

Reaching Everybody! Newsleaders

Friday, Dec. 13, 2019
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Town Crier

Winter Wonderland set Saturday, Dec. 14

Santa and Mrs. Claus have taken time off from their busy schedule to join you and your family for a winter celebration from 1-4 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 14, at the Lake George Municipal Complex. Create arts and crafts, decorate a cookie, see the reindeer exhibit, enjoy a hayride around the lake and much more. Don't forget your camera to capture special moments with Santa! The big trucks will be rolling in again this year for Touch-a-Truck, where children can see, touch and safely explore their favorite big trucks and heavy machinery. Free admission, thanks to our friends at Capital One! Food shelf donations will be accepted during the event.

'Hoopin' in Heaven' event to be Dec. 20

The fifth annual Tommy B "Hoopin' in Heaven" will start at 5:30 p.m. Friday, Dec. 20, in the new Sartell High School Gym, 3101 Pinecone Road N. The event features the Sartell varsity boys and varsity girls basketball teams' doubleheader versus the Willmar Cardinals. Other highlights include the following: Crunch from the Timberwolves entertaining the crowd; between games, the Minnesota Timberwolves Slam Squad/Dunk Team will perform; halftime performance by the Sartell Area Youth Basketball Association; free sweatbands (while supplies last); and a 50/50 raffle. Wear your green Hoopin' in Heaven T-shirt if you have one or purchase one at the event. All proceeds benefit the Sartell basketball programs.

St. John's Boys' Choir to perform Dec. 21

"A Ceremony of Carols" will be 2 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 21, at St. John's Abbey Church, Collegeville, and 8 p.m. at St. Mary's Cathedral, downtown St. Cloud. Hear harpist Dr. Lynne Aspnes perform Benjamin Britten's Christmas masterpiece with the St. John's Boys' Choir. The boys sing new and familiar carols, combining with the talents of the SJBC Orchestra and special Alumni Chorus. To order tickets and learn more, visit sjb-choir.org or call 320-363-2558.

Delivery driver wanted

The Newsleaders is immediately hiring a driver for every other Thursday from 9:30 a.m.-2 p.m. Must have clean driving record and a Minnesota license. Contact Janelle at janellev@thenewsleaders.com or call 320-363-7741 Option 1.

Big growth ahead for Sartell, mayor says

by Mike Knaak
editor@thenewsleaders.com

Sartell's population will grow to more than 25,000 people by 2025, a 37 percent increase since 2018, Mayor Ryan Fitzthum told Chamber of Commerce members Tuesday.

The projection was part of Fitzthum's state of city update

that touched on growth and development issues as well as recent successes.

"One of the things we're very thoughtful about as a council and a staff is making sure that we're growing strategically and we're not just putting a big number out on the population sign," Fitzthum said. "We want to be very

thoughtful in how we're growing. We continue to be the city in the area that's most desirable for the whole gamut whether it's young families or retirees."

The mayor told chamber members that health care and health services drive the local economy. The city wants to grow medical technology

with more development where those facilities are clustered at the south edge of the city west of Hwy. 15 and CR 120. Development includes installing high-speed fiber optic internet.

Sartell is right in the middle on the amount of property taxes on commercial and residential property compared with

Growth • page 3



photos by Mike Knaak

Country Lights Festival

(Above) Spectators ride a train around Lake Francis on Dec. 7 to view the Country Lights Festival. Weather permitting, the train runs from 5-7 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays.

(Right) The display continues through Dec. 28.

Special events include S'more night from 5-7 p.m. Friday, Dec. 13; Santa visits Saturdays, Dec. 14 and 21; Senior Night from 5-7 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 19; Hot Dog Night Fridays, Dec. 20 and Dec. 27; and fireworks on Saturday, Dec. 28.



School board approves teacher contract

by Mike Knaak
editor@thenewsleaders.com

The Sartell-St. Stephen school board approved on Dec. 6 its contract with the district's more than 280 teachers.

Total package cost to the district for the two-year deal is 8.66 percent. The contract covers July 2019 through June 2021 and teachers will receive backpay in their paychecks that arrive before Christmas.

The settlement is in line with past contracts. According to the district, the average cost of the three previous settlements was an 8.42 percent increase. The most recent contract, for 2017-2019, cost 8.67 percent.

"This is a very positive contract," Superintendent Jeff Schwiebert said. "We have a teacher shortage across the Midwest and we have to keep our wages competitive in the

region."

Sartell Education Association President Joe Schulte offered a similar assessment.

"We need to continue to attract and retain talent in this district," Schulte said. "This contract helps us do just that. We remain competitive with area school districts.

"It is very close to the total package percentage that we received last contract," Schulte said. "It helps to offset a 33-

percent increase in our health insurance plan cost that we are facing."

School board chair Jason Nies thanked the board's negotiating team as well as the negotiators from Sartell Education Association.

"The teacher group was great," he said. "The negotiations were friendly and productive."

Financial details of the set-

Approves • page 3

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.

Nov. 20

12:30 p.m. Suspicious vehicle. Hwy. 15. Officers checked an occupied vehicle parked on the shoulder of Hwy. 15. Officers spoke with

the driver. The driver was unable to adequately communicate with officers. Mayo Ambulance arrived and transported the individual to St. Cloud Hospital.

Nov. 21

11:55 a.m. Order for protection violation. CR 120. An individual reported a violation for an Order for Protection. Police contacted the other individual and that person admitted to violating the order. The individual came to the Sartell police station and turned themselves

in. The individual was transported to Stearns County Jail.

Nov. 22

5:55 p.m. Agency assist. Benton Drive N. An officer was requested to assist Sauk Rapids Police Department with an arrest for a Domestic Abuse No Contact Order violation. The individual became combative with officers and was taken into custody. Mayo Ambulance arrived and evaluated the individual prior to his transport to jail.

Nov. 23

9:35 p.m. Traffic stop. First Street NE. An officer witnessed a vehicle coming across the Sartell bridge at a high rate of speed. The officer stopped the vehicle and issued a citation for the speed.

