

EDEN PRAIRIE LOCAL NEWS

IMPACT REPORT 2023-2024







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Photo credits

"Eagles fall to Edina, work to get back on track" **Photo by Jeremy Peyer**. Awarded first place by Minnesota Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists.

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Acknowledgments: A special thank you to Jody Carey for managing the 2024 Impact Report.

DID AON KNOMS

As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit (IRS tax-exempt EIN 85-4248265), Eden Prairie Local News (EPLN) is required to submit to the IRS an annual report called the Form 990, which documents the organization's activities, policies, and community benefits. You can find EPLN's latest Form 990 on its website, www.eplocalnews.org, under "About EPLN."

Democracy needs news. News needs you.

By Steve Schewe, EPLN publisher and CEO

steve.schewe@eplocalnews.org

In our fourth year, the EPLN team continues to serve our community with trustworthy reporting, compelling stories, and news our readers can use. In a recent survey, you told us you're highly satisfied with our efforts and overwhelmingly recommend us to family and friends. This election year, 92% of respondents **said** we are nonpartisan all or most of the time. We are grateful for donations, which comprised 50% of our \$175,074 in revenue; our advertisers and sponsors, who contributed 22%; grants from foundations and service organizations, which contributed 26%; and sponsors of the AI Town Hall, who contributed 2%. We even made a small profit! See our financial report on pages 10-11.

Special thanks to the Institute for Nonprofit News, Google News Initiative, the Fund for Nonprofit News at the Miami Foundation, LION Publishers, Eden Prairie Community Foundation, the local chapter of the League of Women Voters, and our newest supporter, the McKnight Foundation. Thanks also to the advertisers and sponsors, grantors, family foundations and individual donors listed at the end of this report. We take pride in how combining this financial support with the energy of our talented staff has generated vibrant community collaboration:

We sponsored the AI Town Hall Forum in October, and as this technology continues to develop, we are investigating opportunities and looking at policies for using it internally, even as we report on its local impact on our community.

"Silent Struggles," our series on the mental health crisis among young adults, was one of three finalists for a national award for community impact among nonprofit news organizations. Read about our awards on page 7.

We distributed our 2024 printed voter guide to 37,000 households in Eden Prairie and southern Minnetonka, and we'll continue to report on the 2024 election with a specific focus on local races for school board, city council, county commissioner, and state legislators.



We don't have an editorial page or endorse candidates, but we provide a safe space online for civil discourse through letters to the editor from our community.

Through our events calendar, numerous preview articles, and joint grant applications, we publicized the activities of nonprofit organizations such as the Eden Prairie Community Foundation, PROP Food, Lions Club, Rotary, the Eden Prairie Library, Friends of Eden Prairie Parks, and the Eden Prairie Chamber of Commerce. Page 6 of this guide cites other specific examples.

We celebrate our senior citizens, our children, and other residents with ongoing feature stories that our founding editor, Brad Canham, referred to as "the story of us."

Recognizing that we are still figuring out how to be sustainable for the long term, we've shared our story of reinventing community journalism amid the ongoing crisis in local news. We believe the Metro Nonprofit News Network will be a win for everyone involved: for readers, for journalists, and for those who have made generous donations. See page 4.

EPLN and other local newsrooms are emerging around the country to serve citizens hungry for accurate information that helps them engage more deeply with their local institutions and with each other. We are honored to do our part for democracy in Eden Prairie. We invite you to join us by subscribing online, donating, advertising your business or events, or sponsoring us. See how you can help on page 16.

RESPONDING TO THE LOCAL NEWS CRISIS

In April 2024, Southwest Media closed six community newspapers in towns surrounding Eden Prairie. This news highlighted the crisis in local journalism. EPLN responded by holding a meeting on April 29th. 33 participants came from 10 communities, from Hutchinson to Menomonie, Wisconsin. The EPLN team told the story of our still-developing newsroom and encouraged the others to consider forming online newsrooms.

