

# Local News

## BRIEFS

### Christmas tree for veterans is now up at King's Place

Hastings-area residents interested in buying a gift for a resident of the Hastings Veterans Home are asked to visit King's Place in Miesville over the next 10 days.

At the restaurant, a Christmas tree is set up with tags from each of the 170 residents. Each tag has a gift request on it.

Those interested in helping are asked to take a tag from the tree, buy the gift and return it to the restaurant by Dec. 17 so that the gifts can be opened during the Christmas party at the veterans home on Dec. 20.

For more information, contact Mary McGraw at 651-271-9267.

### KC's hold breakfast on Dec. 15

The Hastings Knights of Columbus will hold a pancake and sausage breakfast from 8 a.m. to noon Sunday, Dec. 15, at the Columbian Hall, 3075 Highway 61. Tickets are \$7 for adults and \$3.50 for children.

### City seeks new commissioners

The City of Hastings is seeking applicants to fill open commissioner seats on the Parks and Recreation and Heritage Preservation commissions. Terms begin Jan. 1, 2014. Applications can be found online at [www.ci.hastings.mn.us](http://www.ci.hastings.mn.us). The deadline for applications is Dec. 8.

### Chipotle holds Toys for Tots fundraiser

On Tuesday, Dec. 10, all Minnesota Chipotle Mexican Grill restaurants, including the one in Hastings, will donate 50 percent of the day's proceeds to the Toys for Tots Twin Cities in an effort to give needy children in Minnesota a proper holiday. Customers must mention Toys for Tots on Dec. 10 from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. at any Minnesota Chipotle restaurant for the contribution to be made.

### CP Holiday Train stops Dec. 12 in Hastings

The Canadian Pacific Holiday Train will stop in Hastings at about 4:15 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 12, at the depot, 500 E. Second St. The train heads through the Midwest and Northeast before reaching Saskatchewan Dec. 19.

As in previous years, the stop offers entertainment and an opportunity to raise food and funds for the food shelf at Hastings Family Service.

This is the 15th year the Holiday Train has been raising food, money and awareness for food banks in communities across Canada and the United States.

## CITY BUDGET

# Hastings will reduce tax rate in 2014

## City, county among the few to lower rates

by Katrina Styx • Staff writer  
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Statewide, there are 40 cities operating with budgets greater than \$10 million. Only four of them are reducing their property tax levies next year, and of those four, Hastings leads the way in paring down the budget. Hastings is expected to approve a levy for 2014 that is 2.5 percent lower than this year's levy.

"This is probably the first budget in five or six years where it's easy to have a smile on my face in talking about (where we're headed) in 2014," said Danna Elling Schultz, chair of the council's finance committee.

Hastings' budget process began in April and will be finalized Dec. 16. The long process, plus a number of staffing changes, gave the city an opportunity to ask some new questions, said City Administrator Melanie Mesko Lee.

First, staff wanted to make sure that the budget was an easy to understand organizational document that represents the plans and priorities of the city, she said. To accomplish that, department heads and their staff were encouraged to share information more thoroughly within and across departments.

"It's important for us to understand each other's perspective," Mesko Lee said.

Then in July, the finance committee of the city council (which includes Schultz, Tony Nelson and Tony Alongi) gave staff a firm goal. They wanted next year's tax rate to go back to what it was in 2012, which was 66.25 percent. The 2013 tax levy rate is 68.402 percent.

In September, the city set the preliminary tax levy amount at \$11,610,920. That amount, which is about \$370,000 less than the 2013 levy, was based off the finance committee's directive to lower the tax rate. As the process continued, staff recalculated the tax rate based on the preliminary total levy amount and found that next year's tax rate comes in below target, at 65.855 percent.

The declines are notable because of continued declines in other factors that determine the city's budget. The city col-

lects property taxes based on the valuation of property. Hastings' tax capacity – or the total value of property within the city that can be taxed – has declined, Mesko Lee said. Traditionally, when tax capacity declines, levies and tax rates increase, but Hastings has managed to decrease both of those. It's a way to pay a little respect to the residents and businesses that have settled here, Mesko Lee said.

"We believe that living in Hastings and working in Hastings and doing business in Hastings is a good decision," she said.

On a home valued at \$150,000, the city portion of taxes will go down about \$80.

### State help

Two actions at the state level helped the city pull together a smaller tax levy. One was the return of local government aid (LGA). Hastings has not received any LGA funding from the state in several years, but will get \$510,000 in 2014.

LGA funds are being used next year for one-time capital investments – big-ticket items that don't need to be purchased every year.

Since LGA funds have not been consistent, the city wanted to avoid making taxes dependent on state funds. By designat-

ing LGA to one-time projects instead of ongoing costs, it will have less of an impact on taxes if it goes away again in the future, Mayor Paul Hicks said.

Another factor that helped the city achieve its lower tax goal was a change in the state legislature that made a sales tax exemption for cities and counties for purchases after Jan. 1, 2014.