Nov. 24

12:55 a.m. Suspicious vehicle. First Avenue NE. An officer witnessed a vehicle traveling on private property. The officer stopped the vehicle and the driver told the officer they were looking for an intoxicated friend. The driver continued to look for their friend.

Nov. 25

2:10 a.m. Verbal dispute. 18th Avenue N. Officers were dispatched to two individuals having an argument at a residence. Officers spoke with both parties and both parties agreed to stay away from each other for the evening and to find better ways to discuss issues.

Nov. 26

12:45 p.m. Traffic stop. Riverside Avenue N. An officer witnessed a

vehicle traveling at a high rate of speed. The officer stopped the vehicle and gave the driver a verbal warning for their speed.

Nov. 27

12:55 a.m. Driving complaint. Celebration Circle. Officers went to a driving complaint in a neighborhood. Officers met with the individuals. The juveniles were given verbal warning about curfew and their driving conduct.

Nov. 28

7:55 p.m. Welfare check. Watab Court. Officers checked on a residence regarding a running vehicle in a closed garage. Officers found no one at the residence or in the vehicle. The owner was contacted, and it was discovered the remote start had inadvertently been activated.

Nov. 29

8:15 p.m. Traffic stop. First Street NE. An officer saw a vehicle speeding. After stopping the vehicle, the officer discovered the driver had a revoked license and an arrest warrant. A Benton County deputy arrived and took the driver to Benton County Jail.

Nov. 30

4 a.m. Loud music. Fourth Avenue NE. Officers went to a residence for loud music complaint. Upon arrival the music was turned down and officers cited residents for the infraction.

Dec. 1

5:30 p.m. Domestic. Seventh Avenue S. Officers were dispatched to a residence regarding threats of violence. Officers spoke with both parties and one party was arrested for domestic assault. The individual was transported to Stearns County Jail.

Dec. 2

8 a.m. Traffic stop. 19th Avenue S. An officer observed a vehicle speeding. The officer stopped the vehicle and the driver was unaware of their speed. A citation was given.

Dec. 3

3:45 a.m. Suspicious vehicle. Twin Rivers Court. Officer was dispatched to a business regarding a suspicious vehicle. The vehicle was not occupied. The officer spoke with employees regarding the vehicle.

Dec. 4

9:30 p.m. Domestic. Third Street N. An officer was dispatched to a residence regarding violent threats. Officers spoke with both parties. The two parties told officers they would be OK to stay in the same residence for the night. Officers advised both parties to call if there were any further issues.

Dec. 5

9 a.m. Public service. 19th Street S. Community Service officer enjoyed coffee and conversation with members of the community at the Sartell Community Center.

Dec. 6

7 a.m. School bus violation. 15th Street S. A person witnessed a vehicle go through a school bus stop arm and gave a vehicle description but did not give a license plate. Officer surveyed the area but did not see a vehicle that fit the description. No further action was taken.

Dec. 7

8 a.m. Felony traffic stop. First Street N. Officers were dispatched to a theft in progress. Officers intercepted the vehicle and conducted a felony traffic stop. The three occupants of the vehicle were placed under arrest. The three parties advised officers there was a fourth party involved. An assisting agency located the fourth party. All four individuals were placed under arrest and transported to Stearns County Jail.

Dec. 8

10:30 a.m. Roberts Road. Welfare check. Officer was dispatched to check on the welfare of a person who was going through some hard times. The individual assured the officer she was fine.

Dec. 9

3:45 a.m. Parking violation. Pine Siskin. An officer on patrol noticed a vehicle violating the city's winter parking ordinance. The officer called the registered owner and left a message to move the vehicle or it will be towed. The registered owner was cited for this infraction.

Dec. 10

Noon. Collision. CR 120 and 50th Avenue N. An officer was dispatched to a collision near the roundabout. A driver appeared to have stopped unexpectedly in the road causing a collision with a second vehicle. There were no injuries and an assisting agency handled infractions.

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Growth

from front page

other area cities. For example on a \$250,000 home, the tax bill in Sartell is \$3,710.02 compared with \$3,945.79 in Waite Park and \$3,402.99 in St. Cloud.

“We think that’s a continued advantage for Sartell,” Fitzthum said. “We don’t see it being good business to have significant increases or significant decreases whether it’s on commercial or residential. U.S. businesses cannot plan for that. And so it’s important for us to be good stewards of

those dollars and continue to be consistent.”

Fitzthum showed data that revealed some details about Sartell’s labor force.

“The labor force participation rate is 76 percent compared to about 70 percent statewide,” the mayor said. “We have more female workers than male workers, which is unlike the rest of Minnesota. So I think that’s something that we as a city can be proud



Fitzthum

of – is that we have a lot of stay-at-home dads.”

Fitzthum also pointed out that Sartell has a higher median income than neighboring cities and that’s good news for business.

“We have people here that are willing and able to spend money to buy services,” he said.

Fitzthum listed a number of successes in 2019 and looked ahead to 2020.

His list of 2019 highlights included lower taxes, work on the \$13-million public safety building that will open next year and opening the new Sartell High School. The mayor

also cited the city-school district partnership on Community Center operations and the school district helping the city with IT support.

For 2020, the city is launching a marketing and brand development effort to shop local and celebrate local businesses.

“We’re really looking to go from being a very reactive community to being proactive on the forefront helping us celebrate what Sartell is and where we’re going,” he said.

There will also be a renewed effort for single-family residential development.

“For the last multiple years we’ve had a lot of multi-family

development,” Fitzthum said. “We’ve put a little pause on that. We have two different developments that are being worked on right now between staff and developers. We’re bringing out one very unique property to Sartell which will offer larger acreage.”

The mayor wrapped up by asking for chamber members’ support.

“I’m here today to celebrate Sartell, to share our message. It’s important that we’re in this together. We win together, we lose together,” Fitzthum said.

Approves

from front page

tlement include 2 percent added to the salary schedule each year. The contract also calls for increased contributions to a tax-exempt fund that pays for health care.

The new contract eliminates sick day and personal leave categories and replaces them with discretionary days.

