

Our Family is Growing

My last baby is getting married in a couple of weeks and I'm so happy for her. She's a creative, unique, fun-loving individual who has done things her own way since the day she was born. She can also be hard-headed and stubborn, and I often wondered if there was anyone out there who would be able to appreciate her for herself.



By Penny Leuthard, Contributing Writer

Well, she met the perfect guy several years ago at a rendezvous reenactment they were both participating in. If you're unfamiliar, rendezvous are living history events where participants dress in period clothing and recreate the North American fur trade era from the early 19th century to around 1840.

Along with dressing for the era, participants at rendezvous demonstrate skills and crafts from the time period and hold activities like trading and campfires, providing an immersive historical experience for visitors of all ages. If you haven't attended a rendezvous before I highly recommend you do, it's a truly enjoyable experience.

My daughter's soon-to-be husband, Alex will be Blayne and I's first son-in-law and we couldn't ask for a better one. We knew the day we met him that he was a perfect fit for our family. Ren had told us a boy was coming by who she wanted us to meet and asked Blayne, specifically, to be on his best behavior. She'd

never asked this before so we knew he must be important to her.

During the introduction Ren noticed Blayne's zipper was down and angrily called him out on it. With a straight face Alex said, "Yeah, I was totally checking him out."

Anyone with a sense of humor like that will get along perfect in our family.

As an homage to where they met, after the traditional wedding vows and exchange of rings, my daughter and her fiancé will be handfasted, a symbolic unity ritual in which the couple's hands are bound with a cord to represent their union and commitment to one another. Handfasting ceremonies were common during the rendezvous era as priests were rarely found at the isolated trading posts.

I believe weddings should be personalized to the couple, so I love that this ceremony will be included. I can hardly wait.



REN AND ALEX at a rendezvous. (Photo by Penny Leuthard)

4-H
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impact on my life compared to any other organization I've been involved with," she said. "It has taught me how to lead, how to follow, and the importance of continuous learning. Most importantly, it has encouraged me to pursue what I love."

Ten other Benton County 4-H'ers, grades 3-11, shared the impact of 4-H on their lives. They included, Claudia Schlough- 11th grade St. Cloud; Johnathan Mersinger- 12th grade St. Cloud; Robert Mersinger- ninth grade St. Cloud; Mathew Mersinger- first grade St. Cloud; Eve McKay- 11th grade St. Cloud; Luke McKay- eighth grade St. Cloud; Ana McKay- 12th grade St. Cloud; Ava Kolbinger- sixth grade Becker; Piper Kolbinger, 10th grade Becker, and Owen McKay- sixth grade St. Cloud.

The 4-H youth attended the Benton County Board of Commissioners meeting to request the signing of a proclamation declaring October 5-11, 2025, as 4-H Week throughout Benton County. They encouraged all citizens to recognize the significant impact 4-H has made and continues to make by empowering youth.

National 4-H Week is celebrated from October 5-11, with the theme "4-H Beyond Ready." This theme emphasizes building a generation prepared for a world of change. 4-H equips youth with essential skills for the future while meeting them where they are today.

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Township & Village Photo Exhibit

coming to Sherburne History Center

Submitted Article

Seventeen photographs, culled from the Sherburne County Historical Society's photograph collection, are on exhibition at the Sherburne History center starting Sept. 23, 2025.

This exhibit shows a variety of photographs in the society's archives collection, from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, incorporating an image from each township and village in Sherburne County during this time interval. Townships included in the exhibit include: Baldwin,

TO THE EDITOR:

Dan Schonhardt's recent letter to the editor was confounding to me. He seems to be willing to moderate the language and attempt to have an open dialogue with those with whom he disagrees. We don't know where the writer gets his information and or how he forms his opinions, but he went on to describe Republicans as noble, clear-thinking, God-fearing people who stand for the nuclear family, order and natural law. There are unhinged radicals on the left AND the right, of course. But, according to him, Democrats are full of rage, hateful, lacking in faith and psychologically disturbed! Like nearly half of Americans, I iden-

tify as independent. But I know many Democrats and find most of them to be, like most Republicans, decent, hard-working, often church-going, family-oriented, caring people. How on earth are people like Mr. Schonhardt going to have the dialogue he suggests if he has so little respect for those who think differently from him? I continue to hope that if we stop demonizing and demeaning one another we might finally have some peace.

Marlys Nelson Kolbinger Becker, MN

TO THE EDITOR:

Please run an investigation story or I'm looking for the public's input on this subject matter. The subject is Bar 10 now empty

for three years. Pre Covid I've eaten at The Hideout Bar & Grille, it was spacious and very nice. Post Covid The Hideout had new owners before exiting as Monty's Tropical Hideout both which didn't last long. Followed by the current never opened Bar 10. September 16, 22, on the Bar 10 Facebook page a post stating hoping to be open by Nov of 22. When driving by I always thought the Bar 10 facade signage looked cheap that gave me suspect. There is a blue van in the lot with 22 tabs on it. I've peeked through the windows recently and the disarray shows no signs of ever opening. I have seen a white looking courier truck while driving by a few times not sure if it's load-

ing and selling equipment. Doing a Google search *The Patriot* has an article dated September 8, 2022 as Ather Jameel introducing himself and applying for a liquor license. Googling his name comes up with another business unopened and others opening and closing. Is this a bank fraud circumstance? I would like knowledge of if this property is still owned by him or someone else or if the bank has ownership? It was a nice place to eat at and would actually like to see it opened by an actual owner. Any input from the public to the situation of this building would be greatly appreciated. Thanks.

Jesse Schneider Becker, MN

PUBLIC NOTICES

TOWN OF BECKER NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Notice is hereby given that the Becker Town Board will hold their monthly meeting at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, October 20, 2025, at Becker Town Hall, 12165 Hancock Street. The Town Board will meet to consider the following application(s) and other related topics. Beginning at approximately 7:01 p.m. and following:

Public hearing as follows:

1. Owner Central Sota Cooperative, Applicant Steffes Group, Eric Gabrielson. The owner and applicant have submitted a metes and bounds subdivision application for land currently recognized by parcel identification 05-00108-4100 in S8, T34N, R28 of Becker Township, Sherburne County, Minnesota. The planned subdivision to occur at the gravel road 82nd Street SE.

