



Friday, Dec. 24, 2021
Volume 26, Issue 24
Est. 1995

Town Crier

Donate blood this holiday season!

Blood donated through the American Red Cross helps patients of all ages including cancer and sickle cell patients, trauma and burn patients, and patients with chronic diseases. Minimum requirements for whole-blood donation include donation frequency of every 56 days, must be in good health and feeling well, at least age 16 and weigh at least 110 pounds. Visit www.redcross.org for more information. A one-time blood donation can save up to three lives! Schedule an appointment to give blood today! Visit <https://www.redcrossblood.org/give.html/find-drive>.

Food shelf asks for donations

Catholic Charities Emergency Services food shelf is looking for donations of peanut butter, canned meats such as tuna and chicken, vegetable oil, oil spray, flour, sugar, pancake mix and syrup, and seasonings. While cash donations stretch the farthest, donations provide a respectful variety for clients to choose from. Donations are accepted from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Mondays, 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Wednesdays and 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Fridays. Donations can be delivered to donation door D (door closest to Ten Voorde Ford). Please do not leave donations outside their doors. Donations must be collected and weighed by Catholic Charities staff to ensure food safety standards and inventory tracking. Outside of these times, please call 320-229-4560 to coordinate another drop off time.

Meals on Wheels seeks drivers

Meals on Wheels Drivers provide nutritious noon meals and social interaction to homebound seniors in and around the greater St. Cloud area. Meals are delivered Monday and Wednesday with the exception of holidays. Approximately one hour per week, starting at 10:30 a.m. Driver's license, personal vehicle and current insurance is required. Meals are picked up at Whitney Senior Center in St. Cloud. Please call Annie Hendriksen at Catholic Charities at 320-229-4590.

MERRY
CHRISTMAS
& HAPPY NEW YEAR

INSERT:
City of St. Stephen
newsletter

Parents asked to help with social media abuse

by Mike Knaak
news@newsleaders.com

School leaders are again asking for parents' help after an increase in disruptive and in some cases illegal social media posts.

In a letter to Sartell middle and high school parents, principals reported photos of students posted on Instagram and TikTok accounts such as Sartell Dumps, Sartell Bozos and Sartell Cringe.

The letter asks parents to talk with children about their social media accounts and content.

"Find out what groups they are part of and share that being part of the audience can also contribute to students posting inappropriate content. Assist your child in deleting their accounts if you feel they have crossed a line or are engaging in unsafe practices. Both secondary schools have cell phone policies that are not being fol-

lowed," High School Principal Sascha Hansen and Middle School Principal Laura Arndt wrote in the letter.

While the consequences for phone and social media misuse can result in suspension and in some cases legal penalties, Superintendent Jeff Ridlehoover said school leaders are aiming to change behavior.

Students may not be aware of the ramifications of their actions, he said.

"When people are on their phones it's easy to say and do things thinking you are anonymous and don't see the person face to face," Ridlehoover said.

"The impact of these issues is not insignificant. Students are reporting the social media accounts and content of these accounts make them feel unsafe and that their privacy has been violated," the principals noted

Media • page 8

2021 Year in Review

Re-emerging to a new normal in 2021

Jan. 8 edition

The search for a new Sartell-St. Stephen school district superintendent is off to a fast start with an online survey and focus groups. The district hired consultants School Exec Connect to conduct the search after Superintendent Jeff Schwiebert

told the board in December that he plans to retire at the end of June.

For many months, Sartell's Celebration Lutheran Church Community Free Store has provided food, comfort items and – just as important – hope to COVID-positive households in



photo by Carolyn Bertsch

Santa Claus and an elf prepare to spread good cheer and well-wishes Dec. 22 from atop a Sartell firetruck.

quarantine, to families where a father had lost his job, to single mothers whose work hours have been cut back and to homeless families housed in motels. They've been helping area people in need since the COVID-19 pandemic began almost one year ago, and they are

still working hard because the need for help continues.

Jan. 22 edition

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

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Students build, company donates land for Habitat house



photo by Mike Knaak

Sartell students (from left) Dutch Nordby, Mason Dulski and Jacob Merrill install soffits. Nordby and Merrill are headed to Alexandria Technical & Community College next year.

by Mike Knaak
news@thenewsleaders.com

Sartell High School students have been busy building a Habitat for Humanity house and now, thanks to a land donation from a local company, the completed home will stay in the Sartell-St. Stephen school district.

Ryan and Bethany Cross, co-owners of BCI Construction, donated a lot they owned in their Sartell neighborhood so the six-bedroom, three-bath 2,112 square-foot bi-level may be moved to its permanent location in the spring of 2022.

The original Sartell property where the home was to be moved fell through. After weeks of looking for a suitable replacement, it seemed the only option was to move the home outside of the Sartell community. Joe

Schulte, SabreCON Instructor, mentioned the lack of available real estate to Ryan and Bethany Cross at a community event.

The Crosses quickly determined the opportunity to donate the lot would likely be a perfect fit. The half-acre wooded lot is nestled in an established neighborhood, which would be ideal for a family home.

On a recent unseasonably warm winter afternoon, Schulte's students scrambled up scaffolding and installed soffits on the house under construction at the high school. While several crews worked outside, another team worked on the interior. Schulte circled the house and offered tips and an occasional helping hand.

For the students, the project is a chance to help the community

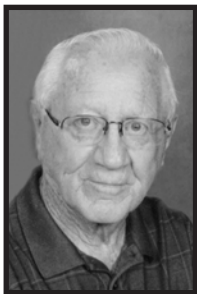
Habitat • page 8

Obituary

**LeRoy “Lee” J. Menke, 87
Sartell
July 30, 1934-Dec. 12, 2021**

LeRoy J. Menke, 87, of Sartell died Dec. 12 at his home. His funeral was held Dec. 18 at St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church, Sartell. The Rev. Ronald Weyrens officiated and burial on Dec. 20 was in the Minnesota State Veterans Cemetery near Little Falls.

Menke was born July 30, 1934 in Cold Spring to Raymond and Luella (Hansen) Menke. He worked at the OK Café throughout high school and graduated from Cathedral High School in 1953. Menke honorably served our country in the U.S. Army from 1958-1960. He married Rosemary Maehren on July 23, 1960 at St. Peter’s Catholic Church in St. Cloud. He was a sheet metal worker for AER, Phillips, and Weidner’s Plumbing & Heating, retiring in 1996. He was a member of St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church and Sheet Metal Local Union 10 where he served on the



Menke

Apprenticeship Board. Menke was faithful, loving, caring and proud of his German heritage. He was a Mr. Fix-it and promised he could make anything out of sheet metal but usually used wood. Menke was a hard worker, a good example for his children and had a strong faith. He enjoyed fishing and gardening.

Survivors include the following: his wife, Rosemary of Sartell; sons and daughter, Brian (Erica) of Royalton, Lisa (Bill) Kittleson of St. Augustine, Florida, and Stephen (Terri) of Edina; sisters, Dorothy Wollak of Inver Grove Heights, Irene Maze of Rochester, and Jean Larson of Waite Park; grandchildren, Bryan, Alex, Isaac, Jonathan, Olivia, Paul, Jaylen, Simeon and Lea; and great-grandchild, Zy’Aire.

He was preceded in death by his parents; daughter-in-law, Sandy Menke; brothers, Jerry, Virgil, and infant brother, Jimmy; and sisters, Laverne Seman and Betty Menke.

The family would like to thank CentraCare Hospice for the wonderful care provided to Menke.

Obituary, guest book and video tribute available online: www.williamsdingmann.com.

If you have a tip concerning a crime, call the Sartell Police Department at 320-251-8186 or Tri-County Crime Stoppers at 320-255-1301, or access its tip site at tricity-crimestoppers.org. Crime Stoppers offers rewards up to \$1,000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of those responsible for a crime.

Dec. 7

3:01 a.m. Alarm. Sixth Avenue N. Officers were called to a residence for an alarm covering the garage and had been motion tripped two times. When the first officer arrived, they noted no tracks were left in the snow in the backyard or near the service door. The officer was not able to contact the homeowner. The officer did locate tracks along the property line and a deputy assisted in checking and following them, which led to a shed with the door open. The officers tried contacting this homeowner but were unsuccessful. The shed was checked, and no one was located. The officers secured the door.

Dec. 8

5:30 p.m. Crash. Highway 10/ Highway 15. Officers were requested to respond to a Benton County call of a rollover crash near the split. Multiple units responded and checked the area and were unable to locate any crashes.

Dec. 9

8:59 p.m. Suspicious vehicle. Ninth Avenue N. An officer was requested to check a black four-door car parked outside the com-

plainant’s address for the last 15 minutes that did not belong there. The officer arrived and made contact with a female party who was visibly upset. The officer spoke to her, and she told the officer she had an argument with her boyfriend and pulled over to gather herself. The officer made contact with the female’s mom and they both agreed she could drive home once she was ready.

