



STAFF PHOTO BY RICK BUSSLER
An 8-foot Boa constrictor wraps itself around Barry Benjamin of Owatonna just after it finished eating a 5-pound rabbit at Benjamin's new pet store last Wednesday morning. Benjamin, who has been breeding animals since he 5 years old, recently opened Happy Tails Pet Store in the Medford Outlet Center. See page B1 for a story on Benjamin's new venture.

RIESS PLEADS GUILTY



Lois Riess

Judge hands down life without parole

BY RICK BUSSLER
PUBLISHER

In an extraordinary court hearing that took place in the auditorium of a high school, accused killer Lois Riess admitted her guilt Aug. 11, bringing an end to the nearly 2½ year saga that began outside of Blooming Prairie.

"What I did was an unpardonable crime. Solitude is forever. I feel I deserve this. I will have no reprieve."

Lois Riess
Convicted Murderer

SEE RIESS PLEADS, A4



STAFF PHOTO BY RICK BUSSLER

With her head buried in her lap, Lois Riess leaves in a sheriff's transport vehicle Aug. 11 from Kasson-Mantorville High School where she pleaded guilty to killing her husband, David, in March 2018 outside of Blooming Prairie. The sheriff's office transported her to the Minnesota Correctional Facility in Shakopee where she will spend the rest of her life. The judge ordered her to life in prison without the chance of parole.

Uniqueness in a COVID election

County's primary turnout at 13%



STAFF PHOTO BY RICK BUSSLER

With protective masks in place, Alexis Weinzeil, left, and Sue Rypka go over voter records at the Clinton Falls precinct on Primary Election Day Aug. 11. Like all precincts, Clinton Falls installed Plexiglass for when voters came in to sign in. Clinton Falls also added an extra twist of hanging a clear plastic shower curtain for extra protection. Voter turnout around the county was 13.47% for the primary.

BY RICK BUSSLER
PUBLISHER

It certainly will go down as one for the history books.

Election judges navigated through their first ever COVID-19 primary election on Aug. 11. With face mask in place, Sue Rypka monitored the polling activities at Clinton Falls. And she came up with a rather unique way to keep herself and voters safe while coming out to the polls.

Rypka purchased an inexpensive clear plastic shower curtain to provide protection between the judges and voters. In addition to the curtain, the precinct also had a smaller clear Plexiglass where voters signed in.

"People were laughing at me," Rypka related about her shower curtain invention. "It wasn't a real big investment—\$1 a piece," she said, noting she actually got the idea from watching TV.

But when it comes to safety during a pandemic, it's no laughing matter. "I'm glad we got the equipment to help protect us from the public," said Rypka.

SEE UNIQUENESS IN A COVID, A8

Fair Fest shrinks down, scales back to drive-in event

BY RICK BUSSLER
PUBLISHER

More than a few times last week Steele County Fair manager Scott Kozelka muttered under his breath that putting on a fair is easier than dealing with a condensed event to satisfy people wanting to get their fix of fair food.

After announcing plans a few weeks ago to host a Fair Fest with 20 food vendors and placing them strategically around the fairgrounds to satisfy social distancing requirements due to COVID-19, fair officials ran into a major snag

SEE FAIR FEST, A5

Corky's Classic strikes out against COVID

BY RICK BUSSLER
PUBLISHER

The early bird is usually known to get the worm. But in the case of Corky's Early Bird Softball Classic, well, they're out of luck this year. Last week organizers of the popular national



SEE CORKY'S CLASSIC, A5

\$1.00 | Volume 129, No. 4



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INSIDE

Options.....	A2	Riess Murder Case.....	A8	Farm Living.....	B5
Coronavirus Coverage.....	A3	Owatonna Park & Rec.....	A7	Community Calendar.....	B6
Public Safety.....	A4	Hometown Living.....	B1	Public Notices.....	B8
History.....	A5	Owatonna.....		Classifieds.....	B9
		Schools Section.....	B4		

AREA DEATHS

Gordon Sommer, 85, Owatonna

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Riess appeared in person with an orange jumpsuit and handcuffed in the front for the hearing at Kasson-Mantorville High School, a move that came about because of Dodge County's small courtroom and concerns over COVID-19.



STAFF PHOTO BY RICK BUSSLER

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OUR VIEW

No winners in the Riess murder case

Nearly 2½ years after the unthinkable shook the Blooming Prairie community, Dodge County and surrounding area, killer Lois Riess surprised everyone last week with a guilty plea, and the judge immediately sentenced her to life in prison without parole.

Murder is something that seems to seldom happen in this predominantly agricultural area. The last time a killing happened in or around Blooming Prairie was in 1989 when Harvey Cole shot and killed his wife, Margaret, near the downtown area.

And when it does happen, it shakes everyone to the core. Many people are left wondering how someone they knew and perhaps trusted could commit such a heinous act. In a dramatic sequence of events, a grandmother shot her husband to death in their rural home before she took off, generating an intense nationwide manhunt for her arrest. The drama associated with the Riess case played out on local, state and eventually national media outlets. People became riveted by the sparse details that were released throughout the investigation.

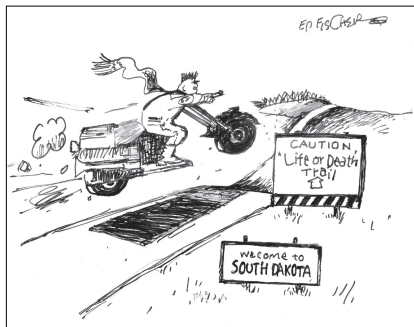
Residents were painfully made aware in 2018 that the rural prairie covered with tall grass and bountiful cropland is not immune to the ills of society and brings with it hardships for families and others—sometimes ones with tragic results.

The Riess case had the makings of gambling addiction, domestic violence, financial woes and certainly unstable mental health. They were all key ingredients that led to a perfect storm of murder in which a family lost a father and grandfather and in many ways a mother and grandmother.

Dodge County Sheriff Scott Rose perhaps summed it up best last week when he said while justice was served in this case, there are no winners. Besides a family losing two people they cared deeply about at least at one time, the community of Blooming Prairie and Dodge County also lost a valued business and friends of many.

We want to commend the Dodge County Sheriff's Office for its professional investigation that ultimately led to a conviction and Riess spending the rest of her life behind bars. Investigator Ben Bohle took the lead on the case from the night officers found David shot to death outside of Blooming Prairie. With help from the Minnesota DCA and other local investigators, Bohle did an outstanding job in putting together an airtight case against Riess. It may have taken more time than everyone would have liked, but in the end Riess got what she deserved.

It should be a comforting feeling that our area is blessed with strong and competent police officers and detectives striving to uncover the truth to benefit the safety of everyone else.



YOUR VIEW

Golden Haired Beauty

On my early morning walk today, on the path beside Maple Creek, I greeted many other walkers, and watched the kids at play.

As I approached a curve in the path ahead, a Golden Haired lady came into view, her beautiful eyes locked onto me, I saw this gal as a thoroughbred.

Each step she took showed grace and ease, she walked with a relaxed carefree stride, She strode quickly up to me and snuggled, I'd say she was something of a tease.

I rubbed her shoulders neck and ears, as she snuggled and cuddled close to me, memories returned of a golden past, then I was almost brought to tears.

I smiled and told her, "You really are a gem," It was then I learned her name was Kate, I said, "It is such a pleasure to meet you, perhaps we will meet right here again."

Before continuing our walk down the Buxton Trail, we said goodbye then went our separate ways, I turned around for a quick look back, and saw the Golden Lady wagging her golden tail.

This meeting brought back memories, of my golden "Grand dog," Elsa, owned by my son, where I saw that there is no better stress reliever, than a loving, loyal, beautiful Golden retriever.

Bud Peka
Owatonna

Battling the fair withdrawals

I am dreading this week.

It's the week where Steele Countians will go without their prize possession, the Steele County Free Fair.

While I am not native to this area, I quickly adopted the Steele County Fair as my fair 11 years ago when I took over ownership of this newspaper. It was love at first sight, and it has turned into a love fest for me ever since.

To make matters worse, my home fair, the McLeod County Fair in Hutchinson, should also be operating this week. It isn't. Like all fairs across the state, COVID-19 has shut them down this year.

Over the years I have become a fair junkie. I love fairs, but not always for the reasons most people do. Most people come to the fair to get their fix of fair foods. Oh don't get me wrong I love mini donuts, smoothies, gyros, malts, shave ice, Godfather's pizza, taffy, pork chops and the list goes on.

But to me the fair is so much more than food. Going back to my childhood, I was involved in 4-H and showed animals and other projects throughout my 4-H days at the fair. I still remember cuddling with my favorite pig with tears in my eyes when it came to shipping it off to the market at the end of the fair.

And I also remember baking some cookies for the fair. I was so proud of those cookies that when it came time to have them judged, I got a little too excited, pulled them out of the container in between my lap as I was sitting



Hot Pursuit
RICK BUSSLER

with the car door open. Yes, you can guess what happened. The cookies went tumbling to the ground. Tears streamed from my face in horror. I think I'm still traumatized by that event today!

Back to the animal barn. I'll never forget a different pig that had a mind of its own and became ornery to put it mildly on show day. The pig would not cooperate with me and barged his way under the wooden bleachers, which sent people scrambling for cover. I was pretty young and in distress with not knowing how to handle an out of control pig. Once again, the tears came flowing, but thankfully I had my parents there to comfort me and help regain my composure.

In my later years, the fair has become all about people. Since 2010, I have met some awesome fair people in Steele County. The fair board and fair staff are some of the best people I know. They are so committed to making Steele County the best fair in Minnesota. I hope area residents realize how fortunate they are to have such a team putting together a first-rate fair.

I enjoy connecting with friends and acquaintances. During the Steele fair, I love

having our booth for the newspaper where I get a chance to meet many of our readers in person. It's one thing to connect with readers through the printed word in the newspaper, but it's another to see them face-to-face. I will miss all of you this year, but don't despair

we still have a fair subscription special for you to enjoy. Check it out in the fair section.

I also love covering the fair from young people to the golden oldies. It's fun to see young 4-Hers competing with their projects. It brings me back to my childhood years. By the way, the 4-H program is the greatest youth program out there so I applaud all those young people for their efforts. And then there's the opposite end of life. A few years ago I featured a 94-year-old lady who proudly shared her story of winning grand champions with her baking. I enjoy bringing our readers great human-interest stories. It's the very essence of a community newspaper.

As I share all these memories of fairs gone by, it makes me sad as the realization sets in there is no fair this year to create new memories. No grand champions, no flag raising ceremony, no dairy malts, no 4-Hers excited about their projects, no entertainment and no livestock shows to take in. It just won't be the same. But then again what has been this year.

If I look like I've taken over my life, at least you know it's me going in hot pursuit of battling the fair withdrawals.

Words can be difficult at times

Words are my game. During my 50-year plus journalism career, I have used a lot of different words to tell a story.

There are also many words that I don't use because I've never heard of them until I hear them used by a reporter on television, or by a writer in print.

Since the coronavirus, COVID-19, has been in the news, we are seeing words, some of them medical terms being used with frequency.

I have been amazed by the use of one word by our American journalists and by our governmental leaders.

Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz has fallen in love with the word "exacerbate." If you watch one of his news conferences, you might hear him use this word three or four times.

What does the word mean? As a transitive verb, it means "to make more violent, bitter, or severe." Search the Thesaurus and you will find these synonyms: aggravate, complicate and worsen.

Antonyms of the word exacerbate in-



Reflections
HOWARD LESTRUD

clude: ally, alleviate, assuage, ease, help, mitigate and relieve.

To make matters more complicated, I checked a Merriam-Webster website and found out that there is another word that is confused with the use of exacerbate.

Merriam-Webster tells us the following:

"Exacerbate is frequently confused with exasperate, and with good reason. Not only do these words resemble one another in spelling and pronunciation, they also at one time held exceedingly similar meanings.

"Exasperate is today most commonly used as a synonym of annoy, but for several hundred years it also had the meanings 'to make more grievous'

and 'to make harsh or harsher.'

"Exacerbate is now the more common choice of these two words when one seeks to indicate that something is becoming increasingly bitter, violent, or unpleasant. It comes in part from the Latin word acer, meaning 'sharp,' whereas exasperate is from asper, the Latin word for 'rough.'

Let's use exacerbate in a sentence: "The lack of potable water additionally increases the risk that intestinal problems like cholera, among other health conditions common in rural Indigenous populations, will exacerbate the effects of COVID-19."

This word is one of 300 most difficult words selected by Vocabulary.com.

Look through this list and find words used often, or pick up new words with meanings that will help make you a better communicator. Don't let the difficult words exacerbate your feelings toward learning new words.

The end!

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(Awards presented by the Minnesota Newspaper Association and the National Newspaper Associations)

State awards Steele \$4.4M in COVID relief

BY CHRIS BALDWIN
STAFF WRITER

During last week's regular county board meeting, Steele County Commissioners opted to approve allocation of COVID-19 relief funds.

The federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act established the Coronavirus Relief Fund, which appropriated \$150 billion in funding to states and local governments. Steele

County's portion of the fund was \$4,479,147 as determined by the state.

At last Tuesday's session, the board approved initial Coronavirus Relief Fund allocation and authorized the county administrator to review individual county purchases to ensure the fund is utilized to its full extent within the short timeline.

"The county amount is \$2,911,445.50, that's 65% of the CARF dollars allocated to the county,"

Board Chair Jim Abbe said while introducing the item. "There's also business relief in the amount of \$671,872.05, which represents 15%."

The remaining funds will be split up and allocated to community relief and a reserve each totaling \$447,914.70.

"We're going to hold a reserve amount back for the late-comers or if something else comes up," Abbe explained.

"Time is of the essence and we need to

get this moving and get those dollars out and into the hands of the public and businesses and back into the county so we can offset some of our losses here."

Abbe said of the need to make sure that each dollar is getting where it needs to go before the spending deadline.

These funds are separate from those which will be going to individual cities within the county. "This does not include the monies

that goes to the cities in the county plus the townships which they have to apply for," Commissioner Greg Krueger explained.

The board also updated the county's COVID-19 Pandemic Response Policy as well as the reopening plans currently in place.

"I want to stress that we're trying to cut back more and eliminate out of town meetings and conferences and that by opening up county travel that it doesn't open

that up too," Krueger said expressing hazard of the loosened travel restrictions.

As the pandemic continues to spread local governments such as Steele County have had to adapt and roll with the punches while also looking to return to the status quo. The county is currently in phase two of its reopening plan, authorizing unrestricted access of facilities to the public with safety measures in place.

Relief funding comes to BP

BY HOWARD LESTRUD
STAFF WRITER

The City of Bloomington Prairie will receive \$150,078 in Coronavirus Relief Funding and those monies will be allocated in a variety of ways.

The funding comes from the federal government, which funneled the money through state channels to cities and townships.

The dollar amount is based on city population.

Council approved funding allocation toward small business grants that will be facilitated through the EDA (Economic Development Authority), facility upgrades, additional expenses due to COVID-19 and to payroll expenses for the Bloomington Prairie Police Department.

To qualify for the funding, expenses must satisfy three distinct components.

First, expenditures must be incurred due to the public health emergency with respect to COVID-19. An expenditure is reasonably necessary for its intended use in the reasonable judgment of the government officials responsible for spending Coronavirus Relief Fund payments.

Expenditures must be used or actions taken to respond to the public health emergency, including expenditures incurred to respond directly to the emergency as well as expenditures incurred to respond to second order effects, such as by providing economic support to those suffering from employment or business interruptions due to COVID-19 related business closures.

Second, costs must not be accounted for in the city's budget most recently approved as of March 27.

Third, the performance or delivery must occur during the covered period, but payment of funds need not be made during that time (though it is generally expected that this

COVID-19 Coronavirus

will take place within 90 days of a cost being incurred).

For cities, the covered period is March 1, 2020 to Nov. 15, 2020.

Andrew Langholz, city administrator, recommended funding be allocated to several different areas. Specific dollar amounts are still being determined as the city is still receiving quotes for upgrades and other expenses associated with COVID-19.

Small Business Grants

Langholz proposed that the council implement a small business assistance program that will be grant based to aid local businesses that were impacted by COVID-19.

He said there is also a possibility that Steele County may provide assistance based on need. This is yet to be determined by the county board.

The program will be facilitated by the Bloomington Prairie EDA. The city will reach out to local businesses to encourage them to complete an application for reimbursement for COVID-19 related expenses.

This program is still being developed. Langholz is working with Steele County and the cities within its borders to have a semi-unified approach. A preliminary estimate is that the city allocate \$40,000 to this program.

Facility upgrades

Facility upgrades are another eligible use for this funding. The city has been fielding quotes for improvements to City Hall to reduce potential transmission sources for communicable diseases and to increase transparency of governmental meetings.

Projects being considered include upgrading public rest rooms to make toilets, sinks

and touch less soap dispensers.

The project also includes HVAC upgrades to improve indoor air quality for city hall and the addition of audio/visual equipment for the council chamber to better stream meetings.

None of these expenses have been accounted for in the 2020 budget but they do meet qualifications to be deemed an expense related to COVID-19 and are reimbursable.

Additional expenses

Other tangible expenses related to COVID-19 include equipment/technology to work remotely; IT support; personal protective equipment; cleaning supplies; signage and plexiglass shields.

The city has currently spent approximately \$8,000. This number will increase between now and the Nov. 15 deadline.

Police payroll
The Coronavirus Relief Funding allows for payroll expenses for administration and public safety officials to be used from this funding at it relates to COVID-19.

The dollar amount for these expenses far exceeds the total amount the city has received. Langholz says remaining funding could be directed to governing a portion of the police payroll expense.

Langholz informed Council that if Coronavirus Relief Funding is used inappropriately, the city would be required to reimburse the state for that amount. He said this scenario is unlikely with the plan developed.

The city administrator has attended multiple training sessions regarding the Coronavirus Relief Fund and Bloomington Prairie seems to be following what the majority of other cities are doing.

Mayo reopens Same Day Clinic in Owatonna

Mayo Clinic Health System is adding a Same Day Clinic to its services in Faribault and will reopen its Same Day Clinic in Owatonna Wednesday, Aug. 19.

Patients are to call ahead to schedule an appointment at all Same Day Clinics; no walk-in appointments will be permitted. Mayo Clinic Health System's Same Day Clinics offer ap-

pointments to patients ages three and older who need care for minor health concerns at short notice. Same Day Clinic patients will be seen by a physician, certified nurse practitioner or physician's assistant to receive treatment for their ailments.

The Owatonna Same Day Clinic was temporarily closed while the clinic adapted to the new COVID-19 environment. Now, Mayo Clinic Health System is ready to open its Same Day Clinic again with new safety measures in place to protect all patients and visitors.

Due to the popularity of the Same Day Clinic in Owatonna, Faribault will also begin offering this service to its patients.

Patients who would like to visit Owatonna or Faribault Same Day Clinic must first make an appointment online at <https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/> or by calling:

• Owatonna: 507-451-1120 or 800-628-2538 (toll-free)

• Faribault: 507-333-3390

Patients will be screened for COVID-19 symptoms when making their appointment and those with COVID-19 symptoms will be directed to a COVID-19 testing site or other designated care facilities on its Mayo Clinic Health System campuses.

All Same Day Clinic patients and visitors are required to wear a mask during their visit. Patients can read about all safety precautions to expect during their visit at the Mayo Clinic Health System COVID-19 online resource site.

Locations and Hours

The Owatonna Same Day Clinic is located at Mayo Clinic Health System - Owatonna, 2200 NW 28th St. NW. Hours for the Owatonna Same Day Clinic will be Monday through Friday: 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The Faribault Same Day Clinic is located at Mayo Clinic Health System - Faribault, 300 State Ave. Faribault, MN 55021. Hours for Faribault Same Day Clinic will be Monday through Friday: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. All other services at Mayo Clinic Health System - Faribault will remain the same.

Same Day Clinic provides treatment for many minor health concerns including sprains, strains and simple fractures, scrapes and cuts, minor burns, skin conditions including rashes, poison ivy and insect bites, urinary tract infections and minor allergic reactions.

In the event of an emergency or a life-threatening injury or condition, immediately call 911 or visit the closest Emergency Room.

There are many heroes in our midst... but only **YOU** can help us identify them!



Let us know about your personal story of how a hero in our communities has touched your life during the coronavirus pandemic.

Share your hero and you could win a prize!

- In 200 or less words, send us details highlighting your hero and how they helped you survive COVID-19.
- Two easy ways to submit:
Email: hptimes@frontiernet.net
Mail: Steele County Times
• P.O. Box 247
• Blooming Prairie, MN 55917
- Please include: Name, Phone Number and Address and/or Email
- Submissions will be published in a special Hero section later this summer.
- **PRIZES** will be awarded to the best submissions as selected by our judges.
 - Gift Cards to area stores and restaurants
 - Subscriptions to the Times
- **HURRY!** Send your submissions by Friday, August 28

What's your COVID-19 HERO story?

We're waiting to hear from you today!

STEELE COUNTY Times

COVID continues to trend upwards in Steele

BY RICK BUSSLER
PUBLISHER

While Steele County is not experiencing any big spikes with the COVID-19 virus, the numbers continue to trend upwards by about 20 cases every week.

In her latest report Monday afternoon, Public Health Director Amy Caron revealed Steele County is at 369

confirmed cases, up by 19 from last week. Of those cases, 296 have recovered. The good news is that no one is currently hospitalized. There have been two deaths in the county since the pandemic broke out in March.

In Dodge County, there are 140 confirmed cases, up by 11 over the past week. Of the corona cases, 119 are out of isolation and recovered.

Dodge has not experienced any deaths and no one is currently hospitalized, according to Caron.

The cases, Caron said, appear to be fairly scattered in both counties. "We know it's widely (caused by) community spread," she said, renewing the importance for people to wear their masks in public.

SEE COVID, A8

COVID-19 UPDATE

World.....21,700,000
Deaths.....776,000
Recovered.....13,700,000

U.S.5,420,000
Deaths.....170,000
Recovered.....2,310,000

MN.....65,198
Deaths.....1,752
Recovered.....28,205

Steele.....369
Deaths.....2
Recovered.....266

Dodge140
Deaths0
Recovered.....109

AS OF AUG. 17, 2020

BLOTTER
SPOTLIGHT**BLOTTER SPOTLIGHT: At 12:18 p.m., a hit and run accident resulting in property damage occurred in the 1600 block of Cedar Ave. S.****RIESS PLEADS: guilty** FROM A

During the short hearing, which was tear-filled at times from both Riess and some of her family members, Riess pleaded guilty to first-degree pre-meditated murder in the death of her husband, David Riess, in March 2018.

After Riess waived her right to a pre-sentence investigation, Judge Jodi Williamson immediately sentenced her to life in prison without the chance of parole. She was remanded into the custody of Dodge County sheriff's deputies to be taken to the Shakopee women's prison where she will spend the rest of her life.

