



McINTOSH

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Enjoying one of the Main Street fire pits during A Very Merry McIntosh in December are friends, Vini Hedlund, Gracie Oertwich and Hayden Rock. There were so many activities and fun for families during the small town Christmas celebration held in McIntosh.

Looking back on the past year: 2024 in review

This year was a momentous one to report on. From public opinion in the U.S. to views around the globe, 2023 was chock full of shifts creating some notable highs and lows. Spanning U.S. politics and economics, global conflict, the workplace, wellbeing, and more.

July:
The Empress, a vintage 4-6-4 Hudson steam locomotive that made its way to Winnipeg traveled through Winger on Wednesday, July 3rd at 3:45 pm. A merger in 2021 created CPKC, a combination of two historic railways, Canadian Pacific (CP) and Kansas City Southern (KCS) and the first single-line rail network connecting Canada, the United States and Mexico. The historic event of the Final Spike completing CPKC's continental connection linking Canada, the U.S. and Mexico. On April 14, 2023, CPKC drove a ceremonial Final Spike completing that continental connection. The rail giant has sent The Empress, a vintage 4-6-4 Hudson steam locomotive, on a month's long journey consisting of 11 stops from Calgary, Alberta, down to Mexico City before returning, celebrating that historic railway moment with a cross-

continental journey starring the 2816, The Empress, honoring railway history and looking forward to an exciting future.

Polk County Sheriff Jim Tadman led the 4th of July parade through McIntosh featuring the The Clubhouse Child-care Center kids. This is an annual event, and the parade took place on Wednesday, July 3rd this year.

The annual Independence Day celebration at the home of Dan & Darlene Dierkes was on Thursday, July 4th. Ben Ramse read the grievances against King George III that caused our forefathers to say, "Enough!". That document, the Declaration of Independence, is as important today as it was in 1776. Over 70 people were in attendance at the farm and after the reading there was much visiting and sharing of snacks.

On Monday, July 8th, the McIntosh Library was host to the StarLab from the Headwaters Science Center in Bemidji. This portable planetarium where up to 20 stargazers can observe the night sky at any time of the day, was set up for everyone to have a chance to sit inside and see what the night sky above McIntosh looks like and how it changes throughout the night and throughout the

year.

In full swing from Wednesday, July 10th and continuing through Sunday, July 14th, was the 123rd Annual Polk County Fair at the Fertile Fair Grounds. The Polk County Fair has been entertaining families for over 120 years and 2024 was no different.

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources has confirmed the presence of zebra mussels in Union Lake, near Erskine in Polk County; First Silver Lake, near the town of Battle Lake in Otter Tail County; and Heilberger Lake, near Erhard in Otter Tail County.

With the new water tower functioning as the primary water source for the past 2 years, on Thursday, July 25th the original, 77-year-old water tower in Winger was taken down by Iseler Construction from Port Hope, Michigan.

The 3rd Annual Win-E-Mac Golf Scramble took place last Friday, July 26th at Oak Lake Golf Course. The first-place team this year was Mark Bagaason, Brennen Bakke, Casey Bergman, and Austin Bellefy.

Win-E-Mac students going into third through ninth grades performed Disney's The Aristocats KIDS with the help of

"Summer Arts Stages," a group out of East Grand Forks.

August:
The 10th Annual Bryan Stordahl Memorial Golf Tournament took place at Oak Lake Golf Course in Erskine on Saturday, August 3rd followed a gathering at The Deuce Bar in Erskine with music and a silent auction. All proceeds from this event are donated to the V Foundation and help support cancer research.

On Saturday, August 10, two great-grandchildren of Anton and Noline (Hendricks) Jensen, a well-known 13-Towns pioneer and businessman, visited McIntosh.

McIntosh held its Annual Tractor Day on Saturday, August 24th. Antique tractors made their way to McIntosh for the annual McIntosh Tractor Day. The tractors with the parade will made their way through downtown along Main Street. After the parade there was a Kiddie Tractor Pull sponsored by the Polar Beach Snowmobile Club who supplies and maintains the pedal tractors and pulling sled that are used at each years kiddie pull event. There was a tractor pull at the

2024.....
Continued on page 2 ...

