



Baseball, softball season previews

Anoka County UNION HERALD

FRIDAY | April 12, 2019 | A | SECTION | \$1.00

ABC NEWSPAPERS | Anoka County UnionHerald | Blaine/Spring Lake Park LIFE | Vol. 153 | No. 40

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PUBLIC NOTICE:

The city of Nowthen will hold a public hearing at 7 p.m. Tuesday, April 23, in the Nowthen City Hall. The hearing is on a rezoning request and interim use permit at 7900 Old Viking Blvd.

See this and other Public Notices on pages 1-10C



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Longtime activist and leader Langfeld dies

Margaret Langfeld, longtime elected official and community activist, died Saturday, April 6, surrounded by her husband and family after a bout with melanoma.

At age 76 the former County Board chair and Blaine City Council member leaves

behind her husband Jim, six children, 14 grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren.

Margaret Casey grew up on a farm in Darwin, Minnesota, and married Jim Langfeld, her high school sweetheart, in 1963. Together in 1970 they moved their four

young children to a new home in Blaine and lived in the city the rest of their life together.

After years of community service with the League of Women Voters, Blaine DFL and the Church of St. Timothy, among many other volunteer positions, Langfeld

decided to run for Blaine City Council when the home developer in her neighborhood refused to complete a neighborhood park for the area children.

