

Rothsay

Enterprise

Keeping an eye on your hometown.

Volume 1, Issue 1 | January 2024

Community newsletter hits the streets

A recent change in how the City of Rothsay is handling its economic growth and housing development has quietly been gaining some traction this year. The City's Economic Development Authority recently reorganized into the Rothsay Area Economic Development Authority (RAEDA) and is changing how it conducts business after years of solely being handled by elected council members. The RAEDA is still a branch of the City of Rothsay; requires approval for large purchases; and has at least one council member appointed to the governing board. The remaining members are now appointed from the community and are individuals who have an interest in helping the city grow. The five community members are: Heather Weber, president of the RAEDA; Jim Boyce; Craig Sullivan; Stephanie Curtis; Travis Olson; with Shane Balken as the appointed member from the city council.

During the past year, several items

have been discussed to help the city grow including new and existing housing; housing loans and grant opportunities in both Wilkin and Otter Tail counties; business development; and better ways of communication with current and past residents; to name just a few topics.

As part of the improved communication, it was decided to bring back the Rothsay Enterprise newsletter into publication for the area residents and Rothsay High School alumni. The quarterly newsletter was last written approximately ten years ago and will now be used to help current and former residents keep in touch with our community. We are looking for RHS alumni names and current addresses. For anyone interested in sending names of RHS alumni, please send them via email to: Heather Weber at RAEDA@rothsay.org; Jim Boyce at jim.boyce@live.com; or Shane Balken at ole.lenas@rothsay.us.

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Rothsay Prairie Days is back!

Mark your calendar for July 12–14

After lengthy discussion and feedback from community members, it was decided to forego the rodeo and focus again on community activities throughout town for the annual summer celebration. July 12th–14th, 2024 is now set for a weekend of fun and entertainment throughout the community. The annual Rothsay street

dance will be held Saturday, July 13th, at the Powerhouse. Stay tuned for more information on weekend activities and events during the upcoming months. If you are interested in volunteering for the weekend activities, we want your help! For more information, contact the Rothsay Areawide EDA office at: RAEDA@rothsay.org.





Faces of Rothsay

Joey Blanchard
Rothsay 5th grader
Son of Kyle Blanchard
and Renee Redenius

COVER
Miranda Marquardt
Rothsay senior
Daughter of
Missy Marquardt and
Brad Marquardt

Tiger 2023 football season wrap-up

Joel Meyer
Tiger Football head coach

If I could sum up this season in one word it would be heart. The boys showed tremendous heart with all the obstacles they had to play through this season.

The season started off exactly as planned with a convincing 22-0 win over Warren-Alvarado-Oslo. This was a good win for us. Defense played lights out, and the offense was moving the ball well. The next game was when the season started on the roller coaster ride. We lost our starting QB Preston Curtis mid way through the second quarter against Ashby-Brandon-Evansville. Our freshman QB Ben Metzger came in for the second half, and almost led the team on a game winning drive as we went down 32-30. The next week we traveled to Border West the defending section champion. We played them very tough, but went down 32-14. Week four we hosted who I believe is the best team in the section Otter Tail Central. For this game we had a new QB at the helm as senior Matt Danielson took over. OTC handled us on both sides of the ball. We also lost our starting RB Karson Jensen. We took a hard loss 54-0. This put us at 1-3 half way through the season.

To started the second half of the season traveling the Big Cat Field in Morris to play Hancock. The amount of injuries caught up to us in this one as we lost 34-16. The next week we hosted Ortonville. We played very well getting the 40-12 victory. Week 7 had us hosting Underwood for homecoming. Again missing two critical key components from both sides of the football hurt us in this game as Underwood got us 28-14. Again we had another player to add to the IR as our starting Center Josh Honer went down. We closed out the regular season traveling to Hillcrest Lutheran Academy. This game got to see the

return of Karson Jensen who had a big game. We took the win 28-20 with the game winning score being a pick 6 by Landon Messerschmidt. The trend continued with our injuries however as we lost another QB Matt Danielson towards the end of the game. We finished the regular season at 3-5 gaining us the 5 seed.

