



STEELE COUNTY Times



GROWING HEMP B12 | **DAIRY DAYS** B1

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WEDNESDAY, JUNE 23, 2021

Blooming Prairie, Minnesota

City, police chief reach agreement in bad review case

BY HOWARD LESTRUD
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

A last minute agreement has been reached between Blooming Prairie and its police chief over a bad review directed at the chief last year.

The State of Minnesota Office of Admin-

istrative Hearings was notified Wednesday, June 16 that the parties have reached a tentative settlement agreement in the matter of Police Chief Greg Skillestad against the City.

A hearing was to have been held Thursday, June 17 at the Blooming Prairie

Government Center. However, the hearing was scrapped after the two sides made an agreement.

Both Skillestad's attorney, Richard Wylie of Minneapolis, and city attorney Jason Iacovino confirmed a tentative settlement. But neither attorney would com-

ment about the terms of the agreement.

Iacovino told the Times, "Details have yet to see the full council's eyes."

The matter is expected to go before the city council for approval at its next meeting on July 12.

Chief Skillestad said he is pleased a settle-

ment has been reached. "Now we can move on," he added.

Skillestad is appealing an evaluation, written reprimand and a performance improvement plan directed at him by City Administrator Andrew Langholz. Skillestad's appeal See **CITY** on A13 ▶



Chief Greg Skillestad

GIVING BACK TO BP

Kruckebergs donate buildings, form children's academy

BY RICK BUSSLER
PUBLISHER

In what is believed to be the single, largest gift in Blooming Prairie's history, Craig and Robyn Kruckeberg are donating commercial buildings, land and money for a new daycare center to serve the region.

The former corporate office building of Minimizer, a company founded by Craig's father, Dick, more than 35 years ago, and a nearby storage building, along with the surrounding land, are appraised at \$850,000. With a monetary donation tied in, the gift pushes the \$1 million mark.

Along with the donation, a new non-profit organization, Leo Augusta Children's Acad- See **GIVING** on A14 ▶



STAFF PHOTO BY RICK BUSSLER

Robyn and Craig Kruckeberg of Blooming Prairie are donating the buildings located in the background as well as the surrounding 3 acres of property on the north end of Blooming Prairie that served as the corporate offices of Minimizer until recently. This fall, the buildings will be converted into a childcare center for children ages infant to 12 years old.

Viktora takes on 4-H role in Steele County

BY RICK BUSSLER
PUBLISHER

All it took was one orphan cow and Krystal Viktora was hooked.

When Viktora was 14 years old, a neighbor introduced her to a Guernsey calf that she adopted to be her own. Though a latecomer to the 4-H program, the en-

counter led Viktora into the youth organization and now she has made it a full-time career.

As Steele County's new 4-H program coordinator, Viktora replaces Missy Koch, who left earlier this year. Viktora will split the 4-H duties with veteran coordinator Tracy Ignaszewski.

See **VIKTORA** on A14 ▶



STAFF PHOTO BY RICK BUSSLER

Krystal Viktora has joined the Steele County Extension Office as 4-H program coordinator. She will share in the 4-H duties with Tracy Ignaszewski, veteran 4-H coordinator.

Ellendale Days set for this weekend

BY DEB FLEMMING
NEWS EDITOR

Ellendale Days is bringing back the dunk tank.

A popular feature of the community festival for many years, the dunk tank is returning after a 10-year hiatus.

"It will be a big draw," said Allison

Muilenburg of the Ellendale Days Committee.

The dunk tank will be open on Friday and Saturday from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

"We have a great lineup," said Muilenburg, adding that on Friday night, dunk tank enthusiasts can take a shot at business owners See **ELLENDALE** on A14 ▶



STAFF PHOTO BY RICK BUSSLER

Celebrations are back in full swing after being shut down for the past year because of COVID-19. Medford is the first community to bring back excitement with Straight River Days, which ran from Thursday until Saturday. Annette Duncan, director of the Steele County United Way, fills balloons for youngsters to enjoy at the opening ceremonies Thursday night. See page B5 for more photos from the weekend celebration.

BACK TOGETHER

Celebrations reunite folks again

BY RICK BUSSLER
PUBLISHER

It may have only been grass, but it didn't make any difference for Chuck and Jerrie Wencil of Medford to kick up their heels and do a little dancing.

With some music blasting on the PA, the Wencils whooped it up in

a field by the Medford Veteran's Memorial during the opening festivities of Straight River Days Thursday night.

"We thought it would be fun to go dance," said Jerrie. "We usually go faster and higher, but it's hard on the ground."

Like most people, the Wencils are thankful to finally be able to

get back together with friends and neighbors again after a year of COVID-19 restrictions brought an end to fun the way most people know it.

"It's nice to get together with each other again," Chuck said. "We love it. We need to do more of it."

See **BACK** on A18 ▶

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INSIDE

Area Honor Rolls.....	A6, A12 & B4	Faith.....	A17	Opinions.....	A2
Calendar.....	B3	Good Neighbor Review... AB & A9		Public Notices.....	B10
Classifieds.....	B11	History.....	A5	Public Safety.....	A4
Community.....	A16	Hometown Living.....	B1	Sports.....	B6

AREA DEATHS

Donna Arndt, 89, Owatonna
Henry Olson, 64, Blooming Prairie
Ron Skala, 57, Owatonna
Judy Vaughan, 71, Owatonna

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