Happy New Year

STEELE COUNTY Times

YEAR IN REVIEW
B1-3

RACHEL'S SALON SOLD A5

www.steeledodgenews.com TUESDAY, JANUARY 1, 2019 Blooming Prairie, Minnesota

BEST CHRISTMAS EVER FOR HARBERTS FAMILY

STAFF PHOTO BY HOWARD LESTRUD

It was an emotional time for the Harberts family as the Best Ever Christmas surprised them with a holiday miracle Dec. 22 in Blooming Prairie. Amy Simon wipes tears away from Jaxon Harberts' face while tears overcame Jaxon's father, Brandon, during the surprise party. Dr. James Midboe (with the red Santa hat) of Savage, co-founder of the non-profit group, says the Harberts story is an inspiration for everyone.

BP woman nominates family for holiday miracle

BY HOWARD LESTRUD
STAFF WRITER

A bowling party at Bunkie's Grill & Lanes of Blooming Prairie turned into a giant-sized Christmas present opening party for Jaxon Harberts and his father Brandon on Saturday, Dec. 22.

It was the Best Christmas Ever, a non-profit 501-C3 organization, that brought more than 100 gifts for Jaxon and Brandon.

Rachel Harberts, a first grade teacher at the Blooming Prairie Elementary School, her son Jaxon and her daughter Emerson were enroute to school from their rural Dodge Center home on Friday, Sept. 7 when they were involved in a car crash.

Emerson died instantly at the scene and her mother died six days later of injuries suffered in the crash.

Local BP resident Amy Simon nominated Jaxon and his father to receive a Best Christmas Ever surprise. The organization received 700 letters of application and was able to respond to 200 of them.

Tasha Gilbertson, a close friend of Rachel Harberts and her college roommate, said Brandon's family was the first picked.

Representatives of Best Christmas Ever met up with friends of Jaxon and Brandon in the parking lot of Farmers & Merchants State Bank. The entourage then paraded to Bunkie's where they crashed the bowling party and caught Jaxon and Brandon totally by surprise.

This program is designed "to lift up families that have fallen upon tough times to no fault of their own," said Jason Kunz, one of the founders of Best Christmas Ever with Dr. James R. Midboe. The non-profit organization was founded in 2011.

Jaxon and his dad, Brandon, opened up every present as an estimated crowd of 80 looked on in the golfing simulator room of Bunkie's.

STAFF PHOTO BY HOWARD LESTRUD

One of Jaxon Harberts' best friends, Mason Simon, leads a group of volunteers into Bunkie's on Saturday, Dec. 22. They were carrying gifts for Jaxon and Brandon Harberts.

Co-founders of the Best Christmas Ever, Dr. Midboe and Kunz, said Best Christmas Ever is "all about giving during the holiday season."

Dr. Midoe said Best Christmas Ever was inspired by courage shown by Brandon and his son Jaxon. "Hun-

SEE **BEST CHRISTMAS EVER, A3**

2018 IN REVIEW

STAFF PHOTO BY HOWARD LESTRUD

Burton Iversen points to his name on the Blooming Prairie Veterans Memorial wall of veterans. Iversen was one of the first to visit the Memorial in November.

Our top 10 news stories of 2018

The past year of 2018 proved to be a hectic year in the newsroom of the Steele County Times. There was plenty of news to cover for staff members of the Times throughout the year.

As we head into 2019, the Times staff takes a look back at what happened in 2018. We put together what we felt was the top 10 news stories of the year. It was not an easy task as there was so much going on in Steele County and the surrounding counties.

We also put together a more comprehensive list of the year in review elsewhere in this edition.

Enjoy our look back at 2018.

#10- Federal charges in home invasions

Three people, including two brothers from Wabasha County, have been indicted by a federal grand jury in connection with a home invasion earlier this year. Lennie Dwayne Brooks, 33, of Zumbro Falls and Randy Lorenzo Brooks, 23, of Wabasha, and Autumn Marie Nichols, 20, of St. Paul face a federal charge of robbery.

Federal authorities accuse the trio of stealing about $50,000 in cash belonging to the Shaung Hur Asian Markets and as a result, caused the death of a robbery victim.

The three are believed to be responsible for a pair of home invasion robberies in rural Steele County in August and September, though the details of those crimes have not yet been revealed in the federal indictment.

#9- Huskies snag second straight state title

It's becoming a familiar feeling for the Owatonna Huskies. The Huskies claimed their second consecutive state football championship at U.S. Bank Stadium in Minneapolis by surviving a thrilling game against another unbeaten team, St. Thomas Academy. Owatonna defeated St. Thomas 14-3.

Star running back Jason Williamson was presented with the 2018 Mr. Football Award by the Minnesota Football Coaches Association.

#8- BP Veterans Memorial takes shape

The Blooming Prairie Veterans Memorial took shape throughout 2018. Two walls have been completed with pavers declaring 372 names. Walls showing all branches of the Military are also installed.

Donations were received throughout the year, allowing the Memorial Committee, to achieve its fundraising goal.

An open house will be held next summer with a dedication planned for Veterans Day 2019.

#7- Big changes in BP City government

Big changes are in store for Blooming Prairie city government as top leadership will be changing in 2019.

Long-time city administrator Mike Jones has retired and will be replaced by a new administrator in February.

SEE **TOP TEN NEWS STORIES, A8**

Friends, family raise funds for little boy with big heart condition

BY HOWARD LESTRUD
STAFF WRITER

The words of Jamie and Gene (Geno) Linse were almost the same.

"I have no words for it; it's just awesome how people come together for the little guy," remarked Gene.

"I don't know what to say; it's great," countered his wife Jamie.

Jamie and Gene are the parents of 20-month-old Hudson Linse, who was born with congenital heart defects in which he only had one ventricle. Hudson has already undergone four open-heart surgeries. He is currently recovering at St. Mary's Hospital in Rochester from his most recent open-heart surgery, the most serious to date.

> "I don't know what to say."
>
> **Jamie Linse**
> Hudson's Mother

Hudson's parents and his older brother Henry represented him at a Winter Festival Fundraiser at the Witt Farms, located about seven miles south of Blooming Prairie on Highway 218 in Mower County.

The boy's parents were overcome with emotion after seeing more than 200 people come to show their willingness to help the family in some way.

Jamie has been staying 24-7 at St. Mary's Hospital but managed to get away to make an appearance at the fundraiser. "We had to get our hugs in," she said in appreciation.

Six teams of horses and a team of mules were on the property of Jeff and Diane Witt, giving rides to the young and older. "Hudson loves horses," remarked Gene.

The special fundraiser was organized by Jamie's sister, Traci Pittman, Erin Pittman and Emma Basness. The sleigh rides featured Percheron, Clydesdale and Belgian horses.

When visitors entered the Witt property, they were immediately drawn to a fire pit that enticed them to wait for a horse wagon to return after making a trip around the Witt property. Cookies and other refreshments were available inside the Witt manufacturing building.

SEE **HEART FUNDRAISER, A4**

STAFF PHOTO BY HOWARD LESTRUD

Jamie and Gene Linse and son Henry pose with two mules owned by Dwight Smith, rural Austin. Smith was giving rides at the Hudson Linse fundraiser on Saturday, Dec. 22.

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AREA DEATHS

Serving Blooming Prairie and Steele County since 1893

OUR VIEW

Nationwide effort makes Steele County safer

A nationwide law enforcement initiative appears to have brought an ending to a pair of violent crimes committed in Steele County last year.

It's called Project Safe Neighborhoods. It brings together federal, state and local law enforcement officers, prosecutors and community leaders to identify the most pressing violent crime problems in a community and develop comprehensive solutions to address them.

For Steele County and many other jurisdictions around the state, the problem at hand was violent home invasion robberies. Steele County experienced two home invasions in rural areas last August and September. In both cases, there appeared to be very few leads for investigators to go on and the likelihood of solving the crimes looked bleak.

That's until Project Safe Neighborhoods came along and tied three suspects to multiple home invasions across the state. Just before Christmas, two brothers and a woman were federally charged with robbery.

In one of the cases, the accused robbers stole about $50,000 in cash and as a result, caused the death of a robbery victim. A 63-year-old man dropped over dead of a heart attack in his Eden Prairie home during the robbery. His death was ruled a homicide by the Hennepin County Medical Examiner's Office. However, the three suspects have not been charged in connection to the death.

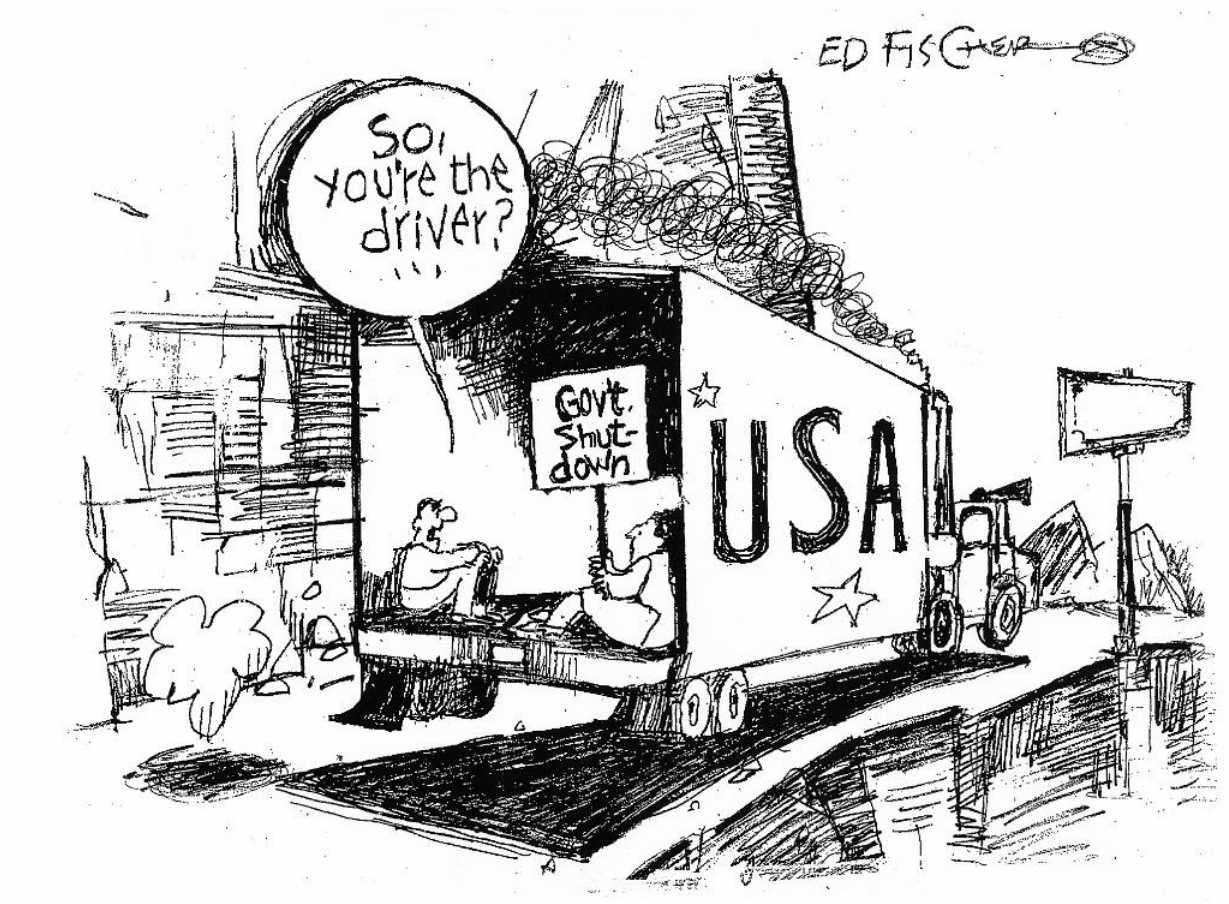
Federal prosecutors say the trio could be linked to as many as 10 home invasions.

The federal indictment came as a result of a multi-jurisdictional investigation. Besides the Steele County Sheriff's Office, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms plus many local police agencies and county sheriff's offices were involved. In all, six sheriff's offices in Minnesota and western Wisconsin and eight local police departments plus the Southeast Minnesota Violent Crime Enforcement team came together to take the suspected violent criminals off the streets.

This is a major relief for all Minnesotans, and especially the two robbery victims in Steele County. In an effort to reduce violent crime, the Department of Justice has taken steps to strengthen the Project Safe Neighborhoods Program and other initiatives. This is welcomed news for those left behind traumatized by these violent offenders.

During a six-year period from 2000 to 2006, Project Safe Neighborhoods saw a reduction in violent crime of up to 20 percent. Since 2001, more than $1.5 billion of federal money has been allocated to support Project Safe Neighborhoods. The funding is used to hire new federal and state prosecutors, support investigators, provide training, distribute gun lock safety kits, deter juvenile gun crime and develop and promote community outreach efforts as well as to support other gun and gang violence reduction strategies.

It's a welcome site to see that such a federal program can have a profound impact in areas close to home like Steele County. Anything that makes our communities safer is a winner in our book.



No trouble finding top stories for 2018

Hot Pursuit
RICK BUSSLER

As I compiled the year-in-review items for this week's edition, I also handled the important task of picking the top 10 news stories for 2018.

It proved to be a great time for me to reflect on the past year of happenings throughout the greater community of Steele County.

While some years it's hard to pick the top news stories of the year, this year was a tad bit different. Sadly, there was an abundant amount of news and right away a couple stories shot to the top of the news-o-meter as the biggest stories.

Without a doubt, the alleged killing spree of Lois Riess that originated outside of Blooming Prairie in March is the number one news story of the year. Riess is suspected of killing her husband, David, before traveling to Florida where she befriended a look-alike woman and allegedly killed her. Riess was finally captured about a month after being on the run in Texas.

The Lois Riess story captivated the nation and put people on edge for several weeks. The manhunt for Riess was carried on news programs across the country and newspapers everywhere. Journalists from Florida traveled to Steele County to learn more about what possessed a grandma to go on an alleged killing spree. The traffic on our Facebook and website showed that people had a profound interest in Riess and were hungry for information about her. We've never had a story generate as much interest as the Lois Riess story did.

Riess' pending court trial in Florida and anticipated charges in Minnesota will likely make her a major story throughout 2019 as well. We will continue to follow the story very closely just as we have since the day it unfolded.

Another big story in 2018 that will have a profound impact on the lives of people all across southern Minnesota is the long awaited approval of funding to widen U.S. Highway 14 to four lanes from Dodge Center to Owatonna. Countless people have lost their lives or been seriously injured on Highway 14 for several decades.

State lawmakers have been haggling over funding for Highway 14 for more than 25 years. Finally this past spring lawmakers came to agreement and found $160 million to get the job done. The project will begin in spring.

For years I have covered the efforts of Beth Hodgman of West Concord and others in trying to get Highway 14 expanded. At times it seemed hopeless, but Hodgman, who lost her husband on Highway 14 in 2012, hung in there and fought it to the end. I applaud Hodgman for not giving up.

The other top story rounding out the top three is ironically a crash on Highway 14 that killed a mother and her daughter. Rachel and Emerson Harberts died from injuries sustained when a vehicle rearended their vehicle on the edge of Claremont.

While the details of the crash itself are horrifying enough and the fact that it happened on the most dangerous roadway in southern Minnesota to warrant it being the top story, it's the response from the community that really makes this a gripping story. The crash devastated the community of Blooming Prairie, who lost a beloved school teacher and an elementary student.

There have been so many heartwarming stories that have come out of the Harberts tragedy since early September. Classmates have rallied together to put on fundraisers to help Jaxon, the seventh grader critically injured in the crash, and his father, Brandon. Just before Christmas, the Best Ever Christmas came to town to throw a huge holiday celebration for Jaxon and Brandon.

As Amy Simon, who nominated the Harberts for the Best Ever Christmas, stated in her nomination, there is no way to fix broken hearts, but small gestures is a step in the right direction. Her efforts have gone a long way in providing hope to the remaining members of the Harberts family. Please take some time to read Simon's nomination on page 3A.

It was not an easy year covering the news of Steele County as evidenced by our top 10 stories for 2018. But if there is any silver lining to it all, people know how to offer support and provide hope in bleak times.

Let's hope the news of 2019 will prove to be a bit more positive as we head into the new year. But no matter what, be assured that we will be in hot pursuit of bringing our readers the best possible coverage of whatever happens in 2019.

GUEST COLUMN

Gratitude for Southern Minnesota

By TIM PENNY

Now that we are past the busyness of the holiday season, I am reflecting on what a wonderful year 2018 was for southern Minnesota. It was a year that renewed my optimism for the future of our unique part of the state. I was once again humbled by the generous people of our 20-county region who make our work at Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation (SMIF) worth every minute.

It is impossible to encapsulate everything that I was grateful for in 2018, but this top 10 list is a start:

1. The collaborative spirit of our partners. I am continually in awe of the giant web of partnerships that exist in our region. This year we received more than 26,500 books from ABDO Publishing and Capstone, which will be distributed through our various early childhood programs and grants. We also celebrated Community Economic Development Associates(CEDA) as Partner of the Year at our Annual Luncheon – they have been a SMIF grant recipient since 1987, receiving 18 grants to do important work in the region.

2. The innovative people of southern Minnesota. I am always impressed by the creativity of our loan clients and grant recipients, and I was especially energized by the students at the Entrepreneurial Bridge student competition. Seeing our youngest entrepreneurs pitch unique ideas is incredibly energizing and gives me hope that they will start their businesses here – and stay here.

3. The steps taken towards solutions to the child care shortage. We partnered with First Children's Finance to conduct a Potential Needs Analysis, which concluded that we have a potential need of 8,616 licensed child care slots. Having a deep understanding of the challenge is the first step in developing solutions. We also announced a new grant called Communities Addressing the Child Care Shortage, which is currently open (deadline is Jan. 22).

4. The addition of two more Community Foundations. Montgomery and "Our Town USA" (United South-Central School District) became our 27th and 28th Community Foundations. These local funds provide direct support for projects and programing important to their community and are often the lifeblood of small towns.

5. The growth of the local foods system. This was especially prevalent at the recent FEAST! Local Foods Marketplace event. More than 1,300 people came out during a snow storm to support local food-makers and shop for their holiday gifts.

6. The addition of a new Prosperity Initiative cohort. This program offers business training and mentoring to new immigrant and minority entrepreneurs in our region. We were excited to welcome a new cohort of 16 business owners.

7. Our AmeriCorps LEAP Initiative members. Every year I enjoy engaging with our AmeriCorps members who serve in preschool classrooms and nonprofit organizations focused on the social and emotional development of young children in the region. We are currently accepting applications for part time positions.

8. Our Rural Entrepreneurial Ventures (REV) communities. These six small towns have had a year under their belt of participating in REV and have spent the time conducting assessments of entrepreneurial activity and opportunities for growth. I can't wait to see how that data is translated into action for these communities in the years to come.

9. The Early Childhood Care Conference. This was our largest conference yet with nearly 500 people in attendance, including child care providers, preschool teachers, center directors and other early childhood professionals.

10. Last, but definitely not least, our incredible donors. None of the work mentioned above would be possible without them. Thanks to our 343 donors - individuals, families, cities, counties, businesses and organizations - we have raised $491,168 to date in 2018. I am humbled by their generosity and their belief in the work we do.

Here's to a new year and a bright future for southern Minnesota. You can find details about the child care shortage grant and the AmeriCorps positions at smifoundation.org.

Tim Penny is the president and CEO of Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation based in Owatonna. Penny represented Minnesota's First Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1982–1994. He may be reached at timp@smifoundationorg or 507-455-3215.

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MINNESOTA NEWSPAPER ASSOCIATION

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

STAFF PHOTO BY HOWARD LESTRUD

Jaxon Harberts and his father Brandon were the recipients of a Best Christmas Ever on Saturday afternoon, Dec. 22 at Bunkie's Grill & Lanes in Blooming Prairie. The father and son received over 100 wrapped Christmas gifts. They opened them as many friends and family looked on with the holiday miracle unfolding before their eyes.

BEST CHRISTMAS EVER:
Harberts family **FROM A1**

dreds of people have stepped up to help," said Midboe who was flanked by volunteers from BCE.

Nominator Simon read her letter of nomination and said the Harberts family "hangs on to hope and will never know why the tragedy happened." Simon said Brandon and Jaxon are not alone in fighting this tragedy.

Dr. Midboe said the Best Christmas Ever group had a gift opening party the night before many came down to Blooming Prairie to make the Christmas gift drop, "a real celebration," he continued.

Jaxon opened the first gift and it was something he has wanted, a set of golf clubs. As he pulled the clubs out of its box, Jaxon laughed about his size and his dad said he would get him re-sized for his clubs. "I wish I were taller," Jaxon said.

