

## On day of fools, Visit Mankato unveils 'plan'

By Robb Murray

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**MANKATO** — At Visit Mankato, the city's convention and visitors bureau, they've announced what might be their most ambitious marketing plan ever.

Putting traditional marketing and strategic plans aside, they've decided to embrace a topic that until now gave them fits.

Readers may remember the fake Mankato website,

the one that touts the city as a winter oasis with hot springs, pyramids, a Dracula castle, whale watching, submarines and more (city-mankato.us). It is responsible for attracting actual visitors from around the country who arrive in town looking for whales and hoping to book castle tours.

It's not real, of course — it was all a ruse by a Minnesota State University professor who wanted to

teach his students the value of not believing everything you see on the Internet.

Like it or not, Visit Mankato decided, the website is there and won't be pulled down any time soon. So they released a press release containing information embargoed until April 1 proclaiming they decided not only to embrace the fake site's claims, but to "create" them.

Fabrication, as Visit Mankato President

Anna Thill said, is the new order of the day. So they announced "plans" to construct a pyramid and underwater city, as well as to attract whales to the Minnesota River (probably before the river drops to 1.6 feet in the heat of summer).

One of the key attractions, she said, will be construction of LufsaHoma, a recreation of the castle from Bram Stoker's "Dracula."

Of course, what spooky castle would be complete

without vampires? Key attractions at that castle, Thill said, will be members of the cast of the "Twilight" films.

Lucky for Thill, she didn't have to come up with such fantastical fake attractions on her own for today's announcement. The website that has duped so many has been going strong since the 1990s, and it does include a disclaimer revealing its fakery.

Still, many have been

fooled.

"It has been on a regular basis," Thill said of the inquiries they've had from people looking for the hot springs. "Literally, over the course of time, we've had hundreds of people come to Mankato."

How do you deal with them?

"We try to answer questions and not make them feel ignorant," Thill said. "But really, how can we

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## Mankato man dies in crash

A Mankato man has reportedly been killed in a crash on the Edens Expressway near Skokie, Ill., which is north of Chicago.

Samee Mohammed Ranginwala, 26, was killed at about 1:45 a.m. Sunday, according to the Chicago Tribune. Ranginwala was reportedly driving a Chevy Tracker. He was pronounced dead at the scene.

The report by the Illinois State Patrol indicates he was rear-ended by an unidentified 21-year old man, who was driving an Audi S4 sports sedan. Ranginwala was reportedly driving in the middle lane when he was struck from behind at high speed, which spun his vehicle and pushed it into a berm on the side of the expressway.

The Tribune is reporting that charges will likely be brought against the other driver, who was taken to St. Francis Hospital in Evanston. Illinois State Patrol said he has since been released from the hospital.

According to Ranginwala's Facebook page, he attended Mankato East High School and studied biochemistry and human biology at Minnesota State University. It also indicates he was studying medicine at Des Moines University in Iowa.

### BRIEFS

#### Tornado reported in western Minn.

**MINNEAPOLIS** — The National Weather Service says it has received a report of a tornado sighting in western Minnesota.

Meteorologist Lisa Schmit says a tornado was spotted in Yellow Medicine County and two reports of damage have come in from law enforcement officers working southeast of St. Leo.

Schmit says she has few details but was told it was structural damage with no people injured.

St. Leo is about three hours west of Minneapolis.

The Associated Press

For more local, state and national news visit [www.mankatofreepress.com](http://www.mankatofreepress.com).

## East Africans

# TALK ACTIVISM



Photo by John Cross

Mustafa Jumale, an aide to U.S. Rep. Keith Ellison, speaks Monday at Minnesota State University during a panel talk on political activism in East African communities. In the background (from left) are Andy Wilhide, a doctoral candidate at the University of Minnesota; Nasser Mussa, director of an adult education center in Minneapolis; and Hashi Shafi, director of a civic education nonprofit in Minneapolis.

