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MAY 21, 2026

Volume 19 • Issue 10

A goal for the future: pursuing KW strengths.

By Jocelyn Aldrich

KW The Kenyon-Wanamingo School District, facing a decline in enrollment in the last several years, has faced significant financial difficulties and changes. KW Superintendent Heiderscheid acknowledges the difficulties, saying, "Our district has been mired in an extended trend of declining enrollment. In the 2014-15 school year, our enrollment was 840 students. (continued on page 5)

Announcements

• **Goodhue County Breakfast on the Farm, June 5th from 7 am to 11 am at Bombay Dairy, 6045 Highway 60 Blvd, Kenyon.** Hosting is the Lexvold Family - Wayne and Donna, Nathan and Kaitlin, and Mitchel and Mallory. Email: Bombay-dairy95@gmail.com. Phone 507-330-6237.

• **The Hiawatha Valley Genealogy Society meets on the second Tuesday of each month at 10:00 a.m. at the Goodhue County History Center, 1166 Oak St., Red Wing, MN 55066.** The society welcomes participants of all ages and genders who are interested in discovering, researching, or expanding their knowledge of their family's ancestors. Whether you are just beginning or have years of experience, the group offers a supportive environment to help you build your genealogy skills and connect with others who share your interest. Your first meeting is complimentary!

• **Save the date! 2026 Dennison Days August 7 & 8.** (continued on page 2)

State Farm 100th Anniversary Celebration An insured legacy

By Jocelyn Aldrich

Since 1926, State Farm Insurance has had a stable presence in the Kenyon area. State Farm was founded in 1922. The first office was based in Illinois. Shortly after, the now nationally acclaimed insurance business branched out and found a home in Kenyon, MN.

Elmer Jacobson was the first State Farm agent in the Kenyon area. He served from June of 1926 to July of 1957. Since then, there have been a small handful of State Farm agents in Kenyon. Many of the early State Farm agents kept their offices in their

homes. In January of 1996, the current Kenyon agent, Lyle Wendroth, set up his office at 635 2nd Street in Kenyon.

With such a long-lasting State Farm presence in the Kenyon area, the State Farm office has witnessed multiple historical events. The Kenyon State Farm office says, "We are proud of the State Farm legacy! State Farm has been here, in Kenyon, through the Stock Market Crash of 1929, The Great Depression, World War II, The Korean War, The Vietnam War, 9/11, a multitude of legislative and regulatory challenges... and State Farm is still here. And WE are still here, in Kenyon. Ac-

State Farm



cording to Dr. Andrew White, a professor at Oxford University, State Farm is the largest organically grown company in the history of the world. Grown one policy at a time, not through mergers and acquisitions." (continued on page 3)

Memorial Day Program in Wanamingo

By Cheri Roshon



Memorial Day is the day chosen to set aside some time to reflect on those who served our country we cherish, and died

in the conflict. Originally called "Decoration Day", it was officially established on May 5th, 1868 by General John A. Logan of the Grand Army of the Republic to decorate the graves of the 620,000 soldiers who died in the Civil War. The 1st major observance of Decoration Day was at Arlington National Cemetery on May 30th, 1868.

The earliest recorded tradition, often cited as the first, was held by freed enslaved people in Charleston, South Carolina. A memorial service was held on May 1st, 1865 for Union soldiers who were buried in a mass grave.

(continued on page 7)

Investing in the future by preserving the past.

By Jocelyn Aldrich



coming meeting. If you are able, please bring a dish to pass.

The Kenyon Area Historical Society (KAHS) is gearing up to host their Annual Gathering on June 1st, 2026, at 5:30 pm at the Gunderson house. Barb Groth, a member of the Board of Directors, says the Annual Gathering has been an ongoing tradition for over 20 years. The Annual Gathering provides an opportunity for both members and non-members to gather together for a potluck meal, learn more about the KAHS, and learn about the effort that is invested in preserving local Kenyon history. The Annual Gathering is also a great time to become a KAHS member. The public is invited to attend the up-

(continued on page 9)



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Announcements

• **Hiawathaland Transit:** Service hours are 7:30am-4:30pm Monday through Friday. Call dispatch at 866-623-7505 Monday through Friday 6am-9pm and Saturday 7:00am-5:00pm. Visit threeriverscap.org for more information.

• **All are welcome to breakfast, fellowship, bible study, and prayer time every Saturday morning at Hauge Lutheran Church in Kenyon.** Breakfast and fellowship start at 8:00 am. Followed by a verse by verse bible study. Finishing with prayer time at 10:00 am. All are welcome (men, women, and children) each Saturday morning!! Any questions, please contact Loren Bauer: 507-450-6623.

• **Three Rivers Community Action is currently accepting new Meals On Wheels clients in the communities of Zumbrota, Mazeppa, Goodhue, Pine Island, Kenyon 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. For more information on how to sign up for meals or to be a volunteer driver, please contact Dana Bergner at 507-421-6067 or dbergner@threeriverscap.org

• **Wanamingo Veterans Honor Guard invite you to become a member.** Join us and help us make the Wanamingo Veterans Honor Guard an even bigger success. WVHG meets the third Tuesday of each month at the Wanamingo Community Center. The VFW will meet from 7-7:30p.m. The Honor Guard will meet from 7:30-8:30p.m. For more information contact Eric Dierks 507-321-1967, Gary Floan at 507-732-7740, or Larry Van De Walker at 507-421-4674.

*Do you have an announcement?
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Graduates, Trust God! - He's Got You!