Dec. 10

10:25 p.m. Verbal. Second Street N. Officers were requested to respond to a residence for a verbal argument that started over a cell phone. The female told dispatch she was pregnant and very upset. Dispatch informed the officer things seemed calm as the male party was going to the front doors to wait for them. The officers were able to determine nothing physical happened and both parties agreed to leave each other alone. A short time later, officers were called back to the same residence for the same issue. Again, the officers determined nothing was physical and were able to help the parties mediate through the argument over the cell phone. Neither party would leave for the night. They agreed they would stay in separate rooms.

Dec. 11

8:05 p.m. Suspicious smell. Seventh Avenue S. Officers were requested to an apartment complex for an odor of marijuana. The officer confirmed the smell was coming from a certain apartment. Officers spoke to the tenant, who admitted to smoking marijuana.

Dec. 12

10:36 a.m. Parking violation. Third Avenue N. An officer was flagged over to assist with getting three vehicles removed from a parking lot that needed to be plowed. The officer saw footprints leading from the vehicles to a nearby home. The officer contacted a male who stated he knew who the cars belonged to and would get them moved.

Dec. 13

9:39 a.m. Stolen vehicle. Northstar Court. An officer was dispatched to a report of a stolen vehicle. The officer spoke to the complainant who stated his son stole the vehicle from a work site. The complainant stated this is the third time his son has done this type of activity and now wants law enforcement’s help. The officer was asked to have the vehicle entered as stolen, and a short time later the officer was contacted by State Patrol that the vehicle and driver had been located. The driver was placed under arrest and transported to the Ramsey County Jail by State Patrol.

Dec. 14

9:39 p.m. Driving complaint. First Street NE. An officer was dispatched for a black Cadillac cutting off the complainant. The Cadillac appeared to be tailgating the vehicle in front of them. The

Blotter • page 10

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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. 24

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

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

Holiday Mass, 4 and 9 p.m., Church of St. 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.

Saturday, Dec. 25

Holiday Mass, 8:30 a.m., Church of St. Joseph, 12 W Minnesota St. Joseph.

Christmas at St. Benedict’s Monastery, 10:30 a.m., Sacred Heart Chapel, 104 Chapel

Calendar • page 5

Sartell-St. Stephen • St. Joseph

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Published every other Friday by Von Meyer Publishing Inc.

The Sartell-St. Stephen Newsleaders is the legal newspaper for the Sartell-St. Stephen school district and city of St. Stephen

Publisher/Owner
Janelle Von Pinnon

Editor
Leanne Loy

Assignment Editor
Carolyn Bertsch

Assistant Manager
Rajahna Schneekloth

Designers
Marg Crumley & Meagan Simonson

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.

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

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

Phone: (320) 363-7741 • E-mail: news@thenewsleaders.com

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to ST. JOSEPH NEWSLEADER, 1622 11th Ave. SE, St. Cloud, MN 56304

YIR

from front page

presented virtually four short shows, three of them written by current or former students 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.

Kindergarten through fifth-grade students returned to in-person learning on Jan. 11 while middle and high school students continued classes in the hybrid model while COVID-19 guidelines are in place.

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. 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.

Feb. 5 edition
The team leading the search for a new Sartell-St. Stephen school superintendent found focus groups and online survey responses agreed on the district’s goals, strengths, challenges and a profile for the next district leader. The team’s research revealed the new superintendent’s goals should be to improve and enhance academic achievement, implement the equity audit now underway and address student mental health needs, especially after COVID. The survey showed district strengths include a high regard for staff and the high expectations they set. Responses also cited new facilities, strong academics, the amount of parent and community support and the many academic and activity options for students. Addressing equity issues and embracing diversity was by far the top challenge.

State funds, the continuing COVID-19 pandemic and unusually uncertain enrollment projections complicate planning for next year’s Sartell-St. Stephen school district budget. The district expects to receive additional COVID-19 federal money that would be like adding 1 percent to the funding formula. State funding and expenses are directly tied to enrollment. Kindergarten enrollment dropped from 311 students at the end of the 2019-2020 academic year to 252

students as of January. Some parents may have held students back because of COVID-19 restrictions.

The Sartell City Council, at its Jan. 25 meeting, agreed unanimously to refund a total of \$35,200 in on-sale liquor-license fees to 11 local bars/restaurants. It was part of a resolution passed by the council in ongoing efforts to help smaller businesses stay afloat during the interconnected difficulties brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, small businesses in Sartell received just under \$1 million last year in CARES Act funding approved by the U.S. Congress last March. CARES Act stands for Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act. A portion of that \$2.2-trillion stimulus bill was intended to help businesses weather the virus crisis.

Young entrepreneurs are finding innovative ways of selling Girl Scout cookies in the COVID-19 era. Beginning Feb. 16, people can order Girl Scout Cookies for pickup or delivery on Grubhub.com or through the Grubhub app as traditional selling methods are limited for the second season in a row.

Feb. 19 edition
What started as an innovation to celebrate a high school tradition during a pandemic may become an annual event. Sartell High School parents are planning another Senior Parade for the night before the June 5 graduation ceremony. During the parade, socially distanced seniors will line up along Pinecone Road while family members drive by. The parade will be limited to two vehicles per graduate for a parade of more than 600 vehicles.

There’s some good news about the half-cent regional sales tax revenue for Sartell. At the Jan. 25 city council meeting, it was announced despite lowered sales-tax revenue in October of 2019, the city still managed to receive 0.4 percent above the 2019 allocation and exceeded the 2020 budgeted sales-tax amount by \$43,244, or by 3.6 percent during the last two months of 2019.

March 5 edition
Three finalists were selected in the district’s superintendent search. The Sartell-St. Stephen school board selected a slate of six candidates from a pool of 18 applicants during a special meeting March 1 and then narrowed that down to three following initial interviews..

Sartell and St. Stephen Mock Trial and Math teams compete at state tournaments.

March 19 edition
The Sartell-St. Stephen school board picked Jeff Riddlehoover, currently the assistant superintendent for Mounds View schools, to be the district’s next superintendent. His contract begins July 1, 2021.

A perennially popular family activity – birdhouse building – will again take place in St. Stephen this year, but this time by “distance.” From 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Sunday, March 21, the St. Stephen Sportsmen’s Club will hand out bird-building kits in what’s dubbed as a “Birdhouse Giveaway” in a drive-by at St. Stephen City Hall. In previous years, parents and children loved coming to city hall to pitch in and help one another build the birdhouses, with pre-cut wood pieces and tools supplied by Sportsmen’s Club members and other contributors and volunteers.

An extensive bike-trails plan is taking shape for Sartell’s Sauk River Regional Park, and construction might begin as early as fall 2021. The trail system will involve a paved trail from the park’s parking lot to a swimming beach at Sauk River, as well as many other interconnected trails designed for various skill levels of bikers.

April 2 edition
In a school full of innovative education transformations, none is more dazzling than Riverview Intermediate’s Pier. What was once the old middle school’s swimming pool is now a new space for a wide range of fitness activities for third-, fourth- and fifth-graders. The room’s centerpiece is a giant video interactive playground projected on an entire wall. Instructors cue up a range of interactive exercises from throwing at a target to dance and exercise.

Lori Dornburg, a highly esteemed Sartell-St. Stephen Middle School teacher, has been named Minnesota Teacher of the Year 2020-21 for grades six through eight by the Veterans of Foreign Wars organization.

With the increasing diversity among Sartell-St. Stephen students, the district is now eligible for a state program that supports American Indian students and raises knowledge of American Indian heritage for all students. The district recently passed a 20-student threshold requiring the district to establish an American Indian Parent Advisory Committee. The requirement also comes with state funding that will total \$20,716 for the 2021-22 school year.

Quite often, it’s what you don’t know that can hurt you the most. Just ask Nathan Bonzelet, Sartell’s new building inspector. Almost every day he meets at least one resident who tells him, voice full of surprise, “I didn’t know that!” Smoke detectors and carbon-monoxide detectors are just two examples. Everybody knows the importance of periodic battery replacement, but not too many know the detectors themselves wear out, often between seven and 10 years. They should be checked and then replaced with new ones, Bonzelet advises.

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Review

2021

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YIR

from page 3

April 30 edition

The third round of federal COVID-19 relief money will boost the Sartell-St. Stephen school district's budget for the 2021-22 school year. The district received \$794,506 in the most recent round of federal support, Joe Prom, director of Business Services, told the school board at its April 19 meeting. With the money, the district will be able to maintain current staffing levels and add mental health and academic intervention positions, Prom said.

In one of the most ambitious projects in Sartell history, County Road 1 (also known as Riverside Drive) will be completely restructured and enhanced for utilities, safety, aesthetics, river access and recreational options. The project, estimated to cost about \$12.5 million, will even include a pedestrian walkway on the old abandoned bridge that has long served as a utility connection between east and west Sartell. The changes will be made from Sartell Street at the south end to 12th Street N.

Throughout the decades, there have been thousands upon thousands of church services at the Catholic Church of St. Stephen, but the two Masses that took place April 24 and 25 were very special indeed. The two-day celebration was billed as "Slovenian Heritage Weekend" – not surprising since St. Stephen and its church were founded by immigrants from Slovenia, many of whose descendants still live in or near the city. The services on Saturday evening and Sunday morning commemorated the 150th year since the founding and construction of the European-style yellow-brick church.

