

PUBLIC SAFETY HEROES

**Featuring deputies,
dispatchers, EMS,
firefighters and
officers serving
Steele County and
surrounding areas.**



**Produced by Steele County Times
May 2024**



BLOOMING PRAIRIE AMBULANCE

SERVICE: There are two ambulance units that service Blooming Prairie and the surrounding area. BP Ambulance is a Basic Life Support service. When needed, Advanced Life Support is available through Mayo Ambulance in Austin and Owatonna.

TRAINING: The ambulance crew meets every third Monday of the month for meeting and training.

AREA COVERED: The service covers the City of Blooming Prairie and surrounding rural townships. The coverage area is 144 square miles.

PERSONNEL: Tyler Wilson is the director of the ambulance service, which currently has 16 EMTs. Applications for new EMTs or first responders are welcome.

CALLS: The BP Ambulance crews responded to 299 emergency medical calls in 2023, down slightly from the previous year.

SPECIAL NOTES: They also provided training and outreach to the Blooming

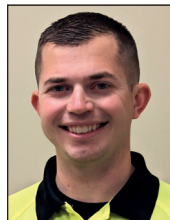
Prairie community, including CPR training to Pine Springs Pool lifeguards as well as BPHS sophomores, now a requirement for graduation; blood pressure checks; ambulance support at the Blooming Prairie Fourth of July celebration, BPHS football games, National Night Out and other local events; and has a ride-along program for EMT candidates.

In addition to those services, the crew members provide EMS education to third graders at Blooming Prairie Elementary School and local Scout groups.

Blooming Prairie Ambulance has 16 active members, but the service would like to add more to the ranks. Applications for new EMTs/first responders are available at the Blooming Prairie City Center.



Paula Abbe (15)



Dan Peach (9)



Kathy Pillar (15)



Jeremy Halverson (14)



Isreal Wacek (7)



Karissa Fawver (6)



Tyler Wilson (3)



Laura Coughlin (3)



Angie Laskewitz (3)



Miranda Camery (1)



Chris Slater (new)



Rick Hansen (28)



Jay Iverson (28)



Jacob Peterson (22)



Jessica Kremer (18)



Nick Nelson (17)

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Free Food & Fun: Enjoy a complimentary meal, bounce houses, games, and activities for all ages!

Meet the Heroes: Get to know your local EMTs and First Responders.

Ambulance Showcase: Tour our ambulance garage and see our brand new ambulance with a powerlift up close.

Special Guest: Witness the latest technology with a demonstration by Stryker.

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Become Part of the Team: Learn how you can make a difference as an EMT or First Responder.

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BLOOMING PRAIRIE POLICE





Chief Greg Skillestad



Officer Dan Peach

MISSION: The Blooming Prairie Police Department is dedicated to protection of the city, as well as loyalty to the community.

PERSONNEL: Police chief and several full and part-time officers: Chief Greg Skillestad, officers Dan Peach, Aaron Friesen, Brad Busho, Joseph Martin, Nathan Taarud, Rick Ellingson and Travis Belich.

SQUAD FLEET: The department has three fully equipped Ford Explorers. Each squad includes a traffic radar, audio/visual camera system, AED for cardiac arrest emergencies and a laptop computer connected to dispatch to better assist on traffic stops and emergency calls.

NUMBER OF CALLS: In 2023, the department handled 3,613 incidents in Blooming Prairie, up from 3,460 the previous year. In comparison, there were 1,707 incidents in 2014. Here are the major calls for service that officers handled in 2023:

- 1,361 traffic stops
- 138 ordinance violations
- 76 animal calls
- 51 suspicious activity incidents
- 44 welfare checks
- 36 domestics/fights
- 31 DWI arrests
- 17 vehicle crashes
- 14 juvenile complaints
- 13 thefts
- 11 frauds
- 9 harassments
- 8 restraining order violations
- 7 unwanted persons
- 6 burglaries
- 4 criminal sexual conduct incidents
- 4 drug activity incidents

COVERAGE: In addition to patrolling the streets of Blooming Prairie, the department routinely assists Steele, Dodge, Mower and Freeborn counties. The department also covers for the Minnesota State Patrol. Blooming Prairie has police coverage 24 hours a day seven days a week.



Officer Aaron Friesen



Officer Brad Busho



Officer Joseph Martin



Officer Nathan Taarud



Officer Rick Ellingson



Officer Travis Belich

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UNIQUE CONNECTION

Father, son share law enforcement bond

BY JONI HUBRED
NEWS EDITOR

When Jacob Holm joined the Steele County Sheriff's Office in January, he'd known one of his co-workers a bit longer than the others.

All of his life, in fact.

Jacob is the second member of his family to wear the county badge. His father, Mark, had signed on part-time about a year ago; he had retired in 2019, after 31 years with the Minnesota State Patrol.

"Over the last several years, job openings in law enforcement have been hard to fill," Mark Holm said. "The opportunity presented itself last year to come back and help out."

