

Principal is finalist

Richfield STEM School Principal Joey Page is one of three finalists for a state award. **Page 16**

State-bound Spartans

Three members of the Richfield wrestling team qualified for the Class AA state tournament Feb. 20. **Page 9**



Public notices

Intermediate School District 287 is accepting bids for transportation services. **Page 12**

Small town in the big city? Survey says yes

Pastor's research team finds that the secret is in the neighborhoods

BY ANDREW WIG
SUN CURRENT NEWSPAPERS

A Richfield pastor has transcribed approximately 3,000 minutes of audio recordings in an effort to learn more about the community, and he might be only halfway done.

Ben Sandin, senior pastor at House of Prayer Lutheran Church, is leading a team of congregation members in an in-depth survey as they take the



Ben Sandin, pastor at House of Prayer Lutheran Church, pores over data that was compiled during 100 interviews lasting about 30 minutes each. The research project is part of Sandin's doctoral dissertation. (Sun Current staff photo by Andrew Wig)

pulse of their city. Sandin has been collecting the recordings, which are taken from interviews that average about a half-hour

long, and tracking the themes that surface as residents are asked about their perceptions of the community.

"The biggest takeaway, I would say, is the vast majority of people who we've interviewed love Richfield," Sandin said.

He's learned that from the approximately 100 completed surveys. Project participants interview their subjects in person, using open-ended questions that did not allude to specific issues, Sandin explained. The interviewees then find additional interviewees by asking for referrals from their subjects.

They started by interviewing church members for the first round of surveys and went beyond the congregation for a second round. At least one more round of interviews is

planned, with a fourth coming if necessary.

People find much truth in the selling point repeated time and again in Richfield – that it's a small town in the big city, said Sandin, a Bloomington resident who grew up in a small town in northern Wisconsin but has lived in Minneapolis, Detroit and Chicago.

"The small town feel thing in Richfield is a reality," he said.

From the survey results, Sandin has learned that feeling stems from the city's neighborhoods. That factor alone has been enough to keep some residents in Richfield, when they could opt for a larger home in a second- or third-ring suburb, Sandin found. He quoted one interviewee who

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Janitors picket Best Buy HQ during 24-hour strike

Best Buy's Richfield headquarters was one of several sites across the metro to be picketed Feb. 17 by custodial workers on a 24-hour strike. Members of Service Employees International Union Local 26 picketed on the sidewalk outside the campus beginning at 5 p.m., just as Best Buy employees were lining up in their vehicles to leave their workplace.

Working for a contractor, many of the Richfield picketers clean the Best Buy campus, according to Rachel Lang, the union representative on site. The union is citing unfair labor practices in the strike,

organizing picket lines at additional workplaces including Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport and the IDS Center in downtown Minneapolis.

Among picketers' chants at the Best Buy headquarters was a call for a \$15 an hour wage. The union's three-year contract with the employers ended Dec. 31. Negotiations have been underway since October.

A phone call to a Best Buy spokesperson was not returned.

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At left: Jesus Fonseca of Richfield is stoic as he pickets Feb. 17, with Best Buy's headquarters serving as a backdrop. Below: Union organizer Ruth Schultz leads picketers during the rush hour protest. (Sun Current staff photos by Andrew Wig)



Funding promotes tobacco cessation amongst Latinos

Health equity at center of the push

BY ANDREW WIG
SUN CURRENT NEWSPAPERS

Richfield is the target of \$175,000 worth of funding for a tobacco cessation campaign focusing on the city's Latino population.

Minneapolis nonprofit CLUES, which stands for Comunidades Latinas Unidas en Servicio, is receiving the money from the Center for Prevention at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota. The outreach is part of CLUES' efforts to enhance its work in Richfield, in keeping with its mission as a Latino advocacy organization, according to Brittany Kellerman, development officer for CLUES.

"Recently we've been trying to target Richfield, given the recent increase in Latinos in the area," Kellerman said.

The emphasis on the Latino population stems from the funding's aim to address health equity issues. In that aim, Blue Cross and Blue Shield is dispensing \$4 million to various organizations across the state over the next three years.

Using the money in Richfield, CLUES plans

to reach out to in-home day care providers and managers of apartment complexes. Through community meetings, the organization plans to educate tenants and caregivers about the effects of second- and third-hand smoke. The latter term refers to indirect exposure to toxins that seep into materials – clothing, furniture, carpet – in a given environment.

"There are still a lot of misunderstandings and

myths within the community, especially about those two issues," Kellerman said.

According to CLUES' proposal for the funding, the group plans to reach at least 20 apartment complexes with heavy Latino populations and at least 10 in-home day care centers that serve a high number of Latinos. Of the targeted apartment complexes, CLUES hopes to convince eight to establish no-smoking policies.

