

# Reaching Everybody! Newsleaders

Friday, Jan. 22, 2021  
Volume 26, Issue 2  
Est. 1995

## Town Crier

### VITA program seeks volunteers

Tri-CAP's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program offers free tax preparation and e-filing services to low and moderate income households. No experience needed. Volunteers receive free training to become IRS Certified and prepare basic tax returns in local communities, which is also a great asset on a resume. For CPAs, the volunteer time also provides continuing professional education credits from the IRS. The Tri-CAP VITA sites are located in St. Cloud and Waite Park. Training begins mid-January and the season ends in April 15.

- Volunteer Positions Available:
- Tax Site Assistant:
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For more information, call 320-251-1612 or visit [www.tricap.org](http://www.tricap.org) to submit an application.

### Habitat for Humanity needs snow removal

Central Minnesota Habitat for Humanity needs volunteers to shovel snow on properties that Habitat owns but there is not a homeowner on the property yet. Locations are in the St. Cloud area. Volunteers are asked to adopt a property and shovel as needed through the winter. The time is flexible for the volunteer's schedule, but the shovel needs to be done in a timely manner after a snowfall. For more information, please contact Jess at 320-248-8256 or [jdahl@cmhfh.org](mailto:jdahl@cmhfh.org).

### 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. Thank you to our recent contributors! Any amount is greatly appreciated.

### List your event in our calendar

If your group or organization is active again after being idle because of coronavirus, send us your event information for our calendar. Send information including time, date, place and a short explanation to [news@the-newsleaders.com](mailto:news@the-newsleaders.com).

**INSERT:**  
City of St. Stephen  
newsletter



photo by Mike Knaak

**K through 5 students return to in-person learning**  
Riverview Intermediate School Principal Zachary Dingmann welcomes students arriving for class on Jan. 19. Kindergarten through fifth-grade students returned to in-person learning on Jan. 11 while middle and high school students continue classes in the hybrid model while COVID-19 guidelines are in place.

## High school theater students perform via Zoom

by Mike Knaak  
[news@thenewsleaders.com](mailto:news@thenewsleaders.com)

The show must go on – even in the time of COVID-19 – for the theater students at Sartell High School.

The students will present virtually four short shows, three of them written by current or former students, at 7 p.m. Thursday-Saturday, Jan. 28-30, streamed on the school district's YouTube channel.

In place of a one-act play usually performed this time of

year, the theater students have been rehearsing and recording the four productions via Zoom. Director Kelli Killmer planned to produce one show. When many students auditioned, she decided to add three 10-minute productions written by students.

"I appreciate the technology we have to do something with theater when we can't be in person," Killmer said.

Instead of a large stage where actors can move, stand and sit, Zoom limits the actors

to a small square showing the body only from the shoulders up.

"It's been a whole new world," Killmer said. "I usually tell actors on stage to 'be big with body motions.' Now we have to stay in the box."

The Zoom format changed the way the actors interpret their characters, they said.

Ethan Neid said he's focusing on upper body movements and facial expressions.

"I use my hands more to show the character," Brooke

## Spring sessions prepare parents, little learners for classroom

by Mike Knaak  
[news@thenewsleaders.com](mailto:news@thenewsleaders.com)

It's time for the Sartell-St. Stephen school district's youngest learners and their parents to sign up for classes that will prepare them for pre-school and kindergarten next fall.

Three Early Childhood Family Education classes are open for registration and sessions begin in February and March.

Sessions for next fall's kindergartners prepare children and parents for what they will find in the classroom. The classes model routines for what happens in a kindergarten.

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Eibensteiner said. She's getting used to seeing herself in the Zoom screen as she performs.

"Interaction is harder," Salma Maray said. "We're so used to feeding off others' energy. It's harder to do that through a screen. I'm more focused on every little thing I do."

The actors perform from their homes with directors, lighting, costume and makeup crew coaching virtually. The technical crew prepared a PowerPoint offering tips for makeup

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## Building history for today's progress

by Heidi L. Everett  
[editor@thenewsleaders.com](mailto:editor@thenewsleaders.com)

As a little girl, Shannon Wiger wanted to be an archaeologist.

She grew up on a farm in Marshall, and every summer a team of archaeology students from the University of Minnesota would journey to the farm fields to dig. They would uncover arrowheads and other artifacts that helped tell the history of the area, she said.

Wiger herself is uncovering artifacts these days. She has a tin of chewing tobacco from 1888 with tobacco still in it, a war bond

poster from World War 1, handwritten notes and tools dating back more than 130 years.

She found them dropped in the floor and tucked in the walls of the Bank of St. Cloud building in downtown St. Cloud. The structure, originally built in 1888, is one of seven historic renovation projects Wiger has been a part of in the St. Cloud area.

"Nearly every day that we were demoing, we found something hidden beneath years of renovations," she said.

Wiger works full time as director of business devel-

opment for the law firm of Moss and Barnett where she splits her time between the St. Cloud and Minneapolis offices.

Saving old buildings is both a hobby and a passion for this Sartell resident.

### Salvage, showcase the past

"I have found that my work on these historic projects brings together three things that I love, history, creativity and doing something for my community," she said. "I know if these forgotten spaces are not saved now, they will be

Building • page 4



contributed photo

**Restoring old buildings is a family affair for Shannon Wiger of Sartell. Pictured with Anne, 4, Owen and Jack, 9, and husband, Nick, at their latest project in St. Joseph.**



PUBLIC NOTICE

SAUK RIVER WATERSHED  
ONE WATERSHED ONE PLAN  
PLANNING PARTNERSHIP

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that the Policy Committee of the Sauk River Watershed One Watershed One Plan Planning Partnership (Douglas County, Douglas Soil and Water Conservation District/SWCD, Pope County, Pope SWCD, Sauk River Watershed District, Stearns County, Stearns SWCD, Todd County and Todd SWCD) will hold a public hearing at 6:30 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 28, 2021. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic and current Emergency Executive Orders, the hearing will be held remotely by telephone and video teleconference. The purpose of the hearing is to consider and take comments on the Sauk River Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan, a 10-year plan to address water quality and quantity, soil conservation, project and program implementation and funding for such activities within the Sauk River watershed.

