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TUESDAY
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Bittersweet farewell for the 417th

By MATTHEW COULSEY
Staff Writer

FARIBAULT — Farewell to the 417th.

Trying desperately to hold her smile, Liz Beckius wiped her teary eyes on Monday evening while sitting next to her new husband, Sgt. Chad Beckius. The couple had been married only hours, and now she was quietly preparing herself to say goodbye.

In a bittersweet gathering held Monday night, a banquet was held at the American Legion for the soldiers of Maintenance Company 417 and their families. The U.S. Army Reserve Unit based in Faribault was called last week to serve in Operation Enduring Freedom, and possibly a war with Iraq. For many rank-and-file soldiers, Monday evening was their last chance to spend time with loved ones before leaving today for Fort McCoy in Wisconsin to receive their next orders.

On Monday, soldiers and family members could only speculate about why the company was called up, but talk centered on supporting forces already stationed in the Middle East.

"Soldiers don't pick where they serve. They perform the missions they are instructed and taught to do," said Battalion Commander Lt. Col. Gary Carlberg in a speech to the soldiers and their families. "There's a lot of people who don't support this conflict. But please, support our soldiers."

The soldiers of Maintenance Company 417 specialize in repairing transmissions, engines, generators, and

other non-artillery equipment. If deployed to the Persian Gulf region, the company would likely support military operations by repairing vehicles and generators, said Carlberg.

Specialist Jason Goin sat quietly at the banquet while listening to the many speakers on Monday evening. His family lives in Iowa and could not attend the banquet. "I'm leaving on Thursday," said Goin, who attends Pillsbury College in Owatonna. "I'm really just preparing myself to leave. There's nothing I can do about college right now."

Speakers at the event included Faribault Mayor Chuck Ackman, Command Sgt. Maj. Neil Heupel, American Legion Post Commander Gerry Heyer, and company Capt. Scott Cockrell.

"As mayor, I often speak on behalf of the city," said Ackman. "The city is proud of you, and we wish you god-speed. You will be in our thoughts and prayers."

Before his speech, Heyer spoke of the importance of supporting soldiers from all branches of the military.

"We wanted to show these soldiers that we're behind them 100 percent," said Heyer. "We have to trust in our elected leaders, and hope they're making the right decisions."

After thanking the Legion for holding the banquet, Heupel spoke directly to the soldiers, telling them to trust in their training.

"It's now time to step up. The time for training is over," said Heupel. "Let's do it. Let's make America proud."



Battalion Commander Lt. Col. Gary Carlberg, left, shakes hands with Sgt. Chad Beckius, of Lonsdale, after awarding a medal for outstanding performance Monday at the Maintenance Company 417 banquet held at the American Legion. To the left of Beckius are fellow members noted for outstanding performance, Pvt. 2 Arnold Olson, SPC John Poepping, and Sgt. Greg Peters. (Kelli Wencil / Daily News)

Auditor: Cut local aid 43 percent

■ Report says Faribault might be in top 25 of cities hit by cutbacks

ST. PAUL (AP) — State Auditor Pat Awada turned up the heat Monday on a long simmering debate over local government aid, the state money that goes to some cities with low property tax bases.

In a special report released by her office, Awada suggested cutting nearly a quarter billion dollars from the program, about 43 percent of the annual total.

"Simply put, it's pretty clear that the more local government aid you get, the more you spend," said Awada, a Republican and former mayor of Eagan, which receives almost no LGA. "It has rewarded and encouraged spending."

The report divided all spending by cities between essential and nonessential services. She found higher levels of spending on nonessential services, which include such things as parks and libraries, among those that receive higher levels of the state aid.

She proposed cutting any money that cities now use to provide above-average levels of "nonessential" services. It would fall on 103 cities, cutting \$244 million, based on 2002 numbers. Faribault ranks 17th in the amount of state funding that would be cut per resident.

Bus replacement depends on federal grant

By PAULINE SCHREIBER
Staff Writer

FARIBAULT — The oldest of Faribault three public buses is slated for replacement this year, but the city is seeking a federal transit grant to pay for it.

The cost of a replacement is around \$60,000, said Kim Lang, coordinator of Faribault's city bus program through the Faribault Community Development office.

The federal transit grant the city has applied for would finance 80 percent of the cost of the bus, leaving the city to pay around \$12,000, Lang said.

"Buying a replacement bus will only go forward if the city gets the federal grant," she said.

A seven-year-old bus with 150,000 miles on it is targeted for replacement. Lang explained that the city rotates the two newest buses on daily bus runs, keeping the oldest as a backup for when one of the other buses is sidelined for repairs.

