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Locker plant repurposed as pizza sports pub in Aitkin



Locker Room staff Lucas and Armando are ready to serve.

By ANN SCHWARTZ
Another recycled building is open in downtown Aitkin, offering pizza, sports viewing and drinks.

The Locker Room is open in what was once the Locker

Plant in Aitkin and most recently was Glen's Meats, which moved to Glen.

Pete and Amanda Lowe own the new business that serves starters, pizza, salads, drinks and emphasizes sports.



Lucas at the brick-lined pizza oven.

There is an extensive alcohol free and alcohol-included cocktail list, plus a wine list.

As you walk into the space, the smooth polished wooden bar in the back dominates it, with various spirits lined up on shelves.



There is a pub feel, with pub-height tables and chairs. Big screen TVs have sports playing and the Christmas tree is decorated with Minnesota sports memorabilia.

There is old mixed in with the new in the design. The large, red bricks that were the signature of the locker plant are still there. Mixed in are old locker plant doors, tin from a wild rice operation, wood from the Tip Top cafe and other textures from a farmhouse salvage.

Decor includes modern games and a jukebox, as well as ancient meat cleavers, axes, and vintage snowshoes and skates.

Lucas and Armando were on staff when we visited.

"The pizzas take about

six minutes," Armando explained. "Three minutes to assemble them and three minutes in the oven."

The large, stainless steel pizza oven dominates the small kitchen in the back. There is also a prep area for the chef of the day.

Another couple wandered

in for some beverages and an early New Years Eve lunch.

Check facebook for hours and days that the Locker Room is open

Back to the future best explains the space, which incorporates the past yet is trendy and modern at the same time.



Now the Locker Room, Stan and Lou Sell operated the Aitkin Locker Plant for 30 years. In 1989—after Stan had suffered a stroke—they sold it to Glenn Monson, who was a meat cutter at Ziske's Market. Monson planned to continue the services of custom meat cutting for farm-raised meats, processing hunters' game, making all types sausage, meat smoking and locker rental for meat storage. He operated the locker plant until the mid-20-teens, when he moved Glenn's Meats to Glen, north of Mille Lacs Lake.

Ice Fishing Extravaganza

The 33rd Annual Brainerd Jaycees Ice Fishing Extravaganza will be held on Gull Lake on Saturday, January 28.

Be one of more than 10,000 anglers to compete for more than \$200,000 in prizes.

It's ice fishing's largest prize package and all proceeds benefit area charities.

Last year's event raised close to \$100,000 for area non-profit organizations with Confidence Learning Center.

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Thursday 4-8 p.m. Friday & Saturday 11 a.m.-8 p.m. Sunday 11 a.m.-4 p.m.

Area snowmobile trails mangled by December heavy snowstorms



By ANN SCHWARTZ
Of the 74 miles of snowmobile trails maintained by the Aitkin Sno-Drifters Club, about half of them were damaged by mid-December heavy snowstorms.

Readers may recall that the heavy wet snow clung to trees, leaving broken trees and branches littered across trails.

Also, groomers were not able to get out and groom the trails.

"About half of our trails are through the woods. We don't have any open areas," said Maurice Brule, Sno-Drifters trail coordinator.

A combination of volunteers with saws, logging equipment and excavators are working to clear the trails.

Over 144 hours of volunteer time was logged by press time -- just around Aitkin. It is brutal, heaving work, wading through deep snow, cutting up trees and limbs and dragging or throwing them off the trail. "After a four-hour shift, our volunteers are exhausted."

"We're hoping by the end of the week to have it cleared," Brule predicted. Donations by businesses and community members in the Aitkin area, as well as Tom Lundberg donating the use of heavy equipment, is much appreciated. "Our goal is to clear the trails wide enough for our groomer and drag. We have a used but new-to-us groomer this year and we are excited to get out and groom."

He advised riders to check club pages or county govern-

ment pages for trail updates. The Sno-Drifters can be found at aitkinsnodrifters.com.

