



Echo Press file photo

At last year's Osakis Days Festival, parade-goers gather candy that was tossed on June 20, 2021.

VIEWES BY THE ECHO PRESS

THUMBS UP/ THUMBS DOWN

Festivals and celebrations

Thumbs Up: It's so good to see community festivals returning this spring and summer. They are part of the fabric that knits people together, creates proud traditions, and helps define what a community is all about. This week, Rune Stone Days in Kensington will take place June 16-19 with pageants, garage sales, bake sales, axe throwing, children's games, music, fireworks, crafts and vendors, car show, tractor pull, a parade and much more. The following week, June 23-26 is Osakis' time in the spotlight. The Osakis Days Festival will include downtown sidewalk sales, meat raffles, a medalion hunt, kids' games in Park Osagi, bingo, a street dance, food truck, a BBQ party, water fights, and a parade. And you don't want to miss the Vikingland Band Festival on Sunday, June 26 at 1:30 p.m., featuring 17 top-notch marching bands. There are also summer celebrations planned in Evansville (July 1-3), Miltoona (July 15-17), Alexandria's Art in the Park (July 30-31), Brandon (Aug. 3-7), Parkers Prairie (Aug. 5-7), Garfield (Aug. 12-13), the Douglas County Fair (Aug. 17-20) and more. If you've never experienced any of these gatherings before, take a short drive and check them out. They're a whole lot of fun. Check our Lakeland Shopping Guide for more details on the festivals as the summer heats up.

Disrespectful drivers

Thumbs Down: An Alexandria resident said he's noticed two troubling trends in the city. First, no one pays attention to the signs at local parking stalls that are designated for people with disabilities. "So many times you see young people, or individuals with no license plate marked for those slots or no sign in their window for using these stalls," the resident said in an email. "One should feel ashamed for thinking you are so important that you can't walk 25 yards more to get into a store." His second thumbs down is for the lack of respect for stop signs. "That sign doesn't mean just slow down somewhat; it means come to a complete stop," the resident said. "The same when turning right on a red light. One must come to a stop and then proceed when safe. What example are we showing our children and young upcoming drivers, when we view driving laws with total disdain?"

Pizza for a good cause

Thumbs Up: Alexandria Community Wood Fired Pizza is again teaming with nonprofits in the community every

Wednesday evening this summer from 4:30 to 7 p.m. at 2210 6th Ave. E (the United Methodist Church in Alexandria). Pizzas are available for takeout or can be enjoyed on the patio. All proceeds go to support a wide variety of nonprofit organizations. For more information, go to Alexandriacommunitywood-fired.com.

Being nice to the bees

Thumbs Up: Now is a great time to help the bees - June is National Pollinators Month. You can create a pollinator-friendly landscape by following these tips from the University of Minnesota: Focus on a "healthy" environment, not a perfect landscape. Choose plants that provide food and habitat for pollinators. Plant a bee lawn. Replace lawn areas that are difficult to mow with shrubs and flowers. Adopt best practices in landscape maintenance to improve plant health and eliminate the need for pesticides. Some suggestions on what to plant: roses, lilacs, fruit-bearing shrubs 6 feet tall and under, trees such as apple, crabapple, pear, cherry and plum; vines and climbers. Here's why it's important: About one out of every three bites of food we eat exists because of pollinators. About 75% of the world's flowering plants depend on pollinators to reproduce. More than 3,500 species of native bees help increase crop yields.

Giving dogs heat stroke

Thumbs Down: With temperatures expected to climb near 100 degrees this Sunday, some people will neglect their dogs, leaving them in a hot car or under a hot sun with no shade for hours. Such incidents come across the police scanner more often than one would expect. Off Leash K9 Training in Osakis recently posted information on how to recognize signs of heat stroke in dogs, from head to toe. Head - seizures, dizziness, and signs of confusion. Mouth - vomiting, heaving panting, excessive drooling, change in gum color. Body - lethargy, restlessness, high body temperature, diarrhea. Heart - a racing heart beat. Feet - collapsing or staggering. Dog owners who see such signs should move the dog into a cool area; apply cool water all over the dog's body; apply cool towels to the dog's head, neck and chest; give the dog small drinks of cool water; and if the signs don't improve, immediately take your dog to the veterinarian.

If you have a suggestion for a Thumbs Up/Thumbs Down, email it to aedenloff@echopress.com or mail it to Echo Press, P.O. Box 549, Alexandria, MN 56308.

Terrifying shrieks in the night

At 3 a.m. on a recent Tuesday night, my wife, Celeste, and I abruptly awoke to a piercing, loud, agonizing scream.

We both bolted upright, simultaneously. "What in the heck is that?!" we both said at the same time.

It was a sound that was unrecognizable - a shrilling shriek that chilled us to the bone.

"Is it human?" Celeste said, echoing exactly what I was thinking.

The tortuous screech continued. It sounded so close to us that I thought whatever creature made the noise was actually in the house. We hesitatingly left the bedroom to go investigate.

In the dining room, the screech was even louder. That's when we realized we had left the windows open because it was unusually warm that night.

The "thing" making the noise sounded like it was just a few feet away.

I felt like a complete wimp, being so scared that I really didn't want to see whatever it was that was making that ungodly noise. Celeste was braver. She shined her phone flashlight out the screen window, trying to get a glimpse of what it was but the night was inky black and we couldn't see a thing.

The shrieking continued. The creepiest part: There was a human feel to it.



AL EDENLOFF
Al's Turn

"Could it be a child?" Celeste asked.

"Possibly, or maybe some kind of huge bird?" I said.

"A dog?" Celeste said.

"A wounded cat?"

I guessed.

"Should I call the sheriff's office?" Celeste asked.

