



STAFF PHOTO BY RICK BUSSLER

It turned out to be a historic election all across America as well as close to home. On Tuesday, Nov. 3, Chris Jongbloedt of rural Owatonna exits the Owatonna Township Town Hall after voting in her first election ever. See Page A6 for a story on her voting experience as well as several other inside pages for complete election coverage.

## District 27 flips to GOP as Dornink ousts veteran senator

BY RICK BUSSLER  
PUBLISHER

For the first time in 18 years Minnesota Senate District 27 will be flipped from DFL to GOP after last Tuesday's general election.

Republican newcomer Gene Dornink of Hayfield captured the District 27 senate seat after ousting veteran DFLer Dan Sparks of Austin.

Dornink earned 19,750 or 49% of the votes while Sparks had 17,833 or 44%. District 27 covers southern Dodge County, City of Blooming Prairie and most of Freeborn and Mower counties.

The last time a Republican sat in the District 27 seat was in 2000 when Grace Schwab of Albert Lea defeated DFL incumbent Pat Piper of Austin. Schwab held the seat



Gene Dornink

for only one term when the DFL regained control after Sparks defeated Schwab in a cliffhanger race by just seven votes in 2002.

Dornink's victory helped the Republicans maintain control of the Minnesota Senate, though the majority appears to have shrunk to a 34 to 33 split. Besides Sparks, Republicans also ousted DFL incumbent Matt Little of Lakeville.

Acknowledging he faced an uphill battle going against a veteran senator, Dornink was extremely happy with the outcome of last week's election, especially after being on the losing end during the 2016 election. "I've been on both sides. I like this side better," said Dornink after beating Sparks. "It makes it

SEE DISTRICT 27, A5

## Miracle officer pays football player a sideline visit



STAFF PHOTO BY RICK BUSSLER

Injured Waseca police officer Arik Matson offers his best wishes to a dear friend of his, Medford football player Josiah Hedensten on his 18th birthday, during Friday night's gridiron contest against Randolph. Matson's comeback is nothing short of a miracle after he was shot in the head while answering a prowler call in Waseca in January. Hedensten and his family have remained at Matson's side the entire time pulling for him to recover. Also shown is Matson's wife, Megan.

BY RICK BUSSLER  
PUBLISHER

Josiah Hedensten got the best birthday gift he could have wished for on his 18th birthday Friday.

The Medford senior foot-

ball player received a visit from a hero who has been a lifelong role model of his. Injured Waseca police officer Arik Matson made a special appearance at Hedensten's game. And Josiah made sure he wasn't disappointed with

what he saw. Hedensten scored five touchdowns in the game against Randolph.

Matson's comeback has been nothing short of a miracle after he was shot in

SEE MIRACLE OFFICER, A3

## Steele breaks previous COVID record

BY RICK BUSSLER  
PUBLISHER

It took less than a week for Steele County to break its own COVID-19 positive case record.

There have been 165 new coronavirus cases over the past week, according to Public Health Director Amy Caron. The previous record was set last week with 95 new cases. "Steele really spiked. Our positive cases have quadrupled in two weeks," said Caron.

With the onslaught of new cases, Steele's total has eclipsed the 1,000

mark at 1,022 since the outbreak began. There have been four deaths and three people are currently hospitalized. Public Health reports that 734 people have recovered.

Caron said the virus is affecting all ages from 1 year to 80 years old, but the main contributors remain people in the 20 to 50 year range. There have been a couple workplace outbreaks and some schools are experiencing COVID cases, she said. However, the majority of the cases

SEE STEELE BREAKS, A3

## Farmers aid in rescue of burning cornfields

BY RICK BUSSLER  
PUBLISHER

Firefighters have water and hoses while farmers have plows and tractors. The combination of the two proved to be just what was needed to control a wild fire in rural Steele County Saturday afternoon.

Ellendale Fire responded to a field fire in Lemond Township north of Beaver Lake around 2:30 p.m. About 160 acres of corn spread over three farms was on fire. What made things even worse was the 35 mph winds at the time.

While three area fire departments battled the blaze, farmers in the area quickly put out the word and showed up with their tractors and plows to turn black dirt in an effort to stop the fire. Their efforts are being called heroic in keeping the fire from getting more out of hand.

"We can't thank them enough as they were a godsend," said Logan Busho, chief of the Ellendale Fire Department. "We're fortunate to live in a

SEE FARMERS, A3

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### AREA DEATHS

LaFaye Farrow, 92, Ellendale  
Colleen Loken, 78, Owatonna  
Keith Phillips, 66, Pittsburg, Texas  
Marcia K. Pesch, 77, Waltham  
John Nechanicky, 98, Owatonna

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