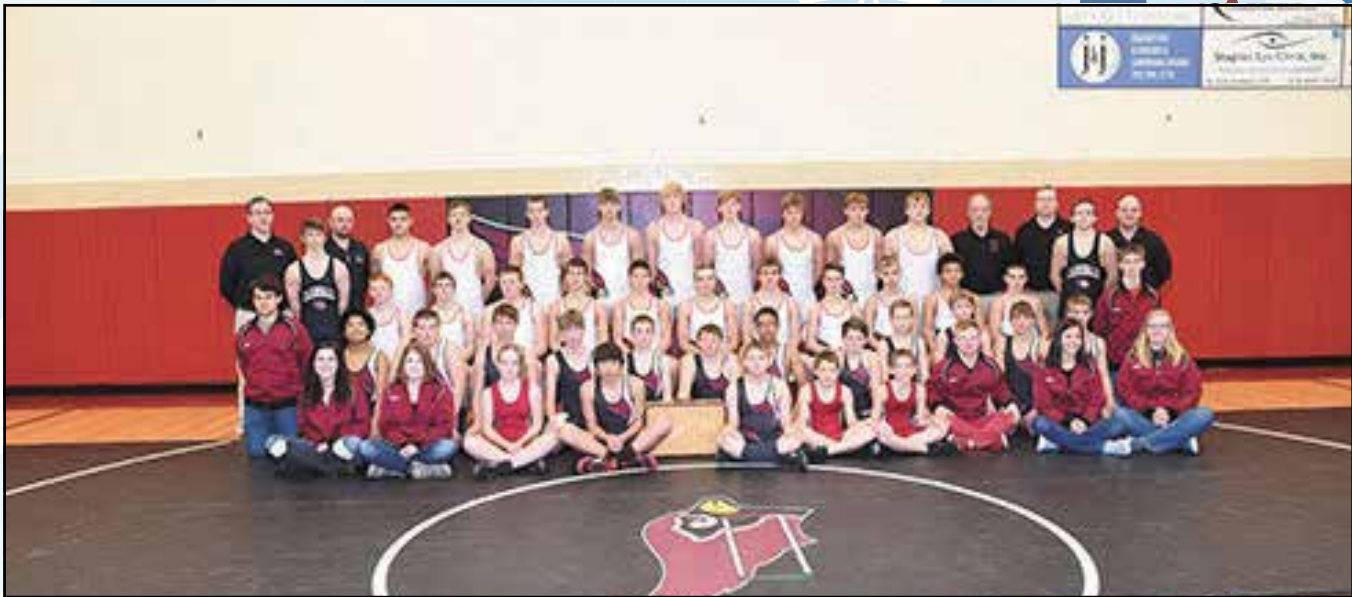


Salute to Staples Motley Winter Sports Teams



Cardinal Girl's Basketball

Front row: Kaitlyn Longworth, Jenna Trantina, Lexi Johnson, Amber Robben, Ashley Smith, Chelsea Nanik, Kelsie Weite, Sam Schimpp.
Back: Coach Craig Wolhowe, Kearra Mikel, Allison Cushing, Emma Gerard, Kiera Dumpprope, Claire Wolhowe, Katie Smith, Alix Peterson, Kiara Storry, Assistant Coach Nick Doll, Assistant Coach Brian Smith.



Cardinal Wrestling

Front Row: Kylee Smith, Shelby Brusewitz, Jayma Lawson, Gilberto Torrenes, Taylor Runge, Jason Trantina, Chase Mikel, Gaven Christensen, Brittney Lisson, Taylor Heldman. Second row: Jack Adamietz, Gordon Enyart, Caleb Jasmer, Mason Nyhus, Mitch Lisson, Dalton Wells, Hunter Carlson, Alex Ross-Bahn, Taylor Serich, Payton Bjerga, Kristian Thompson, Nate Nyhus, Logen Weite, Ryan Gerard.
Third row: Owen Bjerga, Blake Gerard, John Statema, Eric Lisson, Cade Schmidt, Brandon Szymkowiak, Matt Miller, Spencer Miller, Brayden Christensen, Jasiah Paskewitz, Blayne Dumpprope.
Third Row: Coach Steve Jennissen, Charles Woodwich, Coach Derek Holst, Nathaniel Rodrigues, Shaine Guggenberger, James Ehresman, Jonathan Lisson, Cameron Bendson, Isaac Swendsrud, Braden Tyrell, Alex Erpelding, Kyle Serich, Coach Dave Anglin, Coach Darren Heldman, Jack Tyrell, Coach Jim Miller



