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Lake, Clearwater, Orrick,  
Palmer & Santiago Town-  
ships, City of Becker, Becker  
Township and Becker School  
District #726, City of Big Lake  
and Big Lake School District  
#727. The Patriot is also the  
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## THROWING OUR MIGHTY FIGHTING WEIGHT

Submitted Article

(EDITOR'S NOTE:  
Former Citizen Publisher  
Gary W. Meyer spent Oct.  
1-15 visiting 15 World War  
II sites. The following is the  
second of a three-part se-  
ries on those travels.)

Normandy is not a wel-  
coming place. It's known  
for something else – the  
loss of life in one of the  
largest and most grueling  
land invasions in the re-  
cent history of our planet.  
Eighty-one years, that is.

June 6-9, 1944, our

The wind blew hard  
off the English Channel,  
to some effect the strength  
of the storms that blew our  
heroes to the beach 80 years  
prior. The lands inside the  
attack beaches were sand,  
with wisps of beach grass.

We visited first the  
bunkers of the Germans  
manned to mow down our  
troops as they climbed the  
cliffs of Pointe Du Hoc and  
Utah Beach, commanded  
by Gen. Omar Bradley.  
Pointe Du Hoc was a kill-  
ing zone for the Americans.  
Seventy-five percent of our



**HENRI, Belgian tour leader, showing an American tank which met its fate in an encounter with German forces. (Photo Submitted)**

country, in legion with Al-  
lies England, Australia and  
Canada, threw our mighty  
fighting weight against  
hated Germany, which had  
been for five years terroriz-  
ing its neighbors.

forces suffered either fatal-  
ities or war wounds. Their  
main fighting tool besides  
their carbine was a grap-

**WWII  
to page 3**



**MARLEY AND JUNE TURNQUIST enjoyed their time with their Grandma (Peggy Gilyard) and Santa at Santiago Township Hall Sunday, December 7. (Submitted Photo).**

## Santiago Lions host annual Breakfast with Santa

By Mary Nehring,  
Contributing Writer

An estimated 250 peo-  
ple were served breakfast at  
the Santiago Lions Break-  
fast With Santa Sun., Dec.  
7 from 8:30 to 11:30 am.

A steady stream of  
people made their way to

Santiago Town Hall for the  
popular event, which of-  
fered delicious build-your-  
own omelettes, pancakes,  
French toast, sausage,  
scrambled eggs, milk, juice  
and coffee.

Children enjoyed a  
visit on Santa's lap and  
were treated to gift bags

and photo opportunities  
with Santa. Non-perishable  
food items were collected  
for the local food shelf.

Every dollar raised at  
the breakfast goes back into  
the community.

## 2025 Gift Giving Guide: Shopping Local

By Bill Morgan,  
Editor

As one plans one's  
shopping this season, the  
Patriot invites all to pause  
and look around one's own  
community. Local shops,  
makers, and family-run  
businesses are more than  
places to buy things—  
they're part of the story of  
the communities they serve.  
When one chooses to shop  
locally, one is investing in  
the people who greet guests  
by name, remember one's  
favorites, and genuinely  
care about the neighbor-  
hoods everyone calls home.

Every purchase from  
a local business helps keep  
jobs here, supports dreams  
that started around kitchen  
tables, and sustains the  
unique character that makes  
these small towns special.  
People's choices to buy  
close to home fuels a cycle  
of goodwill that comes back  
to everyone in the form of  
vibrant streets, connected  
communities, and a stron-  
ger local economy.

Thanks to all for sup-  
porting the businesses  
that give these communi-  
ties their heart. Together,  
neighborhoods can keep  
that spirit thriving—one  
thoughtful purchase at a  
time.

**B&J Evergreen  
Christmas Tree Farm  
12946-47th St. SE,  
Clear Lake, MN  
320-743-2255**

B&J Evergreen Christ-  
mas Tree Farm, a fami-  
ly-owned business, has  
been growing Christmas  
trees for over 40 years. We  
take pride in providing tra-  
ditional experiences and



quality products. Our expe-  
rienced team plants, grows,  
trims and harvests our trees  
here on our farm. Cut-your-  
own Christmas tree or  
purchase a pre-cut tree.  
Free photos with Santa, free  
petting zoos with a famous  
camel, free pony rides, free  
face painting and more!

**Golden Nursery  
15621 5th Ave. NW  
Rice, MN  
320-393-2155**

Golden Nursery &  
Tree Farm is your perfect  
destination for pre-cut trees  
and wreaths. Or, cut-your-  
own Balsam Fir or Colo-  
rado Spruce from 5-14 feet  
for only \$28. Hours are:  
M-Th, noon to 7 p.m.; Fri.,  
Sat. and Sun., 9 a.m. to 7  
p.m.

**Ralphie's Minnoco  
7988 Front St.  
Clear Lake, MN  
320-743-4638**



Ralphie's Minnoco has  
gift cards in any amount.  
They also sell Ice Augers  
and they offer propane re-  
fills, minnow coolers, for  
that outdoor enthusiast.  
They carry Butchery's sau-

sages, Sweet Pea's pies and  
Mottzaria pizzas. They also  
feature a new and improved  
car wash!



**Flinstones Lounge  
945 State Hwy. 24  
Clearwater, MN  
320-558-2199**

Have you been to  
Flinstones? You should  
check them out where you  
can find Flinstones T-shirts  
for just \$16. Or, a sweat-  
shirt for just \$47!

Flinstones also has gift  
certificates for a fun family  
pizza night out. Stop on by!

**Clearwater Corners  
720 Co. Rd. 75  
Clearwater, MN  
320-558-2212**

Clearwater Corners  
serves beer, wine and spir-  
its. Stop in and get valu-  
able gift certificates in  
any amount to satisfy that  
perfect someone on your  
gift-giving list!

**Riverside Nutrition  
800 Nelson Dr.,  
Ste. 105  
Clearwater, MN  
(Located next  
to American Heritage  
Bank)  
320-558-1102**

Riverside Nutrition is a  
great place o stop by for last  
minute gifts. They have \$6  
mega tea sets to make one's  
favorite energy drinks on  
the go. Also, they have gift  
cards as well as Riverside  
Nutrition T-shirts and other  
local vendors who have  
items selling in their shop



(lotions, keychains, books,  
wooden decor, etc.)

**Taco Gringo  
800 Nelson Dr.  
Clearwater, MN  
320-558-4016**

A great stocking stuffer  
- drop by and pick up a bot-  
tle of Taco Gringo South-  
western Sauce. Or, grab



a gift certificate in any de-  
nomination!

**Grand Meadow  
Meats  
105 Pine St.  
Clearwater, MN  
320-558-6390**

Grand Meadow has  
Christmas hams, steaks,  
pork chops, brats, hot dogs,  
chicken, roasts, jerky &  
much more to satisfy your



hungry guests. Scrumptious  
meats or, just grab a gift  
certificate and your shop-  
ping is done!

**Andra K Salon & Spa  
615 Smith St.  
Clearwater, MN  
320-558-6620**

Hair products make  
great stocking stuffers! All  
retail products are 25% off  
thru Dec. 30, 2025 as an ap-  
preciation sale anticipated  
with the closing of Andra  
K. Salon and Spa.

**Becker True Value  
13350 1st St  
Becker, MN  
763-261-4464**

Becker True Value  
Hardware Store has great  
products including pet beds,  
grills, snowblowers and  
tons of Christmas decor!  
Don't forget to recycle  
your old Christmas lights at  
Becker True Value!

**O' Brothers Wine  
& Spirits  
7890 Front St.  
Clear Lake, MN  
320-743-0139**

O' Brothers is a great  
gift-giving shop where you  
can find a RumChata gift  
set for just \$24.99, or a  
Four Roses small batch gift  
set. O' Brothers also offers  
a wide variety of bourbons  
and other cordials.

**Clearwater Parts City  
Auto Parts  
845 MN-24  
Clearwater, MN  
320-558-9901**

CW Parts City Auto  
Parts had LED head lamps  
ranging from \$84 to \$105.  
They also have tons of  
power tools ranging from  
\$146 to \$370. It's winer,

**CHRISTMAS  
to page 2**



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NMLS# 1493691





## Simpler times

My wife Rita and I did a little Christmas shopping last weekend.

We try not to go overboard when it comes to buying gifts. Including brothers, sisters, cousins and adult children, there are plenty of people we could be spending lots of money on.

Lately, we've been sending gift cards to the adults and focusing on finding appropriate gifts for the youngest generation - the grandkids. A few are pre-teen. Two are teenagers. Last year we had a new addition, Jordan, who is now almost two.

Last week was the first time I had walked through the toy section of a store in a long time. We were looking for something for Jordan, but I didn't expect to see all the new electronic, mechanical (and expensive) gadgets young kids are playing with these days.

I saw a big selection of battery-operated action figures, cars and talking books. There were mini-toy computers with colorful keyboards where kids could spell out words and the picture would come up on the screen. It seemed like a good percentage of toys had either electronics, moving parts or an audio component.

Things were much less complicated when I was growing up. I can remember some of the Christmas gifts I received when I was very young. There weren't any electronics and very few mechanical toys back then. Most gifts for kids were much simpler.

