



STAFF PHOTO BY CHRIS BALDWIN
Robert Sikel and Rally Witzel stand next to their trailer with the American flag blowing in the breeze. Each year Sikel and Witzel get an idea for an area they'd like to plan the ride around and scout the route together.

A reason to ride

Jacob's Run raises awareness and funds for suicide prevention

BY CHRIS BALDWIN
STAFF WRITER

With the sun shining and a light autumn breeze, it was a perfect Saturday to be out riding on the road. For those who took part in the seventh annual Jacob's Run, there was no where else they'd rather be.

The yearly event, which departs from Owatonna and circles through chosen destinations before winding back to town, raises money and builds awareness for the

Open Arms Yellow Ribbon Suicide Prevention Program.

It was started shortly after Jacob Sikel passed away at the age of 15. His father, Robert, decided that he could use Jacob's tragic story as a means of bringing awareness and illuminating issues of suicide.

"It's extremely important for me that everyone realizes that suicide isn't just the result of depression," Robert Sikel explained of the event. "Jacob didn't have depression. He went out on a bender with some friends of his, and they were taking Adderall, which they used sort of like a caffeine pill."

Sikel explained that the after-effects of abusing Adderall can be similar to the come down a heroin user might experience, and although Jacob did not suffer

"It's really heartwarming and every year I cry."

Robert Sikel
Jacob's Run Organizer

from depression, it was this abuse which resulted in his suicide in July of 2012.

Since then, his father and friends and family have done everything they can to raise awareness by reminding us all of the child and friend they lost.

Bill Rosenau, a friend of the family, said that he's participated every year since the inception of the event. "Robert pretty much put this all together," he said as he walked the parking lot full of bikes.

When asked what his

favorite part of the event is, Rosenau echoed the same words that was on the minds of everyone in attendance. "The comradery and the people. You see lots of good friends when out riding."

"I think that the perception was before that riders were all these hardcore guys," Rosenau said. "But take a ride like today where we're able to raise a lot of money for a good cause and you'll see that isn't so."

Not only does the money raised go to help Sikel and his suicide prevention program continue to educate students, it also contributes to scholarships for eligible schools. Last year they gave out 13 scholarships of \$500 each.

Dave Braaten, Jacob's step-grandfather, attested to the

SEE JACOB'S RUN, B2

Memories from the past

Owatonna Orphanage Museum invites former state schoolers and their families for annual fundraiser

BY CHRIS BALDWIN
STAFF WRITER

For its sixth annual fundraising event, the Owatonna Orphanage Museum will be holding an open house/reunion for all surviving state schoolers and their families to come and share their perspective. The event will also be open to the public, and is a great opportunity to get a glimpse at this unique facet of Steele County history.

The Minnesota State Public School for Dependent and

Neglected Children was open from 1886 to 1945 and was of key importance during the depression. Those surviving members of this historic school will now get a chance to relive some of their memories, and share them with the community along with their family and friends.

"It's a reunion for them and an opportunity for everyone else to stop by and check it out," Anne Peterson, the orphanage's museum director, explained. "For the state schoolers, we hope that it's a good opportunity for them to come together and reminisce."

During the years of its operation, there were 10,635 kids who were orphaned, abandoned, or abused and sent to Owatonna, and situated at the Minnesota State Public School for Dependent and Neglected Children. It

SEE ORPHANAGES, B2

HOLLY, WANT A MARIGOLD?



There was a hint of Blooming Prairie shared with visitors at the 53rd annual Marigold Days in Mantorville last weekend. Top: Carl Barber of Blooming Prairie gets an eyeful and into a stare down with Holly, his blue and gold Macaw parrot. Barber walked around with the parrot on his arm so that others could see the colorful parrot, which is native to Central America, North America (only Mexico) and South America. Right: The Stix of Fury drum corps from Blooming Prairie delighted folks of all ages during the Marigold Days parade Sunday afternoon. It was a busy weekend for Six of Fury as the group also performed at Paint the Town Pink in BP.

STAFF PHOTOS BY RICK BUSSLER



Sprucing up the trail system



Steele Talkin'
MAYOR LOIS NELSON

Recreational trails around our community has been a running topic for years. The city does have a trail map design that originated with the original path design through the OakRidge Development. The multiuse path designed and built into the reconstruction project along the north side of West Central Avenue (County Road 12) follows this map. The replacement bridge deck also has a design to

accommodate walking and biking traffic. County Road 12-west of Medford will be under construction next year and includes an 8-foot pathway from the Lazy U to the frontage road. Again, a segment that is included on our trail map.

Of course, the longest running trail system is the railroad that runs through the center of our community. Legislation passed in 1992 designated this area beginning in Rice County at the terminus on County Road 9-about three miles north of Faribault all the way to Austin as the Minnesota Prairie Wildflower Trail. It has gone unfunded all this time largely because the current owner, Canadian Pacific Railway, has not abandoned the stretch from Rice County 9 to at least, 26th Street in Owatonna. (The

SEE STEELE TALKING, B2



STAFF PHOTO BY RICK BUSSLER
Tralo Companies of Owatonna displayed nine semi trucks during the Big Iron Classic in Kasson last weekend. Driver Charlie Kennedy, left, and mechanic Chris Hamilton proudly showed off one of the big rigs.

Power to deliver and drive to succeed displayed at Big Iron

By RICK BUSSLER
PUBLISHER

It was a trucker's paradise this past weekend at the Dodge County Fairgrounds in Kasson.

Big rigs of all shapes, sizes, colors and designs wheeled into Dodge County for the 19th annual Big Iron Classic, which drew around 15,000 people.

Included in the roughly 700 semi trucks taking part in the end of the summer classic were nine big rigs from Tralo Companies. Chris Hamilton, who is a mechanic for the Owatonna-based trucking firm, was managing Tralo's fleet at the show.

"It's good exposure for us," Hamilton said. "It's close to home, and everyone likes to look at nice trucks," he added.

Truckers like Charlie Kennedy of

Tralo take enormous pride in their big rigs. While he admits it's tough at times to keep them clean, he does whatever he can to have his rig spiffed up. "Your best friend is spray wax," Kennedy said. "It's a piece of you. I may not own it, but I treat it like mine."

Hamilton credits the truck drivers for keeping their rigs in good shape. Because of how Tralo's truck fleet is maintained, Hamilton said it allows the company to attract good drivers. And there is other added value to have sharp trucks. "If you have a good truck and a good driver, you attract more freight and it keeps the wheels rolling," he said.

Kennedy has been driving for Tralo, a family owned and American driven company, for the past three years. Tralo hauls freight all across the lower 48 states as well as Canada.

Tralo has been displaying its big rigs at the Big Iron for six years. While Tralo travels around the country for competition truck shows throughout the year, the Dodge County show is purely for pleasure. The classic is just for show as there are no prizes.

"It's kind of like a family you haven't see all year," Kennedy said. "The people are just good people. It's a good time."

Kennedy enjoys his life on the road as a truck driver. "It's the journey you are on" that intrigues him most about driving. "Every week is different. The sights you get to see," he said, adding it's far different than factory work.

Tralo prides itself in having the power to deliver and the drive to succeed.