

Reaching Everybody! Newsleaders

Friday, Dec. 14, 2018
Volume 23, Issue 35
Est. 1995

Town Crier

Sartell Farmers' Market to be held Dec. 15

Sartell Farmers' Market will be held from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 15 at the Sartell Community Center, 850 19th St. S. Looking for that unique gift? Come shop at the Farmers' Market and find items not available anywhere else.

Knights of Columbus Free-Throw Contest set Saturday, Jan. 12

All girls and boys ages 9-14 in the Sartell/St. Stephen community are invited to the local level of competition for the 2019 Knights of Columbus Free-Throw Championship. The local competition will be held at 3 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 12 in St. Francis Xavier School, 219 Second St. N. This event is sponsored annually by the Knights of Columbus with winners from the local level advancing to district, region and state competitions. All contestants from the local level are recognized for their participation in the event and the winners at each level receive a trophy. Participants register at the event and must have written consent and age verification from a parent or guardian. Please contact Jake Schneider at 320-761-7143 with any questions.

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Recently, The Newsleaders began testing providing daily news. We are excited to say our tests were successful and we are ready for prime time! For \$5 a month, or \$50 a year, you can subscribe to thenewsleaders.com and access daily news, exclusive stories and download digital copies of The Newsleaders.

Donate winter clothing

Collect winter gear to help kids stay warm during the cold winter season for United Way Neighborhood Resource Centers at Discovery Community School and Lincoln Elementary School. Winter gear is needed for kindergarten through fifth-graders and their parents. All gently used and new winter clothing is welcome. Items can be dropped off between 8 a.m.-5 p.m. at United Way of Central Minnesota, 921 First St. N., St. Cloud. Contact Mary Krippner, United Way Volunteer Engagement Coordinator at 320-223-7991 or mkrippner@united-wayhelps.org.

INSERTS:

Waters Church

Woodcrest of Country Manor

Lights festival donations help needy families

Sartell firefighters prepared s'mores over an open fire for Dec. 7 visitors to the Country Lights Festival. Donations totaled \$300 and the fire department will use the money to help families in need. The check was presented to the fire department on Dec. 11.

A visit from Santa and a variety of games attracted visitors to the annual light display around Lake Francis on Dec. 8. The display, which includes 75,000-100,000 lights, continues through December.

Additions this year include two large igloos, eight 20-foot trees, and a 20- by 20-foot Warming Lodge that organizers hope will make everyone feel at home when they step inside to enjoy the warmth and ambiance. Bonfires around the trail give visitors a place to enjoy hot chocolate.

Special events include the following:

- Hot dogs will be served Friday, Dec. 14
- Horse-drawn trolley rides will be given Saturday, Dec. 15, around



photo by Mike Knaak

Lighted arches greet visitors to the Country Light Festival in Sartell on Dec. 8.

the lighted path, starting at the entrance and dropping off at the new Warming Lodge,

- Senior Night Thursday, 5-7 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 20,
- Reindeer and Santa night, 5-7

p.m. Friday, Dec. 21.

All events are 5-7 p.m. on weekends and include hot chocolate and cookies. The Girl Scouts donated more than 30,000 cookies for the events.

The light displays will be on more than 30 acres at Lake Francis Park. Lights will turn on when the city of Sartell's street lights turn on at dusk and stay on until dawn every day of the week.

City Council passes final budget/tax levy

by Dennis Dalman
news@thenewsleaders.com

At a Dec. 10 public hearing, the Sartell City Council unanimously approved a city budget and tax levy for 2019 – one with a property tax that is about the same as last year's.

No members of the audience spoke at the public hearing.

The salient points of the budget/levy were presented to the council by Sartell Finance Director Heidi Ostlie.

Last month, the council passed a preliminary levy, but staff had to return to the drawing board – or cutting

block – because the city was given a tax-capacity rate of 42.26 percent, higher than anticipated. In the preliminary budget/levy, the plans were to have a tax-capacity rate of 41.87 percent, compared with the previous one of 42.39 percent. Thus, the staff had to make adjustments based on anticipated revenues and expenses for 2019 in order to keep taxes at a flat rate.

The council members too, in special sessions, had worked very hard to review and discuss possible cuts to keep taxes flat. They and the staff succeeded in getting the tax rate about

one-half of a percentage point within the 2018 levy.