By
John Todor, Pastor

It's that time of the year again - caps are tossed into the air, cameras flash with proud smiles, and graduates stand at the edge of a brand-new journey. Graduation is more than a ceremony; it marks a season of change, transition, and new beginnings. Our graduates are stepping into a season of constant change, where new experiences, opportunities, and challenges will shape their path ahead.

I would like to remind you dear friends,

that in a constantly changing world there is one unchanging reality - God does not change! As one chapter closes and another begins, the same God who's been faithful to you all those years, promises to remain faithful and true as you step forward into an unknown future.

The Bible says in Hebrews 13:8 that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever."

(continued on page 3)

AREA CHURCH DIRECTORY

Whew!

Timothy has . . . brought good news about your faith and love.

— 1 Thessalonians 3:6

Paul was overjoyed! He had sent his disciple, Timothy, back to the city of Thessalonica to check on the church they had recently planted there. And Timothy had returned with amazing news!

First, the background: Paul had spent only a short time in Thessalonica, establishing a community of Christ-followers, before an angry mob opposed to the gospel chased him off. Paul knew the deep challenges that the new Christians faced there in his absence, living in a culture that was deeply opposed to Christianity. He wouldn't have been surprised if everyone had gone back to their former ways of life in Judaism or Greek tradition.

But Timothy came back with a report that the new Christians in Thessalonica were standing firm despite the challenges. They remained full of faith in Jesus. They even longed to see Paul again!

That doesn't happen by accident. The God who raised Jesus from the dead also brought these people to life in him, and he kept them there. You might say that every standing-firm, new Christian was an ongoing resurrection story, a new creation, proof that God was up to something big: the renewal of all creation.

If anyone is in Christ, as Paul says in 2 Corinthians, there is a new creation. The old has gone. The new has come!

Lord, all of us who are new creations in Christ are glad to have your resurrection power at work in us. Thank you! The old is going away and the new is coming. Help us to see and rejoice. Amen.

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Email: pastordavid@landslutheran.org
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May 24: Holden 9:30 Summer schedule begins
May 31: Dale 9:30
June 7: Holden 9:30

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UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
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429 4th Street, Kenyon • 507-951-1271
Worship 9:30 a.m.

KENYON UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
651-283-5754 • Rev. Dr. Daren Flinck
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Franklin Delano Peterson



Franklin Delano Peterson of Kenyon, MN, passed away peacefully on May 10, 2026, at Cannon Rivers Assisted Living at the age of 93.

He was born to John and Myrtle Peterson on November 11, 1932, in Maple Ridge Township near Bra-

ham, Minnesota. He was one of eleven children. In his words, "They were poor but never hungry."

He attended country school through the eighth grade and graduated from Braham High School in 1950, having joined the Air National Guard unit in Cambridge the previous fall. His studies at Augsburg College were cut short when his unit was activated into the U.S. Air Force on May 1, 1951, and he was stationed in Kirksville, Missouri. Following his service, he returned home and enrolled at St. Cloud State University in December 1952 to study business. He graduated in the spring of 1955 with a Bachelor of Arts degree, accepted a position with Farmers Insurance Group, and enrolled at William Mitchell Law School while continuing to work full-time.

Frank married Beverly Ann Crabb on August 2, 1958, in Minneapolis, MN, after meet-

ing on a blind date. He passed the bar exam in 1962 and opened his law practice in Kenyon the following year, where they raised their three children: Heidi, Durk, and Heather. They shared 57 years of marriage filled with an active social life and extensive travel around the world, including trips to Austria, Scandinavia, Germany, France, Switzerland, Jerusalem, Spain, Ireland, Tanzania, England, and Hawaii. He lovingly joked, "We only had one fight, but it lasted 57 years."

Frank practiced law for 59 years, retiring in 2022 at the age of 89. He became an active and engaged member of the community from the moment he moved to town, serving in numerous organizations, including Sons of Norway, Lions Club, Commercial Club, American Legion, Legion Baseball team, Senior Citizen Housing Unit, Kenyon Development Corporation, Kenyon School Board, First Lutheran Church, Goodhue County Republicans, the Masonic Lodge, Scottish Rite, and Osman Shrine. He held leadership positions in many of these organizations and felt a strong calling to serve his community. If he was not in the law office during the day or attending a meeting in the evening, he could often be found having coffee with friends while discussing politics and solving the world's problems. Although he rarely sat still, when he did, he enjoyed a good book and preferred those focused on history.

Frank had a great sense of humor and was

especially fond of The Far Side comics. He spent many joyful hours in wig and makeup with the Cannon Valley Shrine Club as "Franklee," delighting parade crowds while driving his dune buggy, complete with his painted likeness on the hood.

Frank also loved spending time outdoors. He enjoyed fishing, hunting, golfing, mowing the lawn, walking in the woods, growing apples, playing outside with the dogs, and attending local sporting events.

He was proud of how his upbringing shaped his life in a family and community that emphasized hard work, strong values, good behavior, and a solid foundation in his faith in God. He took great satisfaction in passing those values on to his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, and was proud to say that all of them are above average. In the words of Garrison Keillor, "The women are strong, and the men are good-looking."

