

Austin Post-Bulletin

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 27, 2012

Rally falls short

Twins keep it close

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Yecch!

Hot, sticky and miserable » A6



A conversion

Ministry backs away from gay therapy » A4

'Fade to Black'

Keep Jodi Huisentruit's memory alive » A5



Joe Michaud-Scorza / jscorza@postbulletin.com

Minnesota Wild left wing Matt Kassian autographs Banfield Elementary School second-grader Jet Crews' flag Tuesday at Wells Fargo in Austin.

Fans embrace the Wild side

By Heather Rule

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Armed with four hockey pucks just waiting to be signed, Dawn Spencer, 27, of Austin, was one of the first in line Tuesday for the Minnesota Wild/Wells Fargo Road Tour. She had one word to describe her excitement over some of the Wild players visiting Austin to sign autographs for fans.

"Awesome."

She was one of many fans who waited in line to meet Wild players Matt Kassian and Charlie Coyle, Wild alum Antti Laaksonen and television color analyst Mike Greenlay at Wells Fargo in Austin as part of the road tour. The four were available to sign autographs and take pictures with fans.

Spencer watches the games on TV, but she was able to go to one for her birthday, "and it was great," she said.

"They don't have a bad seat in the Xcel Energy Center," Spencer said.

Also in line to see the Wild Road Tour were 67 local kids from Austin's Kids Korner. As they waited, they got to see Bruiser, the mascot of the local Austin Bruins hockey team who stopped by for a visit. Many of the kids got their shirts signed or pictures of the players, and some had even made autograph books made out of green construction paper.

Josh Streiff, of Rochester, brought his nephew Chase Streiff, of Austin, to meet and greet the Wild players. Chase plays hockey and said he goes

to a lot of the Wild games as well.

"I like the Wild a lot," Chase said. "It's a pretty cool team."

Kassian, a 25-year-old left winger, was personable with the line of fans he saw Tuesday. He at least asked a question or struck up a bit of conversation with folks as he signed photos, jerseys and pucks.

He said one of the purposes of the road tour is to connect with people in small towns, since it is difficult for them to go to games.

"It's just great to be able to just get out and meet fans that maybe you wouldn't get an opportunity to see in person," Kassian said.

Coyle is still a new player to the Wild organization. The 20-year-old center was a first-

round draft pick in 2010, originally chosen by the San Jose Sharks. The road tour was his first time in Austin, and he said he was enjoying it. The Spam Museum was interesting and "something different," he said.

This wasn't Greenlay's first visit to Austin; he's been here before with the road tours.

Laaksonen was with the Wild from the beginning, when the club started more than a decade ago. It was his first time in Austin, as well, but he's no stranger to southeastern Minnesota. He said he goes fly fishing in the Rochester area and he likes to find new places to go.

"It's just great to see the whole state is behind the team," Laaksonen said.

MOWER COUNTY HUMAN SERVICES

Board gives nod to plan for redesign

Approval tied to six conditions, including addition of agencies

By Jim Troyer

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The Mower County Board wasted no time Tuesday morning, voting unanimously to move forward with a human services redesign.

Board members chose the second of three options, which was to accept the plan with conditions. What's more, they added a sixth condition to the five that were discussed Monday night: That is to add other county agencies such as law enforcement, finance and the county attorney to the mix.

Board Chair Tim Gabrielson pressed for flexibility for Mower and other counties that would form a Service Delivery Authority.

"We don't want to be like the state and have a shutdown," he said.



Oscarson

County Coordinator Craig Oscarson said the sixth condition would include but not limited to" and Human Services Director Julie Stevermer said that this is not the end of the process but to determine if "it is a feasible

working model."

Earlier this week, Oscarson outlined five conditions that must be met in order for Mower County to move ahead:

1. The final model would merge health and human services.

2. If fewer than 12 counties participate, Mower County's participation would be based on cost savings.

3. The final model should include a service center in Mower County.

4. Of the 12 participating counties, no single county should be allowed to exercise a majority vote.

5. The Service Delivery Area would only provide services outlined in the legislation and cut the cost of providing them.

Dodge, Steele and Waseca counties already have accepted the plan. Freeborn will vote next and Olmsted in July. However, Olmsted County administrators on Tuesday recommended that the county create its own service delivery authority to save money rather than join 11 other southeastern Minnesota counties to establish a regional one. Winona and Goodhue counties have said no to the plan.

Jim Troyer is a freelance writer in Austin.

Watts on tap at Watts Cookin'

By Jim Troyer

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When Kermit Watts decided he wanted a bar for his Watts Cookin' Restaurant on Interstate 90 (officially 1509 10th Place N.E.) he already had the layout in his head. Then he did something really smart: He turned the designing over to his wife, Melodie.

"We wanted something that would make people say 'wow' when they came in the door," he said.

The area at the back of the restaurant was gutted and they started from scratch. Glancing around the room, Watts said. "We spent a fair amount of money, but the result is worth it."

There are new tables and booths, new lighting, four television sets (one for each wall), a modernized ceiling and the bar itself.

All surfaces are a blend of light browns, dark browns and blacks that work with the walls. The pattern unifies the area, making it distinct but still part of the restaurant.

"We applied for a liquor license with the intent of adding the bar," he noted. That license came through in January, but the two took time to plan.

"Melodie is a fashion person," he said. "She's very good at putting things together." With the design in hand, the conversion moved along rapidly and work was completed in 17 days by contractor, Mark Reimann.

It's clear that The Bar @ Watts Cookin' is already a success. "Sales are up, the customer count is up, and we are getting good comments. People do come in and say, 'Wow. This is a nice bar.'"

Hiring has been another positive outcome, he said. "We have added three people in the kitchen and four on the floor," he said. "And we are still looking for a cook and two floor people. We try to hire good people and then we let them do their jobs."

That approach has been working for Watts Cookin' for 25 years. "You can't do great things without great people," he said.

Jim Troyer is a freelance writer in Austin.



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Watts Cookin' owner Kermit Watts stands behind the bar in the recently renovated section of his restaurant in Austin.

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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.

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