The total city portion of the tax levy for 2019 is \$6,570,145. The total of the general-fund budget is \$7,116,142 for which the tax levy will fund \$6.57 million. The rest will be covered by fees and other city revenue.

Taxes will increase a modest amount from about 1 percent for residential property to 1.5 and 2 percent for commercial and industrial properties.

Ostlie characterized the new budget/levy as "frugal." And the council

agreed. They expressed satisfaction about the flat tax rate and thanked Ostlie, city staff and department employees for working so hard to keep the budget in line and taxes flat.

Mayor-elect Ryan Fitzthum praised the city for keeping the tax rate flat for the past eight years. That process should continue in an ongoing basis. He singled out Sartell City Administrator Mary Degiovanni for much of the hard work in recent years to keep the budget low and the levy fair.

The other council members concurred in that opinion.

Costs, communication led to school levy defeat

by Mike Knaak
editor@thenewsleaders.com

Costs and communication led to the defeat of the Sartell-St. Stephen school district's operating levy. That's what about two dozen people gathered for the first of four community meetings told school leaders Dec. 6.

Sartell-St. Stephen voters overwhelmingly rejected the levy in the Nov. 6 election. There were 3,230 yes votes and 4,924 no votes. The levy would have raised \$1.7 million to fund operations that were part of the district's master plan.

In opening the meeting at the Blackberry Ridge clubhouse, Superintendent Jeff



photo by Mike Knaak

Sartell-St. Stephen school district voters discuss with school district officials why the recent operating levy vote failed during a Dec. 6 listening session at Blackberry Ridge clubhouse.

Schwiebert said school leaders were there to hear "what we did wrong, what we did right and what to do next." He was joined by school board members Jason Nies, Jeremy

Snoberger and newly elected board member Amanda Byrd.

The proposed levy would have raised money to operate the district's buildings and grounds, which will include

about 300,000 square feet of additional space when the new high school opens.

When voters approved bonding for the high school in May 2016, the district said they'd be asking for additional money to operate the school and fund other building projects to accommodate a growing student population.

The district introduced the operating request with the slogan Operate, Education and Innovate.

Some of the people attending the session told school leaders that while they supported the "operate" part of the plan, they did not expect to be asked to raise taxes for

Costs • page 4

Newspaper Audit Report

Sartell-St. Stephen • St. Joseph

Newsleaders

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Christmas cheer in St. Stephen



photo by Carolyn Bertsch

Brayden Jarnot, 3, of Royalton, is thrilled to meet Santa and Mrs. Claus in person at the Dec. 9 Winter Extravaganza event in St. Stephen.

Three on council give farewells

by Dennis Dalman
news@thenewsleaders.com

There was a bittersweet, end-of-an-era feeling in the air Dec. 10 as three of the five Sartell City Council members bid farewell at their last meeting of 2018.

The three are council members Pat Lynch and David Peterson and mayor, Sarah Jane Nicoll. They served up bouquets of praise and a flurry of thanks in saying their good-byes.

Fighting back tears at times, Nicoll said the farewell is a “bittersweet” experience, noting that she will now have more time with her family. Nicoll announced months ago she did not intend to file for re-election.

In the Nov. 6 election, council member Ryan Fitzthum was elected as the new mayor for Sartell. He defeated his fellow council member Peterson, the other candidate vying for the mayor’s position. Peterson has served on the city council for

12 years.

Fitzthum was elected to the council in 2016, which means there are still two years left on his four-year term. One of the first orders of business for the new council in January is to decide how to appoint or elect somebody to fill the two years remaining of Fitzthum’s term.

Sartell residents also elected two new council members – Tim Elness and Jeff Kolb. Those members, along with Mayor Fitzthum, will be sworn in at the first meeting in January. After that is accomplished, there will be only two members on the council from this year – Mike Chisum and Fitzthum.

Before their farewells, council members Fitzthum and Chisum thanked the three for their service.

“Thank you, Sarah, David and Pat,” Chisum said. “You will be missed.

Fitzthum thanked them for all their hard work and for being willing to spend so much time away from their families. Working with those three, Fitzthum said, often led to a candid – and sometimes spirited – dialogue but all were dedicated to serving Sartell, even when they disagreed.

“You’re going to be missed,” he said.

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Bids approved for new police, fire building

by Dennis Dalman
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Bob Strack, construction manager for the Public Safety Facilities project in Sartell, brought what he called “very good news” to the City Council at its Dec. 10 meeting.

