



Wishing our readers a Merry Christmas

Be sure to enjoy all the great Christmas art in this week's paper, plus more to come next week!
The Timberjay office will be closed Dec. 24 - Jan. 7.
Watch for your Dec. 31 paper next week.
No paper will be published on Jan. 7.

the TIMBERJAY

Serving the communities of northern St. Louis County since 1989

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HEALTH CARE

Cook Hospital struggling through COVID surge

by DAVID COLBURN
Cook/Orr Editor

Staff remain resilient through nearly two years of trials

More COVID
Omicron poised to dominate. Page 10

COOK - Like everyone else, Cook Hospital Director of Nursing Nichole Chiabotti wishes the COVID pandemic was far, far behind us. But burdened with inpatient caseloads running more than double normal during this fourth wave of the pandemic,

Chiabotti had a more specific wish on Monday for those who remain unvaccinated

and more susceptible to serious illness from COVID.

"I wish that the people who have chosen not to get vaccinated could see what this is doing to somebody in real life," she said. "I wish they could see how sick these people are, how long

A North County resident receives a COVID-19 vaccine recently at Cook Hospital. file photo

it takes them to recover, and how some patients are in the long-hauler syndrome where
See...COVID pg. 9



Merry melodies

Area students perform seasonal favorites



Students from the North Country participated in their school's recent holiday concerts, including, Payton Scofield, above, in the North Woods High School band; Naomi Archer, above right, in the Ely sixth-grade band; and first and second-graders at Tower-Soudan Elementary School, right. Timberjay staff photos



IRRR

Communities get funds for infrastructure

Largest local grants go to Ely, Tower-Breitung Wastewater Board

by MARSHALL HELMBERGER
Managing Editor

REGIONAL— Christmas came early for nearly two dozen area communities last week, as the Department of Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation board gave its blessing to over \$34 million in investments in economic and community development projects. That includes an \$18 million allocation for a new K-12 school in Nashwauk.

The agency funding is helping to leverage a total of \$157.7 million in project investment across the taconite tax region.

In northern St. Louis County, both Ely and the Tower-Breitung Wastewater Board will receive \$250,000 for improvements in their wastewater treatment facilities. Ely will use the funds for phase I improvements in their wastewater treatment plant, while the Tower-Breitung funding will go toward replacement of 22 force main manholes as part of an effort to reduce inflow and infiltration of ground and surface water into the wastewater treatment system. The system has been running close to capacity in recent years, so reducing infiltration into the system is expected to provide some additional capacity to accommodate new development.

In addition, Breitung Township is slated to receive \$40,000 to reconstruct street and storm sewer infrastructure in Soudan. The township is seeking other funding as well to finance those improvements.

Some of the other projects approved for funding include:

- \$950,000 to Cook County and the

See...IRRR pg. 9

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Bonding, redistricting, surplus on agenda

Ely Joint Powers officials, legislators discuss state issues

by KEITH VANDERVORT
Ely Editor

ELY – Sometimes when you have too much money, it is worse than when you don't have enough.

Those words, attributed to Minnesota State Sen. Tom Bakk, were repeated here Monday by Rep. Rob Ecklund when the Community Economic Development Joint Powers Board convened with

See...JOINT POWERS pg. 11

Rep. Rob Ecklund, left, and Sen. Tom Bakk visited Ely on Monday. K. Vandervort



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Community notices

Dream Quilters will meet Jan. 6

TOWER-Vermilion Dream Quilters will meet Thursday, Jan. 6 at 6:30 p.m. at St. Martin's Catholic Church in Tower. Masks continue to be encouraged. Social distancing is available for those who prefer it. The program topic, the use of crayons in quilt designs, will be presented by Alberta Whitenack and Vickie Lange. Visitors are welcome.

Erie Mining history books for sale by Tower-Soudan Historical Society

TOWER- Looking for last-minute Christmas gifts? The Tower-Soudan Historical Society has a book about the history of the Erie Mining Company, a beautiful, hard-cover, award-winning book. Purchase price is \$45. Contact Linda at 218-750-0193 to reserve your copy and arrange a pick-up.

►This book has 352 full-color pages with photos, maps, charts, graphs, and vivid text.

►It contains recollections of former employees, family members, and people linked with the Erie Mining Company.

►It has a fold-out timeline of historical events and production statistics.

►Book purchase includes internet access to over 150 oral interview transcripts, company newspaper articles, photos, organization charts, and more!

Juniper is looking for volunteers to conduct Live Well classes

REGIONAL- Did you know that 80 percent of all adults ages 65 and older have at least one chronic health condition? If you or a loved one have ongoing health concerns such as chronic pain, diabetes, depression, cancer, or have recently fallen, Juniper can help. Through local community networks, Juniper is delivering workshops in communities throughout the state. Workshops are proven to help adults to manage chronic conditions, prevent falls, and live well.

If you are interested in becoming a class leader, Juniper is looking for volunteers who will educate, motivate, and inspire. No experience? No worries! We provide training in the program that's right for you. Registration is now open for our January trainings. Space is limited, so sign up today.

A Live Well with Chronic Conditions Online Leader Training will be held Jan. 18 – March 3, Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2-4 p.m.

A Powerful Tools for Caregivers Online Leader Training will be held Jan. 31 - Feb. 4, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

To learn more, call 218-969-5734 or gmarsalla@yourjuniper.org.



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LAKE VERMILION CULTURAL CENTER

LVCC thanks Lindquists for Christmas decorations



TOWER- The Lake Vermilion Cultural Center is grateful to the Lindquists for donating many spruce and pine trees to enhance the Christmas decorations of the LVCC. Local residents have been extremely complimentary concerning the festive look of the entry into Tower from the west.

John and Denise Lindquist and Denise's mother, Gloria Borchardt.
submitted photos

PUBLIC HEALTH

Local hospitals, St. Louis County Public Health partner in public service announcement

REGIONAL - Healthcare resources are strained. Medical workers are as committed as ever to care for their patients, but they're exhausted and pleading with people: Take COVID-19 seriously and do what you can to minimize virus spread.

This is the message in a new public service announcement (PSA) created by Essentia Health, St. Luke's and St. Louis County Public Health. The PSA features real doctors, nurses and public health staff who have been working tirelessly throughout the pandemic, and have been doing their best to care for patients through this latest surge that has overwhelmed healthcare systems across the country.

The 30-second video

was produced by Story North Productions. It will be aired on local television stations from Duluth and can be seen online at vimeo.com/654648461/.

"We are in a crisis situation and so much of this is preventable if people get vaccinated and follow the preventative steps they've heard so many times. For those who are vaccinated, please get a booster. Boosters can significantly increase your protection against serious illness with COVID-19," said Amy Westbrook, St. Louis County Public Health Division Director. "None of this is easy, and we're all tired and want to be done with this. But as long as we're dealing with a highly contagious virus, we need everyone's cooperation to move past this."

"While it's true that most people who catch COVID-19 will recover, there are still many people

dealing with very serious effects. That includes people who require hospitalization and then require long-term caregiving after they leave the hospital, which falls on their loved ones or long-term care facilities which are also severely strained," said St. Luke's Infectious Disease Specialist Dr. Andrew Thompson. "Our doctors and nurses want to help people and are as committed as ever, but we are also seeing tremendous burnout and we need people to realize just how serious this situation has become."

"We are so grateful to our local media for their assistance in helping spread this important message," said Louie St. George III, public relations manager at Essentia Health. "COVID is real and it is dangerous. Limited bed availability in our hospitals is also real and dangerous. The vast majority of our COVID patients are unvaccinated. We can

do better; we must do better. Our healthcare workers, who have given so much of themselves over the past 21 months, are mentally, physically and emotionally exhausted. Please, do your part to slow the spread of COVID-19 and prevent unnecessary strain on our healthcare resources — and unnecessary suffering."

The full script of the PSA is, "Here's a reality check — COVID-19 is still here. Rising cases are straining healthcare resources in our community. We're ALL tired. We're ALL exhausted. Know that we're still committed to caring for you. But we need your help. We're asking you... PLEASE, get vaccinated. Get your booster. Mask-up in public. Social distance. For you, your family, our community. For all of us. Thank you."

THE BEST GIFT

Blood donations needed, schedule today

REGIONAL- The need for blood is constant, but the supply isn't. Founded by the community, for the community, donors with Memorial Blood Centers help supply nearly 40 local hospitals and more than a dozen air ambulance bases. Help hospital patients in need by scheduling an appointment online at mbc.org or by calling 1-888-GIVE-BLD (888-448-3253).

Memorial Blood

Centers follows strict safety protocols for donors and staff to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and its variants. Donors are required to wear a face mask or face covering.

Blood donation is safe and essential, and MBC has a COVID-19 self-screening policy in addition to general eligibility guidelines. In general, you may be eligible to donate if you are

in good health, 17 years or older — or 16 with written parental consent (form available online), at least 110 pounds, free of antibiotics for 24 hours, unless taken for preventative reasons, and symptom-free for at least 72 hours following a cold or flu.

All donors will be entered to win a 55-inch TV and daily drawings for \$25 streaming gift cards from now until Dec. 31.

Longest Night & Christmas Eve Services ♦ Ely Presbyterian Church ♦

Longest Night Service: Dec. 21 • Online Only

Many people feel sad or deeply thoughtful at Christmas, especially if they are dealing with grief, job loss, divorce or other life issues. This year has been especially hard for everyone. We offer a quiet service about finding light in the darkness. This is an online service only— You can watch it at any time. It will premiere on Tuesday, Dec. 21 and be available at our church website at any time. www.elypresbyterian.org

Christmas Eve Service: 5 pm • Dec. 24

A traditional service of lessons and carols. In the church, everyone will be masked. There will be very little singing, and all Covid precautions will be taken. This service will also be streamed live online and then available to everyone online. www.elypresbyterian.org

Vaccination is recommended. Masks are required.




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ST. LOUIS COUNTY SCHOOLS

ISD 2142 reviews finances, approves levy

by DAVID COLBURN
Cook-Orr Editor

Teachers will vote on new contract in January

VIRGINIA- Instead of discussing the proposed new property tax levy at last week’s meeting, ISD 2142 School Board members focused their attention on a tighter budget for the 2022-23 school year and how to get more state revenue by recruiting more students to the district.

“So much of our revenue is based on enrollment, so even a small fluctuation in enrollment causes some huge impacts

to funding,” district finance director Kim Johnson said. “Last year, with COVID, we lost 130 students, that’s \$1.3 million. That’s a lot of money, and all of our staffing was set before we knew what was happening. We can’t let teachers go because their classes are smaller. We have picked up enrollment from the adopted budget, but we haven’t gotten it all back from the loss in fiscal year 2021. We’ve gotten about

80 of those kids back, but we’re still down 50 kids at \$10,000 a kid. That’s a lot of money.”

Johnson advised caution on the suggestion that the district use additional COVID money expected soon to offset losses. “We have to get pre-approval for any significant spending of those COVID dollars,” she said. “It’s partly restricted, depending upon how you’re going to spend it. We can use it for lost

enrollment, we can use it for staffing costs, but that’s one-time money. We want to make sure that any of the changes we’re making are going to be long term.”

Earlier in the meeting, board members agreed to sign on to a U.S. Congressional resolution calling for the federal government to fully fund the mandates required under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act for special education

services, mandates that currently receive only 14-percent funding from the feds, with the rest of the cost falling on states and local districts. Johnson returned to that discussion in her budget comments, noting that the district’s total costs for special education are a little over \$5 million.

“We only get reimbursed \$3 million (from federal and state sources), so we’ve got \$2.2 million of unreimbursed expenses,”

she said.

Board member Troy Swanson homed in on the idea of generating more revenue through increased enrollment.

“We’re talking about enrollment being the main thing,” he said. “We really need to start marketing ourselves again.”

Swanson described some of the past activities he had been involved

See 2142...pg. 5

REDISTRICTING

Political parties not alone in redistricting plans

by DAVID COLBURN
Cook-Orr Editor

Court-appointed panel will likely have final say

REGIONAL- While Republican and DFL legislators continue haggling over competing plans to redraw Congressional and state legislative district lines to reflect the 2020 U.S. Census changes, a parallel effort led by a five-member panel of Minnesota district and appellate judges has plans of its own to consider – four of them, actually.

The boundaries of eight Congressional districts, 67 state Senate districts, and 134 state house districts must be redrawn to accommodate the growth and geographic shifting of the state’s population since the 2010 Census. The new district boundaries will surely deepen the state’s urban-rural divide since 78 percent of the 400,000 new residents added to the state’s population since 2010 reside in the Twin Cities area.

The population targets for redistricting are simple math. Give or take a few by necessity, Congressional districts must have 713,312 people, state Senate districts, 85,172, and state House districts, 42,586.

The process becomes difficult because of politics. New district boundaries can swing the advantage in a given district from

one party to the other, potentially affecting the balance of legislative power for the next decade. Not surprisingly, while each party claims its maps to be fair, it’s not hard to quickly find newly-drawn lines that give an apparent edge to one or the other, leading to a stalemate when it comes to compromise.