One of my favorites was a set of Lincoln Logs. Me and my brother would spend what seemed like hours building forts and having battles using



By Ken Francis  
Contributing Writer

another gift - plastic soldiers. We didn't need figures that moved. We used our imagination to create whatever we felt like doing. And we built houses, cars and forts using Tinkertoys and Erector sets. That was before Legos.

My parents liked to get us jigsaw puzzles. Not only did we learn how to identify different shapes and images, it also kept us quiet, which mom and dad really enjoyed.

We also got a selection of board games, like Chinese Checkers, Stratego, Mouse-trap and as we got older, Monopoly and Scrabble.

Every Christmas I looked forward to getting a Venus Paradise color-by-number set. Some of my brothers and sisters would also get one, and we spent more quiet time working on our masterpieces.

My older brother was into cars, and I remember him getting Matchbox trucks, cars and other vehicles. None of them were powered by batteries, but he still had lots of fun playing with them.

If I had to buy gifts for young kids these days, I'd probably get some of the things I played with as a child so they could use their imagination to have fun.

Batteries not included.

## Second Trimester

As we begin December and officially begin our second trimester, Becker Public Schools looks forward to three strong weeks of learning before our two-week winter break which will take place from December 20 to January 4. During the next couple weeks our buildings are focused on keeping the momentum on the start of the year and will be working hard to ensure every student finishes 2025 strong.

We are also working on our 2026-2027 school calendar, and this year we have a new twist thanks to a state approved option that allows a pre-Labor Day start for at least the next two years. Our calendar committee will review the options we have created and we expect them to bring a recommendation to the board with a first reading at our January 5 school board meeting, and a goal to have full approval at our February or March board meeting. If you have thoughts or feelings on a pre or post-Labor Day start please reach out to me (Dr. Schmidt).

Additionally, we are in the early stages of planning for next year's budget. With the recent referendum not passing, we will need to have an increase in fiscal discipline. This means evaluating staffing, reviewing spending patterns, and looking for continued efficiencies throughout the district. This work calls for creativity while being cautious. We are committed to looking at a number of innovative solutions that allow us to maintain services and continue to improve the student experience whenever possible.

Recently, we shared our winter weather school closing guidelines. It seems the snow is coming every day now and



By Supt.  
Jeremy Schmidt

this past couple weeks has brought the coldest temperatures in a long time. We ask that families continue sending students (All of them) with proper winter clothing. When I visited the Primary School recess I was encouraged by how well our students were prepared. If you need assistance with winter clothes, please reach out to your child's school as we have a number of resources available to help out.

The winter season is also a very busy time for activities throughout the district. We invite the community to join us for a wide range of events from winter concerts, Community Ed programs, robotics, gymnastics, dance, wrestling, basketball and much more. Our students are extremely talented and love to show off their skills to our community and region. Please take a look at our website and specifically our activities calendars for dates and times.

As we approach winter break, I want to extend my gratitude to our families, staff, and community. I wish everyone a safe and enjoyable holiday season and happy New Year. We look forward to welcoming all students back in January with a renewed focus and excitement for the second half of the year.

### CHRISTMAS from page 1

so don't forget to pick up a shovel — we have them from \$19 to \$63!

**Palmer House (Located 6 miles north of Clear Lake on Co. Rd. 6.) 4181 - 105th Ave., Clear Lake, MN 320-743-2147**

Palmer House has great gift ideas including T-shirts for \$20, laced-up hockey hoodies for \$55, hats for \$25 and flannel shirts for \$55. They also have gift certificates in any denomination for the last minute stocking stuffer.

**Eddie's Auto 8495 Main Ave., Clear Lake, MN 320-743-9993**

Don't forget your (or that special someone's) vehicle this winter! Why not pick up a gift certificate in any amount to place in one's Christmas card or slide into someone's stocking this Holiday season!

**Clearwater Legion 505 Pine St., Clearwater, MN 320-558-6627**

While you are out and about, swing by the Clearwater Legion and pick up a gift certificate in any amount requested or get your hands on a cool T-shirt or sweatshirt and show your support for your area Legion!

#### TO THE EDITOR:

The New York Times reports that our billionaire President said "Affordability doesn't mean anything to anybody". It's a "fake "narrative", a "con job". Trump plans to withhold SNAP payments unless states divulge private personal information about recipients. As personal bankruptcies from health care debt rise the AP reports chances of retaining health insurance subsidies are "dwindling". Affordable housing is nonexistent, shelters are overflowing, food banks and food assistance organizations are overwhelmed with the "fake narrative con job". The tragic fact is, it's not the President's job to fund government programs. The responsibility for spending, taxing and tariffs lies squarely in the House of Representatives which is controlled by Tom-sit on his thumbs-Emmer, and his republican cronies. Our "representative" ignores the needs of CD6 to grovel at the feet of the billionaire dance hall president, trading away the most important duty of the people's House of Representatives-the

Power of the Purse. We deserve better. Trump will be a lame duck next year. In 2026 the Power of the Ballot will have intelligent thoughtful citizens ridding Congress of the Emmer lazies and putting responsive representatives to work for us. Emmer get off your knees and serve your constituents.

**Connie Rutledge  
Big Lake, Mn**

#### TO THE EDITOR:

Why are our Property Taxes continuing to increase? A lot of the reason(s) are due to unfunded State Mandates, but instead of you reading what I have to say, listen to the Sherburne County Administrator. In October, Mr. Bruce Messelt spoke before the Big Lake Township Board of Commissioners, providing a "Sherburne County General Update" and it was extremely informative. He gave the same update to the Orrock Township on 11/19/25, who recorded it and placed it on their YouTube channel, where it can be watched at the following address: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2t-qD3W7M->

## Walz Fraud Fiasco

Last week was a busy week for Congress and Minnesota. After three years of Minnesota Republicans sounding the alarm on the rampant fraud that has occurred on Tim Walz's watch, the national media finally started paying attention. Now, the Trump administration is working to hold our failed governor accountable, and we here in Congress are doing the same.

**Tim Walz's  
Fraud Fiasco**

Under Tim Walz, Minnesota taxpayers have been robbed of more than a billion dollars and counting. Walz and his administration sat idly by while fraudsters lined their pockets and allegedly bank-rolled Al-Shabaab terrorists. The New York Times called the fraud "staggering in its scale and brazenness." The Washington Post, Fox News, and others have all reported on Minnesota's out-of-control fraud.

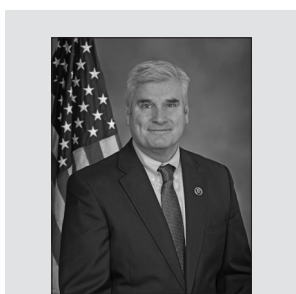
Thankfully, President Trump and his administration have stepped up where Tim Walz has failed. U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent launched an investigation into reports that these fraudsters may have been diverting Minnesota taxpayer dollars to Al-Shabaab terrorists. The House Oversight Committee, led by Chairman James Comer, also launched an investigation into the widespread fraud that has happened on Tim Walz's watch, as well as any potential retaliation against whistleblowers who sought to protect taxpayer dollars. And right before Thanksgiving, the Minnesota Republican delegation sent a letter to U.S. Attorney Daniel Rosen, asking that he fully investigate this issue as well.

Our message is clear: Minnesotans deserve answers and accountability. And we will not rest until they get both.

**Supporting Veterans  
and Their Families**

On Wednesday, I participated in a Veteran Stakeholder Roundtable alongside House Republican leadership, Chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee Mike Bost, and members from Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs) to discuss how Congress can better meet the needs of those who bravely served our country. We were also honored to be joined by one of MN-06's very own – my good friend and former Veterans Service Officer for Sherburne County, Bruce Price.

Our veterans and their families deserve nothing but the very best. Ensuring they



By Rep.  
Tom Emmer

receive the benefits they have earned is a top priority of mine, which is why, in July, I introduced the Veterans Burial Accountability Act. This nonpartisan, common-sense legislation eliminates needless delays in veteran burials and ensures that no family is denied closure or forced to face uncertainty when burying one of our nation's heroes.

House Republicans will always stand with our nation's veterans. Yesterday's conversation was just one of many important steps we're taking to make sure the veteran community is heard and prioritized in the halls of Congress.

**Supporting  
Small Businesses**

We're working to advance our deregulatory agenda to help our small businesses thrive. The legislation we passed this week does just that.

On Wednesday, the House passed the Small Business Regulatory Reduction Act. The estimated costs of federal rules and regulations exceed \$3 trillion every year. A disproportionate share of this burden falls on small businesses. This legislation will reduce that burden by requiring the Small Business Administration (SBA) to ensure that new SBA rules cost small businesses zero dollars. House Republicans are putting small businesses first.

The House also passed the DUMP Red Tape Act. This legislation codifies the Red Tape Hotline, which gives small businesses a direct line to the Small Business Administration Office of Advocacy to report burdensome regulations that are holding them back. Our job creators and small businesses deserve access to engage directly with the SBA about regulations that affect them every day.

I hope you all have had a great week, and if my office can ever be of assistance, please know our door is always open. Thank you for allowing me to represent you in Washington, and God bless.



