

MC Mid-County Messenger Spring

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Spring 2024 • Vol. 43

www.midcountycoop.com

In Memory of Dale and Tony



Bill Reimers

General Manager
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different capacities in our Petroleum and Agronomy Departments, passed away on Jan. 17.

Tony Hallum, who had been our Cologne Holiday Store Manager for 10 years, passed away on Feb. 19.

Both had fought cancer for several years, and even though they were struggling with their health, they stayed working until December, which is a testament in itself to their dedication to their careers at Mid-County.

These will not be easy positions to fill, but the rest of the employees have worked hard to maintain our customer service.

The next couple of pages of this newsletter will tell you more about these two dedi-

cated employees and outstanding gentlemen.

cated employees and outstanding gentlemen.

Truck Center

It has been almost a year since we dedicated our repair shop to strictly truck repair. It was a smooth transition, and we are keeping the bays full even during the winter months. One of our big motivators to change was the lack of qualified auto technicians. We are very fortunate to have some very experienced and qualified truck technicians to handle the workload.

Energy

Energy markets have been rising since the first of the year. This is true for Gasoline, Fuels, and Propane. There are no big reasons for this other than the typical increases we usually see heading into summer. Gasoline and Fuel markets may drop for a day or two, only to rise higher than before. In part, this is due to the instability in the Middle East. With several ships being attacked in the Red Sea, they are taking different routes for all products, which increases costs and adds volatility in the market. In the case of propane, the ability to export from the gulf has grown so much that any excess inventories are sent overseas. So even with the warm winter, in-

ventories are lower than last year, and prices have recently increased.

Agronomy

We are excited and look forward to another good spring in our Agronomy Department. With the addition of another John Deere sprayer and two additional tender trucks, we are well-positioned to be there when you need us.

Staffing

Another positive note is that hiring staff has shown some improvement over the last year. At one time, we were looking to add six full-time employees, and we are now recruiting for one. Part-time staffing for our convenience stores always cycles, but we rarely have excess employees. If you know of someone looking for their first job, this is a great way for them to experience the workplace.

And no matter what career path a young person is taking, working in a retail environment is a great way to learn how to communicate with people, and it will teach them skills that will last a lifetime.

As always, I appreciate your comments to improve your coop.

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In Loving Memory



In loving memory of Dale R. Schmitz



**July 17, 1961 –
January 17, 2024**

It is with profound sadness that we announce the passing of Dale Roger Schmitz, a cherished son, brother, uncle, and friend.

Dale's life, marked by his unwavering faith, love for farming, dedication to firefighting, and profound commitment to family and friends, has left an indelible mark on all who had the privilege of knowing him.

Dale's journey began on July 17, 1961, in Waconia, born to Roger and JoAnn (Notermann) Schmitz. Raised on the family farm, Dale's passion for agriculture bloomed from an early age. Whether tending to cattle or maneuvering a tractor through the fields, Dale's connection to the land was unwavering.

His career path led him to Mid-County Co-op, where for 35 years, Dale served as an agronomy applicator and later as an integral member of the Fuel and LP Gas team.

His dedication to his work extended beyond his role; he was a trusted colleague and friend to many, known for his impeccable work ethic, kindness, and willingness to lend a helping hand.

Dale's commitment to community safety

was exemplified through his 37 years of service as a volunteer firefighter in Cologne. His bravery in the face of danger, compassion in times of crisis, and selflessness in service will forever be remembered as foundational to the security of Cologne.

Outside of work and service, Dale cherished moments spent with loved ones, relishing in family vacations, and creating lasting memories with nieces, nephews, and great-nieces and nephews. His presence brought joy to gatherings, and his playful spirit endeared him to all.

Dale is preceded in death by his grandparents, Martin and Eleanore Schmitz, Arnold, and Evelyn Notermann. He is survived by his parents, Roger and JoAnn Schmitz; sister Nancy (Vern) Elke; brother Tom Schmitz; nieces and nephews Mackenzie (Shane) Lobitz, Kelsey Bakeberg (fiancé James Winterhalter), and Mason Storms; and great-nieces and nephews Elena Bakeberg, Brooks Lobitz, Carson Lobitz, and Cullen Bakeberg.

