

Reaching Everybody!

Newsleaders

Friday, Dec. 11, 2020
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Town Crier

Santa, Mrs. Claus to visit area senior living facilities

Santa, Mrs. Claus and helpers will stop by outside senior living facilities including Edgewood and Chateau Waters on Dec. 14 and 15. This is in lieu of the 2020 Dinner with Santa, a holiday meal event held for local senior citizens every December, which was canceled due to the pandemic. Dinner with Santa looks forward to safely resuming in 2021. For more information, contact Magelssen at 320-251-1038 or Jill.Magelssen@Expresspros.com.

Homeless Helping Homeless seeks volunteers

Homeless Helping Homeless members help each other find resources for food, clothing, transportation, housing and employment. Members depend mostly on in-kind donations of rides, household items, furniture and gift cards. They have a variety of volunteer needs such as driving, fundraising, writing grants, moving furniture, organizing donations and more! Visit www.HomelessHelpingHomeless.com to volunteer.

Donate toys for children

Deliver new, unwrapped toys to any of the Toys for Tots Marine drop boxes located throughout the community. Catholic Charities Emergency Services is also accepting toy donations during limited hours through a drop-off model on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays between 12:30-1:30 p.m. at the loading area of 157 Roosevelt Road, St. Cloud, Door D. Suggested donations: new toys, teen gifts, Bluetooth speakers, electronics, butterfly chairs, men's slippers, nail polish, jewelry, personal care items, children's coats and boots, adult coats (XL, XXL, XXXL) new socks and underwear (all ages). Outside this time, contact info@ccstcloud.org or 32-229-4560 to coordinate another drop-off time.

Ring bells for Salvation Army

Ring a bell at one of their iconic red kettles now through Dec. 24 to raise funds that change lives all year long. Volunteers are the difference between an empty kettle and one that raises about \$30 per hour – enough to provide a family with two bags of groceries. Call Laura at 320-257-7437 or visit <https://centralusa.salvationarmy.org/northern/stcloud/volunteer/> to schedule a time to ring bells.



photo by Mike Knaak

A festive walk around Lake Francis

A ribbon of lights greets visitors who walk the trail around Lake Francis in Sartell. The 33-acre Country Lights display runs through Dec. 31. Because of COVID restrictions, some of the traditional events, such as a warming house and a Santa visit, aren't happening this year. Visitors are asked to observe social distancing and mask guidelines. A fireworks display is planned for 7 p.m. Dec. 31.

Pre-k, kindergarten registration moves online

by Mike Knaak
news@thenewsleaders.com

Preparations for next fall's pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students will operate differently this year to accommodate COVID-19 restrictions.

The usual registration and orientation for students at Oak Ridge Early Learning Center will take place virtually this

January and February.

Early childhood registration for 3- and 4-year-olds will take place online from 6-7 p.m. on Monday, Jan. 25. Registration and orientation for parents of next fall's kindergartners will take place a week later, from 6-7 p.m. Monday, Feb. 1.

A link to the online events will be sent to families starting the week of Jan. 4.

The programs will start with a half-hour presentation to introduce staff and programs. Then there will be time for questions, according to Oak Ridge Principal Jason Mielke. Parents will be able to type in questions during the YouTube Live event. The program also will include information about Boys & Girls Club's child-care programs.

For parents who can't watch the scheduled events, the programs will be recorded and available on the school's website within a week. There will be no in-person tours or registration this year.

Preschool options include morning and afternoon sessions and days-per-week options.

Kindergarten students need to be 5 years old by Sept. 1.

Channel your creativity for local seniors

by Heidi L. Everett
news@thenewsleaders.com

Cards, concerts and conversations were once a seasonal staple to connect with seniors during the holidays. COVID-19 has changed that.

"We've been really blessed," said Emily Frericks, director of marketing and public relations with Country Manor in Sartell and Woodcrest of Country Manor in St. Joseph. "Over the years, we've received thousands of cards, which has been wonderful."

At this time, though, they can't distribute mail. As a precautionary measure, mail from non-family is quarantined in a storage room and goes through a rigorous process before it can be shared.

And like so many other gathering spaces today, many of the residents are in isolation or restricted to a small community of residents to interact with at six feet apart and with masks on.

Country Manor and Woodcrest of Country Manor serve between 500 and 700 peo-

ple a day between their assisted and independent living facilities as well as inpatient and outpatient rehabilitation.

Activities directors have been tapping into their creative sides to maintain that spirit of the season in a time of COVID-19, Frericks said. For example, Woodcrest held its annual holiday door-decorating contest the first week of December. Because residents couldn't go door to door to cast their votes, all doors were photographed and put on Facebook for residents, family and friends to vote.

"We're trying to create programs, so everyone can participate," Frericks said.

Country Manor and Woodcrest also have an internal television channel which originally started to share programming with those who were bedridden.

"This was a new way to bring socializing to our community," Frericks said. "People can tune into this channel and see what is happening."

Residents have already been doing Face-



contributed photo

Country Manor uses live streams to celebrate during COVID-19 restrictions. (Left to right) Brady Johnson, Ansie Sperl and Jennifer Jankowski.

Sartell-St. Stephen • St. Joseph

Newsleaders

Reaching Everybody!

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Seniors

from front page

time and video calls.