Cardinal Boy's Basketball

Front row: Reid Busker, Trey Skeesick, Mason Rychner, Gavin Smith, Jack Fietek, Hunter Carlson, Travis Eisel
Back row: Head Coach Micheal Poncelet, Derek Kennedy, Bentley Christiansen, Jorge Khalil, Ben Bartczak, Deavon Olsen, Chase Davis, Zach Demars, Jordon Carlson, Brayden Losh, Del Eckman, Max Giza, Zac Carlson, Isaiah Ross-Bahn, Scout Strickland, Lukas Schmeig, Assistant Coach Bruce Fuhrman



These area businesses offer their support and congratulations to the athletic achievements exemplified by the Cardinal fall sports teams:

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of Staples, Inc.
Northwind Grocery
Hillyard Supply Company
Staples-Motley Community
Education

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Unity Bank
SuperAmerica
Wayne's Electric of Staples
Countryside Restaurant
Ideal Construction Company
First International Bank & Trust
Jon's Family Foods, Staples
Brenny Funeral Chapel
Central Building Supply
Busker Concrete
Midwest Family Eye Center
Ernie's Food Market
Trident Seafoods
Staples World

Staples Precision Metalcraft
Tower Pizza
Giza Plumbing & Heating
Orton's Staples Food Mart
Motley Dairy Queen
BRICKS Travel Center
Precision Polishing and Plating, Inc.
Staples ACE Hardware
Nyhus Chev/Buick, Inc
Mayer, Porter & Nelson, Ltd., CPAs
Longbella Drug
Dan Orth,
dba Kuhn Insurance Agency
Staples True Value
LMH Embroidery



Two bunny hugs

Carsyn Richer, right and sister Payton Richer, left, colored Easter cards for the Easter bunny at the Easter Eggstravaganza and got an Easter Bunny hug.



Coloring bags for treats

Rita Stone, right, and Joann Schornack hand out Easter treat bags as children, parents, grandparents and guardians entered the Staples Community Center for the Easter Eggstravaganza April 8 sponsored by the Staples '93 Lions. Page Lenk (far left) hands Libby Mumm her coloring bag. In back Addison Holst chooses a bag.

Staples World photos by
Janice Winter



Face painting

'93 Lion Beth Gedde paints a yellow duckling on Jay Nelson's cheek.

Staples '93 Lions Easter Eggstravaganza



Funny bunny faces

Brothers are fun... and little sisters are cute. Ethan and Eli Bounds smile as they pose with their painted faces, while sister Emily has to think about it.



Game and activity stations

Children had their choice of game and activity stations including coloring, bean bag toss, basketball, the fire dog bouncy house, coloring, mini golf and more. Above: Children make foam bunny decorations.



Easter bunny greetings

When the bunny shows itself, it's time to hunt for Easter eggs. Little ones were given treats from the big white bunny at Central Lakes College-Staples April 8. Families had the opportunity to have pictures taken with the Easter bunny.



Bunny patrol

CLC student volunteers wearing their bunny ear, center, were on "Bunny Patrol" as they made the rounds hiding Easter eggs filled with treats.



The real deal, a real bunny

Lamanda Nurnberger, CLC student, holds her daughter, Lylanne Nurnberger as she pets Remington, a bunny visiting Central Lakes College-Staples during the Easter egg hunt held April 8. Gabby Carpenter, right, CLC student, brought baby bunnies to the event.

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ALL TWEC members are invited to join us at our
ANNUAL MEETING and DINNER
Thursday, April 20 at Memorial Auditorium in Wadena
4:30: Registration/Bingo
5:30: Annual Meeting
6:30: Member Dinner
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Saturday, April 15, 2017

SALE TIME: 10 A.M. RESTROOMS LUNCH AVAILABLE

As I have sold my home and moved to assisted living, I will sell the following items:

LAWN, SHOP, TOOLS, ETC.
20 hp 50" Prestige: one with snow blower, weights & chains, high back chair, one with mower, one is 10 yrs. old (approx.) both nice!
Scott's Lawn spreaders
22" Lawn Chief push mower, 5 hp
Upright air compressor, Puma 2 hp
4.5 21" MTD push snowblower
Century 215 welder
8" bench vice
Come-a-longs
LP Thermos BBQ grill
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Gas cans
Sachs Dolmar 16" chainsaw
115,000 lbs. Master Nipco fuel heater
Makita chop saw, 12" - 14"
10" Craftsman table saw
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HOUSEHOLD AND MISC.
2-wheel trailer w/ramp, 6-1/2' W X 10' L
wood floor, wood sides, good cond.
1/2" electric impact
Nuts, bolts & nails
HomeLite leaf blower
2 burner Coleman stove
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Fishing poles & tackle
New Rhino boots, sz. 11
North Star power washer
2-stack tool boxes, 10-drawer on wheels
New, in box: Drill bits, hole saws & wood bits (set)
New wood lot set
Misc. WD-40 & oil
Frigidaire, 17 cf working refrigerator
Old dressers
3 old trunks
Salt & pepper shakers
Rocking chair with footstool
Misc. old chairs, lawn chairs
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Erwin Schneider

