

19 – FEBRUARY – 2024
CASPIAN MI

Last Wednesday, the City of Caspian discussed its intention to apply for a \$3.5 million grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation's RAISE program.

The program, short for “Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity”, allows communities to apply for grants in disadvantaged communities that normally would have a very hard time getting one from this arm of the Federal Government.

Half of the project’s money goes to rural projects, and this year \$1.5 billion dollars is on the table.

If Caspian is successful, the funds will be used for upgrading Albino Street and Brady Avenue, enhancing the overall condition of these roads. Albino is in need of repair, and a significant artery into and out of the city, improvements to Brady are of great interest for Caspian.

The application deadline is fast approaching, set for February 28th. The offices of local politicians, including Senator Gary Peters and Representative Jack Bergman, and other area stakeholders have pledged support and assistance to Caspian during the application process.

The grant is an opportunity for Caspian as it continues to seek ways to finance infrastructure projects. With aged structured and – more recently – flood damaged areas through the Upper Peninsula, finding money to keep roads intact and bridges safe, is a major concern for many communities in the area.

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END OF STORY

17 – FEBRUARY – 2024
LANSING MI

Michigan has officially recognized February 18th through the 24th as Sauna Week, celebrating the Finnish tradition of sauna culture, after a vote on Wednesday.

House Resolution 186 of 2024 was the slip that contained the declaration, with bi-partisan co-sponsorship. Immediately recognizable names attached to it include Greg Markkanen, who introduced it in the first place, and Jenn Hill.

A sauna is a interior space where people can go in and expose themselves to high temperatures and high humidity. Saunas have been used in Europe for at least 6000 years. There is also an independent sauna culture in Korea, but it is considerably more recent, less than 1000 years old. A sauna typically has it's own thermometer to measure temperature, and a sometimes a hygrometer to measure humidity.

The House Resolution cited the Mayo Clinic giving a positive review of the health benefits of saunas, saying that saunas generally improve heart function and also act as a source of relaxation.

Infrared saunas are generally not considered to be saunas with official organizations in Finland, despite their branding, though they claim to have most of the same health benefits.

Sauna sales are up in the United States, with a growth rate in home installation of at least 3.5% since the mid-2010s, according to IBISWorld. Mordor Intelligence has further stated that largest sauna market is North America. Sales are in the billions of dollars.

As the state with the highest number of Finnish immigrants, Michigan's Upper Peninsula holds significant importance in preserving and promoting Finnish American heritage. The sauna, an integral part of Finnish life, serves not only as a means of physical cleansing but also as a space for social interaction and relaxation.

Hancock, home to the Finnish American Heritage Center, will be hosting various events during Sauna Week to educate the public about Finnish life and sauna culture. A detailed list of these events can be found at www.visitkeweenaw.com.

With temperatures expected to remain somewhat below freezing over Sauna Week towards the Keweenaw, despite the expected warm-up next week, visitors to the area would be well advised to try a sauna out up there while it remains cool enough to truly appreciate one.

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END OF STORY

16 – FEBRUARY – 2024
LANSING MI

In another sign that Winter is coming to an early end, the Michigan Department of Transportation has lifted on all state trunkline highways in the lower part of the state, and in some parts of the Upper Peninsula.

This includes US-2 at the Menominee River bridge to the west of Iron Mountain, which also apart of this change, all starting today. This also extends all the way east on US-2 to St. Ignace.

US-2 effectively acts as the border for this policy change. Anything north of it will still have to put up with frost restrictions for now.

While temperatures have gone down recently, we have seen quite a number of days so far this year where it's been above freezing. And after the weekend, they are expected to trend upward again.

As we've reported frequently over the last few months, this has had a negative impact on U.P. businesses that rely on good winter weather for their trade this time of year.

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END OF STORY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Media Contact:

February 13, 2024

Danny Wimmer

News aired 2/15/24

Former Houghton Narcotics Officer Sentenced for Possession of Methamphetamine

LANSING – Yesterday, in the 12th Circuit Court in Houghton County, former narcotics enforcement police officer Scott Monette, 55, of Chassel Township, was sentenced to serve 90 days in jail and 18 months' probation under a deferred sentence after pleading guilty last month to Possession of Methamphetamine, announced Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel. Monette additionally resigned, and agreed not to renew his MCOLES certification, a prerequisite for employment as a police officer in Michigan. Other conditions of Monette's probation include drug testing and counselling.

Monette was employed as a police officer with the Houghton City Police Department at the time of the allegations of methamphetamine use and possession. He additionally served on the Upper Peninsula Substance Enforcement Team (UPSET), tasked with narcotics enforcement across all 15 counties of the Upper Peninsula, though Monette had ceased his role with UPSET by the time the allegations were made in 2021.

This case was investigated by the Michigan State Police. In July 2021, allegations were made to the Houghton office of UPSET that Monette was using and possessed methamphetamine. That investigation found methamphetamine and smoking pipes at Monette's residence and confirmed his DNA was present on the pipes. Monette pled guilty to the charge of one count of Possession of Methamphetamine on January 3rd of this year.

"Crimes committed by police officers harm not only the communities they swore to protect and serve, but also trust in law enforcement everywhere," said Nessel. "Our chief goal in this prosecution was to ensure Monette's law enforcement career was over, and with this plea and sentence we were able to secure that, for not only the people of Houghton but the entire State as well."

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15 – FEBRUARY – 2024
IRON RIVER MI

News Director Jeremy Johnson with the Lightning News recap for the week: and most of it has to deal with the large explosion that happened in Iron River on Cayuga Street late Saturday evening. We were down there and took photos and video of the blast on Sunday, and on Wednesday we posted footage of the explosion as it happened on our Facebook. The blast killed one man, and there may have been some brief confusion in the immediate response coming from Crystal Falls, when someone else reportedly blew up Tannerite concurrently with the disaster in West Iron County. There's your recap, here's Doctor Larry!

-30-
END OF STORY

14 – FEBRUARY – 2024
IRON RIVER MI

V4

An unexpected development in the Iron River explosion story, this time out of Crystal Falls Township; there were two separate blasts in Iron County on Saturday, at about the same time.

This revelation occurred during the monthly Crystal Falls Township meeting on Tuesday, when a firefighter in the audience informed the Township board about the situation, during the Public Comment segment at the end of the meeting.

They said the second explosion occurred within 30 minutes of the Iron River blast.

According to the firefighter, the cause of this second explosion was an intentional detonation of Tannerite by a private citizen.

The reported Tannerite blast confused first responders and central dispatch, who also had to deal with the Iron River explosion, making it more difficult for Iron County's limited enforcement resources to manage the destruction on 820 Cayuga Street. It also reportedly raised concerns of a pipeline explosion.

Tannerite is an explosive compound that is legal at the national level and in Michigan. It is made out of ammonium nitrate and aluminum powder. Tannerite explodes when struck with a high-velocity projectile, like a rifle bullet. Handgun and shotgun ammo generally will not cause Tannerite to explode. In addition to being an entertaining diversion during target practice, it can be used for various blasting jobs. This includes being used for special effects in movies, and for beaver dam demolition.

