

When Walking to the Mailbox Becomes the Hardest Part of Your Day, Something Has to Change.

If knee pain, numb feet, or fear of falling has quietly taken over your life — you're not imagining it. And you're not out of options.

It starts small.

You stop taking the stairs. You grab the cart at the grocery store — not because you need it for groceries, but because you need something to hold onto. You turn down the invitation to walk the lake with friends. You sit out when the grandkids want to play on the floor.

Nobody told you to stop doing these things. You just did. Because your knees hurt. Because your feet are numb. Because your balance isn't what it was. Because you're afraid of what happens if you fall.

And here's the part no one talks about: **you've probably already tried to fix it.**

Maybe your doctor prescribed Gabapentin for the tingling in your feet. Maybe you got a cortisone shot in your knee that helped for three weeks and then wore off. Maybe you did six weeks of physical therapy that didn't change anything. Maybe you were told the only real option left is knee replacement surgery — and you're not ready for that.

None of that means it's over.

What 450+ Patients in West Central Minnesota Have Discovered

At Accelerated Chiropractic & Natural Healing Center in Morris, MN, Dr. Randy Hamling and Dr. Christopher Wolner run two specialized programs that are changing the conversation about knee arthritis and peripheral neuropathy — without drugs, without injections, and without surgery.

The Knee Restoration Program uses advanced decompression technology and certified treatment protocols to restore function in arthritic knees — even knees that have been called “bone on bone.” A 64-year-old woman from Fergus Falls came in with decades of untreated knee arthritis, a 4/10 pain level, and one goal: keep up with her grandkids. Three months later, she reported **80% improvement on stairs** and rated her results “Excellent.”

She never had a single injection.

The Neuropathy Reversal Program combines shockwave therapy, cold laser, vibration therapy, and nutritional support to address the nerve damage itself — not just mask the symptoms. A woman in her early 80s from the Fergus Falls area came in with nearly half the sensation in her feet gone, the worst possible balance score, and a constant feeling like she was walking on a crumpled sock. Three months later, **her sensory loss dropped by up to 69%**, her balance score went from 10/10 (worst) to 3/10 (near normal), and the sock feeling was gone.

She had never received a single treatment for her neuropathy before walking through our door.

“I walked around Walmart without holding onto my cart. Unbelievable.” — Knee Restoration patient

Why Most Treatments Haven't Worked for You

The medications, the injections, the “wait and see” approach — they're designed to manage symptoms. They don't fix anything.

Gabapentin doesn't regenerate nerves. Cortisone doesn't rebuild cartilage. Physical therapy that isn't paired with the right protocols can only do so much.

Call today: (320) 585-7246

Dr. Hamling holds specialized certifications through ClinicMasters and is one of only 4 certified providers in Minnesota offering these protocols for knee restoration, neuropathy reversal, frozen shoulder, and plantar fasciitis. The equipment matters — but the protocols are what make the difference. Any clinic can buy a machine. Few know how to use it.

That's why patients drive 60, 75, even 90+ miles from Alexandria, Willmar, Fergus Falls, St. Cloud, and Little Falls. This program isn't available in most communities.

“My balance was so bad I was afraid to walk on uneven ground. After a few months of treatment I'm walking normally again. The testing they do shows you exactly what's happening — it's not guesswork.”

— Neuropathy patient, Fergus Falls area

“I didn't want to get out of bed in the morning because I knew those first steps were going to be excruciatingly painful. Now I can spend all day on my feet without pain.”

— Plantar fasciitis patient

“I was skeptical. My doctor said peripheral neuropathy just progresses. But the improvement in my balance alone has been worth every appointment. I haven't fallen since I started.”

— Neuropathy patient, Brainerd area

Wonder If This Could Work for You? Call and Ask.

You don't need to commit to anything. You don't need to know which program is right. You don't even need to be sure it's the right fit. **Just call.**

Our team can answer your questions, walk you through what to expect, and get you scheduled for a **\$79 assessment** — no obligation, no pressure. If we can help, we'll tell you. If we can't, we'll tell you that too.

Whether it's your knees, your feet, your balance, or the numbness that won't go away — **one phone call is all it takes to find out where you stand.**

(320) 585-7246

Mention “CANARY” when you call.

Limited to the first 10 readers who respond. We only accept a limited number of new mobility patients each month to ensure every person gets the time and attention the program requires.

Don't wait — call today.

