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NewsHopper

Governor Walz signs executive order to combat fraud



Governor Walz signed an executive order creating a centralized state fraud investigations unit operated by law enforcement at the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension. The Governor also announced a new legislative package to prevent, detect, investigate, and penalize fraud in state programs.

Governor Tim Walz signed an executive order on January 3 to establish a new centralized fraud investigations unit within the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA). The unit is designed to strengthen the state's efforts to combat fraudulent activities that have been plaguing public assistance programs. In tandem with the executive order, Governor Walz unveiled a comprehensive legislative package aimed at preventing, detecting, investigating, and penalizing fraud in state-funded programs.

"As long as there have been programs aimed at helping people, there have been fraudulent actors looking to

steal from those who need them most," Governor Walz said in his announcement. "Our job is to stay one step ahead of them. We're coupling new tools, like AI, with old-fashioned police work, to slam the door shut on theft. Minnesotans rightly have no tolerance for misuse of taxpayer dollars."

Centralized fraud investigations unit

Under the executive order, fraud investigators from the Minnesota Department of Commerce will transfer to the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension to form a Fraud and Financial Crimes Unit. The unit will focus on investigating fraudulent activities

that impact state programs, including Medicaid, food assistance, and other welfare services.

This restructuring aims to streamline fraud detection and enforcement, allowing law enforcement officials to more effectively address fraud across multiple state agencies. The Governor also announced plans to add nine new staff members to the Attorney General's Medicaid Fraud Unit to bolster efforts in addressing fraud in health care programs.

Enhanced fraud prevention and detection

The legislative package proposes several new measures to prevent and detect fraud before it occurs, including the use of artificial intelligence (AI) to identify payment anomalies in Medicaid and other state-administered programs. The Minnesota IT Services (MNIT) will partner with industry experts to develop a pilot program aimed at flagging suspicious payment patterns and helping state agencies detect fraud before it reaches the taxpayer.

Other key proposals include the creation of a provisional license system for Early Intensive Developmental

and Behavioral Intervention providers and more frequent re-validation visits to ensure program integrity. The package also calls for additional staff to enhance internal oversight at Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB) and expand the Department of Human Services' (DHS) capacity to detect fraud and ensure proper billing practices.

In addition, the plan includes stronger oversight of Charter Schools, calling for increased scrutiny of Charter Management Organizations and improvements to the procurement and contract bidding process to reduce opportunities for fraud.

Increased criminal penalties and expanded enforcement

To further deter fraud, the Governor's proposal introduces a new statute, Theft of Public Funds, which would increase criminal penalties for individuals convicted of defrauding state programs by 20% over existing penalties for theft. The package also seeks to criminalize the practice of providing kickbacks, granting the Attorney General investigative authority to pursue these cases.

"Fraud and other financial

crimes harm every Minnesotan," said Drew Evans, Superintendent of the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension. "They drive up prices, steal our tax dollars, and reduce the availability of funding for vital services. By combining state law enforcement resources, we will improve our ability to root out and prosecute these crimes with greater efficiency."

Costs and Legislative outlook

The Governor's plan comes with a projected cost of \$39 million for the 2026-2027 biennium and \$15 million for 2028-2029. Although the proposal has drawn mixed reactions, Walz emphasized that the long-term benefits of reducing fraud, protecting taxpayer dollars, and ensuring the integrity of state programs would justify the initial investment.

In a statement, Tarek Tames, Commissioner of Minnesota IT Services, highlighted the potential of AI to revolutionize fraud detection. "AI can detect patterns, predict risks, and protect resources with unparalleled speed and accuracy," Tames said. "By harnessing these tools, we can stay ahead of fraudsters and

Continued on Page 6

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Select Minnesota laws that took effect January 1, 2025 part 2



The following is the second part of the select new laws passed during the 2024 legislative session. Part one was published in the NewsHopper January 4 issue. Summaries of all laws passed by the 2024 Legislature are available online from nonpartisan House Public Information Services at www.house.mn.gov/new-laws/#/search/2024

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Abortion-related coverage

Effective Jan. 1, 2025, and applicable to health plans offered, sold, issued, or renewed on or after that date, a health plan must provide coverage for abortions and abortion-related services, including preabortion and follow-up services.

Health plans cannot impose co-pays, coinsurance, deductibles or other enrollee costsharing greater than cost-sharing they apply to similar services. Nor can a health plan impose any limitations on the coverage, “including but not limited to any utilization review, prior authorization, referral requirements, restrictions, or delays, that is not generally applicable to other coverages under the plan.”

Per the law, it “does not apply to managed care organizations or county-based purchasing plans when the plan provides coverage to public health care program enrollees under [Minnesota-Care or Medical Assistance statutes].”

An eligible organization or an exempt organization is permitted to not cover some

or all benefits for abortions and abortion-related services due to religious objections. Health plan companies must cover abortions and abortion-related services for enrollees of eligible organizations with separate payments for those services.

The provision is in the law passed in the waning hours of the 2024 session that included provisions covering health and human services, taxes, transportation, labor, housing, higher education, agriculture, and climate and energy. Rep. Aisha Gomez (DFL-Mpls) and Sen. Ann Rest (DFL-New Hope) are the sponsors. HF5247*/SF5234/CH127

Coverage of wigs, amino acid-based formula



An existing private sector health insurance mandate that requires coverage of scalp hair prostheses, often called wigs, in cases of hair loss due to alopecia areata will expand to require coverage in cases of hair loss suffered because of a health condition, or for the treatment of cancer, unless there is a clinical basis for the limitation. Coverage of all equipment and accessories necessary for regular use of scalp hair prostheses will be required.

This took effect Jan. 1, 2025, and applies to policies, plans, certificates, and contracts offered, issued, or

renewed on or after that date.

Also in the law, a health plan company must provide coverage for amino acid-based elemental formula when it is medically necessary; private sector health coverage must cover orthotic and prosthetic devices, supplies, and services; Medical Assistance must cover these items and services to meet many of the requirements that apply to private sector coverage; and intermittent urinary catheters and insertion supplies must be covered by a health plan if intermittent catheterization is recommended by the enrollee's health care provider.

