

IN LOCAL & STATE, B1
CARVING UP THE ICE BLOCKS

IN CURRENTS, E1
BROKEN HEARTS A MEDICAL REALITY

IN OUTDOORS, D6
LET THERE BE BETTER LIGHTS

Fans, family and football

Players’ families gather for DII championship

By Chad Courrier
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MCKINNEY, TEXAS — Football has been an important part of the Goettl family’s life for the last 10 years, but it’s been

even more important the last three years.

In was in January of 2017 that Michele, the active mother and wife, died on a family vacation, causing Alex to reconsider his football future. But football, it turns out, has been a big part of the family healing process.

“It’s brought me a lot closer to my girls, for sure,” Dan, the patriarch

Page D1

West Florida holds off Minnesota State for Division II national title.



Videos accompany this story at: mankatofreepress.com

of the Goettl family, said just a few minutes before he and three daughters walked into the stadium Saturday to watch Alex compete for a national championship with the Minnesota State football

team.

“Now, I’m always talking to the girls, wondering about who can go to the games, and what we’re going to do for tailgating.”

Please see MSU, Page A5

Dan Goettl (back) enjoys some tailgating with daughters Ashley Hanley (left), Katie Faugstad (center) and Kelsey Goettl before Minnesota State’s national championship game Saturday. Dan Goettl’s son Alex played for Minnesota State on Saturday.



Chad Courrier

TODAY’S OBITUARIES

- Larry James Anderson
- V. Thomas “Big Tom” Brown
- Virginia Marie Fischer
- Wendell George Geary
- Lois Jewison
- Julian Olsen

OPINIONS

Ethanol

Despite his devotion to President Donald Trump, Rep. Jim Hagedorn’s pleas for the administration to live up to its promises on ethanol have gone unheeded. — A4.

LOTTERY

- Saturday’s Daily 3 6-0-1
- Friday’s Gopher 5 12-15-24-26-34
- Saturday’s Powerball 19-31-35-50-67 and 14
- Saturday’s Lotto America 4-17-29-40-51 and 8
- Saturday’s Northstar Cash 7-9-22-28-30
- Friday’s Mega Millions 3-20-23-35-60 and 16

PAGEFINDER

- Comics F1-F4
- Corrections A2
- Currents E1-E6
- Extra Local B4, B5
- Health & Fitness C1, C2
- Marketplace C3-C5
- Nation & World A3
- Obituaries B2
- Puzzles E5
- Sports D1-D6
- Your Money C6

WEATHER, PAGE B4

Sunny
High of 40, low in upper 20s.



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Mankato, Minnesota

PEER POWER

Area schools grapple with bullying



Pat Christman photos

Project for Teens’ Dalton Dodge talks with middle schoolers during a visit Friday.

Much of today’s bullying is online

By Kristine Goodrich
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After listening to a small group of sixth graders talk about times they felt they were bullied, 12th grader Dalton Dodge offered one closing piece of advice:

“The only way bullying is going to stop is if you guys stand up for each other,” the East High School student said to Prairie Winds Middle School students Friday.

Dodge and other members of the Project for Teens mentoring group encouraged their younger peers to be “upstanders” instead of bystanders when they witness bullying.

Bullying rates have not changed substantially over the last three years, according to recently released results of the Minnesota Student Survey.

Between roughly two-thirds and one-third of area students said they had been bullied in the prior month, depending on the school district and the grade level.

Given once every three years to the majority of Minnesota students in four grades, the anonymous



From left, Yvonne Ibrahim, Laila Almeer and Sophia Alas talk with Prairie Winds Middle School students during a Project for Teens visit Friday.

survey asks a wide variety of questions about adolescents’ well-being, including how often and why they have been bullied.

Across Minnesota, bullying decreases in pervasiveness as students age. Among fifth graders, 60% reported being bullied at least

once in the month prior to taking the survey last spring. By 11th grade, the number drops to 40%.

