



The Globe

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More than a number

Death from COVID-19 brings heartache for local family

By Julie Buntjer
jbuntjer@dglobe.com
WORTHINGTON

Worthington's Merle Klosterbuer is one of 27 Nobles County residents to die from complications of COVID-19. He's one of more than 2,800 residents of the county to test positive for the novel coronavirus since it reached southwest Minnesota in mid-March.

Merle Klosterbuer is also more than a number.

He was a people person who, at 73, had never considered retirement. He spent his career as a carpenter, working for Johnson Builders and Bruce Campbell Construction locally before starting his own business in 1984. For the past four or five years, he did small jobs and fixed garage doors.

"He had to be out amongst people," said his wife, Joyce. The two celebrated their 47th wedding anniversary in July, and have two sons — Chad of Little Rock, Iowa, and Jason of Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

Since the dawn of COVID-19, following guidelines to protect his health and the health of others was important to Merle. Staying confined to the house, however, was daunting.

"He would take off in the pickup and go for rides quite often because he just felt claustrophobic being in the house all of the time," Joyce



Tim Middagh / The Globe
Joyce Klosterbuer looks at a photograph of her and husband, Merle, taken during an Operation Christmas Child box packing event last year. Merle lost his battle with COVID-19 on Oct. 26.

shared.

When he shopped, he was careful not to go into a store if there were more than 10 cars in the parking lot. He wore his mask everywhere he went, and kept a bottle of hand sanitizer in the truck. Sanitizer was the first thing

he reached for when he returned to the truck, and he'd wash his hands as soon as he got home.

And yet, Merle contracted COVID-19.

While Joyce doesn't know when or where he was exposed to the virus, she

mentioned a rummage sale they hosted at the Nobles County Fairgrounds in late September. Merle had requested everyone who stopped to wear a mask and use hand sanitizer.

COVID-19: Page 13



Tim Middagh / The Globe
Bryan Brandt was elected mayor of Bigelow after the community's voters had to write in names for not only the position of mayor, but for two city council seats as well.

Small towns elect city leaders by write-in votes

By Julie Buntjer
jbuntjer@dglobe.com

WORTHINGTON — Last week, three Nobles County communities finally learned the winners of city council positions after voters had to write in the names of those they thought best suited for public office.

In Bigelow, a mere 10-minute drive from Worthington, no one in the community — population 235 — was willing to file for vacancies in city government. Up for election were the mayoral post and two seats on the city council.

Garnering 30 of the 47 write-in votes cast for mayor, Bryan Brandt was deemed the winner after election results were canvassed last Tuesday. Brandt had previously served one term in the city's top spot, ending in 2012, followed by a stint on the city council due to a write-in win.

"I don't know what the deal is," Brandt said of the apparent unwillingness of people in the community to take on leadership roles. "It's just hard to get young people to do it."

Brandt, a lifelong resident of Bigelow at nearly 62, said he talked with his family and others in the community after no one sought the mayoral post during the filing period.

"I said, 'If someone wants to write me in, I'll take it on,'" he shared. "I've got quite a few relatives in town yet, and I talked to some other people. I told them I don't want to lose our power."

WRITE-INS: Page 3

County acts to disburse remaining CARES funds

Second payments coming for some small businesses, nonprofits

By Julie Buntjer
jbuntjer@dglobe.com

WORTHINGTON — With \$118,547.43 in undesignated Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act funds, Nobles County commissioners voted unanimously Tuesday to issue second checks to all 259 businesses and 42 nonprofits who were previously approved for funding.

Divided equally, the second checks will amount to just under \$400.

The decision came after considerable discussion about how best to use the remaining dollars before the Dec. 1 deadline. Money not spent by that date must be returned to the State of Minnesota.

Collaborating with the city of Worthington throughout the process of awarding funds through a Small Business Grant Assistance Program, Deputy Nobles County Administrator Bruce Heitkamp said the stimulus impact countywide was approximately \$4 million.

The bulk of the funds was awarded to small businesses, with nonprofits receiving a combined \$1,915,917. Nobles County hospitals and clinics will

share in \$125,000; schools will share in \$165,000, and Emergency Medical Services will split \$175,000.

Another \$37,305.58 was dedicated for county personnel to replenish funds paid out while staff were either quarantined or out sick with COVID-19.

Nobles County Administrator Tom Johnson advised commissioners that it would be appropriate to pay public health salaries with the remaining dollars. Worthington City Administrator Steve Robinson also encouraged the county to keep the remaining funds and dedicate them to expenses incurred due to the pandemic.

COUNTY: Page 14

Fire claims Jackson's Burger King restaurant

By Ryan McGaughey
rmcgaughey@dglobe.com

JACKSON — Firefighters from six departments battled a blaze late Friday night that destroyed this community's Burger King restaurant.

Jackson Fire Department Chief Dave Bond said Monday that his department was dispatched at 10:32 p.m. Friday.

