

Reaching Everybody! Newsleaders

Friday, Oct. 30, 2020
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Town Crier

Farmers' Market open Nov. 7

The Sartell Farmers Market will be open from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 7 inside the Sartell Community Center, 850 19th St. S. Find many great items including eggs, meat, vegetables from storage, honey, salsa, caramel corn, baked goods and much more. Come and get ready for the upcoming holiday season.

Historical society to host holiday market Nov. 14

A Holiday Market, hosted by Sartell Historical Society, will be held from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 14 in the Sartell Community Center, 850 19th St. S. Lots of gifts, Christmas decorations, handmade crafts and re-gifting items available. COVID protocols will be followed; masks required.

Support local theater; Buy a raffle ticket!

To help defray ongoing costs in light of our inability to produce live theater, Great Northern Theatre Company, is selling \$10 raffle tickets. This is a 30/10/10 raffle with 1,000 tickets. On Saturday and Sunday, Nov. 7 and 8 from 10 a.m.-2 p.m., the group will sell tickets outside at the Cold Spring Teal's Market. For more information, visit gntc1.com to purchase yours today! Drawing will be held at 7 p.m. Friday, Nov. 20 at Shady's Longshots at the Rich Spring Golf Course. Need not be present to win.

Newsleaders seeks GoFundMe donations

During these turbulent times, advertising support has dwindled. The Newsleaders wants to continue providing up-to-the-minute local coverage both on our website and in print. Please help support the Newsleaders by viewing/contributing to our GoFundMe page on Facebook or mail a check to 1622 11th Ave. SE., St. Cloud, MN 56304. Thank you to our recent contributors! Any amount is greatly appreciated.

INSERTS:
**Country Manor
Senior Housing**
**Westlund
for state rep.**

Bonding bill includes \$4 million for St. Joseph

by Dennis Dalman
news@thenewsleaders.com

Just as the point where many were finally convinced the deal would never be done, it happened: on Oct. 13 and 14, the State Legislature, both House and Senate, approved the biggest bonding bill in state history, a whopping \$1.9 billion package.

And it's good news for St. Joseph. The bill includes \$4 million for a long-proposed community center in the city, which will likely be called – at

least according to past planning sessions – the “Jacob Wetterling Recreation Center,” named after the local boy kidnapped and killed more than 30 years ago.

The \$4 million in state money would go toward the design, construction and equipment” for the recreation center, which would be built on the site of the former Kennedy Elementary School building. The total cost of the community center project has been estimated, variously, as high as \$16 million.

City staff had practically giv-

en up on a community center because of the repeated inability of the legislature to pass a bonding bill.

That particular project has been in the city's on-again, off-again planning for several years. As part of the state bonding bill, it was long in doubt because the Minnesota Legislature just could not agree on that bill, which was twice rejected in the State House. Like all bonding bills, it required 81 votes (a three-fifths majority) in the House. The bill was a hang-over from the leg-

islature's regular 2020 session. Finally, and to the surprise of many, it passed during the fifth special session of the year. In the House on Oct. 13, it passed 100-34, with 25 Republicans joining the Democratic majority in approval. Next day, the Senate also approved it on a vote of 64-3.

Twice before, the bill had failed to pass for various reasons, high among them because of Republicans' dislike of Gov. Tim Walz's executive powers in dealing with the virus

Bond • page 3



photo by Carolyn Bertsch

Trick-or-Treating at Monster Dash

Ryan Brinker, 8, and his sister Emma, 10, of Sartell, trick-or-treat Oct. 24 at booths set up along Lake Francis and on the sidewalks of the Sartell Community Center. The Sartell Chamber's event, called “Monster Dash,” was attended by roughly 500 area children and their families.

Voters will elect mayor, council members

by Mike Knaak
news@thenewsleaders.com

By Election Day, officials estimate about half of Minnesotans will already have voted. As of last week, more than 1.2 million Minnesotans cast ballots. That's more than twice the total early voting in 2016 and 2018. Stearns County early voting is running

more than 324 percent ahead of this point in 2018.

In addition to state and national races, St. Joseph voters will select a mayor, two city-council members and elect four people to the St. Cloud School Board.

For stories on all the races and candidates, go to: [the-newsleaders.com/category/news/2020election/](https://www.thenewsleaders.com/category/news/2020election/)

St. Joseph

St. Joseph voters will select a mayor and two city-council members.

