

MR. PETE

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The Mr. Pete Foundation aims to carry on the passion and dedication Peterson displayed as a teacher and coach in the International Falls School District. Grant funding from the Mr. Pete Foundation is awarded to teachers who desire to enhance their classroom experience in new, fun, and innovative ways.

“It was like this was what was supposed to happen,” Skopinski said of creating the foundation, adding that getting to this point hasn’t been easy. “It’s taken us a long time, as a family, to get to the point to publicly talk about dad’s diagnosis.”

Early stages

When Peterson abruptly announced, near the end of the school year in 2009, to his family his retirement after more than 35 years of teaching Skopinski said looking back, he must have known something was wrong.

“He said he was going to teach forever,” she said. “At least until he felt he was no longer being effective. Still, he loved his job. We were all shocked.”

Skopinski described her father as a man who went “above and beyond” when it came to his students – his kids.

“I was always in his classroom watching or helping him get stuff ready,” she said.

About a year after Peter-



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Leaves of Grass Photography captured the closeness of the Peterson family. Pictured from the left is Gina Skopinski, Mike Peterson, Renee Peterson, Annie Sawatzky and Jennifer Peterson.

son’s retirement, Skopinski said her mother kept her three daughters “sheltered” from Peterson’s illness.

“Mom didn’t want to worry us,” she said. “We knew they were going to the Mayo Clinic, but that was about it.”

It was while Mike Peterson was at Mayo that Renee Peterson opened up to Skopinski and her sisters.

“That was the first time I heard the term Lewy Body,” Skopinski said. “I Googled it while I was on the phone with her and lost it. I got in the car and drove to Rochester right away.”

Living with Lewy Body

Lewy Body Dementia is an umbrella term for two related diagnoses, the asso-

ciation’s site says. The disease refers to both Parkinson’s disease dementia and dementia with Lewy bodies. The earliest symptoms of these two diseases differ, but reflect the same underlying biological changes in the brain. Over time, people with both diagnoses will develop very similar cognitive, physical, sleep and behavioral symptoms.

An early symptom is recurrent, complex visual hallucinations, typically well formed and detailed. Skopinski said when her father was hallucinating, it was like he was back in his classroom.

“He remembers being a teacher,” she said. “It’s actually pretty amazing how much he remembers.

For the most part, it seems like his long-term memory is there to a certain extent. He’ll tell me he has three daughters, not knowing I’m one of them. He remembers me as a little girl.”

Shedding light

There is no cure for LBD, and in Peterson’s case, Skopinski said during the last six or eight months, his health and awareness have seen a steady decline.

“We go through all the stages of grief – denial, anger, all of those stages,” she said. “And when he gets worse, we go through it all again. It’s very heartbreaking. But there are moments I really see a glimpse of him.”

It is those moments of hope combined with the

More information

For more information on the Mr. Pete Foundation or how to become involved, visit <http://mrpetefoundation.org> or find the organization on Facebook.

love Skopinski has for her father and the love he has for children that directed her to launch the Mr. Pete Foundation.

“Before I did anything, I wanted to talk to my mom and I wanted to talk to him,” she said. “I knew deep down it might be harder for her than him.”

Skopinski was right. Her mother needed time to consider the idea, while Peterson’s face “lit up” at the mention of it.

“If I was going to do something in his name, I wanted to make sure it was for something he was passionate about,” she said. “I needed to know if he would rather send a kid to college every year or fund teachers. He was very clear he wanted to help teachers because he doesn’t think they have enough resources in their classroom or enough money to carry out some of the good ideas they have.”

Guiding force

Skopinski said she and Oppelt feel Peterson is the guiding force behind

the foundation that has already received massive amounts of attention on social media sites.

“Messages have been pouring in,” Skopinski said. “I bet I’ve received 500 messages (this week).”

During the summer and fall, Skopinski hopes to continue gaining exposure to the foundation and raise money for its ultimate goal – providing grant money to teachers. Funding will be awarded to those who demonstrate a passion in education and a classroom responsive to innovative learning – much like Peterson did. Grants are expected to be distributed throughout the year and those seeking funding may submit an application to the foundation beginning Oct. 15.

In the meantime, Skopinski said those involved will spend the summer gearing up for the main fundraising event set to take place Oct. 11. During that event, silent and live auctions will be held as well as a ceremony to present a teacher with a legacy award in his name.

“He was proud of what he did and so are we,” Skopinski said of her father. “This event is going to be to honor him and honor those who dedicate their lives to teaching and students like he did.”

WATER

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Another good idea, Jespersen said, is to lap and secure heavy plastic over the sandbags, as another protective barrier. The recommended amount of bags needed to build a 100-foot long, 1-foot high dike is 600, he said, so it doesn’t take long to use a lot of sandbags.

