



Gem Lake News



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Gretchen Artig-Swomley, Newsletter Editor

Special Interest Articles:

- **Congresswoman McCollum visits Gem Lake**
- **Gem Lake Scholarship Award Recipients**
- **Gem Lake Loses Lifelong Resident**
- **City of White Bear Lake Activities**
- **Spring Yard Care**
- **City News, Page 7**

Scheduled Recycling Dates:

- **June 5**
- **June 19**
- **July 3**
- **July 17**
- **July 31**

Gem Lake Receives Visit from Congresswoman McCollum

The City of Gem Lake was honored to receive a visit from U.S. Congresswoman Betty McCollum, on Monday, May 13. McCollum represents Minnesota's 4th District, which encompasses Ramsey County and most of Washington County.

She and several colleagues stopped by Heritage Hall to tour Gem Lake's facilities and to learn more about ways she could help the city with major infrastructure goals. The Congresswoman was instrumental in helping the city obtain its first federal grant to help pay for costs of a potential future municipal water system. The city was awarded about \$950k in 2023 by the federal government, which is approximately 14% of what is needed to build phase one of a water system.



(Continued on Page 2)

Two Graduates Awarded Gem Lake Scholarship

Gem Lake residents and high school seniors, Dov Nathanson and James Marier were recently awarded scholarships for post-secondary education through the Gem Lake Scholarship Program. This eleven-year-old program is funded by charitable gambling receipts and has helped several dozen students with educational expenses since its inception.

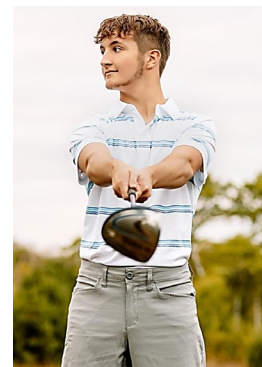
Nathanson is regarded by his teachers and counselors as a highly motivated student who holds himself to high standards. He achieved an Academic Letter as a senior, as well as Honor Roll status and Student of the Month in middle school. As a deaf student, Nathanson has identified barriers and then helped to problem-solve solutions.

In terms of extra curricular activities, Nathanson has been involved in wrestling from 8th to 12th grade, as well as several years' experience as part of the Academic Bowl team, football and trap and skeet. He achieved a Gold Medal from the World Deaf Wrestling Championship in 2023. He also coached a youth wrestling program for deaf and hard of hearing children from 2022 to 2024.

(Continued on Page 2)



(Dov Nathanson)



(James Marier)

Gem Lake Receives Visit from Congresswoman McCollum

(continued from page 1)

Recently, the city applied for additional funds from the 2024 federal budget. McCollum pledged her support to coordinate federal and state efforts to try to bring funds to the city for a municipal water system, which will cost around \$6.5M.



Congresswoman McCollum has a long history in public service, most recently with the U.S. Congresswoman. She was elected to this position in 2000 and now serves as a senior member of the House Appropriations Committee, as well as top Democrat on the Defense subcommittee. She is only the second woman to serve in such a position since Minnesota obtained statehood in 1858. Prior to this McCollum served in the Minnesota Legislature from 1993-2000.



Her experience is also local. She served on the North Saint Paul City Council from 1987-1992 and feels that experience was very beneficial. We are very grateful for McCollum's help and support and appreciated her visit.



Graduates Awarded Scholarship (continued from page 1)

White Bear Lake Area High School teacher and Department Chair Kelly Knutson had nothing but praise for Nathanson. "As a student Dov (Nathanson) is self-motivated and dependable. He takes his studies seriously, completes high quality work, and advocates for himself. His leadership skills go beyond the classroom as he is actively involved in football, wrestling and community service projects. He is a role model for others, including Deaf/Hard of Hearing individuals. It has been a pleasure having his presence in the classroom, as he a young man who leads by example."

Nathanson's goal is to work in the field for aerospace engineering. He intends to attend the Rochester Institute of Technology.

Marier has been an Honor Roll student at White Bear Lake Area High School for the past four years. According to school counselor Jennifer Johnson, Marier excelled in the area of math, taking high school courses in junior high. In terms of extracurricular activities, Marier spent five years in Theatre as an actor, three years in Choir and one year in Cross Country skiing.

