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the TIMBERJAY



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WILDFIRES



Boundary Waters closure extended

Permits canceled until next month as fires intensify and North Country holds its breath

by KEITH VANDERVORT
Ely Editor

REGIONAL— For the first time in nearly half a century, the U.S. Forest Service closed the entire Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness due to a rash of wildfires that have exploded across the national forest and in nearby Canada in recent weeks.

The closure began last Saturday and is in effect at least until Friday, Sept. 3, after the Forest Service announced mid-week that they are extending their initial one-week closure of the wilderness. The closure is in place for the entire BWCAW and includes all lands and waters, including both overnight and day use.

The decision to close the Boundary
See...CLOSED pg. 10



Above, Ely Outfitting Co. staff members Amy Freeman and Nick Bailes organize canoe trip camping equipment Tuesday morning as news was released that the BWCAW is closed until at least Sept. 3. photo by K. Vandervort

The Greenwood Fire, top, grew to more than 20,000 acres this week. This view is near the Sand Lake area. photo courtesy of Joe Thorne

Three squares a day

Britton's Café feeds the fire fighters

by KEITH VANDERVORT
Ely Editor

ELY – Britton's Café here closed to the public last Thursday and will remain so until all the nearby wildfires are extinguished and all the firefighters return home.

No, owner Bonnie Jacobson and her staff are not on vacation. Far from it. In fact, they are working harder than ever these days,

Employees at Britton's Café in Ely, from left, Cassandra Lakner, Cory Noble, Dortz Winsor, and Samantha Jax, prepare paper sacks for 350 lunches for USFS fire fighters Sunday morning. photo by K. Vandervort

preparing more than 1,000 meals every single day for the U.S. Forest Service to



feed the growing multitude of firefighters battling the massive Greenwood Fire and other blazes in the North Country.

A visitor to the little Chapman Street eatery at

6:30 a.m. Sunday morning was greeted by a sign on the door, "We will be closed until further notice. We are feeding the firefighters. God

See...FOOD pg. 11

EMERGENCY SERVICE

Report: Tower ambulance must change to survive

Assessment cites on-call pay as highest in state

by MARSHALL HELMBERGER
Managing Editor

TOWER— The Tower Area Ambulance Service faces a number of challenges to its survival and will likely have to make significant changes in order to succeed. Yet it retains a dedicated staff that takes pride in the service and wants to see it thrive. Those were among the findings of the rural ambulance assessment report issued Monday to the Tower city council by the state Emergency Medical Services Review Board.

The EMSRB review panel had visited Tower back in early May, and interviewed dozens of stakeholders in the community, including ambulance personnel, city officials, and community and business leaders. The state agency conducts several such assessments annually and came to Tower at the request of city officials.

EMS specialist Charles Soucheray presented a high-level summary of the board's findings before handing out copies of the

See...TOWER pg. 9

GREENWOOD TWP

Judges dismiss complaint over election ad

Say fire officials' actions 'cannot be condoned'

by MARSHALL HELMBERGER
Managing Editor

REGIONAL— A panel of administrative law judges has dismissed a complaint against Greenwood Fire Chief David Fazio and Assistant Chief Mike Indihar, but not without leveling a broadside against the two fire officials for misusing their authority within the fire department.

The two faced the criticism after Fazio solicited support from fire department members last March for a political ad backing several candidates in an upcoming township election, including his wife Belinda. Indihar had followed up on Fazio's request during a fire department business meeting held shortly before the election, asking again on behalf of Fazio for members to sign their names to the ad, which backed four specific candidates along with a ballot question.

One of the other candidates, Joanne

See...GREENWOOD pg. 10

EDITORIAL

Ruling should be a wake-up call. Page 4



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Community notices

Renegade Trail Run at Redhead

CHISHOLM- Renegade Trail Run 5K and 25K races will take place on Saturday, Sept. 11 from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. Proceeds will benefit United for Veterans program. During this time Redhead will be closed to the public. ATV and vehicle access into Redhead will also be limited during the event.

Volunteers needed for UWNEMN Renegade Trail Run

CHISHOLM- Volunteers are needed to set up United Way of NE Minnesota Renegade Trail Run 5K and 25K courses at Redhead Mountain Bike Park in Chisholm. Volunteers are needed from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. on Tuesday, Aug. 31. To sign up as a volunteer or for more information, contact info@united-waynemn.org.

Sons of Norway to meet on Sept. 2

VIRGINIA- Sons of Norway, Haaarfager Lodge 40, will meet at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, Sept. 2 for the annual Lapskaus Supper in the Virginia City Hall Clubroom. Serving committee includes Phyllis and Richard Starich, Nancy Roseen and Mary Yapel. Anyone interested in Norwegian culture and heritage is invited to attend.

5K Glow Run supports mental health programming, Sept. 24

ELY- Run and have some fun at the Northern Lights Clubhouse's 5K Glow Run on Friday, Sept. 24 at 7 p.m. beginning at Ely's Whiteside Park. The run takes you through glow zones as the sun sets. People of all ages and abilities are welcome to participate. Costs are \$30 for adults, \$20 for students and \$5 for kids. Proceeds support the Northern Lights Clubhouse, a place where adults with mental health challenges have the opportunity to make and reach personal goals. For more information and to register, visit www.elymarathon.com/5k.

Vermilion Dream Quilters meet on Sept. 2

TOWER- The Vermilion Dream Quilters will meet on Thursday, Sept. 2, at 6:30 p.m. in St. Martin's Catholic Church in Tower. Because of the increasing numbers of COVID-19 cases, all are strongly encouraged to wear masks. The program features four members, Cindy Bird, JoAnn Anderson, Jill Wagoner, and Liz Villnow. Each will present and explain the background process of four of their quilted creations. Visitors are welcome.

Embarrass fair welcomes all this weekend, Aug. 27-29

EMBARRASS- The fair features a horse show, pony rides, a mud run, demolition derby, car show, the Flying Finn 5K, livestock displays, dog show, many exhibits, vendors, beer garden, kid's bouncy houses and much, much more. New this year is an expanded "machinery hill" and cornhole tournament. Gates are open at 2 p.m. on Friday, 8 a.m. on Saturday and 7 a.m. on Sunday. Admission is only \$4 and that buys you a whole day's worth of fun; children 10 and under are free with a paid adult. Weekend passes are \$10. All events are at or around Timber Hall, at 4855 Hwy. 21. For more information, look for the ad in this week's *Timberjay*.

Community Night Out set for Sept. 12

EMBARRASS- Sisu Heritage of Embarrass is celebrating their annual Community Night Out on Sunday, Sept. 12 from 4-6:30 p.m. at the historic Seitaniemi Homestead. Bill Maxwell and Cowboy Angel Blue will provide a free outdoor concert at this family-friendly event. Bring your lawn chair or blanket and relax to the music, or tour the restored housebarn. Chili, cornbread muffins, pie and coffee will be available.

Freewill donations are gladly accepted to support Sisu's restoration projects in Embarrass and the surrounding area. The Seitaniemi Homestead is located on Comet Road in Waasa Twp., between Embarrass and Babbitt. Watch for signs on Hwy. 21. Call 218-984-3402 or visit sisuheritage.org for more information.

MURAL MAKEOVER

Ely Post Office public art preserved



by KEITH VANDERVORT
Ely Editor

Parma Conservation artists, from left, Elisabeth Kendall, Peter Schoenmann, John Salhus and Ewa Devereaux, at the Ely Post Office this week.
photo by K. Vandervort

ELY – The 1940s-era murals in the Ely Post Office were given a once-in-a-lifetime cleaning, renovation and preservation this week. The two murals, one depicting a mining scene and the other celebrating the wilderness, have been part of the landmark United States Treasury building here since shortly after it was built in 1938.

Four members of Chicago-based Parma Conservation – Director and Chief Conservator Elisabeth Kendall, along with conservators Peter Schoenmann, John Salhus and Ewa Devereaux – arrived in Ely last Sunday to begin the project.

"Our mission is to do no harm," Schoenmann

said. "We look to preserve everything that was original to each particular piece of art."

The crew first cleaned the murals and started first thing Monday morning with the delicate work of matching the colors and restoring and touching up the art with tiny brushes while standing or sitting on scaffolding.

Between 1934 and 1943, the U.S. Treasury Section of Fine Art was established to commission artwork in newly constructed federal post offices and courthouses. Mural contracts were awarded based on national and regional art competitions. Only the best artists were selected for these mural projects.

Renowned artist Elsa Laubach Jenne was commissioned to create "Wilderness" and "Iron Ore Miners" for the Ely post office lobby. She used an egg tempera paint on gesso grounds and painted the scenes, about four feet tall by 16 feet long, right on the wall.

"It looks much like watercolor, but this medium is very fragile and delicate," Schoenmann said.

Jenne was commissioned to provide many murals for Post Offices in Minnesota and Wisconsin. There are 1,300 original murals total in the United States, and about 1,100 have survived.

To date, Parma Conservation has con-

served more than two hundred post office murals nationwide. Ely Postmaster Mike Lund said the mural restoration project has been in the works since 2019, when Salhus visited Ely to complete an assessment and provide a proposal.

"We try to prioritize the restoration projects that are most needed to preserve this unique public art," Schoenmann said. "We're perfectionists. We want to fix any imperfections or damage to the art and restore it to its original condition."

MN State Old Time Fiddle Contest champions

MT. IRON- The 39th annual MN State Old Time Fiddle Championships were held Aug. 14 in Mt. Iron. After taking 2020 off due to COVID-19, musicians and fans were eager to reconvene. Fiddlers young and old enjoyed competing for cash and prizes, performing for a live audience, and growing as a musician through feedback from three judges. This year's Minnesota State Champion fiddler is Aaron Wilcox, who grew up in Mt. Iron and graduated from Virginia High School. His win has qualified him to participate in the National Old Time Fiddle Championships in Weiser, Idaho, next June.

We wish to thank the Mesabi Symphony Orchestra, our fiscal agent, accompanist Tom Weisgerber, Blue Wolf Sound, master of ceremonies Tucker Nelson, our judges-Gloria Schoening, Alita Weisgerber, and Alex



Aaron Wilcox of Duluth is the 2021 State Champion Fiddler.
submitted photo

Sharps, the Merritt Days committee, the Merritt School custodial staff, and contest volunteers Mary Peterson, Dana Nelson, Holly Weir, Deb Gunderson, Erik Honkanen and Sheila Wilcox. We greatly appreciate the advertisers who supported the contest. We also want to thank our appreciative audience. This

activity was made possible in part by the voters of Minnesota through a grant from the Arrowhead Regional Arts Council, thanks to appropriations from the Minnesota State Legislature's general and arts and cultural heritage funds, and in part by a grant from the MN State Fiddlers Association.

Congratulations to the following winners:

Championship Division

Aaron Wilcox of Duluth, Ranelle Dietrich of Casa Grande, Ariz., and Kailyn Spencer of Duluth

Junior-Junior Division

Aspen Dietrich of Casa Grande, Ariz., Brie Dietrich of Casa Grande, Ariz., and Sawyer Corcoran of Pinewood

Junior Division

Elias O'Brien of St. Paul, Lillian Hunt of

Virginia, and Delia Alger of Virginia

Senior Division

Kevin DeRusha of Mesa, Ariz., Tami Nelson of Faribault and Don Sadler of Melbourne Beach, Fla.

Intermediate Division

David Greenwood-Sanchez of St. Paul, and Andy Cragun of Duluth

Non-Fiddle Division

Don Sadler of Melbourne Beach, Fla. on dobro, Sawyer Corcoran of Pinewood on mandolin, and Lynette Pearson of Virginia on cello

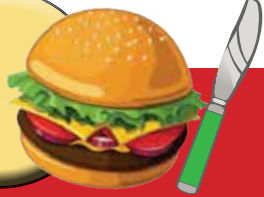
Twin Fiddling

Ranelle and Brie Dietrich, Kevin DeRusha and Tami Nelson

Please like the Facebook page and check out the webpage at www.mesabisymphonyorchestra.org/FiddleContest.

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RUKAVINA MEMORIAL BRIDGE

Rukavina honored with bridge dedication

by JODI SUMMIT
Tower-Soudan Editor

Representative left a legacy of love

VIRGINIA- Tommy Rukavina was a little guy from the Northside of Virginia who left his footprints all across the state of Minnesota. In 2017 he did this literally, if not intentionally, on the bridge named in his honor this past week.

At the dedication ceremony, held Aug. 19 at the Bridgeview Pocket Park off the Mesabi Trail, a huge photo showed Rukavina, the former legislator and county commissioner, getting an early tour of the newly-completed high bridge over the Rouchleau pit right before it opened. He had inadvertently stepped into wet white paint as he walked the bridge, leaving his footprints on the newly-paved blacktop.

No one missed the symbolism.

"This bridge is a fine representation of Tom's life," said Gary Cerkenik, a longtime Rukavina friend and political lobbyist on the Iron Range, noting how Rukavina was seemingly able to connect all sorts of people, at both ends of the political spectrum.



Rukavina died in January 2019, at age 68, after a brief battle with cancer. He served in the state house from 1987 to 2013. After retiring from the Legislature he served on the St. Louis County Board of Commissioners from 2015-2018. He lived in Pike Township.

Senator Amy Klobuchar said she wouldn't have missed the bridge dedication to her longtime political friend. She noted that on the day the bridge opened, Rukavina said in a television interview that it was fitting that after producing the steel that built America and all the bridges in the Twin Cities, that the Iron Range should be home to the



state's highest bridge. And now that bridge is named of course, she joked, after one of Minnesota's shorter politicians.

"This is a tribute to his towering legacy," she said. A number of speakers offered remarks, and remembered Rukavina for his lifelong advocacy of union workers, service workers, and for his commitment to public education.

"Tommy fought for many things that we all cherish," said Pete Makowski, delivering

remarks from Sen. Tina Smith, who was unable to attend the event.

Rukavina's longtime political partner, state Sen. David Tomassoni, who still represents much of the Iron Range, said that Tom was "a giant in his own right."

"He was passionate about his friends and family," Tomassoni. "He admired loyalty. He fought for the little guy."

Tomassoni said that Rukavina fought to make sure the bridge was built with 100-percent American-made steel, and



Amy Klobuchar spoke at the ceremony.

photo by J. Summit

Ida Rukavina holds the dedication sign for her father's memorial bridge.

photo by J. Summit
Tom Rukavina literally left his footprints on the bridge in 2017. He also fought for funding and ensured American steel and union labor were used in construction. submitted photo

100-percent union labor. At that point he had retired from the Legislature, but he helped his replacement, David Lislegard, and DFL House Leader Melissa

Hortman, to make sure his wishes were followed, and that the bridge was funded.

"Tommy's legacy is

See RUKAVINA...pg. 5

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Editorial

OAH Ruling

Judges' words should be a wake-up call for Greenwood town board

It would be a mistake for officials in Greenwood Township to think the recent dismissal of a criminal complaint against the town's two top fire officials means case closed. While the three-judge panel in the case found insufficient evidence to demonstrate that fire chief David Fazio and assistant chief Mike Indihar used their official authority to “compel” members of the fire department to sign on to a political ad supporting several candidates, including Fazio's wife, they made it clear they found such behavior beyond the pale.

“Calling subordinate employees to participate in a campaign advertisement is ill advised and cannot be condoned,” stated Chief Judge James Lefave. “This is particularly true when one is in a position of authority and married to one of the candidates,” he concluded.

In a concurring opinion, Judge Ann O'Reilly went further, stating that the actions of the township's top fire officials “present serious questions as to their professional judgment and the type of working environment they have created at the Greenwood Township Fire Department.”

It would have been reasonable to believe that things would have changed in Greenwood after the township's penchant for finding itself in legal trouble prompted the Minnesota Association of Townships to drop the township's errors and omissions insurance coverage. Events have proven otherwise.

The definition of “condone” is to “accept and allow (behavior that is considered morally wrong or offensive) to continue.” And that, unfortunately, has been a pattern of behavior that has been too readily accepted in Greenwood in recent years. By failing to address past mistakes, the township seems unable or unwilling to effectively address the next one. We would hope that the strong words of the judges in this case could serve as a wake-up for a town board that is being presented with some inconvenient truths, namely that their fire chief is a continuing liability due to poor

judgment.

The question now is whether the board will take disciplinary action to address infractions that most any thinking person would have recognized as inappropriate from the start, or whether they will ignore the advice of the judges and simply condone such behavior.

We recognize that there is a political divide in Greenwood, which can color the way that people interpret and react to events. That's why the words of three impartial judges, with no axes to grind, and no personal feelings on the matter, are worth giving special consideration. Three informed and intelligent people with no stake in Greenwood's petty political and personal infighting took a look at the goings-on in the township and were alarmed by what they saw. Judge O'Reilly certainly did not have to take the time to write a concurring opinion in the case. But she obviously felt strongly about the ill-advised actions that were described in her courtroom.

