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Walz: State will continue boosting law enforcement in the Cities

BY ALEX DEROSIER
Post Bulletin

MINNEAPOLIS — Minnesota's state public safety agency will maintain an increased presence in the Twin Cities metropolitan area as it continues to help local agencies tackle an increase in crime. But Gov. Tim Walz said the increased costs will not be sustainable without eventual action from the state Legislature.

Joined by Public Safety Commissioner John Harrington and other law officials in downtown Minneapolis, Gov. Tim Walz on Thursday, Aug. 11, told reporters the State Patrol will continue its boosted presence in the Twin Cities. State resources, he said, have led to hundreds of arrests, warrants and illegal guns off the streets. "Our response that has now been ongoing throughout this year especially, is totally unprecedented — the number of folks who are involved in this, the number of missions that we're partaking in, and the results that they're getting," the governor said.

See **CITIES**, Page A3

Housing development plan approved Decision affects heron nest site in Rochester Township

BY JOHN MOLSEED
Post Bulletin

ROCHESTER — The Rochester Township Board has approved a preliminary plan for a housing development at the site of a great blue heron nest colony.

The 3-to-2 decision Thursday was the second time the board has voted in opposition to the township's planning and zoning commission's recommendation regarding the proposed development.

International Properties LLC is proposing a 10-home development southwest of Rochester.

Company owner Aderonke Mordi sank to her knees and pumped her fist in the air as the board voted to approve the plan.

The 30-acre site was home to a great blue heron nest colony known as a rookery. The nests, when occupied, are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918. Great blue herons, a migratory wading bird, aren't endangered and when their nests are empty, the nesting area has no special legal protections.

Environmental groups and neighboring property owners say the upland nest colony, not near a major body of water, is a unique natural resource that should be preserved. Legal action brought by neighbors and the group Save the Rookery has taken legal action that has delayed the development.

See **DEVELOPMENT**, Page A3



John Molseed / Post Bulletin

Aderonke Mordi, right, owner of International Properties LLC, reacts as the Rochester Township Board approves a development plan at the site of a great blue heron nest colony on land she purchased from Steve Connelly.



Eddie Swartzentruber outside his home on Aug. 5 in Rochester.

Traci Westcott / Post Bulletin

An unlikely change

Harmony man goes from Amish life to TikTok videos

BY MATTHEW STOLLE
Post Bulletin

ROCHESTER

Eddie Swartzentruber of Rochester was 17 when he slipped a note under

his pillow, quietly crept to the farmhouse door and fled.

It was a terribly cold January night, and his flimsy Amish clothes offered little protection against the sub-zero temperature.

Swartzentruber ran fast enough down the road to make progress and keep warm. He felt scared and guilty but determined to leave behind a lifestyle that offered him no prospect of happiness.

"I was pretty scared, but I knew somehow I would figure it out," Swartzentruber said, recalling his flight eight years ago from his community.

See **AMISH**, Page A5

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WEEKEND



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1922: Tasmania Opossum fur coats on sale at Massey's

1997 – 25 years ago
 • Susan LeGare-Gulden, a city housing inspector, was honored by Mayor Chuck Canfield for her efforts in the Kutzky Park neighborhood. Mayor Canfield proclaimed “Susan LeGare-Gulden Day.”
 • Rochester High School fastpitch softball star Katie Orth played with the Mankato Peppers 18-and-under team at the National Class A Fastpitch



THE DAY IN HISTORY
Loren Else

Tournament in Tulsa.
1972 – 50 years ago

• An armed bandit stuck up the Ray-Mar Motel at 1416 2nd St. SW and escaped with \$106. The night clerk was punched in the face, and the robber pulled a pistol from his waistband.
 • The former rooming house across from the Coffman Building was demolished to make room for a parking lot next to Mayo Foundation's School of Physical Therapy.

1947 – 75 years ago
 • Social Security will open three new branches in Minnesota. New branches will be in Zumbrota, Preston, and Caledonia.
 • Joe Coria won the first prize in the first Walter D. Sheldon memorial golf tournament. Coria had a 54-hole total of 210, which included a hole-in-one on the 175-yard third hole.