White Bear Lake Area High School teacher Debra Hibbard says she wholeheartedly recommends James Marier for the scholarship. "I have had the privilege of witnessing his remarkable growth, both academically and personally. James has consistently demonstrated an exceptional level of creativity, care, and dedication to our district community. Whether it was through his involvement in extracurricular activity, volunteering efforts, or within the classroom setting, he has always shown a genuine commitment to making a positive impact on those around him."

She went on to add that "James's most outstanding quality is his character. He embodies integrity, empathy, sympathy, and a strong sense of responsibility."

He intends to go to Minnesota State University in Mankato and obtain a degree in computer science. After college he wants to use in skills and training to work in the cybersecurity field.

Each student has been awarded \$1000 that will be forwarded to the schools of their choice.



Conduit Debt Financing Approved for Montessori School

A financial arrangement between the City of Gem Lake and the White Bear Montessori School was approved following a public hearing on May 21, 2024. The arrangement is called Conduit Debt Financing. The City of Gem Lake allows the school, which is located in Gem Lake, to use its tax-exempt status to get a better rate on bonds for a planned expansion of the school. In exchange, the school pays a fee to the city to cover all administrative costs. Once the initial financing is closed, the city has no liability for the bonds.



Conduit Debt Financing was used in 1998 when the school first moved to Gem Lake. It was also used about 15 years ago when a major expansion was done for a Mahtomedi based nursing home.

A significant expansion of the White Bear Montessori School has been planned over the course of the past several years to accommodate rapidly growing enrollment rates. The school has outgrown their space and plans to spend about \$3 million dollars on new classrooms, a storm shelter area, additional office space and a Home Economics Kitchen, along with some other features. This will help the school navigate through their high retention rates and ever-expanding student wait lists.



In March of this year, the Gem Lake City Council reviewed details of the arrangement and voted to advance the project to the public hearing phase, which happened at the May city council meeting. Premier Bank, which handled the 1998 remodel, will also be handling the financing for the current project.

Improvements Planned for Gem Lake Open Space

Several projects will be conducted this summer to enhance Gem Lake's small trail and open space area, which is located in the southwestern section of the city.



Between 14-16 new trees will be planted, primarily to replace older trees that have died in the western and northern sections of the public property. In addition, an agency that plants free trees on public land intends visit Gem Lake and remove and replace about a dozen trees they planted several years ago.

Lastly, Prairie Restorations, a company that manages wildflower gardens, will begin a two-year project to reseed the large wildflower plantings on this property. This project will begin with removal of invasive species that have moved into the area, followed by an overspray of native grasses. It is planned that a complete reseeding of wildflowers will happen in 2025, as budget allows.



Fridays with Firefighters

Want to get outside and have some fun with your Fire Department? There will be three opportunities this summer to join the White Bear Lake Fire Department at the south Fire Station, located at 2240 County Road E for fun and safety education! This is a great event for parents and their young children.

The three opportunities are:

- Friday, June 21 – 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.
- Friday, July 19 – 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.
- Friday, August 16 – 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.



Donuts & Coffee with a Cop

Kickoff the first Friday of the Farmers' Market and join the White Bear Lake Police Department for donuts, coffee, juice, and conversation with a cop at the Farmer's Market in White Bear Lake near 2nd Street and Clark Avenue on Friday, June 28 – 8:30 a.m. to 10 a.m.



White Bear Lake Manitou Days

Manitou Days is a three-week summer festival showcasing the great lakeside community of White Bear Lake. For 50+ years this annual summer ritual has been a favorite of locals and visitors. This year's theme is "All Bears Unite".

The fun kicks-off with Marketfest, June 13, and ends on the Fourth of July with a spectacular fireworks display to music over the lake. Festival highlights include the Grande Parade, the Beach Dance, Medallion Hunt, Kiddie Parade, Community Garage Sale, and more.

Build a sandcastle. Enter a fishing contest. Shop Downtown White Bear Lake. Hunt for a medallion. Dance under the stars. Watch fireworks on the beach. With 50+ events, this is something for everyone!



White Bear Lake Marketfest

Shop 130+ merchandise and food vendors in downtown White Bear Lake. Visit marketfestwbl.com for more information. Meet Police, Fire and EMS on July 11 and attend the Environmental Resources Expo on July 25. There is no cost to attend. The festival is located just east of Highway 61 between 3rd Street and 4th Street.

Marketfest will take place rain or shine on Thursdays, June 13 – July 24, 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.



There is a mix of parking lots and on-street parking in downtown White Bear Lake. Guests may park anywhere outside of the Marketfest perimeter, as long as it is not posted in a "No Parking" area.