Previously, full-time employees accrued 10 sick days and four personal days a year. The new contract calls for 13 discretionary days, allowing for more flexibility. Currently, teachers use an average of 9.25 personal or sick days per year.

“Another important provision in the contract that was likely the reason that it passed was the move to discretionary days and away from traditional ‘sick days,’” Schulte said.

“Discretionary leave is a big deal (for teachers),” Schiebert said. “As more teachers come through the district, they want more flexibility in their schedule.”

A contract provision calls for the days to be reduced to 12 if usage exceeds an average of 10 days per year.

The new policy is similar to what’s in place in the Sauk Rapids-Rice and St. Cloud school districts.

“Our teachers are happy in their work,” Schulte said. “We are grateful the school board and the district have recog-

nized that work and continued performance with the settling of this contract. We hope they do the same for all of our support staff, who are an important part of the team and this continued success.”

The vote to approve was unanimous with board member Pam Raden absent.

People

liot Edeburn, son of AnnElise Edeburn, studying in the Chile program, and a junior political science major at SJU; **Bria Ferns**, daughter of Tammy and Doug Ferns, studying in the Roman-Greco program, and a junior nutrition major at CSB; and **Lindsey Hoeschen**, daughter of Sondra and Steve, is studying in the Greco-Roman program, and a junior mathematics and computer science double-major at CBS.

Three Sartell Middle School students won the top three honors at the Patriot’s Pen Awards. This VFW-sponsored youth essay competition gives students an opportunity to write essays expressing their views on a patriotic theme.

This year’s theme was “What Makes America Great.” **Isabelle Schlangen**, **Lilly Houghton** and **Brett Schlangen** were honored Nov. 20 at the Sauk Rapids VFW Women’s Auxiliary.



contributed photo

Patriot’s Pen award winners (from left) Brett Schlangen, third place; Lilly Houghton, second place; and Isabelle Schlangen, first place.



contributed photo

Joanna Richards and Brandon Nordhues

The American Choral Directors Association of Minnesota presented its Award for Creative Programming to Sartell-St. Stephen school district choir directors **Joanna Richards and Brandon Nordhues** on Nov. 16.

The purpose of the award is, “to uphold high standards of excellence in repertoire selection, to acknowledge and reward creativity in performing choral performance, and to affirm the importance of quality secondary and undergraduate choral training throughout the State of Minnesota.”

The Sartell High School Winter Choir Concert will be held at 7:30 p.m. Monday, Dec. 16, in the Sartell High School Performing Arts Center.

Six Sartell students will graduate from Minnesota State Uni-

versity, Mankato on Saturday, Dec. 14. The students and their degree are as follows: **Hannah Lakmann**, bachelor’s; **Kristen Manning**, bachelor’s, cum laude; **Breanna Peterson**, bachelor’s; **Nicole Schefers**, bachelor’s, magna cum laude; **Tasha Smith**, bachelor’s; and **Katelyn Tragiai**, bachelor’s.

Two Sartell students will graduate from Minnesota State University, Moorhead on Thursday, Dec. 19. They are **Olivia Garner**, bachelor’s degree; and **Kia Grindland**, bachelor’s degree.

Three Sartell students are studying abroad during fall semester 2019 through the Center for Global Education at the College of St. Benedict and St. John’s University.

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Jaxson ‘the Elf’ eager to visit Manor residents

by Dennis Dalman
news@thenewsleaders.com

Five-year-old Jaxson Yager is eagerly counting the days until Christmas so he can dress up like an elf and once again bring hugs, kisses and holiday cheer to the elderly residents of Country Manor in Sartell.

In recent years, Jaxson has become something of a beloved “mascot” for residents and staff at the senior-living facility. Like a pint-sized emissary of happiness, Jaxson loves to visit Country Manor where he knows just about everyone. The faces of people there bloom with big wide grins when they see Jaxson scurrying down hallways, peeking into rooms, giving happy greetings, hugs and kisses.

One woman resident at Country Manor was nonverbal – that is, until she met Jaxson. He visited her, gave her a hug, and she brightened up. Jaxson said goodbye to her. She looked at the boy, smiled sweetly and said “Bye!”

“That just made mommy’s heart so happy,” said Jaxson’s mother.

“It makes my heart happy, too, mommy!” he told her.

Jaxson is the son of Nicholas and Amber Yager of Sartell and is a kindergartner at St. Catherine Drexel Catholic School in St. Cloud. Father Nicholas, a former U.S. Marine, is in the construction business. For the time being anyway, Amber is a stay-at-home mom with Jaxson’s new sister, 6-month-old Aryanna. In the recent past, Amber worked in the activities department of Country Manor. Her grandmother, Delphine Bialke, was a resident there, and that is how Jaxson got to know so many residents – during his many visits to his great-grandmother “Del.” Delphine, Amber’s mother’s mother, died Oct. 6 at age 98 after six months in hospice care.

Jaxson, of course, was heartbroken. At her wake, he walked up to her casket and placed a smiley face pin on her blouse. Then he knelt down, said a prayer and rubbed Del’s hand.

Later, he told his mother they must keep going to Country Manor, even though Del is no longer there. He said there are lots more “grammas” there he loves, that he still wants to visit. He and his mother have been going to Country Manor just about every week for several years, even when Jaxson was just a baby.

“Some of those grammas



contributed photos

Jaxson Yager gathers for a photo with family members at Country Manor in Sartell. From left to right are Jaxson’s mother, Amber; his late great-grandmother, Delphine Bialke; and his grandmother, Becky Bialke.

don’t have grandkids any more,” he said. “I still have so much love for grandma, and I want to share that with the other ones there.”

Hugging comes natural to Jaxson; it’s a family trait.

“Hugging was a big part of our family,” Amber said. “My grandparents loved to give hugs. I do too. And so does Jaxson.”

When Jaxson grows up, he wants to be “a Marine and a farmer.” He is very proud of his father having served in the Marines, and during some of his visits to Country Manor he would wear a small Marine uniform with cap that made him look like a little toy soldier. His visit as a “Marine” caused waves of joy and delight among residents and staff.