"It's all about **giving** during the holiday season."

Dr. James Midboe and Jason Kunz
Best Christmas Ever founders

"I just don't grow, I've waited five years to get taller," he joked.

Brandon was next to open a gift and responded with a loud WOW! as he opened a Yeti cooler. "Now, you don't need a new cooler," Jaxon said to his dad.

Fighting emotions of the afternoon, Brandon said he was not much for public speaking but wanted everyone to think twice about using cell phones when driving. The person who struck the Harberts vehicle from behind was allegedly using a cell phone at the time of the crash.

"It's humbling to be part of something so much bigger than yourselves," said founder Kunz. "It's tough saying no," he added.

Best Christmas Ever shows families how many people are behind them and pulling for them," said Kunz.

Following the reading of her letter of nomination, Simon said the Best Christmas Ever efforts "are incredible." She is a pre-kindergarten assistant and said she met Rachel through the kids.

Simon has been very involved in helping the Harberts family in other ways, too. She organized the Honeycrisps (apples) for Harberts fund drive, which was done at football games and volleyball matches.

Speaking out loud to herself as she watched Jaxon and Brandon open their gifts, Lynette Harberts said, "This is overwhelming and amazing at the same time."

The nomination for the Best Christmas Ever for the Harberts

(EDITOR'S NOTE: It was a Best Christmas Ever for Blooming Prairie High School seventh grader Jaxon Harberts and his father Brandon. Best Christmas Ever is a non-profit that provides Christmas presents to families affected by tragedy. Jaxon's mother and sister died from injuries suffered in a car crash on Sept. 7. Jaxon was also injured critically but survived. Jaxon and Brandon were nominated by Amy Simon of Blooming Prairie to receive the Best Christmas Ever. Her nomination is printed as follows:)

BY AMY SIMON

Family Story: Our small town and the families in it know there is no way to fill or fix broken hearts. But small gestures, that lead to the warm smiles we get to see on Jaxon Harberts' face after tragedy struck his family, is a step in the right direction.

To say they are overcoming obstacles is an understatement; but that's what Jaxon does! He and his father Brandon are adjusting to the changes in their lives. They are strong, they are determined, they have a special bond.

Photos of the Harberts family dressing up for every holiday, Halloween especially, help us remember the fun spirit this family once had. Watching Jaxon excel in school and play his favorite sports are something we are dreaming of and working toward getting him back to in the future! Our town is part of an extended family wrapping our arms around this family.

On Sept. 7, 2018, the first Friday of our new school year, Jaxon, his little sister Emerson, and his mom Rachel, were driving to school in Blooming Prairie from rural Dodge Center early in the morning. Brandon was working at his job.

Their vehicle was struck by another driver. The rest of that day and the weeks following are parts of a horrific nightmare. Emerson passed away in the accident. Rachel was transported to a hospital where she later passed as a result of her injuries.

Jaxon was also transported to a hospital, unknowing of all the events around him. He went through surgeries and therapies and for many weeks fought with everything he had to stay alive.

Rachel, a friend, was a teacher in the school where I also work in Blooming Prairie. Emerson was a student there and her glow and smile and beautiful blond hair lit up our hallways and classrooms. Jaxon also is a student of the seventh grade and a dear friend of my son.

In that split second, their lives changed forever. Brandon, the father and husband, was made aware of the accident and traveled to the hospital to meet his son and wife. During their time in the ICU, he also had to prepare and plan a funeral for his sweet daughter. And then, the funeral for his wife. All the while, staying bedside to Jaxon helping him fight for his life.

This might be their story right now in the present, but this isn't who the Harberts were or plan to stay labeled.

Jaxon has excelled in his recovery. Every day there is an update that blows our minds. Just last week he was finally released from the hospital after two months.

He continues every day therapy and healing, working to regain some of the things the accident took away. While still in the hospital, but after Jaxon had reached a safer level of healing, he learned of his mother and sister's passing.

His family members have helped him mourn the best they could from the hospital. Since his release, they've been able to visit the cemetery and do the things to help walk through these steps they both need.

Brandon has been comforted by his family and Rachel's and by us, the friends and community. We've come together in efforts to prepare meals, provide transportation, raise some funds for bills, etc, but none of what we say or do can fix what's broken It's our hope that helping them smile and think of brighter days will lessen the heavy hearts.

None of this is easy. None of this has a right or wrong way. Their horrible tragedy is like no other. It's shaken everyone around.

To think of the upcoming holidays, recently released from ICUs, still healing and recovering, adjusting, mourning, rebuilding, but without two members of their family is heartbreaking.

Their world has crumbled but they get up every day and do just what is needed to move forward. They are trying to pick up the pieces, and we, their very extended family, are trying to think of and do anything we can to help them find some safe, comforting grounds.

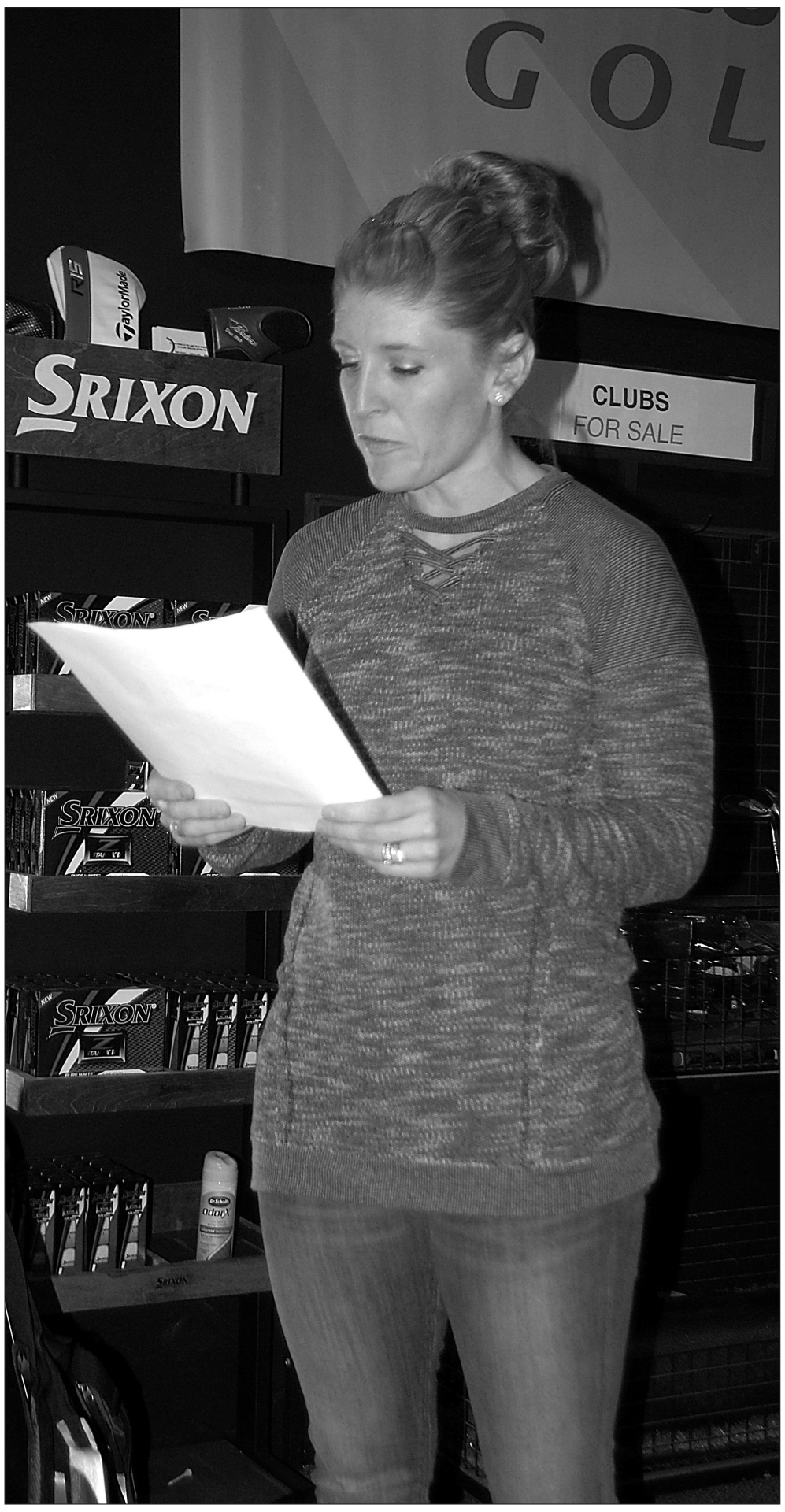
The Harberts are in our Hearts. Emerson and Rachel will never be forgotten. As a teacher, Rachel touched so many lives. Emerson's smile is a vision you just don't forget.

Brandon is one of the most humble and strong humans I've ever met. When you think he should crumble to pieces, he is making sure Jaxon has what he needs along with all of us. And, seeing Jaxon learn to walk again, hearing him talk for the first time again, watching him play catch with his buddies shines hope on the future. There is hope for the Harberts.

I am nominating this family because when you feel like you've lost everything and the world around you is spinning out of control and you can't seem to find answers to the hard questions, if you hang on to HOPE, if you keep HOPE, slowly, the days will start to put themselves back together.

We will never get the answer to "why," but in the aftermath of this tragedy, we've seen hope in action taking form in real life situations. We want the Harberts to know we pray for them daily, we want them to know Rachel and Emerson will not be forgotten, we want them to know that we support their healing and their mourning, that they are not alone and we will continue to find ways to help them smile and Have Hope!

I am nominating The Harberts Family because after an autumn that has been so tragic, thoughts of a wonderful holidays shouldn't be an added burden. They need something hopeful to continue on. They need something like "The Best Christmas Ever."



STAFF PHOTO BY HOWARD LESTRUD

Amy Simon, Blooming Prairie Elementary School pre-K assistant, reads her nomination of Jaxon and Brandon Harberts for a Best Christmas Ever. Amy also coordinated the Honey Crisp apple sales last fall.

What You Should Know About Your Aging Parents Finances

THE SAVVY SENIOR

Brought to you by: Prairie Manor Care Center

Prairie Manor Care Center & Heather Haus
220 3rd St. NW, Blooming Prairie
583-4434

Dear Savvy Senior

My siblings and I don't know much about our elderly parent's financial situation or their wishes if something happens to them. When mom broke her hip last year, it got me thinking we need to be better prepared. What's the best way to handle this, and what all should we know?

Tentative Daughter

Dear Tentative,

Many adult children don't know much about their elderly parent's financial situation or end-of-life plans, but they need to. Getting up to speed on their finances, insurance policies, long-term care plans and other information is important because some day you might have to help them handle their financial affairs or care, or execute their estate plan after they die. Without this information, your job becomes much more difficult. Here are some tips that can help.

HAVE THE CONVERSATION

If you're uncomfortable talking to your parents about this topic, use this column as a prompt or start by talking about your own finances or estate plan as a way to ease into it.

Also see TheConversation Project.org, which offers free kits that can help you kick-start these discussions.

It's also a good idea to get your siblings involved too. This can help you head off possible hard feelings, plus, with others involved, your parents will know everyone is concerned.

When you talk with your parents, you'll need to collect some information, find out where they keep key documents and how they want certain things handled when they die or if they become incapacitated. Here's a checklist of areas to focus on.

PERSONAL & HEALTH INFORMATION

- **Contacts:** Make a list of names and phone numbers of their doctors, lawyer, accountant, broker, tax preparer, insurance agent, etc.
- **Medical information:** Make a copy of their medical history (any drug allergies, past surgeries, etc.) and a list of medications they take.
- **Personal documents:** Find out where they keep their Social Security card, marriage license, military discharge papers, etc.
- **Secured places:** Make a list of places they keep under lock and key or protected by password, such as online accounts, safe deposit boxes, safe combination, security alarms, etc.
- **Pets:** If they have a pet, what are their instructions for the animal's care?
- **End of life:** What are their wishes for organ or body donation, and their funeral instructions? If they've made pre-arrangements with a funeral home, get a copy of the agreement.

LEGAL DOCUMENTS

- **Will**: Do they have an updated will or trust, and where is it located?
- **Power of attorney:** Do they have a power of attorney document that names someone to handle their financial matters if they become incapacitated?
- **Advance directives:** Do they have a living will and a medical power of attorney that spells out their wishes regarding their end-of-life medical treatment? If they don't have these documents prepared, now's the time to make them.

FINANCIAL RECORDS

- **Debts and liabilities:** Make a list of any loans, leases or debt they have – mortgages owed, car loans, medical bills, credit card debts. Also, make a list of all their credit and charge cards, including the card numbers and contact information.
- **Financial accounts:** Make a list of the banks and brokerage accounts they use (checking, savings, stocks, bonds, mutual funds, IRAs, etc.) and their contact information.
- **Company benefits:** Make a list of any retirement plans, pensions or benefits from their former employers including the contact information of the benefits administrator.
- **Insurance:** Make a list of the insurance policies they have (life, long-term care, home, auto, Medicare, etc.) including the policy numbers, agents and phone numbers.
- **Property:** Make a list of the real estate, vehicles or other properties they own, rent or lease and where they keep the deeds, titles and loan or lease agreements.
- **Taxes:** Find out where they keep copies of past year's tax returns.

For more tips, see the Eldercare Locator publication "Let's Talk: Starting the Conversation about Health, Legal, Financial and End-of-Life Issues" at N4A.org/files/Conversations.pdf.

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

Council approves $2M city government budget in BP

BY HOWARD LESTRUD
STAFF WRITER

The Blooming Prairie City Council agenda for its regular meeting on Monday night, Dec. 17 was filled with budgetary items.

Council acted unanimously to approve the 2019 Final General Governmental Funds Budget at nearly $2 million. Council member Bill Neuman made motion, Mary Kittelson seconded to approve the budget with a $10,000 reduction in debt service.

Rounding out the unanimous action were "yes" votes from council members Brad Clark, Tara Gimbel and Mayor H. Peterson.

Council member Neuman praised the work of Blooming Prairie City Administrator Mike Jones in building budgets during his tenure as administrator. Jones is retiring with the new city administrator, Andrew Langholz, taking over on Feb. 4.

Public comments were welcomed on the budget in place of Truth in Taxation meetings in the past.

The revenue budget was presented at $1,997,320 and the expenditures total for the fiscal year final budget was $2,006,488.

A total of $734,189 will be applied for the purposes of the General Fund and Debt Service Property tax revenues to fund the 2019 Final Budget.

The tax levy was certified at $734,189, which represents a minute 2.76 percent increase.

The total tax levy of $734,189 for 2019 compares to $713,925 in 2018.

The council adopted a motion certifying the property tax levy. It is divided as follows: $561,989, General Operations; $70,000, 2010 PFA Bond; $44,000, 2014 Public Project Bond; $26,990, 2015B G.O. Bond, Main Street and $31,210, 2017A G.O. Street Reconstruction Bonds.

In further action, the council approved the designation of $800,055 of the General Fund Dec. 31, 2018 Fund Balance to be reserved for cash flow purposes for the period Jan. 1-June 30, 2019.

Council approval was also given to the 2019 Enterprise Budgets for the Sewer Fund, Cemetery Fund, Storm Water Utility Fund and Ambulance Fund.

"Mike has been very frugal in monitoring the operation of the city," said Mayor H. Peterson.

As discussed at the September council meeting, the General Operation Levy would increase by $38,447 and the Debt Service levies will decrease by $-8,183 for an increase of $30,264. With the reduction of the 2017A GO Bonds levy by an additional $10,000, the 2019 levy increases by $20,264.

Street improvements and additional police coverage the public sought, cost tax dollars, Jones pointed out.

Other non-budget actions of the council included:

- Council approved 2019 cigarette licenses to five different establishments. "This is a non-smoking council," Mayor Peterson remarked. He mentioned that some communities are increasing the age to 21 to purchase cigarettes.
- Approval was given to cleaning of the Northeast Drainage Ditch from Highway 30 to the outlet of the Industrial Park at a cost of $9,275. Ellingson Companies of West Concord will do the work.
- On a motion from Neuman and second from Gimbel, the council approved plans and specifications for the 2019 Street Rehabilitation Improvements. Construction cost estimates came in at $674,367. Administrator Jones said it is hoped that the contingencies, engineering fees and bonding costs come under the approved bonding level of $780,000.
- A motion was adopted by council to update the Police Policies and Procedures Manual on domestic abuse and arrests.
- The Council set the date of Monday, March 11 to hear public input about the proposed updates of the city's current ordinances, removing old ordinances and adding selected ordinances.

HEART FUNDRAISER: FROM A1

Lots of gifts were also made part of a continuing raffle.

Gene, who is also a part-time, special Steele County deputy sheriff, said he travels with the Pittmans (Roger, Erin, Traci and Mark) to competition in the summer at county fairs and at the Minnesota State Fair. "Hudson and Henry are also part of the barn crew," Gene says. Gene is also a truck driver with Waterford Oil Co. of Northfield.

The horse community is a close-knit family, Gene added.

Roger, Erin, Mark and Traci had two teams of horses, Percherons, running rides at the fundraiser.

Other horses were owned by Josh and Dough Grunzke (Belgians) of Wells, Janet Hedberg (Clydesdale) of Owatonna; Lynn and Lisa Apenhorst (Belgians) of Spring Valley; Gene Wangen (Belgians) of Albert Lea and Harlan and Gini Gekler (Belgians) of Waseca.

Dwight and Vicki Smith of Blooming Prairie gave rides on their rig drawn by two mules.

Little Hudson was at the fundraiser in spirit as his parents conveyed his love of horses and pointed to a photo display of Hudson, many of the photos showing him with horses.

The Linses said they have no idea when Hudson will be returning home. He is currently living with a breathing tube and lies in bed or sits in a little chair most of the time. Hudson is heavily sedated and "is not too aware of anything," his mother Jamie says.

Hudson was born with a double outlet right ventricle, Wolf White Syndrome and Hypo Plastic left heart. He underwent his first heart surgery when he was only 3 days old.

Monies earned from the special fundraiser will be used to pay medical expenses, the Linses said.

When not in the hopsital, Hudson receives special help from Owatonna Schools with the Grow with Me program. A school worker comes to the Linse home to work with Hudson on fine motor skills and social skills, including speech. He walks with the aid of a walker.

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COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS

Annual tradition packs VFW Hall in Owatonna for holiday meal

BY CHRIS BALDWIN
STAFF WRITER

Mike and Trudy Pierce have been leading the community Christmas meal for 15 years at the VFW Hall in Owatonna every Christmas Day. Together with over a hundred volunteers the two of them have helped feed members of the community while also spreading holiday joy.

"We have a group of really dedicated people," Trudy said of their holiday helpers. "It's down to a fine art. Everyone comes in and knows what to do."

Prior to the event, Mike and others cook the food, which traditionally includes turkey and ham along with other holiday standards. "Turkey you got to have somewhere in the neighborhood of 600 pounds, and with hams we like bone-in, there's some waste but it has a better flavor, and we'll have around 400 pounds of ham," Mike explained.

The food was so tasty at this year's event that a few guests even asked who did the catering. "We had to tell them that it was all made in the hall," Trudy said. There are also volunteers who take calls and who deliver, and with a fleet of around 30 or so drivers this year they were able to get the food out to those that are unable to make it.

"People want their food, but also they want someone to visit with on the holidays," Trudy said, explaining that drivers typically take one order at a time in order to share a few words with those who they deliver to.

Before taking over the helm, Mike and Trudy were volunteering for Virginia Stern, who still comes to the meal. "She came to see the guests," Trudy said. Stern had originally hosted the meal at the K-C Hall before the Pierces took the reins.

"We liked the parking space and the handicap accessibility of the VFW, and it has a larger hall," Trudy explained of the choice to switch venues. "We're thankful that the VFW donates to us the use of their hall."

> "It's to help people who are alone for the holidays."
>
> **Trudy Pierce**
> Christmas Dinner Organizer

The more space the better, as the tradition has grown since those first years. "The first couple of years we had maybe 80 or 100 people, and now we're up to the hundreds," Trudy recalled. This year they had over 700 in total, 320 of which were deliveries.

"Every year we increase the amount of groceries we buy," said Mike, who spearheads the cooking. "We've never ran out of food, but one year we came close." When the meal is over whatever food is left is given to the Hospitality House and other goodwill locations.

Having participated in the tradition for so long, Mike and Trudy each have something they enjoy. "Mike's favorite part would be the cooking, but for me it's the people," Trudy, who greets those at the door, said. "I really thoroughly enjoy the people."

In her love for those she shares the holidays with, Trudy understands why the tradition is rewarding. "It's to help people who are alone on the holidays," she said. "That's the important part of it." This includes elderly individuals who may not have someone to share the holidays with, or a single mother who has kids to feed. "It doesn't matter what your social status is," Trudy added.