Frank is survived by his children: Heidi (Harris) Haugen of Kenyon; Durk (Deidre) Peterson of Benbrook, Texas; and Heather (Joe) Tousignant of Kenyon. He is also survived by his grandchildren: Anders (Adriana) Haugen; Morgan Anderson, widow of the late Karl Haugen; Mikkel (Gabbi) Haugen; Laura (Joe) Meola; Eric Peterson; Cole (Carly) Tousignant; and Hannah (Drew) Jenniges, as well

as twelve great-grandchildren. He is also survived by his sisters, Delyte Robertson and Ione Maxwell, numerous nieces and nephews, and special friend Doris Walker.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Beverly; his parents, John and Myrtle Peterson; his siblings, Myrlin "Kelly" Peterson, Duane "Duke" Peterson, Virginia Schleicher, Myron "Mike" Peterson, Dale "Red" Peterson, Betty Jane Lutterman, Janet Erbstoesser, and Joanne Reese; and his grandson, Karl Haugen.

In place of flowers, memorials may be directed to the K-W Education Foundation, First Lutheran Church, or the Osman Shrine Auxiliary.

A funeral service will be held at 11 am on Saturday, May 23, 2026, at First Lutheran Church in Kenyon with Pastor DJ Chatelaine officiating. A visitation will be held from 5 pm to 7 pm on Friday, May 22, at Michaelson Funeral Home in Kenyon with a Masonic service at 7 pm. An additional visitation will be held from 10 am until the time of service. Interment will be held at the Kenyon Cemetery with full military honors. A luncheon will follow the burial from noon to 2 pm at the Kenyon VFW.

Graduates, Trust God!

(continued from page 2)

That means that the same Jesus who went about healing and teaching and preaching and ministering, the Jesus that opened blind eyes, the Jesus who reached out to the sinful in compassion and the Jesus who reached out to the hurting and lifted up the fallen, that Jesus is alive.

Here are 3 things about Jesus that are meant to encourage our graduates and us all, no matter what stage in life we may be:

I. HIS PURPOSE IS UNCHANGEABLE

What is Christ's main purpose in the world today? The same that it was when He came into this world. Jesus said, "I have come that you might have life and have it more abundantly". Somebody said that life begins at forty. I believe that Life begins at Calvary. When you come to know Jesus Christ as your Savior then you have a real purpose in life. He came that you might have LIFE – a life that is eternal (John 3:16).

II. HIS POWER IS STILL AVAILABLE

In Ephesians 1:19 Paul said, "I pray that you will begin to understand how incredibly great His power is to help those who believe Him." As the school year comes to an end and you students prepare to step into a new chapter of life, I pray you will find comfort in knowing that Christ's power is still available to you. The same strength, wisdom, and guidance that carried you through late nights, difficult moments, and seasons of growth will continue to lead you into the future. Though classrooms, routines, and familiar faces may change, Christ remains constant. In every decision, uncertainty, and opportunity ahead, you can be sure that His presence will go before you and His power will sustain you for whatever lies ahead.

III. HIS PROMISES ARE STILL RELIABLE

Because He lives, His promises are still reliable. The world around you may shift, plans may change, and the future may not always unfold the way you expect, but God's Word remains steady and unchanging. His promises of guidance, peace, strength, and provision are just as true today as they have always been. When fear, doubt, or uncertainty arise, graduates, trust God and rest assured that He will never fail you. He is faithful to walk beside you through every challenge and every new opportunity, reminding you that your future is secure in His hands, and He will never let go of you.

I will leave you now with the words of one of my favorite hymns, not before wanting to mention the fact that we are all cheering for you and praying for God's best.

Because He lives, I can face tomorrow

Because He lives, all fear is gone

Because I know He holds the future

And life is worth the living, just because He lives.

State Farm 100th Anniversary Celebration

An insured legacy

(continued from page 1)

State Farm Insurance exists "to help people manage the risks of everyday life, recover from the unexpected, and realize their dreams" (State Farm Mission Statement). State Farm takes pride in being a helping hand throughout the years in the Kenyon community. The Kenyon State Farm office highlights, "We enjoy participating in community events such as the Rose Fest Car Show each year, sponsoring local youth activities, and community projects. And being a stable local business in difficult times."

The Kenyon State Farm office is proud to celebrate 100 years of service. Looking forward, the Kenyon State Farm office is eager to continue to provide quality customer service and support to the community. The Kenyon office welcomes the community to join them on June 2nd from 8 am-5 pm to celebrate the Kenyon State Farm legacy. Customers, friends, and neighbors are all encouraged to stop by.

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Obituaries

Page 4

- KENYON-WANAMINGO MESSENGER -

May 21, 2026

James "Jim" Edward Fischer

James "Jim" Edward Fischer, 84, of New Smyrna Beach, Florida, passed away on Saturday, May 9, 2026, surrounded by loved ones. He was born on November 5, 1941, in Faribault, Minnesota, the son of Edward and Mabel (Friesen) Fischer.

Jim grew up in Kenyon, Minnesota, and graduated from Kenyon High School in 1959. He went on to attend Mankato State University, earning a degree in social work and business. During his college years, he married, Judith Diane Haugen, also of Kenyon. Together they raised three daughters: Julie, Jeanne, and Jo.

Jim began his career in Duluth, Minnesota, working as a social worker. He later moved to Austin, Minnesota, where he served as Executive Director of the Minnesota Sheriff's Youth Programs, a role he dedicated himself to for 32 years. On February 23, 1979, he married Monica Lee Storrs in Hopkins, Minnesota. After relocating to Florida, Jim continued his lifelong commitment to service as Director for Habitat for Humanity of Lake and

Sumter Counties, where he worked for an additional 12 years.

Jim loved to travel and especially cherished his annual deer-hunting trips to Colorado. He was a proud member of the National Association of Homes for Children and the Minnesota Child Care Association.