The compound has also been the principle cause of a number of incidents over the past 10 years. In 2017, a 46,000 acre wildfire was caused by a Tannerite detonation in Arizona. And in 2021, 80 pounds of Tannerite were blasted at the bottom of a pit New Hampshire, and the resulting tremors were felt as far away as Massachusetts.

The audience member asked if there were any rules or ordinances relating to Tannerite use that Crystal Falls Township presently had on the books.

Township Supervisor Scott Kenney indicated that the Tannerite situation would be looked into.

V2

WIKB INTERNAL

14 – FEBRUARY – 2024
IRON RIVER MI

An unexpected development in the Iron River explosion story, this time out of Crystal Falls Township; there were two separate blasts in Iron County on Saturday, at about the same time.

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Kenney indicated that the Tannerite situation would be looked into.

**-30-
END OF STORY**

13 – FEBRUARY – 2024
IRON RIVER MI

Continuing coverage of the Saturday Iron River house explosion, with streets around the ruined house on Cayuga Street opened up to traffic.

The streets around the disaster site had been closed through Sunday, but as of Monday evening, those arteries have been unplugged. The streets had also received cleaning, appearing much less hazardous to traverse since Sunday.

That does not mean that authorities are finished with the site. News Director Jeremy Johnson noticed at least three Michigan State Police cars heading towards Iron River while driving on US-2 Monday evening, around 4PM, traveling at a noticeably high rate of speed.

On a hunch, he returned to town a little after 5PM, and noted that a number of law enforcement vehicles were parked at the affected property. He also noted enforcement personnel were standing along the sidewalk by the property at that time.

The Iron River Police Department has also released a revised time for the explosion, placing it closer to 9:15PM on Saturday. Previously, it had been stated that the blast occurred around 9:30PM.

In addition to the IRPD and the MSP, the Michigan State Police Fire Marshal's Division, Iron County Sheriff's Department, Aspirus Medevac, the Iron County Central Dispatch, the American Red Cross, and the West Iron County Fire Department were all involved early on in the disaster, according to a social media post by the IRPD.

Another announcement, by Northpointe Behavioral Healthcare System on their Facebook page, was that clinicians will be available for debriefing from 10AM to 12PM, today, February 13th. They also asked those members of the community with concerns resulting from the blast to call them at (906) 774-0522.

Again, if you have a story you wish to share regarding the Cayuga Street explosion, feel free to get a hold of us. You can call (906) 265-9622, or send an email to news@wikb.com.

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END OF STORY

12 – FEBRUARY – 2024
IRON RIVER MI

We covered it online yesterday, but over the weekend a house blew up in downtown Iron River, not far from the site of the November 2022 house fires and our station offices.

The blast occurred around 9:30 in the evening on Saturday, February 10th. The house in question was the brick structure at 820 Cayuga Street. The blast was powerful enough to completely demolish the structure, leaving little evidence of what stood there just days earlier.

That explosion was also powerful enough to shatter the windows of buildings in proximity to it. We talked with one home owner in the area, who reported that the blast sounded like a “terrorist attack”. It caused everyone inside that house to evacuate it instantly.

Miraculously, no other structures seem to have been destroyed by the explosion, but one of the houses immediately next to 820 Cayuga took noticeable damage on the side facing the ruined building. Other houses also received minor damage from the explosion. Given the force of the explosion, it is not immediately clear how the blast was so contained as to take out the house, yet leave other buildings right by it standing.

The structure was unfortunately occupied at the time it exploded. The victim, an 80-year-old man who had moved up to Iron River from Florida, died in the blast.

The explosion was audibly perceived at least as far away as Caspian, heading south. It was less clear to the north, in Mineral Hills, but a resident there reported that they could hear something akin to a dump truck gantry activating outside their place up there around the time of the explosion.

The Iron River Police Department and the Michigan State Police were on scene yesterday, investigating the explosion. The streets were blocked off to road traffic, but that didn't prevent Iron County residents from crossing police tape and getting a look at the scene.

Everyone we saw in the area doing so at the time kept a respectable distance from the ruin, staying at least 150 feet away from it and the crew investigating the damage. The most distant pair of explorers there hailed from Crystal Falls, coming over to see what happened after reading up on the event on social media. We did see people trying to clear up debris from the sidewalk, boards with nails in them that got blasted half a block away.

Authorities are not treating this as a criminal activity at this time, and are still investigating the disaster. We observed DTE personnel at the location, indicating that some of the investigation's energy may be going into determining if this was a gas explosion.

That all said, the explosion is another event in the recent storied history, of the west end of Iron River.

Media of the damage can be found on WIKB's Facebook page.

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END OF STORY

9
~~7~~- FEBRUARY - 2024
LANSING MI

Talon Nickel is once again in the news, receiving the OK from the state DNR to lease the mineral right of 23,000 acres of land, in order for the company to look for nickel.

Some of the land mentioned in the January 31st announcement includes parcels in the northern edge of Iron County.

Overall this also adds on to the 400,000 acres the company already has to look for the metal, near the Eagle Mine in the vicinity of Marquette.

Nickel is an important metal for electronics, batteries, and electric vehicles. There is very little mining for it, however, in the United States. In fact, the Upper Peninsula of Michigan is the only place in the country extracting it from the ground right now, at the aforementioned Eagle Mine.

With much of the world's nickel is mined in Asia, and a significant portion of global nickel resources come from China and Russia, two countries the U.S. does not presently have the best relations with. In fact, the United States single mine contributes to a little under 1% of global production.

Given recent pushes to on-shore U.S. production, in the face of increasing global instability, the United States Department of Defense entered into a \$20.6 million agreement with Talon to explore for the metal last September.

Talon Nickel is also looking to expand nickel production in Minnesota.

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END OF STORY

8 – FEBRUARY – 2023
LANSING MI

Area lawmakers are going to bat for the Kingsford Post Office processing facility in the Iron Mountain area, after the USPS disclosed plans to relocate affairs there to Green Bay.

A general bi-partisan response to the potential shift was released on Wednesday, with copies of resolutions made to support the center being sent out to a wide range of political figures: everyone from Governor Gretchen Whitmer, to President Joe Biden.

“We are speaking with one voice to oppose this terrible plan to reduce postal services to the people of the U.P.,” said Sen. Ed McBroom, R-Waucedah Township, in a public statement. “There is no partisan divide here. The U.S. Postal Service is pushing this change through manipulation and carefully worded press releases that do not tell the whole story about what they are trying to do.”

On the other side of the aisle from McBroom, Representative Jenn Hill also sounded off. “I’m deeply concerned that the transfer of these essential functions to another state will diminish the speed and efficiency of mail in our communities,” said Hill, D-Marquette. “Our local postal workers are dedicated to ensuring U.P. residents receive their packages on time, without interruptions. I’m strongly opposed to any changes that will compromise the reliable service our residents have come to expect.”

The changes they are speaking out against are part of the “Optimized Collections Plan”, a program where the USPS is trying to streamline their service, remove “underutilized” routes, and find cost savings in the process. Carbon footprint reductions are also under consideration, according to a November 22nd response by the USPS to the Postal Regulatory Commission.

Four resolutions in support of the Kingsford facility, with three of them having been put up for votes by Wednesday.

