



Community crowd gathers to help fight meth

Area law enforcement were among the nearly 200 people who attended in the meth forum, 'Not On My Block', held at CLC in Staples March 31. (Staples World photo by Mark Anderson)

Costs of meth explored by panel

By Mark Anderson
News Editor

Nearly 200 people came to a public forum, Meth: Not On My Block, to learn about the methamphetamine drug problem in the Staples area. The event was held March 31 at Central Lakes College in Staples.

Eight panelists discussed their experience in fighting meth crimes and meth addiction, but the forum started with Howard Weekley telling his story of addiction, much of which was in the March 31 Staples World. His story resonated with many of the panelists who spoke after Weekley, as they referred to portions of his story to make their points. It also resonated with the audience, who gave him a standing ovation when he was done speaking.

To start the panel forum, Staples Police Chief Melissa Birkholtz asked the audience to call in any suspicions they have. She said they record all tips from the public and do act on any information they

get. She praised the drug task forces she works with, including agents Don Burns and Jamie Pierson, who were also on the panel. "They are the unsung heroes, out working every day, trying to make our community safer," she said. "They work with people who are at their worst and help people work through the system."

Burns, with the Central Minnesota Drug and Violent Offender Task Force,

said he has seen meth grow in the area and talked about the heavy personal cost it is to people and their families. "It's the only drug I know that will make mothers leave their children," said Burns. He said the number of children being placed out of the home or with grandparents is "amazing."

Pearson, a member of the West Central Drug and Violent Offender Task Force, continued to tell about the effects of meth,

how people fall into unemployment and lose track of family and friends or start stealing from family and friends. He said a lot of the meth users fall into poverty. If they go to jail, taxpayers have to pay for their dental and health costs.

Wadena County Attorney Kyra Ladd said there is an uptick in child protection cases and babies being born addicted to meth. She said the counties need more foster care homes to place children.

"You or somebody you know has been affected by meth in some way, and you may not even know it," said Ladd.

Ladd said the drug task forces have helped with prosecuting drug cases, but the Wadena County Task Force was started through a grant and the county needs to find a way to keep it going when the grant runs out.

David Determan, Health Education Coordinator for Todd County Health and

Human Services, spoke about environmental costs such as hazardous chemicals in the air, food and water supply due to drugs.

He said a survey showed that less than one percent of Staples Motley High School students have tried meth, but those statistics are three years old and he thought it might rise slightly when the latest survey comes out.

Determan said that

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Staples Area Men's Chorus invited to perform at Carnegie Hall in 2017

By Brenda Halvorson
General Manager

Carnegie Hall in New York City - the Holy Grail for performance artists.

And where our very own Staples Area Men's Chorus will be performing Feb. 19, 2017.

Distinguished Concerts International New York (DCINY) invited the chorus at the recommendation of Dr. Lee Nelson of Wartburg College, Waverly, Iowa. Nelson and his college's men's chorus have participated in Real Men Sing!, an all inclusive annual festival for young male singers, initiated and organized by the Staples Area Men's Chorus (SAMC).

"The Staples Area Men's Chorus received this invitation because of the quality and high level of musicianship demonstrated by the singers as well as the exceptional recommendation given by Dr. Lee Nelson," said Dr. Johathan Griffith, Artistic

Director and Principal Conductor for DCINY. "It is quite an honor just to be invited to perform in New York. These wonderful musicians not only represent a high quality of music and education, but they also become ambassadors for the entire community. This is an event of extreme pride for everybody and deserving of the community's recognition and support."

DCINY tapped Nelson to conduct a Presidents Day weekend concert in the Isaac Stern Auditorium in Carnegie Hall. A 225-member male chorus will perform Randall Thompson's "Testament of Freedom" for men's voices, which is based on the words of Thomas Jefferson.

The SAMC members will join other male chorus members from around the world who have received personal invitations to be part of this event.

