

Randolph Rockets Theatre presents Jane Austen's Emma!

Show Times:

Friday, April 17 at 7:00 pm and Saturday, April 18 at 2:00 and 7:00 pm

Admission:

\$8 Adults; \$5 Seniors 65+; \$5 Children and Students

Doors open 30 minutes prior to each show



Randolph FFA Tractor Parade Friday, April 17, 2026

Line-up will begin at 8 am at Otte Enterprises, 4409 Upper 291st St E, Randolph, (enter on 290th St). All drivers need to be registered by 8:45 am.

Donuts, coffee, and juice will be provided. Non-tractor/trailer parking will be in the River Country Co-op parking lot.

Announcements

• Tea Cup Drive:

The Randolph Music Department is seeking donations of teacups, of any shape, size, or style, for their fundraising event Tea with the Queen. Contributions may be dropped off at the high school any time during school hours between now and April 16. Contact Mrs. Sczepanski, sczepanskij@district195.org or Mrs. Tamayo tamayoe@district195.org for questions.



Book Author to Visit Randolph Historical Society

Come join us on April 19, 2026 at 1:00p.m. for a casual and inspiring afternoon chat with Teri Ferguson Thompson, formerly of Randolph. A past writer for the Today Magazine

and author of the biography, *As I Remember*. Teri will discuss her journey immortalizing her grandmother's life by putting pen to paper.

As a bonus, she will read a few excerpts from her current project, a novel with Minnesota ties.

Everyone is invited to attend. The Randolph Historical Society is located at 4374 292nd St E, Randolph, across from the fire hall.



Alumni Toy Auction

Courtesy of Randolph FFA

Thank you to all our supporters for a successful Alumni Toy Auction. We were able to raise over \$7,500 that will go towards College/Vo-Tech Scholarship and Leadership Grants.



Farmer's Breakfast a Success



Courtesy of Randolph FFA

Thank you to members and parents who help to make Farmer's Breakfast a huge success. We served over 200 breakfast plates.

Dakota City Heritage Village Victorian Tea



Courtesy of Dakota City Heritage Village

This is one of Dakota City's annual fundraisers and we are planning a very special tea luncheon and visit with Lady LaVonne. Dakota City Heritage Village's annual Victorian Tea Luncheon is scheduled for Saturday, May 2, 2026 at Crystal Lake Golf Club in Lakeville, MN.

(continued on page 9)



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The Secret Place



By Ashley Dudek,
founder of Isaiah Ministries, bringing
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When I was eighteen years old and a senior in high school, I was committed to the hospital psych ward. I remember weeping on my bed back at home as I grabbed my hair and pulled on it as I cried out loud, "I want to die. I just want to die." The emotional pain was ever so deep as past regrets, broken dreams, an unstable family life, and deep loneliness haunted me.

I walked into that hospital thinking, I don't belong here, even though I was self-harming, had self-hatred, and was self-destructive. I did not have the words back then, but there was spiritual darkness that hovered over that place and I wanted nothing else than to get out of there. After my short yet dark, heavy, and scary stay at the hospital, I was on my way home on Highway 10 from St. Cloud to Little Falls, and I remember looking out the window and talking to God (Jesus). I was at ground zero, and I needed the Lord to come into my life fully; I needed Him to transform me. In a roundabout way, I said, "Jesus, if you really are that God that changes lives, you need to come into mine." He did. Slowly but surely the Lord healed (and is healing) my heart, identity, trauma, and pain.

Months went by and I soon graduated from high school. I left for basic training with the Air National Guard and then started Crown college in 2003. I walked into that Christian

college with very little knowledge of the Bible, but my heart knew the Lord.

A few weeks into college, my roommate said she was going to go do devotions. I didn't know what she meant by that, so I asked her, "What are devotions?" She then went on to tell me it is when you spend time with God. I knew about spending time with God; I just didn't know there was a name for it. Many people call their time with Jesus devotions (like my roommate did), or they might call it their quiet time; I call it the Secret Place.

Some of you may be in the same spot I was—you didn't have the vocabulary of the Secret Place or, in my case back in college, the word devotions. Sometimes we know something, but we just don't have the terminology for it, and that's okay! Now you have a phrase—the Secret Place—for something you may have known about all along.

My Secret Place time in college started off with a lot of crying, questioning, and deep sorrow. When it was nice outside, I would go to this one oak tree on campus that had an opening in its trunk. I would pray my prayers on a piece of paper and hide the paper in the trunk of the tree. It always brought comfort when I did that. I was so broken in college, and I only truly felt like myself with Jesus and I guess you could say that old oak tree. My time with the Lord and the things I did with Him only flourished as I matured in my faith.

My Secret Place time grew from crying out to the Lord to paging through the Bible. Paging through the Bible led to reading the Bible. Reading the Bible developed to questioning things in the Bible. Questions brought me to studying the Bible. Studying the Bible grew to discovering revelation. Revelation resulted in me being consumed with the Lord. Being consumed with Jesus showed me all the different ways to spend time with God. Discovering the different ways to spend time with the Lord cultivated a life with Jesus. That cultivation taught me what the Secret Place was, at its depth.

Although part of the Secret Place is that "quiet time in the mornings with the Lord," it is so much more than that. The Secret Place at its core is a life that remains in the hiddenness of Jesus. To remain in the Lord, you spend quality time with Him and you bring Him with you everywhere you go. To be hidden in Jesus means you are communing and tapping into His love and truth beyond anyone or anything else.

There are primarily two ways to spend time with God: tangible ways and nontangible ways. Tangible ways are more concrete methods to spend time with the Lord, which can consist of reading the Bible, studying the Bible (there is a difference), and journaling or saying prayers. These would also be good examples of how to spend quality time with the Lord. Then there will be nontangible ways to spend time with Jesus. These are less concrete forms of spending time with God, such as bringing Him with you as you are going to work, running errands, going to school, or just doing life.

The most significant part of spending time with Jesus as you do these tangible and nontangible things is conversing with Him. It's connecting with Him. It's talking to Him and having Him talk to you back. It's an inner relationship that can manifest wherever, whenever, at any time of the day or night.

I once heard a pastor say to a group of people, "I want you all to say that you love Jesus out loud." So the audience said out loud, "I love you, Jesus." Then the pastor said, "Now I want you to say, 'I love you, Jesus,' but I want you to say it to yourself, in your inner core." He gave some time for everyone to do this. After they said that they loved Jesus silently within themselves, he then responded, "That is the Secret Place." What I imagine he meant by that remark was the inner dialogue they just had with the Lord (by saying they loved Jesus silently to themselves) was an example of what it means to enter into the Secret Place in their inner being.

My beloved, you can tap into the Secret

Place at any time. You just need yourself, the Lord, and relationship. If you have a healthy relationship with your mom or dad, a stable walk with your siblings, and a good connection with a friend, what do you do with them all? You visit! You have fellowship! You share your heart and they share theirs.