2. Owner Central Sota Cooperative, Applicant Steffes Group, Eric Gabrielson. The owner and applicant have submitted a metes and bounds subdivision application for land currently recognized by parcel identification 05-00109-2400 in S9, T34N, R28 of Becker Township, Sherburne County, Minnesota. The planned subdivision is to separate the house with 20 acres from the remainder of the farmland.

Anyone interested in this request is encouraged to attend and comment at the Public Hearing. If you wish to attend via Zoom, contact the clerk for details. If you have questions regarding the requests please contact the clerk at Becker Township Hall, 12165 Hancock Street, Becker, MN, 763-261-5301. If you are unable to attend please provide written comment to clerk at P.O. Box 248, Becker, MN 55308 or by email to clerk@beckertownship.org by 4:00 p.m., October 20, 2025.

/s/ Lucinda Messman
Clerk, Becker Township
(Published in the *Patriot*: 10/04/25.)

BIG LAKE from page 1

ever, one neighborhood green space—Mitchell Farms Park—was left out of those plans, sparking debate among councilmembers.

Located in a quiet residential area off Teal Street, the playground at Mitchell Farms Park is roughly 20 to 30 years old and has been deemed unsafe and beyond repair. While the current equipment will be removed, there are no immediate plans to install new structures—effectively leaving the park as an empty lot.

For Councilmember Ken Halverson, that decision doesn't sit right.

"This is a terrible injustice," Halverson said, voicing frustration over what he described as the city's sluggish approach to parks maintenance and upgrades.

"We've neglected the system for so long. This is not how we make our community better—by taking things away."

Mayor Paul Knier acknowledged Halverson's concerns but pointed to budget constraints as the driving factor behind the decision.

"We don't have unlimited funds for parks," Knier said. "We have more needs than money."

He urged the council to take a more strategic, long-term approach and come up with a plan—"before we just keep spending."

Councilmember Ken Geroux echoed that sentiment, suggesting the city needs to reevaluate how it allocates park resources.

"We need to make sure we're funding parks correctly and resources are put in the correct areas," Geroux said.

He questioned whether replacing the playground at Mitchell Farms is even what residents want.

"Has anybody thought to ask the people in that area if another 'tot lot' is what they want? Maybe they do—I don't know. But we're deciding for them."

Still, some councilmembers felt leaving Mitchell Farms behind was shortsighted.

Councilmember Kim Noding said she would like to see Mitchell Farms included, adding that it might be "more beneficial to purchase the equipment now," before costs rise further. She expressed hope that potential grant funding might help cover future improvements.

Halverson warned that delays would only increase expenses, placing a greater burden on taxpayers in the long run.

Despite the concerns, the council unanimously approved the motion to remove and replace playground equipment at Lakeside, Lake Ridge, and Shores of Lake Mitchell parks with updated structures.

Halverson then introduced a motion to revisit and reevaluate the cost of updating Mitchell Farms Park. That motion failed, and the council instead passed, on a 4-1 vote, a resolution to remove the existing equipment at Mitchell Farms—with no replacement plan in place for now.

While the city moves forward with upgrades at three parks, Mitchell Farms Park will remain without playground equipment—at least for the time being. Whether it stays that way may depend on future funding, community input, and a more comprehensive look at the city's parks system as a whole.

BOARD HIGHLIGHTS

This represents a summary of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Education of Big Lake Public Schools #727. A complete set of minutes will be on file at the District Office and on our website at www.biglakeschools.org upon Board approval.

- CALL TO ORDER**
The regular meeting of the Board of Education of Independent School District No. 727, Big Lake Schools, was called to order on September 24, 2025.
- ROLL CALL**
All Board members were present.
- APPROVE AGENDA**
A motion passed to approve the agenda.
- PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**
Chair Reasoner and the Board led the Pledge of Allegiance.
- OPEN FORUM**
Tim Myers addressed the board regarding the referendum.
- CONSENT AGENDA**
A motion passed to approve the following:
A. PREVIOUS MINUTES
B. CLAIMS AND ACCOUNTS
C. CREDIT CARD REPORT
D. PERSONNEL
E. APPROVE ONE READ POLICIES:
- DONATIONS**
A motion passed to approve the donations.
- FINANCIAL REPORT**
A motion passed to approve the financial report as presented.
- APPROVE PAY 2026 PRELIMINARY LEVY CERTIFICATION**
A motion passed to approve the levy at maximum.
- DISTRICT GOALS**
Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning, Minda Anderson, reviewed the district's goals.
- SCHOOL BOARD COMMITTEE/REPRESENTATIVE UPDATES**
- SCHOOL BOARD STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT**
- SCHOOL BOARD RECOGNITION**
Superintendent Truebenbach recognized the school board members for their dedication and commitment to Big Lake Schools.
- SUPERINTENDENT REPORT**
- ADJOURNMENT**
A motion passed to adjourn the meeting.
(Published in the *Patriot*: 10/04/25.)

Becker Middle School Off to a Great Start!

Becker Middle School is off to a fantastic start this year, with students and staff embracing the school-wide motto: *Be a Good Human*. This focus on kindness will guide advisory activities throughout the year, encouraging students to celebrate and embrace our 3 R's; Respect, Responsibility, and positive Relationships!

October will bring a special opportunity to recognize uniqueness and community through Unity Day on October 15 by wearing orange. Students will engage in activities that highlight the value of every individual, reminding all that each person's "fingerprint" matters.

In September, Becker Middle School students showcased their Bulldog spirit through service and teamwork. On September 10, students joined Farm 2 School Week, shucking nearly 1,300 ears of Norm's corn to support the entire district's lunch program. Later in the month, on September 24, students laced up for the annual Bulldog Run. With per-



By Chantel Boyer, BMS Principal

fect fall weather, every grade enjoyed a nearly one-mile outdoor run. Students showed determination, cheered each other on, and celebrated what it means to be a Bulldog—effort, encouragement, and pride in completing the race and cheering their peers on!

This school year promises more opportunities to live out the Be a Good Human message. Through kindness initiatives, our exploratory classes, and celebrations of individuality, Becker Middle School continues to build a community where students feel seen, supported, and empowered to grow.

Becker, Big Lake, Blue Hill, Clear Lake, Elk River, Haven, Livonia, Orrock, Palmer, and Santiago. Villages included are: Becker, Big Lake, Clear Lake, Elk River, Zimmerman and Cable (an unincorporated community).