The provision is in the law passed in the waning hours of the 2024 session that included provisions covering health and human services, taxes, transportation, labor, housing, higher education, agriculture, and climate and energy. Rep. Aisha Gomez (DFL-Mpls) and Sen. Ann Rest (DFL-New Hope) are the sponsors. HF5247*/SF5234/CH127

Gender-affirming care coverage

A health plan that covers physical or mental health services must cover medically necessary gender-affirming care or require treatment of medically necessary care that is defined in the law as “health care services appropriate in terms of type, frequency, level, setting, and duration to the enrollee's diagnosis or condition and diagnostic testing and preventative services. Medically necessary care must be consistent with generally accepted practice parameters as determined by health care providers in the same or similar general specialty as typically manages the condition, procedure, or treatment at issue and must: (1) help restore or maintain the enrollee's health; or (2) prevent deterioration of the enrollee's condition.”

A nonprofit or a closely held for-profit religious organization will be exempt from covering gender-affirming care based on religious objections. If the exempt organization provides partial coverage, it must specify services not covered.

Rep. Zack Stephenson (DFL-Coon Rapids) and Sen. Matt Klein (DFL-Mendota Heights) sponsor the 2024 commerce law. HF4077/SF4097*/CH114

Biomarker testing coverage

For health plans offered, issued or renewed on or after Jan. 1, 2025, the plan must cover biomarker testing to diagnose, treat, manage and monitor illness or disease if the test provides clinical unity.

A test's clinical unity may be demonstrated by medical and scientific evidence, including but not limited to nationally recognized clinical practice guidelines, consensus statements, labeled indications for a U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved or cleared test, indicated tests for and FDA-approved drug, or adherence to warnings and precautions on FDA-approved drug labels; or Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services national coverage determinations or Medicare Administrative Contractor local coverage determinations.

Per the law, “Coverage ... must be provided in a manner that limits disruption of care, including the need for multiple biopsies or biospecimen samples.”

The provision is in the 2023 health finance law sponsored by Rep. Tina Liebling (DFL-Rochester) and Sen. Melissa Wiklund (DFL-Bloomington). HF2930/SF2995*/CH70

Department of Direct Care and Treatment established

To separate direct care and treatment from the Department of Human Services, the 2023 human services finance law creates the Department of Direct Care and Treatment effective Jan. 1, 2025.

Per the law, the department “shall provide direct care and treatment services in coordination with counties and other vendors. Direct care and treatment services shall include specialized inpatient programs at secure treatment facilities as defined in [two statutes]; community preparation services; regional treatment centers; enterprise services; consultative services; aftercare services; community-based services and programs; transition services; nursing home services; and other services consistent with the mission of the Department of Direct Care and Treatment.”

Rep. Mohamud Noor (DFL-Mpls) and Sen. John Hoffman (DFL-Champlin) sponsor the law. HF2847/SF2934*/CH61

Cost-sharing for prescription drugs, medical supplies to treat chronic disease

Effective Jan. 1, 2025, and applicable to health plans offered, issued, or renewed on or after that date, health plans will be prohibited from setting patient co-pays greater than \$25 per one-month supply of prescription drugs used to treat chronic diseases such as diabetes, asthma, and allergies requiring the use of epinephrine auto-injectors. There is also a \$50 per month limit in total for all related medical supplies, such as syringes, insulin pens and pumps, test strips, glucometers, continuous glucose monitors, epinephrine auto-injectors, and asthma inhalers.

The cost-sharing limit for related medical supplies will not increase with the number of chronic diseases for which an enrollee is treated. Coverage shall not be subject to a deductible.

The change is part of the 2023 commerce finance and policy law sponsored by Rep. Zack Stephenson (DFL-Coon Rapids) and Sen. Matt Klein (DFL-Mendota Heights). HF2680/SF2744*/CH57

To Be Continued Next Issue

Spice up your Sunday at the Bruce Blom Memorial Chili Cookoff

Get ready to heat up your January with some mouth-watering chili at the Bruce Blom Memorial Chili Cookoff, taking place at the Hard Water Lounge, 110 W. Main Street, Crosby on Sunday, Jan.12, starting at 1 p.m.

The annual event honors the late Bruce Blom, a community member known for his love of food, friendship, and a

good challenge.To participate, sign up in advance at the Hard Water Lounge for just a \$10 fee. Contestants are asked to bring their best chili, along with a warmer and power cord to keep their creation at the perfect temperature. Don't forget any special accompaniments you might want to add for that extra zing!

The Hard Water Lounge will

provide bowls and spoons, so all you need to bring is your A-game and a pot of your signature chili recipe. And if you're not competing, don't worry—you can still join in the fun by tasting the entries and voting for your favorite chili in the People's Choice category.

For more information, call 218-772-0306.



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Gear up for the Icykel Fat Bike Race: a winter adventure for all levels

Winter warriors, it's time to hit the trails for the 2nd Annual Icykel Fat Bike Race on Saturday, Jan. 18, at the renowned Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area in Iron-ton. Hosted by True North Basecamp, this exhilarating event marks the first race of the Rust Buster Race Series and promises an unforgettable winter biking experience for all riders.

A race for every rider

Whether you're new to fat biking or a seasoned pro, the Icykel race offers three

distances to accommodate all skill levels:

- 10K – Perfect for beginners eager to get their tires spinning on winter trails. Race starts at 10:30 a.m.
- 20K – A moderate challenge for riders looking for a bit more adventure. Race starts at 11:00 a.m.
- 40K – For the seasoned cyclists who crave a rigorous, action-packed challenge. Race starts at 10:00 a.m.

The trails of the Cuyuna Lakes Mountain Bike Trails are

ready to offer a landscape with scenic views, and the thrill of the ride.

Race for a Cause

Beyond the fun and the challenge, the Icykel Fat Bike Race supports a great cause. All proceeds benefit the Cuyuna Lakes Mountain Bike Crew, a passionate group dedicated to maintaining and improving the legendary Cuyuna Lakes Mountain Bike Trails. By racing, you're helping preserve and enhance this outdoor treasure for riders for years

to come.