Jim is survived by his wife, Monica Lee (Storrs) Fischer, of New Smyrna Beach, FL; his daughters Julie Fischer, Jeanne Fischer (David Hofland) of Minneapolis, Jo (Marvin) Schmitt of Shakopee; and step-daughter Nicole (Todd) Miller of Blaine. He is also survived by five grandchildren, one great-grandchild, his brother Richard (Anita) Fischer of Austin, his sister Janice Fischer (Mike Enter) of Yuma, AZ, and many nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Edward and Mabel Fischer of Kenyon.

A Funeral Mass was held on Saturday, May 16, 2026, at 2:00 p.m. at St. Michael's Catholic Church in Kenyon, with visitation beginning at 1:00 p.m. Interment followed at St. Michael's Catholic Church Cemetery in rural Kenyon.

Memorials are preferred to Habitat for Humanity in Leesburg, Florida, or to a charity of your choice.

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Judith "Judy" Ellen Ford

Judith "Judy" Ellen Ford, 81, of Cannon Falls, formerly of Rochester, died peacefully on Monday, May 4, 2026, at the Cannon River Senior Living with family by her side. She has resided there since 2018. Judy was born on July 28, 1944, in Red Wing to Floyd and Selma



(Syverson) Froyum. She graduated from Wanamingo High School in 1962, and then attended Luther College in Decorah, IA. In 1965, she married Tom Ford and they later divorced. She worked for IBM in Rochester for over 30 years. Following retirement, she found her passion working at a local bookstore in Rochester.

Judy was a kind, compassionate, and gentle person who possessed a quiet strength and a keen sense of humor. She was an avid Vikings fan and enjoyed a good game of hockey. She also found joy in gardening and caring for animals. Above all, her children and grandchildren meant the most to her. She took great pride in supporting them and delighted in attending their many activities and sporting events throughout the years.

Judy is survived by her three children, Trace (Laura) Ford of Apple Valley; Kim (Jooho) Ford-Park and Kelly Ford, both of Portland,

Oregon; five grandchildren, Jessica Ford, Jake Ford, Haley Ford, Allison Ford, and Rianna Park; one sister, Sylvia Swanson of Rochester; and sister-in-law, Loretta Froyum of Wanamingo, along with several nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her parents and two brothers, her twin, Jim Froyum, and Glenn Froyum.

A memorial service was at 11 a.m. Thursday, May 21, 2026, at Lands Lutheran Church in Zumbrota. Reverend David Krinke officiated. Burial was in the church cemetery. Visitation was for one hour prior to the service at the church. Arrangements are by the Mahn Family Funeral Home, Larson Chapel in Zumbrota.

In honor of Judy's love for animals, memorial donations may be made to River Bluff Humane Society in Red Wing.

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Updates to the Kenyon Ambassador Program

By Jocelyn Aldrich

The Kenyon Rose Fest will be here in just a few months, and plans are already well underway for another year of celebrating the town of Kenyon. But the celebration would not be complete without the presence of the lovely Kenyon Ambassadors.

Kelly Worner, the program director of the Kenyon Ambassador Program, says that the program began several years ago as a way “to encourage personal growth, build confidence, and promote community involvement among participants.” The program is generously funded through local businesses, sponsorships, and generous support from community members.

The selection process for the next Kenyon Ambassadors is structured with intentionality. Worner comments that the selection process “is designed to identify individuals who demonstrate leadership, community involvement, and serve as positive role models within our community.” While there is a detailed application process, the program seeks to focus on the qualities of kindness, community pride,

and responsibility. Young ladies who participate in the Ambassador Program are challenged to grow in these qualities as they represent Kenyon in many local events throughout the year. Worner says, “the program strives to help each participant grow into a strong role model while building lasting connections within the Rose Fest community.”

While the number of Kenyon Ambassadors can change from year to year, depending on the goals of the Rose Fest and the needs in the community, the Kenyon Ambassador team has brought back the Junior Ambassador Program for this year. This age bracket was brought back to have a section dedicated to younger participants, and because greater support was shown to help grow the Ambassador organization. In addition to the Junior Ambassadors, a new section has been added to the program. “The new Little Miss Rose Fest Division was introduced to spark early interest and excitement in the program,” says Worner. The Kenyon Ambassador Program now has three age brackets. Little Miss Rose Fest is for girls who have completed 1st-3rd grade by June 1st. The Junior Ambassador division is for girls in 4th -6th grade. The Miss Rose Fest is for young ladies in 9th-12th grade.

The Ambassador Program plays a key role in the Rose Fest. Worner comments, “The Ambassador Program plays an important role in building excitement and helping promote Rose Fest throughout the community. Ambassadors participate in events, engage with community members, and help spread awareness about upcoming activities. Through their

involvement, they bring positive energy, encourage participation, and serve as visible representatives of Rose Fest.” If you, or someone you know, would be interested in applying for an Ambassador position, applications are now live on the Kenyon Ambassador Facebook page. But time is running short. Applications for Miss Rose Fest (grades 9th-12th) close June 1st, 2026. Applications for Junior Ambassador (grades 4th-6th) and Little Miss Rose Fest (grades 1st-3rd) will open on May 23rd and close on June 19th. Also, be sure to follow the Kenyon Ambassador Facebook and Instagram pages for updates and an-



nouncements. If you have any questions, please email kenyonambassadors@gmail.com.

A goal for the future: pursuing KW strengths. (continued from page 1)

Today, we proudly serve 602 students. With enrollment serving as our primary source of revenue, what had been a comfortable ending fund balance in 2015 was first negative in 2019 and has been over \$1.5 million in the red each year since 2023.”