This 10-year plan proposes to replace the existing management plans for each of the partner organizations. The plan summarizes existing scientific data about the water resources within the watershed, and proposes implementation projects, potential regulatory actions, data collection needs and the creation of a watershed-wide citizenship and targeted civic engagement and outreach program. The plan states quantifiable goals for the partners, with a vision statement of, “A resilient landscape that balances a healthy ecosystem with a vibrant economy for generations to come.” This planning

effort was completed through the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) One Watershed One Plan program. The plan will provide the partners with Watershed Based Funding through BWSR, while also allowing the partners to apply for additional state and federal grant and loan funds.

The Sauk River Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan, public comments received and responses to those public comments are available for review on the Sauk River Watershed District website: [www.srwdmn.org](http://www.srwdmn.org) in the Announcements section.

To attend and participate in the public hearing, you may join by computer:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89478224502?pwd=QzF6a-jFKUVJjYjZxVGliQ3FsTTlnUT09>

or by phone:

1.312.626.6799

Upon joining the meeting, you will be asked to enter the Meeting ID and passcode listed below. Once that information has been entered, you will be placed in a waiting room until the meeting starts.

Meeting ID: 894 7822 4502

Passcode: 546857

For additional information, please contact Sarah Boser, plan coordinator, at 320-352-2231 or [sarah@srwdmn.org](mailto:sarah@srwdmn.org).

Chuck Uphoff, policy committee chairman

Publish: Jan. 8 & 22, 2021

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Sessions

from front page

ten classroom and introduce kindergarten skills. Activities focus on the alphabet, literacy, songs and motor skills.

Two kindergarten series are scheduled for children 4 or 5 years old. Parents can choose 12 sessions starting on Wednesday, Feb. 17, from 5:30-7:30 p.m. or sessions starting on Monday, Feb. 22, from 5:30-7:30 p.m.

Two other early children programs are also open for registration.

Terrific Tots is for children 24-35 months old. The weekly sessions start on Tuesday, Feb. 16, and run for 10 weeks from 5:30-7 p.m.

Family Class is for children from birth to 5 years old. Sessions begin Thursday, March 4, and run for 10 weeks from 5:30-7 p.m.

All the classes take place at Oak Ridge Early Learning Center. More information and registration materials are available at the district’s website, [www.sartell.k12.mn.us/ECFE](http://www.sartell.k12.mn.us/ECFE).

Parents join students during the sessions, giving a parent a chance to see how the child plays, problem-solves, creates and learns, according to Julia Bjerke, pre-kindergarten through second-grade instructional coach and early childhood coordinator.

“This is a chance for parents to connect and have focused and intentional play and discovery with their child,” she said. “Parents can see a child’s strengths.” Bjerke emphasized the ses-



photo by Mike Knaak

**Blake Theisen (left) and Simon Grover play an alphabet game during a kindergarten preparation session at Oak Ridge Early Learning Center.**

sions are also a time when parents can connect with each other and begin relationships with other families that may last through their child’s entire school years.

Orientation and registration 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 next year’s students will take place virtually instead of in person.

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.

The programs will start with a half-hour presentation

to introduce staff and programs and 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.

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.

Parents can also register for Early Childhood Screening on the website. Screenings are free. The screening appointment takes about an hour and evaluates social/emotional, language, motor and cognitive skills as well as height, weight, vision and hearing. Screening is designed for children between ages 3 and 5, and it’s required before entering kindergarten.

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if you would like to be in the business directory.

Sartell-St. Stephen • St. Joseph

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**Newsleaders**

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[www.thenewsleaders.com](http://www.thenewsleaders.com)

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Newsleader staff members have the responsibility to report news fairly and accurately and are accountable to the public. Readers who feel we’ve fallen short of these standards are urged to call the Newsleader office at 320-363-7741. If matters cannot be resolved locally, readers are encouraged to take complaints to the Minnesota News Council, an independent agency designed to improve relationships between the public and the media and resolve conflicts. The council office may be reached at 612-341-9357.

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# Theater

from front page

and costumes. Neid recorded the actors from the Zoom sessions and edited the video for streaming.

The four shows were either designed or adapted for the Zoom environment, so they are heavy on snappy dialogue, facial expressions and simple costumes with no need for elaborate sets.

The four shows and the student playwrights are:

“Zoom Newscast” by Ethan Neid (class of 2021); “The Bachelorettes’ Bachelor” by Brooke Eibensteiner (class of 2021); “Bunco Night at the End of the World” by Megan Mechelke (class of 2019); and “A Virtual Whodunnit” by Flip Kobler

and Cindy Marcus (presented with permission from Dramatic Publishing Co.).

Student directors are Ethan Neid (“Zoom Newscast”) and Kate Manning (“A Virtual Whodunnit”)

Crew members are Bailey Guggisberg (lighting), Eva Hesse (costumes), Emmerson Hewett (sound), Olivia McDonough (hair and makeup) Ethan Neid (video editing) and Annika Orjansen (stage manager).

Actors are Lance Anderson, Sarah Avery, Olivia Binsfeld, Travis Bunkers, Brooke Eibensteiner, Elliott Hammer, Tierney Hammer, Eva Hesse, Maxx Jokela, Sophie Klemp, Kate Manning, Salma Maray, Olivia McDonough, Ethan Neid, Libby Nelson, Lindsey Nelson, Josh Nguyen, Jack Pesta, Hannah Rivard and Leighton Stebbins.



photo by Mike Knaak

The cast of the Sartell High School production of “A Virtual Whodunnit” rehearse via Zoom.

# Oops! Santa makes return trip for Ben Hengel

by Dennis Dalman  
news@thenewsleaders.com

This Christmas, Santa Claus arrived late for 8-year-old Ben Hengel of Sartell – three weeks late, to be exact.

But when Santa finally “delivered,” on Jan. 15, Hengel was all smiles and wide-eyed when he saw the return address on a Christmas package from the mailbox. In the upper-left corner was written “Santa Claus.”

It was then that Ben knew Santa must have received his “Dear Santa” letter, after all.

In November, David and Jenn Hengel decided to put up a Christmas tree early because son Ben is so wild about Christmas. He loves everything about it – the lights, the songs, the special snuggle-up times at home when it’s snowing outside, the eager expectation of a visit from Santa Claus.