Our leadership attracted the attention of the McKnight Foundation

From this and other events, an informal grass-roots network of community newsrooms has developed organically. Metro Nonprofit News Network (MNNN) will provide shared services, mentorship, and financial guidance to hyperlocal, nonprofit, independent newsrooms in

the Twin Cities. MNNN will help address the challenges of misinformation, declining local newspapers, and reduced civic engagement, supporting the growth and sustainability of community-based journalism and local democracy.

EPLN's leadership attracted the attention of the McKnight Foundation, which has awarded a two-year grant to MNNN totaling \$200,000. The grant will accelerate the founding and sustainability of community-owned, nonprofit newsrooms in suburban areas across the Twin Cities metro area. EPLN sees our participation in MNNN as an opportunity to sustain our local mission by continuing to learn from other talented journalists and community leaders in this network. We will also add resources to build EPLN's business department.



Photo by Jeremy Peyer



METRO NONPROFIT NEWS NETWORK

- Minnesota has lost around 35% of its newspapers in the past 10 years.
- Minnesota has lost more than 65% of our journalists in the past 10 years.
- A growing number of news outlets have turned to philanthropy as an important source of funding.

Source: Minnesota Star Tribune

SERVING THE COMMUNITY

The mission of Eden Prairie Local News is to serve our community with trustworthy reporting, compelling stories, and news you can use — anytime, anywhere."

EPLN covers the hyperlocal news of Eden Prairie. We published 1,112 stories in 2024 about city government, the schools, local businesses and nonprofits, as well as features we call "the story of us." We supplement our local coverage by republishing articles from other leading nonprofit newsrooms like MinnPost, Minnesota Reformer, and Sahan Journal. Through a partnership with the Associated Press, we've supplemented our local election coverage with broader coverage of this year's national election.

COMPELLING STORIES

Compelling news stories published by EPLN in 2024 included: chronicling the labor negotiations between the teachers' union and the school district; covering the memorial service for the slain Burnsville first responders; a story celebrating the life of former EPFD fire-fighter, Joseph Johns; an investigative piece on child maltreatment at a local daycare; telling the story of this year's controversial high school graduation ceremony; a city-wide prom celebrating the 100th anniversary of Eden Prairie Schools, steady, well-executed articles on water usage, redevelopment at Eden Prairie Center, and city hall deliberations; and much more.

People who can identify reliable sources of information and filter through the "noise" of modern media have greater confidence to voice their opinions and enact positive change.

DEDICATED TEAM

EPLN has one full-time editor, Stuart Sudak, one part-time editor, Joanna Takes, two part-time beat reporters, Juliana Allen and Jim Bayer, and two contractors who manage our social media properties and our events calendar. The rest of the journalism team are freelancers, paid by the story or by the photograph. Together, our journalists represent extensive experience in community journalism.

All board members are volunteers. Led by Chair Nancy Tyra-Lukens and Vice Chair Carol Bomben, board members serve three-year terms with the option to renew for one additional term. This year, EPLN added two new directors and said goodbye to Vijay Dixit.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

EPLN has published more than 3,500 events in its website calendar since the organization's inception and has published more than 1,500 events in the last year alone. Carefully tended by EPLN contractor Amy Nylander, our calendar of events has become the place to go when you're looking for something fun and interesting to do in Eden Prairie, including an enhanced calendar of holiday events.

INVESTING IN THE COMMUNITY

Eden Prairie organizations and foundations are investing in great local journalism. As partners, we provide valuable information to the community to keep everyone informed.

PROMOTING DEMOCRACY

The 2024 Voter Guide was mailed to 37,000 households.

To build community and democracy in our community, EPLN increased the number of Voter Guides sent in 2024 by 11,000 to include all of Eden Prairie and residents in south Minnetonka. The Voter Guide helps inform all voters about local candidates and their positions. Through a partnership with Associated Press, we've supplemented our local election coverage with broader coverage of this year's national election.

EPLN also covered the primaries, and candidate forums sponsored by the local chapter of the League of Women Voters.

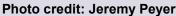


Photo by Jeff Strate



SPONSORING AI DIALOGUE

150 people registered for the town hall, held in the Performing Arts Center of Central Middle School, aimed to engage Eden Prairie community members in a discussion about the current and future impacts of artificial intelligence (AI). The event explored the potential for hope, harm, or hype through expert panel insights and audience participation.





