

FREE
Cabin Fever
PUZZLE BOOK

This week:
Cabin Fever Puzzle Book inside
SRHS delivers over 8k vaccine doses... See /10
Grizzlies advance to semi-finals... See /1B
Pine martens...See /4B

the **TIMBERJAY**



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SULFIDE MINING

Twin Metals leases under review

Lawsuits on hold while Biden officials consider reversing Trump reinstatement

by **MARSHALL HELMBERGER**
 Managing Editor

REGIONAL—A lawsuit challenging a Trump administration decision to renew two federal mineral leases critical to the proposed Twin Metals copper-nickel mine, near Ely,

have been stayed while the Biden administration reviews the case. The administration requested the stay “to allow senior officials at the Department of

the Interior and Department of Agriculture to review the government’s position in this matter, the earlier cases challenging reinstatement of mineral leases

MNES-01352 and MNES-01353 in the District and Circuit Courts, and the historical files for [the] leases.”

Ely area businesses and the Wilderness Society, which had

See...**LEASES** pg. 9



MORE SULFIDE MINING

U.S. Army Corps pulls PolyMet wetlands permit. **Page 3**

INDUSTRIAL TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION



Leave the *sawdust*

Ely students wrap up projects as old Industrial Arts building vacated

by **KEITH VANDERVORT**
 Ely Editor

ELY – A class of Memorial High School seniors gathered late last week and unknowingly participated in the end of an era. A handful of students worked feverishly to finish up their Adirondack chair and table

See...**SHOP CLASS** pg. 12

Seniors at Memorial School worked to finish wood shop projects last week before the Industrial Arts building is vacated to make way for a new building. photos by K. Vandervort.



LAW ENFORCEMENT

Tower, Breitung agree to cancel police contract

by **MARSHALL HELMBERGER**
 Managing Editor

TOWER— By mutual agreement, the town of Breitung and the city of Tower declared their police contract null and void during a joint session of the town board and the city council held here on Wednesday. The decision takes effect at the end of March.

The two governing bodies also agreed to form a committee to examine the costs of various long-term options, possibly working in concert, to address the area’s law enforcement needs.

For now, both communities are being served by the St. Louis County Sheriff’s Department, which is charged with keeping

See...**POLICE** pg. 9

CORONAVIRUS

Ely COVID-19 spike forces learning reset, massive quarantines at Memorial School

by **KEITH VANDERVORT**
 Ely Editor

ELY - Memorial High School here abruptly transitioned to distance learning protocols late last week and will keep students home until at least April 6 due to a rapidly-expanding spike in positive cases of COVID-19.

All grade 6-12 students in ISD 696 are affected by the new rule. Washington students in grades K-5 remain in in-person learning for now.

A whopping 87 percent of Ely high school students started the week in a two-week quarantine due to the locally-reported positive coronavirus case rate explosion. District administrators confirmed Monday

See...**COVID** pg. 10



DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Gigabyte broadband coming to Cook by 2023

by **DAVID COLBURN**
 Cook-Orr Editor

COOK-It’s official –by the spring of 2023, most Cook residents and businesses will have access to blazingly fast broadband internet.

As reported in early February by the *Timberjay*, Bemidji-based Paul

Morcom Township project starts this year

Bunyan Communications received a \$311,000 state Border-to-Border grant to partially fund deployment of their fiber optics GigaZone network in the community, but minor changes to the original proposal meant that the city

of Cook would have to approve the revisions before the project got the final green light.

With the council’s blessing and

See...**COOK** pg. 9



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Community notices

AEOA Food Events

REGIONAL- As part of the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) announced on April 17, 2020, USDA is exercising authority under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act to purchase and distribute agricultural products to those in need. Through this program, USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) is partnering with national, regional and local distributors to purchase fresh produce, dairy and meat products from American producers of all sizes. Distributors package these products into family-sized boxes, then transport them to food banks, community and faith-based organizations, and other non-profits serving Americans in need.

AEOA is also distributing shelf-stable 5-meal, 7-meal, 10-meal, 15-meal and 42-meal kits.

Since May 28, 2020, AEOA has distributed 73,030 boxes and 1,669,137 pounds of CFAP boxes and shelf-stable food to people in need in 26 communities across seven Northern Minnesota counties.

AEOA has served over 67,500 individuals and over 25,000 households.

The current Phase 5 Farmers to Families Food Box program ends April 30, 2021. AEOA will continue distributing food boxes through April 29. The possibility of another round could happen; however, we will not know until late April or early May.

AEOA holds Food Events every Thursday at 12:30 p.m., alternating weeks at the Virginia (702 3rd Ave. S) and Hibbing (2900 E Beltline) locations. Updates and other locations and times are posted to the AEOA (Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency) Facebook page weekly.

Operation Round Up® gives more than \$54,000 to community programs

REGIONAL- Through the contributions of Lake Country Power's participating members, the Operation Round Up® Electric Trust Board recently approved \$54,185 in assistance to local community programs during its quarterly meeting.

The cooperative's Trust Board reviewed and considered 30 grant applications and distributed funds to 27 projects and programs this past quarter. Since the program's inception in October 2004, more than \$2.6 million has been distributed to community-based projects and programs.

All funds generated through Operation Round Up® are set aside in a trust fund. A voluntary Trust Board of nine co-op members administers the trust. Of the funds collected through the program, 100 percent is distributed to charitable organizations through an application and selection process. The Trust Board uses special guidelines and policies when choosing recipients.

Most recent local recipients include Grand Lake Township Volunteer Fire Department, ElderCircle Stay Active and Independent for Life, Northern Lights Music Festival, Project Care Free Clinic and Northeast Range School.

Operation Round Up® is a charitable program unique to electric co-ops, which is designed to provide financial assistance to worthwhile activities and community projects by "rounding up" members' electric bills to the nearest dollar. The average donation of each participating Lake Country Power member is less than \$6 annually.

Among Lake Country Power's 43,000 members, nearly 64 percent of all active electric accounts participate in the program through voluntary contributions. Interested members can opt into the Operation Round Up® program by calling the cooperative at 800-421-9959 or using an online form at lakecountrypower.coop.

Applications are available online at www.lakecountrypower.coop (My Cooperative > Community > Operation Round Up®). The next application deadline is Saturday, May 15.

Lake Country Power, www.lakecountrypower.coop, is a Touchstone Energy® cooperative serving parts of eight counties in northeastern Minnesota. The rural electric cooperative provides services to nearly 43,000 members and has offices located in Cohasset, Kettle River and Mountain Iron.



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"Waterfall" book launch webinar, April 8

REGIONAL- The Arrowhead Library System is pleased to present the book launch of "Waterfall," a webinar with Mary Casanova on Thursday, April 8 from 7-8 p.m. This online event via Zoom will be moderated by Margi Preus and is free and open to the public.

Join Minnesota author Mary Casanova for a virtual book launch of her new historical novel, Waterfall, set on Rainy Lake in northern Minnesota in 1922. Informed by historical figures, by the burgeoning growth of women's rights in the early twentieth century, and the complicated issue of mental illness and how "difficult" women were silenced, Waterfall offers a compelling story of a young woman's fight to find her way. This title

is aimed at adults and is a recommended crossover for older teens.

Casanova is the author of thirty-nine books, ranging from picture books to historical fiction, including Hush, Hush Forest, Frozen and Ice-Out, published by the University of Minnesota Press. Her numerous awards include an American Library Association "Notable," Aesop Accolades from the American Folklore Society, a Parents' Choice Gold Award, Booklist Editors' Choice, as well as two Minnesota Book Awards.

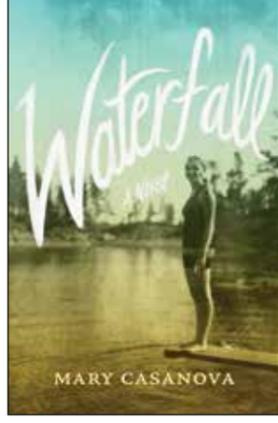
Pre-registration is required for this event. To sign up, please visit https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/alslegacywaterfall or call ALS at 218-741-3840. Zoom log-in infor-



mation will be sent out 24 hours prior to the webinar. The registration deadline for this event is Monday, April 5.

If you are interested in purchasing a copy of Waterfall, please visit the Zenith Bookstore (Duluth) link at https://www.zenith-bookstore.com/waterfall or call 218-606-1777.

This program, sponsored by Arrowhead Library System, was funded in part or in whole with money from Minnesota's



Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund. To learn more about Arrowhead Legacy Events, please see our calendar at www.alslib.info, follow us on Twitter @ALSLibraryNews, or like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/alslibinfo.

LVC Companies supports Angel Fund

REGIONAL- LVC Companies' Hibbing office is honored to support the Angel Fund's mission to provide financial assistance to Northeastern Minnesota residents battling cancer.

The life safety, security and communications provider recently donated \$250 to the organization's Rock for an Angel campaign. Rock for an Angel was created to replace critical funding normally raised through an annual curling event that was canceled due to COVID-19.

"We're ecstatic to welcome LVC Companies to our family of donors,"

said Angel Fund President Kelly Grinsteiner. "We're very thankful for the donation, which will go directly to local cancer patients."

Founded in 2011, and based in Hibbing, the non-profit, all-volunteer charity has provided more than \$500,000 to over 1,500 area residents.

"LVC has a long tradition of supporting charities and giving back to our local community," said Corey Kangas of LVC's Hibbing operations. "Due to COVID-19, the Angel Fund faced donation shortfalls and we were proud to make a contribution that will help them send



From left: Angel Fund Director Angela Zavodnik, Secretary Kari Kilen, President Kelly Grinsteiner and Treasurer Nicole Freeman welcomed LVC Companies' donation. submitted photo

financial support and messages of hope to Northeast Minnesota residents fighting cancer."

For more information on the Angel Fund or to

make a donation, visit angelfundrange.org.

Minnesota Judicial Branch launches Minnesota Court Records Online

REGIONAL- The Minnesota Judicial Branch now provides online access to many Minnesota district (trial) court public documents. Minnesota Court Records Online (MCRO) is an application that, once fully implemented, will replace Minnesota Public Access (MPA) Remote as the online platform for public access to state district court documents.

"Public access and transparency are key to ensuring trust and confidence in the courts," said Chief Justice Lorie S. Gildea.

MCRO provides the public with the ability to search for and retrieve appropriate public court documents without having to go to a courthouse or the State Law Library. The new application features a modern design

and increased usability and reliability over MPA Remote.

The Minnesota Judicial Branch is rolling out MCRO in three phases. During this first phase, appropriate public documents filed in a case are accessible when searching only with the case number. Future phases of MCRO will include access to Registers of Actions, the ability to search for cases using party and attorney names, and the use of advanced search features that include calendar and judgment searches. MPA Remote, the current online platform, will remain available until MCRO is fully implemented.

As MCRO is being rolled out in phases, and not all functionality will be available until its full implementation in 2022, the fee for documents

accessed via MCRO will not be implemented until court customers have complete access to the system. The statutory fee for purchasing copies of documents at courthouses and the State Law Library remains in effect.

The Rules of Public Access to the Records of the Minnesota Judicial Branch determine which case types and documents in those case types are public information, as well as whether that information can be accessed and retrieved remotely.

Users can now access and download the following types of public documents through MCRO:

- Documents filed on or after July 1, 2015, including all public documents in all Major and Minor Criminal case types.
- All public documents in all Major and Minor Civil case types.
- All public documents in all public Formal Probate, Other

Probate, Guardianship and Conservatorship, and Trust case types.

Public orders, appellate opinions, and notices prepared by the court in public Family case types and post-adjudication paternity proceedings.

Additional documents:

- Judgments, orders, appellate opinions, and court-generated notices to parties filed from July 1, 2005, to June 30, 2015, in case types that were publicly and remotely accessible at the time of filing.
- Access to documents in MCRO filed prior to July 1, 2015, is very limited. It depends on when the document was imaged, and if the case type was publicly and remotely accessible at the time of filing.

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MINING

Army Corps pulls PolyMet wetlands permit

Move to allow EPA to conduct review required by Clean Water Act

by **MARSHALL HELMBERGER**
Managing Editor

REGIONAL — Another major permit for the proposed PolyMet copper-nickel mine near Hoyt Lakes has been suspended until further notice as a result of a court ruling. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has pulled the project's wetland impact permit after the Environmental Protection Agency requested to undertake additional review steps as required by the Clean Water Act.

The latest blow to the PolyMet proposal stems from a 2019 lawsuit filed by the Fond du Lac Band, which alleged that the EPA had failed to hold a hearing

on the downstream impacts of the mining project, which will expose sulfide ores, known to cause acid drainage. A federal district court judge found in favor of the Fond du Lac in February, holding that the EPA had a legal duty to inform the Band that the project "may affect" their downstream waters, and to hold a hearing to examine the issue. That never happened.

The EPA, in response, asked the judge for a voluntary remand to complete the steps necessary to comply with federal law. The judge granted that motion earlier this month, and the Army Corps agreed to the EPA's request to suspend the permit until

it can complete the steps required by law.

But the review may involve more than simply going through the motions. "The outcome of EPA's "may affect" determination may require the Corps to reconsider the 404 [wetlands] permit," wrote Karl Jansen, a district engineer with the Army Corps. "It is therefore necessary in consideration of the public interest to suspend the 404 permit while the EPA reconsiders effects on downstream water quality from the proposal," wrote Jansen.

The PolyMet project, should it ultimately move forward, is expected to lead to the destruction of over 900 acres of wetlands



Some of the wetlands that would be impacted as a result of the PolyMet project. file photo

in and around the mine site. That would make it the largest wetland impact ever permitted in Minnesota.

Several other permits previously issued for the project, including the Permit to Mine, are currently under suspension

as a result of court action by environmental groups and the Fond du Lac Band.

EQUAL PAY

Ely AAUW promotes pay equity

ELY - For 2021, Equal Pay Day for women is Wednesday, March 24. This day is marked nationally to symbolize how far into the year women need to work to make what men did in the previous year.

The most recent statistics place women's pay at 82 cents for every dollar a man earns.

The Ely Branch of the American Association of University Women has been actively working to

promote pay equity since the early 2000s, with a primary focus on educating both high school and Vermilion Community College students on the issue.

In 2017, AAUW added presentations to the public and an "Unhappy Hour" to help educate local residents and business owners on wage gap issues.

"When we held our first Unhappy Hour," said Linda Sutton, AAUW

public policy committee chair, "the Eighth Congressional District ranked last in the state for pay equity with a 27-cent difference between males and females. Last year the Eighth District moved to sixth in state rankings and this year, while the ranking is unchanged, the gap has narrowed to 22 cents."

In 2018, the Ely Rotary Club joined forces with AAUW to jointly encourage local businesses to sign

an affirmation of equal pay for their employees. The goal was to become the first city in the state to affirm support of all community businesses for equal pay.

"In 2019 we marked 100 businesses when Mayor Chuck Novak signed the affirmation following a vote by the Ely City Council," Sutton said. "This year, another major Ely business joined with the signature of Ely Bloomenson Community

Hospital."

At present, over 130 local businesses have signed the affirmation. That promotion will wrap up in April of this year with the final publication and celebration of businesses that have expressed their support of equal pay for equal work.

Businesses who would like to finalize their commitment prior to the April 10 deadline may contact Sutton at ldsutton2001@

aol.com for information.

"There has been significant progress in the years since we began our equal pay activities," Sutton said. "We're particularly excited by the number of businesses who have expressed their commitment to equal pay, and by the improvement in the ranking of the Iron Range when it comes to pay equity. However,

See EQUITY...pg. 5

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Ban Lake, Orr- \$115,000 21.75 wooded acres with 1,760 ft of shoreline on Ban Lake. MLS#140882

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OPINION

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The First Amendment of the United States Constitution

e-mail: editor@timberjay.com

Editorial

Reform the filibuster

Democrats can't let GOP use unchecked power to undermine democracy

Should rules of the U.S. Senate allow the Republican Party to undermine our democracy?

The answer should most certainly be “no,” but that could be what’s in store if the Democrats don’t take steps to rein in the GOP’s systematic efforts at voter suppression now being implemented in states across the country.

Since the failed GOP-led insurrection on Jan. 6, Republican legislatures in many parts of the country have introduced hundreds of measures to try to block voters, particularly voters of color, from participating in our elections in the future. While supporters of these measures claim they are necessary for election security, they can cite virtually no evidence that our elections aren’t secure now. The Trump administration’s own cybersecurity czar declared the 2020 election “the most secure” in American history.

And the actual intent of some of these voter suppression efforts couldn’t be more obvious, or more targeted at people of color. In Georgia, for example, where well-organized efforts increased black voter participation and turned that southern state blue in 2020, the GOP-led Legislature is pushing, among other things, to eliminate early voting on Sundays. There’s no evidence, of course, that early voting on Sundays is any less secure than any other day. That’s the day, however, when many black voters typically vote, as part of the “Souls to the Polls” movement organized through black churches. Reducing early voting, in general, reduces participation by the poor and people of color, because it leads to hours-long lines in many urban precincts on Election Day. Rural and suburban areas are typically unaffected by long lines on Election Day, which makes voting on Election Tuesday far easier for those in GOP-dominated areas.

The Republican Party has won a majority of the vote in a national election only once in the past 32 years, so the party has become increasingly reliant on the peculiarities of the Electoral College to hold the White House. That means they’ve strategically targeted battleground states, like Arizona, Georgia, Wisconsin, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania, in the hope that they can suppress enough votes to eke out narrow state victories and win future presidential races through the Electoral College.

The same tactics, of course, in combination with extreme gerrymandering, have allowed the GOP to dominate

U.S. politics despite representing an ever-shrinking minority of the U.S. population.

The U.S. House has already passed its own countermeasure to the GOP effort, known as H.R. 1, which would re-establish many of the provisions of the Voting Rights Act that have been undercut in recent years by conservative activist judges. But the prospects for the legislation in the Senate appear all but hopeless under current rules. While the Democrats hold a working majority in the Senate, the widespread abuse of the filibuster means that 41 senators can block any piece of legislation they don’t like.

