

HAPPY Fourth OF July

2026

Featuring
Blooming Prairie's
Old-Fashioned Fourth
and Owatonna's
Patriot Skies
celebrations



A Publication of the Steele County Times

4th of July buttons - \$5

Sales support 4th of July Celebration



Event Schedule

Friday, July 3rd

Beer Garden **(\$1 off w/ 4th of July button)	City Park	4:00pm - 9:00pm
Concessions	City Park	4:00pm - 9:00pm
Balloons by Kevin *FREE	City Park	5:00pm - 8:00pm
Face Painting by Karen *FREE	City Park	5:00pm - 8:00pm
Dunk Tank *3 balls \$5	City Park	5:30pm - 7:30pm
Mini Golf \$5 *((\$1 off w/ 4th of July button)	City Park	4:00pm - 9:00pm
Kid's Pedal Tractor Pull	City Park	Sign up at 4:30pm
Blooming Prairie Community Band	Large Gazebo City Park	4:30pm - 5:30pm
LIVE ENTERTAINMENT: Bryce Leppert Duo	City Park	6:00pm - 9:00pm
STREET DANCE / Red Dirt Road \$10 Cover	Main Street (BP Tavern)	8:30pm - 12:30am

***must be 21+ to drink, 18+ to attend**

Saturday, July 4th

BP Lion's Club Breakfast	Prairie Manor	8:00am - 11:30am
Red, White & Boom 5K	1st Ave NW - City Park	9:00am
Beer Garden **(\$1 off w/ 4th of July button)	City Park	11:00am - 9:00pm
Concessions	City Park	11:00am - 9:00pm
Dunk Tank *	City Park	11:00am - 2:00pm
Mini Golf \$5 *((\$1 off w/ 4th of July button)	City Park	11:00am - 9:00pm
Fire Department Open House	Fire Hall	9:00am - 11:00am
Fine Arts Fair & Craft Market	City Park	11:00am - 5:00pm
Red, White & Foam *FREE	1st Ave NW *street will be closed	11:00am - 12:00pm
LIVE ENTERTAINMENT The Bazillions	Stage Truck on 1st St NW	12:00pm - 1:00pm
PARADE.....		2:30pm - 4:00pm
Dunk Tank *	City Park	4:00pm - 6:00pm
LIVE ENTERTAINMENT - Dariel Felten	City Park Beer Garden	5:30pm - 8:30pm
Fireworks (rain make-up date: 7/5)	Victory Field	10:00pm

Sunday, July 5th

Tractor Pull - Jonny Kraling 507-475-3088

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Save \$3 on haircuts at Steve's Old-Fashioned Barbershop (BP) or Great Clips (Austin), July 1st-5th.

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11:00am - 4:00pm

Mini Golf: Save \$1 on each round of Mini Golf, July 3rd & 4th.
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Buttons bring extra perks in BP



SUBMITTED PHOTO

The winning design for the 2026 Blooming Prairie Old-Fashioned Fourth of July button, created by Sydney Anderson.

BY KAY FATE

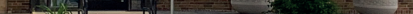
Sydney Anderson will see her artwork everywhere she goes in a couple of weeks. See **BUTTONS** on 5 ►



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Sydney Anderson received a certificate and \$20 in BP Bucks for her winning 2026 Fourth of July button design. Karen Peterson, executive director of the BP Area Chamber of Commerce, surprised Sydney with the news in Jenna Volgarino's fourth-grade classroom.

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She 'Steeles' the show

Citizen of Year named Grand Marshal for BP Fourth parade

BY KAY FATE

Sadie Steele, born in Louisiana but adopted by Minnesota, will be the Grand Marshal for the 2026 Blooming Prairie Fourth of July parade.

"Her dedication to giving back in a community she is not from is what stuck out," said Blooming Prairie Area Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Karen Peterson. "She has made a lasting difference to so many."