## Somali activism put in historical context

By Dan Linehan

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For a time, Somalis in Minnesota had something of a suitcase mentality as many wondered if their time here was temporary, said Hashi Shafi of Minneapolis.

For that reason, and because it was something of a foreign concept, many people didn't participate in American democracy.

"To unpack our suitcases takes time," said Shafi, director of a civic education nonprofit in Minneapolis.

But unpack they have, as evidenced by the Somalis who are organizing their communities politically.

Shafi and two other East African natives visited Minnesota State University Monday for a panel discussion on political activism among Somali and Ethiopian immigrants. Lori Lahlum, chair of the history department, said it was "part of a centuries-old conversation about immigrants and political participation."

That political integration has helped connect Somalis to their adopted homes, which isn't the case everywhere.

Shafi said Somalis in Europe tend to be less active in public life. Perhaps as a result, they tend to describe themselves as Somalis from Somalia, whereas he and others use the term "Somali-American."

There are an estimated 100,000 Somalis and 30,000 Ethiopians in Minnesota.

Lahlum, who has extensively studied Norwegian political participation in the Dakotas, said that virtually everything the panel discussed has happened here more than a century before.

### What's important?

The panelists described their involvement in terms of using political influence to help solve the community's most pressing issues, including employment, immigration, housing and education, especially English classes.

"What am I getting back from voting for a candidate?" said

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## Blue Earth priest sentenced in abuse case

Rev. Koppala being deported to native India

By Josh Moniz

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**BLUE EARTH** — The Blue Earth-area priest who admitted to fondling a girl while attending dinner at

her grandmother's home was sentenced Monday in Faribault County District Court.

The Rev. Leo Koppala, 47, pleaded guilty to

felony second-degree criminal sexual conduct involving a victim younger than 13.

Koppala received a stay of imposition on his charge Monday in court. He will likely not serve more time in jail because he was sentenced to 31 days, which he already served during the trial.

The stay of imposition will place him on probation with monitoring for 25 years. The terms of probation include requiring him to register as a sex offender, have no contact with anyone under 18 years old, pay restitution and undergo psychological-sexual evaluation. Faribault County Attorney Troy Timmerman said the victim and the victim's family were satisfied with the sentence, particularly since Koppala faces deportation to his hometown in India.

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## Local MNsure helpers not that busy on final day

By Robb Murray

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**MANKATO** — On the final day of signing up for health insurance in Minnesota's MNsure system, MNsure call centers reportedly were extremely busy and callers had to wait nearly 20 minutes for help.

But for MNsure navigators — people who help

prospective MNsure enrollees get signed up and answer questions about insurance plans — the day was quiet. Very quiet.

"We cleared our schedules and kept the day open so that, if we were busy, we'd be available," Sheila Ous, a housing recruitment coordinator at Minnesota Valley Action Council, said Monday. "We've had three

calls today."

Ous is among a few dozen navigators in Mankato. Normally a housing specialist at MVAC, she was temporarily reassigned so that MVAC could offer MNsure navigation help. In the weeks leading up to the deadline, Ous said, they were much busier. Last week may have been their busiest. But on Monday ...

dead.

MNsure officials say the call center logged more than 9,600 calls by noon Monday. MNsure says that's putting a strain on the phone system. The average wait time as of about 1 p.m. was 18 minutes, and the time on hold was expected to increase throughout the day.

Exchange officials say

people who couldn't get through or have difficulty enrolling online should fill out an enrollment attempt form on MNsure's home page. MNsure will contact them later to complete the enrollment process.

Those who miss the deadline but make a good-faith effort to enroll will get more time and escape a

Please see MNSURE, Page B3



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# Target Field struggles with snow removal

The Associated Press

**ST. PAUL** — Groundskeepers who have been laboring to remove snow from Target Field before next week's Minnesota Twins home opener could get stung by spring storms. The storm that shut down parts of the Dakotas and western Minnesota on Monday is heading east.

