



Holiday Schedule

Dec. 30 issue: Ads/articles due by 10 a.m. on Dec. 23

The Timberjay office will be closed Dec. 26 - Jan. 6.

No paper will be published on Jan. 6.

Enjoy all the kid's art in our holiday greeting ads in this week's and next week's paper!

the TIMBERJAY



Serving the communities of northern St. Louis County since 1989

VOL. 33, ISSUE 50 December 23, 2022 \$1⁵⁰

ST. LOUIS COUNTY

Flat state aids push county levy higher

St. Louis County's property tax levy has risen faster than its spending in recent years

by MARSHALL HELMBERGER
Managing Editor

REGIONAL— St. Louis County spending will have increased 14.6 percent over the past five years, based on the 2023 budget approved earlier this month by the county board. At the same time, the county's levy will have increased by 19.5 percent

over that same 2019-2023 period.

That's according to actual and budgeted county spending along with board-approved property tax levies for that five-year period.

Why is the levy rising faster than county spending?

While the answer is complex, flat state and federal aids are a big factor behind the trend, which means county property owners

are paying for a bigger share of the money the county spends each year. Earlier this month, the county board approved a levy increase for 2023 of 4.39 percent.

The county levy, which determines the county's portion of property tax bills each year, has traditionally made up just about a third of total county spending. The rest comes from a variety of state

and federal sources, including grants and various program aids, as well as charges for a variety of county services.

The counties administer a wide range of federal and state programs, including essential services like public safety, human services, and transportation, and

See...LEVY pg. 9



HAPPY HOLIDAYS

Sounds of the season



Above: K-2 students at T-S Elementary sang songs of thanks for the season.

Left: Singers perform during the Hometown Holiday Concert in Ely, sponsored by the Northern Lakes Arts Association.

Nazhoni Connor was a standout during the recent holiday choir at North Woods School.



WINTER WEATHER

Latest storm forecast has line crews on high alert

by MARSHALL HELMBERGER
Managing Editor

REGIONAL— Here we go again?

That was the question as the *Timberjay* went to press this week with the latest winter storm forecast to hit the region beginning late Wednesday and lingering into the weekend. The timing of the storm was a near perfect repeat from last week, although the latest winter blast was threatening to bring near-blizzard conditions and bitter cold windchills along with as much as a half foot of new snow to much of northeastern Minnesota.

That could simply add to the problems in the region following last week's storm, which dumped 1-2 feet of heavy, wet snow and left tens of thousands of area residents without power.

Lake Vermilion was among the places hit hard by power outages, with hundreds of customers affected across the lake, many for extended periods.

At the peak, more than 12,700 Lake Country Power customers were without service throughout their coverage territory and many went well into the weekend before power was restored.

Linda and Gary Haugen, who lost power just after midnight last Wednesday, were among the

See...STORM pg. 10

VOYAGEURS NATIONAL PARK

Houseboat operator facing charges in VNP incident

Details remain sketchy as official sources remain mum, fail to respond to *Timberjay* FOIA request

by DAVID COLBURN
Cook/Orr Editor

REGIONAL- Nearly six months after an Ash River houseboat operator was allegedly tased during a June 25 encounter with Voyageurs National Park

enforcement officers, five charges stemming from the incident have been filed by the Minnesota U.S. Attorney's Office.

The charges against Justin Ebel, owner of Ebel's Voyageurs Houseboats, were filed on Dec. 6 and Dec. 8, and include assaulting

or resisting an officer, disorderly conduct, failure to obey a lawful order, interfering with a government employee or agent, and improper display of vessel registration.

All of the charges are considered to be "petty offenses"

according to the case docket on PACER, a federal court records internet site. In federal regulations, the highest-level petty offense is a Class B misdemeanor, followed by Class C misdemeanors and noncriminal infractions. The *Timberjay* has learned

little about the details of the June 25 encounter and alleged tasing beyond comments made by Ebel's mother, Katy Ebel, at a public meeting in Crane Lake on July 21.

See...INCIDENT pg. 9



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Community notices

Sons of Norway Haarfager Lodge #40 to meet at 5:30 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 5

VIRGINIA – The Sons of Norway Haarfager Lodge #40 will meet in the Virginia City Hall Clubroom. Please bring wrapped gifts for playing Crazy Dice. The serving committee is Wayne, Bernie Christiansen and Sara Palazzari. Anyone interested in Norwegian culture is invited to attend.

Northern Lakes Art Association is proud to announce increased art show stipend

ELY- Applications for the 2023 Northern Lakes Art Association (NLAA) 2023 show season are currently being accepted through Jan. 15. Through the generosity of an anonymous donor, the stipend for artists who are selected has been increased from \$250 to \$350.

For the 2023 season NLAA wishes to showcase the works of BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ artists. Applications are available at <https://www.northernlakesarts.org/2023-art-show-application>.

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Sunday, January 1
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Happy New Year!

Elephant Size Joy at Christmas!

from Embarrass Vermillion Federal Credit Union



Winning Artist • Shelby Troop
GRADE 2

Happy Holidays America!

from Breitung Township



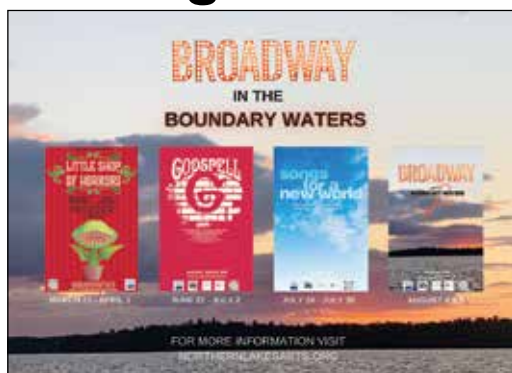
Winning Artist • Amelie Zak
Kindergarten

ON THE STAGE 2023 Broadway in the Boundary Waters releases upcoming show lineup

ELY- The Northern Lakes Arts Association has released its lineup of musical shows for the upcoming 2023 Broadway in the Boundary Waters theater season.

The upcoming season shows are "Little Shop of Horrors" from March 23 - Apr. 1, "Godspell" from June 22 - July 2, "Songs for a New World" from July 20 - 30, and the "Broadway in the Boundary Waters Gala" from Aug. 4 - 5.

All auditions and shows will be at the Vermilion Fine Arts Theater



at the Minnesota North Vermilion Campus.

Auditions for the annual spring

musical, "Little Shop of Horrors", will be held on Jan. 23 - 24 starting at 6 p.m. Auditions will be open to anyone 16 or older. Tickets for the show go on sale Feb. 2.

For the three summer productions, Broadway in the Boundary Waters will bring in professional actors and will also audition local talent for those who would like to participate. Tickets for the summer shows will go on sale sometime in January.

NEW LEADERSHIP

Ely's Historic State Theater hires new manager

ELY— The board of directors of Ely's Historic State Theater (EHST) announced the hire of Todd Crego as theater manager to succeed Peter Schamber, who is pursuing his long-held dream to teach. Crego started his training for the position with Schamber last August, when Schamber began full-time work as a MathCorps tutor at Washington Elementary School.

Todd Crego is well known in the Ely community, having managed and operated Ely Area Television since November 2017 and having worked as a DJ for WELY End of the Road Radio for two years before that. He is a 2010 graduate of Tower-Soudan High School and a 2020 graduate of Winona State University with a bachelor's degree in mass communications.

David Wigdahl, chair of the EHST board, said, "While the board was sad to lose Peter because he's done an amazing job as the theater's

first manager, we are happy to support him in his new endeavors and wish him only the best. The board voted unanimously to offer the theater manager position to Todd. We're excited to have him because besides his communication skills and experience, he brings a real passion for movies. He's one of our most frequent moviegoers, if not the most frequent!"

Crego has seen most of the films shown at EHST since its opening in spring 2020 and keeps count on his Facebook page. As of December 11, he was up to film #139 — which Crego himself brought to the State's big screen. In his EATV role, he produced "Celebrate the Season! — Ely Holiday Concert" for the third year in a row, in which singers, musicians and readers from the community, and a few friends of community members, shared their talents in the spirit of Christmas and Hanukkah.

The theater manager position is

currently a part-time job averaging 20 hours per week. The manager oversees several staff and reports to the EHST board. In addition to selecting and arranging for the screening of films in the State Theater and the Greenstone Cinema, Crego will pick up where Schamber leaves off with scheduling live performances and special events in keeping with EHST's mission to promote and support the cinematic and performing arts as a cultural hub of film, arts, entertainment and learning that cultivates a vibrant, healthy community.

As manager, Crego will also work closely with leadership for the inaugural End of the Road Film Festival, to be hosted by EHST February 9-12, 2023. For more information about EHST, the film festival and the theater's movie lineup, visit elystatetheater.org.

USE CAUTION

Be aware of scams this holiday season

REGIONAL - Many of us spend the holidays relaxing and sharing in goodwill with friends and family. But some bad actors use the holidays to take advantage of people's generous spirits. Scammers frequently target

the elderly and other vulnerable members of our communities. They pretend they are from Social Security or another government agency to steal your money or personal information.

Caller ID, texts, or

documents sent by email may look official, but they are not. Fraudsters are calling claiming they need to verify information about the 2023 cost-of-living adjustment for people who get benefits. Remember, this adjustment is automatic and a beneficiary does not need to verify anything. Social Security won't ask you to provide information or money to get your benefit increase. Know that how business is done doesn't change because it's the holidays. Social Security may email or text about programs and services, but will never ask for personal information via email or text.

Recognizing the signs of a scam can help avoid falling victim to one. These scams primarily use the telephone to contact their victims, but

scammers may also use email, text messages, social media, or U.S. mail. Scammers pretend to be from an agency or organization you know to gain your trust. Scammers say there is a problem with a Social Security number or account. Scammers pressure their victims to act immediately. Scammers demand payment in a specific way.

It is important to know what to look for and be alert. Scammers don't take days off. Be sure to report all suspicious communications. If you receive a questionable call, text, or email, hang up or don't respond and report it at oig.ssa.gov/report. Scammers frequently change their methods with new tactics and messages to trick people.

MERRY CHRISTMAS TO YOU!

from Janisch Realty



Winning Artist • Ayva Anderson
GRADE 2

We Wish You The Happiest of Holidays!

from Aronson's Boat Works Inc



Winning Artist • Clementine O'Brien
Grade 4

Wishing You a Merry Christmas

from BIC Realty



Winning Artist • Cassidy Quincy
GRADE 4

Merry Christmas To You All!

from ALIGN BUILDERS-JEFF MAUS



Artist • Lailana Stellmach
Grade 3

SEASON'S GREETINGS TO EVERYONE!

from BENCHWARMER GRILLE-TOWER



Artist • Sherrie Peters
Grade 3

ELY CITY COUNCIL

Ely Ambulance Service may receive \$1.3 million in federal funding

by CATIE CLARK
Ely Editor

ELY- The highlight of the Dec. 20 Ely City Council meeting wasn't even on the agenda. Rather, Ely's mayor and clerk-treasurer shared some intelligence on federal funding that may be coming to the Ely area for ambulance and emergency services.

"In the appropriation bill that just passed the Senate (earlier on Dec. 20), there was \$1.3 million for Ely area ambulance and Ely emergency services," clerk-treasurer Harold Langowski informed the council. The same bill included \$1.2 million for United Way Iron Range Childcare. Langowski cautioned that these amounts were not final nor certain since the bill still needs to pass the U.S. House and be signed into law by President Biden. The funding, if ultimately approved, could help the Ely area ambulance service, which is facing huge financial deficits.

