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FEBRUARY 5, 2026

Volume 20 • Issue 2

Announcements

**REMEMBER TO RETURN YOUR
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*Keep The Messenger coming!
Thank you for your support!*

- **47th Annual Zumbrota Community Band Spaghetti Dinner Fundraiser, February 14, 2026 from 5:30-8:00 p.m. at Zumbrota VFW.** Free will donation. Meat & vegetarian sauce options available. Gluten-free noodles cooked upon request. Take-out available. Thank you for your support!

- **Celebrate Recovery meetings every Sunday night at 5pm at South Troy Church, 56817 Highway 63 Zumbro Falls.**

- **The Zumbro Valley Food Shelf is located at South Troy Wesleyan Church, 56817 Hwy 63, Zumbro Falls, MN.** The hours are Tuesdays 11:00am-5:00pm and Thursdays 11:00am-6:00pm. Donations and volunteers are greatly appreciated. For more information contact Pastor Colleen Hoeft at 507-259-1442 or choeft52@gmail.com.

- **Three Rivers Community Action is currently accepting new Meals On Wheels clients in the communities of Bellechester, Zumbrota, Mazeppa, Goodhue, Pine Island, Kenyon, Wabasha and Wanamingo.** Receive a hot meal delivered to your home by a volunteer at lunch time up to 5 days per week.

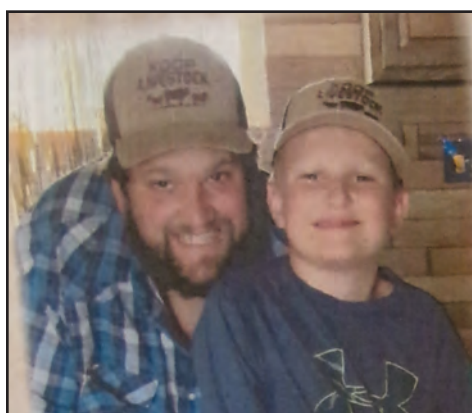
To qualify you must be 60 or older, live within city limits, have limited mobility and/or are unable to prepare nutritious meals. The suggested donation is \$5-\$10 per meal. Please contact Three Rivers at 507-316-0610 or email: oas@threeriverscap.org

Bigger and Better, W.D.'s Reopens

W.D.'s had been an icon in Mazeppa for over a century. The large three story brick building on the corner had been a hotel, bar and restaurant over it's many years on Main

Street. When it was destroyed by fire in the early spring of 2018, along with the building next to it, there was a void in the city.

(continued on page 11)



Benefit for Milton in Zumbro Falls

A benefit in honor for Michael Koop will be held this weekend, Saturday February 7th starting at 11am at the Zumbro Falls VFW.

Michael was a friend and neighbor to many and worked for Central Livestock since he was fifteen years old. He had recently started his own business, Koop Livestock. Micheal passed away from a heart attack on December 17, 2025.

(continued on page 6)

Mazeppa Lions present Winterfest



Mazeppa will be celebrating the annual Winterfest on Saturday February 14th this year.

(continued on page 4)



ZM AAA Award Winners

Congratulations to our ZM AAA Award winners, Cain Lexvold and Breanna Moran. The MSHSL Academics, Arts and Athletics award is given annually to seniors across the state that excel in all three areas. Breanna Moran was also named the Region 1A, Sub-Section 4 winner and is a finalist for the Section AAA award. Congratulations to Cain and Breanna! *Courtesy of ZM Schools*

Zumbro Falls Skating Rink is Open for You to Enjoy





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You are Chosen



By Pastor Colleen Hoeft

You are Chosen- you are chosen, you are chosen, you are chosen, and you are chosen! When you hear those words- how does that make you feel? As a kid- I longed to hear those words- especially in PE. When the teacher chose two students to pick teams- I dreaded seeing how long it would take for someone to choose me. There were sports I wasn't good at- and in our 1 room school we didn't play any 'sports' except softball. (And that was only outdoors for a month or so- and I was only in 3rd grade) So being chosen for a team was horrifying! As the new kid in RCLS and then in Jefferson and then in Kellogg- being chosen last for teams became a regular event. Sadly, there were times I found comfort when another new student would be last instead of me! Until I hit the spring of 6th grade that was the pattern. In PE during 6th grade, I was able to play softball and actually hit it to the outfield! The boys in my class were impressed and began choosing me over some of the more 'popular' girls for softball. And that felt sooooo good!!! Sadly, that only lasted for a little while- but it was fun while it lasted.

No one wants to be an accident. No one wants to be 'forced' onto a team that doesn't want them, no one wants to be picked last! We all want to have the emotional benefit of being chosen: feeling valued, belonging, and fulfilled, which can significantly impact one's mental health and self-esteem. Being chosen often leads to feelings of worthiness and self-acceptance, as it acknowledges one's identity and potential.

Please follow along with me from Ephesians 1:4-5 says, "Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. 5 God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure."

Paul is writing this letter to the believers in the church in the city of Ephesus as he is sitting in a Roman prison. This passage is from a poem Paul writes at the beginning of his letter. It is filled with praising God for all the amazing things the believer has in Christ. Being Chosen from a Biblical perspective encompasses various facets:

- **Purpose:** It indicates a divine assignment. You have a unique calling that serves a greater purpose.
- **Belonging:** It fosters a sense of belonging. You are part of a community working toward a common goal.
- **Accountability:** It comes with responsibilities. Recognizing your status as chosen calls for living righteously and sharing your faith.
- **Reflect on Your Purpose:** Spend time in prayer and meditation. Ask God to reveal your unique role within His plan.
- **Engage with Scripture:** Read biblical passages related to being chosen. This will deepen your understanding and strengthen your faith.
- **Connect with Community:** Join a church or group that shares your values. Surrounding yourself with like-minded individuals enriches your spiritual journey.
- **Share Your Faith:** Use your experiences to encourage others. Sharing stories of how you recognize your being chosen can inspire those around you.

The Greek word 'chosen' in this text liter-

ally means to be selected out from something. It's like being moved from one spot to another one. God has a plan for your salvation even before your birth! His deep desire was and is to move you away from your old lifestyle and bring you into God's love and care. His plan is to move us from our sinful life and give us freedom so that we can be holy and guiltfree. He saw your pain; He saw my pain and chose us! We are chosen. You are chosen!

It feels so good to be chosen! He chose us to be His very own. So when you are feeling down about yourself or are being bullied or if you are feeling the weight of the world as you try to 'measure up'; know that God has chosen you! You are his child. God has chosen us to be holy. Because He chose you, you can be guilt-free. God saw the mess we were in; He saw our pain and our sin and said, "I chose YOU!!!" He has chosen you to be His very own!

Paul is writing that we are chosen, God adopted us and it gives Him great pleasure. You bring God pleasure when you receive Him into your life. It's pretty cool knowing that you and I bring Christ joy! Because we are chosen, because we are his children, we get to enjoy and be filled with His glorious Grace- which only goes to those that belong to Jesus Christ.

Because of Jesus those who weren't Jews believed the wonderful news of Salvation and now every believer is stamped with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit. We each have the Holy Spirit in our lives because of faith in Jesus Christ. He lives in you. He makes you holy, and He removes the sin, the guilt and the shame that holds you back from experiencing the abundant life of grace that Christ has for you.

It is like Jesus has given you an engagement ring- a promise of what is to come. You are chosen, Jesus loves you, and He has come to you with this invitation- please choose to spend your life with me I will give you the Holy Spirit as my commitment- (ring-pledge) I have taken care of your dowry, any price that you may feel you owe, and you are free. The Holy Spirit is with you and will keep you as you choose life with Jesus. God gave each of you that destiny. You only have to say yes. Take confidence in the fact that

You are special.

You are worthy.

You are chosen.

Say yes.... Receive Jesus into your life- Enjoy the overflowing abundance of His grace in your life. Be filled today with the Holy Spirit.

South Troy Church wants to invite children age 4 years old-5th grade to join us.

First Wednesday VBS
The first Wednesday of each month from 6-7:30pm.

This is a monthly Vacation Bible School format filled with God's word, some crafts, fun and a meal.

January-April the Armor of God:

- March 4: Gospel of Peace
- April 1: Shield of Faith
- May 6: Helmet of Salvation and Sword of the Spirit



AREA CHURCH DIRECTORY The Newness of Eternal Life

God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

— John 3:16

The newness we celebrate at the start of each year pales in comparison to the ultimate newness we receive through Christ. Eternal life isn't just about a future promise; it's about a present reality that transforms how we live today. When we embrace the newness of eternal life, we accept that we are part of something far greater than ourselves—an unshakable kingdom that will never fade.

I remember when I first understood this truth fully. It wasn't until a hard season in my life that I truly grasped what it meant to have eternal life through Jesus. I realized that no matter what happened in the world or in my circumstances, the gift of eternal life could not be taken away. This profound shift in perspective gave me the peace that surpasses understanding. I knew I had a hope beyond what this world could offer.

Eternal life changes everything. It shifts our values, our priorities, and even the way we see hardship. Each day becomes a step closer to the fulfillment of God's promises. So when the trials of life come, we can face them with the confidence that we are secure in the love of God, which never ends.

As we conclude this devotional journey, let's remember that the newness we experience now is just a foretaste of the life we have in Christ that will never fade but last forever!

Lord, thank you for the gift of eternal life. Help us to embrace your love and the hope you have given us, trusting in your promises. Amen.

Email your church announcements, schedule, etc. to the Mazeppa-Zumbro Falls Messenger at: hometownmessenger@gmail.com

TRINITY LINCOLN LUTHERAN CHURCH

Pastor Dan Reich
507-753-2576 • 35933 Cty. Rd. 17, Lake City, MN
Sunday Worship at 10:00 a.m.