Current Mayor Rick Schultz faces city council member Anne Buckvold in the contest for St. Joseph mayor.

Buckvold was appointed to the council in May 2018 to fill a vacancy after Matt Killam resigned.

She was elected to a full four-year term in November 2018, receiving the most votes in a three-way race for two seats. Schultz was first elected mayor in 2010. He was re-elected in 2018 without opposition.

Six people have filed for two city-council seats. Incumbents Troy Goracke and Bob Loso are

Voters • page 2



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Voters

from front page

on the ballot with Kelly Beniek, Carmie Mick, Paul Orvis and Mike Osterman.

The mayor serves a two-year term and council members are elected for four years.

St. Cloud School Board

Seven candidates are running for four seats on the St. Cloud School Board. Incumbents Al Dahlgren, Shannon Haws and Monica M. Segura-Schwartz are joined on the ballot by Scott An-

dreasen, Omar Abdullahi Podi and Andrea Preppernau. Incumbent Jeff Pollreis did not file for re-election.

School board members serve four-year terms.

Stearns County Board

Incumbent Joe Perske is running unopposed in Stearns County Commission District 2. Commissioners serve four-year terms.

Legislature

In Senate District 13, Republican Jeff Howe of Rockville is seeking a second term. He is challenged by DFL candidate Michael Willemsen, Sauk Rapids. District 13 wraps around the city of St.

Obituary

Virginia A “Ginny” Pfannen-stein, 87, of St. Joseph, died Oct. 14 at the St. Cloud Hospi- tal. Her funeral was held Oct. 20 at St. Joseph’s Catholic Church in St. Joseph. The Rev. Jerome Tupa, OSB, officiated. Burial was in the parish cemetery.

Pfannen-stein was born on Jan. 3, 1933 in St. Martin to Henry and Hildegard (Schae-fer) Schmitz. She married Aloys “Junior” Pfannen-stein on June 20, 1951 at St. Martin Catho- lic Church in St. Martin. She owned and operated the St. Joseph Meat Market with Aloys “Junior” from 1968 until 1997. Pfannen-stein lived in St. Joseph all her married life. She was a



member of St. Joseph’s Catholic Church, Senior Citizens, and the Council of Catholic Women. She was a woman of strong faith.

Pfannen-stein enjoyed gar- dening, canning, being at the lake, cooking, baking and cro- cheting. She especially enjoyed spending time with her family.

Survivors include the follow- ing: her children, Cyril (Janet) of St. Joseph, Joan (Gary) Van- derweyst of Glendorado, Harvey (Carol) of St. Joseph, Richard (Sherri) of St. Joseph, Karen (Galen) of Avon, Sharon Puer- inger of Sartell, Patrick (Joan) of St. Joseph and Paul (Tammy) of St. Joseph; 36 grandchildren; 71 great-grandchildren; two great-great-grandchildren; son- in-law, Larry Everson; broth- ers and sisters, Ernest (Barba- ra) Schmitz of Iowa, Angeline Gillitzer of Waite Park, Lillian Notsch of Black Duck, Don- ald (Luella) Schmitz of Cottage Grove, Alcuin Schmitz of Big

Fish Lake (Richmond), Doris (Henry “Jack”) Holthaus of St. Martin and Floribert (Rose) Schmitz of Roscoe; many nieces and nephews.

She was preceded in death by her parents; husband, Ju- nior in 2008; daughter, Doreen Everson; grandchildren, Tammy J. Pfannen-stein, Dana Pfannen-stein and Brandon Vanderweyst; son-in-law, Mike Pueringer; and brother and sister, Walter Schmitz and Lucille Hart.

A special thank you to the St. Joseph Rescue, St. Joseph Police Department, Stearns County Sheriff’s Department, Mayo Ambulance and St. Cloud Hospital staff for their profes- sional care provided on Oct. 14. An additional thank you to Dr. Jen Chirhart and Jen Budde of CentraCare in St. Joseph for the care given to Ginny. Thank you also to the Daniel Funeral Home staff for all the guidance during this funeral process.