In honoring Dale's memory, we celebrate a life well-lived, a legacy of kindness, and a spirit of unwavering dedication. Though he may no longer walk among us, his presence will forever be felt in our hearts.

Tributes from Co-Workers:

"I worked with Dale for 16 of the 35 years he worked at Mid-County. He was a soft-spoken guy who knew his customers and his job very well. He was the expert on propane

deliveries and had a great memory. He had all the answers if you needed to know anything about propane or his route. He also was a bit of a jokester who liked to do or say things to see if he could get a reaction out of us. He fought hard when he found out he had cancer. You could tell by looking at him that he was in a lot of pain and didn't feel well, but he still managed to work pretty much every day, and even when he wasn't here, he was always available by phone for questions. He was a dedicated employee and is greatly missed by many." - Julie Clemensen

"It is so hard to sum up what Dale meant to us here at the Coop in a few words. He was so knowledgeable in his job as the lead propane driver and a huge asset to the agronomy department, helping out during their busy season! His customers loved him, and he knew almost everything you needed to know about propane tanks! When you asked him a question about any of his customers, he could give you an answer in seconds! He was certainly a dedicated employee. What I will miss most about him is his sassy smile and how he played jokes on me daily! It was a pleasure working with him. Dale was a friend, a colleague, and an awesome member of our Community! He will be forever in our hearts, and we miss him!" - Diane Beckrich

Dale's memory lives on in the lives he touched and the legacy of love and service he leaves behind.



Great Deals Good Through April 24, 2024



BUY TWO GET ONE FREE

mix & match
8.4 oz. Red Bull varieties

In Loving Memory



In loving memory of Tony Hallum



June 27, 1967 –
February 19, 2024

With heavy hearts, we bid farewell to our colleague and friend, Tony Hallum, who passed away on Feb. 19, at his home in Jordan, surrounded by those who cherished him

dearly.

Tony, aged 56, fought a valiant battle against esophageal cancer for four years until he was called home by the grace of God.

Born on June 27, 1967, in Winona, Tony's journey was one marked by warmth, humor, and unwavering dedication. He was baptized and confirmed in the Rushford Lutheran Church and graduated with the RHS class of 1985.

Tony's passion for literature and history blossomed early, making him nearly unbeatable in Trivia Pursuit, while his legendary sense of humor brightened the lives of all who knew him.

From early endeavors in scouting to his tenure at McGeorge's Restaurant, Tony's work ethic and charm were evident to all. After graduating from Winona State University, he pursued his love for history, earning a place in the masters of history program at Mankato State University.

It was during this time that he found love

in Amy (Bulock) Hallum, whom he married on Aug. 29, 1992. Together, they shared countless adventures, from trivia nights to Renaissance Festivals, forging memories that will forever endure.

Tony's professional journey saw him manage various businesses before finding his calling at Mid-County Co-op in Cologne.

A dedicated leader, Tony nurtured relationships with his customers and mentored countless young professionals, imparting wisdom on integrity and dependability. His commitment to community was unwavering, as seen through his generous donations and active support for local initiatives, earning him recognition from the local 4-H.

Tony leaves behind a legacy of love and laughter, survived by his wife, Amy; his mother, Dianne; his brother, Christopher; extended family; and a multitude of cherished friends. While we mourn his loss, we also celebrate the joy he brought into our lives and the indelible mark he left on our hearts.

In the words of Dr. Seuss, "Don't cry because it's over; Smile because it happened."

Tributes from Co-Workers:

"Tony was our Cologne Holiday store manager. He had a funny sense of humor and always had a comeback or quote to end a conversation. My favorite was when you'd thank him for answering a question; he'd say 'no charge.' When he found out he had can-

cer, he dealt with it by using humor. I was always amazed at how he could go through everything he was going through and still go to work every day and crack jokes. Tony was also very generous to the Cologne community – always willing to donate gift cards, car wash books, beverage coupons, etc, to local non-profit groups. He worked hard to build relationships with his local customers. He is missed by his coworkers and customers alike." - Julie Clemensen

"Tony had the greatest sense of humor and quick-witted comebacks, making me laugh daily! Whenever you needed to get information from him or ask him a question, he would end the conversation with "No Charge!" Whenever the community came asking for donations, he was always generous! Especially when it came to something for town events that involved kids events like 4-H events, Easter, or Halloween events, he was always willing to make a donation, saying, "anything for the kids!". Throughout his whole cancer journey, Tony held his head high, came to work every day, and even when he was off for treatments or not feeling well, he came in on his scheduled day off to work. His love for his job was undeniable, and he was very proud of the store. We will truly miss having Tony in our lives!" - Diane Beckrich

Tony's laughter, kindness, and dedication will forever be remembered and deeply missed.