HOUSEHOLD AND MISC.
Nice rocking chairs
Book shelves, TV cabinet, 3 TVs
End tables
Computer desk
Whirlpool chest freezer, 7 ft
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Kitty vacuum w/attachments
Hoover Floor Mate
Lawn chairs
Blue Ribbon plcher
Linens, rugs, towels
Some colored glass
Lots of kitchen items
Salt & pepper shakers
Chef Choice knife sharpener
CDs, 8-tracks, VCRs
Christmas knick-knacks
VHS Sylvania & DVD player
Dolls, some toys
Antiques & collectibles

Some McCoy pieces

Mikasa China Set,
very nice
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Comfort Chair

Many more items too numerous to mention!

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Let the egg hunt begin.....

Eggs, Eggs, Eggs almost everywhere - on the lawn, by the CLC sign, in the trees....

CLC Easter Egg hunt

Staples World photos by
Janice Winter



Search is on

Let the search begin. Children were divided into age categories for the Easter Egg hunt at CLC Staples with younger ones inside and older ones outside. Activity stations were set up in the commons area for the kids.



Jam session following the contest

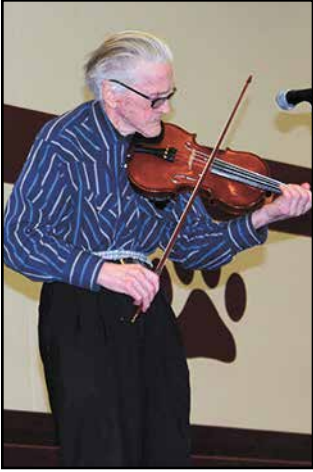
Fiddlers of all ages joined together at the end of the Pillager Fiddler's Contest April 8, playing a few well-known tunes including, "Cripple Creek." Pictured at far right, Harold (Butch) Hines of Pillager accompanied

the group with his guitar. At far left is musician Doug Spartz, Pine River, who provided entertainment prior to the contest and also served as emcee for the evening. (Staples World photos by Dawn Timbs)



Winning fiddlers

Pictured above is nine-year-old Abigail Carey of Farmington who took first place in her age group at the Pillager Fiddler's Contest. Below is 93-year-old Per Ostigaard who took second place in his age group.



Fiddlers from nine to 93 competed in Pillager

By Dawn Timbs
Staples World reporter

Fifteen fiddlers took the stage at Pillager High School April 8, competing for cash prizes at the 33rd Annual Fiddler's Contest. Gilmore Lee of Maple Plain was named this year's "Fiddler of the Year."

The fiddlers ranged in age from nine - 93 and hailed from towns across Minnesota, North Dakota and Wisconsin. They played a variety of tunes, including, "Cripple Creek," "Blackberry Blossom," "Ramona Waltz" and "Ashokan Farewell."

Americana recording artist Doug Spartz of Pine River provided entertain-

ment prior to the contest and also served as emcee for the evening.

Winners in each age category are listed below:

- Ages 7 - 13: Abigail Carey, Farmington, 1st; Sam Smith, Fargo, N.D., 2nd; Michael Trumble, Alexandria, 3rd.
- Ages 14 - 19: Molly Trumble, Alexandria, 1st; Amanda Trumble, Alexandria, 2nd; Abigail Inlow, River Falls, Wis., 3rd.
- Ages 64 - 74: Frances Mendenhall, Minneapolis, 1st; Fran Gack, Akeley, 2nd; Lee Cowen, Oak Grove, 3rd.
- Ages 75-plus: Gilmore Lee, Maple Plain, 1st and Fiddler of the Year; Per Ostigaard, Hoffman, 2nd.

Les Fundine is 'Pillager Citizen of the Year'

'He painted the town red,' says Mayor Bret Mattheisen

By Dawn Timbs,
Staples World reporter

Les Fundine has been named the "Pillager Citizen of the Year" for 2017.

