



STEELE COUNTY Times

SENIOR SIGNS B4 | MAKING MUSIC B1



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WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29, 2020

Blooming Prairie, Minnesota

ANOTHER CANCELLED
Ellendale has cancelled its annual summer festival for June.

FROM QUILTS TO MASKS
An Owatonna church sews hundreds of protective masks.

STILL GOING
Area realtors are keeping busy in a different real estate market.

TAX RELIEF
Steele County provides property tax relief for business owners.

BIG BREAK IN COVID

BY RICK BUSSLER
PUBLISHER

A major breakthrough has developed in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic.

Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz announced on April 22 a statewide strategy for widespread testing. The mitigation strategy will allow for every symptomatic person to be tested for coronavirus with capacity for as many as 20,000 people every day.

The effort is coming together through a partnership between the Mayo Clinic, University of Minnesota and the Minnesota Department of Health. It will in part be funded by the \$36 million in a Minnesota response fund established by the legislature.

The state has launched a new website that will direct Minnesotans to the nearest location where they can get tested for the coronavirus. It includes a health screening

"It will give us a better picture of what's going on."

Amy Caron
Steele Public Health Director

that can be used to determine if someone needs a test and where they can get one. The website can be found at www.mn.gov/covid19-for-minnesotans/if-sick.

Currently, there are 127 clinics and healthcare facilities across the state that are able to offer the diagnostic test for COVID-19. Included in those facilities is Mayo Clinic in Owatonna, which

has offered drive thru testing since the crisis began in March. There is currently no testing site in Dodge County as residents can obtain tests by going to either Owatonna or Rochester.

Steele County Public Health Director Amy Caron said the mass testing is expected to be available within the next two to three weeks. At this time Caron's department is not set up to handle testing on its own, but it is prepared to help with testing

if needed by Mayo Clinic. However, Public Health would have the capacity to set up an additional site by itself if needed, Caron said. Caron calls it important in the fight against COVID-19 to have the mass testing available. With increased testing available, she said, it will help in determining if there are any hot spots locally. "The more we can test people and with the quicker

SEE BIG BREAK, A10

Lifting spirits of seniors



Susie Thorson, far right, and her grandchildren carried a message to Prairie Manor Care Center residents. Shown with their grandmothers are: Shelby Kasperke, Carly McIntosh, Haley McIntosh, and Emily Kasperke. Organizers are attempting to start a weekly parade outside of Prairie Manor until the pandemic is over.

STAFF PHOTO BY HOWARD LESTRUD

Organizers plan weekly parade at Prairie Manor

BY HOWARD LESTRUD
STAFF WRITER

With the lockdown of long-term care centers, it has been challenging for loved ones to communicate with their family members now isolated to their rooms.

Last Wednesday, the residents of Prairie Manor were treated to an outdoor parade around the perimeter of the building.

Susie Thorson paraded around the building with her four grandchildren carrying a banner stating "We love you." Family members of Billy Noble helped organize the parade for the day following his admittance to Prairie Manor. Jeff and Sue Zwiener wore some special attire and others wore silly hats.

"To say that the residents enjoyed this immensely is a huge understatement," said Amy Trotman. "It made me wonder if we could do this more often until the quarantine is over," she said.

Trotman is inviting individuals or any groups that would like to continue doing this, to contact her. Youth groups, church groups and neighborhoods could schedule a parade maybe at about 5:30 or 6 p.m. on a Wednesday. Bring signs, balloons, hearts, costumes, pets, whatever, said Connie Trom, a helper.

If interested in getting a small group together, contact Amy Trotman at 507-475-1888.

"Let's all help put a smile on our seniors' faces during this difficult time," said Trotman.

County approves tax relief

BY CHRIS BALDWIN
STAFF WRITER

With the COVID-19 pandemic continuing to pummel the economy, the Steele County Board of Commissioners has approved a one-time temporary abatement of any penalties for late property tax payments.

The decision came during a special session held April 22 in response to the virus' affect on the local economy. It was a decision that the commissioners had previously discussed in their regular session earlier this month.

The resolution extended the May 16 date for property tax penalties to July 15, giving some relief for those local businesses and farmers who have borne the brunt of the virus-rattled economy.

Brad Meier and the Owatonna Chamber of Commerce, the Blooming Prairie Chamber of

Commerce, and several business leaders within the county were crucial in urging the board to delay these penalties for that 60-day period, emphasizing that for some business owners such an abatement may be the difference in regards to survival or closure.

"This plan seems to be administratively responsible and also compassionate to our businesses and property tax owners that are impacted by this," County Administrator Scott Goldberg told the board as he introduced the resolution.

"We know there are folks who have lost their jobs or had their wages reduced, and some businesses have temporarily closed," he continued. "It's a different time right now, and I think this is our effort to provide some temporary relief to those residents and businesses."

SEE COUNTY APPROVES, A10

Public donates to mask drive for Steele County Public Health

BY CHRIS BALDWIN
STAFF WRITER

On Saturday individuals from around the county were able to do their part in combating the COVID-19 virus by donating handmade masks to Steele County Public Health.

From there these masks will go to those who need them, whether it's frontline staff in public health, those working and living in nursing homes, daycare providers, or emergency personnel.

The masks were given to Steele County Public Health at a drop off site in Owatonna's Central Park. "It's been busy," June Piepho with Public Health said. She estimated that well over 300 masks in total were donated.

The mask drive itself was organized by the Owatonna Fire Department. "It seems like when you get guys like that involved people will donate a little bit more," Piepho quipped. "Public Health is a drop off site too, so we've been collecting for the last couple of weeks."

Piepho credits the public with its continued support for the county. "It's been really neat to see," she said. "Most people are working together. You all have one goal and that's to just try to stay safe and keep everybody healthy. It's been a neat thing to see the collaboration and the cooperation."

That collaboration and cooperation will go a long way in aid-

SEE PUBLIC DONATES, A5



June Piepho with Steele County Public Health holds up a bag of handmade masks during last Saturday's mask drive in Owatonna. The donated masks will be distributed to those within the community who need them during the COVID-19 crisis.

STAFF PHOTO BY CHRIS BALDWIN

COVID-19 UPDATE

World..... 3,000,000	U.S. 1,000,000	MN..... 3,816	Steele..... 14	Dodge 19
Deaths 208,000	Deaths 56,308	Deaths 286	Deaths 0	Deaths 0
Recovered..... 879,000	Recovered..... 113,000	Recovered..... 1,654	Recovered..... 8	Recovered..... 15

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AREA DEATHS

Evelyn Meesa, 95, Owatonna
Eugene Freig, 81, Byron
Rodney Robinson, 77, Rochester
John Tuerk, 81, Owatonna

Serving
Blooming Prairie
and Steele County
since 1893

OUR VIEW

Staying home is working in Steele County

Many people are scared to death. It certainly has been a scary time in our county over the past month and a half.

As the number of confirmed coronavirus cases and the death toll continue to climb across the country and in Minnesota, one thing is noticeable in the statistics: the low numbers connected to Steele County.

For nearly two weeks as cases shot up in most other areas, Steele County remained steady at nine. Just with in the past week, three new cases have popped up, bringing the total to 12. Most of the cases have recovered, according to local public health officials. Fortunately, there still have been no deaths connected to COVID-19 in Steele.

Perhaps it's a fluke, but we think otherwise as the county's top public health official, Amy Caron, has outlined.

Some factors that have been attributed to high transmission numbers are population density and resort communities. Both are lacking in Steele County. The low numbers have even surprised Caron. She shared with the Times that she expected cases in the area to "climb higher and faster" than they have.

So why has Steele dodged the bullet with low numbers when other counties around (Freeborn with 53 and Mower with 28) are more than double? Caron credits local residents for abiding by the governor's stay-at-home order with keeping the coronavirus at a minimum in Steele County. She said it proves staying put works. The majority of people are doing the right thing by staying home when they need to. Simply put, staying home saves lives. It's all of our responsibility to stop the coronavirus.

Another sign of good news for the area is that there have been no COVID-19 cases in any long-term care facilities in either Steele or Dodge counties. There are about a dozen such places in Steele County ranging from nursing homes to group homes.

The success of keeping the virus out of the long-term care facilities, Caron says, is attributed to fast action at the onset of the outbreak back in March when the facilities went into lockdown mode almost immediately.

While these good news items have been bleak times over the past six weeks, Steele Countians can feel good about what they have accomplished by keeping the coronavirus at bay.

But we can't stop now. We need to continue following the direction of public health officials, staying home, practicing social distance when out and about, wearing masks, washing our hands and covering our coughs.

Citizens should also take refuge in knowing that their local public health officials have guided them through this storm by getting out timely information. The actions of everyone have at least made this unprecedented time a little less scary and bearable to live.

GUEST COLUMN

Governor needs to reopen state

BY JOHN PETERSBURG

As Governor Walz' stay-at-home order continues until at least May 4, I have been getting numerous complaints from residents as to why everyone is being quarantined.

I understand where these folks are coming from.

The latest modeling information provided by experts at the Minnesota Department of Health and the University of Minnesota indicates that if we protect the vulnerable and continue to observe social distancing, we could begin the process of bringing our economy back without increasing the number needing hospitalization.

That modeling also suggests that if we only put our most vulnerable statewide residents under shelter-in-place guidelines and allowed everyone else to resume life while maintaining social distances and taking other common sense health precautions, it would result in the same amount of ICU bed demand as well as estimated deaths (22,000) as our current 'stay-at-home for all' order.

Recall that on April 9 Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, lowered his COVID-19 related death estimation in the United States from 240,000 to 60,000.

I highly doubt that 22,000 of those estimated 60,000 deaths are going to come from Minnesota, so maybe it's time our state updated its projections as well. And in doing so, maybe it should also analyze whether confirmed county or regional statistics should play a role in any continued stay-at-home order.

As of this writing (April 22), there were 2,721 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Minnesota. Hennepin County had 1,073. Steele

County had 10 cases. Waseca County had 2.

A number of northern Minnesota counties with similar or lower numbers than ours have already approved resolutions asking Governor Walz to rescind his stay-at-home order, and I can understand why as Main Street businesses, medical clinics and others are suffering enormous losses.

Moving forward, our goal for COVID-19 should be to protect Minnesotans. But it's also time to use some common sense and let people get back in their business and operate in a principled way. This can be done by allowing our economy to open prudently and safely. Minnesotans have recognized the importance of social distancing and keep workers safe. The Department of Labor and Industry has created a template plan, which is optional for businesses to use as a starting point.

2. Engage in health screening each day at arrival

3. Continue to use telework whenever possible

HELPFUL LINK

I've been hearing from a number of farmers in our area who are struggling with the problems associated with COVID-19 as well as other factors out of their control. It is to point them to an ag department website that answers questions, offers contacts, and addresses numerous ag-related topics. Visit <https://www.mn.state.us/covid-19-agriculture> to learn more.

ENCOURAGING NEWS

On Thursday, the governor announced

that industrial, manufacturing, and office-based businesses will be able to reopen on Monday if they have safety plans in place. I am encouraged at the news that many employees will be back to work this coming week, and I hope this will lead to even more of our businesses being allowed to open up as soon as they can do so safely.

According to the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), in order to reopen, businesses are required to do three things:

1. Create and share with their employees a COVID-19 Preparedness Plan that explains the actions they are taking to ensure social distancing and keep workers safe. The Department of Labor and Industry has created a template plan, which is optional for businesses to use as a starting point.
2. Engage in health screening each day at arrival
3. Continue to use telework whenever possible

DEED also noted it is continuing to listen to feedback from businesses and workers about how to implement social distancing practices in their workplaces.

For more information, visit <https://mn.gov/deed/newscenter/covid/safework/>.

SCHOOL CLOSED

The governor also announced that schools will continue to be in learning through the end of this school year. He has not yet made a decision on whether that will continue in the fall.

John Petersburg is the state representative for District 24A, which covers Steele and Waseca counties. He lives in Waseca.

A little corona pushes home projects to the forefront



HOT PURSUIT

RICK BUSSLER

One thing is for certain with everybody being hunkered down while dodging the coronavirus. We definitely have extra time on our hands.

Let me see, which house project should I choose on the list of more than 100 that I have compiled over the past few years. That seems to be the burning question around our house as of late. Perhaps you're facing the same challenge.

In between job transfers and starting new jobs, both of my older kids are home right now. I think my younger kind of likes it, but of course, with her being a newly turned teenager, she's not going to admit it to anybody.

Regardless, I have a little extra help around the house these days. It's a great time to pull out the project list and see what we can knock off.

This past weekend we conquered painting the living room. It has been neglected for many years and was in desperate need of a fresh coat of paint and a little patching of some small

holes. It's amazing what a little paint can do to lift one's spirits. I feel like I have gained a whole new house again. Well, maybe that's stretching it a bit, but you get my drift.

One of the next big projects is to purge through mountains of "stuff" we have inherited over the last 15 years. It just baffles me how quickly things can accumulate. It's time to have a big yard sale and purge the house," my oldest daughter says as she's going through everything. She is on a mission to declutter the house.

I hope you can also find projects that have just

driven you, well maybe, a little crazy.

I have a feeling we are going to have a lot more time on our hands in the coming weeks and months to tackle home improvement projects. With the cancellations of community festivals and celebrations just starting to trickle in, I think we're going to have an onslaught in the next month. I'm afraid it's going to be a long summer without all the fun we're used to enjoying.

We are all going to have to become creative in finding things to occupy our time. I think we're in for the long haul. Let's hope the coronavirus will bring out the best in each of us as we struggle to fill time we're not used to having.

As I've previously said, this pandemic may force us to spend more time together as a family and slow down our pace just a bit. Like it or not, the coronavirus is sending us all in hot pursuit of finding a new way of life, at least temporarily.

YOUR VIEW

Small farms are the solution

To-the-Editor:

As large corporate meatpacking plants close across the nation, the pandemic exposes deep cracks in the nation's monopolistic meat supply. Allowing a handful of multinational corporations to control the meat supply impairs the public safety during our hour of need. The combination-monopolistic control when it gets into does not work well to ensure production and public safety.

During his 90-year lifetime, my father farmed in Dodge County. He watched as multinational corporations forced independent farmers off the land, replaced by industrial-sized factory farms. As I swine factory farms circled our farm within a 3-mile radius, my father frequently proclaimed that "small farmers will feed the country when it gets into trouble." My father was right. The country is in trouble and

small farmers are feeding this country, not multinational corporations.

As America slowly emerges from this crisis, we must re-examine the sick dependency upon corporate titans to feed America and rely, once again, upon small farmers to feed America.

Sonja Trom Eayrs
Maple Grove
Dodge County Concerned Citizens

GUEST COLUMN

Continuing our work during challenging times

BY TIM PENNY

In January I wrote about the importance of having an endowment so that at Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation (SMIF), we can continue to address the emerging needs of our 20-county region through thick and thin. Little did I know at the time how critical this would be for our organization within just a mere two months.

At SMIF we are still able to deliver on the programming that we have promised our region, even during this challenging time. We owe this stability to our donors and the endowment that they have helped us build over the years. Earnings from our invested endowment are a key part of our foundation's annual budget.

Thanks to our endowment, we have been able to continue to operate and provide important services to this region in our focus areas of early childhood, economic development and community vitality. As part of this continuity, we are currently seeking applications for two open grants.

The Early Literacy Grant is designed to support literacy efforts that enhance school readiness for children birth to age five by providing children with books donated by Mankato-based publishers Capstone and ABDO. Annually, approximately forty organizations - from libraries to community education programs to civic groups - receive these

books. Applications for this program are due May 6.

We are also seeking applications for our Paint the Town Grant. In partnership with various Ace Hardware stores in the region, we will be distributing paint to up to ten communities with populations under 10,000. The paint can be used for new community murals, community welcome signs or historic structures. Applications for this program are due June 17. Information for both programs can be found on our website at smifoundation.org.

Not only have our endowment funds allowed us to maintain operations, the endowment has allowed SMIF to be responsive to this health and economic crisis. Within just a few weeks SMIF was able to award 491 family child care providers and 34 centers in our region with emergency funds. We are also working to support strategy and business planning for child care providers during this difficult time. Our lending staff is currently reviewing more than 500 applications for the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development's (DEED) Small Business Emergency loan program.

SMIF has also been able to provide matching grants to our community foundations to support them as they provide their own emergency funding to local organizations. All of this has been made possible thanks to the generosity of our donors and the strength of our partners

who, like SMIF, are dedicated to this region.

This is why it is especially important that we continue to build the size of our endowment and that is what SMIF's Love Where You Live campaign is focused on. When we launched this campaign over a year ago we chose this theme because we believe that it gets to the heart of everything we do. Growing our endowment allows us to enhance support for entrepreneurs, invest more in early childhood efforts and increase financial investments in our region's communities.

To use a metaphor: A storm may have come, but our ship is steady, and we are able to continue steering safely to shore. Like you, I love where I live, and I know that southern Minnesota will emerge stronger for having worked through this challenging time together.

To support our Love Where You Live campaign and continue to grow this critical fund for our region, visit smifoundation.org/lovewhereyoulive.

As always, I welcome your comments and questions. You can reach me at tim@smifoundation.org or 507-455-3215.

Tim Penny is the president and CEO of Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation based in Oatonna. Penny represented Minnesota's First Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1982-1994.

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A state and national award winning weekly

MINNESOTA NEWSPAPER ASSOCIATION	
2020-9 state awards	2015-7 state and 4 national awards
2019-7 state and 4 national awards	2014-4 state and 2 national awards
2018-2 state and 5 national awards	2017-2 state and 2 national awards
2016-1 state and 5 national awards	2011-4 national awards

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

Real estate different, but still going strong

BY RICK BUSSLER
PUBLISHER

Despite the COVID-19 crisis that has disrupted business throughout the state, real estate is still going strong as realtors adapt to new approaches of selling homes.

Jennifer Walsh of Keller Williams Premier Realty based in Rochester and Austin wants people to know realtors are still working, but just differently now in light of the coronavirus pandemic. They are following CDC guidelines by wearing gloves and masks when going into homes.

"People are super shocked that I am still busy," Walsh said. "The market is still active and

there are serious buyers out and people are listing their homes," she added.

Even though many businesses have been shut down over the past month, real estate services have been deemed essential and have continued operating.

Because some people are uncomfortable going into other people's homes, Walsh and other realtors are offering virtual showings and video tours.

"We are not holding open houses right now, but we can still do a virtual open house to successfully market our listings," Walsh explained. "We have had people buying houses without ever stepping foot into the house."

In addition to virtual tours, Walsh has taken to

Facebook Live at Jennifer Walsh Real Estate to answer any questions from prospective buyers or sellers.

Walsh finds that people are generally nervous with what's happening in the world right now. "To quell their fears about the real estate market, it's just different," she said. "People have to understand there might be delays as things are changing every day," she added.

The most recent statistics for March compiled by the Southeast Minnesota Association of Realtors show that average sale prices are up and inventory is still critically low but sales are holding steady. Walsh said realtors are seeing homes selling with less

overall showings, which she points out, "the qualified, serious buyers are still active and looking."

The SEAR report shows the average house is on the market for 68 days, down by one day from a year ago. Over the past year, houses sold the fastest last July at 44 days, the report shows. The average sales price of \$238,826 is up by almost 13% from 2019 and the highest in more than a year.

Though the numbers for April won't be out for a few weeks yet, Walsh has found she has been busier in April than she was in March. What is fueling activity right now is the historically low interest rates. "I have been busy with the rates being super low," she said.

Walsh said now is the perfect time to list a home on the market if you are thinking of selling. "You will have less competition and likely less days on the market before selling," she said. "The home still has to be marketable and priced well," she emphasized.

Many sellers are worried about selling their house and having no where to go. But Walsh points out that can be easily handled by adding language to the purchase agreement.

Despite COVID-19 crippling the nation's economy, it has not caused home values to drop, according to Walsh. "There are always price reductions and so far there has not been anything out of the ordinary," she said.