Accelerated Chiropractic & Natural Healing Center
707 Atlantic Ave, Morris, MN 56267

Monday–Thursday: 8:00 AM – 5:30 PM | Friday: 8:00 AM – 12:30 PM

Want to learn more first? Visit acceleratedchiro.com — read real patient case studies, see how the programs work, and decide for yourself.

No drugs. No surgery. No injections.

Individual results may vary. Patient cases referenced reflect documented clinical outcomes and are anonymized to protect privacy. Accelerated Chiropractic & Natural Healing Center has served Morris and west central Minnesota since 2009. Specialized mobility programs available since 2022.

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News BRIEFS

Filing period opens May 19 to run for county conservation district supervisor

WAITE PARK — The filing period to run for the position of Stearns Conservation District board supervisor is open May 19 to June 2 in the Sauk Centre Herald coverage Area 1. Candidates are elected countywide but must reside in one of the supervisor districts on the ballot.

Area 1 is the northwest quadrant of Stearns County and includes the townships of Ashley, Sauk Centre, Melrose, Millwood, Raymond, Getty, Grove and Oak and the cities of Sauk Centre, Melrose, Meire Grove, Greenwald, New Munich, St. Rosa and Freeport.

SCD supervisors are elected to full four-year terms by the voters during general elections. The board meets monthly to discuss business, including conservation priorities, financial allocations to projects, coordination with other local units of government and state agencies, and legislative priorities. Supervisors do not receive a salary but do receive compensation for attending meetings and expense reimbursements.

Conservation districts are special purpose units of government that manage and lead conservation programs at the local level. Important programs and priorities of the SCD include soil health, water quality, wildlife habitat and protection, and other related resources.

An elected board of supervisors governs every SCD in Minnesota.

Highway 71 improvement order approved

City still open to local project feedback

BY BEN SONNEK
STAR PUBLICATIONS WRITER

During its May 6 meeting, the Sauk Centre City Council unanimously approved the improvement order on the first phase of the Highway 71 project. As it did so, though, council members made it clear the plans are open to suggestion and amendment, and the public can still ask questions and give their feedback.

The first phase of the Highway 71 project covers segments of Cass Street South, 9 1/2 Street South, Eighth Street South, Seventh Street South, Sixth Street South, Fifth Street South, Second Street South, Second Street North, Lake Street North, Linden Lane and the bypass road planned between First Street North and Morningview Road. Its estimated cost is about \$7.2 million.

In the meeting's public open forum, as well as at an April 29 public hearing, the council heard residents' questions about the Highway 71 project. At the forum, attendees mostly focused on the bypass road between First Street North and Morningview Road; concerns included road drainage, the creek in the area, traffic and assessments.

Mayor Warren Stone reassured residents that the road, intended mainly for emergency vehicles,

would be going around the area flood plain, and a culvert would be added for the creek; the road would also not be available — or desirable — for semitrailer traffic, even if paved in the future.

"Part of that road will be an assessment," Stone said.

In approving the improvement order, the council amended the project plan to keep the addition of a sidewalk on the north side of Second Street South between Main Street South and Oak Street South while not adding a sidewalk on the south side of the same stretch of road.

While the city is ready to work with residents, the council wants to have a stable plan in place and not create a cascade of issues that could affect other residents and businesses or push back the project entirely.

"Business owners want to focus on business, not whether or not something's going to change at the next meeting or the meeting after," council member Brad Kirckof said. "We've got to listen to their concerns as well."

With the order approved, the city engineer will complete the project's plans and specifications to prepare for the bidding phase, which is expected to occur around December; the council's guidance will be requested on various aspects of the project. Following bidding and the project commencement, there will be a public hearing on assessments before they are adopted.

The next city council meeting is 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, May 20, at Sauk Centre City Hall in Sauk Centre.

Additional information, meeting agendas and packets can be found on the city's website.

In other council news:

— Approved the CliftonLarsonAllen annual audited financial statement report for the city. The audit did not uncover any issues, and the only internal weaknesses identified were a lack of segregation of duties and financial reporting controls, both of which are common for cities of Sauk Centre's size.

— The Sauk Centre Park Board is looking into purchasing a pair of flagpoles, one for Sinclair Lewis Campground and the other for the Sinclair Lewis Park boat landing.

— The city has budgeted for repairs to the exterior of Sauk Centre City Hall, but because the contractor's bid for repairs came in over budget, an itemized quote is being requested so the building's most urgent needs can be addressed first.

