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Chip Rankin is new Brainerd Schools superintendent



Chip Rankin takes the helm at Brainerd Schools as the new superintendent this summer.

By ANN SCHWARTZ

Chip Rankin was named as the new superintendent for the Brainerd School District. He is now a superintendent in the Minnewaska School District at Glenwood, MN.

Rankin was raised south of Brainerd on a farm, graduating from Little Falls. At his interview, he told the school board that he will be moving three school-aged daughters to Brainerd.

"I want to make this my community again - because I'm from here," said Rankin in an interview.

Rankin was the principal at Pequot Lakes for seven years and he is also in the Minnesota

National Guard.

Rankin was selected in a special school board meeting on February 10. Sarah Speer, school board chair, announced: "This is a pivotal moment for Brainerd Public Schools and we are confident that Mr. Rankin is the right leader to guide us forward. With Chip at the helm, we are entering a new chapter filled with promise, innovation, and a renewed focus on excellence for all."

Pending approval of a contract, Rankin will start working in Brainerd July 1.

During the superintendent search process, the Brainerd School Board compiled the following list of attributes for their new leader:

- Demonstrates principled leadership and strong character, consistently upholds honesty and ethical standards in all interactions.
- Possesses a thorough understanding of school finance and resource management, ensuring fiscal transparency and operational efficiency.
- Understands how to build a foundation of academic excellence from Pre-K through high school.
- Exhibits visionary thinking and effectively addresses

challenges through innovative solutions for students and staff.

• Excels in team building, fostering a culture of shared responsibility and continuous improvement across the school district.

• Collaborates effective-

ly, earning trust and engaging with diverse community groups.

• Utilizes curriculum and data analytics to drive student success and improve test scores.

• Works in close partner-

ship with the school board, providing well-informed and thoughtful recommendations for consideration.

The vote to select Rankin was unanimous. He did not return a call for comment by press time.

Aitkin man convicted of felony criminal sexual conduct



Duane Earl Ganz

A 73-year-old former Aitkin business owner has been convicted of felony criminal sexual conduct following allegations involving a child.

Duane Earl Ganz, former owner of Duane's Photography in Aitkin, was convicted of one count of second-degree criminal

sexual conduct, a felony offense. Two additional counts of criminal sexual conduct were dismissed.

According to a criminal complaint filed in Aitkin County District Court in June 2024, Ganz was accused of engaging in criminal sexual conduct with a person under the age of 13. The complaint alleged the incidents occurred between 2010 and 2012. An Aitkin County Sheriff's Office deputy received a report and a recorded statement from the victim in May 2024, prompting the formal charges.

Ganz was sentenced Feb. 3 in Aitkin County District Court. The court imposed a 36-month sentence at a correctional facility in St.

Cloud. The sentence was stayed for 10 years, meaning it will not be executed provided Ganz complies with the terms set by the court.

As part of his sentence, Ganz must serve 180 days in the Aitkin County Jail, with credit for one day already served. He was also placed on supervised probation for 10 years and ordered to pay \$1,000 in fines and fees.

Court records indicate that compliance with probation conditions will be required throughout the 10-year period. Failure to meet those conditions could result in the previously stayed prison sentence being enforced.

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Bald eagle egg-citement takes flight on Minnesota's DNR EagleCam



An old EagleCam photo from 2016, captured at a previous nest site, shows a bald eagle carefully tending to its egg — a timeless image that mirrors what's unfolding live today.

High above the ground, the bald eagle pair featured on the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources EagleCam has been hard at work, weaving fresh grasses and sturdy new sticks into their massive nest. The renovations weren't just for show. DNR officials now believe the pair laid their first egg Sunday afternoon — and incubation is officially underway.

Viewers tuning in to the live stream at mndnr.gov/eaglecam or on the DNR's YouTube page may notice one adult consistently settled low in the bowl of the nest. That steady, attentive posture is a telltale sign: bald eagles begin incubating their first egg as soon as it is laid.

And so begins the next chapter of this year's Eagle-

Cam season.

What happens next?

If additional eggs are on the way — and two is the most common clutch size — they should arrive within the next several days. Bald eagles typically lay eggs two to three days apart, though sometimes the gap stretches to five days. A full clutch can range from one to three eggs.

Each egg is oval-shaped, dull white and roughly the size of a tennis ball, measuring about 2.5 to 3 inches long. While they may look sturdy, they require careful handling. When adult eagles turn their eggs — a frequent and essential behavior for proper development — they curl their sharp talons inward to avoid puncturing the shell. Using their powerful bills,

they gently roll each egg between their feet before settling back down to keep it warm.