Greenwood officials could certainly choose to start a new chapter, by heeding the insights expressed by the judges, who actually seemed disappointed they couldn't convict the township's fire officials of something. Judge O'Reilly even seemed to suggest the law should allow conviction for *attempting to use* one's official authority to compel another to take part in political work. In that case, wrote O'Reilly, “a violation would certainly have been found... and a significant penalty imposed.” In other words, the township's fire officials may have attempted to break the law, they just lacked the gumption to succeed. Not exactly vindication.

While the Office of Administrative Hearings, which handled the complaint against the fire officials, may have been unable to exact a penalty for what they clearly saw as inappropriate behavior, the Greenwood town board can and should take action in response.

As the township has already found, continuing to condone misbehavior will only lead to more of it.



Letters from Readers

A perfect summer evening in Ely

After all that happened around the Blueberry Festival this year, after all the restrictions of the pandemic, the drought and extreme heat, Monday evening felt like a celebration in our beautiful Whiteside Park with live music, lots of visiting and food. Thanks to Ely United Methodist Church and band member Elton Brown for bringing the Jumpin' Jehosafats dixieland band back after several years. Nothing better than toe-tapping music with wood-fired pizza (thank you Matt Weissert). People of all ages enjoyed the jazz, the breeze and sunshine. Watching the large group of young adults playing Ultimate Frisbee added to the fun!

Emily Brown
Ely

Granite, not greenstone

The recent article in the *Timberjay* about an Ely City Council meeting where two bronze sculptures were accepted from William Rom Jr. and his wife Holly states

that “Both sculptures will sit on a bed of Lake Superior greenstone.” The story further states that, “The greenstone base is being quarried near Isabella.”

As a geologist who is quite familiar with the geology of our area, I can say that we do not have any rock type called “Lake Superior greenstone” in our area and there is no greenstone near Isabella. I am aware, though, that commercial names for quarried stone tend to be fanciful and often do not accurately represent what the actual rock type is. Coldspring Quarries does mine and sell a “Lake Superior Green Granite” from near Isabella, but not a “Greenstone.” And their so called “Lake Superior Green Granite” is actually anorthosite, which is a rock type related to gabbro that consists of the mineral anorthite (a plagioclase feldspar) that can be greenish in color.

The rock formations in the Isabella area are all part of the Duluth Gabbro Complex and therefore consist of various rock types in the gabbro family. In spite of that, another type of this gabbroic material that is being quarried west of Hart Lake (NW of Isabella) is being sold as “Mesabi Black Granite” by Coldspring, even though it is also not at all a granitic rock type.

Interestingly, there actually is a “Lake Superior Greenstone” which is otherwise known as “Isle Royale Greenstone.” This not actually a rock type but rather it is a mineral called chlorastrolite, meaning “green star stone,” which is a semiprecious gemstone that is quite expensive and is often used for jewelry. It is found only on Isle Royale and on the Keweenaw Peninsula of Michigan and it is the Michigan state gemstone. It is only found in small pieces that are not at all amenable to being used as a base for a large bronze sculpture.

The bottom line, here, is that the base for these two sculptures should not be called greenstone. That is, unless it is decided to use Ely Greenstone for the base. Maybe some could be quarried from the old Rock Crusher west of town, but not crushed.

Carl Karasti
Winton

Editor's Note

The bronze statues from Bill Rom Jr. to be set up in Ely's Whiteside Park next summer will include a base made with Lake Superior Green quarried at the Isabella Quarry and supplied by Laurentian Monument. It is a granite and not greenstone.

COMMENTARY

Why voters vote as they do

Maybe it's just a professional preoccupation, but I've always been intrigued by why voters cast their ballots as they do. I've never made a formal study of it, but have talked with plenty of them over the years, and one thing sticks with me from those conversations: There's no one thing. People find a myriad



LEE
HAMILTON

of interesting—and sometimes idiosyncratic—reasons for voting this way or that.

Some care mostly about a single issue—abortion, say, or climate change—and if a politician doesn't meet muster on it, they don't even give her or

him a second glance. Or they care about a candidate's ideology or party—conservative or liberal, Republican or Democrat—and don't feel much need to look beyond the label. For some decades, split-ticket voting was fairly common: that is, voters chose a Republican presidential candidate and a House Democrat or, less commonly, a Democrat for the White House and a GOP House member. This has grown much less common—in both federal and state elections. As

ideological camps have hardened, party affiliation is part and parcel of who many people are.

Sometimes, it's not so much ideology as what a party's leaders stand for. I remember asking one man in my district how he voted and why. He responded, “I always vote for FDR.” This was years after Roosevelt had died. “FDR's not on the ticket any more,” I told him. He laughed and said he knew that, but he always voted for whomever.

See **VOTE...**pg. 5

This old house, a love story about a duplex

This story begins in March of 2007 when I took ownership of a nearly one-hundred-year-old dwelling in one of Virginia's south side neighborhoods. It continues over the next fourteen years while I occupied and leased this duplex that would surprisingly become an important



KATHLEEN
MCQUILLAN

feature in my life. I jumped into the role of “landlady” without much forethought, employing my useful “on the job” training model. My primary goal was to ease one of the stressors related to my occupation. And it worked. In 2016, when I retired from my “grief support” role on

one of our local hospice teams, my relationship with this old house changed. This is a love story about a place.

Without a doubt, my years of working with hospice, offering information and emotional support to our patients and their grieving families, was deeply rewarding, and an experience for which I will be forever grateful. But it was also emotionally strenuous.

My daily routine would

start with a 37-mile drive to our Virginia office and then many additional miles visiting people in their homes. While driving, I'd spend that time engaged in a blend of prayerful anticipation and a process of “grounding” in my knowledge and experience, the goal being to deliver helpful support. My days could be long and no two were alike. The journey home each evening would include reviewing scenes and events of the day and

the complex human emotions I had encountered. As time went on, I felt the effects of continuous exposure to high levels of emotional stress. Caregiving professionals often refer to this experience as “compassion fatigue.”

An accompanying strain came from all those hours sitting in a fixed position behind the wheel of my car. Routinely, I'd watch the odometer spin two hundred or more miles in a single day. One day,

after taking the car to my long-trusted mechanic for its recommended “every 3,000 mile” oil change, he handed me my receipt, slid my keys across the counter, and nonchalantly stated, “See you in a week.” His wink was my cue—that maybe it was time to consider ways to shear some miles off my daily drive.

I started talking to friends about renting a guest room or finding

See **HOUSE...**pg. 5

BOIS FORTE BAND

Bois Forte exploring gas station in Eveleth

NETT LAKE- The Bois Forte Band announced last week that they are exploring a future new business opportunity in Eveleth.

“We’ve been in preliminary discussions with the Eveleth City Council to explore the possibility of opening a gas station,

similar to the Y Store,” said a release attributed to the Bois Forte Tribal Council that was posted on Aug. 17 on the Band’s website.

The potential location would be on the east side of the intersection of Highway 53 and Highway 37 East.

“It is still early in the discussion stages, but we

would envision the store being a state-of-the-art facility with charging stations, propane filling, car and truck wash, bait store, deli, and convenience store items,” the release said. “This proposed business is not on trust land, and we do have the opportunity to add a liquor store.”

Band Chairwoman Cathy Chavers hinted at the opportunity during an early August public meeting to brief Band members on another business opportunity the Tribal Council ultimately decided not to pursue. At the time, she noted that it would take two to three years for the project

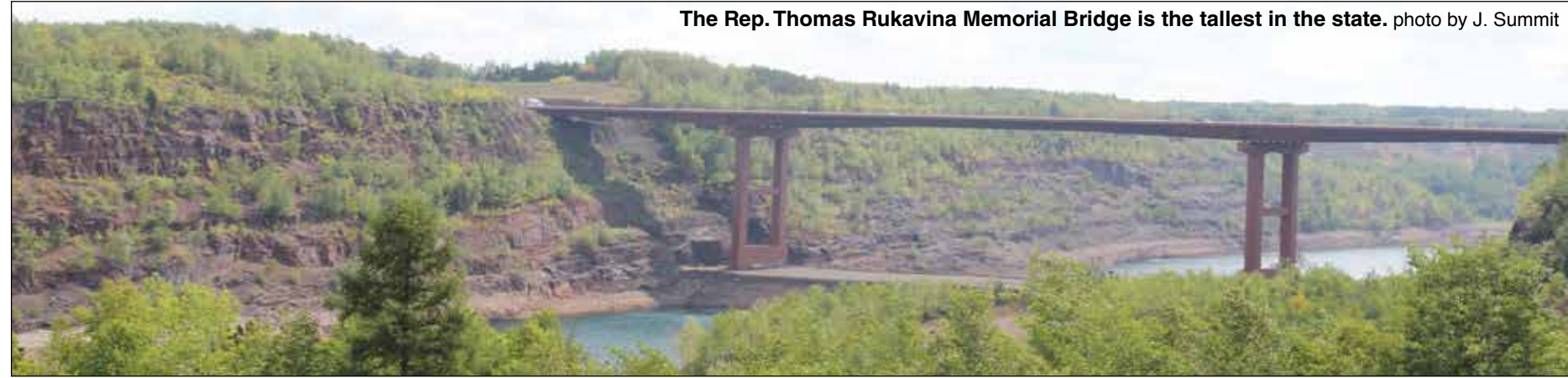
to come to fruition, allowing time to pursue outside federal and state funding opportunities.

The release indicated a traffic count study has been completed by MNDOT, and the Band is working on a marketing study to determine the project’s feasibility. Plans are to present

a more complete proposal to Band members at an October public meeting.

“Rest assured, we will look out for the best interests of all Band members before entering into any agreement,” the release said.

RUKAVINA...Continued from page 3



The Rep. Thomas Rukavina Memorial Bridge is the tallest in the state. photo by J. Summit

secure,” said Tomassoni.

Rukavina also worked to make sure the Iron Range kept as much influence as possible in St. Paul. He lobbied Hortman to name the newly-elected Lislegard to the House Tax Committee.

“He called Melissa Hortman,” Lislegard said, “and asked if she was willing to grant a dying man one wish.” Hortman agreed before hearing Tom explain that his wish was to have Lislegard, even though he was new to the

House, have a seat on the influential committee. She did Tom one better, naming Lislegard as the committee co-chair, a position he still holds.

Several speakers at the program talked about Tommy’s ability to work across the political “aisle” and his ability to maintain strong friendships with those he often disagreed with politically.

“He could get into a heated debate with someone and then go out afterwards for a beer,” said Hortman.

In one of his last public statements, a letter to the editor published in the *Timberjay*, Rukavina wrote “Hate helps no one. Loves solves everything.”

Minnesota Commissioner of Transportation Margaret Anderson-Kelliher, who served in the House with Tommy, said she was proud, on behalf of the Minnesota Department of Transportation, to name the bridge after Rep. Thomas Rukavina. New signs, bearing the bridge’s name,

are now installed at both ends of the bridge.

Tommy’s daughter, Ida Rukavina, was the final speaker at the event. She was introduced as the new generational voice for the Iron Range.

Ida spoke of her father’s love of being out in the woods, chopping trees for his sawmill, growing vegetables in his garden, canning produce with friends and his wife Jean.

“He was so proud he passed on his land to

his kids and grandkids someday,” she said.

But besides his love for his family and friends, Ida spoke of his love for his community, education, and his sense of service.

“He fought for what service workers deserved,” she said. “It was the right thing to do.”

“He loved our history. He was so proud of the work he did at Ironworld conducting interviews with immigrants. He believed that politicians should make laws that helped

people.”

Ida said her father served for the right reasons. “I am one-hundred-percent certain that he served the people of the Range for love,” she said. “And I know that today he would want all of us to reflect on the way that we can each make a difference... the way we can each improve our communities in our own way.”

VOTE...Continued from page 4

er he believed would vote in accord with Roosevelt’s principles. This was not as whimsical as it sounds: he was saying, essentially, that the New Deal values Roosevelt pursued in office were still relevant to him, and he wanted candidates who’d uphold them.

What has always struck me, though, is that voters also find plenty of more particular reasons to cast a ballot one way or another. Sometimes, they care a lot about a particular project—a road, a new school, or some other piece of infrastructure. Or they worry about the taxpayer dollars required for that project, and so vote against anyone who supports it.

Sometimes, public policy actually has nothing to do with how they vote. Over the years, for instance, I’ve noticed repeatedly that likability matters a great deal, and may in fact override everything else. We tend, for instance, to like people who are positive, constructive, and forward-looking, and who make us feel hopeful. Or we like how they behave in public. I still remember an intriguing conversation with a group of Democratic women who told me they planned to vote for Ronald Reagan that election. Given their party affiliation, this surprised me. One of them explained, “Well, I like the way he treats his

wife,” which drew nods from others in the room—they saw in Reagan’s graciousness toward Nancy a sign of character that drew them, and I’m confident they weren’t the only ones.

Of course, there are always the highly personal reasons. I ran into a fellow once who told me he always voted for a certain politician. “I don’t agree with anything he stands for,” the man said, “but he helped get my son out of Vietnam.” Another one told me I had his vote because he liked my short haircut. I refrained from saying I hoped there was more to it than that—but I certainly thought it.

In general, though,

Americans seem to like candidates who display a basic sense of decency, know right from wrong, and show compassion for people who are struggling in their lives. We don’t always vote for them—sometimes, other issues rise to the fore in a given election. But I’m reminded of a conversation I had early one frosty morning, standing at a plant gate. An election was coming up, and I asked a man striding past me how he planned to vote. He was supporting the same ticket I was running on, he told me, adding, “I vote for the candidate I think will help the ordinary guy.” That’s a very American sentiment: We back candidates we

think will bear our interests in mind and reflect our concerns. However we define them.

Lee Hamilton is a Senior Advisor for the Indiana University Center on Representative Government; a Distinguished Scholar at

the IU Hamilton Lugar School of Global and International Studies; and a Professor of Practice at the IU O’Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs. He was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives for 34 years.

HOUSE...Continued from page 4

my own apartment. All I needed was a clean, safe, quiet place where I could lay my head after a long day or take refuge when bad weather made driving risky. Then, I discovered an ad in the paper about a duplex for sale — something I hadn’t considered. I decided to check it out.

I found this great big two-story house on a funky little alley. It was enshrouded by a cloud of white apple blossoms from a very old tree on one side of the front driveway and an equally ancient mountain ash. Together they provided the building with a level of privacy not seen in this neighborhood where houses were stationed less than three feet apart. The inside was as captivating as the outside. After touring several other properties, I knew that “903” was it.

Once the paperwork was signed, I started prepping the upstairs unit to be my “nest”. Furnishings from secondhand stores and garage sales fit perfectly. My mother coined my decor “Early Attic”. Who could argue? For the next decade, “903” became my home away from home.

Then there was the

apartment downstairs. I’d never planned to be a “landlord”. Even the word turned me off. But I needed to forge ahead with my new endeavor. Thank heaven for the internet and Legal Aid Services of MN! I was able to learn the do’s and don’ts of selecting a tenant, the rights and responsibilities of the lessor and lessee, and how to draw-up a rental application and lease agreement. But I recalled a book title from my past, “Feel the fear, and do it anyway!” I began by hanging a poster in our local food co-op. Within a week I received some calls of interest.

As the benevolent universe would have it, the first person who took the tour was related to people I knew from my hometown of Cook. As we toured the place and shared bits of our stories, I could tell we shared some views in common. I loved her humor and sisu spirit. I was surprised at her spontaneous reaction to the living room’s 1970 vintage lime green shag carpeting (for which I immediately apologized). “I love it!” She said. “It’s so ‘retro!’” She was also very cool! I knew I’d

be checking her references only because the “Manual for New Landlords” said I should.

Melissa turned out to be the renter from heaven. She lived downstairs for the next four years until she met her fiancé and put roots down elsewhere. She was the first of many tenants who would bring smiles, and challenges, for years to come.

The apartment served me well. I had my place of retreat from the cares of the outside world — warm and welcoming every time I’d arrive. It was there I could collect books, stones and other cherished momentos from my travels near and far. I hung art wherever I wanted. And, I could offer shelter to friends and co-workers whenever they needed it.


Following my retirement, I stayed there less and less. Eventually, I decided to rent both floors. That presented new challenges but nothing I couldn’t handle, until the COVID-19 pandemic struck. The quarantine period made going into the building more stressful. My two young tenants were not convinced of the risks of contracting the virus.

It was difficult to conduct my routine cleaning and maintenance visits when they would not wear masks. For the next 18 months, I remained “on call” to field any crises. I worried a lot!

Friends and family began to ask me why I was keeping the place. It was hard to find a good answer. The purpose it had once served now seemed to have vanished. I finally decided to sell.

Soon I’ll have signed the deed over to new people, who I am told swooned over this place, much like I did! That warms my heart. There’s just something special about this big old house that has dominated the neighborhood for over a hundred years. Countless characters have filled these rooms with their cherished objects and curious stories, and it seems its welcoming spirit can be felt by everyone who crosses its threshold!