He started his career as a Cannon Falls Police officer, after graduating from Alexandria Technical & Community College, then moved on to the State Patrol. Sixteen of those years were spent in Steele County.

His partner in Cannon Falls, he said, moved to Dakota County and was later killed by a drunk driver. Last month, a stretch of Hwy. 68 from Hwy. 316 east to the Dakota County line in Ravenna Township was named in

See **FATHER, SON** on 15 ►



STAFF PHOTO BY JONI HUBRED

About a year after Mark Holm, pictured left, joined the Steele County Sheriff's Office part-time, his son, Jacob, was sworn as a full-time deputy.



Wide net reels in potential new BP EMTs

BY KAY FATE
STAFF WRITER

Dan Peach wears many hats in Blooming Prairie and beyond, but he's earned another one: successful marketer.

A BP police officer and an emergency medical technician on the BP Ambulance service, Peach was dealing with an issue familiar to small – and not-so-small – emergency rescue services.

The state is facing a shortage of nearly 3,000 EMS workers, most notably in greater Minnesota, and it's nothing new. A 2002 report by the Minnesota Department of Health called the problems facing rural ambulance services “a quiet crisis.”

With 16 people – all volunteers, most of whom work a regular job – staffing a 24-7 operation, Peach knew they needed help.

“Small-town services are important,” he said.

“We need to look out for one another, and make sure we never get to the point” of having to depend on an ambulance that has to come from Owatonna or Austin, which are also seeing staffing issues.

A few years ago, Peach attended a marketing conference, which discussed the value of mass-mailing.

He gave it a try last year at B to Z Hardware, advertising the bounce houses available for rent at the local business – and rentals jumped.

“Small town services are important.”

Dan Peach
BP Ambulance EMT

“Seeing how well that worked,” he said, “I thought, ‘what if we tried that for the ambulance service?’ So we did.”

Mailers seeking volunteers for the BP Ambulance service went out at the end of February.

Peach has received seven applications back,

including “one who joined immediately, because he was already first-responder certified, so that was awesome,” he said. “He’s been on some calls already.”

They have interviewed three people who are interested in becoming

See **BP EMTs** on 15 ►

BP AMBULANCE OPEN HOUSE

- Tuesday, May 21 from 4-7 p.m.
- Ambulance garage- 501 Fourth St. SE., Blooming Prairie
- Local EMTs and first responders will be on hand
- Free food, bounce houses, games and activities, tours of garage and ambulance
- Information about volunteering
- Door prizes given out

Ellendale Fire plays host to first county-wide training



BY KAY FATE
STAFF WRITER

Taking a page from its neighbors to the south, the Ellendale Fire Department organized and hosted a county-wide training event.

“Freeborn County does quite a bit of county-wide training,” said EFD Chief Logan Busho, “but they have 15 departments, and we just have four,” making it a bit more manageable.

The event was held May 11 in Ellendale and focused on structure fires. It featured a trailer – think shipping container material – with an actual roof set up, and walls inside that could be reformatted.

“From one revolution to another, the room can be completely different,” Busho said.

“You have to actually start with the truck, set the truck up, vent the roof, extinguish the fire,” he said of the training. “We do it in teams and kind of have to work through the whole call as if it were a real call.”

EFD’s training officer Nolan McGowan, who

facilitated the training, reserved the trailer about six months ago.

“The specialty training props fill up pretty fast,” Busho said, “so Nolan plans our training a year in advance. He wants to have the whole year’s training planned out before we get to Jan. 1.”

McGowan, he said, “has done really well with training for our department the last few years. He’s like a kid on Christmas – he lives for this stuff. He should probably be a paid firefighter somewhere, but I think he’s afraid that if he did, he’d lose the love he’s got for it.”

Has Busho ever had a training officer that efficient?

“Absolutely not,” he said.

In fact, they’ve had the opposite, “where we say we’re going to work on hoses (training), and the guys come in and talk about the Vikings and leave,” Busho said.

Those days are long gone, as evidenced by the preparation required for the inaugural county-wide training that involved all members of

the Blooming Prairie, Ellendale, Medford, and Owatonna departments.

“About seven years ago, the chiefs of Medford and Blooming Prairie started up county-wide officers’ meetings again,” Busho said. “We got to know a lot of the officers, but on some of these bigger calls – like some of these hog barns or the Waseca grass fire (in February) – we’re all going to work together on stuff like that.

“If we can get to know some of the (crews) a little better, make sure we’re at the same level of training, it’ll make things a lot smoother,” he said.

This will be the only county-wide training Ellendale will host this year because of the expense involved.

“We’re hoping that if we start it this year, another department would host it next year,” Busho said. “We can run through some other things, like water rescue.”

The training is vital, of course, but so is the rapport, he said.

“Some of these calls, you’re trusting your life in somebody else’s hands.”

“If we can get to know some of the (crews) a little better, make sure we’re at the same level of training, it’ll make things a lot smoother.”

