

St. Joseph Newsleader

Friday, Jan. 5, 2018
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Est. 1989

Town Crier

Winter market to be held Saturday

The Sartell Winter Market will be held from 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 6 and Feb. 3 at Sartell City Hall, 125 Pinecone Road. Some of the many items you will find include the following: eggs, beef, chicken, vegetables from storage, canned goods, baked treats, breads and many craft items. Come show your support for your local farmers' market. All items are grown, produced or crafted locally.

K of C breakfast set for Sunday

A special Knights of Columbus breakfast partnering with the Sisters of St. Benedict will be held from 8:30 a.m.-noon Sunday, Jan. 7 at Heritage Hall in the Church of St. Joseph, 12 W. Minnesota St., St. Joseph. Proceeds will go directly to help support Colegio San Benito, a Kindergarten-ninth-grade school administered by the Sisters of St. Benedict monastery in Humacao, Puerto Rico, the area hit hardest from the devastating hurricane. This monastery was founded by the Benedictine Sisters in St. Joseph. Also learn about the people you'll be helping. Masses are at 8 and 10 a.m.

Senior Connection hosts therapy animals Jan. 9

The Sartell Senior Connection will host CentraCare's therapy animals and volunteers at 2 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 9 in the Sartell Community Center Senior Center, 850 19th St. S., Sartell. Marlene Dingman and Paulette Levasseur will share the benefits of interaction of the therapy animals (dogs) with patients, staff and family members; what it takes to become certified with a therapy animal; and what they've experienced with their own therapy dogs. Their furry therapists will accompany them for their visit.

Become an advocate for sexual-assault victims

The Central Minnesota Sexual Assault Center seeks volunteers to attend its upcoming volunteer advocate training. Advocates are required by the state of Minnesota to complete a 40-hour training (our training is 45 hours) which qualifies them to provide support counseling, crisis intervention, and advocacy for survivors of sexual violence and their friends and family on CMSAC's 24-hour phone line, at local law-enforcement centers and at area hospitals. Contact Central Minnesota Sexual Assault Center at 320-251-4357 or visit www.cmsac.org.

For additional criers, visit www.thenewsleaders.com and click on Criers.

Residents celebrate by helping others

by Cori Hilsen
news@thenewsleaders.com

The holidays can be a very stressful time for people who lose their jobs, are diagnosed with a medical illness or receive unexpected bills, but residents in St. Joseph are spreading good cheer by donating and helping others in need.

Kennedy Community School Principal Laurie Putnam said she is thankful for the generosity of others at the school. Some of those good deeds include donations to help clear lunch-account balances for students whose parents are behind in paying up the accounts. Teacher Kelly Haeg's father, Thomas Backes of Backes Construction Co., donated \$1,000 to pay off lunch accounts and to provide funds to each classroom teacher for snacks, school supplies or winter clothing for students in

need. An anonymous donor also donated \$100 to clear lunch accounts.

Other good deeds included the following:

The Sisters of the Order of St. Benedict donated \$400 for greatest need.

Central Minnesota Credit Union and Mission Nutrition each sponsored a Kennedy family for the holidays.

An anonymous donor through the St. Joseph Police Department sponsored three Kennedy families for the holidays.

An anonymous local business sponsored a Kennedy family for the holidays.

The Granite City Rotary donated hats and mittens.

Kennedy staff raised \$350 to support Kennedy families for the holidays.

Celebrate • page 3

2017 Year in Review – Part 1

Filled with growth, changes for St. Joseph

by Vicki Ikeogu
news@thenewsleaders.com

It's been a year of transitions for both the people and the city of St. Joseph. With the installation of a new prioress at the monastery and the retirement of a long-time cook at Kennedy Community School to the merger of Collegeville Community Credit Union with Central Minnesota Credit Union and the groundbreaking of the Lake Wobegon Trail expansion, the year 2017 has been one of change and growth for the city

of just more than 6,700 people.

As we make another trip around the sun, here's a look back at some of the interesting and memorable events occurring in St. Joseph during 2017. The following are just some of the highlights of the year as culled from the 50 issues of the *St. Joseph Newsleader* during the past year.

January

The new year kicked off with a new honor for one of the sisters in the local Order of St. Benedict. Sister Michaela He-

ASA students perform Christmas on Gloria Street



contributed photo

All Saints Academy students: (front row, left to right) fourth-grader Will Velline and first-grader Zach Schaefer and (back row) third-graders James Hanuska, Mason Bill and Scott Stephens, and first-grader Quinton Blenker sing in the school's performance of *Christmas on Gloria Street* Dec. 14 at the College of St. Benedict's Escher Auditorium. For complete story see page 3.

dican was selected as one of the *Our Sunday Visitor News-weekly's* Catholics of the Year 2016. Hedican, along with St. Cloud Diocesan Bishop Donald J. Kettler, was recognized by the national publication in particular for her work with the Somali community after the September 2016 attack at Crossroads Center mall in St. Cloud. The incident, in which a Somali man was accused of stabbing 10 people, brought nationwide attention to central Minnesota. "When the stabbing took place, we got a call the Somalis were going to

be interviewed at a news conference, and I was there just to support them," Hedican told the *Newsleader*.

The St. Joseph City Council reaffirmed its commitment to financially supporting the 3.3-mile extension of the Lake Wobegon Trail from St. Joseph to Waite Park. At its Jan. 9 meeting, the council agreed to contribute \$200,000 to help cover part of the funding shortfall for the \$823,802 project. Additional funding would be contributed by Waite Park, St. Cloud and Stea-

YIR • page 4

Pastor Thul receives warm welcome at RLC

by Darren Diekmann
news@thenewsleader.com

On Dec. 16 at Resurrection Lutheran Church in St. Joseph, the new full-time pastor, Jennifer Thul, introduced herself formally to the congregation. It was a day for which both the congregation and Thul have been praying for a long time.

The welcoming response by the congregation was another affirmation to Thul that she had found a church that was a good fit. She said she and the church share the same belief in the church's role in the community and the larger world.

She is excited to begin her new role at Resurrection – helping people grow and develop, both young and old, and teaching a love of learning, especially with youth.

Getting Pastor Thul and Resurrection Church together was a long stretch for both parties.

The call process, as it is known in the church, isn't seen so much as a hiring, Thul explained, but as a lengthy process involving several meetings with much prayer and trust.

"It is sitting together and having conversations about shared gifts
Pastor • back page



photo by Darren Diekmann

Pastor Jennifer Thul and her husband Daryl moving into their new house in St. Cloud. Here they will be centrally located between St. Joseph and Santiago where Daryl, himself a pastor, will soon begin ministering at South Santiago Lutheran Church. The Thuls have four children: Caleb, a ninth-grader; Oliver who attends Minnesota State-Mankato; Andreas who lives in Redwood Falls with his wife; and Hannalora, who lives in Marshall with her husband and three children.

