



BRIEFS

Two tornadoes do no damage

ST. JAMES — Storm spotters reported tornado touchdowns near St. James and Lake Crystal Thursday afternoon.

A tornado that touched down near St. James did not cause damage.

Watonwan County Sheriff's Department said the tornado touched down at 4:35 p.m. near the southwest edge of town.

A tornado also touched down at 5:12 p.m. six miles west/southwest of Lake Crystal. A Blue Earth County trained spotter reported a tornado on the ground. Blue Earth County Sheriff's Office reported that no property damage occurred.

Several large trees and power poles were snapped off by strong wind gusts generated by a thunderstorm that moved across Waseca Thursday afternoon.

Authorities received multiple damage reports caused by the storm, which moved from the south to the north across the city between 2:55 p.m. and 3:10 p.m.

Lightning strikes apartment building

MANKATO — Lightning struck the roof of an apartment building near Hiniker Pond during a thunderstorm Wednesday night. No one was injured and the strike did not start a fire.

Mankato firefighters responded to call at 9:36 p.m. to Park Place Townhomes and were on the scene at 241 Butterworth St. for about 40 minutes. Fire Cmdr. Don Lehne said crews checked the building for potential problems and found the lightning had knocked out circuit breakers.

House untethers doctors, nurses

ST. PAUL — The House passed a bill Thursday that allows most advanced practice nurses to work without an agreement with a doctor.

The bill, a companion to Mankato Sen. Kathy Sheran's Senate measure, passed after about 2 1/2 hours of debate and six failed amendments to weaken the bill.

The change has been long sought by the nurses and opposed by doctors, though a April 30 agreement between the two parties smoothed the way for the bill, which passed 119-13. The Senate version passed unanimously May 1.

The change allows most of the state's 6,000 or so advanced practice nurses to work without a collaborative agreement with a doctor. Advocates say it will spur these nurses to open private practices in outstate Minnesota.

Because the House passed the Senate version of the bill, it can go straight to the governor.

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Parents: Bumper ride 'not a stunt'

Mankato man remains critical

By Tim Krohn
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MANKATO — The parents of a college student critically injured after falling off the bumper of a bus issued a statement saying he did not climb on the bus as a stunt but because the bus was full and he could not get in it.

"Dylan made two attempts to board the 'sober

bus.' Unfortunately, the bus was full. His attempt to ride on the back of the bus was not a stunt — it was an effort to get home," said the statement from Paul and Troy Smyth, father and mother of 21-year-old Dylan Smyth.

Smyth received serious head injuries after falling from the bus near downtown Mankato at about 2:30 a.m. Sunday. The bus carries students from the

downtown bar area to housing at and near Minnesota State University. He remained in critical condition Thursday.

Cmdr. Jeremy Clifton of the Mankato Department of Public Safety said they can't confirm whether the bus was at capacity.

"However, attempts to ride on the outside of a vehicle just because a transit facility is at capacity is obviously not the way to conduct personal behavior," Clifton said. "It's

clear there would have been alternatives besides driving home."

He said their message is for those going out to celebrate have a plan in place ahead of time for getting home safely.

In their statement, the parents said their son made "a number of good decisions" that night, including not driving home.

"We are extremely grateful for the outpouring of support, positive thoughts and prayers we

have received during this difficult time. Dylan is a very strong and resilient young man. He is an accomplished student, and we are very proud of our son," said the statement released through Mayo Clinic Health System in Mankato.

The statement also commended the city for operating the Late Night Express bus service as well as the doctors, nurses and staff at the hospital.

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Digging in



From left, volunteers Tara Nelson, Mindi Hawks, Julia Carter, homeowner Sara Fjoser and Lowe's live nursery specialist Becky Beyer put the finishing touches on some landscaping around Fjoser's Habitat For Humanity home as part of National Women Build Week Thursday in Mankato.