In mid-December, the Hengel family decided to attend the night-time Country Lights Festival in Sartell, an extravagant, dazzling lights display all around Lake Francis, a large holding pond by the community center. So first, they bundled up – parents; son Jack, 10; and twins Ben and Natalie, 8. The children brought with them the

“Dear Santa” letters they intended to send from a letter box at the lights festival. In the breezy, chilly air, the family walked around the lake on a path, enjoying the spectacular displays. At the postal drop box, Jack and Natalie slipped in their Santa letters. But Ben, reaching in his coat pockets, came up empty.

“I can’t find my letter!” he said.

The family walked back around the lake, seeking the truant letter, but they had no luck. The letter was gone, maybe flung out onto the lake by the breeze. Ben’s parents told him not to fret, that Santa would be sure to bring him presents, letter or no letter.

Along came Christmas Day. Jack opened a box containing a chemistry set and telescope and Natalie received her longed-for karaoke machine. Santa had granted their wishes. Ben liked his gifts too, but they weren’t the ones he’d written about to Santa, the ones he’d mentioned in the lost letter.

Flash forward to Jan. 15, the day Santa dropped off Ben’s gift in the mailbox. He opened the present and there were three hockey pucks, some hockey-stick tape and hockey wax – just the items he’d requested

from Santa.

There was a letter from Santa to Ben inside the box:

“I was told by one of my helpers that your letter was dropped near a lake with beautiful Christmas lights. I read your letter and saw that you were on the ‘Good List’ this year! I’ve got you a gift that got missed in my sleigh. I hope you can still use them. Enjoy! Hope you had a Merry Christmas. Have a Happy New Year. Have fun this year! – From Santa”

The entire family was just as surprised as Ben was when that present arrived, Jenn said in an interview the next day with the Sartell Newsleader.

She was very moved by such an unexpected gift of kindness from a total stranger.

“We had no clue, but we figured someone obviously had to have found that letter. And whoever it was took the time and expense to make a little boy so happy. It just goes to show people are absolutely capable of making other people’s lives better, even in small ways.”

Jenn said she will never forget the mysterious Santa package.

“It will always be a reminder that we all have the power to make somebody’s day happy.”

Gift • page 8



contributed photo

Ben Hengel unpacks the hockey-related gifts he received in a late-surprise package from Santa Claus.

## VIRTUAL CONNECTIONS WITH LSS COMPANION SERVICES

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# Building

from front page

gone forever – and along with it, the history and stories of that time.”

She started in historic renovation nearly a decade ago on the former Davidson Opera House, St. Cloud, by helping a colleague identify historic tax credits and better understand how those tax

Wiger noted you often just cross your fingers and do it, knowing you will have to solve problems as you go. But the risk is worth it for several reasons.

“The amount of waste that goes into tearing down buildings is terrible for the environment,” she said. “And beyond that, many of them, with some care and investment, can see another 100 years of life. For me, it is so rewarding to see these buildings that were so foundational to our

start to finish. It’s also her favorite project, so far.

“The Bank of St. Cloud building is roughly 19,000 square feet and was built as the first bank in central Minnesota. When we acquired it, it was in a state of disrepair on the edge of being saved. It needed a lot of work,” Wiger said.

The historical significance of the building demanded it be saved.

“That’s the building where so much of St. Cloud began,” she explained. “It was a bank. People came here from all over the world with dreams of starting a new and better life. Business loans were provided. It was a place of great excitement and hope. Today, nearly all of the vaults, original walls and pillars still remain. The signature of the bank founder is still on the stained glass window, likely from the day it was delivered in 1889. You can stand in that space and feel the energy, hope and sacrifice of everything that went on in those early years.”

The building also was a place of stress and sadness, especially when it failed during the Great Depression, Wiger said.

A woman who stopped by the construction site one day told Wiger of how the bank used to serve chocolate milk to the kids.

“And she remembers distinctly the day the bank failed and what a shock it was to everyone,” Wiger said. “Nobody thought it was possible.”

When the bank failed, the Whitney Building next door, which Wiger renovated this past year, was a place of hope. The founder of the Whitney Lands Co., A.G. Whitney, made countless loans to local farmers in an effort to help them save their

farms from foreclosure during the depression.

“We’ve found thank-you letters from families who kept their farms because of A.G. Whitney,” Wiger noted.

When Wiger takes on a renovation, her goal is to salvage and showcase what made the building great in the first place.

“I think some of the most beautiful spaces are 100 years old,” she said. “Great design does not go out of style, like hardwood floors, white trim and high ceilings.”

Every time she looks at a building, she tries to determine which features were original and historically significant. Maybe it’s the floors. Maybe the ceiling height. Maybe there’s an exterior window that was boarded up.

“You’ve got to figure out what was there first and then piece the building’s story back together,” she said.

She leans on local museums, the community and social media to share the renovation story and encourage people to share their memories and photos of the space.

“The collection of stories, photos and memories is a treasure when complete,” Wiger said. “I feel a responsibility to document that and share it.”

The goal, then, is to return the building as close to the original design as possible.

Character and colors are key features to consider.

“Ugly paint and terrible design choices often cost the same as timeless design choices,” Wiger said.



contributed photo

**On historic renovations, Shannon Wiger collects artifacts found in floors and walls, like these tobacco tins from the late 1800s with tobacco in them.**

storing at the corner of Minnesota Street and College Avenue in St. Joseph.

“Historical records say this building was built in 1900 and was Frank X. Timmer’s Saloon and General Store,” Wiger said. But she’s quick to note that during demo in December, she found a brick with 1898 carved in it.

Based on photos, Wiger believes the upper floors were added much later.

St. Joseph is dear to Wiger. Her family visited often while she was growing up. They attended church in the chapel and had a special relationship with one of the Sisters from St. Benedict’s Monastery, Cathan Culhane. Wiger also graduated from the College of St. Benedict with a Spanish degree and economics minor.

“I love St. Joseph,” she said. “When I’m there, I feel like I’m stepping back in time. Everyone says hello and waves. We play in

**Building • page 9**

## Wanted: School Bus Drivers


Sartell-St. Stephen ISD 748 is currently hiring a school bus driver. The Bus Driver is responsible to transport students to and from school safely and efficiently, which may include daily routes, field trips, extra-curricular trips and school-sponsored events.

