

It's Our Business to Protect Yours®

We believe our value is measured by the success of our clients.

FEDERATED INSURANCE

www.federatedinsurance.com

Schnoor's sister looks for traction for 'Sabrina's Law'

BY KAY FATE
STAFF WRITER

If you didn't know better, you might think Serenity Schnoor went to law school.

Turns out, she simply got a crash-course in the subtleties and vagaries of law.

"If I have a passion about something ... I feel like my anger motivates that passion," she said.

The case

Schnoor lost her only sibling when her older sister Sabrina was murdered in May 2023.

A jury last month convicted Sabrina's former boyfriend, Jason Horner, of second-degree unintentional murder, but acquitted him of the more serious count of second-degree intentional murder.

He was also found guilty of third-degree murder, first-degree manslaughter, second-degree manslaughter and possession of a firearm after being convicted for a crime of violence.

Sentencing has been set for 10 a.m. Dec. 22; he faces at least 12 years in prison, pending the findings of the pre-sentence investigation.

Sabrina's family and friends have said the verdict felt like a slap in the face – highlighted by a single word: unintentional.

Horner asked Sabrina to meet him that day in Owatonna, allegedly claiming he was going to kill himself if she didn't show up. The two had had a tumultuous on-again, off-again relationship for years.

Worried friends found Sabrina's body 24 hours later; she died of a gunshot wound to the face.

Video footage from the night of the murder showed Horner and Sabrina in a convenience store, then walking down a set of railroad tracks that lead to the spot where she was eventually found.

Horner can be seen on camera leaving the area alone; the murder weapon was never recovered, preventing a forensic exam.

Horner claimed Sabrina "found" the gun as they walked along the train tracks, then accidentally shot herself by slamming the butt of the shotgun against the ground, causing the weapon to discharge.

The issue

Within a week of the verdict, Serenity Schnoor was putting her passion to work.

At the heart of her work is Minnesota Statute §634.20 – Evidence of Conduct.

"It was written so juries could understand the real history of abuse: the threats, the fear, the escalation, the control," Schnoor said, showing that danger may be building.

"But the law isn't clear," she said, "and when a law isn't clear, judges do whatever they think it means."

Schnoor said that between the 24 to 48 hours before her sister's death, there were roughly 1,500 pages of messages between Horner, Sabrina and others.

In those messages, he allegedly wrote:

- "knives don't stop bullets (and) I got 'em."
- "I don't wanna hear about Sabrina unless it's her funeral arrangement"

See **SISTER** on A3 ▶



Sabrina Schnoor smiles for a photo with her son.

Sheriff rises to top of state group

◀ **SHERIFF** from A1

"My focus will be on unity, communication and making sure every sheriff feels supported and represented," he said. "We need to speak with one voice when it comes to preserving the rule of the law and upholding statutory or constitutional rights," he added.

Thiele has found the value of MSA to be enormous. The group provides resources and guiding leadership that's invaluable, he said.

MSA provides training opportunities for deputies across the state. The organization also offers yearly scholarships to students wanting to go into law enforcement as a career.

"I try to involve myself in as much public safety input as I can," said Thiele, who has served as Steele County's sheriff since 2010. "I want to put my goals and philosophies in action," he added.

Jim Stuart, who served as sheriff in Anoka County for many years, said he went through rookie sheriff class together with Thiele. Stuart calls being elected sheriff by citizens as a gift and privilege, and an equal honor when a group of sheriffs elect you to represent them.

"He's always been a strong support for other sheriffs," said Stuart, who now serves as executive director of MSA and will work closely with Thiele. Stuart added the six-month overlap of Thiele serving both MSA and FBI-LEEDA



Steele County Sheriff Lon Thiele has taken over the role of president of the Minnesota Sheriffs' Association. This is the second time a Steele sheriff has led the statewide organization. The late Sheriff Bill Hildebrandt led MSA in 1996.

"speaks to the leadership the sheriff brings to the table."

MSA has been in ex-

BP firefighters suited up with new equipment

The Blooming Prairie Fire Department has replaced nine sets of much needed personal protective equipment (PPE). The funds for the purchase were raised through generous donations by Blooming Prairie area community members, the Compeer Financial Emergency Response Equipment Grant, and the City of Blooming Prairie.

PPE, also known as turnout gear, is the clothing worn by fire fighters to protect them against burns, cuts, and other hazards associated with emergency response tasks. Most turnout gear has a usable life of 10 years according to OSHA and manufacturer standards.

The Blooming Prairie community supports the fire department in numerous ways including the Fire Department Sweetcorn and Brat Feed, the Fire Department Pancake Breakfast, as well as other donations throughout the year.

Compeer Financial has also been a strong supporter through its Fund for Rural America. Compeer Financial awarded 160 Emergency Response Equipment Grants to help volunteer fire, rescue and ambulance departments improve their operational efficiency, safety and response times. Compeer Financial awarded a total of \$605,998 to rural communities across Minnesota, Illinois and Wisconsin this year.

The City of Blooming Prairie has also done an excellent job maintaining the department's equipment and supporting firefighters.

The fire department cannot thank the community enough for its generosity.

"For first responders to give their best, they need to be equipped with the proper tools. We recognize the challenges volunteer emergency response departments face with funding, and we hope these grants help give them the life-saving equipment necessary to effectively respond to critical situations," said Karen Schieler, manager of Compeer Giving at Compeer Financial.

"The community support we receive as firefighters truly makes us proud to be a part of such a great organization," said Mike Ingvalson, a BP firefighter.

Other area departments to receive funding from Compeer were Brownsdale for radios and Mantorville for turnout gear.



Blooming Prairie firefighters have received personal protective gear through several sources. Show in the new equipment are, from left: Dan Miner, Justin Ferguson and Jacob Naatz.



Sheriff Thiele's family joined him as he took over the president's role of the MSA last week. Pictured from left, daughter Jasmine; father Vince, wife Brooke, Thiele, mother Lori and daughter Savannah.

GLEN

MIKE

BRETT

TRUST US TO HANDLE WITH CARE

PROUDLY SERVING STEELE COUNTY

Brick-Meger Funeral Home & Medford Funeral Home

megercares.com | 507.451.1457



On The Farm
RYAN LERMON

As livestock owners prepare for winter, one persistent myth continues to cause preventable animal health issues: the idea that buildings should be sealed tightly to “keep animals warm.” While this may seem logical, closing up a barn does more harm than good. Livestock need fresh air in winter just as much as they do in the summer. In cold climates like Minnesota, proper natural ventilation is essential for maintaining animal comfort, air quality, and long-term building health.

Every animal produces heat, moisture,

Proper ventilation keeps livestock healthy in cold winters

and gases. A single cow exhales several gallons of water into the air each day, and bedding, manure, and wet feed add even more humidity. When a building is closed too tightly, that moisture has nowhere to go. The result is a warm but damp barn, and damp barns are the perfect environment for respiratory illness, mold growth, frost buildup, and structural deterioration.

Ventilation guidelines emphasize that the goal in winter is not to keep barns warm. It is to keep the air dry, fresh, and moving gently, without creating drafts at animal level. Dry air helps animals maintain body temperature better than humid

air, even when temperatures inside the barn are close to outdoor temperatures.

Natural ventilation systems rely on the simple “air exchange” created by openings along the eaves and ridges of a roof. Cool, fresh air enters high along the sidewalls and rises as animals warm it. Warm, moist air naturally lifts toward the peak and exits through an open ridge. This constant, low-speed movement removes moisture and ammonia while preventing sudden blasts of cold.

The right amount of opening is critical. Older barns may have had multiple remodels in the past, doors get sealed, windows get boarded up,

and ridge vents become plugged. For these buildings, reopening designed ventilation areas is often the most effective winter improvement. On many small farms buildings intended for one species are retrofitted to house another. Producers should take the time to match the building’s airflow potential with the needs of the animals housed inside.

One of the clearest signs of poor winter ventilation is frost inside the barn. If moisture is condensing on rafters or forming ice on walls, the solution is more fresh air, not less. Other warning signs include strong odors, coughing animals, wet bedding, or foggy air. Livestock are

remarkably resilient to cold when kept dry and out of direct wind. A well-ventilated barn will often be only a few degrees warmer than the outdoor temperature, and that is normal. Animals create their own micro-environment through body heat and bedding, and good airflow helps them stay healthier throughout the winter season.

As we move deeper into winter, it is worth rethinking old habits. Proper ventilation is not lost heat, it is gained

health. Whether using a modern facility or an older building repurposed for livestock, ensuring consistent airflow is one of the most important steps producers can take to support their animals’ comfort, productivity, and well-being.

Ryan Lerman is the agriculture and natural resources educator for the University of Minnesota Extension for Steele and Rice counties. He may be reached at 507-330-0447 or lermo004@umn.edu.

Schnoor’s sister looks for traction for ‘Sabrina’s Law’

◀ **SISTER** from A2 ments so I can (expletive) piss on her.”

“Sabrina really (expletive) up, the lil (expletive) bitch ... I’m gonna cut her tongue out her skull.”

“Someone’s gonna get hurt real bad, i wont just let this (expletive) happen.”

In the 24 hours before Sabrina was killed, she texted Horner that she didn’t feel safe meeting him. He responded by repeatedly threatening suicide “and degrading her every time she went three minutes without responding to his messages,” Serenity Schnoor said.

“She came knowing it probably wasn’t safe, but risked it anyway because she didn’t want him to actually end up killing himself,” Schnoor said. “So she found a way to Owatonna and spent her last moments on earth with a shotgun up to her mouth.”

really crucial laws that we have – but who can blame him, you know? They’re so vague.”

Schnoor also believes the prosecution’s hands were tied in some of the issues.

“I give them grace,” she said. “They did the best they could with what they were given, but there’s not much (arguing) you can do in a trial because then you’re undermining a judge.”

Sabrina’s Law does not change convictions, burdens of proof, or sentencing. It addresses how courts evaluate and explain domestic-violence relationship evidence in intimate-partner homicide cases.

Included in the law would be standardized judicial guidance and training about domestic-violence dynamics, lethality factors and just what “domestic conduct” is.

In other words: context.

This week, she will meet with attorneys at Standpoint to review her proposal.

The Standpoint team, based out of St. Paul, advocates against domestic and sexual violence, and “has extensive experience in criminal and civil justice interventions and practices to help professionals and organizations in a variety of ways,” its website says.

State support

Schnoor has someone else in her corner – a potential change-maker.

Rep. Tom Sexton, R-Waseca, almost immediately responded to her plea.

“The research team is validating her proposed bill as we speak,” he said last week. “In addition, we are formulating a strategy for successfully passing as much of the proposed bill as possible in the upcoming session.”

Though lawmakers don’t convene at the Capitol until Feb. 17, the wheels of law-making are already in motion.

Still, Sexton said, “we may be working through several sets of revisions prior to getting co-author signatures, formally submitting the bill, committee hearings, etc. I suggested to Serenity that it could be a long process.”

Parts of the proposed bill could take more than one session to pass, he said, meaning there could be years of work ahead.

“It is always great to work with someone who is so passionate about

fixing the law,” Sexton said. “In this case, like many others, we must start fighting for the rights of our victims and their families. We have all heard someone say, ‘If only they could have kept the perpetrator off the streets, this would not have happened.’”

“Let’s make sure that we don’t have another situation like Sabrina’s case,” he said.

Steele County Attorney Robert Jarrett, who tried the case with Mary Russell, of the Minnesota Attorney General’s Office, said he was “unable to comment until the case is sentenced, and I would prefer to wait to comment further until the appeal period is completed.”

The Office of the Attorney General also declined to comment on the proposal, citing Horner’s pending sentencing.

Sen. John Jasinski did not respond to requests for comment.

What lies ahead

Schnoor said it’s unfortunate that it takes a tragedy to pursue change.

“I had to sit there through the whole trial, silent, because I didn’t want to (risk) the integrity of it,” she said, “but after the fact, I was like, you know, something really needs to change. Like, somebody needs to do something.”

“Everybody just says that or thinks that, but who actually is going to do it? So here I am, giving it a shot.”

Even as her proposal makes its way toward the Capitol, Schnoor has requested an appellate review of her sister’s case – a process that reviews the rulings made throughout the trial.

“It’s not to redo the verdict or anything, but just to see if the trial went as fairly as it could,” she said.

“This really changed my whole outlook on the justice system,” Schnoor said. “My biggest hope is that going forward, this can be something that can be a real tool that protects victims and strengthens cases for both sides, really,” she said of Sabrina’s Law.

“I agree with her,” Sexton said. “Now we just need to get enough votes to get it across the finish line. I will be there for Serenity and her family to see it through.”

As for Sabrina, “she would call me crazy for taking on the whole state of Minnesota,” Schnoor said a bit sadly.

“She always stuck up for me, and I have to be her voice now – I feel like the only one that can, really,” she said.

“If there’s one good thing that can come out of this whole situation, it’s that Sabrina’s name can be part of something bigger, something that helps her to live on.”

Agromony • Energy • Feed • Grain • Lumber

Locations:

Adams • Alden • Blooming Prairie • Brownsdale
Carpenter • Charles City • Conger • Elgin • Emmons
Grafton • Lansing • Leroy • London • Manly • Marble Rock
Northwood • Oakland • Oelwein • Randalia • Rockford
Rose Creek • Rudd • Stacyville • Sumner • Toeterville

Call 507-437-4696 www.nexus.coop

STEELE COUNTY AMERICAN DAIRY ASSOCIATION

Can manure from cows be reused?

Manure from dairy cattle can be reused in several ways. Some dairy farms utilize a manure solid-liquid separation system. This process squeezes the liquid manure from the solids, separating the two. The liquid manure contains the nutrients from the manure and is repurposed as fertilizer on the dairy farmer’s crop fields. The leftover solid manure contains little nutrients and is reused as bedding for dairy cows.

Join the fun with our Dairy Trivia Contest

Which vitamin or mineral listed below is not naturally found in significant amounts in mi

A. Vitamin C
B. Iodine
C. Vitamin B12
D. Pantothenic acid

Dairy Trivia

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Circle Answer: A B C D

Dec. 3 Answer:

How many pounds of byproduct feeds are eaten by each milking cow daily in the U.S.?

Correct Answer: D

This week’s winner is Gary Miller of Owatonna.

Enter this contest on our Facebook page or by dropping off (Owatonna or Blooming Prairie offices) or sending to Steele County Times, 109 W. Rose St., Owatonna, MN 55060. Correct answers will qualify for a weekly drawing of a gift card to Culver’s.

WINNERS MUST PICK UP GIFT CARDS WITHIN 30 DAYS!

**1140 Frontage Rd. W
Owatonna, MN 55060
507-455-2000**

Saluting Our Dairy Farmers!

OUR VIEW

Good news connects the community

So often over the past 12 months, the news—national, state, even local—has felt heavy, even depressing at times.

But for one issue of the *Steele County Times*, as we do every year, we're giving you a break from the heartbreak, with nothing but "good news" stories in our B section. Over the past several weeks, our reporters have been hard at work sourcing and writing features that are designed to lift your spirits and shine a spotlight on folks who bring something special to our community.

Highlighting these stories doesn't mean we're just ignoring the challenges we all face every day. It's a powerful and deliberate reminder that for all the bad things that happen, people are still doing good in our community.

As you read through this special section, consider the people we've profiled not as exceptions to the rule but as examples to follow. These folks show us how we, too, can do things large and small to make Steele County a kind, caring, compassionate community every day of the year.

Give the gift of news this holiday season

One of the most powerful things in the world is information.

Having a disagreement over a particular issue? You will likely turn to Google or another search engine to solve it.

Want to find a place to have supper in a new city? No problem, just search for local restaurants.

But when it comes to finding out what is happening in your community, the local newspaper provides that outlet.

Here in Steele County, the *Times* provides readers with award-winning news stories about public school districts; city and county governments; sports; and the good, the bad, and in-between of what happens in Blooming Prairie, Ellendale, Medford, and Owatonna.

Want to know about local government decisions that will affect your property and taxes? Interested in following Husky, Awesome Blossom, Tiger, or Panther sports teams?

We've got it all.

The newspaper is a great source of information whether you want to learn more about your neighbors, local police activity, or events happening in and around Steele County.

And we know many readers enjoy doing the crossword puzzle.

If you don't currently subscribe to the paper, consider joining our growing list this holiday season. If you're already a subscriber, consider giving a subscription to someone in your life—a college student far from home, perhaps, or a parent enjoying their retirement in a warmer climate.

A subscription to your local newspaper is truly the gift that keeps on giving, 52 weeks a year.

YOUR VIEW

The Trumpet's Bluster

This is a powerful and very critical poem about President Donald J. Trump. Given its themes of boastfulness, shifting truth, disregard for oaths/trust, ambition, and self-aggrandizement in a position of power, it highlights the arrogance and the abuse of authority.

Against the heavens doth the Trumpet sound,
Whose brazen bluster knows no check or bound.
His truth, a weath-ercock that spins and veers,
To sow confusion in the common ears.
He holds the oath as

light as painted dust,
And deems his will the only sacred trust.
No gentle grace doth sit upon his tongue,
But boastful scorn, on every rival flung.
To humble souls, he shows a face of stone,
And counts the realm his own domain, his throne.
The gilded cage his heart doth most desire,
To warm his ego with perpetual fire.
Ah, woe the age, when such a man doth rise,
To blind fair justice with ambitious lies.

Brad Trom
Blooming Prairie

CORRECTION

Patrick Knight was one of the nine GOP gubernatorial candidates who attended a forum Dec. 2 in Owatonna. He was incorrectly identified in the Dec. 10 edition of the *Steele County Times*; the *Times* regrets the error.



Hot Pursuit
RICK BUSSLER

A week doesn't go by without someone calling, texting or stopping in to suggest a story idea of something interesting going on in the communities we serve.

One of my favorite aspects of my job is getting out into the community to cover stories. Journalists love to write stories and share them with readers. It shouldn't come as a big surprise, but storytelling is the bedrock of the newspaper industry. We pride ourselves on developing stories that make our readers want to pick up the newspaper every week.

We have a special gift for readers this week. It's our annual "Good News Holiday Edition," a collection of positive stories produced by our editorial staff to capture a glimpse of life in Steele County and the surrounding area.

Every year it never ceases to amaze me how I think we outdo

Local news is what we do best

the previous year with the stories we find. This year is no exception.

Some of our stories are not for the faint of heart. People like Tanner Wencil have shared some real personal struggles they have faced and overcome. Some like Pastors Chris and Laurel Meester are grieving the loss of a young child but have beautifully found a way to honor their deceased loved one. The family of a woman murdered two years ago is hoping to make positive change in state law.

Others like 93-year-old Geraldyn Berg have shared their true passions. In her case, it's a talent of wood carving that puts her a cut above the rest.

Another one of my favorites is what local musician Todd Utpadel has done in organizing Musicians Against Cancer to benefit the Blooming Prairie Cancer Group.

And then there's Gloria Kenow who is a heavy hitter for the Owatonna Hospital Auxiliary and has volunteered only 9,000 hours. To put it in perspective, that's equivalent to 24 hours every day for just more than a full year.

Sheriff Lon Thiele shows us what true leadership means. He's stepped up to serve as president of not only a national organization (earlier this year), but now a state group on top of it at the same time. I'm not sure how he juggles it all, but he's found a secret.

As you read this week's array of stories, I think you will find them impactful and being told from the heart. Our goal is to showcase life in a way that provides inspiration, hope, peace, joy and love. We all need it, especially in a world that often seems bleak and hopeless. Despite the on-going negativity in society, and it has seemed to become worse in the past few years, there are wonderful things happening and people just trying to do the right thing for fellow human beings. Their stories need to be shared for the rest of us.

I am blessed to have some incredible writers who are gifted at telling stories. I hope you feel the same way.

The stories we share may not be major headline grabbers that other news outlets will pick up. However, if you haven't figured out by

now, we never forget about the little stories. Personally, I always write my stories as if they are the biggest story to ever be told. I've heard other professionals in our industry say, "Treat every story as if it were the biggest story of your career."

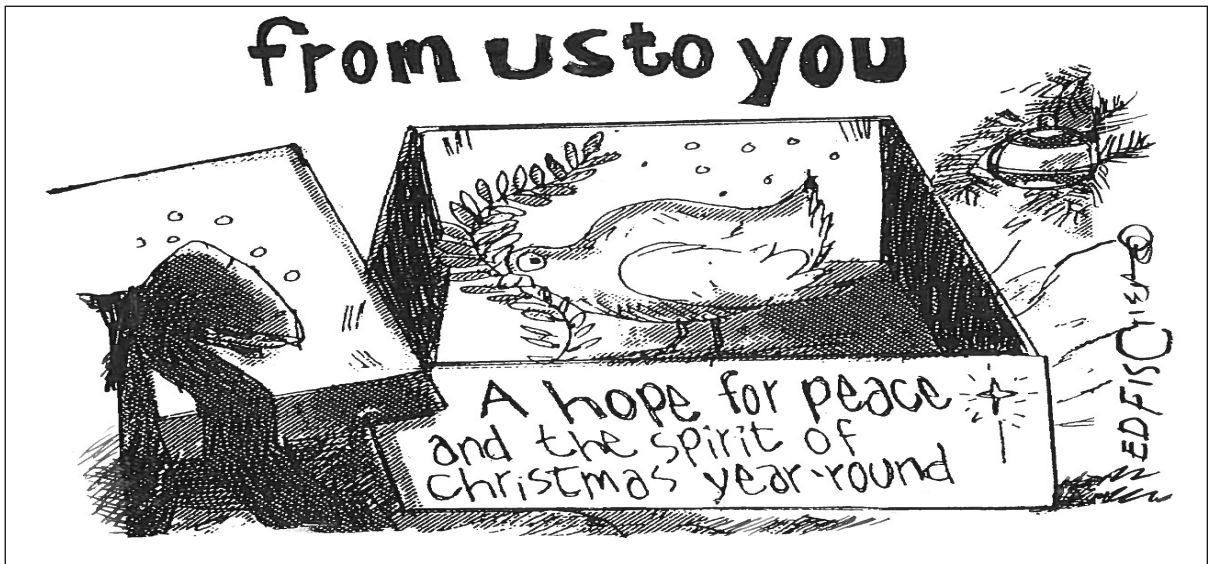
That's certainly great advice and motivation for journalists like us to live by.

Whether the story is life-changing or a seemingly unimportant happening, the story is important to someone. And that makes it important to us. That's why community journalism is relevant and always will be. It's our gift to you.

During this holiday season, don't forget to focus on the core values in life: being kind to one another and treat each other with respect. Perhaps our holiday gift will be a catalyst to helping you achieve those values.

We can find peace and hope that things will get better. Let's start by going in hot pursuit of recognizing the good that many people have to offer the rest of us.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!



YOUR VIEWS

Big rooster Walz is in power

To-the-Editor:
Yes, well it looks like the chickens are coming home to roost in Minnesota. Yes and well, it looks like the big rooster (Tim Walz) went into the hen house and took all that was those chickens' livelihood and no food and eggs, and the big rooster told them they needed to give more for I need those items to give to other people that don't do anything but said if you keep

giving me stuff, I will make sure that we like you and keep you, the big rooster (Tim Walz), in power. But then it seems that all those hard-working chickens said, "no more" and the big rooster can no longer steal from us (taxpayers).

I think you get the drift of the story. Tim Walz is so hungry for power that I truly believe he would sell out to anything. Last week he was in Texas also

bragging about our state flag and said the old flag was native. I don't know a native American waving to a farmer, but Walz would rather have a foreign flag. I can't say which country, but all those vets that were over there fighting for you and I can't all be wrong. What would you expect from a (I am going to call him what he is) a traitor?

Remember what he did. Go back and look it up. As Tim Walz was

deployed to Iraq, he all of a sudden, to get out no matter by what means he had to use, even lying about his rank, the big rooster was afraid and put it on the backs of those who did go. I have so much more to say but that will be a little later as I will expose more about that group of people. Stay tuned. Big black BMW nice car.

Chuck Wobbrock
Blue Tick Worbie
Owatonna

SCHS should discuss, correct and apologize

To-the-Editor:
To the people of Steele County and about the beautiful Village of Yesterday. This was built by the people for the people of Steele County – all volunteer work!

A lot of work goes into keeping it up and

thanks to the staff and board and all volunteers who work up there and thanks a lot to all the people who donate money to keep it going.

All decisions about what happens in the Village are discussed at the board meeting

See **SCHS** on A19 ►

Honoring the service of all vets during the holiday season

To-the-Editor:
I've mentioned several times how much I appreciate your human-interest stories about veterans and coverage of veteran's events. And I mean that sincerely.

Our family has a history of service to country. My grandpa fought in the Army during WWI. My dad served in the Navy during WWII (Pacific theater – subs and sub

See **HONORING** on A19 ►



www.SteeleCountyTimes.com

Offices:
• Blooming Prairie: 411 E. Main St.
• Owatonna: 109 W. Rose St.

Customer Service:
news@steelecountytimes.com
507-583-4431

Deadlines:
News- 12 p.m. Friday
Advertising- 5 p.m. Thursday

Times Staff:
• Rick Bussler, Publisher and Owner
952-224-6331, rbussler@steelecountytimes.com
• Joni Hubred, News Editor
507-583-4431, jhubred@steelecountytimes.com
• Jenine Kubista, Production Coordinator
507-583-4431, jkubista@steelecountytimes.com
• Sherrie Pechan, Office Manager
507-583-4431, news@steelecountytimes.com
• Johnnie Phillips, Sports Editor
507-583-4431, jphillips@steelecountytimes.com
• Kay Fate, Staff Writer
507-583-4431, kfate@steelecountytimes.com

Subscription Rates:
Print: Steele, Dodge, Freeborn & Mower- \$69
Elsewhere in Minnesota- \$75
Out of State- \$79
E-Edition: All areas- \$55

Ethics:
The Steele County Times strives to present the news in a fair and accurate manner. Please bring any grievances to the attention of the News Editor.

Postmaster:
Send address changes to: Steele County Times
P.O. Box 247
Blooming Prairie, MN 55917
Published weekly by Bussler Publishing, Inc., P.O.

Box 247, Blooming Prairie, MN 55917
USPS 058-340
Periodicals postage paid at Blooming Prairie, MN

A state and national award winning weekly



Awarded Mills Trophy (Minnesota's Best Weekly) and General Excellence in 2025

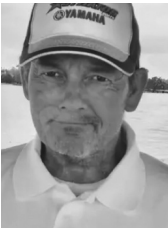
2025 —25 state, 13 national and 3 SBJ awards	2021 —16 state awards	2014 —3 state and 3 national awards
2024 —19 state, 11 national and 1 SBJ awards	2020 —9 state awards	2013 —7 state and 2 national awards
2023 —14 state, 13 national and 2 SBJ awards	2019 —6 state and 4 national awards	2012 —2 state awards
2022 —12 state and 5 national awards	2018 —6 state and 4 national awards	2011 —4 national awards
	2017 —2 state and 3 national awards	
	2016 —9 state and 6 national awards	
	2015 —7 state and 4 national awards	

(Awards presented by the Minnesota Newspaper Association, Society of Professional Journalists and National Newspaper Association)

OBITUARIES

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

John McEnaney, 64, Owatonna



John McEnaney

John was born Feb. 4, 1961, to Dr. James and Patricia McEnaney, the fifth of their seven adored children. John grew up in a happy home filled with love, strong Catholic faith, structure, sports and outdoor activity, with ample opportunity to develop his passions.

After graduating from Owatonna High School in 1980, John attended the College of St. Thomas until his life-altering diagnosis of Still's disease at the tender age of 20 years old, which set in motion his adult life journey of steely determination to face life's challenges with a chin-up attitude and his daily reminder to all—"There is always someone worse off than me."

While living in Mound, much of his adult life, John enjoyed a long career in the telecommunications industry, until six years ago, when presented an offer to move back to his beloved hometown of Owatonna to continue his career path.

Endearing to family, friends, co-workers and clients was his quick wit and insightful comebacks that brought pure oxygen into the room. Most have undoubtedly been on the other side of John's motivational "coaching" lectures or philosophical words of wisdom, inspired by his favorite westerns and classic country songs. He was a master storyteller and no matter how often repeated, resonated humorously with his audience time and time again. John's family and lifelong friends have his many anecdotal slogans etched to memory, but his most memorable mottos were "ten feet tall and bulletproof," when asked how he was doing; and "Improvise, adapt and overcome," of which he lived daily by example. His health struggles never prevented him from setting and reaching goals, he rarely complained of his circumstances, and steadily "just got 'er done." John's positivity was truly infectious.

John's greatest passions were spending time at his cabin on the Gunflint Trail, captaining his boat "Riptide" as a fishing guide on Lake Superior, boating at his brother Mike's cabin on Gull Lake and childhood family vacation spot, snowmobiling, his Irish heritage, and family traditions. John was the self-appointed foreman for heavy-lifting projects at the cabin, as his physical ailments were

many, unfazed delegating to his trusted crew of family and friends who knew how "John liked it done." His brother Brian, and cabin partner for the last 40 years, was John's treasured right-hand man who never failed to orchestrate all things cabin related to keep in tip-top shape for their many visitors and guests to enjoy. Health issues aside, John lived a full and simple life that brought him immense pleasure; he would no-doubt describe his life as one helluva ride!

John is survived by brothers Mike McEnaney of Bloomington; Bob McEnaney (Terri) of Woodbury; Brian McEnaney of Edina; Pete McEnaney of Eagle River, Ark.; sister Kathy Timberg of Mound; brother-in-law David Grieves of Baldwinsville, N.Y.; cherished nieces and nephews: Michael Grieves (Linda); Megan Checksfield (Kevin); Ryan McEnaney (Paul); Joey McEnaney (Anna); Danny McEnaney (Dani); Megan Carson (Nick); Madison McEnaney; Ty McEnaney; Leah McEnaney; Will Timberg; Pete Timberg; Louie Timberg; great nieces and nephews: Jimmy Ziebol; Bailey McEnaney; Parker McEnaney; Emilio McEnaney; Ciara McEnaney; Callum Carson; Lochlan Carson.

John was preceded in death by parents James and Patricia McEnaney; brother-in-law John Timberg; and sister Erin Grieves.

John's absence will be profound but leaves us with enough "Johnny Mac" stories to keep him alive in our hearts forever. We are reassured knowing John is relishing eternal life, unencumbered by physical limitations and free of pain. He fought hard to the bitter end with his usual tenacity and grit. Boundless gratitude and appreciation to the countless caretakers who worked tirelessly over the last three years to keep John's challenging health issues in balance—no small feat.

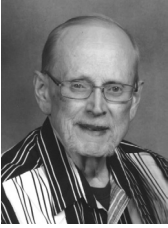
Most importantly, we are indebted to the amazing staff and many folks who befriended John at BridgeWater and Benedictine, tremendously easing our uphill battle with compassion, grace and dedication to raising John's bar for hope and recovery.