After an agreement between the governors of Minnesota and Florida, it was decided Riess would spend her prison sentence in Minnesota, and not Florida where she killed another person shortly after her husband in 2018.

Riess had been in Florida custody in con-

nection with the murder of Pamela Hutchinson prior to returning to Minnesota on July 3. She had been locked up in the Steele County Detention Center in Owatonna before being taken to Shakopee after last week's hearing.

In court Tuesday, Riess said her husband handed her a loaded firearm on March 11, 2018. They had been fighting, and Lois said David told her to go and kill herself and to "get it right this time." Lois said she had tried to commit suicide in the past, but this time she turned the gun and fired at his heart.

Lois said once she realized David was dead, she laid down alongside him, closed his eyes and covered him in a blanket.

Several family members, including Lois' children, gave victim impact statements at the hearing.

"I will never forgive you that you took a part



STAFF PHOTO BY RICK BUSSELER

Deputies use metal wands for security at the Riess hearing at a Kasson school last week.

of our life that we will never forget." David's mother said through a prepared statement read by an Olmsted County social worker. "When you killed David, you took my heart."

Prior to the judge handing down the sentence, Riess was given the opportunity to speak. She apologized to her husband's friends and family, saying life without her husband is her true sentence and that she should not have killed him.

"What I did was an unpardonable crime," Riess said in court. "Solitude is forever. I feel I deserve this. I will have no reprieve."

As she left court, Riess removed her face mask and turned to her family to mouth words to them with a hand on her heart.

With her head of white hair, Riess garnered national attention as the "fugitive grandma" before she was captured in April 2018 in Texas. She had been in a Florida jail prior to coming back to Minnesota last month.

Turn to Page 6A for more coverage of the Riess murder conviction and sentencing.

CRIME BRIEF**Woman seriously injured after falling from vehicle**

A woman was seriously injured after she fell from a vehicle and was dragged for a short distance.



CELES ERICKSON

Owatonna Police responded to the area of Cashwise Foods where they found a woman with serious injuries. Officers discovered the woman on State Avenue with blood coming from her forehead and nose, road rash on her right forearm and complaining that her leg was broken.

Mayo Air Ambulance transported her to the hospital.

The victim told police she was at a bar and was trying to get her friend not to drive. She was in the driver's seat trying

to turn off the vehicle. The friend got into the driver's seat and took off, dragging the victim with the vehicle.

Shakopee Police located

Celes Erickson, 24, of Shakopee. Police say she was intoxicated. After she was transported back to Owatonna, a search warrant was drafted and executed for an evidentiary sample of her blood to determine her alcohol content.

The Steele County Attorney's Office has charged Erickson with two counts of criminal vehicular operation, one causing great bodily harm and the other causing bodily harm.

Man arrested after stolen gun recovered

A stolen firearm has been taken off the streets of Owatonna after police stopped a car for an equipment violation.

Police arrested Stetson Fox, 33, of Owatonna during the incident on Aug. 11. He has been charged with unlawful possession of a firearm, fifth-degree possession of a controlled substance and possession of marijuana in a motor vehicle.

The incident began to unfold when a patrol officer tried to stop a

vehicle with a headlight out at Interstate 35 and Hoffman Drive. The vehicle did not stop until about a mile later at the 26th Street ramp.

When speaking to the officer, the driver identified himself with a name and birthdate. Officers later determined the name was false. During the investigation, the officer detected a strong odor of fresh

marijuana coming from the vehicle.

Officers determined Fox had a warrant out of Waseca County. During a search of the vehicle, officers found a small amount of marijuana and a .357 firearm stolen from Ohio.

Fox was transported to the Steele County Detention Center where officers found cocaine inserted into a part of

Fox's body cavity.

Court records show Fox was convicted in Illinois of robbery and ineligible to possess a firearm.

Separate from this case, Fox has also been charged with third-degree sales of a narcotic. This charge is the result of an undercover drug investigation in which Fox allegedly sold cocaine to a confidential reliable informant working with the South Central Drug Investigation Unit.

Man dies while working at Costco site

An early morning accident at the new Costco distribution center in Owatonna has claimed the life of a construction worker.

Owatonna Police responded to Costco at 3601 10th St. SW around 7:31 a.m. Aug. 10 for a report of a man who fell off a lift. The incident took place where the Costco regional distribution center is being

built in Owatonna's Industrial Park.

Officers pronounced the victim dead at the scene. He has been identified as George McIntosh, 62, of Waterville.

Police are investigating what led up to the incident.

The Steele County Sheriff's Office, Mayo Ambulance and the Steele County Coroner's Office assisted local police at the scene.

COURT NEWS**Steele County**

The following cases were heard in Steele County District Court the week of Aug. 3 with Judge Carmaine Sturino presiding:

Joshua S. Almendinger, 39, Faribault, previously appeared and was convicted of felony domestic abuse - violation of two or more order for protection with 10 year. The defendant was sentenced to 60, 63 days in county jail, obtain and maintain employment, no alcohol or controlled substance use, do not enter liquor establishments, psychological evaluation, cognitive skill training, obtain permission to leave the state, domestic abuse evaluation, no possession of firearms and 3 years of supervised probation.

Nicholas M. Balfe, 44, Rochester, previously appeared and was convicted of felony possession of cocaine or methamphetamine. He was sentenced to 60, 78 days in county jail, obtain and maintain employment, no alcohol or controlled substance use, do not enter liquor establishments, cognitive skill training, obtain permission to leave the state, no possession of firearms, 200 hours of community service and 5 years of supervised probation.

The following misdemeanors and petty misdemeanors were heard in Steele County District Court the week of Aug. 3 - 9:

BLOOMING PRAIRIE POLICE DEPARTMENT

Cole C. Finnegan, 21, Austin, revoked license, \$275; Nathan J. Kahn, 25, Austin, speeding, \$125; Si V. Moo, 20, St. Paul, invalid license, \$175.

MN DEPT. OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Justin W. Bulver, 34, Owatonna, take fish without a license, \$175; Jared L. Evans, 37, New Richland, ATV violation, \$125; Ryan D. Spatenka, 28, Owatonna, ATV violation, \$125.

MN STATE PATROL ROCHESTER

Heidi J. Anderson, 37, Ellendale, speeding, \$115; Kalin C. Arradondo, 32, Minneapolis, no license, \$175; Cassandra S. Bremer, 19, Owatonna, speeding, \$115; Connor J. Carnes, 21, Indianapolis, IN, speeding and possession of marijuana, \$325; Ryan M. Dela Merced, 19, South Elgin, IL, speeding, \$115; Nicholas T. Fifield, 37, Chicago, IL, speeding, \$115; Felipe R. Gonzalez, 49, Clara City, registration violation, \$175; Megan R. Jensen, 22, Lakeville, speeding, \$125; James R. Jirik, 59, Elkton, vehicle weight violation, \$175; Grace K. Justinak, 19, Shorewood, speeding, \$135; Amber M. Klein, 22, St. Joseph, speeding, \$125; Makayla M. Krein, 19, Mason City, IA, speeding, \$115; Emily A. Maine, 18, Owatonna, speeding, \$115; Veronica L. Montes de Oca, 31, Omaha, NE, speeding, \$125; Kristina N. Olson, 36, Princeton, speeding, \$115; Ian A.

Pena, 33, San Marcos, TX, speeding, \$125; Bruce E. Prestegard, 62, Claremont, seat belt, \$100; Arpan Rai, 24, Fargo, ND, speeding and child passenger restraint system violation, \$185; Ballew A. Rasmussen, 31, Farmington, speeding, \$135; Andrew K. Rick, 40, Maple Grove, speeding, \$115; Eric R. Roberts, 31, Albert Lea, speeding, \$115; Adysan N. Schrom, 19, Oceanside, CA, speeding, \$115; Christopher J. Simmons, 31, Cleburne, TX, speeding, \$125; Emmanuel Valdez Medina, 33, Rochester, speeding and no insurance, \$335; Victor A. Van, 34, Faribault, speeding, \$115; Matthew R. Williams, 19, Owatonna, speeding, \$275; Andrew L. Winkelman, 46, Warsaw, speeding, \$115; Tyler J. Worke, 33, Waseca, hands free violation, \$125.

OWATONNA POLICE DEPARTMENT

Darian M. Bohlin-Reyna, 27, Owatonna, theft, \$254 and 1 year of unsupervised probation; Sean R. Gerlach, 19, Medford, seat belt, \$100; Aleasha L. Klindworth, 25, Owatonna, no insurance, \$275; Mark J. Kubat, 46, Owatonna, headlights violation, \$115; Alfonso P. Mendoza, 42, Minneapolis, speeding, \$125; Kader M. Muhamed, 26, Owatonna, speeding, \$135; Alex J. Olson, 31, disorderly conduct, \$75 and 41 days in county jail; Mario R. Perez Juarez, 29, Schuyler, NE, invalid license and no insurance, \$375; Jamari D. Roland, 27, St. Louis

Park, speeding, \$215; Hope K. Rosenquist, 33, New Richland, speeding, \$125; Oscar J. Sletten, 48, Owatonna, unsafe passing, \$125; David C. Swenson, 40, Owatonna, A. Vierling, 40, Owatonna, permit offense, \$115; Scott R. Wilson, 36, Faribault, disorderly conduct, \$125, substance abuse subtle screening inventory and 1 year of supervised probation.

STEELE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Darian M. Bohlin-Reyna, 27, Owatonna, theft, \$75 and 1 year of supervised probation; Jessica L. Gregory, 18, Owatonna, minor consumption, \$175; Brady S. Heaney, 24, Owatonna, careless driving, \$175; Christopher P. Judd, 33, Waseca, speeding, \$115; Salina P. Nra Xiong, 23, Neenah, WI, speeding, \$115; Shane P. Phelps, 29, Minneapolis, speeding, \$125; Timothy P. Plank, 48, San Antonio, TX, speeding, \$115; Jason R. Ranslow, 43, Faribault, speeding, \$115; Jack J. Sande, 16, Owatonna, seat belt, \$100; Jonathan J. Tatterdal, 19, Elk New Market, speeding, \$135; Kaw P. Thaw, 22, St. Paul, speeding, \$215; Mario A. Torres, 55, Faribault, invalid license, \$175; Mackie F. Zabinski, 19, Minneapolis, speeding, \$115.

ARRESTS Steele County**OWATONNA POLICE**

Prentiss Joseph Boyd,

36, arrested at 4:55 p.m. Aug. 10, felony theft of a motor vehicle, held for court. Kenyetta Elwoods, 52, arrested at 2:58 a.m. Aug. 11, felony order for protection violation, damage to property and burglary, held for court. Cody Lane Luohi, 23, arrested at 10 p.m. Aug. 13, probation violation warrants arrest, body only.

STEELE COUNTY SHERIFF

Luiz Antonio Matias Mendez, 19, arrested at 9:09 p.m. Aug. 9, DWI, open bottle and no license, held for court.

COURT NEWS Dodge County

The following misdemeanors and petty misdemeanors were heard in Dodge County District Court the week of Aug. 2 - 9:

DODGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Jalynn N. Colligan, 16, Stewartville, speeding, \$220; Justin J. Harrington, 42, Windom, speeding, stay of adjudication, \$20 and 6 months of unsupervised monitoring without adjudication; Brooke E. Kline, 22, Winona, speeding, \$220; Lebert Ortiz, 50, Dodge Center, cancelled license, \$280; Alexander L. Paulson, 22, West Concord, speeding, \$220; Cristina D. Reyes, 43, Dodge Center, speeding, \$140; Logan C. Sailor, 20, Conger, speeding,

stay of adjudication, \$100 and 6 months of unsupervised monitoring without adjudication.

KASSON POLICE DEPARTMENT

Mindy M. Blesser, 41, Blaine, speeding, \$130; Diego Perez, 25, Kasson, domestic abuse no contact order violation, \$380, 3 days in county jail, domestic abuse evaluation and 2 years of supervised probation; Chase L. Spatenka, 19, Dodge Center, hands free violation, \$130.

MN STATE PATROL ROCHESTER

Jlani M. Bochane, 28, Chicago, IL, speeding, \$130; Jamie J. Fritz, 40, Byron, speeding, \$120; Tyler J. Gephart, 43, Brandon, SD, speeding, \$130; Andrew A. Henden, 38, Rochester, speeding, \$140; Jeffrey A. Herlihy, 50, Dodge Center, speeding, \$120; Austin M. Lewis, 23, Geneva, IL, speeding, stay of adjudication, \$100 and 6 months of unsupervised monitoring; Michael D. Madston, 26, Dodge Center, speeding, \$130; Sofia S. Melrick, 18, Kasson, speeding, stay of adjudication, \$100 and 6 months of unsupervised monitoring without adjudication; Chloe A. Michael-Teschendorf, 22, Mapleton, speeding, stay of adjudication, \$100 and 6 months of unsupervised monitoring without adjudication; Edward J. Shlits, 24, Ellsworth, WI, speeding, \$130.



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federatedinsurance.com
for COVID-19 resources.

How Medicare and Other Tools Can Help Older Smokers Kick the Habit



Dear Savvy Senior,
I understand that COVID-19 hits smokers a lot harder than nonsmokers but quitting at my age is very difficult. Does Medicare offer any coverage that helps beneficiaries quit smoking?
Must Quit

Dear Must,

It's true. Smokers and vapers have a higher risk of severe COVID-19 infection as the coronavirus attacks the lungs. That's why quitting now is more important than ever before.

If you are a Medicare beneficiary, you'll be happy to know that Medicare Part B covers up to eight face-to-face counseling sessions a year to help you quit smoking. And, if you have a Medicare Part D prescription drug plan, certain smoking-cessation medications are covered too. Here are some other tips that can help you kick the habit.

It's Never Too Late

According to the Center of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) 12.5 percent of Medicare beneficiaries smoke. Many older smokers, like yourself, indicate that they would like to quit, but because of the nicotine, which is extremely addictive, it's very difficult to do.

Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable illness, responsible for an estimated one-fifth of deaths in the United States each year.

But research shows that quitting, even after age 65, greatly reduces your risk of heart disease, stroke, cancer, osteoporosis and many other diseases including COVID-19. It also helps you breathe easier, smell and taste food better, not to mention saves you quite a bit of money. A \$6 pack-a-day smoker, for example, saves about \$180 after one month without cigarettes, and nearly \$2,200 after one year.

How to Quit

The first step you need to take is to set a "quit date," but give yourself a few weeks to get ready. During that time, you may want to start by reducing the number or the strength of cigarettes you smoke to begin weaning yourself.

Also check out over-the-counter nicotine replacement products — patches, gum and lozenges — to help curb your cravings (these are not covered by Medicare). And just prior to your quit day get rid of all cigarettes and ashtrays in your home, car, and place of work, and try to clean up and even spray air freshener. The smell of smoke can be a powerful trigger.

Get Help

Studies have shown that you have a much better chance of quitting if you have help. So, tell your friends, family, and coworkers of your plan to quit. Others knowing can be a helpful reminder and motivator.

Then get some counseling. Don't go it alone. Start by contacting your doctor about smoking cessation counseling covered by Medicare and find out about the prescription antismoking drugs that can help reduce your nicotine craving.

You can also get free one-on-one telephone counseling and referrals to local smoking cessation programs through your state quit line at 800-QUIT-NOW or call the National Cancer Institute free smoking quit line at 877-44U-QUIT.

It's also important to identify and write down the times and situations you're most likely to smoke and make a list of things you can do to replace it or distract yourself. Some helpful suggestions when the smoking urge arises are to call a friend or one of the free quit lines, keep your mouth occupied with some sugar-free gum, sunflower seeds, carrots, fruit or hard candy, go for a walk, read a magazine, listen to music or take a hot bath.

The intense urge to smoke lasts about three to five minutes, so do what you can to wait it out. It's also wise to avoid drinking alcohol and steer clear of other smokers while you're trying to quit. Both can trigger powerful urges to smoke.

For more tips on how to quit, including managing your cravings, withdrawal symptoms and what to do if you relapse, visit 60plus.SmokeFree.gov. There are also a variety of helpful quit smoking apps you can download like *SmokeFreeApp* and *QuitGenius* on.

Send your senior questions to: Savvy Senior, P.O. Box 5443, Norman, OK 73070, or visit SavvySenior.org. Jim Miller is a contributor to the NBC Today show and author of "The Savvy Senior" book.

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History from the News Archives

10 Years Ago

Aug. 24, 2010

RICK L. BUSSLER, PUBLISHER

Ideal weather conditions contributed to the second highest attendance ever attendance at this year's Steele County Free Fair. Fair manager, Elmer Reseland, reported that attendance was 285,605 for the six-day event. That figure ended up about 7,500 fewer people than the record set back in 2008.

The Toastmasters International Leadership Program is set up as an experimental workshop that gives youth the opportunity to develop and practice their communication and leadership skills. This is the first time it has been offered in Blooming Prairie. It is coordinated by Elsa Esquivel-Soto. The participants are Tasha Dornquist, Margaret Handel, Marie Hekken, Arlyne Doto, Diego Soto, Emmeline Soto and Amy Winter. The participants will graduate on Aug. 27 and will have gained many leadership and speaking skills.

20 Years Ago

Aug. 24, 2000

ELSIE SLINGER, PUBLISHER

Minnesota State University, Mankato student Natalie Becker of Blooming Prairie has been selected as the recipient of the scholarship from the College of Education. She was awarded the \$4,000 Agnus and Rhea McCarthy Scholarship for both 2000-2001 and 2001-2002 school years. Becker was also named to the MSU Spring Dean's List.

Last Thursday Korean War Veterans in southeastern Minnesota had a chance to be recognized for their service. Sen Dick Day and U.S. Representative Gil Gutknecht presented award pins to over 75 veterans who were on hand to be honored. The KRFO bleachers were filled with admirers, friends and family.

50 Years Ago

Aug. 19, 1970

VICTOR, VERNON & VRYLE KREJCI, PUBLISHERS

Steve Heinz was winner of the Blooming Prairie Country Club Junior Golf Tournament. Winners in the event are Jon Olson, first flight; Carl Peterson, second in the championship flight; Steve Heinz, first in championship flight; Mike Doocy, second in first flight.

Winona State College announced the graduation of two local students. Carol Slezak, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Alan Slezak of Hope, received her Bachelor of Science Degree. Bernice Stender, Blooming Prairie, received her Bachelor of Science degree.

Several women from the Red Oak Grove area went by bus last week of July to Eskine, Minn., where they spent a delightful week at ladies' camp. They toured several places of interest at Roosevelt and Lake of the Woods and Deer River, Canada. Attendees were: Mrs. Oscar Lysne, Mrs. Lauren Grant, Mrs. Louise Magnuson, Mrs. Hilda Lostgaard, Miss Olga Flaa, Mrs. Anos Heigeson, Mrs. Oliver Tollefson, Miss Alice Tollefson and Miss Sofia Thompson.

75 Years Ago

Aug. 23, 1945

FRANK KREJCI, PUBLISHER

The following births were reported in the Goetsch home hospital are:

August 16th

Mr. and Mrs. Norman B Peterson, an 8-pound son named Dan Ervin.
Mr. and Mrs. Marvin Boszkie, Claremont, a 7-pound daughter, Jeanne Marie

August 19th

Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Jepsen, Austin, 7-pound daughter
Mr. and Mrs. Arnold Bergstrom, Moscow, 8-pound daughter
Mr. and Mrs. Marvin Behne, Havana, 8 1/2-pound daughter

At the FFA livestock judging held at the Steele County Fair, Norman Grunklee was high man and won championship individual sweepstakes. The Blooming Prairie team consisted of Norman Grunklee, Lloyd Krell and Richard Christianson. Seven school teams competed. As a team, the Blooming Prairie boys won: Swine, second place; Cattle, third place; horses, fourth place. FFA advisor is Bert Magdary.

Pfc. Merlin H. Madsen is home on furlough. He served in the European Theater with the 117th Infantry Regiment, 30th Division. He was hospitalized for paralysis March 1945 and transferred to O'Reilly Hospital, Springfield, Mo. Aug. 3. He arrived on Saturday to spend 30 days with his wife and son.

Owatonna Photo News

31 Years Ago

Aug. 14, 1989

TOM SHEA, PUBLISHER

Michelle Stangler, 18 and Amy Seidel, 15, both students at the Jill Hoggard Academy of Dance, recently received awards for their performances at the Symposium National Talent Contest in Rochester. Their first-place awards qualified them for national competition, where they won second place trophies for ballet-pointe duet and third place for lyrical-modern duet. Stangler also received a second place for her ballet solo.

Steele County Free Fair has announced that on Wednesday night they have a very special grandstand show with George Jones, King of Country performing one performance at 7 p.m. Jones has been named Male Vocalist of the Year on no less than four occasions, the last time 1986.

Owatonna Aces lost 2 - 7 to Faribault in the Section 2B amateur baseball playoffs Thursday at Darts Park, Owatonna. The Aces ended the playoffs with a 4 - 2 mark, which ties them for second place. The top two teams qualify for State B Tournament. Owatonna is scheduled to host Prior Lake in a one-game playoff on Saturday to determine which team moves on. Good Luck Aces.

FAIR FEST: shrinks down, scales back to drive-in event FROM A1

with the State of Minnesota. State officials would not allow the fair to host the event as it was originally proposed.

The biggest concern from the state was having more than 250 people at one time on the fairgrounds, according to Kozelka.

"To meet their guidelines, we had some different options," he said. "We have been working with all the departments on guidelines."

After going back and forth with the state throughout the week, Kozelka finally settled on a drive-in event where people can't get out of their vehicles.

The event was also scaled back to three days, Friday through Sunday, instead of the original four days.

Fair Fest will be drastically different than the Drive-In Dairy Days held at the fairgrounds in late June. During Dairy Days, people were able to walk around and go up to each vendor to purchase food items. That event featured social distancing with markings on the pavement, we had some different options," he said. "We have been working with all the departments on guidelines."

After going back and forth with the state throughout the week, Kozelka finally settled on a drive-in event where people can't get out of their vehicles. The event was also scaled back to three days, Friday through Sunday, instead of the original four days.

emphasized.

A map of the trail will be given to drivers as they enter the fairgrounds with their vehicles. Included on the map will be vendor sites along with the menus of each vendor.

The trail starts at the south end of the fairgrounds on the corner of Hartle Avenue and 18th Street. Unlike the Minnesota State Fair, there will be no fee to enter Food Fest Trail. The State Fair is charging \$20 per vehicle.

Kozelka said someone from each food vendor will come to your vehicle to take your order. "They will take your money and bring the food right out to you," he said.

Because of the changes, the fair also lost four food vendors from the

original list that had been released a couple weeks ago. The current vendors planning to be at this weekend's event are Evan's Eatery, Godfather's Pizza, Goette's Park Chops, Grandma's Cookies, Minneapolis Pie, Minnesowile, Ole and Lenas, Otte's Kettle Corn, Pretzel Wiz, Schroeder Concessions, Steele County Apple Malts, Tom Thumb Donuts, Fresh Fries and Strawberry Smoothies.

