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# the TIMBERJAY



Serving the communities of northern St. Louis County since 1989

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## GREENWOOD, AGAIN

# Speed limit dispute leads to criminal charges

Mark Drobac charged with defacing speed limit sign he says was erected illegally

by MARSHALL HELMBERGER  
 Managing Editor

GREENWOOD TWP— A disagreement over the rights of a road association here to determine the speed limit on a public road has led to criminal charges against a township resident. Mark Drobac is facing two misdemeanor counts for defacing a 15-mph road sign

posted along Breezy Point Rd., otherwise known as County Rd. 674.

Drobac doesn't deny that he altered the sign, but said its placement by a group of local residents who have formed a road association is illegal. Drobac said he advised the association at a recent meeting against erecting the sign without going through

the legally required procedure.

He cites Minn. Stat. 169.14, which requires permission by MnDOT or another local road authority to post speed limit signs slower than allowed in statute, and that such permission cannot be granted without completion of a traffic study to determine the safe speed.

Drobac maintains that none

**Right: This sign erected along Breezy Point Rd. was replaced soon after it was altered.**

photo by M. Helmberger

of those steps took place. He also claims that the sign is too close to the road, and was placed on a curve, presenting a safety hazard

See...CHARGES pg. 9



## LAKE COUNTY

# Parties argue their cases in Silver Rapids court hearing

by CATIE CLARK  
 Ely Editor

DULUTH- The developers behind a controversial renovation and expansion of Silver Rapids Resort may have surrendered their conditional use permit and preliminary plat, issued by Lake County back in September, but that hasn't satisfied plaintiffs in two lawsuits against the proposed project.

Those differences were aired during oral arguments held Nov. 27 before Judge Eric Hylden in a Sixth District courthouse in Duluth. Defendants Silver Rapids and Lake County argued that the applications were no longer in existence, so the cases should be dismissed as moot.

The owners of the resort, See...COURT pg. 10

saying they wanted to avoid a prolonged court fight, decided to surrender their permits and explore other options for their planned redevelopment of the site.

"(The) defendant is confident that the county's approvals were properly issued but lacks the time to wait for the exhaustion of claims attacking those approvals. So, it surrendered those approvals ... and intends to pursue a (different) course ... by pursuing improvements allowed under existing rights or a scaled down project with fewer units."

The developers returned the permits to Lake County on Oct. 21 and both the devel-

## MINING

# DNR suspends review of NewRange proposal

by MARSHALL HELMBERGER  
 Managing Editor

REGIONAL— The Department of Natural Resources has issued a temporary stay of a contested case proceeding ordered by the state's Supreme Court to assess the viability of the use of bentonite clay as a liner for a planned copper-nickel mine near Hoyt Lakes.

The decision, which would maintain the stay until mid-August of 2025, was opposed by both PolyMet,

which had proposed the mine, and environmental groups hoping to block the venture.

But a DNR director, Grant Wilson, sided with his agency in opting to grant the stay on the proceedings while PolyMet, or its successor joint venture NewRange Copper, takes the next several months to study alternatives for tailings disposal.

NewRange Copper See...REVIEW pg. 10



## HOLIDAY FUN

# 'Tis the BUSY season

The schedule is packed with holiday festivals and related events

by MARSHALL HELMBERGER  
 Managing Editor

REGIONAL—If you can't find something fun to do over the next several days, you're just not trying. With somewhat milder temperatures forecast for Saturday and Sunday, it should be a great time to get out and enjoy the fresh snow and the holiday cheer being served up all around the region during the traditionally busy holiday season here in the North Country.

Here's a sampling of what's on tap over the next two weekends:

► **Virgie Hegg Hospice Partners Lights of Love** tree lighting ceremony and carols, Friday, Dec. 6 at 6 p.m. at the Cook city gazebo.

► **Choralaires Holiday Concert**, Friday, Dec. 6 at 7 p.m. at Gethsemane Lutheran Church in Virginia. A free

will offering will be collected to support local churches, community projects, and music needs.

► **Ely Folk School Holiday Arts Market and Carols**, Friday Dec. 6, from 4-6 p.m., in partnership with the Northern Lakes Arts Association. Support local artists, artisans, and culinary talents. There will be a youth craft table, fresh baked treats, and a variety of beverages. The event is free and open to all, but contributions are welcome. 209 E. Sheridan St.

► **Orr Snow City Festival**, Saturday, Dec. 7- Fuel up for a full day of fun at the Orr Fire Department's pancake breakfast at the Orr Community Center (former American Legion) from 7-9:30 a.m. Vendors selling a wide variety of items perfect for the giving season will

See...EVENTS pg. 10

**Above: Santa gives a big wave during last year's Orr Snow City Parade. This year's parade is on Dec. 7.**

**Below: Helen Chapin shows off some of the treats you will find at the Nelmark Christmas event Dec. 12-14.**



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## Community notices

**Vermilion Country School to host open house with meal and bingo on Thursday, Dec. 12**

TOWER- Vermilion Country School would like to invite everyone to an open house, feast, and bingo at the school located at 1 Enterprise Dr. in Tower. The event will be held on Thursday, Dec. 12 from 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.

In addition to food, fun and games, information packets for enrollment will be available, as well as child care for attendees young children.

Transportation from Nett Lake will be provided by Bois Forte (Big Woods Transit). Pickup will begin at 4 p.m. Call transit to arrange a pickup.

If you would like further information about this event call Adrienne Whiteman at 218-410-6168 or Becky Gawboy at 218-343-5974.

**Friends of the Boundary Waters hosting upcoming December events**

ELY- Friends of the Boundary Waters is holding several events in December. All events are being held at the Friends of the Boundary Waters office located at 8 E Sheridan St. in Ely.

Monthly Movie Night on Tuesday, Dec. 10 from 7–8 p.m. will show the documentary “Wilderness Day.” Step back in time to explore a wilderness canoe trip in 1954. Learn about the gear they used, the wildlife they encountered, and what passed as leave-no-trace principles 70 years ago.

Winter Camping on a Budget presentation on Thursday, Dec. 19 from 7-8 p.m. will explore the magic of wilderness winter camping. The perceived need for expensive gear and technical know-how can leave hopeful adventure-seekers out in the cold. In this presentation, learn how to start winter camping with meager means, where it’s necessary to spend a bit extra, and how to make the most of the snowy season.

**Learn about installing a home solar system**

ELY- The Ely Climate Group invites you to their meeting at 4 p.m. on Tuesday, Dec 10 at the Ely Field Naturalists Resource Center above the Ely NAPA store. Our guest is Rickey Sipila from Sisu Solar. Rickey is a solar installer who works in the area. There will be good practical tips. This program will also be available by zoom you can find the link at [elyminnesota.com/elyclimate](http://elyminnesota.com/elyclimate).

**Breakfast with the Grinch and much more on Saturday, Dec. 7 in Embarrass**

EMBARRASS- This month’s pancake breakfast at Timber Hall will feature a visit from the Grinch, along with a holiday boutique and much more. Pancakes and all the fixings will be served from 8 – 11 a.m. at Timber Hall on Saturday, Dec. 7. This is the monthly fundraiser and community gathering for the Embarrass Region Fair Association. Stop by for all-you-can-eat pancakes, your choice of ham or sausage links, juice, and a bottomless cup of coffee. The cost is \$7 for adults, \$4 for children 6-10, and free for children 5 and under.

Donations of gently-used clothing and outerwear are again being taken for the local Disabled American Veterans. Donations should be packed into white garbage bags.

There will be local vendors selling a wide variety of holiday gift items. Virgie Hegg Hospice Partners will also be at the event to take donations in honor of loved ones as part of their Lights of Love campaign.

The fair association is also collecting new toys and gift cards (Target or Walmart) for the Operation Santa Toy Drive, which serves area families who use the Tower Food Shelf, and for the toy drive organized by the Embarrass-Vermillion Credit Union.

The Memorial Blood Center will have the bloodmobile on site. Save a life by donating blood. Sign up at [www.mbcherohub.club/donor/schedules/drive\\_schedule/73625](http://www.mbcherohub.club/donor/schedules/drive_schedule/73625).

**“Castaway Island Christmas” dinner theater on Friday, Dec. 6, possible matinee on Dec. 7**

COOK- “A Castaway Island Christmas” is taking shape this week. Volunteers are cleaning Cook Covenant Church so the church’s Fellowship Hall will be transformed into a tropical paradise for the dinner theater on Friday, Dec. 6 at 6 p.m. Pastor Burton’s script is done, members of the cast have gotten their parts, and rehearsals have started. Decorations are due to arrive next week. A number of surprises are planned for the guests. Bring your cash donation or non-expired canned goods - this is a fundraiser for the Cook food shelf. Don’t miss this fun event, everyone is welcome.

In the event the maximum number is reached for the Friday night dinner theatre, we will add a Saturday matinee on Dec. 7 at 2 p.m. with a dessert. Call 331-442-9463 with your name, phone number, and the number of seats you’re reserving. Thank you for your support of the Cook food shelf!



**The Wonder of the HOLIDAY SEASON**

Featuring the Tower-Soudan Area Singers

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Tower-Soudan Elementary Gym

A free will offering will be taken  
Coffee an’ after concert

\* Special appearance by the Mattson Family Singers

## NORTHERN LAKES ARTS

**“Elf: The Musical” opens next Thursday, Dec. 12 in Ely**

“Elf: The Musical” director Ian Francis Lah rehearsing the show’s ensemble last Sunday. photo by C. Clark

by CATIE CLARK  
Ely Editor

ELY- The *Timberjay* has been sneaking into rehearsals of “Elf: The Musical” and can now report that you don’t want to miss the Northern Lakes Arts Association production of this well-loved family-friendly show which opens next Thursday, Dec. 12 at the Vermilion Fine Arts Theater.

The plot follows Buddy as he learns he’s not really an elf and travels from the North Pole to New York City to find his human family, discovering the true meaning of Christmas and the joy of spreading cheer.

“Elf: The Musical” is based on the 2003 movie of the same name. The musical opened on Broadway during the 2010-11 and 2012-13 holiday seasons, and on London’s West End during the 2015-16 winter holidays. The musical has toured extensively in the U.S. and the U.K. It was also adapted by NBC

in 2014 as a stop-motion animation featuring songs from the musical.

**Cast**

“Elf: The Musical” has a huge ensemble, seven more than NLAA’s recent production of “Fiddler on the Roof.” The show is directed by Ian Francis Lah with choreography by Megan Wind.

Broadway in the Boundary Waters veteran actor Noah Warner is Buddy the Elf, playing opposite Elyite favorite Lily Stanly as Buddy’s love interest. Bob Winkelman is Buddy’s workaholic father Walter and Andrea Strom plays his good-hearted wife Emily. Nels Maherus is Buddy’s brother. The part of Santa is played by Peter Kess opposite Karin Schmidt as Mrs. Claus. Deb is played by Mallory Wintz. Abby Sirek is Charlotte Dennon. Mr. Greenway is Rolano Rene Arguijo. Quinn Vidas is Chadwick and Mathews is played by Jesse Olson.

**Performances**

The NLAA production of “Elf: The Musical” is sponsored by the Ivancich Family, the Donald G. Gardner Humanities Trust, and the Vermilion Foundation. Thanks to the Donald G. Gardner Trust, the musical will have not one, but two pay-what-you-can performances.

“Elf: The Musical” will play at the Vermilion Fine Arts Theater, 1900 E. Camp St., with the following performance dates and times: Dec. 12, 7 p.m.; Dec. 13, 7 p.m.; Dec. 14, 2 p.m. and 7 p.m.; Dec. 15, 2 p.m.; Dec. 17, 7 p.m.; Dec. 18, 7 p.m.; Dec. 19, 7 p.m.; Dec. 20, 7 p.m.; and Dec. 21, 2 p.m. The Dec. 17 and 18 performances are pay-what-you-can shows.

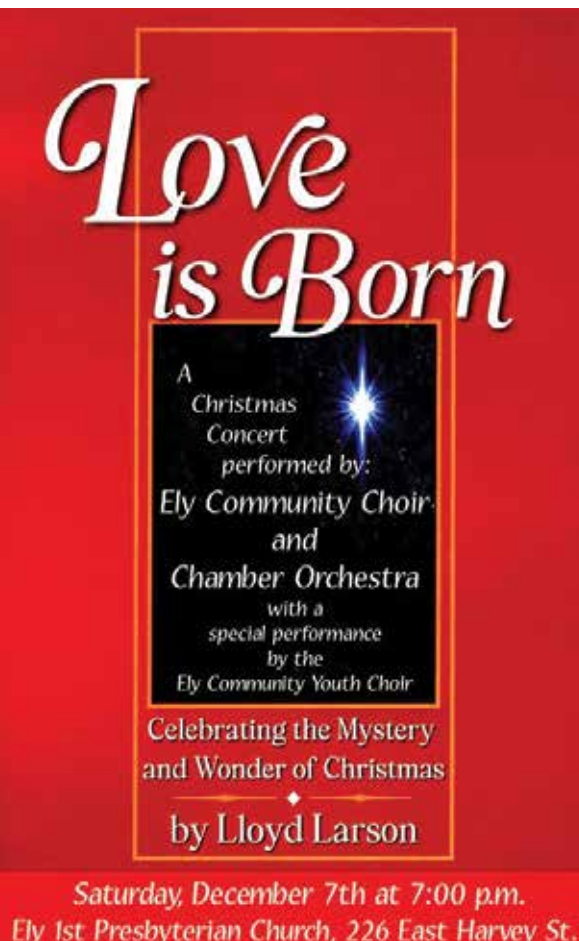
Tickets are available at [northern-lakesarts.org/elf](http://northern-lakesarts.org/elf).

## LIVE MUSIC

**Mesabi Community Band Christmas Concert on Thursday, Dec. 12**

EVELETH- The Mesabi Community Band will present its annual Christmas concert on Thursday, Dec. 12, at 7 p.m. in the Eveleth City Auditorium. Under the direction of Bill Lavato, Larry Baker and Daniel Melby, the concert will present a variety of music of the season, including “Sleigh Ride,” “All I Want for Christmas is You,” and “Joyous Christmas Spirit” Medley. The low brass section will also be highlighted with selections from this year’s Merry TubaChristmas concert held on Dec. 7. The public is invited to enjoy this festive concert, and admission is a free will donation. The band thanks the City of Eveleth for the use of the historic auditorium.

**The Mesabi Community Band tuba section featuring Skip Ferris, Dennis Jerrold, and Tom Baldrice will be joined by other low brass musicians in playing selections from the Dec. 7 Merry TubaChristmas concert at the Mesabi Community Band concert on Dec. 12, at 7 p.m. in the Eveleth City Auditorium. The public is invited, and admission is a free will donation.** submitted

**Love is Born**

A Christmas Concert performed by:  
Ely Community Choir  
and  
Chamber Orchestra  
with a special performance by the Ely Community Youth Choir

Celebrating the Mystery and Wonder of Christmas  
by Lloyd Larson

Saturday, December 7th at 7:00 p.m.  
Ely Ist Presbyterian Church, 226 East Harvey St.



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ELY CITY COUNCIL

# Ely almost ready to finalize cannabis ordinance

by CATIE CLARK  
Ely Editor

Ordinance will limit number of cannabis businesses to three

ELY- The Ely City Council stuffed three hearings around its regular meeting on Tuesday, one on the new cannabis ordinances, one on a change in the zoning code concerning slope stability along Miners Lake, and one for the yearly truth-in-taxation presentation for the city's budget.

## Cannabis

The hearing on the cannabis ordinances was brief and business-like. Ely resident Richard Stuart spoke first, applauding the city's thoroughness and care in putting the two ordinances together. As was covered in the Nov. 1 edition of the *Timberjay*, ordinance 381 dealt with the licensing regulations for both low-potency edibles and cannabis businesses and 383 dealt with zoning for those businesses.

"The one thing that I did notice," Stuart remarked, "was regarding registration for businesses. There's a lot of languages here that seems to put a burden on the city to do additional work that the state and the Office of Cannabis Management is doing already." He recommended that the city should prune the ordinance to remove those redundancies.

He also argued that the number of retail cannabis licenses should be limited to three instead of five, citing Ely's low population and the limited areas where cannabis businesses can operate.

City council member Al Forsman read a letter to the council from business owner Dafne Caruso into the record. Caruso argued for tighter restrictions on the sale of cannabis, stating that since Stinky Pete's opened across the street from her business, she has encountered the smell of marijuana. She expressed concern over public use and exposure to second-hand marijuana smoke, especially since her grandchildren are frequently at her business on Sheridan St.

Todd Crego responded after Forsman finished Caruso's letter, noting that Stinky Pete's does not sell cannabis, only low-potency edibles.

Carol Stahl and Margie Nesteroff both argued against the sale of cannabis in the city, citing the devastation that cannabis can do as an entry drug for youth, leading some to substance abuse disorder. Stahl's testimony was poignant as she described the wreckage that substance abuse has done to her family.

Residents Abby Dare, Lacey Squier, and Ozzie Reif each made a case for personal choice in recreation use while supporting measures to restrict public use and protect minors from obtaining cannabis products.

After the conclusion of the hearing, the city council acted on the two recommendations presented by Stuart. The council approved a motion by Paul Kess to limit the number of cannabis retail licenses to three with a 5 to 1 vote. City council member Angela Campbell was the dissenting vote.

The council also approved a motion to reduce the redundancies with state and county cannabis laws in ordinance 381 as Stuart suggested. The council directed the city's attorney, Kelly Klun, to prune the ordinance language before the council gives its second reading of the ordinance at its Dec. 17 meeting.

The council also approved the cannabis zoning plan in ordinance 383. Ely Clerk-Treasurer Harold Langowski prepared a map of the proposed zoning for cannabis businesses which showed the exclusion zones for cannabis sales around schools, treatment centers, and day care facilities. The map showed that cannabis businesses would be restricted to manufacturing zones and the west and central portions of the commercial districts along Sheridan and Chapman streets. The map is available on the city's website at [ely.mn.us](http://ely.mn.us).

## Land stability

Two city residents testified during the hearing for ordinance 378, which removes the requirement for landowners on the shoreline of Miners Lake to obtain certification of land stability beyond the 75-foot

setback for structures along the shoreline. Instead, the change puts the onus for determining slope stability on landowners, essentially setting up a "buyers beware" condition for ascertaining if their property is stable.

"Never once has it been required for geotechnical work to be done for ground stability," Langowski explained. "We've never had anyone do this."

