



# Hastings Tribune

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## Annual Tribute!

YWCA of Adams County honors centenarian.

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## Hastings face of 'Happiest Place'

'GOOD MORNING AMERICA' CAMERA CREW FILMS CITY SCENES, RESIDENTS

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At about 7:45 a.m. today, TV watchers in Hastings saw some familiar scenery in a "Good Morning America" story about MainStreet's Happiness Index.

Footage from Hastings, including an on-camera interview with Mayor Vern Powers, was featured in the nationally televised piece.

Local officials who helped ABC's camera crew get its shots Saturday said they were given only hints as to the reason for this filming.

"We didn't know what they were looking for," said Dee Haussler, president of the Hastings Economic Development Corp. "I was told by the lady — Mary was her name — from 'Good Morning America' in New York, that they would not share with us what it was about."

### Online

"Happiest Place in America" may be viewed at [abcnews.go.com/gma](http://abcnews.go.com/gma) under the heading "recently on GMA."

Haussler was contacted by the Nebraska Department of Economic Development around 3:30 p.m. Friday and asked to help ABC's camera crew get the shots it needed. The three-person crew from Lincoln and Omaha

arrived in Hastings late Saturday morning and spent about three hours total. These crew members work for ABC and other organizations, Haussler said.

They filmed sandhill cranes on their way west, then visited Juniata Feed Yard, the ethanol plant and nearby fields for agricultural shots, said George Anderson, chairman of the Hastings Board of Public Works and owner of Motorsport Park Hastings.

The camera crew also met with representatives from several local organizations, including the Hastings Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Center Association, Adams County Convention and Visitors Bureau, the city of Hastings and others.

Please see **HAPPIEST**/page B2



Courtesy George Anderson

A "Good Morning America" crew interviews Mayor Vern Powers Saturday at Graham Gallery in downtown Hastings.



BRENT McCOWN/Tribune

Will Locke evens some mulch out around one of the newly planted Black Hills spruce trees at Highland Park Saturday. The Highland Park Arboretum committee and the Hastings Kiwanis Club planted 20 trees in the park.



BRENT McCOWN/Tribune

Ron Seymour (left) and Seth Ostrander (right) unwrap one of the newly planted Black Hills spruce trees Saturday at Highland Park.

## Planting a legacy

VOLUNTEERS ADD 20 TREES TO HIGHLAND PARK ARBORETUM

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Harsh winds, cold temperatures and blowing dirt Saturday didn't keep about 20 volunteers from planting 20 trees at the Highland Park Arboretum.

This was the first planting of the year at the newly formed arboretum on North Burlington Avenue that surrounds the Hastings Museum of Cultural and Natural History and Hastings Utilities' North Denver Station.

"We're pretty excited that

the arboretum is getting a good start and as bad as we thought the weather would be, it's not too bad," said Jo Seiler, co-chairwoman of the arboretum committee.

The Highland Park Arboretum committee was formed in November 2007. It planted the first seven trees on the north side of the museum in September 2008.

On Saturday, volunteers braved the cold winds to plant trees throughout the park on the ground between Burlington and Hastings avenues.

Black Hills spruce, white pines, crab apples and hawthorns were planted in four different areas throughout the park.

Please see **PLANTING**/page B2

## Moeller faces additional charge

FORMER COUNTY TREASURER'S HUSBAND ALSO INDICTED FOR FAILURE TO PAY SALES TAX

**WILL VRASPIR**

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Former Adams County Treasurer Julia Moeller has been charged with a second instance of evading sales tax.

The Nebraska Attorney General's Office filed charges Friday afternoon against Moeller, 67, of 1003 N. Burlington Ave. for failure to pay sales tax on the purchase of a 2006 Cadillac Escalade between April 21, 2007, and May 22, 2007. Moeller's 69-year-old husband, Dwane, also has been charged with the same crime.



Moeller

Mrs. Moeller already faces charges of tax evasion, official misconduct and abuse of public records in the purchase of a motor home in October 2007.

A Nebraska State Patrol investigation revealed the Moellers bought an Escalade for \$45,000 in

Please see **MOELLER**/page B2

## 2 tornadoes touch down in Clay County

'WEAK' TWISTER DAMAGES RURAL HOMES, OUTBUILDINGS

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**CLAY COUNTY** — A pair of tornadoes ripped through here Saturday afternoon, causing loss of power and damage, but no reported injuries.

