



Celebrating the Epiphany

The holiday season is full of faith and celebration. Even though people may believe this important time begins at the start of December, for millions of the Christians, the Twelve Days of Christmas begin with the birth of Baby Jesus on December 25th and continue through the Epiphany on January 6th.

The Epiphany, also known as Three Kings Day, is a Christian feast day that "celebrates the revelation of God in His Son as human in Jesus Christ," says The National Shrine of Saint Jude. The Epiphany is celebrated on January 6th each year and gets its name from the Greek word meaning "to reveal, or manifestation," a nod to the idea that this was the day Jesus was revealed to the world.

On the Epiphany, three Magi visited the Christ child to pay homage. These wise men were the first to greet Jesus after his parents. The Magi followed a star to Bethlehem, having faith that the Child's location would be accurate. The unlikely royal visitors bestowed gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. These herbs are typically used in burial ceremonies, and their offering may have potentially foreshadowed Jesus' destiny.

According to Father Hezekias Carnazzo, a Melkite Catholic priest and founding executive director of the Virginia-based Institute of Catholic Culture, the Feast of the Epiphany is one of the earliest feasts and actually predates the celebration of Christmas.

Although the Epiphany is an important date for Christians and many celebrate it, celebrants in Spain and Latin America consider it as important as Christmas Day. Within these nations Día de los Reyes (Three Kings Day) is a time for serving Rosca de Reyes, an oval-shaped treat that has a small doll inside to represent Baby Jesus. The figurine symbolizes the hiding of the infant Jesus from King Herod's troops. Children also receive

the majority of their gifts on Three Kings Day. It is customary for kids to place their old shoes with a wish list on them for the Three Kings. On the morning of January 6, the shoes are filled with toys and gifts.

The Epiphany is celebrated in various ways around the world. In the Czech Republic, people swim in the freezing cold Vltava River and men dress up as the Magi before riding camels through Prague's city center. Three Kings Bread, similar to the Rosca de Reyes and called Dreikönigskuchen, is prepared and consumed in Germany and Switzerland.

Christmas fanfare does not cease when the calendar turns from December 25th to 26th. The Epiphany on January 6th also is an important day of celebration.



Pictured right: Steve and Barb Faldet brave the cold in their snowman costumes and on their bikes to take part in the parade during A Very Merry McIntosh celebrated on Main Street on Saturday, December 7th. The parade had many fun and festive entries to bring joy to those in attendance.

Pictured below: Visiting with Santa and Mrs. Claus is always a part of every kids Christmas fun. Here, Paisley Kildal and Maci Lee stop by to let Santa know what is on their wish lists for Christmas this year.

Pictured below, right: Enjoying one of the warm and festive fires on Main Street during A Very Merry McIntosh on Saturday, December 7th was Shannon, Jason, Sydney and Janice Svalen.

Stay tuned to the McIntosh Times for more Christmas celebration pictures, from McIntosh to Winger, over the next few weeks,

A holiday interview with Win-E-Mac's new principal, Casey Reiersen

With the start of the new 2024 - 2025 school year, the Win-E-Mac community welcomed our new principal, Casey Reiersen.

Casey is a Bemidji native and has quickly become a great leader at our school.

To celebrate Christmas and the first half of Mr. Reiersen's first year, the McIntosh Times asked him a few fun, and holiday related questions:

McIntosh Times: How has the first half of your new school year at Win-E-Mac School been?

Mr. Reiersen: The first half of the school year at Win-E-Mac has been nothing short of amazing! Our school community has truly embraced the energy and excitement of a new year and new faces in the office, and it's been incredible to see everyone working together to make a positive impact for our Patriots.

McIntosh Times: What do you see as the strengths/successes of the Win-E-Mac School?

Mr. Reiersen: Our greatest strength at Win-E-Mac is our unwavering commitment to student learning and creating an environment where students genuinely enjoy coming to school. Walking through the halls, it's heartwarming to see how often our students smile. Of course, challenges arise—it's part of any school experience—but what sets us apart is the resilience shown by both our staff and students as they work together to overcome obstacles.

Another remarkable strength is the deep involvement of our community. While I've had to make difficult phone calls to parents at times, these conversations ultimately reflect our shared goal: supporting every student's success. Our families and community members understand and trust that the school is dedicated to helping their children grow, both academically and personally. This partnership is what makes Win-E-Mac a truly special place to learn and grow.

McIntosh Times: How, in one sentence, would you describe your vision for Win-E-Mac?

Mr. Reiersen: Win-E-Mac is a place where students enjoy learning.

McIntosh Times: What has been the most interest-



Casey Reiersen is the new Win-E-Mac school principal.

ing or memorable thing that has happened since becoming the principal at Win-E-Mac School?

Mr. Reiersen: During homecoming week I was nominated for Mr. Patriot. This is an extremely prestigious award that has been won by Mr. Roragen, Mr. Kaupang, and our Jack of all trades Scott. I wasn't very confident that I would be able to win, but giving high fives to elementary students and serving lunch to the high school students was a well planned campaign. I won the Mr. Patriot award and that was very memorable. Plus, I get to hold on to the traveling trophy until our next homecoming.

McIntosh Times: What was your favorite school subject when you were in school?

Mr. Reiersen: I know this is going to be foreign to most of our McIntosh Times readers, but my favorite class ever was curling. We would bus from Bemidji High school 2nd and 3rd quarters and take curling EVERY day. Because of that class I can still curl the rock down an ice sheet and hit the button. I was also on the winning team in the inaugural Bemidji High School class bonspiel.

McIntosh Times: What is the best advice you ever received as a student? and from whom?

Mr. Reiersen: Mr. Nelson my P.E. teacher in high school would yell across the gym, "We're all Lumberjacks here!" whenever there was a disagreement between students. This is amazing advice that highlights the fact that we are all on the same team. Maybe I should use his saying occasionally at Win-E-Mac, "We're all Patriots here!"

McIntosh Times: What is one of your hidden talents?

Mr. Reiersen: I have my class A drivers license and have spent many summers driving a side or belly dump truck and trailer. I can also shoot the duck in hockey skates. If you don't know what that is, look it up.

McIntosh Times: What is your favorite school lunch, so far, at Win-E-Mac School?

Mr. Reiersen: Our lunch staff does such an amazing job, but their orange chicken is by far my favorite. A close second would be the boxed salads that our students Riley and Adrian prepare with Cam's croutons.

McIntosh Times: What will you be doing for fun during your Christmas break?

Mr. Reiersen: Over Christmas break I plan to spend a great deal of time with my family. I always build a skating rink in our yard and the weather looks favorable for some hockey games and skating around. We might have just enough snow to pull a sled behind the snowmobile. I'm also hoping to spend a little time ice fishing.

McIntosh Times: What is your favorite Christmas cookie?

Mr. Reiersen: Plain old sugar cookie

McIntosh Times: What is your favorite Christmas carol?

Mr. Reiersen: The Christmas Song by Nat King Cole or Little Drummer Boy by Carrie Underwood and Isaiah Fisher

McIntosh Times: What is your favorite Christmas movie?

Mr. Reiersen: Plains, Trains, and Automobiles

McIntosh Times: Santa or The Grinch?

