

A too-soon goodbye



EXPRESSIONS BY EL
BY ELLARRY PRENTICE

I have put off writing about this because when you put words on paper, they become real. I don't want this to be real.

On Nov. 16, 2020, one of my close friends died. Sweet, witty, kind and altruistic, she was only 27.

Tiffany had just graduated with a degree in occupational therapy and had already touched lives during her internship. She had a husband who loved her, pets who adored her and a mom who was also her best friend. Complications of a case of severe pancreatitis ended all of it decades too soon.

Two and a half months earlier, Tiff was rushed to the emergency room with severe abdominal pain. A diagnosis of gall stones and pancreatitis eventually led to abdominal compartment syndrome, a rare and often fatal illness that causes organ dysfunction.

For days, I couldn't believe she was gone because I couldn't believe that a mother's heart could be ripped out twice in 15 months.

In August 2019, Tiff's sister, Kayla, died of alcoholism at age 30. They played Bette Midler's "The Rose" at Kayla's funeral, and I had since associated the song with her untimely death, which Tiff had feared for years. With both sisters gone, I couldn't help but relate the lyrics to loss. It is a razor that leaves your soul to bleed.

I got to know Tiff when she was an aspiring journalist. She made her newspaper debut at age 13, writing a regular column for the Paynesville Press. Teen Perspective chronicled her journey through middle school and offered insight on issues from bullying to self-esteem. At 16, she came on board as an editorial intern. For two and a half summers, I had the privilege of mentoring her as she wrote articles, photographed events, entertained everyone with memes and one-liners, and pretended to make out with her pencil when the man I later married called me at work.

Our friendship continued after she left her post at our hometown paper. She faced many hardships in her personal life, and I always worried about her – until she met Andrew, a fellow editor for the St. Cloud State University Chronicle. Their shared bylines became shared vows, and I couldn't wipe the smile off my face at their ceremony.

Andrew saved Tiff in every way a person can be saved.

Tiff was one of the people who saved me.

She was the friend who welcomed me to her family's home on Thanksgiving and loved me like a sister.

She was the friend who respected that sometimes

I didn't want to talk but sent me funny memes and "I'm thinking of you," "I love you" and "I'm always here to listen" texts.

She was the friend who would sneak Preparation H and other personal items in my cart at Target and laugh at the look on my face as I scrambled to remove them from the checkout conveyor.

She was the friend who loved animals so much that, in a matter of an hour, she managed to tame wild barn cats at my dad's farm. From that day on, every time I opened the door, a gang of little meowers tried to get inside the house.

And, she was the friend who carried your burdens and hurt because you hurt. When I told her the story of my dad's final minutes of life, I'd somehow been strong enough not to cry. But she did.

After graduating from the mass communications program at St. Cloud State, Tiff continued to work for newspapers – including as special projects editor for the Albert Lea Tribune – and for the Humane Society and other animal centers until her heart called her to help people with fellow health challenges. Instead of succumbing to a yearslong battle with fibromyalgia and an endocrine disorder, she went back to college and turned her pain to purpose by helping people with injury and illness participate in daily life to the fullest.

I miss her so much.

This past year, I was excited when Tiff told me she wanted to use her journalism skills to achieve a little dream we had – producing a podcast through which we'd interview people who took the sourest lemons life has to offer and turned them into something resembling lemonade.

Eventually, I wrote up a development plan with a list of prospective interviewees; some we'd written about before, some we hadn't. Tiff asked me to include her mom on that list because she could talk about the pain of losing a daughter. After Tiff's death, the memory sent me reeling, and I have avoided the document entirely.

I told myself I didn't want to do the podcast without Tiff, but a little voice inside me has been saying to do it for her. I know she would want me to. She would want me to do what she did so well – to take all the broken pieces of my life and use them for good, and to help others do the same by sharing their stories.

This winter, as I grieve her loss, I will remember those song lyrics.

"Far beneath the bitter snow, lies the seed that with the sun's love, in the spring, becomes the rose."

Soon, it's my turn to make lemonade.

Pulse on People

Benton County marriage applications

– Luke James Johnson and Kennedy Jean Fruth, both of Sauk Rapids.

Students earn degrees

FARGO, N.D. – Sauk Rapids residents Clayton Lewandowski and Aaron Peckskamp graduated with honors and received bachelor's degrees from North Dakota State University following fall semester 2020. Lewandowski earned a degree in biological sciences, and Peckskamp earned a nursing degree.

Students earn academic honors

DULUTH – Rice residents Amanda Kollodge and Alyssa Psyck as well as Sauk Rapids residents Hailee Albers, Brooklyn Brown, Andrea Decker, Emma Johnsen, Gavin Kreutzer, Eric Nieters, Emma Plemel, Jackie Rasmussen, Bradley Reuter and Andrea Thyen were named to the fall 2020 University of Minnesota-Duluth dean's list for achieving a GPA of 3.5 or greater.

IOWA CITY, IOWA – Sartell resident Megan Mechelke was named to the fall 2020 University of Iowa president's list for achieving a 4.0 GPA.

ST. PAUL – Sauk Rapids resident Katie Dusek was named to the fall 2020 University of St. Thomas dean's list for achieving a GPA of 3.5 or greater.

VALLEY CITY, N.D. – St. Cloud resident Jacob Knapek, a 2019 Sauk Rapids-Rice High School graduate, was named to the fall 2020 president's list at Valley City State University for achieving a 4.0 GPA.