The singers will spend five days and four nights in



Concert director

Dr. Lee Nelson, right, discussed logistics with Stan Carlson at the 2009 Real Men Sing! event in Staples when Nelson was the guest conductor. Nelson will be directing Staples Area Men's Chorus members along with others in the all male chorus performing at Carnegie Hall in New York City. (Submitted photo)

New York City in preparation for their concert.

"The singers will spend approximately nine to ten hours in rehearsals over the five day residency," said Griffith. "Not all of the time is spent in rehearsals, since there is so much history and culture to see in New York City. However, the performance is the primary purpose for their visit to the city."

"The invitation to perform in the Distinguished Concerts International Concert in New York at Carnegie Hall has to be one of the most impressive statements of respect for our chorus that one could ever imagine," said Jerry Reck, president of SAMC. "Not only is it a testament for how we perform and prepare for our concerts but it is without question a tribute to our director, Steve Hoemberg, and what he has to offer in preparing us for a concert of this

See **CARNEGIE HALL** on page 3a

Wadena board pivots again on space solution

By Rin Porter
Wadena County reporter

At a special board meeting held April 1, the Wadena County Board of Commissioners changed their collective minds once again regarding its quest for additional county office space.

At the last special meeting about facilities needs, in March, the board voted to hire architecture firm BHH Partners, Perham, to

evaluate the empty Currie Building on 1st St SE, in Wadena across from the County Social Services/Workforce Center, to see whether the building could be remodeled at a reasonable cost for county offices. In addition, BHH was to update the plans it had produced several years ago for an Annex to be built just north of the courthouse on the county's property. BHH was to bring all this information to the county board in late April.

Instead, at the April 1 meeting, BHH architect Tony Stoll told the board that he had looked at the Currie Building briefly on March 31. He described the significant work that would need to be done to bring the building up to current building codes as well as prepare it for remodeling. The work would include a new roof, all new plumbing, heating, wiring, gutting the interior down to the studs and more. It would be a huge job.

On the other hand, putting up a new building on the courthouse grounds would allow the county to get exactly what was wanted to fit current space needs, and allow for further expansion in the next decade.

But if the county wants to build on the courthouse grounds, the county must obtain a variance from the City of Wadena to allow

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Thriving Communities invited public feedback

The Staples Thriving Communities Initiative (TCI) held a public input meeting on March 29, with Dan Frank of the Initiative Foundation facilitating the process.

The group of 74 participants helped shape the project goals for Staples in three areas: economics, quality of life and skilled workforce. Printed below

are the projects the participants suggested were the most important to start right away.

The next TCI core team meeting will be Thursday, April 14, from 5-7 p.m. at NJPA. The agenda for that meeting includes: celebrate and review the successful community meeting, refine recommendations for priority areas

and brainstorm task force members.

Economics

Most promising goals/projects:

- Housing Development Incentives/encouragement (affordable) (11)
- Cleanup and improve downtown, existing and new, fill spaces (10)
- Secure/develop more skilled manufacturing jobs (8)

- Encourage entrepreneurship, create a culture of Innovation, encourage start-ups (7)
- Develop and market incentives to businesses (5)
- Assist current businesses with efficiencies and growth (5)
- More retail and housing on south side and Motley (help bridge north

south gap) (4)

• Develop a community Identity and market the area to businesses and residents (4)

• Create a renovation organization to improve commercial and residential properties while teaching skilled trades (3)

• Encourage local employers to hire local See **TCI** on page 2a

Hello, Readers,

On April 6, 1982, in the Metrodome's first regular-season baseball game, the Minnesota Twins lose to the Seattle Mariners, 11-7.

Where in the World?

Feedlot expansion: **8A**
Crow Wing Currents: **9A**

Obituaries

Terri Abbas
Larry Bosen
Joshua Campbell
Alma Mammenga
James Sadusky
Dawn Thompson
Pamela Walton
Rob Widhalm
Frank Wolpert

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