Rest easy Johnny Mac, with fair winds and following seas. You were loved deeply and will be sorely missed.

A celebration of John McEnaney's life will be held at a later date; details to be announced.

BRICK-MEGER & MEDFORD
FUNERAL HOME

Gene Katzung, 73, Owatonna



Gene Katzung

Gene R. Katzung, age 73, passed away peacefully Dec. 10, 2025, in Owatonna.

Mass of Christian Burial will be held on Saturday, Dec. 20, 2025, at 10:30 a.m. at Sacred Heart Catholic Church, 810 South Cedar Ave., Owatonna.

Visitation will take place on Friday, Dec. 19, 2025, at the Brick-Meger Funeral Home from 4-7 p.m., and again one hour prior to the service at the church. A Knights of Columbus Rosary will be recited at 7 p.m. at the funeral home. Military honors will be provided by the Steele County Funeral Unit.

Gene was born in Owatonna to parents Manville and Doris (Erickson) Katzung.

He graduated from Owatonna High School in 1971. He entered the National Guard and served for eight years. Gene started working as a machinist at OMC, working for several manufacturers and eventu-

ally retiring with Truth Hardware.

Gene married Darlene Halla Sept. 15, 1972, at Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Owatonna.

He was a constant presence at area Rendezvous over the years. Gene enjoyed fishing, but especially the numerous fishing trips to one of his favorite places in Canada over the years. Most of all he loved being with his family.

He is survived by his wife of 53 years, Darlene; children, Corey (Lill) Katzung of Owatonna, and Connie (Brian) Nelson of Jasper, Ga.; grandchildren, Tabitha, Sasha, and Tyler; great-granddaughters, Serenity and Olivia; siblings, Jerry, Vernelle (Karen), Bette Sponholtz, Janann (Rod) Langer, and Dixie Bradbury.

He was preceded in death by his parents, and one sibling, Merle (Donna).

For more information or to leave an online condolence message, go to www.megercares.com.

BRICK-MEGER & MEDFORD
FUNERAL HOME

Jasinski to seek re-election to state senate

State Senator John Jasinski, R-Faribault, has announced he will run for re-election in 2026, asking residents of Steele, Goodhue, Rice and Waseca counties to send him back to St. Paul to continue pushing for safer roads, stronger oversight of state spending, and a more affordable Minnesota.

Jasinski, who has represented Senate District 19 since 2017, said he plans to focus his campaign on concerns he hears from residents across southern Minnesota.

"It has been the honor of my life to represent the people of District 19," Jasinski said. "Minnesotans deserve safer roads and bridges, far better oversight of government spending, protections against fraud, and policies that make life easier for families, farmers, and small businesses."

Jasinski said rising costs, state mandates, and repeated failures to stop fraud in government programs are issues he hears about most from constituents. He said he intends to focus on affordability for working families and seniors, support for law enforcement, protecting local control, and securing new investments in Greater Minnesota infrastructure.

He also said he will continue advocating for tougher safeguards to prevent fraud, waste, and abuse in state programs, a theme Senate Republicans have emphasized for the past two years as revelations of widespread fraud have drawn national scrutiny.

"Minnesotans are frustrated, and they should be," Jasinski said. "I'll keep fighting for balance, for accountability, for common



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Senator John Jasinski speaks during a committee meeting. The veteran lawmaker has announced he plans to seek re-election next fall.

sense, and for the values that make our communities strong."

The senator also said he wants the Legislature to refocus on improving student achievement. He noted the state has provided record funding for schools over the years, but test scores have remained low while burdensome new state mandates have strained school budgets. Jasinski said his priority is strengthening core areas of instruction like reading, writing, math and science, and giving local schools more flexibility to direct funding toward classroom learning rather than new regulations.

Jasinski, who serves as Deputy Republican Leader, has emerged as one of the GOP's leading voices on transportation, infrastructure, and government accountability and oversight. He is the Republican lead on the Senate Transportation Committee and sits on the Capital Investment and Finance committees. He has also been heavily involved in

candidate recruitment and fundraising efforts aimed at helping Republicans retake the Senate majority in 2026.

A lifelong Faribault resident and Navy veteran, Jasinski previously served on the Faribault City Council and as the city's mayor from 2008 to 2016. He continues to serve on the Faribault Charter Commission and the Faribault Industrial Corporation and works as a real estate broker with MDC Real Estate.

Jasinski said he plans to continue meeting with residents of District 19 to outline his agenda, which includes improving affordability, expanding transportation and infrastructure funding, strengthening rural healthcare, supporting agriculture and small businesses, funding and mandate relief for local schools, and preventing fraud and abuse of taxpayer dollars.

"Minnesota needs a more balanced government that puts Minnesotans first," Jasinski said. "That's what I'm fighting for."

Celebrating Christmas in the early years



Back in Time
NANCY
VAILLANCOURT

Hard to believe it's Christmas time already! Many of the historical books I read leave out details about everyday life; most do not even mention Christmas festivities. But let me give you a glimpse of some of the ways Steele County residents commemorated Christmas in the past.

In his book "Owatonna: the Social Development of a Minnesota Community," Edgar Bruce Wesley states that the Owatonna Civic League was established in 1907 to elicit pride in the community. At Christmas of 1914, the League sponsored a public Christmas tree in Central Park. At the time of Wesley's writings, 1938, a Christmas tree in Central Park had become an annual tradition.

The photographs included with this article are from the Photo



A headline in the Dec. 7, 1939, Photo News declared, "City has most beautiful holiday decorations." This shows downtown Owatonna decorated in the late 30s.

News on Dec. 7, 1939. The top photo shows Cedar Avenue looking south. The Zamboni Building and the movie theater can be seen on the left. The second photo is taken from Central Park, looking to the west down Bridge Street. S.L. Kubiato-wicz, Robert Bzoscik, and their crew installed the decorations which stretched across the streets.

During World War II austerity measures were in place, but the Straight River Ice

Company hauled blocks of ice to Central Park. They made a miniature ice castle around the fountain. Columns of ice marked the entrances to the park. I have photos of them but their quality is not good enough to print.

Central Park looks especially lovely this Christmas time. The tree in Central Park this year continues this long tradition and, with the other lights around the park, makes a perfect place to visit and take photos. All the best to you during this holiday season!

Nancy Vaillancourt is a history buff from Owatonna who serves as a history correspondent for the Times. She served as librarian in Blooming Prairie for many years before retiring in 2024.

TRUST US TO Handle With Care

GLEN

MIKE

BRETT

BRICK-MEGER FUNERAL HOME
MEDFORD FUNERAL HOME

Proudly Serving Steele County

507.451.1457 • megercares.com

THE SAVVY SENIOR

Brought to you by:

Prairie Manor Care Center & Heather Haus

220 3rd St. NW,
Blooming Prairie
583-4434



LETTERS TO SANTA

SANTA IS CHECKING HIS LIST TWICE TO SEE WHO'S BEEN NAUGHTY OR NICE!

We have GREAT NEWS for area children. The Steele County Times has established connections with Santa Claus at the North Pole. We are taking these letters to Santa from first graders in Blooming Prairie and providing them to Santa in hopes that he will work his magic. Remember kids being naughty or nice may depend on what Santa brings for Christmas!



Dear Santa,
I hope you have a good Christmas. Your elf is being good. I want a Pretend elf.
From, Jersey Bartness



Dear Santa,
I hope you are having a good Christmas! Please, Santa, I want more snow.
From, cici Anderson



Dear Santa,
I hope your elves are doing good. Can you make it snow again please?
From, Jack Velbman



Der Stana,
how is Snowflake? Stanu can I pless have a plesegrlineit it modrck and I will leve a note for you Stanucloss andr the crimis chee Love AyatoStanu



Dear Santa,
Is Snowflakokay? What is it like at the north pole? Would youples bring me a gas brtbike and a fgteev frigy? I hope you like my cires thay are chocklit chip?
Love, Grayson Martin



Der Santa,
Do you no your rawls? Could you bring me a dog rel dog?
I will lev cues for
Love, Jack Steffen



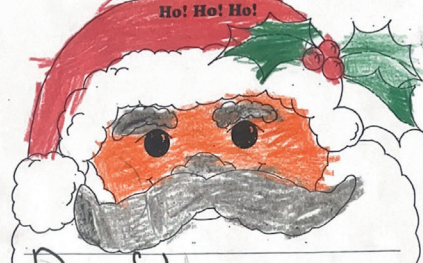
Dear santa,
Is your sleigh ready? For Christmas I want a Messi Jersey. I will leave you Cookies for christmas
Love, Memphis C
Showback



Dear Santa, how is the north pole? For christmas I want a culrene book and a math book. I hope you have a good holiday. Love Paisleigh Kjome IC



Dear Santa,
Are the randeer prath prathusing? For Christmas I want a frbey. I will bee woching owt for your slae.
Love, Bailey D Node



Dear Santa
How are the for reindeer doing? Christmas I would like a watch. Have a good delivery!
Love Lash Vevach



Dear Santa,
How are the reindeer doing in the North Pole? for christmas I would like some horses.
Have a good Love flight!
Charlotte Florend



Dear Santa
How are you doing? For christmas I would like a now ben bag chaw. Have a grat christmas
Love Broxden Dulap



UNITED IS THE WAY™

Taking action together so all can thrive.





Letters To Santa 2025

Dear Santa, Could you give me more monster high dolls? Merry Christmas, Santa. From, Ellie Kathleen	Dear Santa, I hope you doing good and your elves! I like Santa because he is nice. From Cora Zak	Dear Santa, I hope you have a good Christmas. Are your elves being good? I want slime and more snow. From Kaxton Semones (I love you. Your elf is being good.)	Dear Santa, Our Elf is swinging from the ceiling. Please stop it. From, Rhett Hullopetter	Dear Santa, Have a great Christmas! I hope your elf are doing good! I want a giant big puppy stuffy. From Megan Paulson	Dear Santa, I hope you have a good Christmas! For Christmas, I want a phone! From Abel Hernandez
Dear Santa, I hope you have a wonderful Christmas. Your elf is being good in our class. I really want a toy monster truck. From Rebel Witzel	Dear Santa, I hope your elves are being good, and I don't know what I want but, I want lots of snow. From Leona Swanson	Dear Santa, I want a lot of snow. I will sled on it. I want a tablet. From Creed Chladek	Dear Santa, How are you? I am happy. I want a baseball for Christmas. From Leo	Dear Santa, You are the best! I wish I could have a electric dinosaur. From Calvin Kelner	Dear Santa, I hope you are having a good time with your elves. Our elf here is being good. Can I please have a phone? From Adley Koster
Dear Santa, How are you? I am DeKlan. I want a dinosaur for Christmas. From DeKlan	Dear Santa, Could you please give puppy? From, Wayatt Mongeau	Dear Sanda, Are my cukcueas gude from last yere and wate for this yere! Could you git methecolist nrf guns and my babebruthr sum tose too? Brooks Wohlferd	Dear Santu, I love you and what do you do? Would you ples giv me a nrf gun ples prite ples I would leve u keecookies for you. Love, Riley Koch	Dere Santu, Can the ranedere jreke melk, Can you giv me dog ples. I wil giv you presins. Odin Halverson	Der Santa, R the Raber ok? Is Sno-flag ok? Wut are yor favrt cuces? Can you bing my a dog that you can car for a ptend. Love, Arabella Offnr
Dere Santu, What are you doing? Can you get me er bdg. Love, Loki Haberman	Dear Standa, Are the Elfs ok? Can you giv me a nrtsgans? I wiil giv you milk and cuos. Jack Distad	Dear Santa, Hows Snowflake doing? Could you please get me a poodule that is a puppy that is real and a saprise? Love, Stella Downey	Deer Santa! Is rudedolff ok? Could you bring me 1994 pride rock? Do you me to have a can't? Jaxon Olson	Dear Santa, How is your dotr. Can I want to ples have a new born babey. How do you make your tores? Love, Lyla Rodriguez	Dear Santa, Are the Elfs ok? Could you giv me a Rocunsokums? I will giv you milk. Love, John Williamson
Dere Santa, What is your favrit cukes? Would you give me a eolecchick modr scol? Thank you for giving presints ever yere. Love, Amelia Onken	Der Santu, Are the cuces guyd? Could you bring me real now borin cios? I whil giv you cuces. Love, Brooklynn Deml	Dear Santa, Hows snowflake? Can you bring a take care of dog? I will leve milk and cookies. Addilyn Schulz	Dere Santu, Are the cookees gd? Would you get a dog ples? I will give cookes. Love, Carson Gengler	Dear Santa, How are you? For Christmas, I want fake nails. Drive sayf. Love, Jenevieve Jones	Dear Santa, How do you make the salye fliye? For Christmas I want a hovrbord! I will leve you sum milk at Christmas. Love, Everly
Deae Santa, Santa is the shop busy? For Christmas I want Nintendo Switch and ifon15. Love, Anthony (I im gonna bake cookies.)	Dear Santa, How are you? For Christmas I want a 100 mhp rc car. I want phone 17. How is misis Klos? Love, Owen Kormann	Der Santa, I love Christmas. For Christmas, I want a pink bene bag and a phone. I will give you coces and milk. Love, Cecelia Vesely	Dear Santa, Is Mrs. Close make cookies? For Christma I want littlest pet shop. I love you Santa. Frum, Addison Srsen	Dear Santa, Hi Santa! Hi M Sos (Mrs. Claus)! For Christmas I want new iPhone. I hope you Ho Ho Ho. Love, Nolan French	Dear Santa, I help you drive safe. For Christmas I want a messy set up. I help you have a grat day. Love, Silen Tavr
Dear Santa, I hope yor riendeer are doing good. For Crismes I want a amacen girl doll. And ples can I have sum barbies. Have a good Crisemes!! Love, Rori	Dear Santa, Are you eten cuke? For Christmas I want Ron-aldo set up. And I want a messy set up. I hope you drive safe. Love, Mack Slowinski	Dear Santa, How are your reiendeer flying? For Christmas, I want a toy case tractor, I will get cookies for you. Love, Kevin Lawres	Dear Santa, Are you cold? For Christmas, I want a drone. I like you. From Raylan Thompson	Dear Santa, How is the weather? For Christmas, I would like a spying drong. Say hi to Dasher for me! Love, Qie Baxter	Dear Santa, How is Rudolph doing? For Christmas I would like a new hunting bag. Have a good flight! Love, Andrew Kelly
Dear Santa, How is our elf Christmas going? Fro Christmas I would like a watch. Have a good day! Love, Kaylee Krell	Dear Santa, How are the reiendeer going? For Christmas I would like football gloves. Have a good Christmas! Love, Layne Krell	Dear Santa, How is Mrs. Claus doing? For Christmas I would like a T-ball glove. Have a great Christmas! Love, Lauryn Masching	Dear Santa, How are the elves doing at the North Pole? For Christmas, I would like a hunting bag. Have a good Christmas! Love, Carson Moe	Dear Santa, How are you doing Santa? For Christmas, I would like a new bike. I love you Santa! Love, Khloe Olson La-Fontaine	Dear Santa, How is the reiendeer? For Christmas I would like a Rc boat. Have a nice Christmas! Love, Hudson Peterson
Dear Santa, How are the reiendeer doing? For Christmas I would like a toy kitchen. Have a safe flight! Love, Grayson Ratigan	Dear Santa, How are you doing? For Christmas I would like a watch. Have a good day! Love, Claire Sexton	Dear Santa, How are the reiendeer doing? For Christmas, I would like a strry. Good biy Santa and elfs! Love, Lacey Vugle	Dear Santa, How are the elves doing? For Christmas, I would like a flip car. Say hi to the elves for me. Love, Wesley Winzenburg		

Mike's
REPAIR
Ag & Truck Tire
870 32 Ave. NW, Owatonna
Emergency or on the farm repair
507-455-0388
(After hours 507-455-0483)

misgen
auto parts
507-684-2100
12880 SW 72nd Ave, Ellendale

Tandem Products, Inc.
520 Industrial Drive
Bloomington, MN
507.583.7222
HRBP@TandemProducts.com

UNITED WAY
Steele County
Goal \$950,000
Support
United Way
Today!

SIMPLE MOVE
Proudly rooted in Owatonna, Simple Move is more than a moving company; we're a part of your community. We understand the unique needs of our neighbors and local businesses and we are here to make your next move, within southern MN or across our beautiful state, simple!
(507) 475-2214
www.simplemove.com

STEELE COUNTY Times
Always local,
All the time.

Hope CREAMERY
TRY HOPE BUTTER FOR YOUR BAKING!
507-684-2019

Doerhoefer, Miner, Andrist & Arndt, P.A.
CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS
314 E. Main St.
Bloomington
507-583-7258
685 W. Bridge St.
Owatonna
507-451-9136
133 N. Broadway,
New Richland
507-465-8100

SALINAS AUTO REPAIR INC.
656 3rd St. NE • Bloomington, MN
Robert Salinas
Family-Owned
507-583-6620

FLIP YOUR FRIDGE
REPLACE AND RECYCLE
Cool for You. Cool for the Planet.
www.SaveEnergyInBloomington.com

HONEST-1
AUTO CARE
1125 S. Oak Ave. • Owatonna
507-431-4576
www.Honest1Owatonna.com

Vandal's FAMILY MARKET
327 HWY AVE S • BLOOMINGTON **583-6671**

CASH WISE
Employee Owned
www.cashwise.com
LARGE SELECTIONS LOW PRICES
495 West N St.
Owatonna
507-451-7220
Like us on Facebook



Owatonna's Kayla Pastika shoots for a blast double against her Bloomington Kennedy opponent. The Owatonna girls wrestling team took on the Athena Invitational in Hopkins last week for a tournament that saw over 600 female athletes compete across 15 weight classes.

Owatonna sends 14 girls to Athena Invitational

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

Owatonna girls wrestling sent 14 athletes to the Athena Invitational tournament in Hopkins last week, showing off the team's impressive numbers and wealth of talent.

Huskies athletes were split into two separate A and B brackets based off level of competition and experience.

Out of the 14 wrestlers, five braved the A brackets that were loaded with previous state champions and plenty of title contenders.

Over 600 total girls wrestlers were on site for the tournament, making it one of the biggest regular-season tournament that the Huskies will compete in this year.

Taking on the A bracket were wrestlers Aniah Smith, Kayla Pastika, Lucinda Ornelas, McKayla Selle and Aliah Fischer.

Smith kicked off the day for the Huskies in her Athena Invitational debut as a seventh grader in the under 99-pound bracket.

The weight class is not usually offered in Minnesota State High School League competition and won't be available in the post-season, but competition for the Athena Invitational tournament title was still fierce.

Smith's tournament was an immediate uphill battle as she

squared off with eventual champion Sadie Christiansen from Kasson-Mantorville in the first round.

Owatonna's seventh-grade phenom did not let the initial loss phase her and fought back to place fourth in the tournament by taking two quick bonus-point wins before losing a 12-3 major decision to Eagan sophomore Elouise Snook.

Pastika was the next wrestler to hit the mats at 106 for the Huskies and also finished fourth in her bracket.

The sophomore earned a first-round bye and started hot by pinning her Bloomington Kennedy opponent in the third period to advance to the semifinals.

Bemidji's Taylor Merschman managed to stick Pastika in the third period to send her to the third-place match where Kasson-Mantorville's Eliana O'Donoghue won by fall in the first period to take third.

Ornelas followed close behind at 112 pounds but had a more difficult day, finishing as the lone Huskies girl to not place in her A bracket.

The junior lost a painful 10-9 sudden victory match that relegated her to the consolation bracket where she won one match by fall before being pinned herself.

Selle was the next woman up at 142



Owatonna's Kayla Pastika gets her hand raised after pinning her opponent from Bloomington Kennedy. Pastika placed fourth at 106 pounds.

pounds and had a stellar run to finish a team-best third place.

The senior and returning state entrant earned a first-round bye and secured the pin in the quarterfinals to advance to the semifinals, but lost to Nash-Kee-Greenway's Jovanna Volker via second-round fall to fall to the third-place match.

Selle showed great composure to finish

out with a 4-1 win over Minneapolis Roosevelt's Sam Hinman to secure third.

The Huskies' final wrestler to compete was Fischer, who took eighth place after medically withdrawing from the tournament.

Fischer was making her season debut and attempting to return from a serious hip injury that she sustained during an off-season

tournament.

The sophomore looked like her usual self to begin the day, earning a first-round fall, but decided to withdraw following the match to preserve her health.

She still managed to finish in eighth place despite her one-match day.

Also wrestling in the Athena Invitational tournament in

the B brackets were Lilyx Treadway, Aleia Glende, Makayla Glende, Cassandra Volsen, Kiley Waldhauser, Delaney Abraham, Grace Lu, Ella Montanye and Madeline Montanye.

The girls team will be back in action when the Huskies host their Owatonna Girls Classic at the high school on Friday, Dec. 19 at 4:30 p.m.



Owatonna's Aniah Smith works to pin her opponent from Eagan. Smith placed fourth in her under 99-pound bracket.

CELEBRATING 25th ANNIVERSARY 2000-2025

507-333-9838
www.bauerrestoration.com

Helping our Community Manage the Unexpected for 25 Years

WATER • FIRE • STORM • RECONSTRUCTION

Huskies take second in Brainerd

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

Owatonna gymnastics finished in second place at the Warrior Holiday Invite in Brainerd over the weekend after losing a close 142.750-142.100 race for first to Melrose.

Huskies' sophomore Delia Neumann was a large part of the team's

success and finished first in all-around competition with 36.450 points.

Owatonna's day was highlighted by a spectacular showing on the floor, where the team finished with 36.400 points.

Senior Chloe Myer led the way for the team with a 9.300-point routine and was aided

by Kendra Miller's 9.100, Neumann's 9.050 and Ellie Blum's 8.950.

The team also excelled on the balance beam and vault, scoring north of 35 points in each event.

Neumann proved once again why she is the defending state balance beam champion and posted a meet-best 9.400-point routine in the event.

The trio of Miller (9.000), Myer (8.800) and Paige Hullopeter (8.650) helped combine for 35.850 points.

Through two events, Owatonna had already solidified itself as a top competitor for the meet title, and those chances were aided by a solid 35.650 showing on the vault.

Hullopeter helped spark the Huskies with a solid 9.15-point routine to kick off the team's scoring.

Following her were Ellie Blum (8.950), Neumann (8.850) and McKenna Edel (8.700) to round out the team's scoring.

Owatonna and Melrose had been neck-and-neck all day at the Warrior Holiday Invite, but the meet came down to the uneven bars, traditionally Owatonna's most challenging event.



STAFF PHOTO BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS

Owatonna's Paige Hullopeter flies through the air during her dismount from the high bar. Blum scored an 8.225 against Faribault and an 8.050 in Brainerd on her bars routines last week.

Neumann's team-high 9.150 set the team up nicely for a chance at the win, but Melrose athletes Josie Eveslage (9.200) and Celia Schoenberg (9.150) shut the door with their performances.

The Huskies rounded out their scoring with Myer at 8.650, Hullopeter at 8.350 and Blum at 8.050 for a combined 34.200 points.

Unfortunately, it was not enough to fend off Melrose's 35.400 to give the opposition a slight 142.750-142.100 win at the end.

Prior to making the trip north to Brainerd, Owatonna hosted Faribault in a home meet and won 137.350-121.650.

The Huskies' next meet will be at home against Winona on Friday, Dec. 19 at 6:30 p.m.



STAFF PHOTO BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS

Owatonna head coach Kiana Starks hugs a Huskies gymnast after a strong floor routine. Starks took over head coaching duties this season and is a former Owatonna gymnast herself.



STAFF PHOTO BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS

Owatonna's McKenna Edel flips in front of the home crowd during a meet against Faribault last week. Edel scored an 8.800 on her routine.

Late comeback falls short for Owatonna

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

Owatonna boys hockey nearly pulled off an electric comeback attempt in Rochester last week, but still fell 3-2 to Century/John Marshall (CJM) despite tying the game in the third period.

The Huskies' third period magic saw the team score two goals in the opening seven minutes of the frame to tie the game at 2-2 before CJM scored the game winner less than a minute later.

The game was an offensive slugfest from opening puck drop with each side peppering the net over the course of the first 17 minutes, but finding little success thanks to strong performances by each goaltender.

FJM was the first team to break through by scoring 14:28 into the first on an even strength goal that beat Huskies netminder Braxton Ringhofer.

The goal was the lone tally of the first period and sent CJM into the second with a slight 1-0 lead.

The Panthers didn't waste any time finding an insurance goal and cashed in just 1:41 into the second on another even strength goal.

The marker was enough to give CJM a 2-0 lead heading into the third as Owatonna's offense had been held completely in check by CJM goaltender Zachary Bohan.

Bohan had been excellent through 34 minutes of play, but stumbled early when the Huskies finally



STAFF PHOTO BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS

Owatonna junior captain Grady Roush (16) skates past a Mankato East defender. Roush had a goal in the Huskies' 5-2 win over the Cougars.

managed to find the net on an even strength goal by Caleb Ringhofer just 50 seconds into the final frame.

Ringhofer was assisted by teammate Zachary Klecker, who just 6:06 later would go on to score the game tying goal for Owatonna on a play assisted by Zachary Roesner and Gavin Fitch.

The two goals had the Huskies' bench buzzing, but CJM was unfazed.

The Panthers silenced all of the reinvigorated Huskies' fans just 38 seconds later when CJM junior Gustav Baltavics scored the game-winning goal.

Owatonna tried to find its stride once more, but could not manage to slip another shot past Bohan in what would go on to be a heartbreaking 3-2 road loss to CJM.

The defeat cost the Huskies a chance at some critical Big Nine Conference points, but the team had already managed to secure a few earlier in the week when it beat Mankato East 5-2 at home.

Jackson Kath was able to kick off the scoring 1:02 into the game against the Cougars, but Mankato East battled back to tie the game at 1-1 heading into the second.

Mankato East briefly

held a 2-1 lead after scoring first in the second, but the duo of Cameron Molina and Klecker played spoiler by each recording a goal to give Owatonna a slight 3-2 advantage heading into the third.

The Huskies looked excellent in the final 17 minutes and added two more goals by Grady Roush and Kath to win the game 5-2.

Ringhofer secured the win in net by stop-

ping 17 of 19 shots.

Up next for Owatonna is an opportunity for more Big Nine Conference points when the team hosts Rochester Mayo on Thursday, Dec. 18 at 7 p.m.

Player Stats vs. CJM

	G	A	P
Klecker	1	1	2
C. Ringhofer	1	0	1
Roesner	0	1	1
Fitch	0	1	1
	SA	SV	GA
B. Ringhofer	40	37	3



STAFF PHOTO BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS

Owatonna's Wyatt Macy prepares to put a shot on net against Mankato East last week. The Huskies beat Mankato East 5-2 at home.

SCOREBOARD				
TEAM	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	Final
Owatonna	0	0	2	2
CJM	1	1	1	3

Investing in Minnesota.



Razorbacks score two wins in Byron

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

Westfield wrestling took a trip down Highway 14 for the Dave Scharberg Memorial Wrestling Dual Tournament in Byron last week and came home with two wins over Byron and Rochester Mayo.

The Razorbacks looked sharp from top to bottom against some big school competition, with the team's only loss coming to a stacked Plainview-Elgin-Millville (PEM) team.

"It was another good day of wrestling for our guys, and I was proud of our effort overall. We started off the day with a win against Byron in a tightly contested dual. Chase Kiser was able to seal the victory for us with a pin at 189 pounds. In the second dual of the day, we faced a tough PEM team, and were only able to secure two wins. Our best dual effort of the day came in

our final dual against Rochester Mayo. We were able to start with eight straight wins, and six of those were by fall," said Westfield Co-Head Coach David Lassahn.

The team's opening-round matchup against Byron saw Westfield come out on top 41-36.

The dual was a dog-fight from start to finish despite the Razorbacks taking an early 29-0 lead.

Westfield 107-pounder Easton Busho started the day with a fall by beating his opponent in 1:25.

Byron forfeited at 114 and 121 pounds to set Westfield up with a strong 18-0 lead.

The lead only increased when wrestling resumed as Peyton Lembke and Derek Miner both secured bonus points.

The former was spotless in a 17-0 technical fall at 127 pounds while

Miner wasted no time winning by fall in the first period.

Both sides traded falls at 139 and 145 pounds before Byron began to make a comeback.

Westfield's initial 35-6 lead shrunk significantly when the Bears won three consecutive matches by fall to cut the lead down to 35-24 heading into 189 pounds.

With an 11-point lead, Westfield just needed a win to secure the dual and Chase Kiser delivered with style by sticking his man for a second-period fall.

Byron went on to sweep the final two matches by fall, but the match had already been decided at 41-36.

In the team's next dual, Westfield took a 12-55 beating from PEM.

The Razorbacks' Bentley Miller (121 pounds — 10-3 decision), Miner (133 — 16-6 decision) and Braxton



Westfield's Derek Miner, left, and Bentley Miller, right, pose for a photo with their medals after going undefeated at the Dave Scharberg Memorial Wrestling Dual Tournament in Byron. Both finished 3-0 with Miner collecting all of his wins by fall and Miller scoring a fall, forfeit and a 10-3 decision.

Lee (285 pounds — 2:48 fall) were the only three Westfield wrestlers to win.

Westfield rebounded extremely well from the loss to finish its day with a 45-27 win over Rochester Mayo.

The Spartans had no answer for the Razor-

backs' lighter weights and found themselves in a similar position to Byron, falling behind 45-0 right out of the gate.

Westfield received a forfeit at 107 before taking the fight straight to the Spartans with seven consecutive match wins.

Earning bonus points for the Razorbacks were Devan Subbert (114 — 0:58 fall), Miller (121 — 1:03 fall), Miner (133 — 0:46 fall), Grayden Gunderson (139 — 3:46 fall), Isaac Fort (145 — 5:25 fall) and Cayden Maly (152 — 2:58 fall.)

Rochester Mayo won the final five matches and earned four falls, but it was not nearly enough to earn the win a 45-27 blowout for the Razorbacks.

Earlier in the week, Westfield traveled to NRHEG for a dual against the Panthers and came out on top 39-24.

The Razorbacks' win was highlighted again by the team's lighter weights.

After NRHEG took 3-0 lead at 107 pounds, Westfield turned up the heat to win four straight matches and go up 18-3.

