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THURSDAY  
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# New Richmond News

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## County Market will close Sunday

*Chance remains that store could reopen later*

By Gail Winship  
News staff reporter

Gary Cooper, owner of County Market said Wednesday, "The store will close on Dec. 31."

Cooper's statement came after a hastily called meeting of New Richmond City supervisors and Mayor Schnitzler with developers, builders, an architect and Cooper.

Cooper expressed gratitude that "others are concerned" about him and his business but stated that he has liquidated his inventory and is forced to close at this point.

Three detailed proposals for re-developing the existing County Market property were presented to the group by developer, David Robson, co-owner of Ban-Tara, LLC.

Ban-Tara, LLC, developed the shopping area in Hudson at the intersection of Carmichael and Interstate 94 which includes Starbucks, Perkins and U.S.

Bank. "We will bring national tenants to New Richmond which brings additional jobs to the area and won't take away from existing businesses," said Robson.

Discussion of the proposals came down mainly to issues of traffic flow and access roads. A sticking point was whether or not to make one of the roads public or private.

Robson told the committee he would change his proposals as needed to accommodate the requirements and preferences of the city.

"We want to design what is in the best interest of everybody," Robson said.

Bill Derrick, Jr. said he was attending the meeting to see what can be done to keep County Market from going dark.

Bill Derrick, Sr. also made several suggestions to change the proposals to solve the traffic flow issue.

Robert Barbian, planning and economic development director requested that the developer re-submit proposals drawn up with the access road as a city street and as a private road.

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### Making holiday music

Skye Mull and her classmates created all sorts of holiday music during the Somerset Elementary School kindergarten holiday program last Friday.

Photo by Dave Newman

## Forestry officials worried about new tree pest

By Jeff Holmquist  
Managing Editor

Tree lovers have something new to worry about.

Dutch Elm disease downed many trees throughout New Richmond over the past decade, causing more than a little disappointment among residents.

But another pest is appearing on the horizon that could rival that scourge.

The city's recently completed tree inventory revealed that more than 24 percent of city-owned trees are of the green ash variety. The publically-owned green ash trees can be found in local parks, along boulevards and in the cemetery.

"They're a great tree," said Joe Kerlin, city parks and recreation director. "They do so well. They can make it through anything."

Anything, that is, except the emerald ash borer bug.

The pest has laid waste to green ash trees in Illinois and experts worry that the bugs could reach this area within three to five years.

"It could be a potential huge problem," Kerlin said. "We have kind of a high percentage of those trees."

Kerlin recommended that homeowners avoid planting any more green ash locally. He suggested other varieties be considered at this point.

The warning signal sounded over the ash borer bug is one reason why the city is glad to have completed its first-ever inventory project, Kerlin said.

"The inventory is important to maintain our urban forest," he said. "We need to make sure we don't depend on one type of tree. You want a good variety."

With the inventory and a future plan, the city hopes to protect and build up

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## Pigs getting ready for moving day

*Diabetes research facility nears completion*

By Jeff Holmquist  
Managing Editor

The new diabetes research facility being constructed in New Richmond is on schedule and nearly ready for occupancy.

Spring Point Project, in partnership with diabetes researchers from the

University of Minnesota, has been erecting its new facility next to the New Richmond Regional Airport.

When completed, it will house 88 genetically-engineered pigs that will eventually be used in clinical trials. Once the pigs are fully raised, their pancreatic islet cells will be harvested for transplantation into human diabetic patients.

Researchers hope that the procedure will eventually provide a cure for diabetes. University of Minnesota researchers claim that pig islets have

been successfully transplanted in monkeys and cured diabetes.

According to Tom Spizzo, executive director of the Spring Point Project, the new 21,000-square-foot facility should be completed and operational by February.

If all goes according to plan, clinical trials for islet transplantation could occur within three years.

The local facility will carry the non-profit organization through the Federal Drug Administration's approval process. Once they get the stamp of

approval, Spring Point plans the eventual mass production of pigs that will be used for islet transplantation into millions of diabetic patients worldwide.

Even with recent reports that human islet cell transplantation does not appear to "cure" diabetes for some patients, Spizzo said Spring Point backers are optimistic about their project.

He said the University of Minnesota has had the greatest level of success

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## Hmong wine a brewing business

By Julia Ybarra-Young  
News staff reporter

The 10-gallon restaurant-size pot dominated the living room.

"People said it looks like we could cook several turkeys in it," Sara Vang, mother of four, laughed.

Sara and her fiance, Khue Yang, stood in their sun-drenched living room beside the three-foot tall pot. Khue said they hoped to acquire two more for their fledgling business: making traditional Hmong rice wine.

Sara learned how to make Hmong wine as a young girl in Laos by watching her mother. The rice wine was served for special occasions, such as parties or weddings. Sara also said the wine can be used as medicine in certain instances.

"You can also put herbs in it for medicine, but you have to be best friends or highly respected to be served a bottle with the herbs in it," Sara explained.