Jennifer Walsh

Walsh said all indications are pointing to a strong healthy real estate market, but she is quick to caution, "the whole market is a fluid situation."

"I'm here for people. If they have any fears of real estate, I can help them understand," Walsh says. "I always have the coffee on, and we can sit in the driveway six feet apart."

Community Pathways fills the food void during COVID-19

BY HOWARD LESTRUD
STAFF WRITER

Soon after restrictions for the coronavirus COVID-19 were outlined by Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, rumor had it that the Steele County food shelf was closed.

"We are open," says shelf co-directors Nancy Ness and Maureen Schlobohm. "We don't want people going hungry," Ness emphasized.

Community Pathways is the new name for the food shelf, which merged with the Clothesline. The Clothesline is temporarily closed to free up staff to

distribute food. The merger took place in January.

More than 400 households are being served per month. "We are here at 155 Oakdale St. in Owatonna to provide food and be safe," said Schlobohm.

Director Ness said that Community Pathways has changed its processes on a daily basis and sometimes on an hourly basis.

Curb-side delivery is being offered. People pull up in their vehicles and accept food items placed on a table outside.

"People are hunkering in, thus we haven't seen a huge increase in demand for food," said Ness. New families have been added to the Community Pathways delivery list but many of their customers are vulnerable, older people.

The Community Pathways staff of seven full and part-time workers makes 160 deliveries per month to client doorsteps. "We were doing it twice a month but have changed to just once a month," the co-chairs remarked.

A delivery truck also makes a stop twice a month, usually on Friday in Blooming Prairie at the Senior Center.

Volunteers are no longer working at the food shelf. "We asked our volunteers to stay home, to stay safe and to stay healthy," said Ness. Most of the volunteers are elderly, more vulnerable people, Ness explained.

"We are holding our breath and just seeing what will happen in the future," Ness said. "It has been an interesting journey for us," she added.

New hours for Community Pathways are: Mondays and Wednesdays, 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Saturdays are not being done at this time.

Community Pathways is continuing efforts to ensure that staff is safe and healthy. "We are trying to maintain social distancing and safe practices," commented Schlobohm.

"This is such a strange time with everyone living in an ever-changing



Troy Bice of Community Pathways of Steele County prepares food to be delivered to over 400 households in Steele County. He is the market delivery coordinator.



This is what the pre-packaged food box looks like as it arrives from the Channel One food bank.

world," Ness observes. "Our goal is to keep our folks safe and get them food when they need it; we are waiting for a surge yet to come," Ness says.

Channel One in Rochester is the food bank for Community Pathways. Pre-packaged food boxes come from Channel One.

The public is also welcome to make food donations to Community Pathways, said co-directors Ness and Schlobohm. These food donations are kept separate for three days before they are separated by workers who routinely wash their hands and follow safe practices.

Money donations are also welcome. These donations are handled through the mail or electronically. "They are handled with care and attention," Ness assures.

Because of changing circumstances, masked Community Pathways staff members have not been able to visit with customers. "We have lost that personal touch and will be glad to get back to caring for people the way we want to," said Ness.

"We are committed to staying open and staying safe and healthy," reiterated co-directors Ness and Schlobohm.

COVID-19 affects area hog producers

BY HOWARD LESTRUD
STAFF WRITER

"It could be catastrophic," said one Blooming Prairie hog farmer, reflecting on the coronavirus that has forced the shutdown of three major pork processing plants.

Three Midwestern hog processing plants have been closed down because a significant number of employees have been tested positive for the coronavirus.

Closed down are Smithfield Foods of Sioux Falls with 700 workers infected; Tyson Foods of Waterloo, Iowa with 180 cases and JBS USA of Worthington, 20 cases.

Patrick O'Connor of O'Connor Family Farms said he is hopeful that these plants can reopen soon. "We need to get through the next few weeks and hopefully people can get healthy and we can avoid catastrophic results," he said.

O'Connor Farms of Blooming Prairie raises more than 7,000 hogs.

Tessa Magnuson of Magnuson Hog Farms in Freeborn County says the COVID-19 scare has made it difficult to get laborers to work at the hog farm located seven miles southwest of Blooming Prairie in Freeborn County. The Magnuson farm has over 6,000 hogs.

Magnuson said none of their current employees have tested positive for the virus.

Magnuson, like O'Connor, is hopeful that "things will get turned around for everyone soon."



Little Haven Matyas loves to go to work with her mom, Tessa Magnuson. Tessa manages the Magnuson Hog Farm business located in Freeborn County, about seven miles southwest of Blooming Prairie.

your hogs processed, you aren't getting paid either," said O'Connor. "I hope we can get back to where we were before," he added.

"The virus pandemic has been weighing on my mind for the past month," O'Connor said. Some packing plants have 25,000 to 30,000 animals that are not being processed. "This will create a backlog," O'Connor reasons.

"We need to get healthy and stay ahead of this

thing," O'Connor said.

Both O'Connor and Magnuson reported they have begun planting corn. "Field conditions for planting are pretty much just right," says O'Connor.

Magnuson says she will plant 550 acres of corn. Her No. 1 assistant is her daughter Haven Matyas, 4, who often accompanies her in the tractor.

You might say that Tessa, 38, is unique in that she plays an important role as a woman in agriculture. She loves farming so much that she assumes the role of a mom as she carries out her responsibilities of helping manage the Magnuson Hog Farms of Freeborn County.

O'Connor says he does most of the planting, using a 24-row machine. "I let my dad (Jim) do it some times," Patrick said. His brother-in-law Sam Wencil is an "all-around guy" who gets done what has to be accomplished, Patrick said. Cameron Marquardt is "the digger" who does tilling.

Now is a challenging time for farmers and many are struggling," O'Connor said.

Added Magnuson, "I just hope it turns out for everyone."



Patrick O'Connor of O'Connor Family Farms in Blooming Prairie started the planting season using a 24-row planter early last week.

MDA assists livestock producers during pandemic

Due to market and supply/demand changes for meat products during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) is helping livestock farmers and processors in addressing these current challenges.

The recent closures of some meat processing plants around the region due to COVID-19 is disrupting traditional animal markets and the meat supply chain. The MDA is working to limit this disruption for producers of smaller herds or flocks by matching them with slaughter facilities and identifying other marketing opportunities.

Farmers with smaller herds or flocks seeking new markets, or increased space, please contact Jim Ostlie, 320-842-6910, Jim.Ostlie@state.mn.us or Courtney VanderMeij, 651-201-6135, Courtney.Vandermeij@state.mn.us.

The MDA is working with existing "Equal To" processors (plants under continuous inspection that are able to produce and process meat and poultry products for wholesale within the State of Minnesota) to expand capacity.

MDA is also developing an expedited approval process to enable plants that currently do not sell wholesale within the state to do so. If these establishments meet the minimum requirements, they will be granted a 90-day provisional grant of inspection.

Processing plants interested in expanding their slaughter capacity, have additional processing capacity, or wanting expedited licensing, please contact Jennifer Stephaes at 651-249-5566.

The MDA is providing additional financial assistance by awarding over \$345,000 in AGRI Value-Added Grants to nine Minnesota meat processors. The companies will be using the funds for facility improvements, such as increasing freezer space and new equipment for slaughter and processing capacity. Many of these grants are required to make updates to be compliant with the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). This new funding is in addition to the nearly \$1 million in Value-Added Grants in FY20, in which meat processors received a significant amount of the total grant funds.

A new grant program, the AGRI Rapid Response Mini-Grant for Livestock Processing, is intended to assist processors and certain producers respond to market issues caused by COVID-19. This grant will be launched by April 30 and will be available to eligible Minnesota processors of meat, poultry, eggs, and milk, and to livestock producers who need storage capacity for processed products until existing markets return or new markets are developed.

Polio victim: Stay positive and hopeful

BY HOWARD LESTRUD
STAFF WRITER

During this time of worry and concern over the coronavirus COVID-19, polio victim Linda Christianson of Blooming Prairie has some words of encouragement.

She believes that things will only get better when we "stay positive and hopeful," and when we follow the guidance given to us about social distancing, about washing our hands and about wearing protective masks.

The pandemic is very serious, Christianson believes. "Nolan and I have not been anywhere except to go to medical appointments and to pick up groceries," she says.

"I think this pandemic is going to last a long time, and we have to be patient," Christianson says. More and more people will come down with the virus when

they start moving around and not following stay at home orders, she predicts.

"Our health is more important than our economy," says Christianson.

The COVID-19 pandemic has mandated many of us to stay at home. Christianson urges people at home to do things they typically have not had the time to do. She says she is working on a quilt project, which she began in 2006.

Christianson was an infant, 6 1/2 months old, when she became sick with polio.

Memories of her early sickness with the disease are recalled in stories her parents shared with her. Linda also has actively researched her personal bout with polio in order to author a book many years ago.

She has shared her personal journey with polio in her book, in personal appearances and with family and friends.

Her book, "All the Steps I Have Taken Then and Now," has sold over 500 copies. In her book, she recounts her long and valiant battle, a battle that continues today.

Christianson said many of her remembrances about her early affliction can be compared to happenings of today where long-term care residents are isolated from their families.

She was isolated from her parents when she was hospitalized at St. Mary's Hospital in Rochester. She also said she did not meet her crib partner in the hospital until both were adults.

Talking freely about her early hospital stays, Christianson said she had her first surgery on Feb. 27, 1950, her second birthday. The ortho surgery was designed to help with muscle exchange in her left foot.

She remembers wearing a built-up shoe purchased at

Smith's Shoe Store in Austin.

As a little kid, she wore white-topped shoes and as she reached fourth grade, she had to wear boy shoes. "They were ugly brown shoes that were made to fit my brace," she recalls.

Sometimes, Christianson had to wear braces on both legs. She said she finished using the heavy, leather braces in 1987 and decided to keep all of them except some that had grown mold.

She did not wear a brace from age 18 to age 38. The brace for her left leg returned at age 36 when she graduated from dental school and raised her children.

Polio was quite devastating in the early 1950s. Christianson recalls "getting in line" with her sister and many others to get her polio vaccine in 1955. The vaccine was founded by Jonas Salk. The vaccine was first given in shot form and later as medicine atop a sugar cube.

It's very important that we get a vaccine to tackle the coronavirus, Christianson says emphatically.

She believes medical researchers will come up with a vaccine but it will take quite a few stay at home orders to provide time for a vaccine to be marketed.

Christianson does not call herself handicapped. "I call myself differently abled," she says with a sparkle in her eyes. She added she can do many things that other people can't do.

Growing up on a farm, Christianson was determined to be held back from farming activity.

"My parents put up a fence but that didn't hold Linda back. She just used her crutch to unlatch the fence gate. Her parents then removed the fence and let her do what she wanted to do," she says.

Her children and grandchildren have written reports



Linda Christianson of Blooming Prairie is well known for her community service and dedication to her church, Red Oak Grove Lutheran Church, rural Austin. Here, Linda helps clean strawberries for the church's annual strawberry festival.



A young Linda Christianson was fitted with a long brace to make it easier for walking. Doctors diagnosed her with polio when she was six months old.



This is the cover of a book written by Linda Christianson about her journey with polio. The book is entitled "All the Steps I Have Taken Then and Now."

Minnesota prioritizes child care during COVID-19

Temporary changes add flexibility for families and providers, give guidance on operating during peace-time emergency.

Minnesotans who provide child care and families who rely on child care should know that the state is working to prioritize and support their operations and availability during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Under emergency authority granted by Gov. Tim Walz, Human Services Commissioner Jodi Harpstead has approved temporary modifications to child care regulations and procedures. The changes add flexibility for families and providers while preserving access to care.

The temporary changes affect providers and families:

- Family child care providers have longer timelines to renew licenses and meet training requirements, and more flexible requirements for record-keeping and age distribution.

- Child care centers have more flexibility around requirements for staffing, age grouping, training and overnight care.

- Providers who serve the Child Care Assistance Program, or CCAP, have more time to renew their registration. Certain payment rules have been modified so they can continue to serve families. For instance, if a child is absent for medical reasons, the program continues to pay providers for more days than under normal rules.

- Families who rely on CCAP have extended eligibility if they were due for review before July. They

can also switch child care programs without a waiting period if their provider closes temporarily, so they don't lose access to care.

"The Minnesotans who continue to provide child care during this unprecedented crisis deserve our thanks," Harpstead said.

"Their work caring for the children of front-line workers keeps us all safer." Regulatory oversight of child care settings continues during the pandemic. State and county licensors are prioritizing on-site visits on a case-by-case basis, and continue to respond to critical incidents that present a high risk of harm to children or allegations of abuse or neglect.

The changes for child care, in addition to temporary suspensions of routine enforcement by DHS Licensing, give providers

the flexibility to continue serving clients, mitigate the spread of the virus and protect the health and safety of children and themselves and their staff.

Executive Order 20-12 signed by Governor Walz on March 20, allows the Minnesota Department of Human Services to temporarily waive or modify state requirements so services can be delivered safely and without undue delay, protecting vulnerable Minnesotans and those who care for them. Waivers and modifications under the emergency authority are posted on the agency's public website.

The Department of Human Services serves more than 1 million Minnesotans, with programs and services that include health care, economic assistance and much more.

GUEST COLUMN

Bennett targets questions regarding COVID-19

BY PEGGY BENNETT

On Thursday, Governor Walz made the decision to keep the remainder of the school year by deciding that distance learning will continue. There's also some good news for those employed in the industrial and manufacturing sectors, as well as those who work in office settings as they can go back to work on Monday so long as their employer establishes a preparedness plan that follows CDC/DEED announced guidelines AND engages in employee health screening every day.

The Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) has much more information available on this governor's decision.

HELP FOR FARMERS

Farmers all over Minnesota, including from our area, are hurting along with many other Minnesotans. Ethanol plants have closed due to the unnaturally low oil prices and commodity prices have plummeted. I want to pass along a website that MDA has put together. It has numerous different topics and contacts for department staff. The site covers issues from questions about meat processing to mental health resources to financial support through RFA. It's a good resource for farmers in these tough times. For more, go to mda.state.mn.us.

MORE VOICES NEEDED

Recently, I discussed the need to keep people safe and open our economy at this critical time. This doesn't need to be an either-or decision. We can both keep people safe and carefully and smartly begin opening our shuttered businesses.

CAMPING ANSWERS

I have received a number of questions concerning both camping and also the opening of resorts up north. Below is the most recent information that my office has received from the Governor's office for clarification on these issues. As you will read below, the Governor's staff is working

on clarification for campgrounds and RV parks. I will post that information as soon as I get it.

From the Governor's office, which notes that resorts were never actually closed under the Executive Order, but there certainly has been some misinformation circulating on the subject.

- The hotel portions of resorts (including rented cabins) can open as planned and can accept guests.
- Guests do not have to be members of a critical sector to stay at a resort.
- Communal amenities may not be open for use.
- While resorts can accept visitors, the Stay at Home Order continues to discourage unnecessary travel, and the Order asks people to remain close to their homes.
- Resorts do not have to open if they are not comfortable doing so.
- Maintenance and cleaning staff can begin work now to prepare for the season. It goes without saying that the health and safety of employees and guests should remain a priority throughout the season.

We are also working on clarification on campgrounds and RV resorts. I will send those to you as soon as I get them.

HELP RESTAURANTS
Hungry? A number of Albert Lea restaurants are open for pickup or delivery. I have been enjoying eating takeout and thought maybe you would also want to help support our restaurants during this tough time. Please note, I wasn't able to find online information for restaurants that are open in the other communities of our district, many of which have restaurants. If anyone knows of such a list that lists open restaurants in any House District 27A community, please send it my way and I'll be happy to post it!

Peggy Bennett is state representative for District 27A, which covers the City of Blooming Prairie, southern Dodge County and most of Freeborn County. She lives in Albert Lea.

Auxiliary showcases its appreciation



A large THANK YOU banner has been placed by the entrance to the Owatonna Hospital. The banner, accented by hearts made by hand, reads: "Thank you for your courage, selflessness and dedication. Stay Safe!" The banner was donated by the Owatonna Hospital Auxiliary and is aimed at doctors, nurses, environmental services, maintenance, materials, Meadows Cafe staff, security, pharmacy staff and office employees, just to name a few. Sharon Jacobson, volunteer services coordinator for the Owatonna Hospital and District One Hospital of Faribault, worked with Legacy Signs in developing the banner.

How the Coronavirus Relief Law Helps Retirement Savers and Retirees



Dear Savvy Senior,
What can you tell me about the retirement account changes that Congress recently passed in response to the coronavirus crisis?

Seeking Answers

Dear Seeking,

Tucked into the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, or CARES Act, that President Trump signed into law in late March were a series of changes that can help retirement savers in need of cash, as well as help preserve the retirement savings accounts of current retirees while the stock market is down. Here's a rundown to how three provisions in the CARES Act might help you, or someone you know.

HARDSHIP WITHDRAWALS

Normally, if you took money out of an employer-sponsored retirement plan or IRA before 59½, you'd be hit with taxes and a 10 percent tax penalty on that amount. But the CARES Act waives the early distribution penalty on up to \$100,000 of such distributions in 2020 for what the law calls "affected individuals." You are, however, still on the hook for income taxes on any amounts withdrawn, but the new law allows you to pay them over three years. To qualify for this penalty-free hardship withdrawal, you must either have been diagnosed with coronavirus (COVID-19), have a spouse or dependent diagnosed with it or experienced adverse financial consequences as a result of being quarantined, furloughed, laid off, having work hours reduced, being unable to work due to a lack of child care due to COVID-19, or closing or reducing hours of a business you owned or operated if you had COVID-19.

BIGGER LOANS

The CARES Act will also allow you to take larger loans against the money you've saved in your 401(k) or 403(b) during the six-month period after the law was implemented, which was March 27. IRAs do not allow loans.

Normally, you can borrow only up to \$50,000 or 50 percent of your vested account balance, whichever is less. The CARES Act will double that: up to \$100,000 against the amount you've saved in your plan.

Borrowers typically have five years to repay a loan or the amount will be treated as a distribution and taxed. But you also need to know that if you leave or lose your job, you may be required to pay back the balance early, or owe taxes and, possibly, an early withdrawal penalty.

This provision also helps those with an existing 401(k) loan by allowing them to delay repayments that are due in 2020 for one year.

SUSPENDED RMDs

Starting in 2020, individuals who turn 72 are required to take annual mandatory distributions from their tax-deferred 401(k)s and IRAs. In prior years, this requirement kicked in after savers turned 70½ years of age.

This is known as the required minimum distribution or RMDs.

The CARES Act suspends RMDs for 2020, including those for inherited IRAs, which means you can skip taking your required distributions this year if you wish.

The one-year waiver of RMDs will help retirees, who would otherwise have been forced to base their minimum withdrawals for 2020 on their account balances as of Dec. 31, 2019, when the stock market was near record lows. It will also give the market time to recover before resuming distributions in 2021.

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.

PUBLIC DONATES: to mask drive for Steele County Public Health FROM A1

ing those who continue to be on the frontlines during this crisis. Piepho and public health were grateful for all those who donated the masks.

"Being it's a new virus and we don't have a vaccine for it, it definitely is worrisome, but I don't think anybody knows the impact it's going to have," Piepho explained.

"We're trying to slow it down to not overwhelm the healthcare system, and I think we're doing a pretty good job."

As of last Saturday,

there were 10 confirmed cases of the COVID-19 virus in Steele County, with one in the ICU and six recovered. "We've been holding steady," Piepho said. "We've been doing pretty good in Steele County."

"People can go to the CDC website or the MDH website for information," she explained. "There's a ton of trustworthy stuff on there, and if anybody has any questions or concerns please call public health and we will definitely help."

Looking back at past epidemics

Spanish flu hits in 1918

"If you don't wear a mask and do get influenza, don't blame the health authorities, blame yourself."