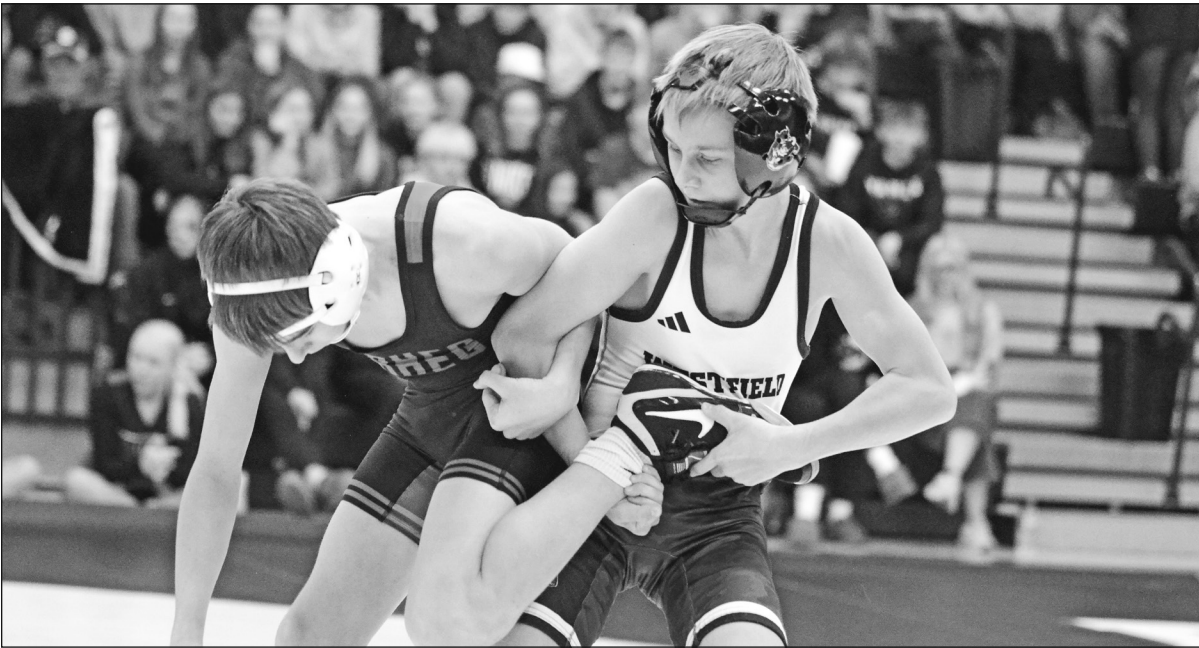
Again it was Subbert, Miller, Lembke and Miner that got the job done with two falls and two decision wins.

NRHEG's only chance at winning the dual disappeared at 172 pounds when Westfield's Jens Tidemann won his match against Noah Weller by fall to push the score to 33-12.

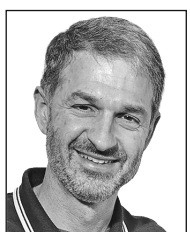
The Panthers could only afford a decision loss at 172 and after securing a bonus-point win, the dual was out of reach at 21 points with three matches remaining.

Westfield's next meet will be far from home when the team travels to Northwood-Kensett High School in Northwood, Iowa on Saturday, Dec. 20.

Official start times for the duals were not available at the time of press.



Westfield 107-pounder Easton Busho works to take down NRHEG's Owen Schlaak. Busho was unsuccessful in his attempt as Schlaak went on to win a 3-0 decision.



Owatonna Live
SPORTS WRAP
ROY KOENIG

New-look Huskies are ready for battle

Owatonna boys basketball is breaking in a

new set of starters after graduating their full lineup from last year. And with only four seniors this season, the team has a different dynamic with a mix of juniors and sophomores contributing.

The Huskies are also adding a dimension to their defense. After switching to a 1-2-2 last year, they are also

using their traditional man-to-man.

Senior guard Gavin Burmeister likes pressing. "It gets the other team moving right away and forces hurried mistakes," said Burmeister.

Will Halverson, a six-foot-five senior post who played tight end in football, will battle against bigger players at both ends of the floor. "I have a little bit more meat on my bones. I like to throw them around a little bit if I can," he said.

Coach Josh Williams says they'll pick and choose when to use each defense. "We're in a position now where we feel comfortable being able to utilize both. I think each game might present different opportunities or situations... The goal is to be really good at both."

He says the offense will mostly stay the same. "We try to get up and down the floor as best we can. Lot of guys

have the green light. We get up shots. Shot clock doesn't come into play a whole lot with us."

The offense is clicking early with the Huskies averaging 77 points per game while winning four of their first five. In Saturday's 95-63 home win over Winona, five players reached double digits, led by junior Willie Moore (26) and sophomores Jackson Holder (16) and Cooper Routh (15).

See **NEW-LOOK** on A15 ►



CAUGHT BEING AWESOME!
BLOSSOMS OF THE WEEK



Liam LaMont – KC – Mrs. Voss' Class – Parents: Kelly & Megan LaMont - Liam was caught being "Awesome" because he loves to learn, shows a positive attitude, and does his best every day. Recently, Liam made a connection to one of our amazing words of the week and heard it in a story. He does many random acts of kindness throughout the day and doesn't seek recognition. He also works extremely hard in the classroom. He has excitement for learning and uses expressive voices, which makes everyone in the room smile! Keep up the "Awesome" work in KC Liam!



Trey Asa – KD – Mrs. Busho's Class – Parents: Tanner & Taylor Asa - Trey comes to class ready to learn and brings such a bright, positive energy every day. He's often caught being awesome during our whole-group lessons – he listens closely, shares ideas, and helps our class in any way. He is a kind role model for friends and always tries his very best. We are so lucky to have to in our classroom, Trey! Keep Being Awesome!!!



Hattie Young – 3B – Mrs. Strunk's Class – Parents: Brent & Katie Young - Hattie is a terrific 3rd grade student who brightens our classroom every day! She shows kindness in her words and actions, works hard even when things get challenging, and is always a caring friend. Her positive attitude and determination make her a shining example to everyone around her. We love her stories about living next to Farmer John's Pumpkin Patch and her love for animals. We are so proud of her and grateful to have her in our class! Keep being amazing, Hattie! You make a difference every single day!

The Blossoms of the Week are Sponsored by this Community Booster



Cargill Nourishing the world
157 Hwy Ave N
Blooming Prairie, MN 55917
507-583-6641
www.cargill.com



Owatonna guard Jackson Holder locks up a Hastings guard on the perimeter. Owatonna will switch between man and the 1-2-2 defensive schemes this season.

GENERAL

DEC. 24: CHRISTMAS EVE – STEELE COUNTY OFFICES CLOSED

BLOOMING PRAIRIE

DEC. 18
7-8:30 p.m. --
High School Band
Concert in High School
Auditorium

DEC. 22
1-3 p.m. -- BP
Monday Movies at the
Library

DEC. 23
10-10:30 a.m. -- BP
Story Time at Library
12:45 p.m. -- Early
Dismissal for Children /
Teacher Inservice Day

DEC. 24
NO SCHOOL –
CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY
BREAK

ELLENDALE/HOPE/GENEVA/
NEW RICHLAND

**DEC. 17, 19, 22,
AND 24**
11 a.m. – SEMCAC in
Ellendale

Meeting in Ellendale
DEC. 24
NO SCHOOL /
OFFICES CLOSED –
WINTER BREAK

DEC. 19
5:30 p.m. -- AA

OWATONNA

DEC 17
7:30 p.m. -- Public
Skating at Four Seasons

DEC. 18
6 p.m. -- 80's Music
Name That Tune at
Mineral Springs Brewery

DEC. 19
3-5 p.m. -- 10th
Anniversary Open
House at Birchwood
Cottages
6:30-8:30 p.m. --
Open Swim at Owatonna
Middle School
7 p.m. -- Home
Brewers Secret
Ingredient Exchange
(1115 – 12th St. SE)

DEC. 21
9:15 a.m. -- Christ-
mas Bake & Craft Sale
Fundraiser at Our Sav-
ior's Lutheran Church
10:30 a.m. -- Public
Skating at Four Seasons
10:30 a.m. -- Ugly
Sweater Sunday! At
Redemption Church
(123 E. Main)
7 p.m. -- Owatonna
Figure Skating Club
presents Holiday
Exhibition at Four
Seasons

DEC. 23
1 p.m. -- Blood Drive
at Zamboni Event
Center Downtown
Owatonna
5 p.m. -- Chris Mims
at Mineral Springs
Brewery

DEC. 24
NO SCHOOL –
WINTER BREAK
10:30 a.m. -- Public
Skating at Four Seasons
4:30 p.m. -- Sound
Church 59 Minute
Christmas Eve Concert
(2002 Austin Road)

MEDFORD

DEC. 18
4 p.m. -- Baubles,
Bubbles, & Bites (6700
W Frontage Road, Suite
406)

DEC. 22
9:30-10 a.m. --
Preschool Christmas
Program (Section A) in
Auditorium
7 p.m. -- Medford
City Council Meeting

DEC. 23
9:30-10 a.m. --
Preschool Christmas
Program (Section C) in
Auditorium
1:30-2 p.m. --
Preschool Christmas
Program (Section B) in
Auditorium

DEC. 24
NO SCHOOL –
WINTER BREAK

Dual weekends
to benefit Geneva
Cancer Auction

BY HOWARD LESTRUD
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Count to 42 and you
will find the number of
Geneva Cancer Group's
auctions held to fight
this dreadful disease.
The first auctions
are set for Friday and
Saturday, Jan. 9 and 10.
The second weekend
of auctions is planned
for Jan. 16 and 17.
Friday auctions start
at 7 p.m. and Saturday
auctions will begin at
2 p.m. All are held at
Geneva Bar & Grill.
Residents are

requested to bring
auction donations to the
Geneva Bar & Grill or
call 507-383-7402.
Raffle tickets are \$5
per ticket. Prizes are:
\$1,000, Grand Prize;
\$500, second prize; \$300
third prize and \$200
fourth prize.
The raffle drawings
will be at 8 p.m. Satur-
day, Jan. 17.
The Geneva Cancer
Group was established in
1985. The auctions
raise funds for cancer
research for the single
purpose of eliminating
cancer.



FILE PHOTO
Geneva Cancer Group will be hosting its annual Cancer Auctions over two weekends in January.

Community meal at
the VFW planned
Christmas Day

BY ALEX MALM
STAFF WRITER

Need a place to
have a Christmas
meal?
Are you home-
bound with no one to
share a Christmas
dinner?
You are in luck, as
Owatonna's Christ-
mas Community
dinner will take place
again this year at the
Owatonna VFW.
Delivered meals

can be ordered by
calling 507-451-1001
on Christmas Day,
beginning at 7 a.m.
There is a limit of
four delivered meals
per household, or
community members
can eat at the VFW
between 11 a.m. and
1 p.m.
While it is not
required, a free will
offering will help
keep the community
dinners going into the
future.

CHEAPEST OIL
CHANGE AROUND!



Full Synthetic
Oil Change
\$49.99
Up to 5 quarts

Isn't it TIME you treat your vehicle
right with CAR TIME?
We're a full-service repair shop!



**1150 Hoffman Dr
Owatonna
507-774-9533**
www.cartimeofowatonna.com
We treat every vehicle like it's our own!



Merry
Mozzarella Bites

Ingredients:

- 1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 Tbsp. thinly sliced chives
- 1 Tbsp. white balsamic vinegar
- 2 tsp. finely chopped fresh basil
- 1 1/4 tsp. crushed red pepper flakes



- 1/4 tsp. kosher salt
- 8 oz. cilingine

Directions:

Step 1. In a medium serving bowl, combine oil, chives, vinegar, basil, red pepper flakes, and salt.
Step 2. Add cilingine and toss to combine.

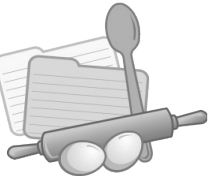
Sponsored by



GIVE. ADVOCATE. VOLUNTEER.
LIVE UNITED

United Way
of Steele County

507-455-1180
unitedwaysteelecounty.org



**THIS HOLIDAY SEASON,
GIVE THE GIFT
OF ENTERTAINMENT!**
Buy \$150 in CDT Gift Cards,
get a \$25 Bonus Card for use
on food and beverage in 2026!



Gift cards are available in any amount,
never expire and can be used for tickets to
the Main Stage, Concert Series, Stevie Ray's
Comedy Cabaret and much more!

Valid on gift card purchases Nov. 17, 2025 - Jan. 6, 2026.
Not valid on prior purchases or with other offers or discounts.
Other restrictions may apply.

952.934.1525
ChanhassenDT.com
**Chanhassen
DINNER THEATRES**
Entertainment for the Holidays!

BIRTHDAYS
AND
ANNIVERSARIES

December 21 Sam Esplan Michelle Wallace Amanda Schiefert Wyatt Rafdal	December 23 Morgan Jo Hagen Jeffrey (Heifer) Ingvalson Daxtin Zilm	December 27 Tara Gimbel Carsten Ingvalson Jeffrey Zimmerman Macy Lembke Lydia Brown Mason Brown Mary Renee DeYoung Harper Schwindel Lauren Robbins
December 22 Lisa Anderson Sharon Lea Lynnae Nelson Paul Heimgartner Gage Edward Nelson Doreen Blome Drew Kittelson	December 24 Noelle Wright Kaylene Jensen Joleen Zilm	December 25 Kylm Bishop Rick Klemmensen
	December 26 Leah Krell Diane Lembke Piper Winn Tricia Steckelberg Owen Brown	



December 21
Tom & Chris Butler
December 26
Paul & Bernice Stender
Wally & Jean Wilke



If anyone would like to add names to the birthday or anniversary list, please contact the Times at 507-583-4431 or news@steelecountytimes.com.

HONEST-1
AUTO CARE
honest1owatonna.com

NEW RICHLAND • HARTLAND • ELLENDALE • GENEVA

**PANTHER
of The Week**

NRHEG Elementary School- Ellendale

This week's Panther of the Week is Brylynn Gilby. She is the daughter of McKenzie Gilby and they reside in New Richland. Brylynn is in Mrs. Reisdorfer's fifth grade class and was nominated by Mrs. Schultz, the Phy. Ed teacher. Brylynn always comes to PE with a smile and ready to work. She's a wonderful teammate and always tries her best. Brylynn has gotten really good at running. Keep up the great work Brylynn!

**Lerbergs Fitness, Car Wash
& Coin Laundry**
Congratulations Panther of the Week!

**118 5th Ave
Ellendale, MN
507-684-2471**

BP TRIVIA & EATS

BP Trivia

The Steele County Times has teamed up with Blooming Prairie Area Chamber and the BP Servicemen's Club to provide Blooming Prairie Trivia. Each week we will provide a trivia question, and readers can enter the contest by entering at the Times office and win a \$15 gift certificate to BP Servicemen's Club

How many students did the first school bus in Blooming carry?

A. 19
B. 36
C. 42
D. 59

BP Trivia & Eats

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Circle Answer: **A B C D**

Dec. 3 Trivia: What year did the Blossoms boys basketball team go to state?
Correct Answer: C - 1966

John Gerold of Medford is this week's winner.
Enter this contest by dropping off at our Blooming Prairie or Owatonna offices or sending to Steele County Times, P.O. Box 247, Blooming Prairie, MN 55917. Deadline will be Monday noon. Correct answers will qualify for a weekly drawing of a BP Servicemen's Club gift certificate.

DAILY
SPECIALS!

- Dec. 23 thru Dec. 26**
- Tuesday** - Soup and Sandwich
- Wednesday** - Chicken Bacon Ranch Sandwich with Fries
- Thursday** - Closed
- Friday** - Cheeseburger Basket
- BLOOMING PRAIRIE SERVICEMEN'S CLUB**
210 4th Street NE | Blooming Prairie
507-583-7884

FORECLOSURE

NOTICE OF MORTGAGE
FORECLOSURE SALE

**THE RIGHT TO
VERIFICATION OF THE
DEBT AND IDENTITY
OF THE ORIGINAL
CREDITOR WITHIN THE
TIME PROVIDED BY
LAW IS NOT AFFECTED
BY THIS ACTION.**

NOTICE IS HEREBY
GIVEN: That default has
occurred in the conditions
of the following described
mortgage:
DATE OF MORTGAGE:
August 26, 2022
ORIGINAL PRINCIPAL
AMOUNT OF
MORTGAGE:
\$392,755.00
MORTGAGOR(S): Ariana
J. Schwab and Ryan J.
Schwab, wife and
husband
MORTGAGEE: Mortgage
Electronic Registration
Systems, Inc., as
nominee for CrossCountry
Mortgage, LLC
DATE AND PLACE
OF FILING: Recorded
on August 30, 2022
as Document Number
A000444372 in the Office
of the County Recorder of
Steele County, Minnesota.
ASSIGNMENTS OF
MORTGAGE: Assigned
to: CrossCountry
Mortgage, LLC by
assignment recorded
on April 14, 2025 as
Document Number
A000456253 in the Office
of the County Recorder of
Steele County, Minnesota.
LEGAL DESCRIPTION
OF PROPERTY: All that
part of the SW 1/4 of
Section 20-T107N-R21W,
Steele County, Minnesota;
described as follows:
Commencing at the
southeast corner of said
SW 1/4; thence South 89°
29' 12" West a distance
of 895.23 feet, on an
assumed bearing, on the
south line of said SW 1/4,
to the point of beginning;
thence South 89° 29' 12"
West a distance of 33.00
feet, on said south line;
thence North 00° 42' 50"
West a distance of 584.48
feet; thence South 88°
42' 37" West a distance
of 141.19 feet; thence
North 01° 06' 27" West a
distance of 448.65 feet;
thence North 88° 58' 55"
East a distance of 576.01
feet; thence South 00°
08' 51" West a distance
of 537.43 feet; thence
North 89° 52' 00" West a
distance of 390.64 feet;
thence South 00° 42'
26" East a distance of
503.29 feet, to the point of
beginning;
subject to a public road
easement on the south
side thereof and any other
easements or restrictions
of record, if any .
STREET ADDRESS OF
PROPERTY: 8890 SW
28TH STREET,
OWATONNA, MN 55060
COUNTY IN WHICH
PROPERTY IS
LOCATED: Steele
County, Minnesota.
THE AMOUNT CLAIMED
TO BE DUE ON THE
MORTGAGE ON THE
DATE OF THE NOTICE:
\$404,447.78
TRANSACTION AGENT:
Mortgage Electronic
Registration Systems, Inc.
NAME OF MORTGAGE
ORIGINATOR: Cross-
Country Mortgage, LLC
RESIDENTIAL
SERVICER: Nationstar
Mortgage LLC
TAX PARCEL
IDENTIFICATION
NUMBER: 09-020-3201
TRANSACTION
AGENT'S MORTGAGE
IDENTIFICATION
NUMBER:
1007191-0001005253-6
THAT no action or
proceeding has been
instituted at law to recover
the debt then
remaining secured by
such mortgage, or any
part thereof, or, if the
action or proceeding has
been instituted, that the
same has been
discontinued, or that an
execution upon the
judgment rendered
therein has been returned
unsatisfied, in whole or
in part.
PURSUANT, to the power
of sale contained in said
mortgage, the above
described property will be
sold by the Sheriff of said
county as follows:

DATE AND TIME OF
SALE: January 13, 2026
at 10:00 AM.
PLACE OF SALE: Steele
County Sheriff's Office,
2500 Alexander St. SW,
Owatonna, MN 55060.
to pay the debt then
secured by said mortgage
and taxes, if any actually
paid by the mortgagee,
on the premises and the
costs and disbursements
allowed by law. The
time allowed by law for
redemption by said mort-
gagor(s), their personal
representatives or assigns
is six (6) months from the
date of sale.

TIME AND DATE TO
VACATE PROPERTY:
Unless said mortgage is
reinstated or the property
redeemed, or unless the
time for redemption is
reduced by judicial order,
you must vacate the
premises by 11:59 p.m.
on July 13, 2026.

THE TIME ALLOWED BY
LAW FOR REDEMPTION
BY THE MORTGAGOR,
THE MORTGAGOR'S
PERSONAL
REPRESENTATIVES OR
ASSIGNS, MAY BE
REDUCED TO FIVE
WEEKS IF A JUDICIAL
ORDER IS ENTERED
UNDER MINNESOTA
STATUTES, SECTION
582.032,
DETERMINING, AMONG
OTHER THINGS, THAT
THE MORTGAGED
PREMISES ARE
IMPROVED WITH A
RESIDENTIAL
DWELLING OF LESS
THAN FIVE UNITS, ARE
NOT PROPERTY USED
IN AGRICULTURAL
PRODUCTION, AND ARE
ABANDONED.
MORTGAGOR(S)
RELEASED FROM
FINANCIAL OBLIGATION
ON MORTGAGE: None

Dated: November 10,
2025

CROSSCOUNTRY
MORTGAGE, LLC
Mortgagee

TROTT LAW, P.C.

By: /s/
N. Kibongni
Fondungallah, Esq.
Samuel R. Coleman, Esq.
Alexa Marsh, Esq.
Attorneys for Mortgagee
25 Dale Street North
St. Paul, MN 55102
(651) 209-9760
(25-1133-FC01)

**THIS IS A
COMMUNICATION
FROM A DEBT
COLLECTOR.**

11.19-12.24

NOTICE

STATE OF MINNESOTA
COUNTY OF STEELE

DISTRICT COURT
FAMILY
DIVISION
THIRD JUDICIAL
DISTRICT
CASE TYPE:
Dissolution with Child
Court File No.

**SUMMONS FOR
DISSOLUTION
OF MARRIAGE**

In Re the Marriage of:
Carmen Damaris
Villanueva,,
Petitioner,
and
Jose Guadalupe
Villanueva,
Respondent.

THE STATE OF
MINNESOTA TO THE
ABOVE-NAMED
RESPONDENT.
**WARNING: Your spouse
has filed a lawsuit
against you for
dissolution of your
marriage. A copy of the
paperwork regarding
the lawsuit is served on
you with this summons.
This summons is an
official document from
the Court that affects
your rights. Read this
summons carefully. If
you do not understand
it, contact an attorney
for legal advice.**
1. The Petitioner, Carmen
Damaris Villanueva, has
filed a lawsuit against you

asking for a
dissolution of your
marriage (divorce). A
copy of the Petition for
Dissolution of
Marriage is attached to
this Summons.
2. You must serve upon
Petitioner and file with
the Court a written An-
swer to the Petition for
Dissolution of Marriage
and you must pay the re-
quired filing fee. Answer
forms are available from
the Court Administrator's
office. You must serve
your Answer upon
Petitioner **within thirty
(30) days** of the date
you were served with the
Summons, not counting
the day of service. If you
do not serve and file your
Answer, the Court may
give your spouse
everything he or she is
asking for in the Petition
for Dissolution of
Marriage.
3. This proceeding does
not involve real property.

**NOTICE OF
TEMPORARY
RESTRAINING
PROVISIONS**

Under Minnesota law,
service of this summons
makes the following
requirements apply to
both parties to the action,
unless they are modified
by the court or the
proceeding is dismissed:
1. Neither party may
dispose of any assets
except (a) for the
necessities of life or for
the necessary generation
of income or preservation
of assets, (b) by an
agreement of the
parties in writing, or (c)
for retaining counsel to
carry on or to contest this
proceeding.
2. Neither party may
harass the other party.
3. All currently available
insurance coverage must
be maintained and
continued without
change in coverage or
beneficiary designation.
4. Parties to a marriage
dissolution proceeding
are encouraged to
attempt alternative
dispute resolution
pursuant to Minnesota
law.
Alternative dispute
resolution includes
mediation, arbitration and
other processes as set
forth in the district court
rules. You may contact
the court administrator
about resources in your
area. If you cannot pay
for mediation or
alternative dispute
resolution, in some
counties, assistance may
be available to you
through a nonprofit
provider or a court
program. If you are a
victim of domestic abuse

or threats as defined
in Minnesota Statutes,
Chapter 518B, you are
not required to try
mediation and you will not
be penalized by the court
in later
proceedings.

**IF YOU VIOLATE ANY
OF THESE
PROVISIONS, YOU
WILL BE SUBJECT TO
SANCTIONS BY THE
COURT.**

**NOTICE OF PARENT
EDUCATION
PROGRAM
REQUIREMENTS**

Under Minnesota
Statutes, § 518.157, in a
contested
proceeding involving cus-
tody or parenting time of
a minor child, the parties
must begin participation
in a parent education
program that
meets minimum
standards
promulgated by the
Minnesota Supreme
Court within 30 days after
the first filing with the
court. In some Districts,
parenting education may
be required in all
custody or parenting
proceedings. You may
contact the District Court
Administrator for
additional information
regarding this
requirement and the avail-
ability of parent education
programs.

Dated: Aug 11, 2025

/s/Carmen Palacios -
Petitioner
Steele County, MN
County

C/O Richards Law, LLC
2746 Superior Dr. NW,
Suite 310
Rochester MN 55901
507-322-0550
Rachel Pletz (rachel@
opalrichardslaw.com)

12.-10-24

FORECLOSURE

NOTICE OF MORTGAGE
FORECLOSURE SALE

**THE RIGHT TO
VERIFICATION OF THE
DEBT AND IDENTITY
OF THE ORIGINAL
CREDITOR WITHIN THE
TIME PROVIDED BY
LAW IS NOT AFFECTED
BY THIS ACTION.**

NOTICE IS HEREBY
GIVEN: That default has
occurred in the conditions
of the following described
mortgage:
DATE OF MORTGAGE:
May 14, 2021
ORIGINAL PRINCIPAL
AMOUNT OF
MORTGAGE:
\$152,009.00
MORTGAGOR(S): Todd

R. Thiesse, a single
person
MORTGAGEE: Wells
 Fargo Bank, N.A.
DATE AND PLACE OF
FILING: Recorded on May
18, 2021 as Document
Number A000436230 in
the Office of the County
Recorder of Steele
County, Minnesota.
ASSIGNMENTS OF
MORTGAGE: Assigned
to: Freedom Mortgage
Corporation by
assignment recorded
on July 24, 2025 as
Document Number
A000457596 in the Office
of the County Recorder of
Steele County, Minnesota.
LEGAL DESCRIPTION
OF PROPERTY: Lot 7,
Sahf-Erickson Second
Addition, Owatonna,
Minnesota. Steele County,
Minnesota.
STREET ADDRESS OF
PROPERTY: 237 13TH
ST NE, OWATONNA, MN
55060
COUNTY IN WHICH
PROPERTY IS
LOCATED: Steele
County, Minnesota.
THE AMOUNT CLAIMED
TO BE DUE ON THE
MORTGAGE ON THE
DATE OF THE NOTICE:
\$143,330.19
TRANSACTION AGENT:
None
NAME OF MORTGAGE
ORIGINATOR: Wells
 Fargo Bank, N.A.
RESIDENTIAL
SERVICER: Freedom
Mortgage Corporation
TAX PARCEL
IDENTIFICATION
NUMBER: 17-204-0107
TRANSACTION
AGENT'S MORTGAGE
IDENTIFICATION
NUMBER: None
THAT no action or
proceeding has been
instituted at law to recover
the debt then
remaining secured by
such mortgage, or any
part thereof, or, if the
action or proceeding has
been instituted, that the
same has been
discontinued, or that an
execution upon the
judgment rendered
therein has been returned
unsatisfied, in whole or
in part.
PURSUANT, to the power
of sale contained in said
mortgage, the above
described property will be
sold by the Sheriff of said
county as follows:
DATE AND TIME OF
SALE: February 11, 2026
at 10:00 AM.
PLACE OF SALE: Steele
County Sheriff's Office,
2500 Alexander St. SW,
Owatonna, MN 55060.

to pay the debt then
secured by said mortgage
and taxes, if any actually

paid by the mortgagee,
on the premises and the
costs and disbursements
allowed by law. The
time allowed by law for
redemption by said
mortgagor(s), their
personal
representatives or
assigns is six (6) months
from the date of sale.
TIME AND DATE TO
VACATE PROPERTY:
Unless said mortgage is
reinstated or the property
redeemed, or unless the
time for redemption is
reduced by judicial order,
you must vacate the
premises by 11:59 p.m.
on August 11, 2026.
THE TIME ALLOWED BY
LAW FOR REDEMPTION
BY THE MORTGAGOR,
THE MORTGAGOR'S
PERSONAL
REPRESENTATIVES OR
ASSIGNS, MAY BE
REDUCED TO FIVE
WEEKS IF A JUDICIAL
ORDER IS ENTERED
UNDER MINNESOTA
STATUTES, SECTION
582.032,
DETERMINING, AMONG
OTHER THINGS, THAT
THE MORTGAGED
PREMISES ARE
IMPROVED WITH A
RESIDENTIAL
DWELLING OF LESS
THAN FIVE UNITS, ARE
NOT PROPERTY USED
IN AGRICULTURAL
PRODUCTION, AND
ARE ABANDONED.
MORTGAGOR(S)
RELEASED FROM
FINANCIAL OBLIGATION
ON MORTGAGE: None

Dated: December 01,
2025

FREEDOM MORTGAGE
CORPORATION
Mortgagee

TROTT LAW, P.C.

By: /s/
N. Kibongni
Fondungallah, Esq.
Samuel R. Coleman, Esq.
Alexa Marsh, Esq.
Attorneys for Mortgagee
25 Dale Street North
St. Paul, MN 55102
(651) 209-9760
(25-1269-FC01)

**THIS IS A
COMMUNICATION
FROM A DEBT
COLLECTOR.**

12.10-1.14

Continued on page A12

Public Notice

Notice to Aurora Township Residents.
The following vacancies on the Aurora Township Board are to be filled at the annual election March 2026:

- 1 Treasurer for a 2-year term
- 1 Clerk for a 3-year term

All interested candidates are to file for open offices by writing to Aurora Township Clerk at P.O. Box 904, Owatonna, MN 55060. The filing period is open 12/30/25 to 1/13/26 and must be received by the Clerk by 5 PM on 1/13/26. Please provide your name, position, along with a \$2 filing fee. Interested candidates may also file at Aurora Town Hall from 1 to 5 PM on 1/13/26, the last day to file.

Brian Chelmo- Chairman
Alicyn Prestegard- Clerk

12.17.24

PUBLIC NOTICE
AURORA TOWNSHIP RESIDENTS

Aurora Township is seeking candidates to file for the elected position of Township Clerk. We are looking for a detail-oriented and reliable individual committed to serving the community.

The Clerk is responsible for preparing and maintaining monthly meeting minutes, managing correspondence, public notices and official filings and overseeing all election-related duties while ensuring compliance with statutory township requirements. The role also provides administrative support to the Town Board and requires strong organizational and communication skills, the ability to work independently with accuracy and attention to detail, and proficiency with computers and electronic record-keeping.

Knowledge of Minnesota township procedures is preferred, though training is available, and candidates must meet statutory requirements to hold township office. Compensation includes an annual stipend for core clerk duties, meeting compensation, and an hourly rate for duties performed outside the primary responsibilities. Interested candidates must file during the upcoming filing period of 12/30/25–01/13/26 by 5:00 PM. Additional information is available by contacting a current board member or by attending the January Monthly Meeting at 7:00 PM on 01/12/26.