Frederica Musgrave testified that the city had not provided enough information before the hearing. "We're having a public hearing where we're not informed. This bothers me," she commented. She bolstered her argument by pointing out that the planning and zoning commission wasn't provided with enough information when they discussed the ordinance change.

"They didn't have info, so they sent it to the city attorney and council to get more info. What happened is the city attorney presented an ordinance with nothing else — just the ordinance with no explanation, no map, no details, no explanation of the intentions ... Council asked for a map at your meeting. I believe that was on Oct. 1. Where's the map?"

Musgrave was followed by Carol Orban, who expressed concern that the ordinance was a backdoor change to benefit the proposed RV park in the Spaulding neighborhood. Mayor Heidi Omerza shut Orban down, saying that the RV park issue was not the subject of the hearing.

"I would just like to say that if and when the campground idea comes forward, that the city citizens (should) have full disclosure of what it's going to look like," Orban remarked.

"We're not talking about that right now," Omerza said. "The only thing we're allowed to talk about right now is this ordinance."

The council approved the first reading of the ordinance on Oct. 1. At that meeting, the council heard a public comment regarding the role the Minnesota Department of

Natural Resources plays in approving shoreline ordinances. As a result, the council directed the city attorney to consult with DNR to be sure that the change was not contrary to state law.

At its Nov. 12 meeting, the council acted on the recommendation by the planning and zoning commission to change the language after the city had consulted with the DNR, and scheduled the Dec. 3 public hearing.

After Tuesday's hearing, the council approved the second reading of the ordinance.

## Truth-in-Taxation

Langowski presented the city budget during the truth-in-taxation hearing. The city's 2025 taxes increased by \$154,600, or 7.16 percent from 2024. The complete presentation of the budget figures is available on the city's website.

In other business, the city council:

► Approved the end of police officer Courtney Olson's one-year probation. Police chief Chad Houde praised her performance, "She's been a great employee and has really excelled in every aspect."

► Approved a memorandum of understanding with AFSCME Local Union No. 1490 regarding a grievance which was aired during a closed city council meeting on Nov. 17. The memorandum states that: "The city denies the grievance and/or wrongdoing that it did not follow the collective bargaining agreement with the union related to the posting and recent hiring of Troy Oelke as a public works foreman. The city agrees to a one-time payment of \$4,500 to Ed Marsolek, paid to deferred compensation. In acknowledgement of the payment, Ed Marsolek shall not be entitled, based on the collective bargaining seniority language Article VIII Section 8, to the position of public works foreman. This agreement shall be non-precedent setting and shall be considered a full settlement of the grievance."



# Well Being hosting an open house on Friday, Dec. 6

by CATIE CLARK  
Ely Editor

ELY- After a year's efforts, Well Being Development's Clubhouse has now moved into its forever home, the Northern Lights House at 248 N. Third Ave E. in Ely. The Clubhouse is a place of belonging and wellness for those that live with the challenges of chronic mental illness and addiction. The Northern Lights House will also open its doors as a recovery residence by the end of February, 2025.

In celebration of this event, Well Being Development will hold an open house on Friday, Dec. 6, from 4:30 – 7 p.m. with a ribbon cutting at 5 p.m.

Well Being Development wants to thank its friends, partners, and the Ely community who have supported the effort to move the Clubhouse to its permanent home. It especially wants to thank Peggy York-Jesme and John Jesme, the previous owners of the home, for trusting us to make a difference in the Ely area community.

Many people and agencies have invested in the nonprofit's mission of supporting behavioral and mental health in the Ely area and the belief that recovery is possible. The organization received over \$70,000 in contributions and \$250,000 in grants in 2024. Over the past year, over 50 volunteers have helped with Well Being Development's programs and fundraisers, as well as the extra efforts of moving into the Northern Lights House.

Well Being Development is a community-based nonprofit acting as a hub of behavioral health education and resources that empower people to be well. Financial support makes a difference by helping the organization make energy improvements to the new facility and provide meaningful programming in Ely and surrounding communities. Contributions of any size are appreciated. Please donate at [www.givebutter.com/wbdrecovery](http://www.givebutter.com/wbdrecovery).

More information is available through the group's Facebook page at [Northernlightsclubhouse](https://www.facebook.com/Northernlightsclubhouse). Those with questions or wanting more information about the organization's programs can visit its website at [www.wellbeingdevelopment.org](http://www.wellbeingdevelopment.org) or can contact the group at [info@elywbd.org](mailto:info@elywbd.org).

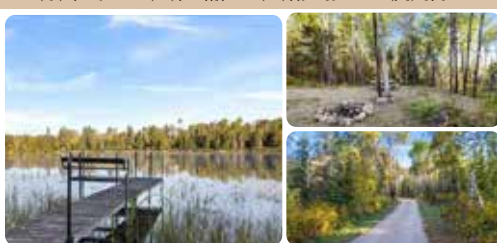
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# OPINION

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The First Amendment of the United States Constitution

e-mail: editor@timberjay.com

## Editorial

### How Dems lost the working class

When the party establishment blocked Sanders in 2016, it set the stage for Trump

In the wake of Trump's election victory last month, Democrats would do well to re-examine their 2016 presidential primary and how it laid the groundwork for the party's fall from grace with key groups of voters. That was the year when Vermont's Independent Sen. Bernie Sanders tossed his hat in the presidential ring one day in a short off-the-cuff speech, and almost instantly caught fire with working class voters who wholeheartedly agreed with his diagnosis and prescription for breaking up America's oligarchy and returning power back to the people.

It was a warning shot that the Democratic Party establishment failed to heed and it led directly to the election of Donald Trump, both in 2016 and again in 2024. Even David Brooks, a longtime conservative critic of Sanders, acknowledged in a recent op-ed in the *New York Times* that Sanders was probably exactly what the Democrats needed—a "disruptor" who would make the establishment uncomfortable.

Indeed, had the Democratic establishment not blocked Sanders' path to the nomination in 2016, Trump would have never been president. With Clinton, who along with her husband had become a defender of the free-trade status quo and a hawkish foreign policy, Trump had a wide-open path to peel off working class voters who had long been the base of the Democratic Party. Sanders would have made Trump's play for the working class untenable because, unlike Trump, Sanders is a true populist who has held steadfast to his principles and ideas for improving the lives of average Americans throughout his political career.

Sanders, who voted against trade deals like NAFTA negotiated by Clinton, appealed in particular to white working-class voters in places like the Upper Midwest, where the Democrat's purported "blue wall," of Wisconsin, Michigan, and Pennsylvania, first collapsed in 2016. Here on the Iron Range, the precinct caucuses in 2016 were jammed with new participants, of all ages, who turned out to back Sanders.

Across Minnesota, Sanders easily swept every congressional district in the caucuses and did the same in Wisconsin. It was no surprise. Poll after poll show that most Americans see the economy as rigged in favor of powerful corporations and the wealthy, and they back the kind of progressive economic policies—like fairer taxes, a higher minimum wage, and union protections—that Sanders has long pushed for in Congress.

The nervous Nellies in the Democratic Party wobbled at the prospect of a Sanders' campaign, telling themselves that Americans would never elect

someone who identifies as a socialist. Yet, many of those same working-class voters who were ultimately denied the chance to vote for Sanders in the general election, turned around and voted for Trump over Clinton. And the Democrats lost Wisconsin, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and nearly lost Minnesota.

We saw it all repeat again last month. Given the opportunity to elect a cautious, qualified, law-abiding president and a convicted felon and sexual predator who promised to blow things up, the working folks opted for the explosion and letting the chips fall where they may. That, more than anything, is a sign of just how frustrated Americans are with the status quo. As long as the Democratic Party is seen as the defender of more-of-the-same they will continue to lose ground to Trump and the oligarchs who dug deep to cash-flow his campaign this time around.

The irony is that Trump's economic policies will hit the working-class hardest of all. His policies will extend tax cuts for corporations and the wealthy and offer "hardship," in Elon Musk's words, to average Americans. That reality will soon dawn on many of Trump's voters, laying the groundwork for the Democrats' resurgence—but only with a messenger who is willing to buck the center-right, neoliberal orthodoxy that has come to dominate the Democratic Party in recent years.

It was the Clinton wing of the party, in a bid to tap big donors, that began promoting policies—traditionally the purview of the Republicans—that favored the country club set. Over time, regular Americans realized that the party had strayed, even as they generally saw the Democrats as a slightly less onerous alternative to the harsh GOP medicine.

Then along came Trump, who recognized that both parties had abandoned a traditionally leftist economic message that had long appealed to working Americans. And he jumped in with rhetoric largely stolen from Sanders combined with a social policy that played to Americans' fearful impulses.

A Sanders' campaign in 2016 would not only have prevented a Trump presidency, it would have reset the terms of political engagement in the U.S. and re-established the Democrats as the party of working people. The Iron Range, and other labor strongholds throughout the Midwest, would still be solidly blue. While hindsight is usually 20/20, it is clear looking back that the Democratic establishment's decision to block a Sanders nomination in 2016 was a monumental blunder that will take years to overcome.



## Letters from Readers

### Yes, thirty years is too long to wait

Political campaigns can be inspiring. I'm thinking of Rep. Skraba's campaign and his statement that "Thirty years is too long to wait."

Of course, he was referring to developing mining projects and I'm thinking about cleaning up mining projects.

This is the thirtieth anniversary of the closing of the Dunka pit. In 1994, the last train load of ore was shipped out and the Dunka site has continued its pollution of Birch Lake and the Boundary Waters ever since. Thirty years is too long to wait for a clean-up.

When Rep. Skraba goes to St. Paul, I hope he'll make some effort to clean up the Dunka site and the other six active taconite plants that are degrading Minnesota's public waters.

**Bob Tammen**  
Soudan

### Pushing for peace in Palestine is not antisemitic

Kudos to the Ely-Palestine Solidarity Group (EPSG) and their allies at Jews for Justice in Palestine, the Arab-Jewish Partnership for Peace and Justice in the Middle East, the New Israel Fund, the Alliance for Middle East Peace and countless millions across the globe for having the courage to speak up against Israel's war crimes in Gaza and elsewhere.

In his criticism of the EPSG ("Misinformation is increasing antisemitism" - *Timberjay* Vol. 35, Issue 47) Charles Marsden offers multiple factual errors and logical fallacies but no support for his thesis that promoting peace and autonomy for the state of Palestine\* leads to antisemitism. I think it far more likely that the increase in antisemitic acts in the U.S. since Oct. 7, 2023, as reported by the Anti-Defamation League, is caused by a backlash against Israel and Benjamin Netanyahu for their crimes against humanity in Gaza.

\*Recognized as a sovereign nation by 146 of the United Nations' 193 member states.

**David B. Stanton**  
Cook

### Netanyahu has been found to be a war criminal

Two readers submitted letters about the Israel-Gaza war to our local papers in the last two weeks.

There is no evidence that either of the writers has gone to any of the Ely-Palestine Solidarity Group's (EPSG) meetings, documentaries, or presentations. If they had, they might have a different picture of what's going on in Gaza. I advocate for the people of Gaza and the West Bank.

Israel had every right to retaliate against Hamas after their horrific attacks in Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, killing 2,500 people and taking 250 hostages. However, Israel does not have the right to kill at least 45,000 residents of Gaza (it's impossible to count the thousands of bodies buried in the rubble); wound 105,000 mostly women and children, with only one or two working hospitals to treat them; target hospitals and schools; and withhold food and other aid.

Ninety-percent of Gazans have had to run from one place to the next with not much more than the clothes on their backs. Hundreds of thousands live in squalid tent camps, which have also been targeted by Israel. People are starving. People generally eat one meal every other day, if they can even get that.

This looks like ethnic cleansing to me.

I'm not anti-Jewish, by all means, but I stand in opposition to Benjamin Netanyahu and his administration. Netanyahu has been named a war criminal by the International Criminal Court for his indiscriminate killing and for using starvation as a weapon of war. Israel has closed almost all aid entry points and refuses to provide security for the trucks that are allowed through.

One of these letter-writers gave a revisionist history of the creation of Israel. First of all, I agree that Israel did need a homeland after the Holocaust. However, Israeli leaders quietly disagreed to the U.N. partition of Palestine that gave them 56 percent of the territory and Arabs 42 percent. They always planned to claw back territory bits at a time through war and sanctions, which is exactly what they've been doing for the past 70 years. In 1948, 85 percent of the Arabs, who had lived on that land for many generations, many centuries, became refugees.

The writer seems to believe that Palestinian Arabs have no right to any territory. It's people like him, who don't seem to care about Palestinians' suffering, who have inflamed the opinions of pro-Palestinian people worldwide. In order to give Palestinians self-determination, the "two-state solution" has been preferred by many U.S. administrations and nations around the world. But that has gone by the wayside because of Netanyahu's intransigence and destruction.

Israel has destroyed Gaza and has gradually encroached on Palestinian mandated property in the West Bank. Israeli settlers daily commit crimes not allowed by international law: they plow down houses and roads, uproot olive trees and other crops, and steal Palestinians' homes. I can easily see why Palestinians are angry. And they have no place to go.

I encourage my neighbors to read more real news and real journalism.

**Carol Orban**  
Ely

### Your letters...

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

We ask that letters be limited to 300 words.

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

## COMMENTARY

# Another way to manage money, or one less bump on the road to bliss

One evening while washing dishes, I happened to hear a radio broadcast of a conversation between Kai Ryssdal, host of *Marketplace*, and a renowned financial guru. The interview was about a lesser-known method to manage household finances than the predominant American model summarized by the familiar adage, "What's mine is yours and yours is mine."



**KATHLEEN MCQUILLAN**

This line comes from a

scene in William Shakespeare's play, "Measure for Measure," where the Duke proposes marriage to Isabelle. As is true with many a phrase that first appeared in the works of Shakespeare, this one stuck, and remains an unspoken element of many a marriage contract.

Despite my not being a regular listener to the show, this conversation perked my interest. Ryssdal's guest re-

ported that a growing number of couples are choosing to keep their finances separate rather than merging them as is still the more common practice. He referenced studies showing that this non-traditional system might actually be increasing the longevity of partnered relationships when, for several decades divorce rates have been rising. Although some states have specific laws that grant rights and dictate certain aspects of how marital assets must be handled, considerable data indicate that when each party maintains

individual control over their personal resources conflicts are reduced and other positive effects within the relationship result. The guest expert went on to extoll the benefits afforded by this less conventional system. I was surprised to hear many of his examples validating my own personal experience.

For nearly 40 years, my husband and I have managed our individual income and assets separately. After years of tweaking our system, we enjoy the freedom to spend and save our own incomes as we see fit, while also reliably

covering shared expenses and obligations.

For both of us, ours was a second marriage. We'd previously experienced the "traditional" method in which we and our then spouses merged our money into the proverbial "shared pot." We drew money out routinely for needs like rent, taxes, and utilities, as well as individual purchases that we might later have to justify. Furniture, clothing, tools, trips in the car, and even groceries would oftentimes lead to conflict. We were living in that murky world of "who

has the last say" on what's important. The world around money soon felt like quicksand, sucking us and our relationship downward. Resentments festered and eventually the damage became irreparable. Neither John nor I ever wanted to experience that again. Consequently, we were both slow to remarry, unaware of other options.

Studies show "money conflicts" number among the top three reasons why marriages fail. (Communication

See **MONEY**...pg. 5

## Capitalism has run its course

Economic systems are born, they develop, evolve and finally, they die. Village barter, master-slave and lord-serf economic systems have come and gone, giving rise to antidemocratic employer-employee capitalism. Capitalism mutating into global corporate monopoly faces a fate of the same kind. Inequality, instability and poverty are falsely justified as necessary for realizing prosperity.

Our economic system affects our lives most profoundly; from the food we eat, air we breathe, water we drink, where we live, how healthy we are, the health care we get and how long we live. The economic system is a matter of life and death! It determines the quality of our lives and consumes a lion's share of our waking hours. We have some voice and vote in our political life, but in economics we have no voice and certainly no vote.

Capitalism, predatory and rapacious, has clearly run its course. Perpetual war, resource depletion, pollution, billions in bailout, climate disaster, and extreme inequality foretell its demise. The system delivered as intended for the very rich and showed some promise for working people from 1935-1985 and then it imploded. Capitalism's Orwellian "political language made lies sound truthful with appearance of solidity to pure wind."

Major economic sectors, dominated by three to five giant corporations, leaves a tiny number of corporate directors to dictate what's on grocery store shelves, how we transport ourselves, the clothes we wear, homes we live in, how we entertain, what we produce, how it is distributed and what we consume. Control over resources, wages, prices we pay, and marketplace domination forms an economic dictatorship.

Questioning has less to do with finding answers than to awaken others by exposing assumptions. The documentary, "Four Horsemen" ended with; "A predatory capitalist's enemy, and humanity's greatest ally is the self-educated individual who has read, understood, delays their gratification, and walks with their eyes open."

**Harold Honkola  
Stillwater**

## MONEY...Cont. from page 4

issues and infidelity are most often cited as the other two.) Ryssdal's guest made a convincing case that "merging our money" might be a major contributor to failure. Sadly, we seldom discuss these matters. Like an unwritten taboo, we avoid talking with others about "how we do money."

I decided to muster some courage. For the purpose of providing a public service, let's break the silence for a brief moment and explore the topic further. I'd like to share a closer look at a few simple things that my spouse and I have done to significantly reduce our tensions around money management. When we were just starting out with our relationship, there was no "how-to" guide — only our fears of repeating past failures — what not to do.

The research shows that money conflicts occur in households across all income brackets. John and I started out very poor by most people's standards. And the arrival of children didn't make our financial situation any easier. Distinguishing between "needs" and "wants" was always of concern. We both needed to develop the skills and self-discipline to successfully live within our means. We knew we needed to work as team. But as

## Give Trump a chance this time

Now that the election is past it is time to move on and begin to work hard on the issues that have been troubling the American people. Let's release the highly controversial issues that have been dividing our country for the last four years and begin to rebuild trust in the government and news media. Let's embrace the values and traditions of the generations that have gone before us.

Issues like transgendered people should not be in the forefront of the public on a daily basis. If adults want to do what they want that is their business but when it comes to children, it is our duty as adults to protect them from issues that may affect them the rest of their life before they mature and are capable of making their own decisions. We do not want to focus on anyone's pronouns, that is their own business and they cannot expect the general public to adhere to their own personal deception.

As far as abortion is concerned, it is good to have that decided on a statewide level. Every citizen of any particular state has the right to vote in their own state as to their own belief. Again, these are deeply personal decisions and corporations and groups like Planned Parenthood should not be able to influence the public with their millions of dollars that they are bringing in on an annual basis rather than truly caring about the mother and not only her physical health but also her mental health.