Jessica Strom named Presidential Awardee by White House

Recently, the White House named Jessica Strom, a teacher at Win-E-Mac School, a recipient of the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST). PAEMST are the nation's highest honors for teachers of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

336 teachers and mentors from around the nation as recipients of the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST) and the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Science, Mathematics, and Engineering Mentoring (PAESMEM). These awards honor the vital role that America's teachers and mentors play in shaping the next generation of technical leaders, including scientists, engineers, explorers, and innovators.

Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST)

Established in 1983, PAEMST is the highest award K-12 math and science teachers can receive from the U.S. government. Award recipients over the years represent schools and organizations from all 50 states, Washington D.C., Puerto Rico, Department of Defense Education Activity (DODEA) schools, and the U.S. territories (American Samoa, Guam, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and U.S. Virgin Islands).

Nominees complete a rigorous application process to demonstrate deep content knowledge and an ability to adapt to a broad range of learners and teaching environments.

A panel of distinguished mathematicians, scientists, and educators at the state and national levels assess nominations before recommending awardees to the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP). Teachers are selected based on their distinction in the classroom and dedication to improving STEM education.

Presidential Awards for Excellence in Science, Mathematics and Engineering Mentoring (PAESMEM)

Established by Congress in 1995, this award has honored the hard work and dedication mentors exhibit in broadening participation in STEM pathways. This award honors individuals and organizations that have demonstrated excel-



lence in mentoring individuals from groups that are underrepresented in STEM education and the workforce. Colleagues, administrators, and students nominate individuals and organizations for exemplary mentoring sustained over a minimum of five years.

A national selection committee assesses the nominations before recommending awardees to the National Science Foundation and OSTP.

With this award, teachers will receive \$10,000 from the National Science Foundation; a certificate signed by the President; a trip to Washington, D.C. to celebrate their accomplishments; and join a prestigious cadre of more than 5,200 teacher-alumni from across the nation. While they are in D.C., they will participate in professional development activities and network with fellow STEM educators from across the nation.

Jessica Strom represents the most outstanding teachers America has to offer and serves as both a model and an inspiration to students and fellow teachers.

For more information, please visit PAEMST (www.paemst.org) and PAESMEM (www.paesmem.net).



The Win-E-Mac students in Economics were able to take a quick trip to McIntosh to hear from local entrepreneurs, Andrea Stordahl and Katherine Howard. Students were able to hear about the benefits and difficulties that come with entrepreneurship, and about the different paths each of these women took to become business owners. Other topics included the difference between being a proprietorship versus an Limited Liability Corporation (LLC), different ownership traits, and the ability to multi-task. The kids enjoyed learning about real world business ventures from local business owners.



Dave Stordahl hosted a book launch and signing of his new book, 401k Basics. at Minnesota Rust on Tuesday, December 10th.

The health risks of radon exposure

A silent foe may be lurking in homes and buildings, and it can cause a number of negative health effects. Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency says can build up in the air of homes and buildings.

The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services warns that radon is responsible for approximately 21,000 deaths each year in the United States.

Radon gas decays into radioactive particles that can be inhaled and become trapped in the lungs. Over time, the radioactive energy in these particles can damage lung tissue. Although everyone is exposed to radon in some amount during his or her lifetime, some populations are at a higher risk of exposure to elevated radon levels as well as the more adverse health effects from that exposure.

Researchers and medical

experts say that radon poses no serious threat at normal levels encountered in the environment. However, exposure to elevated levels of radon can adversely affect the lungs. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicates the main health implication to increased radon exposure is lung cancer. Additional lung diseases that can develop due to radon exposure include emphysema, chronic interstitial pneumonia and pulmonary fi-

brosis.

Although smoking is the No. 1 cause of lung cancer, radon exposure is the leading cause of lung cancer among non-smokers, says the EPA. People who smoke and are exposed to elevated levels of radon are doubly affected.

Many factors can affect the risk of radon-related lung cancer as a result of exposure. They include age at time of exposure, duration of expo-

sure, concentration of radon, cigarette smoking, climate and time of year, and the degree to which radon particles attach to dust particles.

Radon is a risk to lung health for those exposed to high levels and for long durations of time. A simple radon test can determine the level of radon in a building, and there are radon mitigation strategies that can reduce radon levels to keep people healthier.

2024..

Continued from page 1.....

old football field.

Win-E-Mac School held their annual Open House on Wednesday, August 28th from 5:00-7:00 p.m. Students met teachers, picked up class schedules and equipment.

