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EDEN VALLEY

WATKINS

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QUICK HITS

This Week

Library to host plant shuffle, May 12-16

The annual plant shuffle at the Eden Valley Area Library will be held from Monday, May 12, to Friday, May 16, during open library hours (2-5 p.m.). Pick up some interesting annual and perennial flowers and bulbs along with houseplants, herbs, and garden vegetables. Bring a plant, trade a plant, and take what interests you. And it's free!

Thursday, May 15, to Saturday, May 17

City-wide garage sales this weekend

The annual city-wide garage sales will be held from Thursday, May 15, through Saturday, May 17, in Eden Valley and Watkins. Visit local garage sales and find all sorts of treasures! Happy bargain hunting!

Saturday, May 17

Father-daughter dance on Saturday

The Eden Valley Citizens for Progress (EVC4P) will hold a father-daughter dance on Saturday, May 17, from 6-8 p.m. at the Eden Valley Community Center (next to the library). This event is for girls (ages 4-10) who are accompanied by an adult guest. Entry (\$20 per child) includes a wrist corsage, the photo booth, punch, cookies, dancing, and games. Please register at evcitizens4progress@gmail.com or by calling 320-255-5515.

Eden Valley Sportsmen's to hold dinner

The Eden Valley Sportsmen's Club will hold their annual BBQ chicken and pork chop supper on Saturday, May 17, from 4-8 p.m. at their clubhouse (18475 Drumflower Road, Richmond). The menu includes BBQ chicken, smoked pork chops, scalloped potatoes, beans, coleslaw, and dinner rolls. Takeout meals and refreshments will be available. There also will be door prizes, meat raffle, quilt raffle, and drawing for the 2025 "Making Memories" raffle.



Photo Courtesy of Meeker Coop

Some of Meeker Cooperative's line workers – Logan Josephson, Jake Smothers, and John Grabow – with a truck in 2024.

MEEKER CO-OP

Rural electrification began in May 1935

Meeker Cooperative celebrated 90 years of service on May 6

Ninety years ago – as of Tuesday, May 6, 2025 – Meeker Cooperative turned the lights on for rural families across Meeker County.

Today, it's helping those same residents connect to a faster, brighter future – delivering not just electricity, but fiber internet and innovative solutions that empower life in our world today.

Founded in 1935, Meeker Cooperative has grown from a

grassroots effort to electrify rural farms into a trusted utility serving more than 8,000 coop members. With a legacy built on reliability, innovation, and community spirit, the cooperative is proudly celebrating nine decades of powering progress.

Lighting the Way: From Kerosene to Kilowatts

In the 1930s, much of Meeker County was left in the dark...literally. While urban areas embraced electric power, rural residents relied on kerosene lamps and hand tools.

That began to change in 1935, when local farmers and area leaders formed Meeker

Cooperative Light and Power Association. With funding from the newly passed Rural Electrification Act, the first lines were built, and by the end of 1936 electricity was flowing to 300 farmsteads over 175 miles of line.

Electricity brought more than convenience; it transformed rural life. Farms gained access to modern equipment; homes became safer and more comfortable.

Expanding Services and Embracing Innovation

Over the decades, Meeker Cooperative has continued to evolve. The cooperative introduced underground lines in the 1960s, implemented energy efficiency programs in the

1980s, and launched Operation Round Up® in the 1990s – contributing more than \$1 million to local non-profits, projects, and scholarships.

In 2018, recognizing that internet access was just as essential as electricity, the co-op launched Vibrant Broadband, its own internet service designed for rural communities. Since then, the cooperative has secured more than \$32 million in state and federal grants to expand broadband access – bringing high-speed connectivity to homes, farms, and small businesses that had long been left behind.

"We've always believed that

MEEKER CO-OP – Page 3

News Briefs

Stearns County beginning centerline project on Co. Rd. 162

Stearns County area motorists are advised there will be some culverts replaced on two different county roads starting on Thursday, May 15, through Wednesday, May 28. The contractor will start on Co. Rd. 162, just north of Eden Valley. The next culvert work area is on Co. Rd. 176, just south of New Munich, and will start approximately the week of Monday, May 19.

