

Winhawks softball 2nd in state championship – 6B | 75th annual Winona Steamboat Days schedule – 1, 3C | Public input planned for police-fire-ERC project – 4B | WSHS ag, SPED program to shift locations – 3B

GRSF play highlights local stories, people

by CHRIS ROGERS

Winona is the setting, subject, and, partly, the creator of a special play the Great River Shakespeare Festival (GRSF) is putting on next month. “All the Town’s a Stage: A Winona Story” is the festival’s first community-engaged theater project. It looks to enlist Winonans to act out the stories

of other Winonans in a project organizers hope will provoke conversation and build connections.

Over the course of the past year-plus, GRSF partnered with local organizations and community members to tell their stories. The festival will hold open auditions at the end of this month for community members to act in a play based on those stories

to be performed July 29-31 at Winona’s East Recreation Center.

The production started last summer with story circles — essentially open-ended discussions about community members’ experiences that ultimately fueled the plot of the play. “We invite folks to come in, we sit in a circle, we ask questions, and that leads to storytelling,” explained GRSF Community

Outreach Coordinator Heather Lee Echeverria, who facilitated the discussions.

The groups that agreed to take part were Home and Community Options (HCO) — an organization that provides housing and support for individuals with developmental disabilities — Winona Health, and Our

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Challenging athletes, uniting families



by CESAR SALAZAR

Winona’s triathlon, Trinona, made a dashing return to bluff country after being on a hiatus for the past two years. This year, Trinona was able to attract more than 470 athletes and over 80 youth athletes — some from as far as Hawaii and Arizona — to participate in the events.

Trinona featured multiple different courses over two days, such as the International Course, which featured a .93-mile swim in Lake Winona, a 24.85-mile bike ride around

Garvin Heights, and a 6.2-mile run around Lake Park. Trinona’s other three smaller courses — a duathlon, a sprint course, and the youth triathlon — were no walk in the park either, having athletes compete head-to-head or in relays as teams around Lake Winona or at the Winona Family YMCA.

“It’s just fun. It’s a great time, it’s a great environment, and it’s a great people,” Retired U.S. Army Master Sgt. and race participant Hannah Williams said. She continued,

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Photo by Cesar Salazar

The Quinn-Vos family celebrates after completing Trinona. The family saw the race as an opportunity to have a fun family reunion and to honor their late family member, Dr. Laurel Quinn.

Winona extends 60 Main talks again; subsidies possible

by CESAR SALAZAR

Last week the city of Winona’s Port Authority took a step toward possible tax breaks or city funding for a hotel-apartment complex at 60 Main Street as a potential way to bring the project to fruition. The Port Authority also allowed an extension for the developers to continue planning the project until early next year.

The Port Authority has been working with three local developers, C.D. Smith, Latsch Partnership, and Rivers Hospitality, to develop a hotel-apartment complex at 60 Main Street, a city-owned parking lot north of the Winona 7 Cinema. Recently, the developers and the city announced plans to include part of the 58 Center Street property — the site of the former Jefferson Pub and Grill — in the project.

The Port Authority voted 6-1 to allow the development team to extend the project timeline until the end of March 2023, the second extension since negotiations

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Former G-E-T principal named C-FC supt.

by ALEXANDRA RETTER

A new superintendent will start July 1 at Cochran-Fountain City School District (C-FC). Troy White, who was most recently principal at Gale-Ettrick-Trempealeau (G-E-T) High School for 11 years, will now hold the top position at C-FC. “I’m drawn to go where there is a family feel, where everybody is always there for each other,” he said.

White started his career in education, which has spanned 25 years to date, as a physical education teacher in New Auburn, Wis. He later moved to a district in Manawa, Wis., where he met his wife, who teaches kindergarten at G-E-T today. They have three children. While at Manawa, he earned a master’s degree in education administration. He then became qualified to serve as a principal and director of instruction through Viterbo University.

In 2011, White arrived at G-E-T to serve as principal, a role he continued in until now. He earned his license to serve as a superintendent over those years he was principal.

White is now excited to work with everyone at C-FC as superintendent while fondly looking back on the positive experiences he

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Famous MN storyteller coming to Winona



by ALEXANDRA RETTER

Later this month, musician Simone Perrin will be returning to the theater where she played a mouse in “The Nutcracker” twice as a girl. “It feels really fun. It feels super comfortable,” she said of performing in her hometown, Winona. Perrin and storyteller Kevin Kling will weave story and song in a show at Saint Cecilia The-

ater later this month. The performance is a fundraiser for the Sandbar Storytelling Festival, which will take place this October in Winona.