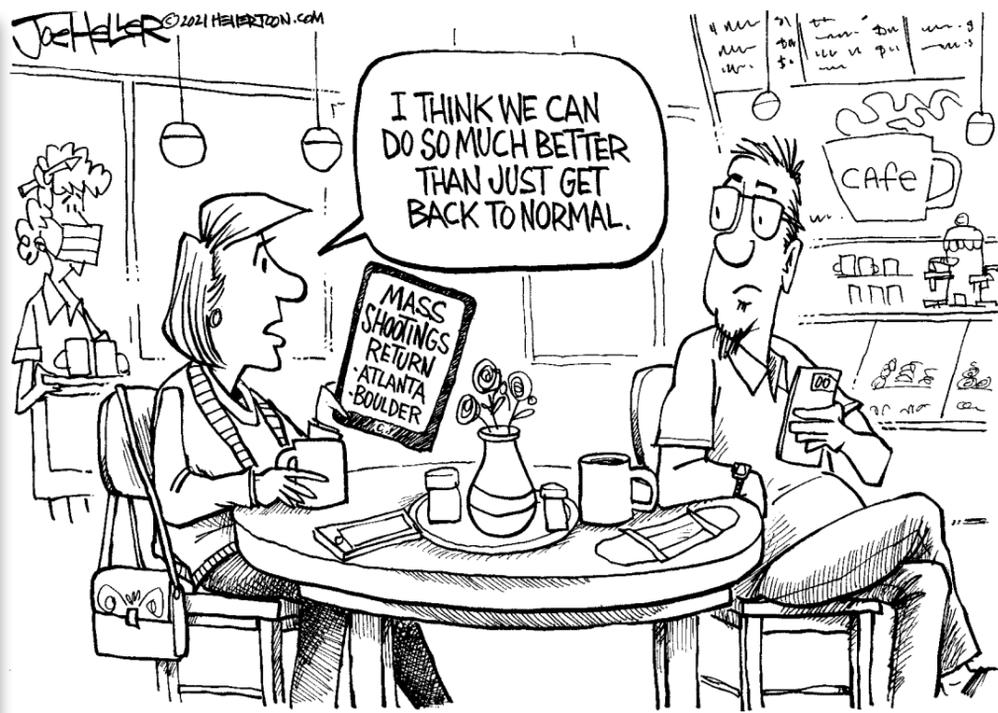
Which is why even moderate senators, like Minnesota’s Amy Klobuchar, are calling for reform of the filibuster. The Republicans already eliminated the filibuster when it comes to filling judicial seats, so they could ram through hundreds of young, conservative judges over the past four years. And the budget reconciliation process is another tactic that the Senate has established as a filibuster work-around.

If packing the courts with conservatives is a high enough priority to suspend the filibuster, surely guaranteeing the constitutionally enshrined right of all Americans to vote would meet that bar.

Like Klobuchar, who has been historically reluctant to reform the filibuster, we’ve seen value in the filibuster when it’s used to protect legitimate principles that may not currently be in vogue. But there’s nothing principled about voter suppression. It’s raw political power at its worst.

What’s more, not one of the state Senates currently advancing voter suppression legislation allows its minority Democrats the right to filibuster those bills. So, the GOP can use its unchecked political clout at the state level to undermine democracy affecting federal governance, while the Democrats in the U.S. Senate are supposed to sit by powerless to stop them. What a farce.

Democrats need to understand the new reality—and that’s that growing numbers of Republicans no longer support the ideal of democratic governance and the right to vote. And unless the Democrats are willing to stand up and truly fight for the principles that this nation was founded on, this country will continue to be ruled by an increasingly radicalized minority, intent on using a system already stacked in favor of the minority to further maintain their grip on the nation. That’s a recipe for disaster.



Letters from Readers

More on township transparency

Many people don’t realize that a hired township attorney works for the town board, not for the citizens of the township. The township attorney’s job is to advise and protect the town board. Same thing goes for a hired city attorney. In the case of Greenwood Township, the town Board has had a tendency to get itself into trouble. We all know that knowledge is power. To help prevent trouble, the Greenwood board’s attorney, Mike Couri, has devised an incredible puzzle that citizens, or a newspaper, need to put together before they can access public knowledge, records that are available under the state’s Open Meeting Law. It’s almost funny if you look at the puzzle. Mr. Couri and the board continue to flaunt the Open Meeting Law, apparently in hopes that no one will challenge them and that some things will just blow over. If the March 9 election is any indication, where the two incumbent board members were ousted, it looks like the township residents are aware of the problem. And the lesson that the board’s attorney works for the board, not for the people, is well taken.

Moving forward, we need to support our two new Greenwood Town Board members and look forward to a time when we don’t have to waste taxpayer money for an expensive board attorney to keep public records under wraps.

Lee Peterson
Greenwood Twp.

Whatever happened to the YMCA plan?

I’d love to see the staff of the *Timberjay* apply their journalistic skill to the matter of the proposed YMCA in Ely. What happened to this plan? Why did it fizzle? As a former member of a YMCA and as a mother I was

very excited about this prospect. I have heard that despite positive results to a city-wide survey, certain residents with disproportionate influence in the community made a decision to quash the plan. I hope you can shed light on this issue.

Laura Butterfield
Ely

Thank you to Fortune Bay

Boozhoo (Hello):

It’s a tough decision, but it’s time for me to resign as the Director of Hospitality at Fortune Bay Resort Casino. I want to thank Fortune Bay Resort Casino, Bois Forte Tribal Council, and Bois Forte Bandmembers for providing me the ability to grow and develop my leadership skills and business acumen for the past 15-plus years. I’ve tried to lead by example daily and genuinely appreciate the opportunity provided.

Fortune Bay contributes a significant amount to our entire region by providing many quality jobs with excellent employee benefits, purchasing goods and services, emphasizing doing so with local vendors. What many don’t understand is how the profits generated are used to develop the entire reservation. Growing up locally and having many native friends, I’ve personally seen the Vermilion Reservation make positive changes over the past 30 years. In the 80’s, bringing friends home from sleepovers, I remember seeing only a few houses and trailers. Now they’ve developed a government building, the Head Start, expanded housing, Wellness Center, a baseball field, and a clinic providing medical, dental, and pharmaceutical services to the community.

They’ve been able to add many of these same services at the Nett Lake Reservation as well.

Going into my senior year of

college, I was fortunate enough to complete my internship at Fortune Bay. On my first day, I washed dishes for an entire shift gaining a genuine appreciation of what is needed to make the hospitality industry operate across the board. I spent the rest of the summer cleaning rooms, making hotel reservations, serving drinks, working banquets, and developing policy and procedure manuals for all departments in the resort.

When hired full-time after gaining my bachelor’s degree, I spent my first 11 years overseeing hotel operations, including the Marina and RV Park. During the past four-plus years, I was responsible for overseeing the entire resort, including food and beverage operations. I had successes and failures, and made both good and bad decisions. Overall, I’m thrilled with the development of hospitality and amenities that I’ve been able to be part of during my tenure. My peers have been great to work with, and I can’t thank my employees enough for allowing me to be their leader!

In addition to my Fortune Bay employment, I took over backend operational duties (Accounting/Marketing/AR/AP) of Lamppa Manufacturing Inc. from my Grandpa Herbie after he could no longer fulfill the duties due to sickness back in 2008. With our recent move to the new facility and increased business levels, I need to focus on the long-term sustainability and success of my generational family business, Lamppa Manufacturing Inc. After all of the sacrifices my dad Daryl Lamppa has made to get us to this point, and as the fourth generation, I’m committing my passion to see it as a pillar of our local community for future generations.

Miigwech (Thank you).
Garrett Lamppa
Virginia

I bet James Garner never tried the keto diet

I’ve got spring fever! I’ve been decorating the inside of my house for Easter. I added some hand-made Easter ornaments my mother made to my all-season-tree in the living room that twinkles every evening with white lights. Last Friday evening I decided to make a wire-frame burlap wreath. I first watched a YouTube video,



SCARLET
STONE

then found an old 1960’s western with James Garner to half-watch as I created....noticing throughout that he was “so easy on the eyes.” A handsome man indeed. The wreath turned out nice, with lots of pulling, pleating, shoving and twisting. Lovely piece! I finished it on the top with faux lavender

and other greenery plus a big green polka-dot bow that I made while James Garner was having a gunfight in the center of a tumbleweed-strewn town with stray dogs, saloon owners and lovely soiled doves looking on from the boardwalks. The western ended, and so did my project. I bought some other cute Easter yard decorations with stimulus money that will soon be outside. I’ve also been finishing painting some ceramics pieces I had in a box from a class I took in Ely a couple years ago...leprechauns, bunnies, candle holders, a couple

little Christmas trees and a nifty sea captain. It has been a great form of relaxation. I was joking with friends that I’m now going to have these holiday ceramic pieces to store, but it will give me something to sell at my garage sale in years to come. Efforts at becoming a minimalist easily go by the wayside for artsy-craftsy types because materials and media need storage space.

This will be the year I finally get some painting done on the walls upstairs. Two bedrooms, hallway, and bath were left for last, and have still not been

painted since I moved here in 2017. I like to paint when I can open the windows to get some fresh air and those days are soon arriving....those dreamy spring days. I decided my bedroom has a Tuscan feel to it with sheer white gauze curtains adrift, wood floors, angled ceilings and cracked, chipped plaster. While I paint, I can pretend there is a vineyard outside being worked by a handsome dark Italian named Giovanni ...yes, he is just outside there...olive-brown

See **KETO...** pg. 5

Letters from Readers

Popular vote would make every vote count

Information from the 2020 presidential election sheds light on how the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact (NPVIC) could affect voter turnout and potentially change election outcomes.

The NPVIC is an agreement among a group of states and the District of Columbia to award all their electoral votes to whichever presidential candidate wins the overall popular vote in the fifty states and D.C. The compact is designed to ensure that the candidate who receives the most votes nationwide is elected president. This can be done without a constitutional amendment.

How do the election results suggest increased voter turnout is likely?

The most interesting state election was our own state. Minnesota has a Democratic House and a Republican Senate. It is the only state in which a split Legislature exists.

Minnesota had a turnout of 80 percent of eligible voters, the highest in the country.

The second most interesting situation was where both the House and Senate were held by a single party but not with enough votes to override the governor of a different party (MI,WI,PA,NC). Their average turnout was 73 percent.

The third most interesting situation was where both the House and Senate were held by a single super majority party with enough votes to override the governor of a different party (KS,KY,LA,MD,MA,VT). Their average turnout was 69 percent.

The least interesting situation of the remaining states is where the governor, House, and Senate are all controlled by one party. Those states' average turnout was 67 percent.

The trend makes sense. In the states where there is little likelihood to change the political landscape, turnout is low (like Oklahoma where the GOP controls all of state government, where turnout was 55 percent).

But if every state's voters had equal impact on the presidential election and interest of all states were the same as Minnesota's, there would have been an additional 27 million additional votes cast last November. By the way, President Trump lost the election by 4.4 percent. If NPVIC were in effect and turnout was increased to the level of Minnesota, and the additional votes allocated proportionally to the percentages by state, he would have lost by only 3.8 percent. In a close election, this type of difference can change the outcome of an election.

Voting is the most important act a citizen can perform in a democracy. NPVIC has the potential to be a powerful means to increase voter turnout. As of March 2021, 73 percent of the 270 votes needed to give the compact legal force have been committed. Let your senator and representative in St. Paul know how you feel on NPVIC.

**Keith Steva
Cook**

Recognize how science informs our world

Foul odors repel, friendly smiles attract, alarms grab attention, we have an aversion to bitter taste and hot surfaces. Scent, sight, sound, taste and touch are the senses that inform. We collect and compile, collate and categorize to conceptualize our experiences that enter our consciousness.

Science is inquiry into the natural world to discover, interpret, know and understand reality. Farmer, mechanic, electrician and physician, plumber and airline pilot depend on the findings of scientific research. Imagine the depth and breadth of scientific knowledge required to keep a 757 airliner in flight at 30,000 feet. Talk about trust in science.

In this era of anti-science, embrace of belief at the expense of evidence, recall that airplanes are not magical flying carpets, disease is not sorcery and alchemy doesn't produce gold. Believing in belief found

Earth as flat, and center of the solar system, and the creation story of faith in unquestioning acceptance of authority. No church, nor state, reveals natural law. Scientific discovery gets the headlines, but the painstaking process of scientific reason gets us there.

Who, what, where, when, how and why are tools for questioning by searching minds. Curiosity is the force of intellect that leads to understanding and lifelong learning. Science begins with careful observation, frames a question, proposes a possible answer (hypothesis), then makes a prediction, followed by testing and experimenting for findings to be verified.

What Copernicus is to heliocentrism, Darwin to evolution, Pasteur to germs, Watson and Crick are to DNA. Curiosity to discover, doubt to inquire, and evidence to conclude fuel scientific thinking. Rising above prejudice and preconceived notions to make sense of the real world we live in by recognizing how science demonstrates knowledge is power!

**Harold Honkola
Roseville**

Vote Kess for Ely Mayor

I support Paul Kess for the position of Ely Mayor. Paul is a creative problem solver. I have seen him identify solutions to problems that no one else considered and that resolved seemingly conflicting issues. He is a smart guy. He can absorb and understand complex material. And he is respectful to all people, whether they agree or disagree with him. Most of all, he is an independent thinker, open to new ideas and opportunities that will benefit his constituency. I am confident that Paul will provide the commitment and talent to fill this important position.

**Celia Domich
Ely**

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KETO...Continued from page 4

skin sweating in the sun. I gladly am being calmed by the Tyrrhenian Sea breezes, because my jets need cooling. While I peek at him from over the top of my paint brush...I am so careful not to be noticed or fall off my ladder. Before buying this paint I'm going to have to dump the idea of Giovanni's being up here on "the Range"... and then see what can be used from the basement paint storage shelf. You see, spring fever!

All of these things sound like a gal who's got quite a bit of energy these days! This is most certainly true. The push from within came out of a visit with my doctor in mid-February. Bloodwork revealed for the first time in my medical history my triglyceride cholesterol was somewhat above the recommended high. My doc suggested putting me on a statin drug, but I vetoed that and said I would try to lower it myself first. Gee whiz, the palms of my hands are not very big to hold any more pills in the morning when I get up. I admit, since former husband, (now friend), Bill's departure, I have had full rein of the television and took advantage of it over the COVID months. Men in my life have been TV hijackers either with

sports or those annoying funniest video shows where idiots drive bicycles off roofs to see what will happen.

Along with getting that high triglyceride diagnosis, I was looking ahead to summertime chores and mowing my lawn, cleaning and managing at the Vermilion Park Inn, and just generally taking care of things in my life. Having the extra weight is becoming more difficult to do the activities in my life the older I get, and while I have been able to stave off the family diabetes, I'm still looking at high blood pressure. So, it's time to be more serious about that extra half-a-person I've been carrying around. "Mabel or whoever you are...get off my damn back!" Fitness could be my next frontier!

A few of my friends have had VERY successful, inspiring runs on the ketogenic diet or keto as they call it for short... and managed to keep the weight off. It's a low-carb, high-fat eating plan that forces the body to burn fats rather than carbohydrates. I tried it briefly a year ago with doctor's approval, but the large amount of fat consumption was difficult for me because I do not have a gallbladder. It occurred

to me this spring I could try to do the keto program again, only add digestive enzymes. This has worked wonderfully for me, and I can report that since March 1 I have lost 16 pounds. I am going in to visit my doc this week and have blood levels checked.

I heard a saying several years ago about weight loss, "nothing tastes as good as losing weight feels." That is very true because when you put something savory in your mouth that initial rush of flavor, dopamine and satisfaction does not last very long at all. I have an ongoing thrill about my clothes becoming loose, reduced inflammation and the lack of stiffness in my joints. There are so many keto food products in the stores and online for purchase, plus great recipes. I have not been hungry at ALL on this regimen, in large part because eating large amounts of fat is very satiating. There were a few days of adjustment as usual, but now I have great energy and I'm sleeping very well. The next step is to get more regular exercise and I feel very motivated in doing that now, so last weekend I bought myself a new pair of Brooks running shoes from my favorite shoe

store in West Duluth. The sales team know about feet issues...which for me are flat, wide, add bunions (not onions) and supination! In other words, my feet roll outward! The saleswoman had me hike up my pants and walk to and from her as she watched my feet. She knew which shoe would work best for my issues and she was correct. I've never had an athletic shoe fit so well.

So, let's just suppose this time, I'm just saying... like we all have done so MANY times in our butter-thigh little lives... let's say I do succeed in a big way on this keto deal, will I have hanging jowls and a turkey neck? I know skin loses elasticity as we age, and I don't want to look like a lumpy sheet of strudel dough. I bet James Garner never had these concerns and if he did there was plastic surgery, and he could afford it. I've seen women who lose lots of weight and look like saggy leather purses. It's fine if they don't care, but I do. When I am driving and nobody can see me, in wooded areas or at night, I do that underchin, skin-tightening deal where you pull your mouth corners taught and get that skin to firm up like a drum top. Aye, this body

is getting an overhaul and I will need to put in many miles to tone but I'm going to just try to enjoy the process. I mean, I've never succeeded in losing all of my extra weight, not since I was about twenty-five and then it was twenty pounds. Big deal. Was that even considered my life or just a warm up? When finished, I won't have this confidence crippling, life-long-pain-in-the-royal-ass goal ahead of me any longer and can't even imagine that....but that's

not today's concern is it? I will keep on eating piles of cheese, bacon and mayo and I'm sure in my next column you will get the update on keto, projects, painting and dark Italians in my vineyard. Have a blessed Easter!

Scarlet, telling it like it is, appreciates your comments and can be reached at scarletstone60@gmail.com.

EQUITY...Continued from page 3

despite civil rights laws and advancements in women's economic status, workplace discrimination still persists."

The pay gap becomes even greater when racial equity is considered, with Black women, as an example, making just 62 cents on the dollar. Native American women make only 57 cents for every dollar a man makes.

Additionally, the

average American woman has a net worth less than half of the net worth of a man. The long-term consequences of the pay gap mean there is less money to put into retirement, less paid into Social Security, and there are ultimately more senior women living in poverty. The average full-time female worker is paid approximately \$434,000 less than a man over a 40-year full-time

career.

"The issues of pay inequity have become especially acute over the last year because of the disproportionate way the pandemic has affected female workers," she said. "For example, two-thirds of individuals filing for unemployment in Minnesota are women, up from one-third pre-pandemic."

The Equal Pay Act was signed into law by John F.

Kennedy on June 10, 1963. The law mandates that men and women receive equal pay for "substantially equal" work at the same establishment. A year later, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that added protections against discrimination based on an individual's national origin, religion, race or sex.

the
TIMBERJAY



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Week of March 29

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 April 20 .

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 vermillioncountry.org.

Holy Week schedule at St. Martin's, St. Mary's, and Holy Cross

Holy Thursday – 5:30 p.m. at St. Mary's in Cook
Good Friday – 3 p.m. at Holy Cross in Orr and 6 p.m. at St. Martin's in Tower.
Holy Saturday – 8 p.m. at St. Mary's in Cook
Easter Sunday – 8 a.m. at Holy Cross in Orr and 11 a.m. at St. Martin's in Tower.

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PUBLIC SAFETY



Breitung Fire Department honors its retirees who served more than 20 years

SOUDAN- Breitung Fire Department is honoring its retired members who have served more than 20 years with recognition on a new wall plaque. The display has 41 names and their years of service. Each plaque is made of leather and would normally be put on the front of a fire fighter's helmet.