Fair Fest will be operating from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Friday and Saturday and 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Sunday.

In the end, Kozelka said this was not easy to pull together and not what he envisioned at all. But he's trying to keep a positive attitude with it.

"Every day is a new adventure," Kozelka said.

CORKY'S CLASSIC: strikes out against COVID FROM A1

tournament, which has been held in Owatonna for the past 40 years, announced they were canceling the tourney for this year over concerns of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Corky's is typically held the first full week

end in May. Shortly after the coronavirus hit in March, organizers announced they were going to postpone the tournament until fall. Tournament director Loren Dietz worked with teams to come up with a date

that worked for most of them. They settled on Sept. 10-13.

But with COVID-19 still a major threat to the safety of people, organizers decided to pull the plug altogether for this year.

Dietz said back in April that he never thought about canceling the event because they didn't want to lose the funds they raise for park and recreation scholarships.

The event is headquartered at the Steele County Fairgrounds diamonds and normally attracts 100 teams from all over the U.S.

and Canada to try their luck against some of the best teams in the nation.

The namesake for the tournament is Corky Ebeling, who was involved with the Owatonna Parks and Recreation department for many years and is a longtime softball enthusiast.

The Owatonna area economy will also come away a major loser as the tournament generated a significant amount revenue for area businesses.

Corky's Classic is a USA Softball slow-pitch softball tournament.

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THE BOURNICK KOHLER

LIFE IN PRISON FOR RIESS

School turns into courtroom for Riess case

BY RICK BUSSLER
PUBLISHER

Never before in the history of Dodge County has a high profile case taken place outside of the courtroom. But that's exactly what happened last week when killer Lois Riess offered her guilty plea and received a life sentence.

Riess appeared in the auditorium of Kasson-Mantorville High School in what would end up being her last time in public. After the hearing, deputies immediately escorted her off to the Minnesota Correctional Facility in Shakopee where she will serve her life sentence without the chance of parole.

The hearing was moved to the school because of concerns over COVID-19, according to Sheriff Scott Rose. He said Dodge County's courtroom is simply too small to accommodate such a high profile case and then add social distancing on top of everything else.

Rose pointed out that Olmsted County has utilized up to 2% courtrooms for cases in order to obtain proper social distancing. "The Judicial Branch has very specific COVID social distancing guidelines for courthouses," he said.

Dodge County, Rose said, had no idea what

to expect for the number of people attending Riess' hearing. There were about 50 people at the hearing, including court personnel, media and family members. Rose said there were likely fewer people than what could have been because the hearing was considered pre-trial. "That didn't draw a lot of attention to the public," he noted.

A pre-trial quickly turning into a plea hearing and wrapped into a sentencing with victim impact statements, which all happened with the Riess case last week, is highly unusual for the courts, Rose said. "I've never heard of that happening before," he said. "I didn't even know you could do it all in one day."

Riess waived her right to a pre-sentence investigation, which typically comes after a plea and before sentencing. The move allowed for Judge Jodi Williamson to sentence her right away, bringing an end to the nearly 27-year-old case.

"The courts worked very well with us and the Attorney General's office to facilitate so it could be done in a day," said Rose. He noted the school's performing arts center was the only building big enough in the county to handle the hearing.

Sheriff Rose said his

office utilized 14 deputies to provide security in the highly unusual location for court. The security force included 10 regular deputies and four posse members.

The sheriff's office brought in a mobile incident command vehicle, which was staffed with dispatchers who relayed information to the dispatch center in Mantorville. Rose said the portable radios used by officers do not work large facilities, creating the need for a makeshift mobile center outside of the school to relay radio transmissions.

Rose said a walk through metal detector was brought inside the school to utilize for security of visitors to the court hearing. Deputies also utilized metal detector wands for screening purposes.

Sgt. Rob Hovland coordinated the sheriff's response at the hearing. Hovland, who took over courthouse security in January, admitted the set up at the school was "unusual for all of us." He is used to dealing with security in a more controlled environment at the courthouse.

Asked about the challenges they faced, Hovland said, "It's not a building we typically deal with. It's a larger venue we have to try and secure."

The garage located



STAFF PHOTOS BY RICK BUSSLER

Top: Dodge County sheriff's deputies provide security inside Kasson-Mantorville High School Aug. 11 for the Lois Riess murder hearing. Bottom: The sheriff's office brought in an incident command unit and stationed it outside the auditorium where Riess appeared in court.



"It went very smoothly considering we were doing it (security) in a school."

Sheriff Scott Rose
Dodge County

behind the stage was used for deputies to drive Riess into the school rather than parade her outside in front of people. "For security reasons, we had transport drive into the garage with Lois," Rose said, noting Riess was never outside. "We were

trying to avoid any problems or issues," he added. While there were no threats or perceived safety concerns, Rose admits he didn't know what to expect for the hearing. "We didn't know how family was going to react," Rose

said. "You have to be prepared for anything." Rose was happy with how well everything took place. "It went very smoothly considering we were doing it in a school," he said. "It went off without a hitch, and it went as well as anyone could have expected."

The sheriff, who has been involved in law enforcement since 1996, says this is the highest profile case he has ever encountered in Dodge County.

Family members deliver emotional impact statements

BY RICK BUSSLER
PUBLISHER

More than two years after the murder, family members finally got a glimpse into what happened to David Riess in March 2018 inside his Blooming Prairie home.

Part of the frustration with the Lois Riess murder case has been that investigators have never been allowed to share any details of what happened with family members, Sheriff Scott Rose said. He noted last week's hearing was the first time family members heard exactly what took place.

Victim impact statements are typically written and presented in court after family members get details about the crime, but as Rose pointed out that did not happen in this case. Rose noted that no probable cause statements had ever been released regarding the Riess murder.

Even though they did not know details going into last week's hearing, four family members

gave victim impact statements.

"When you killed David, you took my heart," David's mother, Darlene Riess, said in a statement read by an Olmsted County social worker. "David was the family's ray of sunshine. I will never forgive you. You took a part of our life that we will never forget."

David's sister Cindy Sleeper told the court she couldn't figure out how Lois could kill David, who a year and a half before his death saved his wife's life. "Our family is fractured so a cold-blooded murderer could do her gambling habit," Sleeper said.

The couple's oldest son, Bill Riess, said he didn't care what his mother said happened that night. "I don't care how many times you apologize," he said. "You stole something from us."

Bill Riess pointed out how this has devastated the family. "The hurt

you caused my kids, your grandkids, is, they love you so much," he said. "They do not deserve this at all. It's so selfish. You have left us with a mess and a burden," he added.

In closing, Bill told his mother, "It will take a lot for me to talk or see you ever again."

The final statement came from the couple's daughter, Bria Riess, who was the most visibly emotional as she cried through most of her comments. "Losing my dad at the hands of my mom is something I will never be able to process," she said. "I cycle between anger, regret and sadness. I can never understand how something like this could happen," she said. Bria concluded by saying, "I miss my dad more than words can describe, but I have to allow for forgiveness in my heart, because that's what he would have wanted."



David Riess

Thanks to everyone who helped on Riess case

I would be remiss if I didn't take a few minutes to thank everyone that helped with the Lois Riess case. This was a challenging and unique case for us for many reasons: no prior contact with family, the second homicide in Florida, and the multiple agencies involved - and then throw COVID into the mix.

We need to thank the following agencies for all their great work and help with this case:

- Blooming Prairie Police Department
- Steele County Sheriff's Office
- Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension
- Iowa Criminal Investigation Division
- U.S. Marshals
- Lee County Sheriff's Office in Florida
- South Padre Island Police Department
- Minnesota Assistant Attorney General Matt Frank

Our investigators really did a great job with this case and put an incredible amount



Behind The Badge
SHERIFF SCOTT ROSE

of time and energy into finding her. Investigator Ben Bohle was lead on this case and did an absolutely outstanding job, as recognized last week in court by the Assistant Attorney General Matt Frank. Investigations Captain Jeff Brumfield also worked day and night to help follow leads from all over the country along with BCA Agent Mark Peterson. Investigator Bob Morris also assisted throughout as well. Fortunately, we were able to locate her before anyone else got hurt because of the people and agencies listed above.

We also have to give credit to our friends

in the media - local, state, and national - for your coverage of this case. The media played a big part in helping us apprehend Mrs. Riess as well.

This family lost their father, brother, and uncle at the hands of their mother, sister, and aunt. Their grandkids have essentially lost both their grandfather and grandmother - grandkids that spent a great deal of time with Lois and David at their home in Blooming Prairie. The community of Blooming Prairie also lost a valued business, and friends of many.

While justice was served, there were no winners. We just hope that the media is respectful of this family's privacy during this time and gives them some space so they can continue their grieving and healing process.

Scott Rose is the Dodge County Sheriff whose agency led the investigation in the Lois Riess murder case.

2018	TIMELINE OF LOIS RIESS MURDER CASE	2020
March 23, 2018: The body of David Riess was found in his home after police do a welfare check. March 27, 2018: Warrant issued in Dodge County for theft against Lois Riess, accused of stealing money from her dead husband. Authorities reveal Lois is a person of interest in David's death. April 2, 2018: Tess Koster of Blooming Prairie tells a harrowing story of coming face to face with Lois Riess in Florida. Koster's information provided police with the first solid lead of Riess' whereabouts since David's murder. April 9, 2018: Pamela Hutchinson of Bradenton, Fla. found murdered in Fort Myers Beach. She suffered fatal gunshot wounds. April 13, 2018: Authorities in Lee County Florida announce Lois Riess has been charged in Hutchinson's murder. A nationwide manhunt is launched to find Riess. April 19, 2018: U.S. Marshals capture Lois Riess in South Padre Island, Texas. She is sent back to Florida to face charges in the Hutchinson murder. April 20, 2018: Authorities execute a search warrant on Lois Riess' motel room and find two hand guns believed to be used in both murders.	February 2019: Minnesota Attorney General's Office takes over prosecution of the Riess homicide for Dodge County. May 2019: A grand jury is convened in Dodge County and indicts Lois Riess on first-degree murder charges for killing her husband. Dec. 17, 2019: Lois Riess pleads guilty to killing Pamela Hutchinson in Florida. Officials in Florida agreed to drop the death penalty against Riess.	2020 March: The COVID-19 pandemic hits delaying the return of Lois Riess to Minnesota to face murder charges. July 3: Dodge County deputies bring Lois Riess back to Minnesota from Florida. She is held in the Steele County Detention Center in Owatonna. Aug. 11: Lois Riess pleads guilty to first-degree pre-meditated murder for killing her husband. Judge hands down life in prison without parole sentence. She will spend the rest of her life in the Minnesota prison system in Shakopee.




PARKS and RECREATION

Calendar of Events

Parks and Recreation Contact Information

Email: parkrec@ci.owatonna.mn.us

Office & Cancellation Line: 507-444-4321
 Fax: 507-444-4299
 Facebook: Owatonna Parks and Recreation
 River Springs Water Park: 507-774-7370

Tennis & Fitness Center: 507-444-4290
 West Hills Social Commons: 507-444-4280
 Brooktree Clubhouse: 507-444-2467
 Park Maintenance: 507-774-7086

Our Mission

The city of Owatonna Parks and Recreation Department provides a diverse system of green spaces, trails, facilities, programs and services to enhance the quality of life for the community.

Steele County,
DID YOU KNOW
 PARKS & RECREATION
 Building life, inspiring community

Owatonna has over 12 miles of paved trails and biking has many health benefits, including reducing stress and improving posture and coordination? Take a bike ride this fall on the Owatonna trails and enjoy beautiful scenery and gain the benefits of exercise and fresh air.

Thank you Park Board Members!

Greg Posch, Angie Malo, Greg Louis, Nicholas Elsner, Jonathan Thiel, David Christiansen, and Andi Arnold



Youth Fall Registration

Youth fall registration is currently pending. We hope to offer a modified youth football and volleyball program this fall. Please visit our website for updates and details regarding registration and program information.

Registration Information

- Register online, on the Park & Rec website, by phone – 507-444-4321, or in person at the Park & Rec Office (Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.).
- Scholarship forms are available electronically, on our website or in person at the Park & Rec Office and must be completed before registering.

City Archery Hunt

- Registration deadline: September 11
- Register online on the Park & Rec website or at the Park & Rec Office (Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.).
- Two seasons:
 - November 1 - 28
 - November 29 - December 23

- Antlerless Deer only, Earn-a-Buck
- All DNR regulations apply
- Proficiency test required
- No crossbows (being reviewed for 2021)
- Parks included: Cashman, Hammann, Kaplan's Woods, Kaplan's Woods Parkway, North Straight River Park Area, Leo Rudolph Nature Reserve, Manthey, Maple Creek Parkway, Kriesel Park and Mineral Springs (second season only)
- \$20 non-refundable application fee
- Random draw if more than 50 hunters apply and if more than 30 hunters pass proficiency test
- For more information, contact Mary Jo Knudson, 507-774-7364 or maryjo.knudson@ci.owatonna.mn.us



Park Clean Up Kits

- Help us keep Owatonna's parks beautiful!
- Sign up online on the Park & Rec website.
- Pick-up your bucket of cleaning supplies at the park shop.
- Clean-up a park or trail using our pickers & garbage bags.
- Leave the trash near a garbage can & drop-off the bucket at the park shop!



Lake Kohlmer

The Lake Kohlmer beach house is open this summer for aquatic and trail equipment rentals and concessions. Rentals are \$6 per hour and rental options include: kayak, canoe, paddle board, paddle boat, hydro bike, tandem bike, electric assist trike and trail-a-bike. Lake Kohlmer will be stocked with adult, child and infant sized lifejackets which are included and required with each aquatic rental. If you have your own Coast Guard Approved Life Jacket it is recommended that you bring your own during the 2020 season. The beach is open daily and ropes are placed to indicate swim areas. There are no lifeguards on duty - individuals will swim according to beach rules and at their own risk. Please visit the Lake Kohlmer page on our website for more information.

2020 Rental/Concession Hours

June 22 – August 30:
 • Saturday-Sunday: noon – 7 p.m.
 Phone: 507-774-7372
 Address: 1550 Mosher Drive, Owatonna, MN 55060

Brooktree Golf Course

Fall is a great time of year to get a round of golf in! Brooktree Golf Course is known for its well-manicured fairways and exceptional greens. The course rating is 72.5 and has a slope rating of 128 from the blue tees. This challenging golf course is a beautiful parkland course that is characterized by Maple Creek meandering through and along 8 of the last 9 holes. Its multiple tees



accommodate the novice yet challenge the most accomplished golfer. Brooktree is regarded as one of the finest courses in Southern Minnesota; check it out this fall!

Broken Tee Restaurant at Brooktree serves delicious burgers and sandwiches, soft drinks, cocktails, beer, wine and weekend dinner specials. The Broken Tee Bar & Grille is the perfect complement to a great day of golf.

Call or visit their website for more information and to book your tee time.
 507-444-2467 | <https://www.brooktreegolfcourse.com>
 1369 Cherry Street • Owatonna, MN 55060

Cancellations and Closings Updates

The following are our most current closings and cancellations. To stay updated on our closings and cancellations, and for program cancellations and/or postponements, visit the Cancellations & Closings page on our website (<http://www.ci.owatonna.mn.us/291/Cancellations-Closings>) and like us on Facebook.

- Brooktree Golf Course – open. Visit their website for COVID-19 protocols.
- City Parks – open. Playgrounds, tennis and pickleball courts are open. Practice physical distancing.
- City Trails – open. Practice physical distancing.
- Dog Park – open. Practice physical distancing.
- Archery Park – open. Practice physical distancing.
- Parks & Recreation Offices – open.
- West Hills Social Commons – closed until further notice.
- West Hills Tennis & Fitness Center – closed until further notice.
- River Springs Water Park – open for Lap Swim, Water Aerobics, and Water Walking. Registration is required to participate, visit our website for registration and updates.



Stay Connected

We offer a variety of ways for you to stay updated and connected.

- Follow us on Facebook on the following pages:

- Owatonna Parks and Recreation
- West Hills Social Commons
- River Springs Water Park
- West Hills Tennis and Fitness Center
- Owatonna Dog Park

• Visit our website: www.ci.owatonna.mn.us/parksrecreation





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OBITUARIES

Obituaries Sponsor:
LEGACY MONUMENT SALES
Leon & Lori Bohman 507-456-7864 or 507-456-3735
landlbo@gmail.com

Gordon Leonard Sommer, 85, Owatonna

Gordon L. Sommer Jr., 85, of Owatonna, died following complications from surgery on Friday, Aug. 14, 2020, at the Mayo Clinic Hospital - St. Mary's Campus in Rochester surrounded by his loving family.

He was born May 22, 1935, in Owatonna, the son of Gordon and Martha (Kruger) Sommer Sr. Gordon graduated from Owatonna High School in 1953. On June 22, 1957, he married Lois Bishman. They had three children and later divorced.

He met Maryls (Dieking) Filzen and they were united in marriage on Aug. 12, 1995 at St. John Lutheran Church in Owatonna.

Gordon worked at Jostens for 18 years setting stones. He owned Sommer Sanitation for over 20 years. Gordon then worked for Perki Oil and Gas for eight years making deliveries to local farmers until his retirement.

He was known as a being very hardworking and was often busy doing something. Gordon was always having fun, meeting new people and making a friend wherever he went. He enjoyed traveling and spending time with his family especially his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Gordon was an active member of St. John Lutheran Church in Owatonna where he was an usher.

He is survived by his wife, Maryls Sommer of Owatonna; children, Julie Dettmer of Owatonna, John Sommer of Punta Gorda, Fla., Jill (Scott) Lushinsky Sommer of Henderson, Nev. step-children, David (Kirsten Hansen) Filzen of St. Peter, Diane (Ryan) Wempen of North Mankato, 16 grandchildren, 15 great-grandchildren; sister, Lorraine (Delmer) Reynolds of Brandon; many nieces and nephews.

Gordon was preceded in death by his step-son, Michael Filzen and sister, Betty Caswell.

Visitation will be at Michaelson Funeral Home on Friday from 4 to 7 p.m. and one hour prior to the service at the church. Funeral service will be held Saturday, Aug. 22, 2020, at 11 a.m. at St. John Lutheran Church with Pastor Dave Klawiter officiating. Interment will be in the Meadow Ridge Memorial Park in Faribault. Memorials are preferred to St. John Lutheran Church to go towards the radio fund, Lions Club in Owatonna or to the donor's choice.



Gordon Leonard Sommer

Owatonna Foundation awards scholarships

Several Owatonna students have been awarded scholarships from the Owatonna Foundation.

The Owatonna Foundation awards traditional and non-traditional scholarships each year. During this upcoming fall semester, six individuals will use traditional scholarship funds to assist with their education costs. These individuals graduated with the 2020 high school class.

Receiving traditional scholarships are Recipients

- Alexis Allen, Riverland Community College, General, \$1,500, parents Ryan and Chrissy Allen

- Rachel Benson, Riverland Community College, Health Sciences, \$2,000, parents Steve and Nancy Benson

- Annika Kilanowski, Southwest Technical College, Building Trades Carpentry, \$2,000, parents Chris and Nicole Kilanowski

- Oscar Julian Sanchez, Riverland Community College, Computer Engineering, \$2,000, parents Rosa and Oscar Sanchez

- Jason Spatenka, Riverland Community College, Construction Electrician, \$2,000, parent Teresa Spatenka

- Alexis Weintzel, Riverland Community College, Nursing, \$2,000, parents Kelly and Jason Schwartz

The nontraditional scholarships are awarded to individuals who are returning to college or continuing their education after high school graduation and four individuals received those scholarships. Recipients attend technical programs at technical or community colleges.

The nontraditional scholarship recipients include:

- Nick Staska, Northwest Technical

College, Electrical Construction and Maintenance, \$3,000, parents Brad and Jodi Staska

- Claire Stewart, Riverland Community College, Medical Administrative Assistant, \$3,000, Blaine and Roxi Stewart

- Alex Tryhus, Riverland Community College, Construction Electrician, \$3,000, Christy and Neil Tryhus

- Stanley Von Helms, Rochester Community and Technical College, Computer Aided Drafting, \$3,000, parent Tracy von Helms

The Foundation also awarded Hannah Gebur a \$1,500 June A. and Melanie Nelson Scholarship.

Gebur is attending Iowa State University and completing a chemical engineering degree. She is the daughter of Susan and Tom Gebur.

Since 1995 the Owatonna Foundation has awarded over 460 scholarships, totaling more than \$630,000, for individuals preparing for technical careers.

For the 2020-2021 school year, \$30,000 is available for scholarships. Nontraditional scholarship applications are due Oct. 25 and June 25. Traditional scholarships are due April 10.

Nelson Scholarship applications are due Oct. 25 and June 25. Applicants must be a woman, pursuing a non-traditional career, and have an Owatonna mailing address or have worked at an Owatonna business for at least the past two years.

Applications for any of the scholarships are available at the Foundation's office at 108 West Park Square, Owatonna; <http://www.owatonnafoundation.org>, Grants/Scholarships, and Apply for a Scholarship, or from Jill Holmes at 507-455-3059.

BOOK NOOK

Pick a book as reward for reading



NANCY
VAILLANCOURT

Hey kids! Have you been reading at least 20 minutes per day this summer? Then come to the Blooming Prairie Branch Library Book Fair on Aug. 25, 26, and 27. If you have read that much for 10 days or more each summer month, you can come and choose one book for each month.

We have ordered hundreds of books from Scholastic from which you can pick your favorites! The Imagine Your Story Book Fair will be held in the library from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. those days. Since we are limiting the total number of library guests to 15 at a time, you may have to wait outside for your turn.

Some of you have been keeping track of

your reading on paper logs. Some have been using the Beanstack app and winning cool online badges. Even if you didn't write it down, but know that you have done the reading, come to the Book Fair! We will be happy to have you choose your very own books to keep.

Adults and teens, keep reading until Aug. 31. After that date, we will be awarding prizes. Some will be for the most reading time and others will be random drawings. The grand prize for the teens will be gift cards. The adults can win a Kindle!

Our final story: Walk for the summer is ready to read! Start at Home Sellers, then go west on Main Street to find the story of the Little Blue Truck.

The Blooming Prairie Branch Library is open for short visits to use computers and to browse for items. Children under the age of 16 need to come with an adult. Our open hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Friday. Don't forget your masks!

UNIQUENESS IN A COVID: election

FROM A1

Rypka, who has been the clerk for Clinton Falls for the past 11 years, is all about saving the township money where she can. She also found another area for savings. Instead of purchasing new portable voting booths, she found some used ones for about one-third of the cost. The portable booths allow voters to sit down and cast their ballot instead of standing up.

