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HAPPY NEW YEAR: From all of us at the Star, we wish all our readers a happy and healthy 2026!

2025

A continuation of 2024

Looking back at 2025, little appears to have changed from 2024. Despite it being an off-year for regular elections, the political environment looks as cloudy as before — perhaps even cloudier locally following a pair of special elections that combined dominated at least social media headlines for the entire year. Also like last year, the positive stories seemed to be fewer and farther between. Here are the top stories, as pulled together by the Star’s editorial staff, that we feel most caught people’s attention in 2025:

Ongoing

CANNABIS BUSINESS

Throughout all of 2025, local governments wrestled with the legalization of selling cannabis. Both Isanti County and the city of Cambridge amended their cannabis ordinances at least once. Cambridge also was forced to make an un-

comfortable decision as two applications were turned in simultaneously. The city of North Branch was forced to approve a dispensary license at an unpopular location. The city of Isanti closed the book on a possible municipal cannabis store and later bemoaned the state taking away promised money to cities from cannabis sales taxes.

January

FIVE FILE FOR ISANTI COUNCIL VACANCY

Five residents applied to fill the Isanti City Council seat vacated by Luke Merrill when he was appointed interim mayor. Ultimately, Nicholas Pedersen was appointed by the council.

VA CONSIDERS NEW CLINIC IN CAMBRIDGE

The city of Cambridge was revealed to be the possible location of a new Veterans Administration clinic, which would bring a regionally needed service to the area. However, since the announcement was made, no updates have been provided.

February

ESGET EARNS FOUR MORE MEDALS

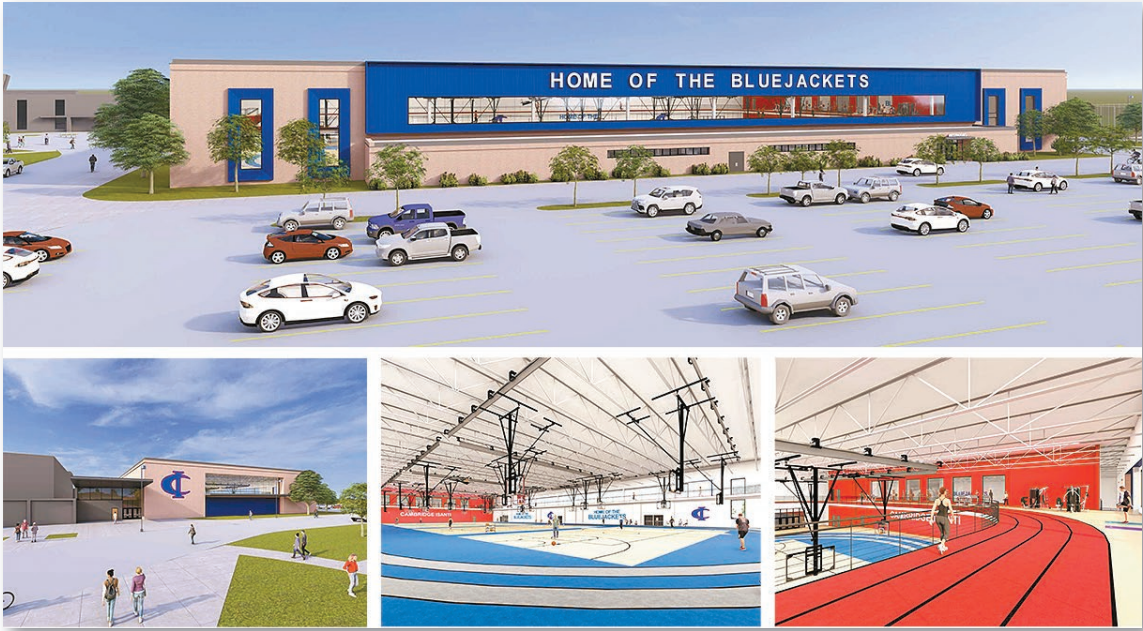
North Branch gymnast Dakota Esget finished her incredible competitive career by earning four more medals at the State Gymnastics Meet. While she didn’t repeat as all-around or bars champion, she still placed second on beam, third on vault and the all-around, and fifth on bars.

C-I MOCK TRIAL RETURNS TO STATE

The Cambridge-Isanti Mock Trial team earned its third state meet berth in the last



four years. In the process, the team completed an undefeated Regional season.



CONTRIBUTED

The Cambridge-Isanti Schools’ bond referendum, which included a proposed fieldhouse that might have looked like the above conceptual design, was a focal point of many debates and discussions for nearly the entire second half of the year.

March

DANGEROUS NORTH BRANCH INTERSECTION IMPROVED

The Minnesota Department of Transportation revealed details for the safety improvement of the Highway 95 intersection with 392nd Street on the west side of North Branch. That intersection had been the

location of multiple serious vehicle crashes, including two that had been fatal. The improvements, which included a left turn only lane, were completed over the summer.

ISANTI MOURNS FINANCE DIRECTOR’S DEATH

Isanti City Hall was sent reeling from the unexpected death of Finance Director Make Betker due to “an unknown medical condition.”

April

NORTH BRANCH SEES TWO COUNCIL RESIGNATIONS

In a span of a month, the North Branch city council had two of its members resign. First, Travis Miles resigned to take the city’s Human Resources Generalist position. Next, Peter Schaps resigned abruptly for unknown reasons immediately following the appointment of former council member Patrick Meacham to fill Miles’ seat. Rather than call for another round of applications and interviews, the council chose to appoint Jim Ibinger, who had applied to fill Miles’ seat as well.

MERRILL, JOHNSON ADVANCE TO SPECIAL ELECTION

The special election race for Isanti mayor was whittled down from three to two during a special primary election. Luke Merrill, who was serving as interim mayor at the time, and former Isanti Mayor Jeff Johnson advanced to the special election that was to be held in August.



BILL STICKELS III | COUNTY STAR

The owners of Delightful Acres, the event venue formerly known as Circle B, held a ribbon cutting ceremony with the North 65 Chamber of Commerce.

FORMER CIRCLE B OPENS UNDER NEW NAME

The Circle B Event Center in Isanti, which became nationally known for suddenly closing in 2024 leaving many wedding parties and other organizations without a venue and minus thousands of dollars, was reopened under new ownership. Now known as Delightful Acres, the new owners gave the venue a cosmetic makeover.

SEE YEAR IN REVIEW, PAGE 8

1824 Nixon Street S, Cambridge • 4 Bed 3 Bath

Beautifully maintained home with an open layout, four bedrooms including a private primary suite, a finished lower level with a wet bar, a fenced yard with a fire pit, and a heated 3-car garage—move-in ready and inviting.

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JORGE PERALES | COUNTY STAR

North Branch’s Jacob Knoespel goes up for a shot through the block attempt of a Providence Academy defender during the Vikings’ game against the Lions at Sartell High School.

Minnesota DNR shares 2025 accomplishments

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources is pleased to release a summary highlighting several significant agency accomplishments from 2025. Each of the featured accomplishments helped advance the DNR’s mission of working with Minnesotans to conserve and manage the state’s natural resources, provide outdoor recreation opportunities, and provide for commercial uses of natural resources in a way that creates a sustainable quality of life.

“I’m honored to celebrate the stewardship and innovation at Minnesota DNR that improved public lands and waters and the experiences of Minnesotans in 2025,” DNR Commissioner Sarah Strommen said. “These accomplishments reflect Minnesota’s commitment to conservation and sustainability that ensures access to public land, clean water, healthy habitat, safe outdoors experiences and economic benefits.”

In 2025, the DNR:

- Closed on its largest land acquisition in recent history, protecting nearly 16,000 acres of wildlife habitat, water, and working forests, and increasing recreation opportunities.
- Completed a four-year, \$10 million project to restore and transform Perch Lake in the St. Louis River estuary.
- Implemented Get Out MORE (Modernize Outdoor Recreation Experiences) projects to increase access to outdoor spaces, modernize camping infrastructure and experiences, upgrade public water access sites, improve fish hatcheries and fishing opportunities, and restore streams.
- Completed the installation of the Ecological Monitoring Network to detect ecological changes within wetlands, prairies and forests in response to stressors such

as climate change, invasive species, loss of pollinators, and changes in how we use our land and water resources.

Opened applications for a historic \$11 million in grants to help communities plant, maintain and protect trees across the state.