September:

For Win-E-Mac students the 2024 - 2025 school year began on Tuesday, September 3, 2024. There were administrative changes this year. Aaron Cook is the new Win-E-Mac Superintendent. The new principal is Casey Reiersen. And a new addition to the administrative team will be the Dean of Students, Brady Langemo.

After a nearly 25-year hiatus, Pam Aanenson and Su-

san Lee reunited to perform a country and gospel concert to benefit the McIntosh Heritage & Arts Center on Saturday, September 21, 2024 at 7:00 PM in the McIntosh Community Center.

The Annual McIntosh Harvest Festival, sponsored by the McIntosh Community Club took place on Saturday, September 21st in downtown McIntosh. There was vendors set up in the Fire Hall and along the streets with many unique and fun finds.

The McIntosh-Winger class of 1974 had their 50th year class reunion on Saturday, September 21st with a meet-up in McIntosh in the morning,

snacks and a social time in the afternoon at the home of Bob and Ann Vesledahl, followed by a dinner and bonfire in the evening at the home of Dan and Darlene Dierkes.

Pam Aanenson purchased the Wertish property just north of Highway 2. Pam is a 1978 graduate of McIntosh-Winger High School and is the oldest daughter of Ordell and Garnet Aanenson. She is excited to be moving back to the community and contributing to the growth of the town, and being a positive force to continue building on all of the work so many have already done. She plans to have a shop open by the spring of 2025.

Record-setting 167,163 Minnesotans used MNsure to Sign Up for 2025 Health Plans

Second year in a row that Minnesota's official health insurance marketplace achieved new sign-up record.

MNsure Chief Executive Officer Libby Caulum today announced that over 167,000 Minnesotans signed up for 2025 health plans using Minnesota's official health insurance marketplace.

At the close of MNsure's annual open enrollment period just before midnight on January 15, 167,163 residents had successfully signed up for private health insurance plans – a 14 percent increase over last year, which was also a record-setting open enrollment period. Sign-ups include consumers who are new to MNsure as well as current enrollees who selected a plan for 2025.

- Private health plan sign-ups: 167,163
- New public program applicants (Medical Assistance and

MinnesotaCare): 47,210

Dental plan sign-ups: 48,670

- Percentage of households receiving tax credits: 61%
- Statewide average annual tax credit by household: \$6,452

"I am extraordinarily proud of our work, together with our broker, navigator, and certified application counselor partners, to serve Minnesotans and help a record number find health insurance that meets their needs and budget," said MNsure CEO Libby Caulum.

MNsure is the only place Minnesotans can access savings to lower the cost of health insurance. Sixty-one percent of MNsure enrollees will save money this year thanks to premium tax credits, which act like a discount to lower monthly health insurance premiums for eligible households. Statewide, eligible households are expected to save \$538 per

month (\$6,452 annually), on average.

"Twelve years ago this month, state legislators introduced a bill to establish the marketplace with a vision that Minnesotans would have improved access to quality health coverage and save over \$1 billion by using it to purchase insurance," added Caulum. "I'm so pleased to say that, since we were established, MNsure has helped tens of thousands of Minnesotans get comprehensive health insurance and save more than twice the amount state leaders had hoped for – over \$2.3 billion in savings, to date."

Additional opportunities to sign up for health insurance

Outside of MNsure's annual open enrollment period, Minnesotans who don't have health insurance may still have opportunities to get cov-

ered. After January 15, Minnesotans who experience a major life event like getting married, having a baby, or losing employer-sponsored insurance may be eligible to shop for coverage through MNsure. The January 15 deadline does not apply to residents who qualify for Medical Assistance or MinnesotaCare, or members of federally recognized tribes, who can enroll in health insurance through MNsure 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.



Community
Birthday and
Anniversary
Calendar

Wed. Jan. 22:
Peyton Roed
Fri. Jan. 24:
Angela Lindseth
Sat. Jan. 25: *Tom
& Eileen Hegg
Sun, Jan. 26:
Cindy Ostenaar
Mon Jan. 27:
Ella Langemo, Krystal Haugen
Tues. Jan. 28:
Shirley Carver, Robert Landsverk



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

Sun. Jan. 26: 8:00am Confession at St. Mary's, Fosston; 8:30am Mass at St. Mary's, Fosston; 10:30am Mass at St. Joseph's, Bagley

Sun. Feb. 2: 8:00am Confession at St. Mary's, Fosston; 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. Jan. 26: 10:00am Coffee Hour; 10:30am Worship Services

Sun. Feb. 2: 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, Jan. 26: 9:30am Sunday School and Adult Bible Study; 11:00am Worship Service (also on Facebook and gosenchurch.com)

Tues, Jan. 28: 10:00am. Sunday worship service telecast on GVTN--30

Wed, Jan. 29: 6:30pm Bible Study at Connie Parr's

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
PastorLee Laaveg

Sun. Jan. 26: 9:00am Worship

Sun. Feb. 2: 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.