**Butcher's Deluxe Package 61% OFF**

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### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

*LU&t=1081s.* Mr. Messelt's remarks start at the 16 minute mark and go on for another 24 minutes. He talks about Northstar, Data Centers, Nuclear Power, Road Projects, Budget, SNAP, Minnesota African American Family Preservation and Child Welfare Disproportionality Act (MAAFPCWDA), Marijuana, Tobacco, Post Offices, Weather Sirens, St. Cloud Airport. . . every person, and not just those that pay property taxes directly, need to listen to this update so as to become informed and learn what is going on now and what is coming in the future.

**Bret R. Collier  
Big Lake, MN**

#### TO THE EDITOR:

Who Really Buys the Farm? Farmers aren't struggling because they forgot how to farm. They're struggling because policy shifts and higher costs hit faster than they can adapt. Tariffs choked off export markets. USAID, once a reliable \$2 billion-a-year buyer of U.S. crops, vanished. Prices of inputs rose. Many crop farmers now lose \$100–

200 an acre, and bankruptcies have nearly doubled. Folks warn that without real help, we could lose a quarter of America's farms. AcreTrader doesn't buy scrub ground. It targets productive row-crop farms (corn, soy, Delta rice) with good yields. The land goes into an LLC, then gets sold in slices to investors. The farm family often stays on as tenants, while rent checks and long-term appreciation flow outward. J.D. Vance's venture-capital fund was an early backer, helping AcreTrader scale from a niche startup into a major player in the farmland-investment boom. His own Senate disclosures show a personal stake as well. That investment helps legitimize and accelerate a system where farmland becomes a financial product. And who can buy in? Only accredited investors with high incomes or over \$1 million in net worth. Any legal U.S. resident can participate no matter where they were born. When farmland leaves local hands, the wealth leaves with it.

**Vanessa Davenport  
Big Lake, MN**

## Mis-management

The state issued updated economic data last Thursday and I, Rep. Shane Mekeland, R-Clear Lake, said Minnesota's outlook is shaky after massive increases in taxing and spending while rampant fraud continues bleeding taxpayers.

The new economic report from Minnesota Management and Budget indicates the state's immediate future is stable, with a projected surplus of \$2.5 billion in the current budget. But the forecast also reveals a significant structural imbalance, with a \$3 billion shortfall in 2028-29. If the \$2.5 billion surplus is spent, Mekeland said, the future deficit balloons to \$5.4 billion.

This, Mekeland said, comes after Democrats — in full control of the Capitol — increased state spending by 40 percent, used up the state's \$18 billion surplus and raised taxes by \$10 billion in the last biennium.

We are looking at a weaker long-range economy in Minnesota, which is largely the result of poor management of our state under the former Democrat trifecta. With full control of the Capitol, Democrats went on an unprecedented spending spree, raised taxes by historic amounts and blew our \$18 billion surplus. All the while, they not only failed to get serious about cracking down on our state's serious fraud problem but also blocked



By Sen.  
Andrew Mathews

House Republican efforts to do so.

Meanwhile, statewide property taxes are up a billion dollars because of unfunded mandates the governor and other Democrats pushed on counties and school districts. On top of that, this forecast also projects falling job growth in large part because of other unfunded mandates the governor and Democrats placed on businesses, such as paid leave. It all leaves Minnesotans with less money in their pockets as our government keeps growing and spending more. It is complete mismanagement of our state and we should be taking the opposite approach by getting a grip on spending and rooting out fraud.

A complete state budget was enacted for the 2026-27 biennium last spring. An updated February forecast will serve as the official framework for supplemental budget work in the 2026 session.

## Get ready to DECA the Halls

#### Submitted Article

The Becker High School DECA organization is once again offering a free community event, as their third annual DECA the Halls celebration will be held on December 17 from 5 until 7 p.m.

Join the DECA students in the high school cafeteria and gymnasium as they have an exciting evening of fun planned for the entire family. Visitors are asked to enter Door #3 - the main activities entrance.

Christmas games, music, crafts, snacks and even Santa Claus will highlight the agenda, and the high school choir program will be caroling.

“Through this event, our DECA students work on their business skills by connecting with local com-

panies, event planning, budgeting, and marketing,” says DECA Advisor Kris Simon. “We will have a handful of vendors that night — and a silent auction to raise money for our food pantry and DECA competition fees.”

Through participation in DECA, students have the opportunity to work on real-life skills in a variety of career clusters, including marketing, finance, hospitality and management. Through their personal leadership development, students experience an integral component of Career and Technical Education (CTE).

The entire community is invited to come and experience this fun-filled evening.



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# AREA NEWS

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<b>THURSDAY JANUARY 1ST</b> <b>@ 10:00 AM</b> ANNUAL ANTIQUE & SIGN AUCTION	ANTIQUES, COLLECTIBLES, HOUSEHOLD, DÉCOR, FURNITURE, TOOLS & OUTDOOR, YARD & GARDEN & SHOP

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**MULLBERRIES BRIDGES BUILT IN THE WEEKS BEFORE NORMANDY** (left photo) locked together and were 280' x 50' wide x 65' deep metal segments bridges that went far into the water and then to shore to transport nearly 100% of landing craft, troops and materials up the beach. (Submitted Photo).



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## WWII from page 1

pling hook attached to 100 feet of rope. It got them nose to nose with the Germans.

To the north, Americans ground up the beach at Omaha. Omaha posed its own life-threatening issues for the Americans. Omaha Beach was a near-thousand foot open yard at which the Germans, from higher stations, could bore their machine guns down on the attacking Americans. The German 7th Infantry Division was the defender.

The British and Canadians attacked the beaches to the north, landing zones Gold, Juno and Sword. The German 15th Infantry Division defended against them.

The invasion would not have been possible had it not been for the design and implantation of the mullberries bridges built in the weeks before in Britain. Locked together, the 280-foot x 50-foot wide x 65 foot deep metal segments formed bridges that went far into the water and then to shore to transport nearly 100 percent of landing craft, troops and materials up the beach. It is reported 3.1 million tons of supplies reached shore due to their efforts. When fighters and materials and vehicles were connected, the charge was on for the Allies.

Nearly 196,000 naval forces were involved. Warships counted 6,800. Aircraft totalled 11,990, of which 3,500 were gliders. Land forces counted 157,205. Over 438,000 vehicles came ashore.

Two stories of note. While Allies were barnstorming the beaches, the American 82nd AB Division was paratrooping at night into St. Mere Eglise, just miles to the southwest. One of the troopers became famous for his unfortunate landing, snagging his parachute rigging onto the steeple of the church, 90 feet above the parish yard. The Germans below spotted him but couldn't hit him — and he lived to fight another day. He did have hearing loss

due to the church bells ringing close by that night. The scene was played by American Actor Red Buttons in the 1960's picture, The Longest Day. Another scene from the movie featured a British paratrooper division capturing the Pegassus Bridge, 20 miles inland, just 11 minutes after the start of the invasion.

Just a few miles inland is located the American Cemetery at Normandy, where 9,387 of our troops are laid to rest. Most of those interned lost their lives the first four days of the invasion.

A second most-noted cemetery is the American Cemetery in Luxembourg, where the famous Gen. George Patton is interred. He asked to be buried with his soldiers if he died in Europe. When he was killed in a traffic accident over there, his wishes were granted.

The Allies made good progress in the months since Normandy, liberating Paris (a great coming-out) in July and Caen in early August. From there, efforts were directed further to the east, north and south.

**The Battle of Bastogne**  
There was no period of the Americans' involvement in the European Theatre that was more dramatic than their time in Bastogne, Belgium during the last months of 1944. Our troops had gotten themselves into a strategic tangle with the Nazis and were surrounded in what became the Battle of the Bulge.

The Germans, aware of their advantage, approached Gen. Dick McAuliffe for a surrender. Just out of bed at 10 a.m. after a night of fighting, Gen. McAuliffe responded to reading the German message, exclaiming, "Nuts".

The Germans, not knowing what "nuts" meant, dawdled for hours while the Americans got their act together and went out and claimed superiority on the field in January, 1945. Gen. Patton's forces were on the scene along with the Brits and helped save the battle.

American soldiers paid a heavy price in Bastogne. Members of the 101st AB Division, pinned down by German artillery fire, attempted to dig fox holes in frozen ground in a pine plantation to save their lives. They barely dug a foot into the ground before they ran into pine tree roots. We saw the fox holes in the forest that October day. And we celebrate our heroes who persevered.

We need to talk about the local residents who resisted in the face of demonic Nazis who took over their lives — and killed them, if the mood was right.

Near 90, Henri, our Belgian tour leader, led a wonderful visit in Bastogne. He introduced us to the "nuts" general's statue and led our tour of the states museum, in appreciation for our wartime efforts. He led us to the forest where the Rangers dug their foxholes.

And he told the story of his father, confronting an SS officer while in their home in the early stages of the war. The SS officer demanded to know where his (Nazi) men were (in the house they commandeered away from Henri's family).

Henri's father repeated his message — that he knew nothing about additional Nazi soldiers, whereupon the SS officer pulled out his service pistol and fired two bullets into the father's chest. Henri's family escaped to a relatives' home and lived out the war.