The city, the Ely-Bloomenson Community Hospital, Winton, and other area townships have agreed to contribute additional funds to keep



Outgoing Mayor Roger Skraba receives the key to the city as Mayor-elect Heidi Omerza looks on.
photo by C. Clark

the service afloat for now. Roger Skraba, in his last meeting as mayor, said how the ambulance service would access that additional money was a top item of discussion at the Dec. 13 meeting of the Ambulance Joint Powers Board. "What happens is that all that money that gets put into the account that the city keeps, and when ... the ambulance service needs the money, they come to joint powers, we authorize it and it gets allocated," Skraba said. He added that the board wants to ensure better financial accountability. "We impressed on the ambulance board that we

need an audit before we go any further ... so there will be a trail of where the money goes." Langowski said that the details of setting up an audit would be one of the main agenda items for the board's January meeting.

Skraba's last meeting

Since the Dec. 20 Ely City Council meeting was Skraba's last as Ely's Mayor, council member and Mayor-elect Heidi Omerza presented him with the key to the city. Skraba described his stint as mayor as the most fun he's had in office and

thanked the city staff for their help and support.

Other business

In other business, the council:

- Heard from Police Chief Chad Houde that citizens should call the police department when a vehicle is parked on the wrong side of the street during winter calendar parking rules but can't be moved because of mechanical problems. "The police department has a procedure for this," Houde explained. He cautioned that callers should use a non-emergency number, or can call 911

and inform the dispatch that it is a non-emergency request to contact the department.

- Approved recommendations by the Airport Commission for signs costing \$2,730, a change order for \$351,125 and a pay application for \$412,205 from Ulland Brothers for work on a taxiway, and a five years of consulting services agreement with TKDA. TKDA is also the current provider of airport consulting services for the city's airport.

- Approved eight recommendations from the Ely Utility Commission, including passing

the EUC budget, paying ISD 696 \$13,543 for energy conservation improvements, and paying for equipment and services provided since the last city council meeting.

- Approved the internal posting for the position of second assistant fire chief since the current holder of the position is looking to move on.

- Passed the second reading of the ordinance to rezone the former Minn. Revenue Building from industrial to C-1 Commercial.

- Approved claims for payments for the city and EUC for \$1,142,089, for Greater Minnesota Parks and Trails 2023 membership dues of \$165, two invoices of \$26,980 and \$11,129 from AE2S for the waste water treatment plant improvements project, and an invoice of \$5,610 from SEH for work on the Prospector ATV trails.

- Approved the city's budget and final tax levy for 2023, settling on a six percent increase over the 2022 levy.

- Approved three negotiated employment agreements with the two unions representing the city's police officers and staff.

SEASON'S GREETINGS!
from GREENWOOD TOWNSHIP

Winning Artist • Reese Connor
Grade 1

Merry Happy Everything!
from Gruben's Marina

Winning Artist • Ella Trancheff
Kindergarten

Enjoy Our Winter Wonderland!
from Nordic Home North

Winning Artist • Josie Feather
Grade 4

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COOK 2 BR, 1 BA, 1-stall detached garage. 225 ft Lake Vermilion shore with a boathouse. Potential for year-round use. **MLS#144156 \$415,000**

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ANGORA 4 BR, 1 BA, 2-stall garage country home. 78 acres with out-buildings and fenced in areas. Seller concessions available. **MLS#143953 \$310,000**

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OPINION

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“CONGRESS SHALL MAKE NO LAW...ABRIDGING THE FREEDOM OF SPEECH, OR OF THE PRESS;”

The First Amendment of the United States Constitution

Editorial

Peace on earth

Americans should question why U.S. policies often clash with our ideals

Peace on Earth, goodwill towards everyone.

That's long been the unofficial greeting of the Christmas season, and it's worth considering at this time each year how well we actually live up to our well wishes for the holidays. Are these just hollow words in the year 2022, that belie a society that too often fails to live up to such ideals?

America likes to hold itself up for its goodness, and certainly there is astonishing goodness in a great many Americans. We see it every day in the willingness of so many in our communities to step up and help others. When we meet another person, face-to-face, in need of some kind of assistance, the vast majority of us are more than willing to offer a hand.

Yet, somehow, a society comprised of individuals who will regularly go out of their way to help a friend or neighbor, doesn't always make the connection that, on this very tiny planet lost in a vast universe, we are all neighbors, and we will only make the world a better place when we begin to act like it—individually, and collectively in the kind of society we choose to build.

It's worth remembering at this time of year that Jesus, whose birth Christians celebrate, was himself a migrant and, eventually, a refugee when Mary and Joseph fled with their young child to Egypt to escape the threat of death from King Herod.

Which is, perhaps, why Jesus taught nothing but compassion for those in similar circumstances—because he, too, was once in need. As quoted in Matthew, “Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these by brethren, ye have done it unto me.”

Indeed, Jesus cursed to everlasting fire those who failed to show charity to strangers. “For I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.”

We recognize that while some might claim otherwise, America is a secular nation, not a Christian one. We follow secular laws not religious ones, as is appropriate in a large and diverse country. Yet can any of us truly argue with the universal principle of the Golden Rule, espoused by Jesus in his Sermon on the Mount: “Do

unto others as you would have them do unto you?”

Just as Jesus faced the threat of violence in his time and relied on the kindness of others to escape persecution, hundreds of thousands of equally desperate people are fleeing to America each year under the threat of violence in nations to our south. These are desperate families for the most part, with parents and children who have faced severe trauma in their home countries. And are we currently treating them with the humanity that any of us deserves? It's hard to argue that the answer to that question is yes.

And it isn't just immigrants who face a system in America that is fundamentally inhumane. As a society, America allows far more injustice against its own people than almost any other advanced nation. America has 4.25 percent of the world's population yet houses more than 20 percent of the world's prison population. Other countries find alternatives to incarceration yet most enjoy lower crime rates than in the U.S.

In Isaiah, the Bible says that nations will be judged and that “they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks.” Yet in Washington, the Congress, just last week, approved a military spending bill totaling \$858 billion, the largest amount of resources ever spent by any nation on its military in world history. Peace on Earth? For a country that has been at war for most of the past half century, it's difficult to view that as one of America's priorities.

In a just and kind America, “wokeness” wouldn't be an epithet for so many. The Oxford English dictionary defines wokeness as “the quality of being alert and concerned about social injustice and discrimination.” Yet we have states in America passing laws to actively punish teachers who try to educate students about such societal issues or teach an accurate and complete version of American history.

We could go on and on. While Americans as individuals are capable of so much good, there's a disconnect between our individual actions and feelings and the society and governmental policies we've allowed in our names. At this time of year, especially, it is perhaps worthwhile to ask ourselves why.



I just have to share my experiences with Mr. Vukmanich

I have two kids who attend North Woods school, and have for a few years now. They have known Mr. Vukmanich as their principal for the entirety of that time. Both of them love to chat with him, they high five him in the halls, they talk about how great it is to have him at school. My daughter cried when I told her he was leaving because she is going to miss having him at the school, and she's going to miss the comfort of having a principal she is familiar and comfortable with. The only time either of my children had problems with other kids in school, they were comfortable going to him and talking about it. They felt secure and confident in the fact that they could trust him with what was going on. He takes the time to see all sides of a story and he handles situations fairly. He's familiar with all the children, families, and staff which is very valuable in a school setting. There is a small group of people who essentially bullied the superintendent into getting their way and the whole school will suffer because of it. The superintendent is entrusted to make decisions for the greater good of the whole community, not a few who cause issues.

The most important thing to take away from this is people in support of him not making this move, don't be silent. Speak up and speak out, let the superintendent know your feelings.

Emilee Manick
Cook

Idiot Democrats keep pushing death shots

Autopsies on deaths HAVE shown people died from Covid vaccinations caused heart inflammation causing death. That's in The Epoch Times paper!

Several Covid vaccines have been identified as causing Myocarditis and Pericarditis. No other causing factors in these cases except for Covid vaccinations! But idiots in the Democrat party keep pushing these Death Shots! And, vaccinations have NEVER cured Covid, NEVER stopped the spread of Covid and there's little evidence it even made for milder cases! Experts also say masks are almost useless, maybe 3-percent effective! This is the worst administration in American history. Stole that designation from Jimmy Carter and Barrack Hussein Obama, who cause most of today's problems!!!

Dave Akerson
Lake Vermilion

Don't punish the majority

I just wanted to write a quick note regarding the movement of the principals between Northwoods and Babbitt. I am the coordinator for the Empty Bowls fundraiser at the North Woods school. I have had contact with Mr. Vukmanich in this regard as well as 2 grandchildren that attend the North Woods school.

I am so extremely disappointed in the Superintendent's decision to move the principals at this point in time like so many other parents and grandparents as well as community members also. The timing of this switch has much less to do with staffing than the fact that people will be busy around the holidays and this can just slip through the cracks unnoticed. We have children who are comfortable to talk to their principal if they have issues - this is a dream for parents and grandparents.

I grew up going to school with a principal who was afraid of the students that he most needed to control and our school suffered because of it. Kids hated going to school, they were afraid and there were fights regularly. This is what can happen if we don't stand up for what is right and what is the best for the students in the school.

I understand that everyone will not be happy with Vukmanich staying, however, I don't think it's fair to punish the majority because of a few. That is not how this is supposed to work. Please email the superintendent renebritson@isd2142.k12.mn.us and let her know if you are not happy with her decision; email every day; 20 times a day. Just please continue to fight for our children and grandchildren. Happy Holidays.

Michelle Manick
Cook



Holiday humor, aggravation, and all that glitter

I was curled up on my sofa a couple weeks ago, listening to some instrumental Christmas music and appreciating my tree lights and my cats, thinking ahead to having a relaxing Christmas holiday to be shared with my son, his fiancé, and maybe some friends here and there.

I felt relieved that I was not pressed to duty... writing out Christmas cards the way mother used to do years ago. I had noticed some Facebook

friends busy sending out piles of cards and humorously thought, “do people still do that?” It seemed almost as old-fashioned as watching someone walk up to the TV and turn the dial to change channels.

Mother hated writing Christmas cards and would complain about it every year from Thanksgiving continuing for a couple of weeks as she struggled to get her 10 or so cards out the door. She was a full-time schoolteacher and had plenty on her plate,

but it was one of those unwritten things that she felt she needed to do, or she would be purged from proper society. Mom would always get a Christmas card from my older cousin and they were generally...Hallmark, made to impress, and adorned with glitter. Card glitter spreads faster than the COVID virus and was everywhere, on everything for days and weeks to come. Thinking back on its expected arrival, preparations could have been made to isolate and contain the glitter. The card should have been taken out of the envelope with surgical gloves, laid down on a newspaper and handled very carefully from at least a foot away with outstretched arms and a set of long-handled

tweezers, in order to prevent the glitter from invading the entire house. After reading its lovely verse, it could have been slowly closed so the glitter would not become airborne, then methodically folded up in the protective piece of newspaper and eased slowly across the kitchen to the trash bin and deposited...with a gentle push. God forbid if a dog were to come racing through at that moment, causing the chosen carrier to fumble the thing before touchdown occurred.

I am surprised that my mother didn't figure that out over the years because she was very good at reading other cards, keeping them for a day or so, then throwing them away, even if you had agonized in front of

the card rack...spending hard earned allowance dollars on it. I would see it lying in the trash bin shortly after her birthday and say, “Geez mom you're already throwing my card away?” She would remark, “Well I read it, we don't need it hanging around forever, do we?”

