

Newsleaders

Reaching Everybody!

Friday, Dec. 10, 2021
Volume 34, Issue 24
Est. 1989

Town Crier

Amadeus Chamber Symphony to hold Christmas concert

After being part of Christmas at St. John's for the past 32 years, this year the Amadeus Chamber Symphony will perform its "first ever" free holiday concert at 7:30 p.m. Friday, Dec. 10 at Atone-ment Lutheran Church, 1144 29th Ave. N., St. Cloud. Donations welcome. To learn more visit AmadeusChamberSymphony.org or contact atheimer@csbsju.edu.

Youth Chorale offers holiday concert Dec. 12

"All is Well," a holiday concert featuring the Youth Chorale of Central Minnesota and the St. Cloud String Quartet, in person at 4 and 7 p.m. (and livestreamed online at 7 p.m. only) Sunday, Dec. 12, at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 4310 County Road 137, St. Cloud. Tickets available at the door or by website at youth-chorale.org.

St. John's Boys' Choir returns with 'A Ceremony of Carols'

This annual treasure returns with two performances on Saturday, Dec. 18 with concerts at 2 and 7:30 p.m. at St. Mary's Cathedral, downtown St. Cloud. Join the Choirboys in celebrating the season with Christmas music, audience carols and the SJBC Orchestra. To order tickets and learn more, visit sjbchoir.org or call 320-363-2558.

Free Christmas meal set Dec. 18 at RLC

A Community Christmas meal, take-out or delivery only, will be held from 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 18 at Resurrection Lutheran Church. For delivery, call 320-363-4232. The church welcomes referrals for shut ins. If you know of someone who needs a meal, let them know!

Donate games, crafts and more!

Big Brothers Big Sisters helps children realize their potential and build their futures. They nurture children and strengthen communities and could not do it without your help. They are looking for donations to help Bigs and Littles have fun together such as board and card games for two people, craft kits and supplies, and sports equipment. Learn more about donations and also becoming a Big by visiting www.bigdefenders.org or call 320-253-1616 to learn more.

Whiskey distiller fell in love with Stearns County

by Dennis Dalman
news@thenewsleaders.com

What does rye whiskey have to do with kittens?

Well, just go ask Jeremy Blankenship, a distiller of rye whiskey, who – with two partners – owns Stearns American Distillery in Avon. Blankenship is always eager to share facts and legends of the old days – especially the old "moonshine" days of the 1920s and 1930s in Stearns County.

At that time, some country folks – many of them impoverished farmers – made illegal moonshine whiskey in stills well hidden from sight. Moonshining, the making and surreptitious selling of whiskey, was for many a way of making a living. The "Feds" (government agents) would often raid farms looking for stills and hidden whiskey kegs or bottles. The feds would smash the equipment and supplies and arrest the "culprits." Some of them did time in prisons for moonshining.

Local radio stations in Stearns County, in sympathy with the farmers, would broadcast a tip-

off message to them as soon as they'd get wind the snoopy feds were in the county or on their way. During the radio stations' daily classified programs, deejays would sometimes announce, rather loudly and clearly, "So-and-so is seeking some FREE KITTENS."

That tip-off (free kittens) was a big nudge to moonshiners to cease production temporarily, to hide equipment and to quickly sell or get rid of their whiskey inventories – to lay low until the feds skedaddled out of the county. At that time, a whiskey produced in and around the towns of Stearns County (especially a product known as "Minnesota 13") was prized as the finest whiskey in the world.

"I love those old stories," said Blankenship, chuckling, adding that the phrase "Free Kittens" is synonymous with his rye whiskey, even though Blankenship's activities are totally legal and legit.

Stearns American

Many months ago, Blankenship and his two business part-

Whiskey • page 6

The return of WinterWalk brings back good cheer

by Leanne Loy
editor@thenewsleader.com

The return of the St. Joseph WinterWalk brought out some of that Holiday cheer we may have been missing throughout the last year.

Music filled the streets, twinkly

lights from 100 Christmas trees lit up the downtown area and Santa listened to children's wishes while Mrs. Claus helped them make their own ornaments.

When it came time to warm up, Heritage Hall hosted several vendors with some beautifully handcrafted pieces of art. From homemade quilts and wooden

cutting boards to doll clothes and coffee, community members could get some important holiday shopping done while also giving back to their community.

Everyone gathered around the 50-foot Christmas tree at 7 p.m. to do the count down of the lighting which was followed by voices in song by carolers.

The much-anticipated opera of Amahl and the Night Visitors may have been cancelled but there was still something for everyone to see and do. This is a tradition the locals come out to see every year.

Even though WinterWalk was techni-

Cheer • page 3

Central Minnesota Nice!

by Carolyn Bertsch
news@thenewsleaders.com

There's Minnesota Nice and then there's Central Minnesota Nice - an even nicer brand of nice!

When Laura Wolfram and Kayla Adams, owners of Korppi Coffee and Bakeshop in Sartell, announced on social media that they would be closed Dec. 5 due to a staffing shortage, David Boyer, owner of Jupiter Moon Ice Cream in St. Joseph sprang into action, calling to ask what it would take for the coffee shop to open it's doors as scheduled.

The Korppi Coffee owners were surprised by the offer of the ice cream shop. "We were just shocked at the generosity he showed us. He really went

above and beyond."

