It went viral
Our reporter saw that a woman was being bullied on Facebook for her bad teeth and she wrote about it: http://www.stltoday.com/news/local/metro/aisha-sultan-woman-posts-friend-s-proposal-on-facebook-then/article_fd4dc8be-a922-5f9c-b570-cb37c58df79b.html

Then a dentist, and readers, wanted to help. So that resulted in a followup that also did well online: http://www.stltoday.com/lifestyles/bullies-tried-to-break-her-instead-they-helped-jessica-mcdaniels/article_71d0f61e-2301-5165-8303-c3418e2ba667.html

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Bullies tried to break her. Instead, they helped Jessica McDaniels get a new smile.

By Aisha Sultan St. Louis Post-Dispatch  Jul 22, 2017  (27)

Jessica McDaniels poses for portraits before her dental surgery and after some of the procedures have been completed.

Pat McGee noticed her daughter had not returned to the oral surgeon's waiting room shortly before her surgery was supposed to start.

She walked to the nearest bathroom and found Jessica McDaniels, 32, outside the stall, crying. Pat took her daughter into her arms.

“We are going to say bye to the old Jessica,” she said. “And hi to the new Jessica.”

McDaniels, a hairstylist in St. Louis, had been praying for this day since high school, when the taunting about her misshapen teeth started. Now that it was finally happening, she was a nervous wreck.

She hadn't slept well in days. This day, she stood up at 4 a.m. and looked around her bedroom.
University of Minnesota grants dying man's wish to see his son graduate
For possibly the first time ever, the University of Minnesota will host a one-student graduation ceremony Monday.

By Aimee Blanchette | MARCH 20, 2017 — 7:53PM

Video (03:40) : Ken Brown was diagnosed with ALS in Feb. 2014. His son Collin will graduate from college in May but doctors say Ken's prognosis is grim.

When Ken Brown found out three years ago that he had ALS, he was forced to think about what he wanted most from life.

At the top of that list? To see both of his children graduate from the University of Minnesota.

Daily breaking news – We shifted a features g.a. to report to the digital editor and asked her to start work at 6 a.m. She scours social media and uses the Crowd Tangle tool to find what’s trending, or simply looks for ideas on her own. When she finds something we think our readers will like, she writes a story, often posting before 9 a.m. She consistently finds hits, and we almost always reverse publish these stories into print. Weird news, like goldfish in lakes and an escaped pet boa constrictor are guaranteed hits. So are sweet stories often scoffed at by our news colleagues, but we know readers love them.

Star Tribune
Extreme senior portraits: Bemidji teen suits up as Spider-Man for epic photos

Jaxon Anderson weaved a web of awesomeness for his senior photo shoot to create the most epic yearbook pics ever.

By Aimee Blanchette Star Tribune | SEPTEMBER 9, 2016 — 10:38AM

GALLERY GRID 1/8

By day, Bemidji high school senior Jaxon Anderson is a lot like Peter Parker, an awkward coming-of-age teen who wants to be everyone’s hero. When he puts on the mask, however, Anderson becomes the Amazing Spider-Man.

And when you’re Spider-Man, the traditional senior photo shoot just isn’t going to cut it.

Anderson swapped the cheesy backgrounds and subpar lighting for a dramatic movie set-style photo shoot as Spider-Man in downtown Bemidji.

Officials warn: Don't flush your goldfish

Don’t want your pet fish? Don’t flush it, donate it.

By Aimee Blanchette Star Tribune | JANUARY 20, 2016 — 8:36AM

Large goldfish, such as these pulled from a waterway near Niagara Falls, are evidence that individuals are releasing aquarium fish in the environment.

Giant goldfish are becoming a problem in Minnesota lakes, and wildlife officials are warning fish owners who no longer want to care for their pets not to flush them down the toilet or dispose of them in lakes, ponds or waterways.

Donate them instead.

“They can grow to be the size of dinner plates in these waters,” said Sharon Moen, a spokesperson with the Minnesota Sea Grant.

Moen said wildlife officials have recovered giant goldfish, piranha, Amazonian catfish, koi and even a caiman — a reptile related to alligators — from Minnesota waterways. A pond in Duluth was taken over by goldfish, she said.

