

PIONEER PRESS BASKETBALL
PLAYER OF THE YEAR



HENRY SIBLEY
SENIOR, 1B

MIKE BRUESEWITZ

Local Page 5A

South St. Paul
taxpayer in trouble
over angry outburst

Business Page 11A

Conficker computer
worm expected to
awaken Wednesday

A&E Live Page 1C

'When a Man Loves
a Diva' — an eclectic,
entertaining delight

PIONEER PRESS

43 high, 29 low > See Page 8B

twincities.com

TUESDAY 3-31-2009

Suit: Cops planted gun on slain teen

Victim's family challenges Minneapolis police over 2006 fatal shooting

By David Hanners
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The handgun found near a teenager shot and killed by a Minneapolis police officer in 2006 could not have been carried by the teen, new court documents allege: It had last been in possession of police before it was found next to the body of Fong Lee.

The court filings in a lawsuit filed by

Lee's family against Minneapolis police and the officer who fired the fatal shots, along with a review of police reports, witness statements and other documents, raise the possibility that Fong Lee was unarmed when an officer shot him eight times — and that the pistol that officers said they found near his body was placed there after the shooting.

The gun in question had been recov-

ered earlier after a burglary and turned over to police, who kept it as evidence and had never returned it to its owner.

Moreover, Minneapolis police "may have tried to deliberately alter history by writing new reports indicating the gun recovered near Fong's body was not the same gun" that had been

POLICE SUED, 5A >

St. Paul wants gang banned at Cinco de Mayo

The city names 10 alleged Sureno 13 members as undesirables at May fest

By Dave Orrick
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To hear St. Paul tell it, Jorge Vargas, 20, is such a dangerous gangbanger he can hardly be permitted to go anywhere near Minnesota's largest Latino festival.

To hear Vargas tell it, he was a troublemaker back in high school. But now, at age 20, he has left the gang life and kept on the straight and narrow for two years. He has moved to the suburbs to stay out of trouble and raise his daughter while working toward a college degree.

Welcome to the murky waters St. Paul entered Monday in an attempt, the first of its kind in Minnesota, to crack down on alleged gang leaders by nearly banning them from attending the Cinco de Mayo Fiesta on May 1-2.

Vargas is one of 10 "most active and influential" alleged members of the Sureno 13 gang, according to court filings that community and law enforcement leaders applaud as putting public safety first but civil liberties advocates criticize as being too broad.

GANG BARRED, 4A >

SONIA'S STORY



PIONEER PRESS: JEAN PIERI

Diane Hovey shares a moment with daughter Sonia, 21, at home in Maplewood. At 14 months old, Sonia suffered brain damage when a swallowed popcorn kernel stopped her breathing.

By Megan Boldt
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Diane Hovey wanted her daughter's peers to get to know her. Children would approach Sonia at ball games, peering at the little girl watching from the sidelines in a wheelchair. They wanted to know why she needed it. Their parents also would listen for the answer, hoping no one would notice their curiosity.



Hovey decided to write a fairy tale based on Sonia, who suffered severe brain damage when she was 14 months old. For years, Hovey

A mom's fairy tale introduced her young daughter's disabilities to her classmates.

Analysis

Obama takes the wheel, but this road has no map

President enters uncharted territory in hopes of reviving GM, Chrysler

By David E. Sanger
New York Times

Last chance: Obama puts the ailing carmakers on a short leash. Page 4A

As an assertion of government control over a huge swath of the industrial landscape, President Barack Obama's decision to reshape the automobile industry has few precedents.

