

Hands-Off during COVID



Even during COVID times, Tri M Graphics in Owatonna took advantage of the beautiful Saturday weather to host its annual holiday open house. Left: During the open house, Tri M unveiled its 2021 calendar, which attracted 703 photo entries this year. Middle: Children take advantage of a fishing game to win some prizes. Right: Annett Duncan, president of the Steele County United Way, and her children, Amelia (being held) and Indya Frank, distribute craft kits through fun and innovative Hand-Off Stations at the open house. There were also mascots on hand as well as Santa letters.

FARMERS: aid in rescue of burning cornfields FROM A1



Ellendale area farmers came to the rescue of firefighters Saturday in battling a cornfield fire north of Beaver Lake in Lennox Township. The farmers brought their tractors and chisel plows to create a buffer of black dirt and contain the fire in an effort to save the rest of the cornfield.

community with such selfless people," he added. Busho estimates there were 30 to 40 farmers who showed up with at least eight tractors to help fight the fire. Most of the tractors were equipped with chisel plows. Busho said the farmers were "Johnny on the spot" in responding to the fire. "We had one tractor after another pulling in," he said. He estimates there were 30 to 40 farmers who showed up with at least eight tractors to help fight the fire. Most of the tractors were equipped with chisel plows. "They can knock down a huge area in a short amount of time," he said. "They put themselves at risk to save the corn field." The fire chief said they have had similar fires in the past, but nothing to the size or scope of Saturday's fire.

In the past, they have had one or two farmers show up to help put out a fire, but never a turnout of solidarity like last weekend. "Nobody there had to do what they did," said Busho. "We would have lost the whole corn field if it wasn't for those guys," he explained. Busho didn't know all the farmers who helped out, but some of them included Brad Hagen, Troy Hagen, Todd Hansen, Mark Hansen and Kevin Klemmensen. Besides the Ellendale department, Geneva and New Richland also responded to the blaze. About 40 firefighters were on hand with many of them concentrating their efforts on saving some nearby hog barns. The cause of the fire, Busho said, appears to have been a neighbor who had been burning garbage earlier in the day.



Area firefighters battled a stubborn cornfield fire on Saturday in southern Steele County. Farmers came to the rescue with their tractors and plows to save the standing corn.

Busho was happy to see all the show of support they had in helping during an emergency crisis. "This is exactly why living in our rural community is so amazing," Busho said. "In this dark and gloomy world lately, it's great to see a ray of sunshine."

STEELE BREAKS: previous COVID record FROM A1

point to community spread where people are unknowingly transmitting the disease to others. Another key indicator used by Public Health is the positivity rate of cases. Steele County was at 15% last week, above the state average of 12%. "I believe it will be higher this week," Caron said, noting the numbers are released on Thursdays. Public Health expected about 1,200 people to take advantage of free testing Monday and Tuesday at the National Guard Armory in Owatonna. Based on the county's current 15% positivity rate, there could be 180 new cases alone reflected in next week's total, though some of

the people tested are from outside the county and would not be counted in the total. Caron is concerned about where the county's numbers are headed. She expects the upward trend to continue in the coming weeks. "We are climbing at a higher rate than the metro area," she said. Asked why greater Minnesota is seeing such a spike in cases, Caron said she believes the metro area is following stricter mask requirements and practicing more social distancing. "They (metro area) are complying more than out state," she added. It would not surprise Caron if the recent spikes in COVID cases lead to another shutdown across Minnesota. "We

COVID-19 AT GLANCE

Steele County	
Oct. 4-11:	69 new cases
Oct. 12-18:	63 new cases
Oct. 19-25:	42 new cases
Oct. 26-Nov. 1:	95 new cases
Nov. 2-8:	165 new cases
Total since March:	1,022

are trying to convince people to put practices into place to avoid another shutdown," she said. "Do your part personally so we don't have to come to this again with another shutdown." Caron said the problem remains people are not wearing masks when they should be and they are congregating in groups of people by not practicing social distancing. "We should assume everyone is a positive contact and act accordingly," she said.

The health leader hopes people will start taking notice of the huge increase in numbers and change their attitudes and ways. Caron is especially frustrated with people who say the vulnerable population should be isolated from others and stay home. "That is unfair and very self centered thinking," she stressed. "This is real affecting our friends and family. We don't want to lose anyone. One death is one too many deaths," she said.