The award was presented to Fundine April 8, at the Pillager Fiddler's Contest, by Pillager Mayor Bret Mattheisen.

In his introduction, the mayor noted that Fundine has been described as "the best neighbor you could hope for." He's the sort of person who volunteers to shovel numerous sidewalks in town each winter; and on his own hand-painted at least 65 fire hydrants throughout Pillager after noticing they needed attention. "He painted the town red," Mayor Mattheisen said.

"I really appreciate the thought," Fundine said later about the award, adding that it came as a shock to hear his name called. "There are a lot of deserving people in our town that

volunteer their services...I just wanted to do my part."

Pillager is near and dear to his heart, Fundine said.

"I was born and raised here," he shared, going on to say that except for three years spent working in the Twin Cities area and a short stint in Brainerd, he has lived his entire life in Pillager. "It's a great place."

"We moved into town when I was five years old," Fundine said, adding that his parents had owned a farm prior to that time. He attended school in Pillager, graduating in 1971.

While in Brainerd, Les met his future wife, Karen, a Perham native. After marrying, they went on to have three children, Patrick, Shawn and JoAnn, all of whom were raised in Pillager. The Fundine family has been active members at the First Lutheran Church in Pillager.

Les was a member of the Pillager Fire Department for 35 years. "I re-

tired two years ago," he said. In addition to serving as a firefighter, Les held the title of Assistant Chief for 25 years.

For the majority of his working career, Les was employed with the Crow Wing County Highway Department. "I was a mechanic in the highway maintenance department."

He retired a few years ago and has been enjoying spending more time with his family. Les and Karen have one granddaughter, Mara; and two step-grandchildren, Anthony and Maddie.

You can also find Les swapping stories over coffee with pals at the local cafe; and deer hunting each fall. In addition, he walks a few miles every day, which gives him the opportunity to catch up with people around town and see where he might be able to lend a hand.



National anthem sung

Pillager Fair board volunteers Miranda Otslund (left) and Norah Kilchesky led the audience in singing the national anthem prior to the start of the Pillager Fiddler's Contest April 8. Pictured in background is fair board member Jennifer Paananen.

Man struck and killed by train in Morrison County

A 35-year-old old Sauk Centre man is dead after he was struck by a train in Cushing Township in the early morning of April 5.

The incident happened near Hwy 10 and 60th Ave. at approximately 3:14 a.m., according to the Morrison County Sheriff's Office.

Authorities say the Bur-

lington Northern Santa Fe train was traveling north when it struck the man, who was identified as Kyle Schiltz. He was pronounced dead at the scene.

The Morrison County Sheriff's Office continues to investigate the cause of this accident.



Accepting his award

Les Fundine (left) thanked the Pillager Fair Board after being named '2017 Citizen of the Year' for the City of Pillager. Also pictured is Pillager Mayor Bret Mattheisen who presented Fundine with his award at the Fiddler's Contest in Pillager April 8. (Staples World photo by Dawn Timbs)

Terrence Brisk murder investigation continues

Morrison County Sheriff Shawn Larsen reports that the homicide investigation into the death of Terrence "Terry" Brisk

which occurred on Nov. 7, 2016, is still active and the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) continues to assist their office in the

investigation.

Larsen stated that starting early next week there will be a heavier police presence northwest of the

intersection of Hawthorne Road and Jewel Road in Belle Prairie Township. Investigators will continue to canvas the property looking for anything that may pertain to the homicide investigation.

Sheriff Larsen states that there is still a \$30,000 reward for information that leads to the identification of the person who shot and killed Terrance Brisk.

Larsen states that their office continues to work this case diligently and they will not give up until the suspect is apprehended.

If you have any information regarding this case you can report it and stay anonymous by either contacting the Morrison County Sheriff's Office at 320-632-9233 or by contacting Crime Stoppers of Minnesota.

Crime Stoppers can be contacted at their website www.CrimeStoppersMn.org; by calling the toll-free number 1-800-222-TIPS (8477) from anywhere in Minnesota; by installing the Submit a Tip APP on any Smartphone; or by sending a text message beginning with TIP674 to CRIMES (274637). All contact with Crime Stoppers is anonymous.



