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Undefeated:
South Shore girls are 12-0, atop standings, **B1**



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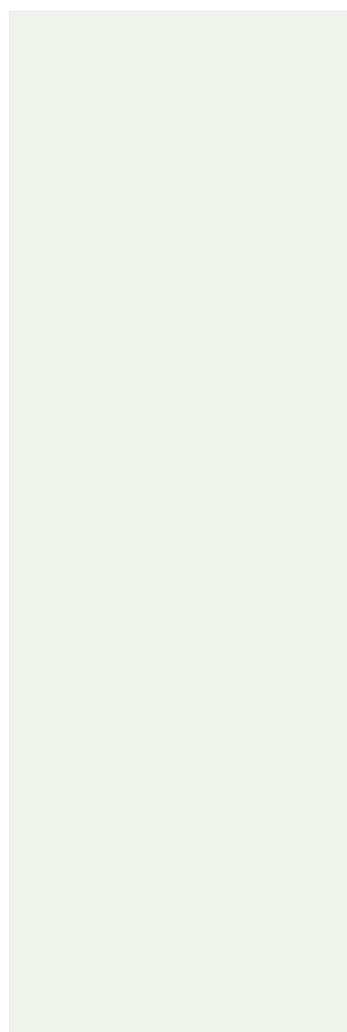


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Mushers rally after dog team run down

\$1,000 reward offered for info on suspect

BY **PETER J. WASSON**
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A Saturday incident in which a snowmobiler ran down a mushing team on a Bayfield County trail has generated attention across the country from well-wishers who are contributing to the team's treatment and a \$1,000 reward for information about the culprit.

Ryan Redington, 39, whose grandfather Joe Redington Sr. founded the Iditarod Sled Dog Race in Alaska 50 years ago, was training with a 15-dog sled team at about 6:45 p.m. Saturday on the Tri-County Corridor that runs between Ashland and Superior.

He and his training partner, Sarah Keefer, spend half the year at their kennel in Brule and make good use of the Corridor.

"We like it because its multi-use and very wide with good visibility," Keefer said. "You can see someone coming and they can see you coming. We get along really well with the snowmobilers; we ourselves are snowmobilers."

But Saturday night was different. On Saturday night, everything changed.

The crash

It's not unusual for Redington to encounter snowmobilers on the Corridor. He and Keefer, like other mushers, are happy to share the space.

They take precautions, using harnesses bearing reflective tape, dog collars with flashing lights and headlamps to alert others on the trail.

On Saturday night, all Redington really remembers is a headlight coming toward him — fast.

"The person on the snow machine, he was head-on passing us and he swerved his machine right toward the dogs and myself,"



MENTZER, ROB

Wildfire rests in a kennel as he awaits surgery on his shattered rear leg in Minneapolis Tuesday. Police are searching for the driver of a snowmobile that ran down Ryan Redington's dog team Saturday on the Tri-County Corridor, and friends have raised a \$1,000 reward fund. (Contributed photo)



Quince Mountain, seen here with some of his team, led efforts to raise reward money. "It's hard to see how it could have been an accident. Could have been a drunk person. Could have just been an idiot," he said.

More Information

Anyone with information about the driver that hit the dogs is asked to call the Bayfield County Sheriff's Department at 715-373-6120.

To contribute to Wildfire's medical fund, visit GoFundMe.com and search for "sled dog"

Redington said. "He struck my dogs as he passed and barely missed me. I saw him coming and slid my butt over off the trail and into

the snow, and he still came right at us. I saw Wildfire get tossed in the air, and the guy didn't stop. He kept right on going."

Redington's first thought was for his dog Wildfire, a 3-year-old Alaskan husky that is the team's sparkplug and who took the brunt of the collision.

"He finished the Iditarod with me last year in seventh place, and he was still barking and wanting to go at the finish line," Redington said. "He's the cheerleader of the whole group."

SEE WILDFIRE PAGE A5

Fishin' Chicks tourney keeps founder's spirit alive

Women-only contest raises money for breast cancer

BY **RICK OLIVO**
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Laurie Soderlund and her husband Jeff didn't withdraw into themselves when she was diagnosed in 2010 with breast cancer.

They chose to face the disease head-on.

They also chose not to go it alone. They created the Fishin' Chicks fundraiser, an Iron River ice-fishing contest open only to women that raises money to care for patients with breast cancer. For nearly 10 years, the couple continued the event, raising a total of \$100,000 and gaining deep community support.

In 2020, they passed management of the fundraiser to others, and just five days before the event that year, Laurie Soderlund died of her cancer.

The event she created, though, continues to raise money for breast health, with an additional \$10,000 raised each year for the cause.

Jeff Soderlund said his wife's reaction to her diagnosis was typical of a woman who was undaunted by challenges.

"It wasn't just her, it was a group effort that came together, with her being the star," he said. "Ultimately she realized that not enough people were getting warned about breast cancer. When she was diagnosed, she was amazed at how many people were there for the same thing, and realized how breast cancer wasn't really all that talked about in public."

SEE FISHING PAGE A5



Tori Johnson of Ashland hauls in a northern pike during a Fishin' Chicks tournament as her friend Hannah Johnson of Wausau watches. The annual event, intended to drive awareness of the need for early testing for breast cancer and raise funds for the cause has averaged \$10,000 in annual donations. (Contributed photo)

City imposes \$20 annual tax on vehicles

BY **TOM STANKARD**
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Ashland residents will pay an additional \$20 for every vehicle they own the next time they renew their license plates.

City Council members voted 6-3 Tuesday to impose the new tax that will generate roughly \$140,000 annually to be used for transportation-related expenses.

Council members Richard Pufall, Charlie Ortman and Elizabeth Franek voted against the fee.

The city estimates that the tax will generate \$90,000 in revenue next year that will go towards the Fourth Avenue West reconstruction.

City Administrator Brant Kucera said the wheel tax was included in the 2022 budget and council members didn't voice concerns at the time.



Kucera

That wasn't the case Tuesday, when some members echoed the voices of constituents who were opposed to the measure.

In 2020, Ashland County Board members declined to bring to a vote a proposed county-wide wheel tax after hearing from constituents almost unanimously opposed to the idea.

Pufall, who was on the County Board at the time, said he believed the city should ask residents to vote on the tax before council members approved it.



Pufall

Franek likewise said some residents can't afford even a modest increase in fees.

"I know we need this money, but the people have spoken and we have to respect that," Franek said. "We have to think about or tax-paying people out there. Our area is very poverty stricken."

What the tax does is essentially create a maintenance fund for the city's roads, Council member Jackie Moore said, ensuring that potholes can be repaired even during tough financial times.

"It's something that we know we need and we're not investing enough in," she said.

Council member Kevin Haas echoed those thoughts.

"This is a protected amount of money that's coming into the city. It is always going to go to public works to fix our roads. Something that you always hear is that the roads in Ashland are always crap. This gives us way to put a dent in it," he said.

SEE TAX PAGE A5

\$1.50

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