Henri joined the Belgian army after the war and has spent much of his adulthood talking about the war. There is a resolve in his demeanor and a love for comrades who saved his country. God bless him and the millions of other Europeans forced into defending their homes from the tyrants with the swastikas.

(Next, a final story, featuring the First World Court, facing the Nazi elite at Nuremberg.)

**THE AMERICAN 82ND AB DIVISION WAS PARATROOPING** at night into St. Mere Eglise, just miles to the southwest. One of the troopers (bottom left photo) became famous for his unfortunate landing, snagging his parachute rigging onto the steeple of the church, 90 feet above the parish yard. (Submitted Photo).

**A MAP (RIGHT) SHOWING** the locations of our visits over 15 days to World War II sites in Germany, Austria, Holland, Belgium and France. (Submitted Photo).





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## Ann Lake residents ask about the boat landing

By Don Bellach,  
Contributing Writer

The gallery was full for the Nov. 19 meeting of the Orrock Township Board. Twenty people were in attendance, many of them residents and homeowners from around Ann Lake. They came to ask questions of board members about what was happening at the boat landing. Seven of them spoke.

Most of the speakers expressed concerns over more traffic on the lake and how that would disrupt the lake. One woman worried about wood ducks and loons that spend their day floating around what she named, "Lilly Pad Bay" and another worried about the area where children fish at the dock throughout the summer. Another man about was concerned about the costs of the township taking over the landing.

All their concerns were unfounded regarding the recent termination of the agreement between the township and the Ann Lake Improvement Club. The termination was necessary so that the board could begin removal of an out-house on the beach and boat landing area before winter. That removal was one of several requests made by the ALIC to the township that were discussed during last month's meeting. The requests included assistance with the maintenance of the beach and boat landing and that the township take over garbage service, electricity, parking lot maintenance, restroom maintenance, and mowing. ALIC wrote that it would still maintain the lake against invasive species and would pay for the insurance for the aeration of the lake. No formal agreement was made at that Oct. meeting.

Later, when discussion about Ann Lake resumed, Chair Anne Felber proposed creating a board with

the lake association to come up with the details of a new agreement. The board would consist of two Township Supervisors and a few residents of Ann Lake. The motion passed unanimously and the newly created board would meet as soon as possible.

### County Update

County Administrator Bruce Messelt updated the board about a few items of distinction in Sherburne County, the first being the termination of Northstar Rail service which will end on the day of the final Minnesota Vikings home game, either Saturday, January 4 or 5. A two-year pilot program will begin on January 5. Metro Transit Bus Route 882 will provide service between Big Lake, Elk River, and downtown Minneapolis on weekdays. Metro Transit will operate this service under an agreement with MnDOT and will have three southbound trips in the morning and three northbound trips from downtown Minneapolis.

Messelt also spoke about data centers and nuclear power. He then finished his update talking about road construction on Hwy. 169. When completed, Messelt contended that Orrock residents will be able to go "from Chicago to the casino without hitting a stoplight."

### Other News

The township board approved an exempt gambling premises permit to Ducks Unlimited Zimmerman #309 for their one-time bingo and raffle event to be held on January 10, 2026 at the Getaway Bar in Orrock.

A motion was approved for the Joint Community Meeting between the City of Big Lake, Big Lake Township, Orrock Township, Sherburne County Board of Commissioners, and ISD 727 to meet in the Big Lake City Council Chambers on Thursday, Jan. 15, 2026 at 6 p.m.



# PUBLIC NOTICES - OBITS

## 2026 ADVERTISEMENT FOR BIDS TO PUBLISH FINANCIAL STATEMENTS DELINQUENT TAX LIST AND OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS OF SHERBURNE COUNTY

Sealed bids for the publication of Sherburne County’s financial statement, delinquent tax list, and the official proceedings of the Sherburne County Board, are to be submitted to the Sherburne County Auditor-Treasurer Office, Sherburne County Government Center, 13880 Business Center Drive NW, Suite 100, Elk River, Minnesota 55330-1692. Bids will be accepted until 4:30 p.m. on December 18, 2025, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. From the said proposal received and accepted, the County Board of Commissioners will award the bids for the year 2026 at its regular meeting on Tuesday, January 6th at 9:00 a.m. or shortly thereafter. Bids will be received for the following:

1. Publication of financial statement as required by Minn. Stat. § 375.17.
2. Publication of official proceedings of the Sherburne County Board sessions as required by Minn. Stat. § 375.12.
3. Publication of notice and list of real estate taxes remaining delinquent in Sherburne County as required by Minn. Stat. §§ 279.08 and 279.09.
4. Publication of other public notices.

Bids shall be submitted in exact accordance with the Bidding Documents. The Bidding Documents may be obtained at the Sherburne County Auditor-Treasurer Office, Sherburne County Government Center, 13880 Business Center Drive NW, Suite 100, Elk River, Minnesota 55330.

All bids must be sealed and marked “Bid for Publication of the Sherburne County Financial Statement, Delinquent Real Estate Taxes, and the Official Proceedings of the Sherburne County Board.”

The Sherburne County Board of Commissioners reserves the right to accept or reject any and all bids and to waive any informalities or irregularities in bidding.

By order of the County Board.

Dated at Elk River, Minnesota, this 18th day of November 2025.

/s/ Loraine Rupp, Auditor-Treasurer

Sherburne County

(Published in the *Patriot*: 11/29/25, 12/06/25, 12/13/25.)

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If you submit an attachment, it will be incorporated into this document. If the attachment conflicts with the information specifically set forth in this document, this document supersedes the data referenced in the attachment.

*By typing my name, I, the undersigned, certify that I am signing this document as the person whose signature is required, or as agent of the person(s) whose signature would be required who has authorized me to sign this document on his/her behalf, or in both capacities. I further certify that I have completed all required fields, and that the information in this document is true and correct and in compliance with the applicable chapter of Minnesota Statutes. I understand that by signing this document I am subject to the penalties of perjury as set forth in Section 609.48 as if I had signed this document under oath.*

SIGNED BY: **Stacy Hollenbeck**  
MAILING ADDRESS:  
**707 Highway 10 Elk River Minnesota 55330**  
EMAIL FOR OFFICIAL NOTICES: **stacy@diamonddtax.net**  
Work Item: **1604900900029**  
Original File Number: **1604900900029**  
STATE OF MINNESOTA  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE  
FILED  
**12/03/2025 11:59 PM**  
/s/ Steve Simon  
Secretary of State  
(Published in the *Patriot*: 12/13/25, 12/20/25).

**STATE OF MINNESOTA  
DISTRICT COURT  
COUNTY OF SHERBURNE  
TENTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT  
INFORMAL PROBATE**  
Court File No.: **71-PR-25-185**  
**In Re the Estate of Steven Charles Laske a/k/a Steven C. Laske a/k/a Steve Laske, Deceased.**

**NOTICE OF INFORMAL PROBATE OF WILL AND APPOINTMENT OF PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE AND NOTICE TO CREDITORS.**

TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS AND CREDITORS:

Notice is hereby given that an application for informal probate of the above-named Decedent’s Last Will dated May 9, 2013, has been filed with the Probate Registrar, and the application has been granted.

Notice is also given that the Probate Registrar has informally appointed the following: Michelle Lynn Hansen, 816 W. Elm St., West Salem, WI, 54669, mmhansen@aol.com., 608-769-0840, as personal representative of the

Estate of the Decedent. Any heir, devisee or other interested person may be entitled to appointment as personal representative, or may object to the appointment of the personal representative. Unless objections are filed pursuant to Minn. Stat. § 524.3-607, and the court otherwise orders, the personal representative has full power to administer the Estate, including, after 30 days from the date of issuance of letters, the power to sell, encumber, lease or distribute real estate.

Any objections to the probate of the Will, or to the appointment of the personal representative, must be filed with this court, and will be heard by the court after the filing of an appropriate petition and proper notice of hearing.

Notice is also given that, subject to Minn. Stat. § 524.3-801, all creditors having claims against the Estate are required to present the claims to the personal representative or to the Court Administrator within four (4) months after the date of this Notice, or the claims will be barred.

/s/ Pamela Kreier,  
Probate Registrar  
/s/ Katrese Ringham,  
Court Administrator  
(Published in the *Patriot*: 12/13/25, 12/20/25).

**STATE OF MINNESOTA  
DISTRICT COURT  
COUNTY OF SHERBURNE  
TENTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT  
PROBATE**  
Court File No.: **71-PR-25-174**  
**In re the Estate of Sharon Elaine Ringwelski, Decedent.**

**Notice and Order for Hearing on Petition for Formal Adjudication of Intestacy, Determination of Heirship, and Appointment of Personal Representative and Notice to Creditors.**

It is ordered and notice is given that on December 24, 2025 at 1:30 p.m., a hearing will be held at Sherburne County Courthouse via zoom hearing for the formal adjudication of intestacy and determination of heirship of the Decedent, and for the appointment of:

Name: Ryan Patrick Ringwelski  
Address: 101 10th Street East #342, St. Paul, MN 55101  
as Personal Representative of the Estate of the Decedent in: an unsupervised administration.