Chief Smith visits the littlest Cardinals

Motley Police Chief Ron Smith stopped by the Motley Family Center recently, during Community Helpers Week. He is pictured with children enrolled in Little Cardinals Academy, Head Start, School Readiness and Early Childhood Special Education. Back row, from left: Claire Rutten, Logan Jares, Zoey Siemson, Brielle Mevisson, Hope Carlson,

Chief Smith, Ellie Decker, Zeva Kriesel, Shyanne Harrington, Isaac Norring, Gunner Vogt. Seated on Ground: Kiera Chenoweth, Aiven Sullivan, Aleese Dokken, Ethan Alexander, Libby Mumm, Madisyn Zetah, Lily Madsen, Noah Current, Malcolm Graffunder, Zander Kane-Hinkemeyer, Natalie Dumpprope. (Submitted photo)

Motley Police, Morrison Cty Sheriff's Office reports

Recent reports from the Motley Police Department (MPD) and the Morrison County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) included the following:

March 30 - April 5 - The MPD issued speeding citations to Thomas Sundahl, 77; Abigail Jokela, 21; Rebecca Keezer, 32; Michael Hino, 43; Christy Minoletti, 34; Daoqi Li, 22; Domonick Morman, 18; Michael Smith, 26; Dennis Johnson, 50; Carol Lewkowicz, 59; Kari Nielsen, 25; Kiah Ward, 21; Darrel Guggenberger, 63.

April 5 - The MPD issued a citation to a woman whose small child was not properly buckled in its car seat and was standing in the rear window of the back seat.

April 4 - The MPD issued a citation to Steven Guck, 41, for driving without a valid driver's license; and a citation to Russell Gorton, 72, for driving with a revoked license.

April 2 - Dawn Kostek called the MPD to report that she sold a necklace valued at \$7,000 to an online party in Tennessee for \$1,650. She was supposed to be paid through pay-pal but has since learned that it was a scam and she never received her money. Officer attempted to contact the buyer but has not heard back.

April 1 - The MPD spoke with a woman burning her garbage in a barrel at her residence near 38000 Hwy 10 in Motley. She told the officer she has been doing it for years and didn't know what else to do. Officer told her she needed to have a refuse service come and pick up her garbage. She was told that she would be cited if she was found to be burning garbage again.

April 1 - The MCSO spoke with a resident near the 100 block of 1st St. in Motley and gave her a verbal warning for disturbing the peace, as she was playing her music really loud.

March 30 - The MCSO received a report from Eldon and Karen Morey of Motley regarding a phone scam which resulted in their losing \$2,000. The party who called them claimed to be their grandson and that he needed money to get bailed out of jail. He asked them to go get two Target cards with \$1,000 on each of them and to call him back with the numbers. They spoke with the Target store and were told there was nothing they could do about it. The Moreys said they knew there was nothing the MCSO could do about it but they wanted it reported.



Cards take three firsts at indoor meet

The Staples-Motley track and field teams finished fourth in the Heart O' Lakes Conference meet held April 4 at Concordia College in Moorhead, the first meet of the season.

The girls team had two champions, Kira Sweeney in the 1,600 and Aleeah Halverson in the high jump. Emmet Anderson won the 3,200 meter run for the boys and Noah Han was second in the triple jump.

Team results

Girls results
Dilworth/Glyndon/Felton 157, Roseau 119, East Grand Forks 99, Staples-Motley 80, Park Christian 65, Barnesville 52
55 - 3. Amber Robben 8.19; 4. Jordan DeChaine 8.20; 14. Brooke Ferdon; 8.66; 22. Sydney Wallace 9.04; 29. Kassidy White 9.69
200 - 4. Robben 30.06; 5. DeChaine 30.17; 17. Larken Hirschey 31.95; 20. Halverson 32.46; 29. Libby O'Neil 34.25; 35. White 36.86

14. Hirschey 1:17; 18. Brooklyn Husinga 1:19
800 - 3. Kiera Dumpprope 2:46; 15. Mikayla Sauber 3:21
1,600 - 1. K. Sweeney 6:01; 3. Addison Lorber 6:08
3,200 - 4. Lorber 13:37; 5. Sweeney 13:38
4x200 - 7. Robben, Hirschey, Wallace, Ferdon 2:05
4x400 - 8. Dumpprope, Ferdon, Husinga, Halverson 5:01
4x800 - 5. Halverson, Kelsie Weite, Sauber, Dumpprope 12:02
High jump - 1. Halverson 4'6"; 6. Weite 4'4"; 14. DeChaine 4'0"
Long jump - 6. Robben 13'4"; 21. Ferdon 11'4"; 24. Heidi Lombard 10'9"; 25. Hirschey 10'8"; 26. O'Neil 10'8"
Triple jump - 12. DeChaine 27'1"

Shot put - 6. Tabetha Allen 27'8"; 10. Weite 25'8"; 19. Toni Brings 22'1"; 21. Hannah Dolezal 21'6"

