



## CATALYTIC CONVERTER THEFTS SKYROCKET 2A



## SWIM AND DIVE TEAM LIFTS OPPONENT'S SPIRITS 1B

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### SCHOOLS



Medford schools leaders are concerned about the supply of substitute teachers this year given the potential spread of COVID-19 to its staff and higher pay rates being offered by other districts. (Photo by Maximilian Scheffler on Unsplash)

# NO SUBSTITUTE?

## Medford School discusses substitute needs during uncertain year

By **ASHLEY REZACHEK**  
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The COVID-19 pandemic has made for an unpredictable year as school staff work to provide consistency to students and families, and the need for and access to substitute teachers this year could prove to be unstable. And costly.

School has started and teachers will inevitably get sick or have to take off time for a variety of reasons. A global pandemic adds an extra layer of difficulty when it comes to quickly finding temporary replacements. Substitutes will have to weigh their options when choosing if and where they should return to school.

The ability to retain (and recruit if need be) substitute teachers this year

is of concern for schools. Medford schools Superintendent Mark Ristau and the School Board discussed the dilemma at Monday night's board meeting. No official action was taken.

"It was nothing short of a miracle to get eight subs for today," Ristau said, adding that they also had folks lined up for Tuesday, too.

A recent positive COVID-19 test from a staff member forced staff and students — determined to have been exposed — into precautionary quarantine over the weekend. Ristau said the district had to follow a very strict protocol with the Minnesota Department of Health and Steele County leaders. All weekend long the group traced and contacted students, staff and families notifying them of the possible exposure.

Competition for scooping up substitutes has picked up. Neighboring schools have jacked up substitutes' pay, some up to \$200 a day, about \$75 more than what Medford is currently offering, according to Ristau.

"It's kind of a dog fight right now to ensure you have subs in your build-



Ristau

ing," Ristau said. He believes Medford will have to be more competitive in order to retain the substitutes they do have. That could mean increasing their rates for substitutes, to make it known that the district is serious about keeping its substitutes.

"We do have a handful of subs that have been loyal to us and prefer to come here," Ristau said, but added these substitutes could potentially decide to drive closer to the metro, where rates could be higher.

The board briefly discussed some ways to approach the problem.

Members talked about paying a long-term substitute to be in the building every day or alternatively relying on Teachers on Call, which Medford and other surrounding districts use. Teachers on Call is a company that connects its pool of substitute teachers with school districts in need of a substitute.

The issue with hiring a substitute to be in the building every day is the fact

that there's a chance they may not be utilized every day. However, Medford would have someone to call on right away to fill a vacant spot if needed. In addition, the long-term substitute could potentially help out other teachers in the classroom, work lunch duty or any other appropriate duty when they aren't actively substituting. Ristau says bigger school districts have gone this route.

In some instances, teachers can still teach their in-person classes virtually from home. A supervisor however needs to be in the classroom, such as a substitute, staff member or paraprofessional. The idea of hiring more paraprofessionals was also entertained.

"We will still have teachers that will get sick and can't teach from home," Ristau pointed out.

The board gave Ristau permission to explore the various options in greater depth. He will do more research and bring more information back to the board to make a decision at a later date.

The next Medford School Board meeting is at 7 p.m. Oct. 19.

## Charges: Driver got to 100 mph during chase

By **ANNIE GRANLUND**  
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An Owatonna man who allegedly led law enforcement on a high-speed car chase last week has been charged in Steele County court.

Marcos Anthony Trevino, 28, is being charged with fleeing a peace officer in a motor vehicle and third-degree drug possession. Both charges are felonies. He is also being charged with gross misdemeanor DWI.

According to court documents, on Sept. 14 an Owatonna police officer observed a vehicle driving south on Oak Avenue with a loud exhaust that could be heard from several blocks away. The officer reported the driver, later identified as Trevino, was also flashing his high beams and failed to stop at an intersection. When the officer tried to initiate a traffic stop, documents state that Trevino took off at a high rate of speed of up to 100-plus miles-per-hour.

During the chase, the officer reported Trevino was driving erratically by tapping his brakes, randomly accelerating and decelerating, and turning his headlights on and off. In the complaint, the officer notes this behavior led him to believe Trevino was impaired.

Trevino was apprehended after his vehicle failed to negotiate a turn and went into a ditch near Crane Creek Road and 92nd Avenue. According to the report, officers recovered 15 grams of methamphetamine from Trevino's vehicle. Trevino complied with a search warrant for a blood sample at the Owatonna Hospital. At the hospital, Trevino told officers he was high, according to court documents.

While being booked into the Steele County Detention Center, a plastic baggie containing 0.510 ounces of a white, crystal-like substance was recovered on Trevino's person.