ST. PETER AND PAUL CATHOLIC CHURCH

222 1st Ave S., Mazeppa
507-843-3885
Sunday Mass 10:00 a.m.

ST. PATRICK CATHOLIC CHURCH

Hall 507-753-2424, West Albany
Sunday Mass 8:00 a.m.
Wednesday Mass 7:00 p.m.

ST. JOHNS (BEAR VALLEY) LUTHERAN CHURCH

Pastor Dan Reich • 507-753-2576
Sunday Worship 8:30 a.m.

IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH (POTSDAM)

Pastor Dean Zemple
7134 Highway 246 NE, Elgin, MN
Sunday worship at 9:15 a.m.
(Bible class at 8:15 during the school year)

LANDS LUTHERAN CHURCH

Pastor: David Krinke, Email: pastordavid@landslutheran.org
Pastor: Nikki Rockne, Email: pastornikki@landslutheran.org
P O Box 225/16640 Hwy 60 Blvd, Zumbrota, MN (507) 732-5482
Web Site: www.landslutheran.org
Facebook: Lands Lutheran Church
Sunday services 8:30 am Contemporary Worship
10:30 am Traditional Worship

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Pastor Dave Neil
180 2nd Ave NE, Mazeppa • 843-4962
Sunday Service 10:30 a.m.

ZUMBRO COMMUNITY CHURCH

Dave Mohler
58354 Cty. Rd. 7, Zumbro Falls
Sunday Service 10:30 a.m.; Sunday Evening 6:30 p.m.
Wednesday Evening 7:00 p.m.

SOUTH TROY WESLEYAN CHURCH

Pastor Colleen Hoeft
56187 Hwy. 63, Zumbro Falls
www.southtroywesleyan.org • 507-259-1442
Sunday 10:30a.m.
Sunday 5:00p.m. Celebrate Recovery - 5pm- meal, 5:45 large group and 6:30 small groups.
Wednesday Kids and Teen worship at 6pm - meal at 6, followed by worship and small groups.

ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Pastor Dean Zemple
80 3rd Ave. S., Hammond, MN
Sunday worship at 11:00 a.m.
(Bible class at 12 noon during the school year)

ST. JOHN'S MAZEPPA

Pastor Al Horn • 507-843-5302
Sunday School 9:45 a.m.
Sunday Worship 10:45 a.m.
Wednesday Night Bible Study 7:00 p.m.

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF ORONOCO

20 - 3rd St. SW, Oronoco, MN
507-367-4711 • www.oronocochurch.org
10:00a.m. Worship



Mazeppa-Zumbro Falls Messenger

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**SUPPORT
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Carl “Kelly” Edward Larson

Carl “Kelly” Edward Larson, 88, of Mazeppa, passed away at Mayo Clinic Health Systems – St. Mary’s Campus, on Saturday, January 3, 2026. He was born to Tilden and Viola (Ihrke) Larson on December 1, 1937 in Pine Island Township, Minnesota. Kelly started work at M.J. Hart & Son Chevrolet in 1955 as a mechanic. He also drove busses for the Mazeppa School District and was the bus mechanic



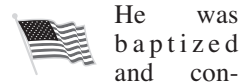
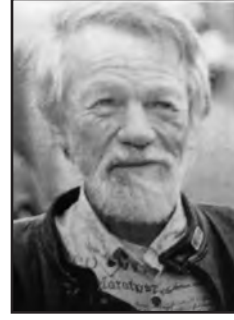
while working there. In April of 1959 Kelly & co-workers bought out Hart and renamed the business to L&R Sales and Service. Kelly married Joyce Mehrkens on May 30, 1959. After over 14 years of partnership, Kelly bought out his co-owner and renamed his business to Kelly’s Sales & Service. In 1978, he bought a farm in Mazeppa, where he moved in with Joyce and their children. Kelly ran the farm and the business until 1997, where he sold the business and focused on the farm. He would still occasionally help out at the business even after he sold it. Kelly continued to run the farm until 2009, where he had a farm auction and retired. He was a volunteer firefighter with the Mazeppa Fire Department for many years.

Kelly is survived by his loving wife Joyce; his daughters Jennifer (Joseph) Flowers, and Julie (James) Burdick; 4 grandchildren and 8 great-grandchildren.

He is preceded in death by his parents; and son, Kevin Larson.

Martin Robert Franz

Martin Robert Franz age 77, was called home by his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ on January 26, 2026. He was born on September 4th, 1948 to Vernon and Ruby Franz at St. Marys Hospital in Rochester, MN.



He was baptized and confirmed at Trinity Lincoln Lutheran Church, rural Lake City, MN. He grew up in Zumbro Falls, MN and graduated from Lincoln High School, in Lake City. After high school he enlisted in the Army under the ‘buddy plan’ with a good friend of his they left March 26, 1968 for boot camp in Ft. Campbell, KY. Marty’s only brother, Richard, was in the Air Force and at the time was stationed in Vietnam. Marty’s tour to Vietnam was delayed by 3 months, until his brother was back in the states. He flew into Nam on the 4th of July and stayed for 9 months. He received an honorable discharge and returned home in March 1970. He was lifetime member of the VFW Post 1802 in Zumbro Falls, and a member of the American Legion of Mazeppa.

He met and married Linda Lane in 1971, at Trinity Lincoln Lutheran Church and they lived in the Zumbro Falls area all their lives. Initially Marty and a friend started their own business of moving and setting up mobile homes. Shortly after, having his own toter, he went to work for Rochester Mobile Homes for four years, moving homes that they sold. In 1978 he went to work for Laursen’s Mobile Home Sales in Rochester. Moving and setting up the homes that were sold from the inventory. He enjoyed the variety of tasks the job entailed and the benefit of working outdoors. Even though it was hot, tedious,

and a lot of crawling on his hands/knees. He would, at times, help with odd jobs on their large farm when needed. Some of which included branding of the long horn cattle, building fence, assisting with the beautiful Belgin horses. Loading them into the semi along with a wagon to participate in large parade events across the country.

Laursen’s sold the mobile home sales part of their business in 1991. Marty continued to work for them, as manager of the two mobile home parks they owned in Rochester. In 2017 they sold the largest mobile home park, Hallmark Terrace. Marty retired in 2018 having worked a total of 38 years for a wonderful business entity, and boss.

He loved to hunt and fish and traveled several years out west hunting elk, mule deer and once to the Alaskan Tundra for caribou. He also took many trips up north, and into Canada fishing. He also made several trips to ‘Sturgis’. He was an avid reader of many books on the Vietnam war and especially liked books about WWII. He had 5 uncles on his father’s side that were in WWII at the same time, one of which was at Pearl Harbor. God brought all of them safely home.

He is survived by wife, Linda, of 55 years, son Dustin Franz, daughter, Dana Briggs, Grandchild, C.J. Briggs all of Rochester area. Brother Richard Franz (Myra) of Rapid City, SD, Nephews Barry Franz of Layton, UT, Terry Franz (Heather) of Rochester, and Niece Julie Modisette (Brad) of Baytown, TX.

He was preceded in death by his parents.

Christian Funeral Service was held at 10 am on Thursday, January 29, 2026 at Trinity Lincoln Lutheran Church, RR, Lake City. (3 miles north of Zumbro Falls) with a Christian burial at Pleasant Dale Cemetery with military honors. (3 miles South of Zumbro Falls). Lunch followed at the VFW Post 1802 in Zumbro Falls.

Memories and condolences of Marty may be shared at rochestercremationservicesmn.com

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We meet Sundays at 5 pm
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Schedule for meetings:

- Supper at 5:00 pm
- Large group meeting: 5:45 - 6:30 pm
- Small group meeting: 6:30 - 7:00 pm

Celebrate Recovery is a safe place to find healing for your hurts, hang-ups and habits.
Begin your journey today!

Questions?
Contact Pastor Colleen Howell at celebratercovery@southtroy.org or 507.258.1442. Visit southtroywesleyan.org for more information.

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Thank you

The family of Marty Franz, would like to direct a heartfelt thank you the VFW Post 1802 in Zumbro Falls, and the Mazeppa Honor Guard for enduring the bone chilling cold and wind to give him a final honor. (He would often tell the family, “Just throw me in the ditch when I die.”) Like that was going to happen.

Son, Dustin, and friends dug his grave, and cleared the snow so we didn’t have to delay the burial. For that we are grateful.

Much respect, honor, and appreciation for his personal doctor, and fishing buddy, Dr. Steve Adamson, who made house calls regularly.

The same to Pastor Reich who made regular visits to the hospital and at the house, in support of Marty’s spiritual health.

May God Bless you one and all.

Snowmobile Show and Ride Planned for February 7th

This Saturday, February 7th, will be the annual vintage snowmobile ride and show in Goodhue. Registration starts at 10am with the show from 11am to 1pm. Judging will commence at 1pm with trophies and cash for several categories as well as door prizes.

A ride will follow the show making a scenic fifteen mile look to Bellechester and back again.

All sleds are welcome and one may enter the show for a donation of \$10.00 or \$25.00 for a family. Food and beverages will be available throughout the day and the event is sponsored by the Goodhue-Bellechester Rail Riders club.



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Trip Details:

Wednesday, March 18

Depart Zumbrota: 9:45 AM

Return: Approx. 5:00 PM

Cost: \$94 per person

Includes bus transportation, lunch & theatre ticket

Register by Monday, March 2

Call the Zumbrota-Mazeppa Community Education Office 507-732-4244.