Chief Steve Burgess and

Captain Trevor Banks reviewed 70 years of department meeting minutes to compile all the information and the project took the two about a year to complete.

Those honored include John Akins, William Holm, Arvo Mattson, Harold Poylio, Mike Simonovich, Richard Larson, Frank Popesh Sr., Charles Mattila, Gerald Sundeen, Joe

Poderzay, Raymond Berg, Robert Johnson Sr., Thomas Poderzay, Anthony Poderzay, John Lilya, Richard Lilya, James Hill Sr., Raymond Stefanich, David Peitso, Wallace Kultala, Kenneth Wargosky, Paul Lilya, Don Redetzke, James Meehan, Roger Dolinar, Frank Planton, Bob Syrjanen, Paul Pishler, Joe Yapel, Nick Tekautz, Jeff John-

son, Mike Dolinar, Frank Gornick, Larry Folstad, James Hill Jr., William Meehan, Kenneth Hinkel, Dana Anderson, Terry Mosher, Frank Popesh Jr., and Kenneth Kultala.

Thanks to Steve Burgess for climbing on top of the fire truck to snap this photo for us.



BREITUNG TOWNSHIP

Breitung to advertise for police chief

by STEPHANIE UKKOLA
Staff Writer

BREITUNG- At their Tuesday meeting, the township made no decisions on police coverage with St. Louis County for the month of April. Clerk Dianna Sundahl recommended not having patrols in April, due to the historical average of low call volume during April. Tomsich agreed, "the data supports it," he said. The board took no action on the issue, so the township will just default to 911-emergency coverage from the county sheriff department.

However, the board did decide to advertise the chief law enforcement officer position and to review the applications already handed in for the full-time position. The board appointed Supervisor Chuck Tekautz and Sundahl as well as residents Renee Pearson, Jim Battin and Stephanie Ukkola to represent Breitung's interests on the joint Breitung and Tower police committee. Chairman Tim Tomsich

clarified that the committee would not have decision-making power but would make recommendations to the board. The committee would work jointly with Tower to explore the future of policing in Breitung and Tower.

Reorganization

During their annual reorganization, the board:

- Selected the *Tower News* as their official newspaper. *The Tower News* bid 65 cents per column inch for legal advertising and \$2.50 per column inch for display advertising while the *Timberjay* bid 99 cents for legal advertising and \$2.59 for display advertising.
- Set wage for rider mower operator and rink attendant at \$10.08 per hour, equivalent to state's minimum wage.
- Increased the town hall cleaner rate from \$13 per hour to \$14.
- Increased the maintenance mechanic wage from \$19 to \$20 per hour.

- Increased the part-time police officer wage from \$20 per hour to \$22.
- Increased the clerk salary from \$20,000 to \$23,000.
- Increased the treasurer salary from \$22,000 to \$23,000.
- Set deputy clerk and deputy treasurer wages as \$19 per hour.
- Did not make any changes for the supervisor or chairman salaries.
- Increased the election judge wage from \$10 to \$15 per hour.
- Set a wage for the annual meeting moderator for \$50 per meeting.
- Increased reimbursement to clerk and treasurer for township related expenses from \$40 to \$50.
- Increased the township grant manager position from \$15 per hour to \$20, Tomsich serves in the position.
- Changed regular meeting days to the fourth Thursday of month at noon.

Other news

- A grant the township received on the wastewater boards behalf of \$250,000 in November 2019 from IRRR for water line replacement was canceled for not being used on time. The township will have to reapply in July.
- Purchased a small parcel of land from St. Louis County on the east corner of the intersection of Hwy. 169 and Thompson Farm Rd. for \$580.
- Will purchase a 2022 HV507 SFA International dump/plow truck for \$145,710, with additions up to \$500, from Mid-State Truck in Marshfield, WI.
- After a complaint about outdoor wood furnaces, the township will update the existing ordinance to clarify that existing wood boilers may be repaired or replaced. The ordinance will be republished and read at two meetings.
- The next meeting will be held Thursday, April 22 at noon.

COMMUNITY NEWS

Info session for parents of upcoming Kindergarten and pre-school students set for April 21

TOWER- Parents of children who will be four years old or entering Kindergarten are invited to a special information session on Wednesday, April 21 at the Tower-Soudan Elementary School. Parents of children who will be four years old and eligible for pre-Kindergarten should come at 4 p.m., and parents of children who will be five years old and eligible for Kindergarten at 4:30 p.m. Both programs are in the school gym.

Correction

TOWER- *The Timberjay* incorrectly stated the previous use of the Abrahamson building currently being renovated, in the article about the TEDA

grants. The garage was the Dodge Plymouth dealership owned by Sonny Peyla. The Burgess Chevy dealership was where Vermilion Food and Fuel is now located.

Last day to register for Suicide Prevention Program

TOWER- Today is the last day to register for the program "Suicide Prevention and Support: How Can I Make a Difference?". The online program will take place on Sunday, March 28 from 3 – 4 p.m. on Zoom. The presenter is Ilene Rice, a retired Marriage and Family Therapist with years of experience in suicide prevention. The format will include an introductory presentation by Rice on risk factors, warning signs, mental illness, "how to ask the question", and how to respond. After the presentation, two panelists will ask

Rice follow-up questions. This program is sponsored by the Lake Vermilion Cultural Center (LVCC). To register for this free Zoom event, send an email to the LVCC at vermillionculturalcenter@gmail.com. You will receive a Zoom invitation on March 27.

Greenwood recount shows same result in close clerk's race

GREENWOOD TWP- Debby Spicer received 165 votes to JoAnn Bassing's 163 in a recount held on March 17. This is the exact vote count recorded on election night. The township did receive three mail-in ballots after election day, which remained unopened. Debra Quick of Kugler Township oversaw the recount.

Dream Quilters cancel April 1 meeting

TOWER- The Vermilion Dream Quilters will be unable to resume in-person meetings April 1 as hoped. Current CDC guidelines encourage even those fully COVID-19 vaccinated to avoid medium-sized indoor gatherings. Governor Walz has loosened Minnesota guidelines, but sets 15 as the maximum for indoor gatherings, well below our past attendance numbers. He has stated that the next three to four weeks should give us a strong indication of how the new variant strains will affect us. The Dream Quilters' officers will continue to evaluate before deciding whether to meet in May.

St. Martin's Annual Pasties Sale

TOWER- It's that time of year again. St. Martin's is getting ready for their Annual Pasties Fundraiser. Orders are now being taken; the last day to order is April 5. To order, call the rectory office at 753-4310, stop by the rectory to see Maryann, or stop in at Jeanne's Card Shop. Orders and money may also be mailed to St. Martin's, P.O. Box 757, Tower, MN 55790.

When you order be sure to indicate if you want rutabaga, or not, in your pasties. The cost is still \$6 a piece, and must be paid at the time of the order. Pasties will be available for delivery/pick up the week of April 19; we will call when your order is ready.

WINDOW INTO YESTERDAY

Ely-Winton Historical Society museum celebrates 40 years

by DAVID KESS

Ely-Winton Historical Society

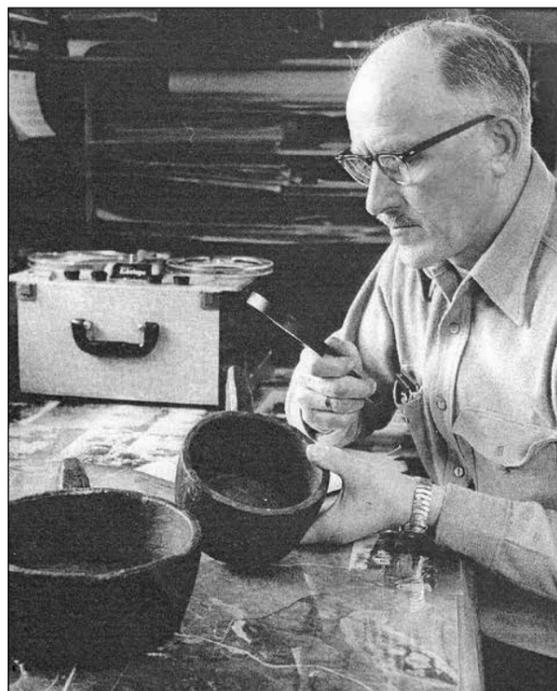
Minnesota's State Centennial, in 1958, was celebrated in Ely with the local Music and Drama Club staging a pageant at Memorial Stadium on the Fourth of July. "This is YourLife,Ely" was directed by Florence Peterson and Elizabeth Gjervik. That night was a sweltering one. Nonetheless, a tableau of dances, songs, skits, and orchestral pieces celebrated Ely's history beginning with the early Native Americans. An awareness was born that it was time to start formally preserving and recording the history of the town.

Some also realized that 1958 was Ely's 70th anniversary, so a committee was organized to celebrate this as well. Newspaper articles were chosen from early issues of *The Ely Miner*, *The Ely Times*, and the *Ely Iron Home* with an eye to put something in print. Columbia Childers, publisher of *The Ely Miner*, collaborated with local historian Lee Brownell. "The Roaring Stoney Book," as it came to be known, was aided by the efforts of Marion Colombo, Lenore Lozar, and John "Shammy" Somrock. The book proved to be so popular Jack Peninger sponsored a subsequent reprinting. This book is still available 63 years later.

In 1961, this publication became the incentive for the Ely-Winton Historical Society to formally organize. A handful of people met for a first meeting in the Community Center. Its "museum" for



The original display of *The Ely Miner* newspaper featured an old printing press, above. William Trygg, below, was the first president of the EWHS. photos courtesy of the Ely-Winton Historical Society



many years afterward was a single display case in the lobby of the historic city landmark. Soon more space was required so a Sheridan Street store window was temporarily used. The Detention Hospital building, unused for many years, was then considered as a stand-alone facility but later dis-

missed as too impractical.

In 1980, a golden opportunity presented itself while Ralph Doty was Provost of Vermilion Community College. He had a vision of a Fine Arts addition for the college. J. William Trygg, then president of the historical society, had begun an impressive collection of

historical artifacts that needed a home. Dennis Cherne was the head of the Ely Area Development Association and he also became interested in what a museum might do for the community.

The I.R.R.R.B. and the Minnesota legislature were lobbied for funding such a project. The result was favorable. The Fine Arts addition and the historical society office and museum were jointly funded.

The museum portion opened in 1981. Everett Laitala, an engineering professor who had moved back to Ely, spent many hours tweaking new exhibits. While much focuses on logging, mining, and the Boundary Waters, the emphasis has always been first on the people of Ely: Native Americans, explorers and adventurers, entrepreneurs, and immigrants.

The 40th anniversary for the office and the museum comes in 2021. Extensive paper files, a digital collection of 22,000-plus pictures,

and research materials including maps and books now fill the office area. The historical society also sells books and art prints of local authors and artists. On West Shagawa Road, it also maintains a storage building where surplus furniture, old tools, and more are stored for future use.

The lobby area just outside the office holds additional displays. The Window into Yesterday display is one that changes every two months. Books and other items for purchase are also displayed. Native Americans are featured in a diorama while Ely's veterans are represented in the outer lobby. Moving towards the entry to the museum are large artistic panels of historical scenes. A virtual tour of the entire museum is also readily available on Facebook.

Inside the museum are more Native American archives, examples of local geology, and a Voyageur exhibit. White men first came to the Ely area searching for white pine timber, shown in an interesting display. Part of a boarding house (or a poikatalo) and an Americanization classroom also have been recreated. Life size mannequins throughout the museum always interest children.

A mining location kitchen in Chandler is shown along with a Finnish sauna using real logs with dove-tailed corners. Health care in early Ely, the Carl Gawboy Gallery, and the original Ely Miner printing press complete the permanent displays.

Many DVDs and tapes are available for viewing in the "Blueberry Bijou Theater." The seats there

are from the old Elco Theater in Ely.

One area is devoted to immigration (with mannequins dressed in period clothing) and another is a rotating display of the Boundary Waters.

During the summer the historical society presents five different programs on Wednesday evenings. These are free and open to the public.

The office and museum are limited to Tuesdays and Wednesdays. More days are added for the summer months. Phone calls and emails are answered regularly. Call 218-365-3226 or email at: ewhsmuseum@gmail.com.

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.
CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUPS: Babbitt: 3rd Monday of Month: 6-7:30 p.m. at Carefree Living Ely: 4th Monday of Month: 10-11:30 a.m. at Ely-Bloomenson Hospital Conference Room B

Ely Police Department Activity Report March 1-15

Arrests/Citations:

➤ Medical- Individual arrested for Domestic Assault.
➤ Traffic Stop- Individual issued a citation for Driving After Suspension.

Complaints:

➤ Disturbance- Officers were called to a vehicle that was driving around with loud exhaust. This case is under investigation.
➤ Scam- Officers were contacted by an individual about a potential scam. Officers advised the individual to stop communicating with the scammer.
➤ Call Back- Officers received information about a potential fraud in Ely. This case is under investigation.
➤ Gas Drive off- Officers received a report from a local business about an individual that did not pay for their gas. The individual returned and paid.
➤ Animal Disturbance- Officers were contacted about an

injured deer. Officers dispatched the deer.

➤ Check Welfare- Officers were contacted to check on an individual that was upset. The individual went with a family member.

➤ Extra Patrol- Officers were requested to patrol around a residence.

➤ Public Assist- Officers assisted an individual get back to their residence.

➤ Security Alarm- Officers were dispatched to a security alarm at a local business. Officers determined this was a false alarm.

➤ Public Assist- Officers assisted an individual unlock their residence.

➤ Trouble Kid- Officers were contacted about a juvenile that was upset. Officers mediated the situation.

➤ Animal Disturbance- Officers were contacted by an individual having a problem with their dog walking. Officers assisted to get the dog back home.

➤ Theft- Officers were contacted about a theft. This case is under investigation.

➤ Loud Music- Officers were contacted about a loud music complaint. The individuals agreed to turn the music down.

➤ Medical- Officers were contacted for a medical. The individual was found deceased.

➤ Security Alarm- Officers were dispatched to a security alarm at a local business. Officers determined this was a false alarm.

➤ Found Property- Officers were given property that was located on the sidewalk. The items were returned to the owner.

➤ Disturbance- Officers were contacted about two individuals yelling inside a residence. Officers determined that this was just an argument.

➤ Threats- Officers were contacted about two individuals having an argument. Officers mediated the situation.

➤ Out With- Officers

located a vehicle that had a mechanical issue and was stuck in the lane of traffic. Officers provided lights for safety while the vehicle was moved.

➤ Suspicious Activity- Officers were contacted about a vehicle that was driving with a person on the hood. Officers located the vehicle and determined it was kids being kids. Officers talked with the individuals about safety.

➤ Animal Disturbance- Officers were contacted about a dog that was located wandering around. Officers knew the dog and returned it to the owner.

➤ Animal Disturbance- Officers were contacted about a dog that was being neglected. This case is under investigation.

➤ Disturbance- Officers were contacted about two individuals that were having a disagreement over a game. Officers mediated the situation.

➤ Suspicious Activity- Officers located a vehicle with rear lights on and the

door partially open. It was determined that the owner left it this way by mistake.

➤ Suicide threats- Individual brought to the Ely Hospital for care.

➤ Suspicious Activity- Officers were contacted about a rope that appeared out of place. Officers determined that the rope was supposed to be in that location.

➤ Public Assist- Officers assisted an individual unlock their residence.

➤ Check Welfare- Officers were contacted about an individual that was walking down the street and appeared to be having a hard time. Officers assisted the individual back to their residence.

➤ Disturbance- Officers were contacted about an individual that was out of control. Officers arrived and calmed the individual down.

Weekly Ely Tuesday Group gathering looking for new leadership

ELY - After 12-plus years at the helm of Tuesday Group, Steve Piragis and Steve Schon are stepping down as facilitators of the group.

"It's been an amazing and enjoyable experience for both of us and we plan on continuing as participants as others step up to take the reins," they said. "During

the transition, we will of course offer guidance and advice to the new leader(s) as well as help in recruiting speakers, as do many of our members."

Tuesday Group take another break after April 14 until participants can meet again in person at the Grand Ely Lodge. New facilitators may want to continue

with online Zoom meetings this spring and summer.

For more information, contact the two Steves at steveschon@gmail.com and steve@piragis.com. "You don't have to be named Steve to lead Tuesday Group but then again it wouldn't hurt," they said.

Upcoming 'Zoom' schedule

➤ April 6 - Jon Erickson - Ely Community Health Center

➤ April 13 - Sherry Abts - Ely's Loon Lady returns with new info on winter research, migration and spring arrivals.

Breathing Out

by Cecilia Rolando © 2021



ferocious winds blow with invisible melting

evaporation

EMERGENCY RESPONSE

New Cook ambulance is truly one of a kind

EMT spearheads customization effort for added safety and service

by DAVID COLBURN
Cook-Orr Editor

COOK- If EMT Justin Bachman looks a little prouder than the rest of his Cook Ambulance crewmates about the shining new blue-and-gray ambulance the department recently received, there's a good reason why. Bachman took the lead in designing the rig's color scheme and new logo, and more importantly, customizing the interior with features designed to improve safety and patient care.

Bachman has been with the service since 2017, and he's still not quite certain how he ended up overseeing the design process.

"I wish I could tell you the exact story, but I don't know," he said. "I was like, 'I'm ready to go, what are we waiting for? Here's my ideas.' It kind of just snowballed from there. And now we have a brand-new ambulance."

The crew was particularly eager to receive the new unit because last March one of their two rigs slid through an icy intersection and into a ditch. Two crew members were injured, and the ambulance was totaled. The service ran just one ambulance until an older 2011 model was found to replace it while they waited for the new ambulance to arrive.

"We were told it would take about 12 to 14 months when we ordered it, so we knew it would be between November and January," ambulance director Tina Rothleutner said. "Then we were told it was supposed to come in December, then January, then it got pushed out

to February. It finally got pushed out to us the beginning of March."

Folks used to seeing the familiar white with blue-and-red accents unit will notice a stark difference immediately with the sharp blue-and-gray motif. The gray was an automobile color Bachman liked, and the blue was a perfect complement, he said. Crew members agreed with the switch because white was just too hard to keep clean.

"One of the big comments from all of us was that white shows the bugs," Bachman said. "We want to look professional." The ambulance is based on a Ford F150 chassis, has four-wheel drive, and has the safety advantage of having lower entry points than the van-based model, making it easier and less hazardous to get in and out.

But the real game-changers are inside, changes Bachman spent a great deal of time researching. He got feedback from his teammates and consulted colleagues with Ely Ambulance about their rigs. He scoured numerous manufacturers' websites and contacted dealers directly, and more, looking for ideas, always with an eye on safety and patient care improvements. "That was a big thing for us, safety for everybody involved from the patient to the EMTs and the medics, whoever's in the back," Bachman said.