Clinton Falls as well as the rest of the precincts throughout the county offered hand sanitizer stations at the front door. Judges encouraged voters to sanitize their hands as they walked into the polls.

Steele County Auditor Laura Ihrike, who serves as the county's chief election judge, said everything went well at all the precincts and there were no major issues for the primary. She said most people came to vote wearing their own masks. For those who didn't, masks were provided by the election judges.

Ihrike reported the county's voter turnout was 13.47%, which she considers average for a primary. Of the 2,992 votes cast, 1,308 were done by absentee voting, according to Ihrike. She said the absentee voting was definitely higher than normal,

which has been widely expected because of COVID-19.

The county also had its first experience with mail-in ballots for two precincts: City of Ellendale and Berlin Township. Ihrike said 30% of the registered voters in those precincts mailed in their ballots for the primary. Both precincts did not offer in-person voting.

Despite the pandemic, Ihrike did not have any problems finding people to work at the polls. "I was thankful we didn't have a shortage of election judges," she said. She added she also came across some new people wanting to be election judges.

The county auditor's office will have a short break for a few weeks before absentee voting for the general election begins Sept. 18. Ihrike expects absentee voting to be high for this year's presidential election.

The general election is Nov. 3. Meanwhile, Rypka is relieved that they have had a trial run with the primary for the upcoming general election.

"It has not been as hard as I envisioned it would be," Rypka said of the COVID election.

Asked if she expects COVID to keep voters away in November, Rypka said, "I have no idea. That's not for me to predict."



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Recipe Corner To Die for Blueberry Muffins

Muffins

1-1/2 C flour
3/4 C white sugar
1/2 T salt
2 T baking powder
1/3 C vegetable oil
1 egg
1/3 C milk
1 C fresh blueberries

Crumb topping

1/2 C white sugar
1/3 C flour
1/4 C butter, cubed
1-1/2 T cinnamon

Crumb topping mixture
Mix together 1/2 C sugar, 1/3 C flour, 1/4 C butter and 1-1/2 tsp cinnamon. Mix with fork and sprinkle over muffins before baking.

Combine 1-1/2 C flour, 3/4 C sugar, salt and baking powder. Place vegetable oil into a 1 C measuring cup; add the egg and enough milk to fill the cup. Mix this with flour mixture. Fold in blueberries.

Fill muffin cups 2/3 full and sprinkle with crumb topping mixture.

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Grease muffin cups or line with muffin liners. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes or until done.

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STEELE COUNTY
Times



COVID: FROM A3

Caron said they have not seen any significant changes in numbers since the statewide mask order went into effect several weeks ago. "We like to think that it's helping. It's one of our primary defenses against this right now," she said. She added hand washing and keeping 6-feet apart from others are the other things people need to focus on doing.

The guidelines for long-term care facilities will be changing soon. Beginning Aug. 29, facilities will be able to operate under two different levels. The first level restricts visitation of family members, which all facilities have been utilizing since March. The second level allows limited amounts of visitation. Facilities have to go 28 days with no positive cases to operate under the second level. Everyone has to test negative in the facility in order for them to take advantage of Level two.

Caron said even if facilities qualify for Level two, it's up to them if they want to allow visitors in. She noted some of the facilities in the county currently fall into Level two. However, they can't allow in-person visitation until Aug. 29.

COVID-19 has been very difficult for long-

term care facilities, Caron said. "It's pretty heart breaking when residents can't see their loved ones," she said. "It takes a toll on the emotional and social health of the residents."

Public Health has been working with school districts in both Steele and Dodge counties over the past two weeks on their learning models for the upcoming school year. "They are trying to find a model they can stay in for a while," Caron said. "The schools have been very thoughtful and detailed planning in a short period of time. They are looking at the health and safety of the kids."

Caron's department also became involved in determining the fate of Fair Fest, which originally started out as an event where people could go to food vendors. It has since been scaled back and become a drive in event where people need to stay in their vehicles.

She said there was no solid plan in place that would keep people spread out during the event. "It became a traffic control issue," Caron said. She is happy to see that the event will still go on but in a different format. "It's a lot safer to have people in their vehicles," she added.

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Something's not quite right...



Pastor Michael Simmerman
BETH-EL CHURCH
OWATONNA

Maybe you can relate. After a particularly long week of work, Saturday finally arrived. Amazingly, the kids didn't wake up early (so I got to sleep in). I started the morning off with some good coffee, and then with a couple of house projects to finish up (which are also therapeutic for me) I decided to run to the store for a few things, and then come back to make an already great day into an even better one by productively knocking a few honey-do's off the list as well.

All seemed right in the world - until I left the house.

On the way to the store, I noticed people

driving with masks on (by themselves - which I'll never understand). Then, as I walked into the store I saw a coldly displayed "masks required" sign at the entrance, followed by the pleasant experience of shopping mostly with others whose eyes darted away before I got the chance to say hello. All of this (of course) capped off by staying behind the intimidating plexiglass shields in the check-out lines before leaving.

Such is the world we live in. It seems on the one hand, there are moments (like my morning) when you can almost convince yourself that "all is

right in the world." No masks, no fears, no sickness, no worries. Until you get the glimpse of a mask (again) or a "drive thru only" sign again that serves as a subtle reminder that something really is broke. And while it's not the end of the world (yet), it reminds you that the world is not how it ultimately should be.

And while I wouldn't go so far as to use the word "thankful," this is a profound reminder of how the Bible describes the constant state of the world since the fall in Genesis 3. Romans 8:20 says that all creation has been "groaning" since sin first entered

the world. Which simply means that while on one level you *can* enjoy so much (nature, relationships, good health, well behaved kids) and think "this is great!" It's only a matter of time before something goes wrong (natural disasters, racial tensions, a positive cancer screening, or strained family relationships) and you're reminded again that something is broke in our world.

The good news though, is how realities like these ought to make us long for the day that Revelation 21 predicts where we're told there will be no more death, or mourning, or crying, or pain;

and where Jesus from his throne will say: "Behold, I am making everything new!"

So next time you see a "masks required" sign, or have to yell through the plexiglass shield at Walmart just so the cashier can hear what you're saying, don't just be frustrated that the world is broken because of our sin. Also be reminded that those who look to Jesus to forgive them of their sin, are in for better days ahead when Christ finally returns and makes all things right again. I pray you know this Jesus personally so that you too can look ahead with this certain and unshakable hope.

AREA WORSHIP SCHEDULE

LUTHERAN

AURORA LUTHERAN
639 SE 28th St., Owatonna
Pastor Stephanie Wood
507-676-5096
Worship: Sunday at 9 a.m.
Sunday School: 10:15 a.m.

COMMUNITY LUTHERAN - ELCA
106 Third St. SE, Geneva
Pastor Kristen Venne
507-256-4288
Worship: 9:30 a.m. Sun.

FIRST LUTHERAN - AFLC
503 Kadel Ct., Ellendale
Pastor Richard Sliper
507-684-2451

Men's Bible Study: 8 a.m. Saturday
Worship: 9 a.m. Sunday
(Kids church 9 a.m. and Confirmation: 10:15 a.m.)
Jesus and Me: 3:30-5 p.m.
Tuesday & Thursday
Call to Prayer: 7 p.m. Tuesday
Bible Study: 9:30 a.m. Wednesday
Wednesday School: 6:15-7 p.m.
followed by Youth Group 7-9 p.m.

FIRST LUTHERAN - ELCA
434 First St. SW, Blooming Prairie
Senior Pastor: Rev. Heidi Hermgartner
Associate Pastor: Rev. Mike Valerius
507-683-6621

firstlutheranbp.com
Worship: 9 a.m. Sunday
Sunday School: 10 a.m.

FIRST LUTHERAN - LCMC
8853 SW 57th Ave., Hope Pastor
Sandy Miller
507-451-3854

Worship: 9 a.m. Sun.
Sunday School, Adult Ed.:
10:15 a.m. Sun.

GOOD SHEPHERD LUTHERAN - LCMC
2500 7th Ave. NE., Owatonna
Pastor Greg Schlicker
507-451-4125

goodshepherdowatonna.com
Worship: 8 a.m., 9:15 a.m. & 10:30 a.m.
Sunday School: 9:15 a.m.

MOLAND LUTHERAN - ELCA
7618 NE 84th Ave., Kenyon
Pastor Nancy Edmondson
507-280-6661

Worship: 10:45 a.m. Sun.
Sunday School: 9:30 a.m.

PONTOPPIDAN LUTHERAN - ELCA
9651 SW 75th St., Ellendale
507-465-8366

Worship: 10:15 a.m. Sun.
Sunday School: 9 a.m. Sun.

REDEEMER LUTHERAN - LCMC
1054 Truman Ave., Owatonna
Pastor Kirk Grubel
507-451-2720

Worship: 9 a.m. Sun.
Education Hour: 10:15 a.m. Sun.

RED OAK GROVE LUTHERAN - ELCA
30456 Mower-Freibers Road, Austin
Leandra Anderson, Pastor
507-583-2038 or 507-437-3000

www.rogulutheran.org
Worship: 9 a.m. Sun.
Sunday School: 9:15 a.m.

ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN - LCMC
4532 SE 84th Ave., Claremont
Pastor Alan Broadwell
507-528-2484

Worship: 10:30 a.m. Sun.
Sunday School: 9:15 a.m.

ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN - LCMC
28959 630th Ave., Sargeant
Pastor Collin Dulung
507-251-5568

Worship: 10:15 a.m. Sun.
Sunday School: 9 a.m.

ST. JOHN LUTHERAN - ELCA
1301 Lincoln Ave. Owatonna
Pastors Dave Klawier
and Jesse Richmond
507-451-7293

stjohnowatonna.org
Worship: 5 p.m.
Thursday & Saturday:
8 a.m. & 10:30 a.m. Sunday
Summer Services:
8 a.m. & 9:30 a.m. Sunday

ST. MICHAEL'S LUTHERAN - ELCA
30450 570th Ave., Waltham
Pastor Dwight Dohell
507-567-2474

Worship: 8:30 a.m. Sun.

ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN - LCMC
202 E. Park Ave., Hollandale
Pastor Jesse Krusemark
507-567-2272

Worship: 8:30 a.m. Sun.
Sunday School: 8:45 a.m.

ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN - ELCA
2781 SW 92nd Ave., Meriden
Pastor: Rev. Dean Smith
507-451-2165

Worship: 9 a.m. outdoors only,
weather permitting

TRINITY LUTHERAN - ELCA
609 Lincoln Ave., Owatonna
507-451-4520

trinityowatonna.org
Senior Pastor: Rev. Todd Buegler
Associate Pastor: Rev. Amanda Eloy
Deacon: Kris Oppgaard

Worship: 5 p.m. Saturday: 8:15 a.m.,
9:30 a.m. & 10:45 a.m. Sunday
Sunday School:
8:15 a.m. & 9:30 a.m.

TRINITY LUTHERAN - ELCA
104 First St. SE., Hayfield
Pastor Paul Henschel
507-477-2248

www.trinityhayfield.org
Worship: 8 a.m. & 10:30 a.m. Sun.
Sunday School: 9:15 a.m.

TRINITY LUTHERAN - LCMC
108 Third Ave. SW, Medford
Pastor Mark Heibigshammer
507-451-0447

Worship: Sunday 9 a.m. in Sanctuary
Wednesday 6:30 p.m. outdoor south
side lawn, bring lawn chairs

TRINITY LUTHERAN - LCMC
57043 306th St., Waltham
Pastor Jesse Krusemark
507-567-2272

Worship: 10:30 a.m. Sun.
Sunday School: 9:15 a.m.

ZION LUTHERAN - ELCA
7126 SW 96th St., Ellendale
Pastor: Rev. Dean Smith
Worship: 8:30 a.m. Sun.
8 a.m. outdoors only, weather
permitting

OUR SAVIOR'S LUTHERAN - ELCA
1909 St. Paul Road, Owatonna
Senior Pastor:
John Weisenburger
Associate Pastor: Lisa Carlson
507-451-4853

oursaviorsowatonna.com
Worship: 8:15 a.m.: Traditional,
9:30 a.m.: Sunday School/Adult
Education
10:45 a.m.: Contemporary

CATHOLIC
CHRIST THE KING
205 Second Ave. NW, Medford
507-451-6353

Father James Starastnick
Deacon Patrick Fagan
Mass: 5:30 p.m. Sat.
Mass: 9 a.m. Mon. & Fri.

CHURCH OF ALL SAINTS
307 SW First St., New Richland
Father Brian Mulligan
507-334-6244

Mass: 5:30 p.m. Sat.
Mass: 9 a.m. Mon. & Fri.

HOLY TRINITY CATHOLIC CHURCH OF LITOMYSL
9948 SE 24th Ave. Owatonna
Father John Wilmont
507-583-2784

www.litomysslweb.com
Sunday Mass at 8:30 a.m.
Litomysl Finance Council:
2nd Thursday
Litomysl Pastoral Council:
2nd Thursday every other month
Litomysl Service Festival has been
cancelled for 2020

SACRED HEART CATHOLIC
150 NE Second St., Hayfield
Father John Wilmont
507-477-2256

Mass: 5 p.m. Saturday
Reconciliation: 3:45 pm Saturday
Deacon: Kris Oppgaard

SACRED HEART PARISH
810 S. Cedar Ave., Owatonna
Father John Sauer Parochial Vicar
507-451-1588

www.sacredheartowatonna.org
Mass: 5 p.m. Saturday:
8:30 a.m. & 10 a.m. Sun.
Spanish Mass: 11:45 a.m. Sun.
Daily Mass: 7:15 a.m. Sun.
Reconciliation: 4 p.m. Sat.
Adoration: 8 a.m. - 10 p.m. Thurs.

ST. COLUMBANUS CATHOLIC
114 E. Main St., Blooming Prairie
Father John Wilmont
507-583-2784

www.stcolumbanuschurch.com
Mass: 10:30 a.m. Sunday
Reconciliation: 9 a.m.
First Friday & Saturday

ST. JOSEPH CATHOLIC PARISH
512 S. Elm Ave., Owatonna

Father James Starastnick
Deacon Patrick Fagan
507-451-4845

Saturday Mass: 4 p.m.
Sunday Mass: 8 & 10 a.m.
Reconciliation: 3-3:30 p.m. Sat.
Daily Mass:
8 a.m. Tues., Wed. & Fri.
(Communion Service 8 a.m. Thursday)

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CHRIST COMMUNITY COVENANT
540 SE 18th St., Owatonna
Dr. V. Brent Carlson, Pastor
507-451-1032

Worship: 9 a.m. Sun.
Sunday Connections: 10:15 a.m.

PENTECOSTAL
FIRST PENTECOSTAL
230 Locust Ave., Owatonna
Pastor Eliazar Talamantes
507-363-2240

Worship: 10 a.m. Sunday:
6:30 p.m. Wednesday

METHODIST
BLOOMING GROVE UNITED METHODIST
45089 180th St., Medford (Seven
miles west of Medford on CR-28)
Pastors J & Stefanie Morgan
507-835-8726

Worship: 8:30 a.m. Sun.
Sunday School: 9:45 a.m.
Prayer Meeting: 7:30 p.m. Wed.

ELLENDALE UNITED METHODIST
200 Sixth St. NW., Ellendale Pastor
Randy Cirksema
507-684-2731

www.ellendaleumc.org
Worship: 10:30 a.m. Sun.
Sunday School: 9:15 a.m.

OWATONNA UNITED METHODIST
815 E. University, Owatonna
Rev. Lisa J. Vick
Pastor
507-451-4774

www.owatonnaumc.org
Traditional Worship (Pathways):
9 a.m. Sunday

NON-DENOMINATIONAL
BRIDES OF HOPE COMMUNITY
130 W. Bridge St., Owatonna
Pastor Keith Haskell
507-215-2249

Worship: 10 a.m. Sun.
Bible Study: 9 a.m. Sun.
Reformers Unanimous Meetings:
7 p.m. Friday

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Blooming Prairie Public Utilities would like to take this opportunity to announce to any local Blossom that would be interested in submitting a design of their own creation to represent the community and become the new logo on the upcoming new water tower. There is no prize offering, but the winner will have the rewarding satisfaction of having their vision of our community being enjoyed by both residents and visitors alike for decades to come.

Anyone interested is invited to submit any questions or designs to Jerry Mausbach at (507) 583-6683 or jerry@bpu.net.

The deadline for submission is October 16, 2020.

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Firefighters battle smoky mess



Black smoke darkened the sky in Blooming Prairie Wednesday, Aug. 12 when a fire was reported at commercial storage buildings owned by area roofer Davin Johnson.

BY HOWARD LESTRUDE
STAFF WRITER

Four area fire departments from Blooming Prairie, Ellendale, Geneva and Hayfield fought an afternoon fire on Wednesday, Aug. 12 at 636 East Main St. in Blooming Prairie.

Fire burned two commercial buildings owned by Davin Johnson of Blooming Prairie. Johnson specializes in roofing and siding.

The buildings, 30 x 70 and 26 x 40, reportedly were used for cold storage. One building was metal and the other, called the old depot, was of wood and metal.

Black smoke billowed into the skies just east of Highway 218 and Main Street. The alarm was sounded at about 2:10 p.m. Nobody was in the building at the time.

Lightning strikes at about 1:15 p.m. were reported in Blooming Prairie during the early afternoon Wednesday.

BP Fire Chief Dean Naatz said it is believed a lightning strike caused the fire. He said the buildings were not powered, nor was gas serving the buildings.

Naatz said he was in communication with the State Fire Marshal's office and it was determined that a visit by the Fire Marshal was not needed.

The buildings were a total loss, Naatz said.

Two vehicles, a dump truck and a Ford Ranger, were in the buildings at the time of the fire. Several loud pops were heard as the fire raged on into the afternoon. Johnson said he believed the sounds were the explosion of the vehicle gas tanks.

Naatz praised the work of the firefighters who responded to the call. He said 43 firefighters responded to the fire. "Mutual aid is a wonderful thing," he remarked.

SEE FIREFIGHTERS, B2



PHOTO COURTESY PAMELA LUJAN

Once most of the smoke cleared, it became evident the devastation caused by the fire. About 25,000 gallons of water was used Wednesday and Thursday to bring the fire under control. No one was hurt in the blaze.



STAFF PHOTO BY HOWARD LESTRUDE

Fire on Wednesday, Aug. 12 in Blooming Prairie destroyed two commercial buildings owned by Davin Johnson. Fire departments from Blooming Prairie, Ellendale, Geneva and Hayfield fought the fire.

Various candidates file for local, school races

BY RICK BUSSLER
PUBLISHER

Several races are shaping up for various city and school board seats for the November general election after filings closed Aug. 11. There will be mayoral races in three of

the four Steele County communities while the fourth city is up for grabs without anyone filing. In Blooming Prairie, Tom Blome will be challenging incumbent mayor Curtis Esplan. In Owatonna, Ethan Cords has filed to run against incumbent

mayor Thomas A. Kuntz. Medford Mayor Lois Nelson is being challenged by Danny Robert Thomas. No one filed for mayor in Ellendale where Russ Goette currently serves in the top spot. Various council seats have also garnered

interest from community members. In Blooming Prairie, four people have filed for two open council seats. They are Greg Johnson, Trevor Kruckeberg,

SEE VARIOUS, B3

Shea refuses PAC, corporate donations in quest for state house

Tom Shea, candidate for State Representative in District 24A, has announced that his campaign will not accept PAC contributions (Political Action Committee) or corporate donations to his campaign. "The reliance on PAC and special interest money by candidates is a significant factor in



Tom Shea

the corrosion of our elective systems," Shea said. "Our campaign will rely solely on individual contributions, local party donations, and public financing," he added.

"Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this election will be very unique, and hopefully one of a kind,"

SEE SHEA REFUSES PAC, B2

Hobby turns into store for pet lovers

BY RICK BUSSLER
PUBLISHER

Ever since Barry Benjamin was 5 years old, he has been breeding animals, primarily fish. What started out for him as a hobby has now turned into his very own pet store.

Benjamin opened Happy Tails Pet Store in the Medford Outlet Mall in late March just as the COVID-19 pandemic took hold across the state. He was fortunate to be able to stay open because pet stores were considered essential because of animal food.

The store offers reptiles, snakes, amphibians, fresh water fish, rodents, rabbits and birds. Benjamin even has live mice, rats and insects. "The ones that people try to keep out of their house," he says with a chuckle. While he

doesn't sell any dogs or cats, he carries supplies for all animals. Benjamin's favorite is fresh water fish. In fact, he has had as many as 42 fish tanks in his home at one time over the years. "I like fish a lot," he stressed. "It's so peaceful watching them," he said. He noted research has shown watching fish can lower blood pressure. "That's pretty awesome," he says.

"I know where my fish and birds come from," Benjamin said. "Everything else I breed at the store." Rabbits have been very popular to the point of where Benjamin can't keep up with the demand. He purchases rabbits from area 4-H members to keep up his inventory. "It helps them put money back into their projects," he said.

SEE HOBBY TURNS, B3



STAFF PHOTO BY RICK BUSSLER

Dexter Benjamin, 5, loves to help his father, Barry, out at Happy Tails Pet Store in Medford. Dexter is shown with some bearded dragons climbing on his shirt. Barry Benjamin opened the pet store in late March during COVID-19.

Helping students transition back to school



Steele Talkin' BOBBI MATHERN

People, by nature, thrive in predictable and structured environments. COVID-19 has shaken this sense of security and we are all grasping for some sense of normalcy and some sense of predictability. People, by nature, are also quite adaptable and

resilient. We are able to find ways to process the loss of what was, adapt to changes in circumstances, and find new ways to enjoy life.

In all years past, that we can remember, this has been the time of year when students and parents are enjoying summer vacations, going to fairs, spending time with friends or family, and getting ready for the return to school. This year is different in so many ways. Many students are yearning to return to normalcy; to see their friends, to learn new things, to play sports, to have a routine.

SEE HELPING STUDENTS, B3

EDA visits new Medford businesses



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

Members of the Medford EDA welcome three new businesses to Medford. They are Rad Zoo, Happy Tails and Bella Vita Salon, all located in the Medford Outlet Mall. Top: Rad Zoo, from left, Board members Bryan Duncan, Chair Tom Heister, Mary Cronin, Mayor Lois Nelson and owner Jamie Pastika. Pastika and Melissa moved to the UltraOutlets shortly after the first of the year from County Road 45 North of Owatonna. Their grand opening coincided with the COVID Shutdown. They have an expanded merchandise area, new creatures and air conditioning. They are opened weekdays mornings and by appointment, but are resuming full days Thursday-Sunday now. A great place to bring the family or schedule special parties. Bottom: Bella Vita Salon, from left: EDA Board Member Mary Cronin, Mayor Lois Nelson, owner Daria and Heather Terpstra, and Chair Tom Heister. The salon moved back to the center in November after spending some time in Fairbault. Business was going well prior to the COVID and declaration of closing all salons. Reopened once again with safeguards in place and working to catch up with all their clients.