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END OF STORY

8 – FEBRUARY – 2024
IRON RIVER MI

News Director Jeremy Johnson with the Lightning News recap for the week: the weather continues to be gentle on area residents, in turn making it brutal for winter business and events, leading the Upper Peninsula Sled Dog Association to cancel a number of races. West Iron also had it's third security shutdown since the end of summer on Wednesday, and the MSP up in Negaunee is looking into a big larceny spree. There's your recap, here's Doctor Larry!

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END OF STORY

7 – FEBRUARY – 2024
IRON RIVER MI

Yet again, the West Iron County schools were shut down today due to potential threats, and this time they've been hit from two sources.

According to a February 7th press release on their website, the school received an OK2SAY school safety alert from the Michigan State Police. The school elected to take a two hour delay while law enforcement looked into the threat, finding that there was none at the time.

However, school also said that teenagers had been found trespassing on school property, gaining unauthorized access to West Iron after school hours. This led to school being outright canceled, and for the police to be called up to search the school in the wake of the intrusion.

Additional police will be hanging around West Iron in response to these events.

This latest incident comes after a string of school safety shutdowns last Fall, all reportedly caused by a single female student making various threats against West Iron.

In response the school set up a safety committee to look into ways to further secure the institution.

Iron River Community Broadcasting News contacted the school for a statement, and were referred to the announcement on the school website in lieu of one.

**-30-
END OF STORY**

Troopers from the Michigan State Police, Negaunee Post are currently investigating multiple large-scale larcenies stemming from as far back as two years. Items found thus far

are. **INCLUDE:** News aired 2/6/24

[REDACTED] gasoline, generators, construction equipment (Cement, scaffolding), lawnmowers, hand tools, hardware, saw blades, merchandise racks from Dollar General, [REDACTED], trail cameras, a side by side [REDACTED] Stem [REDACTED] 8170 multiple shotguns, gauge over [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] heaters, propane [REDACTED], jet skis, [REDACTED] trailers, and lawn care equipment.

The incidents occurred in Ely Township, Tilden Township, Ishpeming Township, Ishpeming City, and Forsyth Township; however other unreported incidents may have occurred as well. This investigation includes incidents that have been investigated by multiple agencies. Troopers are currently working with the Ishpeming City Police Department, Forsyth Township Police Department, Ishpeming Township Police Department, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, and the Marquette County Sheriff's Office.

Marquette County
residents with stolen
items may

email Trooper Bahrman at bahrmanr@michigan.gov. Include the following information in your email:

- Your name
- Date of birth
- Phone number
- Address
- Location/address the items were taken from.
- Description of items that were taken.
- If reported, what agency you reported it to
- Approximate date the items were taken.

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5 – FEBRUARY – 2024
MARQUETTE MI

In another casualty to the increasingly historic winter warm-up of 2024, the Upper Peninsula Sled Dog Association has announce the cancellation of numerous races.

The announcement came Thursday, with the UP200, Midnight Run and Jack Pine 30 races all spiked for the year.

The UP200 and Midnight Run was set to go from February 15th to the 19th, with the Jack Pine 30 being held on February 17th.

The cited reason, according to UP200 president Darlene Walch, is the aforementioned weather. She said that current conditions “cannot offer a safe race”.

The Association is still planning on holding the “Festival of the Sled Dog Powered by NMU”, on February 16th in Marquette.

The cancellation is the latest in a long line of issues caused – directly or indirectly – by the unusually warm weather affecting the area, reporting causing millions of dollars of damage to areas businesses, and shutting down winter sport opportunities.

In one of our more recent reports on the matter, Chili Ski-In event in Florence County was canceled recently, and ATV/UTV trails in that county were also closed.

Walch also stated that sled dog events across the Midwest had been canceled due to the warm temperatures.

And with March just around the corner, there’s very little winter left for anyone to work with. If there’s even much to use, right now.

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END OF STORY

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources is announcing the cancellation of the 2024 Black Lake sturgeon season, which was scheduled to start Saturday, Feb. 3. News aired 2/3/24

A harvest limit is set for each Black Lake sturgeon season. With the current marginal ice conditions and depletion of ice on Black Lake, there is concern of excessive harvest with the inability to effectively track harvests with limited DNR personnel on the ice.

“In addition to protecting the lake sturgeon population, the safety of anglers and staff is critically important,” said Randy Claramunt, DNR Fisheries chief. “We encourage all anglers across Michigan to use extreme caution while on the ice, as we have been experiencing above-average temperatures.”

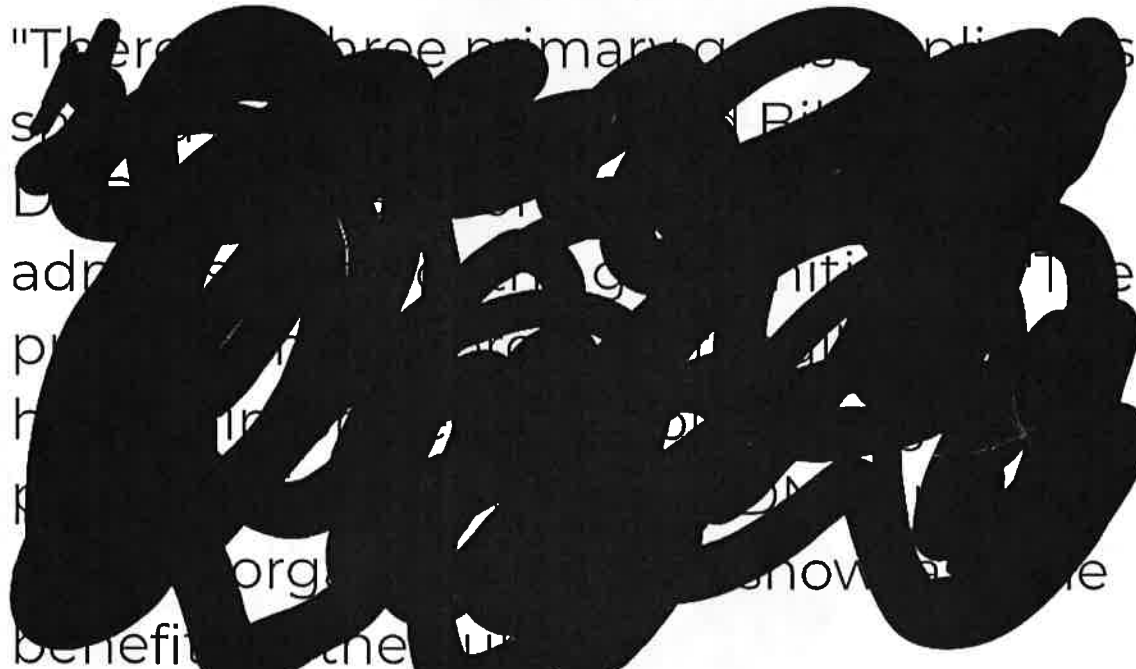
This is the first time the Black Lake sturgeon season has been canceled. It is too soon to determine whether this cancellation will influence the harvest limit next year.

Part 411 of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act grants the DNR the authority to cancel the season.

The application period for the Upper Peninsula's Deer Habitat Improvement Partnership Initiative competitive grant program is now open. *News aired 2/2/24*

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources initiative is a cooperative grant program designed to enhance deer habitat on private lands in the U.P.