CONNECTING BEYOND JOURNALISM

"EPLN is an important avenue for publicizing what is coming up and how the community can participate. From their well-written articles to the EPLN Community Calendar, this resident-run news outlet has been extremely valuable to our organization and the community and is a no-cost way to share our message. "

Terry Eggan, President of the Eden Prairie Lions Club.

"As a new volunteer organization dedicated to improving Eden Prairie's parks and trails, we are challenged to increase awareness of who we are and what we do. EPLN has been critically important in making Friends of Eden Prairie Parks' lift-off successful. We are truly grateful for their partnership and support to make our community a better place to live."



Joe Zweber, Park Steward, Coordinator and Board Member of Friends of Eden Prairie Parks



Your idea to hold a focus group to discuss emerging and current needs within our Eden Prairie School District, and provide that feedback to our \$100,000 Grant Selection Committee, was brilliant! The ideas that were generated seemed to address needs that reach across the entire district, and will provide topics for discussion at many levels into the future."

Dr. Lisa Sisinni, Executive Director, the Foundation for Eden Prairie Schools

"I love what the team at Eden Prairie Local News is doing – we need more people coming together to create vital local news operations in our communities. This team has set a great example and I hope more communities follow their lead."

Steve Grove, CEO & Publisher, The Minnesota Star Tribune



AWARDS: EXCELLENCE IN JOURNALISM

Minnesota Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists awards

Eden Prairie Local News (EPLN) received seven awards in three categories from the Minnesota Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) in June. The Minnesota SPJ 2024 Page One Awards for work published during 2023 saw a total of 520 entries across more than 40 categories.







Olson's third-place entry consisted of three photos from stories published in 2023

Second place in the Story of the Year category for the Silent Struggles series, coming in behind the Star Tribune. Silent Struggles focused on teen suicide and mental health. The award is given for general excellence in any medium, covering a single story or news event. Jim Bayer, Juliana Allen, Stuart Sudak, Mark Weber, and Amy Nylander were recognized as contributors to the series.

EPLN photographers Jeremy Peyer and Rick Olson were both recognized in the Sports Photography

category, with Peyer taking first place and Olson third. News outlets of all sizes from across the state competed in this category, with no subdivision into smaller and larger organizations.

Peyer's first-place entry consisted of three photos that accompanied stories published in 2023: "Eagles fall to Edina; work to get back on track," "Eagles bounce back from







Peyer's first-place entry consisted of three photos that accompanied stories published in 2023

Maple Grove loss, survive Lakeville South," and "EPHS softball runs record to 8-5 with win over Wayzata."

Olson's third-place entry consisted of three photos that accompanied these stories published in 2023: "From Eden Prairie to the NFL, players come home to teach football and fun," "Eagles fly high over Buffalo to open new season," and "On to state: Eagles topple topranked Chaska in section title game."

EPLN also received first-place recognition for Headlines among print & online publications with a circulation of less than 50,000 or with a local or regional community focus.

National Nonprofit News awards

EPLN was a finalist in the Nonprofit News Awards (or INNYs) a national awards competition. Our series "Silent Struggles" on teen suicide and mental health, published in October and November 2023, was recognized as a finalist in the Community Champion division, which recognizes an organization that made a significant contribution to the well-being of its community through a journalism-centered project or service.

The award highlighted the work of Silent Struggles contributors Jim

Bayer (project lead), Juliana Allen, Stuart Sudak, Mark Weber, and Amy Nylander.

The 2024 Nonprofit News Awards received over 600 entries. EPLN editor Stuart Sudak attended the award ceremony at the National Center for Civil and Human Rights in Atlanta, Georgia, which was held in conjunction with the Online News

Association's annual conference.



