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INSIDE



Pitching figured to be the strength of the Hudson baseball team this season, but the Raider hitters haven't been too shabby so far either. **Page B1**



We want to see your photos from the Hudson prom this Saturday. Send us your favorite prom pictures, and we may use them in the Star-Observer or online. **Page A6**

OBITUARIES PAGE B6

- Roger O. Anderson
- George Dean
- Judith Gerhardt
- Marie Gorton
- Mary C. Hackett
- Joyce Karstad
- Sharyl K. Kittilson
- Reid Magler
- John Allen Martell
- Nancy J. Orgeman
- Francis G. Perry
- Joyce (Palan) Perry
- Charles Traiser
- Sandra "Sandee" H. Tyler
- Vera Jean Yndestad



DOCUMENTING LIFE

Writing out of the PANDEMIC

Book reflects on the year 2020

BY SAM FRISTED
Staff Writer

RIVER FALLS – If you were to tell Julie Murphy Agnew three years ago that she was going to be a published author, she would have laughed. Fast forward to 2022 and Agnew's book, "In It Together," is on the market making an idea into a reality.

"This is my first publication, and it's a dream; I had to idea I was going to publish a book," Agnew said.

"In It Together" tells the story of the year 2020 through simple sentences and imagery. It has themes of COVID-19, racial inequality and politics.

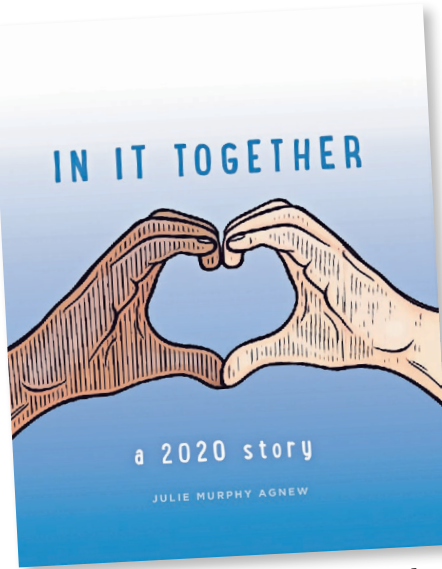


Murphy

"It wasn't the best year; everyone knows that. It's about finding the silver lining in what was otherwise a crazy year," Agnew said.

Agnew came up with the idea to document life during the pandemic as a project while she was at home. While at home with her 9-year-old, she said the idea of the project turned into the idea of writing it as a book.

"I sent out a mass email to all my friends and family asking them how they are surviving the pandemic," Agnew said. "I used their



words
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IN IT TOGETHER reflects on the year 2020.

Get the book

The book is available on Julie Agnew's website, <https://inittogetherbook.myshopify.com>, and on Amazon.

and pictures to create the storyline."

Agnew said she had time to work on the book because she lost her job in March 2020. Her experience during the pandemic was similar to what most others were feeling. She was unable to see friends and family.

See Murphy Page A9

The pandemic through the eyes of a COVID nurse

BY HANNAH COYLE
Staff Writer

Hudson resident Amanda Peterson volunteered for the COVID-19 unit when it was first established at United Hospital in St. Paul in March 2020. She knew she had to be a positive part of a deadly pandemic that would go down in history.

Peterson has been an intensive care unit nurse for 2008 and been working at United Hospital for 14 years.

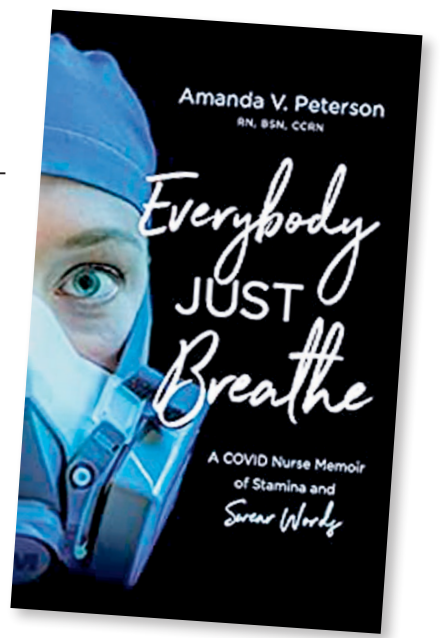
Peterson is not alone dealing with COVID-19.