Boyer and Jupiter Moon employee, Maliah Nemeth, quickly went to work as baristas for the day. Another friend, Boupha Richards, stepped forward to wash all the dishes.

"We are so incredibly lucky to have such a supportive community surrounding us," said Wolfram.

Between the five of them, there was enough hands-on-deck to keep customers happily caffeinated, well-fed and to save the coffee shop from having to close for the day.

Korppi Coffee and Bakeshop is located at 71 County Rd 120 Suite 400, in the former Dunn Bros. location.

Jupiter Moon Ice Cream is located at 15 E. Minnesota St. Suite 108, St. Joseph.



contributed photo

"Kittens" and "whiskey" have a connection stemming back to the days of moonshining in the 1920s and 1930s. This adorable kitty is Rencey, who is a pet of a friend of Jeremy Blankenship, who with two partners own a rye-whiskey distillery in Avon. The bottle in the photo is one of its products.



photo by Carolyn Bertsch

Kayla Adams of Korppi Coffee creates a beautiful design on a latte with cream.

CORRECTION

In the Nov. 26 edition, it was stated individuals should contact the parish for food shelf monetary donations. Please note, the correct contact is Julie Gravgaard. She can be reached at 478-213-2700. Checks can be mailed to: P.O. Box 384, St Joseph, MN 56374 and made payable to St Joseph Community Food Shelf.

HISTORIC SALEM CHURCH

Christmas Program

Saturday, Dec. 18

Everyone Welcome!

Horse-drawn wagon rides from 3 to 4:15 p.m.

Old-fashioned Christmas Program – 4:30 p.m.


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

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

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CHRISTMAS EVE — FRIDAY, DECEMBER 24TH, 2021
4:00 PM — CHURCH OF SAINT JOSEPH (12 W. MINNESOTA ST; ST. JOSEPH, MN)
5:00 PM — SAINT JOHN’S ABBEY (2900 ABBEY PLAZA; COLLEGEVILLE, MN)
9:00 PM — CHURCH OF SAINT JOSEPH (12 W. MINNESOTA ST; ST. JOSEPH, MN)

CHRISTMAS DAY — SATURDAY, DECEMBER 25TH, 2021
8:30 AM — CHURCH OF SAINT JOSEPH (12 W. MINNESOTA ST; ST. JOSEPH, MN)

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Calendar

Is your event listed? Send your information to: Newsleader Calendar, 1622 11th Ave. SE., St. Cloud, MN 56304., e-mail it to news@thenewsleaders.com. Most events are listed at no cost. Those events are typically free or of minimal charge for people to attend. Some events, which have paid advertising in the Newsleaders, are also listed in the calendar and may charge more.

Friday, Dec. 10
The Nutcracker Ballet, 7 p.m., Paramount Center for the Arts, 913 W. St. Germain, St. Cloud. paramountarts.org.

Amadeus Chamber Symphony's Holiday Concert, 7:30 p.m., Atonement Lutheran Church, 1144 29th Ave. N, St. Cloud. Free but donations welcome. AmadeusChamberSymphony.org.

Saturday, Dec. 11
Craft-Vendor Bake Sale, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. St. Cloud Athlos Academy. Free. 3701 33rd St. S., St. Cloud.

The Nutcracker Ballet, 2 p.m., Paramount Center for the Arts, 913 W St. Germain, St. Cloud. paramountarts.org.



Christmas

at Saint Benedict's Monastery

December 24 Caroling & Christmas Eucharist
8 p.m. in Sacred Heart Chapel

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

Sisters of the Order of Saint Benedict | 104 Chapel Lane, St. Joseph, MN (320) 363-7100 • www.sbm.osb.org | [f](#) [t](#) [i](#) [i](#) [p](#) [y](#) [t](#) [b](#) [i](#) [n](#)

Glory to God in the Highest & Peace to God's People

Christmas Eve Worship:

Friday, Dec. 24
3 & 5:30 p.m.

No Worship on Christmas Day

Sunday, Dec. 26
9 a.m.



Resurrection Lutheran Church • 610 N. County Road 2
St. Joseph • 320-363-4232

Monday, Dec. 13
Fare For All, 3:30-5:30 p.m., Resurrection Lutheran Church, 610 CR 2, St. Joseph.

St. Joseph Planning Commission, 6 p.m., Government Center, 75 Callaway St. E.

St. Joseph Township Board, 7 p.m., Township Hall, 935 College Ave. S.

George Maurer Group, a holiday jazz tradition, 7:30 p.m., Paramount Center for the Arts, 913 W St. Germain, St. Cloud. paramountarts.org.

St. Joseph Food Shelf, open 1-3 p.m., 18 Birch St. E, St. Joseph. Visit Facebook page for schedule changes and updates.

Thursday, Dec. 16
St. Joseph Food Shelf, 1-3 p.m., 18 Birch St. E, St. Joseph. Visit Facebook page for schedule changes and updates.

Saturday, Dec. 18
Christmas Community Meal, 11-12:30 p.m. Take-out and delivery meals. Requests for delivery can be made by calling the church office at 320-363-4232. Resurrection Lutheran Church, 610 CR 2, St. Joseph.

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

Calendar • page 10

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This class blends childhood imagination, our seasons of nature and movements of learning the underlying principles of dance. We will use scarves, musical instruments and ribbons.

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photo by Leanne Loy
Colton Schnettler 5, St. Joseph, looks to his mother (not pictured) for help on what to ask Santa for Christmas, at WinterWalk Dec. 3 as Santa waits for his request.

