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SPOTLIGHT

Local author releasing third novel in mystery series

By SHAYNA LEWIS shayna.lewis@apgsomn.com

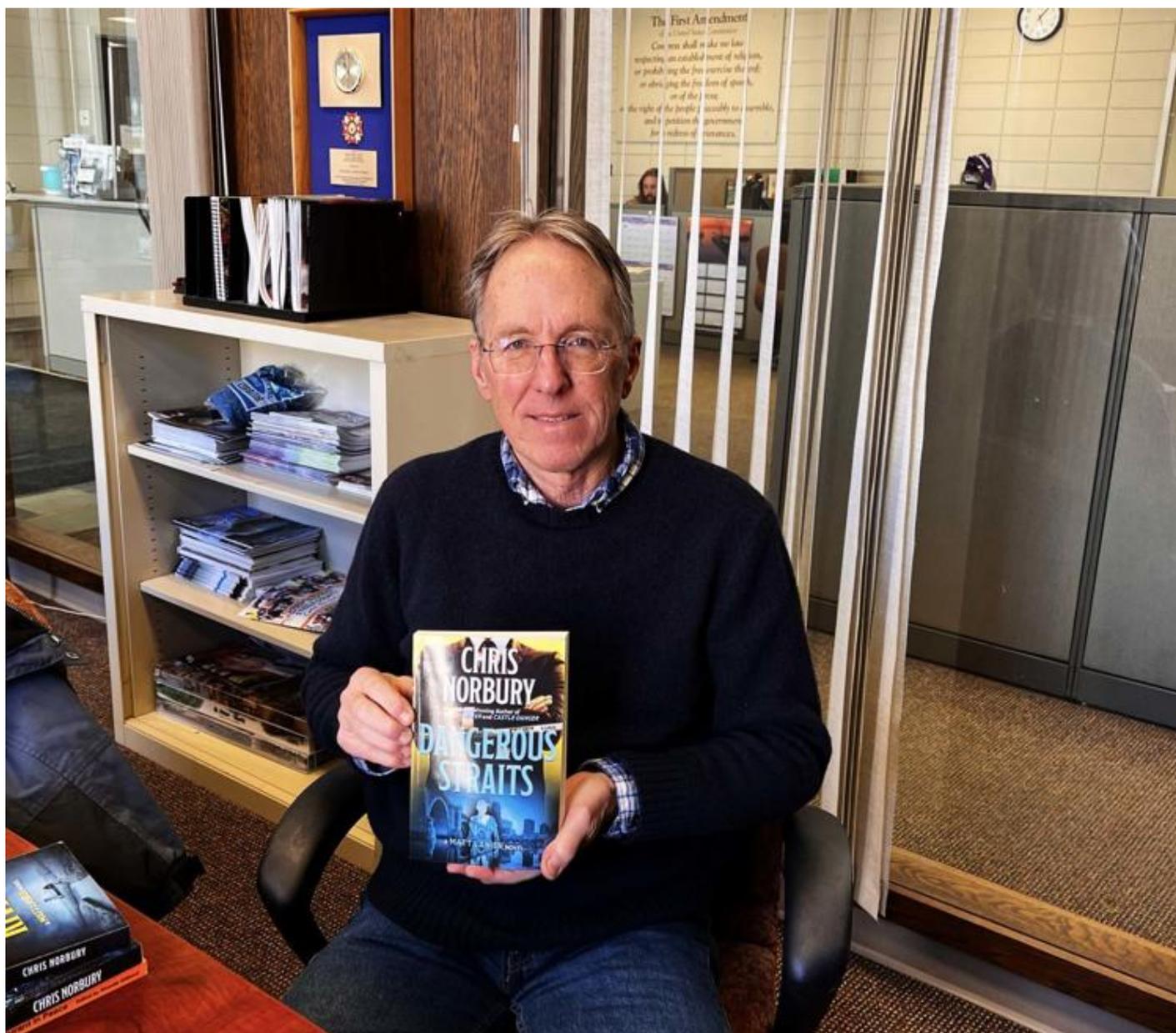
Feb 17, 2022

When the weather outside is frightful, for many there isn't much better than curling up on a couch with a hot drink and a good book.

For those who are particularly interested in mystery and suspense, they can add a new, local book to their "to be read" list.

Chris Norbury, an Owatonna author, is releasing a third novel.

