

Precast Systems, Inc. of Darwin celebrates 50 YEARS



By Brenda Erdahl

For fifty years Precast Systems, Inc. of Darwin has been serving the surrounding area with all its concrete needs and it all started with a dream.

It was 1971, Jim and Elaine Riehle left St. Paul and moved to the small town of Darwin with the idea of starting a precast concrete company that built septic tanks and feed bunks for cattle. Elaine's family had been in the concrete business for years, so it seemed like a natural fit for the couple looking to find their niche in the business world. At that time, the six acres just off Highway 12 that the company now sits on was a baseball field that, after its heyday in the 1940's, had been left unused and empty.

"Dad went to the Mayor and asked if he could buy the land," said Riehle's daughter Jenny. "He paid \$1 for it."

The first Precast Systems production facility consisted of a single septic tank form, one dry well form, one feed bunk form and a 1961 ford boom truck painted highway orange and a telephone box attached to a telephone pole. Everything was produced outside with no building. In year two, Jim and Elaine put up their first building, since then the company has grown to approximately 15,000 sq feet of production space with new products to include concrete signs, wall panels, steps, bunker panels and planters, but septic tanks and feed bunks remain their main products.

In 1996, Jenny and her husband Mark Smith joined the business. Jim and Elaine retired in 2007 even



The knowledgeable and friendly Precast Systems, Inc. crew is ready to meet all your concrete needs. They are pictured, front row, from left, Caleb Hawes, Wendy Wuotila, Emily Smith, Jenny and Mark Smith. Back row, from left, Matt McGraw, Tyler Sale, Taylor Kraft, Mike Kotila.

though Jim still comes in today to do some local deliveries and errands. Today the Smith's three son-in-law's and daughter Emily are part of the company, making it a three-generation family business.

With just nine employees, Precast Systems Inc. is big enough to get to know you, but small enough to serve you, but small enough to get to know you. Matt McGraw is the longest running employee at 27 years. Along with Matt and Mark, Mike Kotila, Caleb Hawes, Taylor Kraft and Tyler Sale are the production and delivery crew. Mark and

daughter Emily do all the engraving work and Wendy Wuotila and Jenny do the design and office work.

One of Precast System's products that continues to grow in popularity are concrete wall panels. These 9-inch or 10-inch-thick concrete walls sandwich a layer of insulation to get the most out of your heating/cooling bills. They are great for sheds, garages and even homes. They come in different styles including the broom finished look and exposed aggregate. In 2006, Precast Systems

ventured into the art of sandblasting. Since then, they have created

elegantly crafted, concrete welcome signs for cities, churches, cemeteries, schools and businesses. In 2007, that led to the establishment of its subsidiary business, Darwin Monument. For more information visit www.darwinmonument.com

Precast Systems also carries a variety of precast concrete farm products, landscape items such as retaining walls and planters with built in benches and specialty products. Some of their unique projects include the Winsted Veterans Memorial, Darwin Veterans Memorial, grenade bunkers for Fort Ripley, a concrete house, concrete garages, Darwin water treatment plant, Dassel Saints Field ballpark bleachers and fence and the Darwin city park fence. Visit www.darwinconcrete.com or call 320-693-8440 for more information.

"We are thankful for exceptional employees and great customers that have made this all possible!"



Since its opening in 1971, Precast Systems, Inc. of Darwin has grown to approximately 15,000 sq feet of production space with new products to include concrete signs, wall panels, steps, bunker panels and planters, but septic tanks and feed bunks remain their main products.



Some of Precast Systems' more unique projects include the Winsted Veterans Memorial, Darwin Veterans Memorial, grenade bunkers for Fort Ripley, a concrete house, and the Darwin City Park fence, pictured above.

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Panfish & Plastics

By Jerry Carlson

Spring is a glorious time in the north country. Although I always find it hard to put away my ice fishing gear, I do relish the days when I can get the boat in the water and search for spring panfish.