Later on in the 20th century, if the village had not already changed incorporation to that of a city, by Jan. 1, 1974 a Minnesota statute enacted that all remaining villages to be established as cities.

The exhibit runs until until Nov. 26, 2025.

The Sherburne History

Center is located at 10775 27th Ave. SE, Becker, MN 55308 and specializes in the history of Sherburne County through museum exhibitions, a reference library, an archives and a Legacy Trail with historic structures. It is open Tuesday - Friday: 10 a.m. - 5 p.m., Saturday: 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. The Sherburne History Center is also currently showing the award winning exhibition: *Life on the Edge*.

For more information contact the Sherburne History Center at www.sherburnehistorycenter.org or (763) 261-4433.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Becker Area Senior Center (BASC)
Open Mon. - Fri. 9am-5pm.
Becker Community Center:
763-200-4271. Planning meeting 3rd Wed. @ 1pm.

Becker American Legion Auxiliary
Auxiliary meetings from November to February are suspended. We will meet again in March of 2025. Contacts are Paula Hinds 763.691.4405 cell and Nellie Simpson 763.482.0619.

Becker American Legion Post 193
Becker Legion meets the second Tues. of every month at 7pm at Becker Legion (old fire hall.)

Becker AA Meeting
Becker Group of Alcoholics Anonymous meets Thurs., 8pm at Mary of the Visitation, 12100 Sherburne Ave., Becker. (320) 247-4732 or email beckeraagroupmn@gmail.com

Becker Lions Club
Meetings are held the second Mon. each month at 7pm at Becker City Park's Shelter.

Becker Sons of the American Legion Squadron 193
Meets the third Tues. of each month at 7 pm at Becker Legion (old fire hall). Looking for new members. Andrew Lee (763) 482-9177.

Becker Beyond the Yellow Ribbon Meeting
The monthly meetings are held 6 pm the third Thurs. of the month at Becker City Hall. (320) 980-2752 or see the state website at www.beyondtheyellow-ribbon.org.

Big Lake Senior Center
The Big Lake Senior Club meets Tues., 1-4pm, Big Lake City Hall, 160 Lake St. North.
For more information, call:
763-309-1010 or 612-219-1614.

Big Lake American Legion Post #147
Meets the first Thurs. of the month @ 7 pm. Tribune Building, 29 Lake St.

Big Lake OPEN AA Meetings
Mon., 7pm at Saron Lutheran Church, Big Lake. Big Book Study, Handicap Accessible. Questions? Contact: Rob, (763) 218-5328.

The Big Lake American Legion Auxiliary
Meets the first Tues. Mar.-Dec. at 6:30pm. Tribune Building, 29 Lake St. Kathy at (763) 263-6093 for information.

Big Lake Beyond the Yellow Ribbon
The Big Lake Beyond the Yellow Ribbon meets at 6:30 pm on the third Mon., of each month in the Community Room adjacent to the Big Lake Police Dept. & the Big Lake Library.

Big Lake Community Food Shelf
The Big Lake Community Food Shelf hours of service are Mon. & Thurs. 5:30-7:30pm & Wed. 9-11am. www.blcfs.org.

The Big Lake Lions
Looking for community minded people to join our organization. If interested send a note to P.O. Box 128, Big Lake, MN 55309 or (763) 263-2218.

Big Lake Narcotics Anonymous Meetings
Big Lake Living Clean NA meeting Sun., 7pm, Bridgeview Assembly of God Church, 20500 Co. Rd. 11, Big Lake, MN, (763) 482-1695.

Big Lake Women of Today
Hold a monthly general meeting at Senior Activity Center located in the Big Lake City Office Building on the 3rd Thurs. of the month @ 7pm. www.biglakewomenoftoday.webs.com.

Clear Lake Legion
Meets the second Tues. of the month at 4180 105th Ave., Clear Lake. The Legion will meet at 7:30 p.m. New members are always welcome. Bud Stimmler at (320) 761-5793.

Clear Lake Lions
Meets the first & third Tues. of the month at Palmer Twp. Hall at 7 p.m. New members are always welcome. www.clearlakelionsmn.org.

Clearwater American Legion Post 323 & Auxiliary
Meets the second Thurs. of the month. Auxiliary 6:30 p.m., S.A.L. at 7 p.m., Legion at 7:30 p.m. at Clearwater Legion, Clearwater.

Clearwater/Clear Lake Food Shelf
Open Mon. 5:30-7 p.m., Tues., 9-11 a.m. & 6-8 p.m., Wed., 3-5 p.m. in the brown Lions Community Building beneath the water tower in Clearwater. Servicing residents of Clearwater and Clear Lake.

Clearwater Lions Club
Meets second Tues. of the month at 8 p.m. Clearwater Pavilion. www.clearwaterlionsmn.com

Snake River Free Church
Hymn sing Oct. 12 4:30 p.m. 5 mi. N of Hwy. 10 on Co. Rd. 11, 1.5 mi. E on Co. Rd. 5, 3/4 mi. N on 180th St. (8940 180th Ave. SE). For more info, email maryerickson41@yahoo.com

Farm Friends Barn
The Farm Friends Barn Board of Directors meet the 4th Monday of every month from April thru December at the Barn at 10782 27th Ave Se in Becker. During the months of January thru March the meetings are held at Becker City Hall. All Board Meetings start at 3pm.

Rejoice Lutheran
Rejoice Lutheran Young at Heart, Clearwater for ages 55+ held the 3rd Thursday each month at 10:30 am. 320-558-6851.

Knights of Columbus
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OBITUARIES

James Sheffield Lee, 86
Waite Park, MN
(formerly of Clearwater, MN)
August 15, 1939 - September 23, 2025



James Sheffield Lee, aged 86, of Waite Park, MN (formerly of Clearwater, MN) was surrounded by his family when he went to his eternal home in heaven on September 23, 2025. Visitation and funeral services will be held on Saturday, October 4 at Calvary Community Church with a visitation at 9 a.m. and services officiated by Pastor Doug Fern at 11 a.m. and interment to follow at Acacia Cemetery in Clearwater.