In our play off game we traveled to Minnewaska to play the 4 seeded Hancock. We ended up losing another 2 key players in the first half Carson Weiers and Karson Jensen. This proved to be the difference as we lost 26-14. Completing our season at 3-6.

As you can see the boys had great resilience and grit to play as well as they did with all the setbacks that we had with injuries. All but one game we were competitive and had a chance to win. I give our players big compliments in how they were able to adapt to ever changing roles as the season wore on.

That all being said we have much to look forward to as we will return many key players, and a solid freshman class that will be looking to contribute more as sophomores next season.



Tripp Meyer, Dawson Leobo, and Wesley Phillips tackle a runner from Ashby-Brandon-Evansville.

Photo by Amy Meyer


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Tiger 2023 volleyball season wrap-up

Tanya Kort

Tiger Volleyball head coach

The 2023 volleyball season was filled with many changes, but through all of that this team was focused on getting better each practice and game and learning from each experience. At the beginning of the season we start matches later than most teams and that can be hard, but keeping the right forward focus and drive we were able to continue to achieve the goal of getting better and it showed in each match, especially some great five-set matches. Those nights everyone was privy to the grit and determination the girls brought most days. I am so very proud of each player for their perseverance through a season that included injuries, role changes, heartbreaking losses and some very exciting wins. All of those experiences and the emotional rollercoaster they bring are the life lessons sports give to help teach us how to reflect, react and move forward. Go Tigers!



Savanna Sullivan and Eli Meyer go up for a block.

Photo by Amy Meyer

A message from the Superintendent

Wade Johnson

Rothsay Public School Superintendent

Being the proud superintendent of Rothsay, I am pleased to share that our school is thriving in numerous ways, including financial stability, enrollment, infrastructure, teaching staff, student engagement, and extracurricular activities. We have a thriving school community.

Rothsay School takes pride in its sound financial management. Through prudent budgeting and effective resource allocation, we have maintained a stable financial position. This stability allows us to invest in various educational programs, facilities, and initiatives that enhance the overall learning experience for our students.

I am also pleased to report that Rothsay School has experienced steady enrollment over the years. This consistent interest from families within our community is a testament to the trust they place in our institution's ability to provide quality education.

Our beautiful school building serves as a cornerstone of our educational environment. Designed with modern architecture and equipped with state-of-the-art facilities, it provides an inspiring space for students to learn and grow. We prioritize maintaining a safe and clean environment that fosters creativity, collaboration, and academic excellence.

At the heart of Rothsay School's success lies our exceptional teaching staff. Comprising highly qualified professionals who are passionate about education, they bring expertise, dedication, and innovation into their classrooms every day. Our teachers continuously engage in professional

development opportunities to stay abreast of the latest pedagogical approaches and ensure they provide the best possible education for our students.

Our school district takes great pride in maintaining low student-to-staff ratios. This intentional approach allows for personalized attention and fosters strong relationships between students and teachers. With smaller class sizes, our educators can provide individualized support, address specific learning needs, and create a nurturing environment that promotes academic growth and social-emotional development.

Finally, Rothsay School and its school community thrive on student involvement in various activities. We offer a wide range of extracurricular programs and organizations that cater to diverse interests and talents. These opportunities not only enhance students' personal growth but also foster leadership skills, teamwork, and a sense of belonging within our school community. The attendance at our events is second to none when considering the number of students that attend school in Rothsay. Our community supports its school in a big way.

In conclusion, our school is in an excellent state, both academically and socially. Despite a lack of funding from our state, our financial stability has allowed us to invest in the best resources for our students, while steady enrollment reflects the trust placed in our institution by families. With a beautiful school building, dedicated teaching staff, low student-to-staff ratios, and abundant student involvement opportunities, we are committed to providing an exceptional educational experience for all our students.