The first tornado touched down without warning south of Fairfield during a thunderstorm at about 4 p.m. Saturday, damaging two homes and destroying three outbuildings and a barn roof, National Weather Service meteorologist Angela Oder said this morning.

The twister — which only lasted several minutes before evaporating a few miles northwest of where it touched down — damaged two homes and knocked over pivots, trees and power poles, Oder said.

Please see **TORNADOES**/page B2

### Weather

**Lo:** Mostly clear tonight. Sunny and warmer Tuesday.  
**22**  
**Hi:** warmer  
**58**



Art by Kyle Sharp, 12, Doniphan-Trumbull School

### FEATHERWEIGHTS

**DETROIT** — Police in Detroit have ruffled some feathers after they cracked down on an organized pillow fight at a downtown park. The Detroit News reports that police at Campus Martius Park pre-

### Nation

vented the feathery fight Saturday by disarming pillow-toting participants. The bout was part of a worldwide event organized on social networking Web sites.

Michael Davis of Hamtramck says police confiscated the 32-year-old man's pillows but returned

their cases. He says he was told that he needed a permit.

Scott Harris of Ferndale told the News that it's "not illegal to own a pillow."

Detroit police spokesman James Tate says cleanup was the issue.  
*The Associated Press*

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# Happiest: Footage from Hastings used on 'Good Morning America'

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With their help, crew members quickly took their outdoor shots before Saturday's storms had a chance to chase everyone indoors.

They filmed joggers at Heartwell Park, tree planting for the Highland Park Arboretum outside the Hastings Museum of Natural and Cultural History, school exteriors, the entrance to Hastings and store fronts downtown.

"They got all of those shots while the sun was still shining. And all of a sudden it was cloudy and it was windy and it was dirty," Haussler said.

Crew members filmed the Kool-Aid

exhibit inside the museum, talked to a group of diners inside the Blue Moon Coffee Co. and interviewed the mayor, Lt. Gov. Rick Sheehy, Graham Gallery owner Angela Graham and others. Interviews were filmed inside Graham Gallery.

"They were asking questions like, 'In your opinion, why are people happier in Nebraska?' It was just all happy questions like, 'Is it the weather in Nebraska that makes people happy? Is it the people in Nebraska that makes people happy?' 'Is it the economy and the morals and values of Nebraskans that end up making people happy?'" Graham said.

"What they told us is that Nebraska was in the running for one of the happiest states in the union and we were making a plea for it. They were kind of giving us hints as far as what the whole story was about," she said. "It was hard to tell how they were going to stitch all of the information together."

The Happiness Index, which MainStreet calls "a fresh take on the old and tired Misery Index," chooses its winner based solely on financial criteria. These include non-mortgage debt, unemployment and foreclosures. Nebraska received a total of nine points, while Iowa, coming in second, had 25. Oregon had the low-

est index ranking with 133 points. The index included all 50 states and Washington, D.C.

Close to two hours of filming was edited down to the one minute or so of Hastings footage seen on "Good Morning America" this morning, Anderson said. The camera crew ran out of time to take some shots it had been interested in.

Anderson took lots of photographs of the filming process, so the chamber eventually can take advantage of ABC's visit to Hastings in future marketing, he said. Powers, who gave the only interview seen in ABC's story, said that marketing already has begun

to happen.

Local Web sites have linked to the ABC story and a friend's daughter in New Orleans called early this morning to say she had watched the story through those links.

"I imagine there's a lot of visits," Powers said. "Anytime you can get your name out to any kind of audience, most press is good press, as long as they're talking about and thinking about (Hastings)."

The ABC story never named Hastings specifically, speaking only of the state of Nebraska. Local footage was only meant to represent the state as a whole, Haussler said.

## Tornadoes: 2 twisters touch down in Clay County

Continued from page A1

"It's looking like it was a pretty weak tornado," she said of the first tornado. "It wasn't a real long-lived one. It only lasted a couple minutes."

At its onset, the first tornado tore the roof off a barn before reaching the farm of Richard and Carolyn Schliep, who live 1½ miles west of Fairfield. No one was home when the tornado struck, but an eyewitness, the Schlieps' son-in-law, James Bassett, spotted the tornado at about 4 p.m., said Bob Rose, Clay County emergency manager.

"He was standing in his yard about a block west of Richard's when he saw debris swirling

around above him," Rose said. "He grabbed his two kids and headed to the basement."

The Schlieps were just beginning to pick through the rubble of their damaged farm this morning.