“They are so proud of their families, and while they can’t be face to face or in person, video calling has helped,” she said. “It’s so sweet when we hear, ‘Tommy wants to sing a song for you, grandma and grandpa.’ We want everyone to experience this.”

Share your videos

The internal television channel is where Frericks hopes people will share videos this holiday season, even if you don’t have a family member there.

“More often than not, everybody has a connection. Somebody knows somebody,” she said. “This channel allows people to interact with us without having to

leave their homes to do it.”

“If you are driving around looking at holiday lights, capture it and send it in,” Frericks said. “Are you having a mini concert at home or building a gingerbread house? Send it in.”

The channel is available to Country Manor and Woodcrest 24 hours a day, seven days a week, so they have ample broadcast time to share videos. (See the “Video Instructions” sidebar for details.)

Frericks also encourages people to follow their social media.

“If people want to tune in to our Facebook page, we are working to increase our online interaction, like Woodcrest did with the door decorating contest,” she said.

They can be found on Facebook at [countrymanorcampus](#).

Share your support of staff

Currently, Country Manor and Woodcrest do not have a shortage of supplies, but they are always accepting encouragement for the staff.

“Our staff has been incredible. It’s been a long nine months,” Frericks said. “What we see all day every day is very heavy. We are covered in full PPE with masks, face shields, goggles and heavy equipment. It’s hot and sweaty. Everyone still smiles, checks in and makes sure everyone is OK.”

“We are battle-weary,” she said, “but staff are rallying to make people feel loved and celebrated. It’s something special to see.”

Cards of thanks to staff and treats are welcome.

“A candy bar can really make someone’s day,” Frericks said.

Donations to staff at Country Manor Sartell can be dropped

off at Door #1. Call 320-253-1920 in advance, so they can plan for appropriate staffing to meet you outside.

Donations to staff at Woodcrest in St. Joseph can be dropped off at the Main Entrance. Call 320-271-1200 in advance, so they can plan for appropriate staffing to meet you outside.

Video Instructions

The link for video submissions can be found on the top of the Country Manor homepage: [www.countrymanorcampus.org](#)

Possible video content includes:

- Music, singing, playing an instrument
- Theater or dance performances
- Cooking or baking demonstrations
- Craft demonstrations (how to) for tenants to follow along with
- Art projects like painting, wood-

working or drawing

- Trivia with answers
- Pets doing tricks or just cute pets
- Science projects
- Family holiday traditions
- Messages of support, love and joy for residents, patients, tenants and staff
- Take us on a tour with you on a hike, ice-fishing, hunting to find the perfect Christmas tree, to see Santa. Go Pro videos welcome.
- Share jokes (appropriate ones, of course)
- Gratitude or reflection

Country Manor families of residents, patients, tenants and staff are also encouraged to share messages to surprise loved ones, like “We can’t wait to see you, Grandma! We love you!” or “Thank you for being our personal hero, mom! We love you!”

Obituary

Roger J. Trobec, 74
St. Stephen
May 23, 1946 - Dec. 8, 2020

Roger J. Trobec, 74, died Dec. 8 at St. Cloud Hospital. His funeral will be private; A link to the livestream video of the funeral (3 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 12) can be found at [www.williamsdingmann.com](#). Burial will be at St. Stephen Cemetery in St. Stephen. Arrangements have been entrusted to Williams Dingmann Family Funeral Home, Sauk Rapids.

Trobec was born May 23, 1946 in St. Cloud to Hilda and Joseph (Lubbesmeyer) Trobec. He married Anna Mae Slivnik on Feb. 3, 1968 in St. Stephen Catholic Church. Trobec proudly served our country in the Army Reserves. He lived in St. Stephen all of his life and was a biology teacher and football coach at Sartell-St. Stephen High School for 33 years, retiring in 2004. Trobec was a member of St. Stephen Catholic Church where he was a member of the choir. He was also a member of Friends in Harmony, Jazz Connection, Sartell Knights of Columbus Council 5276, St. Cloud Fraternal Order of Eagles Aerie 622 and the Minnesota Coaches Association. Trobec served on the St. Stephen City Council for 28 years



and the St. Stephen Fire Department for 36 years where he was assistant chief, and a training officer. He enjoyed teaching, coaching, singing, bird watching and being involved in his community. Trobec was a passionate, thoughtful, honorable and selfless man. In his heart and what drove him in all his endeavors, was his passion and commitment as an educator to have a positive impact on those he taught, coached and had the pleasure to serve and serve with.

Survivors include the following: his wife of 52 years, Anna Mae of St. Stephen; sons and daughters: Stephen of St. Stephen, Garrett (Erin) of Lino Lakes, Jacquelyn Alexenko of Sartell, Mary Jo (Evan) Byl of Sheldon, Iowa, Paul (Angela) of Sartell, Anne Marie Trobec (Mason Shaney) of Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, and Gregory (Parvaneh) of Maple Grove; brothers and sister: Gerald (Jeanette), Larry, Mary Lee Vouk, and Ray (Karen) all of St. Stephen; and grandchildren: Cullen, Caitlin, Luka, Ryder, Michael, Renee, Oliver, and Nora; and many nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by the following: his parents; stepmother, Luretta; brother, Joseph; sisters-in-law, Bernadette and Frannie Trobec; brother-in-law, John Vouk; and nephews, Ken and Jeff Trobec.

