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Volume 14, Issue 3

Gem Lake News

Gretchen Artig-Swomley, Newsletter Editor

Special Interest Articles:

- Seniors Receive Scholarships
- Leadership Changes
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Upcoming Recycling Dates:

- July 1
- July 15
- July 29
- *Tip: put out your bin the night before for 7 a.m. pick-up.*

Three Seniors Awarded Scholarships

Three recent high school graduates from Gem Lake have been awarded scholarships through the Gem Lake Scholarship program. This annual program provides funds for post-secondary education and is open to any graduating senior who resides in Gem Lake. The ten-year-old program is funded through charitable gambling receipts.

This year's recipients are **Corey Howard Doran** (top photo), **Tyler Nathanel Tangwell** (middle photo) and **Griffin Stephen Varley** (bottom photo).

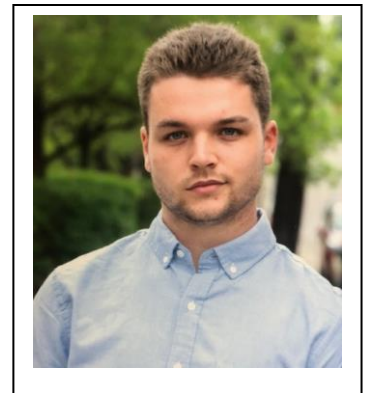
Corey Doran graduated from the White Bear Area High School-South Campus. His parents are Molly and Tom Doran. Corey was very active in sports, including thirteen years in hockey, seven years in baseball and two years in football. His academic achievements included making the "A" honor Roll three years and the "B" Honor Roll one year.

His teachers praised him for his consistently high-quality work. For instance, Brietta Hutson, mathematics teacher for White Bear Lake Area High School, said the following: "While working with Corey in AP Statistics, it is easy to see all of the wonderful qualities he possesses. This is a student with strong leadership skills, a great work ethic, helpful, compassionate and mature beyond his years. These qualities have helped him be very successful in his academics."

Corey plans to attend the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, concentrating on Medicine or Health Sciences.

Tyler Tangwell graduated from Mahtomedi High School. His parents are Gary and Deanna Tangwell. Tyler was active in football for four years, basketball for three years, and track and field and the Wellness Club for one year each. His academic achievements include four years on the honor roll.

According to one of his teachers, Tyler excels at balancing academics and athletics, while still finding time for extra-curricular activities and a part-time job. **(continued on page 5)**



Recovery Begins as Businesses Seek “New Normal”

As pandemic-related restrictions are beginning to lift, Gem Lake businesses are coming back to life. For some it has become a continual process of adjusting to changing rules, changing customer traffic and changing consumer habits. The mood is guarded optimism.

For instance, at **White Bear Floral**, there have been hopeful signs of a return to pre-pandemic business volumes. Mother’s Day floral sales were very brisk, and the greenhouse had a virtual sell-out on their garden planters and starter flats.

However, the past three months have been challenging. White Bear Floral had to furlough 80% of their staff. The business had to shut down completely for two weeks after the state of emergency was initially declared in mid-March. They were able to open up for curb-side pick-up and on-line sales after that. In May, they were allowed to open up their retail space, with restrictions.

Funeral and wedding floral sales have been down significantly, due to the circumstances. At present, folks are coming out to shop with a sense of joy, or a response to cabin fever, or both! “People want to get out and they want to start gardening again,” says Darlene Birkeland, who owns White Bear Floral with her husband John. They are currently working with a small staff, including their daughter Melanie. They hope to see things steadily improve.

The **County Lounge**, next door to White Bear Floral, was able to open up their outdoor facilities on June 1. They were very thankful to have an outdoor space to utilize. As of June 10, they could open up the bar for indoor use.

Traffic has been small but steady. It is too early to form any judgements about trends. The first week of operations for the County Lounge brought in about half the normal traffic.

Gem Lake Hills Golf Course lost about two weeks from their normal season, when pandemic restrictions forced them to remain closed. After the Governor gave courses the go ahead to open on April 19, things have begun to spring back to life.



After a slow first week or so, things have picked up significantly. Current traffic rivals last year’s volumes and may even surpass them if things keep up.

Leagues and junior golfing have come back and this is helping the overall picture, according to General Manager Matt Greer. “The course is now very busy. People are really happy to be outside and enjoying golf again.”

The **White Bear Meadery** on County Road E had the added challenge of being a very new business when the pandemic hit. The business opened its doors in late June of 2019 and was just beginning to build a significant customer base.

According to owner Joshua Eckton, “People are really enjoying having more options, such as indoor seating. We were doing okay with take-out, but this is of course better.” The White Bear Meadery already had a loyal customer base who loved their products and was okay with take out. This really helped get through previous month, when business has been down about 60%.

Joshua says it has also helped that he has continued to introduce new meads, despite the circumstances. This has included several new products in the past few months. “It keeps people interested.”

