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Briefs

Grammy winner Jon Vezner to perform

The Don Juans, featuring Grammy-winning songwriter Jon Vezner, will perform a Christmas concert at 3 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 9, in St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Paynesville. Proceeds will support the Crow River Trail Guards, a Paynesville-based youth organization that provides kids opportunities to connect with the outdoors. Vezner is married to country singer Kathy Mattea and his family has a cabin on Lake Koronis.

Grand opening for new funeral home

Daniel-Anderson Funeral Home will host the grand opening of their new location (625 Airport View Ct., Paynesville) by the Highway 23 bypass in Paynesville on Sunday, Dec. 9, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. As well as facility tours and refreshments, anyone attending may sign a special guest book in memory of former President George H.W. Bush, which will be sent as a condolence to his family and given to the presidential library of the 41st president at Texas A&M University.

Choirs to perform December concert

The Paynesville area 6-12 choirs will present their annual December concert at 7:30 p.m. on Monday, Dec. 10. Performing in the concert will be the Sixth Grade Choir, Seventh and Eighth Grade Choir, and the combined high school choirs. Prior to the concert, starting at 7:15 p.m., a slide-show of photos from the choirs' recent trip to New York City will be shown on the screen in the auditorium.

The sixth, seventh, and eighth grade choirs will perform their Veterans Day songs as well as some Christmas songs. The combined high school choirs will perform a reprise of the "100 Years of Broadway" medley they performed for "Soup, Sandwich, and Song" and at Trump Tower in New York City.

The concert will conclude with all 6-12 choir members combining as a mass choir to sing one song together. The concert is free and open to the public.

Salem to host Christmas program

Salem Historical Church will have its annual old-fashioned Christmas program on Saturday, Dec. 15. Come between 3 and 4:15 p.m. for sleigh rides with real reindeer - snow or no snow. A program celebrating the birth of Jesus will begin at 4:30 p.m. and will include traditional Christmas carols and a children's story time. Guests are asked to bring non-perishable food item for the local food shelf. An offering will be taken for the upkeep of the church, and refreshments will be served. Salem is located five miles north of Paynesville at 28547 220th St. Call 320-249-0373 or 320-493-1657 for more information.

Nominations open for local awards

The Paynesville Area Chamber of Commerce is accepting nominations for its annual Salute to Excellence awards. Visit www.paynesvillechamber.org for application details.

PAYNESVILLE SCHOOLS

Board OKs separation agreement with principal

Lorie Floura served 13 years as the principal at Paynesville High

By Michael Jacobson

At a special meeting on Monday, Nov. 26, the Paynesville School Board approved a resignation letter from secondary principal Lorie Floura, effective Nov. 1, 2018, and agreed to a separation agreement between Floura and the school district.

Floura had been on paid administrative leave since

August 2018, stemming to a complaint that was being investigated. In an email to parents, superintendent Matt Bullard wrote, "On Aug. 7, 2018, Paynesville Area Schools experienced a data breach through a release of student data by an employee. The school district has investigated the breach and has reached a resolution to the matter."

The separation agreement, which was mutually agreed upon, Bullard told the board, includes a \$40,000 buyout of Floura's contract, as well as allowing her to keep her health insurance coverage, with district contributions, until June 30, 2019. In exchange, Floura "released all

claims against the district."

The school board approved Floura's resignation and the separation agreement unanimously last week.

Bullard then told the board that he planned to hire an interim secondary principal for the remainder of the 2018-19 school year, using what remains in the district's budget for the position.

The position was advertised immediately, with the district intending to hire a qualified candidate as soon as possible. Bullard had one interview scheduled for Monday, Dec. 3, and the board could take action on an interim principal at their meeting on Tuesday, Dec. 4.

The process for hiring a full-time replacement will start in January, after a new school board is seated. Incumbents Mark Dingmann, Randy Kern, Heidi Riley, and Lew Storkamp did not run for re-election this year, and will be replaced by Ashlee Anderson, Jacob Holck, Thomas Pierson, and Maggie Utsch. (Incumbents Ric Koehn, Bruce Vanderpool, and Cheryl Veldkamp will remain on the board.)

