

COLD
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temperature of less than -30 degrees was recorded at the Falls International Airport during December, breaking the old record of seven days. The coldest temperature was 37 degrees below zero on the morning of the Dec. 30, and the high temperature for the month was just three days earlier on Dec. 27 with 34 degrees.

Huyck said the snowstorm that dropped more than 16 inches of snow on the ground in the early part of December has acted as an insulating blanket for the ground, preventing any warm air from escaping.

“A prerequisite for cold like this is an abundance of snow cover,” he said. “Ever since that snowstorm, there has been a northwesterly flow of this cold air.”

But, he encouraged residents to hang in there.

“Warmer air will get here,” he said. “We just need to be extremely patient.”

WINTER EFFECTS

With little activity going on outdoors during the cold snap, the moods of many could be impacted by the weather.

Feeling the winter blues in Borderland during a severe winter is a normal reaction to short days and cold temperatures.

According to local psychiatrist Jeff Hardwig, seasonal affective disorder, known as SAD, is a recurring mood disorder that comes and goes on a seasonal basis.

“The condition occurs more in northern latitudes where winters are darker,” he said.

Typically, SAD affects people with a family history of mood disorders. It becomes clear a person is suffering from SAD, he said, when depression repeatedly hits a person in the fall or winter and clears up in the spring and summer.

“A standard psychiatric textbook estimates the prevalence of SAD among the general public is between 4-9 percent,” Hardwig said. “Women (are) affected four times as often as men. Many people experience a drop in their mood in the winter which does not reach clinical proportions.”

All SAD cases are depression or bipolar disorder, but, the reverse is not true, Hardwig said. Not all depression or bipolar disorder recurs on a seasonal basis.

A specific treatment for SAD, he said, is phototherapy.

“White light, like that from a fluorescent light of sufficient intensity indirectly in the eyes can clear up depression withing days to a couple weeks,” he said. “The same result can be obtained by taking a stroll outdoors in the brightest part of the day. Even on a somewhat overcast day, there is a lot of light coming off the snow in the winter and it can help. Dress warmly and get out there.”

On that note, Hardwig echoed Huyck’s comments and encourages people to stay hopeful.

“Days will become longer, the leaves will return and the birds will someday sing again,” he said. “Color will return to our world, so, keeping this in mind can help us look forward to better days.”



FILE PHOTO

Justin Besch, 10, is about to get a strike in last year’s International Falls’ annual Icebox Days’ frozen “Turkey Bowling.” This year’s turkey bowling contest runs from 1-3 p.m. Jan. 18 outside Backus Community Center.

ICEBOX
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tourism season has faded, Whitbeck said

“Icebox Days has certainly done what it set out to do,” Whitbeck said of boosting the local economy during the winter months.

The premier event, the Freeze Yer Gizzard Blizzard Run, will again feature 5K and 10K races Jan. 18, Whitbeck said. The event, she added, has never been canceled — only shortened in 1981 because temperatures hit -72 degrees with the wind chill.

“Only the bold run in the cold,” she said. “This year, the race is really living up to its reputation. The last two years, we’ve had record numbers for the race and participation seems to be growing.”

She added that registrations are already pouring

in and interested participants can register at the chamber office, located at 301 2nd Ave., until Jan. 16. Runners may also register at Rainy River Community College from 5-8 p.m. Jan. 17, and before the run kicks off Jan. 18.

Runners packets can also be downloaded at the newly-designed Icebox Days website, www.freeze-yergizzardrun.com. The site features information on runners and a photo gallery. Whitbeck said this year’s race results will be uploaded to the site shortly after the race.

In addition to the run, Whitbeck said festival goers can expect the return of popular events including turkey bowling, smooch races, a chili cook off, nightlight snowshoeing in Voyageurs National Park, a boot hockey tournament, a beach party with live music and other

chilly favorites. All dates and times will be published in the official Icebox Days schedule inserted in The Journal on Jan. 16.

