



Reinsurance debate rages on at the Capitol. **A3.**

**BBE's title bid comes up short. B1.**

WILLMAR, MINN.

MONDAY, MARCH 28, 2022

WCTTRIB.COM

## Olivia mayor responds to death

Hawkinson expresses frustrations at recent tragedies in town

By Shelby Lindrud  
West Central Tribune

OLIVIA — They are remarks Olivia Mayor Jon Hawkinson probably hoped he would never have to write. But with the tragic death of Isaac Hoff, 13, stunning the community, Hawkinson decided he needed to respond.



Hawkinson

"I am broken-hearted and stunned to find our community struggling with yet another tragedy in our midst," Hawkinson said in a release sent out late Friday evening. "While saying that my thoughts and prayers are with everyone touched by this senseless tragedy might sound trite and cliché, it nevertheless is a true statement of where my mind and heart is at this moment."

It has been a rocky year for the city known as the Corn Capital of the World. In July, Olivia Police officer Aaron Clouse shot and killed Ricardo Torres Jr. on the same block where the apartment Hoff was stabbed in is located. Clouse was found justified for his actions by the Blue Earth County Attorney's Office and no charges were filed. Then in December BOLD High School sophomore Carter Brems-eth passed away, in what his family later released was a suicide.

"I feel frustrated at the parade of horrific situations our community has endured," Hawkinson said.

Hawkinson is also angry at the lives lost and changed forever, angry that Olivia's reputation has been tarnished and angry at how powerless people are feeling.

"The anger I feel has me

**MAYOR:** Page A2



Photos by Macy Moore / West Central Tribune

Friends of 13-year-old Isaac Hoff, who was stabbed and killed early Thursday, gather to mourn his passing Friday afternoon outside the building in downtown Olivia where the stabbing took place.

# Vigil for Isaac

Olivia comes together to mourn the death of teenager

By Shelby Lindrud  
West Central Tribune

Olivia

It is fitting that so many people remembered Isaac Hoff as a happy and laughing teenager since his name, taken from the first book of the Holy Bible, means "one who laughs."

"He was always smiling," said Henry Meyers, lead pastor at Grace Community Church.

While there was laughter Friday night at the church in Olivia, it was sharing space with grief and pain as a large crowd attended a vigil for the 13-year old, who died early Thursday morning in a domestic abuse event, in an apartment located just above the church.

"I am so sorry for your loss," Meyers said to the congregation of friends, family, classmates and community members.

Hoff, an eighth-grader at BOLD Public Schools, died after being stabbed, allegedly by the boyfriend of his mother. The suspect, Houston Allen Morris, is facing three counts of 2nd degree murder and had his first court

**VIGIL:** Page A2



River Estrada reads messages written on the wall outside the building where 13-year-old Isaac Hoff was stabbed early Thursday in the downtown Olivia apartment. Hoff later died at the Olivia Hospital.

# Avian flu is here

Infected poultry are confirmed within Meeker and Mower counties

By Kelly Boldan  
West Central Tribune

ST. PAUL — The highly pathogenic avian influenza, also known as bird flu, has been confirmed in poultry flocks in Meeker and Mower counties, the state Board of Animal Health announced Saturday.

The samples from two flocks were tested on Friday at Minnesota-based testing sites and then confirmed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Veterinary Services Laboratories in Ames, Iowa.

The agency said the Meeker County flock is a commercial turkey flock of nearly 300,000 turkeys reported with mortality and signs of depression.



Tribune file photo

A flock of turkeys is shown in this undated file photo. Two poultry flocks — one in Meeker County and one in Mower County — were confirmed Saturday as infective with highly pathogenic avian influenza.

Samples were collected from the flock, which tested positive at the Minnesota Poultry Testing Laboratory in Willmar.

The Mower County back-

yard mixed flock of 17 chickens, ducks and geese reported increased mortality. Samples were collected and submitted

**FLU:** Page A2

# JO-OT turkey farm is infected with avian flu

Company taking precautions to protect the supply chain

By Shelby Lindrud  
West Central Tribune

WILLMAR — Jennie-O Turkey Store, based in Willmar, has confirmed that one of its farms in Minnesota has been infected with highly pathogenic avian influenza.