The courts have been involved with setting new legislative boundaries in Minnesota so long that the youngest generation of voters might assume they’re just part of the prescribed process, but that’s not automatic. If legislators could approve a bipartisan agreement to send to Gov. Tim Walz by Feb. 15, Walz could sign the deal into law.

However, no such agreement was forged during meetings of the DFL-majority House Redistricting Committee, where DFL maps were approved on a party-line vote on Dec. 9. Given extreme partisan divisions exacerbated during the coronavirus pandemic, there’s little reason to expect that DFL and Republican legislators will find middle ground over competing plans in the first two weeks of the new legislative session in February.

That’s when the panel of five judges would intervene to establish redistricting plans that will allow for legally determined election dates to take place as scheduled and ensure that the district boundaries are formulated without politics in mind.

Minnesota Court of Appeals Judge Louise Bjorkman, who is presiding, Court of Appeals Judge Diane Bratvold, Seventh Judicial District Judge Jay Carlson, Tenth Judicial District Judge Juanita Freeman and Third Judicial District Judge Jodi Williamson were appointed to the redistricting panel by Supreme Court Chief Justice Lorie Gildea. In November, the panel adopted nine redistricting principles that include:

- Congressional districts must be as nearly equal in population as is practicable.
- The population of a legislative district must not deviate by more than two percent from the ideal population target.
- Districts shall be drawn to protect the equal opportunity of racial, ethnic, and language minorities to participate in the political process.
- Federally recognized

American Indian reservation lands will be preserved and must not be divided more than necessary to meet constitutional requirements.

- Districts must consist of convenient, contiguous territory.
- Political subdivisions must not be divided more than necessary to meet constitutional requirements.
- Communities of people with shared interests will be preserved whenever possible. Such communities of interest include, but are not limited to, groups of Minnesotans with clear similarities of social, geographic, cultural, ethnic, economic, occupational, trade, transportation, or other interests.
- Subordinate to other redistricting principles, districts should be reasonably compact.
- Districts must not be drawn with the purpose of protecting, promoting, or defeating any incumbent, candidate, or political party. The panel will not draw districts based on the residence of incumbent officeholders and will not consider past election results.

Among the nine principles, the last, regarding remaining neutral with

regards to politics, is a departure from previous special panels that often made small adjustments to accommodate incumbents who otherwise would have been narrowly placed outside their district.

“If we are called upon to draw new districts, we will do so solely through application of our stated neutral redistricting principles,” wrote Bjorkman in a supplemental memo to the principles.

To avoid conflicting actions filed in various court districts, the five-member panel has authority over all judicial actions filed regarding the 2020 redistricting process. Common to the four filings before the panel are the listed defendants, Minnesota Secretary of State Steve Simon and Carver County Elections and Licensing Manager Kendra Olson, on behalf of all chief county election officials.

Uncommon are the plaintiffs bringing suit, referred to by a primary surname and representing four distinct constituencies.

One of those groups is led by a former Senate redistricting attorney and a former Ramsey County elections supervisor (referred to as the


Wattson plaintiffs); another has GOP leanings (the Anderson plaintiffs); a third comes with DFL ties (the Sachs plaintiffs); and a fourth, spearheaded by Common Cause Minnesota, is advocating for Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) communities to have more clout in the Legislature (the Corrie plaintiffs).

The panel conducted ten public meetings around the state in October to gather public input, and each of the plaintiff groups had to submit plans, maps, and supportive data to the judicial panel last week, including reports on population, how plans split up political subdivisions, and the minority voting age population of each proposed district. It also wants to see how districts meet measurements of compactness.

Oral arguments from the parties will be heard on Jan. 4 at the Minnesota Judicial Center in St. Paul, after which the panel will work to craft the redistricting maps to be enacted should the Legislature fail to meet its Feb. 15 deadline.

MinnPost contributed to this article.

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Editorial

Peace on Earth?

For a nation that likes to talk of peace,
we spend far too much on war

At a time when we regularly offer our wishes for peace on Earth, it’s worth considering whether our priorities as a country truly match our hopes for the season.

For a country that likes to talk of peace, America spends far more than any other country on war. The American war machine is unlike anything that has ever existed in world history, and it comes at tremendous cost, both in resources expended and in opportunities lost.

Earlier this month, as Americans began to gather to sing songs of joy and peace, our representatives in Washington approved a new defense bill authorizing spending \$770 billion for the 2022 fiscal year. At the same time, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs is seeking a budget allocation of \$270 billion for next year. Combined, that’s a total of \$1.04 trillion that America is expected to spend for its military next year.

That dwarfs every other country on Earth. Indeed, it surpasses the military spending of the next 11 largest militaries combined, including China and Russia. At least the Chinese and Russians can point to realistic national security threats, since they both maintain extensive borders with multiple countries, some without friendly relations.

That, of course, is not the case with the United States, which is isolated by vast oceans and maintains borders only with friendly nations that spend little on weapons of war. In terms of the traditional view of national security, there are few nations on Earth as secure as the United States, simply by the fact of its physical size, large population, and remoteness from potential enemies, yet we spend vast sums purportedly for national defense.

We’ve already seen that all that spending yields little in terms of enhanced security. It turns out there is no military solution to terrorism, for example, since it’s a method of warfare that we remain ill-equipped to address more than 20 years after the 9/11 attacks. We spent more than a trillion dollars and wasted tens of thousands of lives in Afghanistan over the past 20 years, and we ended up right back where we started, with the Taliban in charge.

As tornados ripped through the country’s mid-section earlier this month or as COVID-19 killed more than 800,000 Americans over the past 20 months, it should be obvious to all that a gargantuan military machine has no value in addressing the real threats we face as a nation.

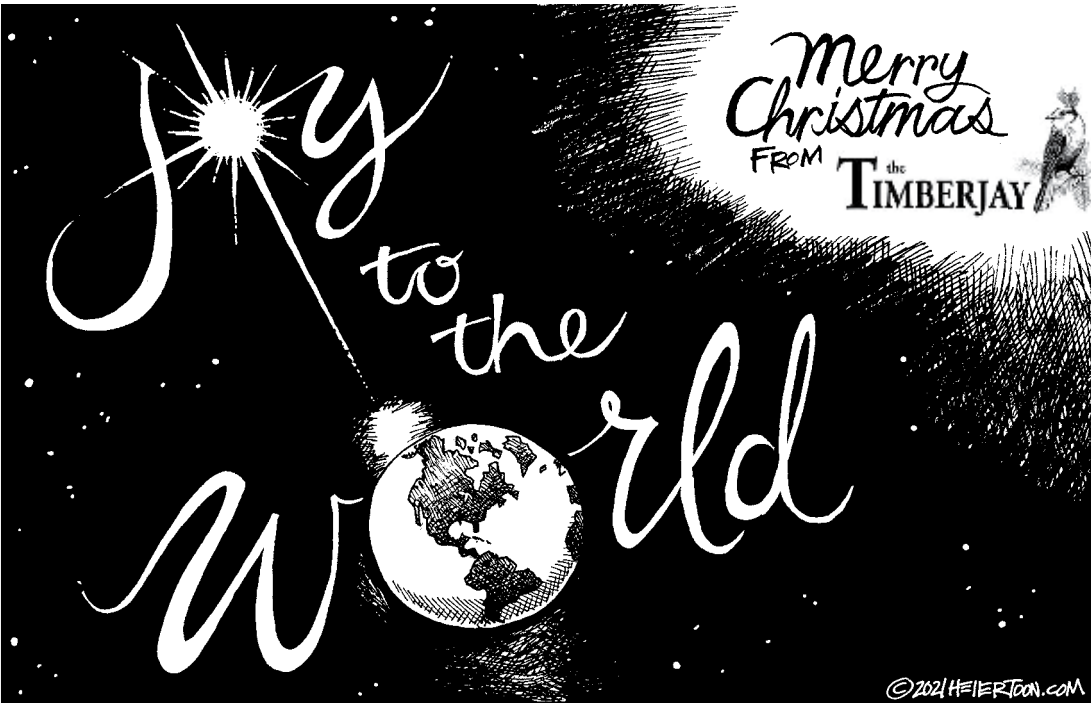
We face a nearly existential threat from climate change,

which has the potential to devastate U.S. food production, flood our coastal cities, worsen pandemics, and make much of the southern U.S. uninhabitable. Yet, members of Congress can find any number of objections to levels of spending to address this threat that would be mere rounding errors to the Pentagon. Our nation’s infrastructure was neglected for decades because we poured unimaginable resources into a bloated Defense Department that has long been the nation’s single biggest contributor to climate change.

It’s no coincidence that America is the only developed country without some form of universal health insurance. It’s the same thing with a host of safety net investments that could make life so much easier for middle class Americans, and which most of our European cousins take for granted. Far from discouraging work, as some Americans have been told to believe, such safety net programs have engendered a higher workforce participation rate, higher job and life satisfaction, and greater upward mobility in European and Scandinavian countries than in the U.S. Other countries can afford to invest in retraining their workers and retooling their communities for economic vitality because they aren’t saddled by a military-industrial complex that sucks vast sums every year from their nation’s budget.

America is a poorer, less happy, and less dynamic country because we have fallen victim to the machinations of a powerful industrial sector that ensures its lavish excesses through its propaganda that keeps the American public living in fear when we are, in reality, the safest country on Earth, with or without our massive military. What threats we do face are, more often than not, the direct result of our military’s heavy-handed tactics around the world. We kill innocents by the thousands and chalk it all up as collateral damage. We overthrow democratically-elected governments if we don’t like their policies and then wonder why other countries view our intentions with skepticism.

America will never live up to its ideals, or even its rhetoric, until we recognize the truth in the words of former General and President Dwight D. Eisenhower: “In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist.” Truer words were never spoken by an American leader.



Letters from Readers

Thoughts on religion, spiritualism and spirituality

Christian/non-Christian, faithful/faithless and God-fearing/godless are pairings that suggest the former is the norm and the latter is the deviant “other.” Tyranny of opposites offers an either/or choice as in, theism or atheism.

Religionism defines to confine what is and what is not. Labeling another as an atheist, a derisive and pejorative term, begs the question, “Just what is it that atheists are supposed to be against?” The spirit of science, evidence-based, demands more than ambiguous and vague assertion. “Knowing” the unknowable is not valid argument.

Religionism rationalized racism in the Doctrine of Christian Discovery, slavery and conquest to subdue and dominate The First People. Manifest Destiny, divinely ordained, justified American imperial reach to plunder the continent and beyond. Overtly and in silence, religionism continues to dehumanize, discriminate, and divide. Believing holds no inherent virtue, is not evidence of reality, nor is it arguable in rational terms.

Spiritualism and spirituality are not interchangeable terms. Spiritualism is a belief, no evidence required, externally and institutionally driven. Spiritualism, shackled and static, doesn’t question the existence of “other world” forces that influence the living. A binary world of good and evil, heaven and hell, angels and demons belongs to another time.

Spirituality, by contrast, excites the wonder of human coexistence in nature’s complex web of life. Spirituality is an adventure, a private quest, a personal journey. Imagination is the only limit of creative discovery in dynamic and fluid reality.

With intellect and feeling we discover our authentic social being. Mind, body and spirit are one with all things together, connected, unified and whole in a seamless web. Grounded in social being, free from certainty, spirituality connects to a universe without boundary to create meaning through the power of love.

Harold Honkola
Winter Haven, Fla.

We welcome your letters

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

We ask that letters be limited to 300 words.

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

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

COMMENTARY

Can We Find Our Way to the Common Good?

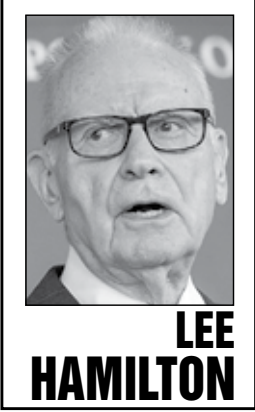
I still remember a question I got years ago. It was at a public meeting in southern Indiana, in one of those squat, featureless cinder-block buildings you find all across the country. This young woman stood up and commented that I’d traveled throughout the U.S. and had met all kinds of people. So, she wanted to know: What was my impression of Americans? I didn’t even hesitate: The American people are fundamentally decent, I told her.

I still believe this. And when I say it, I’m not talking about a bare majority. Most Americans are good people.

Why even mention this? Because, at the moment, we live in a country where a lot of Americans don’t believe it. They think fellow citizens who belong to a different political party are at best misguided and at worst, evil. We have public officials—who want nothing more than to do a good job and stick by the laws—resigning because they’re tired of the threats to themselves and their families. Civic-minded Americans who believe in the institutions of democracy are steering clear of volunteering because they’re afraid of the anger and physical danger they may face.

