

Grand Forks Herald

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2021

Manvel couple hit by car 'kindest people'

Relative: Family suffering after fatal accident on Nashville street

Herald staff

The Manvel couple who were struck by a car Saturday in Nashville, Tennessee, are "the kindest people" and involved in numerous local events and activities, a relative said Monday afternoon.

Jason and Kathy Vasichek were visiting downtown Nashville over the weekend when they were struck by a motorist. Kathy Vasichek, 52, died of her injuries; Jason remains hospitalized.

"They are the kindest couple," Jason Vasichek's brother, Shelby, told the Herald late Monday afternoon. "Their son

is involved in sports, (they do) outdoor activities, traveling. They're business owners and Kathy is a nurse. They're the nicest people you'll ever meet. They're involved in everything."

Shelby Vasichek said for the family, it's "probably the toughest scenario or situation we've ever endured. It's traumatic and hard to understand. There is a lot of suffering going on."

Compounding the grief is a report from Nashville police, which said the couple were "reportedly arguing" just prior to the incident. That line from

the police statement has been reported by media in Nashville, as well as by the Herald early Monday afternoon.

Shelby Vasichek disputes that claim, as did others who called the Herald after the newspaper's original report was published online Monday afternoon. He disputes that there was any sort of physical argument.

"They are not mean or aggressive people by any means. They have hearts of gold," he said, adding that it hurts to see the incident represented that way.

The driver of the car that

struck the Vasicheks, according to police, is 41-year-old Nashville resident Torie Davis. A police statement and Nashville and Davidson County court records indicate Davis is charged with driving with a suspended license and with not carrying proof of insurance. Davis is not listed on the county's jail roster.

Jason Vasichek owns Grand Forks-based Ironhide Equipment.

The Vasicheks recently celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary, Shelby Vasichek said.

He said he appreciates the

outpouring of support that has come since Saturday.

"There is so much love and care out there," he said.

The Herald originally reported the incident over the weekend, but withheld the names pending official notification from the Nashville Police Department.

A record-setting number of fans of the university's men's hockey team were in Nashville over the weekend to watch the Fighting Hawks play Penn State in the U.S. Hockey Hall of Fame Game. The game took place Saturday night, about 18 hours after the accident.

Bill drafts take shape

ND lawmakers aiming to target vaccine mandates, critical race theory

By Jeremy Turley and Adam Willis
Grand Forks Herald

BISMARCK — Many of the more than two dozen bill drafts submitted by North Dakota lawmakers for consideration in their upcoming special session attempt to restrict vaccination requirements and the teaching of critical race theory in public schools — divisive causes expected to add to the Legislature's busy workload when it reconvenes next week.

The state Legislature is set to meet in Bismarck starting Monday, Nov. 8, for a tightly packed special session with specific emphasis on redrawing legislative districts and allocating federal coronavirus relief funds.

But 26 mostly unrelated bill drafts filed by lawmakers can still become law if they make it through a Republican-controlled vetting process at the beginning of the session and subsequent floor votes. GOP leadership said they expect one or two proposals on vaccine mandates and critical race theory to move forward.

Seven Republican-sponsored bill drafts take several different angles at the common goal of curbing vaccine mandates imposed on North Dakotans.

Five proposals aim to prohibit employers from mandating the COVID-19 vaccine for their workers or outline broad exemptions employees could claim if compelled to get the shot.

Separate bill drafts sponsored by GOP Reps. Bob Paulson and Lisa Meier ban employer-issued mandates except at nursing homes that could lose major funding sources under a looming

BILL: Page 6



Eric Hylden / Grand Forks Herald

A North Dakota Highway Patrol officer photographs the scene Oct. 19, where a UND plane crashed Monday evening, Oct. 18, in a field near Buxton, North Dakota, killing the pilot.

Memorial fund created

19-year-old pilot suffered from mental health issues

By Adam Kurtz
Grand Forks Herald

The UND commercial aviation student killed in an Oct. 18 plane crash suffered from mental health issues, and his family has established a memorial fund to support the mental health of UND aviation students.

Robert Kraus, dean of Aerospace at UND, said administrators were previously unaware of any mental health issues student pilot John Hauser may

have been dealing with, but Hauser's family confirmed that was the case. Kraus said the official cause of the crash will be made known when the NTSB releases its final report, which could take up to a year. A preliminary NTSB report that there were no mechanical problems with the plane.

"We don't want to do anything official until the NTSB report comes out but his family has allowed us to say that yes, there were mental health concerns,"

Kraus told the Herald.

Kraus said there were no "warning signals" prior to the crash, and that Hauser was an "outstanding student" who had good grades and was progressing well through UND's program. Kraus said it is difficult to look back and determine what Hauser was thinking at that time, which fuels speculation about the crash.

"Everybody thought everything was normal, and then this event happened,"

Kraus said. "Everyone is scratching their head as to why. Were there missed signals or is there something that we could have done prior?"

An investigator from the National Transportation Safety Board has ruled out the possibility of mechanical problems, according to an initial report of the crash, though that report is preliminary and may be changed.

FUND: Page A5

Minneapolis to vote on dismantling police dept.

By Dana Ferguson
Grand Forks Herald

ST. PAUL — Minneapolis voters on Tuesday, Nov. 2, are set to decide whether the city should dismantle its police department after the 2020 murder of George Floyd at the hands of a former police officer there.

As part of the city's election, residents will decide if they want to replace the Minneapolis Police Department with the Department of Public Safety, which would include police and public health services as determined by the mayor and city council. The plan would also get rid of requirements dictat-

ing the minimum amount of funding and staffing levels at the Minneapolis Police Department.

If 51% or more voters who vote on that question agree to the change, the language transitioning the police department to the Department of Public Safety would take effect in 30

days. City officials have said it would likely take longer than that to pass ordinances fleshing out the new department, and in the meantime, police officers would likely remain on duty as their contracts would remain in place past that date.

POLICE: Page 5

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Scott Olson / Getty Images / TNS

South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem arrives at the Sturgis Buffalo Chip Campground after riding in the Legends Ride for charity on a 2021 Indian Chief on Aug. 9 near Sturgis.

State ethics board investigating Noem requests more info

By Christopher Vondracek
Grand Forks Herald

SIoux FALLS, S.D. — A state board overseeing ethics violations dismissed one of the items of potential concern believed to be related to Gov. Kristi Noem and asked for more information on two others on Monday, Nov. 1.

The Government Accountability Board had been asked by Attorney General Jason Ravnsborg to look into both the Republican governor's intervention in her daughter's realty appraiser certification as well as her frequent use of a state airplane, which has drawn scrutiny from lawmakers.

Monday, the board returned from a private executive session to dismiss one numbered item for lack of standing. The board also requested more information on two other items, though it's unclear from the public portions of the meeting which, if any, of the items related to allegations against Noem.

"It was a big nothing-burger," Rep. Linda Duba, a Sioux Falls Democrat, told Forum News Service following the meeting. "We don't know what complaints are still being looked into. It's just strange."

Prior to Monday's meeting, the Government Accountability Board, had been scheduled to discuss what the agenda opaquely called "new business." There was no public discussion among the members, and no member of the public testified.

Earlier this fall, Ravnsborg passed onto the board a request for investigation from Sen. Reynold Nesiba, D-Sioux Falls. Nesiba had criticized Noem's use of the state airplane for personal travel, including to her daughter's wedding, in apparent violation of state law.

Days later, in October, Ravnsborg also referred questions concerning Cassidy Peters' pursuit of a realty appraiser certification in 2020, which

included a sit-down with Noem and the program's top executive, Sherry Bren, to the board.

Peters is Noem's daughter.

Last week, a legislative accountability committee hearing was spurned by Bren. Secretary of the Department of Labor and Regulation Marcia Hultman contended that Bren had no direct role in assessing Peters' work product for certification and, thus, any meeting with the governor wouldn't have applied pressure on Bren.

Jim Park, executive director of the Appraisal Subcommittee, the federal regulator of state appraiser programs, told FNS that he'd only heard rumors regarding Peters' application.

"We wouldn't know anything specific about what's happened in South Dakota until we do a compliance review," Park said. He said COVID-19 has sidelined compliance reviews for all states until 2023.

While Bren's insisted to media outlets last week she'd provide "relevant" information to the public, it's unclear whether this would be in a formal hearing setting.

The Government Accountability Board itself has a storied history, emerging from the Legislature in 2017 only after lawmakers and Gov. Dennis Daugaard repealed a wide-ranging revision of campaign finance and lobbying laws. The current board meets without a virtual broadcast to SD.net, as do most state boards, and its members are appointed by the governor.

After Monday's meeting, Duba was frustrated with the lack of transparency, adding, "I need to contact the retired chief justice, and ask what I need to do to change [this board]."

Christopher Vondracek is the South Dakota correspondent for Forum News Service. Contact Vondracek at cvondracek@forumcomm.com, or follow him on Twitter: @ChrisVondracek.

StormTRACKER WDAY abc



Jared Piepenburg, Jesse Ritka, Chief Meteorologist John Wheeler, Lydia Blume, Robert Poynter

Get the latest weather news and alerts with up-to-date forecasts, current and future radar and more with the Stormtracker app.

StormTRACKER Forecast

Chilly temperatures through midweek. Warming toward the weekend.

Almanac Through 6 pm Sunday		
Temperature	High	Low
Sunday	43°	29°
Normal	45°	28°
Record	76° in 1999	5° in 1991
Precipitation In Inches		
Sunday	0	
Month To Date	3.38"	
Departure From Avg Month To Date	1.46"	
Year To Date	16.34"	
Departure From Avg Year To Date	-3.73"	
Sunrise: 8:14 a.m. Sunset: 6:07 a.m.		
Moonrise: 5:05 a.m. Moonset: 5:26 p.m.		

Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday
38/17	42/22	46/29	53/35	53/32	50/35	50/36
Mostly Cloudy	Sunny	Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy	Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy
Wind: NW 9 mph	Wind: SW 7 mph	Wind: S 11 mph	Wind: S 15 mph	Wind: W 11 mph	Wind: S 10 mph	Wind: SE 11 mph

*Average wind speed for each day

WEATHER TALK

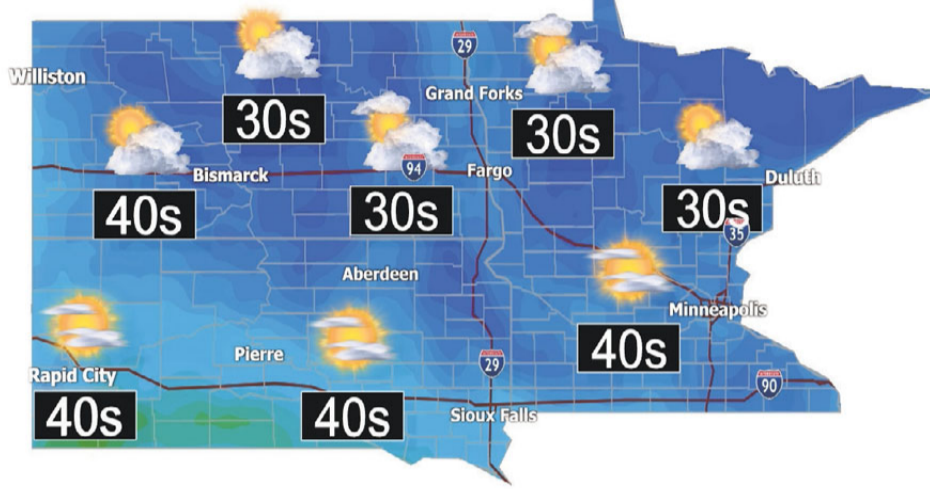
No snow fell in the Valley in October

By John Wheeler

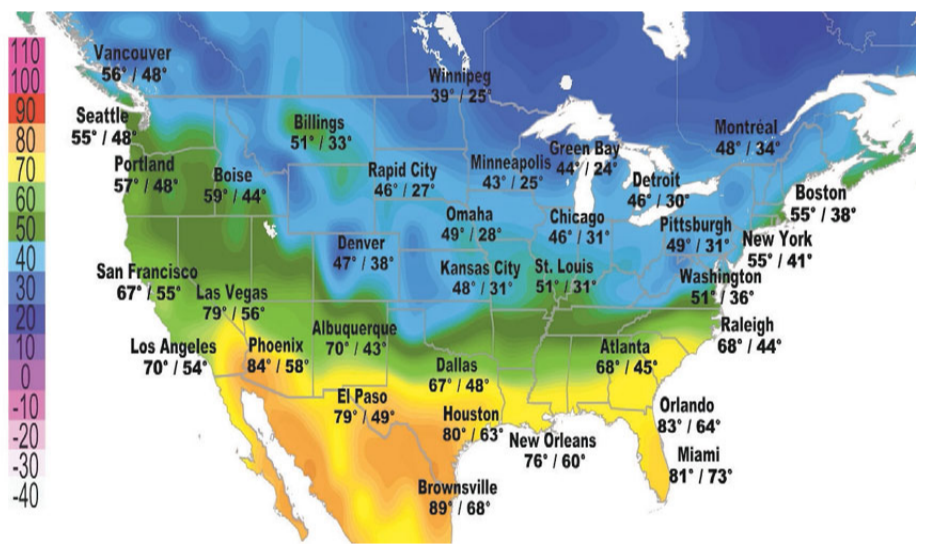
This past October was the first without snow in the Red River Valley in five years. For both Fargo and Grand Forks, measurable snow in October has happened in roughly half the years on record. However, both locations had a run of four years going. Last year, October was the only cold and wet month of the winter with several little snows, all of which melted as the weather turned quite mild in November and remained that way most of the winter.

Back in 2019, the October snow came heavily and wet in a major blizzard Oct. 11-12. One to three feet piled up west of the Valley. Locally, Fargo got 4.5 inches and Grand Forks 7.5 inches. Measurable snow also fell in 2018 and 2017 but none fell in 2016. It should be noted that the presence or absence of snow in October has absolutely no bearing on either the amount of snowfall or the severity of the cold for the remainder of the winter.

John Wheeler is Chief Meteorologist for WDAY Television.



North Dakota		Today		Tomorrow		Minnesota		Today		Tomorrow	
		Hi	Lo	Hi	Lo			Hi	Lo	Hi	Lo
Bismarck		40	16	42	22	Bemidji		37	22	42	23
Devils Lake		38	22	45	25	Duluth		39	26	41	25
Fargo		39	19	43	24	International Falls		38	24	41	24
Minot		40	17	44	23	Minneapolis		43	25	44	24
Williston		41	20	49	25	Rochester		41	24	43	26



BRIEF

Park Rapids woman dies in collision south of Bemidji

BEMIDJI, Minn. — A Park Rapids, Minnesota, woman is dead after her SUV collided with a fertilizer trailer on Friday on U.S. Highway 71 south of Bemidji.

According to the Minnesota State Patrol, Sylvia White, 34, of Park Rapids, was driving a 2014 Ford Explorer when she collided with a 2005 Cat Farm Tractor Challenger driven by Kyle Schulke, 36, of Bemidji,

at 3:16 p.m. on Oct. 29.

According to the incident report, the Cat Challenger, pulling a fertilizer cart, and Ford Explorer were both traveling northbound on U.S. Highway 71 near Beltrami Line Road when they collided.

White was fatally injured. Schulke was not injured.

Conditions were dry at the time of the crash, both parties were wearing their seat belts and alcohol is not believed to be a factor.

— Forum News Service

CALENDAR

Today, Nov. 2

► **COVID-19 walk-up testing event, 7 to 11 a.m., Monday through Friday** at the Fritz D. Pollard Jr. Athletic Center, 2419 Second Ave. N., Grand Forks. Free, all ages, wear masks, PCR and BinaxNOW rapid antigen tests available. Register at testreg.nd.gov.

► **Tour of the Grand Forks Senior Center, 9:30 a.m., Grand Forks Senior Center, 620 Fourth Ave. S., Grand Forks.** Open to all ages. (701) 772-7245.

► **Contact-free hot meal drive-thru at the Grand Forks Senior Center** is 11:30 a.m. to noon, 620 4th Ave S, Grand Forks and **inside dining** from noon to 12:15 p.m. **Monday**

through Friday. For 60+ (need full name and birthdate). Order frozen meals ahead of time, www.gfseniorcenter.org/frozenmeals, by calling 701-772-7245, pick up during the drive-thru. www.gfseniorcenter.org/menus.

► **Overeaters Anonymous, 5 p.m., Sharon Lutheran Church, 1720 S. 20th St., Grand Forks.** Info, call Lynn at (651) 210-3356.

Lottery numbers
Daily 3: 3-2-8
Northstar Cash: 6-9-20-23-27
2 by 2: Red numbers: 8-21
White numbers: 19-25
Lucky for Life: 4-27-28-29-47
Lucky ball: 8
Gopher 5: 8-18-31-32-37
Powerball: 9-25-34-44-45
Powerball: 8 Power Play: 3

International Falls will no longer dress up Smokey

By Dan Kraker
MPR News

INTERNATIONAL FALLS, Minn. — The 26-foot-tall Smokey Bear statue that stands tall over the city of International Falls will no longer don earmuffs in the winter, or fishing gear in the summer.

The City Council voted unanimously last week to prohibit dressing the iconic figure in any garb other than his traditional blue jeans, belt, buckle and "campaign" hat, with his shovel in hand.

International Falls dressed Smokey in different outfits depending on the season, starting in the 1980s.

But Mayor Harley Droba said he reached out to other Minnesota communities that are also home to famous



Glen Stubbe / Star Tribune file / TNS

The 26-foot-tall Smokey Bear statue in International Falls, Minnesota, will no longer be dressed up in gear such as the lumberjack shirt and skates shown here. The City Council has decided that he will only appear in his official uniform: shirtless, wearing blue jeans and a ranger hat, and carrying a shovel.

giant statues — including Paul Bunyan and Babe in Bemidji and Big Ole the Viking in Alexandria — who told him "they thought it was kind of crazy" that International Falls decorated its

famous fiberglass monument.

"This is what you want to be known for is having this thing, and to allow people to put up anything on him, even with council permission, is

just ridiculous to them," Droba said at last week's council meeting.

Council member Mike Holden said he felt caught in the middle. He's helped to decorate Smokey since the mid-80s.

But Holden also said that his father worked for the Minnesota state forestry division for 36 years. "And Smokey the Bear was a big deal in our family," he said.

The U.S. Forest Service has issued guidelines for groups that are authorized to use Smokey's likeness, to ensure that he will continue to be a "powerful icon" of fire prevention for years to come.

"There's a reason for that," Holden said. "They don't want the importance of Smokey the Bear to be degraded."

TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is the 307th day of 2021 and the 43rd day of autumn.

TODAY'S HISTORY: In 1957, the Soviet Union launched Sputnik 2 with a dog named Laika aboard. Laika was the first creature to be sent into orbit.

In 1964, residents of Washington, D.C., were eligible to vote in the presidential election for the first time since the city was established in 1800.

TODAY'S BIRTHDAYS: William Cullen Bryant (1794-1878), poet/journalist; Walker Evans (1903-1975), photographer; Charles Bronson (1921-2003), actor; Michael Dukakis (1933-), politician; Larry Holmes (1949-), boxer; Anna Wintour (1949-), fashion journalist; Roseanne Barr (1952-), comedian/actress; Kate Capshaw (1953-), actress; Dennis Miller (1953-), comedian; Phil Simms (1955-), football player/sports-caster; Dolph Lundgren (1957-), actor; Evgeni Plushenko (1982-), figure skater; Colin Kaepernick (1987-), football player.

U of M to offer free tuition to many Native American students

By Dan Kraker
MPR News

DULUTH — The University of Minnesota plans to extend “substantial financial support,” including in many cases completely free tuition, to enrolled members of the state’s 11 federally recognized tribal nations beginning next fall.

University of Minnesota President Joan Gabel announced the creation of the Native American Promise Tuition Program in a memo to the state’s tribal leaders, calling it a



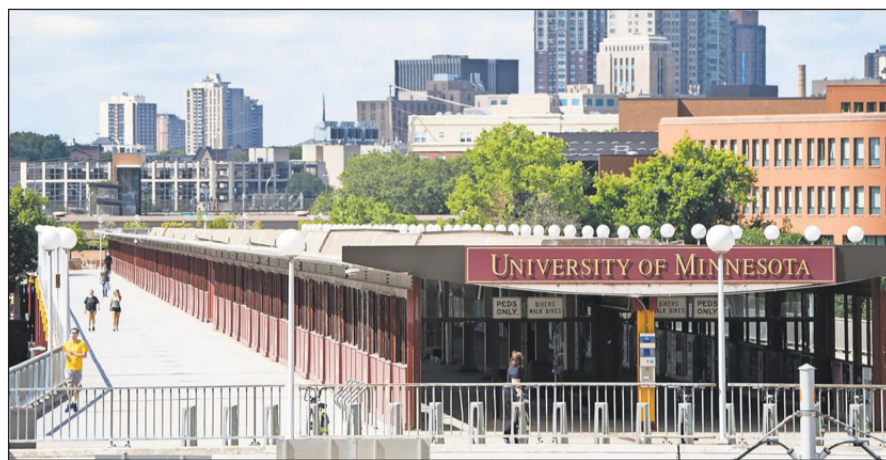
Gabel

The new program expands on a tuition waiver program for American Indian students that’s long been in place at the University’s Morris campus, where more than 6,000 waivers have been awarded since Morris joined the U of M system in 1960.

Starting in the fall of

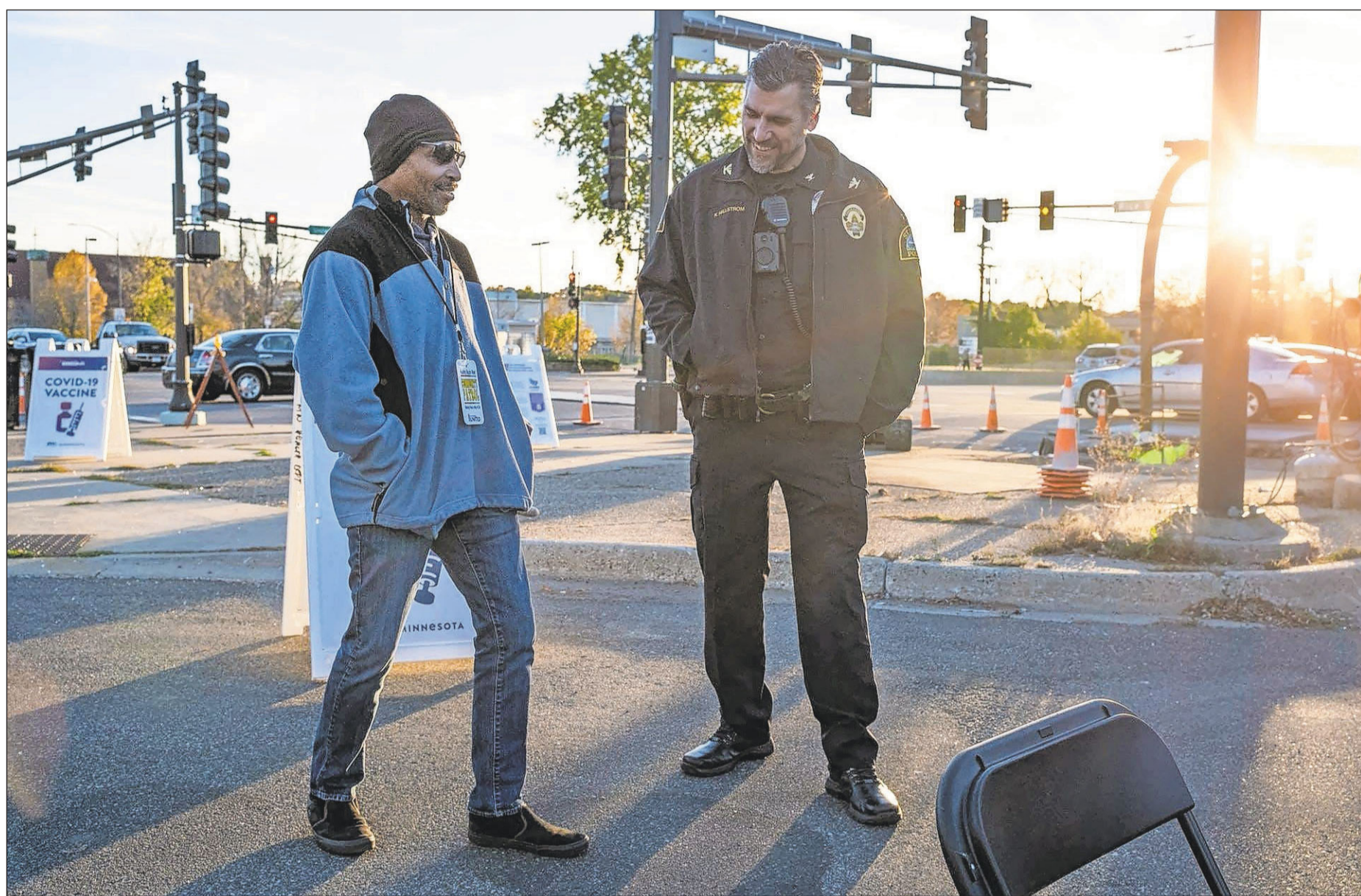
2022, the program will be expanded to the remaining four system campuses, although it’s still unclear which students will be eligible for free tuition. It will apply to first-year undergraduate students and transfers from tribal colleges.

In the memo, Gabel called the expansion a “significant achievement” and said it will place the U of M’s program “among the nation’s most comprehensive free and reduced tuition programs for Native American students.”



Evan Frost / MPR News 2020

The University of Minnesota is expanding its Native American tuition support program to the entire U of M system.



Evan Frost / MPR News

Volunteer George Vaughn talks with St. Paul Police Cmdr. Kurt Hallstrom in a parking lot off of University Avenue in St. Paul on Oct. 25. Vaughn and other volunteers have been coming out in shifts to occupy so-called “hot spots” in the Twin Cities since the summer in an effort to prevent violence.

‘PASTORS, PEOPLE AND POLICE’

Community members weigh approaches to curb gun violence in St. Paul

By Nina Moini
MPR News

St. Paul

Even before the mass shooting at the Seventh Street Truck Park last month, the city of St. Paul was trying to contain rising gunfire and homicides.

The Rev. Runney D. Patterson Sr. of New Hope Baptist Church was planning to spend three weeks over the summer focusing his outreach efforts on crime hot spots around the city.

Months later, Patterson said the work is not finished.

“We’ve built a great relationship with the community,” he said.

Patterson’s “ministry of presence” usually consists of volunteers and faith leaders working with one police officer to connect community members with mental health and house resources.

On a recent weeknight, Patterson and his team are doing outreach at a mobile COVID-19 vaccine clinic set up in a parking lot along Rice Street near the state Capitol.

“Pastors, people and police,” Patterson said. “Sometimes I say clergy, cops and citizens, it’s going to take all of us out here, police can’t do it all.”

Patterson said the hard work seems endless amid a pandemic that has ravaged lives, and high levels of gun violence in St. Paul.

In the past 17 years, Patterson has performed more than 50 funerals

for Black men who died violently.

“I want to go to a football game and watch them make touchdowns, perform their wedding ceremonies,” Patterson said. “Something that is happy and joyful.”

The capital city has had more than 30 homicides so far in 2021, nearing the record of 34 set in 1992, and matched in 2020.

Shots fired and gunshot wound victims are also up over last year. Chief Todd Axtell calls 2021 the worst for crime in recent history.

“It’s a new dynamic we are seeing, a lot of activity going on in all different corners of our city,” he said.

Axtell wants to fully staff the homicide unit, which even now he credits with a 90% solve-rate, far ahead of the national average of around 60%. But he says the focus on homicides leaves less for lower-level but more common crimes, “like auto thefts, catalytic converter thefts, much more than we have seen in the past.”

He also is concerned about his department’s ability to respond to 911 calls in a timely manner.

Axtell asked city leaders to approve more police spending than outlined in the draft 2022 budget set to be finalized in December.

Axtell’s goal is to have filled all 620 sworn officer positions. The department has 524 deployable officers, those not injured or on leave. Axtell said 90% of his budget goes to personnel costs.

“I want to go to a football game and watch them make touchdowns, perform their wedding ceremonies. Something that is happy and joyful.” -- The Rev. Runney D. Patterson Sr. of New Hope Baptist Church in St. Paul. In the past 17 years, Patterson has performed more than 50 funerals for Black men who died violently

“It’s also true that the number of officers in this department has gone down over the last three years,” the chief said. “I’m not spending the money on fancier squad cars and other things. Costs continue to go up.”

Last week, Axtell announced he would not seek another six-year appointment as St. Paul’s police chief. He steps down in June.

In 2020, violent crime surged 17% across Minnesota, including a record number of murders, according to the state Bureau of Criminal Apprehension.

Mayor Melvin Carter said there is no quick fix to curb gun violence, not even more officers.

“We have to be willing to ask all the questions. We have to be willing to ask the Legislature what it can do differently.” Carter said, “That seems to be clear. We have to be willing to ask how we can police differently.”

Carter said crime in downtown St. Paul was at a five-year low over the summer of 2020. The mayor pointed out the city raised police spending by millions in recent years. Carter’s proposed 2022 budget again increases police spending.

The city approved the largest police academy in its history and \$1 million in police overtime costs, Carter added. The new officers will not be ready to work in the community until July.

The city is also in the process of hiring a director for a new Office of Neighborhood Safety.

Carter said the office will use data and resident feedback to decide how to improve public safety. A 48-member Community-First Public Safety Commission met earlier in the year to discuss emergency response.

“None of that helps at a funeral,” Carter said. The Oct. 10 shooting that killed 27-year-old Marquisha Wiley and injured more than a dozen others “tells us we are still not good enough. We’ll never be good enough.”

Before the shooting, dozens of people danced, as a DJ played music at the popular bar across the street from the Xcel Energy Center.

On a recent weekday morning, a single uniformed St. Paul police officer walked up and down a quiet West Seventh Street.

Any increased officer presence helps restaurant owner Brian Ingram feel safer.

“I lived in this building right here where Truck Park is for five years,” Ingram said. “When the world was some sort of normal and even when we had all these events going on, concerts going on, we didn’t have the gunshots we hear every single day, the racing, cars up and down the hill we are on right now.”

Ingram owns several restaurants in St. Paul. He also helped start Seventh Street Truck Park. After the shooting, Ingram said his nearby restaurant saw a 50% drop in earnings. While he says business is coming back with the start of Wild hockey games at the X, Ingram is worried about staying open and keeping his 200 employees safe.

“Everybody keeps asking me, ‘When are you going to move to the suburbs?’” Ingram said. “And that’s a super scary thought if everyone pulls out of here.”

Ingram is not interested in leaving.

“St. Paul is our community, and for me, the only reason we were able to give away 250,000 free meals is because this community supported us.”

Patterson said he hopes the spirit of community and support doesn’t dwindle through the coming winter months. New Hope Baptist Church is looking for more volunteers to work on community outreach.

“These volunteers in St. Paul said to me, ‘Pastor P., as long as you are willing to be out here we are going to be out here with you.’”

Your views. Our views. Opinion from across the world.

THE OPINION PAGE

In the Mail: letters@gfherald.com; Box 6008, Grand Forks, N.D. 58206

OTHER VIEW

Last-minute free-for-all not best way

Under pressure of successive self-imposed deadlines, with a befuddled country looking on, Democrats in Congress continue to wrestle with a supposedly transformative spending plan and the means to pay for it. On Thursday, President Joe Biden announced yet another version of what this might involve. The eventual outcome is still anybody's guess.

There's a reason for the protracted muddle. Democrats set out with two overriding priorities. First, their spending commitments must be huge. (Exactly how and where the money would be spent was less important.) Second, the vast majority of Americans should face no tax increase. That basic contradiction explains much of the subsequent confusion. Somehow, the gap between ends and means needed to be scaled down — but without owning up to diminished ambition and without asking anybody but the very rich to pay more tax.

In recent days, efforts to resolve the dilemma have intensified. Having shelved one idea for raising taxes on the wealthy, partly on grounds of practicality, Biden and his allies turned their attention to another — more radical, more complex, and much more difficult to administer than the first. To nobody's surprise, this so-called billionaire tax also met strong opposition, and not just from Republicans. This too now seems to have been set aside. Biden's outline has moved on to Plan C, a 5% surtax on incomes above \$10 million.

What's strange is that the first tax plan, supported by Biden during his presidential campaign, did in fact make sense: Reform the taxation of assets at death. Unrealized capital gains, which constitute a large part of the wealth of the richest Americans, would no longer escape tax through a provision called "stepped-up basis." Yet some centrists were unpersuaded, inviting the next iteration, long advocated by Sen. Ron Wyden: Tax unrealized gains not just once per lifetime but every year, with the change confined to 700 or so billionaires. This smaller target group would have made the plan easier for the IRS to administer, but would've created countless further complications, prompted prolonged legal challenges, and possibly violated the Constitution.

The latest idea — a surtax on very high incomes — faces problems of its own. By leaving unrealized capital gains untaxed while raising the rate on ordinary income, it maintains the principal channel of tax avoidance by the well-to-do and increases their incentive to exploit it. So it would raise much less revenue than simple arithmetic suggests. In other words, Biden's outline still hasn't bridged the gap between ends and means. One suspects that many Democrats have no problem with that. Fiscal gimmickry (such as pretending that an expansion of spending intended to be permanent will expire inside the 10-year budget window) has been a recurring theme of this chaotic effort.

Biden and his allies are right, to be sure, that the well-off should pay their fair share. They're also right that the tax treatment of capital gains is an anomaly that the wealthy have been able to exploit. Abolishing stepped-up basis at death is a relatively straightforward and constitutionally sound way of addressing the problem. It's to be hoped that this approach can yet be revived — and that what's valuable in the spending plan (not to mention the infrastructure bill that progressive Democrats have shackled to it) won't be discarded.

Meanwhile, the country can only be dismayed by the Democrats' ongoing disarray. It inspires no confidence in their ability to deliver, and pay for, the transformation they promised.

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The pain of choosing a president

As disgruntled citizens grope for a solution — any solution — for the disarray in our "status quo" political system, they are grasping at structural reforms, abolishing the Electoral College, creating a multi-party system, designing new ballots and voting directly for president, to name a few.

Every time a new cause appears, social media are full of solicitations, some of dubious origins. Money is being gathered to abolish the Electoral College. Contributors should realize that this is a futile effort and they could make better investments at the Indian casinos.

To abolish the Electoral College would require submission by two-thirds of each house of Congress and ratification by three-fourth of the states. Democrats think abolition would benefit them and Republicans think the system already benefits them. Right off the bat, we have two competitive parties opposing each other, meaning they will never overcome the majorities required for amending the Constitution.

After George Wallace carried five states for 46 electoral votes in 1968, both parties realized



LLOYD OMDAHL

that a third party could bargain with the major parties on radical issues and they would end up in a bidding war. Republicans were especially concerned and espoused alternate ways for casting electoral votes to keep people like Wallace from getting leverage in the future.

Reform of the Electoral College disappeared like a cellophane cat in hell. Nothing was done and we're still arguing about it 54 years later as though it were a fresh mackerel. It isn't going to happen.

George Wallace proved that a hazard of the Electoral College is its vulnerability to minority parties, not that they could repeat Wallace's successful win of electoral votes but as spoilers.

The most recent spoiler was 2000 when Green Party's Ralph Nader gave the election to George W. Bush by bleeding Albert Gore votes in the races for electors. So there is room for dangerous political dropouts in the Electoral College.

In addition to the abolition of the Electoral College, direct vote for president has been picking up steam. Because advocates know it cannot succeed in the normal status quo climate, they are supporting legislation by states to cast their electoral votes for the presidential candidate who gets the largest popular vote.

A recent Washington Post-ABC poll found that 56% of the electorate favors the direct election while only 37% favored continuing the Electoral College. But the people have no voice in the decision so popular opinion will be dismissed out-of-hand.

As of April 2021, 16 jurisdictions with 195 electoral votes have ratified the compact, leaving the campaign 75 electors short of the 270 needed to activate the compact.

It should be noted that the national vote committee has enjoyed picking the low hanging fruit. The remaining states include a number of small states, among them North Dakota, that think the Electoral College gives them disproportionate leverage in choosing presidents. Mathematical calculations prove that

this is not correct but perception is truth.

Direct popular election has merit but it also has negatives to worry about. It would encourage the formation of multiple parties, with each screening votes away from the two major parties. All sorts of candidates would get on the ballot unless access was limited to candidates with minimal strength.

In the Democratic Party, the "progressives" would have a candidate and, at the other end of the spectrum, the Manchin group would have a candidate, perhaps Manchin himself. (He would be a minor, minor candidate).

In the Republican Party, Congressperson Cheney would be a likely candidate and so would Senator Mitt Romney.

Unless the popular vote system was restrained, it could destroy the two major parties and create havoc in the political system.