With the gamefish season closed at this time of the year, there is little doubt that panfish are king. Many anglers that scoff at the thought of targeting panfish when the walleye and bass seasons are open will make every effort they can to spend

those warm spring days on the water.

Over the years, I have developed a list of spring panfish haunts that have produced fish for me on a consistent basis. Although every year is a little different and the timing changes with weather and ice out, panfish pretty much have the same routine year after year.

Their migration to the shallows to gorge themselves on the invertebrates that are emerging from the mud is all part of their pre-spawn ritual. Depending on the weather conditions and water temperature, this pre-spawn activity can last for some time.

Knowing that lakes don't all warm up at the same pace also helps extend this early panfish bonanza. The small bodies of water and quiet bays are always the first to turn on. Bigger water and some shoreline areas will come next.

As always, I am concerned with my equipment and presentation techniques. Having long rods that allow me to cast far from the boat is critical. I also make use of heavier floats that aid in the ability to make long casts.

There was a time I utilized

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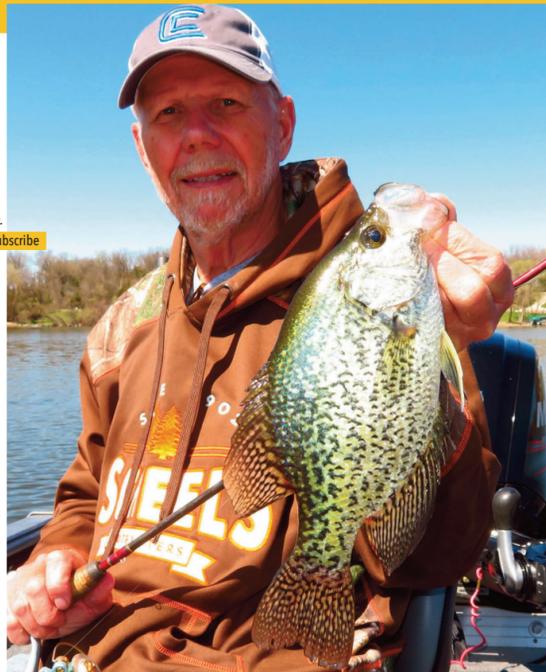
small, feathered Flu-Flu style jigs for the business end of my presentation. A few years back, I started to experiment with plastics. Last year, I never tied on a feathered jig at all.

From my experience, I found the plastic consistently outperformed the feathered jigs. I also learned that there were many different styles, shapes and colors that the fish liked. Brown, pink and red might have had a slight edge in the color preference.

As for the specifics on the jigs, many of them are the same ones I use for my winter fishing. The plastic is also the same with a variety of the soft Maki plastics being hard to beat.

I believe that part of the success of the plastic has to do with the invertebrates that the crappies and bluegills are foraging on in the shallow water. The plastic definitely has a bug-like appearance.

Although I would occasionally tip the jig with a wax worm, I found that it usually was not needed. I did notice that



The author suggests adding some plastics to your presentation this spring. The Flu-Flu style hair jigs work great too, however plastics seem to produce more fish.

bluegills were more interested in the wax worms than crappies. If you are strictly targeting gills, the wax worms will give a little extra incentive.

I also learned that this presentation worked well into the late spring. Spawning crappies and gills devoured the plastic and made the catching easy.

Spring panfish angling is very popular with anglers. Not

only is it a way to get the kinks out of the boat launching routine, it is also a very enjoyable way to spend some extra time on the water and pick up a meal of fish in the process.

I also believe that having the correct rod and reel combination makes the process of hauling in feisty panfish a real treat. Even though they may not compare to the antics of larger fish, they are still a lot of fun to catch.

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Ice conditions have deteriorated quickly across the state

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources urges people to be extremely cautious on and around the ice, as recent warm weather has deteriorated ice conditions across the state. Some lakes already have large areas of open water and there have been reports of vehicles breaking through.