THRIVING LIFE CHURCH
Erskine, MN

Sunday service at 10:00 am
Call or visit us at: 22722 350th Street; 218-687-2343

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"Serving the Win-E-Mac area"

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August 2024: Bryan Stordahl's Uncle Dave Stordahl, Nephew, Jens and brother, Bryce honoring his memory during the Stordahl Memorial Golf Tournament last Saturday.

Updated MN groundwater protection rule map now available

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) has published an updated map that will help farmers across the state comply with the Groundwater Protection Rule.

The rule restricts fall application of nitrogen fertilizer in areas vulnerable to groundwater contamination, and it outlines steps to reduce the severity of contamination in areas where nitrate is already elevated in public water supply wells.

The MDA has made changes to the Fall Nitrogen Fertilizer Application Restrictions Map which is available on the MDA website. The Ellsworth municipal Drinking Water Supply Management Area (DWSMA) was removed from the map due to a change in water source for the community. Additional information on the fall application restrictions and exceptions to the restrictions can be found on the MDA's website.

While no new municipal DWSMAs were found to have elevated nitrate, two non-municipal wells were found to have elevated nitrate based on new information from the Minnesota Department of Health. The Brookhaven Development and the Mobile Manor DWSMAs, both located in Scott County, will be added to the list of Mitigation Level 2 DWSMAs under the Groundwater

Protection Rule, meaning the MDA will form a local advisory group to recommend farming practices that can reduce nitrate levels in groundwater. Additional information can be found on the MDA's Mitigation Level Determination page.

The restriction of fall application of nitrogen fertilizer

on these acres will begin September 1, 2025. Farmers are encouraged to check the new map prior to fall 2025 to determine if their fields are subject to these restrictions.

For more information on the Groundwater Protection Rule visit www.mda.state.mn.us/nfr.



September 2024: Bryson Gunufson shows off his ping pong balls collected on the McIntosh football field during the ping pong ball drop as part of the Harvest Festival celebration on Saturday, September 21st.



July 2024: Ellen Burslie at her 96th Birthday celebration with (l-R) great-grandchildren, Holly and Spencer Foyo, grandchildren, Sara and Jason Burslie, and great-grandchildren, Grayson and Gunner Grettum.

MN individual income tax filing season opens January 27, 2025

New option this year for Child Tax Credit recipients; filing changes for renters.

The Minnesota Department of Revenue will open the state Individual Income Tax filing season on Monday, January 27, 2025. This date matches the opening day for the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). The filing deadline to submit 2024 Minnesota and federal income tax returns is Tuesday, April 15, 2025.

Tax software providers and tax professionals may be accepting and preparing tax returns before January 27 and will submit those returns when the IRS and state systems open.

"There are some new things this tax season that taxpayers should be aware of. A first-in-the-nation advance payment option for Child Tax Credit recipients is available to help families get the benefits of the credit when it best meets their budget needs," said Revenue Commissioner Paul Marquart. "Renters will be filing for the new Renter's Credit on their income tax return and will get that refund along with their income tax refund instead of getting it separately later in the year."

"Taxpayers can find more information about these changes as well as electronic tax filing options and information on choosing a tax preparer on our website," said Commissioner Marquart.

Minnesota Child Tax Credit

Taxpayers may qualify for a Child Tax Credit of \$1,750 per qualifying child, with no limit on the number of children claimed. This is a refundable credit, meaning you can receive a refund even if you do not owe tax. You must file a 2024 individual income tax return in order to claim the credit.

More than 223,000 tax returns claimed the new Child Tax Credit for tax year 2023, for an average total credit of \$1,242 per child. This tax credit put over \$562 million into the budgets of Minnesota families this year.

Learn more about income requirements and qualifications on the Child Tax Credit webpage.

Advance payment option available for Child Tax Credit recipients

If a Child Tax Credit recipient chooses advance payments of their 2025 credit when filing their 2024 tax returns this filing season, they will receive a portion of their 2025 credit in three installments going out at the end of July, September, and November. They will receive the remaining portion of the credit amount when they file their 2025 income tax returns.