Meanwhile, the organization wants to educate day care providers on third-hand smoke and ensure their properties are smoke-free 24 hours a day, Kellerman said.

A fact sheet from the Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids explains how health inequities relate to tobacco use amongst Hispanics.

"Hispanics are the least likely of any racial or

SMOKE - TO PAGE 7



Richfield DECA program certified gold again

Students earn certification for fifth straight time

BY SARAH THAMER
MURPHY NEWS SERVICE

Richfield High School's school store, Spartan Avenue, was among 316 school-based enterprises in the United States this year to achieve Gold Level Certification – the highest level of accreditation that can be achieved.

With the help of their advisor Dean Breuer, Richfield students Lary Lopez and Jonathan Rivas worked on this year's certification – marking the fifth consecutive year that Spartan Avenue has received Gold Level honors.

DECA Inc., a student organization with more than 215,000 members in the U.S., prepares high-school and college students aspiring to be leaders and entrepreneurs in various areas such as



Richfield DECA leaders Lary Lopez, left, and Jonathan Rivas, right, review Valentine's Day promotion data in the Spartan Avenue school store. (Submitted photo)

marketing, finance, hospitality and management.

"They have worked very hard," Breuer said. "My job is to advise, but they really do a great job in selecting the products and merchandise."

School-Based Enterprises are entrepreneurial operations in a school providing services to meet the

needs of the market and are both managed and operated by students.

Breuer's supervision provides Richfield DECA students with learning experiences that may be used in the real world. Those experiences reinforce classroom instruction, enhance skill developments in today's world and prepare

students for college and careers.

Richfield DECA's Chapter President Annie Perez said that being a part of DECA has helped her tremendously with public speaking.

"I have been having trouble with public speaking and learning how to be comfortable," she said.

"With this program, I learned to better my speaking skills and my presentation in classrooms. I look at the audience more and less at my papers."

Vice President Lary joined DECA when he was a sophomore because of his interests in business and marketing. He said the program has allowed him to further explore his goals, such as a possible future in business.

In 2011, more than 100 schools got together and approximately 70 met DECA's qualifications, Breuer said. That same year, Richfield DECA took sixth in the nation. Out of 18 performance indicators, they scored all 18 slots.

"We're one of the top schools in the country," Breuer said. "We really feel a sense of pride."

The students have been able to tour job sites such as Periscope and General Mills to gain better knowledge of real-world businesses.

The certification program was developed to recognize student's

achievements by encouraging excellence and growth. Applying for the certification requires that school stores meet marketing and retail standards.

"This is a big deal for us," Lary said. "It was a small store, and now it's one of the biggest accomplishments that we can show in Richfield."

Breuer's impact on the students doesn't go unnoticed.

"He really goes out of his way to help you with any situation whether it is DECA-related or not," said DECA's store manager Breddy Julian. "He gets here early and gets out late, and if we had an advisor other than Dean, we wouldn't be where we are today."

Richfield DECA will be recognized at this year's DECA's International Career Development Conference April 22 in Nashville, Tennessee.

Sarah Thamer is an intern at Sun Newspapers and is studying journalism at the University of Minnesota.

Smoke

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ethnic group to have health insurance," the fact sheet states. "With limited access to health

care, it is less likely that Hispanic smokers will be advised by a health care provider to quit smoking or have access to cessation treatments."

CLUES' funding proposal further states the need to address health inequities. It says that in efforts to access tobacco-free

housing and day care centers, Latinos face barriers including limited English proficiency, lower incomes, low literacy and limited educational background.

Latinos in Richfield are only one sector receiving attention from health advocates as they work to encourage greater

health equity.

"The challenges our state faces are multi-faceted and complex. A multi-sector approach is needed to close the gaps and improve the health of all Minnesotans," said Janelle Waldock, vice president of community initiatives and health equity at

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota. "What inspires me is the number of organizations that want to step forward and play a role."

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EDUCATION NOTE

Holy Angels students are National Merit finalists

Three Academy of Holy Angels students have been named

National Merit Scholar finalists this month.

Erik Nygren, Jacob Nelson and Eric Miller are among the 15,000 students from across the country

to receive the honor. Of the finalists, 4,700 will be named National Merit Scholarship winners over the next couple months.

Survey

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said Dorow, who grew up in Richfield and now lives in Burnsville.

"The schools, elementary schools in particular – people rave about them," Sandin said.

Residents' enthusiasm even extends to their proximity to the airport, with very few complaints about the noise,

Dorow reported.

"Being close the airport came up several times as a plus, not a negative," she said.

Some residents' loyalty to Richfield went so far that it required a helping of hyperbole, Dorow found:

"Some said this is the best place in the world."

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