



FISHING IN THE DARK

Area trout anglers enjoy abundant hex hatch. Cast your eyes on page B4 for more.

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Photos by Michael Johnson / Pioneer Journal

Dana Damm is pictured with his dad's 1970 Pontiac GTO, which he intends to restore soon.

DAD'S GTO

Wadena man looks to restore car his dad sold 22 years ago

By Michael Johnson
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There's something about getting behind the wheel of a childhood car that transports the rider back to another time and place.

For Dana Damm of rural Wadena, that car from his birth to age 15 was a 1970 Pontiac GTO. He remembers it fondly for its power, loud exhaust and most importantly the driver, his dad Earl Damm, who passed away in 2008 at 63 years old.

Dana grew up riding in that car and since his mom and dad picked it up in New York Mills, it was always a project car. Sometimes so embarrassingly so that Dana would ask to be dropped off a block from school so he wouldn't be seen getting out of the loud car. Now, at 35 years old, he realizes how silly he was.

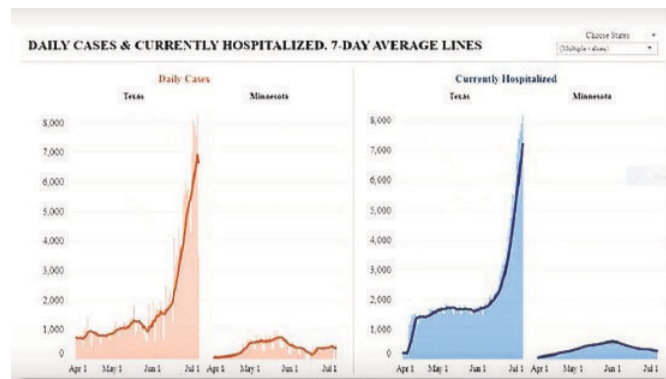


Spotty rust and less than smooth body repairs are features of the GTO that its owner is used to as the car was always a project.

Many nights after Earl got off from work, he'd get back to work tinkering on the body or fine tuning the 455 engine in that car. He made sure the

family always had a vehicle running even if it was a loud and rather unsightly classic.

GTO: Page A8



Covid Tracking Project

In two graphs showing the daily cases and those currently hospitalized from the COVID Tracking Project by The Atlantic, Hess compared Texas and Minnesota with Texas having a flat curve and then exponential growth and Minnesota with a gradual flat peak.

Masks 'key pillar' in preventing spread of virus

By Rebecca Mitchell
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During the third virtual community forum on July 7, Tri-County Health Care Chief Medical Officer Dr. Ben Hess and President and CEO Joel Beiswenger reviewed the hospital's precautions in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic, tips for wearing masks, stress and anxiety management and possible levels of risk related to different activities.

As of July 6, Tri-County has completed over 900 tests with 13 positive. There are 30 tests pending, according to Hess. In Wadena County there are 15 total positive cases, according to the Minnesota Department of Health.

The masks have become a "key pillar" in preventing the spread of the

virus, according to Hess. Masks are in place to protect other people though they need to be worn over the nose and mouth. Hess said if you wear the mask only over your mouth it is ineffective since the virus affects the entire respiratory tract. Masks are also safe to wear for long periods of time without concern about oxygen levels or carbon dioxide build-up, according to Hess.

Hess said another improper style of mask wearing is pulling it down to your neck while not wearing it since you can possibly bring contaminants from your neck back up to your nose and mouth. He recommends folding the mask in half, with the used portion

VIRUS: Page A8

WDC plans for fall schooling options

By Rebecca Mitchell
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After the unexpected distance learning in spring 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, states have been planning options for the 2020-21 school year, with an official decision for Minnesota scheduled for July 27. The Minnesota Department of Education is looking at three options: in-person schooling, hybrid days and distance learning, as detailed in their planning guidance released on June 18.

The Wadena-Deer Creek Public Schools planning committee met on June 18 to further prepare for the options with needs including technology, transportation and health measures. Superintendent

Lee Westrum said he does not want to start with distance learning as students, staff and parents know the challenges with this model.

To address these challenges, a survey is being sent to families and staff about health concerns, if students could be dropped off if buses are limited due to social distancing and how many students would continue distance learning if in-person school is the option chosen. Elementary principal Louis Rutten also noted a possible K-12 platform to streamline the login process for parents with children in different grade levels through the program Modern Teachers.

FALL: Page A7

Enduro races Sunday; more events coming soon

By Michael Johnson
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The long list of summer events has been shrinking while some events cancel and others revamp their offerings to provide for social distancing in the face of COVID-19.

The Wadena County Ag Society is one group trudging forward to put on events this summer. The group was under the gun to complete some major projects at the grandstand this week. The volunteers put up a walkway between the

grandstand and bleacher area and as of Monday night were continuing work to construct a wheel fence in front of the seating areas.

