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VETERANS GPS: New benefits guide now available **PAGE 8**



CONTRIBUTED

Hugo resident Michael Saniti pictured in a bunk while deployed to Iraq for Operation Iraqi Freedom. Saniti served in the Army National Guard from 2001 to 2008.

A veteran's battle doesn't end when the war is over

BY SHANNON GRANHOLM
MANAGING EDITOR

Each year on Veterans Day, Hugo resident Michael Saniti makes a point to go down into his basement and look at a flag that is signed by all his fellow soldiers in his unit.

"I reflect on the guys I served with, where they came from and what they sacrificed," he said.

In addition to missing the birth of one of his sons, Saniti, and his fellow soldiers missed birthdays, holidays and family get-togethers. He survived the battlefield, but surviving the war was only the beginning. Years after returning home, he continues to fight battles no one else can see. His fight is against the memories, the trauma and lasting mental and emotional scars.

SEE **BEYOND THE BATTLEFIELD,** PAGE **8**

County Road J, 35E interchange bridges county and city efforts

BY LOGAN GION
STAFF WRITER

The County Road J bridge and interchange with I-35E is nearly complete. Final ramp paving and sidewalk concrete work is currently underway. The week of Nov.6, the project will see pavement striping, sign installations, and site cleanup and restoration.

The completion of this project will mark the culmination of five years of work from Ramsey County in partnership with multiple nearby cities, including Lino Lakes, North Oaks and White Bear Township.

"This was a huge project, both in size and in complexity of cost," said John Mazzitello, Ramsey County deputy director of public works during the Oct. 30 ribbon cutting ceremony for the project. "Over the past two years, we've managed to reconstruct County Road J, we improved the intersection with Centerville Road, we installed … three new roundabouts in total. We provided two new accesses to I-35E, giving County Road J a fully

LOGAN GION | PRESS PUBLICATIONS

From left: John Mazzitello, Tara Jebens-Singh and Mai Chong Xiong.

SEE **COUNTY J INTERCHANGE,** PAGE **16**

'Hello, Dolly!' parades into White Bear's Performing Arts Center

BY LOGAN GION
STAFF WRITER

Wendy Suoja, director of White Bear Lake Area High School's fall musical, had two reasons for choosing "Hello, Dolly!" as this year's show: the first is that it's fun.

"I think our community really likes shows that are joyful," said Suoja. "They want a show that's funny, and this show is hilarious. There are tons of lines that are just flippant and silly … and we haven't done a show like that in a long time."

The second reason is that it's fun for all ages.

"You can bring somebody here that is in preschool, and they will giggle, and they will love many, many scenes," said Suoja. "You have community members that are in their eighties where this show resonates with them on a real, personal level, and then everybody in between."

The show — about matchmaker Dolly Levi and her quest to find a match for "well-known, unmarried, half-a-millionaire" Horace Vandergelder — is a shift for senior Rio Hilden as well. Before taking on the role of Dolly in this show, Hilden played Zoe Murphy, a teenage sister grieving the loss of her brother and a victim of an out-of-control lie, in White Bear's production of "Dear Evan Hansen."

"I had some time in between, but it is a very drastic difference," Hilden said. "It has taken me a lot of time to figure out who (Dolly) is as a person and dive a little deeper into that. I even have to hold myself differently."

SEE '**HELLO, DOLLY!',** PAGE **9**



PAUL DOLS | PRESS PUBLICATIONS

The cast of White Bear Lake Area High School's production of "Hello, Dolly!" lines up for a Golden-Age-musical-style number.

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Family reopens longtime kennel business to honor legacy

BY SHANNON GRANHOLM
MANAGING EDITOR

Two years after Charlene Wunderlich's death, her family is preparing to reopen the longtime dog kennel business, finding a way to honor her memory while preserving a family tradition they aren't quite ready to let go.

"I had mixed feelings about it at first … just because of how I lost my mom, but when I think about how my mom would feel about it, I think she'd be very happy," said Chris Wunderlich, Charlene's son.

The business is being restarted by Heidi Thomas and her fiancé, Mike Halverson, who are related to the business through Thomas' mother, Lena Harhaj, who is married to Chris Wunderlich.

The Linwood residents plan to relocate their family to the kennel property, located on Ingersoll Avenue in Hugo.

When the family felt emotionally ready to return to the property and begin going through Charlene's belongings, they also began thinking about the future of the kennel. Last April, they ultimately decided it was something they wanted to preserve and carry forward.

Harhaj recalled a text message her granddaughter Skylar texted to Chris saying reopening the business would be a good idea. "The kids were on board, so I think it just kind of blossomed from there," she said.

The business dates back to 1936 when it opened as as Oneka Lake Kennels in the city of North Oaks. In 1965, Chris' grandfather, William "Billy" Wunderlich, took over the business and it was renamed to Bill Wunderlich's North Oaks Kennels. Billy was a renowned dog trainer and inducted into the Retriever Field Trial Hall of Fame in 1994.

Chris' parents Charlene and William "Skip" Wunderlich acquired the business in 1982, when the business moved to Hugo. After Skip passed away in April 2020, Charlene ran the business by herself up until her death in September 2024.

Charlene's son, Trevor Wunderlich, was convicted of first-degree premeditated murder in her death. Court records detailed years of abuse Charlene had documented in journals, photographs and messages to her son. He was found guilty of all three murder counts following a bench trial. His sentencing is scheduled for Dec. 18.

The business has remained closed since Charlene's death.

Harhaj said it took longer than they thought but that the family needed that time to mentally deal with what happened and get the property ready for a business again.

While Charlene's death left a void that can never be filled, the family didn't want the business she had been part of for so long to end with her. They were also determined to continue making happy memories at what has been cherished as a peaceful piece of property.

Throughout the journey to reopen the business, the family has caught themselves thinking, "What would Charlene think?" more times than they can count.

The family got to work, cleaning up the property and freshening up the lobby.

"As much as Charlene loved dogs, she loved her family and I know that she would just be incredibly proud of the hard work that we did," Harhaj said. "It would bring her so much peace and joy just to see the change, and that this is going to be once again a place of laughter and joy and family memories."

The kennel is situated on 11 acres and currently has a capacity for 20 dogs indoors.

Thomas says she is planning to keep the business simple at first to honor Charlene's repeat customers and at the same time attract new ones.

"People always liked that we were in close proximity with the dogs," Chris explained. "When the dogs would come back, they were excited." That excitement is evidenced by the marks on the lobby's countertop, where dogs would jump up for a treat and to greet Charlene. Chris added that it was not uncommon for his mother to care for four or five generations of dogs from one family.



SHANNON GRANHOLM | PRESS PUBLICATIONS

North Oaks Kennels, formerly Bill Wunderlich's North Oaks Kennels, will reopen this month after a two-year closure. The business is owned by Heidi Thomas and her fiancé, Mike Halverson (right). They are pictured with their two children, Skylar (left) and Arya, along with Thomas' mom Lena Harhaj and husband Chris Wunderlich.

"She loved her customers. She loved their dogs. She loved what she did, and people knew it," Harhaj said.

North Oaks Kennels also will not turn away dogs that might not be permitted at other facilities. For example, if a dog is not fixed or does not get along with other dogs. Because each of the dogs has its own individual run to go outside, group play or socialization is not required.

"Charlene had it very basic here, which I think is what people liked," Thomas explained. "People didn't like the extreme overpricing and socialization of their dogs."

The new owners say they plan to stick to the dog kennel business and not necessarily the dog grooming business, which Charlene also did. They do plan to try out some new things as they get a handle on the business — Perhaps dog walking by the lake on the property or doggy playtime with dogs that get along.

"We want to keep those good vibes going. Keep the dogs happy," Halverson said, adding that his hope is that one day, one or both of their daughters will take over the family business.

North Oaks Kennels plans to open mid-November just ahead of Thanksgiving.

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WHAT'S HAPPENING



CONTRIBUTED

SECOND ANNUAL CRAFT FAIR
When: 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 12 to Saturday, Nov. 14
Where: New Life Church, 6000 148th St. N., Hugo
Details: Get a head start on Christmas shopping while raising funds for local charities.
Contact: 651-303-5011

ONGOING EVENTS

HUGO SENIOR CLUB
When: 1 p.m. Monday, Nov.16 and every 3rd Monday of every other month
Where: Rice Lake Centre, 6900 137th St. N.
Details: Meeting will include discussion on change of officers and committee members. Coffee and refreshments served, followed by games.
Contact: Jim at 763-639-4756 or allenj4992@gmail.com

HUGO SENIOR CITIZENS PLAY '500'
When: 12:45 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 19 and 30 and the 1st, 3rd and 5th Thursday of every month
Where: Rice Lake Centre, 6900 137th St. N.
Details: Games begin at 12:45 p.m. Refreshments and coffee served. All senior citizens from the area invited.
Contact: Jim at 763-639-4756 or allenj4992@gmail.com

CRIBBAGE
When: 1 p.m. Monday, Nov. 23, and the 1st and 4th Monday of every month
Where: Rice Lake Centre, 6900 137th St. N., Hugo
Details: Senior citizens from Hugo and surrounding area are invited to an afternoon of cribbage. Coffee and refreshments served. Scheduled on Tuesday this week only.
Contact: Alice 651-429-4413

BURGERS FOR THE TROOPS
When: 5-8 p.m. Monday, Nov. 23 and the 4th Monday of each month
Where: Hugo American Legion, 5383 140th St. N., Hugo
Details: Support military families with a meal of burgers/chips, sponsored by the Hugo Yellow Ribbon Network. Family membes of deployed military members eat free. Cash/checks only.
Contact: Chuck Haas at 651-247-0354