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Publisher/Owner
Janelle Von Pinnon

Designer
Nina Henne

Editor
Heidi Everett

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Carolyn Bertsch

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1608 11th Ave SE, St. Cloud, MN 56304

mailing address: 1622 11th Ave SE, St. Cloud, MN 56304

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[illegible]



To the residents of St. Joseph,

I've knocked on many of your doors during the last few years. First, when I ran for a legislative seat in 2016, in 2018 when I ran for council and a bit here in 2020 in my campaign to be mayor of our town. I'm grateful to have been able to serve you on our city council for the last two years, and look forward to continuing that service for the next two years, as mayor or as continuing council member. Thank you.

Knocking on your doors, allows me the opportunity to hear what you think. Each and every summer, the number one thing I have heard from residents is city taxes are too high and more recently I've heard concerns about the costs of a community center.

In September of 2019, even before the pandemic hit, I voted against moving the community center to the top of our list of state bonding priorities, knowing the state would only come up with a fraction of the cost (\$4 million) and we would have to come up with the rest. (Total price tag even without a swimming pool was estimated at over \$10 million.) Operations and maintenance would mean a considerable raise on our tax levy, again, even without a pool. I was outvoted by a 4-1 vote, and the community center was moved to our number one priority. The state bonding bill finally passed and we will be receiving \$4 million toward the capitol costs. Now, the question before the council is how we will proceed.

To be perfectly honest, I would love nothing more than a community center, with a pool. My family, with four young kids, were members and frequently visited the YMCA in St. Cloud before the pandemic. The question for me isn't about what we want, its about what can we afford, everything comes with a price tag.

If we are to build a community center, it is important to me that it is done well, in remembrance of Jacob Wetterling, possibly with a pool, and most importantly built with the support and encouragement of the broader community.

I'm committed to working together with the consensus of the community, collaboratively toward those things we, as a community, feel we want and can afford.

As a current mid term councilor, mayoral candidate and liaison to the park board, I ask you, the residents of St. Joseph to contact me with your wishes regarding the community center.

Please email me at abuckvold@cityofsaintjoseph.com or call me at 320.339.1941.

I look forward to hearing from you, the residents of St. Joseph, and acting on your behalf on our city council.

Warm Regards,
Anne Buckvold

Anne Buckvold
for Mayor



HOLIDAY SALUTE | A SYMBOL OF SUPPORT

Think Poppies this Holiday Season

Looking for a unique gift idea this holiday season that can greatly impact veterans around the world? Introduced in 1921, the American Legion Auxiliary Poppy Program was adopted to recognize the sacrifices and service of military members.

On Memorial Day and Veterans Day, millions of red crepe paper poppies — all handmade by veterans as part of their therapeutic rehabilitation — are distributed across the country in exchange for donations that go directly to assist disabled and hospitalized veterans, according to the American Legion Auxiliary.

Typically, you can help their cause by purchasing a flower on Memorial Day and Veterans Day, but their significance should be commended year-round, including during the holiday season.

Call your local American Legion to see if there are ways you can help in planning and executing this special program. You can make a big difference in carrying on this long-standing tradition with your help during the holidays.

Read on for more information on the Poppy Program and how big of an impact the American Legion is making on our veteran population.

PROGRAM BASICS

The movement of respecting the poppy is one of the American Legion Auxiliary's most prolific programs. Each year, the organization distributes millions of handmade poppies throughout the country in exchange for donations to impact disabled and hospitalized veterans.

Last year, the group estimates that \$2.1 million was raised to directly assist those in need.

PROGRAM HISTORY

A memory soldiers brought home from World War I was the barren landscape of their battlefield being overtaken by wild poppies. The red fields soon gave military members a sense that their fallen comrades spirits would live on. "In Flanders Fields" is a wartime poem, penned by Lt. Col. John McCrae who was inspired by the funeral of a friend and fellow soldier.

McCrae's composition had such an impact on Moina Michael that she led a campaign to adopt the poppy as the national symbol of sacrifice.

GET INVOLVED

Visit <https://www.alaforveterans.org/Poppy/> to learn how you can get involved in the program. Your financial and volunteer support is always needed when it comes to pulling off this unique, far-reaching program every year.

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HAVE A PROBLEM? LET YOUR DENTIST HELP

Your local dentist can do a lot more than clean your teeth. Today's dental practices can help you with a wide range of oral health problems, letting you protect your teeth for years to come.

Here's a look at five common problems dentists can help resolve:

GRINDING TEETH

Many people develop a habit of grinding their teeth when they experience stress. It's a common issue and, given today's busy world, one that seems to be increasingly problematic.