Sit back, relax, and enjoy a wonderful day of classic country music, great food, and stress-free travel! *Courtesy of Zumbrota-Mazeppa Community Education*



Mazeppa Lions present Winterfest

(continued from page 1)

The Mazeppa Lions Club Double Elimination Bean Bag Tournament fundraiser begins at the American Legion Hall with a 12:30pm registration and draw for partners at 1pm. \$10 entry with a 50% payback and 50% to the Mazeppa Lions Club.

Silent Auctions at W.D.'s begin at 3pm and continue until 7:30pm. Included are a couple half hogs, donated by Holden Farms, a quarter beef donated by Lexvold Farms. There will be live auctions for deck parties, misc. prizes and Mystery Bags at 7:45pm

Mazeppa Lions Club Bar Bingo will start at 6pm sharp at W.D.'s and children are welcome.

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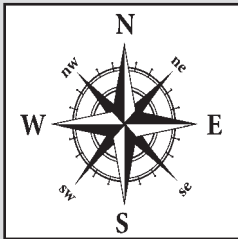


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Changes in Latitudes, Changes in Attitudes

Vacation Funland or Fraud



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.

Timeshares, we all have heard of them. Most have heard bad things about them. I owned one forty years ago when I had young kids. I paid \$6,800 for one week in Florida. We used it twenty-years and it worked out to \$120 per night. Couldn't get hotel for that price. Gave it to my ex-wife so I no longer owned it.

So, this year we rented the same vacation

villa for \$99 per night when we visited Disney World. We love the condo, the pools, the location, the restaurants and amenities on site. A great deal for \$99 per night. Then they offered us \$200 to attend their sales presentation. Only 90 minutes of our time. That is where it went off the rails. First of all, my wife and I knew there wasn't a snowball's chance on a Florida beach we were buying. The sales guy wasn't aware of that. He hadn't been told that some tourists weren't gullible.

They fed us breakfast, they gave us the tour, we saw the kids arcade, water park, paddle boats on the lake, bar and restaurants. They said no pressure, if it wasn't for us to not even consider buying. They wouldn't even tell us the price, just said that it would pay for itself. We would save so much money, our vacation would be almost free. It was a legacy to hand down for generations. Then a closer stepped in and was going to clinch the sale. She said to forget that "pinky" promise we made before we came that we would not buy.

All of this fanfare and we were shown the price. \$39,900 for one week per year. Why, this was an investment better than any we had ever seen. We should pull our money out of whatever we were vested in and place it with them. And maintenance and taxes were only an additional \$1,500 per year.

I am a farmer and I have hauled a lot of manure and have never seen this much shoveled out in such a short time. I replied that my investments made over 14% last year and that \$40,000 would generate \$5,600. Add in the \$1,500 maintenance fee each year and I was



throwing away \$7,100. I could rent the condo for \$700 a week and have \$6,400 to spend on vacation a week without risking a cent of my principal. Poor sales kid was speechless. They called in the boss.

This guy was certain he had us with a \$10,000 price reduction. We didn't even flinch. Then because, I had once been an owner he said he would sell us this unit for the incredible price of \$15,000. We still didn't blink an eye. He lowered his voice and said that for this hour only and never again offered, we could steal it for the measly sum of \$8,900. Three strikes and this guy's pitch was over.

By this time, we were three hours into the presentation and my wife had a spa appointment, she had booked the day before, in half an hour. So, we stood up to leave. A short

woman with long black hair stormed onto the scene. She was the clincher, all business, she was going to save the day, she was their last hope, she would make the sale. When she realized we were leaving she became rather insolent, demanding extra time to speak to us. I said we have a prior engagement and we were going. She looked right at me with fire in her dark eyes and scolded me for scheduling something the day of the presentation. I replied that her 90-minute presentation ended an hour and a half ago and walked away. Still part of me wished we could have stayed to have seen just how low they were willing to go.

We will go back again, we love the facilities. For \$99 a night it is a great deal. And after all, they will pay you \$200 to sit thru the ordeal.

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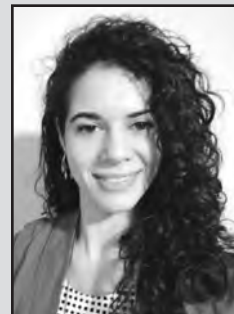
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A Minnesotan: Cats



By RosaLin Alcoser

Growing up in rural Minnesota cats were mainly an outdoor animal that sponged into existence in barns. Yes, there were plenty of people who had house cats, but the ones I saw were mainly outside cats.

Working cats who knew how to survive out in the world. And who may or may not scratch you if you got too close depending on the cat. Not indoor cats of leisure like all city cats appear to be.

My family did not have any cats; inside or outside. Mainly due to the fact that half of the family unit was allergic to them. We were a combination inside outside dog

family; the combination really depended on the dog. Since our first dog basically refused to come inside until she was quite old and my parents current dog panics if she accidentally gets left outside alone.

My husband, however, is from a cat family and he has two inside cats; because we live in the cities and outside cats are not a thing here. Which means that I now have two cats for the first time in my entire life. And I don't mean that they are a cat family like my family is a dog family. Where we have a dog and we love it because it's part of the family. I mean they are a cat obsessed family who takes their cats to the cabin with them and has cat images everywhere. It doesn't even have to be their cats or past cats, it just has to be a cat, and can be on literally anything.

I do like cats and I absolutely love our specific two cats; and with the cold weather we've been having, I am very glad that they don't need to be taken outside. There have been things that I have had to learn though to live with in order to live with indoor nonworking cats. Such as they will stand on us in our sleep and if they choose to sleep on your lap you're just sitting in that chair until they get off on their own.

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Farm Girl Chatter The Ones That Have Taught Me Life Lessons and True Love

By McKell Lemmerman

This article is dedicated to the animals that shape a farmer's life and give meaning to the work done before sunrise and after dark. While family and friends are essential, the deeper connection often lives in the pasture and the barn. It can be found in frost-lined fences at dawn, in the creak of a barn door opening, and in the quiet sound of hooves shifting. For many farmers, animals are the reason the day begins early and ends late. They are constant companions—silent speaking with no words back to you, but always present.

Many farmers, like me, grew up around animals, yet it is often with age and experience that their true value becomes clear. Farming teaches responsibility early, but devotion is learned over years of repetition. They depend on us whether the winter wind strikes through a coat, or the summer dust clings to our sweaty skin. They wait for us, they trust us, and they require our consistency. In your daily routine, you learn patience, and the quiet discipline that defines rural life.

Horses are often dismissed as “hay burners,” but their worth has never been measured

by profit at my farm. Horses offer something deeper; they bring peace. Stepping into the saddle, feeling the leather between your legs, you escape your reality. There is saying that there is no better view between the ears of the horse, the land stretches wide and open, offering perspective that few other places can. They are the ones who are spirited with attitudes, but when they know you have a hard time, they understand what you are going through. Galloping through the fields, they are the ones who give you the imagination of flying like a bird, arms out, soaring through the sky with the air bouncing off your body. They are the animals that can carry you for miles without hesitation, go through unwanted territory like they are a boy scout wondering about the woods. While horses still serve practical roles, such as helping me gather cattle, their greatest contribution is the calm they bring to an otherwise demanding life.

Then there are the dogs—the always present helpers and loyal shadows. Farm dogs are the hired hands who never ask for wages, just a treat or a good scratch. Farm dogs are up when you are up and go to bed when you go to bed. They follow their owners across every stage from sun baked pastures to snow kissed ground. They are always ready and always watching. A good farm dog understands your routine, the long hard days that are worked. No matter how busy the day becomes, the dog remains.

And finally, the heart of the farm is the cattle. For many farmers, appreciation for livestock grows with time. Calving season brings long nights and early mornings, but also moments that remind farmers why they chose this life. Kneeling in straw as a calf takes its first breath, watching a cow instinctively turn to her newborn. The cow gives a gentle moo of appreciation, thanking the farmer much like a new mother thanking the doctor who helped bring her baby into the world. Farmers help the cows raise these calves through storms and sunshine, knowing each one represents hours of care, effort, and hope—whether it becomes replacement stock or is eventually sold, they all have a purpose. The



cows eventually know your routine and patiently wait at the gate for every meal that is served. They learn your voice and your body language. They know the sounds that follow every action you do. So, when you give a call to the herd that is dispersed in open green fields, they shout back, saying I am here. They know you and because of that they come running, jumping, kicking with joy of excitement to see the person they trust most.

Farmers love their animals not because the work is easy, but because there is a bond built. Loving animals means sore muscles, sleepless nights, and heartbreak when one is

lost. But it also means purpose. These animals shape daily routines and give meaning to the labor that often goes unseen.

In the end, farming is not just about land or livestock. It is about a bond formed through routine, trust, and responsibility—a bond that demands everything and gives back just enough to make it worth it. That is why farmers love their animals: because in caring for them, they find not only their livelihood, but their identity.

Silent appreciation never goes unnoticed from the eyes of your four-legged animals.

Benefit for Milton in Zumbro Falls

(continued from page 1)

The benefit is for his son, Milton, and all proceeds will be held in a trust for the young man.

The benefit will include a meal starting at 11am as well as raffles and a silent auction. You may drop off donations at the Buck Wild Bar & Grill in Zumbro Falls prior to the event.

Got a Great Local News Story?

Tell us about it today!

Email: hometownmessenger@gmail.com

Wabasha County Farmers Union to Host Deer Management Meeting February 19 at Plainview American Legion

PLAINVIEW, Minn. – Wabasha County Farmers Union is hosting a public meeting on Feb. 19 for residents to share information about the deer population in southeastern Minnesota with officials from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

The meeting is set for 1 to 3 p.m. Feb. 19 at the Plainview American Legion, 215 Third Street S.W., Plainview. Call Wabasha County Farmers Union President Eddie Jostock at (507) 273-7852 for more information.