With state and federal transit



A Faribault transit bus drops off a passenger at the Buckham Memorial Library on Monday. A federal grant is being sought to buy a replacement bus. (Kelli Wencil / Daily News)

funds are vital for the continuation of the city's bus program, Lang said, city officials are concerned about possible budget cuts.

The cost of operating each

city bus is around \$150,000 a year. Riders pay \$1 for a ride, with discounts for buying bulk tickets, and for senior citizen riders.

The cost of a bus ride, accord-

ing to a study done in 2001, based on the city providing 25,000 to 30,000 rides a year, is close to \$5. With riders paying \$1 per ride, the transit program depends heavily on operating

funds from the state and federal governments, in addition to a local operating fund subsidy of around \$13,000 per year.

At last week's city council work session, Lang said, the council's general affairs committee did discuss the idea of promoting the city bus to families if the Faribault School District has to change its transportation policies and reduce services.

Some school districts have already increased the distance from school that makes a student eligible to receive bus transportation from one mile to two miles. Students inside the radius would either walk or be transported to and from school by parents.

"We'd have to make changes to our bus routes, but the city bus could possibly help get kids to school, should changes have to be made in the school district transportation policies," Lang said. "However, at this stage, it was just a discussion by the city council to find out facts about the city's bus system."

The top 25

ST. PAUL (AP) — Top 25 of 103 cities that would see reductions in local government aid under state auditor's plan, ranked by amount of funding per resident that would be lost per year:

- Eveleth: \$364
- Virginia: \$294
- Minneapolis: \$230
- Le Sueur: \$227
- St. Paul: \$223
- Two Harbors: \$202
- Granite Falls: \$194
- Thief River Falls: \$187
- Redwood Falls: \$170
- Crookston: \$169
- Grand Rapids: \$160
- Hibbing: \$158
- Duluth: \$158
- East Grand Forks: \$151
- Spring Valley: \$147
- Ely: \$147
- Faribault: \$145
- Owatonna: \$141
- Brainerd: \$137
- Chisholm: \$135
- St. Peter: \$128
- Morris: \$128
- Litchfield: \$126
- Fergus Falls: \$125
- Park Rapids: \$122

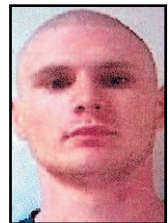
More charges filed against Northfield man

By MATTHEW COULSEY
Staff Writer

FARIBAULT — A Northfield man arrested last month for stealing a car has now been formally charged in connection with a burglary at the Northfield Athletic Club, along with attempted break-ins at other Northfield area businesses.

Jonathan Randal Paulsen, 21, who lists his address as 1520 Koester Ct. #50 in Northfield, was charged on Friday in connection with the Jan. 16 break-in and burglary of the gymnastics club.

He told police he had been staying with his aunt in Brainerd until Jan. 15, when he arrived in Northfield without a place to stay. Paulsen allegedly admitted to police that he broke into the Northfield Athletic Club in



J. Paulsen
Burglary suspect

search of a warm place to spend the night. He also admitted to stealing cash from the club, the complaint said.

Paulsen also allegedly told Northfield Police that he had tried to break into several businesses along Hwy. 3, and that he beat on several doorknobs in an attempt to gain access to the businesses. According to the complaint, Paulsen also specifically described his attempts to break into the Cannon Valley Cooperative.

The complaint charges Paulsen with break-ins or attempted break-ins at the athletic club, Cannon Valley Cooperative, Curves

for Women, Signal Finances Company, El Tequila Restaurant and Northfield Neck and Back Clinic.

Paulsen has been held in the Rice County Jail since his Jan. 19 arrest for allegedly stealing a 1995 Geo Metro from the Northfield High School parking lot. New charges against Paulsen include third-degree burglary, and three counts of criminal damage to property. He is scheduled to appear in court on Feb. 25 to face the new charges.

Under Minnesota law, the burglary charge carries a maximum penalty of five years in prison and a \$10,000 fine. The criminal damage charges range from 90-day jail stints to one-year stays. Maximum fines on those charges range from \$1,000 to \$3,000 on each count.

TODAY

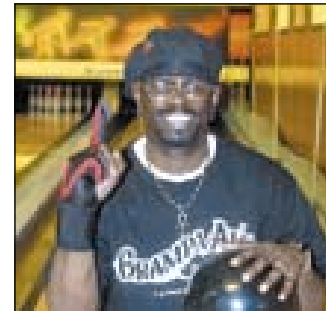
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