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Cold fishing opener brought snow while temps hovered in the 30s



By ANN SCHWARTZ
Despite cold and half-dollar sized snowflakes, all the landings in the Garrison area on Mille Lacs Lake were full of boats and trailers for the May 9 fishing opener. Wayne of Garrison Sports said opening day business was "decent." He sells many types of bait; fat-

heads, shiners, crappies, suckers, leaches and wax worms. The state was not yet allowing launches on the big lake although most resorts have their ships

ready to go — awaiting more news from the state (the governor was to make some further decisions on opening the economy on May 18). Garrison Sports

had one launch ready and one getting repaired. Jason of Garrison, left, spent the morning on the lake, getting lots of bites. "It was great till the snow came."



A family group from Pequot Lakes, Rogers and Baxter land their boat on Garrison Sports Pier on a cold fishing opener with snow, rain and fog. Mille Lacs Lake is catch and release only for now. The group said they hooked and threw back 21 fish. Ann Schwartz photos

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Aitkin Elementary School still has lots of activity during shutdown



Staying home while going the distance

Rippleside Elementary School Principal Andy Dokken Ann Schwartz photos

By ANN SCHWARTZ
Unlike Aitkin High School, which is kind of a ghost down because of the pandemic lockdown, Rippleside Elementary is bustling with activity.

Teachers come and go between their classrooms and home to deliver instruction via Zoom online and to correct assignments. The office is staffed, as is the kitchen and cleaning.

There are 40 teachers and 17 paraprofessionals who are still working at Rippleside, according to Principal Andy Dokken. There is also a childcare program daily for about 30 children of essential workers.

Communication takes place frequently with families and there is a whole tableful of items being dropped off or picked up. There are over 600 students enrolled at Rippleside in grades preschool through six.

"My expectations for teachers is that they communicate with students and families every day," Principal Dokken said.

Buses continue to run daily with paras assisting drivers. Assignments are dropped off and picked up on Mondays for families who aren't using the internet.

Food—breakfast and lunch—is also prepared by cooks at Rippleside and the Aitkin High School and brought to about 400 students a day in the school district via the bus system.

"It's hard being in these empty buildings when our kids are not here," said Dokken.

Cassie Conn, administrative assistant in the Rippleside office, tries to communicate among parents, students and staff to keep the educational wheels turning. "We try to keep parents informed as

much as we can. We try to be transparent and keep our families in the loop," observed Conn.

A silver lining of the pandemic for Conn is she has time to visit with and get to know the teachers in the building. During regular instruction days, teachers are consumed with students all day.

"A lot of staff and families made huge improvements in using technology," said Conn.

"I miss getting the energy from the kids," said Dokken. "Anyone who works with kids knows the tremendous energy that they emit that motivates all staff to do a great job for them."

A silver lining for Dokken has been adapting to distance learning in a tight time frame and being proud that Aitkin is

servicing its students and their families.

Dokken is also pleased to announce that he was honored with a Division Leadership Achievement Award from the Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association.

Teaching days a little different

"I spend my days doing one-on-one Zoom instruction and with the whole class three times a week," said Chesna Siegford, a second grade teacher. "I also help the childcare students with their school work and I keep my routine by coming in and working at the school from 7:30 to 3:30 daily. I miss the kids from my classroom!"

Sarah Emery, a first grade teacher, shared: "In the morning, I post videos to the Seesaw platform. We are also on Zoom twice a week. I keep in contact with students and families through postcards, emails, texts and phone calls. I always end my communications with 'hugs and love.' I miss my first grade family. I'm here for everyone of my students and my colleagues."

Nedra Henline had a unique experience during the Stay at Home order. She was most recently working



Second grade teacher Chesna Siegford with little Mason John, Nedra Henline's newborn son.

pregnancy, and, an extrovert, it's killing her not to be around people. She brought little Mason John into the school to meet everyone.

"I do a morning message with videos and Zoom in with the class twice a week," Henline said about her first grade workload. "I make phone calls to families once a week."

She said she greatly misses her coworkers and friends. "Today was my first outing in over a month. I was quarantined at home starting at 37 weeks of pregnancy."

"I really miss being in the school and seeing all of the kids and stuff, along with being able to give and receive all those hugs—and smiles."



Administrative Assistant Cassie Conn. School offices workers are point people for communication among staff, students and their families.



Two Rippleside teachers: left, Nedra Henline, longterm first grade sub and Sarah Emery, first grade teacher, compare notes.

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Local school districts feed 'army' of students each day



Staying home while going the distance

Food is ready for families at a Grab n Go site.