Boys results
Dilworth/Glyndon/Felton 225, East Grand Forks 102, Roseau 93, Staples-Motley 81, Park Christian 38, Barnesville 23
55 - 4. Matt Miller 7.06; 9. Chase Davis 7.41; 11. Zac Carlson 7.45; 12. Cael Sams 7.47; 25. Logen Weite 7.91; 28. Jeff Sundstrum 8.03

200 - 9. Josh Lombard 26.30; 10. Davis 26.40; 12. Z. Carlson 26.70; 23. Jakob Sachopar 28.84; 26. Kristian Thompson 33.39
400 - 7. Mason Rychner 1:00; 9. Sundstrum 1:02; 14. Tristin Etzler 1:04; 15. Daniel Lozano 1:04; 16. Sachopar 1:05
800 - 9. Jack Tyrrell 2:32; 10. Sams 2:33; 12. Sundstrum 2:42
1,600 - 6. Bentley Christensen 5:25; 11. Isaac Christoffersen 5:40
3,200 - 1. E. Anderson 11:06; 3. Hunter Klimek 11:18; 7. Christoffersen 12:31
55 hurdles - 8. Jordan Carlson 10.97; 9. Scout Strickland 11.23
4x200 - 3. Davis, Matthew Fisher, Lozano, J. Carlson 1:45
4x400 - 3. Miller, Rychner, Z. Carlson, Lombard 4:01
4x800 - 3. Klimek, Christensen, Anderson, Tyrrell 9:48
High jump - 5. Davis 5'2"; 8. Weite 5'0"; 10. Lombard 5'0"
Pole vault - 9. Strickland 7'6"
Long jump - 3. N.Han 17'4"; 5. Rychner 17'0"; 6. Miller 16'11"; 12. Hunter Berggren 15'8"; 24. Thompson 12'9"

Triple jump - 2. Han 38'2"; 6. Fisher 34'8"7. Berggren 33'2"; 9. Lozano 29'3"
Shot put - 5. Berggren 40'6"; 19. Strickland 31'4"; 24. Etzler 27'6";

Cardinal baseball team picks up first win at tournament

The Staples-Motley baseball team won one and lost two at the Park Rapids Tournament April 7-8.

The Cardinals lost the opener 5-1 to Frazee, got an early lead against Nevis but then lost 14-6, then won their final game 15-5 against Cass Lake-Bena.

In the first game, the Cardinals struggled to score as they got four hits, by Reid Busker, Brayden Tyrrell, Brady Holub and Ben Olander. "We had plenty of opportunities, we

just could not get that extra hit," said Coach Mitch Anderson.

Trey Skeesick pitched six innings and gave up five runs with two strikeouts.

In the second games, Staples-Motley took a 3-1 lead but gave it back with errors in the next inning. Busker pitched four innings with James Ehresman and Tom Kossan pitching in relief. Tyrrell had two hits, including a triple, and three RBI. Busker had two hits

and two RBI.

In the final game, the Cardinals had 13 hits, helping them score 11 runs in the first three innings. Mason Nyhus collected three hits, while Busker, Isaac Swendsrud and Ehresman had two hits each. Every starter reached base at least once and were moved around to score.

Swendsrud pitched the first five innings, earning six strikeouts and allowing four runs.

Softball wins opener

The Staples-Motley girl's softball team played well in all phases of the game to win their season

opener April 10 at Aitkin with a 5-3 score.

"We're extremely pleased with the girls' performances," said Coach Bruce Onischuk. "We hit the ball and played very well defensively."

Jenna Trantina had two hits and one RBI, scoring twice. Lisa Kossan had

two hits, including a triple and one RBI. Sarah Kossan, two hits, including a double and two RBIs. Sam Schimpp had a double and scored one run. The team had 10 hits in the game.

Sarah Kossan was the winning pitcher, as the Cardinals allowed just five hits.

Bankruptcies hurt the whole sporting community

By Ray Gildow

The recent news that Gander Mountain, a St. Paul based company, is filing for bankruptcy is very alarming to those of us who work in the sporting industry. Gander Mountain has 162 stores in 27 states. Most stores have 20-30 full time employees and 20-30 seasonal and part-time employees. The company currently employs 1,280 full time employees. The plan is to close three stores in Minnesota, plus others, and to then put the company on the open market and look for a buyer.

