

Youth

Proposed legislation aiming to address youth crime by fostering collaboration between law enforcement, community programs, and young community members has been laid over for further consideration by a Minnesota Senate Committee.

Lieutenant Kelly O'Rourke with the Minneapolis Police Department says in the 22 years he's spent investigating violent crime related to gangs, which he notes is highly comprised of manipulated youth, he's noticed something needed to change.

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[awyouthcrime4.mp3] : 11 (THE BIGGER PICTURE)

"There's been no checks and balances... This is intended to reach youth younger and quicker so we have a solution right away to make sure something's in play while we figure out the bigger picture."

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The bill targets Ramsey, Hennepin, and Anoka counties, with Senator Clare Oumou Verbeten (oo-mow ver-baten) of St. Paul, the bill's author, citing the high level of youth crime in these areas. She suggests potential expansion statewide in the future.

The Summer 2024 Recreation brochure from the City of Fergus Falls is now available online! The guide is full of things for kids (and adults) to do all summer long. Registration opens at 8 a.m. on Monday, April 1 and will be online only. The link will be put on the home page of the city's website and shared on the Facebook page.

Seventy-five trees were removed from Roosevelt Park in Fergus Falls Thursday. To prepare the site for construction of an outdoor community pool, Tradesmen Construction is clearing the site this week because the ground is frozen and more resilient to the heavy equipment used during the process.

The location of the aquatic center was determined by the City Council with input from the task force and consultants who have been working on the project since 2016 and was approved by the voters in 2022. The WPA picnic shelter and restroom will remain, as will the skate park. The Otter Riser Kiwanis picnic shelter and the playground equipment have already been removed and will be placed in another park.

Assuming favorable weather, construction begins in April on the facility which was approved by voters in November 2022 and is scheduled to open by Memorial Day 2025. The \$10.8 million project will feature a zero-depth entry pool, waterslide, a four-lane lap swimming pool, changing rooms and showers, lockers and a concession area.

On Monday January 8th, the Fergus Falls Fire Department had its first night of the Fire Explorer's Meeting, teaching youths about the history of the fire service tonight at the Otter Tail County Historical Society Museum.

The event aimed to impart valuable insights into the historical evolution of the fire service to young participants.

A1 Chris Schuelke, the Executive Director of the Otter Tail County Historical Society, delivered an engaging presentation focused on the historical equipment showcased at the museum. In a Facebook post capturing the essence of the event, Mr. Schuelke shared the following:

"Nice visit from the Fergus Falls Fire Department - Did a little talk on the department's history including the importance of Prince Honeycutt, one of Minnesota's first African American firemen."

This collaborative initiative between the Fergus Falls Fire Department and the Otter Tail County Historical Society underscores the commitment to educating the community on the storied heritage of firefighting and its noteworthy figures.

MN Gas Prices Stay Low Despite National Increase

(Undated) -- Average gas prices in Minnesota have fallen 3.9 cents per gallon in the last week, averaging \$2.77 a gallon. This compares to the national average increase of point-six cents per gallon, to \$3.04. Gas Buddy says last week was a bit of a mixed bag, with gas prices increasing early on but falling again as the situation in the Red Sea continues to drive market volatility.

Fargo-Moorhead effort nearly reaches goal of packing 10M meals for starving children

(Fargo, ND) -- Volunteers in the Fargo-Moorhead area didn't quite reach their goal of packing 10 million meals for starving children by the end of day Sunday, but they got very close at 9,712,224. Organizers say it is the largest meal pack in the history of Feed My Starving Children and will feed over 26-thousand kids every day for a year. Spokesman Dave Gunnlaugsson (GUN-lawg-son) says over 27-thousand volunteers turned out over 10 days "to help feed kids, families and communities around the world." The Fargo-Moorhead effort also holds the Feed My Starving Children record for the most meals packed in a single two-hour shift -- over 985 thousand -- and the most boxes packed at a single station -- 85, by a team of 15 people.

It's "Take a Kid Ice Fishing Weekend" starting tomorrow (Sat) through Monday however DNR officials are asking you to use extreme caution:

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[tricesmart1.mp3] :13 "IS SAFE"

(Some of the lakes up north have frozen in finally. Ice is getting deeper where they are letting people out again but if you are traveling to northern Minnesota, please call a resort double check see where the ice is safe)

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The DNR's Benji Kohn says as of now, he wouldn't venture out on any ice from St. Cloud and south:

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[tricesmart2.mp3] :06 "TAKE SOME TIME"

(Everybody assumes from this cold weather that's coming in that the ice is going to build quickly. It does take some time)

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Kohn says if you do venture out wear a life jacket or float coat, bring along the property safety gear including ice picks, and never go out alone; let someone know about trip plans and expected return home.