Dr. H.M. Bracken

MN Department of Health - Oct. 17, 1918

Editor's Note: This is the second in an installment of stories about past epidemics in Minnesota. Last week, Nancy Vaillancourt shared information about Minnesota's first pandemic, smallpox in 1871.

BY NANCY
VAILLANCOURT

Steele County has experienced several epidemics in the past. This article is based on research for the Owatonna Public Library with additional information added as available. The topic this week is the 1918 influenza pandemic.

My great-great-grandfather and his daughter died of the flu in 1918, just weeks apart from each other. Each Memorial Day, as I decorate their graves in Stockton, Minnesota, I think of the many lives lost through this terrible illness.

At the time, the 1918 influenza was called the Spanish flu although it did not begin in Spain. Spain was the first country to report it in their newspapers; other European countries involved in World War I censored any mention of the epidemic. Worldwide approximately 60 million people died; the United States lost over 600,000 people. In Minnesota, the numbers vary, but most experts put the number over 10,000 lives lost. I have not been able to locate the statistics for Steele County's deaths, but found that at one point Steele County had over 300 cases reported in one week.

The first reports of influenza were of soldiers in military bases throughout the United States and while serving in Europe. While more than 1,400 Minnesotans were killed on the battlefields in World War I, influenza took the lives of an additional 2,300 Minnesota soldiers. Some of them came home before displaying symptoms which led to the spread of the disease to the general population.

The disease itself was lethal in its intensity and speed. A person could be healthy in the morning but dying by the end of the day. Symptoms were cough, exhaustion, general body pain, chills, fever, congestion, and bleeding from body orifices. Victims could develop devastating lung damage resulting in pneumonia, and cyanosis, characterized by skin that appeared blue.

In Steele County, the influenza spread the fastest between the months of October and December 1918, although a few cases continued into 1920. As the influenza epidemic raged, each community in Steele County set its own guidelines. The People's Press reported that the Blooming Prairie village council had met and authorized the printing and display of the following:

Preventive Health Measure:

As a measure of safety, to prevent the spread of the present epidemic of influenza, the village Board of Health in cooperation with the village council and Board of Education, have decided to close the public schools, theater, churches, and all public gatherings. This order is to take effect immediately and to remain in force until revoked by the village Board, of Health.

The Owatonna City Council was given authority to monitor places where influenza could spread. A committee appointed by the council closed dance halls and theaters and cancelled basketball games. This committee was given authority to close the library at their discretion. However, the library remained open and books circulated throughout the epidemic. Schools in Owatonna and Ellendale were closed for one month, although some protested, saying that they could keep their track of the children if they were in school.

Dr. F.M. Smersh, of the Owatonna Board of Health, set guidelines requiring "that all practicing physicians report cases of influenza to the board of health... giving name, location, etc., in order to guard

against the spread of the so-called Spanish influenza." Residents requested that the Board of Health put up signs in the homes of those suffering from influenza so that those families could be avoided. The board agreed to do so.

This round of influenza was fast moving. In page after page newspapers of the time period reported on the deaths of those affected by the influenza.

The 1918 epidemic led the Steele County Board to establish an emergency hospital. It was located on the south end of the county home on South Cedar Street. The emergency hospital was only open three months, caring for 75 influenza patients, 65 of whom were cured.

By early December the ban on public gatherings were lifted. But many were still affected. Later that month, A.W. Sawyer of the Civilian Relief Committee for Steele County requested nurses to help care for farm families who were ill with influenza. He also requested laborers who could help farmers who were sick. Deaths continued from the influenza for many months.

Further information is available at the Minnesota Historical Society website, www.mnhs.org; the Center for Disease Control website, www.cdc.gov; and in the book *Minnesota 1918: When Flu, Fire, and War Ravaged the State* by Curt Brown.

Nancy Vaillancourt is the director at the Blooming Prairie Public Library. She is also an avid history buff.

History from the News Archives

10 Years Ago May 5, 2010

RICK L. BUSSLER, PUBLISHER

On April 18, the Udolpho 4-H Club did its yearly yard cleaning to raise money for Blooming Prairie Ed Foundation. Those participating in the clean up were: Alex Ilke, Lauren Larkowski, Logan Lynch, Skylar Lynch, Isaac Ilke, Michelle Oswald, Rachel Peterson, Cole Christianson, Cade Christianson, Rachel Oswald, Megan Oswald, Luke Larkowski, Emma Christianson, Scott Romeo, and Mrs. Romeo. They spent three hours cleaning Charles Herdina's yard just west of Blooming Prairie. Along with the yard cleaning the club also did nine baskets with spring and winter items.

Several new changes are making their way into your local newspaper beginning with this week's Times. As part of the redesign some pages have been moved around to make more reader friendly and items will be grouped together on certain pages to make them easier to find. Also, our Web page has received a much-needed redesign. The Times staff has been working on these new designs for several months. "We are always looking at different ways to make this one of the best small papers in Minnesota," said publisher Rick Bussler.

Another good week for BPHS sports. Our softball team won three games and have now won 7 in a row. Congratulations to Coach Ali Mach as she recorded her 100th career win. The baseball team has also won two straight games and has upped its conference mark to 4-1. Aaron Krejci was honored with Athlete of the Week in Owatonna's paper. Track teams had success as well, the boys winning their own invitational and the girls finished second in the Blossom Relays. The golf team and tennis will be a very close match, but then came back for conference victories over JWP. The boys finished second in an eight-team invitational at Janesville. Both teams are 2-2 in the conference.

20 Years Ago May 2, 2000

ELSIE SUNGER, PUBLISHER

Although not officially done, the staff and faculty of BPHS retired

another of the "old-time" teachers over the weekend when H (Harold) Peterson, art instructor and golf and football coach was "roasted." H will finish a 34-year career at the local high school this spring, and he has been one of only two art instructors since the new high school opened in 1957. His success with the girl's golf program has been astounding. His team won this spring, and he has won 170 wins, 65 losses and 4 ties. He also championed art in the curriculum as one of the necessary fine arts for a school. Good luck Mr. H in your upcoming retirement.

A total of 485 bachelor's, master's and associate degree candidates will be participating in the 32nd annual Southwest State University commencement on May 6. Graduating Cum Laude is Charles B. Nicholson and Jessica L. Emde. Also, graduating is Neil L. Jensen, all from Blooming Prairie.

Two Blooming Prairie girls were chosen as the top entrees locally for the annual Association of American Women's essay contest this spring. Ashley Masching, a sixth grader, won the local contest and advanced to state competition, where she finished in second place overall for her age group. Kari Peterson, a fifth grader, took second locally. Both received savings bonds for their efforts. The topic for their essays was "What Will Women's Role be in the New Millennium." Congratulations to both of these young ladies.

50 Years Ago April 29, 1970

VICTOR, VERNON & VRYLE KREJCI, PUBLISHERS

Betlach Foods, Inc. recently complete an extensive remodeling project which included adding new equipment, carpeting the floor and in general making it more convenient for customers to shop at the store. Betlachs is an old established business in Blooming Prairie and is now owned by Harry Peinka and Kent Weaver. The owners have received many compliments on the improvement and the establishment is a definite asset to Blooming Prairie's business district.

The Owatonna Prairie Future Farmers of America Chapter will be well represented at the State Convention at the University of

Minnesota May 3-5. Four teams have earned the right to compete for state honors. The Crops Team consists of Mike O'Connor, Linn Thoen, Mitch Klumpf and Steve Frelthoda. The Dairy Team is made up of Robert Schlicting, Dale Hensrud, Jim Prohoda and Charles Naatz, alternate. Meats Judging team, Jon Goodwin, Ronald Braaten, Jerry Ingvalson, Doug Smith and Larry Ullian, alternate. General Livestock team is Donn Olsen, Ed Butler, Gary Schultz and Roger Peterson.

75 Years Ago April 26, 1945

FRANK KREJCI, PUBLISHER

The Junior-Senior Prom to be held May 6 is now fully planned, although the theme is being kept a secret until the big event. The following committees are working on all the details. Refreshments, Donna Anderson, Pat Myers and Margaret Johnston. Reception committee are the class officers: Roger Ingvalson, Joyce Rockne, Phyllis Berg and Edwin Myers assisted by Joanne Turner and Eugene Trom. Harriet Wold and Howard Fentsch are chairpersons for the decorating committee with the assistance of the rest of the class. Entertainment is being handled by Joyce Rockne, Phyllis Berg and Bob Harber.

The ill-fated and sad message was received by Mr. and Mrs. Louis Rasmussen from the War Department on April 23rd that their son, Lt. Robert Jas Rasmussen had been killed in action. Robert was born Jan. 21, 1919, graduated from our local high school in 1936 and enlisted in the Navy in February 1937. His brother, Cpl. Darrell Rasmussen, serves in the Army somewhere in Italy. Mourning are his parents and siblings: Dale, Dorothy, Paul, Loren and Donna. The community grieves with them as well.

The Senior class presented the three-act play "Star Crazy" on Friday, April 27th to a capacity audience. Miss Jackson arranged the music which was performed between acts by Polly Anderson and Joyce Ditlevsen and the trumpet trio. Joyce Peterson, Jean Johnson, Lela Hunter, Edna Lysne, Betty Stokton, Loren Holm, Arthur Moen, Roger Ingvalson and Junior Estenson.

SEEING THE GOOD

The Times continues its "Seeing the Good" feature in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. We are profiling stories of hope and encouragement of friends, neighbors and others doing extraordinary acts of kindness during a bleak period in our nation's history. If you have any ideas of stories we can feature, please reach out to us at btimes@frontiernet.net or call our office at 507-583-4431. Your ideas will help make this an interesting segment for our readers.

Owatonna manufacturer ramps up mask production

Area manufacturers are getting in the spirit of helping with the coronavirus pandemic. The Life Fitness/Cybox manufacturing plant in Owatonna recently began hand-sewing non-surgical cloth masks to donate to local healthcare providers. The effort has since been expanded to the Life Fitness plant in Ramsey and across Life Fitness' global manufacturing footprint in Falmouth, Ky., and Kiskorós, Hungary.

This initiative started in Owatonna on March 30 with the help of two Life Fitness employees. Lisa Boyd, safety and documentation coordinator, and Kris Morgan, human resources coordinator volunteered to sew masks on their own. After hearing about their idea, Life Fitness offered Boyd and Morgan the plant's upholstery department to sew greater quantities of the mask project. In Owatonna, Life Fitness has donated 450 masks

to the Owatonna Hospital, Traditions Care Center, Country Side Care Center, and Timberdale Care Center. The Life Fitness plant in Ramsey is also ramping up production to donate to more local facilities. Collectively, Life Fitness' global COVID-19 relief efforts have produced over 3,000 masks and plan to make tens of thousands of additional masks to donate to local healthcare providers and communities in need.



Life Fitness of Owatonna has donated 450 masks to the Owatonna Hospital, Traditions Care Center, Country Side Care Center and Timberdale Care Center. Life Fitness employees Kris Morgan, far left, and Lisa Boyd, second from right, present the donation to workers representing Owatonna Hospital.



Melissa Anderson of Our Homes South shows off one of the 1,600 masks made by the women of Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Owatonna. The masks have been distributed to various organizations throughout the community.

BY RICK BUSSLER
PUBLISHER

The pandemic has forced a group of women from Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Owatonna to stop getting together for

Our Savior's ladies turn from quilting to mask making

weekly quilting parties, but their talents aren't going unutilized.

The women have shifted to making cloth masks to share with various community organizations as protection from the coronavirus. "Quilting has turned into mask making," said Barb Brown, one of the sewers and coordinator of the mask project.

And they are producing large numbers with no end in sight. As of Monday afternoon, the women have made 1,605 masks within the past 33 days. "We just keep making masks," Brown said. "We will keep going as long as there is a demand."

Brown said the project started out with a request from Melissa Anderson, who is a member of Our Savior's and works at Our Homes South, a group home in Owatonna. "They were concerned because they were at the bottom of the totem pole as the

focus seemed to be on the hospitals," Brown explained.

Once the church ladies began making the masks for Our Homes South, the project spiraled into many other community organizations. Besides Our Homes, they have now distributed masks to Allina Healthcare, Steele County Public Health, The Brooks of Owatonna, Mayo Clinic-Owatonna, weekend food pantry and prisons in Shakopee and Faribault.

Brown collects all the masks from the sewers and then distributes them accordingly. She places a container outside in her entry way where the women drop off their masks. She said she is always pleasantly surprised to go outside and find a new batch of masks in the container ready to be distributed.

"It amazes me that the masks keep coming," Brown said. "It has been a rewarding project.

The response has been unbelievable."

Brown said the focus in the coming weeks will be providing masks for Allina, Public Health and Our Savior's Church.

Those who have sewn masks include: Karen Anderson, Ruth Anderson, Dawn Berg, Linda Brandt, Barb Brown, Judy Gilman, Summer Gustafson, Eileen Knudsen, Marge Larson, Barb Paulson, Sue Peoples, Kim Ramsey, Penny Rusinko, Cheryl Schwartz, Jean Vogt, Lori Weisenburger and Kim Williams.

Brown said, "Our ladies just keep making those masks. They are at home and feel they are doing something and contributing. It's rewarding for them."

When asked how long it takes to make one mask, Brown said she didn't really have a good answer. For herself, she makes them in batches and cuts them out 30 at



The Our Savior's ladies also provided Owatonna Superintendent Jeff Elstad with his very own mask decked out in Huskie colors.

a time. She did know one thing, however: "We are getting more efficient and faster," she said.

Brown said there has been no problem coming up with enough fabric to make the masks. "We had our own fabric stash," she said. "Most of us have enough fabric to take us through the pandemic," she added.

COVID -19

BLOOMING PRAIRIE AMBULANCE IMPORTANT COVID-19 ANNOUNCEMENT

During these uncertain times related to the COVID-19 pandemic, emergency medical services (EMS) and first responders remain committed to providing the best care to those in need within our community.

While we prepare and train for all emergencies, no plan can anticipate all possible variables, and the COVID-19 pandemic poses unique challenges in the way we deliver care.

Please be aware that we have adopted some additional guidelines designed to protect the health and safety of our providers, patients, and the general public.

- When arriving at a patient's residence, a single team member will first evaluate and assess the individual prior to others assisting. This evaluation will include screening questions relating to COVID-19 symptoms.
- Emergent care and resuscitations cannot be done by providers until wearing their prescribed personal protective equipment (PPE). This may result in brief and necessary delays when the team arrives as they prepare to provide care while remaining safe.
- Respiratory procedures increase the risk of exposure. As a result, we will be limiting our airway interventions when possible.
- All patients will be masked and required to keep their mask on during their transport.
- At the request of hospitals during this pandemic, the family is not allowed to accompany the patient. It is suggested that family members provide a contact phone number for the hospital to follow up.
- If the patient is ultimately dismissed from the emergency department, they will require someone to pick them up.

Thank you in advance for supporting our EMS and public safety partners. Please understand that in order to continue to provide care to our community, we must take these precautions with our EMS providers and first responders.

Bloomington Prairie Ambulance



The parade is on to kick off a drive-by birthday celebration for Cindi Hansen.

What the heck! Another birthday for Hansen

BY HOWARD LESTRUD
STAFF WRITER

What the heck! It was another birthday for Cindi Hansen but one she will never forget.

Hansen, who resides on the southwest part of Bloomington Prairie, had just helped her neighbor, Corinne Swanson celebrate her 77th birthday 10 days earlier on a drive-by car caravan.

It was Hansen's 66th birthday on April 22. She and Swanson had something in common with their birthdays, swap the numbers and the age remains the same, 77 and 66.

Swanson was driving a vehicle this time, holding down the third position in the caravan behind Judy and Howard Lestrud and the lead vehicle, a Bloomington Prairie police car piloted by Chief Greg Skillestad.

On his way home for lunch, Skillestad took the lead, turned on his lights and sirens and got the drive off to an auspicious start.

Hansen's husband Darrell had just finished

work for the day and joined the caravan. The caravan included 14 vehicles. Darrell telephoned Cindi and asked her to raise the garage door because he forgot his opener.

As Cindi raised the door, she heard sirens and thought: "What the heck!"

She then witnessed and heard some car horns honking. A couple of convertibles were in the parade on this bright and sunny day, which saw temperatures reach 78 degrees.

Linda Christianson drove her Mustang convertible in the parade. She and passenger Sally Williamson were both wearing homemade protective masks.

The parade came to a halt with participants getting out of their vehicles and approaching Hansen's driveway, keeping a social distance of at least six feet. "I had my camera but didn't take one picture," Hansen laughed. "Got you covered," said her brother-in-law Howard Lestrud.



Cindi Hansen celebrated her 66th birthday on April 22 with friends and family throwing a drive-by birthday celebration for her. Hansen's daughter Nicki Bishop and granddaughter Rianua Bishop display a special sign. Fourteen vehicles participated.



Reflections
HOWARD LESTRUD

Should Major League Baseball resume? The answer is: "Let's Play Ball!"

America's greatest pastime, BASEBALL, needs to continue but when? With the death toll from the coronavirus continuing to increase, it is hoped that the curve will soon be flattened.

With the curve flattened, we can then talk about throwing curves on the baseball field.

If it returns this summer, it will be in a different venue. Let's try having games with the 30 Major League Baseball teams playing on fields in Arizona. There would be no fans.

It's hard to imagine having baseball without the fans but they could be there, but only in their living rooms. If we don't choose this crazy option, we won't have Major League Baseball at all in 2020.

There's only one time in Major League Baseball's long history that an official game was played without fans.

That happened on April 29, 2015, exactly five years ago.

It pitted the home team Baltimore Orioles hosting fellow American League team Chicago White Sox. The game was played at Camden Yards without fans.

Why no fans? The gates of Camden Yards were locked because of the turmoil surrounding the death of a young black man, Freddie Gray. Gray was arrested by Baltimore police and charged for possessing a knife.

While Gray was being transported in a police van, he fell into a coma and later died. His death incited lots

We're gonna win again Twins!

of violence on the streets of Baltimore. On April 25, 2015, a major protest in downtown Baltimore turned violent, resulting in 235 arrests and injuries to 20 police officers.

The unrest in downtown Baltimore led to the postponement of the first two games of the Orioles' series against the Chicago White Sox, rescheduled to be played as a doubleheader the following month.

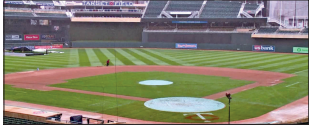
But in order to get the third game of the series in, the decision was made to play the game behind closed doors. The public safety of the fans was considered during these tense times.

Other police officers and National Guard troops were dispatched to other parts of the city to quell any unforeseen circumstances.

The no-fans game was won by the Orioles, 8-2. Playing the game was an attempt to get back to some level of normalcy, even though few aspects of the game were normal, wrote Baltimore Sun writer Eduardo A. Encina.

Orioles players had hoped playing the game would help the healing.

Writer Encina quoted Baltimore Orioles first baseman Chris Davis: "It was a hard time for the city and I think as players, I thought we really hoped we could be a distraction at that point it's still tough to think about it all now. I don't think too many of us really go down that road too often because there's a lot of pain there and it's



not something pleasant to think about."

Davis hit a three-run home run in the first inning to give the Orioles a 4-0 lead. He could hear a crowd cheering from beyond the left-center field gates as he circled the bases.

The White Sox arrived in Baltimore to a site never imagined. White Sox player Adam Eaton remembered looking out his hotel window and seeing smoke emerge from the Baltimore skyline.

This scenario obviously was different than what is transpiring now with COVID-19. There still might be protests but none of this racial magnitude.

Playing baseball on fields in Arizona without fans may also bring a sense of healing to our country.

If Major League Baseball returns, you can bet the conditions in which the game is played, will be very, very different. Players would need to be tested before playing a game. If a player tests positive, then what do we do?

The easiest way out would be to cancel the 2020 season, but the best way to gain movement to a new normal would be to try to play some baseball.

