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ONE FAST TALKER

Minn. farmer becomes champion auctioneer



Chris Flynn / The Forum
Andrew Jossund, 25, of Gary, Minn., was named Champion Auctioneer at the Minnesota State Auctioneers Association convention on Jan. 16 in St. Cloud. He's pictured in a shop building on his family's farming operation near Hendrum.

Hendrum, Minn. Andrew Jossund turned a trait often frowned upon in the school classroom into a unique skill and livelihood.

"I've always talked too much, I guess," said Jossund, who works as a licensed auctioneer.

"I'm just glad I found a way to use it productively," he said, with a smile.

Jossund, 25, not only makes a living at auctioneering, but is winning awards doing so.

He was recently named the 2020 state champion auctioneer at the Minnesota State Auctioneers Association convention in St. Cloud.

In the contest of auctioneering speed, salesmanship, stage presence and poise, along with a short question-and-answer session about the industry,

Jossund came out on top. "The culmination of those things really shows who's the best auctioneer on that day," he said.

Now, Jossund has his sights set on a bigger challenge.

As the state winner, he moves on to the International Auctioneer Championship in San Diego, Calif., this summer, an event that has previously

drawn contestants from Canada, Mexico and Ireland, in addition to the U.S. Jossund describes it as "the best of the best."

"I've got six months to practice, so hopefully I can step up to the challenge," he said.

Perfecting the auctioneer chant

Jossund, who lives with wife Kayla in Gary, Minn.,

works for Resource Auction in Grand Forks and farms with his family in the Perley and Hendrum, Minn., areas.

Growing up on the farm, he spent many summer afternoons at auction sales with his dad and quickly grew to love the atmosphere.

"I just knew it was something one day I'd want to be a part of," he said.

As a teenager, he'd practice bid-calling during long hours in the tractor or combine.

After high school, he pursued diesel technology at Minnesota State Community and Technical College and production agriculture at North Dakota State University.

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Robin Huebner reports

Governments seek answers to MMIW crisis

Legislation 'only a first step' to end disparities in treatment of Native crime victims



Dana Ferguson / Forum News Service
Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz on Sept. 19, 2019, ceremonially signed a copy of a bill establishing a task force to study the prevalence of violence against Indigenous women and girls.

Editor's note: This is the second installment of a three-part series on the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women in the upper Plains.

By Dana Ferguson and Sarah Mearhoff
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PIERRE, S.D. — Zannez Stands was having recurring dreams that he and his loved ones were going missing — pursued by a green Camaro and abducted into the car, never to be seen again.

The nightmares were inspired by the real-life horrors he heard growing up on the Pine Ridge Reservation in southwest South Dakota, where everyone knows a story of a daughter, sister or mother who seemingly vanished.

Stands was 13 years

HOW TO GET HELP

If you or someone you know is a victim of violence, please consider calling the National Indian Women Resource Center at 406-477-3896 or the StrongHearts Native Helpline at 1-844-762-8483. In an emergency situation, please call 911.

old when he sat before 13 legislators in the South Dakota Capitol's largest hearing room on a bitterly cold February night in Pierre, pleading them to greenlight a bill that would collect data on cases of missing and murdered Indigenous people. He said his nightmares only stopped after he began home-schooling in fifth grade.

"It makes you feel scared to walk out of your house," he said in the full hearing room. "You know you could never return."

Legislators unanimously passed the bill in March, and it was signed into law by Republican Gov. Kristi Noem weeks later. About a mile away from where Stands sat, Corinne Faye White Thunder's body was submerged in the Missouri River. Though she was last seen in December 2017, her body wouldn't be discovered until June, when Game, Fish and Parks officials accidentally encountered her submerged car off of Pierre's Downs Marina. She had never been reported missing.

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Sanford partnership to lower drug prices, prevent shortages

By Patrick Springer
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FARGO — Sanford Health has received its first shipment of drugs from a consortium it co-founded to help hospitals maintain reliable supplies of medicine in the face of recurring drug shortages.

The shipment was the first for Civica Rx, a collaboration involving over three philanthropists and 45 health systems representing more than 1,200 hospitals in 46 states.

Last year, Sanford was one of three founding members of Civica Rx, a nonprofit that works to

ensure reliable supplies of important drugs that are costly and sometimes risky to replace.