Pay starting at \$23.75/hr.

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## Live Presentation - Q&A

YouTube LIVE parent information night  
6 p.m. Monday, Jan. 25  
2021-22 School year • 3- and 4-year-olds  
Students must be 3 or 4 by Sept. 1, 2021

Links and class offerings available after Jan. 11 on our website or pick-up at the Oak Ridge Early Learning Center office.  
If you are unable to attend this event, the YouTube recording will be posted to our website after Jan. 26

## Sartell.k12.mn.us/orelc

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## Tri-CAP

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We’re seeking a leader to be responsible for day-to-day management of our agency’s family resources department, administering the asset development, workforce development & housing stability programs. This position leads a department with 12+ staff and budgets totaling over \$1 million annually. This person has integrity, creativity, passion, resourcefulness & a commitment to serve others. Must be highly motivated self-starter who is organized, able to prioritize tasks & is highly skilled at bringing out the best in a team. \$61,000+ annually plus excellent benefits.

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# Organize your Finances

Your debts don't disappear at the time of death. In many cases, your family may be held responsible for any outstanding obligations. When planning your estate, spend time organizing your finances to ensure an executor knows what you owe and how to make the payments.

A life insurance policy means more than leaving something behind for your loved ones, it should also cover funeral expenses and fund your financial responsibilities. Determine the amount you owe and adjust your plan with an insurance agent.

Your family members will be dealing with grief at the time of your death, what you do to ease the stress before the fact, can make it easier for them to adjust.

**IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS**

You should print out clear documentation of life insurance policies and retirement plans, including pensions and annuities. Keep them in a safe place and disclose the location with loved ones. At the time of death, they will require these forms to ensure your contribution is dispersed to the right person, rather than going unclaimed and ending up with the state.

It's a good idea to give copies to your estate planner, attorney or even in a safe-deposit box. These documents should be easily accessible when they are needed.

**GATHERING DEBTS**

Another set of documents you will need to disclose with your estate executor is a list of your financial responsibilities. These include mortgages, vehi-



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cle commitments and credit card debts. Keep your account information in a secure and organized portfolio to make payments easier.

Don't forget to update balances regularly to keep numbers accurate.

A great expert to have when gathering your debts is a financial advisor. Together, you can set up beneficiaries for retirement plans, allow family to access accounts and even create savings strategies for your surviving family and finances.

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Leaving behind a gift to a cause is a way to show thanks and remind people of something that was important to you. It also is a great example for your loved ones of how important supporting charitable organizations is to the future of our country and citizens.

Don't be afraid to share your intentions for a donation with your family members involved in your estate planning.

They may choose to become volunteers or find they share the same passion as you. Bonding over charitable causes is a great way to build a stronger relationship.

## GETTING STARTED?

If you are taking the first steps in creating your estate plan and will, the process of adding a charity as a beneficiary is simple. A qualified attorney can help find the necessary information required to include them in your plan.

According to the Protective Life Insurance Company, here are a few facts about the charity you will need to know.

- The official name of the charity;
- Its current address; and
- The organization's registered charity number.

These requisites are important to ensure your donation will find its way into the right hands.

## UPDATING AN EXISTING WILL

Making changes to your will is easy with the help of a professional. Some experts recommend creating a new will to

include your chosen charity.

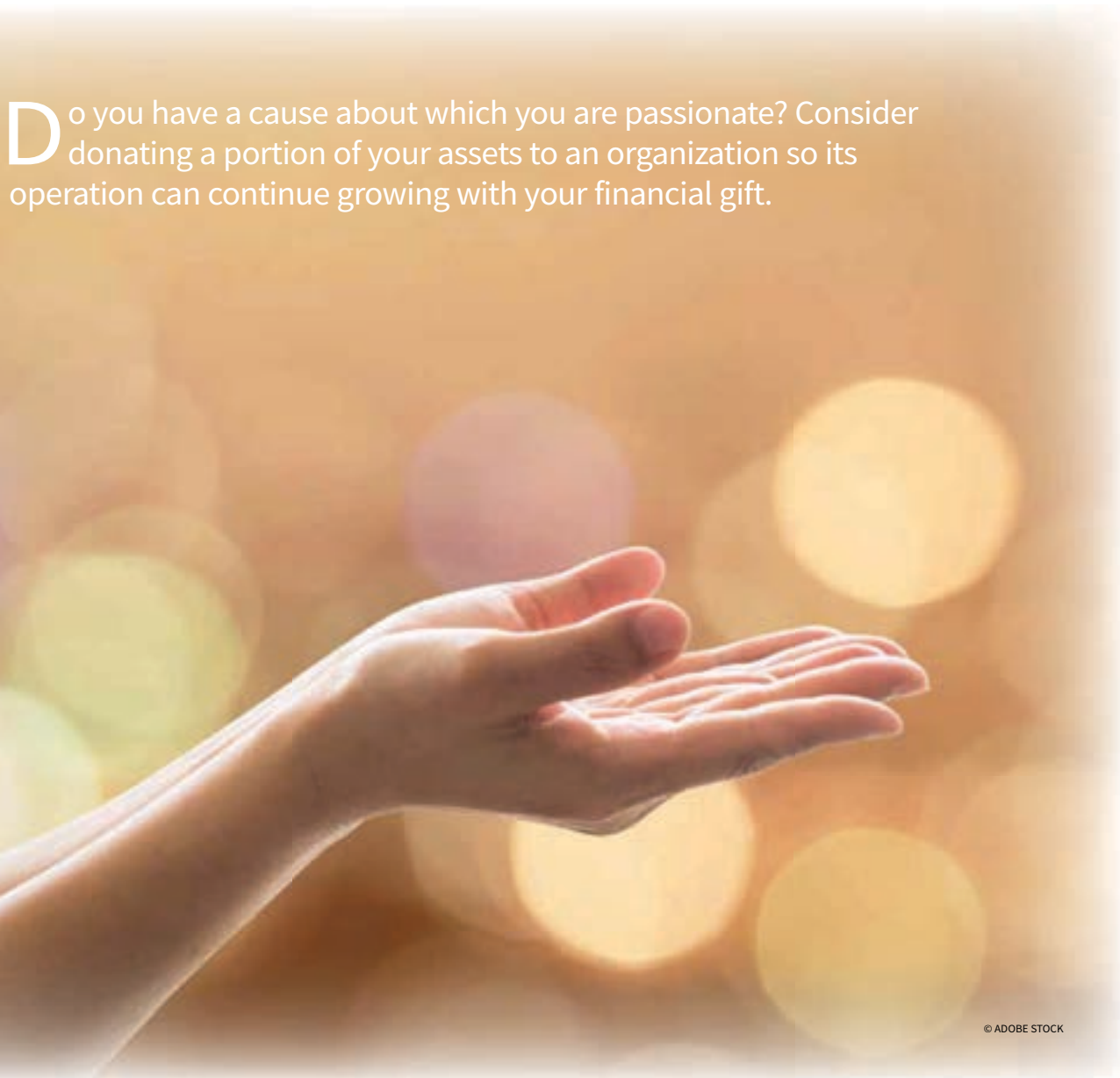
When a new document is developed, a previous will becomes null and void.

