

# The Minnesota Star Tribune

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## He wanted to kill, but was set free

Vicious stabbing shows cracks in how state deals with civil commitment.

Story by **JEFF DAY**  
Photo by **GLEN STUBBE**  
The Minnesota Star Tribune

When Christine Amundson was told her son had been arrested for trying to kill someone, an unlikely feeling came over her.

“It was relief, in a way,” she said.

On July 27, her son, Logan Seitz, carried out a vicious stab-

bing in Willow Lane Park in Brooklyn Center. His mother was horrified for the victim – who somehow survived – but was not surprised that it happened.

Seitz, now 20, has been civilly committed in Minnesota three times in the past three years. Reams of court records show he made consistent threats about carrying out this kind of attack. In a previous criminal case, he followed a roommate at his

group home, pulled his head back and stabbed him in the neck three times with a metal fork. In another, he threatened to carry out a mass shooting at a grocery store and slit the throat of his caseworker.

Amundson, who lives in Brainerd, said Seitz’s mental health has been deteriorating since he was 13.

For years, she told anyone who would listen that her son

was dangerous and needed a higher level of state care. She went so far as to appoint a guardian, so her emotions wouldn’t undermine her son’s treatment. Caseworkers and doctors argued in court that Seitz needed to be placed at the forensic mental health program in St. Peter, Minnesota’s only facility for those found to be mentally ill and dangerous.

**SEE CIVIL COMMITMENT ON A4 »**



The Minnesota Security Hospital in St. Peter, shown in 2013, operates at capacity and has a long waiting list.

## DEPORTATIONS LOOM LARGE OVER WILLMAR

Because of waves of immigrants, small city in deeply red Kandiyohi County continues to grow.

Story by **REID FORGRAVE**  
Photos by **ELIZABETH FLORES**  
The Minnesota Star Tribune

**WILLMAR, MINN.** - This regional agricultural center is a study in contrasts. Flags adorn city streets welcoming people to Willmar in five languages, including Spanish, Somali and Karen, and 29 different languages are spoken in the diverse public school district.

On the city’s outskirts sits the county jail, one of only a handful in Minnesota with federal contracts to house detainees from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. It now holds more than any other in the state.

Sitting outside adjacent stalls in the Kandiyohi County Fairgrounds horse barn on a steamy recent morning, a man and a woman embodied how immigration politics hits differently in this west-central Minnesota county of 44,000 people.

The two shared many concerns: about big-city crime in their rural area, about an uncertain future for kids and grandkids, about how mass deportation could hurt the tight labor market here.

Where they diverged was the topic dividing much of America during President Donald Trump’s second term: immigration.

The man, a 71-year-old retiree and three-time Trump voter named Russ Steinhaus, applauded Trump’s increased immigration enforcement. He said illegal immigration costs America more than it can afford.

The woman, a sixth-grade math teacher in Willmar named Courtney Lee who voted for Kamala Harris, feared students could be hurt by family separations.

Here, immigration views come with nuance. The biggest supporters of Trump’s policies readily admit immigration has driven local growth; the biggest detractors see how demographic changes have jarred longtime residents.

Voters here have become increasingly conservative in recent decades. Trump beat Harris by more than 30 percentage points in 2024, with Republican margins increasing each election cycle since 2008, when Republican John McCain won the county by only 5 percentage points.

Waves of immigration – from **SEE IMMIGRATION ON A6 »**

### ‘OUR DREAMS ARE ON PAUSE RIGHT NOW’

Guatemalan immigrants Jorge and Jaqueline, top photo, play with their baby at home in Willmar, which is increasingly diverse. He works odd jobs and she babysits as they wait for work permits. In the middle photo, llama farmer Gary Stai opposes illegal immigration but welcomes those “here to better themselves.” At right, Somalis cross the street after prayer.



## Transit ridership in metro off track

By **GRETA KAUL**  
and **KARINA KUMAR**  
The Minnesota Star Tribune

Metro Transit’s progress in regaining bus and train riders since the pandemic has stalled, and the system now ranks near the bottom among peers nationwide for its sluggish post-pandemic recovery.

Ridership remains down 45% from pre-pandemic levels, according to a Minnesota Star Tribune analysis of Federal Transit Administration data through the first half of this year. And, to the frustration of local officials, ridership in early 2025 was actually less than it was in the same period the year before.

Among metros with transit systems similar to the Twin Cities’, only Atlanta and St. Louis – facing their own sets of problems – saw bigger drops.

“Unfortunately, Minneapolis’ recovery is quite a bit below the U.S. average,” said Yonah Freemark, an Urban Institute principal research associate who has studied transit recovery. “It’s not as bad as Atlanta or St. Louis, but I think there should be some soul-searching in the metropolitan area, by the Met Council and others, to identify what’s going on there.”

Agencies across the country **SEE TRANSIT ON A8 »**

## Recalling an early Voyageurs champion

Jun Fujita’s photos built a case for preservation more than century ago.

By **BOB TIMMONS**  
The Minnesota Star Tribune

Like its hundreds of islands, Voyageurs National Park in the border lake country between northern Minnesota and Canada ripples with stories.

A colorful but underappreciated champion of the region is emerging as a key part of the Voyageurs origin story as the park marks its 50th anniversary.

Jun Fujita was a Japanese American photographer whose keen eye and sense of adventure was manifested in powerful news photography for the Chicago Evening Post in the early 1900s. His black-and-white images from the hustle and heat of the city included everything from race riots to Al Capone gangster violence.

**SEE VOYAGEURS ON A8 »**