Lee was born on August 15, 1939, just 20 minutes after his twin brother John, in St. Cloud, MN to John and Edith Lee. He grew up on the family homestead in Clearwater and farmed alongside his father and many uncles in the Clearwater area. He attended country school at District 18, a one room schoolhouse in Clearwater Township, up through the eighth grade and then finished his high school at Annandale High School. In school he played the clarinet in the band, participated in the production of Annie Get Your Gun, and was an active member of both 4H and the FFA. After graduating from high school, he continued farming on the homestead for several years along with working at Camp Koinonia on Lake Sylvia. In 1969 he continued his education and his interest in agriculture by attending Canby Technical Institute and graduating with a degree in Soil Science.

He then spent many years working in and managing grain elevators in Hastings and Centra Sota in Annandale. He later found a new career when he began work as an Abstractor with Tri County Abstract and Title. He loved digging into the records at the courthouse to ensure the property abstract was clear. After he retired from there in 2004 he worked part time for Clearwater Township where he kept up the building and maintained the lawn and landscaping.

In the summer of 1969, he met Sharon Tobin and the two were joined in marriage August 29, 1970, at Riverview Baptist in West St Paul MN. Jim and Sharon started their family with the birth of their son James in May 1971 and then Rebecca in 1974. They moved back to the family farm in 1977 where they raised sheep, sweet corn, and kept a large garden with two of his favorites to grow – potatoes and squash (win-

ter squash, not zucchini). He spent many hours over the years attending his kids (and later grandkids) concerts, games, marching alongside the band in the summer, and countless other school events all while keeping up the farm. To the end, he was a dedicated Annandale Cardinals fan and loved to watch football and basketball games and see how the players developed over the years.

He loved to work in his gardens and in his retirement built out and took great pride in beautiful flower gardens on the farmstead. In those years he also had his father's original 1942 John Deere B restored and loved to crank that flywheel and hear that unique John Deere sound as he puttered around the farm. He enjoyed reading, studying family history, watching Lawrence Welk, and listening to his favorites like Whoopie John and Sousa marches.

He was a member of Calvary Community Church for 43 years where he served as a trustee, usher, and served in the nursery.

A special thanks from his family to the nurses, volunteers, and staff at Quiet Oaks Hospice and CentraCare Hospice for helping Jim and the family in his final days. Your kindness and compassion are amazing.

He is survived by his loving wife Sharon, son James Lee of St Cloud, daughter Rebecca (Brenton) Bills of Rockford, grandchildren Johnathan Lee, Katherine Bills, and David Bills, brother John (Marilyn) Lee of St Cloud, cousin Pete (Pat) Hansen of Mankato, brother in law Robert (Mary) Tobin of Stone Mountain, GA, sister in law Audrey Mathews of Draper, SD, and many nieces, nephews and other loved ones.

He was preceded in death by his parents, infant son Brian, sister Karen Mol, brother-in-law Cliff Mol, sister-in-law Jeanette Hildebrandt, brother-in-law Philip Mathews, nephew Steven Lee, cousins, and many aunts and uncles including his special aunt Dr Katherine Elizabeth Lee.

In lieu of flowers the family invites you to honor Jim with a contribution to Calvary Community Church, Quiet Oaks Hospice, or the Cardinal Athletic Foundation.

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Bulldog tennis hits sections

By Mark Kolbinger, Contributing Writer

The Becker girls tennis team put a fitting cap on the regular season in their final M8 Conference match against Chisago Lakes, winning 6-1.

“The girls looked really in their prime, we lost some close conference matches in the year, but we played some of our best tennis against Chisago,” Coach Nate Bucher said. “We were making smart choices in the middle of the point and taking advantage of put-aways the whole way through.”

Singles winners for Becker included Ava Duncombe, Arica Stach and Samantha Duncombe, while the doubles team winners were Chloe Spear/Tess Brown, Faith Bass/Taylor Lisson and Sami Leaders/Bryn Dahlheimer.

Becker then entered Section play seeded #3 and totally dominated Rocori, the #6 seed, 7-0.

“The girls were ready for this match, they played confidently and everyone was ready to execute!” Bucher said. “We will be traveling to Perham on Wednesday Oct. 1, for the semi final match.”

The finals of the Section will be held on October 10 to see which team qualifies for state.

“I think we have a strong chance of advancing to that next level if we continue to execute the small things and focus on each stroke rather than the outcome,” Bucher said. “It will be a tough match on Wednesday at Perham, but I’m proud of this team and the way they continued to pursue excellence in all aspects throughout this season.”

Singles winners for the Bulldogs in the win over Rocori included Ava Duncombe, Gracie Conzemius, Arica Stach and Samantha Duncombe, while doubles winners included the teams of Chloe Spear/Tess Brown, Faith Bass/Taylor Lisson, and Sami Leaders/Bryn Dahlheimer.



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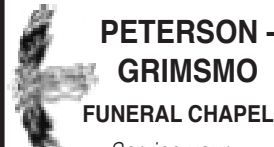
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BL boys 2nd at ROCORI cross-country invitational

By Ken Francis,
Contributing Writer

The Big Lake boys varsity cross country team took second at the ROCORI Invitational at the River Oaks Golf Course in Cold Spring last Thursday.

Competing without their top runner, Gavin Flavin, who was recovering from illness, the Hornet squad stepped up and finished runner-up to Alexandria in a field of almost 20 teams.

Senior Trent Erickson led the team with a strong eighth-place finish in 17:18. He was followed by Theo Johnson, who also broke the 18-minute barrier and placed 14th in 17:58, with Jack Schmidt a few steps back in 15th in 18:05.

Eli Henning (22nd, 18:41), Max Baron (42nd, 19:20), and Eli Schaller (51st, 19:46) rounded out the team.

Final Team scores were: 1. Alexandria 40; 2. Big Lake 94; 3. Willmar 103; 4. Perham 147; 5. Detroit Lakes 167; 6. Albany 170; 7. Rocori 174; 8. Thief River Falls 182; 9. Little Falls 238; 10. Princeton 253; 11. Foley 265; 12. Breckenridge/ Wahpeton 292; 13. Fergus Falls 298; 14. Sauk Rapids-Rice 393; 15. St. Cloud Tech 415; St. Francis and Fargo South, incomplete.

Girls Squad

The varsity girls finished ninth as a team behind a 30th place finish by ninth-grader Shay France in 22:20.

