

Organizers continue to renovate the old Ashland Motel to make it suitable for homeless residents who could be able to move in by the end of the year. (Tom Stankard/Staff photo)

#### » SHELTER

FROM PAGE A1

COVID-19 has made the situation much worse, Douglas said, as more people have lost their jobs and apartments.

"You're talking just in the city," Olbekson said. "With a population of 7,000 people, that's quite high and it's growing."

Giving people like Douglas a place to stay for an extended period would give him a big leg up, Olbekson said. The facility is not intended to be permanent housing, and resi-

dents will be expected to move out within a month.

"The shelter is going to give them a place to shower, sleep and find work," Olbekson said. "We're so looking forward to that. Once it opens, I can finally refer people there."

Having a shelter is a start, but it doesn't solve the problem, said Casie Ledin, Ashland Homeless Help Assistant Director.

"I'm grateful for shelter. Also need a warming shelter as a place to stay a night as the temps get colder," she said.

#### » LOCAL

FROM PAGE A1

And there's another big reason to shop in town, McPhetridge said: Of every dollar someone spends locally, 67 cents stays in the community. Shoppers who support local businesses help the local economy by providing jobs, paying taxes and supporting financial infrastructure.

Over in Bayfield, the first thing customers notice when they walk into Honest Dog Books on Second Street is something impossible to experience online: the smell of the store, followed by the sheer volume of books stocked on the shelves, co-owner Julie Buckles said. Each book in stock is selected based on what she and staff members think customers might want to read, and they help customers find what they're looking

Service like that can't be found at big-box stores or online, Buckles said.

"We read all of our books of the books, Buckles said. "With Amazon, it's all about speed and the lowest price."

Customer service likewise is the name of the game for **Hometown Expressions** owners Tricia Bowers and Lindsey Zifko.

"When you walk in the door, we want you to feel welcome and want to know how your day is going," Bowers said.

Business has been tough for many owners since COVID-19 hit, but Bowers said local shoppers have had their back.

"We've gotten a lot of support from the community," she said. "A lot more people are realizing what local shopping does for the community."

Small businesses are the backbone of a city's economy, McPhetridge stressed. "The small retailers that

line historic Main Street and many that are located on Highway 2 are locally owned and operated. Locally owned small businesses are usually sponsors of youth sports, donate to the many benefits and charities in the community. Many are our neighbors and friends, and are committed to the success of the Ashland community," she said.

Like other storeowners, that is the No. 1 reason Bowers and Zifko opened Home Expressions — to be part of and support the community they love. The two have gone out of their way to support local charities, non-profit organizations and youth programs.

"If small business don't support them, they are going to hurt," Bowers said.

Bowers and Zifko support the area in others ways, too, by selling products made by local vendors. The shelves are stocked with one-of a-kind items that can't be bought anywhere else, Bowers said.

"(Local vendors) do fabuand have reviews about a lot lous work. Things they sell are more on the higher end, but you can't find that quality of work at a Walmart or Target or any of the big box stores. Each and every piece is different and never the same because they make them all individually," she said.

> Likewise, the Bayfield Artists Guild on Rittenhouse Avenue is stocked with art pieces and products made by 22 local artists from the area, ranging from from paintings to glass work to shoes. Checking out one of the pieces, artist Dorine Damm said shopping at places like the Guild gives people a sense of what the area is all about.

> Without such shops, there would be no downtown, Miller said.

"If we have just bunch of empty buildings, how nice is your town?" she asked.



Lindsey Zifko of Hometown Expressions in Ashland stocks the shelves Wednesday.



Tiny shoes made by local artists are for sale at the Bayfield Artists Guild.

#### » RACE

FROM PAGE A1

That includes the behind-the-scenes work of removing downed trees blocking trails, brushing the pathway and other prep work that should have taken place in October before the first snowfall.

"That should have been happening every week, making sure the trail was clear of debris," Fahrenkrog said.

Once the snow began, the meticulous process of trail grooming could begin.

"It's just like at the ski hill. You start pushing the snow, prepping it for when all the snow comes, and you have to keep doing that, and you do that with snowmobiles, and we don't own any of that. We don't have any of that Motiff said.

infrastructure in place," she said.

The event has relied on businessvolunteer help, and the core group that organizes the volunteers suffered a blow with COVID. It was not able to rebound sufficiently to get the event on track for this winter, Fahrenkrog said.