Great Deals Good Through April 24, 2024



All your favorite flavors!

Turkey, spinach and cucumbers with onion & chive cream cheese on an everything bagel.

New Turkey Bagel Sandwich!





AGRONOMY



Mid-County attends Carver County Dairy and Beef Expo

By Owen Elle
Staff Writer

The Carver County Dairy and Beef Expo took place on Feb. 19 at Central Elementary School in Norwood Young America.

Mid-County was represented by its agronomy staff at the annual event. Alex Klaustermeier, John Morrison and Steve Salz were on hand to speak to long time and potential customers.

The event was hosted by the University of Minnesota Extension-Carver County and Carver County Ag Initiatives. The expo opened at 9 a.m. with a trade show that lasted the entire length of the event.

Beef quality assurance training began at 9:45 a.m. and was presented by University of Minnesota Extension Educator Dr. Joe Armstrong. He graduated from the University of Minnesota-College of Veterinary Medicine in 2015. After veterinary school, he worked as a private practitioner with beef and dairy farms at Anderson Veterinary Service in Zumbrota.

Armstrong is currently the Cattle Production Systems Extension Educator where he focuses on educational programming for beef and dairy producers across the state.

Three sessions of speakers started at different locations across the school at 10:30 a.m. Bongard's Milk Procurement and Field Service Manager Tom Beringer delivered a presentation on the prices of milk, University of Wisconsin Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist Luiz Ferraretto delivered a presentation on the feeding behavior of cows, and a dairy beef farmer and extension panel held a session on breed selections and management considerations.

Ferraretto, a native of Brazil, earned degrees from Sao Paulo State University and the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

His research interests are applied cattle nutrition and management with emphasis on starch and fiber utilization by dairy cows, corn silage and high-moisture corn quality and digestibility, the use of alternative byproducts as feed ingredients, and supplementation of feed additives in lactating cows.



PHOTO BY OWEN ELLE

Alex Klaustermeier, John Morrison, and Steve Salz represented Mid-County Coop at the expo.

Beringer, who grew up on a dairy farm five miles west of Glencoe, worked at Glencoe Butter and Produce from 1988 until its merger with AMPI in 1999. He then worked for AMPI until the plant closed in 2004, where in the same year he started his current position at Bongards.

Dr. Chris Wolf, a professor of agricultural economics at Cornell University, delivered the keynote address in the atrium entitled "Dairy economics and farm policy". In the presentation, Wolf discusses the dairy situation and outlook for the US in 2024. Wolf received his PhD. at the University of California-Davis and taught farm business management for over 18 years at Michigan State University.

A lunch break ensued from 12:30 to 2 p.m. before another trio of sessions occurred. University of Wisconsin Extension Beef Outreach Specialist Bill Halfman delivered a presentation on feeding and managing dairy beef cross cattle from 400 pounds to finish. Topics discussed included feed-

ing programs and rations, bunk management, pen management, and a recent Holstein trial.

Halfman transitioned to his current role in 2022 and before that was the Monroe County agriculture extension agent for 20 years. He has developed and presented beef production and management programs and workshops across Wisconsin and holds degrees from the University of Wisconsin-River Falls and the University of Tennessee-Knoxville. Wolf delivered a presentation entitled "Deeper dive into dairy market programs" and Ferraretto gave a repeat of his 10:30 a.m. session.

The expo had 38 vendors in attendance.

The next Carver County Dairy and Beef Expo is scheduled for Feb. 17, 2025.

New Turkey Bagel Sandwich!



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Turkey, spinach and cucumbers with onion & chive cream cheese on an everything bagel.

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HOLIDAY COLOGNE

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Highway 212 improvements remain on schedule

By Owen Elle
Staff Writer

Carver County's Highway 212 - Benton Township project currently remains on schedule according to Assistant Public Works Director and Deputy County Engineer Darin Mielke.