In lieu of flowers, memorials are preferred to St. Stephen Fire Department Equipment Fund, c/o City of St. Stephen, 2 Sixth Ave. SE, St. Stephen, MN 56375.

Obituary and guest book available online at [www.williamsdingmann.com](#).





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To Lee, coffee is a magic social-bonding elixir

by Dennis Dalman
news@thenewsleaders.com

Anna-Maija Lee’s empathy for young people suffering from grief and loss comes from a place deep within herself.

Lee has a passion for coffee as a social-bonding elixir. A long-time social worker, she is the founder and co-owner of “For the Love Project,” a mobile coffee cart service. Her love for coffee and how it can unify people began many years ago. Next summer, she plans to hire young people who are emotionally challenged to work the coffee cart at various public and private venues.

“Life for me was difficult, especially in my early teen years,” said the Sartell woman. “I was an only child. I put on weight in my teen years. I was teased, and I even laughed along with them, but the pain in my heart was real.”

Lee’s mother was a single mom in Michigan, who worked long hours and who moved frequently from one place to another. Lee did not meet her biological father until she turned 18.

To find refuge from her troubled life filled with nagging feelings of grief and loss, Lee would often sit for hours at a local coffee shop. It was her comfort zone in a messy world, and coffee and the “ritual” of coffee-drinking began to take on many meanings for her – feelings of warmth, solace, safety, social connections, sweet peace. Not surprisingly, Lee’s first job was as a coffee-shop barista in Northville, Mich. Later, while



contributed photo

At a local mall, Anna-Maija Lee greets customers at “Joy,” her mobile coffee-serving business, “For the Love Project.”

pregnant with one of her five children, she again worked as a barista at Caribou Coffee and at Starbucks.

After moving to Minnesota, she graduated with a degree in social work from the College of St. Scholastica (Brainerd campus). She then did an internship among the inmates in the Crow Wing County Jail. It was there she learned so much about the processes of grief and loss and of the emotional damage that can

occur to children whose parents are incarcerated.

She also worked as a health practitioner at Brainerd High School and for four years at the Northern Pine Mental Health center.

“People think of grief and loss as related only to death,” Lee said. “But there are other forms of it, in some cases more longer lasting and devastating than what death can cause. There is also grief and loss caused by divorce,

parental (military) deployment, foster-care placements and parental incarceration.”

And Lee has felt first-hand those kinds of loss and grief among so many young people during her years as a social worker in the St. Cloud school district. After receiving a social-work master’s degree from the University of Southern California, she began working for the school district in 2016. After nearly four years, she developed the beginning symp-

toms of “burn-out” and took a leave of absence.

The idea of starting a mobile coffee service, one that could eventually involve young people, came to her.

Preparing and serving coffee to people, she said, will enable young people to focus, to learn discipline, to develop good work habits and – just as importantly – to connect in positive ways with people (customers) while “giving back” to the community.

In January, Lee met another investor for her “For the Love Program” mobile coffee service. They launched the business in August.

Here’s how it works. Lee had a specialty mobile cart made that she dubbed “Joy.” The cart holds two coffee espresso machines as well as all kinds of supplies – fresh-ground coffee beans, tea, flavorings and so forth. By using an automatic lift winch, she puts the cart in a trailer connected to her van, then drives to a venue, where the winch can place “Joy” on the ground.

“Then, all I need is an electrical plug-in,” she noted.

She is fully licensed to do business anywhere. With social distancing and mask-wearing, she has brought “Joy” to corporate events, weddings and even an outdoor house party while it was snowing. She used a plexiglass shield as extra protection against any lurking viruses. She also takes “Joy” to in-house staff-appreciation events at area schools.

“It (For the Love Program) will be a supporting wrap-around

Coffee • page 6

Support Specialist/Scheduler

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Retirement Investment Ideas

It's never too early to get on top of your finances or plan for retirement. With a proper strategy, you can build your savings account or have a steady flow of income after you step away from a career.

According to the Harvard Business Review, Americans between 40 and 45 have an average of \$14,500 in their retirement account – that's less than four percent of what is needed to retire. Consider investing in your future with one of these practical ventures.

REAL ESTATE
A recent survey from the U.S. Census Bureau reveals Americans paid an average monthly cost of \$981 for rent in 2016. Becoming a landlord comes with many difficulties but, if done properly, has big advantages.

Some concerns to weigh are unforeseen expenses like negligent renters, vacancy and property maintenance. Over time, a rental can be very profitable, just make sure to have an emergency fund to cover unexpected fees.

A quicker way to fill a retirement fund with profits earned through real estate is flipping properties.



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With a little knowledge in construction or an affordable contractor, you can earn big bucks by giving outdated homes new life.

BOND LADDER
Buying bonds has long been used to prepare for retirement. Building a bond

ladder means you can strategically plan for the payoff and rely on a steady cash flow at a specified date.

A bond is basically a loan you are supplying to a company or city or local government, usually to fund construction projects or satisfy debts. The borrower is

required to pay you back the provided amount plus interest. Choose bonds with different maturity dates to stagger the payouts during retirement.

With any investment, there is a level of risk. For a safe bet with a smaller return, look for full faith and credit bonds.

Typically, these are offered by governments and federal factions. When you buy bonds from a private company, the return may be higher, but there is a chance they will default on their commitment. Do your research before building the bond ladder to fund your future.