Four-point harnesses are used for seating restraints, and in the cab a driver can monitor a camera feed of the main compartment, improving

awareness and communication if a change is needed for patient care.

Instead of a bench for EMTs to sit on beside a patient, Bachman chose a track seat for the main patient caregiver.

"They're able to slide up and down a track on a seat while maintaining safety by being belted in," Bachman said.

Storage elements were designed so that materials in the new rig can be stowed, for the most part, in the same locations as the other rig. "The last thing you want to do in a stressful situation is forget where something is," Bachman said.

A unique feature of the upper cabinets is that the fronts are slanted, rather than boxy. It's a small thing, but it creates a better work environment.

"It has more of an open feel versus a box, a little more head space," Bachman said. "You're able to move around and have a good visual and not have it feel claustrophobic."

A power load system eliminates the hazards associated with lifting patients into the ambulance. EMTs mainly just have to watch and guide the patient as the cot is loaded. The large, heavy oxygen bottle that often would have been lifted in and out of another rig is also on a specialized loading rack that eliminates that physical stress.

The list of modifications is longer still, but Bachman, who hasn't yet taken it out on an actual run, believes that in total the customized design is mission accomplished.

"The whole experience came out real nice,"



Above: The new 2020 ambulance for the Cook Ambulance Service arrived in early March, sporting a distinctive blue-on-gray paint scheme and a newly designed service logo. The ambulance was ordered in the fall of 2019, knowing backlogs would mean a wait of at least 12 to 14 months.

Right: EMT Justin Bachman sits in the track seat in the patient care compartment, one of the many choices he made after taking the lead in customizing the new rig for improved safety and patient care.

photos by D. Colburn



he said.

But that doesn't mean the rig has been sitting idle. Right after it arrived, the other unit suffered a blown tire that in turn caused a ruptured brake line, putting it out of service for repairs.

"The weekend of March 12 we had six or seven calls, so it got used

on every one of them," Rothleutner said.

And how were the reviews?

"So far everyone has liked it a lot," she said. "There's been a couple of little 'Can I suggest we do this' and 'Can we change this' type of things."

Rothleutner has a crew of about 22 to staff

the ambulance schedule, but the service could still use more help. For people interested in being trained as an EMR or EMT, Rothleutner said Cook Ambulance will pay for the training in exchange for a contractual commitment by the trainee to work for the ambulance for a specified period of time.

Accommodating donors give for better accommodations

A long-term vision for improving Shute staff living conditions hits its first goal ahead of schedule

by DAVID COLBURN
Cook-Orr Editor

ORR- If people were asked to name their top reasons to celebrate something, it's a safe bet that a new septic system probably wouldn't make the top five or even the top fifty of most all of their lists.

However, for the staff and interns who live for months in the decidedly rustic cabins at the Vince Shute Wildlife Sanctuary, the news that they've met their \$25,000 fundraising goal for a new septic system where there hasn't been one is, somewhat ironically, an exciting breath of fresh air.

"Honestly, we were just so surprised," American Bear Association Director Stephanie Horner said. "I don't want to say we do a bad job of raising money, but it usually takes us a lot longer."

The accelerated fundraising may well be due in no small part to the reaction people have when they learn just how primitive the sanctuary's living spaces are.

"They are standard cabins that have just sleeping quarters, and they are very old," Horner said. "We do not have electricity in them, so there are no fans, no air conditioning, and you're

sharing those hot, humid, uncomfortable living quarters with a handful of other people. We use car batteries to power our lights -- if you're really good about it, it probably will last about a week before we have to haul it up to where the electricity is to charge. There's no running water in any of the cabins. We have a couple of outhouses and we have a couple of porta johns on the property. The porta johns get serviced weekly, so that's nice. But yeah, no flushing, either." There is one shower, shared by about 20 people, that's in a donated trailer that is situated near the closest source for electricity, about a mile away from the cabins, Horner said.

"The water is extremely hard," she said. "One of our interns was from the UK and he didn't have means to drive off the property to use a nicer shower, so he showered there the whole summer. He ended up having orange feet."

The sanctuary had an arrangement with a resort about ten miles away for interns and staff to use their showers and laundry facilities, but that ended last year. "It was supposed to be temporary about ten years ago," Horner laughed. "We kind of



A young cub occupies a comfortable perch at the Vince Shute Wildlife Sanctuary.

file photo

overstayed our welcome. But the water was seeping out of the ground and it was like bubbly water from too many showers and too much laundry." Horner doesn't know how old the kitchen and dining facility is, but with only "one little stove" and trying to pack 20 people into a space that's a tight fit for ten, "it's just not working." With a story like that to tell, it's not all that surprising that people sometimes volunteer donations without being asked.

"When we talk about our living accommodations to just the general public, they feel so sorry for us and like hand us \$20," Horner said. "And the fact that we don't have Wi Fi, we don't have

internet, and most of the time we don't even have cell service; they have a hard time comprehending that, too, but they feel really sorry for us. So, they just donate."

But now, the sanctuary can finally get started on a long-term, multi-stage accommodations improvement plan. In a small but significant step forward, Horner said they plan to break ground for the septic system as soon as the ground thaws, and fundraising is ongoing for an accompanying shower and laundry facility to hopefully be completed by the end of the season in October.

"They're really shooting for midseason so we can actually use it," Horner said.

Those upgrades will be located where the electricity is, because running a new line down to the cabins would cost in the neighborhood of \$40,000, Horner said. A new kitchen and dining hall is the next major project on the list, to be followed in years to come with new housing to replace the old rustic cabins. It's a lot to wish for, but Horner knows it's not all going to happen at once. One stage, one piece, one step at a time.

But Horner probably wouldn't mind if things happened faster than she expects, like they did for the septic system. She and her husband have yet to find a suitable place for permanently relocating to the Orr area, so from May

to October they're living right there alongside their fellow Shute staff.

"I'm the only one that's full time, and ideally, I'd love to find a place to live in the area," Horner said. "My husband and I used to be huge campers, and I like to joke that we don't camp anymore because we basically do that all summer long." More information about the Shute sanctuary, the accommodations plan, and a way to make a donation can be found online at www.americanbear.org.

Kids Easter event planned for April 3

COOK- An Easter basket drive-through for kids up to age 10 is scheduled for Saturday, April 3 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Cook Community Center.

Patrons are asked to remain in their cars as volunteers pass out baskets and drawing cards for bikes, four for boys and four for girls. Cards will be collected before leaving the parking lot, and drawing winners will be notified so that their bikes can be picked up at Cook Building Center.

LEASES...Continued from page 1

challenged the Trump administration's decision to renew the two mineral leases, did not oppose the motion for a stay. The Justice Department requested the stay just ahead of a court-imposed deadline to file a brief defending the Trump administration's position in the case. The Justice Department will now have until June 21 to file a defense motion or reverse the renewal decision.

The Twin Metals proposal would seem to be in jeopardy given Biden's picks to head both the Department of Agriculture and the Department of the Interior. Newly confirmed Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack has been an outspoken advocate for sustainable economic alternatives to copper-nickel mining in and around the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. "A project like the proposed Antofagasta Twin Metals mine, which

threatens the fundamental character and integrity of the Boundary Waters, puts all that at risk," Vilsack wrote in a 2018 op-ed. As Secretary of Agriculture, Vilsack oversees the U.S. Forest Service, which has discretion over whether to allow the Twin Metals project to move forward. Vilsack previously served in the same position in the Obama administration and oversaw the Forest Service's decision to veto renewal of the Twin Metals leases.

Newly confirmed Interior Secretary Debra Haaland, a former congresswoman from New Mexico, co-sponsored legislation with Minnesota's Fourth District Rep. Betty McCollum that would have extended a permanent moratorium on copper-nickel mining within the watershed of the BWCAW.

The renewal case stems from an earlier Trump administration

decision to reinstate the two leases in question after the Obama administration had terminated them in Obama's final days in office. But a Trump administration lawyer in the Department of the Interior, Daniel Jorjani, issued a legal opinion claiming the Obama administration had committed legal error in concluding that the leaseholders did not have a legal right to a third renewal. The Jorjani opinion allowed the Trump administration to reinstate the leases and it later renewed them for a third time, with a provision that could give Twin Metals and its parent company Antofagasta, perpetual rights to the minerals in question.

A coalition of Ely area businesses that serve wilderness visitors sued over both the reinstatement and renewal, arguing that they would be negatively impacted by a copper-nickel mine located

adjacent to the Kawishiwi River, a major wilderness watershed, upstream of the BWCAW.

The reinstatement lawsuit is on hold pending a decision on a motion by plaintiffs to reopen the administrative record, to add emails obtained through a Freedom of Information Act request that point to political interference over the issue by Eighth District Congressman Pete Stauber, among others.

The reinstatement of the leases is potentially on thin ice, legally. While the leases in question did call for up to three renewals, previous legal opinions dating back to the Reagan administration had determined that those rights were contingent on the start of actual mineral production within the first 20-year lease term. The Bureau of Land Management first issued the mineral leases in question to the International

Nickel Co., or INCO, back in 1966. The leases have gone through a number of changes of ownership, and renewals in 1986 and 2004, but no mining has taken place as a result of the leases after now more than half a century.

Becky Rom, of Ely, who chairs the national Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters, a coalition of groups opposed to the Twin Metals project, said she's been told that the administration is "taking a look at the legal underpinnings" of the Jorjani opinion, which appears to be an outlier based on the opinions of previous Interior Department lawyers under both Republican and Democratic administrations. "The news is that they've started looking at this issue," said Rom. "The bigger news will be whatever they decide."

For now, Twin Metals officials are expressing confidence that the Trump

administration decisions would ultimately be vindicated. "One year ago, the federal district court in Washington, D.C., upheld the validity of Twin Metals Minnesota's federal mineral leases in northeastern Minnesota," noted Kathy Graul, Twin Metals' public relations manager. "That decision is on appeal, and we are confident it will be upheld. We are aware of the Department of Justice's stay motion on related litigation, and such actions are not uncommon when a new administration transitions into the White House. Twin Metals looks forward to answering any questions the government may have regarding its review of the litigation, and the company will continue to work with federal and state agencies as the project advances through the multi-year scoping, environmental review and permitting processes."

POLICE...Continued from page 1

the peace in the county in areas not otherwise served by local police.

Breitung board chair Tim Tomsich told the joint session, held at the Tower Civic Center, that the town has already taken steps to decommission the Breitung Police Department, handing over guns and assorted paperwork to the sheriff's office. For now, he said, the department's evidence locker will remain locked to keep any remaining evidence secure. The moves come in the wake of the March 5 resignation of Dan Nylund as the Breitung police chief, which came on the heels of the resignation of the department's only other full-time officer in February. Township officials have expressed little interest in rebuilding the department, citing cost and potential liability.

Tomsich stressed the need to nullify the police contract, acknowledging that Breitung wasn't in

a position to meet the 24-hour coverage requirements the agreement requires. "If we don't provide 24-7 coverage, we could be in default," he said. "If we mutually agree, we could nullify the contract at the end of March," noting that the move would free up both communities to work out a solution for themselves.

As it stood, the contract included a 730-day cancellation notice requirement, a highly unusual provision insisted upon by a previous Tower City Council. That provision would have forced both entities to abide by the contract for another two years—unless one side declared the other in default or both parties agreed to terminate the agreement.

Council member Joe Morin said he favored continued collaboration between the two communities and worried that voiding the contract could upset the long-

standing working relationship between Tower and Breitung.

But Breitung officials suggested that the needs of the two communities were different and that any future working agreement would need to take that into account. Tomsich raised concerns about the high cost of the department for Breitung, which has been paying about 15 percent more than the city of Tower to operate the department. He said that if the two communities were to jointly sign an agreement with the St. Louis County Sheriff for coverage, that a 50-50 split might not be appropriate. Board member Chuck Tekautz suggested that Tower had a greater need for law enforcement than the township because of its business district.

Mayor Orlyn Kringstad, meanwhile, urged the continuation of a community-based police department, managed by Breitung. While acknowl-

edging the high cost, Kringstad said he believed that community policing "is worth the expense."

After more discussion, Kringstad made a motion calling for the two sides to continue with the existing contract while working out a more equitable cost-sharing arrangement and addressing Breitung's concerns about liability. But his motion, which could have left the city paying a larger share of the overall cost of operating the Breitung

police, died for lack of a second from his council.

Council member Dave Setterberg then motioned to form a committee with representatives from both the city and the township to examine any number of options moving forward and determine the associated costs with each alternative, while taking more time to hear from residents about their feelings on the issue. Setterberg's motion passed the council unanimously, although not without Kringstad com-

plaining that Setterberg's motion was identical to the one he had offered moments earlier.

To date, Setterberg said he's heard from residents who are interested in seeing some level of local patrolling but haven't expressed a desire that the police be locally based. Morin said he was hearing that other city priorities are seen as important as well. "People who've approached me say they want community coverage, but also want

COOK...Continued from page 1

\$8,000 commitment in hand and with Paul Bunyan committing over \$380,000 of its own, the project is set to move ahead with additional planning and the start of installation in 2022. The system is projected to start serving customers in the spring of 2023.

"This is the news our community has been waiting to hear for a long time," said Cook Mayor Harold Johnston. "We've seen and heard what those with access to Paul Bunyan's network can do - virtually anything they want, and fast! We could not be more excited to help bring this essential service to our community. It will take time to complete the project but finally we know the finish line is in sight."

Paul Bunyan CEO Gary Johnson was equally enthusiastic that the project is moving forward.

"We are excited to continue our efforts to bring gigabyte broadband Internet to those currently without reliable Internet access in our region," he said. "We will be able to expand access to the GigaZone to over 300 additional locations in the area."

"This is a huge service improvement for everyone in the project area,"

added Steve Howard, Paul Bunyan Communications Information Technology and Development Manager. "The pandemic has proven to be especially challenging to people who don't have true high speed internet available at their home or business. As more and more students and employees work from home, many people are learning how critical upload speed is for their job or schoolwork. This will be a game changer for the residents of Cook."

When operational, the cooperative's services will include GigaZone Internet with broadband speeds of up to 1000 Mbps - a gigabyte, and low cost unlimited local and long-distance GigaZone voice telephone service.

Morcom Township

The wait for Paul Bunyan services will be shorter for people living in the Morcom Township area as the company is set to begin installation work this year on project expanded from the company's original proposal. "Paul Bunyan Communications is increasing the size of our Morcom Township Border-to-Border Fiber Optic project," Howard

said in a March 18 Facebook post. "The revised project will include more of Morcom Township and also areas around Togo." It's among numerous others getting underway that will provide fiber optic internet and telephone services, as described in another Howard post on Tuesday.

"Paul Bunyan Communications will soon begin construction of the Ericsburg, Kabetogama, Morcom Township, Pelland, South International Falls, and Strawberry projects," Howard said.

Howard plans to attend the next Morcom Township board meeting on Thursday, April 1 at 6 p.m. to describe the project in more detail and answer any questions. Masks will be required, and sanitizing and social distancing procedures will be followed to ensure safety for all who wish to participate.

Morcom Township clerk Sasha Lehto said in a meeting announcement that those who already know they want the service should call 888-586-3100 to sign up. If someone has additional questions, Lehto can be reached at 218-969-5812.

CREATIVE WORKSHOP FOR ADULTS

It starts on
RIVER STREET

ARTISTS
ARE
EVERYWHERE!

If you are a musician, performer, writer, painter, creator or innovator—you are an artist. Whether you are a seasoned artist or just starting out—you are an artist. Artists of all types and abilities are invited to attend the...



Creative ONLINE Workshop

Saturday, May 1 • 10 am to 12:30 pm.

*If you need help getting online access, please contact us.

This workshop is for anyone who is ready to bring their unique ideas to Cook's River Street. Artists and creatives are encouraged to look at our main street and offer ideas on how to increase visibility and signage, foster connection and cohesiveness, and fill up spaces with innovative design.

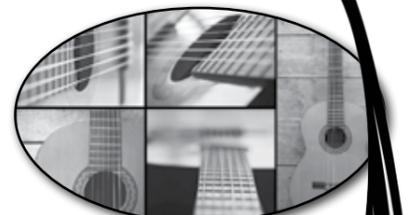
This activity is part of Artists on Main Street, a partnership between the City of Cook and Rethos, with support from the Bush Foundation.

Eligibility

- Have creative ideas
- Live within a 30-mile radius of Cook City Hall
- Attend the online creative workshop

Benefits:

- Free training on creativity
- New connections to other artists and downtown Cook
- Eligible to apply for It starts on River Street project support of up to \$1,000



Contact to Register: Crystal Phillips, Cook Public Library

Call: 218-666-2210

Email: crystal.phillips@alslib.info

CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

Scenic Rivers hits 8,000 vaccine doses delivered

by DAVID COLBURN
Cook/Orr Editor

Numbers will grow with new Eveleth vaccination clinic opening

REGIONAL- From the moment COVID-19 vaccines were made available to community health centers, the five Scenic Rivers Health Services locations, including those in Cook and Tower, have been getting shots in arms.

First came vaccinations for their existing patients 65 and over, soon followed by an expansion to that age group in the broader community. When Minnesota recently increased the pool of those eligible for the vaccine by well over one million people, Scenic Rivers staff adapted and kept moving forward.

The results, said Chief Executive Officer Mike Holmes, have placed Scenic Rivers in the top five in the region in the number of shots delivered.

"As of end of Friday, we had done 4,528 first doses and 3,176 second doses of the Moderna vaccine, which is actually a pretty high total for any of the systems in northeast

Minnesota," Holmes said on Tuesday. "We should be at 8,000 total doses today."

Holmes said that Cook and Bigfork account for the largest share of the total as they have been offering vaccinations five days a week, while the other locations have more limited schedules.

The system is about ready to pick up the pace even more with the addition of a new COVID vaccination clinic in Eveleth that will be located in a former doctor's office near the old hospital. New staff have been hired and are being trained, and if all goes well with outfitting the physical needs for things like chairs and office equipment, the clinic should open for patients next Monday, Holmes said.

"A number of our patients are from across the Iron Range, but it's also an underserved population," Holmes said. "There is a lower income population in that community and in some of the Iron Range

communities, and we were looking to try and create a little better access for some of those populations. Certainly not everyone has reliable transportation to get to Cook or to Tower."

A second rationale for the expansion is the anticipated increase in demand as more and more people become eligible for the vaccine, Holmes said.

Tower Medical Clinic Manager Valerie Turnbull talked about how the vaccination effort is going at her site.

"We've been running (vaccinations) on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday," she said. "Once there's a first-dose day, four weeks later you have to schedule a second-dose day. Sometimes you run into a month of giving first doses, then the next month you're going to be giving second doses, unless you can fit first doses somewhere else in the schedule."

As with other sites, ongoing testing is available at the Tower location, with

rapid tests and send-out tests available for those with COVID symptoms and send-out tests for those who have reason to believe they have been exposed or may be asymptomatic. Send-out test results are returned in two to three days, while rapid test results are available the same day.