Kling has been a commentator on NPR’s “All Things Considered” and has won grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the McKnight Foundation. He has also been named Minneapolis Story Laureate. Perrin is a folk musician

and accordion player. Kling and Perrin were featured at the Guthrie Theater in Kling’s “Tales from the Charred Underbelly of the Yule Log.”

The duo have worked together for years. Perrin and Kling started collaborating in 2006. Kling was set to perform at a festival and wanted to work with a

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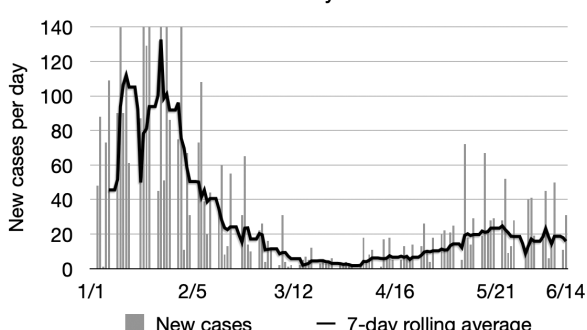
Musician and Winona native Simone Perrin (left) and storyteller Kevin Kling (right) will perform on June 25 at a fundraiser for the new Sandbar Storytelling Festival in Winona.

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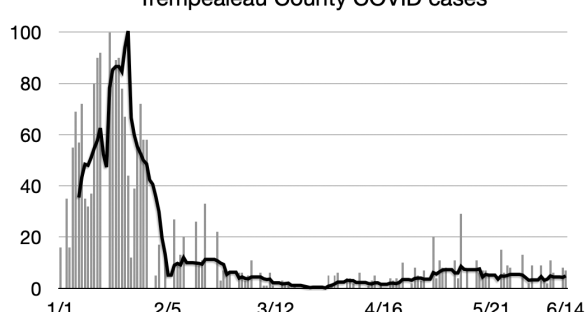
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Coronavirus: Local update

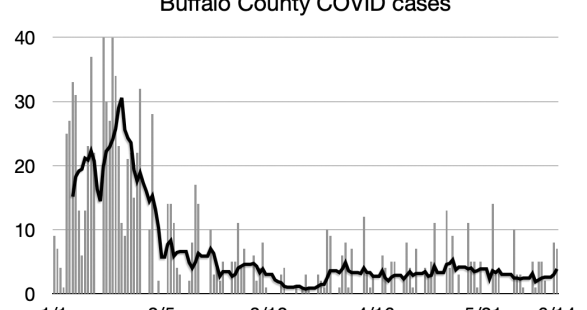
Winona County COVID cases



Trempealeau County COVID cases



Buffalo County COVID cases



Data from state health departments

The spread of COVID was elevated but stable in Winona County this week and remained steady at lower levels in Buffalo and Trempealeau counties.

As of Tuesday, the CDC COVID-19 community level was high for Winona County, meaning the CDC recommends masking; medium for Trempealeau County; and low for Buffalo County.

In Winona County, there were 111 new cases this week, down from 162 last week. Two Winona County residents were hospitalized for COVID this week, and one person was admitted to an intensive care unit, county officials said. There were no new deaths this week.

Trempealeau County saw 34 cases this week, up from 22 last week and on par with the 38 cases two weeks ago. There were no new hospitalizations or deaths, according to county and state health officials.

In Buffalo County, there were 27 new cases this week, up from 13 last week. There were no new hospitalizations or deaths, according to county and state health officials.

Police: Winona man punches officers

by CESAR SALAZAR

The Winona Police Department (WPD) arrested a man on potential charges of assault and attempting to disarm a police officer.

On June 12 at 1:39 a.m., officers arrested Justus William Pomeroy, 28, of Winona, on potential charges of assault and attempting to disarm an officer after two WPD officers responded to an emotional behavioral issue call on the 150 block of Harvest Lane. According to the report, while talking with officers, Pomeroy allegedly lunged at one of the officers in an attempt to try to disarm and remove the officer's gun from its holster. The officer was reportedly able to push Pomeroy away and kept his gun secured.

Two Winona County Sheriff's Office (WCSO) deputies reportedly arrived on the scene to assist the WPD. While they attempted to deescalate the situation, Pomeroy allegedly punched one of the deputies in the head twice and was then reportedly put into handcuffs for the safety of the law enforcement officers, police said.

Pomeroy was reportedly taken to the Winona County Jail on the potential charges but while in custody, he allegedly punched a corrections officer in the face and could potentially face another assault charge, according to the WCSO.

The two law enforcement officers did not suffer any serious injuries.

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C-FC supt.

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had with his former colleagues. He is starting to set goals for his time at C-FC. "My first and most important goal is to listen and learn, [to] get to know people before worrying about whether or not we've got everything perfect," he said. This summer, he plans to meet community members at

events such as a Fourth of July celebration. It is important to him to build connections with others and demonstrate that he values their opinions, he said. He also has a goal of continuing C-FC's strategic plan implementation, he said.