I don’t think this happened by accident. There are major, powerful forces working to divide us. Some are pernicious, others are just looking to make themselves more powerful. Media companies and political commentators find that they can make money—a lot of money—by putting out divisive information. Politicians have discovered that they can benefit politically by appealing to their base and treating the other side as the enemy. Countries such as Russia and China spend enormous time and money sowing seeds of division in our country so they can make our system of democracy look bad and weaken us as a country.

There’s an antidote for this, but it’s not going to be easy: All of us, ordinary citizens and politicians alike, have to restore in our lives a belief in the importance of the common good—to ask ourselves not what’s good for any one of us, or for our party or business or people who look like us, but what’s good for the



The Infinite Cycle of Giving

Diverse thoughts about gifts and giving have been dancing around in my head during this season of giving. Whether we celebrate Christmas, Hanukkah, the Solstice, Kwanzaa, or some hybrid combination, some forms of giving and some types of gathering are probably involved, even if only



virtual. There is something about the season that softens our hearts to the needs of those less fortunate (enhanced perhaps by the added incentive of tax deductions) as organizations of all types depend on the generosity of year-

end givers. We feel the pull of love or obligation to seek out presents for Aunt Millie and Cousin George, grateful for the invention of gift certificates. You may wonder, as I do, why I am sending my homemade fudge and cedar sprigs along with a few small presents to my brother, Mike, and his wife who live 1,300 miles away, paying more for postage than the value of the contents. The fudge has sentiment boiled in with the sugar because

our father taught us how to make it when we were quite young...which means Mike makes it just as well as I do. But I mail him a piece of memory anyway. I have purchased chickens in their honor through the Heifer Project, but the season seems incomplete if I don’t send them something. The cost of a gift isn’t the point, or hopefully, shouldn’t be. This year, as I have before, I tucked in a net bag of gold-foiled chocolate coins, because we always

had some in our Christmas stockings. He has sent me silly little mechanical toys, also tiny remembrances of our childhood Christmas mornings, opening overflowing stockings while we enjoyed homemade muffins and orange juice.

The image persists in my head of hundreds of thousands of packages and people whizzing across the country, burning up oil fields full of petroleum to celebrate, but I continue to participate anyway, at

least in the sending packages part. I love having a quiet, peaceful holiday season with an ocean of time, so I quite happily stay put and don’t engage in much of the Christmas craziness. I think many others have also figured out that keeping things simpler reduces stress and contributes to an environment more in keeping with the true meaning of the season.

I have often thought,

See **GOOD...pg. 5**

See **GIFTS...pg. 5**

Week of Dec. 27

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

Tower City Council- 5:30 p.m. on Dec. 27

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 Jan. 18.

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.

Tower/Soudan Community Bible Study- Thursdays from 6 - 7:30 p.m. at the Tower Elementary School cafeteria. All are welcome. Call 218-984-3402 for more info.

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

Area Churches set Christmas Services

St. Paul’s Lutheran Church in Soudan
Christmas Eve Service at 3 p.m. with Pastor Greg Anderson and music by Rob Mattson. There will be no service on Sunday, Dec. 26.

St. Martin’s Catholic Church in Tower
Friday, Dec. 24 - Christmas Eve 4 p.m. at St. Martin’s in Tower and 7 p.m. at Holy Cross in Orr
Saturday, Dec 25 - Christmas Day 9 a.m. at St. Mary’s in Cook.

Regular Mass times resume on Dec. 26. Please note that there will be no Saturday evening Mass at Holy Cross on Christmas Day.

Immanuel Lutheran Church in Tower
Christmas Eve Services at 4 p.m. and 6 p.m.

Christmas Day Open Sanctuary and Communion from 9-11 a.m.

St. James Presbyterian Church in Tower
Christmas Eve Service at 7 p.m. Special music by Greg and Denise Kuchan including “O Come All Ye Faithful” and Kathy Siskar “O Holy Night.” The Message will be “The Pure Gift Of Love” by Pastor Doug Workman. All are welcome, and masks are required.

MERRY Christmas

Students at Tower-Soudan Elementary and the Vermilion Country School all received \$50 Visa Gift Cards as a holiday gift from the Tower Fire Department Relief Association. The relief association raises money through charitable gambling (pull-tabs), which they donate to many community causes.



TOWER SOUDAN ELEMENTARY



Above: The entire elementary joined together for the finale of the Winter Concert. Below: John Stellmach played baritone in the Elementary Band. photos by J. Summit



Have A Bright & Merry Christmas!

from BOB’S STANDARD



Artist • KOOPER DOSTERT
GRADE 5

Have a Bright, Happy Christmas!

from Aronson Boat Works



Winning Artist • Emmett Flood
Grade 1

HO HO AROUND THE CHRISTMAS TREE!

from THE CITY OF TOWER



Artist • LARENZO STELLA
Grade 2

Sweet Wishes at Christmas!

from BARB’S CUTTING EDGE



Winning Artist • AVA REDETZKE
GRADE 5

Santa Claus is On His Way!

from Breitung Township



Winning Artist • Levi Clemenson
Grade 2

CHRISTMAS IS FOR KIDS



Kids Christmas Workshop



Ely’s Grace Lutheran Church hosted their annual Kids Christmas Workshop last Sunday afternoon. Preschoolers through 6th graders selected from 15 different craft stations to make gifts for parents, friends, relatives, teachers or someone special. Gifts were wrapped and labeled with a tag. Clockwise from upper left, Roger Nyquist, 2, shows off his ornament; Harper Olson, 5, selects a color of paint for an ornament; Hollace Fenske, 3, makes a keychain; Lyla Holthaus, 6, and Will Holthaus, 5, decorate picture frames. photos by K. Vandervort

Higher Ed

Student honored at MSU Moorhead

MOORHEAD – Minnesota State University at Moorhead awarded degrees to more than 500 students during its fall commencement program on Thursday, Dec. 16, including Linda Bajan, of Ely, who earned a Masters of Science degree in Special Education.

Two Ely students honored at MSU Mankato

MANKATO a t Minnesota State University, Mankato awarded 2,276 degrees to 1,941 students at the end of the fall 2021 semester, including two Ely students: Michael Pengal, BSE, Integrated Engineering; and Sara Skelton, GC, Teaching Writing.

Breathing Out

by Cecilia Rolando © 2021



tiresome year ending heaviness with 21

carrying the burden

Libraries

Ely library

Hours: Monday – Friday, 9:30 a.m.-6:30 p.m. Closed on Saturday, Sunday, and holidays 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 Ledgerock Church, 1515 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

OUR COMMUNITY



St. Louis County Commissioners Mike Jugovich, left, and Paul McDonald, right, presented \$250 in donations to Nancy Schwartz, director of the Ely Area Food Shelf last Friday. Schwartz said 148 families were served by the local organization last week. She also indicated that the Ely facility is in need of ADA access and a new ventilation system. photo by K. Vandervort



Fifteen Ely middle school students in three teams competed in a Lego League robotics competition in Hermantown on Saturday, Dec. 11. They competed with 25 other teams from across the region. The students were tasked to build and program a robot to solve a variety of challenges. In addition, the students completed a research project on a real-world topic related to this year’s theme, “Cargo Connect.” The Ely fifth-grade team won the best designed robot in their division. submitted photo

Ely Folk School takes COVID precautions

ELY – As the Ely area experiences its highest number of COVID-19 cases since the pandemic began, the Ely Folk School board of directors announced this week that they are enacting a mandatory face mask use protocol, effective immediately

In addition, all students taking indoor, in-person classes must be vaccinated, including the booster shot, if eligible, starting Friday, Dec. 17.

In a Facebook post, EFS officials said they will revisit the public health policy monthly following the advice of their professional medical advisors.

“We regret that this means some of our students may need to postpone participation in the classes they want to take, but we hope to offer enough virtual and outdoor classes that everyone can find something appealing this winter,” officials said.

Visit www.elyfolkschool.org for the most up-to-date information.



Congratulations and appreciations went to long-time Ely Utility Commission employees last week as they prepared to retire at the end of the year. The EUC members thanked them for more than 100 years of combined service. From left, Judy Niemela (36 years), Butch Gornik (38 years), EUC President Warren Nikkola, and Mick Shusta (33 years), gathered in the City Council chambers. Gornik just retired as Electric Lineman Foreman, Niemala will be retiring in January as the Utility Billing Clerk, and Shusta retired last week as the Chief Water/Wastewater Operator. submitted photo

HOLIDAY CHEER AT NORTH WOODS SCHOOL



CHRISTMAS CARD CONTEST WINNERS

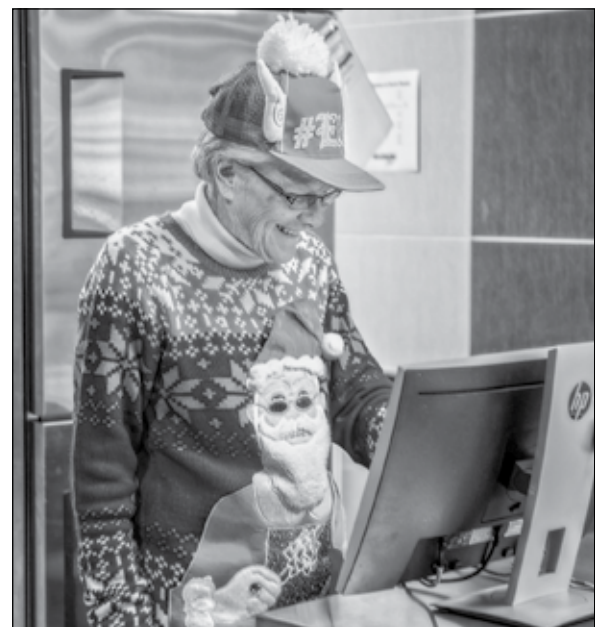
These happy North Woods Elementary students are some of the winning entrants in the annual Timberjay Christmas Card Contest.

The Timberjay would like to thank all the elementary students who participated in the Christmas Card Contest this year. As usual, we saw the imagination and creativity of our local children. The following students were awarded prizes this year. Watch for most of these winners' drawings in the Timberjay in our Christmas and New Year's editions. Winners, with places noted, were, clockwise, beginning in lower right:

- Grade Three: Shay Wilcox, 3; Lucy Talberg, 1; Audree Palmer, 3; and Ava Eggert, 2 (not pictured).
- Kindergarten: Myray Maroste, 3; Charlie Franks, 1; Christopher Koch, 2; and Natalie Eggert, 1 (not pictured).
- Grade Four: Daniel Zupancich, 3; Rylee Gibson, 1; and Kaidence Scofield, 2 (not pictured).
- Grade One: Everett Crain, 1; Jaidyn Wakemup, 3; Ilee Antus, 2 (not pictured); and Audrey Rutchasky, 3 (not pictured).
- Grade Two: Shainah Christiansen, 1; Kendall Duame, 2; Leatah Anderson, 3 (not pictured); and Sammy Amundson, 3 (not pictured).
- Grade Five: Tessa Burnett, 1; Anelise Brodeen, 1; River Deatherage, 2 (not pictured); and Elias Sheffer, 3 (not pictured).
- Grade Six: Carsyn Burnett, Alice Sopoci. Evalyn Thiel, and Donelle Villebrun.



North Woods Elementary second grader Kendall Duame was among about two dozen Grizzlettes cheerleaders who performed at the Grizzlies' game against Hinckley-Finlayson on Dec. 10.



Food service worker Anita King went all in for Ugly Sweater Day on Dec. 16 at North Woods. photos by D. Colburn



Christmas Mass times released

REGIONAL - Christmas Mass will be celebrated by area Catholic churches at the following times:

Two Christmas Eve services will be held on Friday, Dec. 24, one at 4 p.m. at St. Martin's Catholic Church in Tower, the other at

7 p.m. at Holy Cross Catholic Church in Orr.

On Christmas Day, Saturday, Dec. 25, Mass will be celebrated at 9 a.m. at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Cook.

A First Saturday Mass on New Year's Day, Jan. 1, will be celebrated at 11 a.m. at St. Mary's.

Wishing You a Merry Christmas

from BIC Realty



Winning Artist • Anelise Brodeen
GRADE 5

BEST Wishes at Christmas!

from COMO GAS



Artist • HARPER OLSON
PRESCHOOL

Have The Merriest Christmas

from Cook Building Center



Winning Artist • Sammy Amundson
GRADE 2

Have A Healthy Happy Christmas!

from The Cook Hospital



Winning Artist • Ilee Antus
Grade 1

MERRY CHRISTMAS TO EVERYONE!

from First National Bank of Cook



Winning Artist • River Deatherage
Grade 5

Have A Holly, Jolly Christmas!