It’s my turn now to lock the door one last time behind me. I know that my story is now enjoyed with all the others that came here before me. I’ve loved this place. So, all I can say is, “Good-bye ‘903’. Thanks for the memories.”



the
TIMBERJAY

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TOWER-SOUDAN HISTORY

Immigrants all around us

by **KAREN BARTUNEK**
Contributing Writer

Karel Winkelaar, a first-generation immigrant, spoke about the importance of immigration to our community's history

TOWER- The Iron Range's past merged with the current political debate over immigration during the second in a series of history talks sponsored by the Tower-Soudan Historical Society, held on Aug. 9. Karel Winkelaar offered a look at how immigration shaped the Iron Range, during his presentation titled "Immigrants of the Northland."

If you ask Winkelaar, the United States was built by immigrants, "common people looking for a better life," and Tower-Soudan was no different.

Winkelaar, a first generation immigrant himself, shared his personal story.

"I am an immigrant so that's why I can speak to you in Dutch and I think that's part of the reason I'm standing in front of you today," Winkelaar began.

His parents came to America in 1957. Originally from the Dutch East Indies, they were captured by the Japanese and they both survived two and half years in a concentration camp. Once the Dutch East Indies sought independence en route to becoming Indonesia, there was an influx of approximately two million people into Holland.

Winkelaar's parents were a part of that group, but his father, who was half Chinese, grew tired of facing discrimination in Holland due to his appearance. He told his children he wanted to move to the United States where "they wouldn't face any discrimination."

After a boat ride across the Atlantic they arrived at Ellis Island. The memory of seeing the Statue of Liberty for the first time continues to impact Karel. The imprint of the quote is apparent as he recited it to the crowd:

Give me your tired, your poor,

Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,

The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.

Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,

I lift my lamp beside the golden door!

Winkelaar and his family then took a train ride to Duluth, where he was again impacted by the Statue of Liberty quote on a banner in the train station.

In fact, the power of the quote still holds so much sway over him that, at 67 years of age,



Karel Winkelaar spoke to an overflow crowd on the patio at Sulu's earlier this month. The final history talk of the summer was on Aug. 24, with Good Ol' Days owner Randy Semo talking about the history of his bar and other saloons in Tower. photo by K. Bartunek

he teared up seeing the banner again during a visit to the Ellis Island Museum.

His family eventually came to the Iron Range, where his father worked for the Erie Mining Company for 22 years and Winkelaar followed in his footsteps, with 32 years under his belt.

Winkelaar is now a tour guide at the Soudan Underground Mine, regularly discussing both the mining and immigration culture of the area.

The Soudan Mine was a draw for many immigrants, he said, after it opened in 1882. The ore was unique for its purity and high oxygen content and was essential to the steel-making process until changes in technology rendered the expensive ore obsolete.

In the time that the mine was open, it housed a variety of immigrants as well as "native born" workers, said Winkelaar. Their jobs were generally determined by ethnic status, with the harder or riskier jobs falling to the immigrants. The mining company would often pair two foreign men together with different ethnic background who didn't share

a common language for maximum efficiency, and to avoid unionizing.

"You could hide your heritage by changing your name, but you couldn't hide an accent," he said.

Winkelaar read out a list of descriptions given of workers at the time that were less than politically correct by today's standards, delineating by ethnicity, then dubbed 'race.' The Finnish were deemed the 'most efficient miners on the range,' though they were eventually blackballed for attempting to unionize. Austro-Hungarians were "regarded as most desirable due to large frame and muscular build." The list continued on with assessments of the rest of the ethnic groups that worked for the mine.

The attending crowd, many of them descendants of these miners and sharing the heritage he was describing laughed out loud at the absurd assessments.

The mine was the core of the town, providing a way of life for the community. The surrounding area housed recreation and event halls, and a plethora of bars. It might seem surprising

that there were more than 20 bars for such a small population, but they served different facets of the community.

"They were language bars," Winkelaar said. Because there were so many foreign languages represented by the vast number of immigrants, bars would open as a sort of refuge to someone from a particular country.

Winkelaar noted the parallels between the immigrants of the past and the immigrants of today, referencing the current immigration situation along the United States-Mexico border "We all share a common goal, a better life for the next generation," he emphasized.

"I hope you're okay with me telling stories...I'm not a historian," Winkelaar concluded.

But that's history. In this case, a collection of immigrant stories that built this part of the country. A country that was built by common people, hoping to pursue the American dream.

Week of Aug. 30

Monday

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 Sept. 21

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

Wednesday

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

Thursday

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

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

Learn about antique Norwegian tools

SOUDAN- If you are interested in Norwegian arts and crafts, you are invited to Vermilion Park Inn in Soudan on Saturday, Aug. 28 at 3 p.m. for a talk by Jane Laurence, who studied hand tools, carpentry, and the Norwegian language in Norway. The talk will also include a discussion of rosemaling. A potluck dinner will be enjoyed at 5 p.m. Please bring a salad or dessert to share if you would like to attend the dinner. All are welcome.

St. Martin's Annual Rummage Sale set for Aug. 28

TOWER- St. Martin's Catholic Church in Tower will host a rummage sale on Saturday, Aug. 28 from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., in the church social hall. Due to the great response in the past, we will once again offer EARLY BIRD SHOPPING at 8 a.m. for the cost of \$5. In addition to the rummage sale, coffee and caramel rolls will be available for purchase, and a 50/50 cash drawing will be held, with chances for the cash drawing at \$1 each.

Tower Farmers Market raffle tickets available

TOWER- The Tower Farmers Market will regretfully not be hosting BLT Night this year. The annual event is a fundraiser for the Tower Area Food Shelf. Residents who wish to support the food shelf can still do so by purchasing tickets for the Harvest Basket Raffle. The drawing for a basket loaded with goodies from farmers market vendors will be held in mid-September. Tickets are \$1. They are available at the market, Fridays from 4-6 p.m., or at the Timberjay office.

Vermilion Senior Living hosts community picnic



TOWER- The commons area and backyard patio at Vermilion Senior Living was busy, last Tuesday, as the assisted living facility hosted a community lunch barbecue. The dozen residents welcomed family and community members, who shared a meal and listened to live music featuring Jim Lassila.

Director Demetrius Bray said the center currently is housing 12 residents, with more rooms available. Staff consists of Bray, assistant manager Courtney Ruzic, two cooks, and 11 nursing staff (LPNs and RNs).

"We provide round-the-clock nursing care," said Bray, "and home-cooked meals."

Anyone wishing to learn more about Vermilion Senior Living can call 218-753-7788.

Left: Verneal Kolstad has been at VSL for over two years. Her grandson Michael Schultz, of Tower, visited with wife Allycia, and daughters Evelyn and Brielle. Verneal's daughter, who also lives in Tower, said she really appreciates being able to visit with her mother many times each week. Verneal said she enjoys her new home, though said it was usually much quieter than during the afternoon picnic. photo by J. Summit

Tower-Soudan Elementary open house on Wednesday

TOWER- Returning and new students and their parents are invited to an open house at Tower-Soudan Elementary from 4-7 p.m. on Wednesday, Sept. 1. Students, both returning and new, are invited to come meet their teachers, tour the school, and meet

some of the new staff this year.

The first day of school is Tuesday, Sept. 7 for grades one to six, and Thursday, Sept. 9 for Kindergarten.

Principal John Jirik said the school will be offering a new mentoring

program, with the two-day-a-week Check and Connect, as well as a new student/family advocate, a full-time staff member who will split their time between Tower-Soudan and Northeast Range.

The are two new special education teachers

this year, Jessica Gillson and Alli Sandberg. Crystal Scofield is taking over as the school secretary. Ilona Svedberg moved to the North Woods School.



HARVEST BASKET RAFFLE
\$1 Tickets

Fridays 4-6 PM
at the Train Depot

Tower-Soudan Elementary open house on Wednesday

ISD 696



Ely high school fall sports seasons gear up

by KEITH VANDERVORT
Ely Editor

ELY – Memorial High School students here, and the rest of the state’s athletes, endured a disrupted 2020 fall sports season because of restrictions in place due to the coronavirus pandemic and are looking to get back to normal competition this year.

Practices began last week on the football field, volleyball court, cross country courses and the swimming pool in anticipation of the start of the fall sports season by the Labor Day weekend.

As of now, no COVID-related restrictions are in place except for the mandate requiring all athletes and coaches to wear protective face masks while traveling to and from competitions in school district vehicles, according to ISD 696 Athletic Director Tom Coombe.

After an undefeated season last year, the Ely Memorial High School girls volleyball team has high expectations under first-year coach Megan Wognum. The Timberwolves could again be section contenders again this year as volleyball transitions to a four-class system. More than 40 players attended the first day of practice last Monday, including returning All-Arrowhead Conference team members Kellen Thomas and Rachel Coughlin. Ely hosts Northeast Range on Tuesday, Aug. 31 to open the 2021-2022 season.



boys and girls cross country teams, led by longtime coach Jayne Dusich

The boys team took fourth in the section meet last year, and will be led by seniors John Hakala and Gabriel Pointer, juniors Ben Cavalier and Jake Cochran, and sophomore Leo Stalmer.

On the girls team, juniors Zoe Devine, seventh in Section 7A last year, and Phoebe Helms, who finished 20th, lead a team that includes senior Gracie Pointer, juniors Sydney Durkin and Juliet Stouffer, and freshman Anna Dunn.

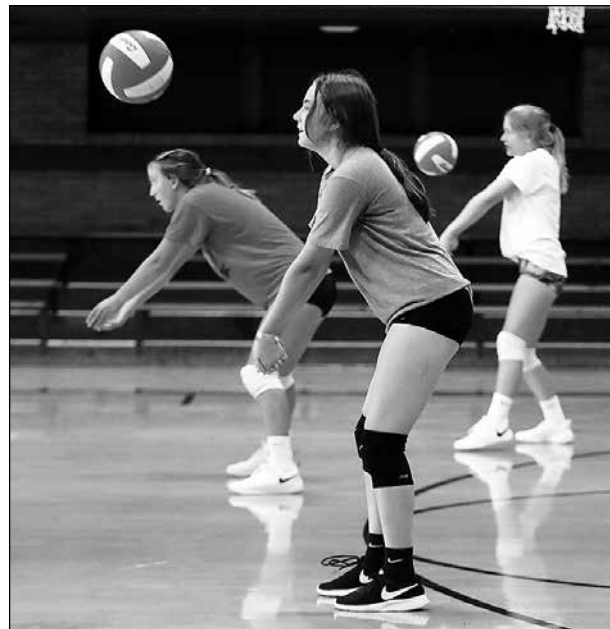
“Both teams are hurting for depth, but there is a group of 8-9th grade

boys who have a chance of moving up to the varsity team,” Dusich said.

There are 26 boys and 15 girls on the 2021 team. “Last year was not fun as the meets were small and not much competition,” Dusich added. “It was spread out, so many kids ended up running by themselves even at the Section meet. We’re looking for a season that is back to normal and brings some excitement to racing.”

The Timberwolves open the season on Wednesday, Sept. 1 at the Virginia Invite. Ely will host the Ely Invite at the Ely Golf Course on Tuesday, Oct. 5.

First-year coach



The Memorial High School cross country team, top, ran a training course at the Ely Golf Club at sunrise last Friday. The volleyball team, above, is training in the gymnasium. At left, a future Timberwolves football player, Brooks Musel, 5, donned the uniform and helmet of his second-favorite team Tuesday night while he helped his father, assistant coach Cory Musel at practice. photos by K. Vandervort

Louis Gerzin will lead the Timberwolves football team on the gridiron this fall. As many as 20 players in grades 7-12 turned out for the first week of practice in hot and steamy conditions last week, including all-conference standouts Jason Kerntz and Eddie Prijatel.

Coach Gerzin, who signed a one-year interim contract following the resignation of former head coach Cory Lassi, was a star running back for the Ely squad in 2012 and 2013 that went to the State Nine-Man division tournament.

Ely opens the season with a pair of home games, Friday, Sept. 3 against

Carlton and Friday, Sept. 10, against Mt. Iron-Buhl. The Timberwolves will also host Cherry on Friday, Sept. 24, and Cook County on Friday, Oct. 8. All Ely home football games start at 7 p.m.

The Ely school district participates in girls swimming with Northeast Range High School in Babbitt. Cheri Debeltz coaches the program that includes many Ely swimmers. All Section 7A standout Lily Tedrick will be returning for another season. The Nighthawks opened competition on Thursday, Aug. 26 at the Virginia Relays. Their first home meet is on Thursday, Sept. 9 against Mesabi East.

Breathing Out

by Cecilia Rolando © 2021



a town surrounded smoke fills the air and our breathe reflected in red

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.
SUNDAY NIGHT AA - at St. Anthony’s Catholic Church is cancelled.
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.
ADULT BASIC EDUCATION GED - Study materials and pre-test available. Call 218-365-3359, 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

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Northwoods volunteers honored

Flesvig, Andreae named Heart of Gold recipients

ELY - Northwoods Partners recently recognized two volunteers with their Heart of Gold Award: Dick Flesvig and Nancy Andreae.

The criteria for the award are that recipients embody Northwoods Partners’ values of compassion, dignity, independence, relationships, respect, and volunteerism; and they go above and beyond to make a positive impact, not only within the organization, but in the community at large.

Flesvig is a Northwoods Partners board member, two-time board chair, and volunteer. He is always willing

to go the extra mile and participates enthusiastically in Northwoods Partners activities and spreading the word regarding all the services Northwoods Partners provides for the community.

Since joining the Northwoods Partners board, Andreae jumped right into the Festival of Trees event, donating items for the boutique, and donating quilts for the raffle. She also took on the job as Northwoods Partners treasurer. In 2020 she made and donated hundreds of face masks for clients, volunteers, and the community. Even after leaving the board, she has stayed active

in Northwoods Partners events and activities and mailings.

Thank you, Dick and Nancy, and all 80 of Northwoods Partners’ dedicated volunteers.

Northwoods Partners is celebrating their 20th year of providing resources that promote independence and healthy aging for those 60-plus in the communities of Ely, Winton, Babbitt, Tower, Soudan, and surrounding areas.

For further information on Northwoods Partners volunteer opportunities or services, call 218-365-8019 or visit the web site, NorthwoodsPartners.org.



Donald G. Gardner Humanities Trust

We are now accepting 2021 Arts Grant Applications

for Individual Artists, Project & Youth Grants, Scholarships & Operational Funding

Updated grant applications and guidelines are available online at www.gardnertrust.org

APPLICATION DEADLINE IS: 12:00 noon on Fri., Sept. 24

Applicants are strongly encouraged to contact Keiko Williams, Executive Director, by mid-September for help and review of their applications. Call 365-2639 or email info@gardnertrust.org Youth Grant applicants must call Keiko by Wed., Sept. 1 to schedule a grant review meeting.

Tuesday Group schedule

ELY – The Tuesday Group community educational lunch gathering meets every Tuesday at the Grand Ely Lodge. Participants have an opportunity to order lunch. For those interested in being a host, or who have a speaker suggestion, contact Lacey Squier by email at ElyTuesdayGroup@gmail.com or by phone at 218-216-9141.

Upcoming Tuesday Group speakers:.

➤Aug. 31: Thomas Gable, The Voyageurs Wolf Project: Understanding the Secret Lives of Wolves in the Northwoods.

➤Sept. 7: Paul Colwell, Manager of the Ely-Winton Historical Society.

Subscribe:

218-753-2950

COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES

Scenic Rivers CEO to lead national association

COOK- Scenic Rivers Health Services CEO Michael Holmes has been named Chair of the Board of the National Association of Community Health Centers (NACHC), the leading policy and advocacy organization for CHCs serving nearly 30 million people nationwide.

Holmes assumed the position during NACHC's Community Health Institute Aug. 22-24 in Orlando, Fla., according to an NACHC press release.

His tenure begins after an extraordinary year of health centers fighting the COVID-19 pandemic in underserved communities and administering nearly 14 million COVID vaccines to hard-to-reach populations.

Scenic Rivers Health Services (formerly Cook Area Health Services) was a single, modest site when Holmes took the helm over 40 years ago. The center now operates six medical clinics and four dental clinics in an 8,300



Michael Holmes
square-mile service area and cares for 13,000 patients, many of whom are uninsured or covered by

a federal health insurance program, such as Medicare or Medicaid.

"Thousands of Minnesotans have benefited meaningfully as a direct result of Mike's decades-long leadership in Minnesota, through their access to robust primary care services at Scenic Rivers Health Services," said Jonathan Watson, CEO of the Minnesota Association of Community Health Centers (MNACHC). "Additionally, Mike has been a con-

stant policy advocate for health centers and their patients, in both Washington, D.C. and Minnesota's capital. He is a trusted collaborator to all health centers throughout the state, in their collective missions to serve low-income populations."

Holmes brings to the NACHC leadership post a wealth of experience and knowledge about health care and the medically underserved. He has testified before Congress numerous times, advocating

for a strong primary care infrastructure and the need to support health centers as they are increasingly called upon to respond to public health crises. Holmes has also served as NACHC treasurer and past parliamentarian, in addition to serving on the Finance and Health Policy Committees of NACHC. Holmes also serves as MNACHC treasurer and chairs the Breakwater Health Network.