Obituary

Gerald L. "Jerry" Johnson, 85

St. Joseph
April 30, 1932-Dec. 25, 2017

Gerald L. "Jerry" Johnson, 85, of St. Joseph, died Dec. 25, 2017 at the St. Cloud Hospital. His funeral was held Jan. 3 at St. Joseph's Catholic Church, St. Joseph. The Rev. Jerome Tupa, OSB, officiated. Burial was in the parish cemetery.

Jerry was born on April 30, 1932 in Blue Grass, Minnesota to George and Esther (Mietzel) Johnson. He graduated from Wadena High School in 1949. In 1954, he married Theresa Wrede. While living in Wadena, Johnson was an accomplished baseball umpire, even being offered a minor league umpiring contract, which he declined. He and his family moved to St. Joseph in 1964. Johnson worked as a route salesman for vari-



ous companies, eventually retiring in 1995 as an independent distributor for Little Debbie Snacks. He was a volunteer firefighter for the Wadena and St. Joseph fire departments, retiring after 32 years of service and a member of the Teamsters for 20 years. He enjoyed golfing, hunting, bowling, playing cards and spending time with his children and grandchildren.

Survivors include the following: his wife of 63 years; children, Debra (Steve) Herlofsky, Julie (John) Taufen, Gary (Mary) Johnson and Diane (Kevin) McGrew; grandchildren, Adam (Courtney) Schneider, Ryan Schneider, Eric (Bonnie) Schneider, Nicole (Aaron) Blackmore and Tasha Herlofsky; brother, Ronald (Jean) Johnson; nieces, nephews, relatives and friends.

He was preceded in death by his parents and granddaughter, Lindsey Johnson.

In lieu of flowers, memorials are preferred.

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In Business

Stearns County earns grant to form sex-trafficking task force

The Stearns County Attorney's Office in partnership with the Stearns County Sheriff's Office, the St. Cloud and Waite Park police departments and the Central Minnesota Sexual Assault Center was recently awarded a \$313,000 grant from the Minnesota Office of Justice Programs to form the Central Minnesota Sex Trafficking Investigative Task Force.

The task force will coordinate with state and federal agencies to investigate and prosecute sex traffickers and provide services and support for adults and children being exploited in Stearns County and across central Minnesota. On Dec. 19, the Stearns County Board of Commissioners approved re-allocation of allotted dollars to support a crime analyst to complete the team assigned full-time to combat this public safety problem.

Waite Park Police Chief Dave Bentrud told the Stearns County Board when investigators started digging into the problem of trafficking, they found it extended beyond the metro area into smaller communities. "It ties to gangs, violent offenders and drugs," he said. "We felt trying to figure out a way to allocate more investigative resources to the problem made sense."

Stearns County Attorney Janelle Kendall added trafficker prosecutions have been successful in part because of the County Attorney's Office expertise in prosecuting domestic violence, echoing that trafficking prosecutions involve not only domestic and sexual violence, but often drug use and sales and other related property crimes to ensure profitability for the career criminals involved.

Partner agencies include not only Waite Park and St. Cloud Police as well as the Stearns County Sheriff and County Attorney, but also the Central Minnesota Sexual Assault Center, the Safe Harbor Regional Navigator, Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid, Terewith Refuge, Catholic Charities, Lutheran Social Services, Stearns County Human Services homeless outreach, child protection and gateway support divisions, the Salvation Army, Anna Marie's Alliance, the Children's Response Initiative, CentraCare's Child Advocacy Center, and representatives from the Stearns County Board of Commissioners and numerous Congressional and state legislative offices. State Rep. Tama Theis, State Sen. Jerry Relph, and State Rep. Tim Miller all played important roles in acquiring this state funding. Rep. Tom Emmer and Sens. Klobuchar and Franken have been kept advised of the developing needs as well. The task force would not be possible without the financial support of the part-

ner agencies who jointly recognize sex trafficking is a clear and present danger that significantly affects the public safety of Central Minnesota.

Since 2010, investigations across Stearns County have demonstrated the trafficking of women and children in Central Minnesota is a significant public-safety issue. The St. Cloud area, sitting at the intersection of I-94 and Highway 23, is a natural crossroads for both sex traffickers and sex buyers, creating the highest demand outside the Twin Cities metro area. Individual and later coordinated efforts by law enforcement in Waite Park and St. Cloud involved numerous buyer stings and prosecution of several traffickers, demonstrating the significant supply and demand for purchased sex that could not be adequately addressed with a part-time or ad hoc approach. In 2016, the partner agencies collaborated to better coordinate both investigations and victim services and to address the need for full-time dedicated resources to attack the problem. From this collaboration, the need for resources was clearly identified, leading to the grant application and county board request.

The Task Force will utilize two full time investigators, one each in the Waite Park and St. Cloud police departments, plus a portion of a full-time detective in the Stearns County Sheriff's Office to concentrate exclusively on reducing both the supply and demand for purchased sex. Investigators will coordinate with other state and federal agencies to share information and to conduct joint investigations. Such cooperation is necessary as traffickers remain mobile to avoid detection and seek greater profit. Investigators will be aided by the crime analyst in the Stearns County Attorney's Office to provide technical assistance to law enforcement including forensic analysis and collection of electronic evidence including social media.

Questions may be directed to: Janelle Kendall, Stearns County Attorney at 320-656-3880; Dave Bentrud, Waite Park Chief of Police at 320-251-3281; Don Gudmundson, Stearns County Sheriff, at 320-259-3700; and Blair Anderson, St. Cloud Chief of Police, at 320-345-3201.

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Celebrate

from front page

The St. Joseph Jaycees donated \$250, and the Kennedy Parent Teacher Association donated \$1,200. Many of these funds will be used for a program called IXL which supports students in reading and mathematics achievement.

Putnam said they use their lists to determine needs. Those lists include names of families receiving free/reduced lunch; and families who approach the school with unique needs, such as a health crisis and more, that are impacting their financial/home situation.

The school's free/reduced lunch percentage has increased to 37 percent from 30 percent last year.

"On behalf of our students and staff, I extend our deepest gratitude for the generosity of our St. Joseph community," Putnam said. "One of the things that makes our school so special is the high level of involvement and care given to us by our surrounding community. I've heard from many of the families who've received support (during) the holiday season, and they feel tremendously grateful. Thanks to the kindness of many in our school and broader community, we can ensure more students have the food, clothing and supplies they need to have a healthy and happy holiday season."

Kennedy seventh- and eighth-grade students who are part of "WE Act" collected toys for the local Toys for Tots drive. WE Act is an organization that believes adolescents are capable of changing the world.

Students and staff at All Saints Academy recently collected donations and filled shoe boxes for Place of Hope Ministries in St. Cloud, an organization that helps homeless people in the area. The shoeboxes were filled with games, snack items, school supplies, hats and gloves and other items for children who are ages infant to teenager.