All the vaccinations and testing have created extra workload and additional stress for staff, but everything and everyone is holding up well, Turnbull said.

"Nobody prepared to do this when they signed on to health care," Turnbull said. "It's been a big, big job, and they've stepped up and they've been amazing. We have had a few of our staff members who are casual (part-time) staff who have really stepped up and helped out during these times, because we've needed the additional help. I'm extremely thankful to everyone for all their hard work."

Also helping to mitigate the stress is seeing what getting vaccinated means to some of their patients, Turnbull said.

"They're so very thankful and relieved," Turnbull said. "A lot of people have stayed home for this entire time, and it allows them to feel a little more confident to go out to pick up their groceries or do their daily routines like picking up their mail from the post office, just simple things that we take for granted." It's been challenging throughout the Scenic Rivers system, Holmes said.

"Just dealing with all of the quarantines and isolation and testing and people with COVID, some people ending up quite ill with COVID. It's been a high stress situation for everyone," Holmes said. "And then everyone was just spending all of 2020 waiting until there was a vaccine developed. The availability of the vaccine has made a dif-

ference. Especially for the senior population, for some of them, they've been isolated from their family. Being able to see family members again, the ability to see grandchildren, it's a wonderful thing." Now that Scenic Rivers has in large part taken care of its existing eligible patient load, its sites have been added to the state's vaccine locator map for any eligible people in the region to access their services. The Eveleth site will be added once it's operational, Holmes said.

"I think every system, every health organization, has done really well," he said. "They're trying to get patient populations vaccinated. COVID is not an illness that people I would want to get, it's just a serious disease. I've had some friends come down with COVID that were hospitalized and they tell me that it is something that no one would ever want."

COVID...Continued from page 1

night that the entire eighth, ninth, tenth and eleventh grades, along with half of the sixth grade and half of the school's senior class, were asked to stay home for the next two weeks. Seventh graders appear safe for now.

As of Monday, there were 21 positive cases of coronavirus reported in the Ely schools, up from eight last Friday. Eighteen cases were reported in the Memorial building and three positive cases were reported in the Washington school building, according to Superintendent Erik Erie. He noted that all the confirmed positive cases involve just students.

Any decision to move Washington school students to distance learning was not announced by district administrators by the Timberjay's deadline.

The cumulative total of positive COVID-19 reports in the Ely schools community for the year

tripled from a dozen just two weeks ago to 36. New positive case reporting was zero for nine consecutive weeks prior to the recent spike.

As of Wednesday, the county reported 33 confirmed cases in the Ely community, 15-percent of the total cases for the entire county. The county said some cases are linked to social gatherings and youth sports.

"In conjunction with the COVID spread we are seeing in the Ely community, the St. Louis County Health Department has advised us to do a 'reset' where we go to Distance Learning for all students in grades 6-12," said Memorial School Principal Megan Anderson. "The intent is to have families quarantine to help stop the spread of the virus."

Students were instructed to bring their learning materials home at the end of the day last Thursday and

to prepare to learn at home beginning Friday, March 19. The intent is to bring students back to school on Tuesday, April 6.

Superintendent Erik Erie said at the weekly Ely Safe Learning Plan Advisory Council (ESLPAC) meeting last Thursday, "The reason for (our transition) is the case count has risen dramatically even in the last day. It went from three at the end of the day (Wednesday) and went to four by the time I got home. "It went up to eight today (Thursday) and we expect more positive cases." He reported two more positive cases last Friday night.

"When we made the decision to go to distance learning, we went from zero cases to as many as eight by (last) Thursday afternoon," Erie said. "We consulted with Aubrie Hoover of the St. Louis County Public Health Department and we made the decision early

Thursday afternoon. We felt it really critical that we notify students and families so we could start the next day."

The learning plan transition included a halt to all school activities, but in a move that confused and concerned some school staff members and many parents, the boys basketball playoff game at home last Thursday night against Lakeview Christian Academy was allowed to continue by ISD 696 administration despite the immediate learning plan transition. At the time, school administrators said school activities would be halted starting on Monday, March 22 and continue until in-person learning protocols resume.

Several members of the basketball team were reportedly already in COVID-19 quarantine. The Ely hockey team was scheduled to travel to International Falls for a playoff game on Thursday, but that game was canceled earlier in the week because of one reported positive case of COVID-19.

Erie told school board members Monday night that by the time the distance-learning transition decision was made, the opposing team's bus and game officials were already on the way to Ely. "We contacted the school's administrator and athletic director," he said. "We met with them the second they came in the door and gave them the choice to continue with the game." The game was played.

With the Ely basketball team's victory, the Timberwolves were set

to continue their run in the playoffs with a game on Saturday, March 20 at North Woods. That game was canceled Friday and the Timberwolves ended their season with a 12-6 record. "A lot of decisions had to be made in a short period of time," Erie said.

At last week's ESLPAC meeting, the school district's AFSCME representative, Jason Kelly, voiced his concern over the continuation of school activities on Thursday and potentially on Saturday. At Thursday's ESLPAC meeting, he said, "This raises some big questions. I am concerned for school staff safety. I don't think it should happen. This seems like a large unnecessary risk."

Along with the boys basketball team, the girls basketball team, varsity hockey and Squirt youth hockey teams remain in COVID-related quarantine for two weeks. The Ely Ice Arena is closed for the season.

School board chair Ray Marsnik inquired as to how many positive COVID cases in the school community were related to athletics and activities

Erie said, "If you look at the quarantine groups, a lot of it is activity related. With a small school, we are very intermixed in those groups."

Marsnik also asked if COVID testing is required of Ely school district athletes. He referenced testing recommendations from state health officials calling for student-athletes to get tested once a week and/or three days prior to games and competition. "Have we looked into the possibility of doing that?"

"We can't require anybody to get tested, ever," said K-5 Principal Anne Oelke.

Erie said the administration team is planning to discuss coronavirus public health protocols concerning the upcoming spring sports seasons.

Anderson explained that each reported positive case of coronavirus is treated individually. "With each case that comes up, we contact the (county) Department of Health and they walk us through the process that covers where each student was seated. Our goal is not to send all kids home due to a quarantine," she said. "We look at the cohorts that are together all day long, and sometimes, due to many positive cases the whole class needs to be in quarantine. We can't impress the importance of having that 87 percent of our students stay home during this quarantine period."

Anderson said the Ely school community will need the number of cases within the school to go down in order to return to in-person learning. "To help with this, please stay at home during this time frame," she said. "If you have positive cases within your family between now and April 5, please let Nurse Mary Schwinghamer know."

ISD 696 will not be offering child care during the quarantine. "I am sorry for any inconvenience this is going to cause. If we could remain in school, we would. But it appears we have a spread of the virus within our school and we need to eliminate it," Anderson said. "If you would like to pick up lunches, please contact Kim Puzel at 218-365-1735 in the cafeteria for more information," she added.

"This is a frustrating situation to go back to distance learning," Erie said. "I think we waited as long we could in coming to this decision



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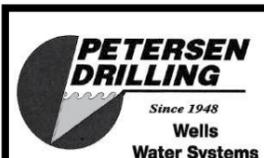
Lake Country Power will hold the annual membership meeting at 5:00 p.m., Thursday, April 15, 2021, from the Cohasset Service Center. Due to COVID-19, the meeting will be closed for in-person attendance, but will be available virtually via Zoom Video Conference or a call-in option.

Please register by April 14 to receive your own dedicated web link for the Zoom meeting. Visit www.lakecountrypower.coop/2021-annual-meeting for more information.

Members without internet service or unable to join via Zoom may contact the co-op for a special call-in option. Please call Lake Country Power at 800-421-9959.

Director election ballots will be mailed to LCP members only in Districts 1, 3, 5 and 9, between March 26 and March 31. Members may vote electronically or by U.S. mail to Survey & Ballot Systems using the provided ballot envelope and postage-paid envelope. Online polls open 8:00 a.m. CST, Mar. 31. Ballots cannot be dropped off or mailed to Lake Country Power this year due to the pandemic. Ballots will include voting instructions.

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CITY OF TOWER

Council okays steps toward airport master plan

by **MARSHALL HELMBERGER**
Managing Editor

TOWER— The city council here gave the green light on Monday for initial steps to complete a master plan for the Tower Airport. Airport manager John Burgess told the council that the airport commission has been under increasing pressure from the Federal Aviation Administration to complete a master plan for the airport, that would lay out the long-term goals for the facility. “Since 2007, the FAA has been asking for this plan,” said Burgess. “They bring it up every time we ask for more funding.”

The plan would provide a graphic depiction of existing airport features, future desired development, and anticipated land use as well as a timeline and financial plan to support the objectives.

The initial cost estimate for the plan was \$300,000, but the commission scaled back the plan, reducing the estimated cost to approximately \$100,000. The city has balked at the cost of such a plan in the past, given that the FAA only paid a 70-percent share of the cost. But COVID-related funding has enabled the FAA to pick up 100 percent of the cost of the plan.

Monday’s council action does not authorize

the full plan. Instead, it grants authority for pre-scoping work and to send the project to the FAA for what’s known as an Independent Fee Evaluation, to establish a reasonable cost for the plan.

At the same time, the airport commission has identified the need for Precision Approach Path Indicator lights, that are designed to aid pilots on landing. The lights are also currently eligible for 100 percent FAA funding, making it a timely upgrade at no cost to the city. The council took no action on that request at this time.

In other business, the council approved the creation of two new trailheads for hiking on the hill on the city’s north side. A local partnership, including the Tower Economic Development Authority, the Wagoner Trails Club, and Friends of Vermilion Country School plan to install informational kiosks with maps of existing and planned new hiking trails on the city’s north side.

TEDA executive director Marshall HelMBERGER told the council that the effort is part of TEDA’s vision to expand outdoor recreation amenities in Tower, both to boost quality of life for residents as well as a way to attract visitors to the community. The two new trailheads will be located

on city land located at the end of Birch St. N and at the existing trailhead for the Lee Mine trail, located just north of the elementary school tennis courts. The trailheads will include kiosks with maps of the trail system and smaller maps will be installed at intersections along the various trails.

HelMBERGER told the council that the north side trails include spectacular rock outcroppings that overlook miles of Lake Vermilion. “I think a lot of people don’t realize how spectacular the trails are up there,” said HelMBERGER. The kiosks and trails work won’t cost the city anything. The partnership has applied for funds from the North St. Louis County Trails Task Force to pay the cost of materials and maps for the kiosks.

The same local partnership teamed up last year to construct the Ancient Cedars Trail on the city’s south side. That trail has attracted considerable use from both residents and visitors.

In other action, the council:

► Heard a presentation but made no decisions on a new software package, called Cleargov, that would enable the city to make much more detailed, and easier to understand, city budget information available to the council and the public. A repre-

sentative of Cleargov, Rachel Alexander, said the company has focused on serving the needs of small and mid-sized governmental units, which often don’t have the staff or the means of producing quality budget documents. Alexander said her company’s software takes budget data from the city’s existing accounting software and can instantly convert it to graphic and narrative depictions that make it easier to understand. It can also quickly and easily take historical data and use it to create comparative charts and graphs.

Clerk-treasurer Victoria Ranua said the software would significantly improve the transparency of the city’s budget process by making it much easier for the public to understand. The basic package would cost approximately \$7,000 per year, along with a one-time setup fee of \$1,980. The council had questions about the security of the city’s data, particularly personnel data, although Alexander said that only information that the city submitted for interpretation would be accessible to Cleargov. Ranua noted that any budget information submitted would be public data in either case.

► Approved bonuses of \$10 per run for ambulance staff who responded to medical calls during

the peak of the COVID outbreak last fall and early winter. The financial impact of the bonuses would total approximately \$2,170, according to ambulance director Dena Suihkonen. Council member Kevin Norby asked if any COVID dollars might cover the cost, but Ranua said none are currently available. “But this is something that fund can absorb,” she said.

► Approved the sale of the city’s 1995 Polaris UTV to Dave Fox, who submitted the high bid of \$800. Two other bids came in at \$535 and \$501.

► Assigned council members Joe Morin and Dave Setterberg to serve on an ad hoc committee with representatives of the town of Breitung to research the financial implications of various alternatives for local law enforcement.

► Authorized the ambulance department to host an emergency medical responder, or EMR, course in Tower. Suihkonen said grant funds of \$300 per student are now available and would reduce the cost of hosting the course from \$8,200 to \$4,600, assuming 12 students. She said some members of the fire department had already expressed interest in taking the course as have others in the community. “We would not have a hard time finding

12 people,” she said.

The training would total 48 hours.

► Approved the consent agenda, which included application for commercial demolition funds from the Department of Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation to cover a portion of the cost of removal of an underground storage tank at the former Classy Cars, located at 615 Main Street, which is currently under renovation by new owners. A separate resolution corrected the terms of three planning and zoning commission members, whose terms were erroneously terminated during the last city reorganization.

► In a separate action, the council approved a resolution transferring the existing development agreement and loan associated with the Tower Harbor Shores project from the city of Tower to the Tower Economic Development Authority.

► Approved a utility connection application form.

► Approved a letter of support for the Historic Mine Tour Project following a presentation by Sarah Carling. The council took no action on a request for a financial contribution of a minimum of \$1,000 towards the project.

ELY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Experience Ely Expos will feature non-profit organizations

by **KEITH VANDERVORT**
Ely Editor

ELY – Details are emerging on the Ely Chamber of Commerce’s effort to allow local non-profits the chance to participate in the community’s summer arts and crafts festivals. The Experience Ely Expo is scheduled to run in conjunction with the Chamber’s art and craft festivals, beginning in 2021.

First announced in late 2019 and put on the shelf last year because COVID-19 public health constraints did not allow the popular festivals to be held, the Chamber’s removal of the nonprofit category for participation in the city’s festivals will likely affect more than a dozen local organizations that rely on the Blueberry/Art and Harvest Moon festivals for a large portion of their annual fundraising efforts.

“Creating space in the Blueberry/Art Festival was extremely challenging,” said Chamber Executive Director, Eva Sebesta. “We literally had outgrown Whiteside Park. We originally had 303 booth spaces, and as of 2019, we were down to 290 usable spaces.”

Both of Ely’s premier festivals are promoted as art and craft events, and visitors come to town by the tens of thousands. “We need to remain true to the mission of both

events, which are economic drivers bringing people to Ely for the event, and exposing them to our retail businesses, restaurants and lodging facilities,” Sebesta said in 2019.

The Chamber’s answer was to develop the new expo event that will offer nonprofits the opportunity to purchase booth space in a separate area of Whiteside Park during the Blueberry/Art Festival, July 23-25, and/or the Harvest Moon Festival, Sept. 10-12.

“We had to make some major changes to accommodate the expo during the Blueberry/Art Festival, which will include discontinuing all the children’s attractions,” Sebesta said. “We now have 280 art, craft, and food booth spaces for the Blueberry/Art portion of the festival and 20 booth spaces for the expo portion. We remapped the southern half of the park and literally used every square inch.”

To take part in the Experience Ely Expo, organizations must fit into one of the following categories: Sport and Recreation, Art and Craft, First Responder, Attractions and Museum, or Service. Qualifying organizations can promote the organization itself, an event it hosts, or its activities.

Nonprofits remaining in the festival as part of the food court, according to the chamber,

include the Ely Fire Department, Ely Jaycees, and the Ely Kiwanis Club. “The Ely Hoop Club will continue to support the festival with trash and recycling efforts,” Sebesta said. “We have reached out to Incredible Ely, who normally does the pancake breakfast, but we have not received a response from them.”

Organizations will be selected through a jury process in mid-May. If spaces are available after the first round of jury selections, the Chamber will do a second request for applications.

In previous festivals, space for nonprofits was limited to a maximum of fourteen spaces in the Blueberry/Art Festival and nine in the Harvest Moon Festival. Each expo will have twenty nonprofit booth spaces. The cost for expo booth space during the Blueberry/Art Festival is \$200 for a 12’ x 12’ booth; the same size space during the Harvest Moon Festival is \$150.

The Experience Ely Expo has its own policies designed to better fit to the needs of the nonprofits. “We created the Experience Ely Expo as an opportunity to include nonprofits in Whiteside Park during the two festivals while freeing them from the constraints of policies designed specifically for our Art and Craft festivals,” Sebesta said.

The new Experience Ely Expo policies and guidelines will bring

year-to-year turnover, more non-profit organizations a chance at participating from year to year. “Just because a nonprofit is in the festival in 2021, does not guarantee they will be in one of the 2022 expos,” she explained. “Every year we will have a jury process to fill booth spaces. We have dozens of amazing nonprofits representing countless activities, events, and causes. Every qualifying nonprofit deserves the opportunity to participate in one or both of the expos

if they choose to do so.”

Barring any event closures this summer due to COVID-19 with the state of Minnesota, Chamber staff are making plans for both festivals as well as the new expos.

“There may be COVID-19 guidelines we have to follow for the festivals, depending on where the dial is at in Minnesota,” Sebesta said. “We have our COVID-19 Preparedness Plans in place and will continue to monitor all state and CDC guidelines, making modi-

fications as needed.”

Application packets for the Experience Ely Expo are available at the Ely Chamber of Commerce office, 1600 E. Sheridan Street starting on Thursday, April 1. The Chamber can also provide application packets via email by sending a request to director@ely.org.

Questions regarding the Experience Ely Expo can be submitted to Sebesta at the same email.



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Ely school building project groundbreaking set for May 27

by KEITH VANDERVORT
Ely Editor

ELY – The official groundbreaking ceremony for the \$20 million campus renovation project will be held Thursday, May 27 at 11 a.m. The Costin Group, ISD 696’s lobbying firm, and Kraus-Anderson, the district’s construction manager for the project, will facilitate the event, according to Superintendent Erik Erie. The public is invited.

In a project update to school board members Monday night, Erie said the bid process for the

first phase of the project, the new construction that will link the Memorial and Washington school buildings, continued this week.

“A pre-bid meeting was held last week with a really good turnout,” he said.

Public tabulation of the phase one bids was scheduled for Thursday, March 25 at 4 p.m. in the school auditorium.

“(Kraus) will let everybody know the bids received for each part of the project such as demolition or electrical work, and will announce the (amounts offered) in an open, public meeting,”

Erie said. “We will review the bids and the school board will hear recommendations (from Kraus) at a special meeting on Tuesday, April 6 to accept the bids.”

The second project bid package, for the Washington and Memorial building renovations, will be let in April, Erie said.

Asbestos abatement in the Industrial Arts building is scheduled to start by the end of April. “May 7 is really the start of the project,” Erie said. “That’s when we turn over areas to Kraus-Anderson, includ-

ing areas of the Industrial Arts building.”

The transition procedures for temporarily relocating band and music classes, industrial technology, the Happy Days preschool, and the media centers in the Memorial and Washington buildings were reviewed at a recent facilities committee meeting.