“I don’t know how many residences out there that are actually going to need dikes around them, I know there’s several,” Jespersen said. “I guess it just depends on Mother Nature, how high this water comes up and how much more is coming.”

When the rain finally stops and the sun returns, some may want to take their boats out on the lake. The sheriff said when they do, boaters should watch where they’re going, as the rising water level has loosened docks, trees, branches, and other debris that could damage a boat.

“Rainy Lake is going to full of debris when you’re out boating; make sure you’re watching ahead of you, because there’s going



STAFF PHOTO BY EMILY GEDDE

Dan Lahmayer stacks sandbags near a residence in Ranier.

to be some trees out there, and stuff floating,” Jespersen said.

Diane Edens reported to The Journal Thursday a dock at Ranier Beach was swept away, with boards from the dock floating back up onto the beach. Large, containers filled with water had been placed on the dock to try to save it, she said, but had been dumped into the lake due to the high waves, water, and wind Thursday.

At Thursday morning’s meeting, Jespersen emphasized the need to use sandbags to save property first, and not docks, as the

sandbags aren’t designed to weigh down the structures. Members of the county’s Environmental Services Department said they had 14 large, metal-covered water containers available for anyone who needed them to weigh down docks.

“I think we’ve got to protect property first, and houses, we can’t be doing docks,” Jespersen said. “They’re not supposed to be using them on the docks, they’re not meant for that.”

Also on Thursday, in Fort Frances, a section of Highway 11 was reported as washed out, just west of

LaVallee Township. Members of the Ontario Provincial Police reported heavy rain overnight caused both lanes of the highway to be completely washed out. Traffic between Fort Frances and Emo was diverted onto Highway 602.

The water level on Rainy Lake has been steadily rising since the end of May, when the start of the consistent rainfall began. According to data from the International Rainy-Lake of the Woods Watershed Board, the primary water level on Rainy Lake has risen 22.28 inches since May 29. On Namakan Lake, at Squirrel Island, the water level has risen 21.93 inches since May 29.

One thing Rainy Lake residents need to remember is to watch out for their neighbors’ property, Jespersen said. Some of the cabin-dwellers may not be full-time residents, and might not be home to see the situation their homes are in, he said.

If it looks like your neighbor isn’t home and increasing water levels are an issue, residents should call the county dispatcher at 283-4416, and notify them of the situation.

This is Northwoods Eating

Breakfast

Mon.-Sat. \$6.29 • Sunday \$7.29

Mon.

Tues.

Wed.

Thurs.

Fri.

Sat.

Sun.

Big Moose Skillet with hashbrowns

Breakfast Sandwich with hashbrowns

French Toast w/eggs & sausage or bacon

Blueberry Pancakes w/eggs & sausage or bacon

Biscuits & Gravy w/eggs & hashbrowns

Cinnamon Swirl French Toast with ham & eggs

Blueberry Cream Cheese Crepes with eggs & ham

Dinner

Mon.-Sat. \$10.99

Mon.

Tues.

Wed.

Thurs.

Fri.

Sat.

Sun.

Half Chicken Dinner

Full Rack of BBQ Ribs

Pan Fried Walleye

Mozzarella Girsasole w/Marinara Sauce

Fishermen’s Catch

Rib Eye Steak

Chicken Kiev

Dinners include choice of potato & salad. Choice of soup for \$1.00

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The International Falls July 4<sup>th</sup> Celebration

is requesting all Koochiching County veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars to join together in being recognized in the city' July 4th parade.

Please contact Derek Briggs at (218) 324-0397 or email [derek\\_briggs@hotmail.com](mailto:derek_briggs@hotmail.com)

Thank you! July 4<sup>th</sup> Commission

4<sup>th</sup> Annual Lady Slipper/Mingo's Miles 5K Fun Run

KABETOGRAMA

1.3 miles north of Gateway Store on CR 122

Saturday, June 28th 2014

Registration at 8:00 a.m. with a 9:00 a.m. starting time.

Rain or Shine

Registration fee: \$20 advance for adults, \$15 for kids 13 and under, \$25 the day of the race

Medals & ribbons will be awarded in every age group.

Download Registration Form Online At [www.kabetogama.com](http://www.kabetogama.com)

Gear up your family & friends, come on out and run!

Rainy Lake Rural Health Clinic Recognizes: Men's Health Month

Recognizing and preventing men's health problems is not just a man's issue. Because of its impact on wives, mothers, daughters, and sisters, men's health is truly a family issue.

Eat Healthy

Get Moving

Make Prevention a Priority

Regular screenings may include blood pressure, cholesterol, glucose, prostate health, and more.

Rainy Lake Rural Health Clinic:

Monday - Friday

8:00 am - 4:30 pm

Call 283- 5503 to schedule an appointment.

Hospital Campus • 1400 Highway 71 • International Falls, MN 56649

Rainy Lake RURAL HEALTH CLINIC