Strack is the head of Strack Construction Co. Inc., the company what will build the facility to house the police department

and fire department in Sartell. The good news Strack presented is that the total bid for the project is about \$430,000 below the budget estimate as approved by the City Council previously.

The construction portion of the project will cost almost \$10,500,000. With non-construction costs added, Strack noted, the facility will cost a total of \$12,676,000.

Bids were received at Strack Co. Nov. 20 and 21. The 141 bids came from various areas of the state, including the Minneapolis metro area and were highly competitive, Strack said.

In his presentation to the council, he recommended three packages in the bidding process be re-bid to clarify what is needed precisely for those aspects of the work.

Strack also recommended

the council approve six alternates for the facility, which include recommendations for such features as a security wall, a mat-mover system, precast concrete-panel upgrades, infrared heating in one area of the building, a high-speed overhead door and a snow-melt function at the police garage entrance. Those alternates would comprise about \$300,000 of the cost.

The City Council unanimously approved the bids, with alternates and the three packages to be rebid. Construction of the facility will start next spring on a site just to the west of Pinecone Road S.

The building will serve as a home for the city’s police and fire departments, which have long been housed in cramped, crowded adjacent buildings along Fourth Avenue S.

Blotter

If you have a tip concerning a crime, call the Sartell Police Department at 320-251-8186 or Tri-County Crime Stoppers at 320-255-1301, or access its tip site at tricountycrimestoppers.org. Crime Stoppers offers rewards up to \$1,000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of those responsible for a crime. This information is submitted by the Sartell Police Department.

Nov. 28

2:15 a.m. Road rage/warrant. CR 120. Officers were dispatched to a road-rage call about a vehicle that had struck another vehicle and was following. An officer located both vehicles and cited the vehicle for reckless driving, failing to drive with care and failing to stop for an accident. During the investigation, the passenger in the suspect’s vehicle gave a false name to officers and was found to have an active warrant for her arrest. She was transported to Stearns County Jail.

Nov. 29

11:35 a.m. Vandalism. CR 120. An officer was dispatched to a person hitting a vehicle with a bat. Upon arrival the officers directed her to place the bat down and she complied. The woman was arrested for disorderly conduct and damage to property.

Nov. 30

11:15 p.m. Traffic stop. Riverside Avenue S. An officer witnessed a vehicle speeding. The officer stopped the vehicle and discovered the driver did not have their license in possession. The driver was issued a warning for the infractions.

Dec. 1

11:10 p.m. Traffic stop. Division Street W. An officer assisted a Waite Park officer with a traffic stop and subsequent field sobriety tests. A driver with a revoked license was found to be in possession of methamphetamine. The individual was arrested by Waite Park police.

Dec. 2

12:10 a.m. Traffic stop. 41st Avenue N. An officer witnessed a vehicle driving without headlights on. Upon conducting the traffic stop, the driver was unable to produce proof of insurance. The driver was cited for both infractions.

Dec. 3

4 p.m. Traffic stop. Hwy. 15. An officer witnessed a vehicle with expired tabs. During the stop, the officer saw an open container of alcohol in the back seat. The driver’s license was suspended. While taking the individual into custody and inventorying the vehicle, marijuana and paraphernalia were found. Driver was arrested and transported to Stearns County

Jail.

Dec. 4

Midnight. Suspicious vehicle. 12th Street N. An officer witnessed a vehicle in a park parking lot after it had closed. The vehicle owner arrived and stated they were snowboarding at a nearby hill. The owner was advised the park had closed and was asked to leave. The owner left without incident.

Dec. 5

10:20 p.m. Intoxicated person. 16th Street S. Officers received a call from a concerned citizen about someone knocking on their door and was not expecting anyone that evening. Upon arrival, a taxi service was noticed dropping off an intoxicated person at the residence. Officers took the intoxicated person to detox.

Dec. 6

10:25 p.m. Gunshot. Second Avenue NE. Officers were dispatched to a report of a gunshot at a residence. The owner of the residence had contacted police to say a firearm accidentally discharged in the home. The officers investigated the gunshot and found the round had not left the home. The owner showed no signs of alcohol or impairment. The officers advised to have the weapon looked at by a gunsmith.

Dec. 7

8 p.m. Domestic assault. Third Street S. Officers were called by an individual stating they had been bitten by someone. Officers found the residence appeared to have had a serious altercation in it. One individual had multiple signs of injuries. The other individual was placed under arrest and transported to Stearns County Jail.