May 14 edition

A major piece of the Sartell-St. Stephen school district's effort to address education equity has been completed. Board members heard a plan for how an Education Equity Committee would function at its May 5 work session. More than two-dozen people contributed to a planning group that developed the plan during the past four months via Zoom meetings.

The "twin" arenas at the Scheels Athletic Complex in Sartell are now united physically, and the brand-new one – with its all-sports artificial turf – will be open for rentals starting May 17. Arena officials call this week a "soft opening," meaning the arena will be in use for play but that the grand opening, with all the public speeches and hoopla, won't happen until early this fall. The long-anticipated new facility is known as RDR Arena, named for its major donor, Regional Diagnostic Radiology. Ice rentals for the other ice-only

arena (Bernick's Arena) will be available starting Nov. 7.

Minnesota roads are no stranger to the damage of de-icing in winter. Now, a Sartell native is working on a research project at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville to study the long-term impacts of these treatments on concrete durability. After receiving the Undergraduate Research, Scholarly and Creative Activity Scholarship his freshman year at UW-Platteville, Dylan Notsch, a sophomore this current academic year, is working on this research with Dr. Danny Xiao, assistant professor of civil engineering.

June 11 edition

The city of Sartell issued a watering ban June 9 due to extremely low water levels. No irrigation is allowed on public or private properties, and the Watab Park Splash Pad has been closed. Anyone found watering up until the ban is lifted may receive a citation – \$100 for the first citation and each consecutive violation increases by \$100 increments.

The Sartell Muskies baseball team scored a resounding championship in the annual Omann Invitational Tournament held last weekend in Sartell. In the tournament's three games, the Muskies gave up only one run. So far this season, the Muskies have had no errors in their last six games and only two errors out of 12 games.

COVID safety plans are in place for summer school and activities in the Sartell-St. Stephen school district. For children ages 11 and younger, masks are required indoors for all students and unvaccinated staff. Masks are not required outdoors. For children ages 12 and older, masks are encouraged but not required for all unvaccinated staff and students. Masks are not required outdoors. Masks are required for all students on school transportation vehicles.

June 25 edition

Equity Alliance MN presented its long-awaited report and recommendations at the June 21 Sartell-St. Stephen school board meeting, but not before 12 people, mostly opposed to the equity effort, spoke during the board's open forum period at the beginning of the meeting. Equity Alliance staff outlined findings of its study that included reviewing data, focus groups with students, staff and community members and observations of the district's schools. The district's effort to address equity, which promises that each student, particularly students of color, receive the support needed to be successful in school, picked up support following last summer's killing of George Floyd. During a listening session in June 2020, students and parents shared stories of racism, and hurtful comments about religion and gender.

Sartell's star is bound to shine brightly Wednesday, June 30 when Fox 9 TV News features the city throughout the day and evening as part of its "Town Ball Tour" series. "Town Ball Tour Sartell" will spotlight a variety of aspects of what makes the city unique: industries, restaurants, the river, parks, recreation, sports and more. There will be news features throughout the day, including interviews with many Sartell residents. A major highlight will be the Fox 9 News live-streaming of a baseball game between long-time adult amateur rivals – the Sartell Stone Poneys and the Sartell Muskies.

July 23 edition

About 20 people showed up for the July 19 Sartell-St. Stephen school board meeting wearing blue shirts with the message Kids Over Politics. But that message was soon lost as the national debate about critical race theory dominated the meeting's open-forum period. A crowd of about 125 packed the old elementary school gymnasium after the meeting was moved from its announced location in the District Service Center board room down the hall. Typically, few people attend school board meetings and the board room is adequate. Most came to voice their concerns about the district's equity audit report. Eighteen people spoke during the open-forum period, which allows each speaker up to three minutes to address the board. During this time, the board listens but doesn't respond.

The brand-new Center for Pain Management in Sartell will host an open house from 4:30-7:30 p.m. Monday, July 26, and all area residents are welcome to attend. There will be a ribbon-cutting ceremony and hors d'oeuvres served throughout the event. The new building, built by Nor-Son Construction, is at 804 23rd St. S. just off Pinecone Road S. and near the Sta-Fit gym. For several years, the Center for Pain Management was located on Connecticut Avenue within the Sartell Medical Campus area.

Aug. 6 edition

After weeks of backlash to a consultant's equity audit survey and report, the Sartell-St. Stephen school district voted Aug. 2 to part ways with the group Equity Alliance MN and move ahead to tackle the district's equity issues with a committee of parents, students, community members and staff. Superintendent Jeff Riddlehoover recommended the move and the entire board agreed during a special meeting. The move came after mounting criticism of how the audit survey was conducted and how Equity Alliance analyzed the data.

Long-time Sartell dragster Gary Olson's win at Brainerd

Calendar YIR

from page 2

Lane, St. Joseph.

Free Christmas Day Dinner, sponsored by the East Side VFW, 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Join for an in-person dining experience or order to go! All are welcome. Turkey, ham, vegetarian dishes, dessert and more! Contact 320-217-5839 or agapewarriorsministry@gmail.com for more information.

Sunday, Dec. 26

Worship, 9 a.m., Resurrection Lutheran Church, 610 N. CR 2, St. Joseph.

Skating rink now open! 25 5th St. NE, located off of CR 2 and Fifth St. NE. The skating rink is now open with lights until 10 p.m. at Smoley Fields.

Monday, Dec. 27

Frozen Meal Distribution –Catholic Charities, 8-10:30 a.m., Celebration Lutheran Church, 1500 Pinecone Road N., Sartell. Participants must be age 60 or older. For information, call 320-229-4584.

Sartell City Council, 6 p.m., City Hall, 125 Pinecone Road N.

Tuesday, Dec. 28

The Texas Tenors’ Deep in the Heart of Christmas. Show times: 1:30 and 7:30 p.m., Paramount Center for the Arts, 913 W. St. Germain St., St. Cloud. paramountarts.org.

Thursday, Dec. 30

Coffee and Conversation, a senior discussion group, 9 a.m., Sartell Community Center, 850 19th St. S. Topic: A Year in Review.

The Nights Before Christmas Tour: Shaun Johnson + The Big Band Experience, Evolution of big band music, 7:30 p.m., Paramount Center for the Arts, 913 W. St. Germain St., St. Cloud. paramountarts.org.

Friday, Dec. 31

Tonic Sol Fa, a cappella quartet, 7:30 p.m., Paramount Center for the Arts, 913 W. St. Germain St., St. Cloud. paramountarts.org.

Monday, Jan. 3

Sartell Lions Club, 6:30 p.m., Stewart Giffin at 651-261-4272 regarding meeting details.

Wednesday, Jan. 5

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

Thursday, Jan. 6

Coffee and Conversation, a senior discussion group, 9 a.m., Sartell Community Center, 850 19th St. S. Topic: Chief Jim Hughes, “A Day in the Life of a Police Officer.”

from page 4

International Raceway July 17 was almost literally “frosting on the cake.” It happened on Olson’s 52nd birthday, and what a birthday triumph it was to be named “Summit King of the Track” after winning by .0004 of a second or literally about 13 inches of roadway at the finish line, a hair’s breadth, a mere squeak ahead of his competitor.

After 41 years of dedicated service, Tom Jensen “TJ” has retired as the director of physical therapy at St. Cloud Orthopedics, but not before helping welcome the new director – a longtime colleague. Jensen not only started the original physical therapy and athletic training program at the clinic but also helped select the new director, Chad Ritter, who has worked at St. Cloud Orthopedics for 18 years, and prior to that was a recipient of Jensen’s training and mentorship during high school.

A Sartell resident, Zurya Anjum, pleaded with the Sartell mayor and the four city-council members to join the school district in active efforts to develop ways to stop harassment and bullying of students. Anjum spoke for three minutes during the Open Forum portion of the July 26 city council meeting. Anjum, a psychiatrist, is originally from Pakistan. She and her family moved to Sartell 15 years ago, partly because of its reputation as an excellent school district. But schools are in “crisis right now,” she added.

Aug. 20 edition

Despite being a new a business and making it through a pandemic, Studio B, a dance studio in Sartell, is moving to a larger location – the old police station in Sartell. Studio B has been a part of the Sartell area for the past two years. Owner and founder Catie Bunde has been teaching dance for more than 23 years. She was inspired by some of her students’ parents to start her own studio.

Sartell Police Chief described the recent “National Night Out” celebrations in Sartell as really fun events with lots of good food, good neighbors, good people. A total of 24 neighborhoods in the city organized their own outdoor parties for National Night Out, which is an annual event observed in cities nationwide to enhance public safety within neighborhoods. The get-togethers also allow neighbors to get to know one another, to raise awareness of safety issues and to open lines of communication between police officers, firefighters and other public servants.

A total ban on the use of non-essential outdoor water usage was implemented Aug. 17 by the city of Sartell as ordered by a requirement from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

All students and staff will be required to wear masks in the Sartell-St. Stephen school district when school opens. The mask requirement affects pre-kindergarten through high school seniors and staff, regardless of vaccination status, indoors during the school day.

Sartell’s population grew by 22 percent during the last de-

cade, according to data from the 2020 Census released Aug 12. Sartell has 19,351 people as of April 1, 2020, up from 15,876 in 2010.