Mr. Reiersen: Jim Carrey as the Grinch and Tim Allen as Santa.

McIntosh Times: Live tree or artificial tree?

Mr. Reiersen: We have a live tree every year! We let our kids pick the tree and cut it down on our property. This is one of my favorite things to do with my family each year. I have never had an artificial tree in my house. We deal with the falling needles, but get to experience the true smell of a Christmas tree.

McIntosh Times: White lights or colored lights?

Mr. Reiersen: I use white on the tree in the house but decorate our yard with a mixture of white and colored.

McIntosh Times: Wrapping paper or gift bag?

Mr. Reiersen: I think it looks nicer to have presents wrapped, but depending on the shape of the present it may need a gift bag.

McIntosh Times: Ice skating or sledding?

Mr. Reiersen: I'm a hockey guy.

McIntosh Times: Any New Year resolutions?

Mr. Reiersen: To minimize my PA announcement interruptions in Mrs. Strom's classroom.

We look forward to a great new year at Win-E-Mac with Mr. Reiersen!



Two sides of a story: Essentia Health & The City of Fosston each release very different statements

Two separate statements from both The City of Fosston and Essentia Health were released this week.

Essentia Health statement from December 18, 2024:

Essentia Health remains committed to providing high-quality care in Fosston and retaining ownership of First Care Medical Services

In a letter sent to the City of Fosston today, Essentia Health and First Care Medical Services (FCMS) assert that the City does not have the authority to unilaterally terminate the 2009 affiliation agreement or force the transfer of FCMS to the City. Instead, it is Essentia's position that the City can only terminate its own participation in the affiliation agreement overseeing health care in the Fosston area.

As a result, Essentia accepts the City's Nov. 26 decision to remove itself from the affiliation agreement, while we continue to own and operate FCMS, which includes the Fosston hospital, nursing home and neighboring clinics.

As always, we remain committed to providing excellent local health care, and patients should not expect to see any operational changes despite the City's action.

Key facts of the Essentia Health-Fosston affiliation agreement

- Since 2009, Essentia has been the sole owner of FCMS, which includes the hospital, clinic and nursing home in Fosston, as well as clinics in Oklee and Bagley.

- The City of Fosston's role was to appoint one member to the FCMS board of directors and to ensure that certain services are provided.

- The City of Fosston can't terminate the affiliation agreement and require the transfer of FCMS to the City because Essentia is meeting the terms of the agreement according to a neutral arbitration panel's ruling in September.

- The arbitration panel specifically found that Essentia is continuing to provide comprehensive care and services to area residents as required by the affiliation agreement.

Statement from Essentia Health

"The City of Fosston has made its decision, and we look forward to engaging with the community to ensure we maintain high-quality health care in Fosston well into the future. The arbitration ruling in September, as well as legal precedent, permit us to continue to follow our mission in serving our patients, colleagues and the community.

The only thing the City can do is terminate its own involvement in the affiliation agreement. In light of the City's refusal to work with Essentia and its desire to withdraw from the agreement, Essentia will accept the City's withdrawal."

In our letter to City officials earlier today, Essentia and FCMS cited the September ruling of the arbitration panel. That letter can be read in its entirety at [EssentiaHealth.org/Fosston](https://www.essentialhealth.org/Fosston).

Statement from the City

of Fosston on Thursday, December 19, 2024:

Fosston Sets the Record Straight on Essentia Health Claims, Affirms Commitment to Local Healthcare Governance

Fosston, MN, December 19—"On Wednesday, December 18, Essentia Health published a misleading press release and letter suggesting that the City of Fosston has decided to 'remove itself from the affiliation agreement between Essentia and First Care Medical Services.

Nothing could be further from the truth. As the City Council made clear in its resolution, its ultimate goal is to restore local healthcare decision making to the community, preserving uninterrupted healthcare access and quality for decades to come. To that end, the City has the legal right to terminate the affiliation agreement—and, in doing so, return governance of First Care to the community where it belongs.

The City is disappointed that, rather than recognize this right, Essentia appears focused on misleading residents by publicly misrepresenting the City's actions. Nevertheless, the City still hopes to collaborate with Essentia to ensure a smooth transition back to local control. If Essentia persists on its current path, however, the City is prepared to exercise all of its legal rights to resolve these issues in the appropriate forum."

New year, new minimum-wage rates

Minnesota's minimum-wage rates will be adjusted for inflation Jan. 1, 2025, to \$11.13 an hour for all employers, including large employers, small employers, youth and J-1 visa wages for hotels, motels and lodging establishments. The law still allows for a 90-day training wage for workers under age 20. The current hourly training wage, \$8.85, will increase to \$9.08.

As of Jan. 1, 2025:

- All employers must pay at least \$11.13 an hour.

- The training wage rate, \$9.08 an hour, may be paid to employees younger than 20 years of age for the first 90 consecutive days of employment.

The state minimum-wage rates will not apply to work performed in the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, which have higher minimum-wage rates.

2024 Minnesota minimum-wage report released

The Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry has released its 2024 Minnesota minimum-wage report.

Key findings

- Effective minimum wages for Minnesota, Minneapolis and St. Paul: The Minnesota minimum wage – \$10.85 an hour for large employers in 2024 – is indexed annually for inflation and will increase to \$11.13 for all employers Jan. 1, 2025. The minimum wages for large employers in Minneapolis and macro employers in St. Paul reached \$15.57 Jan. 1, 2024, and indexed for inflation, will increase to \$15.97 Jan. 1, 2025. Minimum wages for small employers in Minneapolis and large employers in St. Paul also reached the same rate July 1, 2024, and will also increase to \$15.97 Jan. 1, 2025.

Minimum wages for small and micro employers in St. Paul are \$14 and \$12.25 as of July 1, 2024. They will reach \$15 in 2025 and 2027, respectively, and will be indexed for inflation thereafter.

- Full-time annual earnings at the effective minimum wages: For workers earning the Minnesota minimum hourly wage and working 40 hours a week, annual wages in 2024 are \$22,568 for workers at large employers and \$18,408 for workers at small employers. Effective Jan. 1, 2025, annual wages will be \$23,150 for both large and small employers. As of Jan. 1, 2024, workers at Minneapolis large employers and St. Paul macro employers earn annual full-time wages of \$32,386, which will increase to \$33,218 Jan. 1, 2025. As of July 1, 2024, workers at Minneapolis small employers and St. Paul large employers also earn \$32,386, which will increase to \$33,218 Jan. 1, 2025. Workers at St. Paul small employers earn \$29,120, which will increase to \$31,200 July 1, 2025.

- Minimum wages in 2024 dollars: Adjusting for inflation, the 2024 Minnesota large-employer minimum wage of \$10.85 an hour is below the average rate of the federal minimum wage for 1960 through 1981, which was \$12.37 an hour. The current inflation-adjusted Minneapolis and St. Paul minimum wages of \$15.97 an hour is higher than the \$14.42 an hour peak reached by the federal minimum wage in 1968.

View the full report at <https://dli.mn.gov/>.