Sports Authority, another national sporting goods chain, closed 450 stores last year and MC Sports, a 70-year-old privately held sporting good business also closed 66 stores last year, laying off 1,300 employees. There have been eight or nine smaller sporting goods retailers that have also filed for bankruptcy in the past two years. The trend may not be ending. Fourteen percent of all retail operations

being monitored in February, 2017, were deemed to be in distress. That report includes national brands like Sears and Kmart.

These traditional retail stores are running into major competition from emerging on-line powerhouse retailers like Amazon and Zappos as well as Cabela's and Bass Pro Shops, two businesses that are currently working on merging together.

The obvious impact of closing these stores is the loss of jobs for all the employees. The not so obvious impact is the loss of business for the long lines of manufacturers of the goods that are stocked in these stores. Can you imagine producing a line of fishing rods or rain coats and suddenly loosing 500 outlets for your products? There is no way to immediately recover from a loss of that magnitude. We see the loss of jobs at the store, we don't always realize there is a loss of jobs at the plants where they make the products.

Another impact in the

communities where these stores have been located is the loss of financial and product support for activities like golfing, fishing, hunting and water sports. Most of these companies have always been ready to help when community groups come to them for donations of dollars or equipment. That support will no longer be there through the on-line retail operations. Smaller retail businesses also help when they can but they typically just don't have the resources to make continuous donations on a large scale.

For those of us who work in the industry we have

seen this change coming for some time. On the fishing side, many of the old big name tackle companies are gone or have been sold and gone through name changes. The same is true for rod and reel companies. This trend is showing no signs of slowing down.

With all the bankruptcies, the sporting goods industry is experiencing the biggest change in modern history. It is not a good change but one that seems beyond the control of the average shopper. It is important to remember that we all lose whenever a sporting goods store is forced to close its doors.

In search of open water, and maybe some fish, too

Even a lifelong "Gopher" can take only so much of a Minnesota winter. It doesn't matter that the winter has been mild, or lacking in snow (a mixed blessing, to be sure). Winter is winter, with bare trees, bleak tones, dormant grass, and a depleted cast of birds and active wildlife. Enough is enough.

After months of this, some of us get to the point here we need an antidote to help us make it the rest of the way. For me that antidote is open water, and I decided to fill my own prescription and make an early expedition to find some. Find some, and even fish in it, if that were possible.

Along about this time of year, when many of the local lakes are still in the process of shedding their cover of steely, rapidly deteriorating ice, rivers and streams are ahead of the game. Sunlight and warm temperatures are not the only agents of melting. Moving water has the same effect.

In particular, I had in mind as my tonic the streams that wind their way through the bedrock of Northeastern Minnesota on their way to Lake Superior. While the general Minnesota fishing opener is still nearly six weeks away, an angler on "the Shore" can flex the muscles of his casting arm trying for several species of fish that call "Gitchee Gumee" home. In early spring several varieties of trout and salmon migrate up many of these streams. Their destination is gravel spawning beds, their mission to reproduce and perpetuate their kind; some more successfully than others.

As important as catching fish can sometimes seem, the attraction is as much about the chance to walk the banks of these scenic North Shore streams, listen to the roar of water tumbling and churning, and actually wade in the flow and feel its power. Wade, yes; but wade carefully in these rock-studded waters that from time to time have been known to sweep an incautious or unfortunate soul out into Lake Superior itself, where survival is anything but a good prospect.

Wade and pitch a plug, spinner, or fly into a likely place where a fish might be resting as it prepares to pit its own power against the stream's flow to reach the next resting place farther upstream.

Anyone who fails to appreciate the "getting there" part of an outdoor adventure is missing half the enjoyment. I am a morning person anyway, but I especially enjoy a trip that begins before dawn. I like to be on the road when the dark tunnel in the landscape that's lit only by my headlights gradually begins to take shape and form as light filters over the eastern horizon.

On this particular morning timing was especially important. As I headed due east, from another quadrant of the compass my son was heading north. We were to meet at an appointed place and time just north of Duluth. There, engineers in the employ of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources have created a protected harbor for launching Great Lakes-worthy fishing boats, with a breakwater capable of thwarting all but the most threatening waves that Lake Superior can deliver.

On this particular morning the big lake was on its best behavior; with gentle swells that didn't quite measure up to wave status, and barely disturbed the wakes of boats already trolling slowly offshore for lake trout and rainbows. We, however, had our sights set on a river beyond the next town, one where almost a year ago we were fortunate enough to land several steelhead.

Minnesota's steelhead are a migratory rainbow trout transplanted from the Pacific Coast to Lake Superior at the end of the 19th century. Instead of maturing in the salty Pacific Ocean as their forbears did, these transplants grow large feeding on smelt and herring and other forage fish in the fresh water of Lake Superior, and as adults swim up many of the Lake Superior tributaries to spawn.