"Troy seems to be a really dynamic leader," C-FC School Board member Don Baloun said. "He has incredible enthusiasm and work ethic, and I think he's going to carry that into the position, and I believe it's going to resonate throughout the

school."

Baloun said he is looking forward to collaborating with White on C-FC's strategic plan, including efforts to partner with Head Start on a day care program. He also would like to work with White on student achievement, in light of the challenges the pandemic presented in learning, and local partnerships in technical education for students.

The C-FC School Board initially chose three finalists for the position. In addition

to White, the two other finalists were Sarah Tobiason, district special education director and elementary principal in Decorah, Iowa, and Dawn Lueck, Washington-Kosciusko Elementary School principal.

The School Board selection process for superintendent included community forums for community members, families, students and staff to speak with the finalists, as well as interviews with the School Board.

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Voices, a Black student group.

"It was actually a really awesome opportunity to talk about our overall experience as health care providers," Winona Health Director of Surgical Services Angie Johannes said.

"One thing that's really important whenever you do this kind of work — we don't have an agenda," GRSF Producer Lonnie Rafael Alcaraz said. "We don't know what the stories are going to be."

Echeverria described some of the discussion prompts at story circles, explaining, "It can be as vague as ... what does community mean to you? Some of the questions can be really really specific, like, tell me about the oldest thing in your home that you can hold in your hand and what is it like?"

For the Winona Health staff, what bubbled up were their experiences during the pandemic: long hours of sweating under layers of PPE, dealing with staffing shortages, and seeing families lose loved ones without being able to say goodbye. "Also being worried about bringing [COVID] home to our families," Johannes said. "That was a stressor that each and every one of us had." The discussions were also full of pride in how the team handled those challenges. "We were there 110 percent for the community, and all of our caregivers were part of that being there," she said. She added, "It was a great opportunity to speak about our experiences; it brought us closer, too, I think."

"The Our Voices stories told by students, by people in their teens, about some of the struggles they've faced in schools and in the community were really powerful," Director Beth Gardiner said. She added, "There's nothing like hearing a 12-year-old kid being bullied in school. It's heartbreaking."

In story circles last summer, HCO clients and staff talked about some of the challenges of the pandemic, as well, GRSF staff said, but in follow-up conversations this spring, playwrights adapted their script. "They're in a new place this year, so we've actually made a lot of adjustments to the script ... about how we can honor where HCO finds themselves now versus a year ago when we were talking to them," Gardiner said.

"They do really feel like three separate stories that are being tied together rather brilliantly by our playwrights," Alcaraz said. A unifying theme in the play is resilience in the face of challenges, he said. Another is, "What does Winona mean to you?"

At one story circle, Echeverria said one person shared, "They had lived in Winona for 20-plus years, and they had never felt welcomed in the community. The next story circle, we had someone say they had lived in Winona for one year and they felt like they had lived here their whole life ... So there were many stories of the community coming out to support people in their struggles, but then on the flip side we had so many people saying that really wasn't their experience."

GRSF held check-ins with the local groups as the script was developed this year to garner feedback and make adjustments. "If you have that accountability and those check-ins, it shows the community that you really want to engage with them and it also keeps you honest," Alcaraz said.

"So much of this process is about this constant feedback

60 Main

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began in February 2021. The development team still intends to begin development within a year and the extension is for planning purposes due to challenges presented with supply shortages, fluctuating interest rates, and even the difficult development of the project site itself, according to C.D. Smith Senior Vice President Mike Krolczyk. "We want to make this happen," he said. He continued, "We hope to break ground and hopefully start the project late this year or early next year."

The project would see a hotel-apartment-retail complex at 60 Main and a public event center at 58 Center. "We not only have housing, we have hotel [space], some mixed-use space, some amenity space, some public space, and parking," Krolczyk said.

Latsch Building Development Managing Partner Peter Shortridge added that the project could potentially see a commercial aspect. He also suggested that the 58 Center property could be rehabilitated by opening a restaurant or developing it as an event center for a few hundred people.

Shortridge also stated that he has no intentions to tear down the 58 Center property for the project. He plans on rehabilitating the existing Jefferson building to make use of its historic significance. "People thought we were going to tear it down," he said. "We put up a fence to protect the indoor space."

The Port Authority, with the exception of Commissioner Laurie Lucas, agreed to extend the timeline until next year. "The time has come to get to work and bring this part of Opportunity Winona to fruition," she said. Lucas suggested that the developers should have 60 Main as their top priority, provide a timeline and quarterly updates for the project, and that no more extensions should be given. Commissioner Michelle Alexander and Director of Community Development Lucy McMartin responded to Lucas' concerns about the updates on the project, saying that the developers would have to provide an update by the end of the previous deadline of June 2022.