12.17

Continued from page A12

FORECLOSURE

NOTICE OF MORTGAGE FORECLOSURE SALE

DATE December 1, 2025
YOU ARE NOTIFIED that default has occurred in the conditions of the following described Mortgage:
INFORMATION REGARDING MORTGAGE TO BE FORECLOSED
1. Date of Mortgage: December 1, 2016
2. Mortgagors: Nicholas A. Dickerson and Molly R. Dickerson, husband and wife as joint tenants.
3. Mortgagees: Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc. ("MERS"), solely as nominee for Towne Mortgage Company.
4. Recording Information: Recorded on December 2, 2016, as Document Number T000074338, in the Office of the Registrar of Titles of Steele County, Minnesota.
5. Assignments of Mortgage, if any: Assigned to Towne Mortgage Company by written assignment recorded on 12/09/2021, as Document Number T000081043, in the recording office stated in paragraph 4.
Assigned to Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as mortgagee, as nominee for Towne Mortgage Company by written assignment recorded on 05/11/2022, as Document Number T000081614, in the recording office stated in paragraph 4.
Further assigned to Towne Mortgage Company d/b/a AmeriCU Mortgage by written assignment recorded on 10/23/2025, as Document Number T000085165, in the recording office stated in paragraph 4.
INFORMATION REGARDING MORTGAGED PREMISES
6. Tax parcel identification number of the mortgaged premises: 17-272-0212
7. Legal description of the mortgaged premises: Lot 12, Block 2, Brooktree (an Addition to the City of Owatonna, Minnesota). Torrens Certificate No. 19232
Check here if all or part of the described real property is Registered (Torrens)
8. The physical street address, city, and zip code of the mortgaged premises: 701 Oakwood Ln, Owatonna, MN 55060.
OTHER FORECLOSURE DATA
9. The person holding the Mortgage: is not a transaction agent, as defined by Minn. Stat. 58.02, subd. 30.
The name(s) of the residential mortgage servicer and the lender or broker, as defined in Minn. Stat. 58.02, is/ are Towne Mortgage Company d/b/a AmeriCU Mortgage.
10. If stated on the Mortgage, the name of the mortgage originator, as defined in Minn. Stat. 58.02, is Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc. ("MERS"), solely as nominee for Towne Mortgage Company..
INFORMATION REGARDING FORECLOSURE
11. The requisites of Minn. Stat. 580.02 have been satisfied.
12. The original principal amount secured by the Mortgage was \$193,922.00.
13. At the date of this notice the amount due on the Mortgage, including taxes, if any, paid by the holder of the Mortgage, is: \$519,708.59.
14. Pursuant to the power of sale in the Mortgage, the Mortgage will be foreclosed, and the mortgaged premises will be sold by the Sheriff of Steele County, Minnesota, at public auction on 02/12/2026, 10:00 AM, at County

Sheriff's Office, 2500 Alexander St SW, Owatonna MN 55060.
15. The time allowed by law for redemption by Mortgagor or Mortgagor's personal representatives or assigns is six (6) months after the date of sale.
16. Minn. Stat. 580.04(b) provides, "If the real estate is an owner-occupied, single-family dwelling, the notice must also specify the date on or before which the mortgagor must vacate the property if the mortgage is not reinstated under section 580.30 or the property redeemed under section 580.23." If this statute applies, the time to vacate the property is 11:59 p.m. On 08/13/2026.

THE TIME ALLOWED BY LAW FOR REDEMPTION BY THE MORTGAGOR, THE MORTGAGOR'S PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVES OR ASSIGNS, MAY BE REDUCED TO FIVE WEEKS IF A JUDICIAL ORDER IS ENTERED UNDER MINNESOTA STATUTES, SECTION 582.032, DETERMINING, AMONG OTHER THINGS, THAT THE MORTGAGED PREMISES ARE IMPROVED WITH A RESIDENTIAL DWELLING OF LESS THAN FIVE UNITS, ARE NOT PROPERTY USED IN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION, AND ARE ABANDONED.

Name of Mortgagee or Mortgage Assignee: Towne Mortgage Company d/b/a AmeriCU Mortgage

Name and address of Attorney for Mortgagee or Mortgage Assignee:

Schneiderman & Sherman P.C.
8530 Eagle Point Blvd.
Suite 100
Lake Elmo, MN 55042
25-003287-1

Lot 13 in said T.H. Kelly's Addition;
thence North 68° 05' 58" East a distance of 132.00 feet, on an assumed bearing on the northwesterly line of said Lot 13, to the northerly-most corner of said Lot 13; thence South 23° 24' 49" East a distance of 3.95 feet, on the easterly line of said Lot 13; thence South 66° 34' 25" West a distance of 131.95 feet, to a point on the westerly line of said Lot 13; thence North 23° 24' 49" West a distance of 7.47 feet, on the westerly line of said Lot 13, to the point of beginning;
AND
Lot 14, T.H. Kelly's Addition to the Village of Bixby, Steele County, Minnesota;
AND
Lot 15, T.H. Kelly's Addition to the Village of Bixby, Steele County, Minnesota, Excepting therefrom the following: Commencing at the westerly-most corner of Lot 15 in said T.H. Kelly's Addition; thence North 68° 05' 58" East a distance of 132.00 feet, on an assumed bearing on the northwesterly line of said Lot 15, to the northerly-most corner of said Lot 15; thence South 23° 24' 49" East a distance of 3.90 feet, on the easterly line of said Lot 15; thence South 66° 34' 38" West a distance of 131.95 feet, to a point on the westerly line of said Lot 15; thence North 23° 24' 49" West a distance of 7.40 feet, on the westerly line of said Lot 15, to the point of beginning.
STREET ADDRESS OF PROPERTY: 10182 BIXBY PL, BLOOMING PRAIRIE, MN 55917
COUNTY IN WHICH PROPERTY IS LOCATED: Steele County, Minnesota.
THE AMOUNT CLAIMED TO BE DUE ON THE MORTGAGE ON THE DATE OF THE NOTICE: \$116,230.92
TRANSACTION AGENT: Mortgage Electronic

Registration Systems, Inc. NAME OF MORTGAGE ORIGINATOR: Axia Financial, LLC
RESIDENTIAL SERVICER: Freedom Mortgage Corporation
TAX PARCEL IDENTIFICATION NUMBER: 04-103-0014
TRANSACTION AGENT'S MORTGAGE IDENTIFICATION NUMBER: 1006564-0001040213-6
THAT no action or proceeding has been instituted at law to recover the debt then remaining secured by such mortgage, or any part thereof, or, if the action or proceeding has been instituted, that the same has been discontinued, or that an execution upon the judgment rendered therein has been returned unsatisfied, in whole or in part.
PURSUANT, to the power of sale contained in said mortgage, the above described property will be sold by the Sheriff of said county as follows:
DATE AND TIME OF SALE: February 10, 2026 at 10:00 AM.
PLACE OF SALE: Steele County Sheriff's Office, 2500 Alexander St. SW, Owatonna, MN 55060.

to pay the debt then secured by said mortgage and taxes, if any actually paid by the mortgagee, on the premises and the costs and disbursements allowed by law. The time allowed by law for redemption by said mortgagor(s), their personal representatives or assigns is six (6) months from the date of sale.
TIME AND DATE TO VACATE PROPERTY: Unless said mortgage is reinstated or the property redeemed, or unless the time for redemption is reduced by judicial order, you must vacate the premises by 11:59 p.m. on August 10, 2026.
THE TIME ALLOWED BY LAW FOR REDEMPTION BY THE MORTGAGOR, THE MORTGAGOR'S

PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVES OR ASSIGNS, MAY BE REDUCED TO FIVE WEEKS IF A JUDICIAL ORDER IS ENTERED UNDER MINNESOTA STATUTES, SECTION 582.032, DETERMINING, AMONG OTHER THINGS, THAT THE MORTGAGED PREMISES ARE IMPROVED WITH A RESIDENTIAL DWELLING OF LESS THAN FIVE UNITS, ARE NOT PROPERTY USED IN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION, AND ARE ABANDONED.

Dated: November 10, 2025

CROSSCOUNTRY MORTGAGE, LLC Mortgagee

TROTT LAW, P.C.
By: /s/ N. Kibongni Fondungallah, Esq. Samuel R. Coleman, Esq. *Alexa Marsh, Esq.* Attorneys for Mortgagee 25 Dale Street North St. Paul, MN 55102 (651) 209-9760 (25-1133-FC01)

THIS IS A COMMUNICATION FROM A DEBT COLLECTOR.

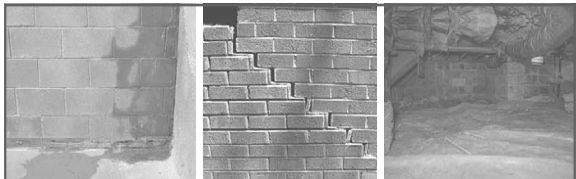
12.17-1.2

Public Notice
NOTICE OF FILING
WESTFIELD TOWNSHIP

Notice is hereby given to the citizens of Westfield Township that affidavits of candidacy may be filed with the Township Clerk John Fouarge. Starting December 30th 2025 and Closing January 13th at 5pm at the Township Hall for the offices of one Supervisor for a three-year term and one Clerk for a two-year term.

John Fouarge (Clerk)
507-208-3759
C/O 75020 118th Ave
Blooming Prairie, MN 55917

12.10.17



Anyone can say they can fix it,
only we guarantee it...for life!

- Basement Waterproofing
- Foundation Repair
- Crawl Space Repair



Schedule your
free inspection:
(844) 839-1112

*Certain terms and conditions apply. Ask your Foundation Specialist for details.

Contractor ID BC00773

FORECLOSURE

NOTICE OF MORTGAGE FORECLOSURE SALE

THE RIGHT TO VERIFICATION OF THE DEBT AND IDENTITY OF THE ORIGINAL CREDITOR WITHIN THE TIME PROVIDED BY LAW IS NOT AFFECTED BY THIS ACTION.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN: That default has occurred in the conditions of the following described mortgaged premises:
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN: That default has occurred in the conditions of the following described mortgage:
DATE OF MORTGAGE: March 6, 2019
ORIGINAL PRINCIPAL AMOUNT OF MORTGAGE: \$127,645.00
MORTGAGOR(S): Ofelia Cortez, a married woman
MORTGAGEE: Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as nominee for Axia Financial, LLC
DATE AND PLACE OF FILING: Recorded on March 8, 2019 as Document Number A000422772 in the Office of the County Recorder of Steele County, Minnesota.
ASSIGNMENTS OF MORTGAGE: Assigned to: Freedom Mortgage Corporation by assignment recorded on October 9, 2025 as Document Number A000458616 in the Office of the County Recorder of Steele County, Minnesota.
LEGAL DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY: All that part of Lot 13, T.H. Kelly's Addition to the Village of Bixby, Steele County, Minnesota as the same is platted and recorded in the office of the County Recorder of Steele County, Minnesota; described as follows: Commencing at the westerly-most corner of

12.10-1.14



Wyonne Priebe

507-456-4299 • wpriebe@steelecountytimes.com

Contact us today and see what makes advertising in the **Steele County Times** a great fit for your advertising needs.

STEELE COUNTY Times



Are You Getting Enough Fiber in Your Work Day?

Sign up today and get a \$100 gift card!*

*Terms and conditions apply



Reliable Internet **NOW!**

844-453-6983



Butcher's Deluxe Package 61% OFF

- 4 Butcher's Cut Top Sirloins (5 oz.)
- 4 Air-Chilled Chicken Breasts (4 oz.)
- 4 Boneless Pork Chops (5 oz.)
- 4 Gourmet Jumbo Franks (3 oz.)
- 4 Individual Scalloped Potatoes (3.8 oz.)
- 4 Caramel Apple Tartlets (4 oz.)
- 1 Omaha Steaks Seasoning (3 oz.)
- 8 FREE Omaha Steaks Smash Burgers (3.2 oz.)

79797FFD separately \$227.04 SPECIAL INTRODUCTORY PRICE \$89.99

Go to OmahaSteaks.com/Deluxe2801
1.844.490.6712 Ask for Offer 79797FFD



MCAN

Minnesota Classified Advertising Network



HELP WANTED

AGE 55+ WORKERS

needed for part-time custodial work at rest areas and state parks in Minnesota. Apply online at greenviewmn.com or call 651/639-1913

MISCELLANEOUS

SAFE STEP

North America's #1 Walk-In Tub. Comprehensive lifetime warranty. Top-of-the-line installation and service. Now featuring our FREE shower package and \$1,600 off for a limited time! Call today! Financing available. Call Safe Step 833/966-3882

CHOOSE EARTHLINK FIBER

Internet for speeds up to 5 Gigs, no data caps, no throttling. Prices starting at upgrade, 80,000 on-demand movies, \$54.95. Plus, a \$100 gift card when you make the switch. Call 844/453-6983

MISCELLANEOUS

DON'T LET THE STAIRS LIMIT YOUR MOBILITY!

Discover the ideal solution for anyone who struggles on the stairs, is concerned about a fall or wants to regain access to their entire home. Call AmeriGlide today! 866/852-5506

GET A BREAK ON YOUR TAXES!

Donate your car, truck, or SUV to assist the blind and visually impaired. Arrange a swift, no-cost vehicle pickup and secure a generous tax credit for 2025. Call Heritage for the Blind Today at 844/220-9501 today!

SATELLITE TV + INTERNET!

Get Dish! Free install, free HD-DVR caps, no throttling. Prices starting at upgrade, 80,000 on-demand movies, plus limited time up to \$600 in gift cards. Call today! 855/562-4309

WANTED TO BUY

WE BUY HOUSES

for cash AS IS! No repairs. No fuss. Any condition. Easy three step process: Call, get cash offer and get paid. Get your fair cash offer today by calling Liz Buys Houses: 844/978-0683

Classified Advertising That is EASY

The Minnesota Classified Advertising Network

Make an impact with your advertising dollar with classified advertising that reaches over 1MILLION READERS



Your newspaper representative can provide complete details or you can call MNA: 612/332-8844



Owatonna girls hockey Head Coach Tony Cloud, center, smiles for a photo with his team after earning his 100th win last week. Cloud's Huskies beat Austin 4-1 to earn him the milestone win.

New-look Huskies are ready for battle

◀ **NEW-LOOK** from A10
Burmeister was the sixth player in 2024-25. "You got to make sure everyone's set to run plays. Push the ball off of defensive stops. Push the ball up the floor so you can get easy buckets," said Burmeister. Halverson, who was the first post player off the bench last season, talks about bringing the new players along. "We have to understand that these guys haven't been playing varsity. Haven't played at this level... We have to be able to encourage guys to keep their composure and stay level-headed." The Huskies play their next four games at home. Faribault, with Loyola University, Chicago commit Ryan Kreager, comes to town on Thursday, Dec. 18. Halverson can hardly wait. "I've been playing him the last several years. He's always very fun to play against. He'll be a challenge." OHS hosts Waconia on Monday, Dec. 22. The Federated Holiday Tournament falls on Monday, Dec. 29 and Tuesday, Dec. 30 with Woodbury, Lakeville South and Waconia. Big Nine Conference favorites Rochester Mayo and Mankato East come to town for back-to-back games in mid-January. Three of last season's Owatonna starters are playing college sports: Nolan Ginskey (football at Winona State University), Cole Kruschke (basketball at Bethany Lutheran College in Mankato) and Jackson Mottl (soccer at Bethany Lutheran College). The Huskies finished 14-14, scoring a

buzzer-beating upset at Lakeville South in the first round of playoffs before losing to Lakeville North.
Win No. 100
A come-from-behind 4-1 win over Austin on Tuesday, Dec. 9 marked the 100th victory for Owatonna girls hockey head coach Tony Cloud. "Sometimes it doesn't go exactly as planned but it's pretty sweet to celebrate with the team." While the Huskies dominated possession time, numerous blocked shots and missed passes kept the game tight. OHS in fact trailed until they broke through with an Alexis Noble goal late in the second period. Grace Mitchell gave Owatonna the lead early in the third. It's Cloud's seventh season as head coach after one year as an assistant. "It means a

lot that the team has been as successful as it's been since I've been here. And the fact that I've been able to be here for as long as I have been," said Cloud. "I love being at the rink. I love being here with the team. The girls are great and they make this experience all the worthwhile. Even when things are hard and things don't go exactly how you want them to, they bounce back and they learn from those lessons. I don't win hockey games. The team on the ice wins the hockey games and I get to celebrate and be alongside them. It's cool to be able to think back about all the teams we've had and all the players that have come through," he said. Cloud was a senior for his high school coach's 500th career victory (Tony Sarsland at Elk River). Cloud as-

sisted with hockey and soccer at Rogers and was an assistant with the Owatonna High School girls soccer team for six years.
Game time
For me, when I grew up, holiday time was a chance to break out the games. It was Monopoly and Scramble and Ticket To Ride and Azul Chess, cribbage, cards... almost anything will do. While I played my share of video games as a kid, mainly the old Atari and Nintendo systems, I have always enjoyed the tabletop and party games more. Atlantis Hobby in downtown Owatonna offers a line of board and tabletop games with a wide variety of card lines as well. Owner Garrett Jewison says, "I think playing games in person is better than video games or something you do on your

computer. It gives you more social interaction. It's way better for kids. Especially with Pok?mon. Kids can learn how to read, do math. And they get excited about it too... Magic the Gathering and some of the other games are a little bit more complicated." A popular tabletop game is Warhammer where players act out futuristic battles with dice and miniature models, frequently painted in great detail. Atlantis Hobby hosts game nights that fill up the tables in the store. The Owatonna business, purchased early in 2025, is the second for Jewison and his brother, who have owned one in Mankato since 2020. "We've wanted to do it for over 20 years," he said. Card games sparked his interest. "When I worked at the Golden Corral in Owatonna, that's when we started playing Magic. I believe

it was in 1994 or 1995 that we started playing." They carry game supplies, dice and some toys. He says running a business is not a game and having money in the bank was essential. "It's a lot more work than people think. Takes a lot of money, a lot of time to run and operate a store. A lot of people have a misconception of starting a game store as just easy because I'm going to do it as a hobby for fun. Most of the time those don't succeed," said Jewison.
OwatonnaLive.com play-by-play
Thursday, Dec. 18: OHS boys hockey vs. Rochester Mayo, 7 p.m. OHS boys basketball vs. Faribault, 7:30 p.m.
Friday, Dec. 19: OHS gymnastics vs. Winona, 6:30 p.m.
Monday, Dec. 22: OHS boys basketball vs. Waconia, 7:30 p.m.



Left to right: Zachary Guldberg of Northfield, and Owatonna's Kevin Marquez, Conner Derosier and Isaac Matzke all play Warhammer at Atlantis Hobby in Owatonna. Warhammer is one of many popular games sold by Atlantis Hobby.



Steele Talkin'
ROBIN STARR

The last few months have been an absolute whirlwind at Community Pathways. We've seen challenges all year long stemming from federal budget cuts to the food bank network bringing supply and logistics issues, economic uncertainty leading more families to seek out resources, and the government shutdown and SNAP benefits scare. What we've found this year is that our community, local businesses, and organizations truly care

about our friends and neighbors feeling the pressures of keeping clothing on their backs and food on the table. We have seen support from donations, food and clothing drives, and volunteers skyrocket this year. We are going to collect 1 **million** pounds of free food in 2025. We have had over 12,000 individual donations made to our thrift store program and have seen more than 1,200 different people give beyond 32,000 hours of their time to keep our operations running at full speed. Through every obstacle we've faced, we have been met with kindness, compassion, and helping hands to keep us bounding over and ahead of adversity. We cannot put into words how grateful we

are at Community Pathways to be surrounded by people who believe in our mission. Looking ahead to 2026, the hits are likely to keep rolling. We have been making many strategic decisions around our purchasing to make sure we are striking the right balance, variety, and budget to continue to support the additional families coming to us for food and clothing resources. We purchase around 65% of the food we distribute from Channel One Regional Food Bank. While we don't receive direct federal funding, those budget cuts to the USDA and programs like TEFAP have a direct effect on regional food banks like Channel One and then results are passed on to the food shelves, like

ours, that they serve. Back in March, our Channel One saw about a 30% reduction in supply but were still serving the same amount of food programs. This led to some heavy constraints for our food shelf and all others across the region. Now, we see more balance and our ability to access food has improved, but we still wouldn't be able to keep up with purchasing alone. Our costs have also increased, meaning we have had to structure ore of our efforts and asks to see if we can find balance in what we buy and what we purchase to do the best for the families that need our help. In 2026, you will hear more about our strategies, struggles, and successes as we

continue to navigate the growing need across the communities of Southern Minnesota. If you haven't yet, please consider following us on Facebook as we are consistently sharing the support we get from the community, important updates, and ways that you can help us continue to grow and face the serious fight against food and clothing insecurity. We will also be adding a few specific campaigns in 2026 to support our additional programming that goes beyond food and clothing. Currently, we are working on ways to support our Period Poverty Program, CodeRED. This program offers free period products to our members. Keep an eye out for more information coming soon!

As Always: If you, or someone you know, is struggling please reach out to us. You can find information at www.communitypathwayssc.org or by stopping to chat with us at 155 Oakdale in Owatonna. There is also information available about how and when to donate, and what openings we have for volunteers. We look forward to continuing to build new pathways together.
Robin Starr is the community and Outreach coordinator for Community Pathways of Steele County. She may be reached at robin@communitypathwayssc.org. Steele Talkin' is a regular column featuring authors representing various organizations throughout Steele County.

Food shelf hits 1M mark

Nothing can change you as much as love

◀ **LOVE** from A1

I stopped being the person I was,” Laurel said. “I did not know it was possible to feel that much pain and still be alive.”

Matty had been born six weeks early, prompting a two-week stay in the neonatal intensive care unit at Methodist Hospital in Rochester.

“He never backslid,” Meester said. “He was off his ventilator very quickly. We had 10 really good weeks where he was very healthy, and then...”

“There’s a special kind of cruelty to it; we thought we were OK, and then we weren’t,” she said.

As pastors, she and Chris “were marginally better prepared than anybody else” to deal with the death of their son.

Laurel is associate pastor at First Lutheran Church in Blooming Prairie; Chris is an associate pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church in Owatonna.

“I mean, his loss has changed me a lot,” Laurel Meester said, “but nothing can change you as much as love can change you.

“The things that have helped us and are the reason that we survive are our community and our faith,” she said. “We know that God can take this horrific, awful

thing and bring some good out of it.”

Like a trip last month to participate in a Feed My Starving Children pack in the Twin Cities.

There were 18 people who went with the Meesters, including Laurel’s parents, two brothers, sister – and all their kids.

It was her sister Julia Gerlofs’ idea.

Laurel’s brother, Joe, is also a minister, “and he’s been very good about helping everybody find ways to support us. So Julia’s way of supporting us is to find good ways to remember Matty.”

She has organized a trip to a nursery, where everyone bought a “Matty plant.”

“Julia planted a tree; my sister-in-law planted a bush; my mom planted a pine tree,” Meester said, “so when we do Christmas at her house, we’ll all hang ornaments on that tree for him.”

Gerlofs also asked “everybody in our family and our close friends get a Teddy bear, because Matthias means ‘bear’ in Celtic,” Meester said. “We called him Matty Bear; that was his name. So we all bought bears, and we’ll donate them to the hospital and to Toys for Tots.

“Those were all Julia’s ideas,” Meester

said. “She’s brilliant.”

It’s about more than remembering Matty, though.

“We talked about it this morning and she said, ‘it’s really important to remind our kids in the midst of getting gifts and asking for things and enjoying life that there are lots of people who don’t have what we have,’” Meester said.

As the family continues to navigate life since April 9, Meester thinks a lot about the circumstances around her son’s death.

“Matty died from AIDS, and we did everything that we could have – and were told to do,” she said.

Her brother, Joe Midthun, said the same thing back in April.

“You can do everything right – which Laurel did – and there’s always a chance it will happen – as it did,” said Midthun. “That’s why it’s ‘sudden, unexplained.’ They don’t know. Matty was not on his stomach, there were no blankets.”

Research has indicated there may be genetic markers and metabolic or brain chemical differences that may make infants more susceptible.

“One day we will figure out why this happens and find better ways to prevent it,” Meester said.

Then, as now, it’s the family’s wish that there is purpose in their grief.

While in their case Matty’s death was sudden and unexplained, “there are millions of children who die from things that are preventable,” Meester said, “and if I can – if any of us can – do



SUBMITTED PHOTO

The Rev. Laurel Meester smiles during a Feed My Starving Children pack last month in the Twin Cities. Her brother, Joe Midthun, right, was one of 16 family members who joined Chris and Laurel Meester to pack food in honor of their son Matty, who died April 9.

something to prevent that, to prevent another parents from feeling what we feel, then we will.”

Laurel and Chris Meester speak frankly about death with their daughter Eliora, 4, who one day said, “I have two mommies. The mommy that was here before Matty died and then the mommy I have now...”

While difficult to hear, Laurel admitted, “we want our kids to see us as humans; we want them to see us grieving. We want them to see us taking our grief and making it into good things.”

Her 13 nieces and nephews – and Eliora – joined the FMSC pack. They all bought a bear; they all picked out a “Matty plant.”

The children “are there with us,” Meester said. “We don’t pretend

that this is OK, but they don’t have to ‘fix’ our bad day.”

Still, she said, they don’t want their life centered around their grief.

“Chris and I talk a lot about how that isn’t what we want,” she said. “We don’t want Matty’s death to be the core of our existence, because there comes a point where you realize that if the center of your gravity is this really tragic event, slowly, everything else is going to fall away – and you’re stuck with your grief.”

Holidays can be especially hard when people are grieving.

First Lutheran Church in Blooming Prairie is holding a Blue Christmas service at 10:30 a.m. Dec. 21.

“I think people feel this immense pressure to be OK and happy

and well before they do anything,” Meester said. “You don’t actually have to be OK to do things like this – you can cry your way through.”

Because of their jobs, she and Chris will both stay busy on Christmas Eve and, to a degree, on Christmas Day.

“We are not putting the pressure on,” Meester said. “Our tradition is not having a tradition. Maybe every year we’ll collect bears and do a pack, or maybe next year we’ll do something totally different.”

Matty will have a Christmas stocking, “and we will fill it with toys and then donate them,” she said.

The Rev. Heidi Heimgartner, senior pastor of First Lutheran in BP, has a phrase: Do it sad.

“It’s not like making (food) packs or buying Teddy bears is going to outweigh this terrible thing,” Meester said, “but it’s not going to be the only thing that comes out of it.”

In the Bible, Matthias is the disciple who replaces Judas, the apostle who betrayed Jesus.

“And the Bible passage says, ‘and his life will be a testament to the glory of God.’ My husband pointed it out to me a couple months ago,” Meester said.

Their Matthias, she said, “is a testament to the fact that the worst thing in the world can happen ... and you can recognize that part of your humanity is being loved and being served by the people who come to support you.”

Her advice to people dealing with loss is simple:

“Don’t assume that you are alone – and let people love you.”

Headaches, Neck/Back Pain, Stress ...
Chiropractic Can Help!

Prairie Family & Sports Chiropractic
Chad M. Eischens, D.C.
344 E. Main Street
Blooming Prairie, MN 55917
583-2271
1-866-5DR-CHAD
www.drchad.org

Plan Your Events With Us!

***Weddings, Banquets, Celebrations of Life, Showers, Business Meetings, and Much More**
***Seating up to 300 people**
***Casual menus or formal dinners**

Contact: Carol Sue at 507-451-1001 or 507-676-3042 cell
c-ahlborn@hotmail.com

VFW Owatonna Auxiliary
135 Oakdale Street
Owatonna, MN 55060

Bring better television into your Life!

KSMQ IN FOCUS Program Guide mailed to you monthly!
Annual Membership \$35

For Membership, Donor or Broadcast Partner information call

507-481-2095

MUSICIANS of the WEEK

Miriam Lindee is an oboist at Owatonna Middle School and a dedicated member of the 8th Grade Band. She is an exceptional learner who consistently arrives prepared and eager to grow as a musician. Her determination in mastering one of the most challenging instruments serves as an inspiration to her peers and directors alike.

Miriam Lindee
8th Grade Band

Tyler Smith is a talented percussionist and pianist in the Owatonna Middle School 8th Grade Band and Jazz Band. He brings remarkable energy to his music, consistently demonstrating enthusiasm, dedication, and active engagement in every rehearsal and performance.

Tyler Smith
8th Grade Band and Jazz Band

SHINING KNIGHT

CALEB YANG
8th Grade
PARENTS: Yandong Wu & Jianling Yang

“It is my pleasure to present Caleb as our newest Shining Knight! Caleb is a terrific student who works hard and excels academically. Caleb always listens carefully when concepts are being explained; he remains focused while working, and then consistently volunteers to answer questions. Caleb is also kind to others, responsible and a humble leader. Way to go, Caleb! Keep shining bright!”

WAS NOMINATED BY MRS. DEML

THIS FEATURE SPONSORED BY A PROUD ST. MARY’S ALUMNUS

ST. MARY’S SCHOOL

730 South Cedar Ave., Owatonna
507-446-2300
stmarys-owatonna.org

SHINING KNIGHT

FREYA KROSKA
1st Grade
PARENTS: Jason & Ashley Kroska

“Freya is a kind and caring friend to everyone in our class. She comes in every day with a positive attitude and a big smile, always ready to lend a hand with whatever we’re working on. She works hard and shows respect and responsibility in everything she does. Freya’s thoughtfulness and dedication make her a great role model. She really shows what it means to be a Shining Knight. Keep up the amazing work!”

WAS NOMINATED BY MS. IHRKE

THIS FEATURE SPONSORED BY A PROUD ST. MARY’S ALUMNUS

ST. MARY’S SCHOOL

730 South Cedar Ave., Owatonna
507-446-2300
stmarys-owatonna.org

Hope doesn't always shout



**Deacon
Kris Opegard**

TRINITY LUTHERAN
CHURCH
OWATONNA

Tom Bodett, the voice many of us remember from the Motel 6 commercials, once said, “They say a person needs just three things to be truly happy in this world: someone to love, something to do, and something to hope for.” It’s a simple line, but a profound one. In many

ways, Bodett names three essentials that ground a meaningful life: relationships, purpose, and hope.

Relationships matter because we were created for connection.

Purpose matters because God made us to serve and bless the world around us.

And hope matters because our spirits were never meant to live on empty or wander in the dark.

For me, it’s that last one—hope—that stands out most. Hope is the quiet heartbeat underneath long days. Hope is the whisper that says, “Keep going.” It’s the thread God weaves through our lives, even

when we feel frayed at the edges.

And let’s be honest, life has been hard this year. Not mildly inconvenient, but deeply hard. Life has moments that knock the wind out of us and leave us wondering how to take the next step. Days when grief, stress, or exhaustion feel heavier than we can carry. Times when moving forward feels impossible, but going back isn’t an option either.

Every one of us has known those moments. Moments when we say, “Lord, I don’t know how to do this. I don’t know how to keep going.”