The National Weather Service issued blizzard

warnings for much of the Dakotas and part of Minnesota on Monday with the storm. Eastern North Dakota and northwestern Minnesota could see the most snow, up to 20 inches. Winds gusting in excess of 40 mph blew the snow around and reduced visibility for motorists.

Minneapolis could see snow overnight into Tuesday morning. Additional snow is possible Thursday

and Friday.

Minnesota Public Radio reports so much snow accumulated over the winter that grounds crews at Target Field have been trying to melt it by hosing down mounds with hot water.

Head groundskeeper Larry DiVito says he needs a couple good days next weekend to let the field dry out, get mowing done and paint the logos.

# PLAN: On day of fools, Visit Mankato unveils 'plan'

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have whales in the Minnesota River? How is that even possible?"

Some, though, bring stories that are a little harder to dismiss. There was the woman from Texas who brought her elderly mother to Minnesota in 2007 only to find

a cute town with bike trails, but no hot springs and no whales.

She tracked down the newspaper with the goal of setting people straight.

"Some people heard there were healing powers in those springs," Thill said, "and they came looking for anything they could find to help them

with their illness."

So the new "strategic plan," which by now you've probably guessed is merely an April Fools' joke, is a way to have a little fun with a quirky fact of life in Mankato, and an even quirkier fact of being the chamber and visitors bureau.

# More soybeans planned for Minnesota

**ST. PAUL** — A government report says Minnesota farmers plan to plant more soybeans in 2014 but the same amount of corn as last year.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture said Monday that Minnesota farmers

plan to plant 8.6 million acres of corn, unchanged from 2013. If farmers stick to those plans, it would be Minnesota's second-largest corn acreage planted, just 150,000 acres less than the record of 8.75M in 2012.

Minnesota farmers also

intend to plant 7.4 million acres of soybeans, up 10 percent from last year. If those plans hold firm, it would be the state's second-largest soybean acreage planted, just 100,000 below the record of 7.5 million in 2003.

# MNsure: Local MNsure helpers not that busy

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financial penalty.

Jessica O'Brien of the Mankato office of the Minnesota Council of Churches is also a Mankato navigator. Like Ous, she said she was busier last week.

"I think we were assuming we'd be really busy," she said.

They did navigator work for eight hours per week, and in that time they had about four or five calls weekly. Most of the work was in person — although

when it got busy last week, it was more phone calls than walk-ins.

Most of the cases they'd dealt with involved people who had already signed up for MNsure but hadn't heard anything back.

Navigators can inspect a person's registration and determine whether errors had been made.

If so, they can initiate the process to rectify them and get the registration back on track.

*The Associated Press contributed to this report.*

# PUBLIC NOTICES

**Law prescribes that certain government, judicial and lay actions -- proposed, pending, consummated or in the form of periodic reports -- are to be published in legal form for the benefit of the public. The intention is to permit you, the citizen, to become more informed on matters of importance, possibly affecting you directly, and adding encouragement to a fuller participation in our democratic process. The Free Press is an authorized publisher of such legal notices, at rates established by the Minnesota Legislature. To make it easier for you to find -- and avail yourself -- of the information in these notices.**

## Legals

April 1, 2, 2014  
**CERTIFICATE OF ASSUMED NAME**  
 MINNESOTA  
 SECRETARY OF STATE  
 Minnesota Statutes Chapter 333  
 1. List the exact assumed name under which the business is or will be conducted: Schenk Trucking  
 2. Principal place of business: 59640 172nd Street, Mankato, MN 56001  
 3. List the name and complete street address of all persons conducting business under the above Assumed Name, OR if an entity, provide the legal corporate, LLC, or Limited Partnership name and registered office address: Christopher Schenk 59640 172nd Street, Mankato, MN 56001  
 4. I, the undersigned, certify that I am signing this document as the person whose signature is required, or as agent of the person(s) whose signature would be required who has authorized me to sign this document on his/her behalf, or in both capacities. I further certify that I have completed all required fields, and that the information in this document is true and correct and in compliance with the applicable chapter of Minnesota Statutes. I understand that by signing this document I am subject to the penalties of perjury as set forth in Minnesota Statutes section 609.49 as if I had signed this certificate under oath.  
 Date: March 6, 2014  
 /s/ Lynn Harris  
 Lynn Harris, Agent  
 lynn@grtplains.com

March 18, 25,  
 April 1, 8, 15, 22, 29, 2014  
**NOTICE OF MORTGAGE FORECLOSURE SALE**  
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# AFRICA: Somali activism put in historical context

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Nasser Mussa, who directs an adult education center in Minneapolis. In other words, a vote is more a means to an end rather than sufficient by itself.

