

Area baby tragedies prompt writer's book

Susan Koefod returns to Wabasha with Debut Mystery

Three times in eight years Goodhue County authorities have been called to the Mississippi River near Red Wing to remove the body of a newborn baby. Despite hundreds of leads since 1999, the cases remain unsolved. And in recent weeks, another baby was found in the river, this time near Winona.

The real stories of the unsolved infant murders prompted Susan Koefod to write her debut mystery, *Washed Up*. "Unbelievably, two of the babies in the Goodhue case are related," Koefod says. "And while the real stories are troubling to me as a mother, they are equally perplexing to my writer's brain, which is always intent on solving the mystery of why people behave the way they do."

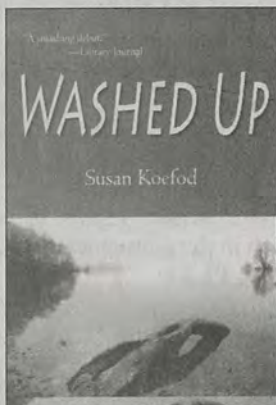
Koefod, who appeared with Wabasha native Melissa Doffing in support of their anthology last fall, returns to the bookcliffs on October 23 to launch her "smashing debut" mystery, *Washed Up*. "Melissa was the first reader of the book, and in fact spurred me to write the book. Her critical eye helped me to craft a thriller that readers will enjoy."

The first in a series, *Washed Up* introduces Arvo Thorson, who has more obstacles than evidence as he investigates why a dead baby has washed up on the shores of the Mississippi River. An obsessive-compulsive social worker is keeping him away from the traumatized witness, a meddling politician is looking for a way to exploit the crime to her advantage, and Arvo's struggling with a drinking problem that may end his career.

Library Journal says *Washed Up* is "a smashing debut with astute observations and gorgeous prose." *Washed Up* has received praise from well-known, bestselling novelists including William Kent Krueger, Steve Thayer, and Jess Lourey. Krueger calls Koefod "a bold new voice in the crime genre."

Given the concern that led her to write her mystery, Koefod is using the book to help bring awareness to the availability of crisis nurseries. "As I was researching my book, I visited with Mary Pat Lee, executive director of the Greater Minneapolis Crisis Nursery, which provides a safe haven for at-risk young children and support for parents (most often mothers) in crisis."

Already a reader of *Washed Up* has made a generous donation to the crisis nursery, and Koefod is donating honoraria from Dakota County library appearances to the Crisis Nursery.



Paddlefish washes up on shore



Jake Wodele snapped this picture of a dead Paddle Fish washed up on the shore by Slippery's one day recently. It looked to be about 3 to 4 feet long. Why it died remains unknown.