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Milaca fifth graders raising money for Ronald McDonald House- one pop top at a time

The million pop top challenge

JEFFREY HAGE
Union-Times

In Jimmy Buffett's song Margaritaville, the songwriter blows out his flip flop and steps on a pop top.

At Milaca Elementary School, fifth graders are taking pop tops and turning them into cash money.

It's part of a fundraising effort by the students of teachers Jessica Juntunen, Cory Anderson, Jennifer Burroughs and Matt Follmuth that is also building on the students' counting skills.

Milaca fifth graders have been challenged to collect 1 million pop tops as part of a project that began a year ago but was slowed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

But not only are the students collecting the pop tops, they are counting them so they know without a doubt that they reach their goal.

That challenge to collect 1 million pop tops was brought forward by teacher Jessica Juntunen, who herself was involved in an effort to collect 1 million pop tops as an elementary school student in Elk River.

"When I was in fifth grade we were challenged to collect a million of them,"

Juntunen said of the pop tops.

"I remember being blown away by what a million was," she said.

The fifth grade teaching team of Juntunen, Anderson, Burroughs, and Follmuth hope their students are equally blown away.

How much is 1 million pop tops? We did some math.

With Milaca's population at 2,976 according to the 2020 census, each resident of the city would need to drink 56 six packs of soda, energy drinks or other beverages and donate those pop tops to the fifth graders in order to reach their lofty goal.

Early returns suggest an enthused and engaged group of fifth graders at Milaca Elementary ready to tackle the challenge.

The pop tops are being donated to the Ronald McDonald House.

The organization states on its website that it takes approximately 1,128 pop tabs to equal one pound. The organization generally collects between 40 to 50 cents per pound of pop tops, based on the current market rate of recyclable aluminum. Last year more than 13 million pop tops were donated nationally to the

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Photo by Jeffrey Hage / Union-Times

Milaca fifth grade student Addie Clark shows off a smile while counting pop tops into groups of 10 on Thursday, Oct. 14 in her classroom.

Ambulance with patient hit by vehicle in Milaca

JEFFREY HAGE
Union-Times

Multiple people were injured Sunday, Oct. 17, when an in-service ambulance was hit by a vehicle on the north end of Milaca.

The North Memorial ambulance was carrying a patient when it was hit at about 7:15 p.m. on Central Avenue North at County Road 9. The ambulance was traveling east on 160th Street at the intersection of Central Avenue with its lights and siren activated when it was struck by a passenger car that was traveling north on Central Avenue.

The patient being transported by North Memorial Ambulance was airlifted from the scene to St. Cloud Hospital by a North Memorial Air Care helicopter. The helicopter landed in the parking lot of Unclaimed Freight, according to scanner reports.

Two care providers in the ambulance were transported by private vehicle to the Princeton hospital, according to the Mille Lacs County Sheriff's Office, while the driver of the passenger vehicle was transported by ambulance to St. Cloud Hospital.

The crash is being investigated by the Minnesota State Patrol. The Mille Lacs County Sheriff's Office was assisted at the scene by the Milaca Police Department, Milaca Fire Department and North Memorial EMS.



A future Milaca firefighter?



Photo by Jeff Hage / Union-Times

Zach Holle wants to be a firefighter when he grows up. On Saturday, Oct. 16, Zach visited the Milaca Fire Department open house where he worked on his bean bag throwing skills, as well as taking advantage of the opportunity to sit in fire trucks, explore firefighting equipment, and meet real firefighters. See more photos from the open house on Page 16.

Mille Lacs County looking at greater security in courthouse

T.A. LEBRUN
For the Union-Times

The Mille Lacs County Board of Commissioners met for their regular board meeting on Oct. 7. A number of agenda items were discussed and voted on, including an emergency management discussion, updated tobacco ordinance, engineering services contract, and awards for outstanding employees.

Courthouse public entrance discussion

Julie Peterson, Mille Lacs County Emergency Management Services director, addressed the board regarding moving the public access in the courthouse from the main entrance at the front of the courthouse to the Justice Center entrance. Peterson proposed the main entrance be an exit only.

She said that the public would go past court security and the department would know who's on site. She added that there is more visitor parking and better accessibility as well.

"Looking at events across the country, unrest has caused a lot of counties and state government buildings to evaluate safety, and we looked at the courthouse and identified some issues," said Peterson. "This way we can keep people as safe as possible."

Consensus was given by the commissioners. The issue has yet to be voted on.

Tobacco ordinance

The tobacco ordinance was approved that mirrors the state's ordinance with nothing above the state ordinance, including a flavored tobacco countywide restriction.

Commissioner Dave Oslin said that he has had many businesses get ahold of

him initially when the ordinance was proposed.

County Coordinator Dillon Hayes said: "In practice, it is the same as the state statute which was adopted in 2020. There are compliance checks, enforcement and nothing prohibited beyond the state statute. Beyond the T21, nothing else has really changed."

The ordinance was approved unanimously.

Engineering services

Since the resignation of the former county engineer, Neil Knopik, the county has been exploring options for the county's engineering services. The county discussed contracting professional engineering services with WSB engineering consultants, and Hayes stated that MnDOT recommended using retired Cass County engineer, David Enblom, who now works with WSB. The position will be on-site in Mille Lacs County approximately 50% of the time and will take care of the bare bones engineering duties.

Awards given for outstanding service

Four Mille Lacs County employees were nominated and received awards for their outstanding service: Danielle Ahmet, (jail sergeant), Alyssa Libra (intake social worker) and Autumn Glassing (lead eligibility worker), and Matt Murphy (jail correctional worker).

Human Resources Coordinator Karley Fetters noted that employees nominate co-workers for outstanding service and that the criteria for the awards is being devoted to and excelling in the position.

Fetters said that Ahmet went above

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