"When we first got there, we thought we just had fire in the kitchen, and the lobby area was full of smoke," Bond explained. "We had to make entry into

the kitchen area ... and the guys weren't in there very long because all of a sudden there was fire coming through the roof. We then got the crew out of there because the building was unsafe."

At that point, Bond said, requests were made to the Spirit Lake, Iowa and Fairmont fire departments for their ladder trucks. Also responding were the Alpha Fire Department as well as the Sherburn and Lakefield fire department, which each brought tankers.

Winds of between 15 and 25 mph blew while

firefighters battled the blaze. Bond estimated that the scene was cleared at about 3:30 a.m. Saturday.

"We had to bring an excavator in early that morning because the roof had collapsed down in itself," Bond said. "There was still fire under the roof, and we also had to take down a portion of the walls because there was still fire inside. He (excavator) was actually able to reach over the walls and pull the roof out."

Bond added that his department was dispatched once again Saturday evening to the site,

located on the east side of U.S. 71 near Interstate 90. He said one corner of the structure was still "smoldering a bit," and firefighters remained for approximately half an hour spraying water on it.

The restaurant was closed at the time of the fire, and no injuries were reported. Bond said that the cause of the fire remains under investigation.

"I want to give a thank-you to all the fire departments ... for helping us," Bond said. "Thanks also to the Jackson County Sheriff's Office, as well as



Photo courtesy of Nathan Peterson
The Jackson Burger King is shown following a fire that began late Friday night and required the services of six regional fire departments.

Minnesota Energy and meter from the building Federated." off, Bond noted, while

Minnesota Energy Federated arrived and was able to pull the gas shut off power.

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GOOD MORNING

Carlton Hurley
Worthington
Thank you for subscribing!

COVID-19 claims lives of 2 more Nobles County residents

By Ryan McGaughey
rmcgaughey@dglobe.com

REGIONAL — The Minnesota Department of Health reported Tuesday morning that two more Nobles County residents died from COVID-19 during the 24-hour period that ended at 4 p.m. Monday. One was between the ages of 80-84, and one was between the ages of 85 and 89.

No additional information was available.

The new report also indicated that Cottonwood County added 28 new cases of the novel coronavirus, while Nobles County added 21 more cases. Murray (19), Pipestone (12), Jackson (10) and Rock (seven) counties followed.

Statewide, 5,770 Minneso-

tans tested positive for COVID-19 in the 24-hour period, and 26 individuals died of complications. There have been 2,943 Minnesotans lost to COVID-19, including 2,015 residents of long-term care or assisted living facilities.

Minnesota's cumulative total of confirmed positive cases is now 236,949 (positive tests and

antigen tests), with 186,680 beyond the 10-day isolation period.

Thus far, 18,357 Minnesota health care workers have contracted the novel coronavirus.

A local snapshot of the virus shows the following cumulative county totals since testing began:

► Nobles: 2,827 positive

cases; three probable; 2,631 beyond the 10-day isolation period as of Monday; 27 deaths.

► Cottonwood: 543 positive cases; two probable

► Jackson: 349 positive cases; one probable; one death.

► Murray: 463 positive cases; one probable; three deaths.

► Rock: 536 positive cases; five probable; nine deaths.

COVID-19

From Page 1

"I don't know if he caught it there, but there were some people that got really ticked off at him when he asked if they would wear a mask," Joyce said.

"Several even left."

Days later, the couple was on their way to a funeral in Chandler when Merle complained that the bean dust hanging in the air was bothering him.

As Joyce recalled the timeline, he then thought he had a cold. Merle went from having

cold symptoms to feeling weak. Food no longer tasted good, and he wouldn't eat.

Merle's weakness worsened, and on Oct. 8, Joyce took him to the clinic. Medical personnel immediately said it sounded like he may have COVID.

In an exam room, Merle's oxygen level registered 81% — low enough to warrant a trip to the emergency room.

What bothers Joyce to this day is the fact that her husband was wheeled down a back hallway to the ER, while she was directed to take another route. When she reached the ER, she was told she couldn't see Merle because "he might have COVID."

"I had been with him (for) how long? I couldn't even go hug him or say goodbye," she said with a sob.

Instead, Joyce was told to sit in her car while medical staff worked on her husband. A couple

of hours later, once he stabilized, she was still not allowed in.

"I said, 'Well, tell him I love him then,'" she continued tearfully. "I could not see him again."

Merle was transported that same day to Sanford USD Medical Center in Sioux Falls. Visitors are not allowed to visit COVID-19 patients unless death is imminent.

In the first four or five days of his hospitalization, Merle and Joyce visited via phone a couple of times. He was so weak that it was difficult for him to talk, however, and she was in a mandatory 14-day quarantine at home. Joyce was tested for the virus the day after Merle was hospitalized, but was negative.

By day five or six — the days were a blur for Joyce — the family made the decision to place him on a ventilator. Son Chad Facetimed with his dad briefly, and Joyce spoke with Merle over the

phone.

"He said, 'I love you, Joyce. Pray for me.'"

Those were the last words she'd ever hear him speak.

