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News & Views

February 24, 2021

The City of New Hope's Employee Newsletter

State of the City

On Feb. 3, Mayor Kathi Hemken and City Manager Kirk McDonald presented the State of the City virtually. In attendance were members of the New Hope Business Networking Group, city residents, representatives from surrounding cities and city employees. Highlights for 2020 included elections, completing the aquatic and Civic Center parks, the Windsor Ridge Development, several properties improved through the scattered site program, the parks and recreation response to COVID-19, a stellar year for the New Hope Golf Course, the 2021 infrastructure improvement project at 36 ½ Circle/Northwood Parkway, the transition of leadership for the police department and successful In Focus and RAVE! Award contests. As always, there were a couple of slides of humor!



2021 Projects Planned/Underway

2021 Infrastructure Improvements: Will involve mill and overlay and the reclaiming of the area of Lion's park neighborhood and Erickson Drive, just south of 49th Avenue. Bids were received on Feb. 11 and generally came in underneath the engineers estimate. More information was presented at the Feb. 22 council meeting and the contract was awarded to the low bidder on the project. Construction is scheduled to begin in the spring/summer of 2021.

Ice Arena South Roof Replacement: Bids were received and the contract was awarded at the Feb. 22 council meeting.

Public Works Phase 1 Improvements: Approval of plans and specifications are scheduled for the Apr. 12 council meeting; bids to be sought thereafter. Beyond many infrastructure improvements, Phase 1 would include renovation and expansion of the existing paint storage room into a fitness room, renovation of the existing mezzanine storage space to add a new office and plan storage room and addition of air conditioning for the mechanical bay and office.

Corner Park Playground Equipment Replacement: Approval of plans and specifications scheduled for Mar. 22 council meeting; bidding to follow.

Little Acre Park Basketball Court Replacement: Approval of plans and specifications scheduled for Mar. 22 council meeting; bids to follow.

Refinancing of Ice Arena Bonds: Sales of bonds at lower interest rate was approved at the Feb. 22 council meeting.

Aquatic Park Bathhouse Equipment: The equipment for the concession stand has been purchased and is being installed in preparation for the park opening in June 2021 (freezer and oven pictured).



Mark Your Calendar

Mar. 10 – Wellness: Sleep

Mar. 24 – Wacky Wednesday

Employee of the Quarter – Fourth Quarter 2020

Vicki Thompson, Admin. Specialist – City Manager Dept.

A round of applause for our 2020 Fourth Quarter Employee of the Quarter, Vicki Thompson. Vicki's nominator and the EOQ committee acknowledged the monumental task Vicki took on by starting her new position in July of a year with a presidential election. She met her work each day with competency, efficiency and a commitment to making sure that each person she greeted at the window saw a smile and felt aided in whatever they were there to accomplish. This work cumulated in the final days before the General Election in November when the election staff assisted long lines of absentee voters for hours on end. Congratulations, Vicki, a job well done!



There were five additional nominations received:

Megan Hedstrom, stormwater specialist and project coordinator, for taking her willingness to help anyone with anything and a smile to the next level and covering administrative needs in the office during co-workers' absences.

Brad Johnson and Mic Rusk, maintenance workers, for identifying a fire risk on a property and alerting the homeowner and fire department, likely preventing significant property damage.

Mark Severson, recreation facilities manager, for his extra effort in making sure the golf course was open as much as possible this fall/winter. In a time when it is so important to give our community members opportunities to be outside, this was much appreciated. And it resulted in a 20-year high for the number of rounds in October and most rounds ever recorded in November and December!

Scott Slawson, police captain, for serving as interim chief and taking the lead on department COVID-19 response/ vaccinations and the embedded social worker program, in addition to his usual duties.

Scott Stephan, ice arena maintenance operator, for ensuring that the arena has been maintained, cleaned and set up in a way that has allowed its continued use during the pandemic. He has also worked with patrons to make sure they understand the many precautions that have been taken to ensure adherence to guidance from state health officials.

Special Mention:

Seasonal workers are not eligible to be awarded employee of the quarter but **Steve Reed**, seasonal golf course worker, was nominated. Steve worked closely with staff to reopen and close the clubhouse four times during November and December, which resulted in the records aforementioned.



