



Inside:
Tiny homes in Ely... See /3
Winter Sports... See /1B
WolfTrack Classic... See /2B

Winter weasels... See /4B

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TIMBERJAY



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EMERGENCY SERVICES

Changes likely for Tower ambulance service

by MARSHALL HELMBERGER
 Managing Editor

New business planning effort should be completed by spring

TOWER— Changes are likely coming to the management of the Tower Area Ambulance Service based on the preliminary results of a new business plan for the service, which the city council got its first look at on Monday.

Among the biggest changes is a push to bring the TAAS into compliance with state law on ambulance licensing. Among a long list of requirements, ambulance services are required to maintain a written on-call schedule, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

“The city of Tower never adopted this,” said Clerk-Treasurer Victoria Ranua, who worked with ambulance director Dena Suihkonen and business consultant Betsy Olivanti to develop the business plan.

“The current model doesn’t match the statute for the state of

Minnesota,” said Olivanti. “We want to get it in alignment so that TAAS is providing the service that’s required.”

Olivanti said rural and small-town services often struggle to maintain staffing and Tower’s has experienced those challenges as well, which is likely

one reason the service hasn’t maintained a full written on-call schedule. The business plan, as currently written, includes an examination of three different staffing models, including a continuation of the high-wage,

See...TOWER pg. 12

ELY ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT

Coming soon!



Greenstone Cinema, Grotto will soon be part of Ely State Theater

by KEITH VANDERVORT
 Ely Editor

ELY – This community’s Ely Historic State Theater (EHST) will soon have a second screen movie facility, named Greenstone Cinema to highlight the area’s geologic uniqueness.

The title was chosen by the EHST board of directors from a list of 27 names suggested by patrons, staff, and board members.

“The list was narrowed to three choices which included the Voyageur, the Shagawa, and Greenstone,” said David Wigdahl, board president.

The new facility is being built in the former Salerno Land Office building adjacent to and

See...ELY pg. 10



Top: The Greenstone Grotto, in the basement, will be nestled near a rock outcrop.

Above: The Greenstone Cinema, adjacent to the State Theater, will seat about 50 people. Right: The concession stand is now open. photos by K. Vandervort



POLITICS

Rep. Stauber’s letter musters little support in Congress

by MARSHALL HELMBERGER
 Managing Editor

REGIONAL — Eighth District Congressman Pete Stauber found relatively little support in the U.S. House for his controversial effort to derail the nomination of the first Native American member of a presidential Cabinet.

The Republican Stauber had hoped to convince the Biden administration to withdraw the nomination of New Mexico Rep. Deb Haaland, a Democrat, as Secretary

See...LETTER pg. 10



Rep. Pete Stauber

Stauber charges mining opponents are playing politics

Critics charge Congressman is kowtowing to foreign interests

by MARSHALL HELMBERGER
 Managing Editor

REGIONAL — Congressman Pete Stauber is accusing the former Obama administration, including then-Vice President Joe Biden, of playing politics with their 2016 effort to head off sulfide-based mining upstream of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area— and he’s now facing pushback for his claim from mining critics.

Stauber took his shots at the former administration as part of his introduction of a new bill in Congress, dubbed the Saving America’s Mines Act, which would prohibit any administration from “unilaterally halting the mining of critical minerals on federal lands where mining is permissible.” Other Republican members of the state’s congressional delegation have signed on to the bill, which is mostly symbolic

See...BILL pg. 11

CORONAVIRUS

COVID cases drop; vaccine demand surges

More contagious UK and Brazilian variants found in state

by DAVID COLBURN
 Cook-Orr Editor

REGIONAL- The number of new daily COVID-19 cases in Minnesota has dropped to levels not seen since September but continued short supply of vaccines is raising the specter of another possible spike as more contagious variants of the coronavirus have gained a foothold in the state.

Minnesota Health Commissioner



Jan Malcolm noted the reporting milestone in a Tuesday press conference. “This 727-case day is our lowest in a while,” Malcom said. “The last time we had a number this low was

Sept. 29. That reflects how far we came up and down since the end of September.”

Of the state’s cumulative total of 456,490 cases since the first case in the state was identified last March, approximately 350,00 of those have been since Oct. 1. Minnesota recorded its largest single-day count of 8,776 cases on Nov. 9.

See...COVID pg. 11



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Community notices

Ely library seeks artists

ELY - The Ely Public Library, in cooperation with the Arrowhead Library System, is seeking Requests for Qualifications (RFQ) to create a piece or series of pieces of public artwork for the library.

These pieces will be funded by the Minnesota Arts and Cultural Heritage Legacy Fund. Artists who are interested should have experience working in stained glass and must live in the seven-county region served by the Arrowhead Library System.

The stained glass produced under this grant should have a theme of historical occupations in this area of Minnesota (mining, logging, etc.); it will be placed on the Chapman Street side of the library building.

Artists who are interested in applying should obtain an RFQ packet by either printing one from the library's website - www.elylibrary.org - or by calling the library to schedule a pick-up time for a hard copy. Deadline for application return is Monday, Feb. 8, 2021.

For more information, call the library at 218-365-5140.

Local communities joined with the nation in honoring those who died from COVID-19

REGIONAL- On Tuesday, Jan. 19 at 4:30 p.m., we as a nation came together to remember and honor all those who had lost their lives to COVID-19. In a ceremony at the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool in Washington, D.C., 400 lights were lit, one for each 10,000 of the nearly 400,000 Americans who had by then died in the pandemic. The Presidential Inaugural Committee also invited all communities, companies and individuals to join the remembrance by lighting buildings and ringing church bells. Countless people across the country joined in, including those in our local communities.

Among those who answered the call was Field Twp., whose board members decided to light up the Field Town Hall in a gesture of remembrance and solidarity. The lighting speaks to the generosity of spirit of our local communities and our connection to the entire nation.

Individual households also participated by ringing bells, lighting candles and lighting up their windows and homes.

Relief available from UWNEMN for those who have suffered financially from COVID

REGIONAL- As proud Iron Rangers, many of us don't like to ask for help. We give; we don't take. We support; we don't lean on anyone. But now, the COVID-19 pandemic has flipped our world and our old ways of thinking upside down.

You've helped us, and now we want to help YOU! Through our COVID-19 Crisis Fund, we are able to help local households that have experienced job loss or reduced hours/wages due to COVID-19. UWNEMN wants you to know that you're not alone in the struggle to get your head above water right now.

Local households should complete an application at <https://www.unitedwaynemn.org/covid-19-assistance-individuals>. If approved, UWNEMN will directly pay mortgage, rent, utility, medical, insurance payments and more. If your job has been impacted by this pandemic, you likely qualify. Eligible applicants include anyone laid off from the mining companies, those with positions eliminated due to COVID-related downsizing, small business owners and employees hard hit, restaurant and hospitality industry employees, and others. Even if you've recently gone back to work, if need help catching up on bills, UWNEMN can help you!

Please take a hard look at your current situation and those of your friends and neighbors as you read this. We urge you to apply yourself or to share this information with others you know who could benefit. We know Iron Rangers feel more comfortable giving rather than taking. However, this is not a handout; it is a hand uniting with another hand to lift our communities up and out of this unprecedented challenge.

THINGS TO DO

Dorothy Molter Museum hosts online fundraiser events

by KEITH VANDERVORT
Ely Editor

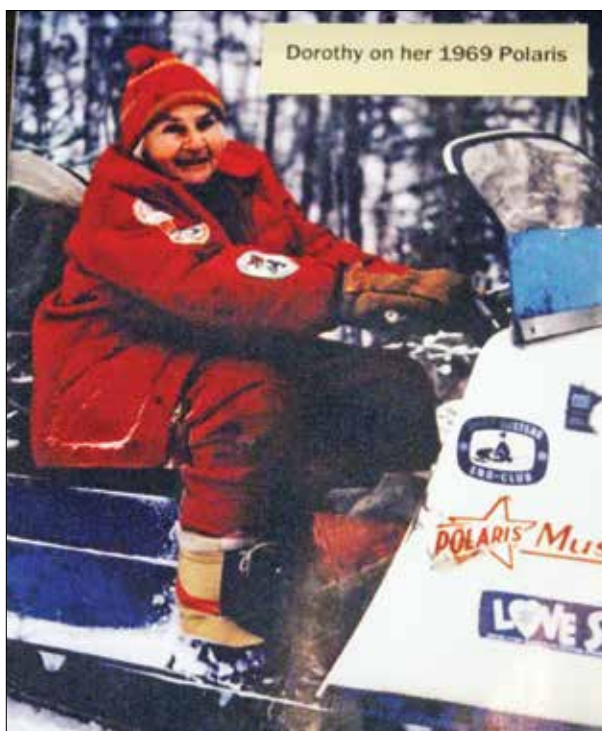
ELY - The 2021 Dorothy Molter Museum's annual meeting and fundraising dinner is going virtual this year due to the public health protocols in place because of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

Each year, the Dorothy Molter Museum hosts an in-person event to support the operation and financial sustainability of the museum as a historic resource. "This year, we have shifted to a series of online events to ensure the health and safety of our supporters," said DMM Executive Director Jess Edberg.

The Dorothy Molter Museum preserves and interprets Northwoods wilderness heritage through learning opportunities inspired by Dorothy Molter, the last non-indigenous resident of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW).

"The online auction allows greater geographic and physical accessibility for participation in this annual event. We have already launched our online silent auction with more than 38 items available and more coming in each day," she said. "Check out the items we have available this year."

The bidding for the event will be held during the Ely Winter Festival,



file photo

Feb. 4-14. "Most of the items are available to ship, so this event significantly increases our participation opportunities," Edberg said.

To view auction items, go to <https://www.32auctions.com/DorothyMolterMuseum>.

"The museum strives to inspire the next generation of Northwoods stewards to make a significant contribution toward a better world through Dorothy's legacy of perseverance, integrity and generosity," Edberg said. "As we continue to remember Dorothy and keep her spirit alive, we strive to embody the same principles that she espoused:

► Perseverance - To maintain long-term sustain-

ability in an ever-changing social, political and financial climate.

► Integrity - To maintain the highest degree of historical accuracy and visitor satisfaction.

► Generosity - To be a positive, active and contributing member of the diverse communities we are a part of."

The Dorothy Molter Museum's 2020 season was a challenge, as it was for every other business. "Overall, not surprising, we were down in revenue for the year," Edberg said.

Admissions were down 74.3 percent, retail sales down 20.7 percent, raffle ticket sales down 60.4 percent, and root beer sales (in-store and wholesale) down 9.9 percent.

Gardening from the Ground Up webinar series by U of M Extension

REGIONAL - University of Minnesota Extension educators are excited to bring you the second annual Gardening from the Ground Up webinar series to help you achieve your garden and lawn goals. This free webinar series will take place Tuesday through Friday, Feb. 16-19, from 1 - 2:30 p.m. each afternoon. The series will cover a wide variety of topics that are important for any gardener (or homeowner with a yard) to understand.

Tuesday, Feb. 16: Starting a Garden from Scratch

Set your garden up for success from the beginning. Extension Educators Troy Salzer and Claire LaCanne will discuss selecting a site for a new garden and preparing the site for your plants, as well as practices you can use



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EXTENSION

to get your garden off to a good start.

Wednesday, Feb. 17: Selecting and Starting Plants for your Garden

February is the perfect time to plan your garden spaces. Join Extension Educators Robin Trott and Shane Bugeja for a review of seed starting, plant propagation, and selecting the right plant for the right place.

Thursday, Feb. 18: Tree and Shrub Maintenance

From maples to lilacs to raspberries, most woody plants need occasional maintenance and pruning. Extension Educators

Adam Austing and Karen Johnson, will cover some of the best practices to keep plants in your yard healthy and beautiful.

Friday, Feb. 19: Lawn Care and Pest Management
Extension Educators Katie Drewitz and Claire LaCanne will talk through best management practices for establishing and maintaining a lawn in Minnesota. Topics will include: seeding, mowing, fertilization, watering, and weed control. Methods for disease and insect pest management will also be discussed.

To join us for all or

one of these webinars, please go to z.umn.edu/GardenUp to register. When you register, you can choose to attend one or multiple sessions. Pre-registration is required to receive the webinar link. Recordings of the webinars will be sent out at the conclusion of the series.

If you have questions about the webinar series or need assistance with registration, please call your local Extension office. Residents in St. Louis County may contact the Extension Office at 218-749-7120 or countyextensionoffice@stlouiscountymn.gov.

For more news from U of M Extension, visit www.extension.umn.edu/news or contact Extension Communications at extnews@umn.edu. University of Minnesota Extension is an equal opportunity educator and employer.

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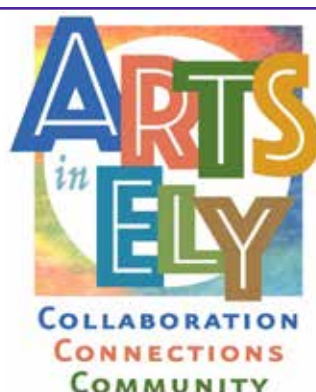
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Are you interested in the arts in Ely??

Join us for the ARTS Virtual Community Meetup
Facilitated by Springboard for the Arts

SPRINGBOARD
for the arts

Final conversation (via Zoom) to help connect and inspire artists, arts organizations and arts supporters during the pandemic, brainstorm possibilities for community collaboration, and dream about long-term ideas and efforts in the arts community.

Need a safe space to participate with good internet access? Register your need and we'll provide a space for you!

Thursday, Feb. 11 from 12 noon-1:30pm

We will be voting on a potential workshop(s) for artists soon!

REGISTER on Facebook or at www.gardnertrust.org

This activity is made possible in part by the voters of Minnesota through a grant from the Arrowhead Regional Arts Council, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the arts and cultural heritage fund.

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CITY OF ELY

How small is too small for homes in Ely?

Planning and Zoning Commission looks to establish size guidelines

by KEITH VANDERVORT
Ely Editor

ELY—The minimum size of a home allowed to be built in this community is headed for more than just small talk by zoning officials and council members. A study session planned for this week was postponed until February to give the Planning and Zoning Commission more time to prepare a way forward for a not-so-tiny issue that has been under construction for months.

City Zoning Administer Tim Riley is exploring a new concept for allowing homes in the city limits that are smaller than what is currently allowed. In an email sent late last year to P and Z members, a new “R-Point Five Zone” would allow for homes that are in the 500 to 750 square-foot range.

“We do not want the discussion to be about ‘tiny homes,’” Riley said.

Tiny homes are typically

well under 500 sq. ft., delivered pre-built, trailer wheels removed, and no permanent foundation. They have gained popularity in the past couple of years on various television programs.

“What we’re trying to accomplish is reducing the size requirement stated in Ely’s ordinance from 768 square feet to allow someone who wants to build a quality smaller home,” Riley said. “The vision for these

smaller homes will be good quality, site-assembled and high cost per square foot.”

The Planning and Zoning Commission suggested that the city cluster the new small-but-not-tiny homes in an orderly development “to avoid potential neighborhood objections to sprinkling smaller homes throughout Ely’s existing neighborhoods,” Riley said. However, variances would still be available for construction in existing

neighborhoods.

“The vision is to create smaller private parcels with walking paths and natural adjoining spaces, water retention pond, etc.,” Riley said. “Only a limited number of parcels would initially be needed, such as a cul de sac area on a single street. Perhaps the city could lease parcels or finance purchase by homeowners to help reduce

See ELY...pg. 6

CITY OF TOWER

Gundersen Trust seeks to expand its investment options

by JODI SUMMIT
Tower-Soudan Editor

TOWER- Faced with a trust fund set up to support city projects that totals almost a million dollars but generated only a few thousand dollars in income last year, the members of Tower’s Gundersen Trust Board are looking at options to insure the fund meets its goals of financially supporting the city and community.

The trust was set up in 1992 to manage funds from the sale of lands donated to the city of Tower by the estate of former mayor Martin Gundersen and his wife, Elizabeth. The original amount of the investment was \$398,929, an amount that the trust’s founding documents requires be kept in insured investments. Each year, the trust is also required to add back enough interest income to keep pace with inflation. Seventy-

five percent of any remaining annual income is distributed to the city, while 15 percent goes to recreation and ten percent to community education.

However, the trust’s founding documents only allow the trust board to invest under the restrictions set under state statute that covers public and governmental funds.

When the fund was established, interest rates were high enough that income earned from the trust provided annual contributions to the city’s general fund, as well as funding projects like the paved bike trail to Hoodoo Point and work on the city’s cross-country ski trails. The city has also borrowed from the trust, using it to help finance a new fire engine and paying back those funds with interest higher than the trust was earning in its other investments.

In the current low-interest environment, the trust has barely

generated any interest income. The city’s 2019 audit showed the trust’s value at approximately \$989,000 at year-end. The fund’s 2020 year-end bank statement from Frandsen Bank in Tower showed it had earned \$123.95 in interest income, though this only covered \$674,002 of the principal, the rest being invested in different financial instruments.

At the trust board meeting on Jan. 21, members discussed options that would allow the trust to earn a higher rate of interest while still protecting the fund’s principal. Trust board members Steve Wilson and Orlyn Kringstad met with three Minnesota foundations and two banks to compile a list of options. They also compared the trust’s set-up to Ely’s Gardner Trust, which provides annual support for arts-related projects in Ely.

The first step is to research other possible investment options allowed under the

current trust set-up that would pay higher interest rates than the certificates of deposit currently held by the trust. This could include government-backed mortgage securities, other types of federal bonds, other state or local governmental bonds, or short-term debt issued by U.S. corporations.

The trust board also needs to clarify the obligations of the current court order. The court documents state that annual income “shall” be distributed. In previous years, the interest income has not always been distributed. Currently, the city’s auditor has calculated that \$224,139 of trust income is in excess of the trust’s base amount.

Another option is to see if the court would allow changes to the trust’s founding documents to allow for wider investment options, such as investing in the Minnesota State Board of Investment, or management

by another area foundation, which could net interest income, after management fees (in the four- to five-percent range annually), according to information received by Wilson and Kringstad.

Kringstad said the trust board would have good reason to seek changes to the founding document based on current investment options, as long as the new options were still considered fiscally prudent.

The board decided to consult both City Attorney Mitch Brunfelt and John Cope, who was city attorney when the trust was set up.

The Gundersen Trust Board will meet again on Thursday, March 18, possibly switching to a daytime meeting. The board is also hoping to seat two new members who will need to be formally appointed by the Tower City Council.

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OPINION

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Editorial

Action on climate

While utilities have made progress, Minnesota remains behind schedule overall

As we've reported in recent weeks, there is much to celebrate in the progress made by Minnesota utilities in reducing their carbon emissions. Those changes not only address climate change—they also mean cleaner air and more jobs, while having little impact on electricity prices, at least so far.

That's the good news.

More troubling is the fact that other major sources of planet-warming carbon aren't keeping pace with the state's utilities, and that's stymied Minnesota's progress on reducing all sources of carbon emissions. Back in 2007, the Legislature approved the Next Generation Energy Act with bipartisan support, including the signature of then-Gov. Tim Pawlenty. It set a goal to reduce combined greenhouse gas emissions from 2005 levels across all economic sectors by 15 percent by 2015, 30 percent by 2025 and 80 percent by 2050.