The St. Joseph Y2K Lions recently donated \$1,000 to the St. Joseph Community Food Shelf. The donation will be matched through the Norman C. Skaliky Foundation, which matched every dollar donated up to an amount of \$100,000 by Jan. 1, to three area food shelves – the St. Joseph Community Food Shelf, Catholic Charities and St. Cloud Salvation Army.

"We try to support local ventures such as the food shelf," said St. Joseph Y2K Lions President Kay Lemke.

Y2K Lions member Julie Gravgaard is now a co-coordinator at the St. Joseph Area Food Shelf. The group also donated \$1,682 to the food shelf in June.

The group recently donated \$250 each to the St. Joseph Catholic Parish, Resurrection Lutheran Church and Anna Marie's Alliance for its greatest needs, as well as \$300 to the Poor Claire's Monastery for heating, \$200 to the St. Joseph Senior Citizens, \$200 to Centra-Care Foundation's "Angel on Earth" Hospice Program, \$100 to the All Saints Academy workathon and

\$500 to Catholic Charities for clothing needs.

The St. Joseph Lions recently donated \$40,000 to the city for the Millstream Park shelter building. They also raised \$1,200 for the Juvenile Diabetic Research Foundation.

"I am happy to have two successful years of the Juvenile Diabetic Research Foundation fundraiser," said Lions member Matt Killam. "I know the donations go to a great place. They help new diabetics through their tough journey and make large strides in research for the cure."

The Lions also plan to donate \$500 to Kennedy Community School for a Biotical Tower Garden to be put in the school. The school will use the garden to grow plants indoors, and students will be able to observe the process of growth of seeds to maturity.

"The Tower Garden will be a great educational resource for Kennedy for years to come," Killam said. "I am happy the Lions and Kennedy were able to work together on this project."

Sentry Bank placed a Giving Tree in the bank lobby Thanksgiving weekend. The St. Joseph Jaycees filled it with paper ornaments that contained mention of an item of need by a local family. Examples of requests included Legos for a 9-year-old boy, a doll for a 4-year-old girl and more.

Residents selected tags, purchased the item of need and returned it to the bank. The Jaycees wrapped the gifts and organized them for families to pick up. If any tags still remained on the tree by a set date, the Jaycees took responsibility of those and completed the purchases.

"This is a great showing of community generosity and the spirit of Christmas," said Jaycees member Jen Warnert.

She added it's because of Sentry Bank's involvement and the Jaycees' donation funds that come from its charitable gambling at the American Burger Bar and meat raffles at the LaPlayette that the club is able to participate in this event.

The club relies on assistance from other area members to help identify families who would benefit from the event.

Central Minnesota Credit Union staff in St. Joseph donated cash to the local Toys for Tots program to help fund the remaining gifts needed for local families.

Many helping hands helped prepare and serve the Thanksgiving meal held at the Church of St. Joseph Heritage Hall Nov. 19 and the Christmas Dinner Dec. 16 at Resurrection Lutheran Church and Son Rise Lutheran Church of Avon.

Church of St. Joseph parishioners provided gifts of clothing through a Giving Tree for 37 families (130 people). The clothing was distributed to the families along with a food basket from the St. Joseph Community Food Shelf.

Roger and Marjorie Henkemeyer and others helped organize a Christmas Treasures sale in November. Donated Christmas items were sold to raise money for the church's

Organ Restoration Fund. An arts-and-crafts sale held Dec. 1 included a bake sale of donated items from parishioners that also raised funds for the organ restoration. The Faith Formation program also sponsored a bake sale.

Church of St. Joseph business manager Sandra Scholz said Dec. 21 was a wonderful area event with the tree lighting at Bello Cucina's and visits with Santa Claus because of the generous partnership of people involved. Sentry Bank donated treat bags given out by Santa, Kay's Kitchen donated cookies and beverages, Central Minnesota Credit Union provided a craft project for children, the St. Joseph Catholic Church opened Heritage Hall to vendors, All Saints Academy sold a turkey sandwich and "sunny roll" meal, organist David Orzechowski provided some piano music, four students from the College of St. Benedict's sustainability program volunteered and more.

Those are just some of the many good deeds that residents of the St. Joseph area participated in during the holiday season. There were many more, often by anonymous donors, which also helped brighten the lives of people in need.

ASA students perform *Christmas on Gloria Street*

by Cori Hilsgen

news@thenewsleaders.com

All Saints Academy students shared their acting and vocal talents as they performed the school's annual Christmas program, *Christmas on Gloria Street*, Dec. 14 at the College of St. Benedict's Escher Auditorium.

The story of *Christmas on Gloria Street* involves Gloria and her family moving to California from Vermont and finding their new town had lost interest in celebrating Christmas, thanks in part to Mayor Molly Hollywooder. Gloria plans to bring some genuine Christmas cheer



photo by Cori Hilsgen

Parishioners (left to right) Dan Thielmann; David Orzechowski; CeCe Weldon, daughter of Nancy and Derik Weldon; Anita Fischer; and Oliver Price, son of Adam and Loni Price, perform Dec. 1 at Heritage Hall to raise funds for the Church of St. Joseph Catholic Church's organ restoration.

to the area while the mayor and her assistant, Seymour Cash, plot to veto Gloria's plans.

Musical songs in the performance included "Mary Had a Baby," "Go Tell It on the Mountain," "Will Christmas Still Be Christmas?," "Christmas Makeover," "Christmas is the Same Old Story," "Glory to the King," "One True Meaning," "Silent Night" and "Christmas will be Christmas."

Mary Schumann, All Saints Academy music specialist and director, said the students at the school are hard-working and talented children.

"They bring the true message

of Christmas by sharing their joy and love of Jesus through story and song," Schumann said. "I am blessed to work with all of them and realize that even more during this miraculous season when a tiny baby brought so much hope to all."

"The students do an excellent job singing and acting," said All Saints Academy Principal Karl Terhaar. "Our program really puts me in the Christmas mode."

All Saints Academy's 152 students performed the show for a full audience of about 300 people.

See photo on front page.

In Business

CMBA donates to 17 area high school technology programs

Central Minnesota Builders Association has seen an amplified level of interest by technology instructors to participate in *Tools for Schools*, an educational project developed in 2004 by the CMBA to increase the skills of students and promote the benefits of working in the building industry as a career.

This year 17 area schools including Sartell, Sauk Rapids, Cathedral, St. Cloud's Apollo and Tech, Albany, ALC McKinley, Becker, Eden Valley-Watkins, Foley, Kimball, Little Falls, Melrose, Princeton, Rocori, Swanville, and Upsala submitted requests indicting their schools were underfunded and could use some more tools for the interested students. The schools were presented \$18,000 at a recent CMBA meeting, giving the passionate and grateful instructor's a platform to share their trials and successes in each program with

CMBA members. They told stories of students learning building trade skills and showed appreciation for the chance to teach with more and safer tools. In addition to the presentation of donation checks, a Tool Drive was held to fill a shortage of simple tools. Donations of tools and money will be matched in 2017 up to \$20,000 thanks to a newly formed CMBA Tools for Schools Presidents Foundation.