While this will be Mike and Trudy's last year putting on the event, they both expressed the desire to keep helping Mike Meyer and Joe Falteysek, who will be taking over next year.

"We'll help show them the ropes," Trudy said. With so many great volunteers, including the Pierce's, the tradition is likely to continue to be a success. "We've had numbers of volunteers that have come every year, they like doing it and they love sharing that time with people," Trudy fondly mentioned.

Both Mike and Trudy have pride in the community for the way that they all come together and make other people's holidays that much brighter. "We're very much proud, this community is so giving anyways," Trudy said, while adding that during the meal, "everyone always has a smile on their face."

It is a tradition that has been going on prior to the 15 years Mike and Trudy Pierce have led it, and will likely continue on in the years to come. "Right now, we have two or three families that have three generations who have helped," Trudy said.

The community meal was held on Dec. 25 at the Owatonna VFW and featured handmade home cooking for those who attended or called in a delivery. The tradition also includes an annual Thanksgiving meal put on each year.

Rachel's Hair sold to associate

BY HOWARD LESTRUD
STAFF WRITER

Rachel's Hair LLC of Blooming Prairie has been sold.

Rachel Hansen, store owner in Blooming Prairie the past 10 years, has sold her salon to associate Emily Allison. She has been a cosmetologist for 16 1/2 years.

Allison has worked the past year-and-a-half in Rachel's salon. Allison, a graduate of Blooming Prairie High School in 2008, has been a hairstylist for nine years.

Lachelle Wondra, another stylist at Rachel's, will remain with the shop, which will get a new name, but it has not been decided as yet, says Allison.

"I'm excited and a little nervous," Allison said.

Hansen's last day was Friday, Dec. 21 and that was an emotional day for her. Her fellow workers tried to raise her spirits by bringing her a tiara and also her own walker.

Hansen said she is looking forward to spending more time with her family. She and husband Steve have three children, Alivia, 15; Bristol, 7 and Harper, 6.

"I am very thankful for my many clients over the year who made my dreams come true," said a grateful salon owner, Hansen.

Hours of the salon will remain the same, Allison says.

STAFF PHOTO BY HOWARD LESTRUD

Rachel Hansen (center), owner of Rachel's Hair LLC of Blooming Prairie, has sold her salon to Emily Allison, left. The change takes place on Jan. 2. Lachelle Wondra, right, will remain at the salon.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

Rachel Hansen, owner of Rachel's Hair LLC, of Blooming Prairie was a queen for the day on her last day of working at Rachel's Hair last Friday, Dec. 21

Who needs Beef Quality Assurance certification training?

Steele Talkin'
CLAIRE LACANNE

An increasing number of local processors and buyers are requiring their beef producers to become Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) certified to ensure that cattle are raised using best management practices in optimal environmental conditions. BQA is a program which is nationally coordinated but implemented by individual states. Currently, several processers and buyers that get beef from Minnesota and surrounding states are requiring beef producers to take BQA training to earn certification for 2019.

BQA provides structured information to beef producers and beef consumers regarding how common-sense animal husbandry techniques can be coupled with scientific knowledge to raise cattle in a way which ultimately cultivates consumers' trust and confidence in the beef industry. The beef industry is committed, through BQA, to work as a cohesive entity to ensure product safety and wholesomeness along with animal wellbeing.

Who needs to get certified? If your buyer or processor requires certification, you should take the BQA training before you sell cattle in 2019. In general, only one person from each operation is required to be certified to ensure the entire operation follows the BQA standards, but the rule of thumb is that seller ID and BQA ID (certification number) should match. According to Ashley Kohls, Executive Director of the Minnesota Cattleman's Association, if producers are marketing cattle through the sale barn, then the key caretaker or whomever owns the facility needs to hold the BQA certificate. If producers are marketing directly to the packer/processor,

SEE **STEELE TALKIN', A8**

A new year brings new faces to Medford Council

BY CHRIS BALDWIN
STAFF WRITER

As a result of last November's election, the Medford City Council will be adding two new members in place of longtime council members Chad Merritt and Keith Maas. Chad Langeslag and Grace Bartlett are set to take their open spots on the governing body after the new year arrives.

Both Merritt and Maas opted not to seek reelection and have served on the council for a combined total of 14 years. "Both have supplied us with ideas and input from their own work experience and have seen the city through an extensive planning process in both our city's finances and capital planning," Mayor Lois Nelson stated. "Medford is 'healthier' in many ways thanks to their leadership."

Merritt served for eight years while Maas sat on the council for six. In their time they were able to give prudent consul and affect the city in a positive way by helping to steer it in its current direction. At December's regular session, Mayor Nelson thanked both and presented them each with a plaque.

The two new council members who will be stepping in for Maas and Merritt were chosen by the people of Medford during last November's election. Langeslag garnered the majority of the votes in the election with 369, Bartlett secured her position with 236 votes. Medford resident Corey Samora also ran, but his 183 votes were not enough to pick up a spot on the council.

"We had 72 percent of registered voters take part," Mayor Nelson noted during the post-election council meeting in November. "It was a high turnout." This high turnout and the voters' decision will be reflected in the two newcomers, who are both ready to get to work serving the citizens of Medford.

Both Bartlett and Langeslag have been attending council meetings since their August filing. "This interest in what is happening in the community is certainly appreciated as 2019 promises to be one of actions around development both residentially and commercially," Nelson said in a statement.

Langeslag, a facilities maintenance mechanic at St. Olaf College and a

SEE **MEDFORD CITY COUNCIL, A8**

National Film Registry adds Brokeback Mountain

Brokeback Mountain, which premiered in 2005 after a Blooming Prairie man shared his love story, has become the youngest film on the list of works being preserved by the Library of Congress.

The National Film Registry designates films that are culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant enough to merit preservation as part of America's national film canon, and this year marks its 30th anniversary. To celebrate the occasion, the registry has also announced the youngest inductee to join its ranks: Brokeback Mountain.

"These cinematic treasures must be protected because they document our history, culture, hopes, and dreams."

The Librarian of Congress makes the selections after conferring with members of the National Film Preservation Board and others. Among the motion pictures considered were more than 6,300 titles nominated by the public. (Films must be at least 10 years old to be eligible).

Here's a look at this year's addition of Brokeback Mountain with description supplied by the Library of Congress:

BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN (2005)

A contemporary Western drama that won the Academy Award for best screenplay (by Larry McMurtry and Diana Ossana) and Golden

SEE **BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN, A8**

PANTHER of the Week

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Brynlee Neitzel

This week's Panther of the Week is Brynlee Neitzel. Brynlee lives in New Richland with her parents Elizabeth and Chad. She has two older brothers named Zachary and Kaeden, and a younger brother whose name is Rylan. Brynlee is in Mrs. Ihrke's second grade class at NRHEG.

She works so hard every day in school. Brynlee always has a smile on her face and is eager to learn! You can often find her helping others or Mrs. Ihrke when she's done with her work. She's also a great role model for others because she is always showing her panther pride. Brynlee is very respectful to her teachers and kind to others.

Brynlee likes to read I Survived books. Her favorite food is her mom's cupcakes with sprinkles. Brynlee enjoys swimming, writing, and watching movies. Avatar is her favorite movie. Keep up the great work Brynlee!

In memoriam:

Remembering those who left us in 2018

The following area residents or those with connections to the area died during the last part of 2017 and 2018 and had obituaries published in the Steele County Times:

DECEMBER 2017

Robert J. McAllen, 87, Blooming Prairie
Merlyn LeRoy Sjodin, 82, Lakeville
Vivian Hjelmen-Eggert, 81, formerly of Blooming Prairie

JANUARY 2018

Bernice E. Thompson, 94, Austin
Lawrence Allen Ingvaldson, 86, Ellendale
James R. Schumacher, 35, Hollandale
Belen (Zuniga) Calderon, 82, Albert Lea area
Allen Dennis Johnson, 93, Blooming Prairie
Sandra Lee Shanley, 75, formerly of Blooming Prairie
Samuel Myron Peterson, 72, Ellendale

FEBRUARY 2018

Eugene D. Trom, 89, Blooming Prairie
Sharon Kaye (Larson) Seedorf, 76, Woodbury
Otilla Anderson, 107, formerly of Blooming Prairie
Lloyd S. Otterson, 85, Blooming Prairie
Jeffrey L. Ditlevson, 54, Mantorville
Lloyd S. Otterson, 85, rural Austin
James A. Srsen, 82, Blooming Prairie
Phyllis Jane Kruckeberg, 87, Owatonna
Orris E. Ohm, 83, Brownsdale
Calvin George Paulson, 90, Rochester
Ida Lorraine Shanahan, 90, Blooming Prairie

MARCH 2018

Barbara Ann Franke, 78, Hayfield
James Johns, 74, Blooming Prairie
Eugene Kaplan, 86, Blooming Prairie
John "Jack" Shaw, 93, Blooming Prairie
David Leonard Riess, 54, Blooming Prairie

APRIL 2018

Allen Lyle Andree, 58, Blooming Prairie
Eileen J. Sheedy, 76, Austin
Lynn Leraaen, 61, St. Ansgar, Iowa
Margot Radtke, 85, Owatonna
Edward Olaf "Bud" Engen, 87, rural Austin
Patricia L. Loftness, 72, Blooming Prairie

MAY 2018

Gerald F. Oxley, 87, Blooming Prairie
Sue E. Mataczynski, 68, Blooming Prairie
Scott H. Easton, 55, Blooming Prairie
Marlin E. Miner, 75, Blooming Prairie
Randall Scott Moe, 58, Owatonna
James Johnson Sr., 78, Blooming Prairie

JUNE 2018

Ruth Elaine Buckley, 91, Detroit Lakes
Ronald Swenson Sr., 76, Owatonna
James D. Prihoda, 62, Blooming Prairie
Meinard Haberman, 76, Blooming Prairie

JULY 2018

Phillip Hansen, 71, Northfield
Barbara Klecker, 67, Owatonna
William Underwood, 88, formerly of BP
Alphonso "Al" Langer, 95, Steele County
Philip Milton, 66, Blooming Prairie
Roger Peterson, 79, formerly of Blooming Prairie
Jeffrey R. Peterson, 57, Blooming Prairie
Regina Mae Wacek, 93, Blooming Prairie
Curtis G. Goodmanson, 65, Owatonna
Leona M. Pogones, 88, Owatonna
Wayne S. Gullickson, 83, Blooming Prairie
Dr. Lee Krystosek, 96, Clearwater, Florida
Donald D. Jensen, 77, formerly of Blooming Prairie
Rose K. Mills, 81, Blooming Prairie

AUGUST 2018

Marlene H. Arndt, 70, Owatonna
Richard Swenson, 84, Faribault
Patricia Rohne, 79, Waseca
Jimmie Ahles, 78, Austin
Jose C. Olivo, 61, Blooming Prairie
David Spinler, 81, rural Austin
Dwaine Dinse, 57, Owatonna
Pamela Ann Bowe, 68, Owatonna
Raeburn J. Hanson, 85, Waltham
Marjorie Leak, 85, Ellendale

SEPTEMBER 2018

Robert P. Olson, 85, Blooming Prairie
Frank R. Williamson, 94, Blooming Prairie
Syrlene Williamson, 85, Austin
James Schmidt, 78, Owatonna
Milton W.J. Ruhter, 96, Austin
Todd Lewis, 64, formerly of Austin
Milton G. Ebeling Jr., 88, Owatonna
Mark R. Jorissen, 60, Ellendale

OCTOBER 2018

Marcella "Sally" Anderson, 90, Hayward
Donald H. Parker, 84, Owatonna
Sharon Eaker, 83, formerly of Blooming Prairie
Jean Lucille Baldwin, 85, Owatonna

NOVEMBER 2018

Donna J. Ditlevson, 83, Blooming Prairie
William F. Angell, 95, Albert Lea
Theresa M. Kasper, 91, formerly of Ellendale
Donald C. Yentsch, 93, Blooming Prairie
Marvin R. Bjoraker, 81, Owatonna
Donald L. Bakke, 91, Blooming Prairie
Gail O. Johnson, 89, Blooming Prairie

DECEMBER 2018

Bernice Wesely, 94, Owatonna
Marleen E. Steen, 81, Freeborn
Margaret Betlach, 96, Blooming Prairie
Gail Yvonne Hofius, 63, Blooming Prairie
Carol Ann Elizabeth Colee, 76, Blooming Prairie

LIBRARY BOOK NOOK

Basic computer training coming to library

NANCY VAILLANCOURT

Like it or not computers and electronic devices are here to stay. They provide information at your fingertips. They can keep you up to date with your family members and distant friends. More companies require you to contact them by email. If you are looking for a job, you probably will need to apply online; if you have lost a job, you need to file for unemployment online.

Several people who visit the Blooming Prairie Branch Library tell us that they are "computer illiterate." If you identify with that term, or would just like to learn more about using a computer, join us this month for a series of basic computer training. The classes will be held on Tuesday afternoons at 1:30 p.m. in the library. They will begin on Jan. 8 and conclude on Jan. 29. As with all library services, there is no cost for the classes. You are welcome to bring along your own tablet or laptop.

Topics we will cover include keyboard basics, searching the internet, setting up email accounts, using library resources and social media. Questions are always welcome. If you are interested in the training, please call the library at 507-583-7750 by Jan. 5. All adults are welcome.

COLLEGE NEWS

Hyland named to Dean's List

Jake Hyland of Blooming Prairie has been named to the Fall 2018 Dean's List at Bradley University in Peoria, Ill.

Hyland is majoring in interactive media game design.

In order to qualify for the Dean's List, students must earn a semester GPA of 3.5 or higher.

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Stendra 200mg	16	$260.00
Spiriva 18mcg	90	$130.00
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Recipe Corner

HEARTY BEEF STROGANOFF

INGREDIENTS:

2 lbs beef sirloin, cut into ¼ inch strips
½ tsp salt
4 Tbls flour (white, rye or rice will work)
4 Tbls margarine or butter
1 4 oz can sliced mushrooms or ½ pound fresh sliced mushrooms
½ cup onion, chopped
2 Tbls catsup
1 10½ oz can beef broth
1 cup milk or milk substitute
2 Tbls sherry
1 Tsp fresh dill, minced, or ¼ tsp dried dill weed

DIRECTIONS:

Dredge meat in mixture of salt and 1 Tbsp flour. Melt 2 Tbsp margarine in hot skillet, add meat and brown Add mushrooms and onion. Cook 3-4 minutes or until onion is tender. Transfer skillet contents to a bowl and keep warm. Add 2 Tbls margarine to pan drippings. Blend in 3 Tbls flour and catsup. Slowly add beef broth. Cook, stirring until mixture thickens. Stir in milk and sherry and heat until thick; add meat mixture and heat briefly. Serve over rice or noodles.

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Blooming Prairie, 583-2046

Season's Greetings

Birthdays

January 2
Trista Motl
Joan Severtson
Connie Lembke
January 3
Doug Naatz
Kaila Burkhart
Kristi Miner
Eunice Doocy
Dan Trom
Makinzie Wangen
Vicki Johnson
Zach Weber
January 4
Colby Johnson
January 5
Lori Pirkl
Quentin Weedman
Kassie Ann Lueth
Deb Brown
January 6
Kyle Williamson
Adam Bumgarner
Randi Long
Andy Weiss
January 7
Christine Wencl
Leah Jenzen
Analeigh Houillion
January 8
Rick DeYoung
Dick Kruckeberg

Anniversaries

January 2
Bill and Margaret Noble
January 7
Mike and LaNell Sunde
January 8
Shannon and Hulio Rivera-Escandon

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Today's your day... Don't waste it!

Pastor Mike Walerius
FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH
BLOOMING PRAIRIE

"Congratulations, today's your day. You're off to great places. You're off and away. You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself any direction you choose." Those rhythmic words of advice come from the delightful little book by Dr. Seuss titled Oh, the Places You'll Go! And there is real wisdom in these words. Although the book was written for children, we can all learn a lesson from Dr. Seuss.

Today is your day and you can do with it what you want. You can use this day however you chose, but remember, you are the one who makes that choice. You are the one who can chose to be happy or angry. You are the one who can chose to help or to hurt. You are the one who can chose to be positive or negative. It is all up to you. How do you want to use your day?

Now I know, there are situations that come up on any given day that we cannot control, but how we react to those situations is in our control. It's a choice we make. Others don't make us mad. We allow their actions or words to affect us, and then WE choose to be mad or to lash out. Or, WE can choose to be tolerant and kind to one another. We can choose to love one another – to be patient with one another as we muddle through life.

With the current political divide in our country, and I know it feels huge, and with social media and the internet giving us a platform to lash out and cast aspersions without ever coming in physical contact with those we disagree with, it's easy to find a place or person to fight with. If you're looking for a fight there are people just waiting for you to comment and engage them, but I challenge us all to not take the bait, not look for an argument, but instead look for a way to find peace. Choose to use your day for something else, something better.

In the book of Galatians, chapter 5, Paul said "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things". When love, or peace, or any of these 9 fruits of the Spirit are at our center we are using our day for something better. When we chose to find good in others who are different than us, and when we have patients for those who challenge us, we are choosing to use our day in a positive Christ-centered way. When we live with joy not anger and gentleness not violence, we are using our day to affirm the gift of life we have been given.

It is in these little choices that we make, day in and day out, to have kindness or compassion, instead of anger or disrespect, that we affect the people and the world around us in a positive way. So, remember, "Today's your day... you can steer yourself any direction you chose" – don't waste it!

AREA WORSHIP SCHEDULE

LUTHERAN

AURORA LUTHERAN
6329 SE 28th St., Owatonna
Pastor Stephanie Wood
507-676-5696
Sunday School: 9:30 a.m.
Worship: Sunday at 10:45 a.m.

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

FIRST LUTHERAN – AFLC
503 Radel Ct., Ellendale
Pastor Richard Sliper
507-684-2451
Saturday: 8 a.m. Men's Bible Study
Sunday: 9 a.m. Worship; 10:15 a.m. Sunday School/ Confirmation
Tues.: 7 p.m. Call to Prayer, open to all churches
Wed.: 9:30 a.m. BibleStudy; 3:30 – 5 p.m. Jesus and Me; 6 p.m. Call to Prayer; 6:30 p.m. Youth Group

FIRST LUTHERAN – ELCA
434 First St. SW., Blooming Prairie
Senior Pastor: Rev. Heidi Heimgartner
Associate Pastor: Rev. Mike Walerius
507-583-6621
firstlutheranbp.com
Worship Service- 9 a.m.
Sunday School- 10 a.m.

FIRST LUTHERAN – LCMC
8953 SW 37th Ave., Hope
Pastor Sandy Miller
507-451-3854
Worship: 9 a.m. Sun.
Sunday School, Adult Ed: 10:15 a.m. Sun.

GOOD SHEPHERD LUTHERAN – LCMS
2500 7th Ave. NE., Owatonna
Rev. Mark Rosenau, Senior Pastor
Rev. Greg Schlicker, Associate Pastor
507-451-4125
www.goodshepherd owatonna.com
Worship: 8 a.m., 9:15 a.m. & 10:30 a.m. Sun.
Sunday School: 9:15 a.m.

MOLAND LUTHERAN – ELCA
7618 NE 84th Ave., Kenyon
Pastor Nancy Edwardson
507-789-6661
Worship: 10:45 a.m. Sun.
Sunday School: 9:30 a.m.

PONTOPPIDAN LUTHERAN – ELCA
9651 SW 75th St., Ellendale
Pastor Mike Walerius
507-465-8366
Worship: 10:15 a.m. Sun.
Sunday School: 9 a.m. Sun.

EDEEMER LUTHERAN – LCMS
1054 Truman Ave., Owatonna
Pastor Kirk Griebel
507-451-2720
Worship: 9 a.m. Sun.
Education Hour: 10:15 a.m. Sun.

RED OAK GROVE LUTHERAN – ELCA
30456 Mower-Freeborn Road, Austin
Pastor Lindsay Brennan
507-583-2038 or 507-437-3000
www.roglutheran.org
Worship: 9 a.m. Sun.
Sunday School
(Sept. – May): 10:15 a.m.

ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN – LCMS
4532 SE 84th Ave., Claremont
Pastor Alan Broadwell
507-528-2404
Worship: 6 p.m. Saturday; 10:30 a.m. Sun.
Sunday School: 9:15 a.m.

ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN – LCMS
28959 630th Ave., Sargeant
Pastor Collin Duling
507-251-5568
Worship: 10:15 a.m. Sun.
Sunday School: 9 a.m.

ST. MICHAEL'S LUTHERAN – ELCA
30450 570th Ave., Waltham
Pastor Dwight DoBell
507-567-2474
Worship: 8:30 a.m. Sun.

ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN – LCMS
202 E. Park Ave., Hollandale
Pastor Jesse Krusemark
507-567-2272
Worship: 8:30 a.m. Sun.
Sunday School: 9:45 a.m.

ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN – ELCA
2781 SW 92nd Ave., Meriden
Pastor: Rev. Dean Smith
507-451-2165
Sunday School: 9:15 a.m.
Worship: 10:30 a.m.

TRINITY LUTHERAN
5881 SE 118th St., Blooming Prairie
Pastor Stephanie Wood
507-676-5696
Worship: Sunday at 9 a.m.

TRINITY LUTHERAN – ELCA
Trinity Lutheran Church
609 Lincoln Avenue
Owatonna MN 55060
507.451.4520
tlcowatonna.org
Worship:
Saturday: 5 p.m.
Sunday: 8:15 a.m., 9:30 a.m. & 10:45 a.m.
Sunday School: 8:15 a.m. & 9:30 a.m.
tlcowatonna.org/worshipschedule
Pastor Todd Buegler
Pastor Amanda Weinkauf
Deacon Kris Oppegard

TRINITY LUTHERAN – ELCA
104 First St. SE., Hayfield
Pastor Paul Hauschild
507-477-2248
www.trinityhayfield.org
Worship: 8 a.m.
& 10:30 a.m. Sun.
Sunday School: 9:15 a.m.

TRINITY LUTHERAN – LCMS
108 Third Ave. SW., Medford
Pastor Mark Biebighauser
507-451-0447
8 a.m. & 10:30 a.m. Sunday Worship Service
9:15 a.m. Sunday School and Adult Bible Study

TRINITY LUTHERAN – LCMS
57043 300th St., Waltham
Pastor Jesse Krusemark
507-567-2272
Worship: 10:30 a.m. Sun.
Sunday School: 9:15 a.m.

ZION LUTHERAN – ELCA
7126 SW 98th St., Ellendale
Pastor: Rev. Dean Smith
Worship: 8:30 a.m.

CATHOLIC

CHRIST THE KING
203 Second Ave. NW., Medford
507-451-6353
Father James Starasinick
Deacon Patrick Fagan
Sunday Mass: 8:30 a.m.
Monday Mass: 9 a.m.

CHURCH OF ALL SAINTS
307 SW First St., New Richland
Father Raul Silva
Fr. Adam McMillan, Parochial Vicar
507-465-8217
Mass: 5 p.m. Saturday

HOLY TRINITY CATHOLIC CHURCH OF LITOMYSL
9946 SE 24th Ave. Owatonna
Father John Sauer, Pastor
507-451-1588
www.litomysl.webs.com
Sunday Mass:
9:30 a.m.c with Children's Church
Reconciliation:
8:45 a.m. - 1st & 3rd Sundays
Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m.:
Faith Formation for K thru Confirmation
Second Sunday of month:
Family Faith Formation
Litomysl Finance Council:
2nd Thursday
Litomysl Pastoral Council:
2nd Thursday every other month

SACRED HEART CATHOLIC
150 NE Second St., Hayfield
Father Thomas Niehaus
507-477-2256
Mass: 8 a.m. Sun.
& 8:30 a.m. Thursday
Reconciliation: 7:30 a.m. Sun.

SACRED HEART PARISH
810 S. Cedar Ave., Owatonna
Father John Sauer
Fr. Jose Morales, Parochial Vicar
507-451-1588
www.sacredheartowatonna.org
Mass: 5 p.m. Saturday;
8:30 a.m. &10 a.m. Sun.
Spanish Mass: 11:45 a.m. Sun.
Daily Mass: 7:15 a.m.
Reconciliation: 4 p.m. Sat.
Adoration:
8 a.m. – 10 p.m. Thurs.

ST. COLUMBANUS CATHOLIC
114 E. Main St., Blooming Prairie
Father Thomas Niehaus
507-583-2784
www.stcolumbanuschurch.com
Mass: 10 a.m. Sun.
& 8:30 a.m. Friday
Reconciliation: 9 a.m.
First Friday & Saturday

ST. JOSEPH CATHOLIC PARISH
512 S. Elm Ave., Owatonna
Father James Starasinick
Deacon Patrick Fagan
507-451-4845
Saturday Mass: 4 p.m.
Sunday Mass: 8 & 10 a.m.
Reconciliation:
3-3:30 p.m. Sat.
Daily Mass:
8 a.m. Tues., Wed. & Fri.
(Communion Service 8 a.m. Thursday)
Adoration Chapel available
Mon. – Fri. 7 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.
Key fob required after hours or weekends

CHRISTIAN

CHRIST COMMUNITY COVENANT
540 SE 18th St., Owatonna
Dr. V. Brent Carlson, Pastor
507-451-1032
Worship: 9 a.m. Sun.
Sunday Connections: 10:15 a.m.

PENTECOSTAL

FIRST UNITED PENTECOASTAL
230 Locust Ave., Owatonna
Pastor Eliazar Talamantes
507-363-2240
Worship: 10 a.m. Sunday; 6:30 p.m. Wednesday

METHODIST

BLOOMING GROVE UNITED METHODIST
43089 180th St., Medford
(Seven miles west of Medford on CR 23)
Pastors JJ & Stefanie Morgan
507-835-8726
Worship: 8:30 a.m. Sun.
Sunday School: 9:45 a.m.

ELLENDALE UNITED METHODIST
200 Sixth St. NW., Ellendale
Pastor Randy Cirksena
507-684-2731
www.ellendaleumc.org
Worship: 10:30 a.m. Sun.
Sunday School: 9:15 a.m.

OWATONNA UNITED METHODIST
815 E. University, Owatonna
Loren Olson, Pastor
Linda Boorman, Associate Pastor
Joyce Parker, Associate Pastor
507-451-4734
www.owatonnaumc.org
Traditional Worship (Pathways): 9 a.m. Sunday

NON-DENOMINATIONAL

BRIDGES OF HOPE COMMUNITY
130 W. Bridge St., Owatonna
Pastor Keith Haskell
507-215-2249
Worship: 10 a.m. Sun.
Biblestudy: 9 a.m. Sun.
Reformers Unanimous Meetings: 7 p.m. Friday

CEDAR CREEK
30 E. Main St., Hayfield
Pastor Aaron de Neui
507-477-2255
www.cedarcreekchurch.org
Worship: 10 a.m. Sun.

DESTINY CHRISTIAN
Owatonna Campus
422 North St., Owatonna
Pastors Tyler & Jessica Braucht
507-254-8514
www.destinycc.org
Worship: 10 a.m. Sun.

ELEVATION NORTH
2002 Austin Road, Owatonna
Pastor Doug Jones
507-363-3099
www.elevationnorth.blogspot.com
Worship (English): 10 a.m. Sun.
Sunday School: 10:30 a.m.
Worship (Spanish): 2 p.m. Sun.
Bible Study: 6:30 p.m. Wednesday
Spanish Evangelism & Prayer: 7 p.m. Friday

NEW BEGINNINGS
332 14th St. NE., Owatonna
Pastors Scott & Joan Peterson
507-413-0209
Worship: 10 a.m. Sun.

SIMPLE CHURCH
4515 NW 22nd Ave., Owatonna
(Country Goods building across the freeway from Cabela's)
Pastor Todd Lundgren
507-451-5661
Worship: 9:30 a.m. Sun.
Bible Study: 7 p.m. Wednesday

MENNONITE

PRAIRIE MENNONITE
13638 750th St., Blooming Prairie
Bishop Dennis Martin
507-583-7532
Worship: 10:30 a.m. Sun.
Sunday School: 9:30 a.m.
Prayer Meeting: 7:30 p.m. Wed.

MORMON

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS
404 31st St. NW, Austin
Bishop Rick Bremner
507-433-9042
Worship: 9 a.m. Sun.

PRESBYTERIAN

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

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
109 E. Main St., Hayfield
Pastor Kirk Johnston
507-477-2631
Worship: 9:30 a.m. Sun.

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
P.O. Box 66, Claremont
507-528-2320
Pastor Douglas Walters
10 a.m. Worship

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST
2373 Seventh Ave. NE, Owatonna
Pastor Brian Beavers
507-340-7143
Worship: 9:30 a.m. Sat.
Bible Study: 11 a.m. Sat.

UCC

CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
211 Main St. S.
Medford
Rev. Richard Waters
507-451-4596
Worship: 10 a.m. Sun.

ASSEMBLY OF GOD

VIBRANT LIFE ASSEMBLY OF GOD
702 Third St. S., Ellendale
Pastor Patrick Stitt
507-684-3421
www.vibrantlifeag.com
Worship: 10:30 a.m. Sun.
Kids Church: 10:30 a.m. Sun.

BAPTIST

FIRST BAPTIST
104 First Ave. NE, Blooming Prairie
Pastor Matt Fennell
507-583-2673
Worship: 10 a.m. Sun.
& 6:30 p.m. Wednesday
Sunday School: 9 a.m.
Bible Study: 11:30 a.m. Sun.

ASSEMBLY OF GOD

VICTORY LIFE
105 2nd St NE
Geneva
Pastor Diane Butler
507-402-0960
Worship on Sundays
Prayer Service: 7:30 a.m.
Church Service: 9:30 a.m.
Children's Church: 9:45 a.m.

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Blooming Prairie
507-583-2276

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Owatonna
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BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN: FROM A5

Globes for best drama, director (Ang Lee) and screenplay, Brokeback Mountain depicts a secret and tragic love affair between closeted gay ranch hands. They furtively pursue a 20-year relationship despite marriages and parenthood until one of them dies violently, reportedly by accident, but possibly, as the surviving lover fears, in a brutal attack. Annie Proulx, the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of the short story upon which the film was based, described it as "a story of destructive rural homophobia." Haunting in its unsentimental depiction of longing, lonesomeness, pretense, sexual repression and ultimately love, Brokeback features Heath Ledger's remarkable performance that conveys a lifetime of self-torment through a pained demeanor, near inarticulate speech and constricted, lugubrious movements. In his review, Newsweek's David Ansen wrote that the film was "a watershed in mainstream movies, the first gay love story with A-list Hollywood stars." Brokeback has become an enduring classic.

"I didn't intend to make a statement with Brokeback Mountain," Lee said. "I simply wanted to tell a purely Western love story between two cowboys. To my great surprise, the film ended up striking a deep chord with audiences; the movie became a part of the culture, a reflection of the darkness and light — of violent prejudice and enduring love — in the rocky landscape of the American heart.

"More than a decade has passed since Brokeback Mountain was released, but I hope that this film, a small movie with wide open spaces, continues to express something both fresh and fundamental about my adopted country," Lee added.

The genesis of Brokeback Mountain as a short story began in 1983 when Annie Proulx was introduced to Brad Trom, a native of Blooming Prairie and country boy from Dodge County. Proulx was an up-and-coming writer located in Byron and Trom in the nearby city of Rochester. Trom, now 63 and a two-time cancer survivor, was a cancer patient at Mayo Clinic when Proulx, now 84, offered to write about anything that he'd like to leave behind as a story. In the world of movies, that collaboration resulted with Brokeback now ranking today as both a top 10 love story and a top 10 western.

STEELE TALKIN': FROM A5

they will need to discuss the situation with their buyer. Kohls also noted that only cattle being sold into processing (market cows and bulls and fed cattle) require BQA at this time. However, anyone who handles and manages cattle is encouraged to become BQA certified.

In response to the large number of producers still in need of BQA Certification, U of MN Extension is providing a modified online/in-person training in Faribault on Jan. 3. The group will be guided through the BQA online modules, and there will be a paper quiz at the end of class. Attendees will then receive their certificate in the mail.

This local meeting will be held in Faribault on Jan. 3 from 12:30 to 3:30 p.m. in the Rice County 4-H Building (1900 Fairgrounds Drive #17, Faribault, MN 55021). This program is free thanks to the Minnesota Beef Council. Refreshments are provided thanks to our sponsors – AgPartners, Purina, and National Farmers - Nexus Marketing.

Walk-ins are welcome; however, RSVPs are appreciated. Please contact the Rice County Extension Office at 507-332-6165 or lacanne@umn.edu to register.

Claire LaCanne is the agricultural extension educator with Steele and Rice counties. Steele Talkin' is a regular column featuring authors representing various organizations throughout Steele County.

MEDFORD COUNCIL: FROM A5

resident of Medford since 2006, said he opted to run when he found out Maas and Merritt were not going to seek reelection.

"I've always followed local government. I follow all the minutes from both the city and school board," Langeslag said. "With all the things coming up in the near future, it just seemed like the perfect time for me to contribute back to my community."

Like the council's other new member, Langeslag is looking forward to getting to work for the city and people of Medford. "I'm honored that so many people put their trust in me," he said of the election results.

"My goals over the next four years are to increase housing growth, invest in projects that benefit taxpayers first, and find ways to finance upgrades without taxing people out of Medford," Langeslag explained. "Medford has all the same issues as our larger neighboring communities. We need to use every cent wisely."

An organizational meeting is set for Jan. 14 during which the new members will be sworn in, have their photos taken for the city website, and board appointments will be accepted along with any other changes proposed and acted upon at that meeting.

YEAR IN REVIEW FROM A1

In November, Blooming Prairie voters ousted Mayor H. Peterson from office. Peterson served the community as mayor for 16 years. Curtis Esplan will become mayor in January.

#6- Elvebak lawsuit settled with Steele County

Steele County's ex-top administrator Laura Elvebak reached a settlement with her former bosses for $225,000 in June. The Steele County Board agreed to pay Elvebak the money to end the lawsuit she filed against the county in 2017. Of the settlement, Steele County will have to dish out $115,000 while the remaining $110,000 will be paid through the Minnesota Counties Intergovernmental Trust.

"We're obviously pleased the case was settled for an amount significant enough that Ms. Elvebak's allegations were taken seriously," said Matthew Morgan, Elvebak's attorney. "We're hoping that it sends a message that women should be treated as the same as men in the work place."

Elvebak claimed in her lawsuit sexual discrimination, violations of Open Meeting Laws and violation of Minnesota Whistleblower Act.

#5- Steele County Sheriff's race gets nasty

The race for Steele County Sheriff took on extreme negativity and vindictiveness throughout the fall leading up to the November general election. Sheriff Lon Thiele came out saying that he had never been involved with so much hate and ugliness in a local campaign ever before.

Things really heated up less than two weeks prior to the election when Thiele broke his silence over on-going negative campaign smears against him and attacks on his credibility by challenger Darrin Helget and his supporters, which included members of the Blooming Prairie Police Department.

Thiele went on to win the general election by 53 percent of the vote to Helget's 46 percent. Thiele will begin his third term as sheriff in January.

Blooming Prairie city officials requested Thiele and Chief Greg Skillestad, who openly supported Helget, to come to a December council meeting. The two vowed to work with each other moving forward.

#4- Tornado hits Owatonna

Officials with the National Weather Service ruled that a EF1 tornado cut through Owatonna on Sept. 20. The tornado hit at 6:23 p.m. with peak winds reaching 95-105 mph.

Owatonna experienced significant damage during the intense storm in portions of the city, leaving about 4,300 homes without power for hours and even days for some. Most of the damage was to local infrastructure, including power lines and power poles snapped off around town.

Governor Mark Dayton authorized the use of funds from the State Disaster Assistance Contingency Account for emergency relief in Steele County as well as other counties hit by the storm. Steele County is slated to receive $435,155 in disaster aide.

#3- Harberts crash devastates community

Tragedy marred the new school year in Blooming Prairie just days after school began as a third grader was killed in a car crash on her way to classes. Emerson Harberts, 8, of Dodge Center was killed instantly in the crash on U.S. Highway 14 on the edge of Claremont Sept. 7. Her mother, Rachel Harberts, died a week later in the hospital. Emerson's brother, Jaxon, is recovering from injuries he sustained in the crash.

Since the crash, students and parents connected to Blooming Prairie Schools have hosted various fundraisers to help the Harberts family. One group of seventh graders hosted Honeycrisps for the Harberts at home athletic games. "It really warms your heart," said Mason Simon, organizer of the fundraiser.

Support has continued throughout the holiday period. Just last week, the Best Christmas Ever, a non-profit organization, brought more than 100 gifts for Jaxon and his father, Brandon, to a bowling party at Bunkie's in Blooming Prairie.

#2- Highway 14 funding finally

A cloud of uncertainty was finally lifted off southern Minnesota in late May when Minnesota governor Mark Dayton signed the bonding bill permitting funding for the last stretch of U.S. Highway 14 to be expanded to four ways between Rochester and Mankato.

The project to expand Highway 14 is expected to cost around $160 million. Construction on the last leg between Dodge Center and Owatonna will begin in spring.

Officials have been trying to find funding for Highway 14 for nearly 25 years. During that time, many people have died or been seriously injured on the dangerous stretch of road.

#1- Lois Riess killing spree puts nation on edge

Accused killer grandma Lois Riess captured the nation's interest after she allegedly killed her husband, David Riess, inside their home just outside of Blooming Prairie in March and a woman she befriended in Florida in early April. The 2-state killing spree ended when U.S. Marshals took Riess into custody in Texas on April 26.

Riess has been charged with killing the woman in Florida. She has not been charged in her husband's death yet as Minnesota authorities continue to build the case against her. If convicted of the Florida murder, Riess could face the death penalty.

Prior to the murder charge being filed in Florida, Riess was charged with theft for allegedly transferring nearly $10,000 from her dead husband's business account into his personal account. She did not have check writing authority for either account.

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Cancer Corner

Blooming Prairie Cancer Group

Support for BP Cancer Group continues to grow

By HOWARD LESTRUD Staff Writer

Community support for the Blooming Prairie Cancer Group continued to grow during 2018.

"It was again a successful year for our Cancer Group," remarked Cheri Krejci, treasurer.

Donations kept coming into the Cancer Group through a variety of fundraising activities including the two cancer auctions the second weekend in September. The 18th Annual Paint Blooming Prairie Pink auctions were held on Sept. 8 and 9 and brought in $45,000.

Members of the Blooming Prairie High School football team helped put up signage for the Paint Blooming Prairie Pink Celebration which starts in late August and continues through the cancer auctions in early September. (Staff photo by Howard Lestrud)

Other activities sandwiched on the outside of the auctions, brought in an additional $23,000 to bring the total contributions to over $65,000, a new record.

More than 100 items were auctioned on Friday night and another 120 items on Saturday night, the biggest auction night. The Big Tent located just west of The Cue Company was crowded with bidders and workers. Both night auctions went from 7-11 p.m.

The BP Cancer Group routinely gives a hefty check to the Eagles Cancer Telethon held in mid-January in Rochester. Last year, a check for $70,000 was presented to the Eagles Cancer Telethon. A donation of $10,000 was also made to the Hormel Institute for cancer research.

A check (amount unknown at this time) will be given during Eagles Cancer Telethon ceremonies on Saturday, Jan. 19.

A fundraising pancake breakfast will be held the following day, Sunday, Jan. 20 at The Cue Company/Pizza Cellar.

Fundraising for 2019 officially begins Saturday, Jan. 5, 2019 with the Coyotes Fur Cancer event. This marks the second year for this popular event which raised over $17,000 for the BP Cancer Group.

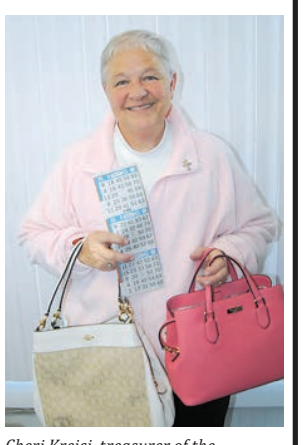
Other upcoming BP Cancer Group events include Purse BINGO on Saturday, April 6 at the BP Servicemen's Club. Last year was the first year for the event which drew over 230 Bingo players. The first-time event brought in over $10,000. Caleb Ostrander was the Bingo caller.

All proceeds from the 2018 Purse Bingo event were given in honor of Phillip Milton who was battling cancer at the time.

Most of the Bingo players were of the female gender but there were a few men playing and one of them won a Coach purse. Rudy Perez of Blooming Prairie won a Coach purse for his favorite lady.

Ham Bingo is always played before Easter and is a popular fundraising event as is Turkey Bingo played just before Thanksgiving.

Cancer donations of course are welcome the year around, says treasurer Cheri Krejci. Many local donations are directed to the BP Cancer Group Community Fund. Those funds help pay for parking passes for cancer patients and for gas cards.



Cheri Krejci, treasurer of the Blooming Prairie Cancer Group, displays two of the purses that were given away at the First Annual BP Cancer Group's Designer Purse Bingo last year at the BP Servicemen's Club. The 2019 event is planned for Saturday, April 6 at the BP Servicemen's Club. (Staff photo by Howard Lestrud)

The BP Cancer Group Community fund was kept healthy at the auctions this past September when auctioneers made appeals both auction nights to help the Community Fund. Forty bidders flashed their bidding numbers to donate $40 each or $1600 for parking passes and the next night they challenged bidders to donator $50 gas cards.