Friends, that's what we can and want to do with the Lord. We want conversation with Him in the inner depth of our being no matter where we are. As we do this, we are entering the Secret Place. However, we do not just want to enter in; we want to stay there. If you have not yet started talking to Jesus, do it, then don't stop. The Secret Place is the best place to be and next month I will elaborate with the benefits of dwelling there.

He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. Psalm 91:1 (NKJV)

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AREA CHURCH DIRECTORY

A Sign of Healing and Life

Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, they lived. — Numbers 21:9

Israel had a lot to learn about being the people of the holy and faithful God. In our story today the people grew impatient with God again as they traveled through the wilderness.

They spoke against God and against Moses, saying, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness?" Sometimes the Lord was merciful when the people acted so rebelliously, but other times, when they had gone too far, the Lord sent punishment. This time the consequence for their actions was a plague of venomous snakes, and a number of the people died from snakebites.

What would happen next? How would salvation appear for these unfaithful people?

In what is a preview of the saving work of Christ, a bronze snake became an instrument of healing and life. Moses made a bronze snake and lifted it up on a pole, and the people were told to look at this snake and live. Many years later Jesus explained that this miracle in the wilderness pointed to the gift of his own life for us all (being lifted up on a cross—John 3:14-15). Through this act of faith, we are freed from death!

Lord, we can be so rebellious and stubborn in our resistance to you. Help us to look to you and believe in Jesus, who was lifted up for us. Amen.

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Easter Egg Hunt in Hampton



Courtesy of St. Mathias Catholic Church

Special thanks to Lori and Linda Endres, volunteers, and sponsors. A fun time was had by all.



OBITUARY

Sarah Ellen Amy

Sarah Ellen Amy, age 59, of Dundas, passed away peacefully at home on Tuesday, March 31, 2026, surrounded by the love of her family.



Sarah was born on April 30, 1966, in Rochester, Minnesota, to Richard and Geraldine (Oldaker) Buckstead. She was raised in Northfield, where she built the strong roots and lifelong friendships that would remain important to her throughout her life. Sarah graduated from Northfield High School and went on to attend Dakota County Vo-Tech, where she earned her nursing degree and began a career defined by compassion and dedication to others.

In 1984, while working at the Red Owl Supermarket, Sarah met Dan Amy. They were united in marriage on August 2, 1986. Together they made their home in Northfield before building a house in Dundas in 1988, where they created a warm and welcoming space filled with love, laughter, and countless memories. It was there that they raised their two children, Brandon and Amanda.

Sarah worked as a Licensed Practical Nurse for many years, providing thoughtful and attentive care to her patients. She was employed locally with Dr. Meland and Dr. Cole in Northfield, where she was known for her gentle manner, patience, and genuine concern for those she served. She retired in 2017, leaving behind a legacy of kindness in her profession.

Outside of her work, Sarah found joy in the simple and creative moments of life. She loved to read and could often be found with a good book in hand. She also enjoyed crafting and painting, expressing her creativity in ways that brought beauty to her home and to those around her. Sarah cherished time spent outdoors, whether camping or traveling with her family, and she never passed up the chance for a shopping trip. One of her greatest joys was supporting her son Brandon at his ball games, proudly cheering him on from the stands.

Above all, Sarah treasured her role as a grandmother. She adored her grandchildren—Matthew, Travis, Pacey, Margot, and Lucy—and found immense happiness in spending time with them, creating special memories that will be forever cherished.

Sarah will be remembered as a loving and caring wife, mother, grandmother, and friend. She had a gentle spirit, remarkable patience, and a selfless nature that always placed her family first. Though she was confirmed in the Lutheran church, Sarah's faith was deeply personal, and she carried her spirituality in her own quiet and meaningful way. Her life was one of quiet strength, enduring love, and deep devotion to those around her. She will be deeply missed and lovingly remembered by all who knew her.

She is survived by her devoted husband, Dan; her children, Brandon (Natalie) of Northfield and Amanda (Ricki) of Dundas; her beloved grandchildren, Matthew, Travis, Pacey, Margot, and Lucy; her stepmother, Methinee Buckstead of Northfield; and her siblings, Jon (Kathy) Buckstead of Texas, Chris Buckstead of Northfield, and Brian (Numa) Buckstead of Minnesota. She is also survived by her brothers- and sisters-in-law: David (Mary) of Dundas, Bonnie (Randy) Asheman of Millersburg, Dallas (Rebecca) of Dennison, Darwin (Lori) of Dennison, Jeff (Paula) of Wells, and Joe (Michelle) of Dennison, along with many nieces, nephews, extended family members, and dear friends. Sarah was preceded in death by her parents.

A private graveside service, followed by interment, will be at Prairie Creek Cemetery, Northfield, Minnesota, with a public celebration of life to be announced at a future date.

Arrangements are with Bierman, Benson & Langehough Funeral Home & Crematory. www.northfieldfuneral.com

Farm Girl Chatter The Year of the Horse

By McKell Lemmerman

Let's take a break from cow talk for a moment and talk about something just as important around a farm—the year itself.

2026 is the Year of the Horse. If you have ever truly known a horse, that title carries a lot more meaning than most people realize.

Now, plenty of folks like to joke and call horses “hay burners.” To be fair they’ve earned the nickname over the years. Horses can eat like a fat kid in a candy store. You can give them a full square bale of hay at night, and by the next morning they will stare at you like they have been starving for three days. Nicker at you like as if they are asking “why is breakfast late?”

But anyone who has ever really owned a horse understands them a lot more than hay-burning lawn ornaments.

Growing up, horses were where my imagination lived.

Long before I ever turned a key in a pickup, a horse was the first vehicle I ever got to drive. No gas pedal. No steering wheel. Definitely no insurance policy. Just a saddle, a set of reins, and the kind of confidence only a kid can have when they believe they’ve got everything under control. Looking back now, I’m pretty sure the horse was the one doing the driving most of the time. That’s part of the magic of horses. They let you think you’re in charge while quietly making sure you both make it back to the barn in one piece.

The truth is, the Year of the Horse represents exactly what horses have always been—powerhouses of strength, endurance, and heart. Long before tractors, combines, trucks, trains, and highways took over the countryside, horses were the engines that built it. They pulled the plows that turned the soil, hauled wagons across rough country, and carried people farther than their own two feet could ever take them. They carried generals through the blood and gun smoke of wars, and Native Americans through their buffalo hunting expeditions.

They weren’t just animals.

They were business partners, the best ones too, non-speaking.

When I was younger, my horses were my entire world. They were where worries disappeared and dreams ran free. On horseback, a simple pasture could become the open frontier. A fence line turned into a trail. A kid could become a cowboy chasing outlaws, playing cops and robbers, exploring new country, or racing the wind just because I could.

Horses have a funny way of teaching lessons along the way. They teach us humiliation. Nothing will knock your ego down faster than a 1,200-pound animal deciding your riding skills are not up to par, that you are better off learning from the ground that day. They teach patience too. Sometimes your adventure turns into twenty minutes of negotiating with a stubborn horse that has decided the gate you want to go through is suddenly the most terrifying object on earth. Lastly, they teach balance, usually the hard way.