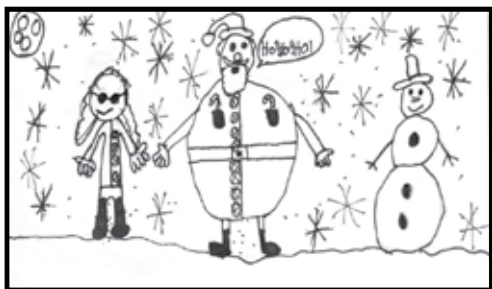
from Lumber Orr Hardware



Winning Artist • Natalie Eggert
Kindergarten

Have A Holly, Jolly Christmas!

from LAKES GAS



Winning Artist • SHAY WILCOX
GRADE 3

MERRY CHRISTMAS TO EVERYONE!

from Fortune Bay Resort Casino



Winning Artist • Jaidyn Wakemup
Grade 1

Season's Best Wishes from Rudolph!

from North Star Insurance



Winning Artist • Leatah Anderson
Grade 2

COVID...Continued from page 1

they still are not back to their (healthy) baseline and may never be.”

Cook Hospital has been engaged with the pandemic from its earliest days, and hospital CEO Teresa Debevec, Chief Operating Officer and Care Center Administrator Julie Lesemann, and Chiabotti sat down with the *Timberjay* on Monday to talk about how the pandemic has affected hospital operations and the people who work there.

Current challenges

From the initial surge at the start of the pandemic in March 2019 and on through the massive statewide wave in November and December of 2020, Cook Hospital largely escaped the influx of cases seen elsewhere in the state.

“We’d see a few here and there in the ER but nobody that really needed to be in the hospital,” Chiabotti said. “We really didn’t see a big impact on our hospital ER until April. We knew the whole rest of the state was seeing it, but we weren’t.”

That changed, however, when the highly infectious Delta variant began driving up area case numbers in mid-August and the hospital’s patient load began rising on pace.

“Our average daily census before COVID was like three or four patients a day for years and years,” Chiabotti said. “That’s how we’re staffed. Now that we have eight or ten patients, we don’t have the staff to take care of them, because we’ve never had that many.”

The problem is compounded because of how ill COVID patients have been and the extra care they need, plus the fact that they’re in the hospital far longer than the average inpatient, between seven and 14 days, Chiabotti said. And the unvaccinated are the hardest hit.

“Those folks are always more sick than anyone who is vaccinated,” Chiabotti

said. “Almost every single one of them is on oxygen. They’re getting the IV steroids, IV remdesivir, and IV fluids, because many of them have no appetite and are highly dehydrated. They can barely get to the bathroom and back, they’re so weak and run down. I’d bet 95 percent of them have to go home on oxygen as well.”

The increased patient load has meant that Lesemann, Chiabotti, and other nurse managers have had to partially step away from their administrative roles and step back into direct patient care as staff nurses.

And while the current surge is taking an emotional toll on all the staff, they’re still managing to cope.

“People have done really well,” Chiabotti said. “They’re just exhausted and tired. We’re taking care of more critical patients than we ever have. The doctors and nurses, everybody, you feel like you’re not helping the patients like you should because we simply don’t have the resources to provide an ICU level of care.”

Pandemic stress has also affected patients and their families, and while most have been good to work with, Chiabotti admitted that some of them have taken their frustrations out on emergency room staff. Some people are frustrated when they’re not allowed into the hospital with their loved ones due to illness or injury issues. Others become mad when they come to the ER to get a rapid COVID test and discover that the hospital doesn’t provide them for the general public, reserving their limited allocation for people who are severely ill.

“There was one weekend recently that was very, very bad,” Chiabotti said. “The staff were berated all weekend long by multiple family and community members. That’s hard. That’s really

hard.”

Chiabotti also was quick to point out that it’s not only the direct care staff that are having to cope with the trials of the current surge.

“It’s not just the nurses and the doctors,” she said. “The lab has to do so many different things, and so does radiology, and the house-keeping staff and maintenance. Everybody has to do so much extra beyond what they’ve done before in every single department. Going above and beyond is not just your frontline care staff.”

Care center

The challenge of having enough staff is also being felt in the care center, Lesemann said.

“We’ve had a part-time nurse position open for a while, but mostly it’s been (a shortage of) nursing assistants,” Lesemann said. We’ve had to utilize contract staff, we’ve had to utilize several of us in different positions helping out as needed on the floor just to be able to meet those needs.”

The staff shortage is such that new admissions to the care center are now limited, Lesemann said.

“It has to be somebody who needs a very low level of care so that we can appropriately meet their needs with the staffing we have,” she said. “It’s been a huge challenge throughout the pandemic, but we have seen it much more so this last year.”

So that they don’t compromise resident care, Lesemann maintains minimum levels of three aides during the day and two overnight, which means many staff members are taking on extra shifts. Lesemann has also worked with supplemental staffing companies to try to alleviate shortfalls, but contract nursing assistants are increasingly hard to find and come at a cost of up to two-and-a-half times regular staff.

A mandate from the Biden administration and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) for all staff to be fully vaccinated has already had an impact on staffing, even though it’s been placed on hold for now by the courts.

“We did lose three already,” Debevec said. “We were preparing for the Dec. 6 enforcement date, and it was so late when the court injunction came that we lost three.”

However, the injunction has also allowed some others to stay on for the time being, and the hospital has enlisted the services of an attorney to evaluate exemption requests, Debevec said.

Regulations and finances

When the pandemic first hit, it hit hardest in long-term care facilities, making the hospital’s care center the first unit to experience the full brunt of quarantines, personal protective equipment, and extensive regulatory changes meant to protect residents and staff.

Lesemann acknowledged the many difficult emotional impacts the changes had on residents, staff, and families over time, something made more difficult in a sense because the care center was able to avoid having many COVID cases.

“We didn’t have an outbreak like a lot of facilities you heard about that were suffering greatly with outbreaks from COVID,” Lesemann said. “But we still had to follow those same precautions and quarantines and all the regulations, which affected everybody tremendously.”

New regulations for the rest of the healthcare industry were quick to follow, and unlike large hospital systems with staff dedicated specifically to handle regulatory issues, all of that work fell on largely on Debevec, Chiabotti, and Lesemann. Not only did

they have to interpret regulations that changed more frequently than the coronavirus spawned variants, they had to make sure they brought staff members up to speed on the new rules.

“No matter what the volume (of COVID) was, it seemed like almost every day a regulation was changing,” Debevec said.

“You’d put something in place and then you’d have to redo it all and try to re-educate everyone,” Chiabotti said.

A common misperception in the public is that funds generated through the hospital’s taxing district cover most of the cost of operations, when in fact the revenue generated from inpatient and outpatient services is what keeps the hospital financially viable.

“Medicare and Medicaid are our biggest payers here,” Debevec said. “The nursing home is pretty much all Medicaid.”

On the hospital side, Center for Medicare and Medicaid Service reimbursement accounts for two-thirds of the hospital’s revenue, Debevec said, with commercial insurance such as Blue Cross and others making up about 32 percent.

The extraordinary expense of getting the necessary equipment to deal with COVID patients, to modify physical spaces and install HVAC equipment to create negative airflow units that remove potentially virus-tainted air, to train staff on new procedures, and more were well beyond anything Cook Hospital, or any other, could afford without major government assistance.

All told, Cook Hospital has received a little over \$8 million in additional funding to cover pandemic-related costs, Debevec said, but the money came from various sources and with complex sets of strings attached.

A large portion of that money came in the form of advance payment loans

of anticipated future CMS reimbursements, Debevec said. CMS withholds 25 percent of every reimbursement request to pay down the loans. For example, if the request is for \$100, the hospital gets \$75 back from CMS.

Another pot of COVID money from the federal government came with the stipulation that it had to be spent by June 30 of this year. That presented a challenge for the hospital, Debevec said.

“We had to spend the money by then or else we had to return it. Well, COVID here really hit after that, so unfortunately we are going to be returning some of that money,” she said.

And extra money wasn’t always available at the time the hospital needed it.

“Before any of the grant money came back in March and April, we did do some staff layoffs and furloughs,” Debevec said. “That was hard to have to do—we’ve never had to do that here. But then having the funds come through really did help us.”

While the current Delta-driven wave may have hit its peak, all three administrators acknowledged that the hospital will continue to play a significant role in the health of the community throughout the upcoming weeks and months that the pandemic continues. And it will be their staff, across all departments, that will see them through successfully.

“It’s really, really important to know how much we appreciate our staff and their commitment to this facility,” Lesemann said. “The dedication that we’ve seen from our staff that have stayed consistent with us throughout this pandemic is just unbelievable. They didn’t see my nice letter, I guess. Yeah. But you know, constantly. They’re the backbone.”

IRRR...Continued from page 1

Grand Marais EDA to fund infrastructure for a new mixed-use development in Tofte, including residential apartments and associated retail space.

► \$250,000 to the city of Hibbing to construct infrastructure for the development of a new city-owned campground on Carey Lake with 29 RV and tenting sites with water and electrical service at each site.

► \$18 million to pay down bonds for the construction of a new K-12 school in Nashwauk. The funding will come from the IRRR’s Iron Range School Collaboration Account, based on collaboration and cooperation between the Nashwauk-Keewatin School District and the Grand Rapids School District.

► \$765,000 to the VisionNE College Merger

to assist with the merger of five community colleges including Hibbing, Itasca, Mesabi Range, Rainy River and Vermilion.

► A total of \$7.2 million to area taconite plants to assist with plant re-investment and improvements. Minntac was the largest recipient, with a total of \$3.122 million approved for Lines 5 and 6 pre-classification, mine

extension, new track scale, and an indurating Line 6 grate.

All combined, the projects approved by the agency are expected to increase the regional tax base, create permanent jobs and temporary construction jobs, provide essential services, improve education and expand outdoor recreation and mining. Loans provided to businesses are antic-

ipated to impact 19.5 jobs and create 32 construction jobs. The infrastructure projects are projected to impact 54 jobs and create 306 construction jobs.

Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation is funded through taxes paid by Minnesota’s mining industry. The agency works to support businesses, communities and workforce development projects.



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Grade 6

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Winning Artist • Arlene King
Grade 6

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from Northwoods True Value



Artist • Serah Ross
Grade 5

In Memoriam

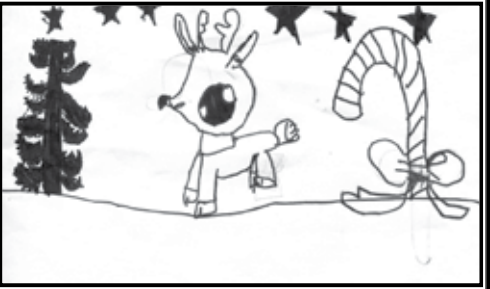
In memory of Priscilla Mickle who passed away one year ago, December 29.

Those we love don't go away, they walk beside us everyday. Unseen, unheard, but always near. Still loved, still missed everyday of the year.

*Love,
Mick and family*

Wishing You A Joyous Christmas!

from Embarrass Vermillion Federal Credit



Winning Artist • Shelby Troop
GRADE 1

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CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

Omicron poised to dominate COVID-19 cases

by DAVID COLBURN
Cook-Orr Editor

New strain exploding less than a month after discovery

REGIONAL- There’s reason to question new Centers for Disease Control estimates of the prevalence of Omicron coronavirus variant cases widely reported nationally on Monday. Yet, with all but four states now reporting cases of the highly contagious virus, it’s likely that Omicron will soon short-circuit the recent downward trend of cases in Minnesota and increase pressure on an already overburdened healthcare system.

Two key indicators provide evidence that the peak of the Delta-driven fourth wave of the pandemic in Minnesota is likely behind us. On Monday, the state reported a seven-day daily average new case count of 3,177. That’s a 33-percent drop in that same measure from the data reported on Dec. 7. And the seven-day test positivity rate dropped under double-digits for the first time in weeks, to 8.2 percent. Both data points suggest declining cases — at least for now. But all recent forecasting bets are off now that the rapidly spreading

Omicron variant is making major inroads in the U.S., suggesting it could become the dominant variant in the U.S., as it has in Great Britain, South Africa, and elsewhere.

The Centers for Disease Control updated COVID infection modeling estimates on its website Monday, based on data gathered through its national genomic surveillance system, that in only one week estimates of Omicron infections skyrocketed from 12.6 percent of new cases to 73.2 percent. Regional variations range from a high of 96.3 percent in the Pacific Northwest to 30.6 percent in the region comprised of Nebraska, Kansas, Iowa and Missouri.

But many of the splashy headlines and breaking news stories on national and regional media outlets reporting the CDC data on Monday night had disappeared by Tuesday morning as multiple sources began questioning an astronomical increase that exceeded any prior data of how quickly Omicron has increased in other parts of the world.

A blog post by Ari Allyn-Feuer, an Artificial Intelligence engineer at a major pharmaceutical company, asserted that the sustained doubling rate of Omicron cases necessary to generate such estimates far exceed documented experiences in the United Kingdom and Denmark that indicate doubling times between two and four days, not the 36 hours needed to account for the CDC’s 73.2 percent estimate.

“This is out of touch with what we know about Omicron,” Allyn-Feuer wrote. “It’s not credible.”

He also noted that the CDC didn’t make any announcement about the number and claimed that the estimate had to be a result of a bug that would be walked back soon by CDC officials. However, he also didn’t downplay the seriousness of Omicron growth.