As for me, I lean toward abolishing the Electoral College and approving the popular vote, not for partisan reasons, but if equality of people is good enough for God, it is good enough for me.

Lloyd Omdahl is a former state lieutenant governor and professor at UND.

DOUBLE PLAY



IN THE MAIL

Sorlie Bridge could shine positive light

To the editor, I just read about the Greater Grand Forks' Sorlie Bridge lights drama, and I was reminded of Minot's Pride Flag on City Hall drama of last year, which made national news. I read the article and learned that Steve Gander would willingly fight for people's right to live according to their sexual orientation and identity, but that he drew the line at using public infrastructure in support of or promotion of one lifestyle choice or another.

Consider this an open letter, I would love to talk to you, but I'd like to talk to the folks living in Grand Forks, too. I spent a year studying the outcomes of queer youth in North Dakota. According to data from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 61.1% of queer youth seriously consider suicide and 84% don't turn to adults when feeling sad, empty hopeless or angry. They are

experiencing significant trauma from the negative messages and bullying that happens all over North Dakota towards the queer community from both inside and outside of their home. They are missing school, disproportionately homeless, more likely to turn to illicit substances, and have abysmal mental health due entirely to social rejection.

The data says that they don't feel seen, safe, included, or deserving of love in this state and we are losing these kids. Does it really cost so much to put on some lights and send a message that they belong? If we wanted an occasion, a momentous moment, it could be the turning point when leadership addressed these issues seriously, because we've been failing these kids to lethal consequences for decades. If asked, one could say we are putting these lights on to reduce suicidality in queer youth. We would not simply be promoting one group over another,

we would be sending an important message that is vital to reducing negative health outcomes in this state. Other groups are more than welcome to make a case for their own lights, but as it stands, if doing this could save even one life, it seems cruel to leave them in the dark.

Faye Seidler Moorhead, Minn.

We must strengthen climate commitment

To the editor, The Earth needs our help! In 2015, Pope Francis issued an encyclical calling for those who have contributed the most to climate change to do their part in restoring our world. As the largest historical contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, the United States has a moral and practical responsibility to reach net zero emissions by 2050. I have joined state legislators across the United States calling on the federal government to strengthen our national climate commitments at

COP26 this week.

We see firsthand the impacts of climate change in North Dakota. We face less predictable moisture, flooding, and droughts. These threaten our waterways and farmland, and the livelihood of our communities. Just this week our legislative committees approved infrastructure spending in the millions of dollars, much related to climate change.

In these divisive times, there can be reluctance to cooperate, let alone collaborate, with those we rarely see eye-to-eye with. But as a public official who knows North Dakotans as people of faith, it is imperative to not let climate solutions be another wedge which divides us further. Rather, let us "work together in building our common home," and commit to bold solutions today, to avoid an uninhabitable tomorrow.

Sen. Tim Mathern Fargo

Mathern has been a senator with the Democratic NPL party since 1986 and is on the appropriations committee.

Letters policy

Letters should be limited to 350 words and must include the name of the author. Shorter letters are preferred. A telephone number should be included (the number will not be published).

All letters are subject to editing for grammar, length, accuracy and clarity.

The Herald will consider longer submissions for its Viewpoint columns. These are limited to writers with specific or pertinent expertise on an issue. Viewpoint columns must include a photo of the author.

Letters construed as advertising or "thank you" notes will not be published.

Email to: letters@gfherald.com. Or send letters to the Herald at Box 6008, Grand Forks, ND, 58206.

Grand Forks Herald

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— GEORGE WINSHIP, Herald founder

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OBITUARY

Mary Elizabeth Jerome



Mary Elizabeth Jerome, 60, passed away Tuesday, October 12, 2021, at her home in Grand Forks, North Dakota. Mary was born in Hallock, Minnesota, to Leonard and Rosalyn (Gardner) Jerome and was the 7th of 10 children. Mary grew up in rural Humboldt, Minnesota and graduated from Humboldt-St. Vincent Public High School in 1979. She was married and had one daughter, Alison.

Mary spent the majority of her life in Grand Forks and Fargo, ND. She had a successful career working with multiple title companies, often called out for her incredible work ethic and ability to solve a problem.

Outside of work, Mary enjoyed spending time with friends and family. She was always up for adventures with her dear friend, Ann-Marie, or sister, Kathy, leading to places like Montana, Mexico, Arizona, Canada, and more than one occasional trip to the casino. She especially valued time with daughter, Alison, and granddaughter, Caitlin – they were the light of her life.

Anyone that knew Mary would certainly remember her distinct laugh, smile, and ability to light up a room with witty comments and banter. She will be dearly missed.

Mary leaves behind one daughter, Alison (Tom) Hennes, Cavalier, ND, granddaughter, Caitlin Johnson; siblings: Renee (Wayne) Stewart, Lancaster, MN, Leonard Jerome, Oregon, Lee Jerome, Aurora, IL, Bill (Deb) Jerome, Grand Forks, ND, Kathy Triechel (Murray Jones), Winnipeg, Canada, Tony Jerome, San Mateo, CA, Martin (Mike Orum) Jerome, Atlanta, GA, and many nieces and nephews. In honor of her wishes, no services will be held; however, those wanting to remember Mary may make a donation in her name to The Arthritis Foundation.

Driver gets prison time for killing couple in Fergus Falls car chase

By April Baumgarten
The Forum

FERGUS FALLS, Minn. — A 32-year-old man has been sentenced to almost 19 years in prison for killing an elderly couple after crashing into their vehicle last year during a law enforcement pursuit in Fergus Falls.

Cody James Freitag of Barrett, Minnesota, cried as family and friends of Steven Christianson, 72, and Diane Christianson, 71, spoke Monday, Nov. 1, in Otter Tail County District Court. Freitag fled Otter



Freitag

Cavour and Union avenues in downtown Fergus Falls.

That's where he crashed into the Christiansons' vehicle. The couple died at the scene.

One of the deputies in the chase was Kelly Backman, who was found to have fentanyl in his system during the pursuit. The former

officer, according to court documents, also had drug paraphernalia in his desk and locker, and investigators determined he failed to log some drug-related items into evidence, despite reporting that he found them during his work as a narcotics officer.

Backman was fired in April and later sentenced to 30 days of electronic home monitoring after pleading guilty to misconduct by a public official.

Freitag pleaded guilty in September to two felony counts of fleeing

law enforcement during a vehicle chase that resulted in death, with each charge carrying a maximum punishment of 40 years behind bars. Because of a plea agreement, he was sentenced to 225 months in prison, which works out to 18 years and nine months.

Two counts of criminal vehicular homicide were dismissed.

If Freitag doesn't commit any disciplinary offenses in prison, he will be released after serving 150 months, or 12.5 years.

POLICE

From Page 1

The campaign over the amendment and the upcoming vote have spurred national media attention. And supporters — including businesses, faith groups, the American Civil Liberties Union and progressive Democratic-Farmer-Labor policymakers — said the proposal is necessary to improve public safety in the city and shore up more resources for mental health counseling and violence prevention.

"We've got to be able to do better than this," Attorney General Keith Ellison, who lives in Minneapolis, told a group of the amendment's supporters last week. "I'm voting yes because the status quo isn't working."

Opponents, including law enforcement groups, Mayor Jacob Frey, Gov. Tim Walz, U.S. Sens. Amy Klobuchar and Tina Smith, and others, meanwhile, said the change could leave the city with too few police officers to respond to crime in Minneapolis and transition the city away from a police department without a clear alterna-



Evan Frost / MPR News

New police officers raise their hands to take an oath July 17, 2020, at a Minneapolis Police Academy graduation ceremony at the Minneapolis Convention Center.

tive.

"We're down one-third of our sworn officers and we've asked these officers that have remained, that continue, to show up day and night to serve our communities, to keep them safe but we're asking so much more of them," Minneapolis Police Chief Medaria Arradondo said last week. "To vote on a measure of public safety without a solid plan and an implementation or direction of work, this

is too critical of a time to wish and hope for that help that we need so desperately right now."

If approved, the proposal would also eliminate the police chief post. A commissioner would be appointed to lead the Department of Public Safety.

A Star Tribune/MPR News/KARE-11/Frontline PBS poll in September found that 49% of Minneapolis residents surveyed supported the effort to replace the

police department with a department of public safety, meanwhile 41% opposed it and 10% remained undecided. And 29% said the city should reduce its police force while 55% said it should not.

Minneapolis polls close Tuesday night at 8 p.m.

Follow Dana Ferguson on Twitter @bydanaferguson, call 651-290-0707 or email dferguson@forumcomm.com

FUND

From Page A1

Hauser was killed on a night flight to Fargo, where he was scheduled to practice taking off and landing before returning to Grand Forks. Kraus said the flight is a normal way for students to gain hours in the cockpit.

Hauser already had a private pilot's license before he came to UND, Kraus said, though he wasn't sure which school or flight academy he attended. Of the 250 hours needed for commercial aviation, Hauser had 133 hours, on top of what he had flown for his private pilot's license.

Shortly after his death, Hauser's family established the John A. Hauser Mental Health in Aviation Initiative Fund, with the UND Alumni Association & Foundation. The fund can be found online at undalumni.org/JohnsFund. As of Monday morning, more than \$20,000 has been raised for the fund.

Flight students, doctors and therapists

A problem particular to aviation, Kraus said, is that pilots don't want to see a doctor and they "really don't like to go see a therapist" out of concern they may be grounded for a medical or mental health issue.

When it comes to mental health, conditions including psychosis, bipolar disorder and severe personality disorder disqualify a pilot from obtaining a Federal

Aviation Administration medical certificate, according to the FAA's website dealing with pilot mental fitness. Kraus said Hauser was not affected by those conditions. But the stigma against seeking counseling for a mental health issue remains, and Kraus said UND is working to address it.

"We have to say there are ways to talk to somebody, and this is how you do it," he said.

Mental health professionals are obligated to report pilots who show signs of a severe mental illness, Kraus said, but the matter isn't always cut and dry. Simply feeling stressed or sad does not necessarily mean a pilot, even a student pilot, will have the medical certificate called into question. Kraus said there are "degrees of OK," before a pilot can be grounded. But it's the fear of losing their flight status that keeps them away.

UND has taken several steps to address the mental health of aviation students both before and after the crash. In April, the John D. Odegard School of Aerospace Sciences enacted the JDO Mental Health Task Force. It's a group made up of students, faculty and staff who work to raise awareness of mental health related concerns. The goal is to put in place programs and training for the college.

The week of the crash, Kraus said students could speak to workers at UND's counseling center on an anonymous basis. It

was a chance for them to open up about the crash, without their feelings being recorded on the record.

"The idea is to help somebody before they get to the point that they would be grounded," Kraus said.

Counseling services remain available on the campus, as are aviation support groups. There are telehealth services on Tuesdays from 7-8 p.m. for students who want to discuss their experiences together. Those sessions are also available in person on Thursdays in room 207 of Ryan Hall, from 11 a.m.-12 p.m.

On Oct. 28 a special training on suicidal behavior was held on campus, which included ways to help a person who is in crisis. The training will be periodically held over the next few weeks.

Another issue in aviation is how mental health professionals record the diagnosis of a pilot. Kraus said education is important for clinicians, when it comes to pilots. A minor issue not requiring medication should be recorded as such, instead of a diagnosis that would ground a pilot.

NTSB report

According to the NTSB's preliminary report, the Piper PA-28-181 airplane operated by Hauser, a 19-year-old sophomore and commercial aviation student, made a "rapid descent" into the ground, not long after the plane took off.

NTSB preliminary

reports do not include causes of crashes, however the report, written by Aaron Sauer, the NTSB investigator in charge, indicated: "The airplane damage was consistent with a high angle and high energy impact with terrain."

Sauer concluded his report with: "Post-accident examination of the airplane revealed no mechanical malfunctions that would have precluded normal operations."

The report includes information that was mostly already known, but refined the timeline of events leading up to the crash.

Hauser took off from Grand Forks International Airport on Oct. 18 at about 7 p.m. About 30 miles south of Grand Forks, the plane made a 180 degree turn heading north before quickly descending into the ground. Air traffic control lost contact with the plane at about 7:24 p.m. The wreckage of the plane was discovered by local law enforcement at about 8:40 p.m., in a field near Buxton, N.D.

The main wreckage of the plane was found about 25 feet from the initial point of impact. The report indicated crushed pieces of the plane were found at those two locations, and debris was found forward of the main wreckage.

Information in the preliminary report is subject to change. Any errors will be corrected in the report's final version, according to the NTSB.

Almost 7,600 in Minn. have been reinfected by COVID

By Paul John Scott
Grand Forks Herald

MINNEAPOLIS — Following are the Minnesota Department of Health COVID-19 case rates, deaths, hospitalizations and vaccinations as of Monday, Nov. 1. Because all data is preliminary, some numbers and totals may change from one day to the next.

Statewide case rates

► **NEW CASES:** 2,857 (including a backlog of 7,597 reinfections since the start of the pandemic; Monday's new case number was 10,454).

► **SEVEN-DAY, ROLLING AVERAGE OF NEW CASES PER 100,000 PEOPLE:** 39.5 (as of 10/22)

► **TOTAL CASES, INCLUDING REINFECTIONS:** 797,984

► **TOTAL REINFECTIONS:** 8,184

► **SEVEN-DAY, ROLLING AVERAGE TEST POSITIVITY RATE:** 7.3 (as of 10/22)

Beginning Nov. 1, the MDH has begun to report "reinfections." In keeping with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention terminology, this denotes cases in which a person tests positive more than 90 days after a previous positive test. As "total recovered" does not reflect known recovery but rather those no longer in isolation, with this updating we will remove that metric.

Hospitalizations, deaths

► **ACTIVE HOSPITALIZATIONS:** 908

► **TOTAL HOSPITALIZATIONS:** 41,392

► **DEATHS, NEWLY REPORTED:** 25

► **TOTAL DEATHS:** 8,694

Vaccinations

► **FIRST DOSE ADMINISTERED:** 3,468,379 and 74.8% of population

► **COMPLETED SERIES (2 doses):** 3,306,034 and 71.4% of population

To place your City Briefs call 701-780-1263 or email citybriefs@gfherald.com

CRAFT/BAKE SALE
Grand Forks Historical Society Guild
Nov. 6, 8:30am - 1pm
2405 Belmont
Myra Museum

FRIENDS USED BOOK SALE
EGF Campbell Library
Friday, Nov 5 | 8-5
Saturday, Nov 6 | 8-5
Bring your own bags & boxes for purchases.
422 4th St NW, EGF

HOLY FAMILY ALTAR SOCIETY
Christmas Tea, Bake Sale with Lefse and Raffle.
Sat., Nov. 6, 1-4 p.m.
1018 18th Ave. S, GF

DRIVE-THRU Thanksgiving FEAST for Seniors from the Region!
Reservations required for the GF Senior Center's Tues, Nov 16, 11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. DRIVE-THRU Thanksgiving meal at the ALERUS CENTER. Call 701-772-7245 with name and birthdate for each person wanting a meal by **Nov 8.** For seniors 60+ and spouse any age, suggested donation of \$5.00/meal.

SHARON LUTHERAN CHURCH FALL Lefse and Bake Sale
Sat., Nov. 6; 9am-12pm

BRIEFS

Man killed by train near downtown Fargo

FARGO — A 40-year-old man was killed after being struck by a BNSF Railway train early Sunday, Fargo police reported.

The incident occurred around 5:02 a.m. in the 1400 block of Main Avenue.

Although out-of-state law enforcement have notified the victim's next of kin, police will not release the man's identity until Monday, said police spokeswoman Jessica Schindeldecker.

Series of carjackings reported in south Minneapolis

MINNEAPOLIS — Minneapolis police responded to six carjackings within five hours Friday night in south Minneapolis, the St. Paul Pioneer Press reported.

Early investigations indicate that the victims were

robbed in each incident, and their vehicles were stolen at gunpoint. It's unclear if any or all of the carjackings are connected.

Police say they arrested three people after a pursuit where they located a carjacked vehicle that had been allegedly connected to multiple aggravated robberies.

According to the Minneapolis Police Department, the first vehicle was stolen at 5 p.m. Friday on the 2800 block of 13th Avenue South. A second carjacking was reported on the same street at 6 p.m.

Another report of a carjacking occurred about 5:30 p.m. on the 4600 block of 28th Avenue South. Less than 20 minutes later, a carjacking was reported on the 2300 block of 32nd Street East.

About 10 p.m., two more carjackings were reported, one on the 5800 block of 11th Avenue South and one on the 4000 block of Third Avenue South.

— Forum News Service

'Somebody knows where it went'

46 years later, NDSU seeks answers in mysterious art theft

By Tracy Briggs The Forum

FARGO — North Dakota State University is trying to get to the bottom of a 46-year-old mystery behind the theft of a valuable work of art from the Memorial Union Gallery in May of 1975.

The work of art, a lithograph titled "Woman Seated at a Table" by artist Richard Diebenkorn, is now estimated to be worth about \$12,000. The head of the gallery, an artist by trade, has turned into an amateur detective, doubling down on efforts to get to the truth.

He's put together an exhibit about the crime not far from where the piece was nabbed and is inviting everyone to join the investigation. Was it an art heist or a college prank?

College shenanigans?

In early May of 1975, NDSU may very well have been ripe for some shenanigans. It was a stressful spring by many accounts. The Fall of Saigon, marking the end of the Vietnam war, happened just two weeks earlier, and the economy was still in recession. Cou-

ple that with the stress of final exams, and many students at North Dakota State University were probably ready to blow off steam.

For some, it came in the form of the Spring Blast All-Nighter.

"The Spring Blast was a multi-day event where the union was open 24 hours," said gallery coordinator Anthony Faris. "There was a Las Vegas night, music, film, massages. They did it every year."

In 1975, something else happened. Sometime between May 9 and May 15, a work of art, the Diebenkorn, was stolen from a student lounge. Back in the '70s, Faris said, the school wanted the artwork to be enjoyed by students, so pieces were placed where students could view them.

"We still have an issue today, where you want the artwork in the vault, which is owned by all students, to be accessible to them, and that's why we do an annual show," Faris said, "And we've done things like the virtual reality program to allow people to access all of the works in our collection."

Today, the works are under lock and key and under the watchful eye of cameras, but that wasn't the case in '75. The school

art, a lot of which was hung in meeting rooms and lounges, was an easier target.

A pattern of theft

It wasn't the only time a painting went missing from the union. The year before, in 1974, a work by Robert Nelson was slashed. In the year following the Diebenkorn theft in 1975, a print by Nelson was stolen. In 1983, a work titled "January" by Gordon Mortensen was stolen.