Goldfish have been recovered from Powderhorn Lake in Minneapolis; the Department of Natural Resources also caught one near Albert Lea that was 9 to 11 inches long.

“It’s not that common,” she said. “But it happens more than you would think.”
Outta Control: Behind the scenes at Sweet Martha's Cookies

Sweet Martha’s Cookie Jar can make up to 3 million cookies a day at the State Fair.

By Mark Vancelave | SEPTEMBER 4, 2017 — 9:01AM

Outta Control — In a shameless bid to boost Facebook followers (so we could trounce our sports department, among other goals), we launched a social video series based on crazy food exploits. We’ve shown food challenges like eating the “bludgeon of beef” offered at one restaurant, or polishing off a massive bowl of pho at another. But we’ve also used Outta Control to explore uniquely Minnesota food phenomena, like a popular chocolate chip cookie at the Minnesota State Fair. We launched this a few months ago and have been getting from 10,000 to 160,000 views per video. Most are in the 100,000 range. We do these with our video team, so the production value is good. While we planned these as social-only, we’ve in fact done extra writing and turned them into secondaries for print. Pro-tip: We used well-known local Instagrammers to take the ice cream challenge, knowing they’d share and help generate more traffic.

Star Tribune
The Juicy Lucy: Two bars battling since 1950s over Minnesota's famous burger

Two Minneapolis dive bars claim to have invented the Juicy Lucy, the legendary cheese-stuffed burger.

By Sharyn Jackson Star Tribune | JUNE 22, 2017 — 5:35PM

The tattoos on the back of Tony Stanton’s arm tell a story. There’s a depiction of a hamburger oozing from the center with cheese. And next to that, dollar signs.

“That’s because ‘Juicy Lucy’ pays the bills,” said Stanton, who has manned the grill at south Minneapolis dive Matt’s Bar for a decade.

Stanton flips more than 400 Juicy Lucys in a day for a devoted fan base, who believe Matt’s Bar to be the birthplace of this cheese-stuffed burger.

Can't pick a flavor? Twin Cities ice cream shop Izzy's packs 32 scoops into one dish

Izzy's Ice Cream offers a massive sampler platter — and you keep the dish.

By Sharyn Jackson Star Tribune | AUGUST 10, 2017 — 2:07PM

There are two kinds of ice cream people. There are those who go to a shop knowing exactly what they want, and leaving satisfied every time with their predetermined flavor of choice. And then there are the tasters.

Jeff Sommers was the former. Every time he went out for ice cream, he’d think about it on the way and make a steadfast decision: chocolate or chocolate almond. He never tried anything new, not even allowing himself one of the plentiful free samples the scoopers behind the counter offered him.

“I wouldn’t ask for a taste,” he said. “It seemed too decadent. Too mooch-y.”
Norah and Mr. Dan, best friends forever: This is an example of a reader-submitted TODAY Parenting Team essay that went BONKERS. The post got more than 1 million pageviews and was shared all over the world. In order to give it new life on social media in the weeks that followed, we requested a whole bunch of photographs from the essay writer. With her permission, we used her photos and excerpts from her essay to create a video specifically for social media. That video garnered more than 17 million views.

Original essay:
http://community.today.com/parentingteam/post/untitled_1476901511

Video:

TODAY.com / TODAY Parenting Team
It went viral: Favorite celebrities

Three of our top page-view totals on Austin360.com so far this year have come from celebrities. Matthew McConaughey and Willie Nelson are go-to celebrities for us (see also Chip and Joanna Gaines), and the "Supernatural" star plus beer proved to be a gift that keeps on giving. A common element in these three are engaging headlines that give away enough to avoid being blatant clickbait while also inviting folks to click through for more.

Austin American-Statesman and Austin360.com
I'm a baby boomer lost in the millennial world of a co-working office space

What a 60-year-old learned when she rented a desk at a Minneapolis co-working office for freelancers, start-ups and other entrepreneurs.

By Lynette Lamb Special to the Star Tribune  |  AUGUST 28, 2017 — 12:11PM

Almost anyone in the building can help you with computer problems.

