



Wishing all our readers a safe & happy New Year!

Please note: The Timberjay office will be closed through Jan. 7. There will be no paper published on Jan. 5

The TIMBERJAY



Serving the communities of northern St. Louis County since 1989

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WHERE'S WINTER?

Warmest December on record?

Almost certainly in northern Minnesota; but will the state top the winter of 1877-78?

by MARSHALL HELMBERGER
Managing Editor

REGIONAL — Minnesotans may be living through meteorological history this month as it appears many parts of the state are on track to beat the all-time record for the mildest December ever here in the North Star state.

It was nearly 150 years ago, in 1877-78, the last time that Minnesotans experienced

a winter anywhere close to this mild. It's been dubbed "The Year Without A Winter" and it was so out of the norm that most of the state's weather observers assumed it was a record that would never fall.

But state climatologist Pete Boulay says this may be the year. "That really looks like where we're headed," he said. "I never thought I'd live to see it."

The only reliable weather station in northeastern

Minnesota back in 1877 was at the Duluth harbor, where temperature records were typically much milder than at Duluth's current weather station at the airport, located well away from the shore of Lake Superior.

Even so, this month's temperatures at the airport could potentially prove warmer than those recorded at the harbor back in 1877. "That would be truly amazing if that happens," said Boulay.

Right: Weeks of above average temperatures have the area poised to set a new record for the mildest December ever. The average high in Tower on Dec. 29 is 18.5 degrees F. The average low is minus 4.6 degrees.

As of Dec. 21, with ten days yet to go in the month, Duluth's airport has recorded an average December temperature

See... WEATHER pg. 9



SAVING HISTORY IN TOWER

Persistence pays off

Over \$700,000 in new grant funding should allow for completion of Old Fire Hall restoration

by JODI SUMMIT
Tower-Soudan Editor

TOWER- After years of sustained effort, it appears the Tower-Soudan Historical Society has finally raised the funding needed to complete its longstanding plans to remake the city's historic Old Fire Hall, the oldest municipal building north of Duluth.

Two new state grants—including \$290,000 from the Department of Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation and \$398,250 from the Minnesota Historical Society—along with over \$50,000 raised locally for the project will allow the group to complete the restoration of the facility. "The award from IRRR is awesome," said TSHS grant writer Nancy Larson. "It's the match we needed to qualify for the MNHS award. It just all came together."

"The IRRR award moves us two years ahead of schedule," she said. "It likely would

"The award from IRRR is awesome. It's the match we needed to qualify for the MNHS award.

Nancy Larson
grantwriter

have taken us at least two more years to raise the funds needed."

"The Minnesota Historical Society saw a lot of community support coming from a small town in rural Minnesota," said Larson, which was key to getting the full amount requested all at once.

Larson said they are planning to solicit requests for proposals for the work in January, and then start construction as soon as possible after that.

Major parts of the project

See... FIRE HALL pg. 9

Top: The front of the Old Fire Hall after last summer's exterior brick repair and tuckpointing.

Above: The plaque commemorating the building's inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places.

Below: The city of Tower's first fire engine, known as "the Tippet," will be among the historic items to be displayed in the Old Fire Hall once renovations are completed.

photos by Timberjay staff



POLITICS

I-Falls mayor to challenge Skraba in '24

by MARSHALL HELMBERGER
Managing Editor

INTERNATIONAL FALLS — International Falls Mayor Harley M. Droba announced Wednesday that he will be challenging incumbent state Rep. Roger Skraba for the House District 3A seat in 2024.

"I believe our citizens and the citizens of the district deserve a representative who is more effective in addressing the issues that genuinely affect our communities,"



Harley Droba

Droba said in a press release. "It's time for change, and I am stepping forward to be that change."

Droba acknowledged that Skraba has only been the District 3A representative for one legislative session, but he has apparently seen enough

See...CHALLENGE pg. 10

GOLF

Wisocki placed on leave over theft charges

by BRIAN K. ANDERSON
Contributing Writer

TOWER— The Wilderness at Fortune Bay Manager Joseph Wisocki IV has been placed on unpaid administrative leave after being charged with five counts of felony theft by swindle in Minnesota district court. The charges stem from his tenure as director of golf at the Willmar Community Golf Club.

Wisocki, who was hired to oversee The Wilderness at Fortune Bay this past spring, worked at the Willmar Community Golf Club from February

See...WISOCKI pg. 9



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Community notices

Pancake breakfast sponsored by the Embarrass Region Fair Association, Saturday, Jan. 6, 8 - 11 a.m.

EMBARRASS - Support the Embarrass Region Fair by joining us for all-you-can-eat pancakes, choice of ham or sausage links, fruit cup, juice, and a bottomless cup of coffee the first Saturday of each month through May at the Timber Hall. The cost is adults \$7, kids (6-10 years) \$4, and kids 5 and under eat free.

LCP to open scholarship applications to high school seniors Jan. 1

COHASSET - Graduating 2024 high school seniors whose parents or guardians are members of Lake Country Power are invited to apply for the Les Beach Scholarship. The rural electric co-op expects to award college scholarships valued at \$4,000 each to more than 35 high school students next spring.

Scholarship recipients can qualify for up to \$4,000 over four years to help pay for technical school, community college or university. Scholarships are renewable for up to eight semesters, and students must maintain a grade point average of 2.5 or higher. Award winners must also keep full-time enrollment status at a technical school, community college or university.

Lake Country Power will offer one scholarship for every five successful applications submitted per school to offer more opportunities for students in the co-op's local communities.

The online application process opens January 1, and high school seniors whose parents or legal guardians are LCP members have until 11:59 p.m., Jan. 31, to apply. The electronic application is available at www.lakecountrypower.coop/MyCooperative/Community/Scholarships.

The Les Beach Memorial Scholarship is made possible through unclaimed capital credits. The scholarship honors a former co-op employee and recognizes student commitment and contribution to local communities.

Lake Country Power also offers \$1,000 scholarships to five area community college foundations and three Minnesota line worker schools to support students in trade schools and community/technical college programs. Applications for these scholarships are available directly through the colleges.

SUPERBOWL SUNDAY
Arrowhead Transit looking for actors for their new Superbowl commercial

REGIONAL- Over the past year, Arrowhead Transit has been working on improving their technology and internal operations to enhance transportation services in the region. These efforts mean that Arrowhead Transit is diving into Marketing/PR in a way they haven't before. They are about to launch a project that aligns with our vision and mission, and the timing is perfect.

What's the excitement all about? They are creating a Super Bowl commercial set to air during the 2024 game in Las Vegas. The script is humorous in nature, thanks to our creative team. The catch? It'll

be a one-time-only broadcast during the Super Bowl.

Now, Arrowhead Transit is reaching out to you, the community they serve. On Jan. 13, from 12 noon to 4 p.m., in the Quad Cities area, they will be shooting the commercial. They need actors - experienced performers and newcomers. Their goal is to represent the diverse talent in our community, giving both seasoned and (very) new actors a chance.

Whether you've been on stage before or not, think about participating. It's about creating inclusive content of high quality. Reach out by calling 218-735-6815 or email-

ing dominick.olivanti@aeoa.org. Visit arrowheadtransit.com for more details and an interest form. The script details are under wraps, ensuring the final commercial will be a surprise for everyone.

The anticipation of seeing the finished commercial for the first time during the Super Bowl night adds an extra layer of excitement. Join us in making this project a success.

More info can be found here: <https://arrowheadtransit.com/arrowhead-transit-super-bowl-commercial-2024/>

SKATING FOR ALL
Castellano Arena gains some new helpers



These new skating buddies can help young and old skaters, and are shaped like little Zambonis.

"These are a great addition to what we are able to offer new skaters," stated Duane Lossing, BBL President. "The confidence, the fun, and the smiles, that's what it's all about. Skating is a lifelong sport that people of all ages can enjoy, and we are so blessed to have this great arena for everyone to enjoy. It's an asset to our community." Lossing teaches the Fundamentals of Hockey in the Castellano Arena for beginners thinking about hockey and what it's all about, without the upfront costs and schedules. "It lets the kids see if they like the game and want to progress further without any pressure or game schedules," Lossing said.

"I love the fact that these Skate Buddies are now available. I haven't seen anything like this in the arenas we've been to, and they are multiuse and multi age appropriate," said Andrea Zupancich, BBL Board Member. "I'm excited we are able to enhance what we can offer."

These are free to use for anyone in the Castellano Arena and are also available to be used for private events in the arena.

In addition to the Hockey Fundamentals Group which meets Monday and Wednesday from 6 p.m. - 7 p.m., the Castellano Arena has open skating on Monday, Wednesday, Friday from 10 - 11 a.m. and Saturdays from 6 - 8 p.m. and open hockey Sunday afternoons from 4 p.m. - 6 p.m. Men's hockey night is every Wednesday from 7:30 - 9 p.m. For those new figure skaters or those thinking about figure skating, the Figure Skating Club is Monday - Friday from 3 - 5:45 p.m.

Some fees do apply for these groups for usage and/or joining. Contact the Babbitt Rec Director or City Hall Office to book a birthday party, private skating party, or a private scrimmage game. More information is online at www.babbitt-mn.com/pars-a-rec-dept.

BABBITT - The Babbitt Blue Line (BBL) has worked on several fundraisers over the years from feeding hungry fisherman at the Walleye Whamma with fantastic fish tacos, offering up Chicago-style beef sandwiches at the Peter Mitchell Days softball tournaments, selling "ICE IS NICE" signs and t-shirts to accepting donations of any kind. All the hard work has paid off and the BBL is proud to donate 12 skate buddies to the Castellano Arena.

The Babbitt Arena opened in 1968 for the Babbitt Youth Hockey and Figure Skating Club in northern Minnesota's Iron Range community. The arena featured a standard 200x85 ice sheet with seating for 1000 spectators on vintage wooden bleachers and was the first arena to have plexiglass which was a big deal then and continues to be now.

The arena was renamed in October 2014 after Ron Castellano, who was a 1991 inductee to the Minnesota Hockey Coaches Association Hall of Fame and longtime Babbitt teacher and resident. Ron helped the town initially secure the Babbitt

Arena and with the financial support of Reserve Mining Co, the arena came to fruition and was built. Castellano went on to coach the Babbitt Hockey team for 32 years. Castellano coached U.S. Olympic hockey player Buzz Schneider, and to this day the two remain close friends. Schneider was a member of the 1974 National Championship Gophers squad under head coach Herb Brooks. He went on to play (and win) on the 1980 Olympic Hockey Team. The renaming of the Arena in 2014 was to honor Coach Castellano and his dedication to the sport, the town, and the arena.

These skate helpers are to help everyone of any age and ability to skate. They can be stacked and locked in place on top of each other for adults, are open enough for anyone with a disability to be able to enjoy the ice and move around freely, and help those budding little skaters feel the confidence to start their first steps on skates and ice by helping them get their balance while feeling safe enough to move forward and skate.

Enjoy The Beauty of The Earth!
from VERMILION LAND OFFICE-TOWER

Winning Artist • Emmett Flood
Grade 3

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from Fortune Bay Resort Casino

Winning Artist • Vivian Villebrun
Grade 2

Joy & Peace To You In 2024!
from Broten Construction

Winning Artist • Boone Broten
Grade 2

Artist • Hux Broten
Kindergarten

Enjoy Nature This Holiday Season!
from Trancheff's Cabins

Winning Artist • Ella Trancheff
Grade 1

Wishes For a Very Merry Christmas!
from Ubetcha Antiques & Uffda Gifts

Artist • Bessie Chavez
Grade 3

Ely Community Pharmacy

Ely Community Pharmacy will be closed:

- * Monday, December 25, 2023
- * Monday, January 1, 2024

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Encouraging helium exploration results near Babbitt

by CATIE CLARK
Ely Editor

STONY RIVER TWP- A 2011 discovery southeast of Babbitt may lead to production of one of the highest-demand natural commodities in the world: helium. While helium is the second-most abundant element in the universe, most of it is trapped inside stars. Helium deposits here on Earth are much rarer.

The introduction of scientific equipment using helium has grown dramatically over the last half century, driving an increasing demand for the gas. The unexpected helium discovery in Lake County has put the region's Duluth Complex rocks on the maps as a target for exploration for this strategic commodity.

The story of how the helium was found is now well known throughout the Arrowhead region. A drilling crew collecting cores for copper and nickel exploration hit an unexpected gas pocket that shut down the drill rig for five days. After the hole was capped, the exploration team had the gas analyzed. The results show it was mostly carbon dioxide, with significant fractions of nitrogen, methane, and a helium content of 10.5 percent.

The concentration of helium was astonishing to geologists because most commercial helium is derived from natural

gas where typical concentrations of the gas average between 1 to 0.5 percent. The find was also unusual because of the age of the rock hosting the helium reservoir. The gas pocket was in the Precambrian Duluth Complex, some of the oldest rocks on earth.

Seismic results

Pulsar Helium, a Canadian company traded on the Toronto TSXV exchange, owns the private mineral leases that cover the deposit. The firm began a sophisticated passive seismic tomography survey of the resource in August and announced the results on Dec. 5. The survey found reduced shear wave velocities, which is a phenomenon indicating rocks saturated with gas.

The size of the anomaly, which corresponds with the gas pocket itself, is substantial, which has encouraged Pulsar to step up its exploration of the resource. "The results of the passive seismic survey exceed our expectations," said Pulsar's President and CEO, Thomas Abraham-James. "This suggests that we are looking at a reservoir with the potential for regional scale."

