

## OUR VIEW

### Stay vigilant when it comes to COVID-19

COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations are declining here and elsewhere. That's welcome news but it doesn't mean it's time for everyone to let their guard down. As Steele County Public Health reported Monday, there were nearly 500 new COVID cases last week. And 30% of those hospitalized in Owatonna are positive for COVID-19. Yes, the numbers are declining and they are significantly lower than one month ago, but people are still getting the virus. For those who aren't vaccinated, the is still time to get vaccinated. At minimum, please wear masks and social distance when in public. Do your part to keep this beast of a virus at bay.

## YOUR VIEW

### Enjoys reading the best paper

**To-the-Editor:** Regarding the news of the Times winning the prestigious General Excellence Award and all of the placement awards, I am not surprised because your weekly paper is the best written, edited and designed in Minnesota. Your editorial page with a local editorial and your column excel. Your letters from your subscribers are an indication of

the interest in your paper. It is a good read from start to finish, particularly the array of columnists. I believe every vibrant community wants a good newspaper, not realizing the time and money needed to have a good local newspaper. I appreciate reading the best paper every week.

**Don Heinzman  
Bloomington**

### Paper is worthy of every award

**To-the-Editor:** Congratulations to you and everyone at Steele County Times on all the awards earned this past year! Your hard work the past 12 years has shown that this newspaper is fantastic and worthy of every award! The comments from the judges show why the Steele County Times has won these awards and that is why it has grown in the number of subscriptions. Every article is

full of interesting news-worthy information. Not just filler type stuff that many newspapers have in their articles. You have assembled a great group of dedicated writers that know how to write articles that are interesting to read from beginning to end. Keep up the great work and go in Hot Pursuit of more great articles and awards.

**Carl and Denise  
Wieman  
Owatonna**



**Hot Pursuit**  
RICK BUSSLER

I don't know how many times in the past that I've been lured into watching a short video and left thinking, "I can't believe what I just saw." I guess you could refer to them as "ah-ha" moments. We've seen this happen many times with videos of police encounters with citizens often blasted across social media. However, what generally is first put out there doesn't usually end up being the entire story. And quite honestly once the entire story is shown, it totally changes the context of what we were initially led to believe. It could be an age thing with me or perhaps I've become wiser in my old age. I think the one time this hasn't been in the case in recent memory, at least for me, is the killing of George Floyd at the hands of former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin. I recall seeing the video right away and thinking there has to be more to this story than

## DQ video illustrates need for 'the rest of the story'

an officer kneeling on the neck of another man for an insane amount of time. Sadly, in that case, what we saw is pretty much what there was. It turned out to be nothing less than a bad cop abusing his power caught on video.

As part of the news media, we are used to people touting their positions and getting out their ideas or causes by showing only what's going to make them look good. The media has to be extremely careful with not falling into this trap by showing only one side.

On a smaller and much less significant scale than a police shooting or nasty police encounter, this has been playing out over the past couple weeks in Owatonna with a video of Dairy Queen workers dealing with a customer trying to get her food.

After watching the video of a DQ worker throwing food at a customer and the customer subsequently falling down while trying to kick it back at the worker, it's easy to jump to a conclusion that the blame should be totally pointed at the DQ workers. Of course, what the video doesn't show is what led

up to the food tossing and customer falling.

I don't agree with what the DQ workers did. Their action was unjustified and should not have happened. are lucky the woman wasn't injured after falling down on a slippery sidewalk.

However, once the rest of the story is shared, though there is no video to support it, it quickly becomes evident that there is more to this than some irresponsible DQ workers.

We are fortunate to have the "rest of the story" this week from staff writer Kay Fate, who sat down to do an exclusive interview with the three former DQ workers in hopes of giving readers some context of what really happened leading up to their inappropriate behavior.

There is something that you won't find in Kay's story. There are no names of the DQ employees. It isn't normal for us to not name people in stories. But because of what has happened with the three teenagers since the video went viral, we chose to protect their identities by not naming them or photographing them. They have received threats against their personal safety.

