

OPINION

Flying blind

Rarely a day or a week or a month goes by but what I learn something new. Sometimes it's not that it's so really new, or earth-shaking, monumental or whatever. Sometimes it's just that two and two come together and one gets four.

Or kind of. So here's what I've realized in the last bit of time, say, one month; maybe even less. First, it's about mosquitoes. I'm a blood-type O positive, and according to all the literature out there, I'm the first one that blood-sucking insects zero in on.

Be it mosquitoes, no-see-ums, wood ticks, chiggers, whatever-if any of them are around, and I'm in a bunch of people, the next thing you know I'm being chewed on. And when they chew on me, the result is some artistically impressive welts, red around the edges out to the size of a fifty-cent piece.



The Prairie Spy
Alan "Lindy" Linda

Even better, they'll itch well into the next month. I guess I'm pretty tasty. So when a daughter bought me what I call a "bug sucker," I was pretty interested. (If you're also interested, and are being bitten, look up on Amazon "bug sucker." One will come up.)

What they are is a little plastic plunger-kind-of-thing which one puts on a bite. When you pull up on the plunger, it pulls the venom or whatever out of the bite. Now, in theory, this should work. It's sim-

ilar to sucking the venom out of a snake bite, more or less.

Does it work? Yes. And no. It has worked on a deer fly bite. It has worked on a wood tick bite. It has also not worked on them. If one was a baseball player, and hit half the balls thrown in his direction, his resulting average would be .500. That's pretty good, huh?

The best thing I've seen when it comes to avoiding mosquito bites is a good smudge fire. Notice that there are not many mosquitoes around lately? That's because Canada has turned into a million-acre smudge fire. Sure, it's hard to breathe, but the upside is that the mosquito population is breathlessly flying around on IFR, lost in the smoke. (Yeah, I know. We cannot breathe either; as usual, blessings are mixed.)

The next thing that I've learned is that wealth can

be measured in many ways. How big a house. How many acres. How many cars. Trucks. Tools. How much money. I however have discovered a new algorithm to measure wealth.

It's by the number of towels you own. A recent family get-together here, which now includes a number of female teenagers, has helped me develop this latest arithmetic measurement.

This statistical cohort, which numbers about five young girls, has helped me develop this formula for predicting wealth.

I just washed and hung 28 bath towels on the line to dry. Do the math. I have a wealth of young girls, by any analysis.

I truly am a wealthy man.

And just darned fortunate. They were here only one weekend.

Another mixed blessing.

A failure in the kitchen shows the importance of life lessons

I may not remember the name of my junior high home economics teacher from Windom High School, but I am pretty sure she will remember mine.

At one point during my year in home economics, I didn't know there was a difference between salt and sugar when cooking—I mean both are white right? When someone had the sugar on the other side of the room I used some salt as a substitute, since they looked very similar.

By the end of the class period it was pretty obvious my cookies were a disaster. As part of the class we had to make enough cookies to give each student one, while also providing our teacher a cookie to taste test herself. It was kind of a public shaming for people like me who struggled to even butter toast correctly.

As she got to my cookie, she immediately spit it out and asked what I did. I told her I used that white stuff to make the cookies and followed the directions.

I'll never forget the snideness in her tone when she asked "did you by chance use salt instead of sugar?"

I could only muster out a response of, "yeah but what is the difference they look the same don't they?"

She then turned to me and reminded the entire class to taste the food they cook before they give it to other people. She instructed the class to immediately throw my cookies in the garbage. She proceeded to ask me why I didn't try the cookies myself, before I gave them to her.

"I did try them," I replied. "I took one bite and they were terrible so I threw it away."

The look of shock on her face was priceless. Needless to say I did not do good in home economics and it wasn't until I got to college and lived with a person who thought he was a professional chef (this was usually at 2 in the morning), when I finally learned how to make a hamburger that wasn't bleeding, or so hard it was like a hockey puck.

I also learned an important science experiment during this time, which is, if you leave a pot of water boiling all night, when you get up in the morning the water will be gone and the pan will be empty.

That leads me to this point. Schools from across the country have had to eliminate home economics classes due to budget constraints and an inability to find teachers for the classes.

While Henning hasn't had a home economics teacher in a number of years, they do offer students the chance to learn real life skills in Eli Hill's home survival classes. The classes teach students things like how to change a tire, how to change their oil, how to insulate a house or even things as basic as how to change blinker fluid (and if you think a vehicle has blinker fluid you should probably sign up for his class—immediately).

You see, as important as



Henning Happenings
Chad Koenen

it is to learn things from a book, it is also important for students to learn how to do things on their own so they won't need to call their parents until they are 35.

After all, you don't want to be in your 20s before you finally learn how to make pancakes—no joke I didn't know how to make pancakes from a mix until my last year of college. Now you may see why my kids still want to sign me up for the TV show "Worst Cooks in America." If they had only seen me before.

Thanks to volunteers

After most of our summer events were canceled last year due to COVID-19, our community has been abuzz over the past few weeks with town festivals around just about every corner. You forget sometimes how much there is to do in our area during the summer months, but these events that we enjoy don't come without the help and work of volunteers across each of our communities.

Oftentimes we take for granted the work of these people, who take time out of their work day to make phone calls, organize events and coordinate schedules to make even the simplest things go off without a hitch. Whether that be making sure the parade line up is set, the bounce houses are on order, or even that the food is ordered for the food stand. Without the work of these volunteers our town celebrations wouldn't be a reality.