CURRENT EVENTS

VETERANS DAY CELEBRATION
When: 10-11:30 Thursday, Nov. 12
Where: Sunrise Park District Senior Center, 2399 Cedar Ave., White Bear Lake
Details: Short presentation and refreshments. Registration appreciated.
Contact: 651-653-3121

WHITE BEAR LAKE WINTER FARMERS MARKET
When: 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 14
Where: White Bear Lake Area High School, West Entrance, 5040 Bald Eagle Ave.
Details: Shop and eat local by visiting over 30 vendors with locally grown food items and hand-crafted goods.
Contact: forksinthedirt.com

ROE FAMILY SINGERS CONCERT
When: 10:30 a.m. Saturday, Nov. 14
Where: Wildwood Library, Mahtomedi
Details: All ages concert featuring original music and contemporary takes on old-time, traditional and bluegrass tunes. No registration required.
Contact: washcolib.org

ST. PAUL HIKING CLUB
When: 2:30 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 15
Where: Laurie LaMotte Memorial Park, 6970 LaMotte Drive Hugo
Details: Hike around Centerville Lake and through the Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Park Reserve, approximately five miles.
Contact: stpaulhike.com

FEDERAL HEALTH CARE CUTS FROM H.R. 1 AND WHAT THEY MEAN FOR MINNESOTANS AND THE STATE BUDGET
When: 6:15-8 p.m. Monday, Nov. 16
Where: White Bear Lake Library, 4698 Clark Ave.
Details: First program in the Hot Topics series will review Medicare and Medicaid Act of 1965 and provide an overview of how the H.R. 1 bill affects the financial stability of hospitals and clinics, status of funding cuts to date, and legislation efforts underway in Minnesota to mitigate the increased burden of the loss of federal funding on the state budget. Open to the public.
Contact: lvw-wbla.org

COFFEE WITH DR. K
When: 4-5 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 17
Where: Caribou Coffee, 4733 Highway 61, White Bear Lake
Details: Stop by for an informal chat with Superintendent Kazmierczak and district leaders.
Contact: 651-407-7500

DORMANT SEEDING: PLANT NOW FOR SPRING
When: 3 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 17
Where: Hardwood Creek Library, Forest Lake
Details: Dormant seeding is a simple way to plant native flowers and grasses in late fall so they are ready to germinate when conditions are right in spring. Presented in cooperation with Comfort Lake - Forest Lake Watershed District.
Contact: washcolib.org

MAHTOREADI
When: 6:30-8:30 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 17
Where: Mahtomedi High School, Chautauqua Theatre
Details: Read "The Many Mothers of Delores Moore" by Anika Fajardo and join in the community discussion.
Contact: communityed.mahtomedi.k12.mn.us

WHERE DO I START? A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO DOWNSIZING AND MOVING
When: 10-11:30 a.m. Wednesday, Nov. 18
Where: Sunrise Park District Senior Center, 2399 Cedar Ave., White Bear Lake
Details: Learn strategies for decluttering, deciding what to keep, planning a move, and reducing stress. Register online.
Contact: 651-407-7501 or bit.ly/wbl2026

THIRD ANNUAL GAZEBO LIGHTING CEREMONY
When: 5-7 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 18
Where: Railroad Park, White Bear Lake
Details: Celebrate holiday festivities downtown. Countdown begins at 6 p.m.
Contact: www.whitebearrotary.org

A VISIT TO THE DEVIL'S WORKSHOP
When: 9:30 a.m. Thursday, Nov. 19
Where: Redeemer Lutheran Church, 3770 Bellaire Ave., White Bear Lake
Details: Local resident Dan Ruth will share his experiences in the Societ Union, including taking part in bioweapons conferences during the cold war. RSVP by Nov. 15.
Contact: 651-429-5411 or redeemerwhitebear.org

'WHITE CHRISTMAS'
When: Nov. 20-Dec.13
Where: Hanifl Performing Arts Center, 4941 Long Ave., White Bear Lake
Details: Irving Berlin's beloved holiday musical filled with timeless songs, romance, and winter wonder.
Contact: 651-478-7427 or tickets@lakeshoreplayers.org

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Service times are subject to change. Contact your local church or check church web sites for service time and online service information. To make changes or to advertise here, call 651-407-1200
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Goodbye Sweet Bean



Angle of View

Paul Dols

We recently had to make the difficult decision to euthanize our beloved feline companion "Bean." I knew it was going to be hard, but did not anticipate the intense emotional wallop that followed after her final trip to the veterinarian. Thankfully, there is helpful information available offering assurance that, for a variety of reasons, feelings of grief are a normal, valid response following the loss of a longtime animal companion.

While experiencing periodic waves of sadness, I also began to think about all of the shared bonds and daily rituals that had evolved over the years. Bean was playful, affectionate and occasionally mischievous. Because a number of her quirky personality traits and activities were not stereotypically associated with cats, we sometimes called her "a puppy in a cat suit." She always greeted us at the door when we came home and then within about a year she also started to eagerly climb up onto my shoulder. She really seemed to enjoy these rides and would seek them out in a variety of circumstances. After climbing up and getting comfortable, she would give me a wet little smooch on the cheek to let me know she was ready to proceed on one of our sightseeing trips around the house. In retrospect, I was probably the one who was actually being trained. On days I was working on the home computer, I could count on one or two visits from her where she would climb up on my shoulder to check out what I was doing. These visits sometimes led to our shared enjoyment of colorful bird videos that included a rich mix of sounds from nature. She also made some surprise guest appearances during Zoom conference calls. A few years ago, our publisher even allowed a column written from Bean's point of view to appear in our newspapers.

Because she was a rescue animal, we weren't exactly sure about her age, but did know that Bean was a sweet and engaging member of our household for more than 16 years. Last year she broke one of her rear legs in a mysterious, middle of the night accident. At the time we were faced with the decision to either amputate or euthanize. After consulting with three different veterinarians we chose amputation. Based on her age and overall health, the consensus was that she had a very good chance of returning to an active and happy life. They were right. Bean made a remarkable and inspiring recovery, resuming most of the activities that she had enjoyed prior to the accident, including play sessions, traveling up and down the stairs and speedy hot laps around the house. Watching her scramble around on three legs, I couldn't help but be amazed at her resilience and adaptability.

Unfortunately, during what we hoped would be a routine checkup this summer, it was discovered that Bean had bladder cancer and it was only a matter of time before it would begin to take its toll on the quality of her life. All of her care then became palliative. Recently, we started to see signs of decline and it became heartbreakingly apparent that she was in distress. In an extreme battle between intellect and emotion we made the agonizing decision to say goodbye. On one of the last nights of her life, Bean crawled up on the bed and stretched out in front of me while I stood and played the acoustic guitar before bedtime. I'm happy that she sought me out and hope that the instrument's vibrations comforted her in the same way that her healing purrs comforted me when I held her close. We are now left with fond memories of this sweet little animal. I truly think it is a blessing that our animal companions can provide us with a direct connection to the beauty and joy of God's creation.

Paul Dols is photojournalist/website editor for Press Publications. He can be reached at 651-407-1238



Hugo food shelf sees increase in need



Movers & Shakers

Chris DuFresne

More and more families in our community are facing food insecurity. Residents who were just getting by before are finding it hard to keep up due to higher food and fuel prices.

So far this year, we have served 8% more households than the same period last year.

As we work to serve this increasing number of residents, community support of the Hugo Good Neighbors Food Shelf is more important than ever.

We are grateful to all those in the community who have already stepped up to help support us, including financial donors, local businesses, local government and volunteers.

As the holiday season approaches, your support will be an essential piece to ensuring we can continue serving the 100 plus families in our community who rely on us for food assistance.

How can you help your neighbors in need this holiday season?

• Monetary donations are especially helpful because we can buy up to 10x as much food for the dollar through our partnership with local food banks like Second Harvest. Donate securely online at hugofoodshelf.org/give or by mail by sending a donation to Hugo Good Neighbors Food Shelf, PO Box 373, Hugo, MN 55038.

• Support the Hugo Fire Department and Centennial Fire Department toy and food drives. All items collected benefit local families and help them have a great holiday. Watch The Citizen, Facebook, and community flyers for more details. Items or gift cards for teenagers are in most need.

• Purchase holiday meals at Festival Foods in Hugo by picking up a pre-packed holiday meal and leaving it at the exit.

• Pick-up pre-packed bags of food at Cub Foods in White Bear Lake and leave them in the bin at the exit.

Need help making ends meet? We are here to help with a confidential and discrete experience to get you the food you need. Email us at info@hugofoodshelf.org, text us at 763-607-6060, or call us at 651-528-6224.

Thank you for helping ensure that our neighbors in need are able to get the help they need this holiday season.

Chris DuFresne is the president of the Hugo Good Neighbors Food Shelf.

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- Repeat letters by the same writer about the same subject matter will not be published.
- Submissions containing libelous or derogatory statements will not be published.
- Submissions containing facts not previously published in The Citizen must be accompanied by factual verification.
- All letters are subject to editing.
- Deadline is 5 p. m., Wednesday of the week prior to publication.
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Bear swimmers 'dug deep' for winning record

BY BRUCE STRAND
SPORTS CONTRIBUTOR

White Bear Lake's swim and dive team made a big improvement this season with a 5-4 dual meet record for fifth place among ten teams in the conference, after several years averaging about one win per season.

"This was our best season in nearly a decade," said Tia Walters, sixth-year coach. "The swimmers and divers really dug deep at each dual meet and believed in themselves. We swam and dove as one team and not individuals."