Learn more about advance payments of the Child Tax

Credit.

New Renter's Credit this year

Starting this tax filing season, renters eligible for a property tax refund will now claim the new Renter's Credit on their Minnesota return. To claim the Renter's Credit, renters must file a state income tax return. For most renters, this means they will no longer file a separate Property Tax Refund return and will not receive a separate refund later in the year. The Renter's Credit will be part of their income tax refund amount, be applied to the amount owed on their income tax return, or be applied to other debts referred to the Minnesota Department of Revenue.

Learn more about the new Renter's Credit on our website.

Protect yourself

Tax time is also primetime for identity theft and fraud attempts. Revenue encourages taxpayers filing their returns to use electronic tax filing software and choosing direct deposit for any refund. Not only is that the most convenient way

to file but it is also the most secure. A list of certified tax filing software will be available on Revenue's website when filing season opens.

When working with a tax preparer, taxpayers should make sure the preparer has the knowledge and experience to prepare their returns correctly. Taxpayers should make sure they are fully aware of any tax document or agreement they sign.

LEGAL NOTICE

County Highway Project
BIDS CLOSE: February 21, 2025,
10:00 AM CST
Polk County, Minnesota

NOTICE TO CONTRACTORS – Sealed proposals will be RECEIVED until 10:00 AM on Friday, February 21, 2025, by Sam Melbye, Polk County Director of Property Records at 612 North Broadway, Suite 207, Crookston, MN 56716 on behalf of the Board of County Commissioners of Polk County for the construction of the County Project listed below. Proposals will be OPENED and READ publicly at 10:00 AM, by the Board of County Commissioners at the County Government Center in Crookston, MN. Proposals received after 10:00 AM will not be considered.

PROJECT NO. C.P. 125-00-1450

LOCATION: Various County State Aid, County Highways, and Township Roads

TYPE OF WORK: Calcium Chloride Application

Major Items: Calcium Chloride 706,000 GAL

Proposals, plans, and specifications are available at: Polk County Highway Department, 820 Old Highway 75 South, Crookston, MN 56716.
Cost - \$50.00 (non-refundable incl. tax)

Bids must be sealed, identified on the envelope and accompanied by a Bidder's Bond or Certified Check in an amount equal to at least 5% of the total bid made payable to the Treasurer of Polk County.

The County reserves the right to reject any or all bids and to waive any irregularities thereof.

Richard C. Sanders
Polk County
County Engineer
M45C

LEGAL NOTICE

POLK COUNTY EQUIPMENT RENTAL
BIDS CLOSE February 21, 2025
Polk County, Crookston, Minnesota

NOTICE TO CONTRACTORS - Sealed proposals will be RECEIVED until 10:00 am, February 21, 2025 by Sam Melbye, Polk County Director of Property Records, at 612 North Broadway, Suite 207, Crookston, Minnesota 56716 on behalf of the Board of Commissioners of Polk County for establishing equipment rental rates. Proposals will be OPENED and READ publicly at 10:00 am by the Board of County Commissioners or their representative at the Polk County Government Center. Proposals received after 10:00 am will not be considered.

Proposals may be examined and obtained at the office of the County Highway Engineer in the Polk County Highway Department, 820 Old Highway 75 South, Crookston, Minnesota 56716.

The right is reserved to reject any or all bids and to waive any irregularities or defects therein.

Richard Sanders
Polk County Engineer
Polk County, Minnesota
M45C

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C.P. 125-48-1440 and C.P. 125-51-1441

LOCATION: CSAH 48 and CSAH 51

TYPE OF WORK: Stabilized Aggregate Base

LENGTH: 9.67 miles and 7.80 miles

Major Items: STABILIZED AGGREGATE BASE CLASS 1 49,000 TON

Proposals, plans, and specifications are available at: Polk County Highway Department, 820 Old Highway 75 S, Crookston, MN 56716.
Cost - \$50.00 (non-refundable incl. tax)

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C.P. 125-11-1444, C.P. 125-16-1445, and C.P. 125-21-1446

LOCATION: CSAH 11, CSAH 16, and CSAH 21

TYPE OF WORK: Bituminous Rout and Seal

LENGTH: 5.46 miles, 5.47 miles, and 16.35 miles

Major Items: ROUT & SEAL BITUMINOUS PAVEMENT CRACKS 96,000 LB

Proposals, plans, and specifications are available at: Polk County Highway Department, 820 Old Highway 75 S, Crookston, MN 56716.
Cost - \$50.00 (non-refundable incl. tax)

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Reminder to check your kids for head lice to help with prevention of an outbreak in school

Win-E-Mac School generally sees increased head lice after the holidays and asks that parents be aware.