Weekend schedule

Pre-race Pasta Meal: Fuel up with a free spaghetti dinner at the Spaghetti Party and Pack-et Pickup on Friday, Jan. 17, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at Hudson Smokehouse, 208 Curtis Ave, Iron-ton.

Racer Goodie Bag: Packed with fun surprises to make your race experience even better.

Weekend Festivities: Get access to all scheduled events throughout the weekend,

making it a full-on Cuyuna experience.

On Saturday, Jan. 18, packet pickup opens at 8:30 a.m. at the Rally Center, Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area.

After the race celebrate with fellow racers at the After Party and Awards Ceremony located at the Hudson Smokehouse staring at 1:30 p.m. It's the perfect way to wind down after a day of racing and community fun.

The Icykel Fat Bike Race takes place on some of the

best groomed winter trails in the state, offering riders a unique opportunity to explore Cuyuna's scenic terrain in the heart of winter.

But you don't need to race to involved.

Volunteer: Help out and be part of this exciting event! Vol-unteers are needed for various roles, and your support will help make the race a success.

Sponsor: Interested in spon-soring the race and supporting local cyclists? Join the effort to make this event even better.

Deerwood Farmers Winter Market

Get ready for a cozy, community-filled day at the Deerwood Farmers Winter Market on Saturday, Jan. 11, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., the Deerwood Auditorium will transform into a bus-tling winter wonderland, bringing together over 20 local vendors showcasing a variety of handmade and homegrown goods. Whether you're searching for the perfect winter treat, a unique gift, or just want to support local artisans, this market has something for everyone.

A taste of local flavor

One of the main attractions is the Chili Cook-Off Contest, where local chefs will battle it out for the title of the best

chili in town. Judging begins at noon, so come hungry and ready to sample some delicious, heart-warming creations.

Fun for the whole family

It's not just about shop-ping and eating! The little ones will love the Snowflake Making Contest, where they can get creative and show off their crafting skills. Who doesn't love a little winter magic, especially when it's handmade?

A feast for the senses

With so many unique of-ferings, you're sure to find something to take home, from homemade jams, pickles, and baked goods to woodwork, ironworks,

soaps, and even freeze-dried candies. The market will feature a wide variety of goods, including jams, pickles, breads, sourdough, woodwork and ironworks, soaps, lotions, pet treats, fudge, salsa, snack mixes, dried herbs, local honey, coffee beans, bird feeders, crafts and more.

Whether you're looking to stock up on local honey, grab some fresh-baked bread, or just enjoy the warmth of good company, the Deer-wood Farmers Winter Market is the place to be on Saturday. Come for the shopping, stay for the chili, and enjoy the warmth of the community during this winter market.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

January

11th - Corey Borg-Massanari Fight the Pike Tournament, noon start, fish /spear on any lake, frozen fish NOT accepted, fish weigh in at 6 p.m. fish fry dinner 6:30 p.m. plus more at Green Lantern Bar and Grill, 19121 MN-18, Brainerd

11th - Northland Arboretum Full Moon Snowshoe Hike, 7:30 8:30 p.m., guided by Bryan Pike. Bring snow-shoes and/or winter boots, and a headlamp for an hour hike. Class size is limited. The cost is \$10 for members and \$20 for nonmembers. Payment is due at registration.

12th - Bruce Blom Memorial Chili Cookoff, 1 p.m., Hard Water Lounge, 110 W. Main Street, Crosby

16th - 18th - Pequot Lakes Antique Snowmobile Rendezvous hosted by the Pequot Brush Pilots Snowmo-bile Club. Antique and Vintage snowmobile show, trail ride and competitions. The races will include only snowmobiles built in 1966 and older. 218-568-5222

17th - 19th - Back to Hack- Hackensack's area winter festival. Activities including the Frostbite Your Fanny Fun Run, Paul Bunyan Family Fishing Contest, Medallion Hunt, Kids Games in the Snow, Snow Sculpt-ing, and a Community Bonfire and Fireworks. 16th - Cuyuna Lakes Chamber Annual Dinner at Rutger's Bay Lake Resort. Social hour 4:30 p.m., dinner 6 p.m. and presentations begin at 7 p.m. Tickets \$80. Call 218-546-8131 for more information.

18th - Icykel Fat Bike Race Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area at Miner's Mountain Rally Center in Iron-ton. Winter races are the 10K at 10:30 a.m., 20K at 11 a.m., 40K at 10 a.m.

21st - 23rd Gull Lake Frozen Fore snow golfing, live music, and dancing on a frozen lake Friday night begins with the annual Frozen Flop, which raises money for local charities. Saturday morning begins with Snow Golf. Finishing the Frozen Fore weekend is Sunday's Food Fest. Proceeds of the Frozen Fore Winter Weekend event are donated to Confidence Learning Center and The Outreach Program of Brainerd Lakes. If you're interested in participating in this fun and charitable event, you can buy tickets online or at any of the sponsoring locations.

30th - Feb. 1st- Crosslake WinterFest January 30 at 9 a.m. - February 1 at 10 p.m.

Send your community events to hopper@crosbyiron-ton.net



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

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LEGAL NOTICE

(Published in NewsHopper Saturday, Jan. 11 & 18, 2025)

LIBBY TOWNSHIP BOARD MEETING

The Libby Township Board will meet online at 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, January 21, 2025 to discuss matters that may come before the board. The January 21 meeting will be conducted via Zoom. Con-tact Jane Jewett, clerk, at wil-lowsedge.janesfarm@gmail.com to request the Zoom link.

Dated this 4th day of January, 2025

Jane Grimsbo Jewett Clerk, Libby Township 2.63

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OBITUARIES

RANDY BYE



Randy Ervin Bye, 65, of Brainerd died unexpectedly on Thursday, Dec. 26, 2024 in Duluth surrounded by his family.

A Celebration of Life was held on Saturday, Jan. 4, 2025 at the Koop Funeral Home in Crosby.