The Bears beat Park, Forest Lake, Roseville, Irondale and Cretin-Derham Hall. They also beat Centennial, but that one had to be counted as a scrimmage because MSHSL officials didn't show up, Walters said. The Bears lost to Stillwater, East Ridge, Woodbury and Mounds View.

In invitationals, they were first at Tartan-North St. Paul and sixth of 10 at Blaine. Next for the Bears is Section 4AA at Stillwater, Nov. 12-14.

The Bears added 11 new members this year, resulting in a significant improvement in depth and points.

Top scorers are seniors Audrey Borofka (50, 100, and relays) and junior Charlotte McIntyre (medley, butterfly and relays).



BRUCE STRAND | CONTRIBUTED

Miya Sage, seventh-grader, is one of 11 newcomers who've given the Bears a boost.

Other senior high girls scoring consistently are senior Sophie Collins (backstroke, 500); juniors Brigid McVeigh (butterfly), Sophie Moen (butterfly), Anna Zarambo (diving), Rita Kozhimannil (diving), and Ollie Heskett (50); sophomores Anna Miller (medley, breaststroke, relays), Eva Hoefer (100 and 200 free, backstroke), Jameson Medin (diving) and Miya Jager (50 and 100).

Junior high girls adding scoring depth are freshmen Corinne Danielson (200 and 500) and Abby Manske (breaststroke); eighth-graders Doireann McVeigh (500, breaststroke) and Erica Cox (100 free, relays); and seventh grader Maya Sage (breaststroke, relays).

COUGAR SPORTS BRIEFS

VOLLEYBALL

Centennial had to settle for a runner-up finish in Section 7AAAA after getting swept by the Blaine Bengals in the finals at home Wednesday evening. Centennial was top-seeded and had beaten Blaine 3-1 in conference play, but the Bengals dominated the rematch 25-21, 25-18, 25-20, with superiority in hitting, blocking and floor coverage. Blaine will take a 19-8 record into their first-ever state trip. Centennial, the defending champion, finished 22-9.

TENNIS

Centennial was 8-7 overall and 7-3 in the Northwest Suburban. Making all-conference were seniors Medha Andiappan and Radha Andiappan, juniors Hannah Lofgren, Ella Nelson and Ellen Huseth, and sophomore Ashlin Kilmer, with junior Kendall Innes getting honorable mention. MVP's were Lofgren and Nelson, who went 18-2 at No. 1 doubles and placed third in the section. Innes was named most improved.

CROSS COUNTRY

Two Centennial runners, Alexandra Sindt and Emma Delf, competed in the state cross-country meet on Saturday, having qualified at Section 7AAA a week earlier.

FOOTBALL

The No. 7 ranked Centennial Cougars (7-2) dueled No. 3 Eden Prairie (8-1) in the second round of Class 6A playoffs on Friday evening.

Editor's Note: *Due to an early deadline for Veterans Day, action from Friday, Nov. 6 and Saturday, Nov. 7 will appear online at press pubs.com.*

SPOTTED AROUND TOWN



1-2. October's sponsor Mueller Memorial served up 177 burger meals at the Beyond the Yellow Ribbon Network's Burger for the Troops event at the Hugo American Legion. The St. Paul Winter Carnival Klondike Kates made a guest appearance. **— Chuck Haas, contributed**
3. New Life Church – Lutheran in Hugo hosted a Trunk or Treat event for Halloween. **— Contributed**
4. Centennial Lakes Police Department community service officers attend the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church Trunk-or-Treat. **— Contributed**

Send us your photos for possible inclusion in Spotted Around Town. Please email your best shot to citizennews@presspubs.com. Please include information about when and where it was taken and who is in the photo.

Press Publications ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

Audrey Borofka

Bears Swimming
Nov. 12, 2026



Audrey Borofka, White Bear Lake senior sprinter and captain, helped lead the swim team to a 5-4 record by contributing consistent first place finishes in the 50 and 100 freestyle. She also anchors the 200 freestyle relay and the 200 medley relay, both of which placed first in recent dual meets. The four-year varsity veteran's best times so far are 25.77 in the 50 and 56.97 in the 100. "Not only has she contributed to many of the points scored, she has also been an outstanding role model and leader," said coach Tia Walters, "by encouraging teammates during difficult practices, uplifting everyone and bringing the team together."

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HUGO POLICE REPORTS

The Washington County Sheriff's Office reported the following calls for service:

- Washington County Sheriff's Office deputies conducted a traffic stop on Rosemary Way and Victor Hugo Blvd. N. at 8:33 a.m. Sept. 21 and arrested the driver for undisclosed violations.
- Two juvenile females were reported for fighting at 4:51 p.m. Sept. 21 in the 1000 block of Farnham Ave. N. No charges were filed.
- Deputies conducted a traffic stop at 1:17 p.m. Sept. 22 on Forest Blvd. N. and 130th Street N. and arrested the driver on warrant.
- A resident in the 1000 block of Fiona Ave. N. at 5:56 p.m. Sept. 22 reported a vehicle passing by his house and taking a photo of it. The complainant then made sure he was seen taking down the vehicle's license plate information to "spook the driver." The complainant said he wanted the incident documented and advised deputies he had seen the driver before.
- A motorist was cited for speeding and instruction permit violation at 1:09 a.m. Sept. 24 on Highway 61, just north of 137th St. N., after deputies pulled the vehicle over for traveling faster than the posted speed limit.
- Deputies were dispatched out to a townhome in the 4000 block of Emmit Drive N at 3:42 p.m. Sept. 24 the garage doors of which were broken open. On arrival at the scene, deputies investigated ring camera footage and interviewed potential witnesses who didn't see how the garage door got smashed in. Deputies left a voice message with the homeowners to ensure they were safe and to try to find out whether they had smashed their own garage door.
- Deputies conducted a traffic stop on a driver who failed to stop for a red light in the 1000 block of Forest Blvd. N. at 7:55 p.m. Sept. 24. Another vehicle received a citation in the 4000 block of 162nd Way N. for illegal parking at 9:30 p.m. Sept. 24. A third motorist was cited at 12:28 a.m. Sept. 26 on 147th St. N. and Foxhill Avenue N. for using their cellphone while driving.
- A burglary was reported at 12:33 p.m. Sept. 26 from the 1000 block of Fenway Blvd. N.
- Deputies promised to conduct extra patrols in the neighborhood after a resident in the 6000 block of 157th Street N. at 8:35 p.m. Sept. 26 reported that someone had been banging on her door.
- Deputies on patrol stopped with a group of juveniles past curfew at 12:12 a.m. Sept. 27 on Highway 61 and Frenchman Road and sent them home.
- Deputies were dispatched out to a brush fire near Frenchman Road and Forest Blvd. N. at 12:35 a.m. Sept. 27. A pedestrian had extinguished the fire prior to the squad's arrival.
- A motorist on 170th St. N. and Forest Blvd. N. received a citation at 2:48 a.m. Sept. 27 for speeding and expired registration after being pulled over for traveling higher than the posted speed limit.
- Vehicle tampering in the 1000 block of Fairbanks Avenue N. was reported at 6:09 a.m. Sept. 27.
- The owner of an unlocked pickup truck in the 1000 block of Europa Trail Way N. reported items stolen from it at 7:38 a.m. Sept. 27.
- Residents in the 5000 block of 141st Street N. reported their mailbox damaged by unknown persons at 8:09 a.m. Sept. 27.
- A vehicle parked in the 4000 block of 129th St. N. was reported tampered with at 9:19 a.m. Sept. 27. Nothing was reported to be taken, but the suspect left two card keys behind.
- Another vehicle was reported tampered with overnight Sept. 26-27, this time in the 4000 block of 129th St. N. Stolen from the vehicle was cash in the form of coins and dollar bills.
- Burglary of an unoccupied dwelling in the 1000 block of Europa Trail Way N. was reported at 10:36 a.m. Sept. 27 with several items stolen.
- As part of a rash of motor vehicle tampering Saturday night, Sept. 26-27, more vehicles were rummaged through in the 1000 block of Europa Trail Way N. with items stolen, including nothing from the first vehicle; sunglasses from a second vehicle; a wallet containing a driver's license and credit cards from a third vehicle and miscellaneous items from a fourth vehicle.
- Clothing that deputies described as "potential burglary attire" was reported littered over the front lawn of a residence in the 4000 block of Europa Trail N. at 12:51 p.m. Sept. 27, the morning after the Saturday night spree.
- Washington County Sheriff's Office deputies were dispatched to a disturbance in the 1000 block of Glenbrook Ave. at 2:06 p.m. Sept. 27. Deputies identified the erratically acting male outside the home from a domestic incident the previous week. Deputies detained the male while they investigated the Order for Protection that had been recently placed and served. The protected party was not at home, so the subject was released.
- Vehicle tampering was reported at 3:10 p.m. Sept. 27 in the 1000 block of Exhall Ave. N. as part of the rash of vehicle tampering incidents reported from Saturday night. Deputies took a follow-up phone call in the 1000 block of Europa Trail from a different victim of the vehicle tampering incidents at 6:04 a.m. Sept. 28 to report more property taken that wasn't included in the original report. Deputies had plenty of investigating to do regarding the thefts and followed up with another of the victims at 7:59 a.m. Sept. 28 in the 1000 block of Europa Trail.
- Deputies were sent out to a business in the 5000 block of 120th St. N. at 6:03 p.m. Sept. 27 for a motor vehicle hit and run report. They met with the reporting party and provided a Washington County case file number for insurance purposes.
- Occasionally, people call the WCSO to find out why deputies were at a neighbor's residence. At 1:08 a.m. Sept. 28 deputies were dispatched to a residence in the 4000 block of Empire Drive about a suspicious person caught on doorbell camera at a nearby residence. When deputies reviewed the doorbell footage, they saw themselves as suspicious people assisting a neighbor. Deputies did not ask the reporter why they didn't recognize them, however.
- In the Case of Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, deputies received a report about two dogs and a pig trespassing on their hunting property near 170th Street and Jeffrey Avenue at 2:56 p.m. Sept. 28. After deputies contacted the DNR, they spoke to the animal owners and advised them of the complaint and the potential severity of the incident. No deer were reported for trespassing on the hunting property.
- A live hand grenade was reported found at 3:00 p.m. Sept. 29 in a residence in the 9000 block of 170th Street N. Deputies retrieved the hand grenade for later disposal.
- A resident in the 1000 block of Finale Ave. N. at 10:27 p.m. Sept. 29 reported that her phone had been hacked and now someone had private photos of her. Deputies discussed possible Harassment Restraining Order solutions and advised her to block that person.
- A motorist was arrested for DWI at 2:36 a.m. Sept. 30 in the 1000 block of Forest Blvd. N., after deputies responded to the scene of a disturbance.
- A person of undisclosed identity was arrested for passing a fraudulent check at 10:54 a.m. Sept. 30 in the 1000 block of Flay Ave.
- A motorist was cited at 4:25 p.m. Sept. 30 in the 1000 block of Forest Blvd. N. for using the turn lane of an intersection to pass another vehicle near to signs prohibiting such violations were posted.
- A business in the 1000 block of Victor Hugo Blvd. N. at 8:43 a.m. Oct. 1 reported the same person for shoplifting that day as well as the day before. After the suspect was later identified, deputies mailed that person a citation and trespass notice.
- A Hugo resident at 2:38 p.m. Oct. 1 reported that she had thrown her old license plates away, only to receive a letter from the Kansas Turnpike about an unpaid toll. The complainant told deputies she would be writing a letter to the Kansas Turnpike authorities.
- A mom driving her child in the 1000 block of Forest Blvd. N. was cited at 4:17 p.m. Oct. 1 for failure to buckle her child in or even secure her in a booster seat due to the child's age. The traffic stop was made due to the vehicle not having a front license plate, later startling deputies to see the child loose in the moving vehicle.
- Deputies issued a citation to a motorist at 9:12 p.m. Oct. 1 on 170th St. N. and Henna Avenue N. for possessing cannabis in an open container, following a traffic stop for no front license plate.
- Two delivered packages were reported stolen at 9:00 p.m. Oct. 2 from a residence in the 4000 block of Rosemary Way.
- Deputies received a report from Falcon Avenue and 124th St. of vehicles racing on the streets at 9:21 p.m. Oct. 2. Deputies followed up and were unable to locate the vehicles in the area, most likely after they had quickly exited the area, leaving deputies far behind.
- A juvenile was reported for ringing a doorbell in the 4000 block of 162nd St. and running away at 4:09 p.m. Oct. 3. After deputies spoke to the complainant, they identified the juvenile and spoke with her and her mother before clearing the scene.

