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## MENTAL HEALTH

# Statewide epidemic hits hard in northern Minnesota

BY SPENSER BICKETT  
Staff Writer

This is the first of a three-part series detailing one of the larger issues facing doctors, law enforcement officials, human services professionals and lawmakers in Minnesota. Every day, people with mental health issues are transported all over the state in search of help. A shortage of care facilities means these people may not get the help they need.

This part focuses on law enforcement officials in northern Minnesota, who with increasing frequency, are required to transport people with mental illness to nearly the Minnesota-Iowa border for the help they need.

Imagine you're taking a road trip.

You're not driving, so you're in the back seat of a car, going from International Falls to Owatonna. The 350-mile trip can take up to seven hours, depending

on traffic. So you've got a book to read, or music to listen to on your iPod, to make the time go by.

It's not an enjoyable ride, with multiple stops to use the bathroom and to eat. You're cranky when you get there, but you've got a couple days before you have to turn around and make the seven-hour drive home.

Now, imagine you're making the same trip, except this time you're handcuffed. You're in the back of a county sheriff's

squad car, and you haven't been taking your medication for your bi-polar disorder.

You've got nothing to distract you except the changing Minnesota landscape outside the car window. The ride seems to take forever, but it's necessary for you to get the medical help you need, which isn't available locally.

You arrive at the facility, where you see a doctor who diagnoses you and helps adjust your medication, or provides

whatever help you need. After a few days, though, it's back on the long road home. As you travel north, you wonder how long it'll be before you have to make the trip back south again.

### Mental health transport

When a law enforcement officer or a doctor is concerned someone might hurt themselves or others, Koochiching County Undersheriff Jon Froemke said they can put a 72-hour hold on them.

**Health to B5 >**

## Nighttime light show

CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Jackie Briggs, Capture Your Moment Photography, snapped these photos of northern lights March 17. Media reports said a solar storm affected the Earth's upper atmosphere last week making the colorful aurora borealis visible in Borderland and around several parts of the country.



## Relaying together

### Koochiching County Relay for Life set for April 11

BY EMILY GEDDE  
Staff Writer

When Teresa Rom and her family were told her father had six months to live, they were devastated.

Manuel Jasso, a talented upholster and craftsman, was diagnosed with multiple myeloma, a type of cancer in which plasma cells accumulate in the bone marrow, where they interfere with the production of normal blood cells. Jasso was left with few options and little hope of survival.

"It was so hard to hear doctors tell him he had only six months," Rom said. "He wanted to be with us so badly and we weren't ready to lose him."

Jasso's team of doctors in Duluth sent him to the Mayo Clinic in Rochester to see if anything could be done to prolong his life. He found out there was.

"We were told there was a clinical trial my dad could be part of," Rom recalled. "The study was funded by the American Cancer Society."

Jasso was diagnosed in the fall of 2002. He passed away at a little more than seven years later at age 72.

"Because of the American Cancer Society, we got seven more years with my dad," Rom said. "I can't explain how grateful we are. We made a lot of memories through the course of his treatment and we grew closer than we already were. I can't explain how grateful I am to have received those extra years with him."

### Reason to relay

Rom had been active in Relay for Life — a community-based fundraiser for the American Cancer Society — for several years. Her father's journey only reiterated the importance of becoming involved with event. In 1987, her grandmother lost a short battle with cancer, kick starting Rom's involvement with the fundraising event.

"I was with my grandma when she passed," Rom said. "It gave me a whole different outlook on things... Shortly after, I joined Relay for Life and have loved it ever since."

Her love for the event led her to become the chairperson of this year's Koochiching County relay. Set to begin at noon April 11 at Falls High School, Rom couldn't hide the excitement she had about the 12-hour long event.

"We have some really awesome things lined up," she said.

Included in the lineup of events are a life-size colon and pelvis for

**Relay to A7 >**

## Local musher wraps up a successful 2015 season

### Anderson finishes final race in third place

BY EMILY GEDDE  
Staff Writer

It was almost a perfect season. Ryan Anderon, of Ray, last week completed the Hudson Bay Quest, his fourth and final sled dog race of the season, finishing in third place. He clinched the first place spot in the three other

races he competed in this year — the John Beargrease Sled Dog Marathon, the U.P. 200 and the WolfTrack Classic Sled Dog Race.

"It wasn't a smooth race," the musher said Wednesday of the Hudson Bay race. "That's the way it goes. Sometimes, it just doesn't work out."

Martin Massicotte of Trois-

Rivières, Quebec, claimed the top spot of the race that runs from Gillam to Churchill. He crossed the finish line of the course in Manitoba's northern port just after 8 p.m. March 14. Massicotte's team completed the event in a little more than 32 hours after the start and more than two hours ahead of second-place finisher Denis Tremblay of St.-Michels-des-Saints, Que. Anderson was about 20 minutes behind Tremblay.

"Even though I was actually the fastest team, I still finished in third because of the amount of rest I took," Anderson explained. "Actually, that's one of the nice things about this race — you don't have to be the fastest to win."

But he's still proud.

He explained his four-legged teammates, many of which competed in both the Beargrease and/or the U.P. races, held strong, although they were showing signs

that it was time to rest for the season.

"I had to carry two dogs and wrapped three of the dogs' wrists throughout the race," Anderson said. "They do just fine if they run on wrapped wrists, but I don't always have to do that."

Trail conditions up in Canada were also against Anderson's luck. A south wind pounded

**Anderson to A7 >**

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