Ice thickness varies widely across the state. In some places south of the Twin Cities, DNR conservation officers already are warning people to stay off the ice. Ice conditions near shorelines and public access sites are particularly poor. All across Minnesota, ice conditions become highly variable when the weather is warm and the sun gains strength.

"Take extra safety precautions around the ice right now," said Lisa Dugan, recreation safety outreach coordinator for the DNR Enforcement Division. "Just because a particular spot was safe yesterday – or even an hour ago – doesn't mean it is now."

Minnesota has had three ice-related fatalities so far during the 2020-2021 ice season. Nearly every year, late-season ice results in dangerous fall-throughs when people try to enjoy the ice as the weather warms.

The most effective way for people to stay safe on the ice or open water is to wear a life jacket. Anyone who ventures onto late-season ice should wear ice picks, use a chisel and check the ice thickness frequently. They also should double the DNR's ice thickness recommendations, which apply to new, clear ice. Ice thickness varies even on the same body of water, but particularly hazardous areas tend to be around bridges, channels, culverts and streams. For more information about ice safety, visit www.mndnr.gov/ice-safety.

– Minnesota DNR

Fishing Report

MARCH, 23, 2021

As temperatures rise most anglers are taking a mandatory break from fishing local lakes due to inaccessibility. Others are taking advantage of open water on some of the area rivers. Shaun at the Lake Region Coop. in Buffalo said anglers are having luck catching panfish on the Mississippi and there has been some action on the Crow River as well. Both rivers are partially open, and the Mississippi has attracted boaters and shore fishers, Shaun said. Lakes in the area, including Buffalo and Pulaski, have bad ice and Shaun recommends staying off. Shaun predicted some of the area lakes will be open by Wednesday.

Kurt Segner, of Little Jim's Sport Shop in Annandale, predicted the lakes around the Maple Lake and Annandale area should be off in week or so. The week of March 15, anglers were still ice fishing Maple, Granite, Clearwater and Sylvia but the ice was getting honeycombed along the edge, making it hard to get out to the deeper water where some thicker ice still lay. With the warmer temperatures and rain in the forecast, Segner expected the ice to deteriorate rapidly. Both Shaun and Kurt predicted a good Fishing Opener on May 15. That's when anglers can once again pursue Walleye and Pike on area lakes. An early spring leading to earlier ice off, and warmer water all point to a good opener, they said.

Crow River: Some open water. Anglers have been after panfish.

Mississippi River: Open water has attracted boaters and shore fishers. Fishermen have been catching panfish using crappie minnows, euro larvae and wax worms.

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PHOTO of the MONTH



APRIL PHOTO WINNER. Mike Fyten landed this black crappie while open water fishing a Wright County Lake near Annandale. The 13½-inch fish hit a Custom jig tipped with a 1-inch gulp minnow.

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Survey shows local water holds trophy fish

Pike up to 40 inches sampled recently in Buffalo Lake

By Joe Stewig
Area Fisheries Manager

Buffalo Lake is a 1,552-acre lake located within the City of Buffalo. The lake has three (3) public accesses and two (2) fishing piers. A city owned access is located within Sturgis Park, a county owned access is located off CR 12 (Montrose Blvd.) and a state owned access is located off CR 35. The lake is very popular and like many lakes in the area offers many fishing opportunities. Buffalo Lake is primarily managed for Walleye and fry (760,000 fish) are stocked during even numbered year, however due to COVID-19 stocking was postponed in 2020 and so make-up stocking is scheduled for 2021 as well as the scheduled stocking in 2022. The most recent lake survey conducted in 2018 found above average numbers of Walleye with a nice average size. Walleye sampled ranged in length from 13 to 25 1/2 inches and averaged 17 inches and nearly 2 pounds. Walleye growth is above average for the area, taking two (2) years to reach 15 inches. Northern Pike abundance is about average for the lake class with good average size at 26 inches and almost four (4) pounds. While anglers won't catch a ton of pike the ones they do catch should be nice. Anglers also have a chance to land a trophy as pike up to 40 inches have been sampled in recent surveys. Northern Pike growth is average for the area, taking six (6) years to reach 25 inches.