Randy Ervin Bye was born in October of 1959 to Marvin and June (Jorde) Bye in Michigan, ND. He graduated from McVillie High School in McVillie, ND; then, received his B.S. degree at the University of MN-Crookston. After graduation, he delved right into the food industry, starting his career in food sales with Upper Lakes Food out of Cloquet. His sales brought him throughout the northeastern territory of MN settling in Brainerd. He met Pamela Sienko while sitting in the dental chair getting his teeth cleaned by her. Randy was united in marriage to Pamela in October of 1984 in Brainerd. Together they raised two children, Jason and Jessica. In 1990, Pam and Randy purchased the Chaparral Bar and Restaurant in Brainerd. Together they built the business to include the Bunkhouse Hotel and Timbermist Banquet and Catering Hall. After twenty-six years of marriage, Randy lost his wife, Pam to her battle with cancer in 2010. Randy and his close friends

and family continued to manage the businesses until 2014 when he eventually sold them. Randy continued to share his passion for the hospitality industry and cooking through many businesses in the Brainerd Lakes Area. In 2019, he had the opportunity to meet Jay Miller from a mutual friend. In September of 2023, they united their friendship to marriage. Together they shared the responsibility of mutually raising Jay's young daughter, Brooklyn. Randy always shared his love through his cooking. Sharing new recipes along with the family favorite staples. As a result, he turned so many friends to chosen family. He will be remembered or his welcoming, fun, and sweet personality, and additional for his dedication and strong work ethic.

He is survived by his spouse, Jay; son, Jason (Laura) Bye; daughter, Jessica (Dean) Longhurst; stepdaughter, Brooklyn; three grandchildren: Lucas and Cole Bye, and Milly Longhurst; siblings, Allen (Julie) Jorde, Wayne (Vangie) Jorde, Gail (Ron) Dockter, Donavon (Marie) Bye, and JoAnne (Special Friend Joey) Davis; and many nieces and nephews.

Preceding him in death were his parents, Marvin and June; and wife, Pamela Bye.

Arrangements were with the Koop Funeral Home of Crosby. To leave a message of condolence go to www.koopfuneralhome.com.

PAMELA RIKALA



Pamela Kay Rikala, 71, died Tuesday Dec. 31, 2024 at home with her family by her side.

Funeral service were held on Monday, Jan. 6, 2025 at First Lutheran Church in Aitkin with dear friend Pastor Susan Cline officiating. Burial will take place at a later date at Lakeview Cemetery.

Pam was born November 5, 1953 to Maurice and Dwanna Rehse in Cokato. She graduated from Aitkin High School in 1972. She held jobs at Security State Bank, Mille Lacs Electric and Hugh Heineke before working at Aitkin Motors. Pam had a great sense of humor and a love for animals. She enjoyed watching the Vikings, traveling to the beach, spending sum-

mers at the Gun Lake Cabin – boating, fishing and spending time with her family. Pam especially loved watching her kids and grandkids play sports. Pam's greatest contentment came from being a grandmother and having her family home for Christmas.

Pam is survived by her husband, Jerry; children: Jeremy (Kelli) Rikala, Jeff (Jen) Rikala and Jason (Heather) Rikala; six grandchildren: Allie and Brady, Kyler and Quinton, Rehse and Zane; sisters: Linda Rehse, Debbie (Dean) Johnson; and many beloved nieces, nephews and cousins.

She was preceded in death by her parents; step-father, John Berry and brother Tim Rehse.

Arrangements were with the Sorensen-Root-Thompson Funeral Home and Cremation Service of Aitkin. Leave online condolences at www.srtfuneral.com.

MARDELLA CHAMBERLIN



Mardeella Mae Chamberlin, 77, of Aitkin, died Tuesday, Dec. 24, 2024 at Aitkin Health Services.

A gathering of family and friends to honor Mardeella's life will be held from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday, Jan. 11, 2025 at the American Legion

Lee Post #86 in Aitkin.

She was born January 14, 1947 in Palisade the daughter of Pearle and Helen (Pratt) Cook, Sr. Mardeella was united in marriage to Harold Carl Chamberlin on May 16, 1977 in Aitkin. She worked at the Birchwood Cafe in Aitkin for many years. She

enjoyed crossword puzzles and fishing. Mardeella loved all of her pets and spending time with family and friends.

Mardeella is survived by her brother, Pearle Cook, Jr.; five stepchildren: Robert, Josh, Gill, Rose and Maritta; many grandchildren; and other special relatives and friends.

She was preceded in death by her husband , Harold in 2021; sister, Laura Straight; brother, Francis Cook and her parents.

Arrangements were with the Sorensen-Root-Thompson Funeral Home and Cremation Service of Aitkin. Leave online condolences at www.srtfuneral.com.

JOANN ANDERSON

JoAnn Anderson, 90, of Brainerd, died Tuesday Dec. 24, in Good Samaritan Society - Bethany. Mass will be at St. Andrews Catholic Church

on Thursday, Jan. 2, 2025, at 11am. Family and friends are invited to gather an hour prior for a visitation.



LOOK WHOSE **baby** JUST ARRIVED

CADEN TURCK

Caden Jo Turck, a boy, weighing 8 lbs., 5 ozs., was born December 29, 2024, in Aitkin, to Samantha Turck of Aitkin and Dalton Turck of Sauk Rapids. Grandparents are Aaron and Tammy Hagen, Scott and Monica Duffney, Dan and Brenda Turck, and David Pritzlaff and Judy Turck.

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CHURCH DIRECTORY

* Indicates handicap accessible. NOTE: All times are Sunday morning (a.m.) unless indicated otherwise.