Logan Busho
Ellendale Fire Chief

Medford Fire changes leaders, but not course

BY KAY FATE
STAFF WRITER

In one respect, it was a year with significant change for the Medford Fire Department.

In another respect, it was business as usual.

Longtime fire chief Rick Hager stepped down from the position in December 2023. The role now belongs to former Medford City Councilor Craig Helgeson; he just completed his first year on the council.

His peers selected him as the best successor to Hager. Members of the city council approved that recommendation at their November meeting, with Helgeson abstaining.

It was then Helgeson's turn to step down; he resigned from his spot on the council, effective Dec. 31.

The city council appoints the fire chief each January, upon a recommendation from the fire department and its crew.

For the last 27 years, it had been Hager. His original plan was to step down in 2022, but he didn't want to be a distraction to a new batch of firefighters who were just beginning their training.

It wasn't a retirement, however. Hager has remained on the department to assist in the transition of leadership. He has also retained another essential role, that of emergency management director for Medford.

Three "very good candidates" were in the running, Hager told the council before making the recommendation for the new chief, but the consensus from the firefighters was Helgeson.



Members of the Medford Fire Department train for any kind of situation, from scenarios where water isn't readily available, necessitating the use of collapsible water tanks – to rescues from water, in all kinds of weather.





BLOOMING PRAIRIE FIRE

TRAINING: The second Monday of every month is a business meeting and the fourth is a training session where fire department members learn skills such as: rope rescue, CPR, propane and LP burn rescue and confined space rescue.

CALLS: There were 82 emergency calls in 2023, down slightly from the previous year. Among the calls were:

- 24 fires, including structures, vehicles, grass, brush and crops
- 31 rescues, including extrication and medical assists
- 10 hazardous conditions, including gas spills,

leaks, CO calls, chemical-related incidents

- 10 good intent calls – cancelled en route or were legal burns
- 5 false alarm calls

AREA COVERED:

Bloomington Fire covers 187 sections, or 187 square miles. It provides service into four counties: Steele, Dodge, Mower and Freeborn. Between the counties, nine townships are covered: Aurora, Bloomington, Somerset, Summit, Ripley, Westfield, Udolpho, Moscow and Newry.

FIRE OFFICERS:

Chief Dean Naatz, 1st Assistant Mike Ingvalson, 2nd Assistant Justin



Members of the Bloomington Fire Department include, front row, from left: Bruce Erath, Andy Kasperek, Mike Studer, Isreal Wacek, Jared Brown, Mike Trom, Dean Naatz, Jake Peterson, John Lurken, Bryce Schlichter and Justin Krell; back row: Ryan Hensel, Mark Dekok, Josh Toquam, Lee Peterson, Jay Iverson, Del Peterson, Jake Lembke, Lee Holtberg, Dave Wradislavsky, Matt Madsen and Jacob Gross. Not pictured: Rick Hansen, Mike Hoffman, Mike Ingvalson, Matt Kittelson, Dan Miner and Jeremy Wangen.

Krell, Rescue Captain Bryce Schlichter, Assistant Rescue Captain Matt Madsen, Fire Marshall Josh Toquam, Assistant

Fire Marshall Ryan Hensel, Training Officer Lee Holtberg and Assistant Training Officer Mark DeKok. Other officers:

Mike Trom, president; David Wradislavsky, vice president and Matt Kittelson, secretary/treasurer.

SPECIAL NOTES: Chief Naatz reports that the department is “sitting good on members” with 28 firefighters.

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ELLENDALE-GENEVA AMBULANCE



Members of the Ellendale-Geneva Ambulance service include from left: Wyatt Grose, Greg Bartsch, Mike Johnson, Al Beenken, Tyler Peterson, Jon Warnke, Lonnie Bartsch, Travis Broskoff and Curt Boswell. Not pictured: first responders Jon Bartsch and Justin Stieglbauer of Geneva.

MISSION: To provide a vital public safety service.

SPECIAL NOTE: Members of the Ellendale Fire Department also respond to calls for the ambulance service. More than a dozen people recently signed up to take first responder classes to volunteer on the EG Ambulance, adding

a much-needed boost to crew numbers. The course began earlier this month.

SERVICE AREA: The department covers five townships: Berlin, Summit, Geneva, Bath and Le Mond as well as the cities of Ellendale and Geneva in Steele and Freeborn counties.

CREW: Formed and operated by a Joint Powers Board, Greg Bartsch is the director of the Ellendale-Geneva Ambulance service. There are two ambulance rigs with one based out of Ellendale and the other in Geneva. Ellendale Ambulance has been serving the area for 67 years.

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GENEVA FIRE DEPARTMENT



Volunteers on the Geneva Fire Department include, from left: Travis Broskoff, Mike Johnson, Wyatt Grose, Al Beenken, David Thompson, Tyler Peterson, Curt Boswell, Jon Warnke, Lonnie Bartsch and Greg Bartsch. Not pictured are Steve Bailey, Jon Bartsch, Jim Beenken, Garry Gordinier, Justin Stieglbauer, Shannon Wobschall and Taff Worrell.