Big Lake's 2-3-4 runners

ran in a tight pack for most of the race and finished close together. Hazel Guldseth took 47th in 24:02, followed by Elsie Jagusch (51st, 24:14) and Clara Devine (53rd, 24:19).

Ainsley McGuire (69th, 25:58) made a notable move, jumping into the team's fifth spot for the first time this fall. Chloe Howe (71st, 26:11) and Aubri Judge (74th, 28:13) rounded out the varsity lineup.

Some more notable results from the meet: Evan Hitter (15th, 20:19) had a breakout race, moving up several spots to finish as Big Lake's top boys JV runner for the first time this season. And the junior high runners ran the full 3200 meters for the first time this season.

Becker Invite

Gavin Flavin and Shay France each finished second in their 5000 meter races at the Becker Invitational Cross-Country meet at Pebble Creek Golf Course last week.

Flavin came back after missing a meet from illness and led the boys varsity, taking second in 16:34.6.

Trent Erickson also placed in the top 10. He finished ninth in 17:21.3.

Theo Johnson and Jack Schmidt ran close together for most of the race and finished 16th and 18th respectively in 18:01.4 and 18:04.5.

Eli Henning was Big Lake's fifth finisher in 22nd in 18:32.7. Max Baron (24th, 18:39.5) and Eli Schaller

(27th, 19:52.1) were the team's sixth and seventh runners.

The boys finished fourth in the team standings with 67 points.

Girls Squad

For the girls, ninth-grader Shay France again led the Hornets with a second place finish in 21:15.5.

Clara Devine ran her fastest time of the year as she led a trio of Hornets, running 23:45.5 for 20th place. She was followed by Hazel Guldseth in 21st at 23:58.7 and Elsie Jagusch in 22nd at 24:06.7.

The next three runners for Big Lake were Ainsley McGuire (26th, 26:27.6), Chloe Howe (27th, 26:33.5), and Aubri Judge (28th, 27:26.6).

The girls varsity finished fourth in the team standings with 91 points.

In other races, Avery Jarvi and Nicholas Erickson had a sprint finish in the JV 5000 meters that saw them both get the same time (20:01.9) as they battled for last spot in the top 10. Jarvi took 10th and Erickson was 11th. Evan Hitter was close behind in 12th at 20:13.4 and Jordan Domka ran 20:31.1 for 15th.

The Hornets competed in a 14-team meet at St. Michael Wednesday, results next week. They run at Princeton Tuesday.

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SPORTS/AREA NEWS

Bulldogs blank Tigers, 21-0

By Bill Morgan,
Editor

The Becker Bulldog football team dominated their most recent game as they held St. Cloud tech scoreless in a 21-0 win last Friday night on the road.

The three scores came in the first three quarters of the game that featured a Becker defense that man-handled the Tigers and held them to just 97 yards total for the game.

Bennett Kujawa, Nathan Weiss, Tyler Hall, Gus Baldry, RJ Houle and Cody Deters all had two or more tackles in the win. Kujawa finished with six tackles, four assists, two sacks and one tackle for loss. Weiss and Hall each had four tackles and two assists, while Baldry had two tackles, four assists, two sacks and one tackle for loss. Houle had two tackles and one assist and Deters had two tackles, one assist, two sacks and one tackle for loss.

In the first, QB Tristan Kowalkowski capped a long drive by the Bulldogs with a three yard TD run to get the visitors on the score-board first.

In the second, Sawyer Brown reeled in a six-yard pass from Kowalkowski to put the Bulldogs up 14-0.

In the third, Nathan Weiss rolled into the end zone from two yards out to seal the deal at 21-0, while the rest of the game



BECKER WR SAWYER BROWN leapt to make this catch against a St. Cloud Tech defender last Friday in Becker's win over the Tigers, 21-0. (Submitted Photo by Anne Koste).

went quiet — except for the Dawg defense.

Kowalkowski finished with 87 yards through the air on seven-of-14 passing.

Weiss finished with 102 yards on the ground on 17 carries and the one TD.

Brown had 81 yards in receiving on six catches and the one TD.

The Bulldogs have now won two games in a row and have some momentum as they face their 2024 championship opponent, Totino-Grace on the road Friday.

Liberty Paper Player of the Game

By Bill Morgan,
Editor

Gus Baldry, senior defensive tackle, was named Player of the Game for his great performance in Friday night's shut out victory over St. Cloud Tech.

Gus has been a dominant leader on the defensive line all season. He was unblockable on Friday night. Defensive coordinator Hokan Bengtson said, "Gus was a destructive force tonight! He was in the Tech offensive backfield all night. Gus carried out his assignment correctly on each call. His play is a coach's dream."



SENIOR DT GUS BALDRY was named "Player of the Week" for his outstanding performance in last week's game against Tech. (Submitted Photo).

Strong finish to the PCWC 2025 golf season

Submitted Article

The Pebble Creek Women's Club officially ended the 2025 season at their recent Fall Banquet where final champions were announced and a newly elected Board of Directors was elected.

"Being able to gather as a community of golfers and celebrate another great season was amazing," said Carolyn Barriball, newly confirmed Pebble Creek Women's Club President.

"The Pebble Creek Women's Club is a great group of women of all levels of golfing ability. We build friendships, improve our golf games and work together to expand the game of golf to women and girls of all ages."

Joining Barriball on the 2026 Board of Directors is past President Jesse O'Neill, Vice President Malinda Pudlick, Treasurer LeAnn Reed and Secretary Karla Johnson along with four Directors: Jen Fingarson, Bonnie Kolbinger, Lori Berends and Melissa Schauer.

Winners of the final competitions of the Pebble Creek Women's Club season were announced including for the 9-Hole Year-End Tournament and Match Play competitions.

The 2025 9-Hole Year-End Tournament first flight winners are: Avery Johnson (first place), Joan Frie (second place) and Kirsten Voller (third place). Second flight winners are Cindie DeRocher (first place), Stacey Vetsch (second place) and LeAnn



2026 PCWC Board President Carolyn Barriball. (Submitted Photo).

Reed (third place). Third flight winners are Nicole Dewall (first place), Krisy Cox (second place) and Toni Knutson (third place).

The 2025 Women's Doubles Match Play Champions are Joan Frie and Annie Hegg and the runners-up are Allee Blank and Peggy Sogard. The 2025 Women's 18-Hole Singles Match Play Champion is Kathy Hollenhorst and the runner-up is Layla Mathews. The 2025 Women's 9-Hole Singles Match Play Champion is Jen Fingarson and the runner-up is Karla Johnson.