The Richland Wilkin Emergency Food Pantry (RWEFP) is fighting food insecurity in schools with their Food for Kids Backpack Program. The Backpack Program's mission is to provide a bag of food to any K-5th grade student in Richland or Wilkin county that is at risk for being hungry over the weekend.

Sharon Bladow, RWEFP Coordinator, says that over the last few years, the number of requests has been stagnant, until this year, when they hit their record high, she says, "In December, our numbers went up to 382. Last year, when the school year ended, we were at 340. Right now, we're at 371, consistently higher than anytime last year."

The record amounts of food requests the RWEFP have received is happening amid Minnesota's record breaking year for food shelves. Angelica Klebsch with Second Harvest Heartland says Minnesota food shelves saw over seven million visits in 2023, which was two million more than the amount seen in 2022, and she expects 2024 to be another record year.

If you'd like to donate to the Richland Wilkin Backpack Program, you can send a check to 699 8th Avenue South, Wahpeton, ND, 58075, or click [here](#) to visit their Facebook page.

The University of Minnesota Extension Office welcomes Rachel Wahlstrom to the West Otter Tail County (WOTC) Extension team. As a former Otter Tail County 4-H member, Wahlstrom will return to the program as an Extension Educator to lead a range of 4-H Youth Development programs. Her primary role as an Extension Educator will be to provide a range of activities engaging youth to learn and lead in 4-H experiences.

“I grew up as an avid 4-Header in West Otter Tail County, which spurred my interest in becoming an educator,” shared Wahlstrom. “I appreciate how 4-H is always evolving to be more inclusive by creating different projects for youth to pursue their passions.”

Wahlstrom shared that her favorite part about being an educator is creating relationships with involved youth, creating strong volunteer structures, and recruiting new members to join the fun. She added being a lifelong learner is also incredibly important to becoming a responsibly engaged citizen.

“I’m excited to give back to an organization and community that established many foundational building blocks in my life,” she said. “I’m thrilled to continue teaching and coaching in a new and different capacity with WOTC 4-H.”

>>USA Hockey Congress Mandates Neck Guards for Players 18 and Under

(Colorado Springs, CO) – Starting August 1st, hockey neck guards are mandated for all age players, other than adults, after the U-S-A Hockey Congress passed legislation requiring the protection. The move comes in response to the death of Hibbing, Minnesota native Adam Johnson, whose neck was cut by an errant skate in October 2023. In a statement, U-S-A Hockey executive director Pat Kelleher says, "The overwhelming opinion was that the time is appropriate to modify our rules." The legislation also "strongly" encourages all adult players to wear neck guards and requires all on-ice officials under 18 to wear neck protection.

>>St. Paul Central Softball Team Headed to Washington to Visit VP Harris

(St. Paul, MN) -- Members of the St. Paul Central High School softball team are headed to Washington, D-C today (Tues) after getting an invite from Vice President Kamala Harris. They will be part of a Women's History Month event Wednesday at the vice president's residence. The team was practicing on March 14th when Vice President Harris showed up unexpectedly in St. Paul. She talked about the importance of women in sports and later invited the team to the nation's capital. A Central High School Go Fund Me page raised more than 17 thousand dollars for the trip.

>>Wet, Heavy Snow Helps Alleviate Some Drought Issues in Minnesota

(St. Paul, MN) -- The wet, heavy snow from the late March storm is good news for areas of Minnesota suffering from drought conditions. State Climatologist Kenny Blumenfeld (BLOOM'-in-feld) says we really needed the moisture after an extremely dry winter. He says this will help alleviate some if not many of the short-term deficits in precipitation that we've accumulated over the last three or four months. The U-S-D-A reported that more than 99 percent of Minnesota was abnormally dry and 74 percent was in a moderate drought last Thursday. Blumenfeld says a lot of people are excited to get around two inches of precipitation from this storm system. There's more snow and a rain-snow mix in today's (Tues) forecast.

>>MN Senate to Choose New Majority Leader as Dziejdzic's Cancer Returns

(St. Paul, MN) – With only one week until lawmakers begin the 2024 legislative session in Saint Paul, Senate Democrats must choose a new majority leader because Kari Dziejdzic (DEED-zick) is stepping down due to a recurrence of cancer. Hamline University political analyst David Schultz says the question is, can the next majority leader hold Senate Democrats together on many controversial votes, as Dziejdzic did in 2023? Schultz notes "Depending on whether or not she is even able to show up for votes, there may be many critical votes where the Democrats just don't have the 34 votes they need to be able to move their agenda." Schultz notes Democrats have a razor-thin one-vote majority in the Minnesota Senate.