“Still prepare for Omicron to become dominant in your area within weeks (or already),” he said. “That’s real, and it’s still on.”

The emerging data from other countries does support the claim that Omicron’s rapid spread has outstripped every other variant of concern to date. In less than a month since the discovery of the Omicron variant was first announced by health officials in South Africa, the new COVID strain had been identified in all but four U.S. states and more than 85 countries worldwide as of Monday.

On Dec. 16, the Minnesota Department of Health confirmed that seven Omicron COVID cases had been identified in the state since the first was reported, and that only two of those cases were linked to each other or involved

out-of-state travel, indicating that community spread is happening in the state. Six of the cases were in the Twin Cities area and one was in Greater Minnesota. On Monday, the GISAID global Omicron database indicated Minnesota’s count had risen to 13.

“When we consider the introduction of Omicron into our community — we have cases in Minnesota that clearly were the result of community spread — it’s all that much more important ... to be attentive to mitigation measures like masking indoors,” said state infectious disease director Kris Ehresmann.

One of the first attempts to model the potential impact of Omicron in the U.S. was released Dec. 16 by researchers at the University of Texas-Austin. In what they called their most “optimistic” scenario, with 80 percent of vaccinated people receiving booster shots by March 1 and virus transmission similar to Delta, the U.S. would see 14.3 million new Omicron cases by May 1, including 682,000 hospitalizations and 182,000 deaths.

However, with less than 30 percent of those eligible for boosters nationwide taking advantage to date, and recent research indicating that the Omicron variant is at least four times as contagious as Delta, the “optimistic” scenario from UT-A is unlikely. In their most “pessimistic” scenario, UT-A researchers predict daily COVID case loads more than two times higher than at the highest point of the pandemic in January 2021, leading by May 1 to 26.3 million new cases, 1.6 million hospitalizations, and 342,000 deaths.

While the reality will likely fall between those extremes, Michael Osterholm, director of the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy at the University of Minnesota said in a Friday podcast that he expects a “viral blizzard” in upcoming weeks and months.

“It is so difficult at this point ... to actually know what to tell you because (information) is coming out so rapidly; the information is confusing and frankly challenging,” Osterholm said. “I think we are going to see a viral blizzard literally ascend upon the world with Omicron, and the questions will be what will that mean clinically, from a public health standpoint, and from a medical delivery standpoint?”

With over 50 genetic variations from other COVID strains, emerging research indicates that Omicron is more infectious than the highly infectious Delta variant and has the ability to circumvent the antibodies produced by standard-dose COVID vaccines and prior COVID infections. The mRNA Pfizer and Moderna two-dose vaccines combined with a booster shot appear to have the best chance at warding off serious illness, hospitalizations and deaths from Omicron.

Osterholm stressed the importance of getting booster shots.

“Two doses of vaccine is a 50-foot rope,” he said. “People are all drowning a hundred feet out. A booster dose gives you the full hundred feet of the rope. That’s what you need to save people.”

However, for the four percent of vaccinated Minnesotans who received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, early indicators suggest that booster shots will do little to improve their immunity against Omicron infections, as is the case with other non-mRNA vaccines developed and extensively used in other parts of the world.

Natural immunity from prior COVID infection also provides little protection against Omicron, which carries a “three-to-eightfold increased risk of reinfection,” according to Osterholm.

“Those who continue

to assert that previous infection is by itself sufficient for ongoing protection, that’s not the case,” he said. “Even those who have been previously infected do need to be boosted with vaccines.”

Osterholm also said last week that early reports of Omicron causing less serious illness seemed to be holding up. However, on Monday, researchers at Imperial College in London reported data on a group of 11,300 confirmed or likely Omicron infections that cast serious doubt on that assessment. They said that they see “no evidence of Omicron having lower severity than Delta, judged by either the proportion of people testing positive who report symptoms, or by the proportion of cases seeking hospital care after infection.”

It’s also unclear at this point what effect Omicron may have on Delta variant case levels. Some health officials have said that Delta could remain a significant source of COVID infections even with the emergence of Omicron as the dominant variant, while others suggest Omicron might push Delta out of the way as a major factor.

“It’s Omicron against Delta and we don’t know where that’s going to play out yet,” Osterholm said. “The one thing you can do more than anything else, to protect yourself, your family, your loved ones, all the people you work with, your neighbors, the people you go to church with, the people you go to social events with, is to be fully vaccinated with your booster, too. That will give you the best opportunity to prevent any kind of serious illness from occurring and maybe even have some impact on transmission.”

Local data

Along with the rest of the state, case numbers in St. Louis County have been trending downward since early December, after tallying 5,019 new cases in November. The seven-day case average dropped to 94.7 on Dec. 14, almost half of what it was on Dec. 2.

Ely’s new cases were down slightly to 24 in the Dec. 16 weekly case report, while new cases in Cook were up from six the prior week to nine. Embarrass and Tower each added six new cases, Orr added two, and Soudan had no new cases reported last week.

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ISD 696

Ely school project trimmed to meet budget shortfall

by KEITH VANDERVORT
Ely Editor

School levy approved at 12-percent reduction

ELY – The ISD 696 school building project is facing a budget shortfall and school board members last week agreed to approve only some of the bids received for a third bid package. Project officials recommended approving about \$2.6 million in bids, instead of the \$3.6 million received earlier this month, and to reconsider priorities.

The unanimous decision allows officials from Kraus Anderson and Architectural Resources Inc. more time to re-establish priorities for the \$20 million building and renovation project and to allow for some money to remain to complete most of the work slated for a fourth bid package that will go to contractors early next year.

The project is seven months into a 16-month schedule, or 38 percent complete. On Nov. 1, the project was 30 percent complete with \$6,125,138 spent and \$14,309,304 remaining, according to Todd Erickson of Kraus Anderson.

At a school board

project facilities meeting at the beginning of December, construction managers were tasked to create a budget for Bid Package 4 priorities from recommended reductions in the scope of work in Bid Package 3.

“As we look at priorities for Bid Package 4, we have, in no particular order, the boys and girls lockers rooms, special education areas, Memorial building doors and locks, science labs, additional classroom remodeling and restroom upgrades,” Erickson said. KA is looking at having the final bid package ready to release sometime in January.

“There’s a significant shortfall, and that’s why we want to make changes,” he said. “If the board were to approve all the Bid Package 3 bids, there would be no funding for the work in Bid Package 4.”

Even with potential adjustments, including about \$640,000 to complete the window replacements, a shortfall of more than \$800,000 remains if just four of the eight

Interim superintendent

The Ely school board was scheduled to meet on Thursday, Dec. 23, to interview John Klarich for the interim superintendent position, and to discuss steps necessary for the hiring process to fill the upcoming vacancy in ISD 696’s top administrator position. Eric Erie recently submitted his resignation and would like to leave his post by Jan. 30, 2022.

priorities in the fourth bid package, boys and girls lockers room, special education area and high school doors and locks, were completed.

Superintendent Erik Erie said earlier this month that the window replacement project could still be completed using the district’s long-term facilities maintenance fund.

The school board’s approval of about \$2.6 million in Bid Package 3 last week included heating and ventilation mechanical work, fire suppression system, building controls, electrical and low voltage and data wiring.

“We have an HVAC unit lead time of about six months and need the units by about May 1,” Erickson

said.

The Project Advisory Team met last week to consider potential revenue sources and reallocation. Letters were developed and sent to the Minnesota Department of Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation and to St. Louis County, highlighting the cost increases and shortages of building materials for the school project due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The district’s financial advisor, Ehler’s Inc., is also reviewing potential revenue sources, according to Erickson.

Construction officials are considering “value engineering” on various facets of the project, including cabinets, sprin-

kler design, window treatments, clocks, flooring, landscaping, sidewalks, and parking lot design to reduce costs.

“There are ways we can do that,” Erickson. “And we can circle back later with maintenance budgets,” he said.

School levy

Following a Truth in Taxation public hearing last week, the school board approved a 2022 property tax levy of \$2,085,911, a decrease of \$287,564, or 12.1 percent, from the 2021 levy of \$2,373,475.

In September, school board members set a maximum levy showing a 6.6-percent decrease. Adjustments and refinements to the budget, particularly in student enrollment figures, were considered in setting the levy, according to the district’s business manager, Spencer Aune.

A portion of what the school district collects from property owners is attributed to student enrollment. A decline of approximately \$100,000 in local property taxes is

directly connected to the recent drop in enrollment, from 573 students at the start of the 2019-20 school year, to 531 students at the start of the 2021-22 school year.

Lower expenditures for post-employment benefits to school district retirees (\$285,233 to \$108,235) also contributed to the decreased levy, Aune said.

With the voter-approved \$10 million bond for the school facilities building and renovation project contributing, debt service (\$757,648) and long term facility maintenance (\$162,399) make up a large portion of the levy, he added.

Other business

In other business at the Dec. 14 business meeting, the school board:

► Approved hiring Laurel Kaercher and Aaron Kaercher as paraprofessionals.

► Approved Carter Manning as volunteer assistant hockey coach.

► Adopted the U.S. General Services Administration maximum per diem reimbursement rates for meal and lodging rates for all district employees.

JOINT POWERS...Continued from page 1

Ely-area state legislators for a sneak preview of the upcoming legislative session, where a state surplus and bonding bill will be on the top of the to-do list, while redistricting will distract from the business at hand.

The local Joint Powers board, made up of elected officials from Ely, Winton, Morse Township, Fall Lake Township, and the Ely School District, uses the annual event to bend the ears of county, state and federal officials on projects and issues of interest to the individual entities and the entire region.

“This will be a big year for the state legislature,” Ecklund said in comments to about 100 area officials at the Grand Ely Lodge. “The bonding committees have been throughout the state looking at nearly \$6 billion worth of requests. There are a lot of needs out there and we’ll have to whittle it down and figure out what kind of bill we can come with.”

He also noted that redistricting, while not of big importance to the Ely area because of its location smack in the middle of Bakk’s 3rd Senate District and Ecklund’s 03A State House District will also be high on the priority list when the legislature reconvenes on Jan. 31, 2022.

“I’ve never been down there for redistricting,” Ecklund said, “but I have talked to friends who have and we find out when the maps come out and we’re matched against each other, all of a sudden the friendships aren’t as deep as you thought.”

Ecklund said it will be a challenging year.

“We have a lot of money to spend, obviously, and there are some things I would like to see (in the bonding bill).”

Bakk talked of his flashbacks to 2001, the last time the state had a huge revenue surplus. “That was the last time we were going into a new session with a huge surplus like this,” he said. “And we did some pretty big stuff, like the ‘Jessie’ (Ventura tax rebate) checks. That was the year that we took the general education levy off the property taxes. That was a really big deal. I think you will see some things like that again.”

Bakk, who switched from the DFL caucus to an independent who caucuses with state Republicans, said he is crafting a bill to buy down the locally-operated levies for schools, not on cabins, but for businesses and individuals.

He explained, “We allow schools to levy \$724 (per pupil) without a referendum. I have a bill drafted to shift that \$724 over to the state’s general fund. It should generate serious property tax relief, close to \$500 million per year. You get the property tax relief and you get more state money into the public school system from the general fund. That will be a high priority for me.”

Bakk also talked about removing the taxes on Social Security income.

“We are one of 12 states that tax that retirement income,” he said. “A whole lot of people think we shouldn’t do

that. There are people who make their retirement decisions on where they are going to live based on tax policy. This is a problem that we never were able to address because we didn’t have the resources. Now we have the resources. I will be pretty surprised if that doesn’t get done this year. It costs about \$600 million a year to do that.”

The unemployment trust fund is also on Bakk’s priority list.

“When that fund (what employers use to pay unemployment) runs out of money, it automatically triggers loans from the federal government,” he said. “We owe about \$1.2 billion right now because the fund ran out of money.”

He added, “That was no fault of the employers. This whole (coronavirus) pandemic hit them. It seems like there is plenty of money to be able to pay off that federal loan.”

He chalked up spending about \$3 billion so far of the estimated \$7 billion in the state surplus.

“It does go pretty fast,” he said.

Bakk, who serves on the capital investments committee, has been studying the bonding project requests.

“Almost every request in rural Minnesota is the same as in Ely. It is wastewater, childcare, and housing. The same problems everywhere you go.”

He noted the discussion taking place on selling bonds to finance

all those projects around the state while the surplus is so big.

“Why would we sell bonds if we have all this cash?” he asked.

He is in favor of bonding.

“For the last bonds we sold, last August, our interest rate was .65 percent. That’s pretty cheap money as borrowing goes. The problem with using (state surplus) cash is that today’s taxpayer will pay the entire bill for that new bridge or wastewater treatment plant. Everybody who drives over that bridge for the next 20 years will have gotten it for free. That’s why we bond.”

Bakk also talked of precedent.

“If we use cash, that will kind of become the new normal. If you use cash, there will be times when you do less because there isn’t enough cash laying around. If you save and wait to do things with cash, construction and inflation way supersedes the cost of the debt service. If you put a project off, the cost keeps going up. If you delay things because you don’t have the cash, all the things down the road get more expensive.”