Cheer

from front page

cally cancelled in 2020, people still came out to see the lights, and a welcomed surprise too.

“Last year they had a parade with Santa and Mrs. Claus” stated Amber Wi-ese, a St. Joseph local. “We try to come out every year.”

Ray Sjogren, the organizer of the event is passionate about making this the go-to annual event that everyone talks about. He was sad to lose the signature piece of the puppet performance, but they are exploring options to reschedule it and hope to bring it back to WinterWalk next year.

There are plans in the works and ideas floating around already for future WinterWalks so if you missed it this year, you’ll have a chance to join in the fun for future years to come.

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Call the St. Joseph Newsleader at 320-363-7741
if you would like your business included. Check out the online Business Directory
at thenewsleaders.com which hyperlinks to each business' website.

Obituaries


Nathan Smith Osbourn, 81

St. Joseph
Feb. 12, 1940-Nov. 22, 2021

Nathan Smith Osbourn, 81, of St. Joseph died Nov. 22.

His funeral was held Dec. 9 in St. Joseph Catholic Church.

Osbourn was born on Feb. 12, 1940 in Dodge City, Kansas. He grew up in Cimarron, Kansas with his mother, Helen, father Russel and brother Dennis. At a young age his father died, and he became very involved in Boy Scouts. In high school, he participated and lettered in, well almost everything! He was in the marching band, played football, ran track and was quite a diver. He also worked as a “soda jerk”



Osbourn

at the local drug store.

After high school, he went to school for radio and television communications and eventually landed a job at a local station in Bismarck, North Dakota. It was while working in Bismarck that Osbourn met the love of his life, Pat. They were married on July 30, 1966 and recently celebrated their 55th wedding anniversary. The couple had two girls and remained in Bismarck until 2000, when they decided to make the move to Minnesota to be closer to their children and grandchildren.

He absolutely adored his grandchildren! He and Pat would spend a lot of time with them. They always made sure they had fun, taking them to the zoo, plays, opera, concerts, playground or just fun parties at home. His eyes would light up whenever he saw them.

Throughout his life, he enjoyed fishing, going to stock car

races, watching the Twins and Vikings. He and Pat enjoyed several trips. They would often travel to see friends and relatives, whether it was meeting up in Vegas, traveling to New York or going to Albuquerque for the hot air balloon festival, they always had a blast!

Osbourn was simply a really great guy! Honest and caring without an enemy in the world. He was the best dad, grandpa, best friend and loving companion. He will be thought of often and missed forever.

Survivors include his wife, Pat Osbourn; daughter Lisa (Roger Lenahan); grandchildren: Katie, Hailey and Johnathan; and brother Dennis (Joan) Osbourn.

He was preceded in death by loving devoted daughter, Sandy; his parents; stepfather, Jack Dupey.

In lieu of flowers, please donate to Willing Hands, St. Joseph Catholic Church.

Laraine K. Forsell, 80


St. Joseph
Sept. 3, 1941-Nov. 25, 2021

Laraine K. Forsell, 80, loving wife and mother of five children, died Nov. 25 at St. Cloud Hospital after a brave battle with cancer.

Forsell

Visitation will be from 1-3 p.m. Friday, Dec. 3 at Hope Covenant Church, 336 Fourth Ave. S., St. Cloud. There will be a private ceremony for the family immediately following the visitation. The Rev. Brian Zahasky will officiate and burial will be at a later date. Arrangements are entrusted to Williams Dingmann Family Funeral Home in St. Cloud.

Forsell was born Sept. 3, 1941, in Biwabik, Minnesota to Jack



Forsell

and Lila (Lehtinen) Hietala. She graduated from Biwabik High School, Class of 1959. Forsell spent most of her working career as an executive assistant at Dezurik. She also worked part time as secretary at Hope Covenant Church for Pastor Rick Mylander. Forsell had four children Laurie, Linda, LeAnn and James from her first marriage. On Dec. 7th, 1978 she married John Forsell, they had one son, Jeremy Forsell. Forsell had a tremendous passion for her family and Finnish heritage. She was strong in her faith, loved listening to hymns in the kitchen, enjoyed quilting, reading and playing piano. She and her husband John loved taking rides in their Model T and wintering at their second home in Gold Canyon, Arizona where they had great memories playing cards with friends and singing in the church choir. Forsell was a genuine inspiration to those who knew and loved her. Her

sharp-witted humor could make anyone laugh. She lived courageously, taught everyone how to fight with grace, and most importantly how to love.

Survivors include the following: sisters, Patty Norrell, Jeannie Viburg and Evelyn Tuomala; husband John; five children: Laurie Blackmore, Linda Blackmore, LeAnn (Kelvin) Howieson, James (Brenda) Blackmore and Jeremy (Erin) Forsell; stepson, Jon (Cindy) Forsell; stepdaughter, Jackie Forsell; six grandchildren: Allison Blackmore, Aaron (Nicole) Blackmore, Matthew Blackmore, Joseph (Ashtin) Blackmore, Mitchell (Kylee) Howieson, Joshua Howieson, Michaela Forsell and Zach Forsell, and four great-grandchildren, Morgan, Thomas, Logan, and Lennon Laraine.

She was preceded in death by her father, Jack; her mother, Lila; and her brother Jack Hietala.