HOMETOWN HEROES
deserve our continued support and trust.

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Senator Gene Dornink
District 23

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ELLENDALE FIRE



Members of the Ellendale Fire Department stop for a photo after a recent evening of training. Front, from left: Kyle Powers, Josh Burgess, Tyler McGowan, Jeff Schultz, Travis Ladwig, Jordan Rosacker, Charlie Spinler, Frank Altrichter, Derek Strohschein and David Modder; sitting on the car in the back: Josh Otto, Nolan McGowan and Brian Flatland. Not pictured: Rick Johnson, Pat Kruger, Joel Adams, Shawn Larson, Allison Muillenberg, Jennelle Olson and Logan Busho.

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10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

CALLS: Ellendale Fire responded to 173 emergency calls in 2023, up slightly from 167 the previous year. The department assists Ellendale Ambulance with medical emergencies. The department also responds to grass fires, car crashes and structure fires.

TRAINING: Meeting the first Monday of every month for training

sessions, the department stays up to date and ready to help.

COVERAGE: The department covers the city of Ellendale, 2 miles south, 6 miles west and 4 miles east. To the north, Ellendale covers 1 mile north of Hope.

PERSONNEL: Chief Logan Busho, Assistant Chief Patrick Kruger, secretary/treasurer

Tyler McGowan, training captain Nolan McGowan, safety captain Derek Strohschein, captain engineer Frank Altrichter and lieutenant Travis Ladwig.

SPECIAL NOTES: Chief Logan Busho said the department currently has one opening. It's still working on the process of building a new firehall with assistance from the USDA.

MEDFORD FIRE DEPARTMENT



Members of the Medford Fire Department include Tim Amberg, John Anhorn, Trevor Davis, Chris Ditlevson, Dakota Ellingson, Rick Ellingson, Ben Finholdt, Eric Findholdt, Nick Goodnature, Darren Hagen, Brad Hager, Rick Hager, Matthias Heinrichs, Chief Craig Helgeson, Rich Kucera, JJ Lawson, Ben Maas, Kelly Markham, Matt Mullenbach, Bo Noble, Tavis Nowak, Mike Prondzinski, Mark Ristau, Greg Sanborn, Alex Schwartz, Dan Simon and Mike Smith.

OFFICERS: Chief Craig Helgeson, Assistant Chief Greg Sanborn and commanders John Anhorn, Rich Kucera and Mike Smith. Rick Hager is the emergency management coordinator.

HISTORY: The volunteer department began in 1939. Medford's first fire truck was equipped with a 300-gallon tank, roof ladder and extension ladder, two hand hooks and a pump with a capacity

of 200-gallons-per-minute. The first fire hall was built in 1954.

FLEET: The department consists of three pumpers, two tankers and a personnel carrier.

COVERAGE AREA: The department provides fire service for 1,300 people in Medford as well as Medford Township and 18 sections of Deerfield Township.

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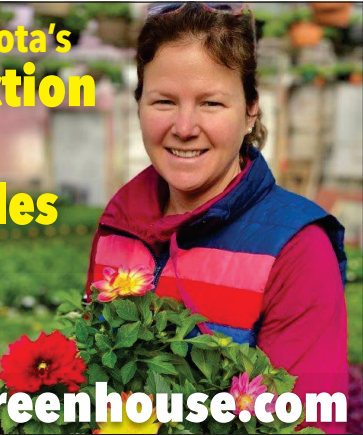
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OWATONNA FIRE DEPARTMENT

STRUCTURE: Owatonna Fire is a combination of full-time firefighter, resident firefighters and paid on-call firefighters. The minimum staffing is one fire commander and one fire equipment operator.

COVERAGE: City of Owatonna, population 25,641; Steele County townships, 3,627; townships: Clinton Falls, Deerfield, Havana, Lemond, Meridan, Merton, Owatonna and Somerset.

MISSION: To save lives and property in a safe and efficient manner.

VISION: To be trusted and respected by all members of our community in

saving lives and property.

CALL VOLUME: In 2023, the Owatonna Fire Department received a total of 523 emergency calls. They responded to 444 city incidents, 77 in rural areas, and provided mutual aid services in two incidents. Of those calls, 55 were for fires, 91 for rescue, and 67 were to clear hazardous conditions. The department also responded to 31 service calls, 108 "good intent" calls, and 167 fire alarms. Firefighters also provide inspection services and fire safety information, tours, and demos to hundreds of people each year.



PHOTO COURTESY SHOT IN THE DARK STUDIO

Members of the Owatonna Fire Department include: back row, from left: Justin Brown, Nic Thamert, Willie Grubish, Tore Osland, Anthony Kozelka, Mitch Terpstra, Ben Hanson, Austin Haverkost, Tyler Brase, Jacob Hines, Matt Halverson, Arik Brase, Charlie Seykora, Ryan Seykora and Ben Staska; front row: Chief Ed Hoffman, Bob Hager, Dan Hed, Tony Ringhofer, Jeff Boland, Miguel Chacon, Dakota Gaffke, Jason Karsten, Kevin Kreiner, Noah Tesch, Madelyn Seykora, Leila Kath, Brooke Radel, Brody Dalland and Bonnie Hermel.