Sept. 17 edition

A city-owned public basketball court in “The Wilds” neighborhood of Sartell will be moved next spring to Pinecone Central Park. The Sartell City Council at its Sept. 13 meeting agreed unanimously to take that action. Four residents from that neighborhood spoke up at the council meeting, as did five residents at the Aug. 23 meeting. The controversy over that basketball court first came before the council 18 months ago. About a year ago, the council voted to keep the park within the neighborhood while hoping a solution to the residents’ complaints could be found. Some speakers spoke forcefully for keeping the court in the neighborhood, and one man presented the council with a petition signed by 68 of the residents there who are in favor of keeping the court, which has been there for 20 years.

A Sartell High School assistant principal has been named the interim activities director. Nick Peterson, an assistant principal at the high school since 2016 will replace Ryan Hauge. Hauge, activities director since 2017, left to take the secondary school principal job in the Rocori school district.

The Sartell-St. Stephen school district’s Educational Equity and Student Experience committee met for the first time on Sept. 13. Overviews and notes from the committee and listening-session information are available on the district’s Educational Eq-

uity webpage: www.sartell.k12.mn.us/EducationalEquity.

Oct. 1 edition

Now that the latest data for the school year is available, the COVID-19 dashboard is back on the Sartell-St. Stephen school district’s website. The dashboard reports the current numbers of student and staff cases and absences for the last 14 days. The dashboard was posted Sept. 24 and will be updated every Thursday. For the previous 14-day period, there have been 54 positive COVID-19 cases among students and 11 staff cases. Those numbers translate to 238 student absences and 22 staff absences.

Sartell police cars will soon be sporting new decals after Police Chief Jim Hughes and other officers recently agreed to replace the “thin blue line” flag decal that some Sartell residents considered inappropriate and/or offensive. The new decal will show the words “REMEMBERING OUR FALLEN” above a blue line. Under the blue line it states “IN VALOR THERE IS HOPE.”

The need for more and a wider range of counseling services topped the list of issues raised during the first listening session organized by the Sartell-St. Stephen school district’s new Educational Equity and Student Experience committee. About 30 people, mostly adults, gathered at the high school’s Learning Stairs to share experiences and opinions during the 45-minute session led by Superintendent Jeff Riddlehoover on Sept. 20. The session’s topic, Student Support Services and Mental Health, was chosen by the committee after

YIR • page 8



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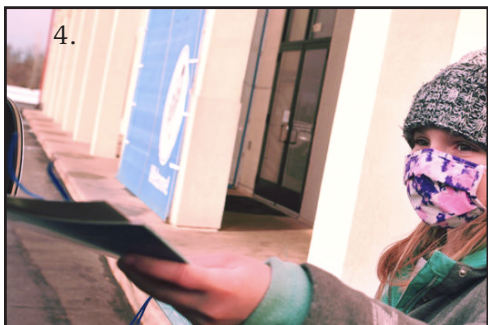
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Snapshots of 2021

While 2021 headlines tell of all we lost due to COVID-19, these snapshots tell all that we gained. Celebration and connection. Compassion. Resilience. Hope. We truly are in this together.



1. Jan. 22
photo by Mike Knaak

K-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.

2. March 19
photo by Carolyn Bertsch

Lucky day for Pot-o-Gold event
A group of co-workers from Encore Capital Group walk the Annual Country Financial Pot-o-Gold 5K together March 13 on a beautiful 45-degree morning in Sartell. They are (left to right) Christy Biss and Becky Wallin, both of St. Cloud; Sue Baker and Justina Gomes, both of Sartell; Russ Overman of Cold Spring; and Denise Condon of Sauk Rapids.

3. June 11
photos by Carolyn Bertsch

Park upgrades a big hit
Marin Darling (left) and Harlow Hines, both 7 and of Sartell, beat the heat June 3 at the Watab Park splash pad.

4. March 5
photo by Mike Knaak

Claire Holstrom hands out a book and a coloring sheet
during the I Love to Read Giveaway Feb. 23 at Blue Line Sports Bar & Grill. The event was sponsored by Sartell-St. Stephen Education Foundation. Three \$25 Blue Line gift certificates were stuffed in random books. Claire is a fourth-grader at Riverview Intermediate School. She was

helping her mother, foundation board member Amanda Holmstrom. Board member Hilary Burns (right) waits with more books.

5. April 16
photo by Mike Knaak

Sartell High School student Tyler Braegelmann records video at Northern Metal Products for a project his team is producing for the custom metal fabricator.

6. May 14
photo by Carolyn Bertsch

A sign of spring!
A mother mallard proudly leads her brood of ducklings across Eighth Avenue North

in Sartell on May 7.

7. Sept. 17
photo by Carolyn Bertsch

Taking a drive
August Fleming, 15 months, and his brother Henry, 4, both of Sartell, hop into a car Aug. 31 at the Pine Meadow Elementary playground and "drive to Sartell."

8. Nov. 12
photo by Carolyn Bertsch

Firefighter ladybug at Monster Dash

Rozlynae Dawson, 5, of St. Cloud, tries on her new firefighter hat Oct. 30 at the Monster Dash event in Sartell.

Mask requirement dropped for after-school, evening events

by Mike Knaak
news@thenewsleaders.com

Masks will no longer be required for after-school events and activities at Sartell schools. For sports and other events, masks are now “strongly recommended” for adults and students.

Masks will continue to be required during the school day, but at the Dec. 20 Sartell-St. Stephen school board meeting, board members debated the purpose for the continued mask mandate during the school day.

Superintendent Jeff Ridlehoover said the administration relaxed the after-school rules for three reasons: all students can be vaccinated if they choose to; the difficulty enforcing masking after hours and after-school events are voluntary while school attendance is required.

Board members Amanda Byrd and Tricia Meling challenged the change only for after-school events and asked why masks are still required during the school day.

Board chair Jeremy Snoberger said the district’s Covid committee supports continued masking. Kids, he said are required to be in school while activities are a choice.

Meling said that when she was a student, after-school activ-

ities such as sports were “not a choice, it was my life. My life was my sports.”

Board members Patrick Marushin and Matt Moehrle focused on hospitalizations and the board’s desire to keep kids in school. When the board voted in August, the decision was that masking was a key mitigation factor for keeping kids in school. Moehrle worried about keeping staff healthy so that schools can remain open if the mask requirement was dropped now.

“In the middle of an outbreak, not a time to reduce preventive measures,” Moehrle said.

“It’s too early to take a mitigation method away,” Marushin said.

Byrd argued “why do schools have to be the ones trying to keep hospital rates low when nobody else is masking? Why are we carrying the burden? We need to move this discussion to parents taking responsibility for their own kids. Our role isn’t to save the world and keep people out of the hospital.”

The board and administration will re-evaluate the mask situation in January.

According to the district’s Covid dashboard, there were 77 student cases as of Dec. 16. That was up from 66 student cases the previous week. Staff cases de-

creased from eight to three.

Tax levy approved

The board voted final approval for the 2022 tax levy. The board approved the \$60 million budget, which includes a 16 percent fund balance, up from 15 percent this year. The district’s policy calls for at least a 10 percent general fund balance. Salaries and expenses account for about 80 percent of district expenses. On the revenue side, state aid contributes 83 percent and local taxes account for 10.5 percent of revenue.

The property tax impact depends on a home’s value and if the value increased in the past year. On a \$250,000 home with no value increase, the school district’s share of property tax will decrease 3.72 percent from taxes paid in 2021. If a home valued at \$250,000 in 2021 increases to \$267,500 this year, a 7 percent increase, school taxes will increase by 3.65 percent in 2022.



photo by Carolyn Bertsch

Buckets of fun at Lake Francis Park
Robyn Krueger and her son Emmett, 7, of Sartell, enjoy hot chocolate while firefighter Luke Dingmann roasts marshmallows Dec. 17 at Lake Francis Park.

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Habitat

from front page

while also gaining valuable experience for entering the building trades.

YIR

from page 5

its first meeting on Sept. 13. Sartell now has a Parks Department supervisor, Tony Krueger, who will start his new job Oct. 3. Krueger is currently one of the maintenance workers for the Sartell Public Works Department. His appointment as parks supervisor was approved by the Sartell City Council at its Sept. 27 meeting. Selecting a supervisor is just one more step in Sartell’s plan to have a full-fledged Parks Department for the first time. The Sartell city budget for the coming year is remarkable for its “flat tax” rate, which means many, if not most, residents will not see a property-tax increase unless their market value increases.

Oct. 15 edition Supply chain shortages affecting restaurants, grocery stores and car dealers are now hitting school cafeterias. Shortages and delivery delays of school lunch staples such as chicken patties and chicken tenders send food services workers scrambling for replacements, according to Shelby Tanner, Sartell-St. Stephen school district Food Service director. Product shortages, discontinued items, on-time deliveries and price increases force school meal planners to look for substitutes and adjust menus. Many Sartell residents will get brand-new water meters, a decision approved late August by the city council.