Speaking of public health let's embrace the conversations about whether or not some vaccines are safe. There has been an unspoken deliberate effort to engage in any honest debate as to the efficacy of these vaccines or the safety of them. In the meantime, we end up taking them without full disclosure only to find out later that they have been giving us heart attacks or strokes. I, for one, am excited to hear what RFK Jr. can do by making our food sources healthier, as eating bugs doesn't really appeal to me.

Long story short, let's lay aside our own biases and give the new administration a chance to see what they can do. I think we all want to be told the truth and want safety for us and our families. The new administration has both conservative and liberal people in positions of power.

That alone is refreshing and perhaps the "good ole boys" club of D.C. is going to have to listen to "We the People" for a change.

**Gary Aubol  
Ely**

## Continuing the work to protect the BWCAW

The election of Donald Trump means that America's public lands will be on the chopping block for the next four years. Pete Stauber's re-election puts the Boundary Waters and the greater Quetico-Superior ecosystem at grave risk, notwithstanding that our protected canoe country supports 'our way of life' and is the backbone of the regional economy.

Stauber attacked the Boundary Waters by proposing legislation that seeks to have Congress (i) overturn Interior Secretary Haaland's Public Land Order withdrawing federal lands and minerals in the Boundary Waters watershed from mineral leasing for 20 years; (ii) order the issuance of federal mining leases and prospecting permits to Twin Metals without environmental review; (iii) prohibit judicial review of leases and prospecting permits; and (iv) force a rapid approval of a flawed mine plan — all for the benefit of Antofagasta, a foreign mining company. Trump has publicly stated support for reversing the withdrawal.

Vote counts strongly suggest that is not what the majority of people who live near the Boundary Waters want. Trump lost in Ely and the three surrounding townships. Stauber lost by a substantial margin in the three Boundary Waters counties—St. Louis, Lake, and Cook. Trump fared even worse in these counties. Stauber and Trump provided plenty of reasons to vote against them, but their high-profile position of being willing to sacrifice the Boundary Waters watershed to help Chilean billionaires get richer was likely a significant factor. The residents of the three counties are not alone; since the summer of 2016, during public comment periods established by federal government agencies, 675,000 people have submitted comments in opposition to copper mining in the Boundary Waters watershed and in support of a permanent ban.

There are some who say that Twin Metals needs

a "fair shake" and that the process should be allowed to "play out." It's hard to say that Twin Metals didn't get a fair shake, because its owner, Antofagasta, has spent millions of dollars on lobbying fees over the past nine years. And the legal process did play out. The U.S. Forest Service, which knows more about the Boundary Waters than any other organization, exercised its authority under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act to ask the Secretary of the Interior to issue a public land order banning copper mining on certain federal lands in the Superior National Forest for the maximum period allowed by current law, which is 20 years. After a thorough environmental review, as required by law, the secretary determined that copper mining in the headwaters of the Boundary Waters would pose a deadly risk to the wilderness and issued the requested public land order.

In his first term Trump brought the American people chaos and an utter lack of transparency. When the Trump Administration was finally compelled to release its own draft environmental review of the proposed mining ban (after breaking its promise to complete the review), it delivered a cover page followed by 59 blacked-out pages. Its entire review was willfully hidden from the public. The Trump administration followed this with issuance of federal mineral leases that were later determined to violate federal law and were canceled—a result Stauber seeks to reverse.

The Boundary Waters Wilderness, one of the most unique and precious landscapes in the nation, is owned by the American people. The three Boundary Waters counties are the frontline of defense. We will be joined by people from across the United States who will continue to work tirelessly to prohibit copper mining in the headwaters of the Boundary Waters.

**Becky Rom  
Ely**

## Many share the view of the EPSG

In his letter last week, "Misinformation is increasing antisemitism," Charles Marsden accused the Ely-Palestine Solidarity Group (EPSG) of spreading misinformation and increasing antisemitism. I would urge Charles Marsden to read the

recent statement by Jewish rabbis. It reads, in part:

"Dabru emet, speak truth: The Israeli military is herding Palestinian men and boys into lines, and forcing them to walk toward pits. These are death marches.

"Dabru emet, speak truth: The Israeli military is forcing Palestinian families to flee again and again, even as there is nowhere safe from their bombs. This is ethnic cleansing.

"Dabru emet, speak truth: The Israeli military is burning Palestinians to death in hospitals and displaced persons camps. The Israeli military is burying Palestinians alive in the rubble of their destroyed homes. The Israeli military is abandoning infants to die and decompose. This is a campaign of extermination.

"These atrocities are crimes against humanity, a phrase codified within international law in response to the Nazi Holocaust, seeking to prevent horror of this magnitude from ever happening again. Lo ta-amodal dam re'echa (Leviticus 19:16): we must not — we will not — stand by watching endless Palestinian bloodshed. So many lives can still be saved."

This statement by the Jewish Voices for Peace Rabbinic Council is consistent with the EPSG message on atrocities in Gaza. Does Mr. Marsden also believe that Jewish rabbis are antisemitic and spreading misinformation about their own people? Perhaps other voices would convince him otherwise.

In July, the International Court of Justice (ICJ), ruled that Israel's occupation of the Gaza Strip, West Bank, and East Jerusalem is illegal. In November, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, as well as a senior Hamas official, accusing them of war crimes during and after the Oct. 7, 2023, attacks on Israel. This

court said it found "reasonable grounds" to believe that Netanyahu bears criminal responsibility for war crimes including "starvation as a method of warfare" and "the crimes against humanity of murder, persecution, and other inhumane acts." Does Mr. Marsden believe that both the ICC and the ICJ, the world's highest international courts, are also spreading misinformation and are antisemitic in their investigation and rulings?

Perhaps the Pope has more credibility. The Vatican's Secretary of State, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, said this about the response to the Oct. 7 attack: "Israel's right of self-defense, which has been invoked to justify this operation, must be proportional, and with thirty thousand dead it certainly isn't."

Similarly, other churches across the U.S. are speaking out against Israeli actions in Gaza. A letter by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America Conference of Bishops to President Biden calling for a permanent bilateral cease-fire states, in part, "We call for the collective punishment imposed on civilians in Gaza to be brought to an immediate end." In their balanced statement they also stated, "The United States must do more to secure the release of all hostages."

There are many other voices echoing these sentiments, representing other church bodies, human rights organizations, the bulk of the leadership of other nations, the UN and ordinary citizens throughout the world. They understand the truth that there is no justification for genocide. It is actually information, not misinformation that may be turning people against Israel. Israeli leaders must take responsibility for their illegal and abhorrent actions in Gaza and beyond. It is only then that they can hope to restore the sympathy of the world and stop providing fuel for antisemitism.

**Sharon Beatty  
Cook**



*the*  
**TIMBERJAY**

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to the other for items deemed "necessary shared purchases," most often food and household supplies. Major purchases with shared use, such as appliances, household improvements, and equipment or tools, always receive prior discussion. That gives each of us the opportunity to weigh in and negotiate whether it's a shared or individual need or want. This eliminates arguments over who's responsible for that expense while freeing that person their right to purchase it with their own money.

All decisions, agreements, and transactions discussed are jotted down in a notebook, recorded verbatim and if important, we both sign our names and date it. This has proven to be one of the most valued tools in our system. If a disagreement arises later, there's no debate over "who said what." We just turn to the "little green book" and the problem is resolved, sparing us an argument!

Like every couple, we have our ups and downs. There are always new and unexpected challenges. Balancing work and family was an ever-present stressor that worsened when financial times were rough. Shared core values helped us cope

during hard times. They aided in adapting to change as we reset priorities, found solutions for problems, and adjusted our financial expectations.

A firm trust and willingness to talk things through have been invaluable to finding agreement. By each managing our own money, we've honed our individual financial management skills that has increased the knowledge, confidence and respect we bring to the shared task of managing the household's finances.

Money has never been used as leverage or control in our relationship. We appreciate the security of knowing what resources we have within our personal control while trusting that our spirit of cooperation will continue to cover the core expenses we've agreed to share. Since operating within our financial model built on personal independence and mutual cooperation, we can honestly say that we have never argued about money.

Our system may not be for everyone, but with all the challenges that can threaten a partnered relationship, we're grateful that conflicts over money will not likely be one of them.

Week of Dec. 2

**Monday**  
Embarrass Al-Anon Family Group- Hope Lutheran Church, 5088 Hwy. 21, 6 p.m.  
  
Tower City Council- 5:30 p.m. on Dec. 9

**Tuesday**  
Tower Area Food Shelf- Open on the third Tuesday of every month from 2:30-5 p.m. New location in the old St. James Church building. Next food shelf day is Dec. 17.  
Greenwood Fire Dept.- Training meetings on the first and third Tuesday of each month at 6 p.m.

Greenwood Town Board- 6:30 pm. on Dec. 10

**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 Week 12 winner of the Charlemagne's 52 Club \$250 cash prize is Greg Buckley of Ely.

**History Tidbit:** Saloons and hotels were extremely common in the early days of Tower, with as many as 33 saloons and at least a dozen hotels scattered around town. Saloons were concentrated on Main Street but other saloons existed. Hotels were typically also on Main Street, though there was a hotel near the Hoodoo Point Road for early workers to live at. Hotels at the time were commonly long-term residences in addition to short-stay places.

**Correction**

The *Timberjay* incorrectly reported information on the CDBG eligibility issue for Breitung Township. The 2024 \$75,000 for the Center St. project was awarded, but not yet paid to the township since it was for work that has not yet been completed, so that money does not have to be "repaid." It does mean that money is not available for use in the planned project, or as use as a match for other funding for that or future projects. The township had applied for, and was hoping to receive another \$75,000 for 2025 year projects.

**Lunch Bunch to meet on Dec. 13 at the Vermilion Club**

GREENWOOD TWP- The Lunch Bunch will meet on Friday, Dec. 13 at 12:30 p.m. at the Vermilion Club. Please RSVP by Dec. 8 by calling Kathy at 218-753-2530. Attendees should bring a \$5 value gift for the game that the group will play. Please also bring an unwrapped gift for a child for the Operation Santa toy drive, and non-perishable food donations (or cash) for the Tower Food Shelf. The group is open to anyone interested in a fun gathering and conversation with friends.

**Tower Holiday Craft Sale set for Saturday, Dec. 7 at the Civic Center**

TOWER- The annual Christmas Craft Show will be held on Saturday, Dec. 7 from 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. at the Lamppa Civic Center in Tower. The craft show will feature handmade gifts, homemade soaps, fur items, Norwex, handknit items, hand-sewn items, ethnic gift ideas, woodworking, massage, homemade treats, holiday specialties, and much more.  
The Tower-Soudan Civic Club will be selling coffee, treats, and lunch. The menu will feature chili with all the trimmings, hot dogs, chili dogs, chips, cookies, scones, and water.  
Any questions, call Jodi at 218-750-3513.  
The craft show is sponsored by Friends of Vermilion Country School.



TOWER-SOUDAN EVENTS BOARD

**Small Business Saturday**

TOWER- Tower enjoyed another successful Small Business Saturday for the second year in a row. The event is sponsored by the Tower-Soudan Events Board and its goal is to keep shopping local during the holiday season (and year round). Although the weather was cold and snowy, shoppers still made the rounds on Tower's Main Street.  
Children enjoyed visiting with Santa and Mrs. Claus, and each received a small treat bag. About two dozen kids made the trip in to visit with Santa.  
Businesses reported seeing heavier traffic than usual and plenty brought in their receipts to take part in the raffle. Area businesses donated over \$500 worth of gift cards and products - please make sure you continue to shop local throughout this holiday season and the rest of the year.

All gifts were donated by their respective businesses - the TS Events Board would like to thank these businesses for their participation and generosity. The lucky winners are listed below:  
Nordic Home North Basket: Marleen Zak  
Pike River Products Basket: Steve Bradach  
UBetcha Baskets: Ashlan Barthorpe and Tonya Hunt  
Rick's Relics Basket: Kolby & Amber Nye  
Benchwarmer Grille Basket: Brooke Koop  
Vermilion Shear Image Gift: Dora Anderson  
D'Erick's Tower Liquors Bloody Mary Basket: Alli Anderson  
Logs Flippin' Fire Poker from Logsflipper.com - John Kauppila  
Zup's Gift Cards: Mary Anne Brenke and Jill Berg  
Tower Café Gift Cards: Maria Myre, Anita Norha, Jess Lagerquist, Charlotte Myre  
Good Ol' Days Gift Card: John Broten  
Frandsen Bank & Trust Gift Card: Maxson McDonough  
Tower's Gathering Gallery Gift Certificate: Sarah Lanik  
*Timberjay* Subscription: Jennie Winger  
The following individuals were also espe-



Above left: Santa lets out a loud ho-ho-ho to the delight of a young visitor. Above: Steve Bradach was one of the lucky basket winners. Left: Elisa Schramm thinks for a minute when Santa asks her a question. Below: Alex Kladivo checks out the brightly lit tree at the Tower Gathering Gallery meeting room. photos by S. Ukkola and A. Zak

cially helpful in the planning and carrying out of the event: Dianna Sundahl, Jen McDonough, Emily Eloranta, Johnny Eloranta, Jolene Mroszak, Jodi Summit, Lori and Tim Tomsich, and Linda Haugen. And a very special thank you to Charlie and Lorna Winger!



COMMUNITY GIVING

**Operation Santa donations are needed by Dec. 13**

TOWER- Donations have started to come in for this year's Operation Santa toy drive, but we still have a long way to go to reach our goal.

Operation Santa is a local fundraiser that purchases Christmas gifts (toys, gift cards, and warm winter items) for children whose families use the Tower Food Shelf. Last year the need was greater than ever, with toys and clothing given to 200 children from 68 families, and thanks to everyone's generosity, we also had enough for small gifts for over 50 students at Vermilion Country School, as well as gift bags we assembled for the senior citizens who use the food shelf.

Take advantage of the great deals, many of which are being offered right now, to bring some joy into a child's life.

We have started to receive some donations, but much more is needed to make sure every child in our community receives gifts and warm clothing this Christmas season.

The effort is organized by the *Timberjay* and the Tower-Soudan Civic Club, with help from many



area groups, churches, organizations, and individuals. If your group or church is planning to donate this year, please contact Jodi at 218-753-2950. This helps with planning!

Lake Country Power's Operation RoundUp® program has once again made a very generous donation to the Tower-Soudan Civic Club to help cover the cost of purchasing warm items for the children.

We are looking for donations of toys, games, art supplies, and sport-

ing equipment for children, and gift cards to either Target or Walmart for our teenagers (\$10 or \$15). Stocking stuffer type gifts and holiday candy are also appreciated. We are always in need of gifts for infants and babies (must be labeled as safe for children under three). Gift ideas for children include games, action figures, building toys, dolls with accessories, craft sets, art supplies (including crayons and markers), sporting goods (basketballs, footballs, playground balls,

sleds), puzzles, cars and trucks, and science kits. Please don't worry about picking out the right gift; I promise there will be a child on our list who will love whatever you pick out!

If you purchase a toy that uses batteries, please also send a spare set! Donations of batteries (especially AA and AAA) are appreciated.

We also accept gently-used holiday decorations and gifts for the adults who use the food shelf. We do assemble gift bags for the senior citizens who use the food shelf, so small gifts for them are appreciated also, such as boxes of Christmas candy, candles, puzzles and puzzle books, holiday scented lotions and soaps, holiday décor, and warm socks.

Donations can be dropped off at the *Timberjay* in Tower, and will be distributed at the food shelf on Dec. 17. Families who use the Tower Food Shelf and have not yet signed up, can call Jodi at the *Timberjay* at 218-753-2950, or email editor@timberjay.com to get your children on the list.

COMMUNITY NOTICES

**Wellness Mini-Expo on Saturday, Dec. 14**

TOWER- There will be a Wellness Mini-Expo on Saturday, Dec. 14 from 12 noon - 6 p.m. at the Idea Warehouse on Tower's Main St.

There will be a meet and greet with vendors, prize drawings, Reconnective Therapy with Terah Rinerson, Bare Rhythms products, Touched by a Starr consultation sessions, chair massages by Sherri, Bravenly products and consultations, Starbaby products, Clean Life Family muscle testing demos and products, and Brianna Lofquist with

PEMF and red light mat demonstrations. Some of these events are free, and others have a cost.

There will be a Native Detox Clinic 101 from 3 - 4:30 p.m. (Contact circlesister13@gmail.com or call 218-780-5554 for registration and cost information).

**Rock Ridge Reach Club hosting Taylor Swift-themed fundraiser Dec. 13**

VIRGINIA- All ages are invited to the 1st Annual REACH fundraiser at Rock Ridge High School (enter at door 1) on Friday, Dec. 13 from

4:30 - 7 p.m. REACH stands for Relationships, Education, Accountability, Character, and Hard Work. The event is raising money for club activities and field trips.

There will be dancing, activities, auctions, contests, snacks, and a silent auction. There will be a contest for the best Taylor Swift-related costumes (but costumes are optional). Tickets are \$15 at the door, and ages 5 and under are free with a paid adult. A slice of pizza and water are included with each ticket. Tickets can be purchased online by emailing lori.ismil@rrps.org.

**Finnish Ice Candle celebration on Saturday, Dec. 14 in Embarrass**

EMBARRASS- Embarrass will once again light up its cemetery with hundreds and hundreds of ice candles on Saturday, Dec. 14. After driving through the candle-lit cemetery located on Highway 135 just north of Four Corners, everyone is invited to the Embarrass Town Hall from 4:30 - 6 p.m. for a light meal and refreshments, organized by volunteer Beth Rolfson and her team of merry elves.

**THANK YOU**

*The Tower Food Shelf would like to send a huge thank you to Frandsen Bank in Tower for donating 60 frozen turkeys that were distributed to food shelf clients in November. And thank you to Zup's of Tower for supplying the turkeys for the food shelf.*

## ELY BUSINESS

# Ely business owner wins national award



Jacki Bregier-Poshak holding a poster-sized photo of when she received a national Rising Star award for women in the hardware business. Bregier-Poshak received the award in Chicago on Nov. 20. The enlarged and framed photo was a gift from her employees and friends. photo by C. Clark

by CATIE CLARK  
Ely Editor

ELY- Ely's own Jacqui Bregier-Poshak, CEO of KJ's True Value Hardware Store, was honored in Chicago on Nov. 20 with a Rising Star award from the HBSDealer newsgroup, a leading building supply trade publisher. The award is given to women "with the potential to make a significant positive difference" in the building supply business, an industry whose leadership is still dominated by men.