Any objections to the petition should be filed with the Court prior to or raised at the hearing. If proper and if no objections are filed or raised, the personal representative will be appointed with full power to administer the Estate including the power to collect all assets, to pay all legal debts, claims, taxes and expenses, to sell real and personal property, and to do all necessary acts for the Estate.

Notice is also given that (subject to Minn. Stat. § 524.3-801) all creditors having claims against the Estate are required to present the claims to the personal representative or to the Court Administrator within four months after the date of this Notice or the claims will be barred.

Dated: October 16, 2025

/s/ Katrese Ringham

Court Administrator

(Published in the *Patriot*: 12/13/25, 12/20/25).

## TOWN OF BECKER SHERBURNE COUNTY, MINNESOTA RFP: BUILDING OFFICIAL/INSPECTION SERVICES.

The Town of Becker is seeking professional service proposals from firms/individuals interested in performing building official/inspector duties for the Township, which has adopted the 1997 Fee Schedule. The Township is interested in an independent contractor agreement for those services. The duties require skilled inspection work in securing compliance with State building, plumbing and mechanical codes, Fire Marshaling, and related regulations and standards. Work involves responsibility for plan review and inspection of structures in regards to conformity with the Townships zoning ordinance, code requirements, and technical standards. The inspection of new and existing septic system is also required.

Submittals to be received online via QuestCDN Quest Number 9978034 or to Lucinda Messman, Clerk, Becker Township, 12165 Hancock Street, PO Box 248, Becker, MN 55308 by 4:30 pm on Friday, December 19, 2025.

/s/ Lucinda Messman,

Becker Township Clerk

(Published in the *Patriot*: 12/13/25.)

## TOWN OF BECKER SHERBURNE COUNTY, MINNESOTA ADVERTISEMENT FOR BIDS TWO YEAR GENERAL MAINTENANCE CONTRACTOR SERVICE AGREEMENT Bids will be received until

**Tuesday, December 23, 2025 at 6:00 p.m.**

Bids for a Two-Year General Maintenance Contract will be received by Becker Township until Tuesday, December 23, 2025 at 6:00pm.

The Becker Town Board will meet at 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, December 23, 2025, to consider said bids. You can attend via zoom for opening, review and award by the Town Board. Zoom Meeting <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86383968670> Meeting ID: 863 8396 8670 Find your local number: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/koXQbFIqk> If you have any issues accessing the meeting, please call the town hall at 763-261-5301 and someone will be happy to assist you with meeting ID.

The said bids shall be for the furnishing of equipment, labor and materials for general maintenance of all township roads as more thoroughly described in the proposed Agreement. The agreement documents are available at the town website [www.BeckerTwpSherburneCoMN.gov](http://www.BeckerTwpSherburneCoMN.gov) or [www.QuestCDN.com](http://www.QuestCDN.com). Quest Number 9980162. To be considered a planholder for bids, register for a free ‘Regular’ membership by clicking ‘Join’. You may download the digital documents for \$5.00 by entering the Quest Number 9980162 on the search page.

Downloading the documents and becoming a plan holder is recommended as plan holder’s receive automatic notice of addenda and bid updates. Contact QuestCDN Customer Support at 952-233-1632 or [Success@QuestCDN.com](mailto:Success@QuestCDN.com) for assistance in membership registration and downloading digital documents. Quest Number 9980162

Bids may be submitted to the Town Hall in a sealed envelope with a statement thereon indicating submission is for General Maintenance Service Agreement for Quest number 9980162. Bids shall be addressed to: Lucinda Messman, Town Clerk, Town of Becker, 12165 Hancock Street, PO Box 248, Becker, Minnesota 55308.

Bids received by the Town Clerk after the time set for receiving bids shall be returned unopened. The Township Board reserves the right to reject any and all bids or any portion thereof for any or no reason.

By order of the Town Board of the Town of Becker.

/s/ Lucinda Messman,

Becker Township Clerk

(Published in the *Patriot*: 12/13/25, 12/20/25.)

## NOTICE OF FILING FOR TOWN OFFICES TO BE ELECTED BECKER TOWNSHIP

**NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN** that a town election will be held in the Township of Becker, Sherburne County, Minnesota, on Tuesday, the 10th day of March 2026.

The first day for filing affidavits of candidacy will be Tuesday, the 30th day of December, 2025 and the last day will be Tuesday, the 13th day of January, 2026, at 5:00 p.m.

Filings may be made with Clerk Lucinda Messman at the Becker Township Hall, 763-261-5301 during regular hours or call for appointment. Town hall will be open until 5:00 P.M. on Tuesday, January 13, 2026.

The following terms will be expiring:

Supervisor, Seat #1 – for the term of three (3) years

Supervisor, Seat #2 – for the term of three (3) years

Filing fee is \$2.00.

/s/ Lucinda Messman,

Becker Township Clerk

(Published in the *Patriot*: 12/13/25.)

## CLEAR LAKE TOWNSHIP NOTICE OF FILING FOR TOWN OFFICES

Notice is hereby given that a Town Election will be held in the Township of Clear Lake, County of Sherburne, State of Minnesota, on Tuesday, March 10th, 2026, at the Clear Lake Township Hall at 7938 116th St SE, Clear Lake Mn 55319.

The first day for filing affidavits of candidacy will be December 30, 2025, and the last day will be Tuesday the 13th of January 2026, during regular office hours: Thursday 9:00 am until noon. The office will also be open on Tuesday January 13th, 2026, from 1:00 pm until 5:00 pm. You may call the Clerk’s office for an appointment if needed. Filings close at 5:00 pm on January 13th, 2026. Last day to withdraw is January 15th, 2026, by 5pm.

Office to be filled at the Annual Meeting in March is for:

Supervisor A for a three-year term.

Filing fee is \$2.00.

Nancy Betzler

Clear Lake Township Clerk

(Published in the *Patriot*: 12/13/25)

## TOWNSHIP OF LYNDEN, NOTICE OF FILING FOR TOWN OFFICES TO BE ELECTED

Notice is hereby given that a town election will be held in the Township of Lynden, Stearns County, Minnesota, on Tuesday, March 10, 2026. Qualified voters of Lynden Township who wish to be candidates for office in Lynden Township must file an Affidavit of Candidacy with the Township Clerk.

Filing for town office will be held for a two week period beginning December 30, 2025 and closing on January 13, 2026 at 5:00 p.m. Affidavits of Candidacy are located on the web: <https://www.sos.state.mn.us/election-administration-campaigns/> or by contacting the clerk. Offices to be filled are:

One (1) Supervisor / Three year term

One (1) Clerk / Two year term

The Clerk’s office located at the Lynden Town Hall 21367 Co Rd 44 will be open from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. on the last day of filing, January 13, 2026.

/s/ Jenny Schmidt

Lynden Township Clerk

(Published in the *Patriot*: 12/13/25.)

## OBITUARIES

## Doreen M. Peacock, 93 Clear Lake, MN July 8, 1932 – December 4, 2025

Funeral Services will be 12:00 p.m. Saturday, December 13, 2025 at Willams Dingmann Family Funeral Home in Becker for Doreen M. Peacock, age 93, who passed away peacefully Thursday at her home surrounded by her family. Rev. Chris Salvevold will officiate and burial will be at Clear Lake Cemetery. Visitation will be one hour prior to the service.

Doreen was born July 8, 1932 in Minneapolis to Harry and Gertrude (McCauley) Jacobsen. She grew up in Minneapolis, and later lived in Richfield and Burnsville, eventually moving to Briggs Lake 40 years ago. Doreen married Jack Peacock on June 27, 1952 in Minneapolis. She was a Deputy Clerk for Dakota County for 15 years. She enjoyed playing cards, watching soap operas, visiting with family and friends and parties at the lake. Doreen liked to take bus trips, cruises and spending winters in Ft. Myers, Florida.



She was a loving and thoughtful woman who would always remember to send cards for birthdays. Doreen loved spending time with her family, especially grandchildren, great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchild.

Doreen is survived by her children, Cheryl (Tom) Forner of Browns Valley, Steve (Debbie) of Satsuma, FL. Lynn (Terry) Cox of Clear Lake; grandchildren, Brigitte, Kristin, T.J., Matthew, Sara, Jennifer, Melissa and Bryce; 21 great-grandchildren; 1 great-great-grandchild; brother, Bob (Betty) Jacobsen of AZ; and many nieces and nephews.

She is preceded in death by her parents and husband, Jack.

A special thank you to Sandy with Arise and the nurses with St. Cloud Hospice for their loving care.

Obituary and Guest Book available online: [www.williamsdingmann.com](http://www.williamsdingmann.com).

## Julie Renee Arneson Hickman, 60 Formerly of Big Lake, MN March 21, 1965 – November 21, 2025

Julie Renee Arneson Hickman passed away on November 21, 2025, in St. Cloud, Minnesota.

Julie was born in Princeton, Minnesota, on March 21, 1965, to Morten Sr. and Sharon (Okerstrom) Arneson. She grew up in the Or-rock/Big Lake area alongside her four brothers. She later spent the majority of her life in Las Vegas, where she met the love of her husband of 35 years.

She is survived by her husband, Edwin Hickman; her three children, AJ Morales, Chad Hickman, and Sabrina Hickman; her two granddaughters; her parents; and her

brothers Mark Arneson and Morten Jr. (“Mooney”) Arneson and his wife Lucinda.