Worries about so-called TikTok challenges prompted school and law enforcement officials to warn Sartell-St. Stephen parents about possible dangerous and illegal student behavior. Without its school system, Sartell might well have become a village or a town rather than an ever-growing city. Time and again on a recent citywide survey, respondents praised the school system, many saying its reputation for excellence is a major reason they moved to Sartell and a big reason they continue to live in the city. Sartell and its Public Works Department received a 2021 “City of Excellence Award” for a road pre-treatment program on the city’s main arterial roadways. The award was given by the League of Minnesota Cities. Starting in spring of 2022, the concessions stand in Pinecone Central Park will be operated by “Mr. Twisty,” an ice-cream shop whose permanent location has been in northwest St. Cloud for years.

“Out of our crew of 18 right now, most of them are going trades pathways,” Schulte said. “We have 10 students who are committed to technical colleges including St. Cloud Technical & Community College and Alexandria technical college. We have

Nov. 12 edition When seventh- and eighth-graders in Sartell Middle School’s What I Need classes head off to high school, they’ll leave behind a lasting contribution to their school. This fall the classes built and installed 23 benches at two outdoor learning spaces overlooking a pond west of the school. There are more than 100 homeless people living in or next to Sartell, according to Harry Fleegel, executive director of the St. Cloud-based “Homeless Helping Homeless,” a nonprofit organization. Based on Fleegel’s research and many personal connections, there are at any given time about five to 10 people living outside in tents, even in the coldest weather, in or near Sartell. Many others sleep in the homes (often on couches) of relatives, friends or acquaintances. During the day, those people tend to wander, seeking help in various places, Fleegel said. In the greater St. Cloud area, including Sartell, there are more than 1,000 homeless people in all categories of homelessness, according to Fleegel.

Nov. 26 edition Health topics – both physical and financial – dominated the Nov. 15 Sartell-St. Stephen school board meeting. District leaders will discuss modifications to the current Safe Learning Plan, including masking, at its Dec. 1 work group meeting. In the meantime, the district needs to comply with federal and state OSHA guidelines for staff vaccinations, Human Resources Krista Durrwachter said. The state has advised the district to comply with the rules while lawsuits in federal court move ahead. Thirty-one employees of the DeZURIK Co. in Sartell recently completed 48 hours of training to become members of a medical responder team at the plant and beyond. DeZURIK, the maker of specialty valves, has for many decades been one of the economic bedrocks/employers in Sartell. The company started in Sartell and is known throughout the world for its valves, some of them huge in scope. The company has about 300 onsite employees and others who work remotely. The state-certified licensed responders are now gung-ho ready to respond immediately to any medical crisis or workplace accident on the premises. Their training will allow them to help anywhere outside of the plant if they should witness or be called to an emergency, including right in their own homes with their own family members, guests or neighbors. The responders are now also Red Cross-certified.

a number of students who are looking at going directly into the trades and joining apprenticeship training programs working toward their journeyman’s license with local industry partner companies like J-Berd. Both are pathways of success into rewarding and promising careers for members of the crew.” Other students are considering architecture or civil engineering careers while others are considering welding and fabrication but want the construction trades experience. The Sartell students are building the upper level of the bi-level home. The foundation and lower level will be built at the home site and the students will likely be involved in some of that construction in the spring. This is the first home build collaboration

for Sartell High School. Ryan and Bethany Cross are part owners of BCI Construction Inc. in Sauk Rapids, where Ryan is the president and CEO. BCI employs about 50 construction professionals. Bethany is an attorney at Rinke Noonan in St. Cloud practicing real estate, estate planning and business law. “We are invested in our community, and this opportunity aligns with our family values beautifully,” Ryan Cross said in a statement. “Our family is able to support our local community and help in educating skilled trades people, who are vital to our community and our workforce. As an added bonus, we can also help a family with a hand up as they invest their time, education and sweat equity into a solid start to homeownership.”



photo by Mike Knaak

The upper level of the Habitat for Humanity bi-level is taking shape at Sartell High School.

Media

from front page

in the letter to parents. Earlier this school year, the issue of social media abuse was also addressed. Worries about so-called TikTok challenges prompted school and law enforcement officials to warn Sartell-St. Stephen parents in an email on Oct. 8 about possible dangerous and illegal student behavior. A few days later, a listening session focused on bullying, harassment and social media quickly turned to the special challenges of keeping students

safe on social media. The Oct. 18 session was the second meeting organized by the Sartell-St. Stephen school district’s new Educational Equity and Student Experience committee. Ridlehoover anticipates that one action resulting from that committee’s work will be an effort at restorative practices where a trained adult sits down with the students involved for a discussion of the abusive action, how it hurt those involved and how to resolve the situation. In that setting, Ridlehoover said, “kids will realize pretty quickly this is not where they want to go.” In addition to school consequences, students taking photo-

graphs of anyone in a bathroom or locker-room setting where there is an expectation of privacy is against Minnesota law that could result in gross misdemeanor or in some cases, felony charges. “These occurrences will be prosecuted legally as well as being subject to school disciplinary consequences,” the principals wrote. “These are serious things,” Ridlehoover said. “Nobody wants to be on the receiving end.” He asked families to help schools achieve the goals of “more kindness, support and an environment that welcomes everybody. Check your kids’ phones.”

People

Six Sartell students recently received bachelor’s degrees from Minnesota State University, Mankato. They are as follows: **Karisa Bienusa**, accounting; **Camilo Hernandez**, accounting; **Mckenna Hupf**, sociology; **Vanessa Ratke**, RN baccalaureate completion; **Taylor Schmidt**, history and political science, summa cum laude; and **Sydney Thi-eschafer**, aviation, summa cum laude

Two Sartell students recently received master’s degrees from Minnesota State University,

Mankato. They are as follows: **Christopher Knoll**, public administration; and **Kelsi Rostis**, accounting, magna cum laude.

SSEF awards more than \$24,000 in grants This fall the Sartell-St. Stephen Education Foundation opened the grant cycle to allow district staff the opportunity to have immediate impact in their classrooms. This allowed the staff to be responsive to the students’ needs in their current classes. The following programs were awarded grants:

Outdoor Learning Enhancements for Early Childhood - \$6,000, Oak Ridge Education Learning Center; **VEX Robotics Kits for Elementary** - \$3,500, ORELC & Pine Meadow Primary; **VersaTiles** - \$3,570, PMP; **Furthering Fine Motor in First Grade** - \$3,500, PMP; **Adaptive Music Instruments** - \$1,000, Sartell Middle School; **Speaker Jesse LeBeau: Leadership Training** - \$4,000, SMS; **Real Life Pregnancy Profile Simulator** - \$1,600, Sartell High School; and **Projection Mapping Equipment** - \$1,590, SHS.

PUBLIC NOITICE

REGULAR SCHOOL BOARD MEETING • SARTELL-ST. STEPHEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT NO 748
NOV. 15, 2021 • SARTELL HIGH SCHOOL

The regular school board meeting of Independent School District 748 was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Chair Jeremy Snoberger. Members present: Snoberger; Jason Nies, vice chair; Amanda Byrd, clerk; Matt Moehrle, treasurer; Patrick Marushin, director; Tricia Meling, director; and Dr. Jeff Ridlehoover, superintendent. Members absent: none.

A motion was made by Meling and seconded by Marushin to APPROVE THE AGENDA AS PRESENTED. All in favor. Motion carried.

During the public comment opportunity five members of the community addressed the School Board. Chris Yasgar, 39522 115th Ave., spoke on inconsistent application of school policy; Peter J. Wilson, 1108 Celebration Drive, spoke on curriculum, COVID policy and permitted student groups; Kara Zdan, 257 Sunburst Ave., spoke on masks; Rochelle Dyer, 817 Third Ave. N., spoke on respectful dialogue in education; Taryn Gentile, 1067 Lawrence Circle, spoke on student and educator support.

A motion was made by Nies and seconded by Marushin to APPROVE CONSENT ITEMS A.4.a – A.4.f AS PRESENTED BELOW. All in favor. Motion carried.

A.4.a. Minutes of the regular school board meeting held on Oct. 18, 2021

Minutes of the school board work session held on Nov. 8, 2021

| | | |
|-------|--|------------|
| A.4.b | Checks in the amount of \$842,461.15 as presented: | |
| | General Fund | 530,66.52 |
| | Food Service Fund | 109,274.65 |
| | Transportation Fund | 15,646.67 |
| | Community Service Fund | 7,303.88 |
| | Capital Expenditure Fund | 156,926.22 |
| | ActivityAccounts | 18,852.40 |
| | Custodial Fund | 1,000.00 |
| | Internal Service Fund | 2,790.81 |
| | Check numbers 182047 – 182288-182525 | |

| | |
|---|----------|
| ACHs in the amount of \$10,027.04 as presented: | |
| General Fund | 1,792.96 |
| Community Service Fund | 345.30 |
| Activity Accounts | 7,888.78 |
| ACH numbers 212200052-212200070 | |

| | |
|--|--------------|
| Receipts in the amount of \$5,104,885.00 as presented: | |
| General Fund | 3,079,366.26 |
| Food Service Fund | 294,846.66 |
| Transportation Fund | 30,628.87 |
| Community Service Fund | 78,780.74 |
| Building Fund | 48.12 |
| Debt Service Fund | 1,594,391.13 |
| Activity Accounts | 11,888.50 |
| Custodial Fund | 1,000.00 |
| Internal Service Fund | 13,934.72 |
| Receipts 49427 - 49570 | |

| | |
|--|--------------|
| Wire transfers in the amount of \$1,892,249.58 as presented: | |
| General Fund | 1,286,341.53 |
| Food Service Fund | 61,000.34 |
| Transportation Fund | 19,199.55 |
| Community Service Fund | 26,682.72 |
| Capital Expenditure Fund | 6,292.20 |
| Internal Service Fund | 492,733.24 |
| Wire transfers 202122254 – 202122330 | |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Building Fund Checks in the amount of \$87,842.60 as presented: | |
| Building Fund | 87,842.60 |
| Check number 601222 - 601224 | |

A.4.c Approve resolution accepting the following donations:

Blackberry Ridge Golf Course, Sartell High School, \$1,000 of range time, donation for Sartell High School Recreation Activities Class; Sartell-St. Stephen Education Foundation, ISD #748, \$24,400, SSEF grants for 2021-22.