Loretta Harding

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH BRIEF

Measles cases in Minnesota hit highest total in 36 years

The Minnesota Department of Health reported 139 measles cases in Minnesota for 2026 — the most the state has seen in a single year since 1990. Health officials are stressing that now is the time for people to check their vaccination status and make sure they are up to date.

Nearly all of the 2026 cases have been among people who had not received two doses of the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine, and most of them (71%) have been children. Over 4,800 cases of measles have been reported in the United States in 2026, nearly double the full-year 2025 total of 2,289 cases according to the Center for Disease Control.

"The measles, mumps and rubella vaccine is well-tested, highly effective and provides long-lasting protection," said Dr. Brooke Cunningham, Commissioner with the Minnesota Department of Health. "We strongly advise anyone who is recommended to receive the MMR vaccine and has not been vaccinated to contact their healthcare provider and get vaccinated now."

Over the past year, MDH has identified several clusters of measles cases from people who traveled within the United States. Due to the historic amount of confirmed Measles cases, health officials expect Minnesota to see more cases in the coming weeks and months. Measles is extremely contagious and a single introduction into a community with low vaccination coverage can quickly lead to outbreaks.

Vaccination rates dropped during the COVID-19 pandemic and have not rebounded to prior levels. This leaves many people, especially children, vulnerable. Vaccination not only protects but the vaccinated, but also helps protect those who can't get vaccinated due to age, pregnancy or medical conditions.

MDH encourages residents to check their immunization records to confirm that they and their children have received the MMR vaccine. Those with questions about vaccinations or who want to get vaccinated, please contact your regular healthcare provider. If you do not have a regular provider, other options include local health departments or community health boards, pharmacies or retail locations.

For more information, visit www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/measles/index.html.

PUBLIC SAFETY BRIEFS

Brothers sentenced for armed robbery in cryptocurrency kidnapping case

United States Attorney Daniel N. Rosen recently announced that Raymond Christian Garcia and Isiah Angelo Garcia, both of Waller, Texas, were sentenced to 180 months and 186 months in prison respectively, for their roles in a September 2025 armed robbery and kidnapping of a family in Grant.

The Garcia brothers were sentenced on Oct. 29, 2026, and both previously pleaded guilty on June 18, 2026.

According to court documents, on Sept. 19, 2025, Raymond and Isiah Garcia kidnapped Victim 1 and his family in their home at gunpoint. They ziptied the family, held them at gunpoint for over nine hours, and demanded access to Victim 1's cryptocurrency accounts. When Victim 1 did not transfer the expected amount of cryptocurrency, the brothers forced Victim 1 to drive Isiah Garcia to the family's cabin in upstate Minnesota. There, Garcia forced Victim 1 to retrieve additional cryptocurrency storage devices and transfer the funds. The defendants ultimately compelled Victim 1 to transfer more than $8 million in cryptocurrency. The brothers fled the area after the victim's son called 911, and law enforcement later identified and arrested them near Houston, Texas.

"The Garcia brothers committed a brazen and calculated act of violence against the victim and his family. My office will continue to pursue those who use intimidation and threats to exploit victims, no matter where they flee," said United States Attorney Daniel N. Rosen.

"Raymond and Isiah Garcia violated the sanctity of a home, abducted a victim, terrorized a family at gunpoint for hours, and disrupted an entire community in a brazen act of violence and greed," said FBI Minneapolis Field Office Special Agent in Charge Christopher D. Dotson. "The defendants' acts were targeted, deliberate, and extremely violent. Crimes like this have real and lasting impacts on victims and entire communities. The FBI and our law enforcement partners will act immediately and unrelentingly to protect our community and bring violent offenders to justice. I hope that today's sentence is an important step toward healing for the victims as they recover from these events."

This case was the result of an investigation conducted by the FBI and the Washington County Sheriff's Office.

United States Attorney's Office

Drivers urged to watch for deer on Minnesota roads during fall peak

Deer-vehicle crashes peak from October to early December, leading the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources to take precautions statewide. Drivers and motorcyclists can take precautions to reduce the risk of a collision, especially during the evening hours when deer are most active.

Drivers should always wear seat belts, travel at safe speeds and use high beams at night when possible, particularly in areas where deer are common. Deer are often found near forested areas and along roads that separate agricultural fields from wooded land. From dusk to dawn, motorists should watch for the reflection of deer eyes and silhouettes along the roadside and slow down if anything appears suspicious.

Deer can behave unpredictably. They may stop in the road, cross and then turn back, or move toward an approaching vehicle. Honking the horn may encourage a deer to leave the road. If it remains in the roadway, stop and wait rather than attempting to drive around it. Officials also caution drivers not to swerve to avoid a deer, as doing so can cause a vehicle to leave the road or enter oncoming traffic. Deer whistles and fences should not be relied upon to prevent collisions.

If a deer is struck but remains alive, keep your distance. The animal may recover and move away. If it remains in the area or presents a public safety risk, contact a Minnesota Department of Natural Resources conservation officer or local law enforcement.

Motorcyclists face particular danger in deer collisions. Avoiding nighttime and low-light riding can reduce exposure to risk. If a deer appears, use both brakes for maximum braking, keep your head and eyes up, and focus on maintaining control of the motorcycle. If a collision appears unavoidable and there is sufficient room to maneuver without leaving the road, brake firmly and attempt an evasive maneuver only when it can be done safely. Full-face helmets and protective riding gear can help reduce injuries, while high-visibility clothing can make riders easier for other motorists to see.

Minnesota residents may also claim a road-killed deer by contacting a law enforcement officer to obtain an authorization permit allowing lawful possession of the animal. For more information, visit https://dps.mn.gov/divisions/ots/safe-driving-information-and-laws/driver-and-passenger-safety/deer-vehicle-safety.

WASHINGTON COUNTY BRIEFS

County receives $1.2 million grant for Hardwood Creek Regional Trail extension

The Washington County Board of Commissioners has approved a $1,244,000 grant from the state of Minnesota's Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund. The grant will fund the design and construction of a one-mile extension of the Hardwood Creek Regional Trail from 130th Street to 120th Street in Hugo. The Hardwood Creek Regional Trail is a north-south multiuse trail in northwestern Washington County. It runs 11 miles along former railroad right-of-way from the Washington/Chisago County line in Forest Lake to 130th Street in Hugo. The one-mile gap between 130th Street and 120th Street remains because that section of rail line is still active.