### What's included

The total 2014 budget is proposed at just over \$28 million, about \$1.8 million higher than the 2013 budget. That will pay for a number of services and items next year.

Some items in the equipment category are new computers, medical training equipment, the remounting of an ambulance box onto a new chassis, some office equipment replacement and some equipment at the Hastings Family Aquatic Center. Some money will be used to create new equipment funds for ongoing and future replacements, including public safety radios; fire, pool and general facilities equipment; and a storm siren.

The city will take out debt to purchase a new snow blower, patrol vehicle, mower, skid loader and aquatic center pool heater.

Some money will be taken

out of the city's fund balance to pay for an emergency generator, water tower repainting, well rehabilitation, catwalk sandblasting, lift station pumps, cleanup of the former Hudson building, a dehumidification unit at the Hastings Civic Arena and an ice edger.

Tax levy dollars will be used to fund handheld ticket writer units, Tasers, radios, an auto chest compression device, fence repairs, warming house roof repairs, HFAC roof replacement, a community survey, the reinstatement of Lifeworks, dust cleaning at City Hall and the police department, spring cleanup day and partial funding of a dog park.

Dedicated funds will pay for certain items. Ward cash will cover part of the dog park project, grants will be used to pay for cleanup at the former Hudson site and trust funds will be used for a project at the LeDuc kitchen.

Personnel costs account for 38 percent of the total 2014 budget. Some of the changes being proposed are an overall compensation adjustment for all regular, full and part-time staff; some additional hours; additional seasonal staff; and a consultant to help the city work smarter and bring more value for the dollars it receives.

## TYLER CORRINGTON

# Hastings native to compete in National Finals Rodeo

## Rodeo viewing party planned for Dec. 7

By Gretchen Kirchmann  
Special to the Star Gazette

Tyler Corrington of Hastings is ranked fourth in the world standings going into the National Finals Rodeo (NFR) with just over \$97,000 earned in saddle bronc riding this year.

This Saturday, Dec. 7, Corrington fans are invited to Dan's Bar in New Trier for a viewing party at 7 p.m. The world standings race will be determined the following Saturday after contestants compete in 10 straight days at the Super Bowl of the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association.

According to Scott Werner, several of Tyler's friends and his mother Stacey came up with the idea to have a fan party at Dan's bar.

"When Tyler is home he hangs out there and has a few beers," Werner said. "The first time he was home after the 2011 NFR he stopped over."

Corrington's signature is on a Texas Ranger cap in the bar. "Danette (Welch, who owns the bar) asked for his autograph and he took off his hat and signed it," Werner said.

The National Finals Rodeo runs Dec. 5-14 in Las Vegas. Great American Country is televising the finals. More than \$6 million will be awarded in prize money. Corrington will



Tyler Corrington of Hastings is pictured during the Ponoka Stampede in 2011. Corrington is competing this week in Las Vegas at the national rodeo finals. PHOTO COURTESY OF MIKE COPEMAN PHOTOGRAPHY

ride nightly for a chance at the \$60,000 event payout. Being consistent is very important, especially with championship titles won or lost in the average payout of \$180,000 per event. Last year the Saddle Bronc World Championship was determined by \$797 when Jesse Wright beat Cody DeMoss.

"A bunch of us are going to Vegas to watch him the last weekend," Werner said. "I purchased 10 tickets for Friday the 13th for myself and nine

of my friends.

"The hotel accommodations are scattered along the strip and downtown because we don't know where we'll end up,"

The friends are looking forward to their Vegas vacation.

"Hopefully when Tyler wins the overall score on Saturday night we won't be going to bed for sure," Werner said.

Middle and high school friends, along with family, friends, uncles and aunt Janice Witcomb of Cherokee, Iowa,

are traveling to Las Vegas to watch Corrington compete.

"My sister (Janice) is 70 years old, she's never been to Vegas or on a plane," said Doug Corrington, Tyler's father.

Tyler's mother, Stacey, made fan club sweatshirts with number 27 screen-printed to show her support and affiliation with her son. She also shared another fan story from this past July.

"At Calgary Stampede this year there was a tour group

from Hastings who by chance happened to be at the rodeo when Tyler won one of two rounds up there," she said.

"They were so excited to see a Hastings native make the victory lap. One was his middle school teacher, another was one of grandpa's coffee buddies and another was a friend of Tyler's great aunt. Truly a small world moment."

To keep up world standings logon to [www.prorodeo.com](http://www.prorodeo.com) and track Corrington's results

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### NEWS ITEMS

Your contributions to the pages of this newspaper are welcome. Mail or hand-deliver information to the office at 745 Spiral Blvd. or fax it to 651-437-5911. You can also send an email to [news@hastingsstargazette.com](mailto:news@hastingsstargazette.com). Deadline is Monday at 9 a.m.

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As a service to readers, the above labels may be cut out and attached to any item that appeared in this week's issue of the paper and placed in your scrapbook.

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