A.4.d Accept the resignation of Christine Bostic, SHS, food service worker, 10/29/21; Elizabeth Brylski, OREL, para, 10/19/21; Dymond Huertas, SHS, cashier, 10/18/21; Tracey Robak, SHS, food service worker, 10/29/21; Elena Stevens, SMS, para, 11/1/21.

A.4.e Approve Design Tree Surveying and Design Proposal
A.4.f Approve Bradbury Stamm Construction Winkelman Management Agreement

Audit Report: Nancy Schulzetenberg, from BerganKDV presented the 2020-2021 audit results.

Superintendent Report: Superintendent Dr. Jeff Ridlehoover reported on happenings around the district. The Middle School held its annual

Veterans’ Day program, a special thanks to speaker Shaun Meling for addressing the students. Teaching staff had a professional learning day last Monday, with the feedback received being very positive.

During a visit with high school students this past summer, a new student-led chapter was embraced by a student; the “Bandana Project” which promotes mental health awareness. The District was recently presented an opportunity to work with the local Lions Club in creating an inclusive playground for special-needs children at Sartell Lions Park. There is no financial obligation from the school district, but rather an endorsement.

This past month numerous meetings were held with the following: staff members, residents, community members, the local Chamber of Commerce meetings and the CLC governing board. After meeting with staff, there is a recognition of the need to establish a vehicle to talk and communicate with teachers and faculty; this will be called the Coordinating Council. Members of this council will be district and site-based administration and our teacher leaders. The purpose of the council is to work in partnership to discuss concerns and develop solutions. The council will start in January.

The process of creating the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 school-year calendars will be starting with the formation of a calendar committee. Treasurer Moehrle has agreed to serve on the committee and the goal is to have the calendars presented at the January school board meeting.

Educational Equity and Student Experience Committee Report: Superintendent Ridlehoover provided an update on the committee’s progress.

District Finance Report: Director of Business Services Joe Prom provided an update on district finances.

COVID-19 Report: Director of Human Resources Krista Durrwachter provided an update regarding COVID-19.

School Board Committee Report: Clerk Byrd reported on the Technology and Communications committee meeting held on Nov. 1. Topics included the Community Education catalog, expectations of the District Facebook page, the community survey and a brief IT department update.

Director Meling reported on the Curriculum, Instruction and Advisory committee meeting she attended. Topics included a new phonics program, PLTW grade-level expansion, the student store The Mill is up and running, and academic standards.

Clerk Byrd reported on the Career and Tech Ed meeting she attended. Topics included class programming at the High School, current student internships and apprenticeships, an update on donation of materials

from local business toward the class house build and an update on the Habitat for Humanity build project.

Director Meling reported on the Sartell Senior Connection meeting she attended. Topics included discussion by the group changing their membership guidelines.

Director Marushin reported on the recent Special Education Advisory Council meeting he attended. Topics included an opportunity to meet the new Director, Erin Dohrmann; a new program called “help me connect” to help providers connect services to the families; and a staffing update.

A motion was made by Marushin and seconded by Nies to APPROVE #1-39:

New Employees/Changes:
Bethany Belling, SMS, custodian, \$19.32/hour, RI, S2, 8 hours/day, 260 days/year, replacing Kenin Jensen, 12/1/2021; Courtney Birr, SHS, para, \$16.75/hour, RIV, S1, 7 hours/day, replacing Isaiah Wallace, 10/18/2021; Nathan Conway, DSC, server administrator, \$65,000/year, increase wage to market rate, 7/1/2021; David Duininck, SMS, robotics advisor, \$1,407 (3.35 percent), BA, Step A (\$42,002), replacing Luke Miller, 11/15/2021; Mikayla Emslander, PMPS, cafeteria worker, \$17.22/hour, RI, S2, 2.75 hours/day, increase in need, 11/9/2021; Jacob Ferguson, SMS, robotics advisor, \$1,407 (3.35 percent), BA, Step A (\$42,002), new position, 11/15/2021; Jacob Hennigs, SMS, Jazz Band, \$945 (2.25 percent), BA, Step A (\$42,002), replacing Rachel Miller, 12/1/2021; Nicoline Hill, OREL, Para, \$16.75/hour, RIV, S1, 6.5 hours/day, replacing Elizabeth Brylski, 11/1/2021;

Steve Janski, DSC, network administrator, \$75,000/year, increase wage to market rate, 7/1/2021; Sylvia Kaare, SMS, Sabre ensembles, \$968 (2.25 percent), BA, Step B (\$43,024), new position, 12/1/2021; Steven Kenne, SHS, custodian, \$17.97/hour, RI, S1, 8 hours/day, 260 days/year, replacing Bethany Belling, 12/1/2021; Alyssa Kingsley, SMS, para, \$16.75/hour, RIV, S1, 7 hours/day, replacing Karen Butler, 10/27/2021; Karen Klein, OREL, head cook I, \$26.71/hour, RV, S6, 7 hrs/day, new position, 10/27/2021; Diane Lee, SFX, Title I, \$28.69/hour, replacing Molly Vogt, 11/16/2021; Marilee Lefeb, District, special education clerk, \$20.30/hour, RI, S1, 8 hours/day, new position, 11/11/2021;

Allison Ley, SHS, Target advisor, \$1,407 (3.35 percent), BA, Step A (\$42,002), replacing Matt Peterson, 12/1/2021; Greta Neigum, RIS, para - LTS, \$16.75/hour, RIV, S1, 7 hours/day, replacing Holly Olson, 11/9/2021; Monique Neussendorfer, RIS, para - LTS, \$16.75/hour, RIV, S1, 7 hours/day, replacing Marilee Lefeb, 11/11/2021; Cheryl Nies, PMPS, cook, \$24.07/hour, RIV, S5, 6 hours/day, replacing Karen Klein, 10/27/2021; Brandon Nordhues, SHS, pit conductor, \$2,629 (5.35 percent), BA, Step H (\$49,145), new

position, 4/4/2022; Caitlin O’Brien, RIS, para – LTS, \$16.75/hour, RIV, S1, 7 hours/day, replacing Joy Patino, 11/15/2021; Claire Parks, RIS, food service worker, \$16.20/hour, RI, S1, 3 hours/day, replacing Leah Saldana, 10/25/2021; Julie Peabody, RIS, Morning cashier, \$16.20/hour, RI, S1, 1.25 hour/day, increased need, 10/28/2021;

Michelle Sand, RIS, cashier, \$16.20/hr, RI, S1, 3 hours/day, replacing Ashley Preusser, 11/9/2021; Diane Santala, SHS, AM cashier, \$19.47/hour, RI, S5, 1.25 hour/day, increased need, 10/28/2021; Nathan Schultz, SHS, assistant girls hockey, \$4,625 (10.5 percent), BA, Step C (\$44,045), updated wage, 11/1/2021; James Sinkel, SHS, Mock Trial advisor, \$945 (2.25 percent), BA, Step A (\$42,002), replacing Nathan Dahl, 10/27/2021; and Lisa Thielen, SMS, Eighth-grade basketball, \$2,667 (6.35 percent), BA, Step A (\$42,002), replacing Mallory Johnson, 10/25/2021.

Leaves of Absence:
Shayna Eichers, SHS, para, LOA, 3/4/21-6/3/22; Michelle Gacke, PMPS, para, LOA, 10/25/21-11/24/21; Hannah Gelhar, SHS, FCS, LOA, 4/7/22-6/7/22; Amanda Holstrom, SHS, ITS/SPED, LOA, 10/4/21-6/7/22; Marilee Lefeb, RIS, para, LOA, 11/11/21-6/3/22; Jody Navratil, OREL, para, LOA, 11/1/21-6/3/22; Holly Olson, RIS, para, LOA, 8/30/21-2/28/22; Kyle Olson, PMPS/SMS, teacher, LOA, Intermittent 11/9/21-6/7/22; Kristina Peterson, RIS, para, LOA, 11/2/21-6/3/22; Laura Sobania, SHS, food service, LOA, 10/25/21-11/12/21; Carol Williamson, SMS, cook, LOA, 10/25/21-11/28/21; and Anne Zidon, SHS, ELA, LOA, 2/28/22-6/7/22.

