



Empty shelves leave parents scrambling for formula. **A12.**

Realizing a dream. **C1**

WILLMAR, MINN.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 18, 2022

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City backs possible CW fest in Sept.

Willmar City Council approves plans for Pep Fest, pending use agreement

By Jennifer Kotila
West Central Tribune

WILLMAR — A Willmar businessman and promoter is seeking city approval to hold a new country music festival at Robbins Island on Saturday, Sept. 10, 2022.

Steve Peppin and his colleague Mike Bowman presented their plans for Pep Fest 2022 to the Willmar City Council on Monday, asking for the council's permission and support to host the festival at the Willmar park.

After an extensive question-and-answer session and discussion, the council approved a motion supporting the festival, pending approval of a use agreement between the city and Peppin, and directing staff to begin working on that agreement.

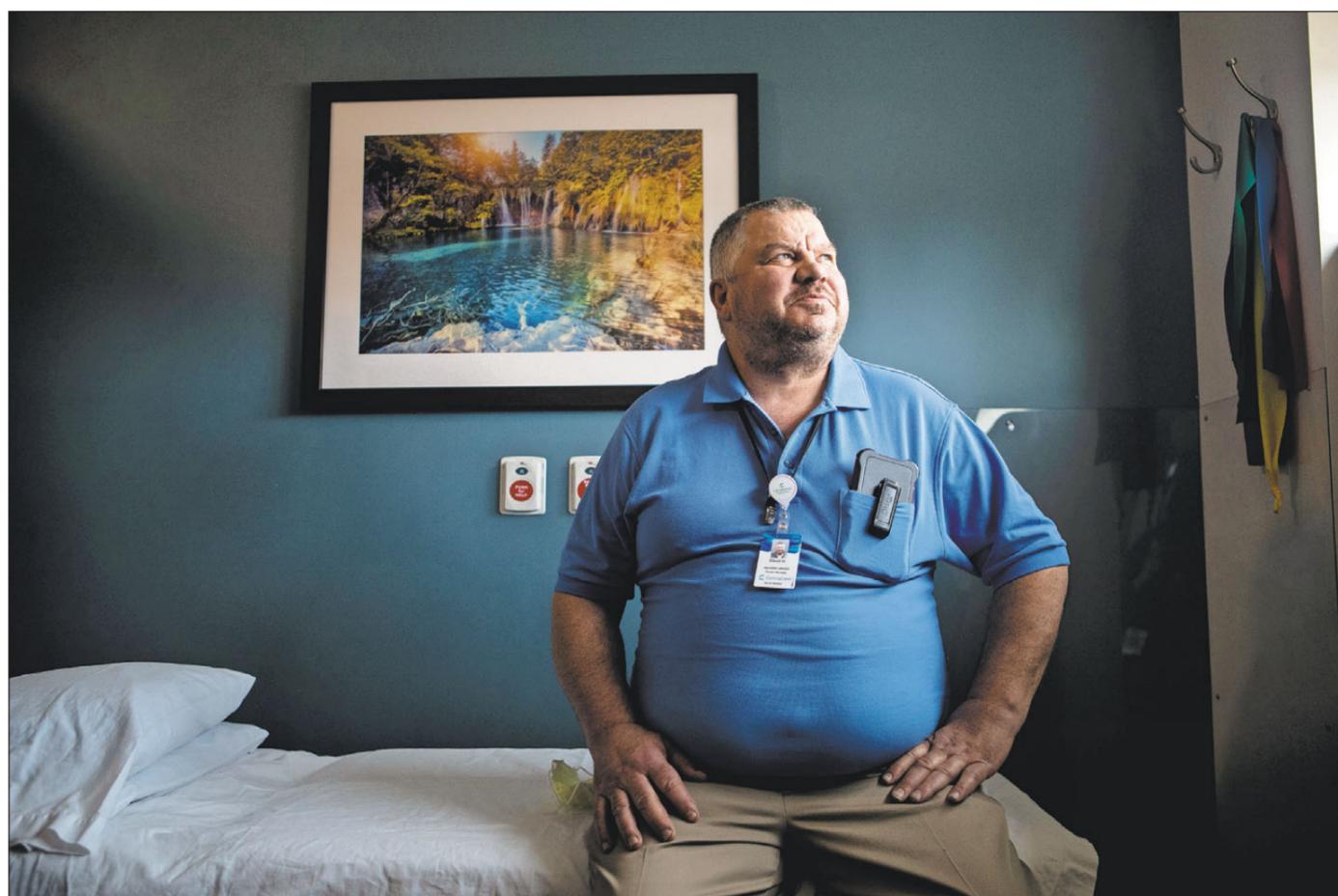
Peppin and Bowman will be responsible for all the planning and logistics, along with a large group of volunteers through Peppin's company Studio 38, which is located on Lakeland Drive in Willmar. Studio 38 will also be contracting with outside professional services for sound stage and lighting, as well as security, to make sure the event "goes off without a hitch."