Photo by Pat Christman

Mankato mayor elects to seek re-election

By Mark Fischenich
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MANKATO — Mayor Eric Anderson, who often remarks on the substantial impact of state and federal government decisions on Mankato, considered moving his name from the municipal part of the Nov. 4 ballot to the state House of Representatives when he files his candidacy late this month.

In the end, though, Anderson decided that his current office is the one he wants.

"I was evaluating some other options with respect to public office," Anderson said. "I knew I was going to run for something. I thought I was best served running for this in terms of what I could offer the public."

A Mankato native who grew up in Lake Crystal and has been a financial adviser in Mankato for more than two decades, Anderson is bullish on his city's future. But he's also worried — about demographic trends and a federal budget mess that could eventually curtail the grants and aid from Washington and St. Paul that the city has historically relied on.

"The underpinnings of our viability are not guaranteed," he said.

In 2010, Anderson advanced to the general election after narrowly finishing in the top two in an August primary election. In the primary, he won fewer than half the votes of first-place finisher John Brady, the incumbent mayor and a 14-year member of the council. But fewer than two weeks later, an extremely intoxicated Brady was arrested for drunken-driving in the Twin Cities after initially failing to pull over for police and hitting another vehicle before finally stopping.

Anderson easily won the general election. He talked little about Brady's personal problems, focusing instead on his financial acumen and his strong belief that higher levels of government have a huge impact on municipal government.

"And that's been verified in spades," he said.

But he's also come to realize the current City Council's options are limited

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Visit Mankato launches YouTube contest

MANKATO — People have a chance to make a YouTube video touting Mankato as a great place to visit and win \$2,500.

Visit Mankato announced the competition Thursday as it marked the 30th anniversary of the visitors bureau.

The Now Playing You

promotion is open to local residents and visitors. The maker of the first eligible video to hit 100,000 views will receive a \$2,500 check.

The contest aims to "have our own community members and visitors tell about their favorite places and experiences in Mankato," Anna Thill,

president of Visit Mankato, said in a press release.

"Most people base their travel decisions on recommendations," said the statement. "So we are just looking for a fun way to engage others in promoting this great destination."

"Videos must include #VisitMankatoMN

and must be posted to YouTube after May 8. Links of the videos should be emailed to Paige at pschuette@visitmankatomn.com to be entered into the contest," the press release said.

For a full, detailed list of contest rules visit www.visitmankatomn.com.

Signature staircase unveiled for Children's Museum

By Robb Murray
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MANKATO — When the Children's Museum of Southern Minnesota opens next year, no doubt one of the signature attractions will be the Tree of Forts Climber exhibit.

When that highly anticipated feature finally gets unveiled to the public — with forts and bridges and ropes and plenty of nooks and crannies for kids to get lost and learn in — it will have a signature staircase to go along with it.

Linder Enterprises,

a rather quietly internationally known Mankato company that produces high-end staircases, will construct a staircase that will start at the floor and spiral its way 28 feet to the top.

The company is donating design time and materials. The museum will pay roughly half of the estimated \$110,000 cost of the staircase. It will be built as one solid structure. Then, while the museum is under construction in June, the staircase will be dropped in with a crane.

Five unique forts will be sprinkled around the tree.

The staircase will have landings along its cork-screw-like route to allow access to those forts. And while the staircase can be used by anyone, its biggest gift of convenience may be to the parents.

Kids are likely to use a cargo net-lined vertical tunnel that will run from the bottom to the top of the exhibit. Their parents can take the less gymnastic staircase if they'd like.

Fundraising continues to go strong. Deb Johnson of the museum said they've raised about \$4.1 million so far, but they need another \$1 million to

complete the exhibits. The so-called Whiz Bang area aimed at older kids, for example, has little funds for exhibit creation.

The museum will have agriculture-related exhibits, a quarry exhibit, a community room for community gatherings or birthday parties, special entrance for school buses, etc.

Johnson said they're planning a soft opening for the end of the year and a grand opening next spring at the new site in the former city bus garage near Cub West.



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