In lieu of flowers, memorials are preferred to the Central-Care-Coborn Cancer Center in St. Cloud.

Obituary, guestbook and video tribute will be available online at www.williamsdingmann.com.

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St. Cloud schools sweeten deal to hire substitute teachers

by Heidi L. Everett
news@thenewsleaders.com

The St. Cloud school district recently announced four steps it was taking to try and increase substitute teacher support, including a temporary pay increase.

At the Dec. 1 school board work session, the district's assistant superintendents presented successes and challenges of the first half of the school year. Among them was the lack of coverage and support for teachers who, as Assistant Superintendent Laurie Putnam said,

are once again experiencing "a year that continues to be unlike any that we have experienced before."

"We were concerned about burnout and exhaustion," said Mike Rivard, assistant superintendent for elementary education.

The district recently held what was called a "substitute summit" to talk about ways to increase the number of substitute teachers in order to have coverage on days when needed. Through this summit, four solutions were identified.

The first solution is to in-

crease rates of pay for guest teachers and retired teachers through the end of this academic year. Daily substitute teachers will now earn \$160/day, up from \$140/day. Permanent building substitutes or retirees will earn \$200/day, up from \$150/day.

In addition, staff from the district offices will be available to provide coverage for classrooms.

"We do have staff members who are able to go out and help when we are significantly short at the building level," Rivard said.

A third strategy is to immediately tap into college graduates completing their degrees this December and enlist them as floating teachers in the buildings.

"We're trying to grab those student teachers up as they become licensed as quickly as possible," Rivard said.

Finally, the district is hoping to increase its number of guest teachers as funding allows. Currently one guest teacher is employed per school.

Education is feeling the pains of labor shortage like most other industries. According to the

Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development's second quarter job vacancies survey, nearly 22,000 jobs were available in Central Minnesota which includes Stearns, Benton and Sherburne counties. The industries with the highest vacancies include food service, sales, transportation and material moving, production and healthcare.

To read requirements for substitute teachers in District 742 and apply for open positions, visit www.isd742.org and type the word substitute in the search bar.

Students to receive extra three days of winter break

by Heidi L. Everett
news@thenewsleaders.com

Students in the St. Cloud school district will receive three extra days of winter break, extending it to two full weeks.

The winter break will now

include Dec. 20, 21 and 22, with school resuming on Jan. 3.

A statement issued by the district said, "We recognize the challenges currently facing schools and families due to staffing shortages, student absences and other impacts of the

pandemic."

As a result of this change, two previously scheduled days will shift focus from what was originally noted on the academic calendar. Jan. 18 and March 4 will now be in-person instructional days for all students.

KIDSTOP will be available to currently registered families all day Dec. 20-22 at Kennedy, Clearview, Madison, Oak Hill or Talahi schools. Families must register for these extended days by contacting KIDSTOP.

Brr...collect winter gear for all ages!

Collect winter gear to help families this winter. All gently used and new winter clothing of all sizes accepted. Items include hats, waterproof gloves, snow pants, coats/jackets, boots, socks, hooded sweatshirts and undies. Contact Mary Krippner at 320-223-7991.

Happy Holidays

Wishing everyone a safe & happy holiday season!

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Whiskey

from front page

ners bought an old gas-station/garage at 112 Avon Ave. in Avon. They began to refurbish the property into a distillery, but as the virus pandemic became worse, progress slowed down.

Currently, they are still redoing the building into what will be a “boutique distillery,” including a “cocktail room” where customers can enjoy a wide variety of drinks containing Stearns American’s Avon Rye (whiskey). The venture should be ready for full production in the summer of 2022.

In the meantime, a partial production has been underway. The rye whiskey has been a big hit with customers throughout the area, including bars, restaurants and liquor stores in central Minnesota and the Twin Cities. To name just some locally, it’s available in St. Joseph at Krewe Restaurant, The Middy Bar, Sal’s Bar and Grill, La Playette Bar and St. Joseph Off-Sale Liquor. It’s also available in Waite Park

at Westside Liquor and Anton’s Restaurant and in St. Cloud at The Wine Shop and White Horse Restaurant & Bar in St. Cloud.

Stearns American is made with a fermented mash of 95 percent rye and 5 percent barley with an alcohol proof of 95 percent. After it is distilled, the product is then placed in white-oak barrels to age for 21 months. During the last three months charred pimento wood chips are added to the whiskey to add a spicy kick to the whiskey. It is then bottled.

Avon Rye, according to the company’s website, has a subtle floral aroma with a hint of vanilla and black cherry. The drink has slightly sweet and mellow notes of leather, clove, old oak and cinnamon with a long peppery finish lingering on the palette.

History

When talking about Avon Rye, Blankenship weaves fascinating strands of history and philosophical asides to describe the product:

Rye was America’s first kind of whiskey.

Scots-Irish immigrants to

America knew how to distill barley for whiskey, but they soon discovered how well rye grows in America and began using mainly rye instead of barley.

President George Washington had a rye-whiskey distillery at his rural spread, Mount Vernon. Just recently, a historian/distiller started that historic production up again, right at its original Mount Vernon site.

Corn began to be used to make bourbon whiskey, but rye whiskey was long considered the highest premium product. Bartenders in New Orleans, for example, insisted on ordering rye whiskey for the variety of drinks they served because its spicy and subtle flavors hold their own in mixed drinks.