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Jeffrey Mundale



Captain
Josh Sorensen



Captain
Andy Drenth



Sgt. Tracy
DuChene



Sgt. Matt
Oeltjenbruns



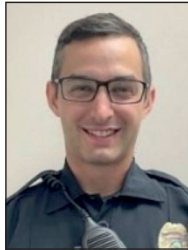
Sgt. Joel
Hunt



Officer Steven
Bowman



Officer
Joshua Lee



Officer Matthew
Lounsbury

MISSION: “All members of the Owatonna Police Department are dedicated to providing a safe and secure community through partnerships, leadership and an unwavering commitment to excellence. Policing excellence through our people, our work and our relationships.”

AREA COVERED: Owatonna Police covers the 25,641 people of Owatonna. It is an area of about 14.62 square miles in Owatonna Township. The department handles around 40,000 calls per year.

2023 INCIDENTS: The police department

handled 42,472 incidents in 2023. Here is a breakdown of specific types of calls:

- Traffic Stops: 4,873
- Animal Control: 2,205
- Citations: 1,285
- Assaults: 175
- Shoplifting: 117
- Thefts: 106
- DWI Arrests: 93
- Vandalism: 70
- Disorderly Conduct: 31
- Burglaries: 30
- Liquor Law Violations: 24
- Weapon Violations: 21
- Rape: 15
- Arson: 2
- Murder: 1

ADMINISTRATION: Chief Jeff Mundale, Captains Josh Sorensen and Andy Drenth

POLICE STAFF: Sergeants—Jason Petterson, Tracy DuChene, Jason Matejcek, Zack Schumacher, Benjamin Johnson, Valerie Satre, Matt Oeltjenbruns and Joel Hunt.

Detectives—Christian Berg, Brady Vaith, Travis Ardolf, Derrik Quinlan and John Van Alstine

Patrol Officers—Steven Bowman, Andrew Van Osdale, Melissa Michael, Alan Callahan, Alexandra Vogel, Casey Martin with K-9 Vegas, Anna Martin, Luke Selvik, Travis Johnson, Joshua Lee, Zachary Plein, Jeremy Katz, Anthony Malepsy, Kyle Martin, Matthew Lounsbury, Madison Ziegler, Matthew

Tomsche, Darrin Helget and Julia Hansen.

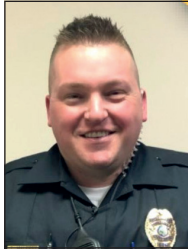
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SUPPORT STAFF: Kimberly Dub, Pam Roberts and Wendy Gasner.

CHAPLAINS: Brent Carlson and Loren Olson.

RESERVE OFFICERS: Michael Leyva, Steve Wrede, Dietrich Piepho, Alex Stenzel, Don McCann and Dakota DuChene.

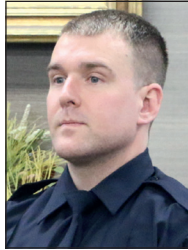
RECORDS STAFF: Kate Schroeder, Renee Babcock, Rebecca Melchert and Kindra Tapp.



Officer Anthony
Malepsy



Officer
Casey Martin



Officer Matthew
Tomsche



Detective
Christian Berg



Officer
Darrin Helget



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Sgt. Valerie Satre and Sgt. Ben Johnson



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RICE STEELE 911 CENTER

The Rice Steele 911 Center is in its 24th year of existence. Brian Becker has been the administrator of the center since February 2023. The agency provides public safety communications, mobile data computer service and records management support for all law enforcement, fire departments and emergency medical services in both counties.

MISSION: We are dedicated to providing quality communications for the Public and Public Safety Agencies. The Center will serve as the vital link between the public and Public Safety organizations through responsiveness and technical excellence while in partnership with our users and employees.

ADMINISTRATION: Administrator Brian Becker, GIS coordinator Justin Fuchs, office manager Nikki Hable and shift supervisors Matt Collins, Derrek Matson and John Wunderlich. Jennifer Colby is the public safety manager.

TELECOMMUNICATORS: Amanda Rothbauer, Christina Conati, Katie Twaddle, Kelsy Wright, Kirk Oswald, Lisa DeRaad, Lynai Torabpour, Norma Hoffmaster, Stacey LaPlount, Tim Siebsen, Sara Weed, Jennifer Garza, Kelsey Neumaier, Amber Bolte, Megan Franklin, Alexia Gentz, Cori Kennedy, Marah Ryks, Atlanta Shilts and Jennifer Wallace.

AREA: Rice and Steele counties have a combined population of about 101,500. The center provides dispatching services for the following:

• **Law enforcement-** Rice County Sheriff, Steele County Sheriff and police departments: Blooming Prairie, Owatonna, Faribault, Northfield, Lonsdale and Dundas.

