

EDITORIALS-OPINIONS-NEWS-OBITUARIES

Clearwater Princesses read to Maggie Mae



CLEARWATER HERITAGE FESTIVAL PRINCESSES CHARLENE AND ALEXIS read to Maggie Mae, the library's visiting therapy dog during the Heritage Festival at the beginning of August. (Submitted Photo).

By Penny Leuthard, Contributing Writer

Therapy dog Maggie Mae visits the Clearwater Public Library once a month for children to practice reading to her. Her August visit coincided with Clearwater's annual Heritage Festival, and Clearwater Heritage Festival Princesses Charlene and Alexis took the opportunity to read to her themselves. Therapy reading dogs provide a variety of benefits to young readers. They cre-

ate a supportive, non-judgmental environment for children to improve their reading skills and build confidence, helping reduce the anxiety some have with reading aloud. They encourage a love of literacy and can help improve overall reading comprehension. Maggie Mae will be at the Clearwater Library again on Sept. 6 and Oct. 4, ready and waiting for more young readers to come in and practice their reading skills with her.

Enough Is Enough

I am calling on state leaders to come clean about a growing pattern of mismanagement and questionable practices under the current administration.

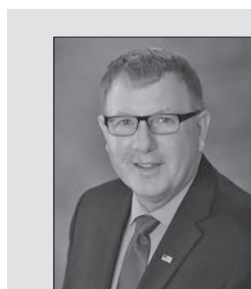
From massive fraud scandals to cybersecurity breaches that disrupt basic government operations, Minnesotans are seeing a troubling trend. Time and time again, problems are swept under the rug, timelines are vague, and accountability is nowhere to be found. We cannot stand for this any longer.

I, along with other House Republican leaders, are demanding answers from St. Paul Mayor Melvin Carter regarding the recent cybersecurity breach that has left Minnesota's capital city operating in a state of limited digital functionality. Nearly two weeks after the breach became public, the city has yet to provide clear information on its scope, severity, or recovery timeline.

Given that Saint Paul is not only Minnesota's capital city but also the administrative hub for state government, the disruption raises serious concerns about the security of the State Capitol Complex, payroll processing, and the integrity of both state and local systems.

When something this serious happens, we should not have to drag information out of our leaders. Each day that goes by without clear answers undermines public trust and raises new questions about what else is being hidden.

In a letter to Mayor Carter, Republican leaders pressed for urgent answers, including:



By Rep. Paul Novotny

- The estimated timeline for fully restoring access to city systems;
- Which systems have been compromised or remain unavailable;
- Whether any employee, resident, or operational data was accessed or exposed;
- The impact on payroll operations and whether employees are receiving full compensation;
- Whether the breach has affected any state, county, or federal systems.

This is bigger than any one incident. Minnesotans are watching a disturbing pattern emerge, and it's time we hold those in power accountable. If our citizens can't trust us to protect their information, safeguard their tax dollars, and tell them the truth, then we have failed in our most basic responsibility.

House Republicans have requested a briefing on the scope of the cybersecurity breach and any related operational disruptions no later than August 12, 2025.

The people of Minnesota deserve the truth—and they deserve it now.

Galapagos Tortoise

I think it would be safe to say that most people are aware of turtles and tortoises. But at the same time, I think there is a lot of confusion surrounding these cool critters. Even those familiar with these reptiles can sometimes have questions about the differences between turtles and tortoises.

Recently while leading a photo tour to the Galapagos Islands, in Ecuador, I had a chance to show my group the difference between turtles and tortoises. The Galapagos Tortoise (*Chelonoidis niger*) is a huge reptile species that is one of three species native to South America. The Galapagos Tortoise is the largest living species of all tortoises.

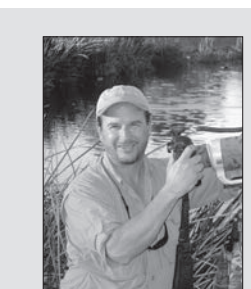
We spent eight days living on a large ship that sailed between many of the Galapagos Islands. One day we went ashore on Santa Cruz Island in hopes that we might find and photograph the giant tortoises. On our way to the Charles Darwin Research Station, we stopped off at a lovely place that specialized in maintaining the native habitat just for the tortoises.