The trail is part of a larger regional network. It connects to Anoka County's Central Anoka County Regional Trail to the west and Chisago County's Sunrise Prairie Regional Trail to the north. Once complete, it will also link to Ramsey County's Bruce Vento Regional Trail to the south, giving trail users more than 40 miles of continuous, dedicated trail between downtown St. Paul and downtown North Branch.

The county applied for this grant funding in March 2025 through the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources. The LCCMR reviews proposals for projects that protect, conserve, and enhance Minnesota's natural resources and recommends ENRTF funding to the Legislature. About $103 million was available for fiscal year 2027.

County Board approves grant for traffic enforcement

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a $63,100 grant from the Minnesota Department of Public Safety's Office of Traffic Safety. The funding is part of the 2027 Enforcement Grant Program, which promotes safety for those who use public roadways. The grant, awarded for the period of Oct. 23, 2026, through Sept. 30, 2027, provides reimbursement for overtime costs associated with enforcement of the following violations: impaired driving, pedestrian, seat belt, speed, distracted driving and move-over laws.

Sheriff's office receives donation from Joshua's Hope for Drug Task Force

The sheriff's office received a $5,000 donation from Joshua's Hope to support the narcotics unit. Joshua's Hope is an organization started by the Greene family, whose family member, Joshua, died from fentanyl poisoning in 2022. The funds will be used to purchase law enforcement equipment for the sheriff's office narcotics unit.

BEYOND THE BATTLEFIELD: A Hugo veteran's journey toward healing

FROM PAGE 1

At the age of 17, Saniti, with permission from his father, enlisted in the Army National Guard on Valentine's Day in 2001.



Michael Saniti with his service dog, Beacon.

"I was one of those kids that grew up pretending to be a soldier. I'd be up late in the middle of the night just on watch, on guard," he recalled. He says his time in Boy Scouts is likely what influenced him to go into the military

"I like helping people. I have that in me to do civil service, so it was either going to be law enforcement or military for me," he said.

Saniti served in the military from 2001 to 2008. During that time, he was deployed for Operation Enduring Freedom in Italy and then Turkey in 2003 and 2004. He was then deployed to Iraq for Operation Iraqi Freedom from 2005 to 2007.

A new battlefield

After deployment, Saniti says he struggled to adjust to civilian life.

"To transition from soldier in combat to civilian in society, you have to get rid of a lot of things that you've learned that kept you alive in combat that are not necessary anymore to keep you alive in society," Saniti explained. "You're still trying to survive because I did survive and some of my fellow soldiers didn't make it back … There is a certain level of fear you hold onto."

He struggled with the lack of structure when he returned and found it very difficult to keep a job. Whereas some soldiers choose to stay silent about their battles, Saniti chose to speak out about the fact that he was struggling.

At a debriefing after he returned from deployment, a sergeant encouraged the soldiers to not say much about what they had been through so they would not get flagged and be prevented from future promotions or opportunities.

"He was right. I got flagged, but I got help," Saniti said. "I didn't have to suffer in silence and deal with what I was dealing with without support from fellow veterans who had been in my shoes before."

Saniti was officially diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder in 2012. He is rated permanently and totally disabled (P&T) by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Advice for other veterans

"I attribute where I'm at today to the Minneapolis VA and my VA job coach for not giving up on me, because at one point I was deemed almost unemployable," Saniti said.

Thanks to medications, therapies, a service dog named Beacon and other resources, Saniti is doing very well. He currently works at Frattalone's Lawn and Garden in White Bear Lake, where he was promoted to team lead. He also credits organizations like the Hugo Beyond the Yellow Ribbon Network, Invisible Wounds Project and Wounded Warrior Project. In fact, the Hugo BTYRN is the reason he decided to buy a home and stay in Hugo.



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

Michael (left) is pictured with his wife, Sara (right), and four children - Mikey Jr., Giovanni, Adrianna and Anthony. Saniti is the runner-up for the 2026 Minneapolis VA Veteran of the Year.

"The support group I have in the community is awesome," he said.

"The biggest thing I could tell any veteran is just tell your own story because you lived it," he said. "Get help. Talk, because talking is what saved me."

Saniti encourages all veterans to talk about what they have been through and follow through with all the VA's recommendations for care, including therapy.

"It helps you to process what you have experienced and where you are going to go from there," Saniti said. "Do you want to move forward, or do you want to dwell on the past and stuff you can't change? Because I can't change what I've done. I can't change the guys we've lost. But I can help my fellow veterans moving forward with my experiences."

Managing Editor Shannon Granholm can be reached at 651-407-1227 or citizen-news@presspubs.com.

VETERANS DAY BRIEFS

Veterans benefits guide launches on Veterans Day

Veterans can access a free, online guide for navigating federal, state and local benefits starting on Veterans Day, Wednesday, Nov. 11.

Veteran Benefits GPS was created by Casey Rose, a service-disabled veteran who deployed to Iraq. The guide directs veterans, spouses and caregivers to official U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs webpages, applicable forms and accredited Veterans Service Organization representatives who can provide free assistance.

Users answer a few brief questions to find information relevant to their situation. The guide covers 10 benefit areas and includes state and local benefits alongside federal programs. It works on smartphones without requiring an app download or login.

According to Rose, the tool does not collect users' names, VA file numbers or disability ratings, nor use artificial intelligence. It is intended as a navigation resource, not a replacement for VA.gov. The guide does not file claims or provide legal advice and is not affiliated with the VA.

"VA.gov is the official source, and I am not trying to replace it," Rose said. "The official pages are the destination. This is the map."

Rose served in the Kentucky National Guard from 2007 to 2013 and deployed to Iraq in 2011 as a military police team leader and convoy vehicle commander. He said the idea for the guide began in 2012 while helping other veterans navigate education benefits at Southeastern Illinois College.

Veteran Benefits GPS is operated as a for-profit Illinois company, but the guide is free for veterans. Rose says it is funded through business sponsorships and voluntary public support.

Veterans and those helping them can access the guide at vbgps.org beginning at 11:11 a.m. Eastern time on Nov. 11.

White Bear Center for the Arts hosts veterans wheel throwing

As a thank you to veterans, White Bear Center for the Arts is offering a pottery class. Join teaching artist and fellow veteran Rob Lieder in the clay studio and give the pottery wheel a try from 6 to 8:30 p.m. Thursdays Nov. 12 and 19.

During the first session, you'll learn the basics of wheel throwing and create simple forms such as cups or bowls. Come back the following week to trim and decorate your pieces, with the option to add military-inspired details to your designs. For more information, or to register, visit www.whitebeararts.org/inspire-events/75535.







‘HELLO, DOLLY!’: White Bear Lake Area High School musical opens Nov. 13

FROM PAGE 1

Both the characters of Dolly and Horace are widowers and much older than high schoolers, which means the actors needed to find other ways to connect to their roles.

Ironically, for senior Ethan Kinsella, who plays Horace, that meant connecting to his past. When Kinsella was younger, he frequently watched the film adaptation of “Hello, Dolly!” starring Barbara Streisand. Kinsella is also a fan of actor Gavin Creel, who was part of the 2017 Broadway revival of the show.

While Kinsella took inspiration from the notable performances of the past, he expressed that he knows better than to try to copy those examples. Kinsella’s angle, then, is to play the straight man reacting to all the other characters’ antics.

“I’m trying to do this new stylization of Horace, who’s meant to be this crazy older guy. I’m (playing him like) he feels like he’s the only normal person in this world full of crazy people,” Kinsella said before pausing, “which is probably what a crazy person would think.”

Hilden, who has never been married, much less widowed, connected with her character’s desire to put herself last.

“Dolly puts everybody else before herself because, you know, matchmaker and everything …

I'm a people pleaser, and I make sure that my friends are doing okay, my family's doing okay, which can be a bad habit,” Hilden said. “As we get deeper into the musical, Dolly realizes, ‘Hold on. What about me? I am a person too, and I deserve love.’”

As far as inspiration, Hilden looked to Streisand’s 1969 portrayal as well as numerous Broadway portrayals, but she also borrowed from more recent media, like the Amazon Prime series “The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel,” so that her performance would feel fresh.

Meanwhile, senior Jeffrey Keenen, who plays Cornelius Hackl, Horace’s chief clerk, did not have the challenge of playing an older person. Instead, his obstacle was the amount of Golden-Age-musical dancing when his previous experience had been with more modern shows, like “Legally Blonde.”

“It’s heavier and harder, in my opinion. There are a lot of ensemble features,” Keenen said. “But it’s definitely been doable. Being able to challenge myself with that has definitely brought the show to a better area.”

Keenen credits his progress to the show’s choreographer, Tegan Jones Newkirk, who previously worked on the school’s production of “Dear Evan Hansen.”



PHOTOS BY PAUL DOLS | PRESS PUBLICATIONS

The cast puts on their Sunday clothes for one of the ensemble numbers. Director Wendy Suoja said that a cutting-edge space like the Performing Arts Center allowed her to rethink production elements for the midcentury musical.



Senior Rio Hilden, pictured center, plays Dolly Levi, a widowed matchmaker who falls back in love with life.



Senior Jeffrey Keenen, center right, plays Cornelius Hackl, a chief clerk to “well-known, unmarried, half-a-millionaire” Horace Vandergelder.

A task Suoja needed to wrangle for the show was making a musical from the 1960s wow audiences in the new Performing Arts Center. While no fairy godmother will be flown this year, Suoja and the tech crew will be taking advantage of the space in other ways.

“Even though this is a Golden Age show, we're adding a video wall to it, so we've got some video projections that we're using,” said Suoja. “We're flying multiple sets pieces, like windows and walls and signs, and then also the scenic backdrops that were utilizing. We’ve never done anything like that.”