Jesse Breidenbach, Sanford's senior director of pharmacy, said patients will benefit by gaining access to drugs that are

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Mostly cloudy Details, D4

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Classifieds	C3-6
Comics	B3
Crosswords	B3, C5
Life	B1
Obituaries	A4
Opinion	A5
Sports	D1

AUCTIONEER

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In 2016, he attended auctioneer school, where he learned the fundamentals of bid-calling, along with the ethics and business practices of being an auctioneer. Most states require that auctioneers are licensed and bonded, he said.

An auction chant involves speaking more from the diaphragm and using filler words between the numbers. For example, "would you give" becomes "who da give" in rapidly spoken fables. The result is a vocal delivery designed to catch the attention of buyers.

"Unless it was entertaining, you wouldn't stand out on an 80-degree day and watch somebody sell cars or farm

machinery or personal estate items," he said.

'Upper echelon' contest

Jossund's first auctioneer victory was in 2018, when he was named rookie of the year in Minnesota and overall runner-up in North Dakota. In 2019, he was overall runner-up in Minnesota and champion in North Dakota, before winning Minnesota this year. Once you've won, you can't compete at that stage again, he said.

During the preliminary round in St. Cloud, each of the 24 contestants sold three items they'd brought from home to sell before the judging panel and audience.

Five of them advanced to the finals, where they were provided three items to sell — that way, they couldn't practice descriptions ahead of time. While each person performed,

the others were sequestered in a room.

Contestants answered questions about being an industry advocate, followed by the bid calling. Jossund thinks his performance in the Q&A portion helped seal the win.

"I feel like I answered well," he said.

His auctioneer and farm jobs work well together, with auction sales being held at times farmers typically aren't in the field. Jossund will have plenty of time to practice on the road this spring, driving from one sale to another.

The International Auctioneer Championship will be held July 17 in San Diego. Jossund hopes to reach the finals of the "upper echelon" competition.

"That's my ultimate goal," he said.

Readers can reach Robin Huebner at rhuebner@forumcomm.com.



Photo courtesy of Brooke Gillespie / Special to The Forum
Andrew Jossund was named the 2020 Champion Auctioneer at the Minnesota State Auctioneers Association convention earlier this year in St. Cloud. Jossund advances to the International Auctioneer Championship in San Diego in July.

MMIW

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The push for legislative action like South Dakota's comes after years of grassroots efforts, which have fueled conversations about Native women and girls' safety in hearing rooms and Facebook groups. A search for #MMIW on Twitter will reveal tweets from activists begging to be seen and lawmakers calling for reform.

And a wave of Native elected officials entering state and federal offices has shone a spotlight on the issue, though Native representation in legislative bodies remains disproportionate.

What are lawmakers doing?

In South Dakota, Senate Bill 164 in 2019 tasked the state with establishing uniform reporting and investigating protocols for missing persons cases and required training for law enforcement officers on cases of missing Native women and children. North Dakota also passed missing persons guidelines in 2019.

This year, South Dakota lawmakers are considering a bill written by the state Attorney General's Office that would establish a statewide universal database of missing persons cases, accessible by local, state, tribal and federal law enforcement.

Lawmakers in Minnesota last year formed a state task force to investigate the prevalence of violence against Indigenous women and girls in the state, as



John Hageman / Forum News Service
Rep. Ruth Buffalo, D-Fargo, is sworn into office Dec. 3, 2018, at the North Dakota Capitol.

well as the gaps that allow these cases to fall through the cracks. The 11-member task force, comprised of advocates and state officials, has a year to study the issue and give recommendations to state lawmakers for legislative action.

In Washington, D.C., members of Congress have pushed for federal action. Savanna's Act, championed by former U.S. Sen. Heidi Heitkamp, D-N.D., has yet to be passed more than two years after the brutal murder of the bill's namesake, Savanna LaFontaine-Greywind, a Spirit Lake Nation woman who disappeared from Fargo in 2017. The Not Invisible Act, introduced by four Native lawmakers in May 2019, has completely stalled.

And Congress' reauthorization of the decades-old Violence Against Women Act, which con-

tains provisions geared toward protecting Native women and reaffirming tribal criminal jurisdiction over non-Native perpetrators, remains unpassed, embroiled in Washington politics.