"I think that during the '70 this was a little bit more common because I found a story about bikes being stolen, dorm mirrors being taken. They say that these were pranks that were happening around the time," Faris said.

He has been in touch with the alumni center to see if officials there could reach out to anyone who might have attended NDSU in 1975 to see if they saw or heard anything.

He uncovered some clues, including a classified ad that ran in the NDSU Spectrum newspaper right after the crime, where someone thanked a certain fraternity on campus for "stealing us away the other night. It was so inspiring."

"It probably means nothing, but that's the question

when you're investigating something," Faris said. "This was in the Spectrum within a week of the theft. And there's the word 'stealing.' Does this mean anything?"

Faris says he doesn't think there was an "ill meaning" with the theft. In fact, after it was stolen and everyone had a good laugh, the culprits might have not known what to do with it.

"Returning something is difficult, especially after it's been taken, right? So that's why we want to have this conversation again," he said. "This is part of someone's memory from that time. Maybe someone is ready to talk about it."

Faris and NDSU even said whoever has the piece can return the work, no questions asked.

"Forty six years, we have this piece that exists somewhere. It's an object in somebody's house, somebody's basement somewhere, and somebody knows where it went. And we would just love it to be returned to the students," Faris said. "It's not necessarily about how valuable it is, or even where it's been, as much as it is that it's part of our story. It's part of our history."

Tracy Briggs can be reached at tracy.briggs@forumcomm.com

BILL

From Page 1

federal mandate. Some of the proposals also spell out the civil or criminal penalties employers could face if they require vaccination.

The bill drafts take on the administration of Democratic President Joe Biden, which set out loose plans to require the COVID-19 vaccine for health care workers and employees at large businesses. North Dakota Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem announced last week that the state is joining a lawsuit against the Biden administration over the prospective federal mandates.

Several of the proposals bar businesses from requiring customers to be inoculated against COVID-19. Earlier this year, the Legislature overwhelmingly passed a narrow restriction on "vaccine passports" after denying an 11th hour attempt to introduce a more sweeping ban on proof of vaccination requirements.

Paulson's plan also inhibits schools from mandating the shot for students, while a broadly worded bill draft from Lisbon Republican Rep. Sebastian Ertelt simply states no one may require anyone else to get a vaccination as a condition to "exercise any right, perform any duty, or enjoy any privilege."

Paulson said he filed his anti-mandate proposal because he believes North Dakotans should have the freedom to direct their medical care. He added that North Dakota should exert states' rights in standing up against the

Biden administration's proposed federal vaccine requirements, which he called "an incredible overreach."

The Minot Republican noted he is personally against the COVID-19 vaccine because he recovered from the illness and has natural immunity to it.

Paulson said he's optimistic one of the bills targeting mandates will pass, adding many lawmakers are likely hearing from constituents who are supportive of the idea. The state House of Representatives killed a bill in February that would have barred employers from requiring workers to be vaccinated.

Meanwhile, several of the proposals filed by North Dakota lawmakers seem to respond to the raging national debates over critical race theory and teachings on race and gender in public schools. Three bill drafts submitted by lawmakers deal with the contents of public school curricula, while a symbolic resolution would recognize parents as the "chief stakeholders" in their children's education.

One proposal, submitted by Fargo Republican Rep. Jim Kasper, explicitly bans the teaching of critical race theory in North Dakota classrooms, mandating that schools maintain "factual and objective" curricula. Under Kasper's definition of critical race theory, the bill would bar teaching the idea that "racism is not merely the product of individual bias or prejudice," but that it is "systemically embedded in American society and the American legal system to facilitate racial inequality."

Another proposal submitted by Mott Republican Sen. Donald Schaible doesn't address critical race theory explicitly but looks to legislate how topics like race and gender are handled in classrooms.

In addition to provisions vetting for "factual and objective" curricula, Schaible's proposal would prevent schools from requiring instructors to teach on the topics of race, gender, sexuality or equality, unless lessons are deemed essential to the course curriculum by the school district.

Employees who voluntarily decide to teach on any of these topics would be required to take a neutral position and present a diversity of perspectives.

Schaible's bill draft would also bar schools from requiring employees to undergo diversity training or professional development sessions that teach or imply that individuals are "intrinsically prejudiced" based on their race or gender.

A third proposal by Williston Republican Rep. David Richter looks to ensure any teachings on "fundamental human behavior" are aligned with statewide standards determined by the Department of Public Instruction. In an interview, Richter said his proposal doesn't aim to ban ideas like critical race theory, only to ensure they aren't taught as fact or explained with political spin.

A once-obscure school of thought confined mostly to law schools, critical race theory has launched into the mainstream over the last year,

becoming a conservative rallying point and the subject of charged school board meetings all over the country. The debates prompted a response from North Dakota United president Nick Archuleta this July in which the teachers' union head stated critical race theory "is not being taught in North Dakota schools."

Eight states have passed legislation responding to critical race theory, according to an August report by the Brookings Institution, a nonpartisan think tank, though only Idaho explicitly named

the concept in code. Other proposals from North Dakota lawmakers include two election-focused bill drafts from Linton Republican Rep. Jeff Magrum, including one to add holographic foil, barcodes and other "fraud countermeasures" to ballots.

Minot Republican Rep. Jeff Hoverson filed a proposal that would require pharmacists to fill prescriptions for ivermectin, an antiparasitic drug that many Americans have used as an off-label treatment for COVID-19 without strong evidence

that it mitigates the disease.

Montpelier GOP Rep. Craig Headland proposed reforming taxes on oil extraction and cutting corporate and personal income tax rates.

All of the bill drafts filed by lawmakers can be found at www.legis.nd.gov/assembly/67-2021/special/bills-submitted-delayed-bills-committees-2021-special-session.

Contact Jeremy Turley at jturley@forumcomm.com or Adam Willis at awill@forumcomm.com.

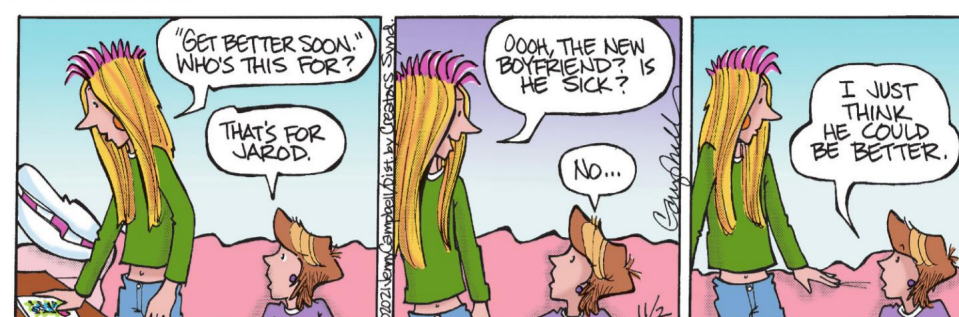


Josiah C. Cuellar / The Dickinson Press

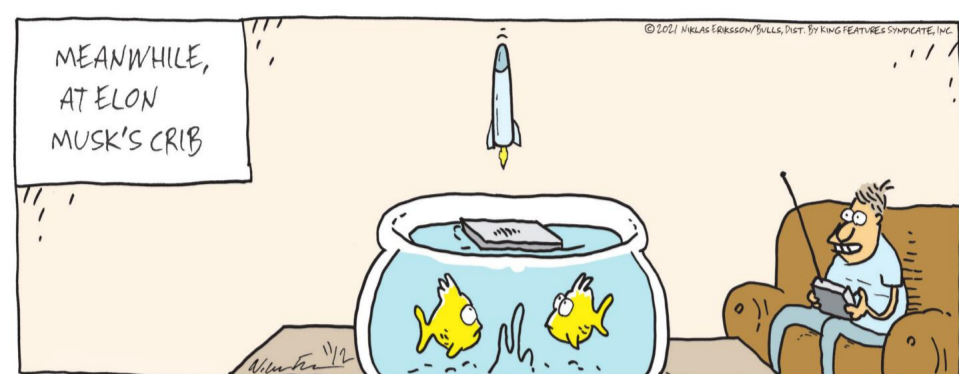
Medical scrubs and marker filled messages on signs and bodies highlighted a divided medical community Aug. 26 in Dickinson, North Dakota, as protesters gathered in front of CHI St. Alexius Health Dickinson in opposition to employment dependent mandates for the COVID-19 vaccine.

Advertisement for Grand Forks Herald EZ Pay service. Includes headline 'Get MORE with EZ PAY', a smartphone image showing '11 inch iPad Pro Wi-Fi & 128GB', and a form to enroll in the service. The form asks for authorization, signature, date, and payment details for either a credit card or bank account.

FLO & FRIENDS



CARPE DIEM



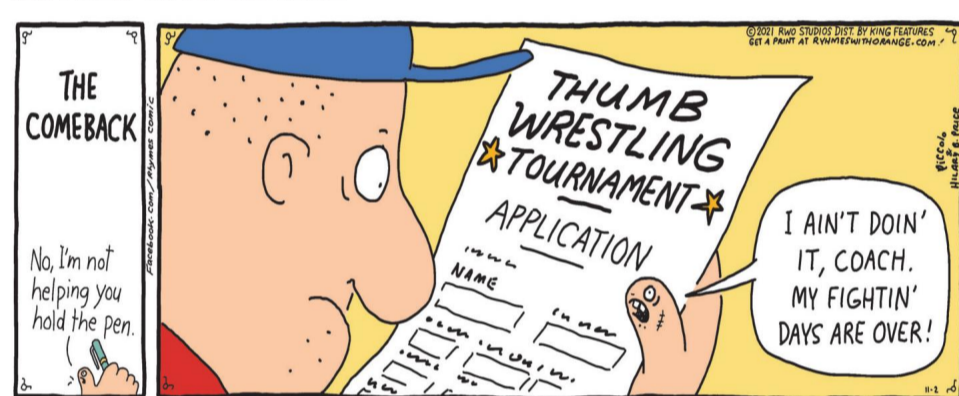
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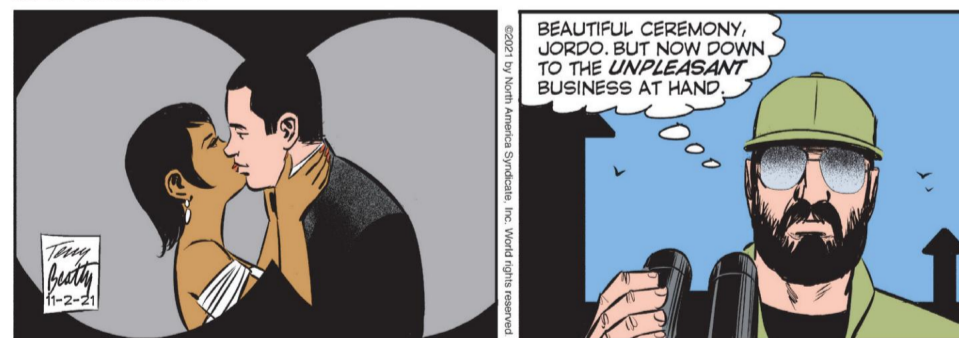
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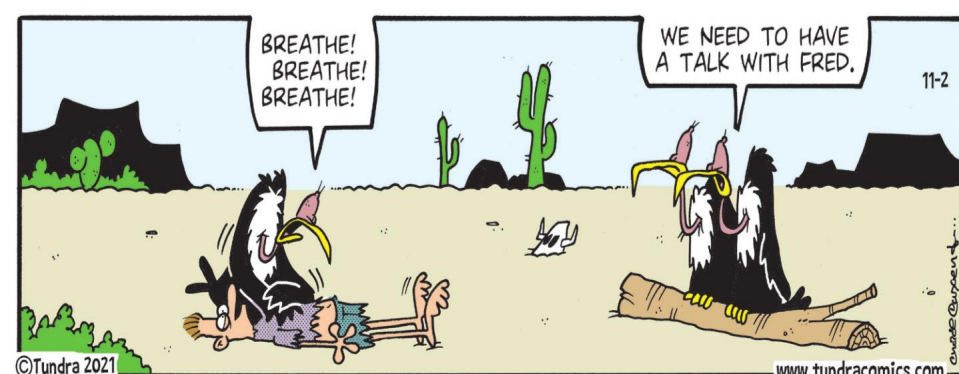
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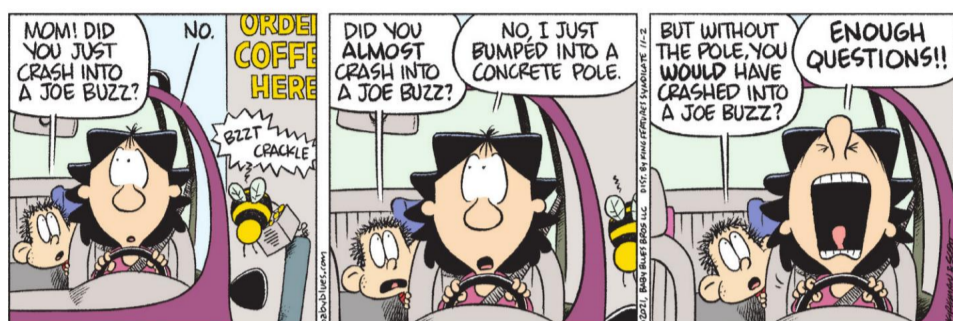
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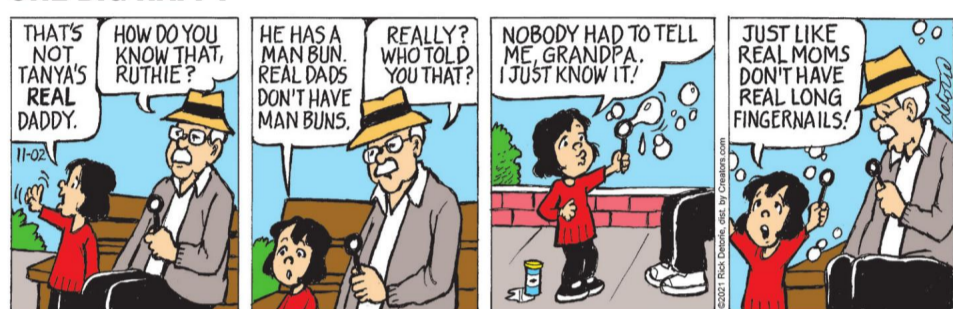
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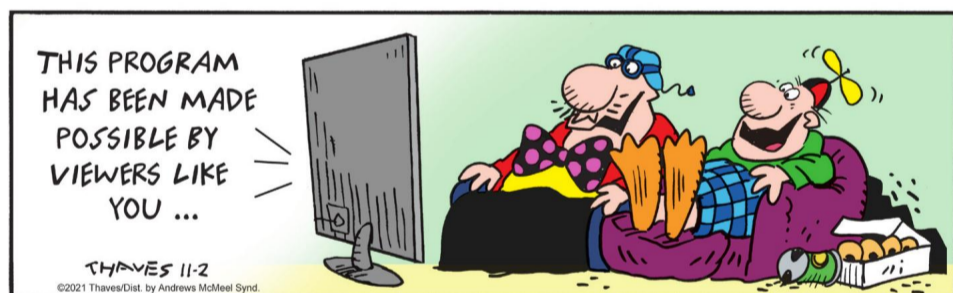
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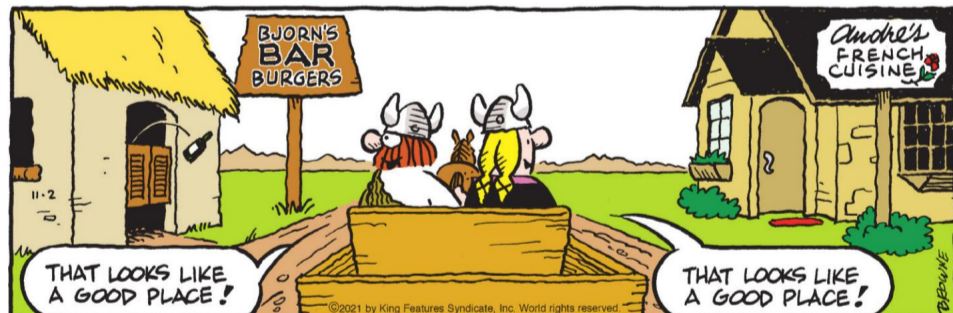
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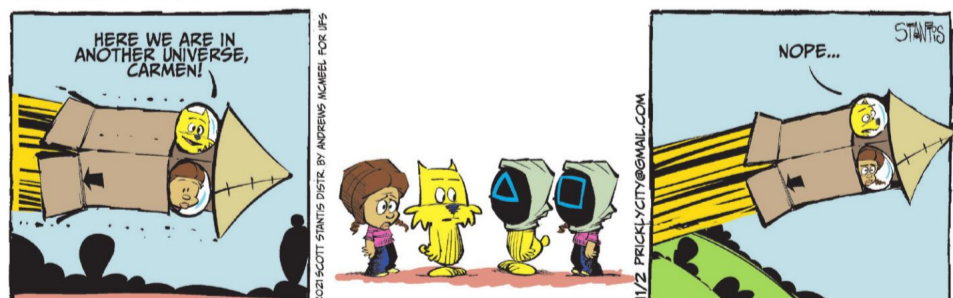
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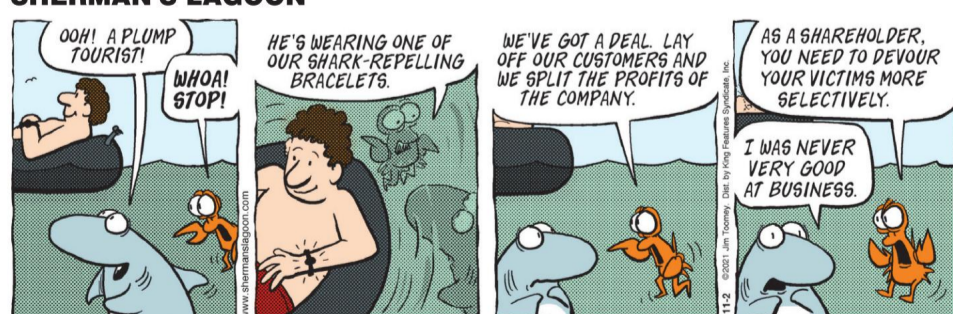
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SPORTS



Eric Hylden / Grand Forks Herald

UND's Brian Mathews goes to the baskets at Mayville State's Colby Dillenbeck defends in the second half of Monday's game at the Betty Engelstad Sioux Center.