CMBA members support this program in a big way and invite the public to do the same. The Tools for Schools program supports teaching basic skills in the technology fields, from construction to car care and electronics to robotics. It provides resources to instructors who strive to ensure enough safe tools for growing class sizes, trips to Minnesota manufacturing businesses and funds to send the most skilled students to SkillsUSA

competitions.

The ultimate goal for CMBA is to help address the building industry's labor shortages, by having contributed more than \$92,000 to area high schools during the past 14 years.

If you would like to support your local schools by make a tax deductible donation go to cmba-online.org/careers-education/tools-schools/

CMBA is a non-profit professional association, with over 75,000 employees in the member companies representing all phases of the building industry. The CMBA strives to improve the Central Minnesota community and grow its membership base by promoting the association to the public, educating the community about building industry best practices, and advocating for the building industry at the local, state and national level.

YEAR IN *Review* 2017

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YIR

from front page

rns County.

An anonymous donor donated \$10 million to the College of St. Benedict to create and support a new Center for Ethical Leadership in Action. This was the largest donation in the college's history.

It was a bittersweet end for Kennedy Community School cook/manager Maxine Pogatshnik. After 39 years in the St. Cloud School District – 30 of which were spent in St. Joseph – Pogatshnik ended her lengthy career serving hot meals to hungry elementary school kids. Over the course of her tenure, it's estimated Pogatshnik helped whip up more than 3.9 million meals.

A New York-based financial research firm named St. Joseph as the safest city to live in 2016. The city had the lowest rate of violent crimes and second lowest rate of property crimes of the 125 Minnesota cities surveyed.

St. Joseph city staff finished compiling items to be placed inside a time capsule, which has a permanent place inside one of the walls of the new government center. The location is marked by a new dedication plaque.

February

St. Joseph resident Ann Buckvold and her daughter Harriet attended the Women's March at the state capitol in St. Paul. The Women's March, which had an estimated 100,000 people in attendance, was done to draw attention and support for women's rights, education and health care.

The Estates Bed & Breakfast development project gets underway as owners and business partners Joe Prostrollo and Cory Ehlert work to transform their rental property at 29 Minnesota St. E. into a bed-and-breakfast. The \$125,000 renovation project would outfit each room to be handicapped-accessible and have its own bathroom.

The St. Joseph Area Chamber of Commerce announced a vacancy after current administrator Jeny Meyer resigned. Chamber President Bob Ringstrom has hopes of announcing a replacement in early February.

The man who confessed to murdering Jacob Wetterling was transferred to a federal prison in Massachusetts. Danny Heinrich was sentenced in November 2016 after being found guilty of possessing child pornography. In return for leading investigators to Wetterling's body, Heinrich was not charged in Wetterling's murder.

The new government center was dedicated at an open house Feb. 6. The ceremony included a flag-raising by members of the American Legion Post 328 of St. Joseph and a ribbon-cutting by St. Joseph Mayor Rick Schultz. "Today, this government center,



photo by Carolyn Bertsch

Jamie Phillipp of St. Joseph assists her daughter, Ella, 3, in drilling a screw into her birdhouse as her little one insists, "I got this!" at the St. Joseph Rod and Gun Club's annual birdhouse building event held March 20 at the American Legion in St. Joseph.

which grew out of a spirit of collaboration, will be a visible and tangible expression of our community's shared concept for improved local and regional services," Schultz told the *Newsleader*.

Students at All Saints Academy celebrated Catholic Schools Week in style. In addition to fun days like Wacky Day and Spirit Day, students had the chance to work with Rockhouse Productions to record songs, participate in science lessons by Minneapolis-based Bakken Museum and visit with author Patrick Mader.

St. Joseph resident Duane Scepaniak survived a scary situation on Big Swan Lake near Grey Eagle. On Jan. 27, Scepaniak and his friend David Walz were going ice fishing. On their way back to shore, the ice surrounding Scepaniak's truck started to break apart. The men escaped through the windows of the truck.

St. Joseph teenager Makayla Keehr was the first patient to undergo adolescent idiopathic scoliosis corrective surgery at St. Cloud Hospital. Keehr was treated by St. Cloud Orthopedics spinal surgeon Dr. Trevor McIver. The surgery corrected Keehr's 55-percent spinal curvature and increased her height from 4-foot 11-inches to 5-foot 1-inch.

St. John's Prep School debuts the Nydeen sisters on the basketball court. Taylor, a senior; Reid, a sophomore; and Jayden, a seventh-grader; all played on the girls varsity basketball team. "It's nice to be part of major moments in each other's basketball careers. I am glad to be able to encourage my sisters like other people encourage me," Taylor Nydeen told the *Newsleader*.

March

Sister Susan Rudolph will succeed Sister Michaela Hedican as the spiritual leader of the Order of St. Benedict in St. Joseph. "I don't know if I would contrast too much of our styles," Rudolph told the *Newsleader* of her predecessor Hedican. "I just see great continuity, and I love our community and I love Michaela. She has been a great leader and mentor for me." Rudolph will be installed June 4 as the 17th

prioress.

Kennedy Community School's honor choir took center stage at the 16th annual Night of the Stars variety show to support the St. Cloud School District's Local Education and Activities Foundation program. Students performed *The Orchestra Song*, a traditional Austrian folk song in German.

Students at All Saints Academy got a surprise visit from a snow plow. Employees of the Stearns County Highway Department brought a snow plow to school to teach kids about snow-plow safety. The students also had the chance to honk the horn and climb inside the cab of the plow.

Chris Hensel, owner of St. Joseph-based Dovetail Kitchen Designs and Sauk Rapids' Anthony Steinemann of ADS Designs, helped develop a new display for the annual Central Minnesota Builders Associations' Home Show. The 'Forever House' showcases the latest in home technology and design. The nearly functional house display was built for the Home Show in about 24 hours inside the River's Edge Convention Center in St. Cloud.

St. Joseph police were able to purchase an automated external defibrillator, thanks to donations from the community. "Now every squad car I have is equipped with the same (kind of) defibrillator," St. Joseph Police Chief Joel Klein told the *Newsleader*.

St. Joseph resident and Apollo High School graduate Peter Hamerlinck is working toward developing an alumni association for his alma mater. The alumni association would serve as a means to keep past students connected to their childhood community and provide them with opportunities to give back to the area.

Catholic Charities Children's Home has stopped providing mental health residential treatment services. "This decision is intended to increase the focus on community-based mental-health services," said Catholic Charities Executive Director Steve Pareja in a media release.

St. Joseph residents were allowed a sneak peek of the

planned community center. While exact amenities have not been decided, residents have determined the center should include space for kids and seniors along with an indoor track and a possible place for the St. Joseph Food Shelf.