MAYOR
LOIS NELSON

Here is a special invitation as we are in this month of August—Come SHOP Medford! Even with school days schedule still questionable, all family members have grown during these summer months. You have done a good job of getting through drawers and closets and may just need a few items. You have kept paint suppliers busy with freshening up the walls of your homes. Alan and Matthew and their helpful staffs are ready to offer assistance—whether a new single item or a room full of furniture. Check out Ashley Furniture and Furniture Mart along the West Frontage road. A great inventory of furniture and new, seasonal items are displayed throughout the stores

Come shop Medford

to give you even more ideas!

At UltraOutlets, you will find plenty of parking spaces. Each store has its own entrance so you can shop and visit safely. A few are limiting a number of shoppers at any one time with sales associates outside to greet you and sharing the day's specials. All are requiring masks as we all follow state guidelines with the goal of keeping everyone safe while enjoying your shopping experience. Great back to school sales and fall wear await. Several stores also have displays on the sidewalks out front so you can take your time and enjoy the fresh air too.

Our Economic Development Authority (EDA) board members welcomed our newest stores Aug. 12. First stop was Barry Benjamin at Happy Tails Pet Store. His inventory of assorted fish is still increasing, along with assorted reptiles—big and little. A still to-be-named box constrictor—about six

foot in length—is available. Barry assured me it only has to feed every two weeks. Bunny rabbits of various breeds and sizes are looking for homes. Of course, a great assortment of pet food will keep your pets healthy and happy.

Second stop was Daria Terpstra at Bella Vita Salon. She is busy with clients catching up on haircuts, colors and all the tender loving care she and her daughter can assist you.

Our third stop was Jamie and Melissa Pastiche at the new RADZOO with an expanded merchandise area and creatures to entertain all the people in your family. They are returning to full day, regular visiting hours Thursday-Sunday. Other weekdays have varying hours. All three sites have regular postings on their own Facebook pages.

UltraOutlets website: <https://www.ultraoutlets.com/> also confirms store hours and current specials.

Downtown Medford has the two salons—Full Service Station and

Magic Shear Salon where you can call for an appointment. Jeri Wendt at Glitzzy Fashions has a great sale underway for party dresses—whether teens, young adults, wedding attendants and mothers, you are sure to find something. Closed Wednesdays. Hours available on Facebook or by appointment.

Of course, don't leave our downtown without stopping at Grampa's Meats for their world-famous tri-tips or other meat selections to share around your table during the week.

Thank you for including us on your shopping tour. All of us in Medford welcome you while encouraging you to keep sanitizer on hand, washing your hands, respecting social distancing and wearing facemasks. Stay safe and healthy!

Lois M. Nelson currently serves as mayor of Medford. She is running for re-election this fall. She can be reached at dlnelson1167@gmail.com or 507-390-4553.



FIREFIGHTERS: battle smoky mess

FROM B1

Blooming Prairie dispatched 18 firefighters to the call. Geneva had six firefighters on duty. Ellendale sent 9 firefighters and Hayfield sent 10 to the scene. Blooming Prairie used its ladder truck to help extinguish the fire. Naatz said the department was called back to the scene at 12:30 a.m. Thursday, Aug. 13, when some hot spots reappeared.

Chief Naatz said heavy timber part of one of the buildings, caused a slight chal-

lenge to the firefighters. He said the wood "really absorbs the water." He said more than 25,000 gallons of water were used to fight the fire.

Nikki Ryks who resides just west of the fire location said she was watching "Gun smoke" on television when she looked outside and saw a foggy sky. She then realized that fire was raging to the southeast of her residence.

Area departments helped haul water from the city's water supply at the fire hall.

BY HOWARD LESTRUD
STAFF WRITER

By a unanimous vote, the Blooming Prairie City Council at a regular meeting on Aug. 10 voted to approve a contract with Abdo, Eick & Meyers to create a long-term capital improvement plan, debt management plan and a utility rate study.

The contract covers a long-term capital improvement plan, a debt management plan, a utility rate study and

a compensation study. Cost to do the four plans will be \$23,400.

The long-term capital improvement plan will provide a schedule that will guide the city in replacing capital equipment such as vehicles, lawn mowers, pumps, turnout gear and many other items.

A debt management plan will assist the city in determining when larger projects should occur. City Administrator Andrew Langholz will provide the firm a devel-

oping plan with information about upcoming projects including the scope of the projects and including a time frame in which they will occur.

A utility rate study ties in closely with the debt management plan. With the information provided to the firm, it will be able to determine where sewer and storm sewer rates should be set and how they will need to change over time to ensure that enterprise funds are financially sound and

can contribute toward the cost of a project.

A compensation study is a comprehensive approach to determine if the employees of Blooming Prairie Public Utilities are being compensated proportionately to other cities.

Langholz recommends using city reserves to pay for the planning costs.

The original cost of the planning studies was \$23,500. Discounts brought the final total to \$23,400.

SHEA REFUSES PAC: corporate donations in quest for state house

FROM B1

Shea said, "There will be no door to door campaigning by myself or volunteers. There will be no literature drops, and no in person meetings by our campaign. It has been most gratifying to personally connect

with individual voters, organizations or groups of voters such as book clubs and coffee catchers. Shea indicated that his campaign will be offering Zoom meetings to personally connect

with individual voters, organizations or groups of voters such as book clubs and coffee catchers. Shea will also be available for phone conversations. To schedule a meeting with Shea, go to the campaign web

site, TomShea.com/contact or call 507-451-9716.

Shea, former State Representative and Steele County Commissioner, is challenging John Petersburg for the House seat from Steele and Waseca counties.

ASK THE MOTOR MEDICS By Shannon Nordstrom and Russ Evans Dear Motor Medics, I am the proud owner of a 2005 Dodge Grand Caravan that has had at least 6 sets of brakes on it. Mind you I only have 130k miles on the vehicle. You may think it is just my heavy foot resting on the brake pedal with that kind of replacement history, but I have owned it since new and the first set lasted for 90k miles. The Front have only been changed three times, but it is the back that give me the trouble. The passenger side rear keeps sticking and at night they sometimes glow red they are so hot. Kyle in Larchwood Iowa Ouch! That is way too many brake jobs for any vehicle in that low mileage. Unless you are doing some heavy towing or riding the brakes, they should not need more than a few sets of brakes in that time on average. When you say the rear has been replaced that many times but the front only three it makes us wonder about the shape of the rear system other than just the pads and rotors. The brake calipers and caliper brackets must all move freely, and the brake hoses all need to be in good shape. If any of these components have failed it will lead to repeat brake failure. Check with the mechanic doing the repairs and ask what parts have been replaced and make sure that all of the components have been checked. Take care, The Motor Medics	Schaeffer's SPECIALIZED LUBRICANTS Bruce Freerksen (507)273-9110 bruce@schaefferltd.com West Concord, MN	LAD Recycling, Inc. Scrap Iron & Metals WE BUY ALL METALS! 507-527-2408 or LADRecycling.com 65070 STATE HWY 66, West Concord, MN
Dear Motor Medics, I drive a 2005 Chevy Uplander with 350k miles on the odometer. I have owned it since new and have only done regular maintenance like spark plugs and filters, tires, and waxes. No major engine work, not even a water pump in all these years. I am wondering how much longer it can go. Is it a time bomb just waiting to leave me stranded on the roadside? What big items make these cars fail and what can I do to keep it going? Phil in Bottineau North Dakota That is a good life for this model vehicle. The Uplander is a great platform and we usually see the body outlast the drivetrain with many of our own customers replacing a transmission or engine or both before they reach 200k miles. Your 350k is an exception to the norm. You obviously have been doing a good job of changing fluids and filters and driving the car with care or else you would not have come this far. As for what you can do to keep it running, keep doing what you have been and keep those fingers crossed. One of the most common failures on this engine is the intake gaskets or head gaskets. It really is an expensive fix and many people will add a bottle of K-Seal which helps prevent future leaks in a cooling system to help keep the car on the road a little longer. Good luck Phil. Take care, The Motor Medics	Kappy's COLLISION CENTER Now using PPG Waterborne Paint STAY HAPPY www.kappysauto.com kappysauto@gmail.com SEE KAPPY Charles & Cheryl 507-451-8989	ALL Insurance AUTO • HOME • LIFE • BUSINESS INSURANCE Jacob Simons 507.361.7556 jacob@allinsure.com 2518 Superior Dr NW Suite 101A Rochester, MN 55901
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Owatonna offers mix of in-person and distance learning

Elstad unveils learning models for upcoming school year

BY RICK BUSSLER
PUBLISHER

Instruction at Owatonna Schools will feature in-person learning for younger students and a hybrid version of both in-person and distance learning for older kids.

On Monday afternoon, Superintendent Jeff Elstad released the school's specific plans for the new school year. In late July, Gov. Tim Walz announced that local schools could make up their own plans for the school year based on the unique situations facing each district.

Owatonna's elementary schools will begin the school year with face-to-face instruction five days a week with reduced class sizes and creative utilization of space, Elstad said.

Grades 6-12 will take part in a hybrid learning model of two days of in-person learning and three days of distance learning per week.



Jeff Elstad

"It is important to know that this starting model may be in effect for at least the first quarter of the school year," Elstad said. "Trends in COVID-19 cases may result in adjustments in the learning model," he added.

In making the announcement, Elstad said the school used the most current health data provided by the Minnesota Department of Health and local public health agencies.

Elstad said the district used five goals to determine a safe start:

- Prioritize the safety of students and staff
- Prioritize in-person learning, especially for younger learners
- Consider infectiousness and transmission risk among different ages
- Support planning, while permitting flexibility for districts
- Take into account disease prevalence at a local level.

When students are on campus, face coverings will be required for students in kindergarten. Parents will be required to conduct a

daily health screening at home prior to sending their child to school. "Parents must keep students who are ill at home," Elstad stresses.

Some families have chosen to participate in full-time distance learning, which the school will accommodate by assigning a certified teacher for their instruction. Enrollment in distance learning will require a commitment of at least one full semester.

"We know that this school year may be anything but ordinary and traveling into the unknown is sometimes frustrating and overwhelming," Elstad said. "Through the unknown, we are committed to providing the safest and best educational experience for all of our students."

For more information, go to www.isd761.org.



It is a father-son dual at Happy Tails Pet Store in Medford. With a critter climbing around his shoulder, Barry Benjamin operates the store with help from his 5-year-old son, Dexter.

"I love it. Honestly, it's fulfilling every day."

Barry Benjamin
Happy Tails Pet Owner

HOBBY TURNS: FROM B1

As a customer walked in last week, Benjamin's miniature Pinscher dog raced to the front door barking loudly. "Very friendly door man coming around, just loud," Benjamin yelled out to the customer. "He just likes to greet people."

Even though the pandemic has left most people shuttered at home, it has been good for the pet industry, Benjamin said.

Because people are at home more, they are flocking out to buy fish tanks, lizards and other animals.

"People find comfort in animals," he said.

"I love it. Honestly, it's fulfilling every day," Benjamin says of owning a pet store.

"It's a job that I have fun at every day. I can't imagine anything else after this."

Asked what intrigues him the most about pets, Benjamin responded, "Each animal has its own personality, even fish." He finds reptiles more affectionate than small animals. "They just want the best off of you. You are just a big warm branch to

them," he said.

While Benjamin, 37, admits it's the worst time to open a business in 100 years since the Great Depression, he has found it to be a rewarding venture.

"I'm still smiling, just behind a mask right now," he said. "I wouldn't trade this life for anything," he added.

Besides having pets as a hobby, Benjamin also worked for another pet store in the area and at the Rad Zoo, which recently relocated to the Medford Outdoor Center.

While it has nothing to do with pets, Benjamin has a degree in chemical engineering from Minnesota State University Mankato.

He graduated from Owatonna High School in 2001.

Benjamin's 5-year-old son, Dexter, enjoys helping out at the pet store. "He can feed everybody," Benjamin said. "It's awesome, miniature me," he said looking at his son.

Happy Tails is open Monday through Saturday except Tuesdays from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Sundays from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

HELPING STUDENTS: transition back to school FROM B1

Many parents are wishing for the same things for their kids.

If you are a parent of a student this year, you may be wondering what you can do to help your child or teen adjust to this unprecedented school year. First, it is important to know that whatever decision you make regarding your children's schooling is okay. You have been put in a position like none other with having to choose whether to send your children to school or keep them home. Every person is different, every family is different, and there is no right or wrong choice that fits all.

Secondly, it is vital that parents take care of their own mental health. This is a difficult time to be a parent. There are increased worries and increased responsibilities. Youth look to adults to learn how to respond to situations. When parents practice good self-care and balance in their own lives, their children learn this as a way to manage stress as well. Parents can take care of themselves by getting enough sleep, eating healthy foods, exercising, making time for leisure activities, practicing mindfulness (paying attention to the present moment), practicing gratitude (noticing what you are thankful for), and avoid-

ing using substances to self-medicate. Parents can seek support from other adults who understand what they are going through. Parents can seek professional supports as well, such as therapy or NAMI groups.

Maintaining structure and routine in your own life will inevitably provide structure and routine in your children's and teenager's lives. We all need to have consistency and balance with sleep, nutrition, exercise, leisure time, work time, screen time, alone time, and social time. It is important to balance productivity and rest, and to put things in place to keep these two things separate. For example, set up space in the home to be used only for schooling or work. Set a schedule ahead of time for work and leisure activities, allowing for breaks and transition times. Take note that most people are spending a lot more time on electronic devices than usual. While this is essential, as face to face interactions are limited, too much screen time can have negative effects. Parents need to be aware what apps their children and teenagers are using to assure safety. You also need to encourage non-screen time throughout each day.

Parents can read books with their children about coronavirus and how to cope. The website nycdoe.libguides.com has several eBooks about coronavirus in multiple languages.

Parents can talk with kids and teens about their own experiences and how they have been able to work through problems (without oversharing, which could cause increased fears in youth). Parents can share with their children and teenagers why they are making certain decisions that impact the family.

Parents should keep a positive outlook, or at least show this to their kids. Remember, kids and teens model our actions. Focusing on the positives, hope for the future, and what we are thankful for will enhance our youth's ability

to cope and make the best of what they have. Parents can engage in regular contact with teachers and the school. This will give the message to their children/teens that there are adults in their lives who are working together in their best interest. It will also allow for communication about any mental health concerns that either the parent or school staff may notice.

Signs that your child or teen may need professional help: Hopelessness, lack of motivation, insomnia or hypersomnia, significant changes in appetite, separation anxiety, excessive fears, avoidance of activities, inability to function, using substances, engaging in self-harm, suicidal thoughts.

Professional help such as therapy and medication management are available via telehealth (through the computer or phone) to assure safety from the virus.

Try to stay positive. We will get through this!

Bobbi Mathern is a licensed marriage and family therapist and the clinical director of the South Central Human Relations Center in Owatonna. Steele Talkin' is a regular column featuring authors of various organizations throughout Steele County.

VARIOUS: candidates file for local, school races FROM B1

Joseph Motl and Marcy Sundine. Incumbents Tara Gimbel and Mary Kittleson did not file for re-election.

There will be one council race in Owatonna for three seats on the council. Matt Durand has filed to run against incumbent Doug Voss for the at-large seat. The remaining seats will offer only the incumbents, Greg Schultz in Ward 2 and Kevin P. Raney in Ward 4.

Five people have come forward for two council seats in Medford. Besides incumbent Matt Dempsey, four others have filed, including Chad Merritt, Mandy Mueller, Cory Samora and Nick Sorensen. Incumbent Marie Sexton did not file for re-election.

In Ellendale, three people are running for two open council seats. They include incumbent Duane Goebel and newcomers Derek

Bartness and Jackie Froman. Incumbent Steve Engel did not file for re-election and resigned within the past week to join city staff as deputy clerk.

Voters will also have the opportunity to choose school board members. Three people will be running for three open seats on the Blooming Prairie School Board. They are incumbents Jenny Thurnau and Jon Sunde and newcomer Melissa Stoen. Incumbent Steve Lille did not file for re-election.

Five people have filed for three seats on the Owatonna School Board. Incumbents Eric Schuster and Timothy Jensen will be running again along with Deborah Baniel, Don Korbel and Abdulahi A. Osman.

Incumbent Christina Ingvaldsen is not running for re-election.

The NRHEG School Board race will feature

seven candidates for three open positions. They are incumbents Dan Schmidt and Karen Flatness as well as Terri Engel, Jennifer Johnson, Nancy Lagerson, Loren Schoenrock and Tami L. Tufte-LaCasse. Incumbent Neil Schlaak did not file for re-election.

In a special election at NRHEG, current board member JoAnn Maloney will be the lone candidate on the ballot.

No one will be challenging the four incumbents on the Medford School Board. All four incumbents filed for re-election. They are Jackie Berg, Jon Sutherland, Betsy Chambers and John Anhorn.

Filings for other federal, state and local races, including county board, took place in early June.

The general election is Tuesday, Nov. 3.

Elect
Shea 24a
Minnesota House

Prepared and paid for by Elect Tom Shea 24a Committee
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Wear a mask in public spaces.

Get tested if you have any symptoms.

Answer if your health department calls.

mm MINNESOTA **STAY SAFE MN**



OWATONNA PROUD

Owatonna Schools Weekly Newsletter



District considers options for safe learning

On Thursday, July 30, Governor Walz and the Minnesota Department of Education announced that school district operations for the 2020-2021 school year will be driven by county-level virus metrics provided by the Minnesota Department of Health. We will be using the tools provided by the Minnesota Department of Health for guidance as to what will be the safest way for our district to start school and move forward throughout the school year. It is clear that our local collective effort to contain the spread of COVID-19 will determine whether or not students can attend school in-person.

In this situation, unpredictability reigns supreme. We must remember we are still in the midst of a global health pandemic and the circumstances continue to change. Ongoing decision-making about

As a part of the Governor's Executive Order 20-42, we are prepared to offer a full distance learning option for any family that chooses to participate in this learning delivery model. For planning purposes, parents were asked to complete a form by Aug. 7, indicating whether or not this was their preference.

We have used the information collected, and the five goals provided by the Minnesota Department of Education listed below to determine our Owatonna Safe Learning Plan.

1. Prioritize the safety of students and staff
2. Prioritize in-person learning, especially for younger learners
3. Consider infectiousness and transmission risk among different ages
4. Support planning, while permitting flexibility for districts
5. Take into account disease prevalence at a local level

additional clearing and hand sanitizing, expansion of lunch room space among other things.

Hybrid Learning Hybrid Learning is a unique combination of distance learning and in-person learning. This plan includes assessing students' health before school, six foot social distancing, face masks per the Governor's expectations, student maximums on buses, and many of the same guidelines and expectations with in-person learning. Hybrid learning for grades K-5 will involve creative space utilization to maximize in-person attendance. Grades 6-12 students would be placed in one of two groups with group one attending school in-person on Mondays and Tuesdays and group two attending school in-person on Thursdays and Fridays. Students in grades 6-12 will be en-

Welcome to Owatonna Schools section

Beginning with this week's edition, the Steele County Times is teaming up with Owatonna Schools to bring readers a weekly school section devoted to news and information.

Superintendent Jeff Elstad wants an engaged community that knows and trusts the decisions made by administrators and school board members. One of the district's core values is to build and nurture relationships. He has reached out to us to help accomplish those goals.

Not only is this section important for parents to know what their kids will be facing and experiencing in school, but also for people in general to know what educational offerings are being provided to the community's greatest asset—children.

Owatonna Schools are focused on inspiring excellence with every learner, every day. The district's vision is to inspire a community of learners with

equitable access to high quality, innovative learning opportunities ensuring all students are college, career and life ready.

We want to showcase this mission and vision in a positive way through this section so that everyone can have a greater appreciation for education and the school district as a whole. During the weeks prior to the school year and the early weeks in the beginning of the year, we will provide useful information so that parents can stay informed about the school they have entrusted with their children to provide education.

As the school year progresses, we will bring you the triumphs and successes of students, teachers, administrators and others from the classrooms and schools within the Owatonna district.

Inspiring excellence is the Owatonna way, and we are proud to be a part of that tradition.



In Person Learning
Traditional, in-class face to face learning with modifications for social distancing and extra safety precautions



Hybrid Learning
A combination of in-person and hybrid learning with creative space utilization to maximize in-person attendance



Distance Learning
All students use online platform. Available to all students

our school model will be a direct result of local virus data. We must all do our part by taking necessary precautions if we would like students to return to, and remain, in school. We thank our parents and community members for their support, patience, and understanding as we work to implement the Governor's direction. Our main priority continues to be the health, safety, and wellness of our students, staff, and community.

Three Learning Scenarios
The three learning scenarios for which we have prepared are in-person learning, hybrid learning, and distance learning.

In-Person Learning
An in-person learning plan is a regular school day with modifications for social distancing, when feasible. This plan includes assessing students' health before school, face masks per the Governor's expectations,

gaged in distance learning on Wednesdays.

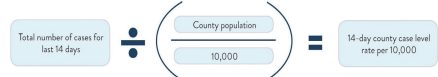
Distance Learning
If the situation presents itself that students need to be away from school for an extended period of time, Owatonna Public Schools will provide appropriate materials to support distance learning. In this scenario, all students would learn from home, breakfast and lunch meals would be provided at select sites, and childcare would be

available for grades K-5. Note: the form sent to parents earlier this month allowed them to choose the option of distance learning if we are starting the school year with in-person or hybrid learning.

Owatonna Public Schools will continue to monitor the community

and school-level impact of COVID-19 on a regular basis in consultation with public health to determine if adjustments are needed. As always, our priority is the safety and wellness of our students, staff, and community. For more information on the Owatonna Public Schools

safe learning plan, please visit our website: www.isd761.org/covid-19. The video from the Aug. 3 school board meeting when the learning scenarios were presented to the Board is also available on our website: www.isd761.org/our-district/school-board.



Number of cases per 10,000 over 14 days, by county of residence	Learning Model
0-9	In-person learning for all students
10-19	In-person learning for elementary students; hybrid learning for secondary students
20-29	Hybrid learning for all students
30-49	Hybrid learning for elementary students; distance learning for secondary students
50+	Distance learning for all students

SOURCE: MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH FORMULA AND LEARNING MODEL PARAMETERS

Calendar set for new school year

Because of the unusual start to the school year, the school board approved some changes to the school calendar to allow for additional preparation time for our staff. Two teacher

training/planning days have been added on Aug. 31 and Sept. 1. The first day of school will be Sept. 2 for grades 9-12, Sept. 3 for grades 6-8, and Sept. 8 for grades K-5.

