

# OPINION

## Community is key to drug court and beyond

The Republican Eagle recently received the Lynn Smith Community Leadership award. I consider this the highest honor bestowed on a news organization by the Minnesota Newspaper Association, and I know that the honor truly belongs to our community.

Smith was the late editor of the Monticello Times and a contemporary of the late RE Editor Phil Duff. Smith spearheaded Minnesota's first Don't Smoke Day in 1974, setting the stage for what today the world knows as the Great American Smokeout.

Simply put, he'd had enough of seeing his fellow citizens killing themselves one cigarette at a time — a motivation not that different than the impetus behind Needles & Pills last winter. Drugs are killing our friends, neighbors and families, and we need to do something about it as a community.

Readers may recall that we published a series titled "Killer Crisis" starting after Christmas 2017 and continuing into early February. In the words of the MNA contest judges, "The personal stories and data are powerful reminders of a global crisis but distilled to a local level."

While we were working on the series, interviews grew into conversations and so with Goodhue County, Red Wing and the Duff Endowment we launched Needles & Pills, which included a community "book read" and culminated in a public forum that March.

The message from that forum was clear: Goodhue County needs a drug treatment court.

Timing is everything, of course.

District Court Judge Doug Bayley, picking up where predecessor Tom Bibus had left

off, had sought federal monies to establish such a court. In 2017, word came back that another grant application had failed, but by year's end a new strategy emerged: Demonstrate community commitment to the need, and we might prevail.

In late 2017, Ben Schmidt, a recovering drug addict, released his book "Six Years Lost." The local man was a part of the Needles & Pills panel March 29 at the Red Wing Public Library. That night, County Commissioner Paul Drotos set the stage and then Police Chief Roger Pohlman moderated as law enforcement, counselors, social workers and more spoke. The place was packed, and citizens asked, "What can we do?"

They learned that housing and hope, jobs and in-house local treatment — not strictly incarceration — must play roles in someone's successful recovery. Everyone heard that a drug court is only the first key step.

In the following months, Bayley gathered letters, newspaper articles, a video from the forum, etc., to round out the final federal application. Goodhue County learned in September that it landed \$500,000.

Thank you to all who allowed us to share their stories in "Killer Crisis" and through Needles & Pills so openly and honestly with readers. Thank you to all who would not relent and are part of winning a federal drug court grant.

As Bayley said in an email announcing that success: "Now the real work begins."

The Republican Eagle will report on the drug court when it launches later this year and will write about the people involved.

As the newspaper judges put it: "This is the kind of journalism that changes the world one community at a time ... that's why we do what we do."

We do it with and for you, our community.

### LETTERS

#### Learn to reduce your environmental impact

Recycling has long been something that we've been able to do as responsible members of the community to reduce waste and to be more environmentally and economically sustainable. Upcoming changes in Red Wing's recycling program should make it easier to participate, increase the amount of our waste that is recycled and likely expand the types of materials collected for recycling.

On Feb. 27 at 6:30 p.m. at the Library, the League of Women Voters will present "Talking Less Trash," a program and a community forum that will include presentations by recycling experts.

Recycling is a simple way to reduce your environmental impact. The Sustainability Commission has chosen to co-sponsor "Talking Less Trash" as part of our educational mission. Please join us and find out more. Randy McLaughlin Red Wing

#### Let's get with it, Design Ellsworth

How about if the Design Ellsworth people would concen-

trate on designing a town with a pharmacy somewhere in the picture — or is that not fancy enough? We had two in this town a few years ago and neither one seemed to be starving.

I can understand the need or want for a great library, but seems like a great cost also. Feeding the soul, as it were, is a fine thought, but giving up such a needed part of the community is rather ridiculous. We have two medical clinics and a dental clinic, so why is it so difficult to set up a decent pharmacy?

While we are at it, why not have a delivery system for a reasonable fee? How much time and expense plus driving in conditions as we have had this winter could be saved by sending one courier instead of several clients cluttering up the roadways and office space. How much does it cost to drive to River Falls or Red Wing from the furthest part of Ellsworth? What about time saved for folks who have jobs? In my case I do not drive, so I have to pay someone's car expense plus for their time. This all becomes an anxiety thing as well as a pain in the butt! Let's get with it folks!

Don Beebe Ellsworth



### VIEWPOINT

## District moving ahead to fulfill promises

Over the past few months, I have described some of our plans moving forward as a result of successful passage of the operating levy questions last November. Today, though, I have news to share about action recently taken to make our promises reality.