His role as an elf was also a big hit with residents as he hopped down the hallways, grinning with his elfin dimples, pointy elf-shoe bells making a jingling ring.

Jaxson, said his mother, is a normal little boy who can, like other kids, be a “little smarty pants” sometimes. When he balks at doing a task and wants “mommy” to do it for him, she tells him, “Well, you’ve got two arms and legs.” It’s a saying Jaxson quickly adopted, one that he now uses on adults.

“He loves Legos and can play with them all day, and he loves playing cards,” said Amber, adding some of the card games take place at Country Manor with its residents.



Dressed in his “Little U.S. Marine” costume, Jaxson Yager spends some huggy moments with Larry Tillemans, Country Manor resident and World War II veteran who was a typist at the Nurmberg War Crimes trial in post-war Germany.

Jaxson also loves music and loves to sing “You Are My Sunshine” to his baby sister. His favorite song, though, is “Sixteen Tons,” an old song from the 1950s sung by Tennessee Ernie Ford.

When Jaxson now visits Country Manor with his mommy, he walks past the doorway to his great-grandma’s room. She is no longer there. He sometimes pauses, remembering, looks sad, but then he hurries on down the hallway to all the other “grammas” and “grandpas” to share hugs, kisses and lots of love.



Jaxson “the Elf” Yager sits on his great-grandmother’s lap during a Christmas party at Country Manor last December. Delphine Bialke, Jaxson’s beloved favorite, died Oct. 6.



photo by Mike Knaak

Sartell church brings Nativity to life
Members of Messiah Lutheran Church in Sartell performed a live Nativity scene Dec. 5 during St. Cloud Hospital’s Christmas lights event. Emily Cameron played Mary and Daryl Cameron was Joseph. The angel is Xavia Finnern. They are flanked by shepherds Amy Finnern, Karen Cameron and Tabitha Kuhl. The wisemen are Kajsa Finnern, Elias Finnern and Averil Finnern.

Advanced Care Pet Hospital celebrates 10th anniversary

by Dennis Dalman
news@thenewsleaders.com

This month, Advanced Care Pet Hospital in Sartell is celebrating its 10th anniversary with a renewed vision for the future and a new veterinarian.

The pet hospital, owned and operated by Dr. Pamela Gerds and husband Tom, is ranked among the top 3 percent of animal clinics/hospitals nationwide, ranking number 139 in the top Vet500 by “Doctor of Veterinary Medicine Insider.”

Gerds’ founding vision was to treat animals with the same kindness and respect that people in hospitals should be treated. After 10 years, the hospital staff plans to extend that service with state-of-the-art veterinary services and treatments.

“Pets love us unconditionally,” she said. “They make us laugh, they make us happy, and in their way they seem to make us more human.”

A native of Minnetonka, Gerds earned degrees in English and French from the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, before returning to school to earn a doctorate in veterinary medicine.

The pet hospital, which is open seven days a week, uses a full range of technology that includes X-rays, ultrasound, a full surgical suite, prescriptions and supplies fully ready to avoid waiting and delays. Its staff of 10 includes two veterinarians, vet technicians and front-desk staff.

Advanced Care works



contributed photo

Dr. Pamela Gerds founded Advanced Care Pet Hospital in Sartell 10 years ago. At her right is Dr. Michael Drey Jr., who was recently hired as the new veterinarian.

in conjunction with the Tri-County Humane Society for critical urgent care of the shelter’s animals.

Currently, in this area there is a critical shortage of veterinarians, causing an opening at Advanced Care to go unfilled for three years. Gerds recently completed her 41st day of constant work without another veterinarian after the previous one resigned to open a practice in Little Falls.

A sense of jubilation swept the staff at Advanced Care at the recent hiring of veterinarian Dr. Michael Drey Jr., a

native of South Dakota who received a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree in Iowa and has 11 years of veterinary experience with small-animal medicine, surgery and preventive medicine. Drey Jr. lives in Sartell with wife Allison, children Camden and Haley, and Abby the family cat.

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photo by Mike Knaak

More than 500 high school skiers make tracks on new Sartell trail

(Above) More than 500 skiers from nine area high schools participated in a Nordic Ski meet Dec. 5 on Sartell’s new ski trail. Junior high and high school teams from Sartell/Cathedral, Apollo/Sauk Rapids-Rice, Tech, Alexandria, Brainerd, Little Falls, Mora, Willmar and St. John’s Prep competed. (At left) Varsity skiers completed five laps on the 1K trail with junior-varsity skiers logging four laps and junior high students two laps. The trail, between Sartell Middle School and the old Sartell high school, opened last month thanks to a partnership and contributions from Nordic Ski Club of Central Minnesota, the city of Sartell, Sartell-St. Stephen school district and area businesses.





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Choosing the Right Vet

Having a qualified health provider for your pet is a critical component to responsible ownership. Your vet can provide annual checkups, emergency services and even grooming services to keep your family pet healthy and happy.

Choosing the perfect veterinarian for your pet may seem like a daunting task. You will be putting your trust in your veterinarian's experience to determine the cause and treatment for discomfort or serious medical issues. Fortunately, there are many resources at your disposal when you begin your search.

AAHA ACCREDITATION

Finding a veterinarian office that is accredited by the American Animal Hospital Association means finding an office that is committed to providing the safest and highest quality care. To become accredited, your vet's office must meet up to 900 standards in different areas.

Some of these areas include emergency services (including surgery and anesthesia), diagnostics, exceptional record keeping and pain management. An AAHA-accredited animal hospital will lay out a detailed evaluation of services and medical equipment. The AAHA then monitors the hospital to ensure its practice meets predetermined standards.