At 60, I decided to leave my longtime job and return to the world of freelancing. But I didn’t want to set up shop on my kitchen counter, amid all the toast crumbs. And I certainly didn’t want to fight for an outlet at my neighborhood coffee shop. So I opted to rent a desk at one of those new co-working spaces — they seem to be multiplying in the Twin Cities as fast as Starbucks. And because I live near northeast Minneapolis, I signed up for a co-working office in that hipster neighborhood. It seemed like a logical choice.

Little did I know I was joining not just a new workplace but a new generation. For despite the reassuring presence of a few receding hairlines, it soon became obvious: I was a boomer lost in millennial land, stranded without a map or even a rudimentary knowledge of the natives.

My father always said that the only way he was leaving this city was feet first.

It was his way of letting us know that, should he get old and decrepit, he wasn’t getting shipped off to an assisted living facility in a second-ring suburb. No sirree.

Aside from winters in Palm Springs, he wasn’t moving anywhere. He was going to die in the city he was born in, just a few miles from where his parents raised him in south Minneapolis.

I, on the other hand, couldn’t wait to get out of this town. No offense, Minneapolis.

When you’re a teenage girl watching “Felicity” on the basement futon while wearing your headgear, you know there’s just one place for a girl like you, and that’s New York City.
Find out which New Orleans restaurants had the most critical health code violations in 2016

Updated July 20, 2017
Posted July 20, 2017

Critical Violations

In Louisiana, restaurant health inspection data is not widely publicized. We don't have letter grades posted in restaurants as you see in some cities. We got the health inspection data from the state for the last full year (2016) and created a ranked list of the local restaurant that had a dozen or more critical violations. The post received more traffic than almost anything the newsroom published this year.

NOLA.com | The Times-Picayune
$6M lodge is ultimate Gull Lake getaway home
The 8,000-square-foot retreat offers sunrise and sunset views near Nisswa, Minn.

By Lynn Underwood Star Tribune | SEPTEMBER 12, 2017 — 1:39PM

Home Gazing – We took the Home Gazing feature we already occasionally ran in our Homes section, looking at unusual homes for sale, and turned it into a driver for online traffic. Now, whenever we find a rare, expensive or just plain weird home, we skip the usual in-depth homeowner interview and pop a quick story online with a photo gallery. Later, for print, we sometimes go back and add context. One recent example: a Moroccan palace house went up for sale and we talked online about how weird and wonderful it was. The for print, we wrote about what it was like raising children there. The digital versions often garner 100,000 clicks due to the galleries.

Star Tribune

Gull Lake is the Lake Minnetonka of northern Minnesota. Hundreds of boaters cruise past long-time resorts such as Cragun’s and Madden’s, and dock at rockin’ restaurants on the shoreline.

Dan and Judy McAthie always loved the Chain of Lakes area, and built an 8,000-square-foot vacation home on a picturesque point on Gull Lake near Nisswa.

“We can watch the sunrise and sunset from the porch and deck,” said Judy.

The couple were enchanted by the scenic point while cruising Gull in 2007. An older home on the land appeared to have been damaged by a fire and was
Adventures in parenting: Raising kids in a medieval-style Spanish 'palace' in Stillwater

A Stillwater couple took on the ultimate historical restoration project — a home inspired by a medieval Spanish palace — while raising their three kids there.

By Kim Palmer | September 9, 2017 — 2:03PM

Prior Lake man creates full-scale Oval Office replica in sprawling home

Just like the West Wing — a passionate collector created a scale replica of the renowned presidential office in his Prior Lake home.

By Lynn Underwood Star Tribune | February 18, 2017 — 8:49PM

Marty and Judi Nora's home looks like something out of an exotic fairy tale, with its ornate columns, arches, gilded medallions and carved plaster.

But it didn't look that way when the couple first saw it almost 20 years ago.

The house, originally built as a lumber baron's ballroom next door to his Stillwater mansion, had been divided into a triplex long ago. Many of its grandest, most distinctive features weren't even visible; the ballroom's soaring ceiling had been lowered, and original architectural elements had

Glynn Crooks is the commander-in-chief of his Prior Lake house.

He does paperwork inside an oval-shaped room, seated at a desk inspired by the woodwork of a British Navy ship. And he can gaze at the same Rembrandt Peale portrait of George Washington, hung above the fireplace, just as many U.S. presidents have done before him.

Crooks, a passionate collector of U.S. presidential memorabilia, has built a replica of the White House Oval Office, complete with the classic four...