1922 – 100 years ago
 • Twelve were killed and thirty-five injured when a Soo Line No. 107 passenger train slammed into an oil truck at a crossing in Annandale, Minn.
 • At Massey's, a fur coat sale will be ongoing in August. A Tasmania Opossum coat is \$240, a striped Marmot is \$120, and a Muskrat with a raccoon collar and cuffs is \$168.00.

Amish

From page A1

He did figure it out. Swartzentruber, 25, has proven successful in navigating the modern world. He sports swept-back blond hair and a well-trimmed mustache and beard distinctly not in the Amish mold. He is married to Karwyn. He owns his own roofing company.

And, perhaps, in the most unlikely twist, Swartzentruber has a growing legion of TikTok fans.

Swartzentruber wasn't seeking TikTok fame when he opened an account last spring for fun. It wasn't until two months ago that he began experimenting with the platform describing life in an Amish community. That's when the number of his followers began to creep upwards, now 70,000 and growing.

It's not hard to imagine why his TikToks are attracting tens of thousands. Swartzentruber keeps his videos short and sweet. He often ends them with a flash of his beatific smile.

But mostly, his short videos work because they lift the veil on a community largely shrouded in secrecy to the outside world. People, in short, are fascinated by Swartzentruber's videos about the Amish.

FAMILY FRICTION

Do his parents still love him despite leaving the Amish? Love is not part of the Amish lexicon, Swartzentruber says in one video.

How do the Amish teach about puberty and sex? They don't. The subject is verboten. Swartzentruber said he was taught that babies come out of the sky. The fact that such subjects are not discussed among Amish explains “why there are a lot of problems in the Amish with abuse.”

On the question of the freedoms the Amish enjoy, Swartzentruber said in one video, they were few, if any. The rules prescribed everything, from how the Amish wore their hats to the size of the brim (no more than three-and-half inches wide). The brim could not be curled upward like a cowboy hat.

“That is way too worldly,” he states emphatically in his Deutsch-accented English.

AMISH BEGINNINGS

Largely viewed as a frozen-in-time Christian sect, the first Amish arrived in America in the mid-1700s. But the Anabaptist movement began well before that in Europe in 1525 as a radical wing of the Protestant Reformation.

Unlike Catholics and Protestants at the time, Anabaptists practiced adult baptism, and insisted on a “free Church” separate from state interference. In the late 1690s, Anabaptist leader Jacob Ammann and his followers promoted “shunning” and other religious innovations. It ultimately led to a split



Contributed

Eddie Swartzentruber when he was a teen, living in an Amish community in Harmony. It was several years before he made his break with the Amish.

between Anabaptists into Amish and Mennonite branches.

“Back when they broke away, there was no cars. It was barely a horse and buggy. It was more just a wagon,” Swartzentruber said. “They still do it today.”

Swartzentruber said this conflict between resistance to change and the need to adapt for reasons of law or survival creates huge dustups in the church that are usually resolved by an all-powerful bishop. Change does come, but when it does, it is often incremental and tortuous.

COWS AND THE COLD

Eddie said that when he was growing up in Harmony's Amish community, his family milked 10 cows to make a living. They stored the milk in cans and kept the can cool in ice and cold water.

But when a big dairy farmer moved in nearby, he introduced bulk milk and storing milk in tanks. Soon, creameries refused to accept canned milk. But to keep bulk milk fresh and cold, power generators were needed, and that was a bridge too far for his Amish brethren. So many turned from dairy farming to the trades and construction.

Life in an Amish community was often miserable. No matter how much he might search the Bible, in many situations he could find no satisfactory answers for why the Amish in Harmony lived like they did.

Swartzentruber said his own church, his namesake Swartzentruber church, was one of the most strict and uncompromising towards change. He recalls the moment when he made his decision to break from the Amish community.

He and his brother were riding in a fore cart, an open-air buggy with two horses hooked

to the front. Both were exposed to the elements on a miserably cold day. His hand froze. He was 12.

It was hard not to look enviously upon other nearby Amish communities that had more relaxed rules toward convenience and innovation.

THE SIN OF ENVY

“We thought the St. Charles Amish were so cool, because they got a triangle in the back of their buggy. They also had a door to get in, in the winter time. And they had a glass on the front, which I thought that'd be so awesome (to protect from the cold wind).”

Swartzentruber said he felt a desperate urge to explore the wider world. But the Amish church exerts a powerful force through its teachings that hedge in community and conformity among congregants.