Protected life, property and natural resources through emergency response and recovery operations across Minnesota, including the major windstorm affecting four counties in northern Minnesota and three large fires in St. Louis County.

Some other accomplishments included: finalizing Minnesota’s Wildlife Action Plan for 2025 to 2035, completing the last of seven new master plans for Minnesota’s largest Wildlife Management Areas, and reducing watercraft-related fatalities to historic lows.

“We’re proud of the many ways our work intersects with the lives of Minnesotans and are grateful for the opportunity to do this work,” Commissioner Sarah Strommen said.

While not an exhaustive list, this year’s overview reflects the scope and importance of the work the DNR does for Minnesotans. A summary of these accomplishments, categorized under the goals outlined in the DNR’s Conservation Agenda, (<https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/conservationagenda/index.html>) is available on the DNR website (<https://files.dnr.state.mn.us/aboutdnr/minnesota-dnr-2025-accomplishments.pdf>). The four goals that drive the DNR’s work are:

- Natural resources conservation
- Outdoor recreation
- Natural resources economy
- Operational excellence

- MNDNR

CAMBRIDGE-ISANTI, NORTH BRANCH HOME SCHEDULES: JANUARY 2 - 10

To see both schools’ full schedules, go to www.mississippi8.org. Schedules are subject to change with minimal advanced notice based on weather, availability of officials, or other reasons. Note: Northern Tier girls hockey is a co-op between Cambridge-Isanti, St. Francis, and North Branch. Northern Edge boys hockey is a co-op between North Branch and St. Francis. Their home games are at East Bethel.

- Friday, January 2**
- C-I girls basketball vs. Sartell (5:30 p.m.)
 - C-I boys hockey vs. Monticello (7 p.m.)
- Saturday, January 3**
- C-I wrestling Bluejacket Individual Tournament (9:30 a.m.)
- Tuesday, January 6**
- C-I boys basketball vs. North Branch (7 p.m.)
 - Northern Tier girls hockey vs. Osseo @ East Bethel (7 p.m.)
 - NB girls basketball vs. C-I (7 p.m.)

- Thursday, January 8**
- C-I girls wrestling vs. Mora, Princeton, Zimmerman (6 p.m.)
 - Northern Edge boys hockey vs. Pine City (7 p.m.)
- Friday, January 9**
- C-I girls basketball vs. Monticello (7 p.m.)
 - NB wrestling vs. Washington Technology Magnet (6 p.m.)
- Saturday, January 10**
- Northern Tier girls hockey vs. Cloquet @ Isanti (1 p.m.)

C-I, NB SCOREBOARD: DECEMBER 23 - 29

- December 23**
- C-I boys basketball 51, Duluth East 62
- December 26**
- NB boys basketball 73, Providence Academy 80
- December 27**
- C-I boys hockey 2, Woodbury 8
- NB boys basketball 41, Rockford 65
- December 29**
- C-I boys hockey 3, South St. Paul 2 (OT)
- C-I boys basketball 95, Hermantown 66
- C-I wrestling 63, Mahtomedi 10
- C-I wrestling 78, Durand-Arkansaw0
- C-I wrestling 59, Park 13
- C-I wrestling 39, Rocori 29
- C-I 21, Simley 55
- *Bluejackets finish in second place at Eau Claire Holiday Duals
- Northern Edge boys hockey 5, Windom 1

Inside Sales Representative

Northstar Media is looking for a motivated person who likes to work with customers over the phone as an Inside Sales Rep. Mon, Tue, Wed, 20-25 hours per week in the Cambridge office. Responsibilities include classified ad sales, service and church directory ad sales, and special page/section ad sales in the Isanti-Chisago County Star, Pine City Pioneer, North Pine County News, Kanabec County Times and Advertiser as well as being able to sell into other newspapers, shoppers and online. Must have strong phone skills, be able to multitask, be good with computers and have strong organizational skills. Wage is \$16-18/hour. Possible full time position for the right candidate.

If interested, please submit resume to Jeff Andres, Publisher jeff@northstarmedia.net

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MON & THUR
Alcoholics Anonymous
7p.m. Main Street Church 6500 Main Street, North Branch, MN. Enter east door. Informational Hotline is 763-312-1088

MON - FRI
Senior Dining
North Branch, Chisago County Senior Center 11:45 a.m. Diners need to pre-register at least one day in advance call 651-674-1956 between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. An annual registration form is required before dining.

MONDAYS
Women's only Adult Children of Alcoholics and Dysfunctional Families
7 p.m. at Cambridge Lutheran Church , 621 Old Main St N, Cambridge Mn 55008 For more information contact Rebecca at 612-702-2844 or CoraJayne 612-210-1605

Fresh Beginnings Alanon
Family Groups meets Monday's 7 - 8 p.m. at Access Church, 4359 - 392nd St., North Branch. Visit minnesotanorth-al-anon.org

Book Club
Third Monday 11 a.m. to noon at Isanti SAC, 140 Buchanan St., N. #164 Cambridge. Isanti County Library lends the books and there is no cost to participate. For info: sacs@midco-network.com

TUES & THURS
Boxing for Those w/Parkinson's
Tuesdays and Thursdays at 10:15 a.m. and 5

p.m. at 115 Adams Street South, Cambridge. For more information, call 763-221-6883.

TUESDAYS
Braham Parkinson's Support
7 p.m. third Tuesday of the month. Braham Evangelical Lutheran Church, 905 Central Drive W., Braham. For info. call Lonnie Anderson at 612-423-1863.

Alzheimer's Support
Third Tuesday of each month from 10-11 a.m. at GracePointe Heritage Center, 322 River Hills Place North, Cambridge. For info call Lyndsey Larson 763-691-6172.

Memory Cafe
First Tuesday of every month, 10 - 11:30 a.m. at GracePointe Crossing Heritage Center, 322 River Hills Place North, Cambridge. Contact Julie at 763-306-5066 for info.

PrimeTime Singers
Cambridge Lutheran Church, 1:30 p.m. A community choir for ages 60+, no audition or fee required. Fellowship follows rehearsal. Info: 612-619-2111.

Grief Share
Faith Lutheran Church, 109 2nd Ave. NW, Isanti. Meets 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month at 2 p.m. 763-444-9201.

Celebrate Recovery
At First Baptist in Cambridge(304 Main St S.) every Tuesday. There is a light meal at 5:45 p.m., large group at 6:30 p.m., and small groups at 7:30 p.m. Visit Celebra-



Jenni Thyng performs Jan. 6 at the We R Able holiday concert at the Chisago County Senior Center.

terecovery.com for more info.

WEDNESDAYS
Alanon
7 p.m. at the Isanti Alano Club, 790 Heritage Blvd. Isanti. 763-444-4605

Chisago County Drop-In Center
Open 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at Main Street Church, 6500 Main Street, North Branch. For individuals 18 yrs or older living with mental illness. Info: 651-213-5600 or Adult-mentalhealth.org.

THURSDAYS
East Central Baby Cafe
Free drop-in breastfeeding support from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Adult Enrichment Center, 540 5th Ave NW, Cambridge, MN. For info. call 763-689-1711.

Cambridge-Edgewood AFG

Cambridge-Edgewood Al-Anon Family Group meets from 7-8 p.m. at Cambridge Lutheran Church, 621 Old Main Street N. Visit minnesotanorth-al-anon.org for info.

Parkinson's Support Group
Third Thursday of the month – 1-2:30 p.m. The Levande, 2011 6th Lane SE, Cambridge, MN for info call 763-325-0100

ACA Adult Children of Alcoholics/ Dysfunctional Families Meeting
7 p.m. at Access Church, 4359 392nd St, North Branch. For info. call 612-251-6556 or email acanorthbranch@gmail.com

Fresh Beginnings Alanon Family Group
From 7-8 p.m. at Access Church, 4359 392nd Street, North Branch. Visit minnesota-al-anon.org for info.

Medicare and Medicaid 101 Open House
Third Thursday of the month from 1-3 p.m. Get your questions answered by trained agents. (763) 689-7390 or ecrlib.org for info.

SATURDAY
GriefShare
At Joy Lutheran Church, from 9-10:30 a.m. each Saturday, except for the 1st Saturday of each month. Contact Mary Schuett, 561-222-3347, for more information.