The seismic survey that Pulsar used is state-of-the-art. Their survey did not use the invasive active blasting or massive vibrating trucks used in large-scale oil and mining exploration. The equipment



utilizes passive seismic waves produced by local ground disturbances like blasting at iron mines in the Range and large trucks driving on local roads. The recorded seismic energy was then analyzed using a finite difference analysis known as tomography, which is the same technique used by medical magnetic resonance imaging, or MRI.

Pulsar will be conducting further exploratory drilling beginning in February to characterize the size and nature of the reservoir, which is hosted in a layered gabbro known as the Bald Eagle Intrusion, which is one of many such bodies in the Duluth Complex. Instead of using the usual diamond drill rig characteristic of mining exploration, Pulsar is bringing a big mud-rotary drill rig typical of those used for oil and gas exploration. The reason is simple: this type of rig is equipped to deal with high-pressure gas pockets, unlike a diamond drill rig used to core rocks. The use of a large exploration-grade mud-rotary rig may be a first for northeast Minnesota.

Helium use

Pulsar's pursuit of helium is a smart move given the current high demand for the gas. The largest use of helium in the U.S. is for medical magnetic resonance imaging, or MRI. According to the U.S. Geological Survey, MRIs utilize 30 percent of all domestic helium sold. Lifting gas for blimps, zeppelins, and other lighter-than-air aircraft takes up 17 percent. Around 14 percent goes to analytical and laboratory equipment and nine percent is used for welding. Engineering and science applications use six percent, while semiconductor manufacturing uses about five percent of the nation's supply.

The need for helium in electronics manufacturing and for cooling superconducting magnets in equipment like MRIs is a recent development of the last 30-40 years and the demand from both sectors is still growing. Before the advent of these sophisticated technologies, the primary use of helium was for lifting gas.

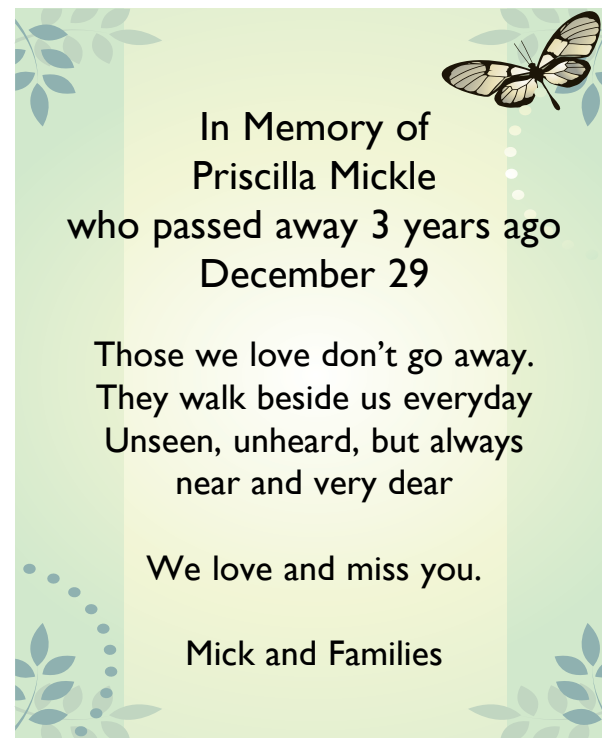
For most of the 20th century, helium was a

fiercely protected strategic commodity because of the military use of blimps and zeppelins. At the time, the U.S. dominated the global helium market and controlled the world's supply for decades. One of the indirect causes of the hydrogen-fueled explosion of Hindenburg zeppelin in 1937 was the United States' refusal to sell explosion-proof helium to Nazi Germany.

The nation's helium dominance had its roots in the helium-enriched oil and gas discoveries in the Texas and Oklahoma panhandles. The helium content of natural gas from Panhandle

area fields averaged 0.5 percent, which was the highest concentration known at the time of its discovery in 1920. The early military demand for helium made the separation of helium from natural gas economically feasible.

Those oil and gas fields along with others like them in Kansas, Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming, still have the most helium-enriched natural gas in the world and provides most of the helium sold in the U.S. Even today, the U.S. has the most helium still in the ground, estimated at 53 percent of the world's total reserves.



In Memory of
Priscilla Mickle
who passed away 3 years ago
December 29

Those we love don't go away.
They walk beside us everyday
Unseen, unheard, but always
near and very dear

We love and miss you.

Mick and Families



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from First National Bank of Cook

Winning Artist • Bentley Frazer
Grade 3



Enjoy The Wonder of Nature!
from Vermilion Fuel & Food & Soudan Store

Artist • Nesstah Strong
Grade 3



Christmas Is Filled With Wonder
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Winning Artist • Nash Lenci
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WINTON 2 BR/2 bath home sits on a large lot within easy walking distance of Fall Lake and a public landing. Main floor has living areas & bathroom, upstairs has bedrooms and 3/4 bathroom, unfinished basement. Several outbuildings, garage, city sewer and water.
\$125,000 MLS# 145968




Happy New Year To You!



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Crane Lake-\$275,000 20-acre Boat Access Crane Lake Property. 6-BR, 3-bath home has new septic & drilled well, water heater, gas forced air furnace and new metal roof. Deeded access across federal land from your private dock to the property. 200amp electric. MLS#144617

Buyck-\$360,000 200 acres off the Crane Lake and Hoffman Rd in Buyck offers privacy and seclusion. Near the Vermilion River with an easement into the property across State land. 1000's of acres of state and federal land borders this beautiful hunting property. MLS#143352

Ash River, Orr-\$59,000 Lot 5 in Bear Ridge CIC. Lot has Electric, shared community septic, and shared water from central pumphouse. Ownership also gives you access to private docks on 155' of shared shoreline, a personal slip, gazebo near lake with grill and 1/10 share of all common areas. MLS#145782

Cook-\$159,000 Very Private year-round 3 bedrooms, 2 bath mobile home on 10 acres. Detached 2 car garage/storage shed, playhouse, drilled well, compliant septic, round out this property. MLS#145461



As measured by residential transaction sides.