Teeth grinding, which usually occurs during sleep, can lead to a long list of dental problems, including crooked, loose or fractured teeth and an abnormal bite. It can sometimes lead to sore jaws and a dull headache, too.

Your dentist is trained to give you options for dealing with grinding teeth that can help keep your smile protected.

CANKER SORES

Sores in your mouth can have all kinds of causes, from sharp objects in your mouth to bacteria or jagged edges on your teeth.

Whatever the cause, it is important to have a dentist diagnose frequent canker sores because, at best, they make your mouth very uncomfortable. At worst, they could be the sign of a serious disease.



PHOTO: YURI_ARCURI / YAYMICRO.COM

While sores will often heal on their own, your dentist may be able to prescribe antiviral drugs, antibiotics, oral bandages or other treatments depending on your situation.

BAD BREATH

Bad breath, also called halitosis, can be an embarrassing condition — and you might not even be aware it's occurring.

Halitosis has a variety of

causes, ranging from dry mouth to dieting or simply eating too many onions and garlic. Whatever the cause, dentists can help you track it down and find a solution that's effective for you.

WHITENING

It seems that everywhere we look, there are pictures of perfect, bright smiles. For people with discolored teeth, it can be a source of embarrassment or cause a loss in confidence, which is why teeth-whitening procedures are so popular in many dental offices.

Depending on the cause and extent of the discoloration in your teeth, dentists can recommend treatments that will improve your smile. They range from in-office bleaching to at-home bleaching and special toothpaste that can whiten your grin.

MOUTH GUARDS

Playing sports can be dangerous, but you can offer your teeth some protection with a properly fitting mouth guard that you get from a dentist.

You can certainly buy pre-made mouth guards from sports shops, but these rarely fit properly because everyone's teeth are arranged differently. A better bet, especially if you spend a lot of time playing sports that risk dental injury, is to get a custom-fit guard.



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Four steps to oral health

Good oral hygiene is the key to a happy, healthy mouth. The American Dental Association (ADA) recommends these four steps to keep your teeth and gums clean:



1. BRUSH OFTEN.

You should brush your teeth at least twice a day — morning and night — to keep your teeth clean. But just as important as the schedule is the quality of the dental products you use. Make sure you're using a fluoride toothpaste that is accepted by the ADA. You should also frequently check your toothbrush for signs of wear. To do its job properly, a toothbrush should be replaced every three to four months, and even sooner if you can tell that the bristles are starting to fray.

2. FLOSS DAILY.

Everyone should floss their teeth — or use some other kind of interdental cleaner — once per day. Even if you brush your teeth regularly, there are places your toothbrush can't reach. Dental floss can reach the tight spaces between teeth and at the gums — places where germs love to hide. This will help remove plaque from your teeth and eliminate the bacteria and food particles that can cause tooth decay over time.

3. EAT RIGHT.

Your diet has a big impact on the health of your teeth. Even if you brush and floss regularly, eating the wrong foods — or even at the wrong times — can lead to tooth decay if you're not careful. The ADA recommends limiting your snacks between meals and eating a balanced diet to avoid tooth problems. Snacking between meals, especially if they're sugary snacks, should be avoided because they allow sugar to linger on your teeth longer than if you ate and drank an entire balanced meal. Foods that are high in sugar content should also be avoided. Not only is it bad for your body, but it also provides the fuel that helps bacteria to grow on your teeth and break down the surface over time.

4. SEE THE DENTIST.

Perhaps no other step is more important to oral health than regular trips to the dentist. Regularly scheduled dental checkups — involving cleaning, a professional examination and often X-rays — are a great way to catch minor dental problems before they develop into something major. That means regular checkups can actually save you money by catching issues in their early stages, when they are typically easier and cheaper to fix. Even if you think your teeth are in great shape, it's still a good idea to visit the dentist regularly for checkups. It's the only way to catch many oral health problems before they become serious.

PHOTO: ELENATHEWISE / YAYMICRO.COM

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Time to Set Goals

Financial goals inspire, motivate and mobilize us into action. They keep us on track during the tough months and help us avoid unnecessary impulse spending that can have a negative impact on our finances.

And setting a goal is the easy part. Sticking to that goal is where the challenge begins.