Joyful Walking Club
The 1st Saturday of each month, from 9-10 a.m., around the perimeter of Joy Lutheran's ball field in Cambridge. Contact Mary Schuett, 561-222-3347, for more information.

JAN 6
We R Able holiday concert
Jenni Thyng will perform with We R Able. Begins with a 5 p.m. meal followed by a concert at the Chisago County Senior Community Center. All are welcome. For more info call 320-358-3616.

JAN 8
Bowling with We R Able
We R Able's winter bowling season starts January 8, from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. at JJ's Bowl and Lounge, 6427 Ash St., North Branch. Additional dates scheduled are January 22, February 5, 19, March 5, and 19. All are welcome to this program for adults with disabilities. For more info call 320-358-3616.

SENIOR CENTER WEEKLY EVENTS

CAMBRIDGE
140 Buchanan Street
Mondays
Bridge - 1 to 3 p.m.
Scrabble 10 a.m. to noon (second Monday of month)
Mahjong - noon to 3 p.m.

Tuesdays
Dominoes - 10 a.m. to noon

Wednesdays
Cribbage - 9 to 11 a.m.
Wizard 11 a.m. to noon
Pinochle 12:30 to 3 p.m.
Mahjong 12:30 to 2:30 p.m.

Thursdays
500 - 12:30 to 3 p.m.
Bunco - 10 a.m. to noon (Third Thursday of month)

CHISAGO COUNTY
38790 6th Avenue, North Branch
Mon, Wed, Fri.
Exercise with Connie - 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.
Monday & Wednesday
500 - starting at 12:45 p.m.

Tuesdays
Music - provided before the meal - 11:15 a.m.
Dominoes - starting at 10 a.m.

Thursdays
Bingo - starting at 10 a.m.
Hand and Foot - starting at 12:30 p.m.
Fridays
Cribbage - starting at 12:45 p.m.

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Chisago City man charged with homicide of hospital security guard

A 35-year-old Chisago City man was charged* today, December 29, 2025, with one count of Second-Degree Homicide related to the December 25, 2025, death of Andrea Merrell, age 43, who was employed as a security guard at a hospital located in Wyoming, Minnesota.

According to the Criminal Complaint, filed with Chisago County District Court in court file 13-CR-25-872, on December 25, 2025, officers with the Wyoming, Minnesota police department were dispatched to the MHealth Fairview Lakes Hospital regarding an adult male, Jonathan Chet Winch, age 35 of Chisago City, leaving the hospital's emergency department contrary to a medical hold. Upon arrival the officer observed an MHealth Fairview security vehicle in the parking lot of the hospital with its lights activated. The security guard was lying unconscious near the vehicle. The Defendant, Winch, wearing dark colored sweatpants and no shirt, was attempting to get into the security vehicle. The officer commanded Winch to get to the ground, but Winch did not comply. The officer deployed his Tasar multiple times to gain control and compliance of Winch. Ultimately other officers arrived on the scene and Winch was taken into custody.

An exterior security camera at the hospital captured the incident which occurred in the parking lot area of the hospital moments prior to the arrival

of law enforcement. The footage depicts two individuals near the hospital security vehicle. The larger person wearing dark pants and no shirt was in a physical altercation with a smaller person. The smaller-framed person, Merrell, is ultimately observed to be on the ground, with the larger person, Winch, on top of Merrell, appearing to swing or strike at her multiple times.

It was apparent to the responding officers that the security guard, Andrea Merrill, had suffered severe head trauma. Merrell was transported to Regions Hospital in St. Paul, Minnesota where she was treated for her head injuries. On December 27, 2025, Merrell succumbed to her injuries and passed away. The Ramsey County Medical Examiner completed an autopsy and determined the manner of death to be a homicide, with the cause of death identified as traumatic head injuries due to physical assault.

At the initial hearing on December 29, 2025, before the Honorable Bridgid E. Dowdal, bail was set at \$2 million dollars. The court ordered the completion of a competency examination to be conducted while Winch remains in custody. - Chisago County Sheriff

Snow plow safety starts with slowing down

Question: I've heard about some snow plows getting hit out on the highway this winter. Can you remind people what they should be doing when sharing the roads with our plow drivers?

AnsWER: For people to stay safe around plows, they just need to practice good common sense and have some patience.

- Give Space: Stay at least 10 car lengths (about 200 feet) behind a plow.
- Avoid Snow Clouds: Never drive into the cloud of snow and spray behind a plow.
- Be Patient & Slow Down: Plows work slowly (20-30 mph) to clear roads; slow down to a safe speed for conditions.
- Stay Alert: Plows may drift over the centerline or partially into traffic, and their wing plows can extend 10 feet out from the truck.
- Don't Pass: Passing is dangerous due to hidden obstacles and the plow's width; let operators pull over when it's safe.
- Use Your Lights: Turn on your headlights and turn off cruise control.

A portion of state statutes were used with permission from the Office of the Revisor of Statutes. If you have any questions concerning traffic related laws or issues in Minnesota, send your questions to Trp. Jesse Grabow – Minnesota State Patrol at 1000 Highway 10 West, Detroit Lakes, MN 56501-2205. (You can follow him on X @MSPPIO_NW or reach him at, jesse.grabow@state.mn.us).



Ask A Trooper
Jesse Grabow

Looking forward to a better 2026 'episode'

Every television series, even the ones you consider to be your all-time favorites, have a few episodes you now decline to watch and, quite frankly, wish they could just be eliminated from the series altogether. For "ER," that's pretty much any episode where one of the doctors is on a mission trip. For "M*A*S*H," it's the two-part episode where Hawkeye and Margaret have a one-night affair while stranded behind enemy lines. The episodes where the characters are "interviewed" — AKA the black-and-white episodes — are also up there. Although I've only watched the first couple of seasons of it, many would include the entire last season of "Game of Thrones" in their list.

For me, this pretty much sums up my feelings about 2025.

When looking back at this column in the Jan. 2, 2025 edition, I remarked how 2024 had an angry or at least pessimistic mood. I also stated my desire to make an effort on the newspaper's end to lighten that mood with more positive feature stories.

Well, that didn't work out as planned. In fact, in many ways, the overall mood of the area became even darker and more negative. There were two particular extended items that combined and wound up engulfing our attention for the entire year, like a dark cloud that seemed to constantly cover the sun.

Compounding the situation, it was far from a banner year for me personally. I'm not going to mention any of the reasons for this analysis. I'm sure regular readers of the Star, and specifically this column, can figure out what I'm talking about.

At the risk of sounding like I'm making excuses, I fully recognize mistakes were made. All of this combined just made for a year in my life I would much prefer not to revisit in the future.

I've never been an advocate for the concept of being able to make changes at the flip of a switch simply because the calendar year changes on January 1. That is one way the above analogy doesn't work in real life. Life isn't as simple as doing a rewrite of a television series.

However, the first month or two of the new year are generally on the slower side. This does enable time for self-reflection and planning out what and how changes can be made in the near future. That's what I plan on doing for both the newspaper and my personal life. I already have the framework of a few ideas in mind, although they are far from being ready to reveal yet.

Hopefully, any professional changes will be met positively by you, our readers.

And as for personal changes? To borrow the chorus from Billy Joel's "My Life" (with no disrespect intended), "I don't need you to worry for me 'cause I'm alright. I don't want you to tell me it's time to come home. I don't care what you say anymore; this is my life. Go ahead with your own life, leave me alone."

BILL STICKELS III is editor of the Isanti-Chisago County Star. He can be directly reached at 651-407-1245, through our main office number at 763-689-1181, ext. 156 or editor@countystar.com.



Worth a Thousand Words

Bill
Stickels III



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Caucuses coming up in February

To the editor,

Democrats need to get ready for the coming year. If you have participated in No Kings Day, then you need to get ready for the precinct caucuses on February 3. Both Democrats and Republicans in Minnesota go to their caucuses on the first Tuesday of February this year, and they meet in groups known as precincts for the Isanti County portions of Senate District 28. Republicans usually meet at the Cambridge High School.