Dangerous Straits is the third novel in a series/trilogy, but what is different about Norbury's books is that they can be read as single novels. The main character and villain are the same throughout the novels. The first two novels are *Straight River* and *Castle Danger*.



Chris Norbury, of Owatonna, has released his third novel in the Matt Lanier trilogy. He is having a book release party from 4-6 p.m. on Monday, Feb. 28, at the Owatonna Country Club. Here, Norbury is holding his newest novel, "Dangerous Straits." (Shayna Lewis/southernminn.com)

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"The trick is to add enough background information," Norbury said. "That way people know what's going on without reading the other novels."

Norbury came to writing later in his life in 2008, but he remembers always having the love for reading. He taught himself to read by reading billboard signs while in the car, and his mom would read him stories. Norbury's dad was a journalist in Minneapolis and a WCCO reporter. When Norbury first started writing, he wrote short stories, but

decided to give novels a try. His favorite saying is, "Write the kind of book you would like to read," and since Norbury has always liked mysteries, thrillers, and conspiracies, he decided to write a farmland conspiracy novel.

Norbury also takes inspiration from the community around him, whether that be interesting people or the weather that Minnesota has to offer. He also trained as a jazz musician and was a band director. He uses his knowledge of music by having the protagonist of his novels be a professional musician.

"I like to think that is my unique slant," Norbury said. "Having a book that is different from everyone else."

Recognition and accolades

Although Norbury started writing later in his life, he has been fairly successful with winning awards, getting recognition from strangers and hosting meet-and-greets.

His first novel, *Straight River*, was a 2019 Kindle Book Review Awards semi-finalist for mystery/thriller and a 2020 Chanticleer Book Review CLUE Award finalist for suspense and thrill fiction.

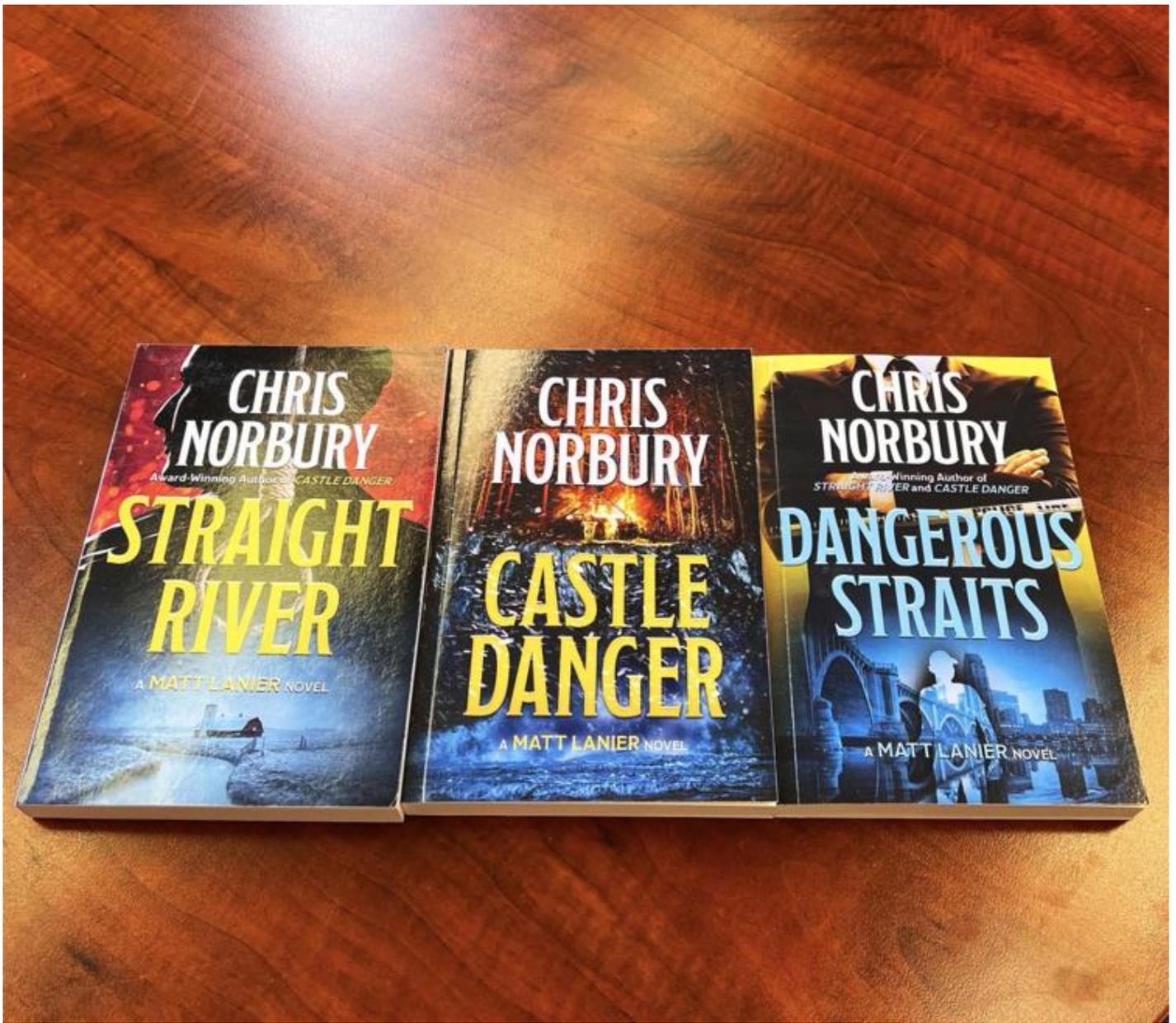
His second novel, *Castle Danger*, was a 2017 BRAG Medallion Honoree, a 2017 Honorable Mention for Writer's Digest Self-Published Book Awards, and a 2018 finalist for MN Writes, MN Reads Self-Published Author contest.