The Minnesota DNR is also collecting information on deer and deer hunting through Feb. 23 on their website, dnr.state.mn.us/hunting/deer/.

About Minnesota Farmers Union

Minnesota Farmers Union works to protect and enhance the economic interests and quality of life of family farmers and ranchers and rural communities. MFU is a nonprofit membership-based organization. Membership is open to everyone. Learn more and join at www.mfu.org and follow MFU on Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn.

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Three Southeast Minnesota School Districts Partner with Mayo Clinic to Launch Biomedical Equipment Technology Academy (BETA)

Courtesy of Z-M Schools

Rochester, MN — What began as a simple conversation over a cup of coffee three years ago has evolved into a groundbreaking new opportunity for high school students across Southeast Minnesota. This January, students from Dover-Eyota, Pine Island, and Zumbrota-Mazeppa Public Schools participated in the launch of the Biomedical Equipment

Technology Academy (BETA) — an innovative partnership between the College of Biomedical Equipment Technology (CBET), Mayo Clinic, Benchmark, Agiliti, and the Southeast Service Cooperative (SSC).

The BETA program is designed to address a critical workforce need in the biomedical technology field — training technicians capable of maintaining and repairing advanced medical equipment. With the rapid integration of artificial intelligence and sophisticated diagnostic tools in healthcare, the demand for skilled biomedical equipment technicians continues to rise.

Beginning in January, the inaugural cohort included four junior students from each of the three pilot school districts, who are dual-enrolled through CBET to earn an Associate of Applied Science (A.A.S.) degree in Biomedical Equipment Technology while completing their high school education. Students completed most coursework online, paired with regular in-person, cohort-based learning experiences at Mayo Clinic. They also take part in paid internship rotations in departments such as diagnostic imaging and surgi-

cal services — gaining hands-on experience with complex medical technology.

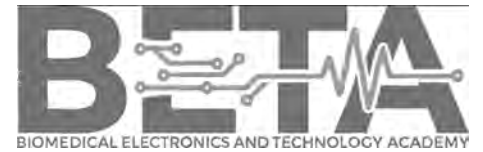
Upon graduation, students will hold an industry-recognized credential, have first-right-of-refusal interview opportunities with industry partners, and be qualified for entry-level positions starting around \$60,000 annually — with no student loan debt.

This program comes at no cost to students or participating districts for the first two cohorts, thanks to shared resources and the collaboration of industry and education partners. The model provides a powerful example of how rural districts can work together to offer specialized career pathways that might otherwise be out of reach.

“Mayo Clinic currently averages 33 open positions per year for biomedical equipment technicians, with roughly 10 remaining unfilled annually,” noted program organizers. “With Mayo’s \$5-billion Bold. Forward. Unbound. expansion underway, this partnership ensures that local students are prepared to step directly into these high-demand, high-skill careers.”

“I’m proud of this newly created academy and the collaboration by so many different stakeholders — all working together to provide new doors of opportunity for our students. It’s a shining example of what can happen when schools, businesses, and higher education unite around a common purpose: creating pathways to success for the next generation,” said Jeremy Frie, Superintendent of Dover-Eyota Public Schools.

“This partnership represents exactly what we want for our students — access to meaningful, future-focused learning that connects



directly to real-world careers,” said Ryan Barnick, Superintendent of Zumbrota-Mazeppa Public Schools. “It’s exciting to know our students can graduate and have an opportunity to step into impactful, high-demand fields right here in our region.”

The BETA initiative represents a bold, cooperative effort to bridge education and industry — ensuring that Southeast Minnesota students have equitable access to advanced MedTech training and meaningful career opportunities close to home.

Recruitment for Cohort 2 will begin later this school year, with participation open to current sophomores from the three partner districts.

About the Partners

College of Biomedical Equipment Technology (CBET): A nationally accredited college based in Texas that provides advanced technical training for careers in biomedical equipment and technology.

Mayo Clinic: A world-renowned healthcare organization committed to advancing patient care, research, and education.

Benchmark and Agiliti: Industry leaders in medical equipment maintenance and technology solutions.

Southeast Service Cooperative (SSC): A regional education service agency supporting collaborative partnerships that expand opportunities for students across southeastern Minnesota.

Mazeppa Historical Society Fundraiser
Drop-off bin at the Mazeppa Community Center parking lot.
THANK YOU for donating!



Historical Happenings

*Compiled by
Helen Reiland*

THE MAZEPPA JOURNAL, Editor and Publisher: Barbara and Reider Tommerraas
FRIDAY, AUGUST 3, 1956

Area Farms Bracing For 1956 Plowville-continued

Darcy for example, operates a 200-acre farm. Volunteer workers will construct seven or eight terraces, build a pond, construct a drop spillway, and fill in gullies. Perrotti's farm will have about 3,000feet of the installed to drain a wet area.

As usual, the Plowville program will include contour and level land plowing matches. The winner of these two contests will be eligible to compete in the national contest to be held in Iowa this year.

Darcy moved on his present farm a year ago last fall but the Darcy family has been in Chester Township for a long time. Don is quite proud of the fact that the Darcy family has been conservation minded for a long time. In fact, it was one of the first to sign up for a program of soil conservation practices.

Like a growing number of farmers, Darcy and Perrotti feel that soil conservation farming is man's remedy for the results of his extravagance. There's a lot hilly land in Chester Township. Consequently you'll find a great deal of contour tillage protecting gentle slopes from erosion.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 10, 1956

Dist. 109 Joins Mazeppa School

Supt. F.G. Eimermann and the board of education have had a busy summer, including remodeling, hiring teachers and attending county commissioners' meeting.

Monday the Goodhue county commissioners at Red Wing set all of Dist. 109 (Maas), into the new district at Mazeppa. The valuation of this one district represents a sizeable part of the Mazeppa total.

Tuesday at Wabasha, the commissioners heard seven petitions of farmers wishing to transfer out of Mazeppa. Part of John Ring's land was set into Mazeppa and part into Lake City.

Wednesday, the Olmsted county commissioners set the farms of William Siems and Amos Ondler from Dist 89 to Dist. 50.

Remodeling on the Munger building has been completed and will house the agriculture and industrial arts departments.

The board decided recently to transport all the children to Mazeppa. In order to accommodate them until a new school can be built, the Dist. 73 (Cliff) and Dist. 54 (Goetsch) buildings will be moved to the local grounds. Each grade will have a separate room. There will be an enrollment of 182 in grades one through six and 140 in the high school.

Vacancies for teachers are now in the process of being filled.

LOCAL MAN TO ATTEND PRIVATE TV MEETING

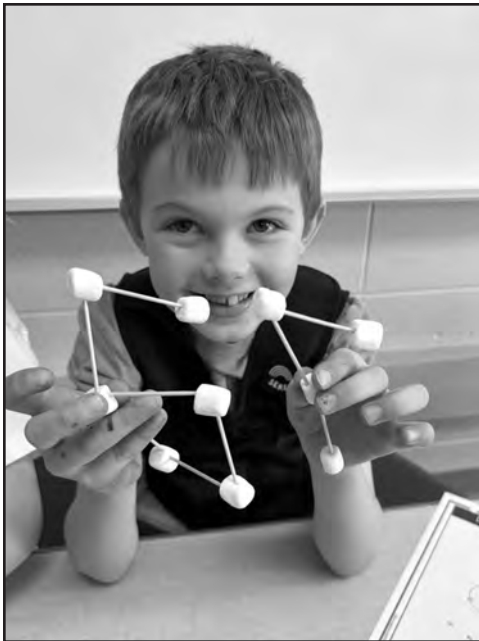
Donald Schreder and other Cargill representatives in this area will meet at the Hotel Leamington in Minneapolis, Aug. 10 to take part in one of industry's newest sales techniques---closed circuit television. A special program will be conducted by Cargill Hybrid Corn for its salesmen, as part of the company's education and research program.

Kuehns, Junior and Senior, Win Trophies



Historical Happenings are taken directly from the archives of the original papers as printed. Any discrepancies need to be taken up the Editor and Publisher of the said papers, who are deceased.

First Grade Astronomy Unit



In January, first graders in Mrs. Fergusons Class learned about constellations and moon phases. They created their own constellations using Marshmallows and toothpicks and moon phases with Oreos. This is part of our Astronomy Unit! *Courtesy of Z-M Schools*

Paraprofessional Week January 19-25

PARAPROFESSIONAL RECOGNITION WEEK

Thank you for your exceptional contribution, dedication, commitment and making a meaningful difference! We appreciate all of you!



Courtesy of Z-M Schools

Attention Incoming 2026-2027 Kindergarten Families!

If you are on our mailing list, keep an eye out—Kindergarten registration information will be arriving soon!

If you'd like to be added to our Kindergarten list or have any questions, please contact Amy at the ZM Primary Office (507-732-7848).

We can't wait to meet our future Kindergarteners at our Open House on April 8th! All the details will be included in your registration packet. *Courtesy of Z-M Schools*

Zumbrota-Mazeppa School District

2026-2027 Kindergarten Registration is Now Open!

We can't wait to meet our future Kindergarteners at our Open House on April 8th! All the details will be included in your registration packet.



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In January, the One-Act crew participated in sub-sections at Triton. They prepared a hilarious show! *Courtesy of Z-M Schools*

22nd Annual
Zumborta - Mazeppa

**EARLY CHILDHOOD
FAMILY EXPO!**

SATURDAY, MARCH 7th - 9:00AM - 11:00AM

Where: Zumbrota-Mazeppa Middle/High School Gymnasium

The free will donation event, for ages 0-5 and their families, highlights various family services that are available in the Zumbrota-Mazeppa community.