Bakk didn’t anticipate new spending in the budget next year.

“The only area I do think will get some attention is in healthcare, especially in long-term care where we have serious problems. We are going to have to figure out how to help them out,” he said. “We have a serious

shortage of healthcare professionals, and some of the reason you hear about shortages of ICU beds is the pandemic, no question, but a lot of beds are taken out of service because we don’t have enough staff. That will be tricky to figure out.”

As far as redistricting, Bakk said that after Feb. 15 the courts release the maps and everyone sees what their district will look like.

“Ecklund’s district will have to gain about 3,000 more people,” Bakk said. “I’m looking at losing 5,000 people in the Duluth area. So, I will need those 5,000, plus I need 6,000, that’s about 11,000. They can’t push me into Lake Superior or into Canada.”

He predicted many retirement announcements when the maps are released.

“You will see people paired against each other. You will see people who don’t live in their districts anymore. And to run for re-election, you will have to make a decision pretty quick to relocate. A lot of people will have a lot of new ground. It has historically been hard to get the legislators to stay in St. Paul and focus on the session when their districts look way different. It will create a lot of anxiety around the building.”

He added, “I think the governor’s thought of having a really grand (legislative) session with a lot getting done is probably not going to happen.”

Minnesota House Minority Leader Kurt Daudt also attended the Joint Powers meeting and agreed with Bakk’s assessment of the upcoming legislative session.

“There will be a lot of distraction with redistricting,” he said. “With this huge surplus, the expectations will go through the roof. When the expectations are too high, it gets very difficult to come together and to figure out how to resolve that.”

Daudt added a word of caution in reference to the \$7.7 billion surplus.

“About \$3 billion of that is carry forward money. That means it is one-time money. We can’t spend \$7.7 billion going forward in additional money or we will end up in a deficit.”

He said he supports fixing the Social Security revenue tax.

“I hope this surplus allows us to do that,” he said.

And he said he supports replenishing the unemployment trust fund.

“At some point we have to pay that money back and the bill is coming due now,” Daudt said.

Look for more coverage of the Joint Powers Board’s discussion in the Dec. 31 issue of the *Timberjay*. One contentious Ely-area issue, sulfide mining, caught some members by surprise when an eleventh-hour resolution supporting the environmentally-risky proposal, was introduced.

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ALTERNATIVE HEALTH CARE

Edibles to be new medical cannabis option

by DAVID COLBURN
Cook/Orr Editor

REGIONAL- While specific details remain to be worked out, the use of cannabis-infused gummies and chews as a new option for Minnesota medical cannabis program participants has been approved to begin on Aug. 1, 2022. Current permitted delivery forms include pills, vapor oil, liquids, topicals, powdered mixtures, and orally dissolvable products, like lozenges. “Expanding delivery methods to gummies and chews will mean more options for patients who

cannot tolerate current available forms of medical cannabis,” said Minnesota Commissioner of Health Jan Malcolm. A rulemaking process that will outline requirements for labeling, safety messaging, packaging, and testing is supposed to launch by the end of the year. Check the Minnesota Department of Health Medical Cannabis webpage for an upcoming announcement describing when and how public comments will be received. The edibles option approved by MDH follows on the heels of action taken in the 2021 Minnesota legislative session to allow registered medical

cannabis patients to use dried raw, smokable cannabis beginning in March 2022 which was approved by the 2021 Minnesota Legislature. Final rulemaking for dried raw cannabis is in process after public comments were received earlier this year. Meanwhile, individuals with a wide array of conditions falling under the umbrella of “anxiety disorders” had their hopes for state-sanctioned cannabis relief quashed when Malcolm rejected a petition to add anxiety disorders to the list of 17 approved conditions for medical cannabis use. Petitions requesting

anxiety disorder or panic disorder as qualifying medical conditions have been filed and denied every year since 2016. Each year petitions were denied due to lack of clinical evidence and the desire to avoid any unintended consequences, according to MDH. Following a more extensive review of the research this year, at Malcolm’s request, the addition was not approved due to a lack of scientific evidence to support

effectiveness as well as concerns expressed by health care practitioners. “We received many comments from health care practitioners treating patients with anxiety disorder, and they urged us to not approve it as a qualifying medical condition,” said Malcolm. “We recognize that not everyone has equal access to therapy, which is considered the front-line treatment, but ultimately we concluded that the risk of addi-

tional harms to patients outweighed perceived benefits.” When the Minnesota Legislature authorized the creation of the state’s medical cannabis program, the law included nine conditions that qualified a patient to receive medical cannabis. According to state rules, the commissioner of health each year considers whether to add conditions and delivery methods.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Babbitt man killed in crash on icy road

by KEITH VANDERVORT
Ely Editor

ELY - A 74-year-old Babbitt man was killed last Thursday in a single-vehicle crash on Highway 21 in Morse Township. George J. Amtrano was pronounced dead at scene of the crash in the 1900 block of Highway 21 North late in the afternoon of Dec. 16. According to a press release from the St. Louis County Sheriff’s Department, first responders arrived at the single-vehicle crash around 3:30 p.m. Authorities said Amtrano lost control of his pickup truck on the snow-covered

and icy road, went into the ditch, and rolled over. The slippery road conditions were believed to have contributed to the crash. Amtrano was the only person in the truck. The incident remains under investigation by the sheriff’s office and Midwest

Medical Examiner’s Office. The Ely Fire Department, Ely Ambulance Service, Morse Township Fire Department and first responders, Minnesota State Patrol and the Lake County Sheriff’s Office assisted at the scene.

LAKE COUNTRY FORECAST

from NOAA weather

Thursday				Friday				Saturday				Sunday				Monday			
25 17				32 3				14 1				21 10				22 9			
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.
12/13	39	23	0.00	12/13	39	19	0.00	12/13	38	22	0.00	12/13	34	21	0.00	12/13	38	15	0.00
12/14	38	20	0.00	12/14	37	18	0.00	12/14	34	20	0.00	12/14	41	27	0.00	12/14	37	19	0.00
12/15	41	31	0.00	12/15	39	30	0.00	12/15	39	24	0.00	12/15	41	37	0.00	12/15	41	30	0.00
12/16	43	29	1.26 0.4"	12/16	44	27	2.14 0.1"	12/16	42	28	1.10 1.0"	12/16	39	5	0.91	12/16	43	23	1.28 0.5"
12/17	28	5	0.06 1.1"	12/17	27	4	0.03 0.1"	12/17	30	4	0.19 3.0"	12/17	10	3	0.01 0.5"	12/17	24	4	0.08 1.0"
12/18	13	6	0.03 1.5"	12/18	11	5	0.02 1.0"	12/18	10	4	0.02 0.4"	12/18	9	7	0.00	12/18	10	5	0.04 1.0"
12/19	13	5	0.01 0.2"	12/19	10	2	0.01 0.2"	12/19	8	2	0.02 0.4"	12/19	21	7	0.00	12/19	9	1	0.00 0.5"
YTD Total	19.09 19.0"			YTD Total	23.30 15.4"			YTD Total	20.94 19.5"			YTD Total	23.09 12.7"			YTD Total	25.17 16.8"		

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Q: What is herd immunity, and why is it important?
A: Herd immunity is when a large portion of the community becomes immune to a disease. Once this happens, the spread of the disease will decline. Experts say herd immunity may be reached if at least 70% of the population has been vaccinated or has recovered from the disease and developed antibodies. However, there are concerns about relying on natural immunities from recovering from infection of COVID-19. It is unclear how long natural immunity lasts, and it would take a significant number of people to contract the illness, which poses a great threat to the population. Vaccines, on the other hand, create immunity without causing severe illness or resulting complications.

Herd immunity protects the whole community, including those who cannot get immunity, such as individuals with immunocompromised immune systems for whom vaccines are less effective. Reaching at least 70% of the community being immune is extremely important, and the safest way to do that is to have as many people as possible vaccinated.

If for whatever reason, you are unable to be vaccinated against COVID-19, there are still ways to help protect yourself and others from contracting and spreading COVID-19

- Wear a mask when in public settings.
- Wash your hands often, or use hand sanitizer.
- Socially distance at least 6 feet from others when in a social setting.

Dr. Brock Urie is an Emergency Room Physician and the Chief Medical Officer at Ely-Bloomenson Community Hospital. Dr. Urie graduated from the University of MN Duluth, with his Bachelor's Degree in Biology and attended Medical School at the University of Minnesota School of Medicine. He completed his Residency in Emergency Medicine at Western Michigan University's School of Medicine in 2015. During residency, Dr. Urie served as a flight physician and county medical control physician, and a clinical instructor of Emergency Medicine.

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NORDIC SKIING

Multiple firsts for Ely at GR meet



Gabe Pointer, Zoe Devine, girls team all top the field

by MARSHALL HELMBERGER
Managing Editor

GRAND RAPIDS— A strong day for Ely meant plenty of firsts here for both the girls and boys ski teams. The girls squad took first in the team competition, narrowly edging Grand Rapids, 381-380 for the top spot in a four-team field.

Ely junior Zoe Devine dominated the individual field, cruising to a first place finish in the 7.6-kilometer ski-athlon with a time of 27:27.9, a full 35 seconds ahead of the second-place finisher.

Fellow junior Phoebe Helms took

Left: Ely junior Zoe Devine took first as an individual in the girls competition during last Saturday's ski meet in Grand Rapids.

Right: Ely senior Gabe Pointer took first as an individual in the boys competition.

photos by C. Ellerbroek

fifth in the 24-skier field, with a time of 29:42.1, while Ely sophomore Ava Skustad finished seventh with a time of 30:26.9. Senior Gracie Pointer was the fourth Ely girls skier to make the top ten, taking tenth with a time of 31:32.2.

See **NORDIC...**pg. 2B



BOYS BASKETBALL

Grizzlies' win streak up to six Moose Lake, Northland are latest North Woods victims

by DAVID COLBURN
Cook-Orr Editor

FIELD TWP- Junior guard Jared Chiabotti scorched the nets for 36 points last Thursday as the North Woods boys passed their toughest test of the hoops season thus far with an 86-73 home win over 7AA Moose Lake.

Averaging 78 points a game and with 30-plus-point wins over 7AA foes Virginia and Aitkin, the 3-1 Rebels were well-equipped for a possible takedown of the high-flying Grizzlies, but Chiabotti was a force they couldn't reckon with.

The Grizzlies held a slim 14-12 lead when Chiabotti nailed his second trey of the game, igniting a 25-12 North Woods run that would prove decisive. Chiabotti scored ten consecutive points before Sean Morrison added a bucket. By the time Chiabotti followed a Davis

Above: The Grizzlies' Jared Chiabotti races ahead of a Moose Lake defender on a fast break.

Right: Brenden Chiabotti drives past a Moose Lake defender for a shot attempt.

photos by D. Colburn

Kleppe triple with a rare four-point play after he was fouled on a successful trey and hit the subsequent free throw, the Grizzlies led 39-24. Chiabotti hit four threes and scored 17 points in the run.

"Jared got hot," Grizzlies Head Coach Will Kleppe said. "I could hear guys talking about it and swinging the ball to him. They were looking for him, and then he returned the favor when it got a little tighter in the second half."

Indeed, the Grizzlies had to battle all the way to the final buzzer to win this

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



GIRLS BASKETBALL

Scoring drought sinks North Woods

by DAVID COLBURN
Cook-Orr Editor

I-FALLS— What was shaping up as a tight battle between the North Woods girls and International Falls on Friday turned into a rout as the Grizzlies went over 12 minutes without scoring a point in a 70-31 loss to the Broncos.

North Woods entered the game without the services of

center Hannah Kinsey, but bolstered by tenacious defense the Grizzlies kept pace with the Broncos in the early going. Helen Koch kicked off the Grizzlies' scoring with a steal and bucket to knot the score at 2-2, and a basket by Hannah Cheney tied the score again at 4-4. Koch hit a trey to give the Grizzlies their only lead of the night, 7-6, and after the Broncos retook the lead she hit a pair of free throws to tie

the game again at 11-11.

Cheney answered a Broncos run with a three-pointer at the 9:30 mark of the first half that made the score 23-16, and it turned out to be the last Grizzlies basket of the half. Stymied by a high-pressure 3-2 zone defense by the Broncos and saddled with poor shooting and turnovers, the Grizzlies trailed 35-16 at the half and trailed 43-16 in the second stanza before Shyla Adams

finally ended the scoring drought with a bucket at the 15:06 mark.

Seven Grizzlies scored in the contest, but Cheney was the only one in double figures with 14. The Broncos were led by Olivia Thostenson's 22 points.

The Grizzlies will try to rebound from back-to-back losses when they play in the Aitkin Holiday Basketball Tournament on Dec. 28-29 in Aitkin.