Dec. 8

3:15 a.m. Crash. CR 120. Officers were called to the scene of a vehicle that had crashed. The driver stated they were traveling too fast while exiting the roadway and because of bald tires lost control. The officer cited the individual for careless driving.

Dec. 9

10:30 p.m. Traffic stop. Riverside Avenue N. An officer witnessed a vehicle driving without its headlights on. The officer stopped the vehicle and the driver failed to provide proof of insurance. The officer gave a warning for both of the infractions.

Dec. 10

1 p.m. Warrant. Highview Drive. A concerned citizen contacted law enforcement about another individual who had a warrant for their arrest. The individual in question did have a warrant for their arrest. Officers arrived and arrested the individual with the warrant.

Dec. 11

3 p.m. Traffic stop. Hwy. 15. An officer saw a vehicle with expired tabs. The driver stated they did not have a valid driver’s license. The driver could not produce valid insurance either. The officer then discovered the driver had a warrant for their arrest. The driver was arrested and transported to Stearns County Jail for the warrant and cited for the other infractions.

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Costs

from front page

the “educate and innovate” costs.

Snoberger said of the total, about \$300,000 would pay for an “education” component, which includes maintaining small class sizes and flexible learning opportunities. The innovate portion would have provided about \$200,000 for innovations including improved technology and teaching life skills such as problem-solving and collaboration.

Those costs, beyond operations, amounted to a bait and switch compared with what was anticipated three years ago, some residents said.

The cost of residents’ total tax bill also was a factor, sev-

eral people said. School district taxes are just one portion of the bill, which also includes property tax for the city, county and special taxing districts. Residents said they were concerned about property taxes in the years ahead as they see projects such as Sartell’s Community Center and the Public Safety Facility, as well as future school district needs.

If the district decides to go back to voters with another plan, participants urged an improved communication plan that included more details about how the money would be spent and why choices were made. The district did conduct community meetings but residents suggested the district could do a better job of telling the story of what’s happening in the schools and reaching out to the 65 percent of house-

holds who don’t have children in school.

For the most recent vote, there was no “Yes” committee formed to campaign for the project. School officials can’t advocate for a yes vote, but citizens can campaign and several people suggested the need to organize a group if the operating levy comes up for another vote.

There were many questions about what comes next, and school officials said they will come up with a plan after the community meetings wrap up.

“We’re going to do everything we can not to have direct impact on kids,” Schwiebert said. “We’re going to have to make some tough choices. We have to decide if we are going back out with a levy vote again.”

The district will begin oper-

ating the high school next fall so those expenses will need to be covered because another vote would not take place until next fall. The district plans to ask any teachers who are contemplating retirement to speak up now instead of waiting until the end of the school year to announce they are leaving. That way, officials can factor in the presumed lower salary of replacement teachers.

“We are not forcing people out,” Snoberger said.

On Dec. 6, the state of Minnesota announced a projected \$1.5 billion budget surplus. Schwiebert suggested people write to legislators urging an increase in state funding for schools.

The group also discussed the vote details of the Nov. 6 election compared with the balloting that approved the building bond. In the May 2016 special election, voter turnout was 41 percent with 53 percent of those voters approving the bond. This time, with about 70 percent turnout, only 40 percent of voters backed the operating levy. In other words, a smaller pool of voters approved an \$89.5 million high school plus upgrades at other schools for a total bond of \$105.8 million.

People asked a variety of questions about school operations in general that may help guide the district’s future communications. Included in the questions:

• **How did the district calculate the additional costs of operating the new spaces?** The district calculated the cost of operating its current space at \$4 per square foot and then multiplied that by the additional 300,000 square feet to come up with \$1.2 million.

• **Why didn’t the district ask for voters to approve the operating levy when the bond was approved three years ago?** The district didn’t

Christmas
 at Saint Benedict’s Monastery

December 24 Caroling & Christmas Eucharist
 9 p.m. in Sacred Heart Chapel
 Reception follows in the Gathering Place

December 25 Christmas Day Eucharist
 10:30 a.m. in Sacred Heart Chapel

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need the operating money until the school was built so officials didn't want to ask for the money until it was actually needed.

• **Could money saved on the building be used for operations?** No, because bonding money has to be used to build not run the district.