Khue demonstrated how they adapted the pot for wine-brewing. They punched two holes in either side of the pot to hold a handmade hollowed-out wooden paddle to drain the wine. Ice water is kept inside the pot to help facilitate the brewing, and must be replenished constantly. The entire contraption sits on a low, propane-fueled

fire on their back porch.

Making the wine is a long process, taking about 2-3 months. Sara allows 1-2 months for the rice to dissolve. Then it takes another 1-2 months to brew. All that time, the temperature needs to be between 80 and 110 degrees. Sara plans to get the barn remodeled to allow her to brew year-round, instead of just in the summer.

As a young girl, Sara said she didn't express a lot of interest in wine-making. It wasn't until she was in her 20s and already living in the United States that she even tried her hand at brewing.

Once she began making her own, however, she realized it was a tradition worth preserving.

Sara said that she has not found anyone else in the country selling rice wine. She believes there is a market because of the positive responses she's had so far.

"There are so many Asian people in the country, but no one is doing it because of all the regulations. So when people hear we are doing this, they say that's good. I have people in California, North Carolina and Texas that already want to franchise."

Sara has been living in Roberts for two years. Before that, she lived in St. Paul. She said one of

"There are so many Asian people in the country, but no one is doing it because of all the regulations."

- Sara Vang

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Photo by Julia Ybarra-Young

Sara Vang and Khue Yang stand with the 10-gallon pot they use to make their wine.





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# Referendum remains in school board's sights

By Gail Winship  
News Staff Reporter

The New Richmond School Board is right on track with pre-referendum planning.

The board's goal is to have information available to the public on the proposed resolution by Jan. 15, and to have a referendum resolution ready to be passed by the board on Feb. 16.

At last Wednesday's board meeting, New Richmond School Superintendent, Morrie Veilleux said, "the land should be taken care of by Jan. 15 and the cost estimates will be finalized by then."

The board will get down to the "nitty gritty" on setting priorities and dealing with major questions at a work session on Jan. 3.

Veilleux said the referendum information was sent to the webmaster and the

public will have access to the proposal some time next week.

The information will be available on the school Web site and hard copies will be at the district office.

"The goal is to give everyone access to as much information as possible regarding the referendum and needs," said Veilleux.

Dean Beeninga and Bob Gunderson from development group Anderson, Torseth, Skold and Rydeen, Inc. of Minneapolis (ATS&R) gave an updated power point presentation.

The presentation included proposed building renovations to East and West elementary schools and the proposed conversion of the high school to a middle school.

They also presented plans for a new elementary school and a new high

school proposed for the district.

Veilleux said he wants the school district to be on "the cutting edge of technology."

He added, "technology has to be part of the discussion when talking about taking care of our infrastructure."

"The goal is to give everyone access to as much information as possible regarding the referendum and needs," said Veilleux.

In other business:

■ The board approved transporting fifth grade orchestra students to the high school by bus for practice. There is no room for them to practice at East Elementary any longer.

■ Veilleux attended civil litigation proceedings regarding the Wanda Erwin, former elementary school principal, case. He reported he expects a written decision

by Judge Vlack mid to late Feb.

■ Veilleux reported that the board is moving ahead with the 4K charter school.

"We are getting things in line to see if it can work financially," Veilleux said.

Veilleux said he expects the board to approve the 4K Charter School and hopes to start the program in cooperation with community partners this fall.

■ The board agreed to table discussion of the school board resolution until next month as the delegate to Wisconsin School Board, Chris Skoglund, was not present.

The next New Richmond School Board monthly meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, Jan. 15.

Closed session will begin at 6 p.m. with open session starting at 7 p.m.

# 'The Lone Ringer' closes in on her fund-raising goal

By Gail Winship  
News Staff Reporter

Salvation Army volunteer Helen McCombie's quest to ring for 30 hours or \$30,000 began at 5 a.m. on Dec. 20, in front of County Market in Hudson.

When McCombie arrived at her post, someone was waiting there in the darkness of the early morning.

An elderly woman stood with five silver dollars in her hand while McCombie assembled the kettle stand.

McCombie gratefully accepted the first donation toward her energetic goal.

People heard of McCombie's mission on radios and televisions as far away as Duluth and Faribault, Minn.

Stories appeared of McCombie's personal crusade for The Salvation Army in local papers and in newspapers in the Twin Cities.

Donors flocked to Hudson, asking for McCombie by name.

At 9 p.m. a man from Woodbury dropped \$50 in the kettle.

The Salvation Divisional Headquarters in Milwaukee received a call-in donation of \$1,000 toward McCombie's goal.

Grace Place, the local office of The Salvation Army received another single donation of \$2,000 earmarked for McCombie's kettle and checks are still coming in.

Although McCombie did not

raise the full \$30,000, she is credited with raising over \$21,700 for her efforts.

McCombie rang for 30 hours, all of them outdoors in front of County Market.

According to Duana Bremer, director of social services for The Salvation Army of Polk and St. Croix counties, the local Salvation Army is still shy of their \$100,000 annual goal despite McCombie's "ring-a-thon."