Trevino has a criminal history that includes convictions for a 2016 DWI in Steele County, receiving stolen property and motor vehicle theft — both felonies — in 2018 in Steele County, and a 2018 felony conviction for second-degree burglary in Waseca County.

Judge Joseph Buetel set bail for Trevino without conditions at \$20,000. His next court appearance is scheduled for Sept. 29.

In other Steele County court news:

- 28-year-old Ryan John Gromelski of Sheffield, Ohio, was charged Sept. 14 with domestic assault and fifth-degree assault, both felonies. According to court documents, the Owatonna Police Department was notified by Lakeville police of an assault that they believe took place in Owatonna the day prior. Officers reported the victim had bruises on her limbs and a split lower lip waiting outside a Lakeville business. According to the report, the woman said she got in an argument with Gromelski after leaving an Owatonna business and that he either backhanded her or threw an ashtray at her face, resulting in the busted lip. Gromelski has two prior convictions in Ohio for violating a protection order in May 2019 and June 2018.

See 100 MPH on 3A

# COVID-19 posing challenges, opportunities for local authors

By **SAM WILMES**  
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Societal shifts created by COVID-19 are posing both challenges and possibilities for local authors.

According to an article in Publisher's Weekly, despite the pandemic, unit sales of print books held up somewhat well in the first quarter of the year, following the trend of other recent economic downturns. Despite the Great Recession, book unit sales rose from 760 million in 2007 to 807 million in 2012. While demand for books has been historically shaky, Kristen McLean, executive director of NPD Books, told Publisher's Weekly that demand spiked between March 1 and April 4 in book genres touching on outdoor skills, medical history and games and activities. Print unit sales in the juvenile nonfiction and fic-



Hvistendahl



Norbury

tion segments were also up within that time compared to 2019, with juvenile nonfiction being seen as having done particularly well.

The pandemic has also changed where people buy books, according to Publisher's Weekly, with print sales at online retailers growing since March 1 and sales at physical retailers declining.

### Promotional work a challenge

Though the increase in time many are spending at home can allow for more writing, in-person

events and human interaction sometimes needed to spark creative minds have been shelved.

Northfielder Joy Riggs published her book "Crackerjack Bands and Hometown Boosters: The Story of a Minnesota Music Man" in 2019. In a typical year, she would be heavily promoting her work and had plans to do so this summer and fall, but, due to the pandemic, her last event was in March at Northfield Rotary Club.

Even then, Riggs remembered telling the audience of the impact of the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic had on her great-grandfather, G. Oliver Riggs. This year in Northfield, the Vintage Band Festival, considered one of the premier events on the summer calendar in Northfield, was canceled due to COVID-19.

"That was one of those examples where music helps," Riggs

### VIRTUAL BOOK FESTIVAL

Norbury, Riggs and Hvistendahl will participate in the children's fiction/nonfiction Deep Valley Virtual Book Festival from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Oct. 3 and 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Oct. 4, representing Northfield. The history writers' panel they were on can be found starting at 4 p.m. Oct. 3 at [deepvalleybookfestival.com](http://deepvalleybookfestival.com). The event is free, but registration is required for live events. The author link is at [bit.ly/3kDODNO](http://bit.ly/3kDODNO).

said. Fellow Northfielder Susan Hvistendahl collaborated with Jeff Sauve on the historical 2019 book "Milestones and Memories of the St. Olaf Band 1891-2018." Their work chronicled the ascendant path of the St. Olaf Band from its founding in 1891 to a 94-piece band that undertook a concert tour of New Zealand and Australia in 2018.

Prior to the pandemic, Hvistendahl and Sauve hosted promotional events at Winter Walk and on Feb. 20, but further out-

reach was hampered the following month due to the pandemic.

Hvistendahl and Riggs have still promoted their books on YouTube but miss the interaction and connections formed during in-person promotional efforts.

"It's a challenge to get the word out about the books," Hvistendahl said.

"It's tough," Riggs added of book promotional work during COVID-19. "It was challenging before."

Owatonna author Chris Norbury shared similar sentiments.

An author of two self-published fiction mystery thrillers in a series set in Minnesota and a contributor to another short story, he spoke of the extensive in-person schedule he had in the spring before the pandemic resulted in the cancellation of a dozen events.

Norbury, who published his first book in April 2016 and his second in February 2019, is working on the first draft of his third story in the series.

See AUTHORS on 3A



INDEX

LOCAL 2A-3A // OPINION 4A // RECORDS 5A // COMMUNITY 6A // ACCENT 7A // SPORTS 1B, 6B // CLASSIFIEDS 4B-5B