>>Changes to MN Child Tax Credit Allows Eligible Families to Receive \$1,750 Per Child

(St. Paul, MN) – As tax season begins to kick into high gear, State Revenue Commissioner Paul Marquart says there are some new changes to the child tax credit where a qualifying Minnesota family can now receive up to \$1,750 per child. Marquart says there is no limit to the number of eligible children a taxpayer can claim. In addition, this is a refundable credit, meaning you can receive a refund even if you do not owe tax. More information can be found on the Minnesota Department of Revenue's website.

Rothsay Celebrates Senior Night with Convincing Win Over Lake Park-Audubon

Rothsay celebrated senior night in style with a convincing 57-40 victory over Lake Park-Audubon. The Tigers asserted their dominance early, securing a comfortable 27-14 halftime lead. Savannah Sullivan led the charge for Rothsay with an impressive performance, contributing 29 points and 4 rebounds. McKenzie Tillman added 9 points and 8 rebounds, while Mia Rivers chipped in with 7 points and 5 rebounds. Rothsay (13-10, 8-8 LEC) looks forward to home matchups against Parkers Prairie and Wheaton/Herman-Norcross.

Alemadi Named MCAC South Division Men's Basketball Athlete of the Week

Belind Alemadi, guard for Minnesota State Community and Technical College, earned recognition as the MCAC South Division Men's Basketball Athlete of the Week. Alemadi's outstanding performance included scoring 57 points, shooting 51.1% from the field and 40% from behind the arc. Additionally, he contributed 19 rebounds, six assists, four steals, and two blocks in the Spartans' two games during the week. Alemadi's stellar season sees him on the brink of scoring his 300th point.

Three Otters Swimmers Earn All-Conference Honorable Mention at CLC Meet

Sartell-St. Stephen claimed victory in the Boys Central Lakes Conference team championship, with Fergus Falls showcasing notable performances in various events. Reece Hansen, Matthew Tuel, and Jaden Kwapinski received All-Conference Honorable Mention recognition for their exceptional performances. The meet saw impressive displays of skill and determination from Fergus Falls and Alexandria swimmers across multiple events.

Spartan Men Secure Crucial Win Over Western Tech

The M State Men's Basketball team delivered an impressive performance, securing a decisive 91-70 victory over Western Technical College. The Spartans showcased their dominance, trailing only once in the game at 12-11. With a halftime lead of 46-37, M State maintained their momentum, leading by as much as 25 points in the second half. With this crucial win, M State (13-11, 5-6 MCAC South) finds themselves tied for the fourth playoff spot in the South division, setting the stage for an intense showdown against Ridgewater with playoff implications.

>>Fair State Brewing Cooperative Files for Chapter 11 Bankruptcy

(Minneapolis, MN) -- Minneapolis-based Air State Brewing Cooperative is filing for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protections. Fair State co-founder Evan Sallee says it's to restructure the cooperative's debt following COVID-19-related setbacks. Sallee says Fair State's taproom in northeast Minneapolis will remain open and he's encouraging Minnesotans to purchase their products at bars and liquor stores. Fair State is Minnesota's first cooperatively-owned microbrewery.

>>U of M study Finds Bias-Based Bullying Creates higher Levels of Emotional Distress in Youth

(Minneapolis, MN) – A new study from the University of Minnesota Medical School shows youth who experience bias-based bullying, defined as racist, homophobic, or transphobic bullying, have much greater levels of emotional distress. Professor Marla Eisenberg says they used data from nearly 80,000 high school students across the state, looking at who suffered from the most emotional distress through five indicators, including depression and anxiety symptoms, self-harming behavior, suicidal ideation, and suicide attempts. Eisenberg says they found the level of emotional distress was as much as 60% lower in adolescents with the same social positions but no bias-based bullying experience.

>>Pine County Sheriff Thanks K9s for Assisting in Drug Busts

(Pine City, MN) -- The Pine County Sheriff's Office is praising its police dogs for their efforts in recent drug busts. Deputies say the K-9s assisted in three investigations in one day and five drug seizures in the last three days. Authorities recovered methamphetamine, cocaine, and M-30 fentanyl pills. Pine County officials are thanking their K-9s Hazard, Luda, and Chaos along with K-9 Layka from the Mille Lacs Tribal Police Department.

The Otter girls' hockey team is going back to state! Fergus Falls was a 5-1 winner over Northern Lakes on Tuesday night in the Section 6A championship match. The Otters put 28 shots on the Northern Lakes net, scoring a pair of goals in each of the first two periods and adding a third period goal

Fergus Falls, MN – Before children can read, they are enthralled by the pictures on the pages of books read to them by family and friends. The sole best artist of children's books is awarded the Randolph Caldecott Medal each year. The Fergus Falls Public Library hosts former Caldecott Committee member, Gail Nordstrom, to lead a workshop on Saturday, February 17th. Nordstrom will share her experience and knowledge about what makes a picture book distinguished. During the workshop participants will get to apply their newly refined visual literacy skills to evaluate recent Caldecott Award books.