— The Sauk Centre Policy Committee has reviewed the city's special assessment policy for potential revisions, especially in how sidewalks and stormwater fees are assessed. Committee members also reviewed other communities regarding assessment trends for public improvement projects.

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NOW thru JUNE 4 - Online only auction. 40 guns, fishing tackle, Eagle statues, misc., gun reloading equipment and supplies, adult magazine collections. Craig Stenglein. Ziemer/Hilbrands Auctions.

JUNE 12 thru JUNE 22 - June Online only Consignment Auction. Zielsdorf Auction and Real Estate Services.

JUNE 19 thru JUNE 29 - James E. "Jef" Fredine Estate Online Only auction. Classic cars, fish house, Kubota utility tractor, alum. utility trailer, dock, boatlift, lots of tools, shop decor, household items and more. Zielsdorf Auction and Real Estate Services.

SAT., JUNE 20 - Metal to Money auction. Farm equipment, motorcycles, 1949 Willy's Jeep, restored 1939 Gar-Wood boat, etc. Also retirement auction items of David and Kim Walsh. Hoffman, MN. Hanson Auctioneers, LLC.

TUES., JUNE 23 - 11 a.m. Virtual real estate auction. 10 acre building site. Hector, MN. Reginald and Deborah Schindler,

Seller. Henslin Auctioneers, LLC/Henslin Brothers Real Estate, LLC.

TUES., JUNE 23 - 6 p.m. Timed online Equipment Auction. JD tractor, Zero Turn mower, lawn mowers, self propelled swather, trailers, power and hand tools. Hector, MN. Reginald and Deborah Schindler, Seller. Henslin Auctioneers, LLC.

JULY 10 thru JULY 20 - Mark Peterson Farming & Excavation Retirement Online Only Auction. Full line of farm equipment along with full line of construction equipment. Zielsdorf Auction and Real Estate Services.

JULY 17 thru JULY 27 - Peter and Colleen Fank online only farm retirement auction. Complete line of well kept late farm equipment. Kerkhoven, MN. Zielsdorf Auction and Real Estate Services.

MON., JULY 27 - 10 a.m. Roland and Shirley Winter farm retirement. 2012 Case IH quadtrac 500, 2012 Case IH Magnum 180 FWA, Case IH 7120 combine, Case IH Patriot 3330 sprayer, White 8524 planter, entire line of

row crop equipment. Lynd, MN. Deutz Auctioneers.

JULY 24 thru AUG. 3 - Hjelle Farms online only auction. Barrett, MN. Tractors, campers, planters, vehicles, augers, tools, misc. Zielsdorf Auction and Real Estate Services.

TUES., JULY 28 - 10 a.m. Summer Timed Online Equipment Auction. Farm & Construction Equipment, Trucks, Trailers, Recreational Items and Much More (SW side) Renville Co. Fairgrounds, Bird Island, MN. Henslin Auctioneers, LLC/Henslin Brothers Real Estate, LLC.

JULY 31 thru AUGUST 10 - August Online only Consignment Auction. Zielsdorf Auction and Real Estate Services.

SAT., AUG. 1 - 9 a.m. Lake Lillian Fun Days annual auction. Lake Lillian, MN. Ice Castle fish houses and new merchandise. American Surplus & Mfg. seller. Henslin Auctioneers, LLC.

AUG. 14 thru AUG. 24 - Marlene (Clay) VanHorn liquidation online only auction. Saddles, miniature pony wagons, sleigh, postal wagon, Dances with Wolves Military Saddle, horse drawn equip., stamp collection, coins, antiques, vehicles, tools, gardening items, Western Theme Fountain and more. Zielsdorf Auction and Real Estate Services.

AUG. 14 thru AUG. 26 - Marlin and Phyllis Rieppel online auction. Appleton, MN. Tractors, vehicles, trailers, tools and much more. Zielsdorf Auction and Real Estate Services.

TUES., AUG. 18 - 10 a.m. Large late model John Deere timed online farm equipment auction. Pennock, MN. Ryan and Sarah Fosso, seller. Henslin Auctioneers, LLC

FRI., AUG. 28 - 10:30 a.m. Large live onsite and online bidding farm estate auction featuring: Tractors, planting and tillage equip., trailers, shop and power tools. Tim Duehn Estate, Hector, MN. Henslin Auctioneers, LLC/ Mid-American Auction Co.