If you think your child has head lice:

- Tell your childcare provider or call the school.
- Children do not need to stay home from childcare and school, but it is recommended that they be treated for head lice. Your child should be encouraged to avoid head-to-head contact with other children.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says there is no precise data regarding how many people get head lice each year. However, an estimated six to 12 million infestations occur each year in the United States among children between the ages of three and 11.

What is head lice?
The Minnesota Department of Health says a head louse is an insect that can infest people. Lice make their homes in human hair and feed on blood. Head lice multiply rapidly by laying small, gray-colored, oval-shaped eggs known as nits. The nits are sticky and attach to the base of the hair close to the scalp. Unlike other blood-sucking insects, such as mosquitoes or ticks, head lice

are not known to spread disease.

Who gets head lice?
Head lice do not discriminate when they choose a person. They are equal opportunity feeders and will hop on just about any scalp for a meal. Head lice are not indicative of a lack of hygiene.

The CDC says infestation with head lice is most common among preschool- and elementary school-aged children and members of their household, including caretakers.

What are the signs of head lice?

Itching is the most common symptom of head lice, says the Mayo Clinic. A louse bite causes an allergic reaction. Itchiness may occur on the scalp, neck and ears.

During visual inspections of the hair and scalp, one may be able to see lice and nits. However, both the eggs and the lice themselves are very small, so it can be challenging to spot them.

Parents and caregivers who suspect a child has lice should consult with a school nurse or a pediatrician. Studies show that many children are treated for head lice with home remedies or nonprescription medications when they didn't even

have lice. Dandruff, residue from hair products, scabs, or even dirt can be mistaken for lice.

How can head lice be prevented?

The most common way to contract head lice is through head-to-head contact. Children should avoid head contact during play and other activities at school and home. Although transmission through shared brushes, combs, towels, hats, and clothing is less common, it is still possible, so sharing of these items should be discouraged.

The CDC says using a hot water cycle in the laundry and the high heat drying cycle can kill head lice on clothing and other items. Seal items that cannot be washed in a plastic bag and store them for two weeks.

Vacuum the floor and furniture to remove any nits or lice that have fallen off the head. Fumigant sprays or fogs, which can be toxic if inhaled, are not necessary to control head lice, indicates the CDC.

Although lice is a nuisance, infestations can be treated. Call Win-E-Mac School and your daycare to report infestations.

What you can do to protect your personal information

With various reports of data breaches involving Social Security numbers in the media, we'd like to remind you about the importance of protecting your personal information. Someone illegally using your Social Security number (SSN) and possibly assuming your identity can cause many problems.

What to do if you suspect your Social Security number has been stolen

Identity thieves can use your SSN and other personal information to apply for loans and credit cards and open cell-phone and utility accounts in your name. If you believe your information has been stolen and you may be a victim of identity theft, you can:

Visit IdentityTheft.gov to make a report and get a recovery plan. IdentityTheft.gov is a one-stop resource managed by the Federal Trade Commission, the nation's consumer protection agency. Or you can call 1-877-IDTHEFT (1-877-438-4338).

File a police report and keep a copy for your records in case problems arise in the future.

File an online report with the Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3) at ic3.gov. Its mission is to receive, develop, and refer cybercrime complaints to law enforcement and regulatory agencies.

Notify 1 of the 3 major credit bureaus and consider adding a credit freeze, fraud alert, or both to your credit report. The company you call is required to contact the others.

- Equifax at 1-800-525-6285.
- Experian at 1-888-397-3742.
- TransUnion at 1-800-680-7289.

Regularly check your credit report for anything unusual. Free credit reports are available online at AnnualCreditReport.com.

Contact the IRS to prevent someone else from using your Social Security number to file a tax return to receive your refund. Visit Identity Theft Central or call 1-800-908-4490.

What else can you do to protect yourself

Create or sign in to your personal my Social Security account to check for any suspicious activity. If you have not yet applied for benefits:

You should not find any benefit payment amounts, and you should be able to access your Social Security Statement and view future benefit estimates.

