

## VIEWS BY THE ECHO PRESS

# THUMBS UP/THUMBS DOWN

### Improving baseball fields in Alexandria

**Thumbs Up:** The Alexandria Youth Baseball Association's fundraising campaign is in its early stages but we hope it hits a homerun. The association is leading the charge to improve baseball fields at Knute Nelson Memorial Park, Dean Melton/Fillmore Park and 14 school district fields, including the Alexandria High School Softball Complex. Some of the much-needed upgrades for Knute Nelson Memorial Park include improved seating in the grandstand, a new concession stand and press box, new lights and security, enlarged and improved dugouts, a new scoreboard, improving the infield, improving bathrooms, enlarging and improving the dugouts, and adding an indoor batting and pitching facility with a clubhouse. These kinds of improvements can push the facilities to the next level and put Alexandria in the running for hosting more tournaments, concerts, movie nights and other events. That translates into a surge of economic activity in our area as visitors shop, gill up with gas, go to a restaurant or shop. There are plenty of ways to support this project – five giving levels ranging from \$500 for a “single” to a “grand slam level” of \$100,000 and above; having your name engraved on a brick for the baseball players' paver Walk of Fame; buying an engraved brick that will be part of a display path known as Friends of Alexandria Baseball; and more. They're also exploring the idea of having a half-cent sales tax. For more details on the campaign, see today's Sports section.

### The power of newspapers

**Thumbs Up:** How many Minnesotans actually read

newspapers? More than you think. A full-page ad is being printed in most of Minnesota's 270 newspapers this week, including the Echo Press (July 27 issue, page 14), that addressed the question, “How many Minnesotans read newspapers?” A new study conducted by Coda Research and released publicly this week finds 3.9 million – or 86% of Minnesota adults – read newspapers each month. Minnesota is known as the state with the highest voter turnout in the nation. Coda Research finds Minnesotans rely on newspapers as their primary source of news and information about schools, local government, high school sports, local entertainment, candidates/ballot issues, crime and safety. Coda finds 78% of Minnesota newspaper readers are under age 65, 68% own homes, 77% vote in local elections and 69% take action as a result of newspaper advertising. Minnesota newspaper readers could fill up U.S. Bank Stadium's 73,000 seats 53 times. And, Minnesota newspaper readers nearly double the 2 million Minnesota State Fair goers. So the next time you hear someone say that “no one” reads newspapers anymore, remember these findings and set them straight.

### Street markings are fading fast

**Thumbs Down:** The striping of many highways and streets in the Alexandria area have faded so much that drivers are having a hard time seeing the markings. “Many center stripes, lane markings, no passing areas (double stripes), turn arrows, yellow curb no parking areas and even crosswalks and school crossings are badly in need of repainting,” a resident told us. “Third Avenue and Nokomis Street, especially

the intersection of Third and Nokomis are classic examples.” The resident added that the faded markings not only makes the area look bad, it also is dangerous.

### Mail package scam

**Thumbs Down:** The lengths that some scammers go to is despicable. The latest scam misrepresents the U.S. Post Office. An Alexandria woman told us about it last week. She received a phone text that caught her attention because she was expecting two packages to be delivered that day. The text was supposedly from the Post Office saying that one package had the wrong address on it and the Post Office wanted the correct address. And, by the way, there would be a \$3 delivery charge and she'd have to use her credit card number to pay for it. It was a scam – one that the woman did not fall for. She knew the Post Office never uses texts like that. But it was a sophisticated attempt. “All of the messaging appears like official USPS,” the woman said. The woman's two packages were delivered and when she stopped at the Post Office the next day, a clerk told her this was the newest, hottest scam. “I can only imagine how some of my elderly friends would have reacted to this scenario,” she said.

### Drivers blocking lanes

**Thumbs Down:** We received this email from a frustrated driver in Alexandria: “When pulling into a left turn lane, please do it COMPLETELY,” the email said. “Some are caught halfway into the turn lane and half of their vehicle is in the driving Lane. If turning left, GET TOTALLY IN THAT LANE. DO NOT BLOCK TWO LANES.”