Daniel Coborn of locally owned Coborn’s Inc. fame died at the age of 86. Coborn, who ran the company from the early 1960s until the late 1990s, oversaw a lot of the grocery store chain’s growth throughout central Minnesota.

St. Joseph residents were asked to give their opinions on the future direction of the city. As the city works to update its comprehensive plan, staff members encouraged the public to provide feedback and suggestions for the city.

April

St. Joseph resident Dan Rassier filed a lawsuit against Stearns County, Stearns County Sheriff John Sanner and others involved in the investigation of the Jacob Wetterling disappearance. Rassier, along with his mother Rita, filed the lawsuit in federal court. They are asking for \$2 million in damages.

Collegetown Community Credit Union announced its intent to merge with Central Minnesota Credit Union of Melrose. Under the agreement, the two credit unions would become one entity and operate under the CMCU name.

Collaborative efforts are emerging between the Central Minnesota Catholic Worker group, Kennedy Community School and others to help distribute food for elementary school students in need. The Colt Action Packs program is designed to stuff backpacks with enough food stuff to help get hungry kids through the weekend. This program is modeled after the ROCORI Action Packs program.

A new Kwik Trip has been given the go-ahead. The St. Joseph Planning Commission moved to send forth its acceptance recommendation to the city council. The location of the newest Kwik Trip would be on the corner of CR 75 and 20th Avenue SE/CR 134.

Members of the YMCA Gators swim team were recognized for their accomplishments. The Gators club swimmers compete in two main seasons and practice at either the St. Cloud Area Family YMCA or Foley High School. Members of the local team include Kennedy Community School student Emily Hammond of St. Cloud and All Saints Academy students Mary and Gabriela Morris of St. Cloud.

Riff City Guitar and Music Co. continues its strong presence in St. Joseph. The business, which opened in November 2012, announced its intent to open a new location in New Hope. Owner Joe Leach said Riff City employee and Minneapolis musician

Leslie Rich will run the new location.

St. Joseph Y2K Lions has decided to help fund the St. Joseph Fire Department’s CPR classes. The fire department lost its funding to continue operating its annual classes. Members of the Y2K Lions decided to step in. The CPR course, which is free to attend, provides instruction on how to use an automated external defibrillator and help with choking incidents.

All Saints Academy has joined other area Catholic schools to form the Catholic Community Schools organization. CCS’s goals are to bring all area Catholic schools together under the guidance of one organization to help collectively strengthen the schools in financial management, academics and spirituality.

May

About 30 St. Joseph residents participated in an event to provide feedback about the proposed community center. Concerns were brought up by many attendees over the cost and where city staff were in the planning process. St. Joseph City Administrator Judy Weyrens said the cost to complete the community center could range between \$8-\$12 million depending on the different services provided.

Astronaut Col. Robert “Bob” Springer hosted a talk about his journey into space at the Gorecki Center on the campus of the College of St. Benedict. Springer participated in two space missions, one in 1989 and another in 1990.

Students from both the St. Joseph and St. Cloud All Saints Academy gathered together to perform *The Lion King, Jr.* The musical is an off-shoot of the Broadway production *The Lion King* that has been adapted for middle-school students to perform.

Current owner of Little Saints Academy Amy Bonfig has plans to open Lillian Leonard Primary, a year-round tuition-based private school that will provide students with a continuation of learning styles developed at Little Saints Academy for students who might not make the age requirement to enter kindergarten. “We’ve had the desire to continue educating children past preschool for some time,” Bonfig told the *Newsleader*.

St. Joseph resident and former Minnesota Twins player Al

Newman spoke about his life and baseball career for a leadership conference hosted by the Sartell Chamber of Commerce.

The City of St. Joseph has dedicated part of its soon-to-be constructed community center to the legacy of Jacob Wetterling. The community center would take about a year to build and would have three gymnasiums, a few game rooms and an activity area. “We can think of no better way to honor him and all that he stood for,” said Jerry Wetterling, Jacob’s father, in a previous *Newsleader* story.

Bad Habit Brewery hosted a fundraiser to help develop a dog park inside Millstream Park. The dog park had already been approved by the city council, but funds totaling around \$15,000 were needed to build fencing. The St. Joseph Park Board has contributed \$10,000 to the project.

Mushroom farmer Kevin Doyle has spent decades growing and distributing all sorts of edible mushrooms from his St. Joseph business, Forest Mushrooms Inc. On average, his farm produces 2,500 pounds of oyster mushrooms and 600 pounds of shiitake mushrooms per week.

Emerging writers and authors had the chance to learn tips and tricks on writing and illustrating from professionals at the 13th annual Young Authors Young Artists conference at the College of St. Benedict. About 1,400 students from around the area participated in this three-day workshop.

The new St. Cloud Area Family YMCA opens. The 106,000-square-foot facility has three gyms, a lazy river, a water slide and a two-story rock-climbing wall. The \$23.3-million facility was built in partnership with the City of St. Cloud, CentralCare Foundation and the Coborn Family Foundation.

June

Military men and women were honored at a Memorial Day ceremony at the Old Cemetery in St. Joseph. Following a Catholic Mass at the Church of St. Joseph, members of the American Legion Post 328 led a procession into the cemetery. The names of more than 350 deceased veterans were read.

Construction plans for the 3.3-mile extension of the Lake Wobegon Trail are expected to start this fall. Permits and ease-

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photo by Frank Lee

Mayor Rick Schultz prepares to cut the ribbon with the help of Central Minnesota Council Boy Scouts of America at the Feb. 6 open house for the new St. Joseph Government Center at 75 E. Callaway St.

YEAR IN

Review

2017

36

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Opinion

Our View

We must all join fight against sex-trafficking

Sex-trafficking is such a vile, disgusting, vicious crime it is difficult to fathom – difficult to imagine so many “ordinary” folks could possibly do such a crime, and those “ordinary” folks are not only pimps but the “johns” (mainly married men) who pay for sex, often with under-aged girls or boys.

Very often, sex-trafficking and drug-trafficking are inseparably connected, which makes the sickening crime even more insidious.

An extraordinary series of exposé stories by the *St. Cloud Times* last year proved just how extensive the crime is right here in central Minnesota and the St. Cloud area. We can no longer pretend sex-trafficking is a big-city crime; it’s right here, right under our noses. Sex-trafficking has become rampant in the area, and many of the pimps are not hard-bitten thugs from metro areas but “ordinary” men (and some women) from just about every city and small town in the three-county area.

But the fight against it has begun. Law-enforcement departments, attorneys, social agencies and others have been networking for at least 18 months to find ways to combat the crime. But there was a lack of funds.

Thanks to a \$313,000 grant from the Minnesota Office of Justice Programs, a new local task force can be formed. It’s called the Central Minnesota Sex-Trafficking Investigative Task Force.

