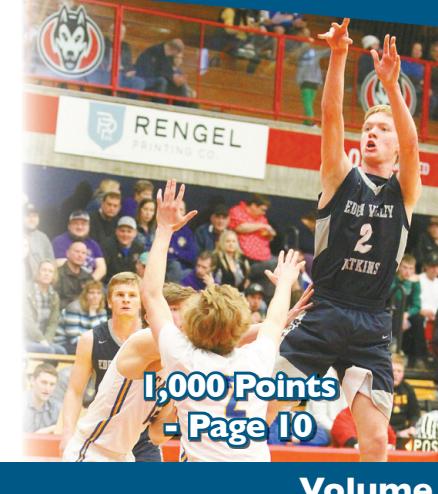
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Wednesday, March 25, 2020

www.evvoice.com

Volume 9, No. 13

COVID-19

Eden Valley, Watkins subjected to panic-buying

Rising concern about coronavirus pandemic causes toilet paper to fly off the shelves

By Ellarry Prentice

A sign outside Lost & Found in downtown Eden Valley offered encouragement in a seemingly discouraging time. *Pray. Hope. Don't worry!*

As concerns about the novel coronavirus heightened, parishioners prayed around the clock at local parishes. Others did what's known as 'panic-buying.' Some food items and other household necessities have been flying off the shelves across the country since officials declared the outbreak of COVID-19 a public health emergency. The respiratory illness is caused by the new coronavirus that emerged in China in December 2019.

Symptoms include cough, fever, and shortness of breath.

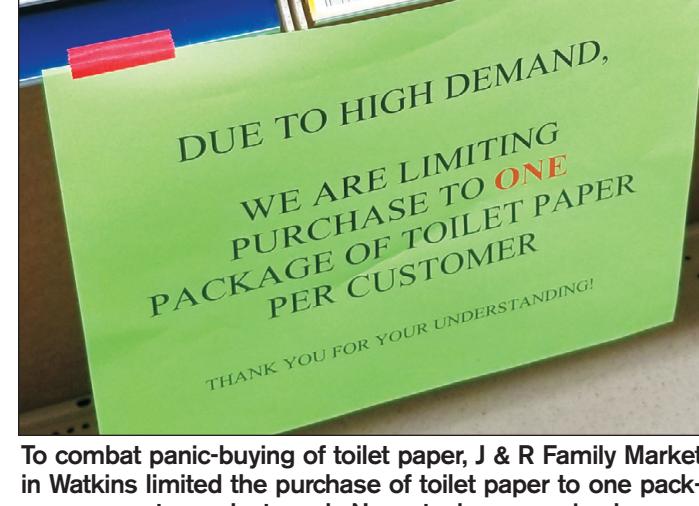
Panic buying occurs when consumers buy unusually large amounts of a product in anticipation of a shortage caused by a health threat or natural disaster. In Eden Valley and Watkins, toilet paper was the most-sought-after, panic-buying item.

Some shelves were bare last week at Dollar General in Eden Valley, which ran out of toilet paper for an extended time. It's close alternative, facial tissue, was also in short supply last week. Bread and some cleaning supplies were low in stock, too.

To protect the elderly, Dollar General announced that it would have a designated shopping time for senior citizens, who are prone to more serious, potentially deadly illness if they contract COVID-19, the first hour of the day: 8 to 9 a.m.

As an additional precaution, the store began closing one hour earlier, at 9 p.m.

An employee said Dollar General in Eden Valley was



To combat panic-buying of toilet paper, J & R Family Market in Watkins limited the purchase of toilet paper to one package per customer last week. New stock soon arrived.

so shoppers need not worry.

The coronavirus pandemic also forced local bars/restaurants to close their doors to dine-in customers, with pick-up/take-out being the only option for dining out.

Classroom instruction in the EV-W School District continues to be suspended until further notice, with district personnel working on a plan for remote learning.



Dollar General in Eden Valley ran out of toilet paper last week. Facial tissue was also in short supply. A store associate said Dollar General was also running low on cleaning supplies amid the coronavirus pandemic. The store expected new stock soon.

A sign outside Lost and Found in downtown Eden Valley encouraged faith and a worry-free attitude in light of COVID-19.

Photos by Ellarry Prentice

Eden Valley Food Shelf plans to remain open during pandemic

Local food shelf set to open next on Wednesday, April 1

By Ellarry Prentice

Because local people still rely on its services, the Eden Valley Food Shelf will remain open during the coronavirus pandemic.

The food shelf is open just twice per month, the first and third Wednesdays. Its next open date is Wednesday, April 1, and plans are to open the doors unless the current health threat worsens and officials tell them otherwise, said director Pat Arnold.