That Great American Game might make us forget, just for an instance, the trying times that have been caused by the coronavirus.

Let's play ball! If it doesn't seem to be working, then call off the season. Let's hope that doesn't have to happen.

Little Theatre awards scholarship to BP senior



Rianna Bishop

A Blooming Prairie senior has been awarded the 2020 Veta Alexander Little Theatre of Owatonna scholarship.

The recipient is Rianna Bishop, daughter of Benji and Nicki Bishop.

Bishop has been involved in each of Blooming Prairie High School's theatrical productions over the last four years. Most recently she played the role of Elsa Schraeder in the production of The Sound of Music.

"She always goes above and beyond to get things done... she would... ask... what she could do to help get our musical off the ground. She coordinated the painting of our sets all on her own," one recommendation stated. The VA Scholarship is especially meant to recognize that dedication to the theatrical arts.

A recipient is chosen based on academic record, community involvement, leadership recognition, school activities, and involvement in LTO and/or

other drama productions.

During her high school career, Bishop has been active in volleyball and softball and recognized for both skills and leadership in those activities. Her involvement has extended into the community as a Family, Community, Career Leaders of America participant/ president, a youth board member, Sunday school teacher and Women of Today Cancer events participant.

The Veta Alexander Scholarship was established in 1969, and Bishop is the 150th recipient. Currently, funds for the scholarship are provided by LTO patrons as 8% of each show's profit is regularly directed to this scholarship. In addition, individual donations and memorials have been and can be made to the Veta Alexander Scholarship Fund.

Recipients use the scholarships to further their education. Bishop plans to attend Minnesota State University, Mankato, to major in nursing.

Bishop will be recognized at the 2020 Blooming Prairie High School Senior Awards Ceremony. Plans for that event have not yet been determined.

The scholarship is celebrating its 51st year and has exceeded \$60,000 in support of Steele County high school graduates pursuing post-secondary education.

The Little Theatre thanks everyone for their continued support in providing scholarship opportunities.

Bennett endorsed for another term

State Rep. Peggy Bennett, R-Albert Lea, was endorsed by unanimous acclamation on April 14, at the District 27 GOP Convention.

This is the fourth time that Bennett, a former long-time first grade teacher, has received unanimous support from District 27A Republican delegates, and she will now run for her fourth term in the Minnesota House of Representatives.

"I am humbled and blessed to have the continued trust and support of the Republican delegates," Bennett said. "It's been

an honor to serve this amazing area, and it is my hope to earn the continued support of the voters of 27A in November as well."

"The Covid19 pandemic has stressed so many people and systems to the brink," Bennett said, "... hospitals laying off staff, farmers dealing with a struggling market, small businesses on the brink of bankruptcy, and the thousands of people in our area who have been laid off from their jobs. I want to be able to use the understanding and maturity I've gained from my years of legislative experience,

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STEELE COUNTY **Times**

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OBITUARIES

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**Evelyn Meese, 95,
Owatonna**



Evelyn Meese

Evelyn (Borchert) Meese, 95, of Owatonna, passed away peacefully on April 22, 2020 at Birchwood Cottages.

Evelyn was born on Oct. 13, 1924 to John and Dora Dietz in rural Steele County. She attended a one room country school and graduated from Owatonna High School in 1941. She married Frank Borchert on Sept. 24, 1946 farming together in Somerset Township until his death in 1964. She married

Howard Meese in 1968 and later divorced. She was a member of Catholic Daughters and St. Mary's Guild of Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Owatonna. She served as a 4-H leader and enjoyed staying busy by sewing, reading, playing bingo, doing jigsaw puzzles and making Christmas cookies. She was very proud of her chicken collection.

Evelyn held various jobs after attending evening classes for a secretarial degree. These included Owatonna Hospital, the office of attorneys Nelson, Casey, Tripp & Dow, as Deputy Clerk of Court, Fitzsimmons Trucking and Walmart. Evelyn finally retired at age 84 from Kitchen Collection.

She was preceded in death by her husband Frank, an infant son and infant daughter, two sisters, two brothers and a grandson.

She is survived by three children: John (Shirley) Borchert of Owatonna, Barbara Borchert of Mt. Juliet, Tenn. and Loretta (David) Lindblom of Byron. She is also survived by three grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

The family would like to thank the loving care provided by Birchwood Cottages and St. Croix Hospice.

A private family service will take place at Sacred Heart Church in Owatonna and burial to follow at Sacred Heart Cemetery. For more information or to leave an online condolence message go to www.brick-megertuneralhome.com.

**John Mark Tuerk, 81,
Owatonna**



John Mark Tuerk

John Mark Tuerk, 81, of Owatonna, died Friday, April 24, 2020 at Pine Haven Nursing Home.

He was born June 12, 1938 in Owatonna, the son of Elmer and Hazel (Paulson) Tuerk. John graduated from Owatonna High School in 1956. Following high school, he served in the Army National Guard and farmed with his family. John married Sharon Mussman on Sept. 5, 1959 at St. John Lutheran Church in Owatonna.

The couple lived on his family farm and John became the fourth generation on the farm. John enjoyed raising livestock, growing crops and maintaining the family farm. He served on the Somerset Township Board and the Steele Center Cemetery Board. John was a member of St. John Lutheran Church.

As a young man, John played softball for the Steele Center Stingers. He enjoyed fishing, spearing, deer hunting, time outdoors, John Deere tractors and dancing with Sharon. In his later years, he loved to read and watch the activities on the farm.

He is survived by his wife of 60 years, Sharon Tuerk of Owatonna; daughters, Brenda (and Geoff) Olmscheid of Mankato, Linda (and Mark) Buermann of Prior Lake, Lori (and Mark) Ingalls of Pine Island; son, John L. Tuerk of Owatonna; 14 grandchildren; 11 great grandchildren; brother, Burnett (and Nancy) Tuerk of Owatonna and two nieces. He was preceded in death by his parents and daughter, Tamara.

Private family services were at Michaelson Funeral Home on Monday, April 27, 2020 with Pastor Dave Klawiter officiating. Interment was in the Steele Center Cemetery.

Memorial services open to the public will be held on a later date. Please visit michaelsonfuneral.com to view John's obituary, which will have service details updated weekly on Mondays.

BOOK NOOK

Library extends wireless network



NANCY VAILLANCOURT

Good News! For those of you who do not have internet access at home, the range for our wireless network has been extended at the Blooming Prairie Branch Library.

That means that you will be able to use the wireless with better reception while sitting in your car or leaning against the building. To access the wireless, just search for wireless networks and choose Blooming Prairie Library. You will need to accept our terms, which is just a fancy way that we use to count our wireless usage, and voila! You can use the internet.

I know, that is good news only in a relative sense. What you want to hear and what I want to say is that the library

is completely open as in normal times. Realistically we know that will not be happening anytime soon. With assistance from SELCO and the Owatonna Public Library, we are drawing up a reopening plan that has incremental steps.

The first step to reopen the library will be to again provide curbside service. We are establishing protocols for hands free delivery and in how to handle items that are returned to the library. Please do not be offended if we wear masks when we interact with you, or when we consciously keep six feet between us. Believe me, I would love to be able to give each of my library friends a hug, but that will not happen at this time. Also, please do not ask to come into the library until it is officially opened to the public. We will bring what you need to you.

Any changes in services will be announced in the Steele County Times, Becky Noble's radio program, the library Facebook page, and on the City of Blooming Prairie website. Until then, keep reading!

COLLEGE NEWS

Hyland inducted into honor society

Jake Hyland of Blooming Prairie was recently initiated into The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi, the nation's oldest and most selective all-discipline collegiate honor society. Hyland was initiated at Bradley University.

Hyland is among approximately 30,000 students, faculty, profes-

sional staff and alumni to be initiated into Phi Kappa Phi each year. Membership is by invitation only and requires nomination and approval by a chapter. Only the top 10% of seniors and 7.5% of juniors are eligible for membership. Graduate students in the top 10% of the number of candidates for graduate degrees may

also qualify, as do faculty, professional staff and alumni who have achieved scholarly distinction.

Phi Kappa Phi was founded in 1897 under the leadership of undergraduate student Marcus L. Urann who had a desire to create a different kind of honor society: one that recognized excellence in

all academic disciplines. Today, the Society has chapters on more than 300 campuses in the United States and the Philippines. Its mission is "to recognize and promote academic excellence in all fields of higher education and to engage the community of scholars in service to others."

**Eugene Frey, 81,
Byron**

Eugene "Bud" Victor Frey, 81, of Byron passed away to his eternal home on Sunday, April 19, 2020 at The Waters on Mayowood of Rochester after a long battle with Alzheimer's Disease.

Bud was born on Aug. 19, 1938 in Blooming Prairie to Victor and Edna (Thorager) Frey. He attended country grade school and attended high school at Blooming Prairie and Waseca. He enlisted in the US Air Force and served four years, mostly in Germany. He was honorably discharged in 1964.

On Sept. 27, 1969, he married Sussie Simmons and the couple later divorced. To his union two daughters were born. On April 30, 1977, he married Doris Ann (Hove) Meeker in Chatfield. Bud's entire working career was with IBM Rochester. He retired in 1992.

Faith was important to Bud and he was proud to be a longstanding member of the Byron United Methodist church. Bud and Doris created a farm south of Byron, where they raised sheep and enjoyed the advantages of country living. Bud loved his dogs, hunting, fishing, camping and traveling.

He is survived by his wife Doris of Byron, his daughters Becky (Jason) Robinson of Rochester, Cindy (Jeremy) Crowhurst of Texas, grandchildren Jakob Robinson, Grace Crowhurst, Ryan Robinson, Joy Crowhurst, and his sister Shirley (Dennie) Darr of Rushford.

He is preceded in death by his parents and his (very dear to him) uncles Bobby and Donald Frey.

Bud's family is planning a private family visitation. A Memorial Service will be held in his name when we can gather at Byron United Methodist Church. Burial will be near his childhood home, at the Union Cemetery of Blooming Prairie.

In lieu of flowers, memorials are preferred to Byron United Methodist Church or donor's choice. Byron Funeral Home handled arrangements. www.byronfuneralhome.com.



Eugene Frey

**Rodney Robinson,
77, Rochester**

Rodney Joel Robinson, age 77, of Rochester passed away on Monday, April 20, 2020 at Seasons Hospice House in Rochester.

Rodney was born on Jan. 10, 1943 in Blooming Prairie to Edward and Louetta (Stork) Robinson. He graduated from Blooming Prairie High School in 1960. He took drafting courses in Los Angeles. After school, he took numerous drafting contracts. In 1983, he ended his career as structural steel detailer and switched to renting apartments. He owned and managed 37 units up until he fully retired in 2014.

His many hobbies included riding a recumbent bicycle all across the country and enjoying an online game of poker.

In 2002, Rodney married Maria Velez at the Little Brown Church of the Vale in Nashua, Iowa.

Rodney was preceded in death by his parents, Edward and Louetta, and his brother, Gayle Robinson.

He is survived by his wife, Maria, his sister, Judy (Wayne) Rentschler (Louisville, KY), several nieces, nephews, grandnieces, and grandnephews. His wife, Maria would like to extend her sincere gratitude and appreciation to everyone who helped her in taking care of Rodney; the Mayo Clinic Hospice and the Season's Hospice House, who were all compassionate and dedicated caregivers, and most especially to the families and friends who extended their support and offered their prayers.

A private family service will be held at a later date.



Rodney Robinson

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STEELE COUNTY Times

NEW OFFICE HOURS
 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday-Friday

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Recipe Corner

Spam Broiler Sandwiches

1 can Spam – ground or shredded
 1 C shredded mozzarella cheese
 A little grated onion, to taste
 1 T. catsup
 1/4 C grated sweet pickle or sweet pickle relish
 1 T milk

Mix all together and put on half English muffins. Broil 3 – 5 minutes until warm. These do freeze well, but, freeze without broiling – just broil up when you need something quick. Spam the All American – Minnesota favorite!

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 Email to bptimes@frontiernet.net
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Learning to sing



Rev. Heidi Heimgartner

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH
BLOOMING PRAIRIE

We are moving into one of the most exciting parts of spring for me, a hobby we may share in common: bird migration time! My husband makes sure our backyard is stocked with seed and suet in winter, and now that spring is here and we've seen our first oriole, we have some grape jelly to keep those bright birds as long as we can. It's fun for our whole family, with delights and surprises that lift our spirits. When the kids were tiny, we would reorient our living room furniture away from the television to face the picture windows. Prime birdwatching has more

entertainment value than any channel can offer. Studying birdsong recently, I discovered it is not all instinct, even for birds: their songs and calls are mostly learned by imitation and repetition. As we catalog music for worship on Sundays, and musicians meet as safely as we can to do the work of recording ahead of time, I realize the power singing has to comfort and teach us. The songbook of the church has endless wisdom, and the poetry of the lyrics often echo in my heart when I need a moment of reassurance. Familiar songs have sustained me especially well

in this time of pandemic. Is the same true for you?
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness/Drive the gloom of death away/Giver of immortal gladness, fill us with the light of day...
Embrace the cross where Jesus suffered/Though it will cost all you claim as yours...
And He will raise you up on eagle's wings/Bear you on the breath of dawn...
Lord prepare me to be a sanctuary/Pure and holy, tried and true...
This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine...
What is your favorite song or hymn? Who taught you to sing? Faith is strengthened by repetition

and imitation—just like birdsong. So even if you're a choir of one...on Sunday mornings (anytime)... please, keep singing.
This is week six of social distancing. As weeks turn to months, the strains for businessowners, workers, eager students, and the home-bound are not fading. Death and grief is real for many of our neighbors. Yet, the news in Minnesota is trending positive. People are working together, protecting one another, meeting needs and helping encourage and support each other. It's not only scientists and social workers, seamstresses and grocery storekeepers; each one of us is essential in God's

economy, God's household (in Greek, the root word is the same). We at First Lutheran want to be part of the solution, too, keeping focused on growing deeper in God's mission, safely and creatively.
I couldn't say precisely who taught me to sing; we didn't do it much growing up. It was congregational singing, week to week, year to year, among hundreds of believers where I was most formed. And my favorite song? Well, that changes day to day, sometimes hour to hour. But I do know this: when I sing, love for God and love for you fills my heart. I'm still learning to sing.

AREA WORSHIP SCHEDULE

LUTHERAN

AURORA LUTHERAN
6329 SE 28th St., Owatonna
Pastor Stephanie Wood
507-676-5696
Worship: Sunday at 9 a.m.
Sunday School: 10:15 a.m.

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

FIRST LUTHERAN - AFLC
503 Radcl Ct., Ellendale
Pastor Richard Sliper
507-684-2451
Men's Bible Study: 8 a.m. Saturday
Worship: 9 a.m. Sunday
(Kids church - 9 a.m. and Confirmation - 10:15 a.m.)
Jesus and Me: 3:30-5 p.m.
Tuesday & Thursday
Call to Prayer: 7 p.m. Tuesday
Bible Study: 9:30 a.m. Wednesday
Wednesday School: 6:15-7 p.m.
followed by Youth Group - 7-9 p.m.

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

FIRST LUTHERAN - LCMS
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
Pastor Greg Schlicker
507-451-4125
goodshepherdowatonna.com
Worship: 8 a.m., 9:15 a.m. & 10:30 a.m.
Sunday School: 9:15 a.m.

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

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

REDEEMER LUTHERAN - 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
Rev. Suzanne Froelich, Interim Pastor
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: 10:30 a.m. Sun.
Sunday School: 9:15 a.m.

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

ST. JOHN LUTHERAN - ELCA
1301 Lincoln Ave., Owatonna
Pastors Dave Klaviter and Jacie Richmond
507-451-7293
sjlhjowatonna.org
Worship: 5 p.m. Thursday & Saturday; 8 a.m. & 10:30 a.m. Sunday
Summer Services: 8 a.m. & 9:30 a.m. Sunday

ST. MICHAEL'S LUTHERAN - ELCA
30450 570th Ave., Waltham
Pastor Dwight Dolzell
507-567-2474
Worship: 8:30 a.m. Sun.
Sunday School: 9:45 a.m.

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

TRINITY LUTHERAN - ELCA
609 Lincoln Ave., Owatonna
507-451-4520
www.owatonna.org
Senior Pastor: Rev. Todd Buegler
Associate Pastor: Rev. Amanda Floy
Deacon: Kris Oppegard
Worship: 5 p.m. Saturday; 8:15 a.m., 9:30 a.m. & 10:45 a.m. Sunday
Sunday School: 8:15 a.m. & 9:30 a.m.

TRINITY LUTHERAN - ELCA
104 First St. SE., Hayfield
Pastor Paul 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 Biebigbauer
507-451-0447
Worship: 9 a.m. Sunday
Education Hour: 10:15 a.m.
Wednesday Worship: 6:30 p.m.

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. Sunday
Sunday School: 9:30 a.m.

OUR SAVIOR'S LUTHERAN - ELCA
1909 St. Paul Road, Owatonna
Senior Pastor: John Weisenburger
Associate Pastor: Lisa Carlson
507-451-4853
oursaviorsowatonna.com
Worship: 8:15 a.m. - Traditional, 9:30 a.m. - Sunday School/Adult Education
10:45 a.m. - Contemporary

CATHOLIC
CHRIST THE KING
205 Second Ave. NW, Medford
507-451-6353
Father James Starasinch
Deacon Patrick Fagan
Mass: 5:30 p.m. Sat.
Mass: 9 a.m. Mon. & Fri.

CHURCH OF ALL SAINTS
307 SW First St., New Richland
Father Antony Arakijyan
507-234-6244
Mass: 5 p.m. Saturday

HOLY TRINITY CATHOLIC CHURCH OF LITOMYSL
9946 SE 24th Ave. Owatonna
Father John Wilmut
507-583-2784
www.litomyslweb.com
Sunday Mass at 8:30 a.m. with Children's Church
Sacrament of Reconciliation
Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m.
Faith Formation classes 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 John Wilmut
507-477-2256
Mass: 5 p.m. Saturday
Reconciliation: 3:45 pm Saturday

SACRED HEART PARISH
810 S. Cedar Ave., Owatonna
Father John Sauer
Parochial Vicar
507-451-1588
www.sacredheartowatonna.org
Mass: 5 p.m. Saturday;
8:30 a.m., 8:10 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 PARISH
114 E. Main St., Blooming Prairie
Father John Wilmut
507-583-2784
www.stcolumbanuschurch.com
Mass: 10:30 a.m. Sunday
Reconciliation: 9 a.m.
First Friday & Saturday

ST. JOSEPH CATHOLIC PARISH
512 S. Elm Ave., Owatonna
Father James Starasinch
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 lock 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 PENTECOSTAL
230 Locust Ave., Owatonna
Pastor Elhazar Talamantes
507-563-2240
Worship: 10 a.m. Sunday;
6:30 p.m. Wednesday

METHODIST
BLOOMING GROVE UNITED METHODIST
43509 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
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
Rev. Scott Jakel
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.
Bible Study: 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
2515 Harvest Lane NW, Owatonna
Pastors Rich and Amy Pettet
507-456-4775
www.destinyinc.org
Worship: 9 a.m. Sunday
6:30-7:30 p.m. 1st and 3rd
Wednesday

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

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Sunday Connections: 10:15 a.m.

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Joyce Parker, Associate Pastor
507-451-4734
www.owatonnaumc.org
Traditional Worship (Pathways):
9 a.m. Sunday

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
109 E. Main St., Hayfield
Pastor Kirk Johnston
507-477-2681
Worship: 9:30 a.m. Sun.

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
P.O. Box 66, Claremont
Worship: 10 a.m. Sun.
Pastor Douglas Walters
10 a.m. Worship

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST
2373 Seventh Ave. NE, Owatonna
Pastor Brian Beavers
651-955-4032
Worship: 11 a.m. Sat.
Bible Stud.: 9:30 a.m. Sat.