Faces of Rothsay

Emma Klossner
Rothsay 9th grader
Daughter of Curt and Dawn Klossner





Pete Rudh
author

RENAISSANCE MAN

Rudh finds inspiration in the next chapter of life

Shane Balken
Rothsay City Councilman

For several years, Pete Rudh had aspirations of writing a book but as he put it — ‘too busy with work and family to start it.’ But inspiration finally struck. After he sold his Super Cars business in Rothsay about five years ago, Rudh said he just sat down and started to write almost every morning for about three to four hours per day, five days a week. Out of this bottled-up creativity “Shiny in the Shade” emerged.

For those who are wondering just what Rudh’s book is about, this is the synopsis Rudh wrote for the Amazon website: “Jon is in a pressure cooker. The ethanol plant he manages, Core Fuels, is crumbling and his disgruntled employees grow testier by the day. The executive board relentlessly micromanages and

Jon wonders if he might soon be replaced. Evenings are for unwinding but a marriage in distress only adds to his anxiety. As things under pressure often do, Jon breaks. But he doesn’t break down — he breaks in two. In his reflection, Otherjon emerges as a dark therapist. Jon tries to keep his significant Other’s wickedness at bay but as his world twists, Otherjon’s inspirations gain credibility”.

Rudh, a 1977 Rothsay High School graduate, said he started to approach the writing process pragmatically. “For a while I started doing recipe cards for each character and writing out their life details, age, what their problems were, and how they fit into the story,” said Rudh. “There were some different books I read about writing and it helped me get started.”

After nearly three years, he finished the

rough draft, family members read the book and gave him some initial feedback. “My daughter Nissa really went through the book thoroughly and helped rewrite some paragraphs and gave me some good feedback on small, but important changes. And then I took the book to a professional editor and they also made changes to help fine tune the book.”

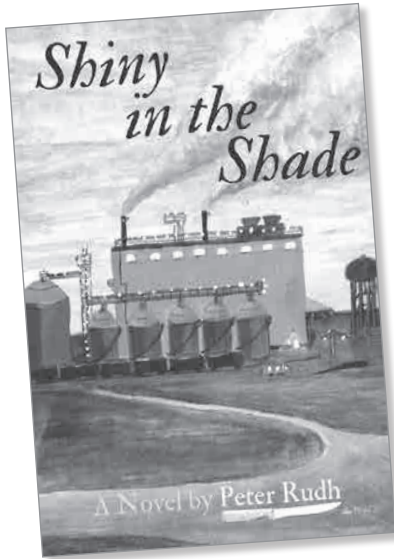
Rudh said when he felt the book was finally ready for publishing, he chose Outskirts Press to publish his book. Part of what attracted Rudh to the publisher was the overall guided process of completing the book from literal cover to cover.

The process included registering the book with the Library of Congress, and also purchasing an International Standard Book Number, or ISBN. This is a unique numeric book identifier assigned to each separate edition and variation of a publication. It’s a mandatory sales tool, as it’s the number that bookstores, wholesalers and distributors use to keep track of books.

The first initial run of 20 books were mostly given out to everyone who helped him get the book finished. Rudh estimates he has now sold about 350 copies to date. And if you’re wondering about another book, or even a sequel, Rudh said he’s got some ideas.

“I have a lot of ideas for it and a lot of notes, different characters that I might try to develop into another story.” And in the end, after years of hard work, diligent writing, the stress of trying to get your story printed, and the cost of publishing it - some might question if it was all worth it? “Absolutely,” said Rudh. “Because how much can you do in your life that’s cool? Something you can say, ‘hey, I did that’. Not everyone does that in their life.”

Rudh’s book is available on Amazon and Barnes & Noble websites; and on a local level, can be purchased at the Rothsay Truck Stop.



Faces of Rothsay

Brock Lehn
Rothsay 1st grader
Son of Shane and
Ashley Lehn



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WHAT I'VE LEARNED...