AUCTION SALE

Sunday June 7, 2026 - Sale Time: 12:01 pm

Location: New Effington, SD - Ostby Auctioneering Building

Owners: Estate of James Kath & Others

This Sale Includes: 70+ Guns, Sporting, Vehicles, Motorcycles, UTVs, Boat, Toy Hauler, Forklift, Tools, Garage Items, Household, Collectible, Catering Equipment, Storage Containers & More!!



Auctioneers Note: We will be holding a very nice auction with a wide variety of items - Make plans to attend - Very Nice Items! For questions feel free to call Derek at (605) 949-2170.

www.midwestauctions.com/ostby

Real Estate/Personal Property Auction

Saturday June 6, 2026 - 10:30 AM

Location: 10288 470th Ave. Rosholt, SD

This Sale Includes: Household, Collectible, Sporting, Tractors, Trailers, Equipment, Trucks, Boats, Snowmobiles, Vehicles, Tools, Garage Items, & More!

REAL ESTATE (sells at 12 Noon)

10288 470th Ave. Rosholt, SD



Located just a few miles from I-29 is this 1 1/2 story home w/partially finished basement & attached two car cement floor insulated garage w/overhead doors & openers. The home has 4 bedrooms, 1 full bathroom, 3/4 bathroom, kitchen,

living room, mud room, & dining room. The home has been lived in recently but will need work! Also on the property is a 34'x48' Pole style building - it has a shop area with overhead door/opener along with a Hot Dawg LP furnace. Other Buildings on property include a 36'x50' cement block style hip roof barn w/all steel roof & cement floor, a 28'x32' cement block style hip roof barn w/all steel roof & cement floor, a single stall cement block style single car garage w/cement floor & overhead door, and a 12'x14' small shed w/cement floor. The property has 2 wells & its own septic system w/drain field. If looking to be in the country with 14.54+/- acres of land here is your opportunity - Make plans to bid/buy!!

Owners: the late Keith Church & Others



Auctioneers Note: Keith has passed away and his family has decided to hold a public auction on his items. Here is your opportunity to purchase a 14.5 acre farmyard along with many other items! If you have any questions, feel free to call Derek (auctioneer) at (605) 949-2170.

www.midwestauctions.com/ostby

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- Section 14 - Moyer Township, Swift County, MN
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2026 SCHEDULE

Sauk Centre Hay Auction Quality Tested
HAY AUCTIONS

PLEASE NOTE LOCATION FOR OUR HAY SALES

The Hay Sales will be held at Sauk Centre Hay Auction LLC office and auction site located from the intersection of I-94 and US Hwy. 71 at Sauk Centre, MN 1/2 miles south on US Hwy. 71 to Modern Farm Equipment, then 1/10 mile east on 408th Street to auction site. Signs will be posted.

Hay Sales Begin at 12:30 pm

Regular fall & winter schedule being the 1st & 3rd Thursdays of each month

Thursday, June 4, 2026
Thursday, June 18, 2026
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NEXT SALE

PSI POWER WASHERS - Power Washers Hot/Cold, Cabinet Parts Washers, Chemicals, Presoaks, Degreasers, Large Parts Inventory Shipped Same Day, On Site Service. Industrial, Commercial, Farm, Sales, Repair, and Rental. Call our Pennock, MN location. "The Guys That Work Great Under Pressure" 1-800-555-1677. C-tfnB

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WANTED TO BUY - Fats, Bull, Hamburger cows, also thin lame lump jaw, foundered cattle. Will pay cash on farm. 320-894-7175 C-tfnB

WANTED TO BUY - Dairy Cows and Heifers. Milking, open or bred. Will pay cash. 320-235-2664. C-tfnB