"We have had many loved ones taken away from us this past year, but we have had many survivors as well," says treasurer Krejci. "We must just keep fighting for a cure," Krejci concluded.

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JAN. 2

An alleged attack on a girlfriend with a machete on Christmas Day (2017) morning resulted in serious felony charges, including attempted murder, against an Owatonna man. The attack also involved an officer getting hurt. Jeremiah Joel Bauer, 31, has been charged with second-degree attempted murder, kidnapping and other charges.

Jason House has taken over as general manager of House Chevrolet, the family car business in Owatonna. He previously held a corporate job with Hendrick Automotive in Virginia.

Blooming Prairie American Legion Post 52 and its auxiliary each donated $500 scholarships to two Blooming Prairie graduates—Delaney Nelson and Lucas Zellmer.

Veteran polka musician Luverne Wanous of Owatonna was honored as the grand marshal during the Wenger Band Festival in June.

JAN. 9

Ken Ratzlaff is the new barber in Ellendale. He took over in the barber shop on Main Street, replacing Jim Johnson, who barbered for nearly 45 years in town.

JAN. 16

Radio broadcasters with ties to Steele County have acquired a longtime AM-FM combo in Fairmont. City of Lakes Media, which is owned by Matt Kelelsen and his father, Lynn Ketelsen, and others, took over KSUM-1370 AM and KFMC-106.5 FM. The Ketelsens also operated KOWZ-FM and KRUE Country Radio in Owatonna.

Craig and Dick Kruckeberg, both widely known for their creation and growth of Minimizer and Kruckeberg Industries, were honored as the 2017 Blooming Prairie Area Citizens of the Year. They were honored at the annual chamber banquet.

A change in administration was made at the Blooming Prairie Youth Club. Marcy Sundine was replaced as executive director by Kelli Naatz.

JAN. 23

Joseph Mason, a native of Sioux City, Iowa has taken over as the new chief administrator of Prairie Manor Care Center of Blooming Prairie. He started on Jan. 8 and succeeds Rich Feeney.

The Blooming Prairie Cancer Group donated $70,000 to the Eagles Telethon in Rochester Jan. 13. Members from the group, Phillip Milton, Jennifer Milton and Connie Trom, made the presentation.

Arrow Ace Hardware in Owatonna moved into a new store in the downtown area in an effort to revitalize Owatonna's downtown. Ace took over the former Arnold House.

JAN. 30

An armful of love found its way to Ellendale mayor Russ Goette. Family, friends and neighbors provided support for the mayor, who has been facing medical issues since November 2017. A benefit was held at the Ellendale Community Building for Goette.

The Steele County Times earned six journalism awards in the Minnesota Newspaper Association's annual newspaper contest in Bloomington. The Times captured the coveted Lynn Smith Community Leadership Award for the second time in four years.

Acknowledging in a police interview that it was "young and stupid," a former St. Mary's teacher in Owatonna has admitted to police a decades-old sexual relationship with a student. Terri Ellen Grose, 60, of Owatonna was charged with three felony counts of criminal sexual conduct. The abuse took place between 1980 and 1986.

James Lundgren of Minneapolis began last week as the executive director of the Steele County Historical Society. His career has been focused on working for non-profit organizations. He replaces Kim Purscell, who was removed by the society from the top spot in April 2017.

FEB. 6

The annual fundraiser benefit sponsored by the Blooming Prairie Youth Club offered proof once again that the community steps up on a great scale to support worthwhile causes. A near capacity crowd of enthusiastic attendees and bidders for the auctions assured the club of a most profitable evening of fun and charitable work. The club raised in excess of $21,000.

FEB. 13

Steele County Sheriff Lon Thiele received the Peace Officer of the Year award from the Exchange Club of Steele County. Bruce Kubicek and Mike Brown of the Exchange Club presented the honor to Thiele.

State Farm Insurance in Blooming Prairie has been taken over by Plemel Insurance Agency of Owatonna. Jenn Trostem is the office representative in BP, and Judy Plemel manages the overall operations in Owatonna and BP.

More than 700 people attended a benefit for the Jon Carlson family at the Cue Company in Blooming Prairie. More than $60,000 was raised. Carlson passed away in December.

A centenarian who once proclaimed she did not want to be the oldest person in the world died at the age of 107. Otilla Anderson, who lived in Blooming Prairie for most of her life and most recently in Mankato, died Jan. 29 at Oaklawn Healthcare Center in Mankato.

Court is fully back in session at the Steele County Courthouse in Owatonna after being shutdown for more than a year. On Feb. 12, the historic courthouse became fully operational again with three functional courtrooms. A water pipe burst in January 2017, forcing the closure of the courthouse.

Five honorary chairs with their own cancer stories led the Steele County Relay for Life in July. The chairs included, from left: Gary Corson of Owatonna, Royetta Spurgeon of Hope, Cheri Krejci of Blooming Prairie, Beckie VonRuden of Medford and Chantelle Seykora of Ellendale.

FEB. 20

Steele County Sheriff Lon Thiele announced he is running for a third term as the county's top cop.

FEB. 27

Revol Greens, a greenhouse farm located outside of Medford, has opened to produce locally grown lettuce led by a team of veteran greenhouse growers. The head grower is Steve Amundson, formerly of Blooming Prairie.

Scott Kozelka of Owatonna has been hired as the full-time manager of the Steele County Free Fair. He replaces Jim Gleason, who resigned at the end of 2017 because of health reasons.

Michele A. Lawson has been named as the postmaster of the Blooming Prairie Post Office. She has been acting postmaster since December 2016.

MARCH 6

Members of the Blooming Prairie Legion and Auxiliary celebrated the Legion's 99th birthday. Commander Karl Luiken unveiled an original digital print of the Otto T. Lund Post during the celebration.

The feedlot controversy in Dodge County appeared to be sparking again, but this time in a different township. A lawsuit was filed in Dodge County District Court involving a proposed feedlot in Ripley Township located on the south end of the county.

Bishop Excavating stepped up to donate site preparation for the Blooming Prairie Veterans Memorial. Benji and Nicki Bishop are donating all of the labor and materials for site preparation of the memorial.

The community showed up in force for former fair manager Jim Gleason at a benefit in Owatonna. Gleason was diagnosed with terminal brain cancer in late 2017.

Stephanie Lawson has begun work as Economic Development Authority coordinator for the City of Blooming Prairie. She succeeds Tom Monson, who left to work at Citizens State Bank in Mantorville.

MARCH 13

Janet Simon was presented with the award for Woman of Achievement in Owatonna. The award is handed out each year to one woman for outstanding accomplishments in the community.

The race for Steele County Sheriff began heating up with veteran deputy Darrin Helget announcing his candidacy for sheriff to replace his boss, Lon Thiele.

Prohibition history from the 1920s and 1930s was relived in Blooming Prairie on March 3 with the second annual Speakeasy Night fundraiser.

MARCH 20

Police activity in Blooming Prairie has skyrocketed over the past three years. Call for service have jumped to 3,034 in 2017, a 44 percent increase over 2014 when 1,707 calls for service were reported.

The Minnesota Chapter of the National Football Foundation announced last week that Blooming Prairie High School student Mitchell Oswald was named a 2018 scholar athlete. Oswald was chosen for his academic excellence, leadership and community involvement.

Two Blooming Prairie students are being honored with the coveted Triple A honor. Samantha Wurst and Ethan Arett, seniors at BP, have received the honor.

John Kraling of Blooming Prairie modeled for Cuts for a Cure during the Paint Blooming Prairie Pink in September.

MARCH 27

The murder of a man found shot to death at a rural Blooming Prairie home has prompted a statewide manhunt for his 56-year-old wife and her vehicle. The body of David Riess was found at Prairie Wax Worm Farms at 75859 U.S. Highway 218 just southeast of the city limits of Blooming Prairie.

Another banner fundraiser was put into the records by the Blooming Prairie Education Foundation. The preliminary magic number was reported at $68,000. More than 300 items were auctioned off on March 24.

The dairy princesses and ambassador were crowned Saturday night at the Steele County Dairy Association's annual banquet in Owatonna. This year's princesses and ambassador are Lacey Nelson, Olivia Dantzman, Danielle Layland, Jacob Slater, Becca Zollner and Chloe Schroeder.

The Owatonna Area Chamber of Commerce and Tourism announced the hiring of Karen Pehrson as tourism director. She replaces Katie Godfrey, who left for a position with the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation.

The Blooming Prairie Area Chamber of Commerce voted to become involved in charitable gambling. The organization will operate electronic gambling.

Sidney Schultz of rural Steele County walked away from the twisted wreckage of a camper that nearly took the life of his mother and grandmother May 29 east of Geneva. Weather officials ruled the storm damage was as a result of straight line winds.

APRIL 3

The City of Medford will receive new signage along its borders. This will be the first upgrade of signs welcoming people to Medford since 1997.

Steve's Meat Market in Ellendale has won 11 awards, including the coveted Sweepstakes Championship award for the second straight year, at the Minnesota Association of Meat Processors.

APRIL 17

Blooming Prairie City Administrator Mike Jones has announced he will retire later this year after holding the position for the past 18

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years.

The first of its kind leadership opportunity in Minnesota is being made available to youth in Steele County to help run the state's largest county fair. The 4-H program will establish a Steele County Junior Fair Board.

Corky Ebeling, long-time park and recreation director with Owatonna, retired from his position after 40 years with the parks department.

A nationwide manhunt is underway for a Blooming Prairie woman who authorities believe is now tied to a two state killing spree that includes her husband and a woman she befriended while on the run in Florida. Police are still looking for Lois Riess.

The Steele County Fair began ripping up the north end of the race track on the fairgrounds in October.

APRIL 24

After nearly a month on the run, the U.S. Marshal's Office captured Lois Riess of Blooming Prairie at a restaurant in South Padre Island, Texas. She will be extradited to Florida.

No one is feeling more relieved over the capture of accused killer Lois Riess than Blooming Prairie business owners Tess and Rod Koster. They were staying at their Florida home in early April when Riess showed up in their driveway. The couple is thankful to be alive.

MAY 1

Accused killer Lois Riess has been transferred to a Florida jail to face murder charges in the death of a woman she befriended while on the run from allegedly killing her husband outside of Blooming Prairie.

Pastor Heidi Heimgartner and her husband, Paul, brought home a trunk full of trophies from the annual Dancing with Our Steele County Stars competition in Medford.

Malia Norton, an elementary teacher in Medford, has been named one of 12 finalists for Minnesota Teacher of the Year.

MAY 8

One of the sons of accused grandma killer Lois Riess of BP took to the national airwaves to say his mother is a "good lady" with "demons." Brandon Riess of Eyota appeared on Inside Edition.

In yet another blow to the Corridors of Commerce project, MnDOT has once again snubbed the U.S. Highway 14 project and placed the funding for future highway projects in other areas of the state, primarily in the Twin Cities metro area.

Former Owatonna teacher Terri Grose, 61, was sentenced to 180 days in jail, placed on five years probation, fined $800 and ordered to pay restitution of $15,390 on criminal sexual conduct charges. She had sexual relations with a former student in the 1980s.

Despite personal setbacks, Frank Vorlicek of Blooming Prairie is back for another year at Frank & Tom's. He has been battling several health issues in recent months and it didn't appear he would be able to operate the popular spring greenhouse again.

MAY 15

Police seized a large amount of drugs and weapons, including a loaded firearm, during a drug bust in Blooming Prairie. Police executed the search warrant at a residence in the 500 block of Center Avenue on May 3 with the SWAT team and Steele County Sheriff's Office assisting.

In what would be one of the largest wind projects in the area, a Florida company is proposing to bring 71 turbines to Steele and Dodge counties next year. NextEra Energy Resources revealed its plans to construct a large wind farm in Aurora and Havana townships on the east side of Stele County. Most of the project would be built in Dodge County's Ripley Township.

Bill Rinkenberger, vocational agriculture instructor and Future Farmers of America chapter advisor at Blooming Prairie High School, was recently honored with an Honorary FFA Degree. He received the honor at the state FFA Convention in Minneapolis.

After being snubbed by state transportation officials, a state senator is breathing new life into potential funding for completing the U.S. Highway 14 project between Dodge Center and Owatonna. Senator Dave Senjem introduced a measure that would provide $174 million for the Highway 14 project.

A chunk of land that has been causing restlessness with Medford School officials for several years has finally been sold. The School Board accepted an offer from Timbercrest, LLC for 16 acres of land on Fifth Avenue SE in Medford.

MAY 22

The Arkema Inc. plant in Blooming Prairie was recognized for excellence in workplace safety and health at the Governor's Safety Awards luncheon on May 10 in Minneapolis.

Saturday, May 19 was a special day in Blooming Prairie. It was the day when a dream became reality, a dream to have a veterans memorial paying tribute to the many veterans who have served from this area, or are related to current residents.

MAY 29

The author of a book that portrays the life of a Blooming Prairie man has earned a top honor. Annie Proulx has been named the winner of the 2018 Library of Congress prize for American Fiction, which recognizes a writer whose work has "told us something new about the American experience." She is author of Brokeback Mountain based on the true story of Brad Trom of BP and his relations with another man.

A single train car derailed in August in Blooming Prairie. No one was hurt during the derailment.

JUNE 5

As Minnesota's governor signed the bonding bill last week, a cloud of uncertainty that loomed for more than 25 years had finally been lifted off Southern Minnesota. U.S. Highway 14 will finally become a continuous four-lane stretch between Rochester and Mankato.

A severe storm rolled through northern Freeborn County, hitting a turkey farm east of Geneva on May 29. The storm decimated the farm and destroyed 8,000 turkeys. Two women were seriously hurt during the late afternoon storm.

The lawsuit aimed at blocking a feedlot operation from being constructed in Dodge County has been dismissed, paving the way for Timothy Langdon of Cannon Falls to continue with the project.

JUNE 12

A motor vehicle crash on the east side of Steele County seriously injured two small children. They were airlifted to St. Mary's in Rochester. Jessica Oeltjenbruns was driving with her two children, when they collided with a truck near their home.

Jessica and Mark Oeltjenbruns shared a hug with their children, Alexis and Isaac, who survived a serious car crash.

Dr. Jeffrey Schwert, owner of the Blooming Prairie Dental Center, relies on Big Red for his means of transportation. Big Red is a faithful Ford F150 that recently turned 410,000 miles without any work on the engine.

A Standard sign from the old Apco Station in Blooming Prairie has been erected at the Village of Yesteryear in Owatonna. The sign has been installed at Gus' Station, the cornerstone exhibit of the village sponsored by the Steele County Historical Society.

JUNE 19

Luverne Wanous of Owatonna kicked off the Harry Wenger Marching Band Festival Saturday as grand marshal by playing polka music on his concertina. Wanous has been a musician for nearly 70 years.

JUNE 26

Craig Helgeson has rejoined the Blooming Prairie Police Department after spending nearly the past three years as a Steele County sheriff's deputy.

A perfect weather day greeted the 60 riders who participated in the annual Cruise for Cancer ride on Saturday. Harvey Farr of J&H Liquor led the ride on his motorcycle.

JULY 3

Steele County's ex-top administrator reached a settlement with her former bosses for $225,000. The Steele County Board agreed to pay Laura Elvebak the money to end the lawsuit she filed against the county in 2017.

Florida officials announced they would be seeking the death penalty against Lois Riess of Blooming Prairie for allegedly killing a woman she met in Fort Myers Beach in April.

The Main Street of Blooming Prairie came alive on July 1 as more than 100 people took their time to walk the street. Residents learned more about what business was located where on Main Street.

JULY 10

A severe thunderstorm forced the first ever cancellation of the Fourth of July Parade in Blooming Prairie. It marked the first time in the 44-year history of the parade that it had been cancelled by rain.

JULY 17

The race for Steele County Sheriff took an unexpected turn with supporters of the challenger, Darrin Helget, spreading false rumors about police coverage in BP. In an unusual step, city administrator Mike Jones took to social media to address the concerns about disbanding the police department and admitted the city was embarrassed about what had transpired.

A three-member Minnesota Court of Appeals upheld a gross misdemeanor domestic assault conviction against Richard Dominguez of Blooming Prairie. The court also ordered that Dominguez must pay $2,800 in restitution to the victim's family.

A renovation at the Beer Garden on the Steele County fairgrounds led to the discovery of 1920s documents, which fair historians described as "pirate's gold."

A Steele County District Court judge has ordered the former Steele County Times business manager to pay back the losses in their entirety to the newspaper. Kimberly Kay Hammer, 54, of Clarks Grove must pay back $15,848 in restitution by December 2022.

GRIEF RELIEF

Many people aren't quite sure what to say when they visit a funeral home. The fact is nothing can be said to adequately express our lost or make the bereaved family member to feel better. Words are not important. But it is appreciated that you care enough to express your sympathy. When a friend loses a loved one convey your feelings at the funeral home with a hug or a word. And offer your assistance. You'll be appreciated for caring.

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JULY 24

The Rev. Michael Walerius has joined First Lutheran Church in Blooming Prairie as associate pastor.

An estimated 179 people came to the farm of Leo Seykora to remember his brother, William J. Seykora, who was killed in action in Vietnam on April 27, 1968. Seykora was serving in the U.S. Army.

Seth Peterson and Rachael Oswald were crowned homecoming royalty in Blooming Prairie Sept. 24.

JULY 24

This year's Steele County Relay for Life generated more than $74,000, bringing the total raised over the past 25 years to $2.1 million. The honorary chairs for this year's relay were Gary Corson of Owatonna, Royetta Spurgeon of Hope, Cheri Krejci of Blooming Praiire, Beckie VonRuden of Medford and Chantelle Seykora of Ellendale.

A 7-year-old boy from Owatonna drowned in a pond in Dodge County July 17. Gabriel F. Kuhlman was pulled from Naylor's Pond in Wasioja Township about three hours after he went under water while swimming with his brother and a friend.

The Owatonna Chamber's Mainstreet program hosted its first Downtown Thursday celebration featuring live music, food and fun.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Southern Minnesota received the top small-mid agency in the nation. The local agency received the award at the national conference in St. Louis.

AUG. 7

A single train car derailed at the crossing by 2nd Street SE and Mill Avenue near Vandal's Family Market in Blooming Prairie Aug. 1. No injuries were reported.

Owatonna Business Women awarded the local Bremer Bank as Business of the Year, citing its continued support of the Owatonna Business Women scholarship fund and a range of contributions to the community since expanding into Owatonna.

AUG. 14

Four large cutting-edge natural gas generator sets promise to bring more efficient and reliable energy to the region. The Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency dedicated a 38.8-megawatt station in Owatonna during an open house Aug. 8.

The iconic sign at Lansing Corners has been relit. The sign has been a trademark of the popular restaurant for many years.

AUG. 21

A last minute deal averted a trial for Steele County Commissioner James Brady. He entered into a plea bargain by pleading guilty to an Alford plea in Waseca County District Court just moments before his trial was set to get underway.

The Steele County Sheriff's Office is investigating an armed home invasion robbery at a rural residence southwest of Owatonna on Aug. 15. The robbers took cash and jewelry.

Mary Larson of Claremont and Gene Kispert of Owatonna were recognized as the outstanding senior citizens for Steele County.

Despite rainy spells throughout the Steele County Fair, the fair's attendance finished 4 percent up and the highest attendance in four years. The estimated attendance was 313,046.

A new record donation to Toys for Tots of Steele County was etched in dollars and cents by the Bikes of Blooming ride on July 21. A check for $14,568 was presented to Toys for Toys on Aug. 18.

AUG. 28

The 2018 Blooming Prairie Cancer Auction was dedicated to Philip Milton, who died in July from cancer.

Michael Green has been named the new plant manager at Arkema in Blooming Prairie. He succeeds David Price, who was plant manager for five years.

SEPT. 11

Tragedy struck the new school year in Blooming Prairie when Emerson Harberts, a third grader at the elementary school, was killed in a two-vehicle crash by Claremont. Her mother, Rachel Harberts, a BP school teacher, and brother, Jaxon, were also seriously injured in the crash.

Anthony Buttera, the training and compliance officer for the Steele County Detention Center, earned a prestigious state award through the Minnesota Sheriff's Association.

The 18th annual Blooming Prairie Cancer Group benefit auctions, part of the Paint BP Pink event, brought in $45,000, setting a new record.

SEPT. 18

A beloved grade school teacher in Blooming Prairie died from the injuries she suffered in the car crash that initially killer her 8-year-old daughter. Rachel Harberts of Dodge Center passed away Sept. 15.