WAHPETON, N.D. – Sauk Rapids resident Andrew Asp was named to the fall 2020 president's honor list at North Dakota State College of Science for achieving a GPA of 3.5 or greater.

ST. CLOUD – Rice residents Stacy Alf, McKenna

Brannen, Kayla Brenny, Caden Collins, Isaiah Hall, Avery Johnson, Anastasia Lentner, Colin O'Leary, Sidney Simmons, Autum Starry and Cole Wunderlich as well as Sauk Rapids residents Alec Anderson, Libby Asper, Jady Athmann, Haeli Bell, Caitlin Berger, Cole Bonovsky, RaeAnn Boos, Shauna Corrigan, Tatum Decker, Joy Fastenau, Fred Feldhege, Carleen Keske, Ellie LeBlanc, Reid Lunser, Makayla Mayers, Rachel Neumann, Natasha Newell, Randall Nolan, Samantha Patton, Brooke Petermeier, Drake Raduns-Parsley, Chelsea Scapanski, Anna Schave, Emily Schimnich, Heidi Schimnich, Linnea Sowden, Magdalene Stamm, Morgan Strandberg, Keara Thornton, Abigail Treffa, Nathan Valek, Tammy Wahl, Candace Wasner and Mitchell Wruck were named to the fall 2020 president's list at St. Cloud Technical and Community College for achieving a 4.0 GPA.

Rice residents Emma Beauchamp, Dylan Bengtson, Cassandra Dehon, Alex Fiedler, Dylan Grimsley, Randy Johnson, Brooke Nelson, Jenalyn Ostendorf, Lily Prince, Nikki Sawyer, Emily Schreindl, Victoria Smith, Joshua Virnig, Kira Weber, Madilynn Westberg and Breanna Westby as well as Sauk Rapids residents Nicole Ash, Emily Boyer, Kaitlynn Christen, Savannah Dyer, Michael Foseid, Rosemary Gallagher, Marissa Genty, Kali Gummert, Trygve Hanson, Ian Hayes, Adam Iburg, Adam Kawlewski, Jaden Lamb, Richard Majeski, Tara Martin, Mariah Mattson, Tyson Mushatt, Maria Nathe, Lydia Nygaard, Ashley Olson, Grace Piechowski, Clarisa Raya Ambriz, Casey Renter-Thomas, Kristin Reynolds, Tyler Schave, Joshua See, Katelyn Storms, Kristin Van Lith, Arianna Vasilj and Krystene Wiese were named to the fall 2020 dean's list at SCTCC for achieving a 3.5-3.9 GPA.

COVID-19 vaccination map launches

ST. PAUL – The state launched an online vaccine finder to better connect Minnesotans age 65 or older to vaccination opportunities in their area. The map with local providers giving vaccinations can be found at mn.gov/covid19/vaccine/find-vaccine. While the locator currently provides information for seniors, it will expand over time as more Minnesotans become eligible for the vaccine.

Masks required on public transportation

ST. CLOUD – A new federal mandate and accompanying directives from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Transportation Security Administration make failure to wear a cloth or fabric mask on a bus or in a facility for public transportation a violation of federal law.

The TSA issued a memorandum and security directive Jan. 31 to clarify and implement the Jan. 21 federal executive order on promoting measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 by travelers within the United States. The directive applies to passenger railroads, intercity bus services and public transportation.

Regarding wearing masks on public transportation, the directive states, "A properly worn mask completely covers the nose and mouth of the wearer. A mask should be secured to the head, including with ties or ear loops. A mask should fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face. Masks do not include face shields. Masks can be either manufactured or homemade and should be a solid piece of material without slits, exhalation valves or punctures."

The CDC mandate includes three exceptions to the masking mandate: children under the age of 2, people with disabilities who cannot wear a mask or cannot safely wear a mask, because of the disability as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act, and people for whom wearing a mask would create a risk to workplace health, safety or job duty as determined by the relevant workplace safety guidelines or federal regulations. Passengers must stipulate people qualify for one of these exceptions if they are not wearing a mask.

Masks are available to the public at the Metro Bus Transit Center as well as on all Dial-a-Ride and ConneX buses.

Rice co-op to receive broadband grant

ST. PAUL – The Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development will award grants totaling \$20,645,425 to 39 projects in the sixth year of the Border-to-Border Broadband Development Grant program.

The funding, which was approved during the 2019 legislative sessions, goes to broadband providers to build out infrastructure to unserved and underserved locations across the state.

Benton Cooperative Telephone Company will receive \$338,011 for its Ramey Phase 2 Project. This last mile project will serve 119 unserved locations in the Ramey telephone exchange located in portions of Lakin and Mount Morris townships in Morrison County and a small portion of Dailey and Page townships located in Mille Lacs County. Through a funding partnership with the state of Minnesota, Benton Cooperative Telephone Company will bring service of 250 Mbps download and 250 Mbps upload to homes, businesses and farms in the project area, exceeding the 2022 and 2026 state speed goals.

Benton Cooperative Telephone Company, which is based in Rice, will provide \$627,735 in match funds for a total project cost of \$965,746.

Manea's Meats

The Sausage Specialists

www.maneasmeats.com
(320) 253-8683
114 2nd Ave N.,
Sauk Rapids, MN

We are here because of you!

Think of us when grilling this Summer!