Employee Kudos



- ♦ The city manager observed that maintenance workers repaired six water main breaks this last December. This number is the highest for December since 2016, plus three of the breaks occurred over holidays. Great job guys!
- ♦ On Jan. 27, a realtor took the time to write the city about his experience selling a house during the pandemic. He complimented Eric Piper, housing/code enforcement insp., saying, "I have worked with many municipalities over the past 25 years in real estate and this was a remarkably refreshing interaction. Mr. Piper should be commended and recognized as an exemplary representative for the city of New Hope. He also had compliments for Linda Bergemann, office specialist, saying "I also had a couple phone conversations with Linda Bergemann, who was also very professional and efficient. Each conversation left me smiling from her pleasant nature."
- ♦ Director of Public Works Bernie Weber shared a voicemail from a realtor on Feb. 17 in praise of Storm Water Specialist Megan Hedstrom's work on laying out and detailing city infrastructure projects on the city website.



NEAR Update

Parks and Recreation Director Susan Rader shared that 2021 donations are off to a good start. On January 29, she delivered 73 pounds of food, along with \$80 from the January Wacky Wednesday to the food shelf. The February Wacky Wednesday was today so the totals will be increasing very soon!

New Building Official Announced

By Rich Johnson, Director of HR/Administration

Please join me in congratulating Eric Hanson on his upcoming promotion to building official! Eric has served as the city's general inspector since 2006 and will move into his new role Mar. 1. Eric holds a Minnesota certified building official license and served as the building official in Little Falls, Minnesota prior to coming to New Hope.

Dean Blom will be participating in PERA's phased retirement option, which means he will be transitioning into full retirement by continuing to serve as the city's building official for a short period, working reduced hours during this transition.

All the best to Eric in his new role and to Dean as he transitions into retirement!



Recruitment Updates

The city currently has one opening for a police officer. The police officer recruitment that began last fall is still underway to fill that position, the upcoming vacancy created by Officer Andy Lamers' retirement, effective Mar. 28, and lastly the anticipated return of the school resource officer position. *Congratulations, Andy!* (more next issue) Candidates are in various stages of consideration and meeting conditions set forth by the city. There will likely be a new recruitment starting in the upcoming weeks.

Internal postings closed today for the general inspector position, open due to Eric Hanson's promotion to building official; and administrative specialist position in the police department, open due to a reallocation from the previous crime analyst position. The general inspector position will be posted externally next week and the admin. specialist interviews will be next week for the internal applicants.



K9 Kody Retires

By Beth Kramer, Communications Coordinator

New Hope K9 Kody retired after serving the New Hope community for the past eight years.

Kody, a nine-year-old German Shepard, joined the New Hope Police Department in 2013 and has worked tirelessly alongside his handler, Officer Miguel Robles. Throughout his career, Kody was deployed more than 1,200 times and played an enormous role in locating missing and vulnerable

persons, locating narcotics and articles of evidence, and finding and apprehending suspects. For his hard work, Kody was commended many times by the United States Police Canine Association (USPCA), including several Regional Case of the Quarter awards and a National Case of the Quarter. Kody was a fixture at New Hope events where he and Officer Robles diligently educated the community about the role that K9s play in law enforcement.



New Employees

Rajaneé Michael, Police Officer

Rajaneé, raised and living in Brooklyn Park, comes to the city from the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office. Her first day was Feb. 1. Her parents are still in Brooklyn Park as well. Her dad has been a truck driver for many years and currently drives for UPS Freight. Her mom is a production manager for medical devices. She has two sisters, one older and one younger. Her older sister works for Best Buy Corporate in Bloomington and her younger sister attends school at Point University in West Point, Georgia, studying accounting and considering a law degree.

Rajaneé has known for many years that her vocation would be in law enforcement. As a middle school student at Bloomington, her basketball coach was a detective by day and she was fascinated by the work he did. Subsequent mentors further reinforced it and she is happy to have taken the path she has. Rajaneé is an animal lover and while she does not have any pets now, she is looking forward to living on her own in the future. She plans to have several when the time comes including dogs, a bird and a ferret!

Spending time with friends and family is one of Rajaneé's favorite things to do, whether it be just hanging out, eating out or traveling. One of her favorite places to eat is Chipotle, which works well since they have been able to stay open through the pandemic closures. She also shares a great appetite for Texas Roadhouses' rolls with the Jolly Journalist. And speaking of eating, she is a baker! She has taught herself to do so with the help of the internet. One of her greatest successes was an Oreo cake that was met with rave reviews by those that tried it. She also makes a delicious banana bread.