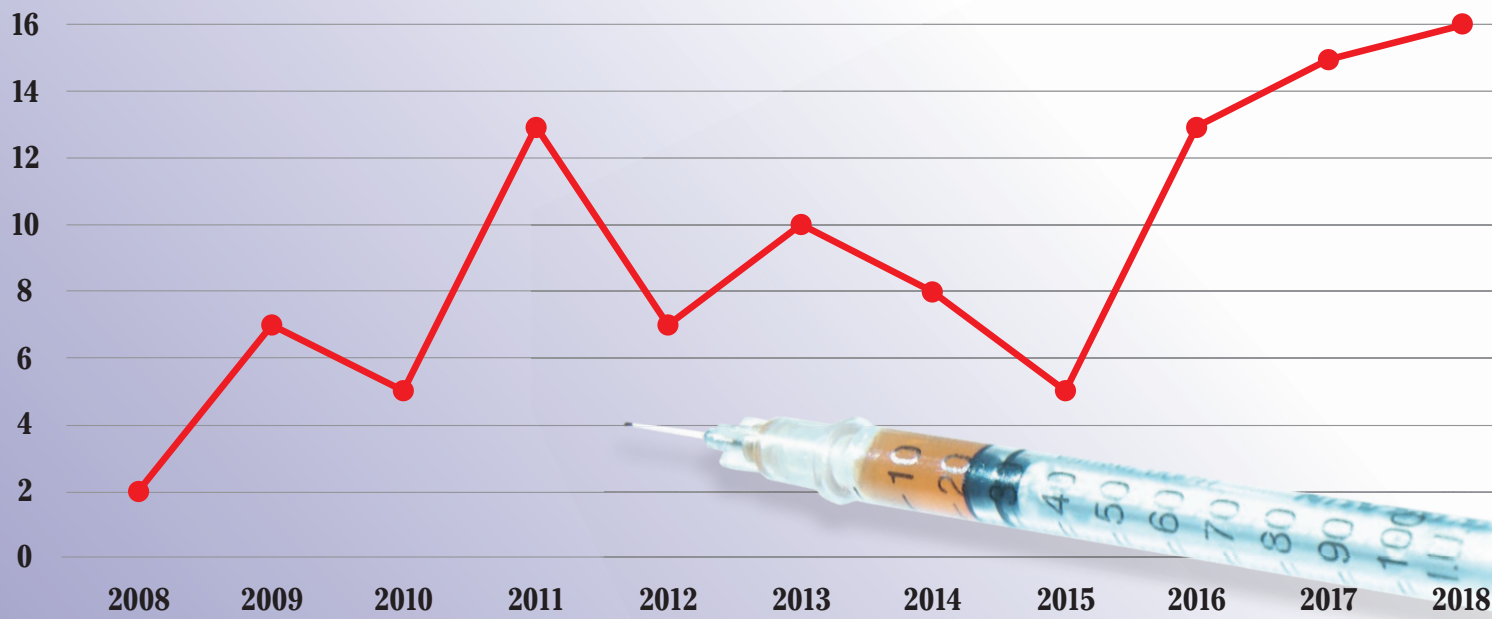
Langfeld once said she



Continued on 10A Langfeld

TOUCHED BY THE OPIOID CRISIS

Heroin overdose deaths in Anoka County



Heroin deaths on the rise in Anoka County

By Connor Cummiskey Staff Writer

Heroin killed 16 people in Anoka County last year, and deaths have been going up each year since 2015, according to data from the Anoka County Sheriff's Office.

The local uptick comes amid a national opioid crisis.

Last year opioids accounted

for more than 90 percent of reported drug overdoses in Anoka County, and about a third of opioid overdoses resulted in the victim's death.

Overall drug overdose deaths were down by 5, with 25 total deaths in 2018, but the Sheriff's Office is concerned with the ongoing danger opioids like heroin pose.

Continued on 8A



Ryan Anderson and Anne Emerson Photo submitted

Anoka resident lost her fiancé to opioids

By Jonathan Young Managing Editor

Anne Emerson knows how dangerous opioids can be. They killed her fiancé and his brother.

Emerson, an Anoka resident, still has nightmares and flashbacks to the early morning hours of Nov. 28, 2017.

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Sheriff's Office, Anoka PD are calling all heroes

Heroes Walk 4 Women replaces Walk a Mile in Her Shoes in Anoka

By Jonathan Young Managing Editor

The Anoka County Sheriff's Office and Anoka Police Department are

looking for heroes to help stop domestic and sexual violence.

Registration is open for the inaugural Heroes Walk 4 Women event in Anoka, scheduled for Saturday, May 18, to raise funds for Alexandra House, a local nonprofit that provides services to victims of do-

mestic and sexual violence. The 1-mile walk starting at Anoka City Hall replaces the annual Walk a Mile in Her Shoes that took place for three years in Anoka.

Walkers can register as teams or individuals, and participants are encouraged to come dressed as their favorite heroes: Won-

der Woman, Superman, Spider-Man – or perhaps a teacher, firefighter or coach.

"This is literally a call to heroes and superheroes of every kind to come together and really take a stance against domestic and sexual violence," Sheriff James Stuart said.

Stuart said this year's change in theme came after the organizers of the Anoka Walk a Mile in Her Shoes event decided they'd be unable to continue the event.

"It was really heavy on my heart that we can't let

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AROUND ANOKA COUNTY

Heroin deaths on the rise in Anoka County amid national opioid crisis

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The majority of overdoses reported last year were from heroin (56 cases), sometimes combined with methamphetamine or other drugs. Eight cases involved fentanyl, a synthetic opioid that's about 30-50 times stronger than heroin and 50-100 times more potent than morphine. One case also recorded carfentanil, about 100 times stronger than fentanyl.

Investigations by the Sheriff's Office into overdoses really kicked off in 2012, according to Detective Gary Patterson, who was recently recognized by the Sheriff's Office for his work combating the opioid epidemic.

Patterson has worked 11 cases that resulted in criminal convictions of third-degree murder for narcotics distribution. In cases where the victim survives, Patterson charges great bodily harm caused by distribution of drugs.

While most of the deaths are young people, victims ranged in age from 17 to 61, according to the Sheriff's Office data.

Patterson said most people who died from heroin overdoses started using after being prescribed opioid painkillers for an injury, usually an orthopedic injury.

"They are not like criminal elements to us, they're victims and we've actually put a lot of time, effort and resources ... going after dealers," Patterson said.

Challenging investigations

Investigations into heroin drug dealers are difficult and time consuming, in part due to the small quantity the drug is moved in.

"A lot of times in the cases that I've worked there's not product for me to test left over at the scene," Patterson said. "There's sometimes packaging, which is evidentiary value to my case. I have to wait until toxicology comes back to determine cause of death."