For Democrats it is more complicated. There are two precincts for the city of Isanti, and they will meet at the Isanti Middle School on Centennial Drive in Isanti. Bradford Township, Isanti Township, and Maple Ridge Township will meet in their respective township halls. The city of Braham, as well as Stanchfield Township will meet at the Braham Event Center. Cambridge East, Cambridge West, Cambridge Township, Springvale Township, Wyannet Township, and Fish Lake Township in Chisago will meet at the Intermediate School in the city of Cambridge. North Branch Township will meet at the North Branch High School in North Branch. Oxford Township will meet with Stacy Township at the Stacy-Lent Township Hall in Chisago County. For more information on locations, check with your Isanti County Auditor's Office or the Secretary of State's

website on your computer.

For DFL caucuses, people start to register at 6:30 p.m. The meeting starts at 7p.m. People register, elect their new precinct officers, and see who wants to go on to the Senate District # 28 DFL Convention to be held at the North Branch High School. People volunteer for committees to organize the SD #28 Convention and they listen to and vote on resolutions for the State DFL platform. If a person from the caucuses goes to the Senate District Convention, then they can nominate and vote for candidates for State Senator and State Representative for their districts. If a person wants to go on to the District 8 DFL and State DFL Conventions, they can vote for their choice of DFL candidates for the US. District 8 Representative to Congress and other state officers including the Governor of the State of Minnesota.

So DFLers can get organized and have some power. For me, 2025 has been a hard year to take. So let's hope for better.

Barbara Kruschel
Cambridge

Instead of affordable healthcare, we're getting warships

To the editor,

The government shutdown, Oct. 1 through Nov. 12, 2025, occurred when the GOP controlled the House of Representatives, but

were unable to muster the votes to advance the appropriations bill for 2026. The democrats with some republicans were holding out with the hope of continuing to fund the ACA enhanced tax credits. An October polling by the Kaiser Family Foundation showed that despite the budget concerns three-quarters of the public thought Congress should extend the enhanced tax credits. That included most republicans and MAGA supporters.

While the President vacationed at Mar-a-Lago prior to Christmas he announced the building of a "new golden fleet of warships" - to be named after himself. Typical of the President, we get warships when we Americans want affordability and quality healthcare. Maybe, just maybe, there could be a forthcoming announcement outlining the specifics of Trump's concept of a quality system of healthcare for Americans. Imagine a health plan that instead of taking tens of millions off healthcare, per the One Big Beautiful Bill, would insure all Americans and give the assurance of quality healthcare. Improving upon Obama's Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act would be great news and a worthy accomplishment. He could, with some ease, model it after the Canadian universal healthcare system and call it "Trumpcare Gold."

Pete Boelter
North Branch

Your Best Source for Community Information

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Editor..... Bill Stickels III
editor@countystar.com
Editor Assistant..... Stacy Verdick Case
news@countystar.com
Publisher..... Jeff Andres
jeff@northstarmedia.net
Advertising/Classifieds..... Kellie Champion
sales@countystar.com
Graphic Designer..... Kassie Lex
starcomp@countystar.com
Circulation..... Scott Kittelson
circulation@countystar.com

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NEWS DEADLINE:
Noon Tuesday

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4 p.m. Tuesday

CLASSIFIED DEADLINE:
4 p.m. Tuesday

LEGALS DEADLINE:
Noon Monday



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Katherine (Kathy) Edith Bardone

Katherine (Kathy) Edith Bardone, embarked on her final adventure on December 21, 2025, at the age of 79. She was born on January 9, 1946, in Oakland, California, to John and Juanita Fabiano.

Kathy graduated from Richmond High School, where she met and married her high school sweetheart, John Bardone, in 1962. Kathy was deeply passionate about her career at Rite Aid, where she worked for more than 15 years as both a pharmacy technician and front-end manager. Known for her warm smile and caring nature, she had a special way of brightening the day of everyone she encountered.

Outside of work, Kathy found joy in gardening and painting ceramics. An avid gardener, she loved sharing her knowledge with anyone who showed interest. She also enjoyed canning and was especially known for her delicious peach jam and her unforgettable spaghetti sauce.

A devoted mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother, Kathy's family was her greatest pride and joy. She is survived by her daughter, Sherri (Jeff) Anderson of Stanchfield, Minnesota, and her son, David Bardone of Orville, California; her grandchildren, Clayton (Kelsey) Anderson, Morgan Anderson, Cecily Bardone, and Kyle Bardone; and her great-granddaughters, Madelynn and Evelyn Anderson, who will forever cherish memories of her heartfelt hugs and her spirited, spitfire personality.

As we bid farewell to Kathy, we remember a woman whose spirit was as bright and sunny as her beloved California, and whose love and legacy will continue to bloom in the hearts of all who knew her.

A Celebration of Life Gathering Friday, January 9, 2026 from 4 - 6 p.m. at Carlson-Lillemoen Funeral Home. Condolences at www.carlsonlillemoen.com

Kenneth Henry Herzog

Kenneth Henry Herzog, age 78, of Cambridge, died on December 27, 2025, at home.

Ken was born on November 3, 1947, in Glencoe, Minnesota, to Wilbert and Lucille (Hanson) Herzog. He graduated from Glencoe High School in 1965. He continued his education at Mankato State University, where he earned his bachelor's degree in 1969, and later completed his master's degree in 1976.

Ken will be remembered for his kindness, humor, dedication to education, and deep love for his family.

He is survived by his son, Corey (Amber) Herzog; brothers, Dennis (Charlotte) Herzog, Kevin (Michelle) Herzog, and Karl (Lori) Herzog; grandchildren, Drew, Ethan, and Brock; and many other relatives and friends. He was preceded in death by his parents.

A Celebration of Life Gathering will be held from 1 to 3 p.m., with a short sharing time at 2:30 p.m., on Sunday, January 4, at Strike Life Tributes in Cambridge. Online condolences may be made at StrikeLifeTributes.com.

Cheryl Ann Hubacher

Cheryl Ann Hubacher, 78, of Cambridge, passed away on Tuesday, December 24, 2025, at her home, surrounded by her children.

She was born on May 1, 1947, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, to Charles "Andre" and Gertrude (Richman) Calander. Cheryl grew up in the Cambridge area, attending country school and graduating from Cambridge High School in 1965.

On October 27, 1972, she married the love of her life, Floyd C. Hubacher. She enjoyed spending time with her family and attending church services. Her love of art kept her busy and brought her joy for many years.

Besides her parents, Cheryl was preceded in death by her husband, Floyd, in December 1999, her brother, Wayne and stepdaughter Karen.

She is survived by her children, Aaron Hubacher and Stephanie (Greg) Jensrud; her grandchildren, Avery, Sophia, and Sawyer; her stepchildren, Lynn, Diane, David, Paul, and Jennifer; and sister Joan (Myron) Nelson.

Funeral services 11 a.m., Wednesday, December 31, 2025, at North Isanti Baptist Church, 2248 313th Ave NE, Cambridge, MN 55008. Visitation at 10 a.m. Interment in the church cemetery. Condolences at www.carlsonlillemoen.com. Arrangements by Carlson-Lillemoen Funeral Home and Cremation Services of Cambridge.

James Edward Cirhan

James Edward Cirhan, 84, of Isanti, passed away peacefully on November 30, 2025, with Ecumen Hospice after experiencing medical complications due to COPD.

James was born on March 6, 1941, in East St. Paul Minnesota to George and Lorainne Cirhan. James grew up in St. Paul and graduated from Harding High School. Received a Residential Architectural Draftsman degree at St Paul Technical Vocational Institute. James married Shirley Wambolt, at Sacred Heart Church in St. Paul. James and Shirley began their married life in Blaine, then moved to Maple Grove to raise their two sons. James worked several years at President Homes as an Architectural Draftsman. Later in life, James worked for the Osseo Brooklyn Park bus company shuttling kids to school. In the evenings, James worked at French Park in Plymouth as a building manager/maintenance worker. Prior to retiring, James and Shirley built their retirement home on Little Web Lake in Hackensack, MN and retired. James participated in their local Triad program and community organizations. James also participated in the Foster Grandparent Program where he served as a teacher's aide and role model for pre-kindergarten students. In 2021 James and Shirley moved to Isanti to be closer to family and friends.

James is survived by: wife Shirley, sons Chuck and Curt, grandson Conner, sister Judy Stelter and husband Ron, brother-in-law, Rodney Wambolt and wife Peggy. He is predeceased by his parents, George and Lorraine Cirhan, sister Mary Jean "Mer", and in-laws, Elijah and Rose Wambolt.