While Walleye are the most sought after species in Buffalo Lake, Largemouth and Smallmouth Bass also offer anglers a reason to come to the lake. No bass sampling was conducted in 2018; however Largemouth Bass

numbers in 2013 were average for lakes within the Sauk Rapids Management Area. Largemouth Bass sampled in 2013 ranged in length from 6 to 21 inches with an average length and weight of 11 1/2 inches and about one (1) pound. Forty-five percent of the bass caught were longer than 12 inches, while 15% were longer than 15 inches. Nineteen Smallmouth Bass

were also sampled in 2013 ranging in length from 7 – 16 inches. While we did not sample many larger Smallmouth Bass, angler reports indicate that Smallmouth Bass over 18 inches are present.

Black Crappie tend to be abundant in the lake and while the population tends to be dominated by smaller fish, crappies up

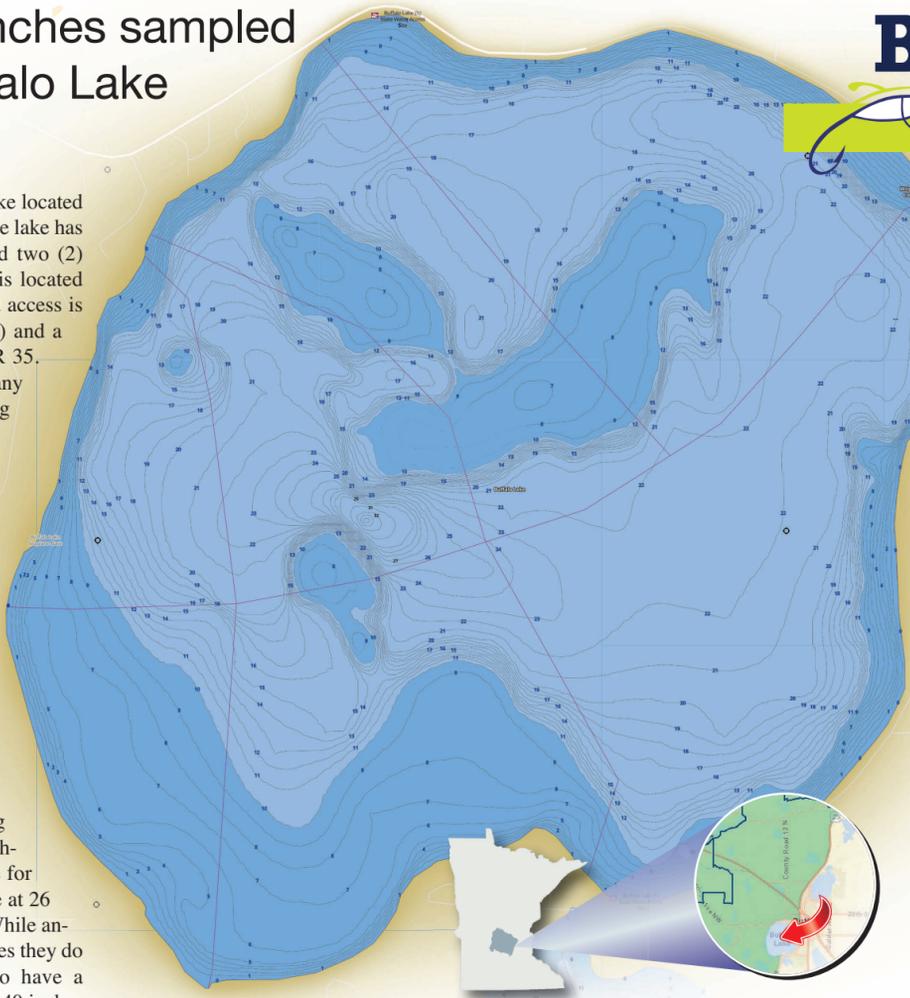
Buffalo Lake Lake of the Month

14 inches have been reported. Fifty percent of the crappies sampled in 2018 were longer than eight (8) inches while only 4% were longer than 10 inches. Crappie growth is above average for the area taking three (3) years to reach eight inches (8) and four (4) years to reach 10 inches. Bluegill abundance is low for the area; however the average size is respectable. Bluegill sampled in 2018 ranged in length from four (4) to 8 1/2 inches with an average length of 6.5 inches. Eighty-three percent of the Bluegill caught were six (6) inches or longer, but only 1% were eight (8) inches or longer. Bluegill growth in Buffalo Lake is average, taking five (5) years to reach seven (7) inches.

Currently there are no special fishing regulations on the lake; however Black Crappie would probably benefit from a bag limit reduction in order to improve the existing population size structure.

Buffalo Lake will also be part of a few research projects coming up. One looking at factors influencing Yellow Perch recruitment and abundance across the state and another as a control lake (non-infested) looking at the effects of zebra mussels on Walleye population dynamics across the state. These projects are being managed by the DNR Fisheries Research Unit in cooperation with the University of Minnesota.