She also enjoys traveling. She and a friend recently returned from a trip to Sedona, Arizona. And while one set of grandparents live nearby in St. Paul, she also has a grandmother in Alabama who she enjoys traveling to visit. When she's closer to home, Rajaneé enjoys being outside, hiking around the many lakes in the area or visiting Top Golf to tee off a few golf balls. In her down time, she has a passion for make-up and pampering herself. I think the latter is something we all enjoy!

Welcome Rajaneé, we are glad your path has brought you to New Hope and we look forward to seeing you out working with the community!



Corey Cracknell, Police Officer

Corey Cracknell, police officer, hails from California where he met his fiancé, Jennifer. Corey landed in Minnesota because of familial migration. Jennifer and Corey now live in Brooklyn Park with their Rottweiler, Creed; Red Nose Pit Bull, Kintaro; and Pomeranian, Maru. His first day was Feb. 16.

Corey was previously working with Robbinsdale as a CSO and the city of Corcoran as a reserve officer. Jennifer works as a receptionist at a pet hospital while she is studying to be a veterinary assistant. Corey said that over the years she has had all types of animals as pets and without missing a beat that the pet hospital is her "natural habitat."

Corey's dad is a heavy equipment mechanic, so Corey is a self-described "gearhead" and enjoys working on and pretty much anything related to cars. Over the years, he has owned several that he has modified. When he is not working on a vehicle, he enjoys playing baseball and spending time with Jennifer. He and Jennifer snowboard, skydive and hike whenever they get the chance. They took a trip to Duluth recently and greatly enjoyed the hikes and being outside.

When they cannot be outside, they enjoy going to action movies, especially Marvel. They also enjoy hosting Corey's family when they visit from California. Corey's mom and sister do not think much of the Minnesota winter weather but his dad enjoys it!

Corey is appreciative of being here in New Hope and is looking forward to the work ahead. Welcome Corey, there will be no shortage of opportunities to work!



Josh Arthur, Police Officer

Originally from Florida, Josh and his fiancé, Shannon, and their five-year-old son, Tyson, live in Lakeville. Shannon works as an imaging technician at the Fairview Breast Cancer in Edina. Josh moved here with family when he was 20 and stayed as he became established in the fitness industry, managing an LA Fitness. Shannon's family is in Shakopee and Josh prefers the Minnesota weather, so they are here to stay!

Josh had considered a career in law enforcement in his teens but did not act on it until he became friends with officers that would come in to use the gym he managed. As he spoke with them about their work, he realized it was something he wanted to do. They recommended Hennepin County Jail as an entry point and that is what he did as he earned his degree in law enforcement.

Josh and Shannon both enjoy staying fit, so even when they are not at the gym they are staying active. The family all enjoys going to the Minnesota Zoo and ValleyFair enough that they have annual passes for both. Tyson is involved with basketball and currently taking swim lessons.

When they want to get away, Shannon's grandparents have a cabin outside of Duluth where the family swims, boats and plays games including Cribbage, cards and dominoes. There is little cell phone reception and no internet, so it is a good place for them to unplug and recharge.

Welcome to New Hope, Josh. We are glad to have you here and hope that your planned relocation closer to work this summer is successful!



Embedded Social Worker Starts New Program for City of New Hope

Please join the police department in welcoming Asha Mohamud, MSW, embedded social worker with Hennepin County. Asha started in her new position, shared between New Hope, Crystal and Robbinsdale, on Jan. 4.

After one month on the job, Asha says things are going well. She is receiving referrals from all three departments on a regular basis and she is finding her stride in balancing the three locations. And she is continuing to expand her knowledge. When we met for this interview, she was just arriving on-site from a scenario-based training day with the Brooklyn Park Police Department.

Asha has lived in the Richfield/Bloomington area for more than 20 years, though originally from Somalia and immigrating to the United States as a child with her family. All but one of her eight siblings live in the metro area. She earned her bachelor's degree from Metropolitan State University and then her Master of Social Work from St. Thomas University.