A codicil is a legal instrument made to modify an earlier

will. Adding a charity by utilizing a codicil is typically a simple process.

However, when you make major adjustments such as altering a power of attorney or

renaming a living trust, it can be more economical to simply redraft a will with the new information. Your legal advisor will guide you toward the best move for your changes.



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# Buying Funeral Insurance

Ensuring the cost of a funeral is covered before the time of death will guarantee your family is not left with the financial burden. If your life insurance policy doesn't cover the service expenses, it's refreshing to find a third party who does. Check with your insurance agent.

According to the National Funeral Directors Association, the average cost of a funeral with viewing and burial services was \$7,360 in 2017. Consider the burden loved ones face if there is no policy in place to cover the cost. This expense can cripple the financial security of family members, especially if they are responsible for other unresolved debts.

### BURIAL INSURANCE

This important type of insurance can sometimes be offered by licensed funeral homes in your area. However, the Insurance Information Institute says that under most state laws, a policy must be acquired through a broker or agent at an insurance agency. Be sure to shop around for the best policy available based on your age, health conditions and coverages.

Burial life insurance immediately pays your beneficiary at the time of death. They are free to disperse the money as they wish. Most find peace of mind by covering funeral expenses, medical bills or outstanding debts which may be owed.

### PRE-NEED FUNERAL INSURANCE

Much like burial insurance, this policy is in place to prepay for foreseen costs like burial or cremation services, funeral

arrangements and church donations. The main difference in pre-need insurance is that the available funds are given to the funeral service provider you choose. Understanding the finances are directly going

toward the right outlets is an important aid for family members who are grieving. When shopping for policies, look for services who offer a locked in price. This protects you against the rising costs of expenses by

guaranteeing your service will be priced at today's standards.

### DISCUSSING WITH FAMILY

Talking about death with loved ones is never easy.

However, being honest about your final service expectations helps everyone be prepared when the time comes.

Be open to their questions, advice and listen to their feelings during the conversation.



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## People

**Bryce Olson**, a 2014 Sartell High School alumni, recently with a bachelor's degree in nursing from South Dakota State University, Brookings. He will be working as an RN for Allina Health in Minneapolis.

**Tessa Hager** and **Daymia Martin**, both of Sartell, were recently named to the fall dean's list for achieving a GPA of 3.5 or higher from Alexandria Technical & Community College.

**Emma Zenzen**, college of education & human sciences, was recently named to the fall 2020 dean's list at University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. Her academic performance has been outstanding, earning a minimum semester GPA of 3.70 with a minimum of 12 completed credits.

**Brooke Walters**, a chemistry major from Sartell, has earned a spot on the fall dean's list for achieving a GPA of 3.5 or higher at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls.

**Tina Hengel**, of Sartell and Premier Real Estate Services, has been selected from nearly 250,000 U.S. volunteers to earn Junior Achievement's top volunteer recognition, the Bronze Leadership Award. JA volunteers play a key role in bringing entrepreneurship, financial literacy and work-readiness programs to life. By sharing their personal and professional experiences and skills with students, volunteers provide positive role models and help students make the connection between what they learn in school and life after graduation. Hengel has been a volunteer since 2013, a regional board member since 2014, and has held leadership positions.

**Thomas Connolly** of Sartell has recently been named to the fall president's list at Gonzaga University, Spokane, Washington. Students must earn a 3.85 to 4.0 grade-point average to be listed.



Hengel

**Five Sartell students** have recently been named to the fall dean's list at Minnesota State University Moorhead. Students must maintain a 3.25 or higher grade point average and carry 12 graded credits to qualify for the honor. They and their majors are as follows: **Emma Gent**, art education; **Kristina Kirick**, finance; **Briana Kowalke**, biology, life science education; **Rebecca Loehrer**, nursing and **Grace Middendorf**, health and medical sciences.

## Santa

from page 3

The Hengel children are being home-schooled, and it's working well.

"The three of them, being home so much, have developed a very close friendship," Jenn said.

Their parents are fortunate that they can work from

home and help educate the children. David owns All Seasons Small Engine Repair, and is a volunteer Sartell firefighter; Jenn is vice president of project management at Central Minnesota Credit Union.

contributed photo

**The Hengel family of Sartell** includes parents David and Jenn and (from left to right) Jack, Natalie and Ben.



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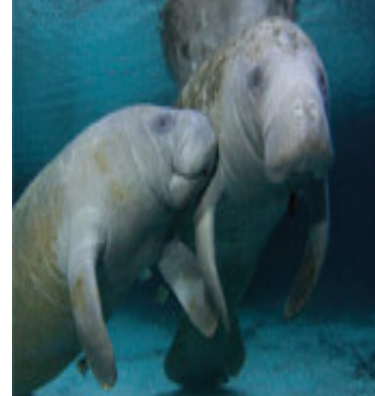
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# Building

from page 4

the parks, go for bike rides and get ice cream.”

Wiger had been looking for a project in St. Joseph for many years. One day she was in the park with her kids and noticed the business on the corner was closing. She ran across the street to get in touch with the current owner, and talked about her passion for historic renovation and love of St. Joseph.