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Questions? Contact Megan Anderson at megana@zmsch.k12.mn.us or 507-732-4244

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Bigger and Better, W.D.'s Reopens

(continued from page 1)

The Haugen's plans to rebuild W.D.'s were delayed by construction setbacks from the covid years and permit approvals from the state.

The new restaurant is now more than double the original size and cost nearly \$1 million to complete. The building is a log construction built by an Amish company and the interior finished by local crews.

It is a beautiful facility inside and out and comfortable for large crowds of customers.

The kitchen is open Monday through Friday from 7am to 9pm and weekends 8am to 9pm. Every Wednesday there is Bingo at 7pm and a fish fry on Fridays.



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\$5.00/entry. Tasters will pay \$5.00 to taste all entries/vote.
12:00 PM Bring Entry to City Hall • 12:30 PM-2:00 PM Tasting/Voting
2:30 PM Hot Dish Winner Announced (1st & 2nd Place Payout)
Hosted by Dennison Lions Club

2:45 PM Red Neck Pool "Round One" at Cattlemen's Saloon

4:00 PM Designer Purse & Gift Card Bingo at City Hall
\$30/packet, 10 games, designer purses and \$150 gift card packages

6:30 PM 12th Annual Denni Dazzle Parade \$200.00 Prize for Best Float!
Hosted by the Dennison Lions. Call or text Diane at 612-532-0268

6:45 PM Red Neck Pool "Round Two" at Cattlemen's Saloon

7:00 PM LIVE MUSIC Bryan Anderson at Cattlemen's Saloon

9:30 PM Raffle Winners Announced at Sapphire Cocktail Lounge & Event Center

Flake Out Festival Raffle Saturday, February 7
Buy a Raffle Ticket from any Lions Member, Fireside Lounge, Dennison Depot Gas Station, Cattlemen's Saloon or Heritage Bank in Dennison for \$5.00 for your chance to win!
Grand Prize \$500.00 Cash!
2nd Prize \$250 Cash • 3rd Prize \$100 Cash
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Fertility



By Noel Aldrich, PhD, CNS
Licensed Nutritionist

While you may remember a discussion of “the birds and the bees,” with a parent or in a classroom setting, nothing of that content provides a helpful foundation for how to create a family. A couple can establish a household and have a stable place for raising children, but there are many more factors that go into creating an environment for conceiving a child. The perfect environment seems to be harder to achieve these days as the fertility rate in the USA continues to decline. The Center for Disease Control has documented a continuing decline of fertility since the “baby boom” of the 1950s, and the British Medical Journal published a report in 2025 that the fertility rate in the US had reached an all-time low. Current fertility rates are not able to sustain a stable population. In order to create a perfect environment for conceiving children, a couple must begin with an evaluation of their nutrition.

My personal journey into nutrition began with this question of fertility as my wife and I learned how challenging conception can be. I am very thankful we were directed to a doctor who clearly outlined for us how important nutrition is for establishing a foundation of health that can support the creation of new life. This discovery has changed my life and the life of my family, which now includes two healthy young adult children. As the statistics from the CDC declare, there is an increasing number of couples across the country who need to know this information too.

Healthy conception is a team effort dependent on the health of the man and the woman. Sperm and egg quality reflect the quality of food that has been consumed in the past six months. In fact, the study of epigenetics points to the impact a grandparent’s diet will have on the grandchild. The children of the “baby boom” were the result of family food practices that involved gardens and farm fresh foods. Very little processed food existed in the 1950s compared to what is on the store shelves today. But as processed foods, preservatives, fast foods, and sugar have increased in the nation’s food supply, the fertility rate has decreased due to decreased sperm and egg quality.

As my wife and I discovered, there are opportunities to select quality food sources and nutrition supplements that will heal the body and restore fertility. A few of those choices include:

Add healthy fats – Do not purchase any

product with “low fat” on the label. Healthy cells egg and sperm cells require quality fats to function well. Whole milk yogurt, whole fat cheese, wild caught fish, eggs, Olive oil, and coconut oil are good examples of healthy fat sources. These whole food sources should be a part of each day to help promote the stable production of hormones that will direct the conception process.

Add protein to each meal – Protein provides the building blocks to make new tissue and new cells. Protein should come from whole food sources like poultry, fish, meat, beans, nuts, and cheese. Avoid protein powders as there can be additives and these products are more expensive forms of protein.

Add fresh vegetables each day – Fresh vegetables will provide the vitamins, minerals, and additional nutrients that will help the sperm and egg to function properly. Dark leafy greens like kale, collard greens, chard, and broccoli are rich in folate and minerals. Make an effort to add a rainbow of colors to your plate with carrots, red onion, cabbage, bell peppers, and black olives. Each color represents a different set of nutrients delivered to fertility system.

Within these primary food categories are important nutrients that sustain healthy fertility and a stable environment for a growing baby. Key nutrients for fertility include: Omega-3 fatty acids, folate, zinc, selenium, iodine, Vitamin D, iron, Vitamin C, Vitamin E, Vitamin B12, and choline. Both the male and female need to give attention to consuming these nutrients to improve fertility and give the next child the best chance of a healthy start. Your grandchildren in the future are affected by your diet now.

I enjoy helping couples develop a healthy food plan for their households that result in greater health and stronger families. Contact me to discuss your health goals for the com-

ing year. Nutrition is designed for healing. I can help you reach greater health freedom in 2026.

Contact me at
nutritionproportion@gmail.com, or check out

my website at www.nutritionproportion.net

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

Wabasha County Public Health Spotlight Self-Care Isn’t Selfish

BY KARLI GOODMAN, BSN, RN, PHN

As we are navigating the second month of the New Year, many of us are focusing on resolutions, fresh starts, and plans for the month ahead. February also marks Self-Check Month, a nationwide reminder encouraging people of all ages to pause, pay attention to their health, and take steps that can make a big difference.

In rural communities where long drives, busy schedules, and limited health resources can make regular check-ups challenging, self-checks serve as an important first line of defense. Self-Check Month promotes the idea that knowing your own body, and noticing changes early, can help prevent issues from becoming larger health concerns.

A 2020 study published by The BMJ found that 17.5% of emergency department visits could have been prevented by early detection of symptoms. Something as small as checking blood pressure at home once per week or noting changes in appetite, mobility, sleep, or mood, can create an early warning signal that prompts timely care and a phone call to your primary care doctor. Health professionals across rural Minnesota encourage community members to use January as a time to reset. “Checking in on your own health doesn’t have to be complicated,” says one local nurse. “If something feels off, don’t ignore it. Early care is always easier than emergency care.” Clinics, pharmacies, and home care providers all echo the same message: if you’re unsure about a symptom, bring it up. There are no “unimportant” questions when it comes to your health.

Wabasha County Public Health nurses recommend taking 10 minutes per week to check-in with yourself. Follow these steps to get you started:

• How’s My Breathing?

Notice if you’re more short of breath than usual when doing normal things like walking to the mailbox or getting dressed.

• Look for Swelling

Check ankles, feet, and hands for increased puffiness or tightness in the skin

• Do I Have Energy?

Feeling more tired than usual for several days in a row can be an early warning sign

• Have I Been Eating and Drinking?

Think about if you have had a poor appetite or haven’t been drinking enough in the last few days. Are you nauseous or just not hungry?

• Bathroom Habits

Are you going to the bathroom regularly, more than normal, or less than normal?

• Check Your Balance

Notice if you feel more unsteady, dizzy, or like you might fall. Falls are a major reason people end up in the emergency room.

• Skin Checks

Look for new sores, rashes, redness, bruises, or pressure spots.

• Mood and Memory

More confusion, forgetfulness, or sudden personality changes can be early warning signs, not just “signs of aging.”

Self-Check Month isn’t just about individuals—it’s also about neighbors helping neighbors. In close-knit communities, small gestures can make a big difference. Checking on a neighbor, reminding a friend to refill medications, or offering a ride to an appointment can help prevent serious health problems. Social connection also plays a role in overall health. Studies show that people with strong community ties tend to live longer and experience fewer complications from chronic illness.

Self-Check Month serves as a simple but powerful reminder: taking a few minutes to pay attention today can help prevent bigger problems tomorrow. Whether it’s scheduling a long-overdue check-up, taking daily measurements, or simply being more in tune with your body, these small steps support a healthier, more independent life. Self-Care isn’t selfish. Make time to put your well-being first. And while you’re at it, check on a neighbor too—because in rural communities, we stay healthier when we look out for one another.





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Yes! Cold Weather Does Make You Ache More!



By Shauna Burshem, D.C.

Here it is. The answer to the most asked question during winter months pertaining to aches and pains: Cold weather exacerbates arthritis symptoms by affecting joint fluid, circulation, and muscle flexibility. As temperatures drop, the synovial fluid in joints

thickens, making movements feel stiff and painful. Reduced blood flow and tightened muscles further amplify discomfort, while shorter days and less sunlight contribute to inactivity and vitamin D deficiency, weakening bones and increasing inflammation. These combined factors make winter particularly challenging for those with arthritis, as the body struggles to adapt to the seasonal changes.

Barometric pressure drops during cold weather also play a significant role in worsening arthritis pain. When the pressure decreases, tendons and muscles expand, creating additional strain on already inflamed joints. This internal pressure makes joints feel tighter and more sensitive, often causing discomfort even before a storm arrives. Additionally, poor circulation in cold temperatures slows the delivery of oxygen and nutrients to joints, delaying recovery and heightening stiffness, especially in weight-bearing areas like the knees and hips.