What’s been easy about the show has been spreading its feel-good message.

“In today’s age, there’s always some negativity going on,” said Keenen. “I hope that (audiences) are able to take away the kindness that Dolly’s able to send everyone. She’s able to help everyone instead of bringing others down.”

“There’s a song in the show called ‘Dancing,’” Hilden added. “Everyone is so happy to be together and so happy to be dancing and so happy to be out at this parade. And all these things, and I feel like people could definitely take something away from that. Like, just have fun.

Just like enjoy your life and enjoy the people around you.”

IF YOU GO

What: “Hello, Dolly!”
When: 7 p.m. Nov. 13, 14, 19, 20 and 21; 2 p.m. Nov. 14
Where: White Bear Lake Area High School Performing Arts Center, Door A, 5040 Division Ave.
Contact: sites.google.com/isd624.org/musical-theatre/season-tickets

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CENTERVILLE TIDBITS

• The Centerville City Council has approved the refuse and recycling three-year contract extension with Republic Services, who will take over the billing responsibilities. Services include garbage collection in various container sizes, appliance collection, yard waste collection, bulk waste collection, recycling and construction debris collection. There will be an increase in service fees across the board in each of the three upcoming years.

• Each year the city receives funding from Anoka County for its Residential Recycling Program. This year, city staff is requesting funding in the total amount of $35,588. The allocation for 2027 consists of $10,550 for base funding; $10,161 for enhancement funding; $8,876 for labor and staffing costs and $6,000 for supplemental funding.

• CenterPoint Energy and Michels Utilities have started a natural gas line project in Centerville to supply services to new developments in Lino Lakes and make retrofitted connections to services on the south side of 20th Avenue to Gateway Circle. Due to recent road construction, the Public Works Department doesn't know where some of the existing underground connecting pipes are located.

City staff requested council to allow cleaning and televising of these lines to obtain recorded data for future locating and have the work completed before the contractors get to 20th Ave. S. Council authorized staff to contract with American Environmental to clean and televise approximately 3,600 feet of sanitary sewer infrastructure under 20th Ave. in an amount not to exceed $13,500.

• Last June, council approved a feasibility study of Well #3 to be conducted by WSB. The study was paid for through the Water Fund. Centerville has an aging well-related infrastructure and is impacted by the White Bear Lake five-mile groundwater management zone. The city is exploring the possibility of a third well to ensure water supply reliability, as well as water quality. A third well would also increase firefighting capacity.

WSB's study recommended Laurie LaMotte Park as the first option for the third well, compared with two other options — at the Hunters Crossing Trail or on Main Street/Centerville Road. The estimated total project cost stands at $1.7 million, with an alternate addition of an emergency generator for $126,000. The city is scheduled to select a site for Well #3 in November, with the bidding process due to begin during summer 2027 and a contract awarded next September. Construction is expected to take place from October 2027 to July 2028.

• LaMotte Memorial Park received refurbishment including new ice hockey rinks, and also removed some playground equipment that is now unsuitable for reuse in another city park. However, other parts of the playground equipment may still be salvageable. City staff asked council to declare the removed playground equipment as surplus property to be offered for sale through an electronic process authorized by state statute. The city doesn't expect to receive very much money but hopes to avoid having to pay for disposal of the equipment, City Administrator Athanasia Lewis said. The value of the playground equipment is estimated to be less than $25,000.

• Every year the city must send its snowplow trucks in for routine inspection, and this year's repairs are higher than normal at $6,802, Lewis said. Because the expense is greater than $5,000, city staff must bring this item to council for approval. Council authorized the repairs to the exhaust and front brake systems for the 2007 Sterling L8500 truck in the amount of $6,802 to be paid for from the Replacement Fund.

• A developer, Element Design-Build has submitted a concept plan for a mixed-use development for Block 7 on 1.6 acres and has requested input from council on the plan before they submit their formal concept plan for further review. At a pre-meeting workshop, council heard a presentation of the development and provided input. The developer is proposing a project that includes 15 new homes in three different categories with approximately 9.3 homes per acre. The 15 homes include six townhomes along Centerville Road, five two-story homes on Sorel Street and four 1.5-story homes on Heritage Street. A coffee shop with a residential loft above it is proposed to be located at Centerville Road and Sorel Street with a patio to the south and garden seating to the west.

• For the past year, representatives from the University of Minnesota Empowering Small Minnesota Cities Project have been working with the city on a shared vision for downtown by re-imagining the public realm, which includes rights-of-way and other public property along Centerville Road and Main Street corridors. A volunteer advisory board of residents and community stakeholders has provided input on strategies to increase safety, improve pedestrian and bicycle facilities, improve green infrastructure and open space and other amenities. The project was completed through the University of Minnesota ESMC grant program.

• The city council has finalized its 2026-2028 goals, and staff requested that council formally adopt those goals. The council goals are split into three parts:

- Organizational resilience – to strengthen the city's ability to adapt to and recover from change while planning responsibly and sustaining operations.
- Fiscal sustainability – to maintain long-term fiscal stability through responsible financial planning, budgeting and revenue generation.
- City infrastructure – to maintain software equipment, underground infrastructure, parks transportation, water, sewer and storm water services and to deliver the last three items effectively while ensuring community resilience and emergency preparedness.

• In her report, Lewis noted that the city is upgrading to a new utility billing system, aimed at bringing citizens an improved online experience and reliable service. Citizens are advised to watch the November mail for their paper bill, which will include instructions on setting up their new online account, configuring future payments and completing the transition.

• The League of Minnesota Cities Mayor for a Day Essay Contest has returned. Fourth, fifth, sixth graders are invited to share their biggest ideas about: "What would you do if you were mayor for a day?" At stake is a chance to win $100 and recognition in Minnesota Cities Magazine. The deadline for submission is Dec. 11. Students and parents/guardians may submit essays through an online form, a PDF email attachment, or through the mail. Essays may be submitted at: www.lmc.org/about/mayor-for-a-day-essay-contest/.

• Due to the holidays, it has become traditional for council to cancel its second meetings in November and December. City staff will add a work session prior to the Nov. 12 and Dec. 10 meetings while keeping with tradition by cancelling those second meetings in November and December.

The council next meets at 6:30 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 12, at City Hall, 1880 Main St.

Loretta Harding

HUGO BITS & PIECES

• Jordan Fahey has resigned from the Planning Commission due to moving outside of the city of Hugo, according to her resignation letter.

• Ducks Unlimited Coon Rapids Chapter 187 plans to hold raffles at an event on Friday, Jan. 22 at the Hugo American Legion. Now that the city council has approved the lawful gambling exempt permit, the Minnesota Gambling Control Board needs to approve the permit.

• The city recently completed annual performance reviews for Fire Chief Jim Compton Jr. and public works worker Kraig Pettee.

• Cee Jays, Inc. (doing business as Hugo Auto Parts) has applied for the biannual renewal of their auto dismantling license. As a requirement of the license, city staff conducted the annual inspection and found it to be in compliance with City Code as well as Washington County regulations. The license was approved for the business, which is located at 16615 Forest Blvd.

• The city council has authorized city staff to move forward with a feasibility study for the Heritage Parkway street project. According to the city's capital improvement plan, the project is slated for 2028. However, if the city is not successful in securing bridge funding for the Fable Hills bridge replacement project, the Fable Hills street project will be delayed, and the Heritage Parkway project could be moved up to the 2027 construction season.

"This will allow us to change course if needed," explained City Engineer Mark Erichson. "We want to get a start just in case we need to change gears and switch projects. We want to make sure we do have a project moving forward next year one way or another."

• The council recently met in closed session Pursuant to Minn. Stat. 13D.05 Subd. 3(b) to discuss the ruling of the administrative law judge in re to the matter of amendments to various water appropriation permits. City Attorney Dave Snyder update the council on the administrative law judge's ruling, and no decisions were made.

The next city council meeting will be at 7 p.m. Monday, Nov. 16 at city hall.

Shannon Granholm



GOOGLE MAPS | CONTRIBUTED

If the Fable Hill street and bridge project is postponed due to lack of funding, the city plans to do Heritage Parkway in 2027 instead.