Now, years later, horses still carry that same quiet magic.

Sure, nowadays there are side-by-sides, and every machine imaginable to get across a pasture. They’re faster, easier, and a whole lot less stubborn. But none of them will ever replace the feeling of riding a horse down a trail you made yourself.

A machine takes you somewhere. A horse takes you on an adventure.

Some communities, like the Amish, still rely on horses as their everyday transportation, living much like people did generations ago. For others, like me, horses have become something different. Their entertainment, therapy, adventure, and freedom all rolled into one.

Just go to a rodeo. That’s where horsepower meets heart. Riders and horses working together in a dusty partnership that may only last a few seconds but carries a tradition that’s centuries old.

When you’re a kid, they’re your escape. When you grow up, they become your reminder.

They remind you where you came from—

dusty summer evenings, long rides with no destination, and a younger version of yourself who believed the world was as wide open as the pasture in front of you. Somewhere along the way life gets busier. Jobs, responsibilities, bills, and worries pile up higher than a winter hay shed.

Horses have a way of bringing you back to center.

There’s a quiet moment that happens when you’re riding—when the only sounds are hoofbeats, wind through the grass, and your own thoughts finally slow down. In those moments it’s hard not to feel like there’s something bigger at work. The truth is, horses teach faith in a way few things can.

When you climb into a saddle, you’re putting your trust in something stronger than you. You guide the path, but ultimately you trust that horse to carry you safely down the trail.

Life with God can feel a lot like that ride.

So, if 2026 really is the Year of the Horse, maybe it’s more than just a title.

Maybe it’s a reminder.

A reminder of the strength God places in quiet things.

A reminder of the trust it takes to follow a path you can’t always see.

And maybe most of all, a reminder that sometimes the best way to understand where you’re going...is to saddle up and remember where you started.



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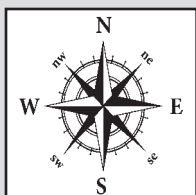
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Changes in Latitudes, Changes in Attitudes

Rocket Ship on the Tennessee River



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.

We live along the Tennessee River on the banks of Kentucky Lake. Kentucky Lake was formed in the 1940's when the Tennessee Valley Authority built a lock and dam to raise the Tennessee River to accommodate larger barges carrying coal, steel and bulk products on the river. The barge traffic travels all the way to Chattanooga. Where we live, the lake is about a mile wide. Lots of barge traffic and fishing boats. One of my favorite activities is to take the runabout on the river to experience life on the water. Every day we see something unusual. This last trip in the middle of March was no exception.

We were heading downstream to eat lunch at the Burger Barn at KenLake Marina, a little more than an hour down river. We noticed a white object a few miles ahead on the river and assumed it was one of the tug boats pushing a barge. The closer we got, the bigger it got. I have never seen an ocean-going vessel on the river. There are river cruise boats on the lake but not this large. As we passed the vessel I had to circle around and follow it, taking a closer look. There was an orange totally enclosed sea worthy lifeboat on each side of the ship. I knew this was no river boat. My wife looked up the name on the side and we were surprised to discover what it actually was.

The United Launch Alliance Rocket Ship is a 312' cargo vessel that transports space rocket components from the 1.6 million sq. ft. production facility in Decatur, Alabama to Cape Canaveral, Florida. It is 82' wide and 50' high with a draft of 15'. It weighs 9,500 tons and carries Atlas V, Delta VI and Vulcan Centaur boosters, second stages and payload



fairings in an environmentally controlled setting. The rockets are rolled in on semi-trailers through the 80' wide fold down ramp at the aft for the ship. It is the only United States flagged ship with the capability to transport rockets on both rivers and open ocean. It is powered by two General Motors G7A engines developing 4,000 horsepower each and four Caterpillar generator engines of 831 horsepower each to maintain the A/C for the cargo hold and a 371 horsepower emergency Caterpillar engine. The fuel capacity is 163,800 gallons of diesel.

The ship requires a crew of 16 to operate and has living quarters, dining area, helicopter pad, below deck machine shop and the most sophisticated computers and navigational system available. The officers are assigned four-hour shifts while on the river and eight hour shifts in the open sea, and two experienced river pilots come on board to guide the boat while inland. There is a cook and assistant to serve meals during the eight day/4,336 mile one-way trip from Decatur to Cape Canaveral Space Force Station. The

Rocket Ship has been in constant service since 1999 and a 356' sister ship has just been built and will enter service this spring.

Now more on the sophisticated navigation system. On August 7, 2001, the Rocket Ship ran aground on a sand bar on the Tennessee River and had to be freed by a tugboat. On January 26, 2012 the Rocket Ship struck the Eggner's Ferry Bridge on the Tennessee River, which is about five miles from where we encountered the ship. The crew was operating in a recreational channel rather than the shipping channel at the time and destroyed a 322' section of the bridge. The pilot's failure to use all available navigational tools was found to be the cause of the accident, while ignoring two coast guard broadcasts and a radio call from a nearby ship. The bridge built in 1932 was scheduled for replacement and the incident sped up the schedule for the construction which was completed in 2016. Had we known all that, we might have given the Rocket Ship a wider berth when we passed by.

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A Minnesotan: Spring



By RosaLin Alcoser

They have returned. The harbingers of spring have been spotted. In other words the geese are back. As I am sure that I have mentioned in the past, geese and I do not get along.

Mostly because since I was a young child they have taken great delight in chasing me; well into adulthood. When I was in my late teens and was attending community college over in Rochester there were geese

that always hung around on campus. Those geese chased me just about every day for two years.

My mother thought I was exaggerating until one day she came in to the school when coming to get me. We were sharing a car at the time and while walking to the car I saw the geese coming and I asked her for the keys. Which she gave me right before I took off running with honking geese on my heels.

After that she believed me that geese had been chasing me about campus. Before anyone says 'well they wouldn't have chased you if you didn't run from them'. I did try that and you know what happened they swarmed me and hissed. Have you ever been bitten by a goose? Because I have and it hurts more than you would think.

With that being said as much as I dislike geese and will go out of my way to not go anywhere near them. I have learned one very important thing about them that adds a point in their favor. When they return in the spring it usually is a good sign that winter is over and it probably won't snow again until at least Halloween.

2026 Summer Theater Camp

Randolph Community Education presents High School Musical Junior!



If your current 2nd-6th grader is interested in learning more about theater arts and all things acting, dancing, art, and music, our annual summer theater arts camp is back for another summer!

Camp dates are July 13-17, with a free performance for the community on July 17 at 2:00 pm.

Randolph Theater Arts Camp is open to all students currently in grades 2-6. Auditions will be April 29-30.

Registration and payment of \$200 (payable to Randolph Community Ed.) is due by April 29.

Please contact Director Alicia Hall at aliciahleringer@gmail.com or Assistant Director Deanna Shellen at shellend@district195.org with any questions.



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Courtesy of Randolph Schools

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Contact us today to start planning your custom home!