Driving down a red dirt road, we came across our first tortoise. It was slowly walking down the road. It was so large that it took up most of the road and we were unable to pass by it in our vehicle. We all got out and approached the tortoise. Nothing prepares you for how massive these animals become.

Males tend to be larger than females. A large mature male can weigh upwards of 800 pounds and measure six feet long. They stand around three feet tall. On average males are around 400-600 pounds while females run around 300-500 pounds. What is even more impressive is, they obtain this size with an herbivorous diet consisting of cacti, grass, green leaves, lichens and fruits of many tropical trees such as oranges.

Their huge size allows them to build up both fat (food) and water to last them six or seven months without eating or drinking. It is thought that these reserves are what allowed them to move from the mainland of South America to these remote islands, which are over 600 miles off the coast of Ecuador in South America.

The primary difference



By Stan Tekiela, Naturalist

between tortoises and turtles are in their habitat and some basic physical parts. Tortoises are primarily land-dwelling animals. They have large, thick legs and stumpy feet, which are perfect for walking on land. Turtles are aquatic and have feet that are thin and flipper-like, that help propel them through the water. Tortoises tend to live much longer than turtles. Tortoises also have high domed shells. Turtles have flatter more hydrodynamic shaped shells.

The Galapagos Tortoises often live over 100 years making them one of the longest living vertebrates on the planet. In captivity they have lived for over 175 years. The Galapagos Islands are near the equator which means they don't have winter in the traditional sense. They have a wet season and a dry season. This allows the tortoises to be active all year long. Plants on the islands stay green all year providing them with constant food sources. Their mouth is more like a bird's beak, with sharp edges which allows them to eat the flesh of cacti without any issues.

All together, we found and photographed over a dozen mature Galapagos Tortoises which was a thrill of a lifetime for me. Seeing and getting a chance to capture some images of these creatures was something I won't forget for a long time. Until next time. . .

Stan Tekiela is an author / naturalist and wildlife photographer who travels the U.S. to study and capture images of wildlife. He can be followed on www.Instagram.com, www.Facebook.com. He can be contacted via his web page at www.NatureSmart.com.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

TO THE EDITOR:

It was just announced that they are planning on discontinuing the Northstar Train January 4, after the final Vikings regular season game. Now let me remind you why we built the Northstar in the first place, it was to relieve auto congestion on the Hwy. 10 corridor during the weekday morning and afternoon commutes. Being a "public good", you know, "helping the taxpayer get to and from work more efficiently", taxpayer dollars were used to build and subsidize the train. The train was not constructed so that the "sports fans" had an easier way to get to and from sporting events. So you are telling me that instead of closing the Northstar Train down tomorrow, we are going to keep it running, hemorrhaging money all so that we can run (14) special Vikings trains? That's 14 additional round trips in addition to the 420 weekday round trips that would occur between now and January 4. Viking owners, (and you Twins owners too) it seems that you should be covering the trains operating losses between now and January if you are the reason we are not shutting it down sooner.

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

TO THE EDITOR:

Rep. Shane Mekeland did very well in representing repeat DWI offenders when he was one of only five Minnesota legislators to vote against HF2130, a law to increase penalties on those who cause injury, death and property damage by repeatedly driving drunk. Perhaps the victims of that crime don't feel well represented by Mekeland? That law was put forward after two people were killed and over a dozen injured when a repeat DWI driver plowed into an outdoor restaurant terrace. But of course there is a long line of victims over the years. Thankfully, I've never suffered injury but I have suffered property damage on two occasions from folks who couldn't abstain from driving drunk. An overwhelming

majority of his fellow Republicans voted for that common-sense legislation, but Mekeland chose to align with a few fringe reps who don't seem to believe in personal responsibility and accountability. Can anyone take him seriously as a representative with that record?