Participants include police departments, sheriff departments, a sexual-assault center and the Stearns County Attorney’s Office. The task force will now have full-time sex-trafficking investigators in the St. Cloud and Waite Park police departments. There will also be a full-time officer and a part-time detective on the task force. The force will also network with state and national efforts, which is so important because sex-traffickers and their victims are constantly on the move to escape detection.

In addition, the task force will connect with many excellent organizations that are trying to put sex-traffickers out of business, off of the streets, while helping restore their victims to a sense of self-worth, health and new direction. Such organizations include women safe-shelters, churches, legal-aid agencies, Catholic Charities and Terebinth Refuge.

Stearns County Attorney Janelle Kendall deserves our thanks and the highest praise for working tirelessly on ways to stop sex-trafficking, along with those who network with her.

We are happy about the task force, the new funding. But there is also a place for all of us in this crucial battle. As is the case with terrorist activity, if “you see something, say something.” Some of the sex-trafficking trysts take place in apartment buildings, hotels, motels, cars in parking lots and in homes of neighborhoods. A sure sign something may be awry is unfamiliar people going into and out of places, sometimes staying for short times, then leaving. That is sometimes also a sign of drug sales going on, and – not to forget – where there are drugs, there is often sex-trafficking and vice versa.

Sex-trafficking is like a cancerous rot on our entire society. We must all learn about it, learn how it cripples its victims emotionally and physically, and learn the ways we can all help to stop it, to arrest and prosecute offenders and to help restore its victims back to confidence and health.

St. Joseph • Sartell-St. Stephen

Newsleaders

Reaching EVERYbody!

The ideas expressed in the letters to the editor and of the guest columnists do not necessarily reflect the views of the *Newsleaders*.

Letters to the editor may be sent to news@thenewsleaders.com or P.O. Box 324, St. Joseph, MN 56374. Deadline is noon Monday. Please include your full name for publication (and address and phone number for verification only.) Letters must be 350 words or less. We reserve the right to edit for space.

Tax plan contains sugar-coated poisons

When they concocted the tax bill, Republicans were wearing rose-tinted glasses in dimly-lit, locked rooms in Washington, D.C. (aka “The Swamp.”)

Should we be celebrating this “legislative triumph?”

Whoa! Not so fast.

We don’t even know if the deal will improve anything except for more money circulating in the rarified world of the already-rich, the politicians’ “donor class” for which the bill was primarily crafted.

First off, there were good reasons for tax reform such as tax-code simplifications and, yes, even a decrease in corporate rates. But with gaping loopholes left intact, how dare they call it “reform” when such loopholes and shell-game chicanery remain intact for giant corporations that pay little or nothing in taxes already?

They insist the plan is fair for one and all. Here’s their theory: Giving huge tax breaks to corporations, millionaires and billionaires will benefit all Americans because that extra money in the hands of the wealthy will trickle down to the rest of us in the form of new and better jobs and boosted wages. Besides “trickle down,” it’s also known as the “rising-tide-lifts-all-boats” theory. It hasn’t worked before; many a boat has sunk. Will it work this time? Best put on your flotation jackets.

Another starry-eyed presumption is the tax cuts will spur economic growth by 3 to 5 percent of Gross Domestic Product, and that, they claim, will eventually kick off an increase in average-worker salaries of about \$4,000 annually. That one’s called the “counting-chickens-before-they-hatch” theory.

Why haven’t corporations with re-

Dennis Dalman

Editor



cord profits already invested in major job-creation? Will even more money convince them to invest in Main Street rather than just Wall Street? Will some new American-style *noblesse oblige* take hold?

Most companies, with good reason, will not expand until there is an increased demand for goods and services. That is why it would have made good sense to give the lion’s share of the breaks to blue-collar workers, middle-class workers and to small-to-medium businesses that have long created nearly two-thirds of the jobs in the nation.

Most corporations have already said they will likely use their tax-break windfalls for stock-buybacks in order to increase share prices. More money begets more money, and Wall Street – not Main Street – wins again.

But as the order-before-midnight TV commercials shout, “But wait! There’s more! Free! Just pay extra shipping and handling.”

In the fine print of the tax-cut deal are some things we *hoi polloi* should not be celebrating – far from it. Squint hard; you’ll see them:

- The individual mandate for Obama-Care is rescinded, thus causing big premium increases mainly by those in the middle class who make too much money to qualify for federal subsidies.
- It will increase the deficit by at least \$1.4 trillion. That will lead to all kinds of “solutions,” including state and local

governments having to raise taxes and fees to make up for shortfalls in federal aid – everything from education to infrastructure, from health care to worker safety. Those increased costs to the lower-income and middle-class people will more than wipe out any tax breaks they’ll see in their paychecks. According to most analyses by economists, workers will see tax breaks of – at most – anywhere from \$1,500 to \$2,000 annually. It won’t take long to “neutralize” those gains by deficit-induced costs.

- Corporate tax breaks for corporations are permanent; those for individuals will “sunset” in the coming decade.

This package is touted as a big Christmas gift to all Americans. It’s more like sugar-coated poison. After the sugar-rush wears off, the paycheck gains will be eroded. But wait! There’s more! The right-wing ideologues who gave us this “gift” will start using the astronomical deficit it causes as the grand excuse to start slashing Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and other social programs. That slash-and-burn intention, along with privatization of public programs, has long been their goal. To do that, they will have to retain control of the House and Senate. And that is why their tax scheme is so sugar-coated – to fool people into thinking what a swell deal it is for the little guys’ and gals’ paychecks, the folks whom they hope will re-elect them in the 2018 election and beyond.

Probably the biggest lie Trump ever told, among so many, is when he crowed this tax-break deal won’t benefit him whatsoever (“Bull-lieve me! Bull-lieve me!”) Yeah, right. Sure, anything you say, Big Santa.

Some Christmas gift. Great big lump of coal is more like it.

Holiday classics usher in new year

I can’t believe it. Once again we are in a new year; 365 days have unfortunately gone by so fast. Now is the time I have to transition to writing 2018 as the date on papers and documents, even when I was just getting used to switching to 2017 from 2016. Christmas is over, to return in another year that might just go as fast as this one.

As I have discussed before, the holiday season is one of my favorite times in large part due to the atmosphere of giving and togetherness it provides. This is accomplished through decorations, snow on the ground, music. But there’s something that also really gets me into the mood of the season, and that’s holiday movies.

There are certain movies saved only for Christmas and New Year’s among my relatives because for our family they bring a more special significance then. It all seems so much more relatable when the weather outside mirrors the television screen, and the characters work to put up the Christmas tree and make the most of the season.

As soon as Thanksgiving blows through, my mother likes to turn the television over to 25 Days of Christmas on the Hallmark channels. Although I find these movies a little sappy, it’s encouraging there are networks that devote their time to provide entertainment with a lot of holiday values and spin on the airways. I’ve seen enough

Connor Kockler

Guest Writer



cheesy romances to guess the plot a mile away, and seen many a Scrooge-like character turned into a Christmas-lover by their caring neighbors, but I think people keep coming back to these themes because they say something about what this time of year is supposed to be about.