"There are three primary goals of this initiative...
...the Michigan Department of Natural Resources...
...advises that the program is a cooperative grant...
...program...
...benefit the..."



Now in its 16th year, the initiative is supported by the state's Deer Range Improvement Program, which is funded by a portion of deer hunting license revenue. More than 132 projects in nearly all U.P. counties have improved thousands of acres of deer habitat.

The DNR has announced a total of

The DNR has announced a total of \$100,000 in U.P. deer habitat improvement grant funding for 2024. [REDACTED] the maximum amount of individual grants is \$15,000 and the minimum is \$2,000.

[REDACTED]

Project applications must be received electronically or postmarked by Monday, March 18 and successful applicants will be notified by Friday, April 5.

Bay College Student's Poem Places First in Statewide Competition

News aired 2/1/24

Fiona MacFadyen's poem, "Collateral," earns top prize in LAND writing contest.

ESCANABA, MI– Bay College sophomore Fiona MacFadyen's poem recently earned her first-place honors in a statewide writing competition. Her poem, "Collateral," placed first in Bay College's local writing contest and was forwarded along with five other local entries to the 2023 Liberal Arts Network for Development (LAND) annual creative writing competition. The contest is open to students enrolled in a credit class at any public two-year college in Michigan during 2023. All submissions must be sponsored by a faculty member. MacFadyen's poem was sponsored by Bay College English Instructor Nanci Love.

Judges noted that the winning poem provides readers "a complex physical and emotional experience in language that is personal to the writer, yet accessible to the reader." They added, "This is a solid poem about denial, resistance, and acceptance. No matter the actual experience the narrator has, he/she/they uses accessible language that immediately draws in the reader. What is shared here is not the actual experience, but common 'feelings' that we all share in spite of our individual experiences."

The daughter of Bill MacFadyen and Mary Conneely-MacFadyen, Fiona went to high school at North Dickinson County School in Felch, Michigan. She is currently pursuing an associate's degree in Liberal Arts at Bay College. Her immediate post-graduation plans are to do some traveling.

She can't remember what first sparked her interest in poetry. "As far back as I can remember, I was writing songs or little books that I drew pictures in," says MacFadyen. Prior to completing her schooling in the Upper Peninsula, MacFadyen attended school in Chicago where she participated in poetry club after school for three years. She said, "I have always had deep feelings and just wrote them down. The older I get, the more complex that life, and my feelings, get." MacFadyen said she especially appreciates the poetry of Ezra Pound and Rupi Kaur.

MacFadyen will receive a certificate and cash award and is invited to attend the virtual LAND Conference which will be held February 21 – 23, 2024, where her work will be recognized along with other state winners.

To read MacFadyen's poem, "Collateral," and other submissions by Bay College students, please visit this link: [Annual Writing Contest](#).

JAN 30, 2024

Negaunee Post

MARQUETTE COUNTY, MICH. During a social media investigation regarding narcotics and child sexual predators in the Upper Peninsula, troopers with the MSP Eighth District Hometown Security Team began an investigation on 4/29/23 with a suspect residing in Ishpeming Township. During the investigation, a trooper with the team was posing as a minor on an investigative social media account. A 49-year-old male from Ishpeming Township began conversing and soliciting to meet for sexual relations in exchange for methamphetamine.

An in-depth investigation was conducted then forwarded to the Marquette Prosecutor for review.

News aired 1/31/24

The suspect, Bryan Scott Ahtonen, was arrested on 1/22/24 and lodged at the Marquette County Jail on charges of possession with intent to deliver methamphetamine, three counts of using a computer to commit a crime, accosting a minor for immoral purposes and child sexually abusive activity. Ahtonen was arraigned in the 96th District Court on 1/23/24 and lodged at the Marquette County Jail.

96th District Court on 1/23/24 and lodged at the Marquette County Jail.

If you have information regarding additional victims with this suspect or area, please contact the Michigan State Police, Eighth District Headquarters. Troopers were assisted by The Upper Peninsula Substance Enforcement Team (UPSET)



RYAN D. BOEHMKE, SHERIFF
County of Iron - Office of the Sheriff

Courthouse – 2 South Sixth Street – Suite 18
Crystal Falls, Michigan 49920-1413
Telephone: (906) 875-0650 • Fax: (906) 875-6370

On January 3rd, 2024 the Iron County Sheriff's Office received a call from the Grand Traverse County Sheriff's Office requesting assistance with a larceny of wire in excess of \$20,000. With the information provided and a series of citizen complaints, the Iron County Sheriff's Office executed a search warrant on January 8th, 2024 at approximately 1215 hrs. in Crystal Falls Township, recovering a large quantity of stolen property linked to four victims throughout the state of Michigan.

The Iron County Sheriff's Office was assisted by the Michigan State Police and Iron County Prosecutor's Office. A report has been forwarded to the Iron County Prosecuting Attorney for charges of Receiving and Concealing stolen property, Weapons Possession (firearm) by a Felon, and Tampering with Evidence.

News aired 1/26/24

25 – JANUARY – 2024
LANSING MI

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources is looking for Spring park workers for 2024.

The DNR as usual is marketing the positions to young adults and retirees.

For younger applicants, the work could be used to spin into other natural resources jobs down the road.

Some of the positions the DNR is looking to fill include state site maintenance, animal control, and wildlife surveys.

“Each of these roles within the wildlife team not only contributes to vital conservation efforts but also offers a rewarding and hands-on experience,” in a statement by Jennifer Schafer, human resource liaison for the DNR Wildlife Division.

Those interested in applying can go to the DNR section on the State’s website at www.michigan.gov.

Applications are due by February 5th.

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END OF STORY

24 – JANUARY – 2024
FLORENCE WI

The Chili Ski In event set for February 3rd in Florence County, down in Wisconsin, has been canceled because of a lack of snow.

At least, when it comes to skiing or snowshoes on the Lauterman Trail System. That's according to a Tuesday post on the Explore Florence County webpage.

Temperatures are also set to skyrocket in the area towards the end of month. Despite a cooldown in early January, the warm spell we experienced in December seems set to make a comeback with a vengeance, with temperatures expected to hit the high 30s to low 40s.

With no prospects for cold weather or additional snow, the event was determined to be non-viable.

This year's winter has been comparatively wimpy as opposed to recent years, for better or worse. For area businesses, it's been for the worse. In addition to challenges producing snow at northwoods ski hills, Gogebic area businesses generally reported a significant economic downturn due to December's warm temperatures.

And with one month to go before March, there's going to be next to no time to make that up.

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END OF STORY



NEWS RELEASE

MICHIGAN STATE POLICE

News aired 1/23/24

Laurium Couple Arrested for Child Sexually Abusive Material

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

January 22, 2024

LAURIUM, MICH. The Michigan State Police (MSP) Computer Crimes Unit, Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force is announcing the arrest of Willaim Nicholas Horner, 43, and Stacey Jean Horner, 42, of Laurium, for child sexually abusive material – aggravated possession, and using a computer to commit a crime.

The Horner's were arrested following an investigation which was initiated when it was learned the Horner's were viewing files of child sexually abusive material on the internet. A search of their residence resulted in digital evidence being seized.