Unforeseen expenses, untimely bills and material temptations are part of daily life. Only those who are serious about overcoming these roadblocks are truly ready to achieve their financial objectives.

HOW TO SET A GOAL

Don't wait until your New Year's resolution to set your new financial goals. Grab your past few bank statements, a piece of paper and a pencil, and get busy.

Write down where every one of your pennies went during the past couple of months and organize them into sections like "necessary bills," "entertainment" and "eating out."

Determine which one of these segments has some wiggle room and set a goal to decrease similar spending next month.

DEFINE YOUR GOALS

When it comes to finances, you should have short-term and long-term goals. A short-term goal may be a plan to pay off a credit card or save enough to put a down payment on a new house.

What types of purchases or payoffs are you looking to accomplish in the next six to 12 months? Put them down on paper and keep track of monthly progress toward your goal.

And stay dedicated. Even an extra \$20 saved from eating in on a Friday night can go a long way toward

achieving your goal and building your confidence in your ability to save.

BE REALISTIC

If you earn \$3,000 month, it probably isn't a realistic goal to shove \$2,000 of your income into savings every 30 days. Be honest with yourself and

choose a number that you can achieve within your short- or long-term target.

If you have more than one financial goal, it is probably best to choose a primary one that receives most of your attention. This will help keep you focused on where to most effectively distribute your income.

And remember to think about the long term. Growing your savings can seem like a sacrifice in the short term, but the more you sacrifice now, the more wealth you'll be able to achieve. You'll be living a much more secure, financially rewarding life in the future if you take the right steps today.



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People

Local drivers nominated for national award

Duane Botzek and Connie Miller, who are a driver team for Brenny Specialized Inc. of St. Cloud, were among the drivers nominated for the annual driver of the year, sponsored by the National Association of Small Trucking Cos., which represents more than 13,000 trucking companies in the United States and Canada that employ more than 125,000 drivers collectively.

“As nominees for the award, Botzek and Miller join a very elite group that represent the very best of our 125,000 drivers,” according to Buster Anderson, executive vice president of NASTC.

“Brenny Specialized Inc. is very proud of their drivers and should be very proud of themselves as well,” Anderson added. “It says a lot about a company when they can attract and keep employees of this caliber.”

Botzek and Miller have



contributed photo

Connie Miller and Duane Botzek are a driver team for Brenny Specialized who recently earned the annual driver of the year award from NASTC.

driven for Brenny Specialized Inc. for more than 11 years, have been professional drivers for more than 15 years and have driven more than three million accident-free miles.

Two St. Joseph students recently graduated from Bemidji State University.

They and their degree are the following: Margaret Donnay, bachelor’s de-

gree, summa cum laude; and Derek Ertl, bachelor’s degree.

Lauren Vouk, daughter of Lisa and Frank Vouk, St. Joseph, recently earned an excellence scholarship to attend Concordia College, Moorhead. She is a graduate of Holdingford High School.

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Opinion

Our View Electoral College must be abolished

We always hear about the electoral college during presidential elections because it's how we elect the president. Even though we all vote for a candidate, what actually matters is an arcane mathematical formula in which each state gets a proportionate number of electors to actually vote for the president. Our individual votes are supposed to tell our state's electors whom to vote for.

The idea a state, a geographic region drawn on a map, votes for a person seems crazy in today's world. People vote, not land. Electoral votes are based on the population inside those random boundaries. This means a large physical, but low-population state would have less electors than a state with a small physicality and larger population. The number of electors for each state is determined by population; how many representatives plus the two senators each state sends to the U.S. Congress.

This is the thing that's given us our Red States versus Blue States mentality. Each side has its "safe" electoral votes, and only by getting 270 or more electoral votes nationwide can someone be president.

Hypothetically, this should correspond to who actually gets the most votes, but it doesn't! In fact, it's been shown this year, Joe Biden is only likely to win the presidency if he wins the national popular vote by 5 percent or more. Five percent of the votes cast in 2016, our most recent election, would be about 6.4 million votes. To put that into perspective, that is like not counting the votes of all the people (total population, not just voters) in Wyoming, Vermont, Alaska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Delaware, Rhode Island and Montana combined. Coincidentally, those states are split evenly red and blue in the current election.

We have a system where someone can get millions more votes than their opponent and still lose! That's insane. Hillary Clinton won the popular vote in 2016 by 3 million votes but still lost because of the electoral college.