Blankenship

Jeremy Blankenship, who lives in the Twin Cities, has had a remarkable life of many talents leading him in many surprising directions.

His father was a chemical engineer for the U.S. Department of Defense, his mother a nurse. He has two half-brothers.

Born in Morgantown, W.V., in

the heart of Appalachia, he grew up in towns along the Ohio River. He soured on West Virginia because of its unemployment, poverty level and lack of career opportunities. Throughout the years, though, he would get a bit lonesome and visit the places of his youth.

Blankenship left “coal country” and moved to Minneapolis where he studied at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design, graduating in 2003.

Then he became a private investigator for child-support cases, surveillance jobs, insurance scams and more. In 2009, he started a company called Artist Built that specialized in high-end fashion leather accessories with models wearing the products during runway shows.

Later, he created special effects for short films, some of them “cheesy fun movies.”

Still later, he wrote and self-published a children’s book entitled “Poop on the Shoe: A Potty-Training Whodunit.” A year in the making, the book was illustrated by a friend, Kim K. Whittemore.

Blankenship became intrigued by distilleries through Phil Steger, a Minneapolis resident he met at a yard sale in 2013. Together they started in Minneapolis the Brother Justus Whiskey Co, in which Blankenship became the head distiller until 2017. The company was named after Brother Justus, a monk of St. John’s Abbey, who made distilling devices for area farmers in those days. Blankenship’s Stearns American is not connected in any way to the Justus

Whiskey Co.

Later, when he and partners decided on the Avon location, Blankenship spent many days and weeks in Stearns County, meeting people of all walks of life, hearing their stories, their histories, their unique backgrounds and of course moonshine stories.

“That’s how I fell in love with Stearns County,” he said, referring to the people he met and their memories of generations of old-timers in the county.

Sometimes Blankenship gets razzed about how if he is a distiller he must drink a lot of whiskey, hooked like a “drunk.”

He laughs at the assumption.

“A distillery friend said the job is 60 percent janitor, 30 percent valve fiddler and 10 percent alcohol,” he said.

Blankenship is passionate about collaboration above all else. To start the Avon distillery, he teamed up with an old friend from Bent’s Brew Distillery in Roseville. They worked together in a tight collaboration. He often consults and works with experts from Bad Habit brewing company and Milk & Honey Cider, both in St. Joseph, as well as breweries and distillers elsewhere.

“Anything I make is collaborative,” he said. “You never stop learning. Ever. The more I learn the less I know. It’s a continual and collaborate process.”

Blankenship said he is gratified so many people are discovering the quality of locally produced products, shopping locally and supporting the talents of their hometown friends and neighbors.







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For Pets and their Humans

Don't forget our feathered and four-legged friends this holiday season — and their humans.

If you want to impress a pet-loving person, turn up with a great gift for their animals. A great way to start is by making a trip to the local pet store and ask for some advice. Or you can start with these ideas.

GIFTS FOR PUPS

Treats. Lots of treats. Some local bakeries may make special pup cakes and cookies just for doggies, and a selection of those will make any pup happy. While you're at the pet store, look for other things like pet outfits, collars, harnesses and leashes. If your friend's dog is particularly fuzzy, pick up some grooming supplies like brushes, combs and shedding spray. Food and water dishes are another excellent idea, and you can find a variety of bowls in different materials and styles to suit every decor.

GIFTS FOR CATS

With the kitties, start with toys. Anything that sparks a cat's instinct to hunt is a great toy. Keep an eye out for small balls and crinkly toys, feathers and wands they can chase, scratchers and, for the advanced cat owner, interactive cat toys. Laser pointers are another popular option.



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Cat furniture is a great gift, like scratching poles or loungers, but make sure their person has plenty of room for it.

GIFTS FOR BIRDS

Another pet that loves a toy is a bird. Look for toys that are appropriate to the type of bird

your friend has; you may want to look for toys that help keep their birds' beaks and claws properly maintained. Other ideas are dried fruits and seeds appropriate for your favorite bird's diet, nesting boxes, perches and cage accessories.

FINS, FUR AND MORE

You're going to see some common refrains for these uncommon pets. Treats and toys are great ideas no matter what pet you're buying for. Just make sure with the experts at the pet store that the ones you've picked out

are appropriate for the pet you're buying for. Many pet stores also offer things like outfits, even for our scaly friends, and grooming tools for all kinds of pets. Ask the experts in the store to help you put together a show-stopping gift.

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DENTAL CARE | GIVING BACK

Give Kids a Smile

Give Kids a Smile is an American Dental Association program to give children who may not have access to dental care free oral health education, screenings, preventative care and treatment from volunteer dentists and other volunteer dental professionals.

More than 6 million children have received free services since Give Kids a Smile began in 2003.

HISTORY

Give Kids a Smile started in 2002, when Dr. Jeff Dalin and Dr. B. Ray Storm held the first event in a soon-to-be-demolished dental clinic in St. Louis. That event served 400 children. The ADA stepped in, recognizing the event's potential to raise awareness about the importance of oral health. As the program grew, so did the need for leadership. In 2011, the Give Kids a Smile Community Leadership Development Institute was founded to give program coordinators across the country a platform to learn and share best practices.

FOR PARENTS

You can find more information about free and low-cost



BRENDAN JOHN/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

oral health services, such as the Give Kids a Smile Program, by calling (844) 490-GKAS or contacting your state dental association. The American Dental Association also suggests contacting local dental school clinics. CHIP, the Children's Health Insurance Program, also provides free or low-cost health coverage for more than 7 million children up to age 19,

including eligible immigrants.