Steele is not only not a native of Blooming Prairie, she has been a resident for less than a decade, but has made a significant impact in the lives of many.

She is considered family to many residents, continuing to provide care throughout the week to multiple people who need her compassionate touch.

Steele also visits Prairie Manor Nursing Home every chance she gets, especially over the holidays.

It should come as no surprise that Steele had her choice of fancy vehicles in which to ride, but will ride in the traditional carriage.

Can we expect to see her in additional parades, then, so she can still wave from the back of a shiny convertible?

"Oh, you're giving me some ideas now," Steele laughed.

Here are Steele's responses to some questions about her latest honor:

Have you ever been a Grand Marshal before?

No!

Do you like parades?

Yes, I do.

Do you usually watch Blooming Prairie's Fourth of July parade?

I'm always *in* the parade, because I have my golf cart and I drive for Prairie Manor, so I'm always there. They decorate it with all kinds of bells and whistles, and we have all kind of candy we throw out.

Are you having any one ride in the carriage with you?

Ramona Jacobson, a friend who lives at Field-

crest in Hayfield. She was all excited – she's already got her outfit all picked out. We'll have a little candy; I don't know if we'll have enough, because it's such a long parade, but I'm going to try and get some more.

Some young women wanted to ride with me, but I wanted to have some older people; that's kind of what I'm known for.

Do you know what a big honor this is? Blooming Prairie loves this parade!

Yes, I do, and I think this is a huge honor – and I'm very humbled. I thank Chief (Greg) Skillestad for nominating me.

What does this mean to you? First the Citizen of the Year, now this? How does it make you feel?

I am very humbled, very honored to be Citizen of the Year. You have no idea; it's just making my year. I'm so honored to have all these keepsakes, and they'll be there after I'm long gone.

Are you getting recognized more often? Are you totally famous now?

So many times, somebody will say, 'I saw you in the paper,' or they'll say, 'I know you from somewhere – oh the paper!' People I don't even know won't let me forget it; they keep reminding me. I'm recognized all the time, even just running errands.

My bank laminated a beautiful picture of me, and I didn't even have to frame it – they framed it.



Sadie Steele is this year's grand marshal for the Fourth of July parade in Blooming Prairie.

My church has just been awesome, too.

Do you have a special outfit planned? Will you share what it is, or do we need to wait until the parade to see it?

I think I'm going to wear what I was going to wear for that (citizen of the year) dinner; it's yellow – but it'll depend on the weather.

We've got two or three fans ready; Ramona has one with ice cubes in it, ready to go. We plan on having a wonderful time.

BP set to host Fourth of July festivities July 3-5

BY KAY FATE

STAFF WRITER

America is turning 250 years old, and Blooming Prairie will once again throw the party.

The 52nd Annual BP Old-Fashioned Fourth of July celebration kicks off three days of fun, entertainment, community spirit and hometown pride at 4 p.m. July 3 in Central Park.

That's when the concession stands and the

Beer Garden open; just 30 minutes later, the Blooming Prairie Community Band will provide patriotic music near the large gazebo.

Also starting at 4:30 p.m. is the kids' Pedal Tractor Pull registration, which always draws a big crowd for the littlest contestants.

Central Park will feature a dunk tank, mini golf, face-painting and balloon art.

The Bryce Leppert Duo will play in the Beer Garden that night from 6 to 9 p.m.; the street dance begins at 8:30 p.m. in front of BP Tavern.

Red Dirt Road will play until 12:30 a.m.; there is a \$10 cover charge.

The festivities continue July 4 with the BP Lions Club breakfast from 8 to 11:30 a.m. at Prairie Manor.

Registration for the Red, White & Boom 5K begins at 9 a.m. at Central Park.

The BP Fire Department will host an open house from 9 to 11 a.m. – just in time to get back to Central Park for the fine arts fair and craft market, which runs until 5 p.m.

Concessions, the dunk tank, and the Beer Garden also open at 11 a.m. July 4.