However, despite the financial deficit, the KW District is committed to investing in student experience. To more readily invest in KW students, no programs have been cut. Superintendent Heiderscheit highlights this commitment by stating, “program elimination means reduced student opportunity and a diminished student experience. Instead, we are transitioning to a trimester course schedule for our secondary students, which has proven to be an efficient model in school districts of our size.”

Even though the KW District has faced difficult challenges and changes, a key goal for the district moving forward is to implement a greater focus on enhancing the learning environment. Superintendent Heiderscheit notes, “Our goal is to enhance our student experience. We will have to continuously look for efficiencies to live within our means and pri-

oritize our teaching and learning.” With a stronger focus on enhancing the learning environment, the KW District also aims to work towards a positive financial statement in the near future. Superintendent Heiderscheit states, “Our goal is to have a positive ending balance no later than fiscal year 2029. We have taken the necessary steps to control our expenditures. However, we need steadier enrollment to ensure consistent revenue.” Superintendent Heiderscheit would like the KW community to know three things moving forward: “First, we’ve aggressively addressed our budgetary issues this year in accordance with the statutory operating debt plan required by the Minnesota Department of Education. Second, there are successful schools our size and smaller scattered across Minnesota. Third, we are going to get our finances in order so any child that starts kindergarten in our district will have an opportunity to one day be a proud alumnus of our district.”

The KW District has many committed teachers, students, and faculty who make the KW Schools a unique place of learning. Superintendent Heiderscheit notes some of these strengths, saying, “Our greatest strength is our size. Small schools are not for everyone, but for our students, our size equates to support and opportunity. When I walked the halls this year, I experienced friendly, respectful young people who appeared very comfortable in our school environment.” Moving forward, the administration looks forward to highlighting the strengths of the KW District even more.

KENYON-WANAMINGO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS of the WEEK



NOBLE KNIGHTS OF THE WEEK FOR MAY 11, 2026

Front Row: Odin Caron, KG, Ms. Emma Kmoch; Lucya Delgado, KG, Mrs. Tanya Short; Adeline Strand, Gr. 1, Mrs. Katie Benbrooks; Ella Rodriguez, Gr. 1, Mr. Tony Donkers. Back Row: Caden Fortsch, Gr. 2, Mrs. Deb Hinrichs; Daniel Coult, Gr. 2, Mrs. Megan Jordan; Aubrey Kylo, Gr. 3, Ms. Val Ashland; Mark Dressel, Gr. 4, Mrs. Chloe Gohman; Roman Johnson, Gr. 4, Ms. Rhonda Thesing



KENYON VFW POST 141

MEMORIAL DAY AT THE KENYON VFW

Join us on May 25th to Remember & Honor all who have served.

Following the parade & Graveside Service, the VFW Colorguard will be hosting a lunch that is open to the public.

Parade begins at 10:30am. VFW hours of operation will be 10am-4pm.

HAPPY HOUR: Monday-Saturday from 4:00-7:00 PM. Come on down and support the VFW and enjoy some good times!

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Investing in Our Future

By Cheri Roshon

Well, if you have been reading the Messenger this past year, you are familiar with the Wanamingo Community Foundation Committee. A small group of dedicated and concerned citizens have been working on ways to fund Wanamingo's future growth, and they recently received recognition for their efforts. On Wednesday, May 6th, the Foundation was blessed with a \$3,500.00 check from the Wanamingo Firefighter's gambling fund. The funds are from the proceeds received from the Friday night meat raffles held at JB's from September through March this year. The meat was purchased from Blondie's Butcher Shop in Wanamingo for a very reasonable price. These funds were specifically designated for the Wanamingo Endowment Fund. You may remember that another way of raising funds this year was from the proceeds generated by the sales of our own Wanamingo history book, compiled and written by Gary Bakko. This book is still available through the folks at City Hall. If you are interested in helping to fund this important cause, just give City Hall

a call.

Firefighter Trevor Aase was present to gift the members of the Endowment Fund the check at their committee meeting. Pictured here are some of the board members. In the front row are Brent Leininger, Lisa Johnson, Jennifer Ohr, Trevor Aase and Michael Boulton. In the back row are Larry VanDeWalker, Barney Nesseth, Gary Bakko and Patty Prigge. Members of the board not pictured are Susie Beulke, Andrea Wallaker and Mike Alme. To learn more about the Endowment Fund and see where you can help, contact any one of the members, and they can fill you in.

A big thank you goes out to the Firefighters, JB's, Blondies and all the great people who came out to support the raffles!



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Memorial Day Program in Wanamingo

(continued from page 1)

In 1966, President Lyndon B. Johnson, along with Congress recognized Waterloo, New York as the official birthplace of Decoration Day as businesses closed in observance of those who never returned. Their graves were decorated, and a service was held in their honor.

The southern tradition was started by women who decorated the graves of Confederate Soldiers, such as the April 25th event held in Columbus Ohio, which inspired the famous poem, The Blue and the Gray, by Francis Miles Finch. This poem portrays a post-Civil War landscape Where the Union

(Blue) and the Confederate (Gray) soldiers lay side by side, emphasizing shared death and the quiet passage of time rather than continued conflict.

It was called Decoration Day because of the decoration of the graves, but the name was changed to Memorial Day after World War 1 to honor all service members.

In 1868, Congress passed the Uniform Monday Holiday Act, establishing Memorial Day as the last Monday in May. It became an official holiday in 1871.