Michael Kelley, Superintendent, kelley@m@district195.org, 507-645-4773, ext. 204

Community Garage Sale - Looking for Donations May 16

The Randolph Music Department will be hosting a Community Garage Sale Event at the high school on Saturday, May 16 from 9:00am - 2:00pm. There will be 30+ different sales throughout both gyms selling all sorts of items! Mark your calendars now! You DO NOT want to miss this unique fundraising event! Admission is \$2 per person.

The music department will again be accepting donations of new or gently used items to sell at the event. Donations can be dropped off at the school the week of May 11. Any donations that aren't sold at the sale will be donated to the Epilepsy Foundation or brought to a donation center (see below)! Please make sure the items are clean and free of pet hair.

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Money raised from the sale will be used to help defray costs of the music students trip to New Orleans in March 2027. For more information about the sale or how to donate, contact band director, Jackie Sczepanski, sczepanskij@district195.org, 507-263-2151.

Tea With The Queen April 18

The high school band and choir will be hosting a Tea Party with the Queen fundraising event for their trip to New Orleans in March 2027.

At the event guests will enjoy a pleasing assortment of refreshments, including a specially themed cookie, finger foods, a variety of desserts, and a selection of tea, coffee, and lemonade as well as a Souvenir Tea Cup to commemorate the experience.

Feel free to dress in the style of the Regency Era, wear your Easter best, or favorite tea party attire thereby adding to the experience.

Tickets are \$15/person can be purchased in the district office or by returning the ORDER FORM form with payment to Mrs. Sczepanski or Mrs. Tamayo.

Order Form

Tickets can be purchased in the district office or by returning this order form with payment to Mrs. Sczepanski or Mrs. Tamayo and we will send the tickets home with your student.

Please note that tickets to the EMMA are not included in the price and can be purchased separately at the door.

_____ Tickets X \$15.00 =

Amount enclosed: \$ _____

Check # _____ Cash _____ Venmo _____

Name: _____

Student Name: _____

Email Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Please Venmo, send cash or a check payable to "Randolph Public Schools" and return to:

Randolph High School
c/o Jackie Sczepanski
PO Box 38
Randolph, MN 55065



Jackie Sczepanski
@lefse1977
#7309

venmo

Deadline for purchasing tickets is Thursday, April 16, 2026

Arrive anytime between 12:30 and 1:00.

Money raised from the tea will go towards the band and choirs trip to New Orleans in March 2027

COMMUNITY



DATE: May 16, 2026
9:00 am - 2:00 pm

LOCATION: Randolph High School
Randolph, MN

WANT TO DONATE YOUR STUFF??

DONATE YOUR GENTLY USED, CLEAN, WASHED ITEMS TO THE HIGH SCHOOL MUSIC DEPARTMENT

Donations will be accepted at Randolph High School

- Monday, May 11th, 3:00-7:00pm
- Tuesday, May 12th, 3:00-7:00pm
- Wednesday, May 13th, 8:00am-7:00pm
- Thursday, May 14th, 3:00-7:00pm

**No large furniture items accepted - if you can't bring it in by yourself, we can't take it.
Any donations that aren't sold at the sale will be picked up by the Epilepsy Foundation or brought to a donation center.



WE ARE UNABLE TO ACCEPT THE FOLLOWING
Mattresses, Sofas & Large Upholstered Chairs, Entertainment Centers, Baby Furniture, Car Seats, Strollers, Exercise Equipment, Monitors, Printers, Large Appliances, TV's, Microwaves, Metal Office Furniture, Gas Powered Items, Large Seasonal Items (i.e. Christmas Trees), Food Items, Toiletries, Bathroom Fixtures, Tires and Undergarments.

Contact Jackie Sczepanski for more info, sczepanskij@district195.org
The sale is a fundraiser for the Randolph Music Departments trip in March 2027

Technology Empowered Careers (TEC) Conference



Courtesy of Randolph FFA

Jonathan Zweber participated in the all-new Technology Empowered Careers (TEC) Conference, focused on power, structural, and technical systems and the many career pathways within agricultural mechanics and technical industries.

Throughout the conference, students toured the John Deere Training Center, St. Paul College, The Toro Company, and more, and participated in hands-on technical skill experiences, and connected with industry professionals during a networking reception.

FFA Agricultural Policy Experience (APEX)



Courtesy of Randolph FFA

Lucy, Georgia and Natalee attended the two-day conference learning about agriculture advocacy. They were able to join other FFA members at the State Capitol.



Ag Science - Top 3

Courtesy of Randolph FFA

Congratulations to Logan for competing in the Agri-Science Contest. Logan placed in the top 3 and will learn his placing at the State Convention on Monday April 20th.



Share Your Good News with the Community!

Submit your engagement, wedding or birth announcement

Email: hometownmessenger@gmail.com

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parksidenerstrand@gmail.com

Lorenzen Named Cannon Falls Chamber Director

The Cannon Falls Chamber of Commerce announced Keri Lorenzen as its new Chamber Director. Lorenzen started her position February 23rd. Lorenzen is a Randolph native and Graduate.

Lorenzen replaces Maggie Wilson, after Wilson left the position earlier this winter. Wilson had been in the role since the winter of 2023. Lorenzen stated she was looking for something different when she applied for the position. She attended Minnesota State University-Mankato where she earned her marketing degree.

She then worked in banking in Red Wing and Cannon Falls. She also worked in marketing for the U of M, did some freelance work and her most recent position was with Optum. Members of the chamber board stated that both being a local resident, knowing the



Keri Lorenzen
area and her marketing background made Lorenzen a great match for the position.

**Got a Great
Local News Story?**

Tell us about it today!

Email:
hometownmessenger@gmail.com

FCCLA State Conference



Courtesy of Randolph School
We enjoyed workshops, speakers and everything Family, Career, Community Leaders of America has to offer! It was great weekend to mix and mingle with chapters from all over the state!

**MAY 1ST 2026
03:00 PM**

Murray Field, Randolph MN
Randolph vs Le Sueur-Henderson

We will have some fun items for sale at the concessions stand!
All proceeds go to support the initiatives of Tayven's Puruit.

- Ice cream
- Cookies
- Memorial Baseball Game t-shirts
- Memorial Baseball Game baseballs
- Kids goody bags w/raffle entry

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Dakota City Heritage Village Victorian Tea

(continued from page 1)

This special event is an afternoon dedicated to celebrating and appreciating the incredible women in our lives.

Friends and relatives are invited to congregate in tea attire to appreciate an era gone by which includes a four-course meal with tea and entertainment. All ages are welcome! This is a great day to bring Mom, Grandmother, and Grandchildren together. A proper tea is a healing ritual between friends and family where trust, empathy, love and friendship abide.



Seating starts at 11:30 am with the tea luncheon starting at 12 noon. Crystal Lake Golf Club is located at 16725 Innsbrook Drive, Lakeville, MN.

Ticket sales for groups of 7 without a costumed hostess or 8 with a costumed hostess at your table, are available. Please call our office if you have any questions. (651) 460-8050 Please note: Tables at the facility now seat 8 not 10.