The award was given at the annual Top Women in Hardware and Business Supply event in Chicago to 76 women nationwide, including Bregier-Poshak.

Bregier-Poshak is a carpenter and the co-owner and CEO of one of Ely's two hardware stores, KJ's True Value Hardware, which she manages. The store is a family business started by her husband Jay's parents over 40 years ago.

KJ's was originally on Chapman St. as J&L Hardware, shoehorned into a long narrow retail space alongside its sister business, Ban Franklin Craft and Rental, which Bregier-Poshak also manages. The Poshak family changed the name of the hardware store when it moved two years ago into the former Zup's Grocery building on the corner of Sheridan and Third.

Making the move into the former Zup's building allowed Bregier-Poshak to expand the business's product lines including sporting goods, fishing gear, and rentals.

## The award

Amy Grant, associate publisher of HBSDealer, said the award selection committee faced the challenge of selecting this year's Rising Stars from the over 600 women nominated, all of whom displayed "an abundance of talent and potential from across the industry." The selection committee narrowed the winners down to 76 individuals, including Bregier-Poshak.

"Through leadership, dedication, and innovation, these remarkable women are shaping the future of the hardware and building supply industry," Grant said. "It's gratifying to believe that this group is inspiring the next generation of leaders in this amazing business."

HBSDealer is a national hardware and lumberyard media company that publishes a monthly magazine, weekly newsletter, and news website, focusing on news and events for the building supply industry. They host the two-day Top Women in Hardware and Building Supply event in Chicago every November. This year's event was attended by over 400 hardware professionals.

## In Brief

### Tuesday Group schedule

ELY - Hosted by Boundary Waters Connect, the Tuesday Group community educational luncheon 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.

The Tuesday Group is now on its winter holiday hiatus until January.

## Breathing Out

by Cecilia Rolando © 2024



stopped in for snack time  
puffed up raven visitors

feast for observers

## AROUND TOWN



Due to its popularity, the Ely Folk School expanded its Thanksgiving potluck to two seatings this year, but the event was still packed, especially at the 4 p.m. seating. photos by S. Clark



## Libraries

### Ely library

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

### Babbitt library

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

## Support groups

### AA - Alcoholics Anonymous

**OPEN AA - 7:30**  
p.m. Wednesdays and  
Saturdays, in-person,  
First Lutheran Church,  
915 E. Camp St., Ely.  
**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  
**ADULT BASIC**  
**EDUCATION GED**  
Study materials and pre-test  
available.  
Call 218-365-3359, or  
1-800-662-5711.

### CO-DEPENDENTS'

12-step support group, 4:00  
p.m. Tuesdays, hosted by  
Well Being Development,  
Ely. *This meeting is sus-  
pended temporarily while*  
*Well Being Development's*  
*Northern Lights*  
*Clubhouse moves to its*  
*new home.*

### CAREGIVER SUPPORT

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

## COMMUNITY EVENTS AND NOTICES

### Sage Foundation

ELY- Sage Foundation is helping connect hard-working students with community members who need extra hands with simple labor projects. If you need help moving, stacking firewood, or any other simple project please contact Lou Wiggin at 218- 821-2341.

### Christmas Cantata

ELY- The Ely Community Choir and Chamber Orchestra and the Ely Community Youth Choir will perform the Christmas cantata "Love is Born" by Minnesota composer Lloyd Larson, on Saturday, Dec. 7, at 7 p.m., at the Ely First Presbyterian Church, 226 E. Harvey St.

### Reflections Dance Company

ELY- The Reflections Dance Company's winter showcase will be on Saturday, Dec. 7, at 7 p.m. at the Vermilion Fine Arts Theater, 1900 E. Camp St. Admission is "pay what you can."

### Braver Angels Social

ELY- The Ely Chapter of the Braver Angels Alliance will hold a lightheart-

ed social event open to the public featuring complimentary snacks, beverages, and entertainment by Steve Solkela on Wednesday, Dec. 11, from 5-7 p.m. at the Boathouse, 47 E. Sheridan St.

### Santa Hayride and Bazaar

BABBITT- The Babbitt Santa Hayride and Bazaar will be on Saturday, Dec. 14 at the Babbitt Municipal Building, 71 South Dr. Booth set-up is at 1 p.m. The bazaar starts at 3 p.m. Hayrides start at 4 p.m.

### Gingerbread House Contest

BABBITT- Peter Mitchell Fun Days is sponsoring a gingerbread house contest on Saturday, Dec. 14 during the Santa Hayride and Bazaar (see above). Bring your finished gingerbread house to the Babbitt city gym stage between 3-4:30 p.m. Judging will be at 5 p.m. Pick up your gingerbread house at 6:30 p.m. Age groups will be ages 0-5, 6-12, 13-17, and 18+. First place prize is \$100, second place is \$75, third place is \$50. New for this year is a

people's choice award of \$50 for each age group.

### Babbitt Public Library

BABBITT- The December take-and-make kit is a felt mitten and heart pocket project. Pick one up while supplies last.

The Friends of the Library are throwing a holiday party with refreshments and live music by Gerry Mealey on Thursday, Dec. 12 starting at 6 p.m.

The Friends of the Library have a raffle for a Kate Spade glimmer tote bag. Tickets are \$5 each and only 500 will be sold. The drawing will be on Dec. 14; ticket holders do not need to be present to win.

The library has a Christmas wreath made by Theresa Miller to raffle off. Tickets are \$1. The drawing will be on Dec. 16.

Preschool story time is every Wednesday at 10:30 a.m. All library events are at the Babbitt Public Library, 71 South Dr., unless otherwise noted.

### Ely Public Library

ELY- The spice for December is cardamom. Pick

up a spice sample and recipe while supplies last.

The take-and-make kit for December is a tea light snowman ornament. Pick one up while supplies last.

The Friends of the Library Book Club for adults will meet on Monday, Dec. 9 at 3 p.m. The book for discussion will be "All's Quiet on the Western Front" by Erich Maria Remarque. You do not need to be a member of Friends of the Library to attend.

The Friends of the Library monthly board meeting will be on Tuesday, Dec. 10, from 1-2 p.m.

The Curiosity Cohort Group for adults will meet on Thursday, Dec. 12, from 1:30-3 p.m. The topic will be global winter holidays. Please sign up in advance.

Ely's string and winds group, the Accidental Ensemble, will perform an hour of seasonal music on Friday, Dec. 13, from 3:30-4:30 p.m.

The library will hold a snowflake appreciation day on Wednesday, Dec. 18, from 2-3 p.m. Learn about snowflakes and participate in fun flaky activities. This activity is for all ages. Please register in advance

for this event so the library can order enough supplies for participants.

The library will hold an online Kahoot trivia game starting on Thursday, Dec. 19 at 3 p.m. through Monday, Dec. 23 at 8 a.m. on the following Christmas novels: "A Christmas Carol" by Charles Dickens, "The Night Before Christmas" by Clement Clarke Moore, and "The Best Christmas Pageant Ever" by Barbara Robinson. Participants must preregister for the Kahoot so the library can email the link for the game.

The Get Crafty Group for all ages will meet on Friday, Dec. 27, from 1-2 p.m. for a winter craft station session where participants can try as many craft projects as look interesting.

The library board will not meet on Jan. 1 when the library will be closed. The meeting has been moved to Wednesday, Jan. 8, 5:30-6:30 p.m.

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.

## NORTH WOODS SCHOOL

# AmeriCorps program looking for math tutors

## Reading program started last year has produced stellar gains for students

by DAVID COLBURN  
Cook-Orr Editor

FIELD TWP- There's no question that schoolchildren's academic progress took a big hit during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the road to getting back on track with where they should be developmentally will be tough for many.

That's why organizations that provide student tutoring in basic skills are even more essential now, and folks are familiar with the fine job performed by volunteer tutors with Volunteers in Education (ViE) who have served North Woods School and other Iron Range schools for years.

And now there's a new participant in the tutoring mix at North Woods, Ampact, the educational tutoring service offered through the AmeriCorps program.

Ampact placed a reading tutor at North Woods last year, and now they're preparing to add two math tutors to provide even more assistance for students in need.

Education Impact Manager Sarah Caffee talked with the *Timberjay* on Tuesday about how the program works and how people can get involved by becoming tutors.

"This is our second year working with North Woods. We first partnered with them last year and we had a read-

ing corps tutor who served last year and just had an incredible impact with students," Caffee said. "About 100 percent of our third-grade students exceeded target growth, which is so powerful because we know that when students move into fourth grade there's a shift from learning how to read to reading to learn. We just placed another reading corps tutor at North Woods this year in October and we've already seen great growth with her students. We now have an opportunity to add to math corps tutors at North Woods and so that's really where we we're looking to fill some positions for this year."

There's a perception in the general public that AmeriCorps service program participants are primarily young adults, but the reality is quite different, as opportunities are available for people of all ages.

"I think that was my perception when I first served as an AmeriCorps volunteer in college," Caffee said. "But we have so many people of all different ages. We obviously have college students, but we have a lot of retirees. We have people you know who've been in a variety of careers - we've had accountants, we've had engineers, we've had former teachers, all who just really wanted to give back to their communi-



ty, so you can be of any age, any background."

Caffee described what reading tutors have been doing at North Woods, noting that math tutors would have similar activities.

"Depending on the hours that they set with their program with the school, our tutors get there at the beginning of the day and they work with students and groups of generally one to three students 20 minutes a day so they're working with students around 20 minutes a day. All of our interventions and curriculum is scripted, so you can come in with any education, any experience working with students. We

train our tutors and they facilitate lessons that we provide. They see students every day that they're on at the school, which builds really positive relationships with the students and helps them see that growth throughout the day. They also have time built-in where they have some time to plan and enter data, but the bulk of the day they're really working in small groups or individually with students."

Caffee noted that the curriculum used by Ampact tutors has been recognized for its evidence-based quality, and the program has served as a model for supplemental reading assistance.

When the Minnesota Legislature passed the READ Act in 2023 to support efforts to boost lagging reading achievement, the AmeriCorps reading program was written into the bill.

The full tutoring program provides reading support for students from kindergarten to third grade, and two levels of math support, kindergarten to third grade and fourth to eighth grade, Caffee said. The extensive training and scripted lessons make it particularly easy for those who believe their upper level math skills may be a bit rusty to easily become an effective tutor, she added.

"Sometimes we find that people are hesitant to tutor math because they're like, 'I'm not a math person,'" Caffee said. "We provide tons of training both virtually and in person prior to our tutors beginning service and they have a coach that's assigned to them at the school. We all do math in our daily life. I think everyone is a math person. And I think that our tutors who may feel like they struggle a little bit more with math are actually excellent tutors because they could really meet students with compassion and understanding and kind of break down math and a really helpful and powerful way."

Caring, compassionate tutors contribute to the research findings that student

grow in their confidence around math as well as their competence, Caffee said. "We talk a lot about data and how students grow in math but we also have studies with math that show our students confidence around math grows with tutors. I think that it's just having a tutor who cares who works with you and you know."

Caffee said the program is looking for two math tutors to start in January. The hours are flexible, and tutors will receive a stipend for their service.

An added benefit is that tutors can receive a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award, which provides up to \$2,800 for tuition or student loans after successful completion of a service term. Tutors who are 55 or older at the time they enrolled in service may transfer their award to a child, stepchild, foster child, grandchild, or step-grandchild.

To apply, go online to [join.readingandmath.org](http://join.readingandmath.org). Applications must be entered by Wednesday, Dec. 11 to begin service in January.

"We want people to jump on and get on that website and apply if they're interested," Caffee said. "A recruiter will reach out to them and they'll do an interview to see if it's a good fit."

## Community events

### COOK COMMUNITY THANKSGIVING



The social hall at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Cook was a popular destination on Thanksgiving as families and friends gathered for the 38th annual Cook Community Thanksgiving Dinner. Activity was particularly brisk when the line staffed by volunteer servers opened at noon, and remained busy throughout the two-hour event. This traditional sit-down dinner is made possible every year by the efforts of a small army of dedicated volunteers and the generous donations from local merchants, churches, clubs, contractors, and individuals. D. Colburn

### Church to stage dinner theatre

COOK-On Friday, Dec. 6, take in the fifth annual dinner theatre "A Castaway Island Christmas" at 6 p.m. at the Evangelical Covenant Church. Great food and fun, with the price per seat a generous freewill donation with all proceeds going to the Cook Area Food Shelf. Call 218-666-5892 for reservations.

### Annual lutefisk meal is Saturday at Trinity Lutheran Church

COOK- Join the fellowship and feast at Trinity Lutheran Church in Cook on Saturday, Dec. 7 for the 10th annual lutefisk and meatball traditional Scandinavian dinner.

Serving from 4-6:30 p.m., the menu includes lutefisk, meatballs, potatoes and gravy, green beans, rutabagas, lefse, homemade bread, cranberries, pickled herring, kranssekake, cookies and

more.

As always, it is open to the public and all are welcome. Take out meals are available. Meal cost is \$20 per adult and \$10 per youth (10-17), with children ten and under.

Proceeds donated to the Cook Flood Survivor/Preparedness Fund & Trinity's Parsonage Repair/Refresh Fund.

The church is located at 231 2nd St. SE. Call 218-666-5965 for more information.

### Santa's coming to Cook Community Center on Sunday

COOK- Jolly Old St. Nicholas and his elves will be in Cook on Sunday, Dec. 8 to help ring in holiday cheer with Santa's Workshop at the Cook Community Center from 3-5 p.m.

There will be games, crafts, and an animal walk, as well as an annual favorite, Hanson's horse-drawn wagon rides. Refreshments will include pizza, cookies and

beverages.

Santa will be posing for pictures, with one free picture per family. All other activities and food are free as well, thanks to generous community donations.

Santa's Workshop is sponsored by Cook Friends of the Parks.

### Additional area holiday events

►Cook, Friday, Dec. 6 - 5th annual dinner theatre "A Castaway Island Christmas" at 6 p.m. at the Evangelical Covenant Church. Great food and fun, price per seat will be a generous freewill donation with all proceeds going to the Cook Area Food Shelf. Call 218-666-5892 for reservations.

►Cook, Friday, Dec. 6 - Virgie Hegg Hospice Partners Lights of Love Tree Lighting ceremony and carols at 6 p.m. at the City Gazebo.

►Orr, Saturday, Dec. 7 - Virgie Hegg Hospice Partners Lights of Love Tree

## Bear River Lutheran to host annual hanging of greens Dec. 13

by GLORIA ANDERSON-HEGG  
Contributing writer

BEAR RIVER- When the hardy pioneers of the newly formed Bear River Lutheran Church gathered to celebrate the birth of Jesus over 100 years ago, they worshipped at the old Bear River Log Schoolhouse. One of the traditions was to pull the tree out of the corner of the room, light all the little candles attached to its boughs (with one person standing nearby with a pail of water, of course), hold hands with each other and sing Christmas carols as they walked around the tree. Although we no longer sing around the tree, favorite Christmas traditions continue.

On Friday, Dec. 13 at 7 p.m. folks will gather at the little white church on the banks of the Bear River for the 29th annual "Hanging of the Greens" worship service. We will make the sanctuary ready for the birth-

day of the King much as we would make it ready for a banquet with a royal host, by dressing it with its best apparel. As we get ready for Christmas, we often find ourselves getting caught up in all the hustle and bustle of the holiday season. Sometimes we lose sight of why we are celebrating in the first place. The "Hanging of the Greens" worship provides a way to stop and prepare ourselves for the real reason for the season - the celebration of the birth of Jesus.

While we sing together and decorate the church, not only will we explain the history of the symbols and customs of these special seasons, but we will dedicate these symbols to the glory of God. Come and join with us as we prepare our church, and ourselves, for the wondrous celebration of the birth of our Savior. Following the service, refreshments will be shared.

More coffee and goodies

will be available on Saturday, Dec. 14 from 11 a.m.-2 p.m. at our Holiday Bake Shop. Cookies, breads, candies, cakes, bars, pies, and much more will be available for you to purchase for your own holiday gatherings. Enjoy fellowship while you shop, all while enjoying hot coffee or cocoa from our cocoa bar.

Celebrating Jesus' birth will continue throughout the Advent season during our 10 a.m. Sunday worship times, and another favorite tradition for over 20 years, our Christmas Eve Candlelight Service, will be at 4:30 p.m. on Tuesday, Dec. 24 at 4:30 p.m.

Bear River Church is located at 11141 Hwy 22 in Bear River, three miles west of the intersection of Hwy 5 and Hwy 22 or four miles east of Hwy 65. If you have any questions, please call 218-376-4673 or 218-966-2817.

Lighting ceremony and carols at 6:30 p.m. at the Orr Center.

►Cook, Friday, Dec. 13 - North Woods Elementary Christmas Concert at 1:30 p.m. 10248 Olson Rd., Cook.

►Cook, Thursday, Dec. 19 - North Woods School Winter Band and Choir Concert at 6 p.m. 10248 Olson Rd., Cook.

### Cook Public Library plans winter hours

COOK- The library will be open Monday - Thursday, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. through the winter as long as there are no issues with the building.

The library walls are insulated but not sealed and there is no carpet. There are two entry rugs to help keep moisture off the concrete floor. The staff room, meeting room and storage room are not insulated and will not be used during the winter.

A small area of shelves is open for browsing books, DVDs and audio books.

Staff are happy to help find things beyond this browsing area. Printing, copying and faxing services are available. Wi-Fi is available outside the building 24/7.

At this time, we cannot provide seating areas or use of the public bathroom due to safety concerns.

Due to our limited hours and space, we will not accept book sale donations until spring.

If you have any questions about the library, please call 218-666-2210 or email [crystal.whitney@alstlib.info](mailto:crystal.whitney@alstlib.info).

Call  
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to subscribe  
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- Traditional Funerals
- Graveside Services
- Cremation
- Pre-Need Planning
- Monuments by Warren Mlaker



PUBLIC HEALTH

# Pertussis cases spike in state and St. Louis County

by CATIE CLARK  
Ely Editor

**REGIONAL-** Pertussis, commonly known as whooping cough, is at a ten-year high in both St. Louis County and across the state. The most recent statistics, issued on Nov. 21, show 1,969 pertussis cases have been reported in the state so far this year, with half occurring since mid-October.