The same abrupt death was never in store for those Christmas cards as they gradually grew in number in the small, wicker basket. I could almost see the glittery ones rubbing and gyrating against all the other plain rather Mennonite cards that held no sparkle of any kind. In fact they were the less ex-



SCARLET
STONE

Letters from Readers

The pitchforks arise for our wolves

Low deer harvest numbers in the north-east ring of a sense of entitlement. Didn't get a deer? It's got to be because of wolves despite rationale provided by the DNR. Clear cuts, providing plenty of summer forage but nothing in winter, have been going on a long

time. Except for young pine and cedar, there's little for them to eat, and little thermal cover. Add in a series of moderately severe, to severe winters (and right now, things don't look good), and the fact that spruce budworm has devastated balsam fir (they're falling like Jack straws as all the while folks are cutting and burning balsam) thermal cover is disappearing that much faster. Oh, but it's the wolves.

Perhaps it's also

pressure put on bucks the past several years, there's just fewer of them. Our small group (hunting in 118) saw plenty of does, but few bucks. Personally, I saw more deer this year than in any year I've hunted. Or perhaps it's pure dumb luck, being in the right place at the right time. Why can somebody sit in a stand for hours on end, with no results, only to have someone else sit in same stand and have a ten-point buck walk downwind, broadside, 50-

60 yards away?

Last, why bring up wolves and moose at all? David Mech's data extended through 2012, and yes, wolves appeared to be the leading cause of moose calf mortality. But by 2014/15 when everybody jumped on the Mech wolf/moose bandwagon, he also said that the wolves had since declined, and that the wolf numbers were probably supplemented by deer and beaver. The *Timberjay* has provided at least

two pieces on deer as the probable biggest problem for moose (2/11/16 and 3/12/16) as deer numbers have been kept artificially high due to supplemental feeding, and that brain worm and liver flukes vectored in by deer are a larger long-term threat to moose than wolves. I might add, in regard to the DNR moose cow and calf collaring fiasco, how many of the cows that abandoned their calves were already brain worm addled, and if infected

with brain worm, less likely to aggressively protect their calves? Bringing up something about wolves and moose from 2015 in conjunction with low deer harvest (deer fawns are preyed upon by wolves, bears, coyotes, and bobcats) is little more than a clarion call for getting out the torches and pitchforks.

**Mike Ruzich
Ely**

GLITTER...Continued from page 4

pensive cards, the budget packs with the off-shades of red and green inks that brought a gentle nod with the words "its the thought that counts" to mind.

I liked to sit and read through mother's modest pile of Christmas cards every year....about five times or so. They came from a few relatives and women she had taught with at various schools earlier in her career but had not seen in decades. There was always the card from "Twi," short for Twila who lived far away in Sheboygan, Wis. Their handwritten messages varied little from year to year and were quick summations about husbands, the most accomplished child prodigies that walked the earth, accidents, broken bones, an occasional bunion surgery or appendicitis.

Unfortunate occurrences were always mentioned at this most joyous time of year. These vessels of heartfelt intention had similar last paragraphs building to the ongoing hope of finally getting together to visit with mom in the coming year! If memory serves correct, that never happened. There was "Weezy," too...or

was she "Wheezy?" We kids wondered why she had that name...but kids are like that. She was a former college roommate that I never met or saw a picture of. Did she even exist? You wonder maybe if mother just wrote those cards in the dark at night after we'd all gone to bed? They could've been a stack of prop cards that she pulled out of the Christmas box in the basement every year, kind of like stock actors that appear in certain films. I know that's not true because I would see the cards arrive in the mail and eagerly wait to read about these people that I did not know or would ever meet.

At any rate, the happiness and relief I felt about not having to send Christmas cards was soon put to the ultimate test by the universe. I went down to Virginia a couple weeks ago with two friends to see the Tuba Christmas concert at Goodman Auditorium. We went to have lunch first and were seated at a table at a popular family restaurant.

I had no sooner eagerly taken my menu in my hands when I noticed

a familiar woman being directed to the table right next to us by the hostess. "Oh my God," I thought, "it's my glitter-card-cousin who I had been planning to not send a Christmas card to...again this year." This decision I had made on the couch that night in the contemplative haze of the tree lights. Over the course of my life, seeing her at various family events she rarely failed to deliver awkward comments or questions in regards to my life such as, "I see my cousins haven't lost any weight this year either." I knew she would recognize me at some point, so I spoke first to just get it over with. I quickly introduced my friends and made some lighthearted comments in anticipation of attending Tuba Christmas. Then the silence grew, and I could feel the waves of her thoughts moving above the dingy carpet...crossing the five feet from her fork to mine. Out came those zinging words... "How's your husband doing?" I had avoided telling her over the brief conversations I had with her in the past couple years that I was divorced....again.


Why would I? It'd be like sharing a chapter of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* with a church book study group. "Oh, we're divorced," I said. She assertively replied, "I wondered when that was going to happen?" She proceeded joking over the top of her omelet to her friend that I had really been married to some "doozies." It was like a big pancake sailed into the side of my head as I thought "but they were MY doozies damn it!" Her pristine alter had been soiled by divorce too, so let us not cast pancakes. It didn't end as she further narrated her memory of my mother rolling her eyes about my life. "That's all fine and dandy too," I thought, knowing that mother and I were cut from a different cloth, but loved one another dearly. At this point I started having an out-of-body experience and I know if I had been drunk, I probably would have dashed a glass of ice water in her face. This had to be the universe putting me in a Saturday Night Live comedic sketch to invariably teach me another lesson, show me a truth, confirm the suspicion that pan-

cakes do fly. She concluded with instructing me to send her a Christmas card with all of the details. (A cold-day-in-hell event.) I did not say anything more and when I was finished, I stood up and simply is all the glitter you need.

Well, these things happen and provide good story material at any rate, confirming the truth that "you can pick your friends, but you cannot pick your relatives."

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

**Enjoy The Outdoors This Christmas!
from Frank's Marina**




**Winning Artist • Brayden Amundson
Grade 5**

**Rock Around The Christmas Tree!
from Handberg's Marina**



**Winning Artist • Kensie Herdman
Grade 2**

**the
TIMBERJAY**



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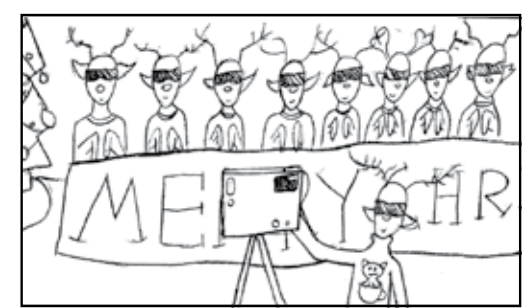
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Have A Safe & Healthy Holiday Season!
from *Scenic Rivers-Cook*



**Winning Artist • Addy Manick
Grade 2**

We Wish You A Merry Christmas!
from *Ryan's Rustic Railings*



**Winning Artist • Rylie Gibson
Grade 5**

MERRY CHRISTMAS TO EVERYONE!
from *the Tower Soudan Agency*



**Winning Artist • Kayla Drift
Grade 5**

Be Thankful For Family & Friends!
from *The Timberjay*



**Artist • Edwin Swanson
Preschool**

Have a Happy & Cozy Holiday Season!
from *Vermilion Park Inn-Soudan*



**Winning Artist • Sterling Carter
Grade 5**

MERRY CHRISTMAS TO EVERYONE!
from *STATE FARM INSURANCE-TIM JOHNSON*



**Winning Artist • Skye'la James
Grade 3**

Week of Dec. 26

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

Tuesday
Tower Area Food Shelf- Open on the third Tuesday of every month from 2:30-5:00 p.m. Located in the back of the Timberjay building on Main Street. Next food shelf day is Jan. 17.

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

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

St. James Presbyterian Church of Tower Advent services underway

TOWER- St. James Presbyterian Church in Tower is holding Advent services through Christmas. The focus this year is about how "He Is Everything to Us".

Saturday, Christmas Eve 7 p.m.: "Sweet Little Jesus Boy!"

The church will not have worship on Christmas Day. Blessings to all this Christmas and during the New Year.

St. Paul's hosting special New Year's service and brunch

SOUDAN- St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church is hosting a special service on Sunday, Jan. 1, 2023.

"When the Pastor's Away, St. Paul's Will Play" will feature live music by Deb Tuominen and Louise Wiermma, with the service led by the women of the church. The congregation invites the community to start the New Year out right. Worship begins at 10 a.m. and is open to all. There will be a free brunch following the service, catered by Marco. RSVPs appreciated but not required, please call 218-753-3047.

"A New Journey" for St. James

TOWER- With the retirement of Pastor Doug Workman at St. James Presbyterian Church in Tower, the Session has supplied the pulpit with the following speakers for January: Jan. 1, New Year's Day, JoAnne Connel; Jan. 8, Pastor Ellen Taube; Jan. 15, Greg Kuchan; Jan. 22 and 29, Rev. Rebecca LeMenager.

Worship services are at 10 a.m. on Sundays, with coffee served before the service, and coffee afterwards in the social room. All are invited to attend.

Every Sunday, during the service, there is special music with Greg Kuchan on guitar and his wife, Denise Kuchan on electric drums. On Jan. 1, weather-permitting, Sonja Connell and her father Jay Carlsgaard will be performing on viola (Sonya) and piano (Jay). Both are travelling to Tower from Bemidji, and will also be performing special music prior to the service at 10 a.m.

Come early, and see us as St. James looks forward to "A New Journey."

TOWER-SOUDAN ELEMENTARY



Timberjay Greeting Card Contest winners announced

TOWER- The *Timberjay* would like to thank all the students at Tower-Soudan Elementary who created holiday greeting cards for this year's contest. Please watch for these and other students' artwork in this week's and next week's special holiday editions. Winners are listed in order, first, second, and third.

Kindergarten: Raven Rettke, Amelie Zak, Ella Trancheff

First: Boone Broten, Payton Edwards, Reese Connor and Elius Strong (tie)

Second: Ayva Anderson, Zaija Schroeder, Shelby Troop and Sri Stellmach (tie)

Third: Raymond Boshey, Kia Gagnon, Nash Lenci

Fourth: Clementine O'Brien, Josie Feather, Harley Banks

Fifth: Nolan Lenci, Kija Chosa and Kayla Drift (tie), Quinn Jordan and Sterling Carter (Tie)

Sixth: Serah Ross, Lucy Pecchia, Jade Drift.

VERMILION COUNTRY SCHOOL



The students at Vermilion Country School would like to thank the Tower Fire Department Relief Association for their donation of gift cards for the entire student body. They would also like to thank Aronson Boat Works and Operation Santa for their donations for the school holiday party gifts. Students celebrated with a holiday-themed lunch, and decorated homemade gingerbread cookies, before heading off for a two-week holiday break. photo by J. Summit

TOWER-SOUDAN PRESCHOOL



Ho, Ho, Ho

Santa's helper Fred Precht visited Tower-Soudan Elementary last week, along with helper elf Susan, and their granddaughter Noel. The preschool class spent time with Santa singing songs and talking about Christmas traditions. photos by J. Summit



DECK THE HALLS

Ely's art-filled holiday weekend

ELY- The Northern Lakes Arts Association and its collaborators held most of the holiday events on the weekend of Dec. 16-18. The weekend started with a Friday evening reception at the art show of local artist Dafne Caruso at the State Theater, followed on Saturday by the December Makers' Market and Mixer at the Ely Folk School, and capped by the NLAA's Hometown Holiday Concert at the Minnesota North Vermilion Campus.