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August 1 New Teacher Workshop 2 Teacher Work Days 3 K-5 Before School Interview Day 4 Before School Development 5 End of First Quarter 6 No School, Teacher Work Day/Staff Development 7 Grades K-5 Conferences 8 No School, Grades K-5, Conferences 9 K-5 Before School Interview Day 10 First Day of School, Gr. 6-8 Before School Interviews, Grades 1-5 11 No School 12 Labor Day/No School District Closed 13 First Day of School, Gr. K-5	September 1 Teacher Training & Plan Development 2 Homecoming/2-Hour Early Release 3 All-Campus 4 OHS Conferences 5 MEA/No School 6 MEA/No School	October 1 OHS Conferences 2 OHS Conferences 3 OHS Conferences 4 OHS Conferences 5 OHS Conferences 6 OHS Conferences 7 OHS Conferences 8 OHS Conferences 9 OHS Conferences 10 OHS Conferences 11 OHS Conferences 12 OHS Conferences 13 OHS Conferences 14 OHS Conferences 15 OHS Conferences 16 OHS Conferences 17 OHS Conferences 18 OHS Conferences 19 OHS Conferences 20 OHS Conferences 21 OHS Conferences 22 OHS Conferences 23 OHS Conferences 24 OHS Conferences 25 OHS Conferences 26 OHS Conferences 27 OHS Conferences 28 OHS Conferences 29 OHS Conferences 30 OHS Conferences 31 OHS Conferences	November 1 Last Student Day 2 Graduation 3 Teacher Work Day 4 PLC Staff Dev. Day 5 PLC Staff Dev. Day

Before school interviews for elementary students

Owatonna Public Schools is committed to creating strong student and family relationships and fostering a positive first experience. Students in grades K-5 will start the 2020-2021 school year on Tuesday, Sept. 8 to allow time for before school interviews to take place.

Before school interviews allow teachers to meet individually for 30-40 minutes with students and parents before the start of the school year. All kindergarten students will sign up for

an individual 30-minute interview conference time on either Thursday, August 27 or Wednesday, Sept. 2. All students, grades 1-5 will sign up for an individual 40-minute interview conference time on either Thursday, Aug. 27, Wednesday, Sept. 2, or Thursday, Sept. 3.

Students will meet one-on-one with their teacher for approximately 40 minutes to learn more about them and assess their reading level. Parents will complete paperwork during this

time. Following the teacher meeting, students will stop at stations to complete FASTBridge reading assessments and school pictures. The teachers are looking forward to getting to know your child better at the beginning of the school year.

A letter will be sent to parents this month with their child's teacher's name and a link to sign up online for an interview time. If parents have questions about signing up for a time, please call the elementary building office.

Lincoln Elementary
507-444-8100
McKinley Elementary
507-444-8209

Washington Elementary
507-444-8300
Wilson Elementary
507-444-8400

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Steele County District 3 Commissioner

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Destructive beetle discovered in Minnesota

The European chafer beetle (*Amphimallon majale*), an insect that can cause major damage to turf grass, has been found for the first time in Minnesota.

A resident of south Minneapolis first noticed large swarms of beetles in their yard at dusk and reported the find to a University of Minnesota Extension entomologist who suspected the beetles were European chafers and reported them to the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA). The MDA worked with the United States Department of Agriculture to confirm the identity of the insect since it had never been found in Minnesota before.

The European chafer

beetle was discovered in the United States in 1940 in New York state and is currently found in the northeastern U.S., as well as Michigan and Wisconsin.



Agriculture officials are urging Minnesotans to be on the lookout for the European chafer beetle.

The grub of the European chafer can cause more damage to turf than Japanese beetles because it spends a longer portion of the summer feeding on turf. However, adults do not

eat at all, so they do not defoliate other plants like Japanese beetles are known to do. Home lawns, golf courses, and turf growers could be significantly impacted if the European chafer beetle becomes established in Minnesota.

The adult insects are about a half-inch long and tanish in color. They are similar to the "June bugs" commonly found in Minnesota in early summer but are generally a bit smaller and lighter in color. The beetles emerge from the soil between mid-June and early July and are active on warm evenings for several hours just before and after sunset. The white grubs can range from 1/2-inch to 1-inch long with a dark

brown head and noticeable legs.

Since this is the first reported discovery of the European chafer beetle in Minnesota, the MDA would like to better understand where this insect may be in the state and how big of an issue this is to homeowners, golf courses, and turf growers. Minnesotans can report suspected European chafer to the MDA's Arrest the Pest line at arrest.pest@state.mn.us or 1-888-545-6884. Before making a report, please capture the insect, take a picture, and place it in a container or plastic bag and place it in the freezer. The MDA will contact you if the specimen is needed for confirmation.

Industry experts discuss dairy outlook

There has been unprecedented milk and product price volatility over the last few months. Rabobank's global dairy strategist Mary Ledman and Vice President of Dairy Research Ben Laine discuss their outlook on the global and US dairy markets on a webinar at noon on Tuesday, Aug. 25. The webinar is hosted by I-29 Moo University Consortium.

Laine has spent 10 years working across the dairy value chain from cooperatives and cheese processors to food and agriculture finance. He is currently an analyst covering the North American dairy production sector for RaboResearch.

As Rabobank's Dairy Strategist, Mary Ledman leads a team of analysts around the globe to analyze developments in the regional and global dairy markets. She develops Rabobank's dairy forecasts. Ledman has extensive knowledge of international dairy markets and policy with over thirty years of experience in the sector.

There is no registration and participants can access the webinar at <https://z.umn.edu/129dairyOutlook>. For more information, contact Jim Salfer at jsalfer001@umn.edu or 612-360-4506; Fred M. Hall at fredhall@iastate.edu or 712-737-4230; Jennifer Bentley at jbentley@iastate.edu or 563-382-2949; Tracey Erickson at erickson@sdstate.edu or 605-882-5140; Kim Clark at kimclark@unl.edu or 402-472-6065.

STEELE COUNTY FARM FAMILY OF YEAR THE SPINDLERS

Since the mid 1950s, the Spindlers have been managing a farm operation in Steele County. Eugene and Marian Spindler moved onto the farm in November 1955. They raised six children, three boys and three girls, on the farm. One of the children, Dale, has taken over the operation while his parents still live on the farm. Growing up on the farm made farming a natural career for Dale to pursue. "To basically be your own boss is a different challenge every day, and you have to be up to taking that challenge. It's a rewarding experience," he said.

With the help of a hired man, the Spindlers milk 44 cows and raise calves. They have heifers for replacement or possibly selling as spring heifers and finish out bull calves as steers.

In addition to livestock, the Spindlers produce corn, oats and hay on their 160-acre farm. Most of the crops go to feed the animals.

Dale is active with the Steele County American Dairy Association. In his role with the board, he oversees the popular milk stand.

"I enjoy farming. It gives me something to work for and it gives me pride in my work," said Dale.

The Spindlers will be honored by a virtual ceremony sponsored by University of Minnesota Extension on Thursday, Aug. 6 at 1 p.m.

Congratulations to the Spindlers for their outstanding contributions and achievements to agriculture and the greater Steele County community.



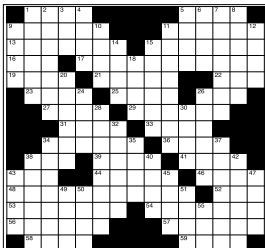
The Steele County Farm Family of the Year includes, from left: Dale Spindler and his parents, Eugene and Marian Spindler.

This week's farm family is brought to you by:



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JOHN DEERE

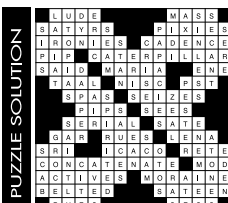


CLUES DOWN

1. Rope used to lasso
2. Hoyle places
3. Field force unit
4. Guitar great Clapton
5. Slang for type of skirt
6. Figure skating jump
7. Innocent
8. Mathematical ratio
9. Slowly drinks
10. Line where edges meet
11. Office of the pope
12. Dry or withered
14. "___ the Man" Musical
15. Difficult situations
18. Greek goddess of discord
20. Marked by smartness in dress and manners
24. Habitat
26. Annoy constantly
28. Full of life
30. Great enemy
32. BBQ and soy are two
34. Virtuous
35. Not fatty
37. Foes
38. Mechanic
40. Dishonest scheme
42. Repeats
43. Protective crest
45. Native American people
47. Any place of bliss or delight
49. Bring up
50. Birds
51. Geological times
55. Consumed

CLUES ACROSS

1. Methadone pill (slang)
5. Religious service
9. Woodland gods (Greek myths)
11. "Where Is My Mind?" neckers of affluence
13. Deliberately contrary states
15. Inflection of the voice
16. "Great Expectations" character
17. Becomes a butterfly
19. Snake
21. Tennis player Shapovalov
22. Misgivings between northeast and east
23. Africans
25. No instruction set computing
26. Pacific Standard Time
27. Relaxing places
29. Confiscates
31. Gladys Knight's fellow performers
33. Winemakers
34. Taking place in a series
36. Satisfy
38. Freshwater fish of N. America
39. Laments
41. "Birds" creator Dutham
43. Indian title of respect
44. Cocoa plum
46. Network of nerve cells
48. Link together in a chain
52. Cool 70s crew "The ___ Squad"
53. Persons engaging in energetic pursuits
54. Accumulation of glacial debris
56. Fastened
57. A cotton fabric with a satiny finish
58. Whiskey and bread are two
59. Scottish tax



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BLOOMING PRAIRIE

AUG. 18
10:30 a.m. – Storytime Online, Facebook Live

ELLEDALE/HOPE/GENEVA

AUG. 21
10 a.m. – SEMCAC, Community Building

AUG. 24
10 a.m. – SEMCAC, Community Building

AUG. 26
10 a.m. – SEMCAC, Community Building

OWATONNA/MEDFORD

AUG. 21
11 a.m. – Drive In Fair Fest, Fairgrounds

AUG. 22
7 a.m. – Farmers Market, Central Park
11 a.m. – Drive In Fair Fest, Fairgrounds

AUG. 23
11 a.m. – Drive In Fair Fest, Fairgrounds

AUG. 24
7 p.m. – Medford City Council Meeting,

Community Building

AUG. 27
7 a.m. – Ellendale

EDA Meeting, Community Building

7:30 a.m. – Ellendale City Council

Meeting, Community Building

City Admin Building

AUG. 25
9:30 a.m. – Garden Time, Owatonna Library

10:30 a.m. – Storytime Online with Darla, Facebook Live

AUG. 27
10:30 a.m. – Storytime Online with Darla, Facebook Live

7 p.m. – @7

Concert-Lost Facilities, Central Park

BIRTHDAYS

Aug. 20
Carol Jensen

Aug. 21
Ashley Garcia, Kollin Alwes, Cletus Glynn, Joe Holland

Aug. 22
Carol Ingvalson, Jacob Schwarz, Kory Grunklee, Pastor Mike Walerius

Aug. 23
Darla Doocy, Cruz Chadek

Aug. 24
Braxton Lee

Aug. 25
Samuel Wehner, Lanell Sundt

Aug. 26
Cole Lindeman

Aug. 27
Gerry Oswald, Chris Thompson, Jim Fiebigger, Andrew Hardecoph, Max Wondra

ANNIVERSARIES

Aug. 20
Kevin & Sondra Hanenberger, Denise & Chris Thompson

Aug. 23
Mark & Bonnie Coughlin, Troy & Monica Anderson

Aug. 24
Terry & Kim Trotman, David & Rita Goodnature

Aug. 26
Keith & Jennifer Thomas, Bob & Linda Wolf

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Sudoku Corner

7	1	3	9	2			
	9		1	4	8	3	2
	8			3			
		9	7			1	5
	3	2	5	6			7
			4	1		8	3
3			2	1	5		7
	2	5			7	3	
7		3	6				

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Answers

8	2	9	6	9	8	1	7
9	1	8	2	7	8	9	6
6	7	9	1	2	8	9	8
8	2	1	6	7	2	9	9
2	7	6	9	8	9	2	1
9	9	1	2	8	1	6	7
1	6	2	8	9	9	7	8
2	8	7	1	9	6	9	
7	9	9	8	2	6	1	2

Improving Main Street



STAFF PHOTO BY HOWARD LESTRUD

The City of Blooming Prairie received a donation of \$15,000 for facade improvement to local businesses. Here, the work is being done on New York Life and Floor Tech.

AL Theatre extends pause on shows into 2021

Due to the global COVID-19 pandemic and to ensure the health and safety of its patrons, actors and volunteers, the Albert Lea Community Theatre Board of Directors has voted to extend the pause on performances into 2021, and will resume the remaining two shows from the 2019-20 season in March and June of 2021.

"Doublewide, Texas" is now tentatively scheduled to open March 18, 2021, and "Willy Wonka" will open June 17, 2021. "With the uncertainty that exists during this pandemic, the ACT Board, in partnership with the City of Albert Lea, will continue to monitor and evaluate the situation and determine when it's safe to open our doors to the public for performances," says Tony Segura, ACT co-president. "Our hope is that by March 2021, we will be able to return to the stage, continue providing outstanding community theatre and ensure the health and safety of our staff, volunteers and patrons."

If you hold tickets to "Doublewide, Texas" and/or "Willy Wonka" from their originally scheduled dates, includ-

ing season tickets, you have several options:

• **Donate the value of your tickets.** ACT is a local nonprofit organization. Your ticket purchase is a tax-deductible contribution, which plays a critical role in the sustainability of your community theatre. By not requesting a refund or credit for next season, you are donating the value of your ticket purchase to ACT.

• **Hold your tickets as a credit.** You may use your current tickets for "Doublewide, Texas" and "Willy Wonka" as a credit for those shows in 2021. Because the dates have changed, you must purchase new tickets. Please retain your printed tickets and bring them to the box office as a credit when purchasing your new tickets.

• **Request a refund.** Please call the box office at 507-377-4371 and leave a message with your contact information. Box office volunteers may receive a high volume of calls, and will respond as soon as possible.

Additional information and updates will continue to be provided in the coming months through social media, email, and at action-broadway.com.

AAUW Owatonna to kick off new year virtually

Members of the American Association of University Women Owatonna invite interested guests and potential members to attend their fall kick-off meeting on **Thursday, Aug. 27 at 7 p.m., via Zoom.**

Non-members interested in attending, please contact us at auuowatonna@gmail.com.

Our speaker for the evening is Laura Hlre, Steele County Auditor. She will educate us about the upcoming November election procedures, including voter registration and mail-in/absentee ballot voting and will discuss the primary process and the cost of elections.

Also, AAUW Owatonna will be hosting **A Virtual Taste of Steele County.** Our Virtual Taste will give you the opportunity to win a gift card from one of the

vendors who have so faithfully helped us host the Taste of Steele County in previous years. Vendors are: Costas', El Tequila, Fareway Foods, Mizuki Fusion, Nick's Pizza, Old Town Bagels and Cafe, Owatonna Eagles Club, Owatonna Elks Club, Sparetime Entertainment, Steve's Meat Market and Torey's Restaurant and Bar.

Tickets to the virtual event are \$10 each and each ticket will be entered into drawings for \$25 vendor gift cards. Tickets will be available from AAUW Owatonna members or by request @ auuowatonna@gmail.com. The drawings will take place via Zoom on Thursday, Sept. 17 at 7 p.m.

Proceeds for the Taste of Steele County help fund AAUW educational scholarships for women and girls.

SCHS to host Onward & Upward Women's Event

The Steele County Historical Society announces an Onward & Upward Women's Event to take place 11:30 a.m. Thursday, Sept. 3 at the Steele County History Center, 1700 Austin Road, Owatonna.

Folks are encouraged to join for a box lunch with a panel discussion with local women entrepreneurs featuring Betsy Lindgren, Donnavon Eaker, and Tanya Henson. In this event, we are celebrating the growth of Steele County women who've been prominent entrepreneurs in the business community. Each of these ladies will have an opportunity to give their perspective of accomplishments and challenges relating to business ownership in founding Express Employment Services, Steve's Meat Market and Hat Chic.

This event is an extension of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, which granted the right for women to vote in presidential elections which was celebrated last year; 2020 is the 100th anniversary of its

ratification. Without these early activists, the road to entrepreneurship would not have been possible.

Through courage and persistence of men and women alike, the Voting Rights Act in 1965 was passed, protecting the voting rights of all Americans.

The cost of this event is \$20; please register by calling 507-451-1420. If you wish to be seated with another attendee, please indicate this with your registration. SCHS will try to honor all requests. Registrations for this event must be made by Thursday, Aug. 27 at 5 p.m. Men and women are encouraged to attend this event! Event attendees will be required to wear face coverings and adhere to social distancing guidelines set forth by the Minnesota Dept. of Health. Our SCHS website, schsmn.org references additional safety measures for all patrons.

This event is sponsored by Sharon West.

If you have any further questions regarding this event, please contact SCHS for more information.

AMVETS POST 23 TO MEET

The AMVETS Post 23 will meet at 7 p.m. on **Monday, Aug. 24**

The meeting takes place at:
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NOTICE

NOTICE OF SHERIFF'S SALE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, that on May 8, 2020, the District Court of Steele County, Minnesota, First Judicial District, made and entered a Judgment in an action entitled "Troy Co. Concrete & Masonry, Inc. v. Richard Hadler, Mar-go McKay, Richie's Trucking, Inc. Michael J. Grimm, and Wickman Enterprises LLC dba Generation Building Center" being Court File No. 74-CV-20-513, adjudging that Plaintiff Troy Co. Concrete & Masonry, Inc., is entitled to a Mechanic's Lien upon the premises hereinafter described in the amount of \$25,217.20; and, Defendant Wickman Enterprises LLC dba Generation Building Center, is entitled to a Mechanic's Lien upon the premises hereinafter described in the amount of \$24,929.05 and directing said premises to be sold by me as Sheriff of Steele County, Minnesota, to satisfy said Mechanic's Liens; and a certified transcript of said Judgment has been duly delivered to me with directions to proceed with the sale of said premises as therein provided. NOW, THEREFORE, NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, that pursuant to said Judgment and the statutes in such case made and provided in the premises so described in said Judgment and situated in Steele County, Minnesota, viz:

Legal Description: THE EAST ONE-HALF OF LOT 8 AND ALL OF LOT 9 BLOCK 1, ALL IN AN EX-ANDER ADDITION TO THE CITY OF OWATONNA, MINNESOTA, AS PER THE RECORDED PLAT THEREOF ON FILE AND OF RECORD IN THE REGISTRAR OF TITLES IN SAID STEELE COUNTY, MINNESOTA.

Property Address: 342 McIndoe St., Owatonna, MN 55060
PN: 17-139-0109
Registered Property, Cert. No. 19810
 will be sold at public auction, to the highest bidder, on September 30, 2020, at 10:00 am at the Steele County Sheriff's Office, Civil Process Division, 204 East Pearl Street, Owatonna, MN 55060.

Dated: July 27, 2020

Lon S. Thiele
 Sheriff of Steele County, MN

By: Anthony David
 Deputy

THIS INSTRUMENT WAS DRAFTED BY:
THE LAW OFFICE OF DAVID S. HOLMAN, LTD.
 201 W. Travelers Trail,
 Suite 144

Burnsville, MN 55337
 (952) 895-1224

8/16

NOTICE

STATE OF MINNESOTA COUNTY OF STEELE

DISTRICT COURT
THIRD JUDICIAL DISTRICT
Court File No.:
74-PR-20-1104

NOTICE OF INFORMAL PROBATE OF WILL AND INFORMAL APPOINTMENT OF PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE AND NOTICE TO CREDITORS

In Re: Estate of
 Carol L. Liming,
 Aka Carol Lee Liming,

Decedent
 Notice is given that an Application for Informal Probate of Will and Informal Appointment of Personal Representative was filed with the Registrar, along with a Will dated February 6, 2000. The Registrar accepted the application and appointed Carrie Jo Laue, whose address is 19393 575th Street, Dodge Center, MN 55927, to serve as the personal representative of the decedent's estate.

Any heir, devisee or other interested person may be entitled to appointment as personal representative or may object to the appointment of the personal representative. Any objection to the appointment of the personal representative must be filed with the Court, and any properly filed objection will be heard by the Court after notice is provided to interested persons of the date of hearing on the objection.

Unless objections are filed, and unless the Court orders otherwise, the personal representative has the full power to administer the estate, including, after thirty (30) days from the issuance of letters testamentary, the power to sell, encumber, lease, or distribute any interest in real estate owned by the decedent. Notice is further given that, subject to Minn. Stat. § 52A.3-401, all creditors having claims against the decedent's estate are required to present the claims to the personal representative or to the Court within four (4) months after the date of this notice or the claims will be barred.

Dated: July 29, 2020
 /s/ Deanna Verdict
 Deputy Probate Registrar
 Dated: July 29, 2020
 /s/ Robin Hoesley
 Court Administrator

Melanie J. Leth, #0311911
 Weber, Leth & Woessner, P.C.
 P.O. Box 130
 Dodge Center, MN 55927
 ATTORNEY FOR
 PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE

8/12, 19

BP School approves Safe Learning Plan

BY HOWARD LESTRUD
 STAFF WRITER

After hearing Blooming Prairie Schools Superintendent Chris Staloch explain a Safe Learning Plan to return students to school, the board voted unanimously to approve a COVID-19 education plan.

Listening to Staloch in a Power Point presentation explain the numbers game of county cases of COVID-19, the board moved from a work session to calling a special board meeting to order.

The special meeting was called to order at 7:01 a.m. by Board Chairman Rodney Krell one hour after the board work meeting had begun.

It took the board only three minutes to approve the plan. Board member Jon Sundt motioned approval of the Blooming Prairie School District's COVID-19 education plan. Steve Ille seconded. Motion carried with all members voting "aye."

The full board in attendance included Sundt, Ille, Kelly Braaten, Pam Hamelster, Dean Meshke, Jenny Thurnau and Rodney Krell.

A two-page letter was sent to parents on Thursday afternoon, informing them of the School District 756 decision.

Classes in Blooming Prairie School District 756 begin on Tuesday, Sept. 8.

With the school board action, classes will resume with elementary students pre-K following the normal schedule and those students in

grades kindergarten through sixth grade returning to the classroom for in-school learning on the normal schedule. "That has been our goal," remarked Staloch.

The high school, grades 7-12, will adapt to a hybrid plan, meaning students will be split to 50% capacity based on last name and will follow an A (Awesome) and B (Blossom) schedule.

Last name A-L will attend school on Mondays and Tuesdays, and they will distance learn Wednesdays through Fridays.

Last name M-Z will attend school on Thursdays and Fridays and they will distance learn Mondays through Wednesdays.

SEE STORY ON RETURNING TO SCHOOL IN BLOOMING PRAIRIE

Superintendent Staloch explained to the board that he has been in close contact with Steele County Health Department officials and with representatives of the Minnesota Department of Health.

With the Safe Learning Plan of Gov. Tim Walz, students could consider full return to the classrooms if counties showed 9 or fewer COVID-19 cases per 10,000 residents over a 14-day period. If the incidence is higher, less of a full or part-time return would be considered.