In essentially taking command of General Motors and telling Chrysler to merge with a foreign competitor or cease to exist, Obama was saying economic conditions are sufficiently dire to justify a new level of government involve-

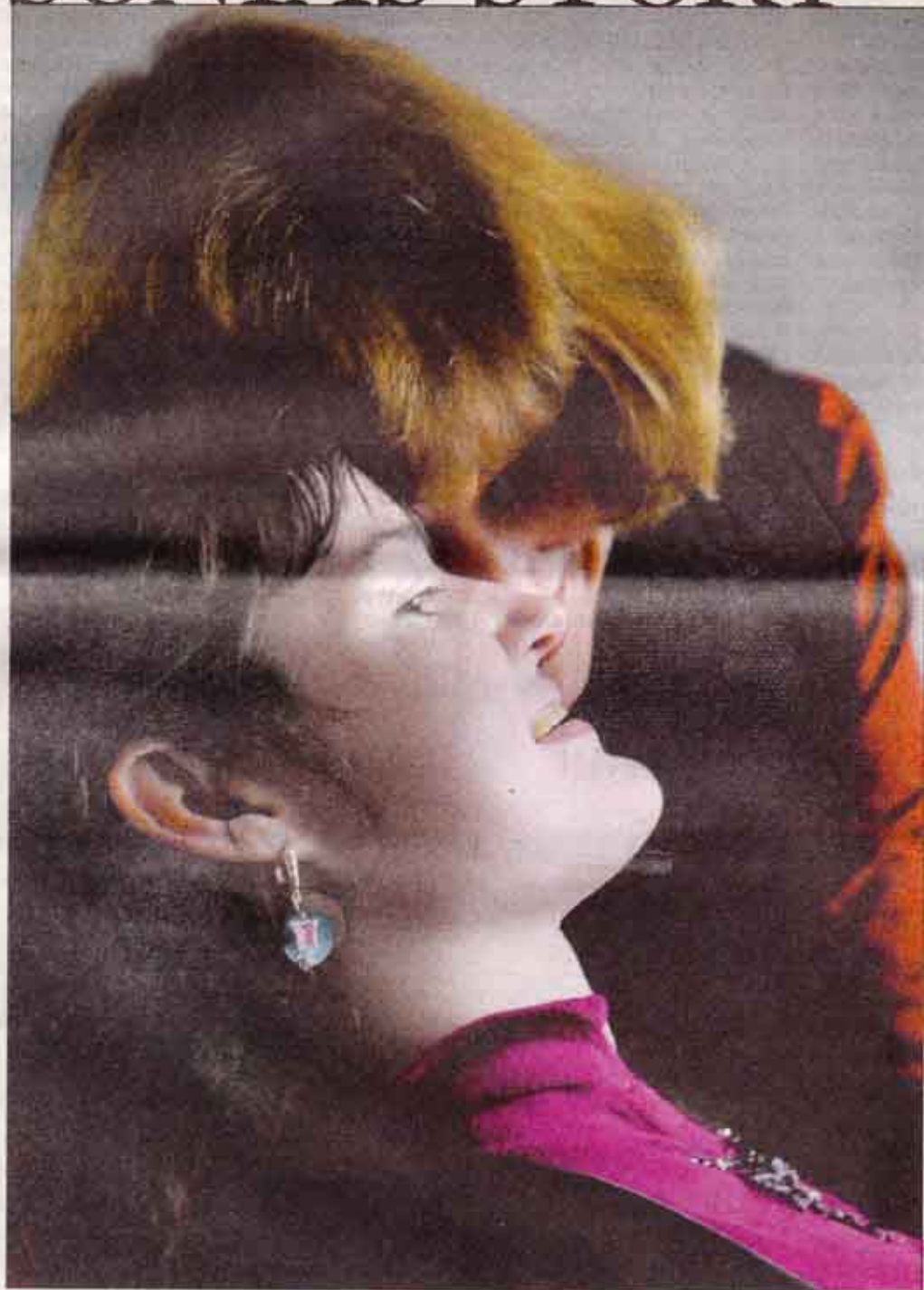
ment in the management of Corporate America. His message amounted to an invasion of the relationship that helped define the rise of American manufacturing might in the 20th century; now, Obama seemed to be saying that what is good for America will have to be good enough for General Motors.

AUTO BAILOUT, 4A >

Last of the sandbags filled, Fargo is ready for a second crest

Though Red River down considerably,

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Hovey decided to write a fairy tale based on Sonia, who suffered severe brain damage when she was 14 months old. For years, Hovey used the story as a learning tool, reading it to Sonia's classmates at the beginning of each school year.