Photo courtesy of Brainerd School District food service department

By ANN SCHWARTZ
We may think that a lot of folks are lolling around home in their pajamas, watching television and baking during this weird pandemic shut-down time.

But school cooks in area school districts have been on the job for the last seven weeks, preparing daily meals that are delivered to students via school buses.

Brainerd School District distributes 2,000 meals a day Alyssa Thompson, director of food service for the Brainerd School District, shares: "Since March 18, ISD 181-food service has been providing meals to children in essential worker childcare.

We have also been delivering meals to homes daily via school buses. We also have three Grab n Go sites where parents can come between 11-1pm to pick-up daily meals.

"Meals consist of a breakfast and a lunch. They are ready-to-eat and do not need any cooking. Starting with Easter Weekend we started supplying cook-at-home weekend meals. These meals come with a detailed instruction sheet on how to cook and store the ingredients. We have served over 100,000 meals since March 18. This program will run until the end of the school year on May 22. Plans for summer meals

supervisor for the Aitkin School District, said cooks have been working at both the Aitkin High School and Rippleside Elementary kitchens, despite the pandemic lockdown.

"Our home delivery started March 18 when the governor shut down the schools," said Dox. He said there are four staff in each building.

He gets to work about 4:30 a.m. to get ingredients prepped. Four hundred breakfasts and lunches are made on a rotating menu. A sample menu for a weekday includes a muffin, apple and juice and milk for breakfast. Lunch includes a turkey sandwich with oranges and



Cooks prepare food for the Brainerd School District's students at Forestview Middle School. Photos courtesy of Brainerd School District food service department

will be announced shortly." **Both kitchens open in Aitkin**

Terry Dox, food service

Ruby's pantry reopened May 2



Ruby's Pantry, the household food support program run by the Journey North Church of Aitkin and Brainerd, reopened on May 2. Aitkin's pickup is the first Saturday of the month at 9 a.m. at the Aitkin Church. With social distancing, no customers went inside the building. They stayed in their vehicles, got in the line and paid \$20. Various volunteers loaded food into vehicles. Households get about \$100 of food for each \$20 share that they buy. About 233 shares were distributed in May. Above: A small army of volunteers kept the Ruby's shares flowing to customers that waited in these vehicles. Ann Schwartz photos



Greeters say hello at the beginning of the food line.



A masked volunteer loads up the backseat of a car.



Rippleside Elementary Cooks, from back left: Cheryl and Wanda in the back and Susanne and Kim in the front. Ann Schwartz photo



Terry Dox, food service supervisor for the Aitkin School District.

Sidewalks close near courthouse

Concrete repairs will temporarily close sidewalks near the Crow Wing County Historic Courthouse in downtown Brainerd. Repairs are scheduled to start around the downtown county campus on Monday, May 18th and are expected to take two weeks to complete.

The largest area for repair is the sidewalk at the north entrance of the Historic Court-

house and the south sidewalk along Laurel Street at the Historic Courthouse.

These areas will be closed for the duration of the repairs along with the crosswalks at south 4th Street and Laurel Street.

• Access to the All Veterans Memorial will be best from the south parking lot behind the Historic Courthouse.

• Access to the Land Ser-

vices building will remain open via the south parking lot or sidewalk west of the Historic Courthouse.

• The north sidewalk along Laurel Street will remain open while repairs are completed.

All work and tentative timeline are weather permitting. If you have questions contact Crow Wing County at 218-824-1067.

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Freedom of speech paramount

The Cuyuna Range and surrounding communities can be thankful the owners of the *NewsHopper* take our freedoms seriously. To print opinions, uncensored, unaltered, and never attempting to persuade anyone from stopping, takes tremendous courage. The letters have always been about the abuse of power and the massive violation of the public trust. It is my personal belief the letters have failed. The culprits were not brought to justice or held accountable; they have moved on to brighter careers and left the residents holding a potential massive financial burden in the future, that's dis-

heartening, but I don't always get what I want.

I apologize to the twice wrongfully terminated officer who asked me to stop writing letters and to the seven time falsely charged former Mayor for the constant disclosure and reminders of what these people put them through. As I told them to their faces, it's not about them, nor will I write in support of them.

The letters were simply to get the council and mayor to do their jobs, investigate the situations and bring an end to the corruption; I failed there also.

I don't consider fighting for the public trust a waste

of time. I am humbled by the support and the controversy that came with my choice. I know you can't kick a fire without risk of getting burned.