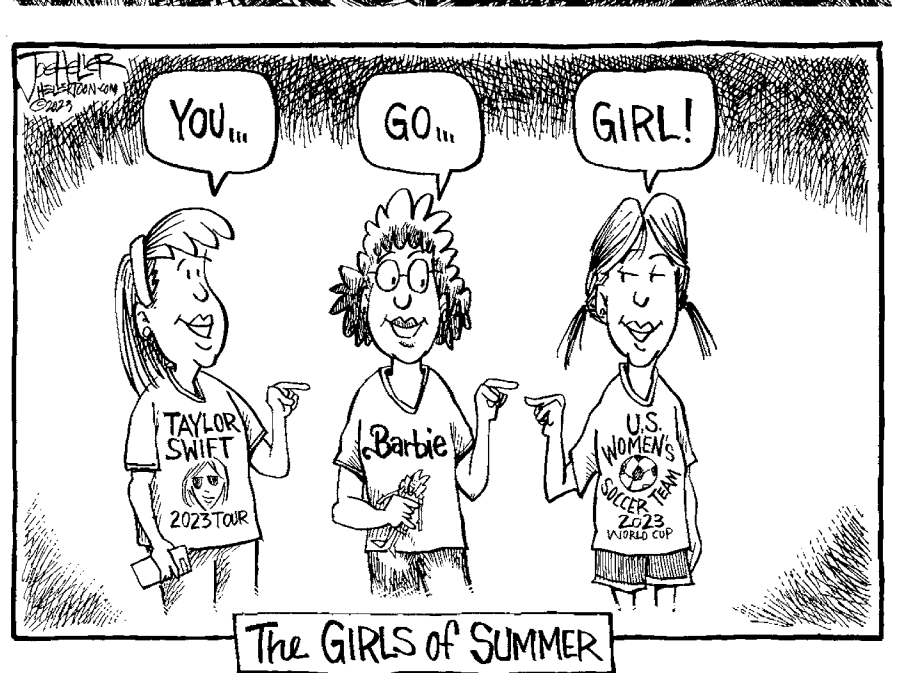
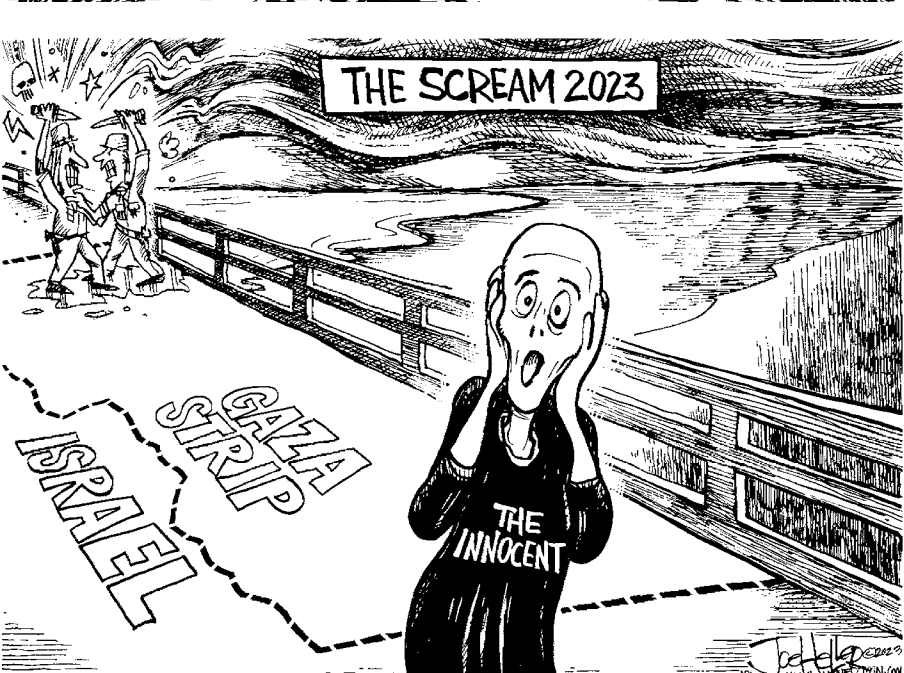
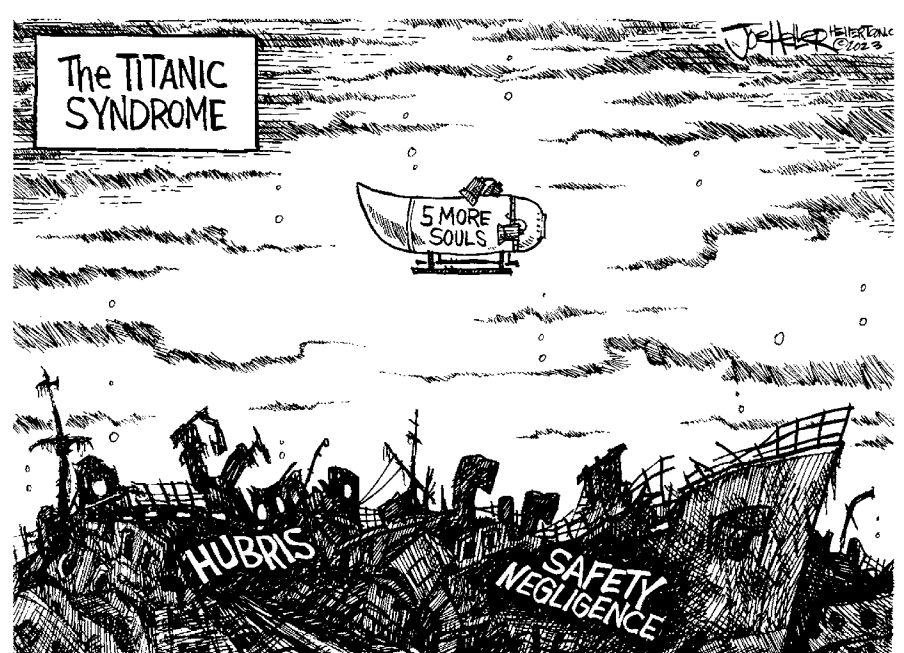
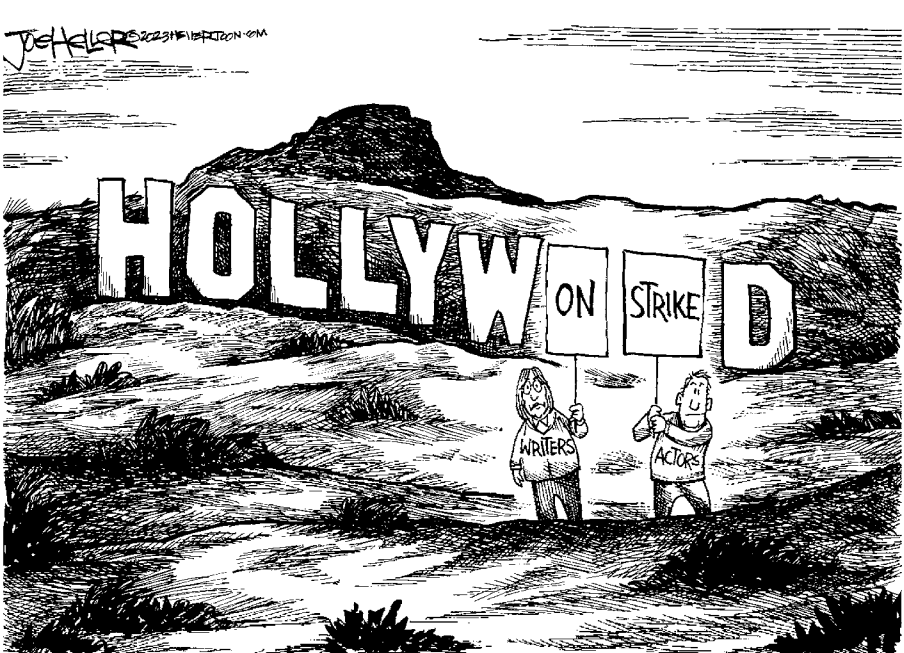
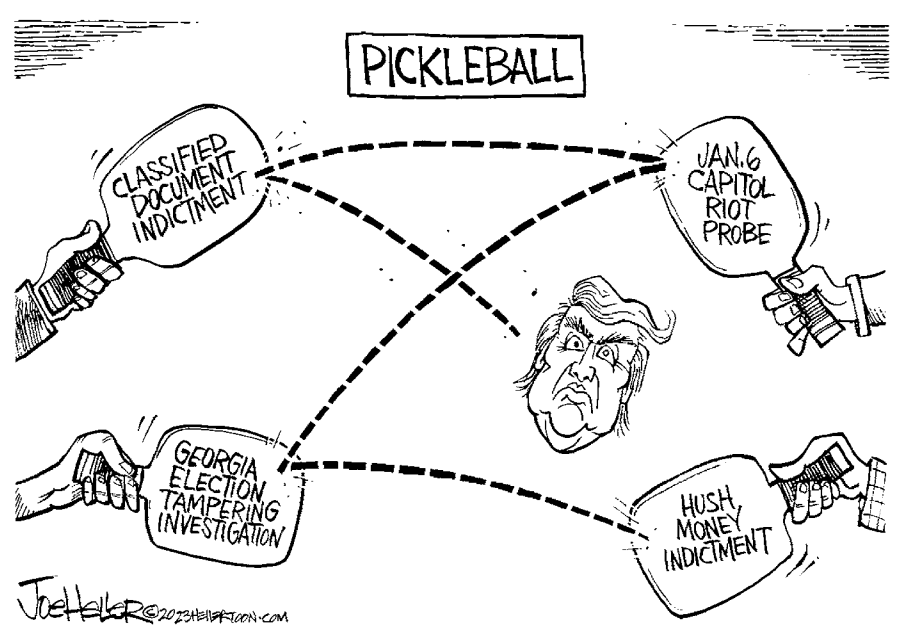
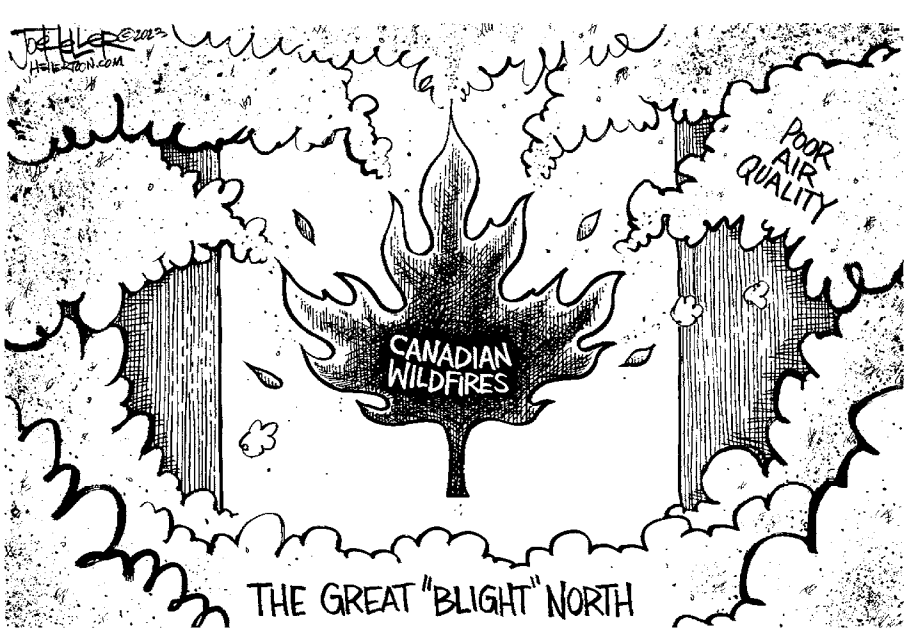
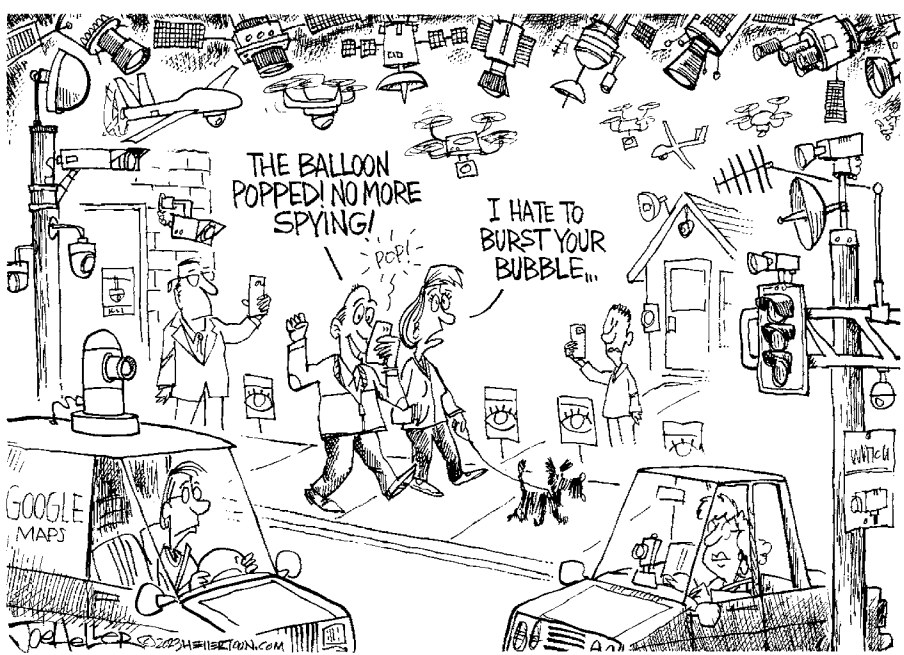
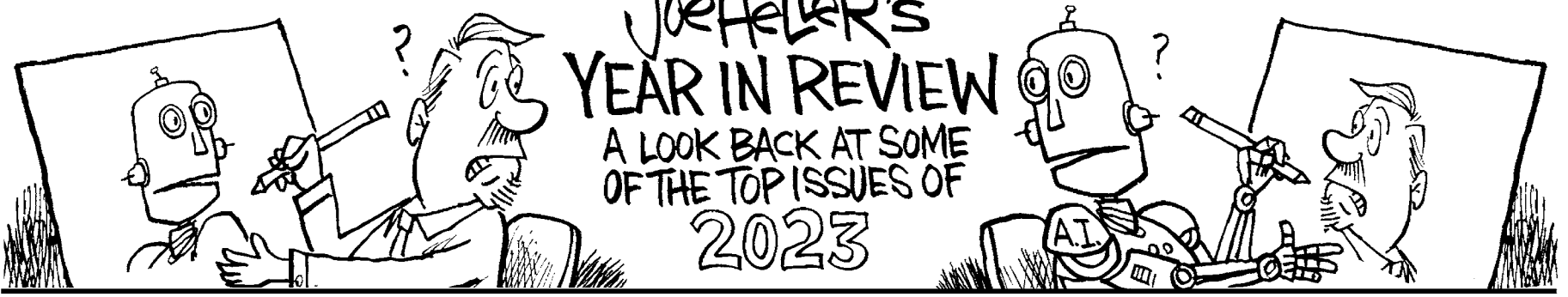
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Joe Heller's YEAR IN REVIEW

A LOOK BACK AT SOME
OF THE TOP ISSUES OF
2023



COMMENTARY

This Kansas kid misses Minnesota winter

As a kid growing up in Kansas, snow and ice were happy aberrations in the otherwise brown and dreary winter months. It was a true marvel when we would get enough snow to cancel school, dust off the sled, and build a snowman. On rare occasions we'd get enough for one of our neighbors to break out an unsteady iron-railed toboggan that he would tow behind his truck on the snow-covered brick streets, a treat always accompanied by hot apple cider sipped in front of his massive stone fireplace.

Some years we'd get enough extended cold for the creek behind my house to freeze thick enough to support a hockey game played by a dozen bundled-up neighborhood kids using fallen tree branches for sticks and a hedge apple for a puck. I recall that Bob Robinson had a distinct advantage because he wore speed skates, and those flashing long blades looked too dangerous to me as a youngster to get near. And I happily recall the year when someone showed up with an actual official hockey puck – everyone felt like Bobby Hull or Gordie Howe that day.

A limestone quarry south of town was another skating op-

tion when the weather was right. That attracted kids from all over town and the surrounding countryside, too.

We had a small CCC-era county lake to the east and a big 1960s-vintage federal reservoir to the west, hence the town's marketing slogan of "Marion, the town between two lakes." That was a big selling point in Kansas. Here, darned near every town seems to be between two, three, or more lakes, so not so much.

The ice on those lakes rarely got thick enough for regular recreation – I only recall one ice-skating trip to the county lake, and none at all to the reservoir. The closest thing Marion had to ice fishing was a covered heating fishing dock at the county lake that would get surrounded by ice in the winter, and it was enough to keep the crappie anglers happy.

When I was back as news editor of the *Marion County Record* in January 2018, we had an unusually long cold spell, long enough and cold enough that for the first time in my experience a small ice fishing village formed for two days on the east end of the reservoir. Everyone walked out to their spots from

the parking area near the swimming beach, most pulling sleds behind them with their equipment. I walked out there, too, with my camera equipment, and got a dandy story out of the deal. But it had warmed up greatly the second day, and on the third only a handful of anglers were willing to slog through the growing puddles of slush and water to give it a try. On the fourth day, ice fishing season was over. Given all the adult years I spent away from Marion, this surely wasn't the first time for ice fishing there, but it was the first time seeing it for me, and I found it both utterly fascinating and totally underwhelming.

Accustomed to those experiences and many others with winters spent in the warmer climates of Missouri, Oklahoma, Texas, and California, in February 2020 I somewhat shocked family and friends by moving to a place where winter is a lifestyle, not an aberration, little Tower, Minnesota. I'd done my research and knew all about Tower's -60-degree state record, the Halloween blizzard of '91, and the area's reputation as a winter playground, and I came anyway. Always up for new experiences, this was definitely new, and oddly appealing.

I'd also done enough research to know that in my first few days here a trip to Ely for a

nice warm Wintergreen coat and a pair of Steger mukluks would be wise, and I still count that as one of my best apparel choices ever. During the first two weeks in my new home there was probably a foot and a half of snow on the ground and nighttime lows hovered around -30 degrees, and I found it all quite invigorating.

In the months and years since I think I've acclimated well to northern Minnesota winters, enough so that the current one, much like the middle of winter in Kansas in some ways, feels abnormal. I've not been one to jump into all of the recreational pursuits – ice fishing holds no appeal for this one-time bass fisherman accustomed to constant casting and movement, cross country skiing is far too labor intensive for one more inclined to let gravity do the work on downhill slopes, I don't own a snowmobile, and I can only imagine the crashes that would await me if I were so unwise as to try my hand at fat-tire bike riding. But still, I love winter's unique grandeur and beauty here, and find myself terribly impatient for it to fully arrive this year. I'm so well acclimated that I even miss shoveling the snow from my driveway, not because I like doing it, but because it's part of my routine. It's completely bizarre to me that I haven't had to do

it yet, and surely won't have to until next year.

And I sighed with a sense of loss this week when I read the notice that the Straight Line Speed Association has canceled its Battle at the Bay high-speed snowmobile race in January – not enough ice. According to the announcement, the sheriff and the DNR require 18 inches of ice, not for the speeding sleds but for the temporary city that grows up around the track on race day, and it just doesn't look like we'll get there in time. Oddly, I'm also missing the sound of snowmobiles traveling the trail near my house well into the night.

Folks keep assuring me that I'll still get my fill of winter, but I'm already wondering how much earlier ice-out might be next year if we really do have a mild few months ahead of us.

All of this to say that we humans can be very adaptable creatures when we choose to embrace change. For six decades, winter was mostly an afterthought for me. In my seventh, it's become a welcome friend. Hurry, real Minnesota winter, come on in. I'll be happy to see you, but won't say that I'll greet you warmly, as that might turn you away, and you don't need any excuse from me to remain scarce.



DAVID COLBURN

Letters from Readers

Let nature take its course

Recently I listened to a National Public Radio program (called "1A") that featured an interview with the head of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The main controversial subject was the shooting of barred owls, whose traditional range is the eastern U.S., and its invasion of the northwest coast timberlands. The Northwest is the native haunts of the spotted owl, considered endangered.

So, because the barred owl is much more adaptable and has extended its range to the West it gets a bad rap and is "euthanized." Now, from what I was taught in school and what I know most biologists believe, is the theory of evolution, or "adapt or die." I can't understand why the USFWS acts in a hypocritical way and interferes with what most

scientists consider the Law of the Natural World. Taxpayer money is being spent killing owls. I was taught in gun safety training to NEVER shoot a raptor, because they were part of the ecosystem and were valuable predators of rodents.

Over the years I have also adapted my views of natural law and don't quite swallow the whole theory of evolution anymore. Even the original inhabitants of this land believed in a creation made by a Creator. Man has disrupted nature in many ways on this planet, whether it was created or evolved, and it looks like barred owls are the next victim of man's lack of wisdom.