Owatonna's Kaplan's Woods Parkway was named one of the 10 best parks in the state for a fall hike by Explore Minnesota. The city also celebrated the official opening of a new paved trail near 18th Street SW in Kaplan's Woods.

The Blooming Prairie City Council approved the hire of David Drown Associates to conduct the search for the new city administrator.

Mary Cronin of Medford was honored with the Live United Award from the United Way of Steele County.

SEPT. 25

Minimizer of Blooming Prairie entered into a re-capitalization plan with Capital Partners, which has made an investment into Minimizer. Capital Partners is based in Connecticut.

A Touch of Charm of Blooming Prairie has a new owner and it will also soon have a new name, Prairie Home Floral, Décor & Gifts. Leanne Hanson, who has owned the shop for 30 years, will relinquish ownership to Jacqueline Reiter Vorlicek on Jan. 1.

A severe thunderstorm caused heavy damage in Owatonna Sept. 20. The National Weather Service ruled an EF1 tornado hit the Medford area. About 4,300 homes in Owatonna were without power during the height of the storm.

Andrew Kubista was deployed to Kuwait for a second time. He will be serving for one year.

A small tornado packing wind speeds of 95-105 mph ripped through Owatonna Sept. 20 uprooting hundreds of trees.

OCT. 2

Seth Peterson and Rachael Oswald were named Homecoming King and Queen at Blooming Prairie High School.

Two Blooming Prairie High School graduates and two educators were honored by the Blooming Prairie Education Foundation Sept. 29. Receiving Blossoms Forever awards were Peggy Tashima, Jay Iverson, Bob Nahlovsky and Dennis Kruckeberg.

First Lutheran Church volunteer Dorothy Trom saw stars in preparation for the Blooming Prairie church's annual Lutefisk Dinner. Actually, she was hamming it up with rosettes she was making for the dinner.

OCT. 9

The Ellendale Fire Department recently announced it has been awarded a $138,000 Federal Emergency Management Agency grant. The grant will be used to purchase new Self-Contained Breathing Apparatuses for the department.

OCT. 16

The idea has been swirling around for years, but it wasn't until last week that the Steele County Fair began kicking around some dirt to make it become reality. Workers removed the north end race track as part of the fair's "new reconfiguration area." The area will be used to add more space to the fair beginning next year.

Steele County has been issued a fine of $7,000 by OSHA for having extensive bats in the county courthouse. The county is appealing the fine.

Korey Kamholz has been named the Owatonna Firefighter of the Year. He has been full time with the department for 38 years.

OCT. 23

Less than two weeks before the election, Sheriff Lon Thiele broke his silence over ongoing negative campaign smears against him and attacks on his credibility. Thiele lashed out about how the campaign is being run by his opponent, veteran deputy Darrin Helget.

It was a somber moment for the Blooming Prairie School Board on Oct. 15 as board members sat in silence and disbelief after learning of longtime superintendent Barry Olson's intent to retire at the end of the 2018-19 school year.

The Blooming Prairie Elementary School will use a $216,000 state grant to bolster safety and security.

OCT. 30

Julio Caballero Cano, 45, of Owatonna has been charged in Steele County District Court with second-degree attempted murder and other charges in connection with attacking his son.

Voters in Steele County will be utilizing new voting machines during the general election Nov. 6.

NOV. 6

Gary Hird has taken over as executive director of South Central Human Relations in Owatonna. He replaces Carolyn Wheeler.

The Steele County Fair showed a $33,000 profit for 2018. Overall the fair tallied $1,147,000 in total revenue.

NOV. 13

A Blooming Prairie area farmer has joined in a national lawsuit against the Environmental Protection Agency's efforts to shield factory farms from reporting toxic emissions. Lowell Trom is fighting against a move by the Trump administration's EPA to limit local communities' access to information about the toxic emissions released from factory farms.

Steele County Sheriff Lon Thiele survived an election scare by being elected to his third term as sheriff. Thiele captured 53 percent of the vote compared to deputy Darrin Helget's 46 percent.

Blooming Prairie Elementary will soon receive a new playground valued at $74,000.

The Owatonna Public Utilities Commission announced the appointment of Roger Warehime as the new general manager of Owatonna Public Utilities. Warehime replaces Mark Fritsch, who will retire on Dec. 28.

NOV. 20

Mike and Sandy Jones of Blooming Prairie have been selected as Citizens of the Year for 2018.

Dan Peach, police officer in Blooming Prairie, has been elected president for the Blooming Prairie Chamber of Commerce for 2019. Miranda Camry of Highway 218 Liquor will join him as vice president.

Sandra Blaha of Owatonna has been recognized as the volunteer of the year for the Steele County Historical Society.

Jessica and Mark Oeltjenbruns of rural Steele County are thankful for the gift of life after their two children, Alexis and Isaac, recovered from serious injuries suffered in a car crash in June. The prognosis initially did not look good, but the children have since rebounded and appear to be perfectly healthy.

NOV. 27

The Blooming Prairie Fire Department has been awarded a $111,377 federal grant, which will be used to replaced its outdated breathing equipment allowing firefighters to more safely enter burning buildings and work around other hazardous materials.

DEC. 4

The Community task Force on Facilities in Owatonna has recommended that the school district build a new state of the art high school on a new site.

DEC. 11

The Blooming Prairie Education Foundation approved $67,800 in allocations to the BP School District.

Three major companies have committed significant financial and product support for a new high school in Owatonna even before the board voted on a recommendation to build a new school.

Siguard and Leland Johnson of Owatonna have been honored as honorary lifetime farmers through the Minnesota Farm Bureau.

DEC. 18

The issue of building a new high school will end up in the hands of voters next spring after action taking by the Owatonna School Board Dec. 10. A special school election will take place May 14.

DEC. 25

The first two graduates of the Steele Waseca Drug Court DWI Track Program were honored at a special ceremony Dec. 19. Graduating were Jamison Allen and Brandon Oreskovich, both of Owatonna.

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BLOTTER SPOTLIGHT

BLOTTER SPOTLIGHT: Restraining Order: Deputies responded to a restraining order violation in the 4600 block of County Road 45N in Clinton Falls Township at 7:37 a.m.

COURT NEWS
Dodge County

The following case was heard in Dodge County District Court the week of Dec. 10 with Judge Jodi L. Williamson presiding:

Dana L. Gernes, 25, Shakopee, previously appeared and was convicted of felony receiving stolen property. She was sentenced to $130 and 19 months in Shakopee State Prison.

Michael J. Tully, 29, West Concord, previously appeared and was convicted of felony theft of motor vehicle and gross misdemeanor reckless driving. Tully was sentenced to $2,427.12, 18 days in county jail, no possession of firearms, no alcohol or controlled substance use, do not enter liquor establishments, cognitive skill training, mental health screening, write letter of apology, 100 hours of community service and 5 years of supervised probation.

Roderick M. Washington, 47, previously appeared and was convicted of felony assault and felony possession of dangerous weapon in courthouse. Washington was sentenced to $130 and 15 months in St. Cloud State Prison.

The following misdemeanors were heard in Dodge County District Court the week of Dec. 10 – 17:

DODGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Jonah K. Abrahamson, 35, Farmington, parking violation, $32; Jeff M. Bowman, 44, Kasson, speeding, $140; Brie K. Clark, 26, Dodge Center, unnecessary noise, $100; McKenzie M. Colvin, 27, Kasson, speeding, $120; Tristen M. Haberman, 21, Blooming Prairie, speeding, $220; Ashley M. Heckmann, 20, Rochester, possession of marijuana and no license in possession, $130, 5 hours of community service and 1 year of unsupervised probation; Katie L. Koebele, 21, Mantorville, speeding, $130; Zachary R. Lair, 40, Dodge Center, DWI, $1,010, 3 days in county jail, no alcohol or controlled substance use, chemical assessment, do not enter liquor establishments and 2 years of supervised probation; Teagan M. Langley, 19, Kasson, failure to yield, $130; Dustin J. Lunn, 34, Scottsdale, AZ, speeding, $140; Peggy A. Marquette, 52, Kasson, seat belt, $10; Kristen A. McKee, 25, Hayfield, no insurance and revoked license, $480; Amber M. Mills, 33, Kasson, speeding, $140; Jade R. Nordby, 18, Owatonna, speeding, $120; Rodney A. Pickens, 38, Rochester, issue dishonored check, $130, 3 days in county jail and 1 year of probation; Shawn T. Schmerbeck, 23, Mantorville, stop sign, $130; Kyle R. Tucke, 51, Dodge Center, parking violation, $32; Brock A. Westrom, 29, Pine Island, speeding, $140.

KASSON POLICE DEPARTMENT

Roger F. Bierlen, 67, Kasson, parking violation, $32; Silvia J. Colin Lopez, 32, West Concord, invalid license, $180; Juan Escudero, 49, Owatonna, DWI, $1,005, 2 days in county jail, no alcohol or controlled substance use, do not enter liquor establishments, chemical assessment, 90 hours of community service and 2 years of supervised probation; Lyndon M. Franzen, 67, Webster City, IA, parking violation, $32; Alfredo Gonzalez Rodriguez, 26, Rochester, revoked license, $280; Billy W. Loveday, 46, Mantorville, seat belt, $105; Dolan S. O'Malley, 45, Kasson, revoked license, stay of adjudication, $200 and 6 months of unsupervised probation; Stephanie J. Preston, 33, St. Paul, possession of marijuana, stay of adjudication, $50, 2 days in county jail, no alcohol or controlled substance use, do not enter liquor establishments, chemical dependency evaluation and 5 years of supervised probation; Eric L. Unger, 32, Kasson, parking violation, $32.

MN STATE PATROL ROCHESTER

Krystle S. Bernatz, 28, Mantorville, seat belt, $105; Francis Brady, 31, Milwaukee, WI, speeding, $220; Shawna L. Dickenson, 33, Waseca, speeding, $120; Greg J. Dunbar, 35, Waseca, no license and no insurance, $380; Nicholas L. Garlisch, 19, St. Charles, IL, speeding, $120; Robert S. Garson, 41, Hayfield, speeding, $220; Derak C. Knudson, 31, West Concord, speeding, $120; Amber K. Murrell, 26, Rochester, speeding, $130; Jerry A. Reis, 60, Sargeant, seat belt, $105; Makenna L. Schliem, 18, Rochester, speeding, $130; Daniel J. Trainor, 31, Mankato, speeding, $130; Jenna J. Volgarino, 24, Hayfield, speeding, $120.

WEST CONCORD POLICE DEPARTMENT

Michael C. Davis, 45, West Concord, parking violation, $32.

POLICE BLOTTER
Owatonna Police

Dec. 14

Hit and Run: At 10:25 a.m., a hit and run accident resulting in property damage occurred in the 1400 block of 21st Ave. NW.

Fraud: Officer took a report of a fraud incident in the 2200 block of Hartle Ave. SE at 1:09 p.m.

Warrant: Officer made a warrant arrest in the 2300 block of 46th St. NW at 1:53 p.m.

Theft: Police received a theft report from the 200 block of Larch Ave. NE at 6:35 p.m.

Dec. 15

DWI: Police arrested a motorist for driving while intoxicated at South St. E. and Cedar Ave. S. at 8:28 a.m.

Crash: Paramedics and officers responded to a motor vehicle accident with injuries in the 3100 block of 3rd Ave. NE at 11:46 a.m.

Domestic: Police responded to a domestic disturbance in the 500 block of Main St. E. at 2:44 p.m.

Suspicion: At 3:08 p.m., officers responded to suspicious activity in the 2200 block of 46th St. NW. They arrested a subject at the scene.

Dec. 16

Shoplifting: At 3:35 a.m., a shoplifting incident occurred in the 1100 block of Frontage Rd. W.

Vandalism: Property damage was reported in the 1500 block of Deer Trail Lane NE at 6:25 a.m. and the 400 block of Dartt Ave. NE at 11:20 a.m.

Dec. 17

Assist: Police assisted another agency with arrested a subject in the 600 block of Cedar Ave. N. at 7:30 a.m.

Vandalism: Property damage was reported in the 400 block of Dartt Ave. NE at 8:19 a.m.

Theft: Officer took a theft report in the 100 block of 22nd St. NW at 2:36 p.m.

Hit and Run: At 8:44 p.m., a hit and run accident resulting in property damage occurred in the 100 block of Bridge St. W.

Domestic: Police responded to a domestic disturbance in the 300 block of Allan Ave. SW at 9:55 p.m. They arrested a subject at the scene.

Shoplifting: Officer arrested a subject for shoplifting in the 1100 block of Frontage Rd. W. at 9:58 p.m.

Dec. 18

Vandalism: Property damage was reported in the 400 block of Mineral Springs Road NE at 7:36 a.m.

Crash: At 8:55 p.m., a motor vehicle accident resulting in property damage occurred at Truman Ave. SE and 16th St. SE. Police issued a citation to one of the drivers.

Criminal Sexual Conduct: Police began an investigation of criminal sexual conduct in the 800 block of Rose St. E. at 9:37 p.m.

Dec. 19

DWI: Police made a DWI arrest in the 1600 block of Mineral Springs Parkway at 1:48 a.m.

Warrant: Officer made a warrant arrest in the 600 block of Cedar Ave. N. at 11 a.m.

Suspicion: Police responded to suspicious activity in the 3300 block of Park Dr. NW at 11:36 a.m.

Mental Health: At 4:23 p.m., officers responded to a mental health incident in the 2200 block of 30th St. NW.

STEELE COUNTY SHERIFF

Dec. 14

DWI: Deputies arrested a motorist for driving while intoxicated in the 1000 block of 47th Ave. NW in Meriden Township at 2:26 p.m.

Dec. 15

DWI: Deputy made a DWI arrest on Interstate 35 southbound in Owatonna at 2:10 a.m.

Drugs: Deputies arrested a subject for drug activity at the detention center at 4:37 a.m.

Dec. 16

Vandalism: Property damage was reported in the 300 block of Park Dr. NW in Owatonna at 12:20 a.m.

Arrest: Deputies arrested a juvenile during a traffic stop on Interstate 35 northbound in Clinton Falls Township at 12:36 a.m.

DWI: Deputy made a DWI arrest in the 3800 block of 93rd St. SW in Somerset Township at 9:52 p.m.

Dec. 17

Warrant: Deputy made a warrant arrest in the 100 block of Main St. E. in Owatonna at 8:46 a.m.

Child Protection: Deputies received a child protection report from the 500 block of 3rd St. NE in Medford at 1:15 p.m.

Assault: Deputies responded to an assault in the 9900 block of 34th Ave. SE in Somerset Township at 1:16 p.m.

Juvenile: Deputies received a juvenile complaint from the 600 block of School St. in Ellendale at 1:27 p.m.

Arrest: Deputies arrested a subject after responded to a motorist assist in the 10000 block of Highway 218 in Aurora Township at 10:52 p.m.

Dec. 18

Hit and Run: At 2:30 p.m., a hit and run accident resulting in property damage occurred in the 6800 block of Frontage Rd. W. in Medford.

Dec. 20

Restraining Order: Deputies responded to a restraining order violation in the 4600 block of County Road 45 N. in Clinton Falls Township at 7:37 a.m.

Warrant: Deputy made a warrant arrest in the 2000 block of Alexander St. SW at 8:11 p.m.

POLICE BLOTTER
Steele County arrests

OWATONNA POLICE

Raymond Scott Keith, 40, arrested at 5:06 p.m. Dec. 15, felony probation violation, held for court.

Zachary Richard Savoie, 27, arrested at 11:03 p.m. Dec. 13, felony controlled substance, theft, fleeing, possession of hypo needle and drug paraphernalia, contempt of court, held for court.

Oscar Trevino III, 30, arrested at 8 a.m. Dec. 17, apprehension and detention arrest, held for court.

Mason Lee Evans, 19, arrested at 11:15 p.m. Dec. 17, felony domestic assault/assault, false imprisonment and interference with 911, held for court.

Tyler Matthew Lutz, 29, arrested at 2:34 a.m. Dec. 19, DWI, held for court.

STEELE COUNTY SHERIFF

Jonathan Daniel Heien, 29, arrested at 12:44 p.m. Dec. 13, probation violation, body only.

Anne Elizabeth Pommerenke, 30, arrested at 2:40 a.m. Dec. 15, DWI, held for court.

CRIME BRIEF

BEING HIGH LEADS TO POOR CHOICES

SAVOIE

A Faribault man has found that being high can lead to some poor choices.

Owatonna Police responded to Walmart for a theft-in-progress on Dec. 17. Store officials reported a man was concealing items in back pack and had two TVs in a shopping cart. Once officers arrived, the chase was on. A short foot pursuit ended when the man surrendered. Officers arrested Zachary Savoie, 27.

During a search, an officer uncovered a hypodermic needle, a bindle and a folded up dollar bill containing a total of .4 grams of heroin. A bindle is a piece of paper often folded into a triangle to carry powdered drugs, police said.

Savoie told police has was high on heroin, made some bad choices and stole from Walmart.

He has been charged with theft, fifth-degree possession of a controlled substance and fleeing police on foot.

COURT NEWS
Steele County

The following case was heard in Steele County District Court the week of Dec. 10 with Judge Joseph A. Bueltel presiding:

Blake L. MacPherson, 20, Owatonna, previously appeared and was convicted of felony aggravated robbery. The defendant was sentenced to 60 days in county jail, no alcohol or controlled substance use, do not enter liquor establishments, no possession of firearms and 7 months of supervised probation.

The following case was heard in Steele County District Court the week of Dec. 10 with Judge Ross L. Leuning presiding:

Dennis J. Hedberg, 45, Owatonna, previously appeared and was convicted of felony restraining order violation. Hedberg was sentenced to $131 and 18 months in St. Cloud State Prison.

The following misdemeanors and petty misdemeanors were heard in Steele County District Court the week of Dec. 10 – 14:

BLOOMING PRAIRIE POLICE DEPARTMENT

Elizabeth M. Ticas, 31, Lavergne, TN, speeding and no insurance, $341.

MN STATE PATROL ROCHESTER

Mohamed A. Aden, 18, Faribault, speeding and no license in possession, $241; Jesse L. Becker, 27, Ellendale, speeding, $121; Andrew S. Bogue, 36, Northfield, texting while driving, $131; Simen A. Hayes, 18, Minnetonka, speeding, $131; Kevin A. Jones, 33, Faribault, speeding, $121; Marissa M. Kellis, 19, Faribault, speeding, $221; Matthew D. Lohrmann, 36, Faribault, speeding, $121; Laltigus R. Lyons, 24, Faribault, revoked license, $281; Chad R. Olson, 44, Rochester, seat belt, $106; Syed M. Qadri, 52, Chicago, IL, speeding, $100; Jesse F. Riley, 39, Owatonna, revoked license and no insurance, $481; Hassam A. Shaikh, 19, Edina, restricted license violation, $131; Michael J. Sutlief, 26, Waseca, speeding and failure to change information on license, $161; Nathaniel B. Thompson, 31, Ellendale, window tint violation, $121.

OWATONNA POLICE DEPARTMENT

Amy L. Berrier, 41, Owatonna, seat belt, $106; Micayla E. Best, 24, Waseca, stop sign, no insurance, expired tabs and speeding, $401; Lyndsay L. Bohlman, 35, Owatonna, prohibited passing, $131; Jathan P. Dettmer, 22, Medford, revoked license, $281; Tricia L. Fenger, 45, Owatonna, failure to yield, $131; Stetson P. Fox, 31, Owatonna, suspended license, $281; Jhovani Garcia Pina, 17, Owatonna, speeding, $221; Jesse Garza, 60, Claremont, seat belt, $106; Christopher C. Gent, 31, Owatonna, expired registration, $111; Benjamin L. Grandia, 16, Owatonna, seat belt, $106; Matthew R. Hager, 29, Owatonna, speeding and revoked license, $341; Tiffany A. Hernandez, 29, Owatonna, no license, $181; Nikeya K. Jones, 29, Owatonna, no insurance and suspended license, $481; Holly A. Kuball, 28, Medford, theft, $325.48,

WARRANTS: The following individuals have active warrants in Steele County. The Sheriff provides this information as a public service

- Harold Crafton – give false name - $500 bail
- Sylvia Cramer – warrant – no bail
- Elias Cruz – DWI - $12,000 bail
- Jose Cruz – DWI - $1,400 bail
- Keith Cruz – DWI – no bail
- Victor Cruz-Puentes – fleeing in motor vehicle - $5,000 bail
- Stuart Culpepper – DWI - $700 bail
- Joel Dahl – DWI - $3,000 bail
- James Davis – domestic assault – no bail
- Lonell Davis – cancelled license – no bail
- Jeanne Day – worthless check - $10,000 bail
- Federico de la Cerda Jr. – controlled substance - $75,000 bail
- Arturo Dector – DWI – no bail
- Felipe Delacerda – DWI - $750 bail
- Jose Delbosque – dishonored checks - $10,000 bail
- Joseph Deleon – forged check – no bail
- Jose Delrio – criminal damage to property - $3,000 bail
- Rachell Dentz – obstructing - $3,000 bail
- Donald Derrick – theft – no bail
- James Desbiens – child support – no bail

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For advice about your rights, contact an attorney

More prizes offered for 2nd coyote hunt

BY HOWARD LESTRUD
STAFF WRITER

STAFF PHOTO BY HOWARD LESTRUD

Successful coyote hunters in last year's first Coyotes 'Fur' Cancer fundraiser for the Blooming Prairie Cancer Group helped raise $18,000. This year's goal is $20,000, say organizers Craig Anderson and Elliott Herdina.