• **When is the teachers' contract up?** The contract ends in 2019.

• **Why was it necessary to add another building?** All the current buildings are at maximum capacity. With the new high school, current buildings will be modified and grades housed at each building will be changed to accommodate growth.

• **What is current average class size?** The targets are 28 students in the high school, 20 or fewer students in

kindergarten, 20-25 students through third grade and 25-30 students in fourth through eighth grade.

• **How many students entered the district this year?** 120.

• **How do Sartell's property taxes compare with surrounding communities?** For a \$250,000 home, combined taxes are the highest in Waite Park, second highest for Sar-

tell and about \$100 more than St. Cloud, which is third highest. Schwiebert pointed out that the district does not have a large amount of commercial or industrial property to tax and he urged voters to contact legislators to rebalance the

funding formula.

Residents will have one more chance in the coming week to meet with district leaders. The meeting is 6:30-7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 18, at Sartell Community Center, 850 19th St. S.

Chief honors officers for top-notch work

by Dennis Dalman

news@thenewsleaders.com

Two police officers were honored with awards at the Dec. 10 Sartell City Council meeting, one of them for his quick expertise at the site of a house fire, the other for spearheading so many training programs for officers.

Sartell Police Chief Jim Hughes read the citations of praise and presented the awards.

On Sept. 12 at about 11:30 p.m., Sartell officer Curt Grosz was patrolling an area near Seventh Avenue N. and 27th Street N. when he thought he saw a fire. He turned his squad car around and saw flames rapidly spreading on the side of a house as high as the eaves. The fire had apparently spread to the house from a bonfire in the yard. First, Grosz called emergency dispatch, then he used a fire extinguisher on the flames before pounding on the door, trying to awaken whoever might be inside. He then noticed a garden hose near the house. He turned on the water and sprayed the flames until they were all extinguished. In the meantime, Sartell firefighters arrived to take charge of the situation.

The home's siding, Hughes noted, was very old cedar wood, and without Grosz's immediate actions, the house could have been ablaze, gravely endangering the sleeping residents inside.

Next, Hughes honored Sgt. Wayne Schreiner with a Meritorious Service Award. For years, Schreiner has worked constantly, most often on his own time, to research, develop and fine-tune the police depart-

ment's ongoing training program.

Training, Hughes said, has become a vital component of police work, more and more important with the passing years. Without up-to-date ongoing training, a dangerous complacency can set in. In the past few years, thanks largely to Schreiner, Sartell police have been training based on real-world scenarios. Such training, Hughes noted, makes police work safer and more efficient while also boosting safety

for the people police serve.

Schreiner, throughout the years, made huge commitments in time to research tactic and techniques of training, including the programs in many other police departments. He scrutinized literally hundreds of programs, rating each for their effectiveness, then adapting and tweaking for use in Sartell. The training, Hughes said, greatly increases the skills of each officer and enhances safety and efficiency.

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Opinion

Our View It's time to talk to strangers

Don't talk to strangers.

That advice is widely given, especially to children.

Don't talk to strangers because they pose a threat to your safety. Don't make eye contact. March forward. Avoid the homeless people on the street corner. Don't exchange glances with politicians looking for votes or with folks ringing bells next to kettles.

No commitment. Don't talk to strangers.

It may be time to take a chance and start talking to strangers, even for young children.

When we don't talk to strangers, we continue to connect with people just like us. People who live in the same neighborhood, vote the same way, attend the same school and church, work in the same type of jobs, cheer for the same teams and drink at the same bars.

That's safe and comforting but it's not working.

As 2018 comes to an end, ask yourself what have you done to make your community better?

Social scientists like to talk about social capital – the networks of relationships among people who live and work in a particular society, enabling that society to function effectively. Talking to strangers is one way to improve social capital.

Over and over we hear about tribes and partisanship. Voters told candidates they wanted to elect officials who could work together, to compromise to come up with solutions instead of bickering. Too many candidates, especially at the national level, focused on fear and anger.

Following the death of President George H.W. Bush, we read about how Bush, a Republican, worked with a Democratic Congress to pass spending and tax legislation, improve the environment and protect people with disabilities from discrimination. Globally, Bush talked to strangers to build a coalition of nations to drive Iraq out of Kuwait.