Blooming Prairie students hail from Steele, Dodge, Mower and Freeborn counties. Staloch said the bulk of Blooming Prairie's enrollment comes from

Steele County.

Staloch referred to the most recent Steele County numbers announced by Amy Caron, county public health director. The case average was listed at 14.72 for Steele County.

Staloch said Dodge County's case total was much lower than Steele. Hayfield schools, located in Dodge County, are fully returning to school.



STAFF PHOTO BY HOWARD LESTRUD
Blooming Prairie Superintendent of Schools Chris Staloch, in mask, checks for updates from the Minnesota Department of Education on Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz's Safety Learning Plan.

Board member Sundt urged the board to make a decision, be consistent and not fluctuate. "Our goal is to bring kids back, all of them," Staloch said. "Most of our teaching staff want to come back," Staloch related.

He said community surveys showed the sentiment toward bringing students back to the classroom. He said frustration has been evident but mainly aimed at government.

Masks have also been controversial. "I don't want to wear

a mask either but we have to roll with it," said Staloch. "If students come to school without masks, we will offer them one. There also will be no huge discipline for those who do not wear one."

He said the school will not screen kids. Transportation-wise, buses will not pick up students west of Highway 218 in town. Students riding buses must wear masks.

Staloch predicted that 20-30 kids will not come back to school. He also said open enrollment would continue.

Staloch, COVID-19 acknowledged the possibility of students testing positive to the virus. He said both schools will have quarantine rooms.

"There are not a lot of good answers but we are trying to do the best we can," commented Staloch.

"The plan covers all options," said Krell. "The biggest fear I see is if we have a couple of kids come down with the virus." Ille said. People will say "shut it down" or "keep rolling," said Ille.

"I feel absolutely comfortable with bringing my child back to school," said board member Jenny Thurnau. "Is it going to be a perfect world, I can't guarantee that," Staloch said.

Staloch complimented the board, staff, parents and students for providing input on the COVID-19 decision. He also praised the school business office for doing a fabulous job in facilitating implementation of the Safe Learning Plan.

BP unveils learning models for schools

BY HOWARD LESTRUD
 STAFF WRITER

The word is out. Blooming Prairie School District 756 has adequately circulated information on how students can return to school on Tuesday, Sept. 8.

Teaching staff was notified at 10 a.m. on Thursday, Aug. 13 about the details of returning students to school.

Parents of students enrolled in BP were notified by letter at 1 p.m. last Thursday.

In his letter to parents, Superintendent Chris Staloch said local school districts were given some local control regarding how school resumed for the coming

school year. A six-page COVID-19 handbook was also sent to all parents.

Gov. Tim Walz on July 30 announced the state's Safe Learning Plan. Staloch said a timeline was then developed in Blooming Prairie with the official return to school plan being announced on Aug. 13.

In that announcement, local school districts were told they could decide which learning model they will start and work in based on a 14-day average of COVID-19 case numbers in the counties that Blooming Prairie's school district serves.

Blooming Prairie's school district serves students in Steele, Freeborn, Mower and Dodge

counties. Most of the students are located in Steele County, Staloch says.

In consultation with the counties' public health directors, the decision was made to begin the year with in-person learning for all pre-K-6th grade, and hybrid for grades 7-12.

The Blooming Prairie School Board at a special meeting on Thursday, Aug. 13 approved a COVID-19 Safe Learning plan for School District 756.

Basically, students in pre-K will follow a normal schedule. Students in grades K-6 will attend school in person every day, Monday through Friday.

Students in grades 7-12 will be split to 50% capacity based on last name and will follow an A (Awesome) and B (Blossom) schedule.

Last name A-L will attend school on Mondays and Tuesdays, and they will distance learn Wednesdays through Fridays.

Last name M-Z will attend school on Thursdays and Fridays and they will distance learn Mondays through Wednesdays.

All students and staff who are part of in-school learning must wear a mask per executive order of the governor.

Wednesdays will be a thorough cleaning day at the high school. No students will be in school on Wednesdays. Cleaning will also be done in all schools every day. The district is advertising for two custodians to do cleaning two hours per day per building.

COVID-19 case numbers come out each Thursday.

The Blooming Prairie school district then con-

sulted with public health officials in the counties they serve. A Blooming Prairie advisory team then determined which learning models to be in, based on a 14-day county case level rate per 10,000 people.

The superintendent then communicates which learning models Blooming Prairie can embrace, with goals being to create consistency and providing the least restrictive environment for learners under the guidelines.

Aug. 13 numbers are as follows: Steele County, 12.0; Mower County, 15.15; Freeborn County, 8.19 and Dodge County, 4.86.

"We don't want to flip back and forth; we want a consistent plan," Staloch said.

Learning model parameters (# of cases per 10,000 over 14 days by county of residence) are as follows:

- 0-9 cases per 10,000 – in-person learning for all students
- 10-19 cases per 10,000 – in-person learning for elementary, hybrid for high school (THIS IS ONE CHOSEN FOR BP)
- 20-29 cases per 10,000 – hybrid learning for all students
- 30-49 cases per 10,000 – hybrid learning for elementary students, distance learning for high school students
- 50+ cases per 10,000 – distance learning for all students

Hayfield and Kasson schools will be in-person learning because of their low incidence rates in Dodge County.

"We are really excited about having kids come back to our facilities," remarked Staloch. "We want to work with parents to have a great school year," he added.



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Mastering Gardening
LORRIE RUGG

This month's article is going to be a bit different. I am going to share with all of you a little more about the Master Gardener program from my perspective.

I became a Master Gardener in 2001, almost 20 years ago. It is one of the best decisions I ever made, besides marrying my husband, among others! I have enjoyed gardening through most of my adult years.

In the fall of 1984, I answered an ad in the paper for part-time Christmas help at a local garden center in the town we were living in at the time. I had been working

retail in previous jobs and figured I can do that. From the first day at that job, my fate was sealed. I loved all aspects of the retail garden center. In the winter we sold garden seeds, bird seed and feeders of all types, poinsettias, spring bulbs, tools and just about everything you could think of that you would find at a garden center. The group of people I worked with opened my eyes and my heart to the world of gardening. Spring brought bedding plants, nursery stock, roses, perennials, grass seed and so much more. I was hooked. I learned so much from my co-workers that I thought, I have this gardening thing all figured out.

When a friend suggested we take the Master Gardening training together, I thought this would be a piece of cake, with

all my knowledge. But was I wrong! I quickly figured out the amount of my knowledge was very small compared to the vast world of gardening that the Master Gardener program provided for me.

I took the course work on-line, which 20 years ago was a learning experience all of its own. The course work lasted 10 weeks, with a different subject each week. From soils, to plant disease, lawn care, insects, house plant care, trees and shrubs to name a few. From there we started our Community Service, give back hours. The first year while you are an intern that amounts to 50 hours. It may seem like a lot, but there are so many ways to get that goal accomplished.

We as a group, help and mentor all of our interns to help them achieve that goal, through plant sale

hours, work at our Community Garden, a booth at the County Fair, Farmers Market Q&A sessions and many more. After your first year is complete you are officially a Master Gardener. Then comes the commitment for the years after that. Twenty-five hours of Community Service and five educational hours are required per year to maintain your eligibility.

If this year has done anything, I think we have a lot of new gardeners out there, planting vegetable gardens. We would love to have you join our group as we continually learn new research based gardening knowledge. I would love to talk with you, if you have questions, and we can help you start the process. I will post more information as we progress through our recruitment period. Sign up

for the program ends Oct. 1, so think about joining us, it might be the best decision you ever make.

Lorrie Rugg of Owatonna is the

coordinator of the Steele County Master Gardening program. She may be reached at bruce3298@umn.edu or 507-444-7687. Her column runs in this newspaper monthly.



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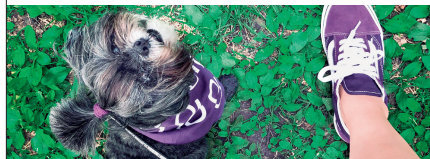
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September 13, 2020

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C1

Welcome to the fair section

Okay, we know this year is a bust when it comes to community events, celebrations, festivals and perhaps most importantly, the Steele County Free Fair. We should all be heading out to the fair this week to enjoy livestock shows, carnival rides, displays, entertainment and of course, the food. We will at least get a little taste of the fair through a Drive-In Fair Fest Thursday until Sunday at the fairgrounds. The Fair Fest will offer a few of the popular treats we have all come to love over the years. It won't be the same as nobody can get out of their vehicles, but why shouldn't that surprise us after the kind of year 2020 is turning into. Even though the COVID-19 pandemic has basically brought our lives to a screeching halt

over the past few months, we still were able to find some life going on with the fair behind the scenes. We offer our findings this week in a special section devoted to the fair. As you sit back this week with no fair to attend, take a moment to read this special section and relive some of the fairs in the past. This is a great time to remember your favorite fair memories of the past and dream about what's to come hopefully in 2021.

It's sad that we will be missing out on all the fun at Minnesota's largest county fair right in our back yard, but if it's any consolation, the fun is just being postponed until 2021. We hope by then all of us can kick the COVID-19 where we never have to worry about it again!

4-H Dairy showing becomes family tradition for Katzungs



BY RICK BUSSLER
PUBLISHER

Showing dairy cows has become a family tradition for the Katzung family of Owatonna. And Jace Katzung wasn't about to let the COVID-19 pandemic get in the way of him showing this year.

Jace will be showing two dairy steers in 4-H competition this week at the Steele County Fairgrounds. It won't be anything like the 16-year-old has grown accustomed to over the past few years, but he's just glad to have the opportunity to show.

"I'm really glad it wasn't a virtual show," Jace says. "I'm glad we can do it in person. Just to not have the chance to show one time would be disheartening."

For Jace and other 4-Hers, parading around the show ring will be a little different this year than any other. They will be required to wear masks and extra scrutiny will be placed on cleaning and sanitizing everything. Volunteers will also be at the show performing health screenings.

Jace has served on the county's Project Development Committee that formulated plans for continuing 4-H livestock shows this summer in Steele County. The committee has been meeting since May at the height of the coronavirus to work out details. Jace's family has been involved with the committee for eight years.

The dairy show will be different this year as there are not as many 4-H members competing as normal. In Jace's division, there will be only

Jace Katzung of Owatonna shows a dairy steer at a past show. Katzung will be showing this week in 4-H competition in Steele County.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

SEE 4-H DAIRY, C2

No one will be inducted into Livestock Hall of Fame this year

Fifty people have been inducted into the Steele County Livestock Hall of Fame since its inception in 2004.

Honorees are recognized for their contributions to the local livestock industry, said Tom Trotman, superintendent of the Steele County Free Fair Livestock Hall of Fame. A retired dairy farmer from Blooming Prairie, Trotman has been on the committee for eight years, heading it the past six years.

"There are people out there working hard for the industry. They are the unsung heroes working behind the scenes... working to make a living and keep the industry thriving," Trotman said.

With the cancellation of the Steele County Fair this year, no one will be inducted into the Livestock Hall of Fame for the first time since its creation.

"We are sad, but we didn't want to award someone without having the program," said Trotman, adding that the induction program typically takes place on the opening day of the fair in front of a crowd of 150 to 200 people.

This year's nominees will be considered for induction next year.

Typically, two or three people are inducted into the Hall of Fame each year. But in the first year, the committee inducted 15 people, representing the 15 decades since



Ron Van Nurdan makes his acceptance speech into the Livestock Hall of Fame at the 2019 ceremony during the Steele County Free Fair. Van Nurdan and the late Bob Chladek were last year's inductees, and two of 50 that have been inducted since 2004.

the county was established in 1855 by the Minnesota Territory legislature.

Last year, the Livestock Hall of Fame inducted two members. Ron Van Nurdan was recognized for his 44-year career as a high school agriculture teacher and adult farm management

"There are people who are out there working hard for the industry. They are the unsung heroes working behind the scenes... working to make a living and keep the industry thriving."

Tom Trotman

Hall of Fame Superintendent

instructor. The late Bob Chladek also was honored for his contributions to the livestock industry and the gift of his farm to the 761 Foundation, which provides scholarships for local high school graduates to further their college education and mini grants to teachers and principals for programs that enhance educational opportunities for students.

Chladek spent his working career as a Registered Holstein Breeder and Dairy Herd Improvement Association member. He served on the board of the Steele County Holstein Breeders, Owatonna Elevator and was an active member of the Steele County Farm Bureau.

Each year, the Steele County Livestock Hall of Fame committee seeks nominations for inductees from the community.

Nominees are judged on the impact/influence upon the livestock industry — county, state and national, leadership in the livestock industry, length of livestock and/or community service and other relevant contributions or accomplishments. Nominees may be living or deceased.

Nomination forms are available at the Steele County Free Fair office on the fairgrounds. The address is 1525 S. Cedar Ave., Owatonna, MN 55060.

Never imagined life without the fair

BY TODD HALE

After working for the SCFF for 30 plus years, it was beyond my imagination that there would be a situation forcing the cancellation of the fair.

This fair is circled on everyone's calendar. It means fun, great food, and the reuniting of family and friends who attend or attended the fair. Class reunions are scheduled for fair week. Family gatherings bring family members to Owatonna during fair

week from all over the country. Yes, the SCFF meant so much to everyone to lives or lived in Owatonna.

Now, that's all been taken from us due to COVID-19. Some of the activities of families and friends may go on as scheduled but it won't be the same. The fair is the frosting on the cake. Let's all look forward to August a year from now. Will we all be "back to normal?" Probably not, but hopefully the Merry-Go-Round will keep turning, the bumper cars will keep bumping, the cows will keep

mooring, the horses will keep trotting and the fair food will continue to be available for all of us.

Meanwhile, plan to come to "Fair Fest" and make the best of 2020, a year fair fans would just as soon forget!

Todd Hale has been the voice of the Steele County Free Fair giving announcements over the PA system for more than 25 years. He ended a 26-year stint as publicity and entertainment director in 2017.

Steele County Livestock Hall of Fame Inductees

2004: Harry Andrews, Charles Calverly, Alfred Camp, George Deml, Hubert Fisher, J. Russell Gute, Herbert Hartle, John Hartle, Arthur B. Johnson, Adelbert Radke, Thomas Raine, Jerome Rypke, A.B. Seykora, Ernest Sloan, and John Zwiebel
2005: Mary Larson and Eugene Pichner
2006: Victor Calverly, Emil Steinert, Truman Tillerhaus
2007: James Grass, Clarence Mulert, Larry Tande
2008: General Alexander Chambers, Russell Seath, Duane Urch
2009: Marvin Meixner, Joe Stransky

2010: Glen Edin, Gene Francis, Donald Henry
2011: Darwin Kasper, Leonard G.W. Gabbert and Evelyn Stransky
2012: Steve Eaker and Dorothy Rypke
2013: Donald Resler and Vic Richardson
2014: Dan Deml and Kay Anderson
2015: Barb Kasper, Howard Schoenfeld, and Donald Sloan
2016: Mark Ihlenfeld
2017: Eugene Kruckeberg and Gail Demmer
2018: Lester Oeltjenbruns and Richard "Rusty" Paulson
2019: Robert "Bob" Chladek and Ron VanNurdan

4-H DAIRY: showing becomes family tradition for Katzung FROM C1

eight steers compared to 20 in a normal year.

Jace said some kids have lost hope in showing because

of everything that has gone on with the pandemic over the past several months. But, Jace maintains he has

never lost interest even though showing won't look anything like it has in the past.

"My family is really passionate about showing," said Jace. He added that his family was instrumental in pushing to have livestock shows this summer despite COVID-19.

The Katzungs have taken part in at least one other show this summer. A few weeks ago they showed in an open class show featuring about 50 steers from all over southern Minnesota. Jace proudly shared that his family had the grand champion steer in the show.

With 4-H, Jace has earned trips to the Min-

"Just to not have the chance to show one time would be disheartening."

Jace Katzung
4-H Dairy Exhibitor

nesota State Fair in the past. He has shown a dairy steer three times in the past. In 2018, he earned third place overall at state.

Jace is less enthusiastic about State Fair this year because the state is doing a virtual competition in which exhibitors send in several photos of their an-

imals to be judged. "It's better than nothing, but I don't know how much better," Jace related. He is afraid that the judging may be skewed to who ends up taking better photographs. Showing has helped build self-esteem for Jace. "For me, it's a big confidence boost," he said.

Joining Jace in showing over the past several years has been his older brothers, Joshua and Jacob. Jace is a member of the Meriden Meadowlarks 4-H Club. He has been involved with 4-H since he joined as a Clover Bud at 5 years old. Besides 4-H, Jace is also involved in FFA at Owatonna High School where he will be a junior this year.

When he's not in school or working with his 4-H animals, Jace helps with his family's business, Northland Farm Systems in Owatonna. Jace has been busy mowing the lawn and doing landscaping for the business this summer.

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Loss of fair gigs impacts Miner's Outdoor & Rec



BY HOWARD LESTRUD
STAFF WRITER

County fair time is always a busy time for Miner's Outdoor & Rec of Blooming Prairie. Miner's also owns MOR Golf & Utility of Lakeville.

The story is different this year as most county fairs have been canceled because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The busiest time is during the Steele County Fair in Owatonna, usually third week of August just before the Minnesota State Fair.

Anyone who has attended the Steele County Fair has spotted Miner's Outdoor vehicles scouting around the grounds.

The cancellation of the Dodge County Fair in Kasson, the Freeborn County Fair in Albert Lea, the Mower County Fair in Austin, the Steele County Fair

in Owatonna and the Dakota County Fair in Farmington has taken away good revenue from Miner's Outdoor.

Miner's supplied golf cars for the fairs with the Steele County Fair renting the most cars, about 30 (12 standard, 6 utility, 10 four-passenger, 2 six-passenger). Some individual cars are also rented to various vendors.

Not only have the cancellations taken away golf car rentals, they have also taken away the opportunity to set up sales outlets at the fairs. Miner's sells a variety of Husqvarna products.

"We really won't know how many sales we will have lost," said owners Doug and Kristi Miner.

Doug Miner, a graduate of Blooming Prairie High School, started the outdoor and



recreation business as a supplement to a snowmobile repair and salvage business began by his father Marlin many years ago. That business was located on a farm about six miles east of Blooming Prairie in Dodge County.

Doug worked with his dad in the salvage business and also helped him farm. Doug and wife Kristi and family currently reside on the family farm.

Doug is also a veteran of the U.S. Army National Guard. He was deployed for a year as a chief maintenance officer in Kosovo with

the Red Bull Division of the Minnesota National Guard.

It was on June 17, 2001 that the Miners' business interests changed from a nights and weekends business to a full-time outdoor and recreation business.

On that June 17 date, Doug was participating in two weeks of annual training at Camp Ripley. He called his father to wish him a happy Father's Day and was informed of the news that the shed which housed the snowmobile business was on fire.

The Miners were newly married at the

time and they made a decision to move the business to its present location on Highway 218 South.

Property and four buildings owned by Krampitz Lumber were for sale. The lumber yard sold Husqvarna and Cub Cadets. The Miners kept Husqvarna to supplement their snowmobile business.

Husqvarna is known for its outdoor power equipment, especially its chain saws, leaf blowers, weed trimmers, walk behind lawn mowers, tractor mowers, zero turn mowers and snow blowers.

Doug's knowledge of this brand helps him tell the customer what will fit their needs.

Miner's Outdoor still deals in snowmobile parts but directs more attention to golf cars, holding a Club Car golf car dealership.

"We sell and customize any kind of golf cars," Kristi says. "We're busy all year around and there is a less of a focus on snowmobile parts," Doug said. He offers that personal touch in sales.

Miner's is open from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Mondays through Fridays and from 8 a.m. to 12 noon on Saturdays.

"We have a really good team at Miner's and the workers all bring something different to the table," says Kristi.

The Miners have four children: Elizabeth, Derek, Alexa, and Maverick.

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Owatonna Izaak Walton League Chapter Activities

RICE LAKE STATE PARK

The Owatonna Chapter owned and developed what is now Rice Lake State park. It has since been expanded by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The chapter continues to work with other organizations to support and improve the park.

Owatonna Reclamation Center

The chapter was one of the original organizing groups for the recycling center. Members took turns manning the center on Saturdays. This was the forerunner of curbside recycling.

Steele County Free Fair

The chapter maintains the Game and Fish building at the fair and provides displays during the fair.

Oak Glen Lake Park and public access

Since 1950, the chapter has owned the little park on highway 218 south of Bixby. It is the only public access to the lake and is used by many waterfowl hunter as well as birders.

Adopt A Highway

The chapter cleans two miles of Highway 218 twice a year from Oak Glen North to just north of Bixby.

Adopt A River

Cooperate with DNR and Cannon River Wa-



Last year, some 150,000 people visited the Game and Fish Building during the Steele County Free Fair.

tershed to Adopt over a mile of Izaak Walton Creek. Work with high school field biology and agriculture classes to clean creek twice a year and also remove invasive species from the area.

Somerset Wildlife Management Area

Worked with DNR and other conservation groups to add 45 acres to the Wildlife Management Area. The Iles contributed \$10,000 and was part of the committee.

Straight Creek Wildlife Production area

Cooperated with US Fish and Wildlife and Minnesota Pheasants to purchase 100-plus acres located eight

miles south of Owatonna near the headwater of the Straight River. Donated funds to restore native prairie and create nesting area for wildlife, part of work crews to remove invasive species and misplaced trees.

Reducing our carbon footprint

The chapter has purchased solar panels through the SUNNA project to do our part to reduce carbon em-

issions. Most months the chapter house is fully powered by solar.

Youth Activities

The chapter has been a sponsor of Kid's Safety Camp since the



The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources typically provide between 18-20 species of local fish for the Owatonna Izaak Walton Leagues aquariums.

beginning. The chapter sponsors a Cub Scout troop. Provide and partner with Scouts to accomplish their Eagle project. Sponsor Junior Wildlife Champion Award for 4-H at the Steele County Fair.

Ahlborn Woods Wildlife area

The chapter maintains a wildlife area of approximately 10 acres on County Road 31 or 58th St. SW. There are area trails through the woods for walking and bird and wildlife watching. This property is adjacent to the chapter house.

Woody's Reserve

In 2019, the Owatonna Chapter inherited the farm of Elaine Wodarczak south of Steele Center. It was her wish that the bulk of it be a wildlife area. There is approximately 70 acres that the Owatonna chapter will manage as wildlife reserve for the enjoyment of all. It will have hiking trails and areas to observe and enjoy the wildlife and outdoors. Per Elaine's wishes there will be no hunting.

Monthly Meetings

The chapter meets the 2nd Thursday of each month except December it is the 2nd Friday. We meet at the chapter house, which is the AF Reding Environmental Center at 1546 - 58th St (County Road 31) south of Owatonna. There is a potluck meal beginning at 6:30 with a speaker and membership meeting to follow.