Other snowmobile clubs in Aitkin, Crow Wing and Mille Lacs counties include Giese Sno-Cruisers, Haypoint Jackpine Snowmobile Club, Mille Lacs Trails, MnUSA Region 2, Tamarack Sno-Flyers, Baxter Snowmobile Club, Bay Lake Sno-Packers, Brainerd Snoderos, Crow Wing County Snowmobile Trails Association, Emily/Outing Snowbirds, Fort Ripley Trail Busters, Gull Lake Drifters, Ideal Sno Pros, Merrifield Marathons, MnUSA Region 3, Pequot Brush Pilots, Sno-Serpents Snowmobile Club, Mille Lacs Driftskippers and Rum River Sno-Riders. Club listings can be found at <https://www.mnsnowmobiler.org/get-involved/our-clubs/club-listing>.



Long Lake to host Frozen Forest 5K Run or Zero-K Bonfire Sit and Fish Fry

This winter, don't hibernate. Run!

Long Lake Conservation Center, near Palisade, is host-

ing the first annual Frozen Forest 5K Run or Zero-K

Bonfire Sit and Fish Fry on Saturday, Feb.18. The race

begins at 3 p.m. followed by a walleye feast at 5 p.m.

Race entrance and walleye dinner is \$65 for adults, and

\$55 for children 17 and under. The Walleye Feast only

is \$30 per adult and \$20 per child. The Zero-K Bonfire Sit

with the Walleye Feast is \$40 per adult and \$30 per child.

This fun run is perfect for those who like the scenery as much as the competition. The race winds through the woods surrounding Long Lake with bonfires and s'mores awaiting racers at the finish line. A social hour and walleye fish fry dinner cap the event.

All racers will receive a Frozen Forest 5k stocking cap, post-race s'mores and refreshments, and admission into the walleye feast. Those not wishing to race can sign up for the walleye feast only, or take part in the "Zero-K Bonfire Sit" where instead of racing, participants head straight from the starting line to the finish line where they'll claim a stocking cap, and sit by the fire with a beverage of their choice, before enjoying

the walleye feast.

"This might be the most picturesque 5K course anywhere," Long Lake Manager Dave McMillan said. "Even if you're not a racer, a leisurely hike around the lake is well worth your time. Plus, it's for a great cause."

Proceeds from the event will be earmarked for scholarships so that young people can attend nature school or summer camps at Long Lake, he said.

The event is presented by the Long Lake Conservation Foundation, a 501(c)3 that exists to support Long Lake's mission of inspiring a deep appreciation of nature, promoting wise use of natural resources and fostering a lifelong stewardship of the environment.

For more information and to register, go to longlakecc.org/forest5k or call 218-768-4653.



CONSERVATION TIP OF THE WEEK
JANUARY 8-15, 2023

LONG LAKE CONSERVATION CENTER

MAKE A MAKEUP DIFFERENCE

Many self-care or makeup routines include disposable cotton rounds. Try switching those out to something REUSABLE like bamboo cotton cloth. Use as you currently do to remove makeup or clean your face and then wash with your regular laundry.

NATURE NOTES
Here is what to look and listen for in nature this week:

- It's hooting season.** Listen for Great Horned Owl duet hooting during the evenings. So, what's with all the hooting? Great-horned owls normally remain together for life, so they use hooting to help solidify their pair-bond. The hooting also lets the other owls in town know that this particular territory is occupied. These nightly duets may go on for several weeks, but once the first egg is laid, the birds tend to quiet down and focus on raising a family.
- Winged seeds.** Maples, Ironwood and Paper Birch trees drop their seeds this time of year. If you find them, you'll likely find Ruffed Grouse, Turkey, fox and a variety of rodents who make a meal of them.
- Porcupines** are still in the trees eating bark and Pine needles. They are active all winter and easier to spot in the trees than in other seasons.

STARGAZING NOTES
What is happening in the starry sky this week:

- Jan. 14: Last quarter moon (also known as Third Quarter Moon). The Moon is in quadrature, and one half of the Moon's disk is illuminated as seen from Earth.

As part of its ongoing mission to educate the public about wise use of natural resources, Long Lake's team of Environmental Educators will share simple, everyday Conservation Tips that everyone, including kids, can do. If everyone makes the effort to consume resources more wisely, we can help ensure a brighter future for the planet and make life better TODAY!

