

OPINION

That took guts, kid: St. Peter student can be an example for us all

I wasn't ready.

When I came to the sudden and confusing realization that I was gay in junior high school, I quickly committed myself to not telling a soul. My friends were just starting to develop an interest in the opposite sex; I had already "dated" a few girls myself; no one was questioning me, so there was no need to come out. Perhaps peers became suspicious over my high school years, but I was easily able to ignore that potential reality and go on with my life. I planned for a life in the closet: it wouldn't be so bad.

That's what I thought as a senior back in 2010. Alex Bosacker thought differently in 2022.

In one of the most difficult environments to do so, sports, the St. Peter senior addressed his peers and informed them of his sexuality. It was a major risk — with the threat of alienation and discomfort among teammates, some of the most important people in an athlete's formative years.

But Alex's courage was rewarded.

In return for his honesty, he received kindness and compassion from his team, determined to treat him the exact same as before. And that grace was extended to classmates in school, who supported Alex with rainbow colors and, more importantly, respect.

Alex didn't reveal his sexuality to garner attention. He did it to stop lying — to others and to himself. Pretending is not so hard, but there is loneliness in a lie.

Recently, all the fears associated with coming out as a high school athlete reared their ugly head for Alex. In a rivalry game, an opposing player yelled out, referencing his sexual orientation in an effort to humiliate. Fans of the opposing team proceeded to ridicule and harass him. And after the game, while the motive is yet unconfirmed, four teens followed the St. Pe-



Our View

Philip Weyhe

ter team bus, forced it to slow down and shot water beads at it, a frightening experience for the squad.

So not only is a teenager left feeling personally humiliated, but he now feels culpable for the distress of people he cares about. And it's all because he chose vulnerability — a simple desire to live openly and honestly.

While Alex is a personable and optimistic young man, he admitted these incidents sullied a senior year that should've been reserved for fond memories and individual growth. He will no doubt move past it all; he'll be the bigger person that he's already proved to be.

But let us not forget to commend him.

I don't like to share about myself. Those years in the closet perhaps conditioned me to keep things close to the chest. But Alex has inspired a 30-year-old, like me, to be a little more courageous.

My years denying my own sexuality were years denying my own existence. I didn't allow myself a place in the world. An athlete myself, I preferred internal isolation to possible external ridicule.

But now, a year into marriage and several years out of the closet, I realize my sexuality is a blessing. It feels good to know who I am, and while "queer" is just one descriptor for that person, I kind of like the ring to it these days. It took longer than I'd like to admit, but I found my bravery.

Be proud of yourself, Alex. You found yours early.

Reach Regional Managing Editor Philip Weyhe at editor@apgsomn.com or 507-931-8579. © Copyright 2022 APG Media of Southern Minnesota. All rights reserved.

Sen. Frentz: American Rescue Plan delivering much-needed help to our counties

When President Biden signed the American Rescue Plan (ARP) into law one year ago this month, it was a much-needed response to a pandemic that by early 2021 had taken hundreds of thousands of lives, stolen millions of American businesses and jobs, and upended families, schools and communities in Minnesota and across the country.

In the year since then, the ARP has armed the nation with the resources needed to help restore the health and economic well-being of millions of struggling Minnesotans who have benefited from free COVID-19 testing and vaccines, from the \$1,400 in direct payments to individuals, and the expanded unemployment assistance for those out of work.

It also benefited workers and businesses alike by helping with childcare costs so parents could get back on the job, and it expanded the child tax credit, which not only cut taxes for millions of families, but also cut our child poverty almost in half.

In all, Minnesota received about \$8.5 billion from the



Another View

Nick Frentz

ARP, which has been invaluable in getting Minnesota back on its feet and helped put our state government on sound financial footing, with a healthy budget surplus projected into the future.

Helping Greater Mankato, St. Peter Area

But part of the untold story of the ARP's success is that it also helped Minnesota's hard-hit state and local governments, which during the pandemic had to drastically cut services, reduce public safety efforts, and delay needed infrastructure projects, including broadband, water and sewer upgrades.