A quote by Brevet Lieutenant Colonel Edmund B. Whitman stated, "The nation that respects and honors its dead shall ever be respected and honored itself." The modern proclamation calls on Americans "to observe Memorial Day by praying, according to their individual religious faith, for permanent peace." It is in this tradition that the Wanamingo Veterans are assembling on May 25th for a parade, speeches, prayers and decorating the graves of our own community members who deserve this recognition,

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Wanamingo Memorial Day Program

May 25, 2026

Assembly (8:30 A.M. at the Community Center)

9:00 a.m. - Step off at the Community Center

Order of March

Color Bearers

Mayor Ryan Holmes, Pastor Dave Sorenson, Trevor Prigge (guest speaker)

Rifle Squad

All Veterans and Scouts (if unable to march we have vehicles provided)

Flower Bearers : Henry Stoppel, Pryor Morris, Emma Quam and Cheyenne Amundson

Kenyon-Wanamingo Marching Band

Parade will proceed down Main Street to the Zumbro River Bridge

Brief remarks honoring those lost at sea Pastor Dave Sorenson

Flower Bearers: : Henry Stoppel, Pryor Morris, Emma Quam and Cheyenne Amundson

Program at Riverside Park

Welcome:

Words from the Mayor

Invocation and introduction of the band

Musical Selections: America, and
America the Beautiful (Claire Larson: Director)

Introduce Scouts for Pledge of Allegiance

Pledge of Allegiance

Introduction of Students for readings

In Flanders Field

Gettysburg Address

Introduce speaker (read bio)

Remarks by guest speaker

Star Spangled Banner

Honor Roll of the Fallen

Salute to the Fallen

Taps and Flag detail

Benediction

All Veterans are welcome to march in the parade. For Veterans unable to march we have transportation provided, (uniform not required). In case of rain the ceremony will be held in Trinity Lutheran Church.

At 8:00 A.M we will have a short program and prayer at the Wanamingo POW/MIA Memorial --TAKE NOTE-Breakfast served to all veterans and parade participants prior to parade at 7:15 AM in the Community Center. (Courtesy of the Todd Greseth family)

Pastor Dave Sorenson

Ryan Holmes

Pastor Dave Sorenson

Kenyon-Wanamingo Band

Pastor Dave Sorenson

Holly Carlstrom (Eagle Scout)

Pastor Dave Sorenson

Maddie Schwab

Rebecca Elzen

Pastor Dave Sorenson

Trevor Prigge (Afghanistan Veteran)

Kenyon-Wanamingo Band

read by Gary Floan VFW Post 186 Commander

WVHG Rifle Squad

Oliver Bauer

Jim Kittelson - Holly Carlstrom

Pastor Dave Sorenson

Building Homes, Hope, and Opportunity in Kenyon

KENYON, Minn. — A unique partnership between community volunteers, students, and Goodhue County Habitat for Humanity (GCHFH) is helping address the need for affordable housing in Goodhue County—while also creating a rare opportunity for a future homeowner in Kenyon.

Goodhue County Habitat for Humanity (GCHFH), a nonprofit organization founded in 1993, works to bring people together to build safe, stable, and affordable housing. Guided by its mission of putting faith into action, the organization has helped more than 60 families achieve homeownership and continues to expand its impact across the county.

A Home Without an Owner—Yet

In Kenyon, a new Habitat home located at 716 Washington Street, Kenyon, MN 55946, 2 blocks from Kenyon-Wanamingo Schools (K-W), is nearing completion thanks to the efforts of Rochester Build Crew volunteers and students from the K-W High School construction classes.

The home, a three-bedroom slab-on-grade design with a 2-car garage, is part of an innovative program where students gain hands-on building experience while helping meet real housing needs.

At this time, however, the home does not yet have a family selected to purchase and move in—creating a unique opportunity for an eligible household to step into the program and become a homeowner.

Students Building More Than Houses

The collaboration between GCHFH and local schools has proven to be a win for everyone involved. Students work daily on construction projects, learning everything from framing and roofing to installing windows and siding. Local contractors assist with specialized work, ensuring quality construc-

tion while exposing students to career pathways in the trades.

Beyond skill-building, the program strengthens the community by increasing the supply of affordable workforce housing.

How Habitat Homeownership Works

Habitat for Humanity offers a path to homeownership designed to be affordable and sustainable for working families. Applicants must meet several key criteria:

- Demonstrate a need for safe, affordable housing
- Show the ability to pay a mortgage
- Commit to helping build their home through “sweat equity”

In Goodhue County, Habitat for Humanity generally serves households earning between 30% and 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI). AMI is determined annually by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and varies based on household size and county. The AMI guidelines help ensure affordable housing opportunities are directed toward households with moderate to lower incomes who may not otherwise qualify for traditional homeownership opportunities.

Current Goodhue County AMI information can be viewed through HUD at:

HUD Goodhue County AMI Guidelines

Monthly housing costs—including mortgage, taxes, and insurance—are structured to remain affordable, typically capped at about 29% of household income.

Homes are sold at appraised value, but financing is uniquely structured. Habitat often combines a lower-interest mortgage with additional zero-interest or deferred loans, and no down payments, significantly reducing upfront costs and monthly payments.

Long-Term Benefits for Families

This model creates long-term financial stability for homeowners. Families build equity over time while benefiting from:

- Affordable monthly payments that fit their budget
- Low or no-interest or deferred loans, re-



ducing financial burden

- Equity growth, offering a stepping stone to future financial security
- Stability for children and families, including consistent housing and community roots

Additionally, Habitat maintains a first right of refusal if a homeowner chooses to sell, ensuring the home remains affordable for future families and preserving community impact.