More prizes will be offered this year at the Second Annual Coyotes 'Fur' Cancer fundraiser set for Saturday, Jan. 5.

Event chairmen Elliott Herdina and Craig Anderson had a brainstorm last year to run a fundraiser for the Blooming Prairie Cancer Group.

This fundraiser was unique. It involved chasing coyotes. The novel fundraiser made over $18,000 for the BP Cancer Group.

Two guns will be raffled off. One is a 1022 Ruger and the other is a .243 Rossi. Two bows will also be raffled.

Many silent auction items will be featured, too, including a National Football League football autographed by Minnesota Vikings start receiver Adam Thielen.

Raffle tickets cost $20 each. Donations will be accepted for a soup and chili supper.

Hunters will go out in groups in the early morning. When the hunt is over, hunters will bring their coyotes to the back parking lot of the Cue Company.

Anderson and Herdina said hunting groups from Kenyon, Clarks Grove and Blooming Prairie are expected to participate.

Purchase tickets at Cumberland's Northwest Trappers Supply, Inc. of Owatonna, The Cue Company of Blooming Prairie, Dean's Smoke Shack of Geneva and Coordes Guns in Lansing.

No license is required to hunt coyotes since they are considered varmints. Furs will be sold anywhere from $7 to $45, Herdina says.

"We are so thankful for the efforts of these hunters," said Cheri Krejci, Cancer Group treasurer.

For more information on the coyote hunt and fundraiser, contact Anderson or Herdina.

U of M sets Research Updates for ag professionals

There are six locations scheduled for the 2019 Research Updates: Waseca, Kasson and Lamberton (Jan. 8, 9 and 10 respectively) and Morris, Willmar and Crookston (Jan. 15, 16 and 17 respectively) from 12:30 to 4:40 p.m.

Registration fee is $55 through Jan. 4, and then $60 beginning Jan. 5. Online registration, meeting sites and session abstracts can be found on our website at z.umn.edu/researchupdates or onsite registration begins at 11:30 a.m. at each location.

The program will feature research-based strategies to deal with today's changing pests, diseases, varieties, and nutrient and environmental recommendations. Continuing education units for Certified Crop Advisors have been applied for including: 1 in Nutrient Management and 3 in Pest Management, (additional 1 in Crop Management at Crookston).

Educational Sessions for all locations (except Crookston):

- Integrated weed management – Now is the time! Dr. Jeff Gunsolus
- Updates on emerging challenges with insect management in soybean and corn. Dr. Robert Koch
- A behind-the-scenes look at corn and soybean diseases in Minnesota. Dr. Dean Malvick
- Lessons learned in variable rate nitrogen trials. Brad Carlson (at Waseca & Rochester)
- Managing sulfur in crop species in western Minnesota. Dr. Dan Kaiser (at Lamberton, Morris and Willmar)

Steele County seeks Century Farms

Applications for the recognition of 2019 Century Farms in Steele County are now available at the office of the Steele County Free Fair. Century Farms will be recognized during the Steele County Livestock Hall of Fame program on Tuesday, Aug. 13.

Farms that qualify for the Century Farm recognition are those that are at least 100 years old in 2019 according to abstract of title, land patent, original deed, county land records, court file in registration proceedings or other authentic land records. The family must have owned the farm for 100 years or more. Ownership must be continuous.

To obtain application forms on line go to MNstatefair.org. Deadline for applications is Feb. 26.

Owatonna Winter Weekend Out planned in late January

The Owatonna Parks and Recreation has a fun-filled, snow fun, weekend planned! Take a look at the weekend's activities and like our page on Facebook to stay updated on the weekend's activities.

Snow Sculpture Competition – get your team together and register for the first annual Snow Sculpture Competition in Central Park! Register on the Park & Rec website.

- Carving will take place Jan. 17-20. Spectators are welcome to watch teams carve their sculptures!
- Carvings will be done by 10 a.m. Jan. 20. Come and view the finished sculptures! Sculptures will be available for viewing until they melt.
- Prizes for first and second places!

FRIDAY, JANUARY 25:
Sledding at West Hills
Time: 5 p.m.
Sledding on the Hill- decorate your sled with lights and glow sticks!
Free Admission to West Hills Tennis and Fitness Center
Time: 5-7 p.m.
Gym, walking track, cardio room, and weight room is open for use. Swimming will also be available from 6-7 p.m.. The tennis courts will also be open for beginner, intermediate, and advanced players, with games, drills, and prizes hosted by tennis pro Kelly Baker and the Owatonna Tennis Association. (Space is limited)

SATURDAY, JAN. 26:
Icicle Dive
Time: 11 a.m.
Are you brave enough to jump into a frozen lake to raise money for We All Play Owatonna? We are hosting our first-ever Icicle Dive at Lake Kohlmier. Along with the chilly swim we will have frozen lawn games and treats to keep everyone warm.

Fat Bike Demo
Time: 11 a.m.-1 p.m.
Have you ever wanted to try fat tire biking? Now's your chance! Straight River Sports will be at Kaplan's Woods, providing fat tire bikes for you to give it a try.
Sled Dogs
Time: 2-5 p.m.
Come and meet real working sled dogs at Morehouse Park! Learn about the equipment, lingo, and history of the dogs while playing games!
Rock on Ice
Time: 6-8 p.m.
Music, lights, fun...we'll be Rockin on Ice! Bring the whole family down, warm up by the bonfire and enjoy a night skating to the music!
Kids Games/Activities/ Rec on the Go
Time: 6-8 p.m.
Bring your own props and decorations for a Build Your Own Snowman Competition. Judging will begin at 7:30 p.m. Additionally we will have snow paint to create your very own snow art, plus winter lawn games and other fun snow games!
Ice Bocce Ball
Time: 6-8 p.m.
Get Your Roll On, It's Bocce Time!
Get your team of two to four together and join us at Morehouse Park, on the Bass Pond, for Bocce on ice! Discover the sport you can enjoy year round! This FREE event is open to all who want to experience this game on ice.

SUNDAY, JAN. 27:
Family Ice Fishing at Lake Kohlmier
Time: 2:30 – 4:30 p.m.
Join us on Lake Kohlmier for an afternoon of ice fishing. Limited equipment and bait will be provided -- holes will be pre-drilled for fishing. Prizes for kids 15 & under who catch the top three longest fish. This is a FREE event. More information to come.

BLOOMING PRAIRIE

JAN. 8
10:30 a.m. – Storytime, BP Library
2 p.m. – Intro to Computers, BP Library

JAN. 9
10:30 a.m. – Storytime, BP Library

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ELLENDALE/HOPE/GENEVA

JAN. 3
3 p.m. – 4-H Fidget Spinner Science, Ellendale Cafeteria

JAN. 4
10 a.m. – SEMCAC, Community Building

JAN. 7
10 a.m. – SEMCAC, Community Building
6 p.m. – NRHEG Band Boosters Meeting, NRHEG

JAN. 8
6:15 p.m. – Tae Kwon Do, Ellendale Smart Room

JAN. 9
10 a.m. – SEMCAC, Community Building
5:30 p.m. – Community Ed-Rosemaling for Beginners, NR HS Art Room
6 p.m. – NRHEG After Prom Meeting, Ellendale Media Center

OWATONNA/MEDFORD

JAN. 3
6:30 p.m. – History Detectives, History Center

JAN. 7
1 p.m. – Senior Place Inc. Board Meeting, West Hills Social Commons
7 p.m. – Steele County Planning Commission Meeting, County Admin Building

JAN. 8
Noon – West Hills Commission Meeting, City Admin Building
1 p.m. – So Many Books... So Little Time, Owatonna Library
4:30 p.m. – Library Board Meeting, Owatonna Library
5 p.m. – Steele County Board Meeting, County Admin Building
5:30 p.m. – Human Rights Commission Meeting, City Admin Building
7 p.m. – Owatonna City Council Meeting, City Admin Building
7 p.m. – Veterans Open Roundtable, Good Shepherd Lutheran

Ecumen Hospice seeks volunteers

Ecumen Hospice is opening Jan. 2 and seeking volunteers with an interest in serving patients and caregivers in Owatonna and surrounding communities.

Anyone interested can email HospiceVolunteer@Ecumen.org, or call Mary Schwieters at 507-774-3221.

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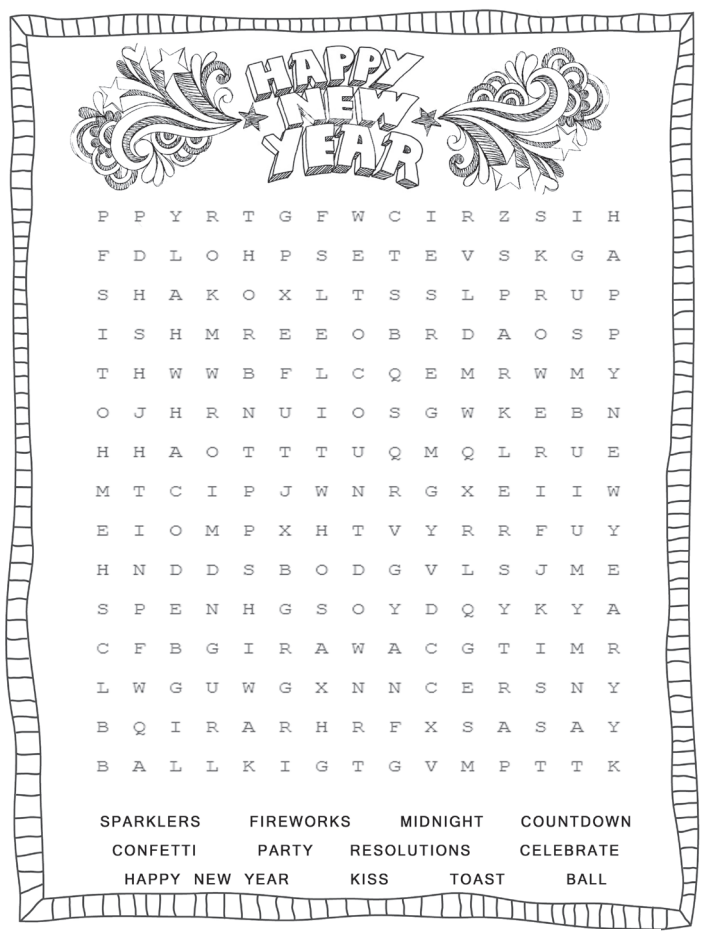

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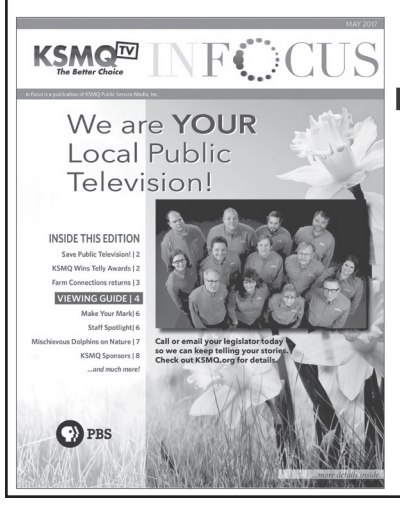

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NOTICE

18-110344

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: April 16, 2012
ORIGINAL PRINCIPAL AMOUNT OF MORTGAGE: $143,698.00
MORTGAGOR(S): Cindy L. Thorn, an unmarried woman
MORTGAGEE: Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc.
TRANSACTION AGENT: Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc.
MIN#: 100848111700991861
LENDER OR BROKER AND MORTGAGE ORIGINATOR STATED ON THE MORTGAGE: Mortgages Unlimited, Inc.
SERVICER: JPMorgan Chase Bank, N.A.
DATE AND PLACE OF FILING: Filed May 8, 2012, Steele County Registrar of Titles, as Document Number T000068570
ASSIGNMENTS OF MORTGAGE: Assigned to: JPMorgan Chase Bank, National Association; Dated: February 26, 2014 filed: March 4, 2014, recorded as document number T000071265
LEGAL DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY:
Lot 1, Block 1, Brindmore Addition
REGISTERED PROPERTY
PROPERTY ADDRESS: 650 Allan Ave, Owatonna, MN 55060
PROPERTY IDENTIFICATION NUMBER: 17-445-0101 COT# 11914
COUNTY IN WHICH PROPERTY IS LOCATED: Steele
THE AMOUNT CLAIMED TO BE DUE ON THE MORTGAGE ON THE DATE OF THE NOTICE: $131,347.42
THAT all pre-foreclosure requirements have been complied with; that no action or proceeding has been instituted at law or otherwise to recover the debt secured by said mortgage, or any part thereof;
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 22, 2019, 10:00am
PLACE OF SALE: Sheriff's Main Office, Law Enforcement Center, 204 Pearl Street East, Owatonna, MN 55060
to pay the debt secured by said mortgage and taxes, if any, on said premises and the costs and disbursements, including attorneys fees allowed by law, subject to redemption within 6 months from the date of said sale by the mortgagor(s) the personal representatives or assigns.
TIME AND DATE TO VACATE PROPERTY: If the real estate is an owner-occupied, single-family dwelling, unless otherwise provided by law, the date on or before which the mortgagor(s) must vacate the property, if the mortgage is not reinstated under section 580.30 or the property is not redeemed under section 580.23, is 11:59 p.m. on July 22, 2019, or the next business day if July 22, 2019 falls on a Saturday, Sunday or legal holiday.
"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 5 UNITS, ARE NOT PROPERTY USED FOR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION, AND ARE ABANDONED.

Dated: November 30, 2018

JPMorgan Chase Bank, National Association
Assignee of Mortgagee

SHAPIRO & ZIELKE, LLP
BY _____
Lawrence P. Zielke - 152559
Melissa L. B. Porter - 0337778
Randolph W. Dawdy - 2160X
Gary J. Evers - 0134764
Tracy J. Halliday - 034610X
Attorneys for Mortgagee
Shapiro & Zielke, LLP
12550 West Frontage Road, Suite 200
Burnsville, MN 55337
(952) 831-4060

THIS IS A COMMUNICATION FROM A DEBT COLLECTOR

12/4,12/11,12/18
12/25, 1/1, 1/8

NOTICE

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 25, 1999
ORIGINAL PRINCIPAL AMOUNT OF MORTGAGE: $60,750.00
MORTGAGOR(S): Robert M. Sikel and Angela J. Sikel, husband and wife
MORTGAGEE: Voyager Bank, a Minnesota banking corporation
DATE AND PLACE OF FILING: Recorded on August 30, 1999 as Document Number A277326 (labeled as T277326) in the Office of the County Recorder of Steele County, Minnesota.
ASSIGNMENTS OF MORTGAGE: Assigned to: Norwest Mortgage, Inc., a California Corporation n/k/a Wells Fargo Bank, N.A. successor by merger to Wells Fargo Home Mortgage, Inc. by assignment recorded on August 30, 1999 as Document Number A277327 in the Office of the County Recorder of Steele County, Minnesota.
LEGAL DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY: Lot 14, except the South 5 feet thereof in Block "E" in Creamery Addition to the City of Ellendale.
ALSO: Beginning at NE corner of Lot 14, in Block "E" in Creamery Addition to City of Ellendale, thence East 30 feet, more or less, to the East line of said addition, thence south to a point 33 feet North of SE corner of said addition, thence West 38 feet more or less, to the SE corner of Lot 19 of said addition, thence North to the place of beginning.
EXCEPTING: That portion of said tract lying East of the South 5 feet of Lot 14, and
EXCEPTING: That portion of said tract lying East of Lots 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19 in said addition, the foregoing described tract or tracts being situated in the Creamery Addition to the City of Ellendale.
STREET ADDRESS OF PROPERTY: 609 SCHOOL STREET, ELLENDALE, MN 56026-1000
COUNTY IN WHICH PROPERTY IS LOCATED: Steele County, Minnesota.
THE AMOUNT CLAIMED TO BE DUE ON THE MORTGAGE ON THE DATE OF THE NOTICE: $41,752.70
TRANSACTION AGENT: None
NAME OF MORTGAGE ORIGINATOR: Voyager Bank, a Minnesota banking corporation
RESIDENTIAL SERVICER: Wells Fargo Bank, N.A.
TAX PARCEL IDENTIFICATION NUMBER: 15-104-0514
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: January 29, 2019 at 10:00 AM.
PLACE OF SALE: Steele County Sheriff's Office, Law Enforcement Center, 204 Pearl Street East, Owatonna, Minnesota.
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. The time allowed by law for redemption by the United States of America or any agency thereof is twelve (12) months from the date of the sale, if applicable.
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 29, 2019.

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 30, 2018
WELLS FARGO BANK, N.A. Mortgagee

THE ACADEMY LAW GROUP, P.A.

By: /s/

N. Kibongni Fondungallah, Esq.
Samuel R. Coleman, Esq.
Corbin C. Smith, Esq.
Attorneys for Mortgagee
The Academy Professional Building
25 Dale Street North
St. Paul, MN 55102
(651) 209-9760
(18-0902-FC01)

THIS IS A COMMUNICATION FROM A DEBT COLLECTOR.

12/11, 12/18, 12/25
1/8, 1/15, 1/22

NOTICE

Minnesota Secretary of State Certificate of Assumed Name Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 333

The filing of an assumed name does not provide a user with exclusive rights to that name. The filing is required for consumer protection in order to enable customers to be able to identify the true owner of a business.

ASSUMED NAMED:
Horizon EyeCare Professionals

PRINCIPAL PLACE OF BUSINESS:
2560 Street Harvest Lane, Owatonna, MN 55060 USA

NAMEHOLDER(S):
Name:
Gilthvedt EyeCare Clinic, Inc

Address:
2560 Harvest Lane
Owatonna, MN 55060

If you submit an attachment, it will be incorporated into this document. If the attachment conflicts with the information specifically set forth in this document, this document supersedes the data referenced in the attachment.

By typing my name, I, the undersigned, certify that I am signing this document as the person whose signature is required, or as agent of the person(s) whose signature would be required who has authorized me to sign this document on his/her behalf, or in both capacities. I further certify that I have completed all required fields, and that the information in this document is true and correct and in compliance with the applicable chapter of Minnesota Statutes. I understand that by signing this document I am subject to the penalties of perjury as set forth in Section 609.48 as if I had signed this document under oath.

SIGNED BY:
Elizabeth M. Gilthvedt, OD
Date:
December 19, 2018

EMAIL FOR OFFICIAL NOTICES:
ncvoptometry@gmail.com

12/25, 1/7

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: October 16, 2008
MORTGAGOR: Pamela S. Ingvalson, a single person
MORTGAGEE: Affinity Plus Federal Credit Union, a credit union organized under the laws of the United States of America
DATE AND PLACE OF RECORDING: Recorded October 24, 2008 in the office of the County Recorder, as Document No. A000360304, Steele County, Minnesota.
TRANSACTION AGENT: None
TRANSACTION AGENT'S MORTGAGE IDENTIFICATION NUMBER ON MORTGAGE: None
LENDER OR BROKER AND MORTGAGE ORIGINATOR STATED ON MORTGAGE: Affinity Plus Federal Credit Union
RESIDENTIAL MORTGAGE SERVICER: N/A
MORTGAGED PROPERTY ADDRESS: 455 Main Street West, Blooming Prairie, Minnesota 55917
TAX PARCEL I.D. NO. 14-111-0107
LEGAL DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY: Lot 7, Block 1, Prairie Villa Addition to the Village of Blooming Prairie, Steele County, Minnesota.
COUNTY IN WHICH PROPERTY IS LOCATED: Steele
ORIGINAL PRINCIPAL AMOUNT OF MORTGAGE: $89,240.00
AMOUNT DUE AND CLAIMED TO BE DUE AS OF DATE OF NOTICE, INCLUDING TAXES, IF ANY, PAID BY MORTGAGEE: $84,731.06
INTEREST RATE AND PER DIEM: Current interest rate is 3.500%, with a per diem of $7.64.
That prior to commencement of this mortgage foreclosure proceeding Mortgagee complied with all notice requirements by statute; That no action or proceeding has been instituted at law or otherwise to recover the debt secured by said mortgage or any part thereof;
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 14, 2019, at 10:00 a.m.
PLACE OF SALE: Steele County Sheriff's Office, 204 East Pearl Street, Owatonna, Minnesota 55060, to pay the debt then secured by said Mortgage, taxes, if any, on said premises, and the costs and disbursements, including attorneys' fees allowed by law subject to redemption within six (6) months from the date of said sale by the mortgagor, their personal representatives or assigns.
DATE AND TIME MORTGAGOR MUST VACATE THE PREMISES: 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 August 14, 2019, at 11:59 p.m.