Over the last few years, we've all had our fair share of encounters with the life-changing COVID-19 illness. We've been quarantined in our homes. We've worked virtually. We've worn masks to the grocery stores. We've had driveway parties to avoid getting too close to family members. We've gotten sick. We've gotten better. We've lost loved ones.

Unlike most of us, Peterson wrote about her experiences.

Peterson, like many health care workers, had COVID-19 in her life every single day.

As a mom, whenever Peterson came home from the COVID-19 unit, she would strip down in the garage and disinfect to protect her family from



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"Everybody Just Breathe: A COVID Nurse Memoir of Stamina and Swear Words" by Amanda Peterson.

any viruses she may have encountered at work.

"We spent a lot of time naked in our garages," Peterson said.

As the virus spread in China but had not found its way to the United States, Peterson and her coworkers saw what was coming. They prepared the best they could. They were ready and waiting for COVID-19 to make its entrance.

It was like watching a car crash in slow motion. All they could do was wait to save the patients when

See Peterson Page A9

MYGATT CASE

'We did everything possible'

After allegations, churches notified authorities, counseled victim, accused

BY TOM LINDFORS
Contributor

BALDWIN – Jacob Mygatt pleaded not guilty to charges of sexual assault of a child and child enticement at an arraignment hearing March 1 in St. Croix County Circuit Court.

The charges arose from a criminal complaint alleging that Mygatt had an inappro-

priate sexual relationship with an under-age female high school student while serving as a volunteer leader with a faith-based youth group in Baldwin between 2016 and 2018.

While the victim was under-age at the time of the alleged assault, complicating the case is that the alleged relationship carried on undiscovered for more than a year, according to

the complaint.

Anson Veenstra was the pastor at Baldwin Christian Reformed Church, where the victim and her family were congregation members at the time.

Veenstra said, "There's something larger here for all of us to learn from ... We need to continue to be diligent, to monitor and to make sure that

it never happens again under our watch."

He added that he feels a responsibility that "this happened under my watch."

"I understand that you can't monitor everybody, you can't be following everybody around all the time, but it weighs heavily on a pastor's heart

See Mygatt Page A5



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**PETERSON
PAGE A1**

they arrived, Peterson explained. The fear was unimaginable in the beginning. An “impending doom,” they called it. The fear wasn’t something that stayed at the hospital, either. Peterson wears many hats. In addition to being the mom of two and an ICU nurse, she started actively pursuing a degree as an acute care nurse practitioner at Winona State University. She will graduate May 6. At the end of March 2021, the COVID-19 unit was taken down. Briefly. When the delta variant hit in the fall of 2021, the nurses stepped up again, seeing yet another wave of sickness and deaths. It’s only been in recent weeks that things began to feel normal in the ICU. The first time in years.



Amanda Peterson and her husband, Collin, met in high school in Hudson. They have a 9-year-old daughter Sammy and a 6-year-old son Lewie.

SUBMITTED

“I know that our story was worth telling,” she said. For the first time in many of their careers, health care workers were experiencing something inexplicable, scary and unique. And they not only faced those things, but for the first time they weren’t always being believed. “People want to deny scary things,” she said. “People want it so badly not to be real.” But it was. In a sinking ship, together, health care workers would bale water for two and half years, saving everyone in sight that they could. This book, though about a traumatic time in our world, is humorous at moments. With young children, Peterson couldn’t help but include the moments of trial and triumph with them.

Families were allowed in as visitors, as opposed to restricting numbers. She doesn’t think the virus is gone but hopes we will move into a time where we can treat COVID-19 like other seasonal bugs. Slowly, things began to feel normal, in a way that only shocked Peterson more when restrictions and recommendations lessened. Peterson recently watched a movie with her daughter who said, “There are too many people in that room,” referencing the wedding taking place on screen. Having had a significant part of her young life placed in small groups of people with masked faces, a wedding scene from a movie seemed out of place for Peterson’s 9-year-old daughter, Sammy. “You wonder when that will go away,” Peterson said.

pandemic. COVID-19 was a collective trauma experienced in a particular way by health care workers. It was hard to leave those daily experiences at work. The virus followed you home, she said. There was no turning off a global pandemic, and there was no fool-proof way to cope, but Peterson turned to writing. And ranting. And swearing.