• **Fire-** Blooming Prairie, Faribault, Lonsdale, Northfield, Nerstrand, Ellendale, Morristown, Medford and Owatonna.

• **EMS-** Blooming Prairie Ambulance, Ellendale Ambulance, Mayo Ambulance, North Ambulance and Northfield Ambulance.

CALL VOLUME: In 2023, the 911 Center had a total of 116,237 emergency and non-emergency phone calls, a drop of almost 80,000 calls from the previous year. The center's busiest hour of the day is 3 p.m. with Wednesday being the busiest day of the week. The busiest hours in the center are 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. The busiest month of the year is August.

The Owatonna Police Department produces the most calls for the center. The center handled 9,901 medical emergencies in 2023. Mayo Ambulance (based in Owatonna) had the most EMS calls followed by North Ambulance (based in Faribault). The busiest fire department was Faribault.



Brian Becker



Amanda Rothbauer



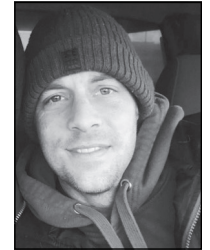
Christina Conati



Derrek Matson



John Wunderlich



Justin Fuchs



Katie Twaddle



Kelsy Wright



Kirk Oswald



Lisa DeRaad



Lynai Torabpour



Matt Collins



Nikki Hable



Norma Hoffmaster



Stacey LaPlount



Tim Siebsen



Sara Weed



Jennifer Garza



Kelsey Neumaier



Amber Bolte



Jennifer Colby



Megan Franklin



Alexia Gentz



Cori Kennedy



Marah Ryks



Atlanta Shilts



Jennifer Wallace

Father, son share law enforcement bond

◀ **FATHER, SON** from 4 honor of Deputy Luther Klug, who died on July 15, 1996. He was 36 years old.

"We were pretty close. I didn't have any brothers growing up," Mark said, adding that he has seen other officers killed in shootings and car crashes. "That's a tough part of the job."

Both Holm boys—Jacob and his brother, Isaac—graduated from Medford High School and are in law enforcement. Isaac serves in LeSueur County. But Jacob didn't start out on that path.

"I went to school for business," he said. "I made it about half-way through when I realized I wanted to be in the outdoors. It's kind of second nature."

After the course correction, Jacob was first hired in 2018 by Faribault, where he worked for five years before moving to Steele County.

"One of the investigators, Matt Borash, is a very good friend," he said. "It gets me closer to home."

Jacob said the best part of his job—besides being outdoors—is being able to help people.

"When you get to see the work you do, it just makes you feel a lot better about what you're doing," he said.

Still, it can be a little nerve wracking to have a family member in law enforcement, especially these days.

"Their mom thinks about it more than I do," Mark said. "I do, but having worked it for so long,

I understand the pitfalls and the dangers. They do a good job of taking care of themselves and their partners."

"There's less respect for the job than when I started training," he added, though he believes that comes from a minority of people. Also, the lack of respect extends to other positions of authority, like teachers and even parents.

"People are generally supportive," Mark said. "They will come up in a restaurant and say 'thank you for your service.'"

Jacob Holm believes the atmosphere has changed even in just the five-plus years he has served.

"You only hear about the small groups on the news," he said. "You don't hear about people coming up and thanking you."

The Holms have been on several calls together—and have slightly different reviews of the experience. Jacob called it "interesting," but his dad has clearly enjoyed those times.

"It's been fun to work together," he said. "I coached their teams growing up, took them hunting. It does add a different dimension."

"It makes it easy on calls, because we know each other so well," Jacob said. "If we go on calls (together), I know he'll make a good decision."

"As a dad, you get to make all the decision any way, don't you?" Mark quipped.

"It is nice when he has to call me with a question,"



PHOTO FROM BEHIND THE STEELE STAR

Steele County Sheriff's Office deputy Mark Holm had the unexpected honor of pinning a badge on his son's uniform shirt earlier this year. Jacob Holm joined the department in January.

"It is a very rewarding job. You get to help people on good and bad days."

Mark Holm

Sheriff's Deputy

Jacob said, grinning.

Both father and son recommend that anyone with an interest in law enforcement arrange a ride-along to see what the work is really like.

"It is a very rewarding

job," Mark said. "You get to help people on good and bad days. There's not a lot of jobs that have that and allow the freedom to do your job and be outside and interact with a lot of different people."

Wide net reels in potential new BP EMTs

◀ **BP EMTS** from 5 EMTs; the next one-semester course begins in late August at Riverland Community College.

"We have three more applicants that we still need to schedule interviews with, and gauge interest," said Peach, who is pleased with the response.

"I had zero idea how many applicants we'd get; I thought 10 would be awesome," he said. "I think we'll still be getting more."

Another surprise was the interest shown in becoming an EMT.

"I thought we'd have more (wanting to be) first responders," Peach said, because it's a smaller commitment, education-wise, "so this is huge."

