



STAFF PHOTO BY EMILY GEDDE

A Falls High pep fest tradition is for senior students to “pin” senior athletes. Above, Caitlyn Milette secures a pin on hockey player Wyatt Ulrich.

CLOSURES

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Nelson said the district also factors in how its equipment would operate in extremely cold temps. “The mechanical abilities of our vehicles are trustworthy, but things still happen,” he said. “If a bus were to go into the ditch and quit working...it would take very little time for it to reach 0 degrees inside. Then we’re faced with problems of frostbite and freezing. I can’t stress enough that the children come first.”

MAKE-UP DAYS

For this academic year, there has been one early release, one late start, and three cancellations. Nelson said the late start and early release still count as

“When it comes to children, their safety comes first in decision making.”

Nordy Nelson
Falls Superintendent

a full school day. In the past, Nelson said the state of Minnesota required 170 days of classroom instruction or it would withhold state aid. While that number is still “highly recommended,” Nelson said the district wouldn’t receive any less money if it fell short by a few days. “With the days we’ve missed, (make-up days) will be looked at, but at this time I wouldn’t recommend we run those days,” Nelson said, adding that some school districts designate make-up days,

but the local district does not. “The district should set the school calendar to allow some make-up days...possibly around the Easter vacation.”

RESCHEDULING SPORTS

Falls Athletic Director Kevin Grover said he was busy Tuesday communicating with other athletic directors around the area to reschedule five games that were canceled Tuesday. “It was probably harder this go around because everyone was out of school,” he said.

Luckily, Grover said each game was successfully rescheduled, except a boys swim meet. “Both parties chose not to reschedule,” he said of the meet against Virginia. Jan. 6-10 was designated Winter Sports Week at Falls High School and each sports team was already set to play multiple times this week. “It gets busy,” Grover said. “We’ve already got some kids playing three times a week and if you schedule any more than that, they have no time for practice.” He said it’s easy to cancel and reschedule games with priority focused on whether it’s a conference matchup. “It’s easier to throw a non-conference game out,” he said. “It’s not as big of a deal.”

COLD

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“It’s just kind of fun to let people know we do still exist and life pretty much goes on as normal,” he said. “We’re all trying to keep people interested in International Falls in one way, shape or form.”

A few others in the community have also experienced the media exposure when temperatures plummeted this year and in other years. “Indeed, our reputation and geographical spot puts us on the map when the headlines are about cold weather,” said Faye Whitbeck, president of the International Falls Area Chamber of Commerce. “We have already been featured on The Daily Beast out of New York City, and ABC News will be in town for our Icebox Days—after considering how best to report the cli-

mate in our northern town.”

Whitbeck and International Falls Mayor Bob Anderson, who has also been interviewed recently about the cold, said reporters from elsewhere seem to have a tough time understanding that the community is acclimated to handle the frigid temps. “It’s often a chuckle here at the chamber that questions from journalists are universal regarding curiosity about cold-weather living. For instance, ‘Must you run right from your car to the door?’ or ‘What, exactly, do you wear in those temperatures?’”, said Whitbeck. “Last year, we got reported all around the U.S. as wearing, on the outside of our jackets, the couch-blankets with sleeves known as ‘Snuggles.’ They also want to know if running a footrace outdoors in January in this area wouldn’t actually be dangerous. Duh?”

Anderson agreed. “What

mystifies, it seems most of the people that I have interviews with, is for us it’s business as usual here,” said Anderson, who spoke recently with a reporter from Streator, Ill., about 80 miles southwest of Chicago. The reporter told Anderson that it was 8 below there with a wind chill of 35-40 below and most businesses had closed for the day. Anderson said he told the reporter that businesses were open and it was 20-below with wind chills of 45-50 below. “I told them we’re not out cross-country skiing or doing activities like that, because it’s not smart to do that, but if we had to shut down every time it got that cold we’d spend a good portion of the winter not operating,” he said.

Pete Schultz, director of the area’s Convention and Visitor Bureau, has also experienced the media blitz caused by the cold.

