SUN SAILOR
MINNETONKA / EXCELSIOR / EDEN PRAIRIE

ELECTIONS

Hartland, Hyman, Wilhelm Garbers elected to Hopkins School Board

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SEMI-FINALS

Quarterbacks have special bond

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(SUN PHOTO BY NATALIE TRIMBLE)

Forest Hills Elementary Principal Joel Knorr unveils the National Blue Ribbon School 2025 sign to students and staff at the Blue Ribbon Bash on Nov. 5.



(PHOTO COURTESY OF EDEN PRAIRIE SCHOOLS)

A sea of blue floods the Forest Hills Elementary cafeteria.

Eden Prairie Schools: Forest Hills Elementary recognized as a top school in the nation

School received Blue Ribbon School award by the Minnesota Department of Education

NATALIE TRIMBLE
natalie.trimble@apgecm.com

Forest Hills Elementary is now a 2025 National Blue Ribbon School and was recognized in both of the program's award categories: Exemplary High Performing Schools and Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools.

The Exemplary HP Schools award is given to schools whose students are among the highest performing in reading/language arts and mathematics in their state. To receive the Exemplary GAP Schools award, schools must have made significant progress in closing achievement gaps across student sub-groups in addition to the schoolwide average over the years.

Only seven schools in the state receive this recognition annually and are chosen based on academic results over time, high participation in state assessments and a school's overall learning environment.

"This award is not just about academics; this is about the space that you all create and you're all a part of creating and that's so important," Eden Prairie Schools Superintendent Josh Swanson said.

This is the third school in the District to receive this award, following Eden Prairie High School's recognition in 1996 and Oak Point Elementary in 2023.

The U.S. Department of Education announced in August that this would be the final year of the Blue Ribbon program before its discontinuation, but that didn't stop Forest Hills from celebrating the achievement.

Students, staff and proud community members celebrated the school's accomplishment at a Blue Ribbon Bash on Nov. 5 in the school's cafeteria, flooding the room with blue shirts, flags and other blue-colored accessories.

Eden Prairie Mayor Ron Case, State Sen. Steve Cwodzinski (DFL-Eden Prairie) and Outreach Director for U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar's office, Patrick Kelliher, were all in attendance.

Some of the guest speakers at the event included Forest Hills Principal Joel Knorr; Superintendent Swanson; Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Education Felicia Thames; former Principal Connie Hytjan; and teachers Amber Amundson and Jessica Cozza.

Both Amundson and Cozza have children attending Forest Hills and emphasized the trust they have in the school's ability to protect, challenge and encourage their children throughout their learning journey.

"The phrase 'it takes a village' has never felt more true to me than it has now, as both a parent and a teacher," Amundson said. "Forest Hills truly is that village; one built on connection, care and collaboration."

The celebratory ceremony concluded with students and staff singing the school song followed by the uncovering of the new 2025 National Blue Ribbon sign that is now on display in the school's cafeteria.

Minnetonka Theatre partners with ICA Food Shelf to help locals this holiday season

ICA Food Shelf to provide 1,000 turkey dinners to local families in need with help from Theatre

NATALIE TRIMBLE
natalie.trimble@apgecm.com

The holiday season is fast approaching and ICA Food Shelf's annual turkey dinner program is in full-effect. The program began Nov. 1 and will continue until it has provided turkey dinners to 1,000 local families in need.

This season, Minnetonka Theatre is partnering with ICA Food Shelf during its high school production of "OLIVER!" to encourage community members to donate to the cause to help the food shelf cover program expenses.

"We anticipate that it will cost about $50,000 when the program is said and done," said Matt Dymoke, director of development and communications at ICA Food Shelf. "We're expanding our services here at ICA outside of our turkey program right now to help meet some of the growing needs and raising funds to do that."

Dymoke explained that the food shelf sees an increase in need around the holiday season each year, with this holiday season being no exception. Due to the changes in SNAP benefits and the ongoing effects of the government shutdown, ICA Food Shelf has added more than 60 appointments a week at the food shelves for clients and has opened four emergency bag distribution sites across the city.

Minnetonka Theatre encourages donations through ticket sales and marketing campaigns for its upcoming production. When purchasing tickets, audience members are given the option to donate to the turkey dinner program. The cast and crew will also be at the theatre doors collecting donations following each performance.

ICA clients are able to purchase their turkey dinners during their normal shopping appointment, making their holiday grocery shopping experience as seamless as possible. Each turkey dinner costs $25 and includes a turkey of the client's choosing, classic thanksgiving side dishes and dessert, according to Dymoke.

The food shelf also accepts pie donations and is currently distributing a

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series of 300 pies to clients as they come in to do their grocery shopping.

"OLIVER!" is an award-winning musical by Lionel Bart and is based on the Charles Dickens novel, Oliver Twist. The story takes place in the streets of Victorian England, where an orphan in a workhouse named Oliver escapes to London and becomes involved with a group of petty thieves. He is wrongfully accused of a crime he did not commit and is seeking the true love of a family.

There are 60 students in the production, with more cast and crew behind-the-scenes. Minnetonka sixth-grader Vinny Gartner will be playing Oliver.

Trent Boyum, artistic director of Minnetonka Theatre, describes it as the perfect production for the Thanksgiving holiday season. Audience members may recognize songs like "Food, Glorious Food" "Consider Yourself" and "It's A Fine Life," which carry themes of family, food and resilience.



(SUBMITTED PHOTO)

Minnetonka Theatre cast members from their musical production of "OLIVER!"

Upcoming performances are 7:30 p.m. Nov. 15, 21, 22 and 29, and 2 p.m. Nov. 16 and 23, located at the Arts Center on 7 — Main Stage, 18285 Highway 7, Minnetonka. Tickets are $26 for adults, $23 for seniors and $15 for youth, with reserved seating. Group rates are available.

Visit minnetonkatheatre.com for more information and to purchase tickets.

COMMUNITY BRIEF

Shorewood switching to Waste Management for recycling in 2026

Shorewood will change recycling providers at the start of the new year.

Shorewood's contract with Republic Services expires Dec. 31, and Waste Management of Minnesota will begin residential recycling collection Jan. 1, 2026.

Residents in one- to four-unit homes will receive new green-and-yellow 96-gallon recycling carts between Dec. 22 and 24. Republic Services will collect island residents' current carts Dec. 18 and mainland residents' carts Dec. 31.

Collection days will remain the same: Wednesday for mainland residents and Thursday for island residents. Waste Management's first pickup is scheduled for Jan. 2 for island routes and Jan. 14 for mainland routes.

All recycling questions and service requests will now go directly to Waste Management at 888-960-0008, online at wm.com, or through the My WM app. This is a change from the previous system where residents contacted Republic or city staff.

More details and updates are available at shorewoodmn.gov/recycling.