We all owe a great debt of gratitude and support for the *NewsHopper's* courage to understand, defend and support our rights.

To my friends, enemies, neighbors, acquaintances, take your stand, fight for it, don't be afraid to speak out, and don't be persuaded your convictions don't matter, they do. The *Courier* won't print your articles but the *NewsHopper* will.

Kelly Avelsgard, Deerwood Concerned Observer

More COVID-19 deaths must come

It is important at this point that people understand that more transmissions and deaths will occur after reopening as the lockdowns end, and they suppress the fear the national media will generate by reporting on the spread of the virus again.

People who gave in to fear and allowed it to direct their thoughts and actions when the virus initially hit us may have understood that social distancing and lockdowns would stop the spread of the virus or even end the virus. Nobody said that.

Those mitigation efforts were taken to slow the spread of the virus so we would not overwhelm our medical sys-

tems. It has always been understood the virus would work its way through the population as quickly as it could until it was confronted by a vaccine and sufficient herd immunity had been reached. That is what viruses do.

As for a vaccine, we are not likely to see one this year. When we do, people should be concerned about whether a vaccine is adequately tested before it is administered to people who may still need it as a placebo more than for protection. In the end, a vaccine should be available for those who are at risk and should not be mandatory for anyone, as annual flu vaccines are not.

Many hospitals were not overwhelmed and have furloughed personnel; hospitals and medical centers have begun filing for bankruptcy. In high population areas, they ran short on equipment during the first wave, now more areas

may be short on medical staff to deal with the next wave.

CNN and others began to ratchet up the fear again as we moved into March with stories and predictions about increasing numbers of transmissions and deaths which would be "caused by reopening." Some in media are doing this because they think we need more mitigation efforts and believe it is their responsibility to move us in that direction; others are doing this for political purposes.

Governors' decisions to lock down and quarantine the healthy reduced the population the virus could work its way through with resulting herd immunity. The failure to quarantine groups at high risk led to more deaths in those groups.

StarTribune.com reported on May 2, "Minnesota virus deaths up 24, cases up 498." By then Minnesota had 395 COVID-19 deaths and 80 percent of those deaths were from long-term care residents.

As an aside, according to the Minnesota Department of Health, 435 people died in the 2017-18 flu season.

Looking ahead, the increase in transmissions and deaths, which are inevitable with later waves of the virus, are not reasons for repeating mistakes with more lockdowns.

Terry A. Larson, Alexandria

Memories of a youthful spring

I truly enjoyed the story by Ann Schwartz about back to a youthful spring. It appeared about mid April. It was like a breath of fresh air.

I too have memories of jumping rope and other outdoor fun. My father gave me a long rope for two or three to jump together. It was from a well-worn hay sling. I took it to school with me to use.

Those of us that had clamped roller skates took our skates along to skate on the sidewalks. We would go to the courthouse to skate where there was a lot of side walk, at noon and maybe after school. Never once did those in the courthouse ever tell us we were too noisy.

If we were at the school playground, there were a

couple softball games going. Younger kids would play "Drop the Handkerchief," "Fox and Geese" and more.

Just think of the lung ex-

ercise and leg strength we gained by just having fun — so much fun.

I have enclosed several rhymes that I can still remember. I Hope you enjoy them. The other "A Daisy and a Robin" is a childhood song we sang in the second or third grade. I like it so well I just always remembered it.

I enjoy your newspaper, the *NewsHopper*. Keep up the good work.

May the Corona Flu end soon. I feel badly for this year's graduating seniors.

Pearl Jensen, Aitkin

A daisy and a robin

Once a little daisy raised its pretty head.
Robin red-breast listened, this is what she said:
Oh, I am so thirsty, robin - robin dear
All the day the sunshines in the sky so clear.
Then dear robin red-breast called the rain drops down.
Pitter-patter-pitter on the daisy's crown.
Said the daisy "Thank you" o'er and o'er again,
And dear robin red-breast sang out in the rain!

Nice young guy

Apples, peaches, pumpkin pie,
Tell me then name of a nice young guy.
[Start the alphabet, A-B-C and so on until you miss. That letter is the initial of the nice young guy — all in fun.]

Jump the rope

Jump the rope, jump the rope
First I fumble, then I stumble
Start once more, start once more
One and two and three and four...
[Keep counting 'til you miss, then exit]

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HEATED LEATHER, BACKUP CAMERA, BLUETOOTH, MOONROOF, JBL AUDIO POWER, LIFTGATE, TOW PACKAGE

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#10AG137T

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#10AG032T

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