“We are working to make this as smooth and as seamless as we can,” Anderson said. “Hopefully we can be all ready for them to pop into their spaces after the distance learning reset.”

Erie said the plan

to move the school bus garage to the Ice Arena parking lot is unlikely to happen.

“The estimate from ARI (Architectural Resources Inc.) came up significantly so we are looking for alternatives. We are exploring (the area) behind the current bus garage.”

School board facilities committee member Tony Colarich provided an update on the city of Ely’s cooperation in the school building project.

“The time frame is extremely tight, especially for the power supply for the school,” he said.

“When the tunnel and the boiler building is taken out, the original power supply will be terminated, so right now they are working on a plan for which route to take for the power supply.”

He noted that the city is looking into contracting with a firm that will conduct horizontal boring rather than trench digging because of the tight timeline.

“There could also be a timing issue with transformer purchases. The city will be doing the work and when they’re finished, we’ll get the bill.”

SHOP CLASS...Continued from page 1

projects in the wood shop of the landmark Industrial Arts building.

They didn’t know that they were the last class to use the woodworking equipment that fills the back of the 100-year-old building before bulldozers knock the landmark down later this spring.

With the initiation of the \$20 million school renovation project, the building that houses all the industrial technology classes, music and band classrooms, a child-care facility, and the transportation department workshop, must be vacated next month to begin asbestos abatement in preparation for demolition.

What the students didn’t know last Thursday morning was that by the end of the day, the rapidly-expanding coronavirus would force all grade 6-12 students to leave the campus and return to distance learning until after the Easter break on April 6.

Longtime Ely industrial arts teacher Rob Simonich said the past year of teaching his hands-on classes was “challenging.” All students in seventh grade and high school students in grades 9-12 made the wooden chair and table sets as part of their elective shop class project this year. Many students also made little libraries as part of a fundraising collaboration project with the art department.

“We made well over 150 chairs and table sets over two semesters,” Simonich said.

“I was trying to get all of the projects done by the end of the month because we have to be out of the building,” he said. “We will likely finish assembling the tables and chairs somewhere else on campus in May. We’ll get them all done.”

An electricity and electronics curriculum for all the industrial arts students in grades 7-12 will round out the school year. Simonich will be using the choir room in the Memorial building for the rest of the school year.

The Industrial Arts building, built in 1921, will be one of the first campus areas to be demolished to make room for the new structure.

“We are packing up everything this week,” Simonich said. “We will be storing the tools and equipment in semi trailers, the bus garage, and anywhere we can find room.” Demolition will start around the end of April.

According to the



Ely-Winton Historical Society, with the construction of the Washington Elementary School in 1915, the school district had the beginnings of a school campus. The present auditorium, which houses many school and community events, was first used as a gymnasium. The campus was expanded in 1921 with the construction of the Industrial Arts building and the heating plant. The Memorial High School building was completed in 1924 for a total cost of \$1 million. During the following year, the school enrollment reached its peak at 2,333 students.

Plans for the Ely

school renovation provide for almost 9,000 square feet for industrial arts education in the new building that will link the Memorial and Washington buildings, according to Simonich.

He recently visited other regional high schools to get an idea of what kind of space is being devoted to technology education across the Iron Range. He learned that new and remodeled schools around the area include 9,000 to 10,000 square feet for industrial arts education.

The final drawings of the school project show a pair of large “shop” areas, one for woods and another for welding and metals. In between is a classroom

and office area, along with tool storage area and finish rooms.

“We will have a new industrial tech area that is downsized about 4,000 square feet from what we have now, but we will have all new modern equipment for woods and metals, and we will be adding some new equipment. We will be sitting good as far as equipment goes,” Simonich said. “We still have our classroom and lab area. And we’ll have another section which is going to be for welding and machining. We will have all new air drops and electrical drops for tools. It will be state-of-the-art.”

The school board prioritized industrial technology education to be maintained and modernized in the new construction project.

“The kids here in Ely deserve it. The students really enjoy the classes. It will be sad to see the building go. We had a nice work space. But the building is getting old and it’s time for a new home for our industrial arts education.”

Memorial woods students, from left, Abigail Thompson, Harry Dammann, Emmett Faltesek, Cameron Kienitz, Riley Bishop, Brock LaTourell, Will Davis, and teacher Rob Simonich, show off the last project in the Industrial Arts building. photos by K. Vandervort

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SECTION 7A BOYS BASKETBALL PLAYOFFS

Wolves top Lions, then bow out due to COVID

by JORDAN PRICE
Contributing Writer

ELY — During most playoff runs, only one team can claim to have ended with a win. Ely found another route to that claim, however, after an outbreak of COVID ended their playoff run after a first-round 65-50 victory over Lakeview Christian last Thursday.

Ely struggled to field a team

as it was against Lakeview. The Timberwolves were missing nearly half of their team along with two starters, and it made for a closer contest than might otherwise have been the case against the Lions.

“We were down to four varsity players to start the game along with four guys brought up from the JV team, so it was quite the game we played with that lineup,” said Head Coach

Tom McDonald.

Indeed, the game was a nail-biter throughout the first half with the teams knotted at 28 at the break. The Wolves grabbed some breathing room early in the second half with a 10-0 run, fueled by eight straight points, including two treys, from seventh-grader Jack Davies.

But senior Emmett Faltsek, in what turned out to be the final game of his high school

basketball career, led the way offensively with a career-high 31 points. Senior Brock LaTourell notched 15 points while senior Will Davies added ten. Senior Riley Bishop collected nine rebounds and Gavin Marshall added five boards in his first varsity action.

But the latest COVID outbreak, which has spread like wildfire through the Ely schools, forced the team to call

it quits after last week’s game. A much-anticipated rematch with rival North Woods, that had been set for Saturday night, was canceled as the Wolves were forced to bow out of the Section 7A playoffs.

The Wolves ended their season with an impressive 12-6 record.



SECTION 7A BOYS BASKETBALL PLAYOFFS

Grizzlies head to semis

COVID outbreak forces Ely to bow out early

by DAVID COLBURN
Cook-Orr Editor

FIELDTWP-After pasting Hill City 96-33 in the Section 7A tourney opener on March 18, North Woods was eagerly looking forward to welcoming Ely on Saturday for a chance to avenge an earlier loss and send the Timberwolves home for the season.

“We put that one in the books and started to focus on Ely,” Grizzlies Head Coach Will Kleppe said.

COVID-19 beat them to it. After an outbreak of positive cases last week forced Ely to make the decision on Thursday to go immediately into distance learning mode, Ely Athletic Director Tom Coombe contacted North Woods on Friday with the sad news that the T-Wolves were withdrawing from the tournament and wouldn’t be playing on Saturday.

If the Grizzlies needed any extra encouragement to meticulously follow all COVID-19 precautions, this was certainly it.

“There was a lot of scuttle starting Thursday night that their school was going into a ‘reset’ and everyone was speculating on how that was going to affect their travel

for sports,” Kleppe said. “We were well aware that they had played Lakeview Christian shorthanded, so we were in a holding pattern to see what was going to happen. I received an email from Coach McDonald wishing us luck and I replied with my regrets for him and the Timberwolves that their season ended like it did. We looked forward to a great quarterfinal match up.”

With no game on Saturday and a certain quarterfinals berth, the Grizzlies could literally start looking ahead to their next opponent, as most tuned in to the streaming broadcast of the Deer River-South Ridge game that afternoon. Deer River won, 77-56, setting up a rematch of a Feb. 26 game that the Warriors won 81-70. North Woods trailed by as many as 17 in the second half as they foundered from three-point land, hitting just two of 12 attempts. They also sent Deer River to the free-throw line 18 times, where the Warriors sank 14 of their attempts.

“It was a benefit for our team and coaches to be able to watch the livestream of Deer River and South Ridge,” Kleppe said. “Deer River is a

See GRIZZLIES...pg. 2B

Above: The Grizzlies’ Jake Panichi eyes the bucket as he goes in for a jump shot. North Woods easily got past Hill City last Thursday.

Below: Erik Aune tries to get his long arms in the way of a Hill City shooter.

photos by D. Colburn



GIRLS BASKETBALL

Bluestreaks end season for Grizzlies

by DAVID COLBURN
Cook-Orr Editor

CHISHOLM- Cold shooting is the last thing an underdog team needs when trying to pull off an upset, and that’s what happened to the North Woods girls team in their season-ending 71-31 road loss to Chisholm on March 17.

The Grizzlies couldn’t beg, borrow, or steal a basket for the first 12 minutes of the game, their lone points coming on a pair of Madi Dantes free throws. When Madison Spears grabbed a rebound and finally scored on a putback at the 6:10 mark, Chisholm already had a comfortable 19-4 lead. “It was a little bit unreal,” Grizzlies Head Coach Liz Cheney said about the slow start. “It was like we were in a bad dream. And the opposite was happening for Chisholm. It seemed like their first shot went in every time they had the ball.”

But the score by Spears seemed to energize the Grizzlies, who finished the half on a 10-6 run that included three hoops by Hannah Kinsey, another from Spears, and a fast break layup by Helen Koch. North Woods was within nine before a Chisholm buzzer beater made the score 25-14 at the half. “I felt like we just had a slow start, that whatever that was was

about over,” Cheney said “At half-time when we talked to the girls we told them this was still their game to win.”

The Grizzlies found themselves on the ropes again early in the second half as a 13-4 Chisholm blitz ballooned the lead to 20, 38-18, with 13:39 remaining. This time there would be no rally for

See NW GIRLS...pg. 2B

Shorthanded Wolves fall to Floodwood

by JORDAN PRICE
Contributing Writer

FLOODWOOD — This past week’s COVID outbreak dealt a blow to Ely’s chances against Floodwood in the first round of the Section 7A girls basketball tournament, and it proved terminal to the Timberwolves’ season.

The Timberwolves had been playing their best basketball of the season heading into the playoffs, but the suddenly resurgent pandemic in Ely sent a slew of players into quarantine at the start of the postseason, leaving the Wolves hamstrung against seventh-seeded Floodwood.

Even so, they put up a fight, and kept it close through most of the first half. But the Polar Bears slowly pulled away and when the final buzzer sounded, they were on top, 47-35.

“We struggled to create good

See ELY GIRLS...pg. 2B

PUBLIC HEALTH

COVID case numbers spike across the region

Increase points to latest outbreak, potentially of more contagious UK variant

REGIONAL- The tables have turned on COVID-19 in St. Louis County, and that's not a good thing for residents of the North Country. As of last week, the seven-day average case rate reached 23 in northern St. Louis County, a nearly ninefold increase over the case rate of just 2.7 back on Feb. 2.

The latest case rate is perilously close to the 25-case threshold for unchecked community spread and represents one of the first times that the case rate in the northern half of the county outpaced rates in Duluth.

A rash of new cases in the Ely middle and high schools sent those students home on Friday for at least two weeks of distance learning. Mesabi East in Aurora was added to the state's list of schools with more than five active COVID cases last Thursday, and the rise in cases in Aurora and the surrounding area prompted the county health department to stage a temporary testing event on Monday and Tuesday at the Aurora Community Center.

"Typically, we see a higher

percent of our cases in the southern part of our county, where our largest population center is, but we've been seeing this shift over the last couple of weeks, so it's concerning," county Public Health Director Amy Westbrook said on Tuesday. "It's not just within schools that we're seeing community transmission. We're seeing it in community settings, too. We're not seeing the high numbers we did in October and November, but the increase, especially in the northern part of the county, is concerning." Weekly zip code case data monitored by the *Timberjay* indicates the number of new cases identified in a three-week period ending last Thursday coincides with the recent rise in regional cases. They include Ely, 21; Tower, 5; Soudan, 5; Cook, 4; Orr, 1; and Embarrass, 1.

Westbrook didn't have specific data to provide about what contact tracing might reveal about the general community outbreaks, but Aubrie Hoover, the health department specialist who works with school districts in the northern part of the county,

shed some light on a shift they've noticed in school-connected cases.

"In the fall, the close contacts were home," Hoover said. "What we've seen here over the last month is that there has been a little more rapid spread and higher attack rates among close contacts, not so much the ones that are in school. It is the ones that have participated in closer connections, such as going from sporting events and playing in sporting events or having social gatherings. Unfortunately, all have those close contacts and friends, they get together and they're in the school. We have just seen some close contacts within the schools that have turned up positive. Unfortunately, we can't say if it's because they were sitting next to them or because they were riding to and from social gatherings and sports together."

Westbrook confirmed that the more highly contagious coronavirus variant b117 has been identified in the county, but couldn't link the variant to any outbreaks, as the genetic testing

for the variant is extremely limited right now in Minnesota. That means while the b117 variant is present in the county, there's no way to determine whether it's a factor in driving the current outbreak.

"Just like early on in the pandemic, when we could only test health care workers or severe illness, we were identifying a small percent, with the understanding that it was not just within those populations but more widespread in communities. This is sort of the same thing. We're finding (b117) in all parts of the state, but the number of cases that are identified are not necessarily representative of the prevalence across the state."

However, new information shared in a Tuesday afternoon press conference by MDH State Epidemiologist Ruth Lynfield indicated that the statewide database of variant cases is providing clues to the extent of b117, the variant first identified in the United Kingdom. "The greatest spread in Minnesota right now seems to be with the b117 variant," Lynfield said. "We

have now identified 479 cases of this variant. When we look at one of our partner labs that has been sending specimens for sequencing, we estimate that 50 to 65 percent of COVID-positive specimens tested from March 16 through March 20 would be b117. This is an increase compared with specimens tested March 10 through March 15 in which 38 to 44 percent of those specimens were estimated to be b117. We do expect b117 to really dominate. It is already dominating."

Westbrook, Hoover, and Lynfield echoed a common theme about what can be done to limit the increase in cases, whether they're caused by the regular strain of coronavirus or one of the variants – stay vigilant in observing the COVID-19 protocols of wearing masks, social distancing, staying home when feeling ill or having been exposed to COVID-19, and getting tested when warranted.

GRIZZLIES...Continued from page 1B

very good team and it is going to take a complete team effort to compete with them. When you get to the semifinals the game plan gets very simple – outwork your opponent. It is easy to fall into the trap that you need to reinvent your team to succeed. Looking at the statistics from our first game, it was obvious what we need to do to give ourselves a chance to get to the finals."

With North Woods riding a three-game win streak and carrying a winning margin of 28 points into the game, there was little chance the 4-13 Hornets had enough sting to pull off an upset on

the Grizzlies' home floor, but a lackluster start had North Woods leading just 11-2 five minutes into the contest.

Then Davis Kleppe knocked down the team's first trey and the slumbering Grizzlies offense was aroused. Keying off a swarming defense, the Grizzlies went on a 39-point tear the rest of the half, reaching the break with a 50-17 lead that made the only question worth pondering just how bad the final beatdown would be.

Kleppe took the opportunity to substitute freely in the second half, working different combinations of players

throughout. Everything he tried clicked against the hapless Hornets, including the last-minute insertion of junior varsity player Ben Kruse, who nailed a final three-pointer in the 96-33 win.

Ten Grizzlies notched scores as they shot 51 percent from the field and 37.5 percent from beyond the arc. North Woods went to the charity stripe 30 times, converting 19. In signature style, North Woods defenders forced 37 Hill City turnovers that they turned into 42 points.

All five North Woods starters scored in double figures, with Darius Gogleye cashing in 21.

Jared Chiabotti scored inside and outside as he knocked down 17, followed by Alex Hartway with 13, Brendan Chiabotti with 12, and T.J. Chiabotti with 11.

"No matter the opponent, there are going to be some 'tournament jitters' – I'll attribute the sluggish first half to that," Kleppe said. "Plus, we were playing a team we don't see during the regular season so our information on them was somewhat limited. By the second half we were getting into a rhythm and getting through our bench rotation." Kleppe also took a moment to reflect on the season

and the opportunity ahead of them.

"When the season started we had no idea the challenges it was going to present," he said. "In my years as a head coach I can't recall one where I've dealt with more 'stuff,' to put it kindly. I never cease to be amazed at the expectations that can be placed on a team and its coaches that most would not put on themselves. I imagine the success we have had creates that situation but it boils down to the fact that we have the opportunity to step on the floor on Wednesday in the semifinals. That is a reward for our kids who have per-

severed and worked hard for this."

The scheduled Wednesday tilt at Deer River was after this week's print edition of the *Timberjay* went to press. If the Grizzlies won, they would play the winner of Nashwauk-Keewatin vs. Northland on Friday for a berth in the state tournament. Game results will be available at timberjay.com and on the *Timberjay* Facebook page.

NW GIRLS...Continued from page 1B

the young North Woods squad, as a veteran and senior-laden Chisholm unit continued its dominance on both ends of the court to rack up the 40-point win and advance in the sectional tourney. "We just could not recover because the second half continued much the same way as the first," Cheney said. "They actually played zone defense because we weren't hitting anything from outside and that really plugged up the middle for us."

While six Grizzlies scored in the contest, none reached double figures. Spears led North Woods with eight points. It was the sixth consecutive loss for North Woods, who in mid-February stood at 5-5. The 12th-seeded Grizzlies had the unenviable task of matching up against six of the top seven teams in the section in that streak, finishing with a 5-11 record.

"It was a real tough way to end a season that was already difficult from

COVID," Cheney said. "My worry is always when you lose and you're losing by 20 to 30 points what does that do to the team's morale."

Knowing the final slate of foes were daunting challenges, Cheney and her assistants had the team focus on clear in-game goals that were attainable even when a game might be out of reach, and that seemed to help, as did a renewed commitment among coaches and players that they would play as hard as they could until the final buzzer sounded.

The upside of a losing record with a relatively young team is the fact that everyone will be back for Cheney next year, and the first-year coach was encouraged by both team and individual development during the season.

"When I thought about the season at the beginning, I knew we were going to miss Coley Olson, because of her speed and defense. But Helen Koch

stepped right up into that role. I was really proud of her and excited by her defense and the way she plays the game from beginning to end. Talise Goodsky, Kiana LaRoque, and Hannah Cheney, three girls who for most of their basketball careers since fourth grade have been playing post, showed great improvement with ball handling and taking on the wing position. I feel

like we're really coming together. All the pieces are there for next year."

Offseason work is going to be key to next year's success, starting with individual team members getting out and doing a lot of shooting. Cheney said that they didn't really have a solid "go to" alternative to spark the team on off nights like at Chisholm.

None of the players

participate on a spring club team, but there will be summer league ball with some of the area schools. And Cheney said she and her assistants were going to meet Tuesday to start mapping out other possibilities, including exploring the idea of a home-grown "camp" that would have position specialists come in to work with the Grizzlies.

While this team has

been able to embrace the youth and inexperience mantra in a season heavy on learning, that won't be the case next year, Cheney said.