HAWKS HANG ON, BEAT MAYVILLE

UND downs Comets 68-64 in exhibition game

By Tom Miller
Grand Forks Herald

If the UND men's basketball program was hoping to ease its nine newcomers into the college basketball season, Mayville State was having none of that Monday night. The Fighting Hawks had to fight to the final horn and use 28 points from Mitchell Sueker to escape with a 68-64 exhibition win in front of 1,234 at the Betty Engelstad Sioux Center. "We had a lot of looks around the basket and weren't finishing strong," UND coach Paul Sather said. "I think it's really easy sometimes in your mind to assume it's going to be easier and it's not. I give all the credit to their coaches and their players. They came in without a fear. I thought our guys were trying to figure out how they should act."

Mayville State, which led most of

the first half, made UND sweat out the final moments. UND's biggest lead was seven points early in the second half.

"We've got some tough returners who have been through the wringer a little bit," Mayville State coach Darren Tighe said. "They don't let us quit, whatever we're doing. That's just what our culture is. It doesn't matter the score, our effort level should be the same. We didn't hang our heads; we stayed in the moment."

Latrell Franklin, a 5-foot-8 senior speedster from Temecula, Calif., who scored 17 points, hit a 3-pointer with 4 minutes, 30 seconds left in the game to tie it at 57.

Sueker scored six of the game's next eight points. His lob at the rim with 2:50 to play put UND up four at 63-59.

HAWKS: Page 10



UND's Mitch Sueker slams a basket as Mayville State's Colby Dillenbeck defends in the second half of their game Monday.

Hunter out for season

Vikings defensive end tears pectoral muscle against Cowboys

By Chris Tomasson
St. Paul Pioneer Press

MINNEAPOLIS — Minnesota Vikings star defensive end Danielle Hunter will miss the rest of the season after suffering a torn right pectoral muscle during Sunday night's 20-16 loss to Dallas at U.S. Bank Stadium.

Hunter was injured in the second quarter and did not return after playing 27 snaps. He had an MRI on Monday morning, and an initial diagnosis of the injury was confirmed.

"I don't think you replace him, he's one of a kind," said Vikings coach Mike Zimmer. "It's unfortunate that we're going to miss the next half of the season with him."

Hunter missed all of last season with a neck injury but looked strong in his return this season. He had six sacks in the first six games before being hurt against the Cowboys. "He's a great kid," Zimmer said. "He'll do a great job in



USA Today Sports file photo

Minnesota Vikings defensive end Danielle Hunter reacts after a play Oct. 10 against the Detroit Lions at U.S. Bank Stadium in Minneapolis. It was announced Monday that Hunter would miss the rest of the season with a torn pectoral muscle.

his rehab and he'll be ready to go."

Hunter is expected to be replaced in the lineup by D.J. Wonnum at left defensive end. Wonnum began the season as the starter at right defensive end before Everson Griffen took over for the past three games.

"We know losing Danielle possibly is very hard," Griffen said. "He's a big-time player

for us and that situation is hard. But in this game that's why you got a football team and we got to go out there and we got to get the young guys going and get them ready to play. But losing Danielle is a big blow. ... It's devastating."

The Vikings have little experienced depth after Wonnum and Griffen. Kenny Willekes, a seventh-round draft pick in 2020 who is on the practice squad, was elevated to the roster and made his NFL debut by playing 16 snaps against the Cowboys. They also have rookie defensive end Patrick Jones II, who has yet to play this season.

"(Willekes has) been coming up," Zimmer said. "Pat's got some ability, and he's been working real hard. So they'll get some opportunities now."

Minnesota traded veteran defensive end Stephen Weatherly to Denver on Oct. 23 after he had played little in the first six games. He had his first sack of the season for the Broncos on Sunday against Washington.

The Vikings have talked about not wanting to over-use Griffen, who turns 34 in December. He played 60 of the 73 defensive snaps on Sunday while Wonnum played 53.

"I just got to take care of my body better and ready to go out there and work," Griffen said.

Another loss burned into the collective memory of Vikings fans

Minneapolis

There were a surprising number of boos raining down on the Minnesota Vikings on Sunday night, and not the kind that generally come with Halloween. Vikings fans weren't trying to scare their team, they were sending a message.

They expect more. It's impossible to blame them. Minnesota's 20-16 loss to Dallas at U.S. Bank Stadium will be burned into the collective memory of Vikings fans as the day Cooper Rush made his first NFL start in four years as a pro and outplayed Kirk Cousins.

This wasn't just a loss. It was a milestone. Washington's football team has Clint Longley, who replaced Roger Staubach and led the Cowboys to an unlikely Thanksgiving Day victory in 1974. The Vikings now have Rush stepping in for early MVP favorite Dak Prescott and, for all intents and purposes, ending the Vikings' season on Halloween Night.

Rush completed 24 of 40 passes for 325 yards and two touchdowns, including



JOHN SHIPLEY
St. Paul Pioneer Press

the game-winner to Amari Cooper in the corner of the end zone with 51 seconds remaining. Cousins and the Vikings have managed a couple of late rallies this season, beating Detroit on a last-second field goal and Carolina in overtime, but they didn't come close on Sunday. The final drive was chaos.

Cousins finished 23 for 35 passing for 184 yards and a touchdown in his 111th NFL start.

Dallas might have a top-notch offensive line and an athletic, opportunistic defense, but is it expecting too much to assume Cousins, making \$21 million and owed \$35 million in 2022, would outplay a quarterback who before Sunday had thrown only three passes in a regular-season game — and completed one?

SHIPLEY: Page 10

Magic roar past Wolves in fourth quarter

Orlando outscores Minnesota 43-19 over final 12 minutes

Field Level Media

MINNEAPOLIS — Cole Anthony scored 31 points, rookie Franz Wagner had a career-high 28 and the Orlando Magic ended a four-game losing streak with a 115-97 comeback victory over the Minnesota Timberwolves on Monday.

Anthony (14 points) and Wagner combined for 24 fourth-quarter points as Orlando outscored the Timberwolves 43-19 over the final 12 minutes. Minnesota was on top by 13 points in the second quarter and 11 late in the third.

The Timberwolves took a 78-72 lead into the fourth period, but the Magic pulled ahead 94-85 on Anthony's 3-pointer with 6:28 remaining. Wagner hit a 3-pointer from the corner to make it 99-89 at the 4:57 mark, and he later drove the lane for a dunk and a 104-91 advantage.

Wagner shot 10-for-18, including 5-for-9 from beyond the arc, as the Magic salvaged one victory during its three-game road trip that included losses to the Toronto Raptors and Detroit Pistons. Wagner

has reached double figures in all eight Orlando games this season.

Anthony made six triples and added nine rebounds and eight assists. Orlando's Wendell Carter Jr. had 15 points and 14 rebounds.

Magic guard Jalen Suggs totaled 15 points in his return to the state of Minnesota. The fifth overall pick in the 2021 draft was born in Saint Paul and attended Minnehaha Academy in Minneapolis before he played one collegiate season at Gonzaga University.

Karl-Anthony Towns amassed 23 points and 16 rebounds and Anthony Edwards scored 24 points, but Minnesota dropped its third straight game at the Target Center and fell for the third time in four games overall.

The Timberwolves, who entered the day No. 4 in the league in defensive efficiency, allowed Orlando to shoot 45.1 percent from the field and sink 17 of 43 3-point attempts (39.5 percent).

Timberwolves starting point guard D'Angelo Russell played



Bruce Kluckhohn / USA Today Sports

Minnesota Timberwolves forward Anthony Edwards goes to the basket as Orlando Magic center Mo Bamba defends Monday at Target Center in Minneapolis.

17 minutes before leaving the game with a right ankle sprain. He scored three points on 1-for-8 shooting and had five rebounds and three assists for Minnesota, which was also

without guard Patrick Beverley (left calf soreness).

Orlando shot just 38.2 percent in the first half, but the Magic stayed within 58-53 at halftime thanks to a decided

edge at the free-throw line.

The Magic converted 20 of 25 free throws — compared with 2 of 4 for Minnesota — as Anthony sank nine of his 11 attempts.

Woods comes up big against former team, but loss to Cowboys 'stings'

By Chris Tomasson

St. Paul Pioneer Press

MINNEAPOLIS

Entering Sunday night's game at U.S. Bank Stadium, Minnesota Vikings safety Xavier Woods admitted he wanted revenge against his former team.

Woods spent the previous four seasons with the Dallas Cowboys, but they didn't offer him a contract when he became a free agent in March.

Woods had a big game against the Cowboys, getting an interception and forcing a fumble on a strip sack. But Minnesota lost 20-16.

"During the game, they were high," Woods said of his emotions. "But we didn't win, so I don't like that. Even though I played well, we lost and that stings."

Woods had his interception in the second quarter. Early in the fourth quarter, he hit Dallas quarterback Cooper Rush on a blitz to force



Jeffrey Becker / USA Today Sports

Minnesota Vikings free safety Xavier Woods returns an interception as Dallas Cowboys tight end Dalton Schultz (86) looks to make the tackle Sunday at U.S. Bank Stadium in Minneapolis.

a fumble that Vikings linebacker Anthony Barr recovered.

"They just didn't block me," Woods said.

Woods was disappointed that the Vikings didn't

"finish" after taking a 16-13 lead on a 24-yard field goal by Greg Joseph with 2:51 left in the game. Rush threw a five-yard touchdown to Amari Cooper with 51 seconds

remaining for the winning score.

The Cowboys played without star quarterback Dak Prescott due to a strained right calf. Woods said it hurts a "little

bit" more that they lost against a backup quarterback.

"No matter how you take that L, it's still a loss," he said. "We can't let this break us."

Willekes debuts

The Vikings were thin at defensive end in the second half after two-time Pro Bowl selection Danielle Hunter was lost for the game — and now the season — due to a shoulder injury. Vikings coach Mike Zimmer said the loss of Hunter definitely "affected us" on Sunday night.

The Vikings played their first game after trading reserve defensive end Stephen Weatherly to Denver on Oct. 23. Weatherly had a sack for the Broncos in his first game for them on Sunday against Washington.

With Weatherly out of the picture, defensive end Kenny Willekes, a 2020 seventh-round pick, finally made his NFL

debut. Willekes spent last season on injured reserve with a knee injury and has been on the practice squad this season. He was elevated to the active roster, and got some snaps from scrimmage against the Cowboys.

Osborn returns kicks

Vikings receiver Dede Westbrook sat out Sunday with an ankle injury, and receiver K.J. Osborn took over as the punt returner. He returned one punt for seven yards and had two fair catches.

In addition to Westbrook, inactive for the Vikings were nose tackle Michael Pierce (elbow), who had been ruled out Friday for a third straight game, defensive end Patrick Jones (knee), who had been listed as doubtful, quarterback Kellen Mond, linebacker Chazz Surratt and guard Wyatt Davis.

HAWKS

From Page 8

"Mayville came out with a ton of energy, and we had to respond," Sueker said. "They played well and shot it well. I think we learned some things."

A 3-pointer from Mayville State's Winder Joseph, who ended with a team-high 20 points, trimmed the lead back to 63-62 with 2:32 to play.

After Sueker hit a free throw with 1:37 left to give UND a 66-64 lead, Fighting Hawks' 6-foot-9 transfer post Tsothe Tsartsidze had a block at the rim as the Comets attempted to tie the game on the next

possession.

With about 30 seconds left in the game, UND guard Caleb Nero drew a blocking foul in the lane in which the Comets' bench wanted an offensive foul. Nero's resulting free throws with 18.2 seconds left gave UND a 68-64 lead.

The Comets would then miss two shots on their final possession.

"I think you learn a lot from this game," Sather said. "But if you look at a score and just get kind of caught on that, you're not seeing the big picture. I loved how we were guarding some of their stuff late. We just have to continue to learn from it. We have some great practices coming up to get ready for Milwaukee."

The Hawks host Milwaukee on Nov. 9.

Sueker finished 11-for-19 from the field and was 9-for-12 in the second half.

"I missed some easier finishes in the first half," Sueker said. "I had to calm down, compose myself and keep attacking and they'll fall eventually."

Sueker was joined in double figures by Ethan Igbano, who had 11 points.

"(Sueker) is a large human on the perimeter," Tighe said. "He did a nice job spacing and cutting at the right time. That's what's great about playing these games. If we don't do something correctly, and we get a little lazy, they score. He's a good player."

Brendan Howard, a 6-foot-5 junior transfer from Montana State-Billings, finished with eight points in just about six minutes of play, while Bentiu Panoam added seven points off the bench. UND was just 3-for-15 from the 3-point line and 11-for-19 from the foul line.

"They gave us a good fight, for sure," Igbano said. "We had a lot of guys checking in for their first Division I game or first time at North Dakota. It was a good test, for sure."

"We need to shake the rust off. We were a little hesitant in the zone. We need to be confident when we're in there and play hard defensively. That's stuff we'll get better as the year goes on."

Franklin and Joseph had 37 of the team's 64 points for the Comets. Colby Dillenbeck was also in double figures with 11 but he battled foul trouble and played less than 16 minutes. He was a plus-13 when he was on the floor for Mayville State, which plays at Minnesota Crookston on Thursday.

"I loved how we battled," Tighe said. "We got home at 4:30 a.m. on Halloween from Iowa. I wasn't sure how we'd come back, but we showed a lot of heart and that's a positive sign moving forward. But Crookston isn't going to give a rip about what we did today, so we have to get a little better at practice each day and see what we can do on Thursday."

SHIPLEY

From Page 8

It's possible that some of those boos on Sunday night, in fact, have been the many Dallas fans in attendance cheering Rush — "Coooooop!" But there was little doubt when the Vikings, facing third-and-23 from their own 35 in the fourth quarter, called a draw play to Alexander Mattison.

Those were boos. Fans had had enough.

"If you're not frustrated, you probably shouldn't be a player on this team," said receiver Adam Thielen, who caught the Vikings' touchdown and finished with a team-high six catches for 78 yards.

The Cowboys had

arrived with Prescott in street clothes, a clear sign that this nationally televised night game meant less to them than it did to the Vikings — and it did. No matter what happened, Dallas (6-1) would have still had a comfortable lead in the NFC East. The Vikings (3-4) were starting a stretch of four difficult games that would make or break their season, and this was a bad — if not fatal — way to start.

They had been given a gift when Dallas, with bigger fish to fry, held Prescott back because of a calf strain. Turns out, it didn't matter.

The Vikings have well-paid stars all over the field, on both sides of the ball — Cousins, Thielen, Danielle Hunter, Eric Kendricks,

Dalvin Cook, Justin Jefferson, Anthony Barr — yet rarely play like a team with well-paid stars all over the field on both sides of the ball.

Hunter was lost to a shoulder injury in the first half and never returned — he'll get an MRI exam on Monday, Zimmer said — and the team was without their best cornerback Patrick Peterson, on injured reserve with a hamstring injury. But there was enough talent on the field to beat a headless snake. This team's default setting is ... meh.

The Vikings defense made some big plays — an interception and strip sack by Xavier Woods chief among them — but allowed the Cowboys to drive 75 yards in two minutes for the

winning touchdown. The secondary was rough; one shudders to think about what Prescott would have done with it.

Winners of three of four to climb back to .500 and coming off their bye week, the Vikings felt good about their team headed into the game, and with Detroit and Chicago stumbling, they were set to be Green Bay's lone competition in the NFC North. It now appears the Packers (7-1) have no competition.

The loss was so shocking that Zimmer was at something of a loss to explain how it happened, or even what's next. Minnesota plays at Baltimore next Sunday, then against the Chargers in Los Angeles before coming home to face Green Bay. Unless



Matt Blewett / USA Today Sports

Minnesota Vikings head coach Mike Zimmer looks on in the fourth quarter of the Vikings' 20-16 loss to the Dallas Cowboys on Sunday at U.S. Bank Stadium in Minneapolis.

something changes drastically, jobs may be lost.

Asked how his team might channel its frustrations into something positive, the eighth-year head coach

said, "That's a good question. I think there needs to be some time to think about it and figure out what we can do differently, because this was a tough loss tonight."

Finally at home in Houston

Versatile veteran catcher Martín Maldonado helps save the Astros' season

By Jack Harris
Los Angeles Times

Atlanta

Carlos Correa couldn't help but chime in. On a night everyone else was raving about one of his favorite teammates, the Houston Astros shortstop wanted to speak up too. In the team's 9-5 win over the Atlanta Braves in Game 5 of the World Series on Sunday, a result that staved off elimination and sent the series back to Houston on Tuesday for Game 6, catcher Martín Maldonado was the unexpected hero.

In the regular season, the 35-year-old veteran was one of the least productive hitters in baseball, batting .172 (second-worst among big leaguers with 400 plate appearances) with 12 home runs and only 36 runs batted in. His numbers in the postseason had been even worse, entering Sunday just four for 41 with 14 strikeouts and one walk.

Nonetheless, he continued to serve as the Astros' everyday catcher — he played in 125 games this year, seventh-most among MLB catchers — because of all the other elements of his game, including solid pitch framing, expert game-calling and management of a young pitching staff.

But finally on Sunday, his wily skill set showed up at the plate as well. He had a team-high three RBIs on one hit, one sacrifice fly and one game-changing walk against Atlanta reliever A.J. Minter in the fifth inning, a bases-loaded free pass that tied the score and teed up Marwin Gonzalez's go-ahead hit in the next at-bat.

"Whatever way you bring in a run, especially in the playoffs, is huge," Maldonado said after the game, getting star treatment in the Truist Park interview room. "You get good at—bats, whatever the situation dictates. You try to work through it. I was really hopeful to help the team win whatever way we can do it."

As he sat beside Maldonado at the postgame dais, it was the fifth-inning walk that Correa wanted to highlight.

"Did you guys notice how close he was to the plate on the bat against Minter?" Correa excitedly interjected, staring out at reporters with a laugh. "You guys notice? That was sick."

It might have helped save the Astros season too.

At that point, the Astros were still trailing 5-4. There were two out in the fifth and Atlanta had willingly loaded the bases by intentionally

walking Alex Bregman, purposefully targeting Maldonado instead.

"I was expecting that," Maldonado said. So, the 11-year veteran came up with a plan.

"I wasn't going to swing to get a strike," he said.

Minter made that easy on the first pitch, throwing well inside with Maldonado — much to Correa's delight — crowding the plate. The next offering was a cutter just off the outside corner, but Maldonado was taking all the way.

Minter finally hit the zone on pitch No. 3 but then missed low to make it a three-ball count.

As the left-hander began to fire again, Maldonado showed a late bunt, but then pulled the bat back as a fastball whizzed well wide of the plate. Ball four. Tie score.