BACK TO SCHOOL AT NORTH WOODS

Principal extends welcome to new school year

by JOHN VUKMANICH
North Woods Principal

FIELD TWP- Welcome back to another exciting school year at North Woods! As your Principal, I am super excited for the new school year, and I am looking forward to seeing all of our Grizzlies this fall.

The staff at North Woods are very excited to begin another school year of learning and making memories. We have several new faces at North Woods for the upcoming school year including Mr. Kubiak, Band, Ms. Hazelton, 7-12 Math, Ms.

Flank, Preschool, and Ms. Sokoloski, First Grade. Our school also welcomes a new School Resource Officer, Deputy Kim Hanegmon, and Site I Secretary, Ilona Svedberg. We welcome the new staff to our North Woods school and community family!

At the time of the writing of this letter, except for bussing, the decision to wear masks will be left up to individual families. Whatever your decision, we will support all of our kids and provide them with a great school experience. Masks will be required on the bus.

If the protocol for

COVID changes in the coming weeks, our school district will inform families.

Our school days will run from 8:25 a.m. to 3:12 p.m. on Monday/Tuesday/Thursday/Friday and 8:25 a.m. to 2:02 p.m. on Wednesday. We are back to a full five-day schedule for all students. Also, remember that students cannot be dropped off before 8:05 a.m.

North Woods will continue to use PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports) in the elementary school to promote respectful students and positive behavior. At

the high school level, we will continue to focus on giving our kids the best possible academic experience while focusing on positive relationships that connect every student to a caring adult. As Principal, I will also be engaging student leaders in regular conversation to ensure that North Woods has the most positive school culture anywhere! We will continue working hard on student engagement, making school as relevant as possible for our kids, and having high expectations for academics and behavior.

Our Grizzlies are Di-

verse, Together, and North Woods Strong.

Our Dean of Students, Mr. Oehler, and I will be visiting all classrooms within the first two weeks of school to talk with all students and staff about ensuring the best and most appropriate learning environment for our students. We ask that our parents and families support us in having these high expectations. As the signs in our building state, "Grizzlies will be Responsible, Respectful, and Ready to Learn."

Open House at North Woods will be Wednesday, Sept. 1 from 4 to 7 p.m.

This will give you and your child time to meet teachers and ask any questions you may have. Additional information will be sent regarding Open House and Seventh Grade Orientation. The first day of school for first through twelfth grades is Tuesday, Sept. 7. Kindergarten will begin Thursday, Sept. 9. Picture Day will be held Monday, Sept. 13. Information will be available later this month on the North Woods homepage and at the Open House. See you then!

Go Grizzlies!

School lists back-to-school info for parents and students

FIELD TWP- The annual North Woods Open House will be on Wednesday, Sept. 1 from 4 to 7 p.m. Students and parents/guardians can meet teachers, visit classrooms, obtain classroom schedules, and much more.

A registration/information packet was recently mailed to currently enrolled student households. New or currently enrolled students can register online via computer or mobile phone. Log into Parent Portal or see the link on our school website at northwoodsschool.net to get started.

Classes for first

through twelfth grades begin Tuesday, Sept. 7. Classes for Kindergarten begin Thursday, Sept. 9.

Class Assignments: Elementary student teacher/classroom assignments will be posted at the Open House. Grades 7 - 12 student schedules will be available for pickup in the Commons.

Educational Benefits: All families are asked to complete the "Application for Educational Benefits." The application can be accessed through the Parent Portal or on the school's website under "Parent Resources." A paper version was also included in the

registration packet. Completion of this application is crucial to help our school qualify for funding and discounts.

Food Service: All students will receive meals free of charge for the 2021-22 school year.

Students who choose milk only will be charged 65 cents, and extra lunch items are not free. Payment may be made directly to cafeteria staff or online through the Parent Portal or the school website. A credit card option is also available in the school office. Please make sure your student has money in his/her account

when school begins.

Fall Sports Fees: Volleyball, football and cross-country fees for students are due before their first game or meet. Students cannot participate unless their fees are paid. Varsity and junior varsity athlete fees are \$120 per student. C-team athletic fees are \$60. A sliding fee will be applied to students who qualify for educational benefits. Fees may also be paid online via the school website and a credit card option is available in the school office.

For more information on practices, contact the respective coaches at the

school - Joel Anderson for football, Kandi Olson for volleyball, and Dan Squires for cross country. See the school website for email and contact information.

Bussing: Routing assignments are in progress. It is very important that we have current contact information for your household. If you moved over the summer and/or changed phone numbers, be sure to complete online registration as soon as possible.

Picture Day: Student and staff pictures will be taken on Monday, Sept. 13. Order forms will be

available at the Open House or they may be picked up in the office. Orders may also be placed online via the link on the school website (to be added soon).

Contact the school office at 218-666-5221 if you have questions. The office will be closed on Friday, Sept. 3 and Monday, Sept. 6. Beginning Tuesday, Sept. 7, front office hours are Monday/Tuesday/Thursday/Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Wednesday 7:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. The school is located at 10248 Olson Road East, north of Cook.

COMMUNITY NEWS

Ancient Cedars art exhibit at NWFA

COOK- Multimedia art inspired by an area trail comes to the Northwoods Friends of the Arts Gallery beginning Saturday, Aug. 28 when the "Ancient Cedars Trail: An Artistic Exploration" exhibit debuts for a month-long show.

Works were created by artists who walked the 100-plus acres of the Ancient Cedars Trail in Tower. The woodland path meanders through a stand of upland white cedar that dates back to about 1880. The trailhead is just a couple of blocks east of the old train depot, branching off the Mesabi Trail.

Cook is the fourth stop for this traveling art exhibit, which has also been displayed in Virginia, Ely, and Hibbing.

Eleven regional artists who support preserving and protecting the critical habitat within the new Ancient Cedars Trail collaborated for the exhibit. Participating artists include Jim Devries, of Britt, Jordan Gawboy, of Tower, Pamela Davis, Nancy Ensley, Wendy Rouse, all of Ely, Jeff Argir and Louise Laakso Lundin, of Hibbing, and Linda Glisson, Margie Helstrom, Sue Rauschensfels, and Nan Stubenvoll, all of Duluth.

The exhibit will con-

clude on Thursday, Sept. 30 with a closing reception from 4 to 6 p.m. when visitors will have the opportunity to meet the artists.

The NWFA Gallery in Cook is located at 210 S River St. adjacent to DreamWeaver Salon and Day Spa. Tour the gallery, view the Ancient Cedars exhibit, and shop from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, and from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday.

Contact NWFA by email at nwfamn.org@gmail.com and view additional information online at nwfamn.org and Facebook.

Music series to feature jam band from Rochester

COOK- Jaggedease, a Rochester-based jam band, will perform at Cook's Music in the Park on Wednesday, Sept. 1 from 6 to 8 p.m.

According to band member Gabe Holmes, Jaggedease "plays original music that covers numerous different genres, improvising off of the songs written....." They regularly perform at The Redwood Room, The Forager, Thesis Brewery, and Civic Theatre Live in Rochester. Learn more about Jaggedease on their website at jaggedease.

com.

In case of rain, the concert will move to the Cook VFW.

Music in the Park is made possible by the Cook Chamber of Commerce, Cook VFW Post 1757 and Auxiliary, Cook Lions Club, Northwoods Friends of the Arts, and free-will community donations.

First Friday Mass added at St. Mary's

COOK- St. Mary's Catholic Church in Cook will offer a new worship option for parishioners beginning in September with First Friday Mass.

The inaugural celebration of First Friday Mass will be on Friday, Sept. 3 at 7 a.m. There will be no holy hour or confession preceding the Mass. This service will be available on the first Friday of every month.

Chili chefs sought for Orr benefit feed

ORR- The second annual Tony Cornelius Chili Cook-off in Orr is less than a month away, but those with a fantastic chili recipe and a competitive streak still have time to toss their pots in the ring.

Up to 20 teams will compete for awards such as People's Choice, Not Your Mother's Chili, Fire in the Hole, and A Round

of Applause in the event, which will be on Saturday, Sept. 25 from 4 to 8 p.m. at the Orr Community Center.

Prospective chili chefs should call or text Kay Cornelius at 218-780-9187 for more information or to sign up.

Cook-off proceeds benefit the Tony Cornelius Memorial Scholarship, which is given to a North Woods School graduate entering a two-year trade program.

Along with great food, a cash bar and raffles will be taking place as well.

Admission for those 12 and older is \$10 and includes voting rights. Kids ages six to 11 get in for \$5, and those five and under are free.

Korda to lead fall writing workshop

COOK - A four-hour writing workshop, "Nature Writing: Autumn in the North," will be offered on Saturday, Oct. 2 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Northwoods Friends of the Arts Gallery in Cook.

DyAnne Korda, a poet and experienced writing instructor, will lead the workshop. Her work has been published in many journals including "The Wisconsin Academy Review". She has authored several poetry and story collections includ-

ing "This Earth Woman", "Path of Belonging", and "Finding the Lost Woman." Her most recent book is titled "The Shore's Absolute Edge".

"As autumn's colorful landscapes peak, we pause to appreciate summer's bounty and prepare for the season to come," Korda said in a description of the course. "Set aside a day to discover the richness of your inner harvest through nature writing. In a supportive group circle, generate written pieces through reading, discussion and free-flow nature-writing exercises. The class will focus primarily on the early stages of the writing process and include time to reflect on our work and share. Weather pending, we may take a short walk."

Registration is required, and the cost is \$40 for NWFA members and \$55 for nonmembers. Register at the NWFA Gallery in Cook from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, and from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday. Writers may also call to register at 218-666-2153.

NSCU receives service award

COOK- North Star Credit Union (NSCU) has received the 2021 Dora Maxwell Social Responsibility Community Service

Award for giving back to its communities.

The credit union was honored for its participation in "CU Day: People Helping People," where it gave \$3,200 to 17 different nonprofits that each have a mission of devoting to a specific cause with an overall theme of people helping people, community, and giving back. The goals of the activity were to build awareness about meaningful causes for staff and communities, and to support nonprofits that were suffering due to the pandemic.

"This project was especially important to us because staff members had an opportunity to donate to charities that impact our lives and those around us," said NSCU Executive Vice President Jennifer Stedt. "There are so many volunteers working hard to make a difference everyday and we wanted to find a way to help."

The award, sponsored by the Minnesota Credit Union Network (MnCUN) and the Credit Union National Association (CUNA), recognizes credit unions for the activities they coordinate that benefit their community or a specific charity. NSCU's winning entry will advance to the national competition against other state awardees.

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83-page report to members of the council, along with township representatives and media.

Soucheray's presentation focused mostly on personnel challenges, such as strategies for recruiting and retaining ambulance personnel, attracting and retaining experienced and trained leadership, and creating opportunities for members to enhance their skills. He said discussions with ambulance personnel indicated that current ambulance supervisor Dena Suihkonen is generally viewed positively, although some maintain concerns about her limited leadership experience. Soucheray noted that training is key to building the TAAS's leadership capacity.

The report itself, a copy of which was obtained by the *Timberjay*, focuses primarily on TAAS's financial struggles, and lays out three operational scenarios moving forward. While none of them showed the ambulance service operating at a profit, the EMSRB recommended a scenario that brought the service close to break-even.

Maintaining the service's current operational model, on the other hand, would likely lead to deficits of close to \$100,000 annually, even assuming the service begins taking large numbers of inter-hospital transfers again. That's true, in large part, because of the extraordinarily high wages that the service set for its paid on-call personnel when it shifted to that model back in 2018. The consultant retained by the EMSRB for the financial analysis stated that the firm was not aware of any ambulance service in Minnesota or Wisconsin that paid on-call staff as high a wage rate as in Tower. Currently, on-call EMTs are paid \$11.50 an hour, while EMRs are paid \$10.50.

Most other services around the Upper Midwest pay in the range of \$4-\$6 an hour for staff who are on-call, according to the report. "The current paid on-call structure is costly and inherently brings some additional risks related to FLSA and IRA rules on on-call," wrote the consultants, referring to the federal Fair Labor Standards Act and the risk of overtime liability under federal law. "Essentially, TAAS is paying on-call staff what could be considered a livable wage, which is not how on-call staffing is intended to function," noted the consultant.

The on-call system was put in place in 2018 by former ambulance supervisor Steve Altenburg, with approval of a prior city council. The concerns now raised by the EMSRB were raised at the time by this newspaper but were dismissed by Altenburg and the city council.

Since Altenburg's dismissal, city officials have discussed the need to reduce the on-call pay rate but have faced pushback from some on-call staff that have grown used to the exceptionally high pay. The EMSRB recommendation may provide greater justification for the city to make the needed adjustments.

City records highlight just how much some ambulance personnel are currently earning from the paid on-call system that Altenburg established. Since the city council ended the prohibition on incurring over 40 hours per

Ambulance scenarios in brief

Scenario	Total expenses*	Annual loss
#1 (status quo)	\$544,832	\$90,629
#2 (cut POC pay)	\$456,528	\$2,325
#3 (career service)	\$834,182	\$379,979

All projections are for the 2022 calendar year. Scenarios developed and analyzed by EMSRB, which recommends adoption of Scenario #2. *Total projected revenue for each scenario was \$454,203, which assumed 100 transfers per year to generate additional revenue. Average estimated profit per transfer is \$448.

week in on-call time earlier this year, the highest paid EMT in the city is now on track to earn approximately \$95,000 in annual pay, for a schedule that averages about 15 hours per week of actual work time. That's far higher than any other city employee, although the position does not come with health benefits.

Despite the exceptionally high cost of the city's on-call system, Soucheray noted that pay is typically not the primary motivator for ambulance staff, who are more often encouraged by the camaraderie and sense of pride that most services develop. The financial consultant agreed, and questioned whether TAAS's on-call pay structure actually benefitted the service's recruitment and retention of ambulance personnel.

The report highlights the fact that the ambulance service has not engaged in realistic budgeting or financial accounting for years and that it is only beginning to establish true accounting of its expenses. One of the major expenses that the service has not calculated in the past is depreciation, which is one of the largest line items in the budget of most other ambulance services. The consultant pegged the ambulance service's annual depreciation at \$72,567, a figure that has a substantial impact on projected surpluses going forward. This expense had never been accounted for in city financials.

Scenarios outlined

The financial report lays out three distinct scenarios, including continuing with the status quo, converting to an all-paid career ambulance service with full-time personnel, or its recommended option, which reduces on-call pay to \$5 an hour for all on-call personnel, regardless of their certification level. Activation or duty pay for all personnel would be set at \$25 for EMTs and \$20 for EMRs.

All of the scenarios include an increase in the number of inter-hospital transfers, from the current relatively low number to approximately 100 per year. The consultant concluded that the TAAS does generate about \$448 in profit, on average, from transfers, and recommended that the service take advantage of that revenue stream, but only after it has stabilized its 911 emergency capabilities. All of the scenarios also assume that the TAAS will begin to comply with state law that requires that all ambulance services maintain fully-staffed on-call schedules 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Soucheray noted that the TAAS has not been in compliance with that requirement for years. The report also recommends that the service reduce its ambulance fleet

from three vehicles to two.

Even assuming a substantial increase in transfers, the EMSRB's financial consultant concluded that the status quo, labeled Scenario 1, would lead to a \$90,629 deficit in 2022 and slowly increasing deficits in subsequent years. The EMSRB concluded that maintaining the status quo required the least change, but that it would leave the TAAS unprepared for the future and keep it saddled to a very expensive labor model that appears to provide few benefits.

Converting the service to a full-time, career ambulance service, labeled Scenario 3 in the report, would likely provide the most reliable staffing model, noted the report. But it would also be extremely expensive, leaving the TAAS with a projected \$379,979 deficit next year and growing deficits after that. Those shortfalls would need to be made up primarily from taxpayer dollars, notes the report.

The EMSRB's recommended model, labeled Scenario 2, would provide the least financial drain, with a projected deficit of \$2,325 next year, slowly rising to \$11,288 by 2025. The recommended scenario would "bring TAAS in-line with similar ambulance services as it relates to on-call and duty pay," notes the report. It would also help ensure strong and reliable leadership by creating a full-time ambulance manager position with a full city benefits package and greater authority over the service. The current ambulance supervisor is considered part-time and reports to the clerk-treasurer rather than the city council, but would likely report directly to the council under the recommended scenario.

Other concerns

The EMSRB also highlighted a number of other concerns that appeared to be impacting the service, undermining its financial status as well as hampering staff morale. The report noted that TAAS's previous ambulance supervisor chose to sign a contract with a large commercial insurance company for the years 2017-2020, that willingly discounted TAAS's rates for inter-hospital transfers to at or near Medicare reimbursement rates. "This agreement cost the city tens of thousands of dollars in lost revenue for those years combined, which was ultimately made up by tax-paying citizens," noted the report. TAAS has since discontinued the agreement.

The report also expressed concern that ill feelings generated in the wake of the dismissal of the prior ambulance director had created divisions, or "camps" within the ambulance service which were undermining the service's

cohesiveness and morale. "A great amount of ambiguity exists over roles and responsibilities related to the termination of the previous ambulance manager, his role in the negative publicity of the service, and those who may have been hired under his direction," noted the report.