Children are taught from an early age that they will roast in the pit of hell when they die if they ever leave the community. And for the first five years after leaving the Amish, Swartzentruber had trouble going to sleep at night.

“My mom would always say, ‘The end of the world could come for you in the middle of the night,’” he said.

Swartzentruber began his new life “among the English” basically from scratch. When he fled the Amish, he had no driver's license, no birth certificate, no social security number. He had only an eighth-grade education (He has since gotten his GED). But his Amish upbringing outfitted him with skills and an outlook that helped him succeed in the English world.

For one, he had a strong work ethic. He wasn't afraid of work. And soon enough, he was taking on odd jobs, shoveling snow and splitting wood, as long as they paid him in cash. Still, the learning curve was steep.

BUILDING AN ENGLISH LIFE

“It's hard to ask questions, because every question that I have, I feel like it's the stupidest question ever,” Swartzentruber said.

It was hard not to be dazzled by this new world after the cramped existence of Amish life.

Soon after he left the Amish, Swartzentruber went on a cross-

country furniture run to California. Driving down an interstate, Swartzentruber saw his first overpass bridge. He urged the driver to slow down.

“I wanted to take a picture, because I didn't know if I was going to see another one,” he said.

Swartzentruber still retains that wide-eyed wonder of the world. He travels often and has visited almost every state in the union.

But he discovered that there were Amish qualities and personality traits he had that collided with the social conventions of his new world and that he had to tame.

The Amish are a blunt people with an edgy sense of humor. At a Subway fast-food restaurant one day, Swartzentruber noticed that the food preparer behind the counter was a heavy-set lady.

“It looks like it's nice working at Subway,” he recalled telling the woman. “With the Amish, you would take that as a joke like, ‘ha, ha,’ but out here, you don't say stuff like that.”

Subway was challenging in another sense. An Amish dinner was simple and straightforward: Eggs for breakfast, a casserole for dinner. But at Subway,

he found the multitude of choices he had to make for a customized sandwich bewildering and overwhelming. Do you want tomatoes? Lettuce? Mustard? Oil?

“The first time I ever went to Subway, I was almost crying. The person I was working for wanted to go through Subway, and I'm going, ‘How do you order one of these? There's a million things here. I didn't know what half of these things are called,’” he recalled.

“Just make it like his. Just make it like his,” he recalled telling the server.

BACK HOME, AGAIN

Swartzentruber said he has returned to Harmony's Amish community that he was raised in a number of times since leaving. The first time was a short-lived visit a year after he had left. He drove up in a car, and his mom came out the door ready to reprove him. He didn't stay long.

His relations with his mom are up and down. His mom feels like she failed him. But for the most part, he has gotten his mom to promise not to talk about why he left.

Swartzentruber said he has nine siblings, many of whom have left the Amish community as well.

He gets enjoyment from making the videos, but if suddenly his audience plummeted to zero, he would go about his life as before.

“I'm not going to be offended,” he said.

But that's not going to happen soon, given the volume of questions he gets about Amish life. Every question he answers leads to 10 more.

He said he knows many Amish are aware of his TikToks and “they hate it.” Some young Amish have phones or they use the phones of others. They create accounts to keep tabs on others.

“(The Amish) would see me as so much better of a person if I would be home, wearing Amish clothes, living an Amish lifestyle, even if I had a computer and a phone but kept it hidden,” he said. “That's one of those things that I never respect about the Amish is they will totally live a lie.”

But it is important, he says, to give the unvarnished truth, both the good and the bad, about life among the Amish from someone who lived it.

“Some of it is not comfortable to talk about, but I think it's needed,” Swartzentruber said, “because some of the stuff that happens is horrible.”

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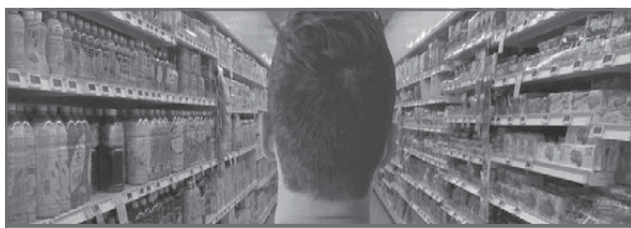
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