A film that usually gets pulled out at the family gatherings is *National Lampoon’s Christmas Vacation*. Despite its 1980s release, it maintains a lot of relevancy and odd situations that make for laughs even in our changed times. Finding the perfect Christmas tree, dealing with unexpected family situations and just general shenanigans are a start. The Griswold family reminds us our sometimes-stressful holiday experiences could certainly be getting a lot more out of hand.

Building into that theme is one of my personal favorites, *Home Alone 2*. Though I am also a fan of the first *Home Alone* movie, its sequel catches more of the Christmas spirit and sees Kevin McCallister up to his old antics, not just to torment the idiotic bad guys, but to

protect and help those less fortunate than himself. Without getting too far into the plot, a young kid realizes the true meaning of Christmas, as we all hope to do as well.

Finally, I will end with a favorite of my grandmother’s, and a truly classic tale of the holiday spirit. This, of course, is *White Christmas*. It has everything you could ask for from a great Christmas movie – wonderful music, scenery, romance and one of the most heart-touching tributes I know in a movie. After World War II is over, two soldiers who have made it as successful entertainers find partners and run into their old commanding officer from the conflict. The rest is history, and if you’ve never seen it before, I encourage you to watch it.

So as we start off the new year, let’s all be sure to hold the lessons of the past holiday season with us, start our New Year’s resolutions off right and work toward making the world better one kind act at a time. Whether it’s with our favorite films, songs or holiday activities, there are many things that can remind us of what really is important. This January, we can use the holidays and its values to get a good start on the new year.

Connor Kockler is a Sauk Rapids-Rice High School student. He enjoys writing, politics and news, among other interests.

YIR

from page 5

ments have been secured and engineering plans have been finalized. The last obstacle to overcome is securing the final approval from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and the Minnesota Department of Transportation.

The planned release of documents related to the Jacob Wetterling case have been delayed. Attorneys for Patty and Jerry Wetterling have filed a lawsuit to prohibit the release of the documents, citing privacy issues. The Wetterlings have until June 30 to submit the investigative materials they believe are personal and

private that should remain so.

The St. Benedict's Monastery Whitby Gallery displayed art works by the Rev. Jerome Tupa, pastor of the Church of St. Joseph. The display is titled *Paintings by Jerome Tupa, OSB*.

The Killer Vees will perform a tribute concert to the late Bobby Vee at this summer's Joetown Rocks festival. Bobby Vee passed away in October (2106) after battling Alzheimer's disease. Also slated to perform during the annual festival is All Saints Academy students, the Graduates, Collective Unconscious and Brat Pack Radio.

St. Joseph resident Joyce Stock is seeking volunteers who have a knack for sewing. Stock and her sister, Janice Stock, make and donate dresses and

skirts to children in Haiti. In 2016, the Stock sisters donated more than 200 dresses and 30 skirts to the island nation.

Sister Susan Rudolph becomes the new prioress of St. Benedict's Monastery. Rudolph, a Sauk Rapids native, was elected by the sisters in February. She has taken over the prioress position from Sister Michaela Hedican.

Patty and Jerry Wetterling were selected by the St. Joseph Lions Club to be the grand marshals of the Fourth of July parade. In addition, the St. Joseph Y2K Lions have selected Kay and Chuck Kern to be the senior Queen and King royalty.

Stearns County names Jon Lentz to the chief-deputy position.

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Community Calendar

Is your event listed? Send your information to: Newsleader Calendar, P.O. Box 324, St. Joseph, Minn. 56374; fax it to 320-363-4195; or, e-mail it to news@thenewsleaders.com. Most events are listed at no cost. Those events are typically free or of minimal charge for people to attend. Some events, which have paid advertising in the Newsleaders, are also listed in the calendar and may charge more.

Friday, Jan. 5
St. Joseph Area Historical Society, open 11 a.m.-2 p.m., Old City Hall, 25 First Ave. NW. stjosephhistoricalmn.org.

Sunday, Jan. 7
Breakfast for Puerto Rico, sponsored by Knights of Columbus and Sisters of St. Benedict, 8:30 a.m.-noon, Heritage Hall, Church of St. Joseph, 12 W. Minnesota St., St Joseph. All proceeds benefit Colegio San Benito, which is administered by the Sisters of St. Benedict monastery in Puerto Rico, and the hardest-hit area from the hurricane. David, 320-271-7225.

Monday, Jan. 8
Lunch and cards, sponsored by Helping Hands Outreach, noon-3 p.m., Rusty Nail, 4 CR 2 S., St. Stephen. (through February).

St. Joseph City Council, 6 p.m., council chambers, St. Joseph City Hall, 75 Callaway St. E. 320-363-7201. cityofstjoseph.com.

Tuesday, Jan. 9
St. Joseph Joint Planning Board, 7 p.m., St. Joseph City Hall, 75 Callaway St. E. 320-363-7201. cityofstjoseph.com.

National Alliance on Mental Health, 7-8:30 p.m., Calvary Community Church, 1200 Roosevelt Road, St. Cloud. 320-259-7101.

Wednesday, Jan. 10
St. Joseph Area Chamber of Commerce, 11:30 a.m., St. Joseph Government Center, 75 Callaway St. E. stjosephchamber.com

Forum for Executive Women, featuring a presentation by Malissa Adams on "Resiliency: The Key to Overcoming Adversity," 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m., Tuscan Center, Midtown Square 3333 W. Division St.

#116, St. Cloud. **RSVP by Jan. 5** at FEWStCloud.org, Jennifer, 320-292-3591.

Thursday, Jan. 11
Holiday Tree Collection, all day, remove all bags, stands and decorations from your Christmas tree and place them curbside for pick-up.

St. Joseph Food Shelf, open 1-3 p.m., Old City Hall, 25 First Ave. NW, St. Joseph.

St. Joseph Senior Citizens, 1:30 p.m., St. Joseph Community Fire Hall, 323 Fourth Ave. NE.

"State of Minnesota, Part 1: In Flux," illustrations by Anne Buckvold, 6 p.m. reception, 7 p.m. artist talk, Great River Regional Library, 253 N. Fifth Ave. Waite Park. Caron, 320-253-9359.

St. Cloud Area Mothers of Multiples, 7 p.m., VFW Granite Post 428, 9 18th Ave. N., St. Cloud.

Saturday, Jan. 13
Central Minnesota Chapter of the Federation of the Blind of Minnesota, 12:30 p.m., American Legion, 17 Second Ave. N., Waite Park.