Until recently, the ambulance was required to have two EMTs on board to legally transport a patient. That has changed to one EMT and one first responder.

Becoming a first responder, Peach said, "is a great way to see if they like it, or if they don't have the time to be an EMT, to maybe come onboard later."

The city will pay for first responder and EMT certification, as well as mileage to and from where the course is held. Volunteers will

be reimbursed for the cost of the final board test.

What better opportunity for people who "said it's been on their mind for a while," Peach said of the offer. "They saw the mailer and decided to go for it. Everything is 100% paid for."

Despite the success of the mailer, the search for more crew members continues.

"If we could get 10 onboard – if we could be in the 20-plus mark..." Peach said.

There are currently 16 EMTs and one first responder available – but not always.

"Everyone has their full-time job," he said. "We always say, 'God comes first, then family, then your real job, then the ambulance service. It's a volunteer position. You can't survive on volunteering.'"

The recruiting will be ongoing, "because we need to keep planning for the future," Peach said, as some members look toward retiring after 10 or 20 years.

He's had a banner made, and will move it around town to various events "to keep reminding people. The more people, the better," he said.

"We'll never turn anyone down."



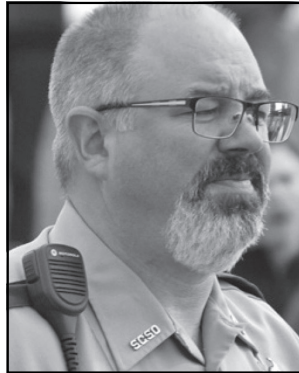
STEELE COUNTY SHERIFF



Sheriff Lon Thiele



Chief Deputy Scott Hanson



Sgt. Bill Youngquist



Sgt. Chad Forystek



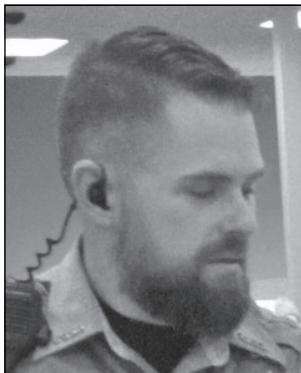
Sgt. Mike Smith



Sgt. Andy Seifert



Deputy Caleb Buck



Deputy Sean Robbins



Deputy Mark Holm



Deputy Jake Holm



Investigator Matt Borash



Investigator Kari Woltman

AREA: The sheriff's office serves a population of about 37,406 people and 432 square miles. There are six cities in the county, including Owatonna, Medford, Ellendale, Meriden, Hope and Blooming Prairie. The county is divided into 13 townships.

2023 INCIDENTS: The sheriff's office handled 19,897 incidents throughout 2022, up about 2,000 from the previous year. Of those, 2,570 were traffic stops, 81 child abuse/protection reports, 49 DWI arrests, 47 thefts, 19 burglaries and 10 assaults.

MISSION: The sheriff's office is dedicated to

protect and serve the citizens of Steele County and support their quality of life. The office coordinates the efforts of emergency and support services to provide the highest level of responsiveness possible. Deputies also hold themselves accountable for their actions and take pride in a professional level of service and fairness to all.

SHERIFF: Lon Thiele is in his fourth term as Steele County's chief law enforcement officer. His office is responsible for protecting citizens throughout the county, including the commu-

nities of Medford and Ellendale, which contract through his office for police protection. In addition to protecting and serving citizens, he supervises sheriff's office personnel, detention center, special deputies, mounted posse, water patrol and courthouse security.

Thiele was first elected to the sheriff's position in November 2010 and re-elected in 2014, 2018 and 2022. His current term expires in 2025.

ADMINISTRATION: Sheriff Lon Thiele, chief deputy Scott Hanson and administrative assistant

Karen Meier and support staff Jane Christenson.

SERGEANTS: Chad Forystek, Andy Seifert, Mike Smith and Bill Youngquist.

SHERIFF'S DEPUTIES: Matt Borash (investigator), Caleb Buck, Ben Frear, Jeffrey Gunther, Rachel Heinrichs, Jake Holm, Mark Holm, Josh Horejsi, Jake Miller, Adam Rector, Sean Robbins, Chad Schlueter, Jayson Teichroew, Madilyn Trupe, Jeremy Wiste and Kari Woltman (investigator).

COURT BAILIFFS: Jim Holton, Jake Miller and Jayson Teichroew

JURY ATTENDANTS: Julie Harriman, Pamela Kirchner, Sharon Kubicek and Kay Oberle.

RECORDS: Renee Babcock, Rebecca Melchert and Kate Schroeder (supervisor).