"Most of the food shelves are staying open because people need food," Arnold said.

The food shelf was open last Wednesday, March 18, and

FOOD SHELF – Page 2

QUICK HITS

Got a Covid-19 experience you'd like to share?

The Voice will be continuing to cover the Covid-19 pandemic in our next issues. If you have a Covid-19 story, experience, or picture you want to share, please send it to editor@evvoice.com.

Until next week's Voice, check www.evvoice.com for updates about the novel coronavirus pandemic.

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EVW SCHOOLS**District focusing on its COVID-19 efforts**

"Second, internet. We're working with internet service providers in the area to expand quality internet access for our students," said Messman, noting the district's potential deployment of hotspot devices and pressure on Arvig (a local internet service provider) to improve their grid.

"Third, materials. Not all distance learning needs to be digital," Messman said, explaining that many teachers are looking for support in utilizing non-electronic resources for long-distance education.

"Fourth, nutrition. We've set up four food-distribution sites. We're making contact," Messman said. The district is offering free breakfast and lunch to students at four locations – EV-W High School, Watkins Elementary, the Church of Our Lady in Manannah, and St. Nicholas Catholic Church – and is offering to deliver meals to students who are unable to travel to centralized distribution points.

If interested, students or their parents are asked to fill out a survey on the district's website. "Our message is getting out really well. Our staff is doing an excellent job of getting the message out in a very clear way," complimented board member Ann Lemke.

"First, devices. We're working on mobilizing the number of devices available to our students," Messman said, referencing the district's push to offer long-term Chromebook rentals to students who lack access to a device at home.

"All staff members are remaining whole in terms of compensation, and it's important that schools, businesses, and communities rally around each other. There's going to be some pain along the way, and I'm asking us all to please patronize our local businesses."

Messman also updated the board on the daily operations of EV-W employees. "Our first priority is in the health and safety of our students and staff. We're aware of medically-compromised staff with high-risk factors, and we've encouraged them to work from home," Messman said, adding that he has sent near-daily updates to personnel with relevant COVID-19 information and district administrators have met with each other and teachers daily to monitor the effectiveness of the operation.

School nurse Anno Johnson has also set up health monitoring stations around district facilities for staff to check their body temperatures when entering and exiting buildings. All employees with temperatures exceeding 99.5 degrees Fahrenheit will be sent home.

In coordination with the nationwide effort for social distancing, the Minnesota State High School League has mandated an end to in-person practices until at least Monday, March 30, and a halt on competitions until at least Monday, April 6. The timelines on both will likely be extended in the

coming week.

"We had a fantastic winter season," said EV-W athletic director Dave Schneider, praising the district's success in basketball, wrestling, hockey, gymnastics, Knowledge Bowl, and speech. Informing the board of the possibility of cancelling the spring sports season, however, Schneider raised concern about the compensation of coaches. "Hourly workers will continue to get compensated. Will coaches be the same?" Schneider said, adding that spring-sport coaches have communicated practice regimens to athletes to follow at home in the event of the spring season being resumed at a later date.

With more pressing concerns related to COVID-19, the district has devoted little attention to its upcoming construction plans. "Phase II has taken a back seat right now," Messman said, informing the board of the largely mundane, procedural work done towards the project. If, however, the state or federal government mandates an end to in-person education for the rest of the 2019-20 school year, the district will shift its construction timeline. "If schools are closed for the year, we will move forward with Phase II construction right away," Messman said, noting that the district's plans are entirely reliant on announcements from the state. Phase II largely consists of repairs and improvements to the 1927 building at EV-W

SCHOOLS – Page 2

QUICK HITS

U.S. Census continues despite COVID-19

By Wednesday, April 1, every U.S. home is expected to receive an invitation to participate in the 2020 census – by mail, by phone, or online. Residents are required by law to be counted in the 2020 census. To complete the census, residents will answer a questionnaire about themselves and everyone who is living with them as of April 1, 2020. So far, 11 million households have responded.

In Greater Minnesota, some zip codes will receive a paper census form in the first mailing – starting Thursday, March 12, to Friday, March 20. Some zip codes will not initially receive a paper census form. Instead, the mailing will include instructions for responding to the census either online or by phone.

Residents who receive the postcard version and do not have access to respond via the internet can follow the instructions to respond by calling a phone number on the postcard and being connected with a person who will record their information. Or, if they prefer a paper questionnaire, they can call the phone number and request one, or wait until the second week in April, when paper forms will be mailed to people who have not yet responded.