EPLN staff Stuart Sudak, Juliana Allen, Amy Nylander, and Joanna Werch Takes display awards received for Headlines and Story of the Year for the Silent Struggles series. Photo by Rick Olson

BOARD LEADERS & STAFF

Officers



L-R Mark Weber, Secretary; Carol Bomben, Vice Chair; Steve Schewe, Publisher & CEO; Ben Hymans, CTO; Nancy Tyra-Lukens, Chair. Not present: Kelly Salwei, CFO

Board of Directors



L-R Charlie Crocker, Jeff Strate, Mark Weber, Carol Bomben, Steve Schewe, Ann Byrne, Ben Hymans, Nancy Tyra-Lukens, Rod Anderson, Frank Farrell. Not present: Vijay Dixit, Kelly Salwei, David Lindahl

Staff



Front L-R Babar Khan, Brianna Collett, Renee Rushdy, Robin Silverman; Middle Row L-R Rachel Engstrom, Amy Nylander, Lea Jacobson, Jeff Strate, Joanna Takes, Frank Farrell, Greg Olson, Rod Anderson; Back Row L-R Brad Canham, Mark Weber, Jim Bayer, Stuart Sudak.

Not present: Juliana Allen, Denise Beusen, Dennis Buster, Jody Carey, Vijay Dixit, Renee Fette, Mollee Francisco, Angelo Gentile, Tamia Hassan, Gretchen Haynes, Gillian Holte, Daniel Huss, Lyn Jerde, Pat Lavone, Mehri McLaughlin, Rick Olson, Jeremy Peyer, Jennifer Pitterle, Kelley Regan, Harini Senthilkumar, Amber Stoner, Mike Wilkinson. EPLN welcomes the contributions of other freelance journalists and photographers.

Photos by Rick Olson

Voter Guide Team



L-R Mark Weber, Carol Bomben, Jim Bayer, Lea Jacobson, Stuart Sudak. Nancy Tyra-Lukens, Ben Hymans, Joanna Takes, Greg Olson. Not present: Renee Fette

"Silent Struggles" Team



Silent Struggles: L-R Mark Weber, Jim Bayer, Amy Nylander, Stuart Sudak. Not present: Juliana Allen

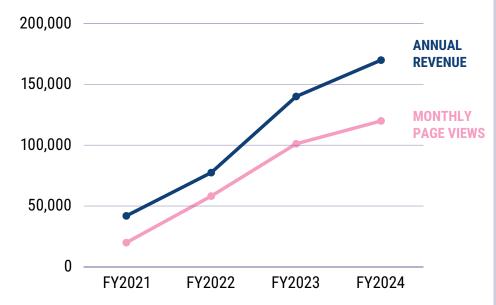
EPLNBY THE NUMBERS

What are the metrics that measure EPLN's effort to provide trustworthy, compelling news that's useful to residents? For a nonprofit news website like ours, it's the number of stories, donations, website page views, level of reader engagement, email newsletter subscribers, advertising, foundation grants, overall revenue, and more. Here are a few of the numbers that help show that EPLN is growing in size and advancing its mission:

1,112 stories were published by Eden Prairie Local News during the fiscal year from July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024, and the range of topics was wide. Here are the story categories that rose to the top of the list for FY2024:

- City of Eden Prairie (177)
- Sports (123)
- Schools (119)

- Community service (107)
- Public safety (89)
- Calendar events (1,577)



The top line shows dollar growth in revenue to EPLN over the past four fiscal years, July 1 through June 30. The bottom line shows growth in the EPLN website's average monthly page views.

"Net Promoter Score" shows exceptional reader satisfaction.

+19% subscriber growth.

3,336

Email subscribers as of June 30, 2024.

73%
Have lived in EP for more than 10 years.

91%

read us at least weekly; and have a higher level of education and discretionary income.

92%

Consider EPLN to be nonpartisan all or most of the time.

EPLN Reader Survey 2024 - 358 respondents (11% of subscribers).

