

OUR VIEW

Flyovers mark solidarity for COVID-19 heroes

The Minnesota National Guard is on a mission to honor those on the frontlines of the COVID-19 crisis.

As part of a nationwide Air Force initiative, the National Guard conducted statewide flyovers on Wednesday in recognition of those working on the pandemic response. Officials say these flyovers are their way of showing solidarity for those who have stepped forward to serve during this outbreak.

The flyovers will reach many medical facilities throughout the state, including Rochester. Other sites in the state will be flown over during future flyovers planned for later in the month.

The National Guard is incorporating the flyovers into previously scheduled training missions. The aircraft flying these missions will be combinations of F-16 Fighting Falcon aircraft and C-130 Hercules aircraft.

COVID-19 has been a tough deal for many people and it doesn't appear it is going to get any better any time soon. We would like to join in with the National Guard in saluting health care workers, emergency responders, food industry and other essential workers throughout the state that have done their part or even gone beyond to keep the state functioning during the stay-at-home order. There are many heroes in this crisis that are keeping everything going for the benefit of the rest of Minnesotans.

For nearly two months already, these heroes have been on the frontlines working hard for Minnesota citizens. Without their dedication and heroism, who knows where we would be right now. Thank you for your service.

Each week we have seen some pretty amazing things being done in our local communities to soften the blow of this horrible crisis. We need to continue standing by each other.

It's been said often, but bears repeating. We will pull through this together. That's what true Americans have always been known for no matter what the circumstances are in the world.

YOUR VIEW

Governor's order is a real gut punch

To-the-Editor:
In response to Gov. Tim Walz's continued stay-at-home order issued on April 30, the governor's decision is a real gut punch to the Main Street business owners who have been holding their breath for

weeks and are nearly out of air.
Minnesota can methodically and carefully reopen its economy and keep Minnesotans safe, it doesn't have to be one or the other. Our small stores can safely serve the public

in the same ways being given to our larger retailers, and the governor needs to trust them and give them that opportunity.

Rep. Peggy Bennett
District 27A
Albert Lea

GUEST COLUMN

Grow your own salad



Mastering Gardening
LORRIE RUGG

A few tips to help you have the fresh delicious salad:

- If you want to plant early – plant shallow rooted plants
- Use cold tolerant varieties, they tend to have more sugar in the variety Earliest plants to be planted – not to much risk if we have a frost late in the season.
- Radishes • Spinach
- Broccoli • Cabbage
- Peas • Onions Late spring frost tolerant
- Potatoes • Bok Choi
- Chinese cabbage • Cauliflower • Lettuce
- Carrots Last Spring Frost tolerant • Snap beans • Sweet corn

Examples of shallow rooted plants:
Beets, broccoli, carrot, cauliflower, celery, greens and herbs, on-

ions, peppers, radishes, and spinach

- One thing to remember about shallow rooted plants- They can't wait to long between waterings.

You want to water your plants during pollination, when the fruit or vegetable is growing.

Make sure you do wider spacing of rows to allow good air movement through your garden

Plant greens that say on the package- widely adaptable, or heat tolerant

Another example – peas – you want to plant more than one kind, early peas and a later variety

Diversity in your plant choices to a way to help manage fluctuations in early spring temps

The last frost date in the spring is changing, but it is around May 12 for our area. The fall frost date is pretty stable and has not changed that much.

Our growing season is changing – it is getting longer. Consider a soil test in the spring to determine if your garden needs anything.

Add compost to your garden to help the soil

Don't walk in your garden if it is too wet, likewise don't walk in your yard until it dries up and doesn't feel squishy.

Use mulch between the rows after your garden is up and growing to help maintain a more even moisture level also to help with weed control.

Also make sure your garden gets at least six hours of sunshine – most vegetables need at least that much to give you the yield you desire.

Watch the weather forecast – to help you determine when to plant. Tomatoes, for example, want heat, they don't do well in cold ground. So it is not real beneficial to get the plants in to early.

We have to plan for the unexpected in the garden, and we learn from our mistakes! Best feeling in the world is "smelling dirt" in the spring and getting those hands dirty.

Lorrie Rugg of Owatonna is the master gardener coordinator for Steele County. She writes a column for this newspaper regularly.

