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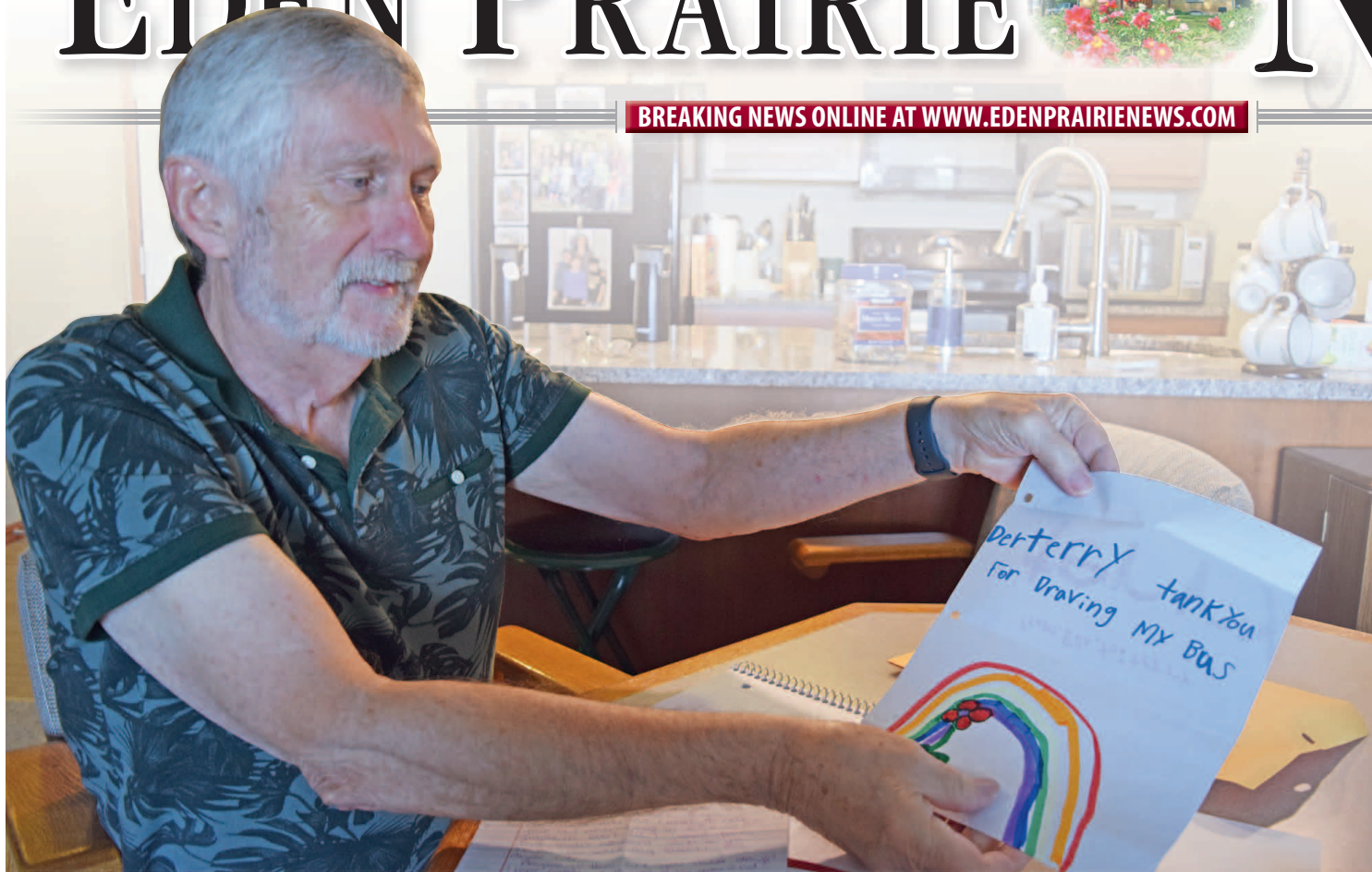


PHOTO BY EDEN TELLER

Terry Degner keeps a folder of cards from the students he drove on his school bus.

Tobacco 21's small splash

At 6 months, minor business impact from tobacco regulations

BY EDEN TELLER
eteller@swpub.com

Six months after Eden Prairie raised its tobacco purchasing age to 21, it's business as usual for retailers.

Hani Kotifani owns Anderson Market, at 8795 Columbine Road, which sells tobacco products and has a sign stating the new purchasing age of 21 on its display of cigarettes. He estimated that tobacco products make up around 10% of his store's sales and said that while it's "gone down a little bit" since the city ordinance went into effect on Feb. 1 of this year, he hasn't felt a huge impact on his bottom line.

When the Eden Prairie City Council voted on Tobacco 21 in 2018, City Council member Brad Aho was the sole dissenting voice. He expressed concern that the regulation would drive customers away from Eden Prairie retailers to other cities where the purchasing age is 18 and said it would be more appropriate for the state or county to pass regulation. But just across the border in Chanhassen, where the tobacco purchasing age is still 18, Eden Prairie's ordinance hasn't affected sales at Green Leaf Tobacco, said manager Mo Mirib.

"We're slow, very slow," he said.

Pat MulQueeney, president of the Eden Prairie Chamber of Commerce, hasn't heard directly from local business owners who sell tobacco, but he noted that increased adoption of Tobacco 21 would create a more "level playing field" for those competing for customers.

Tobacco to 17 >

Beyond the SCHOOL BUS

Longtime EP bus driver pens memoirs

BY EDEN TELLER
eteller@swpub.com

Starting in 2004, Terry Degner shepherded Eden Prairie's elementary schoolers safely to and from school, watching over them on his bus named Big Murphy. When the bus emptied in the morning, though, Degner's work wasn't over:

Every day, he settled down in a nearby Caribou Coffee to work on his memoirs.

After 15 years of writing, Degner, 73, has self-published three memoirs, collections of lessons and memories from his early years in an orphanage in northern Minnesota, to growing up with his adopted family on a rural farm, to serving three tours with the U.S. Navy in the Vietnam War. Setting his experiences down in writing has always been the plan, Degner said.

"I made a promise to God when I was 12 years old that I would do eight things in my lifetime. Writing a book was one

of those things," he explained.

Some of the other promises Degner has fulfilled — he kept his lips sealed about the ones he hasn't achieved yet — were to write a script, go to college and own a business. After returning from his military service, Degner hit the ground running. He attended the University of Minnesota and learned how to direct films, eventually creating his own video production company to create instructional and informational films for companies in the Twin Cities and

School bus to 3 >



Heidi & Brian
Personal Service With Proven Results

Heidi and Brian Wiessner@edinarealty.com

Heidi Wiessner
Phone 952-200-2229
HeidiWiessner@edinarealty.com

Brian Wiessner
Phone 952-334-2690
BrianWiessner@edinarealty.com

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SUBSCRIBE: 952-345-6682
EDITOR: 952-843-4640 OR
EDITOR@EDENPRAIRIENEWS.COM
ONLINE: EDENPRAIRIENEWS.COM

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