Dafne Caruso art show at State Theater

by CATIE CLARK
Ely Editor

ELY- Dafne Caruso is a local Ely artist whose career shows that it's never too late to start pursuing the arts. The Northern Lakes Arts Association in collaboration with Ely's State Theater, hosted a show from Dec. 11-18 of Caruso's art. NLAA held a reception for her on the evening of Dec. 16 in the lobby of the State Theater.

Caruso creates artworks in multiple media, including leather, enamel, acrylic, watercolor, colored pencil, and even felted wool. She has been a regular exhibitor and vendor of her works at both Ely's Blueberry and Harvest Moon Festivals for many years.

Her NLAA show was entitled "Ely and

Beyond," and featured color-rich paintings and drawings inspired by both the Ely area and her travels in Central and South America.

Never too old

Though she has a brother who is a professional artist, Caruso didn't think that career path was one she would ever pursue. "I always wanted to paint but I never thought I could," Caruso explained. She started her creative endeavors with sewing, like her Columbian mother and grandmother before her. Then she branched out to crocheting and knitting.

"Finally in 2012, I said I want to do this and I'm not getting any younger." In her mid-40s, Caruso took an online class on painting which she described as her cata-

lyst. She's been doing art ever since.

Home in Ely

Caruso found her home in Ely the same way many others have. She was living in Massachusetts north of Boston and came to visit her artist brother, who lived in Ely. Like many other new residents to Ely, she fell in love with the town.

Caruso explained, "I stayed for three weeks and we went back home. Two weeks later, I said I don't want to live here anymore. My husband said are you sure? Yes I am. And then it took us two weeks to buy a car, buy a trailer, pack everything and come here. We've been here since 2002, 20 years."

Caruso owns the Art Corner, a local Ely art supplies store, which she



Dafne Caruso (left) and Sara Skelton (right) at the Northern Lakes Arts Association reception at the State Theater in Ely.

Photo by C. Clark

opened about a decade ago. "I was twiddling my thumbs at that point," Caruso explained, "and then a friend of mine who was another artist said 'hey, have you thought about maybe opening up an art store?'"

"It's been a lifesaver for me, because it's not just art ... I'm very generous with my time when people come in. I want to inspire people. That's my goal."

Holiday Makers' Market

by CATIE CLARK
Ely Editor

ELY- The Northern Lakes Arts Association and the Ely Folk School hosted a Christmas-themed Makers' Market and Mixer event on the afternoon of Dec. 17. The NLAA's pitch for the event stated "Stop by to purchase some last-minute Christmas Gifts and stay for the music and the camaraderie."

Nine local makers set up to sell their crafts. The items for sale included hand-knitted winterwear, hand-woven winterwear and blankets, jewelry, artwork, handmade wooden kitchen implements, and candles. Among the mak-

ers were Dafne Caruso, who recently exhibited at the NLAA's December art show, and the *Timberjay's*



Vendor sign spotted at the Makers' Market and Mixer at the Ely Folk School on Dec. 17.

Photo by C. Clark

haiku illustrator and poet, Cecilia Rolando.

The folk school's Alexia Springer set out toys for children with no

interest in shopping. She also set up a table where attendees could try their hand at origami. The mixer portion of the event featured music performed live by Joey Kenig.

The makers' markets are every third Saturday. They started in October and will run through March. Ian Lah, managing director of NLAA related that the makers' markets are a new program for the two collaborating organizations, "Lucy Soderstrom (program director of the folk school) and I came up with the idea for the makers' markets last summer. After March, we will assess and see what we can improve for next year."



Joey Kenig provided the music for the mixer portion of the Makers' Market and Mixer at the Ely Folk School on Dec. 17.

Photo by C. Clark

Hometown Holiday Concert at the Vermilion Fine Arts Theater

by CATIE CLARK
Ely Editor

ELY- For the first time since the arrival of COVID-19, holiday music returned to the Ely community at the Dec. 17 Hometown Holiday Concert. The Northern Lakes Arts Association held the event at the Vermilion Fine Arts Theater at the Minnesota North Vermilion Campus.

An hour before the concert started, the Ely Winton History Museum next door to the theater opened its doors to the public and held a decluttering sale of surplus antique items clogging its storage space.

The concert drew a large audience which packed the theater. The opening number was the Sylvester Wager arrangement of César Franck's *Panis Angelicus*, performed by Sarah Skelton singing, Keiko Williams on violin, and Susan Ger-

mek on piano.

The second number was *Chambrield Ridings*, not on her well-known clarinet, but singing Leonard Cohen's *Hallelujah*. She was followed by Adolphe Adam's *O Holy Night*, sung by Justine Carlson accompanied by Susan Germek on piano.

The Bear Naked Ladies Trio of Ellen Root on string bass, Grace Klein on vocals and ukulele, and Emily Weise on vocals and kazoo performed a medley of *God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen* and *We Three Kings*. Weise's solo on the kazoo was a highlight of the concert.

Keiko Williams returned to the stage with her violin to perform Alexey Igudesman's *Harp*, which is a piece that is played entirely pizzicato.

Jim and Ian Lah performed a duet of *Happy Days/Get Happy*, which was followed by Ian Lah singing Joni Mitchell's bitter-sweet soul classic,



The Bear Naked Ladies trio at the Northern Lakes Arts Association Hometown Holiday Concert. From left-to-right: Ellen Root, Grace Klein and Emily Weise.

Photo by C. Clark

River. The next number was Frank Loesser's humorous duet of *Baby It's Cold Outside*, sung by Ian Lah and Andrea Storm.

The performance portion of the concert was capped by two numbers sung by the Hometown Holiday Choir, conducted

by Susan Germek and accompanied by Barb Litchfield. The first was Mendelssohn's *There Shall a Star Come Out of Jacob* followed by the Austrian folk tune of *Still, Still, Still*.

The choir stayed on the stage for the second

portion of the program which was audience participation caroling. The carols were a selection of both traditional Christmas carols like *Silent Night* and contemporary classics like *I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas*.

2022 Community Service to the Arts Award

ELY- Laura Savinetti-Moberly is this year's recipient of the 2022 Community Service to the Arts Award, given out by the Ely Music and Drama Club.

Savinetti-Moberly was active in many past Northern Lakes Arts Association theater programs as choreographer, costumer, assistant director, and all-around production assistant. She was also an NLAA committee member on their Theater and

Visual Arts committees, an NLAA Board officer, a Gardner Humanities Trust Board member, the coordinator of the "Prairie Fire Children's Theater," and a volunteer at multiple performing events.

Savinetti-Moberly organized the *Voyageur Winter Festival's* art show featuring the carvers' work in multiple media, volunteered with "Pictures on Parade" in the Ely Schools for many years, and supported CAPP in its

mission as Secretary.

Laura grew up in



Laura Savinetti-Moberly

Brooklyn and West Babylon, NY, where she was always just a short train ride from New York City to see dance, theater, art museums, and fill her soul with beauty. After New York, she moved to California where she continued to study movement and visual art, and pursue her love of theater, all of which she brought with her when her family moved from California to Minnesota.

Laura, with her husband Mike and son Colin

attended the Blueberry Art Festival in July of 1993, and like many others, fell in love with the Ely area. They built a custom home on Farm Lake to showcase their extensive personal art collection, and Laura immediately got involved in the community.

Savinetti-Moberly recently moved to South Carolina. Her contributions to the Ely arts' community, especially the NLAA and the Ely Music and Drama Club, will be

In Brief

Tuesday Group schedule

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

The Tuesday Group is now on its annual holiday hiatus and will be back after the first of the year.

2023 Upcoming Tuesday Group speakers:

- Jan. 3: Meet new Elyites.
- Jan 10: End of the Road Film Festival.
- Jan 17: Ely Free Clinic.

Breathing Out

by Cecilia Rolando © 2022



very big snowfalls
dumping heavy piles of white
dig out through Christmas

Libraries

Ely library

Hours: Monday — Friday,
9:30 a.m.-6:30 p.m.
Closed on Saturday,
Sunday, and holidays
Phone: 218-365-5140

Babbitt library

Monday 10 am-6 pm
Tuesday 10 am-6 pm
Wednesday 10 am-6 pm
Thursday 10 am-6 pm
Friday 10 am-6 pm
Phone: 218-827-3345

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 canceled.
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, 5:30 p.m. Thursdays, Wellbeing Development, 41 E Camp St. Ely.
ADULT BASIC EDUCATION GED
Study materials and pre-test available. Call 218-365-3359, or 1-800-662-5711.
CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUPS:
Babbitt: 3rd Monday of Month: 6-7:30 p.m. at Carefree Living.
Ely: 4th Monday of Month: 10-11:30 a.m. at Ely-Bloomenson Hospital, Conference Room B.

MUSIC EDUCATION

Cook native is repeat finalist for Grammy educator award

Chicago-based Nicholas uses music as medium for healing trauma

by DAVID COLBURN
Cook-Orr Editor

COOK- It was a special moment for Cook native Trevor Nicholas last year when he was named as one of only ten national finalists for the 2022 Music Educator Award presented by The Recording Academy, the group that decides the winners of their the annual Grammy Awards, and the Grammy Museum.

On Monday, the accomplished vocal music teacher at Senn Arts with Nicholas Senn High School in Chicago got to live that moment over again when the ten finalists for the 2023 award were announced. Nicholas made the cut again, the only finalist from last year's group so honored.

"UNREAL!!!" was the first word Nicholas

posted to his Facebook page after learning the news, and in typical fashion, he immediately acknowledged the collective impact of others represented in his achievement.

"Deeply grateful for everyone who has poured into me over the years and encouraged me on this journey to explore and amplify the healing power of the arts," he wrote. "May each of my students feel uplifted by this hope we've been building together. Thank you GRAMMY Museum for extending the reach of my students' artistry and light."

Being nominated for the Music Educator Award is the easy part. Nominations can come from anyone, students, teachers, administrators, Recording Academy members, and the general public. Music

teachers can also nominate themselves. This year, more than 1,200 nominations from 47 states were received.

To advance toward the finals, however, requires hard work on the part of the nominees as they work with supporters to complete an extensive application process that goes well beyond an individual's classroom teaching ability. Music Educator Award applicants are evaluated based on demonstrated evidence that they have made a measurable difference in the lives of students, and lasting contribution



Trevor Nicholas

to the field of music education, are exemplars of the best in the field, have shown a commitment to the broader cause of maintaining music education in schools, and have made a significant impact on their school and community.

After the applications were electronically scored and ranked, around a thousand nominees were eliminated when 207 quarterfinalists, including Nicholas, were selected in June. That triggered another round of work gathering supplemental materials such as videos, testimonials, and written essays in support of their

nominations. The field was trimmed to 25 semifinalists in October after multiple screening committee reviews, and a "blue ribbon committee" made the selection of the ten finalists and a recommendation for the winner. The Recording Academy Board of Trustees has final approval of the committee's selections.

For Nicholas, a 2004 Cook High School graduate, a central driving factor in his teaching experience has been exploring responses to trauma through vocal music. A video-based recording project with his students at Senn Arts when the school was closed during the COVID pandemic, "Who Will Carry Me?," a song composed by Nicholas, received wide acclaim from an array of educa-

tors, performers and local and state government officials.

Nicholas is also known for reaching outside the Senn Arts campus to establish significant ongoing collaborations for his students with noted performers and arts organizations in the Chicago area, and also to raise well in excess of \$300,000 in grants and donations to support the Senn Arts program.

