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FOOD SHELF
Minnetonka High School's Interact Club creates food shelf on campus
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Tonka girls resume state title quest
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Santa Claus visits pups at Helping Paws for Give to the Max Day







(SUN PHOTOS BY NATALIE TRIMBLE)

TOP LEFT: Beth Brown and Helping Paws volunteer Jordy Stradtman pose with their dog Petra for a photo with Santa Claus at Helping Paws' Winter Wonderland event for Give to the Max Day Nov. 20. **TOP CENTER:** Wendy Khabie, founder/owner of Khabie Communications, greets a furry friend, PJ. **TOP RIGHT:** Rick Ebner, Lisa Shaw and dog Eila meet Santa Claus. **ABOVE LEFT:** Foster trainer Terri Bevins poses with Golden Retriever Tia. **ABOVE CENTER:** Helping Paws visitor Raiden happily greets guests. **ABOVE RIGHT:** A festive holiday snack table is available for Santa's guests.

District 49 Sen. Steve Cwodzinski announces retirement after term ends

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State Sen. Steve Cwodzinski (DFL-Eden Prairie) announced on Nov. 17 that he won't be seeking re-election at the end of his current term in 2026, closing the chapter on more than a decade-long career in the Minnesota Senate.

His retirement begins in 2027, following the end of his third term in the Minnesota Senate.

The District 49 senator first pondered the idea of retirement around one year ago and came to a decision earlier this year.

"I have two grandkids that live in Minnetonka and I just want to spend more time with them and my lifetime friends," Cwodzinski says. "All of my professional friends and my friends I've stayed in contact with from high school, they're all retired. I'm the only one still working."

He's ready to turn his focus towards tackling his pile of fiction books sitting on his bedside table, spending more time outdoors and catching up with old friends.

Prior to his work in the Senate, he had a 33-year teaching career at Eden Prairie High School, where he taught U.S. government and citizenship. He shared that it was one of his former high school students who encouraged him to run for election in the Minnesota Senate.

Among Cwodzinski's proudest accomplishments as the District 49 senator is when he became the chief author of the Menstrual Equity Bill, which made feminine products in grade school bathrooms free to young girls who can't afford them. He also focused heavily on improving public school education, advocating for environmental conservation and expanding

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(SUN PHOTO BY NATALIE CIERZAN)

Sen. Steve Cwodzinski (DFL-Eden Prairie) introduces himself at the legislative breakfast held earlier this year at Hopkins North Middle School.

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mental health services.

He credits his work as an educator for his healthy approach to working with lawmakers of a differing political party. "The Republicans that I have become friends with are great people. They care about the exact same things I do– families, budgets, schools and creating opportunities for young people to succeed in the American dream," Cwodzinski said. "They want the same things I do; we just might disagree on how to get there."

The lawmaker hopes that the next person to fill his seat in the Senate is open to listening to the wide range of political beliefs seen across District 49, calling it a "very purple district." He emphasizes the importance of making all community members feel heard, regardless of a lawmaker's personal beliefs on a matter.

While Cwodzinski has just over 12 months left of his third and final term as the senator for District 49, he looks forward to the time spent with his family and friends and is eager to get to work for his district with the time he has left.

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