Fire Inspector Nick House with the Coon Rapids Fire Department demonstrates the nasal applicator that is part of the CRFD's Narcan kits using a saline solution.

Photo by Connor Cummiskey

Unlike drugs such as methamphetamine or marijuana, which are the two most common drugs by volume in Anoka County, heroin and other opioids are moved in small quantities, according to Lt. Brent Erickson a member of the Anoka-Hennepin Narcotics and Violent Crime Task Force.

In 2018 the task force seized about 175 grams of heroin, or roughly a little over half a cup by volume.

"To put in perspective, it's less than a half-of-a-pound throughout the year," Erickson said.

Despite that, the majority of overdoses the task force sees are opioid-related.

"Heroin is far and away the more dangerous of the drugs that we deal with," Erickson said.

That could be due to the increased presence of powerful narcotics like fentanyl and carfentanil, which are being mixed in with heroin.

Both have started to creep into the area in the last few years, though carfentanil is still uncommon. Carfentanil was reported in only one overdose death in 2018.

Analysis and toxicol-

ogy can slow down an investigation of a death, but even when the victims survive, they are often reluctant to roll on a dealer.

"I'll be frank: victims that survive, they are not always cooperative, wanting intervention," Patterson said.

He largely blames that on heroin addiction being so intense that once people are addicted, they don't take heroin to get high but "to start feeling normal again" and ward off withdrawal symptoms.

On the other hand, new technology has changed how investigators search for evidence. With the prevalence of smart phones and computers, a significant amount of data is collected by searching suspects' devices.

"If we arrest four or five people in a house, everybody's got a phone, we're going to be going through every one of those phones," Erickson said.

However, the equipment and specialists necessary for gathering that data are expensive, and it takes special equipment to parse through terabytes of data each year, Erickson said.

Still, Erickson considers the digital forensics a positive development for law enforcement. He called it unbelievable what people will put on social media, and even paging through text messages can help investigators build a case.

The task force has not been able to catch the really big dealers, and Erickson said it's unclear why.

The task force does catch mid-level opioid

dealers. Even then, it's hard to tell how one bust affects drug distribution. It can take a year or more of watching rates of drug seizures and overdoses to see if a bust has reduced circulation, Erickson said.

In the meantime, analysts have found trends between regions that can help predict, based on overdoses, when and where opioids are being moved.

"We know if we see a kind of an influx or spike in overdose deaths in Chicago, we'll expect to see that here within the next day or two, and if we see it here, then we know that ... Duluth can expect to start seeing overdoses within the next six hours," Erickson said.

Narcan

Another development helping stem the tide of overdose deaths is naloxone, often referred to by the brand name Narcan.

In 31 overdose cases in Anoka County, Narcan was administered. In one case, the victim still died after receiving Narcan.

The drug is an opioid antagonist; it binds to opioid receptors and can quickly reverse the effects of an overdose, restoring normal respiration.

"What happens with opiate overdoses is their breathing depresses, and it slows down and fluids back up, and if you can help them with their breathing, you can sustain them," Patterson said.

Many first responders have begun carrying the drug, such as the Blaine and Lino Lakes police departments. In some cit-

Anoka County overdose deaths by year

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Heroin	10	8	5	13	15	16
Methadone	6	5	3	4	2	1
Other	12	5	20	19	13	8
Total	28	18	28	36	30	25

Source: Anoka County Sheriff's Office

ies, such as Coon Rapids, the fire department carries Narcan but the police don't.

The Coon Rapids Fire Department started carrying Narcan in 2014 and purchases Narcan devices unassembled for about \$45 a kit, whereas an assembled kit can run between \$92 and \$125, Fire Inspector Nick House said.

In the Anoka County Sheriff's Office, sergeants carry Narcan, but deputies do not, because Allina's ambulance crews carry it, and their response time of about six-and-one-half minutes in Anoka County, Patterson said.

The Anoka-Hennepin Narcotics and Violent Crime Task Force also carries Narcan to protect investigators who may be exposed to fentanyl or carfentanil.

The Centennial Lakes Police Department has carried Narcan since the summer of 2016, according to Lt. Russell Blanck, who administers the program. Since implementing the program, the Centennial Lakes Police Department has saved more than 10 lives and has spent a total of \$66, thanks to grant funding.