The former director, who now regularly reports negatively on the city and ambulance in the *Tower News*, prompted the EMSRB to note that one of the newspapers in town is currently "creating quite a bit of conflict without stating all the facts."

Soucheray, in his comments to the city council on Monday, noted that "myths and rumors" in the community were making it difficult to move forward. "It's time to leave the past in the past and move on to build something really good," he said.

While chiding one newspaper, the report also cited the value of the reporting by the other newspaper in town. "Years' worth of local newspaper articles relating to TAAS, while certainly uncomplimentary of previous city of Tower and TAAS leadership and practices, have shed light on the need for change," said the EMSRB, clearly referring to reporting by the *Timberjay*.

The EMSRB notes that the service still has some fence-mending to accomplish with neighboring communities, which contribute financially to the TAAS. Soucheray said talk of missing money isn't an issue that the EMSRB addressed and said that the city could hire a forensic accountant if it wants to settle that issue.

Improving relations with partner communities is valuable, said Soucheray,

since the TAAS is likely to need an increase in the per-capita contributions to sustain itself financially.

Overall, the report strikes a generally optimistic tone about the future of the service and the desire for improvement. "A change to the ambulance leadership in 2020 brought new ideas, fresh energy, and a willingness to improve the current state of TAAS," wrote the consultant. "With this leadership change, there is the potential for an effective ambulance service and a rebuilding of trust amongst all staff and city leadership. This trust between leadership and staff is a fundamental requirement for the retention of staff."

Soucheray said the TAAS should also do more to increase its public presence and establish ways to build its brand and demonstrate its professionalism in the community. He said such steps will increase trust, build community support for the service, and aid recruitment and retention of new members. "Building positive relationships with stakeholders is imperative to creating success," he said.

Soucheray recommended that the city establish a working group to examine the report's findings in detail and to help implement changes to the service's operations. In doing so, he said the city and TAAS need to move forward with a unified front. He urged the members of the council to read the report thoroughly and he offered to answer any questions they might have after they've had time to do so. He said the EMSRB staff hopes to continue to work with TAAS as it seeks to make the changes necessary for success. "If you're willing, we'd like to

return in a year to check in on your progress," he said.

Reaction

Ambulance supervisor Dena Suihkonen said she was still working her way through the voluminous report, but said she expects it will prove to be "an invaluable tool" in helping to reshape the service. "I believe that we learn from both compliments and constructive criticisms and believe this report will bring with it a new beginning," she said.

Suihkonen also noted that some of the concerns raised in the report have already improved since the EMSRB evaluators came to Tower in May. "I believe that even in the short span of time since May, I am seeing a lessening of the 'camps' noted in the report," Suihkonen said. "We have acquired new members and with that are seeing our long-standing members enjoying helping our new members become involved. New members are the lifeblood of rural services and we look forward to having more members join us."

Suihkonen said the TAAS has also been making a greater effort at outreach, noting that the service had a presence at the Old Settlers picnic as well as at the Breitung Fourth of July picnic.

"The ability to show others our amazing equipment without being involved in a medical emergency is fun for both our crews as well as the community and we are planning future opportunities to engage the community with our members," stated Suihkonen.

The *Timberjay* also reached out to Steve Altenburg for comment on the report. He did not respond.



International Rainy-Lake of the Woods Watershed Board

VIRTUAL PUBLIC MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL RAINY-LAKE OF THE WOODS WATERSHED BOARD

The International Rainy-Lake of the Woods Watershed Board invites you to attend a virtual public meeting with the Board on:

**September 14, 2021
1-3 pm Central Time**

To participate in this Zoom meeting, please register on the Board's website: ijc.org/rlwwb. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting. You are encouraged to register by September 7.

This meeting is an opportunity to hear about the activities of the Board and its Committees e.g. the Water Levels Committee, the Aquatic Ecosystem Health Committee, the Engagement Committee and the Adaptive Management Committee. Participants will also have an opportunity to ask questions and share feedback.

All are welcome! Please circulate this invitation to others who may be interested.

If you require additional information, please contact:

Wellsley Hamilton IRLWWB Canadian Secretary
Wellsley.Hamilton@ec.gc.ca

Scott Jutila IRLWWB U.S. Secretary
Scott.A.Jutila@usace.army.mil

The International Joint Commission formed the International Rainy-Lake of the Woods Watershed Board to assist with binational coordination of water quality efforts for the entire boundary watershed and to coordinate the management of the water levels and flows on Rainy and Namakan lakes and the Rainy River.

CLOSED...Continued from page 1

Waters is not unprecedented but it has happened only once before. The Forest Service closed the entire Superior National Forest due to extreme drought back in 1976.

The closure means no new permits are being issued until further notice. All permits issued for Aug. 21-Sept. 3 have been canceled, and anyone with permits starting Saturday, Sept. 4 or beyond has been sent an email alerting them that their permits may be canceled as well. Meanwhile, wilderness rangers began fanning out last weekend across the 1.1 million-acre wilderness in order to contact travelers already in the wilderness to advise them to evacuate in an orderly way as soon as practical.

Ginny Nelson, manager of the Spirit of the Wilderness outfitters, said she had a heavy heart as she processed many trip cancellations this week. On Monday, the Ely outfitting business was still waiting on a couple of canoe parties to return. "We normally have a big week here with outfitting, but this is turning out to not be my favorite week at all," she said.

Looking at the positive side of things, Nelson said a couple of groups who were kept out of the BWCAW decided to still take their gear and head on a trip outside of the Boundary Waters. "There is a small silver lining that those people who come to the area and are solely focused on the Boundary Waters, may not take the time to check out the other area lakes and local attractions. These circumstances now give them that chance to explore the Ely area in a different way. They are finding out that there are some fun resorts and campgrounds, hiking trails and other outdoor activities here, too," she said.

Outfitters were playing a waiting game this week, hoping that conditions will change enough to allow the Forest Service to reopen the wilderness.

Kawishiwi District Ranger Aaron Kania said the Forest Service will assess conditions weekly and that they remain hopeful that sufficient rain will arrive to allow them to reopen the Boundary Waters as soon as possible.

"This is definitely not a decision we took lightly," said Kania. "We know the impact this will have on



A refueled Sikorsky S-61 helicopter leaves the USFS Air Attack base at the Ely Airport last Friday to continue battling the Greenwood Fire. The helicopter can suck 1,000 gallons of water out of a lake or stream and dump it with pinpoint accuracy on a fire.

photo by K. Vandervort

businesses in our gateway communities. This really shows how extreme this drought has become and how extreme the fire conditions have gotten."

Months of intensifying drought have created fire conditions far beyond what is normally seen in northeastern Minnesota, even during the fall fire season, and the conditions have stretched resources well beyond the capacity of the Forest Service to manage fires and recreational use of the BWCAW simultaneously.

"As we looked at it all together, it really made sense to go wilderness-wide with the closure," Kania added, who said the decision allows the Forest Service to focus its fire-fighting resources on the highest priority fires.

The Forest Service had already closed much of the northwestern part of the Boundary Waters several weeks ago in response to several major wildfires just north of the border, in Quetico Provincial Park. Those fires have grown dramatically in recent days, as well, fueled by the same conditions that are posing challenges south of the border.

While the Forest Service had managed to keep most of its wildfires under control for much of the summer, the recent intensification of the drought and a full



USFS wilderness rangers worked to clear the BWCAW this week as a closure order was enacted. submitted photo

week of near critical fire weather allowed both the Greenwood and John Ek fires to explode as of last Friday.

The Greenwood blaze, a lightning strike fire first reported Aug. 15, more than doubled in size on Monday, fanned by dry air and strong southwesterly winds. As of Tuesday, the Forest Service had put the Greenwood fire at 21,720 acres. That fire is burning outside the BWCAW and has forced the evacuation of several hundred Lake County residents in the potential path of the fire. The Forest Service has offered no information on the status of homes or cabins in the path of the fire. Under extreme fire conditions on Monday, the Greenwood fire command pulled crews out of the McDougal Lake area, which had been stationed there to protect cabins.

Conditions were so extreme Monday afternoon

that command even pulled aircraft from the fire for a time.

Tuesday's cooler temperatures and lighter winds allowed crews to re-engage in the McDougal Lake area and work to strengthen fire lines and conduct defensive backfiring near residences to reduce fuels near structures. The fire command has relocated to Babbitt, while the Isabella Community Center will serve as a forward operating base for the fire-fighting effort.

Monday's extreme fire conditions also blew up the John Ek fire, located near Little Saganaga Lake in a remote portion of the central BWCAW. According to Inciweb, that fire is now estimated at 1,567 acres, although no resources are currently assigned to fire line operations there. Crews are assessing the situation and will develop a suppression

plan, although resources are already stretched thin on the Greenwood fire.

The Forest Service is also aware of more than a dozen smaller fires throughout the Boundary Waters, several of which were first spotted this week. Any one of them has the potential to grow given the exceptionally dry fuel conditions.

Local impact

With the closure of the Boundary Waters and other parts of the Superior National Forest, the Ely Chamber of Commerce is emphasizing that many recreational sites remain open in and around Ely. That includes extensive hiking trail systems, such as Secret-Blackstone, Bass Lake, and Kawishiwi Falls.

Chamber director Eva Sebesta said Tuesday that she sees the economic impact in Ely. "If it is just a week where the Boundary Waters is closed, I think that is something that our outfitters can rebound from. We have had a very busy outfitting season for many businesses. If it ends up being a closure for the rest of the season that will have a big impact here, and that has a ripple effect across the community."

Sebesta said many outfitters are looking to pivot for the rest of the season and help Ely visitors explore and take advantage of some of the under-utilized places in the Superior National Forest for day trips and hiking. "Unfortunately the (coronavirus) pandemic kind of primed us for being able to pivot and look at things from a different perspective," she said.

Jason Zabokrtsky, of Ely Outfitting Co., predicted that Forest Service officials may be preparing for an extended wilderness closure. "The Boundary Waters permit reservation site at www.rec.gov shows that not a single permit is available through the quota season that ends Oct. 1," he said. "I don't know what they are driving at, but right now no permit reservations are allowed through the end of next month."

Kania said the Forest Service will be considering allowing some day use of the wilderness in the coming days, but for now, he said, officials are focused on the fire situation. "Once we catch up with the fire activity, we may be able to allow for some day use, like motor use," he said.

Zabokrtsky was still waiting for a couple of canoe parties to return on Tuesday. "Our business is 100-percent BWCA canoe tripping and right now there is zero of that business going on," he said.

Ely Outfitting Co. staff Nick Bailles and Amy Freeman were in their Sheridan Street facility Tuesday morning organizing and shelving sleeping bags and cook kits. "It is so sad to see these shelves full. The equipment is usually in canoes in the wilderness," Freeman said. Other staff members were in the office processing trip cancellations, answering emails and fielding phone calls.

"We are in a holding pattern and we don't know when the Forest Service will tell us what their next decision is or when they will make it," Zabokrtsky said.

Loggers pitch in

Local loggers put their skills to use earlier this week to help create shaded fuel breaks at key locations on the Greenwood Fire.

"It is important to remember that anyone who works on a fire needs to receive additional and specific training before they are allowed near the fire line," Kania noted. Local logging contractors completed that training last Sunday which included practicing the deployment of fire shelters.

"They got to work quickly after they finished training and are giving firefighters additional tools to use in their efforts to stop the Greenwood Fire. Their work will help protect people, property, and natural resources," Kania said.

"We know that people care greatly about the long-term health of the forest and the beauty of the natural areas in the Superior National Forest. While the logging actions are taking place during an active incident, loggers are following all the applicable laws and regulations," he said.

Kania expressed his appreciation for the work being done by these loggers. "We're glad to be able to contract with local companies who can apply their knowledge of this area to help in our efforts on the Greenwood Fire. We know they are committed to this place and the long-term availability of timber resources in north-east Minnesota."

GREENWOOD...Continued from page 1

Bassing, filed an immediate complaint with the Office of Administrative Hearings, or OAH, alleging a violation of Minn. Stat. 211B.09, which makes it a crime for a public official to use their official authority to compel another person to take part in political activity.

While the judges found evidence that both Fazio and Indihar may have attempted to compel others to sign onto the political advertisement, which Fazio placed in the March 5 *Tower*

News, they determined that the preponderance of the evidence suggested those efforts had failed. In the end, they noted while 18 members of the department had ultimately agreed to sign the ad produced by Fazio, the three who did not could not identify any retaliation or threats of retaliation they had experienced as a result of their refusal.

While dismissing the complaint, the judges made clear that they found Fazio's and Indihar's actions unac-

ceptable. "Calling subordinate employees to participate in a campaign advertisement is ill-advised and cannot be condoned," wrote Chief Judge James Lefave, in an accompanying legal memorandum. "This is particularly true when one is in a position of authority and married to one of the candidates."

Judge Ann O'Reilly, in a concurring opinion, delivered even harsher words for the two fire officials. "Chief Fazio and Assistant Chief Indihar's actions,

while not a violation of Minn. Stat. § 211B.09, under the specific facts of this case, present serious questions as to their professional judgment and the type of working environment they have created at the Greenwood Township Fire Department," Judge O'Reilly wrote. "A fire chief and assistant chief have significant authority and control over their subordinates, including control over their subordinates' continued employment and working conditions. Thus, it is entirely possible that a subordinate could feel compelled to reluctantly go along with an inappropriate political request from a superior, even if the subordinate disagrees, to prevent difficulties in the future."

Judge O'Reilly even seemed to suggest that a change in the statute might be in order. "Had Minn. Stat. § 211B.09 been written to say, [an] employee or official of the state or of a political subdivision may not use official authority or influence to compel or attempt

to compel (emphasis hers) a person to . . . to take part in political activity," a violation would certainly have been found in this case and a significant penalty imposed."

But the judges agreed that given that no witness testified that they had felt forced or compelled to take part in the ad, the law, as written, requires dismissal. In doing so, however, Judge O'Reilly offered up a warning. "Finally, should any retaliation or other reprisal arise out of any member's failure or refusal to lend his or her name to the political advertisement, it would likely trigger legal action beyond a campaign complaint – costly legal action into which the Fire Department and Township could be brought. Respondents are, thus, well advised to avoid this type of political action in the future and ensure that the members whose names did not appear on the ad do not suffer any negative consequences as a result."

Complainant Joanne Bassing said she was dis-

appointed with the ultimate decision, but said it was important to bring attention to the actions of the fire officials. "We knew it was going to be difficult to prove that they had compelled people to sign the ad, but we pushed ahead because of the unethical nature of their use of township resources," said Bassing. While Fazio paid for the ad with his own funds, Bassing noted that the town's firefighters were being paid while attending a business meeting, that later turned into a political rally, of sorts.

While disappointed in the decision, Bassing said she was pleased to see that the judges recognized the inappropriateness, if not criminality, of the actions described in court. "They indicated that there's a real problem here."

The *Timberjay* sent an email message to Greenwood Fire Chief David Fazio, seeking comment for this story. He did not respond.



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CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

COVID-19 indicators continue to worsen statewide

by DAVID COLBURN
Cook/Orr Editor

Area nursing homes facing federal vaccine mandate

REGIONAL- As key indicators of coronavirus activity continue to rise across Minnesota, health officials directed their attention on Tuesday to recent developments that may help to slow the concerning increase.

“Compared to last year at this time our case rates are 84 percent higher,” said health commissioner Jan Malcolm, noting that all but two of the state’s counties have substantial or high transmission according to the Centers for Disease Control. “The seven-day average of new cases is 22.8 per 100,000, up from 17.7 in the prior week.”

There were 9,710 new COVID cases last week, Malcolm said, compared to 8,870 cases the prior week.

Cases are also on the rise in St. Louis County, according to Public Health Director Amy Westbrook.

“Our rates are a little bit better than the state,” Westbrook said. “Still, the increase is concerning, because we are seeing our rates where we were in early May, even late April. That’s concerning, because we’re going into the school year, we’re going into events like the state fair.”

The greatest increases are in northern and central St. Louis County, Westbrook said. Evidence of that can be seen in the biweekly case rate used for school decision-making, which in north St. Louis County more than doubled from about 8 to 19.2 in two weeks. This is the highest of any region of the county. Because of the process used to confirm and calculate the biweekly case rate, the number reflects the level of case activity two weeks prior.

“We want to do all we can to call attention to our increasing rates, the importance of vaccination and masking, and all the other public health interventions that we rely on for decreasing community transmission,” Westbrook said.

Westbrook also emphasized the need for those with symptoms to get tested, not only for their personal health, but to assist public health officials in assessing the ongoing extent of infections to help plan for mitigation efforts.

Vaccinations rise

Malcolm reported that the pace in vaccinations also continued to rise last week, and noted an encouraging trend among school-age recipients. Fifty percent of those between 12-15 years old have now received at least one dose of the Pfizer vaccine, the only one approved for use in that age group. Daily vaccinations among all Minnesotans have nearly doubled in recent weeks, Malcolm said.