'Honk, 4 my birthday'

In these days of a coronavirus-filled world, one never knows what you're going to find along the roadside.

In late April as I was traveling between my offices in Kasson and Blooming Prairie, I stumbled across some commotion at the end of a driveway just outside Hayfield. As I went by, I honked my horn because that's what I was instructed to do thanks to a poster declaring, "Honk 4 my birthday."

As any good journalist would do, I quickly turned around to find out exactly what was going on along Hwy. 56. I found Anthony Schnable celebrating his 10th birthday along with his parents Nancy and Andrew and his younger brother, Ethan.

Only in a COVID-19 induced society is one going to find a family gathered at the end of a driveway in the middle of the country celebrating a special occasion.

It's not exactly the way Anthony envisioned celebrating the first of his double-digit birthdays, but things are anything but normal these days. The coronavirus pandemic has changed everything.

Anthony and his family practiced social distancing by decorating a golf cart and spending the day camped out at the end of the driveway. They took turns flashing the honking motion to get passing truckers to blast their horns and



Hot Pursuit
RICK BUSSLER

other vehicles to chime in with a few toots.

While getting passing motorists to recognize Anthony's birthday, the family enjoyed a baseball-themed lunch of hot dogs, chips and a baseball ice cream cake from Nick and his crew at the Blooming Prairie Dairy Queen. Anthony was decked out in his Chicago Cubs jersey in honor of a baseball season that has yet to be.

Asked what he thought about his birthday, Anthony responded, "It's weird."

"It's a different way of celebrating," acknowledged Anthony's mom. "You do what you can."

Added his father Andrew, "I don't think we will do this every year for your birthday."

As a MnDOT snow plow made its way northbound on Hwy. 56, Nancy asked out loud, "Do you think we can get a snow plow to honk in April?" They all motioned their arms high in the air and within seconds, the snow plow blasted its horn, bringing chuckles and smiles to the faces of Anthony and his brother.

A little while later a semi truck came by

and laid on its horn. "That was kind of a wimpy one for a semi," Nancy commented about the horn. "Some are really big."

The original plan was for the family to go to Dave & Busters, an arcade in the Twin Cities, for Anthony's birthday. But once the COVID-19 crisis forced families to stay at home, the Schnables rolled with the punches and came up with a different way to celebrate.

The Schnables hit the end of their driveway around 9 a.m. and planned to stay there until mid-afternoon.

Even though it wasn't what the family had in mind, Nancy said they had fun with Anthony's birthday. "You make the best of every situation," she says. "It's a big birthday with him turning double digits. This is one to remember, that's for sure."

Nancy hopes the stay-at-home restrictions will loosen up next month when both she and her husband have big birthdays. They both turn 40 this year. "We hope we can celebrate," she said. "If not, you'll be seeing us at the end of the driveway," she added.

And, if that happens, the Schnables at least have a little practice under their belts.

"For now, this is as good as it gets," Nancy said.

All we can do is hope that families going in hot pursuit of celebrating birthdays will be able to do so without restrictions much longer.



STAFF PHOTO BY RICK BUSSLER

Anthony Schnable celebrates his 10th birthday on April 23 with his family in a decorated golf cart at the end of the driveway of their rural Hayfield home by getting passing vehicles along Hwy. 56 to honk their horns. Celebrating with Anthony are his brother Ethan and parents Nancy and Andrew Schnable.

YOUR VIEW

Grateful for generosity of area communities

To-the-Editor:
Steele County Public Health would like to extend a huge Thank You to our caring community for donating cloth masks to help protect our health care workers, essential business providers, and vulnerable populations.

Steele County received 190 masks from Blooming Prairie Fire Department, 126 from

Medford, and 831 from Owatonna during the Minnesota State Mask Drive initiated by Gov. Tim Walz.

We are extremely grateful for all of those who have contributed to these efforts. Steele County Public Health continues to accept PPE, cloth masks, and other donations. Donations can be dropped off at the Steele County Public Health office

Mon-Friday 8-5:00 located at 635 Florence Ave. Owatonna.

We encourage all people who can to wear a mask when out in public or interacting with others outside of your immediate families and continue to practice social distancing.

Steele County Public Health
Owatonna