While many of the state's electric utilities have made substantial progress, the same can't be said for the state's transportation and agriculture sectors. The lack of progress on those fronts is putting Minnesota behind the schedule lawmakers established in 2007. Overall, statewide emissions have declined by only about eight percent over 2005 levels, based on the latest data from the state's Pollution Control Agency. We should be at more than 20 percent.

Fortunately, Gov. Tim Walz is hoping to keep the pressure on. He announced a new initiative this past week that would push the state's electric utilities to reach 100 percent carbon-free power production by 2040, ten years earlier than previous targets. Given that utilities are already ahead of schedule, it's a goal that could be achievable and, if so, it would help the state make more progress toward overall carbon reductions.

But there's so much more that needs to be done. If anything, we now know that the goals and timelines established here in 2007, aren't aggressive enough to truly address the threats posed by climate change.

Generating clean electricity is part of the battle, but it's not the whole solution. Transitioning our transportation sector to carbon-free sources of energy is critical. The Biden administration took an important step in that direction this week with its announcement that it would restore stricter fuel economy standards for U.S. automo-

biles, a move that was greeted enthusiastically by most U.S. automakers. Those same manufacturers had objected when President Trump opted to roll back gas mileage standards, so the new direction is welcome to most in the industry. Here in Minnesota, the Walz administration should also be pushing incentives for the purchase of electric vehicles.

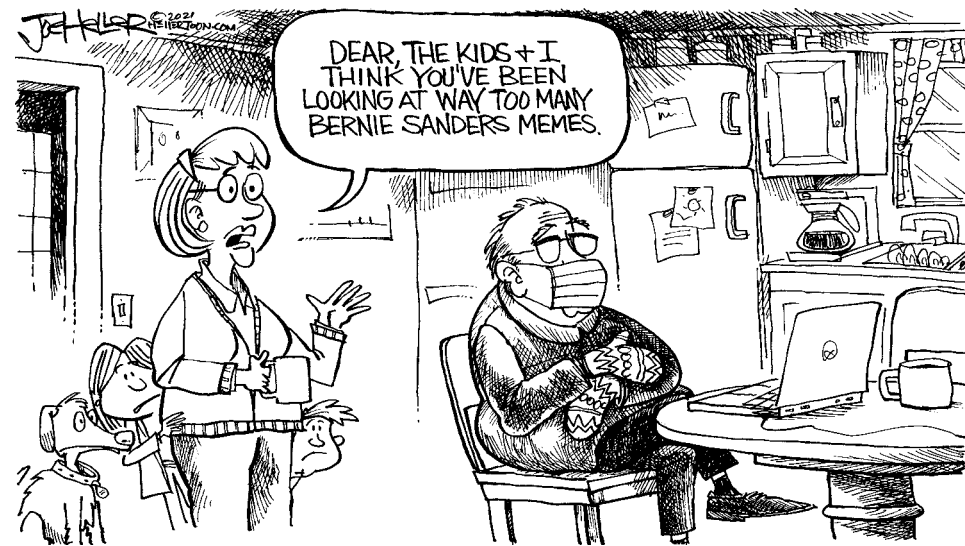
Even more important is designing a future where we have less need for driving. The transition to remote work is a valuable part of the answer, as we've already seen during the COVID-19 pandemic. Highways in many urban areas, which are normally choked with cars during rush hour, have been remarkably uncluttered in recent months as so many workers are now working from home. That change has also noticeably cleared the air in many major cities, which highlights the fact that fighting climate change has a multitude of societal benefits.

In agriculture, we already know how to make progress—it's just a question of giving farmers the right incentives. Conservation tillage means less fuel is consumed by heavy farm equipment. Reducing nitrogen fertilizer use also helps, and both of these methods provide the additional benefit of reducing soil erosion and runoff of farm chemicals into lakes and streams. Again, fighting climate change brings benefits across the board.

Farmers should also be encouraged to convert marginal lands to perennial vegetation, like shrubs or trees, that provide critical wildlife habitat at the same time that they remove carbon from the air. We need to revamp the Conservation Reserve Program for the 21st century to make this happen.

Perhaps what we need most of all is a return to the bipartisan agreement around fighting climate change that Minnesota and the nation previously enjoyed. Republican leaders need to fight back against the anti-science attitudes that seem to have infected so much of the GOP base. COVID-19 isn't a hoax invented by China, and neither is climate change. Yet, when large numbers of Americans fall victim to such false claims, it seriously hampers our ability to address such threats.

When it comes to climate change, we don't have the luxury of delaying action. We're already behind schedule.



Letters from Readers

Tower clinic gives exemplary service during COVID shots

Just had to share what a great job the Scenic Rivers Tower Clinic did in giving out the COVID-19 vaccinations. We received a call on Tuesday that they had received a shipment and were setting up appointments for their patients on Wednesday for people over 75. Of course, we jumped at the chance and made a morning appointment. They were so organized and informative that I can't praise them enough. We were served cookies and juice afterwards and we left feeling so good. It was a completely painless process. I went home wanting to tell everyone about it.

**Adrienne DeVries
Soudan**

Meanwhile, GOP members egg on rioters

Al Franken had to resign from the Senate for a joke photo taken while he was a professional comedian on a USO Tour, years before running for office. I keep wondering if Putin's Internet farm wanted to make sure that the one guy who could talk sense to Trump's people was going to be out of the way.

Meanwhile, four Minnesota members of Congress are encouraging and defending the Capitol Hill rioters.

**Dave Porter
Minneapolis**

Thank you, Rob Ecklund

I have had policy disagreements with Rep. Ecklund, that's for sure. But I have always found him to be responsive and concerned about the welfare of his constituents, who are among the poorest in any legislative district in Minnesota. He is a person of high character. That is why I was astonished when I saw flyers from a group I had never heard of, posted in Cook, attacking Rep. Ecklund for supporting Governor Walz's efforts to combat the pandemic.

Then I learned that this group, Action4Liberty, is a right-wing splinter group that has been active in encouraging mobs to "protest" at the Governor's Mansion. During one recent mob scene, the Governor's teenage son had to be evacuated for safety reasons. Particularly considering the source of these senseless attacks, those of us who are weary of the pandemic, but understand the need to keep us all safe, must push back on such nonsense. The easy thing to do would be to try to end the emergency restrictions and pretend everything is just dandy. That would be popular among some. He has chosen another path, concern for us and our safety regardless of whether it is popular. That is because we have all seen the consequences of not taking the pandemic seriously, as the Trump Administration policies allowed COVID to run rampant, causing over 400,000 deaths and growing. COVID infections have pushed hospitals to the brink, and the refusal to take proper measures has left our economy in tatters. This constituent is proud that Rob Ecklund did the right thing, even though it angered some who are understandably at wits' end over the pandemic. I have some advice for the small business owners and others hurt by necessary measures to protect the public. Rather than giving credence to flyers calling Rob names and demanding that everyone be allowed to do whatever they want regardless of the consequences to others, ask him for help. You know what; I bet he'll try.

**Kelly Dahl
Linden Grove**

Time to bring forward the light of truth

The week of Jan. 17 to 24 was bookended by two important dates. Jan. 18 was Martin Luther King Jr. Day, which we as a nation acknowledge each year as a holiday and a tribute to his legacy. Jan. 20 was the inauguration of our 46th President, Joseph R. Biden.

Both events will be remembered and celebrated in our nation. These events showed us our better selves. They are in stark contrast to the events of Jan. 6 with the storming of our Capitol.

Some falsely claimed by their actions and words, anarchy, conspiracy theories and alternative facts would be our nation's future on Jan. 6. They ignore that one cannot create a loving and caring community under these circumstances. These are misguided individuals who promulgated such efforts, and need both correction and punishment. But others who have bought into this sort of thinking need to be brought into the light of truth. Their grievances will need to be listened to for understanding. Their concerns about the rural economy will need to be responded to, since they have watched the middle class shrink for the last forty years.

Martin Luther King Jr., in one of his famous quotes, said, "Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that." A young poet, Amanda Gorman, the highlight of the inauguration, wrote "when day comes, we step out of the shade, aflame and unafraid. The new dawn blooms as we free it. For there is always light, if only we're brave enough to see it."

**Reverend
Charles D. Barnes
Aurora**

We welcome your letters

The *Timberjay* encourages letters to the editor. You can submit letters by mail at PO Box 636, Tower, MN 55790, or email letters to marshall@timberjay.com.

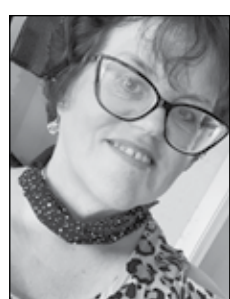
We ask that letters be limited to 300 words.

Letters are subject to editing, primarily for length and clarity.

Letters are a great way to offer your input to the *Timberjay's* editorial page. We want to know what you think!

It shouldn't, it couldn't, it wouldn't, it DID

RELIEVED... is how I am feeling since the presidential inauguration. Over the past four years there have been multitudes of Facebook memes, cartoons and skits about the Trump era. Bernie Sanders sitting at the inauguration with his homemade mittens has become a meme that went viral. The cartoon that best illustrated how



**SCARLET
STONE**

I felt, was the view over the steering wheel of a car with the caption, "The Trump presidency is like riding in a car with a toddler behind the wheel!" I know I started slinking down onto the floor with my hands over my head after the first few rotations of the tires.

There was some real bad sh#t that went

down during Trump's four years, such as: his inciting an insurrection, the migrant children separated from their parents, a president's brazen abuse of power, the run-a-way pandemic, and a smattering of impeachment trials. It's a long list. The backdrop of our lives as Americans isn't supposed to closely resemble apocalyptic movies or make you wish you could somehow go back to the 80s or leave the country. In childhood we begin drawing conclusions about how things "shake-down" and we predict outcomes....but then

there are those times when things take a destructive turn. Those are..."It shouldn't, it couldn't, it wouldn't, it DID" happenings. I felt that way when the baby robin my brother and I tried to keep alive with bugs and worms suddenly died. I cried for the bird. When a lying, power-hungry insurrectionist rose up out of TV-land and became President of these United States... I cried for our country. There's been nothing like this in my entire life and I hope we can keep it from ever happening again. Picture me...and you were there too, hun-

kered down on the back floor of the four-year car ride from hell, bouncing down the rough road yelling..."It couldn't, it wouldn't, it shouldn't, it did." And it DID.

This presidency brought me more stress than my bout with shingles in the late 80s, irritable bowel syndrome in the 90s, and my gallbladder issues just three years ago. I'm just glad I had an armful of kitties, a well-stocked refrigerator, and a soft coach to sink into on so many days when I needed comfort. At least

See **TRAUMA...pg. 5**

Letters from Readers

I am working for my constituents

The new legislative session began on Jan. 5 and there are many pressing issues our state needs to address including balancing the state budget, responding to COVID-19, and helping small businesses and their workers recover from the pandemic.

This year, I serve as Chair of the Senate Capital Investment Committee. This committee is responsible for crafting legislation to allow the state to issue bonds to pay for important projects. Investing in roads, bridges, clean water infrastructure, education facilities, and other local infrastructure projects is critical to creating the foundation for Minnesota's economic growth. The bonding bill I helped secure in October provided funding for improvements at the International Falls Airport, funding for a new water treatment plant in Two Harbors, and money for campgrounds and trails at our local state parks. I am proud to have gotten funding for projects all over my district from International Falls to Proctor to Silver Bay and beyond.

In addition to the capital investment committee, this session I will serve on the Senate Tax, Rules, and Redistricting Committees. On the Tax Committee, I will work to prevent taxes from being raised on middle-class families and ensure our

local governments receive adequate aid funding. Our local governments have shouldered a lot during the pandemic and need proper support from our state.

On the Senate Rules Committee, I will be a voice in encouraging the Minnesota Senate to operate in an open and transparent manner. The pandemic has provided unique challenges to governing, but our government must always be accessible and accountable.

I am eager to serve as a member of the Senate Redistricting Committee. This opportunity only happens once a decade after the U.S. Census. The committee oversees the redrawing of state and federal district boundaries, so they reflect changes in population. My goal is that all Minnesotans have fair representation in the state Legislature and in Congress. As the sole Independent on the committee, I will work to make sure Minnesotans are prioritized over partisan interests.

Regardless of committee assignments, my priority is always supporting good-paying Northern Minnesota jobs. This past year has been especially difficult for our small businesses and their workers. We need a state budget that is fiscally sound and prioritizes those who have been hurt hardest by the pandemic. We also need to give our schools the tools to safely reopen. Our students represent our future and the adverse effects of distance learning on our kids' mental

health and ability to learn are devastating. I am also working on improving the access and affordability of high-speed broadband in Northern Minnesota. Working and learning is especially challenging without reliable internet access.

A message I often hear today is that we in the Legislature need to do a better job of working together. The challenges we face now are too great for one party or one individual to fix. I have always tried reaching across the aisle, and this session will be no different. My main priority is always my constituents, and I will work with Republicans and Democrats to do what is best for the people I serve.

As always, if you have any questions or comments, please contact me at senate.mn/senator-bakkemail or call me at 651-296-8881.

**State Sen. Tom Bakk
District 3A**

God's will is at work so trust in the Lord

Greetings to my fellow Christian in Christ. I just read your piece that you wrote in the *Timberjay* stating, "He has gone well beyond delusion and now belongs with the lunatic fringe." I believe that God is in control over everything, allowing things to happen for His end time purpose. We don't always understand what His end purpose is, you, me or the man in question. You

and I may have different opinions on why things are happening in America now. Our God allows us the choice to choose between God and Satan. God's end time clock is winding down. His will is at work and I trust in the Lord with all my heart. "Love one another as I have loved you."

**Darwin B. Mickle
Tower**

Region's childcare crisis is growing worse

With the recent closures of some family childcare facilities in Ely, we are left with three licensed providers to serve our population of 3,356 people. Many families were affected by these closures, including my own. Even before these closures, Ely did not have enough childcare slots to accommodate our current population of young children. Add in the COVID-19 pandemic and more people working remotely and looking to either move or spend more time Up North (which follows a nationwide trend of people leaving cities for small town living)—we have a childcare crisis in our community.

In 2016, the Center for Rural Policy and Development called Minnesota's childcare shortage just that: a "quiet crisis" that has hit rural areas especially hard, with northeastern Minnesota having the worst childcare shortage in the state. In

2018, another study by the Northland Foundation found that our region needs an additional 4,500 licensed childcare spots—a 50-percent increase in current capacity to cover the need for childcare in the region.

On a personal note, I've heard from numerous families in Ely where parents had to quit their jobs, take extended leaves-of-absence from work, cut their hours, or turn to unreliable or potentially unsafe situations in order to care for their children. A few parents have even considered moving out of town (and the school district) because they are not able to find the care they need to support their families. Some families have said they would like to have more children but will not because they do not have access to reliable childcare.

The childcare shortage has broader implications for Ely's economy as well. Parents forced to quit their jobs are not contributing to our economy via tax dollars. They aren't purchasing as much from local stores as their family budget is reduced. Employers could see increased absenteeism from employees who may have to leave work due to a lack of access to affordable, reliable care for their children. Employers also face the cost of lost time and money due to finding, training, and hiring new employees if someone has to quit due to childcare issues.

It is in our best interest to do what rural

Minnesotans do best: come together to form a community coalition and involve businesses, parents, childcare providers, school districts, nonprofits like Incredible Ely and ECR, and government entities to work to expand the amount of quality childcare in Ely. One potential solution is a partnership with Ely Public Schools to offer before and after care to school-aged kids. This could be a source of revenue for the district—Virginia and North Woods schools offer this type of program with the help of the YMCA. This type of coalition could also focus on increasing the availability of infant childcare spots, which are extremely hard to come by.

If we want local families to thrive, businesses to have a reliable workforce, and our local economy to grow, we must work together to increase quality, affordable childcare in Ely. I'm grateful to have moved here as it is a wonderful place to raise our family. We can make it an even better place to call home by working together to solve this dire crisis.

**Mandy Petersen
Ely**

Petersen is a research scientist with Wilder Research. She is a co-author of the Northland Foundation study on the childcare shortage.

More
letters on
page 6

TRAUMA...Continued from page 4

I could afford food to eat. Periodically I would fluff myself onto the bathroom scale and to my amazement weighed the same as I did prior to holding my refrigerator for ransom....give or take three pounds. I did my "life-stuff"...I worked...did my dishes-eventually...my laundry too, but I could not stop watching the news.

I became obsessed for fear the world would end in a pandemic, a hostile takeover, or we'd get nuked. It didn't ease my anxiety to see the fear in seasoned TV journalists' eyes, especially in the final stretch, and hear them acknowledge that a deranged leader had the nuclear codes at his fingertips. Geez....don't tell us that...and don't suggest it to him! On one semi-terrorized occasion, when I should have been on a walk in the twinkly snow, I watched a YouTube video to seek reassurance there were many steps involved in a nuclear launch. I'd hear the phrase start in my head...."It shouldn't, it couldn't, it wouldn't"..... or would it? "Go have a Hershey bar and calm yourself dear," I would say to myself.

My imagination flew across the ocean, too. Would a foreign country somehow disable our power grid? I Googled how many power plants there are in the state and stopped myself before I called Minnesota Power with my seemingly insane questions. Next, I thought about heat source backup for my fuel furnace and I ordered a small propane heater to put in my basement so the pipes wouldn't freeze. I went to get a propane tank and the guy

said I needed to supply my own tank. I replied, "I thought you'd sell me a tank?" "No, I don't sell tanks," he said, looking at me like I should just know this stuff. I studied the small tank and knew it wouldn't last very long. A big tank would need to be delivered, jiggled into a garage corner with a long propane hose attached. I went home to think about it, eat some chips, and watch the news.

One good thing that came out of the four-year ride with Trump...is that I learned more about politics than I have ever known. Women with younger children don't have the luxury of time for their gears to grind like this. Someone has to make the sandwich. Now that the lunchmeat and fruit snacker is over, I can reserve my energies for torturing my soul, being a good citizen, and keeping up on my politics. Truth be told, one could barely keep up with the constant string of bad decisions and drama unfolding. It was nearly a full-time job.

I bought a vinyl cutter and a heat transfer press earlier in the fall for my screen printing business, but I haven't used them. There was always more "Breaking News" to watch. Creativity was stifled, energy usurped in plotting out a life in a country at war instead. I thought, "Maybe I should return the press and cutter because I may need the cash?" Then part of that verse..."It shouldn't come to that" dashed through my mind. Donald Trump's words and deeds did this to millions of people...not just me. He brought fear, sickness, hunger,

stress, death and he nearly brought down our democracy. Still, a person must hang on to hope and faith. We do that in America.

There were days that I sat in my pajamas until well after lunch, and I felt guilty about it...yes, of course I did. I could hear my mother, back in time, saying... "Why are you still in your pajamas... are you SICK?" So, with ghosts of parents-past in your head, it's really hard to wear pajamas anywhere close to the lunch hour. I doubt I will become one of those ne'er-do-wells you see in Walmart wearing their pajamas and shuffling through the store in bedroom slippers.

Have I mentioned, I still have my Christmas tree in the living room, and a smaller one in my kitchen? No brisk New Year's Day tear-down happened here in my asylum. The lights and memories of Christmastime did not need to be shoved in a box in the basement after the holidays ended. I needed cheerful props to help lift my spirits, and I am going to keep lifting them. Seasonal decorations will adorn both trees.