**Anthony Thompson
Big Lake, MN**

TO THE EDITOR:

"Taxation without representation," grievance 17 of 27 grievances sent to King George by the colonists, is still our battlecry today. The first Congress enacted the Tariff of 1789 to pay war debts and protect fledgling industries. In 1817, Congress abolished the internal taxes to pay for the War of 1812 and abolished all offices and officers to collect them. Lincoln signed a temporary tax act at 3% on income over \$800 to fund the Civil War. The Supreme Court (1895) declared it unconstitutional, according to Article I, Section 9 of the US Constitution. But, the 16th Amendment in 1913 authorized Congress to levy corporate and personal income taxes and established the Bureau of Internal Revenue. President Roosevelt, in 1935, signed the Social Security Act, designating the Bureau to collect revenues at the rate of 1% of the first \$3,000 earned. The Victory Tax surcharge of 1942, to pay WWII debts, raised the rate to 5% on a net income of \$624. In 1953, the Bureau became the Internal Revenue Service. In 2025, We the People again claim the slogan of "taxation without representation." We the People do not directly vote on taxation. The USA is not a democracy, rather a constitutional republic, and we elect politicians to pass laws. Might the reintroduction of tariffs finance government? In his inauguration speech on January 20, 2025, President Trump announced the creation of the External Revenue Service.

**Dr. Phyllis E. VanBuren
Clearwater, MN**

OBITUARIES

Ann Karla (Buhl) Kuschel , 66 Becker, MN

August 14th 1958 – August 8th 2025

Our loving wife, mother and grandmother; Ann Karla (Buhl) Kuschel, 66, of Becker, Minnesota, went to be with the Lord Jesus Christ peacefully on August 8 surrounded by her loved ones after a courageous battle with cancer.

Born on August 14, 1958, in Estherville, Iowa, to Jerome and Violet (Cebulla) Buhl, Ann grew up in Dunnell, Minnesota, and graduated from Sherburn High School. She furthered her education at Granite Falls Vocational and Technical College, where she earned her associates degree as an Optician. She went on to work in the optical field for 20+ years and then also worked as a Chiropractic assistant.

On October 3, 1981, Ann married the love of her life, Ronald L. Kuschel, in Sherburn, Minnesota. Together, they welcomed their son Mathew, in 1982 and built a life filled with love and adventure. In 1987 the couple settled in Becker, where they made their home for nearly four decades.

Ann was a woman with a passion for travel that took her and Ronald across the United States on their motorcycle, exploring the open road and creating countless memories. Their love for adventure also led them to enjoy 13 unforgettable cruises, embracing the beauty of the world together. Ann's warmth and zest for life touched everyone she met, and her devotion to her family was unwavering.

Ann's Love for gardening and plants was a cornerstone of her life, bringing beauty and tranquility to her home and those around her. She had a remarkable gift for nurturing her garden, where vibrant flowers and lush greenery flourished under her care. Whether tending to her colorful flower beds, or cultivating indoor plants, Ann found joy in every bloom and leaf. Her garden was a reflection of her nurturing spirit.

She was a proud grandmother to five grandchildren—Bryce, Bella, Boston, Blayne, and Brielle Kuschel—who brought immense joy to her life. Ann's legacy of love and laughter will live on through them.

Ann was preceded in death by her parents, Jerome and Violet Buhl; brothers, Roger and Donald Buhl; father-in-law, Richard Kuschel; mother-in-law, Renee Kuschel; sisters-in-law, Charlene Hentges and Carol Theisen; and brothers-in-law, Rick Kuschel, Jim Melton, Jerry Freyman and Joel Burmeister.

She is survived by her beloved husband of 44 years, Ronald Kuschel of Becker; her son, Mathew (Cassandra) Kuschel of Clear Lake, MN; her five cherished grandchildren; and her siblings; Kathy (Kevin) Gregg of Courtland, MN, Susan Burmeister of Sherburn, MN, Carol (Bryan) Schafer of Boyceville, WI, and Tom (Deb) Buhl of Jamestown, ND. She is also survived by sisters-in-law Lynn Buhl of Waukon, IA, Rita Buhl, Rosenberg TX, Connie Melton of Peoria, IL, Coleen Freyman of Brooklyn Park MN, and Karen Kuschel of St. Cloud, MN; and brother-in-law, Gary Hentges. Plus, many nieces, nephews, cousins, aunts, uncles and dear friends.

Ann's adventurous spirit, generous heart, and love for her family will be deeply missed but forever remembered by all who knew her. A celebration of her life will be held at the Williams Dingmann Funeral Home in Becker, MN on Wednesday, August 20th from 4-7pm.

Ann liked to donate to the Becker Area Food shelf and Sharing and Caring Hands in Minneapolis.