Often, Republicans like the electoral college because losing the popular vote but winning the electoral college is their path to victory. To you fine folks we say that's a bunch of malarkey. If the shoe was on the other foot, would you be OK with that? If the blue team had won two out of the last five elections despite not having the popular vote, would you think that's just fine?

Furthermore, Republicans in Minnesota, you live in a blue state. It's a safely blue state. Wouldn't you like your vote to go toward your candidate's victory, rather than just being a number that has no effect on the race? Rural populations tend to vote Republican, but they don't have the numbers to overcome the more populous urban centers that vote Democrat. There just aren't as many people in all of rural Minnesota as there are in cities. And cities will tend to vote for Dems because larger population centers in a smaller physical space will require more public services than a widespread small rural population.

Everyone should want to abolish the electoral college because it gives more power to their individual votes. "But," you say, "don't we live in a republic of states not of people?" And to that we say, nope! In fact, even if you think that's what the founders intended, it was the Democratic Republicans under Jefferson and Madison who wanted that. Federalists such as Alexander Hamilton, John Adams and even George Washington, who never officially joined the party, believed we are not just a collection of states but one country with one rule and law that superseded states.

Our elections have evolved along with our democracy. Throughout our 200-plus-years history, we have expanded voting rights to women, Black people, non-land-owning males, changed the allotment of electoral votes, changed how we send senators to Congress and more. We have a moral imperative to always strive for a more equal country. We must amend our U.S. Constitution, as we have many times in our nations' history, to remove the electoral college. Your vote, red or blue, depends on it.

Newsroom ghost scared me half to death

Boo!

I'll never forget that terrifying time when – in a split second – I suddenly saw a ghost.

Years ago, in the dead of a chilly fall night, I drove to the Alexandria news office to write a Halloween feature story about ghosts. Earlier that day, I'd interviewed five or six people in several cities of Douglas County who claimed they had seen or experienced ghosts at some point in their lives. Ever the skeptic, I listened intently as they told me their strange stories, but I kept thinking such creepy goings-on could be explained, somehow, by other natural factors. Real ghosts or not, the goose-bump stories were so wonderfully eerie. And I had to admit I couldn't conjure up any rational reasons for what caused things to go bump in the night.

One couple I interviewed felt a blast of cold air in their kitchen and then pots, pans, kettles and dishes flew with a crashing clatter from cupboards.

Another story was about a ghost sometimes seen in an upstairs storage room of an old farmhouse. The ghost was a female wearing an old-fashioned dress from a previous century. She was glowing and semi-transparent and would appear in the room, walk across the floor, look out a window and then slowly fade. The apparition was so spooky, family members dreaded entering that room.

On my way to the office, I mulled

Dennis
Dalman
Reporter



over those and other ghost sightings, pondering how best to write the story. It was late at night, about 11 p.m., when I arrived at the office and let myself in with my key. The inner offices were dark so I turned on a couple lights. Then I sat down in my office, reviewed the notes I'd written and began to write the story on my computer.

The office area, like most newsrooms, was a large, mainly open area in which the work cubicles were separated by those movable, portable walls about six feet tall.

In the quiet office with my desk lamp glowing, I began to write the story, consulting my notes every couple of minutes. As I reviewed every detail of every ghost sighting, I began to get a case of the heebie-jeebies. In that big, empty, quiet news office, abandoned to the night, me in there all alone, the ghost stories were a lot scarier than they were during the day-time interviews.

"What if?" I paused to wonder. "What if ghosts really do exist?"

Those people I talked with were intelligent, level-headed – not the types to cook up ghost stories.

I kept writing, pondering . . . And then BOO!, I suddenly saw something bright-white skittering along the top of the divider wall a few feet from me. I jumped and let out a strangled gasp as my heart started pounding so loud it rattled my chest.

Just then, a woman was standing in the doorway, right next to me.

"Dennis, what's the matter?" she asked. "Is something wrong?"

Whew! Relief! It was Liz the cleaning lady, working late that night in the news building.

"I just saw a ghost," I said, heart still pounding.

"A ghost?!" she asked, suddenly scared, too.

"Yes, a ghost! That white dusting rag you're holding. It was skittering on top of the dividing wall. A ghost. Liz the newsroom ghost."

"Oh, I'm sorry," she said. "I didn't mean to scare you. I was just dusting."