ST. MARY'S CHURCH Fosston Fr. John Svakeen, Pastor

Tues. Dec. 24: 5:00pm Christmas Eve Mass at St. Mary's, Fosston

Wed. Dec. 25: 8:30am Christmas Day Mass. All are welcome to join in the joyful celebration of the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Sun. Dec. 29: 8:00am Confession at St. Mary's, Fosston; 8:30am Mass at St. Mary's, Fosston; 10:30am Mass at St. Joseph's, Bagley; 5:30 pm Advent Penance Service, St. Mary's, Fosston

Wed. Jan. 1: 8:30am Mass at St. Mary's, Fosston; 10:30am Mass at St. Joseph's, Bagley

OURS SAVIOR'S LUTHERAN CHURCH (ELCA) McIntosh

Pastor Rene Mehlberg
Synodical Authorized
Rachel Roggenbuck,
SAM

Sun. Dec. 29: 10:00am Coffee Hour; 10:30am Worship Services

Our Savior's Lutheran Church, McIntosh will run church services on Channel 30 on Garden Valley Channel 30. They will also be available on YouTube on channel One in Spirit - The Journey. Our Saviors service will be available by 8:30 am each Sunday until further notice.

MCINTOSH FREE LUTHERAN AFLC

McIntosh Trinity / Mount Carmel:

Pastor:
Jerry Moan

Trinity: (27262 315th St. SE, McIntosh) Sunday Worship: 9:30am; 10:45am Sunday School

Mt. Carmel: (305 State St. NE, McIntosh) 9:45am Sunday School; Sunday Worship: 11:00am

Wednesdays: 6:30pm Confirmation; 7:15pm Free Lutheran Youth meets at Pastor Moan's home

GOSEN LUTHERAN CHURCH Independent

Gary Johnson, Pastor
www.gosen-church.com
Face Book: Gosen Church

Sun, Dec. 29: 9:30am Sunday School and Adult Bible Study; 11:00am Worship Service (also on Facebook and gosenchurch.com); 7:00pm Luther League/Sunday School Christmas Program (see article elsewhere in the paper)

Tues, Dec. 31: 10:00am. Sunday worship service telecast on GVTN--30

Wed, Jan. 1: No Bible Study
Fri. Dec. 3: 10:00am Telecast of the Sunday School/ Luther League Christmas Program

Gosen Church is located 4 miles south of the junctions of Highways 2 & 59 or 4 miles north of Winger; then 1/2 mile east on County Road 206. For information call 268-4242 or 687-3461.

VERNES LUTHERAN CHURCH (LCMC) McIntosh Pastor Lee Laaveg

Sun. Dec. 29: 9:00am Worship

IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH McIntosh Pastor Bruce Blocker,

Sundays: 9:00am Worship; 10:00am Fellowship Hour; 10:15am Sunday School

DOVRE LUTHERAN CHURCH Winger, MN

Sundays: 9:00am Adult and Children's Sunday School; 10:00am Worship Service
Wednesdays: 7:00pm Bible Study

CALVARY LUTHERAN CHURCH Winger

Sundays: 10:30am Coffee Fellowship; 11:00am Worship

GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH- NALC Erskine Rev. Pam Thorson

Sundays: 9:15am Sunday School; 10:30am Worship

Come early and enjoy fellowship and a good cup of coffee. It will also be available at the same time on Garden Valley Channel 30, Facebook and YouTube.

Avoid norovirus over the holidays

More than 40 outbreaks of norovirus, sometimes called "stomach flu", have been reported to the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) so far this December, almost twice the usual number.

Noroviruses cause vomiting, diarrhea and stomach cramping. Other symptoms can include low-grade fever or chills, headaches and muscle aches. Noroviruses are very contagious; they are the leading cause of foodborne illness outbreaks in Minnesota and the most common cause of short-term diarrhea/vomiting illness in the United States. Most people will get norovirus about five times in their lifetime.

"Particularly ahead of holiday gatherings, we want to make sure people are aware of this increase in norovirus outbreaks and taking steps to

prevent spreading illness to family or friends," said Jessica Hancock-Allen, infectious disease division director at MDH.

Most norovirus illnesses and outbreaks can be prevented through good handwashing and appropriate food handling. To prevent getting and spreading norovirus, health officials recommend that you:

- Always wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds before preparing or eating foods, and after using the bathroom or changing diapers. Note: most hand sanitizers do not kill norovirus.

- Do not prepare food for others at all if you have been sick with vomiting or diarrhea in the last three days. Likewise, do not eat food prepared by someone who is ill with vomiting or diarrhea.

- Clean and disinfect surfaces with a household bleach

solution immediately after surfaces come in contact with vomit or diarrhea.

- Cook oysters and other shellfish before eating them.

Illness usually goes away in one or two days with no long-term health effects. People who are ill with symptoms of norovirus should drink plenty of fluids to help avoid becoming dehydrated. If you have questions or concerns, contact your health care provider.

Restaurants, schools, child care, long-term care and similar facilities should follow outbreak prevention guidelines and employee/attendee vomiting and diarrhea illness exclusions.

For more information, visit Norovirus Infection at www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/norovirus/index.html

THANK YOU!

A BIG Thank You to the Win-e-mac Honor Society and students for donating 815# of food. Congrats to the class with the most food donated. Grace Community Food Shelf

MATC

Gosen Sunday School program and Luther League

The Gosen Luther League meets on Sunday evening, December 29th, at 7 o'clock for their annual Christmas Program.

Jennie Erickson will be back to share musically as well as the Troy and KaraLynn Hemmer Family. A drama entitled "Christmas, The Story" will be presented. Other local talent may also be sharing.

Refreshments and Christmas goodies will be served following the program.

Join us for an inspirational evening in honor of the greatest gift ever given, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Gosen Church is located 4 miles south of the junctions of Highways 2 & 59 or 4 miles north of Winger; then 1/2 mile east on County Road 206.

For information call 791-0797 or 280-0821.

Thank You

Thank you for the donation from the Thanksgiving Service held in McIntosh. What a great community. ~ Grace Community Food shelf

MATC

CONGRATS on your RETIREMENT!

Please join First National Bank and Agency of McIntosh on
Thursday, January 2nd
from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.
to celebrate the upcoming retirement of
Darlene Dierkes!

Darlene has worked in the industry for over 40 years and has had the pleasure of working with so many great people along the way. While Darlene will be with the agency in a different capacity, we won't see her smiling face on a daily basis. Coffee and cake will be served to celebrate the occasion.

Congratulations Darlene!

first national bank

FDIC

of McIntosh

260 Cleveland Ave. SW
PO Box 129
McIntosh, MN 56556
www.fnbmcintosh.com
218-563-2865

MATC

Community Birthday and Anniversary Calendar

Wed. Dec. 25: Nicole Vettleson, Jordyn Zahn

Thurs. Dec. 26: *Bill Jr. & Valerie Fritz

Fri. Dec. 27: Heather Hegre, Erin Jore, Haley Smeby, Dustin Carlson

Sat. Dec. 28: Anita Roy

Sun. Dec. 29: Preston Carlson

Mon. Dec. 30: *Rudy & Kathy Finseth

Tues. Dec. 31: *Bryce & Andrea Stordahl

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Gonvick (218) 487-5225

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POLK COUNTY BOARD MINUTES

DECEMBER 3, 2024
BOARD MINUTES

Pursuant to motion of adjournment, the Polk County Board of Commissioners met in regular session at 1:00 o'clock p.m., December 3, 2024. Members present: Commissioner Paul Reese, Commissioner Warren Strandell, Commissioner Mark Holy, Commissioner Joan Lee, and Charles S. Whiting, County Administrator, Clerk of the Board. Others present: Samuel Melbye, Deputy Clerk of the Board. Members absent: Commissioner Gary Willhite.