At its Feb. 19 meeting, the Red Wing School Board authorized the hiring of several positions directly related to the school district's educational plan and referendum promises. The additions will have a lasting impact on our students and community.

To help implement a career, college, and life readiness framework and fulfill a referendum promise, the School Board authorized the hiring of a Flight Path coordinator. The coordinator will develop and oversee student work-based learning opportunities in local businesses, develop curriculum for career planning, implement a career

planning software called Naviance, and plan for the restructuring of coursework to meet today's employment needs. It's a big assignment, so we hope to hire a strong candidate this spring to begin planning for next year.

Providing mental health support is a key school and community need. At a minimal cost to the school district, we will contract with local providers for mental health therapists to provide direct services to students in K-12. Eventually, there will be a therapist at each elementary and secondary school.

Because the therapists can bill insurance companies and Medical Assistance for their services, the positions will become self-sustaining financially. However, until caseloads are full, referendum resources — as promised — will be allocated to provide stronger access to mental health services.

The counseling departments at our schools need additional resources to provide personal

counseling and support for career and college planning. An additional school counselor will be hired for next year using money generated from the operating levy referendum. As a result, there will be two school counselors at the middle school and three at the high school. The structure of the counseling department will also change to provide better service for our students.

And, finally, the school board authorized the hiring of a media and technology specialist for our elementary schools. This specialist will replace our media specialist who recently retired, but in the newly formulated position we will be looking for someone who has a strong media, literacy, and technology background.

We have significant planning work to do this spring and next year as we implement our educational plan and fulfill our referendum promises. I will continue to regularly inform you of our promises, progress, and pitfalls.

Please contact me at 651-385-4502 or klanderson@rwps.org if you have any questions or concerns about the school district.



KARSTEN ANDERSON  
Superintendent  
of Red Wing  
Public Schools

### VIEWPOINT: GOODHUE COUNTY

## Leadership transitions abound at Goodhue County

One hundred ninety-two is the combined number of years served by department heads or elected officials who have retired or left leadership positions from Goodhue County in the last year. That's almost two centuries of combined time.

During my 12 years as the Goodhue County administrator, I have had the pleasure of working with very competent, valuable and highly respected individuals throughout the county. As we move forward and wish those success in their retirements, I look forward to developing those same relationships with new faces.

Goodhue County as an organization is adjusting to change and tackling transitions. I would like to introduce a few of those changes to you:

Finance Director Brian Anderson along with the Finance Controller Kelly Bolin are new faces to the Government Center. This new leadership team is overseeing the Finance and Taxpayer Services. This department strives to provide quality taxation, assessment, election administration and financial reporting services for all the residents of Goodhue County.

Sheriff Marty Kelly along with Chief Deputy Jeremy Lurfald are new faces to the Law Enforcement Center. The sheriff is an elected position, while the chief deputy is an appointed position by the sheriff. Kelly was sworn into office for his first term in January 2019, and appointed Lurfald. Numerous transitions are taking place due to retirements of employees within the Sheriff's Office and

the Adult Detention Center.

Stephen O'Keefe is the new county attorney, but is far from a new face to the Justice Center. He held the position of an assistant county attorney for over 25 years. The county attorney is an elected position, in which he was sworn into office for his first term in January 2019.

Court Services Director Joanne Theobald Pohl intends to retire in March 2019 after 40 years of service. The state of Minnesota and Goodhue County are in the process of hiring her replacement.

Scott Safe was appointed as an interim commissioner to represent District 1 as Commissioner Ron Allen continues his battle against cancer.

The County Board of Commissioners continues to encourage departments to succession plan as we look further down the road and see the potential of long-term county employees retiring.



SCOTT ARNESON  
Goodhue  
County  
Administrator

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Reader letters and viewpoints - The Red Wing Republican Eagle welcomes readers' letter and viewpoint submissions. If you wish to submit a letter, please limit it to 350 words or less. At the editor's discretion, the Eagle may consider publishing longer submissions as viewpoints, which generally are limited to 650 words.

Letter and viewpoint submissions must be signed and contain your name, address, email and phone number for verification purposes. Email your submission to: editor@republican-eagle.com. You can send a letter or viewpoint submission to: Red Wing Republican Eagle, PO Box 15, Red Wing, MN 55066.

Reader submissions must be received no later than Noon Monday to be considered for publication in the following Wednesday's edition and 5 p.m. Wednesday for publication in the weekend paper. For details, call 651-388-8235.

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