At any rate, I think it is a waste and misuse of taxpayer money to kill owls or wildlife of any kind that are not threatening human life or commerce. It is a little different when predators threaten livestock,

beehives, or pets. Or when insects damage crops or ticks and other bugs carry and spread dangerous diseases to man, animal or plant life. Sometimes then we have to interfere, but owls should be able to adjust on their own turf and terms.

Mark Roalson
Hoyt Lakes

Jen Schultz will support our district

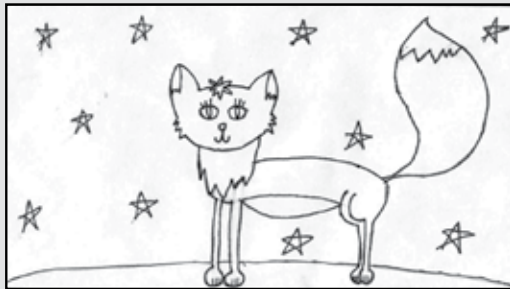
The DFL had its grand opening at our new office on First Avenue in Hibbing recently, with 20 people present, including Jen Schultz. Jen is an economist from UMD and she mentioned Stauber's absolute lack of ability to author bills. He is a con-

stant "No Vote" from our Eighth District. If we put his picture with other men in a lineup I bet most of us could not identify him. He even voted "no" on the in-

frastructure bill. We need Jen who is educated, with a new drive and plan for our future.

Skip Dickinson
Britt

Peace To Creatures Great & Small from Lake Vermilion Cultural Center



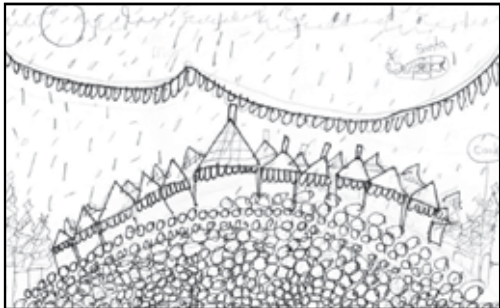
Winning Artist • Harley Banks
GRADE 5

DECK THE HALLS...IT'S CHRISTMAS! from LUMBER ORR HARDWARE



Winning Artist • Tesheem Othman
GRADE 2

Let The World Be Happy from Barb Hegg-Vermilion Land Office-Cook



Winning Artist • Shainah Christiansen
GRADE 4

Let There Be Peace On Earth from D'Ericks



Artist • Ivy Russell
GRADE 5

HAPPY HOWL-IDAYS! from DISABILITY SPECIALISTS



Winning Artist • Leah Las
GRADE 5

HAVE A HAPPY NEW YEAR from Fortune Bay Resort Casino



Winning Artist • Kayla Drift
GRADE 6

the TIMBERJAY
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Moving? Questions about your subscription? Call the Tower office at (218) 753-2950.

Week of Jan. 1

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 p.m. Located in the back of the Timberjay building on Main Street. Next food shelf day is Jan. 16.

Greenwood Fire Dept.- Training meetings on the first and third 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.



TSHS weekly winner
TOWER- The \$100 winner of Week 22 is Terri Kitto of Seattle, Wash.

Little Church to meet Jan. 13
VERMILION LAKE TWP- The Little Church will hold a special meeting on Saturday, Jan. 13 at 10 a.m. We always welcome anyone and are looking for people interested in keeping The Little Church preserved and maintained in our community. The Little Church is located on Co. Rd. 26/Wahlsten Rd. Any questions contact Len Hujanen at 218-749-2014.

Bookmobile stops
REGIONAL- The Arrowhead Bookmobile will be in the Tower-Soudan area on Wednesday, Jan. 3 & 24.
Stops include: Britt (Sand Lake Storage): 9 - 9:30 a.m.; Bois Forte (Boys & Girls Club): 11 - 11:30 a.m.; Greenwood (Town Hall): 12 - 1 p.m.; Soudan (Post Office area): 2:30 - 3:30 p.m.; Tower (Civic Center): 3:45 - 4:30 p.m.; and Embarrass (Hwy 135 & Hwy 21): 5 - 6 p.m.

SINGING IN THE SEASON



Peace, Joy & Fun

The Tower-Soudan Area Singers held their annual Christmas concert on Dec. 17 in front of a full house at Tower-Soudan Elementary School.

Above left: Choir director Rolf Anderson with his grandsons, Soren (left) and Charlie Bortnem, who accompanied the singers as well as playing holiday favorites on their violins. Above: Accompanists Julie Horihan on keyboard and Angie Gurius on flute.

Left: Fifth-grader Harley Banks sang a solo, and Santa even stopped by to visit.

Below: Tuuli Herring got to watch her grandparents sing in the concert, with a lift from her father Tim.

Bottom: Rolf Anderson conducting the choir of almost 30 voices. photos by J. Summit



Thank You!

This was the busiest year ever for the Operation Santa Toy Drive. Even before toy distribution day on Dec. 19, we had more children signed up than ever before. On food shelf day, we added another 12 families, for a total of 68 families served, and 200 children. This is double the number of families and children we were serving 10-15 years ago. Operation Santa started back in the 1990s as a way to purchase gifts for children whose families used the Tower Area Food Shelf, and has grown along with the needs of families who use the food shelf.

But amazingly, the donations this year more than kept up with the need. We had plenty of toys for all ages, gifts cards, warm clothing, and toiletry items for every child on our list. And some extra clothing and toiletry items were donated to students at the Vermilion Country School. Cash donations were used to purchase additional toys and gift cards, making sure we had enough gifts for all the ages of children on our list, which included several newborns!

We would like to thank Lake Country Power's Operation Round-up® for their generous donation to the Tower-Soudan Civic Club. This grant was used to purchase warm items such as hats, mittens, socks, pajamas, sweatshirts, and blankets.

We would like to thank the following individuals, churches, and businesses for their generous donations of toys, cash, and gift cards this year:

Immanuel Lutheran Church Women, Emanuel and Judy Sundahl, Ron and Sue Norha, Dick Johnson, Dennis Passi, Jeremiah and Pamela Kearney, Steve Abrahamson, Kathy and Frank Siskar, Ellie and Dick Larmouth, Lynn Lehto, St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Collette and Peter Johnson, George Stefanich, Carol Wright, Tom Mesojedec, Joan and Jeff Jauss, St. James Presbyterian Church, The Little Church of Vermilion Lake Township, Laurie and Rolf Anderson,



Gwen Lilya and Al Horvat, Wendy and Jim Tuominen, Dan and Faye Mobilia, Val Leciejewski, Four Corners 4-H Club, Embarrass Fair pancake breakfast patrons, Vermilion Lumber, John Kolpela, Bonnie Harma, Shannon and Maryann Wycoff, Paul and Carol Knuti, Joan Zobitz, De'Etta Clemenson, Lunch Bunch ladies, Wayne and Georgia Suoja, Connie Childs, Tom King, Barb Peyla, Carol and Jeff Maus, Nancy Larson, Jim and Kathy Wright, St. Martin's Catholic Church, Kolpela family, Bergetta and Mike Indihar, Annette and Paul Herring, Steve Wilson and Mary Shedd, Gail Melting, Michelle and Dave Toutloff, Elaine McGillivray, and many anonymous gifts!

Special thanks to this year's volunteers: Jodi Summit, Kathy Lovgren and the Tower-Soudan Civic Club crew, Corky Eloranta, Briita Noyes, Marshall Helmberger, Michelle and Dave Toutloff. And we would also like to thank the Timberjay staff for putting up with all the disruptions this past month!

**Jodi Summit and Kathy Lovgren
Operation Santa Coordinators**

HOLIDAY SPIRIT

Mollie, the Christmas cookie lady

by CATIE CLARK
Ely Editor

ELY- For the last five years, Mollie Johnson has baked Christmas cookies and given them away free to all comers at the store where she works, just because it's a nice thing to do. This year, she baked 1,100 cookies. "It took me about two weeks to bake them all," Johnson said.

Johnson set up her cookie spread on Thursday, Dec. 21, on a large table at KJ's True Value Hardware. She made over 20 varieties including thick slices of Swedish almond cake, Russian tea cakes, and traditional Christmas sugar cookies.

This is the first year Johnson has set up her cookies at the KJ's True Value location. She has

worked for Jay and Jacki Poshak for the last six and a half years, first at their J&L Hardware location on Chapman. When the Poshaks moved the hardware store to the new location on 3rd Ave, and rebranded the store as KJ's True Value, Johnson moved with them. The new store has a lot more room, which enabled Johnson to set up on a table twice as big as previous years.

This year, Johnson set up a donation jar at her cookie table. She collected \$229 in cash donations, which she split three ways, with \$77 for the Contented Critters animal shelter, \$77 for the Ely Area Food Shelf, and \$75 to help pay for the supplies to make cookies for Christmas 2024.



David Hicks grabs a cookie from Mollie Johnson's cookie table at KJ's True Value Hardware, where Johnson works. This is the fifth year she has made and given away free Christmas cookies to any and all who want them. photo by C. Clark

In Brief

Tuesday Group schedule

ELY – The Tuesday Group community educational lunch gathering meets every Tuesday at noon 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. Tuesday Group is now on winter holiday hiatus.

Upcoming Tuesday Group speakers:

► Jan. 2: Through Hiking the Appalachian Trail with Cory Kolodji

► Jan. 9: Capturing the Aurora Borealis with Alex Falconer

Breathing Out

by Cecilia Rolando © 2023



another new year
time moving the world forward

following the light

ISD 696 THEATER AND MUSIC



Left: Members of the Ely High School and Middle School Choirs entertained the residents of Ely Carefree Living on Wednesday, Dec. 20, with choral concert selections and Christmas carols. submitted photo Right: "Frozen" cast members Rachel Carter, Alison Poppler, and Matt Johnson rehearsing the discovery of Olaf on Thursday, Dec. 21. Carter plays Princess Anna, Poppler plays Olaf, and Johnson plays Kristoff. photo by C. Clark



Experience Ely Expo applications now open

ELY- Every year, the Experience Ely Expo makes it possible for nonprofits to apply for a space at the Blueberry/Art and Harvest Moon Festivals with the application fees waived.

Planning for the two festivals is currently underway. The Expo runs concurrently with the fes-

tivals and applications for it are now being accepted.

The Expo is open to 501(c)(3) or 501(c)(4) nonprofit organizations in one of five categories; attractions and museums, first responders, sports and recreation, art and crafts, and service organizations located within Ely, Babbitt or Winton. The Expo

makes twenty spots available for nonprofits at each festival. Organizations that receive spaces at the festivals are still responsible for booth fees, which are \$225 for the Blueberry/Art Festival and \$175 for Harvest Moon.

Applications are now available at ely.org/experience-ely-expo. Appli-

cants can apply for one or both festivals. Completed applications, along with required paperwork, may be submitted via email to director@ely.org or dropped off at the Ely Chamber of Commerce office. Applications will be reviewed by a jury of individuals belonging to area nonprofits.

This year's Blueberry/Art Festival will be July 26-28. The Harvest Moon Festival will be Sept. 6-8.

For questions or more details on the application process, please visit the website link or contact Eva at 218-365-6123 or director@ely.org.

COMMUNITY EVENTS AND NOTICES

Ely Public Library

ELY- The library will be closed on Jan. 1-2 during the winter holidays.

The library board will meet on Wednesday, Jan. 3, 2024, at 5:30 p.m.

The first Kahoot trivia game of 2024 will be on three books by Mark Twain: "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer," "The Adventures of Huck Finn," and "The Prince and the Pauper." The Kahoot will begin on Thursday, Jan. 4, at 3 p.m. and run until Tuesday, Jan. 9, at 8 a.m. Pre-register in advance to provide an email address. The library will email the link to the game when it starts.

The library will host a new group called the Curiosity Cohort to explore quirky new crafts and skills. The first meeting will be on Friday, Jan. 5, from 1-2:30 p.m. to explore sewable circuits. The session is for adults and will investigate using conductive thread to make a bookmark that will light up. A second project will be introduced if time permits. Preregister for this event so the library can order enough supplies for participants.

The Friends of the Library Book Club will meet on Monday, Jan. 8, from 3-4 p.m. The book under discussion will be "Horse" by Geraldine Brooks.

The monthly Friends

of the Library board meeting will be on Tuesday, Jan. 9, from 1-2 p.m.

The library will hold a jigsaw puzzle swap on Wednesday, Jan. 10, from 4-6 p.m. Bring gently used puzzles to swap. Please, no puzzles with missing pieces.

The Get Crafty group will make do-it-yourself heating pads on Thursday, Jan. 11, from 1-2 p.m. Make heating pads using fleece, rice, and thread. Preregister for this event so the library can order enough supplies for participants.

The library will hold a Kahoot on books six through 15 of the "Owl Diaries" series of books by Rebecca Elliot. The Kahoot will begin on Friday, Jan. 12, at 3 p.m. and run until Wednesday, Jan. 17 at 8 a.m. Pre-register in advance to provide an email address. The library will email the link to the game when it starts.

Preschool Storytime is held every Friday from 10:30-11 a.m.

All library events are at the Ely Public Library at 224 E. Chapman St., unless otherwise noted.

Babbitt Public Library

BABBITT- Starting on Jan. 2, the library will have new hours: Monday through Thursday, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. and Friday, 10

a.m. - 2 p.m.