With less and less people willing to contribute to making these events a success, the planning of these events continue to fall on a dwindling number of people who are expected to complete their work during the day, while also making sure the community can have a celebration of its own.

Unfortunately, all-too-often the work of these volunteers are cut down after the fact by people who think they could do a better job, even though they are unwilling or don't want to be a part of the planning, organizing and working at the events themselves.

So for all of the volunteers for events like the Henning Festival, OtterFest, Ottertail Community Auction, fly-in breakfast, Watermelon Day, Deer Trails Day, the Landmark Center Corn Feed, Lions Steak Fry, bike rodeo and many more, thank you. Your work is appreciated and we know that without your dedication our summer would be a little more boring and unsafe. If you don't believe me just look back to last year to see how much fun you had.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

City council needs to conduct an investigation

To the Editor,
At the last City Council meeting Jane Cook, Co-Director of the ambulance department, read a statement regarding a disturbing meeting she had with Councilman Jim Haberer. In her statement to the City Council last week, Jane said Jim asked for her resignation as a director or she could possibly be terminated. She also contended he told her she could possibly lose her pension and attorneys may be involved. Coming from a city of Henning superior, this was extremely threatening to Jane.

Jane questioned why that would be and what she had done to justify the threat. According to her statement to the council last week, Jane said Jim mentioned several topics all of which she had reasonable answers for from her perspective as Director with more knowledge than he had about these accusations. Jane soon understood that this was not a fact finding mission or any offer to be of help, so she sought to end the meeting.

Jane called me, Reggie Thiel, and ask to meet which we did soon after the meeting with Jim. My wife joined us and Jane told us what happened. I was quite angered at what must be a certain breach of protocol; the threats to her position; and the potential loss of her pension earned from 22 years on the ambulance team. She questioned if she

was going to need an attorney.

The next two weeks were emotionally charged for Jane and her husband Kevin, living with unfounded charges for two weeks until the next City Council meeting where she could tell of her experience. Determined, with courage and a refusal to be a victim by suffering in silence, Jane presented a statement about what happened to the City Council.

Following, Councilman Haberer initially denied he met with Jane but then said it was only as a friend. He then denied Jane's allegation that he told Jane she needed to resign or face termination; that attorneys could be involved, and that she faced possible loss of pension. These four threats are the very and the only reasons Jane brought this before the Council.

I am angered at the brief consideration the council members gave this serious issue regarding the conduct of a fellow council member. I'm further angered that a motion by Councilman Wes Johnson to investigate this conduct further could not get a second by the other members.

This dismissive treatment by a credible and devoted Department Head is not going to be so easily swept under the rug. I trust the community at large will not allow this to stand. It needs to be fully investigated and a reasoned conclusion made.

If this meeting had just been about some concerns then that is to believe Jane was so offended that in a matter of a few hours she concocted a scheme of lies about what Councilman Haberer said. Instead, Jane

immediately documented what was said and she told a couple trusted friends who would believe her and offer some needed emotional support.

I am calling for the Mayor and the Council to convene and conduct a full investigation to arrive at the reasoned truth. That should include possible motivation for Jane to be removed and if there were others of like mind involved behind the scenes. I am also encouraging the public at large to read Jane's statement and contact the Mayor and Council members. A copy of Co-Director Jane's statement that was written from her documentation is a matter of public record and is available at the city office.

Reggie Thiel,
Henning

Breakfast on the Farm returns to OT County

To the Editor,

As we all know, we had to skip a lot of great events due to the COVID pandemic over the last year. One of those events was the EOT Breakfast on the Farm. I am happy to say it is back in 2021, and I hope you will be able to join us. The local agriculture community and a host of volunteers are all geared up for this year's EOT Breakfast on the Farm event. This year's event will be held on Saturday, Aug. 14, at the Twin Spruce Farm North located north of Perham at 48285 County Highway 51, Perham (follow the signs). This

recently completely remodeled dairy farm is owned and operated by Arnie and Kris Gruenes and their seven children. Pancakes and sausage will be served from 7 a.m. to 12 p.m., all cooked and served by the members of the local farming community.

This family friendly event is a great opportunity for non-farming families to connect with our local farming families and ag professionals to learn about modern farming operations and how our local agricultural community works together to produce our food. In addition to getting an old-fashioned breakfast, those that attend will have the chance to ask those burning questions they have always had about agricultural production in the area. Attendees will be able to get an up-close look at an operating dairy farm, the machinery and technology used in farming today, and many different types of livestock displayed. 4H and FFA members will be on hand to assist with answering questions about the various animals, along with many activities for the kids.

I would like to encourage everyone to mark their calendars and plan to attend this family friendly event. Agriculture lives at the core of our society in Otter Tail County. The EOT Breakfast on the Farm is one way we can ensure that we build and maintain a connection and appreciation for the farming community. You can find out more about the event at www.Eotbreakfastonthe-farm.com.

Darren Newville
District Manager, EOT
SWCD

How to contact your elected officials

<p>Governor Tim Walz Office of the Governor 130 State Capitol 75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. St. Paul, MN 55155 Telephone: 651-201-3400 Toll Free: 800-657-3717</p>	<p>District 8B Representative Mary Franson 303 State Office Building St. Paul, MN 55155 651-296-3201 E-mail: rep.mary.franson@house.mn</p>	<p>District 8 Senate Bill Ingebrigtsen 175 University Avenue W. Minnesota Senate Bldg., Room 3207 St. Paul, MN 55155 (651) 297-8063 Email Address: sen.bill.ingebrigtsen@senate.mn</p>
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