Most make this spawning run in spring, when snowmelt fills streams that have been ice-covered or barely flowing. Water that melts and flows over warming earth, and rainfall, combine to raise stream temperature, which in turn triggers fish that are staging offshore to begin their ascent. Anglers such as my son and I hope to be there when they do.

=We drove north, past one popular river whose parking lot was nearly full with pickups and SUVs and automobiles, confirming to us that the river of my choosing might be less crowded. "Less crowded" was an understatement, for when we got there we pulled off into a roadside parking area entirely devoid of vehicles. It didn't take long to discover why. The stream where 11 months ago we had been successful was still icebound from bank to bank, upstream and down.

With as much precision as one can expect from the weather, the streams of the North Shore thaw and begin flowing from south to north. Meaning, there was no point in continuing northward. We began thinking "Plan B," and turned the vehicle's nose south again on Highway 61. As much as we love solitude, there are times in angling when that quality is elusive, and you have to tolerate company.

We spent the remainder of our fishing day on two different rivers, one large and brawling, the other small, twisting and hemmed in tightly by towering spruce, fir and pine. Narrow shelves of ice more than a foot in thickness still clung to the shorelines in places, reminding us how recently these streams had been icebound. Spring flows usually carry a load of soil from runoff, and the water we fished ranged in color from root beer to latte.

One thing the presence of other anglers can do is provide a barometer of fishing prospects. In the hours we spent fishing that day we found no one who had landed a steelhead. Those who most fit the description of old-time (other than myself) repeated the same diagnosis: water too cold to trigger the fish to leave Superior and begin their spawning run upstream. My son had several "taps" that could have been fish, but it's difficult to be sure when your weighted lures are invisible, and bouncing off stream-bottom rocks ranging in size from bowling balls to beer kegs. In the absence of proof to the contrary we like to think "fish," if for no other reason than it lifts spirits, and keeps you exploring possibilities.

Eventually, however, the towel must be thrown in, and the most persistent angler has to reluctantly utter the familiar words "next time." Which there will be; and soon, we hope.



Bowling champs

The 2016-17 Thursday Twilight League Champs at Wadena Bowling Lanes are, left to right: Deb Punt, Jackie Perius and Helen Leaderbrand of the Spectrum Marketing Team. (Submitted photo)

Time for spring pan fishing

By Ray Gildow

It is time to start thinking about pan fishing now that this strange winter is winding down. Most anglers can't wait to get out and find some open water to find a few pan fish! Even though the winter was fairly warm, it was still long, and jumping in the boat is just a great way to forget about it all.

When the ice first leaves our lakes and the water starts to warm up it is important to remember that many of the pan fish are still hanging around in the deeper water until the temperatures start heading towards that fifty-degree range along the shorelines. So, anglers who like to get out on the water as soon as the ice is gone will often have the best luck fishing in water that is twenty to thirty feet deep. That is often where the sunfish and crappies will still be hanging out waiting for that big warmup and the spring spawning activity. Vertical fishing at very slow speeds is usually the best technique for this type of fishing and fish at these depths are usually always seen on your locator screen. Fishing deep at this time of the year can be iffy, good one day and slow the next, but if the fish aren't in the shallows, they will still be hanging out in deeper water.

Once the water temperature starts to get close to the fifty degree range the pan fish will start migrating to shore structure. The crappies move in to spawn, the sunfish move in looking for food, and it is very common to catch them both in the same areas. The north side of most lakes warms up first and the areas that warm up the fastest are lakes with muddy bottoms. Look for fallen trees, bull rushes, old cattails and any other organic material along the edge of the lake. These areas attract pan fish food and pan fish.

I like to use three techniques to find fish. I use a #6 hook tipped with a crappie minnow or small plastic bait like a Puddle Jumper and hang it under a slip bobber. I also use a 1/32 oz. jig tipped with a minnow or small plastic bait and cast along the shoreline until I locate the fish. The third technique I use to search for pan fish is casting very small crankbaits. Crankbaits can be a very useful tool for locating where the schools of fish are and once you have found them you can slow down and fish the spot with bobbers or jigs. Crankbaits are also a great way to locate summer pan fish. This is a technique usually overlooked by most anglers.

Some of the very best pan fishing can be found on the smaller lakes located throughout the Midwest. It is also very important to remember that these lakes cannot sustain a lot of fishing pressure, just take what you need and enjoy a great meal.