This Spring we will have a Celebration of Life Services for James E. Cirhan at Cambridge Lutheran Church. Afterwards, James remains will be taken to Hillside Cemetery in Minneapolis. More information will be provided later this Spring.

Margaret "Marge" M. (Valentyn) Ubel

Margaret "Marge" M. (Valentyn) Ubel, 78, of Cambridge, MN passed away on Saturday, December 20, 2025 at GracePointe Crossing with family by her side.

Marge was born on October 31, 1947, in Faribault, MN to William Sr. and Theresa (O'dette) Naughton. She grew up in Faribault and attended Bethlehem Academy graduating in 1965.

On June 4, 1966, she was united in marriage to Dennis Valentyn at Immaculate Conception Catholic Church in Faribault. They made their home there and raised their son, Dennis Jr., until moving to Cambridge in 1979.

Marge began a career in the optometric field as an Optometric Assistant with the Cambridge Eye Center as an Optometric Assistant advancing her way as the Office Manager. In 1998, she continued her career in optometry with Allina Eye Center in Cambridge, retiring on October 31, 2013. She was a recipient of the Paraoptometric of the Year Award.

She enjoyed spoiling her grandchildren, shopping, spending time with family and friends. She took great joy being involved in the planning and attending of several Military Balls held at the Cambridge American Legion.

Marge remarried on September 10, 2016 to William (Bill) Ubel and they resided in Cambridge. They enjoyed going out for breakfast with friends, watching the MN Twins and going to the DQ.

She is survived by her husband, Bill Ubel; son, Dennis (Brenda) Valentyn; grandchildren, Mike (Aspen) Valentyn of Grand Rapids, and Jessica (Andrew) Rott of Fargo; great grandchildren, Indie, Isla and Colter Valentyn, Jamila, Evie, and Legend Rott; sister, Barb (Eldon) Turek; sisters-in-law, Sandi Naughton, MaryJo Miller, Chris Dopkins; stepchildren, Dave (Melanie) Ubel, Mindy (Conrad) Joppru; and step granddaughter, Kensie Ubel, many nieces and nephews.

Marge was preceded in death by her parents; husband, Dennis Valentyn Sr.; sister, Virginia Grothe, brother, William (Pat) Naughton and James Naughton; brothers-in-law, Lambert (Fat) Valentyn, Clarence (Val) Valentyn, Francis (Bubs) Valentyn, Robert (Red) Miller, and James Ubel; sisters-in-law, Shirley Naughton, Marlene Valentyn, Ruth Valentyn, MaryLee Valentyn and TheoDora (Toots) Wandrey.

Funeral Services 2 p.m., Monday, December 29, 2025 at Christ the King Catholic Church in Cambridge. Visitation one hour prior. Interment at Christ the King Catholic Cemetery.

Arrangements by Carlson-Lillemoen Funeral Home & Cremation Services of Cambridge. www.carlsonlillemoen.com.

STUDENT NAMES IN THE NEWS

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Christmas cheer for veterans

Members of the North Branch American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars, joined by the North Branch Air Force Junior ROTC, gather Dec. 19 at Ecumen in North Branch to celebrate Christmas with veterans. Also pictured are Legion Commander Paul Johnson and VFW Commander Dirk Doble, dressed as Santa, who officiated the program.

CONTRIBUTED



2025

A year in pictures



BILL STICKELS III | COUNTY STAR

This young guy knows the importance of keeping both your inside and outside hydrated during hot weather as he grabs a drink while playing in the water sprinkler created by North Branch Fire Department's ladder truck during Midsummer Days.



BILL STICKELS III | COUNTY STAR

Mincco Credit Union's Kirsten Schneider reacts to getting slime poured over her head by Jeff Klatt, owner of Cambridge Pizza Pub. The Nickelodeon-themed event was the reward for the downtown Cambridge branch eclipsing its school supply drive goals.

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BILL STICKELS III | COUNTY STAR

Normally, Main Street in downtown Cambridge would be filled with a sea of people during the annual Customer Appreciation Day. However, because of a steady rain for the duration of the event, this year's scene featured rows of empty chairs and tables as those who chose to venture out despite the weather mainly stuck to eating under one of the business' awnings.



BILL STICKELS III | COUNTY STAR

Isanti Ambassador Chloe Olson shows off her cleaned pie plate during the Ambassadors Pie Eating contest. Olson ate through the entire plate of "pie" (actually chocolate pudding) and whipped cream in under one minute.



BILL STICKELS III | COUNTY STAR

Area emergency personnel go through a mock crash at Braham Area High School ahead of prom.



BILL STICKELS III | COUNTY STAR

Cambridge American Legion Commander Andy Fiedler (back to camera) receives a hug from Legion Riders Chaplain Ed Chromey after Fiedler struggled to get through the Roll Call of Deceased Veterans, which included two close friends of his.



DEE ANN SIBLEY | COUNTY STAR

This bucking bronco appears to be showing its contempt for not being able to throw its rider during Friday's Isanti Firefighters Rodeo performance.

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Talking respiratory illnesses with University of Minnesota

As Minnesota enters the heart of respiratory virus season, families are already starting to feel the familiar waves of coughs, sniffles and even fevers. Phoebe Smith, MD, with the University of Minnesota Medical School talks about cold and flu season trends, how people can protect themselves and care for symptoms at home.

Q: What trends are you seeing with this year's cold and flu season?

Dr. Smith: So far, I'm noticing a fairly predictable early rise in respiratory infections among the people I see, in both the clinic and hospital. This tracks with the viral respiratory illness stats found on the Minnesota Department of Health website, which show we are just starting to see a seasonal upswing in influenza, RSV and COVID-19 cases in the state. In October, I usually start to see a few more sick kids and families as the school year gets into full swing, and typically, December is when the real cough-and-cold party starts!

Q: What are the most effective prevention steps people can take right now?

Dr. Smith: All the usual suspects remain true: diligent hand hygiene, staying home when you are sick and consider masking in higher risk situations. The seasonal flu and COVID-19 vaccines are always

a must for my family. While it can be tricky to predict how closely the flu vaccine will match with the virus strains circulating in the community, it is consistently very effective at preventing a flu infection from becoming severe. It's also worth checking with your health provider or pharmacist if you are eligible for the RSV or pneumococcal vaccines.

Q: How long are people typically contagious, and what does responsible behavior look like when someone is sick?

Dr. Smith: The typical rule is that you are most contagious with a respiratory virus within the first three to four days after symptoms begin, though with something like the flu, you can be contagious up to two weeks! You are most likely to spread infections if you have a fever, are coughing, sneezing or have a runny nose, as these droplets get into the air and on surfaces. Do your best to stay home during these first few days. A cough can linger for weeks after a respiratory infection and while you may not be contagious the entire time, it is good practice to wear a mask and avoid close contact with others, especially in the first week of having a cough.

Q: When should we manage symptoms at home, and when should we reach out to a doctor?

Dr. Smith: Hydration and resting your body are the



most effective ways to get better quickly. Most people can manage typical symptoms without seeking medical care, and can safely seek relief with over-the-counter medications if needed. If you are pregnant, have multiple underlying health conditions or are caring for a child under 12, reach out to your healthcare team to ask about which medicines are safe. Prolonged fevers more than four to five days, confusion, notable shortness of breath, chest pain or not being able to keep down fluids for more than 12 hours should

prompt anyone to seek urgent or emergency care. Also, you should call if the symptoms do not improve after 10 days.

Q: How does your work at the University of Minnesota advance health in Minnesota?

Dr. Smith: As a family physician, I am lucky to feel the positive impact of my work most days simply from seeing patients. If I can help even a handful of people feel better, or help educate someone on how to prevent future disease, I take that as a success. Also, a large part of my current job is supervising and training res-

idents to become independent family doctors, so I feel privileged to pass along knowledge to the future of healthcare, all while helping myself to always keep learning!

Phoebe Smith, MD, is an assistant professor at the University of Minnesota Medical School. She provides full-spectrum family medicine care, including obstetrics. She is most passionate about LGBTQ+ primary care, sexual and reproductive health and adolescent medicine. - The University of Minnesota Medical School



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April cont.

TRIPLE A AWARD STAYS IN FAMILY

In being named the Class AA Triple A (Academics, Arts, Athletics) award winner, Keagen Lowman became the fifth senior from Cambridge-Isanti High School to claim the honor — not to mention the second member of the Lowman family to win it. Keagen’s sister, Ava, won it in 2023.