“The oddest thing I’ve been asked was a caller from Texas, judging from the long, slow drawl, who told me he had just watched a weather report on the brutal winter here and wondered if we plowed the roads,” said Schultz. “Although he left it at that, I was waiting for him to complete the thought with ‘or do you just rely on the dog sled?’”

Schultz said he posted recollections from former residents about the cold on the CVB’s Facebook page. “My take is that I have memories of building forts, throwing snowballs, sledging, playing broomball, etc. but have no memories of being told I could not go outside to play because it was too cold.”

Anderson said the wind-chill factor has been blown out of proportion in recent years. “I cannot remember anybody talking about wind chill when I went to school,”

he said. “When we walked to school, I lived around 11 or 12 blocks from school on Ninth Avenue, you put your parka hood up and walked backwards. Yeah, it made your eyes water and nose hurt, but that’s how you deal with the cold.”

Meanwhile, the exposure — not to the cold but to the nation — is a benefit to the area, said Schultz and Whitbeck. “I believe any exposure, pun intended, the cold provides is beneficial in the long-run,” said Schultz. “People show up at our counter every summer saying they went 150 miles extra to include International Falls. We get requests for information from people that saw us on the evening weather. We have name recognition throughout North America and beyond.”

Whitbeck said some people may be dismayed by the attention drawn by the Icebox of the Nation.

“I say, what a great opportunity to expound on our identity and character,” she said. “There’s plenty of other really cold small towns which don’t get these multiple opportunities to tell the world about our extraordinary Rainy Lake, charismatic citizens and four-season paradise.”

And Anderson said in each interview he invites people to visit the area to experience an Icebox of the Nation winter, but also the other seasons that bring warmer temperatures to Borderland and its natural wonders.

Despite the notoriety the cold brings International Falls, Whitbeck said she’s hoping for a bit of a warm up for the Icebox Days festival, which starts Thursday. “It makes it safer for kids and adds to all-around fun,” she said. “But we’re resilient and come what may, we will celebrate to the fullest degree.”

BUSINESSES

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“Don’t wait until the last minute,” he recommended. “It takes two seconds to test it and check it.”

Borderland homes have also not been immune troubles caused by the cold, as heating systems are prone to failure in extremely cold weather. Shannon’s Inc. has been exceptionally busy for the last month, Cindy Hell, assistant residential service manager, said.

“We’ve been on the phone all day with special orders, getting furnaces out,” Hell said. “We’ve been so backed up, it’s been kind of crazy.”

Shannon’s has sold more furnaces this winter than in years past, Hell said, and their service technicians have been “exceptionally great” with all the service calls they’ve been getting.

“We’re doing the best we can trying to take care of everybody,” she said. “There’s only so many of you, it’s hard to take care of the whole town.”

The staff have been challenged to keep up with the increased demand, Hell said, and they seem to be on the phone constantly, either ordering new furnaces, or fielding service calls. It was only Tuesday and Wednesday when they were getting caught up from a month ago with service calls, she said.

To make sure you’re not the one calling Shannon’s when you’re having heating problems, Hell said there’s a few things to remember when it’s this cold. If you heat your home with propane, keep the tanks cleared of snow, as it can act as insulation and make it freeze up. Keep heating lines buried so they don’t freeze up, and make sure the exhaust doesn’t freeze up either. Make sure there’s plenty of propane or fuel oil in the tanks, and

don’t let it get too low. “If the tanks don’t have enough fuel, the regulator won’t run right and push gas into the house,” she said.

Having backup heaters on hand is also important in case you do have an issue, she said. Also, if you’re traveling for an extended period of time, there are alert systems that can be installed that will call you if the temperature in the home dips below a certain setting.

When winter hits Borderland, residents and visitors like to relax by ice fishing and snowmobiling. However, the bitter cold start to winter has meant these visitors haven’t been coming to Thunderbird Lodge, Mary Jane Haanen said.

“We’ve had to close the dining room three times this year, because the staff couldn’t get in,” she said. “There hasn’t been any snowmobile traffic. Hopefully it picks up as it gets nice.”

Winter lodging accounts for about 10 percent of her yearly lodging business, Haanen said, and these reverse snowbirds come to the lodge for ice fishing and snowmobiling.