SCHEDULE A MEETING

It's important to let your pet warm up



to your vet before any medical attention is required. Plan a meeting where both you and your pet can visit the facility and meet with the doctors and staff. This will allow your pet to become comfortable with the ones who will be administering medical assistance when the time comes. This meeting also is a good time for you to gain comfortability with staff members. Take a tour of the facility. Ensure the office is clean and all equipment appears to be up to date. Take

notice of the other animals' comfort level. Is the kennel area kept clean or does it seem cluttered? **QUESTIONS TO ASK** Asking questions is the best way to become familiar with your veterinarian's practices. The AAHA has laid out some basic questions you should ask. • What is the telephone policy? Your vet's office should have experts who can offer professional medical advice over the phone. They should be able to

determine if your pet requires medical attention by listening to different symptoms. • What is their emergency response? Find out how soon your vet will be able to see your pet after an emergency. The answer should be "immediately." • Do they have a large group of specialists available? Your office should have staff available to provide attention to a wide array of medical issues your pet could encounter.

Pine Cone Pet Hospital

Drop-off appointments, extended evening & emergency appointments are available



City council approves budget/levy for 2020

by **Dennis Dalman**
news@thenewsleaders.com

At its Dec. 9 meeting, the Sartell City Council gave final approval to a 2020 budget/levy that was described as “balanced, sufficient, yet frugal” by the city’s financial director, Heidi Ostlie.

The budget, she noted, will result in a slight tax decrease overall. The tax rate for 2020 shows about a 1 percent tax-rate decrease from this year’s.

The budget/levy portion of the Dec. 9 meeting was an open public meeting, but there

were no comments offered by anyone. There were only about a dozen people present in the audience.

The vote for the budget/levy was 5-0. Two council members, Mayor Ryan Fitzthum and Tim Elness, both Sartell firefighters, abstained from budget-related votes regarding two provisions for the fire department – one provision for modest pay increases for fire department members, the other for increases in retirement benefits for the Fire Department Relief Association. The remainder of the council – members Brady

Andel, Mike Chisum and Jeff Kolb – voted for approval of those provisions.

Ostlie also showed the council a graphic showing that since 2013, the city’s tax levy has been quite level and consistent with no wild swings up or down.

Most revenue to pay for general government services comes from property taxes. They pay for public safety, public works, parks and recreation, community development and economic development – a total for next year of \$7,298,693. Other revenue comes mainly from building

permits, other licenses and permits, local government aid, fines, charges for services and interest on investments.

A major portion of the budget will cover street overlay and reconstruction projects throughout the city, and there will also be money reserved for public works and equipment replacements for the police and fire departments. There will also be money marked for the operating costs for the Public Safety Facility, which will house the fire and police departments, which is slated to open in mid-year 2020.

Another item in the budget,

Ostlie noted, is allowance to cover the costs of three elections in 2020 – two primary elections and the presidential general election.

The budget is the result of a thorough analysis and review that began in June of this year by city staff, department directors, the city administrator and the City Council. Many changes and revisions were done along the way to keep the budget in line and taxes as low as possible while still covering the costs of necessary city services.

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HISTORIC SALEM CHURCH Christmas Program Saturday, Dec. 14

Everyone Welcome!

Horse drawn wagon rides from 3 to 4:15 p.m.
Old-fashioned Christmas Program—4:30 p.m.

We welcome your gifts of non-perishable food items and toys to be delivered to the Paynesville Community Center.

A free-will offering will be taken for the Salem Church and Cemetery restoration and upkeep. Refreshments served.

Historic Salem Community Church, 5 miles north of Paynesville on 220th Street.
Call 320-249-0373 or 320-493-1657 for more information.

Memorial fund set up for soldiers killed in helicopter crash

A memorial fund has been set up in memory of the three National Guard soldiers who died in the Black Hawk helicopter crash near Marty on Dec. 5.

The three soldiers are Sgt. Kort M. Plantenberg, 28, of Avon; Chief Warrant Officer 2 James A. Rogers Jr., 28, of Winsted; and Chief Warrant Officer 2 Charles P. Nord, 30, of Perham. Nord graduated from Albany High School in 2009.

The three were on a maintenance test flight when the helicopter crashed.

All three soldiers were assigned to Company C, 2-211th General Support Aviation Battalion, based in St. Cloud. The unit returned from a nine-

month deployment to the Middle East in May 2019, where they conducted medical evacuations in support of Operation Spartan Shield and Operation Inherent Resolve.

All three soldiers deployed on this mission.

Donations may be sent to:

**Beyond The Yellow Ribbon
Memorial Fund
Deerwood Bank
P.O. Box 337
Waite Park, MN 56387**

Donations can be mailed or dropped off at any Deerwood Bank location.



Sgt. Kort M. Plantenberg

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Fostering animals ‘best experience ever,’ Trisko says

by **Dennis Dalman**
news@thenewsleaders.com

As a foster dog, Tukker the sheltie was virtually deaf. One day, his foster “parent,” Jenna Trisko of Sartell, let Tukker go into the backyard along with her own family dog, Shyla.

Later, she yelled for the dogs to come back in, but she soon realized Tukker couldn’t hear her voice. Shyla, the miniature Australian shepherd dog, returned to the house.

“Shyla, please go get Tukker,” Trisko said. “Tukker can’t hear me.”

Just like that, Shyla ran back out and began to trot circles around her friend, Tukker, shepherding him back to the house.

Jenna Trisko is grants manager for Ruff Start Rescue, based in Princeton, and she also served – and still does -- as a foster parent for many of its rescued animals throughout the years. She is one of numerous Sartell residents who serves as foster parents for animals up for adoption at various shelters in Central Minnesota.

Tukker has a new home now. Two women in Grand Marais, who specialize in adopting older shelties with health problems, heard about Tukker and visited the Trisko home. The women instantly took a liking to the dog and agreed to adopt him. Tukker is now 9 years old.

“My husband (Ben Borgert), and I had Tukker for about six weeks as a foster dog,” Trisko said. “But he still tugs at my heart. He is the sweetest, kindest dog, and when he looked at us it’s as if he could read our minds.”

Tukker is one of more than 70 animals – mainly cats and dogs – Jenna and Ben have fostered during the past seven or so years. And Tukker is still one of their favorites. They are glad he found a good home in Grand Marais, but that amazing dog still prances, trots and leaps in loops of happy memories in the minds of Ben and Jenna. Like many adoptees, the couple stays in touch with the people and the pets they adopted after being fostered by Jenna and Ben.