“Initially, he didn’t want to sell the building, but he changed his mind,” she said “It was fate and meant to happen. I just happened to be there at the right time.”

In fact, the previous owner of the building is completing the electrical upgrades, and his brother is leading the construction.

Her kids are excited about the project too. Twins Jack and Owen, 9, and little Anne, 4, have been hard at work with the demolition since December.

“It is important to me that my whole family is involved. I want my children to feel the reward of hard work, and also value the people and places that came before them,” she said. “My kids go to town with sledgehammers, pulling through five layers of past renovations. Anne makes piles and then carts her little pieces out to the dumpster. They love St.

Jo(seph), too.”

A few weeks ago, Wiger and her family were digging into the tear-down of the front awning and found elements of the original storefront. The discovery was exciting.

“It was unexpected. Some of the glass was still in place,” Wiger said.

Wiger plans to remove layers of stucco and brick and finish the building exterior with wood siding and windows more typical of the era.

“This really is the corner of Main and Main, and this building sets the tone as you turn downtown. I want it to be perfect,” Wiger said. “Most people would’ve just bulldozed this building, and there were days when I wondered if we would have to do that. But we’re going to take it back and make it stunning. The uglier the building, the more I want to tackle it. And this one is really ugly.”

In addition to breathing new life into old buildings, Wiger appreciates meeting other people who are equally enthusiastic about historic renovation, like Stearns History Museum employees who help her track down information about the buildings or craftspeople who specialize in plaster restoration or tuck-pointing brick.

“These are the true artists,” she said.

Wiger also is grateful for a shared love of St. Joseph.

“I can’t even describe how

great working with the city of St. Jo(seph) has been,” she said. “It’s so easy, and they are all focused on doing things right and finding creative solutions that drive economic development, yet preserve the charm of St. Jo(seph). “They’ve all been so enthusiastic.”

Wiger has had a lot of interest in the corner building and plans to announce a new business there soon that will bring new jobs to St. Joseph.

“It’s a really special time to join in with the momentum to make St. Jo(seph) grow,” Wiger said. “I hope that in 100 years someone values this work, our collective history and continues this work to care for these important spaces and the history that goes along with them.”



contributed photo

The Whitney Building in downtown St. Cloud is one of seven building renovations completed by Shannon Wiger of Sartell.



contributed photos

(Above) Shannon Wiger and her twins, Owen and Jack, 9, bust through the walls on their renovation project in St. Joseph in December. (Below) The property at the corner of Minnesota Street and College Avenue got its start in 1900 as Frank X. Timmer’s Saloon and General Store.



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# Opinion

Our view

## We couldn't do this without you. Thanks.

On Jan. 8, the Newsleaders team received humbling results of our annual audit. Bottom line: our performance is well above national averages, and that bodes well for the communities we serve.

The audit, which we've been doing since 1999, looks at our circulation, print and digital reach, readership, audience profile, advertising impact and opportunities to be better. It's funded through Midwest Free Community Papers, an organization with the mission to improve publications through education, exchanging of ideas and information.

As you know, the Newsleaders are mailed free to every mailbox and P.O. Box in Sartell, St. Joseph and St. Stephen. We also distribute them to local businesses. Our circulation is just shy of 13,000 every other week.

While that is a lot of papers, what really matters is how many people actually read those papers. That's where numbers get impressive.

More than 7 out of 10 households that receive the paper read it. That compares to the national average of daily newspapers, which is 2 or 3 households out of 10, and weekly newspapers, with a national average of 1 or 2 households reading out of 10. In a competitive market such as ours – with larger daily papers and the Twin Cities metro media market reach – people are reading our paper.

This strong readership has held true every year since we started measuring in 1999.

In addition to print, the Newsleaders has an average 5,917 unique web visitors monthly and an average of 1,355 monthly Facebook likes. As people find new ways to get news and stories, they are seeking out all of our platforms.

How do we sustain such high readership? We believe we have several things in our favor. First, we're local and focused on the communities we serve. Second, we have a nice balance of news, local happenings and inspiring stories about our neighbors. Finally, we think it's because each issue is 8 to 16 pages. Think of our paper like a short story about our community rather than an epic novel. It's easily enjoyed in one sitting with a nice cup of coffee.

Finally, if you are a local business, we have even more great news. The research shows 69 percent of our readers have purchased products based on ads in our paper. Nationally, 50 percent is considered solid. Again, the Newsleader performs well above the average which means our local businesses can realize a strong return on advertising investment.

Like so many businesses, ours was hit hard in 2020. We are entirely funded through advertising dollars. When our local businesses are hurting, we hurt too.

As we come out of COVID-related closures and start to reopen and re-energize our communities, the Newsleaders is here to help. We have a trusted, affordable community resource that is widely distributed and well read.

In fact, we started a GoFundMe campaign to help get through the pandemic and are grateful to the 45 individuals who reached out with financial support. That helped us hold on. When larger media companies are struggling, free community papers are stable and growing. They are valued in the communities they serve.

And, we are stewards of the precious dollars we receive from donors and advertisers.

Our audit showed we do not have wasteful spending. Our freelance reporters and columnists? They earn 10 cents a word. Our four staffers are part-time, making the paper happen in addition to working their full-time jobs.

All of us at the Newsleaders are in this business because we love it. We love bringing you the local news. We love telling local stories. And, we love having local readers who appreciate the Newsleaders as much as we do.

## After Capitol riot, truth is essential

On Jan. 6, I was shocked by images of rioters breaking through police cordons and ransacking the United States Capitol. I never thought I would see something this heinous take place in our country.

The Capitol is more than just a monumental building; it embodies our democracy and what we believe as Americans. Rather than resolving differences through violence, we elect lawmakers who do the people's work through constructive debate, voting and law-making. While we are still processing those events and making strides to unify the wounds of division in our country, we must also consider how we got here in the first place.