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Wrapping for a good paws

Tri-County Humane Society is “Wrapping for a Good Paws” at Crossroads Center daily through Thursday Dec. 24. Volunteers wrap presents for people who give a free-will donation to Tri-County Humane Society during the mall’s open hours. Due to COVID-19 social distancing guidelines, all volunteers must wear masks. Sanitation and cleaning supplies will be supplied. Kids over 12 years are welcome, but an adult must be present with them. Sign up at <https://tricityhumanesociety.org/how-to-help/fundraisers/wrapping-for-a-good-paws.html> or contact Angela at 320-252-0896 ext. 14.

All is Well

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This activity is made possible by the voters of Minnesota through a grant from the Central MN Arts Board, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the arts and cultural heritage fund.

Our season partners:



Sartell mother, daughter write book of positive messages

by Mike Knaak
news@thenewsleaders.com

In the years ahead, when Sartell parents and children look back on the trying and challenging times of 2020, they will also be able to remember how the community never lost hope, thanks to a book by a third-grade teacher and her daughter.

Shannan Houghton and her ninth-grade daughter, Lilly, created “Grounded,” a book that tells the story of how a tree starts from a seed and how it has to change.

This book is an A-to-Z collection of words related to COVID-19 and illustrated with local photos. Houghton found the silver linings that surrounded her community during these uncertain times. She chose the title, because, she said, “it’s life lessons that keep us rooted and grounded. When you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change.”

A growing oak tree illustrated by Lilly is the metaphor for the tale.

On a page illustrated with a seed growing into a tall and strong tree, Houghton writes:

“The seasons changed; and the children grew.

The people changed; and the community grew.

The perspectives changed; and the appreciation grew.

The priorities changed; and the families grew.

The hearts changed; and the love grew.”

Houghton collected hundreds of photos of local people to illustrate the words with each letter of the alphabet.

For Q, an easy choice: Quarantine. But the Q page also



photo by Mike Knaak

Shannan Houghton and her daughter Lilly wrote “Grounded,” a collection of memories and photos about Sartell in the time of COVID-19.

reminds us of a Quest for a cure, Quality time, Quilts that comfort, and Quiet moments.

Houghton said she’s always wanted to write a book.

“During shelter in place in March, I woke up and thought now is the time,” she said. “What could I do to mark history for my students?”

As a coach, Houghton says she tells her athletes to focus on the positive. As a community “we’re making history,” she said. “We should document how we’re making history. Our

community never lost hope.”

The book has been out since Oct. 30 and is available online at www.blurb.com/bookstore/invited/8769774/7d-4ca5e9780eda1aa32545a5ae6f-7fbaf7c998e3#. Houghton says it’s fun to open and find heartfelt messages of thanks and photos of kids reading the book before bedtime.

“I want my students to remember this time,” Houghton said. “We forget all of these things unless they are documented.”

Coffee

from page 4

program for teenagers,” Lee said. “It will provide structure, opportunities for meeting and talking with people, and instill a sense of stability.”

For the Love Program is truly community-based, Lee said. For example, in the St. Cloud School District there is the “One Step” program designed for people ages 18 to 24 who have cognitive

or physical disabilities. One of their work projects and a way to make some money is to stamp logos on paper coffee cups and cup sleeves used for the mobile service. Also, five percent of any profits Lee gives to good local causes, such as those that support mental-health programs.

“Many coffee makers are my mentors who give me recipes, tips and their talents,” she said. “I am very, very grateful for that. I’m a tool that makes connections. I’m in the joy-making business.”

Her own favorite drink? Ice

espresso with a bit of almond milk. The most popular with customers? Salted vanilla latte and Bear Hug latte with a cinnamon, clove, cardamom spice base.

In her public-speaking presentations, Lee refers often to “Mrs. C.” – a babysitter she had when she was a girl and her mother was working 60 hours a week.

“Mrs. C. was firm and stern sometimes, but I knew she loved me,” said Lee. “Mrs. C. was a woman of strong faith who taught me so many things.”

Every time Lee remembers Mrs. C., a flood of sweet memories comes rushing back.

“I learned from Mrs. C. that kids can thrive and be healthy and successful if they develop good connections with even one other person in a nurturing relationship. That sense of belonging can sustain someone throughout life. Mrs. C was my ‘one.’ Who is your ‘one?’”

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contributed photo
ConneX curb-to-curb, on-demand bus service extended in Sartell through 2021.

Busing among businesses rerouting plans from pandemic

by Heidi L. Everett
news@thenewsleaders.com

Sartell ConneX bus extended despite no fare, low ridership

The curb-to-curb, on-demand bus service in Sartell known as ConneX is extending its pilot program another year, through December 2021.

“We need better information on whether or not this service is doing the job it needs to be doing,” said Nate Ramacher, marketing and communications manager for St. Cloud Metro Bus.

“Are we serving the public to justify the expense?”

The pilot program was launched in April 2020 to replace the former fixed route loop around Sartell.

“The structure of Sartell makes it difficult to have a set route because of so many dead ends, neighborhoods and curved roads,” Ramacher said. ConneX was developed as a way to better serve residents, he said.