All in favor. Motion carried.
A motion was made by Moehrle and seconded by Meling TO APPROVE THE AUDIT FOR FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2021. All in favor. Motion carried.

Schedule Work Session and Committee Meetings:
Future Board Work Session – 6:30 p.m. Monday, Dec. 1 at Sartell High School
Future Regular Board Meeting & Truth in Taxation – 6 p.m. Monday, Dec. 20 at Sartell High School

Official Review of Policies:
The Board had the second reading of adoption of policy 908.

Committee Assignments were reviewed.
A motion to ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 7:31 p.m. was made by Meling and seconded by Moehrle. All in favor. Motion carried.

/s/ Amanda Byrd, clerk

Publish: Dec. 24, 2021

Blotter

from page 2

caller was unable to get the plate number of the Cadillac. The complaint told the officer the vehicle was now parked at Kwik Trip in Sauk Rapids, the Sartell unit asked Sauk Rapids to follow up. The vehicle was gone upon Sauk Rapids’ arrival.

Dec. 15

11:55 p.m. Assist agency. CentraCare Circle. An officer was asked to assist St. Cloud Police

Dec.16

3:27 a.m. Hazard. Pinecone Road N. While on routine patrol, an officer noticed a construction

sign had blown into the roadway. The officer removed the sign.

Dec. 17

10:47 p.m. Juvenile problem. CR 120. An officer was dispatched to a report of a juvenile problem at a business. Staff informed the officer they had kicked out eight or nine juveniles and as they were leaving, one of the juveniles lit fireworks in the vestibule while another videotaped it. Staff was able to get a license-plate num-

ber and the officer contacted the owner of the vehicle. The owner informed the officer that her son would have been driving that vehicle. The officer informed her of the situation and informed her he was unable to determine who had lit the fireworks. The owner stated she would be addressing the issue with her son.

Dec. 18

1:57 p.m. Snowmobile complaint. Eighth Street N. An officer

was dispatched to a residence for a complaint of a snowmobile riding on public roadways. The officer arrived and observed tracks in the yard and in the street. The officer spoke with the homeowner. He told the officer his kids had been driving it in the yard and he had taken it down the street. The officer informed the owner of the city ordinance and how the snowmobile needed to stay on his property. The homeowner stated he understood.

Kwik Trip stores to end a gas-pump option

by Dennis Dalman
news@thenewsleaders.com

Starting Jan. 3, Kwik Trip gas stations/convenience stores will discontinue a gas-pump option. Customers will have to pay at the pump with a card or pre-pay inside the stores before they put gas gasoline in their vehicles.

The one exception is for side-diesel islands whose customers will still have the pay-inside option after pumping gas.

That policy change will be initiated at all local Kwik Trip stations. For people who typically pay right at the pump, there will be no change whatsoever.

The reason for the policy change? Too many drive-offs. Some motorists push the pay-in-store option on the gas pump,

then pump their gas and drive off without paying.

A clerk at the Sartell location said that many gas stations/convenience stores in large cities throughout the country have had a pre-pay policy for quite a few years. She said drive-offs are a real nuisance because it takes a lot of time for an employee to get information, such as license-plate numbers and then contact the police in an effort to track down the drive-off motorists.

Gas drive-offs happen quite often, even in times when gas prices go down.

When contacted via email by the Newsleader, Steven Wrobel, a spokesman for Kwik Trip, wrote back this: “We are moving to pre-pay to improve our guest

service. Our co-workers must spend so much time watching the fuel islands for drive-offs, they can’t focus solely on the guests in the stores. Guests can still use cash or check, in addition to debit, credit and gift cards to pre-pay for fuel inside. Gift cards are a great way to pay for fuel as they avoid any pre-authorization fees and guests will be charged for the specific amount pumped right away.”

The Kwik Trip chain of stores was founded in 1965 with locations in Minnesota and Wisconsin. The family-owned company, headquartered in La Crosse, also has stores under other names such as Kwik Star, Tobacco Outlet Plus, Hearty Platter and Stop-N-Go.

‘Vax-required’ movies now an option

by Dennis Dalman
news@thenewsleaders.com

Parkwood Cinema in Waite Park has begun to offer a limited number of movie showings for vaccinated people only.

All movie-goers for those showings, including children, must bring their vaccination cards, a photo of the cards and a photo I.D. to gain admission to the vax-required showings.

The proof-of-vaccination card

must show that the bearer of the card has received the second Pfizer/Moderna or the second Johnson & Johnson shots at least two weeks previously.

To find out the names of the movies for which vaccinations are required, go to the Parkwood Cinema website and scroll down on the movie listings. It will state “Vax Required” to the right of the movie title and then the times of the movie showing. Example: Spider-Man: No Way Home (Vax

Required).

In addition to the movies advertised as vax-required at Parkwood Cinema, there will also be showings of those same movies where vaccinations will not be required.

Parkwood Cinema is one of many multiplex theaters owned by Marcus Theaters that recently initiated vax-required showings of some movies on afternoons and evenings.

Sartell-St. Stephen • St. Joseph

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Newsleaders

Oct. 1, 2020 - Sept. 30, 2021

Free distribution every other Friday

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION

Frequency of Issue: Bi-Weekly No. of issues Per Year: 26

Subscription Price: \$75 per year.

Mailing Address of Office of Publication:

1622 11th Ave. S.E.

St. Cloud, MN 56304

Mailing Address of Headquarters of General Business Offices of the Publisher:

1622 11th Ave. S.E.

St. Cloud, MN 56304

Full Name and Complete Mailing Address of the Editor:

Leanne Loy

1622 11th Ave. S.E.

St. Cloud, MN 56304

Full Name and Complete Mailing Address of the Managing Editor:

Rajahna Schneekloth

1622 11th Ave. S.E.

St. Cloud, MN 56304

Owner Name:

Janelle Von Pinnon

Owner Mailing Address:

1622 11th Ave. S.E.

St. Cloud, MN 56304

Known Bondholders, Mortgagees and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or more of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages or other Securities: None

| | | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|---------|--------|
| | 12-Month Average | | |
| Extent and nature of circulation | St. Joseph | Sartell | Both |
| Total No of copies (Net press run): | 4,003 | 9,306 | 13,309 |
| Total paid or requested circulation: | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Free distribution by mail carrier: | 3,700 | 9,106 | 12,806 |
| Newsstands | 283 | 180 | 463 |
| Restock/office copies: | 10 | 10 | 20 |
| Gross distribution: | 3,993 | 9,296 | 13,289 |
| Unclaimed/returns: | 59 | 30 | 85 |
| Net circulation: | 3,934 | 9,266 | 13,200 |

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Opinion

Our View

A focus on student safety

Dec. 17 should have been a happy day for our school-aged kids as the last day of school before their winter break. Instead, parents all around the United States had to debate whether or not to allow their kids to even attend.

Another TikTok trend has hit our nation and this time the challenge is to shoot up your school. While the districts around the area didn't seem too concerned about the validity of this trend, the email that was sent out by superintendents didn't dampen the fear a lot of parents felt about this day.

Several families decided to keep their children home last Friday for fear there was some validity to the threats. The sad thing is that fear is not unrealistic. It wasn't that long ago that suspicions were valid but went unheard, and now four teens are being mourned.

We cannot blame our schools for this, even though that seems like the easiest route. The school districts can only do so much. That's why it's time for parents to step up and do what's right. Stop misplacing the blame. Only parents can control what their children do online, what social media outlets they are a part of and what kind of discipline happens at home.

Teachers are trained to teach our students, not raise them to be outstanding citizens, and yet it seems they are spending more time teaching manners, and what appropriate behavior is than focusing on student education.

There are schools in our area that received backlash from parents because classrooms were choosing to show movies in those last few days before breaks. Apparently, some parents did not think this was appropriate because showing movies is not educational. If we can raise a stink about something so inconsequential but allow these other trends to continue to happen, what is that saying for our community, for the adults who are raising our next generation? It might be time to focus our outrage on something more important, like our children's safety.

Parents, be more aware. Talk to your kids about what they are seeing and posting on social media. As of now, children are getting suspended and expelled for inappropriate behavior on social media when they are caught. But parents are starting to be held responsible for the actions of their kids; maybe that's the solution we need. We can learn a lot from our kids, or they can learn a lot from us.

If you're interested in knowing more about how you can keep your kids safe on social media, see TikTok's website at: <https://www.tiktok.com/safety/en/guardians-guide/> for guidance.

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.

What really matters at Christmas

There used to be this excitement for me around the holidays. The time-frame is fuzzy but a few weeks before Christmas my mother would pull out all the decorations, put Bing Crosby's Christmas album on the record player and our house would turn into the North Pole, or at least what I imagined the North Pole to look like.

My favorite thing to decorate was our French doors. We had small, wooden ornaments that were strung by thin, gold thread that I would attach to each individual window of those doors, after cleaning them of course.

