



Little Joelle (JoJo) Olson of Owatonna enjoys a bubble machine spraying bubbles all over her at the Steele County Fair. The 2-year-old is the daughter of Zach and Jordan Olson. Thousands of people enjoyed the six-day fair, which ended Sunday. See Section B for complete fair coverage.

STAFF PHOTO BY RICK BUSSLER

Precast bid comes in below budget for BPHS project

BY KAY FATE
STAFF WRITER

The first big step in the Blooming Prairie School District building project is in the books. Members of the school board approved a \$2.8 million bid from Wells Precast for the walls that will form the new gym and auditorium. “This first bid, the precast, is a big chunk,” Superintendent Chris Staloch told board members. The precast may also move the timeline of the build up “by a month or maybe even two,

depending on how everybody else bids, too.” Taracon Precast presented a bid of \$3.07 million. “Both companies came in and did presentations,” Staloch said. “Wells ... was not only the lowest bidder but came in with ideas of things that were concerning to them and ways to address those concerns – and well within the budgeted cost.” The rest of the bidding process will begin at the end of August and run through the first two weeks of September.

In addition to the precast decision, the district will have “lots of permit reviews in the next couple of weeks,” Staloch said. The project oversight committee will meet twice a month when construction begins later this fall, on pace with the original timeline. “I feel good about where we are right now,” he said. Jon Sunde, treasurer of the school board and a member of the building and grounds committee, agreed. “I was on the last project also,” he said,

“and this one’s going smoother.” The work is funded through a \$34 million referendum school district voters passed in November. In addition to the new gym and performing arts center at the junior/senior high school building, the project will add six new classrooms, flex learning space, upgrades to the industrial technology program, an expansion of the Commons, more art and music space, and new baseball and softball practice fields. See **PRECAST** on A17 ►

Ballots set for fall election

BY KAY FATE
STAFF WRITER

Expect to see more signs in yards this fall, because several races around the county are going to be contested. Three of the four school board elections have more candidates than empty seats. The lone exception is Medford, where the three incumbents are the only people who filed to run. But the Medford City Council is a different story: Four people have filed for the two open seats. There are no incumbents in that race. Four seats are up for grabs on the Owatonna City Council. Each incumbent has refilled; all but one has a challenger. In a repeat of the 2018 election, Steele County Sheriff Lon Thiele is facing a challenge from Steele County Deputy Darrin Helget. Thiele has held the role since 2010. The four incumbent Steele County Commissioners are running unopposed, as are the county attorney, surveyor and soil and water supervisors. In municipal and school board races around the county:

Owatonna School Board (4 seats)
Lloyd Brandt
Nikki Gieseke (i)
Jan Guse
Elizabeth Hedlund
Michael Herman
Josh Indahl
Jolayne Mohs (i)
Mark Sebring (i)
April St. Martin
Lori Weisenburger (i)
Colin Whalen

Owatonna City Council (4 seats)
Council Member at Large:
Dan Boeke (i)
Peng Olson
Council Member Ward 1:
Nathan Dotson (i)
Seth Madole
See **BALLOTS** on A19 ►

Couple cracks all-time high with MS Run

BY RICK BUSSLER
PUBLISHER

Carl and Denise Wieman had some extra motivation to finish this year’s annual MS River Run. Their trip proved to be a sentimental journey as they paid tribute to Carl’s uncle, Bob Wieman, who died just two weeks ago at 100 years old. Carl and Denise traveled on the run on a Honda Gold Wing, which has now been involved 26 years with the first 10 years with Bob and now the past 16 with Carl and Denise. The Wiemans dedicated their ride to Bob, who rode in the run for years and raised more than \$50,000 for MS. During that time, Bob won many awards as the oldest rider as well as top fundraiser. His last trip was at 80 years old in 2002. “He went on saying that after he was done riding that we should continue with the ride and try to exceed his goals for MS,” said Carl. “He encouraged us to not just try to do the minimum, but try to exceed at our fundraising and work with MS.” And the Wiemans have done just that and more. Since 2002, Carl and Denise have picked up the torch and dedicated their lives to riding in the run and helping MS. This year alone the Owatonna couple raised



STAFF PHOTO BY RICK BUSSLER

Denise and Carl Wieman of Owatonna are set to take off on the annual MS River Road Run Saturday morning. The run began at Leo’s South in Lakeville and continued on back roads to Tomah, Wis. The Wiemans designed the route for the run.

a personal record of \$7,500, bringing their 20-year total to more than \$90,000. This year’s total was bolstered by a \$2,500 donation from Al-Corn Clean Fuel in Claremont. No other cycle has come close to as many rides as the Wiemans have done on their Gold Wing. “There are very few people that have been on the ride more than 20 years, and most of them have bought new bikes through the years,” Carl said. The Wiemans have no plans to get rid of the Gold Wing.

“That will never be sold and will stay in the Wieman family forever,” Carl says. On Saturday, the Wiemans and dozens of other motorcyclists took off on the 37th annual River Road Run from Leo’s South in Lakeville to Tomah, Wis. Carl and Denise have designed the route for the past few years. And this year was no exception. The goal of designing the run is to have scenic routes with no interstates and very few state roads, according to Carl. “We want to make this more of a leisurely ride and enjoy-

able for people,” he said. The Wiemans are passionate about multiple sclerosis as Denise’s niece, Lori Serbus, died from complications in 2004. Funds are raised on the run for research in hopes of finding a cure for MS, a chronic and often disabling disease of the central nervous system. Carl and Denise are still accepting donations to add to this year’s record. They can be sent to the Wiemans at 524 Glendale St., Owatonna, MN 55060. All contributions are tax-deductible.

Mini-series shoot starts in Owatonna

BY JONI HUBRED
NEWS EDITOR

Nick Hagen grew up walking the North Straight River Parkway in Owatonna and now, he’s looking to film a mini-series there. Hagen, representing Owatonna-based Winter State Entertainment, asked city councilors Tuesday to approve a permit for work in the south-east area of Manthey Park and along the trail. Their “back up” location is nearby Cashmere Park. The project, Hagen said, has a medieval/fantasy theme. “I grew up here, I graduated here, and I’ve walked that trail many times, and there’s something kind of magical about the trees and the way they bend,” he said. “It has that kind of mythological space to it.” Winter State will shuttle the small cast and crew from a parking area on 26th Street, following the paved path to locations. The crew and equipment carts will also remain on the path. Everyone will be out of the park during the hours it is closed. The stumbling block for officials was the company’s timeline. Winter State’s permit request came in less than 30 days before the requested August 24 start date. And this wasn’t the first time they asked to waive the 30-day requirement. Council member Kevin Raney reminded his colleagues that they had “a long discussion” about permit submissions coming See **MINI-SERIES** on A19 ►