"That was OK this year, to be the young team," she said. "Next year we'll have some seniors and juniors and sophomores. Our expectations will be a little bit different for ourselves."



Ely Community Health Center Position Opening

The Ely Community Health Center is a non-profit free health clinic serving Ely and the surrounding communities. The Center provides basic health care at no cost to those who are uninsured or underinsured. The clinic is located at 111 South 4th Avenue East in Ely and is open every Thursday evening from 5:30-7:00.

Executive Director

This part time position (20-25 hours/week) is responsible for the operations, staffing, and administration of the Ely Community Health Center. The Executive Director works closely with the clinic Medical Directors. Responsibilities include:

- Supervise volunteer staff
- Create and maintain data and reporting systems, including budget and grants
- Maintain relationships with other service providers, donors, and funding resources
- Oversee all operations and functions of the center
- Collaborate with local and state entities to increase and expand programs

Note: There is the potential for additional hours to include Insurance Navigation. Training will be provided.

We are seeking an individual with the following qualifications:

- Administrative, managerial and organizational skills
- Communication skills (both written and verbal)
- Computer skills
- Ability to be self-directed and demonstrate sound leadership and judgment
- Grant writing experience desired
- Background in healthcare is not necessary

Interested candidates should submit a cover letter and resume to Dr. Mary Bianco at mcbianco520@gmail.com. Please also contact Dr. Bianco for more information and a full position description. Application review will begin immediately until the position is filled.

For more information about ECHC, visit our website at <http://www.elycommunityhealth.org>.

ELY GIRLS...Continued from page 1B

shots, and I have to credit Floodwood with some tough defense," said Head Coach Max Gantt.

Freshman guard Grace LaTourell, who was a force all season, ended with 18 points and four steals. Sarah Visser added nine rebounds and seven points, while Katrina Seliskar scored six points

and collected 12 rebounds.

"I am proud of how hard we competed, but missing some of our girls was a real bummer. A tough way to end the year, that's for sure," said Gantt.

The Timberwolves, who ended the season at 8-10, are a young team that will be back with more experience come next year.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Be prepared for wildfire; have an evacuation plan

by GLORIA ERICKSON
Firewise Coordinator

REGIONAL- Making an evacuation plan is one of the most important things you can do to prepare your family for wildfire. You can use the following steps as a guide for your family to gather and discuss a wildfire evacuation plan

Step one is to sign up for emergency notifications. Register online for notifications that come straight to your phone. All information is strictly confidential. Register for St. Louis County emergency notifications at <https://member.everbridge.net/453003085616005/login>. Register for Lake County emergency notifications at <https://member.everbridge.net/453003085619442/login>.



Preparing your home and family for evacuation is the next step. It's important to explain wildfire risks to family members, including small children, and ensure they understand the importance of being prepared. Actions to consider include:

- Discuss and print out a family evacuation plan. Establish and practice exit routes out of your home and neighborhood. Access to evacuation routes may be limited depending on the location of the fire, so familiarity is crucial for making on-the-fly decisions. Identify

at least two ways out of your neighborhood. Mark your potential evacuation routes clearly on a map and then practice them with your family.

- Have a designated meeting point outside of the hazard area. Make sure everyone in the family knows your safe meeting place, then let your friends and family know your plans.

- Ask an out-of-town friend or relative to serve as a point of contact for your family.

- Know how to, and if time allows, turn off the water, gas, and electric-

ity before leaving your home. Check with your local utilities provider on how to properly do this. Shut all windows and doors.

- Have a plan to assist seniors and disabled members of your family.

Evacuation checklists

- American Red Cross: https://www.redcross.org/content/dam/redcross/atg/PDF_s/Preparedness___Disaster_Recovery/Disaster_Preparedness/Wildfire/Wildfire.pdf

- Ready, Set, Go: <https://www.readyforwildfire.org/prepare-for-wildfire/go-evacuation-guide/>

- Living with Fire Evacuation Checklist: <https://www.livingwithfire.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Wildfire-Evac-Checklist-Bi->

fold-FS0607.pdf.

Next steps

Next, have a Go-Bag ready for each member of your family. Be sure to include water, food, any necessary medications, a change of clothes, spare chargers, important documents and an extra set of credit cards, cash, or checks. A go-bag checklist can be found online at <https://mwgjlaw.com/wildfires/grab-and-go-checklists/>.

Finally, prepare a plan for pets and large animals. If you have house pets, include them in your evacuation preparation. Practice evacuating with them, ensuring that your family can safely get them in the vehicle and to your agreed upon meeting point. Pack food for your pet(s) in your go-bags and include any medications they are taking. Ensure you have a

plan in place for outdoor animals or livestock.

Evacuation plans for pets and livestock can be found at <https://www.ready.gov/pets> and <https://www.humanesociety.org/resources/make-disaster-plan-your-pets>.

Contact Mesabi Humane Society for more information by calling 218-741-7425, or visiting their website at www.mesabihumanesociety.org.

Remember, your biggest defense in evacuating safely is to have a plan, be ready to go, leave early, stay calm, and follow the directions of emergency personnel.

For more information, contact Gloria Erickson, St. Louis County Firewise Coordinator, at 218-365-0878 or via email at gloria@dovetail-inc.org.

Obituaries and Death Notices



James T. Hart

James Thomas Hart, 81, of Eagles Nest Township, passed away on Monday, March 15, 2021, at the Ely Bloomenson Community Hospital.

The world lost a great man - our dad, grandpa and great-grandpa, Jim Hart. He lived life to the fullest, most notably canoeing, kayaking and biking into his 80's and skiing into his 90's. With help from family, friends and neighbors, he lived on his own until his final days at his cabin under the towering pines in Eagles Nest Township. Jim loved his place in the Piney Woods, and especially his large family of ten children, 24 grandchildren, and 18 great-grandchildren. We all loved him, too, and will miss him.

Memorial services will be planned for later in the summer. Final interment will be at Calvary Cemetery in Duluth. The family would like to thank St. Anthony's Catholic Care, Northwoods Partners, local friends and neighbors, Dr. Jeff Wilt, Dr. Joe Schwinghamer, and the nurses and staff at Ely Bloomenson Community Hospital for their wonderful care and friendship, especially in Jim's last days.

He was born on Jan. 10, 1930, in Duluth, to the late Albert S. Hart and Nora Moran. His great-grandparents, Onesime Jolicoeur (James Hart) and Adelaide Bourget, were some of the early residents of the city of Duluth, arriving in the early 1880's from Quebec, Canada. His mother Nora and her sister Mary Ellen Moran McLaughlin both came to Duluth from County Mayo, West Ireland, in the early 1900's. A Nursing School graduate from St. Scholastica, Jim's

mother met his father Albert when the Hart family hired her as a nurse for Grandpa Hart.

Jim attended Duluth schools and graduated from Duluth Cathedral (now Marshall) High School in the class of 1948. He earned his B.A. in Economics from St. John's University in Collegeville and finished his law degree with honors at William Mitchell College of Law (now Mitchell Hamline) in St. Paul in 1958.

As General Counsel for the St. Paul Housing and Redevelopment Authority, and later as Assistant City Attorney for the city of St. Paul, Jim was proud of his career. As a young attorney, he clerked for Judge Dennis F. Donovan, U.S. District Court, and spent a few years in private law practice before he retired and moved from his home in Woodbury to Ely. During his long career, he loved to spend his free time relaxing and gardening in his yard. We all enjoyed the fruits of his labors. His yard was gorgeous.

After moving to Ely, he made many dear friends and was very involved in social and civic activities in Ely and Eagles Nest Township. He loved gathering with family and friends for holidays and special events. Fourth of July at the Piney Woods and Christmas in St. Paul were cherished Hart family traditions.

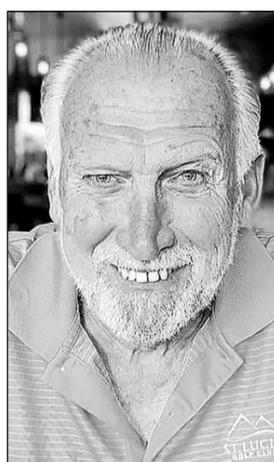
As a veteran of the Korean War, Jim served in the U.S. Army from 1951-1953. He was stationed in Boston, Mass., for counter-intelligence training, and later in Japan for the remainder of his tour of duty.

Jim married his college sweetheart, Mary Ellen Stember, on Aug. 21, 1954, at the old Catholic Church in Ely. They had ten children. Jim was married to Francis Leigh McMullen on May 1, 1994.

Jim is survived by his children, Jim (Cheryl), Lindsay (Joe) Smith, Leslie (Greg) Brzezinski, Tom (Chantry), Elizabeth, Rob, Mary (Percy) Gutierrez, John, Dan (Dolores) and Maggie (Tom) Crichton; sister, Patte Peterson; grandchildren, Matt, Rebecca, Nathan, Molly, Scott, Sara,

Paul, Gabe, Tony, Jeff, Luke, Brian, Helaina, Kelsey, Andy, Adam, Daniel, Lanie, Rea, Allie, Lily, Jake, Nick and Sam; and great-grandchildren, Addilyn, Henry, Jude, Kaylee, Addy, Elle, Madeline, Drew, Abigail, Ava, Laicey, Madden, Willow, Jayden, Cameron, Quentin, Leo and Pearl; and many nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his first wife, Mary Ellen in 1992; second wife, Leigh in 2008; sisters, Rosemary in 1963 and Jeanne in 2011; brother, Bert in 2005; parents, Albert S. Hart in 1936 and Nora Moran Hart in 1966; and great-grandson, Orion in 2016.



Charles N. Young

With profound sadness, we announce the passing of our beloved husband, father, grandfather and friend - Charles Nels "Charlie" Young (aka "Chuck" and "Papa"). After collapsing at the St. Thomas softball field on Saturday, March 20, 2021, Charlie later died at Regions Hospital in St. Paul after multiple heart attacks. 71 years was not enough.

Services will be held on Friday, March 26 at Cremation Society of Minnesota in West Duluth. Visitation begins at 2 p.m. with the service at 3 p.m. and refreshments following. Please wear masks.

Sincerest gratitude is extended to all those involved at St. Thomas, the St. Paul responders, and the staff at Regions Hospital Emergency Room. Heartfelt thanks go to all our friends and family members for the outpouring of love and support during this difficult time. How sad we are now, but

how lucky we were.

It had been a wonderful week that brought Charlie so much joy. He watched his grandson, Jack, play two hockey games which his son, Joe, coached. He received a big running hug and smooch from his granddaughter, Valerie, before one of the games. He road tripped with his wife, Sarah, on roads they had not yet traveled in their many years together. He visited with his daughter, Krista, while he watched his granddaughter, Gianna, start in and win the St. Thomas home opener on a beautiful spring day. He died full of pride and love for his family.

Charlie was born to Carl "Nick" and Ruby (Swenson) Young on Oct. 22, 1949, in Duluth. Charlie grew up in Cotton with his parents and siblings on their family farm. He attended Cotton High School and always bragged about being Class President and ranked in the top 10 (out of 12 students), and he later went on to become the Mayor of 8th Street for 40-plus years.

After high school, Charlie honorably served as a military police officer in the U.S. Army from 1968-70. He was a proud member of Laborers Local 1091 where he worked most of his life. He was also a member of American Legion Post 0071 for 38 years.

Charlie and Sarah Sundeen were married on April 29, 1978, in Sudan. Together they raised Krista and Joseph in West Duluth and still resided in that same home. He lived the past 10 years in retired bliss with his soulmate and best friend of 43 years, Sarah, "my love", as he said. They enjoyed many matinee movies, dinner dates, traveling, and spoiling their grandchildren every chance they got.

He is survived by his wife, Sarah; daughter, Krista Smith of Eagan; son, Joseph (Samantha) Young of Duluth; granddaughters, Gianna Torres and Valerie Young; grandson, Jackson Young; sister, Loretta (Edwin) Bodey of Plymouth and their son Jason Bodey and family; along with countless other family members and friends.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Nick and Ruby; brother, David; in-laws, Gerald and Lila Sundeen; brother-in-law, Roger Berglund; and sister-in-law, Faye Sundeen.

Gene L. Avikainen

Gene Lawrence Avikainen, 74, of Shakopee, formerly of Pike-Sandy, passed away at his home on Sunday, March 14, 2021. Interment will be at Fort Snelling at a later date.

He is survived by his wife, Sharon; sons, Darryn (Dana), Adam (Midori) and Grant (Crissey); daughter, Christine (Ross); eight grandchildren; siblings, Gary (Bonita) Avikainen of Pike-Sandy, Glen (Debra) Avikainen of Mt. Iron and Gail (Ted) Esala of Vermillion Lake Township.; and numerous nieces, nephews and cousins.

Michael A. Biondi

Michael Anthony Biondi, 69, of Chisholm, loving son, brother, uncle, cousin and friend left to be reunited with the rest of "la famiglia" on Wednesday, March 10, 2021. The family wishes to express their sincere appreciation for the staff of Aspen Grove and Fairview Range Hospice for their care and support throughout the past few years. A private family ceremony was held on Wednesday, March 24 at Rupp Funeral Home and Cremation Service in Chisholm. A graveside service will be held in June with a celebration later this summer.

He is survived by his brothers, Joe (Marilyn) Biondi of Warroad and Jeff (Carol) Biondi of Orr; many cousins, nieces and nephews; and special buddies, Terry, Rick, Mark and Unch.

Marjorie K. Ojala

Marjorie Katherine Preblich Nelson Ojala, 93, of Ely, passed away on Friday, March 12, 2021, at the Boundary Waters Care Center in Ely. The family wishes to thank all staff over the years for the wonderful care given to Marjorie during her time at BWCC. She truly enjoyed the activities. Interment will be at the Ely Cemetery at a later date. Arrangements are with

Landmark Funeral Home in Virginia.

She is survived by her sisters, Florie (Donald) Maroney and Rosie (Gale) Maroney; grandson, Garry Nelson; granddaughter, Cherish Jarvi; great-granddaughters, Haven and Braelynn Chavers; and many nieces and nephews.

Earl A. Johnson

Earl A. Johnson, of Ely, left us on Wednesday, March 10, 2021. Family arrangements have been entrusted to Kerntz Funeral Home of Ely.

He is survived by his sons, Scott (Jennifer) and Todd (Rhonda); grandchildren, Nikki, Josh, Brady and Drew; great-grandson, Weston; siblings, Jay Johnson, Brian Johnson, Cheryl Johnson and Marilyn Plunkett; and several dear friends.

Valerie K. Ohotto

Valerie Kay Martinson Ohotto, 60, of Cook, peacefully passed away on Friday, March 19, 2021, with her loving family by her side. A memorial service will be held at 11 a.m. on Friday, March 26 at the First Baptist Church in Cook. Visitation will be held one hour prior to the service at the church. Arrangements are with Mlaker Funeral Home in Cook.

She is survived by her loving husband of 41 years, Jerry Ohotto; daughter, Rachel (David) Fultz; son, Travis Ohotto; grandchildren, Samantha, Olivia and Isaac Fultz; sisters, Kathleen Sarazine and Coralee (Greg) Mihm; sisters-in-law, Donna (Walter) Snyder and Bonnie Martinson; brothers-in-law, Jim Ohotto and Butch Strand; and numerous nieces and nephews.

Gladys M. Molick

Gladys M. Molick, 91, of Britt, died on Friday, March 19, 2021, at Cornerstone Villa in Buhl. Arrangements are pending with Rupp Funeral Home and Cremation Service in Chisholm.



Outdoors

Our lives in the
Northwoods

FOREST MANAGEMENT

Timber permit refunds could aid ailing loggers

by DAVID COLBURN
Cook-Orr Editor

REGIONAL- While it's no secret that the logging industry in northeastern Minnesota has been laboring under a decades-long decline and razor-thin profit margins, those still hard at work cut for today and plan for tomorrow.

With tomorrow in mind, loggers snapped up nearly 100 timber permits in Department of Natural

Resources auctions in the first week of June 2020, secure in the knowledge that there would be a market for that timber as they shelled out the 15-percent down payments on each tract they bought, just as they had for all of the prior auctions



Rob Ecklund

that year.

But the very next week, that security was pulped for anyone counting on the spruce and balsam fir they expected to harvest. On June 9, the Verso mill in Duluth announced it was shutting down, decimating the market for those species. The outlook for tomorrow suddenly became bleak.

"A lot of loggers bought a permit thinking 'I can deliver 10,000 cords of spruce to

Verso each year,'" DNR Timber Program Supervisor Jon Drimel said. "And then the announcement came out and everyone looked at each other saying 'Now, what are we going to do? We had all these permits bought.'"

Mike Birkeland, Executive Vice President of the Minnesota Timber Producers Association put some sobering numbers to the impact of Verso's closure.

See LOGGERS...pg. 5B



A HUNGRY NEIGHBOR

The lean times

Even in a mild winter, survival in the wild is a challenge in the North Country

The remarkably early warm-up and meltdown this year may have us all thinking spring, but it's worth remembering that this is still the leanest time of year for most of our wildlife. Winter is always a survival challenge for wildlife here in the North Country, even in an exceptionally mild winter like we've experienced to date.

I was reminded of that the other day when what appeared to be a female pine marten showed up to "feast" on the freeze-dried remains of a deer rib cage I had hung out by our bird feeders months earlier. Even when we've done the best we can while butchering our deer each fall, there are always bits of meat and fat that still remain, and everything from jays to chickadees to woodpeckers will spend weeks making sure nothing is left behind.

But come later March, even what little the birds couldn't get was apparently enough to interest a neighborhood pine marten. It's been months since I'd seen a pine marten around the house, so I was happy to see her even as I recognized that her interest

in the by-now-thin-pickings of the deer carcass was indicative of the hunger that faces many smaller predators here come late winter.

As a female, she's in need of more food this time of year, since the fertilized embryos she's been carrying since the fall, finally implant right about now, so she's presumably eating for more than one. Pine martens actually breed in the fall, but the fertilized eggs don't implant in the womb until late winter or early spring, so the kits are born in the spring. This phenomenon, known as delayed implantation, is actually quite common among mammals, with bears being among the best known.

With pine martens, the young take just 27 days, on average, from the time they implant until they're born. As the time to give birth approaches, the female is actively scouting out a nest site, which is typically in a mature tree cavity, often one left over from something large, like a pileated woodpecker.

See MARTENS...pg. 5B

Above: A pine marten, with one ear askew, pauses from gnawing on a deer rib cage just outside the writer's picture window.

Below: While aggressive predators, pine martens are always on the lookout for larger predators, that could make a meal out of them. photos by M. Helmberger



MARSHALL
HELMBERGER

Outdoors briefly

Fire restrictions start to take effect in region

REGIONAL— Warmer temperatures and dry conditions in northwestern and north-central Minnesota mean increased wild-fire risk, so the Minnesota DNR is restricting open burning in several counties in the northwest as well as Koochiching and Itasca in the north-central.