MIRACLE OFFICER: pays football player a sideline visit FROM A1

the head while responding to a prowler call in Wasasca in January. His prognosis initially did not look promising. But after months of hospitalization in the Twin Cities and rehabilitation in Nebraska, Matson returned back home last month. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, he hadn't seen family members in person since February. "It meant a lot to me to have him at my game," said Hedensten, who reached out to Matson's wife, Megan, to invite him to the game. "It felt good that he got there to get his mind off things he has been going through and feel normal again," he said. Earlier in the day, Matson spoke in a Wasasca County courtroom where his attacker was sentenced to the maximum 35 years in prison. "I would still respond to that call if it was tomorrow," Matson told the court. "I have

gratitude for being here today with everyone. It's amazing one day you have everything and the next day it is gone," he said. "I had so much stolen from me this year, from my daughter's eighth birthday to celebrating Father's Day and other special events. My wife and daughter lost out on so much this year as well." Hedensten, who grew up being a neighbor to Matson in Freeborn, has always enjoyed hanging out with Matson. He was saddened and devastated to see what happened to Matson on Jan. 6 at the hands of a man with an extensive criminal history. Hedensten and Matson have watched football together as well as played catch in the front yard while growing up. The two have also enjoyed hunting trips together. Despite what has happened to his role model, Hedensten isn't discouraged about pur-

suing his own career in law enforcement. He says the two of them often talked about becoming a police officer while on hunting trips in the past. He plans to go to college after graduating next year. Hedensten would like to become a DNR officer some day. While Hedensten admits it was tough not knowing how Matson would recover from this shooting, Hedensten knew he is a fighter. "I believe he is going to come out strong because of the way he is," Hedensten said. "He is fighting every day trying to be the best he can be." Hedensten's father, Jason, and his girlfriend Amy Schak, also joined in escorting Matson at Friday's football game. Jason, who has been an EMT for nearly 30 years, has been pleasantly surprised at Matson's recovery. "When someone gets shot in the head, you don't expect good," he said.

Jason was in the hospital by Matson along with others right after the shooting took place. "I didn't think he would make it. It has been a hard strain. Many sleepless nights," Jason said. "There was unbelievable support for him," he said, adding he credits the support from family and friends with pulling Matson through this ordeal. Jason described his son as playing for Matson in Friday's game. Following halftime where he gave Hedensten a quick pep talk, Matson left the game because he was tired after spending all day in court. Hedensten credits Matson's appearance with inspiring him to play even harder in the game. "He means a lot to me," Hedensten says. "He's someone I can look up to and joke around with and have a good time."

FIGHTING: the curse of the postal service FROM A2

to experience this on a regular basis is getting quite old. And then to top it off without getting any satisfaction, or let alone just a simple return response, from the powers-at-be is mind-boggling. The bottom line is that once we drop off the papers at the post office, they are out of our hands. I wish I could control it beyond, but there is nothing I can do at that point. Our readers are at the mercy of the postal carriers and when they decide to release our papers from being hostage. Perhaps the postal fairy will dazzle her magic with our papers moving forward, but I'm not guaranteeing that with anyone, especially after my dealings with the postal service. I feel your pain when you don't get the paper at the normal time. I just want you to realize it most likely has nothing to do with anything we've done. Some days I wonder if it would be best to explore going back to the era of the Pony Express. Seriously, I don't know what it will take to shake things up at the post office because obviously in my case, nobody really seems to care. It's time to go in hot pursuit of shaking the curse of the postal service. If anybody knows how, feel free to let me know right away.

COVID-19 UPDATE					
World.....	50,600,000	Deaths.....	1,260,000	Recovered.....	31,200,000
U.S.	10,100,000	Deaths.....	238,000	Recovered.....	4,880,000
MN	181,000	Deaths.....	2,710	Recovered.....	94,416
Steele.....	1,022	Deaths.....	4	Recovered.....	734
Dodge.....	500	Deaths.....	0	Recovered.....	385
Freeborn.....	903	Deaths.....	5	Recovered.....	
Mower.....	1,683	Deaths.....	21	Recovered.....	

AS OF NOV. 9, 2020