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

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VIBRANT LIFE ASSEMBLY OF GOD
702 Third St. S., Ellendale
Pastor Patrick Stitt
507-684-3421
www.vibrantlifegag.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.

FIRST BAPTIST (Owatonna's oldest church)
123 E. Main St., Owatonna
Pastor Carla Nelson
507-272-9834
www.firsbaptistowatonna.com
Fellowship: 9:30 a.m. Sun.
Worship: 10:30 a.m. Sun.

BETHEL BAPTIST
1611 Hemlock Ave. Owatonna
Pastor Michael Simmerman
507-451-8548
www.bethelowatonna.com
Worship: 9 a.m. & 10:30 a.m. Sunday

ASSEMBLY OF GOD
VICTORY LIFE
105 2nd St NE
Geneva
Pastor Diane Butler
507-402-0960
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Church Service: 9:30 a.m.
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Peeking in at Billy

STAFF PHOTOS BY HOWARD LESTRID

Margaret Noble, left, and Amy Noble Seitz visited Billy Noble (husband and father) at the Prairie Manor Care Center on April 22. Billy was admitted to Prairie Manor the day before. Right: Billy Noble had a window seat in his room. The care center is on lock down.

BIG BREAK: In Covid FROM A1

turnaround time, that's what will make a difference for us on a local level," she said. "We will have a much better grasp on it."

Part of the challenge for Public Health up until this point has been getting a handle on how widespread the disease is throughout Steele and Dodge counties, the two areas Caron is responsible for in her role. "Right now, it's so scattered that we are being reactive," she said. She added having the additional testing may actually allow them to be more proactive in fighting this crisis.

One thing Caron is certain about is that the number of confirmed cases will likely spike once the mass testing gets underway. But, she is quick to add, "It will give us a better picture of what's going on."

Local Cases
On Monday, Caron reported two new confirmed cases in Steele County, bringing the total to 14 since the outbreak began. Steele's numbers went up by five in the past week. There still are no cases in long-term facilities or deaths in Steele County, according to Caron. Of the 14 cases, eight of them are out of isolation and considered recovered, she said.

In Dodge County, there have been 19 cases with 15 out of isolation and no deaths. Both Steele and Dodge counties each have one case requiring ICU treatment.

Cases in Freeborn County have jumped to 33 while

Mower County went up to 28. No deaths have been reported in either county.

As of Monday, there are 3,816 confirmed cases in Minnesota with 286 deaths.

Over the past week, COVID-19 cases have "really ramped up and saw significant jumps" across Minnesota, Caron said.

The spike in cases comes as Gov. Walz allowed 100,000 workers to return to their jobs beginning Monday. Businesses are urged to continue to work from home whenever possible.

Caron stressed that businesses with workers coming back must have a COVID-19 preparedness plan available and make it known to their employees. She said it does not need to be submitted to the state, but it must be available if the state requests to view it.

Distance Learning
The governor closed schools and extended distance learning through the end of the school year on April 23. The state continues to pursue opportunities to expand technology for students, provide guidance for educators on how to best connect with students and support families.

"As a former teacher, this is a heartbreaking decision," Gov. Walz said. "I am sorry for all of our students who will miss out on graduations, tournaments and end of year celebrations. While I recognize distance learning is

a challenge for many families, it is critical to social distancing in Minnesota and supports the health of Minnesota's families."

In response to the governor's order closing schools for the rest of the school year, the Minnesota High School League declared all activities and athletics that occur during the spring season be cancelled. The decision came as the league is "in support of practices that focus on community health and safety."

The cancellation applies to all forms of student participation in any league activity, athletics and fine arts. League activities and athletics for the spring season had been previously suspended since March 15.

"Our work will continue in providing leadership and guidance for our member schools and will soon turn to the summer and planning for a return to participation this fall," said Erich Martens, executive director of MSHSL. "At this time, everything we can do to slow the spread and impacts of COVID-19 will help ensure the health of all, and will most certainly increase the chances that programming for students can return."

The current stay-at-home order is set to end on Monday, May 4. Caron says she expects the order to be extended in some fashion once again.

"It wouldn't surprise me if it's a combination where it's extended, but loosened up," Caron said. She added it must be a "slow process to slowly reopen things up again."

COUNTY APPROVES: tax relief FROM A1

The board was in complete agreement on the resolution, seeing it as a necessary measure to help out those who have been financially burdened by the COVID-19 pandemic.

While the penalization date has been pushed back, the board is hoping that those who have not been negatively impacted by the current pandemic make payments by the May 16 date. "The spirit of this is to allow those that really need it to have that 60-day delay,"

Administrator Golberg said. "For those who can pay on the 15th, we are strongly encouraging them to do so."

"We're continuing the restricted access to our building and facilities as you directed, until further notice," Golberg said as he updated the board on county operations. "Most of our operations are continuing to provide services via email, online, phone, U.S. postal mail, and drop box services."

The landfill is one of the exceptions to the public ac-

cess restrictions, reopening to the public on April 16 and it is now fully operational for commercial and self-haulers.

With the pandemic continuing to affect those across the country, Steele County is poised to help those impacted weather the economic storm while taking measures to minimize the local spread of the virus. "We're planning right now what we need to do to reopen to the public," Golberg said.

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Ellendale nixes popular summer festival

BY RICK BUSSLER
PUBLISHER

Another community celebration has fallen victim to the coronavirus pandemic.

The popular Ellendale Days has been cancelled for this year, according to Scott Groth, one of the organizers of the event. The festival was set to take place June 25-28. The Ellendale Community Action Group has sponsored the celebration in recent years.

Ellendale becomes the second Steele County community to cancel a large summer celebration. Last week, Medford announced it was cancelling Straight River Days, also set for June.

"It wasn't the most popular decision," Groth acknowledges of cancelling Ellendale's annual event. But, he said, multiple factors led into the final decision to pull the plug.

The biggest factor that played into the cancellation was giving groups and organizations enough time to plan for things. For example, RJ's Bar, which typically brings in a band, would not have gotten any money back after April 15 if the event was cancelled. "We don't want him to be out any money," Groth said.

But, perhaps more importantly, the event committee has no idea how the COVID-19 pandemic will play out in the coming weeks. The committee felt it would be

nearly impossible to keep people practicing social distance of six feet during the celebration.

Stephanie Kibler, who serves on the Ellendale City Council, was sympathetic to the group's decision. "The committee puts lots of time and energy into an event like this," Kibler said. "I know this decision was not an easy one for them. The months of COVID are definitely difficult for all of us."

Kibler was quick to point out community celebrations like Ellendale Days play a significant role in connecting neighbors. "It is always disheartening when they are cancelled," she said. "I applaud the committee for putting their community's

health above all else and am sure they will be back bigger and better for 2021," Kibler said.

Groth said Ellendale Days has been around since the 1980s and has never been cancelled before. "It's just one year," he says. "We will be back bigger and better than ever before."

The committee is already looking ahead to 2025 when the community will celebrate its 125th celebration. "We hope to do much more for that," Groth said.

Groth said they haven't ruled out the possibility of doing a special one-day event this fall depending on the outcome of the pandemic. "We might celebrate that we can all go out again," he said.



THOMAS FILE PHOTO

Ellendale Days has been a popular attraction for the young and old alike for many years. However, the community celebration has been cancelled for this summer because of the coronavirus pandemic.

United Way picks new leader



Annette Duncan

United Way of Steele County will be under new leadership.

Annette Duncan of Owatonna has been named president of the United Way beginning June 1. She brings a depth of leadership and nonprofit organization experience.

Duncan has served on the United Way Board of Directors from 2007 to 2015. In addition, she was board chair from 2012 to 2014.

Most recently Duncan has served as executive director of the Exchange Club Center for Family Unity in Owatonna.

She has a bachelor's degree in organizational management and communications from Concordia University in St. Paul and a master's degree in nonprofit management from Adler University.

In accepting the new position, Duncan said, "I have a passion for the work of the United Way. Accepting the president position is exciting and allows me to expand my influence and capability to help even more people achieve success."

David Albrecht, United Way board chair, said, "We are elated to have found a person of such high caliber to lead our United Way agency into the future. Her wealth of education, experience and energy positions us well for the years to come."

Duncan replaces Kim Schaufnubel, who has taken a job with Federated Insurance as an instructional designer in its learning center. Schaufnubel will remain with United Way until Duncan starts and there will be a couple of weeks of overlap for continuity.

Detours kick off Hwy. 14 expansion

Motorists in Dodge County are encountering detours as crews begin to build the new 630th Street and prepare to build a bridge on Dodge County Road 1 for an overpass as part of the Hwy 14 expansion project between Dodge Center and Owatonna, according to the Minnesota Department of Transportation.

Motorists on Dodge County Road 1 and 630th Street will find detours south of Claremont and should follow signs to access their destinations. Crews are beginning to bring equipment and mate-

SEE DETOURS KICK OFF, B3



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Nancy Matti of Hayfield comfort in not surprisingly, music. She recently wrote a song, "Ballad of the Virus," to mark the coronavirus pandemic that has hit America.

Soothe the soul

Retired teachers find comfort in a COVID-19 song

BY RICK BUSSLER
PUBLISHER

What started out to be a family Easter project for a retired Hayfield couple has turned into being something of a hit on social media as it soothes of soul in times of despair.

Doug and Nancy Matti joined in with other family members to share something a little extra with each other when they couldn't get together for Easter because of the coronavirus epidemic. Not to be outdone by their children and grandchildren who shared banjo performances and dancing kids, Doug and Nancy

made their own video showcasing their musical talents.

They wrote a song about COVID-19 and sang it to the tune of Leonard Cohen's "Hallelujah." In the song titled "The Ballad of the Virus," the Mattis share various aspects of life that have come to a screeching halt since the crisis began around March 13. The song features Nancy, a retired music teacher and current church choir director, on piano and vocals with Doug in the background on vocals as well.

Nancy said they went down to their basement and recorded it on the first attempt. They shared it with their family. "It was an Easter challenge for the Matti family,"

Nancy said. "That was supposed to be the end of it, but it wasn't."

Little did Nancy know that it would become a popular hit on social media thanks to her granddaughter, Olivia Matti, who shared it on Facebook and Twitter.

Asked about composing a song, Nancy said, "It just kind of came. It wasn't a masterpiece."

Nancy, 79, can't believe the reaction they have received regarding the song from friends and neighbors. "It was fun to do it, but we never anticipated for anybody else to hear it," she said. "Oh dear, never can tell what will happen."

At the end of the song, Doug jokingly closed out the video by saying, "You can get copies of this by sending \$1.98 to Box 198, Hayfield, Minn., thank you."

Nancy said as of a week ago that a few donations have trickled in since the song was shared on social media. "It's going to the toilet paper fund," she said.

"A lot of people liked the song," Nancy said. "They like to be reminded of things we can't do," she added.

She is enjoying retirement after "many, many years" as music teacher at Triton Schools in Dodge Center. Doug is a retired English teacher from Hayfield Public Schools. They have lived in Hayfield for 56 years.

Music continues to be a big part of Nancy's life as she serves as choir director and organist at Trinity Lutheran Church in Hayfield. Despite the services moving online in recent weeks



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Nancy and Doug Matti teamed up to write a song about the coronavirus and sang it to the tune of Leonard Cohen's "Hallelujah."

SEE SOOTHE THE SOUL, B3

COVID-19 affects social media consumption



Steele Talkin'
ALISHA GROENEWEG

COVID-19 has been responsible for temporary closures of restaurants, movie theaters, zoos, and other places that people flock to for leisurely activities and socialization. For many of us, we have been thrust into this "new norm." These closures have created hardships for some and blessings for others. Such blessings may include spending more time with your family and learning to appreciate the little things in life. Some of you may have taken up a new hobby or have finally found the time to complete that home renovation project. Some may be sewing masks to donate, or some may now be your child's new homeschool teacher. Whatever you chose to do with your extra time, statistics have shown that social media and social networking has skyrocketed.

Did you know that in 2018, the average person would spend two hours and 22 minutes on social media or social network sites a day?

Now fast forward to current times. People are turning to the internet to help entertain themselves; 80% of the population have admitted that their consumption of broadcast television, social media sites, online videos and video streaming has increased.

Social networking sites have made it easier and more enticing than ever during this pandemic. Zoos are taking virtual field trips while providing an educational live stream of animals for children and families. Online streaming sites are releasing new movies sooner for your enjoyment to watch from home since cinemas are closed. Children and caregivers have been propelled into a world of distance learning and using technology more than ever to complete daily assignments. More people are working from home to help with social distancing. Families and friends are finding new ways to connect thanks to apps such as Zoom, Google Meets, and Microsoft Teams. You may also find yourself looking for new recipes to make for the family or getting wrapped up in a new book. It is no surprise that people have turned to the endless options of the world wide web.

However, studies have shown there are some negatives to the increased use of social networking.

Many people are turning to the internet to search for the latest pandemic updates. Searching for COVID-19 or coronavirus has increased by 68% and is the highest activity ranking over listening to music, watching funny videos, or playing games to name a few. There is also the

SEE COVID-19, B3

Finding a new norm



MAYOR
LOIS NELSON

The "TIMES" we are in! We are all finding different routines—home schooling, working, socializing and staying healthy. With the Governor's extension of virtual schooling, many families will have to hang on tight. Many people can continue to work from home. We have to provide emotional support for everyone that has to go to the work place—whether a manufacturing plant, hospital, clinic, grocery store etc.

Our area city festivals including Medford Straight River Days have been cancelled. Our city council and boards are now meeting virtually. Our local faith community is using Facebook. The parks are closed. Minimal running to the store. COVID has affected all our lives.

In Medford, more people are walking. There are more training wheels in motion as families get in exercise—most with proper spacing between them. The dogs are smiling—guessing they are getting more exercise than ever. With the UltraOutlets closed, beauty salons closed, we are not wearing anything new and hair, nails etc. are sure looking differently!

Congratulations to the Class of 2020 in all our communities. We are seeing you and cheering you on certainly. Many of us were not alive when the polio virus closed so many public institutions and events back in the late 40s and early 50s. A vaccine was the result and today, polio has been eradicated from the world in all but three countries—Nigeria, Pakistan and Afghanistan. We grew up with polio vaccine and maybe this will be the result with COVID.

In the meantime, stay put if you have any symptoms, be tested—a process that is progressing for easier access, cover your cough or sneeze and wash your hands anytime you touch something and keep hands away from your face. Wear gloves and a mask anytime you are with others—at the workplace or the stores/businesses that you frequent. It is both a courtesy to others and a reminder that any of us may be carriers of the virus and this is our way of giving a safety message to everyone we meet. Whether hand sewn or a scarf or bandana, be safe.

Lois Nelson serves as mayor of Medford. Her column appears in this newspaper monthly.

Thankfully, April weather has been a reason for celebration. We can be outside! Last fall, Medford was reported with the first infestation in the county of Emerald Ash Borer. This spring, Rice County and Mower County have also confirmed infestations. This is the active growing season so infected trees should not be cut down, but you might consider treating ash trees yourselves or contracting with a tree service. Pesticide treatments can typically be done during spring, April 15 – June 15, depending on the insecticide in use. Always consult the label when using insecticides. A commercial pesticide contractor can provide treatment at a cost of \$10-20 per inch of trunk diameter. Owatonna Groundmasters are already advertising EAB treatment. Other possible vendors in Owatonna include D & D Yard Service LLC, From the Ground Up Lawn Care & Cleanup LLC, Wolfe & Sons, Inc. and Northwood Nurseries & Landscaping Inc. Carr Tree Service who works with Steele-Waseca Coop is also familiar with our region.

We do need other distractions these days! Several weeks ago, I put out a challenge to our other three city mayors in encouraging census completion. We all received a letter in mid-March with the 12-digit code to use when responding on line my2020census.gov or to use the toll free number of 1-844-468-2020. As of April 20, Minnesota has one of the highest returns in the country with 60.9% response. Steele County over 62%. Our four cities: Blooming Prairie 63.4%, Ellendale 50.7%, Medford 72.3%, and Owatonna 63.1%. Way to go!

The census statistics demonstrate representation in Congress. Minnesota now has eight districts. We have grown as a state, but other parts of the country have grown even more so there is potential that we may lose a seat. Our local state representation will have new boundaries drawn so potentially we could have a change in our Legislator and Senator. In addition, during the last decade federal funding averaging \$28,000 for every Minnesotan in around one hundred programs came to us. If you have not already completed the form on line or by phone, make it a family affair. We all count!

This spring is memorable for so many reasons. Enjoy your new routine. Learn something new each day. We will all be stronger in this experience! Mayor Lois

Lois Nelson serves as mayor of Medford. Her column appears in this newspaper monthly.

Still on... for now



STAFF PHOTO BY HOWARD LESTRUJ

The Steele County Fair is still on in the minds of these workers who put the finishing touches on a sign last week. Shown from left are Colin Davis and Rich Voss of SignPro and Troy Sommers of R & K Electric. Within the past few weeks, both Medford and Ellendale have cancelled their summer celebrations because of the coronavirus pandemic. Plans are still moving forward with the county fair.

Minimizer launches newly designed website

Minimizer's redesigned website is having its desired impact, according to Director of Marketing Steve Hansen.

Since the Tested & Tortured company launched its new site back in February, Hansen says users are up, load times are down, and the new customer-centric distributor buying options are leading to additional sales. "Feedback from end users and distributors has been terrific," Hansen said. "End users appreciate seeing online and local buying options while distributors are reporting back with noticeable increases in quote requests asking for Minimizer products based on the website presence."

Hansen points to the distributor-facilitated Commerce option that can be found on each product page as a game-changer. "One of our biggest goals was to create a more modern site, so giving people the chance to purchase from our online distributors – while also seeing a map of local options – was a big part of the redesign," Hansen said. "Additionally, we were hoping to attract new visitors, and we've been able to do that."

Hansen also highlights a large decrease in bounce rate, since the new Minimizer homepage loads quickly and creates an easy-to-use interface for users to navigate. "Understandably, people don't want to fumble through a slow site not knowing where to click while waiting for a page to load," Hansen said. "The average trucking industry website takes more than six seconds, so it was important for our website to stand out in that way."

See the new site and learn more at www.minimizer.com.

Hwy. 251 detour begins May 4

Construction on Hwy. 251 in Freeborn and Mower counties is scheduled to begin on May 4.

For people who use Hwy. 251, it will mean a detour. It's set for two stages.

- Hwy. 251 through traffic and traffic to Hollandale detour for Stage 1 begins May 4; Hwy. 218 north to Freeborn County Road 35 west to Freeborn County Road 30 south to Hwy. 251.
- Hwy. 251 through traffic and traffic to Hollandale detour for Stage 2, which follows completion of Stage 1: North on Freeborn County Road 30 to Freeborn County Road 35 west to Interstate 35 south to Hwy. 251.

- Single lane traffic on Hwy. 251 bridge over I-35
- Freeborn County Road 26 detour during Stage 2 south of Hwy. 251 is CR 26 south to Freeborn County Road 25 west to Freeborn County Road 45 north to I-35 north to Freeborn County Road 35 east to CR 26 south

The detours are needed while culverts are replaced that cross the highway, requiring construction crews to dig up the portion of the road where these are located. People will still have access to their businesses and homes along the highway. The project is expected to run through October.

- The project will resurface approximately 16.7 miles of Highway 251 from Interstate 35 (I-35) east to Hwy. 218, mostly in Freeborn County, with a small portion of Mower County included. Approach panels will be replaced on the bridge over I-35. Additionally, culvert/pipes will be replaced along the route
- Improve ADA access in Hollandale
- Replace guardrail on Hwy. 251

If you have questions about access to your property or have issues you encounter, please contact Ulland Bros. Access Manager Chris Venem, who can be reached at 507-391-2600.

DNR awards Owatonna \$50K to fight emerald ash

The City of Owatonna is one of many communities around the state to receive nearly \$1 million in grants to fight emerald ash borer. Owatonna will be received \$50,000 to help with the deadly disease.