"It was amazing," said Gonzalez, who watched the battle from the on-deck circle before slapping a two-run single into left on the very next pitch. "I said after the game, I think that was the key."

The fact Maldonado ended up in Houston in the first place required a complicated turn of events.

After six steady seasons to begin his career with the Milwaukee Brewers, the Puerto Rico native has been shuffled, swapped and shipped around the league so many times that the Los Angeles Angels — the club that originally drafted him in 2004, cut him three years later, then signed him as a free agent before 2017 — now have two other key players because of him.

In 2018, Maldonado went from Anaheim to Houston at the trade deadline in exchange for pitcher Patrick Sandoval, now one of the Angels' best young arms.

After signing as a free agent with the Kansas City Royals the next year, Maldonado was traded twice within two weeks in July, first to the Chicago Cubs, then back to the Astros in a move that prompted them to later trade their then-backup catcher Max Stassi to the Angels, where he has since blossomed into a starting role.

But after returning to Houston the second time in 2019, Maldonado has slowly solidified a leading role. A free agent again that year, he re-signed with the Astros on a two-year deal. Near the start of this season, he agreed to a one-year extension with an option for another.

"Maldy's a guy that, obviously we talk about how



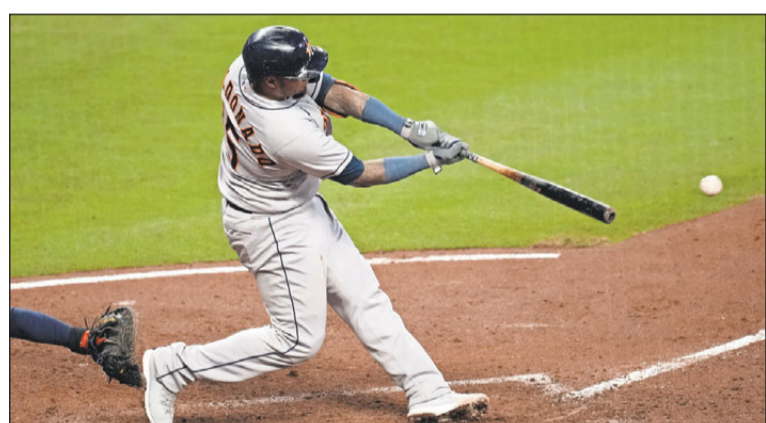
USA Today Sports file photo

Houston Astros catcher Martín Maldonado reacts after hitting an RBI single against the Atlanta Braves in Game 2 of the 2021 World Series at Minute Maid Park in Houston.

great he is with the pitch calling, and his defense is amazing and all that, but he's a guy that puts in the work every single day in the cage also," Correa said. "He cares about the team. He cares about at-bats. He wants to win the game."

And on Sunday, all those things coalesced into a uniquely signature performance, Maldonado reversing his season-long offensive struggles to help the Astros keep their World Series hopes alive.

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Dale Zanine / USA Today Sports

Houston Astros catcher Martín Maldonado hits an RBI double against the Atlanta Braves in the seventh inning Sunday of Game 5 of the 2021 World Series at Truist Park in Atlanta.

Bettman defends NHL's decisions in scandal

Fans should be horrified at Blackhawks incident, commissioner says

By Steve Keating
Reuters

Fans should be "horrified" by the sex abuse scandal engulfing the Chicago Blackhawks, said National Hockey League commissioner Gary Bettman on Monday while defending his handling of the case.

Bettman was grilled by the media during a nearly one hour press conference that focused on the findings of an independent investigation conducted by the Blackhawks into allegations that former video coach Brad Aldrich sexually assaulted player Kyle Beach after he was called up from the minors during the 2010 Stanley Cup playoffs.

Bettman began by offering a public apology to Beach for this "horrible situation," but he was quickly left to defend



Dirk Shadd / TNS file photo

National Hockey League commissioner Gary Bettman talks with reporters before the Tampa Bay Lightning take on the Pittsburgh Penguins in the NHL season opener at Amalie Arena on Oct. 12 in Tampa, Florida.

the league's handling of the matter, warning there will be consequences for any team

putting results above player safety.

"This has to serve as a

wake up call to all clubs that you need to make sure you understand what your organization is doing because you are going to be held responsible," he added.

An explosive 107-page independent report released last Tuesday detailed a lack of action by Blackhawks senior management, who were made aware of the Beach allegations but did not deal with the matter while playing in the Stanley Cup finals.

After winning the Stanley Cup, the Blackhawks offered Aldrich the choice of facing an investigation or resign, which he did.

Beach, a first round draft pick who would never play a game for Chicago, filed a lawsuit against the Blackhawks in May, 2021 and only revealed himself as the vic-

tim of alleged assault last Wednesday during an emotional interview with Canadian sport network TSN.

"I think that people are going to feel dispirited, disappointed, horrified as to what happened," said Bettman.

Blackhawks general manager Stan Bowman and Florida Panthers coach Joel Quenneville, who had been coach of the Blackhawks at the time, both resigned their positions last week.

Still, Bettman was on the defensive throughout much of the video conference, challenged about his decision to exonerate Winnipeg Jets general manager Kevin Cheveldayoff, the former-Blackhawks assistant.

Sanford Health suspends less than 1% of employees for refusing vaccine

By Jeremy Fugleberg
Grand Forks Herald

SIoux FALLS, S.D. — Sanford Health has suspended 82 employees for refusing to get vaccinated against COVID-19 or get an exemption from doing so, the Sioux Falls, South Dakota-based health system reported Monday, Nov. 1.

Sanford Health leaders in late July set Monday as the deadline for its 48,000 employees to get vaccinated against COVID-19 or be granted a medical or religious exemption to the vaccination.

All those suspended have 60 days to comply with the health system's expectations or will be considered to have voluntarily resigned and be terminated from their jobs.

"Sanford Health was proud to be one of the first health care providers in the country to announce we would require all employees to get a COVID-19 vaccination to protect our patients and our people," Dr. Jeremy Cauwels, chief physi-



David Samson / The Forum

Sanford Medical Center in southwest Fargo.

cian at Sanford Health, said in a statement. "We remain committed to doing all we can to ensure a safe care and work environment for our patients and employees. As a result of

our high employee vaccination rate, we have also seen a decline in COVID-19 infections and sick leave among staff."

Sanford Health has major medical centers in Sioux Falls,

Fargo and Bemidji, Minnesota, among its 46 medical centers, as well as 224 clinic locations and 200 Good Samaritan Society senior care facilities. Its workforce includes about 1,500 physicians and 8,700 registered nurses.

The number of those suspended varies across Sanford's footprint, and totals less than 1% of its workforce, Sanford Health noted.

Suspension include:

- ▶ 31 in Fargo
- ▶ 28 in Sioux Falls
- ▶ 16 in Bismarck
- ▶ 7 in Bemidji

None of the 31 suspended in Sanford's Fargo region were physicians, physician assistants, nurse practitioners or certified registered nurse anesthetists, said Dr. Doug Griffin, Sanford Fargo vice president and medical officer, in a statement.

Asked to clarify how many medical or religious exemptions it had granted, Sanford Health spokesman Jon Berg didn't directly answer, stat-

ing, "Exemption data is a personnel matter."

Those granted an exemption will be required to comply with regular COVID-19 testing, he said.

The health system hasn't unilaterally granted any religious exemptions without being asked, and hasn't given employees who refuse to get vaccinated a choice to work remotely or other accommodations, Berg said.

Sanford Health also didn't directly answer a Forum News Service question on whether any exemption requests were denied.

"Consistent with applicable state and federal law, Sanford has a system in place to review and provide exemptions for critical medical conditions, or if employees demonstrate a sincerely held religious belief warranting the exemption," Berg said.

Fugleberg covers regional health issues, with a focus on Sanford Health. He can be followed on Twitter at @jayfug and reached at jfugleberg@forumcomm.com or 605-777-3357.

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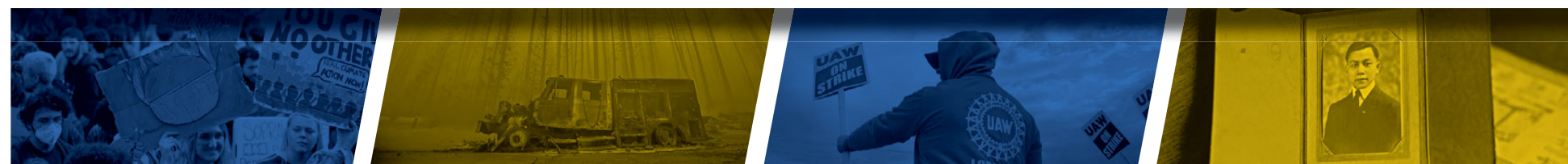
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TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2021 | NATION PLUS - A FORUM COMMUNICATIONS EXTRA

BIDEN: US WILL MEET CLIMATE GOALS

PRESIDENT DELIVERS SPEECH ON FIRST DAY OF COP26 CLIMATE CONFERENCE

By Jeff Mason and Valerie Volcovici
Reuters

Glasgow/Washington

President Joe Biden on Monday sought to assure world leaders the United States would fulfill its promise to slash greenhouse gas emissions in half by the end of the decade, but a setback at home heightened uncertainty about his ability to follow through.

Biden joined leaders from over 100 countries in Glasgow for the start of the COP26 climate conference, which kicked off on the heels of the G20 summit in Rome that concluded with a statement that urged "meaningful and effective" action on climate change but left huge work for negotiators to ensure an ambitious outcome.

Biden pledged earlier this year that the United States would cut its greenhouse gas emissions 50-52% by 2030 compared with 2005 levels. The White House has expressed confidence it can achieve that, even as a bill that would help further those goals languishes in Congress, with a key senator on Monday withholding his support, for now.

Biden wanted to show to the world that Washington could be trusted to fight global warming despite changes in policies between Republican and Democratic administrations that have undermined its pledges in the past.

"We'll demonstrate to the world the United States is not only back at

the table but hopefully leading by the power of our example," he said. "I know it hasn't been the case, and that's why my administration is working overtime to show that our climate commitment is action, not words."

As Biden was meeting with world leaders in Scotland, moderate Democratic Senator Joe Manchin announced he would not yet support a \$1.75 trillion legislative framework that is central to achieving the president's emissions reduction goals.

National Climate Adviser Gina McCarthy said ahead of Biden's arrival in Glasgow that the bill would unleash \$555 billion in climate spending, the largest investment to combat global warming in U.S. history, and allow the country to reduce emissions well over a gigaton or a billion metric tons by 2030.

Biden announced a long-term strategy laying out how the United States would achieve a longer-term goal of net-zero emissions by 2050.

In his COP26 speech, Biden said the world needed to help developing nations in the climate fight.

"Right now we're still falling short," he said.

Biden plans to work with the U.S. Congress to launch a \$3 billion program in 2024 aimed at helping developing countries adapt to and manage the impacts of climate change through locally led measures.



Evan Vucci / Pool via Reuters

President Joe Biden speaks during the U.N. Climate Change Conference (COP26) on Monday in Glasgow, Scotland.

Manchin will not commit to backing spending bill

By Richard Cowan and David Morgan
Reuters

WASHINGTON - President Joe Biden's domestic agenda suffered a major setback on Monday when Democratic Senator Joe Manchin said he would not commit to supporting a \$1.75 trillion framework on social spending and climate change unveiled last week.

"While I've worked hard to find a path to compromise, it's obvious: Compromise is not good enough for a lot of my colleagues in Congress. It's all or nothing, and their position doesn't seem to change unless we agree to everything," Manchin told a news conference.

"Enough is enough. It's time our elected leaders in Washington, all of us, stopped playing games with the needs of the American people in holding a critical infrastructure bill hostage."

Manchin spoke four days after Biden visited Capitol Hill to unveil a \$1.75 trillion proposal that would offer free preschool for 3- and 4-year olds, expand home care for the elderly and



Jonathan Ernst / Reuters

U.S. Sen. Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.) delivers remarks to reporters Monday at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C.

offer tax credits for companies investing in clean energy sources.

The package was half the size of Biden's prior \$3.5 trillion goal, after dropping some progressives' priorities.

Manchin portrayed the bill as being filled with "shell games" and "budget gimmicks" that would end up costing far more than its \$1.75 trillion price tag.

In reaction to Manchin, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer insisted: "We are still talking and working through important details and making good progress."

But the news dimmed the chances of passing either bill this week. Schumer has not said when he would have the votes needed to pass the legislation.

Manchin demanded

immediate House action on a \$1 trillion infrastructure bill that the Senate passed in August with the support of 19 Republicans.

But progressives in Biden's Democratic Party have demanded that no vote occur on that measure until the larger bill to expand social programs and attack climate change was first assured of Senate passage.

Manchin's defiance further complicated Democrats' efforts in a month when they are facing a towering legislative to-do list.

In addition to hoping to pass the two major bills, Congress faces critical deadlines in the next five weeks to avoid a government shutdown and avert an unprecedented default on the federal government's debt with its catastrophic economic consequences.

US Supreme Court may allow challenge to Texas abortion law

3 hours of oral arguments took place Monday

By Andrew Chung and Lawrence Hurley
Reuters

WASHINGTON - Two months after letting a near-total ban on abortion in Texas take effect, conservative U.S. Supreme Court justices on Monday signaled they are reconsidering their positions and could let abortion providers pursue a bid to invalidate the law.

The court on Sept. 1 declined to halt the law in a 5-4 decision with all but one of its six conservative justices in the majority. During three hours of oral arguments on Monday, at least two of the justices who had allowed the law to be enforced - Brett Kavanaugh and Amy Coney Barrett - appeared to lean toward permitting abortion providers to proceed with their legal challenge.

The court's conservatives seemed more skeptical about whether to let Democratic President Joe Biden's administration pursue its own challenge. The Justice Department sued Texas in September seeking to block the Republican-backed law.

The administration and abortion providers have said the law violates a woman's constitutional right to terminate a pregnancy recognized in the court's landmark 1973 Roe v. Wade ruling and is impermissibly

designed to evade federal judicial review.

The law imposes the nation's toughest abortion restrictions, banning it after about six weeks of pregnancy - a time when many women do not realize they are pregnant - with no exceptions for pregnancies resulting from incest or rape. It is one of a wave of Republican-backed state abortion laws in recent years. Abortion opponents hope the court's 6-3 conservative majority will pare back abortion rights or even overturn Roe v. Wade.

Some justices signaled that existing Supreme Court precedent could accommodate the lawsuit by the abortion providers despite the law's novel design that makes it difficult for federal courts to block it. The law lets private citizens rather than state officials enforce it through lawsuits against providers and others who assist a woman in obtaining an abortion.

Depending on what approach the justices take, they could block the law entirely or pave the way for a lower court judge to do so. If the justices keep federal courts out of the process by virtue of the law's design, it could be replicated in various other states seeking to curtail abortion access.

U.S. abortion rights are hanging in the balance as the justices review the Texas law before hearing arguments on Dec. 1 over the legality of a Mississippi measure.

Number of unvaccinated dwindles in NY

Mayor: No disruption of services as mandate for first responders takes effect

By Peter Szekely
Reuters

NEW YORK - New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio declared his coronavirus vaccination order for emergency responders a success on Monday, with no disruption to city services, despite a sickout by some firefighters who officials said were protesting the mandate.

The mayor's Oct. 20 order, which police and firefighter union leaders said would cause staff shortages, led to an 11th-hour rush of inoculations that shrank the ranks of the unvaccinated as officials in the largest U.S. city began enforcing the mandate on Monday.

The vaccination rate for the city's workforce of 378,000 employees, including teachers, corrections officers and other city workers who faced previous orders, rose to at least 91% over the weekend from 86% on Thursday, de Blasio said.

"Time and time again we



Carlo Allegri / Reuters

New York City police cars are pictured Monday amid the COVID-19 pandemic in the Manhattan borough of New York City, New York.

put the mandates in place and they've worked," de Blasio told a briefing.

Mandate disputes also have erupted in other cities as political leaders have sought

enforcing a vaccine mandate for police officers who are union members and ordered the case to arbitration.

New York City police and firefighter unions also have challenged the mandate. But the Police Benevolent Association of the City of New York said courts last week rejected its requests for an emergency order to halt the mandate's enforcement.

The New York mandate prompted several thousand uniformed workers, including emergency medical services and sanitation employees, to get the required minimum first shot by the Friday afternoon deadline, and more than 3,500 others to do so over the weekend, de Blasio said.

That lifted vaccination rates to 85% for the New York Police Department, 88% for Emergency Medical Services, 83% for the Sanitation Department and 77% for firefighters, the mayor said.

Some 9,000 workers were placed on unpaid leave for failing to get immunized, while another 12,000 unvaccinated workers were getting paid while officials assessed their claims for medical or religious exemptions, which could take days, de Blasio said.

"We're not seeing disruptions to any city services," he added.

Fire Commissioner Daniel Nigro said 2,300 employees had called in sick on Monday.

Despite the sickout, which could lead to discipline, all of the city's fire houses were open on Monday, Nigro said.

Union officials, who said last week at least one-third of firefighters and police officers were unvaccinated, had predicted worker shortages as a result of the mandate, which eliminated a COVID-19 testing alternative that they said had worked well.

Pacific Gas & Electric under federal probe in Dixie fire

By Hayley Smith
Los Angeles Times

In yet another investigation into the role that utility giant Pacific Gas & Electric has played in California's worsening wildfires, the company announced Monday that it received a subpoena from the U.S. attorney's office seeking documents related to the Dixie fire.

PG&E received the subpoena Oct. 7, according to Monday's regulatory filing, which also said the utility expects to take a loss of at least \$1.15 billion from the blaze.

The Dixie fire — the sec-

ond-largest wildfire in California history — ignited in the dense forest of Plumas County in July. In the weeks and months that followed, it burned through more than 963,000 acres across five counties, destroying 1,300 structures and leveling the town of Greenville.

The cause remains under investigation, but PG&E previously said its equipment may have been the source of the blaze after a worker in the Feather River Canyon area reported two blown fuses and a tree leaning into a power line conductor on July 13, the

date the fire started.

A small fire was burning at the base of the tree, but nearly 10 hours passed between the initial sighting and the arrival of first responders, according to a report submitted to the California Public Utilities Commission.

The quarterly report filed Monday confirmed that PG&E received a subpoena from the U.S. attorney's office for the Eastern District of California in October. The company is cooperating with the investigation, they said.

PG&E spokeswoman Lynsey Paulo said in a statement

Monday that the company is "working every day" to resolve claims stemming from past fires and to make its systems safer.

"Our hearts continue to be with everyone who was affected by the Dixie fire," Paulo said. "As we've shared previously, we believe our actions around the time of the Dixie fire's ignition show that we are a reasonable operator of our electric system. We remain focused on reducing wildfire risk across our service area and are committed to keeping our customers and communities safe."