"Jennie-O Turkey Store has been preparing for this situation and took extensive precautions to protect the health of the turkeys in the supply chain," read a press release from the company Sunday morning.

The state Board of Animal Health on Saturday announced that a commercial turkey farm, with 300,000 birds, in Meeker County had been infected with HPAI. Quarantine and depopulation

of the birds on the premises has started, the Board of Animal Health said.

It is believed migratory waterfowl play a big part in the spread of HPAI. A second case of the disease was also found in a mixed backyard flock in Mower County.

"While farms supplying turkeys to Jennie-O Turkey Store have not had any confirmed cases until now, many regions, producers and companies have been impacted since February," the Jennie-O release said. "Cases have included numerous chicken and turkey commercial farms, as well as smaller backyard flocks."

Jennie-O said it would

**TURKEY:** Page A2



## VIGIL

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appearance on Friday. Hoff's mother was also injured in the incident.

Members of Hoff's family brought the vigil together with Grace Community Church opening its doors, giving everyone a place to gather out of the biting wind. Candles in glass vases were available for people to write notes on with markers then light, with some of the candles lining the sidewalk outside. The outside wall of the church, the former home of The Master's Coffee Shop and the Christian Community Outreach Center, was inscribed with many messages to Hoff in chalk.

"Isaac was a spunky but a very bighearted young man," said Kaleigh Gilberts, one of Hoff's aunts. "He loved his mom and baby sister. They meant the

world to him."

Mydalene Mendez, aunt to Hoff's young sister, also remembered a boy who loved the little girl.

"And she loved him," smiling brightly when he would come by, Mendez said. She said it was important for her to attend the vigil, for the baby, as well as to support the rest of Isaac's family.

The group at the vigil was a young crowd, many who were friends and classmates of Hoff. They remembered a great friend who was always cheerful.

"He was a good guy, very outgoing, funny," said friend Angel Lutz.

The teenager's death, and how he died, has been hard for most to understand, especially for fellow students.

"I don't think I have fully comprehended it," said Elijah Swenson, friend and classmate.

BOLD Schools has been reaching out to

support its staff and students during this difficult time. BOLD Principal Brett Benson, in an interview with the West Central Tribune on Friday afternoon, said the district's crisis plan has been put into action, with mental health professionals having been at the school since Thursday.

"Having a loss in your school is never easy," Benson said.

Over the last few days the school has been offering those who need it safe spaces to process, talk or just grieve. Meetings were held with staff and with Hoff's classmates. A prerecorded message also went out to BOLD parents, to make them aware of what was going on. There is also information about grief on the school district's website. Councilors will be at the school again on Monday. Afterward, the district will evaluate its next steps, to make

sure both students and staff are getting the help they need.

"Everybody grieves differently," Benson said.

At the vigil, Olivia Mayor Jon Hawkinson said he really didn't know what to say about what had happened. The city has dealt with several tragic events in the last year, including the death of BOLD sophomore Carter Bremseth in December and the officer-involved shooting in July 2021.

"Just really heartbroken obviously," Hawkinson said. "We need to come together as a community, repair and grow."

While the grief was palpable at the vigil, Meyers hoped people would also treasure Hoff's smile and sense of humor.

"Please laugh, that is what his name means," Meyers said. "We want to remember the funny things he did."

## MAYOR

From Page A1

wanting to "do something" tangible beyond offering condolences and prayers," Hawkinson said.

The most recent event, plus those in the months passed, have caused Hawkinson to reflect on what common threads there might be between them. In the release, Hawkinson said he believed illegal drugs, the challenges around providing support and encouragement to youth and the loss of civility between individuals and groups throughout society are growing problems.

"I believe we need to be honest with ourselves and admit that we face these daunting problems which in some cases are destroying lives, destroying our community's reputation, threatening the stability of our area and dimming the prospect of a better future for ourselves and our children," Hawkinson said.