When I feel that way, I reach—figuratively—

into my back pocket. And there, tucked away, is hope. It’s always been there, even when I forget to look for it. My faith has planted hope so deeply within me that even when I can’t see it, it hasn’t disappeared. It’s the kind of hope that trusts life won’t always feel this heavy, that goodness may be waiting around a corner I haven’t turned yet.

But here’s the key: I must remember to pull it out.

Hope doesn’t always shout. Sometimes it’s quiet, like a seed waiting in dark soil for spring.

When life overwhelms me, I pause. I

close my eyes. I breathe slowly and intentionally. And I imagine myself standing in an open space—wide, peaceful, and filled with light. A place where joy is possible. A place where people lift one another up and share burdens. A place of hope.

Hope does not erase pain or deny struggle. It simply insists that pain is not the whole story. Hope whispers that God is not finished yet. Hope helps us lift our eyes—if only a little—toward the promise that something new can grow again.

Emily Dickinson once wrote, “Hope” is the thing with feathers

That perches in the soul,

And sings the tune without the words,
And never stops—at all.

I love that image: hope singing quietly within us, even when we’re too tired to sing ourselves. And sometimes that faint song is enough to help us rise again—one small step at a time.

So, when the day has been too long and your heart feels worn thin, reach into your own back pocket. Hold onto whatever hope remains. Breathe deeply. Step into your open space. And remember—you do not step there alone.

Hope steps with you. God steps with you.

AREA WORSHIP SCHEDULE

ASSEMBLY OF GOD

**RADIANT CHURCH
ASSEMBLY OF GOD**
1650 7th Ave. NE, Owatonna
507-451-5467
Sunday School: 9:30 a.m.
Sunday Worship: 10:30 a.m.

BRIDGE OF HOPE
500 Dunnell Dr., Owatonna
507-215-2249
Sunday Bible Study: 9 a.m.
Sunday Worship: 10 a.m.
Friday RU Recover pfm: 7 p.m.

**ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL
CHURCH**
220 S. Cedar Ave., Owatonna
507-451-5319
Sunday Worship: 10 a.m.
Wednesday Bible Study: 11 a.m.
Wednesday Evening: 6 p.m.
www.stpaulsowatonna.org

**VIBRANT LIFE
ASSEMBLY OF GOD**
702 32nd St. S., Ellendale
507-684-3421
Sunday Worship: 10:00am
Wednesday Youth: 6:30pm
www.vibrantlifeag.com

BAPTIST

FIRST BAPTIST
104 First Ave., Blooming Prairie
507-583-6273
Sunday Worship: 10 a.m.
Sunday School: 9 a.m.
Sunday Bible Study: 11:30 a.m.
Wednesday Service: 6:30 p.m.
www.fbcbloomingprairie.org

**GRACE BAPTIST—
OWATONNA**
65 26th St., Owatonna
507-451-3494
Sunday Worship: 10 a.m.
Sunday School: 8:45 a.m.
Sunday Evening: 5 p.m.
Wednesday Adult Service 7 p.m.
Wednesday Youth Service 7 p.m.
gracebaptistministry.org
info@gracebaptistministry.org

BETHEL BAPTIST
1611 Hemlock Ave., Owatonna
507-451-8548
Sunday Worship:
9 a.m. & 10:30 a.m.

CATHOLIC

CHRIST THE KING
205 Second Ave. NW, Medford
507-451-4845
Mass: Friday at 8 a.m. and
Saturday at 5:30 p.m.
parishoffice@
stjosephowtonna.org

CHURCH OF ALL SAINTS
307 1st St. SW New Richland
507-835-1222
Rev. Glenn Frerichs
Friday Mass: 10 a.m.
Sunday Mass: 8 a.m.
Sheart.asaintsoffice@gmail.com

HOLY TRINITY CATHOLIC CHURCH

OF LITOMYSL
9946 SE 24th Ave., Owatonna
507-583-2784
Rev. Bill Becker
Sunday Mass 10:15 a.m.
Litomyslchurch.org

**SACRED HEART
CATHOLIC**
150 NE Second St. Hayfield
507-477-2256
Rev. Bill Becker
Saturday Mass 4:30 p.m.
www.stcolumbanuschurch.org

SACRED HEART PARISH
810 S Cedar Ave., Owatonna
Mass Times: Daily Tuesday-
Friday at 7:15 a.m.
Saturday Mass: 5 p.m.
Sunday Mass: 8 a.m., 10 a.m.
12 p.m. (Spanish)
Reconciliation 4 p.m.
Saturday
Adoration Thursdays 8 a.m.
and 7 p.m.
www.sacredheartowatonna.org

**ST. COLUMBANUS
CATHOLIC**
114 E Main St.
Blooming Prairie
507-583-2784
Rev. Bill Becker
Sunday Mass 8:30 a.m.
www.stcolumbanuschurch.
org
columbanusbp@gmail.com

**ST. JOSEPH CATHOLIC
PARISH**
512 S Elm Ave., Owatonna
507-451-4845
Daily Mass 8 a.m.- Tuesday,
Wednesday, Thursday and
Saturday.
Saturday Mass: 4 p.m.
Sunday Mass: 8 & 10 a.m.
Adoration Chapel available
Mon-Fri. 7 a.m. -5:30 p.m.
(Key fob required after hours
or weekend)
www.stjosephowatonna.org

CHRISTIAN

**CORNERSTONE
EVANGELICAL FREE**
1500 18th St. SE, Owatonna
507-446-5850
Sunday Worship: 9 a.m.
Sunday School: 10:30 a.m.
www.cornerstoneowtonna.com

**CHRIST COMMUNITY
COVENANT**
540 SE 18th St., Owatonna
507-451-1032
Sunday Worship: 9 a.m.
Sunday Connections:
10:15 a.m.
www.
owatonnacovenantchurch.org

**CHRISTIAN FAMILY
CHURCH**
2300 Heritage Pl. NW,
Owatonna
507-455-3205
Sunday Worship 9 a.m.
www.cfchurches.org

**VICTORY CHRISTIAN
CHURCH**
1380 Rice Lake St. E., Owatonna
507-451-8111
Sunday Service: 10 a.m.
www.victoryymn.org

LUTHERAN

AURORA LUTHERAN
6329 SE 38th St., Owatonna
507-451-2819
Sunday Worship: 9 a.m.
Pastor Clark Baldwin
Sunday School: 10:15 a.m.
office@auroralutheranchurch.org

**COMMUNITY
LUTHERAN – ELCA**
106 Third St. SE., Geneva
507-256-4288
Rev. Leandra Anderson
Worship Service 8:30 a.m.

FIRST LUTHERAN- AFLC
503 Radel Ct., Ellendale
507-684-2451
Sunday: Worship-9 a.m.,
Sunday School & Adult Bible
Study-10:20-11:15 a.m.
Monday: Call to Prayer-7 p.m.
Wednesday: Bible Study- 9:30
a.m., Confirmation- 6-7 p.m.,
Youth Group- 7-9 p.m.
Saturday: Men's Bible Study-
8 a.m.
Sunday School- 10:15-11 a.m.
firstlutheranchurchellendale
@gmail.com
Website: https://www.
firstlutheranellendale.org/

**FIRST LUTHERAN –
ELCA**
434 First St. SW,
Blooming Prairie
507-583-6621
Sunday Worship 9 a.m.
Sunday School 10 a.m.
firstluthoffice@yahoo.com

**FIRST LUTHERAN –
LCMC**
8953 SW 37th Ave., Hope
507-451-3854
Pastor Scott Dirks
Sunday Worship 9 a.m.
Sunday School and
Adult Ed 10:15 a.m.
flchopemn@gmail.com

**GOOD SHEPHERD
LUTHERAN – LCMS**
2500 7th Ave. NE, Owatonna
507-451-4125
Sunday Hymn Service with
Sunday School 8:30 a.m.
Sunday Worship Service with
Sunday School 10 a.m.
GoodShepherdOwatonna.com

**PONTOPPIDAN
LUTHERAN – ELCA**
9651 SW 75th St., Ellendale
507-213-0281
Sunday Worship 10:15 a.m.
Sunday School 9 a.m.
pontoppidanlemond@
outlook.com

**RED OAK GROVE
LUTHERAN- ELCA**
30456 Mower-Freeborn Rd.,
Austin
Rev. Leandra Anderson
507-320-8287
Worship Service 10 a.m.
www.roglutheran.org

**ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN
– LCMS**
4532 SE 84th Ave., Claremont
507-528-2404
Sunday Worship 10:30
a.m. (2nd & 4th Sunday Holy
Communion)
Sunday School 9:15 a.m.
Wednesday: Advent 7 p.m.
(with Holy Communion)
sjlcoffice@frontiernet.net

**ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN
– LCMS**
28959 630th Ave., Sergeant
320-674-0351
Sunday Worship 10:15 a.m.
Sunday School 9 a.m.
www.saintjohnssergeant.
jimdo.com

**ST. JOHN LUTHERAN –
ELCA**
1301 Lincoln Ave., Owatonna
507-451-7293
Sunday & Summer Worship 8
a.m. & 9:30 a.m.
Thursday & Saturday
worship at 5 p.m.
Sunday worship at 8 a.m.
and 10:30 a.m.
info@stjohnowatonna.com

**ST. MICHAEL'S
LUTHERAN- ELCA**
30450 570th Ave., Waltham
507-567-2474
Sunday Worship 9 a.m.

**ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN –
LCMS**
202 E Park Ave., Hollandale
507-567-2272
Sunday Worship 8:30 a.m.
Sunday School 9:45 a.m.
www.motorcitychurch.org

**ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN
– ELCA**
2781 SW 92nd Ave., Meriden
507-451-2165
Pastor Billie Jo Wicks.
Sunday Worship 10 a.m.
pastorbilliejo@gmail.com

**TRINITY LUTHERAN-
ELCA**
609 Lincoln Ave., Owatonna
507-451-4520
Sunday Worship -Sanctuary
8:15 a.m. & 9:30 a.m.,
Fellowship Hall 10:45 a.m., Live
Stream 9:30 a.m. at facebook.
com/tlcowatonna and
tlcowatonna.org/worshiplive
Video on Spectrum (CH181)
Metronet TV (Ch 900) and
owatonnalive.com Tuesday
at 4:30 p.m. Wednesday at 6
p.m. and Sunday at 11 a.m.
www.tlcowatonna.org/

**TRINITY LUTHERAN –
ELCA**
104 First St. SE, Hayfield
507-477-2248
Sunday Worship: 9 a.m.
Sunday School: 10 a.m.
www.trinityhayfield.org

**TRINITY LUTHERAN –
LCMS**
102 Third St. SW, Medford
507-451-0447
office@tlcmeford.org
Sunday Worship 9 a.m.
Sunday Education 10:15 a.m.
tlcmefordoffice@gmail.com

**TRINITY LUTHERAN –
LCMS**
Trinity Ev. Lutheran (LCMS) -
Waltham
57043 300th St., Waltham
507-567-2272
Pastor Jesse Krusemark
Sunday Worship: 9 a.m.
Sunday Education: 10:30 a.m.
(8 a.m. June-Aug.)
Wednesday Worship: 6:30
p.m. (Advent+Lent)
Wednesday Education: 5:30
p.m. (Sept.-May)

ZION LUTHERAN – ELCA
7126 SW 98th St., Ellendale
Pastor Billie Jo Wicks.
Sunday Worship 8:30 a.m.
pastorbilliejo@gmail.com

**OUR SAVIOR'S
LUTHERAN – ELCA**
1909 St. Paul Rd., Owatonna
507-451-4853
Traditional Service 8:15 a.m.
Contemporary Service
10:45 a.m.

Coffee and Fellowship
between services.
www.oursaviorsowatonna.com

**EMMANUEL
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN**
750 Jeffery St., Owatonna
507-455-2729
Sunday Worship: 9 a.m.
www.emmanuel-
wels-owatonna.com

MENNONITE

PRAIRIE MENNONITE
13638 750th St. –
Blooming Prairie
507-583-7532
Sunday Worship: 10:30 a.m.
Sunday School: 9:30 a.m.
Wednesday Pray Meeting:
7:30 p.m.
www.prairiemennonite.org

METHODIST

**BLOOMING GROVE
UNITED METHODIST**
43089 180th St., Medford
(Seven miles west
of Medford on CR. 23)
507-835-8726
Sunday School 9:45 a.m.
Worship Service 10:45 a.m.
(1st & 3rd Sundays)
www.bloominggroveumc.org

**ELLEDALE UNITED
METHODIST**
200 Sixth St. NW, Ellendale
507-382-2483
Sunday School: 9:15 a.m.
Sunday Worship: 10:30 a.m.
Food Shelf open every
Thursday from 3:30-6:30 p.m.
www.ellendaleumc.org

**OWATONNA UNITED
METHODIST**
815 E. University St., Owatonna
507-451-4734
Pastor Derek Harvey
Sunday Worship 8:30 a.m.

NON- DENOMINATIONAL

CEDAR CREEK
30 E Main St., Hayfield
507-477-2255
Sunday Worship 10 a.m.
www.cedarcreekchurch.org

**OWATONNA CHRISTIAN
CHURCH**
315 S. Grove Ave., Owatonna
Sunday Service: 9 a.m.
Wednesday Discipleship:
6:30 p.m.
Worship and Table Talk:
The 2nd Wed of each month
at 6:30 p.m.
come worship and enjoy a
free dinner.
info.owatonna@gmail.com

NEW BEGINNINGS
332 14th St. NE, Owatonna
507-413-0209
Sunday Worship: 10 a.m.
Wednesday Service: 7 p.m.
www.nbclife.org

REDEMPTION CHURCH
123 E. Main St., Owatonna
507-413-7850
Sunday Worship:
8:30 and 10:30 a.m.
www.redeptionowatonna.org

SIMPLY CHURCH

105 2nd St., Geneva
507-438-5418
Sunday Bible Study: 9:30 a.m.
Sunday Worship: 10:30 a.m.
Tuesday Worship: 5:30 p.m.
Wednesday Worship: 5:30 p.m.

SOUND CHURCH

2002 Austin Road, Owatonna
Saturday- 6 p.m.; Sundays-
8:15, 9:45 and 11:15 a.m.
www.sound.church
Pastors Judson and Kristina
Bartels

MORMON

**CHURCH OF JESUS
CHRIST OF LATTER
DAT SAINTS**
404 31st St. NW, Austin
507-433-9042
Sunday Worship: 9 a.m.
www.churchofjesuschrist.org

PENTECOSTAL

**FIRST UNITED
PENTECOSTAL**
230 Locust Ave., Owatonna
507-363-3046
Sunday Worship: 10 a.m.
Wednesday Service: 7 p.m.

PRESBYTERIAN

ASSOCIATED CHURCH
Presbyterian Church (USA)
and United Church of Christ
800 Havana Rd., Owatonna
507-451-1546
Sunday worship: 9:30 a.m.
(Fellowship, Sunday School and
Adult Discussion follow service)
Wednesday Activities Sept-
May (see website for schedule)
www.associatedchurch.org
office@associatedchurch.org

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
109 E Main St., Hayfield
507-477-2631
Sunday Worship: 10 a.m.
www.
firstpresbyterianhayfield.com

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
P.O. Box 66
121 East St. N., Claremont
507-528-2320
Sunday Worship: 10 a.m.
www.faithstreet.com

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST

**SEVENTH DAY
ADVENTIST**
2373 Seventh Ave NE, Owatonna
651-955-4032
Saturday Worship: 11 a.m.
Saturday Bible Study: 9:30 a.m.
www.owatonnasdachurch.org

UCC

**CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**
211 Main St. S., Medford
507-451-4596
Sunday Worship: 10 a.m.
www.ucc.org

**Monuments
LEGACY MONUMENT SALES**

Leon's Cell 507-456-7864
Lori's Cell 507-456-3735
landlbo@gmail.com

Call for a catalog to view in the comfort
of your home. We are here to help you
create your monument by email or phone.

LEON & LORI BOHLMAN

**LERBERG'S
FITNESS
CENTER
& CAR WASH**

118 5th Ave.
Ellendale

507-684-2471

GIVE. ADVOCATE. VOLUNTEER.
LIVE UNITED.

**1850 Austin Rd Ste 103
Owatonna, MN 55060**

507-455-1180

www.unitedwaysteelcounty.org
Text UWSC2021 to 202-858-1233

Doerhoefer, Miner,
Andrist & Arndt, P.A.
CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS

314 E. Main St.
Blooming Prairie
507-583-7528
685 W. Bridge St.
Owatonna
507-451-9136
133 N. Broadway
New Richland
507-465-3810

**HONEST-1®
AUTO CARE**

1125 S Oak Ave
Owatonna, MN 55060-3701

507-431-4576

www.Honest1Owatonna.com

**Vandal's
FAMILY MARKET**

Locally Owned & Operated

237 Hwy. Ave. S.
Blooming Prairie

507-583-6671

**Owatonna
GRANITE & MONUMENT**

"Creating Your Story in Stone"

1180 Frontage Rd E • Owatonna

507-455-9551

www.owatonnagranite.com

**FARMERS
INSURANCE**

Mike Bishman

121 W. Broadway St.
Owatonna

507-451-0193

**REAL LIFE
COOPERATIVE**

Vibrant Living For
Individuals 55 & Older
at a Reasonable Price

Call Jon Arnett @

455-3735 for a tour

236 22nd St. SE • Owatonna

STEELE
COUNTY

Times

411 E. Main St • Blooming Prairie • 507-583-4431

STEELECOUNTYTIMES.COM

DEALS ON WHEELS

Sell your car, bike, RV, trailer, and anything on wheels today!!

Over 16,000 in households

CLASSIFIEDS

BARGAIN FINDER

Sell your items for \$50 or less. Run it for four weeks. ONLY \$5!

www.steeledodgegenews.com

TO PLACE AN AD

Steele County Times
507-583-4431
bptlmes@frontlernet.net
411 E. Main St., Blooming Prairie, MN 55917

3-WEEK SPECIAL: \$40

BUY TWO WEEKS,
GET THE THIRD FREE

UP TO 20 WORDS; 15¢ FOR EACH WORD AFTER

TO PLACE AN AD

Dodge County Independent
Dodge County Advantage
507-634-7503 • dcl@kmtel.com
301 S. Mantorville Ave., Suite 200, Kasson, MN 55944

COINS

NEED CASH? I give free appraisals of your older coins from 1964 and older. I am also looking to buy older coins such as silver dollars, halves, quarters, dimes, and Indian Head cents. Please call Ron from Hayfield at 507-477-2427 or 507-259-6460.

TFN

FOR RENT

Apartment for rent in Kasson. 2 Bedroom, Full Bath, C/A, Deck, D/W. No Pets. \$900/mo. Available 12/1/25. Randy (507)951-3401

TFN

FEBRUARY RENTALS

Smoke free 1 & 2 bd apts in Owatonna. Rent from \$595-875 p/mo. Most utilities are included. Deposit pay plans. 507-451-8524, www.lifestyleinc.net, tdd 507-451-0704 Equal Housing Opportunity

12.10-25

FOR RENT

IMMEDIATE OPENINGS Smoke free 1 bd wheel-chair accessible and 1 & 2 bd apts in Claremont & Kasson. Rent from \$805-910 p/mo. Most utilities are included. Month to month leases & deposit pay plans. 507-441-3649 or 507-451-8524 www.lifestyleinc.net tdd 507-451-0704 Equal Housing Opportunity

12.10-25

SERVICES

ODD JOBS

14-yr old boy looking for odd jobs in and around Kasson. Available part-time after school and most weekends. 507-573-1545.

TFN

CALEB'S PET SITTING

Cats & Dogs, please call me at 507-634-7907.

TFN

ADVERTISING THAT WORKS HARD FOR YOU!



Wyonne Priebe

Contact us today and see what makes advertising in the Steele County Times a great fit for your advertising needs.

STEELE COUNTY Times

507-456-4299 • wpriebe@steelecountytimes.com

EARN EXTRA INCOME



We're looking for reliable drivers to deliver small packages daily around a 10 mile-radius of Blooming Prairie. Serve the community by helping them out delivering packages! Must be 18 or older with good driving record. Perfect opportunity for retirees! Call 507-583-4431 Ext. 2 for more details.

Steele County Times
Blooming Prairie

ASK THE MOTOR MEDICS®

From the Hosts of the Under The Hood radio show.

By Shannon Nordstrom and Russ Evans



Dear Motor Medics,

I heard you guys on a recent show discussing vehicle warm-up times and heard you say it was not necessary to warm up a fuel injected vehicle. I thought that all vehicles should be warmed up to get the oil flowing at least a little bit. If this is so, how long is a good warm-up time?

Brandon in Dayton, Ohio

Dear Brandon,

There was more to what we were talking about that you must have missed. While we said that the fuel injected vehicles manufactured in the past few years could be driven right away due to better parts and efficient injection systems we still recommend some warm up time. We have heard some people even say just start them up and drive them to warm them up faster although we don't agree with that. There has to be a proper medium between running a vehicle too long to warm it up which wastes fuel and taking off so soon that the defroster won't even keep a windshield clear posing a safety hazard. The owner's manual will provide a good reference for warm ups. For us personally we tend to err on the longer side of warm up times. We like to make sure everything is lubricated and working as it should. It also gives us a chance to do some important things like adjust those mirrors, fasten our seat belts, and most importantly, turn off our cell phones for safety.

Take care, the Motor Medics

Dear Motor Medics,

My question is about accessories plugged into a lighter socket. Recently I have been experiencing dead batteries on my 2009 Cadillac Escalade and they tell me it's caused by the accessories that I leave plugged into the lighter at all times. If the vehicle is not driven every day it will not start and is completely dead. I question how something as small as a cell phone or GPS unit can drain a battery so quickly, is this possible? I have stopped leaving things plugged in and have had no further issues but wonder if it's not just a weak battery. What are your thoughts?

Darla in Elmira, New York

Dear Darla,

It may sound strange but when anything is left plugged into the accessory outlet it can run the battery dead. Yes the power drain is very small and would take many days to drain a battery but there is something much larger at work here. Newer vehicles have many modules that when awake (turned on) will draw several amps of power and would drain a battery very quickly. To prevent this drain the modules go into a sleep state just like a home computer in sleep mode. They know when to sleep by monitoring the systems for non-use just like a home computer. If something is being charged by the lighter socket they think the system is still in use and keep the modules powered thus draining the battery quickly.

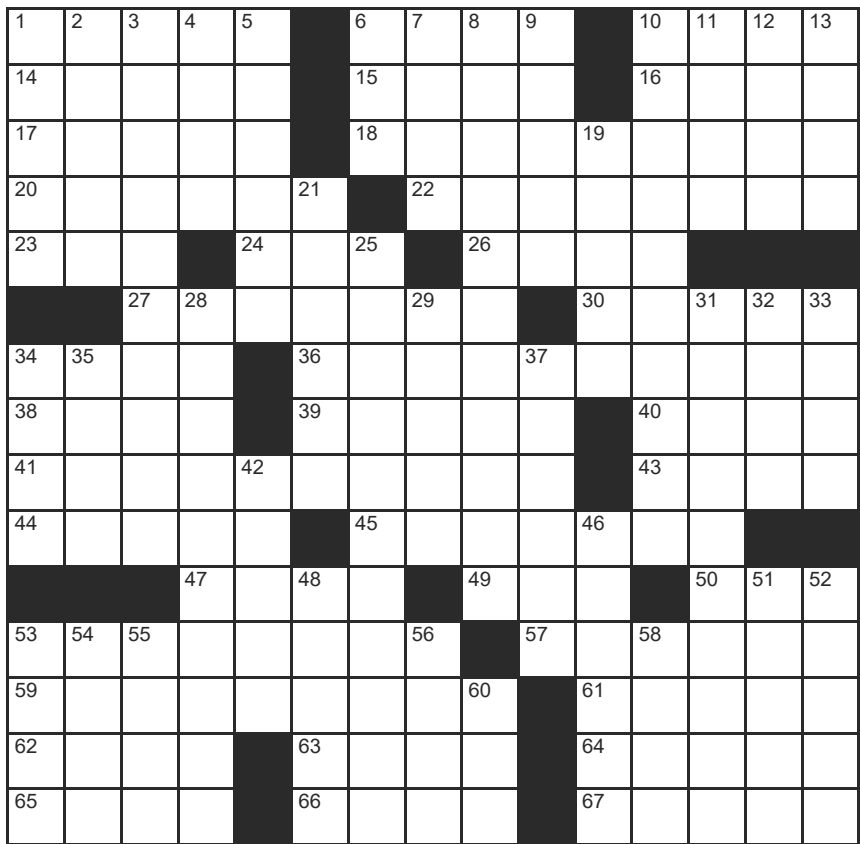
Take care, the Motor Medics

The Weekly Crossword

by Margie E. Burke

ACROSS

- 1 Judgment payout
6 "What the ____!"
10 "Dude ..."
14 Lowest point
15 Soon, to a bard
16 Court order?
17 Fleetwood RV line
18 Now and then
20 Bering, for one
22 Those going 80, say
23 Kyoto currency
24 "Lilies of the Field" character
26 Designer Cassini
27 Shellfish dish
30 Bocelli, for one
34 Brown bird
36 Gift-wrapper's need
38 Tear apart
39 River in Hades
40 Place for a roast
41 Like some parties
43 Riesling, for one
44 Puccini opera
45 Rising sky-high
47 Taylor of "American Crime"
49 A.T.M. need
50 Fly ball's path
53 "See you then!"
57 Hostage taker
59 Bluffing game
61 Easily duped
62 Suffix with leather or lay
63 2023 Oscar winner Michelle
64 Middling poker pair



Copyright 2025 by The Puzzle Syndicate

- 65 Pigeon-____
66 Taxpayers' IDs
67 Uneasy state

DOWN

- 1 Unable to relax
2 Ralph of "The Waltons"
3 Trimmings
4 Baltic capital
5 Pulls the plug on
6 Suffers from
7 Hazzard deputy
8 Place for kitchen scraps
9 Prepare to be dubbed
10 Capital of Barbados
11 Wintry coating

- 12 ____-friendly
13 Name on a green toy truck
19 Places for crowns
21 Go at it
25 They may be bare
28 No Clue
29 State-run game
31 Plotting, as a course
32 Pop the cork
33 Fiona on TV's "Tracker"
34 Order in the court
35 City near Sparks
37 Comic dubbed 'the Entertainer'

- 42 Speakeasy risks
46 Canadian actress Sarkis
48 ____ mantle
51 Wanders
52 Colgate alternative
53 "Why should ____ you?"
54 Jackson 5 member
55 Fill beyond full
56 Course for bus. majors
58 Liniment target
60 "Say what?" sounds



Solution to Crossword:

exp REALTY

FOR SALE



Jennifer Walsh
REAL ESTATE

Jennifer Walsh

507-438-6676

jennifer@jenniferwalshrealestate.com
jenniferwalshrealestate.com



SINCE 1839
Schaeffer's
SPECIALIZED LUBRICANTS



Bruce Freerksen
(507)273-9110

brucewithschaefferoil@gmail.com
West Concord, MN

L&D
Recycling, Inc.

L&D Recycling, Inc.
Scrap Iron & Metals

WE BUY ALL METALS!
507-527-2408 • LDRecycling.com
55976 STATE HWY 56, West Concord, MN

HOME OF THE HONEST MECHANICS!

HONEST-1®
AUTO CARE

Mon-Fri 7 a.m. - 6 p.m.

1125 S. Oak Ave. • Owatonna
507-431-4576 • www.Honest1Owatonna.com

LET THESE SPONSORS KNOW YOU
APPRECIATE THESE COLUMNS!

FOR ENTERTAINMENT ONLY.

ALWAYS CONSULT YOUR LOCAL SHOP AND
FOLLOW ALL SAFETY PROCEDURES
BEFORE REPAIRS.

Come visit the Motor Medic® online at
underthehoodshow.com

Honoring the service of all vets during the holiday season

◀ **HONORING** from A4 tenders). My brother served in the Navy during the Vietnam war. He was in DaNang during the Tet Offensive. It changed him. My sister served in the Army, and I joined the Air Force. I remember getting my draft number. Don't remember what it was but it didn't matter. I had already decided to enlist. I served for nine years. So that brings me to this. There were many things I was thinking about saying to rebut Phil Heim's mischaracterizations and faulty statistics, but as I continued to ponder those things I decided – no. It just doesn't feel right now. This is the Christmas season. I push away those thoughts and I just want to say, Phil, I honor your service. I honor the service of all those vets who served and were discharged honorably. After my brother passed away, I was going through some of his effects and found he had been awarded the Bronze Star. He never mentioned it. May God pour his blessings an all of us during this Holy season. We sure need it. Harlan Carlson Austin

SCHS should discuss, correct and apologize

◀ **SCHS** from A4 and voted on by the board. This Board is all volunteer people from the county – who were elected to run the History Center, not a director! The mess we are in now was because of letting a director handle all decisions and not bringing it to the board first and discussing it and voting on it! We all make mistakes – but discuss it and correct it and apologize for it. Lloyd Kaplan and Terry Prokopec worked on this project to make money for the History Center and not for themselves – which they have done other years. We are all volunteers who work many hours up here – but we love the village and History Center – we also donate food-talent-time to make it great. Steele County should be very proud of it. Thanks to all the people who donate money to keep it going. Barb Kasper Owatonna

BEV'S FRIENDS & FAMILY TOURS PRESENTS:

GUYS & DOLLS

A MUSICAL FABLE OF BROADWAY

A VALENTINE CELEBRATION

Wednesday, February 18, 2026

Chanhassen Dinner Theatre

For the first time in over 35 years Chanhassen Dinner theatre brings you a thrilling and electric staging of Guys and Dolls! From the gritty streets of New York to the colorful cafes of Havana, Guys and Dolls is a grand spectacle of music and comedy to delight you!

\$154 includes motorcoach transportation, lunch and performance.

Reserve your seat early as this one will fill quickly!

Departures:
9:00 am Albert Lea Walmart
9:30 am Owatonna Perkins
10:00 am Faribault State Bank (Mall Location)

CONTACT BEV'S FRIENDS & FAMILY TOURS
At 507-451-8695 • jblsne@charter.net
Mail Check to 210 Oak Ave, N. #511, OWATONNA, MN 55060
Or contact Kim at the State Bank of Faribault

BEV'S FRIENDS & FAMILY TOURS PRESENTS:

White Christmas

THE MUSICAL

HOLIDAY SEASON FUN!

Saturday, December 20th, 2025

Chanhassen Dinner Theatre

\$134 includes motorcoach transportation, lunch and performance.

Departure times:
Albert Lea Walmart 9:00 am
Owatonna Perkins 9:30 am
State Bank of Faribault 10:00 am (mall location)
Reserve your seat early as this one will fill quickly!