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STEELE
COUNTY **Times**

Four Season Centre has ice in August for first time

Fair cancellation gives way to early hockey, figure skating

There's ice down in the west arena at Four Seasons Centre, located on the Steele County Fairgrounds, and skaters are putting it to good use.

"We've never been able to have ice the month of August because of the fair," said Steve Schroht, Steele County Park and Rec director and manager of the Four Season Centre. "This is our fifth week of ice and it will stay until March."

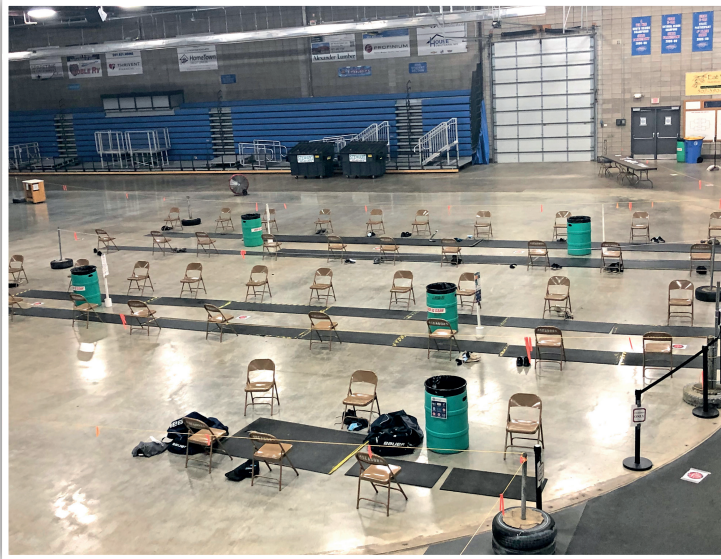
Schroht said he'd hoped to have the ice available in June, but the COVID-19 guidelines for ice arenas kept changing. "Once we knew we could operate comfortably within the state and CDC guidelines, we opened the ice to local hockey and figure skating groups on July 6."

For now, the east arena is set up so skaters can put on their skates safely.

"Parents, skaters and coaches have been so cooperative," Schroht said. "It's been really neat to see how everybody has worked together."

He added that every group who rents the ice provides a designated liaison to ensure that the COVID-19 guidelines are being followed. The guidelines require:

- Players to wait in the car until 10 minutes prior to practice time;
- Players and coaches to be temperature checked and asked medical screening questions before entering the building;
- Players to come to the rink fully dressed, not in-



The east arena is set up with chairs and mats so skaters can put on their skates safely while social distancing. The mats and chairs are disinfected between each skating group.

"It's been really neat to see how everybody has worked together."

Steve Schroht
Steele Park & Rec Director

- cluding skates and helmet;
- Players to leave the rink within 10 minutes of the end of practice;
- Masks to be worn

- except on the ice; and
 - That no spectators are allowed - players and coaches only.
- If all goes as planned the second sheet of ice will go down in Sep-

tember and both rinks will be available to skaters through March, with ice going back down in June for six weeks. Between March and May, the Centre is available for the tradeshow season and dry floor events. And in August, it will host the Steele County Free Fair exhibitors.

The Four Seasons Centre was built in 1972 and expanded in 2000, providing users with

expanded opportunities for ice-related activities and dry floor events. The facility employs four full-time people and 10-12 part-time employees.

The multi-purpose complex consists of two connected buildings with 30,000 and 20,000 square feet of floor space. A hospitality area, usable also as a meeting space, overlooks both exhibit floors. Events held in the

Four Season Centre have included: car shows, circus, concerts, conventions, dog shows, gun & weapon shows, farm equipment shows, trade shows, graduation, high school prom, company meetings and parties, banquets, weddings and receptions, wrestling tournaments, auctions, figure skating shows, sporting events, hockey tournaments, class reunions and family reunions.



The ice in the west arena has been available to youth hockey and figure skating groups since July 6.



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Good luck to all 4-H members in competition this month!

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FAIR MEMORIES

Summer is not bright without the fair

BY JAN MITTELSTADT
TIPPETT

The great August Steele County reunion won't be happening this year.

The Free Fair has long been a place and time to visit with friends, old and new, see the animals, ride the rides, enjoy fair food, listen to music, shop with the vendors and admire the exhibits. Our summer is not as bright without it.

Having grown up in Owatonna — on McKinley Street, just three short blocks from the fairground, we went to the fair every day, and certainly more than once a day.

In my mid-teens came the fair job. Mine was working at the Tom Thumb stand. Selling those cute doughnuts for 8 to 10 hours a day for six days can cure you from ever wanting to eat them again. Truly.

But all of that having no purpose except enjoyment came to an end when I started working as a summer intern for the People's Press for \$2 an hour; the minimum wage in 1970. No benefits. No overtime. But enjoyment there was and plenty of purpose. I repeated the intern job in 1971 and then covered the fair as a reporter and then editor from 1972-1985.

In those early days, newspaper people seemed to like living up to the unearned reputation of big time partiers and drinkers. And, I confess, maybe it wasn't always unearned. We had a press shack located on the west side of the racetrack wall. It was a tiny old place but during the fair it was a place to work, to meet with people, and to hear stories and jokes late into the evening. Lots of folks would just drop by. And when there were races, you had to find another place to hang out.

L.R. "Lefty" Ringhofer, the long-time editor then in semi-retirement, was the master joke teller. Lefty was often joined by Norb McCready who

told outlandish stories about life in Owatonna, state government and the powers that were. All of these stories were fueled by alcohol — and I admit that the telling and the hearing was better with a little or a lot of liquid refreshment.

All of that fun was beside the work, some of which was certainly different than the normal coverage of the schools, the city, the county, and the people of Steele County since no local person was usually shot out of a cannon.

Alas, the press shack was removed to make room for vendors (I think that's what happened). The site is memorialized. There's the Lefty Ringhofer drinking fountain there, installed in his honor after his death in 1982. It's still there but when the fair is in session, you have to look for it. When the water is turned on, you could have a drink on Lefty.

We moved into the Oakdale Motel, room 22, after the press shack was removed. It wasn't as much fun but it had certain advantages, such as air conditioning and an on-site bathroom. There were still stories to listen to but the number of drop-in visitors declined since it wasn't on the fairgrounds. Adult beverages were still available. We were still using typewriters so writing off-site wasn't a big deal.

Later, the computer system eliminated writing off-site but it was still a great place to hang out. We had our favorite foods to eat and local vendors to support. Duke Randall did a great turkey dinner in the KC stand that always had sliced cucumbers with onions. The Aurora dinner had super food and pie (and still does).

Before Fair Square, in my recollection, the music was concentrated in the KRFO Tent. Pink Allen and Todd Hale broadcast live for much of the day with Jerry Boos running the board. The only

non-newspaper work I did was participating in the nail driving contest. I never won. I never came close. It was not part of newspaper coverage so there is no permanent record. Thank goodness.

My favorite rumor of all time originated at the Steele County Free Fair. I was reminded of it when I was the editor in Sun City and Sun City West, Ariz., where dozens of Owatonians wintered (and probably still do). One of those hometown people was Bob Ringhofer (Lefty's brother), who was president of the fair board when the rumor started and for years before and after.

The story goes like this: A viewer at the cattle barn show ring was attacked by a huge green ball. The ball circled the ring several times before attacking the man and killing him. Several others were injured by either the green ball or the blue smoke that caused much damage. The police came, along with the fire department, rescue squad and the National Guard.

The fairgrounds were abuzz with the story. Just as children playing telephone, the message was changed with each teller. We had dozens of calls at the office and at the press shack. The story grew and grew. Another reporter and I worked a half-day to track down the real story.

None of it was true, of course.

The truth? There had been a little electrical problem, no fire, no smoke, no nothing at one of the cattle barns. Like most rumors, the truth is far less interesting. But the green ball of fire story went on and on. It could still be making the rounds.

Jan Mittelstadt Tippett is a retired editor and reporter. She moved back to Owatonna five years ago. She can be reached at jtippett@midco.net.

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Fair or no fair, Owatonna Izaak Walton League's work continues

With this year's cancellation of the Steele County Free Fair, August is proving to be far less hectic for Ted Mittelstadt.

As president of the Owatonna Izaak Walton League and superintendent of the Game and Fish Building on the fairgrounds, Mittelstadt said he typically spends about 100 hours each summer getting the building ready and to host its estimated 150,000 visitors.

This summer, Mittelstadt and his fellow "Ikes," as they like to be called, worked a few nights at the building — doing some general maintenance and making some improvements they typically don't

have time to do when preparing for the fair.

The building itself is more than 80 years old. It was constructed in 1938 through a Works Progress Administration (WPA) project and is owned by the county.

Mittelstadt said the Ikes will miss the fair this year because it's a great opportunity to connect with fellow conservationists and to talk with others about the local chapter's goals:

- To ensure America's streams, lakes, and other waters are safe for fishing, swimming, and other uses;
- To connect more young people to conservation and outdoor recreation;

• To conserve and restore habitat to support healthy, sustainable fish and wildlife populations; and

• To engage more people in sustainable outdoor recreation.

"It's all about protecting the outdoors," said Mittelstadt. "We need clean air for birds and clean water for fish."

The public may not be able to see the 18-20 species of fishes typically displayed at the fair this year, but there are things they can do to protect the environment.

At minimum, Mittelstadt said, everyone can recycle. That's something the local Ikes have advocated for years.

The chapter was one of the original organizing groups for the local recycling center. Members took turns manning the center on Saturdays. This was the forerunner of curbside recycling.

On the renewable energy front, the Owatonna Chapter purchased



Ted Mittelstadt is president of the Owatonna Izaak Walton League and superintendent of the Game and Fish Building on the Steele County fairgrounds.

10 solar panels through the Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric (SWCE) Sunna Project

to reduce its carbon footprint. Most months the chapter house is fully powered by solar.

Without the fair this year, Mittelstadt said, he and the chapter's 85 members will focus

their efforts on several other environmental protection and conservation projects, including work to make Woody's Reserve accessible for hiking and bird watching. The chapter inherited the farm of Elaine Wodarczak south of Steele Center last year

and it was her wish that the bulk of the 70-acres be preserved as a wildlife area.

The chapter also maintains the 10-acre Ahlborn Woods Wildlife area located adjacent to its Chapter House on County Road 31.

Anyone interested in learning more or joining the league can contact Mittelstadt by calling 507-451-7946. The chapter can also be found on Facebook as "Owatonna Izaak Walton League."

The Owatonna chapter meets the second Tuesday of each month, except December when it's the second Friday. Members meet at the chapter house, which is the AF Reding Environmental Center at 1546 58th St., Owatonna (about 6 miles south of Owatonna off County Road 31). There is a potluck meal beginning at 6:30 p.m., followed by a speaker and membership meeting.

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August 26 – The Health of our Community: Health Panel
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Beer Garden sees improvements during off year as crew prepares for 2021

BY CHRIS BALDWIN
STAFF WRITER

While the news that this year's fair would be canceled was a disappointment for all, some saw it as an opportunity to make something good out of a bad situation.

"I didn't want to be complacent and I feel that our fair is one of the best around and I want to keep it that way," said Josh Prokopec, a member of the fair board and in charge of the grounds crew.

With the cancellation of the fair, many projects, which might otherwise have to be delayed, were able to move forward. "We have the luxury of having no time constraints seeing as there's no fair and no off-season events," Prokopec said.

"We picked \$10,000 as a good number to use for any projects, it's something to work towards where we can go after some of these things," he explained. A lot of the work being done involved painting or tidying up the buildings. "It's been really nice to get into these buildings and take care of some things that were lingering."

The Beer Garden saw a host of improvements, from new chairs and tables, to a more uniform look. "Part of the reason I was pushing so hard to do that was because we did the bathrooms last year, and that was such a nice addition to the Beer Garden that I felt we were getting more publicity and use out of it," Prokopec explained.

"I felt that we needed to dress it up a little."

One of the most noticeable updates to the Beer Garden is the new furnishings. Chairs, tables, and booths were all donated by Godfather's Pizza in Owatonna. "I think it's really nice that they did that," Prokopec said while noting that the old chairs and tables were getting a bit long at tooth.

"The fair is very important to the community and we had tables and chairs that we were no longer going to use and we knew that the fair could use them," Brad Price, owner of Godfather's Pizza, said. "The fair benefits everybody in the community and it's an economic driver. It's

such a well-run fair and well organized, I'll miss it this year."

Another silver lining to this summer is the opportunity to shore up the grass on the former north end of the track. "Hopefully we can get it totally finalized this fall," Prokopec said. "We were in such a rush last year that the grass didn't take as well as we had hoped."

As for the grounds crew, much of its work is done for the year. "We're going to be wrapping things up this fall as we're going to be losing some of our crew to college," Prokopec noted.

"I think it's the best grounds crew that I'm aware of," he said. "They work long hours

and come in early and leave late—especially during the fair—I don't think they get as much credit as they deserve but they're awesome."

With a myriad of

updates and improvements throughout, the fairgrounds will be more than ready to play host for next year's festivities once the fun continues in 2021.



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Steele County District 3 Commissioner

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Quilt On-A-Stick: One of the fair's most unique competitions, Quilt On-A-Stick features the 2020 theme, "Fishing in Minnesota: The One That Got Away." Maximum dimensions are 8" x 9" and can use any quilting method

— machine or by hand — with a paint stirrer as the stick. This competition will be judged, and the top five submissions will be highlighted on social media.

More information on each showcase and how to enter can be found at the following link: <https://www.mnstatefair.org/competitions/competition-2020/>

In addition to the virtual showcases, the fair previously announced that the show will go on for the 2020 Fine Arts Exhibition of Minnesota. This one-of-a-kind showcase will feature amazing work by hundreds of artists from across the state selected through an online juried competition. Fair fans can get an up-close opportunity to view the exhibition during special in-person gallery showings from Thursday, Aug. 27 through Labor Day, Sept. 7, in the Fine

Arts Center on the State Fairgrounds. Tickets for gallery showings are \$10 each and currently on sale. The exhibition is also available through a video-recorded tour and an online catalog, both available later this summer at no cost. For more information, visit the following link: <https://www.mnstatefair.org/competitions/fine-arts-exhibition-event/>

The Minnesota State Fair is one of the largest and best-attended expositions in the world, attracting more than 2 million visitors annually. Showcasing Minnesota's finest agriculture, art and industry, the Great Minnesota Get-Together is 12 Days of Fun Ending Labor Day. Visit mnstatefair.org for more information. The 2021 Minnesota State Fair runs Aug. 26 – Labor Day, Sept. 6.

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Scott Seykora of Owatonna operates a power saw while working on a repair project at the Mother's Rest building on the Steele County Fairgrounds. Brandon Guse is shown at the steps in the background. The two are art teachers who work at the fair during the summer.

THE ART OF MAINTAINING THE FAIR



Brandon Guse uses a power tool to put together a new steps on the fairgrounds.

They both share a common thread in their professional careers as well as their summer gigs. Together they have discovered the art of maintaining the grounds of Minnesota's largest county fair.

Scott Seykora and Brandon Guse are art teachers and share a passion for keeping the Steele County fairgrounds in working order and properly maintained. Seykora teaches computer graphics at Owatonna High School while Brandon Guse teaches art at Waseca Intermediate School. Both grew up in Owatonna.

Throughout the summer months, they each log in 40 hours per week except during August. For the two weeks prior to the county fair, they work 70-80 hours while the fair is going on. Of course, that won't happen this year because of the coronavirus pandemic shuttering all fairs in the state. But they are still working their normal summer hours sprucing up the grounds.

In recent years, the fair has focused on a number of larger maintenance projects and smaller projects got pushed to the side. With no fair this year, the maintenance

Area art teachers team up to keep the grounds in order

STORY AND PHOTOS BY RICK BUSSLER

crew is getting a chance to do those smaller projects. "We're getting to do things we've wanted to do for the past five years," said Seykora, who has been with the maintenance crew for the past 17 years. Guse has been working alongside Seykora for the past 12 years.

Guse, a 2003 graduate of Owatonna, likes the summer fair job for a variety of reasons. "You get to work with your friends and be outside. It's nice to work with your hands," he said. "I enjoy doing stuff you can see results when you are down."

Seykora explained that the fair has given them a budget of \$10,000 to work with for doing the variety of smaller projects this summer. "We're doing a lot of things at low cost," he said. "We're under budget so far. We're trying to save money when we can and make things look better," he added.

A few weeks ago, Seykora and Guse replaced the wooden steps leading into the Mother's Rest building. They have also been repainting the restrooms and some other paint and trim in the Beer Garden. "It's 5 gallons of paint here and 5 gallons of paint there," Seykora said.

Joining Seykora and Guse on the maintenance crew are several high school and college age members. The building and grounds director is Josh Prokopec, who was a classmate of Seykora's.

"It's like being a teacher out here," Seykora says of his summer gig. "I'm telling the crew what needs to get done and where to go," he said. "I'm teaching these kids some of their life skills."

Guse and Seykora enjoy working together. "We both have different creative ideas and different styles," Seykora said. "It's fun to be able to trust someone (like Guse). He is a good co-worker to have," he added.

"We're getting to do things we've wanted to do for the past five years."

Scott Seykora
Fair Worker

While they won't be cramming so much this year with no fair, Seykora is taking advantage of the slower pace. "It's a nice change of pace for one year, but I wouldn't want to do it forever," he said.

Seykora, who grew up on a farm south of Owatonna, has been hanging out at the fair for most of his life. In his younger years, he showed hogs, cattle, shop and creative arts projects as a member of the Straight River Stars 4-H Club. He takes great pride in making the fairgrounds look the way it does.

He always knew he wanted to be a teacher, but never envisioned being an art instructor. Seykora originally was enrolled in the tech ed program at Minnesota State University Mankato. However, the program was dropped in his junior year and he switched to art. After he graduated from college, the art position opened up in Owatonna and he jumped at the opportunity to come back home.

In his 17 years of doing maintenance, Seykora feels that the fair has gotten better each year. "I'm usually the last one here every day. I want to make sure everything gets done," he said.

By the end of summer, Seykora admits he's ready to head back to the classroom. "It's refreshing to get back to teaching," he said.



COVID puts senior honor on ice

No Steele County top senior citizen this year

BY HOWARD LESTRUD
STAFF WRITER

The coronavirus, COVID-19 dealt a knockout punch this summer to plans to name two outstanding Steele County senior citizen volunteers of the year.

The Steele County Exchange Club met on Thursday, Aug. 7 and voted to delay the naming of a 2020-21 top man and top woman senior citizen volunteers.

Bruce Kubicek, a past president of the Steele County Exchange Club, said the selection committee said it would wait until the first part of 2021 to name two top senior citizen volunteers.

The Steele County Exchange Club typically announces its senior citizen volunteer selections at an Exchange Club breakfast the week before the start of the Steele County Free Fair.

The public is invited to a special awards ceremony for the top seniors on the Thursday of the Steele County fair. Top senior selectees are then advanced to the Minnesota State Fair where they compete with other top senior volunteers.

Last year's top Steele County male senior citizen of the year, Vern Wilker of Owatonna, was named a runner-up to the top senior picked as Minnesota's No. 1 male senior volunteer of the year.

Carol Prokopec of rural Blooming Prairie was named the top female senior volunteer for 2019.

Now, these two top Steele County senior volunteers get to wear their crown a few months longer.

"I was really surprised on being selected for this honor," Carol remarked. "It's certainly an honor and I appreciate it," she continued.

Carol's husband Bob received the top senior volunteer



Vern Wilker, 80, of Owatonna was selected the Male 2019 Steele County Senior Citizen Volunteer of the Year. He also was chosen a runner-up in the Minnesota State Fair senior citizen volunteer competition.

award three years ago. "I'm very proud of Carol," smiled husband Bob, sitting next to her at the awards ceremony in Fair Square Park at the fair.

Carol is 77 and she never says she is old, "just older," she laughs.

Growing up on a farm near Pratt, Carol attended a one-room school through eighth grade in District 71. She has two brothers, Don and Bill.

After graduating from Owatonna High School, Carol studied radiology at the Owatonna City Hospital and the University of Minnesota. She worked at Deaconess Hospital in Minneapolis and then became head technologist in Owatonna, implementing a teaching program.

She and Bob have two children, Karen Beiter of Rochester, N.Y. and Kristyn Todd of Owatonna. Karen was born deaf and currently teaches at a deaf college. Kristyn is a personal care assistant.

The Prokopecs have eight grandchildren. Carol said volunteering has come to her naturally because her parents served as volunteers.

Carol began volunteering at the Prairie Manor Care Center in Blooming Prairie. Carol helped care for her mother and her mother-in-law at Prairie Manor. She has continued volunteering for others at Prairie Manor. "It's almost become a full-time job for both Bob and me," she said.

Carol also volunteered for a deaf association in Austin in the late 1960s. She helped raise funds for various projects of the deaf association.

A member of the Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Litomysl, Carol started the Sunday School program there "and it is still going," she says. She is a member of the Holy Trinity Women's Council, participates in spring and autumn baking,

serves as a greeter and sings in the church combo.

Sewing is a love of Carol's. She meets weekly with the Holy Trinity sewing group at the former St. Isador's School. "Most of our sewing goes to missions," she says.

Her church work is not devoted to just Holy Trinity as she volunteers as a worker at First Lutheran Church's lutefisk dinner in October each year.

Carol also has been a member of the Blooming Prairie American Legion Auxiliary for 10 years. "Volunteering is helping neighbors," Carol says with enthusiasm.

A runner-up for the top state award, Vern Wilker said "volunteering is very fulfilling."

Wilker turned 80 last November.

His resume includes: • Getting the youth camp ready each year for the Elks Club youth campers

• Teaching farm and farm equipment safety

• Teaching geography to elementary school children through the Wilson School "Passport Program."

• Walking in parades to hand out flags to children along the parade route

• Radio announcing for the Steele County Free Fair

• Member and past chairman of the Steele County Exchange Club whose national mission is the prevention of child abuse.

• He served as chairman of the Exchange Club Center for Family Unity.

Wilker's other talents are singing and auctioneering and he uses those talents for fundraising events such as the cancer auction held annually at the Eagles Club in Owatonna.

He is a member of St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Meriden. He has served as Sunday School teacher, board member, choir member and soloist for events held at the church. Wilker is also a member of the Pork Producers, serves on the board of directors of the United Prairie Bank of Owatonna, is a charter member of the Steele County Corn and Soybean Association, is a member of the Cannon River Watershed, is past director and current member of the SE MN Farm Management and is a member of the singing group Just friends.

Wilker and wife June, who have been married 58 years, have two daughters, Michelle and Debbie, five grandchildren and one great grandchild. "Steele County is blessed with lots of folks who do a lot of volunteering," Kubicek says. He presented last year's awards to Wilker and Prokopec at the Steele County Free Fair.

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