

for all she does ... happy Mother's Day

contact us: 507.452.1262 fax: 507.454.6409 email: winpost@winonapost.com P.O. Box 27, 64 E. 2nd St., Winona, MN, 55987



winona's twice-weekly newspaper since 1971

winona post

wednesday, may 5, 2021

volume 50, no. 17

winonapost.com

Official newspaper of the city of Winona

WAPS' racial disparity in discipline persists

by ALEXANDRA RETTER

Black students at Winona Area Public Schools (WAPS) were suspended seven times more often than their white peers last school year. As the district nears the end of a three-year agreement with the Minnesota Department of Human Rights (MDHR) to

reduce the disparity in discipline between students of color and white students, that disparity remains largely unchanged.

Later this year, WAPS will submit a final report to the MDHR regarding suspension rates. The district is one of many that entered agreements with the department. "We all agree that kids can't learn if they're not

in the classroom," former MDHR Commissioner Kevin Lindsey told the Winona Post in 2018.

In the 2019-2020 school year, Black students were suspended at 7.14 times the rate their white peers were. The rate of suspension for Black students was about 34 suspensions per 100 students, while the rate

for white students was about five suspensions per 100 students.

That rate marked an increase from the previous academic year. In the 2018-2019 school year, Black students were suspended at 6.9 times the rate their white peers

see **DISPARITY** page 7a

Farmers market starts summer season



by ALEXANDRA RETTER

Holli Wieser and her sisters just started their candle making business in January. Wieser brought their goods to the Winona Farmers Market (WFM) last weekend as it opened for its summer season. However, she already "can't wait to come back." Wieser is one of the vendors joining the WFM as more of its pre-pandemic community-building elements return.

Though WFM organizers and vendors persevered last year and held the event and

enthusiastic customers continued to attend, the feeling of community that comes from gathering to learn about and bring home local products was not quite the same as it had been in pre-pandemic years, several organizers and vendors agreed. "And while we had very loyal customers last year, people didn't feel like they could hang around and have those long, interesting conversations that farmers market customers have," Market Coordinator Monica DeGrazia said. The

see **FARMERS MARKET** page 5a

Photo by Alexandra Retter

■ Liv Charlton (foreground right) and Connor Dunn (background) speak with a Winona Farmers Market attendee on Saturday, May 1. The market began its summer season last weekend and will remain open through October.

Vaccine progress hits a wall; cases tick up

by CHRIS ROGERS

COVID infections are up and vaccinations are down in Winona County. The number of new coronavirus cases in the county nearly doubled over the weekend, with a total of 49 new cases in the past week, compared to 26 cases last week. That is the highest weekly total in nearly three months.

"In my mind, it was inevitable that we would see an increase of cases here in Winona County," Winona County Public Health Supervisor Melanie Tatge said, noting how prevalent the more-contagious B117 variant is in Minnesota.

At the same time cases rose, new vaccinations — the number of people receiving their first dose — fell by almost half for the second straight week, with just 377 first shots administered between April 24 and May 1, down from 1,284 shots just two weeks prior. That is the lowest number of first doses administered since the Winona Post began tracking vaccination data in January.

The vaccination slowdown was remarkably abrupt. Over the month of March, Winona County went from having 18 percent of the population with at least one dose to 38 percent. Now, that rapid progress has hit a wall. As of May 1, 44 percent of residents had at least one dose, a gain of only six points since the beginning of April.

see **TICK UP** page 7a

Winona council defers to county on juvenile detention

By ZACH KAYSER

An advisory group's resolution that would voice opposition to the idea of a juvenile detention facility was flatly rejected by the Winona City Council on Monday.

The Human Rights Commission (HRC) submitted a resolution for the council that would

see **HRC** page 5a

After 19 years, holistic doctor passes the baton



Photo by Zach Kayser

■ Dr. Karen Vrchota poses in an exam room at her practice, Integrative Health Care in Winona. Vrchota, 65, will retire this summer.

by ZACH KAYSER

At 65, Dr. Karen Vrchota is about to hand over the reins of her holistic medicine practice to the next generation.

Vrchota has a background in conventional medicine, having graduated in 1985 from the University of Minnesota and completed her residency at Hennepin County Medical Center. But her 19 years in the field of alternative medicine

began at a conference in 2002, where Dr. Jacob Teitelbaum was speaking on his forte, chronic fatigue syndrome. She was so inspired that years later, Vrchota still gives her patients copies of Teitelbaum's seminal "From Fatigued to Fantastic."

She then dipped her toe into the water of alternative medicine, treating chronic conditions with a limited scope of "fat chart patients," that is, patients with a long medical history that stumps many

doctors. For a while she did this even as she continued working in an E.R., but after seeing results from the alternative treatments, she decided to do it full time.

"It was scary, but I would say, medicine isn't working for most people," she said. "Most doctors, most nurses, most patients are not happy, with the things the way they are. I am a prayerful person

see **VRCHOTA** page 5a

WMS 8th grade returns, other ages remain in-person

by ALEXANDRA RETTER

Eighth-grade students at Winona Middle School are learning in-person again. Four COVID-19 cases and 154 possible exposures at the eighth-grade level led Winona Area Public Schools (WAPS) officials to move that grade to distance learning from April 21 to May 3. Meanwhile, however, WAPS reported that district-wide there were seven new cases and 123 students and staff in quarantine between April

see **WMS** page 6a

the winonapost ... proud to be your community newspaper for over 50 years

BROSNAHAN LAW FIRM P.A.

PAUL BROSNAHAN

507-457-3000 | 24-Hour Emergency: 507-450-2422

Located in Winona | Helping families throughout Minnesota & Wisconsin

Helping Injured People get their bills paid.

www.brosnahanlawfirm.com