AGENDA

A motion was made by Commissioner Strandell seconded by Commissioner Reese and adopted by unanimous vote of the Board to approve the December 3, 2024, agenda.

CONSENT ITEMS

A motion was made by Commissioner Strandell seconded by Commissioner Reese and adopted by unanimous vote of the Board to approve the December 3, 2024, consent items:

1. Approve November 19, 2024, Board minutes.
2. Approve Auditor Warrants.
3. Approve payment to Abentroth Brothers Construction, Caledonia, ND, in the amount of \$2,500.00 for Sidewalk Repair from tax forfeit demolition in Nielsville for the Environmental Services Department.
4. Approve payment to Johnson Controls, Fargo, ND, in the amount of \$456.77 for Service of Rooftop Unit at the EGF Human Services Building for the Facilities Department.
5. Approve Resolution (2024-82) Appointing the Commissioner to the Northwest Minnesota Multi-County Housing and Redevelopment Authority.

RESOLUTION (2024-82)

Appointing the Commissioner to the Northwest Minnesota Multi-County Housing and Redevelopment Authority

The following resolution (2024-82) was offered by Commissioner Strandell:

WHEREAS, The term of Commissioner Mark Finstad expires, effective January 4, 2025.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, That the Polk County Board of Commissioners does hereby appoint Mark Finstad to serve as Commissioner of the Northwest Minnesota Multi-County Housing and Redevelopment Authority for a period of 5 years, starting January 4, 2025. Commissioner Reese seconded the foregoing resolution, and it was declared adopted upon the following vote: YEAS: Commissioner Reese, Commissioner Lee, Commissioner Strandell. NAYS: None.

COUNTY BOARD MEMBER
ISSUE FORUM

1. Commissioner Reese brought forth that he attended the following meetings:
 - a. West Central Regional Water District meeting.
2. Commissioner Strandell brought forth that he attended the following meetings:
 - a. West Central Regional Water District meeting.
 - b. Drug Task Force meeting.
3. Commissioner Lee brought forth that she attended the following meetings:
 - a. Household Hazardous Waste Advisory Committee meeting.
 - b. State Community Health Services Advisory Committee meeting.
 - c. East Polk County Development Achievement Center Board meeting.
 - d. Department of Health and Human Services Performance Council meeting.
 - e. Wild Rice Watershed – 1 Watershed 1 Plan meeting.
 - f. Inter-CountyCommunity Council Personnel Committee meeting.
 - g. Inter-County Community Council Board meeting.

HIGHWAY

Richard Sanders, Polk County Engineer, came before the Board with matters pertaining to his department:

1. **Certificate of Performance/ Final Acceptance SAP 060-609-022 (CSAH 9), SAP 060-621-015** (CSAH 21), Box Culvert Contract
Knife River Materials-Northern, MN of Bemidji, MN has completed the work required on the contract. The original contract amount was \$1,889,642.60, with the final contract amount being \$2,009,960.70. A motion was made by Commissioner Reese seconded by Commissioner Strandell and adopted by unanimous vote of the Board to approve the Certificate of Performance and the Certificate of Final Acceptance for SAP 060-609-022 etc. and allow the County Engineer to sign the Final Voucher.
2. **Certificate of Performance/ Final Acceptance SAP 060-614-023 (CSAH 14), SAP 060-645-025 (CSAH 45), Overlay Contract**
Knife River Materials-Northern, MN of Bemidji, MN has completed the work required on the contract. The original contract amount was \$1,762,174.50, with the final contract amount being \$1,862,033.35. A motion was made by Commissioner Reese seconded by Commissioner Strandell and adopted by unanimous vote of the Board to approve the Certificate of Performance and the Certificate of Final Acceptance for SAP 060-614-023 etc. and allow the County Engineer to sign the Final Voucher.
3. **Certificate of Performance/ Final Acceptance CP 124-03-1429, CP 124-206-1433, CP 124-36-1430, CP 124-41-1431, CP 124-42-1432, Crack Fill Contract**
1 ads...Polk County minutes 2024

Asphalt Surface Technologies Corp. of St. Cloud, MN has completed the work required on the contract. The original contract amount was \$173,130.00, with the final contract amount being \$147,876.90. A motion was made by Commissioner Strandell seconded by Commissioner Reese and adopted by unanimous vote of the Board to approve the Certificate of Performance and the Certificate of Final Acceptance for CP 124-03-142 etc. and allow the County Engineer to sign the Certificate of Performances and the County Engineer and County Administrator to sign the Final Voucher.

4. **Certificate of Performance/ Final Acceptance SP 060-591-001 Fosston Ramp/Sidewalk**

Gordon Construction of Mahnomen, Inc. of Mahnomen, MN, has completed the work required on the contract. The original contract amount was \$230,420.00, with the final contract amount being \$241,453.00. A motion was made by Commissioner Strandell seconded by Commissioner Reese and adopted by unanimous vote of the Board to approve the Certificate of Performance and the Certificate of Final Acceptance for SP 060-591-001 and allow the County Engineer to sign the Certificate of Performances and the County Engineer and County Administrator to sign the Final Voucher.

Commissioner Holy joined the meeting at 1:32pm.

5. **CD Ditch Maintenance Request**

A Ditch Petition was submitted to survey and clean CD 161, Sections 11, 12, and 1 of Small Vineland Township. A motion was made by Commissioner Strandell seconded by Commissioner Reese and adopted by unanimous vote of the Board to approve the work in CD 161 and to name Richard Sanders, Engineer, over the projects.

6. CD 111 Petition to Add Lands
Earl and Neal Pederson have petitioned to add the North ½ of the SW ¼ Section 7, T149N, R42W to the Benefitted Area of County Ditch 111. Polk County Board needs to set a hearing date. A motion was made by Commissioner Strandell seconded by Commissioner Reese and adopted by unanimous vote of the Board to approve setting the hearing date for adding lands to County Ditch 111 as February 4, 2025 @ 10:00am.

7. **2025 Tractor Rental**
The Highway Department received one quote for 2025 Tractor Rental: Valley Plains Equipment of Crookston, MN rate is \$18/hr. for 500 hours for 3 tractors. A motion was made by Commissioner Reese seconded by Commissioner Strandell and adopted by unanimous vote of the Board to approve the 2025 Tractor Rental Rate of \$18/hr. for 500 hours for 3 tractors from Valley Plains Equipment of Crookston, MN.