All proceeds benefit Dakota City Heritage Village.



Vendors Invited!

The IMCA Old Timers & Dakota City Heritage Village Swap Meet & Vintage Sale is Saturday, May 9th. Vendors are welcome to sell their wares! See flyer for details or contact info@dakotacity.org.

SATURDAY, MAY 9 – 8AM TO 2PM

Vendor Invitation

DAKOTA CITY HERITAGE VILLAGE

Vendors Fee \$20, space 15' x 20'

Vendor set-up begins @ 7am

Two vendor options:

1) Selling items out of vehicles will take place along 2nd St.

2) Sell items from your tables & awnings. Awnings need to be secured with weights - no stakes allowed.

Vendors pay fee at the gate and then will be directed by volunteers where to park based on vendors choice.

All vendors must fill out a ST-19 form to be turned in at start of event.

Dakota City

Where the past is present

Please contact IMCA for additional information on the Swap Meet & Car Show! Rob Caho (Vintage Racing), p: 651-325-2588 e: rwcaho@gmail.com

Please contact DCHV in interested in being a vendor or wishing to donate to the Vintage Sale, p: 651-460-8050 e: info@dakotacity.org

Provide the following information: Name, Phone #, Email Address & a brief description of items to be sold

ITEMS NOT ALLOWED FOR SALE: Fire Arms & all related items, environmentally hazardous items, animals, & any inappropriate items not deemed family friendly.

DAKOTA CITY HERITAGE VILLAGE @ THE DAKOTA COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS

4008 220TH STREET W., FARMINGTON, MN

DAKOTA CITY HERITAGE VILLAGE

Spring Clean-Up

Volunteers needed!

SATURDAY, APRIL 25

Arrive @ 9 am & finish with a Pizza Buffet @ 12 pm!

Visit tiryurl.com/DakotaCityClean to sign up!

Dakota City Heritage Village invites you

Victorian Tea

Saturday May 2, 2026

11:30am

Crystal Lake Golf Club & Event Center

16725 Innsbrook Drive

Lakeville, MN

www.dakotacity.org

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8-11 JUNE

Master Apprentice Camp

17 JUNE

Try-It Day Camp

22-25 JUNE

Junior Apprentice Camp

13-16 JULY

Junior Apprentice Camp

Information and Registration @ www.dakotacity.com

3rd Annual

Vintage Road Trip!

Th, Fri, Sat • May 7, 8, 9
9am-5pm

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Crabby Wren

17857 Cannon City Blvd, Faribault 55021 (Cannon City)



**RR REVIVAL/
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104 Railway St. NW, Lonsdale 55046



**Wool &
Vintage Market**

3435 Lonsdale Blvd E, Northfield 55057



Potpourri Mill
Log Cabin Crafts & Antiques

*sale days/hrs: th, fr, sat, sun 10-5

2290 County 49 Blvd, Dennison 55018



Hoopla JUNK

*sale hrs: 10-5

313 Bush St, Red Wing 55066



**Weathered &
Worn Vintage Market**

13720 240th St E, Miesville 55009



**THE RETRO MAIDEN
VINTAGE SHOP**

*sale hrs: 10-5

W3553 WI-35, Maiden Rock, WI 54750



MAP NOT TO SCALE
(Google addresses shown)

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**Friday, April 10
8:00PM
LIVE MUSIC!
Rob Wood**



**Saturday, April 11
8:00PM
LIVE MUSIC!
The Biscuits**



**Sunday, April 12
1:00-4:00PM
LIVE MUSIC!
Mike Poet**



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& SUNDAY
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Friday 11:00am-1:00am; Saturday 9:00am-1:00am; Sunday 9:00am-9:00pm



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Children's Blood Pressure On The Rise



By Shauna Burshem, D.C.

American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) updated its blood pressure guidelines. These changes aligned adolescent thresholds with adult standards and simplified diagnostic categories, leading to millions of previously "healthy" teens being reclassified as at-risk or hypertensive. For younger children, the recalibration of percentiles using only normal-weight peers effectively lowered the thresholds for diagnosis. While these updates made it easier to identify HBP, they also expanded the number of children falling into elevated or hypertensive categories, sparking debate about the implications of this broader diagnostic net.

The rise in HBP among children is linked to a combination of medical and lifestyle factors. While some cases stem from underlying conditions like kidney or heart problems, diabetes, or genetic predisposition, research highlights poor diets, obesity, physical inactivity, and sedentary lifestyles as primary drivers, particularly in older children. These lifestyle shifts, coupled with increased stress and environmental changes, have created a perfect storm for rising blood pressure levels. Despite this, prevention efforts often lag behind, with new medications frequently prioritized over strategies to address root causes and promote healthier habits.

High blood pressure in children, though often silent, poses significant long-term risks, including cardiovascular and kidney complications. The 2017 AAP guidelines replaced the term "prehypertension" with "elevated blood pressure" and adopted fixed adult cut-points for adolescents, simplifying diagnosis

but also increasing the number of children classified as hypertensive. This underscores the urgent need for prevention-focused approaches, such as promoting balanced diets, regular physical activity, and stress management, to combat this growing health crisis and ensure better outcomes for future generations.

Resistance Training Shown To Improve Brain Function: -intense resistance workouts have been shown to enhance cognitive function by improving reaction times without compromising accuracy. These exercises boost inhibitory control, working memory, and brain-processing speed, as evidenced by faster P3 latency signals. Such cognitive benefits are attributed to the brain's ability to update information more efficiently and coordinate attention-related networks effectively. This is particularly useful for tasks requiring focus, multitasking, or quick decision-making.

The cognitive improvements from resistance training are likely linked to temporary increases in systolic blood pressure during exercise. This enhances blood flow and neural efficiency, allowing the brain to process information faster and more effectively. These physiological changes make resistance workouts a powerful tool for sharpening mental acuity, especially when incorporated into daily routines. Even a single session can yield immediate benefits, making it a practical strategy for boosting mental performance on busy or demanding days.

Children and teenagers also experience cognitive gains from resistance training, with small but consistent improvements in cogni-

tion, classroom behavior, and academic performance. These benefits are particularly pronounced in youth with lower baseline muscular fitness, highlighting the importance of strength training for overall development. For adults, maintaining 40 to 60 minutes of strength training weekly is optimal for longevity, as excessive lifting can diminish benefits and even negatively impact mortality outcomes. Whether you're looking to enhance cognitive function, improve physical health, or support long-term well-being, resistance training proves to be a versatile and effective solution.

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

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- Knowledge of/access to a computer
- Enjoy small town atmosphere
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Garden Thyme Craft Show

Thursday, May 7 • Friday, May 8 • Saturday, May 9
Sunday, May 10

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or call 507-649-1009

by HANS #10

April events, happenings and goings on at **WildWood!**

315 Main Street | Nerstrand

Monday Night Yoga

Mondays, April 13, 20, 27 | 6-7pm

\$12/each or pre-pay \$40 for all four classes

This series is perfect for those who have always been curious, for those who have more experience AND for those who have none at all. Old, young, flexible or stiff : Yoga Flow is for every body!