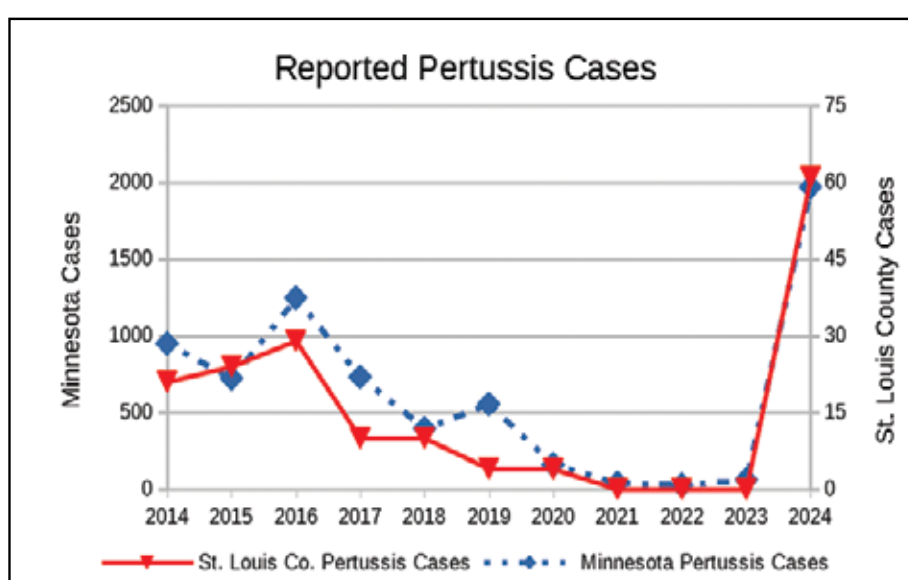
Most cases have been reported in the seven counties of the Twin Cities metropolitan area, however, St. Louis County, with 61 cases is the state's other hot spot. "There is a distinct clustering of cases in the Duluth area, although it is starting to spread north to the Iron Range," said Cynthia Kenyon, senior epidemiology supervisor at the Minnesota Department of Health, along with Senior Public Health Nursing Advisor Tabitha Hanson. "MDH is also hearing that there may be more cases than are getting reported, so there is likely more pertussis circulating than is reported."

St. Louis County had no reported pertussis cases in 2021, 2022, and 2023, so the reporting of 61 cases year-to-date in 2024 appears startling.

According to Kenyon and Hanson, the zero rate was an unusual situation due to the pandemic, and this trend wasn't just in St. Louis County — it was national.

Pertussis cases in Minnesota and the rest of the nation fell to historic lows in the three years after the arrival of COVID-19, and it affected all contagious respiratory infections. According to the National Institutes of Health, "The fall in non-COVID-19 respiratory diseases, including seasonal influenza, during the pandemic is well reported. It is thought to be a result of a combination of social distancing, lockdowns, improved hand hygiene, and respiratory protection measures."

With the lifting of the pandemic protocols, infectious diseases have come roaring back. The U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention reported that the current year-to-date cases of pertussis in the U.S. mark a return to pre-pandemic rates. While the spike of pertussis in Minnesota and St. Louis County is at a ten-year high, the increase follows a cyclic trend for the disease.



"Pertussis outbreaks tend to follow a cyclical pattern," explained Kenyon and Hanson, "with peaks occurring every three to five years. These cycles are influenced by decreasing immunity and the contagious nature of the disease ... (with the) regular cyclical pattern disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic."

While the current pertussis rate may seem high compared to the rate during the pandemic, it is worth mentioning that in 2012,

Minnesota had over 4,000 reported pertussis cases and over 1,500 in 2005.

The decreased immunity the two MDH experts described is due to a drop in the immunity effectiveness provided by the modern pertussis vaccines, which are bundled with tetanus and diphtheria vaccines in one injection. While the tetanus and diphtheria immunity from modern vaccines last several years, the pertussis immunity declines sooner.

Pertussis is often a severe disease for infants and young children. It is famous for its noisy bouts of prolonged and severe coughing. It was a significant cause of childhood death before the introduction of the first tetanus-diphtheria-pertussis vaccine in 1948. While infants and toddlers were once most of this disease's victims, the age demographics of pertussis have changed to include older children and teens.

"Pertussis vaccine rates

in Minnesota are pretty good overall, but pertussis vaccines decrease in protection over time," Kenyon and Hanson explained. "Additionally, pertussis is endemic in Minnesota, meaning that it is always circulating, and we see peaks of pertussis every three-five years. When we have these peaks, we see the biggest impact in those whose vaccine coverage has decreased, so with over the last couple of peak years, the age group that has been the most impacted are teens with a median age of 13 and 14."

Kenyon and Hanson emphasized that immunization can prevent pertussis and will mitigate the symptoms when vaccinated individuals do become infected. They recommended a booster shot for adults and teens who haven't had a tetanus-diphtheria-pertussis vaccine in the last year, and for pregnant women, infants, and children who have not previously been vaccinated.

## CHARGES...Continued from page 1

for travelers along the route. Drobac said he intends to claim his actions were justified if the case makes it to a court hearing, currently scheduled for Dec. 20.

Drobac found himself in the legal crosshairs shortly after the sign was erected. Within an hour of erecting the sign, the doorbell camera of a nearby resident captured video of Drobac, who had stopped his car near the sign and walked up to it, apparently inspecting it closely. Given

Drobac's opposition to the sign, the resident placed a trail camera in an inconspicuous location to record any other incidents involving the sign.

He didn't have long to wait. According to the statement of probable cause in the case, the trail camera captured video of Drobac on Nov. 7 at approximately 6:55 a.m. The video allegedly shows Drobac approaching the sign with a propane torch before beginning to burn the sign in order to change the numeral

one to a four. A second video clip shows Drobac returning to the sign about 20 minutes later with a can of spray paint, which he used to paint a black "4" over the area he had previously burned.

After the sign owner called 911 to report Drobac's action, a St. Louis County deputy responded and visited with Drobac about the incident. According to the court filing, Drobac "initially adamantly denied burning or painting any sign and said he

would never do such a thing." Once the deputy informed Drobac that he had been video recorded in the act, "he said something to the effect of 'Oh, I didn't know what sign you were talking about.'"

Drobac said he had no objection to other signs placed along the road by the road authority, including a yellow 15-mph sign placed near the intersection with Thomas Rd. But Drobac said the yellow sign is merely advisory, while the official black and white

sign that caught Drobac's attention is more likely to be mistaken as a mandatory limit, even if it isn't one that county sheriff deputies are likely to enforce.

Drobac notes that he pays into the road association so the sign he defaced is technically part his. The summons filed in court cites Drobac's claim, but it's unlikely that the court would find it persuasive.

The incident is a reminder that in an era of easy surveillance, it can be difficult

to avoid detection for such actions, and that even actions that someone may feel are justified can lead to legal consequences. Drobac, age 70, now faces a misdemeanor count of 5th degree arson for setting fire to personal property and 4th degree intentional damage to property. Both counts allow for a maximum penalty of \$1,000, 90 days in jail, or both.

# Keep it Clean, ST. LOUIS COUNTY



<b>ASH RIVER TRAIL CANISTER SITE</b> 11391 Ash River Trail	<b>WINTER HOURS</b> Sat: 12:30 p.m. — 4:30 p.m.
<b>COOK TRANSFER STATION</b> 2134 S. Beatty Rd. Cook	<b>HOURS</b> Mon: 10 a.m.—6 p.m. Tues thru Sat: 9 a.m.—3:30 p.m.
<b>COUNTY 77 CANISTER SITE</b> 2038 County Rd. 77 Greenwood Twp	<b>WINTER HOURS</b> Thu, Sun: Noon—5 p.m.
<b>KABETOGAMA LAKE CANISTER SITE</b> 10150 Gamma Rd	<b>HOURS</b> Wed: noon — 4 p.m. Sat: 8 a.m. — noon
<b>ORR CANISTER SITE</b> 4038 Hwy 53	<b>WINTER HOURS</b> Tue, Thu: 9 a.m.—noon Sat: 8 a.m.—noon
<b>PORTAGE CANISTER SITE</b> 6992 Crane Lake Rd, Buyck	<b>WINTER HOURS</b> Tue, Sat: 1 p.m. — 4:30 p.m.
<b>REGIONAL LANDFILL</b> 5341 Regional Landfill Rd, Virginia	<b>HOURS</b> Mon-Fri: 8 a.m.—4:30 p.m. Sat: 8 a.m.—3:30 p.m.
<b>HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE FACILITIES</b>	
5345 Regional Landfill Rd, Virginia Tues and Sat: 8 a.m.—1 p.m.	3994 Landfill Rd, Hibbing Sat: 8 a.m.—1 p.m.

**ST. LOUIS COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT**  
 218-749-9703 | OFFICE HOURS MON - FRI 8 A.M. - 4:30 P.M.

**Winter hours effective October 1 - April 14**



**COURT...**Continued from page 1

opers and Lake County filed motions nine days later asking Hylden to issue summary judgments to dismiss the cases as moot. Summary judgment is permissible when none of the parties dispute the facts of a case but differ on the legal interpretation of those facts.

The plaintiffs, however, argued against summary judgment, citing both factual disagreements and fears that a dismissal could prompt the defendants to break the law again. Community Advocates for Responsible Development, or CARD, and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, argued that dismissing the cases did not fix the underlying problem that Lake County allegedly disregarded its own ordinances by approving the applications, and should be subject to a writ of mandamus or a similar court order to prevent it from doing so again.

The issue of unit density for lodging is crucial to CARD

and DNR's arguments. CARD and DNR contend that Lake County should have followed its own shoreline land use ordinance for determining the permitted unit density, which would greatly reduce the number of new timeshare cabins at the renovated resort.

Instead, DNR argued, "Silver Rapids Resort states any future application ... would be for a scaled down project with fewer units than were approved in the approvals; however, neither Silver Rapids Resort nor (even more importantly) the planning commission commit to following Lake County's ordinances. The planning commission does not even concede Ordinance 9 [the shoreline land use ordinance] applies to its decision."

DNR and CARD argue that Lake County must follow its shoreline ordinance, which it negotiated with the DNR back in 1995, for determining development

density along shoreline. Lake County appears to be arguing, however, that it has discretion to use whatever density rules it feels are appropriate, like it did with the Silver Rapids approvals.

What's more, the plaintiffs argued that while the developers may have surrendered their permits, they were still legally valid. They contended the surrender was "deficient" because the legal description of the property was missing and the surrender was not properly acknowledged or recorded by Lake County.

In response, Lake County and Silver Rapids executed a second surrender which was accepted, signed, and recorded on Nov. 19 to correct the deficiencies in the first surrender document.

Attorney Tom Torgerson, arguing for the developers, told Judge Hylden that now that the surrender was fixed, the legal dispute was now moot and that motions to

dismiss were straightforward. He expressed some frustration over the plaintiffs' wanting to pursue a decision against Lake County in the wake of the surrender.

"They have the win. Why don't they go away?" he said.

**Is it really moot?**

Meanwhile, Peter Wenker, the lawyer representing the DNR, argued that facts in the case remain in dispute, which would prevent the issuance of summary judgment. In particular, Wenker said, the DNR and Lake County appear to disagree on how to interpret the density language contained in the county's ordinance and in state rules. The DNR argued, further, that the surrender did not moot the planning commission's approval of the resort's applications because the surrender can't erase the county's "error of law" in not following its own ordinance.

CARD's attorney argued

that despite the surrender of the permits, Minnesota case law had established "mootness exceptions," which includes circumstances where a defendant is seen as likely to repeat an action and could then be protected from judicial review. Both Lake County and the developers are asking the judge to dismiss the DNR's and CARD's claims with prejudice, which means the case is permanently closed and a plaintiff is prevented from filing the same claim in the future.

The danger of Lake County repeating its actions was clear, CARD stated, because Lake County, in its initial memorandum rebutting CARD's motion for a writ of mandamus, "expressly states that the planning commission acted properly in ignoring Ordinance 9's density maximums."

**Litigation prompted by county decision**

The Nov. 27 court hearing stemmed from lawsuits filed in early October, both of which sought to overturn a conditional use permit and a preliminary plat authorizing a planned redevelopment of the Silver Rapids property. Local opponents to the approved project organized as Community Advocates for Responsible Development, or CARD. The group filed suit against Lake County on Oct. 2.

The DNR filed its own suit against both Lake County and the developers the following day, on similar grounds.

Both lawsuits argued that Lake County violated the law regarding the permitted density of units. Because the suits are similar, the Nov. 27 hearing considered motions for both, even though they have not been consolidated.

Judge Hylden promised to issue a decision sometime in mid-December.

**EVENTS...**Continued from page 1

open for business in the center from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. More vendors will be on hand across the tracks at the Orr Center, from 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

The most highly anticipated event of the day is the Snow City parade which kicks off at noon, running behind the Orr Muni and over to Lumber Orr Hardware. You can enter your family, business, or organization in the parade - just show up by Norman's One Stop before noon to line up with the other entrants. The festival

theme this year is The Grinch.

Santa will be taking Christmas wish lists at T. Pattenn's Café from 1-3 p.m. and there will be carnival games available during that time as well. Families are welcome to take in popcorn and a movie at Calvary Lutheran Church at 4 p.m. The featured film is "Angela's Christmas."

► **Tower Christmas Craft Show**, Saturday, Dec. 7 from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. at the Herb Lampka Civic Center

in Tower.

► **Community Lutefisk and Meatball Dinner** at Trinity Lutheran Church in Cook, Saturday Dec. 7 from 4 - 6:30 p.m. Take out meals available, but no delivery will be available. Net proceeds will be donated to the Cook Flood Survivor/Preparedness Fund and the Church Parsonage Repair Fund.

► **Virgie Hegg Hospice Partners Lights of Love** tree lighting ceremony and carols, Saturday, Dec. 7 at 6:30 p.m.

at the Orr Center.

► **Ely Community Choir Cantata "Love is Born,"** Saturday, Dec. 7 at 7 p.m. at the First Presbyterian Church in Ely.

► **Holiday Boutique and Pancake Breakfast**, Saturday, Dec. 7, from 8-11 a.m. at Timber Hall. Toy drive with a special holiday guest, so bring the kids!

► **Mrs. Claus Party**, Saturday, Dec. 7, from 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. at Grand Ely Lodge. Kids can meet Mrs. Claus and

participate in various activities. More details available at ely.org.

► **Santa's Workshop**, Sunday, Dec. 8 from 3-5 p.m., presented by Cook Friends of the Parks at the Cook Community Center. You'll find Santa, sleigh rides with horses, treats, activities/games, crafts-to-go, and a free picture with Santa by Connie Stone Photography. It's supported by donations from generous area organizations.

► **A Scandinavian**

**Christmas at the Nelmark Homestead**, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, Dec. 12-14 from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. all three days. You'll find handcrafted and ethnic gifts, baked goods, coffee and conversation.

► **Embarrass ice candle lighting** at the Embarrass Cemetery, Saturday, Dec. 14, with a holiday gathering to follow at Embarrass Town Hall, from 4-6 p.m.

**REVIEW...**Continued from page 1

announced in August that it would undertake four key studies to assess whether new mining technology and sustainability developments can improve the environmental safeguards and performance of their proposed NorthMet mine.

Those studies include a re-examination of options for tailings disposal, including a new dam design for the tailings basin as well as using former mine pits in the area for tailings disposal.

"Regardless of which option is identified as the best solution, our objective is to ensure that tailings storage is safe and stable, and that we take advantage of any reasonable opportunities to clean up old contamination," said

Tannice McCoy, NewRange president and general manager in the August release.

The company will also explore increasing their planned production from the 32,000 tons per day in their original plan, to 40,000 tons per day. There would be no

change to the project's 225 million total tons of minerals proposed for mining and processing. However, if feasible, increased daily production could shorten the mine plan from 20 years to 15 years.

The company is also considering possible alternatives

for wastewater treatment along with ways to reduce its carbon footprint, including possible carbon sequestration in geological formations near the mine.

While PolyMet had appeared poised to begin mining operations back in

2018, the company has faced a gauntlet of legal challenges since then that have left most of the state and federally issued permits in tatters.

The company's DNR-issued permit to mine was remanded in 2021 by the state's Supreme Court which wanted a better analysis of PolyMet's proposed use of bentonite clay as a liner for the company's proposed tailings basin.

PolyMet, which is now a wholly owned subsidiary of the international commodities conglomerate Glencore, has joined forces with Teck Resources to create the NewRange joint venture. The new entity is beginning to reassemble a new mine plan, which may or may not look

similar to the old one.

That's why the DNR opted for a stay in the current proceedings, according to a statement issued by agency spokesperson Gail Nosek. "The scope of potential changes could have a direct impact on specific issues under consideration in the contested case hearing process related to the NorthMet permit to mine," said Nosek in a statement. "It was determined... that the implementation of a stay will prevent significant expenditure of time and resources in the contested case process for a project design that may become moot if the company amends or withdraws its current permit application."



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LEARNING

# Singing group uses drums and song to teach Native culture

by JODI SUMMIT  
Tower-Soudan Editor

TOWER- The echoes of rhythmic drumming replaced the usual sounds of students at work here last week. It was all part of a performance by members of the Oshikii Giizhik Singers, a community of Ojibwe women, based in Fond du Lac, that perform across the region, and country.

Their simple, unadorned hand-held drums made from deer hide stretched over a wooden frame sounded in unison, echoing mostly single and double beats. The lead singer began the song, and the other two singers then joined in. The songs shared were different from the ceremonial songs; these songs are meant to be shared in everyday life, featuring Ojibwe language about being thankful, sharing, and the need for clean water.

"We are a group of ladies that meet every few weeks," member Rebecca Gawboy told the students at Vermilion Country School during a performance the week before Thanksgiving. Gawboy works at the charter school, teaching students about Ojibwe and other Native American culture.

Gawboy has been singing with the group for five years. The group formed about 17 years ago, and is led by Lyz Jaakola, a faculty member at Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College, as well as a member of the Cloquet City Council and an outreach artist for Minnesota Public Radio. She is also pursuing a PhD in Musicology at the University of Minnesota-Duluth.

Jaakola, Gawboy, and Sheila Coughlin performed a series of songs, all part of the oral tradition of Ojibwe singers. The group features many female singers mostly from the Cloquet/Duluth area, with members performing at public events if they are available. Most have regular jobs, said Gawboy, so only a few were able to attend this midday performance.

### The songs

"None of this music is written down," said Gawboy.

The singers do not consider themselves professionals, but they do feel a deep connection to the music they share.

"These songs were gifted to us," said Jaakola. "Animals have songs. Water has a song if you really listen. Humans

**Right: Members of the Oshikii Giizhik Singers performed recently at Vermilion Country School in Tower.**

photo by J. Summit

have lots of different songs."