"Yes, and I'm mighty glad that rag was attached to the hand of a real human being," I assured her.

I told her I'd just been working on a story about ghosts. She started laughing; I started laughing, but it still took awhile for that shock to wear off.

The ghost-sightings story was published that Friday. I learned later it scared a lot of readers, not to mention a writer – me. To this day, every time someone tells me about ghosts, I listen up, keeping old doubts at bay.

There is no excuse for not voting

When this article is published, there will be less than a week until Election Day. As someone who has never been able to vote in a presidential election before, it feels like it has been simultaneously forever and barely any time at all since 2016 where I had to sit out on voting because of my age. Being able to vote twhis time around is an important milestone I've been looking forward to since I turned 18. Though it may seem silly to attach such importance to such a small event such as voting, it's important to remember that many people around the world don't even get the opportunity to choose their leaders. This is why I have talked about voting so much during the past month – because I truly believe if we want to advance change in our local communities and country at large, there is no excuse for not voting.

Connor
Kockler
Guest Writer



All the way back in 1776, the founders of our country declared independence because they were ruled from afar by a tyrannical king whom they did not choose but who nevertheless had influence in almost every aspect of their lives. They instead set out to create a government that would be chosen by and responsible to the people of the United States. While the right to vote has been shamefully denied to many people, such as Black Americans and women throughout our history, the ideal we have slowly and painfully been

living up to is that every American of voting age should be able to have a say in who runs their government at the federal, state and local level.

Just like there shouldn't be an excuse for not voting, there also should be no excuse for making it harder for people to vote. We have heard almost as much news about court cases trying to restrict avenues of voting as the actual election itself. Texas has been embroiled in legal action over its governor's action to restrict the number of ballot drop boxes in each county. Pennsylvania and South Carolina have seen court actions seeking to restrict the use of absentee ballots. These cases go against the expert consensus showing the risk of voter fraud is virtually nonexistent and that such measures often just make it harder for people who are trying to cast their ballots legitimately to do so. In a democracy like the United States, we should not be trying to make it harder for legitimate voters to make their voices heard.

There may also be people who feel the political system doesn't respond to

them, that no matter who they vote for nothing will change. While the dysfunction in our political process makes these concerns valid, I would suggest not voting actually makes things worse. When you choose to refrain from participating in voting, politicians know they no longer have to take your opinions into account. Not voting, in a certain sense, is voting to have your voice ignored. Even if you don't like any of the major parties and want to do a write-in vote, that is at least a signal of your dissatisfaction with the choices you have. And if enough voters do that in sufficient numbers, it turns into a movement large enough that politicians will have to start appealing to those voters.

So, this Election Day make it a point to get out and vote if you haven't voted by mail or in-person absentee already, as I did. After all, it's something we only get the chance to do every few years. Going to vote often takes less time than going to the store or driving to work. So why wouldn't we do it? Taking some time now will decide how our country, states and cities are run for the next two to four years. I think that fact alone is worth the effort.

Connor Kockler is a student at St. John's University. He enjoys writing, politics and news, among other interests.

GOT AN
OPINION?

Please include your full name for publication (and address and phone number for verification)

The Newsleaders
1622 11th Ave S.
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Cultural connections:

Gift of cultural experience sheds light on diversity fears

Fasalladii waa soo noq-deen.
Waxay idinku war gali-nayaan xarumaha (cultural bridges iyo Central MN adult basic education ABE) ee wax barashada dadka waawayn in dib u bixinayaan fasal-ladii ingrisiga ahaa oo ku yaala St. Joseph.

Gugii lasoo dhaafay waxa hakad galay fasalladii luuqada ingrisiga, xanuunka COVID-19 dartiis. Xagaagii oo dhan waxay ardaydu ku qaateen faslladii habka on-line ka.

Fasalladii waa soo noq-deen.

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Mahadsanidiin. (Thanks)

...
by Jeff Veline
(Veline is the oldest son of rock 'n' roll legend, the late Bobby Vee. Jeff is the co-owner of Rockhouse Studios in St. Joseph.)