FOR DENTAL PROFESSIONALS

Give Kids a Smile is open to all dental professionals who want to participate. You can get a free toolkit from the American Dental Association that will help you plan and promote your Give Kids a Smile event, including legal forms

and guidance for offering these services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The ADA can also help you reach out to organizations and groups that work with children and youth to help you identify children in need of oral health services.

Depending on the size and type of your event, you may also be eligible to receive edu-

cation, screening and product kits to help out. These kits include toothbrushes and toothpaste, health education cards, masks and more.

If you're a dental professional and can't host an event but still want to help out, the ADA will match you to local Give Kids a Chance events. Contact gkas@ada.org for more information.



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Opinion

Our View

More than one solution to stop terror

Not everyone will be able to celebrate the holidays with their loved ones this year and it has nothing to do with COVID. Four families will be mourning the loss of their children. As the news slowly fades around yet another school shooting and as the statistics just blend in with the rest, families and friends of the four victims will have to endure the pain of these losses for the rest of their lives. The saddest part is that this all could have been prevented.

On Nov. 30, yet another school shooting happened in our country. This time, the warning signs were as plain as day and yet we as a society still failed to protect our children.

There is not just one thing that is needed to end these senseless acts. Those who say it's the parents who need to be held responsible are correct. Those who say we need stricter gun laws are correct. Those who say we need to pay more attention to mental health are correct.

The discipline and education must start at home. In this most recent shooting, the mother of the shooter was said to have sent a text to her son after a teacher became disturbed by the student's researching gun bullets on his iPhone. The boy texted his mother about the teacher's concern. The mother responded with, "LOL. I'm not mad at you, you have to learn how not to get caught." Later, she texted her son again, "Ethan, don't do it." She didn't know her son's shooting rampage had already begun at the school. We are becoming a society in which parents want to be "friends" with their children. This does not teach them valuable lessons or support a healthy upbringing. Parents, we need to do better.

Demanding stricter gun laws does not mean taking away the Second Amendment, as some falsely claim. Some people fear stricter laws mean they can't have their guns, which apparently is more important to them than keeping kids safe. But that is not true. All it would do is give greater punishments to those who choose to use their weapons illegally. Furthermore, there is simply no reason for a civilian to be carrying around military-grade weapons. Those weapons are created to kill, nothing else. Government, you need to do better.

Mental health plays a huge role in all of this too. An urge to kill others does not come from a healthy mind. Therapy shouldn't be given to just those who can afford it. Insurance companies need to step up and realize mental health is just as important, if not more important, than physical health. Seeing a therapist frequently should be just as common as your yearly physical check-ups. Health providers, you need to do better.

Parents should not have to wonder if they will see their children again as they send them off to school. Our kids shouldn't have to worry about how to hide properly under a desk to protect themselves. It's absurd an editorial like this even needs to be written after yet another horrific school shooting. Society, we can do better.

Letters policy

Letters to the editor may be sent to news@thenewsleaders.com or mailed to 1622 11th Ave. S.E., St. Cloud, MN 56304. Deadline is noon Monday. Please include your full name for publication (and address and phone number for verification only.) Letters must be 350 words or less. We reserve the right to edit for space or to not publish.

Hurrah! The ‘cavalry’ gallops to the rescue

Dennis Dalman
Reporter



In old Western movies, there was often a scene in which a bugle blared as the cavalry soldiers on horseback galloped to a crisis and saved the day. We popcorn munchers would cheer.

That's how I felt on the morning of Nov. 30 when I heard the good news. It was like a blaring bugle announcing that a medical-response team from the U.S. Air Force had arrived at the St. Cloud Hospital. The 23 team members are there to provide hands-on help, assisting overwhelmed nurses, doctors and other employees who are exhausted physically and emotionally because of the increase in patients, the over-crowding, the ever-increasing work loads.

Like health facilities throughout the nation and the world, the St. Cloud Hospital is filled to capacity because of these recurrent surges of the COVID virus and its variants. Sad to say, the biggest cause of the influx of seriously ill patients is due to so many people who refuse to get vaccinated. They have chosen to get terribly sick or even die because of "hoax" theories, jeopardizing not only themselves but others. Many of those people actually believe their antagonism to vaccinations and other health-protection measures is a patriotic duty, a way of proving how "free" they are.

What's worse is throughout the nation some of them have insulted, threatened and in some cases even physically assaulted nurses, doctors, flight attendants, school-board mem-

bers, legislators or anyone else who dares to request and/or to mandate they wear a mask or get vaccinated. In at least one case, a woman clerk told a man he must wear a mask to be in the store. He walked away, then came back and shot her to death.

Meantime, life (rational life) somehow manages to go on. Some weeks ago, the much-maligned but honorable Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz asked the federal government for emergency hospital staffing. The U.S. Department of Defense granted the request and sent the Air Force teams to the Hennepin County Medical Center and to the St. Cloud Hospital.

Like the cavalry in the movies, they arrived just in time, in the heat of the crisis. There is an 18 percent COVID-positivity rate in the St. Cloud area; at St. Cloud Hospital, 77 percent of patients in the intensive-care unit are there because of COVID infections and almost all of them were unvaccinated; during the virus surge of recent weeks, available intensive-care-unit beds at the hospital hover at or below 5 percent. Those dire factors are exacerbated by the influx of extremely ill COVID patients sent to the St. Cloud Hospital from other

rural hospitals that are filled to capacity or unable to handle the severity of the illnesses.