DETENTION CENTER: Anthony Buttera, administrator; Paul Prissel, assistant administrator; Greg Huebbe, training and programs; Kevin Kozel, Jed Loftus, Joyce Prusha and Jesse Steneman, sergeants; Michelle Bromley, Seth Hummel, Brian Rinehart and Linda Skala, corporals; Dawn Grunklee, programs assistant; Leah

Kent, nurse; Whitney Hanson, public health nurse; John Anderson, Travis Avelar, Katelin Bahl, Mason Droog, Gina Felstead, Sean Grivette, Jessica Guggisberg, Matthew Gwin, Katya Krueger, Rachel Kuriger, Brianna Reese, Kimberly Saenz Juarez, Steve Schulz, Anthony Solseth, Christian Villafane and Michael Witter, correctional officers; De Vonwald, George Devinny, Joel Jandt, Andy Nelson, Jeff Ratzloff and Matt Summer, transport officers; and Nancy Gjerald and Lisa Risch, support staff.

STEELE COUNTY SHERIFF



Steve Wrede



Samantha Austin

SPECIAL DEPUTIES: Coordinator Wyonne Priebe, Sgt. Lewis Luedtke, Mary Delzer, Grant Duffy, Gene Fisher, Paul Hanson, Dennie Himle, Jeff Kirchner, Gene Linse, Mike Meyer, Scott Prestegard, Barbara Stendel, Jeff Stendel, Mike Urch, Steve Wrede and Samantha Austin.

MOUNTED POSSE: Capt. Tony Schwering, 1st Lt. Mary Purfeerst, 2nd Lt. Anna Schultz, Warrant Officer Becky Schwering, Sgt. of Arms Tom Hager, Joe Schwering, past captain, Michelle Darrah, Brittania



Members of the Steele County Special Deputies include, front from left: Dennie Himle, Mary Delzer, Paul Hanson, Lewis Luedtke and Grant Duffy; back: Mike Meyer, Gene Linse, Wyonne Priebe, coordinator, and Jeff Kirschner.



Barb Stendel

Eklund, Melissa Foster, John Gerold, Josh Horejsi, Susan Jackson, Megan Jensen, Dolly Jones, Kay Klemmer, Bob Malecha, Jill Malecha, Duane Peltz, Jordan Skelton and Tanner Wesely.



Other special deputies include, from left: Scott Prestegard, Mike Urch, Gene Fisher and Jeff Stendel.



MAYO AMBULANCE- OWATONNA

LOCATION: Mayo Clinic Ambulance Service serves Owatonna, Albert Lea, Austin, Duluth, Fairmont, Litchfield, Little Falls, Mankato, Plainview, Rochester and St. Cloud. In Owatonna, the service is based at 1005 S. Cedar Ave.

COVERAGE: Mayo Clinic Ambulance provides ground and air medical transport services throughout Minnesota and Wisconsin. The ground ambulances provide advanced life support

with paramedics and emergency medical technicians. There are more than 70 ambulances in the Mayo network.

CALL VOLUME: Mayo ambulances respond to more than 70,000 emergency calls for service each year. The local service responds to approximately 5,000 calls each year throughout Steele County with the exception of Ellendale and Blooming Prairie, unless needed for mutual aid.

HISTORY: On April 1, 2019, Mayo Clinic took over Gold Cross Ambulance, which had been part of Mayo Clinic since 1994.

CREW: With a roster of 24, the ambulance service has three daytime crews and two nighttime crews, with two people on each crew. There are four rigs based in Owatonna.

PERSONNEL: Supervisor: Shawn Smith; Assistant Supervisor/Para-

medic: Debra Beckstrom; **Paramedics:** Rick Ellingson, Candice Darling, Jeff Howard, Evan Schulz, Susan Ernste, Evelyn Hjelmgren, Kayla Auger, Rachel Schmidt, Travis Blake and Jon Romans; **EMTs:** Dawn Winkels, Jeremy Berhow, Steven Schneider, Kathryn McDermott, Kalli Swanson, Derick Baker, Elizabeth Okerberg, Lori Heslep, Cassi Fedder, Damion Ramon and George Charnin; **RN/MEDIC:** Nikkole Schwichtenberg.



Some members of Mayo Clinic Ambulance Service in Owatonna are, from left: Shawn Smith, Evan Schulz, Jeremy Berhow, Candy Darling, Damion Ramon, Steven Schneider and Rachel Schmidt. There are 24 paramedics and EMTs working out of Owatonna.



**Thank you for your service
to our community!**

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Keeping together is progress.
Working together is success."
-Henry Ford



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WE HAVE AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE... Thanks to all the police, sheriff, fire, and EMS departments that keep everyone safe each year at the **Steele County Free Fair** as well as the rest of the year. Your dedication and service are invaluable in maintaining the quality of life we all have come to enjoy... Thank you, for all you do!



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THANK YOU PUBLIC SAFETY HEROES!

We want to extend a special thank you to the Blooming Prairie area public safety agencies for their diligent efforts in keeping our community safe.

Police, fire and EMS recently assisted us with a safety drill at our Blooming Prairie facility. Their expertise helps us ensure a safe work environment for our employees. We value our partnership in keeping us all safe.



Thanks for all you do in keeping Cargill and the rest of Blooming Prairie safe!