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, the Butte County district attorney's office and other agencies are also investigating the cause of the blaze, PG&E said. Cal Fire seized some equipment as part of its probe in July but has not yet issued a determination as to the fire's cause.

Potential liabilities from the fire are dependent on a variety of factors, including the cause of the blaze as well as the number, size and type of structures and trees damaged or destroyed, PG&E said.

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BRIEFS

No Russian troop buildup near border, Ukraine says

KYIV, (Reuters) - Ukraine's defense ministry on Monday denied a media report of a Russian military buildup near its border, saying it had not observed an increase in forces or weaponry.

The Washington Post said at the weekend a renewed buildup of Russian troops near the Ukrainian border had raised concern among some officials in the United States and Europe who are tracking what they consider irregular movements of equipment and personnel on Russia's western flank.

In Washington, the Pentagon said it was aware of public reports about "unusual activity."

Up to 100 people missing in collapsed Nigerian highrise

LAGOS (Reuters) - Up to 100 people were missing after a luxury residential highrise under construction in Nigeria's commercial capital Lagos collapsed on Monday, trapping construction workers under a pile of concrete rubble, witnesses said.

A body was retrieved and at least three survivors were pulled out on Monday night as rescue workers raced against the clock to dig up victims at the site in the affluent neighborhood of Ikoyi, where many blocks of flats are under construction.

Rescue workers used excavators to dig through rubble using generator-powered flood lights. The retrieved body was put in a waiting van while at least three people who were rescued were taken to nearby ambulances.

'Time for action,' Queen Elizabeth tells summit

GLASGOW (Reuters) - Britain's Queen Elizabeth told the United Nations climate change summit on Monday that "the time for words has now moved to the time for action," as she urged world leaders to think of future generations when negotiating a deal to limit global warming.

In a video message on the first day of the conference in Scotland, the queen urged leaders to rise above "the politics of the moment" and said the legacy of a successful summit would help "our children's children."

The 95-year-old, the world's oldest and longest-reigning monarch, was due to attend the event in person in Glasgow but pulled out after doctors advised her to rest.

Facebook: Troll farm by Nicaraguan government is gone from Facebook

(Reuters) - Facebook said on Monday that last month it removed a troll farm with more than 1,000 Facebook and Instagram accounts which it was said was run by the Nicaraguan government and the country's ruling party, the Sandinista National Liberation Front.

The social media company said the troll farm - a coordinated effort to manipulate public discourse using fake accounts - was intended to amplify pro-government and anti-opposition content. It said it had been active on its platforms since 2018.

The Supreme Court, which has been an Ortega ally, and the Nicaraguan Social Security Institute also ran smaller clusters of fake accounts, Facebook said.

China, Russia push to lift sanctions on North Korea

UNITED NATIONS (Reuters) - China and Russia are pushing the U.N. Security Council to ease sanctions on North Korea by reviving a 2019 attempt to remove a ban on Pyongyang's exports of statues, seafood and textiles and expanding it to include lifting a refined petroleum imports cap.

In a reworked draft resolution, seen by Reuters on Monday, China and Russia want the 15-member council to remove those sanctions "with the intent of enhancing the livelihood of the civilian population" in the isolated Asian state.

North Korea has been subject to U.N. sanctions since 2006 over its nuclear and ballistic missile programs.

Developing countries demand climate action

Weekend G20 summit failed to set positive tone

By Elizabeth Piper and William James
Reuters

GLASGOW - A crucial U.N. conference heard calls on its first day for the world's major economies to keep their promises of financial help to address the climate crisis, while big polluters India and Brazil made new commitments to cut emissions.

World leaders, environmental experts and activists all pleaded for decisive action to halt the global warming which threatens the future of the planet at the start of the two-week COP26 summit in the Scottish city of Glasgow on Monday.

The task facing negotiators was made even more daunting by the failure of the Group of 20 major industrial nations to agree ambitious new commitments at the weekend.

The G20 is responsible for around 80% of global greenhouse gases and a similar proportion of carbon dioxide, the gas produced by burning fossil fuels that is the main cause of the rise in global temperatures which are triggering an increasing intensity of heatwaves, droughts, floods and storms.

"The animals are disappearing, the rivers are dying and our plants don't flower like they did before. The Earth is speaking. She tells us that we have no more time," Txai Surui, a 24-year-old indigenous youth leader from the Amazon rainforest, told the opening ceremony in Glasgow.

Delayed by a year because of the COVID-19 pandemic, COP26 aims to keep alive



Yara Nardi / Reuters

Demonstrators protest Saturday during the G20 summit in Rome.

a target of capping global warming at 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial levels. To do that, it needs to secure more ambitious pledges to reduce emissions, lock in billions in climate financing for developing countries, and finish the rules for implementing the 2015 Paris Agreement, which was signed by nearly 200 countries.

The pledges made so far would allow the planet's average surface temperature to rise 2.7C this century, which the United Nations says would supercharge the destruction that climate change is already causing.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres reminded delegates that the six hottest years on record have occurred since 2015.

Other speakers, including activists from the poorer countries hardest hit by climate change, had a defiant message.

"Pacific youth have rallied

behind the cry 'We are not drowning, we are fighting'," said Brianna Fruean from the Polynesian island state of Samoa, which is at risk from rising sea levels. "This is our warrior cry to the world."

In 2009, the developed countries most responsible for global warming pledged to provide \$100 billion per year by 2020 to help developing nations deal with its consequences.

The commitment has still not been met, generating mistrust and a reluctance among some developing nations to accelerate their emissions reductions.

Leaders of countries such as Kenya, Bangladesh, Barbados and Malawi called rich nations to task for failing to deliver.

"The money pledge to least developed nations ... is not a donation, but a cleaning fee," Malawi's President Lazarus McCarthy Chakwera said.

Ethiopia gov: Tigray forces kill 100 youths

Thousands die, 2.5M uprooted during year-long war in African country

Reuters
NAIROBI - Ethiopia's rebellious Tigrayan forces have joined up with an Oromo force also fighting the central government, a spokesperson for the Tigrayan forces said on Monday, and said they were considering marching on the capital.

Reuters could not independently verify the statement as phone connections in the area were down.

The forces from the northern region of Tigray say they have pushed further south into the neighboring Amhara region this week in a bid to pressurize the central government to meet their demands, although the government disputes how far they have advanced.

If Tigrayan fighters join up with rebellious forces from Oromiya, it could strengthen their ability to threaten the capital, a move that would deepen the conflict in Africa's second most populous nation and increase turmoil in a volatile region.

"We have linked up with the OLF/OLA and if achieving our objectives in Tigray will require that we march to Addis Ababa, we will. But we are not saying we are marching to Addis Ababa," Getachew Reda, a spokesperson for the forces led by the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), told Reuters.

The Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) is a banned armed group that splintered from the opposition party the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). The Oromo are Ethiopia's largest ethnic group; many of their political leaders are currently in jail.

US concerns

The U.S. Secretary of State

Antony Blinken expressed concern about Tigrayan advances on Monday, tweeting "Continued fighting prolongs the dire humanitarian crisis in northern Ethiopia. All parties must stop military operations and begin ceasefire negotiations without preconditions."

This weekend Tigrayan forces said they had pushed further south and taken Kombolcha and Dessie, two towns on the A2 highway leading into Addis Ababa. Tens of thousands of ethnic Amharas had sought refuge from an escalation in fighting in Dessie.

The Ethiopian government denied Tigrayan forces had taken Dessie on Saturday, but on Monday they issued a statement accusing Tigrayan forces of killing 100 youths in Kombolcha.

TPLF spokesman Getachew told Reuters by satellite phone from an undisclosed location: "We don't have to kill the youth. There was no resistance in Kombolcha."

A Reuters witness counted at least three checkpoints within 50 kilometers on the A2 road on Monday, each manned by 50 federal police officers.

One militia officer told Reuters the dragnet is to stop illegal migration into the capital.

On Sunday, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed called on all citizens to mobilize. The Amhara regional government has issued a similar call.

The Tigrayan forces have been fighting the government for the past year in a widening war that first pitted federal troops against the TPLF, which dominated Ethiopian politics for nearly 30 years.

The conflict has plunged around 400,000 people in Tigray into famine, killed thousands of civilians and forced more than 2.5 million people in northern Ethiopia to flee their homes.

Study: Climate change increasing fire weather

Western US has grown thirstier over past 40 years

By Alex Wigglesworth
 Los Angeles Times

A new study adds to a growing body of evidence that climate change is fueling more frequent and intense wildfires in the western U.S.

The study's researchers report that based on the rate that dry air sucks up moisture, climate change is essentially two-thirds to 88% responsible for the conditions driving the region's wildfire woes.

And that's a conservative estimate, said study author Rong Fu, a climate researcher at the University of California, Los Angeles.

"It's happened so much faster than we previously anticipated," she added.

The study, published this week in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, looks at what's known as the vapor pressure deficit, which basically describes how thirsty the atmosphere is, Fu said. The researchers found this to be the leading meteorological variable that controls how much land burns in the western U.S. during a given fire season. The higher the deficit, the more moisture the atmosphere saps from soil and plants, priming the landscape to burn.

Such findings are driving the conversation this week as world leaders meet in Scotland.

Previous studies have found the atmosphere in the western U.S. has grown thirstier over the past 40 years. Experts have theorized that is due to both natural fluctuations in the weather and because carbon dioxide emissions have caused the planet to warm, and warmer



Mel Melcon / Los Angeles Times / TNS

Burned trees rise above a truck destroyed by the Dixie Fire in the town of Greenville, California.

air can hold more moisture.

This team of researchers sought to explain exactly how much of each of those factors has driven the increase. They used a machine learning approach to compare recent vapor pressure deficit values with those observed in the past during similar weather patterns.

"Prior to 2000, we can explain this fire weather pretty well just using the weather patterns," Fu said. "But now we can only explain like 30% of what we see with the fire weather."

After ruling out other influences like changes in vegetation and cloud cover, the researchers concluded the other 70% is due to greenhouse gases warming the planet, she said, a figure which some climate modeling suggested could be as high as 88%.

The findings have important implications for fire management. If natural

weather cycles were driving the increase in fire danger, it could be expected to lessen again at some point. But the planet is expected to continue to warm, meaning the risk will likely increase, Fu said.

"This new research combined with what we've known before means that we can be very confident that continued global warming will continue to intensify the conditions that create these record or near record fuel aridity conditions on the landscape," said Noah Diffenbaugh, a climate scientist at Stanford University who was not involved with the study. "And we know from recent years what that means for our fire preparation and response system. It means a higher risk of more severe fire conditions, simultaneously, in multiple areas of the region."

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Hope for path out of Sudan's crisis in days

UN envoy: Mediation efforts currently underway in Khartoum

By Michelle Nichols
 Reuters

UNITED NATIONS - National and international mediation efforts working to solve Sudan's political crisis are expected to bear fruit in coming days, the U.N. special envoy said on Monday.

General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan toppled Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok's cabinet a week ago and arrested key politicians. Hamdok remains under house arrest in his residence, Volker Perthes told reporters in New York via video from Sudan.

"There are multiple mediation efforts underway in Khartoum by a host of actors," Perthes said. "We are supporting a couple of these efforts, proposing initiatives and ideas and coordinating with some of these mediators."

"It is bigger packages that are being put up for negotiation and they hope that with-



Mohamed Nureldin / Reuters / File Photo

Protesters gesture and shout slogans Saturday as they demonstrate against the Sudanese military's recent seizure of power and ousting of the civilian government, in the capital Khartoum, Sudan.

in the next couple of days ... the contours of a package would become visible," he said.

Perthes said he could not

negotiations could only be held between "people who are at liberty," in reference to the detained officials.

A statement posted by the Ministry of Information representing civilian authorities, said that Hamdok maintained that the solution to the crisis was the release of all detainees and the return of his cabinet to work, and that he would not recognize the decisions of the coup leaders.

Politicians involved in mediation efforts say the main compromise under discussion is a proposal for Hamdok to be given full executive powers and appoint a cabinet of technocrats.

The proposal would do away with the 14-member power-sharing Sovereign Council in favor of a three-person honorary council.

Political parties, rebel groups, and the military - partners in the pre-coup government - would be represented in parliament, and

the military would continue to lead a Security and Defense Council, they said.

The coup took place 2-1/2 years after a popular uprising ousted the authoritarian Omar al-Bashir.

Hundreds of thousands of protesters took to the streets on Saturday to demand an end to military rule and the restoration of a civilian-led government. Security forces shot dead three people, a doctor's union said, bringing the death toll since the coup to 15.

The doctors union and an eyewitness said that security forces fired tear gas and live bullets at citizens in a neighborhood of Omdurman on Monday.

Burhan has said he removed the cabinet to avert civil war after civilian politicians allegedly stoked hostility to the armed forces. He says he is still committed to a democratic transition, including elections in July 2023.

French port braces for storm in fishing row with Britain

By Layli Foroudi and Clotaire Achi
 Reuters

BOULOGNE-SUR-MER, France - People who earn a living from fishing in the English Channel battered down the hatches on Monday for an escalation of a Franco-British row over fishing licenses that they anticipate will be costly on all sides.

France alleges Britain is not honoring a post-Brexit deal on access to British fishing grounds and has said that from midnight (2300 GMT) on Monday it will retaliate by

stepping up checks on trucks coming from Britain and barring British trawlers from docking in French ports.

Olivier Leprêtre, president of the regional sea fishing committee for northern France, said he had advised his group's members to steer clear of British waters, in case they were caught up in tit-for-tat British measures.

Tracking data for marine traffic in the English channel on Monday afternoon showed that most of the French fishing fleet were staying close to their shorelines. British trawlers were also staying in

their own sector.

Lepetre said France needed to take tough action on Britain, but his members also worried about collateral damage from a worsening row.

Britain's government on Monday issued its own threat to France, telling Paris it had 48 hours its planned retaliatory measures, or face legal action.

Stephane Pruvost is boss of sea food processing firm JP Marée, one of several in the port of Boulogne which import part of their raw materials from Britain.

He said he feared disruption

to his supply chain on Tuesday if France follows through on threats to step up checks on trucks entering France from Britain at the port of Calais, and arriving in Boulogne.

"Is blocking imports the solution?" he asked, in an interview with Reuters.

Referring to French President Emmanuel Macron, he said: "Macron isn't aware of the effects of all of this. We are only listening to the voice of the fishermen and not anyone in any other stage of the chain."

Stephane Fournier, a 44-year-old fisherman in

Boulogne-sur-Mer, is among dozens waiting for Britain to issue his vessel with a license to fish in its waters.

He said France had to retaliate against Britain, even if there is blowback for French fishing crews.

"I prefer losing one month's salary to losing our livelihood, our way of life," he said.

The row being played out between London and Paris over fishing licenses was, he said, a "political game with pride on each side and we are in the middle watching the match."



Photos by Reuters / Gustavo Graf

A figure of a Mexican Xoloitzcuintle dog is seen Sunday during the annual Day of the Dead parade in Mexico City.

President: New steps to improve supply chain

Biden order during G20 summit would speed response to shortfalls

By Tony Capaccio and Justin Sink
Bloomberg News

President Joe Biden took several steps to address supply-chain problems as he met leaders from major global economies, including the European Union, to address recent disruptions.

He issued an executive order during the Group of 20 summit on Sunday aimed at speeding up the response to shortfalls of supplies, equipment and raw materials housed in the U.S.'s National Defense Stockpile.

The U.S. also is boosting funding to Mexico and Central America to alleviate supply bottlenecks and to improve customs and clearance procedures, the White House announced Sunday.

"Solving this is going to take all of us — government and private industry, labor unions and research institutions," Biden told reporters as he convened a meeting of international leaders in Rome.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo will convene a summit next year with their international counterparts to bring together companies, labor organizations, indigenous groups and academics to identify more steps to bolster the resilience of supply chains, according to the White House.

Biden ordered a broad review of U.S. supply chains this year as the economic disruption of the coronavirus pandemic triggered shortages of everything from computer chips used in cars to medical supplies and bicycles.

His defense-related order puts the Pentagon's top weapons buyer in charge of deciding whether and when to release raw materials from the National Defense Stockpile.

The Pentagon's undersecretary for acquisition and sustainment "may release strategic and critical materials from the National Defense Stockpile for use, sale, or other disposition only when required for use, manufacture, or production for purposes of national defense," according to a White House statement.

The NDS is a raw materials-based stockpile of 42 commodities meant to decrease or prevent "dependence upon foreign and single points of supply for strategic and critical materials needed in times of national emergency," according to the Congressional Research Service.

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'Making light of death'

Mexicans return to Day of the Dead celebration with a vengeance

Reuters

Mexico City

Thousands of Mexicans crowded into the main avenue of Mexico City for a lively Day of the Dead parade on Sunday, relishing the chance to mark the festive tradition after the coronavirus pandemic cast a thick pall over it last year.

Most of the mass of spectators lining Paseo de la Reforma boulevard wore protective face masks as they watched colorful floats, bands and performers trundle down the street.

Others proudly sported bright depictions of calavera skulls on their faces to celebrate.

"I love coming to see this tradition we Mexicans can't lose sight of," said Leticia Galvan, a 67-year-old civil servant decked out in a skeleton suit and trilby, and with half of her face painted in the colors of a La Catrina skull.

"It's us making light of death, celebrating death."

Children sat atop their parents' shoulders to catch sight of the procession of floats bearing dancers in indigenous attire and feathered headdresses, scaled-down reproductions of Mexico City landmarks



A spectator with a skull face painting films with his phone Sunday during the annual Day of the Dead parade in Mexico City.

and spectral figures.

Mexico has endured one of the highest death tolls worldwide from the COVID-19 pandemic, and last year the city authorities urged the public to stay at home, ordering cemeteries to close during festivities traditionally held on Nov.

1-2.

But with nearly half the population now fully vaccinated against the virus, Mexico has in recent weeks significantly reduced daily infections, enabling the capital and most other regions of the country to lift restrictions on the public.

Many Mexicans still mask

up when they go outdoors and some spectators kept their distance from the parade.

"I didn't expect to see so many people," said Rebeca Brito, a 22-year-old nurse, hanging back to avoid the crowds. "After all the time spent cooped up, they want to get out now."

Yellen: Need support for global tax rules

G20 leaders support a global minimum corporate tax of 15% by 2023

By Andrea Shalal
Reuters

DUBLIN — U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said she expected U.S. tech giants to broadly support the reallocation of taxing rights agreed to by nearly 140 countries as part of a broader deal on global taxes, saying the impact on U.S. companies should be minor.