The Trump Administration in November announced the formation of its own task force, dubbed Operation Lady Justice, aimed at better understanding what President Donald Trump called "a tremendous problem" that's "been going on for a long time — many, many decades, beyond that."

Pushing for answers

Minnesota state Rep. Mary Kunesh-Podein, D-New Brighton, said she authored the bill to create a state task force amid increased national awareness of the issue, which grew thanks to grassroots activism and high-profile cases like LaFontaine-Greywind's.

"People finally started talking about it," Kunesh-Podein said, but the stories that were already well-known among Indigenous communities weren't as familiar at the Capitol.

"Very few people had any idea that this was even happening," Kunesh-Podein said. "So our first hearing (in 2018), there were legislators and people in the audience that were in tears, that were incredibly moved by the testimony of the women that came in to tell the stories."

Democratic Lt. Gov. Peggy Flanagan, a member of the White Earth Nation, said part of the credit for getting the proposal in Minnesota off the ground goes to the Native women, including a coalition of Indigenous state lawmakers, who pushed to get Minnesota's bill passed.

"I'm grateful that we didn't have to convince people that our women were worth protecting this session," Flanagan said. "The groundwork had been laid. The advocates were a constant presence here, and reminding us of our role and responsibility, and we got it done."

In South Dakota, proponents of SB 164, asked for even less than a task force: They simply proposed that law enforcement keep track of cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls (MMIWG) in their records. Without proper documentation, Native women's cases remain invisible to the eyes of the state.

Annita Lucchesi, a Cheyenne woman, at February's hearing in Pierre said that as a survivor of domestic violence and trafficking herself, she was frustrated "that these stories weren't being cared for and this data weren't being collected in any meaningful way."

She single-handedly — literally, with one hand broken by her former abuser — founded the Sovereign Bodies Institute, which houses one of the most comprehensive databases on MMIWG cases in the continent. Lucchesi, who is pursuing her Ph.D. in geography from the University of Arizona, began collecting the data herself with no funding or institutional backing.

"If that's something that little ol' me can do at a coffee shop table, that's something our state agencies and law enforcement can commit to, as well," she told legislators.

According to Sovereign Bodies, at least 158 Native women and girls have gone missing or murdered from South Dakota, and 35 from North Dakota, since 1900.

Lucchesi read off the names of the women and girls missing from South Dakota at February's hearing: "Delphine, Tessa, Desiree, Darla..." Twelve Jane Does. It took her two-and-a-half minutes to get through the list, reading only the first names.

Is legislation enough?

Setting up state and federal task forces is a step, many involved in creating them said. But there's more work to be done.

"This isn't the victory," Flanagan said. "The victory comes when we implement the recommendations and then see that we are experiencing a decrease in the number of women and girls that go missing or are murdered who experience violence."

Heitkamp said as the prime author of Savanna's Act, she'll be proud when it finally reaches the president's desk. But she cautioned that solving the crisis is "going to take more than just these one-offs."

"It's not about, 'Boy, we got something done because we passed Savanna's Act,'" she said. "Savanna's Act is only a first step to overcome historic disparities in the treatment of Native Americans as crime victims."

She said the lack of resources starts at the very beginning of every MMIWG case, from the moment a Native person goes missing. Tribal law enforcement agencies are notoriously strapped for resources, and Heitkamp said precious time is "wasted" because protocols aren't in place and federal agencies may not respond right away.

Heitkamp said public safety on reservations "has never been equal" to the rest of America. It wasn't until 2018 that Amber Alerts could be issued in Indian Country when children went missing, thanks to a bill Heitkamp cosponsored.

"What are the things that happen in white America when someone goes missing and why are we failing to do these exact same things in Native America?" she asked.

"They've been second-class citizens as it relates to public safety for a lot of years."

Lucchesi said the law's lack of a response is part of a larger problem: a "culture of violence against Indigenous women and girls."

"The law enforcement and justice systems are complicit in maintaining a culture of violence against Indigenous women and girls, where perpetrators, especially white men, are repeatedly taught by law enforcement that there are no consequences for harming an Indigenous woman or girl," she wrote in Sovereign Bodies' November report.

But there's a beacon of hope, Heitkamp said, in the advocates for change.

"They aren't going to go quietly into the night," she said. "They're not going to say, 'Well, that's just the way it is.' There is now a whole movement."