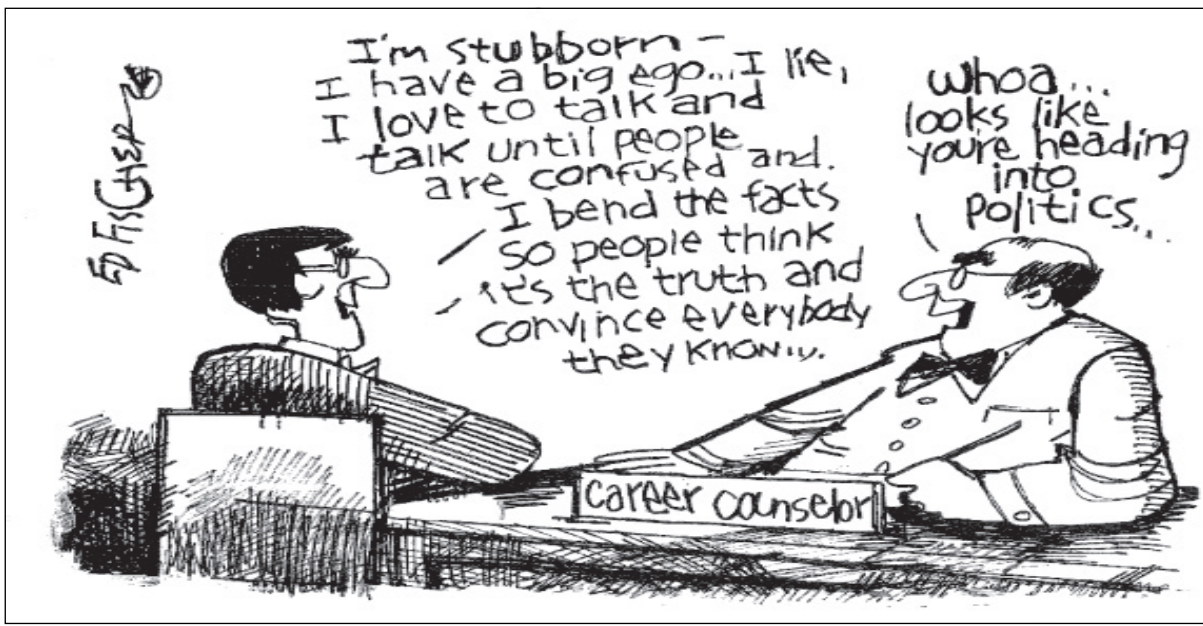
As polarized as this country currently is, it did not make any sense for us to name the DQ workers, especially given the fact that people are threatening to hurt them.

After reading Kay's story, it quickly became apparent that the customer did not help the situation in any way with how she acted toward the DQ employees. She reportedly was acting belligerent and throwing out profanities like a swearing sailor because of the service she had received.

This is where we all need to take a deep breath and remind ourselves of the times we're living in. Remember that thing called COVID-19 and how it has impacted businesses, especially restaurants? Short tempers and being quick fused just doesn't cut it right now.

As I review the DQ video, I am once again reminded that people need to be careful about jumping to conclusions and reach to find out the rest of the story.

Or better yet, let us go in hot pursuit of tracking down the story for you so you can make an informed decision of what you're really seeing on snippets of video.



## GUEST COLUMNS

### Focused on making life more affordable

BY GENE DORNINK

As we head into the 2022 legislative session, we have a historic government budget surplus. Meanwhile Minnesotans are facing the rising cost of inflation, shortfalls in our children's education, and many other hardships as we recover from the pandemic. This year, I am focused on helping Minnesotans make everyday life more affordable, enhancing community safety, and empowering parents with resources to help guide their children's education. Minnesotans have worked hard for their money, and they deserve to keep it in their pockets. I will prioritize meaningful tax relief that helps support your family budgets. Specifically, last session, I introduced a bill that would remove all taxes on social security and other retirement incomes. Minnesota is 1 of 13 states that still tax social security. Our neighbors on fixed incomes deserve to have more money going directly to them to help combat the rising costs of essential everyday items. I will also advocate for repaying the state's unemployment insurance debt instead of placing that burden on our small businesses, who did everything they could to keep their employees on the payroll while navigating government shutdowns. I continuously hear from superintendents and educators that they need help finding staff and filling vacancies. Even before the

COVID-19 pandemic, there had been a shortage of substitute teachers in our schools. Now, with quarantines and other health-related absences, shortages are more prevalent and problematic and have altered the ability of our schools to offer in-person learning. Last session, I introduced legislation that allowed school districts to employ a person who meets the professional requirements as "short-call substitute teachers." This bill passed the Senate 36-29 as a stand-alone bill and part of the Omnibus Education bill, but the democrat-controlled House would not accept it. This legislation would temporarily allow a person with an associate degree, a professional certification, See **FOCUSED** on A7 ▶

### Love wins, not just on Valentine's Day

BY JAN MITTELSTADT TIPPETT

As individuals, we all have the power to make a difference. And there are multitudes of people and organizations in Steele County who do just that, sometimes alone and sometimes with others. Just think of how terrible life would be if all the churches, organizations, schools and individuals threw their collective hands up over their heads and decided that the task was too great to start. Love wins here – and not just on Valentine's Day. The list of helpers is endless in Steele County. Quiet good deeds are done daily. Hungry people are fed. Home-

less people are helped. Children are cared for. Students are taught. The aged are visited. The sick are treated. People who need encouragement are encouraged. Parents are helped to become better parents. Education is valued. Kind words are given. Gossip (I hope) is discouraged. Birds are fed, as well as counted. Prayers are offered. Quilts are made. Books are read. Money is raised and donated. Music and theater are enjoyed. Opinions are shared. We don't often know the difference we make. Not knowing is okay. But it may be life-changing to hear and hearing might mean reading a note, a post or a story in a newspaper.

There is power in community journalism, shared by reporters, editors and publishers. There is power in community organizations, not-for-profit, for profit and non-profit. There is power in health organizations. There is power in churches, in daycares, in schools, in offices and in factories. There is also power in free speech. It's a darn shame that free speech has sometimes encouraged people to just spit out what they think, even when there are no facts to back up those thoughts, speeches and posts. And, dear readers three, there is power in personal responsibility. Unfortunately, sometimes those See **LOVE** on A7 ▶

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2019 - 7 state awards	2014 - 3 state and 4 national awards	

(Awards presented by the Minnesota Newspaper Association and the National Newspaper Associations)

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