For more information on the Pebble Creek Women's Club, contact Carolyn Barriball, Pebble Creek Women's Club President at PebbleCreekWomensClub@gmail.com.



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Becker boys CC compete in Griak Invite



BOTH THE BECKER BOYS AND GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY TEAMS posed for a photo before running the homecoming football to Eppard Field last Friday. (Submitted Photo).

By Maria Moore,
Contributing Writer

This past week the Becker boy's cross-country team participated in the annual "Running of the Football" for the homecoming football game.

The team ran the ball relay style from Princeton high school all the way back

to Eppard Field. Lots of encouraging honks met the Bulldogs as they escorted the game ball.

Griak Invite

Ten runners for the Bulldogs were represented in the U of MN's Roy Griak Invitational in St. Paul last Friday. There were over 150 different High School teams competing in this invitational.

Hornets' rally falls just short, 32-30



RB ABRAHM KOOP tries to shake off a Westonka tackler during last weekend's game at home. (Submitted Photo by Jessica LaRoche).

By Bill Morgan,
Editor

If one ventured to last Friday's Big Lake football game against Westonka and left early after the home team fell behind big — lesson learned because this Hornet team showed heart and they laid it on the field and almost completed a remarkable comeback, eventually losing, 32-30

It was Big Lake's annual Tackle Cancer Game and for the first three quarters, the Hornets struggled with numerous missed opportunities. Westonka built a 32-6 lead heading into the fourth quarter and the fan base began doubting — but not the Hornet players and coaches.

The rally began with 10 minutes left when junior running back Abraham Koop broke free for a six-yard touchdown, cutting the score to 32-14.

The defense followed with a key stop, giving the offense another chance. QB Dillon Spaeth connected with sophomore Danny Rotz for a 29-yard touchdown with Rotz making an incredible one-handed catch despite heavy coverage. After the 2-point conversion, it was suddenly 32-22.

Momentum kept swinging the Hornets way as the special teams recovered an onside kick (Jackson LaRoche), and the offense quickly struck again with a five-yard touchdown run from senior Carter Stromberg, making it 32-30 with 1:36 left.

Unfortunately, Westonka recovered the subsequent onside attempt and was able to drain the

clock.

"Despite the loss, I couldn't be prouder of how our guys battled until the end," said Head Coach Nick Shriver. "In those final 10 minutes, we saw our best in all three phases—offense, defense, and special teams.

Big Lake racked up 538 total yards on offense while Caleb Martin had a breakout game with 121 receiving yards and 28 rushing. Dillon Spaeth threw for a season-high 257 yards.

Big Lake's ground attack added 281 yards, led by seniors Montell Hester (99 yards) and Carter Stromberg (89 yards).

Defensively, Bennett Thieke led with 14 total tackles.

Through five games, Big Lake's offense ranks #1 in Minnesota's Class 4A in total yards, #4 in passing, #4 in rushing, and #5 in scoring.

Up next, the Hornets (2-3) take on the Thunder (3-2) from Zimmerman at home Friday, Oct. 3.

The weather faired nicely besides the couple of slick spots from the rain the previous day.

"I was proud of our guys for working hard in the highly competitive championship division that had 45 high-caliber teams from across the country," said Head Coach Dustin Weege.

The Bulldogs' team finished 36th overall in the event but received fifth out of the MN Class AA schools in the race.

The top runner for the Bulldogs was Parker Spindler (63rd place) with a time of 17:13 — 48 seconds faster than last year at this time. The rest of the runners include Alex Swanson (17:35), Tanner Felton (18:11), Evan Hubbard (18:34), Holden Hubbard (19:11), Brandt

Hemmelgarn (19:20), Mason Tschida (20:20), Weston Denne (21:31), Copper Pany (21:37), and Carson Schuster (22:16).

Up Next

The team is ready to host the Becker Invitational at Pebble Creek GC Thursday. After that they travel to Alexandria for the 52nd Annual Meet of Champions at Arrowwood Resort Oct. 4.



Becker swimmers go 2-1

By Mark Kolbinger,
Contributing Writer

The Becker swimming and diving team put together some strong performances in the past week, going 2-1.

Two weeks ago, Becker fell to Foley by four points, 95-91.

"It was another close one with Foley that came down to the last relay and they pulled ahead for the win with a second place finish in the 400 FR," Coach Tina Tamm said. "Foley is always good competition for us and it always ends up being a great event with a lot of close races. We look forward to seeing them again at True Team and Sections."

Last Tuesday, Becker downed Albany 101-74 in a Parent's Night dominant meet.

A small delay at the start of the meet and a switch in the order of events had the divers doing their event first. Albany didn't have any divers so Becker started out with a good lead on the scoreboard.

"Our girls continued to add points by taking first place in 10 of 12 events," Tamm added.

Last Thursday, it was a M8 Conference win for the Bulldogs in a 95-83 win over Cambridge-Isanti.

"We had another good night as we traveled to Cambridge-Isanti and came away with almost a clean sweep

of first place wins - getting 11 of 12," Tamm said. "We moved the girls around to other events to give them a chance to try different things. We have some depth which allows us to do that. "

In addition to the two wins, Becker also has 18 swimmers and divers qualified for the section meet, with many of the athletes qualified in four or more events.

"We are just about halfway through the season and will start to focus on sections," Tamm said. "The girls will have to decide what events (they can only do 2) they want to swim and then the work starts."

Tamm also noted the efforts of the divers, who continue to make increase the precision of their dives and add difficulty to the routines.

"They go through a lot of 'smacks' during practice but it pays off in the meets," Tamm added.

Current section qualifiers include: Lillian Bonsante, Laila Cook, Karli Kirk, Kylar Graning, Kailey McGowan, Elin Cook, Maggie Graning, Addison Kasper, Myka Maksimenko, Grace Mork, Alyssa Cowley, Kandell Hagen, Eiley Kaehler, Harper Kellogg, Brielle Kuschel, Izza Mork, Clara Pratt, and Mia Suelter

Becker will play host to the True Team meet in Becker on October 11.

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Hornets go 1-3 in volleyball

By Bill Morgan, Editor

The Big Lake Hornet volleyball team went 1-3 over their last few games. Following are stats and excerpts.