CONTACT BEV'S FRIENDS & FAMILY TOURS
At 507-451-8695 • bev@bevtours.com
Mail Check to 210 Oak Ave, N. #511, OWATONNA, MN 55060
Or contact Kim at the State Bank of Faribault

STEELE COUNTY **Times**

411 E. Main St • Blooming Prairie • 507-583-4431

STEELECOUNTYTIMES.COM

HERE'S MY CARD

AUTOMOBILE

Mike's REPAIR

507-455-0388
Fax: 507-455-0486

870 32nd Ave. NW
Owatonna, MN 55060

Mike Hartle Owner

All tire sizes, sales and service for ag and truck!
After Hours: 507-455-0483

AUTOMOBILE

misgen auto parts

Full-service & self-service automotive recycler
Late model cars & trucks

12880 SW 72nd Ave. | Ellendale, MN 56026
800-358-4902 | 507-684-2100 | www.misgen.com

since 1972

misgen auto parts

BOOKS

USED BOOKSTORE

507-455-3440 | eatonsbooks@q.com |
Mon-Fri 10-5 Sat 10-3:30 |

RECYCLE YOUR BOOKS WITH US

602 North Cedar Ave Owatonna MN 55060 |

COLLISION

THE ONLY AREA SHOP certified to work on the 2015 Ford Aluminum F150

Body Shop
MOPAR
GM
Enterprise

CSI: Collision Specialists Inc
507.437.2837
www.csiaustinnm.com

CONSTRUCTION

J.A. Gwilt Siders, Inc.

Siding, Windows, Gutters, Roofing & Decks

Call 507-456-1504 for your FREE estimates!

Serving Steele County for 20 years.

Known for our exceptional quality of material and labor.

CONSTRUCTION & TREE SERVICE

Johnson Construction & Tree Service

Tree & Stump Removal • Trimming & Topping • Tree Moving
Lot Clearing • Backhoe/Skidloader • Hauling General Construction
24 Hr. Emergency Services • Year Round Work • Licensed & Insured

KYLE JOHNSON • 507-583-7592
AUSTIN & BLOOMING PRAIRIE

EXCAVATING

SEPTIC SYSTEMS • Design • Installation • Compliance Inspections

State License # 1844

Serving the Area Over 12 Years

BISHOP BE EXCAVATING, INC

EXCAVATION • BASEMENTS
DEMOLITION • DOZER WORK
Commercial & Residential Sitework

507 583-2999

Aggregates • Hauling • Washed Sand • Black Dirt • Fill • Gravel

FLOORING

FLOORS 4-U

FLOORING SALES & INSTALLATION
ELLEDALE, MN

507-684-3351
floors4u2007@gmail.com

Offering:
Carpet, Laminates
LVT & LVP Products
Cambria Countertops

GARBAGE SERVICE

SKJEVELAND ENTERPRISES

Sanitation & Recycling Services
Pride in service since 2007

RESIDENTIAL • COMMERCIAL • INDUSTRIAL

• Sanitation & Recycling Services
• Roll-Offs & Dumpsters
• Rubbish & Garbage Removal

Contact Skjeveland Enterprises today!

507-528-9900

GRANITE & MONUMENTS

Owatonna GRANITE & MONUMENT

Sunburst MEMORIALS

Creating Your Story in Stone

JOHN & BARB HEEREMA
1180 Frontage Rd E, Owatonna

507-455-9551 • owatonnagranite.com

STEELE COUNTY TIMES ADVERTISING SALES

ADVERTISING THAT WORKS HARD FOR YOU!

Contact us today and see what makes advertising in the Steele County Times a great fit for your advertising needs.

Wynne Priebe

507-456-4299 • wpriebe@steelecountytimes.com

INSURANCE

A FAMILY FIRST INSURANCE AGENCY

AUTO • HOME • HEALTH • LIFE • BUSINESS

Call Us for your Auto and Home Insurance
Excellent Coverage-Competitive Rates
Call for a Free Quote Today
507.451.0539

325 N Cedar Owatonna, MN 55060
service@helpingyouinsure.com
helpingyouinsure.com

INSURANCE

R&R Insurance Agency, LLC

**Carl R. Peterson
Jill Lindeman**

236 E Main St. • PO Box 66
Blooming Prairie, MN 55917
Office (507) 583-7971
Fax (507) 583-7147
Cell (507) 383-3988
rrinsllc@gmail.com

PETS

Bennett's PET HAVEN CEMETERY, INC.

"Professional Cremation and Burial Services for your loving pet"

Larry & Donna Bennett
4151 N. City Rd. 45
Owatonna, MN 55060
(507) 451-2203

Shorty & Sue Schroht
857 Mosher Ave.
Owatonna, MN 55060
(507) 455-3204

Cell: 507-456-3562

REAL ESTATE

HIGH POINT LAND COMPANY

TROY STAFFORD CPA, MBA
507-259-3047
Troy@HighPointLandCompany.com

HIGHPOINTLANDCOMPANY.COM

ROOFING

Contact us for all of your roofing needs

PIEPHO ROOFING, INC

Unparalleled Service

James Piepho 507-451-1686
5098 SW 18th Street, Owatonna, MN 55060
www.piephoroofing.com Lic. #BC679096

SHOE REPAIR

Jim's Shoe Repair

Boots. Shoes. Zippers.
Purses and More

Jim Marquardt
628 E. Rose St
Owatonna, MN 55060

Call for Service
507-451-2909

STEELE COUNTY TIMES ADVERTISING SALES

ADVERTISING THAT WORKS HARD FOR YOU!

Contact us today and see what makes advertising in the Steele County Times a great fit for your advertising needs.

Wynne Priebe

507-456-4299 • wpriebe@steelecountytimes.com

New lighted Christmas tree shines in Central Park

◀ **LIGHTED** from A1

Lower succeeded Jeff Feters as president and chief executive officer on Jan. 1.

Following the Dec. 5 Holiday Parade down Cedar Avenue in Owatonna, Michael led the countdown to the lighting of the tree for the first time.

After the tree lighting program, Lowers said that he, and Federated, anticipate the tree will add beauty to the Central Park decorations and people will enjoy it for many years to come.

Federated Insurance has been a part of Owatonna for 121 years, Lowers said. Federated employs 3,000 people, he said, and is “blessed to be headquartered in Owatonna.” The company, he said, has a history of supporting the community.

Federated has supported the BBBS since the Federated Challenge was started in 2005. According to information on the Federated Challenge website, since it began, the organization has raised more than \$57 million dollars to support the organization. The Federated Challenge is a two-day gala and golf event. The Lowers were hosts for the event in July.

This year’s event raised \$4,945,000 for BBBS.

In addition to the funds raised by the Federated Challenge numerous employees also support the organization by volunteering as Bigs, company officials said.

Blooming Prairie Area Chamber of Commerce 2025 Annual Banquet
Thursday, January 22, 2026

Tickets are available at the BP Servicemen’s club for \$45 or online, or by scanning the QR Code.
<https://thebpchamber.com/event/blooming-prairie-area-chamber-of-commerce-annual-banquet/>

- 2025 CITIZEN OF THE YEAR: **SADIE STEELE**
- NONPROFIT OF THE YEAR: **BLOOMING PRAIRIE SERVICEMEN’S CLUB**
- 2025 BUSINESS OF THE YEAR: **MAIN STREET DENTAL CLINICS.**
- Social Hour: 5pm, Dinner: 6:30pm, Dessert and Program to follow.

NEW THIS YEAR!!!

- Bottle Pull Fun “We’re adding a little extra excitement with a bottle pull (wine & liquor), for just \$20, you’ll participate in a game of skill to be able to pull a wrapped mystery bottle, every pull is a win, some lucky bottles come with a mystery prize valued higher than your event ticket!! Must be 21 to participate!



12 KIDS OF CHRISTMAS

Give the gift of mentorship this holiday season. It takes little to be Big!

MEET JOSIE

Josie enjoys:

- Drawing
- Music
- Animals
- Being active

The best Big for her would be someone who can help her build self confidence and enjoys art.



STAND WITH THEM.
BECOME A BIG.
bbbssmn.org/beabig



12 KIDS OF CHRISTMAS

Give the gift of mentorship this holiday season. It takes little to be Big!

MEET KACIE

Kacie enjoys:

- Gymnastics
- Strawberries
- Make-up & nails
- Volleyball

The best Big for her would be someone who shares her optimism and likes to laugh!



STAND WITH THEM.
BECOME A BIG.
bbbssmn.org/beabig





Affordable, Patient-Centered Care in Owatonna

Experience high-quality, patient-centered care at our new primary care clinic and state-of-the-art ambulatory surgery center (ASC) — bringing a new, convenient choice for comprehensive health services right to your community.

Our Comprehensive Services:

- **Primary Care & Family Medicine:** Preventive care, regular screenings, and chronic disease management to keep you and your family healthy.
- **Acute Care:** Timely care for colds, flu, minor injuries, and other urgent health concerns.
- **On-Site Laboratory & Radiology:** Access to state-of-the-art testing, X-rays, mammography, and ultrasounds without the hassle.
- **Specialty Care & Procedures:** Benefit from minimally invasive procedures such as endoscopies, colonoscopies, and biopsies, alongside specialized care in orthopedics, cardiology, obstetrics and gynecology, podiatry, psychiatry, dermatology, and more.

www.olmstedmedicalcenter.com

Ambulatory Surgery Center (ASC):

Our cutting-edge ASC offers a range of surgical procedures that are safe, efficient, and designed for same-day discharge. Enjoy the advantages of expert surgical care without the need for an overnight hospital stay, all while experiencing a cost-effective and patient-centered approach.

New patients are welcome!
Experience the difference.



OLMSTED
MEDICAL
CENTER

507.935.5601
210 N Oak Ave
Owatonna, MN 55060



SOUBA
GREENHOUSE
GIFT CARD

THE GIFT THAT KEEPS GROWING. SOUBA GREENHOUSE GIFT CARDS!



**Purchase gift cards in store, or eCards online
anytime at soubagreenhouse.com**

Located 2 Miles West of McDonald's | 4003 Crane Creek Road
Owatonna, MN 55060 • 507-451-1444

Good News Edition

Man turns handwritten notes into hobby

BY RICK BUSSLER
PUBLISHER

While most people are buried on their phones as a means of communicating, an Owatonna man is picking up what has quickly become a lost art. He's utilizing the power of handwritten notes.

Nolan Engebretson turned to writing letters to family and friends during the peak COVID years. He often dropped a letter—and not a text message—to aunts, uncles and cousins asking them how they were doing.

And now his handwritten letters have progressed into something that's bringing him even greater joy.

About a year ago, Engebretson, 27, got the idea to write letters to first responders, including police, fire and EMS, across the

country. When he broached the topic with his grandmother, she gave him the nod and he was off on a mission.

"Sometimes he is a sly character and does things without mom and dad knowing," said Carolyn Engebretson, Nolan's mother. Nolan quickly added, "My mom doesn't like surprises."

In his letters, Engebretson thanked the first responders for performing their tough jobs. But he also had a small favor and asked them to send him stickers. Some responded with something even better—uniform patches of their departments. He quickly amended his request to patches for any new letters.

"I wrote them that I hoped they were doing well, but the biggest thing was thanking them for what they do,"

See MAN on B13 ►



With a holiday backdrop on his family's garage, Nolan Engebretson of Owatonna has immersed himself in a new hobby—collecting police and fire patches.



Geraldyn Berg, who is still carving wood at age 93, talks about some of the creations she has made over the years. Her first piece was a carving of Santa Claus, and he remains a favorite thing to carve, in his many variations.

At 93, Berg's talent is a cut above the rest

BY KAY FATE
STAFF WRITER

Geraldyn Berg's first-ever carving earned her \$50.

That may not seem like a lot, but consider this: It was in 1949, when Berg was in high school.

She did the carving in Ivory soap, "then my teacher sent it in to some national contest for Ivory, and I must have won it. They kept it, and they sent me \$50."

Today, that would be the equivalent of about \$680.

"I was supposed to go on some kind of tour, but I never heard any more

about it," Berg said.

If you've done the math, you may have figured that she is somewhere in her 90s – 93, to be exact, and

she's still carving—wood, not soap.

Her intricate, beautifully hand-painted designs continue to win

See BERG on B13 ►



Geraldyn Berg has carved her share of Santa Claus figures over the past nearly 30 years. The first piece she ever carved is on the right; the one she will donate to the Blooming Prairie Education Foundation auction this spring is in the center. Berg, 93, signs and dates every work she does.

Local musician hits the right notes for cancer

BY KAREN M. JORGENSEN
STAFF WRITER

Helping those fighting a battle against cancer has become a passion for local musician Todd Utpadel.

His goal the past two years has been to raise \$100,000 to help those with cancer meet their basic needs during treatment. He said he started the charity after watching friends and family members go through treatment and seeing the financial impact it had on them.

For the past two years, Utpadel has organized and performed at holiday concerts in Owatonna, as well as other events. His mission became personal last year, when he was diagnosed with cancer

as he planned his first Christmas event.

The 2025 version of Musicians Against Cancer put him over his fundraising goal, with one more event scheduled for Jan. 1 in Albert Lea. His original idea was to raise funds through Musicians Against Cancer for just two years. But with the success of the original plan, he has now decided there will be one more year, although it will not be exactly the same.

Utpadel said he was born in Owatonna and lived in the city until the year before he started kindergarten, when the family moved to Ellendale. His grandfather, he said, had been a sheriff's deputy, and his grandmother had worked at Duffy's supermarket in Owatonna.

Utpadel said he has known Cheri Krejci, long-time leader of the Blooming Prairie Cancer Group, since they were in school. When he decided he wanted to raise money for helping cancer patients it was logical he turned to the Blooming Prairie group.

(Krejci stepped down earlier this year; her daughter Lindsey French, along with Tammy Busho, Mandy Doocy, and Lexi LaMontagne, now lead their fundraising efforts.)

Originally, Utpadel's goal was more modest. Maybe, he thought, he could raise \$3,000. He held his first event on Jan. 1, 2024, at the Moose Lodge in Albert Lea, and it was a big success, with 100% of what he earned through his music in 2024 going to the BP

See MUSICIAN on B13 ►



Todd Utpadel speaks to those attending the most recent Musicians Against Cancer Christmas show held at the Owatonna Eagles.



It is an honor to represent
all District 23 families in Saint Paul.

From the Dornink family to yours, please enjoy a
wonderful Christmas and New Year holiday.

I look forward to serving you in 2026!

Prepared and paid for by Sen. Gene Dornink • Brownsdale, MN 55918



"My Lonely Christmas"

As I lay down to sleep, this eve of Christmas morn, I slide between the cotton sheets so comfortable and warm.
A tinge of guilt comes over me followed by a saddened tear.
I say another lonely prayer that only God can hear.
I turn the bedside light off and quickly settle in, but it will be a few more hours before my night comes to an end.
I lie here all but motionless, eyes wider than the sky,
I try to think of happy thoughts, but I still break down and cry.
I punch my flattened pillow and lie flat on my back.
I'm thinking of my soldier who's bravely serving in Iraq or elsewhere.
I finally stop my crying and a calm sets in my heart.
For I know this year will quickly pass, then we'll no longer be apart.
My eyes are feeling heavy now, so I send God one last prayer.
"God please protect my soldier while fighting over there!"

Proudly supporting our past veterans and active military members!

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

Blooming Prairie Servicemen's Club
210 4th St. NE • Blooming Prairie
507-583-7884

COMMUNITY PATHWAYS

RENEWING LIVES. ENRICHING FUTURES. AND PROVIDING CONNECTIONS

155 Oakdale St, Owatonna
www.communitypathwayssc.org

We hope you have a Very Merry Holiday Season!

The Blessings Of Christmas

PEACE • HOPE • JOY • LOVE

As we Celebrate a Season of Giving, we want to Share our Gratitude for the Trust you've placed in us this year.

Glen Meger

Mike Meger

Brett Meger

Cheryl Meger

Scott Kozelka

Tim Rice

Matt Thurnau

John Connor

Tom Standke

Terry Kuck

BRICK-MEGER & MEDFORD FUNERAL HOMES

507.451.1457
www.megercares.com

Merry Christmas

from MBT Bank in Blooming Prairie

As the holiday season approaches, we want to take a moment to express our gratitude for your continued trust and partnership with MBT Bank. We wish you and your loved ones a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Adam Thoen

Amanda Schumacher

Anita Deters

Bruce Rumpza

Carissa Easton

Emily Holevoet

Judy Engelken

Katrina Staska

Michelle Vigeland

Kent Lea

Sandra Christenson

Austin | Blooming Prairie | Dodge Center
Hayfield | Mantorville | Rochester
Iowa: Clear Lake | Forest City | Lake Mills

MBT Bank

www.mbtbank.bank | Member FDIC

WE WISH YOU A VERY
MERRY
Christmas
— & —
HAPPY NEW YEAR





Trusted Service. Cooperative Value.



*With Our
Thanks*
May your holiday be
trimmed with peace,
joy and goodwill.



Doerhoefer, Miner,
Andrist & Arndt, P.A.
CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS

We sincerely appreciate the kindness you've shown us as customers, neighbors and friends. Thank you for making 2025 a great year for us. We look forward to seeing you again soon!

314 Main St. E. • Blooming Prairie • 583-7528
685 W. Bridge Street Suite 6 • Owatonna • 451-9136
133 N Broadway • New Richland • 465-8100

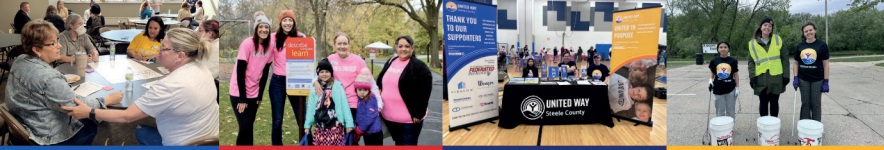


Together, we're creating a future where everyone can reach their full potential.

UNITED IS THE WAY™



245 18th Street Ste 1, Owatonna, MN 55060 | 507-455-1180



HEALTHY
COMMUNITY

YOUTH
OPPORTUNITY

FINANCIAL
SECURITY

COMMUNITY
RESILIENCY

Hope this holiday season brings you **lots of reasons to smile!**







Main Street Dental Clinics
comfortable dentistry

Blooming Prairie
405 E Main St
507-583-2141

Owatonna
1170 E Frontage Rd
507-455-1000

New Richland
132 North Broadway
507-463-0502

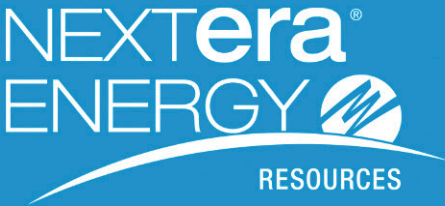
Rochester
3110 Wellner Dr NE
507-536-7700

Mankato
287 St Andrews Dr
507-720-0250

mainstreetdentalclinics.com



Wishing you warm, safe
and Happy Holidays



Warmest holiday wishes to you and your family!





2250 AUSTIN ROAD
OWATONNA, MN 55060
507-451-3131

VISIT OUR WEBSITE
northlandfarmsystems.com

Holiday greetings from your friends at Loken Excavation & Drainage.

507-451-2873

LOKEN

Excavation & Drainage Inc.

3695 Hoffman Drive NW • Owatonna
lokenexcavation74@gmail.com | lokenexcavating.com

Have a Merry Christmas & a Joyous New Year

Legacy Monument Sales

Thank you to all the families we have been blessed to work with throughout 2025. We hope you will always remember us as someone you can trust and that cares about your family's needs.

Leon & Lori Bohlman



Leon's cell: 507-456-7864
Lori's cell: 507-456-3735
Email: landlbo@gmail.com

Warmth and Peace to You and Yours

May this sacred season be filled with the warmth of faith, family and friends.

We're so grateful for your faith and trust in us.

Thank you for being a part of our story this year.



Locally Owned by John & Barb Heerema

Owatonna
GRANITE & MONUMENT

507-455-9551
1180 E. Frontage Rd.
Owatonna, MN 55060

Sunburst MEMORIALS
employee owned | established 1917

Wishing You All A Season Filled With

Health & Happiness

Merry Christmas and very best wishes to our family, friends and customers. We appreciate every moment you've chosen to spend with us, and thank you for your support. I am so excited for the chance to have opened my business in 2025 and look forward to serving you in the new year!

At One Bread One Body MD, we're redefining what health care can feel like—warm, personal, and deeply restorative.



OneBread OneBody MD



Wendy Bongers, M.D.

513 Central Avenue North, Suite 1
Faribault, MN 55021 • 507-301-7602





Happiest Holidays

Thank you for your patronage, we look forward to seeing you in the New Year!

Mike's REPAIR

507-455-0388
870 32nd Ave NW, Owatonna, MN
Emergency OR On-The-Farm Repair

Season's Greetings Merry Christmas Happy Holidays Feliz Navidad



157 Hwy Ave N – Blooming Prairie MN



Cue the Lights: It's Christmas!

**Hope it's merry, hope it's bright,
Hope the season treats you right!**

At the holidays and all year, we're filled with gratitude for friends and customers like you.

Thanks for brightening our year with your visits. We wish you all the best!

Blooming Prairie Utilities
333 2nd Ave. NE • Blooming Prairie
583-6683

Wishing you a
MERRY CHRISTMAS
from all of us at



Deml
HEATING & AIR CONDITIONING, LLC
507-451-6388



Our family keeping yours comfortable since 1969!

Greetings to our Friends and Customers



Happy Holidays
and Thanks
so much for
Supporting us
in 2025!

Your Loyalty and Sharing with Others is Wonderful.
I am Looking Forward to a Wonderful 2026!
Thank You!

BEV'S FRIENDS & FAMILY TOURS
210 Oak Ave N, #511, Owatonna
507-451-8695
bevs@bevstours.com
www.bevstours.com

 Find us on Facebook **Bev's Friends and Family Tours**

Merry
Christmas
&
Happy
New Year!





Colors & Glass, Inc

John Glynn • Logan Glynn

507-451-1936

Auto Glass - Replacement & Repair

Clearly Your Safest Choice

• Locally Owned Since 1990

• Lifetime Warranty

• Call or Text Anytime

• Will Handle the Insurance Claim

• Mobile or Pick Up/Drop Off Service

• Calibrate All Advanced Safety Systems

Merry &
BRIGHT

May peace and
joy light up your
holiday season!



CALL BROZ ELECTRIC FOR ALL
YOUR ELECTRICAL NEEDS!

Residential • Farm • Commercial

24 HOUR EMERGENCY SERVICE

507-414-1076 • Claremont





Merry Christmas
from your friends
at Souba
Greenhouse



We appreciate your support
over the past 132 years!

Thank you for voting us Best Garden
Center in Southern Minnesota in 2024!

4003 Crane Creek Road (2 Miles West of McDonald's) | Owatonna, MN 55060
507-451-1444 | Follow us on Facebook and Instagram

Wishing You
All The Best
This Holiday Season!

Dr. Deborah Lien

DDS, MBS

Building
Healthy
Smiles

drdeborahlienorthodontics.com
507-583-6613
FREE CONSULTATION
132 2nd Ave NE | Blooming Prairie





Merry
Christmas

Zephyr

TRAILER SALES

www.zephyrtrailers.com 507-775-2740

CHECK OUT END OF
YEAR LOW PRICES

We Service and D.O.T. Certify
All Brands of Trailers!

Call 507-775-2740 Today
To Set Up a Time to Bring
Your Trailer in.

LOOKING TO
PURCHASE A TRAILER

We Have a Full Inventory of
New Trailers!

If We Don't Have What You Are
Looking For We Can Custom Order it!

GET YOUR
TRAILER READY FOR
UPCOMING SEASON!

MENTION THIS AD
AND GET
10% OFF
LABOR COST



Zephyr

TRAILER SALES

www.zephyrtrailers.com 507-775-2740

967 Frontage Rd NW • Byron, MN

May your holidays
be merry
and bright!

MINER'S

Outdoor & Rec

635 6th SE, Blooming Prairie
507-583-2712
www.minersoutdoor.com



Merry
Christmas

Thank you for lighting up our year with your business.
Customers like you mean so much to us, at the holidays
and year-round. We appreciate your support in 2025, and
wish you all the best this Christmas season and beyond!

HODGMAN

DRAINAGE COMPANY INC.

16536 County Hwy 34, Dodge Center
507-528-2225
hodgmandrainage.com





SENDING WARM
WINTER WISHES TO
YOU AND YOUR FAMILY



Tandem Products, Inc.
HRBP@TandemProducts.com
507.583.7222

CELEBRATING

50

19722022

YEARS OF SERVICE





*Merry Christmas From All Of Us
at R & S Grain Systems, Inc!*



MANUFACTURING & FABRICATION
25863 650TH AVE. • DEXTER, MN 55926
507-584-6794 • 507-584-6634 Fax
www.rsgrain.com

**We have on hand: Belts • Bearings • Electric Motors • Nuts & Bolts
• Roller Chain • Pulleys • Dodge Gear Drives • Hubs**

We also have a Laser for your custom cutting needs!







Dealer Inquiries Welcome

For the love of lefse – and family

BY KAY FATE
STAFF WRITER

Necessity, it's said, is the mother of invention. And while the Fisher family hardly invented lefse, it was necessity that started their decades-old tradition. "Well, we're Norwegian," said Caroline Oeltjenbruns, of Owatonna, "and our grandmother made it. She stopped when she went into a nursing home, and then we didn't have any lefse."

"So, we thought we would try making it ourselves, and we improved over the years," she said. You'll excuse their mother for not taking on the responsibility of making the soft potato-based flatbread: Marion Fisher was busy raising 18 children.

The family had their grandmother's cookbook, "and we just followed that recipe, because there's not much to it," Oeltjenbruns said. "There's just flour, sugar, cream, salt and potatoes."

"And shortening," added her sister, Lisa Boyd.

Though no one is quite sure when they started the group venture, they all know the recipe.

"I came home from the military in '91," Boyd said, "and Caroline and Sue (Miller) and a couple of the other sisters were doing it at that point, just for family."

It "kind of progressed from there," she said, as more siblings began to help.

"All eight of us girls make it," Oeltjenbruns said, "and there's boys that participate, too. We've been trying to figure out how many years we've been making it, and we're just not sure. It's been 19 years that we've been doing it for Relay for Life, though."

The family has a team for the annual Relay for Life fundraiser, formed after the loss of their youngest brother, Scott Fisher, who died in 1995, when he was just 23.

"Not only have we made the lefse for that 19 years, but we've also participated for 31 years as a team," Boyd said.

Though they haven't kept track, the Fisher Miller Team has likely raised tens of thousands of dollars for cancer research—much of it from the sale of their fresh lefse.

They sell it every fall at the Blooming Prairie Women of Today's Village Affair, a large craft show held the last weekend in October.

The group makes them the day before the

event and keeps them in coolers, in order to sell the freshest product.

This fall, they made 99 dozen. After expenses, all proceeds go to Tri-County Relay for Life, formerly Steele County Relay for Life.

The 200 pounds of potatoes they typically use are donated by Souba Greenhouse, in memory of a loved one who died of cancer.

The Fisher Miller team reconvenes in December for the family lefse-making, gathering most recently on Dec. 5 and 6.

A couple years ago, they switched from making it in someone's home to renting a space, "because it takes a lot of space, and it takes a lot of juice—energy," Boyd said.

"Nobody's home had enough power to be able to do all the griddles that we needed, so we go out to Holy Trinity Church in Litomysl and rent the hall for the day and spend the day out there making lefse."

Boyd still attends Holy Trinity, as does Oeltjenbruns' daughter.

It is the home church of their parents, Paul and Marion Fisher, who lived about two miles away. Many of their 18 children went to the affiliated St. Isidore School, which closed about a decade ago.

"There's only 16 of us left," Boyd said, "but we do still get together as brothers and sisters, for Christmas, and we bring lefse out for that."

On the family lefse-making day, "the brothers and sisters bring their own potatoes, but Caroline takes care of the other



From left, Sue Fisher Miller, Everly Boyd and Caroline Fisher Oeltjenbruns roll out dough during the Fisher family's annual lefse-making weekend. The women's grandmother used to make lefse, but when she entered a nursing home, they had to learn to make it themselves. It's turned into a decades-long tradition involving three generations, and also benefits cancer research.

ingredients, and we just kind of give her a few bucks to cover the cost," she said.

This year, "we only made, I think, 88 dozen," Boyd said. "That's a low year for us."

The young women who wanted to replicate their grandmother's recipe are now grandmothers themselves, meaning the conversation has turned to "the next generation."

"We do involve the young ones in the process, because we're getting too old," Oeltjenbruns said. "I think the

oldest one is 76. When you're standing from 8 a.m. until 3 p.m., bending over, rolling the dough out—that's when you get old."

The youngest participant that weekend was 2, "so you'll see some of the younger kids that have been there and are working, as well," she said.

"And we take just a quick lunch break and that's all you get for a break during the day," Boyd said.

"We might get to go to the bathroom, if we're nice," Oeltjenbruns laughed.

They joke about the "proper" thickness of lefse, a discussion that likely began when the very first round came off the griddle sometime in the 1700s.

"We do involve the young ones in the process, because we're getting too old."

Carolyn Oeltjenbruns
Lefse Maker

"We try to keep a set standard, because we want it pretty thin," Boyd said. "We have some mats that have red circles, like for a pie crust, and we tell them, 'it has to be rolled out thin enough to be able to see that red circle.'"

"There's some that don't necessarily always hit that mark, and then we will ..." she paused. "Educate them."

The other point of debate, of course, is the best way to eat lefse.

"My husband loves it with peanut butter," Oeltjenbruns said. "I like it with butter and sugar, and warmed up in the microwave, just for a little bit. It's like it's fresh off the griddle."

"I like it exactly like Caroline," Boyd said.

It is, they agreed, just like Grandma used to make.



Ila Boyd, whose great-great-grandmother Olga used to make lefse for her 18 grandchildren, is learning at a young age that some traditions are made to be kept. The Fisher family has been making lefse together for more than 35 years, renting the hall of the family's home church in Litomysl to set up their assembly line production of hundreds of dozens of the Norwegian flatbread.



From left, Traci Seykora, Nancy Wolters and Wendy Buck (back to camera) all play a role in making lefse, which is sold annually at a Blooming Prairie craft show. The proceeds are donated to Relay for Life; the Fisher Miller Team has walked in the annual cancer fundraiser for 31 years.



The "Lefse Gang" gathers twice a year to make the traditional Norwegian flatbread. The children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of Paul and Marion Fisher make 100 dozen or more to sell at the Blooming Prairie Women of Today's annual Village Affair every October, and donate the proceeds to Relay for Life in honor of their brother, Scott. The Fisher Miller Team walks in the Relay every September to honor their brother and a brother-in-law, Jim Miller.



COURTESY MARISA WENCIL

Owatonna's Tanner Wencil smiles during his first day of classes at RCC. Less than two years since sustaining a TBI during a sledding accident with a vehicle, Wencil is now enrolled in college and continues to make strides in his recovery.