The songs they share all come with stories. Stories about the women who taught the songs. Stories from elders who passed songs down from the older generations. And stories about new songs, coming from dreams.

"These songs come straight from our hearts," Jaakola said.

The tradition of women's hand drum singing is more common in Canada, said Gawboy.

Some of the songs came from old recordings from the turn of the 20th century, recorded on old wax cylinders. It was a way to preserve their tradition since Native music was prohibited in the U.S. and Canada for many years.

Other songs are contemporary and are now being passed from singer to singer at musical gatherings and powwows.

Drums also carry their own story. The drum Jaakola



played was a gift for the work she does for women in her community. The drum has its own personality, and sounds good in the winter, but not other times of the year, when she uses a different drum. "Drums carry a spirit," she said, noting it was important to offer food on behalf of one's drum.

"The drum helps me do a lot of good things," she said. "I am very grateful."

Coughlin made her own drum. Gawboy's drum came from a drum maker she met out west.

Every drum carries its own story and own teaching.

These drums are different from the larger "Grandfather"

drum seen at a powwow. In contemporary Ojibwe culture, it's usually only men who sit and sound the large drum, while women singers might stand behind the men to sing at certain parts of the song. The songs Oshikii Giizhik Singers render sound similar to the men's powwow songs in that they are sung with drums, but most of them are women's songs. Ojibwe culture is never static, always changing, and women's drum groups have become more common over the last 75 years.

"Some of these traditions are changing," Gawboy said. "There are some women's drum groups at powwows in Canada now."

The group has performed across the region as well as in many other states, sometimes to crowds of over 3,000. The group performed at the Ely Film Festival in 2023.

"When people ask us, we come and sing," said Gawboy.

The group has recorded three albums, the first one, titled "It is a New Day," was awarded a Native American Music Award for the best traditional recording in 2009.

To learn more about the group, find the Oshikii Giizhik Singers on Facebook. You can find a video of a longer performance from 2023 at The Current, <https://www.thecurrent.org>, search for Oshikii Giizhik Singers.

## ST. LOUIS COUNTY

# County approves cannabis ordinance to take effect Jan. 1

by DAVID COLBURN  
Cook-Orr Editor

REGIONAL- The St. Louis County Board gave its final approval last week to an ordinance regulating cannabis businesses in the county. The ordinance goes into effect January 1, 2025, and covers the municipalities, townships and unorganized townships in St. Louis County where the county is the planning and zoning authority.

A public hearing preceding the board's vote drew only two comments from residents of Solway Township, where a Twin Cities business has inquired about available commercial property for establishing a cannabis distribution center, according to Town Board Chair Ronald Gajewski. Rick Johnston

registered his objection to the business, noting the lack of regular law enforcement in the township. Commissioners received the remarks without specific comment.

Third District Commissioner Ashely Grimm raised several questions about the ordinance, particularly about the restriction on the use of cannabis on public lands owned by government entities. As was confirmed by County Attorney Kim Maki, that would include tax-forfeited properties, which Grimm felt might be overregulating use that presented no harm and could be an enforcement issue. Sixth District Commissioner and Board Chair Keith Nelson pointed out that the ordinance was drafted carefully, and that the commission could always modify the provisions after it

has been enacted, once they see what the evolving cannabis landscape looks like.

"We took a very conservative approach, there's no question," Nelson said. "These ordinances are something that can be modified as time goes on. Remember that the state handed us a pile of crapola and said, 'You guys figure it out.' This ordinance is the process of figuring that out. This was all handed down to the counties, without any money, by the way, so we've spent the last five or six months going through this, we've spent a lot of time and energy and money to come up with what we have in front of us. The state can't even get a drawing done on time."

Based on a calculation accounting for the population in the areas of the county

governed by the measure, the ordinance approved the registration of three licensed cannabis businesses. County staff noted that the state Office of Cannabis Management is responsible for all licensing activities, and that state statute says that the counties "shall" register businesses granted a license. St. Louis County will take those state-granted licenses on a first come, first served basis, and retain a list of other applicants that will be contacted should any of the initial registrants cease operating.

The county's ordinance addresses use of cannabis in public, establishes zoning restrictions for cannabis businesses and hemp businesses, and sets hours for operations of retail businesses.

Significant points of the

ordinance include:

► No cannabis retail business will be allowed to operate within 1,000 feet of a school, or within 500 feet of a licensed daycare, residential treatment facility or a public park that is regularly used by minors.

► Per statute, the county is required to approve registrations for at least one licensed cannabis retail business per 12,500 residents. Based on the number of residents living in areas where St. Louis County has zoning authority, that means the county will grant approval to three such retail businesses.

► Use of cannabis will be banned in public parks or government owned, leased or controlled lands, as well as any indoor places where smoking is banned.

Anyone hoping to open a cannabis business in St. Louis County must first apply for a license through the state's Office of Cannabis Management.

The ordinance, as well as other information and resources about cannabis, can be found on the county's website at [stlouiscountymn.gov/cannabis](http://stlouiscountymn.gov/cannabis). The ordinance passed 6-1, with Grimm opposing.

## HELPING REDUCE HUNGER

# Walz taps ARPA funds to help food shelves

by DAVID COLBURN  
Cook-Orr Editor

REGIONAL- With Minnesota food shelves nearing the end of a third consecutive year of record visits, Gov. Tim Walz dipped into the state's American Rescue Plan Act funding to authorize \$5 million of additional assistance going into the holiday season.

"All Minnesotans deserve to sit around a full table and spend time with loved ones during the holidays," said Walz. "Minnesotans are generous people who do their part to ensure their neighbors have what they need - and this

funding will go a long way to supporting those efforts. I'm grateful for our partnership with organizations working to tackle food insecurity and distribute these funds quickly."

Walz made the comments while volunteering at a St. Paul food shelf on Nov. 25. The funds will be distributed around the state early next year.

Despite inflation's return to normal levels in recent months, Minnesotans are still feeling the effects of the increase in grocery prices in 2022 and 2023, which have remained relatively high. The high cost of food has led to almost 1.5 million more visits

to Minnesota food shelves in 2024. Officials believe the total number of visits will be close to nine million, the third annual record in a row.

Funding will support food shelves throughout the state. The Department of Children, Youth, and Families will partner with The Food Group to distribute the funds.

Walz also took aim at the issue of providing shelter for the homeless, designating another \$6 million of ARPA funds to support the expansion of a St. Paul emergency homeless shelter.

"Housing is a basic human need, yet thousands of families struggle to find and maintain

stable housing," Walz said. "When left with nowhere to turn, emergency shelters step in, providing warm spaces, hot meals, and needed services. This funding will provide necessary resources for shelters and homeless services."

Interfaith Action of Greater St. Paul, a nonprofit organization that provides families with emergency shelter, food, clothing, tutoring and job coaching, and free legal assistance, will use the funding to expand housing resources for families.



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## GIRLS BASKETBALL

### Grizzlies sputter in 0-3 start

by DAVID COLBURN  
Cook-Orr Editor

FIELD TWP- The North Woods Grizzlies girls basketball team is off to a rough start this season, dropping their home debut against Chisholm last week and road games to Bigfork and Barum this week.

Without a bona fide big in the post this year, Head Coach Liz Cheney's team is having to adapt to a guard-driven style of play, a style

that will apparently take some time to gel, as the Grizzlies have been topped by double-digit margins in all three games they've played so far.

Turnover and poor shooting plagued the Grizzlies against Chisholm on Nov. 26. The Bluestreaks built a 14-0 lead before senior Tatum Barto finally converted on a corner trey on the Grizzlies' 15th possession of the game to get on the scoreboard. With the cap off the basket North Woods steadily fought back, getting an

**Right: Grizzlies' senior guard Tatum Barto drives the lane for a shot in the season home opener against Chisholm last week.**

photo by D. Colburn

old-fashioned bucket-and-one three-point play and a trifecta from the top of the key by senior Addison Burckhardt, a pair of hoops by sophomore Corra Brodeen and a baseline drive by junior

See NW GIRLS...pg. 2B



## GIRLS BASKETBALL



Amelia Penke goes up high for a jump shot during Tuesday night's contest with Mesabi East.

photo by J. Greeney

### Wolves' rally falls short in home contest

by MARSHALL HELMBERGER  
Managing Editor

ELY—An impressive Timberwolves rally fizzled in the final ten seconds here on Tuesday, as the final buzzer sounded before the Wolves could get off a potentially game-winning shot. The miscue spoiled an otherwise strong second half of play as Ely rebounded from a big first half deficit on their way to a 53-52 loss to Mesabi East. The loss drops the Wolves' season record to 1-2.

Despite the loss, the Wolves posted some impressive statistics in the contest. Lydia Schultz topped the scoring chart with 15 points, while Audrey Kallberg was close behind with 13, along with eight rebounds. Amelia Penke added ten points, while Clare Thomas tallied nine points along with seven assists and four steals. Zoe Mackenzie led the way defensively with nine rebounds and four steals.

The Wolves notched their first win of the season on Nov. 26, as they ran over Two Harbors 56-30. Schultz and Penke dominated scoring in the contest, as Schultz poured in 18 points while Penke connected on three treys enroute to 17 total points. Penke also notched 11 boards for the double-double, while Schultz added eight steals and four assists. Maija Mattson and Gretta Lowe added six points apiece to the Wolves' effort. Mackenzie added seven rebounds and four steals for Ely, while Mattson and Lowe added five boards apiece.

The Wolves struggled offensively in their season-opening tilt against Chisholm, falling to the Bluestreaks 52-32 in a game in which no Ely player reached double digits.

Penke and Mackenzie led in scoring with six points apiece, while Thomas and Schultz each added five points. Mattson and Lowe contributed four points apiece. Mattson also led in rebounds with seven, while Mackenzie posted six.



## BOYS BASKETBALL

### Grizzlies reload

### Rout Bigfork 84-60 in home opener

by DAVID COLBURN  
Cook-Orr Editor

FIELD TWP- Coming into a new season, North Woods boys basketball Head Coach Andrew Jugovich had a big question looming – how was he going to replace the 50 points per game his graduated seniors, including standout Jonah Burnett, took with them when they left?

The answer in Tuesday's inaugural 84-60 home win against Bigfork appeared simple – play hard-nosed, swarming, unselfish

Grizzlies basketball.

"I told the boys before the game, this is a year that we don't have to have somebody shoot 25, 30 times a game to compete," Jugovich said. "We look different than last year. We're smaller, we may not be as fast and as athletic. If you look at tonight we had guys moving the ball. There's a lot of guys with several assists."

It was Bigfork who moved and shot the ball well early on, racing out to a 12-4 lead. But North Woods senior Trajen Barto canned the Grizzlies' first trey of the

**North Woods' August Peltier goes up for a jumper over a Bigfork defender in Tuesday's season-opening 84-60 win.**

photo by D. Colburn

season and junior August Peltier scored a double to get a rally going. A trey by senior Louie Panichi and a trey and a deuce by senior Talen Jarshaw brought the Grizzlies all the way back, taking a 19-18 lead with 9:45 left in the half. A fast

See GRIZZLIES...pg. 2B

## HEALTH CARE

### Arrowhead EMS group awarded major grant

by DAVID COLBURN  
Cook-Orr Editor

REGIONAL-Emergency medical service in northeast Minnesota scored a big win this week from the U.S. Department of Transportation with a \$5 million award to implement advanced telemedicine services in 15 agencies that are part of the eight-county Arrowhead EMS Association.

The Northeast Advancement of Rural and Remote Emergency Medical Services (NEARR-EMS) program will connect 20 ambulances in 15 agencies with EMS telemedicine services to provide area responders with real-time access to board-certified emergency personnel to reduce roadway fatalities and serious injuries, particularly in communities with significant numbers of fatal and serious injury crashes, as well as Tribal communities.

Avel eCare Emergency Medical Services has physicians, paramedics and nurses available to support EMS personnel who are en route or at the scene of an emergency who are able to assist with guidance from triage to trauma care within the scope of practice of the emergency personnel.

"Telemedicine can speed access to post-crash care during the critical Golden Hour in medicine, when the patient's chances of survival are greatest. This program will deliver life-saving trauma care more quickly, helping to reduce traffic fatalities in rural communities," said Rebecca Vande Kieft, VP and general manager of emergency services at Avel eCare in a press release.

Rural areas in Minnesota account for just a quarter of traffic crashes but represent over half of the state's fatal crashes. The Arrowhead's seven counties and four tribal nations averaged 9.88 traffic deaths per 100,000 residents between 2017 and 2021.

See GRANT...pg. 2B

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STATE FINANCE

# Economists project budget surplus, but future deficits loom

by PETER CALLAHAN  
MINNPOST

ST. PAUL—Minnesota state economists Wednesday projected that the surplus for the next state budget will be \$616 million, far less than legislators have become accustomed to and signaling a less-ambitious budget when the Legislature convenes in January.

Minnesota Management and Budget released the basic numbers Wednesday morning and will release a more-detailed account of its projections for the state economy and how current state taxes will perform.

If lawmakers stay with current taxes—a likelihood with a politically divided state House—and add only the required spending increases in health programs and education, the budget would have \$616 million left in reserve.

That would be \$1.1 billion less than what was projected for the 2025-26 budget period at the end of the 2024 legislative session.

“Projected reductions in income and sales tax revenues and higher spending for long-term care and special education = growing structural imbalance throughout the forecast period,” the agency stated on social media.

“Structural imbalance” is budget speak for projected spending exceeding project revenue. That is, they aren’t called deficits by budgeters until an actual budget is adopted that spends more than the state will bring in.

A House GOP staffer put a slide on social media that appears to be from MMB’s presentation that showed the “structural imbalance” for the budget following the next

one — that is the budget that would start July 1, 2027 — at \$5.1 billion.

The outlook led House Republican Speaker-designate, Rep. Lisa Demuth of Cold Spring, to warn that budget cuts will be needed to make sure future budgets stay in balance.

“While the budget is stable in this biennium, it’s obvious that spending reductions are needed to prevent a deficit down the road,” said the lawmaker who will share control over the House next session. “House Republicans are putting state agencies on notice: the times of automatic budget increases and dramatic government employee growth are over, and we expect you to join us in working to find savings and root out waste and fraud.”

The numbers released Wednesday morning give an indi-

cation of what state lawmakers will have to spend when a final, two-year, budget is approved next spring. But the official revenue numbers for that process will come from another economic and revenue forecast due in February.

While it is possible economic conditions could change between now and February, the state and national economic models that helped craft this week’s forecast do look into the future to assess risks.

Since the February 2024 forecast was released, economic predictions and actual tax collections have been somewhat rosier. Monthly tax collections have exceeded projections each month since February and were \$642 million above what was projected by revenue forecasters at the time of the November collections report. But the scant numbers posted

Wednesday indicate that the economic forecast is causing the economists to reduce what is expected from existing taxes going forward.

Whatever happens next spring when a final 2025-2026 budget is approved by the DFL Senate and the equally divided House, legislators will likely brag about cutting the state budget. The current two-year plan spends \$71 billion, and existing taxes won’t support a budget that large. That is due to the fact that \$5 billion or so of the current budget is going toward one-time spending. Such a cautious move was driven by knowledge that surpluses of the last several budget cycles were driven by one-time federal pandemic relief and tax collections goosed by federal spending on jobless pay, business grants, and federal and state rebate checks.

## NW GIRLS..Continued from page 1B

Isabelle Koch to pull within four at 19-15. North Woods drew even at 21-21 on a shot by Barto, then took their only lead of the night on a three-ball by junior Brynn Chosa. A 6-1 run by Chisholm to end the half gave the Bluestreaks a 28-25 lead at the break.

Whatever magic got the Grizzlies back into the game in the first half eluded them in the second, as Chisholm immediately reeled off a 22-2 scoring streak to effectively put the game out of reach at 50-27 with 14 minutes left to play. Chisholm kept up the pressure defensively, forcing the Grizzlies into turnovers and tough shots that wouldn’t

drop. North Woods scored only 13 points in the half as the Bluestreaks claimed a dominant 37-point win, 75-38.

On a frustrating night offensively, the Grizzlies hit just 28 percent of their shots and limited their scoring opportunities by turning the ball over 32 times, leading to 37 Chisholm points.

The Grizzlies spread their scoring across the lineup, with Burckhardt and Brodeen topping the chart with eight each, followed by Chosa and Barto with seven each.

“We have played for so many years with our bigs and relied on that under the basket, and we don’t have that this

year,” Cheney said. “We can’t rely on our tall folks like we have for years. Now we have just the five guards. We have to crash the boards; we have to go for the rebound. We were just getting one shot and that was it.”

“We’ve got some new kids that haven’t played together before, so we’re working on that chemistry,” Cheney continued. “So, it’s not what we wanted for the first game – we’ve got work to do. But it’s there. We just have to pull it together.”

### Bigfork

The Grizzlies’ road trip on Monday to Bigfork found

them on the short end of a 57-35 loss, but in a positive development, North Woods won the turnover battle this time, forcing 26 while giving up only 15. The challenge came in converting those Bigfork miscues into points, as the Grizzlies had another tough shooting night, hitting just 20 percent of their shots. Three-point shooting dragged the average down considerably, as the Grizzlies made just two of 29 shots from behind the arc. Bigfork’s play in the paint, where they mopped up on rebounds and scored 38 of their points, was the main difference maker in the game. For North Woods, seniors

Sierra Schuster Barto led the offensive attack, with Schuster tallying a team-high 15 points and Barto cashing in a double-double with 12 points and 10 rebounds. Barto also led the team in assists, four, and steals, five.

### Barnum

The Grizzlies suffered their third setback of the season on Tuesday with an 82-52 road loss to the Barnum Bombers.

Barto was the only North Woods player to score in double digits, knocking down 22 to lead all scorers in the game. But Barnum was active under the basket, scoring 46

points in the lane and drawing 30 fouls on the Grizzlies that they converted into 25 charities on the night. The Bombers cashed in on 53 percent of their shots from the field, while North Woods was held to 25 percent.

The Grizzlies were scheduled for their third consecutive road trip on Thursday at Carlton, with another away game on Monday at Floodwood. The Grizzlies will be back on their home court on Thursday, Dec. 12 to take on Two Harbors.

## GRIZZLIES...Continued from page 1B

break bucket by Peltier forced the Huskies to take a time out with the Grizzlies up 27-22, but the break didn’t slow North Woods’ attack. Senior Aidan Hartway dropped in a pair of charities to up the lead to 42-26, and the Grizzlies carried a 44-35 advantage into the halftime break.