8. **RAISE Grant Application Resubmittal Tabled from the November 19, 2024, Board Meeting**
Along with County Engineer Sanders, East Grand Forks City Administrator Reid Huttunen discussed the RAISE Grant Application. Grand Forks County, City of Grand Forks, and Polk County, City of East Grand Forks, have approved spending funds to have SRF revise and complete the RAISE Grant Application for the Merrifield Bridge/ Inner City Bridges. A motion was made by Commissioner Strandell seconded by Commissioner Reese and adopted by unanimous vote of the Board to approve amending the contract and spending funds to reapply for the RAISE Planning Grant.

9. 2025 Out of State Travel Requests
Mr. Sanders presented a list of out of state travel requests to the Board. A motion was made by Commissioner Strandell seconded by Commissioner Holy and adopted by unanimous vote of the Board to approve allowing Richard Sanders to travel out of state for the dates shown on the list presented (list on file in the Administrator's Office) and to submit a letter of approval of Mr. Sanders being reappointed to the NACE Board.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Alecia Helms, Human Resources Director, came before the Board with matters pertaining to her department:

1. **Approval of Collective Bargaining Agreement – Teamsters Sheriff's Department/ Dispatchers**
Negotiations have concluded with the Teamsters Dispatchers Group, and they have voted to approve the contract. A motion was made by Commissioner Lee seconded by Commissioner Strandell and adopted by unanimous vote of the Board to approve the Teamsters Dispatchers Collective Bargaining Agreement.
2. **Approval of Collective Bargaining Agreement – 49ers Engineer Division**
Negotiations have concluded with the 49ers Engineer Division, and they have voted to approve the contract. A motion was made by Commissioner Reese seconded by Commissioner Lee and adopted by unanimous vote of the Board to approve the 49ers Engineer Division Collective Bargaining Agreement.

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

Jon Steiner, Environmental Services Administrator, came before the Board with matters pertaining to his department:

1. **RRF Steam Contract Extension – 2025**
A motion was made by Commissioner Reese seconded by Commissioner Lee and adopted by unanimous vote of the Board to approve an extension of the 2024 Steam Sales Contract through 2025 and require certain data from Steam Customers be submitted.
2. **2025 Solid Waste Fee Assessment – Correction**
On 10/22/2024, the Board of Commissioners approved a 2025 Solid Waste Fee Assessment Schedule. The Addenda which

contained the aforementioned Fee Schedule contained an error. A motion was made by Commissioner Holy seconded by Commissioner Reese and adopted by unanimous vote of the Board to approve the corrected 2025 Residential Solid Waste Fee Assessment schedule.

3. **2025 Out of State Travel Request – Landfill Supervisor**

Polk wishes to send its Landfill Supervisor, Wade Farrell, to the U.S. Compost Council (USCC) 2025 conference in Phoenix, AZ, in January

AUDITOR WARRANTS

A motion was made by Commissioner Strandell seconded by Commissioner Reese and adopted by unanimous vote of the Board that the following Commissioner Warrants were approved:

AUDITOR WARRANTS 11/05/2024

Vendor Name	Amount
Becker County Human Services	6,347.64
Clay County Public Health	11,955.01
Gladen Construction Inc	114,617.50
Hardwick P.C./Brian T	2,252.67
Liberty Business Systems Inc	6,160.00
Mcmahon Counseling And Consult Svc LI	7,375.00
Norman County Public Health	60,099.26
Northdale Oil Inc	5,179.15
Northland Business Systems Inc	6,810.57
Ottertail Public Health	9,104.97
Polk County Highway Department	7,692.64
Polk County Public Health	165,170.63
Polk County Social Services	42,638.80
US Bank Voyager Fleet Sys	4,778.24
9 Payments less than 2000	7,595.92
Final Total:	457,778.00

AUDITOR WARRANTS 11/12/2024

Vendor Name	Amount
Agassiz Asphalt LLC	17,564.66
AMP Robotics Corporation	6,052.92
AT&T Mobility	2,838.18
BELTRAMI COUNTY SOLID WASTE	3,852.56
Davidson Construction	76,500.00
ENTERPRISE FM TRUST	16,153.45
Gladen Construction Inc	137,086.01
GP Excavating LLC	3,230.00
Hoffman,Philipp, & Martell, PLLC	67,305.00
Knife River Materials	146,870.25
Lepier Oil Company Inc	4,739.34
Norman County Public Health	19,879.51
Polk County Public Health	37,673.90
Ziegler Inc	10,525.74
28 Payments less than 2000	12,112.09
Final Total:	562,383.61

AUDITOR WARRANTS 11/12/2024

Vendor Name	Amount
1 Payments less than 2000	15.00
Final Total:	15.00

AUDITOR WARRANTS 11/19/2024

Vendor Name	Amount
Abdo Financial Solutions LLC	18,733.38
Altru Health System	2,653.00
ENTERPRISE FM TRUST	5,159.30
Fosston Municipal Utilities	58,522.35
Fosston Municipal Utilities	2,063.59
Great Plains Natural Gas Co	5,346.55
Kronos SaaShr Inc	3,394.60
Main Street Station	5,086.58
Mn State Treasury	7,279.50
Norman County Public Health	24,535.00
Ottertail Power Co	22,751.38
Polk County	106,673.95
Polk County Public Health	71,505.05
RJ Zavoral & Sons Inc	852,423.69
Trail County	22,419.18
Verizon Wireless	2,619.54
27 Payments less than 2000	15,909.12
Final Total:	1,227,075.76

AUDITOR WARRANTS 11/19/2024

Vendor Name	Amount
ENTERPRISE FM TRUST	29,611.32
1 Payments less than 2000	94.01
Final Total:	29,705.33

AUDITOR WARRANTS 11/26/2024

Vendor Name	Amount
Crookston Water Department	4,702.37
Purchase Power	2,566.74
Valley Plains Equipment	16,472.45
13 Payments less than 2000	9,461.34
Final Total:	33,202.90

MANUAL WARRANTS 11/08/2024

Vendor Name	Amount
Internal Revenue Service	200,599.98
Minnesota Revenue	35,072.57
Final Total:	235,672.55

MANUAL WARRANTS 11/19/2024

Vendor Name	Amount
Mn Dept Of Revenue	2,999.00
Final Total:	2,999.00

MANUAL WARRANTS 11/19/2024

Vendor Name	Amount
Minnesota Revenue	4,904.00
Mn Dept Of Rev Tax Division	69,703.95
3 Payments less than 2000	1,779.14
Final Total:	76,387.09

MANUAL WARRANTS 11/22/2024

Vendor Name	Amount
U.S. Bank Corporate Payment Systems	122,447.41
Final Total:	122,447.41

MANUAL WARRANTS 11/22/2024

Vendor Name	Amount
U.S. Bank Corporate Payment Systems	1,970.82
Final Total:	1,970.82

MANUAL WARRANTS 11/22/2024

Vendor Name	Amount
1 Payments less than 2000	304.73
Final Total:	304.73

2025 to begin his certification process. A motion was made by Commissioner Lee seconded by Commissioner Strandell and adopted by unanimous vote of the Board to approve the Out of State Travel Request to Phoenix, AZ, for Landfill Supervisor Wade Farrell from January 26th – January 31st, 2025, and all associated costs for travel and conference registration.