FINANCIALS FROM FISCAL YEAR 2023-2024

An important responsibility for nonprofits like EPLN is to be accountable for the charitable contributions and grants from donors and foundations and to spend those dollars wisely. Below is our Financial Statement of Activity for July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024 compared to FY2023:

REVENUE:	2023	2024	% Change
Donations- Donations greater than \$999.99	\$ 25,000.00	\$ 37,111.00	48%
Donations \$100 to \$999.99	17,467.90	29,802.93	71%
Donations less than \$100	13,847.19	19,129.38	38%
Total Donations	56,315.09	86,043.31	53%
Total Bollations	30,313.03	00,040.01	33 /0
Grants	36,400.00	45,610.00	25%
Interest Income	37.35	23.88	(36%)
Newsbreak Revenue	93.42	-	, ,
Al Town Hall Revenue	-	4,387.51	
Ad Design Services	-	382.61	
Advertising & Sponsorships	47,244.49	38,721.01	(18%)
TOTAL REVENUE	140,090.35	175,168.32	25%
EXPENSES:			
Payroll	73,489.72	100,812.14	37%
Payroll Taxes	6,261.00	8,111.06	30%
Bank Charges	226.88	142.51	(37%)
Merchant Account Fees	1,243.68	1,639.40	32%
Quarterly Administration Fees	341.62	410.28	20%
Mailing	5,905.96	450.93	(92%)
Payroll Processing	720.45	840.35	17%
Legal	5,030.00	934.50	(81%)
Insurance	5,119.08	4,843.51	(5%)
Printing & Reproduction	14,632.17	294.00	(98%)
Design Services	2,450.00	1,400.00	(43%)
Stipends	25,329.00	29,142.50	15%
Sales Expense		14,960.99	
Office Supplies	488.02	467.66	(4%)
Storage Rent and Supplies	458.49	548.00	20%
Dues & Subscriptions	460.00	595.00	29%
Meetings & Training	761.56	1,941.01	155%
Shoptalk Conference	8,577.98	-	
Miscellaneous	-	540.00	/
Development	1,194.85	2,021.81	69%
Technology	3,007.22	2,980.89	(1%)
Minnesota and IRS Filing Fees	274.80	284.05	3%
TOTAL EXPENSES	<u>155,972.48</u>	<u>173,360.59</u>	11%
(EXPENSES IN EXCESS OF REVENUE)			

(EXPENSES IN EXCESS OF REVENUE)
REVENUE IN EXCESS OF EXPENSE

\$ (15,882.13) **\$ 1,807.73**

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

The statement of financial position is another term for the balance sheet. The statement lists the assets, liabilities, and equity of the organization on June 30, 2024, the final day of EPLN's most recent fiscal year and compared to FY2023:

ASSETS			
	2023	2024	% Change
CURRENT ASSETS:			
Checking - Security Bank & Trust	19,666.02	18,863.86	(4%)
Cash held by EP Comm. Foundation	<u>24,644.66</u>	<u>13,399.63</u>	(46%)
Total Cash	44,310.68	32,263.49	(27%)
Accounts Receivable	3,414.00	23,109.00	577%
Prepaid Insurance	<u>146.92</u>	<u>147.41</u>	0%
TOTAL ASSETS	<u>47,871.60</u>	<u>55,519.90</u>	16%
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS			
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS			
LIABILITIES:			
Accounts Payable	4,275.96	4,747.94	11%
Accounts Payable for MN Sales Tax	-	22.39	
Contract Liabilities	<u>3,222.00</u>	<u>8,568.20</u>	166%
Total Liabilities	<u>7,497.96</u>	<u>13,338.53</u>	78%
NET ACCETO.			
NET ASSETS:	50 OFF 77	44.070.04	(700/)
Unrestricted Net Assets, Beginning	56,255.77	11,873.64	(79%)
Restricted Net Assets*	45 000 40	28,500.00	(4440/)
Current Year Income (Loss)	<u>-15,882.13</u>	<u>1,807.73</u>	(111%)
Total Net Assets	40,373.64	<u>42,181.37</u>	4%
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	<u>47,871.60</u>	<u>55,519.90</u>	16%

\$20,000 from a Google News Initiative grant will be spent on audience development. \$5,000 from the Eden Prairie Community Foundation and \$3,500 from the local chapter of The League of Women Voters spent on the voter guide.