Both William Horner and Stacey Horner were charged with two counts of child sexually abusive material-aggravated possession, and two counts of using a computer to commit a crime. The Horner's were arraigned in the 97th District Court on January 19.

If convicted, The Horner's face up to 10 years in prison for the child sexually abusive material-aggravated possession, and 10 years in prison for using a computer to commit a crime.

The MSP Computer Crimes Unit encourages parents to speak to their children and family members about safe use of the internet. There are many resources available to assist in keeping people safe online. The MSP ICAC Task Force provides a comprehensive list of resources on their website at <http://www.michiganicac.com>.

If you have information regarding possible child sexual exploitation, report it to the CyberTipline at <http://www.missingkids.org/cybertipline>.

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MEDIA CONTACT:

D/Sgt. Nichole Dyson, MSP Computer Crimes Unit, 906-231-0196

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www.michigan.gov/msp

22 – JANUARY – 2024
BREWTON, AL

Caleb Anderson, the area resident who committed a string of violent crimes between here and Alabama last year, is now convicted as a result of his spree, and is serving a life sentence.

Anderson's activities last year are now a well known tale in the area, starting with an attack on Iron County resident Aurora Dahl on the morning of August 1st of 2023.

The next day, Anderson killed Patrick Ernst, of Green Bay, WI. He used the opportunity to use Ernst's vehicle to flee the area.

Anderson then traveled to Alabama, and then killed Birmingham resident Dwight Dixon. However, Anderson was soon apprehended by police in the area, booked on charges of murder and burglary in the first degree on August 10th of last year.

Anderson had priors, having groped multiple women in Marquette in 2019.

With Anderson's conviction, as he now behind bars for life, residents of three states have one less threat on the streets to worry about.

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END OF STORY

Wakefield Troopers Assist with Fatal Traffic Crash


Crash occurred on M-28, east of Ewen

JAN 19, 2024

News aired 1/20/24

Wakefield Post

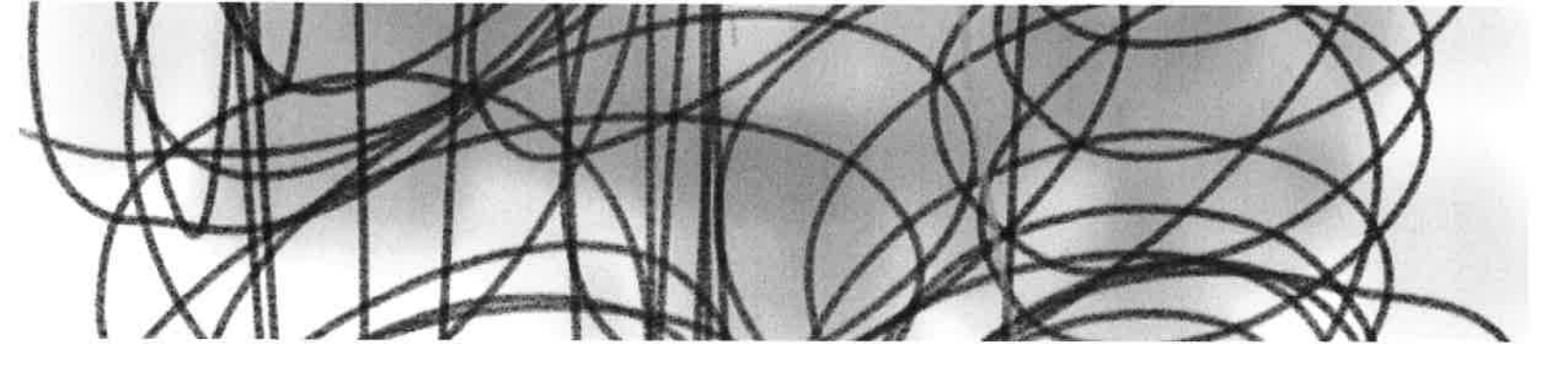
On 1/18/2024 at approximately 8:35 P.M. Ontonagon County Sheriff Department Deputies and Troopers from the MSP Wakefield Post were notified of a head-on collision on M-28 east of Ewen. Upon arrival, investigators learned the collision was between a semi-truck driven by a 42-year-old male and a passenger vehicle driven by a 17-year-old female. The 17-year-old female was treated by SONCO ambulance but passed away at the scene as a result of her injuries. The driver of the semi did not require medical treatment. Traffic was rerouted for several hours as investigators and medical personnel handled the scene.



The Ontonagon County Sherriff's Department is leading the investigation with MSP assisting. Accident Investigators from MSP Wakefield and MSP Calumet responded to the scene in addition to the MSP Accident Reconstructionist out of Marquette in order to help determine the cause of the crash. The incident remains under investigation.

*News aired 1/20/24
(part 2)*

Responding Agencies included the Ontonagon County Sheriff Department, MSP Wakefield, MSP Calumet, MSP Accident Reconstruction, Michigan DNR Conservation Officers, Ontonagon County Medical Examiner's Office, SONCO Ambulance, Bruce Crossing Fire Department, Ewen Fire Department, Ontonagon County Road Commission, Al's Auto Towing, and Superior Services Towing.



19 – JANUARY – 2024
IRON RIVER MI

Young's Golf Recreation and Dining will be hosting their 6th annual Winterfest, on Saturday, January 20th.

It's not dissimilar to the Heikki Lunta event that's long been held in Negaunee; with a mix of sports events, family fun, and food and drink. The event is a promotional opportunity for the facility out on Chicagon Lake, free to attend.

Starting at ten in the morning, Young's will option out free rentals of snowshoes, fat tire bikes, and cross-country skis. Their trail system will also be open to the public, so anyone picking up the free rentals will get many miles of use out of them.

Alpha Michigan Brewing Company will be taking over the taps, giving patrons a chance to try new brews while they participate in a smear tournament. The smear tournament, along with a cornhole tourney, will begin at one in the afternoon. Registration for both events begins at noon.

Live music will be provided by country/rock band Koltrane Acoustic, from 5PM to 9PM.

Activities for kids include games, face painting, and crafts. There will also be dog sled rides from 11AM to 3PM, and horse-drawn sleigh rides from 11AM to 4PM.

The weather Saturday is also projected to be quite a bit warmer than it has been all week, around 16 degrees as of filing this report. With calm weather and mild winds, it promises to be one day out of this week that Iron County residents can go out and enjoy some post-blizzard fun.

-30-

END OF STORY

18 – JANUARY – 2024
IRON RIVER MI

Iron County area residents skewing into medical education might be able to receive a financial boost from the Iron Area Health Foundation, in the form of a scholarship.

Graduating seniors from West Iron County and Forest Park can liaise with high school scholarship coordinators for a chance to win \$500 through the foundation, so long as they are going into medical studies after they leave high school, a boost to their academic budget when they hit college.

New for this year, however, is the fact that adults who are resuming education into the medical arts can also apply for the scholarship. They can apply online via the Iron Area Health Foundation's website.

The foundation provided four scholarships to West Iron and Forest Park students in 2023.

The Iron Area Health Foundation was formerly the Aspirus Iron Area Health Foundation. The foundation's goal is to promote wellness in Iron County.

