

'Parents' Night Out: Talk! They hear you' is March 26 at WHA School

Parents and caregivers are invited to attend Parents' Night Out: "Talk! They hear you," March 26 from 6 to 7:30 p.m. at Walker-Hackensack-Akeley School.

This interactive session will increase parents' awareness of youth substance trends, equip them with practical strategies for talking with their children about prevention and connect them with helpful resources to support ongoing conversations at home.

Prevention of youth substance use starts with par-

ents and caregivers. It's never too early to begin meaningful conversations about substance use prevention. Research shows that one of the most influential factors for children is having a trusting, open relationship with a caring adult, often a parent or caregiver. Though it may not seem like it, children really hear your concerns, and it's important that you discuss the risks of substance use.

The session will be presented by County Health and Human Veterans Ser-

VICES Public Health Planner Jamie Richter.

This activity is made possible by a grant from the Cannabis and Substance Use Prevention program of the Minnesota Department of Health's Health Improvement Bureau in collaboration with Walker-Hackensack-Akeley Community Education.

A light supper will be provided. Registration is requested by March 23 by emailing Jamie.richter@casscountymn.gov or calling (218) 547-6833.

State park naturalists to offer maple syruping events in March and April

March in Minnesota means the sun is higher in the sky, and plants are getting ready to come back from dormancy.

When that combines with a cycle of daytime temperatures in the 30s and 40s and overnight temps below freezing, one gets perfect the conditions for maple sap to start flowing.

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources will offer programs at four state parks to introduce people to the fun of making maple syrup, as well as the equipment needed and the processes used. Participants

will learn how to identify the right kind of tree and tap it for sap and, finally, how to boil the sap until it is sweet enough to serve with breakfast.

The DNR will offer its programs at:

- Lake Bemidji State Park: March 14
- Nerstrand Big Woods State Park: March 14, 15, 21, 22, 28, 29
- Whitewater State Park: March 14, 21, 28
- Wild River State Park: March 21, April 4 and April 11

Due to space limitations, some programs require ad-

vanced registration. For the complete event schedule with program details, and more information about how to tap trees and make maple syrup, visit mndnr.gov/maplesyrup

Maple syrup programs at Minnesota state parks are free, but vehicle permits are required to enter the parks (\$7 for a one-day permit or \$35 for a year-round permit). Visitors can buy a permit online at mndnr.gov/permit, or at the park's ranger station during open hours.

She Shed quilts success story: from passion to profit

When Shannon Graupman opened the doors to She Shed Quilts in North Branch in the fall of 2024, she was fulfilling a dream she had carried since childhood.

Shannon learned to sew at her mother's side when she was 8 years old. Over the years, quilting became not just a hobby, but a way to connect with others. She envisioned a space that was more than a retail store. She wanted a place where people could gather, learn new skills and find encouragement among friends.

Because she did not come from a business background, Shannon knew she needed help turning that vision into a viable business.

In those early months, She Shed Quilts operated out of the smaller side of a duplex, with Shannon and her family living in the other half. The first classroom was a converted kitchen and inventory began with just a few bolts of fabric and basic supplies.

From that modest beginning, Shannon worked to create an inviting environment where crafters could take classes, participate in quilt challenges, and use tools like irons, cutting mats and rulers at no extra charge.

Investing in creativity and capacity

By late 2024, Shannon realized that to grow beyond a fledgling startup she needed a better location and a solid business plan. She found a larger space in the Shops of Gateway North and took the leap into a bigger footprint.

The move required greater planning, stronger financials, and access to capital. A meeting with a local banker confirmed what Shannon already suspected: she needed guidance to sharpen her projections and prepare for a loan.

This is when she connected with the North Central Small Business Development center and professional business consultant Kathy Lindo, who worked out of the North Central SBDC satellite office at the Chisago County HRA-EDA.

Working with Kathy became a turning point for Shannon and her business. She was guided through the process of building realistic financial projections, setting achievable sales goals, and developing a strategy that made sense to lenders.

What could have felt overwhelming became manageable because Kathy took the time to explain the "why" behind every number and helped Shannon translate her passion into a business plan that worked. With newfound confidence and clearer targets, Shannon was able to articulate her vision and demonstrate both sustainability and growth potential to her bank.

The results were meaningful. She exceeded the sales goals they had set together and gained clarity about her business. More importantly, she built self-assurance in her own ability to run a business with discipline and purpose, not just enthusiasm. After balancing entrepreneurship with a full-time job, Shannon now works in the business

full time, side by side with her mother, nurturing a growing community of quilt makers and creatives.