The wheel fence is simply a woven wire fence that rises about 12 feet up from the bottom of the grandstand. It acts as a barrier in case of a wheel falling off of a racing enduro or demolition derby car. The walkway offers a far better in and out of the grandstand areas.

EVENTS: Page A7



Michael Johnson / Pioneer Journal

Volunteers install metal fencing on the front of the Wadena County Fair grandstand in an effort to protect visitors from flying debris.

In Coordination with Wadena County Public Health - Friendly Rider's Hours for Dispatching are Monday - Friday 8:00a.m. to 4:30p.m. Friendly Rider will be closed Saturdays and Sundays.

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WEEKEND WEATHER

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GTO

From Page A1

Over the years, the car was in the family, Earl had done body work, painting, replacing the motor after the original one blew up, steady maintenance and even switched it from a manual transmission to automatic so his wife, Paula, could drive it. He even traded a different vehicle to have the upholstery redone to a blue velvet that made the riders feel like they were riding in luxury. Despite all the work, it was never finished.

A combination of factors brought Earl to have to sell the GTO in 1998. Paula was sick with her first of three bouts with cancer. His daughters were starting to attend college and Dana's older brother Erik was battling his own life struggles.

"We were poor," Dana, who is now 35, said.

The car was still just primer gray in color in 1998. Earl had aspirations of returning it to its original midnight blue color that shined when it came off the showroom floor. But an offer of \$2,500 was money the family needed. Despite saying goodbye to another GTO, Earl never complained, according to Dana.

While many of the family didn't seem to mind seeing the old car drive away, Dana, the youngest of five kids, was the only one who never got to drive the GTO. He never forgot that or the attachment his father had to them.



Photo courtesy Dana Damm

Earl Damm looks over his 1970 GTO for the last time before parting ways in 1998.

So in 2019, Dana began the pursuit of his dad's GTOs. He didn't have enough information to find the first two, but he had a lead on the last. He enlisted the help of his dad's good friend Jim Hansen to track it down. Hansen, now chief of police for the city of Akeley had just found his old truck from his earlier days, a 1948 F-1 Ford pickup. He was excited to help Dana find that car that he knew his old friend adored.

Hansen recalled who bought the car from Earl, which led him to find that buyer, who then led him to the next buyer. The two car searchers found one of the last buyers was at Roadside Salvage near Erhard and Dana assumed the car had been stripped down for parts.

"My hope was, if they parted dad's car out, maybe I could at least buy the steering wheel," Dana said. Upon arriving at the salvage yard in February 2019, Dana heard the car was intact and in storage

at another man's home in Wheaton.

"I started balling," Dana said as he knew he was close to seeing the car.

Deep snow was keeping the car parked for the remainder of winter. It turns out the salvage yard owner bought the car back from that man with plans to restore the GTO just a week before Dana arrived at his door. Dana asked if there was any way he could buy the car and asked him to name a fair price.

He told Dana he knew he'd have to sell it to him, understanding the sentimental value of the car outweighed his attachment to the car.

A deal was struck and on the first day of summer break, Dana and Hansen drove down to pick up the car.

"I was probably almost as excited as Dana," Hansen said.

Hansen even had custom magnetic decals made to slap on the side of his truck for the drive

down, which he later gave to Dana. The decals indicated that this was a special mission of the USS Oriskany, the same aircraft carrier that Earl served on during the Vietnam War. Hansen heard about the time Earl served when the two lived together for about a year while Earl was working road construction and Hansen was entering into law enforcement.

"That GTO was the love of his life," Hansen said. He added that Earl never sacrificed time with his family to spend time on the car. That's likely why it remained a project car all those years.

Hansen referenced the day they made the trip to haul the GTO home as "the day of reckoning."

The moment the two laid eyes on that old GTO was one they'll never forget. It wasn't just intact, it was nearly exactly how Dana remembered it from 22 years ago. Even the tires and key chain remained the same.

he doesn't have all the mechanical background his father did.

That being said, Dana has every hope of bringing the car back to life. He sought out the help of Motor Trend's "Garage Squad," a reality TV show that includes a group of car nuts bent on helping people finish those project cars in their lives. Dana received feedback that his application has been accepted but the show has been on hiatus during the COVID-19 pandemic. Dana would love the extra help, but he isn't going to wait for "Garage Squad" if he can finish the car himself.

Reaching the finish line

On Father's Day this year, Dana, a Henning science teacher, and Mike Shrode, a WDC engineering and technology instructor, worked on the car for the first time hoping to bring it back to life.

"My intentions are to finish my dad's car," Dana said. "Our goal is to have it mechanically running this summer."

His intentions over the winter are to complete the body work.

"I'm kind of trying to do it how Dad would have wanted it finished," Dana said.

He looks forward to taking his wife and mom for a cruise when it is complete. He'll gladly take on the name of "GTO guy" like his father before him.

GARAGE SALE

SEASON IS HERE!