Over the next 34 to 39 days, the nest will become a hub of coordinated activity. Both parents share incubation duties, trading shifts between egg-warming and hunting. As their bodies adapt to the task, each adult develops a "brood patch" — a temporary area of bare skin on the chest that allows direct transfer of body

heat to the eggs.

If all goes according to nature's timetable, viewers could spot the first signs of a chick as early as March 21.

Signs of the season

Longtime EagleCam watchers knew the clues with more frequent visits to the nest, careful rearranging of grasses, and courtship displays that strengthen the pair's bond. In past seasons, eggs have arrived in mid-February, and the behavior seen this

week — especially an adult remaining seated in the nest bowl for extended stretches — strongly signals that egg-laying has begun.

For wildlife enthusiasts across Minnesota and beyond, the live stream offers a front-row seat to one of nature's most captivating dramas.

Supporting the stream

The EagleCam is made possible through the Nongame Wildlife Program, which

relies on public support. Viewers who want to help keep the camera rolling can contribute to the Nongame Wildlife Fund tax checkoff when filing Minnesota state taxes or donate online at mndnr.gov/donate.

For now, all eyes remain on the nest.

The egg has arrived. Incubation has begun. And if history is any guide, the next few weeks will bring plenty more egg-citement.

Central Lakes Wind Symphony seeks members

Music will soon fill the rehearsal hall once again as the Central Lakes Wind Symphony launches its spring season and new musicians are invited to take a seat on stage.

The semi-professional ensemble will resume rehearsals Monday, Feb. 23, from 7 to 9 p.m. in the Rehearsal Hall (Room E471) on the Central Lakes College Brainerd campus, 501 West College Drive.

Known for its dynamic performances and artistic excellence, the Symphony is actively seeking new members for the upcoming season. Membership is open to advanced All-State-caliber high school students, CLC students and music majors, professional music educators or community members passionate about high-level

music performance. An immediate opening for bassoon needs to be filled.

Throughout the year, the Symphony presents formal concerts and hosts high school band festivals, including powerful combined massed-band performances that highlight the strength and artistry of wind and percussion music. The group prides itself on fostering a culture of mentorship and musical distinction, bringing together performers at different stages of their careers in a shared pursuit of excellence.

In addition to preparing for spring performances, the Symphony will also share information about its upcoming 2027 European Tour during rehearsals. Participation in the tour is optional, but the opportunity reflects the ensemble's ambitious

vision and growing regional reputation.

Rehearsals will take place in Brainerd, and interested musicians are encouraged to reach out to Jonathan La-

flamme, Director of Instrumental Music, at jonathan.laflamme@clcmn.edu or 218-855-8215 for more information.

DNR proposal/comments

Minnesota's native rough fish may soon receive new protections under proposed rules from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

The DNR is proposing harvest limits and other regulations for species including bowfin, buffalo, carp sucker, freshwater drum, goldeye, mooneye, quillback, redbreast and suckers. Officials say the move reflects growing recognition of the important role these fish play in maintaining healthy lake and river ecosystems.

Once often overlooked, species like bowfin are now valued for their ecological contributions, from nutrient cycling to supporting balanced fish communities. The DNR says the proposed

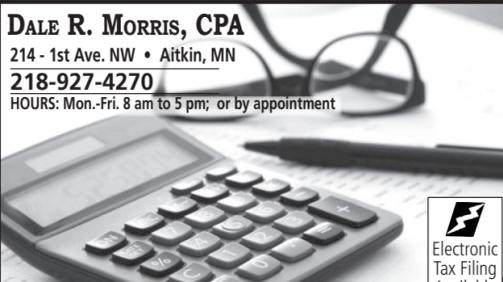
rules aim to ensure long-term sustainability.

Public comments on the rough fish proposal will be accepted through March 5 on the DNR website.

The agency is also reminding anglers that March 5 is the deadline to comment on a proposed change to Minnesota's statewide walleye limit. The DNR is considering reducing the inland possession limit from six to four fish, while keeping the current rule allowing only one walleye over 20 inches.

If approved, the walleye change would take effect March 1, 2027. Officials say the proposal is intended to protect Minnesota's walleye fishery amid changing environmental conditions and advancing technology.

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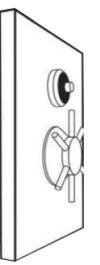
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OBITUARY

RICHARD ROBERTS



Richard Eugene Roberts, 70, of Crosby passed away from surgery complications on Feb. 13, 2026 in Robbinsdale, MN.

