



Karen Peterson sells baked and canned goods out of her home business, Confections by Karen, in Blooming Prairie. (Julian Hast/southernminn.com)

BAKING A BUSINESS

Blooming Prairie local scores big for small-time food vendors

By JULIAN HAST
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Karen Peterson has loved baking for decades. The visual and gustatory creativity, the wide variety of recipes, and the looks on people's faces as they sink their teeth into her creations.

"I really love being able to create something that makes somebody happy," Peterson said.

In 2013, working in Walmart's bakery in Owatonna, Peterson knew that she wanted to start selling her own baked goods. Being able to set her own hours, experiment with her own recipes and enjoy a revenue stream

while taking care of her baby at home seemed like an ideal situation. It would even allow her to run over to Blooming Prairie Elementary School, which is across the street from her house, when the school needed a substitute teacher.

But Peterson quickly ran into an obstacle: it was illegal for individuals in Minnesota to sell baked goods out of their own homes. Her only option was to sell at a farmers market, where she could make up to only \$5,000 a year.

As of Aug. 1, the Cottage Food Exemption in Minnesota Cottage Food Law has changed to allow registered individuals to now make up to \$78,000

a year selling food out of their homes. They can also now make pet treats for dogs and cats, and organize their cottage food business as an official, state-sanctioned business entity.

Peterson, a board member of the Minnesota Cottage Food Producers Association, played an instrumental role in that legislation passing. With that law changed, she can now sell baked and canned goods through her home business, Confections by Karen.

"When you're told 'no' by the government, you've got to work to change it," Peterson said.

See FOODS on 3A

Trooper stops speeding vehicle, allegedly finds Colorado THC products

By ANNIE GRANLUND
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Four young adults are facing criminal charges after a Minnesota State Trooper allegedly found the vehicle they were driving filled with THC products from Colorado.

Gabriel Randall Andrusko, 21, of Coon Rapids; Anita Mae Mimbach, 20, of Circle Pines; Carlos Alexander Hernandez, 23, and Ricardo Diaz Beristain, 21, both of Minneapolis, were all charged Thursday in Steele County District Court with third-degree conspiracy to sell five kilograms (11 lbs) or more of marijuana and fifth-degree drug possession of not a small amount of marijuana, both felonies. The charges stem from a traffic stop that occurred in Steele County along Interstate 35 on Wednesday morning.

According to the criminal complaint, a trooper observed a vehicle speeding traveling north near mile marker 36 — about four miles north of Hope — and initiated a traffic stop. As the trooper approached the vehicle, he reportedly smelled a strong odor of marijuana before the windows were rolled down. Mimbach was driving the vehicle and told the trooper she owned it, according to the report. The three men were passengers.

Mimbach's license came back as revoked in 2019 in relation to a controlled substance charge out of Anoka County. As the trooper asked the individuals to exit the vehicle, he allegedly saw a plastic THC container on the front driver's floor. Mimbach reported told the trooper they group went to Colorado the previous weekend to purchase THC products and that her and Hernandez alone had spent roughly \$15,000 on the items. Mimbach said they still had about \$10,000 in cash in the vehicle, according to the police report.

See BUSTED on 3A



Hernandez



Andrusko



Beristain



Mimbach

Miller of Winona to lead Senate GOP caucus, team up with Jasinski

By ANNIE GRANLUND AND
TIM PUGMIRE

Republicans in the Minnesota Senate have picked Winona Sen. Jeremy Miller to lead their caucus.

The 34-member caucus and two affiliated independents selected Miller as their leader Wednesday night. It's an initial step toward officially naming him majority leader, which will require a formal resolution when the Senate meets in session again.

Despite early rumors — before Paul Gazelka, of East Gull Lake, stepped down — that Faribault's John Jasinski might be named the next majority leader, Jasinski said there has been a plan in motion for "a long time" to put Miller in that top seat.

"This was always the plan from the beginning," said Jasinski, who is the current assistant Senate majority leader. "Jeremy and I had been working together to prepare for his nomination, and I wanted to be the one to personally nominate him, but so did Sen. [David] Senjem."

Jasinski said that, because the Rochester senator has seniority, he yielded to let Senjem make the official nomination. Nevertheless, it all played out how Jasinski was hoping it would.

"Jeremy has 11 years of experience in the Senate, and I only have five, with an upcoming election where we want to keep the majority; we want to be able



Sen. John Jasinski (R-Faribault) said he has worked closely for a number of years with Sen. Jeremy Miller (R-Winona) and is excited to see Miller step into the roll of Senate majority leader. Miller was appointed to lead the GOP caucus Wednesday night, which is the first step toward formally naming him majority leader. (Photo courtesy of Senate Media)

to use his expertise," said Jasinski, reiterating that the rumors of him being named the next majority leader were just that — rumors. "I am going to be a heavy team player with Jeremy and am not disappointed at all; I will be playing

a crucial role in the upcoming session." According to Jasinski, he plans on working closely with Miller to ensure the dispersing of federal dollars for frontline hero pay will be an immediate priority. He also said they will

work closely together, as they move into the bonding year during the 2022 session.

Miller said he and other republicans have a similar vision.

"We just want to get good things

done for the people of the state of Minnesota," Miller said. "I feel like I'm well positioned to work within our caucus as well as with members across the aisle to get that done, including the governor."

Miller said he would work across the aisle to get things done and that he has a good relationship with DFL House Speaker Melissa Hortman, of Brooklyn Park.

First elected in 2010, Miller, 38, has been Senate president since 2019, at the time the youngest senator in state history to hold that position. A husband and father of three, he works for his family's metal recycling business based in Winona.

Miller succeeds Gazelka, who stepped down last week and announced a run for the GOP gubernatorial nomination on Wednesday.

The Senate DFL caucus is also planning a leadership election after Minority Leader Susan Kent, of Woodbury, stepped down last week.

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