BOYS BASKETBALL

Wolves fall hard to Cherry

by MARSHALL HELMBERGER
Managing Editor

ELY— The Timberwolves struggled to find the basket here on Friday and it allowed Cherry to make the ride home celebrating a 58-31 victory. It was Ely's lowest point total of the season so far, a testament to the undefeated Tigers' stingy defense. The loss drops Ely's season record to 3-2.

"I thought we played well enough defensively but we just couldn't do a whole lot offensively against them," said Ely Head Coach Tom McDonald. "They are really athletic and we couldn't get a whole lot going."

Cherry's aggressive play forced 19 Ely turnovers, which didn't help the Timberwolves' cause. "That's way too many turnovers against a team the caliber of Cherry," said McDonald.

Junior guard Joey Bianco was the only Ely player to reach double digits, with 13 points on the night. Bianco and junior forward Erron Anderson had some success on the boards, with seven rebounds apiece.

The Wolves were set to travel to Cook County on Tuesday, after the *Timberjay's* early holiday deadline. They'll host Mille Lacs on Tuesday, Dec. 28. After a brief New Year's break, the Wolves will be back in action on Friday, Jan. 7, when they take on the Grizzlies at North Woods.

GIRLS BASKETBALL

'Streaks shut down Ely girls

by MARSHALL HELMBERGER
Managing Editor

ELY— The Timberwolves needed a second-half rally after heading into the halftime break here on Monday trailing Chisholm 38-30. But the Bluestreaks had other ideas as they dominated the boards in the second half, holding Ely to just 11 points in the frame en route to a 77-41 shellacking.

"The first half was full of runs and we played some really nice basketball in spurts," said Ely Head Coach Max Gantt. "We played some really wild basketball in spurts," he added.

Despite inconsistencies, Ely was definitely in the hunt in the early going. "The second half, we got beat up on the boards and turned it over too much," noted Gantt. "It was maybe our worst half all year."

Grace LaTourell and Sarah

See **ELY GIRLS...**pg. 2B

HOCKEY

Ely burys Blizzard for second win in three games

by KEITH VANDERVORT
Ely Editor

ELY— The Timberwolves hockey team is happily adjusting to a new experience this year: Winning. For the second time in three games, the Wolves delivered a convincing victory on home ice as sophomore Drew Marolt and junior Kole Macho combined for seven goals on Saturday to bury the Blizzard from Burnett Co., Wis., 7-3.

“Once again our first period was a little rough, but after that we played pretty well with our floor check and some hard skating,” said Ely Head Coach Jake Myers. “We started shooting the puck more and started moving our feet.”

Kole Macho, who notched a hat trick on the day, lit the scoring lamp early in the first period on

a power play score, assisted by Brady Eaton and Jakson Hegman. The Blizzard answered about a minute later to tie the score at 1-1 and they took a 2-1 score into the locker room at the end of the first period.

But Ely scored three unanswered goals in the second period and never trailed after that. Macho notched his second goal on a power play just 25 seconds into the period, assisted by Logan Loe. Drew Marolt put the puck in the net at 3:46, assisted by Macho and Hegman, and again at 5:49 with help from Jace Huntbatch and Deegan Richards.

Marolt notched the hat trick at 3:16 in the final period on an assist from Richards to post the Wolves to a 5-2 lead.

The Blizzard came right back to score just 20 seconds later, closing the gap to 5-3.



With an Ely player in the penalty box, Marolt punched the net for the fourth time, at the 11:07 mark, to give the Timberwolves a 6-3 advantage. Macho added icing to the victory cake with his third score of the day at the 14:21 mark to give Ely the 7-3 win.

Left: Ely sophomore forward Deegan Richards works the puck around a Burnett Co. defender during hockey action in Ely this past Saturday.

photo/K. Vandervort

feet and it is really paying off for them.”

The Timberwolves took 26 shots to the goal. Ely senior goalie and captain Chase Sandberg defended 40 of 43 shots. Both teams were called for five penalties.

The Timberwolves (2-4) were scheduled to host International Falls on Tuesday, Dec. 21, after the *Timberjay's* early Christmas deadline. They'll take part in a Christmas tournament in Proctor, Dec. 28-30.

GRIZZLIES...Continued from page 1B

one, fending off numerous attempts by the Rebels to reel them back in. Moose Lake was within seven at 67-60 when Brenden Chiabotti scored seven points in about two minutes to give North Woods a 12-point cushion at 74-62.

With two minutes to play the Rebels were threatening again when Logan Orvedhal's fourth trey of the game narrowed the gap to 77-71. A basket by Morrison was followed by a huge shot block by the Grizzlies' Jonah Burnett, and free throws by Morrison and Jared Chiabotti pushed the lead back to double digits, 82-71, with less than a minute remaining, virtually sealing the victory.

“We knew they were going to make runs. We said

it at halftime and we said it again on our last time out that this team is going to make a run on us, and our guys weathered it,” Kleppe said. “We handled the ball well and we limited our turnovers when they dialed up the pressure to get back on us. We showed a lot of composure out there.”

Another key to the win was an emphasis in the second half to get more aggressive on the boards, Kleppe said.

“The biggest thing I talked about at halftime was that this game might come down to guard rebounding,” Kleppe said. “Our guys did an excellent job of getting in there. Alex (Hartway) and Jared and T.J. (Chiabotti) had some monster rebounds, and

Davis came in off the bench and grabbed two key ones.”

Morrison collected a double-double with 14 points and 14 rebounds, and Jared Chiabotti also pulled down ten rebounds. Brenden Chiabotti was the other Grizzly double-digit scorer with 10. North Woods put this game away at the free-throw line, where the Grizzlies were a collective 20-for-35 on the night, ten more than Moose Lake.

Northland

The Grizzlies were back to the races again Friday at Remer with a 35-point romp over the Northland Eagles, 103-78.

T.J. Chiabotti had the hot hand in this one, going 13-of-23 from the field with four three-pointers and 31

points.

But the senior guard had plenty of help with four other Grizzlies scoring in double figures, including Morrison with 18, Brenden Chiabotti with 13, Burnett with 12, and Jared Chiabotti with 11. Collectively, the Grizzlies hit 59.4 percent of their shots from the field, including 40 percent from three-point range, and went

11-of-14 from the free-throw line, a season-high 79 percent.

Through six games, the Grizzlies have outscored their opponents by an average margin of 88-54. They've hit 49 percent of their field goals and generated an average of 30 points a game off turnovers, while limiting their opponents to just 37 percent shooting.

Next up for the Grizzlies will be the Granite City Classic holiday tournament on Dec. 29-30. North Woods will take on Nevis at 4 p.m. on Dec. 29, and Ashby at 12:30 p.m. on Dec. 30. Both games will be played at St. John's University in Collegeville.

NORDIC...Continued from page 1B

Gracie's brother, Gabe, also a senior, finished first in the individual competition among a boys field of nine skiers, with a time of 24:44.3. That was a hefty 27 seconds ahead of second-place finisher Skelton Carter, of Mesabi East.

Senior Jon Hakala finished in third place with a time of 25:33.7, while senior Micah Larson took fifth with a time of 27:02.7.

With only three boys skiers, Ely fell short on total points against Mesabi East, whose six skiers filled

in second, fourth, and the final four finishes to claim a 385-294 team victory.

Ely skiers take a break for the holidays. They'll be back in action on Jan. 4 when they host the Ely Classic at Hidden Valley.

ELY GIRLS...Continued from page 1B

Visser kept the Wolves in the game in the first half, as the pair combined for 21 of the team's 30 points. But Chisholm's defense boxed out Ely's shooters on the inside the rest of the way. While LaTourell and Visser each connected for treys in the first half, the Wolves couldn't hit from beyond the stripe in the second half, all but shutting down the Ely offense. Meanwhile, Chisholm poured in 39 points in the frame to run away with it.

LaTourell and Visser ended the night with 12 points apiece, while Madeline Perry finished

with seven points and Madison Rohr added six.

“Now we need to regroup and get ready for our road game in Cook County,” said Gantt. “It's always a tough ride and road game there. We will see how we respond. This group is tough and wants to get better, so I think a winning streak is coming soon.”

The *Timberjay* will report on the Cook County game in its Dec. 31 edition. The Wolves, meanwhile, will host the Hoops for Hope tournament on Dec. 27 and 28. They'll be back in regular action on

Jan. 4, when they head to Littlefork to take on the Vikings.

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Obituaries and Death Notices



Mona J. Jarnstrom

Mona Joyce Strom Bullert Jarnstrom, 93, of Lake Vermilion-Tower and Bonita Springs, Fla., passed away on Monday, Dec. 13, 2021, at Edgewood due to leukemia. The family would like to thank the loving staff at Edgewood, who were Mom’s extended family, and Essentia Hospice for their wonderful care. She will be remembered for her witty one-liners and easygoing personality. Memorials are preferred to St. James Presbyterian Church, PO Box 413, Tower, MN 55790. Due to COVID, a celebration of life will be held in the summer of 2022. Arrangements are with Range Funeral Home in Virginia.

Mona was born on Sept. 21, 1928, in Eveleth, to John Arthur “Art” and

Eva Strom. She was best known for working in her father’s store on the main street of Eveleth, Strom’s Variety, and later the Ben Franklin Store. After graduating from Eveleth High School in 1946, she attended Eveleth Junior College and Duluth Business School.

Mona married Royal Jarnstrom in 1948 and together they had four daughters. After Royal passed away in 1976, and left with six-year-old Kristie to raise, Mona attended Mesabi Community College and graduated from the University of Minnesota-Duluth in 1980 with a degree in Business Education. Mona taught at Minnetonka High School and Minneapolis Technical College and retired from Minneapolis North High School in 1993.

In 1993, she married Loyd Bullert and moved to Lake Vermilion, only three miles from the 1925 Jarnstrom family cabin where numerous kids learned to waterski, take sauna, and jump off the dock. After her worldly travels, sitting on the shore of Lake Vermilion at her cabin was Mona’s favorite place to be.

Mona is survived by her loving daughters, RaMona Walberg, Re-

nee Holloway, Lynn Dee (Mark) Lehto and Kristie (Marc) Baumgartner; grandchildren, Jeff (Jenny) Holloway, Matthew (Amanda) Holloway and Jesse (Abby) Brula; and great-grandchildren, Rory and Drew Holloway, Will Holloway and Maddox Brula.

She was preceded in death by her parents; husband, Royal Jarnstrom in 1976; sister, Norma (Laurie) Aho in 1977; beloved son-in-law, Don Holloway in 2011; and husband, Loyd Bullert in 2011.

James Meehan

James Meehan, 87, longtime resident of Soudan, died on Saturday, Dec. 18, 2021, in Fridley. A private service will be held at a later date.

He was born on Feb. 22, 1934, in Virginia, and lived most of his life in Soudan. He attended Tower-Soudan schools and in 1951 he joined the U.S. Army, serving during the Korean War. When he returned from service, he began working at the Soudan Mine. He worked there until it closed in 1962. He then worked at Reserve Mining until it closed. Along with those jobs he also worked for Breitung Township in their water department,

rising to the position of supervisor before retiring. He enjoyed hunting when he was younger and ice fishing on Lake Vermilion in the winters. He could often be found out at the fish house or on his snowmobile on winter days. He always kept busy putting around the house or his garage. He loved tinkering with his old cars and was a Mr. Fixit for any problem you had. He loved his children and grandchildren and will be greatly missed.

He is survived by his children, Joy (Charles) Corum of Knoxville, Tenn., Tracie Hellerud of Fridley, Pat (Dawn) Meehan of Burnsville and Darcie (Robert Strand) Meehan of Cook; brother, John Meehan of Gilbert; grandchildren, Naomi (Ryan) Proctor, Corrine (Billy Vann) Emery, Andrea Emery, Jeremy (Missy) Emery, Jessica Meehan, Shay Robinson, Mitchell Jay Meehan, Trinity Meehan, Casey Meehan and Jordan Meehan; great-grandchildren, Dylan Emery, Zachary Proctor, Addisyn Rinaldi and Ariel Meehan.

He was preceded in death by his sons, Mitchell and Shane; and brothers, Joseph and Jerry.

George J. Amitrano

George Joseph Amitrano, 74, of Babbitt, a proud U.S. Army veteran of Vietnam, passed away on Thursday, Dec. 16, 2021. A Mass of Christian Burial was held on Wednesday, Dec. 22 at St. Pius X Catholic Church in Babbitt. Burial followed at the Waasa Cemetery. Please consider making a donation to the Babbitt Golf Course in memory of George. Family arrangements were entrusted to Kerntz Funeral Home of Ely.

He will be sadly missed by his wife, Patricia “Patty” Gibson Swanson Amitrano; stepchildren, Jennifer Paxson, Jessica Swanson, Jack (Diana) Swanson, Ben (Stacia) Swanson, Courtney (Bill) Hardwick and Autumn (Jacob) Homerding; grandchildren, Jacob, Michael, Tom (Allyssa), Camilo, Vanessa, Henry, Paige, Luke, Paul, Claire, Philip, Nicholas and Kate; nephew, Michael Sjoquist; several brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law; numerous nieces and nephews on Patty’s side; and his black lab, Allie.

