenario. Under Scenario 1, the wastewater treatment facility is expected to handle 30,000 gallons per day of domestic wastewater, which would not require an expansion of the existing system. Scenario 2, which involves industrial cooling water, would produce about 26,000 gallons per day of domestic wastewater and an additional 9.4 million gallons of cooling water wastewater annually. The facility's current infrastructure can accommodate this load, with the cooling water being treated through a Rapid Infiltration Basin that operates only from April to October, when cooling systems are active.

Kimley-Horn further clarified that while they have an NDA with their client, they are not aware of any other NDAs related to the project. Additionally, while the firm is familiar with the general layout and maximum square footage of the proposed Data Center, no official site plan has been finalized yet.

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## Hampton City Council Meeting

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Porten's questions highlight ongoing concerns about transparency, project planning, and the impact on local infrastructure, and the responses from city officials and Kimley-Horn help clarify some of the logistical aspects, although key details, such as the full site plan, remain under development.

### Ordinances and Resolutions:

**Resolution 2024 \_\_ (17) Adopting the Final 2024 Tax Levy, Collectible in 2025** – Motion by Russell, seconded by Huddleston, to approve the final 2024 tax levy, collectible in 2025, the amount of 326,509. All voted in favor. None opposed. Motion passed 3-0.

**Resolution 2024 \_\_ (18) Providing for the Redemption and Prepayment of a Portion of the General Obligation Improvement and Utility Revenue Bonds, Series 2019A** – Motion by Russell, seconded by Huddleston. All voted in favor. None opposed. Motion passed 3-0.

**Resolution 2024 \_\_ (19) Authorizing the Issuance and Sale of \$2,510,000 General Obligation Water Revenue Bonds, Series 2024A, Providing for Their Issuance and Pledging for the Security Thereof Net Revenues** – Motion by Russell, seconded by Huddleston. All voted in favor. None opposed. Motion passed 3-0.

### Reports of Officers, Boards, and Committees:

**Engineer Report** – Brad Fisher from Bolten & Menk provided a detailed update on the ongoing water tower project. He mentioned that the signed contracts with contractors have been received, and the next step is for the city to execute them. A pre-construction meeting is scheduled for later this week to review the contractor's proposed schedule, discuss material procurement, and plan for submittals. A key challenge in the project will be managing the lead times for the materials needed, which will impact the overall timeline.

The project has a final completion deadline in spring 2026, but the bulk of the construction is expected to be completed by late fall 2025. The contractor will work within the contractual deadlines, which include significant milestones for utility work along Lincoln Street, particularly water main and sanitary sewer extensions. These tasks are important as they directly affect local residents. Fisher explained that while the schedule is still in development, they are likely to have a better sense of whether the work will start early or later in the year after the meeting with the contractor.

Fisher also clarified that the construction will not impact the ballpark area. The focus will be on extending Lincoln Street eastward, connecting it to the water tower site. Once the new water tower is constructed and operational, the old one will be decommissioned. This method ensures that there will be no interruption to water service, as the new tower will be fully operational before the old one is removed. This approach avoids the need for a temporary storage tank, which is often required when building a new water tower at the same location as the existing one.

**Water / Sewer Report** – Councilmember Luhning spoke with Mayor Knetter prior to the meeting and he said that there is nothing significant to report regarding water and sewer.

**Park Report** – No new updates with parks. Just waiting for stable cold weather to flood the hockey rinks. Councilmember Russell asks if anyone would like to volunteer and help flood, to get in touch with him.

**Street Report** – There are no new updates. Councilmember Luhning has conducted some drive-bys to check for any raised iron that needs attention. With the upcoming snow plow season, he feels confident that the streets are in good shape for plowing.

One thing to note is that we've received several complaints from residents about parking. These "violations" are more about neighbors being inconsiderate and parking in front of someone's driveway. While it's not something we actively enforce, residents could contact the police if they feel their driveway is blocked. However, it's not an issue the city typically addresses. One resident even requested no-parking signs, but that's not something the city would implement.

### Unfinished Business:

**Engine Brake Ordinance** – Tabled until the next meeting.

### New Business:

**Approve Final 2025 Budget:** Motion by Russell, seconded by Huddleston, to approve the 2025 budget. All voted in favor. None opposed. Motion passed 3-0.

**Debt Service Transfers:** An annual clean up that is done every year on the debt service transfers. The 2012 bond series, the 2015 bond series, and the 2019 bond series, these require water fund, sewer fund, and some general fund contribution to the debt service. The bond payment's on February 1st and August 1st, the numbers are in the council's packets. Motion by Luhning seconded by

Russell to approve the transfers. All voted in favor. None opposed. Motion passes 3-0.

**Adjournment** - Motion by Russell, seconded by Huddleston, to adjourn the meeting. All voted in favor. None opposed. Motion passed 3-0. The meeting adjourned at 8:57 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Kelly Roan

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