Mankato Area Public Schools students reported the lowest rates of bullying in the region and Maple

Please see BULLY, Page A5

Catalog retailers revived

The Associated Press

PORTLAND, MAINE

— Catalogs, those glossy paper-and-ink offerings of outdoor apparel, kitchenware and fruit baskets, are not yet headed for the recycling bin of history.

Until recently, the future appeared grim for the mailbox-stuffers. A one-two punch of postal rate increases and the Great Recession had sharply cut their numbers. Common wisdom had everything retail-related moving online.

But a catalog-industry rebound appears in the works, fueled in part by what might seem an unlikely group: younger shoppers who find it’s sometimes easier, more satisfying and even nostalgic, flipping pages rather than clicking links.

Industry experts say that all those catalogs crammed into mailboxes this holiday season are a sign that mailings have stabilized — and may be growing — after a decline of about 40% since the Great Recession.

New companies are mailing catalogs. And even direct-mail retailers like Amazon and Bonobos are getting into the act.

“They’re tapping out on what they’re able to do digitally,” said Tim Curtis, president of CohereOne, a direct marketing agency in California. “They’ve got to find some new way to drive traffic to their websites.”

Catalog retailers slashed mailings, and some abandoned catalogs altogether, after a major U.S. Postal Service rate increase and the start of the recession in late 2007. Catalog numbers dropped from about 19 billion in 2016 to an estimated 11.5 billion in 2018, according to the American Catalog Mailers Association.

The industry still faces

Please see CATALOG, Page A2

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BULLY: Much of today's bullying is on-line

Continued from Page A1

River had the highest. The Student Survey did not give its takers a definition of bullying. School districts define it as repeat harming conduct that involves an imbalance of power and substantially interferes with a student's educational opportunities.

Bullying evolves

While pushing is still happening on the playground and teasing is still occurring on the bus, Project for Teens coordinator Kate Cox says bullying has evolved from what many parents remember of their school days.

"The bullying now is done so passive aggressively," she said.

And much of it happens online, said Cox, who worked as a youth therapist and clinical social worker before leading Project for Teens full time.

Adolescents as young as upper elementary school are using social media, texts, messaging apps and even video games to disparage and spread rumors, Cox said she hears from the youths with whom she works at area schools.

Perhaps even more frequently, youths are using those platforms to exclude peers from activities and conversations. And that can be even "more impactful than if someone came up and punched you in the gut," Cox said.

In one of Project For Teens' role-playing scenarios with sixth-graders, a group of girls take a photo of themselves at the WOW!Zone. Some of the girls want to share it online with a classmate whom they did not invite so she would know she was being excluded. But other girls, who are "upstanders" to bullying, convince their friends to instead post the photo with an invitation to the girl who was left out to join them.

More Mankato students reported being excluded than reported being cyberbullied on the Student Survey. Nearly 36% of fifth-graders, 25% of eighth-graders and 18% of 11th graders recalled being excluded at least once in the past month. Over the same time period, 16% of fifth-graders, 13% of eighth-graders and 11% of 11th graders said they had been bullied online or via text.

Gender gap

At all ages, girls are more likely to say they have been bullied. Across Minnesota, 61% of eighth-grade girls and 48% of 11th-grade girls said they had been bullied in the last month, compared to 47% of eighth-grade boys and 32% of 11th-grade boys.

The gap is a little wider in Mankato Area Public Schools, where 50% of girls and 34% of boys in eighth grade reported recent bullying and in 11th grade it was 45% of girls and 23% of boys.

Cox said the gap could be at least in part because girls



Project for Teens students act out a skit for Prairie Winds Middle School students Friday.

Pat Christman

tend to remember bullying incidents better. "They hold grudges longer," she said.

West High School social worker Molly Fox said it might just be because girls are less reluctant to admit they are being bullied.

Parents speak

The Free Press invited local people to share their experiences with bullying on its Facebook page and received more than 170 responses.

Many commenters believed area schools don't do enough in response to bullying.

"I believe they let kids get away with a lot in school," wrote Misty Ritchie of Mankato. "My son is in third grade ... and the same kids have picked on him and all they do is talk with the other kids."