The winner will be recognized during Grammy Week festivities preceding the annual awards show scheduled for Feb. 5. The winner will receive a \$10,000 honorarium and a matching grant for their school's music program.

Timberjay Coloring Contest Winners



Second graders Kensie Herdman, Addyson Manick, Hadley Bundy, and Jase Kuhlman.



First graders Bradley Winans, Vivian Villebrun, and Peyton Schuster.



Kindergarteners Evalynn Shermer, Ascheron Chapman, and Haven Bangs.



Fourth graders Jackson Udovich, Leah Las, Joselyn Pascuzzi, and Cassidy Quincy.



Third graders Samantha Amundson, Ripley Rintala, Skye-la James, and Ryker Nurmi.



Fifth graders Brayden Amundson, Daniel Zupancich, Rylie Gibson, and Kaidence Scofield



Sixth graders Cooper Long, Savannah Abts, and Anelise Brodeen.

TOWER- The *Timberjay* would like to thank all the students at North Woods Elementary who created holiday greeting cards for this year's contest. Please watch for these and other students' artwork in the Christmas and New Year's editions of the paper.

Winners listed in order, first, second, third

Kindergarten: Evalynn Shermer, Ascheron Chapman, Haven Bangs

First: Peyton Schuster, Bradley Winans, Vivian Villebrun

Second: Kensie Herdman, Addy Manick and Jase Kuhlman (tie), Hadley Bundy.

Third: Samantha Amundson, Ripley Rintala, Skye-la James and Ryker Nurmi

Fourth: Cassidy Quincy, Leah Las, Jackson Udovich and Josey Pascuzzi (tie)

Fifth: Kady Scofield, Rylie Gibson, Brayden Amundson and Daniel Zupancich (tie)

Sixth: Anelise Brodeen, Savannah Abts, Cooper Long.

LEVY...Continued from page 1

they receive a considerable amount of money from the federal and state government to do so.

Among the state aids that St. Louis County relies upon is what's known as County Program Aid (CPA), a funding source that has been largely flat in recent years, according to St. Louis County Administrator Kevin Gray, even as inflation has eaten into the value of those funds. "Our subsidy for corrections costs has actually gone down," he said.

Ten years ago, said Gray, the county received a total \$25.5 million in aids ranging from CPA to tac-onite aid, to payments-in-lieu-of-taxes, or PILT. Ten years later, those combined aids amount to \$27 million, a slight increase due mostly to a boost in federal PILT payments. Yet, inflation alone has cut the buying power of those funds by more than \$5 million over that time, and that means property taxpayers are paying a bigger share of county spending. Ten years ago, county taxpayers were picking up about 29 percent of total county spending. In 2023, they'll pay 36 percent of the county's budgeted spending.

It's a trend that counties in Minnesota have noticed. The Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC) has put increasing CPA funding at the top of its agenda for the upcoming legislative session. According to Matt Hilgart, a government policy analyst with the AMC, County Program Aid was created decades ago as a way for lawmakers to recognize

and help fund some of the laundry list of mandates they places on counties in the state. "A lot of what we do is carry out mandates of the state," said Hilgart. Back in 2002, the Legislature allocated just over \$250 million for the program. Twenty years later, while the state budget has doubled in size, the amount allocated for CPA has barely budged. "In inflation-adjusted dollars, we're seeing \$150 million less than we were two decades ago," said Hilgart.

CPA comprised about 12 percent of a county's levy 20 years ago, but today it's down to just seven percent, Hilgart noted.

While the issue has been a hot one for counties for some time, Hilgart notes it's one that doesn't get much attention from the public. "Everyone is very familiar with their property tax," he said. "Most residents aren't aware of the CPA, and how it interacts with the levy is pretty foreign."

Counties are undoubtedly eyeing the state's unprecedented budget surplus and they'll be actively lobbying for an increase in CPA funds this year. They may find a more receptive audience in St. Paul this year with DFL control of the Legislature. St. Louis County had made progress during last year's legislative session in advancing a provision that would have boosted state PILT dollars to St. Louis and other northern counties, but when DFLers in the House and Republicans in the Senate couldn't agree on several critical

funding issues, everything fell apart.

"That's the hand we're dealt," said Gray.

Spending on par with inflation

In part because of diminishing federal and state funding, county officials have worked hard to keep spending increases in check even as they've invested considerable sums in new facilities as well as maintaining wages and benefits to attract and retain a skilled workforce.

While county spending has jumped nearly 15 percent since 2019, that's actually somewhat below the rate of inflation, at least according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' CPI calculator. County operations don't take place in a vacuum, so the cost of the goods and services the county purchases go up as they do for everyone else.

And Gray notes that the bulk of the county's spending is for personnel. The county currently has about 1,880 workers and that jumps to over 2,100 when staff at various regional corrections facilities are added in. And at a time when wages and salaries are rising in most sectors, Gray said the county needs to keep pace. "We're focused on attracting and retaining our really good core of employees. We continue to be committed to our people."

Gray noted that many county jobs are more than 9-to-5. For law enforcement to snowplow drivers, to child protection workers, a county job entails availability to respond 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

"It's always tougher to attract people to that kind of shift work," he said.

The size of the county workforce has been relatively stable over the past decade. For a time, said Gray, the county wasn't filling some vacancies as workers left or retired. But that eventually became untenable, said Gray, especially as some of the demands for child protective services, mental health, and other issues, increased. Since then, Gray said the county has been adding two or three positions a year on average.

Meanwhile, the county is also making major investments in new equipment and in facilities, according to Gray, particularly in public works. The new Cook facility is one such example and three more county garage facilities are under construction, in many cases replacing facilities that date back 80 years or more. The county garage in Embarrass, which is being closed as part of the consolidation in the new facility being built just south of Tower, still has an outhouse for workers there. Gray said the county has also invested in new equipment, updating its fleet of graders and other vehicles. It's also updated the technology on county snowplows, utilizing newer brine technologies that eliminate the need for salt, work at lower temperatures, and last longer.

Gray acknowledges that he has advocated for, and the board has supported, similar investments in human services, adding resources for things like mental health supports,

chemical dependency treatments, and child protection. The county also changed its medical provider at the jails to improve the level of service, including better mental health and transitional services.

At the same time, Gray said the COVID pandemic and other factors have demonstrated the need for the county to upgrade its technology and security systems, particularly cyber-security. Among the technology upgrades is a relatively new interactive feature on the county website, known as Budget Explorer, which makes it much easier than ever to track county spending and understand where your tax dollars go. That new feature was integral to this reporting.

"We're not only addressing the inflationary pressures, but we're making targeted investments that we think better serve our residents," said Gray.

Most of these investments aren't funded by federal or state dollars, which means it requires levy dollars to make them.

Higher tax base

The impact of the higher county levy has been limited to some extent by a growing tax base, particularly among residential properties, which saw a 19 percent valuation increase this year. That lowers the overall average property tax rate somewhat, although as in most things related to property taxes, the full story is more complicated.

While values for residential property have increased significantly

over the past two years, that's generally not the case with other classifications of property, which means homeowners are collectively paying a bigger chunk of an increasing tax levy than in the past. At the same time, the county will see about one million dollars less in its fiscal disparities distribution than in past years. That factor alone accounts for about a 0.67 percent increase in the county levy for next year.

Gray said the tax implications of the levy is something of which county officials are well aware. "The board is really conscious of how the levy translates into the taxes residents pay," he said.

But even as the county's tax base rises, the Legislature regularly finds ways to shift additional costs onto the levy. Hilgart notes that lawmakers have established a number of property tax reductions and exemptions for some categories of taxpayers, such as disabled veterans and some types of farming property. Hilgart said the exemptions are worthy, but notes that while lawmakers take credit for the exemptions, they haven't been providing counties the funding to make up for the losses in tax base, which pushes taxes higher for others. "It's not a benefit the state pays," he said. "Their neighbors pay for it."

If there's a surprise in any of this, notes Hilgart, it's that counties have somehow managed to get by. "County governments have had to get really creative," he said.

INCIDENT...Continued from page 1

"I am Justin Ebel's mother," she said at the meeting. "He was the person that was tased not once but twice. He was taking a boat off the rocks in the wind, and he was trying to get that boat into Sullivan Bay or back to our base to be checked for any holes in the pontoons. He was stopped and told that they were boarding the boat. He told them that he wanted to do safety first. He wanted his customers back into at least Sullivan Bay if not back at the dock because he checks each and every boat that goes onto a rock for whether or not it has been damaged. This boat had damage."

The *Timberjay* has attempted to obtain official statements and/or docu-

mentation about the incident from Voyageurs National Park Superintendent Bob DeGross, VNP Visitor and Resource Protection Team Lead Ranger Joshua Wentz, the Minnesota U.S. Attorney's Office, and the National Park Service, all to no avail. Also of note is that while the initial citations issued to Ebel are viewable on PACER, the accompanying probable cause statements that would describe the justification for the charges are blocked from public view.

When contacted by the *Timberjay* in July, Ebel also declined to comment on the incident due to possible future litigation, and again declined when the newspaper reached out to him on Tuesday.

Ebel's alleged violations occurred in the midst of broader concerns about Voyageurs National Park enforcement activities expressed by business owners. In four public meetings including the one at Crane Lake, business owners expressed fear that the perception of over-zealous law enforcement actions in 2022 versus prior years would turn away many of the park tourists they depend on to make a living.

DeGross responded to those concerns in August with a multi-point action plan to improve operational transparency, improve procedures, and develop stronger and more frequent connections between park staff and the surrounding

communities.

NPS discrepancies

Both the denials of VNP staff to answer basic questions about the alleged tasing incident and the failure of NPS to act on Freedom of Information Act requests submitted by the *Timberjay* on Aug. 4 stand in stark contrast to the agency's far more transparent response to the tasing of a park visitor in New Mexico on Dec. 27, 2020.

In that situation, a Native American man, Darrell House, and his sister were confronted by an enforcement ranger at Petroglyph National Monument in Albuquerque, New Mexico for being off the designated trails. House was uncooperative when the ranger asked for his

name and identification, and he attempted to walk away. During the encounter, the ranger deployed and fired his taser after giving repeated warnings.

House's sister recorded video of the incident on a smartphone that he uploaded to his Instagram account that same evening. The next day, after the video had been viewed more than 10,000 times in the first 12 hours it was available, NPS issued a formal statement acknowledging the incident and video and announcing an investigation into the incident.

Two days after the incident, after local print and television media had reported on it, NPS voluntarily chose to release the ranger's body cam video,

along with an expended statement including more details about the encounter.

The *Timberjay* has not been able to discover why the agency's practice of immediate transparency by releasing the ranger's body cam footage and two press statements within 48 hours of the Albuquerque incident was not similarly followed in the VNP incident.

Ebel was scheduled for an initial court appearance before a magistrate judge in Bemidji on Wednesday. The *Timberjay* will continue to follow the story and report on developments as they become available.

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STORM...Continued from page 1

luckier ones. Their outage only lasted about 24 hours according to Linda. Many other residents across the region weren't so lucky as some outages extended into late Sunday night, according to Tami Zaun, public relations coordinator with Lake Country Power.

"Lake Country Power was pretty quick to respond for us," said Haugen.

Last week's storm was accompanied by mild temperatures, which helped to limit the impact for residents who need electricity to heat their homes. "It's a good thing it was warm those days because it cooled down pretty fast in the house even so," said Haugen. The Haugens do have a wood fireplace, so they were able to provide some heat to the house during the outage.

