

Walker Rotary Club Learns How the “Wolfpack Plan” Could Bring State Dollars Back to WHA Schools

Members of the Walker Rotary Club recently heard from Walker-Hackensack-Akeley (WHA) Superintendent Kevin Wellen, who outlined the district’s proposed 2026 operating levy and the opportunities created by Minnesota’s new Seasonal Tax Base Replacement Aid (STBRA) program. Wellen explained how the program allows districts like WHA to capture additional state funding because of the area’s large seasonal property tax base, helping bring education dollars back to local students.

During the presentation, Wellen shared details of “The Wolfpack Plan,” a proposal designed to increase revenue for WHA Schools while minimizing the impact on local taxpayers. Question one on the Nov. 3 ballot would unlock significant state aid without increasing property taxes on year-round homes, businesses or seasonal properties because the school board has committed to reducing other local levies. A second ballot question would provide additional funding with an estimated increase of about \$4 per month on a \$400,000 home. If both questions are approved by voters in November, the plan would generate approximately \$1 million in new annual revenue, including about \$825,000 from the state.

Wellen emphasized that the Wolfpack Plan would help protect the programs and services that support student success, including small class sizes, mental health resources, school safety, academic intervention programs, and career and technical education opportunities. He noted that the new state program offers a unique chance for the community to invest in local students by accessing new state funding available to the district.

Walker Rotary Club supports the high level of education offered by the WHA school district with Rotary Reader volunteers who listen to them read, and encourage second grade students to read at home to family members. Rotary Volunteers have observed rapid advancement of reading levels in students throughout the school year through this program. Rotary also provides third grade students with dictionaries. High school sophomores are offered opportunities for free leadership training through RYLA (Rotary Youth Leadership Academy). Some graduates of RYLA have advanced to exciting careers. Rotary also provides scholarships for graduating seniors. Recipients are chosen based on an essay written about the Rotary 4-Way test.

For additional information about enrolling a student in RYLA, contact the WHA school office. Rotary thanks Superintendent Wellen for his excellent research on how our taxes are spent, seeking ways to reduce class sizes, and improve students’ learning

opportunities in our rural community by including the opportunity for AA degrees upon graduation.

Wellen and his Administrative team are pictured below: Julie Granberg, High School principal; Kyle Bergem Business Manager; Jeremy Digiovanni, Athletic Director/Community Ed. Director; Supt. Kevin Wellen. Not pictured, Jill McGowan, Elementary Principal.