A conversation with Warren Helgeson

Shane Balken

Rothsay City Councilman

Some people just have a gift for telling jokes and captivating stories. If laughter is the best medicine, then meet Dr. Warren Helgeson, Rothsay's resident doctor of humor. Warren has been making people laugh for nearly 80 years. Whether it's been in Minnesota or Montana, or somewhere in between, conversations with him are always memorable. A long-time Rothsay resident who truly has mastered the art of joke-telling and story-stretching, Warren recently took time out of his fishing schedule to sit down and share some thoughts on a lifetime of comical observations, his unique perspective on life, and what makes his pickled herring recipe so good. This is what I've learned.

"I was born in Fergus Falls, Minnesota in 1944. Growing up with friends in town and playing sports were some of the best memories I have in town. I was just mediocre but I loved it as much as anyone else on the team. I also loved to go out to Ouse's creek all the time and catch fish."

"21.5 pound Northern in Waubay, South Dakota. That's the biggest fish I've ever caught. We still go over there to fish."

"If I could take two people fishing, one of them would be Michael Ray, a country-western singer. And I wish I could take my dad fishing. 'Marky' Marvin Helgeson."

"My dad worked for Orris Grina at the hardware store for the last years of his life. Prior to that, he worked for Vernon Ostlund as a meat-cutter, and as a part time job he'd butcher for people. Sally Helgeson was my mom. She baked donuts for people at the pool hall, among many other occupations. My grandmother and grandfather lived in town. Ted Helgeson had a dodge car business in town. But that was before I knew him. He was quite a musician and could play any instrument."

"My family. I'm proud of my kids and what they are doing. My biggest accomplishment was raising my family. I don't like them— but I raised them."

"I just absolutely think Phil Sauer was the funniest person I ever met. He was a printing friend of mine out in Helena, Montana. He would come up with the best antidotes on anything. Just a very humorous guy."

"When I graduated from science school in Wahpeton in printing, there was a job waiting for me at Geneseo, Illinois. I graduated on Friday. Married Saturday. And then left for Illinois on Monday. When I got out there I was to learn how to operate a large newspaper printing press. I was in Illinois from about May until the end of October. I was second in command out there while they were installing the new press. One of the people who was supposed to be the top foreman had a heart attack and couldn't run the press any more so he ended up taking my position. So they hired another person to be in charge of the press. So the boss came to me, and said 'you know what happened to the foreman and you know, I'm afraid I'm going to have to let you go.' For the first time in my life I wanted to kiss a guy right on the lips! I hated it down there so bad. It was like he said 'Here Warren – here's a million dollars. Enjoy it!' So here I was back home, for three months when I should have been working and no job. So I was working at Trosvik's farm with the turkeys. I came home and someone said I had a call from Cut Bank, Montana. Here it was a guy I went to school with who moved out there and said they were looking for someone to run the Commander Newspaper press. So I talked it over with my wife and we looked it up on the map. So that's how I got to Cut Bank, Montana and spent 10 years there."

"I thought it was great growing up in Rothsay in the 40's and 50's. Friday and Saturday nights in

Warren Helgeson continued on page 7



Warren Helgeson

Faces of Rothsay

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Rothsay Public School teacher



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Gary Wigdahl
Rothsay historian

RHS ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Wigdahl's work makes lasting legacy

Shane Balken
Rothsay City Councilman

It's been 40 years since Rothsay celebrated its centennial in 1983 and one of the items commemorating the celebration has continued to stand the test of time. "Twixt Hill and Prairie: A century of challenge in the Rothsay, Minnesota area" was authored by Gary Wigdahl. Published in 1982 in honor of the town and surrounding area, the book is an in-depth history of the community and immigrants who helped shape the lives of all who have called Rothsay 'home.'

Wigdahl graduated from Rothsay High School in 1960 and said he always knew he wanted to be a journalist. "When I used to stay with my grandmother Alma Lund in town before I started school, she knew I was interested in newspapers. She used to give me a notebook with small pages she sewed together and I would sit down and write a story in there," said Wigdahl.