“Today we’re averaging almost 5,000 a day,” she said.

As of Tuesday, nearly 3.3 million Minnesotans had received at least one dose of COVID vaccine, including 71.2 percent of those 16 and older. At 69 percent, St. Louis County lags slightly behind the state as a whole for the 16-plus age group.

“The number of people who show up for vaccination (at county-sponsored clinics) is fewer than before, but we’re still moving along and getting people vaccinated, which is a good thing,” Westbrook said. With respect to the gains, she said, “We’re talking about inches now rather than meters or miles.” State officials and Westbrook were of one accord that the official approval of the Pfizer vaccine by the FDA could lead many of those who are unvaccinated to now get the shots. The final approval, which applies to vaccines for those 16 and older, also paves the way for employers to implement vaccination requirements more easily for employees. “Now that it’s fully authorized, it’s very similar to any other vaccine that’s



out there,” Westbrook said. “It’s been tested to be safe, and it’s been tested to be effective. Especially given the situation we’re in with the Delta variant circulating, there is a lot of reason to consider mandating vaccines, especially through employers.”

A Monday press release from Gov. Tim Walz also touted the success of the state’s \$100 gift card incentive in raising vaccination rates. About 80,000 people who received their first dose of vaccine applied for the reward, which ended last Sunday.

Of particular note, Walz said, was that a high percentage of applicants were from counties that had some of the lowest overall vaccination rates in the state.

Nursing homes

In the realm of employer mandates, two North Country nursing homes are awaiting guidance from the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services about President Joe Biden’s recent declaration that all nursing home staff nationwide will be required to be vaccinated. Facilities will stand to lose federal funding if they are not in compliance.

Boundary Waters Care Center, in Ely, and Cook Care Center, affiliated with Cook Hospital, are the area facilities that would be affected by the new rule. Both facilities were above the state average for vaccinated staff in the most recent CMMS report. Boundary Waters Care Center showed 69.6 percent of staff as fully vaccinated and Cook Care Center was in the top quartile statewide at 75.9 percent.

National and state long-term care advocacy groups have responded to Biden’s mandate with alarm, assert-

ing that the requirement could cause facilities to lose staff at a time when staffing shortages are already widespread and critical. “Right now on any given day, there are about 10,000 open positions in long-term care settings in Minnesota,” said Gayle Kvenvold in an Aug. 20 statement. Kvenvold is the CEO of LeadingAge Minnesota, an association that represents about 1,000 assisted-living and nursing homes. “The concern that we have about this mandate is that it has the potential to make worse a very severe workforce crisis that we already have in our settings.”

But, at the moment, without specific direction and guidance from CMMS, it’s not easy for nursing home administrators to predict specific workforce and financial impacts of the mandate.

“We recognize the great importance that COVID-19 vaccines play in the overall health and wellness of everyone who lives and works at Boundary Waters Care Center,” said Executive Director Adam Masloski in a written statement provided to the *Timberjay*. “Whereas we believe vaccination against COVID-19 is a necessary step we all can take to end this pandemic, it is important we thoughtfully consider the needs of our residents, team members, and all others residing in our region. Our team is presently considering how we can best protect those most vulnerable to the devastating outcomes from this relentless virus—older adults, the immunocompromised, and unvaccinated children.”

Masloski said that BWCC has been in compliance with all federal, state, and local health requirements since the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020. He urged people to get vaccinated “to prevent further spread of COVID-19.”

Westbrook said that

the county health department has been working closely with long-term and congregate care facilities to encourage vaccinations among both residents and staff.

“No one wants to see mandates,” Westbrook said. “Everybody wants the vaccine to be taken up voluntarily.”

When county health specialist Aubrie Hoover took on the task of advising schools in northern St. Louis County about COVID-19 practices last year, the state’s Safe Schools Plan provided a regulatory framework for her consultations. With the end of the state emergency, regulations are gone, replaced by strong recommendations based on CDC, American Academy of Pediatrics, and state health and education department guidance. That’s brought about some changes in her work.

“This year is almost more challenging than last year because they don’t have the mandates or the requirements to fall back on,” Hoover said. “Now every best practice is strongly recommended, strongly encouraged, but ultimately up to the school to decide if they will implement that. So consultations, we’ve been doing a lot more than last year as they’re planning for return to school.”

The upward trend in cases over the past six weeks has caused many districts to rethink the plans they started formulating in July, Hoover said.

“Our rates were lower when we began planning with a lot of the schools (in mid-July),” Hoover said. “For schools that wanted to dial back on masks; we’re saying, ‘Okay, this is local control. If that’s what you’re going to decide, how can we make it safer?’ They have to put a policy in place if they’re going to require masks, and what does that look like for a student who chooses not to wear a mask?”

What’s the plan?”

The issue is complicated, Hoover said, by the fact that a large portion of the population is experiencing COVID fatigue and have scaled back on their own COVID precautions. This creates a balancing act for school administrators as they decide what COVID precautions and protocols to implement.

“Schools are being very mindful and thoughtful in how they approach this because they want to protect the integrity of in-person learning and their faculty and their students, and they also want to have their students remain in school,” Hoover said.

The state Department of Education is making free COVID testing available to schools, recommending weekly tests for all who are unvaccinated and more frequent testing for students involved in extracurricular activities such as sports. However, Hoover said the response to the program among districts she consults with has been mixed.

“I have some schools that adamantly want that to be one of their mitigation strategies, especially for student athletes,” she said. “Then, I have some schools that just want to provide resources and information to families about where they can go for a COVID test in their area. So, it’s kind of across the board.”

Booster shots

State infectious disease director Kris Ehresmann addressed the recent CDC recommendation for COVID booster shots during Tuesday’s press conference, emphasizing that the federal guidance is clear that people should not receive a booster until eight months have passed since their second vaccination. Boosters have been recommended only for those people who received the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, Ehresmann said, with additional study necessary before determining a recommendation for the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

FOOD...Continued from page 1

bless them and keep them all in your prayers.”

Inside the popular restaurant, most of the 12 Britton’s employees, who had been working since midnight, had just finished cooking and boxing up 350 hot breakfasts that were picked up by USFS personnel to be delivered to the fire crews. Lunch was next.

Jacobson was contracted by Forest Service officials last month to help provide meals for the Delta Fire crews.

“We started July 16 with preparing about 120 meals, twice a day,” she said. “Since Thursday, we were asked to provide up to 350 breakfasts, lunches and dinners every day, that’s 1,050 meals every 24 hours. We had to close our doors to the public because we just couldn’t keep up and we were running out of space for organizing and preparing all the meals.”

By daybreak on Sunday, the breakfasts were out the door and the crew was arranging 350 open paper bags on tables, benches, chairs and counters for sack lunches. Each bag received an apple, bag of chips, snacks and other treats. Soon, sandwiches would be added to the bags before they headed out the door.

“We said we would continue for as long as they need us and until the fires are out,” Jacobson said.

As anyone who has visited the restaurant can attest, the firefighters are getting well fed. “We switch it up every day,” she said. “Tomorrow morning they will have breakfast burritos with



Part of the Britton’s Cafe crew, from left, Logan Crawford, Cassandra Lakner, Dortz Winsor, Cory Noble, Bonnie Jacobson, Luanne Harper, Samantha Jax and Jess Oelke. The longtime eatery closed to the public last Thursday, and started making 350 meals, three times each day, for the USFS fire fighters battling the Greenwood Fire. photo by K. Vandervort

American fries. They have also had the biscuit and gravy meal. We make eggs and bacon or sausage with American fries. We have blueberry or apple French toast on the menu. They have us decide what we will make for the day.”

What would cause an Ely icon to close its doors to the public during the gravy days of the tourist season, especially since recent COVID closures

challenged all the businesses in town?

“They asked us,” Jacobson said. “I told them we could do whatever they need. Our staff is amazing and they are what make all this happen.”

She listed off her staff, Samantha “Sam” Jax, Cassandra Lakner, Dortz (not Delores!) Winsor, Cory Noble, Luanne Harper, Brenda Johnson, Bev Kappes, Logan Crawford, Jess

Oelke, Sue Leino, Carla Olsen, and Joe Rasmussen.

“We also have a ton of people helping us,” Jacobson added, including her son, Jesse Cornwell, Jim Woods, Paul and Tina Nyman, and Kathy Zupancich.

“I’m so blessed with all these people coming in to help us help the firefighters. I have so many wonderful people in my life. Jess took a U-Haul to Sam’s Club in Duluth to get more food, and

a bunch of people showed up and helped unload the truck. So many great people live in this community.”

As the Britton’s staff was preparing another round of meals, a steady stream of hungry customers kept knocking at the door Sunday morning hoping to get breakfast.

“We have the big sign on the door explaining why we’re closed but they knock anyway,” she said. “Once they find out what we’re doing, they thank us for what we’re doing.”

Community service is in Jacobson’s heart. Britton’s stepped to the plate a decade ago to help the firefighters battling the Pagami Creek Fire. This is the first time the restaurant made the decision to close to the public.

“Back then we just made their lunches and the crews came in here for breakfast, because they weren’t so far away,” she said.

Jacobson and her crew of dedicated workers do get some time off during the day and evening.

“It just seems like we’re here all the time. My staff is awesome. It amazes me what they all do,” she said as her eyes welled up with emotion. “I’m not going to cry,” she called out to her staff nearby. But a few tears were spotted on her cheek.

“I would like everyone to keep all these firefighters and everyone involved in their prayers,” Jacobson said. “And thank you all for your support.”

SAFE LEARNING

ISD 696 ready to open as coronavirus pandemic continues

by KEITH VANDERVORT
Ely Editor

School board approves safety plan, hopes for a 'typical' school year

ELY – School board members here are not all comfortable with some of the precautions spelled out in a school reopening plan they approved this week as the 2021-22 school year is set to begin during a continuing coronavirus pandemic.

Wearing protective face masks and vaccinations, political footballs across the country as well as in Ely, and distance learning options this year for families who don't feel safe on the ISD 696 campus were the focus of a lengthy discussion at a school board study session Monday night.

Ultimately, the school board approved a resolution that spells out the administration's procedures to keep students and staff as safe as possible from COVID-19, using the limited number of recommended requirements set forth by federal and state education and health officials. The goal is to return to normal school operations and programming while giving the administration the ability to make changes as public health conditions dictate.

"We were all hoping to have a more typical operation for the new school year, but things changed this summer, so we have been looking at plans and recommendations," Superintendent Erik Erie said as he introduced the Safe Learning Reopening Plan 2021-2022.

ISD 696 will not require COVID-19 vaccinations for all those staff and students who are authorized to receive them. ISD 696 will not require students, staff and visitors to wear protective face masks while on campus.

"These were kind of hot-button topics as our Safe School Learning Plan Advisory Council met recently," Erie said. "We are encouraging vaccinations but not requiring them. Plans are in the works to have local health officials conduct a COVID-19 vaccination clinic on school campus this fall as emergency-use-only authorizations are lifted and younger students are allowed to receive them," he added.

The Minnesota Departments of Health and Education strongly recommend all students, staff, and visitors wear masks, but masks are not required.

"We acknowledge that recommendation," Erie



Construction crews used a specialized crane to carefully place a 60,000-pound propane tank onto a cement cradle last Thursday on the Ely school campus. The tank was relocated from the front yard of the school.
photo by K. Vandervort

Tanks a lot!

ELY – Lots of heavy lifting was accomplished last week at the \$20 million Ely school district building construction and renovation project.

The 60,000-pound propane tank was relocated from the front yard of the school to the southwest corner of the campus. The campus's former heating plant building is long gone, demolished to make room for a new building linking the Memorial and Washington school buildings.

The campus heating plant was relocated to the back of the Memorial building and the 32,000-gallon propane tank was moved to a more efficient location according to building construction officials.

In a project update presented to Ely school board members this week, Kraus-Anderson project manager Brendan Ward said extensive ledge rock removal was necessary to install the new propane fuel line. He said the new campus heating equipment should be ready to be turned on by mid-September.

said, but quickly added, "but that is subject to change."

Erie stressed that face mask mandates could be implemented for an individual class, classroom, or one of the school buildings if a positive coronavirus case or multiple cases are reported.

"Face masks are required on all school vehicles per federal rules," he said. "Everybody who is riding a bus, whether it is to and from school or going to an activity (such as sports competitions) are required to wear a mask at all times."

School board member Darren Visser voiced his frustration with medical and professional health research that shows both pro-mask and anti-mask recommendations.

"It seems like the medical profession can't agree on what the best stance is right now," he said. He wondered what changed in ISD 696 to shift from mask requirements to mask recommendation. "We are now dealing with a Delta variant that is twice as likely to hit kids."

School board chair Ray Marsnik acknowledged that

the protective face mask argument remains controversial.

"I can assure you I get emails on both sides of this issue," he said. "What I haven't heard about is what the health risks are of wearing a face mask. I can't recall hearing about anyone who died from wearing a mask. I realize there is some discomfort. My glasses sometime fog up. Younger kids may develop a rash because their skin may be more sensitive. Realistically, what is the concern?"

Marsnik also wondered what the legal ramifications would be if the school district sidestepped federal and state recommendations.

"If our infection rates go up what legal trouble is possible?" he asked.

Marsnik also wondered about peer pressure.

"How are the students who wear masks going to be treated when they come here?" he asked. "Are they going to be bullied? Will they take their masks off because they are embarrassed to be wearing them?"

Visser voiced his concern for the safety of K-5 students who don't have the opportunity to get vaccinations at this time, versus the grade 6-12 students who can get the vaccine. "We're not even comparing apples to apples here," he said. "It is completely different because of the (vaccine) opportunity for the older kids."

He continued, "I don't want to be sitting here discussing how we do grief counseling because one of our young students just passed away from COVID. I've been wrestling with this for a while. In digging

for more information, I find just as much on one side as I do the other. Even in the medical field, this feels like a political situation. We can't get clear guidance on what is the best way to go. It is a very uneasy thing for me overall."

School board member Tom Omerza related that he thought last year the safest place for Ely kids was on the school campus.

"Who knows what went on at home or a friend's house, or other activities outside the school campus. I still believe, outside of the hospital, that this is the safest place to go for students," he said.

Omerza stressed the need to maintain a safe place for students.

"We follow the numbers, like last year, from St. Louis County Health," he said. "We continue to monitor and be proactive."

Because children under age 12 are not authorized to receive a COVID-19 vaccination, school board member Hollee Coombe wondered if Ely elementary students "are sitting ducks." She feared an "explosion" of coronavirus cases coming for the Washington building. "What happens until a vaccination is possible?" she asked.

Visser stressed that with any decisions made on face masks, some parents on either side of the issue will decide to not have their kids in school.

"I, too, have been getting emails from parents on both sides of this issue," he said. "I hate the idea of losing students. They are either here in school or nothing. There is no alternative (distance learning) option. There will be some

student loss no matter what we do. I hear parents say if we do (require) masks they are not sending their kids, and if we don't require masks they are not sending their kids. These are very unprecedented times."

Erie said he did not know of any area school districts offering distance learning this school year.

"From Chisholm to ISD 2142, even Duluth, is not offering that. We know that for the majority of students and teachers, distance learning did not work well," he said. "The message we got from staff is that we don't want to again try to provide both (in school and distance learning) again this year."

The Safe Learning Reopening Plan spells out a number of procedures and protocols that will go into effect when school starts on Tuesday, Sept. 7.

Physical distancing, COVID-19 screening and testing, cleaning and maintaining healthy school facilities, handwashing and respiratory etiquette, contact tracing, and coordination with state and local health officials are addressed.

In a special meeting following the study session, the board approved a resolution adopting the plan and authorized the school administration, after consultation with the school board chair and notification to the school board, to implement any public health procedures and protocols during the school year as deemed necessary.

The school district's reopening plan is available for viewing on the ISD 696 website and Facebook page.

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IMPACTS ON AGRICULTURE

Area livestock producers reeling from effects of drought

Many already culling herds as pastures dry up, hay yields fall sharply

by MARSHALL HELMBERGER
Managing Editor

REGIONAL— All across northern Minnesota, livestock producers are slashing their herds in response to dried up pastures, minimal hay crops, and the rising cost of other feeds necessary to sustain them. With little or no relief in sight, it's not a question of if, but of how many head, to cull as a difficult summer

transitions into fall.

"I hate to sell them, but I'll have to," said Paul Knuti, of Embarrass, who used to run as many as 25 beef cows. "After I wean my calves, I'll probably have to ship them to market."

Knuti is hardly alone.

Emmett Berens, a longtime cattle rancher and livestock trucker from Linden Grove, said he's been far busier than usual

hauling livestock to various markets. He said a recent auction in Bagley featured over 5,000 head of cattle for sale. "Usually, you'll have about 3,500 there," he said.

Berens is cutting his herd as well, dropping it from the usual 150-160 head down to 120 at this point. "But I'll have to get rid of more yet," he said.