The way ConneX works is someone will call and request a ride. The rider will provide a name, phone number, location and destination. Then, the rider is placed into a queue. Wait times for pick up will vary depending on demand. Those requesting a ride are asked to wait where they can see the ConneX bus as it arrives and be ready and able to board within one minute of its arrival. ConneX provides curb-to-curb service and will stop near the end of a home’s driveway or near the entrance of buildings with parking lots.

Ramacher said the service is ideal for commuters, students attending the technical and community college or university in St. Cloud or people who want to run errands but are dependent on others for

transportation. There are no age restrictions for passengers; however passengers must be able to ride independently or bring their own assistance.

“People don’t have to walk several blocks to a bus stop,” he said. “It’s a convenient, affordable way to travel.” He also noted it’s a convenient way to avoid the hassle of winter driving.

The service is focused on Sartell but also goes to CentraCare Health Plaza as well as the downtown St. Cloud transit hub for connections with fixed routes throughout the St. Cloud area.

From April through October, the service provided 5,389 rides, which was less than expected due to COVID-19. “We wanted a year of data of ridership, but COVID has complicated that,” Ramacher said.

The fare to ride ConneX was initially \$2.50, and that came with a two-hour pass for fixed route connections or return rides home if completed within two hours. For example, if someone needed to get to the grocery store, they could request a ride, get to the store and shop, request a ride home and complete that all in two hours for the one fare. But, Metro Bus hasn’t been charging fares on any routes since April because of COVID-19. The elimination of fares allowed passengers to board regular buses from the front and back of the bus to reduce congestion at the front of the bus and allow social distancing.

“The safety of our drivers and riders is of the utmost importance,” Ramacher said.

Ridership has been low enough that capacity hasn’t had to be formally reduced.

“People can social distance,” Ramacher said.

Face masks also are required for all drivers and passengers,

and increased cleaning procedures have been implemented.

While fares are an important piece of the Metro Bus budget, they do have access to state and federal funds to offset complications associated with COVID-19. The extension to the ConneX pilot program through the end of 2021 allows time for Metro Bus to gather data on the effectiveness and efficiency of the service.

Riders can learn more at <https://ridemetrobus.com/connex/>.

Parked and ready: Trobec’s awaits return to school

In St. Stephen, 80 of the 100 buses in the Trobec’s Bus Service fleet are parked. Students are distance learning. Athletic events are cancelled. After-school activities aren’t happening. The buses are parked.

“They are parked for the foreseeable future,” said Bethany Schubert, vice president of Trobec’s, which serves the 4,100 students of Sartell-St. Stephen School District and 9,900 students of St. Cloud Area School District. St. Cloud also contracts with Palmer Bus Co., Spanier Bus Service and Voigt Bus Service.

Like so many businesses being trounced in the COVID-19 pandemic, bus companies and their drivers are trying to navigate the deep potholes, speed bumps and wash outs that come with safety requirements to slow the spread of COVID-19.

“In August, we said the theme of this year is flexibility. No two days will be the same,” Schubert said. “We have a great team holding this thing together.”

In the fleet, 14 buses are still driving Monday through Friday, twice a day, to drop off breakfast

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Become a Pet Sitter

Caring for pets while earning a living at the same time? That's a win-win. If you are passionate about pets, starting a pet-sitting business may be right for you.

Pet owners — especially those who like to travel — are always looking for the most convenient care for their pets while they are away. While most veterinarians offer great boarding services for pets, many owners decide the home environment leads to a much more relaxed experience for both owner and pet.

That's where you come in. Pet-sitting businesses have expanded in recent years and are being started at a fast pace. Starting one is easy and requires very little initial investment. The marketing to get the word out on your business is the extent of your expenses, especially considering you don't need an expensive storefront or costly equipment to get started. You literally only need an open schedule and a love for animals to launch your business.

WHAT DO PET-SITTERS DO?

Pet-sitters handle a wide range of responsibilities for their pet-owner clients. This can include feeding, walking,

training, playing, bathing, brushing and administering medication. Cleaning up accidents and changing litter boxes can also be part of the job description, as can checking the mail, watering plants and general house upkeep.

You may work out an agreement to either spend the night at your clients' homes or just perform general check-ins throughout the day or night, so you have to be prepared to go with the flow.

HOW MUCH CAN YOU EARN?

As with any entrepreneurial job, you can earn as much as the market bears for your services. You can either charge by the hour or by the day, depending on what makes the most sense for your bottom line.

The National Association of Professional Pet Sitters reports the national average for this type of role is \$16 per visit. Depending on how many clients you can line up during a day, this can lead to a nice payday.



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





contributed photo

Starting Nov. 20, more than 80 of Trobec’s 100 buses are parked and waiting for students to return to school buildings.

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and lunches to students in the St. Cloud district, but each district operates differently.

“While both school districts used to make decisions in tandem,” Schubert said, “the size of the St. Cloud school district is larger, so extra precautions are taken sooner.”

Their needs are also different. Schubert said the company committed to guaranteed pay for their drivers this school year, even if the routes weren’t running and even if they were unsure where the money was coming from.

“This was an easy decision for us to make,” Schubert said. “We can’t just pull a driver off the street. We want drivers here. We want them on our team.”

Becoming a driver takes weeks

of training to become licensed with background checks and other on-boarding requirements.

“Bus drivers are the backbone of getting our kids back into the schools,” Schubert said.