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OBITUARIES

ROBERT CARLS



Robert "Bob" Carls, 82, Bay Lake, died on Monday, Dec. 26, 2022 at his home surrounded by family.

No services are planned. Bob's life was celebrated by his family and friends while he was living. To honor his life, plant a tree. Memorials are preferred to Wild and Free Wildlife Rehabilitation Program, Garrison; or the Nature Conservancy in Minnesota.

He was born July 3, 1940 to Robert A. and Ruth (Bundgaard) Carls in Minneapolis. A graduate of Southwest High School in Minneapolis, he was a U.S. Navy veteran, attended the University of Minnesota and graduated from the University of Oregon at Eugene. He was a full-time artisan working primarily in turned wood, and since

2000 he and his wife owned and operated Ripple River Gallery. He brought to his work a lifetime of study in art forms ranging from improvisational music to the visual arts, especially photography, sculpture and film. He was an avid gardener. His turned wood vessels can be found in public and private collections worldwide.

He is survived by his wife, Amy Sharpe; daughter, Emilie Johnson, Aitkin, and daughter and son-in-law, Elizabeth Carls and Tim Whitley, St. Paul; stepsons and spouses, Joshua and Katharine Sharpe, New Brighton, and Noah and Melanie Sharpe-Stirewalt, Ironton; six grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren; sister, Bonnie Van Santen; brother and sister-in-law, Mike and Peggy Carls; nieces, nephews and countless friends.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Robert Carls Sr. and Ruth (Bundgaard) Carls; and brother-in-law, Stuart Van Santen.

IRENE PIETZ



Irene Mae Pietz, 99, died on Friday, December 30, 2022 at Riverside Assisted Living in Pillager.

A memorial service will be held on Saturday, January 7, 2023, at 2:00 p.m. at First Lutheran Church in Pillager. Friends and family are invited to gather for two hours prior to the service. Interment will take place at a later date.

Irene was born on April 23, 1923 to Otto and Ada (Grams) Cornnick in Rose Hill Township near Tracy, MN. She attended school through the eighth grade in Tracy, her family then moved to May Township, Northwest, of Pillager. Irene married Ordell Pietz on August 27, 1940 and lived on their farm near Pillager until 1976 when they moved into town. Together, they had three children: Joan, Gary and Larry. Irene was employed at Madden's

Resort in housekeeping for many years, and also enjoyed cooking at the Pillager restaurant. She was an active member of First Lutheran Church and the Red Hat Society. Her favorite hobbies included, camping, fishing, riding in the boat and spending time with her family and friends.

She is survived by her son, Gary (Beverly) Pietz; four grandchildren: Terri (Kevin) Hedquist, Kim Simon, Michelle (Jerome) Pietz and Bob (Linda) Pietz; 11 great-grandchildren; 16 great-great-grandchildren; sister-in-law, Rose Marie Pietz; nieces: Cindy Hedquist, and Karla and Karen Cornnick; nephews: Ron Pietz and Kasey, Kent, Kevin, Kelly and Kim Cornnick.

She is preceded in death by her husband, Ordell; children: Larry and Joan Pietz, siblings, Art Cornnick and Alice Fassero; great grandson, Tyler Johnson; brother-in-law, Albert Pietz; nephew, Vern Hedquist and niece, Kathy Pietz.

