

Austin Post-Bulletin



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Genes and jerseys
The Superlarks going to state have dads who did the same » **B1**



Nice day for 'White Christmas'
Riverland stages theatrical classic » **A2**

New coach, familiar face
AHS' girls basketball coach knows Ove Berven gym » **B1**

Illegal ballots discovered

More election day concerns raised by county, city staff

BY BRETT BOESE
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Turns out Maplevue isn't the only spot in Mower County to have questions raised about voter validity during the recent election.

Mower County Auditor-Treasurer Doug Groh has identified three non-citizens who were improperly allowed to vote Nov. 6 within the city of Austin. Two illegal ballots were submitted at Ellis Middle School, and another was found at Austin High School, Groh said. Attempts to contact those individuals by county staff members have been unsuccessful.



Groh

Groh said it's the first time the county has seen illegal voter activity since at least 1989. While none of the Austin races were close enough to be altered by three votes, the county attorney's office still might decide to prosecute.

"The election process needs to be tightened up," Groh said.

A fourth "suspicious" ballot was reported in Brownsdale, but Groh was able to contact that individual and clear up the paperwork. He said the person had mistakenly checked a box on the voter registration card provided at the polls that designated him or her as a non-citizen.

Recounts for the mayoral races were performed in Brownsdale and Maplevue. The race was decided by one vote in Brownsdale and four votes in Maplevue. The

results were upheld. However, Maplevue city council member Kris Finley has filed complaints with the county attorney's office against an election judge and Simon Hancock, a city council candidate, over what she feels was an illegal challenge to her ex-husband's voting rights. It's the first such complaint within the county since at least 2003, Groh said.

Hancock was elected to office, while Finley's bid for a second term failed. Austin City Clerk Lucy Johnson, who has held her position since 1981 and worked in the county auditor's office before that, said the increase in voter registration at the polls — which some states don't allow — has put a strain on her low-paid staff of election judges.

Officials recorded 1,869 of the 10,761 Austin voters using same-day voter registration — a figure approaching 20 percent.

"It causes delays in the precincts, and it causes problems because judges are overwhelmed," said Johnson, who worked her first election in 1966. "They do the best they can. They have people coming at them with identification that is wrong and have people getting irate with them. I feel for my judges."

Though the illegal ballots slipped by the election judges on Nov. 6, Groh's office recently discovered them while performing the election review. As soon as that entire process is complete, likely next week, Groh says he'll be forwarding the information to the county attorney's office for "investigation or prosecution."

Neither Groh nor Johnson were supporters of the voter identification amendment that was on the ballot this fall; Johnson said it would have created "a nightmare" for her staff. Still, they both agree that change is needed.

"It's getting worse all along," Johnson said.



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Community Against Bullying chairwoman Danielle Borgerson-Nesvold is one of the 2012 Ten Outstanding Minnesotan Honorees announced by the Minnesota Jaycees.

Anti-bullying group's organizer honored as Outstanding Minnesotan

BY HEATHER RULE
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When Danielle Borgerson-Nesvold, the chairwoman of Community Against Bullying, learned she was chosen by the Minnesota Jaycees as one of Ten Outstanding Minnesotan Honorees for 2012, she was "thrilled" and "awestruck."

"It's a pretty great honor," she said. "It's very humbling to get this recognition."

Humble is a fitting word for Borgerson-Nesvold, who started an anti-bullying group in Austin just less than two years ago. She was quick to share the spotlight with everyone else who makes CAB a group that still is going strong.

"It's not just Danielle," Borgerson-Nesvold said. "It's really a lot of people."

Mike Chavez, a statesman with the Minnesota Jaycees who lives in Rose Creek, was one of the people who nominated Borgerson-Nesvold for the award. He said she could not have been a better candidate for what the award represents: Making the community a better place to live.

"Bullying is out there, and she has kind of brought it to the limelight in Austin," Chavez said. "Her whole organization is out there just to enlighten people with what it is."