Tukker’s life had been a difficult challenge he somehow managed to endure, overcoming adversities time and again. He was originally owned as a show dog by a woman in Texas, who decided to give him up. A friend of that woman has a son who lives in Princeton who just might take the dog. He agreed to, and his mother drove the sheltie from Texas to Minnesota.

One day in Princeton, Tukker ran away from the yard of his new owner. He ended up running around on a bitterly cold



contributed photos

Jenna Trisko comforts her foster dog, Tukker, a rescued sheltie originally from Texas. After about six weeks of foster care, Tukker was happily adopted by two women who live in Grand Marais.

day next to the Ruff Start Rescue facility. The women workers noticed him and brought him in to warm him up. He was sopping wet and had begun to turn into a virtual canine ice cube, his tail frozen and matted. Later, Tukker’s owner learned his dog was at the shelter and came to pick him up. The very next day, Tukker ran away again. He was later found, hiding in the man’s garage. The owner decided to let the shelter keep the dog, and so the shelter’s women lured Tukker from the garage with food.

“Tukker was a very timid dog,” Trisko said. “He was almost completely deaf; he was arthritic and had severe dental disease. He was leery of men. We took him to the vet where he was neutered and had 12 teeth removed. After that, Ben and I decided to foster him.”

It is a deep satisfaction for Ben and Jenna when the pets they foster find warm and loving “forever” homes. They do get attached to the critters, but having to give them up is offset by the knowledge the pets will be cared for and happy.

Among other stand-out dogs they fostered are:

Raisin: A very sick puppy at first, she was severely malnourished and had mange. But, with lots of care and love, she thrived and was eventually adopted.

Shilo: A senior cattle dog was surrendered by a family that had to move elsewhere. For a week, she was listless and disoriented, but she suddenly bloomed and loved nothing better than getting people hugs. She was adopted by an “amazing” couple in Rice, Trisko noted.



Tukker romps with his new buddy, Rose, at his new home in Grand Marais.

Lola Lee: A genuine “diva,” she fell in love with Ben. “To Lola Lee, I was chicken feed compared to Ben,” Trisko said. “A single man from Waite Park adopted her. And she could not be happier having her male human all to herself.”

Fostering

Fostering animals is a rewarding task both for the animals and the people, Trisko noted. Before foster care, the animal is spayed or neutered and given complete check-ups. Foster parents, naturally, must love animals, be willing to take good care of them and be able to bring them to vet appointments (though shelters will provide transportation for shut-ins or those who lack their own transportation). Foster parents must also be willing to attend adoption events once a month, along with their foster pets.

Fostering • page 11



Tukker poses as “Easter Bow Wow” at the home of Ben Borgert and Jenna Trisko, foster-animal parents who live in Sartell.

Opinion

Our View Readers want news, but who pays?

Americans want to read local news. There’s just one problem: they don’t want to pay for it.

Some 86 percent of Americans say everyone should have access to local news, even if they don’t pay for it, but just one in five Americans has supported local news in the past year by subscribing to, donating to or purchasing a membership to a local news organization.

The findings are part of a recent Gallup/Knight study about the value and financial future of local news.

In the past 20 years, print circulation shrunk as more and more readers move to digital sources for news. Print advertising revenue decreased too and while most newspapers have robust digital products, the digital advertising revenue gained did not match the print advertising revenue lost.

Traditionally, advertising accounted for about three-fourths of newspaper revenue with the other fourth coming from subscriptions.

News gathering is not cheap. Deep, thorough reporting takes experienced reporters and editors and it takes time. It’s also not very efficient. Hours, sometimes even days are spent chasing down tips that, when checked out, don’t lead to stories.

When people say they don’t need to subscribe to a news source...either print or digital...because they get their news from Facebook or Twitter they are missing the point.

The vast majority of stories people share on social media come from newsrooms that produce newspapers or their websites. Watch cable or network news and you’ll see their shows are driven by stories first reported by the New York Times, Washington Post, Wall Street Journal and The Associated Press. Cable news anchors fill their hours by interviewing reporters from these national or regional newspapers who broke the big stories.

Unfortunately, when newsrooms cut expenses, the highest-paid staffers, who just happen to be the most experienced and who have spent decades developing sources and knowledge of community issues, are the first to be cut.

In Minnesota, about 200 journalists work in the StarTribune newsroom – by far the state’s largest. With the exception of Minnesota Public Radio, with it’s powerful fundraising operation, broadcasters can’t match that commitment.

Some local papers, like the Newsleaders and the Morrison County Record, have found a different business model. These newspapers are distributed free with advertising providing all the revenue. Because we deliver to every household – almost 14,000 - in Sartell, St. Stephen and St. Joseph – advertisers are willing to pay for that coverage rather than advertising in subscription publications that may only reach 10, 20 or 30 percent of households.

Nobody has found the magic answer to deal with the financial plight of news.

Most Americans (76 percent) say they need local and state news organizations, and 59 percent see their local newspaper as an important symbol of civic pride. But when it comes to financial support, Americans’ behaviors do not match the value they place on local news.

With just one in five subscribing or donating to local news organizations, the financial base for the industry is limited. Americans believe individuals, philanthropic organizations and tech platforms should help close the financial gap for local news.

Americans are deeply divided on whether subsidies are appropriate, even as some experts have argued they are a key part of the funding puzzle: 66 percent oppose support from the federal government for local news, and 60 percent oppose support from the local government. Most journalists would agree that government support could easily lead to officials wanting to control coverage in return for continued financial support.

The financial strain on local news organizations has hollowed out newsrooms, leaving some communities without a fundamental democratic institution.

Educating the public on the benefits of local news for American democracy, and its current financial straits, increased Americans’ likelihood of financially supporting local news, the study found.

After 15 years of delay, time is running out

Time is running out for nine out of 10 Minnesotans. If you are one of the 90 percent of Minnesota residents who hasn’t applied for a Real ID, and unless you are planning on using your passport to fly, now is the time to act. You have until Oct. 1, 2020.