The counties in our area of the state greatly benefitted from the ARP. Here's how:

Blue Earth County was allocated \$13 million in ARP funding, with \$5 million covering revenue that was lost during the pandemic. The funds also include more than \$3 million

for local housing, and roughly \$1 million each for Water Quality Projects, Human Services, expanding Broadband services, and Cyber Security.

Nicollet County received \$800,000 in ARP funds that will allow it to purchase a property in Saint Peter that will become a much-needed Adult Mental Health Facility. Addressing access to Adult Mental Health care is an important priority of our area, and a specific legislative priority of mine this session in St. Paul.

Le Sueur County will receive a total of \$5.6 million in ARP funding. Of that, \$3.8 million will be used to remodel a currently vacant jail building for use by county public health staff. The upgrade will improve overall public access to county services. About \$1 million will go to bolstering the county operations budget, and an additional \$375,000 will cover shortfalls in the county roads budget. The ARP funding will also help provide Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for public health staff, cover local fire department fees, and extend volunteer pay

for local vaccination clinics.

The ARP has already done much to help Minnesota get through the health and economic crisis the pandemic brought to our state. The benefits of the plan have been widespread and have helped virtually every community across our country and our state, including the significant benefits being realized in southern Minnesota and in the Greater Mankato and St. Peter region.

I should note I was proud to see Minnesota's U.S. Senators Tina Smith and Amy Klobuchar, as well as all four Democrats in the U.S. House of Representatives from our state vote in favor of the bill. Their work to respond to the needs of our state and our nation will be felt for years to come in the form of jobs, economic development and added economic resiliency.

Nick Frentz, DFL-North Mankato, represents District 19, including St. Peter and the rest of Nicollet County, as a Democrat in the Minnesota Senate. Reach him at sen.nick.frentz@senate.mn.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We aim to do better

To the editor:

In light of the recent public homophobic acts by some of our New Ulm students, our kids, toward members of your community, it is beyond time to address the issues that brought us to this place.

Is our town a space that allows and encourages this type of behavior? To anyone reading the news reports of this incident, it would appear that we are. Recent letters to the editor in our local paper would support that view.

So the question is what do we, as a community, do now? Is everyone OK with what happened? Or should we work to address, educate and do better?

The Human Rights Commission believes

firmly in the latter and will be working to construct opportunities for growth and compassion with our students and community at large. The New Ulm School Board apparently believes the same and has been taking proactive steps with equity and diversity training, but has been met with resistance and criticism from community members for their efforts. This is an "It takes a village" time. Time for everyone to commit to doing better for ourselves and the children we are raising.

To the citizens of St. Peter, their basketball team, and specifically to the young man targeted: We, as members of the New Ulm community, are profoundly sorry. We will work to do better. And we implore others to join us.

The New Ulm Human Rights Commission Execu-

tive Board

Wendi Ringhofer
Larry Czer
Kristin Sprenger
Casey McMullen

An apology from New Ulm Public Schools

New Ulm Public Schools does not support any act of aggression, disrespect, or intolerance towards any one person or community. What has occurred during and after recent games with St. Peter is horrible and not acceptable for our students and our community.

Our school administration will spend time in the next week meeting with students to review our policies around bullying, intolerance and hate. All Students need to understand this is unaccept-

able behavior.

As a board, we apologize to our community, the St. Peter Community and the St. Peter Basketball team for what has occurred in the past month. As a board, we will continue our work on equity, inclusion and diversity to make sure that all students matter, regardless of the community in which they live.

Sincerely,
The New Ulm School Board

CORRECTION

In a story in the March 10 edition of the *St. Peter Herald* titled "New First Lutheran Church Pastor highlights inclusivity in worship," the First Lutheran Church was mistakenly referred to in two passages. Chris Culuris is the new lead pastor at First Lutheran Church.