ALLIANCE
Aitkin* — New Life Church of the CM&A; Worship 10:15 am; Services on Sunday at 10:15am and 6pm; 11-1st Street SW; newlifeaitkin.com 218-927-2823.
Baxter* — Pointway Alliance Church; Rev. Charles Bolstridge, 218-537-6505; 7756 Highland Scenic Road; Worship 10:30; www.pointway.org
Garrison* — Worship 10:30am
Onamia — Vineland Native American Chapel, Hwy. 169 north of casino; Worship 11; Pastor Boeringa 320-532-4449

ASSEMBLY OF GOD
Aitkin — Pastor Andrew Jergenson; Sunday Morning Service 10.
Baxter — Heritage Church, Pastor Heath Beard; 8:30, 10 & 11:30 Sundays, 6:30p Wednesdays, iamheritage.org
Crosby — Pastor Dustin McCaleb; Worship 10:30
Crosslake — Crossroads Christian, Rev. Gary Espeseth; SS at 9:30; Worship at 10:45
Hill City — Interim Pastor John Koppel, Staff Pastor Lisa Jordan; Worship 10; hillcityagchurch@gmail.com; 218-697-2662
Palisade — Pastor Charlie Bell; SS 9; Worship 10; Kids Church; Small groups during the week 218-845-2726

BAPTIST
Aitkin - Northwoods Community Church, Pastor William Verbeke, Worship 10:30, northwoodscommunitychurch.org
Baxter - The Journey North, Worship 9 & 10:30, 218-824-5617 thejourneynorth.com
Brainerd* - Faith Baptist Church, Pastor Jim Stephens, 218-829-3191; SS 9:00, Worship 10:30 and 6 p.m., Wed. Classes and Clubs 6:30 p.m.; fbcbrainerd.com
Brainerd- The Church On The Wise Road, Pastor Todd Stumbo 218-829-4673, Worship 11:00, SS 9:45 www.thechurchonthewiseroad.org
Breezy Point — Eagles Nest, Pastor Zach Broom 218-562-5252, Worship 9:30, SS 11
Crosby — Bible Baptist, Pastor Jon Thorson; SS 9:45; Service 10:45 and 6 p.m., Bible Study Wed. 7 pm
Deerwood* — Jeff Shadrick, SS 9:30; Worship 10:30 and 6 pm; Wed. Service, 6:30 pm.
Glory* — SS 9:15; Worship 10:30 a.m.; Wed 6pm Glory Family night, KidMin grades kindergarten - 6, Mad4Christ grades 7-12, aitkinchurch.com
Hill City — Pastor Lonnie Lee; 218-697-2645; Adult SS 9; Worship 10 am; Bible Study, Fri., 7 pm.
Isle — Pastor Nick Skogen; 676-3171; SS 9:30; Service 10:30; Bible Study, Wed., 7 p.m.
Opstead — 676-8859; SS 9:30; Worship, 10:30; Bible Study Wed., 7 p.m.
CATHOLIC
Aitkin* — St. James, Fr. Mike Patullo, 218-927-6581; Mass Sat. 5 pm, Sun. 10:30. Confession Sat. 10-10:45 and 4-4:45 pm.
Brainerd — St. Andrew's, Fr. Gabriel Waweru, Sat.4:30; Sun. 10:00 and St. Mathias Sunday 8:00.
Brainerd — St. Francis, Fr. Michael Garry, Sat. 5:00; Sunday 7:30, 9:00, 11:15 and All Saints Saturday 4:00 and Sunday 10:30.
Cromwell/Wright — Immaculate Conception, Mass: Sat. 5 p.m.
Crosby* — St. Joseph's, Fr. Eli Gieske, Mass: Thurs. and Fri. at 8; Tues at noon, Sun. 8:30 & 10:30.
Crosslake — Immaculate Heart, 218-692-3731; www.ihmstemiys.org; Mass: Sat. 4 pm; Sun. 8:30; Confession Sat. 3 pm.
Emily — St. Emily, Mass: Mon. & Wed. 8; Sun. 10:30; Confession 1st Sat. 11 or by appt. 218-763-2101.
Garrison — Our Lady of Fatima, Fr. Eli Gieske, Mass Wed. 9 & Sat. 4 pm, Confession Sat. 3:30 - 3:50 pm
Grand Rapids — St. Joseph's, Fr. Jerry Weiss, Mass: Sat. 5 pm; Sun. 8 & 10:30. 218-326-2483
Hillman — Holy Family; Sun. 10 to Mass Sat. 6:30 pm (only through Labor Day) w/ confession before or by appt.
McGregor — Holy Family, Fr. Mike Patullo, 218-927-6581; Mass Sun. 8; Confessions Tues. 5:30-6:30 pm
Vineland — St. Therese, Mass Sun. 11; Holy Days 8:30.

CHURCH OF CHRIST
Baxter, Lakes Area — Nondenominational; 7001 Highland Scenic Road; Bible Study every Wed. 7 pm; Worship 10:30-11:30. 218-828-1362
Tamarack — Pastor Terry Banker, 608-475-1528, Worship 9:30; SS 10:45; Wed Youth 4 pm.

CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS
Aitkin — Co. Rd. 12, Chapel Ph. 218-927-4454; Kevin Haffner 218-792-5684; Sacrament Mtg. 10
COMMUNITY
Aitkin — Nondenominational; 927-2749; at 219-1st Ave. NE., Aitkin, Services Sun. 10, 218-927-6959
Brainerd - Community of Hope Church of the Nazarene- Pastor Dave McGaffey Sunday worship at 10, SS 9; 16549 Johnson Rd -church phone 218-829-9005
Glen — Pastor R. F. Stauter, 218-838-1981; Worship 9 May-Oct.
Grand Rapids — Solid Rock Church of God, Pastor Robert Kimberling; 218-326-0711; Sun. BS 9:30, Worship 10:30; Wed. BS 6:30 pm
Jacobson — Jacobson Community Church, Pastor George Collins, 218-252-5938, Sun. SS (All ages) 9:30, Worship 10:30; Family Time 2nd & 4th Sundays; Wed. BS 7 pm
Kimberly — Nature Ave. Rev. Rick Perry; Worship 9; Adult Bible Study & Sunday School 10:30; 218-927-6256.
McGregor — The Lighthouse Christian Church; Worship 10; 99 South 1st Street (at the McGregor United Methodist church [shared] in downtown McGregor) Pastor Joel Seibel.
McGregor — Victory Mission, Pastor J. Gould, 218-768-2160; Sun. 10; Wed. Bible Study, 7:30 pm.
Merrifield — Community Church of the Nazarene, Pastor Ron Christenson; Service 11 & 6 pm. Wed. Prayer Meeting, 7 p.m.; 218-829-7536.
Merrifield — Ossipee Community, SS 10; Service 11; Wed. Bible Study Prayer, 7:00 p.m.
Nisswa — Christ Community Church, Pastor Richie Bean; Service 10; Fellowship 9:30-10
Outing* - Narrows Community Church, Pastor Kenny Holm, 218-792-5530 Worship 9:30; 6297 Woods Bay NE, just north of Hwy. 6 bridge
Palisade —Hilltop Chapel (Waukenabo Twp)*- service 10 a.m.; Adult and Children's SS 9 a.m.; 49448 Osprey Avenue, Palisade.
Tamarack — Church of Christ, 218-768-3898; Service 9:30; SS 10:45.
EPISCOPAL
Aitkin — St. John's, Holy Communion or Morning Prayer 9
Brainerd* — St. Paul's, Rev. Joyce A. Rush. In-person worship service at 10 am Sunday. Online at 5 pm Saturday. Call the church 219-829-3834 and leave a message with email to receive a Zoom invitation.
EVANGELICAL FREE
Baxter — Lakewood EFC, Pastor Matt Nagel; Worship at 9:00 and 10:45. Wednesday for all ages 6:30 pm.
Crosslake — The Log Church 9:30, Pastor Troy Nelson; 218-692-4141, 37218 County Road 66, www.crosslakeefc.org
Isle — Pastor Mark Lee; Sunday School 9:00 am; Worship 10:30 am, Sun. Youth group 6:00 pm, Wed. Adult Prayer 6:30 pm and Kids Konnect 6:30 pm
Malmö — Pastor Glenn Browning; SS 9:30; Fellowship 10; Worship 10:15
Wright — Pastor Ken Mitchell, 218-426-5115; SS 9:30; Worship, 10:30; Thu., Bible Study, 7 pm.
HEBREW/MESSIANIC
Glen — Beth Shalom Tabernacle of Truth, for information 320-684-2804
LUTHERAN
Aitkin — Bethlehem (ELCA), Rev. Rebecca Hinz; Worship 9:30; Holy Comm. 1st & 3rd Sun each month.
Aitkin — First* (ELCA) Pastor Reggie Denton; worship Sun. 99am (9am service also available via livestream on YouTube — First Lutheran Church, Aitkin and broadcast on KVIN 94.3 FM radio at 10am), take out community meal every Mon. & Thurs. 5pm and Tues. 12pm; food shelf 2nd & 4th Thurs. each month 9am- 4pm.
Aitkin (Cedarbrook) — St. John's (ELCA) Pastor Sarah Stadler, 602-318-6876, 27452 St. John's Church Road, Aitkin. Worship on Sundays at 9:00 am followed by Sunday school at 10:00 am. stjohns-cedarbrook.weebly.com.
Aitkin — St. John's (Missouri Synod), Pastor D. Becker; Worship Sun. 9, SS 10
Baxter — Christ Lutheran Church and Preschool (WELS). Pastor Bill Werth. Sunday Worship 9. Sunday School/ Adult Bible Class 10:15. 13815 Cherrywood Dr. in Baxter. (Corner of Ingelwood and Cherrywood). 218-829-4105. www.christbaxter.com.
Baxter — Prince of Peace (LCMS); Communion every Sunday 9, Fellowship 10:15, Adult Bible Class & Sunday School 10:30 am 218-829-7092 www.princeofpeace-lutheran.church
Beaver Township — Finnish EA, Hwy. 27, Worship 1st &

3rd Sun., 10:30.
Brainerd — First Lutheran Church (ELCA) Pastors: Patty Bjorklund and Jordan Gades, Sunday worship 9, Sunday School following worship. Services also available on YouTube and Facebook. 218-829-9552 flicbrainerd.com
424 8th Street South, Brainerd
Brainerd* — Good Shepherd Free Lutheran Church (AFLC), Pastor David Franz, find service info at www.goodshepherdfreelutheran.church, 5878 Pine Beach Road, Brainerd, 218-824-3052
Brainerd — Laestadian Lutheran Church, 1501 So. 8th St. - Sunday Worship Services 10:30 am. (www.llchurch.org)
Brainerd — Trinity Lutheran Church (ELCA) 1420 South 6th St. Brainerd, Worship time September through May 8:15am & 10:30am; worship (June through August) 9 am. 218-829-5147. Website: www.trinitybrainerd.org. Email: trinity@trinitybrainerd.org
Brainerd — Truth Lutheran Church (LCMC, Pastor James Walth, Corner of 5th and Kingwood, Worship 9
Brainerd - Zion Lutheran Church (LCMS) Pastor Steve Benson, Sunday Worship 9, Monday Worship 6 pm. Education hour Sunday 10:15 am. 220 N. 8th St. Brainerd. 218-829-4317. www.zionbrainerd.com.
Cedar Lake, Norwegian Lutheran — Third Sun 11, May - Oct. Crosby — Immanuel (LCMC, NALC) Rev. Paul Mattson; Sun. 9 & 10:30 worship; SS (Sept.-May) 10:40.
Crosby — Zion (LC-MS) Worship 9 (alternates with Immanuel Iron Hub) 218-546-6910.
Crosslake Lutheran Church (ELCA) www.crosslakelutheran.com
Kristin Oltmann, Pastor / Becky Swanson, Pastor 218-692-3682 September 8-Mid-May: Sunday at 8:30am & October-Mid-May: Wednesday at 6:15pm
Crosslake —Mission of the Cross (LCMS), Pastor Leslie Uhrinak; Worship 9:30 with every Sunday Communion, Fellowship 10:30, Adult Bible Class 11, 218-692-4228, www.missionofthecross.org
Deerwood* — Salem (ELCA), Pastor Amanda Kempthorne; Worship: 9; Sunday School 9:50.
Garrison — Light of the Cross (ELCA), Worship 9 SS 9; 320-692-4773 or 877-406-9101.
Garrison — Shepherd of the Lake (LCMS), Rev. Caleb Worrel. Worship 10 with Communion Every Sunday, Adult Bible Study 8:30am, Sunday School Sept-May, 8:30am. Fellowship 11am. 320-692-4581. www.shepherdofthelake.org.
Giese — Immanuel, Rev. R. Langhorst & Rev. R. Lovaas; Worship 9; SS 10; Holy Communion 1st Sun. of month 8:45.
Hill City — Trinity, (Missouri Synod), Pastor M. Eckert; Worship 9; Bible Study 10:15.
Hillman — Immanuel, (ELCA) Sun. Worship 11, fellowship follows. Located on the corner of Hwy. 27 and Co. Rd. 47. (Handicap accessible)
Iron Hub — Immanuel (LC-MS) Worship 9, (alternates with Zion of Crosby) 218-534-3069
Isle — Faith (ELCA), Pastor Josh Blair; Worship 9:30; handicapped accessible.
Isle — Holden (ELCA), SS 9:30; Worship 10:30.
Isle — Trinity (Missouri Synod), Rev. Mark Maunula; Worship 9; Fellowship follows; SS 10:30; Adult Bible 10:30.
Jacobson — Carmel, Vicar Mark Wagner; SS 1st & 3rd Sun. 10, Service 11, fellowship follows.
Lake Shore — Living Savior Lutheran Church, 8327 Interlachen Rd.; Worship 9 Sunday mornings, followed by fellowship and Bible study. (Located on Co. Rd. #77 N)
Malmo — Bethesda (ELCA) Rev. James Muske: Sun. Worship 9am. Fellowship following Service. Communion every Sunday.
McGrath — Grace; Wed. potluck 5 pm, Bible study 6 p.m.; SS 10; Worship 11.
McGrath — Zion (ELCA), Worship 9; SS 9.
McGregor/Big Sandy Lake — Grace Lutheran Log Church (LCMC), Pastor Lorelei Robinson; Worship 9, Fellowship follows, SS 10.
McGregor — Our Savior's (Missouri Synod), Pastor Joshua C. Reinke; Worship 9; SS 10; Bible Study Tue. 9, Wed. 7 pm
Outing — Our Saviors ELCA; Pastor Luke Lekander, Worship 9.
Palisade* — Bethel (ELCA), Pastor Steven Telf; Worship 9:30.
Pequot Lakes - Gloria Dei Lutheran Church (LCMS) Pastor Monte Meyer Worship 9 am, Fellowship 10 am, Sunday School and Adult Bible Study 10:15 am
Pequot Lakes* - Our Savior's Lutheran Church (ELCA) Rev. Stephen Blenkush Worship 9:00 a.m., SS 9:15 a.m., Fellowship 10:15 a.m. Wed. Adult Bible Study 11:00 a.m.
Rossburg — Bethesda Lutheran (LCMC) Congregations in Mission for Christ) 11:30 service. Communion 1st & 3rd

