



Best friends:
Apostles group wins
stewardship award, **A3**

The right foot:
Northland men's soccer earns
first 10-win season, **B1**



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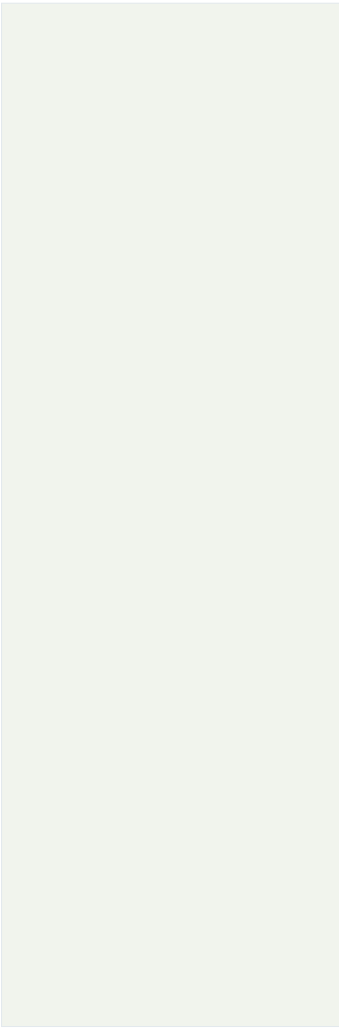
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2021

WHAT'S INSIDE



- > **Wolves' fate in hands of judge,**
A6
- > **Ashland council considers**
grants, budget, A3
- > **Bayfield chamber hosts coat**
drive, A3
- > **South Shore completes inau-**
gural football season, B1
- > **Sawyer County Jail inmate**
dies, A2

MAILING LABEL ONLY



INDEX

Talk Around Town.....	A4
Ashland history/quiz.....	A6
Down on the Farm.....	A7
Law.....	A7
State/national news.....	A8
Sports	B1-2
Classifieds.....	B3-5
Puzzles	B6
Comics	B7
Outdoors.....	B8

Ashwababai looks toward record-early opener

BY **TOM STANKARD**
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Skiers and snowboarders should be able to shred down Mt. Ashwababai earlier than ever this year after an anonymous donor gifted the hill with snow-making machines.

Following a record-breaking season last year, executive director Doug Olson said the staff plans open the hill for the season on Dec. 18.

“That should be a record-early opening,” Olson said. “We’re anticipating that because we were able to get new snow-making equipment through a generous donation.”

The donation of five snow-making machines valued at \$50,000 symbolizes the support the community has for the non-profit organization.

“We are a family. Ashwababai stands for Ashland, Washburn and Bayfield. We are nothing without our family,” Olson said.

And that family of skiers and snowboarders turned out in droves last year — part of the COVID-connected rush on outdoor activities.

“Last year was fabulous. We were really nervous because of COVID-19. We did everything we could to make sure people could have a good time, but still feel safe. Had a record year. People couldn’t go to hockey tournaments, basketball games, so we saw a lot of people coming up here skiing. Hopefully we hooked them and they come back up here this year,” he said.

Preparations for the upcoming season have already begun. Mechanic Joey Pierce was working on a snow groomer’s engine on a warm and sunny afternoon in early November. He said it’s largely up to Mother Nature whether the hill can hit its targeted opening date; the hill’s now nine snow-making machines need winter temps to set in.

“You can’t make (snow) if it doesn’t get cold enough. It needs to be in that 28 degrees and lower temperatures,” Pierce said.

Elsewhere, staff members



Paul Karpinski sharpens a pair of skis at Mt. Ashwababai Ski and Recreation Area in preparation for the upcoming season, which may open earlier than ever. (Tom Stankard/Staff photo)



Mechanic Joey Pierce works on a snow groomer’s engine as he and other staff await help from Mother Nature, who needs to chill things enough for snow-making machines to begin their work.

have been hard at work mowing and prepping the trails after seeing more use than normal last year.

“That’s been where we are going to see our growth. We saw 30% growth in Nordic skiing last year,” Olson

said. “We consistently saw 16 cars in the parking lot on a weekday when our alpine stuff isn’t even open. And then a tremendous amount more on weekends.”

SEE SKIING PAGE A5

Food truck Thai-ing itself down

BY **TOM STANKARD**
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After years of bringing Asian delights to foodies across the Bay Area, Jodi Rush is taking her show off the road.

Rush’s One Night In Bangkok has a deep and loyal following in the area, but she’s only able to satisfy customers for about six months of the year with the food truck.

“I’m tired of not working during the winter, and there’s so much winter up here,” she said Wednesday night inside her new restaurant. “A few months back, I started looking for a restaurant I could buy, rent or lease.”

As it happened, an employee, Aaliyah Griffin, mentioned that the former Son Shine on Main restaurant at 311 Main St. E. was vacant and Rush didn’t waste any time assessing the



One Night in Bangkok food truck founder Jodi Rush, right, and employee Aaliyah Griffin are transitioning to a brick-and-mortar restaurant in downtown Ashland. (Tom Stankard/Staff photo)

property.

Sitting in the gutted back dining room, Rush envisioned a whole new look. The plan is to take the theme of her food truck and apply it to the new restaurant with a black vinyl

floor, black walls in the front dining room and a beer and wine bar in the back dining room to make it more of a lounge.

SEE THAI PAGE A5

Red Cliff break ground for new cultural center

BY **TOM STANKARD**
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The Red Cliff community broke ground Friday for construction of a building that will become a focal-point community resource building for everything from cultural gatherings to weddings.

It was a cloudy, dreary day, but tribal officials didn’t seem bothered as they plunged golden shovels into the turf.

“Rain is a good sign. Snow is a good sign. They are good signs for the community,” said Marvin DeFoe, band historical preservation officer, to the more than 30 people gathered at the powwow grounds for a ceremony.

Tribal members have been planning and discussing this large, roughly \$2.5 million facility for several months, Tribal Chairman Christopher Boyd said as he looked out onto its future site.

“It’s expensive to build facilities, so this decision wasn’t an easy one,” he said. “This facility is just the beginning of re-engaging with our culture.”

Construction of the facility, funded by the federal government thought the American Rescue Plan Act, is expected to begin in the spring. The act, signed into law by President Joe Biden on March 11, invests \$1.75 billion in American Indian and Alaska Native government programs.

Community members have taken surveys and voiced their opinion on how to best use the space once it is build, Boyd said.

“It’s going to be a catch-all facility. It’s going to be available for educational purposes. It’s going serve as a wake house for those that pass on. It will be open to the community for maybe a bridal or baby shower. It’s all-purpose,” he said.

As the band’s members get older, Chief Robert Buffalo hopes the new facility will house information that helps its legacy live on.

“There’s not many of us storytellers left. This will provide information of all the stories about the Anishinaabe people up here. This will be able to teach our youth, so that as they grow older, they will be able to continue telling the history of our people,” he said. “These stories will have a place where they can be told.”

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