She is new to this program but she has been with Hennepin County (HC) for about six years. Before coming to HC, she worked for St. Paul Neighborhood House for several years coordinating one of the food shelves and assisting refugee families with navigating life in a new country. For the first five years with HC, she worked with eligibility and support services.

When I asked Asha why she chose to apply for this position, she stated that she has long held an interest in the interactions between those with mental health issues that she has worked with and law enforcement. She noted that it is a complex environment and especially difficult for those with mental health issues to navigate.

She hopes to enhance the relationship between the community and law enforcement by stopping repeat calls for officers to mental health needs and giving people in need someone to talk to and proactively work through issues with.

Client and department needs will drive much of Asha's schedule but tentatively she will be here at New Hope City Hall on Wednesdays and Fridays. Her office is in the investigator "U" of the police station. She would like everyone to know that she is flexible and welcomes discussions about how to deepen the integration of her services with the department's operations. *For more details on the program, the Sun Post ran an article on the "Tri-City Social Worker" program on Dec. 8.*



Recipe Tested and Shared

In celebration of his birthday in January, Johnny Vang, housing/code enforcement inspector, brought in a huge pan of fried rice for his coworkers to share. One never to be rude by refusing a gift, The Jolly Journalist took part and found it to be absolutely delicious. Johnny also shared the recipe. Thank you for allowing us to celebrate with you, Johnny!

Ingredients for 1-2 servings:

- Oil of your choosing, I prefer vegetable oil (enough to cook 2 eggs on)
- 1 clove of garlic (minced) and cook in vegetable oil till golden brown
- Add rice (1-2 servings) white or brown rice
- Sauce: sweet soy sauce and oyster sauce (add little increments at a time to get your preferred sweetness/flavor)
- Eggs (2 minimum per serving)
- Choice of meat: chicken, beef, pork, or seafood (cook before adding in)
- Add in salt once ingredients above have been added into the pan (small increments at a time till preferred saltiness has been obtained)
- Green onions and cilantro (you can go light or heavy, I prefer to use a good amount)
- For myself, I like to add fried onions at the end to add a crunch and extra flavoring to it. I do not add broccoli, peas or carrots into my fried rice. I think it is a cardinal sin to do this but you can certainly add them to yours.

And that is about it, Enjoy!



In Memoriam



Our sympathies to:

- Chris Swaja, police officer, for the passing of his mother earlier this month.

Wellness Program

Biometric Screening – Feb. 2-4

Wellness programming started out strong with 53 employees participating in biometric screening. The program was different this year in that Hy-Vee dieticians came on-site versus employees traveling to the Hy-Vee wellness bus. It is not too late! If you would still like to participate, let Walker MacBeath in HR know and he can provide advisement on how the process will work in-store, including the issuance of \$60 Hy-Vee gift cards for participation.

Sleep: Why it matters and how to improve it – Mar. 10

Sleep. It is like air and water, without it we would die. Yet many Americans take it for granted. The importance of sleep and its effect on our mental and emotional well-being should not be underestimated. Please join us for a presentation given by Beatrice Comty-Charnock, MA, LMFT, LADC. Submit your menu selection and \$5 to Walker by Friday, Mar. 5 at end of day. If you would like to participate without purchasing Qdoba, let Walker know so he can send you the meeting link. This presentation will be recorded and made available to employees for viewing on-demand.



Wellness Activities

Since we had a little extra room in this issue, we have attached the activity sheets from the January and February wellbeing newsletters that were distributed in city facilities. This series is produced by Gallagher, the city's insurance broker. If you would like the newsletters again, let HR know and we will send them to you.



Wellbeing Activity

Identify Your Strengths

TAKE A STRENGTHS ASSESSMENT

This is only a recommendation. You can choose any accredited strengths assessment or quiz to complete this activity.

Take a strengths assessment or quiz to identify your character strengths. Then, use your strengths in a new way within the next week. Reflect on your experience using the journal prompts below:

- In what way did you use your character strength(s) this week?
- What are some new ways you could use your strengths in the future?
- Who else in your circle shares the same strengths?



Wellbeing Activity

Therapeutic Journaling

Try a therapeutic journaling exercise. Do not hold back. Stay open to what flows out onto the page. Here are some prompts to help get you started:

- What I need to accept is...
- What I want to come of this is...
- What is on my mind right now is...
- I am grateful for...
- If my body could talk, it would tell me...
- I feel most energized when...