Usually Trobec’s has 120 drivers, but they have 70 this year. Schubert said it’s because the demographic is older. Many drivers still want to work, but they won’t until after COVID-19 is contained.

“They need to protect themselves,” she said.

Lynda Shepard is in her third year at Trobec’s, and she’s remained on board during the pandemic. For 20 years, she was a foster care provider. Then she retired.

“I missed having the children around,” she said. Her sister was a bus driver in Kentucky. “She said this would be perfect for me. And she was right.”

Shepard drives a special education bus. She said she’s missed

seeing the smiles behind the masks students were wearing, but the bigger challenge was helping students understand why they needed to keep their masks on.

“They are constantly wanting to take their masks down,” Shepard said. “We want to keep you safe and healthy, so masks on. Keep yourself safe, and it will help keep others safe. I do repeat that a lot.”

Shepard said students don’t understand what “flatten the curve means, so we need to communicate in a way that doesn’t cause fear.”

When the announcements come that students are moving to distance learning, Shepard feels it.

“I was sad when I realized I don’t have as much time to prepare for this as I thought,” she said.

She hopes students are able

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Opinion

And just like that. It happened to us. COVID-19.

**Heidi L.
Everett**
Editor



My husband and I opted to hunker down on Thanksgiving with our one remaining child at home. No more immediate family. No extended family.

We were doing our part as a precautionary measure to slow the spread of COVID-19 locally.

We informed Goopa that he wouldn't see the grandkids face to face. Told the nieces and siblings no feisty games of 500 or Hand and Foot this year.

FaceTime worked for two of our adult children.

Another met me on the Wobegone Trail for a socially distanced walk.

Then out of nowhere, my husband went down. In bed. High fever. Aches. Pains. Headache. For 13 days.

At the time of this writing, we are nearly three weeks in, and he is finally moving around but still has no sense of smell or taste. And, he said he feels like his head is underwater. He can't drive or have the TV on because it overloads his senses.

We were stunned how COVID-19 hit him because the guy is pretty healthy and prior to COVID-19 was playing hockey three nights a week in his late 40s. We are also not sure how he got it because we've been pretty good about keeping to ourselves, masking up and sanitizing.

The 11-year-old munchkin got it within days and had a deep, painful cough for one day and then was fine.

I was knocked out for 24 hours and then popped out of bed like nothing happened. Again, we were stunned because I rarely make the healthiest of choices, and COVID-19 was mild for me.

And the guy we avoided?

My dad – an 80-year-old with diabetes and heart disease – tested positive this week. It's been brutal with the fevers and labored breathing. He is staying with my sister right now, so we can keep an eye on him and measure his oxygen levels. I lay awake at night staring at my phone, so I don't miss a call saying we have to bring him to an emergency room. Sometimes I cry, worrying that there won't be an emergency bed for him.

During the holidays, COVID-19 exploded in our circle of friends and family. We went from only knowing a few people who had confirmed cases to dozens of people who had confirmed cases.

I'm grateful to the fabulous medical team at CentraCare-Melrose Clinic for the drive-through COVID-19 testing. (And, I'm publicly apologizing for grabbing your arm and flinching when you came at me with the throat swab! Involuntary reflex.)

This illness is fast spreading. It's radically inconsistent in its effect on people. And, it's debilitating and deadly for too many.

We were careful and still got COVID-19. Everyone will likely get COVID-19. The key is to slow the spread, so we can care for those who need it.

Please. Please. Please. Wear your masks. Keep your distance. Wash your hands. Connect with those you love on digital platforms, so you'll be able to hug them when we get through this.

Our view: Commit to fact-finding

In September, the World Health Organization and eight other organizations issued a statement about the infodemic (not the pandemic).

What is an infodemic? An overabundance of information that includes deliberate attempts to share wrong information, to polarize perspective and to advance alternative agendas, among other things.

The statement noted, "the technology we rely on to keep connected and informed is enabling and amplifying an infodemic."

One way technology amplifies the infodemic is through algorithms, a set of instructions technology is programmed to follow to achieve a certain result. For example, if you are online shopping and place an item in your cart, the retailer might have an algorithm that suggests other products. You may see, "People who purchased this item also considered these items."

This example really isn't much different than a server asking if you'd like "fries with that." It's upselling to achieve the goal of more sales.

Upselling also works to advance

ideologies and misinformation. For example, if you are on social media, and you like, comment or share a post that includes something racist, sexist, that is a conspiracy theory or that touts fiction as fact, then algorithms will continue to show you similar content to achieve the goal of more activity. In other words, "People who liked this post also engaged with these other posts." Why? Activity is the basis for advertising revenue.

While you may think the content you are seeing on digital platforms is random, it's not. Every search, swipe and share makes the algorithms you encounter smarter.

The infodemic isn't new to the internet. Similar conversations may have happened with the invention of the printing press and the publishing of the penny press, when news and information of the day could easily be made available to the masses and not rely on oral tradition or the wealthy who could afford to print or purchase books and newspapers.

In the 1980s, another monumental shift occurred when cable television

and the 24-hour news cycle forever changed the way news was presented and consumed. This in turn, led to the repeal of the Fairness Doctrine, which had required media outlets to present unbiased, fair coverage of key news. The repeal was made because people could seek out multiple perspectives from many media outlets, rather than just the big three that had been around for decades.