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REPRESENTATIVE SALES				FAT STEERS			
FEEDER BULLS				FEEDER BULLS			
Hawley	1	Char	285 1,650.00 H	Browerville	14	Blk	1483 260.50 C
Farwell	1	Rwf	325 1,500.00 H	Glenwood	7	Blk	1647 258.00 C
Hawley	4	Char	546 450.00 C	Browerville	1	Blk	1260 257.50 C
Norcross	5	Rwf	442 435.00 C	Frazee	1	Blk	1530 256.00 C
FEEDER HEIFERS				Morris	3	Blk	1436 256.00 C
Hawley	9	Char	520 460.00 C	Browerville	1	Blk	1515 255.00 C
Farwell	4	Blk	613 405.00 C	Ulen	4	Blk	1706 255.00 C
Farwell	1	Bwf	1070 242.50 C	Glenwood	3	Red	1603 253.50 C
SLAUGHTER COWS				Glenwood	1	Xbrd	1485 253.00 C
Neché ND	1	Blk	1540 187.00 C	Morris	5	Blk	1375 252.00 C
Glenwood	30	Red	1717 186.50 C	Neché ND	4	Blk	1486 250.00 C
Glenwood	30	Blk	1742 186.50 C	Frazee	3	Xbrd	1680 250.00 C
Glenwood	30	Red	1724 185.75 C	Menagha	4	Xbrd	1703 249.00 C
Neché ND	1	Blk	1500 183.00 C	Donnelly	1	Xbrd	1495 246.00 C
Glenwood	1	Blk	1530 182.50 C	Glenwood	1	Xbrd	1840 244.00 C
Glenwood	3	Blk	1506 182.00 C	Underwood	1	Xbrd	1625 244.00 C
Glenwood	7	Red	1455 179.00 C	Neché ND	1	Xbrd	1490 238.00 C
Rothsay	1	Blk	1890 178.00 C	Fergus Falls	1	Hol	1760 237.00 C
Farwell	1	Blk	1820 178.00 C	Glenwood	1	Hol	1700 235.00 C
Glenwood	4	Red	1426 176.00 C	Underwood	1	Hol	1705 234.00 C
Glenwood	3	Blk	1448 175.00 C	Glenwood	1	Xbrd	1760 234.00 C
Glenwood	2	Blk	1607 174.00 C	Glenwood	1	Xbrd	1600 233.00 C
Pelican Rapids	1	Bwf	1695 173.00 C	Underwood	1	Hol	1575 233.00 C
Glenwood	1	Blk	1590 171.00 C	Glenwood	1	Gray	1595 231.00 C
Brandon	1	Blk	1515 171.00 C	Brandon	1	Hol	1575 225.00 C
Glenwood	4	Red	1312 165.00 C	Donnelly	2	Xbrd	1952 223.00 C
Dalton	1	Red	1325 165.00 C	Brandon	1	Hol	1550 221.00 C
Hawley	1	Blk	1260 165.00 C	SLAUGHTER BULLS			
Pierz	1	Blk	1020 162.50 C	Hawley	1	Blk	1695 214.00 C
Farwell	1	Blk	2130 150.00 C	Wheaton	1	Blk	1760 204.00 C
Dalton	1	Blk	1200 150.00 C				
Brandon	1	Blk	1250 147.50 C				
Clitherall	1	Xbrd	1330 146.00 C				
Glenwood	6	Blk	1323 142.50 C				
Kensington	1	Blk	1240 142.00 C				
Dalton	1	Red	1275 135.00 C				
Glenwood	1	Holx	1235 132.50 C				
Clitherall	1	Xbrd	1390 130.00 C				
Glenwood	1	Blk	1205 130.00 C				
Glenwood	1	Holx	1205 120.00 C				
FAT HEIFERS							
Clarissa	3	Blk	1365 257.00 C				
Clarissa	1	Blk	1255 255.00 C				
Fergus Falls	1	Blk	1415 255.00 C				
Fergus Falls	1	Blk	1540 252.00 C				
Frazee	2	Red	1555 252.00 C				
Menagha	4	Xbrd	1765 248.00 C				
Browerville	11	Blk	1504 240.00 C				
Brandon	1	Bwf	1090 237.50 C				
Brandon	1	Bwf	1185 222.50 C				
Neché ND	1	Xbrd	1495 215.00 C				
Neché ND	1	Hol	1515 212.50 C				
Underwood	1	Hol	1700 212.50 C				
Glenwood	1	Hol	1555 202.50 C				
Fergus Falls	1	Xbrd	1805 200.00 C				
Neché ND	1	Xbrd	1550 195.00 C				
Frazee	1	Xbrd	1775 190.00 C				

Check our current market prices & upcoming sale dates at Fergus Falls Livestock Auction Market on our website:

www.salebarninfo.com FIND US ON FACEBOOK TOO!
We do take cattle all day on Monday from 8 a.m. - 10 p.m., all pens with hay and water. Buyer Commission is \$20 per head on cows, fats, and feeder cattle!
Note: We are discontinuing our sheep buying day for now. If you have large numbers of sheep or goats call Doug @ 218-689-0295

NOTICE: WE WILL BE STARTING OUR FEEDERS AT 11 A.M.