Potential outages from this week's storm could be far more dire for many residents since temperatures



Left: A Lake Country Power line crew works to reconnect a broken line, one of hundreds of individual outages from last week's snowstorm. This week's storm is expected to bring widespread outages as well, just days after power was finally restored across the area.

photo courtesy Lake Country Power

clinging to many trees and power lines, and that the winds forecasted with the coming storm are likely to spark more outages from broken branches and lines. "It's a recipe for disaster," she said.

The National Weather Service is also warning of widespread power outages from this week's storm as already stressed trees, still laden with snow, shed branches or topple altogether. "The risk of power outages combined with the dangerously cold

are expected to remain below zero in northeastern Minnesota throughout the storm and high winds are expected to push windchills into the minus 40-50-degree range.

While the latest storm won't feature the wet and sticky snow from last week's event and likely

won't yield as much snow, high winds combined with tree branches still laden with last week's snow, has the potential to create another round of widespread outages in the region.

"We are very concerned," Zaun said, adding that frozen snow is still

temperatures and windchills is particularly worrisome," wrote the National Weather Service meteorology staff this week in a forecast discussion posted on Wednesday. "We encourage Northland residents to prepare now and develop a plan to stay warm should they lose power."

Lake Country Power, which serves a broad swath of rural St. Louis, northern Lake, and eastern Itasca counties, is also warning its members to be prepared for extended power outages depending on the winds accompanying the storm. "Winds could gust as high as 55 mph," according to the notice posted on the LCP website.

Storm cleanup

If this week's storm brings the forecasted conditions, it's likely to be dispiriting for the many line crews who had worked so much overtime last week to restore power.

"This was almost worse than a summer storm," said Tami Zaun, public relations coordinator for Lake Country Power, referring to last week's snowfall. "Trucks were getting stuck especially on roads that had not been plowed yet or were barely plowed. They could be cutting a tree off the line while hearing another tree snapping down the line. I saw it firsthand and it was really bad out there."

In most cases, utilities can reach out to neighboring cooperatives or power companies when a storm brings power outages. But because last week's storm impact was so widespread, none of that assistance was available. That same scenario could repeat this week as the brunt of the storm was expected to hit just to the south of the North Country.

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Friday					Saturday					Sunday					Monday					Tuesday				
Hi	Lo	Prec.	Sn.		Hi	Lo	Prec.	Sn.		Hi	Lo	Prec.	Sn.		Hi	Lo	Prec.	Sn.		Hi	Lo	Prec.	Sn.	
33	24	0.00			33	28	0.00			31	27	0.00			30	27	0.00			33	28	0.00		
30	25	0.00			29	27	0.00			29	27	0.00			30	28	0.00			30	27	0.00		
31	29	0.05	0.5"		33	29	0.22	1.3"		32	29	0.25	2.3"		34	30	0.70	4.0"		33	29	0.20	1.8"	
31	28	0.90	10.0"		34	30	1.05	12.2"		32	29	0.55	5.5"		30	28	0.80	8.8"		32	29	1.32	12.0"	
32	27	0.20	3.0"		33	28	0.33	4.0"		32	26	0.06	0.9"		30	27	0.05	0.7"		32	28	0.14	2.6"	
29	23	0.11	1.6"		33	25	0.08	1.6"		32	24	0.05	1.0"		27	7	0.00			31	24	0.18	2.8"	
27	0	0.01	0.2"		26	-1	0.00			24	0	0.03	0.5"		7	-6	0.00			25	-2	0.02	0.5"	
YTD Total 26.81 33.2"					YTD Total 29.97 36.7"					YTD Total 26.70 32.6"					YTD Total NA NA					YTD Total 37.26 36.9"				

HEALTH CARE

Triple disease threat fills hospitals

by DAVID COLBURN
Cook/Orr Editor

REGIONAL- As Minnesota was experiencing a post-Thanksgiving rise in coronavirus cases, state Health Commissioner Jan Malcom and state Epidemiologist Ruth Lynfield appeared together last week for the first time in months to warn of the current "triple threat" of COVID, influenza, and respiratory syncytial virus and once again encourage people to get vaccinated.

"COVID is very much circulating in our community," Lynfield said. "We have mostly avoided the fall and early winter surges that we've experienced in the past two years; however, we are seeing elevated rates and hospitalizations coming after Thanksgiving holiday."

Lynfield also noted that this year's flu season has come earlier and is more severe than in the past couple of years.

"After two very mild influenza seasons in 2020 and 2021 we are seeing a heavy early season surge in influenza," she said. "There have been more than 2,100 hospitalizations for influenza reported to MDH, about twice the number of hospitalizations seen for the last two winters. We've also seen almost 900 outbreaks of influenza-like illness in schools so far this year. Additionally, we've had close to 40 outbreaks of influenza-like illness in nursing homes, and the frail elderly have a very high risk of severe illness due to influenza."

Lynfield reported that 41 Minnesotans have died from influenza this season, and that the overall situation is more challenging because of shortages of influenza antiviral medications that are particularly useful for those with underlying medical conditions, the elderly, very young children, and pregnant women.

St. Louis County has been seeing the same kinds of trends, according

to county Public Health Program Coordinator Diane Seiloff Yourczek.

"We definitely are still seeing COVID here in the county," she told the *Timberjay*. "As far as other respiratory illnesses, you know, it's flu season, we're in full swing. And actually, we're seeing more activity than we normally would see at this time of flu season."

RSV infections are of particular concern for youngsters, Lynfield said.

"This fall we have experienced an early and severe RSV season, leading to much higher hospitalizations and emergency room visits," she said. "Since September we've had nearly 1,500 hospitalizations for RSV, including more than 900 in children under the age of one. This has led to challenges in health care, particularly in pediatric care."

Yourczek explained how RSV presents a threat not only to young infants but to elders as well.

"In young infants and older adults, RSV can lead to inflammation of the small airways of the lung and pneumonia. That's what we get really concerned about," she said.

Healthcare hit

Malcolm addressed the combined effects of the three diseases on the health care system.

"Those three things together have driven up the need for urgent care and hospital services in particular, although it is also impacting other parts of the healthcare system like primary care, home care, group homes and the like. What this means is long waits for care and very long hours for our healthcare workers."

Winter surges of COVID the past two years have flooded hospital inpatient and ICU units creating bed shortages, but with the new bivalent boosters and the less severe strains of the Omicron variant circulating, health officials were confident COVID would be less of an issue for capacity this year.

That's been the case so far, but influenza and RSV have picked up the slack. Here in the Arrowhead region, non-ICU and ICU beds in use last week nearly matched the numbers around the peak of last January's huge Omicron COVID wave, although COVID accounts for only a small fraction of current hospitalizations.

Vaccinations

The current bivalent COVID vaccine, tailored to be more effective against the BA.4 and BA.5 Omicron variants that gripped the nation in late summer, has been touted by health officials as a way to increase individual immunity and decrease risks of infection, hospitalization, and deaths. But beyond an initial jump in vaccinations immediately after the Pfizer and Moderna boosters were approved in August, uptake of the boosters has failed to take off.

"As of last week, less than 20 percent of Minnesotans were up to date with their COVID-19 vaccines," Lynfield said.

Two weeks ago, the Centers for Disease Control authorized the use of the bivalent vaccines for children six months through four years old, but demand for those, too, is expected to be minimal. In the six months since vaccinations were authorized for this youngest group, only 17.2 percent of Minnesota children in that age range have received a first dose of the vaccine. There has been no significant change since summer in the percentage of parents who have said they would not get their children

immunized for COVID, or for those who said that they wanted to "wait and see" before making a decision.

Health officials have cited a number of reasons for the apparent lack of enthusiasm for the bivalent vaccine, chief among them the general sense of COVID fatigue and the desire to put the pandemic in the past.

Another factor has been the question about the potential effectiveness of the bivalent vaccine as the specific virus variants it was designed to combat. BA.5 is causing only ten percent of the current caseload, as opposed to 83 percent of all cases just three months ago. BA.4 is not believed to be contributing to COVID cases anymore.

However, data on breakthrough cases continues to show that those who have been fully vaccinated for COVID have lower rates of severe illness, hospitalization, and deaths than those who are unvaccinated or only partially vaccinated.

Lynfield said flu shots are also lagging behind normal trends.

"Our vaccination rates are about ten percentage points lower than they typically are for influenza in various age groups," she said. "I would not at all be surprised if we have a deep surge at some point over the winter, so please get your vaccine."

Malcolm and Lynfield both emphasized that getting the COVID bivalent booster and the flu shot are still the best preventative action people can take, and that both can be administered at the same time, rather than having to schedule separate appointments for them.

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TRADITIONS

Ice candles bring community together in Embarrass

by JODI SUMMIT
Tower-Soudan Editor

EMBARRASS- It took a little while to explain the tradition of ice candles to my 87-year-old mother-in-law, who recently moved to the area. But as soon as we pulled up the narrow lane to the Embarrass Cemetery on Saturday and slowly drove up the ice candle-lit drive, she was quickly enchanted.

And then when we stopped by the town hall for a quick coffee and cookie stop, she settled in with a table full of newly minted friends and visited for over an hour.

Community members stopped by the hall for a light meal, a visit with Santa, and lots of delicious homemade holiday cookies. Santa had treats for the children, and there were holiday crafts to make and bring home.

Adults sat and visited with neighbors and family, talked about plans for the upcoming Christmas holiday, got caught up on everyone's children and grandchildren, and of course, talked about the winter weather.

The cemetery this year was picture perfect. The recent heavy snow flocked the conifers lining the drive, and ice candles were placed on top of the unseasonably high snowbanks on both sides of the lane. The road into the cemetery, as well as the paths that wind around and through, were all lit with ice candles, as well as hundreds of candles lighting the gravestones of family members of area residents.

The tradition of ice candles comes from Finland, it's been said. Embarrass has been hosting this annual celebration for decades. According to one local resident, it's been since the time the late Margaret Kinnunen was the town clerk, so possibly the late 1980s or early 1990s.

Jack LaMar was in charge of ice candle creation again this year.

"I did them 100 at a time," he said, using heavy-duty 2-1/2-gallon plastic buckets, which are filled with water from a



Four Corners 4-H members (below) traipsed through the Embarrass Cemetery on Saturday afternoon helping to place and light the 400 ice candles. Pictured: Back row (from left) Delia Dahl, Cephas Hainey, Corbet Hainey. Front: Lucia Dahl, Sephira Hainey, Khepra Hainey, Molly Brophy, and Miranda Mackai. photo by Christine Mackai
Top right: Eva Scherer gets her first meeting with Santa Claus.
Right: Community members check out the table full of holiday treats.
Bottom right: Chevelle Goodwin has a talk with Santa. photos by J. Summit



hose connected to a sink in his garage. After leaving them outdoors overnight, he then brought them into the garage, with a heated floor, which made it easier to pop them out of the buckets. He then breaks a hole in the top and pours out the water that hasn't frozen yet, leaving a spot to place the candles. The ice candles are then stored outdoors until they are all ready to go to the cemetery.

The trick to getting crystal clear ice candles, he found, was using hot, filtered, softened water, something he luckily had access to out in his garage. Using regular water straight from the tap produced ice that was a bit discolored and not nearly as clear as he wanted.

When he was all

done, over the course of a week, he had 400 perfect ice candles, ready to be placed on Dec. 17 at the cemetery.

But while LaMar was one step in the process, many others also lent a hand. Embarrass Town Clerk Jennie Boese took the orders for the ice candles. Family members paid a small fee for each candle, money which helps support cemetery maintenance.

