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glimpse back in time / 5

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2021



Picking up STEAM

STAFF PHOTO BY BRENT SCHACHERER

Lake Ripley Elementary School fourth-graders Bodhe Helstrom, Marlee Alberson and Danny Johnson add blocks to the ice wall they and other students at the school constructed as part of a STEAM lesson.

New Lake Ripley Elementary program helps students get a jump on science, technology skills

BY BRENT SCHACHERER
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Though bundled up in winter wear, the class of Lake Ripley Elementary School fourth-graders still shivered in the February cold, especially as the wind whipped across the playground, delivering an extra-chilly blast.

Listening to the students offer exclamatory objections to the cold, teacher Lori Weseman offered them a reminder.

"What are we building this for?" Weseman asked, referring to the ice block wall positioned in a corner of the playground, to which students were continually adding milk carton-sized blocks of colored ice. "What can we do when the wind is blowing?"

There were some knowing "aahhs" as several students gathered on the east side of the wall and crouched below the top row of ice blocks.

"Does it work?" Weseman asked.

To the uninitiated, it might have seemed like just a fun time at recess, but the students were experimenting and learning as part of the newest class offering at Lake Ripley, the district's STEAM — science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics — program.

And the answer to Weseman's question, was "yes," the ice-block wall did work as a wind break. Though not perfect, the students agreed that "it's warmer behind the wall."

Building the ice wall was the first all-school STEAM lesson that Weseman, who became the district's first STEAM teacher this year, had taught. But she expects there will be many more, as she incorporates STEAM activities for kindergarten through fourth grade into the program's inaugural year.

Bringing the concepts of science, technology, and engineering to the young students was exactly the point when the district decided last year that, with the retirement of its elementary

art teacher, it would launch a STEAM program as a replacement to art.

"In analyzing our day, the day is based on reading and math blocks, and sometimes science can get shortchanged," Lake Ripley Principal Christ Olson said. "Looking at 21st century learning — hands-on learning, collaboration, the inventive side of things — that all goes into the program.

"We also saw this as a program that can get our kids away from a screen and give them an opportunity to make things with their hands," Olson added. "They've done just a ton of different things."

Those things start with Weseman. In her 29th year as a teacher in the district, Weseman had spent 10 years as a second-grade teacher, after many years as a kindergarten teacher, when the move to STEAM came up last year. And she immediately expressed interest.

"I like to change it up once in a while," Weseman said. "And the STEAM position is just all the things I'm excited about, the things I like the most. I was thrilled to be able to make the switch."

Steam to 2 >

Pro shop proposal piques Council interest

Part-time manager
would oversee pro shop,
promote golf course

BY BRENT SCHACHERER
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By the time they meet next, Litchfield City Council members could be approving the hire of a part-time pro shop manager for the Litchfield Golf Course.

The Council approved a plan during its Feb. 16 meeting for city staff to develop a job description and seek someone to fill the role of a pro shop manager at a salary of \$15,000 to \$20,000 for the coming golf season.

City Administrator Dave Cziok told the Council he already had someone in mind for the position, someone who worked at the pro shop last summer.

While finding a pro shop manager was a goal set by the Council during a recent work session, Cziok moving on that was difficult.

"I struggle a little with the management," he said, "because the council hasn't completely explained to us what the new vision or goals are."

Two weeks earlier, the City Council had agreed to scrap plans for a transition in management and go forward with a 2013 contract between the city and Litchfield Golf Club Inc. That agreement, however, deals primarily with GCI's management of the restaurant in the clubhouse at the golf course.

Meanwhile, the city continues to maintain the golf course itself with existing city staff, something it has "handled extremely well for the last eight years," Cziok said.

That arrangement leaves the pro shop — and marketing of the golf course — as the one area needing attention. Cziok said his initial job description thoughts included the pro shop manager handling advertising, retail sales and training of pro shop staff, as well as spearheading new initiatives such as membership cards. While the pro shop manager

Pro shop to 2 >

No more saving soles

Cobbler George Moehring
is retiring after nearly six
decades in Hutchinson

BY JEREMY JONES
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George Moehring wishes he had a dollar for every pair of shoes he held in his hands. Just how much would that earn him? After nearly 70 years in the business of sole protection, it's hard to say, but one thing would be certain.

"It'd sure stack up," he said. "I've seen a lot of stinky, smelly feet."

For the past 56 years, the local artisan has been selling and repairing shoes in Hutchinson. He first sold shoes at Carly's Shoes in downtown Hutchinson while repairing at a side business in the back — The Shoe Inn.

"I bought it from someone else who had it there," Moehring said.

Then, 16 years ago, he moved his repair business down the road to 137 Main St. In a workshop marked with a vintage gold and black sign, the artisan continued to ply his trade as demand dwindled and changes to

Moehring to 3 >

Music festival seeks city assistance

Council expresses
support, but legal
review needed

BY BRENT SCHACHERER
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Plans for a new summer music festival received a warm reception from the Litchfield City Council last week.

But a full embrace of the event — including about \$3,500 in electric upgrades around Litchfield Civic Arena — will have to wait for a legal review by the city's attorney.

The Songs of Summer Festival is a nonprofit organization which aims to stage a music event on Saturday, Aug. 14, to raise money for youth-oriented programs and activities, according to Eric Mathwig, a council member and a spokesman for the event.

The Songs of Summer Festival replaces the Litchfield Community August Bash, which had been held in the parking lot on the north side of the Civic Arena. With a new name, the event's

organizers also hope to hold the festival in a new location — a grassy area on the south side of the civic arena.

Mayor Keith Johnson praised the event, saying it was a good way to bring people together in the summer.

In addition, Mathwig said, the event — when it was the August Bash — raised \$10,000 to \$15,000 which was donated to youth-oriented organizations.

However, moving the event to the south side of Civic Arena will necessitate installation of electrical power stations both for the bands and for vendors, Mathwig said.

Staging the Songs of Summer is estimated to cost about \$20,000, and the organizing committee already has raised \$14,000 through donations, Mathwig said. He asked if the city might also support the event by funding the power stations.

"We need more power in the new location," Mathwig said. "We would like the city to consider helping us with it in any way shape or form, if they can."

To adequately support the event's power needs, three 50 amp services would be needed

on the exterior of the Civic Arena's southwest corner — to support the bands' stage — and six portable 20-amp "trees" that could be extended from the skating rink warming house near the south end of the green space.

The trees would be removed and stored after the event, but could be made available for other groups, Mathwig said.

Asked if there might be other needs for the additional power service in the area, City Administrator Dave Cziok said that whenever an outlet is added, "we find a use for it." He also said a couple of different funds could be used to pay for the work, depending on what the primary use for the electrical service might be in the future.

Before the city moves forward with the project, however, City Attorney Mark Wood suggested he be given time to review the arrangement.

"The city, in making a donation to a nonprofit, we have to be careful," Wood said. "We would have to clarify exactly how this is going to happen."

"Not that it can't be done," Wood added later, "just that we've got to figure out how we're going to do it."

INSIDE TRIBUTES/3 OPINION/4 BACK THEN/6 FAITH/7 PUBLIC NOTICES/8 CLASSIFIEDS/9

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