The Huskies’ early shooting edge withered in the face of the Grizzlies’ stifling man-to-man defense that allowed few uncontested shots in

the second half. Meanwhile, North Woods players did a good job of distributing the basketball to open shooters, with Peltier being a big beneficiary as he racked up 13 of his team-leading 22 points in the second half. The Huskies never threatened as the Grizzlies continued to build their lead, with another Jarshaw three-ball putting North Woods up 66-44 with just under nine minutes remaining. The Grizzlies led

by as many as 26 points before claiming the 84-60 win.

In addition to Peltier, three other Grizzlies scored in double digits. Panichi hit for 15, Jarshaw connected for 14, and senior Kalvyn Benner dropped in 10. In all, ten Grizzlies got into the scoring column, reflecting Jugovich’s emphasis on spreading the ball around.

“Bigfork started out of the gate really hot, but our boys responded well,” Jugovich

said.

Jugovich was particularly pleased with what he saw the Grizzlies do down low with a trio of players with only minimal prior varisty experience.

“We’ve been working with August and Kal, getting our bigs to be able to use their bodies down low, getting the right positioning,” Jugovich said. “If you look at our four guards, Talen, Aiden, Trajen and Louie, they’re

all going to be able to slash through defenders. Having that guy consistently down low, whether it’s Kal or Auggie or (junior) Scott (Morrison) to be able to catch it and finish it, that really set us over because we’re not a big team. It worked out great tonight.”

Jugovich was also pleased with the patience the Grizzlies showed against Bigfork’s defense.

“There were times you could see we rushed it right

in the beginning, but once we let the game come to us and we played at our own pace, it showed that we are capable of breaking down a zone, which is something that we’ve struggled with the past two years,” Jugovich said.

The Grizzlies had another home contest scheduled for Friday against Carlton before going on the road for the first time next Tuesday against Nashauk-Keewatin.

## GRANT...

Continued from page 1B

“Residents of rural and remote areas in NE Minnesota face significantly greater challenges than their urban counterparts in getting to definitive care after a crash,” said Arrowhead EMS Association Executive Director Adam Shadiow. “EMS teams have longer distances between EMS hubs and few-to-no nearby specialty centers available, resulting in increased response and transport times. We believe our NEARR-EMS program will help rural communities make the most of extremely limited resources.”

As a pilot program, the NEARR-EMS program will be monitored by a research team at the University of Minnesota Translational Center for Resuscitative Trauma Care (TCRTC). The data collected during the five-year program will be used to evaluate the efficacy of the new EMS telemedicine program, focusing on its impact on patient care.

“There has been a significant increase in traffic deaths and serious injuries across Minnesota over the last five years,” TCRTC Director Greg Beilman said. “Innovative approaches are needed to reverse this trend. This project will have a positive impact on safety outcomes through high-quality data to inform the state’s post-crash care plan.”

The Timberjay attempted to contact Shadiow to determine what North Country EMS services, if any, may be part of the pilot project, but did not hear back from him prior to press time.

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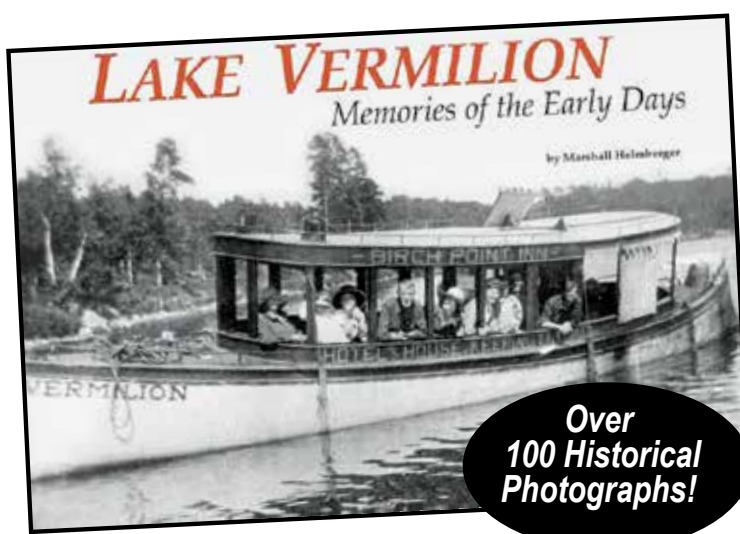
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Obituaries and Death Notices



**Jodi LeeAnn Naykki**

Jodi LeeAnn (Lewis) Naykki, 49, died Nov. 4, 2024, in Duluth, from a brief but aggressive illness. Her loving husband of 24 years, Brian, was by her side. Jodi was born Dec. 7, 1974, in Fairbury, Neb., to Rev. Daryl and Sharol (Samp) Lewis, joining brothers Lynn and Troy. Jodi and her siblings attended a Christian elementary school run by their parents, and she graduated from Fairbury High School on May 16, 1993. She went on to study at North Central Bible College in Minneapolis.

At Inner City Church of Minneapolis, Jodi worked for 10 years with the children's program and transportation ministry. But her main occupation – and her passion for more than 35 years – was her work as a child care provider. She dearly loved the countless kids she cared for and frequently stated (on Facebook and IRL) that she had the "best job ever," "I love my job," and "LOVE, LOVE, LOVE what I do!"

Jodi married Brian Naykki on Dec. 31, 2000, at Christ Church International, in Minneapolis. One of their favorite activities as a couple was traveling. Memorable destinations included Silver Dollar City in Branson, Mo.; Niagara Falls; Wyoming; and Las Vegas. Especially meaningful to them both were trips to Rapid City and Hill City, S.D., where Jodi enjoyed showing Brian where her dad had grown up; and to Ohio, where Brian arranged for them to have dinner with an Amish bishop and his family – a great fit with Jodi's fascination with Amish culture.

Jodi and Brian loved experiencing new foods together, either at home where Jodi loved to cook, and Brian says, "She put the 'love' in her cooking," or trying out new restaurants. They

enjoyed watching shows together or just hanging out. For two years they had fun being "Santa and Mrs. Claus" for area Christmas events, including in Ely, in Winton, and at Fortune Bay.

Jodi also loved reading Christian Amish books, watching Christian Amish movies, and spending time in person or by phone with her best friend Maria.

Jodi is survived by her husband Brian, of Babbitt; by her mother Sharol Lewis Slama; brother Lynn; sister-in-law Cheri; and nieces Anna and Gabrielle Lewis; nephew David Lewis; niece Celeste Lewis (Joel) Stanberg, all of Lincoln, Neb.; and by her uncle and aunt, Daryl and Judy Lewis, of the Denver, Colo., area.

Jodi was preceded in death by her father Daryl; brother Troy; stepfather George Slama; and grandparents Chester and Beatrice (Lewis) Crandall, Rob Lewis, and Melvin and Darlene Samp.

May the memory of Jodi Naykki be a blessing.



**Darlene Gay Wamhoff**

Darlene Gay Nelson Wamhoff passed away on Nov. 27, 2024, just a few short weeks after closing up the cabin for the season and a mere four days after her 82nd birthday. She had battled dementia for a very long time and though she had been non-verbal, a smile or laugh from her was a priceless and treasured gift. Darlene will be interred at the Veterans Cemetery in Saginaw. Private family services are planned. In lieu of flowers, please send memorials to The Mesabi Humane Society in Virginia or PJs rescue in Duluth.

Arrangements are by Bauman-Vermilion Funeral Home, Tower.

Darlene was born on

Nov. 23, 1942, in Hibbing, to parents Lester and Lillian (Nobbe) Nelson. Though she would move from Hibbing in her early teenage years, she would always harbor a love for Hibbing and the Iron Range. Darlene, by then known affectionately as Dar, became a member of the first graduating class (1961) of the newly-formed Centennial High School in Circles Pines. There, she met Kenneth Raymond Wamhoff, and they were to start on a love story that would last for 62 years and indeed be only severed by death.

Ken and Darlene started their married life together in what was the adventure of serving in the Marine Corp. Their first daughter, April, was born a service brat - but not for long. They returned to Minnesota where they built a home in New Brighton to be near family. Their second daughter, Shannon, was born there. Ken became a trucker driver while Darlene was always ever capable on the home front.

Darlene had a connection to all animals and was always busy taking care of kids and critters, including dogs, cats, horses, cows, rabbits, and well, you name it. She developed the home place into a small hobby farm and then they relocated the whole family northward to Milaca. Darlene was a talented painter on many forms of media. She knit the most intricate sweater patterns. She could sew and crochet. The walls are adorned with her artwork.

In what would have been considered her later years, she completed vo-tech training and worked in the printing industry. The whole family was very proud of this accomplishment but she would always say that Shannon got her through school as they studied at about the same time.

Darlene never gave up

her love of the Iron Range and eventually the couple came to land on Lake Vermilion and started a from-the-ground-up cabin project.

Together, they built the masterpiece that is the cabin. There were, of course, some obstacles to overcome. By this time, Darlene was wheelchair bound, so the pontoon was the only available mode of travel. Once on the island, there were the gravel and dirt paths to contend with. Ramps were installed in some places to allow access to the different levels of the cabin. Darlene was made of tough stuff and was determined to spend the summer at the place we all love.

Darlene's journey with dementia started and slowly robbed her of the retirement she and Ken had planned. Ken took care of Darlene for many years and later, with help from family. She stayed at home, in the company of those who loved her, until she died. Her passing creates a big hole in her family's hearts and lives.

Darlene is survived by her husband of over 62 years, Kenneth; and daughters April Wamhoff and Shannon (Susie) Paulsen-Wamhoff.

She is preceded in death by her parents, Lester and Lillian (Nobbe) Nelson.

**Pastor Erika E. Foss**

"And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you." Ephesians 4:32

Erika Elizabeth Foss, 43, of Cook, died on Friday, Nov. 22, 2024, in the Cook Care Center. A special thanks to the Essentia chemotherapy department in Virginia, East Range Hospice, and the Cook Care Center for their loving care. A memorial service will be held at 11 a.m. on Friday, Dec. 6 at Trinity Lutheran Church in Cook. Bishop Amy Odgren will officiate. A gathering time

for family and friends will begin at 9:30 a.m. prior to the service. Inurnment will take place at Salem Lutheran Cemetery in Inguadona. A prayer service will be held at 2 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 7 at Salem Lutheran Church in Longville. Bishop Amy will officiate. A coffee fellowship will follow the service. Memorials are preferred and may be directed to Trinity Bible Quest, Salem Lutheran WELCA, East Range Hospice, Voyageurs Lutheran Ministry or Concordia College. Family services are provided by Bauman-Cron, a Bauman Family Funeral Home in Virginia.

Erika was born on April 2, 1981, in Moorhead, the daughter of Dale and Sonja Schultz Foss. She graduated from Northland High School in Remer, Concordia College in Moorhead, and Luther Seminary in St. Paul. Erika was baptized at Grace Lutheran in Ada, confirmed at Bethany Lutheran in Remer, and was a Sunday School teacher and preached her first sermon at Salem Lutheran in Longville. She worked summers as a counselor at Lutherdell Camp. She served her internship in Glenville. Erika was ordained on July 15, 2007, at Salem Lutheran. She served her first call at Quale Lutheran Church in rural Fordville, N.D., Fordville Lutheran Church, and Trinity Lutheran Church in Lankin, N.D. She then served Grace Lutheran Church in McGregor, and finally served Trinity Lutheran Church in Cook.

Erika is survived by her daughter, Maren of Cook; parents, Dale and Sonja of Cook; brother, Evan (Katie Johnson) and future nephew of Cottage Grove; best friends, Sara Dreke Eyre, Carrie Peltier and Jenny Turner; aunts, Gretchen (Mark) Noordsy and Kris Wilcox; cousin, Grant (Abbie) Noordsy; and extended family and friends.

She was preceded in death by her grandparents; and aunt, Nancy Foss.

**Russell Soger**

Russell Soger, 88, originally of Cook and Orr, passed away at home in Mission, Texas, on Thursday, Nov. 14, 2024. The family plans to gather for a memorial next summer in Minnesota.

He is survived by his wife, Jackie Autio Soger; sister, Margie Olsen; sons, Ross (Anna) and Robert; daughters, Sue Prout (Bill) and Julie Kangas (Bill); grandchildren, Emily Soger, Lilly Soger, April Soger, Mike Soger, Jaime Elder (T.J.), Brett Kangas and Ryan Kangas; great-grandchildren, Fisher Soger, Will Soger, Jack Elder and Nate Elder.

**Jill S. Hebl**

Jill Suzanne Powell Hebl, 65, of Ely and formerly of Babbitt, died on Sunday, Dec. 1, 2024, in her home following a battle with cancer. A private celebration of life will be held at a later date. Inurnment will be in the Argo Cemetery. Family services are provided by Bauman-Vermilion, a Bauman Family Funeral Home in Tower.

She is survived by her husband, Billy; brothers, Michael Powell of Iron and Clair John Powell of Rimrock, Ariz.; sister, Janice Powell of Foley, Ala.; and numerous extended family members and friends.

**Carol A. Lassey**

Carol A. Lassey, 95, of Ely, passed away on Monday, Dec. 2, 2024, at the Boundary Waters Care Center in Ely. Funeral arrangements are pending with Landmark Funeral Home in Virginia.

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# Outdoors

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## WEATHER

### North Country just saw its 2nd warmest fall

by MARSHALL HELMBERGER  
Managing Editor

REGIONAL— The North Country experienced its warmest autumn in more than 60 years and the second warmest on record, continuing a recent pattern of exceptionally warm fall seasons over the past few years.

Based on data from International Falls airport, which has the longest period of record in northeastern Minnesota, this year's meteorological autumn, which runs from Sept. 1-Nov. 30, averaged 46.9 degrees F, or 6.4 degrees above average for the three-month period.

That's just a half-degree cooler than the all-time warmest autumn in the border city, set in 1963, when the average temperature for the period clocked in at 47.4 degrees. It replaces the previous second warmest autumn on record, set in 2016 with an average temperature of 46.3 degrees F.

The region has seen a streak of above-average autumns since 2021, when International Falls recorded its fifth warmest season on record. That was followed by autumns in the top 20 warmest in 2022 and 2023, although nearly two weeks of missing data in 2023 puts a caveat on the record for October that year.

"There have been a lot of recent years in the top ten," noted Pete Boulay, a state climatologist with the Department of Natural Resources.

Recent data analyses conducted by the climatology office have found that the month of September is one of two months that have seen the most significant warming in recent years as a result of climate change. According to Boulay, 11 of the 24 autumns experienced in International Falls since 2000 have been in the top third in the historical record for warmth.

This autumn's warm spell continued until the final five days of the month, when daily temperatures in the region dipped below average for the first time

See **WEATHER**, pg. 5B

## DEER HUNTING

### Firearms buck harvest ends 12 percent higher in Arrowhead

by MARSHALL HELMBERGER  
Managing Editor

REGIONAL— The buck harvest across northeastern Minnesota finished the regular firearms season up overall, by about 12 percent. That's compared to final numbers from all hunts last year, including the muzzleloader season so the final results for 2024 should end up closer to 15 percent above last year's totals.

This year's muzzleloader season began Nov. 30 and runs through Dec. 15. Hunters in permit areas 119, 126, 131, and 178 saw the biggest increase in hunter success on percentage basis, while 178 saw the biggest increase in the total number of bucks registered, with 1,174 compared to 949 last year.

Permit area 177 was the only local permit area that experienced an appreciable decline in the buck harvest, with 377 bucks registered this year compared to 423 last year.

Statewide, it appears likely that buck registrations will finish up slightly above last year's totals. As of Tuesday of this week, hunters had registered a total of 156,509 deer, just slightly below last year's final tally of 158,678, with 11 days of the muzzleloader season yet to go.

Last winter's record mild conditions almost certainly boosted survival for white-tailed deer in the region as well as improved reproductive potential this year.

## FINCH FORECAST

# It's anybody's guess

Forecast offers hope for winter bird feeding, but bird movements are tough to predict

It appears winter has settled in around the North Country and for many folks in our area, that marks the start of the bird feeding season. As usual, the folks at the Finch Research Network have issued their annual prognostication of just who we can expect to visit our feeders this winter.

As is typical of the forecast, it's mostly just best guesses. While a limited food supply can be relied upon to move birds out of an area, where they end up going is a lot harder to predict. So, keep that in mind as you read further.

For most of us who feed birds in winter, the grosbeaks are the most coveted. Both the pine and evening grosbeaks bring plenty of color and cheerful noise to the feeder. While evening grosbeaks can be found here in the North Country at any time of year, the pine grosbeaks summer north of the border, so it takes something to push them south to our area. Typical winter conditions are usually enough, which is why we tend to see pine grosbeaks here, at least in limited numbers, virtually every winter. It's usually just a question of how many.

This year, according to the finch forecast, "areas around Lake Superior and particularly northern Minnesota, may see a larger movement" as a limited crop of cones and native fruits in northwestern Ontario is consumed.

Pine grosbeaks feed heavily on balsam fir cones, ash seeds, and mountain ash berries, and while most parts of the boreal forest reported a decent crop of all-of-the-above, that was not the case just to our north, as drought, last winter's record mild conditions, and spruce budworm, all seemed to take a toll on those natural foods. That could bring pine grosbeaks into our feeders in better numbers than usual, where they feast most readily on black oil sunflower seeds. So far, I've yet to see any at our house although I have heard a few out in the woods in recent weeks.

The same factors leading the forecasters to predict a good movement of pine grosbeaks may have the same effect on evening grosbeaks. "With spruce budworm outbreaks becoming more widespread and scattered

around Lake Superior, western Great Lake states may see even more movement this winter," the forecast noted, adding: "Evening grosbeaks in northwestern Ontario westward should move out of the boreal forest, looking for feeders in towns or suitable food sources further south." Hopefully this will bring some excitement to our feeders this winter.

Some of the smaller finches may also add interest. Redpolls, which rely heavily on birch and alder seeds, have arrived in the area although they tend to stay out in the woods until their natural foods grow scarcer later in the winter. Then, they'll come in to feeders for black oil sunflower and, especially, thistle seed. The forecast suggests

we'll see more of them than usual this winter as redpolls clear out of parts of northwestern Ontario.

In the past, I've written about how to distinguish the common redpolls from the hoary redpolls, but there's no reason to bother in the future. The birding poobahs recently determined that the three species of redpolls, two found in North America and the other in Eurasia, are all variations of one species. So, I'll have to cross another species off the life list thanks to the "lumpers" who currently seem to be dominant in the birding world.