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

## LETTERS

### Religion should be a free and personal choice, not a government mandate

**To the editor:**  
In the July 15 Echo Press, in a letter to the editor, Roger Krebs reflects on the early 1960s when God and prayer were “kicked out of public schools.”  
I attended the Alexandria school system in the early 60s but I didn't experience or need prayer in school. I went to school for an education, not spiritual guidance. We had release time from school once a week for religious instructions.  
In my confirmation class at an evangelical Christian church, my pastor taught that God is omnipotent, nothing in the universe exists without God. Not even science or scientific discovery such as evolution could exist without the Almighty. If one believes God created the universe, it would be impossible to “kick God out of school” or from any place else.  
I appreciate the early 60s when politics were not part of religious instruction. Religion and abortion issues have been hijacked by politicians to advance political agendas. For the past 40 years religion and abortion have been a major factor in every election cycle. It might be noted that the increase in the religious activity in politics

coincides with the drop in church attendance across the country. In a democracy, religion should be a free and personal choice, not a government mandate.  
Abortion and Roe v Wade are definitely on the ballot this year, nationally and in every state election.  
**Bruce Kakac**  
Alexandria, MN

**Price gouging for gasoline in Alexandria?**  
**To the editor:**  
If you have been driving around Minnesota recently you have probably noticed that we are paying significantly higher prices for gasoline in Alexandria than in other cities and towns.  
It is not unusual for the price of gasoline to fluctuate in different parts of the state by as much as 10 cents per gallon but that difference has ballooned to 60 cents per gallon recently.  
Last week I went on a trip to southeast Minnesota and was pleased to see that the price of gasoline had dropped to \$3.99 per gallon in that area. When I returned to Alexandria I expected to see lower prices on gasoline but the price had not dropped and was still \$4.59 per gallon. The price here has dropped around 25 cents per gallon in the past week but the price in other parts of the state has also dropped

and is now \$3.65 per gallon in many parts of the state, including St. Cloud.  
Alexandria may have always been a little higher for gasoline because it is a resort community but why the huge difference now?  
**Bill Meighan**  
Alexandria MN

**Buying food locally has host of benefits**  
**To the editor:**  
Summer is in full swing and with that comes cookouts and gatherings where food is featured. As you plan your menu, keep local farmers in mind.  
Buying locally-produced food strengthens the local economy. According to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, on average, every \$100 spent at a locally-owned business results in \$45 flowing back into the local community. This is much higher than the \$14 that stays in the community when we spend our \$100 at a business that isn't locally owned.  
More customers are now choosing to purchase their food from farmers markets, farm stands, local meat processors, and Community Supported Agriculture programs. These purchases favor local farmers over intermediary food corporations. When we eliminate the middleman, the farmer and consumer both win.  
Much of this change is taking place in the meat sector. During the

COVID-19 pandemic, local meat processors saw an historic demand for their services due to disruptions at larger packing plants. Local customers give small farmers an alternative to selling to the big factories and the chance to establish a connection with people who want a high quality product. The local meat processor also benefits and spurs the local economy from the increased business.  
Though highlighted by the pandemic, the desire for local food has been increasing in the past decade, according to the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences. Among the reasons is the nutritional benefit. Because they are able to be harvested, sold and transported in a shorter period of time, customers are learning fresh fruits and vegetables purchased locally are fresher, healthier, and more flavorful.  
Whether preparing for a summer gathering or a weeknight meal, customers who purchase locally can be confident that what they are getting is good for their community and their wallet.  
**Tim Mussack, senior policy associate**  
Center for Rural Affairs  
Lyons, NE  
Established in 1973, the Center for Rural Affairs is a private, nonprofit organization working to strengthen small businesses, family farms and ranches, and rural communities.