Leadership Changes in Gem Lake

Following the death of Mayor Bob Uzpen in May, back-up mayor Gretchen Artig-Swomley stepped in temporarily as Acting Mayor of Gem Lake. The appointment became official as of the June 16 City Council meeting when Ms. Artig-Swomley was voted in as Mayor for the remainder of Uzpen's term. Uzpen's term was to expire at the end of this year.



Directly following this resolution her position on the city council had to be declared vacant to comply with state law. (You can't hold two positions at the same time.) This creates an opportunity for someone in Gem Lake who is over 21 and a resident for at least the past 30 days. You must also be eligible to vote. If you are interested in serving out the six-month vacancy on the council, all you need to do it fill out a simple form. The form is available by calling Gloria Tessier, Acting City Clerk at 651-747-2790 or email the city at the address listed on page 6.

In addition, there will be multiple opportunities to serve on the Gem Lake City Council beginning in January 2021. There are going to be four spots up for election this November.

The following will be up for election:

City Council Position now occupied by Faith Kuny. This is a four-year term.

City Council Position now occupied by Jim Lindner. This is a four-year term.

City Council Position just vacated by Gretchen Artig-Swomley, who stepped into the remainder of Mayor Bob Uzpen's term, which ends at on December 31, 2020. This term was vacated mid-way through, so the position up for election will be a two-year term.

The position of Mayor of Gem Lake. This is a four-year term.

While previous experience helps, it is certainly not a prerequisite. It is not known at this time, if any incumbents plan to run for their positions again. What do you do if you are interested? There is an easy and standard procedure for running for office. It involves obtaining a filing form, called an "Affidavit of Candidacy," either on-line from Ramsey County, or from Acting City Clerk Gloria Tessier.

To file for office, you fill out the form, pay a \$5 fee and file the form before the deadline. The filing period starts July 28 and runs to August 11. These positions are not part of the primary process. Election day is November 3. The voting precinct for all Gem Lake residents is Heritage Hall.

What is involved in serving on the council? There are one or two meeting each month. Each requires at least several hours of preparation by council members. Council members also have a specialty area. For instance, I (Gretchen) do the newsletter, Jim Lindner is in charge of all storm water related issues and serves on the Vadnais Lakes Area Water Management Organization (VLAWMO), Len spearheads the Gem Lake response to the Water Gremlin situation, and Faith Kuny serves on several liaison committees. The mayor is in charge of things like leading the budgeting process, setting broad goals and priorities, etc. For their service, council members receive \$100 per month. The mayor receives \$200. So, you aren't going to file for office for the money. However, you can have an impact on your community. Please consider running for office. Any current member of the council can answer your questions about what is involved in serving.

Memorial Bench Planned in Honor of Late Mayor

The Gem Lake City Council is considering purchasing a park bench inscribed with the name of the late mayor, Bob Uzpen. Bob died on May 13 from complications of ALS. The bench would be paid for out of charitable gambling receipts, after most pressing needs are met, such as the funding of this year's student scholarships. (see story on page 1)

The bench might be placed on the short walking trail on County Road E or near Heritage Hall. No decisions have been made as of yet. The planting of a memorial tree is also being considered.

City News

Garden Permit Approved for Property on County Road E

A garden zoning certificate was approved for a large plot of land on County Road E, owned by Bryan Hansen. This acreage has been used for community gardening for the past several years. The approval was given after the owner submitted an application and paid the fees prescribed for this use.

As part of the permit, various conditions must be met. For instance, there are designated times when gardening activities can be conducted. (typically, sunrise and sunset), as well as restrictions on parking, machinery use, etc. The approval was voted on at the City Council Meeting on June 16.



Planning Begins Early for 2021 Gem Lake Budget

The Gem Lake City Council decided at the June City Council Meeting to get an early start on budget planning for 2021. The early start will help fill the gap left by late Mayor Bob Uzpen, who was a banking and financial specialist.

City Treasurer Tom Kelly will be on hand at the July 21 City Council Meeting to review budget results to date for 2020 and to make very initial observations and recommendations.

Typically, cities in Minnesota must submit initial numbers to their county for property tax levies. This necessitates constructing an initial budget for the year ahead. Whatever numbers are submitted to the county must constitute the maximum amount to be levied for property taxes. To prepare for this, most cities budget high initially and then refine their budget in the months remaining.

Peddlers at Your Door? What to Do?

Like most cities around us, Gem Lake requires door to door salespeople to obtain a peddlers' license from the city before doing unsolicited sales. Unsolicited salespeople are those folks who ring your doorbell without an appointment or invitation; and want to give you a bid for something. Or maybe they want to sell you something out of the back of their car. You can ask them to show you their peddlers license. At present, there are no outstanding peddlers' licenses in our city. If they tell you they have one, then their pants are on fire.

There are exceptions to this rule. They are generally as follows: People running for office and their minions can go door to door, and also religious groups can provide you with their message if you care to hear it.