On Jan. 20, 2021, the Trump era ended like a big steam release from a pressure cooker. A functional, experienced, compassionate and responsible President was sworn in. During the inauguration I was in my recliner in front of the TV crying intermittently, with my clumsy roll of Charmin tumbling across my lap, followed by a kitty and another kitty. Our beautiful United States Capitol was still standing strong...dressed in miles of stars-


n-stripes bunting, restoring faith for the majority of us. Lady Gaga came sashaying down the royal carpet in her red-ball-gown-skirt; with vocal passion unleashed and sweeping arm gestures she sent shivers through my core. Twenty-two-year-old youth poet laureate, Amanda Gorman, vibrant and showstopping in her yellow coat and scarlet red headband, became larger than life when she spoke words with a performance that came from somewhere divine. She is our new Maya Angelou I reckoned...and we need her. The 2021 presidential inauguration was "deep and rich" from start to finish.

Since then, it has become very evident to me that there are great chasms in America that I did not know existed. I did not think that I was sharing my country with people who would attack our Capitol and murder fellow citizens at our own President's urging. That was the biggest "It shouldn't, it couldn't, it wouldn't, it DID" event in my life. An awakening has occurred, and insights to not let it happen again. We hope. You don't know what you have until it's gone.

In summary...the car stopped, a capable driver is at the wheel, and I have eased myself up off the floor while offering a hand to you. I put on calming music and admire my every-season tree as I try to come to terms with the world that we live in. I've kicked 2020 to the curb....the drama, the divorce, the viral fear, and Donald

Trump. I have a sore foot from doing so, but there is one last Hershey bar waiting in the kitchen

drawer.



the
TIMBERJAY

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ELY...Continued from page 3

the cost of constructing a (small) home.”

Ryan Callen represents the city council on the Planning and Zoning Commission and suggested the two groups gather for a study session discussion over the matter.

“It would be nice to have more information about this and then perhaps have a study session,” said council member Heidi Omerza. Council member Paul Kess agreed. He asked how allowable home sizes would be determined.

Clerk-Treasurer Harold Langowski asked council members how they would feel about having small homes mixed in with existing R-1 Zone structures. “Do you want to take a specific piece of property and make a new zoning district?” he asked. “That seems to be the direction that P&Z is pushing for.”

Langowski noted there are a couple of areas available in Spaulding for a new zoned area for those types of homes. “They don’t want to see (small homes) spread through all our neighborhoods,” he said.

The invitation for the Planning and Zoning Commission to meet next week was pushed to the study session on Tuesday,

Feb. 23.

Community Center

Langowski reported to council members last week that an online website that features available old houses and buildings for sale has sparked interest in the former Community Center building.

“With this online magazine, I believe it’s called ‘Cheap Old Homes,’ we have received dozens of phone calls and emails for both (Heritage Preservation Commission Chair) Celia Domich and myself,” he said. “She has shown the building a couple of times already and there is a lot of interest. It is crazy the worldwide reach that ‘Cheap Old Homes’ has.”

He expressed hope that a legitimate offer will be made on the 1930s-era landmark that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and has been vacant for several years.

The K-America Foundation bought the vacant building in 2018 for \$30,000 with plans to renovate the building into a Korean cultural center. The plans withered after organizers claimed ongoing racism over the coronavirus pandemic

Community Center building

The building is situated on the corner of First Avenue and Harvey Street in Ely, Minn. It is owned by the city of Ely which is the entry to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness.

It is three stories high with a total area of 28,834 square feet. The two main entrances are between the lower and main floor. The lower level is a cafeteria with kitchen, dishwashing and dishware that could serve hundreds of people. The main floor previously housed the city library and provided office space. The top floor includes a 5,000-square-foot multi-purpose auditorium.

The building, constructed as one of the Public Works Administration Building projects in 1938, is made of the finest materials including an exterior of Minnesota Mankato Gray Limestone and an interior that boasts terrazzo floors, Montana Travertine Marble on selected walls, and oak, walnut and birch doors, frames and panels. The building is a stunning example of



file photo

streamline moderne design.

History: The building was completed in 1938. For over 75 years it served as an office building, library, and event center. In 2014, the city chose to sell the building and construct a small library giving up the community center aspects of the building. In 2018 the building was sold to a non-profit organization that was planning to open a culture camp on the site. They have since dropped the project and the building has been returned to the city.

Additional Notes: With the building unoccupied since 2014, there has been some cosmetic damage to the building—primarily in the area of peeling paint and some mold in the lower level. However, it is still structurally sound and the primary materials are holding up well. Please see the 2014 Re-use Study on the city of Ely website (ely.mn.us) for complete details about the building.

Source: www.cheapold-homes.com

stymied their plans to raise as much as \$3 million for the project.

The building is listed for \$79,000 at www.cheapoldhomes.com (see sidebar).

Other business

In other business, the

council:

► Appointed Albert Forsman as acting mayor for 2021.

► Approved a note and mortgage for a residential rehab loan for fellow council member Jerome Debeltz, 311 N Lakeshore Dr., for \$7,000.

► Approved the Ely

School Board’s use of the council chambers for board meetings during the coronavirus pandemic.

► Received a report on passport sales by the city of Ely which were down more than half in 2020 over 2019, from 152 to 65, generating less than \$2,000 in net income.

► Accepted a COVID-19 public health plan from Ely Winter Festival organizers that includes a major scale-back of the 2021 event due to social distancing protocols.

Letters from Readers

Greenwood board plays dirty, again

Last week’s *Tower News* had an article about an incident that occurred at the Greenwood Town Hall on Jan 12. The article had one glaring omission—the other side of the story. No one from the *Tower News* has contacted any of us to get our side of the story as to what happened.

In the afternoon prior to the filing deadline, I called the town hall and asked the Interim Clerk Debby Spicer which individuals had filed for office. She questioned who I was, and why I wanted to know. I told her I might want to run and wanted to know who I might run against. I pointed out that the previous clerk would post the names of all the candidates on the clerk’s office door for all to see. Ms. Spicer informed me she had done that also. I responded, “I don’t understand the problem then.” Reluctantly, she finally gave me the information.

Later, when other candidates came to file, they asked Interim Clerk Spicer why it was so difficult to find out who was running for office? She explained she didn’t know who I was and I could have been from another township. I don’t understand what difference that would make—it’s public data. Supervisor Carmen DeLuca came in ranting that he had it on tape, and I suggested he call the sheriff. He sat down and proceeded to level a personal insult at my wife, and we all returned the same in kind. The candidates finished filing and we departed.

At the regular monthly board meeting later that evening, the board passed a motion to hire TechBytes to retrieve a segment of the surveillance tape from

4:30 to 5:15 p.m. and bring it for vetting with the appropriate authority. I never expected the “appropriate authority” would be the *Tower News*, since they do no vetting. The Greenwood Board has a vested interest in pushing this libelous story to influence election results in their favor, keeping the status quo.

**John Bassing
Greenwood Twp.**

There is always another side of the story

Shame on Greenwood Township Supervisors for handing photos to the *Tower News* from its surveillance cameras. Was there a motion passed to do so? What was the charge to retrieve it from the surveillance camera? Did the *Tower News* fill out an information request and go through all of the steps to get the information and picture? Or was it given out without the process the town board had established?

Shame on the *Tower News* for not checking facts on what was said and by whom. If the unnamed writer of the article had followed journalistic ethics, they would have contacted both parties for comment and represented both sides equally. And this is the newspaper that is currently the township’s official newspaper of record.

I will go over the events, as I was there, with others, to file for the upcoming township elections.

Two of us waited outside the hall – we needed to exchange personal items. Then, four of us all walked to the town hall office, to find the door locked, a COVID precaution. If the interim clerk was watching us—as noted in the *Tower News*,

she would have seen we all had masks in place and should have been let in. The doorbell had to be rung.

The *Tower News* article failed to list all persons at the office. Interim Clerk Spicer’s husband was there, along with (after a phone call for him to rush down) Supervisor Carmen DeLuca, who simply escalated the situation. DeLuca raced in the door yelling – “we have you on tape!” He then took a seat and began to harass Dr. JoAnn Bassing. This hit a nerve with the others there. DeLuca was then asked about several bad things from his past. He just said, “prove it.”

The *Tower News* failed to check with others to confirm what had been said. I did NOT SAY – “Then you better damn well act like it.” I did not even hear that being said by anyone.

We were there for a purpose, to file for office. I do not know why Deb Spicer, her husband and DeLuca seemed to be angry about it. The township office is the only place where a resident may file to run for office. The *Tower News* reported we shoved our paperwork to the clerk. This report is incorrect—two were given and I held mine until the first two were completed and copies given. Dr. John Bassing was there to get information but decided to postpone that inquiry.

It is a very sad situation when residents who want to serve the township are harassed by township officers for attempting to participate in a democratic process.

**Sue Drobac
Greenwood Twp.**

I’m thankful Ecklund is focused on important work

A big thank you to my state representative, Rob Ecklund, for his work to keep us safe during the pandemic.

With well over 400,000 dead so far, I’m grateful that he knows that we need continued emergency measures and frequent adjustments to the rules so that we can “follow the science” of disease prevention and be able to act quickly to open up when we can and pull back when we have to as COVID-19 moves through our communities.

I can’t imagine how much more my life would be restricted—and endangered—as an elder with preexisting conditions, if I couldn’t count on people wearing masks. Because my life is at risk, I don’t go to businesses that defy the rules. Thanks, Rob, for keeping those places to a minimum by cooperating with the governor to get us through this crisis.

I can’t imagine what would have happened if the pandemic had occurred last year while my husband’s immune system was destroyed by chemotherapy for Hodgkins Lymphoma. Thanks, Rob, for giving us the ability to go to Mayo Clinic for cancer check-ups and not have to worry—even now as he’s recovering—about the places along the road that we must stop on the drive there.

I can’t imagine why people—right wing outside groups—are putting up posters in Rob’s district blasting him for supporting emergency measures during a pandemic. Why would people want to make this whole thing last longer? Don’t they know

that the more people who wear masks, the faster businesses can open and we can get back to normal?

Meanwhile, I’m thankful that Rob is able to go about the business of representing his constituents as the rural Minnesota champion of funding for extending Internet service to our remote rural areas, for bringing construction jobs to our communities through the bonding bill, and most recently as the key sponsor of a Workers Rights Bill.

**Leah Rogne
Gheen**

Our communities need peacemakers

Our nation is in deadly peril. So are our communities. Political conflicts make conversations with some neighbors difficult because of the fear of “losing it”. Conflicts over a wide range of community issues separate us from one another. We have been torn apart over the education of our students and have lost the community generated by community schools. Our conflicts between ourselves make community growth difficult. Our small-town family connections close off new relationships. “Swappers” or “outsiders” move into the community and cannot integrate into relationships. As one community college professor told a new teacher at the end of his first year of teaching, “I would love to be friends with you but I’m so busy with my family and my wife’s family that there is no time left over.”

This overt conflict hinders the growth and health in our communities. What we need most in our communities is peace. Peace is to be “at rest”. When at peace, fear, conflict and loneliness are set aside and we “rest in safe relationships.”

We receive benedictions. We call for peace. We long for peace. We proclaim peace. At the same time, we blame others for causing conflict and cause conflict. “Democrats are baby killers.” “Republicans want skimpy government.” “We support Mining.” “We support the environment.” “Catholics are prolife enemies.” “Protestants only want to be entertained.”

When adding global conflict, about which we can do little personally, fear increases. We witness the killing of hundreds of thousands of men, women and children and experience the conflict over the influx of refugees searching for homes among us. Our national policies create intense conflict between Americans. Many of us rebel when immigrants become our neighbors.

My vision is that a “critical mass” of “us” become peace MAKERS. We do not know how to make peace in our neighborhoods. But we can learn. It will take time and heartfelt desire to become a peace makers. The joy of creating “rest” with our neighbors will far outweigh living in a life of “conflict” with them.

Who wants to join me?

**Art Dale
Soudan**

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Week of Feb. 1

Monday
TOPS - Immanuel Lutheran Church, Tower, at 9 a.m. Canceled until further notice.

Embarrass Al-Anon Family Group- Hope Lutheran Church, 5088 Hwy. 21, 6 p.m.

Tuesday
Tower Area Food Shelf- Open on the third Tuesday of every month from **2:30-5:00 p.m.** Located in the back of the Timberjay building on Main Street. Next food shelf day is Feb. 16..

Greenwood Fire Dept.- Meetings on the first (business meeting) and third (drill) Tuesday of each month at 6 p.m.

Wednesday
Tower AA- Open Basics- 7 p.m. at St. James Presbyterian Church. Questions, call 753-2332.

Thursday
AA Meeting- Lake Vermilion 12x12 (Open). 6:30 p.m. at Immanuel Lutheran Church, Tower, use the rear side door entrance.

Vermilion Country School Board- Meetings posted online at vermilioncountry.org.

TOWER ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

New grant program available for Tower businesses

A total of \$62,500 in grants available to help local businesses impacted by COVID-19

TOWER— A total of \$62,500 in grant funds is being made available to help businesses here that have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Businesses within the city limits of Tower can now apply for their share of the funds, provided they meet one or more of several goals of the program established by the Tower Economic Development Authority.

The program, funded primarily through a COVID-19 relief grant from the Department of Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation with matching funds from TEDA, is designed to meet any of a number of objectives, including:

- Reopening a business

that closed within the past year due at least in part to the pandemic.

- Expanding an existing business.
- Establishing a new business likely to create additional employment opportunities in Tower. The higher the job-creation goals, the higher the applicant will rank.
- Establishing a new business, preferably on Main Street.
- Improving storefronts or commercial buildings (should be tied to creation or maintenance of jobs).
- Improving energy efficiency or installing renewable energy sources. Businesses interested in such improvements

will be encouraged to also work with the AEOA's Business Energy Retrofit Program to leverage additional dollars for improvements to Tower's Main Street.

The new grant program is a change that the TEDA board approved earlier this month. An earlier version had anticipated providing low interest loans, but TEDA officials decided that given the level of need, a grant program would be a better option.

Grant requests will be considered in the range of \$3,000-\$20,000.

Application forms for the TEDA program are now available on the city of Tower's website at cityoftower.com/teda. Click on "Incentives" to find

the application form. The deadline for application is March 1, 2021, with awards to be announced shortly thereafter.

"We think these dollars, if applied strategically, can create new jobs and help sustain existing jobs on Main Street, as well as improve the look of storefronts," said TEDA President Steve Peterson. "We strongly encourage businesses in the community to utilize this program to improve their operations."

Questions about the program should be directed to TEDA Executive Director Marshall Helmlinger at 218-750-2510 or teda@cityoftower.com.

TOWER-SOUDAN ELEMENTARY



Tower-Soudan Elementary music teacher Michelle Anderson has been teaching her classes in the gym, which makes it easier to keep students at least six feet apart. The gym also gives the opportunity to run off some steam after the music lesson is over!

Above: Kindergartener Shelby Troop takes a turn being "it" during a tag game.

Left: First- and second-graders "Dance Like a Penguin" at the start of their class.

photos by J. Summit

SCHOOL NEWS



Vermilion Country School second quarter honor roll

"A" Honor Roll

- Caleb Ramponi
- Emilie Wojcik
- Leah Anderson
- Jaicee Krings
- Mariah Mitchell
- Alliyah Zapata

"B" Honor Roll

- Isaac Archambeau
- Talyn Hedin
- Abbi Zapata
- Hunter Jackson

COMMUNITY NOTICES

Skating parties set

SOUDAN- Chimpy's skating parties are now underway, with the next party set for Saturday, Jan. 30 from 12 noon – 2 p.m. There will be free food, including hot dogs, burgers, pizza, drinks, and snacks. The skating rink is being kept in good condition, and children also have fun playing on the huge snow piles adjacent to the rink and playing on the swings and playground.

Rink attendant Jayne Sundeen will be offering food at the rink for skaters on Tuesdays and Wednesdays after school, weather-permitting.

The rink warming shack is open daily, weather-permitting, weekdays from 4 – 8 p.m., and weekends from 11 a.m. – 8 p.m. with safety provisions in place and reduced capacity.

Sponsors this year included Terry and Dianna Sundahl, and Paul Johnson. Anyone interested in donating money to help pay for the food should

contact Chimpy at Zup's in Tower.

Clarification

Greenwood Chairman Mike Ralston wants Greenwood residents to understand that the annual meeting set for March 9 may be "continued", not adjourned, to a later date if residents so decide. The story in the Jan. 22 *Timberjay* used the word adjourned, but technically, state rules say that the meeting is not to be adjourned, but continued to a later, specified date. This year the board is considering this action due to the complications of having to hold the annual meeting remotely due to COVID-19 safety measures.

Brooklynn Berg named to Iowa State University Fall 2020 Dean's List

REGIONAL- Brooklynn Mae Berg, a sophomore from

Tower, is one of the more than 11,000 Iowa State University students recognized for outstanding academic achievement by being named to the fall semester 2020 Dean's List. Students named to the Dean's List must have earned a grade point average of at least 3.50 on a 4.00 scale while carrying a minimum of 12 credit hours of graded course work. Berg is majoring in Kinesiology and Health.

Area students named to The College of St. Scholastica Fall 2020 Dean's List

REGIONAL- The College of St. Scholastica is proud to announce its Fall 2020 Dean's List recipients. The list includes the following local students:

- Bria Chiabotti of Soudan. Chiabotti is a Senior majoring in Nursing - Intended.
- Lori Huseby of Babbitt. Huseby is a Senior majoring in

Mathematics.

Brandon Mackai of Embarrass. Mackai is a Senior majoring in Health Information Management.

Danna Weets of Tower. Weets is a First Year Student majoring in Nursing - Intended.

Dean's List members have achieved a 3.75 grade point average or above on a 4.0 scale. The College of St. Scholastica would like to commend these students for their honorable academic achievements.

'Souper Bowl Sunday' booya on Feb. 7

TOWER- Mark your calendars, the St. Martin's youth will again be hosting their annual "Souper Bowl of Caring" on Sunday, Feb. 7. This year, due to COVID-19 restrictions, there will only be take-out meals available.

Take-out dinners will be picked up from 11:15 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the church social hall. The dinner includes booyah

(vegetable beef soup), rolls, and choice of desserts. Freewill offerings will be accepted. All proceeds will be donated to the Tower Food Shelf.

For the past 16 years, the youth at St. Martin's have been donating the ingredients for the booyah. They come in the day before to peel, cut, and dice the vegetables. This year, a group of parishioners will make the desserts on Friday.

Everyone in our community is encouraged to support the youth in this worthwhile project.

'Souper Bowl of Caring' began as a senior high youth fellowship that has spread nationwide. It enables young people to see that by moving beyond themselves and working together, they can make a difference in their community.

Higher Ed

Local students honored at St. Scholastica

DULUTH- The College of St. Scholastica's Fall 2020 Dean's List includes the following local students: Gavin Blauch and Apolonia Homer, both of Ely, and Lori Huseby of Babbitt.

Blauch is a first-year student and has not declared a major. Homer is a sophomore majoring in Psychology. Huseby is a Senior majoring in Mathematics.

Dean's List members have achieved a 3.75 grade point average or above on a 4.0 scale.

In Brief

Be a firefighter

ELY – The Ely Fire Department is accepting applications for volunteer firefighters. Applications can be picked up from the clerk's office at City Hall, 209 E Chapman St.