Review your Statement to verify the accuracy of the earnings posted to your record to make sure no one else is using your Social Security number to work.

If you receive benefits, you can add blocks to your personal

my Social Security account:

The eServices block prevents anyone, including you, from viewing or changing your personal information online.

The Direct Deposit Fraud Prevention block prevents anyone, including you, from enrolling in direct deposit or changing your address or direct deposit information through my Social Security or a financial institution (via auto-enrollment).

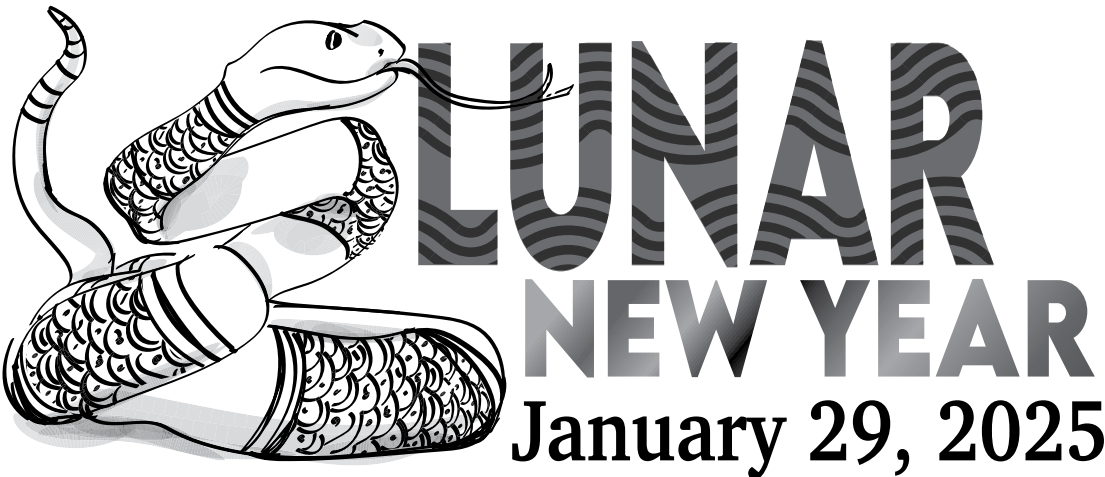
Other ways to safeguard your information

Don't carry your Social Security card with you. Keep it at home in a safe place. Be careful about who you give your number to.

Change your passwords regularly and use a unique password for each account to prevent hackers from accessing multiple accounts if one password is stolen.

Add an extra layer of security to your online accounts by using multi-factor authentication, which is a sign-in process that requires a password plus additional information.

Be wary of scammers pretending to be Social Security employees. If you get a suspicious call, text, or email about a problem with your Social Security number or account, ignore it, hang up, and don't respond!



Celebrating the Chinese (Lunar) New Year

Chinese New Year sparks interest every year. Unlike New Year on the Gregorian calendar, which always falls on January 1,

Chinese New Year does not begin on the same date each year.

It's important to note that this is only when Chinese New Year begins, which is another thing that distinguishes the celebration from New Year's celebrations in the west, which tend to be limited to December 31 and January 1.

In 2025, Chinese New Year begins on January 29. The Lunar New Year in 2025 welcomes the Year of the Snake, according to the Chinese lunar calendar. Celebrated by millions around the world, this is a time for cultural traditions, family reunions, and hopes for good fortune in the coming year.

As we move from the energetic and dynamic Year of the Dragon, 2025 brings the Snake's wise and intuitive energy.

The Snake, symbolizing wisdom and transformation, offers opportunities for personal growth and change.

According to Chinese mythology, the order of the zodiac animals was decided by a Great Race hosted by the Jade Emperor. The Snake, clever and strategic, coiled around the Horse's hoof, managing to finish the race ahead of the Horse and claim sixth place.

Unlike the bold and outgoing Dragon, the Snake represents calmness and introspection. These traits are seen as essential for guiding one's life with wisdom and grace.

Individuals can look to this FAQ to learn more about this unique and meaningful celebration.

What is the significance of Chinese New Year?

Chinese New Year is also known as the Spring Festival, and that offers some insight into its significance. According to Chinesenewyear.net, while wintry conditions are still present during the Spring Festival, the period when the celebration takes place marks the end of the coldest days. This also is why the Chinese New Year is symbolic of new beginnings.