There was a little drummer boy, wooden presents with bows, reindeer and several other Christmas symbols I can't seem to remember. It's the drummer boy I remember most. Maybe it was his bright, red suit, or the drum and sticks he held in his hand, or maybe it's because he reminded me of one of my favorite Christmas songs, but I can still feel the wood in my hands and hear the hollow noise he made as I hung him against the glass. It takes me back to a time when the holidays meant something different to me, something simpler.

Those times cleaning and decorating with my mother are what I miss the most this time of year. She embodied the spirit of the holidays and even though she worked her tail off to make every Christmas special, and even though I'm sure there was plenty

Leanne Loy
Editor



of stress involved, she never let us know it.

She was an expert at stringing lights on the tree, a skill I fall terribly short on. The house always smelled like pine, cookies and peace, if peace has a smell. And our door was open to everyone. One year, my brother had a friend who had nowhere to go on Christmas Day and my mother couldn't have that. She opened our door to him and had even wrapped up a present so he had something to open with the rest of us. It was a box of tea, but it was a present and it made us all laugh.

Christmas Eve was exciting too. There were always visitors stopping in for some holiday cheer. The table was dressed with a holiday tablecloth, mixed nuts (the kind you need a nut cracker for) and of course a variety of homemade Christmas cookies. Godparents would come by and drop off gifts; cousins would come over to play. We could barely contain our excitement as we talked about Santa coming that night. We would be all dressed up in our best to attend midnight Mass and when we got home, one of us kids

We're lucky despite weather extremes – so far, anyway

We Minnesotans just love to complain about the weather; it's practically a part-time occupation. This past summer, though, we had plenty of good reasons to complain: brutally broiling temps often in the upper 90s.

That said, my New Year's resolution is going to be this: No more bellyaching about the weather. We are mighty lucky living so far from "Tornado Alley," as it's often dubbed.

After seeing those heartbreaking scenes of devastation caused by the monstrous tornadoes in five states, I instantly concluded Minnesota is a great state to live in, despite scorching hot summers and bitter-cold winters that seem to last forever and a day.

The tornado scenes were horrifying: towns flattened to shattered rubble, a collapsed Amazon.com plant torn to shreds, a candle factory ripped apart, birdless trees stripped bare or ripped from the earth. Sadder still were all the people numbed by shock and terror, blank but quizzical looks on their faces, as if they were seeking an answer to a cruel riddle while standing next to the smashed and twisted ruins of what used to be their homes. It was unbearably sad. So far, there are 88 people dead, including a 5-month-old baby boy whose parents, now homeless, destitute, grief-stricken, hang on somehow – their hopes and happiness blasted to smithereens.

Decades ago, we Dalmans called my oldest brother Jimmy's wife, Tina, a storm paranoiac. They lived in Okla-

Dennis Dalman
Reporter



homa City not too far from Chickasha, where Jimmy, in the military, met and began dating Tina. When they'd visit St. Cloud, Tina would bring up the subject of tornadoes time and again with her voice quivering, her face turning pale.

Tornado-illiterates at that time, we would laugh at her. We'd toss off remarks such as, "Oh, c'mon Tina, tornadoes aren't that bad. Sure they're windy, but all you have to do if one's coming is get out of the way, go down in the basement."

One time Tina practically screamed at us, "What basement? We don't HAVE a basement!"

And that was a huge part of her fear: no basement. Many residents in Oklahoma do not have basements. Tina was constantly hounding Jimmy to dig some kind of underground shelter in their backyard. Jimmy, too, would dismiss her fears as over-reactions.

It wasn't until sometime in the late 1980s that Jimmy finally got around to having an underground shelter put in the backyard. After living in Oklahoma for 30 years with his wife and three kids, fearless Jimmy must have finally seen the light. It must have dawned on him that yup, Tina was right, tornadoes

was allowed to put the baby Jesus in the manger.

Every year I try to make my house feel the way my mother made our childhood home feel, to share that same joy with my own kids. We decorate, but the music is different, we bake but it somehow feels more rushed, we even go and cut down our own tree, a tradition I'm thrilled to share with my littles. Maybe it's because I can't see it through innocent eyes anymore, I know now what I didn't know then. There's work involved that I didn't understand as a kid, and there's stress to preparing everything on time. Maybe times really have changed and we've made ourselves so busy with mundane, but seemingly important tasks, that preparing for holidays seems more like a chore than something enjoyable. Or maybe I just miss my mom.

As I write this, though, I'm realizing more and more that my children are making memories. They won't be the same as mine because realistically that's just not possible. But when my teenaged son showed me a sign of giddiness for the arrival of Christmas even though he's known the truth about Santa for years now, I realized although I might be a little stressed and I might feel a little rushed, I'm still giving my kids memories, a joy they will take with them into their adult lives and really, what more could I ask for?

are bad. Really bad. Duh!
Jimmy died of a heart attack at age 51 in 1990, but it's a good thing he had that shelter built. On May 3, 1999, a series of tornadoes with winds exceeding 300 mph, roared through Oklahoma. Forty-six people died, 800 were injured, more than 8,000 homes were destroyed.

One of the worst tornadoes ram-paged from Chickasha (Tina's hometown) to south Oklahoma City where Tina, her kids and some neighbors were stunned by terror. They crammed together in that backyard underground shelter as the tornado howled like 20 freight trains less than a mile from them. It took Tina the "storm paranoiac" almost 30 years to convince Jimmy to install that shelter. His family is forever grateful that he did. Finally.

Minnesota is not tornado-proof, obviously. I recall a vicious tornado that ripped through Fridley in 1965, killing 13 people. I remember rushing to Hoffman, west of Alexandria, to cover for the newspaper the aftermath of a tornado that had struck. The family members stood there, blank faces, looks of dazed disbelief. Up in a tree was a battered car. No deaths, thank goodness.

Climate change must be mediated; there is not a day to lose. Storms, fires, hurricanes get worse every season. Who knows but, God forbid, that Minnesota might someday, sooner than we like to think, become a northern extension of Tornado Alley.

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

PERSONAL FINANCE | IN A CRISIS

Pandemic Financial Resources

Given that they happen roughly once every 100 years, virtually no one was totally prepared for an economically devastating pandemic.

The financial fallout since the virus began ravaging the United States in March 2020 has left consumers scrambling to navigate myriad financial maneuvers, including mortgage forbearances, unemployment claims, retirement account loans or withdrawals, credit card and student loan payment arrangements and more.

If you've found yourself suddenly learning a new financial vocabulary and skill set, you're not alone. Here is a primer on how to get some key forms of financial relief.

MORTGAGE FORBEARANCE

The CARES Act enacted in 2020 to provide financial relief to consumers allowed a temporary suspension of mortgage payments for borrowers with federally insured loans. This includes loans backed by FHA, VA, USDA, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. Loan services for privately backed mortgages may also offer some relief.

Forbearance does not erase any amount of money you owe your mortgage lender. It simply allows you to skip some payments for now. Typically



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those payments will be added onto the end of your loan term, or repaid over the course of several months. This all happens without any fees, penalties or interest, and without a hit to your credit score. Your servicer may even offer a restructuring of your loan with different terms and interest rate. All you need to do is tell your loan servicer that you are having pandemic-related financial challenges.

RETIREMENT ACCOUNT LOANS OR WITHDRAWALS

The CARES Act also estab-

lished temporary rules allowing for withdrawals from retirement accounts that would otherwise be prohibited. According to the Internal Revenue Service, you can withdraw up to \$100,000 from eligible retirement plans, including 401(k)s, 403(b)s and IRAs, without being subject to the usual 10% penalty. In addition, if you repay the distribution within three years, you will not owe income taxes on the withdrawal.

The Act also provides an increase in the amount of loans you can take against your account and more time to

repay loans.

In order to qualify for these benefits, you must prove that you have suffered financial harm due to the pandemic.

CREDIT CARD PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS

Although credit card payment arrangements were not covered by the CARES Act, many card issuers are offering some type of relief to consumers. Contact your card issuer to find out what they offer and the guidelines for qualifying. This may include lowering or deferring your monthly payment, waiving or refunding

late fees, reducing your interest rate and establishing a payoff plan for existing balances, according to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. Contact your credit card company in writing through their website or mobile app and explain how you've been affected by the pandemic. Then get a copy of your agreement in writing.

STUDENT LOAN ASSISTANCE

Principal and interest payments on federally held student loans were automatically suspended through Sept. 30, 2021, according to the CFPB. (Find a list of federal servicers at bit.ly/2YCg9jZ.) You did not need to contact your student loan servicer or take any action to receive this relief.

Many private lenders are also offering assistance to borrowers. As with a credit card arrangement, be sure to get everything in writing from your lender.

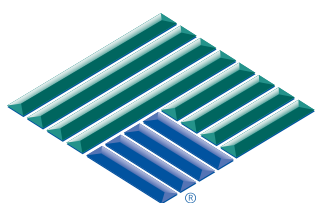
FUTURE PLANNING

If you are interested in being more financially prepared to weather a crisis in the future, check out George Washington University's Global Financial Literacy Excellence Centers website at gflec.org/education/financialresilience. It provides not only a list of government assistance programs but tips for budgeting during a pandemic, rebuilding your savings, managing debt, protecting your credit, avoiding fraud and more.

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