The stated goal of many of these rioters was to disrupt the certification of electoral votes that confirmed Joe Biden's victory in November's election. This is usually a dry, ceremonial process where certificates from each state are examined by Congress and quickly accepted. Usually it takes less than an hour. However, purposely irresponsible and undemocratic political rhetoric by President Trump, Republican politicians and media commentators created a false narrative that the 2020 election was "stolen" from Trump. Based on this false narrative, millions of Americans believe electoral fraud took place in November. Some took this belief to a violent extreme.

**Connor Kockler**

*Guest Writer*



To be clear, no evidence of widespread voter fraud that could have altered the results of the 2020 presidential election exists. The Trump campaign and its allies brought dozens of election lawsuits in many states, more than 60 of which have already been dismissed for lack of evidence or lack of standing. In fact, many lawsuits have been dismissed by judges nominated by Republican presidents. The Supreme Court, which includes three justices nominated by President Trump, unanimously denied election lawsuits brought to it. Christopher Krebs, the top Homeland Security election protection official, and Attorney General William Barr, both appointed by Trump, refuted claims of election fraud.

Even more telling, this narrative appeared long before the election. Months before the first results came in Nov. 3, Trump was claiming the election would be fraudulent, and he might not accept the results if he did not win. This is un-American on every level. If we are going to have fair elections and a peaceful transfer of power, all participants must accept veri-

fied and confirmed results. If those who lose an election do not accept the winner's legitimacy, we cannot function as a democracy.

Trump and his allies had every chance to legitimately challenge election results, and they exhausted them. Following defeat in the courts, and numerous recounts confirming Biden's victory in key battleground states, the proper thing to do would have been for Trump to concede. He refused, instead playing up more lies and conspiracies. This kind of rhetoric has consequences. Emboldened by Trump's falsehoods, thousands traveled to Washington to storm the Capitol. As a result, five people, including a police officer, died.

Falsehoods have real-life repercussions. People have died because of those who refuse to recognize one of the basic tenets of American democracy. In order to prevent such tragedy from occurring again, we need to demand truth and accountability from those in power. The only way to ensure our democracy continues to function is to have an engaged and informed citizenry, aware of the truth and ready to stand up for it against those who would twist reality to benefit themselves.

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

## We are supposed to empathize with lunatics?!

Disinformation peddlers are at it again – big-time. And, make no mistake, it's the kind of toxic disinformation that led to the vile acts of domestic terrorism Jan. 6 at our nation's Capitol.

The conspiracy crackpots keep repackaging more crazy theories. First, it was anti-maskers during the so-called virus hoax, then it was (still is) election-fraud howlers and now – wouldn't you know? – it's anti-vaxxers.

More than 3,500,000 Americans have died of the COVID-19 virus as these dangerous fools keep spouting nonsense. We all have a patriotic duty to speak up against it. So many good people are anxious, worried to death, hungry and even homeless as these loud liars peddle their nasty deceptions, making our national crises even worse.

Here's the latest outlandish stupidity: Dallas lawyer Sidney Powell, who is slightly left of Attila the Hun, is claiming far and wide that vaccinations contain a microchip or bar code to let the "Deep State" (whatever that is) to "keep track" of people.

What's more, those who are vaccinated will receive a reminder card to get a second dose. But – shhh! – those "reminder cards" are really ways to keep tabs on people, to spy on them and "to limit their activities."

**Dennis Dalman**

*Reporter*



So go the paranoid fancies of Ms. Powell. Her toxic concoctions are posted and re-posted on social-media and gobbled up by gullibles who figure the loonier the postings, the more they must be true. Such shocking "truths" are never acknowledged by the mainstream media, so that certifies they must, in fact, be true.

Powell blabs her fool head off that the rigged-election plot hatched in Venezuela somehow involved leftist billionaire George Soros and the anti-fascist movement. Georgia's governor and secretary of state, both Republicans, were in on the plot. Better believe it, folks! Besides millions of dead people voting (ghosts and zombies stumbling to the polls?), the dastardly scheme included rigged voting machines. But wait, there's more! The plot – ready for this one? – also involved a "secret algorithm." Horrors!

Not one shred of evidence is offered for these nightmare notions. But who needs evidence? Who needs facts?

Lunatic theories grow like mold these days, promulgated by social-

media devotees.

Did you hear about how prominent Democrats and movie actors are sex-trafficking children, killing them and eating their bodies because their blood contains aging-retardant chemicals? Communists, child-killers, cannibals! And it must be true because the mainstream media claims it's NOT true – the media that is controlled by a "Satanic Deep State" squirreled away in some secret building.

We hear pleas constantly to "listen to the other side," to try to understand them, to empathize for the sake of national unity. It's sad so many fellow Americans are so easily misled, so willingly misinformed, so eagerly gullible and, in some cases, so dangerous. In fact, I have indeed listened to them closely, including white-supremacist militia hate groups, and I remain appalled and disgusted by what I've heard and still hear.

On Jan. 6, whipped up by Trump's incendiary pep talk, a mob of terrorists disguised as flag-draped patriots invaded the National Capitol, causing death and destruction. So we are supposed to "understand" and "empathize" with those spreaders of lunatic lies, those perpetrators of violence? Well, speaking for many good Americans: Ain't gonna happen any time soon.

**Have an opinion? Share it: [news@thenewsleaders.com](mailto:news@thenewsleaders.com)**



Letter to the editor

Obituary

When scientists destroy the Earth

Denis Grossen  
Sartell

An ecological catastrophe is being created right now just because the human race still refuses to accept that it is not completely in charge of the Earth and that we are not eternal but rather the most dangerous species on this planet.

The Pfizer vaccine against COVID-19 is shipping around the world in containers filled with dry ice. Dry ice is frozen CO2 and as it provides the necessary cooling effect to maintain a required temperature,

it converts back into gaseous CO2. According to available information, Pfizer has taken no measures at any stage of the distribution process to eliminate or minimize emissions of CO2, one of the principal culprits of climate change. The CO2 gas required to manufacture the dry ice is not removed from the atmosphere either to create a carbon neutral process.

We, as a species, are responsible for the most destruction of other species and our environment. Above all, we have demonstrated our unwillingness and incapacity to control our population growth. In 2000, the world population was 6.115 billion and today it is 7.8

billion. A deadly virus is but one of the very few defenses available to Mother Nature to bring our unruly species back to reality. Homo sapiens are not immortal, and we will not escape to Mars or any other planet despite the fantasy of some billionaires.