The deadline for scholarship applications is March 15th.

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END OF STORY

18 – JANUARY – 2024
IRON RIVER MI

News Director Jeremy Johnson with the Lightning News recap for the week: it's been reported that area businesses have collectively lost millions of dollars due to the warm weather before the blizzard this month, some plans to give the Apple Blossom trail in Iron River an overhaul are being bandied about by Wickwire. And the Marshfield Clinic is laying off three percent of it's system wide workforce, with unknown impacts in Iron Mountain. There's your recap, here's Doctor Larry!

-30-
END OF STORY

25 – JANUARY – 2024
IRON RIVER MI

News Director Jeremy Johnson with the Lightning News recap for the week: Caleb Anderson has been convicted for part of his killing spree last year, and sentenced to life for it. The Iron Area Health Foundation is organizing medical scholarships again. A 17-year-old young woman died in a car accident near Ewen. And warm weather is once again messing with winter business in the area. There's your recap, here's Doctor Larry!

-30-
END OF STORY

30 – JANUARY – 2024
IRON RIVER MI

Area news round up for today, including a new piece of heavy equipment for the Iron River DPW to play with.

The vehicle is a John Deere 410P backhoe, also comes with loading equipment. The new four-wheel drive ride is another tool in a fleet of city vehicles ~~the city~~ has been trying to keep up to date and in good working order. ^{IRON RIVER}

The backhoe should assist the city in a number of heavy lifting and digging tasks going forward.

Meanwhile, the Eagle River Police Department is set to hold their next concealed carry class in a few months, on March 16th.

The ERPD holds these classes every so often, with registration priced in at \$40 for some time now.

If anyone is interested, pre-registration is required, and the forms on hand at the Eagle River Police Department.

And over in Iron Mountain, John Fornetti Dental Center will be holding a first-come first-serve day of dental cleaning for those in need of it.

^{FREE}

This includes one cleaning, one filling, or one extraction as part of the options on hand.

This charitable event, titled “Dentistry from the Heart”, is for adults, and will be held on February 10th.

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END OF STORY

27 – JANUARY – 2024
FLORENCE WI

A few days ago, we reported that the Chili Ski-In event in Florence County had been canceled due to warm weather, which we have seen in the U.P. from the sudden reappearance of blacktop in some places. Now, off-roading has been virtually shut down there because of it.

On Thursday, the Florence County Forestry and Parks Department announced that snowmobile trails, ATV, and UTV trails in the county, are shut down until further notice due to the warm winter conditions.

Aside from generally poor travel conditions, the trails were also shut down to prevent rutting and erosion damage.

Florence County hasn't been the only place in the listening area having trouble with trail systems. As far back as January 15th, the Iron Range Trail Club – in Iron County – announced that numerous trails would not be groomed again until winter weather conditions improved, which they have not.

The Michigan DNR has also weighed in on the situation, cautioning drivers about off-road conditions, and announcing updates for state-designated trails. In the Western U.P., Trail UP11 near Wakefield was closed on January 23rd. Trail UP49 in the Eastern U.P., near Sault Ste. Marie, was closed as early as January 11th. Both due to the warm weather, and lack of snow.

Similar reports of warm conditions and grooming pauses have been reported in Gogebic, Houghton, and Keweenaw Counties. Poor conditions have also been reported in Northern Wisconsin counties.

And it looks like it'll continue, with NOAA reporting good chances for warm temperatures to persist in the northwoods up to February 16th.

As such, it can be expected that area businesses that thrive in winter will also continue to face issues. With reports of expected losses in the millions this month in some parts of the U.P., February is not expected to offer much relief to outdoorsmen, or accountants.

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END OF STORY

17 – JANUARY – 2024
IRON RIVER MI

A round up of local news today, starting with a major event coming down the pike in Marquette.

That event is the Meijer State Games of Michigan, holding the Winter Games in Marquette in mid-February. This year, a number of new events have been added to the lineup: archery, rifle marksmanship, pickleball, and snow volleyball.

Most of the event will run through February 9th to the 11th, though the figure skating portion will run a week later, February 17th through the 18th.

Meanwhile, Florence County in Wisconsin has moved away from a first-come-first-serve system for some of their parks and lakes – Lake Emily, and the West Bass Lake Campgrounds, specifically – going towards a reservation system on the internet.

They're encouraging people interested in those sites to book them at florencecountyparks.com.

A fundraiser for the Florence County K9 Unit and Deputies Association will also be held, on February 17th. It will be at One-O-One Bar & Grill, food for the event is Chicken Booyah, five dollars a plate in the evening.

And the area around Lake Gogebic is still getting cleared out and organized in the wake of the recent winter storms. They received around 10 inches of snow in some parts of it. Yesterday, it was reported by Gogebic Area Grooming that Trail 13-N was getting set. Trail 8 is also being worked on, which flows from Bessemer all the way into Iron County.

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END OF STORY

16 – JANUARY – 2024
MARSHFIELD WI

In a surprise followup to yesterday's story regarding the Marshfield Clinic and its attempted merger with Essentia, it is now being widely reported that the medical system is furloughing several hundred employees.

From the information that has been made public, the Marshfield Clinic has said they would furlough 3% of their workforce. The statement did not define which of their hospital or clinics would have furloughed staff, which includes their outfit at Marshfield Medical Center in Iron Mountain.

Furlough is unpaid time off, as per the Marshfield Clinic's own words, a "temporary period of time when an employee is not working due to changing business conditions, but is anticipated to return to work once conditions improve".

Recently, a merger between the Marshfield Clinic and Essentia health systems fell through. The combined systems would have led to the formation of a 25 hospital multi-state network.

Fitch Ratings, one of the top global credit rating agencies, downgraded the Marshfield Clinic below A-rating a year ago. Fitch cited issues with wages, and technical issues following the Marshfield Clinic's expansion efforts a few years back.

Marshfield has been rated BBB+ by Fitch for the past year.

We have contacted Marshfield Medical Center in Iron Mountain this morning, to see if that facility has been affected by the furlough, and will report on any response the facility issues in due course.

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END OF STORY

15 – JANUARY – 2024
DULUTH, MN

A few years ago, the Marshfield Clinic got it's feet wet in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, by merging the Dickinson County Healthcare System in Iron Mountain. Further expansion seemed to be planned, but is now on hold; merger talks with Marshfield and Essentia Health have stalled out.

In a January 5th announcement, Essentia announced on it's website that "a combination at this time is not the right path forward".

Essentia does not have a footprint in Michigan, but it has it's fingers in Wisconsin, North Dakota, and especially Minnesota. It's headquartered out of Duluth.

It has slightly more facilities than the Marshfield Clinic system does, 14 hospitals versus 11. And 78 clinics against 60. Combined, the merged system would have had 25 hospitals and 138 clinics.

In comparison, Apirus – which also has a notable presence in the Western U.P. and Wisconsin – has 17 hospitals, and 75 clinics. As such, a merger of the two would have been a major development regionally.

Relations between the two entities appear to remain cordial at this time, and Essentia stated that they would "continue to seek opportunities for collaboration".

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END OF STORY

13 – JANUARY – 2024
BERGLAND MI

In the midst of a blizzard, it's easy to forget that not all that long ago, temperatures here were in the 40s with bone-dry ground. And that has had an outside economic impact on the listening area.