Why is the date different each year?

Topchinatravel.com notes that Chinese New Year follows the lunar calendar, which is why the date of the celebration differs from year to year. The lunar calendar is based on the monthly cycles of the phases of the moon. China officially operates under the Gregorian calendar, but significant celebrations are still conducted in accordance with the lunar calendar.

Do people work during Chinese New Year?

Chinese New Year is a public holiday in China, and that means people generally get seven days off for celebration.

How to celebrate Chinese New Year

Saturday, February 10, 2024, marks the date when various nations will celebrate the new year as indicated by the traditional lunisolar calendar. The Lunar New Year coordinates with the phases of the moon, and while some refer to it as Chinese New Year, the event is celebrated outside of China as well. It is a 15-day celebration that begins on the new moon that occurs sometime between January 21 and February 20 and ends on the following full moon.

Celebrants often have time off from work to commemorate this time, and the period also may be referred to as the "Spring Festival," according to Britannica. Many traditions and customs are intertwined in Chinese New Year celebrations. Those looking to participate in traditional fashion can explore these common sights and sounds.

Red envelopes

Celebrants hand out red envelopes filled with money called "hong bao" in Mandarin.

Did you know?

Computers are vital for work or school. Computers can cost anywhere from a few hundred dollars for a basic model to upwards of \$3,000 for a top-of-the-line machine.

Either way, purchasing a computer involves a considerable sum of money and buyers may wonder just how far that money will go in terms of the

computer's longevity.

According to the technology resource Nerds on Site®, the average life of a computer falls between three to eight years, and varies depending on the type of the computer and how it is being used.

A desktop computer tends to last around five years, while laptops have shorter lifespans

ing. In 2024, that seven-day period will begin on February 10 and end on February 17. Celebrations also can extend beyond seven days, and some celebrants will avoid working if they are able and choose to do so. The shutdowns lead to significant travel, and Statista reports that around 226 million people traveled in China by air, railway, road, and waterway during Chinese New Year 2023.

What is the significance of animals in relation to Chinese New Year?

Jade Emperor is an important deity in traditional Chinese religion, and the reason behind animals' connection to Chinese New Year relates to a race organized by Jade Emperor. All animals in the world were invited to partake in the race and help establish the Chinese Zodiac. But only 12 animals showed up on the day of the race, and how they finished would determine the years on the calendar named after them. Each animal in the Chinese Zodiac has its own unique characteristics, and some believe people take on the traits of the animal associated with the year they were born. So those born in 2025 may have the attributes associated with the Snake, which is believed to bring good fortune.

Chinese New Year is a unique cultural tradition with a lengthy and interesting history.

These envelopes are given to children or unmarried adults who are not working. Red denotes good luck and fortune as well as happiness and abundance in Chinese culture.

Dragon

The dragon is an important symbol that represents prosperity, good luck and good fortune. A performance of a dragon or lion dancing during Chinese New Year is commonplace. There are additional lucky mascots as well, including the phoenix, unicorn and dragon turtle.

Loud noises and bright lights

Fireworks and other noisemakers are used during Chinese New Year. One legend says a monster named Nian would attack villagers at the start of every new year. Since it was afraid of loud noises, bright lights and the color red, people used these things to chase away the beast.

Deep cleaning

People traditionally conduct a thorough cleaning of

Nian Ye Fan

Families will gather together at a big table to have New Year's Eve dinner. This is known as "Nian Ye Fan." Children and adults will thoroughly bathe and dress in new clothes for the festive occasion. Red decorations and lanterns are usually hung inside and outside the home. China is a vast nation so foods will differ based on region.

Lantern festival

One of the final events of Chinese New Year is the lantern festival. This is when people hang glowing lanterns in temples or carry them during a nighttime parade. Praying to ancestors is also an important component of the celebration.

Chinese New Year celebrations include many time-honored traditions that promote good luck and prosperity.

because of the batteries needed to keep them running, damage that can occur when transporting the devices and heat buildup from inefficient cooling.

Despite the relatively short lifespan of modern computers, users who emphasize proper care and maintenance can likely add years to the life expectancies of their devices.



Kai Johnson talks with Santa at the Winger Lions Breakfast with Santa.



Aubree Lisbury visiting Santa during Breakfast with Santa in Winger.



Santa and Kinsley Sharer have a visit at Breakfast with Santa sponsored by the Winger Lions Club.