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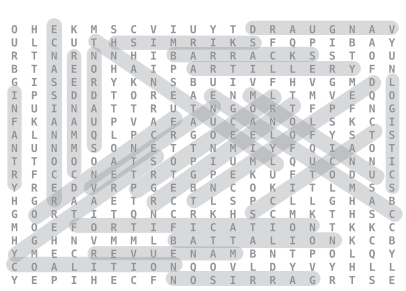
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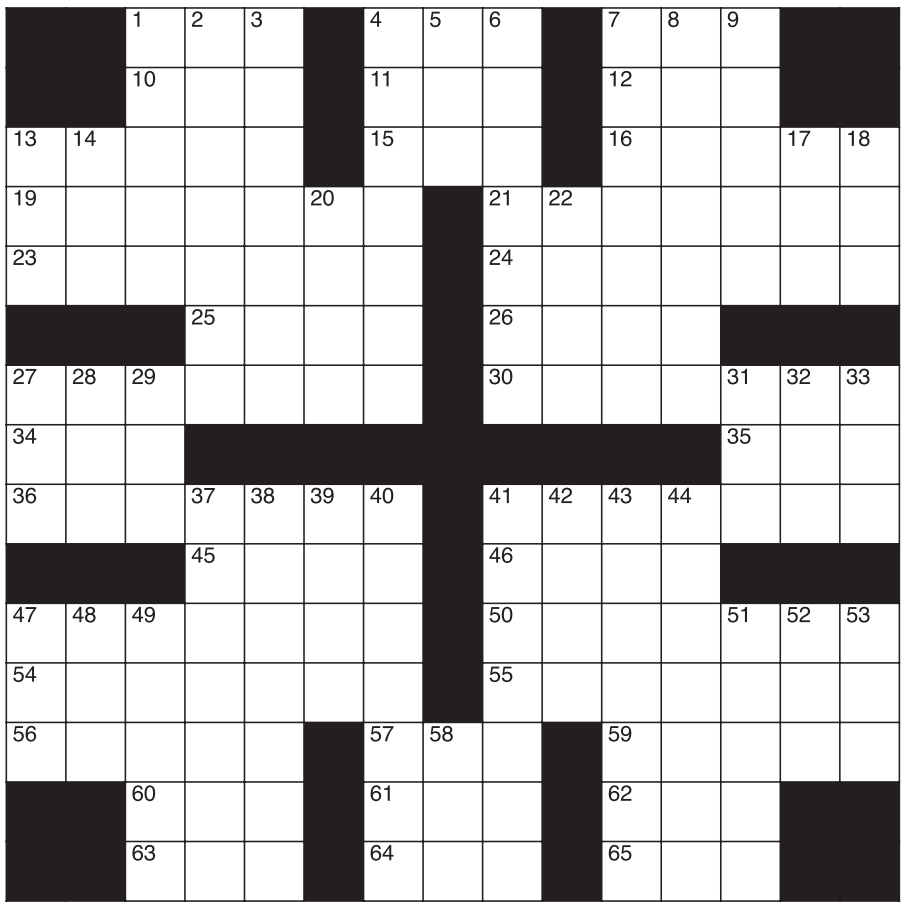
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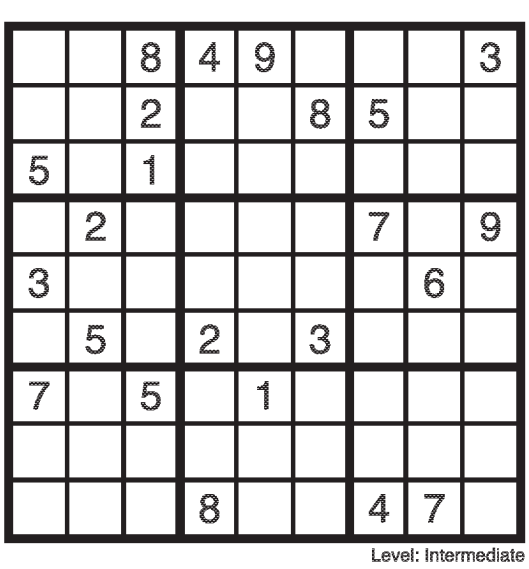
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4. Request
7. Clairvoyance
10. 007's creator Fleming
11. Male adult
12. Norse mythological figure
13. Coffin cloths
15. Breeze through
16. Ladyfish genus
19. We all take them
21. Nobleman's jurisdiction
23. Members of U.S. Navy
24. Rummy-like card game
25. Unable to move
26. Type of horse
27. Parted
30. Woman's cloak
34. South American plant
35. Prohibit
36. Something one takes
41. Dish detergent manufacturer
45. Romanian river
46. Personification of pity
47. Makes upset
50. Discuss again
54. Medical instrument
55. Support
56. Informal term for money
57. Catch doing something wrong
59. Prehistoric people
60. Large African antelope
61. Automobile
62. "Losing My Religion" rockers
63. High-resolution scientific instrument
64. A major division of geological time
65. Attempt

CLUES DOWN
1. Indoor plant
2. Fit to be sold
3. Rather
4. Collected
5. A baglike structure in a plant or animal
6. Irish rap group
7. Ageless
8. Lists indicating curriculum
9. Pokes at
13. Public television station
14. They __
17. Cooking tool
18. Separately managed account
20. Iron-containing compound
22. Swiss river
27. Former French coin
28. Electronic countermeasures
29. Taxi
31. Helps little firms
32. Unhappy
33. Midway between northeast and east
37. Glowing
38. Lists of items to be discussed
39. An informal body of friends
40. Indispensable quality
41. Neural structures
42. Brews
43. A place to dock
44. Festive singer
47. Sino-Soviet block (abbr.)
48. Northernmost point of mainland Wales
49. Most worthless parts
51. Type of "bear"
52. Take or consume
53. Defunct European organization
58. Swiss river

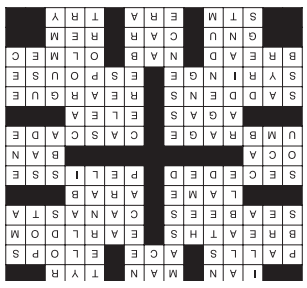


Fun By The Numbers

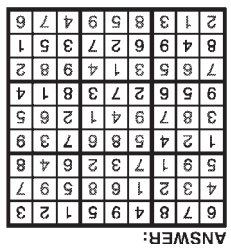
Like puzzles? Then you'll love sudoku. This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your sudoku savvy to the test!

Level: Intermediate

Here's How It Works:
Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!



ANSWER:



2026 LOCAL ELECTION RESULTS

MINNESOTA HOUSE DISTRICT 33A



Stacey Stout
52.87% (12,558 votes)

Angela Thompson
47.07% (11,180 votes)



Write-In
0.05% (13 votes)

STATE SENATOR DISTRICT 33



Karin Housley
50.00% (23,977 votes)

Nat Smith
49.92% (23,935 votes)



Write-In
0.08%(39 votes)

STATE SENATOR DISTRICT 36



Heather Gustafson
57.01% (27,492 votes)

Heidi Heino
42.92% (20,698 votes)



Write-In
0.06% (29 votes)

ANOKA COUNTY COMMISSIONER DISTRICT 3



Jeff Reinert
50.58% (12,060 votes)

Melissa "Mel" Lawlis
48.88% (11,653 votes)



Write-In
0.54% (129 votes)

WASHINGTON COUNTY SHERIFF



Brian R. Mueller
71.71% (84,906 votes)

Jeremy Bolen
27.72% (32,817 votes)



Write-In
0.58% (681 votes)

WASHINGTON COUNTY COMMISSIONER DISTRICT 2



Stan Karwoski
75.54% (14,923 votes)

Edison Vizuete
23.76% (4,693 votes)



Write-In
0.70% (139 votes)

WASHINGTON COUNTY QUESTION 1

Yes
73.00% (103,089 votes)

No
27.00% (38,122 votes)

CENTERVILLE MAYOR



Nancy N. Golden
96.61% (1,255 votes)

Write-In
3.39% (44 votes)



CENTERVILLE CITY COUNCIL (ELECT 2)



Linda M. Broussard
50.08% (997 votes)

Anita Rios
48.72% (970 votes)



Write-In
1.21% (24 votes)

CENTERVILLE CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL ELECTION



Kale Haluptzok
98.55% (1,021 votes)

Write-In
1.45% (15 votes)



HUGO MAYOR



Tom Weidt
95.58% (6,446 votes)

Write-In
4.42% (298 votes)



HUGO COUNCIL MEMBER WARD 1



Becky Petryk
60.25% (1,434 votes)

Mark Koll
38.99% (928 votes)



Write-In
0.76% (18 votes)

HUGO COUNCIL MEMBER WARD 3



David Strub
98.37% (1,872 votes)

Write-In
1.63% (31 votes)



CENTENNIAL SCHOOL BOARD (ELECT 3)



Gloria Murphy
21.85% (7,297 votes)

Tom Knisley
21.72% (7,253 votes)





Jessica Schwinn
20.30% (6,780 votes)

Laura Gannon
19.56% (6,532 votes)





Joe Ackerman
16.09% (5,375 votes)

Write-In
0.48% (160 votes)



SCHOOL DISTRICT QUESTION 1 (ISD #12)

APPROVAL OF NEW SCHOOL DISTRICT REFERENDUM REVENUE AUTHORIZATION

Yes
54.00% (9,546 votes)

No
46.00% (8,133 votes)

SCHOOL DISTRICT QUESTION 2 (ISD #12)

APPROVAL OF SCHOOL BUILDING BONDS

Yes
49.97% (8,840 votes)

No
50.03% (8,850 votes)

EDITOR'S NOTE: ELECTION RESULTS ARE PRELIMINARY AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE. THE WASHINGTON COUNTY CANVASSING BOARD MET ON NOV. 9, AND THE ANOKA COUNTY AND RAMSEY COUNTY CANVASSING BOARDS MET ON NOV. 10, AFTER PRESS DEADLINE, TO MAKE COUNTY AND LOCAL RACE RESULTS OFFICIAL. STATE AND FEDERAL ELECTION RESULTS WILL BECOME OFFICIAL ON THURSDAY, NOV. 19, AFTER THE STATE CANVASSING BOARD CONVENES.

KEY:

Election Victor | Not Elected

Note: Bar length is a visual representation only, and not meant to depict the percentages listed with 100% accuracy. The percentages and total votes next to the name of the candidate are correct based on vote count.