"I've never seen one tool have such a drastic impact in the field as Narcan has," Centennial Lakes officer Benjamin Stepan said.

Stepan, who has been an emergency medical technician about 26 years and an officer about 19, said most overdose victims go from almost no pulse to awake and breathing within minutes of receiving Narcan.

Upon arriving at a scene, Stepan said the department administers about half a dose to each nostril before attempting rescue breathing, if there's reason to suspect a person has overdosed.

"Essentially anytime we're on a call where there's an unknown reason that this person isn't breathing we will kind of fall back on Narcan, because there are such limited side effects to it that we're not going to do any harm in administering it to somebody who is not having an overdose," Stepan said.

Most victims awaken confused and can be aggressive. Overdose victims are always transported to the hospital.

The follow-up is important, Stepan said, because Narcan can wear off 30 minutes to an hour after being applied, which can send victims back into an overdose state if the opioid hasn't fully left their system.

He also said that, in accordance with state law, officers responding to medical assistance calls don't charge overdose victims with drug possession crimes.

While Narcan has and is saving lives - Erickson suspects the county's drop in 2015 deaths is related to Narcan becoming more widespread - there are some concerns over how it is treated.

Patterson worries that Narcan is giving carte blanche to some users, who think it will protect them.

"I think people are getting too complacent and too comfortable, thinking that Narcan is their safety net," Patterson said.

He points to overdose deaths where he has found someone with Narcan unused. While some will have a partner while taking heroin, that may not be enough - especially when the partner is also using and can enter a semi-conscious state called "the nod," Patterson said.

Narcan's increasing prevalence also has Patterson concerned about a shortage, he said.

While health care systems such as Allina aren't suffering a supply problem, according to Allina spokesperson Tim Burke, House said the Coon Rapids Fire Department has seen the cost of Narcan double or triple since 2014.

"My hope is that people will wake up and realize the deadly game that they are playing with using these drugs," Erickson said. "They don't know where they came from, they don't know what's in them ... and it's a deadly game."

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Lives are at stake in national opioid epidemic

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together and started a drug court, expanded treatment programs and launched one of the first excess medication drop-off initiatives - the effort has collected 23,000 pounds so far - to slow the commonplace pattern of teens and young adults "shopping" for pills in the medicine cabinets of friends and family members.

As a result of those efforts and widespread use of naloxone by first responders, opioid deaths "took a little hiatus" before roaring back in recent years with the introduction of fentanyl and carfentanil - a synthetic opioid 100 times more potent than fentanyl that is also used as an elephant tranquilizer - into the market, Monte Nelson said. The town of about 20,000 residents had three people treated for serious overdoses in a 48-hour period in March 2018 after ingesting pills they thought were oxycodone that were laced with carfentanil.



Opioids are a class of drugs that includes the illegal drug heroin, synthetic opioids such as fentanyl, and pain medications available legally by prescription such as oxycodone, hydrocodone, codeine and morphine.

"We're still in the middle of this crisis, and it's getting worse with fentanyl and carfentanil and the stuff available off the dark web," Monte Nelson said.

The story is similar about 60 miles north of Seattle in Skagit County, Washington. The rural county endured seven

Indeed, fentanyl is so potent that it presents a danger to officers responding to calls where it is present. Skagit County now arms officers with extra-strong doses of naloxone - also known by the brand name Narcan - for themselves, and requires two deputies to respond in case the one handling a fentanyl-laced drug stash goes down and needs to be revived.

Such precautions are now taken from North Carolina in the Southeast to Washington in the Northwest and everywhere in between, as the nation seeks to fight back against a crisis that can seem overwhelming as it strikes people of all ages, races and incomes.

"It's hard to find a parent or family member who has not been affected in some way," Monte Nelson said of his Minnesota hometown. "But you can't give up on it, because there are too many lives at stake."

overdose deaths in the first three months of this year, all suspected of being caused by synthetic opioids, said Undersheriff Chad Clark.

"That's just way too many in our small county," Clark said. "The world is changing. This stuff is deadly."