The loss of pasture is among the biggest problems

facing area ranchers right now as many fields have produced only a fraction of the forage of a typical summer. "I had to pasture on 40 acres of a neighbor's land just to give them something green to eat," said Berens. It was brushier than most pasture, but at least it gave his cattle some leaves to browse, he added.

See DROUGHT...pg. 4B



Hay yields are running about one-third of normal this year due to the intensifying drought. photo by M. HelMBERGER

DEVELOPMENT

City council okays CUP for RV park

Won't require EAW as ordinance appears to conflict with state law

by MARSHALL HELMBERGER
Managing Editor

TOWER— The city council here, on Monday, gave its 4-1 blessing to a conditional use permit, or CUP, for the proposed Renner RV park, to be located on Pike Bay just west of the Standing Bear Marina.

The council largely adopted the conditions approved by the city's planning and zoning commission, except it dropped the requirement that the developer, Justin Renner, complete an environmental assessment worksheet, or EAW.

The change prompted considerable discussion by the council, in part because the city's shoreland zoning ordinance states that a developer of a planned unit development (which seems to include RV parks) must complete an EAW before a CUP can be approved.

The ordinance provision has been dismissed as an error by some members of the planning and zoning commission in the past, but on Monday, Clerk-Treasurer Victoria Ranua contended that the ordinance is incompatible with state law. She noted that the city could order what's known as a "discretionary" EAW under state law, but only if it has evidence that the project poses the potential for "significant environmental effects." Ranua, who served as the land manager for the Mdewakanton Sioux community in Shakopee for a decade, said she had dealt with the EAW process many times and that the scale of the current project did not meet the threshold typical for a discretionary EAW.

Council member Kevin Norby suggested that impacts to wetlands on the property, or the installation of a septic system to serve the facility, could meet the definition, but Ranua contended those types of actions were largely routine with development and that the developer would need to comply with other regulatory agencies on those impacts in either case.

City attorney Karl Sundquist contended that the city ordinance didn't apply in either case because the RV park likely didn't meet the definition of a planned unit development. But it was Ranua's argument, which she bolstered by presenting the administrative rule in question, (Rule 4100.4500), that

See RV PARK...pg. 4B



GROWERS

Flowers for the picking

Woman returns home to find her floral niche

by DAVID COLBURN
Cook-Orr Editor

REGIONAL— "Stay on this path and you will find nourishment. Stay on this path and beauty will follow you." — Kate Ingrid Paul, in *Memoirs from Down in the Boondocks*

For Paul, who published those words in 2013, that path has been a circle, taking her away from her childhood home south of Iron Junction for 17 years but bringing her back in 2006 to Owl Forest Farm and a new future in which living in harmony with the land and nature is as natural as breathing.

"This is land that my grandpa owned," Kate said. "Home was just one mile down the road."

In 2010, her future husband, Ron, wandered down that path and into her life, and they married in 2011. Together, they started a community-supported-agriculture (CSA) vegetable operation in 2013, preparing up to 50 boxes of food a week during the growing season underneath a carport next to

See FLOWERS...pg. 4B



Top: In front, sons Levi and Noah, and Kate Paul, with Rich (Ron's dad) Paul and Ron Paul. Not pictured is Kate's mom, Donna Johnson, who also helps and lives next door.

Above left: You'll find colorful places for quiet contemplation at the farm.

Above: Sunflowers were in bloom in huge numbers this past week.

Left: A zinnia with a backdrop of yellow.

photos by D. Colburn

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Outdoors

Our lives in the
Northwoods

DEER HUNTING

DNR keeps a lid on area deer permits

Most areas to offer a small number of antlerless tags, but many remain bucks only

by MARSHALL HELMBERGER
Managing Editor

REGIONAL— Last year's exceptionally mild winter isn't translating into more generous bag limits for deer hunters this fall, at least here in northeastern Minnesota.

Indeed, hunters in most areas will be limited to bucks only again, although several local permit areas, including 107, 109, 176, 177, and 178

will each be offering a limited number of antlerless tags through the lottery.

The Department of Natural Resources will issue 600 antlerless tags in Permit Area 177, which is the largest number offered in any permit area in the region. That area includes farm country west of Cook as well as the shoreline of Lake Vermilion, both of which tend to hold the largest concentrations of whitetail deer in northern St.

Louis County. Up near the border, PA 107, located in far northwestern St. Louis and eastern Koochiching counties will offer 500 tags. PA 178, in central St. Louis County, will have 400 antlerless tags available, while PA 176, just to the north, will offer 150. PA 109 will offer just 25 antlerless tags. Such relatively low numbers of antlerless tags mean that most hunters in these permit areas will be limited to bucks only.

Right: A doe won't be a legal target for most deer hunters in northeastern Minnesota this fall.

file photo

Meanwhile, hunters in PA 119, in northeastern St. Louis County, and in PA 118 and 130, will be limited to bucks only this year, without any opportunity to take part in the lottery.

Hunters who hope to win

See PERMITS...pg. 3B



WILDLIFE WOES

Devil in the brush

Wily woodchuck wreaks havoc in my squash bed

I reacted with alarm back in July the first time I noticed my winter squash plants had been browsed. Like many backyard gardeners, winter squash is my pride and joy, a delicious fruit that is a staple in our household throughout the winter and often right into the following spring.

I tend my winter squash like a mother hen. It's usually my first stop in morning after waking up, when I check for the newly-opened female flowers, which I typically hand pollinate. I'm out there morning and evening, making sure they have enough moisture and watching the progress on the developing fruits. Because we're high up on a ridge, we usually miss the first frosts of the fall, which means I can almost always bring even butternuts, a notably long-season squash, to maturity.

In a normal fall, we sock away several bins worth of squash, secure in the knowledge we'll have months of good eating.

So, when my garden invader

moved from nibbling my squash plants to devouring my actual squash, I was, understandably, in full panic mode. Not knowing what exactly I was dealing with, I went into deer mode, and quickly erected my electric fence. It made no difference. In the meantime, whatever it was had apparently decided that it really, really liked squash.

I put up chicken wire and other fencing material I had stashed away over the years all around my squash, figuring that might be enough to keep a hare at bay. I sprayed my squash to the point of dripping with deer and rabbit repellent. And still, each day, when I would come home from the office, another burgeoning

squash fruit would have been reduced to a stem and a pile of seeds. My delicious kabocha squash, so dry and nutty, that cook up with the finest squash texture, were being devoured along with good portions of the plants. Then, the hopi gray squash started disappearing, and yet I had never been able to spot the creature who was destroying my garden. I put out a trail cam on several occasions, wanting to confirm that I was dealing with a mere animal, and not some evil spirit vexing me, yet I could never capture an image.

My garden, for so many years the place I am most at peace, became a place I almost feared to venture if only to avoid another stabbing disappointment.

I had a pretty good idea that whatever was raiding my garden lived underneath a brush pile off the edge of the driveway, which had become the repository of about three years-worth of brush and tree branches. I was tempted to light the thing on fire, but then I didn't think it was worth burning the entire township up over some lost squash, even if they were kabochas.

I had also concluded by this time that my perpetrator was a woodchuck, since I had never experienced such depredation from one of our neighborhood snowshoe hares before and the process of elimination left it as the most likely alternative.

I thought about sitting out with a rifle, but I had no idea when this nasty critter emerged from its lair under the brush pile and I really, literally, didn't have the time to sit in the yard all day. Finally, Jodi suggested borrowing a live trap from our friends Chuck and Mickey, which sounded at least like a workable solution. So, I asked Chuck, a squash grower himself, who instantly understood my agony. He had Mickey deliver their big Havahart trap to the office the following day.

I deployed it with high hopes, using a partially devoured

squash as bait, only to come home to an empty trap and a new destroyed squash two days in a row. In desperation, I covered my remaining squash with fencing, buckets, straw, or anything else I could find to try to protect the fruits.

Finally, on the third day, I came home, and the trap had been tripped. And there, inside, was my garden devil, a woodchuck who seemed not the least bit ashamed of himself. Even from inside his tiny prison, he wanted it known he was ready to take me on. And he had clearly fortified himself. Rather than getting worked up being caught in a trap, the critter decided, "hey, I might as well eat," and devoured the entire squash, other than the seeds and the guts. It had probably eaten at least a third of its body weight by the time I got home.

I can't tell you the relief that washed over me. Yes, half of our squash crop is gone and many of the plants were damaged to the point they won't produce a single fruit, but at least my perpetrator had been caught. I drove him to a gravel pit about three and half miles west of our house and let him go, or at least tried to let him go. The animal had apparently eaten so much it could barely move. I eventually got him out of the trap and he waddled off to his next adventure while I went home to tend to my squash.

Next year, we're installing a fence.



MARSHALL
HELMBERGER

Wildflower Watch

This week's featured flower
PANICLED ASTER



If you see a tall, all-white aster in the North Country, it's likely **Panicled Aster**, *Symphotrichum lanceolatum*, although you'll need to check a few things to confirm it. You'll need to count the number of rays on the flower. If there are more than 50, you're likely looking at a fleabane, another type of aster. If the flower cluster is relatively tight and flat on top, and the flowers are more cream colored than white, it's a flat-topped aster. On the panicled aster, the flowers (which measure 1/2-3/4 inches across) are grouped in a very loose cluster of as many as 100 blooms. Its leaves are long and narrow with fine, scattered teeth about a quarter inch apart.

It's actually our most common white aster, so it's worth getting to know its characteristics.

Outdoors briefly

Public Trust film to be shown in Ely

ELY-Environmental advocates will gather at the Ely State Theater next month for a screening of Patagonia's "Public Trust," a film highlighting America's three most threatened public lands, the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, Bears Ears National Monument, and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

The documentary will be shown on Thursday, Sept. 2 at 4:30 p.m. Tickets are \$5.

A panel discussion will follow the screening focusing on the controversial proposals threatening these areas.

This event is sponsored by Northeastern Minnesotans for Wilderness, the Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters, Sportsmen for the Boundary Waters, and the Wilderness Society.

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BEAR SEASON

LAKE COUNTRY FORECAST

from NOAA weather

Friday					Saturday					Sunday					Monday					Tuesday				
62 55					75 58					71 52					72 51					74 53				
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.
08/16	89	64	0.00		08/16	89	62	0.00		08/16	90	64	0.00		08/16	88	63	0.00		08/16	89	61	0.00	
08/17	85	64	0.00		08/17	85	62	0.00		08/17	86	64	0.00		08/17	na	64	0.00		08/17	85	64	0.00	
08/18	89	67	0.00		08/18	90	65	0.00		08/18	90	66	0.00		08/18	na	na	0.00		08/18	89	66	0.00	
08/19	91	63	0.00		08/19	91	66	0.00		08/19	90	68	0.00		08/19	na	na	0.00		08/19	90	62	0.00	
08/20	91	63	0.00		08/20	91	66	0.00		08/20	90	66	0.00		08/20	91	na	0.00		08/20	90	64	0.00	
08/21	89	64	0.15		08/21	89	62	0.13		08/21	89	62	0.18		08/21	72	52	0.02		08/21	88	62	0.06	
08/22	66	40	0.01		08/22	67	38	0.00		08/22	66	48	0.00		08/22	79	46	0.00		08/22	66	38	0.01	
Total 9.06					YTD Total 9.75					YTD Total 10.65					YTD Total 12.99					YTD Total 13.12				

Advantage goes to hunters in a season marked by drought

by MARSHALL HELMBERGER
Managing Editor

REGIONAL— Bear hunters in northeastern Minnesota can expect to have plenty of activity at their baits when the bear season opens next Wednesday, Sept. 1. The region's intense drought has withered most of the region's natural bear foods for the second year in a row, and that is almost certain to increase bear interest in baits, according to Tower Area DNR wildlife manager Tom Rusch.

"Both the drought and the hard freeze on May 27 really took a toll on berries and brackens," said Rusch, noting that young bracken ferns are another early season food for bears. "They really have had poor foods across the board," he added.

The lack of wild foods has kept area bear guides busier than usual, as bears have been actively hitting bait stations as soon as they deliver their latest offerings. "We're going to use twice as much bait as in the past," said Dennis Udovich, of Greaney, who marks his 40th season as a bear guide this year. "When these bears come through, it's like a vacuum cleaner. There's nothing left."

The lack of natural foods has been a problem all spring and summer, notes Rusch, which has prompted a significant increase in reports of nuisance activity. "My phone has not stopped ringing since they came out of the den," he said.

The limited available food is almost certain to boost hunter success. Last year, another difficult food year led to an astonishing 57-percent success rate for hunters and Rusch predicts hunters could do at least that well this year.

While that might please hunters, another high

harvest isn't likely to help the bear population recover from its current estimated statewide population of 10,000-12,000 animals. That's less than half of the population peak about 15 years ago, when the DNR estimated the state's bear population at over 25,000.

Tough food years not only tend to boost the overall bear harvest, they also tend to increase the percentage of female bears in the harvest. While bear guides, like Udovich, strongly discourage hunters from shooting sows, distinguishing a female from a male can be difficult, particularly under low light conditions. "You don't have antlers to make it easy," said Udovich.

Last year, sows made up 45 percent of the harvest, which takes a whack at the bear population's breeding potential, notes Rusch. "The percentage of females in the harvest has been higher than I'd like to see," he said.

Since many female bears in the region don't start breeding until age four, it means many of them never get the chance to reproduce, notes Rusch. "A lot of them aren't making it that long," he said.

The *Timberjay* should have first week bear results in the Sept. 10 edition.

Outdoors in brief

DNR ask hunters not to shoot collared bears

REGIONAL—The state's bear season opens Wednesday, Sept. 1, and the Department of Natural Resources is asking hunters to avoid shooting marked research bears. These bears are marked with distinctively large, colorful ear tags and have radio collars.

Researchers with the DNR are monitoring about 20 radio collared black bears across the state, especially in bear hunting zones 25, 27, 45 and 451, and in parts of the no-quota zone. Most of them are in or near the Chippewa National Forest between Grand Rapids and Bigfork. Others are near Voyageurs National Park and around Camp Ripley.

"We're asking hunters to avoid shooting these valuable research bears," said Andy Tri, DNR bear research scientist. "These collared

bears give us much of the data we use in bear management and are most valuable to us when they are collared for multiple years."

A key to the research is looking at year-to-year changes in natural food supplies and how that affects individual bears in terms of their habitat use, physical condition, denning, reproduction and interactions with people. This research is not designed to evaluate mortality from hunting. Trapping new bears every year to replace the ones killed cannot substitute for long-term data on individual bears.

All of the collars the DNR uses in this research have GPS units. The GPS coordinates are either uploaded to a satellite or stored in the collar and downloaded by DNR researchers when they visit the bears in their dens. Each bear provides several thousand data points per year.

Links to photos of collared research bears and some research

findings gained from them are available on the DNR's bear management webpage.

The DNR asks any hunters who do shoot a collared or ear-tagged bear to call the DNR Wildlife Research Office in Grand Rapids at 218-328-8879 to report it.

Zebra mussels confirmed in Ely Lake

EVELETH—The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources has confirmed zebra mussels in Ely Lake, near Eveleth.

DNR invasive species specialists followed up on a report from a lake property owner of an adult zebra mussel found under their dock. A DNR scuba search revealed adult zebra mussels under rocks several hundred yards from the site of the initial report.

PERMITS...Continued from page 2B

an antlerless tag this year will need to buy their license by Thursday, Sept. 9 to be automatically entered in the lottery.

The relatively conservative bag limits reflect the impact of a several recent moderate-to-severe winters, which have reduced deer winter survival in the region. At the same time, the DNR has increased its deer population goals throughout the area, and with most permit areas considered under goal, in some cases substantially, the opportunity to boost harvest is limited.

Tower Area DNR Wildlife Manager Tom Rusch said changes in the forest, particularly the loss of mature winter cover, are contributing to limited winter survival.

"We can no longer carry the deer that we once did," said Rusch, adding that lack of good winter cover on

public lands, as a result of shorter forest rotations on state lands, is making deer more vulnerable to winter conditions as well as predators. While deer regularly utilize freshly-cut forests, taking advantage of fresh growth, Rusch notes that those bursts of nutritious browse only last a few years. Once the growing tips of young aspen and other trees get beyond the reach of deer, such forests have little to offer until they've reached maturity and beyond and begin to provide better winter cover. "The pole-sized forests like we have so much of now, don't provide habitat for deer," Rusch said. "There's no food and there's not enough large trees to provide the cover they need."

Deer permit bag limits by area

Permit area	Designation	# of "doe" tags
107	lottery	500
109	lottery	25
118	bucks-only	0
119	bucks-only	0
130	bucks-only	0
176	lottery	150
177	lottery	600
178	lottery	400

If the region returns to the trend toward milder winters it experienced in the 2000s and 2010s, Rusch said whitetails might be able to survive winter weather and resist predators even in marginal habitat. For now, he said, "We're still struggling to get out of our population sink."