The Robert Niskala family, along with many in the Ely community, said goodbye to the U.S. Marine veteran last Friday at a funeral at St. Anthony's Church and an Ely Honor Guard ceremony at the Ely Cemetery. Niskala died Jan. 13, 2021. Donna Niskala and family were presented with the American flag that draped his coffin. A celebration of life will be planned for this summer. photos by K. Vandervort

WINDOW INTO YESTERDAY

Women's suffrage in Ely has temperance roots

by DAVID KESS
Ely-Winton Historical Society

By the 1870s women already had begun to organize suffrage groups in their local communities across the state of Minnesota. In 1875, the legislature gave them the right to vote only in school board elections. In 1881, fourteen women in Hastings founded the Minnesota Woman Suffrage Association and affiliated themselves with the national association.

By 1893, this group got the Minnesota Senate to take up the matter of suffrage. Their goal was to seek the vote in municipal elections. The vote in the Senate was 32 ayes to 14 nays. However, the House voted it down. A protest parade in Minneapolis of 2,000 women followed.

By 1919, continued activity in other parts of the state brought 30,000 women into the effort. The Legislature then gave women the right to vote, including presidential elections. Even though it did ratify the 19th Amendment, it wasn't until 1920 until the required two-thirds of the other states followed suit. The suffrage movement (MWSA) later became known as the Minnesota League of Women Voters which is still active today.



The Vespi Temperance Society was organized in Ely in 1889. photo courtesy of EWHS.

As early as 1893 New Zealand granted the right to vote in parliament to women. However, that right was not given to indigenous women. Women, including the indigenous Sami (or Lapps in Finland), were given that right in 1906. It was 1920 in the United States.

In Ely the women's suffrage movement had its beginnings with the temperance society. In 1889 the Vespi Temperance Society was organized, the first organization in town. Besides discouraging the use of strong drink (drunkenness was prevalent in this frontier town), the group constructed a large building on Camp Street that became known as the Opera House. A men's gymnastics group, a free lending library, lectures, programs, dinners, dances, a brass band, concerts, musicals including operettas, and a women's suffrage group became active.

My grandmother, Senja Maki, and her friend Anna Leino, told of at least one suffrage parade in downtown Ely besides whatever lectures or programs were held at the Opera House. Oddly, no mention of

these activities or any parade was ever made by the local papers. And of course, no pictures. Was this an oversight or a matter that the male editors back then chose not to report? Mention would certainly have been made in the minutes of this group's meetings but unfortunately they are, for the most part, not available because they were recorded in Finnish and were subsequently sent to the Minnesota Immigrant Archives in Minneapolis. No one has been found to translate them at this point. As temperance

activity declined, the large building was used as a vaudeville theater, then a silent movie theater, followed by "talkies," and finally a bowling alley. The temperance society itself continued until the late 1960s or early 1970s finding meeting space at Grace Lutheran Church. The Ely-Winton Historical Society does have a number of pictures of the building and the group. Those will be on display at the community college Fine Arts Lobby through February. Call 218-365-3226 for hours and information.

Breathing Out

by Cecilia Rolando © 2021



a tested nation moving toward unity
our breath is released

Libraries

Ely library
Hours: Monday – Friday, 10 a.m.-6 p.m.
Saturdays – 8 a.m. to noon
Closed on Sundays
Phone: 365-5140

Babbitt library
Monday Noon-6 pm
Tuesday Noon-6 pm
Wednesday Noon-6 pm
Thursday Noon-6 pm
Friday Noon-5 pm
Phone: 827-3345

Support groups

AA - Alcoholics Anonymous
OPEN AA - 7:30 p.m. Wednesdays and Saturdays, in-person, First Lutheran Church, 915 E. Camp St., Ely.
ELY WOMEN'S OPEN AA - Every Monday at noon at St. Anthony's Catholic Church, 231 E. Camp St., Ely.
BABBITT AA - 7 p.m. Tuesdays, Woodland Presbyterian Church
AL-ANON - Sundays 8-9 p.m. at St. Anthony's Catholic Church in Ely. For persons who encounter alcoholism in a relative or friend.
BABBITT AL-ANON Thursdays, 7 p.m., at Woodland Presbyterian.
CO-DEPENDENTS' 12-step support group, noon Fridays, St. Anthony's Catholic Church, Ely.
ELY FOOD SHELF - Third Wednesday each month, 15 W. Conan St.
ADULT BASIC EDUCATION GED
- Study materials and pre-test available. Call 218-365-3359, 218-827-3232, or 1-800-662-5711.

EBCH gears up for COVID vaccines

ELY – In public update information on the local availability of COVID-19 vaccinations, Ely-Bloomenson Community Hospital officials released the following information this week. Last weekend, several changes were made at the state of Minnesota level regarding vaccination allocations, however, it is still not clear when EBCH will have doses available to continue vaccinating Phase 1b (frontline essential workers and people over the age of 75, or with medical conditions). EBCH officials urge residents to visit their website at <https://www.ebch.org/> to sign-up for the COVID-19 vaccination waitlist. The Ely facility went live this week with a sign-up system to gather information and gauge public interest. For those who do not have internet access or have trouble signing up, please call the main hospital number, 218-365-3271, and one of the receptionists will help complete the process. EBCH officials recommend utilizing the MyChart account for Essentia Health Clinic patients and registering at the MN Department of Health's vaccine pilot site in Mt. Iron. Doing so will ensure every opportunity to get called for a vaccination.

ELY YOUTH IN ACTION



The Ely Area Food Shelf recently received more than 1,000 pounds of donated food from a Food Drive sponsored by "Youth in Action." Each year this group of Ely high school teens encourages K-12 students and their families to donate non-perishable canned and boxed foods. Shown from left, Will Davies, Riley Bishop and Zach Robbins. "Especially in times like now, people are in need like never before and food drives are a great experience for everyone who participates," Davies said. submitted photo

NORTH WOODS SCHOOL

Oehler getting settled as Grizzlies' new dean

FIELD TWP- The 2020-21 school year brought with it many changes, including a new Dean of Students at North Woods School. I feel very fortunate during these challenging times to have hired Mr. Gerald Oehler. He brings with him a wealth of experience in teaching and school leadership roles. Mr. Oehler replaces Mr. John Jirik, who accepted a new role in ISD 2142 leading Tower-Soudan Elementary. We wish Mr. Jirik (JJ) the best in his new position as we welcome Mr. O.

Where are you originally from and where did you go to high school and college?

I grew up in Mora. I went to Mora High School. Go Mustangs! I did my undergraduate in Social Studies Education with a Minor in Human Relations at St. Cloud State. I received my Masters in Education from Notre Dame of Maryland. My Administrative degree was through St. Mary's University.

Were there teachers who were an influence on you? Please name a few if you can.

In high school, my Accounting teacher Mr. Sandy was excellent. I was horrible at Accounting, but he would do anything to help. In college, Dr. Glade was the reason I became a Social Studies teacher. She made it so interesting!

What characteristics did these teachers have that were important to you?

They cared. The one thing that stood out the most was that they would go above and beyond to help us. Dr. Glade directed class more like a discussion rather than giving



JOHN VUKMANICH

us information. She was very thought provoking.

What is your role at North Woods?

I am the Dean of Students. I am primarily responsible for behavior management, but none of that works without building relationships with students and staff. I try to be a team player and get to know the kids.

Why did you choose teaching as a profession?

It goes back to Dr. Glade. But I have a love of history and that was a big influence. I wanted to share my passion for history with students and try to influence them to enjoy learning about the past.

What are your hobbies?

I love to read; I read a lot. Suspense and horror primarily. I enjoy the outdoors, walks, and going to the gym. I am hoping to get a place soon where I can also pursue my love of gardening.

What is something you like about North Woods?

I like the small community feel and how everyone is connected. People treat each other more positively because we are a small community and we know each other.

What is a professional goal for you?

Eventually I would like to be a principal. Educational leadership is also a passion of mine. I have had roles as a teacher, curriculum director, staff development, language learner coordinator, department chair, and instructional coach. These experiences all fall in line with my passion to help kids be successful.

What is something you love about northern Minnesota?

Space! I lived on the East Coast for many years and I appreciate the space and the ability to be outside. I also love the green, the trees, and all that is NOT concrete.

What is a piece of advice you'd give your students?

Do your work. Drive forward with your passion. Don't be afraid to



North Woods Dean of Students Gerald Oehler has a passion for history and another passion for gardening. submitted photo

ask for help. We are here to help you be successful.

Do you have a favorite saying or expression?

Nope. I do have a favorite quote though, "Nothing to fear but fear itself."

What do you hope your students remember you for?

I am strict but I am fair. I want students to like me, but also to realize that I am holding them accountable in their best interest.

Thanks Mr. Oehler, and welcome to North Woods School. We are glad that you are here getting to know our kids and making a positive impact on our school and community.

Go Grizzlies!

Grizzlies fans get virtual access to watch home hoops games

by DAVID COLBURN
Cook-Orr Editor

FIELD TWP- There was little question, as the fall season for high school sports ramped up, that the severe restrictions on fans attending contests in person would end up being applied to winter sports as well, and a huge statewide spike in COVID-19 cases starting in November guaranteed it.

Only two fans per team member are allowed to attend basketball games, but thanks to a collaborative effort between North Woods School and the Bois Forte Band, Grizzlies fans who can't get in aren't entirely left out in the Minnesota cold.

The school has a new subscription-based video service through the NFHS Network, an online streaming service that's been installed in thousands of high schools across the country. The network is affiliated with the National Federation of State High School Associations and its members and Play On! Sports, and will stream more than 300,000 high school sporting events this year.

"This is a system that Mt. Iron-Buhl and Cherry put in," said Grizzlies Boys Basketball Head Coach Will Kleppe, who took the lead at the school for getting the system. "It's a proven system on a pretty reliable platform, and it also allows people to go back and see previous games, which was something we were looking for."



This new camera in the North Woods gym streams live game video to the internet.

The network provides, free of charge, a sophisticated camera positioned at midcourt that automatically tracks the flow of action with no need for an operator. It picks up audio from the gym, but there are no announcers. The game score, updated automatically, is at the bottom of the screen. However, there's a charge for installation, and the school was responsible for installing the additional cables needed to connect the system to the internet.

Enter Randy Long, information technology director for the Bois Forte Band.

"Will reached out to me and asked if I had funding available and could help out on the project," Long said. "I told him we would make it happen."

About a year and a half ago, Long secured a grant from the Blandin Foundation to fund broadband demonstra-

tion projects in the Nett Lake and Cook areas, and while he's already done about 20 projects, there was still money available to do the work at North Woods. Long also provided the labor, along with Evertt Huismann and Lou Pliml, both of Cook.

Long was already an NFHS subscriber, using the service to watch some of his relatives in other parts of the state compete, and he had high praise for the system.

"I think it's wonderful," he said. "Some of the money you pay for a subscription helps support local activities at the school. It's a one-stop shop where you can watch not only your local school but other schools that are part of the network as well."

As an example, North Woods subscribers were able to watch the Grizzlies' road game on Tuesday at Cherry.

However, the rollout hasn't been com-

pletely free of glitches. Users have reported instances where the video momentarily freezes. Sometimes it picks up where it left off, while other times the score on the bottom of the screen reveals that viewers may have missed some possessions and scoring.

"It's kind of tough to figure out where it's coming from," Long said. "It could be on the local end where they're at limited bandwidth, or it could be at the school, which is highly unlikely because they're on a fiber circuit."

Long discounted the idea that the delays could be due to excessive simultaneous usage, noting that systems like NFHS Network typically piggyback their services on huge commercial providers that are more than capable of handling the traffic. He said he believed the camera is set up wirelessly and that connecting it directly by cable could be a possible fix.

Kleppe noted that when school activities start to return to normal the system can also be used to stream other events, for example, music concerts, that are held in the gym.

NFHS Network offers both monthly and annual subscription plans. For more information about rates and available content, visit the network's website at www.nfhsnetwork.com and enter "North Woods High School" in the search field.

Hearts and students raise funds for VHHP

COOK- Virgie Hegg Hospice Partners Inc. has announced a new February fundraising campaign, Hearts for Hospice.

Participating local businesses will have hearts available for purchase in memory of a lost loved one for just \$5.

Also, North Woods students will be collaborating with VHHP during the month of February by collecting coins and dollar bills. Prizes will be awarded to one high

school and one elementary class that brings in the most donations.

All proceeds will go to Virgie Hegg Hospice Partners to carry out their mission of supporting hospice and hospice-eligible patients and their families.

For more information please contact program director Becca Bundy at 218-780-5423 or fundraiser campaign host Emily Koch at 218-235-9113.

Hospice to award health scholarships

COOK- Virgie Hegg Hospice Partners is seeking applicants for its 2021 scholarships, which include two for high school students and one for college students.

High school students who live in the Cook, Nett Lake, Orr, Tower and Soudan school attendance areas and are pursuing a career in a medical field -- nursing, dental, EMT, physical therapy, etc. -- may apply. Students should have an address that falls in one of the listed areas, but they do not have to be a student attending one of the area

schools to apply.

Previous scholarship recipients now in college are encouraged to apply for the college scholarship as well as any other college student who lives in the same attendance areas.

Applications are due to VHHP postmarked by April 15. Applications can be obtained from the North Woods High School counselor's office, the VHHP website (www.vhhp.org) or by contacting program director Becca Bundy at 218-780-5423 or email at vhhpdirector@gmail.com.

Book club to meet Feb. 9 via Zoom

COOK--Readers and Rappers, a Cook-area book club, will have their next meeting via Zoom on Tuesday, Feb. 9 at 1 p.m.

The book to be discussed is 'Rodham' by Curtis Sittenfeld. Jane Kujala will serve as the

discussion moderator.

The Zoom link will be sent to each member's email prior to the meeting. Questions concerning the link should be directed to Shawna Kishel at 218-666-5096.

ISD 696

Ely school district has more lobby work for Costin Group

by KEITH VANDERVORT
Ely Editor

ELY – In a study session Monday, ISD 696 school board members considered retaining the services of a lobbying group for the next year. The Costin Group believes it has a several ideas to steer more Taconite Production Credits to the Ely community.

Costin Group principals Gary Cerkenik and Jeff Anderson helped the Ely school district to successfully develop and implement a bonding bill and other funding last year to begin a \$20 million school renovation project.

“In conversations with Superintendent (Erik) Erie and Board Chair (Ray) Marsnik, we have identified that the Ely Schools generally receive the least amount of taconite tax money in the Taconite Assistance Area,” Cerkenik said. “We believe we have a legislative strategy to

potentially remedy this and increase the amount Ely receives, without reducing the amount any other district receives.”

Taconite production credits replace revenue that would otherwise be collected from property owners, although it is not considered additional revenue.

ISD 696 and 13 other Iron Range districts are in the Taconite Assistance Area. For 2021, Ely is set to receive \$91,806. While that amount has been increasing over the past couple of years, Ely is at the bottom of the list and receives less than half of the next lowest district, Aitkin, that is set to receive nearly \$200,000 in production credits. At the top of the list, Hibbing will receive \$1,671,437 and Rock Ridge will receive \$1,437,328.

Taconite production credits are based on local mines’ prior three years of taconite production.

Ely does not have a

mine or plant within the school district, and so is not eligible for the school maintenance fund in the taconite tax distributions. Ely does not have a taconite railroad and loses out on additional distributions. And, according to Cerkenik, Ely gets less because of low numbers of students and the high-end property valuations of lakeshore properties in the district.

“We need to articulate that Ely schools continue to need assistance,” he said. “It is apparent that Ely is isolated geographically, and Ely schools must remain operational to serve these students as there is no realistic opportunity to send them elsewhere.”

Cerkenik said the Costin Group “would like to work with the Ely school district and area lawmakers to consider changes in the taconite tax distribution formula to increase the flow of funds over the long term.”

He noted the con-

tributions of State Sen. Thomas Bakk and State Rep. Rob Ecklund in the success of the \$7 million in Department of Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation funding for the ISD 696 facility renovation project, and said they will be key in helping them with this taconite tax distribution adjustment. “They have both been champions for the community of Ely and we expect they would have a willingness to help us with this issue,” Cerkenik said.

The Costin Group also highlighted other ways they propose to lobby and advocate for ISD 696 in the coming year:

► “We will also effectively monitor proposed education legislation, committee hearings and other legislative activity. We maintain close and effective relationships with legislators, staff and other lobbyists to keep updated on issues we represent.

► “Through our strong relationships, we will be able to keep the school district connected with lawmakers and staff throughout the session and year-round.

► “Our team will assist in 2021 efforts related to the new school project. We will help execute a successful ground-breaking ceremony and assist in keeping lawmakers updated on progress related to the new building project.

► “In a large construction project over an extended period, there are always surprises. Our firm will be on the ground keeping our partners informed of the project and be prepared to seek potential assistance to address problems.”

The Costin Group proposed a flat fee of \$2,000 per month for a one-year contract (with a 90-day cancellation clause).

Marsnik praised the efforts of Cerkenik and Anderson.

“Your work was extremely important to us

in getting the \$7 million (from IRRR) for our building project,” he said. “Speaking for myself, I definitely would like to keep you on because there is more work to be done to benefit our school district. If we can get an increase in the taconite money, we will gain a lot more than it will cost us. While it does not bring direct revenue to the district, it will provide some help for our taxpayers.”

School board members will likely vote on the Costin Group’s lobbying proposal at their next meeting on Monday, Feb. 8. That meeting will be the first of many Ely school board public sessions to be held at the Ely City Hall council chambers while public health protocols are in place due to the coronavirus. That larger facility can accommodate in-person meetings while maintaining social distance mandates.

CITY OF ELY

Ballot grows for Ely mayor position; Candidate forum set for Feb. 18

by KEITH VANDERVORT
Ely Editor

ELY – Another Ely resident has joined the race for Ely mayor. Micca Leider, 36 W. Conan St., will join at least four current city council members and a former mayor on a primary election ballot in April.

The filing period closes at 5 p.m. on Tuesday, Feb. 2.

Leider filed for the position last Friday. She

has lived in Ely since 2017 and previously lived in the community from 2005 to 2008. She has been involved in education, particularly as a school counselor, for about 10 years, and is planning to pursue a doctorate degree.

“I have been involved in politics since I was a kid and have always been an activist. It is in my blood,” she said. “I try to look for the truth, fairness

and justice and honor that. I hope to help people be more informed so they can make choices that are accurate and represent what they want.”

As more than two candidates are seeking the job, a primary election will be held on Tuesday, April 13. The top two candidates will face off in a general election on Tuesday, Aug. 10.

A candidate forum is scheduled for Thursday,

Feb. 18, at 6 p.m. Due to coronavirus concerns, the event will not be open to the public but will be broadcast live on Ely-TV, streamed live on Facebook, and recorded for later viewing. Those wishing to submit questions for consideration should email them to khv771@gmail.com. The event is being organized by the Ely branch of American Association of University Women.

2021 Ely Mayoral Special Election

- Feb. 2 – Candidate filing period closes
- Feb. 4 – Close of withdrawal period (two days after close of filing period)
- Feb. 18 – Candidate forum on Ely Area Television and Facebook
- Feb. 26 – Open absentee voting period begins
- April 13 – Special Primary Election (top two candidates advance to general election)
- June 25 – Open absentee voting period begins
- Aug. 10 – Special General Election
- Aug. 12 – Canvass election results at special council meeting

ELY...Continued from page 1

just down the hall from the State Theater.