In lieu of flowers or gifts, please donate to one of those great organizations. Or feel free to make one to the charity of your choice.

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PUBLIC NOTICES

CITY OF BIG LAKE NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING FOR A CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT FOR AN ACCESSORY COMMERCIAL DAYCARE AT 3 LAKE STREET

You are hereby notified that the Big Lake Planning Commission will hold a public hearing to consider a Conditional Use Permit to allow an accessory commercial daycare at 311 Lake Street. The hearing will be held in the Big Lake City Hall Council Chambers located at 160 Lake Street North on **Tuesday, September 2** at **6:00 p.m.**, or shortly thereafter.

Applicant: Crystal Bray-Cotten, Woodland Explorers, LLC, 8553 Fairhill Lane, Monticello, MN 55362

Owner: Saron Lutheran Church, 311 Lake Street S, Big Lake, MN 55309

Location: 311 Lake Street S, Big Lake, MN 55309

PID: #65-00019-3402

Request(s): A conditional use permit to allow an accessory commercial daycare facility in the AG zoning district as allowed by Section 1006.07 of the Zoning Ordinance.

If you desire to be heard in reference to this matter, you are encouraged to attend the scheduled public hearing or submit written comments to City Hall prior to the hearing. Comments can be emailed to Consultant Planner Kendra Lindahl, AICP at klindahl@landform.net or mailed to City Hall at 160 Lake Street North. /s/ Kendra Lindahl, AICP Consulting City Planner City of Big Lake (Published in the *Patriot*: 08/16/25.)

STATE OF MINNESOTA DISTRICT COURT COUNTY OF SHERBURNE TENTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT PROBATE DIVISION

**Court File No. 25PR-319
In Re the Estate of Dawn M.
Hansen Brisbin, Decedent.**

NOTICE AND ORDER FOR HEARING ON PETITION FOR DESCENT OF PROPERTY.

A Petition for Determination of Descent has been filed with this Court. The Petition represents that the Decedent died more than three years ago, leaving property in Minnesota and requests the descent of such property be determined and assigned by this Court to the persons entitled to the property.

Any objections to the Petition must be filed with the Court prior to or raised at the hearing. If proper, and no objections are filed or raised, the Petition may be granted.

IT IS ORDERED and Notice is further given, that the Petition will be heard on October 22, 2025, at 1:30 P.M., by this Court at

13880 Business Center Drive NW, Elk River, Minnesota.

1. Notice shall be given to all interested persons (MINN. STAT. § 524.1-401) and persons who have filed a demand for notice pursuant to Minnesota Statutes section 524.3-204.

2. Notice shall be given by publishing this Notice and Order as provided by law and by mailing a copy of this Notice and Order at least 14 days prior to the hearing date.

Dated: July 28, 2025
/s/ Blayne Graves,
Deputy Court Administrator
Attorney for Petitioner:
Adam J. Kaufman
Henningson & Snoxell, Ltd.
6900 Wedgwood Road, Suite 200
Maple Grove, MN, 55311
Attorney License No: 0328868
Telephone: (763) 560-5700
FAX: (763) 560-0119
Email:
adam.kaufman@henningson.com
(Published in the *Patriot*: 08/09/25, 08/16/25).

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Nonprofit roundtable yields results

Submitted Article

Last week, 29 different Becker area organizations met at the Becker Community Center for the first ever Mayor's Nonprofit Roundtable. The goals for the meeting were to create a resource list that could be shared with the community, as well as to establish connections between groups to create synergy and collaboration.

"I want to thank the groups that came together and shared information about their nonprofits,"

Becker Mayor Mark Kolbinger said. "It was an important meeting with a clear purpose, and I could not be more proud of the great work these groups are doing in our community."

Kolbinger states that the resource list should be available on the community section of the city website within a couple of weeks, and there is still time for other nonprofits to be included.

"Our residents will be able to see the many opportunities that are available because of these groups,

and I think everyone will be able to find a cause they can support," Kolbinger said. "Within a few hours of the meeting, we were able to connect one of these groups with a family in need of support and I see many more success stories in the coming weeks and months."

The individuals in attendance overwhelmingly voted in favor of making the meeting an annual one, where information and ideas can be shared.