Furthermore, local news stations are being purchased by large businesses. Sinclair Media Group is one that owns nearly 300 television stations, or more than 70 percent of local news stations, across the country. Sinclair pushes a specific agenda through what is still largely the most trusted news source: local news. Sinclair anchors are told what to say and who to interview.

The bottom line is this: much like the pandemic, we have to take responsibility for our mental and intellectual health in the infodemic. We must commit to seeking out a variety of sources from the right, left, center and non-partisan to determine fact from fiction.

Let's begin the National Restoration

Let's make America good again; let's begin the National Restoration. It's time to restore the forces of goodness, decency and democracy. It's a tall order, but it can happen if we all work hard together to make it so.

Let's restore the checks and balances that help maintain a distribution of power among the three branches of government – executive, legislative, judicial. Founding Father James Madison's checks-and-balances concept is the crucial safeguard against the lopsided misuse of power, against the tentacles of tyranny.

Let's restore policies and enact iron-clad laws to limit presidential power. The dangerous drift toward an "Imperial Presidency" must be stopped because we have seen all too well how the autocratic, reckless exercise of power can veer alarmingly close to tyranny.

Let's restore every word, comma and period of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, which was unwisely weakened by a U.S. Supreme Court decision seven years ago.

Let's further restore election confidence by illegalizing voter-suppression schemes, which have increased drastically in recent years. They include consolidating polling places or moving them to far-flung places, limiting early-voting days and placing hurdles in the way of voters trying to register. Those partisan schemes were and are aimed at limiting voting among targeted demographic groups – mainly Blacks.

Let's restore and/or create national standards for all elections. Wobbly variations of voting processes not only cause intolerable situations such as people having to stand in line all day

**Dennis
Dalman**
Reporter



to vote, but they also undermine the cherished right that every voter, every vote should count. Local jurisdictions would still conduct their own elections, but they would have to adhere to uniform standards.

Let's restore and strengthen the concept of one person-one vote by abolishing the cockeyed electoral-college system. Yes, it's in the U.S. Constitution, but it's one of those ideas whose time has come – to go!

Let's restore the integrity of voting by abolishing the practice of gerrymandering – the skewed partisan re-drawing of U.S. House legislative boundary lines every 10 years based on U.S. Census results. Let's end it. Instead, bipartisan or nonpartisan committees working with precise, objective computer data should determine the boundaries.

Let's further restore election confidence by forming a permanent federal agency to root out and to combat efforts by foreign countries to meddle in democratic processes. That insidious cyber war can undermine our trust in the voting process and faith in our democracy.

Let's restore, tighten and enforce campaign-finance laws so corporations and the wealthiest cannot dictate, through their congressional puppets, the direction and circumstances of everybody's daily lives.

Let's restore confidence in our institutions, forbidding the politicizing or weaponizing of them. We have seen with creeping dread how they can be manipulated by the impulsive whims of corrupt movers and shakers.

Let's restore all laws and regulations that protect our environment, and let's rejoin the Paris Climate Accords so all countries can work together fast and furious to slow and stop apocalyptic climate change.

Let's restore our mutual alliances with friendly countries.

Let's restore detailed plans for comprehensive immigration reform and reunite children who were viciously snatched from parents at the U.S.-Mexican border. And fully reinstate the "Dreamers" Act.

Let's restore adherence to facts, evidence, truths and science while rejecting lunatic conspiracy theories and bloated lies that proliferate on social media.

With renewed commitment, let's restore five decades of civil-rights laws so they truly do, in fact, make possible equal opportunities for Blacks, who should not have to live in fear of hate crimes and white supremacists.

Finally, let's fully restore the Affordable Care Act and work hard to make it much better and more efficient for one and all.

If we Americans, through visionary leaders and our legislators (the ones who are true public servants), insist upon those restorations/reforms, we can help restore national unity and a renewed trust in our institutions so that ours will become a life-enhancing nation for all of us. And then, at long last, America will be restored as a major leader of *the Free World*.

Have an opinion? Share it: news@thenewsleaders.com

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to go back to school and looks forward to seeing them first thing in the morning and at the end of their day.

“This is our normal lives right

now,” Shepard said. “We have to decide how we are going to let this affect our daily lives, our work, our family and our kids. It’s hard.”

For Schubert’s part in these uncertain times, she’s still recruiting drivers. Right now if everyone was back in school on a regular schedule, she wouldn’t

have enough drivers to cover the routes. And, Trobec’s is willing to pay for it “from day one starting with training,” she said.

“We weathered the storm in the spring,” she said. “We need to hunker down, and we’ll come through on the right side in 2021.”

Religious, political reasons for Trump's defeat

Kent Nelson, Sartell

I am 78 years old and have learned a few lessons throughout the years. One of the most important includes the following: never argue politics, never argue religion and never argue with a drunk. Ignoring my own advice, I would like to propose the following arguments as to why Trump lost the election. Let’s start with religion.