"Jennie puts in a ton of work," said LaMar. She tracks all the donations, and then she places small flags at each gravestone that will need an ice candle, or two or three or more, placed in front of them, a job that is done before the snow gets too deep.

Nature threw a bit of a surprise, dumping a foot-and-a-half of fresh snow in the area only days before the ice candles were to be placed. Many of the headstones were totally covered with snow.

The local 4-H Club has volunteered to help with placing and lighting



of them were buried under the snow. While the road around the cemetery was plowed, there were no paths opened between the gravestones. And when you are still in elementary school, and your legs aren't that long, it was a long afternoon and a lot of hard work.

The youngsters, along with other township volunteers, worked for over three hours in the afternoon, and managed to place and light all of the 400 candles. By the time the sun had dipped below the tree line, the cemetery was sparkling, creating another picture-perfect Christmas-time memory for all those who took the time to drive through.

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NORDIC SKIING

Ely skiers post solid times in opener

by MARSHALL HELMBERGER
Managing Editor

C O L E R A I N E — Timberwolves skiers lodged a solid performance here in their opening meet of the young season. Skiing at Mt. Itasca against an eight-team field, the Ely girls squad took second to powerhouse Duluth East, while

Girls place second while boys take third in eight-team field

the boys finished in third place behind Duluth East and Mesabi East.

Longtime Ely standout Zoe Devine, now skiing in her senior year, took second among 47 racers, finishing the 5.2 kilometer course in a time of 16:45.4. Ely

junior Claire Blanch finished in 11th place with a time of 18:16.3. Fellow junior Ava Skustad took 16th with a time of 19:00.2.

For the boys, sophomore Dylan Durkin led the field for Ely, finishing in ninth place with a time of 16:24.4. Fellow

sophomores Silas Solum and Eli Olson finished in twelfth and sixteenth respectively, with times of 16:48.8 and 17:30.9.

The Wolves now head into the holiday break, although they have scheduled a team mini camp at Giants Ridge from Dec. 28-30.

They'll be back in competition on Tuesday, Jan. 3 at the Cloquet Invite, with a 4 p.m. start time.



BOYS BASKETBALL

Grizzlies win one, lose one

by DAVID COLBURN
Cook-Orr Editor

FIELD TWP- After a hard fought but losing effort against Northland last Friday, the North Woods boys basketball team got back on the winning track in a big way Monday with a merciless home beatdown of Wrenshall, 114-59.

The outcome against the over-matched Wrens was never in doubt, as the Grizzlies led 36-12 just nine minutes into the contest and 74-28 at the half. Steal and score was the overall theme as North Woods defenders had little problem separating the Wrens from the basketball and converting those turnovers into fast break buckets. The Grizzlies' 6'2" Jonah Burnett had numerous opportunities to showcase his leaping ability, collecting the first of several dunks on the third possession of the game, delighting the somewhat sparse home crowd.

The rout gave Head Coach Andrew Jugovich ample opportunity to work his bench players into the mix for extended periods of play, and the Grizzlies barely skipped a beat. One reserve who made the most of his opportunity was soph-

Top Wrenshall in 114-59 beatdown at North Woods

Top: North Woods sophomore Louie Panichi tries to block out a Wrenshall player during Monday's home matchup.

Right: Six-foot two-inch North Woods junior Jonah Burnett stuffs a dunk on Monday. Burnett dominated the Grizzlies' offense, pouring in 41 points on the night.

photos by D. Colburn

omore forward Talen Jarshaw.

"We gave him a shot and he really did great," Jugovich said. "He's a quick defender with strong hands, and he's got a nose for the basket. We've just got to fine tune a few things with him, but seeing him and the improvements he's made, I like him a lot."

Junior Luke Will has been a consistent starter for the Grizzlies who has been a strong contributor on the defensive side of the ball, but against Wrenshall he had the chance to step up his game on offense.

"He's a very lengthy kid,"

See NW BOYS...pg. 2B



Wolves crush NER, Mesabi East

by MARSHALL HELMBERGER
Managing Editor

AURORA— A slow start didn't keep the Timberwolves from ultimately running roughshod over Mesabi East here on Monday night to improve to 4-1 on the season. Ely helped their cause with a 40-point second half, which helped them pad their 35-19 lead at the half.

"We played a much better second half defensively after giving up too many easy points

in the first half with our man-to-man defense," said Ely Head Coach Tom McDonald.

Ely's senior guard Joey Bianco led the Wolves offensively, pouring in a game-high 23 points and clocking seven steals and eight assists. Fellow senior Jason Kerntz was right behind with 22 points and seven rebounds, while senior Erron Anderson added 13 boards.

Playing Thursday at home, the Wolves had a romp over the newly-reconstituted

boys basketball squad from Northeast Range, winning 97-15. "We jumped out to a big lead early," said McDonald in the understatement of the week. Ely led 67-8 at the half but their offensive production slowed in the second half as McDonald let several younger players in on the action.

"All of our younger guys played quite a bit and we had 10 players score," said McDonald. "We shot the ball well throughout the game and I thought both our man and zone

defenses were good."

Bianco led the way with 29 points and seven assists, while sophomore Caid Chittum added a career-high 25 points along with seven steals. Freshman Jack Davies added ten points.

Ely was set to host Cook County on Thursday. They'll be back in action during the Ely Holiday Tournament, set for Dec. 27-29.

GIRLS BASKETBALL

Grizzlies romp at Wrenshall

by DAVID COLBURN
Cook-Orr Editor

WRENSHALL- The North Woods girls' basketball team made the most of a long road trip to Wrenshall on Monday, thumping the home Wrens by a score of 73-28.

This game gave Head Coach Liz Cheney her best glimpse yet in game conditions as to where this year's squad could go, with the Grizzlies controlling the tempo, implementing a new press, and getting big offensive contributions from leaders Helen Koch and Hannah Kinsey.

While Kinsey has been a go-to scorer, Koch has been more productive defensively and with assists. Based on their performances last year, Cheney has been looking for the pair to deliver a one-two scoring punch for the team, and they delivered on Monday. Kinsey knocked down 22 points and Koch poured in 19.

"This is the first game they have been leading together, Helen from the outside and Hannah from the inside," Cheney said. "This was Helen's best game offensively so far. It was great to see her making the threes and finding that offensive success. I'm hoping this was the boost Helen needed to get her on track to be putting up double digits for us."

Throwing in the new press generated the steals and fast breaks that propelled North Woods to 47 first-half points, giving Cheney the comfortable cushion to focus on the Grizzlies' set offense and lineup combinations in the second half.

"It was good to see some new possibilities, some players stepping up and taking advantage of their time on the court," Cheney said. "This will only

See NW GIRLS...pg. 2B

Ely edges Bluestreaks

by CATIE CLARK
Ely Editor

ELY- The Timberwolves girls basketball team squeaked out a tough win in a high-intensity game on home hardwood Monday, edging the Bluestreaks 61-57.

"It was a fun playoff-type game," remarked Head Coach Max Gantt. "It was fun to come out on top."

Grace LaTourell led the Wolves offensively, pouring in 16 points. Sarah Visser notched a double-double with 12 points and an impressive 18 rebounds. Madeline Perry also scored 12 points, followed by Hannah Penke with 11.

The girls scheduled match-up with Cook County on Thursday, was cancelled due to weather. They'll host the Hoops for Hope tournament on Dec. 27 and 28 during the holiday break. They'll be back in regular action on Tuesday, Jan. 3, when they host Littlefork-Big Falls.

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

DNR: New wolf plan strengthens conservation

by MARSHALL HELMBERGER
Managing Editor

REGIONAL — The Department of Natural Resources has released an update to its wolf management plan that continues the state's commitment to wolf conservation. The new plan, which incorporates the diverse views of Minnesotans, will guide the state's approach to wolf management for the next 10 years.

"We're proud we brought people together to update Minnesota's wolf plan," said DNR Commissioner Sarah Strommen. "We had great engagement from tribes, state and federal agencies, academia, and groups and individuals interested in wolves."

The updated plan is available on the DNR's wolf plan page (mndnr.gov/WolfPlan). This is the first update to Minnesota's wolf plan since 2001.

The plan includes summary information about Minnesota's wolf population and the history of wolves in the state. It details the diverse and changing public attitudes about wolves, the legal status of wolves, tribal perspectives on wolves, and ways to support a healthy and resilient wolf population while minimizing conflicts between humans and wolves. The plan also includes a framework for how the state will approach decisions about wolf hunting or trapping if the wolf is delisted federally.

"The DNR is continuing Minnesota's longstanding commitment to wolf conservation and ensuring that our wolf population remains healthy and stable," said Kelly Straka, DNR wildlife section manager.

Six goals in the plan are designed to support Minnesota's vision for wolves. Those goals include:

- Maintaining a well-connected and resilient wolf population.
- Collaborating with diverse partners to collectively support wolf plan implementation.
- Minimizing and addressing human-wolf conflicts.
- Informing and engaging the public about wolves in

Minnesota.

➤ Conducting research to inform wolf management.

➤ Administering the wolf program to fulfill agency responsibilities and the needs of the public and partners.

"The plan reflects the breadth of input received through the process to update the plan," said Dan Stark, DNR large carnivore specialist. "Information in the plan describes current knowledge of the wolf population, Minnesotans' attitudes toward wolves, and guides the approach to the future conservation and management of wolves in Minnesota."

To guide the wolf plan update, the DNR conducted

a public opinion survey, consulted with technical experts and tribal staff, and convened a 20-member wolf advisory committee. Advisory committee members represented diverse perspectives including hunting and trapping, wolf advocacy and animal rights, livestock and agriculture, and other interests related to wolf conservation and management. The DNR's public engagement efforts for the plan update included input meetings, forums, online questionnaires and public review of a draft plan.

More information about the plan update and a full version of the plan is available on the DNR's wolf plan page (mndnr.gov/WolfPlan).

NW BOYS..Continued from page 1B

Jugovich said, "and with him taking one dribble he can get to the rim, one dribble and he's there. I was glad to see him actually taking that because when we've played other teams, he hasn't realized he can do that half the time."

It's often the case that in the midst of a rout a team will ease off the gas a bit, but Jugovich was pleased to see his squad mostly keep up the pressure throughout the contest.

"The boys stayed hungry, the entire game their intensity was up," he said. "Our second-half defense was a little lackluster, but that's because we got comfy. I want them to keep the mentality that it's 0-0 whether we're up by 40 or down by 40. I want them to keep going as hard as they can."

Burnett scored from everywhere on the floor

in racking up a game-high 41 points, leading an onslaught in which nine Grizzlies tallied scores. Jared Chiabotti knocked down 20 points, Will notched 12, and Brenden Chiabotti dropped in 10.

Northland

The contest against Northland had all the air of a post-season playoff tilt, as the Grizzlies faced off against an equally matched foe in a tight first-half battle with multiple lead changes. By halftime, North Woods had carved out a 44-36 advantage, and the Grizzlies extended that lead to as many as 13 points early in the second half. But the Eagles refused to go away, trimming the deficit to 69-62 with over nine minutes still remaining.

And then, in a feat rarely seen at any level, suddenly a Northland team

that had fired mostly blanks from three-point range couldn't miss from behind the arc. On six consecutive possessions the Eagles connected on trifectas, and after skipping a trip they added a seventh, a 21-point deluge the Grizzlies were powerless to stop or match. With five minutes remaining, the North Woods lead had turned into an 85-76 Grizzlies hole.

