

DON'T GET CAUGHT
A novel

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by Jamie Stoudt

Alexandria ECHO PRESS



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Low turnout for big problem: zebra mussels



Photo courtesy of Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Zebra mussels have been found in 46 lakes in Douglas County.

By Karen Tolkkinen
Alexandria Echo Press

Douglas County Lakes Association President Steve Henry said he was disappointed by the low turnout in last week's presentation of the connection between weedy lakes and zebra mussels.

Given the weed problems in local lakes this summer, he said, he thought more people would want to find out the causes.

"I think the vast majority of people just look at zebra mussels as a nuisance," he said. "They have no idea how

much the zebra mussels change the whole lake ecology."

In Minnesota, zebra mussels are known to inhabit more than 500 water bodies. In Douglas County, they have been found in 46 lakes, including biggies like Ida, L'Homme Dieu,

Carlos, Miltona and Mary, mostly discovered in the past decade.

Meg Duhr, research outreach specialist for the Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center, told about 20 people at the Oct. 13 meeting that zebra mussels are bad

news. Not only can they cut peoples' feet, but they filter the water, making it so clean that sunlight can penetrate deeper, prompting the growth of aquatic plants where none had grown before.

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Photos by Thalen Zimmerman / Alexandria Echo Press

Author and professional stone carver Janey Westin demonstrates her stone carving abilities at the Runestone Museum on Saturday.

Alex woman honored for making the roads safer

By Travis Gulbrandson
Alexandria Echo Press

An Alexandria woman is among those being recognized by the Minnesota departments of health, public safety and transportation with Minnesota Toward Zero Deaths Awards.

Crystal Hoepner was given the Education Star Award during a virtual presentation Monday, Oct. 18, during the 2021 TZD state conference.

"I am honored and was really shocked to be nominated. It's a pretty high honor," said Hoepner, who works as the Grant and Douglas County TZD Safe Roads Coalition coordinator.

The TZD Awards are presented annually to recognize significant achievements that help save lives and reduce life-changing injuries on Minnesota roads. Road fatalities have decreased by 40 percent since the TZD program began in 2003.

"My job is to coordinate a coalition in each Douglas and Grant County of professionals who work in traffic safety, so law enforcement, EMS, county highway, state, and other people in the community who have a vested interest in traffic safety," Hoepner said.

The coalition's goal is to promote traffic safety measures.

"A lot of it is related to contributing factors to crashes, so we analyze our crash data. Locally and throughout the state the top four are speed, impairment, unbelted and inattention, or distracted driving," Hoepner said.

A health educator with Horizon Public Health, Hoepner uses social media messaging to educate drivers and organizes events at local schools, health fairs and other public venues.

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Carving into history

Author and professional stone carver visits museum

By Thalen Zimmerman
Alexandria Echo Press

Professional stone carver and co-author of the 2012 book, *The Last Kings of Norse America: Runestone Keys to a Lost Empire*, Janey Westin, 64, of Edina, demonstrated her skills in stone carving at the Runestone Museum in Alexandria on Oct. 16.

Westin co-authored the book with her father, Robert G. Johnson — an adjunct professor in the earth sciences department at the University of Minnesota with a PH.D. in physics who previously worked at Honeywell doing research lab work. The book is available for purchase at the Runestone Museum.



Dust flies from the stone as Janey Westin demonstrated her stone carving abilities at the Runestone Museum in Alexandria.

Westin was invited by Amanda Seim, executive director of the Runestone

Museum, after Seim reached out to Westin to purchase more books

for the museum. Westin informed her that she has more research following up from her book that she would like to add as a pamphlet to the books on display.

Seim asked if Westin would be available for an author talk, which Westin accepted and offered to bring her carving station to do a demonstration. It was the first public event the Runestone Museum has held in the last two years since COVID-19.

"I think it is really special to have someone of her caliber speaking to our museum members and community," said Seim,

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ALEXANDRIA SCHOOL BOARD

District updates COVID-19 response, examines enrollment

By Celeste Edenloff
Alexandria Echo Press

Alexandria Public Schools is working on updating their COVID-19 mitigation guide so that decisions are based on

more local, school level data instead of statewide data.

Superintendent Rick Sansted said at the Monday, Oct. 18, meeting that parents should be

receiving information on Wednesday about the changes. This includes changes to the tiers and when masks will be mandated.

"Our goal is keeping kids safe and keeping our students and staff in school," Sansted said.

He also said the district is taking a look at the quarantine process and also how the district can do more COVID testing for students in

school. More information will soon be shared on both of those, he said.

Watch the Friday, Oct. 22, Echo Press for full details.

Enrollment stable

Trevor Peterson, director of Business Services, shared some good news about enrollment. He said it is stable and showed a slight increase

DISTRICT: Page 6

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