After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the federal government turned its attention to the security of driver’s licenses, the preferred form of identification used for travel. In 2005, Congress passed the Real ID Act, which required minimum security standards for state-issued licenses.

Without a Real ID or passport, you won’t be able to board a plane next October.

Minnesota was well behind other states in embracing the federal Real ID law. State lawmakers didn’t pass a compliance plan until 2017.

The Department of Public Safety has a huge backlog of Real ID applications. As of last week, the agency was processing applications from the week of Oct. 8.

My current driver’s license expires this month, so I applied on Nov. 4.

I visited the Stearns County Service Center in Waite Park. I’ve been there before to buy license tabs and pick up an absentee ballot. It’s staffed by efficient and friendly county employees and I found the wait times to be just a minute or two. The whole Real ID process took less than 10 minutes and the only delay was waiting for another applicant to be photographed because there’s just one photo booth.

If you want to quickly move through the application process, come prepared

Mike Knaak
Editor



with the correct documents. A Real ID application requires a number of original documents that verify birth, residence, Social Security number and citizenship.

DPS prepared a very detailed and helpful website listing all the acceptable documents (read it carefully) and other information about the application process here: REALID.dps.mn.gov.

Applicants need one document proving identity, date of birth and legal presence in the United States; one document proving your Social Security number; and two different documents proving current residency in Minnesota.

I used my passport to prove identity, birth and legal residency. If you don’t have a passport, get one, even if you don’t plan to travel abroad. A passport is extremely useful for actions unrelated to travel such as applying for a job.

I used my Social Security card, current driver’s license and a recent printed bank statement to satisfy the other requirements.

Pay attention to the document requirements, because if you don’t fully follow the rules, you’ll end up making a second trip to the office.

Don’t bring a laminated document such as a Social Security card. When you apply, a worker scans your documents and laminated documents don’t work.

Make sure you bring two documents

proving residency and they must have your current name and address. Post Office box numbers don’t work.

If you’ve changed your name, for example because of marriage or divorce, bring all legal documents backing up that change. Your name must match on all the application documents.

Maybe some of us no longer use paper statements for banking and other transactions. For Real ID purposes, you need paper. A smartphone can’t be scanned.

So why are we talking about this now if Congress acted 15 years ago? You can thank the Legislature.

After postponing full implementation for several years, the federal government went state-by-state to get each ID to comply with the act or get an extension.

In 2009, legislators passed a law prohibiting the commissioner of public safety from “taking any action to implement or to plan for the implementation” of the Real ID Act. The bill passed with near-unanimous support in the Legislature and was signed by former Gov. Tim Pawlenty. Lawmakers had concerns about data privacy and the cost of implementing Real ID.

Years went by and the federal government granted a series of extensions until finally the feds ran out of patience. The Legislature changed the 2009 law in 2017. Officials scrambled to come up with a plan and began issuing Real IDs in October 2018.

Eighteen years after 9/11, four million Minnesotans still need Real IDs. Time is flying by.

Facts matter for democracy to work

Does 2 plus 2 really equal 4?

Some would say not, the way some insist a leopard can change its spots, the way others point to the moon and call it cheese.

A world without established facts is a world in deep trouble. It doesn’t take long until meanings evaporate and discord takes over in a society where facts don’t matter.

“It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen.”

That is the sinister opening line of the dystopian novel “1984” written by English author George Orwell and first published in 1949. From its first sentence, we are plunged into a world in which facts no longer matter – a totalitarian, repressive society in which everyone is tightly controlled and manipulated by a cult leader dubbed “Big Brother.” It is a world in which people are forced to believe that 2 plus 2 equals 5.

In another classic English novel, Lewis Carroll’s “Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland,” (1865) facts become shuffled in a chattering flurry during the Mad Hatter’s Tea Party. Time stands still in the Hatter’s world; the clock’s hands are stuck forever at 6 ‘o’ clock – thus, a perpetual tea time in a topsy-turvy world. Fond of nonsensical riddles, the Hatter asks Alice, “Why is a raven like a writing desk?” Alice ponders until the Hatter admits the riddle has no answer. All facts become muddled and confused at the tea table.

“Alice felt dreadfully puzzled. The Hatter’s remark seemed to her to have

Dennis Dalman
Reporter



no meaning in it, and yet it was certainly English.”

Like Alice, whose adventures began when she fell down a rabbit hole, we too are in danger of falling down a big rabbit hole into a crazy “Dunderland” where confusions, not facts, rule the day. Some people nowadays gather at political rallies to applaud outlandish lies; the bigger the lie, the louder they clap.

Just one example: Kellyanne Conway, counselor to President Trump, famously referred to “alternative facts” after the president’s press secretary (Sean Spicer at the time) insisted Trump’s inauguration attracted the biggest crowd in inaugural history. Trouble is, it wasn’t true; photographs proved it wasn’t true. Well, no matter, just keep saying it was true, over and over, until listeners believe the “alternative fact.” That ruse is precisely what Big Brother did in “1984” to keep people believing in the very opposite of what is true – that “war” actually means “peace.” Alternative “facts.” It’s the way the Hatter juggles things into a jumble of confusion.

The next election is rapidly approaching. Will the Russians again meddle in it by perpetrating lies, distortions, slanders and alternative

“facts?” They almost certainly will, perhaps not so much to favor a candidate as to infect our democratic process with divisionism, suspicions and rampant distrust. It is the new “warfare” – cyber lies in place of bombs, propaganda attacks instead of facts and truths. The prime rule in the Russian playbook is to first divide via confusion and mistrust and then dominate. If we cannot trust voting results, we lose faith in our system, our democracy.

Once again, Putin and his cyber-thugs will likely infiltrate social media with the copy-cat help of cyber warriors right here at home. Before the last election, the Internet was flooded with lurid lies, such as Hillary Clinton operating a sex ring of children from a pizza joint in Washington, D.C., a vicious “posting” that caused a gullible (and deranged) man to shoot a gun inside the pizza place, fortunately striking nobody. Many of those kinds of vile postings were perpetrated not by Russians but by Americans.