Prairie Garden in Full Bloom

The native prairie garden around the home of Tim and Sherren Heil of Gem Lake is now in full-bloom! It is not only beautiful, but also fits so well into the Gem Lake environment, says Tim.

"It's good for the wildlife, and super easy to manage. Yesterday, I counted 26 monarch butterflies on my walk to the mailbox and back."

Tim wants to invite the community to take a look and consider putting a prairie garden on their property. He can be reached at timjheil@gmail.com.

Gem Lake Seniors Awarded Scholarships (continued from page 1)

“He has gained indispensable knowledge and skills through a variety of activities,” according to Angela Buckingham, a teacher at Mahtomedi High School. “Tyler’s participation on the football and basketball teams for MHS have given him the opportunity to learn the value of teamwork, time management and responsibility. I feel that Tyler will thrive in a challenging academic environment.”

Tyler plans to attend St. Thomas University in the fall to study Communication, English and eventually, law.

Griffin Varley graduated from Hill-Murray High School. His parents are Steve and Steph Varley. During his high school years, he spent four years in varsity baseball, three years in junior varsity hockey, two years in DECA (Distributive Education Clubs of America) and one year as a school Ambassador. School Ambassadors help to orient both students and parents to school programs and facilities. He achieved the “A” Honor Roll two years, and the “B” Honor Roll two years. He was awarded Science Wizard status in his Junior and Senior years. That means he was twice selected as Best in Class, once for Anatomy and once for Chemistry.

His teachers recognized him for his tenacity and hard work. “Advanced Geometry is considered a particularly challenging course at Hill-Murray. Griffin demonstrated tenacity and grit in his assignments and in his coursework. In addition, Griffin has a logical and sequential mind that helps him to grasp both abstract and concrete ideas quickly. He is also confident in his ability and willing to ask for help when he has questions. This combination of skills helps Griffin to be an outstanding student,” according to Mathematics Teacher Renee Luther, from Hill-Murray High School. Griffin plans to attend St. John’s University and plans to study pre-physical therapy. After college he plans to enroll in Northwestern Health Sciences University to become a chiropractor.

The Gem Lake Scholarship program is funded by charitable gambling within Gem Lake, meaning pull-tab sales. Normally, each month, the city received a portion of charitable gambling receipts. Funds were then regularly dispersed to organizations such as the White Bear Lake Area Emergency Food Shelf and Willow Lake Elementary School.



This year has been anything but normal. With bars and restaurants shut down for months, pull tab sales were non-existent. When the scholarship applications were reviewed by the council at the May Gem Lake City Council Meeting, it was decided to take a new approach. Given the pandemic, the balance on hand in the charitable gambling fund is currently a bit skimpy. Therefore, it was decided to give the fund a few months to get healthy again.

Each of the three recipients of the scholarship will be awarded one third of whatever funds are available on September 1 of this year. Previous scholarships have been \$1,000 each.

Golf Course On the Mend

Gem Lake Hills Golf Course is on the mend after major vandalism during the evening/early morning hours of May 3-4. Weeks of hard work went into repairing more than 20 damaged golf carts, graffiti on the club house, vandalized benches, and devastating damage to several of the greens.

According to General Manager Matt Greer most of the damage has been dealt with. Restoration of two heavily impacted greens will take a while to heal completely, but the areas are doing well so far. The areas needed to be partially rebuilt, reseeded and leveled with a good deal of dirt. Vandals dug a coffin sized hole in one green and carved a picture of a body part in another.

“Our customers have been very understanding.” Anyone with information is urged to contact the White Bear Lake Police Department, where leads are being pursued.

The City of Gem Lake

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This newsletter is also posted on the city's web-site under the "Documents" section and the "News and Updates" section.

We're on the Web!
See us at:
www.gemlakemn.org

Meetings: July and August, 2020

The following Gem Lake Meetings will be held in July and August of 2020. All meetings are planned for Heritage Hall. (Actual, in-person meetings!!)

July 7, 2020

Planning Commission Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

July 13, 2020

City Council Workshop at 7:00 p.m. THIS MEETING IS CANCELED.

July 21, 2020

City Council Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

August 4, 2020

Planning Commission Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

August 10, 2020

City Council Workshop at 7:00 p.m.

August 18, 2020

City Council Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Your Gem Lake City Council

Gretchen Artig-Swomley-Mayor
Phone: 651-260-9742

City Council Members:

Len Cacioppo
Phone: 651-796-3222

Faith Kuny
Phone: 612-718-4316

Jim Lindner
Phone: 651-429-7597

For more information on meetings, city ordinances, recent events, permit procedures, etc. please consult the Gem Lake web-site. The address is www.gemlakemn.org

Each Gem Lake Newsletter is also posted on the web-site under the

"Documents" and "News and Updates" section.

Please email your ideas, comments and suggestions. See box at left for detailed contact information.

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