In addition to winning the Triple A award, Keagen made his second trip to the State Class AA Doubles Tennis Tournament, along with his teammate Micah Gustafson.



May

WEDLUND RETIRES AS GRAD BAND CONDUCTOR

East Central Grad Band founder and conductor Lynn Wedlund retired as the band’s conductor. The band’s spring concert was supposed to be Wedlund’s on-stage swan song, however an unexpected surgery prevented her from attending. Wedlund still performs with the band, playing the oboe.

CAMBRIDGE SELLS INDUSTRIAL PARK LAND TO ISANTI COUNTY

The city of Cambridge and Isanti County reached a purchase agreement for two parcels in the city’s industrial park, north of Highway 95. The final price for the land was \$750,000, plus the county conveyed via easement the current Highway Department property off Emerson Street North. The county is planning on constructing a new, larger Highway Department facility on the sight.

ISANTI COUNTY REJECTS E-POLLBOOKS

The Isanti County Commissioners went against the recommendations of Auditor-Treasurer Angie Larson, voting down a request from Larson to purchase e-pollbooks for every precinct in the county. The commissioners cited what they admitted might be a “vocal minority” against the election devices for swaying their vote. As an offshoot of the decision, the city of Cambridge, who had been using the e-pollbooks since 2018, now must go back to paper pollbooks starting with the 2016 election.

June

STATE HOSPITAL BUILDINGS TO BE DEMOLISHED

It was revealed by Isanti County Administrator Amanda Usher that the county was informed by the state all the buildings, except for the cottage-style buildings, will be demolished by the state. Previously, the Isanti County Commissioners had considered asking the state to not only do just that, but also to convey the land to the county. It remains unknown what the state will now do with the property. While some prep work has been done and fencing erected, the state has yet to follow through with the actual demolition.

July

C-I SCHOOL BOARD CALLS FOR BOND REFERENDUM VOTE

The Cambridge-Isanti School Board unanimously approved calling for a November bond referendum vote to pay for upgrades, deferred maintenance, plus other improvements to all buildings and facilities in the district. The referendum was in the form of two questions, with the first question asking for “not to exceed \$87.1 million” and the second question asking for “not to exceed \$36,475,000.” The primary component of question two was a fieldhouse that would include four courts, a competitive running track, plus a second-level walking/running track that would be open to the public. The projects to be included in both questions were unanimously recommended by a 59-member Facilities Planning Task Force.

July cont.

RED RETURNS TO BLUEJACKET LOGO

Another of the Facilities Planning Task Force recommendations that didn’t need a public vote was to restore the color red to the district’s logo. The logo was blue, white and red up until about ten years ago when the district opted to go with just blue and white in the logo. The school board unanimously and enthusiastically approved adding the red back in.



APARTMENT COMPLEX TO FILL FORMER SCHOOL PROPERTY

The North Branch City Council approved a special use permit for the former school district building land adjacent to Highway 95, allowing a four-building apartment complex to be built there. This was actually the second time a developer proposed constructing an apartment complex on the site. The initial request was met with resistance from the council at that time, along with the general public. The current council’s opinion was a 32-unit, four building complex was a “better fit” for the property. Ground has yet to be broken on the project.

August

NEW PATHWAYS BREAKS GROUND



Following a whirlwind of fundraising efforts that yielded \$3.5 million in a mere six months, New Pathways officially broke ground on a 10-unit apartment-style building to house the organization’s homeless clients 24/7. The land for the building, which is located adjacent to the Isanti County Health and Human Services building, was purchased by New Pathways from the city of Cambridge for one dollar, plus New Pathways agreeing to pay for an expansion of the water drainage holding pond. The building is scheduled to be completed by early August, 2026.

K9 KARMA DIES

Karma, one of the Isanti County Sheriff’s Office’s K9s, unexpectedly died from complications associated with heat stroke following Karma’s involvement in the apprehension of two drug suspects. A public memorial for Karma was held at the Isanti County Government Center a couple weeks after the incident.



MERRILL WINS SPECIAL ELECTION

Following a long and contentious (on social media) campaign, Luke Merrill was elected mayor for the city of Isanti during a special election. Merill is currently serving the remainder of his abbreviated term, which will expire on Dec. 31, 2026.

September

PILOT DIES IN PLANE CRASH

Local emergency personnel responded to a report of an airplane that had crashed just north of the Cambridge Airport’s runway. Upon arrival, emergency personnel discovered the pilot, who was the only occupant of the plane, was dead at the scene. The exact cause of the crash has yet to be made public.

October

ISANTI COUNTY SHERIFF’S FOUNDATION VICTIM OF FRAUD

Kimberly Sue Nordenstrom, who was one of the founders of the Isanti County Sheriff’s Foundation — a non-profit designed to financially assist the sheriff’s office, was charged with embezzling nearly \$100,000 from it. Nordenstrom allegedly funneled the money through a series of unrecorded bank transactions that also involved another Twin Cities based organization, to pay off her personal debts and purchase farming equipment.

BLUEJACKET GIRLS TENNIS EARNS FIRST TRIP TO STATE



For the first time in school history, the Cambridge-Isanti Bluejacket girls tennis team won the Section 7AAA team championship, earning the team’s first-ever state tournament berth. Unfortunately, the team ran into some very tough competition at state, losing to powerhouse Rochester Mayo and being edged by Alexandria. At the same time, North Branch’s girls tennis team completed its best-ever season, coming in second place in the Section 7AA team tournament.

November

C-I SCHOOLS REFERENDUM FAILS

Voters overwhelmingly rejected both of the Cambridge-Isanti Schools’ bond referendum questions. Question one received 59.6% no votes. Question two received 65.73% no votes.

CAMBRIDGE LAUNDERERS AND CLEANERS GOES UP FOR AUCTION

Following a long, detailed process by Isanti County, the building that used to house Cambridge Launderers and Cleaners was officially put up for public auction for \$100. The building, which has been vacant and was tax forfeited in 2023, is known to contain some hazardous waste, which would have to be cleaned up by the winning bidder if that person wishes to do anything with the site. The auction is currently open, with a closing date of Jan. 14.

DOOM SWORN IN AS NEW JUDGE

Local attorney Carrie Doom was sworn in as Isanti County’s newest Tenth District judge during an investiture Ceremony. Doom replaces Judge Amy Brosnahan, who recently retired.



NORTH BRANCH SCHOOLS CALLS FOR TECH LEVY EXTENSION

North Branch Area Public Schools has also approved a referendum vote, with this one taking place Feb. 10. The lone question on the ballot asks for voter approval of an extension to the district’s tech levy, which was originally approved by voters in 2017.

December

ISANTI COUNTY ASKS FOR SALES TAX REFERENDUM

A third referendum vote might be on the horizon if the state legislature allows Isanti County to call for a local option sales tax referendum. If the legislature approves it, the .25% sales tax increase would be put before voters as early as November, 2026. The money collected would be used to pay for the construction of the county’s proposed new Highway Department Facility.

CAMBRIDGE CHIPOTLE BACK ON MENU

Over two years after initially being announced, a Chipotle restaurant finally appears to be coming to Cambridge at the site of the former Perkins. Additionally, a Les Schwab Tire store will be constructed on the site.

Minnesota DNR permanently protects nearly 16,000 acres

This fall, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources finalized one of its largest land acquisitions in recent history, resulting in the permanent protection of nearly 16,000 acres of forested land across a ten-county area in northern Minnesota. This action ensures these lands will remain forested into the future, securing the broad range of habitat, recreation, economic and other benefits these lands provide.

“We’re grateful for the opportunity to protect these forests, lakes, and waterways – now and for generations to come. This land will expand outdoor recreation access and preserve critical habitat,” DNR Commissioner Sarah Strommen said. “Public lands are essential to Minnesota’s environmental stewardship, identity, and economy, and we appreciate the collaboration of our partners as we work to steward and conserve these lands for the future.”

The acquisition is the culmination of two separate efforts made possible in partnership with The Conservation Fund (TCF), Northern Waters Land Trust (NWLTT), and multiple Minnesota counties. These efforts began with TCF purchasing land from Potlatch-Deltic Corporation between 2018 and 2022, with the intent of preserving large blocks of forest land. The DNR and counties then worked in collaboration to identify their respective acquisition priorities and secure funding. “For the benefit of all Minnesotans and the state’s economy,

we’re expanding recreational access, helping local wildlife thrive and ensuring that working forests can keep working,” said Kim Berns-Melhus, Minnesota State Director at TCF. “This outcome protects jobs in the forest industry, protects the lands we all need and love, and protects our shared heritage for future generations to enjoy.”