A Call to the Community

As the Kenyon home nears completion, GCHFH is seeking qualified applicants ready to take the next step toward homeownership. At the same time, volunteers are always needed to help finish homes and support future projects.

Those interested in applying or learning more about the program are encouraged to contact Bob Hawley, Executive Director of Goodhue County Habitat for Humanity, at 507-251-7470 or by email at



bobhawley@gchabitat.org.

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May is Mental Health Awareness Month

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture, Minnesota Department of Health and University of Minnesota Extension partner to offer COMET™ (Changing Our Mental and Emotional Trajectory) throughout Minnesota (and online).

COMET is a two-hour interactive training program designed to help people support others who may seem sad, anxious, distracted, or

depressed. COMET teaches a simple strategy that friends, neighbors, and colleagues can use to engage with somebody who may be suffering with moderate depression or anxiety before a crisis occurs. COMET aligns with rural cultural values of neighbor helping neighbor and communities being their own best resource.

It was developed collaboratively by the High Plains Research Network Community Advisory Council, a grassroots group of ranchers, teachers, small business managers and others from rural eastern Colorado, along with rural mental health professionals and health researchers.

In Minnesota, the program is offered free of charge, making it accessible to a wide range of communities. While its focus is on rural areas, COMET's approach is versatile, making it valuable in urban and suburban settings as well. Past participants include school district staff, county advisory committees, agri-

cultural-based organizations, nonprofits, veteran's groups, churches, volunteer firefighters and EMS.

COMET will be hosted at the Goodhue Lions Community Center on May 27, 2026. Supper and resource tables will be available beginning at 6pm, with the training starting at 6:30. Goodhue County 4-H staff and volunteers will be on site providing activities for youth during the training to allow parents to attend and participate fully.

To help estimate attendance for ordering food and supplies, we request you RSVP – but all are welcome to attend even if you do not register. We hope to see you there!

Questions about this event? Please reach out to Aly Kloeckner, Goodhue County Extension Educator at 651-385-3100 or schw1348@umn.edu



COMET Training
May 27, 6PM - Supper will be provided
Lions Community Center, Goodhue
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Investing in the future by preserving the past.

(continued from page 1)

Groth says the Annual Gathering provides a chance for the KAHS to present the “past year’s activities and an update on how donations were used to maintain and preserve the Gunderson House.” In addition to updates on the past year, Groth says, “the Society will also share plans for the coming year and invite ideas and suggestions from the community. These gatherings often spark great conversations, and many people come with questions about the house or the Gunderson family—topics the Historical Society loves to discuss and expand on.”

The KAHS is dedicated to caring for

Kenyon's history. Groth highlights that “the Kenyon Area Historical Society plays a vital role in preserving the community’s identity by protecting the stories, artifacts, and traditions that have shaped the Kenyon area...By sharing these stories, KAHS helps residents of all ages — including young people — understand how the people who came before them shaped the town they live in now.” The mission of the KAHS is to help ensure that future generations will appreciate and understand the meaningful heritage of the Kenyon community.

The KAHS is truly a community effort. From serving on the Board of Directors to volunteering for a few hours to maintain the Gunderson House, behind each act of service is a community member who cares about the history and legacy of the Kenyon area. The KAHS is always eager to welcome volunteers and interested individuals to join their team. Groth notes, “We also encourage residents to bring friends and family for tours throughout the summer or consider the Gunderson House as a charming venue for gatherings such as weddings, showers, or family tea parties. Donations of vintage or antique items are appreciated for our Rose Fest antique garage sale, which directly supports the upkeep of the [Gunderson] home...Every contribution, whether time, membership, or participation, helps preserve Kenyon’s history for generations to come.”

Groth encourages community members to get involved with the efforts of the KAHS. Groth states, “as the Kenyon Area Historical Society looks ahead, we invite the community to stay engaged in preserving the stories and landmarks that define our town. Whether through volunteering, attending events, or considering a role on the Board of Directors, every contribution helps ensure that Kenyon’s history remains vibrant and accessible for generations to come.”



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News

Rep. Keith Allen

DISTRICT 19A



Dear friends and neighbors,

I want to start by wishing you a belated happy Mother's Day weekend. To celebrate, I got to spend time with my wife, Morgan, and our kids. We had a lovely weekend before I had to head back to St. Paul for our final stretch of the legislative session. Our constitutional adjournment date is this Sunday, May 17, meaning we have just hours to finish up the remaining business, and have been on the floor everyday this week to ensure it's all wrapped up.

Passing the OIG Bill

I am THRILLED to announce that we delivered on our number one priority for the 2025-26 session. Last week, the House officially passed the independent Office of the Inspector General bill off the floor, marking a major step forward in strengthening oversight and accountability in state government.

This effort has been more than a year in the making. We began work on this bill last January, taking time to meet with stakeholders and build a proposal that would actually work in practice. The goal from the start was clear: create a truly independent office with the authority needed to investigate fraud, waste, and abuse wherever it occurs. Despite stalling and slow-rolling from the DFL, we held strong and make sure this got across the finish line.

This office will be separate from the Governor's administration, which is critical to making sure investigations are fair and free from political influence. It will also have real law enforcement authority, giving it the tools to not just identify fraud, but take action to stop it and hold bad actors accountable.

That combination matters. For too long, we have seen cases where fraud is identified but not effectively addressed. This creates a dedicated watchdog for state government, focused on protecting taxpayer dollars and ensuring programs are working as intended.

The bill has now passed the Senate as well and is just awaiting Governor Walz's signature to become law.