The library will host a class on how to make watercolor cards on Thursday, Jan. 4, starting at 2 p.m. Call the library at 218-827-3345 to sign up. There is no fee for this class.

The library will host free bingo on Monday, Jan. 8 at 1 p.m. The prizes will be books.

Preschool Storytime is held every Wednesday at 10:30 a.m.

All library events are at the Babbitt Public Library at 71 South Drive unless otherwise noted.

Ely Ice Rink

ELY- The rec center ice rink will open as soon as the weather cooperates. Check the city's Facebook page or ely.mn.us/recenter for the opening announcement and hours.

Ely Ice Arena

ELY- The Ely Ice Arena on the Ely School District campus is open for skating on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursday, from 1:30-2:30 p.m. through March 4, except when school is closed for holidays. There will be no skating through Jan. 1. To see an entire schedule and to register for this no-cost activity, go to ely.k12.mn.us/communityed.

NLAA Art Show

ELY- The Northern Lakes Arts Association art show for December is "Emotions" by Rita For-

tunato Sterling. The show runs through Dec. 31, in the lobby of Ely's Historic State Theater, 238 E. Sheridan St., whenever the theater is open.

Polka!

BABBITT- Friends of Babbitt Recreation will host the Solkela Polkela Band in a fundraiser on Sunday, Dec. 31, from noon-3 p.m., at the Municipal Gym, 71 South Drive. Advance tickets are \$35 at Z'Up North Realty, 33 Central Blvd., Suite 300, or by texting 218-742-4322. Tickets at the door will be \$45. Desserts and refreshments are included.

Woodworking Class

ELY- Ely Community Education will offer a woodworking class for beginning through advanced skills on Wednesday evenings, from 6-8:30, starting on Jan. 3 and ending on March 6. The class will be in the new woodshop on the Ely School District campus, 600 E. Harvey. The cost is \$85, not including materials. Go to ely.k12.mn.us/communityed and click on the red bar for more details and to register.

Makers' Market

ELY- The January Makers' Market and Mixer will be at the Ely Folk School, 209 E. Sheridan St., on Saturday, Jan. 6, from 3-5 p.m.

Auditions

ELY- Youth auditions for the March NLAA production of "Fiddler on the Roof" will be on Saturday, Jan. 6, from 6-8 p.m. General auditions will be on Monday, Jan. 15, from 6-8 p.m. All auditions will be at the Vermilion Fine Arts Theater, 1900 E. Camp St. The performance dates for the musical are March 14-17 and 21-23.

Heat Pumps in Minnesota

ELY- The Ely Climate Group will meet at 4 p.m. on Jan. 9 at the Ely Field Naturalists Resource Center above the NAPA store, 41 E. Chapman St. This is a new meeting time. All are welcome. The topic is air source heat pumps, which will work even in Minnesota. They reduce a home's carbon footprint, and use less electricity than conventional electric heat. The discussion will include the availability of rebates and tax incentives to offset the cost of installation.

Community Dance

ELY- The Ely Folk School will hold a community dance on Saturday, Jan. 13, starting at 7 p.m., at the Ely Senior Center. Cost is \$10 at the door, youth dances for free. All dances are taught live, so people of all ages and skill levels can participate.

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-2 pm

Support groups

AA - Alcoholics

Anonymous

OPEN AA - 7:30

p.m. Wednesdays and Saturdays, in-person, First Lutheran Church, 915 E. Camp St., Ely.

AA FRIDAYS - 7 p.m.

Fridays, First Presbyterian Church, 262 E. Harvey St., Ely.

ELY WOMEN'S OPEN

AA - Monday at noon at Ledgerock Church, 1515 E. Camp St., Ely.

BABBITT AA - 7 p.m.

Thursdays, Woodland Presbyterian Church.

AL-ANON - Sundays

8-9 p.m. at St. Anthony's Catholic Church in Ely.

BABBITT AL-ANON -

Thursdays, 7 p.m., at Woodland Presbyterian.

CO-DEPENDENTS'

12-step support group, 4:00 p.m. Tuesdays, Wellbeing Development,

St. Mary's Episcopal Church, 712 S. Central Ave., 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.

COOK CITY COUNCIL

Council approves five percent levy increase and budget

City selects veteran staff as new co-directors for ambulance service

by DAVID COLBURN
Cook-Orr Editor

COOK- The Cook City Council held its Truth in Taxation meeting Thursday night, and approved a five percent increase in the property tax levy to help fund what City Administrator Theresa Martinson called a “bare bones budget” for 2024.

Martinson noted that the increase could have been higher if not for the city council’s mandate to cut costs.

“We had proposed eight percent and the council mandated us to reduce it to five percent,” Martinson said. “We’ve cut everything we possi-

bly can. There’s no longer a designation for street equipment funds. There is no planning and zoning. There is no economic development. What’s being presented to you (covers) the cost of inflation and utility costs. It’s a bare bones operating budget.”

The approved levy increase will generate a total of \$515,429.78 for city operations.

In other business, the council:

►Reviewed the proposed agreement with St. Louis County for the upcoming road projects on Vermilion Dr. and North River St. Martinson said they should seek clarification regarding responsibility for street lighting

expenses once the county installs new lighting on Vermilion Dr.

►Heard from councilor Liza Root that the city will receive funds from both St. Louis County and the Department of Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation to cover the costs of a comprehensive housing needs assessment to be conducted by Maxwell Research. Councilor Liz Storm pointed out that having such a study in hand would be necessary for the city to pursue additional housing assistance funds.

►Accepted the resignation of ambulance director Roland Shoen and the appointment of paramedic Will Fischer and

EMT Amy Luecken as co-directors, as reported in the Dec. 22 edition of the *Timberjay*. The change will become effective Jan. 1.

►Approved payment of an invoice from SEH in the amount of \$8,050 for work related to the relocation of the Automated Weather Observing System at the airport.

►Heard that the HealthLine billing service used by the ambulance service has been sold to Hometown Billing LLC, and there will be no changes to the service from how it has been operating.

►Approved a new drug and alcohol testing policy for city maintenance workers. The poli-

cy is required by the U.S. Department of Transportation because of the size of the trucks workers have to operate.

►Approved a contract with auditing firm Walker, Giroux and Hahne, LLC to perform the required annual financial audit for the city. The contract specifies that the fee for the audit will not exceed \$26,000.

►Hired Dave Gustafson as a clerk/stocker for the liquor store.

►Approved changing the regular council meeting time to 6 p.m. after hearing the results of a citywide survey about meeting times. Martinson reported that 88 respondents preferred 6 p.m.

while only 20 chose 10 a.m. The change will take effect in January.

►Storm reported on a recent emergency management meeting facilitated by Cook Hospital. The goal is to pull together a more comprehensive emergency management plan for the city, Storm said, and she invited anyone with an interest in being involved to contact her through the city office.

►Heard that the city will contract with American Legal Publishing to review and update the city’s ordinances to ensure they are in line with state requirements. Once finished, the city’s ordinances will be available online as well as in book form.

Donkey basketball coming on Jan. 9 to North Woods School

FIELD TWP- Get ready to laugh as you’ve never laughed before when the Dairyland Donkey Basketball Show comes to North Woods School on Tuesday, Jan. 9 at 7 p.m.

The teams will consist of local riders willing to sacrifice their bones and reputations for a shot at playing basketball on the backs of real live donkeys. The North Woods PTO and Student Council promise a thrill a minute and spill a minute in an event wilder than a rodeo and funnier than a circus.

Advance tickets are available for \$10 per person (children five and under are free) and can be purchased at the North

Woods School office. Tickets will also be available at the door for \$15 per person. All proceeds will go to benefit the North Woods PTO and Student Council. Questions may be directed to Emily Koch at ekoch@isd2142.k12.mn.us.

Anishinaabe tales to be featured at Bois Forte events Jan. 10

BOIS FORTE- Come enjoy Anishinaabe storytelling as Joseph Sutherland (Ogimaawab) shares Naanaboozho stories, and shares his knowledge of tales and teaching of the Anishinaabe in two sessions on Wednesday, Jan. 10, sponsored by KBFT 89.9 Bois Forte Tribal Community Radio.

Sutherland, a proud member of Nishinawbe Aski First Nation, passionately serves as an Anishinaabe Language and Cultural Teacher. His dedication extends to bridging generational gaps, imparting valuable knowledge, and fostering a deep understanding of Anishinaabe language and customs. His commitment to cultural education plays a vital role in preserving and enriching the Anishinaabe heritage. Additionally, he shares indigenous insights into the night sky’s perspective.

The first presentation will be at 1 p.m. at the Bois Forte Heritage Center, 1500 Bois Forte Rd., Tower, and the second will be at 5 p.m. at the Bois Forte tribal government center, 5344 Lake Shore Drive in Nett Lake.

Both sessions are free to the public.

Cook Public Library sets winter reading program schedule

COOK- Cook Public Library Director Crystal Whitney has announced details for the library’s winter reading program that begins on Tuesday, Jan. 2.

Adults and Teens
Pick up an Around the World Reading Challenge card at the library. Read seven books set in seven different places in the world. When you finish a book, stop by the library and mark your book location on our world map. Finish the reading challenge and turn in your challenge sheet by Mar. 28 for a prize.

The “One Book One

Community Read” selection chosen by library patrons is “The Saboteur” by Andrew Gross. Copies of the book are available to pick up at the library. A book discussion will take place in March.

Younger children
All North Woods Elementary students will receive a Reading Wonderland activity booklet in January, and copies of the booklet are also available at the library. Complete the Bingo card on the inside cover and turn it in by Mar. 28 at the library to receive a prize.

The library will also hold a “Preschool – 6th Grade Snowman Check-out Challenge.” Every time kids check out a book between Jan. 2 – Mar. 28 they’ll get a snowman to hang in the library windows. Once there are 300

snowmen in the windows, there will be a pizza party.

The library will host a series of thematic story times with fun stories and crafts. Dates and themes are:

- Jan. 18, 10:30 am: Let it Snow!
- Feb. 15, 10:30 am: Animal Party
- Mar. 21, 10:30 am: Little Chef
- Apr. 18, 10:30 am: Piggy Palooza
- May 16, 10:30 am: Camp Out

The Cook Public Library Winter Reading Program is sponsored by the Friends of the Cook Public Library with support from the Arrowhead Library System.

COMMUNITY NEWS

NORTH WOODS ELEMENTARY CONCERT



Music teacher Lorenda Daugherty leads the audience in a song.



Sullivan Roesch, Charlotte Pascuzzi, Kallen Williams, Lucy Norup perform in the Dec. 15 concert in the gymnasium.



Cora Goodbird lets the audience know the concert is almost over.



Samantha Amundson, Sherrie Peters, Leatah Anderson, Chloe Ditter, Brittany Phillips sign the final farewell song. photos by D. Colburn



GRIZZLIES BANDS PERFORM

North Woods bands held their winter concert on Dec. 19.

- Top left: Savannah Abts plays the French horn.
- Top middle: Pianist Alex Shelde’s performance of a difficult Beethoven sonata received a standing ovation from the crowd.
- Top right: Rebecca Koch added festive touches to her hair and clarinet for the concert.
- Bottom left: Amber Sopoci plays trumpet.
- Bottom center: Instrumental music instructor Paige Stanislawski directs one of the ensembles.
- Bottom right: Jackson Udovich plays his part in the trombone section.

photos by D. Colburn



WISOCKI...Continued from page 1

2019 until his dismissal on Jan. 3, 2023.

Bois Forte Secretary/Treasurer Tara Geshick informed the Bois Forte Tribal Council of the criminal complaint against Wisocki late Saturday evening, Dec. 16. At a special meeting on Monday,

Dec. 18, the tribal council voted 4-0 to place Wisocki on unpaid administrative leave.

"We take this very seriously, and we're doing our internal investigation at this time," said Bois Forte Tribal Chair Cathy Chavers Monday afternoon, shortly

after the council's unanimous decision was made.

According to a criminal complaint filed in Kandiyohi County District Court on Dec. 14, 2023, Wisocki allegedly stole nearly \$28,000 from the Willmar club. Wisocki has maintained his inno-

cence and has retained an attorney.

Four of the felony counts alleged that Wisocki "obtained possession of property or services from another person of a value of more than \$5,000." Those four thefts by swindle each ranged from \$5,100 to

\$6,959 in funds stolen. Each of those counts could result in a maximum sentence of 10 years imprisonment, a \$20,000 fine, or both. The fifth felony count alleged that Wisocki stole \$4,100, which is punishable by up to five years imprisonment, a \$10,000 fine, or both.

Wisocki, who lives in Eveleth, will make his first appearance in court at a remote hearing on Wednesday, Jan. 17, 2024.

FIRE HALL...Continued from page 1

to be completed include removal of the rear (south) brick wall, followed by its reconstruction with the historical features restored. The back door will be large enough to move the old Tippet steam engine, which dates back to the earliest days of the city's fire brigade, in and out. Interior work includes a new heating system;

electrical upgrades; interior wall restoration; work on the floors, door, and windows; and construction of a small rear addition to be used for storage. New restrooms are being installed using previous smaller grants from the IRRR and MNHS as well as local fundraising.

The nonprofit historical society purchased the

Old Fire Hall in 2015, with hopes of preserving this piece of Tower's history and creating a new community space. Once completed, the space will be available for possible city use, or for rental to private businesses. Larson said they already have interest from businesses looking to locate in the building. Part of the building will be used

to house the Tippet, as well as for historical displays and exhibits.

