

THE BUZZ

October 2026

FRESHWATER'S MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Welcome to Fall in Our District

As the leaves turn to shades of amber, gold, and red, we welcome the refreshing arrival of fall in Minnesota. The crisp temperatures, fall food favorites (chili, soups, apple crisp), and sweatshirt weather bring a renewed sense of focus, energy, and warmth to our schools.

Fall is a season of transition and routines. In our member school districts, classrooms are buzzing with learning, athletic courts and fields are active with fall activities, and students and staff are settled into regular daily routines.

Five Reasons This October is Extra Special

Every fall season brings happiness and gratification, but this October comes with a few rare and exciting highlights that make the month truly great:

October Highlight	What Makes It Special
5 Full Fridays	Five chances to celebrate student achievements and wrap up productive learning weeks together.
5 Full Saturdays	Extra weekend time to enjoy apple orchards, pumpkin patches, and crisp autumn walks.
The Hunter's Moon	A brilliant, luminous full moon that lights up the October sky with seasonal magic.
Halloween on a Saturday	Festive daytime fun and trick-or-treating without the rush of a school night.
"Fall Back" Extra Hour	As Daylight Saving Time ends, families get an extra hour of rest and recovery!

With Heartfelt Gratitude

As we move forward into this amazing season, I want to express my gratitude to the Freshwater community. Your work, commitment, and dedication to the students, families, and staff across all of our member school districts creates a nurturing, safe, and inspiring environment where our students can excel and succeed every single day.

Wishing everyone a safe, restful, and enjoyable fall!

Warmly,
Paul Brownlow

STAFF SHOUT-OUTS

I want to recognize two outstanding staff members—Michelle Halonen, who is new to the Level IV setting though experienced in special education, and Johnie Goodpasture, a seasoned paraprofessional in the program.

What transpired was nothing short of amazing. Through the intentional and creative implementation of visual supports and built-in reinforcement systems, Michelle and Johnie provided our students with the structure and opportunities necessary to feel fully included in our school community. Because of their hard work, our students participated in the Friday celebration for the very first time—and thrived beyond expectations.

The positive energy was felt across the entire building, with colleagues expressing excitement and giving compliments on how included and successful our students were during the Friday celebration.

As a coach working with this site, this program, and these two staff members for the first time, this experience was deeply meaningful. These two took the simple visuals and reinforcements suggested, ran with it, and saw instant success!! It gave me that overwhelming feeling of *"I want to work here"—*followed quickly by the proud realization that "I DO work here!"

Michelle and Johnie exemplify the absolute best of special education. Their willingness to do "whatever it takes" to support our students sets a powerful standard for inclusion, teamwork, and student-centered care. I hope you will join me in recognizing and celebrating their phenomenal contributions to our school and students.

– Amy Zamzo

Alyssa Rieland was so very very helpful with a new student today who has lots of needs. The para reported that Alyssa helped her carry in things, brought steps to accommodate the student, showed her how to help the student, and gave her confidence to do the work needed with the student! Alyssa also plans on coming back to train the para on how to lift so she does not hurt her back. The para reports that she would not have been able to do her job today without the help from Alyssa. Thank you Alyssa for being a part of our Team.

–Menahga staff

Even though I know she will probably cringe a little, as she doesn't like the spot light, I want to shine it on Sondra Lee (just a little bit). Regardless of how full her plate is, she is always willing to help out anyone who asks. She's super knowledgeable, and I appreciate her so much.

–Synneve Moe

I want to give a shout out and high recommendation.

Cathy Newberry subbed in my classroom today. Cathy was awesome. She was kind, caring, helpful, willing. She asked questions when she needed clarification on anything, which I totally appreciate. She willingly did what was requested of her. No hesitancy. Her interactions with the children were spot on. I would love having her as a sub para again. Thank YOU for sending her.

–Brenda Faust

We love and appreciate our Freshwater Team! They are always willing to go above and beyond to support our staff and students, and we truly couldn't ask for a better team!

They help us develop and provide awesome programming for our students. They are always available to answer our questions, collaborate with staff, and provide valuable guidance. Their assessment reports are thorough and helpful, with great accommodations and modifications tailored to meet the individual needs of our students.

They also help facilitate challenging meetings and provide support when we need it most. We are so grateful for their expertise, dedication, and willingness to work alongside us. Our Freshwater Team truly makes a difference for our staff and students, and we are lucky to have them as part of our team!

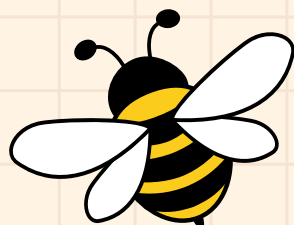
–Michelle, Steph, John and Kristi – Menahga staff



HAPPY BIRTHDAY! BLOWING OUT CANDLES THIS MONTH:



- Cari Grenier – 10/1
- Melisa Brever – 10/5
- Karissa Berg – 10/6
- Tracie Borders – 10/7
- Nick Lorensen – 10/11
- Sara Truax – 10/12
- Janet Becker – 10/15
- Kristina Macheel – 10/15
- Rich Murdock – 10/16
- Monica Leslie – 10/17
- Diane Gillespie – 10/19
- Kylene Lehmann – 10/21
- Mandy Peeters – 10/25
- Ruth Bowman – 10/29
- Erin Huebner – 10/29
- Monique Holmes – 10/31
- Paula Peterson – 10/31



ON THE FRESHWATER HEALTH PLAN? 2 MONTHS REMAIN TO EARN FULL \$250 ON WELLRIGHT - DEADLINE: DECEMBER 15

Log into Wellright to explore the many ways you can earn points, which turn into dollars!

By attaining the \$250 maximum amount for 2026, it helps our Freshwater Wellness Team to function.

What the Wellness Team does:

- Encourage healthy living habits through information sharing
- Provide Employee Assistance Program and other information in the Wellness area on the FED website
- Send out veggies and fruit treats once per year to the majority of our sites
- Give out health-inspired goodies at the All-Staff Meeting
- Implement in-house Wellness Challenges throughout the school year

You can't just rake leaves and not jump in them!

