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SPORTS, PAGE 9

Alexandria

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DOUGLAS COUNTY BOARD

Road is delcared passable by board

Commissioners hear complaint about Toddler Lane

By Celeste Edenloff
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A complaint filed with the Douglas County Board of Commissioners in early August regarding Toddler Lane in Belle River Township was discussed during a hearing Tuesday, Oct. 15, during the regular county board meeting.

Landowners Daniel and Lisa Graffunder filed the complaint, which stated that Belle River Township has not property maintained Toddler Lane and its right-of-way, and due to it being neglected, the road was impassable.

The Graffunders want to move a 34-foot-wide house onto their property at 13700 Toddler Lane NE and requested the removal of all trees and bushes, including the tall pine trees in the road right-of-way to make the road passable.

Included in the complaint was a timeline of the couple's communication with the Belle River Township Board dating back to May 2016.

Testimony was given by the Graffunders, members of the Belle River Township Board, other Toddler Lane landowners and Douglas County Attorney Chad Larson. Afterward, Commissioner Tim Kalina made a motion to deem the road passable and that the township does not have to do any more work on it other than to maintain it as any other township road. Commissioner Jerry Rapp seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

Before making the ruling, Larson explained the state statute for an impassable road. Impassable, he said, had nothing to do with whether two vehicles can be on the road at the same time. Instead, he reiterated, it means impassable to travel on or over.

At one time Toddler Lane was a minimum maintenance road, but in July 2016 it was reportedly upgraded to a township road, according to minutes from a township board meeting that were presented at Tuesday's hearing.

The Graffunders voiced their concerns and frustrations with the Belle River Township Board to the county commissioners, stating that they would really like to use the road as they thought they would be able to when they purchased the property.

Lisa Graffunder said part of the problem throughout this whole process is that at times they were told one thing and at other times they were told something different. She also said that the minutes of the meetings were not relevant because much of what was discussed during nearly the past three years of meetings is not in the minutes anyway.

"It looks like my husband and I were causing problems, but the township never did anything," Lisa Graffunder told the commissioners. "It's been a continual problem up to this summer."

ROAD: Page 15



Celeste Edenloff / Echo Press

Janel Toppari, an advocate at Someplace Safe, and Brad Anderson carry the banner and lead the way for those walking in the 13th annual Taking Steps Against Domestic Violence Tuesday, Oct. 15, in Alexandria.

DOING MORE FOR CHILD ABUSE VICTIMS

Justice keeps her promise to help

By Celeste Edenloff
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(Editor's note: This is the third and final part of a series about child abuse.)

"I want to tell you I'm sorry. I didn't do my job and this wasn't your fault."

Minnesota Supreme Court Justice Anne McKeig spoke those words to a man in prison recently. The man, now 34, was just a boy the last time McKeig saw him. She was working in child protection services in Hennepin County then and had entered the child into protective services.

"There is no one more



Al Edenloff / Echo Press

Minnesota Supreme Court Justice Ann McKeig spoke at Wednesday's Domestic Violence Awareness luncheon at Arrowwood.

important than a child," McKeig said to those attending the annual Domestic Violence Awareness luncheon Wednesday, Oct. 16, at Arrowwood Resort and Conference Center.

McKeig, who worked in

child protection services for 16 years, was this year's guest speaker at the luncheon hosted by United Communities Advocating Non-violence.

JUSTICE: Page 16

Strength, courage, hope and love

These are attributes of domestic violence survivors

By Celeste Edenloff
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Kristy Brackett has met thousands of survivors of domestic violence – not as many when she was a part-time Long Prairie police officer as she did in her role as the director of advocacy for Someplace Safe.

Someplace Safe, which has an office in Douglas County, is a nonprofit agency that offers a myriad of services to victims and survivors of crime, families and communities in a nine-county area in west-central Minnesota.

Brackett was the guest speaker at the 13th annual Taking Steps Against Domestic Violence event Tuesday evening, hosted by Someplace Safe and United Communities Advocating Non-Violence.

While speaking to the large crowd, Brackett shared stories of some people she met during her five years of being an advocate.

She's met a woman whose husband slapped her because she broke a dish. She met a man who had an imprint of his girlfriend's boot perfectly illustrated in the bruise on his back.

She met a woman who had broken blood vessels in her eyes and on her face. That same woman spoke in a whispery, raspy voice because her husband had wrapped his hands around her neck, trying to squeeze the life out of her.

She also met a woman whose husband would move furniture around the house a few inches at a time, along with moving her things to different spots, to make her believe she was going crazy.

She met a woman whose husband held a gun to her head and asked her to guess whether a round was in the chamber. That husband pulled the trigger and laughed in his wife's face.

Brackett has also met many children in her career, including a girl whose parent repeatedly told her that she and her siblings should die. She met children whose pets were beaten in front

SURVIVORS: Page 16

Area schools to receive safety funding

By Rachel Kubik
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Four area schools are receiving a combined total of about \$231,700 from the state to create a safer school environment for students and staff.

Alexandria Public Schools are receiving \$146,324, Brandon-Evansville Public Schools are receiving \$16,303 and Osakis Public School is receiving \$27,695. Minnewaska School District also received \$41,353, but district officials did not

respond by press time to a request for comment.

The state set apart \$30 million to fund safety initiatives in Minnesota schools. This safe school supplemental aid must be used for expenses allowed by the safe schools levy. The safe schools levy, formerly known as the crime levy, allows school districts to levy for costs associated with student and staff safety issues, according to information from the Minnesota House of Representatives.

The money will be used for police liai-

son services, counseling, school security, gang resistance education training and other crime prevention and safety measures.

The funds come from a one-time Safe Schools Supplemental Aid appropriation in the state's new education budget. The \$30 million will be provided to school districts and charter schools based on the number of pupils served per district throughout last year.

FUNDING: Page 5



The Urology Clinic is moving to the Alomere Health campus to serve you better.

Dr. Kurt Hansberry



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