THE AUXILIARY'S HEAVY HITTER



Gloria Kenow is a heavy hitter with the Owatonna Hospital Auxiliary—she has donated more than 9,000 hours of volunteer work to the organization.

Not a matter of 'if,' but Wencil

Owatonna's Tanner Wencil continues to defy the odds in recovery from TBI

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

When 2025 Owatonna graduate Tanner Wencil ditched his walker to cross the stage at the Huskies' ceremony last spring, he recalled feeling a bit nervous about the steps that lay ahead of him.

His recovery from a traumatic brain injury (TBI) sustained on Jan. 12, 2024, in a sledding accident with a vehicle, had been going superbly, but this was another gigantic goal that he had set for himself.

About halfway through, he realized that it was "too late to go back." It didn't stop him from making it to principal Kory Kath and receiving his diploma.

His journey that day was symbolized by steps that doctors didn't initially think would ever be possible.

An initial diagnosis by medical professionals at Mayo Clinic in Rochester said he would never eat, walk or talk again. Less than two full years from the day of his accident and having spent four months in a medically induced coma, Wencil is doing all three – and improving every day.

"You can tell by his face how much he's changed. Now, even if he has his walker, people still do ask questions. They ask, 'Dude, did you hurt your leg?' Not knowing he had a TBI," said Wencil's mother, Marisa.

Since making his walk at graduation,

Tanner's life has changed in more defining ways than just his recovery.

Initially, the plan was for him to attend welding school and get into the trades after studying at Riverland College.

Now, his interests lie in the same field that he once excelled in for the Huskies: Sports.

"We were talking about my future job and I said, 'I'd love to be a gym teacher and coach at Lincoln Elementary,'" said Tanner about a conversation he had with his mother.

The goal is to study for two years at Riverland College before transferring to get his bachelor's degree from Minnesota State University, Mankato.

However, the extent of his athletic career is not limited to teaching and coaching.

Wencil has improved his motor skills so well over the course of his rehabilitation that he is now able to play pickleball and be a regular at the local Anytime Fitness.

"I kind of just went to the gym one day and I was like, 'Wow, this is like physical therapy.' I went two days in a row, and I realized like, 'Oh I'm fine,'" said Tanner.

According to Marisa, he now goes once a day and is a fan favorite at the gym.

"I would drop him off and one day we ran into Nolan Soller and his dad and they said, 'Hey Tanner is in there.' I asked them, 'Do I need to go in there? Is

he OK?' They replied, 'You leave him alone in there. Everybody loves him here and if they have a problem, we'll deal with it.' That's the first time where I felt like I could leave him there and be totally fine," said Marisa.

When he's not leg pressing six plates and making his own brother jealous with his strength, Tanner can also be found playing pickleball with his former hockey teammate Wyatt Macy on the local courts.

What once seemed so far away from his future reality has become the norm again for Tanner.

And in typical fashion, he has his mind set on more goals.

"I want to run a mile. I used to be able to run a mile in under six minutes. 5:58 to be exact. I remember telling my mom I could

do it and she said, 'You can't do it in six minutes.' So, we went to the track. I sprinted the whole way as she called out my times. I did it, but I did throw up after," said Tanner with a laugh.

While his new goal will require time and training to complete down the line, Tanner has his sights set on a more familiar activity this winter.

The former hockey player is hopeful to lace up his skates again and get back out on the ice at the local ponds for the first time since skating to the blue line on senior night with his Huskies' teammates last season.

The brave young man that once fought for his life and won continues to prove time after time again that the odds don't define him. They're merely his motivation.



COURTESY MARISA WENCIL

Tanner Wencil and his mother, Marisa, pose for a photo with his Owatonna Community Scholarship prior to enrolling at Riverland Community College (RCC). Wencil's future plans include studying at RCC and Minnesota State University, Mankato to earn his bachelors degree before coming back to Owatonna to be a P.E. teacher and coach.

Embroidery, volunteerism go together for Kenow

BY KAREN
M. JORGENSEN
STAFF WRITER

Anyone who stops by the Auxiliary gift shop at Owatonna Hospital is likely to notice the embroidered dish towels for sale. And they probably are Gloria Kenow's handiwork.

Kenow likes to do embroidery, something she learned from her grandmother. She also enjoys volunteering with the Auxiliary. So, it was natural to put the two things together.

Kenow said she has been volunteering with the Auxiliary since the hospital on 26th Street was opened. In fact, in June she was recognized by Allina Health Owatonna Hospital as one of the 2025 Heavy Hitter volunteers. Since she started, Kenow has put in 9,000 volunteer hours.

One of her favorite activities is sewing those dish towels.

"My grandma taught me how to embroider," she said. Her mother tried, she said, but it really took grandma to show her.

She estimates that during her years of volunteering, she has sewed "hundreds, maybe more."

"I can't just sit and watch television," she said, so she does embroidery, and the visitors to the gift shop appreciate it.

"One lady stopped last Friday and asked if I had cat dish towels." It probably won't be surprising to see those make an appearance.

The Kenows, Gloria and David, came to Owatonna in 1962 and raised their four children here. She said their son is now in Nebraska, and they have daughters in Oregon, Alaska, and North Dakota.

Gloria Kenow worked for Dr. Henry, and David Kenow worked in human resources at Truth, Inc.

Having heard about the hospital Auxiliary about the time the new hospital opened, she looked at it as an opportunity to serve.

"It's a wonderful organization," Gloria Kenow said of the Auxiliary. "It's an opportu-

nity help serve others."

She has taken on a variety of roles as an Auxiliary member. Although her responsibilities now keep her in the gift shop, she also worked at the information desk and served as the organization's president and vice president.

Now she can be found at the Auxiliary gift shop on the first and third Fridays of the month, 8 a.m. to noon, though she has taken December off.

"If I go in on Friday its decorated one way," she said, "and two weeks later, it's different." Christmas season is always a special time at the gift shop with all the holiday decorations, she said, decorations that change regularly with the seasons.

Marcia Sullivan, the gift shop supervisor, is the one who does the decorating, Kenow said, and "it's fun to see what Marcia has done."

In addition to the gift shop, the booth at the county fair is also special.

"The grab bags are a highlight," she said, "watching the little ones on the floor opening them."

The grab bag items are all donated, she said, and she has gone to garage sales and asked people to donate leftover sale items.

What many may not realize, Kenow said, is that "men are very, very welcome" as Auxiliary volunteers.

One of those men is David Kenow, who has put in 4,000 hours as a volunteer. He said when he first started volunteering, he worked at the information desk, but after COVID, the hospital needed volunteers at the surgery desk. That is where he mostly works now. He has also served on the Auxiliary board.

He is a member of the Steele County Honor Guard for funerals, he said.

In the end, Gloria Kenow said, volunteering with the Auxiliary is all about helping visitors feel welcome.

"A warm greeting and a warm smile are what's needed," she said.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Dawson Levy uses a level to check the fence post he was installing as part of his Eagle Scout project at The Lighthouse of Southern Minnesota. Levy built a new privacy fence on all sides of the back yard space, removed old rock and dirt, then brought in new rock, two benches and a fire pit.

Eagle project brings security, privacy to The Lighthouse

BY KAY FATE
STAFF WRITER

Though it would be years before he would know it, Dawson Levy saw his Eagle Scout project in elementary school.

"I actually used to go to Washington Elementary" when it was located on Main Street, he said, "and I remember asking my mom one day, 'Hey,

what is this place across the street?' She said that it was a men's home, but I was too young to really understand what it was."

Levy was talking about the big yellow house on the corner of Main and Grove Avenue, known then as the Hospitality House.

It would be several years before he realized its purpose – and See EAGLE on B13 ►



Santa arrived in style at the United Church of Christ in Medford, courtesy of the Medford Volunteer Fire Department.



Nick Novak and Jack Novak stopped by United Church of Christ in Medford Friday to let Santa know their Christmas gift wishes.

Santa brings a new holiday twist to Medford

BY KAREN M. JORGENSEN
STAFF WRITER

Santa Claus made an early visit to Medford Friday afternoon, coming to the United Church of Christ on Main Street in style, in the front seat of a fire truck.

The event at the church included visiting with Santa to share

Christmas wishes, decorating Christmas cookies, and games.

But this event included something new. All those activities were available for kids who needed a quieter space. The church set aside a special area for those with autism and other neurodivergent conditions, said organizer Mary Stanley who is a Medford

resident and member of the congregation. She is also the mother of two children with autism.

She said the event was designed so all children could enjoy activities and visit with Santa. To make that happen, she said, activities would be held downstairs for all children who wished to attend, but for those

who needed it, there would be a quiet area upstairs for them.

Stanley said she has also prepared the room for those attending the church who need the less stimulating environment.

Lighting, especially fluorescent, she said, can be a trigger, so the lights are dim. The area is also quieter, so children can calm

themselves. To her knowledge, she said, the Medford church is the first Steele County church with an area specifically for neurodivergent children.

“For any child, upstairs will be a safe zone,” she said before the event. “That way all kids can play.”

Neurodiversity, she said, can include a variety of conditions that

can affect a person’s way of life. It can include bipolar disorder, PTSD, autism, trauma and ADHD, among others.

This was the first year for the event, but it won’t be the last.

“This is a trial run,” Stanley said.

Next year, they are thinking of holding it earlier, perhaps on Black Friday.

Former Huskie teammates reunite at UWS

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

It’s been a few years since Owatonna’s Tyrel Creger and Collin Vick were lighting up the court for the Huskies boys basketball team, but their talents have found a new home playing together for the University of Wisconsin, Stout (UWS) Blue Devils.

Vick made his way to Wisconsin straight out of high school in 2023, while Creger’s path took stops at Bay College (Iowa), Citrus College (California) and Valley City State University (North Dakota) before reuniting with Vick at UWS for his senior season.

“Ty entered the portal after his season last year at Valley City State. Our coach here is brothers with Owatonna girls head coach Pat Webb, so he had the Owatonna connection and knew Ty was in the portal. We have a few guys here from his team at Bay College too, so we all pitched in on

an effort to make sure he got up here because we really needed him and knew we could really use him as well,” said Vick on recruiting Creger to UWS.

Vick’s career to date with the Blue Devils has been a strong one as he’s started all 61 games that he’s been active for since arriving in the 2023-24 season.

The junior has averaged four points, 6.5 rebounds, 3.6 assists and 1.3 steals while playing 26.3 minutes per game over the course of his career.

His role with the Blue Devils has been similar to the one he excelled in for Owatonna, playing air-tight defense and distributing the ball amongst his teammates from the point.

His style of play is also a perfect complement to Creger’s – and a huge influence in the latter joining the team.

“C.V. is the point guard, but we’re in a situation where it doesn’t really matter who brings the ball up in our offense. It’s pretty



Ex-Huskies Tyrel Creger (1) and Collin Vick (12) share the court in a game for the University of Wisconsin, Stout (UWS.) The duo reunited this season for the Blue Devils when Creger transferred to UWS this season as a senior.

and were obvious from the first practice as a Blue Devil.

Meanwhile, Vick recognized Creger’s shooting and athleticism as having become “elite” since developing his game further in college.

The future on the court is bright for both athletes, but it’s looking equally as stellar off of it as well.

Creger is planning to graduate with a bachelor’s degree in business administration and has goals to play basketball overseas before eventually getting into property investment.

Vick is studying psychology and hopes to earn a master’s degree in sports psychology and one day work for a professional sports team.

Local fans can catch a glimpse of the two in action for the Blue Devils when the team plays their closest game to Owatonna this season in a matchup against St. Mary’s University in Winona on Saturday, Dec. 20 at 1 p.m.

Saint Bernard pups love winter in Blooming Prairie

BY HOWARD LESTRUD
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

A snowy winter makes Ellie Mae and Jethro happy and contented.

With more than 10 inches of the white stuff on the ground, this canine couple finds the fun in frolicking in it.

The Saint Bernards belong to Doug and Tamzen Johnson. Their names, of course, come from two characters of “The Beverly Hillbillies” fame.

Two years ago, the Johnsons and their pups moved from the country west of Blooming Prairie into the city.

Going from country to city living was quite the transition for Ellie Mae, 7, and Jethro, 8. They now find themselves parents of nine Saint Bernard offspring that have been adopted by new owners.

Tamzen Johnson said she and Doug buy special Christmas treats for their Saint Bernards, a breed that has a storied history and is famous for its gentle temperament, large size (120-200+ lbs) and history of Alpine rescue work, originating from Saint Bernard

of Menthon’s hospice.

The Johnsons revealed that Jethro has become Tamzen’s dog and Ellie Mae chooses to hang out with Doug.

Christmas is special for the Johnsons and their protectors.

“Ellie Mae and Jethro have found their special places to find comfort,” Tamzen Johnson said.

Rawhide preferred

The dogs are not ones to play with toys. Instead, they look forward to receiving a rawhide treat.

“If we give Jethro and Ellie a rawhide leash or collar, they will have it gone in four hours,” Doug Johnson said.

At times, the Saint Bernards “are rather boring, but they are very loving, coming in from the snowy outdoors,” Tamzen Johnson said.

On the Johnsons’

larger acreage, the canine pals were accustomed to roaming their rural landscape. Now, they are walked in town.

Jethro likes the walks, but he doesn’t like the civil defense sirens that sound the first Wednesday of each month.

Do the Saint Bernards bark? Yes, when they let their owners know that company has arrived or someone is passing by.

At times, the Johnsons must kennel the dogs.

Former neighbors Greg and LeAnne Janes spoil the dogs, Tamzen Johnson confessed.

The Johnsons and their Saint Bernards welcomed 135 trick or treaters on Halloween night.

“We ran out of candy,” Tamzen said.

Jethro and Ellie Mae also get into the Christmas spirit by wearing a set of antlers or a candy cane hat.

Jethro loves winter, as evidenced by this photo taken in late November.



Jethro loves winter, as evidenced by this photo taken in late November.

Community member applauds Ellendale volunteers

BY KAY FATE
STAFF WRITER

Jo Lerberg has some history in Ellendale – and she’d like to see the city recognize the people who have worked hard at maintaining it.

She appeared at the Ellendale City Council meeting last week and shared her thoughts with city leaders.

“I’m just here because I would like to acknowledge all the volunteers that do so much to help make Ellendale a great place to live,” Lerberg said.

She provided a list of the people she believes have made a difference.

“The Community Foundation of Ellendale has made many of the improvements to this building you’re in tonight by raising funds from individuals, businesses, Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation – with much less from your budget than there would be if the community foundation hadn’t worked so hard,” Lerberg said.

After mold and water damage to city hall were discovered last summer, the council has been meeting in the Ellendale Community Building.

“The Lions Club,” Lerberg continued. “You all know about the Lions Club that provides so much for so many people.

“The Ellendale Area Community Action; they raised money ... for that electric sign that lets the citizens know what’s going on in town,” she said, “and put on one of the best Ellendale Days I’ve ever been to – and they did that



Jo Lerberg wants Ellendale city officials to recognize the people who have worked hard at maintaining the city’s history. She worked earlier this summer at Ellendale Days, along with long-time historian Lloyd Kaplan, formerly of Ellendale, who now lives in Owatonna.

through raising funds and people working in the community with them.

“Your community garden that’s out here,” Lerberg said of the green space at the corner of Fifth Avenue and Second Street South, directly across the street from the Community Building.

“There’s a volunteer that does that almost on her own,” Lerberg said, “and if you check your budget, I don’t believe you paid for any of the gardening there, any of the upkeep for it, and I think she deserves a big thank you.”

At the south end of the green space is the community mural, a commissioned art piece that was coordinated by volunteers.

“Many, many people have stepped up, including SMIF, to pay for that,” Lerberg said, with a \$10,000 grant.

“There’s a lot of money over there, and I don’t believe that you have had to be asked for much for that at all,” she said. “The American Legion (was instrumental in building) the beautiful veterans memorial over here.

“You may not see the people that sit at volunteer meetings, many nights of the week,” Lerberg told the councilors. “You might not come to their fundraisers; you may not play Bingo – but there are people working hard to make Ellendale a good place.

“They give a lot of

time and a lot of money,” she said, “and I just would like for people to know how much is done” by volunteers.

Lerberg took exception to a comment made by a city council member who warned that people would be “leaving town” if taxes kept climbing.

“I think it’s disingenuous to insinuate that these projects that so many volunteers work on are costing you or making your taxpayers pay more taxes,” she said.

“I think you owe many, many volunteers a big thanks.”

Mayor Scott Groth acknowledged the volunteers, saying their work “doesn’t go unrecognized and they should be thanked.”

Owatonna police turn lobby tree into ‘giving tree’

BY KAREN M. JORGENSEN
STAFF WRITER

There is always a Christmas tree set up in the lobby of the Owatonna Police Department during the holiday season, but this year, instead of the usual ornaments, it’s decorated with items to help those in need.

On the branches are mittens, gloves and hats; underneath, children’s books and gift bags.

This year the department’s Christmas tree has turned into a “giving tree.” Items are available at no cost to those who can use them.

The idea for the giving tree came from one of the investigators, said Kirk Oswald, records specialist for the department. Everyone liked the idea of hats and mittens, and it just grew.

Capt. Josh Sorenson agreed that it was an idea everyone could get behind. It started with the department getting festive for the season and grew into something to help the

“It’s a great way to give back to the community.”

Capt. Josh Sorenson
Owatonna Police

community. Items on and under the tree are donated by the police officers and staff, Sorenson said. The gift bags are left over from the Coptober event the department held at the library in October. The library also donated a bag of books, Sorenson said.

“It’s a great way to give back to the community,” he said.

Anyone can stop by the office during regular business hours, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., to pick up an item, but arrangements can be made for those unable to get to OPD during the day. No records will be kept of those who stop in to pick up the items.

Sorenson hopes the giving tree is a success and can continue next year.



STAFF PHOTO BY KAREN M. JORGENSEN

The Christmas tree in the lobby of the Owatonna Police Department looks a little different this year, as it has been transformed into a “giving tree,” with mittens and hats, with books and gift bags underneath.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Blooming Prairie native Lisi (Ingvaldson) Wright, center, came “home” to perform “A Grand Ole Opry Christmas” on Dec. 6. All proceeds from the concert benefited the Blossoming Community Foundation and the Blooming Prairie High School fine arts department.

Alum brings Grand Old Opry Christmas to BP

BY HOWARD LESTRUD
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

It was almost like Lisi Wright never left Blooming Prairie.

The BPHS graduate joined seven other musical talents in providing a Grand Ole Opry Christmas in the Blooming Prairie High School Performing Arts Center, displaying how her talents have grown and matured.

Lisi (Ingvalson) Wright was indeed the star of the show on Dec. 6: She was onstage the entire

night, backed by some outstanding musicians and vocalists.

“A Grand Ole Opry Christmas” was presented by Mick Sterling, and featured Christmas songs of traditional country legends at the Grand Ole Opry. Some powerful renditions of Christmas songs were featured on stage.

Lead vocals were Cate Fierro, Shalo Lee and Wright, accompanied by band members Donnie LaMarca, piano; John Wright, bass; Matt Jacobs, drums; Dan Neale, guitar and

vocal; Steve Lehto, guitar.

The best is often saved to the last, and that was true with Wright, who performed some artistic violin numbers in addition to singing. Her daughter, Noel, performed a dance for the audience.

Several times during the performances, Sterling praised the school district for its impressive performing arts center.

The show was sponsored by the Blossoming Community Foundation; all

proceeds benefit the BP Public Schools Fine Arts Department.

Other sponsors of the show were Sue Zwiener with New York Life; Main Street Dental Clinics; Ryan and Jenny Heimerman; MBT Bank; Travis Christianson with New Life Contracting; Doerhoefer, Miner, Andrist & Arndt; Iacovino Law Office; R & R Insurance; Koster’s Car Korner; Rick Schwarz and Hometown Insurance.

All funds stay in Blooming Prairie to support local projects and organizations.

16th Street holiday drive nets 2K lbs. of food

KAREN M. JORGENSEN
STAFF WRITER

Once again, the residents of 16th Street NE in Owatonna had a successful Holiday Drive, this year benefiting Community Pathways.

“It went well,” said Elizabeth Fink, who organizes the drive with her neighbor, Danika Beck.

She said the Dec. 4 event was a success with 2,000 pounds of food and an additional \$500 collected to help the Steele County nonprofit.

The Holiday Drive began with the neighborhood decorating their homes and inviting people to drive through the neighborhood. As many of the residents of the neighborhood got older, it got more difficult to do the lights and yard decorations, so the Finks came up with an alternative.

Last year, she said, they switched to a collection drive, asking visitors to donate items that students might need at school. As both Fink and Beck are Owatonna teachers, they asked the school social

workers for suggestions and were told mittens, hats and hygiene items would be welcomed.

“We were overwhelmed last year,” Fink said. “We had a huge turnout last year for the schools.”

For the second year of the drive, Fink and Beck chose Community Pathways, as the food shelf has seen an increase in the number of people seeking help, especially with the recent shutdown of the U.S. government and the rising cost of groceries and other items.

Fink and Beck contacted Community Pathways to find out what they needed most and set about organizing the event.

Community Pathways staff said they were in need of canned food items, toilet paper, instant oatmeal packets, applesauce pouches, laundry soap pods and could always use cash donations and once again Owatonna residents came through to meet the need. Donors also received a sweet treat, holiday cookies courtesy of Hy-Vee in Owatonna.

Fernbrook acquisition expands services across Minnesota

BY ALEX MALM
STAFF WRITER

It was 25 years ago when Jon and Mandy Young began Fernbrook Family Center. He provided services; she ran the business side.

The business has grown over the years, adding more locations and services, but the mission stays the same: providing inclusive mental health services to all ages.

A month ago, Fernbrook acquired Lighthouse Child and Family Services and expanded its services to additional communities across the state.

“This acquisition allows us to reach even more individuals and families with the care, connection, and hope they deserve,” CEO Shannon Brown said. “We are honored to continue the incredible work Lighthouse has built and look forward to serving these communities together.”

The conversation

Brown, who became a minority owner and CEO a few years ago, said that the two businesses connected during the height of the pandemic.

They got to know each other more through the past few years, and last spring, the owner of Lighthouse reached out, looking for options.

“She was getting to the point that she wanted to step back from the high level management piece and just go back to doing some clinical work part-time, and then she was curious if we would be interested in some sort of merger acquisition,” Brown said.

Brown called a meeting; Fernbrook leaders talked it through and decided they may be interested.



Fernbrook Family Center majority owners Jon and Mandy Young pose for a photo outside of their building.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

Eventually, the conversations turned into actions.

While Fernbrook operates in Owatonna, Faribault, Kasson, Waseca, Rochester, Red Wing, Austin, and Mankato, Lighthouse has locations mostly in central Minnesota, including Cambridge, Milaca, Sauk Rapids, and Princeton.

Brown said there are no plans to close any of them.

Size factor

One of the main differences between the two companies, Brown said, was simply the size of its staff. While Lighthouse had about 45 staff members, Fernbrook currently has over 200.

Brown said it made getting bigger difficult for Lighthouse.

As anyone in the profession or who has navigated the mental health care system knows, there is a growing demand for services.

“Expansion was difficult just due to like lack of resources, so we

would love to increase the number of services and locations that we have up in that area if possible,” Brown said. “We won’t be closing any we will keep everything...nobody’s jobs are being eliminated, no one’s getting laid off, no programs are closing or anything. The hope is to grow it more than it already is.”

Brown explained one of the current struggles for smaller organizations is size, primarily due to reimbursement rates not keeping up and in some cases going down.

“One of our biggest protective factors is size,” Brown explained.

She said the “more people we have billing, the more revenue we can bring in, where those smaller agencies are struggling because of the rate cuts...they just don’t have enough people to bill enough to make up for that.”

Brown explained in many cases, smaller agencies are selling to places like “capital equity firms” or very

large companies buying them as an investment.

It was something the Lighthouse owner was not interested in.

“Oftentimes, when you lose... the culture of the agency you lose some of those values and it becomes about profit and money more so than the work that we’re doing and so it was important to her that she find someone to take over who was going to keep doing the work with that ... value driven like mentality and, and not just about making money,” Brown said.

Different approach

Brown explained Fernbrook differs from other providers in traditional office settings.

“One of the things that we do different than a lot of other mental health agencies is a lot of our work is in home, where a lot of other places the clients have to come to the office,” Brown said.

Brown said that has led to many counties approaching them about bringing ser-

vices to their counties “because a lot of the clients with the most significant mental health concerns cannot consistently get to an office for services.”

“They don’t have transportation, they don’t have child care, they’re too ill, whatever it is,” Brown said, explaining in-home services have always been their main business model.

Brown said while clients are able to schedule in-office visits, providers typically schedule regular appointments in people’s homes or in the community when appropriate.

Climbing the ladder

Brown didn’t start her career with Fernbrook as the CEO; and as she put it, she started at the bottom of the organizational chart.

She began in 2011 as an in-home worker, out of the Kasson office.

Right before the COVID-19 pandemic, she moved into the executive clinical

director position and worked in the role for a couple of years before she was named CEO and became a minority owner.

“I started at the bottom of the food chain and have worked my way up about as high as you can go, which I think is another thing that makes us different... we hire and promote from within as much as we can,” Brown said.

Brown thinks it’s important for staff to know she isn’t in an executive suite making decisions and instead, continues to do the work.

She says it helps recruit and retain talent.

For example, the day before an interview for this story, she worked until 6 p.m. completing an intake with a family.

“I’m willing to stay late, I’m willing to fill in where I need to, and I think that goes a long way to creating a culture in the organization that makes people wanna work there,” Brown said.

Don't judge, get to know your immigrant neighbors



Outside Perspectives
ALEX MALM

A few years ago, my wife and I entered the world of homeownership.

When we first moved back to Minnesota, we lived in an apartment, and about halfway through our lease, we decided instead of paying rent, it was time to look for a home of our own.

We searched different places in the metro, and we found a home we fell in love with.

On the list of things we looked for: good schools, access to public transportation, relatively affordable, big

enough to raise a family, and relatively safe.

I can promise you, one thing on the list was not the ethnic makeup of the neighborhood.

In fact, we noticed only after we began moving in that we looked much different than most of our neighbors.

We happen to live in a predominantly immigrant neighborhood. As I have mentioned before, my wife and I are in the minority by a lot.

And I couldn’t be happier.

Like anywhere else, we are in more of “wave to each other in the morning” relationship with many of our neighbors.

But we have gotten close with others.

Rafi from across the street will come over with pupusas from time to time. One of my next-door neighbors came over to lend us a hand one day when we were working on my deck.

I also happen to live next to one of the best

neighbors anyone can have.

A couple of weeks ago, my in-laws decided they would take us up on our offer to host Thanksgiving at our place.

One issue: Our couch broke, and we hadn’t replaced it.

Instead of making my 70-something in-laws and my almost 50-year-old sister-in-law sit on the floor or a dining room chair all day, we ran around looking for a decent, cheap couch. Of course, this is 2025. By “running around,” I really mean looking on Facebook Marketplace.

The Saturday before Thanksgiving rolled around, and we landed a couch, which was about a half hour away in the metro.

My wife and I checked it out and decided we would purchase it.

I called my neighbor, who is a small business owner and was working, and he said he

would come help us that afternoon.

No hesitation. No demands to help him with something down the road. Just a commitment to helping his neighbors.

We got in our car, and he got in his truck, and we drove over to the home. Before we left, I tried handing him cash to help us. He refused.

I tried again after we got back to the house and moved the couch inside. He still refused.

In fact, my wife told him we would buy him supper since he refused our money.

Not only did he refuse again, but he said he was in the process of making tacos and brought some over for us.

All of three of these generous neighbors are immigrants to this country. I can say with certainty, overall, they have been some of the best neighbors I’ve had.

But the reality is, the idea of where someone was born, how long they have lived here, or anything like that shouldn’t even have to be a topic of discussion.

While it is nowhere close to what my neighbors experience, I am hypersensitive to these types of discussions.

For example, I have noticed more and more the last few years that people are not as willing to meet people where they are at.

In my example, east coasters are generally much more blunt, don’t have as much interest in what people describe as “Minnesota Nice,” and on many occasions, use different terminology to describe things such as the names for daily meals.

More and more often as time goes by, I have noticed people don’t try to just sort things out.

My wife is from Mankato, but she lived in Rhode Island with me for a few years before we got married, and she worked in Boston.

She really caught my attention once when we were bickering. She told me it wasn’t just that I am blunt because I’m from Rhode Island, but that at times, I can just be rude. She used much harsher language.

Perhaps she was just mad or annoyed or what not, but she had a good point. Instead of just attributing disagreements to being from different places and having different life experiences, wouldn’t it be much better to actually have civil conversations with one another?

I have heard many people tell me over the past few years, and in the past few weeks, for that matter, “That is just Minnesota Nice” or “It’s just because you’re from the East Coast,” and then explain that is why it is hard for some

people to relate to me.

But it goes both ways.

I was watching a public television show from back home, and the host was talking negatively about how one of the spokespeople for the governor’s campaign just uses general talking points. In particular, the host said something to the effect of it being a red flag when a press release carries an out-of-state area code.

This was not, in any way, shape, or form, the same bigotry my neighbors face. It was more about weighing in on the challenges the governor is facing in his re-election campaign. But it is an example of what people face when they are from somewhere else.

For me, not only do I face challenges here because I’m from Rhode Island, but people in my home state also aren’t as welcoming as I probably thought growing up.

Keep in mind both states are in the same country. I can only imagine what it is like to be from a different part of the world, working hard to fit in or get along, and people not wanting to get to know you as a person.

Hopefully, we can all do better to get to know each other as individual people, celebrate our differences, and learn from each other.

About this project

One Steele County is a year-long project by the Steele County Times focusing on serving underserved groups in our communities. This project is being coordinated by Joni Hubred and Alex Malm of the Times staff. If you have any ideas for stories that you feel would fit this project, please reach out to us at underserved@steelecountytimes.com.

At 93, Berg’s talent is a cut above the rest

◀ **BERG** from **B1** awards, including at the Steele County Free Fair.

Much of Berg’s work involves animals, including a charming “Northwoods nativity” that she spotted in a magazine. There was a carving pattern for a bear, but the other animals – a raccoon, a moose, a beaver and a duck – weren’t pictured, “so I made the patterns from their picture.”

The finished product took her nearly a year to complete.

She also carves several varieties of fish, birds – and lots and lots of Christmas items.

In fact, Berg’s first question to a reporter wanting to do a story was, “I suppose you want to see some Santas?”

Though Santa is a popular figure, Berg lets the wood speak to her.

“I tell people, ‘I just look at that piece

of wood and I think, ooh, there’s a horse in there,’” she laughed.

She creates her patterns with a band saw, “then I break out the blade.”

When she started carving wood in 1996, she had one knife, “and I had that for a long time, just one. I even made a mountain goat, a polar bear” and, of course several Santas – the very thing she carved at that first adult education class at Blooming Prairie High School.