Spring Cookie Decorating Class

Saturday, April 11 | 11am | \$50

Hosted by Kari of Sweet Q's Cookie Co

Join us as to decorate your very own spring themed cookies with everything you need to learn and some basic skills to decorate with royal icing. Perfect for beginners or anyone looking to enhance their skills!

Women in Business Networking Group

Tuesday, April 14 | 9am | no charge

Bring your own coffee and come mingle and learn about other women-owned/managed local businesses.

Learn to Sew w/Cindy

Tuesday, April 21 | 6-8pm | \$40*

Bring your own sewing machine and receive basic sewing instructions; from how to properly set up your machine to cutting fabric to any questions you may have! This class will be limited to keep the size intimate, so register sooner than later!

Table Runner Class w/Cindy

Wednesday, April 22 | 6-8pm | \$30*

Come and learn how to sew your own table runner with hands-on instructions in a fun learning atmosphere!

*sign up for BOTH Wednesday Night Learn to Sew AND the Table Runner Class and receive a \$10 discount!

Pop-Up Fabric Shop

Friday, April 24 | 9am-1pm

Yards, fat quarters, quilts fabric, Table Runner Kits and more!

Sewing Retreat Weekend

Friday, April 24-Sunday, April 26

\$125 for the whole weekend

open to all skill levels

Sign up for a weekend of sewing, laughing, creating and DO-ing! Bring your sewing machine and whatever other materials you need to spread out and create. Work on your own projects, bring something you need help with and/or UFO's! Enjoy small -optional- impromptu classes and kits throughout the retreat; light snacks, coffee and tea provided.

Paint and Plant

Thursday, April 30 | 6pm

\$30+ depending upon project choice

Hosted by Erin of Mosaic Filled Life

Everything you need to create some super cool painted pots and fill them with a plant from a local nursery!

The Sacred Bloom Experience : A Spring Immersion to Nurture What's Ready to Bloom

Saturday, May 2 | 9am-5pm | \$167

Hosted by Maria of MVR Healing and

Julie of Willow River Yoga

Treat yourself to a full-day retreat devoted to renewal, self-expression and intentional growth.

And don't forget to mark your calendars and join us for WildWoods' May Market on Saturday, May 9 from 9am-1pm!

More information and event tickets available online at wildwoodofnerstrand.com/happenings

Cancer



By Noel Aldrich, PhD, CNS
Licensed Nutritionist

Like many of you, I have had friends and relatives diagnosed with cancer and have walked with them through their journeys of chemotherapy, radiation treatments, surgery and the loss of life. Cancer is the second leading cause of death in the USA, exceeded only by heart disease. In December of 1971, President Nixon signed into law the National Cancer Act declaring a "war on cancer." The estimated deaths from cancer in the United States in 1970 was 330,000 as reported in the Cancer Statistics report of 1970. Compare that to 618,120 estimated cancer deaths in 2025 according to the Cancer Facts and Figures report of 2025. On the American Cancer Society website, the article headline states 1 in 3 Americans will be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetime. In research compiled by Provectus, 1.5% of the population in 1971 lived with cancer. Compare that to roughly 5.4% of the population that is living with cancer in 2026. This "war on cancer" does not seem to be making significant advances. After all these years, why have we not seen more progress towards a solution to cancer? What options can be considered?

Since 1971, billions of dollars have been spent researching various types of cancer and the possible treatments to eliminate them. Chemotherapies have been developed that target weak points of cancer cells but can also weaken healthy cells resulting in a loss of stamina and vigor during treatment. Radiation treatments have been developed that can target cancer cells with laser precision but can also cause damage to nearby healthy cells. Surgery can remove cancer tumors but

does not get to the cause of why the cancer growth started in the first place. An entire industry has been developed around the treatment and care of cancer without significant change in stopping cancer. The cause of cancer does not seem to be identified by this industry.

Cancer is a global problem, not just an American problem. The International Agency for Research on Cancer has developed a database collecting information from 185 centers around the world to understand the global severity of cancer. A 2020 report using this database identified breast cancer and lung cancer as the most common around the world followed by colon and prostate cancer. From the year-by-year data collected, many researchers are predicting the number of cancer cases to nearly double by 2040.

Nature Medicine journal published an article in February of 2026 using the same database to determine what factors are contributing to these increased cancer rates. The researchers found that 44% of cancers were associated with lifestyle factors that could be modified. The lifestyle factors most clearly associated with cancer were smoking, infections, and alcohol. Smoking and alcohol are clearly personal choices that when reduced help improve health and the immune system resulting in reduced infections.

A healthy immune system is an important key to fighting cancer cells. According to Dr. Thomas Seyfried, research into cancer cells has been focusing on the genetics of cancer and not on the how cancer cells process energy. In his 2012 book, "Cancer as a Metabolic Disease," Dr. Seyfried outlines how targeting the energy process of cancer cells may help us to finally identify solutions to conquer cancer. Stated another way, the standard American diet with an abundance of seed oils, refined flour, and sweeteners produces an energy pathway that promotes excess weight and cancer growth. A healthy immune system is promoted with fresh, whole foods prepared without preservatives. A healthy immune system will generate a healthy weight, reduce inflammation, and help eliminate cancer cells.

On Saturday, May 2, there is an opportunity to learn more about holistic cancer treatment at the Northfield Holistic Health Summit. This annual event brings together community members to listen to local professional health practitioners, meet health vendors, and enjoy a delicious catered lunch. The theme this year is "Cancer and Immune Health," with seven practitioners, 20 vendors, and many attendees. For more information on the agenda and tickets, check out the web page <https://www.nutritionproportion.net/health-summit> or scan the QR code with this article.

Contact me to discuss your health goals for the coming 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.*





Severe Weather Awareness Week

Severe Weather Awareness Week in Minnesota is April 13-17, 2026, with Thursday, April 16th, designated as the statewide Tornado Drill day.

Special emphasis is placed on preparedness

for severe weather during the late afternoon and early evening when there is the highest probability for storm activity.

Be prepared ahead of time. Families are strongly encouraged to plan where to take shelter and what items to have with them. At the sound of the siren, move your family to your safe area (basement or windowless interior room) until the siren has stopped. (All Clear signals are an urban legend and are not sent out.)

When severe weather threatens, listen to the latest forecast by way of television, local radio or your favorite weather app. Keep a watchful eye toward the sky, and consider postponing your outdoor activities. Keep a National Weather Service (NWS) NOAA Weather Radio in your home or business to



receive tone-alerted warnings from NWS. These relatively inexpensive radios can be purchased at most Wal-Mart or Best Buy stores.

If you're traveling, always learn the name of the county you are in because the NWS issues tornado and severe thunderstorm warnings on a countywide basis. Be aware of the severity of summer storms. Know the difference between a watch and a warning. Remember, a severe thunderstorm or tornado watch means weather conditions are favor-

able for a severe thunderstorm or tornado to develop. A warning means a severe thunderstorm or a tornado is occurring, is highly imminent or already on the ground.