Closer to home, there are more examples of people talking to strangers. In the Sartell-St. Stephen school district, citizens are working on how to move forward after voters rejected an operating levy. The school leaders scheduled a series of listening sessions to find out, in the words of Superintendent Jeff Schwiebert, "what we did wrong, what we did right and what to do next."

At the first meeting last week, there was plenty of talking to strangers. Those who supported the measure spoke up, but so did opponents who explained "what we did wrong" with respect and engaged with others to offer solutions. Nobody assigned blame or turned to anger. The meeting included parents with children in schools as well as people with no kids, teachers, coaches and retirees.

Most of the two-dozen people in attendance offered opinions but they also asked for facts to shape the road ahead.

In the year ahead, it's time to show our children how to safely talk to strangers and build social capital.

Instead of a New Year's resolution to lose weight or to eat more vegetables, resolve to talk to strangers. There are some big challenges out there. What are we going to do about climate change, health care, income inequality, education funding and crumbling roads and bridges?

Solutions come from talking to strangers, not talking about fear and anger.

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.

Sartell-St. Stephen • St. Joseph

Newsleaders
Reaching EVERYbody!

65 is no longer a magic number

Life's milestones are measured in different ways.

Births, deaths, weddings, divorces, funerals are markers on life's timeline.

For the more numerically inclined, there are birthdays.

The numbers that increase with each trip around the sun clearly stamp crucial passages.

A first birthday is always a big deal for a new family member. At 13, the teenage years begin. Sixteen-year-olds look forward to a driver's license and at 18, it's time to vote and officially become an adult. Twenty-one-year-olds enjoy a legal drink with friends.

After that though, the years don't mean much and birthdays slide by, pushed to the side by other more important life events – marriage, children, a new home, a promotion at work.

All of a sudden, you are 65. It used to be a big deal.

Not so much any more.

After years of work, people looked forward to retirement...many leaving the same employer where they started their careers.

Not so much any more.

At 65, it's time to collect Social Security and Medicare, benefits partially funded through decades of payroll deductions.

Not so much any more.

At 65, it's time to stop working and enjoy your remaining years. When the Social Security Act became law in 1935, life expectancy was 61. The generous federal government was betting you were gonna die before you collected much.

Not so much any more.

Today's life expectancy is just shy of 80, although it's dropped because of a rise in what public-health experts call

**Mike
Knaak**
Editor



"deaths of despair" – suicide and opioid addiction.

Today I hit the magic milestone of 65, although it's no big deal. My wife and I left the full-time workforce more than two years ago and we are enjoying travel, volunteering and part-time jobs that offer intellectual challenges but with considerable flexibility.

We're not cashing Social Security checks yet. We're waiting a few years to collect higher benefits and betting we outlive the government's actuarial tables.

I did receive my Medicare card, which along with a good supplemental plan, will provide me with health benefits many Americans either can't afford or don't qualify for.

I haven't announced my approaching milestone, but the telemarketers and direct mailers certainly have my number.

My mailbox is full of offers for hearing aids, knee braces, health insurance, senior condos, step-in tubs, cell phones with big buttons, stair chairs and financial-planning services.

These folks have missed their mark. While their databases list my age, name and address, they have not zeroed in on my current situation.

My iPhone and my knees work just fine.

I laughed at the step-in tub brochure that arrived in the mail. So the creaky senior user doesn't have to step over the

side of the tub, it has a swinging door. The unit features a special drain that quickly empties the tub so you don't have to sog-gily sit waiting to open the door. The tub reminded me of the Mad Tea Party ride at Disneyworld with the cups' little swinging doors.

A solicitation for financial planning at age 65 is about 40 years too late. Starting a financial plan at 65 really means carefully spending your Social Security check and keeping an eye on the lottery. I was tempted, though, by the free meal that was offered to those who want to hear the pitch.

These mailings go straight to recycling. I do like taking advantage of "senior" discounts for food, movie tickets and museums. A good financial plan always includes wise purchases.

Age is less about a number but more about your health or how you feel.

Doctors are working on calculations to determine your biological age by using various measurements of your body and its functions.

Dutch TV personality Emile Ratelband, age 69, feels a good deal younger. He wanted to change his date of birth to 49 to boost his dating prospects. But a court disagreed last week, highlighting that many rights in law are based on a person's age, and changing it at will could cause many problems.

"Mr Ratelband is at liberty to feel 20 years younger than his real age and to act accordingly," the court said, but changing his legal documents would have "undesirable legal and societal implications."