“It’s kind of a beginner’s knife, but now I have several boxes full of old knives,” Berg said.

They saw her through carving classes and meetings from Forest City, Iowa, to Wahpeton, N.D., and points in between.

She has done commissioned carvings – if it’s an animal, “I need two

pictures, one from each side,” Berg said, with pricing dependent on the size and time involved.

She advises beginning carvers to “just follow the rules. Wear a cut-proof glove.”

Berg smiles almost guiltily when asked if she’s ever cut herself.

“I never went to the doctor,” she said, “but it was pretty bad. I just held a Band Aid tight on there and taped it up.”

That independence is no surprise to people who know her. Berg still lives on the farm west of Bixby where she and her husband Ralph moved in 1967.

She said she carves as a means of relaxation.

“I’ve got my broom and dustpan in the kitchen, and just operate in there,” she smiled.

Her bird feeders provide her with plenty of models – including a wild

turkey and a pheasant.

Deer, too, make regular appearances.

Basswood is her favorite wood, followed by butternut. Everything else is too hard, Berg said, though she isn’t losing strength; it’s just harder to carve with precision.

Each spring, she donates a Santa carving to the BP Education Foundation auction, and a miscellaneous carving goes to the annual BP Cancer Group auctions every fall.

Earlier this month, Berg answered the call from Fox 9 news in the Twin Cities, which holds an annual “Primp Our Tree” event.

The station solicits ornaments that are donated, along with a Christmas tree, to deserving families.

Berg’s ornament – a University of Minnesota gopher, holding a



STAFF PHOTO BY KAY FATE

Geraldyn Berg holds the first carving she ever did, a Santa Claus figure she made in a community education class at Blooming Prairie High School. In the nearly 30 years since, she has carved hundreds of pieces, with fish, birds, wildlife and Christmas items topping the list.

football – made it to air, as did her story.

“I told them I had designed the pattern, carved it and painted it; my name is Geraldine and I’m 93 years old,” she said, but

brushed aside any compliments.

“My real claim to fame is, I was our high school homecoming queen,” she said – a year after the soap carving that started it all.

Eagle project brings security, privacy to The Lighthouse

◀ **EAGLE** from **B9** another three years before he became a part of its history.

Now known as part of a two-home organization called The Lighthouse of Southern Minnesota, the house is “not intended to be a (homeless) shelter,” said Dan Wolfe, a member of the board.

Founder Pete Connor “was very much an advocate to make this place a home for people for as long as they’re here,” Wolfe said.

Levy helped with that concept through his recently completed Eagle Scout project, with an assist to the Knights of Columbus 945.

Wolfe told fellow KC Josh Halverson that a plan to do some landscaping around the house had fallen through.

Halverson happens to be the Scoutmaster

for Levy’s Troop 253, which is sponsored by the Owatonna KCs.

About the same time, Levy was looking for an Eagle Scout project.

“He gave me all the details and I was like, ‘Yep, that’s the one,’” Levy said of Halverson’s pitch.

“Getting to help the guys sounded like a great opportunity,” he said. “I liked how this project really makes a lasting impact. All the guys at the house can utilize that space and have a little bit of privacy, since they’re so close to the road there.”

Wolfe said Levy came over to the house, “and we kind of sketched up some plans on a sheet of paper and talked about what we envisioned.”

There was already a fire pit in the yard, and “we decided we wanted to give the space a little bit more privacy and

fix a retaining wall on both sides that we didn’t have before,” he said.

The goal was to “make it a nice, secure, larger space for everybody to come out and enjoy in the summer and the fall,” Wolfe said.

“That was kind of the crux of the project – and I think it turned out great. It really made the space very nice and attractive; the west side was all overgrown, and it didn’t look very presentable, especially to the neighbors.”

Before Levy’s project, there was a small privacy fence that had seen better days.

There was also a lower fence, “and they were having issues with people coming into the back and taking their bikes, unfortunately,” the Owatonna High School senior said.

The rest of the landscape was rock

covered; a little path led to the house, flanked by hostas.

Levy and his crew, which consisted of his parents Malissa and Doug Levy, siblings, an uncle, Scouts from his troop, friends with machinery, Halverson and Wolfe, took out the hostas, dug out the old gravel and three inches of soil, then put up the fence posts, hauled in new rock, put up fence slats and did the finish hardware.

They also built a couple of benches for more seating.

“When the guests were coming and going from work or this and that, they were always commenting how nice it was looking,” said Wolfe, “and I think they were very – as all of us were – impressed with the work that they were doing and getting it done.”

Those comments, from guests, neighbors and passersby, “were great to have during the process of the construction project,” Levy said.

Several businesses and organizations provided donations and discounted materials that were “absolutely critical to the project,” he said.

The makeover took about 255 hours of labor at a total cost of about \$3,600; thanks to the generosity of donors, “we actually had about \$600 left over, so that was all donated to the Hospitality House as well, for whatever they needed,” Levy said.

“It was a true team effort, but he did an outstanding job, getting it planned and executed and done in a short period of time,” Wolfe said. “I just can’t say enough about how much effort and time he put in – all the while in high

school, captaining the cross-country team,” not to mention going to the state tournament with the team.

There was a need for efficiency: Eagle Scout projects and the accompanying paperwork must be submitted for review by the Scout’s 18th birthday.

Levy, who joined the Navy last summer, completed the project in early November. He turns 18 on Dec. 20, graduates in June, then ships out July 13 to Recruit Training Command Great Lakes.

He “really hopes” that his project lifts the spirits of people who are overcoming adversity, perhaps not used to the kindness of strangers.

“The point of the projects,” Levy said, “is to make a lasting impact on people, so it was really good to hopefully be able to do that.”

Man turns handwritten notes into hobby

◀ **MAN** from **B1** said Engebretson, who suffers from cognitive developmental delays and lives with his sister, Emily, and their parents, Ron and Carolyn.

Even though Engebretson hasn’t heard back from everyone, he feels as if he’s had solid success. About 100 of the 120 handwritten letters sent out have responded back.

One letter came from Officer Caitly Horne of the Bismarck Police Department. She wrote, “Thank you for your support of law enforcement—it truly means a lot to us. Your appreciation and encouragement help strengthen the bond between our officers and the community we serve.”

His hobby has stretched out further than just a letter. Engebretson has made a trip to the Owatonna Police Department where he had his photograph taken with the chief and other officers. They offered him one of their patches. He has also stopped at the local fire station.

He often reaches out to officers at local community events when his family is out and about. Officers have also shown up at his house for no reason other than to check how he’s doing.

In September while on a family trip to North Dakota, Engebretson stopped in at the Jamestown Police Department where he was given a tour of the police station and



STAFF PHOTO BY RICK BUSSLER

Nolan Engebretson displays the large frames containing police and fire patches that he has collected from first responders over the past year next to the family’s Christmas tree.

“It makes me think that they keep us safe and that’s good.”

Nolan Engebretson
Police Patch Collector

had a photo taken with officers.

“Nolan thinks he meets one officer one time, and they are great friends,” said Carolyn, his mother. “He’s like the Energizer bunny. He keeps going and going and never slows down.”

Engebretson has assembled his patches and photographs into eight large frames that he plans to hang in his bedroom.

As he looks over a sea of patches, he has developed his favorites. “My really favorite is Jamestown,” Engebretson said, noting some

other special ones to him are Blaine, Statesboro, Ga., and Fairbanks, Alaska. “And Owatonna,” he quickly added.

He loves the project he’s put together over the past year.

“It makes me think that they keep us safe and that’s good,” Engebretson said. “I keep telling my mom that we only live once.”

Aside from focusing on his part-time job at Fleet Farm in Owatonna, he’s already eyeing his next project.

“I want to write to country music stars,” he said.

Local musician hits the right notes for cancer

◀ **MUSICIAN** from **B1** Cancer Group.

But things changed soon after, when he was diagnosed with cancer the following April. That diagnosis “put a face on it,” he said.

His future, it turned out, included 12 rounds of chemo and 27 of radiation. During the chemo treatments, he said, he would drive to the hospital in Mason City every other Monday for six months, where he would be “hooked up” from 7:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Then he would receive additional chemo at home for three days. He said he would do okay for the first three days but by Thursdays, his energy dropped.

Following the chemo treatments, he said, came the radiation, Monday through Friday for five weeks.

Now, during this entire time Utpadel had committed himself to using his musical talent to fundraising, and he wasn’t about to give up on that goal. During his entire treatment, he said, he never missed a date he was scheduled to perform, including 40 in 2024, and he also never missed work at Owatonna Motor Cars, which was very accommodating about him meeting his treatment schedule. He said he took it as a challenge.

The challenge and the effort have paid off, he said, as the cancerous tumor, which when discovered was the size of a tennis ball, has been reduced to the size of a half dollar and is very

flat scar tissue. While the tumor has not gone away, he said he has avoided the need for surgery, and the doctors are now just monitoring it.

“Right now, everything is okay,” he said.

He said he knew from the start that he wanted to work with the Blooming Prairie Cancer Group to reach his goal with Musicians against Cancer.

“Blooming Prairie knew how to do it,” he said.

With their help he could concentrate on his music. He credits Deb Ensley and Bonnie Krueger with being invaluable as he tried to reach his goal. They and the Blooming Prairie Cancer Group are still on board as he moves into the third year. Ensley and Krueger do the Power of the Purse event for United Way of Steele County, and when that is over for the year, they concentrate their energy on the Christmas show, he said.

Musicians Against Cancer will continue next year, but the Christmas show will be different.

He plans to take a couple months off from performing after his New Year’s Day show in Albert Lea to give his body time to heal, but he will resume his active schedule in April.

In 2026, he said, he is looking to breweries, wineries and the like as settings for his tribute shows. He did a tribute show in Albert Lea featuring the music

of Frank Sinatra and other members of the infamous “Rat Pack.” It was a big success.

It is looking for 10 of those types of events in the coming year. He said he will probably continue to do a show at SpareTime Entertainment in Owatonna, because they have been a supporter for all his efforts. He will also look for more sponsors for his Christmas show.

The Blooming Prairie group, he said, holds an auction every year that brings in money for a variety of groups supporting cancer research and patients.

The money that is spent from Musicians Against Cancer, however, is used to directly benefit the needs of cancer patients. All the money he raises, he said, goes directly to those receiving treatment to help them pay for their expenses.

“Music has been very good” to him, Utpadel said. Over the years, he has opened for 20 national acts, recorded three albums, and worked with musicians in Nashville. He has worked in a variety of genres, including country, gospel and “60s stuff.”

“For me, it’s just my way to give back,” he said.

When he looks out at the audience and sees people he has helped, it is humbling, he said.

“I feel I was chosen,” he said. “My grandma told me to use my gifts. God gave me my gifts. Music has been very good.”



MERRY CHRISTMAS
AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR

Owatonna Collision & Glass
(507) 774-7888 • Next to the DMV
1835 S. Elm Ave, Owatonna



HAVE A
Merry Christmas
& HAPPY NEW YEAR

I want to thank you for your support and business this year. It has meant so much, living in a community that cares.

AGROECOPOWER

SINCE 1839
Schaeffer's
SPECIALIZED LUBRICANTS

Bruce Freerksen 507-273-9110
brucewithschaefferoil.com



Wyonne Priebe
507-456-4299

STEELE COUNTY **Times**

I want to thank all my clients for trusting me with their marketing & advertising needs. I look forward to helping you in 2026.

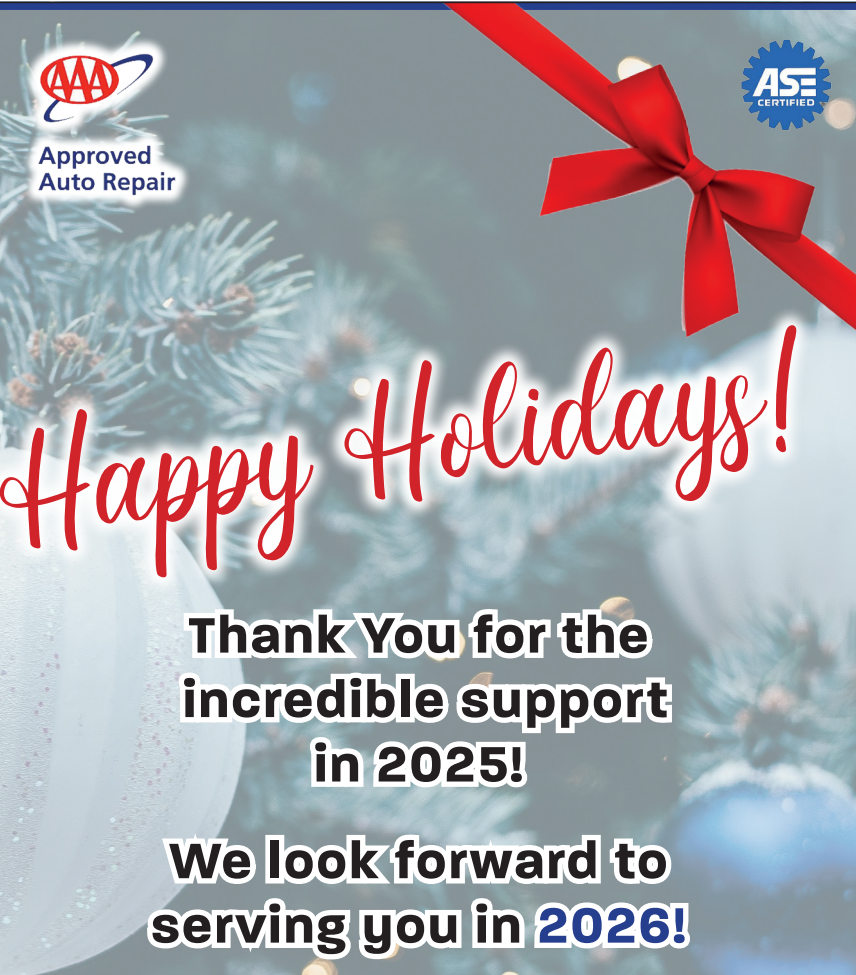
Have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!



Season's Greetings

Wishing You a Happy and Healthy Holiday Season!

OWATONNA BUS COMPANY



AAA Approved Auto Repair

ASE CERTIFIED

Happy Holidays!

Thank You for the incredible support in 2025!

We look forward to serving you in 2026!



HONEST-1
AUTO CARE

507-431-1123
1125 S Oak Ave
Owatonna, MN 55060-3701
www.Honest1Owatonna.com



Happy Holidays & A Wonderful New Year!

Purchase \$100 in gift certificates and receive **\$15 FREE!**

Starting 11/26/2025

TOREY'S
RESTAURANT & BAR

DOWNTOWN OWATONNA • 208 N Cedar
507-455-9260 • www.toreys.net



Wishing You Joys
Big & Small All
Holiday Season

With our thanks for your friendship and support, we hope you have a Merry Christmas!

**EDUCATING TODAY
for a Brighter Tomorrow.**

**Kid's Korner
EDUCARE
CENTER INC.**

600 Florence Ave, Owatonna
www.kidskorner.org
507-451-0312

A Flurry of Holiday Wishes
Peace, Joy, Happiness, Love...
May the Christmas season shower
you and your loved ones with
many blessings!



Beede Apartments 507-213-0096
Herman & Karen Beede

Merry Christmas to All!

Contact us for all of your
roofing needs.



PIEPHO ROOFING, INC
Unparalleled Service

JAMES PIEPHO
507.451.1686

5098 SW 18th Street, Owatonna, MN 55060
www.piephoroofing.com

LIC. #BC679096



STEELE SALOON

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

Steele County Free Fair Board of Directors & Staff

2025

Merry Christmas!

**Lerbergs Fitness,
Car Wash
& Coin Laundry**



118 5th Ave
Ellendale, MN
507-684-2471

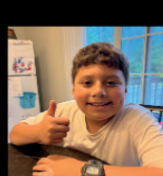
**12 KIDS OF
CHRISTMAS**

Give the gift of fun this holiday season! **Become a Big.**

Grab a slice of pizza, catch a game, or share stories over hot cocoa, it takes little to be Big!

Interested in learning more about how you can empower their potential?
Visit: bbbssmn.org





LEVI



KACIE



MALAKI



JOSIE



JAMARI



CARLEE



MATTHEW



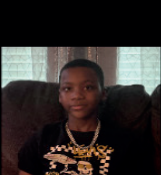
AVELINE



MADDUX



CALLEIGH



MICHAEL



MAREE



**Big Brothers
Big Sisters.**
OF SOUTHERN MINNESOTA

It's a season for reflection, hope and gratitude too, and we hope the warmth of its spirit touches each and every one of you.

With our thanks and best wishes,

Iacovino Law Office

Jason Iacovino, Attorney
507.583.6663
Jason.bplaw@gmail.com



STEELE COUNTY Times

*Always local,
all the time.*

**DARRICK'S
PREFERRED AUTO**

**Merry
Christmas**

ASE Certified
3 Year/36,000 Miles Warranty
**540 Highway 218 South
Blooming Prairie**

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!



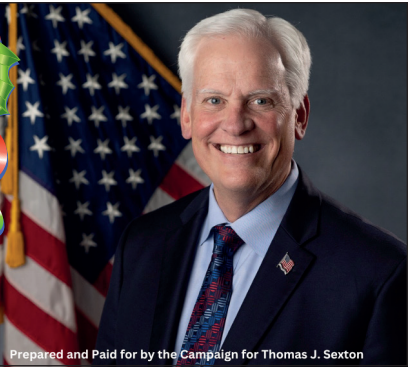
FIRST STATE BANK OF RED WING
**WHERE FAMILY AND FINANCE COME
TOGETHER TO MEET YOUR NEEDS!!**
RED WING • MAZEPPA • MEDFORD

Member **FDIC** 

www.firststatebankredwing.com

May the Holiday Season bring Happiness
and Joy to You and Your Families!

Tom Sexton, Representative, MN House District 19B



Prepared and Paid for by the Campaign for Thomas J. Sexton



Ho, Ho, Hope you know how much we appreciate your Business!

Thanks for making our year so Merry, and Best Wishes for a Wonderful Christmas!



507-446-9218
1/4 Mile East of I-35 on Hwy 45

MERRY CHRISTMAS & HAPPY NEW YEAR

It's not the gifts under our tree we cherish the most, but the people all around us who bring such joy and meaning to our holiday season. Thanks for shining your light into our year. We value your trust in us, and we appreciate your support more than you know!



Owatonna Foundation
Forever Funding Our Future

108 W Park Square, Owatonna
507-455-2995
www.owatonnaFoundation.org

Season's Greetings

Wishing Everyone a Happy and Healthy Holiday Season!

MEDFORD BUS COMPANY

from all of us at

OWATONNA HEATING & COOLING

Thank you to all of our customers for your continued support. We hope you have a wonderful holiday season with your loved ones.



Turn to the experts

Warm Wishes for a Happy Holiday Season!



THOMPSON SANITATION INC.

Serving Owatonna & Surrounding area for all your Trash and Recycling needs! We have offices in Clarks Grove, Austin and in Owatonna
Steele County Recycling drop site: 1255 Kilworth Drive, NW
Office: 507-256-4370
Owatonna: 507-214-0685

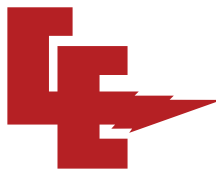
Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from your friends and families at Whispering Oak Place.

Exceptional Care. Extraordinary Living



903 Calverly Court • Ellendale, MN 56026
507-684-3026 • Health Dimension Group

Time does not define us. Moments do.



COLE'S ELECTRIC, INC.

507-451-1387

Happy Holidays!

Residential • Farm Industrial • Commercial

Free Estimates
24-Hour
Emergency Service



7596 NW 40th St. Owatonna
www.ColesElectric.com

"Wishing your family health during this Holiday Season. Merry Christmas to everyone!"



Benedictine
LIVING COMMUNITY | OWATONNA

2255 30th St. NW
507-444-4200
www.benedictineowatonna.org

Brightest Wishes

For a

Happy and Healthy

Holiday Season!

Blooming Prairie

Bus Company

AUTO • HOME

LIFE • BUSINESS

FARMERS

INSURANCE

Mike Bishman

Merry Christmas!

121 W Broadway

Owatonna, MN 55060

507•451•0193 800•856•9864

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

Help-U-Sell

REAL ESTATE



1534 S. Cedar Ave.

Owatonna

507-390-4030

The difference between

Help U Sell and their

competitors, is that

we Save Buyers and

Sellers money!

Debra Schmidt

Broker/Owner

www.helpusellowatonna.com



WE'VE GOT BETTER THINGS TO DO

MOST

Blossoms would rather

NOT drink alcohol when

hanging out with friends.



BPAC

BLOOMING POSITIVE ACTION COALITION

GRANT HOSTED BY UWSC. FUNDED BY MN DHS BHA.

SOURCE: 2024PCN SURVEY, N=193 GRADES 9-12, BPPS

Happy

Holidays

Thank you for welcoming

Olmsted Medical Center into

your community. From

everyday check-ups to

same-day urgent care needs,

our team is here for you —

today and in the year ahead.

Wishing you a healthy,

joyful holiday season.



OLMSTED

MEDICAL

CENTER

www.olmstedmedicalcenter.org

Happy

Holidays!

from all of us at

Baker Tech Services

Baker Tech Services

507.414.7800 | info@bakerts.com

1607 State Avenue | Owatonna MN

bakerts.com



Full-service & self-service
automotive recycler
Late model cars & trucks

12880 SW 72nd Ave. | Ellendale, MN
800-358-4902 | 507-684-2100 | www.misgen.com
Since 1972



Merry Christmas!

Seykora Automotive Repair

See our Facebook page
seykoraauto@gmail.com

195 18th STREET SE.
Owatonna, MN 55060
507-413-8010

HAPPY HOLIDAYS
from our home to yours



Thanks for filling our year with so much joy and so many great memories. Serving you has been our pleasure, and we look forward to sharing more good times together in the coming year.

exp REALTY

Jason Young
507-573-4669
Email: jasonyoung@jasonyoungrealtor.com



Happy Holidays
From the Crew at Vandal's!

Thank You for Shopping Local
this Holiday Season!



Gift Certificates
available in any amount
for last minute gift ideas!

Vandal's FAMILY MARKET

Open Daily from 8a.m. to 7p.m.
237 Hwy Ave. S, Blooming Prairie
507-583-6671



HAPPY HOLIDAYS

Wishing you and your family
a safe and joyful season.



Darrell Ingvaldson*
Agent
Office | 507.567.2296
Darrell.Ingvaldson@fbfs.com
100 S. Mill St., Brownsdale, MN
fbfs.com/find-an-agent/darrellingvaldson



Grace Carroll
Sales Associate
Office | 507.567.2296
Direct | 507.567.2291
Grace.Carroll@fbfs.com

FARM BUREAU FINANCIAL SERVICES

Registered Representative/Securities & services offered through FBL Marketing Services, LLC,* 5400 University Ave., West Des Moines, IA 50266, 877/860-2904, Member SIPC. Farm Bureau Property & Casualty Insurance Company,** Western Agricultural Insurance Company,** Farm Bureau Life Insurance Company*/West Des Moines, IA. *Affiliates. *Company providers of Farm Bureau Financial Services. PR-S-A (5-23)



Happy Holidays

T&W TOWING

1750 State Ave, NW
Owatonna, MN. 55060
24/7: 507-456-8858
www.tandwtowing.com

MERRY CHRISTMAS &
HAPPY NEW YEAR!

JANNING SEED & FERTILIZER LLC



Sales are UP Bigtime!
Thank you to all my customers
for your support!

507-213-6548



Owatonna VFW 135 Oakdale St.
Owatonna, MN 507-451-1001



Wishing everyone a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Worship
*at one of
these Area
Churches this
Holiday
Season!*



*Warmth and
Peace to You
and Yours*

May this sacred
season be filled with
the warmth of faith,
family and friends.

Christmas Eve Mass
4 PM • Holy Trinity, Litomysl
6:30 PM • St. Columbanus (BP)

Christmas Day
9 AM • Sacred Heart, Hayfield

**ST. COLUMBANUS
Catholic Church**
114 E. Main Street • Blooming Prairie
507-583-2784

Christmas Worship Schedule
Christmas Eve
Wednesday, December 24th
4:00 PM ZION LUTHERAN
7126 SW 98th St, Ellendale

6:00 PM ST. PAUL'S
LUTHERAN
2781 SW 92nd Ave, Meriden

First Lutheran Church of Blooming Prairie
The WELCOME Place | 434 First Street SW | firstlutheranbp.com

Visitors Expected!

December 24 - 3pm & 5pm
*Children's Message, Holy Communion
and candlelighting at both services*

December 25 - 9am
*Festival Worship
with Holy Communion*

December 28 - 9am
Lessons & Carols

*Share in the
Light of the
Season*

*Please join us in celebrating the
miracle of our Savior's birth.*

Christmas Service
Sunday, December 21
at 10 a.m.

Christmas Eve Service
Wednesday, December 24
4 p.m.

**First Baptist Church
of Blooming Prairie**
104 1st Ave NE
Blooming Prairie, MN
507-583-2673

**SACRED HEART
CATHOLIC CHURCH**
810 S. CEDAR AVE.
OWATONNA, MN 55060



All Are Welcome

Christmas Eve:
5:00 PM, 7:00 PM (en Español), 10:00 PM

Christmas Day: 8:00 AM & 10:00 AM

www.sacredheartowatonna.org

Peace. Hope. Joy



Christmas Eve Service by Candlelight - 7 p.m.

Pastor Derek Harvey

**Owatonna United
Methodist Church**
815 East University Street x 507-451-4734

MERRY CHRISTMAS
From TLC—Medford

CHRISTMAS EVE
Candlelight Service at 6:30 p.m.

CHRISTMAS DAY
Worship Service with
Communion at 9:00 a.m.

Sunday Worship - 9:00 a.m.
with Education Hour at 10:15 a.m.

Pastor Ian Thormodson
Trinity Lutheran Church
102 3rd Street SW, PO Box 209
Medford, MN 55049
Office@tlcmedford.org
507-451-0447



**St. John
Lutheran Church**
1301 Lincoln Ave SE, Owatonna

Christmas Eve <i>Communion & Candlelight</i> 4:30pm & 9:30pm	Christmas Day <i>Communion</i> 9:00am
---	--



Live Stream Christmas Eve 4:30pm & 9:30 pm Christmas Day 9:00am Website: stjohnowatonna.org facebook.com/stjohnowatonna	Radio Broadcast Christmas Eve 10:00pm Christmas Day 11:00am KRUE 92.1 FM
--	--

*Celebrate the
birth of Christ*

Worship with Trinity
Christmas Eve
Family Blessing
9:30am, 1pm, 3pm
Candlelight & Communion
5pm, 7pm, 10pm

Christmas Day
10am

Worship in-person or online on Facebook or YouTube

609 Lincoln Avenue | Owatonna, MN
507.451.4520 | tlcowatonna.org

 **TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH**
OWATONNA, MN

CHRISTMAS
at Good Shepherd in Owatonna

CHRISTMAS EVE
4:00PM Candlelight Worship Service
6:00PM Candlelight Hymn Service

CHRISTMAS DAY
10:00AM Hymn & Carol Service

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
2500 7th Avenue NE
GoodShepherdOwatonna.com

**Christmas
at RADIANT
CHURCH**



Candlelight Service
Christmas Eve
5:00p

RadiantMN.com | 507-451-5467
1650 7th Ave NE | Owatonna
Sunday Mornings: 10:30a

ASSOCIATED CHURCH
A Warm and Welcoming Place to Meet God

Candlelit Christmas
Worship in Lessons and Carols
Christmas Eve, December 24th, 5:00 p.m.
In Person and Live-Streamed

Each advent season, we wait with hearts full of hope. Let's celebrate together the joy that this Christmas brings - knowing that all are loved, valued, and belong - no exceptions.

   **MORE LIGHT
PRESBYTERIANS**

800 Havana Road, Owatonna, MN 55060
associatedchurch.org | (507) 451-1546



*Wishes Everyone
a Happy
Holiday Season!*

**323 E. Main St.
Blooming Prairie
507-583-4469**

State association recognizes Dodge/Steele county program

The Southeast Minnesota Regional Population Health Data Model, an initiative that includes Dodge and Steele counties, was among six outstanding county programs honored Dec. 9 at the Association of Minnesota Counties' (AMC) 2025 annual conference in Bloomington.

The County Achievement Awards recognize programs exhibiting excellence and innovation.

AMC President and Dakota County Commissioner Mike Slavik presented the awards; recipients were nominated by their counties and selected by a committee of county officials.

The award went to Dodge, Fillmore, Freeborn, Goodhue, Houston, Mower, Olmsted,

Rice, Steele, Wabasha, and Winona counties for creating the model.

Turning data into information is key for public health departments, but staff capacity and skills can limit smaller jurisdictions' ability to access and summarize data. Olmsted County Public Health Services implemented a regional population health data model with 10 neighboring counties in the southeast region for data needs.

The project provides one model of how a larger public health department can support smaller jurisdictions with epidemiological population health data support, including not only securing and analyzing the data but teaching staff how to

interpret and use the data in public health practice. This model not only benefited smaller counties, but through this work, Olmsted County Public Health Services gained access to real-time public health data instead of waiting years for final data to be released.

Dashboards were built for all counties, and a comparison group of the southeast region was created to compare trends against counties in the area. Counties in the southeast are now able to monitor fatalities from overdoses and suicides in near real-time through easy access data dashboards leading to more effective timing of prevention and intervention efforts.

**Your Hometown Realtors,
Bringing Holiday Cheer All Year!**



**BERKSHIRE HATHAWAY
HOMESERVICES**

**ADVANTAGE
REALESTATE**

*We Wish You a
Merry Christmas
and a
Happy New Year!*



The Kitchen

Monday-Saturday: 6:00 AM - 2:00 PM
329 N Cedar Ave • Owatonna
507-451-9991



Gillespie Beauty Salon

109 W. Vine St.
Owatonna
507-451-4552

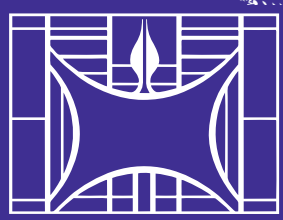


Roberta Jensen,
Owner, Independent
Contractor



LERBERG'S FOODS
since 1901

120 5th Ave., Ellendale
Visit our website:
lerbergsfoods.com
Like us on Facebook
507-684-2472



**OWATONNA
ARTS CENTER**

435 Garden View Lane
Owatonna
507-451-0533



**HOMETOWN
INSURANCE**

348 Main Street E, Blooming Prairie
507-583-6691
hometown-insurance.com



**SALINAS AUTO
SALES & REPAIR INC.**

507-583-6620
656 3RD ST. NE • BLOOMING PRAIRIE