She was preceded in death by her twin brothers Marvin and Marilyn Arneson.

Julie was a caring and giving woman who loved her family deeply. Her warmth, strength, and generosity touched the lives of many. She will be missed dearly.

A Celebration of Life will be held on March 21, 2026, from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. at the home of her parents, Morten and Sharon Arneson, at 26222 184th St. NW, Big Lake, MN 55309.



## FILING NOTICE TO QUALIFIED VOTERS IN SANTIAGO TOWNSHIP

Notice is hereby given that a Town Election will be held in the Township of Santiago, Sherburne County, MN. on March 10, 2026.

Notice is hereby given to qualified voters of Santiago Township, Sherburne County, State of Minnesota, that filing for town office will be held for a two-week period beginning Tuesday, December 30, 2025.

Affidavits of Candidacy shall be filed by appointment with the Town Clerk, Kathy Woolard. Affidavits will be accepted from December 30, 2025 through January 13, 2026. The Clerks office will be open for filing January 13, 2026 from 1:00 pm until 5:00 pm.

There will be a \$2.00 filing fee.

Offices to be filled at the Annual Election in March are as follows;

1. Supervisor for a three-year term

1. Clerk for a two-year term

The clerk’s office , located at 16943- 20th Street, Santiago, MN., will be open Saturday, March 7, 2026 for P.A. Testing and for the purpose of absentee voting.

/s/: Kathy Woolard, Clerk

Santiago Township

(Published in the *Patriot*: 12/13/25, 12/20/25.)

# Moe family helps CW fire with fundraiser

*By Mary Nehring,  
Contributing Writer*

The Clearwater Fire Department joined Flinstones Lounge last Saturday in Clearwater for their annual Toys for Tots fundraiser.

Helping in the fundraiser were numerous members of the Moe family including 96-year-old matriarch, Joyce Moe and her family members.

Joyce’s daughter, Lynea was present as well as granddaughter Nicole and great granddaughter Aaliyah Theisen. Lynda Moe (owner of Moe Agency in St. Cloud) and daughter of Joyce, and another daughter of Joyces, Lurae Scoles (owner of Winners Sports Bar & Grill locations in Sartell & Cold Spring) were also there to help. Clearly, serving in the hospitality industry runs in the family!

Flinstones Lounge is located in Clearwater and is a family owned and operated business that offers a wonderful variety of food, including delicious homemade pizzas!

Clearwater Corners, Clearwater Legion and Clearwater Travel also are collecting toys for Toys for Tots.

Flinstone’s is also hosting a free community Christmas dinner made by their family for anyone who does not have a place to go during the holidays. The free dinner will be held on Christmas Day at 1 p.m.



**THE CLEARWATER FIRE DEPARTMENT** gathered with a group of helpers which included a fourth-generation grandma, 96-year-old Joyce Moe, her daughter Lynea as well as her granddaughter, Nicole and great granddaughter Aaliyah Theisen. Also pictured is another of Moe’s daughters, Lynda Moe (owner of Moe Agency in St. Cloud), as well as another daughter Lurae Scoles (owner of Winners Sports Bar & Grill locations in Sartell & Cold Spring). (Submitted Photo).

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# AREA NEWS

## Clearwater EDA hosts Holiday Open House



**HOLIDAY CHEER.** Clearwater EDA hosted a Holiday Business Networking Open House at Clearwater Lions Park Pavilion Tuesday, December 9th from 8am to 9am. Pictured: Mary and Ken Abraham. (Patriot photo by Mary Nehring.)

By Mary Nehring, Contributing Writer

The Clearwater EDA hosted a Holiday Business Networking Open House network event Tues., Dec. 9 from 8 a.m. – 9 a.m. at the Clearwater Lions Park Pavilion.

Refreshments were generously provided, including fresh coffee and delicious cinnamon rolls and cookies, courtesy of Clearwater Travel Plaza.

Attendees enjoyed visiting with one another at the event, which was hosted by the City of Clearwater.

## Refuge neighbors being asked to fill feeders

Submitted Article

This year marks the 126th anniversary of the nationwide Christmas Bird Count, a survey of winter bird species conducted annually from December 14 to January 5.

This citizen science project is organized by the National Audubon Society and involves 10s of thousands of volunteers from Alaska to Antarctica, including a group of volunteers at your nearby Refuge.

On Thursday, December 18, Sherburne's volunteers will survey within a 7.5-mile radius from the intersection of Sherburne Co. Rd. 9 and Co. Rd. 5.

While additional volunteer counters are not needed, the Refuge could still use your help! If you live within fifteen miles of the count area, please clean and fill

your bird feeders at least three days before the count. Be aware that vehicles may be driving slowly past your home with binoculars fixed on your property. There is no cause for concern; the observers are only interested in the species and numbers of birds on your property.

Reports from participating groups across the country are tallied by Audubon and other birding organizations, including the Minnesota Ornithologists' Union. The final tally provides valuable information on the number of bird species present during that 23-day time frame.

Local data for the Refuge is used to track changes in our bird populations over time, and it can also be pooled with data from other areas to detect patterns over a larger region. Last year, the Refuge's Christmas Bird Count observed 42 species of birds, including numerous common species such as trumpeter swans and black-capped chickadees, as well as less common species like one northern saw-whet owl and four northern shrikes.

## Christmas Holiday Invitation

Trisko Jewelry would like to invite you to our studio in Waite Park.  
DEC. 15-16-17-18-19, 2025: M-F 10am-4pm  
DEC. 22-23, 2025: M-TU 10am-4pm  
JAN. 6-7-8, 13-14-15, 20-21-22, 10AM-4pm  
Please call for an appointment 320-253-5346  
If needed, call for directions

Bring in your old gold jewelry and let's design something new that you can cherish for years to come for yourself or someone dear to you!

# TRISKO

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**FREE Pitcher of pop/beer**

**November 28 - December 23, 2025**

Thank you for supporting your local businesses!

Bring in your Christmas tree receipt from any local tree farm and receive 1 free pitcher of pop or domestic beer free with the purchase of an entree.

8475 Center St., Clear Lake, MN 55319 • 320-743-5540  
Hours: M-TH, 11am-12am; F-SA, 10am-2am; SU, 10am-12am  
www.brickyardbarandgrill.net

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**HOURS: MON-THURS NOON-7PM  
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### CHRISTMAS TREES



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## B&J EVERGREEN CHRISTMAS TREE FARM

### FREE EVENT DAYS

November 22 & 23	November 28, 29 & 30	December 6 & 7
Cutting Hours 9:00am-5:00pm	Cutting Hours 9:00am-5:00pm	Cutting Hours 9:00am-5:00pm
Events 11:30am-3:30pm	Events 10:30am-4:00pm	Events 11:30am-3:30pm

### EVENTS

Santa-Petting Zoo-Face Painting-Chainsaw Carving  
Horse Drawn Wagon Rides-Pony Rides-Food  
Fire Pit-Playground- Cliff the Camel- Character Visits

**Regular Hours**  
Daily  
9:00am-5:00pm  
Closed Thanksgiving Day

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320-743-2255  
www.bjeevergreen.com

(Events Subject to weather)

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## Becker Lions host Lange Home Christmas Party

By Mary Nehring, Contributing Writer

The Becker Lions treated Lange Board & Room Assisted Living members to their annual Christmas party at Jack and Jims Event Center in Duellm on Monday evening, Dec. 8.

Musicians Janet Schulte and Richard Currot provided guitar music and The Snake River Singers led a Christmas carol sing-along with Lange Home residents.



**BECKER LIONS SPREAD HOLIDAY CHEER.** Santa cozied up to Patti Cox. (Patriot Photo by Mary Nehring).

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# SPORTS/AREA NEWS

## Becker gymnasts take 1st at home meet

By Maria Moore,  
Contributing Writer

The Becker gymnastics team hosted its annual Bulldog Clinic Invitational on Fri., Dec. 5 and came home with the title.

This meet is different then normal meets because after the athletes compete, the judges take the time to give them feedback on their skills and their routines. Head Coach Jen Harmoning said this is great for the athletes to be able to take firsthand feedback from the judges and ask questions of their own. It's also an amazing way to start the competition season off, as the girls get ready for the conference matchups.

"I was very proud of the way the team performed at this very early point in the season," said Harmoning. "They have been working hard all off-season, and

many of the gymnasts successfully transferred new skills into their competitive routines."

The team continues to get stronger as each week goes by. The annual Bulldog Clinic Invitational was supposed to be a quadrangular, but one team had to pull out, which meant that the Bullsogs were allowed to field two teams.

The team results were as follows, first place: Becker (first team) 138.15; second place: Chaska-Chanhassen 130.4; third place: Becker (second team) 125.4; and fourth place went to Wayzata with a score of 119.85.

Individual results include vault, bars, beam, floor exercises and all-around results.

**Vault results:** first place: Karli Kirk (9.35); second place: Maggie Graning (9.15); third place:

Alyse Denne (9.1) and fourth place: Brielle Kuschel (8.7).

