



STEELE COUNTY Times

ENCHANTED DREAMS

Wednesday, April 14, 2021
www.SteeleCountyTimes.com
Blooming Prairie, Minnesota

STAFF PHOTO BY RICK BUSSLER

Ashley Holm of Owatonna dazzles spectators with her figure skating talents during the Enchanted Dreams skating exhibition Saturday at the Four Seasons Centre in Owatonna. Holm performed a solo to "Happy Working Song." Skaters of all ages from the Owatonna Figure Skating Club took part in the annual performance.

'I was numb at the time'

Dairy farmer watches operation go up in flames

BY RICK BUSSLER
PUBLISHER

Even two days after a devastating fire knocked out his dairy operation, Brian Seykora was overcome by emotion while sharing about how his life has been upended.

"It's a surreal scene out there. I don't believe it is happening," said Seykora, who has produced one of the top dairy herds in Minnesota. "You just don't replace all the hard work I have put into it."

On Saturday afternoon, Seykora walked through the burned shell of what once housed his cows that rank in the top 10 statewide for milk production. "All I saw was daylight, smoke and burnt wood," he said. "You hate to see it... life throws you a lot of curveballs."

Seykora is the sixth generation of his family to operate the dairy farm. Joining him on the farm are his wife,

Mary Beth, an elementary school teacher in Owatonna, and their sons, Matthew, a senior at Owatonna High School and Mitchell, who is a freshman.

While sharing how he has employed at least 20 Owatonna area teenagers at the farm over

the past 23 years, Seykora became emotional. "People have reached out to tell me what a joy it was to work out there," he said. "We know we were doing it right," he

said fighting back the tears.

Seykora was enjoying his son's baseball game in Owatonna Thursday night when he received a message that the barn was on fire. "When I got there, flames were shooting 30 feet above the roof," he said. "I was numb at the time."

Once Seykora got to the farm, he discovered four neighbors, Matt Deml, Mike Klecker and Ben and Jake Rysavy, pulling cows and calves

"You hate to see it... life throws you a lot of curveballs."

Brian Seykora
Dairy Farmer

See DAIRY on A9 ▶



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE SEYKORA FAMILY

Flames rip through the Brian Seykora dairy barn south of Owatonna Thursday night as black smoke could be seen for miles. The blaze destroyed the century-old structure, as well as a newer addition built in the mid-1990s and eight dairy cows.

Fire kills 8 milk cows, destroys dairy barn

BY DEB FLEMMING
NEWS EDITOR

Brian Seykora credits good neighbors and good employees for saving most of his dairy herd last week.

A Thursday evening fire destroyed Seykora's century-old dairy barn located at 11632 24th Ave. S.E., Owatonna, and about 3,000 bales of

straw and alfalfa hay. Eight of Seykora's 42 milk cows also died in the fire.

Blooming Prairie Fire Chief Dean Naatz said more than 35 firefighters from four area fire departments battled the blaze near Litomysl for nearly eight hours.

"It was a long-winded fire," said Naatz, adding that the call

came in a little before 7 p.m. and firefighters left around 3 a.m. "You could see smoke from [Highway] 218 and when we arrived at the scene, the fire was burning through the roof."

Firefighters from Ellendale, Geneva and Owatonna assisted Blooming Prairie in battling the blaze. Ellendale Ambulance

Service out of Geneva and the Steele County Sheriff's Department were also on the scene.

When the fire broke out, Naatz said, people started untying the cows and opened the barn doors allowing most of the herd, which included 45 milk cows and 12-15 calves, to escape. The surviving

See FIRE on A17 ▶

Hwy 14 expansion, roundabouts top road projects in area

Lane closures underway

BY DEB FLEMMING
NEWS EDITOR

Motorists traveling between Owatonna and Rochester on Hwy. 14 will encounter lane closures on the four-lane portion west of Dodge Center as crews build crossover lanes for construction related to the roadway's

See LANE on A14 ▶



STAFF PHOTO BY DEB FLEMMING

Steele County is planning to begin work on a new roundabout in northeast Owatonna in early June.

26th Street, CR 45 roundabout construction set for early June

BY DEB FLEMMING
NEWS EDITOR

Construction of a new roundabout at the intersection of 26th Street and County Road 45 in northeast Owatonna could begin in early June.

The City of Owatonna approved the project last month, and the county plans to hold a public hearing later this month on the proj-

ect's final design and schedule.

"To get it done as quickly and cheaply as possible, we will be closing the intersection and detouring traffic," said Paul Sponholz, assistant county engineer.

Next year, Sponholz said, the county plans to construct another roundabout in Owatonna at the intersection of 18th Street and Sixby. The cost of See 26TH STREET on A14 ▶

\$1.00 | Volume 129, No. 38



507-583-4431 | bptimes@frontiernet.net

INSIDE

Opinions..... A2	Sports..... A10-A13	Tributes..... B1-B5
Coronavirus Coverage..... A3	Community..... A15-A17	Hometown Living..... B6
Public Safety..... A4	Faith..... A16	Calendar..... B9
History..... A5	Public Notices..... A18	Owatonna School Page..... B10
Business..... A6, A7	Classifieds..... A19	

AREA DEATHS

Anita Ulwelling, 68, Austin
Merle Gostomczik, 101, Medford
Duffy Moberg, 44, Ellendale
Naven Knutson, 89, formerly of BP
Ralph Schrader, 89, Owatonna

Serving
Blooming Prairie
and Steele County
since 1893