Although I'm not worried about my dating prospects, I will continue to act how old I feel.

Today is just another Dec. 14.

Will 'National Restoration' soon begin?

Come January, the National Restoration just might begin – a restoration of voting integrity, of the rule of law, of checks and balances, of strengthened treaties with our long-time allies, of re-dedication to environmental health, of renewed respect for science and facts.

Time to make America decent again, sane again, democratic again.

But will that restoration actually begin? Yes, but probably only with "baby steps."

A "Blue Wave" did indeed sweep the nation. The United States House of Representatives will be Democrat-controlled. However, if Democrats are wise, they had better not act like hot-shot vigilantes itching to impeach the president.

What they should do, from Day One, is get to work to pass whatever legislation they can, to fulfill the promises that brought them victory. That's a tall order, though, considering the Republicans still control the Senate and the president has the power of the veto. There is the possibility, however remote at this time, that the president and Republicans might join the Democrats in some legislative efforts.

The real power now in the House is to put the kibosh on Trump's most extremist proposals. Never mind impeachment threats. The best way to put the brakes on the president's crazier notions is to work aggressively on the following issues so a full restoration can begin in 2020 if Democrats take full control. And, just maybe, the president and Republicans might join the Democrats in some legislative efforts.

One: Retain Nancy Pelosi as House majority leader. A master legislative tac-

**Dennis
Dalman**
Reporter



tician, she knows exactly how to herd cats to get legislation approved. In this critical time, the Democrats must let leadership stay in Pelosi's expert hands and not take a chance on a newcomer.

Two: Protect the Mueller investigation. If they cannot prevent his firing or crippling, they should accelerate House committee investigations concerning the president.

Three: Push to reunite immigrant children and parents ripped apart at the border.

Four: Approve ways to protect those with pre-existing medical conditions and, beyond that, find ways to preserve key provisions of the Affordable Care Act, with improvements.

Five: Appoint a nonpartisan (or at least bipartisan) Committee for the Restoration of Voting Integrity. Uniform standards must be set in stone for every voting jurisdiction in the nation to prevent meddling, sabotage, voter suppression and polling mistakes. There must be new laws to prevent the blatant partisan jiggering of legislative-district boundaries (aka gerrymandering).

Six: The Comprehensive Immigration Reform Bill, rejected years ago, should be dusted off, tweaked and re-considered for approval in 2020, if not now. Until they pass such a bill, illegal immigration, loopholes and anti-immi-

grant demonization and fear-mongering will continue. Strict, specific and fair laws allowing for legal immigration are essential.

Seven: Democrats should insist Dreamers be allowed to stay in the nation, along with a way for them to attain full citizenship.

Eight: Make strides toward gun-safety legislation, including mandatory universal background checks and a ban on military-assault-style rifles for civilian use.

Nine: Work to make college more affordable and options for loan paybacks, including public service alternatives.

Ten: Pass a resolution condemning Saudi Arabia's complicity in the murder of Washington Post journalist Jamal Khashoggi and a condemnation of Trump's business-as-usual comments in the wake of that sadistic crime.

Eleven: At long last, work to pass a bipartisan infrastructure bill.

The Democrats cannot afford to fritter away precious time with political bickering. That is exactly what their antagonists most hope for – divisive feuds among Democratic factions.

Voters elected Democrats partly as a repudiation of Trumpism but mostly because they are worried about the issues noted above, and more. If this new House can start solving even some of those problems, voters' faith in them will be renewed by the next presidential election, and the restoration effort will continue, perhaps with help from a "Blue" U.S. Senate and a new president – one that unites, not divides.

Recharged with hope, voters will know the building blocks for the National Restoration are solidly in place.

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, Dec. 14

Benton County Museum, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., 218 First St. N., Sauk Rapids. 320-253-9614. mnbentonhistory.org.

Saturday, Dec. 15

Winter Market, 9 a.m.-1 p.m., Resurrection Lutheran Church fellowship hall.

Zip Code Saturday for Sartell, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Stearns History Museum, 235 33rd Ave. S., St. Cloud. Residents with a Sartell Zip Code can visit the museum for free. stearns-museum.org.

Community Meal, 11:30 a.m.-12:45 p.m., First United Methodist Church, 1107 Pinecone Road S., Sartell.

Historic Salem Church Christmas Program, 4:30 p.m., 4 miles north of Paynes-

ville on 220th Street. Sleigh rides from 3-4:15 p.m.