Finally, please remember that the lake is infested with Eurasian milfoil so care should be taken not to spread this invasive species. Practicing selective harvest will continue to ensure healthy fish populations for future enjoyment. If readers have questions, feel free to send your questions or comments to joe.stewig@state.mn.us or leave a voicemail at 320-223-7867.



New sunfish limits on three Wright County lakes

By Wright County

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources has announced that new restrictions for number of specific fish daily limits and those allowed to be in possession have been placed on Minnesota lakes for 2021. Much of the focus is on sunfish, but other species are affected as well. In Wright County, six lakes and the Mississippi River have some sort of restrictions. Three lakes have been added to the restricted lake list for 2021 – Indian Lake, East Lake Sylvia and West Lake Sylvia. Three other lakes already have restrictions on them – Crawford Lake, Mink-Somers Lake and Sugar Lake.

These are the restrictions to the individual lakes:

Crawford – Largemouth bass are catch-and-release only. The possession limit for sunfish is five. The possession limit for crappies is five. The possession limit for walleyes is two. The possession limit for yellow perch is 10.

Indian (New) – The sunfish bag limit is 10.

Mink-Somers – The possession limit for sunfish is five. The possession limit for crappies is five. The possession limit for walleyes is three with a minimum size limit of 17 inches. All largemouth bass between 12-20 inches must be immediately released with one fish over 20 inches allowed in possession. All northern between 24-36 inches must be immediately released with a possession limit of three and just one over 36 inches. The possession or use of live minnows is prohibited.

Sugar – The possession limit for crappies is five. All northern between 24-36 inches must be immediately released – there is a possession limit of three with only one over 36 inches.

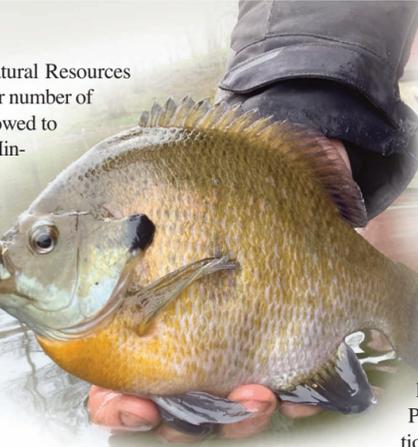
Sylvia East and West (both new) – The daily limit for crappies is five. The daily limit for sunfish is 10. In addition, there are restrictions on the portion of the Mississippi River that provides the northeast border of Wright County. All muskies caught must be immediately released. In addition, from the St. Cloud Dam to the confluence of the Crow River, all smallmouth bass between 12-20

New sunfish limits are now in effect on 94 Minnesota waters including three in Wright County.