Vs Delano
 Delano defeated Big Lake, 25-10, 25-12, 25-12 on Tues., Sept. 9.

Big Lake's Madison Reed had six kills and one dig. Adelle Nomeland had three kills. Aiyana Baker had two kills. Lauren Ulven had two kills and two digs.

Taylor Kipka had two kills, one block and one dig. Ashley Fitzgibbons had one ace serve, one kill, 14 assists and seven digs. Kam Tschritter had four digs and Brooke Moshier had seven digs in the loss.

"Delano is a strong team and runs a great program at all levels," said Big Lake Coach Alisha Brust. "It is always fun to play good competition."

Vs. Princeton
 Princeton defeated Big Lake, 25-19, 25-8, 25-19 on Sept. 11.

Hornet Iva Sanchez had two ace serves, four kills, one assist and five digs. Aubrey Trulock had two ace serves and three digs. Ashley Fitzgibbons had one ace serve, one block, 16 assists and eight digs.

Brooke Moshier had

one ace serve and 12 digs. Madison Reed had one ace serve, five kills and six digs. Aiyana Baker had four kills and two digs. Hailey Kojetin had one kill. Kam Tschritter had one kill and four digs and Taylor Kipka had one kill.

"The girls did a great job of adjusting to a new lineup on the fly with a player unexpectedly out for the night," said Brust. "I am proud of their resiliency and willingness to cover each other. We have gone a few matches without our normal lineup. This crew just keeps showing up and working hard every day."

Vs. Hutchinson
 Big Lake defeats Hutchinson, 26-24, 25-20, 25-17 on Tues., Sept. 16.

Aiyana Baker had five kills and two blocks. Iva Sanchez had five kills, one block and 12 digs. Madison Reed had two ace serves, 11 kills and eight digs. Kam Tschritter had two ace serves, two kills and four digs.

Aubrey Trulock had one ace serve and seven digs. Adelle Nomeland had three kills. Taylor Kipka had two kills and four digs. Ashely Fitzgibbons had two kills, one block, 23 assists and 12 digs. Brooke Moshier had seven digs.

Vs. North Branch
 North Branch defeats Big Lake, 17-25, 25-18, 20-

25, 25-14, 15-6 on Thurs., Sept. 18.

Iva Sanchez had four ace serves, 11 kills, one block and 11 digs. Madison Reed had three ace serves, 11 kills and 14 digs. Kam Tschritter had four ace serves and eight digs. Aiyana Baker had seven kills and four blocks.

Adelle Nomeland had four kills. Ashley Fitzgibbons had one kill, one block, 30 assists and six digs. Taylor Kipka had four kills, one block and two digs. Aubrey Trulock had seven digs and Brooke Moshier had 11 digs.

"This was a great test for us," said Brust. "Consistency has been a key focus for us, as the team struggles at times with unforced errors. This is the first five set match we have played, and it tested the group in staying disciplined and playing our game. North Branch never gave up and minor adjustments on their end caused our defense to struggle. It was a great match with good set distribution and lots of great rallies."

Up Next
 Big Lake has two tournament weekends coming up. Dassel-Cokato tournament this Saturday, along with the Bloomington tournament on October 11.

BL boys soccer gets a win and two ties

By Ken Francis, Contributing Writer

The Big Lake boys soccer team won its second game of the season last Saturday, 3-0 against Watertown-Mayer at home.

Elijah Chastain opened the scoring with an assisted goal at 21:52 of the first half.

The Hornets didn't take long to extend their lead when Will Priest scored at 28.41 with an assist by Jonathan Puma Pineda.

The game stayed that way until Carlos Contreras Cabrera scored at the 68:46 mark in the second half, assisted by Will Priest, and that's how the game ended.

Big Lake played a strong defensive game. Goalkeeper Caleb Olson turned away six shots in net to gain the team's first shut-out win of the season.

Vs. Saints
 Last Thursday the Hornets played to a 2-2 tie against St. Francis.

There was no scoring in the first half. Will Priest broke the ice at the 44:50 mark of the second half with an assist from Elijah Chastain.

After the Saints tied the score at 66:57, Priest got his second goal of the game at 76:32.

But it wasn't enough as the Saints got the game-tying goal with just 17 seconds remaining.

Olson had eight saves in goal for the Hornets.

Vs. Tigers
 Two days earlier Big Lake tied Princeton, 1-1.

In that game Will Priest had the only goal, assisted by Christopher Obregon in the first half.

The Tigers came back in the second half to tie the game, and that's how it ended. Olson had

four saves in net.

The Hornets lost to Monticello, 3-0 on Sept. 16. Big Lake managed just two shots on goal the entire game. Olson had seven saves for the Hornets. The Magic is undefeated (8-0) in the Mississippi 8 Conference.

Up Next
 The Hornets had games against Becker and Delano over the past week. They play today (Saturday) at Mound Westonka, all results next week.



Hornet swim team hosts cure for cancer event



THE BIG LAKE GIRLS SWIM/DIVE TEAM gathered with the football team's participants for a cure for cancer event last Saturday. (Submitted Photo).

By Bill Morgan, Editor

Big Lake Swim and Dive hosted an event where they invited the Big Lake football team to the pool for a fun function this weekend.

The event was called, *Swimming vs Football for*

Randy Shaver's Cure For Cancer Foundation. It was a great event that both teams enjoyed and also raised money for a great cause and the community.

Guests were asked to donate at least \$5 at the door with all proceeds going towards the cancer fund. Family and friends were invited and all guests

were asked to wear the color pink.

The boys had a warm-up in the pool at 10 a.m. while the girls started their warm-ups at 10:30 a.m. The meet kicked off at 11 a.m. and all who participated and attended were rewarded with a fun day.

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The importance of firefighters in our communities

Submitted Article

When sirens sound and red lights flash, firefighters rush into situations most of us instinctively run away from. Their job is more than putting out fires; it is about protecting lives, property, and the very fabric of our communities.

Firefighters embody courage, selflessness, and service, and their importance cannot be overstated.

At their core, firefighters are trained emergency responders. When a blaze threatens homes or businesses, they are the first to arrive, often risking their

own safety to pull people from burning structures. But firefighting is not limited to fires alone. Modern fire departments respond to medical emergencies, hazardous material spills, natural disasters, vehicle crashes, and even technical rescues. Their role has evolved into that of

all-purpose guardians, prepared to handle a wide range of crises at any hour of the day or night.