"It's bad," Carolyn Schliep said this morning. "It kind of happened within about a 10-minute span. I was working at the gas station in Fairfield and my husband was out getting his Tahoe out of the field by Anan, about 2½ miles away. By the time he got back, it was all over."

Damage to the farm is widespread, she said.

"We lost a partial shed, our oil shed, and a metal building down in our silos," Schliep said.

"There is tin everywhere. There's glass all over our front porch, holes in the kitchen and wood. A board broke our antique table when it came through the wall, and there's wood debris and glass in the basement."

Insurance inspectors believe the house may have shifted off its foundation, she said.

"Other than that, the house is still here," she said. "So that's a good thing."

Rose said that the storm left residents of Fairfield without power for about an hour. The suddenness of the first tornado caught Rose and area spotters by surprise, he said.

"We were running in circles at

the time," he said. "There was no warning, then all of a sudden, we had damage. When you have something sneak up on you like that, you are lucky it's not worse."

The second tornado, coupled with strong easterly winds from the same storm system, caused additional damage in Fairfield and northeast Clay County, Oder said.

It hit about an hour later and arrived during a tornado watch, Rose said. Spotters from Sutton and Grafton reported seeing a funnel cloud in the area at about 5 p.m. Saturday. Rose said he wasn't sure the second tornado actually materialized. But NWS reports confirmed this morning that it had touched down.



Courtesy Jennifer Bassett

Rubble from a tornado that hit just west of Fairfield Saturday afternoon covered the farm of Richard and Carolyn Schliep. The farm sustained considerable damage from the touchdown, which was one of two reported in the area.



BRENT McCOWN/Tribune

Members of the Highland Park Arboretum Committee and the Hastings Kiwanis club plant one of 20 trees at Highland Park Saturday.

## Planting: 20 trees added

Continued from page A1

Crews with the city's Parks and Recreation Department dug the initial holes for each tree. The volunteers had to widen and deepen the holes to the necessary depths before planting.

The planting had an assembly line approach as there was a group that would plant, followed by one that would string up the wires used to stabilize the trees. Then a group would come around to put mulch around the trees followed by arboretum committee member Will Locke, who watered them.

Locke used a large water tank in a trailer behind his SUV, which he pulled throughout the park.

The tree planters included arboretum committee members, master gardeners and members of the local Kiwanis club.

Don Siffring, who is a Kiwanian and serves on the arboretum committee, said there were about 40 members volunteering throughout the

community Saturday as part of the Kiwanis One Project event.

Kiwanians across the country were volunteering just a few hours of their time on Saturday as part of the national event.

"Several of us are on the arboretum committee so it's just natural when there's work to do, we look for helpers," Siffring said. "And Kiwanians like to work in areas that affect the lives of kids and we see an arboretum of this nature as having a great potential to impact kids."

Phyllis Salyards, another member of the arboretum committee, said she agrees that planting an arboretum and just planting trees in general leaves a great legacy for the future.

"I think one of the things that makes Hastings special is we have more trees than some of the similar communities of our size," she said.

Salyards said many trees across the city have been damaged by ice storms and strong winds over the last 100 years. That's one reason it's important

to plant new trees in the community.

"We have a lot of trees that aren't in such great shape so this is a great opportunity to enhance this space and make it more part of the community," she said.

Seiler said this is a great way to add more trees to the community and bring people together in a meaningful way.

"To finally see the effort that so many people pulled together is rewarding," she said. "This is an area where many trees have died over the last 100 years, some from age, some from weather. We need more diversity and we need more trees so here we go. We're going to try to do some good for Hastings, the community where we love living."

The arboretum committee plants to do two more large tree plantings this spring on Arbor Day and Memorial Day.

To learn more about the arboretum, contact Ron Seymour or Don Siffring at 402-461-7209.

## 3 slain Pittsburgh officers to lie in state

DAN NEPHIN

The Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — The bodies of three slain Pittsburgh police officers will lie in state at a downtown municipal building, city officials announced today.

The viewing at the City-County Building will begin Wednesday afternoon for officers Eric Kelly, Stephen Mayhle and Paul Sciuolo II. A memorial service will be held Thursday at an arena on the University of Pittsburgh Campus.

Richard Poplawski, 23, was wearing a bulletproof vest when he opened fire on the officers who were responding to a domestic disturbance call Saturday, turning a quiet Pittsburgh street into a battlefield, police said.

The 911 call that brought Sciuolo and Mayhle to the home where they were ambushed on Saturday, and where Kelly was later killed during a four-hour siege, was precipitated by a fight between the gunman and his

mother over a dog urinating in the house.