The state will not issue burning permits for brush or yard waste in these counties until restrictions are lifted.

DNR officials note that burning restrictions have proven effective at reducing spring wild-fires and they encourage residents to use alternatives to burning, such as composting, chipping, or taking brush to a collection site.

People who burn debris will be held financially responsible if their fire escapes and burns other property.

The restrictions come in the wake of an earlier-than-usual snow melt that has left even much of the Arrowhead with little or no snow cover. While open burning is still allowed in St. Louis, Lake, and Cook counties, burning permits are now required given the limited remaining snow cover.

Further burning restrictions for additional counties will be added as conditions change.

Spring thaw brings state forest road and trail closures

REGIONAL— The Minnesota DNR is temporarily closing some state forest roads a bit earlier than usual this year, as the early thaw has softened forest road conditions, even in northeastern Minnesota, at least two weeks ahead of normal. Depending on weather conditions, the temporary closures could remain in effect until sometime in May.

"The annual spring thaw creates wet, unstable road and trail conditions," said Deb Pitt, roads program coordinator for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Forestry Division. "Seasonal closures protect these roads from damage."

For information on road and trail closures, visit the DNR's road closure web page at www.dnr.state.mn.us/trailconditions/listing.html. Temporary road and trail closure information is updated weekly on Thursdays by 2 p.m. Temporary closure signs also will be posted at entry points and parking lots.

FISHERIES

Pike River hatchery to operate this year, without public access

by **MARSHALL HELMBERGER**
Managing Editor

PIKE RIVER— An exceptionally mild March is likely to translate into an early start at the Pike River Hatchery, which will be operating this year under COVID-related protocols.

Operations at the hatchery, located at the mouth of the river at Lake Vermilion, were suspended last year as a result of the pandemic. While egg collection and hatching will go forward this season, the facility will not be open to the public and there will be no sucker sales as has been the case in the past.

With temperatures running eight-to-ten

degrees above normal so far this month, the river is now open in front of the hatchery. Even so, the hatchery crew likely won't set nets until at least early April, said Tower Area Fisheries Manager Edie Evarts. While the annual walleye spawning run is believed to respond primarily to water temperature, Evarts said day length may play a role in the readiness of the walleye to spawn. In 2012, when the hatchery crew set nets April 1 after the warmest March on record, the walleye took weeks to ripen enough for egg-stripping. "We don't intend to make that mistake again," said Evarts.

WILDLIFE

Take steps now to avoid bear problems

REGIONAL— A mild March has bears emerging from hibernation and Minnesota DNR is reminding homeowners to check their property for food sources that could attract bears.

"To avoid season-long problems, take the time now to remove or secure anything that could attract a bear," said Eric Nelson, wildlife damage program supervisor for the DNR. "Prevention is key. Once a bear finds a food source, it will likely return."

As bears emerge from hibernation, their metabolism gradually ramps up and they will begin looking for food at a time when berries and green vegetation are scarce. Home and cabin owners should remove or secure attractants such as birdseed, garbage, livestock feed, or compost to reduce potential conflict.

Black bears are the only bear species that live in the wild in Minnesota. Bears are more common in the forested region of northern Minnesota, but can live anywhere in the state if they find an area of suitable habitat. They usually are shy and flee when encountered. Never approach or try to pet a bear. Injury to people is rare, but bears are potentially dangerous because of their size, strength and speed.

Avoid bear conflicts by following these tips:

- ▶ Any time you feed birds, you risk attracting bears. Avoid feeding birds from April 1 to Nov. 15.

▶ If you still wish to feed birds, hang birdfeeders 10 feet up and 4 feet out from the nearest trees. Use a rope and pulley system to refill birdfeeders and clean up spilled seeds.

▶ Do not put out feed for wildlife (like corn, oats, pellets or molasses blocks).

▶ Do not leave food from barbecues and picnics outdoors, especially overnight. Standard coolers are not bear-proof.

▶ Clean and store barbecue grills after each use. Store them in a secure shed or garage away from windows and doors.

▶ Store pet food inside and feed pets inside. If pets must be fed outdoors, feed them only as much as they will eat.

▶ Store garbage in bear-resistant garbage cans or dumpsters. Standard rubber or plastic garbage cans are not bear-proof.

▶ Keep garbage inside a secure building until the morning of pickup.

▶ Properly rinse all recyclable containers with hot water to remove all remaining product.

▶ Store recyclable containers, such as pop cans, inside.

LAKE COUNTRY FORECAST

from NOAA weather

Friday				Saturday				Sunday				Monday				Tuesday			
40 23				42 20				42 26				53 34				47 20			
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.
03/15	39	11	0.00	03/15	39	7	0.00	03/15	37	16	0.00	03/15	46	16	0.00	03/15	38	8	0.00
03/16	43	14	0.00	03/16	43	8	0.00	03/16	46	15	0.00	03/16	37	27	0.00	03/16	43	16	0.00
03/17	41	29	0.00	03/17	39	25	0.00	03/17	38	26	0.00	03/17	43	28	0.00	03/17	38	24	0.00
03/18	43	21	0.00	03/18	43	15	0.00	03/18	42	25	0.00	03/18	50	21	0.00	03/18	43	15	0.00
03/19	49	19	0.00	03/19	49	13	0.00	03/19	46	20	0.00	03/19	55	23	0.00	03/19	49	15	0.00
03/20	53	26	0.00	03/20	53	13	0.00	03/20	53	25	0.00	03/20	59	32	0.00	03/20	53	22	0.00
03/21	56	53	0.00	03/21	56	33	0.00	03/21	57	33	0.00	03/21	55	39	0.00	03/21	57	33	0.00
Total 1.29 62.3"				YTD Total 0.73 46.8"				YTD Total 0.72 57.1"				YTD Total 0.68 NA				YTD Total 1.02 46.7"			

MARTENS...Continued from page 4B

I assume this particular pine marten was a female based on size, although this isn't a foolproof method by any means. As with most members of the weasel (Mustelidae) family, females are somewhat smaller than males, although there's plenty of overlap within the range of variability.

In general, they're about the size of short-legged house cat, with a dark, fluffy tail that's about a third their body length.

They prey on just about anything they can catch, but are known as deadly predators of red squirrels, and chipmunks in the warmer

months. Given the abundance of red squirrels around our bird feeders right now, I wish there were a few more hungry pine martens around.

While pine martens are fairly large, they are small enough to become prey themselves at times, which is why they always seem so alert. Larger members of the weasel family, like fishers, will kill and eat martens, as will bobcats, and even large hawks and owls. Our recent visitor was certainly keeping a close eye out for threats the entire time. She'd tug at some hunk of dried-up meat or gristle, then stop and look around intently. In nature, only

the largest and most aggressive of predators can truly relax.

Life in the wild isn't easy, but at least this hungry marten probably isn't hungry anymore. After watching the marten repeatedly return to our deer carcass, I pulled out the last bag of venison scraps that I'd hadn't yet put out for the birds over the winter. With the cold season apparently coming to an end, I stuck the whole bag out on top of the rib cage, which the marten quickly turned into a major windfall. Life in the wild is still a challenge, but at least this marten won't have to worry about hunger

LOGGERS...Continued from page 4B

"There is a significant amount of money on the table here, more than a million dollars that has already been paid to the state of Minnesota in down payments for auctions at timber sales," Birkeland said. "Verso was using nearly 50 percent of the spruce and balsam in Minnesota. Because of the Verso mill closure, there are just very few markets now for that spruce and balsam."

Duluth officials have been scrambling to find a buyer for the Verso mill, but a recent revelation that they may have a company interested in converting the mill to produce tissue is of little solace to loggers.

"What we've learned is that it's all recycled feedstock, meaning paper, cardboard, whatever it might be, so tissue paper would have minimal if any impact on Minnesota's logging industry," said Scott Dane, executive director of Associated Contract Loggers and Truckers of Minnesota.

Outside of the Verso closure, COVID-19 also exerted a negative impact on the market for raw timber, as many mills have been forced to close at times, temporarily reducing or halting their production. And while the federal COVID relief bill passed in December included \$200 million for the timber industry, some Minnesota loggers may have limited access to those funds. Applicants for relief have to demonstrate at least a 10-percent loss in 2020, but about two-thirds of the state's harvest typically takes place between December and March. That activity in 2020 came before the impact of the pandemic took hold.

Legislative relief

The industry's plight has not gone unnoticed by the region's legislators. Rep. Rob Ecklund, DFL-International Falls, and Sen. Justin Eichorn, R-Grand Rapids, have introduced companion bills in their respective chambers that would provide some relief for timber permits. A bipartisan group of legislators have signed on to both as co-sponsors.

"A lot of these loggers had bid on state sales that had 30 percent or more of spruce and balsam to supply the Verso paper mill," Ecklund said. "So, I talked to the advocates for paper producers and the Minnesota forest industry about how we could address this, and that's how we came up with the legislation to get this going forward."

The essential elements of both bills are the same, although some differences remain to be worked out. The three components in each bill, applicable to permits issued prior to Jan. 1, 2021, include:

- ▶ An automatic two-year

permit extension, one year more than the DNR currently has the authority to grant.

▶ A full refund of 15 percent for permits where no cutting has taken place.

▶ For permits where cutting has started, a possible partial refund of the down payment, dependent on a calculation of what the DNR is owed for the value of the timber cut. Ecklund said he had the DNR research permit sales for tracts with at least 30 percent spruce and balsam fir, and arrived at an estimate that it would take a \$1.07 million allocation from the Legislature to take care of the potential refunds.

However, because of differences in the bills, that number could easily fluctuate. While Ecklund's version uses the 30-percent mix as a cutoff, Eichorn's cutoff is at 25 percent, which could make more permits eligible for a refund.

Dane also pointed out a significant difference in what timber permits would receive the automatic two-year extension.

"The extensions in the Senate bill are on all permits and the House bill is limited to spruce and balsam permits," Dane said. "We need that to actually be all permits because the market impact evolved to the point where it pushed all the guys that would normally harvest spruce and balsam to other species and flooded that market. So those permits have been impacted as well. That's why we want all permits to be eligible for two years."

The bills not only have the support of legislators and the timber industry, but the DNR as well.

"The DNR is glad that Rep. Ecklund and Sen. Eichorn brought these bills forward because one of our customers is our loggers," Drimel said. "You want them to be healthy and have a good logging industry because that is what gets our forest management done. Because everything we do is outlined in statute, having them bringing this forward is going to allow us to help them on our timber permits." Ecklund said the bills were about ready to go to conference committee.

"I'm certain it's going to be in the House version of the environment bill, and I don't know why it wouldn't be in the Senate version either," he said.

Expected impact

The usefulness of holding onto a timber permit and getting the automatic two-year extension to work it is pretty straightforward, Birkeland said.

"Extensions provide a little bit more time to get at wood that everybody's looking for markets for," he said. "Because there are

very few markets now for those types of trees, the black spruce and balsam, we have more loggers cutting the same types of wood now, and the wood yards filled up pretty quickly at the mills this winter for other species as a result of that."

Holding on to untouched timber permits for two more years isn't as viable for loggers who need the immediate infusion of cash from a full refund of their down payments. "It could be tens of thousands of dollars for an individual logger," Dane said.

The greatest juggling act in deliberations will involve those permits where some harvesting has already taken place. Turning back a permit to the DNR doesn't have a set value, as the down payment amount has to be balanced against the value of the timber already harvested. Some loggers will qualify for a partial refund, while others would end up owing the DNR money above that covered by the down payment.

"I think at this point the loggers would typically weigh their options," Birkeland said. "It's just hard to answer that question at this point in time, because that's an individual decision for every logger."

Whatever their choices, the DNR will have to go back and assess each partial tract that remains, State Lands Section Manager Andrew Arends said. Some may be suitable for putting back on the auction block, while some may need to be rebundled with adjacent tracts in order to be sold.

Still others may have been cut to the extent that the DNR will need to initiate restoration efforts.

"We will get it back into production one way or another," Arends said. "That costs money instead of generating money, and we have limited money for those sorts of activities. We'll do them where we need to, but it's not a deep bucket to reach into and find funds for those sorts of contracts."

Birkeland said his main concern is getting the best timber permit relief possible for loggers who continue to supply mills with the material they need to bring improved economic impact to their communities and essential products to consumers.

"We've got a logging community in Minnesota that is resilient, highly resilient," Birkeland said. "They've had to adapt not only as a result of this, but over the years. But the bottom line is that they provide an important resource to mills, and the mills provide essential products for society. So, keeping the entire supply chain healthy is vitally important."



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East Pattison St., Ely, MN 55731, United States

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: March 17, 2021 SIGNED BY: Melanie Steele MAILING ADDRESS: 305 East Pattison St., Ely, MN 55731

Published in the Timberjay, March 26 & April 2, 2021

LOCAL BOARD OF APPEAL & EQUALIZATION KUGLER TOWNSHIP

Important Information Regarding Property Assessments This may affect your 2022 property taxes

Notice is hereby given that the Board of Appeal and Equalization for Kugler Township shall meet on Wednesday, April 14, 2021 from 10 - 11 a.m. at the Kugler Town Hall.

The purpose of this meeting is to determine whether taxable property in the jurisdiction has been properly valued and classified by the assessor, and to determine whether corrections need to be made.

If you believe the value or classification of your property is incorrect, please contact your assessor's office to discuss your concerns. If you disagree with the valuation or classification after discussing it with your assessor, you may appear before the local board of appeal and equalization. The board will review your assessments and may make corrections as needed. Generally, you must appeal to the local board before appealing to the county board of appeal and equalization.

COVID-19 protocols will be followed, along with social distancing, and masks are required.

Chris Suihkonen, Kugler Township Clerk

Published in the Timberjay, March 26, 2021

NOTICE - LOCAL BOARD OF APPEAL & EQUALIZATION MORCOM TOWNSHIP

Important Information Regarding Property Assessments This may affect your 2022 property taxes

The Local Board of Appeal and Equalization is set for Tuesday, April 27, 2021 at 10 a.m. at the Bear River School/Community Center.

Appeal information will be printed on the bottom of your county valuation statements. You must call the county prior to the meeting and talk with an assessor.

COVID-19 protocols will be followed, along with social distancing, and masks are required.

The purpose of this meeting is to determine whether taxable property in the jurisdiction has been properly valued and classified by the assessor, and to determine whether corrections need to be made.

If you believe the value or classification of your property is incorrect, please contact your assessor's office to discuss your concerns. If you disagree with the valuation or classification after discussing it with your assessor, you may appear before the local board of appeal and equalization. The board will review your assessments and may make corrections as needed. Generally, you must appeal to the local board before appealing to the county board of appeal and equalization.

Sasha Lehto, Town Clerk

Published in the Timberjay, March 26, 2021

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MORCOM TOWNSHIP BROADBAND MEETING

A representative from Paul Bunyan Communications will be at our next township board meeting, Thursday, April 1 at 6:00 p.m. They will be able to address any questions you may have about high-speed broadband to your home.

If you already know you will want the service, you may call Paul Bunyan Communications NOW to get signed up at 888-586-3100. If you have any other questions, please give me a call at 218-969-5812.

Masks will be required, sanitizing, and social distancing procedures will be followed to ensure safety for all who wish to participate.

Sasha Lehto, Clerk Morcom Township

Published in the Timberjay, March 26, 2021

EMPLOYMENT

Kasota Stone Fabricators is seeking a Stone Quarry Operator/ Miner that is a strong core value fit with a desire to grow. \$54,000-\$65,000 Annual Income Range. Our quarry is in Ely, MN and work is available all year round.

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We are looking for candidates that excel in a team environment and have the willingness to complete all functions related to the quarry extraction process.

Stone Quarry Operator/Miner Responsibilities

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To apply or to get more information about the position, please contact Tom at 952-217-3607 or submit your resume to tkraemer@kasotastf.com 3/26

Administrative Assistant (Part-time) Position Availability

The City of Cook is hiring a part-time administrative assistant primarily for its municipally-owned ambulance service, a BLS service providing emergency care to city and area residents. This non-emergency, uncertified position assists the Ambulance Director in all daily activities providing administrative and clerical support for all major functional areas such as the department's general administration, billing/bookkeeping, recordkeeping, maintenance activities, and volunteer staff training, as well as safety training for all city employees. This position may provide administrative support to other city departments (fire).

Minimum qualifications include: H.S. diploma/equivalent; some administrative support experience; familiarity with word processing, spreadsheets, databases, and internet use/web search; and ability to properly handle confidential data/information. Starting wage up to \$12.01 per hour, with an opportunity for step and cost-of-living increases.

To apply: visit City's website cookmn.us or call Cook City Hall at (218) 666-2200 for required application forms. Position will remain open until filled.

Published in the Timberjay, March 19 & 26, 2021



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Ambulance Director Position Availability

The City of Cook is ready to hire a salaried director for our municipally-owned ambulance service, a BLS service providing emergency care to city and area residents. The director is accountable/responsible for the success of this important public service, the coordination of a city-wide safety program, and active participation in the City's emergency management efforts. The position reports to the City Administrator and directly supervises all volunteer staff and a part-time administrative assistant.

Minimum qualifications include: H.S. diploma/equivalent, state-approved EMT certification, at least three years of administrative and supervisory experience, valid MN Class D with EVOC or ability to attend. Able to be bonded under City's selected insurer and insurance coverages. This is a FLSA-exempt position offering a starting pay from \$44,803 to \$49,795 DOQ with the City's benefits package.

To apply: visit City's website cookmn.us or call Cook City Hall at (218) 666-2200 for required application forms. Position will remain open until filled.

Published in the Timberjay, March 19 & 26, 2021

Answers

R	E	L	I	C	U	P	S	T	A	G	E	C	O	P	S	H	O	W			
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SUMMER CARETAKER VERMILION

Vintage Vermilion Cabins and Retreat is seeking a couple for our caretaker position. The retreat is an attractive, completely updated 5-cabin rental, housekeeping resort on Black Bay on Lake Vermilion.

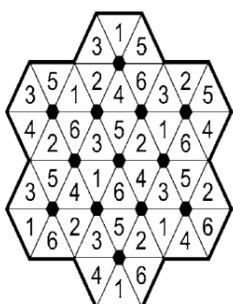
Duties include yard work, boat tending and routine maintenance on buildings/property and equipment on-site, cabin prep for guests (cleaning, changing linens, laundry) and serve as resort host(s) (which includes welcoming visitors, explaining amenities, answering questions and providing assistance as necessary).

Should possess basic carpentry and mechanical skills, be self-starters, presentable appearance with an outgoing personality that enjoys and promotes effective interaction with guests. Moderate physical activity required. Should have own truck.

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Weekly SUDOKU

by Linda Thistle

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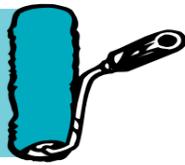
Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each small 9-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.

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