FEEDERS FROM 5-19-26			
Campbell	1	Red	1570 192.50 C
FEEDER BULLS			
Alberta	2	Blk	395 570.00 C
Alberta	6	Blk	568 460.00 C
Rothsay	2	Blk	670 390.00 C
Alberta	5	Blk	738 357.50 C
Erhard	1	Char	875 255.00 C
FEEDER HEIFERS			
Alberta	3	Blk	336 610.00 C
Alberta	7	Red	437 545.00 C
Rothsay	3	Blk	431 530.00 C
Moorhead	2	Red	455 515.00 C
Alexandria	2	Blk	467 510.00 C
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Alexandria	1	Red	580 390.00 C
Henning	1	Red	630 390.00 C
Alexandria	1	Blk	595 380.00 C
Moorhead	7	Red	707 370.00 C
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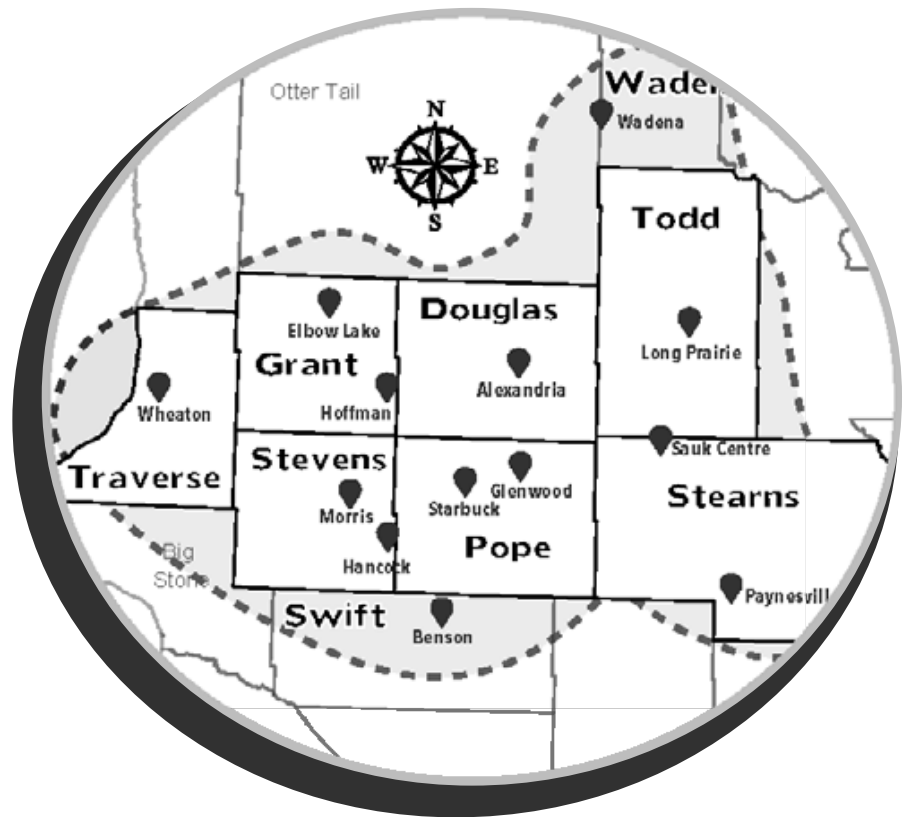


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Fighting for home

Downtown fire tests family, community

BY SHALON WILBER
STAR PUBLICATIONS
WRITER

Only a melted Lego piece and a small metal sign reading “Princess Street” remained in Matthew Brunko’s upstairs bedroom after a May 11 fire in downtown Sauk Centre. The rest of the room was blackened, soaked or gone.

The events of the late-night fire changed the landscape of downtown Sauk Centre. The corner of U.S. Highway 71 and Sinclair Lewis Avenue will see less foot traffic going in and out of the buildings for a while, but the tragedy also renewed a sense of neighborly community for many both directly and indirectly impacted by the fire.

In the aftermath, waterlogged drywall squished underfoot when walking in the hallway outside Brunko’s apartment. Smoke stained the walls in the apartment, and pieces of ceiling and insulation covered the floor. The room where Brunko normally slept sat directly beside where flames ripped through the roof of the building that houses El Mezcal.

Somehow, he and everyone else in the four apartment units survived.