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources provided two grants

for communities across the state to combat EAB and manage city-owned ash trees. Collectively, 25 communities spanning from Bemidji to Winona will receive nearly \$1 million for tree inventories, management plans, ash removal and tree planting.

The grants enhance Minnesota's effort against the invasive beetle that kills ash trees, helping cities build preparedness and coordinate response. "These funds will help front-line communities prepare for EAB," said Emma Schultz, community forest project specialist

with the DNR. "And in areas where the beetle is established, this funding is important to manage ash and diversify urban tree canopies."

To date, EAB has been confirmed in 23 Minnesota counties, including Steele. Last year emerald ash was discovered in Medford.

Fondell joins SMMPA in finance role

Beth A. Fondell joined Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency (SMMPA) on April 13 as the director of finance and accounting and chief financial officer.

She replaces John Winter who is retiring from SMMPA after 13 years with the agency.

Prior to joining SMMPA, Fondell served as CFO and

director of financial and administrative services at Owatonna Public Utilities (OPU) since 2011. In addition to overseeing all financial operations for the utility, she led the project to successfully replace the organization's enterprise resource planning (ERP) system.

Prior to joining OPU, she served as

served as vice president of finance and facilities at Riverland Community College in Austin and as regional audit coordinator for Minnesota State Colleges and Universities.

Fondell holds a Bachelor of Science degree in accounting and business administration from Minnesota State University

—Mankato and is a certified public accountant.

"We are delighted to welcome Beth to our team and thank John for his 13 years of service to the agency," says SMMPA Chief Executive Officer Dave Geschwind.

"Beth has an excellent background, a great understanding of the utility industry, and she knows our organization well. We look forward to her financial leadership in helping SMMPA and its municipal utility members meet the needs of their customers."

SMMPA provides utilities to 18 cities across southern Minnesota, including Owatonna, Blooming Prairie and Austin.



Beth A. Fondell

Dr. Deborah J. Lien

DDS, MBS

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BLOTTER SPOTLIGHT

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

County 13 by Medford closed for construction

County Highway (CH) 13 from NE 19th Avenue to Bess Ave along the Steele County and Rice County Line in Medford, Merton, Richard, and Walcott Townships is closed to thru traffic for construction...

making drainage improvements. The highway will be closed to all traffic at culvert locations, but will be open to local traffic up to either side of the culverts.

subject to change due to weather or other factors. Steele County advises motorists to drive with caution and slow down through work zones for their safety and for the safety of the construction crews.

CRIME BRIEF

Local burglary tied to Sibley County arrest

A man found in possession of stolen firearms in another county has been tied to a burglary in Owatonna, police said.



Shawn Williams, 36, of Gaylord, has been charged in Sibley County District Court with receiving stolen property and unlawful possession of a firearm...

According to police, Williams' residence was searched when three firearms were found under his bed on April 17. The guns were the same firearms reported stolen in a burglary in Owatonna on April 15, police said.

Williams, who is currently on intensive supervised release, was in possession of stolen firearms. The Owatonna burglary case remains under investigation.

COURT NEWS Steele County

The following case was heard in Steele County District Court the week of April 13 with Judge Jeffrey M. Johnson presiding: Blake L. MacPherson, 21, Owatonna, previously appeared and was convicted of felony possession of firearm and felony failure to appear.

MN STATE PATROL ROCHESTER

Nicholas R. Bjork, 23, Des Moines, IA, no license, \$175; Madison R. Calhoun, 27, Owatonna, speeding, \$115; Maria A. Garcia Bethke, 33, Owatonna, child passenger restraint system violations, \$175; William J. Goodman, 60, Lakerville, radar detector violation, \$175; Sarah S. McGowan, 20, Waunakee, WI, speeding, \$115; Natalie C. Pint, 28, Mankato, speeding, \$275; Grant D. Sanders, 30, Faribault, speeding, \$125; Andrew W. Thompson, 20, Woodbury, speeding, \$125.

OWATONNA POLICE DEPARTMENT

Darnell A. Berg, 35, Owatonna, DWI, \$150, do not enter liquor establishments, attend MADD impact panels and 1 year of supervised probation; Theodore P. Brown, 22, Medford, speeding, \$115; Joelle K. Butler, 34, Ellendale, speeding, \$125; Jose L. Garcia, 22, Owatonna, possession of marijuana, stay of adjudication, \$50, 81 days in county jail, maintain employment, no alcohol or controlled substance use, do not enter liquor establishments, chemical dependency evaluation, cognitive skill training, obtain permission to leave the state and 2 years of supervised probation; Jose L. Garcia, 22, Owatonna, theft, \$125, 62 days in county jail and 30 days of unsupervised probation; Leo R. Gaxiola, 40, Owatonna, cancelled license, \$275; Karrie S. Meyer, 36, Owatonna, hands free violation, \$125; Abby M. Stano, 34, Owatonna, cancelled license, \$275.

STEELE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Georgann I. Brookins, 61, Ellendale, speeding, \$115; Aubrey J. Hansen, 30, Owatonna, no insurance, \$275; Jesse S. Matthews, 43, West Concord, speeding, \$135; Mohamed A. Mohamed, 26, Owatonna, speeding, \$215.

POLICE BLOTTER Steele County

BLOOMING PRAIRIE POLICE

April 19 Domestic: Police responded to a domestic disturbance in the 200 block of 2nd St. NE at 8:25 p.m.

OWATONNA POLICE

April 17 Drugs: Police responded to drug activity in the 200 block of 18th St. SW at 3:30 p.m.
Thefts: Officers took theft reports in the 2900 block of 24th Ave. NE at 4:28 p.m. and the 400 block of Hoffman Dr. NW at 8:15 p.m.

Shoplifting: Police arrested a subject for shoplifting in the 800 block of Oak Ave. S. at 3:19 p.m.

Restraining Order: At 8:30 p.m., a restraining order violation occurred in the 900 block of Ridgewood Place NE.

April 18 Crash: Police responded to a motor vehicle accident in the 400 block of Mineral Springs Road NE at 9:13 p.m.

April 19 DWI: Officer made a DWI arrest in the 300 block of Allan Ave. SW at 1:44 a.m.

April 20 Vandalism: Property damage was reported in the 200 block of Beech Ave. NE at 11:50 a.m.

Welfare: Police arrested a subject while conducting a welfare check in the 900 block of Mosher Ave. SW at 12:54 p.m.

Domestic: Officers responded to a domestic disturbance in the 100 block of Rice St. E. at 4:04 p.m.

Restraining Order: At 4:48 p.m., a restraining order violation occurred in the 300 block of Rose St. E.

April 21 Theft: At 12:04 a.m., a motor vehicle was reported stolen from the 1200 block of Oak Ave. S.

Burglary: Police began burglary investigations in the 100 block of North St. E. at 2:22 p.m. and the 1900 block of Woodcrest Dr. NE at 4:41 p.m.

Animal: At 3:53 p.m., an animal bite occurred in the 2700 block of St. Paul Road NE.

April 22 Domestic: Police responded to a domestic disturbance in the 700 block of Academy St. E. at 11:12 a.m.

Fraud: Officer took a report of a fraud incident in the 100 block of Broadway St. W. at 1:01 p.m.

Domestic: At 7:47 p.m., a domestic disturbance occurred in the 300 block of Main St. E.

April 23 Domestic: Officers responded to a domestic disturbance in the 200 block of 21st St. NW at 12:01 p.m.

Weapons: Police responded to a weapon-related incident in the 400 block of Academy St. E. at 1:49 p.m.

Vandalism: Property damage was reported in the 1200 block of Kohlmier Dr. SW at 8:39 p.m.

Drugs: Police issued a citation for drug activity in the 1200 block of Kohlmier Dr. SW at 9:47 p.m.

STEELE COUNTY SHERIFF

April 22 Theft: Deputy took a report of identity theft in the 6300 block of 8th St. SW in Meriden Township at 12:42 p.m.

Welfare: Deputy conducted a welfare check in the 6200 block of 22nd Ave. SW in Somerset Township at 1:35 p.m.

ARRESTS Steele County

STEELE ARRESTS OWATONNA POLICE

Jared Allen Wigham, 39, arrested at 2:13 a.m. April 19, DWI-test refusal, held for court.

COURT NEWS Dodge County

The following misdemeanors and petty misdemeanors were heard in Dodge County District Court the week of April 12 - 19:

DODGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Tiffany D. Clausen, 34, Kasson, parking violation, \$32; James L. Essig, 47, Dodge Center, parking violation, \$32; Matthew C. Mointre, 22, Byron, parking violation, \$32; Krystal K. Netcott, 35, Dodge Center, parking violation, \$32; Donald A. Nystel, 66, Austin, parking violation, \$32; Cody D. Thorn, 22, Byron, speeding, \$140; Cory W. Utech, 18, Dodge Center, parking violation, \$32; Jeffrey S. Warner, 54, Dodge Center, parking violation, \$32; Thomas J. Weber, 26, Dodge Center, parking violation, \$32; Gary R. Williams, 63, Claremont, animal at large, \$100.

KASSON POLICE DEPARTMENT

Alexander J. McElmury, 20, Kasson, speeding, \$220.

MN STATE PATROL ROCHESTER

Tyler D. Johnson, 26, Kasson, speeding, \$120; William A. Olson, 21, Dover, speeding, \$120; Oren W. Soward, Jr., 50, Chippewa Falls, WI, seat belt, \$105.

SOOTHE THE SOUL: Retired teachers find comfort in a COVID-19 song FROM B1

to comply with state social distancing guidelines, Nancy still played organ music for Trinity's Easter service.

While Nancy misses seeing kids all the time in school, she still finds time to accompany on the piano for them with their various musical activities.

The Mattis also perform in the area from time to time. Doug also continues to produce corn and soybeans on a family farm north of Mantorville. Nancy said the farm has been in the family for about 100 years.

Nancy is confident that America will conquer the coronavirus. "We will defeat it," she says. "I'm hoping sooner rather than later," she said, adding that she and her Mayo Clinic will come up with a vaccine soon.

As for the COVID-19 song, Nancy blushes at the notoriety they have gained in such a short time.

BALLAD OF THE VIRUS

On Friday the 13th, March 2020 Activities and tournaments all a-pleanty They had to stop because of a tiny virus...

Seeing friends, basketball, going to church, Fun at the mall, all had to stop because Of Coronavirus!

We'll defeat you, Coronavirus, yes, we'll beat you Alleluia (repeat)

Doctors, nurses, firemen, too, the old, the young In between, too, working to combat you, tiny virus.

Masks & gowns & PPE, teachers & students Watching TV, studying from home because Of Coronavirus!!

But, we'll defeat you, Coronavirus, yes, we'll beat you. Alleluia. (repeat)

Alleluia, alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia-----I---o---g!!!

Written by Nancy Matti Hagfield

"I'm just amazed that something spreads so quickly," she said. The video of the song can be viewed on twitter under Olivia's account

@omatti25 or on Facebook at www.facebook.com/100005800757599/video:pcb.1357556254447720/133755501145107?type=3&theater.

DETOURS KICK OFF: Hwy. 14 expansion FROM B1

rials in to build a bridge on Dodge County 1 for an overpass of new Hwy. 14 and building a new 630th Street. Grading work west of Claremont is also expected to begin.

Farmers who use these roads to access fields along this area should contact Jim Hannaman of Shafer Contracting at 612-703-0304 to arrange the best route for their equipment.

The project will expand 12.5 miles of Hwy 14 from two lanes to four lanes between Dodge County and Owatonna to connect to the new four-lane road between Mankato and Rochester. The project is intended

to improve the capacity, safety, travel times and access between Rochester and Owatonna, as well as the I-35 corridor. The expansion area is a new route for Hwy 14, which will stay south of the railroad tracks on the west side of the project, travel south of Claremont and connect where the four-lane highway is west of Dodge Center

Shafer Contracting of Shafer, Minn., is the prime contractor for the \$107,997,119 construction project. Construction is scheduled to be completed by 2022. Traffic on the new Hwy 14 route is expected in 2021.

Motorists are reminded

that while in the work zone: Slow down when approaching every work zone, then navigate through with care and caution

Stay alert; work zones constantly change

Watch for workers and slow moving equipment

Obey posted speed limits. Fine for a violation in a work zone is \$300.

Minimize distractions behind the wheel.

Be patient; expect delays, especially during peak travel times

Following guidance from state health officials and to prevent further spread of COVID-19, MnDOT crews will maintain social distancing practices while working.

COVID-19: affects social media consumption FROM B1

issue of false news articles and misinformation circulating the internet and social media. The top three posts on social media included articles of cyber hand washing, racist posts towards the Chinese, and posts that originated in other countries made to warn of what was to come. These articles and posts are fear inducing and only creates more anxiety. Make sure the articles you read are from a reliable source such as the MN Department of Health (MDH), the Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention (CDC), and the World Health Organization (WHO).

While being up to date on current pandemic updates is important, you must also be able to switch off that pandemic mentality and keep a positive mindset. Living in constant fear and anxiety is not good for your mental health. Look at the brighter side of this pandemic and notice how the population is using different resources to stay connected to one another. Go for a walk, while staying six feet apart that is. Try

having a Zoom chat with your friends over dinner. Try learning something new. Be creative and more importantly, be kind. Remember we are all in this together, and together we will overcome this.

Alisha Groneweg is a registered nurse and health educator with Steele County Public Health in Owatonna. Steele Talkin' is a regular column featuring authors representing various organizations throughout Steele County.

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

- 1. Mario Contreras - DWI - no license - \$500 bail
2. Omar Cordova Jr. - stalking, revoked license - no bail
3. Mario Alejandro Correa - robbery - no bail
4. Jose Cruz - DWI - \$1,400 bail
5. Keith Cruz - DWI - no bail
6. Victor Cruz-Puentes - fleeing in motor vehicle - \$5,000 bail
7. Christopher Cummins - failure to appear - \$500 bail
8. Jeremy Danielson - check forger - \$5,000 bail
9. James Davis - domestic assault - no bail
10. Joseph Davis - theft, DWI - no bail
11. Ricardo Degollado - damage to property - \$10,000 bail
12. Rey Diaz - escape tax - \$5,490 bail
13. Katrina Doig - false name - \$2,000 bail
14. Laura Dominguez - DWI - no bail
15. Austin Drake-Moreno - disorderly conduct - \$500 bail
16. William Durham - domestic assault - \$2,000 bail
17. Mark Erschens - DWI - no bail
18. Andrey Ezequiel - assault - no bail
19. Francis Feeley - domestic assault - \$3,000 bail
20. Romero Fernandez - criminal sexual conduct - \$200,000 bail

Extension offers goat and sheep management webinar series

University of Minnesota Extension will be hosting a four part webinar series on goat and sheep management. The webinars will take place on Tuesdays and Thursdays: May 5, 7, 12 and 14, at 6:30 p.m.

This webinar series is for anyone managing goats or sheep who would like more information on various aspects of herd and pasture management, starting with highlighting a Minnesota goat grazing operation and then covering topics from weaning, to parasite control, to pasture management. Farmers, 4-Hers and those interested in goats or sheep are invited to join in!

The topics are:

- Tuesday, May 5: Featured Goat Producer - Jake Langeslag, Goat Dispatch
- Thursday, May 7: Sheep and Goat Weaning Management - Travis Hoffman and Joe Armstrong, University of Minnesota Extension
- Tuesday, May 12: Herd Health and Parasite Management - Dr. Whitney Knauer, University of Minnesota College of Veterinary Medicine
- Thursday, May 14: Pasture Management - Brenda Postels, University of Minnesota Extension

Pre-registration is required, please register at z.umn.edu/GoatSheepSeries by 4 p.m. prior to the first webinar you want to attend. Once you register, you will be registered for all subsequent webinars. If you are unable to attend the live session, you will receive the recordings. Please contact Claire LaCanne, Extension educator for Steele and Rice counties with any questions at 507-330-0447 or lacanne@umn.edu.

COVID-19 cancels church at St. John

All church activities at St. John Lutheran Church of Clamart are being cancelled for the month of April. The church elders have suspended all activities and church services through at least May 4 to comply with state guidelines known as shelter in place due to the COVID-19 virus outbreak. If anyone is in need of pastoral care, please contact Pastor Broadwell at 507-528-2643.

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Sudoku Corner

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

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Answers

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

Awesome Blossom lawn signs in place



Senior lawn signs are strategically located throughout Blooming Prairie on the lawns of parents and grand parents. Seniors Baylee Sorensen and Jacob McHenry are shown by the lawn signs.



Blooming Prairie High School Activities Director Alison Mach helped deliver senior lawn signs to families of seniors. Signs showed up all over town.

Gardening webinar series offered in May

When looking to start a garden or improve your current garden it is best to start from the ground and work up. University of Minnesota Extension local educators are excited to bring you the Gardening from the Group Up webinar series to help you achieve your garden goals.

This free webinar series will take place May 12-15 from 1-2:30 p.m. each afternoon. You must pre-register for this series at z.umn.edu/GardenUp to receive the webinar links. The webinar series will cover a wide variety of topics that are important for any gardener to understand.

Tuesday: Soil and Soil Testing - Extension Educators Katie Drewitz and Robin Trot

On Tuesday, Extension will focus on soil. It is recommended that you get your soil tested once every three years. During this session, you will learn how to properly take a soil sample and how to submit that sample to the lab. Then, the educators will walk through how to read the soil test results and what they mean. The session will also touch on soil textures which will lead into Wednesday's discussion.

Wednesday: Fertilizer and Nutrient Deficiencies - Extension Educators Adam Austing and Troy Salzer

Building on the concepts learned on Tuesday, the educators will explore fertilizer and nutrient deficiencies. Plants need nutrients in varying levels. Many times your plants will tell you what it is lacking. They will walk through common deficiencies and how they

are likely to show up in your plants. The session will also discuss what you can do to correct the problem.

Thursday: Cover Crops - Extension Educator Troy Salzer

You may be familiar with the concept of using a cover crop on a large field. Did you know that cover crops can also be beneficial for gardens? Salzer will show you the benefits that cover crops can have on your garden; building on what was learned about fertilizer and nutrient deficiencies. He will also discuss which cover crops may be the best option for you.

Friday: Beneficial Insects - Extension Educators Claire LaCanne and Shane Buejela

Have you ever wondered how to attract (and keep) beneficial insects to your garden or small farm? What are the best ways to promote pollinators on our properties, and how helpful are those mason bee houses? In this session, the educators will also discuss "good bugs" that help keep pest populations low, such as parasitoids and predators. Lastly, they will discuss several new pesticides on the market that are low in toxicity to bees and other non-pest species.

To join in for all or one of these webinars, please go to z.umn.edu/GardenUp to register. You only need to register once to receive access to each topic. If you have questions about the webinar series or need assistance with registration, please call your local Extension office. Residents in Steele and Rice Counties may email lacanne@umn.edu or call 507-330-0447.

Steele County 4-H salutes volunteers

Each year, thousands of volunteers in Minnesota donate their time and energy to make their communities a better place to live. These volunteers were among the millions across the country who were spotlighted during National Volunteer Week, April 19-25.

One group that relies heavily on volunteers is the University of Minnesota Extension's 4-H Youth Development Program. Minnesota 4-H supports nearly 11,000 youth and adults who volunteer their time to engage young people in a variety of hands-on learning experiences. Volunteers are critical to the success of 4-H programs and making a difference in the lives of youth.

In Steele County, 150 adult volunteers serve as club leaders, project leaders, committee members, and in advisory capacities for the 4-H Youth Development Program. Volunteers spend numerous hours working on tasks, such as mentoring a child with a 4-H project, leading a project with youth to serve the community, or helping organize an event at the county fair.

The work of 4-H volunteers is continuous. Every day volunteers lend a helping hand to make 4-H programs more beneficial to the residents of Steele County.