Other small finches appear to be around as well, at least so far. We had a huge purple finch population this summer, but they've largely moved south of our region. Julie Grahn, outside of Cook, recently reported a few still hanging around at her house, along with a few pine siskins, which are probably the most unpredictable of our finches. We had a lot of them around earlier in the year but, like the purple finches, they seem to have mostly moved out of the area.

We do appear to have a few goldfinches hanging around the North Country this winter, at least so far. I've had a flock at least 15 that's been hanging around for the past few weeks.

That's the thing with our northern finches. Unlike the snowbirds, that reliably head south to avoid harsh winter conditions, northern finches can move in

See **FINCHES**, pg. 5B



Above: Evening grosbeaks cluster at a bird feeder for black oil sunflower seeds.

Above: Pine grosbeaks eating sunflower seeds.

Lower right: Smaller finches, like this pine siskin, will eat sunflower seeds but prefer nyjer thistle.

Bottom: A male redpoll works on a sunflower seed in the snow.







The ice fishing season got underway this past week as temperatures finally dropped into the single digits ahead of several days of light snow. Additional snow, which fell Tuesday this week, left about eight inches of snow on the ground around the region. Pictured above is a lone ice angler on Lake's Vermilion's Stuntz Bay. photo by V. Ranua

### NE Minnesota Buck Harvest

Preliminary results following the end of the 2024 firearms deer season compared to final numbers compiled in 2023. Final 2024 season totals won't be known until the end of muzzleloader season.

Permit Area	2023	2024	% Change
107	538	566	+5
109	295	333	+13
117	7	5	-28
118	364	380	+4
119	228	287	+26
126	61	85	+39
130	103	119	+16
131	18	42	+133
132	154	180	+17
133	317	313	-1
176	452	509	+13
177	423	377	-11
178	949	1,174	+24
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,909</b>	<b>4,370</b>	<b>+12</b>

THE TIMBERJAY: Your source for news

### LAKE COUNTRY FORECAST

from NOAA weather

Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday
<b>20 12</b>	<b>31 21</b>	<b>34 19</b>	<b>25 9</b>	<b>18 3</b>

Ely	Hi	Lo	Prec.	Sn.	Emb.	Hi	Lo	Prec.	Sn.	Cook	Hi	Lo	Prec.	Sn.	Orr	Hi	Lo	Prec.	Sn.	Tower	Hi	Lo	Prec.	Sn.
11/25	29	23	0.18	1.9"	11/25	29	24	0.17	2.0"	11/25	28	24	0.12	2.4"	11/25	29	23	0.18	2.7"	11/25	29	25	0.20	2.2"
11/26	31	13	0.09	0.4"	11/26	31	12	0.12	1.5"	11/26	30	12	0.16	2.5"	11/26	29	12	0.10	1.8"	11/26	31	11	tr	0.2"
11/27	21	14	0.01		11/27	21	11	0.00		11/27	22	10	0.02	0.3"	11/27	22	12	tr	0.2"	11/27	22	11	na	na
11/28	23	17	0.00		11/28	23	18	0.00		11/28	21	19	0.02	0.4"	11/28	23	19	0.01	0.1"	11/28	23	18	na	na
11/29	23	17	0.07	1.6"	11/29	22	9	0.02	1.5"	11/29	22	11	0.05	1.0"	11/29	22	10	0.02	0.8"	11/29	24	9	0.16	2.4"
11/30	18	3	0.02	0.5"	11/30	16	-1	tr	0.2"	11/30	16	-1	0.04	0.8"	11/30	16	-1	tr	0.2"	11/30	16	-2	tr	0.2"
12/01	14	3	tr	0.2"	12/01	11	-1	0.00		12/01	11	-3	0.02	0.4"	12/01	11	-2	0.01	0.3"	12/01	11	-2	0.08	1.6"
<b>YTD Total</b>			<b>26.57</b>	<b>6.8"</b>	<b>YTD Total</b>			<b>26.49</b>	<b>5.4"</b>	<b>YTD Total</b>			<b>26.78</b>	<b>7.8"</b>	<b>YTD Total</b>			<b>NA</b>	<b>6.1"</b>	<b>YTD Total</b>			<b>29.57</b>	<b>6.6"</b>

### FINCHES...Continued from page 4B

any direction come winter, even north, depending on where their favorite food sources are found. Since they feed high in the trees, on pine, spruce, fir, or ash seeds, birch catkins, and berries or other native fruits, deep snow is no hindrance for these boreal forest wanderers. Hopefully we'll be seeing more of them at the feeder this winter.

### WEATHER...Continued from page 4B

in more than three weeks. The latest 8-14 day outlook shows above average temperatures building in the western U.S., although temperatures are expected to remain near normal in the eastern half of Minnesota. The average high in Tower on Dec. 6 is 24.8 degrees F, with an average low of 4.9 degrees.



## Minnesota North College & Bois Forte Band of Chippewa Program Fair

Join Minnesota North College & Bois Forte Band of Chippewa for a program fair! Explore many hands-on activities and interact with faculty from all six Minnesota North Campuses! Lunch will be provided for attendees.

Transportation is provided by Big Woods Transit. Pick-up will be at the Vermilion Wellness Center in Tower, MN and at Zups in Cook, MN. Transportation spots are limited. Reserve by calling 1-888-757-1540!

Friday, January 24, 2025  
11-1:00PM  
Bois Forte Government Building  
5344 Lakeshore Dr, Nett Lake, MN 55772



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Get Connected. Volunteer.

United Way of Northeastern MN



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## BUSINESS

# Legal disputes delay social equity cannabis lottery

by DAVID COLBURN  
Cook-Orr Editor

REGIONAL- The roll-out of Minnesota's adult-use cannabis industry took a significant hit last week when a Ramsey County judge indefinitely delayed Tuesday's planned social equity cannabis lottery in response to lawsuits alleging flaws in the selection process. The decision raises concerns about the availability of cannabis product for the market's anticipated launch in 2025.

## Rejected applicants sue

A firestorm of controversy erupted after the state Office of Cannabis Management announced that it had rejected approximately two-thirds of the 1,817 applications for the 282 social equity cannabis licenses to be awarded in what was to be the first of two such lotteries.

OCM Interim Director Charlene Briner defended the stringent process, which was intended to screen out applicants who failed to

meet qualifying standards or provided insufficient documentation, and those who appeared to be trying gain unfair advantage in the process through fraud.

"We saw a couple of hundred applications that were virtually identical, including the business plans and the projected profits for the first year," Briner said. "There were multiple people with the same address. They were using a domain name that is unregistered and inactive. Some have a phone number that ties back to the same individual."

But many rejected applicants complained that OCM did not inform them why their applications were rejected, and with no option to appeal the decisions, many turned to the courts for resolution.

Ramsey County District Court Judge Stephen Smith granted a motion by applicants Cristina Aranguiz and Jodi Connolly to delay the lottery. They alleged that OCM "arbitrarily and capriciously" denied their appli-

cations without explanation while allegedly allowing other applicants to revise their submissions.

The lawsuit and subsequent court filings revealed allegations of fraudulent schemes involving the applicants. Attorney General Keith Ellison claimed that Aranguiz and Connolly participated in a "straw applicant scheme" to flood the lottery with over 200 related applications. According to Ellison, the applicants were connected to an Iowa cannabis operator, Tate Kapple, who reportedly orchestrated the submissions using the same email domain, mncanna.org.

Ellison's filing alleged that applicants signed agreements to sell their licenses to Kapple for \$100,000 if selected in the lottery. Aranguiz, however, denied the allegations, calling herself a "legitimate applicant."

Smith ruled in favor of the motion to give appellate courts the time to consider all the issues.

"There's no lottery

tomorrow," Smith stated during a virtual hearing, stating that OCM could appeal the decision. Assistant Attorney General Oliver Larson warned that a prolonged delay might force the agency to abandon the social equity lottery entirely.

OCM issued a brief press release defending the review process.

"While we are disappointed by the decision to prevent OCM from moving forward with the license pre-approval lottery tomorrow, we stand by the process used to review applications," the release said. "Minnesota's approach has always aimed to protect the integrity of a social equity license, and the rigorous review also allowed us to identify and prevent bad actors from entering the system. State statute sets high standards for applicants to successfully complete applications while also filtering out those with malicious intent."

The social equity lottery was designed to provide an early advantage to veterans,

residents of high-poverty areas, and those harmed by marijuana prohibition. Successful applicants would receive preapproval licenses, enabling them to jumpstart their businesses ahead of the broader licensing process next year.

## Timeline challenge

The delay poses risks to Minnesota's cannabis supply chain, which is already under pressure to prepare for the industry's official launch next year. The lottery was intended to preapprove licenses for 182 cultivators who could begin growing marijuana immediately to provide cannabis to licensed retailers.

OCM spokesman Josh Collins minimized the impact of the delay, noting that early cultivation under the social equity licenses "would have only provided a fraction of the anticipated supply to meet demand."

Nonetheless, the delay in the social equity licensing program undermines the program's ability to provide a meaningful head start for marginalized communities.

OCM has warned that the delay will incur additional costs – estimated at \$100,000 for the initial lottery – and could jeopardize its ability to conduct the process altogether. The agency has also expressed concern that the delay could diminish the benefits for the 648 social equity applicants who were approved to participate in the lottery.

Despite the challenges, OCM officials said that they remain focused on launching the broader licensing process early next year.

Meanwhile, individuals can grow small amounts of cannabis for personal use or can purchase cannabis products from already operating tribal dispensaries. The Bois Forte band is completing work on its new cannabis dispensary and may open for business before the end of the year.

*MinnPost contributed to this article*

## VOYAGEURS ATV CLUB

# DNR seeks comments on ATV trail network expansion

by DAVID COLBURN  
Cook-Orr Editor

Club looking to add up to 125 trail miles, connecting and improving existing trails

REGIONAL- Plans to add up to 125 miles to the Voyageur Country ATV Club's trail system have been released by the Department of Natural Resources for public comment.

The proposed project would connect the existing Voyageur Country system

with communities in Koochiching County, including International Falls, Littlefork, Ray and unorganized territories of East Koochiching, Rainy Lake, and northwest St. Louis County. The project includes 39 miles of existing routes that will not see any changes, 78 miles of exist-

ing route with improvements and eight miles of new trail construction. Existing routes include cleared utility corridors, current recreational trails of various types such as current ATV or snowmobile trails, currently designated mixed-use trails, hiking or hunting trails, forest and log-

ging roads, and streets, township, and county roads.

"Our main focus would be to be able to get from Crane Lake all the way right up into International Falls, Littlefork, Big Falls so you can take off and hit some of the communities there," Voyageur Country ATV board member Kurt Kennedy told the *Timberjay* on Monday. "It's quite a connector, that's what it would be. Right now, you can easily get from Crane Lake to Ely and then pretty much to the North Shore, so to open this up that would get us International Falls to the North Shore basically if you wanted to ride it."

And while some areas of the state lend themselves well to new trail development, utilizing existing trails and roadways is essential for expanding the network in Koochiching County, Kennedy said, as building new trails would be cost prohibitive.

"One of our downfalls in Koochiching County is that it's 80 percent wetlands up here so that gets to be another fly in the ointment, if you want to call it that. It makes trail making much more difficult – that's why we want to utilize as much existing county road or whatever that we can."

Trail segments proposed for development include:

► Rainier Connector –

a four-mile trail that would connect with the Ericsburg to International Falls trail.

► Blue Ox to Pelland Junction – six miles a portion of which is on the Haggerman Voyageur Lowman snowmobile trail/Blue Ox State trail, where ATV traffic is currently allowed.

► Ericsburg to International Falls – 14.5 miles of ATV trail on existing routes.

► Galvin Spur – eight miles along existing utility corridor and Galvin Rd, connecting with the Littlefork Connection.

► Littlefork Connection – 44 miles of trail connecting Littlefork to Ray, utilizing a combination of existing roads and trails.

► Kab Store to Ericsburg – 23 miles of trail, utilizing county roads and portions of the existing Voyageur Trails, Haggerman Voyageur Lowman Trail, and Arrowhead State Trail as well as logging roads.

► Ray Spur – a half-mile connector to the Kab Store to Ericsburg trail.

► FR612A to Black Duck Connector – approximately 1.5 miles of new trail and 1,300 feet of existing trail that would connect to the existing Voyageur Country ATV trail system, including the Elephant Lake to Lake Kabetogama Connector.

Kennedy emphasized that the 50-plus page Environmental Assessment

Worksheet developed for the expansion proposal represents, in essence, a wish list of what the club would like to accomplish. But as of this point no formal arrangements have been made for the proposed trails, no engineering plans have been developed for needed improvements, and most significantly, no new funding has yet been allocated to finance the project. How all of those needs come together if the EAW is approved will determine what eventually gets built over the next three to five years.

Kennedy noted that the club's Phase 1 expansion, approved in 2021, has items that have not been built in favor of pursuing more viable options.

A copy of the Phase 2 project is available on the DNR website at [mndnr.gov/input/environmentalreview/voyageur-country-trail-expansion.html](http://mndnr.gov/input/environmentalreview/voyageur-country-trail-expansion.html). A printed copy can be requested by calling 651-259-5694, or may be viewed at the International Falls Public Library, 750 4th St. in International Falls.

Comments on the EAW must be submitted no later than 4:30 p.m. on Thursday, Dec. 26. Email comments should be sent to [environmentalrev.dnr@state.mn.us](mailto:environmentalrev.dnr@state.mn.us) with "Voyageur ATV Phase 2 Project" in the subject line. Mail comments should be sent to the attention of Kathy Metzker, EAW project manager, Environmental Policy and Review Unit, DNR Ecological and Water Resources Division, 500 Lafayette Road N, St. Paul, MN 55155-4025. Anyone providing a mailing address or submitting comments via email will receive a copy of the decision document, which includes responses to comments. Because all comments and related information are part of the public record for this environmental review, commenters' names and email or postal addresses will be published and publicly available as they appear in the materials they submit.

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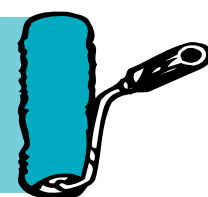
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						6	9	1
1			4	9	5	3		
	5		7		1	8		
		7	6	5				
4	9		3	8	7	2		6
8	6				4		5	3
					6	3		
		4	9	8			7	
5			2	3	9			8

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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**EMPLOYMENT**

**ELY PUBLIC SCHOOLS POSITION OPENING**  
**Cafeteria Aide**

Ely Public School District is looking for a Cafeteria Aide for the 2024-2025 school year. We are an EC - Grade 12 district, seeking an energetic, self-starting, personable, and highly motivated individual. **Background check required.**

**Required Qualifications:**

- > Must be able to lift 30 lbs. on a regular basis
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- > Evidence of ability to work cooperatively and communicate effectively in a collaborative setting

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www.ely.k12.mn.us

A complete application must include the following:

- > District Non-Licensed Application
- > Resume
- > 2 letters of recommendation

**Return materials to:** Ely Public Schools, Attn: Superintendent, 600 E. Harvey St., Ely, MN, 55731 or email lwestrack@ely.k12.mn.us

**Starting Rate of Pay:** \$18.35/hour  
**Hours:** 2.75 hours/day; 5 days/week; student contact days  
**Deadline to apply:** December 17, 2024; open until filled.

*Published in the Timberjay, Dec. 6 & 13, 2024*

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

**KABETOGAMA TOWNSHIP**  
**Notice of Filing for Town Offices to be Elected**

Notice is hereby given that a town election will be held in the Kabetogama Township, St. Louis County, Minnesota, on Tuesday, the 11th day of March, 2025.

The first day for filing affidavits of candidacy will be Tuesday, December 31, 2024. The last day will be Tuesday, the 14th day of January, 2025, at 5:00 p.m.

Filings may be made with Clerk Mary Manninen. You can either make an appointment by calling 240-9325 or Town Hall 875-2082 or emailing kabtown@frontier.com. You may file without an appointment by coming into the Town Hall on Tuesday, January 14, 2025, between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m.

The following terms will be expiring:

Supervisor for the term of three years

Treasurer for the term of two years

Filing fee is \$2.00.

Clerk, Mary Manninen

*Published in the Timberjay, Dec. 6, 2024*

**CryptoQuote**  
answer

I'm afraid that if you look at a thing long enough, it loses all of its meaning.  
— Andy Warhol

**SNOWFLAKES**  
solution

**Super Crossword**

**Answers**

COVES	HIHO	ABCS	ABET
ALIVE	ADAR	GRILL	GURU
LEOIV	SELA	SODOI	OMAN
VOLLEYBALLS	NEWSH	SSE	
ESS	NOEL	BEATREPORTER	
ETRE	TRESS	UAE	
STEPHENC	STE	TENTERS	
ACRE	SHAKENUP	ADFREE	
THREEP	OPERAGOER	ISAW	
ERE	BOWWOW	SHELTON	
DORIA		MARKS	
NONAGON	STOUGE	PIA	
SLAW	THERAPIST	SOWING	
SERAPE	DAMAGERS	ATRA	
TARTARS	AASH	ATOMIZER	
OCR	EDITS	ALIF	
LIGHTWEIGHTB	ALLS	ADA	
ALA	BADGE	DOWNWARD	DOG
TINT	TESTL	XENA	EIDER
TACO	TRINA	EVER	AMORE
EDEN	SNOB	REST	DENSE

**King Crossword**

**ACROSS**

1	Winter coaster	37	Prof's degree	16	Yale students
5	Gear tooth	38	Presentation aid	20	"Community" actor Jeong
8	Guesser's words	41	Romance	21	Up-and-coming
12	"Arrivederci!"	42	"Right you —!"	22	Guided
13	Notre Dame coach	45	Petty of "Tank Girl"	23	Biol. or chem.
14	German refusal	46	Working	24	Marry
15	Well-known	48	"Topaz" author	25	Santa — winds
17	Body powder	49	— Dhabi	26	Mafia boss
18	"Now, where — I?"	50	Roman censor	27	Foreman foe
19	Novelist Deighton	51	Ordered	28	Aussie hopper
20	One of the Kardashians	52	Prof's helpers	29	Family
21	Squeak stopper	53	Strong farm team	31	Satchel
22	Golfer Trevino			34	Scrap
23	Lake flock			35	"Oops!"
26	Neighbor of Germany			37	VIP on Air Force One
30	Penny			38	Sandwich type
31	Physique			39	Circle dance
32	Sci-fi race			40	Bone-dry
33	Boise native			41	Connecticut Sun's org.
35	Labor group			42	Trojan War hero
36	Work unit			43	Memory method
				44	Black, in verse
				46	Feedbag tidbit
				47	— -friendly

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