Kids can play in the Red, White & Foam area from 11 a.m. to noon on First Avenue Northwest.

The Bazillions will play from noon to 1 p.m.

at the stage truck on First Avenue.

The grand parade will step off at 2:30 p.m.; Sadie Steele is Grand Marshal of the 90-minute event.

Saturday's events will wrap up with Dariel Felten playing at the Beer Garden from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m., followed by the grand finale: Fireworks are set for 10 p.m. at Victory Field, with a rain date of July 5.

Sunday morning will feature a tractor pull at 9

a.m. west of Victory Field, and a car show from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the BP Servicemen's Club, rain or shine.

Pay \$5 for a BP 4th of July button and earn most of the money back in discounts at Vandals, the Beer Garden, Steve's Old-Fashioned Barber-shop, Great Clips, a round of mini golf and a discount for nine or 18 holes at the Blooming Prairie Country Club.

\$30K for 250th

Patriot Skies over Owatonna to feature extra fireworks

BY KAREN M. JORGENSEN

Owatonna’s Early Morning Rotary Club is inviting the community to join it the evening of July 4th to celebrate the United States 250th birthday at the Patriot Skies fireworks display.

As they have for the past 26 years, the club is sponsoring the fireworks for Owatonna, said Steve Grubish, who is coordinating this year’s event.

Because this year marks the country’s 250th anniversary, the display will be a bit bigger, he said.

The display has generally cost the club about \$25,000, he said, but this year the club was able to have a longer display or a bigger display for an additional \$5,000. They chose the bigger display, he said.

The fireworks display is funded by donations and fundraisers, he said, and the Chamber Foundation stepped up and provided the additional funds needed for this year’s event. The city also helped with some last-minute insurance help.

Among the fundraising events held by the club, he said, are meat raffles at the Eagles and the twice a year Purse and Bingo event. Donation containers are also available at area grocery stores.

J&M Displays puts on the yearly show, he said, with the fireworks launched from the infield area of the Steele County fairgrounds.

Because of the height that the fireworks reach, they are visible from throughout the area near



the fairgrounds. People are also invited to watch them from anywhere on the fairgrounds, but the grandstand will not be open because of liability issues.

The display is scheduled to begin at 10 p.m. on Saturday, July 4 weather permitting. Although a light rain might not stop the event, it cannot be held

if there is any lightning in the area. The rain date for Patriot Skies is Sunday, July 4, at 10 p.m. “It takes a village” to

put on the event, Grubish said, and the club thanks all those companies and individuals who help with the fireworks display each year.

Buttons bring extra perks in BP

◀ **BUTTONS** from 2 The rising fifth-grader submitted the winning entry in the annual Fourth of July button contest, decided after members of the public selected the winner

from nine finalists. Sydney’s design, called “Blooming With Freedom,” features the Statue of Liberty surrounded by fireworks, with colorful flowers and American

flags scattered across the bottom of the pin. This year’s celebration will be held July 3-5. “I really like to create and draw,” said Sydney, who is the daughter of

Nick and Kelsey Anderson, of Blooming Prairie. While she picked up \$20 in BP Bucks for the creating the winning design, the people who wear it will see some financial benefits, too. The \$5 button could more than pay for itself, with several new perks for

people wearing one: · 5% off purchase of \$10 or more at Vandal’s Family Market, from June 1-July 5; · \$3 off haircut at Steve’s Old-Fashioned Barber-shop through July 4, one per person; · \$3 off haircut at Great Clips-Austin through July

4, one per person; · \$1 off each round of mini golf throughout the weekend, one per person; · \$1 off each beverage at the Beer Garden · Play nine holes for \$15 or 18 holes for \$20 from July 1-5 when wearing the button

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PUBLICATION OF STEELE COUNTY TIMES

A PATRIOT TWIST FOR BRICK-MEGER

BY RICK BUSSLER

For many years, Brick-Meger Funeral Home in Owatonna has celebrated the Fourth of July with community residents. But, with America's 250th anniversary this year, things are taking on an even greater patriotic twist.