In order to speed up the transition, Bullard suggested last week setting an extra meeting in January. (Normally, the board has only met once in January.) By meeting early, say on Monday, Jan. 7, the board could set the new mem-

bers and do their annual organization (elect officers, establish committees, etc.). Then, at their second meeting, they could be ready to dive into business, such as a hiring process for a new principal.

A native of Sioux Falls, S.D., Floura served 13 years as the PHS principal, replacing John Janotta when he retired in 2005. Prior to coming to Paynesville, she taught 12 years, mostly science, and coached swimming. (She was an All-American swimmer at the University of Nebraska.) She served as the principal in Truman, Minn., for three years before coming to Paynesville in 2005.

SANTA VISIT

Spirit of the Season celebrated...



Photo by Michael Jacobson

Amy Miller of Hawick encouraged her granddaughter, Whitney Miller, 3, of Faribault, Minn., to speak with Santa during his yearly visit to Paynesville for the Spirit of the Season event in downtown Paynesville on Saturday, Dec. 1. Turn to Page 10 for more pictures this week.

CITY OF PAYNESVILLE

City proceeding with stormwater planning

Businesses facing assessments, object to cost of proposed project

By Michael Jacobson

Following a public hearing, the Paynesville City Council approved proceeding with a stormwater improvement plan for Railroad Street (east of Washburne Avenue), but two businesses that would be assessed for the project raised concerns about the cost.

The council - at their meeting on Monday, Nov. 26 - reviewed the plans and voted to proceed, but after the objections the city is planning to review the project financing.

The city looked at three options for the project: expanding the current pond by the railroad tracks (which also would have required increasing the size of some stormwater piping) (estimated cost of \$849,000); increasing pipe sizes and building a new regional stormwater pond somewhere by the river (estimated cost of \$820,000, plus land acquisition); and piping the water along Garfield Avenue under the railroad tracks and creating a new stormwater pond (estimated cost of \$736,000, including the land purchase).

The city originally planned

to contribute \$252,000 to the project, which would have left \$494,000 to assess, with both Paynesville Cenex and Avon Plastics facing possible assessments of more than \$200,000. (The Soo Line also would have been assessed \$79,000.)

Cenex general manager Paul Evans, on behalf of the cooperative, expressed their opposition to the project, since they don't feel there is a big problem with flooding. Shown pictures of flooding in the area, Evans said there will always be overnight flooding, until the water can drain, after heavy rains.

"Paynesville Farmers Union obviously we're opposed to this," he told the council. "We don't have a problem with water."

"Why should I spend \$200,000 for a problem we don't have?" he asked.

The project, city engineer Chuck DeWolf explained to the council, would handle a 10-year rain event (i.e. the type of storm that happens every 10 years).

The city, added public works director Ron Mergen, could be liable if it were found negligent in addressing and preventing flooding.

Both Paynesville Cenex and Avon Plastics, whose representative at the meeting also expressed their opposition to the proposed assessment for

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NYC TRIP

Band, choir students enjoy trip to Big Apple

More than 100 students and chaperones visited New York City

Ninety-four PHS band and choir students, along with 18 adult chaperones, took a five-day trip to New York City over Thanksgiving.

Leaving on Tuesday, Nov. 20, the group traveled in three couch buses to New York City, where they visited Yankee Stadium, Grand Central Station, the Radio City Music Hall, walked through Central Park, saw the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, viewed New York City at night from the top of the Empire State Building, visited the Today Show, performed at Trump Tower, toured the 9/11 Memorial and Museum, and saw the Broadway show

"Wicked." One special moment for the group was singing with a homeless guitar player in Central Park, including the Leonard Cohen song "Hallelujah." Videos of this performance have gone viral.

The frigid temperatures in New York made the busy trip even more exhausting.

After leaving on Saturday, Nov. 24, the PHS group arrived home safely on Sunday, Nov. 25. Here are some of their favorite memories of the trip.

What did you like?
"I liked witnessing the fast-paced lifestyle and having a good time with my friends/classmates."
senior Angie Gehrke

"I liked everything."
ninth grader Alissa Gottwald



Photo Courtesy of Maggie Utsch

While in New York, the PHS students saw Freedom Tower and toured the 9/11 Memorial and Museum at Ground Zero.

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