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OUTDOORS GUIDE
SPECIAL SECTION

Alexandria

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Karen Tolkkinen / Echo Press

Water stands in a soybean field on Brackin Road southeast of Alexandria.

Wet fall delays harvest

By Karen Tolkkinen
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Ken Marthaler would have preferred to be in the fields on Tuesday, combining soybeans.

Instead, he was perusing farm equipment for an upcoming retirement auction.

The fall harvest is proving “slow, muddy, wet,” said Marthaler, who runs a 60-cow dairy in Osakis and grows corn for feed and soybeans as a cash crop.

Local farmers are contending with a late spring, a cool summer, and a run of low commodity prices, said Russ Elliott, president of the Douglas County Corn and Soybean Growers Association. A cool, wet fall and a predicted early snowfall and freeze, he said, are “adding insult to injury.”

Their pain is felt across the state. Typically, about 43% of soybeans would be harvested by now in Minnesota, according to

the National Agricultural Statistics Service. This year, that figure is at only 8%.

September created fields that were much squishier than last year. In September 2018, Chandler Field airport in Alexandria logged 1.26 inches of rain, according to the Old Farmers Almanac, which tracks rainfall at sites across the country. This year, September delivered 6.57 inches of rain to the airport.

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PUTTING THE FOCUS ON CHILD ABUSE

Authorities look into hundreds of cases a year

By Celeste Edenloff
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(Editor's note: This is the first of a three-part series about child abuse. Part 2 will run in the Wednesday, Oct. 16, Echo Press.)

Almost 140 children – infants on up to age 17 – were served by Someplace Safe in Douglas County during its last fiscal year.

As of Sept. 1, Douglas County Child Protection Services had received 508 reports of possible child abuse in 2019. Of those, nearly half – 44 percent – had enough information/evidence to warrant an investigation.

In all of 2018, Douglas County Social Services received 808 reports, with 340 (42 percent) having enough information/evidence to warrant an investigation.

Child abuse, whether physical, emotional, sexual or neglect, is prevalent in this area and is the focus of this year's annual Domestic Violence Awareness Month events hosted in part by Someplace Safe in Douglas County.

Upcoming events

In the next coming weeks, several events are planned for Domestic Violence Awareness Month:

► **13th annual Taking Steps Against Domestic Violence** – Tuesday, Oct. 15, at 5 p.m. Walk begins at the Douglas County Courthouse and ends at Calvary Lutheran Church with a guest speaker and free food. Hosted by Someplace Safe and United Communities Advocating Non-Violence.

► **Community Driven Innovation: Creating a Responsive Family Court** – Wednesday, Oct. 16, from 9-10 a.m., at the Douglas County Public Works office. Featuring Justice Anne McKeig of the Minnesota Supreme Court. Anyone, particularly those who work with people impacted by family court

or within the court system, may attend this free event. Register in advance at ucan-justicemckeig.eventbrite.com or call 320-762-0663. Hosted by Legal Services of Northwest Minnesota, Someplace Safe and UCAN.

► **19th annual Domestic Abuse Awareness Luncheon** – Wednesday, Oct. 16, from 11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Arrowwood Resort and Conference Center. Guest speaker will be Justice Anne McKeig from the Minnesota Supreme Court. Hosted by UCAN.

► **Day of Purple** – Thursday, Oct. 24, all day. Join Someplace Safe to recognize those impacted by domestic violence. Participants are encouraged to wear purple and take photos, posting them on social media with the hashtag #dayofpurple19. Free Day of Purple stickers and posters available at newsletter@someplacesafe.info.

State implements guidelines

So, what exactly constitutes child abuse?

Sandy Olson with Douglas County Social Services said it occurs anytime

a child is injured physically, sexually, emotionally or a child is neglected, meaning the child is not provided

ABUSE: Page A10

Broadway project gets grant

Developer gives details on timeline

By Al Edenloff
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A \$14 million project that will completely change the look of the heart of Alexandria's Broadway received a \$350,000 boost this week.

The Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development announced Tuesday, Oct. 8, that it has awarded the grant to help redevelop a 2.3-acre spot on Broadway and Third Avenue previously occupied by Blue Collar Bob's and Bello Cucina restaurant.

The money for the Alexandria Economic Development Authority will come from the state's Redevelopment Grant funds and go toward demolition and infrastructure improvements, led by developer GoodNeighbor Properties, LLC.

This site will be redeveloped to a four-story, mixed-use building offering 23,450 square feet of retail and professional space, 75 apartments and one level of underground parking.

The state said this project is anticipated to create 37 jobs and increase the tax base by \$209,847. Matching funds will be provided by tax increment financing and the developer.

Mike Weber, Alexandria's city planner, said the grant was “exciting news” and credited Nicole Fernholz, director of the Alexandria Area Economic Development Commission, for writing the grant application.

At one time, the project was expected to start in April, but it has encountered delays. Weber said that although there's been “no shovel in the sand yet,” the developer has until Dec. 31, 2020 to have the building substantially complete under the terms of the tax increment financing agreement with the city. The developer could also file for an extension if needed.

BROADWAY: Page A11



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An architectural rendering of the completed project.

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