In addition to the usual parking lot Fourth party at the funeral home, Brick-Meger is celebrating America's 250th at all Downtown Thursdays in Owatonna this summer. They have a booth on the northeast corner of Central Park where they are giving away commemorative 250th pins. They also are giving away flags as door prizes. Remaining Downtown Thursdays are July 2, Aug. 6 and Sept. 3.

Showing patriotism comes as no accident for a funeral home that has been serving the community for more than half of the 250 years America has been around. Brick-Meger began in 1897 with a downtown location where Just One More Bar is now located.

"I don't think people are paying attention to it closely, but it's a big deal," Glen Meger, owner of Brick-Meger, said of celebrating America's 250th. And, he added, "it's a good fit for us."

The idea to promote the 250th for the funeral

home came from Tim Rice, who handles marketing for Brick-Meger. He acknowledges how it can be difficult to get people to come to a funeral home booth, but he stresses how important it's for them to interact with people outside of a funeral.

"We want people to see us," Rice says. "Visibility is huge. It's intangible to put a price on it."

Rice said he thought giving away commemorative pins would be a subtle way to engage with people. "They are well done pins," he said. "They may not be Jostens-type, but they are free."

To sweeten things even more, Brick-Meger is giving away flags and \$500 in Chamber Bucks from all those who register throughout the summer at the Downtown Thursdays. The grand prize will be awarded in September.

Funeral Home party

Meger chuckles about how he initially began hosting a Fourth of July party 26 years ago. He had just purchased the funeral home in 2000 when he was warned about Fourth of July and the mess that would be left behind. The fireworks are displayed from the fairgrounds, which is located across the street from Brick-Meger, making it a prime viewing of the fireworks.

"It was kind of a Debbie Downer when I was told about that," he said, noting he was kind of wondering what he had gotten himself into.

Meger decided to be proactive and opened the bathrooms in the funeral home and placed garbage cans around his parking lot. He also went around greeting people. In that first year, he ended up picking up only two beer cans after it was all over.

By the second year, Meger decided to offer free watermelon for those utilizing his parking lot, in addition to having the bathrooms open. "A lot of families come here with their kids," Meger said, adding the bathroom idea evolved into what they're doing today.

This year Megers will offer watermelon as well as old-fashioned Chocolate Shoppe ice cream from Old Town Bagels. They will also stream patriotic music and offer a prize wheel for youth and adults to win prizes. As an added bonus, games will be offered in the parking lot.

Meger estimated as many as 400 people attend the party every year. Added Rice, "A lot of them come to put up their lawn chair, leave and come back again. They know how to find the right spot (for fireworks)."

The party gets un-



Tim Rice, left, and Brett Meger of Brick-Meger Funeral Home welcome residents at the June Downtown Thursday in Owatonna. Brick-Meger is giving away commemorative pins throughout the summer as part of America's 250th.



Tim Luy of Owatonna displays a large 250th flag he won from Brick-Meger at the Downtown Thursday in Owatonna.



Another flag winner is Logan Johnson of Owatonna.

derway at 7 p.m. at 1603 Austin Road.

Both Meger and Rice agree that it's important for them to connect with the community through the Fourth party as well as Downtown Thursdays. "The community appreciates a family business," Meger said, noting that when someone calls the funeral home there is a 95% chance there will be one of four Megers on the other end.

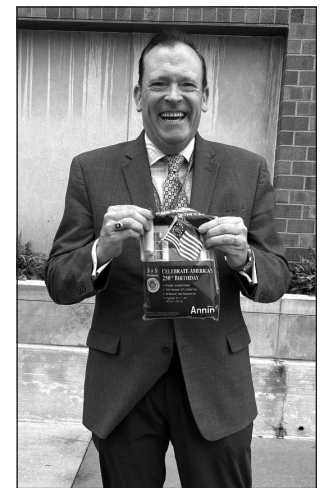
Besides Glen, his sons Mike and Brett are licensed morticians, and his

wife Cheryl is the office manager.