Photo by Don Dittberner

inches must be immediately released with a possession limit of three and just one over 20 inches. The new regulations on inland waters have impacts on lakes and rivers throughout the state. Seeing as many local residents go outside of Wright County to fish during the course of a year and want to see if lakes they frequent are on the list of lake restrictions, an alphabetical list starts on Page 38 of the 2021 Minnesota Fishing Regulations manual. It can be found at:

https://files.dnr.state.mn.us/rlp/regulations/fishing/fishing_regs.pdf#page=38&20210301&view=fit



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Now is the time to prune those trees and bushes

By Adam Austing & Katie Drewitz
University of Minnesota
Extension Educators

species, but for most, late winter into early spring is the best time to prune.



From the pages of the Maple Lake Messenger.
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AS April welcomes us with mild weather perhaps you are looking for something to do to get out of the house. There are a few tasks you can be focusing on to help get you ready for spring, including pruning your trees. An old rule of thumb was to prune in winter while the plant was dormant. For best results, we need to be a bit more specific than that, but it's a start. When to prune depends on the

Pruning near the end of the dormant season has several advantages, including: 1) Limited time remaining before the tree or shrub will begin its spring growth and healing process. 2) Avoid certain diseases and pests. 3) Provides easier sight and access without deciduous foliage.

Oak wilt can be a devastating disease and continues to spread throughout Minnesota and therefore oak trees should not be

pruned during the months of April through mid-July. If an oak tree is damaged or wounded during this time period, it is best to cover the wound surface with a water-based paint or pruning sealer to help minimize the attraction of pests that may spread the disease.

Fruit trees such as apples, crabapples, mountain ash, and hawthorns should be pruned in February through early April. This reduces the chance of the bacterial disease fire blight and infection from occurring. Pruning in fall or early winter may cause drying out and die-back at the pruning sites.

Trees with sap will "bleed" during late winter or early spring pruning. Although it may look alarming this does not cause harm to the tree. One option with these types of trees or shrubs such as maples, box-elders, birch, and walnut or butternut, is to prune them after their leaves are fully developed in late spring or early summer. However, never remove more than one-quarter of the live foliage.

Early spring blooming trees



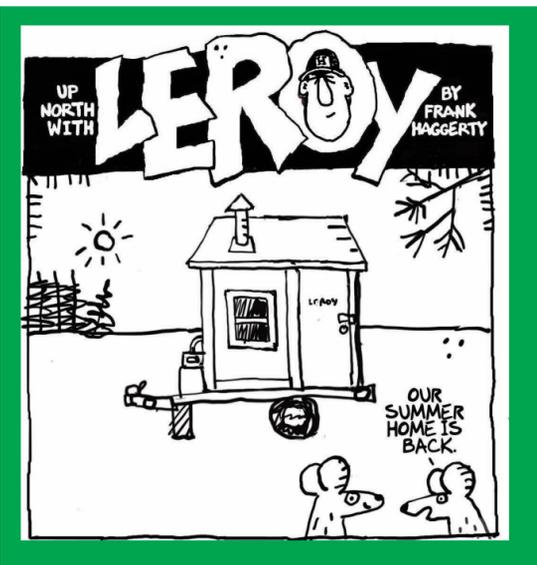
Although the best time to prune depends on the species, for most, late winter into early spring is the best time to prune.

and shrubs such as forsythia, flowering plum, lilac, azalea, chokeberry, chokecherry, and flowering crab should not be pruned in the late winter or early spring. Instead, these early bloomers should be pruned after they have finished blooming. If they are pruned at any other

time, once the flower buds are set, you will be pruning off next spring's flowers.

Remember that late winter and early spring is the best time to prune many of your trees and shrubs. Do your research, have the proper tools, and be careful.