Because of the ongoing pandemic, hospitals have had to cancel or postpone some surgical procedures. They have also had to improvise and make-do, converting spaces to add more beds, to accommodate more and more patients.

In the meantime, hospital staff who have made heroic efforts to help patients for the past two years continue their struggle against burn-out. They are feeling overwhelmed as they endure exhausting work hours, but they forge on because they are so dedicated to helping save lives.

The 23 members of the Air Force Medical Response Team will help out in the intensive-care unit, the emergency room, the surgical department and other areas of the hospital. The team arrived in St. Cloud Nov. 26 and will stay for 30 days, although that time could be extended another two months.

And there's more good news. The St. Cloud Technical College is now giving nursing-assistant training to 13 members of the Minnesota National Guard. Once trained, they will help nursing staffs at health-care centers and long-term care facilities.

We would like to extend our thanks and undying gratitude to the staff of the St. Cloud Hospital, the Air Force team, the technical college and the Guard members. They all arrived in the nick of time to help save the day.

What to be thankful for this holiday season

Connor Kockler
Guest writer



As the snow starts to come down and the holiday season is upon us, I've been increasingly thinking about the season and what I'm thankful for. It can be very routine for us to look back at the year in review and talk about what we did, what we are happy with, and what we want to improve in the future. This year though, I think it's especially important considering the changes taking place this year, both in our world and in my own experiences. So I think we can all take this time as one especially to reflect, given all the uncertainty we have experienced.

I think we can all remember back to March 2020 as the time when things really started to change for many of us. I remember being sent home from college because of COVID-19, wondering how long this changed landscape might last and what was going to come of it. A pandemic seemed like a very surreal concept, not something I'd be experiencing myself. More than a year later, and with so much damage caused by the losses many of us have experienced, it can be tough to find any hope this situation will improve.

I know I've been lucky and grateful that people close to me have largely stayed healthy, and that the measures we have taken to be careful, though they have been exhausting

at times, have been paying off. The fact we could have a relatively "normal" Thanksgiving dinner this year because of improvements that have been made in the situation like vaccines was very rewarding and made me hopeful things will continue to improve moving forward.

I am thankful even with all this uncertainty and change in the wider world, that I have still been lucky enough to have a college experience during this time filled with supportive friends and professors and staff who have made my time at St. John's University a great one, and that we have supported each other through all of this. I was unsure at the start of last year how college would go with COVID and with the increasing prospect of deciding on next steps after graduation. But looking back, I'm thankful for all of the people I met or reconnected with and all the experiences I had in that time that helped me learn even more and be confident I'm on the right path for the future.

Although senior year now has been a challenging one at times with

how busy everything is, this ground-work built up throughout the last few years has made what's really important come into focus and helped me truly appreciate what is going well even when some days may be tough ones to get through. Whenever I'm having a day that feels overwhelming, I'm grateful I can lean on my friends and resources and that together we can tackle a problem or just have fun and enjoy life when we need a break. There are so many people from my time here at CSB/SJU I know I'll enjoy being able to stay in contact with long after graduation.

Though this time has certainly been a stressful and challenging one in many ways, I think about how these kinds of experiences can be formative in the future. I hope in this holiday season we can all reflect on what has been hard and different this year, but then also what we're looking forward to and what we're thankful for. I wish us all a good holiday season and the holiday spirit of hope, renewal and reflection becomes a reality for us all as we move into the new year.

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

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

Choosing a Dentist

Visiting the dentist can be nerve wracking. A study published by the U.S. National Library of Medicine and National Institutes for Health found more than a third of Americans experience some kind of dental anxiety.

A case of the nerves shouldn't be a reason to skip the dentist's chair, though. "Your dental health is such a vital part of your overall health, so it's important for every patient to have a dental home," Dr. Cathy Taylor-Osborne, a dentist and director of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment's Bureau of Oral Health, told the American Dental Association. "That means there is always someone looking out for the best interest of you and your family."



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THINGS TO CONSIDER
You can battle dental anxiety by making sure you're comfortable with your dental practice. Some questions to consider when choosing a dentist include:

- Is the office easy to get to? Do they have convenient office hours?
- Is this dentist in your insurance network?
- Is the dentist a member of the ADA or any other profes-

sional organizations?

- Will the dentist explain ways to help you prevent dental health problems?
- How does the office handle emergencies outside of office hours?
- Is the office staff familiar with your benefits plan and do they offer other financial options for treatment costs?

TOOLS FOR YOUR SEARCH
The ADA has an online

Find-A-Dentist tool that allows you to search for a dentist by name, location and specialty.
Your local dental society can also give you recommendations, and, of course, you should ask your friends and relatives in the area. If you don't have dental benefits or can't afford dental services, your local health department or dental schools can help you find care, the ADA says. So

don't be afraid to reach out.

FINDING THE RIGHT DENTIST
Most dental offices allow you to schedule a consultation with the dentist before you have any work done. Make a list of questions to bring with you and bring your health records with you so the dentist can take a look at your history.
You should share any concerns or anxiety you have

about visiting the dentist. With so many Americans experiencing anxiety, chances are your dentist will have a way to help you cope.
"So much of your dental health can impact your overall health," Dr. Taylor-Osborne said. "Look for someone who can be a coach to motivate you, a trusted adviser to turn to when health issues arise and a partner to make dental care decisions with."



