

Walgreens gets license to sell alcohol

BY DEBBIE GRIFFIN
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The City Council agreed Tuesday night to grant Walgreens, 1047 N. Main St., a Class A combination liquor and beer license "to sell alcohol for off-premises consumption."

Erin Neff spoke on behalf of the corporation, with District Manager Brian Rigby and local Store Manager Brian Lee also in attendance.

Neff said the plan was to have about 12 feet of space for beer and about six feet of space for wine.

The alcohol display space would be in the front part of the store near the photo counter and electronics.

She confirmed after a question that video games are

located there but said that department doesn't typically draw a lot of kids because there are so many other places they tend to get games.

Neff said the store based the location of the alcohol on local feedback.

When Council Member Bob Hughes asked about the portion of the license that allows liquor sales, Neff replied, "We do not plan to sell liquor."

She said no Walgreens stores in Wisconsin sell liquor, but some in other states do.

Neff said about 4,000 of the company's stores sell some type of alcohol and that the corporation has a good compliance record.

She explained that no employees under 21 would be allowed to sell alcohol.

The store's computer system requires a code that only clerks over 21 will know. The register also prompts the operator to ask for a photo ID from anyone that doesn't look 40 or older.

A letter from a Walgreens attorney says the store has cameras running that assist with security. It also says the request for a liquor license was "in direct response to customer demand."

The letter agrees with Neff's comments about how all employees, regardless of age, undergo training beyond what the state requires.

COUNCIL ACTS

Our Neighbors' Place supporters filled quite a few seats as the council considered modifying the homeless shelter's special-use permit for an

eight-plex property on West Johnson Street.

The modification would remove the requirement for 24-hour on-site supervision of its apartments housing families from Pierce and St. Croix counties.

ONP has four units — those in need occupy three, and a supervisor occupies the fourth.

The shelter has changed its model since startup to a system it doesn't think requires the live-in supervisor.

"We need that apartment for our homeless guests," said ONP volunteer Carole Mottaz.

Long discussion ensued about how ONP's plan has changed and why.

It began with hopes of buying the eight-apartment building and using it to house the

homeless, but a capital campaign hasn't yielded enough to buy the building.

ONP looks instead to buying a four-plex building, possibly on the west side of the city. However, it must honor leases in the Johnson Street building through August.

Council Member David Reese voiced concern that the organization is asking to revise the special-use permit only three months after starting.

He asked if the council would need to grant another special-use permit for the four-apartment property, and Mottaz said yes, but ONP would seek the permit before buying.

Reese said he isn't against ONP — he voted yes for the permit change — but also wanted to be sure the body

considered those constituents in the early meetings who had concerns about the Johnson Street facility.

He wondered if neighbors at the potential next property would also have concerns and suggested that ONP communicate well its intentions.

Amateur boxing, wrestling emerged victorious as the council voted yes to amending a city law that banned any kind of "fighting" not related to a school event.

Before, the law prohibited all fighting events within city limits, including wrestling, boxing and mixed martial arts.

Now it allows for amateur boxing and wrestling events but still bans professional matches or any kind of mixed martial arts fighting.

Lights brighten hearts of military family

BY DEBBIE GRIFFIN
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Thousands of twinkling Christmas lights now complement the American flag and two, big, yellow ribbons hanging outside the Brace home in River Falls.

The lights — hung free by local professionals — represent the collective thanks of a nation for the sacrifices military families make.

Sandy Brace said last Thursday when the lights were hung: "Missy called me and up to that point, I had no idea we'd been nominated."

Melissa "Missy" Crayford of Greenskeepers, which includes a seasonal franchise called Christmas Décor, said she was thrilled to make that call.

Though Sandy wishes most to have her deployed husband Tony home, she says the Christmas lights do brighten the season. She says with him gone, the family hadn't planned on decorating outside.

She'd always wanted to experiment with garland but never had. Crayford made sure the package included feet upon feet of it.

Good friends and neighbors Dianne and Jerry Halstrom nominated Tony and Sandy for the free decorations. The couple says they can't think of anyone more deserving.

The Halstroms smile broadly as they describe how they could hardly contain themselves when they heard the decorations of honor would go next door.

NOT HOME FOR HOLIDAYS

Tony deployed in April last year. He's in Balad, Iraq, and not expected home until April 2011. Sandy looks forward to that but also says knowingly that homecoming dates are never certain.

"He'll be retiring in September and will have 41 years" she said.

She explains he is a full-time soldier in the Army's active reserves, a warrant officer. Sandy says his job in Iraq involves the logistics of both inventorying equipment and getting it where it needs to go.

Tony last came home on leave in late September.

He and Sandy talk by phone about every other day and can e-mail as well. She said they used to chat by video but decided not to keep paying the \$60 expense for service that sometimes wouldn't work reliably until the wee hours of the morning.

When asked how he reacted to the Decorated Family honor, Sandy said, "He thought it was pretty cool. It touches our hearts."

She says it's a good feeling to know people out there are caring for and thinking about military families.

Sandy will be e-mailing him pictures and steering him to a Twin Cities Live TV story done



Local company Greenskeepers brought a team of festively dressed crew members to decorate a local military family's home this year and another, different family last year. Greenskeepers also runs Christmas Décor, which decorates homes for holidays and donates services for the Decorated Family program.

on the family.

She and Tony both grew up in Minnesota and moved to River Falls six years ago when he was assigned to Fort Snelling. After moves to Atlanta and Des Moines, they learned of Tony's impending deployment.

Sandy said, "We decided to move back up here to retire."

The Braces have four children: A 14-year-old at home, two adult kids in the area, and one adult child in London — and five grandchildren.

DAZZLING DÉCOR

Crayford said Greenskeepers has had its Christmas Décor franchise for eight years and probably "lights" about 80 homes in a season that hits hard and fast plus is subject to weather.

The company serves western Wisconsin and parts of the Twin Cities. Crayford says it does about 25 house in the River Falls and Hudson areas.

At least a half-dozen crew members dressed in red spent a few hours trimming the Brace home with white lights around each window, in the bushes, along the roof eaves and woven within two nine-foot strands of garland. Crayford estimates they affixed somewhere around 3,000 mini lights and 150 large rooftop bulbs.

She says the business uses all its own decorations for the jobs and does all the putting up, taking down and climbing upon ladders to icy rooftops.

Most people like not having to store all the decorations, too.

"We see our average customer spending between \$500 and \$1,500," said Crayford.

She estimates any lights for a Decorated Family home would be toward the upper end of that range. For example, she said the Braces' lights would all be on an automatic timer so that Sandy wouldn't have to do anything but enjoy them.

Crayford says it's an honor to serve these families who give so much. The local business honored another local family last year through the Decorated Family program — Mark and Theresa Mithun.

She hopes more people will keep the program in mind and nominate more local families. Crayford says she's glad the Halstroms found the Facebook page for nominations.

People can make nominations and learn more about the Decorated Family program at the Christmas Décor website: www.christmasdecor.net.

Sandy says she appreciates people's efforts and showing of support. She says it's nice that people express gratitude for their freedoms.

"I'm really proud of my soldier and can't wait for him to come home," she said.



The Decorated Family program honored for its military service the River Falls family of Tony and Sandy Brace.

CORRECTION

A student name was misspelled on the high school's first term honor roll students published in last week's

Journal. The correct spelling should be Jack Bruns, for the grade 10 "B" honor roll list.

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