Writing a book (on accident)

“Everybody Just Breathe: A COVID Nurse Memoir of Stamina and Swear Words” was kind of a fluke. It began as a collection of social media posts, where Peterson would release all of the day’s stress and fear and spread the word about what COVID-19 was doing to our communities behind hospital doors. She realized that it would be neat to put all of the 74 pages she had written together for future reflection and wanted a second opinion. She sent it off to some publishers in the Twin Cities, not for publishing, just for thoughts. The publishers wanted

Writing a book (on accident)

more. “We want to hear the rest of the story,” was what she got in response. Peterson revisited the manuscript and rounded out what is now “Everybody Just Breathe.” Before she could send



Amanda Peterson collected images from her time in the COVID-19 unit, while documenting stories.

the book to press, the delta variant hit. Peterson felt the story wasn’t over and started writing yet again. This time, she added a prologue. “I honestly just kind of wrote it for me,” Peterson said about the book. She called it “word

vomiting.” As much of a therapy as it was for her to write, Peterson hopes other health care professionals will feel a sense of camaraderie and solidarity in her pages.

“Everybody Just Breathe” can be ordered on Amazon and signed copies can be purchased directly through Peterson at thisnursemom.com. Readers can reach Hannah at hcoyle@orourkemediagroup.com

My name is Amanda. I am third-generation nurse. I think it is genetic at this point, because my daughter likes to make me Google things like “baby with two faces,” “smallest organ in the body” and “horse lungs.” Or, maybe, I am raising a tiny serial killer. One or the other. I knew early on that I wanted to be something medical. At Girl Scouts one year, I made a first aid kit out of a film canister. (Yes, I am dating myself. Let’s pretend my age makes me wiser, mmmkay?) On the playground at school, I wore the kit tied on a shoelace like a necklace. It had alcohol wipes, antibiotic ointment, and Band-Aids for scraped knees. I loved being the one to fix people. I liked saving the day. It was the beginning. Feeling the physical book in her hands provided Peterson with a piece of closure, like finishing therapy, she said. It’s a book for everybody, about an experience everybody was a part of.

**MURPHY
PAGE A1**

She focused on the positives. Doing that she found some good came from the lockdown. “Even though I lost my job, I got to spend a lot of time with my daughter,” Agnew said. “Those were some of my best memories during the pandemic.” One goal of the book was to reflect on the experiences and emotions 2020 brought everyone, Agnew said. She wanted to share other peoples experiences and emotions in the book.

“It was important for me to educate her and anyone that reads the book because we should be educated about the injustices in the country,” Agnew said. “As a community we need to find resources to be the best citizens possible.” As the calendar flipped to 2021, Agnew completed the book. The next step was finding a publisher, a challenge for the first-time author. “I was told we’re not going to publish your collection of family and

friend photos,” Agnew joked when talking about feedback received from publishers. Remaining unfazed and confident she could find a publisher, Agnew had to decide whether to self-publish or continue on the standard publishing route. She picked a hybrid model of the two and eventually found a publisher. A few months later, “In It Together,” became available for purchase. Agnew said since the book has been out she has received

nothing but positive feedback. “We were all in the same storm, just in a different boat. I feel like we were in this together,” Agnew said. “I hope the book provides readers reminders of all the good things that came out of the year 2020.” Readers can reach Sam at sfristed@orourkemediagroup.com

EXCITING NEWS!
Peter Goodwin joined me to form the 'Goodwin & Moore' team. I am excited to add his 20 years of finance experience, vast real estate experiences and passion for customer service.

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The project began in June 2020. An optimistic Agnew thought the project would be completed by Christmas. She was wrong. Major events besides the pandemic forced her to pivot away from the main goal of the project. “I realized I should expand it beyond COVID to focus the book more about racial inequality, the election, the death of Ruth Bader Ginsburg, etc.,” Agnew said. As Agnew spent time with her daughter while working on the project, it allowed Agnew to educate her daughter on the themes discussed in the book.

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