Thursday's memorial will also serve as the funeral service for 41-year-old Officer Eric Kelly, who will be buried immediately afterward.

Separate funeral services are set for Mayhle and Sciuolo.

The argument between Margaret and Richard Poplawski escalated to the point that she threatened to kick him out and she called police to do it, according to a 12-page criminal complaint and affidavit filed late Saturday.

When Sciuolo and Mayhle arrived, Margaret Poplawski opened the door and told them to come in and take her son, apparently unaware he was standing behind her with a rifle, the affidavit said. Hearing gunshots, she spun around to see her son with the gun and ran to the basement.

The mother told police her son had been stockpiling guns and ammunition "because he

believed that as a result of economic collapse, the police were no longer able to protect society," the affidavit said.

Autopsies show Sciuolo, 37, died of wounds to the head and torso. Mayhle, 29, was shot in the head.

A witness awakened by two gunshots told investigators of seeing the gunman standing in the home's front doorway and firing two to three shots into one officer who was already down. Sciuolo was later found dead in the home's living room, and Mayhle near the front stoop, police said.

Kelly, 41, was killed as he arrived to assist the first two officers. Kelly was in uniform but on his way home when he responded and was gunned down in the street.

Kelly's radio call for help summoned other officers, including a SWAT team. The ensuing standoff included a gun battle in which police say Richard Poplawski tried to kill other officers.

## Moeller: Former county treasurer faces additional charge of tax evasion

Continued from page A1

April 2007, according to a news release from the Attorney General's Office. At the time of purchase, they reportedly were given \$16,000 in trade-in value for a pickup truck. When the Escalade was titled and registered in Adams County, the couple allegedly inflated the trade-in value to \$29,000, which reduced the sales tax by more than \$1,000.

According to testimony during preliminary hearings for the previous case, investigators believe the Moellers purchased a motor home in Grand Island on Oct. 5, 2007, but didn't pay \$4,084.80 in sales tax for the vehicle.

When the vehicle was licensed in Harris County, Texas, on Oct. 29, 2007, a fraudulent form reportedly was sent, indicating the taxes had been paid in Adams County. Investigators testified that Michelan Parr,

Moeller's daughter, who at the time worked in the Adams County Treasurer's Office, sent the fraudulent information to officials in Texas.

Parr also was charged in that incident. She will have a plea in abatement hearing to challenge the charges being sent to the district court Wednesday in Clay County District Court.

Investigators from the Nebraska State Patrol interviewed Moeller on July 30, 2008, and she allegedly said she forgot to pay the taxes. On Aug. 11, 2008, Moeller faxed documents to the State Patrol auto fraud office that showed she had paid \$4,490.21 for the sales tax, appropriate penalties and interest.

Adams County Special Prosecutor Jeff Gaertig filed a motion in March to present evidence of Moeller's failure to pay or collect sales tax on two additional vehicles, the Escalade and

a 2001 GMC Sierra pickup truck. According to the motion, the evidence is relevant to the case for the purpose to show proof of motive, opportunity, intent, preparation, plan, knowledge and/or absence of mistake or accident.

Clay County District Judge Vicky Johnson scheduled a hearing on the motion for Wednesday at 1:30 p.m. in Clay County District Court.

Moeller resigned her position Jan. 5, amidst a recall election effort. She had served as county treasurer since 1981 and was last elected in 2006.

Failure to pay sales tax and tax evasion are each a Class 4 felony punishable by up to five years imprisonment and a \$10,000 fine. Official misconduct in office and abuse of public records are each a Class 2 misdemeanor punishable by up to six months in jail and a \$1,000 fine.

## Heavy, wet snow causes problems in Ind., Mich.

**The Associated Press**  
**SOUTH BEND, Ind.** — Heavy, wet snow knocked out electrical service to thousands of customers and snarled morning traffic today in northern Indiana and southeast Michigan.

The National Weather Service said up to 7 inches of snow fell in the Detroit area and northern Indiana got at least 4 inches.

Michigan's CMS Energy Corp. and DTE Energy Co. and Indiana's Indiana Michigan Power said about 79,000 of their customers were blacked out as the weight of the snow snapped branches and power lines.

Indiana State Police reported

numerous slide-off accidents on the Indiana Toll Road, but no serious injuries.

The Kansas City Royals game in Chicago against the White

Sox was postponed due to a snowy forecast and the Tampa Bay Rays' game in Boston was postponed because of expected rain and wind.

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