4. **MSW Landfill Phase 15 – Change Orders**

A motion was made by Commissioner Reese seconded by

Commissioner Holy and adopted by unanimous vote of the Board to approve the Landfill Phase 15 – Materials Contract – Change Order #1 in the amount of \$94.92 (Addenda #1) for R.J. Zavoral & Sons of East Grand Forks, MN. A motion was made by Commissioner Strandell seconded by Commissioner Lee and adopted by unanimous vote of the Board to approve the Landfill Phase 15 – Installation Contract – Change Order #1 in the amount of \$2,335.48 (Addenda #2) for R.J. Zavoral & Sons of East Grand Forks, MN.

5. **Professional Services Agreement – MPCA Grant Projects**

Polk County has solicited a Professional Services proposal from Up North Engineering of Fargo, ND, to administer a portion of the MPCA Grant Projects. A motion was made by Commissioner Reese seconded by Commissioner Holy and adopted by unanimous vote of the Board to approve the Professional Services Agreement for Up North Engineering of Fargo, ND in the amount of \$30,240.00.

6. **2025 EPA SWIFR Grant – Resolution (2024-81) EPA Solid Waste Infrastructure for Recycling (SWIFR) Grant Program Polk County Support for Hubbard County Hub & Spoke Regional Hub & Spoke Project**

Resolution (2024-81) was offered by Commissioner Lee seconded by Commissioner Reese and adopted upon the following vote: YEAS: Commissioner Strandell, Commissioner Reese, Commissioner Lee, Commissioner Holy. NAYS: None. (See Resolution (2024-81) on file in the Administrator's Office)

7. **Solid Waste Updates**

Discussion was held with the Board regarding general updates on programs, facilities, and initiatives from the Solid Waste Department.

PROPERTY RECORDS

Samuel Melbye, Director of Property Records, came before the Board with matters pertaining to his department:

1. **2024 Election Recap**

Discussion was held with the Board regarding a summary of statistics and discussion of 2024 General Election, Canvassing, and Post-Election Review.

2. **Legal Services 2025 Hourly Rates – Rinke Noonan, Attorneys at Law**

Discussion was held with the Board regarding an update on an hourly rate schedule from Rinke Noonan, Attorneys at Law, who provide legal services to Polk County.

ADMINISTRATION

Chuck Whiting, Polk County

Administrator, came before the Board with matters pertaining to his department:

1. **Set 2025 Board Meeting Dates**

Proposed dates and times for meetings in 2025 were presented and discussed with the Board. A motion was made by Commissioner Strandell seconded by Commissioner Reese and adopted by unanimous vote of the Board to approve the Polk County Board of Commissioners meeting schedule, amending the December meetings to have the December 2nd Board meeting convene at 1:00pm, the Public Budget Hearing convene at 6:00pm, and removing the December 23rd meeting. (Schedule on file in the Administrator's Office)

2. **2025 Budget**

a. Draft Budget Resolutions
Draft Resolutions pertaining to: Adopting the 2025 Budget; Setting the 2025 Net Levy; Setting 2025 Wage Grid for the County Administrator, Department Heads, Non-Union, and Social Services Personnel, and Approving New Positions and Position Changes Effective in the 2025 Budget; and Setting Commissioner Salary/Per Diem/Meeting List were discussed and presented to the Board. (Draft Resolutions on file in the Administrator's Office)

b. **Review of Budget Presentation**

A handout was discussed and presented to the Board regarding the 2025 Polk County Proposed Budget. (Handout on file in the Administrator's Office)

2025 BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING

1. **Budget Presentation – Chuck Whiting, Polk County Administrator**

The 2025 budget was presented to the Board. (Handout on file in the Administrator's Office)

2. **Open Public Hearing**

A motion was made by Commissioner Lee seconded by Commissioner Strandell and adopted by unanimous vote of the Board to open the Public Hearing at 6:27 p.m.

3. **Close Public Hearing**

A motion was made by Commissioner Strandell seconded by Commissioner Reese and adopted by unanimous vote of the Board to close the Public Hearing at 6:47 p.m.

With no further business, the Board adjourned to reconvene at 9:30 o'clock a.m., December 17, 2024.

Mark Holy, Vice Chair
ATTEST:
Charles S. Whiting, County Administrator
Clerk of the Board M41C

Notable events that occurred on December 25



December 25th is Christmas Day, when billions of Christians across the globe celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. Though Christmas is likely the first thing people think of when December 25th comes around, over the years many additional memorable and even infamous events unrelated to the holiday have taken place on this unique day on the calendar.

- **333:** The Roman Emperor Constantine elevates his youngest son, Constans, to the rank of Caesar. This designation establishes Constans as Constantine's heir apparent.
- **1000:** Hungary is established as a Christian kingdom by Stephen I of Hungary.
- **1046:** Pope Clement crowns Henry III of Germany as Holy Roman Emperor. This decision on the part of Pope Clement frees the Vatican from dependence on the Roman nobility and lays the foundation for its authority across the empire.
- **1261:** Eleven-year-old John IV Doukas Laskaris, who would be the last emperor from the prominent Laskarid dynasty that ruled the Empire of Nicea, is intentionally blinded on the orders of Michael VIII, making John IV ineligible for the throne.
- **1492:** The merchant ship Santa Maria, commanded by Christopher Columbus, runs onto a reef off the coast of Haiti.
- **1758:** German astronomer Johann Georg Palitzsch sights Halley's Comet, which confirms Edmund Halley's prediction of the comet's passage. The sighting marks the first passage of a comet that was predicted ahead of time.
- **1776:** George Washington and the Continental Army cross the Delaware River at night. The crossing enables the army's attack on Hessian forces serving Great Britain in Trenton, New Jersey, the following day.
- **1809:** American physician and pioneering surgeon Ephraim McDowell performs the first surgical removal of an ovary or ovaries. McDowell performed the surgery at his home in Danville, Kentucky, removing a 22.5-pound tumor without the use of anesthesia. McDowell's patient, Jane Todd Crawford, made an uncomplicated recovery and lived another 32 years.
- **1826:** A drunken riot at the United States Military Academy in West Point, New York, concludes a day after it began. Known as the "eggnot riot," the conflict began a day

earlier and 70 cadets were implicated, with 20 of them being court-martialed. Jefferson Davis, future Confederate States President, was among the implicated cadets.

- **1831:** One-fifth of Jamaica's slaves mobilize in an ultimately unsuccessful fight for freedom. The Great Jamaican Slave Revolt lasts for 11 days and involves up to 60,000 enslaved individuals.
- **1868:** United States President Andrew Johnson grants unconditional pardons to all Confederate veterans in the aftermath of the American Civil War.
- **1932:** Nearly 300 people are killed when a magnitude 7.6 earthquake strikes Gansu, China.
- **1950:** Scottish nationalist students take the Stone of Scone from Westminster Abbey. The coronation stone of British monarchs is eventually found in Scotland in April 1951.
- **1951:** Harry T. Moore is killed instantly and his wife, Harriette, is fatally wounded when a bomb explodes at the home of the Civil Rights Movement leaders in Mims, Florida. No one was ever prosecuted for the bombing and murders.
- **1986:** Sixty-three people are killed when the hijacked Iraqi Airways Flight 163 crashes in Arar, Saudi Arabia. Forty passengers aboard the plane survive the ordeal, and pro-Iranian group Islamic Jihad Organization claims responsibility for the hijacking.
- **1991:** Mikhail Gorbachev resigns as President of the Soviet Union. The union itself is dissolved the following day.
- **1996:** The body of six-year-old American child beauty queen JonBenét Ramsey is found in her family home in Boulder, Colorado. Her death is ruled a homicide and the case remains unsolved.