Motorists are strongly urged to find alternate routes to minimize delays. Dates and timeframes are weather dependent. Local motorists are advised to use caution while traveling through the work zone and to expect delays.

Questions or concerns may be directed to the Stearns County Highway Department.

Horse with EHM confirmed in Washington County in April

On Friday, April 25, the Minnesota Board of Animal Health received notification of a Washington County horse exhibiting neurologic signs and testing positive for equine herpesvirus Type 1 (EHV-1). EHV-1 is highly infectious between horses and can develop into a debilitating neurological disease known as equine herpesvirus myeloencephalopathy (EHM). Because the horse, a 16-year-old mare, exhibited symptoms consistent with equine herpesvirus myeloencephalopathy (EHM), the Minnesota Board of Animal Health has issued a quarantine for the remaining 60 horses on the property to control the spread of the virus.

The horse's owner first noticed clinical symptoms on Tuesday, April 22, and voluntarily instituted biosecurity measures to reduce the risk of potential spread, such as limiting visitors to the farm and isolating the affected horse and those considered to be higher risk exposures. A veterinarian examined the animal on Wednesday, April 23, noting significant balance and muscle control issues and dribbling urine. The horse has shown marked improvement in its first 48 hours of treatment. Treatment for equine herpesvirus myeloencephalopathy consists of supportive care to allow the nervous system time to heal. Some horses with equine herpesvirus myeloencephalopathy recover completely and go back to their previous level of function, while others never fully recover.

"EHM is highly contagious, and horse owners should take

EQUINE DISEASE – Page 2

SCHOOL NURSE

Catherine Birr enjoys working with kids

In second year at EV-W, it feeds her passion for helping children

By Ava VanderBeek

Catherine Birr, a dedicated school nurse in the Eden Valley-Watkins School District, developed a passion for working with children. Now in her second year as EV-W's school nurse, her journey into the field was driven by her desire to make a difference in the lives of students while ensuring their well-being and health are always a priority.

Birr never imagined that she would enter the nursing field until she began working with the elderly at a local nursing home. Birr later graduated from nursing school at Bemidji State University in 2012 with the initial idea of pursuing a career in public health.

"When I started working with the elderly, I realized that I loved being a caretaker. So, I went to nursing school and then after a while I decided to try something different and work with children," Birr explained. "That landed me at Wright and Meeker county public health."

"In my work with public health, I made home visits to families after their babies were born. I participated in



Photo by Ava VanderBeek

Catherine Birr, who graduated from nursing school at Bemidji State University in 2012, is completing her second year as the school nurse for the EV-W School District.

the newborn health exams in-house, provided nutrition classes for parents with children under the age of five, community vaccination clinics, and I am a child passenger safety technician, which means I do car seat clinics for many new parents," said Birr.

"I really wanted to help the best I could, so I tried to provide families with as many resources as I could. I focused on family health, and I did work with child protection services," she added.

Birr specialized in substance abuse in families

through child protection. "Yes, it's hard and challenging, but it's worth it to see people gain their sobriety and learn new coping skills. When they recover, so does their whole family," she explained.

"It's rewarding when you are able to see all those successes," she continued. "You have to learn how to navigate watching all of the struggles that families go through. When they can pick themselves up and put themselves back together, it's awesome to see them go back to a state of normality," noted Birr.

After experiencing the different aspects of nursing and public health, she found a passion for helping children. "I learned that I absolutely loved working with children and their families. I gained a good foundation from working in public health for 10 years, and I decided it was time to do something else," she said.

During her public health journey, COVID-19 became very overwhelming for her. "After COVID happened, public health got away from some of the work that I loved. It was focused on COVID most of the time," she said "I wanted to work more directly with children and women's health."

Because Birr graduated from nursing school with clinical skills, she was eligible to work inside a hospital. However, she quickly realized that working in that setting wasn't the right option for her.

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EDEN VALLEY WATKINS
VOICE

103 STEARNS AVE. E.,
P.O. BOX 7,
EDEN VALLEY, MN 55329
PHONE: 888-223-1371
EMAIL: EDITOR@EVVOICE.COM
WWW.EVVOICE.COM

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