More obituaries on Page 4

COMMUNITY EVENTS

January

- 7th - Northland Arboretum Full Moon Snowshoe Hike, 7:30pm-8:30pm, 14250 Conservation Dr, Baxter, Bring snowshoes and/or winter boots and plan for an hour hike. If it's cloudy, please bring a headlamp. Warm up after the hike together with hot chocolate. Call 218-829-8770.
12th - Stress Reduction Workshop & Breathwork Ecotherapy, 5:15pm-7:00pm., 14250 Conservation Dr, Baxter. Call 218-829-8770.
14th - Northland Arboretum Snowshoe Class, 9:30am-11:30am, 14250 Conservation Dr, Baxter, Bring snowshoes and/or winter boots and plan for an hour hike. Call 218-829-8770.
14th - GreatWorks Theatre Company performs "Mytholomania!" at the Chalberg Theatre. A fast-paced, raucous comedy that presents the greatest hits of Greek Mythology in under an hour! Fun for the whole family! Doors at 1:30pm and 6:30pm, with shows at 2pm and 7pm, respectively. Tickets between \$5-\$15. Family package of 4 tickets available for \$35.
15th - Breakfast at the VFW, 8am-Noon, Located just two blocks south of Brainerd's famous concrete water tower, 309 South Sixth Street, Brainerd. The cost is only \$9 per person.
20th - Cuyuna Lakes Chamber Annual Dinner. Call 218-546-8131 for more information.
22nd - Northland Arboretum Adult Ski Lessons, 2pm, 14250 Conservation Dr, Baxter. Call 218-829-8770.
23rd - "OboeBass!" performs at the Dryden Theatre. This internationally known, multi-faceted instrumental duo creates a sense of wonder for their audiences with original works and re-imaginings of classic standards. Doors open at 6:30pm. Show at 7pm. Free ticket reservations open on December 23.

Send Us Your Photos and Community Events!



Got an interesting photo and story to share? Just send it to hopper@crossbyironton.net, along with your name, city and a description of the photo. We also accept news and community events. And who knows, you may see your submission next week in the NEWSHOPPER!

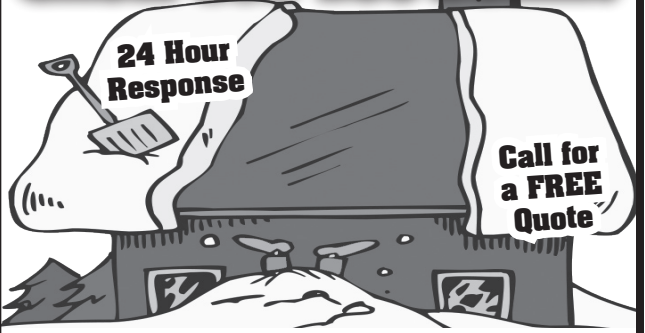
LEGAL NOTICE

(Published in NewsHopper Sat., Dec. 31, 2022 & Jan. 7, 2023) WEALTHWOOD TOWNSHIP BOARD OF AUDIT

The Board of Audit for Wealthwood Township will be held on Tuesday, January 10, 2023 at the town hall at 7:00 p.m. with the regular meeting to follow.

Dated: December 11, 2022 LINDA WENDLANDT, Clerk Wealthwood Township 2.2

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Outdoor Heritage Fund grant secures forestland for water quality



Outdoor Heritage Fund-backed land purchases in Crow Wing and Hubbard counties will benefit wildlife habitat and protect a source of drinking water. The Crow Wing County purchases included this parcel in the Pine River watershed, which flows to the Mississippi River — a source of drinking water for more than 1 million people in the Twin Cities and St. Cloud.

Crow Wing SWCD photo

A land acquisition made possible with a \$1.6 million Outdoor Heritage Fund grant will help to preserve water quality in a Crow Wing Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) priority watershed that supplies the Twin Cities with a source of drinking water.

The five parcels totaling 200.52 acres lie in the Pine River watershed, surrounded by 105,000 acres of county-owned land. The \$436,900 purchase, recorded on Oct. 27, nudges the SWCD's goal of keeping 75% of forestland within the Ruth Lake sub-watershed forested up by 2 percentage points to 64%. The SWCD purchased the land from two couples, and then donated it to the Crow Wing County Land Services department, which will manage it for timber production and wildlife habitat.

"The more we can keep forests as forests, the more we're going to be able to keep this water clear and good so when it comes down to the Twin Cities, people don't have to pay as much money to treat it," said Crow Wing SWCD Manager Melissa Barrick, who serves as the project manager.

The Pine River flows to the Mississippi River, a source of

drinking water for more than 1 million people in the Twin Cities and St. Cloud.

A Minnesota Department of Natural Resources study determined that protecting 75% of forestland within a lake's watershed helps to preserve its water quality. When more than 25% of a lake's watershed is deforested, phosphorus runoff spikes. Phosphorus feeds the algae that turns lakes green.