We previously reported on the difficulties of making snow for ski hills, but those aren't the only concerns that make their money in the winter. Last week, the Lake Gogebic Area Chamber of Commerce reported that 43 businesses, in Gogebic and Ontonagon Counties, lost over \$3 million in combined revenue due to the December dry patch. In fact, counting only seven days of it, December 26th to the 31st.

They also said they expected another combined loss of of \$3.8 million over the course of January.

The affected business owners in those counties have appealed to the State of Michigan for relief, with the Lake Gogebic Chamber of Commerce framing the issue as a "crisis" that is "comparable to a hurricane", or similar natural disasters.

The winter storm may ultimately improve the outlook for activities in the listening area going forward, once road crews have their way. Particularly with more events later in the month, such as Winterfest over at George Young's on January 20th, or the Ironwood Ski Week around the same time.

But the impact of last month's weather has already been felt, and there's no guarantee seasonal tourists put off by earlier warm weather will look into the area again this year.

If any businesses in the Gogebic or Ontonagon areas would like to contact the Lake Gogebic Chamber of Commerce, they can do so at (906) 575-3542, or (906) 575-3557. They are organizing workshops for impacted businesses, in response to this issue.

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END OF STORY

12 – JANUARY – 2024
IRON RIVER MI

Weather predictions ten or more days ahead of time frequently run the risk of change. Previous ideas about a dry winter in the area are fading with the onset of a large winter storm bearing down on the Upper Peninsula and Northern Wisconsin.

Snowfall is expected to be around seven to fifteen inches, with gusts as high as 40 miles an hour.

The storm warning should already be in effect, and it is expected to last until 7PM tomorrow, on Saturday.

In the wake of the storm, there have been several school closures have been announce. West Iron has closed in response to the storm, as have the Forest Park schools. North Dickinson County School has also closed. All Dickinson-Iron Intermediate School District programs are also shut down for the day.

The Michigan State Police are also taking this storm seriously, suggesting that households have a 72-hour emergency kit on hand – including food, water, a portable radio, flashlight, and blankets – in the face of storms like these.

We would also suggest being careful when driving, particularly as the storm progresses. In areas where there's heavier snowfall, there's always the chance you could get stuck somewhere while driving. Unless you have a pressing need to travel, sheltering in place may be advised, particularly if you are in a remote area.

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END OF STORY

11 – JANUARY – 2024
IRON RIVER MI

News Director Jeremy Johnson with the Lightning News recap for the week: the West Iron schools are working on upping security on top of the hill, after several soft lockdowns last Fall. Meanwhile, out in Ironwood, a house burned down Sunday, killing two people inside of it. Down in Wisconsin, their DNR needs help tracking bears after a bad hunting season, and Iron Mountain is getting grant money for trees. There's your recap, here's Doctor Larry!

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END OF STORY

11 – JANUARY – 2024
IRON RIVER MI

Not all that long ago, Iron River residents were able to enjoy the Apple Blossom Trail and its boardwalk, that cut through the RV park on Genesee Street. However, over the last few years, the boardwalk has decayed badly. Residents have been warned away from using it. But that might be changing soon, with fixes for it in the works.

Wickwire, the Iron River-based engineering company, announced plans to repair and upgrade the boardwalk on their Facebook account on January 5th.

The idea for the boardwalk to take some of the board out of it, replacing them with screw piles.

Screw piles are basically steel screws that support whatever is put on top of it. They just need to be screwed into whatever soil happens to be around the site, just like a wood screw. Since they're steel, they can resist outdoor wear and tear, and are easy to install.

The trail itself is a roughly two-and-a-half mile stretch that allows area residents and tourists, to walk from Iron River, all the way down to the county museum near Caspian. People coming up from the south can follow it all the way up to around Bachman Park. It's a car-free foot traffic option, and a scenic path during summer months.

Area roads and paths are frequently in need of servicing. It can take some time for certain areas to be serviced, such as Mineral Hills, which had to contend with bad roads and broken plumbing for years until it was worked on in 2023.

But the recently re-topped stretch of nearby Forbes Road, between Mineral Hills and Iron Lake Road, already shows significant pothole damage. The project was a source of contention between former City Manager David Thayer, and the most recent full-termed Mayor, Dennis Powell in the late 2010s. And the underside of the US-2 bridge, part of the two-and-a-half mile stretch of trail, is a noted vandalism target.

While some areas still face ongoing maintenance challenges, the trail's boardwalk might not be one of them, for much longer.

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END OF STORY

10 – JANUARY – 2024
IRON RIVER MI

Late last year, it was said that a single student with heat against the faculty of the West Iron Schools, lead to the shutdown of the school two times. While no violence came of it, it lead to the creation of a Safety & Security Committee there towards the end of the year. And they've just released some initial findings to the public.

The summary, which was released Tuesday, discussed some of the activities the new board has engaged in.

The board said they had made an assessment of the West Iron buildings, looking for potential security defects. The observations from this tour will be noted in a school safety grant that the West Iron Schools are going for, looking for funding for security cameras, alarms, training, and other needs.

The committee also participated in a school safety online seminar called "LEAST", which looked at nature of school shootings. West Iron is planning on changing their drills for these scenarios as a result of this seminar.

The release also included a reminder that the speed limit around the school is 15 miles an hour.

At recent West Iron school board meetings, concerns had been raised that motorists have been going too fast around the property.

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END OF STORY

9 – JANUARY – 2024
MADISON WI

The Wisconsin DNR is asking residents to report bear den locations, in the wake of a low-yield bear hunting season.

They want a state-wide report of dens, but in the northwoods, they are particularly interested in den information from Oneida County.

The results of Wisconsin's bear hunt last year were disappointing, well below the normal take of four thousand bears. This was with over a hundred thousand people applying, and 13,000 issued licenses. Overall, a low rate of success.

People who want to help the state out should give the GPS coordinates, a description of the den and the bears in it, and a photo of the den to the WI DNR. Note that they do not want anyone getting close to the dens, and are fine with information taken from a distance.

Once the survey results are in, scientists will track the bears at the sites for the next six to seven years. They won't be able to get to every place submitted, but they hope to track at least 100 mother bears through the process.

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END OF STORY

8 – JANUARY – 2024
IRONWOOD MI

About a year ago, Iron River had to contend with a major fire along US-2, not too far from this radio station. Fortunately, no one died. Now, a little over a year later, a fire in Ironwood has claimed the lives of two city residents.

According to the Ironwood Department of Public Safety, the fire was reported just before 7AM, yesterday, January 7th. When firefighters arrived at the structure, it was already completely on fire. The fire was put out by 7:45AM, but the people living there had already died.

The fire was a residence on Greenbush Street, a north-south street which runs through the center of town along US-2. A bit to the north, it turns into Greenbush Road which runs along Gogebic Community College and Mount Zion Park.

The Ironwood Department of Public Safety managed access to the area around the blaze, and warned Ironwood residents of possible brown water issues.

Public comment on social media from people near the fire said it was fast-acting. They also praised area firefighters for their work fighting the fire.

The Ironwood Department of Public Safety is investigating the cause of the fire, and has said it will release more information in due course.