LEGAL NOTICES

CITY OF ST. JOSEPH NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING ON PROPOSED APPLICATION FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG) FUNDING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, that the City Council of St. Joseph, Minnesota will meet in Council Chambers of the St. Joseph City Hall, located at 75 Callaway St. E., St. Joseph, Minnesota 56374, at 6 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 16, 2018, thereby dedicating a portion of their regular monthly meeting to identify community development and housing needs, including the needs of very-low- and low- income persons, as well as other needs of the community that might be addressed through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. The public hearing will include a review of the proposed CDBG

activities, their benefiting location(s), overall cost and proposed financing, and the implementation schedule. Citizens will be provided the opportunity to comment upon the original Citizen Participation Plan, or to the activities for which CDBG funds will be used. Information and records regarding the proposed use of CDBG funds will be available at the St. Joseph City Hall during regular business hours.

Judy Weyrens
City Administrator

Publish: Jan. 5, 2018

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Pursuant to Chapter 322C, Minnesota Statutes, the undersigned, who is or will be conducting or transacting a commercial business in the State of Minnesota under a limited liability company, hereby certifies:

1. The limited liability name under which the business is or will be conducted is: FBB Venture LLC.
2. The registered office and agents, if any at that office: 354 Fourth Ave. SE, St. Joseph, Minn. 56374.
3. Duration: Perpetual.
4. Organizer: Scott A. Eichers, 692 Eagle Drive SW, Melrose, Minn. 56352 abd Renee J. Symanietz,

354 Fourth Ave. SE, St. Joseph, Minn. 56374.

I certify I am authorized to sign this certificate and I further certify I understand by signing this certificate, I am subject to the penalties of perjury as set forth in Minnesota Statutes section 609.48 as if I had signed this certificate under oath.

Dated: Dec. 15, 2017

Filed: Dec. 15, 2017

/s/ Scott A. Eichers, organizer
/s/ Renee J. Symanietz, organizer

Publish: Jan. 5 and 12, 2018



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photo by Mindy Peterson
Kristen Bauer (center), a Kennedy Community School music teacher, dances with her children Timmy (left), 4, and Eva (right), 5, at the Jungle Boogie school dance Jan. 27 in St. Joseph.

YIR

from page 7

tion. Lentz was recently appointed to the position by interim Stearns County Sheriff Don Gudmundson. Lentz has been with the department since 1991.

Year in Review Part 2 will be published in the Jan. 12 edition. (To read any of the above stories in their entirety, visit the-newsleaders.com and search for your favorite stories.)

Pastor

from front page

and plans,” she said. “In all, it’s about trusting what God is up to, what God has in store for both the pastor and the congregation.”

In this case, it ended in the happy realization for both Thul and Resurrection they are called by God to work together.

Thul began looking for a new church in September. She has been pastor of Danebod Lutheran Church in Tyler, southeast of Marshall, for more than seven years.

“I felt my gifts for ministry and my sense of call to ministry and the context in which I was serving was no longer a good fit for Danebod,” Thul said. “I feel my gifts for ministry in the setting of Resurrection Lutheran Church is a good fit for them and for me. It just feels God is calling us to have a ministry together.”

The church’s call committee was excited and relieved to be able to agree with her. The members of Resurrection have had to exercise patience for more than a year-and-a-half since their full-time pastor of 21 years, Dwaine Bruns, retired.

“Though the transition was tough, it made the congregation stronger and ready to successfully welcome our new pastor,” said Amanda Lynn, a member of the call committee.

Lynn said the committee thought Thul to be relatable and genuine.

“She seems to be really great with the youth,” Lynn said. “We

found her personable, she was so easy to talk to and seemed to listen well. She was so real.”

Thul said in the last couple of months she has discovered Resurrection is a place where she and the church can share and develop their gifts and beliefs.

“I have an incredible passion for life-long learning, for sharing the grace and love of Jesus Christ,” she said. “But not alone. I’m excited to do this in a community who wants to share Jesus with a broken and hurting world.”

She is impressed with the church’s outward focus

“With this church it’s never about a building; it’s about the people,” she said. “It’s not like, ‘Hey, we are Resurrection and we want your butt in the pew.’ It’s about being a shining light in a dark, crazy world . . . It’s loving people and walking next to them”

As an example of that spirit of outreach, she points to the non-denominational community meals several area churches provide for anyone who wants it. She was excited to be a part of that for the first time Dec. 15 at the Resurrection community meal they provide every year around Christmas.

She also mentioned Fare For All, a non-profit community-supported organization that sells food at a 30- to 40-percent discount. They distribute at several locations throughout Minnesota, including Resurrection.

“Food insecurity is such an important issue,” she said. “I’m glad to be part of a community that recognizes this and cares.”

Thul is also excited to continue Resurrection’s outreach to the St. John’s and St. Benedict communities with a renewed effort, she said.

This most recent move to the area is Thul’s 24th. All this moving

has not been a burden to her, she said. She likes change.

“Some people say they have lived in the same place for 40 years,” she said. “I can’t imagine that. How boring.”

One particularly nomadic period was when she was young and the family moved around, following her father’s work until he settled into a position with the State of Minnesota in the New Ulm area.

“I call New Ulm my home town because when I was young, my family lived there the longest,” she said.

Her ministry position at Resurrection will be just her second. Her first, where she has just spent more than seven years, was at Danebod Lutheran. That was the longest she has stayed in one place in her life. So she is excited about the move, but is sad to say goodbye.

“My sister-in-law said it best when she said the pain of loss is a testament to the love and the relationships we had with the people in those communities,” Thul said.

She has not always had such a strong sense of mission to be a pastor. In fact, the call is relatively new.

After high school she spent five years in the U.S. Army, much of it stationed in Munich, Germany where she served as a Russian linguist and an interrogator.

When it was suggested this job seemed at odds with her current focus on love and community, she laughed and explained it wasn’t war time and most of the people were cooperative.

“I(’ve) worked with people who were willing to share information about their country in exchange for an opportunity for a better life,” she said.

That experience, Thul said she believes, gives her a unique per-

spective on the refugee crisis today.

The Army also taught her a sense of community, Thul said. And it helped her learn to cooperate and get along with people, even the difficult ones.

After the Army, she became a teacher for 11 years. She first taught English as a second language for three years, then first and second grade.

That career choice, Thul said, was partly motivated by the contrast in quality in the teachers she had growing up.

“I had some terrible teachers in my life,” she explained. “But I absolutely loved my fourth-grade teacher . . . She cared about me as a person and saw the potential in me even when I didn’t.”

Thul said she wanted to be like her (fourth-grade teacher) and show kids they are loved and respected. She wanted to help kids realize their potential — as she still does today.

She said she felt the call when a friend told her she and her husband were the kind of people needed in the ministry.

“I just laughed and told him, ‘No, my calling is in the classroom,’ So this was not the path that I chose. I thought I was fine teaching elementary school, but God had something else in mind.”

Thul said she believes being a teacher and a pastor are not entirely different. Much of what she does is still teaching because she is developing relationships and helping people reach their potential.

“I’ve never had a day when I thought, ‘ah this doesn’t feel right. I should be doing something different,’” she said. “It’s an absolute joy and an honor to be paid to be in a relationship with people.”

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