He sees political organizing as essential; no one is going to solve his community's problems unless they get out and make "a lot of noise," he said.

From Mussa's point of view, Somali-Americans' biggest problem is unemployment. Imagine, he said, that you speak no English and have no skills to put on a resume.

"I see people struggling with employment every single day," he said.

Though people in their 30s and 40s are organizing, Shafi sees apathy in the next generation. It might be the case that these teens and 20-somethings will catch up with their elders, given time. Abdi Sabrie of Mankato asked the panelists when Somalis would start to advocate for wider minority issues, such as the achievement gap, and take foreign-policy stances.

Mussa said he doesn't think the achievement gap will be closed until classroom lessons are more closely tied to what's going

on in their communities.

Somali political activism suffered a setback during precinct caucuses Feb. 4 in Minneapolis, where a fight broke out over who would lead the meeting.

Less violently, DFL organizers were challenged in 2012 as they tried to persuade Somalis to vote against a constitutional amendment limiting marriage to one man and one woman. Many East Africans are very conservative, Mussa said. To get them to think about the issue differently, he would ask if they believed marriage should be between one man and one woman. They would generally say yes. But then he noted that the Koran says marriage can be between one man and up to four women.

"They laugh a little bit and are open to dialogue," he said.

After they spoke on the topic, the panelists noted they had taken this position on gay marriage because they were working for Democrats, not because they were representing their community.

## Norwegian parallels seen

Lahlum, the MSU history chair, said 19th-century

politicians and political parties recruited Norwegians to stump for candidates.

This was a time when ballots were printed in several languages, and foreign-born Norwegians tended to identify with the old country more than the new.

But even if they griped about how things were different in Norway, their letters home show how much they valued their newfound political rights.

It's the same among the Somalis, who have been coming to America in large numbers since civil war broke out there in 1991.

"For most Somalis, voting in general is a new phenomenon," said Mustafa Jumale, an aide to U.S. Rep. Keith Ellison. "They hold that very dear."

Turn-of-the-century America made accommodations for non-citizen Norwegians, about 7,000 of whom could vote in South Dakota state elections, Lahlum said.

But they had advantages that Somalis don't, she said, including that they shared skin color and religion with their fellow Americans.

If they wanted to totally blend in and ignore their heritage, no one could really prove different.

STATUTES. SECTION 582.032, DETERMINING, AMONG OTHER THINGS, THAT THE MORTGAGED PREMISES ARE IMPROVED WITH A RESIDENTIAL DWELLING OF LESS THAN FIVE UNITS, ARE NOT PROPERLY USED IN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION, AND ARE ABANDONED.  
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## Legals