HAVE FUN & STAY SAFE:



KEEP A SAFE DISTANCE



WEAR A FACE MASK



WASH HANDS OFTEN



USE HAND SANITIZER BE SURE TO FOLLOW STATE AND FEDERAL SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS.

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Pioneer Journal

VIRUS

From Page A1

on the inside, to store it between wearing. If you are in your car alone or walking on the street with social distancing in place you do not need to wear a mask, according to Hess.

As a way of highlighting the benefits of the health and safety measures, Hess compared Minnesota and Texas' approaches to the pandemic. Minnesota shut down early, hard and long with gradual reopenings leading to a gradual flat peak while Texas did not fully shut down throughout the pandemic and then opened businesses all at once leading to an exponential growth in cases.

The current outbreaks in the state are young people and in nursing homes, according to Hess. While there is debate on why young people are experiencing greater risk now, Hess said they are more likely to attend events indoors where people are talking, cheering or yelling. These activities increase the spread of the droplets that spread the coronavirus. Young people may also feel they have a lower risk

since they are not as highly susceptible to serious outcomes.

"Any socialization carries some risk so there's no zero risk activity out there in a social setting but if you can wear a mask doing the activity, if you can socially distance and you're outside in the fresh air and sunlight that's a ... relatively safe scenario compared to some other things," Hess said.

Hess listed these other activities with possible risk levels as:

- ▶ Camping or playing tennis or golf relatively safe;

- ▶ Take-out or eating outside at restaurants safer than inside;

- ▶ Playground for an hour medium risk;

- ▶ Backyard BBQ bit more risk depending on crowd size and if one or various people are serving the food;

- ▶ Beach higher risk than going to park;

- ▶ Close proximity (ex: hair cut, hugging, shaking hands) high risk;

- ▶ Events where sitting for a long period of time and not socially distanced (ex: plays, concerts, sporting events, school events) high risk.

Hess responded to a

question about indoor pool risk in group swim lessons by recommending that participants shower before and after, try to be in a class with social distancing and health screenings and to wash hands before and after. Public pools, though not specifically denoted as indoor or outdoor, are equivalent to working one week in an office, according to Hess.

Throughout the hospital's building, Hess noted the safety and health measures in place, from health screenings to plexiglass, social distancing with staff and in the waiting room, one-way traffic flow patterns, escorting patients to critical areas of the hospital to avoid possible exposure and removing items from walls and surfaces to clean better. Beiswenger said the environment is "extremely safe," including with the addition of negative pressure spaces to move contaminated air outside.

While services were also limited at the beginning of the safety and health measures in March, Beiswenger said services have returned except for outpatient respiratory therapy area and aquatic therapy at the Maslowski Well-

ness and Research Center. The aquatic therapy could potentially open in August.

The visitor policy has also expanded from no visitors to allowing one visitor with patients in specific circumstances such as pediatric patients, vulnerable adult patients, critical care and maternity. Visitors for end of life patients can be changed on a case-by-case basis depending on the patient care teams.

Hess encouraged patients to come in for health care related issues, including in the emergency situations of chest pain or stroke symptoms.

Hess also discussed self-care to help with stress and anxiety during the pandemic such as getting plenty of rest, staying hydrated and eating well, exercising, going outside and continuing social connections. You can call 218-631-3510 for a mental health appointment, which can be in-person or over video or telephone.

COVID-19 data: July 7

COUNTIES
 ▶ Wadena: 15 positive cases; cumulative laboratory test rate of 111.41 per 1,000 people (as of July 2);

0.9% positivity rate

- ▶ Todd: 401 with 2 deaths; test rate, 135.02; 12.9% positive

- ▶ Otter Tail: 100 with 1 death; test rate, 99.11; 1.7% positive

- ▶ Hubbard: 8; test rate, 57.81; 0.6% positive MINNESOTA

- ▶ Total positive cases: 39,133

- ▶ Positive health care workers: 3,826

- ▶ Age range with greatest number of cases: 20-29 years old with 21.9% of cases

- ▶ Tests completed: 685,247

- ▶ Deaths: 1,477 with 37 probable COVID-19 deaths

- ▶ Deaths among those in long-term care or assisted living: 1,157

- ▶ Patients no longer needing isolation: 34,377

- ▶ Currently hospitalizations: 267 with 121 in intensive care

- ▶ Total cases requiring hospitalization: 4,252

Information gathered from the Minnesota Department of Health daily and weekly reports. Not all suspected cases of COVID-19 are tested, so this data is not representative of the total number of people in Minnesota who have or had COVID-19.

WE'RE STILL HERE!

Pioneer Journal

THE PJ HAS MOVED TO OUR NEW LOCATION BEHIND THE COZY THEATER!

New signage will be going up in the next couple of weeks so you can more easily find us.

We continue to be closed to the public, but you can set-up an appointment to meet with one of our team members, by calling 218-631-2561 or emailing us (see below).

If you have questions, comments, or concerns, we are always open to hearing from you!

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