The project, which started in 2019, is designed to implement roadway safety and capacity improvements for an approximately five-mile stretch of Highway 212 from the city of Norwood Young America to Cologne. It has most recently been in the final design and land acquisition phase.

"We're finalizing our construction plans which should be done within the next month and then we are also in the process of acquiring land from property owners impacted by the project," Mielke said. "We are planning on advertising for bids during the month of May and then plan to have a contractor on board and start construction in the month of July."

The Benton Township project is set to expand the aforementioned stretch of Highway 212 from a two-lane undivided highway into a four-lane divided highway, bridging the final gap in the four-lane expressway between Eden Prairie and Glencoe. This project is the second of two phases, the first of which took place in Dahlgren Township and entered completion in 2022.

The improved highway is expected to have an economic benefit on surrounding communities, however the primary goal of the project, according to Mielke, is safety. "I would say overall [citizens] are glad to see this project finally come to



Highway 212 near Cologne.

Photo by Owen Elle

fruition for the safety aspects that it will provide, in particular, the interchange that's proposed at the Bongards' intersection, which has had a lot of fatalities in the past. This will definitely help to hopefully eliminate that issue altogether."

Expanding on the safety issues that Highway 212 has posed, Mielke said, "Currently the existing two-lane highway, if there would be an accident, the highway has to be shut down, it can't remain open, whereas with an expressway there's potential to at least keep traffic moving and users can be accustomed to a more reliable route than having it occasionally closed down for emergency situations."

The project is set to be finished in 2026 and

detour plans have already been drawn up as traffic will be impacted during construction. However, Mielke believes that the impact the project will have on traffic won't be as large as people may expect. "For those that are familiar and drove Highway 212 when the Dahlgren Phase was being constructed, there was rather minor inconvenience to the commuters at that time. This should be very similar, however, with the addition of the interchange by Bongards, there will need to be a short-term closure of Highway 212, I believe it's going to be two days for the westbound direction and up to maybe 12 days for the eastbound direction while that bridge is being constructed over the highway," Mielke said.



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Missie Beckmann
Store Manager
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STAFF SPOTLIGHT



Erika Kieser - Waverly Holiday Assistant Manager

Erika is originally from Wayzata; that's where she grew up and where she attended and graduated from high school.

After graduating high school, she moved to Waverly and purchased a house. Erika started working for Mid-County Holiday as a customer service representative and became assistant manager two years ago.

When she is not working on her home, she enjoys the outdoors. She said the best part of her job is the customers. She loves seeing them and greeting them everyday.



Miriah Austin - Cologne Holiday Assistant Manager

Miriah is originally from Waconia but moved to St. Cloud when she was young.

She graduated high school in St. Cloud and went to St. Cloud Technical and Community College for nursing after graduating and getting her degree. Miriah worked as a nurse for 10 years. After the pandemic, Miriah said she needed a change and moved back to the Cologne area, where she has family.

When she saw the job opening at Mid-County Holiday, she thought it would be a great place to work. She said she enjoys the atmosphere and the people she works with at the store.

In addition, she loves hiking, camping, and the outdoors when not at work.



Rich Ritter - Agronomy Support

Rich is originally from Oakdale but now resides in Watertown.

After retiring from the St. Paul Fire Department, he was looking for something to keep himself busy part-time that was flexible, and that's when he found Mid-County Coop.

He was hired as part-time agronomy support. Rich said he loves working at Mid-County and enjoys his fellow employees.

In his spare time, Rich likes to hunt and fish.



Toby Schauer - Custom Applicator

Toby grew up in Lincoln, Nebraska on the edge of town by the cornfields. He loved playing in the cornfields as a kid, and now, working in the agronomy department at Mid-County Coop, he enjoys custom spraying them for area farmers, and using all the new equipment. He's looking forward to getting back in the fields this Spring! He loves meeting the farmers and seeing them around the community as well. This past year, Toby was also certified in propane delivery which allowed him to help with more of our customers' needs. He loves staying busy and helping wherever needed.

In Toby's spare time, he enjoys Nitro R/C Cars and helping around the family farm when needed.

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