Stay away from windows. Go into a basement or lower level, or interior hall or closet. A bathtub can also be used as a last resort. Get out of mobile homes, large auditoriums or large warehouses. If outdoors or in a motor vehicle, lie flat in a roadside ditch, ravine, or culvert, and cover your head with your arms. It's safer than staying in your vehicle.




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Ask A Trooper

By Sgt. Troy Christianson,
Minnesota State Patrol



Question: *The longer I've been driving the more issues I see on the highway. I'm certain there are a number of people that don't understand on-ramps and merging onto the freeway. Can you talk about that?*

Answer: Entering the freeway. Entry ramps are short, one-way roads that provide access to freeways. At the end of most entry ramps, there is an acceleration lane that allows you to increase your speed to safely merge with traffic already on the freeway.

To avoid disrupting traffic flow or cutting off other drivers when you merge, adjust your speed to match the vehicles already on the freeway. You must yield to other vehicles when merging. Use your turn signal to let other drivers know your intention. Watch for an opening in the nearest traffic lane and merge into the flow of traffic when you can do so safely.

Do not stop on the ramp or in the acceleration lane unless it is absolutely necessary. Do not force your way into the lane of traffic.

Question: *I enjoy reading your column in the weekly newspaper. I have a question I hope you can address. We've had some heavy fog recently and I get frustrated with the vehicles that do not have their lights on. Sometimes the headlights are on and the rear lights are not. What is the advice/law in using your lights during the daytime when*

there is fog/rain/snow?

I think in the newer vehicles, the owners don't check if the lights are on thinking they automatically come on under those conditions. More often than not my 2025 Subaru does not have any lights on, at least in the early stages of lower vision conditions. I look at my dashboard and can see if the headlights are on via the instrument lights. Then I go outside to the rear and sometimes the rear lights are not on.

The best way I have found is to get to know your vehicle switches and lights. So, when I am parked, I can try the different positions on the switch to see exactly what lights are coming on. If the light conditions haven't triggered the auto lights, I can manually turn them on. In general, I keep the switch in the position of headlights and running lights (rear lights included) automatically coming on when light conditions warrant coming on. They automatically turn off when the car is turned off.

Thank you for addressing my question.

Answer: Thank you for the question and you bring up a lot of good advice and points. Your headlights and taillights must be turned on at sunset and used until sunrise. Use them during weather conditions that include rain, snow, hail, sleet or fog, and any time you cannot clearly see the road ahead for at least 500 feet.

People often fail to turn on their headlights in rain and fog due to a false sense of security, over-reliance on automatic light sensors that don't always activate, and the mistaken belief that lights are only for seeing, rather than being seen. Other factors include confusion with daytime running lights (DRLs) and simply forgetting.

Key reasons for this dangerous habit include:

- Misunderstanding of Purpose: Many drivers do not realize that in the rain, headlights are crucial to make their vehicle visible to others, especially from the rear.
- Automatic System Failure: Auto-light sensors often do not register daytime, overcast,

or rainy conditions as "dark enough" to activate headlights.

- Dashboard/DRL Confusion: Modern dashboards are often always lit, leading drivers to mistakenly believe their headlights are on.

- Habit/Forgetfulness: Drivers often forget to manually activate lights if they are used to automatic systems.

- Ineffective DRLs: While Daytime Running Lights are on, they often do not activate rear tail lights, making the car invisible from behind.

Question: *Even with laws I still see a lot of motorists driving distracted. Can you get a reminder out there?*

Answer: Driver distraction or inattention is a leading factor in crashes in Minnesota, accounting for at least 25 percent of all crashes annually. Distracted drivers fail to recognize potential hazards on the road and react more slowly to traffic conditions, decreasing their margin of safety.

Types of driver distraction:

- Visual: Looking away from the road.
- Mechanical/physical: Taking hands off the wheel.
- Cognitive: Being "lost in thought."

Distractions inside the vehicle can include activities such as: using a cell phone, using a GPS, reaching for items, eating and drinking, adjusting the radio, talking to other passengers, and reading maps and other materials. Even when you are watching the road, behaviors such as looking at a crash scene or daydreaming can divert attention from your driving responsibilities. For safety, give the task of driving your full attention at all times.



Certain driver behaviors are illegal on Minnesota roads. These include using a cell phone or wireless computer device for text messaging, emailing or accessing the internet while driving, including while stopped in traffic. Drivers under age 18 with an instruction permit or provisional license are prohibited from using a cell phone, whether handheld or hands-free, except to call 911 in an emergency. It is also illegal to wear headphones or earphones in both ears simultaneously to listen to a radio or other sound-producing device.

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)

There Is No Distracted Driving Lane. Drive Smart.

April showers are just around the corner — and so is the month-long Distracted Driving campaign! The awareness and enforcement campaign that kicks off April 1 will run through April 30.

While taking your eyes off the road or hands off the steering wheel present obvious risks, activities that take a driver's mind away from driving are just as risky. They can include daydreaming, putting attention toward something outside of the vehicle, eating, reaching for items, changing music, and dealing with rowdy passengers or kids. Distracted driving is anything that takes your attention away from the road.

Distractions of any kind are all potentially deadly:

Visual distraction - looking away from the road.

Physical distraction - taking your hands off the wheel to do something else.

Cognitive distraction - being lost in thought.

Using electronic devices combines all of these elements - like texting or snapchatting while driving.

Be part of the solution when it comes to distracted driving. Start by setting a good example for your kids or anyone in the vehicle by parking the phone. Then take a moment to sync your music and confirm your route so your focus stays on the road. And when you feel the urge to reach for a distraction, think about how it feels to share the road with someone who isn't paying attention.

Together, we can drive Minnesota toward zero deaths.



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Hampton City Council Meeting February 17, 2026

The Hampton City Council met on Tuesday, February 17, 2026, at Hampton City Hall for the Regularly Scheduled Meeting. Present were Mayor John Knetter and Council Members Jerry Huddleston and David Luhning. Nick Russell was absent. Also present were Erica O'Connor – appointed to fill the remainder of Councilmember Anthony Verch's term, Brad Fisher of Bolton & Menk, Chris Meyer, treasurer, and two members of the Randolph-Hampton Fire Department.

Regular Meeting Called to Order – Mayor Knetter called the regular meeting to order at 7:00pm.

Disclosure of Interest – Mayor Knetter noted that he is a member of the Fire Department and would abstain from participating in any voting regarding matters involving the Randolph-Hampton Fire Department.

Approval of January 20, 2026 Special Hearing, Public Hearing, and Regular Meeting Minutes – Motion by Luhning, seconded by Huddleston, to approve the January 20, 2026 special hearing, public hearing, and regular meeting minutes. All voted in favor. None opposed. Motion passed 3-0.