Lifestyle changes during winter, such as reduced physical activity and dietary shifts, further contribute to joint pain. Inactivity weakens muscles, reducing their ability to support joints and increasing friction and stiffness. Immune system overactivity in colder months can also intensify inflamma-

tion, particularly in autoimmune conditions like rheumatoid arthritis. However, proactive measures like regular movement, heat therapy, and maintaining a nutrient-rich diet can help counteract these effects and improve joint health.

Nutrition and supplementation are crucial for managing arthritis symptoms in winter. Optimizing vitamin D and K2 levels strengthens bones and reduces inflammation, while consuming anti-inflammatory foods supports overall joint health. Warm bone broth, rich in collagen and cartilage-repairing compounds, nourishes joints and improves circulation. Avoiding inflammatory seed oils and replacing them with healthier fats like grass-fed butter or ghee can also reduce oxidative stress and support cellular health, further alleviating joint discomfort.

Daily movement, heat therapy, and sunlight exposure are essential strategies for staying active and pain-free during winter. Gentle exercises like yoga, stretching, or indoor walking keep joints lubricated and improve circulation. Heat therapies, such as warm baths or saunas, relax stiff tissues and restore flexibility. By combining these practices with proper nutrition and self-care, individuals with arthritis can reduce winter flare-ups, maintain mobility, and confidently navigate

the colder months.

Improve Mental Health; Reduce Social Media time: A recent study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association AMA Network Open revealed that reducing social media use to approximately 30 minutes per day can significantly improve mental health. The research found that participants experienced a 16% reduction in anxiety, a 25% decrease in depression, and a 15% drop in insomnia symptoms. However, loneliness scores remained largely unchanged, highlighting the dual role of social media as both a source of connection and stress. These findings align with earlier studies, such as those from the University of Bath, which demonstrated that even a one-week break from platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook can enhance well-being, though such short resets are not substitutes for therapy or medical care.

The study, which tracked 373 young adults aged 18 to 24, used a digital phenotyping app to measure real-time social media usage and its effects on mental health. Participants were monitored over three weeks, including a one-week "detox" period where nearly 80% voluntarily reduced their social media use from 1.9 hours to just 30 minutes daily. During this detox, participants reported significant improvements in mental health, particularly those with severe symptoms at the start. Depression scores dropped by nearly 50% for those with moderate-to-severe depression, while anxiety and insomnia symptoms also saw notable reductions. Researchers attributed these benefits to reduced opportunities for negative social comparisons and addictive behaviors rather than simply cutting overall screen time.

Interestingly, the study found that behavior changes during the detox were subtle, with participants spending slightly more time at home and maintaining similar overall phone usage. This suggests that the type of content consumed on social media, rather than the total time spent, plays a more critical role in mental health outcomes. Experts emphasized that interventions targeting problematic engagement, such as late-night scrolling or unhealthy comparisons, may be more effective than focusing solely on reducing screen time. While the study's short-term nature limits its ability to predict long-term outcomes, it highlights the potential of brief digital detoxes as a practical mental health strategy for young adults.

Mental health professionals have praised the study for its robust methodology and impactful results. Psychologist Mitch Prinstein of the American Psychological Association noted that the improvements observed in just one week rival those typically achieved after 8 to 12 weeks of therapy. However, experts caution that such detoxes should be approached thoughtfully, especially for individuals who rely on online communities for support. Planning and consulting with a trusted health professional can help integrate these experiments into broader mental health care. Ultimately, the study underscores the importance of mindful social media use and its potential to positively influence mood, sleep, and overall well-being.

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

The Savvy Senior How to Turn Down the Volume on Tinnitus



By Jim Miller

Dear Savvy Senior,

What treatments are recommended to help with tinnitus? I started noticing a subtle ringing in my ears about 10 years ago, but it's gotten much more bothersome since I turned 60.

Ringin' Ronnie

Dear Ronnie,

Tinnitus is actually one of the most common health conditions in the country. According to the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders around 10 percent of the U.S. adult population – over 25 million Americans – experience some form of tinnitus.

For most people tinnitus is merely annoying, but roughly 5 million people struggle with chronic tinnitus and 2 million find it debilitating.

While there's no cure, there are a range of different strategies you can employ to reduce the symptoms to make it less bothersome. Here's what you should know.

What is Tinnitus?

Tinnitus (pronounced TIN-a-tus or tin-NIGHT-us) is the sensation of hearing a ringing, buzzing, roaring, hissing or whistling sound in one or both ears when no external sound is present.

The sounds, which can vary in pitch and loudness, are usually worse when background noise is low, so you may be more aware of it at night when you're trying to fall asleep in a quiet room.

Tinnitus itself is not a disease, but rather a symptom of some other underlying health condition. The best way to find out what's causing your tinnitus is to see an audiologist, or an otolaryngologist – a doctor who specializes in ear, nose and throat diseases (commonly called an ENT). The various things that can cause tinnitus are:

Hearing loss, which is the most common cause.

Middle ear obstructions usually caused by a build-up of earwax deep in the ear canal.

Side effects of many different prescription and over-the-counter medicines like aspirin, ibuprofen, certain blood pressure medicines and diuretics, some antidepressants, cancer medicines and antibiotics.

Various medical conditions such as high blood pressure, vascular disease, diabetes, allergies, thyroid problems, ear or sinus infections, Meniere's disease, Lyme disease, fibromyalgia, otosclerosis, temporomandibular joint (TMJ) disorder, a tumor, an injury to the head or neck, traumatic brain injury, depression, stress and more.

Treatment Strategies

There are many ways to treat tinnitus depending on the cause. For example, if your tinnitus is caused by a wax build-up in your ears or a medical condition like high blood

pressure or a thyroid problem, treating the problem may reduce or eliminate the noise.

Or, if you're taking a medication that's causing the problem, switching to a different drug or lowering the dosage may provide some relief. If you have hearing loss, getting a hearing aid can help mask your tinnitus by improving your ability to hear actual sounds.

Another strategy that can help suppress or mask the sound so it's less bothersome is "sound therapy." This can be as simple as a fan or white noise machine, or you can use sound therapy apps like ReSound Tinnitus Relief, myNoise or NatureSpace.

Cognitive behavioral therapy and psychological counseling can also be helpful, as can tinnitus retraining therapy (TNT). This combines counseling and sound therapy to train your brain to ignore the sound in your ears. The new MindEar app offers TNT.

There are even new innovations like the FDA approved device Lenire that uses electrical stimulation of the tongue to alleviate symptoms.

There are also certain medications that may help. While there's no FDA approved drugs specifically designed to treat tinnitus, some anti-anxiety drugs and antidepressants have been effective in relieving symptoms.

Your audiologist or ENT can help you figure out the best treatment options.

Other things you can do to help quiet the noise is to avoid things that can aggravate the problem like fatty foods, salt, artificial sweeteners, sugar, alcohol, tonic water, tobacco and caffeine. Also be sure to drink plenty of water as dehydration can worsen symptoms. And protect yourself from loud noises by wearing earplugs.

Ask A Trooper

By Sgt. Troy Christianson,
Minnesota State Patrol



Question: *I know you were talking about winter safety tips in your last article. Can you go over the items a person should have in their vehicle when traveling in the winter?*

Answer: When assembling a winter travel survival kit, it's best to include a variety of items that prepare you for cold, isolation, and unexpected delays. Even if you keep the kit in your vehicle year-round, review it regularly to make sure everything is in good condition and still in its proper place. A winter travel survival kit should focus on warmth, traction, communication, and basic supplies.

Winter Travel Survival Kit Essentials

Warmth

- Extra blankets or a sleeping bag
- Warm hats, gloves, socks, and scarves
- Hand and foot warmers
- Emergency thermal (space) blanket

Traction & Vehicle Safety

- Ice scraper and snow brush
- Small shovel
- Sand, cat litter, or traction mats
- Tire chains (if appropriate for your area)
- Jumper cables

Communication & Visibility

- Fully charged power bank and charging cables
- Flashlight or headlamp with extra batteries
- Reflective vest or roadside flares
- Whistle for signaling
- Paper and pencil(s) to leave note/message

Basic Supplies

- Non-perishable food and snacks
- Bottled water (rotate to prevent freezing or expiration)
- First aid kit
- Multi-tool or basic tool kit
- Matches or lighter (stored safely)
- Paper towels, tissues, and wet wipes

Additional Helpful Items

- Map of the area (in case GPS fails)
- Emergency contact information
- Duct tape and zip ties
- Tow strap

Keeping these essentials on hand can make a critical difference if you're stranded or delayed during winter travel. Regular checks ensure your kit is always ready when you need it most.

Question: *My husband always used to say "never use your cruise control during the winter months". Is that still true with advances on tires and technology?*

Answer: He is correct, cruise control should

never be used on wet or icy roadways. If your wheels lose traction, the cruise control will continue to accelerate, causing the vehicle to skid. By the time you realize you are skidding, it could be too late.

With dry road conditions, cruise control helps you safely monitor your speed, stay within the speed limit and improve driving comfort on long, fairly straight stretches of road. It should be used only when you are able to drive at a steady speed with safe road conditions.

On icy, snow-covered or wet roads.

When deciding if you should set your cruise control:

- Ask yourself if it's safe to travel the speed limit. If not, it isn't safe to set your cruise.
- Is there limited visibility? If it's foggy, snowing, or raining and your range of visibility is significantly reduced, play it safe. Don't set your cruise.
- Is traffic moving smoothly? If it's stop-and-go, or there's heavy traffic around you, it's not safe to use cruise.

Remember that using your cruise control can be an advantage when driving long distances, but YOU are your vehicle's best safety feature.

Question: *I listened to your radio show the other day and you were talking about fatal crashes were lower last year, what was the break down on the numbers?*

Answer: In 2025, Minnesota saw a significant improvement in road safety, recording 370 traffic-related deaths. This marks the lowest fatality count since 2019 and reflects a 22% decrease from 2024 and 8% percent less than in 2023.