**Bar results:** first place: Kirk (8.8); third place: Graning (8.05); and fourth place: Denne (7.9).

**Beam Results:** first place: Sabrina Jensen (8.8); second place: Denne (8.5); third place: Kirk (8.45); fourth place: Violet Johnson (8.4); and fifth place: Kuschel (8.4).

**Floor results:** first place: Kirk (9.15); second place: Graning (9.05); third place: Denne (9.05); and fourth place: Lillian Bon-sante (9.0).

**All-Around results:** first place: Kirk (35.75); second place: Denne (34.55); and third place: Graning (34.55).

The conference opener is Dec. 12 against Princeton at home.

## Auto Value Parts Store Completes United Bus Sales Move

By Don Bellach,  
Contributing Writer

According to Operations Manager Justin Robinson, the move by United Bus Sales to their new location began in December of 2023 with the purchase of 18 acres off Hwy. 10 in Becker Twp. At that time, United Bus had plans to expand and knew the old facility would not be able to meet all their future needs, including plans to incorporate a retail parts store into their business. Robinson shared that the new location was chosen in part because United owners and management, "...wanted to stay within a certain radius for employees, so they wouldn't have to drive farther to work."

In April of 2024, Robinson first met with Becker based contractor B&B Built to develop plans for the new building and then with Becker Twp. for planning and permitting. In October of last year, they finally broke ground. The goal was always to finish construction by July of this year to avoid interfering with their busy bus season. Thankfully, construction was completed in the middle of June and the move-in for the offices and shop was completed on June 18,



THE NEWLY COMPLETED BUILDING for United Bus Sales and Auto Value Parts Stores. (Patriot photo by Don Bellach)

2025. Robinson shared that he was confident that they would meet their deadline.

"Things kept clicking into place," he said.

Business for United Bus Sales was never interrupted by construction or the move to the new building. Once that was completed, plans to set-up the retail parts store began. The plan was always to expand their parts department into retail and Robinson found a partner in Auto Value Parts Stores that would allow them to do that. He also hired a seasoned Parts Manager to run it.

Set-up began in October of this year, culminating in a soft open on 10/28. The store officially opened on Tuesday, 11/18. Auto Value Parts is open to the

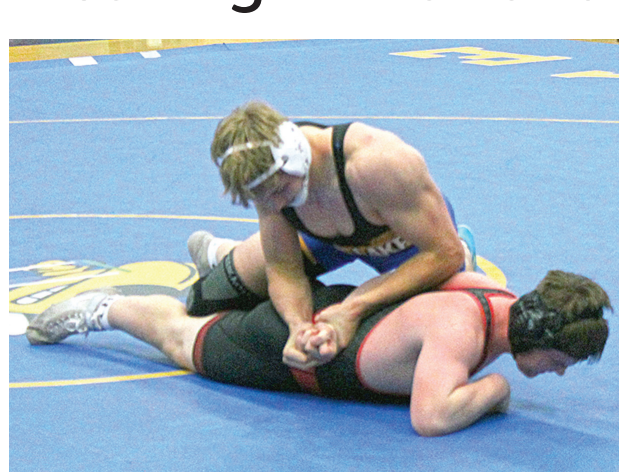
general public offering parts for almost every type of vehicle.

"If it has wheels or tracks, we can help you out," said Robinson. "Auto Value stocks parts for trucks, busses, tractors, small engines, and cars."

The opening of Auto Value completed the plans that began in December of 2023. Overall, he shared how thrilling the project has been.

"It's exciting to see a plan come together," Robinson said. "We're completing our plan for growth."

When plans to expand began, United Bus Sales had 14 employees, currently, they've expanded to 32, with plans to hire more in the future.



LIAM MAYER has complete control of his opponent from North Branch during a dual meet last week. Mayer finished third at 189 pounds at the Big Lake Invitational last Friday. (Photo by Ken Francis.)

Preston Wilson of Minnewaska in his final match.

JT Rector placed fifth at 145 pounds. He had two bye wins for the evening.

Lucas Hemmesch was fifth at 107 pounds. He had two bye wins on the evening.

The Hornets wrestled in a triangular meet at Becker Tuesday and hosted St. Francis Thursday, results next week. They compete in the Maple Grove Invitational today (Saturday).

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## Hornets 5th at home wrestling invitational

By Ken Francis,  
Contributing Writer

The Big Lake Wrestling team finished fifth of eight teams at the Big Lake Invitational last Friday.

Seven Hornets placed in the top five spots in their weight classes.

Austin Frederickson had the team's highest finish, taking second at 215 pounds. The senior pinned Kyle Nye of Amery at 0:20 in his first match. He pinned Eric Bowen of Minnewaska at 1:36, but lost a 5-4 decision to Brecken Andres of Pierz in the championship match.

Elijah Schaller took third at 121 pounds. He pinned Owen Wiger of Sartell at 1:35 in his first match, before losing a 10-0 decision to champion Rylan Gruber of Pierz. He pinned Colton Carlson of Albany at 0:50, then beat Breken Navarro of Kerkhoven

Murdock Sunburg (KMS) by 18-2 tech fall in his final match.

Jaylen Rand finished third at 133 pounds. After an opening round 13-9 loss to Rowan Steward of Sartell, he pinned Brecken Gruber of Pierz at 5:11, then pinned Landon Schaudenecker of Byron at 3:26 in his final match.

Liam Mayer placed third at 189 pounds. He opened with an 18-10 win over Wyatt Rudningen of KMS before losing, 14-2 to Jayden Zajac of Pierz. He pinned Sawyer Erickson of Minnewaska at 1:22, then beat Brad Tanner of Pierz, 11-7 in his last match.

Hank Kuchera took fifth at 285 pounds. He pinned Preston Wilson of Minnewaska at 3:07 in his first match, then lost by pin to Peyton Allen of Sartell. He lost by pin to Zayden Johnson of Minnewaska, then won by forfeit over

## Emmer, Stauber demand Gov. Walz revoke CDLs

Submitted Article

Today (Dec. 4), Congressman Tom Emmer (R-Minn.) joined Congressman Pete Stauber (R-Minn.) in sending a letter to Minnesota Governor Tim Walz on the findings that one-third of Minnesota's non-domiciled commercial driver's licenses (CDLs) were issued illegally. Congresswoman Michelle Fischbach (R-Minn.), Congressman Brad Finstad (R-Minn.), and fourteen other U.S. House Republicans signed Stauber's letter as well.

"Another day, another Tim Walz failure. And once again, law-abiding Minnesotans are the ones forced to pay the price," said Emmer. "Thankfully, the Trump administration is committed to holding Walz's feet to the fire for his inexcusable negligence, as are we."

"First, it was the rampant fraud schemes like Feeding Our Future and Housing Stabilization Services, where billions in taxpayer dollars were siphoned off, some even making its way to terrorists," said Stauber. "Now, this administration is actively

compromising the safety [of] drivers on our roads. This waste, fraud, and abuse must come to an end. Minnesotans and the American people deserve better."

### Background

In April 2025, President Trump issued an executive order directing the U.S. Secretary of Transportation and the Administrator of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration to audit all non-domiciled commercial driver's licenses issued by state agencies to identify irregularities. This audit uncovered a pattern of states

illegally issuing licenses, and U.S. Secretary of Transportation Sean Duffy took swift action to implement a rule barring non-citizens from eligibility for CDLs.

Minnesota's illegally issued CDLs were provided to drivers whose presence in the United States was no longer valid, to drivers who were prohibited from holding a non-domiciled CDL, and to drivers whose lawful presence in the United States had not been verified by the state. This negligence directly endangers Minnesotans and other Americans.

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## Unfunded mandates a concern for BL Schools

By Don Bellach,  
Contributing Writer

The Big Lake School Board met on Wed., Nov. 19, following a disappointing night at the polls on Nov. 4.

During that meeting, Director of Business Services Angie Manuel presented the board with updated budget numbers. Enrollment continues to lag and expenditure numbers were presented that accounted for those lower numbers. Adjustments were made to staffing, transportation, curriculum subscriptions, and community service programming. However, expenditures continued to increase due in part to the timing of some capital projects.

There was some positive news: General Fund revenue was up slightly, due in part to an increase in investment revenue; however, those gains were offset by a decrease in general education aid.

Following Manuel's presentation, Superintendent Tim Truebenbach requested that staff identify how much of the added expenditures were the result of unfunded mandates from the State and Federal Governments. Manuel identified three areas of policy that have recently changed - unemployment, Special Ed., and Family Medical Leave, and agreed to look into other areas and report back at a future board meeting.

## Clear Lake Approves Final Levy for 2026

By Don Bellach,  
Contributing Writer

Prior to the Dec. 1, 2025 meeting of the Clear Lake City Council, the formal hearing for the state mandated Truth in Taxation was held. There were no residents present and no comments were made.

At 7 p.m., the council met and a resolution approving the 2026 Final Levy, to be submitted to Sherburne County Auditor, was approved by all the members present, except for Mayor Tim Goenner, who was absent. The total proposed levy was \$440,000-\$420,000 for the General Levy and \$15,000 for the Fire Hall Levy.

### Public Works

Tim Barrett from Public Works updated the council about upcoming repairs to be done to Well no. 3. After consulting with Traut Companies, it was determined that an external check valve needs to be installed in the drop pipe above the pump. The cost of the repairs will be \$3,450. The council approved that amount.