The fire hall was built in 1895 and housed the city hall, jail, and fire hall. A bell tower formerly sat on the roof, which was used to warn of fires. A huge cistern in the basement held water for extinguishing fires. The building was used by the city until 1965 when it was

replaced with a fire hall and civic center. After that, it was used as a community and youth center until it was sold to a private party in the 1980s. In 1990, the building was purchased by Tim Kotzian and Chuck Cathcart. The two worked to preserve the building, shoring up the foundation and repairing some brickwork, but the pair was

unable to do the large scope of work required. They did get the building listed on the National Register of Historic Places, but the building sat vacant from 2008 until it was purchased by the historical society in 2015.

WEATHER...Continued from page 1

of 28.0 degrees, a full nine degrees above average for the month, which puts it in second place among the warmest Decembers in Duluth history. In 1877, Duluth's harbor recorded a monthly average of 32.7 degrees. That's a 5.7 degree difference from the airport's readings so far this year, which would seem likely to leave the 1877 mark intact. Yet, as of this writing, the forecast called for Duluth to experience a full week of temperatures above freezing—even at night— which is likely to increase Duluth's average monthly temperature by several degrees. "It might be a photo finish," said Boulay.

Other than Duluth, International Falls has the longest period of record in northeastern Minnesota and this December appears to be well on the way to leaving the border city's previous

December record in the dust. Back in 1913, residents of the Falls enjoyed a December with a monthly average temperature of 22.8 degrees F. With ten days yet remaining in the month this year, the average temperature so far in the Falls is running at a jaw-dropping 25.8 degrees, or three full degrees above the previous record. And with astonishingly mild weather forecasted to continue right through the end of the month, it appears the city will almost certainly set a new record for the warmest December once the books are closed on 2023.

While other local weather stations in the North Country lack the long periods of record that meteorologists look for, this December is almost certain to be the warmest on record at just about every location. As of this writing, Tower, Orr, and

Kabetogama are all running 10.7 degrees above average for the month, while Ely is running 9.4 degrees higher.

The rest of winter?

While the weather could certainly turn more winter-like the rest of the season, the experience of 1877-78 suggests that may not happen. While January of 1878 turned somewhat colder than December, the weather turned remarkably mild again in February and March.

Recent research into the factors behind that winter's remarkable temperatures suggest that it may have coincided with another strong el Niño pattern in the Pacific. While the el Niño current, which periodically brings warmer water temperatures to the eastern Pacific, wasn't known of in 1877, a review of ship's logs and water temperature readings from that era point to unusually

warm water temperatures there at that time.

A similarly strong el Niño pattern has established itself this year and that is likely a contributor to our mild conditions. Boulay said that climate change, which has led to a steady warming of winters in Minnesota and many other places, is potentially also playing a role.

Impacts of mild conditions

While the warm weather has made outdoor activities more enjoyable for those who don't like the cold normally associated with December in

Minnesota, it could have economic impacts if it continues. According to press reports back in 1877-78, that extraordinarily mild winter had negative consequences for transportation of people and goods. Winter normally froze the dirt roads and rivers, providing a stable base for transporting goods via sleighs. Without the cold, transportation bogged down for months as roads remained muddy in many parts of the state and rivers lacked sufficient ice cover to support sleighs.

While the use of sleighs for winter transportation faded out a century ago, a

continuation of the recent weather patterns could have serious repercussions in many parts of northern Minnesota, where winter recreation like snowmobiling, cross country skiing, and dogsledding draw large numbers of visitors to the region in a typical winter, filling area hotels, restaurants, and bars with customers. Barring a change in the weather, this winter could prove a bust for those who rely on good snow conditions to keep business hopping.



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LAW ENFORCEMENT

County sheriff recognizes six new deputies

REGIONAL— Six new St. Louis County deputies were recognized earlier this month during a ceremonial pinning of badges held at the county's Public Safety Building in Duluth.

Sheriff Gordon Ramsay welcomed the new deputies - the first group hired since Ramsay took office. The new

deputies include Trevor Dowton, Nicholas Brown, Zachary Hwy, Saul Jeanetta, Daniel Merrill and Madison Sand.

Dowton was hired in May and has completed the Field Training Officer portion of his instructional period, meaning he now can respond to calls on his own. The other five were

hired in September and are still working alongside a Field Training Officer.

"This is a difficult profession, and we need to keep the best and the brightest" said Ramsay. "By establishing good relationships with the people we serve, we can do our role better, and it's more enjoyable. Our best deputies

know how to use the authority we're given and treat people well."

The ceremony also was an opportunity to highlight deputies who've been promoted in the last year.

The St. Louis County Sheriff's Office is responsible for all law enforcement activity in the

unincorporated areas of St. Louis County, as well as several cities. Sheriff's deputies operate out of regional offices in Duluth, Virginia and Hibbing, with additional stations in Cook, Ely and Mt. Iron.

CHALLENGE...Continued from page 1

to believe he could better represent the needs and concerns of the entire district.

"I have found that Roger has been ineffective," Droba told the *Timberjay* on Thursday. "As mayor of International Falls I requested to have a hearing on one of our bills, but I wasn't able to get a hearing in front of the House. We had one bill that we ultimately did get funding for. But I went to St. Paul on multiple occasions to speak with Rep. Skraba. The conversations that I had with him compared to any other representative that I spoke to, Republican or Democrat, well, he wasn't listening to what concerns we had in our city. In fact, he was telling us about the concerns that other cities in the district had. I found that to be very interesting, because my thought of a representative isn't whether you agree or disagree, your job is to listen and wade through the information that's being given to you. And I don't think that's what we're receiving from Roger."

Droba's announcement comes several weeks after former state Rep. Rob Ecklund, who narrowly lost

to Skraba in 2022, indicated he won't be seeking his old job again.

Droba said a driving factor behind his decision to run is the state of rural health care, particularly rural emergency medical services, and that will be a primary focus for him if elected. One aspect of the system he's particularly familiar with as mayor is the financial burden threatening rural ambulance services.

"I know for a fact that Ely is going through it, and so is Virginia and Hibbing and International Falls," he said.

A significant challenge Droba sees lies in the fact that a community-based ambulance service is assigned a mandated service area by the state, in the case of International Falls 989 square miles, but there's no complimentary mechanism for requiring funding from other communities or governmental entities in those service areas.

"Using my city as an example, there's no mechanism or tool for us to go to other entities such as Koochiching County or Ranier - the only entity that ends up having to take

on that financial burden is the municipality that ends up providing the service," Droba said. "There has to be a way to negotiate a rate to be able to offer that service, because right now if any community has major runs outside their community they're stuck with the bill, and it's becoming \$500,000 a year that goes on the taxpayers of those communities."

Droba said he's also concerned over the inequity created for rural public health services versus metro areas because funding is based on population. That creates a situation where rural public health staff are limited and overburdened, he said.

"We have staff in our counties that have to do the jobs of four or five people from the metro areas," Droba said. "They're not actually able to provide all of the services that are being funded because they spend all their time doing the paperwork that they have to provide. There has to be a tweak to the system on how you fund these things, because we're an aging population where we need to utilize public health considerably more than you would in the metro area

with more opportunities."

Dovetailing with his concerns for rural health care are the military veterans who often have to travel to Minneapolis to get service for their health care needs, Droba said. As a four-year U.S. Army veteran, and through his engagement with his local VFW post, Droba said he's seen the need to be an advocate for increased telehealth services for veterans. He said he's also committed to looking at how Minnesota's tax system affects military retirement benefits to be sure veterans aren't negatively affected.

Droba's military service involved telecommunications, and after his discharge he had jobs in Minneapolis and Denver working for WorldCom, a telecommunications company. While acknowledging that his experience from many years ago doesn't make him an expert in today's world of high-speed broadband access, Droba said he's committed to bringing the benefits quality broadband provides to the citizens in the district.

"I served on the Koochiching Technology Initiative, which is one of

the things we did here to try to bring in more high-speed broadband," he said. "You cannot go without being connected these days. If we're going to be able to attract people for tourism in northern Minnesota, we have to have the connectivity. You have to have digital equity to be able to keep up with your work or community."

Droba acknowledges that there are numerous issues affecting the district such as wolf management, mining, and logging that he's not been directly involved with and needs to learn more about. "But I look at this as a huge opportunity to have someone with fresh eyes that hasn't been indoctrinated in 100-percent mining or 100-percent we have to save the environment," Droba said. "I'm really open to listening to every view to understand and make educated decisions that make the most sense."

Droba said he didn't run for mayor in his border town because of any single issue, but because he wanted to change the contentious nature of the city council's decision-making process. He said he's been successful with that locally,

and he wants to bring that same civil quality to the Legislature.

"We have disagreements at city council all the time, but there's no bickering, there's no fighting," Droba said. "I just believe that we have to bring civility back to government, and I think that having people who are willing to work and compromise goes a long way."

While not noted in his press release, Droba will be running as a DFL candidate.

"It was really important to hone in on the messaging right now, to just get out there that I'm running," Droba said. "I've been working with the DFL for the last six or seven months just trying to get an understanding of the whole process. But I'm not hiding in any capacity that I'm running under the DFL."

For more insights into Droba's campaign, his vision, and his stance on various issues, visit HarleyDroba.com or his Facebook page, Harley Droba for House 3A.

An official campaign kickoff event is being planned for January. More details will be shared closer to the date.

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ENERGY ADVANCES

Hoyt Lakes native leading regional hydrogen hub

Investment as part of Inflation Reduction Act could eventually make Minnesota a leader in green steel

by LARISSA DONOVAN
KAXE News

REGIONAL — A Hoyt Lakes native leading a regional hydrogen fuel partnership says the emerging fuel source could someday help make Minnesota's Iron Range a leader in the production of green steel.

"Yes, certainly it has great potential," said Tom Erickson,



Tom Erickson

of Energy to kickstart hydro-

gen fuel production. "The first obvious use of hydrogen within the taconite (mining) industry is just to produce electricity."

The federal government is investing billions to develop regional hydrogen production hubs, intended to spur the infrastructure needed to increase the supply and lower the cost enough to make it commercially viable. Federal officials have earmarked

up to \$925 million for the Heartland Hydrogen Hub, which includes the states of Minnesota and North and South Dakota.

Hydrogen emits only water vapor and warm air when burned, but it's typically produced from natural gas in a process that creates high greenhouse gas emissions. The Heartland Hydrogen Hub will use renewable energy and nuclear power to try to reduce

the climate impact, as well as the price tag.

The initial focus will be on supplying hydrogen as a greener source of ammonia fertilizer, but Erickson said the same output could also replace more carbon-intensive fuels used to heat and power taconite mining operations on the Iron Range.

See **HYDROGEN...**pg. 2B



BACK TO ROOTS

MAKING MUSIC



Longtime local musician Rob Mattson to release his first original song

by MARSHALL HELMBERGER
Managing Editor

EAGLES NEST — Better late than never is an old adage that could certainly apply to longtime musician Rob Mattson, whose first original musical release is set to download Friday, Dec. 29.

"Kinda Pretty Good (Ain't Too Bad)" is a country song that harkens back to the Bakersfield sound made famous by the likes of Buck Owens and Merle Haggard as it relates how our everyday conversations often hide our true feelings.

It's a return to roots for Mattson, who grew up in Ely in a musical family that performed gospel and country music in local churches and

Above: Singer-songwriter and music producer Rob Mattson works out a song in his studio in his house in Eagles Nest Township.

Right: Rob during a recent public performance.
submitted photos

other venues as early as the 1960s.

The youngest of seven kids, Mattson remembers music as a family affair. His father and his brother Donny both played guitar while his sisters played keyboard and they all sang together. "We played music everyday," he said. "That's how it started. We all sang together and learned to do harmony."

See **MATTSON...**pg. 2B



COUNTY SCHOOLS

Budget pains grow as student numbers fall

by DAVID COLBURN
Cook-Orr Editor

REGIONAL- While last spring's \$19 billion state budget surplus provided room for some additional aid for education, it wasn't enough to relieve many school districts of financial shortfalls due to issues other than the state reimbursement formula.

The ISD2142 school board grappled with that reality at its Dec. 12 meeting, approving a 4.37-percent increase in the 2024 property tax levy while engaging in a review of tough choices they will have to make to deal with an approximately \$1 million shortfall in the unassigned fund balance for the 2023-24 budget year.

Levy increase

A significant factor driving the district's pay levy hike is the increase

See **SCHOOLS...**pg. 2B

HOCKEY

Raiders rock Wolves 4-1

by MARSHALL HELMBERGER
Managing Editor

GREENWAY — The Raiders outshot the Timberwolves 43 to 27 as they broke the Timberwolves winning streak with a 4-1 victory on home ice here on last Thursday. The loss drops Ely's record to 7-3.

Both teams hit the scoreboard early. Greenway's Brayden Nielsen and Layn Mustad lit the lamp at the 1:14 and 3:05 marks respectively. Ely's Drew Marolt got the Wolves back in the game just over two minutes later with a power play goal at the 5:20 mark with an assist by Owen Marolt. But that early flurry was all either team could muster until the final period when Greenway added two insurance goals at the 4:11 and 7:01 marks.

The Wolves had their chances with seven power plays on the night but the Raiders managed to fend them off all but once. Ely's Wes Sandy spent two minutes in the box for hooking midway through the first period for the Wolves' only penalty.

Ely goalie Ben Leeson notched 39 saves.

