

ICEBOX DAYS

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and moonlight snowshoeing return to Voyageurs National Park.

Whitbeck said the moonlight snowshoeing at VNP started a few years ago,

SHERIFF

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an effort to do the best he can as sheriff, he said he will attend a new sheriffs conference early in the year and has applied to participate in the Blandin Community Leadership Program.

He had begun meeting with key staff and other officials on his days off in the weeks just prior to stepping into the position.

A smooth transition is important for the department and the community, he said. Undersheriff Jon Froemke will remain in his position, as will Jail Administrator Tim Milette, he said.

The age of those men, 38, as well as his own age, and the age of county Attorney Jeff Naglosky, 36, indicate the potential for continuity in the county’s lead law enforcers, he said.

“I think that’s unique to our county,” he said. “We have an opportunity for the next 20-plus years of moving in the direction we want to go.”

Among the priorities Hedlund has set for himself is to improve communication on various fronts, he said. First and foremost, he said he’ll likely meet with staff individually and as a group to develop an exchange of information within the Sheriff’s Office.

Carrying out the duties of a county law enforcement officer requires contact with staff of many agencies and departments, in and outside of county government. Hedlund said improving communication between the Sheriff’s Office and the people it works with will benefit everyone.

“We do have to change some of the way we do business,” he said.

Enforcing the law in a small and fairly remote county makes having a good relationship with other law enforcement agencies important, he said. He’ll work hard to maintain and improve the friendships and relationships he’s already built among fellow officers, he said.

“It’s so nice when you can get along,” he said, adding that he’ll count on the experiences of other leaders in law enforcement as he learns the ropes. “I don’t know everything. Every day I learn something new.”

Hedlund said he’ll be open to considering new ideas and ways of doing

and is quickly turning into a tradition, with the park supplying the snowshoes for interested adventurers.

A boot hockey tournament will take place at the outdoor rinks in the Falls, with the beach party and traditional chili cook-off returning as well. Music and

dancing is also planned at various locations throughout the festival.

Fireworks under the winter sky are scheduled for the fifth consecutive year in Smokey Bear Park at dusk on Saturday evening.

“The whole idea is to look at things from a different perspective. Just because we’ve been doing something the same way for the last 20 years doesn’t mean it’s the best way. There may be a better way to do it, and then you may.. realize the old way was the better way and you go back... There’s no harm in trying something.”



Perryn Hedlund
Koochiching County sheriff

things. “Sometimes we get locked in on our ideas and the way we think things should go,” he said. “Sometimes it’s nice to open up and listen to others.”

Law enforcement has changed in recent years in that officers have contact with many more people for many more reasons. That makes good working relationships important, he said.

“Family services, humane society, the school — we’re a lot more involved now — it’s really nice to have those open lines of communication, and keep those lines open,” he said. “We’re a small community with limited resources so you really need to count on everyone to work as a team. We’re on an island up here.”

Transparency in the hiring process for positions in the office is important to Hedlund, he said. The International Falls Police Department hires through a civil service commission, made up of community members and others, which interviews candidates for positions, and provides a ranking to the police chief. The chief recommends hiring someone from the top candidates.

Key in hiring, he said, is establishing and sticking to a set process. He said he’d like to involve an impartial panel in interviews and a ranking system and said he will work to advertise open positions in an effort to draw the best candidates. Without a transparent process, the Sheriff’s Office is open to assumptions and criticism in hiring, he said.

Even in Minnesota’s second largest county, Hedlund said a sheriff must be visible and accessible to residents. He said he’ll establish connections and

build networks in each of the communities in the county.

“The sheriff has to be willing to go to these small towns and talk with people,” he said. “It’s what people want... Community leaders can tell you these are the issues affecting our community and how can we work together to solve this.”

Sometimes, a fix is easier than it appears, he said. “The whole idea is to look at things from a different perspective,” he said. “Just because we’ve been doing something the same way for the last 20 years doesn’t mean it’s the best way. There may be a better way to do it, and then you may... realize the old way was the better way and you go back... There’s no harm in trying something.”

Hedlund said being approachable can often head off trouble, as well as open opportunities. “It’s amazing what a simple smile and ‘hello’ can do — it can deescalate a situation,” he said. “That’s one of my goals as sheriff: To put a face on the department and lead by example. It doesn’t hurt to be friendly to people.”

That understanding of the value of personal relations may partially stem from his physique, he said.

“I am not the biggest guy in the room, so I am not going to walk in and intimidate. I have to rely on my ability to interact and form some connection with a person to see where I am coming from,” he said.

And it may also come from his experience as a police officer who has found establishing personal relationships has value in all aspects of life and who will continue to build on those relationships and create new ones as sheriff.

