



## A year defined by Dan Patch

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by **Andrew Miller**

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Local news last year was heavily horse-oriented.

Famed local pacer horse Dan Patch made headline after headline in 2006, 100 years after his world record-setting mile run.

In February, Dan Patch was inducted into the Minnesota Harness Racing Hall of Fame. The first horse to receive the honor, Dan Patch was honored along with B.E. "Jack Budahn, host of a harness racing television show in the 1950s, at a ceremony in Shakopee.

The first book in half a century about Dan Patch was released in June. "The Great Dan Patch and the Remarkable Mr. Savage," by St. Paul author Tim Brady, chronicles the pacer horse's racing career and the life of his owner Marion W. Savage, the turn-of-the-century entrepreneur after whom the city of Savage is named.

Brady, a writer for the History Channel Magazine, did much of his research locally, consulting members of the Savage-based Dan Patch Historical Society (DPHS) and visiting the Heritage Room in the Savage Library for source material.

The pièce de résistance for Dan Patch in 2006 came at the Minnesota State Fair. Sept. 2 was designated "Dan Patch Day" at the fair in recognition of the pacer horse's record-setting mile run of 1 minute, 55 seconds at the fairgrounds on Sept. 8, 1906.

The DPHS hosted a tent outside the fair's Grandstand featuring Dan Patch memorabilia and historical displays. Brady was on hand to sign copies of his book, and Deborah Savage, great-granddaughter of Marion W. Savage, signed copies of her Dan Patch-inspired young adult novel, "To Race a Dream."

### **Depot returns**

Most Savage residents were fast asleep when the historic Savage Depot returned home in July.

After more than 30 years at Murphy's Landing in Shakopee, the depot was moved back to Savage July 28. To ensure the safest journey, the caravan of vehicles transporting the depot left Murphy's Landing at about 1 a.m. and arrived in Savage about 4:30 a.m.

Situated in the city-owned lot adjoining the Town Square parking lot in downtown Savage, the depot has been under renovation since summer. The city is in the final phase of lease proposal talks with Annette Grant, a third-grade teacher at M.W. Savage Elementary, who hopes to operate a coffee shop out of the depot.

The effort to relocate the depot was spearheaded by the Dan Patch Historical Society and the city. Historical society members first approached the city with the proposal to relocate the depot in fall 2004.

Built in 1880, the depot is known for being one of the last standing buildings frequented by Marion W. Savage. Murphy's Landing bought the depot in 1973 and brought it to Shakopee. Officials at Three Rivers Park District, which assumed ownership of the depot in 2000, determined they couldn't afford to maintain it and agreed to give it back to Savage.

### **Artists set up shop downtown**

Pending sale of the Minnesota River School of Fine Art in Burnsville sent the working artists and teachers who cemented the local arts community over the school's 12-year history scattering.

Seven artists leasing space at the school formed a co-op and began scouting out studio space in downtown Savage. The end result was the opening of Savage Art Studios this year in the Hamilton Building on West 123rd Street.

In July Savage Art Studios signed a three-year lease with the city, which owns the Hamilton Building, and opened its doors Sept. 1. The lease signing was followed by creation of the Savage Arts Council with a \$5,000 grant from the city, with the intent that the council will work with the city to identify and apply for outside arts grants.

Savage Art Studios began offering a limited schedule of art classes in the fall and has since expanded its curriculum to include a variety of courses. A full listing of winter course offerings is available at [www.savageartstudios.com](http://www.savageartstudios.com).

### **New police chief**

New Savage police chief Rodney Seurer was sworn in at the Dec. 4 City Council meeting. Seurer, formerly a captain with Savage police, stepped in to fill the vacancy left by former Chief Gordon Vlasak, who resigned in November after leading the police department for 22 years. In tendering his resignation, Vlasak said he had accepted a managerial position with Super America-Speedway Corporation.

Seurer, before joining Savage police in 2001, was a sergeant with the Durham, N.C., police department, where he had served since 1979.

### **South Savage upgrades planned**

In December, Savage City Council green lighted the first phase of infrastructure improvements in south Savage. The project involves the extension of trunk utilities and road reconstruction along 154th Street from County Road 27 to the east about 2,000 feet.

Construction is expected to begin in March and finish up in July. Completion of the project will open the door for further development in south Savage.

Estimated cost for the first phase of improvements in south Savage is \$2.94 million. Utility and street assessments are proposed for property owners affected by the improvements. Trunk sewer assessments are anticipated for the project area south of 154th Street, and would be levied after an assessment hearing slated for fall 2007.

### **Parks planning**

Savage City Council in December approved the Parks, Trails and Open Space System Plan intended to guide city parks through 2030.

The plan identifies the need for additional baseball and soccer fields, an indoor ice rink, and more trails, as well the addition of a park along the Minnesota River. The likely location for a river park would be land between Vernon and Quentin avenues, according to a draft of the parks plan.

The “priority actions” in the next five years laid out in the plan include improved trail and walkway access from downtown Savage; the addition of an off-leash dog area, a baseball field and multiple soccer fields; planning for the McColl Pond Environmental Learning Center at Community Park; and discussions with landowners near the site for the proposed riverfront park.

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