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Calendar

from page 2

"A Ceremony of Carols," presented by The St. John's Boys Choir, 2 and 7:30 p.m., St. Mary's Cathedral, 25 8th Ave. S., St. Cloud.

Historic Salem Church Christmas Program, 3-4:15 p.m. Horse-drawn wagon rides, 4:30 p.m. Old-fashioned Christmas program. 28547 220th St., Paynesville.

Sunday, Dec. 19
Rock & Roll Christmas Spectacular. 7:30 p.m. Dec 19-23, Paramount Center for the Arts, 913 W St. Germain, St. Cloud. paramountarts.org.

Monday, Dec. 20
St. Joseph City Council, 6 p.m., Government Center, 75 Callaway St. E.

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

Tuesday, Dec. 21
St. Joseph Economic Development Authority, noon, Government Center, 75 Callaway St. E.

St. Joseph Food Shelf, open 1-3 p.m., 18 Birch St. E, St. Joseph.

St. Joseph Lions Club, 7 p.m., Millstream Park Pavilion, 101 Fifth Ave. NW., St. Joseph.

Thursday, Dec. 23
St. Joseph Food Shelf, open 1-3 p.m., 18 Birch St. E, St. Joseph.

Christmas in The Barn, 7 p.m. tonight and Dec. 24, 26258 County Road 2 (between Cold Spring & St. Joseph) watch for signs. Narration of the Christmas story, hymns, hot cider and more!

Friday, Dec. 24
Paramount 100th Birthday Party, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., Paramount Center for the Arts, 913 W St. Germain, St. Cloud. Free cake, coffee. paramountarts.org.

Christmas Eve Worship, 3 & 5:30 p.m., Resurrection Lutheran Church, 610 N. CR 2, St. Joseph.

Holiday Mass, 4 & 9 p.m., Church of Saint Joseph, 12 W. Minnesota St., St. Joseph.

Christmas Mass, 5 p.m., St. John's Abbey, 2900 Abbey Plaza, Collegeville.

Christmas at St. Benedict's Monastery, 8 p.m., Sacred Heart Chapel, 104 Chapel Lane, St. Joseph.

Dental Care and COVID-19

The need for good oral health practices didn't take a break for the COVID-19 pandemic.

There may be few things, however, that are different as your oral health professionals take precautions against the pandemic.

BEFORE YOUR APPOINTMENT

The American Dental Association's guidelines help dentists and other oral health professionals control infections both amongst their staff and their patients. And it's working. A June 2021 study showed monthly infection rates for dentists were as low as 0.2%.

To help make sure their patients are healthy, your dentist may call and ask you some questions before your appointment. These will cover your general health and possibly your vaccination status. You may also be asked to limit the number of people you bring with you to your appointment, meaning your children may have to stay at home or wait in the car.

AT YOUR APPOINTMENT

Bring a mask to your appointment, especially if your state or local government is requiring people to wear masks in public. Some areas are only requiring it for medical practices and, in other



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places, each business – and your dentist's office is a business – has their own requirements. It's best to be prepared.

You may be asked to wait outside or in your car until the staff is ready for you, reducing the number of people in the office and the time that you're close to other people.

You may have your temperature taken and you may be offered hand sanitizer or the opportunity to wash your hands. You may also notice staff cleaning and wiping down surfaces more than usual, and there could be more protective equipment present. Some dental instruments may be

switched to disposable items that can be thrown away instead of reused.

AFTER YOUR APPOINTMENT

The staff will thoroughly clean areas to prepare for the next patient. They may start doing this while you're still

waiting to leave or check out. If you start feeling ill or test positive for COVID-19 after your appointment, call the dental office even if you've been vaccinated. You may have been carrying the virus when you visited, so anyone you came in contact with should be notified.

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CASH BACK

Many cards offer cash back for types of purchases or payments. There are, however, some pitfalls to be aware of. Some programs cap the cash back annually, cash back rewards and amounts can change on a regular basis or the cash back may depend on how quickly you pay off your balance.

DISCOUNTS OR GIFT CARDS

Another common inducement to

open a card is a free gift card for opening an account.

Also look to see if your card gives you discounts with certain merchants or on certain types of purchases. This is similar to cash back, so some of the same warnings apply here, too.

INSURANCE

Some credit cards offer insurance on rental cars if the card is used to book the rental. Others offer insurance that makes payments on behalf of the cardholder if they can't make their payments because of a loss in income. Buyer beware,

however. The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau has taken action against some of these policies for unethical practices in sales and distribution of these policies.

CELL PHONE PROTECTION

If you pay your cell phone bill with your credit card, that card issuer may offer cell phone protection plans to help offset the cost of repairing or replacing your phone. As with most perks, however, there is a but. Some cards cap their plans, so if you have the priciest new model, it may not be much help.

FREE SHIPPING

Online shoppers, take note. Some credit cards offer free ShopRunner access, giving you free two-day shipping with more than 100 online retailers.

Enroll for free with your eligible card and add to cart.

EVENT ACCESS

Always on the go? Your card may be able to help with that. Many credit card issuers will offer exclusive access to entertainment events, such as presale tickets, priority seating and complimentary access.



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