Mariah Meadows of Mankato said her 7-year-old was repeatedly bullied by a classmate last year and it did not stop after both children met together with a counselor.

"Schools say they don't tolerate bullying, (but) in my eyes and what my daughter went through for as long as she did, it seems it was just brushed under the rug," she wrote.

Other respondents praised how schools address bullying.

"Based on our experience at Rosa Parks (Elementary School), the school does a good job talking to the kids on a routine basis on topics of inclusion and being a good friend," Jenny Weckwerth of Mankato wrote.

"I do believe most of the schools do their best to prevent bullying but they can only do so much," Kacie Stevensen of Nicollet wrote. "No teachers want children to bully. Teachers can't be everywhere at once watching all kids."

Many others said parents need to be part of the solution.

"It's not always the kids' fault. We all need to work together to fix this problem instead of pointing fingers at the just the kids," wrote Travis Theis-Griggs, a Mankato area school bus driver.

"It takes both staff in the school and parents outside of school," Stephanie Walters of Mankato wrote. "Parents need to be more involved, listen and pay attention to what's going on. Everyone needs to be proactive instead of reactive."

Kate Finch of Mankato wrote about how she responded when her son would come home from preschool in tears.

"I can't stop other children from bullying my kid, but I can do my best to give him tools to feel okay even if someone is unkind," she wrote. "And I can teach him how to make sure he's not a bully either. We've made it a regular topic that is discussed regularly."

School response

How the Mankato Area Public School District responds to each reported bullying incident is unique to each situation, said Eric Hudspith, the district's director of human resources and organizational development.

"Our policy allows us to be discretionary and support students based on the needs they have," he said.

A response known as restorative circles was introduced in the district's high schools five years ago and has expanded into other schools.

"It's a process of facilitating communication in the form of a circle, providing everyone an opportunity to speak and respecting each other's time to speak," said Marti Sevick, the district's director of teaching and learning.

Fox said a school social worker, counselor or assistant principal usually first meets with each of the parties involved individually and then brings them together for a guided conversation.

In an era when misinformation is often spread via social media, Fox said open communication can be the key to resolving a conflict.

The same questions are asked at every circle: What happened? What were you

thinking? What are you thinking now? Who has been affected? What do you need to do to make things right?

Each circle ends with each participant making a pledge to take at least one rectifying action, Fox said.

Hudspith said the restorative circles don't always mean students escape without a more traditional form of punishment.

"Do we have some clear and concrete consequences at times? Absolutely we do," he said. "We do have some students who need to have some consequences at times when behaviors merit that."

Educators are not allowed by law to share information about how a student is disciplined with the parents of other children involved in an incident or with any other members of the public. A few commenters on The Free Press query suggested this may be contributing to some parents' perception the district does not adequately respond to bullying.

In the Maple River Public School District, Supt. Dan Anderson said their work to reduce bullying has included adding social workers and banning cellphones at the middle school.

The district added two social worker positions and now has one at each school.

"Already we are seeing a great benefit to identifying and addressing the issues our students are dealing with at school and at home," Anderson said.

This fall the district added special lockers in which middle school students must lock up their cellphones for the full school day.

"In just the first four months there has been an astounding improvement in the environment of the entire school," Anderson said.

School prevention

Administrators at Mankato Area Public Schools say the district has a number of programs that aim to prevent bullying, and more broadly, to

promote a positive school climate and students' social-emotional growth.

Every school in the district uses the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports framework, said Scott Hare, the district's director of student support services. Often known as PBIS, the program sets student behavior expectations and provides interventions for students who aren't meeting expectations.

Elementary schools also use the Second Step social-emotional curriculum, which aims to help students develop empathy, manage their emotions, improve problem-solving and build learning skills.

Some of the district's schools also incorporate other social-emotional programs into their day.

"We recognize that every building has its own climate," Hudspith said.

Peer education

Project for Teens visits every sixth-grader at five area middle schools to talk about bullying. They act out instances of bullying that are inspired by the real-life experiences of the volunteer high school students. They then role play how the interaction might have gone differently if someone had stepped in to prevent or stop the bullying behavior.