April 1, 2014  
**NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING ON FINAL ASSESSMENTS FOR 2014 MADISON LAKE ANNEXATION PROJECT**  
 CITY OF MADISON LAKE, MINNESOTA  
 Notice is hereby given that the City Council of Madison Lake, Minnesota will meet at the All Saints Catholic Church, 601 4th Street, Madison Lake, MN at 7:00 o'clock P.M. on April 15, 2014, to consider objections to the proposed final assessments for the 2014 Madison Lake Annexation project. The proposed assessment roll is on available for public inspection at City Hall. The total amount proposed to be assessed is \$6,700,000.  
 The area proposed to be assessed consists of every lot, piece or parcel of land benefited by said improvement, which has been ordered and includes:  
 Properties adjacent to Nutmeg Road & Krason Drive  
 The Duck Lake CIC and properties adjacent to Doran Drive  
 The Wheaton Cabins along Clydette Drive and Wheaton Drive  
 Agricultural land within NW 1/4, Section 34, and W 1/2 & NE 1/4, Section 27, Jamestown Twp  
 23165 618th Avenue  
 Properties adjacent to Mustang Drive and Nigh Owl Lane  
 Written or oral objections by any property owner will be considered at the hearing. No appeal may be taken as to the amount of any assessment adopted at the assessment hearing, unless a written objection, signed by the affected property owner, is filed with the City Clerk prior to the assessment hearing or presented to the presiding officer at the hearing.  
 An owner may appeal an assessment to District Court pursuant to Minnesota Statutes Sections 429.081 by serving notice of the appeal upon the Mayor or City Clerk of the City within 30 days after the adoption of the assessment and filing such notice with the District Court within ten days after service upon the Mayor or City Clerk. The City may, at its discretion, defer the payment of assessments under specific conditions for homestead property for which it would be a hardship to make the payments. Please contact the City Clerk for more information.  
 DATED: March 28, 2014

## Bid Requests

March 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 31;  
 April 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 2014  
**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**  
**MANKATO / NORTH MANKATO AREA PLANNING ORGANIZATION**  
 Notice is hereby given that the Mankato/North Mankato Area Planning Organization (MAPO) is seeking the services of a qualified consultant. The purpose of this Request for Proposal (RFP) is to solicit responses from qualified consulting firms interested in the respective services, as described in the proposal for the purposes of conducting the MAPO's 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). The firm selected must have experience and expertise in long range transportation planning, public involvement, level of service analysis, development impact review and a clear understanding of the MPO planning process and federal and state requirements.  
 The request for proposal is available on the MAPO's web-site http://www.mankato-mn.gov/mapo/Page.aspx or available in person at the Inter Governmental Center (IGC) located at 10 Civic Center Plaza, Mankato, MN 56001.  
 Any inquiries regarding this notice should be directed to Paul Vogel MAPO's Executive Director by calling (507) 387-8613 or by email to pvogel@city.mankato.mn.us. Proposals can be sent to the MAPO's Office located at 10 Civic Center Plaza, Mankato, MN 56001 by 4:30 pm Thursday, April 10, 2014.  
 Paul Vogel  
 Executive Director  
 Mankato/North Mankato Area Planning Organization

# ABUSE: Blue Earth priest sentenced in abuse case

Continued from Page B1

Koppala was taken into Department of Homeland Security custody after the sentencing. He will remain in the department's custody until the conclusion of his deportation proceedings.

The Diocese of Winona has had Koppala on administrative leave since June 10, 2013.

On Monday, the diocese had him permanently removed from priestly ministry with the diocese and terminated from any employment with it.

The diocese has submitted a full report to the Vatican Office of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which handles sex abuse cases and the start of defrocking procedures. The dioceses also has been working directly with the Diocese of Nellore, India, in regards to Koppala's future as a Roman Catholic priest.

"Our hearts and prayers will continue to be with the victim of this case," said Bishop John M. Quinn of the Winona Diocese.

Koppala was charged in June 2013 and the diocese put him on leave since the

**"Our hearts and prayers will continue to be with the victim of this case."**

**BISHOP JOHN M. QUINN OF THE WINONA DIOCESE**

accusation. He served in the diocese starting in September 2008. He spent time at the Church of the Resurrection in Rochester. In 2009, he was assigned to the Catholic Church of St. Peter and Paul in Blue Earth and to St. Mary's in Winnebago.

According to the criminal court complaint, Koppala was having dinner with the girl and her family on June 7. At one point, the girl went downstairs to watch television. Koppala went downstairs, pulled her up from where she was sitting and kissed her on the cheeks and lips.

He then put one hand on her lower back and the other on her chest, according to the complaint.

Koppala told the girl he loved her and when she was done with school he wanted to come to her house so they could be free together, according to the complaint.

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