### Misc.

The Sherburne Co. Sheriff's office reported 60 calls for service in November. Of note were 28 calls for security checks and one burglary. Clear Lake Fire noted 16 calls for service in November.



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## Bulldog boys crush Crusaders

By Mark Kolbinger,  
Contributing Writer

The Becker Bulldog boys basketball team hosted a veteran St. Cloud Cathedral team last Friday, with the Bulldogs cruising to a 79-60 lead.

"Our goal coming into the game was to enjoy the moment and the experience of the privilege to play High School Basketball and set the tone defensively," said Coach Cory Nuest.

"We win on Defense" has been one of this year's program standards, and the Bulldogs did precisely that, racing out to a 22-7 lead.

Isiah Boyer and Nathan Weiss set the tone early on offense, while the team played a connected brand of defense.

"They didn't have an answer for Isiah," Nuest added. "His decision-making was on point — attacking when he should attack,

finishing strong, hitting outside shots when they were there, and finding the open teammate when the defense collapsed. He was phenomenal."

The Crusaders didn't quit, as they trimmed the lead to 12 late in the first half before Nolan Burau (loose ball save) and Troy Nuest (steal and acrobatic layup) teamed up for an important part of a sequence that sparked a decisive 17-0 Becker run.

Boyer then drilled a buzzer-beater to send the Bulldogs into halftime up 49-22.

The second half was a complete team effort, as Weiss continued his strong play on both ends of the court, while Nuest and Boyer played scrappy defense against the Crusader back court. Nuest also had praise for the Bulldogs' ball-screen coverage.

Senior Bryce Paumen had an important contribu-

tion, hitting three consecutive post shots to help the Bulldogs push the lead back to 20 points. Also noted for their contributions were Saul Kreft, Burau and Owen Reinking.

"They are doing so many of the things that win games — talking on defense, bringing intensity, rebounding, screening, spacing, and cutting," Nuest said. "They're a huge part of our success."

Stat line: Weiss 21 pts, eight rebounds, four assists; Paumen 18 pts, 11 rebounds, four assists; Nuest 16 pts, four assists, four rebounds, five steals; Boyer 22 pts, four assists, six rebounds; Kreft three rebounds; Burau five rebounds, two blocks.

Becker's Tuesday evening game was postponed until Thursday due to inclement weather. Complete details in next week's *Patriot*.

## Becker girls fall to Eagles

By Mark Kolbinger,  
Contributing Writer

Last Thursday's girls basketball game between the Becker and Totino-Grace had interesting early season seeding implications, as both the Bulldogs and Eagles have their sights set on making a run in the Section Tournament in March.

In the end, the Eagles came out on top with a 66-61 victory over the young Becker squad.

The Eagles started out with the hot hand, going seven-for-seven from three point land to race to an 18 point lead.

Becker wasn't as hot when it came to shooting percentage, and that was the

difference in the game despite the Bulldogs eventually cutting the Totino lead to just two points in the waning minutes of the contest.

"We made a valiant comeback, but a slow start cost us in the end," Coach Dan Baird said after the game. "Our poor shooting three-for-20 (15%) really cost us. If we were able to see another one or two go in, I feel this could have been our game."

Andie Changamire was the offensive leader in the game, scoring 19 points to go along with six rebounds. Sister Adele was also outstanding, notching a double double with 13 points and 10 boards.

Becker captured a 40-32 rebounding advantage, some-

thing Baird credited with keeping the Bulldogs in the game. The Bulldogs were also the aggressors in the game, earning 31 free throws (making 18), while the Eagles were 10 of 12.

"Totino is now the front runner in Section 5AAA to earn the number one seed come playoff time," Baird said. "It was nice to see that we're right there when it comes to competing for a state birth at the end of the season. Our effort was outstanding, especially during the comeback."

Stat line: Ady Petty four points, Alyse Denne eight points, Juliana Stach nine points and Tess Brown with eight points.

## Becker/Big Lake Eagles Beat Northern Edge 7-4



THE BECKER/BIG LAKE EAGLES lined up for introductions before taking on the St. Francis/North Branch Northern Edge. The Eagles won the contest, 7-4. (Submitted Photo).

By Maria Moore,  
Contributing Writer

A Monday night conference hockey game took place with the Becker/Big Lake Eagles skating against the St. Francis/North Branch Northern Edge.

The first goal of the night for the Eagles was scored by Tate Spilde with a highlight "Michigan-style" goal and a Tanner Felton assist.

Spilde would go on to score his second goal of the game in the first period with an assist from Brant Russin.

At the end of the first period, the Eagles powered on to a 3-0 lead after Owen Zahler scored a goal on a power-play goal with assists from Spilde and Ethan Grafnitz.

The Northern Edge would make a comeback in the second period with two goals, making the score 3-2.

With a nice breakaway goal, Lucas Hancock scored with assists from Grafnitz

and Finn Kellogg, bringing the score to 4-2 in favor of the Eagles. Spilde would go on to score another goal at the beginning of the third period with an assist from Felton to make it 5-2.

The Northern Edge retaliated with a goal of their own, but Captain Carter Tatge would then score a beautiful one-timer for the Eagles with assists from Kellogg and Gavon Jacobson to go up 6-3.

Northern Edge tightened the gap with another score in

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## Becker dance team ready for the season

By Maria Moore,  
Contributing Writer

On Fri., Nov. 14, the Becker Dance team had its annual home show, "The Great Becker Dance Together." This event is partnered with a food-shelf drive each year, and this year, athletes and fans were able to contribute over \$300 in cash through raffle ticket sales as well as donate several boxes of non-perishable food items. During this time, the dance team performs a guy/girl dance as the show's finale. This is a great way to get the guys and the community involved in the dance.

"I really love that all of them get to be involved in giving back to our community," said Head Coach Nadia Fischer-Danzeisen. "(A community) who gives so much to us."

The head coaches this year, along with their years coaching here at Becker, include: Varsity Jazz/Kick Head Coach - Nadia Fischer-Danzeisen (12 years); JV Jazz/Kick Head Coach - Ava Holm (two years); B-squad Jazz Head Coach and Varsity Kick Assistant, Mel VanHofwegen (six years); Varsity Jazz/Kick Assistant - Rhi Edwards-Li-



THE BECKER 2025-26 DANCE TEAM. The girls gathered after competing at Rocori schools, where varsity jazz and kick took second place. (Submitted Photo).

ebberman (seven years); JV Jazz/Varsity Kick Assistant - Jada Krinke (first year coaching); and B-squad Jazz/JV Kick Assistant - Brady Roberts (first year coaching).

The four captains this year are seniors Ashlyn Frey and Ali Vieau and juniors Payton Lechner and Kendall Lamp.

There is a 100% eligible varsity vets returning this year, which is a common statistic for this program. Some team goals this year are winning the conference Jazz title for the seventh straight year, regaining the conference Kick title, and returning to the state tournament for the fifth consecutive year. The team would also like to work towards a more stable season compared to

last year.

This is a very competitive year for the Becker dance team, with only a couple of spots open to go to state and over 500 teams competing for the spot. Last year's highlights included conference Jazz champions for the sixth straight year, conference Kick runner-up, second place in both jazz and kick at the 4AA Section tournament, 10th place in jazz at state, and eighth place in kick at state.

Five seniors graduated from last year's squad.

At their recent home invite, Becker beat Sauk Rapids in both jazz and kick; however, at their first conference meet, they fell to St. Francis in both jazz and kick.

## Democrats drive Minnesota into deficit with overspending, fraud, and tax hikes

Submitted Article

The state budget forecast presented recently (Dec. 4) revealed a sustained deficit due to runaway spending, unchecked fraud, and slow economic growth hampered by billions in new taxes on Minnesotans.

Senator Andrew Mathews (R-Princeton) issued the following statement:

"Minnesota families are doing everything they can to balance their budgets. The state should do the same," said Sen. Mathews. "After \$10 billion in tax hikes, Minnesotans shouldn't be looking at a deficit created by overspending and fraud. It's time to get spending under control, stop the fraud, and prioritize Minnesota families."

The overall forecast reveals the state's spending is outpacing revenue, despite \$10 billion in new taxes. According to Minnesota Management and Budget, the budget for fiscal year 2026-2027 includes a \$2.465 billion surplus, even while spending outpaces revenues. However, looking to 2028-

2029, the deficit balloons to \$5.4 billion as spending is projected to outpace revenues. Only by not spending the surplus would the 2029 deficit projection reduce to \$2.960 billion.

Slow economic growth is a major factor in revenue losses. This underscores concerns raised from a *Minnesota Chamber of Commerce Business Benchmarks Report* released two weeks ago, ranking Minnesota 38th with 1% GDP per capita annual growth, 40th for labor force growth, and 41st in net domestic migration. Between 2019 and 2024, key economic statistics slowed to nearly stagnant or negative levels, reversing previous trends, and impacting the state's overall economic climate.

Additionally, increased spending on health care pressures revenues. This is notable as Minnesota has seen significant fraud in health care services. Efforts to reduce fraud and verify eligibility will be necessary to ensure these funds are available for those who actually need it.