"That took a lot of courage to stand up in front of everyone and say that was the wrong thing to do," East High School junior Eli Olson said after one skit.

"That shows the power of being an upstander," Dodge said after another scenario. "It only took one person to say something."

After the skits, the high school volunteers gather their younger peers into small groups for more discussion.

Olson and East High School senior Mikayla Stanley said they hope their message is more powerful coming from peers.

"I remember they had an impact on me," Olson recalled of the Project for Teens visits he experienced in middle school. "I saw

them as role models."

Olson and Stanley said they have not personally been the victim of bullying, but they have intervened when they have seen it happening to others.

A Cougar football player, Olson said he sometimes reminds his teammates they are all on the same team when he witnesses accomplished players being disrespectful to lesser able teammates.

Stanley said she sometimes talks to friends about questionable social media posts. She said she waits until she sees them in person to broach the subject because such a conversation is best done face to face.

Advice for parents

Cox said she sees youths as young as fourth grade with cellphones and social media accounts, and that's concerning.

"No one that young should have social media," she said.

She recommends parents keep their children offline until high school and then track their online interactions.

For parents who say they trust their child and are reluctant to invade their privacy, Cox reminds them that the brain of even the most trustworthy child is still developing.

"It's a parent's job to monitor their kids and put those boundaries and limits in place," she said.

The Project for Teens director said parents also need to be role models online. Not only do they need to keep their own online conversations respectful, they should intercede when they observe online bullying and show their children how they did so.

Cox also recommended the website commonsensemedia.org, which provides resources on safe media use.

Fox said parents shouldn't hesitate to contact their school's counselors, social workers or administrators for help when their child is dealing with a conflict.

"If they have a concern, reach out to us," she said.

MSU: Players' families gather for DII football championship

Continued from Page A1

Dan has only missed one game in Alex's career, coming this season when the Mavericks played Northern State at Aberdeen, South Dakota. Dan stayed in Mankato that Friday night to watch his daughter Kelsey be chosen as the homecoming queen at Mankato West, and weather prohibited him from driving to Alex's game the next day.

But he's up on the miles recently. He flew to New York two weeks ago

with Alex for the William Campbell Award ceremony, recognizing his son's academic achievement and community service.

A couple of days later, he drove to Pennsylvania to watch the Mavericks defeat Slippery Rock in the national semifinals.

This week, he joined a group for a bus ride, organized by his daughter Ashley, to Texas for the national championship game. He got to the parking lot early, celebrating a potentially historic event with the other families,

fans and former players.

"It's been an incredible journey," Dan said. "We made so many new friends and gotten to know the other families. Now, when we get together, we're asking about each other's families and how everyone is doing."

Dave Schlichte, father of Minnesota State quarterback Ryan, has also been plenty busy this week. His older son Jay is an offensive line coach at Morning-side, which played in the NAIA championship game Saturday in Louisiana.

"We flew down here Wednesday, then we drove over to spend as much time as we could with Jay (on Thursday)," Dave said. "It's so unbelievable to have two sons, one playing and one coaching, this weekend in championship games. Football has been such a big part of our lives. You can't make this up."

Ryan Schlichte and Alex Goettl were teammates when the Mankato West football team won a state championship. It was the same year that Minnesota State played in its first

national championship game.

Dave said he was a little torn on which venue he should be at today, but Jay told him that he should be watching Ryan's final game as a player.

"He told us to go and enjoy it," Dave said.

Back in 1957, Ken Weilage was a freshman running back at Minnesota State, coming to Mankato from Waterville to play for legendary coach Bob Otto. It was Weilage's only year as a player, but he's stayed connected with the Maver-

icks program ever since.

He was bold enough to ride the bus for 14 hours to see the Mavericks play for a national title.

"I'm just supporting the team," he said. "They've kicked butts all season, and I hope I get to see some history and they're national champions."

Weilage, 81, said his wife June stayed home to take care of the family cats and dog.

"Tell (June) I miss her," he said.

Follow Chad Courrier on Twitter @ChadCourrier.