



## Tech falls to Holy Angels in state semifinals

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# St. Cloud Times

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A ST. CLOUD TIMES SPECIAL REPORT PART THREE

## 'CHANGE IS A DIFFICULT THING'



### MANY IN ST. CLOUD WORK TO BRIDGE BITTER DIVIDE ABOUT GROWING SOMALI POPULATION

**Austen Macalus** St. Cloud Times  
USA TODAY NETWORK

Linda Thielen has lived in St. Cloud her whole life.

She's always been a people person, quick to strike up conversation, open her door to company and bake treats for neighbors.

But she remembers feeling a mix of emotions — fear, confusion, anger — when she and other longtime residents started to notice more Somali and East African people moving to the city about a decade ago.

"I couldn't really believe that so many people were coming ... It was

like, what was going on?" said Linda, who works as a Realtor.

In the back of Linda's mind was 9/11, the devastating terrorist attacks claimed by Islamic extremists that she said had instilled an omnipresent fear for many in Central Minnesota and across the country. As more Somali residents — many of them Muslim — moved to St. Cloud, Linda said she was afraid of another attack, this time in her community.

"That was what we knew: Those people were over there. We wanted to keep them there," she said. "When

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#### About This Series

"Hope & Fear in Minnesota's Heartland" is a four-part series taking an in-depth look at how St. Cloud is addressing a bitter divide about its growing Somali refugee population.

**Linda Thielen, born and raised in St. Cloud, smiles as she discusses her efforts to help immigrants in St. Cloud on July 17.**

ZACH DWYER/ST. CLOUD TIMES

## No charges filed; home day care still closed

Report of abuse spurred investigation in 2018

**Nora G. Hertel** St. Cloud Times  
USA TODAY NETWORK

The state suspended the license of a home day-care provider in St. Cloud after Sherburne County Sheriff's Office started to investigate an alleged abuser who had access to children there.

A report that alleged "a serious incident of abuse by an individual who had access to children in your care," spurred the investigation in December 2018, according to a public Order of Indefinite Suspension from the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

The investigation wrapped up in April and no charges were filed, according to Sherburne County's communications media specialist David Unze on Monday.

The home child-care center remains closed.

Kelly Puhl is listed as the license holder for the home day care with a capacity for 12 children, according to state license documents. It's located in Palmer Township near Duelm.

It's no longer in operation, Puhl told a St. Cloud Times reporter before hanging up last week.

"There's nothing to report," Puhl said.

The state temporarily suspended Puhl's license in December 2018 and indefinitely suspended it in March.

"(Department of Health Services) cannot ensure the health and safety of the children served by your program at this time," wrote a deputy inspector general in a letter to Puhl called the Order of Indefinite Suspension.

Before this allegation, Puhl was considered "in compliance" in a September 2018 licensing review, according to public records. Details of the allegation and investigation are not included in the public file.

Puhl and others who lose state licenses can appeal these rulings.

A home day-care provider in Rice is doing just that after indefinite suspension of her license in September following reports a child was seriously injured there, as previously reported by the St. Cloud Times.

The St. Cloud Times regularly reviews public records from the Minnesota Department of Human Services and the Department of Health for incidents of local impact.

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Deer movement in Minnesota peaks during fall months. **Local & Region. 3A**

#### Weather

High 39° | Low 17°  
Partly sunny.  
Forecast, **6B**

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