Those attending the event will park at different locations throughout the city and be shuttled by bus in order to ease any traffic concerns, according to Peppin.

No liquor will be served at the event, but there will be two beer tents. People will need wristbands and beer tickets to purchase beer.

In order to keep people who have not paid for tickets from being able to view the festival, Peppin plans to work with a fencing company to put up an 8-foot fence with only one access point for entrance to the festival.

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Photos by Macy Moore / West Central Tribune

David Hallberg sits in an examination room April 13 at the Rice Rehabilitation Center in Willmar. Hallberg's hard work and determination assisted his recovery from long COVID symptoms while working with respiratory therapist Kendra Sandmann.

THE LONG HAUL

Survivor calls long COVID symptoms surreal, scary

By Linda Vanderwerf
West Central Tribune

Willmar

Surreal is one of the words Mark Stier uses to describe his life now. Scary is another.

A year and a half after he contracted COVID-19, he struggles with lingering symptoms.

It's scary, Stier said in April, because no one can tell him yet how long the occasional crushing fatigue, muddled thinking and other issues will be with him. He first fell ill on a hunting trip in October 2020.

"What is this going to look like in two years, in 10 years?" he wonders.

Stier, of Willmar, was quite ill but was able to stay out of the hospital.

David Hallberg wasn't that lucky. He contracted COVID-19 in October 2021 and was hospitalized for nearly two months, including 17 days on a ventilator and weeks of inpatient rehab.

Six months later, he said,

"Where's the line? What is COVID and what's not? What's old and what's not?"

MARK STIER

he feels he's almost back to where he was before, but still gets tired standing or walking.

For people with long-haul COVID-19, there aren't many answers yet, said Dr. Jayme Van Beek, a family practice physician for Carris Health and Stier's doctor.

"We're only two years into this, so we really don't know what long-term is," he said.

Definitions of long COVID vary, and so do symptoms. As with the initial infection, symptoms vary widely from person to person and can affect different parts of the body.

Van Beek said someone whose symptoms linger for weeks should see a physician. The most common long-haul symptoms he sees are fatigue, shortness of breath, chest pain and "fogginess."



Mark Stier, who has battled the lasting impacts of long COVID, sits with his wife, Lynn, on April 18 at their home in Willmar.

Most information is anecdotal at this point. Studies into long COVID are going to take a long time, and a lot of money, Van Beek said.

There's a variety of other symptoms, and some people develop post-traumatic stress disorder, too. He knows of a person who hasn't had any sense of smell since

2020. Some people spend six months or longer on oxygen.

While the illness may be recent, treatment involves "a lot of things we already know how to do," he said, like pulmonary rehab for someone with trouble breathing or occupational therapy for someone with brain fog.

LONG COVID: Page A6

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Kandiyohi County declares a disaster after storms



Macy Moore / West Central Tribune

Lightning strikes illuminate the sky Thursday evening over the Middle Fork Crow River near Spicer. The Kandiyohi County Board declared a disaster in the county at Tuesday's meeting, which is the first step in getting state funding to help fix damage done to public infrastructure and facilities.

By Shelby Lindrud
West Central Tribune

WILLMAR — After rounds of severe weather late last week left damage strewn across Kandiyohi County, the County Board officially declared a disaster at its meeting Tuesday, starting the process of perhaps receiving state funds to help pay for repairs and cleanup of public infrastructure and facilities.

Stephanie Felt, county emergency management director, said, based on early estimates, approximately \$2.6 million in damage was done to public infrastructure and facilities in last week's storms. After insurance kicks in, there is still currently about \$200,000 of work needing to be funded. Felt said disaster reports are still coming in, so the final

estimate could rise. "We are still getting reports from townships," Felt said. "We're not sure what insurance will cover."

With the disaster declaration approved, it will start the state's process in assessing the county's damage. First, the county needs to have suffered at least \$90,000 in damages. Then it has to be determined what damage costs are qualified expenses under state and federal rules. The county declaration is also a step toward a statewide disaster declaration that could bring in federal monies. To be eligible for federal funds, the county will need at least \$170,000 in damages.

"Time is of the essence" for damage reports to come in, Felt said.

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