Wigdahl's father, John Wigdahl, was an electrician in Rothsay and Gary joked that he didn't pick up much from his dad in terms of work knowledge. "The genes didn't travel far down the family tree," quipped Wigdahl.

After graduating from Rothsay, Wigdahl went to school in Fergus Falls at the junior college for two years (now called Minnesota State Community and Technical College - Fergus Falls), and then later to the University of North Dakota where he earned his bachelor's degree in journalism. It was 1965 and the war in Vietnam was raging. Wigdahl said he could either get drafted or enlist in the service, so he decided to join the U.S. Army. He spent three years overseas in Germany as a repairman in the cryptography career field.

After his honorable discharge in the fall of 1968, Wigdahl came back home and worked for a brief period at the Fargo Forum as a writer. It wasn't long before he decided to go back to school and use his GI bill for a master's degree in journalism at the University of Missouri. By 1972, Wigdahl had taken a job at the Elbow Lake newspaper and was involved in an earlier book about the history of Wendell, MN.

"It was quite some time before I wrote my own book on Rothsay, but as I was helping with

the history of Wendell I thought — I could do this. Occasionally I would save scraps of articles and put them in my proposed Rothsay file. It was the summer of 1975 and I was starting to get burned out on the newspaper business and I thought one of the things I could do would be to take some time off and do some research. I went to the state historical society in St. Paul and looked through

65 years of Rothsay papers," said Wigdahl.

Gary later went back to Elbow Lake to work at the newspaper in the fall of 1975 and worked at his previous position. It was during this time that Wigdahl started writing his book in earnest. Wigdahl said the next few years of working his full-time job and trying to write a book became stressful at times.

"I guess I alternated at times trying to do both things. I later went to Mankato for a brief period and worked for their newspaper. It was during this time that one Saturday afternoon Roberta Ouse called me and asked if I might have the book ready in time for the centennial." Wigdahl said after it became known around Rothsay that he was working on the book, many people from around the area would give him suggestions about what to research, or a story idea. "It was encouraging that I knew I had support from a certain number of people. Janice Rudh, Roberta Ouse, Art Fosse, Dale Western, Otto Moe, and Buddy Halbakken were very supportive. Had it not been for the townspeople, it had not gone as slick as it did."

Wigdahl said he wrote about two-thirds of the book in about the last year prior to publishing. "I was really grinding it out and I could really feel the stress mounting at this period," recalled Wigdahl. "But I thought, I need to keep going or I might not finish it if I take a break."

Gary Wigdahl continued on page 7

Faces of Rothsay

Easton Mansfield
Rothsay 4th grader
Son of Randall and
Kate Mansfield





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Warren Helgeson continued from page 5

town you couldn't park downtown because there were so many cars. And that's a fact. It was just full of people. The weekends were always fun with roller skating in town. We certainly were not a well-to-do family but I never thought about that, not once. But I loved growing up in town here. One thing that brought me back to Rothsay in the 70s was when my dad passed away. I had come back home for about year just before he died and stayed here for a while and helped him out. One night dad said, 'I'll tell you what - I'd like some help taking down an old chimney in the house.' It was old enough in the house that it was falling apart and I could take the bricks out by hand. Well, mom and dad went out of town and when they returned I told them that I got the chimney down for them. He said, 'what?' I said I got the chimney down and he said no, it was that one - pointing to the other chimney. So I went back and grabbed all of the bricks and the next night I was building a chimney. But I helped him!"

"Back in those days, "Booky"(Lawrence) and Hazel Lein had the café and the Fergus journal was dropped off there. So you'd go up there and grab the papers. I came home and dad said go ahead and take the car - 1949 Mercury, and go drop off the papers around town. It was winter time and the windshield was frosted over. So I made a

hole about the size of your thumb to look out the windshield. I was coming across the tracks and looked - no train, and no lights. Except there was a freight train sitting there. I came home and dad is sitting there having supper. I said, 'I had a little trouble with the car.' Dad said, 'what then?' I said I hit a train. But it didn't hardly move. I don't think I hurt (the train) at all."