The business, Glen Meger said, has grown substantially over the past few years. "The big part of our growth has been our commitment and having a family business," he said.

Added Rice, "It's like an octopus with a lot of tentacles of families you serve. You strive so hard to treat people fairly. It's a very personal business,"

Meger said, "It has been an honor to serve this community."



A third winner is Jon Medo of Owatonna.

FREEDOM 250

County Exchange Clubs to mark special milestone of America's anniversary Sept. 11-13

BY KAREN M. JORGENSEN

A fresh wave of pride will be showcased in honor of America's 250th this fall.

The Exchange Clubs of District 4 in Minnesota, including those in Steele County, will be celebrating America's 250th anniversary as well as remembering the 25th anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks with a display of flags Sept. 11-13 and are currently looking for sponsors.

Called "One Nation...Many Stories United we WILL stand" the flags will be on display for the three days and there will also be a program at the Degner Regional Airport in Owatonna, which currently is one of five locations in Minnesota planning this special tribute. Others include Spring Valley, Winona, Bloomington and St. Paul.

"There's a real sense of heart behind this work," said Bridget Hughes of Colonial Flag Foundation, known as Healing Field, which is coordinating the effort. "You can feel it in every flag placed, every conversation sparked, every young person who pauses to ask questions and



learn. These fields remind us that freedom isn't free—it's been earned and protected by generations of brave men and women who answered the call to serve."

Hughes said it's up to everyone to make sure that story is

never forgotten. "That's what makes this so meaningful," she said. "It's about honoring the past, strengthening our communities today and helping teach the next generation about civic pride, responsibility and the

true cost of the freedoms they enjoy," she added.

For the Owatonna program, the exact time during the September days has not yet been finalized, said Bryan Duncan, fundraiser chair, and member of the Medford Exchange Club. The display will include at least 1,000 3 feet by 5 feet flags, plus 26 commemorative flags showcasing the changes in the flag over the years, he said. During the program, he said, volunteers will also be holding a large, flat American flag.

The display will also include a banner with the Constitution

and a history of the country.

The event will help support the Steele County clubs' work in prevention of child abuse, Americanism, community service and youth in Steele County, he said.

Each of the 1,000 flags displayed will display the name of a person who has impacted the life the one who purchased the flag.

Duncan said that the flags at the airport, plus the flags that businesses along that stretch of I-35 fly will bring attention to the event.

The clubs are currently seeking help in raising the funds to put on this event.

Healing Field flag programs have donated millions of dollars in charitable funds to aid veteran and first responder programs, efforts to prevent child abuse, food insecurity programs, funding for scholarships, children's programs and more.

The program began as a way to honor the lives lost on Sept. 11. Since the first Healing Field display in 2002, hundreds of communities across America have hosted Healing Fields to raise funds and awareness for various important causes.

Paul Swanson, the founder and creator of the program, recognized the potential of these memorial events to help heal the nation.

For additional information about the Owatonna effort, contact Duncan at 507-676-4043 or Lynn Limberg, project co-chair, at 507-475-1316.

HEALING FIELD

- Coming to Owatonna's Degner Regional Airport Sept. 11-13
- Celebrate with area Exchange Clubs in honoring America's 250th
- Exchange Clubs are seeking funds to pay for this unique tribute
- More for information, go to www.healingfield.org/owatonna or call Bryan Duncan at 507-676-4043 or Lynn Limberg at 507-475-1316

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Thursday, Aug. 20 • 7:30 PM

Hairball with special guest **Rival 5**

Friday, Aug. 21 • 7:00 PM

Randy Houser with special guest **Cori Kennedy**

Saturday, Aug. 22 • 7:30 PM

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