Spring Yard Care for Water Conservation

While this spring felt like it was drawn out into one mega-season, June is still one of the biggest months for plant growth and a key time to be working on the yard care. Whether or not you're one to rise up early in the morn', now's still a great time to set-up some water-minded yard habits that can last for the rest of the year. Our lawns can take a heavy toll on municipal water resources, but they can also support water conservation. So how will we use our community's water all the live-long day?

Start with the basics: Mowing height

- Maintain a mowing height of 3" or more, especially early in the year. This will encourage robust root growth that will reduce the need for irrigation later in the year.
- Deeper roots have a better ability to withstand drought, retain moisture, and access nutrients when they're needed most (especially in hot, dry months).
- Taller grass also shades out weed seeds and keeps soil cooler. This is great for soil health and urban heat island effect.
- When short turf hardens due to sun exposure, a hard crust can form on the soil surface. This creates an ongoing struggle for turf, as the crust will resist water when wet conditions return, requiring even more maintenance, re-seeding, and higher water use to repair the lawn. Thankfully, this can be prevented with higher mowing heights.

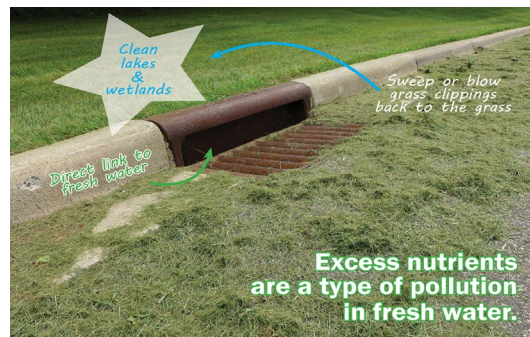


Irrigation: Don't just pass the time away

- "Set it and forget it" is not a water-friendly method. If you have an irrigation system, consider updating to a smart irrigation that adjusts watering according to rainfall.
- Conventional turf only needs about 1" of water per week. Try using a paper cup to estimate water depth from a sprinkler, or a rain gauge to keep track of precipitation.

Other tips:

- Avoid "weed and feed" lawn treatments, as these don't apply herbicide or fertilizer in ways specific to what the lawn needs. This leads to excess product in the form of wasted nutrients and a higher risk of exposure to pollinators. The best practice is to apply treatments according to a soil test, and to err on spot treatment rather than blanket treatment.
- Grass clippings are full of nutrients. On soil this is great, but in water these excess nutrients become a type of pollution. Keep grass clippings off of pavement and always sweep or blow them back up to the lawn. This keeps valuable nutrients in your soil instead of losing them and needing to replace them with a treatment later on.
- Periodically change the direction of your mowing to promote upright shoot growth. This also helps reduce soil compaction, which helps the soil take in air and water.



Links:

- If working with contractors, consider hiring a contractor certified in Turf Maintenance Best Practices through the [Minnesota Pollution Control Agency](#).
- Check out VLAWMO's [water stewardship at home](#) page for more tips and resources on yard care and yard waste disposal.
- Check out the U of M Extension's [Mowing Practices for Healthy Lawns](#)" page for more tips and specifics.
- Check out VLAWMO's [soil health grant](#) for potential funding to install bee lawns, alternative turf, raingardens, and even rain barrels.
- Apply for a [Lawns to Legumes grant](#) for support in installing a pocket prairie, pollinator lawn, pollinator meadow, or targeted trees and shrubs.

New yard routines take time and teamwork, kind of like a railroad. Next time you find yourself doing yard work, be inspired that even a small yard adjustment can make a big difference for the watershed.

Gem Lake Loses Lifelong Resident

Very few people can lay claim to living their whole lives in Gem Lake. Larry Kuehn was one of them. He was born in 1939 to Anna Braun. At that time, Gem Lake was a sleepy little village, filled with truck farmers and horse trails. By the time of his recent passing on March 21, 2024, Gem Lake had morphed into a green oasis in the middle of a busy urban area, surrounded by freeways and commercial businesses.



Larry grew up and worked on the family farm located at 1400 Goose Lake Road, with his grandparents Adam and Lucy Braun. After high school he enlisted in the U.S. Navy and married Viola Olheiser. Over the years, the couple raised six children, Pam, Julie, Larry, Scott, Cheryl, and Mary. His years in the Navy ignited his love of travel. He was stationed in Hawaii, out of which his ship the U.S.S. Helena, sailed the oceans and seas.