A gathering place that grows

Looking ahead, Shannon plans to broaden her class offerings, host special events and retreats, and introduce a line of sewing machines that customers can test before they buy.

Her customers have formed a community of their own, returning again and again not just to purchase fabric, but to share stories, learn new techniques and support one another.

More than a store, She Shed Quilts is a gathering place for creativity and connection that reflects Shannon's value and vision.

Shannon encourages other entrepreneurs to seek out mentors and advisors in their journeys because "no one builds a business alone." For her, the team at the North Central SBDC and Chisago County HRA-EDA became


trusted partners who provided encouragement, expertise and accountability when she needed it most.

Her story is a powerful reminder that passion alone is not enough; long-term success comes from truly understanding the financial side of a business. When creativity is paired with clear projections, a dream becomes sustainable. Shannon's journey shows that knowing your numbers can help you gain confidence to grow, invest and make informed choices.

The North Central Small Business Development Center is hosted at Central Lakes College and provides no-cost, confidential business consulting, training, and resources to entrepreneurs and small business owners across an 11-county region. The North Central SBDC supports clients at all stages of business, from idea development to growth and transition.

To learn more and register for consulting, visit www.northcentralsbdc.com

Sniff Out a Great Deal in the Classifieds.



Shoppers with a nose for bargains head straight for the Classifieds. In the Classifieds, you can track down deals on everything from cars to canine companions. It's easy to place an ad or find the items you want, and it's used by hundreds of area shoppers every week.

The Pilot-Independent
Go with your instincts and use the Classifieds today.
P.O. Box 190, Walker, MN 56484 • 547-1000

Save up to **\$800 on a stairlift!***



Move confidently up and down your stairs with an AmeriGlide stairlift.

DON'T WAIT! CALL US TODAY!
1-866-852-5506

*Terms and Conditions apply. Call for details.

Audien Hearing

The World's First Hearing Aids With Touchscreen Controls.

Atom X

No tiny buttons. No apps.
No prescriptions.

Call 833-647-3293
to get your 45-day risk free trial.



STATEWIDE ADS ONLY \$279

Classified Advertising That is EASY

The Minnesota Classified Advertising Network

Make an impact with your advertising dollar with classified advertising that reaches over 1MILLION READERS



Your newspaper representative can provide complete details or you can call MNA: 612/332-8844

WANTED TO BUY

WANTED: ALL 1970S MOTORCYCLES
Running or not. Titled or not. Will pick up. Cash in exchange. Sell now before prices fall. Call Dan at 612/720-2142

WE BUY HOUSES
for cash AS IS! No repairs. No fuss. Any condition. Easy three step process: Call, get cash offer and get paid. Get your fair cash offer today by calling Liz Buys Houses: 844/978-0683

MISCELLANEOUS

SATELLITE TV + INTERNET!
Get Dish! Free install, free HD-DVR upgrade, 80,000 on-demand movies, plus limited time up to \$600 in gift cards. Call today! 855/562-4309

CHOOSE EARTHLINK FIBER
Internet for speeds up to 5 Gigs, no data caps, no throttling. Prices starting at \$54.95. Plus, a \$100 gift card when you make the switch. Call 844/453-6983

MISCELLANEOUS

SAFE STEP
North America's #1 Walk-In Tub. Comprehensive lifetime warranty. Top-of-the-line installation and service. Now featuring our FREE shower package and \$1,600 off for a limited time! Call today! Financing available. Call Safe Step 833/966-3882

GET A BREAK ON YOUR TAXES!
Donate your car, truck, or SUV to assist the blind and visually impaired. Arrange a swift, no-cost vehicle pickup and secure a generous tax credit for 2025. Call Heritage for the Blind Today at 844/220-9501 today!

DON'T LET THE STAIRS LIMIT YOUR MOBILITY!
Discover the ideal solution for anyone who struggles on the stairs, is concerned about a fall or wants to regain access to their entire home. Call AmeriGlide today! 866/852-5506

GENERAC

#1 standby generator worldwide.
Get whole-home power, automatically.



Call 855-984-8982 to schedule your free quote today!

*Terms & conditions apply

Your Local News Anywhere, Anytime Every Which Way




With print, online and mobile delivery, we put the news that matters most to you at your fingertips

The Pilot-Independent
Your Hometown News Leader
408 Minnesota Ave. W., Walker, MN 56484

Call us to subscribe! 218-547-1000

www.walkermn.com