The Otto Bremer Trust awarded \$14.32 million in grants and program-related investments in December 2023 and January 2024. Empowering Kids Perham was one of the organizations awarded. They received \$45,000 for general operations to provide therapeutic, recreational and learning opportunities for neurodivergent youth.

>>200K Coming to Minneapolis for Big Ten Tourney, Other Events

(Minneapolis, MN) -- Major events are expected to draw more than 200 thousand people to Minneapolis over the next week and a half. Meet Minneapolis C-E-O Melvin Tennant says the Big Ten Women's Basketball Tournament starts today (Wed) at Target Center and is sold out for the first time because of N-C-A-A all-time scoring leader Caitlin Clark of Iowa. An estimated 109 thousand fans are expected and the Big Ten Men's Basketball Tournament is at Target Center next week. Tennant says the schedule of events will help restaurants, bars, hotels and other attractions in Minneapolis.

>>Puck Drops on Minnesota Boys State Hockey Tournament

(St. Paul, MN) -- The 2024 Minnesota State Boys High School Hockey Tournament gets underway today (Wed) at the Xcel Energy Center. Warroad and New Ulm face off in the first Class-A quarterfinal at 11 am, and St. Cloud Cathedral plays Northfield in the second game at 1 o'clock this afternoon. It's Hermantown versus Alexandria at 6 pm and defending 1-A champion Mahtomedi (mah-tuh-MEE'-dye) takes on Orono (OAR'-uh-noh) in the late game at 8pm. The Class 2-A quarterfinals begin Thursday morning in St. Paul.

Boy Scout Troop 305 will be having their Annual French Toast and Sausage Breakfast on Sunday March 17th from 8 until noon. This year, they will be combining their breakfast with their Scouting for Food campaign, where they ask for non-perishable donations for the Fergus Falls Food Shelf. The breakfast will be at Living Faith Church in Fergus Falls.

>>Minnesota Among Super Tuesday States

(Undated) -- Voters in Minnesota will soon be heading to the polls for the Presidential Primary. Minnesota is among a cluster of states for Super Tuesday. There's still an opportunity to vote early by absentee or mail-in ballot. More information is available online at sos-dot-state-dot-mn-dot-us

>>MSHSL Needs Officials for Spring Sports

(Brooklyn Center, MN) -- If you're interested in officiating for spring sports in Minnesota, the Minnesota State High School League (MSHSL) is looking for officials and umpires for various sports, including softball, baseball, lacrosse, track and field, and boys' volleyball, a new state-regulated sport that will begin spring 2025. To learn more or sign up, visit the MSHSL website. (<https://www.mshsl.org/>)

Northern Minnesota Robotics Conference

The NMRC will be holding its annual "Week 0" event for regional High School Robotics teams in Brainerd, MN on Saturday Feb 17th. The event will be held in the gymnasium at Riverside Elementary School. This is the NMRC's 2nd annual "Week 0" event which will showcase robots from 24 teams from across Northern MN and North Dakota.

It will be the first opportunity of the season for teams to come together and compete to see just how good their new creations are. It serves as the launching point for the six week long competition season which will feature major events in Duluth, Grand Forks, and St. Cloud here in our territory.

Doors will open at 7:30 AM on Saturday. The event is expected to continue throughout the day with a lunch break from 12:00-1:00 and the final matches concluding around 4:00 PM. Admission is free and open to the public.

Now that breakfast and lunch are free for all students in Minnesota's schools, they need more time to eat them. That's the position of the Minnesota School Nutrition Association. Right now, determining the amount of time for lunch is up to the individual school districts. The School Nutrition Association wants the state legislature to require all students to have at least 15 minutes of seat time within the lunch period to eat their meals and reduce food waste:

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[trschoollunch1.mp3] :20 "SLOWER EATERS"

(Typically, a class or a grade would have so much time to get through a lunch line and eat. But if you are the last person in line and we are serving 10-15 percent more in our school that last student might only get five-ten minutes to eat and that's not enough time, especially for our elementary kids who are a little bit slower eaters)

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Darcy Stueber (steeb-er) the Public Policy Committee Chair for the Minnesota School Nutrition Association says their 2024 Position Paper also wants the state to reimburse schools 50 cents for each carton of milk provided to students who bring a cold lunch. They also want a one-time infusion of state funds to retire old meal debts.