After his military career, he returned to Gem Lake and moved across the street from the family farm after it was sold and engaged in several business ventures to support his family. He started Kuehn Excavating out of his Gem Lake property, growing it into a successful business over the years. He retired in 2004.



Larry's love of travel inspired him to become a pilot. He was a proud bush pilot for most of his adult life, flying all over the United States and Canada. He said he was most at peace in the skies. He would attend the Reno Air Races annually and enjoyed flying into the bush in Canada to go fishing. Many trips were made with his children, grandchildren, and even great grandchildren. Many family trips were made to his favorite location, Custer State Park. Larry's love of a challenging, albeit short, runway was ever present. Airports were optional.



Larry was a magic enthusiast, who brought playing cards to every family gathering, where he would entertain everyone with card tricks.

Larry lived a full and adventurous life, mostly in the City of Gem Lake. His love of travel and adventure was passed onto his family, who miss him immensely. He was preceded in death by his mother Anna, special aunts Elizabeth and Lucille, son Scott, and grandsons Owen and Brian. He is survived by children Pam Frisk, Julie Wrich, Larry, Jr., Cheryl Hagen, and Mary Carroll, as well as numerous grandchildren, great grandchildren, and even two great great grandchildren.

City News

Upcoming Meeting Presentations

The June 18 City Council Meeting will include a presentation of results of the 2023 City of Gem Lake audit.



The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency has been invited to do an update on well testing and related water matters at the July 16 City Council Meeting. This presentation has not yet been confirmed and may be moved to August.



2024 City Clean Up Day is a Success

For the second year in a row, the City of Gem Lake partnered with White Bear Township during their City Clean Up Days. Citizens of both municipalities participated in this free event on May 11 and May 18, dropping off everything from paints and fluorescent bulbs to electronics and appliances.

The event was well attended on both dates, with people dropping off literally tons of furniture, building materials, solvents, tires, and other items. Otter Lake Elementary School was the official drop off site. A total of 18 Gem Lake households participated in this event, versus 12 a year ago. Our thanks to White Bear Township for sponsoring this event and allowing Gem Lake to take part in it.



Gem Lake Has a Facebook Page

Acting City Clerk Melissa Lawrence has designed and published a Facebook page for the City of Gem Lake. The address is: www.facebook.com/CityofGemLakeMN

The Facebook pages focus primarily on special announcements and news items, events, etc. It is intended to compliment rather than replace the city website. Please check it out and “like” and “follow” the page. We are also looking for a few appropriate Gem Lake photos. Your feedback is welcome!

Charitable Gambling Donations

Donations of \$1000 and \$1500 were approved by the Gem Lake City Council in April and May 2024 to be given to the White Bear Area Food Shelf. These donations come from charitable gambling receipts that result from pull-tab and bingo sales within city limits.



Heritage Hall Holiday Office Closures

Heritage Hall will be closed June 19 for Juneteenth National Independence Day and July 4 for Independence Day. The office will also be closed July 1 beginning at 10:30 a.m. – July 3.

All other hours remain the same. Have a safe holiday!



The City of Gem Lake

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Gretchen.artig-swomley@gemlakemn.org

This newsletter is also posted on the city's website under the "Documents" section and the "News and Updates" section.
www.gemlakemn.org

**After Hours Public Works
Emergency Number:**
651-755-9828

(For water main breaks, main city sewer back up, collapse of manhole, etc. Or call 911)

Meetings: June and July 2024

The following Gem Lake meeting will be held in the months of June and July. All meetings are held at Heritage Hall unless otherwise indicated.

June 10, 2024

City Council Workshop is **CANCELED**

June 11, 2024

Planning Commission Meeting is at 7:00 p.m.

June 18, 2024

City Council Meeting is at 7:00 p.m.

July 8, 2024

City Council Workshop is **CANCELED**

July 9, 2024

Planning Commission Meeting is at 7:00 p.m.

July 16, 2024

City Council Meeting is at 7:00 p.m.

See also the Gem Lake website for more information.

Your Gem Lake City Council

Mayor:

Gretchen Artig-Swomley
Email: gretchen.artig-swomley@gemlakemn.org

City Council Members:

Laurel Amlee
Email: laurel.hynes-amlee@gemlakemn.org

Len Cacioppo

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Ben Johnson

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Jim Lindner

Email: jim.lindner@gemlakemn.org

You can also reach each city council member by calling 651-747-2790. After hours you can follow the prompts for the city council directory.

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