CAB started in February 2011 and has been going strong since. It all started with a bullying incident involving Borgerson-Nesvold's son, Sam, who now is 12 years old.

Sam, then a fifth-grader at Southgate Elementary School,

came running home from school, Borgerson-Nesvold said. During his walk home from school, two kids approached him; one held him and the other attacked him.

Borgerson-Nesvold was furious.

"No one really knows what to do," she said. "I didn't like it. I didn't think my child deserved to be scared."

Her son didn't want to go back to school. Borgerson-Nesvold transferred Sam to another elementary school, a decision she made at the time in order to protect her child, though she said Southgate, as a school, did nothing wrong.

An email Borgerson-Nesvold composed outlining her unhappiness about the bullying situation sparked the interest

of some parents and teachers. About 30 people showed up at the Austin Public Library for a town hall meeting at the end of February 2011.

From there, Borgerson-Nesvold said it was like a train.

"It was starting to move so fast, and people were jumping on," she said.

Neveln Elementary School Principal Dewey Schara has been actively involved with CAB and also spoke highly of the group's leader.

"She leads by example," Schara said. "It just doesn't happen by saying you're going to have meetings. People have to believe in you, and they believe in Danielle."

A2: Organizer didn't expect anti-bullying group to get this far.



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Sisters Lisa Dunlop, left, and Jeanne Anderson install holiday decorations on Wednesday that were welded by Austin High School students and painted by community members.

Downtown dressed in decorations made to last

BY HEATHER RULE
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There's no snow yet, but it's beginning to look a lot like Christmas in downtown Austin.

The weather was unseasonably warm on Wednesday afternoon as volunteers put out new metal holiday decorations in the large planters up and down Main Street. Downtown is all ready for the holiday season, just in time for Christmas in the City, with snowflakes, snowmen, stars and Christmas trees.

The 38, four-foot-high decorations were a collaboration between the Vision 2020 committee, The Downtown — A Destination Point, Austin

Area Chamber of Commerce, Austin Downtown Association, Main Street Project and an Austin High School class.

"We decided to try to come up with an idea to try and use something year after year," said Lisa Dunlop, a member of the Vision 2020 committee.

The Vision 2020 group started brainstorming and at first wanted to create wood cutouts. That's how the high school carpentry class was brought into discussion. AHS career and technical education teacher Ryan Stanley then brought up the idea of making them out of metal.

So students in the high school's metal class had about two weeks to work on the decorations. They cut the

steel with a plasma cutter at the school shop. They were provided with patterns, but the students also used some creativity for some of the snowflake designs, Dunlop said.

"They were excited about it," Dunlop said.

Once the cutouts were done last Friday, volunteers from the various groups spent the weekend painting them all.

In past years, the Chamber, Main Street Project and businesses decorated with greenery and other decorations, but those would only last one season. It also cost about \$500 last year for greenery that was then discarded.

This time, the decorations

cost \$800, paid for by the Main Street Project. The difference is these metal decorations will last for years, with maybe just a few paint touch-ups here and there.

"This is much more cost effective," Dunlop said.

It also was an exciting project for the Vision 2020 downtown committee, a chance for the community to see what they've been working on.

"We're looking at what can we do in the short term," Dunlop said. "What can we do in the meantime to make the downtown look a little bit more presentable."

"This was a fun project to really be able to do something."

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Lois E. Carlson, Austin
Jack R. Etherton, Owatonna
Theodore E. Koziolk, Ostrander
Anna M. Johnson, Rose Creek

Weather A8

Friday

30
12 6 a.m. 23° Noon 28° 6 p.m. 11°

Punchline A2

1. You're sweating gravy.

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Corrections

The 1,750 Hormel workers referenced in a story on page A1 on Wednesday are workers in the Austin plant. Hormel employees across the corporation were eligible for the \$16.9 million in profit sharing.

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