“Greenstone was chosen in part because of a large outcropping of greenstone rock in the basement of the building,” he said, “where we have plans to open the Greenstone Grotto, a gathering area for folks who may want to purchase a beverage and a treat and relax before or after a film on movie night, or at any time the building is open.”

The State Theater was very busy the first six months they were open for business before being closed again in November by state COVID-19 mandates.

“The theater screened 64 films, selling almost 3,800 tickets and averaging more than two movies per week,” Wigdahl said.

In addition, the venue hosted several live events including performances of “The Quiltmakers’ Gift” theatrical production, an outdoor movie at the Rockwood on July 4, the first indoor opera performance in the country during the pandemic in July, and a dance production and video introduction with the Reflections Dance Company in August. There was also a family film series and a wellness series last fall.

Ely’s Historic State Theater re-opened last

week and is in the second week of their POV (Point of View) Women Directors eight-film series on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. Discussion groups before and after the screenings of award-winning films including “Selma,” “Leave No Trace,” and “A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood” (Mr. Rogers) are part of the event.

“This weekend is the long-awaited arrival of the new ‘Wonder Woman 1984’ paired with the original ‘Wonder Woman’ movie for a terrific double outing for WW fans,” Wigdahl said.

The Reflections Dance Company returns on Saturday and Sunday, Feb. 6-7, to introduce their new video “Home on Earth.”

The facility’s expanded concessions area just opened a new “pop-up” cafe featuring Belgian Snack Waffles (crispy golden pastries with caramelized pearls of sugar) and Belgian Drinking Chocolate (intense, velvety smooth chocolate melted into a delicious warm drink) that enhances their film fare offerings of popcorn and candy as well as soda, beer, and wine. “We are anticipating some Valentine’s Day specials in February including our first mixed drink special,” he added.

Fundraising efforts

The EHST non-profit group raised more than \$360,000 to furnish and reopen the State Theater.

“We successfully raised over \$80,000 of that amount on our first fundraising campaign, including a \$10,000 match on GiveMN day and a \$20,000 IRRR grant for the seating,” Wigdahl said

“The 50-seat Greenstone Cinema will require \$180,000, approximately half that amount,” he added. “We are announcing our second phase fundraiser for the projector and screen with a direct-mail campaign starting next week.”

Prior donors will be contacted as well and may wish to consider becoming sustaining donors.

“There are still more than 80 seat-plaque name badges available to purchase for \$400 each, which would add \$32,000 and which make wonderful mementos for posterity in the State Theater,” he said.

“Fifty over-size rocker-style seats for the Greenstone Cinema have been ordered as well as the speakers and the overhead and sconce lighting. Carpet and floor tile have been selected and will be ordered as monies become available,” Wigdahl said. “Every item purchased for both theaters has been prepaid and we are incurring no outstanding debt,” he noted.

“The EHST Board thanks the Ely and surrounding communities for your continued support of this ambitious project to help revitalize main street Ely. See you at the movies!”

LETTER...Continued from page 1

of the Interior. But Stauber couldn’t even convince other GOP members of the Minnesota congressional delegation to sign on to a letter he issued this week opposing Haaland’s nomination.

Stauber has come under fierce criticism from tribal officials across the country, and particularly those within the Eighth District of Minnesota.

In a joint, Jan. 14 letter, leaders of the five Ojibwe bands within Stauber’s home district expressed their “profound disappointment,” with the Congressman,

noting the historic nature of Haaland’s nomination. Tribes were especially frustrated that Stauber failed to consult with them prior to his decision to circulate a letter to members of Congress seeking support for his effort.

Yet with more than 200 Republican members in the House, Stauber found just 14 other signatories, according to a copy of the letter that Stauber released on Tuesday. Stauber’s supporters include newly-elected Lauren Boebert, one of only two members of the

House to openly espouse the Qanon conspiracy theory.

No other member of the Minnesota congressional delegation signed on to the letter.

Stauber lauded his effort, despite the marginal support he received. “I am proud to lead this letter to the Biden Administration because the Interior Department with Representative Haaland at the helm would be disastrous for northern Minnesota’s natural resources-based economy and working men and women across the nation,”

wrote Stauber in a press release. “Not only has Representative Haaland championed expensive socialist policies like the Green New Deal, which seeks to force energy-sensitive mines, paper mills, and manufacturers in this country out of business, but she has also actively worked to end high-wage mining jobs here in the Northland.”

Advocates of the Green New Deal cite any number of economic analyses that show the net result of the investments recommended as part of the proposal would yield sig-

nificant new job creation. Tribal officials say they recognize the need for balance between environmental protection and the need for jobs. “We understand that you walk a fine line in the Eighth District in balancing the interests of industry versus the environment,” wrote Mille Lacs Band Chair Melanie Benjamin in a separate letter to Stauber. “Your letter cites your concern about jobs yet Indian tribes are the largest employer in your district.” Tribal officials, in their joint letter, called on Stauber to end his efforts

to derail Haaland’s nomination. “Ultimately, Indian tribes are eager to see how Rep. Haaland in her appointment as the Secretary will lead and transform the function of many Interior divisions on behalf of Tribes and enhance self-determination and self-governance within this next administration.”

As of Wednesday, the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources had not scheduled a hearing on Haaland’s nomination.

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COVID...Continued from page 1

In the North Country region, the most recent seven-day average case rate of 10.6 is less than half that of St. Louis County as a whole and dramatically lower than when it hit a peak of 76.1 on Nov. 19.

The combined zip code areas of Orr, Cook, Tower, Soudan, Ely, and Embarrass had a total of only seven new cases in the Jan. 21 weekly situation report. None of those communities had more than two new cases reported between Jan. 14 and Jan. 21.

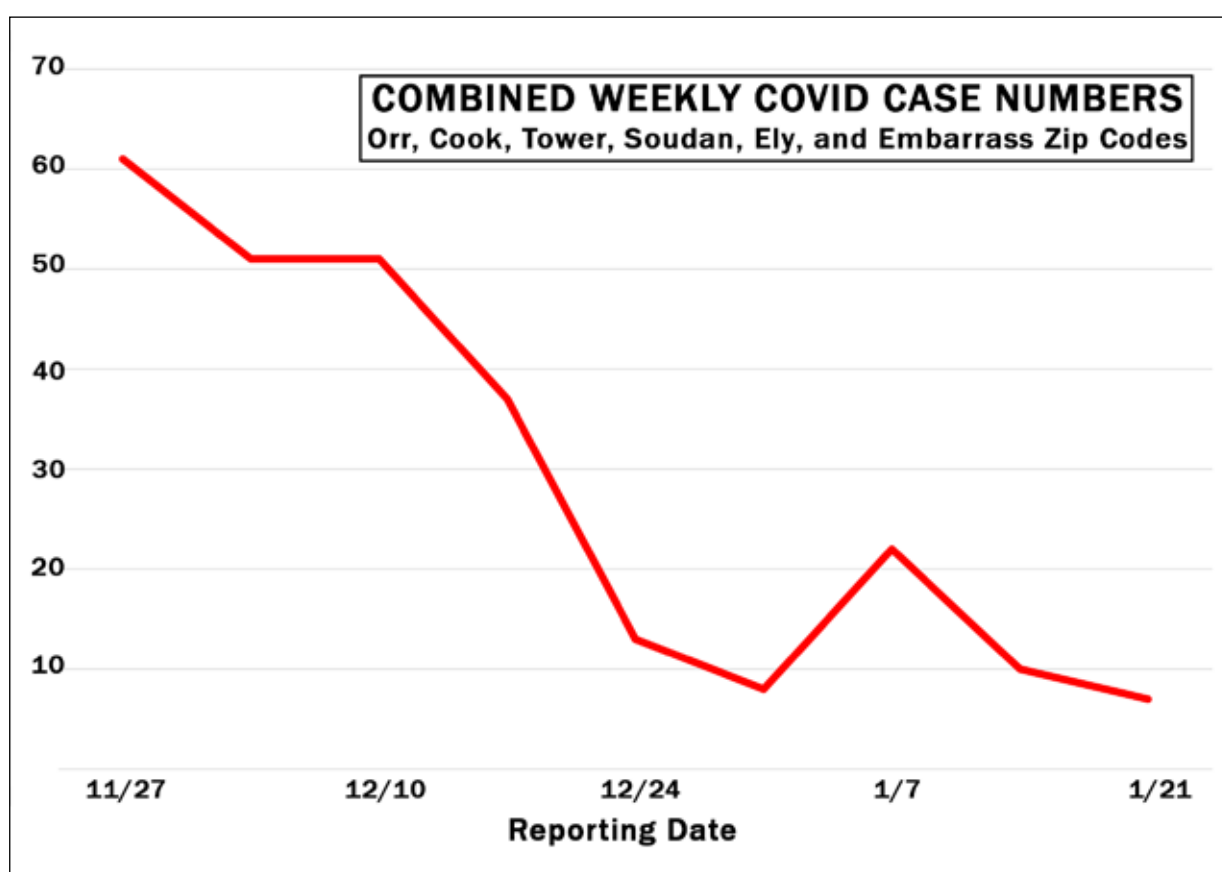
The sharp downward trend from 61 new weekly cases to eight on Dec. 31 came to a momentary halt when 22 cases were reported on Jan. 7. That total coincided with a week in which health officials anticipated a possible post-Christmas surge. Statewide, there was little evidence of a post-holiday surge, health officials said last week.

Vaccinations

Officials shifted gears this week for how it determines who among those 65 and older can get vaccinated at nine pilot sites around the state after massive demand created massive frustrations for hundreds of thousands of people trying to be first in line for a limited number of vaccinations.

First-come, first-served is gone. In its place is a lottery-style system where eligible individuals will be picked at random from the pool of registrants for appointments, this week totaling about 8,000. Those who registered with the system last week were automatically included in the eligible pool with those who registered between 5 a.m. Tuesday and 5 a.m. Wednesday.

As of 1 p.m. Tuesday, with 16 hours still left to register, about 180,000 people 65 and older had signed up for a chance at getting one of roughly 8,000 doses to be administered at this week's clinics, state IT Services Commissioner Tarek



Tomes said. After an early morning rush, online and call center registrations were running smoothly and had minimal or no wait times, he said, a far cry from the stories of people waiting for hours to register last week.

The pilot clinic in Mt. Iron will have just under 500 doses to administer to those 65 and older this week, with an equal amount reserved for educators and childcare workers.

Community health centers are also beginning to vaccinate patients 65 and over. Scenic Rivers Health Services, with clinics in Cook and Tower, announced that they had a small number of doses that they would begin administering to patients 75 and over and to those 65 and over with underlying health conditions.

The announcement stressed that Scenic Rivers would contact patients based on randomized lists to schedule appointments, and that patients should not call the clinic, as excessive call volumes could interfere with other urgent patient needs.

Commissioner Malcolm emphasized the same caution on Tuesday.

“Right now, it’s not likely to be successful to call your clinic,” she said. “They’re starting to reach out to their patients when they do have supply, but if you haven’t heard from them it’s not likely that they have vaccine, so it’s best not to flood them with calls, but to wait for information.”

As of Tuesday, 14,182 people in St. Louis County had received at least one dose of vaccine, and 4,200 have completed the two-shot regimen. The number of county residents age 18 and older who will eventually be eligible to be vaccinated is around 160,000.

In an effort to speed up vaccinations, Gov. Tim Walz set a new goal on Monday of having 90 percent of vaccines administered within three days of being received by providers. Those who miss the mark without sufficient reason could see a reallocation of doses to other providers. Officials heard from the Biden administration on Tuesday that the state’s weekly allotment of vaccine, which had been 60,000 doses, would be increased by 11,000 each week for the next three

weeks.

“The federal government simply has to step up with more vaccine,” Walz said. “Minnesotans are ready for this pandemic to end but it’ll take far too long at the current rate we’re getting vaccine.”

Variants found

Health officials doubled down on their pleas for Minnesotans to keep following COVID prevention protocols after announcing that the more highly contagious United Kingdom and Brazilian mutations of the coronavirus have been identified in the state.

Standard coronavirus testing doesn’t identify which strain of the virus caused an infection. But numerous labs send 50 random positive samples each week to the state Public Health Laboratory for more extensive testing. Eight cases of the UK variant and one case of the Brazilian variant had been identified as of Monday.

The Brazilian variant case is the first one identified in the United States and is linked to a Twin Cities resident who recently traveled to Brazil. The individual tested positive on Jan. 9. After

it was identified as the Brazilian strain officials are conducting a more extensive investigation into that person’s movements and contacts.

“What has us concerned about the variants circulating currently is that it appears that they have some of those characteristics that could allow them to spread more easily. We are watching that and monitoring them very closely,” MDH Assistant Lab Director Sara Vetter said on Tuesday.

Centers for Disease Control researchers announced on Jan. 15 that the UK variant, which is estimated to be anywhere from 30 to 70 percent more contagious than the current dominant strain, could become the predominant variant by late March. Researchers in the United Kingdom published an analysis of four studies on Jan. 21, indicating that there’s a 50-percent chance the UK variant is also more deadly. Additional research is being conducted to determine if that variant is responsible for an observed increase in cases among women and

younger adults in the UK as well.

The Brazilian variant, identified there in mid-December, has health officials concerned because it appears to have been the cause of a devastating second COVID outbreak in a city where it was estimated nearly three-fourths of the population was infected during the first outbreak last April. The mutated virus strain appears to be able to mask itself by preventing some antibodies from binding to it, increasing its ability to spread more rapidly and possibly reinfect people.

While it is not possible from the sampling to estimate the amount of either variant currently circulating in Minnesota, Vetter expressed confidence that vaccines would still provide sufficient protection.

“Although variants might have an impact on vaccines, it’s not likely that a vaccine would be rendered completely ineffective,” she said. “Also, if this virus continues to change and evolve, it’s important to note that vaccines like Pfizer and Moderna are easily adaptable and can be updated. This concept is not new – our influenza strains change every year, and the vaccine is updated as necessary to reflect the circulating strength.”

But with only a small percentage of Minnesotans having been vaccinated, officials reiterated that more contagious variants could lead to yet another spike that could increase hospitalizations and deaths. To avoid that, they reinforced that people should continue to mask up, practice social distancing, limit small group gatherings, get tested immediately when symptoms appear, and stay home if they’re feeling ill.

BILL...Continued from page 1

since it has little chance of passage.

In late 2017, the Obama administration had initiated a two-year study of a proposal to withdraw mineral leasing on 234,000 acres of the Superior National Forest located upstream of the BWCAW. The Trump administration canceled that study, kept its findings under wraps, and rejected the proposed mineral withdrawal.

“Fortunately, the Trump Administration’s reversal of this harmful withdrawal moved Minnesota’s miners one step closer to working high-wage jobs, unleashing economic prosperity in the region, and reducing dependence on unreliable nations with horrific labor standards,” said Stauber in a press statement announcing his new bill. “America needs the copper, nickel, cobalt, platinum-group elements that exist on our lands for infrastructure, modern energy technology, national defense, and for applications in our everyday life like cell phones, refrigerators, and batteries.”

Stauber suggested the Biden administration may try to revive the effort to discontinue mineral leasing on the

Superior, which he said his bill would prevent. A mineral withdrawal, at this point would only forestall the issuance of future leases on the affected acres. Two existing mineral leases, which the Trump administration issued in 2018, would be unaffected by a mineral withdrawal. Those leases, issued to Twin Metals, a subsidiary venture controlled by Chilean copper mining giant Antofagasta, are currently under court challenge by opponents who argue that the Trump administration issued the leases illegally.

Critics of Antofagasta’s proposed copper-nickel mine charged Stauber with hypocrisy. “Last month, Pete Stauber and the rest of Minnesota’s Republican Congressional delegation signed on to an attempt to invalidate the votes of millions of Americans and overturn a free and fair election, and now have the gall to accuse others of political motivation,” said Tom Landwehr, executive director of the Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters. “The truth is no one injected more politics into the issue of Boundary Waters protection than Pete Stauber and

former President Trump. At every turn Stauber and the Trump administration bent over backwards to kowtow to a foreign mining company...”

Chris Knopf, executive director of Friends of the Boundary Waters, accused Stauber of peddling dangerous conspiracy theories. “This latest stunt only adds to a shameful record and shows just how subservient he is to the interests of foreign mining conglomerates,” added Knopf.

If the terms of the Trump leases are met, Antofagasta would obtain perpetual rights to the minerals involved, a highly unusual arrangement under federal minerals policy, which typically limits leases to ten years. The leases also effectively overturn existing federal law that gives the U.S. Forest Service the right to veto proposed mining operations on the Superior National Forest.

Emails made public through a federal Freedom of Information Act filing, show that Stauber’s office interceded with federal officials overseeing the leasing to obtain the special treatment for Antofagasta. A Stauber staff person told Forest Service offi-

cial that Antofagasta “is getting increasingly concerned about the stipulations put forward by the Forest Service on the up or down vote they require for mineral lease renewals every ten years. Do you mind setting up a quick call next week where we can recenter and get on the same page?”

Critics note that the usual ten-year lease term, and any Forest Service discretion, was subsequently dropped from the Antofagasta leases, affecting several thousand acres southeast of Ely. “Getting ‘on the same page’ meant satisfying Antofagasta’s demand that it not be bothered by the legal requirement that mining leases can only be granted and renewed with the consent of the Forest Service,” said Landwehr.

Despite the heated rhetoric, and promises of potential jobs, it remains unclear whether the Twin Metals proposal is a viable venture. While the company issued a mine plan in late 2019, it has yet to publicly issue any financial projections for its proposal. The Timberjay requested such projections from Twin Metals last year, but the company has not responded to that request.

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TOWER...Continued from page 1

partial paid on-call system that's been in place since 2018, or a shift to a full paid on-call system with generally lower pay for on-call hours. That's a system that's currently in place with both the Cook and Orr ambulance services.

The TAAS launched in 1958 as an all-volunteer service, operating as an all-call service, which means all staff are, in effect, subject to call at any time. But the TAAS has gone through a number of changes over the decades, including increasing rates of compensation, in an effort to boost participation—with limited success. Among the most recent changes was a shift to a partial paid on-call system in 2018, noted Ranua, although that system only provided 40-50 percent scheduled coverage, rather than the 100 percent required by law. The TAAS also paid much more than other similar services for on-call personnel, which pushed payroll costs sharply higher and created other unanticipated consequences, such as a big jump in worker's compensation costs and potential overtime liability.

While the TAAS will need to develop a full on-call schedule, it will also likely have to adjust the pay rates to maintain financial viability. Suihkonen said that likely means a shift to pay rates similar to Cook and Orr, of around \$3 to \$5 an hour for periods in which staff are on-call, but a higher rate when staff members actually respond to a call.

Currently, TAAS on-call staff are paid between \$10.50 and \$11.50 an hour. At full coverage, such a rate of pay would push payroll costs just for the on-call staff to nearly \$200,000, noted Ranua. Activation pay would add considerably more to that amount.

The high rate of pay in Tower had been sold to the city council on the promise that the on-call personnel would pay for themselves by enabling the TAAS to undertake more inter-hospital transfers, which typically pay more than 911 emergency calls. But Ranua noted that the on-call staff is supposed to be utilized solely for emergency calls, not for transfers.