Sunday each month.
Tamarack (AFLC) — Pastor Ron Staudinger; 1st, 3rd and 4th Sundays 10 am; 41163 Kestrel Ave 3.3 mi. South of Hwy 210
Thor — Zion, Worship 11; 1st and 3rd Sun. April through December.
Wright — Bethlehem, Worship; SS 9.
Wright — St. John's (Missouri Synod), Pastor Joshua Reinke; Worship 10:30; Bible Study and Sunday School Sun. 9:30; Lent services Wed. 5:30 pm.)
NON-DENOMINATIONAL
Brainerd—Oak Street Chapel, Pastor Todd Wooden, Worship service is Sunday at 9:30, 523 SE 11th Street, Brainerd, 218-454-0984
Brainerd—Remnant Ministry Center, Pastor Ben Davis, Worship service is Sunday at 10am, 512 S 8th St., Suite 2, 218-829-2989.
PENTECOSTAL
Baxter — Christ Alive, 12485 Forestview Drive, Baxter, MN 56425. Pastor Walter Starr, 763-316-7270, Sunday Worship 10:00am, Wednesday Bible study 6:30pm
Emily — Cornerstone Church; Pastor Earl Ready; Worship 10, 41536 Birchwood Drive, Emily; 218-763-2939.
Ironton — Iron Range Christian Center; Pastor Dwight Semler; 218-546-6523; meeting at Irondale Town Hall", Co. Rd. 12, (Deerwood Shortcut); Worship 10 & Wed. 7 pm.
Tamarack — Warriors of the Rainbow Ministry, Pastors Ken and Ron Fairbanks, Sat. 11. 218-768-3585
PRESBYTERIAN
Crosslake - Pastor Mark Ford, 218-692-4769; Worship 9; Fellowship 11, 14444 Daggett Pine Road, Crosslake, just passed the Community Center; www.crosslakepres.org.
McGrath — Calvary, Pastor - Todd Oltmann; Worship 9.
McGregor/Round Lake — Pastor Talley; Worship Sat. 5 pm.
Tamarack — First, Rev. J. Yingling; Worship 11.
REFORMED
Crosby — Lifespring Church, a member of Fellowship of Independent Reformed Evangelicals, 9:30, 30 Hallett Ave NE 218-545-5433, www.visitlifespring.com

SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST
Aitkin — Pastor Josh Jeresek; Worship Sat. 9:30, Prayer Meeting & Bible Study Wednesday at 6:30 p.m.; www.aitkinadventist.org; 423-805-0933; 830 Minnesota Ave S
Brainerd — Pastor Josh Jeresek; Worship Sat. 11:10, Bible Study 10; Bible Study & Prayer Mtg. Wed. 6:30 p.m.; 2910 Oak Street, Brainerd, 218-829-1676

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST
Pequot Lakes — 28877 State Hwy 371, Pequot Lakes 10:30 1st and 4th Sundays. 218-330-3476

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
Brainerd — First Congregational UCC, 415 Juniper St, Brainerd. Sunday worship at 10. Pastor; Leslie Moughty. Handicapped accessible.