## PAID POLITICAL LETTER

### Susag and Reilly Best Choices for School Board

To the Editor:  
The August 9 primary election for District 206 Board of Education requires voters to carefully consider their choices for each position.  
As a Board Member for 12 years, Sandy Susag has exemplified the kind of person best qualified for the task. She has participated in the planning and implementation of referenda for District construction projects that have resulted in our wonderful high school and upgrades to other school buildings. She has worked with school administration to navigate the challenges of the pandemic, making decisions based on the best available public health recommendations despite withering and disrespectful criticisms from local self-ordained “experts.” We need her community spirit and dedication to our children to continue as a Board member.  
Shawn Reilly also has a proven track record of community and school system involvement. His extended family has a long history of giving their time, talent and treasure to make the Alexandria area a welcoming and progressive place to live. His business acumen will help the District manage the complexities of operating a multi-million dollar budget and hundreds of employees.  
Sandy and Shawn's opponents in the primary have demonstrated in their public statements that they and their small group of vocal supporters will bring a political and ideological agenda to the Board. Our school administration and students deserve Board leaders who are nonpartisan critical thinkers. Please vote for Sandy and Shawn to keep our school district on the right path.  
Ken Howell  
Alexandria, MN

## The problematic appeal of true crime

It started with Jack the Ripper. I was in middle school when I saw a report on his crimes on the evening news, and I was fascinated. Who was he? Why did he do it? Why did they never catch him? The questions were endless.  
Over the years, I became interested in other morbid, often tragic stories of true crime: Leopold and Loeb, the Cleveland torso murderer, Dr. H. H. Holmes.  
Eventually, I began doing my own research on lesser-known regional crimes. There was the family near Wakonda, S.D., whose house was burned down after they were shotgunning in their beds. There was the Women's Army Corps member who was killed in Sioux Falls in the early 1940s. There was the slow poisoning of a Nebraska man by his wife and one of his employees at the dawn of the 20th century.  
It's only in the past few years that I've begun to think of this as wrong.  
I'm not talking about the reporting of crime as a public service in newspapers and on television, but rather the problematic rise of true crime as entertainment.  
I'm certainly not alone in my interest — a quick Google search reveals almost 200 true crime podcasts sprung up over a period of only six years. There are hundreds of true crime books. There are hundreds more true crime documentaries and television programs.  
However, most of these only exist because somebody was murdered.  
What's worse, the majority of them offer only the most cursory of glimpses into the lives of the victims of those murders. Usually uttering something along the lines of, “Well-liked by friends and family,” the programs then move on to what their fans see as the real meat of the story.  
Instead of learning who the victims were as



TRAVIS GULBRANDSON  
Travis' Turn

people, what they meant to their families and why the world is worse off without them in it, we usually get an overly graphic recounting of how they were killed. By contrast, the murderers' lives are portrayed to the utmost detail, with no fact too small to be included.  
Their names are known by millions of people. Jeffrey Dahmer. Ted Bundy. John Wayne Gacy.  
How many of those same people can name one of the victims?  
My thinking on the subject was changed several years ago when I was reading, of all things, a comic book called “Eightball” by Daniel Clowes. In it was a one-page story about Leopold and Loeb, a subject which had long interested me. The last panel showed an old man sitting in a chair, and gave the age Bobby Franks — the pair's victim — would have been at the time of publication had he lived.  
The story did something years of reading about the crime never had: It made me feel bad. I'm glad it did.  
It's impossible to guess how many true crime books have been written with murder as their main subject. Jack the Ripper alone has inspired more than 500 fictional and non-fictional accounts.  
As far as I know, only one of them (“The Five” by Hallie Rubenhold) has been specifically about the victims. It was published three years ago, 130 years after the last murder.  
I still have an interest in true crime. I can't help it. However, I can help in mind that it isn't something to take lightly, like some idle pastime.  
Murder, some of us need reminding, is not entertainment.  
“It's Our Turn” is a weekly column that rotates among members of the Echo Press editorial staff