I recently sat down and had a conversation with a local Somali mother and daughter here in St. Joseph, and it almost instantly transported me back to my own childhood growing up in Los Angeles. I was not aware of any Somali people living there at the time; however, there was vast cultural diversity. Los Angeles, of course, has always been a melting pot of people from many ethnicities and walks of life.
As a child, I took for granted that we had Mexican friends, Asian friends and Middle Eastern friends, among others. It was just normal.
My best friend in third

grade was Black. We spent all of our free time together, and he often came to my house for sleepovers. However, I never went to his, until one day I did. At the age of 9, we rode the city bus across L.A., changing twice, to get to his house in the Crenshaw neighborhood. We did have a few dimes in our pockets in case we needed to phone for help! It never crossed my mind at that age that everyone in his neighborhood would be Black. That his whole family would be Black. Even the dog was Black. If it were not for our friendship, the overwhelming warmth of his family and my innocence, I might have used one of those dimes to call for a ride home. I think everyone should experience being the minority, if even for just a few days. I feel fortunate for that lesson.
Moving to central Minnesota, at age 16, was a bit of a “culture shock” in that there really was not much culture to speak of, at least not in the way I knew it. There were Germans, Scandinavians (my actual heritage) but very little real diversity. Sadly, what I noticed as time went on was not only a lack of diversity but an actual fear of diversity, an element of racism. I assumed it was from a lack of expe-



contributed photo
(From left) Nathan Rudolph, Jeff’s Black friend, Eric Avery and Jeff Veline.

rience of other cultures and thus a lack of understanding. But it existed nonetheless.
These are some tricky days we are living in. Not only are we divided like never before by race and gender issues, but by a chasm of political views. I look back on my years growing up in Los Angeles with so much gratitude. I wish everyone could have a similar experience. I truly think things would be better in our society today.
Racism and discrimination of any kind has always seemed counter-intuitive to

me as it limits the potential and the vibrancy of our society. We are all people. We all want the same basic stuff. By reaching out across ALL of these divides with pure intentions, I believe there is unlimited potential to influence others positively and for our community to be the best that it can be.
...
If you have any questions, contact Juliana Howard at 715-791-8976 or Jamal Elmi at 320-310-2351.

Guest column

Support public-health guidelines, human dignity

Ronald Pagnucci,
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Jama Alimad,
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CMCEO Board Member
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CMCEO Executive Director

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 216,000 Americans have died and almost 8 million Americans have been infected. Pub-

lic-health guidelines issued by the Centers for Disease Control and the Minnesota Department of Health outline clear steps, including social distancing and face masks, that control the spread of COVID-19. Unfortunately, these guidelines became politicized, resulting in the continued uncontrolled spread, further imperiling the health of our communities. The Central Minnesota Community Empowerment Organization urges strict adherence to all public-health guidelines. Controlling the spread is a matter of public health and human dignity.
According to the APM Research Lab, 1 in 1,000 Black Americans died in just the first six months of the pandemic, compared to 1 in 2,100 White

Americans. Structural inequities, including unequal access to health care and a disproportionate number of racial minorities in front-line jobs, has exacerbated the risk for Black Americans and other minorities. CMCEO recognizes a strong public-health response to the pandemic will help protect every American and stop the acceleration of racial inequities.
Unfortunately, prominent elected officials and candidates have undermined public health guidelines. One of the most shameful examples came from St. Cloud city councilman Paul Brandmire, the current Republican nominee for state Senate District 14B. During a July 20th city council meeting, Brandmire compared the mask ordi-

nance to the Holocaust, claiming it could lead the city council to mandate wearing a “bright yellow star.” CMCEO stands in solidarity with the nonpartisan Jewish Community Relations Council, St. Cloud City Council, The St. Cloud Times and others in condemning Brandmire’s Holocaust analogy. The Nazis forced Jews to wear gold stars to mark them for genocide. Face masks protect both the wearer and others against COVID-19, which strikes indiscriminately.
COVID-19 threatens the health and wellbeing of every American but especially the most vulnerable among us. Slowing the spread is a matter affecting the life and dignity of our neighbors. The politicization of public health guidelines

accelerates needless suffering and racial inequities. We are only being asked to do the basics to safeguard the lives of all Americans. The only way we can stop the spread is by uniting across political, racial and religious differences to follow public health guidelines, especially social distancing and face masks.

Public statement on public health and human dignity issued by Central Minnesota Community Empowerment Organization. CMCEO is a multi-faith nonprofit that works to improve the lives of East African and other new American members of our community through intercultural dialogue, after-school programming and aid distribution.

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