OIG bill

Another DHS Shakeup

In other fraud-related news, there was a significant leadership shakeup at the Department of Human Services recently. Commissioner Shireen Gandhi was moved into a new role as Deputy Commissioner for Medicaid Programming, while current Deputy Commissioner John Connolly was named as the new DHS Commissioner.

The timing raises real questions. This change came just one day before Gandhi was scheduled for her Senate confirmation hearing, which suggests there may not have been enough support from Senate Democrats for her to be confirmed. Regardless of the reasoning, it adds to ongoing concerns about accountability at an agency that has been tied to some of the largest fraud cases in state history.

Gandhi has been part of DHS leadership during that period. When fraud continues to happen on that scale, it is fair to ask whether the current structure is doing enough to prevent it and respond when it does occur.

This is exactly why the independent Office of the Inspector General matters. Right now, oversight can be limited by internal structure and leadership decisions. An independent OIG, operating outside of the Governor's administration and with law enforcement authority, creates a clear line of accountability. It is not tied to agency leadership or political considerations.

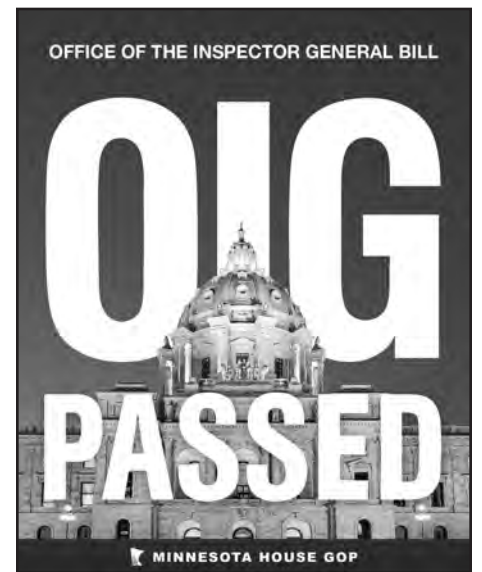
Situations like this highlight the need for a system that does not rely on internal oversight alone. A truly independent watchdog ensures that when problems arise, they are investigated fully and addressed, regardless of who is in charge.

Finishing Strong

As we come to the end of this session, I want to thank you all for your support and trust in me to be your voice in St. Paul for the past two years. It is a job I don't take lightly and I am honored to be in this position. I want to remind you that I am here to serve you and am always available if you have questions, concerns, or ideas. Please reach out if I can help you!

Please Contact Me

I am here for you! If you have any questions, concerns, or would like to talk, I can be reached by phone at 651-296-8237 or by email.





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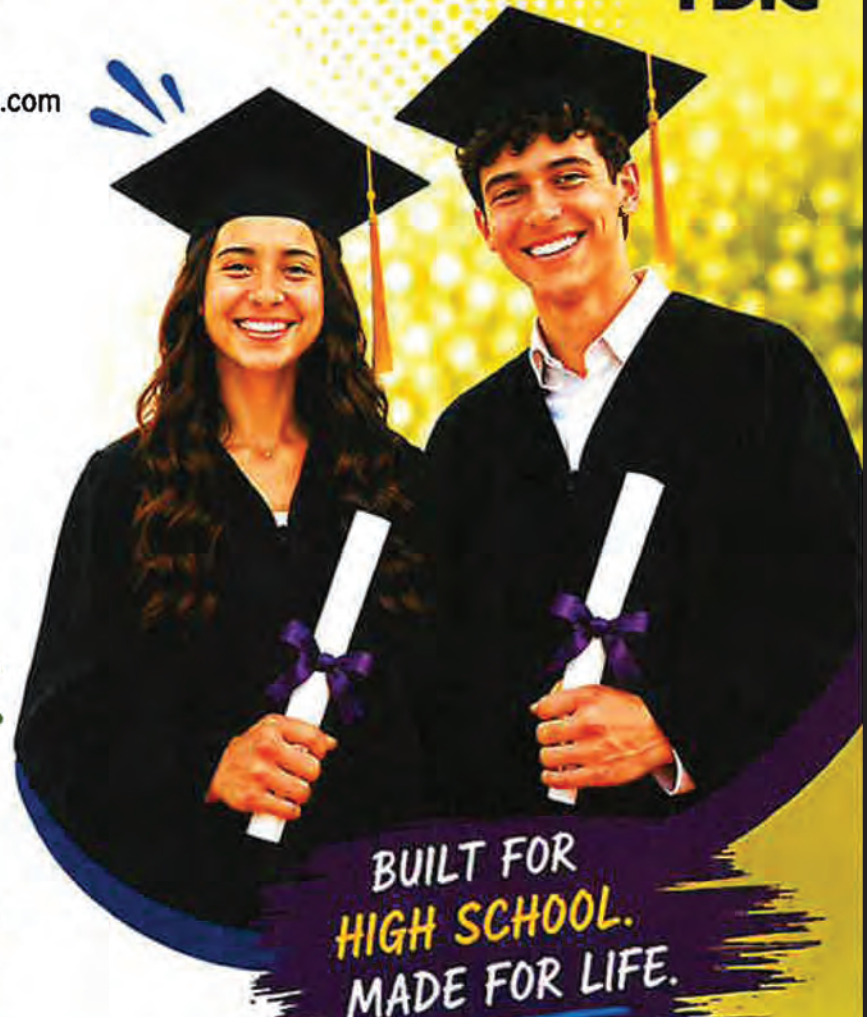
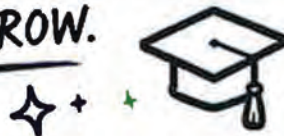
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