Macy Moore / West Central Tribune

Friends of 13-year-old Isaac Hoff write messages Friday afternoon at his vigil in downtown Olivia. Following Hoff's death in an alleged domestic violence incident, Olivia Mayor Jon Hawkinson is hoping to do something about the negative issues he believes are hurting the town.

Going forward Hawkinson said he plans to reach out to various leaders and representatives from law enforcement, schools, human services, faith organizations and the community at large on how to confront the issues he feels are threatening the community and its families.

"Today we grieve the senseless loss of another young member of our community," Hawkinson said. "I am done feeling angry, frustrated and helpless."

Hawkinson is hopeful that others in Olivia and the surrounding area will assist in trying to find solutions.

"I'm adding in with

my prayers for all those impacted by recent tragedies an earnest hope and desire that together we can put faith into action and begin to address some of the problems and challenges our community currently faces," Hawkinson said. "Please join me in this effort."

## TURKEY

From Page A1

continue to work with

the U.S. Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, the Minnesota Board of Animal Health, the Minnesota Depart-

ment of Agriculture and other poultry industry associations.

"USDA and the National Turkey Federation are monitoring and

responding to the situation and remind consumers that HPAI does not pose a food safety concern," the release said.

## FLU

From Page A1

to the University of Minnesota Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory in St. Paul.

Meeker County is located in west central Minnesota and Mower County is located in southern Minnesota, on the border with northeast Iowa.

Both poultry sites are now quarantined and depopulation of birds on the premises has started. Poultry are depopulated to prevent the spread of the disease and poultry from the infected flock at the sites will not enter the food system.

Poultry is safe to eat, and proper handling and cooking of poultry and eggs to an internal temperature of 165°F is always advised. The Centers for Disease Control also recently announced this strain of avian influenza is a low risk to the public.

"These are the first cases of HPAI in the state of Minnesota since 2015," said Dr. Dale Lauer, Poultry Program Director for the Board, according to the news release. "Poultry producers and backyard flock owners need to be on alert and contact their



veterinarian immediately if they see any changes in their flocks. Everyone in poultry facilities needs to follow the site's biosecurity protocols every time to prevent the spread of disease."

Minnesota farms that raise turkeys or chickens have been on high alert as avian flu outbreaks were reported this year in the United States, including Iowa, South Dakota and Wisconsin.

A commercial flock of

2.75 million egg-laying chickens in Wisconsin were culled to prevent the spread of avian flu after birds on the farm tested positive in mid-March, according to Reuters.

The disease is already widespread in poultry in Europe and affecting Africa, Asia and Canada.

In 2015, more than 9 million birds in Minnesota were either killed by the virus or euthanized to slow its spread.

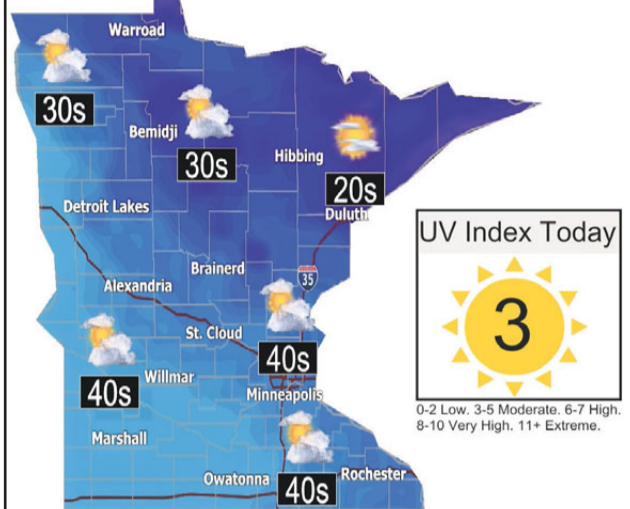


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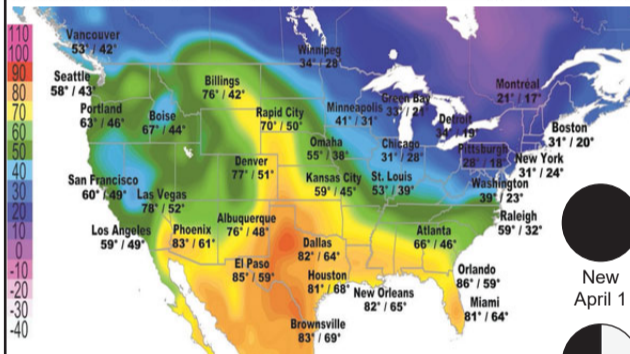
## StormTRACKER WILLMAR FORECAST