A Celebration of Life will be held on Saturday, Feb. 28, 2026 at The Taconite Canteen in Ironton from 12-3 p.m. A private burial will be held at a later date.

He was born on September 1, 1955 in Crosby to

Eldon Roberts and Beatrice Bowman. Richard was a proud of his country and served in the United States Air Force. He served in the battle of Vietnam. Richard was known for his social skills and known by many as "The Meat Raffle Man." He could be seen calling many meat raffles in the local area and heard yelling out "Hell Yeah!" anytime a winner was called.

Aside from friends and family Richard was proud of his son Joseph Roberts of Cuyuna.

LEGAL NOTICES

(Published in NewsHopper Sat., February 21 & 28, 2026)

MINNESOTA SECRETARY OF STATE CERTIFICATE OF ASSUMED NAME

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PRINCIPAL PLACE OF BUSINESS: 517 NW 4th St., Suite 113B, Brainerd, MN USA

3. The name and street address of all persons conducting business under the above assumed name:

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517 NW 4th St., Suite 113B, Brainerd, MN 56401 USA

4. I certify that I am authorized to sign this certificate and I further certify that I understand that by signing this certificate, I am subject to the penalties of perjury as set forth in section 609.48 as if I had signed this certificate under oath.

DATE: 02/01/2026
SIGNED BY: Anna Bankey
Bankstera101@gmail.com
Work Item 1625782800026
Original File Number 1625782800026
5.9

(Published in NewsHopper Saturday, Feb. 21 & 28, 2026)

NORDLAND TOWNSHIP NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING

Notice The Annual Meeting for Nordland Township will be held Tuesday, March 10, 2026, at the Bethlehem Lutheran Church fellowship hall at 7:30 p.m. In case of inclement weather, the meeting will be postponed until March 17, 2026, at 7:30 p.m. The purpose of this meeting will be to conduct all necessary town business as required by law. Please note that there will be a discussion of the costs of rebuilding the east half of 330th Place and whether the township should do so.

Dated: February 11, 2026
MATHEW NIX, Clerk
Nordland Township
3.7

(Published in NewsHopper Saturday, Feb. 21, 28, & March 7, 2026)

TOWNSHIP OF LITTLE PINE NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING

The annual meeting for the Township of Little Pine will be held on Tuesday, March 10, 2026 at 7:00 p.m.

In the case of inclement weather the meeting will instead be held on Tuesday, March 17, 2026 at 7:00 p.m.

The meeting will be held at Emily City Hall
39811 State Highway 6, Emily, MN 56447

The meeting is also accessible via Zoom
Meeting ID: 780 450 6554
Password: 56447

Dated: February 10, 2026
ABRA HAWLEY
Little Pine Township Clerk
3.6

Community to rally for 10-year-old Allison Dotzler at March 21 benefit

The community is asked to come together to support a young girl facing the fight of her life.

Family and friends have organized a benefit to help ease the financial burden

and show Allison that she is surrounded by a community that cares.

The benefit will be held Saturday, March 21, from 3 to 7 p.m. at the Clarissa Ballroom, 19281 Kotter Road. The event will feature a free-will offering supper, a gun raffle, a chance auction and a live auction.

One of the evening's biggest highlights is the opportunity to win an African Safari Hunt for two, donated by Numzaan Safaris and valued at \$7,635. Only 150 tickets will be sold at \$100 each, giving participants strong odds at the grand prize adventure.

Additional raffle prizes include a rifle valued at more than \$1,000 for second prize

and an enclosed deer stand valued at more than \$1,000 for third prize. Participants need not be present to win. Those interested in purchasing safari raffle tickets can contact Neil Dotzler at 218-429-1326. Participants must be 18 or older to gamble.

For those unable to attend the benefit but wishing to contribute, monetary donations are being accepted at all Unity Bank locations. Donations can be made to the "Allison Dotzler Benefit" account. Contributions are also being accepted via Venmo at @mmdotzler.

As Allison continues her treatments, organizers say the outpouring of support means everything to the Dotzler family.

Area Births, Open Houses, Engagements, Weddings & Community Events are published **FREE!**
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(**No to go containers for reorders on AYCE specials**)

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Upcoming Events:

Celebrate St. Patrick's Weekend March 13-15

Mark Your Calendars for Our Annual Job Fair
March 28 10 a.m. - 1 p.m. in the ballroom.

Easter Weekend April 4-5

Poke the Bear Maple Tap Weekend April 10-12

25039 Tame Fish Lake Rd., Deerwood
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