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Palmer Twp. Cleans Up Park in Preparation of Palmer Day

By Katie Cantin,
Contributing Writer

Supervisor Mitch Wip-
per said that, in anticipation
of Palmer Day, about 10
trees were removed at the
park. Palmer Day will be
held on September 6 this
year.

In other parks news, the
board spent \$2,000 last year
on trees from Briggs Lake
Nursery, who donated an
extra \$200 in trees, during
a half-off sale. The board
moved to spend the same
amount again on some
more trees, as the nursery is
running a sale again.

The water at the park
was tested, which happens
every three years, with
nothing to report.

The ball program is
over for the season. Super-
visor Michael Ganz said
they would look to redo the
back fencing near one of
the diamonds, and that may
happen this fall.

A little while ago, sev-
eral local kids vandalized
the park. Supervisor Ganz
said the families of two of
the kids sent some money
to the township to help
with the clean up, and Ganz
spoke with the kids about
their actions.

Rad s Update

The supervisors re-
ported that brushing has
been underway for the past
couple of weeks, and crack
filling should begin soon.

The culvert work had to
be delayed due to weather,
and the board shared an
updated schedule. Unfor-
tunately, the township will
not be able to finish the
project before school starts,
and bus routes will be af-
fected. But the board did
not want to put the project
off for fear of losing the
great price they got for the
work.

Northern Reliability
will be doing work at a cou-
ple of places in the town-
ship starting this fall. They
may have to use township
roads to complete the work,
but representatives said
they would let the town
board know ahead of time
if that would be the case.

In Other Business, the Bar d:

- Heard the fire report,
which included 23 calls for
service, two of those being
for trees on power lines;
- Heard about the up-
coming Three Lakes Im-
provement District annual
meeting;
- Noted that they have
not yet received a check
from the county for cleanup
day, but that the township
portion was about \$4,000
and the county portion was
about \$ 7,000.

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POST OFFICE from page 1

the post office in Becker without an interruption to service. He
has called numerous postmasters in the state and beyond and
can never get a solid response. He has contacted Congressman
Tom Emmer and presented him with proposals to keep the post
office valid, but to no avail (so far).

Word is that if the post office closes in Becker, the mail
will be re-routed to the Monticello branch where current
Becker drivers will have to drive to to load their trucks and
return to Becker and surrounding areas for delivery. Word is
that Big Lake has outgrown their post office space and are also
looking for a home, but they too may be subject to calling the
Monticello branch their temporary home should a resolution
not be reached in the near future.

Mayor Kolbinger was recently interviewed by a reporter
from *Channel 5 News* and he spoke of the frustration he has had
to face since the October deadline looms just around the corner.
“The post office has been around for over three years that this
lease was going to end in October,” Kolbinger says. “They’ve
done nothing to determine where the new post office is going
to be.”

Numerous concerned citizens have come forward with
their concerns as well. In the *Channel 5* piece, 88-year-old cit-
izen Janet Voigt described how she walks almost every day to
the post office to get her mail.

“It gets me out of the house a little bit,” she said. “And I
meet people I enjoy saying hi to.”

Another citizen, who is a local, rural carrier, says “the
Monticello P.O. is ill-equipped to handle this consolidation
(Becker, Monticello and Big Lake merge). With 27 vehicles
(nine postal, two rural, 10 carrier personal, three clerks, one
postmaster, one supervisor) and only eight empty parking
spaces daily, adding Becker’s 16 confirmed vehicles would
exceed capacity, creating logistical chaos.”

He went on to say the lack of a dedicated loading area
and limited workspace—estimated at 1,500–3,000 square feet,
raises safety concerns, especially during the winter package
season when 8–16 additional sorting hampers for Becker routes
will reduce available space.

“The Minnesota State Fire Code’s requirement of 150
square feet per person further underscores the risk of over-
crowding,” he said. “Commuting between Monticello and
Becker, particularly in Minnesota’s harsh winters, also poses
safety risks for carriers and adds unnecessary mileage, increas-
ing costs and environmental impact.”

Is it too late to find a way to keep a post office in Becker?
It sure appears to be that way.

The USPS provides critical support to communities across
the state by the delivery of goods to businesses, medicine to
disabled veterans, and ballots to local election offices, to name
a few. In many instances, USPS is seen as a type of lifeline
to area communities and a breach in services would result in
devastating consequences for businesses and residents alike.