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
43/32 Mostly Cloudy Wind: SE 17 mph	42/33 PM Showers Wind: SE 19 mph	37/26 Snow Showers/Wind Wind: N 21 mph	36/22 Mostly Cloudy Wind: NW 19 mph
Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday
45/30 Partly Cloudy Wind: W 10 mph	47/26 Partly Cloudy Wind: NW 9 mph	50/30 Partly Cloudy Wind: NW 11 mph	53/40 Partly Cloudy Wind: S 13 mph

\*Average wind speed for each day



Regional Weather	Today	Tomorrow	Regional Weather	Today	Tomorrow
Bemidji, MN	34 / 25	40 / 28	Marshall, MN	44 / 32	42 / 31
Duluth, MN	27 / 22	37 / 30	Minneapolis, MN	41 / 31	40 / 34
Eau Claire, WI	40 / 28	41 / 34	Rochester, MN	40 / 31	39 / 36
Fargo, ND	44 / 32	46 / 30	Sioux Falls, SD	50 / 34	50 / 32
International Falls, MN	31 / 20	37 / 25	St. Cloud, MN	40 / 30	40 / 32

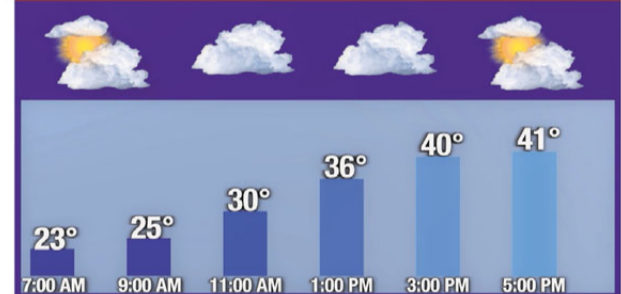


## StormTRACKER Forecast

Mostly cloudy skies with highs in the low 40s.

Almanac Through 6 pm Sunday		
Temperature	High	Low
Sunday	28°	14°
Avg. Wind Direction Sunday N		
Peak Wind Speed Sunday 18 mph		

Sunrise: 7:08 a.m. Sunset: 7:43 p.m.  
Moonrise: 5:58 a.m. Moonset: 3:36 p.m.



## TODAY'S INFO

### What's happening?

Do you know of something that might make a good story or photograph for the newspaper? We really appreciate hearing ideas from readers. Just give us a call at 320-235-1150, or stop in our office at 2208 Trott Ave. S.W., Willmar.

### Lottery results

Winning numbers drawn Saturday and Sunday are:

Powerball: 2-10-50-59-61  
Powerball: 6  
Estimated jackpot: \$167 million  
Saturday Daily 3: 3-7-8  
Sunday Daily 3: 1-8-9  
Saturday Northstar Cash: 6-17-12-29-30  
Sunday Northstar Cash: 3-4-13-21-28  
Lucky for Life: 1-5-11-25-42  
Lucky ball: 7

For more information, go to mlottery.com.

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wctrib.com  
A Division of  
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Vol. 95 No. 74  
(USPS 675080)

Postmaster: Send any address changes to: West Central Tribune, PO Box 839, Willmar, MN 56201-0839

**Publishing:** The West Central Tribune publishes print and digital e-paper editions on Wednesdays and Saturdays and a digital e-paper edition Mondays through Saturdays. The Tribune publishes online at wctrib.com seven days a week. The newspaper is published by West Central Tribune at 2208 Trott Ave. SW, Willmar, Minnesota, 56201.

**Membership Rates**  
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\$259.09 for 52 weeks  
or \$143.94 for 26 weeks

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