For more information on pruning visit www.extension.umn.edu and search for pruning. You can also contact your local Extension Office. Residents of Wright County can email aausting@umn.edu or call 320-249-5929.



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As some of you may know, at the beginning of 2020, I decided to take a break from writing the cooking column after 13 years, 340 columns, and one book. Who knew that just three months later, we would all be on lockdown and home? At first, it was a daze. We were on a March vacation in Utah. Flying there was normal. Flying home just days later felt very different. A few people were wearing masks, but it really hadn't set in yet how bad it would get. By April, we all knew about COVID-19, and I thought maybe a gap year was a good idea after all.

KITCHEN MEDLEY



SANDY HOLTHAUS

I needed a break to refresh my mindset. I've always wanted to write a positive column that I could share with you. Nothing too crazy or political and definitely nothing upsetting. Just good food and good friends. I found that I had lost sight of all of you. Sometimes I felt as if no one was really interested in cooking for themselves anymore. I was so wrong! I started getting emails and Facebook messages almost immediately that you wanted recipes now more than ever. It was so nice to hear your ideas. To be honest, I was stumped too. My husband and sons were home working and studying online. I needed to cook now more than ever.

boxes and cookbooks to find traditional meal ideas. Shopping for a lot of ingredients wasn't possible. I started stocking a kitchen like my parents, ready for the apocalypse. I found

comfort food had new importance. It wasn't just about a meal; it was about soothing a soul during an unprecedented time. Smells took on a new meaning. The baked chicken smelled of warmth, the cake took on the smell of a hug, and citrus lightened the darkest days with a smile. Here is my favorite new Chicken-recipe. ~ I missed you, friend, and I'm glad to be back.

Peace,
- Sandy

Baked Chicken Breast

- Four boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 1 Tablespoon melted butter
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/2 teaspoon smoked paprika

Preheat oven to 450 degrees.

To brine your chicken breasts, fill a large bowl with 1 quart of warm water and 1/4 cup salt. Stir to combine until most of the salt is absorbed. Add the chicken breasts and let them sit in the mixture to brine for 15 minutes. Remove the chicken breasts from the brine, rinse them with cold water, then pat them dry with some paper towels.

Place the chicken breasts in a single layer in a large baking dish. Brush on both sides with the melted butter. In a separate small bowl, whisk the salt, pepper, garlic powder, and paprika until combined. Then sprinkle the spice mixture evenly over the chicken on both sides.

Bake for 18 to 22 minutes, or until the chicken is cooked through and no longer pink. Cooking time will depend on the thickness of the chicken breasts. Cut open at the thickest area; you should not see pink. The internal temperature of the chicken should be 165 degrees.

Once the chicken is cooked loosely, tent the plate with aluminum foil. Let the chicken rest for at least 5-10 minutes before serving.

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TEACHER of the MONTH



SCOTT ORVIK

By Tom Westman

Earlier this month the Annandale community voted online for the Annandale Middle School teacher of the month. The results are in and seventh grade U.S. History teacher Scott Orvik came up with the most votes. He has been teaching at the Annandale Middle School since 2004. Orvik also coaches AHS varsity tennis and AMS baseball.

Pillar of the AMS team

"I'm not one bit surprised that Mr. Orvik was selected," said AMS Principal Jeff Erickson. "He is a pillar of our AMS team and we are extremely fortunate to have him and his family in our Cardinal community."

Orvik serves as our seventh-grade team lead and the social studies department chair.

"His leadership has been key to successful distance, hybrid, and in-person instruction and his fair and level-headed approach to potentially challenging teaching topics ensure that our students are seeing the world through multiple perspectives."

Authentic and interesting

"Mr. Orvik works hard to create authentic and interesting learning opportunities for our students," Erickson said. "He is calm, personable, and genuine with our students. He takes the time to get to know students and what they are interested in. His ability to build relationships is second to none."