Submitted Article

Great River Faith in
Action (GRFIA) has been
working with multiple
youth groups lately to co-
ordinate projects for senior
citizens in the group’s area
this summer.

In July, GRFIA
worked with two wonderful
churches looking to serve
their neighbors. Oakwood
Church and Becker E Free
Church which had amazing
turnouts.

Oakwood Church youth
served two different home-
owners with yard work,
weeding, mowing and more
on one evening.

“They served and loved
on these folks so well,” said
GRFIA Executive Director
Maureen Baty.

ELEVATORS of Becker
Evangelical Free Church
served five homeowners
with outdoor projects over
three different days. Since
the weather didn’t cooper-
ate for painting or staining
as planned, this group fo-
cused on weeding and also
went above and beyond —
they picked up grocer-

ies and made a meal for one
of the widows they helped.
For another senior, instead
of painting outside, they
helped organize her craft
area.

“This service that they
perform is not only supply-
ing the needs of the Lord’s
people but is also overflow-
ing in many expressions of
thanks to God,” says Baty.
“Great River Faith in Action
loves coordinating projects
for senior citizens in our
community that need some
help living safely in their
homes. We are SO grate-
ful for our amazing church
partners and the volunteers
that did such a great job!”

A LOCAL ELDERLY MAN
(right photo) was the ben-
eficiary of the generosity
imparted by youth groups
under the guidance of Beck-
er’s Great River Faith in Ac-
tion organization. (Submitted
Photo).

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Bandit Season Ends

By Mark Kolbinger, Contributing Writer

The Becker Bandits amateur baseball team was eliminated from the Minnesota Baseball Association playoffs last week with a 0-2 loss to the Braham Snappers in the Regional playoffs.

Becker's bats were silent in the game, as they managed just 3 hits total.

Kellan Graning started on the mound and was very good, going 6.1 innings and striking out 7 Snappers and allowed no hits. His one run surrendered was unearned. Weston Schug came on in relief and finished off the game, yielding one earned run on just one hit.

The Bandits finished the season with a 7-11-2 record.

License Center Warning About DVS Scam

Submitted Article

The Minnesota Department of Driver and Vehicle Services is warning of scam emails and text s reqe sting payments.

People are getting emails and texts claiming to be from "Minnesota Department of Motor Vehicles (DPSMN)," "Minnesota (DVS)" or "Minnesota Department of Vehicle Administration (DMV)" about outstanding penalties and traffic tickets. The real Minnesota DVS never sends texts or emails asking for money or saying money is due.

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Horseshoe Club finishes 36th season

By Bill Morgan, Editor

The Santiago Horseshoe Club held their final meet of the season last Saturday in Becker.

On a cool, August day, the pitchers and their wives enjoyed a potluck picnic before starting the double-elimination tournament. There were four teams remaining out of the nine that pitched in the event and in the first round, the two teams playing on Court 5 were 2-1.

Paul Secord of rural Foley and Dave Henne of Duelm defeated George Peterson and Dennis Barutt — both of Becker. With the loss, Peterson and Barutt were eliminated, finishing in the fourth spot.

On Court 3, Don Claseman of St. Cloud and Russ Girtz of rural Big Lake defeated Rich Alickson and his grandson, Cody — both of Santiago. The win put Claseman and Girtz at 4-0

while Rich and Cody finished at 2-1.

Secord and Henne went on to defeat the Alicksons to capture third place.

That left Claseman and Girtz at 4-0 against Secord and Henne with Claseman and Girtz winning 117-103 in the “count all” match. The win also meant Russ and Don became only the fourth team to accomplish this feat in

the 36-year history of the league.

Al Bloomer of Princeton and Mike Hoffman of Becker were second. In third place were Cam Lheurevy and Reid St. George. Peterson and Barutt rounded out the money winners in the league, finishing fourth.

It appears the club will be continuing to play despite some doubts over the years as to who would take the reins. President Brian Wipper, Secretary/Treasurer Don Claseman and MN State President Russ Girtz have dedicated their services to keep it running.

Ten club members will be pitching in the annual state tournament over Labor Day weekend in Genola, MN,