Council member Dave Setterberg asked if the transfers could be operated as a kind of secondary business for the TAAS, that would be undertaken by staff on a solely pay-per-call basis. He even suggested the TAAS utilize a separate ambulance, paid for with city funds, to facilitate the transfers.

"That's a good idea," said Mayor Orlyn Kringstad.

By utilizing an ambulance purchased solely by city funds, the idea would presumably eliminate the concerns expressed by area townships, which have been concerned by the additional miles that transfers have put on TAAS rigs. The area townships pay into a fund for ambulance replacement and the city recently agreed to township demands to institute a

mileage charge of \$1.66 for every mile incurred on a TAAS ambulance during a transfer. Those funds go into the city's dedicated ambulance replacement account. Olivanti said that she and Ranua and Suihkonen could develop that concept as a fourth scenario for the council to consider.

In a related discussion, Olivanti briefly outlined partial financial projections which, at this point, suggest the TAAS could generate substantial profits under any of the scenarios they examined. But the projections reach that conclusion by assuming a sizable increase in revenues over any previous year. "The revenue, as planned is \$615,000," said Olivanti, without providing a clear explanation of how that figure was determined. It represents a \$75,000 increase over revenues in 2019, during which the TAAS saw a record number of calls. In 2020, after runs dipped in the spring due to the COVID-19-related shutdowns, the TAAS is expected to generate about \$495,000 in revenue.

Ranua noted that the financial projections do not yet include depreciation costs. A separate analysis she generated suggested that that expense could top \$90,000 annually, although it's an expense for which TAAS officials have not previously accounted.

While the city appears likely to move to adjust its on-call pay, it remains unclear how staff will be

paid when they actually respond to calls. The business plan explores a flat rate of \$50 per run for 911 calls or an hourly rate of \$25. The plan notes that 911 calls typically take two hours. Ranua and Suihkonen said they plan to discuss that issue with ambulance personnel in February before making a final decision on which way to go. Some city council members plan to attend that discussion as well, which would require posting the discussion as a special council meeting, tentatively set for Feb. 15. The council could have a finalized business plan for the ambulance service approved as early as March.

In other business, the council approved a resolution making committee appointments and other designations for 2021. Setterberg will remain as acting mayor, in case of Kringstad's absence. The council left four seats on the charter commission vacant for now, given that there's no suggested charter changes pending. The resolution adds Steve Wilson and Wayne Dahl, of Embarrass, to the city's forestry board and also adds Dahl as a forestry board representative to the Gunderson Trust. Council member Joe Morin agreed to replace council member Sheldon Majerle on the Tower Economic Development Authority after Majerle assured him that TEDA's executive director does "99 percent of the work."

Kringstad's motion to solicit requests for proposals from engineering

firms failed for lack of a second, although council members agreed to take another look at the idea at some point in the future.

Majerle questioned the appointment of Clifford Koski as zoning administrator, and he later voted against the overall resolution, presumably over that issue.

The council designated the Timberjay as the official newspaper once again. The Timberjay's quote of \$3.25 per column inch for display ads beat out the \$4 per inch offered by the Tower News.

In other action, the council:

► Authorized the clerk-treasurer, deputy clerk-treasurer, and councilor Morin to take training for overseeing future boards of appeal and equalization.

► Approved a motion acknowledging that the city had made "deductions in error" from ambulance personnel pay begin-

ning in 2016, for PERA. The council directed Ranua, who discovered the error by the previous clerk-treasurer, to notify ambulance personnel of the situation and give them the opportunity to roll over any accumulated funds into a state deferred compensation plan or take a cash distribution. Ranua said that PERA has agreed that the city won't have to make any matching contributions so the error won't impact the city financially.

► Heard from Joan Broten, representing Mill Point neighbors, under public input. Broten requested that the council issue findings of fact regarding the Dave Rose RV park. She said the council was supposed to issue such findings in 2016 but never did so.

Broten noted that the total valuation of the Mill Point neighborhood exceeds \$5 million, far above that of an RV park.

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GIRLS BASKETBALL

Second half drought sinks Grizzlies

by DAVID COLBURN
Cook-Orr Editor

FIELD TWP- A gutsy 11-point rally put the North Woods girls basketball team ahead of visiting Eveleth-Gilbert last Thursday, but a devastating eight-minute drought from the field to start the second half sealed their

Left: Madi Dantes eyes the basket as she looks to shoot with an Eveleth-Gilbert defender coming up from behind.

photo by D. Colburn

fate in a 56-39 loss.

Fans could be forgiven if they arrived at the gym wondering which Grizzlies team would show up, the confident, poised squad that won its opener over Nashauk-Keewatin 47-41, or the one that struggled in a 50-24 loss to International Falls.

As it turned out, they saw both.

The Grizzlies took an early lead on three-balls by Madi Dantes and Brianna Whiteman, but a trey by the Golden Bears' Morgan Marks ignited a 15-4

Eveleth-Gilbert run that put the visitors ahead 23-13 with just over five minutes left in the half.

But when Shyla Adams scored a bucket with 4:40 remaining, a Grizzlies comeback was on. They held the Golden Bears scoreless as Helen Koch and Dantes hit field goals and Whiteman nailed a trey, and a score by Hannah Kinsey with time running out put North Woods back on top 24-23 going into intermission. "That was super exciting," North Woods Head Coach Liz

Cheney said. "We made some defensive adjustments pretty quick, and then five different girls came in and scored. Once they get themselves going they can hold onto that energy and do really well."

But when the teams came back onto the court, the Grizzlies couldn't find the basket. They didn't score until Whiteman hit a free throw at the 11:06 mark, and it took another minute and a half before Kinsey made the team's first field goal of the

See **NW GIRLS...**pg. 2B



BOYS BASKETBALL

Grizzlies roll over E-G

After slow start, defensive pressure lifts North Woods

by DAVID COLBURN
Cook-Orr Editor

FIELD TWP- Down by double digits in the first half, the North Woods boys basketball team turned up the heat defensively and came roaring back in the second half to defeat Eveleth-Gilbert 87-66 on Friday on the Grizzlies' home court.

The Golden Bears had a decided height advantage that they capitalized on early as they methodically built a 33-20 lead, and appeared to be in firm control of the game.

"E-G took advantage of their size in the first half and was winning the rebounding battle and getting too many second-chance opportunities," North Woods Head Coach Will Kleppe said.

But then Jonah Burnett drained a three from the left corner, and intense trapping pressure

Above: The Grizzlies' TJ Chiabotti drives the ball down court ahead of E-G defenders.

Right: North Woods' Brenden Chiabotti steals the ball from an E-G player.

photos by D. Colburn

resulted in a TJ Chiabotti steal and layup, and a North Woods comeback was in full swing. Powered by eight more points by Chiabotti and scores by Jared Chiabotti, Alex Hartway, and Jake Panichi, the Grizzlies roared back to take a 44-41 lead. A late three by Eveleth-Gilbert knotted the score at 44 at the half.

"Our pressure defense turned the tide right before halftime and gave us the momentum that we carried into the second half," Kleppe said. "Once we got buy-in

See **GRIZZLIES...**pg. 2B



Ely off to strong start with back-to-back wins

by JORDAN PRICE
Contributing Writer

LITTLEFORK— Ely's Will Davies notched a double-double last Friday to lead the Timberwolves to a 79-39 blowout over host Littlefork-Big Falls. The defense-led win lifted Ely to 3-0 on the young season, despite shooting that was as cold as the

weather.

"We didn't shoot the ball very well and that won't win many games for us," said Ely Head Tom McDonald. "All in all, it was a bad shooting night."

The Wolves connected on just six of 27 attempts from beyond the arc, while managing a somewhat better 45 percent (23 for 51) from

two-point range. But the Wolves worked the boards hard all night, providing many second chances that allowed them to rack up a solid win.

Davies led offensively with 20 points and added 14 rebounds. He also recorded seven steals, narrowly missing a rare triple-double. Joey Bianco put up impressive numbers as well, with

eight points, nine rebounds, eight assists, and six steals. Brock Latourell scored 15, while Hammett Faltesek notched ten points.

The boys are set to take on the Golden Bears this Friday, in Eveleth. They'll be back home on Tuesday, when they host Deer River. Tip-off is set for 7:15 p.m.

GIRLS BASKETBALL

Defense rules as T-Wolves top Spartans

by JORDAN PRICE
Contributing Writer

NASHWAUK—Ely's defense held the Spartans to just four points in the first half here as they cruised to their first win of the season, 42-33. Ely offensive miscues left the game a tighter contest than it might have been. "We had some turnovers at the end that made it seem closer than it was," said Ely Head Coach Max Gantt. "But we got the first win for this group as constructed!"

Ely's Grace LaTourell poured in 16 points to lead the Wolves offensively, but it was the team effort that got it done in the end with nine different girls scoring in the contest. Rachel Coughlin anchored the defense, grabbing boards and blocking shots all night. Madeline Kallberg and Lilly Tedrick were also key to the formula as they brought radiant energy off the bench.

The win improved the Timberwolves' record on the season to 1-3.

The Wolves were set to take on Eveleth-Gilbert at home on Thursday. They'll be home to host Mt. Iron-Buhl on Monday. Game time is set for 7:15 p.m.

Sunblad shines but Nighthawks still struggle

by MARSHALL HELMBERGER
Managing Editor

HILL CITY— The Nighthawks' Maizy Sunblad, with 24 points, led all scorers in their contest here on Friday, but it wasn't enough to notch a win against the Hornets. Hill City/Northand topped the Nighthawks 56-40, to claim their first win of the season.

Sunblad provided most of the excitement on the night as she connected seven times from beyond the arc to keep Northeast Range in the hunt. Natalie Nelmark added seven points for the Nighthawks, while Morgan Bush added five, including a trey.

The Nighthawks let some opportunities slip away, particularly at the charity stripe, where they connected on just four of 18 chances. Meanwhile, Willa Koivisto fouled out.

For the Hornets, Laine Spangler and Annika Spangler each scored 11 points, but they had scoring support from eight other teammates in the contest.

The Nighthawks return to action next Thursday, when they host Bigfork. Game time is set for 7:15 p.m.

MUSHING

Mushers get ready for WolfTrack Classic

Race sponsors still needed for Ely Chamber event

by KEITH VANDERVORT
Ely Editor

ELY - The race roster is full for the 13th running of the WolfTrack Classic sled dog race on Sunday, Feb. 21. The first of 20 eight-dog teams and 20 six-dog teams will depart from the Ely Softball Fields beginning at 9 a.m. on race day.

The race will run in accordance with the Stay Safe Minnesota COVID-19 guidelines and the WolfTrack Classic COVID-19 Preparedness Plan, said race coordinator Ellen Cashman.

"This year's race will be different, but it was decided that it was important to run the race rather than cancel it," she said.

The 2021 WolfTrack Classic is one of only two such races that

will take place in Minnesota this year because of public health concerns over the continuing coronavirus pandemic.

"In spite of the challenges that accompany planning and organizing a race during this pandemic, the race will run unless additional restrictions are put into place before race day," she said.

"Perhaps the most difficult aspect of the running this year's race is keeping the public, the mushers, and the many volunteers needed to run the race safe," Cashman said. "In order to comply with COVID-19 guidelines, including limiting gatherings at outdoor activities to no more than 250 people, this year's race will be run without allowing spectators at the start or finish or any other points on the race route or musher parking area."

Efforts are being made to find other ways to offer live race coverage. IFan-TV Sports Network and Mushing Midwest will stream live coverage,



Sled dogs express their impatience as they get ready to compete in the 2020 WolfTrack Classic. file photo

according to Cashman. "There will also be WELY live radio coverage. More information on these options will be

made available just before the race, as is typical of past years," she said.

In this challenging year, the

WolfTrack Classic sled dog race needs sponsor support. For \$100 anyone can be a Mile Marker Sponsor.

"These mile markers tell the teams who is cheering them on as they run the 50 miles of trail," Cashman said.

To sign up to be a Mile Marker Sponsor, visit www.wolftrackclassic.com.

There are many other levels of sponsorship and ways to donate. More information is available at the WolfTrack Classic website.

Sponsorship funds and in-kind product donations are used for the musher purse which is split between the six-dog and eight-dog categories, with cash payments made to the highest placing mushers.

"In spite of the difficult year, the WolfTrack Classic is proud to welcome some of the biggest names in mushing to race in Ely, and we hope to keep them coming back to race in Ely for years to come," Cashman said.

NW GIRLS...Continued from page 1B

half. Leading 37-27, the Golden Bears squashed any notion of another North Woods comeback by building their lead to as many as 23 points in coasting to the 56-39 win.

Whiteman and Dantes shared scoring honors for the Grizzlies with nine points each. Kinsey dropped in eight.

Missed opportunities

in the team's opening possessions of the second half sapped the momentum the Grizzlies built in the first, Cheney said.

"They all get frustrated missing those key baskets that we've been making in practice over and over and over again," she said. "It all goes very quickly the other way for them. Someone misses a

key shot, and then you can see it, just boom, it brings them down."

The game was Cheney's first as the team's permanent new head coach. An assistant to former coach Robbie Goggleye since 2012, Cheney stepped into the role as an interim when Goggleye resigned after taking a new job as exec-

utive director of the Bois Forte Band of Chippewa. The job wasn't hers for good until a formal interview two games into the season.

Adding in a group of players skewed heavily toward freshmen and sophomores, North Woods is a team with question marks, but promise, particularly as they learn to level out

the emotional highs and lows, Cheney said.

"The girls have so much potential, it's going to be really fun to be with them to see them grow," Cheney said. "Helen Koch and Hannah Kinsey are the only two who were starters on varsity last year. It takes a while to build a foundation, even though I've been around for a

while. It's still it's a new foundation. And I'm just really excited to see the potential to be gunners and runners and good shooters all around."

The Grizzlies were scheduled to play at Deer River on Thursday, and will be on the road again on Monday at Carlton.

GRIZZLIES...Continued from page 1B

that the defense was going to dictate the tempo of the game and we started to get some turnovers and transition buckets, things started to roll for us."

Brenden Chiabotti got the Grizzlies off to a fast start in the second half by scoring the team's first three baskets, including two treys.

But rebounding and defense were the primary factors in the Grizzlies' second-half dominance. They held the Golden

Bears to half the number of points they scored in the first while continuing to roll on offense, led by TJ Chiabotti's game-high 27 points.

"E-G had a definite size advantage but we won the rebound battle," Kleppe said. "Darius (Goggleye) battles hard in there but he needs some help from the perimeter guys. TJ, Jared, and Alex started to pull in some big rebounds for us."

The outsized Grizzlies

won the battle of the boards 41-36. The team also had 18 steals and forced 28 E-G turnovers in the game, negating 55-percent shooting by the Golden Bears.

The Golden Bears stayed within striking distance for much of the second half, trailing 70-60 with just over six minutes remaining, but the Grizzlies slammed the door on a comeback with a 17-6 blitz to end the game.

Brendan Chiabotti was runner-up in scoring

for the Grizzlies with 11, followed by ten each for Jared Chiabotti and Jonah Burnett.

Kleppe praised the contributions from his bench players in the win.

"We got some excellent minutes from Jonah (Burnett), Davis (Kleppe), Sean (Morrison), Jake (Panichi) and Erik (Aune)," Kleppe said. "It presents a challenge for teams when we can rotate that many players and keep the tempo in our favor.

This team continues to be a work in progress. The boys are working very hard in practice. They know we have work to do and it's not all going to happen overnight."

The Grizzlies are scheduled to host Bigfork on Friday, and host Littlefork-Big Falls on Feb. 5.

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Memories of the Early Days

A fascinating look back at the early history of the Lake Vermilion area

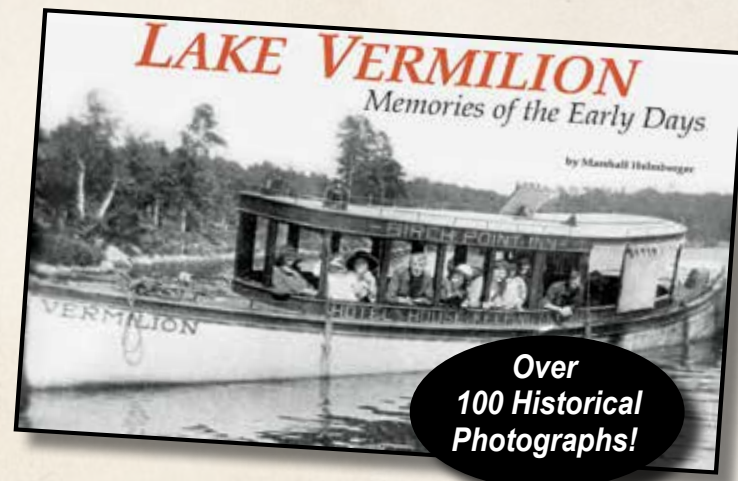
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HIGH-SPEED INTERNET

Broadband study shows area projects financially feasible

by JODI SUMMIT
Tower-Soudan Editor

Pike Bay, Daisy Bay, and Eagles Nest areas might be first focus of any project

REGIONAL- A roadmap to provide broadband level internet service to the Tower area was recently released by the Laurentian, Tower, and East Range (LTE) Broadband Group. The study's conclusions show bringing broadband to the Tower area may be financially feasible for the priority areas of Pike Bay, Daisy Bay, and Eagles Nest, and expansion to a wider rural area encompassing the Tower School district boundaries could be possible, although additional financing and contributions from stakeholders might be required.

The study was funded with contributions by governmental units, local businesses, and a matching grant from the Blandin Foundation. The LTE Broadband Group, which has been working with funding and leadership from the Blandin Foundation and Iron Range Resources, and stakeholders from the East Range, Tower-Soudan, and Eveleth-Gilbert-Virginia areas commissioned the study last year. The group hired NEO Connect to conduct the study, which cost about \$120,000.

John Bassing, who along with his wife JoAnn, has been an active participant in the broadband planning group, said that while the results of the study are promising, there is a possible complication. A company called LTD Broadband that has previously specialized in providing fixed wireless internet service, not fiber-optic-based services, received \$312 million in funding from the Federal Communications Commission for projects in the state, the largest amount awarded in Minnesota.

"That Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) grant throws a wrench in the monkey-works," said Bassing. "The company bid on providing service to census blocks, including those in our area." LTD's experience in Minnesota has been providing fixed wireless service in flat farmland areas, said Bassing. The company's expertise to provide fiber optic

service has been questioned, as well as whether it can provide the gigabyte level service that is the goal in Minnesota.

The Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition sent a letter to state officials asking them to allow the state's Border to Border program to make grants to projects, including in LTD's proposed areas, but this may run counter to the federal grant program guidelines.

The Blandin Foundation blog on broadband issues reported in mid-December on concerns from the Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition:

"The concern is multifaceted. Their primary concern with the federal funding is that it won't happen. From the Task Force perspective, the greater concern is that legislators will assume that RDOF will serve the proposed areas and that therefore no further state funding is needed. An unintended consequence is that the promised funding might prevent other providers from going into those areas, companies that would have provided folks with speeds that would meet the Minnesota broadband state goals. They are concerned that unlike what happens with Minnesota's state program, the FCC will not follow through with oversight on provider performance."

"Our next step is to attract a broadband provider," said Bassing. "But DEED [Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development] is worried about the legal implications of giving out grants in the RDOF area." DEED oversees the state's Border to Border grant program, which is instrumental in funding rural broadband projects.

