

Austin Post-Bulletin

He used to play basketball
But now he likes sumo wrestling
» **B1**



THURSDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2012

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SNOW RETURNS IN BIG WAY



Linda Solis shovels her driveway before going to work on Thursday in Austin. For more updates throughout the day on the storm, visit AustinPB.com, and for a full weather forecast, turn to page A6.

BY JOHN WEISS
weiss@postbulletin.com

Southeastern Minnesota was socked with the first significant snowstorm in nearly two years this morning, leaving up to 10 inches of snow.

Most school districts in the region were closed or delayed, roads were slippery and event cancellations were widespread. The snowfall totals were highest in the far southeast, but Austin already had received had 7 inches by 7 a.m. today.

The National Weather Service in La Crosse, Wis., had been reporting for a few days that a nasty winter storm was heading our way, with each forecast sounding more ominous.

The service reported snow began falling in Rochester about midnight and has continued. Winds slowly shifted more to the north and, by 8 a.m., were gusting up to 32 mph.

If Rochester gets the 8 inches of snow the service predicts, it would be the heaviest snowfall since 15 inches fell Dec. 11, 2010.

As the storm wanes, winds will pick up, dropping visibility.

"This is a life-threatening storm," the service said. "Protect yourself and others by staying home. Significant blowing, drifting and whiteout conditions are expected. Road crews will not be able to keep up with the intense snow rates."

Heaviest snow was expected this morning and into the afternoon followed by whiteout conditions and drifts 2 to 4 feet high. Winds could gust up to 45 mph.

Nearly every school district was closed, except for Cannon

Accumulation

More than half a foot of snow has accumulated at 7 a.m. in much of the region, and snowfall was expected to continue until noon. Snowfall totals at 7 a.m., as reported by the National Weather Service at La Crosse, Wis.:

- Dodge Center, 5 inches
- Claremont, 4.3 inches
- Spring Valley, 6 inches
- La Crescent, 4 inches
- Lanesboro, 3.2 inches
- **Austin, 7 inches**
- LeRoy, 4.5 inches
- Rochester International Airport, 6 inches
- Reads Landing, 7 inches
- Stockton, 6.5 inches
- Winona, 7.0 inches

Falls, Goodhue and Red Wing in the far northern part of the region; they were opening two hours late.

As of 7 a.m., Houston County had the most snow in southeastern Minnesota with 7 inches and is expected to get 10 to 14 inches when the storm is done.

That county's 10 plows were sent onto roads at 3 a.m., and some drivers will put in 15-hour days, said a highway department employee.

Conditions were decent this morning but could get worse with the expected winds, he said.

AustinPB.com
For storm updates

National Guard armories will be renovated

Associated Press

ST. PAUL — The Minnesota National Guard armory in Austin is one of two that are in line for renovations.

Minnesota officials put out the call this week for architects and other designers to bid on projects in Austin and Chisholm.

The National Guard Armory in Austin was built in 1964. It's a single-story building with about 22,000 square feet. The construction budget tops out at \$3 million.

The armory in Chisholm is even older, dating to 1957. It's also a single-story building and is about 16,600 square feet. The budget for that project is about \$2 million.

For both armory projects, the goal is to start construction next fall and be done by June 2014.

The Austin armory is familiar to many as the site of emotional homecomings in recent years of National Guard soldiers returning from service in Iraq and Afghanistan. It's also the site from which soldiers depart to their postings.

Morning Grind prepares to close doors

BY HEATHER RULE
hrule@postbulletin.com

Not many people get to have the fulfillment of whatever their dream job might be. But for the past nine years, Daneen Theobald has been one of the lucky ones to work that dream job.

"It has," Theobald said. "It totally has. It's been a great job."

"It was just kind of a dream to have a coffee shop. I always have been a coffee lover."

She is the co-owner, along with her husband Brian Theobald, of the local coffee shop Morning Grind, 301 First Ave. S.W.

The java spot will close its doors, or rather, shut its drive-through and walk-up windows, Dec. 31. The shop serves various coffee drinks, smoothies and some baked goods such as muffins and scones.

She and her husband made the decision a couple months ago to close at year's end. It was a decision that was very difficult, she said, and "very emotional for me."

Business just hasn't been



The Morning Grind will be closing after nine years of business in Austin.

the same since the chain Caribou Coffee came to town in summer 2011.

"They have just killed us," Theobald said. "You can't compete with them. You can't compete with their prices."

The personal relationships she has with her customers is quite evident. Just take the fact that she handed a lot of her customers letters explaining they were closing.

"I felt like I owed that to them at least, to be the one to let them know," Theobald said. "That's just the kind of business we've had. We've had a very close relationship with our customers."

Theobald recalls one of her first loyal customers, a woman with a baby daughter who loved teething on the Morning Grind's biscotti. That girl is now 9 years old,



Tim Eckholt speaks with Daneen Theobald on Wednesday at Morning Grind in Austin.

and Theobald gave her a big tub of biscotti as a Christmas/going away present.

They have been through so many life events with customers: birthdays, babies, deaths.

"I know their families; I know their pets; I know their grandkids," Theobald said. "They're going to miss us, and we're going to miss them."

Morning Grind has been a

family affair as well. All three of Theobald's sons, her sister, mother, nephew and niece have worked in the shop, in the quaint house along one of the main drags in Austin.

Most of the customers have been very supportive and understanding of the decision to close, Theobald said, with a little sadness mixed in. One of the loyal customer groups have been police officers,

Theobald said. An Austin police officer swung by the drive-through Wednesday afternoon for a cup.

"It's sad for all of us cops," he said.

For her next chapter, Theobald hopes to get into child care, work on projects at home and spend more time with her three grandchildren. Basically, "focus on the little ones," she said.

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Friday



Corrections

The Post-Bulletin is committed to fairness and accuracy. If you have a concern, contact Managing Editor Jay Furst at 285-7742 or furst@postbulletin.com.

Contact us

Newsroom, delivery, advertising 507-434-7340
Email austin@postbulletin.com
In person 201 S. Main St., Austin, MN 55912
Connect with us on **Facebook** and **Twitter**

Punchline A2

As he snuggled up to me, he said, "I don't care what your grandchildren say. I love you, Meanie."

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