

**Proofread those steet signs**

**Ask Us**

Q: Hi, On a beautiful spring day I was sitting in the parking lot of the MoonDogs field and wondered why the sign has a misspelling and how many people have caught this? Just curious, A: If previous people have reported the spelling error — “street” spelled as “steet,” Mankato City Manager Pat **Hentges** hasn’t heard from them.

“I’ll get right up there with a magic marker and fix it,” **Hentges** said.

Although the city has other issues higher on its priority list at the moment, he said the sign contractor will eventually be asked to correct the mistake.

The question got **Hentges** reminiscing about growing up in Sleepy Eye, where the **Hentges** family lived in the same neighborhood as Sleepy Eye’s sign-maker, who always had a large supply of sign rejects in storage.

“Wally Forster had the sign business, and Wally was just a great artist. That was back when they painted the signs. Wally, unfortunately, was a bad speller.”

The irony was that Wally’s wife was a fifth-grade teacher, and **Hentges** knew from personal experience that she always spotted misspellings and other mistakes in his school papers: “She was a great

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Submitted photo

On the positive side, the sign maker got the number and the first four words right.

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ASK US: Readers wonder about misspellings, contradictory COVID-19 death projections

speller. My father always said, ‘I never figured out why Wally didn’t have Helen edit his work.’” **Hentges** speculates that Sleepy Eye residents can probably still list some of Wally’s most finely crafted signs — and one or two of his better blunders.

**Q:** In the Sunday newspaper on side-by-side pages (A6 and A7) the numbers for estimated deaths over a 12-month period from COVID-19 appeared. The number given nationally was 60,000 and the number for Minnesota was 22,000. Seems like there’s a disconnect here. Why is the Minnesota number so high? Thanks!

**A:** All Ask Us Guy can say is, “Go Huskies.”

The 60,000 nationwide death toll estimate, referenced on Page A7 of Sunday’s Free Press, comes from the University of Washington. The more dire projection of Minnesota deaths, mentioned on Page A6, is from a model developed by the University of Minnesota, working with the Minnesota Department of Health. So Ask Us Guy, normally an avid fan of the Gophers, is definitely rooting for the University of Washington in this dark competition.

The 60,000 figure was widely reported after Dr. Anthony Fauci mentioned it on a national television interview April 9. The new projection from Washington’s Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, or IHME, was a notable glimmer of good news because Fauci had said about 10 days earlier that 100,000 to 200,000 was a middle-of-the-road estimate of the total number of expected American deaths.

The IHME projection covers predicted deaths through early August — a month after the institute projects there will be no new fatalities from the disease anywhere in the United States. The estimate

is based on a scenario where full social distancing continues through May, and it projects the last deaths from the pandemic in the U.S. occurring near the end of June.

As of Saturday afternoon, nearly 39,000 Americans had already died of COVID-19.

IHME also does state-by-state projections and predicts the death rate in Minnesota will peak at the end of this month and no new COVID-19 deaths will occur in the state after June 22. After predicting 185 Minnesotans would die of the disease, the model increased the number to 195 late last week. As of Friday, Minnesota had 121 COVID-19 deaths and has been averaging about 12 per day in the past three days. Again, the University of Washington model assumes that stringent restrictions on social interactions will continue through the end of May.

The University of Minnesota model has been consistently less optimistic than the University of Washington’s. While the University of Washington is predicting the pandemic will be over by July 1, the Minnesota model predicts the number of hospitalizations won’t even peak here until sometime in July.

The estimated 22,000 Minnesota deaths, which assumes the stay-at-home order continues until May 4 and social-distancing efforts continue into June, is actually the midpoint of a much broader range of potential deaths. The model technically projects between 9,000 and 36,000 Minnesota deaths through March 2021.

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