"THE TIME ALLOWED BY LAW FOR REDEMPTION BY THE MORTGAGOR, THE MORTGAGOR'S PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVES OR ASSIGNS, MAY BE REDUCED TO FIVE (5) 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: December 20, 2018

MESSERLI & KRAMER P.A.
By: /s/ Jonathan R. Septer
Jonathan R. Septer (Lic. #390506)
1400 Fifth Street Towers
100 South Fifth Street
Minneapolis, MN 55402-1217
(612) 672-3600
Attorney in Fact for
Affinity Plus Federal Credit Union

15845-928
IMPORTANT NOTICE
This communication is from a debt collector and is an attempt to collect a debt. Any information obtained will be used for that purpose.

12/25,1/1,1/8,
1/15,1/22,1/29

NOTICE

Minnesota Secretary of State Certificate of Assumed Name Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 333

The filing of an assumed name does not provide a user with exclusive rights to that name. The filing is required for consumer protection in order to enable customers to be able to identify the true owner of a business.

ASSUMED NAMED:
Central Park Coffee
PRINCIPAL PLACE OF BUSINESS:
113 North Cedar Avenue, Owatonna MN 55060 USA
NAMEHOLDER(S):
Name:
Vision Force, LLC
Address:
17545 295th Avenue
Waseca MN 56093

If you submit an attachment, it will be incorporated into this document. If the attachment conflicts with the information specifically set forth in this document, this document supersedes the data referenced in the attachment.

By typing my name, I, the undersigned, certify that I am signing this document as the person whose signature is required, or as agent of the person(s) whose signature would be required who has authorized me to sign this document on his/her behalf, or in both capacities. I further certify that I have completed all required fields, and that the information in this document is true and correct and in compliance with the applicable chapter of Minnesota Statutes. I understand that by signing this document I am subject to the penalties of perjury as set forth in Section 609.48 as if I had signed this document under oath.

SIGNED BY:
Charlene J. Esch President
Date:
November 27, 2018

EMAIL FOR OFFICIAL NOTICES:
the_momin8tor@hotmail.com

12/25, 1/7,1/14

NOTICE TO CREDITORS AND CLAIMANTS

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN by Trinity Lutheran Church of Blooming Prairie that:

1. The Corporation, whose principal office is located at 5881 SE 118th Street, Blooming Prairie, MN 55917, is in the process of voluntary dissolution.

2. The Corporation has filed with the Minnesota Secretary of State a Notice of Intent to Dissolve.

3. Such Notice was filed with the Minnesota Secretary of State on the 30th day of October 2018.

4. All claims by creditors or claimants must be in writing and must be presented to:
Michael Rodning Bash
Attorney at Law
400 South 4th Street #1025
Minneapolis, MN 55415

5. All claims by creditors or claimants must be presented by the 16th day of March 2019.

ss/ LaRae Hansen, Secretary

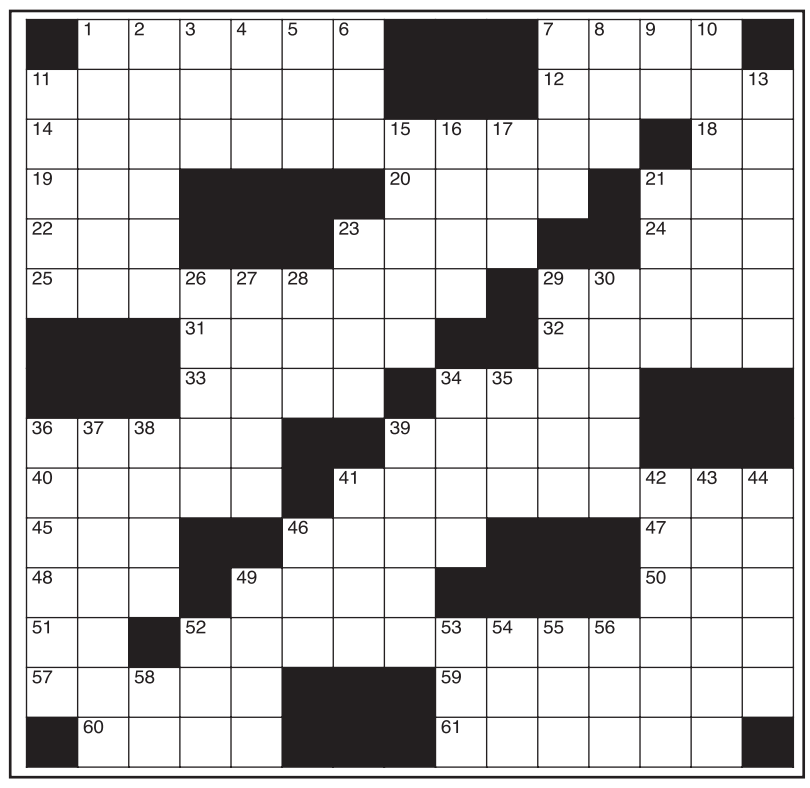
12/18,12/25,
1/1,1/8

CLUES ACROSS

1. On time
7. Swiss river
11. Maine river herring
12. In a way, waits
14. "Titanic" director
18. The Ocean State
19. Black tropical Am. cuckoo
20. Macaws
21. A transgression of God's will
22. Belonging to a thing
23. Mures River city
24. Electroencephalography
25. Puts together
29. Sound practical judgment
31. Pops
32. In a way, assists
33. One and only
34. Prong
36. More wise
39. One who propagates
40. Got up
41. Writers of news stories
45. Pianist Cliburn
46. Hindu mother goddess
47. Insures residential mortgages
48. Non-human primate
49. Of sound mind
50. Ficus fruit
51. Sodium
52. BOGO
57. Pulsating ache
59. Short open jackets
60. Genus Quercus trees
61. N.O. football team

CLUES DOWN

1. Sows a crop
2. Derelict
3. Be indebted
4. Prefix meaning wrong
5. Beginning military rank
6. Afternoon meal
7. American Board of Orthopaedic Surgery
8. Own (Scottish)
9. Rural delivery
10. Most supernatural
11. Roseate spoonbill genus
13. Lightly burns
15. Adult female horses
16. Geological times
17. Radioactivity unit
21. 1/100 of a tala
23. Winglike parts
26. S S S
27. "Ghost" actress Demi
28. Package or bale (abbr.)
29. More mentally healthy
30. Siskel and __, critics
34. Pith helmet
35. __ Jima, WW II battlefield
36. Learned person or scholar
37. East Colorado Native Americans
38. No longer here
39. 1995 Brad Pitt movie
41. Gambling town
42. An earnest attempt
43. Odd-toed ungulates
44. Profoundly wise persons
46. Sunrise to sunset
49. Poor boys
52. Chinese cabbage, ___ choy
53. Point that is one point S of due E
54. Tibetan gazelle
55. __ Lilly, drug company
56. Hamilton appears on it
58. Egyptian sun god



Weekly crossword

■	P	R	O	M	P	T	■	■	■	A	A	R	E	■
A	L	E	W	I	F	E	■	■	■	B	I	D	E	S
J	A	M	E	S	C	A	M	E	R	O	N	■	R	I
A	N	I	■	■	■	■	A	R	A	S	■	S	I	N
I	T	S	■	■	■	A	R	A	D	■	■	E	E	G
A	S	S	E	M	B	L	E	S	■	S	E	N	S	E
■	■	■	S	O	D	A	S	■	■	A	B	E	T	S
■	■	■	S	O	L	E	■	T	I	N	E	■	■	■
S	A	G	E	R	■	■	S	O	W	E	R	■	■	■
A	R	O	S	E	■	R	E	P	O	R	T	E	R	S
V	A	N	■	■	D	E	V	I	■	■	■	F	H	A
A	P	E	■	S	A	N	E	■	■	■	■	F	I	G
N	A	■	B	U	Y	O	N	E	G	E	T	O	N	E
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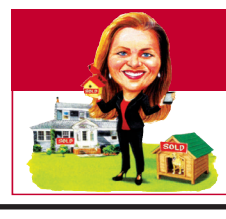
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bptimes@frontiernet.net
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3-WEEK SPECIAL: $32
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Dodge County Advantage
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121 W. Main St., Kasson, MN 55944

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- 26ft w/awning
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Call to make appointment
Gene Francis 507-583-2331

Electric Bicycle (needs nothing)

Asking $700.
(retail $1700)
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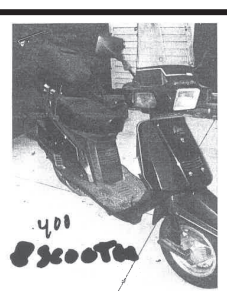

Motor scooter 5000 mile, Yamaha model Royal.

Asking $600.
(new #3,500)
Call 507-279-4103 cell or 281-4040

Yamaha Virago XV750
Adult Driven - One owner
54K miles 97'
Shaft Drive, cover, soft saddle bags, books.

Asking $1239.
call 507-634-4345

2010 Honda Gold Wing, 12,000 miles. Heated seats and handle bars ($24,000 new)

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Call Jim 477-2458 or 438-9981 (cell)

2000 Ford F250 7.3 diesel/ Many new parts.

Asking $9000 OBO.
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1992 Dodge Dakota

318 V8, Black, 192,000 miles, Fair condition, Running Boards, Ladder Rack, Tool Box
$1,500 OBO
507-455-9662 or
507-390-2626
Ask for Stephen

1998 John Deere Model 320 18 horse liquid cool hydostatic all gone through 48" lawn mowing, ready to blow snow.
$2,700 OBO.
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- Power Awning & Stabilizer Jacks
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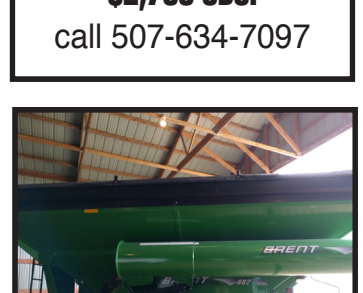
- 1 slide out
- Smoke free - Pet free
- 1/2 ton towable
- $22,900 Must sell (health issues) - Make an offer

507-398-3297 Galen

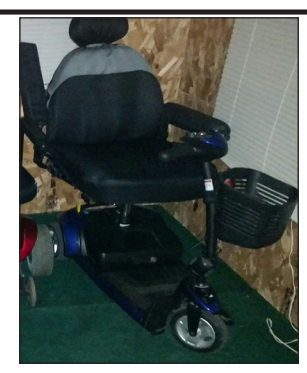


For Sale - Brent Grain Cart Model 882 with tarp.

Asking $29,500.
Call 507-269-8797

Place your employment ads with us.
Call 507-319-1549 and ask for Annie

DEALS ON WHEELS



New scooter. New batteries. Pride series.

Asking $400.

call 507-355-1347

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FOR SALE

FOR SALE: BORDER COLLIE / BLUE HEELER cross Puppies. Born 10/30/18. 3 males, 4 females. Asking $250.00 each. Call 507-383-6701. (wk 1,2, and 3 No charge)

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FOR RENT

APARTMENTS FOR RENT, 1, 2 & 3 BR, gas & elec. Included. 507-273-7386. 44tfc

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YEAR IN REVIEW

STEELE COUNTY SPORTS

STAFF PHOTO BY DENNIS MARSHALL

Owatonna running back Jason Williamson breaks free for a long touchdown against St. Thomas Academy in the Minnesota Class 5A state championship game on November 24 at U.S. Bank.

No. 10

Minnesota Lynx select New Richland native Carlie Wagner

The Minnesota Lynx selected New Richland native and former Minnesota Golden Gophers star Carlie Wagner with the 36th overall pick of the 2018 WNBA Draft on April 12.

However, Wagner was cut by the Lynx on May 15 following the team's preseason.

"I've had a blast," Wagner said. "Just to be here is amazing. Anytime you get to go in and play with this team and in front of this Minnesota crowd is always a blast. It's been unreal, just the past week and half I have been here. I think I have learned more than I have my whole basketball career. It's a whole other level to be here at home and be part of such an amazing team and program where they have high morals and high standards. It's just awesome to be surrounded by so many great people."

Wagner signed with the Zonadostres Basketball Team in Spain on July 23.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Carlie Wagner shots a free throw during her final season playing for the Minnesota Golden Gophers.

No. 9

Husky athletes sign to play sports in college

A total of 14 Owatonna athletes signed Letter of Intent to continue their athletic careers in college on February 7 in a ceremony at OHS.

Syd Schultz signed to play basketball at Concordia University in St. Paul, Jenna Zeman signed to play basketball at Wisconsin-River Falls, Jacob Dub signed to play lacrosse at the University of Northwestern in St. Paul, Braeden Meier signed to play lacrosse at Wittenburg College in Springfield, Illinois, Tucker Alstead signed to play baseball at Saint Cloud University, Kenna West signed to play soccer at Gustavus Adolphus University, Sarah Spears signed to play soccer at Minnesota State University in Marshall, Margo Achterkirch signed to play soccer and run track at Saint Benedict in Collegeville, Sophie Amundson signed to play soccer at the University of Wisconsin-Lacrosse, Zach Mensink signed to play football at the University of Wisconsin-Lacrosse, Terrell Conner signed to play football at Sioux Falls, Peyton Robb signed wrestle at South Dakota State (later change to University of Nebraska), Jamie Davison signed to play hockey at the University of Wisconsin-Superior and Ben Stelter signed to swim at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls.

No. 8

NRHEG basketball teams capture Gopher Conference titles

The New Richland-Hartland-Ellendale-Geneva boys' and girls' basketball teams won the Gopher Conference.

The Panthers boys finished the regular season 23-3 with a perfect 12-0 mark in the conference.

NRHEG's girls finished the season 16-7 with a 10-2 conference record.

The Panthers boys where led by Benji Lundberg while the girls were led by Betsy Schoenrock. Both are now playing basketball at Gustavus Adolphus University.

No. 7

Owatonna gymnastics wins three straight Big 9 title

Despite having no individuals champions, Owatonna great depth propels the Huskies' gymnastics to their third straight Big 9 Conference championship.

"It's an incredible feeling coaching a team like this," Owatonna head coach Tom Smith said. "They made it easy to be the coach when they work so hard and are so focused on what they want."

The Huskies went on to finish third at the state meet. Owatonna is currently ranked No. 2 in the state and has a goal of a better finish at the state meet this season.

No. 6

Saint Baldrick's event held at Medford High School

Teachers, students, law enforcement officers, firefighter and the University of Minnesota football players were some of 95 people who showed their support for young patients battling cancer by shaving their heads to raise money for childhood cancer research at the Medford Saint Baldrick's Foundation fundraiser on March 15 at the high school.

"I really thought it would be super cool to get an event here in Medford and really see the community come out and support it," Medford teacher and event organizer Chris Haakonson said. "I just reached out to anyone I could. I got some responses from some people who were more than willing to donate their time. They're showing everyone that they want to be more than just a police officers or a football players — They want to be a big part of their community which is great to see."

STAFF PHOTO BY DENNIS MARSHALL

Owatonna's Peyton Robb celebrates after winning the Class 3A state championship at the 160-pound weight class on March 3 at Xcel Energy Center in St. Paul.

No. 5

Winona State and former Blossoms quarterback John Rumpza happy to be cancer free

It wasn't a typically offseason for former Blooming Prairie star and Winona State University quarterback John Rumpza by any means of the imagination.

Just before the New Year's, Rumpza received a diagnoses of testicular cancer.

Rumpza went through a round of chemotherapy and had to spend a short amount of time away from the Winona State football team, where he was competing for the starting quarterback position.

However, Rumpza returned the team cancer-free.

"It was God-send type kind of thing how I found it actually," Rumpza said. "I just found a bump and went it and had it checked out during last football season in October.

"Honestly, I think I handled it pretty well," he continued. "I never got to down about it. It just sucked when I was feeling crappy because of the treatment. The surgery was tough and I was limping around for a couple of weeks after that, but from a mental standpoint, I think I handled it pretty well."

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE OWATONNA HIGH SCHOOL MAGNET

Owatonna gymnasts Ali An competes during the Minnesota gymnastics state meet.

No. 4

Owatonna grapplers claim state titles

Owatonna senior Peyton Robb and junior Cade King won individual state wrestling championships on March 3, 2018 at the Xcel Energy Center in St. Paul.

Robb won the Class 3A title at the 160-pound weight class and King claimed the title at 182.

Robb finished the season 48-0 and became Owatonna's first three-time state champion.

"I had the goal of being a state champion and to have my first undefeated season," Robb said. "That's exactly what I did. Just to finish the year with no loses and be the undefeated champion at 160 means so much to me."

King wasn't satisfied Despite winning a state title and finishing the season 44-0.

"I was bummed after the championship match because I want to wrestle my best in every match and although I won, I wasn't happy with my performance," King said. "Most kids are just happy to win, but I'm not happy to win. I want to wrestle my best and dominate. I want to go out there in every match and make sure that my opponent never wants to wrestle me again."

No. 3

Blossoms overcome tragedy to reach state football tournament

The Blooming Prairie Awesome Blossoms football team suffered though much adversity this past season, but the school, team and community rallied together and had a prosperous year despite falling short of a Class A state championship.

Blooming Prairie first-grade teacher Rachel Harberts and her 8-year-old daughter Emerson died from injuries suffered from a car accident on Highway 14 on September 14. In addition to being a teacher at BP, Harberts was also a volleyball coach. Harberts 12-year-old son Jaxon suffered serious injuries from the crash.

The entire Blooming Prairie community rallied together and many surrounding communities showed signs of solidarity and support in the Blossoms' time of need.

BP star quarterback Seth Peterson also suffered a season-ending injury in the Blossoms final regular season game. However, reserve quarterback Kaden Thomas led the Blossoms to a section championship and trip to the state semifinals.

No. 2

Medford volleyball makes Cinderella run

The Medford Tigers volleyball team took the state by storm this past season.

The unranked Tigers advanced all the way to the Class A state championship game before falling to No. 1 Minneota.

"I wasn't crying because I disappointed at all of our performance," Medford head coach Missy Underdahl said. "It was more that I was so emotional because it was the last time that I was ever going to have this group of girls on the court together. Granted I realize a lot of them are coming back next year, but it's another team next year because we are losing three girls. As much as you want to say that you can find girls throughout the program that can fill these positions, it still going to be hard to replace the team bond."

The Tigers defeated Faribault Bethlehem Academy on November 1 to win the 1A subsection-west championship and No. 6 Mabel-Canton on November 8 for the section title.

Medford went on to knock off the defending state champs No. 2 Mayer Lutheran and No. 3 Belgrade-Brooten Elrosa to advance to the championship game.

Medford juniors Emma Kniefel (outside hitter), Kiley NIhart (libero) and sophomore Kinsey Cronin (middle hitter) were named to the All-State Tournament team.

No. 1

Owatonna football makes history

The Owatonna football squad captured its second consecutive Class 5A state championship when the Huskies defeated St. Thomas Academy 14-3 on Saturday, November 24 at U.S. Bank Stadium.

Owatonna finished the season a perfect 13-0.

"I wish I knew what the secret is," Owatonna head coach Jeff Williams said. "Obviously it's talented athletes in our community and program, but you got to make them want to play football too and not every community has strong football traditions and get their best athletes out for the sport.

"Our kids want to be part of our program," he continued. "We have blast together in practice. We have a really good time together, which you better because our season was 17 weeks from beginning to end. So you better like each other and have fun with it, but I don't know what the secret is. Our kids just work hard, they're pretty talented and we have coaching staff that's been together for 25 years. That probably helps a little too."

Huskies' running back Jason Williamson finished the season with 3,003 yards and 47 touchdowns on 313 carries and won Minnesota's three most prestigious award: Mr. Football, AP Player of the Year and Gatorade Player of the Years.

STAFF PHOTO BY DENNIS MARSHALL

Owatonna athletes (left to right) Zach Mensink, Ben Stelter, Braeden Meier, Peyton Robb, Jacob Dub, Terrell Conner, Tucker Alstead, (front row) Margo Achterkirch, Sophie Amundson, Sarah Spears, Syd Schultz and Jenna Zeman stand for a photo after signing their Letters of Intent on February 7.

Dr. Deborah J Lien
DDS, MBS
ORTHODONTIC SPECIALIST
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