While the overall trend is positive, specific categories show where our roads are getting safer and where challenges remain:

Speed-related fatalities (98) were 29 percent less than in 2024 (138), 43 percent less than in 2021 (171) and the lowest since 2019. Unbelted deaths (70) were 31 percent less than in 2024 (101) and the lowest in the past seven years. Distraction-related deaths (21) were 30 percent less than in 2024 (30), 34 percent less than in 2020 (32) and the lowest in the past seven years. Bicycle fatalities (14) were twice as high as in 2024 (7). The next highest count since 2019 was in 2020 (10). Motorcycle deaths (57) were 25 percent less than in 2024 (76) and the lowest since 2019.

The Minnesota State Patrol remains committed to a dual-pronged approach for 2026. While public education on the dangers of speeding, impairment, and distraction is vital, it must be supported by extra enforcement.

Let's work together to make 2026 the safest year yet. Buckle up, put the phone away, and drive for the conditions.

Question: *I travel a lot and I see a number of people making some poor choices when it comes to passing semis and large vehicles. There is no way these big rigs can stop in time when people do these unsafe maneuvers. Can you write about this?*

Answer: A commercial vehicle is a motor vehicle or a combination of motor vehicles that weighs more than 26,000 pounds and is used to transport passengers or property. Buses, including school buses of all sizes, and smaller vehicles with hazardous materi-

als placards are also considered commercial vehicles.

Before passing a commercial vehicle, make sure you have safe clearance to the side, behind and ahead of your vehicle.

- Passing on a level highway: It takes three to five seconds longer to pass a commercial vehicle than a car. Allow enough time to pass and return to the right lane before coming within 100 feet of oncoming traffic.

- Do not pass: If you plan to exit or turn off the road soon, stay behind the commercial vehicle until you reach the exit.

- Passing while going uphill: Commercial vehicles often lose speed on an upgrade, making them easier to pass than a car.

- Passing while going downhill: Commercial vehicles increase speed on a downgrade. Allow more distance to pass.

- Complete your pass quickly: Do not remain alongside the commercial vehicle. Move back into your lane only when you can see the front of the commercial vehicle in your rearview mirror. Maintain your speed after passing.

- When a commercial vehicle passes you: Keep to the far side of your lane and slightly reduce your speed. Do not speed up while the commercial vehicle is passing.

- Meeting a commercial vehicle from the opposite direction: Stay as far to the right as possible to avoid a sideswipe crash and reduce wind turbulence between the vehicles.



Turbulence will push the vehicles away from each other, not toward each other.

- Judging speed and distance: Because of their large size, commercial vehicles often appear to be traveling slower than they actually are. Many car-commercial vehicle collisions occur at intersections because the driver of the car misjudges the speed and distance of the commercial vehicle.

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)

**Opinions expressed in Letters to the Editor are not necessarily those of The Messenger.*

To the Editor:

As a resident of Wabasha County, I am writing to express concerns about the lack of accountability of certain elected county officials to the County Commissioners, even though county tax revenue is the source of their salaries and fringe benefits.

A prime example is County Attorney Matthew Stinson. To my knowledge, he has never disputed information published in prior newspaper articles. In the absence of correction or rebuttal, it is reasonable to presume that the reporting was factual.

When a government official takes an oath of office, that oath represents a contract with we the people to perform the duties of the position faithfully, within the law, and in the best interest of the public. In the private sector, an employee with a comparable performance record would likely face reprimand or termination. If self-employed, such a record would likely lead to financial insolvency.

Individuals who choose to file or refile for elected county office are fully aware of the responsibilities, salary, and benefits associated with the position. If those terms are unacceptable, they should not seek the position.

The real concern lies in the financial consequences of nonperformance. One of many instances as reported, Mr. Stinson and his office failed to fulfill required duties in 2024, resulting in approximately \$180,000 in additional taxpayer costs to outsource legal services — on top of his full salary. Despite this, he successfully appealed a pay reduction imposed by the County Commissioners and was awarded full compensation by a State District Court, even in light of documented nonperformance.

This approach — using arbitration or litigation during salary disputes — is too often employed by elected county officials, frequently resulting in outcomes favorable to the official while taxpayers absorb the financial burden. Meanwhile, county residents face higher costs through increased property tax levies — most recently a 5 percent increase — as well as rising consumer taxes.

A similar issue has been brought to public attention involving Sheriff Rodney Bartsh, who is reportedly demanding a higher salary increase than what the County Board has offered. Is this matter also be heading toward arbitration? Again, at taxpayer expense?

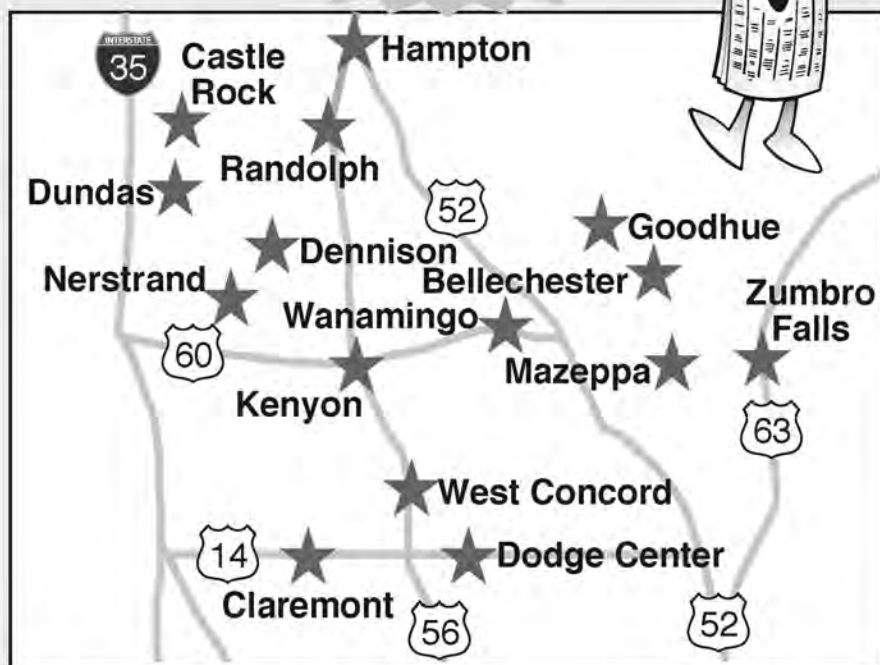
This raises an important question: How do we, the taxpayers, gain accountability?

One possible solution is to urge our state legislators, working with knowledgeable County Commissioners, to draft and pass legislation requiring that all elected county officials be fully accountable to the County Board. The Board should have clear authority to set salaries, fringes and the ability of elected officials to seek arbitration or court intervention over any disputes should be eliminated. This would help prevent continued taxpayer burden and restore accountability in county government.

Respectfully,
Paul Kottschade
Kellogg, MN
507-421-5437

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Honoring the Past, Building the Future



By Benya Kraus
President & CEO Southern
Minnesota Initiative
Foundation

Our state is going through a lot right now. Crisis after crisis has put Minnesota in the national spotlight. What feels even more fraught is the way these crises seem to be tearing apart much of the social fabric that has knitted us together as Minnesotans for decades: a state that has led the nation in civic engagement, a people whose warmth binds us together through the sub-zero months, a team spirit that never gives up on the Vikings, no matter how many times we enter a Super Bowl playoff without them.

In times of crisis, we can choose to fan the fire, to respond with such force that one crisis begets another, to sow suspicion and blame in our neighbor. Or we can choose cooperation. To respond with measured reason, to hold multiple truths at the same time and believe that the solution is better when we work at it together.

And as Minnesotans, we've seen and chosen both paths in our history.

This year, we are celebrating the 40th anniversary of Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation — which is also 40 years since the farm crisis of the 1980s. I remember my uncle Paul driving me around our farm in the four wheeler near Waseca when I was a teenager, pointing out which plots of land

used to be owned by which family. As the farm crisis unfolded, many of those families were forced to sell off land that generations of their ancestors stewarded. Some of those families were lost to suicide. All this was unfolding within the backdrop of the Cold War, where children had learned to practice hiding under desks for fear of nuclear attacks.

The farm crisis of the '80s had the potential to pit neighbor against neighbor, the urban metro benefitting from the gains of globalization while rural communities were shut out of financial markets. Yet, amidst the devastation — a group of Minnesotans came together across urban and rural communities to form the Minnesota Initiative Foundations. With the leadership and financial investment of the Minneapolis-based McKnight Foundation, an endowment fund was set up in each of the six regions of Greater Minnesota as a way to keep as much wealth retained in our rural communities as possible. Residents of each region governed the fund that would impact where they lived, and in those 40 years since, generations of local donors and volunteers chose to invest in a fund where the returns would be distributed to future generations of entrepreneurs, child care providers and community leaders with big ideas to grow their small towns.

Forty years ago in a time of crisis, Minnesota chose cooperation and focused on meeting local need. They made immediate sacrifices in service of future generations they would never meet.

I find myself reflecting on this history now as we prepare to celebrate SMIF's 40th anniversary on April 23, and as my husband and I prepare to welcome our first child in the coming month. The theme of SMIF's anniversary event is "Honoring the Past, Building the Future" — which feels a lot like the weight of impending parenthood as well. As we think through names for our future child, we keep turning to the legacy of our grandparents as inspiration. Do we hope for our child to be strong in faith like Granny Jean and resilient like Khun Yai Somjit? Or perhaps humble like Grandpa Powell and selflessly headstrong like Grandpa Jim? We know the next generation will leave their own distinctive mark on the world in ways we will never be able to predict or control. Yet, how they handle crisis, the responsibility they will hold for their neighbor and community, is not forged in isolation. By looking to our past, to the lives of service that our ancestors led, we can choose to extend their legacy into the futures we build today.