"This is a way for people to look at her and her gifts rather than her disability," Hovey said.

Now, after 15 years of sharing the story with teachers, doctors and other families, the Maplewood resident has turned the tale into a children's book, "Princess Sophia's Gifts." The North St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale school district's community education department is

A mom's fairy tale introduced her young daughter's disabilities to her classmates. Now, the story is offering a wider audience the gift of understanding.

SONIA'S STORY, 4A >



PIONEER PRESS: JEAN PIERI

Diane Hovey holds daughter Sonia's hand. Sonia's experiences inspired her mother to write "Princess Sophia's Gifts." "You can say things through stories that you sometimes can't discuss," Diane Hovey said.

CONTINUED FROM 1A

> Sonia's story

hosting a reading and book discussion tonight in Oakdale.

Hovey said the tale grew out of her own need to tell Sonia's story in a way that could build understanding.

When Sonia was just 14 months old, a popcorn kernel lodged in her lung, unbeknownst to her parents. When she was lying down at night, it moved with her breathing, causing swelling and ultimately blockage.

One night, Sonia woke up with a strange cough and stopped breathing. She had no vital signs when paramedics arrived. It took 25 minutes to revive her.

Doctors didn't know the extent of the damage then but knew it would be significant and apparent within a year. Sonia, now 21, cannot talk and uses a feeding tube and wheelchair.

Hovey, a marriage and family therapist, said she has found writing can be a powerful tool. She also is a licensed poetry therapist and uses writing often with her patients.

"You can say things through stories that you sometimes can't discuss," she said. "There is incredible power in healing in writing a story."

Hovey's fairy tale is about Princess Sophia, the third child of King Caradoc and Queen Raena. On her third birthday, she choked on a seed.

When Sophia awoke weeks later, the little princess who once charmed her kingdom



COURTESY TO THE PIONEER PRESS: DIANE HOVEY

Sonia Hovey celebrates her first birthday about two months before suffering severe brain damage.

could no longer walk or talk. She had stopped breathing for too long.

She went to an exquisite garden while she was asleep and came back with gifts given to her by three women — beauty, spirit, patience and endurance.

Her family searched high and low for a cure, but they didn't find one. After their journey, they realized how much they had grown and healed, returning with wisdom instead.

"It's a universal story, not just about disabilities," Hovey said. "I think everyone always asks why when something tragic happens. They're on this journey about how to make sense of how this event can happen."

Sonia was the first special

education student mainstreamed into Sandy Winegarden's third-grade classroom at Webster Elementary in North St. Paul, and Winegarden was a bit nervous.

But that quickly changed. Hovey came in to talk to Winegarden's class and read the story. The children were accepting of what Sonia could do and wanted to make sure she was a part of everything they did in class, Winegarden said.

"It was probably one of the most enriching experiences of my career," she said. "What the students and I all learned from her, it was absolutely amazing."

"They saw the real person in Sonia. They loved her for who she is and looked beyond her

IF YOU GO

What: "Princess Sophia's Gifts," a book reading and discussion

When: 7 to 8:30 p.m. today

Where: Oakdale Discovery Center, 4444 Hadley Ave. N. in Oakdale

Cost: \$10 per family includes music, reading and refreshments

For information: Call North St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale school district's community education department at 651-748-7445 or visit community education.webaloo.com and look for Volume II of the Learning for All Catalog, Page 3.

disability. They were so good at it that I learned how to interact with Sonia."

The brain damage may have changed Sonia physically and mentally, but it didn't change her spirit or personality, Hovey said. She is still a social butterfly. Her favorite word is "go."

"Her laugh is contagious," Hovey said. "You can't help but laugh yourself."

Sonia doesn't like it when people discuss her disability, but she loves her story. She will be at the book reading to hand out signed copies of her book as well as necklaces and bookmarks.

"It makes it acceptable for her to talk about her disability," Hovey said of the book.

Megan Boldt can be reached at 651-228-5495.