

BRIEFS

Man killed on bicycle identified

MANKATO — Authorities have identified the man killed while bicycling on Highway 14 Sunday.

Ralph J. Polzin, 74, of North Mankato had been riding his bike westbound on the highway at about 7 p.m. when he made a left turn into the path of semi coming up behind him.

The driver of the semi was Dennis L. Harms, 46, of Mankato. He was not cited.

Business coalition to hold open house

MANKATO — Greater Mankato Growth, the combined chamber of commerce and economic development organization, is holding an open house this afternoon in its newly expanded offices in the building formerly called Technology Plus.

The city-owned building was recently renamed as the Greater Mankato Business Development Center.

The open house, which runs from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., will give the public the chance to tour the new offices and learn more about the organization. Refreshments will be served.

Greater Mankato Growth consolidated in the building on May 28 after a move from the Mankato Depot.

Paving rescheduled for Riverfront

MANKATO — Riverfront Drive, from Plum Street to Madison Avenue, is scheduled for street paving beginning Wednesday.

The road will remain open but motorists may experience delays and various lane closures. Street paving is expected to be complete next week, weather permitting.

For more information, contact Mankato's Engineering Department at 507-387-8634.

Freedom School gets Mankato Clinic grant

MANKATO — Mankato Area Public Schools' Central Freedom School is receiving a \$5,000 grant from the Mankato Clinic Foundation.

The money will go toward operating costs of the Central Freedom School, which is a year-round high school program serving referred students who are in recovery from chemical dependency.

The Mankato Clinic Foundation provides resources to organizations and endeavors that effectively promote and improve community health and wellness.

—The Free Press

Topsoil moisture is holding steady

ST. PAUL — Topsoil moisture held steady last week as rain fell across central and northern Minnesota.

In its weekly crop progress and condition report for the state on Monday, the U.S.

Department of Agriculture says precipitation from last Tuesday's thunderstorms varied from under 1/2 inch to over 3 inches.

Sixty-one percent of the state has adequate to surplus topsoil moisture, up from 60 percent last week.

High temperatures were generally 5 to 10 degrees below normal. Statewide, there were 5.5 days suitable for fieldwork.

—The Associated Press

North Kato council gives in to DNR

City attorney says resistance to aquifer study is futile

By Mark Fischenich
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NORTH MANKATO — You can fight City Hall, if you're the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and you're willing to play hard ball.

That was the unanimous conclusion by the North Mankato City Council

Monday night after City Attorney Mike Kennedy advised council members that they were destined to lose if they continued to resist joining a DNR study of the Mt. Simon aquifer.

"I think they would likely prevail," Kennedy said.

The dispute was over whether North Mankato was required to join the Mankato

Area Mt. Simon Monitoring Project and immediately pay \$4,600, with additional costs likely in future years.

After six other nearby cities and large commercial water users signed up and paid up, North Mankato was the last holdout — viewing the DNR study as an unfunded mandate, an open-ended financial commitment and duplicative of other studies being done of the aquifer.

Then came a June 29 letter from DNR Regional Hydrologist Skip Wright to

Mayor Gary Zellmer and Kennedy's subsequent analysis of state law. Wright's letter stated that the DNR wasn't going to force North Mankato to join the group but would instead amend the city's water permit to require the city to drill a monitoring well and supply monthly data reports about water levels in the aquifer.

The 850-foot well would need to be in place by the end of the year under the DNR order.

"It could easily be 50,000

bucks," City Administrator Wendell Sande said of the cost of providing the well.

And state law seems to give the DNR the authority to amend the city's permit — required for the city to remove water for municipal purposes — to force the installation of the monitoring well, Kennedy said.

"They want our money," said Kennedy, calling the DNR's approach "very heavy-handed."

Please see AQUIFER, Page B3



Photos by John Gross

Meg Cabot is the best-selling author of "Princess Diaries," which was recently adapted for cinema. She spoke Monday about the impact of the Maud Hart Lovelace's books on her career as the culminating event of the Betsy-Tacy Convention.

Authorized

By Tanner Kent
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Best-selling writer pays tribute to Mankato's Maud Hart Lovelace

MANKATO — With an elbow propped casually on the podium and her brow turned up in slight suggestion, Meg Cabot — the witty and wry best-selling author of "Princess Diaries" — picked up a copy of Maud Hart Lovelace's "Betsy and Joe" and cautioned thus:

"There aren't any young children in the room are there?"

After a burst of laughter from the large crowd of mostly middle-age and pre-teen women, Cabot read one of the most beloved — and steamiest — scenes from one of Lovelace's enduring Betsy-Tacy books.