Impact of Individual Donations

Overall, slightly less than 50% of EPLN's support came from donations in FY2024. This philanthropic support makes local news sustainable, ensuring that Eden Prairie will continue to be one of the best and most informed small cities in America.

Total donors FY 2024: 528 Net new donors: 74

Total donors since EPLN's founding: 798 Average donation: \$162.96

^{*}Note on Restricted Net Assets in 2024 were from the following sources:

COMING UP: 2025



REPORT FOR AMERICA

EPLN has applied to become a host newsroom for Report for America, a national organization that recruits, places and supports early career journalists in local newsrooms around the U.S. Based on feedback from our readers, if we are chosen we will seek our first full-time reporter to cover the city, with an emphasis on new development, diversity, and the constant evolution of Eden Prairie's dynamic business community. By focusing on the "why" question to guide these stories, this reporter could provide insights that resonate with our current readers while also helping us connect with newer, more diverse audiences.

ADDING YOUNGER READERS

This summer, we received \$40,000 from the Google News Initiative, which we'll use in the coming year to further understand and develop younger cohorts of readers while continuing to serve our current readers and strengthen our outreach to donors, advertisers, and sponsors.

NEWSMATCH

This national fundraising match organized by the Institute for Nonprofit News has transformed public-service journalism. This year's NewsMatch campaign will be supplemented by a local match from the McKnight Foundation. We have set a goal to raise \$75,000 in November and December.

EPLN's fundraising campaign at the end of each calendar year has the word "NewsMatch" attached to it because NewsMatch is a national dollar-for-dollar, matching-funds program that doubles the impact of local donations each November and December. Up to \$20,000 could be matched by participating foundations. Newsmatch has helped transform how Eden Prairie residents support public-service journalism through EPLN. Please consider making a year-end donation that qualifies for this national match. EPLN also welcomes donations of appreciated stock

2025 & BEYOND

EPLN will continue to champion local voices, empower community journalism and shine a light on the "story of us" and the Eden Prairie community.

THANK YOU, EPLN DONORS

In accordance with nonprofit guidelines and public transparency, we share the names of donors to EPLN for the fiscal year starting July 1, 2022 and ending June 30, 2023. EPLN apologizes in advance for any errors or admissions. Our donors:

Anonymous Achartz, Thomas Ahmann, Marcelline Alberts, Mary Allen, Beth Altmann, Tim Anderson, Anna Anderson, Joan Anderson, Kelly Anderson, Michael Anderson, Rodney & Julane Andis, Glenn Andis, Jennifer Ar, Na Arnold, John & Barbara Asleson, Brian Autio, Wendy Avcota, Mark Aver, Jean Backes, Linda Bakker, Kristin Battista, Stephen & Mary

Baumer, Fred & Patricia

Baxter, Betty

Bayer, James

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Campbell, Wendy Canakes, Eileen Canham, Bradley Carlson, James Carey, Jody Carter, Ellen Chester-Jones, Ann Chisenhall, Patricia Christianson, Julie Cielecki, Mikel Clay, Barbara Clark, Susan Cole, Gretchen Cofer, Marvin & Wahletha Conley, Joyce Conrad, Curtis & Rita Conrad, Janet Constable, Lori Cook, John Cornell, Gregory Crist, Lynne Curry. Susan Winn Curtiss, Wynn C Cwodzinski, Steve & Patti Davidson, Craig Dempsey, Susan Desai, Riku Dixit, Vijay Doctor, Joe & Gretchen Doherty, Jeffrey Dolan, Collette

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Homes
Fox & Grouse
Godavari Restaurant
Gunnar Electric
Hair Restoration Institute of
Minnesota
Jardin Minnesota
Kim Ross for School Board
Committee
Kuubs Modern
Mediterranean Restaurant
Lab 651
League of Women Voters &

EPHM

Campbell, Robert M.

Legacy Gymnastics
Lions Tap
Lisa Toomey for City Council
Reelection Committee
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Suburban Chevrolet
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The Campaign Fund of
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The Waters Senior Living
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Washburn McReavy
Wild Birds Unlimited EP
Wooddale Church

(continued on next page)

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