Welcome Kayla—

On Thursday, April 19th, we welcomed Kayla Perkins as the newest police officer on the Owatonna Police Department. She will begin the first phase of the field training program on the day shift working with Field Training Officer Chad Fierst. Kayla comes to us from the Redwing area where she graduated from the Redwing High School. Kayla is a graduate of St. Mary’s University in Winona where she majored in criminal justice and sociology. She is also a graduate of the Law Enforcement Skills Program at the Alexandria Technical College. Kayla has previous law enforcement experience as an intern with the Goodhue County Sheriff’s Office and as a reserve officer with the Winona Police Department. We welcome Kayla and hope she has a long, rewarding career with the Owatonna Police Department.

Early Morning Juvenile Arrest—

Early Sunday morning, an Owatonna officer was patrolling the Steele County Fairgrounds when he came along a vehicle parked along the side of the horse barns on the east end of the fairgrounds. The officer investigated further and found two 17-year-old males in the vehicle; he also smelled an odor of marijuana coming from the vehicle. A subsequent search of the vehicle revealed four zip-lock plastic bags containing marijuana, a smokeless tobacco tin containing marijuana and two devices used to smoke marijuana. Both juveniles were released to their parents and will be facing curfew charges. One of the juveniles will also face additional charges of possessing marijuana in a motor vehicle and possessing drug paraphernalia.

Distracted Driving Awareness—

Driver distraction is a contributing factor in one-quarter of all Minnesota vehicle crashes annually — and resulting in 208 deaths and nearly 26,000 injuries in the last three years. In Minnesota, it is illegal for drivers to read, compose or send texts/emails, and access the Web on a wireless device while the vehicle is in motion or a part of traffic — even at a stoplight/stop sign, or stuck in traffic. It is also illegal for drivers under age 18 to use a cell phone at any time.

State traffic safety officials and law enforcement agencies are launching a distracted driving education campaign this week anchored by increased enforcement on Thursday, April 19. Please consider the following tip to minimize being distracted while driving:

- **Cell phones** — turn off cell phones, or place them out of reach to avoid the urge to dial/answer or read or send a text. If a passenger is present, ask them to handle calls/texts.
- **Music and other controls** — pre-program favorite radio stations and arrange music in an easy-to-access spot. Adjust mirrors and AC/heat before traveling, or ask a passenger to assist.
- **Navigation** — designate a passenger to serve as a co-pilot to help with directions. If driving alone, map out destinations in advance, and pull over to study a map or program the GPS.
- **Eating and drinking** — try to avoid food/beverage (especially messy foods) and have drinks secured.
- **Children** — teach children the importance of good behavior in a vehicle; do not underestimate how distracting it can be to tend to children while driving.
- **Passengers** should speak up to stop drivers from distracted driving behavior. If making/receiving a call to/from someone driving, ask them to call back when they are not driving.