Bremer said, "donations can still be sent in to be credited to Helen's kettle."

With just a short time to go, every donation helps toward the goal and all donations remain local to help those in our community.



Photo by Shay Tilander

## Slippery roads

Slippery road conditions were the cause of numerous accidents around the area last week, like this one on Highway 64 on Friday afternoon.

# PIGS: Business involved in research for finding a cure for diabetes

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with islet transplantation, compared to eight other diabetes research centers nationwide.

"We're confident in our partnership with the University of Minnesota," he said, "even though some of the reviews are mixed."

He said researchers continue to work on the immunosuppression drugs required to improve the success of islet cell transplantation.

Perhaps some of the greatest news for Spring Point is its funding support. Last summer the organization had just \$5 million in pledges committed toward the \$20 million project. Now they've almost reached their goal.

"We've been very successful," Spizzo reported. "We've made tremendous progress. We expect to be fully funded through our first phase and clinic trials."

# A sign of the times

## County Board enacts moratorium on billboards

By Judy Wiff  
Regional Editor

The St. Croix County Board agreed last week to put a temporary moratorium on permanent signs.

The six-month moratorium regulates outdoor signs along highways in rural areas. It prohibits both on-premises and off-premises signs. Temporary on-premises signs will be allowed only with a county

permit. Planning and Zoning Director Dave Fodroczi said the existing sign regulations date back to the 1970s and have been troublesome for both his department and the Zoning Board of Adjustment.

He said the committee and department want to take a deliberate approach to developing regulations that are contemporary.

According to the moratorium resolution, the county is seeing more demand for signs because of growth and development, more advertising options along improved highways and advances in sign technologies.

In 2006, 40 new signs were

approved through the special exception process, more than were approved in the previous three years combined.

Requests involving signs accounted for about half of the Board of Adjustments' applications this year.

All except two of the approved applications were in on the western side of the county in the towns of Troy, St. Joseph, Somerset, Star Prairie, Richmond and Warren.

Of these, 17 signs were along recently improved state highways, including Hwy. 35/64 between Houlton and New Richmond, Hwy. 35 between River Falls and I-94 and Hwy. 65 near New Richmond.

# MARKET:

Continued from Page 1A

Barbian set the next supervisory review meeting for this Thursday at 9 a.m. to look over the two new proposals from Robson.

The proposal would then go

before the planning commission for approval.

The future of the County Market site could be decided by Jan. 8, the next city council meeting.

# WINE: Being as big as Budweiser is their dream

Continued from Page 1A

the reasons she moved to Wisconsin was because the brewing regulations were not as strict.

"Regulations are tough in Minnesota and you have to be really rich to do it," Sara commented.

Khue brought out a sample bottle of the crystal clear wine. Sara compares the taste to Japanese saki, or American moonshine.

"This doesn't give you a hang-over," Sara said proudly. "You drink this room temperature, but before you drink it, you need to have food in your stomach or it'll knock you down flat."

Sara also suggested mixing it with cranberry juice.

Khue and Sara both work at Comcast in St. Paul but, once they secure a loan for barn remodeling, hope to brew and distribute the wine full-time.

They already have a license to make one thousand 375 ml and 750 ml bottles a month in their home. More than that, they would have to move to a commercial zone.

"I have an investor and we wanted to have an 'open house' by December, but it didn't go as well," Sara admitted. "So we're looking at late summer or early fall next year."

Although Sara is excited to get the business going, she said she doesn't want to rush things.

"An Asian radio station wanted me to advertise," Sara recalled. "But we weren't ready so I said 'No, not now.' If you make a mistake, you can't erase it. I want to do it right."

"This is my dream," Sara said fondly. "My whole life I've wanted to have my own business. In 20 years, I want to be as big as Budweiser."

# TREES: Increasing number, health is goal

Continued from Page 1A

its valued tree resources. The recent inventory estimates the

trees, Kerlin said.

"Education is going to be a huge part of this," he said.

Part of the education process is making sure homeowners realize that trees in the boulevard are owned by the city, but their maintenance is the citizen's responsibility, he noted.

The board also hopes to have an influence on landscape and tree plans in proposed new developments in the city, Kerlin added.

The city would also like to discourage some of the "clear cutting" that now occurs when a housing development goes in, saving as many of the existing mature trees as possible on the land, Kerlin explained.

As the inventory and forestry planning progress, Kerlin said the city will update its computer records to reflect the current status of each tree. He figures more complete updates will be done every five years.

The city owns about  
3,000 trees

2,731 are in fair or  
better condition

284 are in poor condition

18 are marked for removal

"Everyone wants trees," he said. "Their worth is huge. It's important to know their value, because then you can work to maintain them."

As part of the inventory and maintenance effort, the city has also established a new Urban Forestry Board dealing with the community's trees. The board plans to meet on a monthly basis and will make forestry-related recommendations to the city's Park Board.

The group's goal is to improve the city's tree health and numbers, and to work with local landowners on the maintenance of existing and future

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