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END OF STORY

6-JAN-24

LANSING, MI

The City of Iron Mountain is get \$41,000 in grant money from the state to plant trees.

This was announced toward the end of last year. The grant was funded by the Inflation Reduction Act.

It was a part of eighteen tree-related projects around the state that share nearly \$400,000 in state and Federal grants.

The money will go to tree removal, planting and education in Cemetery Park.

These grants are part of an early, limited round of funding.

More grants to such projects, which may impact area communities, are planned during 2024.

Applications are now being accepted for the Porcupine Mountains Artist-in-Residence Program for 2024 spring, summer and fall and winter 2025 residencies.

The program is open to artists and artisans whose work can be influenced by the unique northern wilderness setting of Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park – also known as "the Porkies."

Located in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, the park encompasses 25 miles of wave-washed shores, four inland lakes, entire river systems, countless waterfalls, enchanted wooded peaks and an escarpment that rises slowly from the edge of Lake Superior until it plummets abruptly into the Carp River valley.

Still, the park's most impressive feature – and the reason for its creation – is its virgin forest of eastern hemlock and northern hardwoods and the variety of flora and fauna that it supports. Because of these attributes, the park is an ideal location to inspire creativity.

The Artist-in-Residence Program offers writers, composers and all visual and performing artists an opportunity to experience the natural beauty of the Porkies and to express it through their art form.

Each year, artists are selected for residencies lasting a minimum of two weeks. They are given the use of a rustic cabin located on the Little Union River and, if requested, a three-night backcountry permit so that each may live in and explore the park's 60,000 acres of natural beauty, ranging from stunning vistas to 90 miles of rugged backcountry trails.

The program is open to all art forms except those that may be inconsistent with the mission of the park. Selection is based on artistic integrity, ability to reside in a wilderness environment, the artist's ability to relate to and interpret the park through their art medium and a willingness to donate an original, finished piece of art inspired by their stay in the Porkies. Artists will also be asked to share their experiences with the public through a demonstration or talk during their residencies.

Application materials for the Porcupine Mountains Artist-in-Residence Program can be found at the Friends of the Porkies webpage at Porkies.org/Artist-in-Residence. Applications for the 2024-25 season must be received by Feb. 14, 2024.

Selected artists will be notified by phone in mid-April, and by will be posted by the end of April on the Friends webpage and on Facebook at Friends of the Porkies.

~~News aired 1/2~~ News aired 1/5/24

4 – JANUARY – 2023
IRON RIVER MI

News Director Jeremy Johnson with the Lightning News recap for the week: Florence County jailer and 911 Dispatcher Mark Steber has retired, the Bates Hall Preservation Society is reporting it's within a hair's breath of \$200,000 raised for hall repairs, and the State of Michigan is increasing the cost of it's Recreation Passports. And, least surprisingly, it's a new year! There's your recap, here's Doctor Larry!

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END OF STORY



Troopers Respond to Tragic Accident in Watersmeet

DEC 29, 2023

Wakefield Post

News aired

1/4/24

Watersmeet Township, Gogebic County

At approximately 4:00pm (CST) on 12/28, troopers from the Michigan State Police, Wakefield Post, were dispatched to a residence in the village of Watersmeet for an accident. Upon arrival, troopers located a 59-year-old Watersmeet man who had been working on a skid steer in his home garage when there was a hydraulic failure. The failure caused the bucket of the skid steer to strike the subject. The subject was able to call a neighbor for help who in-turn called 911. He was brought by ambulance to Aspirus Eagle River Hospital where he was pronounced dead from his injuries.

Assisting at the scene were Lac Vieux Desert Tribal Police, Watersmeet Township First Responders, and Aspirus Ambulance.

3 – JANUARY – 2024
IRON RIVER MI

A couple of stories about police developments that occurred recently that got lost in the holiday shuffle, including an area retirement.

Just before New Years, Florence County Wisconsin Corrections Officer and 911 Dispatcher Mark Steber retired, as announced by the Florence County Sheriff's Department. Steber had been a public servant in that capacity for 23 years.

Meanwhile, in the middle of December, the Gogebic County Sheriff's Office announced they received two grants – one from TC Energy, and the other from the Gogebic Range Health Foundation – for new automated external defibrillators.

That sheriff's office is one of a number that received the capital for, or new, AEDs in 2023. One of the others was the Iron River Police Department, last January.

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END OF STORY

2 – JANUARY – 2024
LANSING MI

There's a lot of natural beauty in the Upper Peninsula. But state residents paying in for vehicle access to it, will have to pay a bit more going forward. With the start of the new year, prices for Recreation Passports will increase to \$14.

It's a one dollar increase; the Michigan Department of Natural Resources says it's increasing due to a legislative mechanism, which automatically changes the price based on what the current cost of goods are in Detroit.

The non-resident annual passport is also going up one dollar, to \$40.

The money raised from the fees go to state park maintenance.

A \$5 convenience fee is also charged when the passport is purchased at a state park, rather than at a Secretary of State office when a license plate is renewed.

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END OF STORY

1 – JANUARY – 2024
IRON RIVER MI

Welcome to a new year of Iron River Community Broadcasting News!

Last year we had quite the successful year; we won a Michigan Association of Broadcasters award for our coverage of the fire along US-2, in Iron River.

Since then, those ruined houses have been cleared out by the city, but we have persisted in our coverage of important events in the listening area.

In Iron River, we covered the numerous issues faced by the West Iron County schools in 2023, most recently the serial shooting threats made by a single student this Fall. This included the words exchanged between the schools and the Iron River Police Department on how the situation was handled. We also covered the funding issues facing the IRPD, speaking with Police Chief Curt Harrington about their strategy to cover the costs of new upgrades to their equipment. And when they did receive such equipment from charitable concerns, such as Enbridge.

When it came to Crystal Falls, we spoke to Mayor Mike McCarthy at length about his cancer treatment, and also received some clarity on financial issues he encountered over the course of that treatment. We also covered acts of heroism in the community, such as their Fire Department returning from the Annual U.P. Firefighter Tournament in Negaunee to fight a fire that could have claimed a number of structures at the bottom of the hill in the middle of the year.

And speaking of that contest, we covered the victory of Caspian-Gaastra Fire Department over the rest of the U.P. in that very tournament. You can rest assured we will watch them defend that victory in Iron River later this new year, with great interest.

Countywide, we covered the 911 funding fight, the possible salvation of the Porter School in Alpha, and the floods that tore through here and many other counties in the Upper Peninsula last April. And the vandalism of Larry Lenoarduzzi's memorial on the Bates – Amasa Road.

Abroad, we have had – and will still have – continuing coverage of the contest between the Dickinson County Board, and their own library, over easy access books with sexual content. We covered the missing Wisconsin boy – as did many other outlets, admittedly – in Ontonagon County, early in 2023. The June death of another Wisconsin youth in Florence in a hardware store.

We even ran a year-long special on overseas travel, to France in 2022, experienced by myself. Some people found it to be escapist, others informative, but we received significant feedback over it. Be on the look out for more specials in 2024.

And be on the lookout for more news, as well. With new station ownership, comes new opportunities. We hope to realize them over the next 365 days.