Valued, caring and funny

Some of the reason people voting thought highly of Orvik included:

"Kind, caring teacher."

"Connects well with students and makes them feel valued."

"He is very good at teaching and he teaches us by making learning fun."

"Dedicated, caring teacher and funny."

Orvik was asked what he likes most about teaching. "The positive relationships built with students and being able to share my interest in history with students," he answered.

About Scott

Orvik grew up in Benson, Minnesota and attended Benson Senior High School, he went on to earn a degree from Concordia College in Moor-



head. He is married to Kelly, who grew up in Annandale and is the daughter of Jerry and Jo Cordell who still live in Annandale.

"We are very fortunate to be able to spend a lot of time with Kelly's parents," Orvik said.

Loves Annandale

"Annandale is a great place to raise our boys," Orvik said. "There is a strong sense of community here and we enjoy all that the Annandale and surrounding area have to offer."

"It's great to be a part of a community that has such strong support for its schools and activities. Cardinal pride is everywhere in this town. We love it here"



CHRIS PAUMEN

By Brenda Erdahl

Chris Paumen, a middle school language arts and social studies teacher at St. Timothy School in Maple Lake, has been voted the April Teacher of the Month.

Paumen has spent the last 38 years teaching students and 34 of those years have been at St. Timothy School. She holds a BA in education from the University of Minnesota Morris and previously taught in a small town in Southern Minnesota called Lismore.

Paumen grew up in a small

family – only one sibling, a sister – in the small southern Minnesota town of Lakefield. That is where she developed her love for education.

"I always liked school and had a love for children. I felt (teaching) was a way to help shape the future of our world," she said.

Paumen loves working with students and finding new strategies to inspire them and get them excited about learning. Before moving to the middle school grades, she taught fourth grade at St. Timothy.



Paumen is married to Neil Paumen and they do not have any children.



Photo by Brenda Erdahl

Chris Paumen teaches middle school language arts and social studies at St. Timothy School in Maple Lake. Paumen loves working with students and finding new strategies to inspire them and get them excited about learning.

VOTE **BY APRIL 11**

Annandale Teachers
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GO ONLINE TO VOTE FOR THE MAY TEACHER OF THE MONTH
The May poll features teachers from grades 9-12

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LAKE Country Calendar

April



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>April is derived from the latin word <i>aperit</i> which means to open. It is considered that April is the month of the growing season and when trees and flowers begin to "open".</p>	29 April is Occupational Therapy Month	30	31	1 • April Fools Day	2 • Good Friday - No School	3
4 • Easter Sunday 	5	6 • Corinna Twp Meeting 7 pm • Silver Creek Twp Meeting 7 pm	7 • M.L. Chamber Meeting Noon • South Haven C.C. Meeting 7 pm • Library Week - Bookmobile Day	8 • Sons of the A.L. Meet 8 pm • ML Lions Club Meets 7 pm	9 • Day of Silence	10
11 • National Pet Day	12 • April New Moon	13 • Chatham Twp Meeting 7 pm	14 • Hasty Silver Creek Sportsmen's Club Meeting 8 pm	15 • W.C. Saddle Club Meets 7:30 pm • M.L. Legion Auxiliary Meets 7 pm	16	17
18	19 • Commemoration Day Oklahoma City Bombing	20 • M.L. City Council Meeting 7 pm • M.L. Twp Meeting 7 pm • Albion Twp Meeting 7 pm • Corinna Twp Meeting 7 pm	21 • Earth Day	22	23	24
25 • Wright Co. Snowmobile Ass. Meeting, M.L. Legion 7:30 pm	26 ○ Full Moon - Full Pink Moon	27 • Wright Co. Snowmobile Ass. Meeting, M.L. Legion 7:30 pm	28	29	30 • Arbor Day	<p>All events posted to this calendar may be affected by COVID-19. Please check with these events by calling or visiting their website.</p>

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