"Those are the kinds of things that will, in fact, spark additional protections."

Readers can reach reporters Sarah Mearhoff and Dana Ferguson at mmhw@forumcomm.com or call toll-free at 1-877-583-1817.



Official White House photos by Joyce N. Boghosian
From left, Fond du Lac Band councilman Roger Smith, Fond du Lac Band chairman Kevin DuPuis and Mille Lacs Band Chief Executive Melanie Benjamin listen to President Donald Trump speak before he signs an executive order Nov. 26, 2019, creating a national task force to address the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women.

MEDICATION

From Page A1

more affordable than the premium prices that hospitals must pay for medications in short supply. The nonprofit will help to avoid drug substitutions that might not work as well or can result in dosage errors.

"It helps us stabilize our cost of medication," Breidenbach said. During acute shortages, he added, drug prices can skyrocket by 100%, 300% or even 500%.

Sanford's first drug shipment was vancomycin, an "essential" antibiotic hospitals use to treat serious infections caused by bacteria that are resistant to other antibiotics — examples include pneumonia, cellulitis, septicemia, osteomyelitis and endocarditis.

Vancomycin often is in short supply. The last time it was in dire shortage was



Special to The Forum

Vial of vancomycin, a potent antibiotic and the first drug shipment Sanford Health received from Civica, a consortium formed to provide hospitals with a stable supply of more affordable generic drugs.

in 2018, when Sanford's cost soared 85%. During periods of ample supply, vancomycin prices are stable, but they can spike abruptly when shortages hit.

Using the stable supplies enabled by Civica Rx, San-

ford achieves annual savings of \$300,000 system-wide, including \$150,000 in its Fargo region.

Last year, Sanford administered more than 71,226 doses of vancomycin.

Maintaining a sustainable supply of medicines allows doctors to prescribe medications that they are familiar with. Finding substitutions cause administrative headaches and often requires educating doctors and nurses about the change, Breidenbach said.

"These medications are much more affordable than the alternatives that are out there, so it does continue to lower costs," he said.

Separately, the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association announced that it has joined with 18 locally operated Blue Cross Blue Shield insurance companies and Civica Rx to form a new subsidiary dedicated to lowering the cost of generic drugs.

The Blue Cross Blue Shield partners are invest-

ing \$55 million in the effort and are inviting other health insurers, employers, pharmacies and others to join the initiative, which plans to produce generic insulin in response to the high prices that cause hardships for patients.

Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota are not among the insurers forming the subsidiary with Civica Rx.

"We are continually looking for ways to reduce the cost of prescription drugs for our members," said Andrea Dineen, a spokesperson for Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota. "However, after evaluating this partnership and understanding the initial investment required, we determined it was not the best use of our members' dollars at this point in time."

Although deciding "we did not want to take on the risk that comes with this kind of joint venture at this time," the North

Dakota Blues said they will "continue to work with our pharmacy benefit manager to ensure we are bringing the best possible pricing and access to prescription drugs to our members."

A spokesman for Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota didn't offer any comment beyond confirming that the company was not involved in the generic drug initiative "at this time."

Civica Rx has 17 other generic drugs in development, including medications to manage surgical patients' pain for procedures such as knee and hip replacements as well as heparin, a blood-thinner, and steroids given to cancer patients before chemotherapy.

"The goal is to make generic medicines accessible and affordable," said Dr. Joshua Crabtree, vice president of Sanford Clinic in Sioux Falls, S.D. "Sanford Health's membership will help ensure our locations can continue to pro-

vide vital medications for our patients."

Medications supplied by Civica Rx will be available to patients at Sanford's medical centers in Fargo, Bismarck, Sioux Falls and Bemidji, Minn.

To provide stable drug supplies, Civica Rx member hospitals commit to ordering up to 50% of their supplies for certain drugs from the nonprofit. That provides certainty for the drug manufacturers the consortium works with, enabling a steady supply of medicines with predictable costs.

Ninety percent of hospitals belonging to Civica Rx have had to find alternative treatments due to drug shortages and price increases. A recent survey cited by Civica found that drug shortages cost hospitals almost \$360 million annually in labor expenses, with another \$230 million spent annually buying more expensive alternatives.

Readers can call reporter Patrick Springer at 701-241-5522.