We live just outside the city limits so the sheriff's office would be the one to call but we didn't want to come across as scaredy cats or bother them if it was some common animal noise. We waited just a few seconds and the sound gradually faded, leaving us in silence except for throwing out more guesses as to what on earth - or not on earth - had made those weird screams.

We've seen a lot of critters on our property through the years - dobermans on the loose, cats, deer and rabbits, scores of rabbits. And that got me to thinking. Back when I was 10 or 12 in Parkers Prairie, a big dog in our neighborhood got into a rabbit hutch and the sounds those rabbits made were eerily similar to what Celeste and I had heard.

"I'm betting it's a rabbit," I said.

"Could be," Celeste said.

"Maybe we'll find out in the morning."

We actually were able to get back to sleep that night but when we looked all over our yard the next day, we found nothing - no dead animal, no blood, no signs of anything amiss.

I Googled "rabbit sounds" on my phone and found a clip of a rabbit screaming, which they do if they're under attack or are dying. The scream sounded a lot like what we had heard. Celeste agreed.

But we were wrong. Celeste happened to get a phone call later that day from Police Chief Scott Kent about a story she was working on and the conversation strayed into the otherworldly shrieks we heard. He instantly knew what we were talking about and told us to Google "vixen fox calls." This led us to a YouTube video and sure enough, the noise we heard last night was exactly the same as a vixen fox mating call. It all fits because we have seen a few red foxes exploring our yard every now and then.

Remember that song from years ago - "What Does the Fox Say?" Remember how it would stick in your head for hours? I'd listen to that annoying verse anytime instead of that blood-curdling screech in the middle of the night.

"It's Our Turn" is a weekly column that rotates among members of the Echo Press editorial staff.

COMMENTARY

The impact of having a father

By Scott Fasset
Alexandria, MN

Long ago, I had heard a story, and have since heard it many times over, of a prison. Mother's Day was approaching, so Hallmark dropped off hundreds of Mother's Day cards for the inmates to write their mothers. The response was overwhelming. Every single card was used, so much so, that Hallmark had to drop off more cards because the inmates wanted to send cards to grandmothers, aunts, teachers, neighbor ladies etc. No matter where you are in life, no matter how good or bad you may perceive your life to be, you always remember the love and kindness shown to you by the special mother figures in your life - and this was still true in this prison filled with people who have done unspeakable acts of evil.

As Father's Day approached, Hallmark, which was so touched by the outpouring of love on Mother's Day, anxiously collected hundreds and hundreds of Father's Day cards for this prison. The day came and hundreds of cards were dropped off, but curiously, almost none were taken, and almost none were sent. Surprisingly (but not so surprisingly) the overwhelming number of these inmates, either had a bad relationship with their fathers, or no relationship at all.

More than almost any other factor, Fatherlessness is the most harmful condition that could possibly happen to a child.

A 2021 US Census Bureau study found that a child growing up in home without a biological father, step, or adoptive father is: four times greater risk of poverty; more likely to go to prison; 700% more likely to become pregnant as a teen; more likely to abuse drugs and alcohol; two times more likely to be obese; and

much more likely to commit suicide.

Another study was completed by one of the largest church bodies in the world, concluded that the single greatest factor in keeping children in church through their adulthood, was going to church, with their dad, as a child.

Think about that! The study compared almost every possible factor: Does the church have an active youth group, summer Bible camps, cool worship teams, Christian K-8 schools, Sunday school programs; did you attend church with you mom, grandparents or friends etc.? But more than anything, the number one indicator of whether or a not a child will remain in church as an adult was "Did you go to church with your dad?"

Please understand, I'm not sharing this stuff to make it sound like all of us fathers are super cool, charming, attractive, stunning, brave and intelligent, but I am sharing this with you because, although I am not a biologist, I know that each of you has a father, and I know that many of you are mothers whose children also have fathers. And I am imploring you now, to pray for those fathers.

Pray that fathers will know, with full certainty, who their heavenly father is.

Pray that they openly delight in their children, and the task of fathering.

Pray that the devil may have no stronghold in their mind or in their actions.

Pray that they are granted wisdom, humility and strength, so they may be a pillar of safety and truth in your home.

Pray that God would prepare men to be father figures to children who have none in their lives.

And finally, pray that God continually prepares them for the task of being a husband and a father.

May God bless you all this Father's Day, and always.

LETTER

America has a gun problem; we need real gun safety laws

To the editor:

Another day another mass shooting in America. In 2021, there were 693 mass shootings. So far in 2022 there have been 246 mass shootings - 27 in schools. There are an estimated 393 million civilian-owned guns in the U.S. Guns are now the leading cause of death for children (The New England Journal of Medicine). Ten Minnesota hospital systems say gun deaths have reached epidemic levels. Gun violence is affecting the mental health of our children. After each mass shooting, poli-

ticians offer their thoughts and prayers and blame mental illness but refuse to address the prolific gun problem in America.

Due to the influence of the NRA and powerful gun lobby, one arm of Congress refuses to do anything to protect the public from mass shootings and weapons of war. Currently, there are at least four common-sense gun safety bills sitting in the U.S. Senate blocked by Republicans. The NRA and gun lobby use the Second Amendment to the Constitution passed in 1791 to justify non-regulation of guns. The founding fathers lived in a world of the musket which fired a single lead

ball. In the 21st Century, we live in a world of the AR-15 with a 30-round magazine that fires bullets with such velocity they pulverize whatever they hit.

No civilian in the U.S. should be able to purchase/own an assault rifle meant only for military use. Our country needs real gun safety laws not just a Band-Aid to stop mass shootings in schools, churches, grocery stores, nightclubs, theaters and workplaces. Our precious irreplaceable children need protection not shooter drills. Politicians who protect guns over people for political gain need to be replaced.

Jan Duhnke
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