"Oh god, yes. Anything I could change in life? How big is your notebook? Yeah I'd change things. I don't truly know why but I was the printer for one of my jobs and the owner certainly made more money than I did, but I would have never wanted his job. I wanted to be a printer. But I also wish that I would have bared down in school. The teachers all told me all the way through school, 'For Christ's sake Warren - you know how to do it, you just won't do it.' And they were right. Now I wish I would have done it. I really feel I could have been one of the top students but I didn't, and that's ok. But not so I could have been something else. I became what I wanted to be."

"I would say always pay real good attention in school and learn what you can when you're young. It's an old joke, 'too soon old - too late smart' but it's true. Do your studies and be positive in life."

"Be good to people is the motto I try to live by. I try to be as good as I can. Always treat people with respect and they will in turn back."

Gary Wigdahl continued from page 6

When the book was finally written, it was time to start looking at publishers. In the early 1980's, Holiday Printing, owned by Vince Anderson, was located in Rothsay. The centennial committee worked with Anderson to help get the book off the ground. Wigdahl said it cost roughly \$12,200 to print 2,000 copies of the first edition of his book. During the centennial celebration, Wigdahl said he conducted book signings and sold approximately half of the books during the

weekend festivities.

When asked about his thoughts on finally finishing his novel, Gary said he felt elated. "I felt pretty exotic when it was finished." Sonja Wigdahl Anderson, one of Gary's sisters recalled during the time of the centennial just how impressed so many people were with Gary's work. "I was very proud of him, and I know we as a family were also very proud of him. He did a wonderful job on the book. A lot of people were very supportive about helping him get it finished."

Wigdahl's hard work and dedication into writing and researching the area's history stands as a testament to what anyone is capable of accomplishing with a 'never quit' attitude. Forty years later, the book still stands as a tribute to all of the early pioneers that came before us and built a community out of the prairie. If someone is interested in buying a copy of the book, they are still available in the Ottertail County Historical Society in Fergus Falls.



Faces of Rothsay

Savannah Sullivan,
Rothsay 10th grader
Daughter of Craig and
Kristi Sullivan

We want to hear from you!

Do you know an RHS alumnus that has an interesting story to tell? We want to hear from you! Send your idea and contact info to: Shane Balken at ole.lenas@rothsay.us

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January 2024

Rothsay Enterprise

Rothsay Areawide Economic Development Authority
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Rothsay Enterprise is a publication prepared and issued through a cooperative effort of the City of Rothsay and the Rothsay Areawide Economic Development Authority.

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Like what you see?

Advertise your business in the Enterprise and help spread the word! For more information, contact the Rothsay Area Economic Development office at: RAEDA@rothsay.org.

We need your help!

The Rothsay Area Economic Development Authority committee is currently assembling a mailing list of all Rothsay High School graduates. Please send us your name, address, and year of graduation. We will add you to our mailing list for future correspondence and Enterprise newsletters. Please send your information to one of the following:

Shane Balken
ole.lenas@rothsay.us

Stephanie Curtis
scurtis@otpc.com

Heather Weber
RAEDA@rothsay.org

Jim Boyce
jim.boyce@live.com

Housing opportunities in Rothsay

Are you, or someone you know, interested in making Rothsay your home or business location? We want to help you!

Rothsay has options and programs for new homes being built, home builders and businesses looking to establish roots in Rothsay or current business looking to expand in town. We have resources that offer business planning guidance, gap financing, loan options and possible grants. There are currently opportunities for both new construction and remodeling of



existing homes in Rothsay. Incentive programs are currently in place within both Wilkin and Otter Tail counties to help create new housing infrastructure. Additionally, if you are interested in moving or starting your business in Rothsay, office space is also available for rent.

For more information about housing and business opportunities in Rothsay, contact **Heather Weber** at RAEDA@rothsay.org or **Shane Balken** at ole.lenas@rothsay.us