God is omniscient and omnipotent we are taught. There is also the idea of the will of God. This suggests God can judge and determine cosmic outcomes. Sixty percent of the residents in Stearns County voted for him. Coincidentally, 45 percent of the residents in Stearns County are Catholics bound by the teachings of “pray, pay and obey.” This aligns with his demand for loyalty and obedience to him. Now, Trump’s lists of failures include the fol-

lowing: he lies and has a total disregard for the law, bungled the covid pandemic, behaved poorly toward women and minorities, disrespected the presidency, insulted world leaders, cozied up to dictators and ignored the teachings of Jesus by insulting and demeaning people. The obvious conclusion to the mess Trump has created is God in his/her infinite wisdom is now punishing the United States with Covid-19 and has caused his defeat for re-election. If one believes in religion, then one has to believe this is God’s will.

Now let’s move on to politics. He and his lawyers have lawsuits rejected, proposed outlandish claims of fraud and conspiracy theories of dead people voting, rigged voting machines, fraudulent mail-in ballots and rejected the results of the elections all without proof. As of this writing, Biden has won 290 electoral votes to Trump’s 232 and won the popular vote by more than five million votes.

Now for a secular reason. The scientific principal of Occam’s Razor can explain his loss. It states, “The best explanation of an event is the one that is the simplest, using the fewest assumptions or hypotheses.” Judging by his loss, it’s plain the simple reason people didn’t vote for Trump is they didn’t like him or his behavior.

The two aforementioned reasons for Trump’s failure has little to do with reality or have any truth behind them. They are mere speculations that even a person who has had too much to drink couldn’t accept. So there you have it: don’t argue religion, politics or with a drunk. But, there is an abiding reason for his failure that combines both religion and a secular explanation. And after four years of Trump, his loss is best explained by Martin Luther King Jr.’s declaration that, “The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.”

PUBLIC NOTICE

STATE OF MINNESOTA
COUNTY OF STEARNS

DISTRICT COURT
SEVENTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT
Court File No.: 73-PR-20-8025

In Re: Estate of
Thomas E. Schoenfelder,
Decedent.

NOTICE OF AND ORDER FOR HEARING ON PETITION FOR PROBATE OF WILL AND APPOINTMENT OF PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE AND NOTICE TO CREDITORS

It is Ordered and Notice is given that on Jan. 8, 2021 at 8:45 a.m., a hearing will be held in this Court at St. Cloud, Minnesota, on a petition for the formal probate of an instrument purporting to be the decedent’s Will dated Nov. 12, 1999 and for the appointment of Julia Simard whose address is 38001 Anchor Point Road, Crosslake, MN 56442 as personal representative of the decedent’s estate in an unsupervised administration.

Any objections to the petition must be raised at the hearing or filed with the Court prior to the hearing. If the petition is proper and no objections are filed or raised, the personal representative will be appointed with the full power to administer the decedent’s estate, including the power to collect all assets; pay all legal debts, claims, taxes, and expenses; sell real and personal property; and do all necessary acts for the decedent’s estate.

Notice is further given that, subject to Minn. Stat. § 524.3-801, all creditors having claims against the decedent’s estate are required to present the claims to the personal representative or to the Court within four (4) months after the date of this notice or the claims will be barred.

Dated 12/3/20	BY THE COURT /s/ William J. Cashman Judge of District Court
Dated: 12/3/20	/s/ Taylor Jude Deputy Court Clerk
Breen & Person, Ltd. J. Brad Person, MN #0296302 124 N. Sixth St., Box 472 Brainerd, MN 56401 Telephone: (218) 828-1248 Facsimile: (218) 828-4832 Email: brad@breenandperson.com	Publish: Dec. 11 & 25, 2020

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.

Contact organizations directly to find out about COVID-related changes.

- Monday, Dec. 14**
Sartell City Council, 6 p.m., City Hall, 125 Pinecone Road N.
- Tuesday, Dec. 15**
Memory Writers group develops topics and turns in stories, 10 a.m., Stearns History Museum, 235 33rd Ave. S, St Cloud.
- 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.

- Sartell Chamber of Commerce**, 11:30 a.m., Community Center, 850 19th St. S., Sartell. 320-258.6061. info@sartell-chamber.com.
- Holistic Moms Network**, 7-8:30 p.m., Good Earth Co-op, 2010 Veterans Drive, St. Cloud. 320-252-2489.
- National Alliance on Mental Health**, 7-8:30 p.m., Calvary Community Church, 1200 Roosevelt Road, St. Cloud. The group helps parents raising a child with mental illness learn coping skills and develop problem-solving skills. 320-654-1259.

- Wednesday, Dec. 16**
SALT (Seniors and Law Enforcement Together), 9 a.m., Sartell Police Department, 310 Second St. S., Sartell.
- Advocates for Independence**, 2-4 p.m., Independent Lifestyles, 215 Benton Drive N., Sauk Rapids. 320-529-9000.
- Breakfast Club**, 9-10 a.m., Stearns History Museum, 235 33rd Ave. S. Free for members; nominal fee for nonmembers. 320-253-8424.

- Thursday, Dec. 17**
MOPS, Mothers of Preschoolers monthly social, 6:30-8:30 p.m., Celebration Lutheran Church, 1500 Pinecone Road N., Sartell.
- Holiday food and wine pairing event**, sponsored by Sartell Chamber, 7-8 p.m. on Zoom. Contact nikki@sartellchamber.com to register.
- Saturday, Dec. 19**
Community Meal, 11:30 a.m.-12:45 p.m., First United Methodist Church, 1107 Pinecone Road S., Sartell. Free.

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Happy Holidays!

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