Sunday, Dec. 16

Breakfast, 8 a.m.-noon, Waite Park American Legion, 17 Second Ave. N.

Monday, Dec. 17

Benton County Museum, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., 218 First St. N., Sauk Rapids. 320-253-9614. mnbentonhistory.org.

Lunch and cards, sponsored by Helping Hands Outreach, noon-3 p.m., Rusty Nail, 4 CR 2 S., St. Stephen.

St. Cloud Area Parkinson's Disease Support Group, 1-2:30 p.m., Independent Lifestyles, 215 Benton Drive N., Sauk Rapids.

Sartell-St. Stephen Truth in Taxation meeting, 6-6:30 p.m., Sartell High School, 748 Seventh St. N.

Sartell-St. Stephen school board, 6:30-8:30 p.m., Sartell High School, 748 Seventh St. N.

St. Joseph Rod and Gun Club, 7 p.m., American Legion, 101 W Minnesota St., St. Joseph.

Tuesday, Dec. 18

Memory Writers group develops topics and turns in sto-

ries. 10 a.m., Stearns History Museum, 235 33rd Ave. S, St Cloud.

Community Lunch and Entertainment, sponsored by Helping Hands Outreach, noon-2 p.m., St. Stephen Parish Hall, 103 CR 2 S. 320-746-9960.

Sartell-St. Stephen school district community meeting, 6:30-7:30 p.m., Sartell Community Center, 850 19th St. S.

St. Cloud Area Genealogists meeting, 7 p.m., Stearns History Museum, 235 33rd Ave. S., St. Cloud. stearns-museum.org.

Wednesday, Dec. 19

SALT (Seniors and Law Enforcement Together), 9 a.m., Sartell Police Department, 310 Second St. S., Sartell.

Advocates for Independence, 2-4 p.m., Independent Lifestyles, 215 Benton Drive N., Sauk Rapids. 320-529-9000.

Thursday, Dec. 20

Coffee and Conversation, a senior discussion group, 9 a.m., Sartell Community Center, 850 19th St. S.

American Legion-Sartell, open to all veterans young and old, 6 p.m., Liquid Assets, 1091 Second St. S. #600, Sartell.

john.denney@charter.net.

Friday, Dec. 21

Benton County Museum, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., 218 First St. N., Sauk Rapids. 320-253-9614. mnbentonhistory.org.

Dave Cofell's 10th Annual Christmas Show, 7-10 p.m., Local Blend, 19 Minnesota St. W., St Joseph. Traditional stories, songs and poems. Free.

St. Cloud Singles Club Dance, 8 p.m.-midnight, American Legion, 17 Second Ave. S., Waite Park. 320-339-4533. stcloudsingles.net.

Monday, Dec. 24

Christmas Eve services, 1, 3, 5 and 9 p.m., Celebration Lutheran Church, 1500 Pinecone Road N.

Christmas Eve worship, 3 and 5 p.m., Resurrection Lutheran Church, 620 CR 2.

Christmas Mass, 5 and 9 p.m., Church of St. Joseph, 12 Minnesota St. W.

Christmas Eve Mass, 6 p.m., St. Stephen Catholic Church, 103 Central Ave. S., St. Stephen.

Christmas Eve Caroling and Eucharist, 9-10 p.m., St. Benedict's Monastery. <https://sbm.osb.org/event/christmas-eve-caroling-and-eucharist/>.

Tuesday, Dec. 25

Christmas Day Mass, 7:30 a.m., St. Stephen Catholic Church, 103 Central Ave. S., St. Stephen.

Christmas Mass, 9 a.m., Church of St. Joseph, 12 Minnesota St. W.

Christmas Day Eucharist, 10:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m., St. Benedict's Monastery, <https://sbm.osb.org/event/christmas-day-eucharist/>.

Thursday, Dec. 27

Coffee and Conversation, a senior discussion group, 9 a.m., Sartell Community Center, 850 19th St. S.

Kids Can Blood Drive, noon-6 p.m., Resurrection Lutheran Church, 610 CR 2, St. Joseph. Contact either Tamara 320-282-8266 or Mary 320-493-1937 to set up an appointment or go to www.redcrossblood.org.

Friday, Dec. 28

Benton County Museum, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., 218 First St. N., Sauk Rapids. 320-253-9614. mnbentonhistory.org.

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