"They're small awards, but it does give you some credibility," Norbury said.

Norbury has a book release party from 4 to 6 p.m. on Monday, Feb. 28, at the Owatonna Country Club.

"I call it a party," he said, adding there will be a cash bar. "Because writing a book is a huge accomplishment."

Norbury enjoys meeting other people who are also interested in books. He said he was surprised when a stranger told him that they read one of his books and wanted another one. He wasn't ready for how good it would make him feel in the end, that he fulfilled his reader/writer contract.



Straight River, Castle Danger, and Dangerous Straits can be read as standalone novels or as a trilogy. Every copy that is sold, author Chris Norbury donates \$1 to Big Brothers Big Sisters of Southern Minnesota. (Shayna Lewis/southernminn.com)

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"It's a high form of flattery," Norbury said. "That they took the time to tell you something positive about the book."

Big Brothers Big Sisters

Norbury also donates to Big Brothers Big Sisters of Southern Minnesota. For him, it's become an important part of his writing career. He was a Big for 20 years, but it had its challenges, which led him to take a little break.

"It's tough running around with a 7 year old," Norbury laughed.

Norbury went to Michelle Redman, executive director of the organization, and asked if they would help with bookmarks and book purchases, and he in return would promote BBBS as much as he could. Now, he puts BBBS bookmarks into each book he sells and includes a five-minute discussion about the organization during his introductions.

For every copy of his book that he sells, in any format, he donates \$1 to the organization. In total, Norbury has donated more than \$2,500 to BBBS.

"Knowing that I'm selling enough books to donate money to them is a great motivation to keep me writing," Norbury said.

According to Redman, the money donated goes toward recruiting volunteers, screening them and matching them with a child on the waitlist. The funds are also used to professionally support the matches once they are made.

With the help of Norbury's promotions, BBBS has recruited more Bigs.

"Chris' personal testimony helps to relay the importance of mentoring," Redman said. "It shares the powerful impact that these friendships can have."

Norbury is one of their biggest cheerleaders, from promoting the organization through book sales to sharing social media messages, he is a strong supporter.

"We greatly appreciate his support," Redman said.

Right now, Norbury is working on a middle-grade adventure novel, where the main character is a BBBS Little, and he and his Big go on adventures together. Norbury hopes that kids will find similarities with the characters and show potential Bigs how to be good role models.

Norbury hopes to show the organization in a positive light, telling the story of what they do and their success rate.

If he finishes this novel and it goes well, Norbury plans to switch it up with having the characters be girls.

"Boys and girls are pretty different," Norbury said. "It could be challenging, but I know it can be done."

Reach Reporter Shayna Lewis at 507-333-3133. ©Copyright 2022 APG Media of Southern Minnesota. All rights reserved.

If You Go

WHAT: Book release party for *Dangerous Straits* by Chris Norbury

WHEN: 4 to 6 p.m., Monday, Feb. 28

WHERE: Owatonna Country Club

Find out more about Chris Norbury at his website, chrisnorbury.com.

Shayna Lewis