Over 150k Minnesotans have signed up for health insurance since November 1st.

Following last year's incredible enrollment success, MNsure is pleased to report yet another new record for health insurance sign-ups in Minnesota.

Between November 1st and the first deadline (December 18th), 151,098 Minnesotans used MNsure.org to sign up for qualified health plans. This represents a 14% increase in private health plan sign-ups compared to the same time last year.

"We're proud of the steady growth, year over year," said MNsure CEO Libby Caulum. "Each sign-up represents another neighbor finding comprehensive coverage and having access to the care they need. Sixty percent of MNsure enrollees are eligible for financial help that lowers their health care costs. They aren't just getting insurance – most are saving money, too."

With enhanced federal tax credits only available through MNsure, eligible families are expected to save an average of \$561 per month (over \$6,700/year) in 2025. All Minnesotans can continue to find a plan with premiums that cost no more than 8.5% of their annual household income, thanks to federal laws that improve affordability.

Still time to

enroll for 2025

Minnesotans who need health insurance for next year still have time to apply and enroll before the final deadline on January 15, 2025. Consumers who sign up between December 19 and January 15 will have coverage that starts February 1st.

MNsure's statewide network of certified brokers and navigators can help Minnesotans sign up before the January 15 deadline in person, by phone or through virtual appointments – at no cost to consumers. Consumers can connect with a local, trusted broker or navigator for free help in their language by searching MNsure's Assister Directory (mnsure.org/free-help).

The open enrollment deadlines do not apply to Minnesotans who qualify for Medical Assistance or MinnesotaCare or members of federally recognized tribes, who can use MNsure.org to enroll in health insurance any time of year.

MNsure is Minnesota's health insurance marketplace where individuals and families can shop, compare and choose health insurance coverage that meets their needs. MNsure is the only place you can apply for financial help to lower the cost of your monthly insurance premium and out-of-pocket costs. Most Minnesotans who enroll through MNsure qualify for financial help.



The Win-E-Mac School would like to extend a huge thank you to the American Legion Post 596 of Erskine for their very generous donation of \$10,000 to be used towards our fieldhouse project. Donations for this project can be made to the school. Pictured: Assistant Football Coach, Ryan Breitbach, Superintendent Aaron Cook, Veteran Daryl Meyer, and Veteran Terry Cook.

Five local higher education institutions sign course exchange agreement

Five higher education institutions – Concordia College, Minnesota State University Moorhead, North Dakota State College of Science, North Dakota State University, and Minnesota State Community and Technical College – came together Wednesday, December 18th to enter into the Metro College Alliance course exchange agreement to benefit students.

A signing ceremony was held at M State, with presidents and additional representatives from each institution in attendance. Speakers included M State President Carrie Brimhall, NDSU President David Cook, Tri-College Provost Tim Flakoll, and MSUM nursing student Carley Berg. The agreement, effective January 1, 2025, will allow degree-seeking students at any of the member institutions to enroll in undergraduate courses at the other institutions without undergoing separate admission procedures.

The Metro College Alliance course exchange agreement replaces the previous Tri-College University consortium, which has facilitated cross-institutional course enrollment since 1970. The new agreement is designed to adapt to the evolving



Student speaker Carley Berg at the podium with (seated, left to right) Tri-College Provost Tim Flakoll, M State President Carrie Brimhall, MSUM President Timothy Downs, NDSU President Rod Flanigan, Concordia College President Colin Irvine and NDSU President David Cook at the signing ceremony at M State's Moorhead campus to enter into a course exchange agreement called the Metro College Alliance.

higher education landscape, ensuring that students continue to benefit from the collaborative spirit of the member institutions.

Key highlights of the agreement include seamless course enrollment and enhanced academic flexibility. Students can register for courses at any of the member institutions through a streamlined process, broadening their educa-

tional opportunities and keeping them local.

The agreement supports students in completing their degrees by providing access to courses that may not be available at their home institution, especially in their final academic year or for specific program requirements.

"This agreement exemplifies our commitment to providing flexible and comprehensive

educational opportunities for our students. By collaborating, we can offer a richer academic experience and support our students in achieving their educational goals," said M State President Carrie Brimhall.

For more information about the Metro College Alliance course exchange agreement, contact President Brimhall at carrie.brimhall@minnesota.edu.



7 ways to organize and store holiday decorations

Decorating a home for holidays is quite popular. A survey from the National Retail Federation found that 53 percent of respondents said they were planning to decorate their home or yard for Halloween in 2023. Lombardo Homes polled 1,000 Americans in 2021 and 94 percent said they celebrate Christmas in at least some way, and 84 percent said they decorate.

According to Time2Play, which surveyed 1,000 Canadians about their holiday decorating habits, Manitoba puts up Christmas decor earlier than any other province, with these residents taking out decorations 4.3 weeks ahead of Christmas Day on average.

With so many avid holiday decorators, individuals will need to find ways to organize and store their seasonal items. Holiday decor comes in many different sizes - from the smallest tree ornaments to illuminated statues for the yard or inflatable items. Figuring out a storage plan can take a little effort. These seven tips can help.

1. Purchase clear, similarly sized storage bins and shelving racks, hanging them where you plan to keep the decorations. Most people prefer an out-of-the-way spot, such as in the garage, attic or basement. Label each bin by holiday and put the bins in chronological order to make finding items more convenient. Uniform bin sizes make it easier to stack and store.

2. Store smaller items inside larger decor items. Decorative baskets or wrapped boxes brought out for Christmas or Chanukah are ideal places

to keep smaller tchotchkes like ceramics, dreidels, candlestick holders, or mantel hooks. Delicate items can be tucked into Christmas stockings or wrapped and stored in a fluffy tree skirt. Egg cartons can be used to keep small items safe as well.

3. Label everything so you will not need to dig through boxes or bins to know what is inside. This might be a good year to ask for a label maker for the holidays!

4. Use overhead or wall storage for holiday decor. Overhead spaces in the garage or basement walls can be good spaces to keep holiday decorations. Always keep bins and boxes off the floor so they are not vulnerable to damage related to leaks or floods.

5. Garment bags can protect larger decorations, such as wreaths, artificial trees or signs. If you have a large number of mechanical, illuminated or inflatable lawn ornaments, consider investing in a small shed where these items can be safely kept. Wrap the extension cords and any bracing stakes or strings used with the decorations so it's easy to find.

6. Utilize pieces of cardboard as well as toilet paper or paper towel tubes to keep lights and wires tidy. Tuck cords into the toilet paper tubes, and wrap lights around the cardboard to avoid tangles.

7. Each year, take inventory of your decoration collection and toss out anything that is damaged or has seen better days.

Storing holiday decorations will take some time, but once you establish a system, things will be simple year after year.