In one transaction, with funding from the Minnesota Legacy Outdoor Heritage Fund, the DNR collaborated with NWLTT and the counties to strategically select 10,675 acres within Aitkin, Becker, Carlton, Cass, Crow Wing, Hubbard, Itasca, Koochiching, and Wadena counties. These lands will expand existing wildlife management areas, scientific and natural areas, and state forests.

“By keeping these forested lands forested, we are strengthening the ecological health of our region and creating new opportunities for people to explore and enjoy the outdoors,” said Annie Knight, Executive Director of Northern Waters Land Trust. “These lands will continue to support clean water, thriving wildlife habitat, and the connection communities feel to Minnesota’s natural places.”

In the second transaction, the DNR acquired 5,120 acres in St. Louis County using Reinvest in Minnesota dollars. These lands will expand and consolidate ownership in existing state forests, creating larger, contiguous blocks of DNR land.

“This project will benefit local

economies, wildlife habitat, and the public well into the future.” said Jason Meyer, St. Louis County Director of Land and Minerals. “The collaborative effort of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and St. Louis County proved successful in consolidating important and productive forestlands for wildlife habitat and sustainable forest products, while securing the land for public use. It is projects like these which help strengthen local communities by providing economic, environmental, and recreational opportunities for the good of the region.”

The newly acquired state public land belongs to all Minnesotans. As with all land the DNR manages, the mix of management purposes and allowable activities will vary based on the specific land designation. For example, wildlife management areas are managed for wildlife production and to provide hunting, fishing, and wildlife watching opportunities, whereas scientific and natural areas preserve some of the last remaining habitat for Minnesota’s rarest plants and animals and are open to recreational activities that do not disturb natural conditions. State forests support multiple benefits including habitat, clean air and water, carbon sequestration and storage, sustainable forest products, and a variety of recreational activities. More information about Minnesota’s state-managed public lands can be found on the DNR website (mndnr.gov). - MNDNR

Explore the outdoors this winter by hunting Minnesota small game

“Winter is a fun time to get out in the crisp air and hunt small game,” said Benji Kohn, volunteer mentor program coordinator with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. “These hunts can be a lot like hikes with the added challenge of pursuing some excellent table fare.”

The pheasant hunting season is open through Jan. 4, 2026. On Dec. 1, the daily bag limit increased to three roosters, with a possession limit of nine roosters. Pheasant numbers were up nearly 50% over last year and were 21% above the 10-year average, according to the DNR August Roadside Survey, available on the DNR pheasant hunting webpage (mndnr.gov/hunting/pheasant). The best places to find pheasants at this time of year are tall grass or cattail marshes. Hunters should remember to exercise caution around thin ice.

Grouse hunting season is also open through Jan. 4, 2026. Wintertime grouse hunters might find success during the “golden hour,” the last hour before sunset, when ruffed grouse move out of their snow roosts to feed.

There’s even more time for squirrels and rabbits in a season that stretches through Feb. 28, 2026. Winter is breeding season for squirrels, which means they are active and easier to find. And rabbit hunters tend to find the most success around thick cover like brush piles, thorn tangles and briars. This has been a banner year for cottontail rabbits, with populations at a 60-year high, according to the August Roadside Survey.

Fisher, martin and bobcat trapping opens Saturday, Dec. 13, so hunters should be aware of this season while in the woods. Hunters also can find regulations and complete bag limit information on the Minnesota DNR website (mndnr.gov/hunting). More information about how or where to hunt can be found on the DNR’s learn to hunt webpages (mndnr.gov/gohunting). Recorded webinars with tips on how to hunt pheasants, grouse, squirrels or rabbits are available in the webinar archive on the outdoor skills and stewardship page of the DNR’s website (mndnr.gov/discover). - MNDNR

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DON'T Drink & Drive!

Think before you drink. There's So Much to Celebrate...

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DRIVE SOBER OR GET PULLED OVER

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2. Make plans to have a designated driver.

3. Reserve a ride home with a car service.

4. Call a taxi.

5. Make overnight plans.

6. Attend an alcohol-free celebration.

Your health is important. Your friends and family are precious. Your reputation is valuable. Your freedom is priceless. Life is irreplaceable.

When you decide to drink and drive, you risk it all.

Respect yourself and others by committing to a sober ride home this Holiday Season.

THE KEY TO A HAPPY NEW YEAR:



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Using firewood to heat your home? Stay safe with smart firewood practices

As Minnesotans settle into the winter season, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources is reminding land-owners who harvest or buy firewood for heating to take the following steps to protect their homes, woods and selves.

AVOID MOVING FIREWOOD

The DNR urges landowners who harvest their own firewood to burn it close to where it is cut. Similarly, the agency reminds people who buy firewood to find locally sourced wood. With insects dormant in winter, cutting firewood during cold months and minimizing the distance cut firewood travels reduces the risk of spreading diseases and fungi. Once the weather warms up and insects become active, unused firewood can spread invasive insects and diseases such as emerald ash borer and oak wilt.

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture has established pest quarantines in some areas that restrict the movement of firewood. Only firewood that has been processed or heat-treated

and is MDA-certified can be moved out of quarantine areas. Moving untreated firewood out of quarantine boundaries can result in fines. More information is available on the MDA website (mda.state.mn.us).

STORE WOOD SAFELY TO PREVENT FIRE

Sparks, embers or a stray grassfire can ignite firewood quickly. Proper firewood storage is an important step Minnesotans can take to prevent wild-fires and protect homes.

Store only the firewood needed for the season at least 30 feet from a home or other structures.

Avoid stacking firewood directly against buildings, which can create a direct path for fire to spread.

Clear leaves, needles and dry vegetation from around stacked or piled firewood to reduce fuel sources.

Maintaining defensible space around homes and outbuildings is especially important during warm or dry winter periods when snow cover is limited. For more tips on how to keep homes and properties safe from fire, visit the



DNR's Firewise webpage (mndnr.gov/firewise).

By following smart firewood practices, Minnesotans can stay warm

while protecting homes from fire and woodlands from invasive species. -MN Department of Agriculture

WORSHIPguide

Baptist

First Baptist Church

304 S. Main St., Cambridge,
763-689-1173. Call the church office or visit our website for current service times and programs.
firstbaptistcambridge.org

North Isanti Baptist Church

Lead Pastor: Travis Blake
2248 313th Ave. NE, Cambridge, MN
55008. www.nibchurch.com
Email: nibchurch@msn.com
763-689-3576.
8:30am Worship Service (traditional style)
10:45am Worship Service (contemporary style)

Springvale Baptist

Pastor Zane Hall
9:30am Sunday School
10:30am Sunday Worship
Wednesday: 6:00 pm Band of Brothers
Thursday: 10:00 am Ladies Bible Study
410 County Road 6 NW
Stanchfield, MN 55080
763-689-1373
springvalechurchmn.org

Sunrise Bible Church

41300 Second St., North
Branch, Pastor David Stertz. Sunday
school for all ages
9:30am, Sunday morning Worship
10:30am, Sunday evening 6pm, Wed.
Kids 4 Truth & Bible studies for all
ages 6:30pm. More info at
sunrisebiblechurch.org
or 651-674-4107.

Catholic

Christ the King

305 Fern Street N
Cambridge, MN 55008
763-689-1221
Friday 8:30am
Saturday 4pm
email brigitte@isantiacc.org
Website: isantiacc.org

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

207 Whiskey Rd NW, Isanti, MN.
763-444-4035
Email: brigitte@isantiacc.org
Mass: Tues. & Wed. 8:30am.
Sun. 8:30am.
isantiacc.org

Evangelical Covenant

Karmel Covenant Church

5799 County Road 6, Princeton MN
763-389-3169
Lead Pastor: Jason Hovis
Pastor of Youth: Kohl Hanson
Sunday School for All Ages (school
year only): 9-10 a.m.
Sunday Worship (in person & online):
10:30-11:30 a.m.
Wednesday Programming (school year
only):
Family meal at 5:30 p.m. with
AWANA and Youth Group from
6:30-8 p.m.