“With the help of the city of International Falls, Saturday we will again have fireworks under the winter sky at Smokey Bear Park,” she said. “The fireworks are a brilliant way to show the celebration of our climate.”

NEW EVENTS

New to the Icebox Days lineup this year are several events at the Viking Bar and Backus Community Center.

According to Viking Bar owner Joann Smith, the new events at her establishment are toilet seat tossing, a wing eating contest and redneck days.

The wing-eating contest starts at 6 p.m. Jan. 16 followed by redneck trivia at 7 p.m. On Jan. 18 at 1 p.m.,

there will be a toilet seat toss, and a winter wonderwear competition for the best redneck outfits at 1:30 p.m.

“I usually try to have a theme,” Smith said of the redneck-inspired events. “Right now Duck Dynasty is cool, so I thought we’d do something around that.... There’s not a lot of events for all ages. I wanted to give people an opportunity to participate in Icebox Days.”

Backus Community Center will also host a new event — Icebox Idol Karaoke, open to all ages.

The contest, according to Robin Bjorkquist, event coordinator at Backus, will start at 7 p.m. Jan. 16 and costs \$5 to attend and \$5 to perform a song.

“We’re always looking for new ideas and new ways to engage the community in fun events,” Bjorkquist said. “We re-

ally want to engage a lot of people.”

Prizes will be awarded for first, second and third place and winners will be judged by the audience.

Overall, Whitbeck is confident this year’s festival will mimic the success of years past.

“Icebox Days is successful because both locals and visitors alike have shown their character,” she said. “No matter what the weather, there is joy and fun in being together and having unique events to attend.”

For more information on Icebox Days or FYGBR registration, call the chamber at 283-9400, visit its website at chamber@intlfalls.org, or register online at www.freeze-yergizzardrun.com.

Whitbeck also said volunteers are needed for the events and anyone interested should contact the chamber.

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investments he’s made in the community over the years.

Shannon said the date marked nearly 30 years Shannon’s Square had been open. The square houses several businesses.

Anderson also voiced thanks to Larsen, who was not present at the meeting, for “his confidence in purchasing another building in this community.” Larsen also owns Ronning’s adjacent to Shannon’s Square.

“I’m very pleased to say we have a buyer with a vested interest in downtown,” Shannon said.

Other councilors also expressed gratitude for the investments in the city made by Shannon and Larsen.

Larsen told The Journal Thursday immediate plans call for Shannon’s Square to continue as it is now.

“I do have extra space in there and am looking for renters,” he said.

Larsen also expressed confidence in the downtown business district of the city.

“I have very good thoughts about downtown businesses, or I wouldn’t have done it,” he said.

Councilor Paul Eklund said the loan program has helped businesses in the community grow and

noted waivers have been provided to other buyers in previous sales of property on which loans remained.

In other city business, the International Falls Economic Development Authority Commission met in special session Monday prior to the special council meeting.

The commission approved expenses for officials to attend the Minnesota Economic Competitiveness Summit Jan. 22 in St. Paul, where Shawn Mason, EDA director, will serve on a panel to discuss the state’s economic development tool box. Mason’s expenses had been approved at an earlier meeting.

Organized by the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, the daylong event is expected to draw more than 400 community economic developers, workforce development practitioners, planners, civic and government leaders, educators, researchers and nonprofit and foundation representatives for a wide-ranging discussion on innovation, globalization and talent as key drivers to economic growth.

While no commissioners indicated they could attend, Anderson questioned how the public was notified of the special meeting and wondered if the meeting was conducted to surprise

the commission members.

An email with the agenda said the item had not been addressed during the Dec. 23 EDA meeting, which was abruptly adjourned when Anderson read aloud an email criticizing Mason’s conduct during radio programs intended to provide information about economic development.

But Anderson said a review of that meeting’s agenda showed all items had been addressed.

EDA Commission President Gail Rognerud said the item on the summit was to be handled during Mason’s director report, which did not occur prior to adjournment of the Dec. 23 meeting.

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Email: defender@defendernelson.com

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