UNITED METHODIST
Aitkin* — Aitkin - Pastor Dawn Houser; Worship 10, Wednesdays at 5:30 pm Bible & Brew, Facebook live.
Crosby/Deerwood* — Cascade, Pastor Gary Taylor; Sunday Worship with Youtube live streaming 10 am with fellowship to follow. Cascade Ladies meet on the first Wednesday of each month at noon. Come & Eat Community dinner on the third Wednesday of each month at 5:30 pm. Please call the office to sign up: 218-534-3507.
Cutler* (South Aitkin County) — Pine Lake Chapel, Pastor Gary Taylor; Worship Sunday 1 p.m. Fellowship follows.
Cromwell — Pastor Tim Homstad; Worship 10; SS 9
Emily* — Pastor Gary Taylor; Sunday Worship with Facebook live streaming 8:30 with fellowship to follow. UWF meet on the first Sunday of each month following worship. Men's prayer breakfast 2nd Saturday of each month at 8. Bible Study Thursdays at 6 pm.
Fleming* — (Northern Lights Parish) SS 9:15; Worship 10:30; fellowship follows.
Hill City — Pastor Roger Lynn; Worship 10
McGregor* — (Northern Lights Parish) Worship 8:45; fellowship follows.
Onamia — Pastor Rick & Judy Wilder; Worship 11; fellowship 10; 2 bks north of Post Office; handicap ramp; 320-532-3150; office: 218-546-7656; cell: 218-360-1947
WESLEYAN
Emily — Rev. Jason Gressman; Worship 9; Friendship Time 10; SS 10:30; Wed. Activities 6:30 p.m.; 218-763-HOPE.

Three ways dogs and dog owners can accomplish resolutions together

The new year perfect time for a fresh start—especially when it comes to your health and well-being. But did you know that your furry friend can be the perfect partner in your pursuit of a healthier lifestyle? Whether you're looking to eat better, get moving, or find a little more peace in your daily routine, your pet can be an essential ally in making those goals a reality. Here are three simple yet effective ways you and your pet can work together to build healthy habits this year.

1. Exercise together

Getting active is one of the most popular New Year's resolutions, but for many, sticking to a gym routine can be tough. Fortunately, there's no need for fancy equipment or crowded workout spaces to get your exercise in. In fact, one of the best ways to stay motivated is by turning exercise into a shared experience with your pet.

If you have a dog, a daily walk or jog is an easy way to get your heart pumping while also giving your dog the exercise they need. If you're up for a bit more of an adventure, consider heading to a local park or nature trail to take your fitness to the next level. Mix it up with a game of fetch in the backyard or take a trip to a dog park to add some variety and keep both you and your pet engaged.

2. Revamp your diet

Eating well is a key component of any health journey—and it's just as important for your pet as it is for you. This year, focus on feeding yourself and your pet real, wholesome foods that nourish the body. Just like you, your dog needs high-quality nutrition to thrive.

By choosing quality food for both you and your pet, you can make a positive impact on your diet—and theirs. Healthy meals mean more energy, better digestion, and a happier, healthier life for both of you.

3. Emotional serenity

It's not just physical health that benefits from spending time with your pet—your emotional well-being can also see a boost. Research from the National Institutes of Health shows that quality time with pets can lower cortisol levels in humans, helping to reduce stress and promote a sense of calm.

Whether it's taking a leisurely stroll through the neighborhood, playing in the backyard, enjoying a gentle grooming session, or simply snuggling up for a few moments of quiet together, pets have a natural ability to bring peace and joy into our lives. This year, commit to prioritizing your emotional wellness by spending more time enjoying the presence of your furry friend.

Make this the year that you and your pet embrace health and wellness together.

Recovery journey at Hilltop Chapel

Hilltop Chapel is inviting the community to an inspiring and uplifting service on Sunday, Jan. 12 at 10 a.m. The service will feature Teen Challenge, a renowned Christian organization that helps individuals overcome addiction, as they share their powerful testimonies and music that speak to the life-changing power of faith.

Teen Challenge members will take the stage to sing songs of hope and redemption, and share their personal stories of how God has helped them break free from addiction. Their stories promise to be moving and impactful, offering a message of healing and renewal to all who attend.

Following the service, everyone is welcome to stay and connect with the Teen Challenge group in the fellowship center, where refreshments and goodies will be served. This will be an opportunity to meet the speakers, hear more about their journeys, and learn how Teen Challenge continues to make a difference in the lives of people overcoming addiction.

The event is open to everyone, so whether you've been a part of Hilltop Chapel for years or are attending for the first time, this service is a chance to witness the power of transformation through faith and support those who are walking through their recovery journey.

Governor Walz signs executive order to combat fraud | Continued from Page 1

prevent harm to the programs that serve Minnesotans.”

Response to ongoing concerns

While the Governor's proposals have garnered support from some, they have also faced criticism, particularly from those who argue that fraud prevention efforts have been inadequate under Walz's leadership. Bill Glahn, a policy fellow at the Center of the American Experiment, criticized the plan as insufficient and largely reactive, focusing more on investigations and penalties than on preventing fraud in the first place.

Glahn pointed to high-profile cases, such as the Feeding Our Future scandal, where more than \$250 million in fraudulent payments, prompted action, state officials were already aware of the fraud before it occurred. He suggested that the state should focus more on empowering agencies to stop fraudulent payments before they occur, rather than merely investigating fraud after the fact.

“Fraud has been so widespread in social service programs under this governor that we had to create an entire ScandalTracker just to keep up,” Glahn said.

“The problem isn't just about cracking down after the fact; it's about preventing the fraud in the first place.”

Looking forward

Governor Walz's fraud prevention measures build on efforts initiated in the 2023 legislative session, which included expanding oversight of state grants, strengthening compliance within the Department of Human Services (DHS), and creating an Office of Inspector General within the Department of Education.

As the legislative package moves forward, state lawmakers will review the Governor's proposals and determine the best approach to enhancing fraud detection and enforcement. For now, the administration signals that they will remain focused on preventing further abuse of public resources.

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- Free compost of lawn and garden material (please separate brush and branches)

- Free oil, oil filter, and antifreeze recycling at the landfill and several drop-off locations within the County. Visit our webpage for drop off locations: www.crowwing.gov/recycling
- Demolition materials may be disposed in the demolition landfill for a fee
- Large appliances, electronics, tires with or without rims, and scrap metals can be disposed at the site for a nominal fee for recycling.

The landfill is open only to residents of Crow Wing County for recycling and disposal needs.

For more information, please call 218-824-1010.

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