Those interested in joining the team of 4-H volunteers are invited to contact the University of Minnesota Extension - Steele County at 507-444-7885.

Girls' youth basketball named top award winners

Minnesota Youth Athletic Services (MYAS) in strategic partnership with Youth 1st, Federated Insurance, Pearson, Cashwise, Bennerotte & Associates, Jaguar Communications, The Retrofit Companies, U.S. Bank, Profinium, Pizza Ranch, Heartland Chevy Dealers, Dick's Sporting Goods, Institute for Athletic Medicine, and Urban Air Adventure Parks have selected Girls Youth Basketball teams from across Minnesota as the recipient of a Youth 1st Team Award for their outstanding sportsmanship during the 2020 MYAS Grade State Championships, held March 7-8, at 14 locations across the Twin Cities metro area.

Youth 1st, a non-profit organization headquar-

tered in Owatonna, is an official Playball! MN Partner of the Minnesota Twins.

As the premier youth basketball event in the state of Minnesota, the Grade State Championships is about showcasing the kids and competition, not the negativity of unsportsmanlike behavior of players, coaches, and spectators that tends to creep into youth events. For the second consecutive year, MYAS and Youth 1st are excited to recognize the teams and associations that received exemplary scores from the officials for their sportsmanship and positive conduct during the tournament.

The Youth 1st Team Award recognizes positive behavior from players, coaches and everyone associ-

ated with the team (parents, fans and spectators). "We are placing the emphasis on how you play the game, which is ultimately more important than if you win or lose," said Mark Arjes, founder/director of Youth 1st. "It has become increasingly difficult to find and retain coaches and officials for youth sports because of the abuse that they take during games. We believe it is time to model and encourage values-based actions, creating what we call a Conduct 1st environment where the focus is on the kids, competitive energies are kept in check and officials and opponents are respected."

One of the goals within the MYAS mission is to promote sportsmanship, teamwork and cultural in-

teraction through sporting competition," said Dawson Blank, MYAS executive director. "The entire MYAS team is thrilled to be able to partner with Youth 1st to help us meet those goals within our programs. As a leader in youth sports throughout the great state of Minnesota, we want to be proactive and impact participants (youth athletes, coaches, parents, and officials) in a positive way through a Conduct 1st environment at all our tournaments and events. Implementing this initiative with Youth 1st during the Grade State Championships has significantly decreased the number of unsportsmanlike events that took place compared to previous years."

AUSTIN 7-DAY FORECAST

THU	FRI	SAT	SUN	MON	TUE	WED
80	78	81	81	82	79	76
62	63	62	63	62	63	63

WEEKEND Weather Forecasts
7am & 6pm
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BIRTHDAYS

MAY 1
Kari Olsen Bodurtha
Barbie Johnson
Paul Smith
Anthony Noble
Bricyn Thompson
Hunter Wollenburg

MAY 2
Brian Hoveland
Virgene Doocy
Tyler Kruckeberg
Trevor Kruckeberg
Matthew Farr
Micheanna Kline

MAY 3
Haley Tollefson
Stacie Toquam

MAY 4
Rodney Krell
Robert Ingvalson

MAY 5
McKenzie Jensen
Dennis Sauke
Brian Anderson
Becky Noble
Maverick Miner
Ryker Long

ANNIVERSARIES

MAY 2
Joshua & Jenny Winn

MAY 5
Ryan & Heather Weber

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Minnesota prioritizes child care during COVID-19

Temporary changes add flexibility for families and providers, give guidance on operating during peacetime emergency.

Minnesotans who provide child care and families who rely on child care should know that the state is working to prioritize and support their operations and availability during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Under emergency authority granted by Gov. Tim Walz, Human Services Commissioner Jodi Harpstead has approved temporary modifications to child care regulations and procedures. The changes add flexibility for families and providers while preserving access to care.

The temporary changes affect providers and families:

- Family child care providers have longer timelines to renew licenses and meet training requirements, and more flexible requirements for record-keeping and age distribution.

- Child care centers have more flexibility around requirements for

staffing, age grouping, training and overnight care.

- Providers who serve the Child Care Assistance Program, or CCAP, have more time to renew their registration. Certain payment rules have been modified so they can continue to serve families. For instance, if a child is absent for medical reasons, the program continues to pay providers for more days than under normal rules.

- Families who rely on CCAP have extended eligibility if they were due for review before July. They can also switch child care programs without a waiting period if their provider closes temporarily, so they don't lose access to care.

"The Minnesotans who continue to provide child care during this unprecedented crisis deserve our thanks," Harpstead said. "Their work caring for the children of front-line workers keeps us all safer."

Regulatory oversight of child care settings continues during the pandemic. State and county licensors are prioritizing on-site visits on a case-by-case

basis, and continue to respond to critical incidents that present a high risk of harm to children or allegations of abuse or neglect.

The changes for child care, in addition to temporary suspensions of routine enforcements by DHS Licensing, give providers the flexibility to continue serving clients, mitigate the spread of the virus and protect the health and safety of children and themselves and their staff.

Executive Order 20-12, signed by Governor Walz on March 20, allows the Minnesota Department of Human Services to temporarily waive or modify state requirements so services can be delivered safely and without undue delay, protecting vulnerable Minnesotans and those who care for them. Waivers and modifications under the emergency authority are posted on the agency's public website.

The Department of Human Services serves more than 1 million Minnesotans, with programs and services that include health care, economic assistance and much more.



Gardening Tips

JULIE WANOUS

Do you love fresh asparagus, but the price per pound stops you from buying it? Consider planting your own asparagus bed! This easy-to-grow, nutrient-packed perennial will garnish your table with many meals of delicious fresh asparagus for years to come. When cut, prepared, set on the table and ready to serve in 15 to 30 minutes, fresh asparagus is truly the star of spring vegetables.

Before we dive into the process of planting your bed, let me start with a word of encouragement: don't be intimidated! While it takes a bit of work, muscle, and patience to install your own asparagus bed, once the plants are established they are easy to tend, long-lasting, and a tasty return on your investment.

First, consider the location for your asparagus bed. As your bed will last at least 15 years (my bed is now 30 years old!), asparagus needs to be planted in full sun for the duration of its life. Avoid nearby young trees that will eventually shade out the asparagus. A well-drained soil is a must. The crowns of asparagus do not like wet feet and will rot if the soil remains saturated for too long. Make sure to have a soil test done, collecting soil from at least 12 inches deep in the area you are considering for your asparagus bed. Asparagus grows best at a pH of approximately 6.5 to 7.5. Avoid planting in a low area, as late spring frost can damage the early emerging spears. Plant asparagus where you can control grass from creeping into the bed, as grass robs the asparagus of essential nutrients.

Now that you've picked out your planting area and have the results back from your soil test, let's prepare the site for planting. I filled the trench very well, going as deep as possible. Then with the soil loosened, I dug the trench. (Or I should say "we" dug the trench, as I talked my sister-in-law, Linda, into helping me. Recruiting help makes this project easier, faster, and more fun, and you can sweeten the deal with a promise of asparagus (eventually in return!) The trench needs to be 15 to 18

Love fresh asparagus? Plant your own!

inches deep, and at least 12 inches wide. Deeper is better to allow for extra space for compost. Heap the soil removed from the trench next to it without spreading it out. At the bottom of your 16 inch trench, add the recommended fertilizer or lime from the soil test results. I also added a 3 inch layer of well-composted manure to the bottom of the trench. Add 2 to 3 inches of soil on top of the compost. The trench is ready to plant asparagus crowns.

Asparagus crowns purchased should be either 1 or 2 year old crowns. The heirloom variety commonly found for sale is Mary Washington. Jersey Supreme and Jersey Knight are also available for our Zone 4. Or if you want to try something unusual, Purple Passion is a purple colored asparagus. I recommend planting crowns, as seeds, as it reduces the wait time to fresh harvest of your asparagus. Male plants have a thicker spear than female plants, but you will want both to ensure longevity of the bed. Asparagus will self-sow seeds, constantly revitalizing the bed.

The planting process happens in stages, gradually as the spears grow. First, spread the roots of the crown out as much as possible, making sure the buds are facing up in the trench. You will want both to ensure longevity of the bed. Water thoroughly, but do not fill the trench with water. As the young asparagus spears emerge from the soil and are approximately 3 inches tall, add another 2 inches of soil, being sure to not cover the tip of the emerging spear. Again, when the spear is 3 inches tall, add another 2 inches of soil. Making sure the trench is watered if rainfall is not sufficient. Repeat the soil addition until the trench has been completely filled, with just a bit of extra soil added on top (called crowning) to allow for soil settling. Your first year asparagus plants will leaf out into what looks like a fern, which will continue to put energy back into the crown.

Unfortunately, no cutting asparagus spears for the first two years. Patience is an important part of establishing an asparagus bed. The third year you will be able to harvest 1/3 of the spears. Stop harvesting by the Fourth of July to allow the plants enough

time to rest and restock on energy for the following spring. The fourth year, you will be able to cut as much as you would like, but always remember to stop harvesting by the Fourth of July (the taste declines in the summer heat as well).

Asparagus should be fertilized with a 10-10-10 fertilizer at the recommended rate. Asparagus also benefits from being mulched. I use clean (herbicide- and weed-free) grass clippings to mulch, for a few reasons. Grass clippings decompose easily which adds a bit of nitrogen to the soil, grass clippings keep the soil moisture level even, they're effective at weed control, and I have them readily available, thanks to my husband! However, there are other options available to mulch with as straw, hay, etc. work as long as the mulch is free of weed seeds.

I leave the fern tops on my asparagus bed all winter long. They catch the snow, insulating the crowns from the severe cold days. But, come spring time, I try to get out to the garden as soon as the soil can be worked. I carefully rake off the dried remains of last year's ferns and remove them from the garden. I spread my fertilizer and rototill the whole asparagus bed, working in the last of the grass clippings. However, I fill only the very top layer of soil, staying as shallow as possible. I don't want the new little crowns of the new little volunteer plants uprooted. Remember, these little plants are necessary for the longevity of your asparagus bed.

And once the asparagus spears start emerging, I mulch, having a better idea where each crown is growing. I add mulch about 4 inches deep to the entire bed, careful to not cover the spears, and reapply in the summer months if it decomposes quickly. Mulching in the early spring slows harvest for a short time, but it's worth it to avoid the battle with the weeds.

If you enjoy fresh asparagus as much as I do, consider planting your own bed. It takes some up-front preparation and sweat equity, but your asparagus bed should last for many years, and the pay-off is so sweet. Happy harvesting!

Julie Wanous is a master gardener in Steele County. She may be reached at jjwanous12@gmail.com

DEED begins Pandemic Unemployment payments

The Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) announced last week that the agency has begun making Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) pay-

ments to people who are self-employed, independent contractors, and other eligible recipients who are not eligible for regular unemployment benefits.

PUA is a new program

that was authorized by Congress in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) and signed into law on March 27.

SEE DEED BEGINS, B10

J & H LIQUOR

Future events will depend on the State of Minnesota COVID-19 guidelines.

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Sunday - Closed

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The bar will remain closed till May 1st or until the State of Minnesota allows it to re-open.

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Parks and Recreation Contact Information:
Office & Information Line 507-444-4321 Tennis & Fitness Center 507-444-4290
Fax 507-444-4299 West Hills Social Commons 507-444-4280
Facebook: Owatonna Parks and Recreation Brooktree Clubhouse 507-444-2467
Email Address: parkrec@ci.owatonna.mn.us River Springs Water Park 507-774-7370

Office Hours
Monday – Friday
7 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Thank you Park Board Members!

Angie Malo Andi Arnold Jonathan Thiel
David Christianson Nicholas Elsnor Greg Posch

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

Summer Registration | Thursday, May 21 | Ways to Register:
• **On-Line:** <http://owatonnaparksrecreation.maxgalaxy.net/Home.aspx> (beginning at 7 a.m.)
• **Walk-In Registration:** Parks and Recreation office at 540 West Hills Circle. Office hours are 7 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday through Friday. • **Call in:** 507-444-4321

Please check our website to see current COVID-19 updates!

Registration deadline is May 7th for T-ball and Mini Sluggers. Save \$10 on each program by registering before the deadline.

- Special Events**
- Munchkin Market
 - Earth Day Clean Up
 - Rec On The Go
 - Kid's Safety Camp
 - Movies in the Park
 - Owatonna Weekend Out
 - Woodstock
- Youth Summer Programs**
- T-Ball
 - Mini Sluggers
 - Day Camps
 - Little Tykes Camps
 - Learn to Skate Hockey
- Partnership Programs:** Community Sports Camps
- Programs coming in the Fall Brochure (released July 21)**
- Track
 - Swim Lessons
 - Football
 - Volleyball
 - Swim Lessons
 - Basketball
- For all swim lesson details visit our website at www.ci.owatonna.mn.us/parksrecreation.*

T-Ball

Current 5-year-olds and current kindergartners (1st time players).
• Boys & Girls
• Played on Mondays at Brown Park
• Session 1: 5:30-6:30 p.m.
• Session 2: 6:30-7:30 p.m.
• Goal of 8 players per team

JUNE is to be used as skill development (station work).
Dates: June 8, 15, 22, 29
JULY is to be used as game play.
Dates: July 13, 20, 27
Makeup is August 3
Cost: \$37, after May 7 is \$47

Mini Sluggers (formerly Squirt Ball)

Current kindergartners and 1st graders who have played T-ball
• Boys
• Choose between Brown Park and McKinley Park
• Choose time: 5:30 p.m. or 6:30 p.m.
• Played on Tuesdays and Thursdays, 60 minutes per night
• Tuesdays are skill development (no game play). These are scheduled as team practices
• Thursdays are game play; goal of 8 players per team
• Cost: \$40, after March 7 \$50
JUNE DATES: 2, 9, 16, 18, 23, 25
JULY DATES: 14, 16, 21, 23, 28, 30

Mini Crush softball:

Grades K (if completed T-Ball) 1 & 2 (grade just completed).
An in-house program emphasizing fundamental softball skill development using fun and creative drills. Coach pitching and/or pitching machines will be used.
Cost: \$60, after March 5 \$70

Little League Level 1:

current 2nd and 3rd graders
Pitching machine league with emphasis on participation and development of fundamental skills.
Cost: \$55 (\$65 after March 5) registration to P&R, \$25 to HBC (Taco John's Fund-raiser)
Days: 2nd grade – Monday and Wednesday, 3rd grade – Tuesday and Thursday

Little League Level 2:

current 4th-6th graders
Player pitch in-house leagues intended to continue the development of fundamentals and the skills of game.
Cost: \$75 (\$85 after March 5) registration to P&R, \$25 to HBC (Taco John's Fundraiser)
Days: Monday and Wednesday

Learn to Skate-Hockey

Take to the ice on Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 6:30-7:30pm, starting June 9. Classes run 5 weeks. No classes held June 29-July 3.
Tuesdays: June 9, 16, 23, July 7, 14
Thursdays: June 11, 18, 25, July 9, 16
Cost: \$55

A helmet and skates are required for anyone on the ice, including adult helpers and coaches. If you need to rent protective equipment, please contact Mark Spurgeon at marks@ultrapure.com or phone 507-456-5949. Skate rental is available at Straight River Sports & Fitness, 222 W. Bridge St, 451-1666. Any questions, please contact Tony Schwichtenberg at tony.schwichtenberg@gmail.com.

Camps

Summer FUN! Owatonna Parks & Recreation is committed to encourage learning and still give kids a change to be kids! Campers will make new friends, experience new things, learn new skills and enjoy what we hope is the best week of their summer.

Little Outdoor Adventurers Nature Camp: for youth ages 3-5
Session 1: June 8-11 (9 a.m.-12 p.m.)
Session 2: July 20-23 (1 p.m.-4 p.m.)
Session 3: August 3-6 (9 a.m.-12 p.m.)

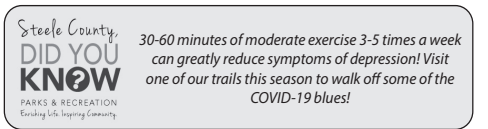
Big Outdoor Adventurers Nature Camp: for youth ages 6-8
Session 1: June 15-18 (9 a.m.-12 p.m.)
Session 2: July 13-16 (9 a.m.-12 p.m.)
Session 3: August 3-6 (1 p.m.-4 p.m.)

STEM Camp III: 9 and 10-year-olds
Session 1: July 6-9 (9 a.m.-12 p.m.)
Session 2: August 10-13 (1 p.m.-4 p.m.)

Little Tykes Sports Camps: ages 3-5
Session 1: June 8-11 (5:30-6:20 p.m.) ages 3 & 4
Session 2: June 8-11 (6:30-7:20 p.m.) ages 4 & 5
Session 3: June 15-18 (5:30-6:20 p.m.) ages 3 & 4

Pavilions available for rent!
Pavilions rentals are available one year in advance. Call the Parks & Recreation office at 507-444-4321 or stop by our office to make a reservation. Payment is due at the time of the reservation.

Give the Gift of Recreation!
Purchase a Parks and Recreation gift card and give the gift of recreation and fun! Our gift cards can be used for any registration, program and at any one of our facilities (Brooktree Golf Course, Tennis & Fitness Center, River Springs Water Park or SeniorPlace).



Steele County DID YOU KNOW
PARKS & RECREATION
Enriching Life, Inspiring Community

30-60 minutes of moderate exercise 3-5 times a week can greatly reduce symptoms of depression! Visit one of our trails this season to walk off some of the COVID-19 blues!

River Springs Water Park

2020 Season Open Swim Hours
June 5 Friday 4-8 p.m.
June 6 - August 9 Monday - Sunday Noon - 8 p.m.
(Closing times may vary beginning August 10)
August 10 - 23 Monday - Sunday Noon - 7 p.m.

Pass Book prices: 10 passes for \$65 or 30 passes for \$165
2020 Season Passes
Individual pass \$85
Family Pass: Includes 3 people \$180 (\$20 for each additional person)



Therapeutic Recreation

Membership and registration packets for Teen Club and Night Club are available at the TR office and **must be submitted prior to starting**

Teen Club: pre-teens through young adult, 10-22 years, who have developmental disabilities
Dates: Thursdays
Time: 6-7:30 p.m.
Location: West Hills Social Commons (formerly SeniorPlace), location may vary with activity
Membership: \$48 (includes tax) for six months, with fees due January 1 and July 1

Night Club: adults 22 years and older who have developmental and physical disabilities
Dates: Wednesdays
Time: 6-7:30 p.m.
Location: West Hills Social Commons (formerly SeniorPlace), location may vary with activity
Membership: \$48 (includes tax) for six months, with fees due January 1 and July 1

Special Rec: children ages 4-10 with developmental disabilities
Dates: Wednesdays
Time: 5-6 p.m.
Location: West Hills Social Commons (formerly SeniorPlace)
Membership: \$24 (includes tax) for six months running January 1-June 30 and July 1-December 31



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West Hills Tennis & Fitness Center

West Hills Pool Open Swim

Cost: \$4 weekdays, \$5 weekends
 Days & Hours: October 1 - Memorial Day
 Monday, Wednesday, Friday
 Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday
 Saturday, Sunday

6 a.m. - 7:15 a.m.
 7 p.m. - 9 p.m.
 1 p.m. - 4 p.m.

Amenities:

- Cardio and strength training equipment
- Gymnasium
- Sauna
- Running Track
- 6 indoor tennis courts
- Heated swimming pool
- Locker rooms with showers

Private party facility rentals are available for the pool, gym, and tennis courts

Lifeguard Training Classes: registration available now

May class: May 12-22

Pre-requisites:

- Swim 300 yards continuously performing front crawl and breaststroke
- Swim 20 yards, pick up 10-pound brick from 10 feet of water and return it back 20 yards using only a kick, holding the brick with 2 hands on the chest
- Must be 15 at the time class ends
- You must attend all classes to pass
- No refund will be issued if you do not pass

Table Tennis promotes entertainment, athletic competition and physical fitness. Bring your racquet and ball to Sid Kenyon courts at Lincoln Elementary school and compete with your family and burn off some energy!