The importance of firefighters extends beyond emergencies. They are educators, working proactively to prevent tragedies before they occur. Firefighters visit

schools, businesses, and civic organizations to teach fire safety, demonstrate evacuation procedures, and promote the use of smoke detectors and fire extinguishers. These public education efforts save lives, reduce property damage, and foster a culture of preparedness. By teaching children how to stop, drop, and roll or families how to create escape plans, they empower citizens to act wisely in dangerous situations.

In rural towns and small communities, firefighters often serve as volunteers. These men and women dedicate their free time to training, maintaining equipment, and responding when their neighbors are in need. In many places, they are the backbone of emergency response, proving that service and community spirit are as important as professional skill. Their presence ensures that even the smallest towns receive lifesaving help when disasters strike.

Firefighters also play a critical role in community resilience. After a disaster—whether a house fire, a tornado, or a flood—they are among the first to bring stability and order. Their compassion and professionalism provide comfort to those who have lost everything, and their swift response helps communities rebuild faster. They are

not only protectors of physical safety but also symbols of hope and reassurance.

The job itself is not without sacrifice. Firefighters face dangerous conditions, long hours, physical strain, and the emotional toll of witnessing tragedy. Yet they continue to serve with commitment, often forming tight-knit brotherhoods and sisterhoods forged through shared risk. Their resilience and bravery remind us of the human capacity for selflessness in the face of danger.

In every community, large or small, firefighters represent a vital line of defense. They protect our homes, our loved ones, and our way of life. Their work reminds us that safety is not guaranteed but earned—through vigilance, training, and courage. To honor firefighters is not only to recognize their heroism during emergencies but also to appreciate their daily, quiet dedication to keeping us safe.

Firefighters are not just first responders; they are the heartbeat of public safety. Without them, our communities would be far more vulnerable. Their importance is not measured only in the flames they extinguish, but in the lives they save, the trust they build, and the security they provide.



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Big Lake Fire Department

THE 2024-25 BIG LAKE FIRE DEPARTMENT. In alphabetical order: Brad Anderson, Brady Bagne, Terry Baxter, Eric Boe, Eric Burleigh, Nick Christenson, Steve Christenson, Tim Davis, Adam Dietz, Nic Dornbusch, Brian Erlandson, Seth Hansen, Sam Hanson, Daren Hardies, Mark Hedstrom, Jesse Hemauer, Matthew Houle, Mike Houts, Noel Krebs, Ryan Lien, Joshua Matich, Clinton Maxson, Joe Moraczewski, Doug Novak, Jeff Novak, Trever Roediger, Eric Rosa, Shane Roy, Kiel Ruberg, Samuel Sweat, Jeremy Terwisscha and Jason White. (Submitted Photo)



Clearwater Fire Department

THE CLEARWATER FIRE DEPARTMENT. Back Row, left to right: Dan Peterson, Alan Strohschein, Dave Lindberg, Kyle Gramsey, Tyler Knobbe, Josh Neubert, Adam Quamme, Travis Barker and Scott Ziwicki. Front Row, left to right: Brandon Hanebuth, Maci Hill, Sarah Johnson, Harvey Doble, Mike Keller, Melissa Alberico, Nick Maurer, John Schmidt, Jim Repke and Jason Lang. **Not pictured:** Andy Struffert, Chad Koren, Trenton Scott, Shane Rollings, Jackson Lorentz, Gavin Michalski and Justin Potthoff. (Submitted Photo)



Clear Lake Fire Department

THE CLEAR LAKE FIRE DEPARTMENT. Top: Weston Ludwig, Andrew Beniek, Danny Kampa, Anthony Baert, Tyler Marklowitz and Matt Lunser. Back: Mathew Davis, Ron Koren, Ryan Leaders, Ben Goenner, Ryan Peterson, Chad Nelson and Nathan Legatt. Front: Brent Plumski, Joshua Madsen, Mitchell Litfin, Logan Draack, Colleen Knafla, Branden Weis, Crag Milani, Barb Rucks and Barry Schuldt. Not Pictured: Harvey Doble, Ross Imholte. (Submitted Photo)

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When life hands you lemons...

The important, lifesaving role of AEDs

Submitted Article

Medical emergencies happen every day. Knowledge is everything when faced with a medical emergency. Emergency situations that affect heart health are often navigated thanks to devices known as AEDs. Knowledge of why they're such vital components of medical emergency response protocols can save lives.

What are AEDs?

The American Heart Association notes an automated external defibrillator (AED) is a lightweight and portable device that delivers an electric shock to the heart through the chest when the device detects an abnormal rhythm.

What Calls for the use of an AED?

The AHA notes AEDs help people who experience sudden cardiac arrest, which is often deadly if not treated immediately. Sports fans may recall an incident in January 2023 that played out on national television during Monday Night Football. In that situation, Buffalo Bills safety Damar Hamlin went into cardiac arrest on the field after making a tackle against the Cincinnati Bengals. Those in the stadium and millions more watching at home looked on in fear and uncertainty as Hamlin laid on the field for 10 minutes. It was later revealed that an AED was utilized to restore Hamlin's heartbeat on the field before he was taken away by an ambulance. The

instance involving Hamlin, who has since fully recovered and returned to play for the Bills, underscores the significance of AED training and the benefits of having a readily accessible AED.

Who can use an AED?

The AHA notes AEDs were designed to be used by the general public so anyone with access to the device can save a life when a person goes into cardiac arrest.

Where can an AED be found?

Wider availability of AEDs remains a point of emphasis for many both within and outside the medical community. Educators and coaches remain among the most vocal advocates for AEDs within schools and in places where athletes routinely compete. The AHA recommends AEDs be placed near elevators, cafeterias, main reception areas, and on walls in well-trafficked corridors. Educating individuals, including young athletes, about the location of AEDs and how to use them can be a lifesaving preventive measure.

Is AED training available?

The AHA offers CPR and AED training to individuals within the United States, and information about such sessions can be found at heart.org/CPR. Individuals in Canada also can access such training by visiting the Canadian Red Cross at redcross.ca.

AEDs save lives, and anyone can learn to use these invaluable devices.

Thank you firefighters!

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