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

Public Comments: None

Petitions, Requests, and Communications: Chris Meyer presented the 2025 Treasurer's Financial Summary, explaining that it is the required annual report providing an overview of monthly balances, including the checking account and Diamond Money Market accounts, with details on deposits, interest, disbursements, and transfers throughout the year. He also reviewed the City's escrow accounts, noting that the landscaping and stormwater escrow primarily consists of accumulated interest from prior years and is used to hold deposits for new development landscaping requirements until those obligations are met. Meyer reported that the

Lemons Rayspark escrow, related to the oversizing of a water main serving the Rayspark area, will be addressed at a future meeting, with plans to notify the responsible party and return the remaining funds.

Meyer also provided an update on the draft financial statements for the year ending December 31, 2025, noting that a preliminary cash-basis draft had been submitted prior to the February 14 deadline. He explained that additional schedules and accrual-based statements—including accounts receivable, accounts payable, enterprise fund reporting for water and sewer, and fixed asset depreciation—will be completed and presented at the March meeting before final submission to the State Auditor by March 31. The Council thanked Meyer for the update and his work to keep the City in compliance.

The Council then considered filling the vacant council seat and reviewed the application submitted by Erica O'Connor. Mayor Knetter noted that O'Connor was the only applicant and provided background information, stating that she has lived in the city for over twenty years, assists with bookkeeping for her family's local auto repair business, and would provide representation from the 240th Street area of the city. Council members briefly discussed the appointment, and Mayor Knetter expressed his recommendation for O'Connor. Motion by Luhning, seconded by Huddleston, to appoint Erica O'Connor to fill the remainder of Anthony Verch's council term. The motion passed unanimously. O'Connor was then administered the oath of office by the City Clerk and took her seat with the Council.

The Randolph-Hampton Fire Chief presented a request for approval to purchase a used air compressor and four air cylinders for Station Two, explaining that the department's current compressor cannot fully pressurize the upgraded air packs installed in 2020, leaving approximately ten percent of cylinder capacity unused. The estimated cost for the remanufactured equipment is \$15,000, compared to approximately \$36,000–\$37,000 for a new unit, and the purchase would leave about \$13,500 remaining in the department's equipment fund for the year. The Chief noted that Randolph had already approved the request and that purchases over \$10,000 now require approval from both cities under the joint powers agreement. Motion by Huddleston, seconded by Luhning, to approve the funding request.

Motion passed unanimously.

Firefighter Andrew Gilquest then presented a request from the Fire Relief Association to increase the annual retirement benefit from \$3,800 to \$4,500 per year, noting that the pension fund remains well funded at approximately 126–129 percent and is primarily supported by Relief Association fundraising activities. Mayor Knetter abstained from voting due to his membership in the fire department. Motion by Huddleston, seconded by Luhning, to approve the benefit increase. Motion passed with the Mayor abstaining.

Gilquest also requested approval to maintain the deferred interest rate for retirees who defer their pension payout at 1.25 percent. Motion by Luhning, seconded by Huddleston, to approve the request. Motion passed with Mayor Knetter abstaining.

Ordinances and Resolutions – None

Reports of Officers, Boards, and Committees:

Engineer Report – City Engineer Brad Fisher of Bolton & Menk provided an update on the water tower project, noting that progress had slowed during the past month due to cold temperatures but has resumed with the recent warmer weather as crews continue working to bring the new tower online. Fisher reported that the star lights have been brought up to code and are now installed and operational, marking a milestone in the project.

Fisher also requested council direction regarding the remaining decision on the old water tower, as the contractor is coordinating with subcontractors and planning demolition work for the spring. Councilmembers discussed several options that had previously been considered, including relocating the entire tank or preserving a larger portion of the structure in the city park. Those options were determined to be impractical due to the presence of lead paint and the high cost of mitigation and long-term maintenance.

Mayor Knetter presented a concept suggested by a resident to salvage the top portion of the tower and relocate it to the city park to serve as the roof of a pavilion structure near the ball field, providing shade for park users while preserving a piece of the city's history. The council also discussed salvaging the "H" from the "Hampton" lettering on the tower as a historical element. Councilmembers noted that donations and park funds could potentially be used for future improvements such as benches or signage recognizing the history of the water tower.

After discussion, the council agreed this option would preserve part of the tower while avoiding the significant costs associated with preserving the entire structure. Motion by Luhning, seconded by Knetter, to direct the contractor to salvage the top portion of the tower for use as a pavilion roof in the park and demolish the remaining portions of the structure. Motion passed unanimously.

Fisher then presented a proposal previously discussed with the council regarding implementation of a web-based Geographic Information System (GIS) for the city. The system would transition the city's mapping and infrastructure data to a web-based platform owned and maintained by the city under its existing license. Motion by Luhning, seconded by Knetter, to approve the GIS proposal. Motion passed unanimously.

Water / Sewer Report – Mayor Knetter re-

ported that significant issues were discovered with the ventilation system in the chlorine addition area of the water and sewer well house. Due to corrosion and equipment failure, the ventilation fan and related components were no longer functioning, creating a serious safety concern for anyone entering the building. Killmer Electric inspected the system and determined that the motor had failed and wiring issues were present. A repair proposal totaling approximately \$6,000 was received and approved by the Mayor, as it falls below the city's \$10,000 authorization threshold, and repairs are scheduled to begin immediately.

Knetter also noted that new sewer regulations will require additional sampling for total suspended solids prior to discharge beginning this spring, which will add an estimated \$35–\$50 per test. Discussion also occurred regarding a recent informational meeting hosted by the Metropolitan Council Environmental Services concerning long-term regional wastewater planning in the southeast metro area. City Engineer Brad Fisher explained that the meeting focused on gathering input from communities regarding potential future trunk sewer extensions and possible changes to regional wastewater treatment facilities. At this time, the City expressed no immediate interest in connecting to a regional system but requested to remain informed as planning progresses.

Park Report – No report was provided due to Councilmember Russell's absence, though park improvements had been discussed earlier in relation to the water tower pavilion concept.

Street Report – Councilmember Luhning reported that streets are generally in good condition but noted several developing potholes that will be patched in the coming weeks. He also confirmed the city will be scheduling spring street sweeping.

Unfinished Business – None

New Business – Mayor Knetter reported that Chris Meyer, who had been assisting with water meter reading duties following staff departures and a retirement, has requested to step back from those responsibilities due to increased workload. In response, the council discussed creating a new part-time position combining water meter reading with backup clerk responsibilities to provide additional support and redundancy for city office operations, particularly in light of new state leave policies.

The position would primarily involve quarterly meter reading duties and cross-training in clerk responsibilities to ensure continuity of city operations if staff members are unavailable. Councilmembers discussed the importance of flexible hours, training time, and occasional regular office presence to maintain familiarity with city processes.

Motion by Knetter, seconded by Huddleston, to draft and post a job listing for a part-time water meter reader and backup clerk position with a proposed hourly pay range of \$18 to \$23. Motion passed unanimously.

Adjournment - Motion by Luhning, seconded by Huddleston, to adjourn the meeting. All voted in favor. None opposed. Motion passed 4-0. The meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Kelly Roan



Do You Have a Story Idea?

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hometownmessenger@gmail.com

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