At this point, Bassing said, the project is on hold until some of these questions are resolved.

Bassing said LTD still has some hurdles to cross, with their final application to the federal government due at the end of this month.

"They have to show they can do the job," said Bassing.



Vermilion Country School in Tower is already connected to high-speed fiberoptic broadband. Students are now using the new digital piano lab purchased with a grant made possible by the Blandin Foundation and the LTE Broadband Group. photo by J. Summit

Bassing said the local broadband group is not interested in fixed wireless internet, because the speeds available are much lower than what fiberoptic service provides.

"We want a quality system," Bassing said.

Whether or not the state's Border to Border program will be able to make grants to projects in our area is uncertain at this time, Bassing said.

NEO study results for the Tower area

Northeast Service Coop (NESC) has already installed more than 865 miles of fiber optic cable in the area, connecting to many township and governmental buildings and schools. This was a "middle mile" project and did not include connections to private homes. But this fiber backbone can be leased by other providers who would provide home service and would greatly reduce the costs.

The cost estimates for providing service to the priority areas of Pike Bay, Daisy Bay, and most of Eagles Nest Township range from \$16.1 to \$25.2 million, depending on the

amount of rock encountered, for an average cost of \$20.6 million. Utilizing NESC fiber would save about \$6 million. Assuming half the project could be financed with a grant, that brings total costs to around \$7.2 million. The study assumes that 40 percent of area households would subscribe (1,153 after two years), with costs ranging from \$60 to \$125 per month, depending on connection speed. The study concludes that this project would be feasible for a provider and that it could be financed (with cash flow covering debt expenses).

The cost estimates for providing service to the entire Tower-Soudan School attendance area (including the priority area) is much higher, at \$53.9 million, though the study still looks at funding half that amount through grants. The study estimates a higher participation rate in these areas, up to 50-percent of households. The study did not calculate the amount that would be saved by using the existing NESC fiber. It noted that additional stakeholder contributions to cover projected losses in the first year of implementation, use of additional financing tools,

and building to served areas as part of this project would make this entire project financially feasible.

The study looked at the feasibility of bringing broadband to the three distinct regions, assessed currently available broadband options, looked at already existing infrastructure, potential number of customers, possible project costs, and surveyed area residents on their interest in broadband and pricing options. The study also looked at how the pandemic has impacted people's ability to work from home and attend school remotely.

The study identified areas that are already served, partially served, or underserved. It designated potential priority areas, where there is a higher density of homes that do not currently have high-speed internet available. The study also mapped out areas that would be eligible for grant funding, which often provides about half the cost of extending broadband to rural areas.

COUNTY SCHOOLS

Board to allow in-person comments at meetings

School board meetings will also continue to be held over Zoom

by DAVID COLBURN
Cook-Orr Editor

REGIONAL- The ISD 2142 school board decided Tuesday to allow members of the public back into the board room for meetings, one of several agenda items connected in one manner or another to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

Board Chairman Dan Manick first raised the possibility of reopening meetings to public attendance while also continuing to stream meetings virtually on Zoom during the board's organization meeting earlier in the month. As discussion commenced on Tuesday the challenges of how to accommodate visitors in the room became apparent.

"Can we set an attendance limitation so that we know how many people can be in attendance, rather than worrying about all of a sudden that there's one extra and we say let them enter or not?" board member Chris Koivisto asked. "It would be great if they can be face-to-face, but can we set an actual attendance level?" After several minutes of considering attendance limitations, seating arrangements, stickers to mark social distancing requirements, and other logistics, it became clear that Manick intended something quite different and more restrictive than the open attendance scenario being discussed. Manick explained his desire to allow individuals to make public comments or presentations to the board individually and not stay for the whole meeting. "I picture a podium in the corner up here as they enter," Manick said. "They would state their piece and

they're done, and then the next person would come in. We wouldn't be seating anybody."

Koivisto indicated that he had received the message.

"I understand now that you're talking about maybe they come in and speak and go back out and Zoom from their phone in the parking lot while they wait," he said. "Either way, I'm sure we can create some sort of functionality for the system."

Board members voted unanimously to move ahead with the process and to have more specific guidance developed for Manick's proposal.

More COVID-related discussion came when Superintendent Reggie Engebretson gave her regular report and mentioned staff vaccinations.

"We have been part of the vaccine clinic that's in Mt. Iron. Last week 14 staff members got vaccinated, and this week it's 42. It's been good."

"Who gets vaccinated at the school?" board member Chet Larson asked.

Engebretson explained that teachers and paraprofessional in the district have to go to the pilot clinic in Mt. Iron for their shots as it's the only clinic in the region designated to do vaccinations for school personnel and childcare workers. After discussing more procedural aspects, Engebretson shared thoughts about how having vaccines available has affected staff.

"I think it's reduced anxiety - they're very grateful," Engebretson said. "They know that the goal is to stay in-person and that's where we hope to stay."

In other business, the board:

► Approved continued participation in the QComp teacher mentoring and development program after Koivisto received clarification that no district funds would be allocated to supplement funds from the state for the Dept. of Education program. Board members also agreed to revisit the approval process.

► Gave unanimous final approval to the shared services agreement with Mt. Iron-Buhl after minor changes were made to notification requirements related to renewals or dissolutions of the agreement.

► Officially hired and then terminated Dawn Niemi as Tower-Soudan Community Ed Coordinator. The effective date of Niemi's hire was Dec. 19, a day after the resignation of former coordinator Amy Banks, and Niemi's termination was effective on Thursday, Jan. 21. Contacted by *the Timberjay*, Engebretson confirmed that the termination was "for cause" but did not go into additional detail due to personnel confidentiality issues.

► Approved the special assignment of Gerald Oehler as dean at North Woods.

► Hired Christine Jarvis and Blake Scofield as part-time paraprofessionals at Tower-Soudan and North Woods, respectively.

► Hired Cara Harksen and Drayke Snidarich as part-time preschool paraprofessionals at Tower-Soudan and North Woods, respectively.

► Accepted resignations from North Woods girls basketball head coach Robbie Goggeye and Tower-Soudan paraprofessional Brandi Martin.

Death Notices

James A. Frazee

James Albert "Jim" Frazee, 83, a lifelong resident of Tower, died on Monday, Jan. 18, 2021. A Mass of Christian Burial will be held at 2 p.m. on Saturday, Jan. 30 at St. Martin's Catholic Church in Tower with Fr. Nick Nelson as celebrant. Visitation will be for one hour prior to the service at the church. Spring interment will take place in Lakeview Cemetery in Tower. Family services are provided by Bauman-Vermilion, a Bauman Family Funeral Home in Tower.

He is survived by his daughters, Jennifer (Jeff) Teasck of Virginia, Sally (Gary) Muller of Fergus Falls and Paula (Gary) DeFries of Foxhome; siblings, Lucille Carlson of Forest Lake and George (Fran) Frazee of Apple Valley; sister-in-law, Lois Frazee of Tower; brothers-in-law, Paul (Carol) Laugen and Scott (Bonnie) Laugen; grandchildren, Jody (Garrett) Kaivola, Tim Frazee, Andrew (Audrey) Muller, Aaron (Kim) Muller, Cody (Alyssa Holzer) DeFries and Jeanne DeFries; step-grandchildren, Sherri (Markus Hoche) Teasck and Jeff (Sarah) Teasck; numerous great-grandchildren; nieces, nephews, extended family and friends.

Joanne J. LaFrenier

Joanne J. Schlader LaFrenier, 86, formerly of Babbitt, died on Monday, Jan. 25, 2021, at New Journey Residence in Eveleth. A memorial service will be held at 1 p.m. on Friday, Jan. 29 at Faith Assembly of God Church in Aurora with Pastor Derrick DeTurk officiating. Friends may gather one hour prior to the service at the church. COVID mandates will be followed. Burial will be at a later date in the Harris Cemetery in Harris Township. Arrangements are by Ziemer-Moeglein-Shatava Funeral Home in Aurora.

She is survived by her children, Debra Jean Hanson of Grand Rapids, Vicki (Warren) Eggebraaten of Babbitt and Robert (Bonnie) LaFrenier of Hoyt Lakes; grandchildren, Eric, Jon, Beckie, Steve, Lisa, Michael and Melissa; great-grandchildren, Landan, Brendan, Tristan, Rowan, Victoria, Jon, Elizabeth, Alex, Emily, Addison, Paige, Cooper, Taylor, Evelyn, Reid, Kaitlyn and David; and several nieces and nephews.



Outdoors

Our lives in the Northwoods

FURBEARER REGISTRATIONS

Trappers report lowest fisher numbers in twenty years

Biologists concerned that habitat loss could be factor; marten numbers look better

by **MARSHALL HELMBERGER**
Managing Editor

TOWER—Registrations of fisher pelts continued their downward trend here, while trappers reported taking slightly more pine marten during the nine-day season held in late December.

Trappers tallied a total of 337 pelts during the annual registration day held Dec.

29 at the Tower, Eveleth, and Hibbing offices of the Department of Natural Resources.

That includes a total of 202 marten, 66 otter, 34 bobcat, and 35 fisher.

The fisher numbers have been declining noticeably for years, and this year's total harvest of just 35 animals was the lowest in 20 years.

"It's alarming," said

DNR Tower Area Wildlife Manager Tom Rusch. While wildlife managers expect considerable variability in trapping results from year-to-year, Rusch said the trend with fisher has become increasingly clear.

Research by DNR biologist John Erb has documented that fisher are particularly dependent on nest cavities in large aspen, which have

Right: Pine marten numbers appear to have stabilized, but there's little sign of recovery for fisher, a larger member of the Mustelid family. file photo

become increasingly scarce on state-managed lands, where aspen stands are being managed on shorter rota-

See **TRAPPING...**pg. 5B



THE NEIGHBORS

Weasel's winter white

For this member of the genus Mustela, it's all in the tail

I was surprised the other morning by the little white head that popped up from under the remains of the rib cage of the deer I shot this fall. The rib cage, or at least the remains of it after we've cut all the meat that's readily accessible off the bones, has been lying out on the big rock that sits just outside our west picture window. So far, it's mostly attracted the attention of jays, woodpeckers, chickadees, and the occasional bold raven that doesn't mind getting so close to the house.

This time, however, it was a furry neighbor who had decided there were still enough bits of something to pry from between the ribs. Dressed in its winter white, it was a short-tailed weasel who'd come calling, and he was making the most of the situation. His sharp teeth and strong jaws were able to shear off bits of fat and meat that the birds hadn't already pruned off long ago. With every mouthful, he'd disappear momentarily under the big rock, presumably to cache his latest booty. Then he'd bound, seemingly effortlessly, up the side of the rock for another go at his bony prize.

While I presumed our visitor was a short-tailed

weasel, I actually had to do a little research to confirm it. We have three species of the genus *Mustela* here in the North Country, including the least weasel, the short-tailed weasel, and the long-tailed weasel.

It was obvious this wasn't a least weasel, which lives up to its name as a truly tiny little carnivore. Females range in length from just four and a half inches to about eight inches, while the males average between five inches up to about nine inches, nose to tail tip. And unlike the other two members of its genus, the least weasel lacks the black tail tip that was readily apparent with our visitor.

The short-tailed weasel is smaller, on average, than its long-tailed cousin, but the size ranges of the two species overlap quite a bit, so it's not always a good indicator. As with other members of the mustelid family, which includes marten, fisher, mink, and otters, the males of the species are considerably larger than the females, so the potential variability in size within each species is quite substantial.

Both the short-tailed and long-tailed weasels have the black-tipped tail, which

See **WEASELS...**pg. 5B



Top: A short-tailed weasel was busy with the remains of a deer carcass recently.

Top: Even though they're predators, the weasel's small size can make them prey for other meat eaters as well. That's why they're always on alert.

Right: Standing up, the weasel reveals his short, black-tipped tail, key to its identification.



photos by M. Helmberger

COMMENTARY

Learning to cross-country ski is proving an adventure

Bushwhack. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, "bushwhack" means to clear a path through thick woods by cutting down bushes and low tree branches. "Hey Jordan, do you want to go on a backcountry Nordic ski trip?" my friend Clara asked recently.

"Sure! I'm in!" I said, not knowing what I had just agreed to. "Just a heads up, we might have to do some bush-

whacking," she stated. Bushwhacking is exactly what it sounds like, but imagine doing it with long skis on and poles in your hands.

An adventure is what I asked for, and an adventure is exactly what I got.

Cross-country skiing, also known as Nordic skiing, is a pretty popular activity up here in the Northwoods. For those who are unaware, there are two styles of cross-country skiing: traditional or "classic" and skating, which typically requires a firm surface and open terrain. On this bushwhacking adventure, we stuck to classic skiing, a method that involves sliding your skis parallel to one another using a bit of glide between each "step" to gain more distance. Those who are knowledgeable on the subject say that classic skiing is a better option for those who want a pair of skis that do it all. You can ski deep in the woods, like on my adventure, or you can check out the many groomed trails in the area and ski within the narrow set of tracks. Believe me when I say that I am definitely an inexperienced classic-style cross-country skier, but I am learning more every time I ski.

Turns out, Clara's mom is a part of what's known as the Friday Ski Group out of Ely, so we joined in on one of their recent adventures. The Friday Ski Group has been skiing together for nearly 40 years. The most impressive part: they go on a cross-coun-

See **SKIING...**pg. 5B



JORDAN PRICE



MARSHALL HELMBERGER

WILDLIFE



LAKE COUNTRY FORECAST

from NOAA weather

Friday					Saturday					Sunday					Monday					Tuesday				
7 -8					14 6					17 1					17 1					17 7				
Ely	Hi	Lo	Prec.	Sn.	Emb.	Hi	Lo	Prec.	Sn.	Cook	Hi	Lo	Prec.	Sn.	Orr	Hi	Lo	Prec.	Sn.	Tower	Hi	Lo	Prec.	Sn.
01/11	28	18	0.00		01/11	27	18	0.00		01/11	27	19	0.01	0.1"	01/11	28	25	0.01	0.1"	01/11	27	17	0.00	
01/12	31	24	0.00		01/12	29	24	0.00		01/12	29	24	0.00		01/12	34	25	0.00		01/12	29	23	0.00	
01/13	29	10	0.00		01/13	30	4	0.00		01/13	31	18	0.00		01/13	36	16	0.00		01/13	30	-1	0.00	
01/14	40	8	0.00		01/14	37	1	0.00		01/14	28	13	0.00		01/14	36	27	0.00		01/14	41	-1	0.00	
01/15	35	26	0.04	0.8"	01/15	36	26	0.09	1.1"	01/15	36	23	0.04	0.6"	01/15	32	28	0.10	0.8"	01/15	36	24	0.05	0.6"
01/16	34	26	0.03	0.3"	01/16	34	24	0.01	0.1"	01/16	33	26	0.02	0.4"	01/16	28	19	0.00		01/16	33	25	0.04	0.4"
01/17	28	21	0.00		01/17	27	19	0.00		01/17	26	18	0.01	0.2"	01/17	19	16	0.00		01/17	26	18	0.00	
Total 0.07 41.6"					YTD Total 0.13 28.8"					YTD Total 0.09 39.5"					YTD Total 0.12 NA									

DNR seeking input on deer population goals in north St. Louis County

REGIONAL — Minnesotans interested in deer populations in northern and central St. Louis County can take an active role in shaping state management decisions during an open public input process starting Monday, Feb. 8.

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources sets population goals as part of managing the state's wild deer herd. The goals are updated on a staggered basis in 14 regional goal-setting blocks that comprise multiple deer permit areas. The population goals established in this process will provide direction for management in each goal-setting block for a 10-year period, with a midpoint review at the five-year mark.

This year, to minimize the risk of COVID-19 transmission and support social distancing measures, the DNR is shifting to online-only engagement, rather than in-person workshops.

This is the second year of a four-year, statewide process, with several geographic blocks addressed each year. In northeastern Minnesota, the Border Uplands/St. Louis Moraines goal block and permit areas 119, 132, 171, 173, 176, 177, 178, 179, 181, 199 are up for review.

Details, including how to participate, are listed on the DNR's deer goal-setting webpage.

Get involved

The DNR will gather public feedback using its online community engagement tool, in two separate phases. During the first phase, from Feb. 8-28, participants may give input on whether the deer population should increase, decrease or stay the same, and share their ideas on deer management. During the second phase, from March 15-25, participants may provide feedback on proposed population goals developed based on input from the first phase and other information available to the DNR.

Background information about deer management and population goal setting will be provided. Participants who cannot access the webpage through a computer browser or mobile device may provide feedback by calling the local area manager listed on their deer permit area map for the permit areas of interest.

Goal-setting

In 2019, the DNR updated its deer population goal-setting process, which previously obtained input through citizen advisory committees and in-person public meetings. The new format design allows more participants and encourages discussion across viewpoints.

WEASELS...Continued from page 4B

remains whether they are in their summer brown coat or their winter white. The only field mark that's reliable is the length of the tail. Tail length averages about one third of body length in the short-tailed weasel, while the tail reaches at least 50 percent of the body length in the long-tailed variety.

Based on that characteristic, I could safely identify our visitor as a short-tailed weasel.

Weasels are aggressive predators and they are known to prey most readily on other small mammals, like mice and voles. When they are

successful, they are known to cache leftovers for later consumption. I've run into these caches a time or two over the years, and they can appear fairly grisly. Once, I found eight star-nosed moles stuffed tightly into two old engine cylinders I had stuck in a box in the garage after rebuilding an old VW engine— a sure sign of an industrious weasel.

While they're aggressive predators, weasels are so small that they also frequently become prey, which is probably one reason they never seem to relax. They're constantly on the lookout for something larger,

like a hawk, owl, or pine marten, headed their way. Their shift to a white winter coat is almost certainly more a factor of protecting them from other predators than it is to hide their approach in the snow. In fact, in winter, weasels spend a lot of time under the snow, following the tunnels left behind by their small mammal prey. All that most of their victims would ever see of a weasel under the snow are their black, beady eyes, pink nose, and sharp teeth. And, by the time they see that, it's pretty much all over.

SKIING...Continued from page 4B

try ski trip almost every single week in the winter. "Okay, Jordan. Here's a bit of advice: If you get stuck while bushwhacking, just hold your poles straight up in the air so we can come find you after we're done and pull you out." This quote set the tone for the trip and it made me realize how special this group was. I was fortunate to be able to join them and experience the Northwoods in a way I would have never thought possible. We ventured to beautiful places that are inaccessible during any other season. We skied across lakes, frozen swamps, on trails, and bushwhacked in between to make a nice three-hour loop back to the car.

When I accepted a job in the area last August, my parents told me that I would have to learn how to cross-country ski, so my mom generously passed on her 1980s Fischer classic skis. I get it. Sometimes, it can be hard to make an investment in something when you don't know how often you're going to use it. However, keep in mind that skis will last you for years and provide many memories. Of course, if you

aren't quite ready to buy skis, there are places around, like Ely's Piragis Northwoods Company, that rent them. If you are apprehensive, I would suggest renting first to see if it's something you enjoy.

It's been hard for me to meet people in the area due to COVID-19, but it's activities like cross-country skiing that allow me to be social even amid the restrictions. When we got our first snowfall, I posted on Facebook asking if someone in the area could give me a few pointers. That's how I met Clara. In fact, I don't even know if Clara has ever seen me without a winter hat on. Among the many people who reached out to me, she is another example of the kindness this area has to offer. Clara has given me so many helpful tips and I can say now that I thoroughly enjoy the sport. Cross-country skiing is a great activity to take part in during the pandemic because it's easy to social distance. And if you like the outdoors, all the better.