Northland kept the Grizzlies at bay the rest of the game, tacking on four points in the last 20 seconds of the game to win 93-83.

"At halftime with that eight-point lead, I said (Northland) can change that in three possessions," Jugovich said. "It took them awhile to get hot, but they were catching it in rhythm, and we were giving them two to three feet of space. The boys were tired and they were doing what they

Right: Grizzlies junior Luke Will reaches high for a block on Monday.

photo by D. Colburn

could, but after going back and forth and back and forth, Northland had more will to win in my eyes."

Jugovich knew going in that Northland had the potential to cause problems.

"We are a much more physical team inside and can get to the rim better, but they can shoot from anywhere, 25 to 30 feet they will put it up, and they can make seven in a row as we saw," he said.

Jared Chiabotti scored 31 points in the contest, almost double teammate Louie Panichi's 16. Brenden Chiabotti and Burnett were the other two Grizzlies in double figures with 13 points each.



NW GIRLS..Continued from page 1B

make us a stronger team." Coming off two consecutive losses and a snow

cancellation, this result came at the right time.


"Wins like this boost

confidence, which is really what they need," Cheney said. "It was a great way

to end the first half of the season as we go into winter break and prepare

for the holiday tournament in Aitkin. When we start back in January, we hope

to be ready to play a more consistent and competitive game."



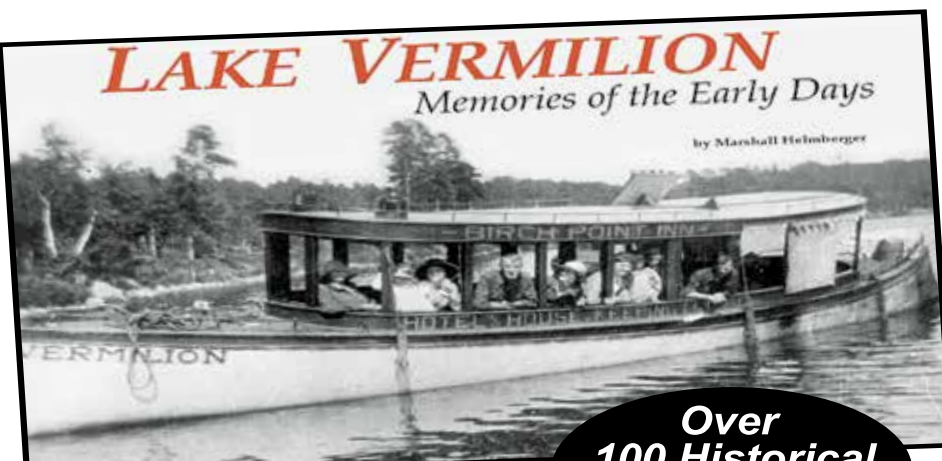
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Obituaries and Death Notices



Ronald R. Hujanen

Ronald R. Hujanen, 80, of Cook, passed away on Tuesday, Dec. 13, 2022. A celebration of life will be held at 10 a.m. on Friday, Dec. 30 at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Tower. Honorary pallbearers are Phillip Birk, Jeromy Fonkert, Ray Niskanen, Jason Niskanen and Kurt Hujanen. Arrangements are by Kerntz Funeral Home of Ely.

Ron was born on Nov. 25, 1942, in Soudan. He was married to Delores Niskanen in Menominee, Mich., on Aug. 14, 1965. Ron taught grade school there for two years, then moved to Ely where he taught until he retired. They moved to Lake Vermilion in 1992 and to Cook in 2017.

Ron enjoyed life, and together with his family enjoyed all seasons of activities in God's great outdoors. Ron also enjoyed kicking tires. The family wishes to thank the Cook Care Center for the wonderful care and compassion given to Ron. Thanks be to God.

Ron is survived by his wife, Delores; son, Les (Brenda Edmundson); sister, Kathie (Brian) Birk; grandson, Austin (Caley) Hujanen and a great-grandchild due in the spring; granddaughters, Alyssa Hujanen

(Dustin Olson), Brielle Hujanen (Kaden Ratai) and Mia Mattifield (Jack Tanner); sisters-in-law, Edith (Jim) Vetort, Viola Youngquist, Lydia Coble, Judy Franklin and Ellen Nowack; brothers-in-law, Norman Niskanen, Raymond (Joy) Niskanen and William (Sherry) Niskanen; as well as many cousins, nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his son, Ronald Jr.; parents, Helen and Reino Hujanen; in-laws, Helen and Wilho Niskanen; brothers-in-law, Donald, Russell and John; and sister-in-law, Elaine.



Esther E. McKenzie

It is with profound sadness that we announce the passing of our beloved mother, Esther Ellen "Bubs/Bubba" McKenzie at the age of 92 on Friday, Dec. 9, 2022. The family is especially grateful to Alesha Johnson for the loving and professional care she gave to our Mom in her final years. Her positive attitude made everything easier.

A Mass of Christian Burial was held on Friday, Dec. 16 at Queen of Peace Catholic Church in Hoyt Lakes with Fr. Kristoffer

McKusky celebrating. Interment was in Maple Hill Cemetery in Hibbing. Arrangements were by Ziemer-Moeglein-Shatava Funeral Home in Aurora.

Born into the close-knit Griffiths family from Hibbing and Little Swan, she was a woman full of class and sass from the very beginning. Just as her mother raised her to do, Bubs pursued education for much of her life. She graduated from Hibbing High School in 1948 and the College of St. Scholastica in 1953. She later returned to St. Scholastica and earned a graduate certificate in Gerontology. She retired from the Minnesota Senior Federation in 2008. For many years, she was involved in ministry at Queen of Peace Catholic Church in Hoyt Lakes. Our mother dedicated her life to helping others.

Bubs loved life and a good hardware store. She thought of herself as an amateur electrician, although the occasional spark and smoke would indicate otherwise. Even into her 90s, she had an adventurous spirit and "Fear Of Missing Out", never wanting to miss a party or gathering. She also never met a side road she did not want to explore. She leaves behind a legacy of love, strong faith, sense of humor, and spunk. Family was everything to her and she was everything to us. She loved the Wolf Lake cabin, sitting on the dock or sitting by the fire, enjoying her morning coffee, and a gin and tonic or glass of wine in the evening.

She is survived by her children, Mary (Robert) Edwards, James (Karla)

Patrick, Shawn (Sandra), Timothy, Bridget (David) Goette, Bryan (Molly), Megan (Grant) Stevenson and Cathlin (Ken) Larsen; grandchildren, Ashley, Jessica (Nick), Grant, Matthew, Alex, Ian, Anders, Erin, Eleanore and Grace; great-grandchildren, Kira and Miriam; sister-in-law, Dorothy Griffiths; and many nieces and nephews.

She was preceded in death by her first husband, Ed Maloney, killed tragically in 1951; husband, James McKenzie in 2017; granddaughter, Emma; and nine siblings, Roy, Mary Margaret, Patricia, John, Ed, Eleanore, Julia, Bryan and (Deacon) Jim.

Dorothy J. Harri

Dorothy Jane Skeryanc Harri, 89, of Ely, passed away at Boundary Waters Care Center on Saturday, Dec. 17, 2022. Family arrangements have been entrusted to Kerntz Funeral Home of Ely.

She is survived by her nephew, Al Kovall; nieces, Deb (Priatelj) Edwards and Jeanne (Kovall) Hanninen, both of Ely; and many more nieces, nephews, great-nieces and great-nephews in Ely, Babbitt, Alaska, Minnesota and California.

Donna M. Meacham

Donna Mable Rogers Meacham, 81, of Aurora, died on Monday, Dec. 12, 2022. Funeral services were held on Thursday, Dec. 22 at St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Palo with Pastors Steve Banks and Jeanne Madsen officiating. Interment was in the Rauha Cemetery in Palo. Arrangements were by Ziemer-Moeglein-Shatava Funeral Home in Au-

rorra.

She is survived by her children, Larry (Maxine) Meacham of East Bethel, Gordon (Kris) Meacham of Embarrass and Lynn (Rick) Jones of Aurora; grandchildren, Kristen Mullens, Julie (Tyler) Koski, Joshua (Jessica) Jones, Alyssa (Chris) Sumner, Amber (Nate) Holmstrom, Renee (Matt) Lane, Melissa (Jon) Semmelroth and Marcell (McKayla) Meacham; nine great-grandchildren and three on-the-way; and numerous nieces and nephews.

Phillip A. Haburn

Phillip Arnold Haburn, 76, of Babbitt, passed away on Wednesday, Dec. 14, 2022, at his home. A memorial service will be held at 3 p.m. on Saturday, May 20, 2023, at New-Life Church in Alexandria, followed by a burial service at Lakeside Cemetery in Osakis. A celebration of life will be held in Babbitt at a later date. Arrangements are with Landmark Funeral Home in Virginia.

He is survived by his children, Carol Ann (Brierley) Haburn, Sean Phillip Haburn and Shannon Marie (Brian) Shin; grandchildren, Rachel AnnMarie Simmons, Gabby Rose Gonzalez, Isabel Rose Gonzalez, Alyx Sean Haburn, Jordan Haburn, Bryson Shin and Preston Shin; and three great-grandchildren.

Jon Malek

Jon Malek, 61, of Tower, passed away on Wednesday, Dec. 14, 2022, at his home. Funeral services will be held at 11:30 a.m. on Saturday, Dec. 31 at Kerntz Funer-

al Home in Ely with visitation at 11 a.m. Following the service there will be a gathering from 1-4 p.m. at Grand Ely Lodge. Family arrangements have been entrusted to Kerntz Funeral Home of Ely.

He is survived by his wife, Theresa Levar Malek; father, James (Faith) Malek Sr.; half-sister, Roseanne Malek; brother, James (Stacey Moen) Malek Jr. and nephew, Jacob (Leah) Malek and niece, Courtney Malek; brother, Josef (Sue) Malek and nephew, Michael Malek; brother, Karel (Jade) Malek and nephew, Chase Malek and niece, Chelsea Malek.

Ross Houle

Ross E. Houle, 67, of Ely, passed away on Friday, Dec. 16, 2022, at his home. Family arrangements have been entrusted to Kerntz Funeral Home of Ely.

He is survived by his wife, Lisa; daughter, Lindsey (Joe); son, Jeremy; brother, Glenn (Janet); sister, Janis (Judy); three grandchildren; and special friend, Rosemary Vesel.

Charlotte Gallagher

Charlotte "Dottie" Gallagher, 80, of Cook, passed away on Tuesday, Dec. 6, 2022. Services are pending with Mlaker Funeral Home of Cook.

Susan McGrath

Susan McGrath, 68, of Ely, passed away on Saturday, Dec. 10, 2022, at Boundary Waters Care Center in Ely. Family arrangements have been entrusted to Kerntz Funeral Home of Ely.

THANK YOU

The Tower-Soudan Area Singers would like to thank everyone who attended these three Monday evening Caroling Concerts.

We want to give a special thank you to Dianna Sunsdahl, who organized the Breitung Township gathering at the Breitung Community Center.

Thanks to Mary Batinich for getting things "heated up" in the Vermilion Cultural Center, and to all who brought holiday treats for coffee an'.

And finally, to Brenda Winkelaar and Linda DiCasmirro thanks for one fine pot of chili served following our final sing in the Pike River Products store recently opened by Terry and Dianna Sunsdahl.

TSAS members have more than enjoyed presenting the wonderful holiday music.

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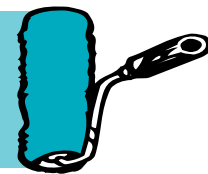
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