When it prioritized 500 lakes within the 785-square-mile Pine River watershed, the SWCD ranked Ruth Lake among those deserving the highest level of protection based on water quality, sensitivity to phosphorus, economic significance, and probability of attaining the 75% goal.

"The No. 1 goal for the Pine was to protect habitat, forestland and groundwater. And the best way to do that is through either acquisitions or through conservation easements, because we're basically buying the rights so that land doesn't get developed," Barrick said. "It's a three-for-one: habitat, water protection, forestland."

By working with landowners to install best management practices, the SWCD also aims to reduce by 5% the

amount of phosphorus that enters Ruth Lake. That translates to 18 pounds a year.

Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) Board Conservationist Chris Pence added land access and consolidation to the list of stacked benefits.

"It's not too often that you're going to find a piece of property like this that's completely forested and surrounded by county land. It's an island to itself," Pence said. "One of the reasons why it's so important to look at these rural parcels for consolidation is the county is unable (without incurring a high cost) to provide services that people would expect if they would build a house back there."

A second grant-funded land purchase in Hubbard County —encompassing parcels south of Akeley and north of Kabekona Lake near Laporte—protects 309.8 acres within the Leech Lake River watershed, which also feeds the Mississippi River. That \$417,832 purchase was also recorded on Oct. 27. The Crow Wing SWCD bought the land from The Conservation Fund, which had purchased the property from PotlatchDeltic, and had been seeking a third party

to take it over. The SWCD bought the parcels for well under the assessed value of \$639,000. It then donated the land to Hubbard County. Barrick worked with both counties' land departments.

Hubbard County Land grant's purpose was to have a unified protection plan for the lands within the watershed. ... That's why we're doing both easements and acquisitions."

The Crow Wing SWCD staff is reviewing landowners' easement applications, which are ranked. Easement outreach continues in Hubbard and Cass counties. RIM easements are held by BWSR and monitored by SWCDs.

The Pine River ranked No. 3 among 27 watersheds in terms of private forests important for drinking water supply in seven states

— Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Iowa, Missouri, Illinois and Indiana. The USDA Forest Service's "Forests, Water and People: Drinking water supply and forest lands

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Hubbard County Land Commissioner Chip Lohmeier said the property would be managed for forestry, public recreation and wildlife habitat.

"We try to mimic nature," Lohmeier said. That means the occasional timber harvest. Public recreation includes activities such as hunting, hiking and bird-watching.

The land provides habitat for deer, black bears, wild turkeys, ruffed grouse and nongame species such as eagles, hawks and songbirds.

The \$1.6 million grant covered the land acquisitions in Crow Wing and Hubbard counties, plus \$107,000 for contract, legal and appraisal work related to those purchases (including a \$10,000 contract with Walker-based Northern Waters Land Trust, which coordinated the acquisition process among landowners and partners, gathered necessary documents and ensured reporting requirements were met). The balance will fund permanent Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) easements with willing landowners. The grant was awarded on July 1, 2021, and

runs through June 30, 2025.

"Our goal was to acquire 300 acres, which we did surpass.

And then we had a goal to place 240 acres of high-quality forest, wetlands and shorelines into conservation easements," Barrick said. "The in the Northeast and Midwest United States," published in June 2009, ranked the Mississippi headwaters No. 7 and the Leech Lake River watershed No. 9.

The SWCD's grant application notes that the Pine and Leech Lake river watersheds provide habitat for wild rice, golden-winged warblers, Northern long-eared bats, Blanding's turtles and more than 100 unique, rare, endangered or threatened species — all of them at risk from development trends.

The application also notes that the watersheds' lakes and fisheries contribute to a tourism industry that generates nearly \$400 million in gross sales per year in Crow Wing, Hubbard and Cass counties.

Thirty-three percent of sales tax revenue from the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment, which Minnesota voters passed in 2008, is allocated to the Outdoor Heritage Fund.



A Clean Water Land & Legacy Amendment sign marks property south of Akeley in Hubbard County that is now owned by the county. Chip Lohmeier, Hubbard County photo

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