2026 LOCAL ELECTION RESULTS

2026 LOCAL ELECTION RESULTS

ISD#832 SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER (ELECT 3)



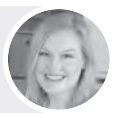
Allyson Sellwood
28.76% (4,704 votes)



Jenny Peterson
26.85% (4,392 votes)



Ryan Domin
26.71% (4,369 votes)



Erica Engelbert-Hensel
17.01% (2,783 votes)

Write-in
0.67% (110 votes)

ISD #624 SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER AT LARGE (ELECT 4)



Amanda McFarlane
15.61% (14,230 votes)



Amy Puschinsky
13.52% (12,326 votes)



Dan Arcand
13.21% (12,043 votes)



Ryan Vernosh
13.03%(11,881 votes)



Christina Streiff Oji
12.09% (11,027 votes)



Melissa Roberts
11.69% (10,661 votes)

Colleen Berquist
10.65% (9,712votes)

Bob Krominga
9.82% (8,950 votes)

Write-in
0.35% (240 votes)

MINNESOTA CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT

SHALL THE MINNESOTA CONSTITUTION BE AMENDED TO INCREASE THE FUNDING GOING TO ALL SCHOOL DISTRICTS FROM THE PERMANENT SCHOOL FUND, WHICH IS A FUND THAT SUPPORTS SCHOOL DISTRICTS WITHOUT RAISING INDIVIDUAL INCOME OR PROPERTY TAXES, EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2027?

FAILURE TO VOTE ON A CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT WILL HAVE THE SAME EFFECT AS VOTING NO ON THE AMENDMENT.

Yes
72.38% (2,068,124 votes)

No
23.4% (666,637 votes)

Estimated Blanks
4.03% (114,694 votes)

CHURCH BRIEF

Grass maze now open at New Life Church

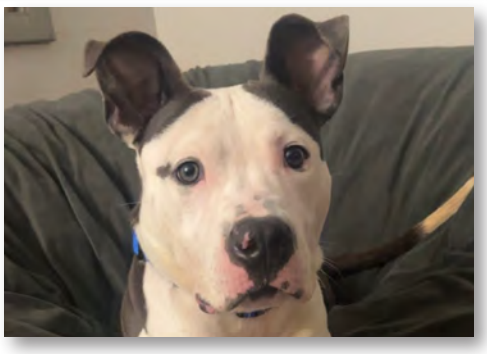
The annual grass maze is open and ready. New Life Church — Lutheran in Hugo recently mowed a simple grass maze on the north end of their property. Anyone is invited to stop by anytime to walk through the maze. The maze is in the tall grass behind the playground equipment. There are small white crosses near the entrance and exit. The maze is designed to go in by the left cross and out by the right cross (but you can go either way). New Life is located at 6000 148th St. N (next to Hugo Elementary). Stop by anytime to have some fun outside.



CONTRIBUTED

Stop by the grass maze at New Life Church-Lutheran in Hugo.

WEEKLY WAG



Blue is a handsome young boy with a big personality. He is 8 months old, and he has nothing but love and companionship to offer. Blue is an American Pit Bull Terrier mix. and he is not at full weight yet.

Blue is playful and energetic; he likes staying close to his people and he loves to snuggle. His foster says he is a constant shadow and will follow you everywhere. Blue is affectionate, and he has done very well meeting new people, including children. He is social with other dogs but has not yet been introduced to cats.

Blue is crate trained, and he is learning his basic commands very quickly. Being young, playful and active, Blue would do best in a forever home where he will get plenty of exercise, attention and mental stimulation. One thing is for sure: Blue will keep you smiling.

With patience, love and affection, Blue will continue to grow and learn, and he will become a wonderful, lifelong companion.

If you are interested in learning more about Blue or adopting him, please fill out an application at www.ruffstartrescue.org. Once your application is received, Ruff Start Rescue will contact you as soon as possible.

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COUNTY J INTERCHANGE: 'We appreciate the grace and patience you gave us'

FROM PAGE 1

functioning interchange. On top of all of that, we improved stormwater management and provided better access to people not only driving, but walking and biking the road as well."

Mazzitello recognized the cities' efforts as well as those from the Federal Highway Administration, Minnesota Department of Transportation and the White Bear Lake Area Chamber of Commerce.

"It took a big team of people to design, plan and execute this two-year, $18 million reconstruction project with a full bridge replacement over a busy freeway," said Tara Jebens-Singh, Ramsey County Commissioner. "I live just southwest of here — about two, three miles — so I know how critical this project was. For many years, this area had safety concerns; congestions; limited access for drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians; and that the missing freeway connections have been a pain point for residents and businesses."

Jebens-Singh specifically thanked the city of Lino Lakes for their contribution and continued maintenance of the Centerville Road roundabout.

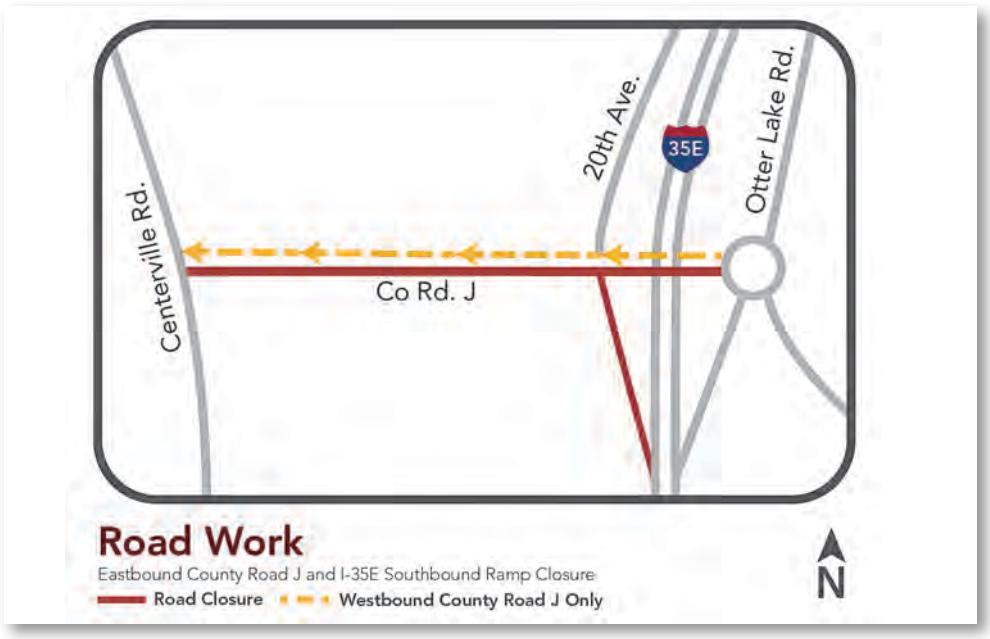
Lino Lakes Mayor Rob Rafferty as well as Council Members Michael Ruhland and Randy Rennaker were also in attendance.

Motioning to Otter Lake Road, then to Centerville Road, Rafferty said, "I think the most important thing is the transition between the interchanges and the roundabouts the abilities to get from point A to B, (and what it) offers the businesses."

Rafferty also drew attention to the project's three roundabouts rather than stoplights.

"The amount of money and things that are spent on (stoplights) is tremendous compared to what we've got here," Rafferty said. "Look at how it's cleaned up the area. It's spectacular."

"It's great to see all these counties and communities come together," said Ruhland. "There's some more commercial development that'll come in as a result of this."



CONTRIBUTED

A map of the project area and the detours during the final weeks of construction. Roads in red are currently closed while the yellow-dashed roads are open to westbound traffic only.

"I'm really pleased that there was shared funding for the project," Rennaker added. "I'm really excited that the businesses are going to have access again to the area."

Rennaker highlighted the benefits that the Wilkinson Waters mixed-use commercial and residential development will receive from this as well.

"All those folks are going to have nice, easy access to the freeway," Rennaker said.

Though the completed project will have many benefits, Mazzitello also thanked the citizens of the northeast metro for bearing with the county during the process.

"Nobody ever looks forward to two years of construction — noise, detours, dirt, dust, mud, smell … To everyone who was affected by this project, we appreciate the grace and the patience you gave us," Mazzitello said.

Remembering Joey Lundquist



LOGAN GION | PRESS PUBLICATIONS

Joey Lundquist, the project manager for the County Road J and 35E interchange, passed away from a sudden heart attack on Aug. 25, 2026.

"It's difficult to celebrate the completion of a monumental project like this without thinking about her and the contributions she brought … Joey was really looking forward to seeing this project completed," Mazzitello said, addressing members of Lundquist's family present at the ribbon cutting. "She helped make it a reality, and the impacts of her work and the benefits that will come from this project will live in this community for decades to come."

"She had such a major role in planning, design and construction," added Jebens-Singh. "She was known as a team player and a problem solver, a cheerful individual who had an infectious laugh and an easygoing demeanor."

Those in attendance at the ribbon cutting wore woven, floral memorial pins in her honor.

COMMUNITY BRIEF

Proper pumpkin disposal

Don't trash your pumpkins! Bring them to a designated drop-off site for composting. Pumpkins must be free of glitter, paint, wax and candles. Pumpkins with decorations that are not removable should be placed in the trash.

Anoka County:

• Lino Lakes - Rice Creek, 7701 Main St.

• Coon Rapids – Bunker Hills, 13285 Hanson Blvd. NW.

Washington County:

• Afton City Hall - 3033 Saint Croix Trail S.

• Cottage Grove Public Works - 8635 W. Point Douglas Road S

• Cottage Grove Washington County Service Center - 13000 Ravine Parkway S

• Forest Lake North Yard Waste Site - 6065 Headwaters Parkway

• Lake Elmo Fire Station - 3880 Laverne Ave. N

• Mahtomedi - Food Scraps Drop-Off Site, 800 Stillwater Road

• Oakdale Walton Park - 6812 15th St. N.

• Scandia – Community Center - 14727 209th St. N.

• Stillwater - Washington County Government Center, 14949 62nd St. N.

Some waste haulers may pick up pumpkins. Contact your hauler for details.

Celebrations



Happy 9th birthday Twinkie!

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-Love mom, dad, Royce, Tinsel & Tundra

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