Yellen told Reuters on Sunday the support of the big global players should help foster bipartisan support among U.S. lawmakers for what is known as Pillar 1 of the tax deal negotiated by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Leaders of the world's 20 biggest economies this weekend backed the overall OECD



Reuters / Clodagh Kilcoyne

U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen gestures Monday during a news conference with Irish Finance Minister Paschal Donohoe in Dublin.

deal, which also calls for implementation of a global minimum corporate tax of

15% by 2023.

Yellen said the minimum tax part of the deal would provide

welcome certainty for large internet companies like Google, Amazon and Facebook, by eliminating the complicated web of digital services taxes they face in many countries, and could help boost support for the broader deal.

U.S. lawmakers are expected to approve the global minimum tax part of the deal as part of a broad, Democratic-only spending bill winding its way through Congress, Treasury officials said.

The second component on the reallocation of taxes is still being finalized but will require separate passage.

It has already drawn criticism from Republican lawmakers and some nondigital companies, but Yellen said she believed Congress would eventually "come around," especially given the support

of big companies.

Senior Senate Republicans have argued that the approach agreed to in principle by the OECD would require a new international tax treaty, which would need Senate ratification by a two-thirds majority.

"I think they're going to be telling members of Congress that they like this agreement and they can live with it," Yellen said of the tech companies. "When you have businesses supportive, rather than lobbying against something, I think that will be helpful."

Initial calculations by the Treasury Department showed little harm to U.S.-based multinational corporations, even if some of their taxed profits were allocated elsewhere since they would be eligible for other tax credits.

YouTube taps new boss to grow content

By Wendy Lee
Los Angeles Times

YouTube on Monday named Tara Walpert Levy as its new vice president of Americas, a key role at the Google-owned video platform overseeing global content verticals including influencers, shopping, gaming and news.

Walpert Levy, who has worked for Google since 2014, will start her new role on Nov. 29. Prior to her promotion, she was vice president of agency and brand solutions at the tech giant.

"I'm a builder at heart, and in my last team, we had a lot of success and momentum already in place when I came in, but we were able to quadruple the business and to successfully build out the infrastructure to support it," Walpert Levy said. "That's really what I'm hoping to do in this new role at YouTube."

She replaces longtime YouTube executive Kelly Merryman, who resigned over the summer. Merryman was seen by many people in the industry as instrumental to changing YouTube's image in Hollywood from a pariah to a key partner that could help market programs from studios and networks.

Merryman is now president and chief operating officer at Burlington, Mass.-based digital security company Aura.

YouTube, the pioneer in user-generated video content, has seen increased competition from the likes of TikTok, Snapchat, Facebook and Amazon-owned Twitch to court the best creators.

After audiences embraced 15-second short videos on TikTok, rivals including YouTube and Facebook launched their own version. YouTube says its videos of 15 seconds or less through Shorts have more than 15 billion views each day.

During the pandemic, YouTube saw an increase in demand for its platform from audiences as they looked for ways to connect as they sheltered at home. With many Hollywood productions shut down or postponed, entertainers also turned to YouTube to distribute their content.

YouTube is also reaching out to audiences in real life. In August, YouTube opened its first branded theater in Inglewood, a venue that will hold concerts, e-sports competitions and other events.

YouTube has more than 2 million creators in its YouTube Partner Program and has paid



Dia Dipasupil / Getty Images for Bottomless Closet / TNS
Tara Walpert Levy speaks onstage during the 20th Anniversary Bottomless Closet Luncheon at Cipriani 42nd Street on May 15, 2019 in New York City. YouTube on Monday, named Walpert Levy as its new vice president of Americas.

more than \$30 billion to creators, artists and media companies in the last three years, Walpert Levy said.

"I just think these oppor-

tunities in everything from Shorts to shopping, to gaming to areas like health and learning ... really have a lot of runway in front of us," she said.

"So (I'm) excited to lean into those and help creators grow their businesses."

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Scott Olson / Getty Images / TNS

Striking workers picket outside of the John Deere Davenport Works facility on Oct. 15, in Davenport, Iowa. More than 10,000 John Deere employees, represented by the UAW, walked off the job yesterday after failing to agree to the terms of a new contract.

'CLASS VICTORY'

Tentative John Deere deal shows momentum for worker movement

By Joe Deaux and Josh Eidelson
Bloomberg News

A tentative deal struck between Deere & Co. and the United Auto Workers union offers substantial improvements over one that workers rejected before going on strike, including larger wage increases, no new tiers to retirement benefits and a signing bonus of \$8,500.

The deal, which is subject to approval by union membership, suggests that John Deere backed down rather than get drawn into a protracted work stoppage with farm equipment demand at the strongest in a decade and earnings at a record.

The contract includes wage hikes of 10% in the first year of the contract and 5% in the third and fifth years, according to a published document of the deal on the union website Sunday. No one was available at John Deere to comment on the latest accord.

Deere shares jumped as much as 1.8% to \$348.40 at 7:22 a.m. in pre-market trading in New York. The shares have climbed 27% this year to Friday's close.

Details of the agreement come more than two weeks after some 10,000 John Deere employees went on strike

"The workers' rejection of the initial deal combined with the enormous gains made between the first and second deals, and the very real improvements that the contract will bring, all of it points to the significant consolidation and exercise of worker power."

BENJAMIN SACHS, LABOR LAW PROFESSOR AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

for the first time since 1986, having rejected a prior deal that called for a 5% to 6% wage increase for the first year. Shares of Deere rose each of the last two weeks, indicating shareholders continued to expect a speedy resolution to the strike.

"The workers' rejection of the initial deal combined with the enormous gains made between the first and second deals, and the very real improvements that the contract will bring, all of it points to the significant consolidation and exercise of worker power," said Benjamin Sachs, a labor law professor at Harvard University.

The Deere agreement adds to evidence that U.S. workers are successfully pushing for

higher compensation as the U.S. economy emerges from its pandemic-blighted slump. Businesses are increasingly on the back foot when it comes to wage negotiation because they're struggling to hire workers and retain enough people to cope with swelling demand.

"We're living in a kind of extraordinary moment of worker mobilization and militancy," Sachs said. "At this particular moment in history, when workers are willing to fight they're going to win."

There are no new tiers in the Deere deal, with everyone hired after 1997 having the same retirement options, according to the document. Deere would also contribute 5% of employees' annual wages to their 401(k), and a 3% lump sum bonus would be paid in the even years of the contract based on prior-year earnings.

The post-retirement health care fund includes cash balance savings at 2.5% for the first through fourth years, 3% in years five through 14, and 4% for 15 years and above, and it includes \$2,000 of seed money per year of service. There were no changes to the cost of health insurance, with employees paying no premiums or

deductibles, and still having co-pays.

Class Victory

Michigan Democratic Congressman Andy Levin, a former union organizer and assistant AFL-CIO organizing director, said the Deere workers' victory should fuel support for pro-labor legislative reforms as well as for other workers' contract struggles.

"These Deere workers have added a huge boost to the momentum of the broader American working class in saying that we're done with this kind of ever-increasing income and wealth inequality," Levin said. "They've won for the whole American working class."

Events surrounding the negotiation have been intense at times. Senator Bernie Sanders, a vocal proponent of labor unions, tweeted shortly after the strike started that "workers who spent years with the company are now being forced off their insurance."

The company later issued a statement that it will continue providing health care for all striking union-represented production and maintenance employees.

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Microsoft launches cybersecurity campaign

By Akash Pasricha
The Seattle Times

Microsoft launched a training program for community college students on Thursday in an effort to fill 250,000 cybersecurity jobs by 2025.

The company will make its cybersecurity curriculum available for free to all public community colleges across the country and offer 25,000 scholarships. It will also train faculty at 150 community colleges through a grant and partnership with the National Cybersecurity Training and Education Center at Whatcom Community College in Bellingham.

Many data breaches companies and organizations have suffered "could have been prevented or substantially mitigated ... if they had applied cybersecurity best practices," Brad Smith, president and vice chair of Microsoft, said in a news conference. But one of the biggest problems is that institutions "don't have the people they need to fill the jobs they've created."

For every two people in America who work in cybersecurity, there is a third position that is unfilled, according to CyberSeek, which collects data on cybersecurity employment. With 464,000 cybersecurity jobs open nationally, Microsoft's goal is to help fill half those positions with this campaign.

It adds to a growing list of investments the company has made to combat cybersecurity threats. In August, the company said it would invest \$20 billion over the next five years to add further protection for its customers. And the company will invest \$150 million to help government agencies boost protections for the public as part of a White House campaign to partner with the private sector to improve cybersecurity.

Smith said the average cybersecurity professional earns a salary of \$105,800. He said this campaign is not only an opportunity to get more people into these high-paying jobs but also a way to make the profession more diverse. More than 80% of cybersecurity professionals are white, and 80% are male, but 40% of community college students are Black or Hispanic, and 57% of students are women, Smith said.

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Brian Cassella / Chicago Tribune / TNS

Tom Fong holds a photo of his father inside his Cozy Inn Chinese Restaurant in Janesville, Wisconsin, on Oct. 20. Fong's father, Fang Lang aka Wing Sun Fong, was a survivor of the Titanic who moved to Chicago and worked in Chinatown.

Titanic survivor inspired scene

Wing Sun Fong lived, died in Chicago's Chinatown

By Louisa Chu
Chicago Tribune

A nearly unknown Titanic survivor lived in Chicago, died in Chinatown and possibly inspired one of the 1997 film's most iconic scenes, according to a new documentary, executive produced by filmmaker James Cameron.

Of eight Chinese passengers on board the ill-fated ship, six survived, and "The Six" focuses on their stories, said lead researcher Steven Schwankert, who co-created the film with director Arthur Jones.

Schwankert, who has been based in China for 25 years, said he lost sleep at night over their untold stories.

While other Titanic survivors became minor celebrities wherever they went, the six "just arrived in New York after being saved from Titanic, and then all of a sudden, they're gone," he said.

Schwankert and Jones began their work with a visit to Tom Fong.

Fong happens to own one of the oldest Chinese American restaurants in the country: the Cozy Inn in Janesville, Wisconsin.

"He told us, 'I'm the son of a Titanic survivor,'" Schwankert said. "The skeptic in me said, 'No way. Unless you're like 95.'" When we got there, he told us that his father had gotten married very late in life and started a family very late in life. At least that part of it was believable."

Even Fong, 61, was skeptical at first.

"My father never told us he was on the Titanic," he said. The family patriarch never spoke of the ship to his wife either. Mother and son remain close, living just 10 houses apart.

Wing Sun Fong was an 18-year-old third-class passenger when the Titanic sank in 1912. He died at 91 in 1986. His grave at Mount Auburn cemetery in west suburban Stickney is marked with a modest metal plate. Chinese characters show only his name and ancestral village in Taishan.

Nearly 20 years after his father's death, Tom Fong took a visiting cousin to a local tourist attraction, where he first learned about his father's survival story.

"My father sponsored my cousin's family from Hong Kong," Fong said. That

cousin's family would go on to open Quon Yick Bakery, long closed in Chicago's Chinatown. On a visit to Wisconsin, the cousins went to the House on the Rock in Spring Green. The attraction has long housed a Titanic display among myriad memorabilia.

"My cousin just mentioned that my father was on the Titanic," Fong said.

Later that evening, his son began looking for passenger lists online and found their last name, but spelled slightly different. Further research revealed a story about Titanic survivor Fang Lang, found floating on debris. The floating debris detail matched a story a family friend had told Fong as a child about his father surviving a shipwreck.

"I had always just assumed it was in China," he said.

"The Six" shows a scene cut from the 1997 movie "The Titanic" of Fang Lang desperately balancing on a board floating on the freezing water. Cameron says in the documentary the historical account may have inspired the fictional ending with his characters Jack and Rose.

The new film shows the methodical and meticulous research around the world that proved and disproved the Chinese survivors' stories. Schwankert was able to share details unknown to Fong, whose parents divorced when he was only 5.

The documentary is as much a son's quest to learn more about his own family history.

"We got what I would call the Rosetta Stone of his father's documents, basically his application for naturalization," Schwankert said. "He had to get all these letters from different employers saying, 'Yes, he worked for me, and he's an upstanding citizen.' The funny thing is, he's submitting all of these documents with these fake names, but he's submitting them under his own name."

The film doesn't show what the research team discovered about how the survivor known as Fang Lang got from the Titanic to Chicago.

"He worked on fruit boats down in the Caribbean," his son said. "When World War I started, he somehow managed to make it back to Europe. They did find that he

worked for some ship that was registered to Denmark. And somehow he lived in France, in Le Havre."

Fong remembers seeing a photo of his father as a young man standing in front of the Arc de Triomphe in Paris, luggage in tow.

"He worked on a ship that went to New York that was docked there for weeks. Just prior to that ship leaving, he disembarked, and he made his way to Chicago from there," Fong said.

His father arrived in Chicago in the 1920s. He tried to become a merchant, and at one point opened a laundry. He would eventually move to Milwaukee, where he worked as a server at the Lotus restaurant on Third Street, which has since been torn down.

After the divorce, he moved back to Chicago, where his younger brother opened the bakery. He lived at 202 W. Cermak Road, in a family association bachelors' quarters on the third floor, above the old Three Happiness restaurant. The building was later demolished to make way for the new Chinatown branch of the Chicago Public Library.

"He used to roam back and forth on Wentworth all the time, because he had so many relatives there," Fong said about his father. "Do you remember Haylemon restaurant? They were relations too. It was right as you walked into the main strip of Chinatown, right under the gate. That's where we'd have family reunions."

The elder Fong was also very politically active, Schwankert said.

"He was very active in the community," he said. "So if somebody of note was coming to town, he got a photo with him."

Some of those photos can be seen in the film. They may eventually be seen at the Chinese American Museum of Chicago, said former president and board member Soo Lon Moy. She appears in the documentary, explaining immigration laws.

Moy said the film could end up showing at the museum as well. Meanwhile, you can find a list of upcoming screenings — several of which will be virtual in November — online at thesixdocumentary.com.

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'Virgin River' is that good comfort TV show

Nurse practitioner, midwife flees big city to work with small-town doctor

By Karla Peterson

The San Diego Union-Tribune

Beer and body butter. Candles and caramel turtles. Peanut butter and potpourri. Lattes, lattes and more lattes.

It's fall, and the apps and aisles are packed with ways to fill your senses with the cozy comforts of pumpkin-spice everything. Whether it's your parched elbows, your musty closets or your demanding sweet tooth, there is a pumpkin-spice product waiting to waft you away on a cloud of nutmeg and nostalgia.

But what about your brain? Doesn't that deserve a little pumpkin love, too?

It does. And Netflix's "Virgin River" is ready to deliver unto you a bottomless mug of warm, comforting Pumpkin Spice TV, with a generous topping of cinnamon whipped cream on top and a scone on the side.

Because "Virgin River" knows what you want, even when you won't admit it to yourself.

Now in its third season on Netflix, this flannel-wrapped drama about a grieving nurse practitioner's do-over life in a small Northern California town is also one of the streaming service's most popular series. It was recently renewed for a fourth and fifth installment, and if you have been wondering what the heck this Hallmark Channel-esque show is doing lurking in your queue, it's time to stop asking and start watching.

You might be surprised, but you won't be sorry.

Based on the romance novel series by Robyn Carr (now at 21 books and counting), "Virgin River" stars Alexandra Breckenridge (Kevin's ex-wife, Sophie, on "This is Us") as Melinda "Mel" Monroe, a nurse practitioner and midwife who flees the big city and her bad memories to work with a small-town doctor (Tim Matheson) in the picturesque hamlet of Virgin River.

Is Doc Mullins a curmudgeon who doesn't want Mel's help? Of course he is. Does a convenient medical emergency give Mel the chance to prove herself worthy of his time and office space? It does. Is her life made both better and more complicated by the presence of Jack (Martin Henderson, "Grey's Anatomy"), a handsome, sensitive man with a few demons of his own?

Do you really need to ask?

From the swoony seesaw of Mel and Jack's relationship to the gaggle of endearingly eccentric townsfolk who are always up for good deeds and hot gossip, this is not a show that is going to dazzle you with plot twists and character revelations. The beauty of "Virgin River" is its ability to tell its mostly predictable stories with such loving care and

Hollywood expertise that you will happily surrender to its cozy embrace.

Resistance is futile, I promise you.

Speaking of surrendering, now would be good time to talk about Jack Sheridan, the dimpled, be-stubbled former Marine who becomes Mel's love interest the minute she steps into his homey bar.

Like Mel, Jack came to Virgin River for a fresh start. He is haunted by a botched mission in Afghanistan, and he immediately recognizes Mel as a fellow trauma survivor in need of strong coffee and chivalrous support. Sparks fly almost immediately, but the show manages to keep the relationship at a steady simmer for an astoundingly long time.

Given the synapse-searing chemistry between Breckenridge and Henderson, this is no small feat. For the most part, the roadblocks to romance rise organically from pretty believable life situations, which is just one of the ways in which "Virgin River" is better, and deeper, than its throwback vibe would lead you to believe.

Take Mel, for starters. As shaped by author Carr and series creator Sue Tenney ("7th Heaven") and portrayed by the empathetic Breckenridge, Mel is a woman who is good at her job, cool under pressure and not an emotional train-wreck, despite her many losses. Yes, she is beautiful. And yes, her hair is amazing. But she is also intelligent, principled and recognizably human.

In a welcome development for a show that seems so safe and soapy, much of Mel's heartbreak is rooted in the very real problem of infertility. Mel's past struggles to get pregnant, along with other characters' childbirth challenges, are treated with real sensitivity.

Even as it's keeping audiences happily invested with love-triangle cliffhangers, pot-farmer drama and coffee-klatch comedy featuring the town's meddlesome mayor (Annette O'Toole, having a fine old time), "Virgin River" also deals with domestic violence, postpartum depression and PTSD.

Some of the issues are handled more deftly than others, and with just one nonwhite major character (Colin Lawrence's stalwart Preacher), it has a ways to go on the diversity front. But the show does an admirable job giving audiences a little emotional fiber with their fairy-tale glitter.

With glorious scenery provided by Canada and a soundtrack that feels like every WB Network drama you forgot you loved, "Virgin River" is very sweet, slightly spicy and totally addictive. It also has 30 episodes to savor, with more on the way. Unlike a certain flavor profile we know, Pumpkin Spice TV never goes out of season.

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Netflix / TNS

Alexandra Breckenridge, left, as Melinda Monroe and Martin Henderson as Jack Sheridan in "Virgin River."