William P. Haapala

William Paul Haapala, 67, of Chisholm, died on Thursday, Dec. 16, 2021, at Vermilion Senior Living in Tower. Funeral services were held on Tuesday, Dec. 21 at Landmark Funeral Home Chapel in Virginia with Pastor Erik Roth officiating.

He is survived by two sons, Matt (Ashley) of Hibbing and Mike of Ely; eight grandchildren; and two brothers, Charlie of Aston, Fla., and John (Barb) of Hibbing.

Jimmie E. Noteboom

Jimmie E. Noteboom, 73, of Cook, passed away peacefully at home on Wednesday, Dec. 8, 2021. A celebration of life will be held at a later date. Arrangements are with Mlaker Funeral Home of Cook.

He is survived by his loving wife of 52 years, Cindy; sister-in-law, Renee Noteboom; niece, Tami Noteboom-Branan; and a countless “family” of friends.

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Ely Public Schools is looking for a Long-
Term Substitute Art Teacher starting February
4, 2022 through approximately May 4,
2022. Salary and fringes as per the Master
Agreement between ISD #696 and the Ely
Education Association and School Board poli-
cy. A background check is required.

Qualifications include:

- Current Minnesota teaching license
- Previous teaching experience preferred
- Excellent communication skills including
verbal and written

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

A complete application must include the fol-
lowing:

- District Licensed Application
- Resume
- Copy of official transcripts
- Current Minnesota teaching license
- 3 letters of recommendation

Return materials to: Ely Public Schools, Attn:
Superintendent Erik Erie, 600 E. Harvey St.,
Ely, MN 55731 or email mwognum@ely.k12.mn.us. Contact Memorial Principal Megan
Anderson at (218) 365-6166 ext. 1726 or
manderson@ely.k12.mn.us with any ques-
tions.

Application review to begin: January 7, 2022;
open until filled.

Published in the Timberjay, Dec. 24 & 31, 2021



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deadline. Job would be about 12 hours a week
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available if desired. Looking for someone who
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puter skills (typing, email, familiarity with basic
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candidate on graphics/page layout software.

For more information, call Jodi at 218-753-
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Answers

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STAINLESSSTOOL STAMEN
SUN NIP SNOOZEGUARD
ARTIST GAPS ONA
TOOTERONTHSEEDGE LITHE
SWAN DEBRA GAMIER
ENS EEEK AURAL AGRA
COPCAR RIDINGBROOCHES
ORIOLE TWIN CABTSE
NOODLEINAHAYSTACK
SACESO IAMS EMINEM
PAYASTOOPPRICE RADIAL
ORCS ATREE SRI TUB
UGLIER CALFS RIPE
THEAX MAKEACLEANSWOOP
IMO LIAM SIERRA
CHOOSEPIZZA LIZ DEL
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PT RN/LPN (\$4,000 Sign-On Bonus)

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Activities

PT & Casual Activities Assistant

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Casual Housekeeping & Laundry

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www.cookhospital.org/join-our-team/

More Info? Contact Human Resources

218-666-6220

humanresources@cookhospital.org



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King Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Earring site
- 5 Smack
- 8 Blog entry
- 12 Regrettably
- 13 Fuss
- 14 "May It Be"
singer
- 15 Dealer's foe
- 16 Moving-day
rental
- 17 Aviation prefix
- 18 Energetic per-
son
- 20 Galley supply
- 22 Strikers'
queue
- 26 Manhandled
- 29 Chemical suf-
fix
- 30 Hobbyist's
abbr.

- 31 Rue the run
- 32 German con-
junction
- 33 Lavish party
- 34 — Paulo
- 35 Fuel stat
- 36 Devil's
domain
- 37 Playgoer's
souvenir
- 40 Writer
Quindlen
- 41 Short jacket
- 45 Gambling
game
- 47 Jay follower
- 49 San —, Italy

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

- 50 Help a crook
- 51 Hosp. sections
- 52 Author
Sheehy
- 53 Striped fish
- 54 Perched
- 55 Deco artist

DOWN

- 1 Crow's-nest
cry
- 2 Skin care
brand
- 3 Hoedown site
- 4 Jailbreak par-
ticipant
- 5 Mayhem

- 6 Greek moun-
tain
- 7 Ad nauseam
- 8 Oyster's prize
- 9 Biased
- 10 Aleppo's land
(Abbr.)
- 11 Eastern "way"
- 19 Central
- 21 Consumed
- 23 Monarchs
- 24 Evening, in an
ad
- 25 Peepers
- 26 Bygone days
- 27 Exotic berry
- 28 "So what?"

- 32 Chimney
pipes
- 33 Maker of
ornate eggs
- 35 Gents
- 36 Coloration
- 38 Shoelace
woes
- 39 Secret ren-
dezvous
- 42 Dread
- 43 Send forth
- 44 Portrayal
- 45 "Terrific!"
- 46 Lawyers' gp.
- 48 Altar constel-
lation

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Weekly SUDOKU

by Linda Thistle

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

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

DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK: ♦

♦ Moderate ♦♦ Challenging
♦♦♦ HOO BOY!

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FUNERAL SERVICES

Range Funeral Home



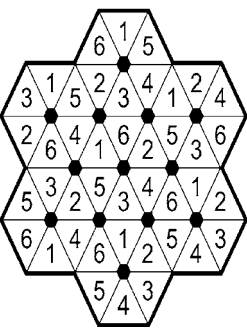
Virginia
741-1481

Hibbing
263-3276

"Friends Helping Friends"

CryptoQuip
answer

If a letter has reached
somebody by airmail, I guess
you could say it's been sent
flying.



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VIRGIE HEGG HOSPICE PARTNERS can provide help for patients and their families in ways such as: comfort care, massages, last wishes and more. For more information, contact Program Director Becca Bundy at 218-780-5423 or vvhpdirector@gmail.com. This ad is paid for by Virgie Hegg Hospice Partners.

SUPPORT GROUPS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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


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

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

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

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS- East Range meetings and information, call 218-749-3387 or www.district8online.org.

AA FRIDAYS- 7 p.m., First Presbyterian Church, 262 E Harvey St., Ely. Meets in the basement.



PET FOOD

HIBBING FEED and SEED

262-3049

— King Crossword —
Answers
Solution time: 25 mins.

LOBE	HIT	POST
ALAS	ADO	ENYA
NARC	VAN	AERO
DYNAMO	OARS	
	PICKET	LINE
PAWED	INE	DIY
ACHE	UND	FETE
SAO	MPG	HADES
TICKET	STUB	
	ANNA	REEFER
FARO	KAY	REMO
ABET	ERS	GAIL
BASS	SAT	ERTE

WANTED

SELIGA CANOES WANTED: We'll buy old Seligas in Good Shape. Turn your classic canoe into cash. Call Steve at 365-6745. tfn

HELP WANTED

HELP NEEDED- COOK full-time or part-time at MelGeorge's on Elephant Lake. WEEKEND CABIN CLEANERS also needed. Call 218-374-3621. tfn

CryptoQuip

This is a simple substitution cipher in which each letter used stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Solution is accomplished by trial and error.

Clue: E equals L

UA R EFDDFY BRO YFRMBFL

OJVFVJLS WS RUYVRUE, U XKFOO

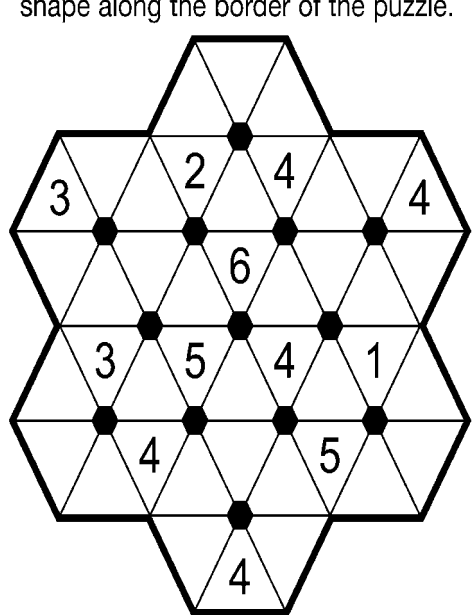
SJK MJKEL ORS UD'O WFFG OFGD

AESUGX.

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SNOWFLAKES
by Japheth Light

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



DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK: ♦♦♦

♦ Easy ♦♦ Medium ♦♦♦ Difficult

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Weekly SUDOKU

Answer

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

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Super Crossword

BROODING SEASON

ACROSS

1 Examined by touching

9 Smart — (know-it-all)

14 Alphas' opposites

20 All across the region

21 Indian city on the Yamuna River

22 "Gil Blas" novelist Alain-René —

23 Blemish-resistant bar seat?

25 Male flower part

26 Earth lighter

27 Autumn chill

28 Sentry allowing nobody to nap?

30 Monet, say

34 Interstices

36 — roll (hot)

37 Shoulder-hugging, horn-honking driver?

42 Thin and supple

47 Duck cousin

48 Actress Messing

49 More plucky

50 Lt.'s inferior

53 "I see mice!"

56 Ear-related

58 Indian city on the Yamuna River

59 Vehicle in a chase scene

63 Decorative pins worn by jockeys?

67 Yellow-and-black bird

68 16-Down, to Jacob

69 Flagged auto

70 Mao — -tung

71 Bit of pasta that's really hard to find?

77 Bodily pouch

79 Spanish for "that"

80 Big pet food brand

81 "Infinite" rapper

84 Have pain from bending forward too sharply?

89 Tire type

90 Tolkien terrorizers

91 Up — (stymied)

92 — Lanka

94 Butter holder

95 More hideous

97 — liver (meat product)

100 Harvestable

104 Work layoff, slangily

105 Dive to attack with perfect form?

111 Texter's "I think ..."

113 Neeson of "Darkman"

114 GMC pickup

115 Decide on Domino's for dinner?

122 Taylor of "Cleopatra," for short

124 Los Angeles' Playa — Rey

125 Regular practices

126 Botching an April 1 prank?

131 Crops up

132 Ickily sticky

133 Enlarge

134 Quick

135 In any way

136 Power-supplying socket

DOWN

1 Volkswagen model

2 Maestro Toscanini

3 Simple shed

4 — gow (casino option)

5 Grain beard

6 Up to, informally

7 Paradise

8 Blueprint

9 TV spots

10 "Show me"

11 College town in North Carolina

12 Toy train, when doubled

13 Quantity in a narc's bust

14 Former NFLer Merlin

15 Annual ritzy NYC fundraising event

16 Biblical birthright seller

17 Explorer Vasco da —

18 Antiquing aid

19 Ship off, say

24 Petty quarrel

29 Saldana of the screen

31 "— so you!"

32 Hem, e.g.

33 Lilted syllable

35 Prof's deg.

38 United

39 Israel's Abba

40 Opiate, e.g.

41 Raiment

43 Apple option

44 Close, as a community

45 "— to you!"

46 Rub out

49 Person rubbing it in

50 Prefix with warrior

51 And not

52 Final washer phase

54 Noted Deco master

55 Furry fruit

57 Rocket paths

60 Pigeon noise

61 Balm plants

62 Betelgeuse or Antares

64 Clangor

65 How balloons float

66 Trump replaced him

72 Thief's bagful

73 "Bali —"

74 Autos such as Gremlins and Pacers

75 Belgian river

76 Spain's El —

77 Teapot part

78 "I'm so frustrated!"

82 Water, to Gigi

83 Rangers' and Rays' gp.

85 Brunel locale

86 Mean whale

87 High point

88 One-named sports legend

93 Lyric penner Gershwin

96 Lived

98 Ball of mashed chickpeas

99 — -fi movie

101 Electees, say

102 Greek letter

103 She baas

105 Swab

106 Film score composer

107 Schiffrin

107 Iago's wife

108 Hard trial

109 Bully's threat ender

110 Warehouse platform

112 Hardly tidy

115 Cartoonist Addams

116 Celestial instrument

117 Off-Broadway prize

118 French river or department

119 TV actress Swenson

120 — suit (1940s duds)

121 Reverse alphabetical order

123 Bronze metal

127 Olive of "Popeye"

128 Lt.'s inferior

129 "Despicable Me" villain

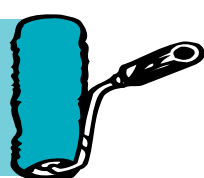
130 Dewy, e.g.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	
20								21					22						
23							24						25						
26						27			28				29						
30			31	32	33		34		35				36						
37						38				39	40	41			42	43	44	45	46
			47					48					49						
50	51	52				53	54	55		56			57			58			
59			60	61	62		63		64	65					66				
67							68						69				70		
			71			72				73	74	75				76			
77	78			79					80					81				82	83
84			85				86	87	88					89					
90					91						92		93			94			
95				96			97		98	99			100	101	102	103			
104						105					106	107					108	109	110
					111	112				113				114					
115	116	117	118					119	120	121			122	123				124	
125							126				127				128	129	130		
131							132						133						
134							135						136						

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