Merle remained on a ventilator for about 12 days, until his death on Oct. 26. Days prior, his heart began acting up and the family was notified of his struggles.

Being on a ventilator, COVID-19 patients are required to lay on their stomach for 16 hours per day. It helps the patient clear their lungs, Joyce was told. She knew that was something Merle was struggling with. Before the ventilator, he could lay on his stomach for four or five hours a day.

"If I could have just been there to rub his back or something," Joyce said, shedding more tears. "I don't think he ever had a good day — it was always downhill just a little bit."

On Oct. 26, the hospital called to say Merle's

kidneys had quit working and "everything was going wacko," Joyce said.

Chad took her to the hospital, but he wasn't allowed to stay. As he returned to his vehicle, Joyce went in to see Merle. He was still on the ventilator, but the plan was to remove it.

"He only lasted two to five minutes after the ventilator was unhooked," she said. "The ventilator was keeping him alive."

As Joyce stood at his bedside, singing "Lead Me Gently Home, Father," Merle took his last breath.

The funeral took place a week later, due in part to Jason testing positive for COVID. While he had short-lived, mild symptoms, he was quarantined.

If being separated from one's spouse during illness isn't difficult enough, grieving with family and friends — while social distancing — added to the strain.

"I will say I did hug a couple of people, but most people stayed back," Joyce said. "It was very hard for me because I wanted to just let them hug me and I wanted to hug them, but I couldn't."

As hard as it is to lose someone, losing a loved one during a global pandemic seems to compound the loss.

Joyce agreed to share her family's story because she wants people to wear their mask, to use hand sanitizer and to wash their hands.

"You may not know you have it, and you have to watch out for the people that are vulnerable," she said. "Merle had sleep apnea, so his lungs were weaker. He got pneumonia because his lungs were weaker."

"You just don't know what the other person has and how it will affect them."

PUBLIC NOTICE

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE OF HEARING ON PROPOSED IMPROVEMENT

To Whom it May Concern: **NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN,** That, pursuant to Minnesota Statutes §§429.011 to 429.111, the City Council of the City of Worthington, Nobles County, Minnesota, will meet in Council Chambers of City Hall at 7:00 p.m., on Monday, December 14, 2020, to consider the making of an improvement of the following described street by extension of the municipal water distribution system: North Crailsheim Road (CSAH 10) from Fox Farm Road to a point 600 feet south of the north line of the Southwest Quarter of Section 22, Township 102 North, Range 40 West, Nobles County, Minnesota; The area proposed to be assessed for such improvements by extension of the municipal wastewater collection system and by extension of the municipal water distribution system is that property abutting the street as described above. The estimated cost of the improvement by extension of the municipal water distribution system is \$280,700. The City Council will also consider, in accordance with the report and MS 429.051, the assessment of additional benefit, estimated at \$9,010 to said properties, or portions thereof, from other trunk water distribution system improvements. A reasonable estimate of the impact of the assessments will be available at the hearing. Such persons as desire to be heard with reference to the proposed improvements will be heard at this meeting. Dated this 9th day of November 2020. **Mindy L. Eggers, City Clerk,** City of Worthington, Minnesota (Nov. 18 & 25, 2020) 2866744

CITY OF WORTHINGTON, MINNESOTA

SUMMARY OF ORDINANCE NO. 1165

AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND WORTHINGTON CITY CODE TITLE XI, CHAPTER 113: PEDDLERS, SOLICITORS AND TRANSIENT MERCHANTS TO INCLUDE MOBILE FOOD UNITS WITH VARIOUS RESTRICTIONS

THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WORTHINGTON DO ORDAIN, that on November 9, 2020, Ordinance 1165 was adopted by the City Council of the City of Worthington, Minnesota. Due to the lengthy nature of Ordinance 1165 the following summary of the ordinance has been prepared for publication as authorized by state law:

The ordinance which would amend and create a new subchapter in Chapter 113: Peddlers, Solicitors and Transient Merchant Code to allow Mobile Food Units in commercial, industrial and for special events in institutional or public districts subject to certain conditions. Some of the conditions in the ordinance include:

1. Must have Department of Health Licensing;
2. Providing a Waste Management Plan;
3. Only can be operated from 7:00 AM to 11:00 PM;
4. Must be on hard surface and in place with at least 6 hard-surfaced spots for the general public when not part of a City approved event.
5. Can be in same location for more than 21 days with City approval

This ordinance shall take effect and be in full force from and after its passage and publication. A printed copy of the entire ordinance is available for inspection by any person in the office of the City Clerk during the City's regular office hours of 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. and on the website www.ci.worthington.mn.us.

APPROVED FOR PUBLICATION BY the City Council of the City of Worthington, Minnesota, this 9th day of November, 2020.

(SEAL)

CITY OF WORTHINGTON

Mike Harmon, Mayor Pro Tem

Attest:
Mindy L. Eggers, City Clerk

VOTING IN FAVOR: Cummings, Janssen, Oberloh, Ernst (via conference call)

VOTING IN OPPOSITION: None

(November 18, 2020)


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