Some in the crowd had spent the weekend in Mankato celebrating the Betsy-Tacy Convention and already knew the words by heart. They whispered in synch with Cabot, who read the scene in which Joe and Betsy share their first kiss in Willard's Emporium, the same place they first met several years — and several books — earlier.

After the kiss, the scene continues with Betsy reflecting she'd enjoyed the moment more than anticipated. She'd never been interested in kissing "this boy or that boy, especially when it didn't

Please see CABOT, Page B2



After three days in Deep Valley, the Betsy-Tacy Convention came to an end Monday with Meg Cabot's keynote address. After the talk, Cabot answered questions and signed copies of her books.

Health care forum in Mankato tonight

By Mark Fischenich
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If You Go

What: Health Care Reform forum

Sponsors: Mankato Health Care Reform and the League of Women Voters

When: 7 p.m. today

What: Showing of PBS documentary "Sick Around the World".

Where: Heritage Room, South Central College, North Mankato.

NORTH MANKATO — The health care reform debate going on in Washington, D.C., and on the airwaves across the nation is coming to North Mankato tonight.

Mankato Health Care Reform and the local League of Women Voters are sponsoring a forum at 7 p.m. at South Central College on the American health care system and proposals to improve it. The forum, free and open to the public, comes as the U.S. House and Senate are constructing reform legislation. President Barack Obama is pushing for swift passage and opponents are attempting to block major changes.

TV and radio commercials by opponents and supporters of the reform effort also are being aired in select parts of the country.

"It's definitely crunch time," said Mark Friedman, a coordinator for Mankato Health Care Reform. "It's certainly a time to be vocal, and we want to be influencing the process as much as we can as citizens."

Several members of the group support a single-payer health care system, while others support a public insurance option to

compete with private insurers, Friedman said. But anyone interested in the topic, including those opposed to any additional government involvement in health care, are invited to tonight's event.

The group will be showing the PBS Frontline documentary "Sick Around the World" at 7 p.m. in the Heritage Room at SCC, followed by a panel discussion that will include questions from the audience.

The one-hour documentary, first aired in 2008, compares the health care systems in five capitalist democracies — the United Kingdom, Japan, Germany, Taiwan and Switzerland.

Friedman said the documentary drives home the fact that, as difficult as it's been for the United States to reach consensus on

Please see FORUM, Page B3

A life remembered

Pastor Polzin supportive soul and 'great leader'

By Brian Ojanpa
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Pastor Ralph Polzin was struck and killed Sunday while bicycling on Highway 14.

NORTH MANKATO — The Rev. Luke Myslik was working Monday on the sermon he'll deliver at the funeral of a retired colleague.

Myslik, a pastor at Trinity Evangelical Lutheran in Nicollet, said although the talking points were still in formative stage, one trait about the late pastor Ralph Polzin was clear:

"The greatest thing about him was his dedication to his Lord," Myslik said of the 74-year-old Polzin, who died Sunday when he was struck by a semi while bicycling on Highway 14 near his North Mankato home.

Polzin, a Milwaukee native, became the minister of Trinity Lutheran in 1967 and served there in that capacity until his retirement in 2001.

In recent years he

enjoyed bicycling and working in various volunteer roles at Minnesota Valley Lutheran High School in New Ulm, which his grandchildren attended.

"He'd take tickets at sports events and help with mailings. He was always very supportive of the school. He just loved it," Minnesota Valley Principal Tim Plath said.

Longtime Trinity parishioner Dorothy Rosin said as a clergyman Polzin was workmanlike in the pulpit.

"I won't say he was bad and I won't say he was good. He was just Pastor

Please see POLZIN, Page B2

Jean Sonnek

Jean Ann Sonnek, 82, of Wells died Monday, July 20, 2009, at her home. Services are 10:30 a.m. Thursday at St. Casimir Catholic Church in Wells, with burial in St. Casimir Cemetery. Visitation is from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. Wednesday at Bruss-Heitner Funeral Home in Wells, and one hour prior to services Thursday at the church.

Woman found dead in Steele County pond

O W A T O N N A — Authorities are investigating the death of a woman who was found floating face down in a private pond in Steele County in southern Minnesota.

Steele County Sheriff Gary Ringhofer said the body of 59-year-old Susan Frette of rural Steele County was recovered about 4 p.m. Sunday in Aurora Township.

—*The Associated Press*

Online

The Free Press now publishes full obituaries online as well as information on daily funeral services.

Go to www.mankatofreepress.com