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SCHOOLS...Continued from page 1B

in property market values. The district's property valuation went from \$3.40 billion to \$3.94 billion, an increase of around \$530 million. District finance director Kim Johnson told the *Timberjay* on Tuesday that the district's hands are tied by the state when it come to the concurrent increase in the district's referendum market value levy, one segment of the overall pay levy.

"The Legislature believes that the higher the market value in your district, the more money that should come from your taxpayers," Johnson said. "That total referendum market value levy increase of \$210,698 is because of the market value increase. We have no control over it."

Another item that factors into the levy increase is a decrease in the taconite replacement funds the district will receive, a hit of \$37,125 for the 2024 levy.

"Taconite is not displacing as much levy as it did in the previous year, and therefore taxpayers have to pay more," Johnson said.

A third factor in the pay levy calculation is the district's ongoing debt service for bonds used to construct and renovate district schools, Johnson said. The district will levy for \$3.73 million, an increase of \$128,021, for bond payments.

"I have gotten one phone call this year on the levy, which is highly unusual, and the question that individual asked was when will the bonds be paid off?" Johnson said. "That debt service is going to be paid off in six years, and there's going to be a significant drop. There's going to be a \$4.5 million drop in debt service payments in six years."

With those and several other line item adjustments, the overall 2024 pay levy increase factored out to be 4.37 percent, but not all taxpayers will see an increase on their property tax bill, Johnson said, because of the property valuation increase in the district.

"If you do not have an increase in your market value, you will more than likely see a decrease in

your school taxes because everybody else is carrying a bigger share because of the total market share for the area," she said.

Budget concerns

Johnson reviewed the audited 2022-23 budget and the current adopted 2023-24 budget with the board, and in current year projections show the district will need to tap about \$1.2 million of its surplus reserves to balance the budget. That figure will be reduced somewhat when the district's savings from switching health insurance providers is factored in for the next scheduled budget revision, Johnson said.

The deficit is not as large as it was in 2022-23, when the district's expenses of \$46,117,988 exceeded its revenue of \$43,135,941 by \$2.98 million. Those back-to-back deficits are projected to reduce the district's unassigned fund balance from \$7.74 million at the start of the 2022-23 school year to \$3.55 million by the end of the current school year.

A decline in the district's student count is

behind the budget woes.

"Pre-COVID, our 2019-20 school year, between then and what we have for the revised enrollment projection for the current fiscal year, we have a 167 adjusted pupil decline in student enrollment," Johnson said.

And when state aid is allocated on that adjusted pupil count, fewer pupils means less money coming in — a lot less.

"That fiscal reduction for each school year, 2021, 22, 23 and 24 has resulted in a \$3.7 million deficit in general education aid," Johnson said.

The adjusted pupil count gives more weight to junior high and high school students, so a clearer reflection of actual head count is what's called average daily membership.

"With our ADM, we're down 155 students," Johnson said.

With the decrease in aid to an organization that spends around 80 percent of its revenue on staffing costs, staff cuts might have been a way to offset those deficits, but that wasn't

an option because of the strings attached to the extra COVID funding the state and district received from the federal government.

"Even though we knew and understood that we were seeing declines in pupil units, in order to get the COVID funding from the government we had to maintain staff levels," Johnson said. "It's a Catch-22 — we've got the decline in pupil units, but we can't decrease staffing levels. We had to show MDE and the federal government that the district was maintaining equity in staffing levels. So that has exacerbated the fact that we're down in revenue. We were basically caught between a rock and a hard place."

Those COVID funds will run out this year, having been carried over to complete projects approved in prior years. And when the COVID restrictions come off, hard budget choices will need to be made, said Johnson.

"I guess the bottom line is the district is taking a hard look at ways to save money," she said. "One of

those ways was to go out for request for proposals for our health insurance. We're looking to right-size staffing levels. It's difficult for a district like 2142 because 155 students could be spread across five schools and how many grades per school? That makes it difficult to do just blanket cuts. So, the administrative team is taking a look at different ways of delivering education that will allow us to right-size districtwide."

There's little question that whatever solutions the district finds, staffing adjustments will be a significant part of the mix.

"Any time we try to do some saving with non-payroll related items we are not making a huge impact," Johnson said. "There are a lot of things that are going on that are going to help us, but we've got to figure out long-term what everything is. We've been trying to do things over the last couple of years without impacting FTEs and that's very, very difficult."

MATTSON...Continued from page 1B

His parents belonged to a non-denominational church, which meant they had an open door to churches all across the region and they got to travel some as they performed.

Mattson's family moved to Eagles Nest Township when he was young and he attended school in Tower. "I was into sports, art, cars, and guitars and my parents made room for all that," he said.

"I was given my first guitar at five or six," Mattson recalls, and he's never really put it down although he remembers his early struggles learning to play chords quickly. He got a few pointers from his brother Donny who went on to play bass guitar for country great Marvin

Rainwater. "He told me not to worry about the speed of my chord changes, but just to make them sound good. He said the speed would eventually come."

He had hopes of following his brother into a musical career, but when he told his father of his plans, his father told him to have a vocation to fall back on. He followed that advice and earned a doctorate in chiropractic medicine, which became his livelihood even as he continued to dabble in music.

While he was born and raised in the North Country, he did leave the area for a while when a colleague offered him a position at his clinic in Willmar. After several years of schooling and early career-building, it

had been some time since Mattson had the opportunity to perform publicly. He eventually connected with a local band in the Willmar area, named Fresh Fire, which played a repertoire of praise and gospel tunes and performed at the Sunshine Festival, an annual event that used to draw thousands. "I built some good relationships down there," Mattson said.

He returned to the Ely area in 1995, where he established his own Ely Chiropractic Clinic on Chapman Street, where he continues to serve patients.

He recently retired from two other part-time gigs, as a firefighter with the Eagles Nest department and as the long-time traveling sports doc with

the Ely basketball team, to free up more time to pursue his music. While his various pursuits kept him busy, he still found time to perform locally. He played for more than ten years with The Boundary Waters Boys and has, more recently, been playing solo gigs in the area. In fact, he's scheduled to perform at 3 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 24, at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Soudan, as part of the church's candlelight Christmas Eve service.

While "Kinda Pretty Good (Ain't Too Bad)" is his first original release, Mattson said he's got many more teed up and ready to hit the digital "air" waves after this initial debut. While he's musically talented, he said he's needed

help from more internet savvy people to handle the technical side of today's music business. "It took me a while to figure out how to get my music out," he said.

"Matthew Larson, from Ely, has helped on the technical side. So now, once I get that figured out, I have 25 more tunes coming down the line."

His songs will run a gamut as wide as his musical interest, which spans everything from gospel to rock and roll to heavy metal. His likely next song up, tentatively titled, "Hey, You Going My Way?" will have an early "sock hop" feel he said. "I really enjoy that style... there were some great melodies back then. I think if you write a

good melody, people will gravitate toward it. I want to put out a good product that sounds good. I'm not quitting my day job but I want to get these songs off my hard drive."

He's since registered with BMI as a songwriter and producer and has his website, robmattsonmusic.com up, and running. The website has a catchy minute-long segment of his pending release available for anyone wanting to get a taste ahead of the official Dec. 29 release as well as a pre-save and follow link to Spotify which will automatically download the song to phones upon its release on Spotify.

"A lot of pre-saves will help generate more interest in the song," said Mattson.

HYDROGEN...Continued from page 1B

"That industry uses a lot of natural gas for heat and thermal systems, for producing the pellets," Erickson said. "You'd have to design (the systems) quite a bit differently, but you could certainly add some hydrogen power to that and decrease the emissions from that standpoint."

Manipulating molecules

The most abundant element in the universe, hydrogen has historically

been difficult to harness into energy. The Hindenburg Disaster of 1937 is an infamous example that demonstrates hydrogen's explosive qualities.

"You can't mine it. You can't stick a pipe in the ground, then bring hydrogen up. You have to produce it from something else. It's the smallest molecule, the hardest one to trap," Erickson explained. "It's the hardest one to move around once you've

produced it, so we have some things that we need to get over and get behind coming up with new innovative ideas to really bring the costs down."

Most commercial hydrogen is produced today by separating the hydrogen atoms from methane under high heat and pressure, with many industrial facilities using natural gas as the methane source. This method produces hydrogen, carbon monoxide and

a relatively small amount of carbon dioxide.

Electrolysis splits hydrogen from water using an electric current. This method does not create any byproducts or emissions other than oxygen and hydrogen. It is the primary focus of the Department of Energy's investment into hydrogen energy.

The Heartland Hydrogen Hub's projects are expected to reduce carbon emissions by

roughly 1 million metric tons per year, the equivalent of 220,000 gasoline-powered cars.


Erickson — who is also the director of exploratory research at the University of North Dakota — said infrastructure for hydrogen's use on a wider scale is in the future.

"Shipping — whether it's trains or whether it's ships moving large quantities of oil around — they are even bigger targets,"

he said. "Maybe even a little bit easier targets for application of the hydrogen fuel."

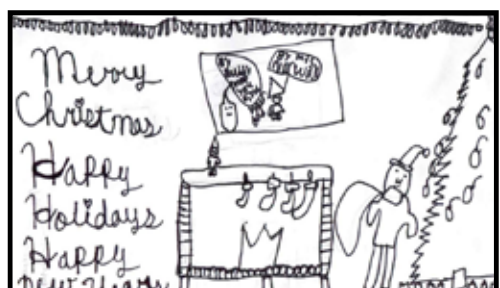
Erickson, whose grandfather and numerous other relatives worked in the taconite mines on the Iron Range, said technology to produce higher quality taconite pellets has been studied in Keewatin, where U.S. Steel plans to invest \$150 million in a new higher-grade taconite plant.

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FIRE DANGER

Superior National Forest to reduce Fernberg corridor fire risk

by CATIE CLARK
Ely Editor

ELY- One the last day of November, the Superior National Forest (SNF) filed an official notice that it was initiating what it calls the Fernberg Corridor Landscape Management Project (FCLMP), named after Fernberg Rd. A large part of the proposed project involves prescribed burns and forest fire fuels reduction along the Fernberg Rd. corridor and in Stony River Township east of Highway 1 and north of Forest Rd. 377. All of the forest lands involved are in Lake County.

The areas in the FCLMP are of concern because of conditions favorable to high intensity wildfires. The condition of greatest concern is an abundance of both live and dead balsam fir and dead spruce in the understory zone of the forest. Removing these trees would limit surface fires from climbing up the volatile trees of the current understory into mature tree canopies.

The FCLMP seeks to address this and other fire-conducive conditions, especially along the Fernberg Rd. corridor, which is surrounded to the north, east and south by fire-prone forest.

“One of the goals here is to restore a more natural fire cycle,” Kawishiwi District Ranger Aaron Kania told the *Timberjay* at the Dec. 7 open house at the district headquarters in Ely. “We want fire to play its natural role in maintaining the health of the forest.”

He explained that pre-20th century natural and indigenous-set fires reduced the fuels that fed blazes. “Historically, the accumulation of fuels would not be this thick,” pointing out fire-prone features of a modern forest area near the district headquarters. A previous USFS policy of suppression of all fires prevailed for most of the 20th century. Realizing that total suppression was causing an accumulation of wild-fire fuels in many forests, the USFS started to back away from that policy, leading to initiatives like the FCLMP.

“Our aim is to reduce



Kawishiwi District Ranger Aaron Kania with a pile of cut and cleared understory fire fuels. photo by C. Clark

high-intensity wildfires in drier, windier fire conditions seen during summer and drought.”

Some of the specific fire reduction features of the FCLMP include prescribed burning inside the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW) to reduce high intensity wildfires. Outside of the BWCAW, the USFS will reduce understory fuels with heavy equipment or chainsaws. The project will also reintroduce fire into fire dependent ecosystems within the project area.

Other FCLMP activities

The FCLMP has provisions to improve the scenic quality of trails, campsites and waterways. It will also improve and create new non-motorized trails, and improve access to hunting, fishing, and trapping.

The project will also expand eight gravel pits “to meet future gravel needs” for USFS road and trail maintenance and to provide gravel to “local governments, private citizens, and other agencies.” Also included will be the

improvement of Forest Rd. 443, and the decommissioning of Forest Rd. 446 and unclassified road U544601 after the project is completed.

Approximately 32 miles of temporary roads will be needed for project activities, which will be decommissioned afterward, unless needed to by tribal members to exercise their treaty rights.

Also included in the FCLMP is the commercial green timber harvesting of 9,000 acres “at sustainable levels.” The timber harvest not only fulfills the USFS mission to provide viable commercial activities within its forests, it also aims “to create young forests, improve stand conditions while maintaining stand age, reduce potential wildfire impacts, and improve moose habitat” according to the FCLMP scoping report.

Public outreach

The Superior National Forest started its public outreach with a Dec. 7 open house at the Kawishiwi District Headquar-

ters. It also held a virtual open house on Dec. 19.

On Jan. 1, the SNF will load up a new webpage with an interactive map for the FCLMP. To access the site, go to www.fs.usda.gov/projects/superior/landmanagement/projects and then click on the link to the FCLMP. This will take the user to the project website which will host the map. The site also has a library of project documents, including a report of the complete proposed project scope.

The FCLMP also has a public comment page where users can upload their comments and concerns about the project. Included is a library of public comments already uploaded, which currently has 16 submitted letters, all of which can be read online.

The period for commenting on the FCLMP scoping documents ends on Jan. 18 at 11:59 p.m., though the USFS states on the website that “Comments on the Fernberg Corridor project Scoping Report would be most helpful if received by

Jan. 15.”