As our state continues to navigate the intensity of today's crises, I hope you will join us in finding new pathways forward beyond today's cultural standstill. We may just find that looking at the past and honoring what it's taught us is the best way we can build a new future together, and for our children.

As always, I welcome your comments and questions. You can reach me at benyak@smi-foundation.org or 507-455-3215.

About Benya Kraus

Benya Kraus is the President & CEO of Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation. Benya is the co-founder of Lead for America and served as the Network Advancement Director at Resource Rural.

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Attorney

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Quorum of the Mazeppa City Council Meeting Minutes Monday, January 12, 2026

A quorum of the Mazeppa City Council was present at a meeting with CRW Architecture Design Group discussing changes to Mazeppa City and Community Center to comply with current Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards, a requirement of the Federal grants received for the wastewater treatment projects. Meeting was called to order at 3:00 PM.

Present: Council Persons Dustin Wiebusch, Erica Young, and Mike Hammes.

Others Present: Administrator Clerk Karl Nahrgang, City Engineer Matt Mohs, CRW Architecture representatives Jason Woodhouse and Veronica Kingston.

Preliminary plans were presented.

No business was transacted.

Motion by Young, second by Wiebusch to adjourn upon exit of quorum. All in favor, none opposed. Carried.

Meeting adjourned at 4:00 PM.
Administrator-Clerk

Regular Meeting of the Mazeppa City Council Meeting Minutes Wednesday, January 14, 2026

The regular meeting of the Mazeppa City Council was called to order at 6:02 PM by Mayor Chris Hagfors.

The Pledge of Allegiance was said.

Present: Mayor Chris Hagfors. Council Persons: Mike Hammes, Erica Young, Dustin Wiebusch, and Steve Liffri.

Others Present: City Attorney Luke Lamprecht, City Engineer Matt Mohs from Bolton & Menk, Wabasha County Sheriff's Sargent Jason Larson, Candidate to represent 20B Brady Rouhoff, Harold Mullholland, and City Administrator-Clerk Karl Nahrgang.

Present via electronic meeting: Holly Galbus from the News Record.

Motion by Young, second by Hammes to

approve the agenda and the addendum. All in favor, none opposed. Carried.

Motion by Wiebusch, second by Young to approve the December 10, 2025, regular Council meeting minutes and the January 12, 2026, quorum minutes. All in favor, none opposed. Carried.

Motion by Young, second by Hammes to approve the agenda and the addendum. All in favor, none opposed. Carried.

Wabasha County Sheriff's Sargent Jason Larson gave the ICR for the month of December.

No Public Works report was submitted.

Administrator-Clerk Karl Nahrgang gave the Fire Department report.

Administrator-Clerk Karl Nahrgang gave the Municipal Liquor Store report.

City Engineer Matt Mohs gave the Engineering update.

Motion by Wiebusch, second by Liffri to approve WWTP pay application 14 for \$248,576.99 All in favor, none opposed. Carried.

Administrator-Clerk Karl Nahrgang gave the City Hall report.

Republican candidate for Minnesota Legislative district 20B, Brady Rouhoff introduced himself to Council and took questions about his potential legislative agenda.

Motion by Young, second by Wiebusch to approve building permits: 25-18-0025 – 171 15Ave. NE – New home. 25-18-0031 - 195 15th Ave. NE – new home. 25-18-0028 – 907 River Bluff Rd. SE – re-side. 25-18-0029 – 1331 River Bluff Rd. SE – new home. 15-18-0030 – 114 3rd Ave. SE – bath remodel w/plumbing changes. All in favor, none opposed. Carried.

2nd Reading of Ordinance 45-1.26 Establishing Fees for 2026 for the City of Mazeppa.

Motion by Wiebusch, second by Young to approve Ordinance 45-1.26 Establishing

Fees for 2026 for the City of Mazeppa. All in favor, none opposed. Carried.

Motion by Wiebusch, second by Liffri to approve Resolution 2026-02 transferring surplus funds to Reserves. All in favor, none opposed. Carried.

Motion by Young, second by Liffri to approve Resolution 2026-03 transferring \$286,601.00 from the Fire Truck fund in City reserves to the City operating fund for purchase of the new Rescue Response unit. All in favor, none opposed. Carried.

Motion by Young, second by Wiebusch, to approve Resolution 2026-01 approving City of Mazeppa appointments for 2026. All in favor, none opposed. Carried.

Motion by Young, second by Liffri to approve the 2026 Pay Equity Report submission. All in favor, none opposed. Carried.

The City has received a donation of \$5000.00 to be directed toward purchasing new streetlamp Holiday decorations.

Motion by Wiebusch, second by Liffri to approve purchasing Holiday decorations for the streetlamps up to \$10,000. All in favor, none opposed. Carried.

Motion by Young, second by Liffri to approve Resolution 2026-04 accepting a donation from the Mazeppa Fire Relief for \$145,000.00. All in favor, none opposed. Carried.

Motion by Wiebusch, second by Liffri to pay the bills and claims. All in favor, none opposed. Carried.

Council thanked the trail committee for their hard work to bring the trail plan to fruition.

Motion by Hammes, second by Young to adjourn the meeting. All in favor, none opposed. Carried.

Meeting adjourned at 7:19 PM.

Administrator Clerk

Zumbro Falls City Council Minutes - December 10, 2025

The Zumbro Falls City Council met at City Hall on Wednesday at 6PM. Present at the meeting were all council members, Fire Chief Scott Kennedy and Representatives for the Greater Lake City Community Foundation, Beth Krehbiel and Peter Coyle.

Mayor Heitmann called the meeting to order. Clerk read previous council meeting minutes which were accepted as read with a motion from Anderson, seconded Winters, all in favor, carried. Treasurer's report followed with acceptance by a motion from Winters, seconded Benson, all in favor carried.

Scott reported to council that the 2026 ZFFD Election results are as follows: Fire Chief - Chris Conrad, Asst. Chief - Ike Klees, Treasurer - Caleb Tesmer, Secretary - Leon Sexton, President - Matt Fick, Vice President - Troy Nibbe, Training Officer - Adam Zich, Assist. Training - Tyler Kaupa, Fire Relief - Matt Fick and Alex Leonard. A motion by council to accept the 2026 new members was made by Anderson, seconded Winters, all in favor, carried. A special thank you to Scott Kennedy for serving our community on the Fire Department for the 26th year and as Chief the last 3 years.

Beth and Peter spoke on behalf of the Greater Lake City Community Foundation about their mission and the continued effort to connect philanthropic resources with communities in need. The council will be looking to explore opportunities to collaborate with the Foundation and appreciated Beth and Peter's visit.

Clerk will send the second notice of 2026 Levy amount to Wabasha County and TIF payment will be sent to Darin Hofschulte in the amount of \$40,707.23 which is 95% of TIF collected for the second half Levy. Cigarette and Gaming licenses applications for 2026 were distributed to city businesses.

A donation to the fire department in the amount of \$300 was accepted by the council, thank you to Naomi Mangold for your generosity.

Additional Thanks to Sara Anderson who did a fantastic job this year with the holiday planters located around town. Thank you Sara!

Meeting was then to adjourn and the clerk to pay bills by a motion from Benson, seconded Anderson, all in favor, carried. Next meeting is set for Jan. 14th, 2026.

Submitted by Blake Hanson, Clerk



**Farm • Crop • Home • Auto
Business • Life • Health**

Ali Peters

200 2nd Street N, Goodhue, MN

651-923-4433

alison@fuinsurance.com



Thank you to those who slow dripped water during the recent cold snap. It helps to keep your service lines running and helps water mains that may be a bit shallow to keep flowing also. It's a good feeling to see the help residents give to the City to keep things going. The City asks the residents to help keep the City functioning in many ways.

With Cleanup Day approaching in a few short months, I will be talking about efforts to keep our City functional and looking good.

Every year the City gets complaints about how some properties may be in violation of Nuisance Ordinances around the community and follow up with those owners on how to bring these properties back into compliance.

At these visits, we give suggestions on how to bring the property into compliance. If your property looks like an RV sales lot, you are not in compliance. If it looks like you are set up for a year-round antique auction, not in compliance. If you have unlicensed autos in your yard, not in compliance.

Spring cleanup is a good way to get rid of many items you have laying around.

Automobile salvage yards will come to pick up old vehicles. If you have multiple recreational vehicles and trailers on your property, you should consider finding a rental storage yard to park them.

We have been working with several property owners to clean up properties. This process is usually a start and stop process, with progress being made, then sitting idle.

We can work to keep Mazeppa beautiful. Planning for Cleanup Day is a good start. Watch for updates on Cleanup Day.



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ZM FFA officers, left to right: Ryker Proctor - Assistant Officer, Maggie Nelson - Historian, Josslyn Lohmann - Reporter, Troy Clemenson - Vice President, Edward Winters - President, Morgan Proctor - Secretary, Delaney Mellgren - Treasurer, Carley Howard - Sentinel, Lincoln Toombs - Parliamentarian

Some Highlights From This Year for Our Chapter Include:

- Summer officer retreat in June at Whitewater State Park
- Member serving as the Region 8 FFA President
- Goodhue County Fair
- Fall Leadership Day
- Members attend Greenhand Camp
- Fruit Sales
- Success at the State Winter Leadership Contests - 5th place Conduct of Chapter meetings team
- Strawberry Sales
- State bound nursery landscape team and small animal team
- Upcoming ZM FFA Alumni Breakfast



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