Brooktree Golf Course



Adult/Youth Golf Lessons

Beginning Adult Group Golf Lessons: Learn the basics of the game: gripping the club, posture and stance in the full swing, chipping, pitching and putting.

The class will meet once a week for 1.5 hours for four weeks. Lessons are designed to introduce new golfers to the game in a relaxed, non-stressful manner. Lessons will be taught by PGA Professional Tom Vizina.

Limited to 10 participants. Must have own clubs.

Dates: May 20 & 27, June 10 & 17

Time: 6-7:30 p.m.

Location: Havana Hills Golf Course

Cost: \$40

Youth Golf Lessons: Limited to 10 participants per session. Must have own clubs.

Intermediate Golf Lessons: Ages 12-16

Intermediate lessons are designed for kids age 12-16 who have at least 2 years of previous golf experience. Lessons will focus on swing fundamentals, skill development through drills and course management. Lessons will be taught by PGA Professional Tom Vizina.

Dates: June 8, 15, 22, 29, July 13, 20

Time: 6 - 7:30 p.m.

Location: Havana Hills Golf Course

Cost: \$50

Special Events

Rec On The Go

Rec on the Go is back this summer! We'll be rolling into local neighborhoods throughout the summer with sports, arts and crafts, games and fun. Look for the summer schedule to be posted on our website. We might just pull into your neighborhood and bring FREE recreation to you!



Steele County Kids Safety Camp

The Owatonna Police, Fire, and Parks and Recreation Departments, Steele County Sheriff's and Attorney's Offices along with Gold Cross Ambulance will host the Steele County Kids Safety Camp. Kids entering 4th grade learn about fishing safety, boat and canoe safety, camping and hiking, bike safety, firearms safety, first aid, electrical safety, fire safety, outdoor equipment safety and much more. Fee includes lunches, snacks, beverages and safety items to take home. Each child will receive a camp T-shirt, certificate of completion and team picture. Due to the COVID-19 crisis we are re-evaluating planning this year. **The Safety Camp board is planning on holding the camp at the end of July or beginning of August. Keep a look out for updates! We will work on**

sending information out to the schools as soon as decisions are made.

Cost: \$20

Location: Lake Kohlmer and Fairgrounds

Dates: TBD

Time: 7:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. each day

Days: TBD

Movies in the Park

This summer we have two family-friendly movies planned. Movies begin at sunset (between 7:30 p.m. and 9 p.m. depending on the day). Details for each movie will be posted on our website and Facebook page as the dates get closer. Movies are FREE.

June 26 - Moana at River Springs Water Park

July 24 - Look for information to come on the 2nd Movie in the Park we'll be showing this summer. We will do a Facebook vote to determine the movie.

Thank you Premier Banks of Owatonna, Stoyks Plumbing LLC, and Travel Leaders, our current movie sponsors!

Owatonna's 10th Annual Weekend Out - July 24-26

All Weekend Activity: Trails Challenge - walk, bike or run on your Owatonna trails this weekend and be entered into a drawing for prizes! Look for details to come on this challenge on our website and Facebook page. Thank you to our sponsor - 1st United Bank.

Fridays Activities:

3-on-3 Basketball Tournament

Starting at 2 p.m. in downtown Owatonna

Get your game on with our 3-on-3 Youth Basketball Tournament! Separate boys and girls divisions for kids entering 4th through 7th grades. Prizes for 1st place in each division. Only \$30 per team to enter! Sign your team up online, on the Park and Rec website or in person at the Park & Rec office.

Movie in the Park Central Park

Grab your blankets and lawn chairs, sit back and watch a movie under the stars! Look for a chance to vote for the movie choice on Facebook. The movie will begin at sunset (approximately 8:45-9 p.m.).

Saturday Activities:

Diaper Dash-Toddler Trot-Kids K Trail Runs

9 a.m. at Darts Park

Register at the Park. Races are free, all participants finishing receive a prize. A child may register for more than one race, but will only receive one finishing prize.

Diaper Dash-crawling only: a 10 ft course for 24 months or younger

Toddler Trot-ages 2-5: a 100 meter run

Kids K-ages 4-12: a full K trail run-ending at Brooktree Clubhouse

Bean Bag Tournament

Downtown Owatonna-Exact Location TBD

Grab a partner and throw some bags in our Bean Bag Tournament! We'll have a free youth tournament starting at 10 a.m. for kids ages 6-17. There's no registration required for the youth tournament. Just show up at 9:45 a.m. to play! At 11:00am we'll start an adult tournament for those ages 18 and up. The adult tournamne is just \$20 per team and prizes will be awarded for 1st and 2nd places! Register your team (you and a partner) for the adult tournamen onlce, on our website.

Woofstock!

Lake Chase Dog Park

August 15th 10 a.m.-noon

Details to come on our Facebook page and website. If you were interested in being a vendor at this event, please contact the Parks & Recreation office.

Outdoor FREE Fun!

Looking for something to do outdoors? Check out Sid Kinyon courts and Lincoln Elementary school. There is something fun for everyone! The park has one tennis court, two pickleball courts, a bocce court, two bean bag games a ping pong table, and an open area for other games! For now be sure to bring your own equipment but when the Parks and Recreation office is open to the public we will have equipment check out available!



Park & Rec Employment Opportunities:

- Lifeguard
- Therapeutic Recreation Camp Staff
- Water Aerobics Instructor-Substitute

Apply at www.ci.owatonna.mn.us and click on Employment

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ASSUMED NAME: Ritchie Bros. Auctioneers PRINCIPAL PLACE OF BUSINESS: 4000 Pine Lake Road, Lincoln, NE 68516 United States

NAMEHOLDER(S): Name: Ritchie Bros Auctioneers (America) Inc. Address: 4000 Pine Lake Road, Lincoln, NE 68516 United States

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: Karl Werner MAILING ADDRESS: 4000 Pine Lake Road, Lincoln, NE 68516 EMAIL FOR OFFICIAL NOTICES: dhronik@rbauction.com

Work Item 1155476000024 Original File Number 1155476000024 State of Minnesota Office of the Secretary of State Filed 04/22/2020 11:59PM /s/ Steve Simon Secretary of State 5/29, 5/6

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ASK THE MOTOR MEDICS By Shannon Nordstrom and Russ Evans

Dear Motor Medics, I have a 2017 Honda Civic and I have let it sit for a month and when I tried to start it the engine did start but once it fired every warning light you can think of came on. The message center also is giving error messages. I tried to disconnect the battery for ten minutes then I restarted it and it did the same thing. I have heard that the wiring may have been eaten by a rodent since I am seeing evidence of a rodent under the hood. Is this possible.

Nathan in Sachse Texas It's possible that you have a rodent problem. Some cars are made with soybean-based wiring covering which we believe is for environmental reasons. It can be an attractive food source for rodents and a very expensive fix. We once had a van in our shop four times for repair to the same wire at the same spot because of a hungry mouse. Before you get to excited about the high costs involved with a wiring repair of this nature make sure to have your shop check the basics. It could be as simple as the battery being low and when the car started it caused the computers to get disrupted which is causing all the lights. It may be as simple as resetting the computers and possibly charging the battery. A Battery maintainer is a good idea when a car is parked for extended periods.

Take care, The Motor Medics

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CITY OF BLOOMING PRAIRIE NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING The Blooming Prairie City Council will conduct a Public Hearing regarding the issuance of a Conditional Use/Interim Use Permit on Monday, May 11 at 7 p.m.

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Crossword solution

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dish BRING EVERYTHING YOU LOVE TOGETHER! 2-YEAR TV PRICE GUARANTEE \$59.99 190 CHANNELS

WEEKLY CROSSWORD CLUES ACROSS 1. Holds candles 7. In possession of 10. Rodents 12. Type of cofactor (Brit. sp.)

Let's get you movin'! Jennifer Walsh 507-438-6476

DEALS ON WHEELS

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

Over 25,000 in households

Serving Steele, Mower, Freeborn, Dodge, and Olmsted Counties

BARGAIN FINDER

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

www.steeledodgegens.com

CLASSIFIEDS

TO PLACE AN AD

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

3-WEEK SPECIAL: \$32

BUY TWO WEEKS, GET THE THIRD FREE UP TO 20 WORDS; 10¢ FOR EACH WORD AFTER

TO PLACE AN AD

Dodge County Independent Dodge County Advantage 507-634-7503 • dci@kmtel.com 121 W. Main St., Kasson, MN 55944

FOR RENT

DODGE CENTER RENTALS Smoke free 2 bd townhome & 3 bd apt available for June. Several great amenities! 507-438-7935 or 507-451-8524 or www.lifestyleinc.net tdd 507-451-0704 EHO 42312

OWATONNA RENTALS Smoke free 2 bd apt & 3 bd townhome available May. Several great amenities! 507-451-8524 www.lifestyleinc.net tdd 507-451-0704 EHO 42312 Housing Opportunity 42312

STUDENT EMPLOYMENT

CALEB'S PET SITTING, Cats and Dogs, please call me at 507-634-7907. 336c

SAMANTHA UPHAM'S BABYSITTING/NANNY services I'm a 15-year-old honors student entering my sophomore year at Kasson High School. I have babysitting experience and have been through a class specific for caring for young children. I am best suited to care for toddlers through young teens. Available 7 days a week and can be very flexible with times. I will ensure a summer full of fun! (references upon request) 507-358-3415 276c

NICK'S LAWN MOWING SERVICE. 50% off first mowing with a contract for 1 year. Weekly or vacation, residential or commercial, yard cleanup, mowing and trimming, satisfaction guaranteed. 10 years of experience. FREE estimates. Please call 507-696-3849 and leave a message. 716c

BRIANNA'S LAWN CARE SERVICES. Mowing, trimming, complete yard cleanup. Weekly or on call. Satisfaction guaranteed. FREE estimates. Call 507-421-7945. 196c

BARGAIN FINDERS

BRRP approved maintenance free bluebird and chickadee nest boxes with pole assembly and instructions. Pick up Owatonna Under \$30. Call 612-598-1374. 42314d

DRY CLOTHES NATURALLY. Sunshine umbrella clothesline. Large 14-foot circle. Steel pole. 2-inch diameter. Like new. \$50. 507-635-5511 42314d

ALLEN SPORTS 4 PLACE bike hitch for a truck. \$40. 507-414-2191. 43074d

FOR SALE

MAPLE WOOD CRIB with mattress and bumpers, excellent shape. FREE. Call 507-421-2833. 179c

AGED HORSE MANURE for the garden connoisseur. Courtesy of Lady Maggie, Call Madeline to place your spring order. \$4 for 5-gallon bucket or \$9 for a 13-gallon bag. Customers must provide bucket or bags. Call 507-634-6293. 179c

75 BALES of first and second crop alfalfa baleage and 40 bales of millet baleage. Call 507-456-2814. 41813d

FIELD ROCKS for sale. \$25 per load. South of Kasson, You load. Call 507-273-9678. 41813d

TWO OLDER BOOK DISPLAY RACKS. Each holds approximately 50-60 books. Racks came from a Hallmark store. \$20 for both or best offer. Please call 507-450-5395 if interested. 41814d

APPROXIMATELY 100 OLDER SPICE TINS. Some cardboard containers, some are very rare. \$25 or best offer. Please call 507-450-5395 if interested. 41814d

50 PLUS OLD POST CARDS. In frames. Some rare. \$40 for all or best offer. Please call 507-450-5395 if interested. 41814d

PLATBOOKS 7 old Dodge County plat atlas books (1905-1960). Also, other southern Minnesota atlas books available. \$50-\$250 OBO. Call 507-450-5395 41814d

JOHN DEERE LX277 riding lawn mower. Extra blades, trailer hitch, excellent condition. \$1550. Cash only. If interested call 607-634-4810 43073d

HELP WANTED

SALES PERSON WITH ABILITY to work with area business in developing a marketing/advertising plan that will build the client's business. Experience preferred, but not necessary. Will train. Base-plus commission. Apply by sending your resumé and three references to: keithdci@kmtel.com. No phone calls please. 41814d

LAWN care service needed at three sites in Wasioja. Contact Jim at 507-635-5508; or email jimcheckel@gmail.com

ROCK PICKING 1.5 miles south of Kasson. Junior high to adults, flexible hours. If interested please call Joe at 507-273-9678. 42314d



DODGE COUNTY INDEPENDENT www.steeledodgegens.com • 121 Main Street W. Kasson

VICTIM SERVICES A service of DFO Community Corrections Sexual Assault Program & Victim Witness Assistance Program Advocacy, information and assistance for victims/survivors of sexual assault and other crimes. Community and professional education and consultation. All services free and confidential. Located in Courthouse, Mantorville Mon.-Fri. 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. 635-6266 or call collect 24 hours 289-0636

CAREER OPPORTUNITY

Resident Assistant • PT 2 p.m. - 10 p.m. • PT 10 p.m. - 6 a.m.

Apply at: 800 5th Ave. NW, Kasson, MN - EOE

Professional Sales Opportunity We're looking for an enthusiast and driven person to build relationships and help other businesses grow through advertising sales and marketing opportunities. The right candidate will help our community newspaper, which includes a weekly newspaper, shopper, website and social media, grow our digital and newspaper platforms. We offer a variety of special section opportunities as well as a competitive commission plus base salary. Send your resumé and letter of interest to Publisher Keith Hansen at keithdci@kmtel.com. DODGE COUNTY INDEPENDENT

MCAN Minnesota Classified Advertising Network

EMPLOYMENT FULL-TIME SCHOOL COUNSELOR KMS Public Schools - August 2020. Qualifications: Current Minnesota Licensure. Apply online: www.kms.k12.mn.us; Attach: letter of interest, resume, three letters of recommendation, transcripts and copy of license. SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER OPENING KMS Public Schools - August 2020. Qualifications: Current Minnesota Licensure. Apply online: www.kms.k12.mn.us; Attach: letter of interest, resume, three letters of recommendation, transcripts, copy of license. SEED/FEED/GRAINS PROTECT YOUR YIELD from soybean white mold and SDS. Ask your seed dealer for Heads Up® Seed Treatment. Cost-effective. Proven results. headsUpST.com/plant20 or 866/368-9306 ONLY \$279 to reach a statewide audience of 1.7 million readers!!! 1-800-279-2979

One persons bargin is anothers treasure!

BARGAIN finder

\$5 SELL IT HERE! Item must be priced \$50 or less! Runs for 4 weeks Place your ad and reach over 25,000 households in Steele, Dodge, Olmsted, Mower and Freeborn counties. Up to 20 words

Bargain finder classifieds will run in four publications and covers 12 communities. You may cancel your advertisement when your item sells, however, there are no refunds for this special. Call: 507-634-7503 or email: dci@kmtel.com and place your ad today. Must be prepaid prior to ad running.



Employment Opportunity We want to grow with you! We're looking for an enthusiast and driven person to build relationships and help other businesses grow through advertising sales and marketing opportunities. The right candidate will help our community-owned newspaper group, which includes two weekly newspapers, a shopper, website and social media, grow our digital and newspaper platforms. We offer a variety of special section opportunities as well as high commission for sales and base salary. We have a flexible work environment. Send resumé and letter of interest to Publisher Rick Bussler at bprick@frontier.com. STEELE COUNTY Times

CLEAN AND DISINFECT • Clean AND disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily. This includes tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, and sinks. • If surfaces are dirty, clean them: Use detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.

DEED BEGINS: Pandemic Unemployment payments FROM B5

"In less than one month, DEED's unemployment insurance team has created the infrastructure to implement this brand new program, determine eligibility, prevent fraud and adapt to the unprecedented challenges caused by COVID-19," said Commissioner Steve Grove.

"While it will take us some time to determine eligibility for everyone who applies for PUA, we are working closely with the Department of Revenue to expedite that process.

"Minnesota is proudly one of the first states in the nation to implement all three components of the federal CARES Act and provide critical financial assistance to hundreds of thousands of people who have been impacted by this pandemic."

Here's what Minnesotans need to know about applying for PUA:

- If you have already applied for regular unemployment benefits, you do not need to do anything extra to qualify for PUA. DEED will automatically establish a PUA benefit account for you if you are eligible.
- If you have not applied for unemployment benefits yet, special instructions for self-employed and 1099 workers are available here. These instructions include steps you can take to make your account easily identifiable as potentially eligible for PUA.
- If you applied for unemployment benefits without following those instructions, don't worry – you don't need to change anything. Your account

will still be reviewed for PUA eligibility.

- If you have not heard from DEED yet, don't worry. We expect to be in touch with most people who are eligible for benefits under PUA by the end of April. There is no need to call or follow-up; you will hear from us proactively if we need additional information to determine eligibility.

- You will receive information about PUA benefits in your online account, by email, and by mail.
- Applicants who receive PUA benefits will also receive the \$600/week additional payment.
- PUA benefits will be backdated to whenever you first became eligible due to COVID-19.
- Additional information, including answers

to many commonly asked questions, can be found here: COVID-19 information for self-employed people and independent contractors

Since March 16, a record number of more than 540,000 people have applied for unemployment insurance benefits in Minnesota. Despite this massive influx of applications, the Minnesota UI program was able to

quickly begin authorizing the additional FPUC \$600 weekly payments, implement the 13-week extension of unemployment benefits (PUC), and begin processing payments under PUA.

Anyone who has been separated from their job, had their hours reduced or cannot work due to the COVID-19 pandemic is encouraged to apply online at uimn.org.

SAVE THE DATE!
Blooming Prairie American Legion Auxiliary's

Flower Show and Luncheon

Thursday, July 30, 2020

Blooming Prairie Servicemen's Club

- Exhibitor entry categories will be similar to last year
- Several classes for the flower or plant entries
- Prizes
- Lunch followed by card party

Don't miss our exciting Flower Show!

DON'T LET COVID-19 GET YOU DOWN!

Kids and adults: have some fun and win prizes while staying at home!

Kids Coloring Contest (for kids up to age 12)

- Draw whatever you want on regular paper, but birds must be in the artwork.
- Up to age 5: 1 bird
- Ages 6-9: 2 birds
- Ages 10-12: 3 birds
- Public will judge and entries will be displayed in main street businesses.
- Mail entries to P.O. Box 441 Blooming Prairie or drop off at 319 2nd St. SW, Blooming Prairie
- Win \$10 in BP Bucks

Adult Video Contest

- Lip sync and dance to any song
- Earn points for costumes, choreography and dance moves
- 1-minute video
- Upload to Facebook business page thread
- Win \$25 gift card to J&H or Pizza Cellar

More information on both contests available on **FACEBOOK** at Jennifer Walsh Real Estate.

Entries due for both contests by Saturday, May 2

Have fun and color it or dance it up while sheltered at home!

Let's get you movin'!

Licensed in Minnesota
Serving Serving Steele, Dodge, Mower and Freedom counties, including Rochester, Byron, Kasson and Owatonna.

KW KELLERWILLIAMS
PREMIER REALTY MLS

Jennifer Walsh
507-438-6676
email: jenwalsh@kw.com
web: jenwalsh.kw.com

#bloomingprairiestrong

one small purchase can make a big difference



Sportstitch, Inc. is making t-shirts as a way to support our local businesses.

T-shirts are \$20 each.
\$2 will go to the Blooming Prairie Chamber and the remaining amount will be donated to the business of choice (listed below).

Order yours by May 4th

www.bloomingprairiechamber.com/store
or contact Linda Klemmensen at Sportstitch.

Pickup will be Thursday, May 14th from 4-8 pm in the parking lot of the City Center.



Heather Irish Green



Heather Graphite



Antique Heliconia

SHOP LOCAL. SHOP LOYAL.

#bloomingprairiestrong



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Blooming Prairie
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A special thank you to Jamie at Klemmensen Creative for creating the online store



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