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EAGLES NEST TOWNSHIP

Eagles Nest Township asking ATV group to reroute Sept. 18 ride

by JODI SUMMIT
Tower-Soudan Editor

EAGLES NEST TWP—Township officials here and organizers of a planned ATV Ride and Rally are at loggerheads over the use of local roads in the township for the ride, set for mid-September. The issue led the agenda when the township's newly-formed ATV committee met Monday, a day before the group planning the Ride and Rally routes was set to make their final decisions on the guided group ride locations to be offered during the statewide event. The Ride and Rally is sponsored by the ATV Association of Minnesota, or ATVAM.

The township's ATV committee is composed of two township supervisors, Richard Floyd and Kurt Soderberg, along with representatives from the Prospector ATV Club, and township residents, both ATV and non-ATV users.

Committee members are charged with finding solutions to address the concerns of many township residents over the upcoming ATV event and increasing ATV use on roads in the township.

One of these proposed ride routes, which would take ATVs across a series of gravel roads in the township, has been formally opposed by the Eagles Nest Town Board. Though county policy already does allow ATVs

to use county roads outside of municipal boundaries, the route does use a short portion of the township-controlled Migisi Rd.

Eagles Nest Supervisor Kurt Soderberg opened the committee meeting by explaining that ATV use of existing forest roads, logging roads, and gravel roads is nothing new.

"People have been using them for years," Soderberg said, "but this is something different."

The proposed guided ride, a loop ride that travels over what has been named Trail 4, comes through Purvis Lake access and onto county and township roads to meet back up to established ATV trails. The ride would be limited to 20 machines, and the organizers have offered to have a police car escorting the ATVs as they ride on the township roads.

"This is a one weekend deal," said Steve Goteber, with the Prospector ATV Club. "Getting the Taconite Trail open is the big issue."

Goteber said in the long-term they would like to jointly, with the township, ask the DNR to open 2.45 miles of the Taconite Trail in the Bear Head Lake State Park to ATV use.

"ATV-ers do not want to ride on paved roads," he said.

The Taconite Trail in this area is close to residential homes on Swanson Shore Road. Whether or not the noise would be comparable to the existing

noise from snowmobiles is unknown, and whether ATVs are quieter or noisier than snowmobiles was up for debate.

"We want our state parks to stay quiet," said Eagles Nest resident Karen Graham, who was on the committee.

Several on the committee asked why the Eagles Nest loop ride was needed, when a similar loop ride, that also ended in Tower, was also being planned.

"The southern route goes down to Babbitt and back to Tower," said Tom Maggio, from the Prospector Club. "It is a long ride on an ATV. Many families want a shorter ride, and this [Eagles Nest Trail 4] is a shorter ride." He also noted that the ride to Babbitt is a long way and "a horrendous ride."

"The question for representatives from the ATV club," said Soderberg, "is why would you even be considering a ride that comes through an area that is clearly disputed. The township has said we do not want to do it when there is an alternative."

Goteber responded, "Because it is my right." "It is your right," said Soderberg. "But is it the right thing to do?"

"The township message is we ask you to consider not using Migisi Road from the Purvis Lake access during this ride," Soderberg said. "This is our request to the Prospector Club."

Committee member Frank Pengal noted this isn't the

Boundary Waters.

"We do every type of activity here," he said.

Soderberg said township officials did meet with area legislators about allowing ATVs on the Taconite Trail in the state park boundaries.

"They both said it would be a heavy lift," he said. "They said we should focus on the completion of Trail 5 [which will connect existing ATV trails to a proposed ATV campground at Lake Vermilion State Park and then to Tower.]

Soderberg noted that trail construction would likely take two years.

"So, within that time, aren't you putting your finger in the eye of the town board and our residents?" Soderberg asked.

The concern of township residents on the committee was mostly with the idea of increased ATV traffic through the area, not with the existing ATV usage.

"We don't object to the ATV riders who live here," said Bob Larson.

Trail 4 does cross one short section of township-controlled Migisi Road, and the township would have the authority to close that road to ATV use.

Committee members representing the Prospector Trail Club said they would let the committee know what the trail club decides on Tuesday.

Whether or not the committee will meet again will depend

on the result of the final Ride and Rally route plans.

ATVAM Fall Ride and Rally

The ATVAM Fall Ride and Rally will be held Sept. 17-19. The event kicks off on Sept. 17 in Embarrass with a pancake breakfast at Timber Hall, followed by a morning guided ride on new sections of the Prospector Trail, and a bus tour to the site of the planned ATV campground at the Lake Vermilion State Park. At 4 p.m. there is the free ATV Big Air Tour show in Babbitt, which features jumps, backflips, incredible balancing acts, launching a Polaris RZR, crowd games, good music and more.

Saturday starts out with a pancake breakfast at the Morse-Fall Lake Fire Hall, with a series of over a dozen guided rides to choose from. Rides leave from Embarrass, Babbitt, Ely and Tower, and range from 40 to over 100 miles. Saturday evening features a silent auction, live auction, and banquet at the Historic Pioneer Mine in Ely. The event wraps up on Sunday with the ATVAM board meeting at Grand Ely Lodge in Ely.

More info at www.atvam.org.

Obituaries and Death Notices



Janet M. White

Janet Marie White, 81, of Embarrass, died unexpectedly on Monday, Oct. 19, 2020, in her home. A memorial service will be held at 12 noon on Saturday, Aug. 28, 2021, at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Tower. Pastor Liz Cheney will officiate. A gathering time for family and friends will begin one hour prior to the service. A private committal service will take place at a later date. Family services are provided by Bauman-Vermilion, a Bauman Family Funeral Home in Tower.

She was born on March 15, 1939, in Eveleth, the daughter of Verner and Lila (Ranta) Rasula. She was raised in Leonidas, and married Ira "Mike" White on Nov.

10, 1956. They made their home in Mt. Iron prior to moving to Embarrass about 25 years ago. Janet was employed as a bookkeeper for Reliable Motors, the Lenont Peterson Clinic, and K-Mart. She was a member of Immanuel Lutheran Church in Tower. She enjoyed baking, cooking, sewing, quilting, and caring for her family.

Janet is survived by her husband, Mike; children, Michael (Betsy Phillips) White of Angora, Mark (Dawn Aho) of Iron, Robert White of Garrison and Bonnie (Bradley) Mayry of Cherry; sisters, Louella Zappa of Coon Rapids and Kathleen (Gale) Rostvit of Eveleth; grandchildren, Gary, Ira, Angela, Brenda, Thomas, Shaina, Dawn, Tia, Ashley, Adam, Abby and Alisa; great-grandchildren, Bruce, Brayden, Mairika, Greyson, Avery, Rylen, Camden and Isla; numerous nieces, nephews, extended family and friends.

She was preceded in death by her parents; son, Thomas George White; and niece, Pam Samuelson.

William F. Quinn

William "Bill" Farrell Quinn, 78, of Ely, joined his God (he knew without a doubt that there is a great big God) on Saturday, Aug. 21, 2021. At the time of his passing, he was in hospice care at his home on Farm Lake. His transition to eternal life came during peaceful sleep while attended by his long-term friend Bert Hyde, and life-partner Jo Kovach.

Bill had lived in the Ely area since the late 80's and was a staple in community theater. He said that when he made the decision to stay here he would take any job that enabled that stay. His resume, if he ever had one, would have been long and interesting and his list of references lengthy.

A regular at sauna and AA meetings, Bill was immensely grateful for his 48 years of sobriety. Bill was known for his good humor and pleasant disposition, integrity and steadfast valor. He was a gentle man. Bill cherished his time in the wilderness and the comradeship of fellow Charlie Guides.

His family and friends will celebrate his life with a September canoe outing.

He would have loved to be there.

Mary M. Anderson

Mary M. Vaughn Anderson, 64, of Chisholm, formerly of Bear River, died on Monday, Aug. 16, 2021, at Essentia Health Miller Dwan in Duluth. Memorial services were held on Saturday, Aug. 21 at Trinity Lutheran Church in Cook. Arrangements were entrusted to Rupp Funeral Home & Cremation Service in Chisholm.

She is survived by her husband, Donald; children, Greg, Eric (Trista) and Sarah (Trevor) Northagen; grandson, Nolan, sisters, Tarsia Kalway, Judy (Ervin) Kruse and Linda Grayson; brothers, Craig (Deb) Vaughn and John (Babette) Vaughn; numerous nieces and nephews; godson, Connor Kalway; and special adopted daughter, Talia Carlson.

Dennis L. Daugherty

Dennis Lyle Daugherty, 67, of Babbitt, formerly of Duluth and Denver, died on Monday, Aug. 16, 2021, at his home on Birch Lake. A funeral service was held at 11 a.m. on Friday, Aug. 20 at

Ziemer-Moeglein-Shatava Funeral Home in Aurora. A reception immediately followed the service at the Aurora American Legion.

He is survived by his wife of 30 years, Kathi Smith Daugherty; son, Dustin (Michelle) Daugherty of Mobile, Ala.; daughter, Emily Daugherty of Duluth; brother, David (Gayle) Daugherty of Tucson, Ariz.; sister, Debra (Mike) Brizee of Grand Junction, Colo.; mother-in-law, Vivian Chase of Virginia; in-laws, Marjorie (John) Nelson of Hoyt Lakes, Diane (Mike) Gordon of Grand Rapids, Laura Montgomery of Virginia and Martin Smith

of Buhl; and several nieces and nephews.

Franklin D. Hackley

Franklin Delano Hackley, 88, of Bear River, passed away peacefully at St. Luke's Hospital in Duluth on Saturday, Aug. 21, 2021. A memorial service will be held at 11 a.m. on Thursday, Sept. 2 at the Bear River Lutheran Church. Visitation will be held one hour prior to the service at the church. Arrangements are with Mlaker Funeral Home in Cook.

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THANK YOU

The Rutar family would like to thank everyone who attended the visitation and funeral for our beloved Anthony Rutar. The family would like to thank Carefree Living in Orr, East Range Hospice, St. Mary's Catholic Church in Cook, the choir, kitchen ladies and all of those who brought food to the luncheon. A special thank you goes out to Gayle Shoemaker, Tammy Palmer, Father Beau Braun and Lisa Mlaker Funeral Home.

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HEAVY METAL SPORTS

Who is the "cross-fittest" of them all...

ELY – Fitness enthusiasts of Heavy Metal Sports gathered in the parking lot across from their workout facility here on Sunday afternoon to participate in the organization's second annual Cross Training Games.

About a dozen athletes and just as many fans and spectators joined in the unique, friendly competition, all in support of attaining a healthy lifestyle through exercise and physical fitness.

Participants signed up for as many as ten different events and

celebrated each other's efforts to be the fittest, fastest, strongest, and most agile cross-trainer in the area.

The events, all varying in ability levels, included the weighted backpack toss, plank off (balancing on toes and elbows for the longest time), one-mile speed spin, squat challenge, deadlifts, headstands, pushup contest, sit-up challenge, and tire flip.



Above: Cross-trainers spin their way to completing a mile ride.

Right: Toni Danwaller participates in the plank competition with her own cheering section, her granddaughter, Evelyn.

Below: Kelly Noble, of Ely, does the backpack toss.

photos by K. Vandervort



Art & Soul Gallery & Gift House announces "Muse Unleashed" by Nancy Scheibe



This "Fox", painted by Nancy, is not traveling alone!



Nancy's 1957 vintage corvette trailer is coming to Ely!

The Artist, Nancy Scheibe, is returning to Ely, MN for an exhibition of her current work in the Exhibition "Muse Unleashed".

Exhibition Dates: September 1 - 30th, 2021 Gallery hours Mon - Sat 10:00 - 5:00 PM

Location: 427 E. Sheridan, Ely MN 55731 Ph 218-365-7300 info@elysartandsoul.com

Open House: Saturday, September 4, 2021, noon - 4:00 PM

*COVID protections will be in effect



Nancy Scheibe is the original owner of the Art & Soul Gallery. Opened in 2016, she is the muse behind having a place for local artists to exhibit and sell their work. Join us to view Nancy's current work created in her new home in Utah.



Team Penning NEW date

August 20-22, 2021

August 27, 28, 29 2021
Friday 27th

Exhibit Entries.....1:00-7:00PM	Gates open2:00PM
Crafts & Concessions.....2:00 PM	Beer Garden.....2-8 PM
Wizard's Kingdom Inflatables..3:00 PM	Family Entertainmen....4 -10PM

Saturday 28th

Grounds Open.....8:00 AM	Exhibit Entries.....8:00-10:00 AM
Crafts & Concessions.....All Day	Livestock Building.....All Day
Softball Tournament.....All Day	Dog Show..... 10:00AM
40th Annual Flying Finn 5K Run Walk.....9:30AM	
First Ever Corn Hole Tournament....10:00 AM	Races for All Ages....11:00AM
Exhibit Building Closed for Judging.11:30 AM	Beer Garden...12 PM -8 PM
Tony Morsching Memorial Mud Run.....12:30PM	
Saturday Night Country live.....4 PM-10 PM	

Sunday 29th

Grounds Open.....7:00 AM	Crafts & Concessions.....All Day
Livestock Building.....All Day	Softball Tournament.....All Day
Pony Rides.....All Day	Horse Show.....9:00 AM
Classic Field of Dreams Car & Truck Show.....9:00AM	
Karaoke Contest (Sign up 10AM) 12-3 PM	
Beer Garden.....12 PM -6 PM	Demolition Derby.....12:30PM
Parade.....4:00 PM	Brand new Event Lawnmower Races

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BE WILDFIRE RESILIENT

Firewise landscaping workshop held in Ely

As fires spread in North Country homeowners learn to protect their property

by KEITH VANDERVORT
Ely Editor

ELY – With record-breaking heat and drought conditions persisting across the North Country this summer, area residents gathered at the Dorothy Molter Museum last Thursday for a hands-on workshop on how to make their properties more wildfire resilient.

Coordinated by St. Louis County Firewise Coordinator Gloria Erickson, and sponsored by Firewise Minnesota in cooperation with Dovetail Partners, the timely advice and recommendations were welcomed by more than a dozen participants as wildfires continue to burn and spread in just about every direction around Ely.

Jeff Jackson, a wildfire prevention specialist with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, said, “Right now is a scary time for all of us, but I hope we can empower you to make a difference on your own property and in your community to be more resilient to wildfires as they spread across the area.”

He cautioned that there are no guarantees that making a property more resilient to a spreading wildfire will spare anyone’s property.

“But we can all take steps to increase our chances,” he said.

He added that Firewise procedures around private property should be practiced year-round, and not just when the fire is just down the road and evacuation orders are issued.

Jackson used the Dorothy Molter Museum property, with several wooden cabins and other structures nestled under a stand of pine trees, as an example of a typical North Country property in the woods.

The information he presented has been repeated many times by Firewise ambassadors.

“At your entrance from the road, check and clear around address and street signs, and make sure the fire number sign is perpendicular to the road, reflective on both sides and clearly visible to emergency personnel responding to a particular address,” he said.



Jeff Jackson (above), a wildfire prevention specialist with the DNR, demonstrated how to make homestead's more resistant to wildfire.

photos by K. Vandervort



Make sure the property’s driveway is cleared of overhanging trees and branches at a minimum of 14 feet wide and 14 feet high for easier access for emergency vehicles.

“Think about how a big truck would get down your driveway to respond to a fire,” Jackson added.

Numerous steps can be taken in the immediate area around the house and other structures to make them more resilient to wildfire.

➤ Screen areas below decks and porches with 1/8”-inch wire mesh to help prevent material

from accumulating underneath.

➤ Cover exterior attic and soffit vents with 1/8-inch metal wire mesh to help stop sparks from entering your home.

➤ Enclose eaves to help prevent embers/sparks from entering your home.

➤ Sweep pine needles and leaves from porches and rake from under decks, porches, play structures, etc.

➤ Clear any needles and leaves out of gutters and off roofs, and inspect and replace shingles or roof tiles as needed.

➤ Cover ends of tiles and metal roofs with fire resistant

stops to help prevent embers being sucked in during a wildfire. Make sure chimneys have spark arrestors.

➤ Remove debris from a circle extending at least 30 feet from structures.

“Being wildfire resilient is not just cutting down all the trees around your house,” Jackson said. “Look to cut the lower limbs of these trees at least eight feet up from the ground, and also look to separate the canopies of each of the trees to help reduce the chance of fire hopping from tree to tree.”

He suggested homeowners

move woodpiles, construction materials, trash and other flammables at least 30 feet from the house and other structures.

“Get your project wood, lawnmowers, propane tanks and other flammables out from under the deck,” Jackson said. “This seems obvious but we all need to be reminded of the fire dangers right in front of us,” he said.

Other suggestions:

➤ Rake and remove pine needles and leaves at least three to five feet around the house and other buildings. Maintain the grass and weeds in the same perimeter.

➤ Make sure trees are cut brush is removed, and grass is trimmed around the propane tank. “And keep the propane tank full,” Jackson added.

➤ Dispose of branches, weeds, leaves, and pine needles at designated hazardous woody debris drop-off sites.

For more information, contact Erickson at gloria@dove-tailinc.org or 218-365-0878.

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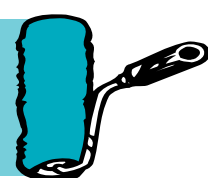
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