It's also a good opportunity to learn how to fall. I didn't think

I would crash on this backcountry adventure, but boy was I wrong. In total, I fell seven times, but who's counting? Clara missed all of my downhill, out-of-control spills except for the last one. "Jordan, oh my gosh, are you okay? That looked like a rough one. You're never going to want to come again!" Clara called out from ahead. I chuckled. "Clara, this has been happening all day. You've just missed it every time. By now, if I know I'm about to go down, I just let it happen," I said.

The Friday Ski Group goes to show that bad or cold weather isn't a reason to avoid the outdoors. Learning to enjoy the beauty with people who can do the same is what it's all about. If you haven't tried cross-country skiing, I'd highly recommend it. If you're lucky, you may even meet a forever friend like I did. By the way, Clara, I would LOVE to go on another bushwhacking backcountry trip with you, but maybe let's cut back on the hills next time.

TRAPPING...Continued from page 4B

tions than in the past. Marten are less dependent on large aspen, as research has shown they more often use cavities in white cedar or underground burrows to sleep or raise young.

DNR officials had hoped that marten and fisher populations would recover when the agency slashed the trapping season for those two predators from 16 days to just six days several years ago.

The season has since been increased to nine days, although the bag limit for both species remains at just two.

If registrations are an indicator, marten may have been more responsive than fisher to the lower bag limit, perhaps a reflection of the greater denning capacity on the landscape for the smaller martens.

"We tried to adjust the season to get some bounce back," said Rusch. He said the lack of response

from fisher points to a limitation of habitat. "We just don't have that 18-inch tree anymore, like we did when fisher were at their peak," he said.

The DNR held a second registration day for both otter and bobcat on Tuesday, Jan. 26. Results were not available as of press time.

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Curbside COVID-19 testing available Mon-Fri at our Cook and Tower Clinics. If you have symptoms of COVID-19 or have been exposed to COVID-19 through someone with a known positive test result, please call to schedule a testing appointment.

Testing will not be completed without an appointment.
Scenic Rivers will not bill patients for testing.
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(218) 666-5958

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Dental: (218) 753-6061

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www.ScenicRiversHealth.org

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Leading Self & Others thru Change is a virtual workshop scheduled for Wednesday, February 10 from 3-5 p.m. This workshop will introduce you to a model that you can use to manage any transition for yourself and your team. To enroll contact fun@ely.org or 218-365-6123.

For on-demand access links, visit our Facebook page @ElyChamberOfCommerce. Questions? fun@ely.org or 218-365-6123.

EMPLOYMENT

Network Director • Ely Behavioral Health Network

The Ely Behavioral Health Network (Ely BHN) is currently hiring for a half-time to full-time Network Director. The Ely BHN is a collaborative network which includes area nonprofits, mental health providers, Public Health, healthcare providers, and community members. Our goal is to work together to expand access to, coordinate, and improve the quality of behavioral health care in the rural Northeast (NE) Iron Range communities of Babbitt, Ely, Embarrass, Isabella, Soudan, Tower, Winton and surrounding townships.

This is an exciting opportunity for an individual seeking a challenging and rewarding career working with an innovative behavioral health network. The Network Director will work under the direction of the BHN Governance Group to implement the network's goals and objectives.

Preferred experience and qualifications:

- Proficiency in Microsoft Office products
- Excellent written & oral communication, organization, and time management skills
- BA/BS degree
- Experience in grants management
- Experience working in and managing teams

TO APPLY: If interested, contact us for more information at jennys@elybhn.org. If applying, email resume, cover letter, and three references to jennys@elybhn.org by February 8, 2021.

Published in the Timberjay, Jan. 22 & 29, 2021

POSITION OPENING Ely Public Schools Paraprofessional (2 positions)

Ely Public Schools is looking for two Paraprofessionals for the 2020-2021 school year; background check required.

Qualifications include:

- AA Degree or two years of college required
- Preferred experience working with school age children
- Evidence of ability to work cooperatively and communicate effectively in a collaborative setting.

Application available at: www.ely.k12.mn.us

A complete application must include the following:

- District Application
- Resume
- College Transcripts
- 2 letters of recommendation

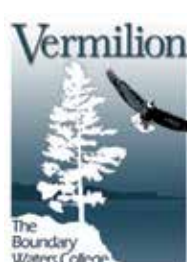
Return materials to: Ely Public Schools, Attn: Superintendent, 600 E. Harvey St., Ely, MN 55731 or email mwognum@ely.k12.mn.us

Starting Rate of Pay: \$16.57/hour

Hours: 6.5 hours/day

Deadline to apply: open until filled.

Published in the Timberjay, Jan. 29 & Feb. 5, 2021



Vermilion Community College in Ely, MN is seeking applicants interested in Coaching Varsity Women's Volleyball, Varsity Women's Basketball or Varsity Women's Softball for the 21-22 academic year. Each position is renewable into future years. The successful candidate must have the ability to coach Varsity Women's sports at the collegiate level. Vermilion is a member of the NJCAA and abides by all NJCAA regulations.

Duties include:

- Recruiting and organizational responsibilities
- Monitoring the academic progress of athletes
- Team preparation through scheduled practices
- Coaching throughout the season

Qualifications: A minimum of a two-year degree; experience and interest in coaching. Salary based upon education and related experience.

Preferred Qualifications: A four-year degree; Master's Degree in physical education or coaching related field.

Application Procedure: Send a letter of interest, current resume, (copy of college transcripts required at time of hire). Please specify which sport(s) interests you in your application. Application review begins February 8, 2021. (AA/EQ, Veteran Friendly)

Send to: Michelle Zupancich, Vermilion Community College, 1900 E. Camp St. Ely, MN 55731, m.zupancich@vcc.edu

Published in the Timberjay, Jan. 29, 2021

SEEKING PART-TIME MANAGER ELY-WINTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY



The Ely-Winton Historical Society, located in the Fine Arts wing of Vermilion Community College, is seeking a manager for the day-to-day operation of the Ely-Winton Historical Society office and museum. Duties include responding to oral and written communications received, overseeing the Society's artifacts, displays, videos, books, and festivals, coordinating research with the public, grant writing, and communicating with both Vermilion Community College and the Ely Chamber of Commerce. Computer literacy a must.

Compensation: Rate of pay will start at \$12.00 per hour. Average hours: 20 hours per week. There will be a three-month probationary period after which the rate of pay will be determined.

Anticipated date of hiring is April 1, 2021

For more information or to submit a resume, contact Margaret Sweet, Ely-Winton Historical Society, c/o 1900 East Camp Street, Ely, MN 55731. 218-365-3226 or 218-827-2386, or email ewhsmuseum@gmail.com

Resumes will be accepted if emailed or post-marked by March 15, 2021.
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Published in the Timberjay, Jan. 22, Feb 5, 19 & March 5, 2021*

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**PUBLIC
NOTICE**

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Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 333. The filing of an assumed name does not provide a user with exclusive rights to that name. The filing is required for consumer protection in order to enable customers to be able to identify the true owner of a business.

Assumed Name:
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PRINCIPAL PLACE OF BUSINESS:
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NAMEHOLDER(S):
Michael Thomas Olin, 8468 North Ahlstrand Road, Tower, MN 55790

By typing my name, I, the undersigned, certify that I am signing this document as the person whose signature is required, or as agent of the person(s) whose signature would be required who has authorized me to sign this document on his/her behalf, or in both capacities. I further certify that I have completed all required fields, and that the information in this document is true and correct and in compliance with the applicable chapter of Minnesota Statutes. I understand that by signing this document I am subject to the penalties of perjury as set forth in Section 609.48 as if I had signed this document under oath.

Dated: December 21, 2020
SIGNED BY: Michael Thomas Olin
MAILING ADDRESS: 8468 North Ahlstrand Road, Tower, MN 55790

Published in the Timberjay, Jan. 29 & Feb. 5, 2021

PUBLIC NOTICE



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<https://cityoftower.com/positions-available>

Published in the Timberjay, Jan. 29, 2021

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MORCOM TOWNSHIP MEETING NOTICE

Morcom Township monthly township meeting will be held virtually on Thursday, Feb. 4, 2021, at 6:00 p.m. If you would like to attend, please contact the Clerk at 218-969-5812.

Sasha Lehto, Town Clerk

King Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Flourish
- 6 "Rabbit, Run" author
- 12 Tearjerker
- 13 Construction piece
- 14 "Anna Christie" playwright
- 15 Coats
- 16 Lima's place
- 17 Father of Thor
- 19 Away from WSW
- 20 Style
- 22 Lummox
- 24 Most Wanted List org.
- 27 Elite alternative
- 29 Bart's sister
- 32 Lincoln's election year
- 35 Region
- 36 Location
- 37 Storm center
- 38 Inseparable
- 40 Osso buco base
- 42 A cont.
- 44 Level
- 46 Apiece
- 50 Boardroom props
- 52 Prophet
- 54 Half a story-book duo
- 55 "My heavens!"

	1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9	10	11
12								13				
14								15				
16						17	18			19		
				20	21			22	23			
24	25	26		27			28		29	30	31	
32				33				34				
35						36				37		
		38		39		40			41			
42	43			44	45				46	47	48	49
50			51				52	53				
54								55				
56								57				

- 56 Clothing composer
- 57 Unlike a rolling stone?
- 11 Gaelic
- 12 Doo — music
- 18 Fool
- 21 Make a choice, with "for"
- 23 "The Greatest"
- 24 Shriner's cha-peau
- 25 Life story, for short
- 26 Unknowing
- 28 Waiting area
- 30 Pigpen
- 31 Nay canceler
- 33 Coop denizen
- 34 Multitude
- 39 Old anesthetic
- 41 Starts
- 42 Turkish potentate
- 43 "Animal House" group
- 45 Capri or Wight
- 47 Dogfight participants
- 48 23-Down's old name
- 49 The lady
- 51 Sixth letter after 53-Down
- 53 See 51-Down

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More Info? Contact Human Resources
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humanresources@cookhospital.org

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Weekly SUDOKU

by Linda Thistle

		6	7					3	
5				8					2
	7					6	9		
		9		7					6
7			2					9	
	4					3	8		
		3	5	1		7			
1			4						5
	9					7			6

Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each small 9-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.

DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK: ♦♦

♦ Moderate ♦♦ Challenging
♦♦♦ HOO BOY!

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Considerations of personal privacy, time and resources prevent the newspaper from investigating ads placed in the classified section. If you respond to an ad, we urge you to use the same care and prudence that you would use when conducting business in any other situation.

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SUPPORT GROUPS

Ely AA OPEN GROUP MEETINGS- in person meetings, Wednesdays & Saturdays at 7:30 p.m. at First Lutheran Church, 915 E Camp St., Ely

MS SUPPORT GROUP- meets the second Friday of the month at 1 p.m. at the Babbitt Municipal Building, senior room. Open to all. For information contact Mary at 218-827-8327.

ORR AA meets Tuesdays at 8 p.m. at Holy Cross Catholic Church, Orr.

ELY CO-DEPENDENTS MEETING- Fridays at noon-St. Anthony's Church Classroom 3-Use west side entrance. For more information go to coda.org on the web.

OVEREATERS ANONYMOUS- Meetings every Wednesday at 4:30 p.m. at Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Virginia.

BABBITT AL-ANON- meets Thursdays at 7 p.m. in the upstairs of Woodland Presbyterian Church.

AL-ANON FAMILY GROUP- Are you troubled by someone's drinking? Al-Anon Family Group is a community-based mutual support program for the friends and families of alcoholics. It is confidential and open to anyone affected by someone else's drinking. Hope Lutheran Church in Embarrass hosts an Al-Anon group on Monday evenings at 6 p.m. 218-984-2037.

VIRGINIA AA WOMEN'S MEETING- Ladies by the Lake. Tuesdays at 12 noon. Peace United Methodist Church, 303 S 9th Ave, please use side door and parking.

AA OPEN MEETING- Thursdays at 7 p.m. at Woodland Presbyterian Church, Acacia Blvd. and Central Drive in Babbitt.

ELY WOMEN'S OPEN AA MEETING- Every Monday at noon at Ledgerock Community Church, 1515 E Camp St., Ely

IF YOU THINK YOU HAVE A PROBLEM WITH DRUGS, give yourself a break. There is a way out with the help of other recovering addicts in Narcotics Anonymous. We have been there. For meeting or other information call 218-728-3199. (Narcotics Anonymous is a non-profit organization.)

HIV/AIDS? For confidential compassionate local support call the Rural AIDS Action Network, toll-free 1-888-647-RAAN(7226).

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King Crossword

Answers

Solution time: 24 mins.

B	L	O	O	M	U	P	D	I	K	E		
W	E	E	P	I	E	G	I	R	D	E		
O	N	E	I	L	L	L	A	I	E	R		
P	E	R	U	O	D	I	N	E	N	E		
M	O	D	E	O	A	F						
F	B	I	P	I	C	A	L	I	S	A		
E	I	G	H	T	E	E	N	S	I	X	T	Y
Z	O	N	E	S	I	T	E	E	Y	E		
O	N	E	V	E	A	L						
A	F	R	T	I	E	R	E	A	C	H		
G	R	A	P	H	S	O	R	A	C	L	E	
H	A	N	S	E	L	O	H	D	E	A	R	
A	T	T	I	R	E	M	O	S	S	Y		

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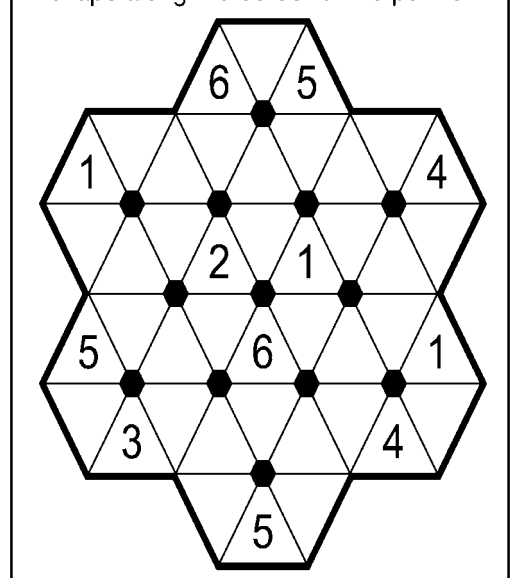
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SNOWFLAKES
by Japheth Light

There are 13 black hexagons in the puzzle. Place the numbers 1 - 6 around each of them. No number can be repeated in any partial hexagon shape along the border of the puzzle.



DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK:

◆ Easy ◆◆ Medium ◆◆◆ Difficult

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Weekly SUDOKU

Answer

9	1	6	7	2	4	5	3	8
5	3	4	9	8	1	6	7	2
8	7	2	3	5	6	9	1	4
3	5	9	1	7	8	4	2	6
7	6	8	2	4	5	1	9	3
2	4	1	6	9	3	8	5	7
6	8	3	5	1	2	7	4	9
1	2	7	4	6	9	3	8	5
4	9	5	8	3	7	2	6	1

Super Crossword

ACROSS

1 TV ET from Melmac
4 Puncturing tool
7 Restrained like Rover
15 "To a ..." poems
19 Road gunk
20 Zodiac beast
21 Course taker, e.g.
22 Actress Carter
23 Start of a riddle
26 Singer Fitzgerald
27 Grove sight
28 Certain boxing stat
29 Mil. bigwig
30 Pale-looking
31 Riddle, part 2
38 Kilmer of film
40 Alley-
41 Lion's foot
42 Fellow's wig
43 Actor Estevez
45 Sega's hedgehog
47 Look up to
51 Riddle, part 3
55 Lyric-writing Gershwin
56 Globes
57 "Ixnay"
58 "Take this"

DOWN

10 Vowel sound in "game"
11 Born first
12 Alicia of ballet
13 Use stitches
14 "— a Rebel"
15 Like a single-part process
16 City of India
17 Barkin of "The Fan"
18 Street talk
24 Prefix with colonialism
25 Auction unit
30 Mars, to the Greeks
32 Move around in confusion
33 Pleistocene, for one
34 Spout off
35 Axis-vs.-Allies event
36 Singer Tina
37 Copycatted
38 Bill blocker
39 Eros, to the Romans
44 Young girls
45 Hang-up
46 Be logically connected
48 Letters after "had a farm"
49 Ache for
50 Subdued with a shock

ACROSS

59 Brainstorms
61 Parsley bit
64 Riddle, part 4
67 Kay
70 Native Kiwi
71 Fluctuated greatly
72 Riddle, part 5
75 Odor
77 French port in Brittany
78 Outing ruiner
79 Afflicted
80 Poses
84 Inflated self
85 Riddle, part 6
90 TV talker
93 Slipknot loop
94 Address of "Dr. No"
95 Highest volcano in Eur.
98 Mil. bigwig
99 Mumbai "Mr."
100 Cotillion girl
101 End of the riddle
107 Throat affliction, for short
108 To the — degree
109 Western Hemisphere gp.
110 McEntire of song

DOWN

113 Hair removal brand
114 Riddle's answer
120 Deli sandwiches, for short
121 Grow pale
122 Oct. follower
123 O'Hare approx.
124 Anatomical sac
125 Slammer
126 Porker's place
127 Water barrier

ACROSS

10 Vowel sound in "game"
11 Born first
12 Alicia of ballet
13 Use stitches
14 "— a Rebel"
15 Like a single-part process
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50 Subdued with a shock

DOWN

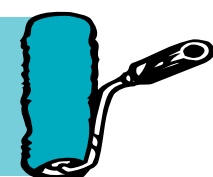
52 Lead-in to lateral
53 Classic soda brand
54 Coach Parseghian
59 Very hot star
60 Anti-alcohol measures
62 Oct. exam for many juniors
63 Home: Abbr.
64 Compound in wine
65 Greedy type
66 Indigo, e.g.
67 Fix firmly
68 One of the Florida Keys
69 Cineplex — (former theater chain)
70 Hurt severely
73 Following loyally
74 Zodiac beast
75 Plum used to flavor gin
76 Roman 1,051
79 Commercial lead-in to -gram or -matic
81 Shivered in fear or revulsion
82 Frilly veggie
83 Wild guess
85 Lewis of rock

ACROSS

86 Apt to pry
87 Artist Vincent van —
88 Master marksman
89 Actress Moran
91 Calvin Coolidge's college
92 Beginning of a web address
96 Papal envoy
97 2017 World Series winners
99 Gives rise to
101 Rachel Maddow's channel
102 Rome's land
103 Ground corn dish
104 Burn — in one's pocket
105 Chili holder
106 Foul up
111 Version being tested
112 Eden evictee
114 "I'm less than impressed"
115 "Who am — argue?"
116 Cave in
117 Siouan people
118 A small number of
119 Trellis plant



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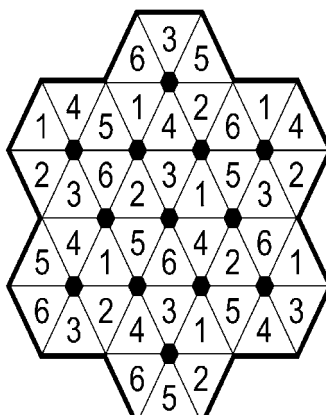
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