Updated guidelines aim to prevent first strokes

Minnesota could save lives and Minnesotans could avoid an estimated 10,000 strokes per year through stroke prevention efforts, according to recently updated national stroke prevention guidelines.

A stroke occurs when the blood supply to the brain suddenly stops. This can lead to brain damage, which can cause long-term disability or even death.

However, up to 80% of strokes may be preventable, according to newly updated guidelines from the American Heart Association (AHA) and the American Stroke Association (ASA). These guidelines emphasize the importance of healthy lifestyle behaviors and screening for risk factors to help prevent first strokes.

The "2024 Guideline for the Primary Prevention of Stroke" replaces the 2014 version and is a resource for clinicians implementing prevention strategies for people with no prior stroke history.

The new guidelines:

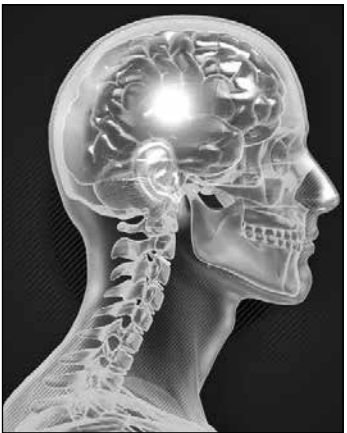
Recommend screening for risk factors like high blood pressure, elevated cholesterol, high blood sugar and obesity.

Highlight women's unique stroke risk factors, including endometriosis, pregnancy complications and early-onset menopause.

Address the role of weight loss drugs like glucagon-like protein-1 (GLP-1) in reducing stroke risk.

Consider how social determinants of health, such as economic stability, education, neighborhood, social and community context, access to health care and structural racism impact stroke risk.

"These new guidelines fit well with Minnesota's ongoing stroke prevention efforts and provide a good opportunity for



us to highlight the opportunities we have as people and institutions to prevent those first strokes from ever happening," said Minnesota Commissioner of Health Dr. Brooke Cunningham.

Each year in the U.S., over 600,000 people have a first stroke. Stroke is currently the fifth leading cause of death in Minnesota. In 2021, over 2,300 Minnesotans died due to stroke.

Stroke is the fifth leading cause of death and one of the leading causes of disability in Minnesota. The Minnesota Stroke Program is committed to reducing the burden of stroke in the state through raising stroke awareness in the community, providing continuing education to health care providers and working to improve the entire system of care for stroke patients.

Healthy lifestyle behaviors

The new national guidelines and Minnesota's 2035 Plan to address cardiovascular disease, stroke and diabetes highlight lifestyle behaviors that can help reduce stroke risk.

MDH works with partners across the state to help communities and people make healthy lifestyle changes. The State-

wide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP) supports community-driven strategies to expand opportunities for active living, healthy eating and commercial tobacco-free living. By partnering with health care systems and community partners across the state, MDH also supports the Diabetes Prevention Program, Self-monitored Blood Pressure Education and other programs that help Minnesotans incorporate healthy habits into their life.

These behaviors are detailed in the American Heart Association's Life's Essential 8, which include:

- Healthy eating.
- Physical activity.
- Quitting tobacco.
- Adequate sleep.
- Healthy weight.
- Controlling cholesterol.
- Managing blood sugar.
- Managing blood pressure.

The new guidelines recommend:

• A Mediterranean diet, which has been shown to reduce the risk of stroke.

• At least 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity or 75 minutes per week of vigorous aerobic activity.

• Screening patients for sedentary behavior (a confirmed risk factor for stroke).

Know the signs

Timely treatment can decrease the chance of disability and death after stroke. The abbreviation B.E. F.A.S.T. is a useful tool to recognize the warning signs of stroke and when to call for help:

- B: Balance loss
- E: Eyesight change
- F: Facial drooping
- A: Arm weakness
- S: Slurred speech
- T: Time to call 9-1-1

Care starts in the ambulance. Minnesota stroke hospitals are prepared and ready to treat stroke.

Dispose of holiday greens and Christmas trees correctly to protect MN's trees & forests

Invasive pests can hide on festive foliage.

Holiday greenery and Christmas trees bring joy throughout the season, but they can also hide dangerous pests. Diseases and invasive species can make their way into our landscapes on trees and boughs brought into Minnesota from other states.

To protect our environment, the State of Minnesota is asking residents to take these steps to properly dispose of greenery and trees after the holiday season:

• The best option is to use a curbside tree collection or bring trees to a designated drop-off site. Check with your



waste hauler, city, or county to see what services are offered in your area. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency has a map of yard waste compost locations (www.pca.state.mn.us/business-with-us/community-composting); contact locations directly to see if they accept trees and greenery.

• Don't toss trees and greenery into your backyard woods or residential compost pile, which can spread the invasive species or disease.

• Wreaths and other decorative greens can be disposed of in trash cans.

• If your city or county does not have an organized pickup or drop-off, the last resort is to burn the greens. Always check fire danger conditions and burning restrictions before burning and follow local ordinances.

Pests of concern include elongate hemlock scale, a small insect established in the eastern U.S. where many decorative Fraser firs are grown.

Feeding damage caused by this invasive insect can cause the needles of hemlocks, firs, and spruces to yellow and prematurely drop. Also, boxwood blight, a fungal disease, and round leaf bittersweet, an invasive noxious weed, are sometimes found on wreaths and centerpieces and can endanger native trees and other landscaping.

If you suspect your greenery or tree may be infested with an invasive insect or disease, contact the Minnesota Department of Agriculture's Report a Pest line at 1-888-545-6684, reportapest@state.mn.us, or through the online reporting form.

PICTURES

With Santa



Riker and Hensley Chaput.



Grace Roed and Adler Stordahl.



Haaken Roed.



Emerson, Sutton, Braxton and Lennon Smith.



Santa and Mrs. Claus were visiting kids during the A Very Merry McIntosh event that was held on Saturday, December 7th. There were many kids that made their way up to see the jolly elf to let him know what their wishes for Christmas were. Pictured are Jemma, Sawyer and Ivy Cook.



Garrett Gunufson.



Jazmine and Hazel Burthwick.



Vini and Alex Hedlund.

Christmas Greetings

**BEST WISHES FOR A JOYOUS CHRISTMAS
FILLED WITH LOVE, HAPPINESS AND
PROSPERITY!**

**RON'S
BARBER
SHOP**

**NEIL'S
QUALITY
MEATS
& MORE**

**CITY OF
MCINTOSH**

**JERED'S
GROCERY
& LIQUOR**

**HOWARD
SOAP
COMPANY**

**THE
CLUBHOUSE
CHILDCARE
CENTER**

**FIRST
NATIONAL
BANK AND
AGENCY**

**MINNESOTA
RUST**

**POPLAR
MEADOWS
SENIOR
LIVING**

**NORTH COUNTRY
LUMBER &
JASON & CHAD'S
PLUMBING AND
HEATING**

**MCINTOSH
SENIOR
LIVING**

**FARMCHEK
SERVICES**

**LOUIE'S
MERCANTILE**

**GINGER
JUNKER**

**BULLY
BREW**

**MCINTOSH
TIMES**

**NORTHERN
PRAIRIE
AROMATHERAPY**