2014 YEAR IN REVIEW

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January

- Record temperatures are broken with -42 degrees.
- Keith Aili takes third place in second annual Gichigami Sled Dog Express race.
- Resolute halts production at Fort Frances mill.
- Rainy Lake Medical Center hospital campus will house a new clinic.
- St. Thomas School officials announce the school will eliminate four grades.

February

- Koerter’s Amoco is robbed at gunpoint for the second time.
- Northland Tackle closes Ranier facility.
- Falls School Board agrees to offer a free preschool program.
- Ranier City Council approves bringing public pianos to the city.

March

- Community appears to enjoy the play, “The Mill,” written by Falls native Jeannine Coulombe.
- Mark LeBlanc shapes the Olympic rings out of ice.
- Mary Thydean enjoys reading to Littlefork-Big Falls elementary children.
- The Minnesota Deer Hunters Association distributes more than 11,000 pounds of feed to help protect the health of white-tailed deer.
- Ken Anderson is named the new city administrator of International Falls.
- Little River Band is named as the headliner for Riverfest.

April

- Rainy Lake fishing guide Barry “Woody” Woods is inducted into the Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame.
- Water regulation officials begin to monitor the risk of high levels in the area’s lakes as deep snow melts across the Rainy River basin.
- Cynthia Warren is named citizen of the year by the International Falls Chamber of Commerce.
- Rainy River Community College professors offer their guesses of when Rainy Lake’s ice will be declared out.
- Tim and Kris Lessard share the story of their son, Derek, who died of a heroine overdose.
- Adam Mannausau takes over as the new fire chief of International Falls.

May

- Kevin Grover is hired

as the new superintendent of Independent School District No. 361.

■ Former congressman Jim Oberstar dies at age 79.

- Rainy Lake ice out records second latest date.

June

- Area business and homeowners prepare for rising waters.
- International Falls electrician Mike Holden prepares for retirement after 39 years.
- Water levels continue to rise.
- Gov. Mark Dayton and other state lawmakers visit Borderland to assess flooding situation.
- The level of Rainy River is as high as it’s been in 85 years.
- Minnesota National Guard is called to International Falls.

July

- Sen. Amy Klobuchar hears requests for rule curve changes.
- Pulling for Peace tug is canceled because of high waters on Rainy River.
- Active Streets is deemed a success by organizers.
- Birchdale native Gary Hultman joins The Boxcars.
- Severe wind storm causes damage to homeowner, Falls Country Club.
- A shooting in Ray leaves one man dead, others traumatized.

August

- The 300-mile journey of Minnesota Miracle begins in International Falls.
- An International Falls city councilor accuses Mayor Bob Anderson of bullying.
- Flood recovery efforts continue by Koochiching County Board.
- City Beach reopens.
- International Falls Bass Championship celebrates 10 years, baby born to angler Bonita Ysen and new winners.
- Local artist Mason Wilson opens new art gallery.

September

- U.S. House’s 8th District candidate Stuart Mills visits International Falls.
- Joe Best discusses how ATV accidents can “happen to anyone.”
- County officials recall summer flooding events.
- The Rainy Lake Property Owners Association is formed.
- Allegations made about International Falls Mayor Bob Anderson were dismissed by Councilor

Gail Rognerud.

- Koochiching among 18 counties designated as primary disaster area.

October

- A grant from the Federal Aviation Administration will allow the Falls International Airport to make some repairs to its runway before winter.
- Area schools celebrate homecoming.
- Five structures deemed hazardous in International Falls are slated for demolition with action by the Falls City Council.
- The International Falls animal holding facility is nears completion.
- Falls High School students release balloons for a classmate who died.
- Falls School Board approves wrestling as an FHS sport.

November

- Election night comes and goes: Perryn Hedlund is elected as the new Koochiching County Sheriff.
- Koochiching County Board approves sandbag removal as final step in flood cleanup.
- A television show exploring America’s national parks and the love affair people have with them will feature Voyageurs National Park in an episode airs.
- Moving forward with a plan for the Grand Mound History Center that can be sustained is key to opening the facility that was closed in 2003 due to state financial concerns.
- Page & Hill Forest Products in Big Falls announces it will close its doors when its inventory runs out the first of the year.
- The 2014 ‘Twas the Lights Before Christmas parade features floats, music, lights and an engagement.

December

- November’s colder-than-normal temperatures help jump start plans for winter recreation in Borderland.
- After local officials put the heat on the provincial government and the facility’s owner, Resolute Forest Products has announced it will heat the closed Fort Frances pulp mill over the winter.
- The former Rainy Lake Lodge building is demolished.
- A new law adds stricter rules for teen drivers — and their parents.
- A federal judge’s decision makes killing wolves in Minnesota illegal.

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