Even 100 million deaths from this virus worldwide would not make a dent in our population.


Accepting our mortality and embracing natural selection as the way Mother Earth can equitably defend Herself against our abuses is the only way to ensure our long-term survival together with the survival of our planet. It is our last chance to abandon our arrogant atti-

tude that we master life and death because of the progress of western medicine. Humility and responsibility toward all other species and our environment are the only way forward.

Our desperate quest for a vaccine against COVID-19 has only added to our alarming incompetence. To extend the life of millions of people by a few years, we are prepared to inflict terminal damage to the Earth.

Viruses and bacteria populated the world long before homo sapiens emerged to become the dominant species, and viruses and bacteria will survive us all. Accepting our limitations would be a good start in ensuring our survival.

Richard 'Dick' Gunderson  
May 18, 1947-Jan. 13, 2021  
Sartell



Richard Gunderson

"Dick" Gunderson, 73, of Sartell, died after a long battle with cancer on Jan. 13 at the Lake Ridge Care Center in Buffalo. A memorial will be held at a later date. Arrangements have been entrusted to the Miller-Carlin Funeral homes.

<b>Jan. 7</b> 10:15 a.m. Drug paraphernalia. Pinecone Road S. A motorist was approaching an intersection and spotted what appeared to look like a purse/bag. The driver stopped to pick up the bag. Upon looking inside, the driver observed drug paraphernalia inside. The individual did not want it in their possession and brought the bag to the police department. A report was written, and surrounding agencies notified.	<b>Jan. 12</b> 9:45 p.m. Lift assist. Oak Pond Drive. A complainant called about a family member who had fallen and could not get up. An officer was dispatched to the residence. Upon arrival, the officer assisted the individual off the floor and verified they did not obtain any injuries. No medical assistance was needed.	<b>Jan. 17</b> 5:30 a.m. Medical. Eveningstar Court. An officer was dispatched to a residence after an individual had fallen downstairs and was bleeding from their head. The officer assisted the individual until Mayo medics arrived on scene.
<b>Jan. 8</b> 10:30 a.m. Dog. 16th Street. An officer was dispatched to a neighborhood for a dog at large. The	<b>Jan. 9</b> 2:15 p.m. 11 hang-up. Brianna Drive. An officer was dispatched to a residence after dispatch received a 911 call but had no answer on the line. Upon arrival, an elderly individual was found having trouble breathing. Medics also responded.	<b>Jan. 18</b> 4 p.m. Crash. Terry Lane/ First Street North. An officer was dispatched to a crash where a vehicle sideswiped a bus. No injuries. No tows needed. Photos were taken and a report was written. No further action needed.
	<b>Jan. 15</b> 3 p.m. Traffic stop. Roberts Road. An officer on patrol clocked a vehicle traveling above the posted speed limit. The officer made contact with the driver, discussed the infraction and issued a citation.	

Community Calendar

Is your event listed? Send information to: Newsleader Calendar, 1622 11th Ave. SE., St. Cloud, MN 56304., e-mail it to [news@thenewsleaders.com](mailto:news@thenewsleaders.com). Most events are listed at no cost. Those events are typically free or of minimal charge 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 schedule changes.

**Monday, Jan. 25**  
**Sartell City Council**, 6 p.m., City Hall, 125 Pinecone Road N.  
**Little Sabres Preschool Parent Information Night**, 6 p.m., YouTube LIVE event, Sartell. [k12.mn.us/orelc](http://k12.mn.us/orelc).

**Tuesday, Jan. 26**  
**National Alliance on Mental Illness- Family Support Group**. 7-8:30 p.m., currently meeting via Zoom on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month. Visit [www.namistcloud.com](http://www.namistcloud.com) for registration details. This group is for family and friends of a person dealing with a mental illness, any diagnosis, any age. Learn coping and problem solving skills. Questions, call 320-654-1259, or email [fsnamistcloud@gmail.com](mailto:fsnamistcloud@gmail.com).

**M.O.M.S. (Making Our Mothering Significant)**, 7-8:30 p.m., virtual table group, [calvarystcloud.org/group/mom](http://calvarystcloud.org/group/mom).

**Monday, Feb. 1**  
**Sartell Lions Club**, 6:30 p.m., contact Stewart Giffin at 651-261-4272 for details.

**Wednesday, Feb. 3**  
**St. Stephen City Council**, 6:30 p.m., St. Stephen City Hall, 2 Sixth Ave SE.

**Saturday, Feb. 6**  
**Sartell Winter Farmers' Market**, 10 a.m.-1 p.m., Sartell Community Center, 850 19th St. S.

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# Hiring an Agent: A Solid Choice

To hire or not to hire an agent? That is the question. Many homeowners face that decision when it comes time to put their home on the market.

And while there is certainly a cost associated with using a Realtor to help you sell your home, you may just find that their commission is more than fair compensation given the amount of work they put into your home sale.

A good agent simplifies the process for you by interacting with potential buyers and by engaging only with serious potential buyers, saving you tons of time in the process.

Also, if any issues pop up during the process of trying to sell your home, a quality Realtor will be there to handle them for you. These issues can include contractual or financial challenges that become critical to the sale, especially late in the transaction.

Read on for a few more reasons that experts in the realty industry strongly recommend home sellers enlist the help of a licensed local agent.

**COST-BENEFITS ANALYSIS**

Agents generally command up to 6% of the sale price of your home. Considering how much work they will put into



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showing the home, facilitating negotiations, structuring contracts and being at your beck and call throughout the process, many experts consider this percentage to be well worth the cost.

One of the most helpful parts of working with an agent

is setting the actual price of your home. Agents have access to critical home market data from across your region, which should be taken into consideration when determining your asking price.

Realtors are trained to help you sell your home as quickly

as possible while also fighting for your fair rights as the seller.

**GOING DIY**

Although tempting, experts urge it's probably not a great idea to try to sell your home on your own, especially if you haven't done it before.

If you choose to go down this route, you may consider hiring a real estate attorney to help you with the finer points of the transaction and the escrow process. The last thing you want to happen is a legal issue halting the progress of your sale.



**Two-bedroom. 55+, patio home in St. Joseph**  
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