To guard against another infiltration of free and fair elections, we must all insist on the integrity of facts and stop mistaking ludicrous, alarming or “entertaining” Internet postings as factual information. We need highly informed voters, not low-information voters who don’t pay attention or who applaud and then parrot only social-media lies.

Let’s remember that 2 plus 2 really does equal 4.

Fostering

from page 9

Many also use Facebook postings to let people know the pet is up for adoption.

“There is always, always a need for fostering,” Trisko said. “Ben and I wanted to adopt a second dog, but we realized we’d have to give up fostering if we did. And we just can’t do that because fostering is the best experience ever.”

If anyone is interested in fostering, call Ruff Start Rescue, the Tri-County Humane Society

or any other animal shelter in central Minnesota.

Ruff Start

Ruff Start Rescue was founded 10 years ago and so far has rescued 11,500 dogs, cats and small critters. This year alone, the shelter and foster homes will care for more than 2,500 animals, with 500 animals in rescue status at any given time.

There are 370 foster families – mostly in Central Minnesota and the Twin Cities area –and more than 600 volunteers, along with a small staff, that help Ruff Start thrive.

The nonprofit organization also offers a Foster-to-Adopt program where an animal can be placed into a foster home where the pet will receive veterinary care, love and attention. If the pet is the right “fit,” the family or the individual can then adopt it.

Among its many services, Ruff Start also has a Children’s Animal Welfare Program and a low-cost Wellness Clinic and other services to help economically strapped families.

For more about Ruff Start and its animals, visit its website at www.ruffstartrescue.com. The phone number is 763-355-3981.

News Tips?

Call the Newsleader at 363-7741

Community Calendar

Is your event listed? Send your information to: Newsleader Calendar, 1622 11th Ave. SE., St. Cloud, MN 56304., 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. 13
Benton County Museum, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., 218 First St. N., Sauk Rapids. 320-253-9614. mnbentonhistory.org.

Saturday, Dec. 14
KringleFest, 10:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m., Stearns History Museum, 235 33rd Ave. S., St. Cloud. Free for museum members and children 4 and younger or nominal fee for nonmembers. 320-253-8424,
Cookie Walk, 10-11:30 a.m., First United Methodist Church, 1107 Pinecone Road, Sartell. Purchase three to four dozen homemade cookies.
Historic Salem Church

Christmas Program, 3-4:15 p.m. horse drawn wagon rides, 4:30 p.m. Christmas Program. Historic Salem Community Church, 5 miles north of Paynesville on 220th Street.

Sunday, Dec. 15
Best Omelette in Town, 8 a.m.-noon, Waite Park American Legion, 17 Second Ave. N, Waite Park. Nominal fee includes hash browns, toast, coffee, juice and water.

Monday, Dec. 16
Benton County Museum, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., 218 First St. N., Sauk Rapids. 320-253-9614. mnbentonhistory.org.
Sartell-St. Stephen school board, 6:30 p.m., Sartell High School, Watab Room 101-102, 3101 Pinecone Road N.
Brockway Township Board, 7:30 p.m., Township Hall, 43710 85th Ave. N.

Tuesday, Dec. 17
Memory Writers group develops topics and turns in stories, 10 a.m., Stearns History Museum, 235 33rd Ave. S, St Cloud.

Mobile office hours, 10 a.m.-1 p.m., Sartell City Hall. A caseworker from Rep. Tom Emmer’s office will be available to handle issues with federal government services.
Dementia Friends information session, 1-2 p.m., Sartell Community Center, 850 19th St. S., Sartell. Learn what dementia is, what it’s like to live with the disease and communicate with people who have dementia.

Wednesday, Dec. 18
SALT (Seniors and Law Enforcement Together), 9 a.m., Sartell Police Department, 310 Second St. S., Sartell.
Children’s Christmas Event, 6:30 p.m., Grace Baptist Fellowship, 1197 Pinecone Road, Sartell. All children from the community, ages 4 years through sixth grade are invited. There will be games, crafts, goodies and a Gospel presentation.

Thursday, Dec. 19
Coffee and Conversation, a senior discussion group, 9 a.m., Sartell Community Cen-

ter, 850 19th St. S. Speaker is Morgan Webster, Williams Dingmann Funeral Service outreach coordinator, Grief 101.
American Legion-Sartell, open to all veterans young and old, 6 p.m., Sartell Community Center., 850 19th St. S. john.denney@charter.net.
MOPS, Mothers of Preschoolers monthly social, 6:30-8:30 p.m., Celebration Lutheran Church, 1500 Pinecone Road N., Sartell.

Friday, Dec. 20
Benton County Museum, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., 218 First St. N., Sauk Rapids. 320-253-9614. mnbentonhistory.org.
Tommy B. Hoopin’ in Heaven Night, 5:30 p.m., Sartell High School gym. Entertainment between high school games featuring Timberwolves Slam Dunk Squad, Sartell Area Youth Basketball Association will perform at halftime, Crunch will entertain.
Christmas Singles Dance, 8 p.m. to midnight, Waite

Park Legion, 17 Second Ave. N. Nominal fee for non-members. www.StCloudSingles.net

Saturday, Dec. 21
Sartell Winter Market, 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Sartell Community Center, 850 19th St S, Sartell.
Community Meal, 11:30 a.m.-12:45 p.m., First United Methodist Church, 1107 Pinecone Road S., Sartell. Free.

Monday, Dec. 23
Benton County Museum, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., 218 First St. N., Sauk Rapids. 320-253-9614. mnbentonhistory.org.
Sartell City Council, 6 p.m., City Hall, 125 Pinecone Road N.

Thursday, Dec. 26
Coffee and Conversation, a senior discussion group, 9 a.m., Sartell Community Center, 850 19th St. S.

Friday, Dec. 27
Benton County Museum, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., 218 First St. N., Sauk Rapids. 320-253-9614. mnbentonhistory.org.

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