USFS fire policy

The USFS policy of total fire suppression is now believed to have harmfully changed many forests, especially those which depend on fire to support their ecosystems. This policy persisted for almost a century. By the 1990s, forest managers realized that total suppression made forests more vulnerable to catastrophic high-intensity wildfires.

Starting in 1995, the USFS gradually adopted policies to reduce fuels and reintroduce prescribed burns.

The Great Fire of 1910 solidified the USFS’s policy of putting out every fire. The event is still called the Big Burn in Idaho and Montana. One compilation listed the Big Burn as the ninth largest fire in recorded history, the second largest fire in U.S. history, and the largest in the lower 48 states. In just two days in late August, 1910, three million acres burned along 300 miles of the Idaho-Montana border, from the Canadian border to the Salmon river, devastating forests and destroying towns. The

smoke and soot fell across the northern part of the country as far as New England.

Many politicians at the time, especially those from western states, saw the USFS as a federal land grab. The result was frequent attacks on the USFS budget, which had been pared back so much in 1910 that the agency ran on a skeleton staff. In the face of the death toll and devastation, public sentiment about the USFS changed overnight and its budget doubled in the space of year.

The USFS embraced total fire suppression in the wake of the Great Fire of 1910. Where the USFS led, other federal and state firefighters followed because of the Weeks Act of 1911, which established collaboration and cooperation among federal, state, local, and other firefighting agencies. Accordingly, in the years that followed, total fire control is what Americans came to expect for most of the 20th century. Now we know better.

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Watch The VIKINGS GAME!
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CLOSED MONDAYS
Hours: Tues-Thurs: 3 PM-Close; Fri, Sat, Sun: Noon-Close
Dining Room: S,Tu,W,Th: Open daily to 9 PM, Fri & Sat: Noon to 10 PM
Poor Gary's Pizza: S,Tu,W to 9 PM; Thur. to 10 PM
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Cook VFW POST 1757

(218)666-0500

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Noon to Closing
(Closed Tuesday)

HAPPY HOUR 3:30-6:30 PM
Pull Tabs (Lic #00390)

Thursday: BINGO
Opens: 5 PM
Games Start: 6:30 PM

FRIDAY BURGER NIGHT • 4:30-7 PM
1/3 LB BURGER - \$6

206 1st St SW, Cook, MN

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GRADE 4

Joy & Peace To The World from Northern Comfort Co.

Artist • Charlotte Anderson
GRADE 5

Merry Christmas, Enjoy The New Year! from Norman's One Stop

Artist • Dominic Kelley
GRADE 4

EMPLOYMENT

OPENINGS



Vermilion Country School (VCS) is seeking applicants for the following positions:

Vermilion Country is a project based learning school seeking to expand our staffing. We are adding new positions! Currently open for interview on a rolling basis - call 218-248-2485 or email info@vermilioncountry.org for more information:

- Licensed Teaching positions grades 7-12(B.A. or teaching license required):**
- Literature/Language Arts &/or Social Studies (Licensed) 40K-54K DOE
 - Science &/or Math Teacher (Licensed) 40K-54K DOE

Student Support and Community positions (no education license required) Benefits Eligible

- Special Education Assistant /para(Special Education) (Hourly \$17.50 - 24.50/HR +)
- Student Success Counselor (salary) (\$40K annual salary)
- Student Success Program Specialist (hourly \$24-30/hr+ DOE)

Part Time:

- American Indian Programs Liaison & Community Organizer (Hourly \$24-30/hr+ DOE) Part time 4-8 hours per week
- Transportation Driver (Van) 5-20 hours per week. Hourly rate DOE
- Transportation Driver (Class C School Bus) 5-20 hours per week. Hourly rate DOE

For inquiries, contact info@vermilioncountry.org and/or 218-248-2485

COME JOIN OUR TEAM! Waschke Family Chevrolet is currently seeking a Auto Body Technician and an Automotive Detailer. Stop in and apply in person at 126 N Hwy. 53, Cook, or inquire by phone at 218-666-5901, or send resume to Dgrecinger@waschke.com.

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Waschke Family Chevrolet is currently seeking an A/B technician. Prefer GM Certified but will train. Base pay plus incentives! Stop in and apply in person at 126 N Hwy. 53, Cook, or inquire by phone at 218-666-5901, or send resume to Dgrecinger@waschke.com.

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Even Exchange by Donna Pettman

Each numbered row contains two clues and two 6-letter answers. The two answers differ from each other by only one letter, which has already been inserted. For example, if you exchange the A from MASTER for an I, you get MISTER. Do not change the order of the letters.

- | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------|---------------------|-----------|
| 1. AM/FM device | ___ D ___ | Relative amount | ___ T ___ |
| 2. Ocean voyage | C ___ | Black-and-blue mark | B ___ |
| 3. British tea cake | ___ O ___ | Play division | ___ E ___ |
| 4. Country | ___ A ___ | Perception | ___ O ___ |
| 5. Home sweet home | ___ R ___ | Physical well-being | ___ L ___ |
| 6. Fossil resin | A ___ | Cinder | E ___ |
| 7. Dense | ___ C ___ | Ponder | ___ N ___ |
| 8. Turn upside down | ___ V ___ | Implant | ___ S ___ |
| 9. Like Billy the Kid | ___ W ___ | Expend | ___ Y ___ |
| 10. Peppermint | ___ A ___ | Caulking material | ___ U ___ |

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PUBLIC NOTICE

Vermilion Lake Township Notice of Filings

Filings for the following offices will open on Tuesday, January 2, 2024 and close on Tuesday, January 16, 2024 at 5:00 p.m.

Supervisor 3-year term
Clerk 2-year term

Filing fee: \$2.00

Candidates: File Affidavit of Candidacy by appointment only at the CLERK'S OFFICE, 6703 Wahlsten Rd. The clerk's office will be open the last day of filing from 1 p.m. - 5 p.m. Call 218-749-2902 and leave a message.

Election will be held on Tuesday, March 12, 2024

Crystal Alaspa, Town Clerk

Published in the Timberjay, Dec. 22 & 29, 2023

Notice of Sale

This is legal notice of the sale of a 2020 Ram 1500 with a Possessory Lien, for mechanical work and storage, in the minimum amount of \$8,260.77.

Sale of this vehicle is on January 15, 2024 at 9:00 a.m. at Hibbing Chrysler Center, 1321 E. 39th Street, Hibbing, MN. The owners and lienholder have been notified by certified mail.

Published in the Timberjay, Dec. 22, 29, 2023 and Jan. 12, 2024

CryptoQuote

AXYDLBAAXR is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each week the code letters are different.

ORD'S MZXD SNG VRPIO ZDO

IRWG CRTP WRTI; VXWORB XW

UGSSGP SNZD WXIQGP RP MRIO.

- URU BZPIGC

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CryptoQuip

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

Clue: X equals T

VLXXLSI ILZX XP NMSR QULVVLSI

MAPBX WPSILI XWMX IXPJ MZQ

SLNBIL XP FLLJ UMFVHZT:

AMVF RMHV.

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Legal notices are online each week at timberjay.com www.mnpublicnotice.com/

Notice of Election MORCOM TOWNSHIP State of Minnesota, County of St. Louis

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that we will hold a township election on Tuesday, March 12, 2024 at the Bear River School.

**Offices open for election:
1 Supervisor, 3 year term
1 Clerk, 2 year term**

Filing period opens on Tuesday, January 2, 2024, and closes on Tuesday, January 16, 2024. Contact Sasha Lehto, at 218-471-7776 to make an appointment to file. Open office hours will be held from 1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, January 16, 2024 at 12059 Hwy. 22, Cook, MN 55723 (Bear River Community Center/School) for filing as well.

Sasha Lehto, Town Clerk
Morcom Township
218-471-7776

Published in the Timberjay, Dec. 22 & 29, 2023

Up For Bids
2015 GMC Sierra 1500 SLT· 5.3 V-8 motor
101,109 original miles
· Crew cab · Moonroof
· Leather Seats
Bids will be accepted until Friday, December 29, 2023.

Vehicle can be viewed at Embarrass Vermillion FCU during normal business hours, 600 W 3rd Ave N, Aurora, MN.

We reserve the right to accept or reject any and all bids. Item is being sold "as-is" with no warranty, expressed or implied.

Bids can be submitted to any of our three branches in Aurora, Embarrass, or Tower.

Published in the Timberjay, Dec. 15, 22 & 29, 2023

King Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Jog
- 5 Cry
- 8 Goblet feature
- 12 Stead
- 13 Spanish aunt
- 14 Tortoise's opponent
- 15 Ride-sharing arrangements
- 17 Work units
- 18 Sixth sense
- 19 Forbidden acts
- 21 Stylish wrap
- 24 Flintstones' pet
- 25 Comic strip possum
- 26 "Yellow" band
- 30 Where Lux. is
- 31 Primitive
- 32 Brit. record label
- 33 Slapstick missile
- 35 Perched on
- 36 Evergreens
- 37 Icky
- 38 Where Gauguin painted
- 41 Pen name
- 42 Out of the storm
- 43 Temporary lodging
- 48 Furnace fuel

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

- 49 Snaky fish
- 50 Jazzy Fitzgerald
- 51 Maintained
- 52 Lay down the lawn
- 53 Deli loaves
- 7 Historic
- 8 Cyndi Lauper hit
- 9 Poi base
- 10 Thus
- 11 Disarray
- 16 Sugary suffix
- 20 Tennis champ
- 21 Pampering, for short
- 22 Estuary
- 3 Not 'neath
- 4 Elvis' birth-place
- 5 Halt
- 6 Texas tea
- 7 French prison
- 8 Cyndi Lauper hit
- 9 Poi base
- 10 Thus
- 11 Disarray
- 16 Sugary suffix
- 20 Tennis champ
- 21 Detail, briefly
- 22 Go sightseeing
- 23 Shrek, for one
- 24 Writer Lessing
- 26 Whims
- 27 Jared of
- "Panic Room"
- 28 Book after Joel
- 29 Shriill barks
- 31 Send forth
- 34 Off course
- 35 Sagittarius
- 37 USO audi-ence
- 38 Dash gauge
- 39 Skin soother
- 40 Make well
- 41 Hardly hirsute
- 44 Old Olds
- 45 Layer
- 46 Pub order
- 47 "— Kapital"

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Weekly SUDOKU

by Linda Thistle

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

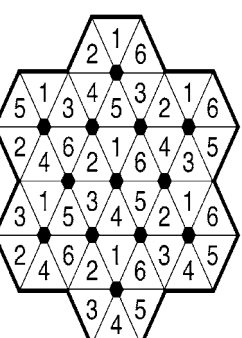
Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each small 9-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.

DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK: ♦♦

♦ Moderate ♦♦ Challenging
♦♦♦ HOO BOY!

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SNOWFLAKES solution



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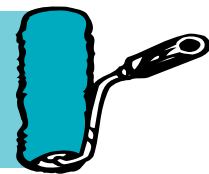


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N	S	F	W	S	H	I	V	O	L	D	P	R	O	D	U	D	E								
A	T	O	I	P	E	D	I	P	A	U	L	I	V	A	T	O	N								
P	E	R	F	O	R	M	A	N	C	E	P	I	E	C	E	D	O	G	G						
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				L	E	O	N		S	E	N	T	E	N	C	E	N	F	R	A	G	M	E	N	T
				P	A	R	E		I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



HOME IMPROVEMENT GUIDE



Cook Building Center Wishes You...



Closed December 25 and January 1



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We will be closed Dec. 30 - Jan. 2

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EMPLOYMENT



DEPARTMENT OF IRON RANGE RESOURCES & REHABILITATION

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Permanent, Full-Time

As the Research Analyst for the Community Development Division, the incumbent will have the opportunity to use critical thinking skills to connect small details with the big picture in their daily work and for the public. The incumbent in this position analyzes and interprets data, tracks trends and studies statistical and financial information to inform agency decisions on growing and sustaining communities and developing businesses in the Taconite Assistance Area. Analyses will include a variety of data and information to better understand the relationship between local and macro-economic trends, labor and workforce trends, emerging technologies and industries, transportation, and other key factors. Additionally, the incumbent will perform community, regional, programmatic, industry, economic and demographic research.

This position is located in Eveleth, MN with the eligibility for a mixture of in office and telework.

Learn more and apply online at mn.gov/careers
Job ID: 72076

Application deadline: January 3, 2024

GREAT BENEFITS PACKAGE! Full time positions are eligible for low-cost medical and dental insurance, employer-paid life insurance, short- and long-term disability, pre-tax flexible spending accounts, retirement plan, tax-deferred compensation, sick leave, paid personal days.

AA/EOE, Veteran Friendly

Published in the Timberjay, Dec. 15, 22 & 29, 2023



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HOURS:
8-5:30 M-F

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It's Time To Celebrate!

from Northwoods Friends of the Arts



Winning Artist • Rune Hodge
Grade 2

Wishing Christmas Fun For Everyone!

from Tim Johnson-State Farm Insurance-Cook



Winning Artist • Kallen Williams
Grade 3

Happy Holidays To You!

from The Timberjay



Winning Artist • Edwin Swanson
Kindergarten

Wishing Everyone a Safe New Year

from the Tower-Soudan Agency



Brooks Anderson
Kindergarten

Let There Be Peace On Earth

from Embarrass Vermillion Federal Credit Union



Winning Artist • Lily Russell
Grade 3

Let The Bells Ring In A New Year!

from Vermilion Senior Living



Winning Artist • Amelie Zak
Grade 1