Evangelical Free

Dale Evangelical Free Church

45268 Brunswick Rd,
Harris, MN 763-689-5817
Pastor/Teacher Dr. Harvey Martin.
Sunday School – all ages 9am.
Sunday Service 10:25am.
www.daleefc.com

Kost Evangelical Free Church

37405 Kost Trail, North Branch, MN –
Jct. of CR 11 & CR 72
651-583-3281 • Kostchurch.org
Pastor Josh Jensen
Sunday worship service 9:30 am fol-
lowed by fellowship & Sunday School
Youth group Wednesdays 7 pm
Respawn Gaming Ministry for teen
boys – 2 Fridays per month.

Oxlip Evangelical Free Church

29237 Roanoke St NW, Isanti
KidZone 9:15 & 10:30 a.m.
(1 mile West of Cty 5 and Hwy 47)
763-444-5134 oxlip.org
9am Worship Service
10:45am Christian Education
Awana children's ministry Wednesdays
6 to 7:30pm

Wyanett Evangelical Free Church

12 Miles West of Cambridge on Hwy 95
www.wyanettevangelicalfree.org
Pastor Bruce Talso 763-221-4469
Sunday School 9:30 am
Morning Worship 10:30 am
Mondays - Women's Evening Bible
Study 6:00 pm
Tuesdays - Men's Bible Study 5:00 pm
Wednesdays - Midweek Bible Study/
Prayer 2:00 pm
Thursdays - Women's Morning Bible
Study 9:30 a.m. at Heart Matters
Ministry, 403 1st St. Princeton
A LOVING CHURCH PROCLAIMING A
LIVING MESSAGE!

Lutheran

Braham Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELCA)

Dr. Suzanne Begin, Minister
905 Central Drive West
320-396-2755
www.brahamlutheran.org
9:30 a.m. Worship Service
In-person & Live on Facebook
9:00 - 9:45 Sunday School
Children may join worship service
or be picked up by an adult
All Are Welcome!

Calvary Evangelical Lutheran Church Of Rush Point (ELCA)

Pastor Vicki Vandervegt.
320-358-4829, 600 Rush Point Dr.
10:30am Worship with Fellowship fol-
lowing
my.calvaryofrushpoint.org.
Office: calvaryrushpoint@gmail.com

Cambridge Lutheran Church (ELCA)

621 Old North Main Street, Cambridge
763-689-1211
Traditional service: 8:30 a.m.
Contemp service: 9:15 & 10:30 a.m.
KidZone 9:15 & 10:30 a.m.
www.cambridgelutheran.org
Facebook: fb.com/Cambridgelutheran
YouTube: tinyurl.com/Cambridgelutheran

Christ Ev. Lutheran Church (WELS)

32962 Vickers St. NE, Cambridge, 763-
689-5333
Pastor Samuel L. Biebert.
Sunday Worship 9am, Sunday School/
Bible Class 10:30am
www.christcambridge.com

First Lutheran Church (ELCA)

43779 Gates Ave., Harris.
651-674-4498. Handicapped accessi-
ble.
Pastor Vicki VanderVegt
Sunday Worship 9:20am
Coffee & fellowship following service
Email: firstlutheran@q.com
www.firstlutheranharris.org

Joy Lutheran Church (Missouri Synod)

33525 Jefferson Street NE, Cambridge
763-689-4355
www.joylutheran.net
Pastor James Ritter
8:30 a.m. Traditional Service
10:30 a.m. Contemporary Service

Living Branch Lutheran Church (LCMS)

6486 Elm St (PO Box 335),
North Branch
651-674-5576
Pastor Glen Kleppe
CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE 7PM
Sunday Worship 10am
Sunday School 9am
Sunday Adult Bible Study 9am
www.livingbranch.org
email: office@livingbranch.org

Long Lake Lutheran Church (ELCA)

3921 277th Ave NW Isanti, MN 55040
763-444-5315
Pastor Sue Olson &
Pastor Rebecca Holland
All Are Welcome!
Sundays
9 am Worship & 10 am Sunday School
Holy Communion: 1st and 3rd Sundays
Wednesdays 6 pm Confirmation

Salem Lutheran Church

4638 381st Ave. NW, Dalbo, MN 55017.
763-689-1687
Join us for worship every Sunday at
10:30
Sunday School 11:00 resuming in the
Fall
Coffee fellowship after worship
www.salemmlutherandalbo.com

Spring Lake Lutheran Church (ELCA)

8440 Erickson Road, PO Box 958,
North Branch, MN 55056 (9 mi. E. of
Cambridge on Hwy. 95, North one
block on Erickson Road).
651-674-4606.
Pastor Vicki VanderVegt.sllchurch.org
Email: sll.church@gmail.com
8:15am Worship with fellowship fol-
lowing

St. John Lutheran Church (Missouri Synod)

28168 Jodrell St. NE, North Branch
Located 6 mi. E. of Isanti on Co. Rd. 5;
(or 7 mi. W. of North Branch on Co. Rd.
5); then 1-1/2 mi. S. on Co. Rd. 12. 763-
444-5988, Paul Anderson, Pastor;
Sunday 9am Worship;
10:20am Adult Bible Study;
Thursday 6:30pm Bible study.
Email: stjohnlutheran@att.net

St. John's Lutheran Church (Missouri Synod)

980 West 4th Street, Rush City
320-358-3623
Sunday 8:45am Worship
Monday 10am Longer Look Bible Study
stjohnsrushcity.org

St. Stephen's Lutheran Church (Missouri Synod)
400 SE 8th St., (Isanti #4 E.), PO Box
37, Braham
320-396-3103
9:30am Sunday School & Adult Bible
Study.
10:30am Worship.
ststephensbraham.org

Trinity Lutheran Church (ELCA)

38460 Lincoln Trail, North Branch
651-674-7047 Pastor Paul Cannon
In person and online worship
8 & 10 am Worship
9 am Coffee Hour
9 am Sunday School
www.trinitynorthbranch.org
office@trinitynorthbranch.org

Methodist

Common Ground - A United Methodist Community

404 Cypress St. North, Cambridge.
763-689-2071.
Pastors Amelia & Andrew Buschena.
Sunday 9:30am Worship.
Livestream of services and more info
at commongroundumc.org.
Everyone Counts!

Non-Denominational

Grace Gospel Church

37126 MN-65, Stanchfield, MN 55080
763-308-5618
Coffee fellowship: 9:45am
Service: 10:00am
Pastor: Tim Miller
www.gracegospelmn.org
info@gracegospelchurchmn.com
Located just north of Grandy on 65,
across from East Central Diesel, with
three large crosses near the road.
We look forward to having you!

Journey of Faith

Bible based worship.
651-600-9878.
faiththroughaction777@gmail.com
Sunday fellowship 9am
Worship & Youth Ministry 10am
Come as you are. All welcome.
Junction Bowl. 123 Cajima Street, NE,
Isanti. Refreshments served.

JustPassinthru IHS Ministries

Becoming Agape – Allowing the Holy
Spirit to
transform lives
763-228-0883
Meeting at Crossroads Commons
1001 1st Ave. E., Suite 100, Cambridge
MN
justpassinihs@gmail.com
Justpassinthru.net
Pastor Tom Bakke
Sunday mornings at 10 am
Sunday nights and Wednesdays

Pentecostal

The Journey New Life Church

601 Heritage Blvd NE, Isanti
Pastor David L. Willis.
Sunday 10am Worship &
the Word & Kids' Church.
Sunday 6pm Family Worship.
Wednesday 7pm Family Breakout
Classes.
763-689-4471
Thejourneynlc.org

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Kellie 651-407-1237
sales@countystar.com

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763-333-4990.301
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North of Brook Park.
Previously planted
with alfalfa and soy
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Agates, jewelry, primi-
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cast iron pans. 651-
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MN.358
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wood, mixed hard-
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loads \$450. Two cord
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environment that promotes a lasting career.For more information about our community and the position,
please visit our website at www.ci.mora.mn.us >employment. You
may also obtain the required application packet at City Hall
located at: 101 Lake St. S, Mora, MN 55051. Contact Joe Kohlgraf at
joe.kohlgraf@cityofmora.com or 320-225-4806 with questions.City of
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City Pioneer, North Pine County News,Kanabec County Times and
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shoppers and online. Must have
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