McMartin acknowledged Lucas' concerns about the length of the project. "I can think of another project I worked on where we started meeting with the company and the developer and it [took] three years," she said. "Not that we want it to be that, but it can get complex with real

loop in this community to get it right," Gardiner said. "There has been some really hard stuff that people shared with us. The play comes from loving Winona and wanting it to be its best self," she added.

The pandemic was a traumatic experience for many, said Sarah Johnson, a local artist who is working with GRSF on "All the Town's A Stage." "One of the impacts of trauma is narrowing our ability to see complexity and nuance, which is challenging in a world that is more and more complex," she said. Like the improv comedy mantra "yes and," "All the Town's A Stage" challenges Winonans to see the beauty and the struggles of their community at once, to see the many different experiences of what living in Winona means, Johnson said. "That's what we're asking the audience to do, is say, 'Yes, this is true, and this is true, and this is true,'" she said.

Theater can sometimes touch people in a way other media cannot, Alcaraz said. After falling in love with community-engaged theater (and his future wife) at Cornerstone Theater Company in 1994, Alcaraz went on to co-found Brown Bag Theater Company — a Latinx community-engaged theater company at the University of California Irvine. After seeing a play that recounted the true story of campus service workers trying to unionize, a university administrator who had turned down those workers came forward to apologize. "That's the kind of empathy you can get from this," Alcaraz said.

At another Brown Bag play — about the experience of Latinx students — an audience member choked up as he thanked the cast after the show. "He had never seen his story represented in that way," Echeverria explained.

Hopefully, "All the Town's A Stage" will be able to share stories that haven't been told and get people to listen to them in a deeper way, Alcaraz said.

Along with that storytelling, the production itself is a community-building exercise. There's nothing like putting on a play to bond a group, Alcaraz said. "By the time this play ends, there are going to be friendships formed that wouldn't have been formed otherwise," he said.

"When I think about positive change, the only way that'll come about is relationship building, and for situations that are complex and historically unheard, that's going to take time," Johnson said. "That's why I say this is not the ending. Hopefully, this will just be the beginning of conversations and action and relationship building."

In the play, Winona residents will get a chance to perform alongside professional actor Alex Campbell, who is playing the lead in "Twelfth Night," and actors in GRSF's professional training program, as well as work with the company's talented crew.

Open auditions for "All the Town's A Stage" are scheduled for June 28-29, with the time and location to be determined. Check www.grsf.org/winona-story for details, or email communityengagement@grsf.org to express interest in participating.

"Everybody should come audition — no acting experience necessary," Gardiner said. "The audition experience is going to be fun and something you can just walk in and do, so people shouldn't be nervous about not having acted before." The rehearsals are planned for nights and weekends to accommodate busy schedules.

Gardiner added there will be opportunities for Winonans to join in behind the scenes, as well. "Help with marketing or help with costumes or work with the sound designer on what the soundtrack of Winona is. There's so much to do, and we welcome everybody," she said.

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estate, business, and development. Then we add on to it supply chain issues, interest rates, COVID, building supplies, contaminated soil [on the site], grants, and timing."

The 60 Main site has some soil contamination due to industrial use decades ago. The city would have to remove that soil before developers can build on the property.

Lucas' proposal failed because no one else supported it. "The angst is that it's taking a long time; we know that," Port Authority Chair Mike Cichanowski said. "There's been a lot of stumbles on this [project], but we want this thing to move on."

The Port Authority also voted and passed an interfund loan resolution for \$250,000, earmarking that money for development costs and leaving the door open for a potential tax increment financing (TIF) district for the project, as well as potential bonding — or city debt — to help pay for the project.

TIF is a tax break for the property's increased value after development. The property would be taxed at the current undeveloped value, and the increased taxes it would normally generate would go toward paying off costs of development instead of funding local governments.

While the Port Authority passed the vote for the interfund loan resolution, it does not mean that the city will be using these options, but rather that the city has these options available for use in the future, according to McMartin.

The city could potentially give financial assistance or subsidies to the developers. "We look forward to continuing to work with the city on the potential incentives ... and come up with a plan," Krolczyk said.

McMartin also said that the project could potentially make use of state grants, like the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development's (DEED) Redevelopment Grant Program. Currently, the city staff have submitted an application for a DEED site cleanup grant for the project, which could be approved within the next couple of months, according to McMartin.

"I'm excited that we're extending this and hopefully we can put something together that works well for everybody," Port Authority Commissioner Dana Johnson said. "It should be the centerpiece for our downtown. I appreciate everybody's diligence working on that because this will set the standard for downtown for the next 50 years, so it's important that we do it right and we don't cut any corners."

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