“The ice fishing has been great, but we haven’t had much traffic for it because of the cold,” she said.

The winter lodging business depends more on the weather than the summer lodging business, Haanen said, as the lake’s ice conditions play a role. Because of this, the winter reservations aren’t scheduled until about a week in advance, unlike the summer reservations, which are sometimes planned a year in advance.

Dealing with the cold temperatures has been difficult, she said, as they’ve had burst pipes, cabin lines freezing, and other similar winter issues. However, the coming warmer weather has Haanen hopeful business will pick up.

LOOKINGBACK

25 YEARS AGO

Terrence R. Baird, Big Falls, and Kelly Mortenson, Littlefork, have been named to the director’s list at Bemidji Technical Institute for the fall quarter.

Students named to the fall quarter dean’s list at Bemidj State University were Brenda Lee Chute, Richard Ditsch, Kathleen Ellen Dugas, Lorelei Kelley Ittner, Jack Elliott Jessop, Michael Jerome Kaminski, Timothy Robert Klein, Julie Ann Larson, Blake Dennis Monkman, Dale Mitchell Olson, Lisa L. Riley and David Lee Vohler.

40 YEARS AGO

Jeff Kantor, a sophomore at the University of Minnesota-Duluth, was among 10 student representatives

receiving assignment on University Board of Regent committees.

The Great River Road Club scholarship at Rainy River Community College was awarded to Nancy Mattson and art scholarships were received by Nancy Berg, Lloyd Skogstad and Joni Niemi.

Darcy Page was elected president of the Forest Hill Cemetery Association. Other officers elected were Donovan Dilworth, vice president and Mrs. Cecil Smrstik, secretary-treasurer.

50 YEARS AGO

A boy was born today at La Verendrye Hospital, Fort Frances, to Mr. and Mrs. Gary Mann, Riverside Trailer Court, 8 pounds, 3 ounces.

About 500 pounds of burbot were removed Sunday from a pond net immersed under the ice of Rainy Lake in the vicinity of Bald Rock. The net, operated by Stanley Johnson, Point O’Pines, is lifted on the average of once a week, depending upon the run of the rough fish. More than a ton of burbot were removed the previous week.

Army PFC Stanley F. Thompson, son of Mr. and Mrs. Henry T. Thompson, 936 Third St., and other members of the 9th Chemical Company participated in Exercise YELLOW WEDGE, a 4th Armored Division.

Mrs. Robert (June) Miggins was recently interviewed on the Art Linkletter TV program. Art asked

Mrs. Miggins what problem she had. It was about her son, Richard, if he was too young to attend the teenage dances for he just loves to dance.

60 YEARS AGO

A daughter was born today at Falls Memorial Hospital to Mr. and Mrs. Rodney Fox, 423 Ninth St.; weight, 8 pounds, 8 ounces. Name chosen, Linda Lee.

A son was born today at Falls Memorial Hospital to Mr. and Mrs. Irwin Clark Jr.; weight, 7 pounds, 4 ounces.

Mary Lou Lennox celebrated her second birthday anniversary yesterday with a party at the home of her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Glenn Lennox, South International Falls. Among

the guests were two sets of twins, Patricia and Marilyn O’Leary and Norma and Jimmy Johnson.

The temperature dipped to 43 degrees below zero overnight in Koochiching County as the coldest weather of the season was recorded.

70 YEARS AGO

Mrs. Clarence Moone and children left for Brainerd to meet Mrs. Moon’s husband, Pfc. Clarence Moone, who is coming home on furlough.

Like good neighbors, members of the International Falls City Council promised to go to the aid of South International Falls residents in the matter of water supply. Headed by Mayor Pearson, the South

International council members appeared before the local body to ask permission to tap the city’s main for water to be re-sold to consumers.

Pvt. Joe Proszek arrived from Camp McCoy, Wis., and is spending a 10-day furlough at the home of his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Tom Proszek. The Proszeks have five sons in the Armed service: Adolph, Paul, Victor, Anton and Joe.

Pvt. Joe Tracy, who is stationed at Camp Hood, Texas, with a tank destroyer division, arrived this morning to spend a short furlough visiting his wife at 503 Eighth St.

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