Brunko had been sitting in the kitchen of the upstairs apartment owned by Travis Thom when he heard crackling outside and thought someone might be trying to get in through the rooftop deck. His bedroom window had been open.

His mother, Kim, could still hardly process it the next day while standing inside the damaged apartment she once called home.

Across the rooftop deck is the building owned by Derek and Jessica Essler.

In addition to renting to upstairs tenants, Jessica has run Jessica’s Shear Paradise, a beauty salon, since 2004. In addition, two of Jessica’s part time employees have worked in the salon for around 50 years, making the building feel like a home away from



PHOTO BY SHALON WILBER

Matthew Brunko stands inside his smoke- and water-damaged living room May 12 at his apartment in Sauk Centre. Brunko escaped the overnight downtown fire May 11 after hearing crackling noises coming from outside the building.

home, Jessica said.

Jessica said there has been incredible community support since the fire.

“I’ve been born and raised here,” she said. “I have loved Sauk Centre my entire life, more than anything.”

The night of the fire, the Esslers had been asleep for about half an hour when Derek, a member of the Sauk Centre Fire Department, said his fire pager began sounding.

Before dispatchers even gave the address, Derek knew something was different. Multiple departments were already being paged almost simultaneously.

“It was our tone, it was another tone, another tone, another tone,” Derek said. “It’s the first time I’d ever heard this.”

Then came the location. All the Esslers knew from the page was the fire was on the intersection where their building stood.

Jessica immediately called tenants upstairs while Derek raced toward Sauk Centre from their home near GreyStone Golf Club to join in the firefighting efforts.

As soon as he reached the stoplight downtown, Derek said he saw flames shooting from the neighboring building toward the apartments above his wife’s salon.

“I knew it was ours,” Derek said. “It was just a blur.”

When arriving on

the scene, Derek said he sprinted behind the building, searched apartments upstairs, then grabbed a hose line and concentrated the spraying water across his own building as flames blasted, in his words, “like a jet engine.”

In the front of the buildings, ladder trucks soaked the upper floor with thousands of gallons of water. Derek said the hose had such force, pieces of brick flew from the building.

When Jessica arrived downtown, her first priority was to check on tenants to account for everyone.

The upstairs apartment where Brunko lived was soaked and torn apart. The Esslers’

upstairs rental was heavily damaged. Below it, Shear Paradise sat filled with smoke and water damage, ceiling tiles collapsed onto the floor.

But by 8 a.m. the next morning, Jessica said support from the community had already started pouring in.

Business owners offered temporary workspaces. Friends showed up carrying boxes. Meals arrived at the Esslers’ home. Other salon owners cleared room so Jessica and her employees could continue working less than a week later.

“We have plenty of space if you need it,” Jessica said neighboring salon owners told her.

Jessica’s phone did

not stop going off the next morning. She said she had more than 125 Tuesday-morning messages of support.

The emergency was eye-opening, Derek said. He has spent 16 years responding to emergencies for others but never an emergency so personal.

“One of the hardest things as a fireman is watching owners stand there while you’re trying to save their building,” he said. “It’s different when it’s your own.”

Across the road, Palmer House Hotel, Restaurant & Pub owner Dave Schrader had been finishing up for the night when he smelled smoke and looked outside to see Main Street glowing

orange the night of the fire.

When recalling the events the next day, Schrader was overcome with emotion while looking out of his lobby window.

“It was amazing to see that there were communities from all around; ... I think we had five or six cities that came flying in here,” Schrader said. “You’re just watching everybody pull together.”

Schrader opened his doors immediately to assist those needing a place to stay, warm clothes and something to eat. He said it was hard to see the devastation because he was watching it happen to those who he considers his friends and neighbors.

“It’s tragic to see the impact it has on an area and the people that live in that area,” Schrader said. “You sit there and watch it, and there’s the fear of watching what’s happening and the devastation that’s going there and how it could be worse.”

Uncertainty exists, individuals and families are without homes, business owners are displaced, and building owners are left to pick up the pieces. But underneath the fear and emotion is a sense of determination shared by all, Schrader said.

In a fire that could have destroyed an entire block, everyone made it out alive — this, Schrader said, is a silver lining.



PHOTO SUBMITTED

Fire trucks line U.S. Highway 71 May 12 at the scene of a fire that started late May 11 in downtown Sauk Centre. Derek Essler, one of the responding firefighters, arrived at the scene ready to extinguish flames threatening the building he owns with Jessica, his wife.



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