"It doesn't mean we can't reestablish it, and this is a wake-up call for everybody that we need some help with this," she said. "I know that we have a lot of people who are very passionate about it, and with that passion we will bring it back, but this late in the game, that just couldn't happen this year," she said.

The cancellation will be a blow to the tourism economy of the Bay Area, Bayfield County Tourism Director Mary

"Any winter tourism

event is helpful for our es to get through the winter. It will definitely have a noticeable effect, especially for those



Motiff

businesses in downtown Bayfield that are open in the winter and are looking for that business," she said.

Motiff said the emphasis will now go to promoting winter events at Mount Ashwabay and at other regional locations.

"With COVID still lingering, outdoor activities are still going to be a big draw," she said.

Fahrenkrog said the chamber would also help to promote Winter Fest hosted by Bayfield's Rec-

reation Fitness Resources, and asked mushers to consider participating in Iron River's Northern Pines Sled Dog Race to be held on Feb. 19.

Still, for those who love might be. the Apostle Islands Sled Dog Race, the cancellation is a tough blow.

"It's sad because it is a training ground for all these young

mushers, one of whom is heading to Alaska soon Fosdick

to defend his junior Ididarod title," said Bayfield businesswoman Cheryl Fosdick. "It's an important race — it's a teeth-cutting race for a

Fosdick has volunteered to work with the

lot of little kids"

timing crew at the race for several years. She remains eager to resume her duties when the event makes its comeback, whenever that

"I'm guessing there may be a new course that year, and I think there are going to be some changes," she said. "I know Mount Ashwabay is interested in getting involved. I think there may be some new players involved, and in the end it may turn out to be a more sustainable race."

For Janet Martins, the return of the race would mean the resumption of an event that attracted racers of all different skill levels.

"It attracts mushers from all over the Midwest. There are people like Jeff King who competed one year, and he is an Ididarod champion. Then there are people like us who are just backyard racers who grew up with the race. It's like a family reunion of sorts," she said.

Both Talia and Morgan Martins went to the Ididarod in February. Morgan will return next year to defend his title, and his mother said it is all due to the start they got at the Apostle Islands Sled Dog Race.

"I think it was their ticket to doing better things. Without that race we would never gotten into dog mushing as much as we have," she said.





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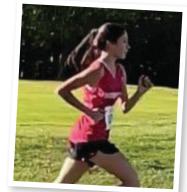


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Ashland's holiday parade coming Saturday, A3

### Coast to coast:

A Q&A with Castle Guard multi-sport athlete Olivia Soltero, **B1** 



# Ashland Daily Press

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FRIDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2021

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- > John W. "Jack" Peterson -Washburn

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# Photo contributed by Bayfield Chamber and Visitor Bureau)

# Mushing no more

### Apostle Islands Sled Dog Race cancelled again

BY RICK OLIVO rolivo@ashlanddailypress.net

he Apostle Islands Sled Dog Race has for years been a joyful annual ritual for Janet Martins and her two children, Morgan, 15, and Talia, 21.

Morgan began a mushing career at the race — a career that since led him to win the junior version of the most prestigious sled dog race in the world, Alaska's Ididarod, on Feb. 28 with a time of 17 hours, 15 minutes and 20 seconds.

When the 2021 Apostle Islands race was cancelled because of COVID-19 restrictions, the Brule family was sorely disappointed, but understood the precaution. This year, however, their disappointment was multiplied when Bayfield Chamber and Visitor Bureau race officials announced that the 2022 event would also be cancelled due to "a sudden lack of trail and race marshal leadership."

"Both of my kids love that race, and so do I," Janet Martins said. "They've all moved up in the ranks in the children's race, and now they were planning on running the 80-mile race. It is a real disappointment because it is so close to home and it's a charming race. The people we know who compete in the race are Fahrenkrog said. friends, and very support-



The Martins Family, Talia (from left), Tim, Janet and Morgan, have made the Apostle Islands Sled Dog Race an annual event for years. Experience Morgan gained at the race allowed him to win the prestigious Ididarod junior event in Alaska. (Contributed photo)

ive of each other. It's a very to make that decision," she close knit community of mushers."

The race is actually a series of races, 80-, 60- and 40-mile events for teams of up to 10 dogs that run through the hills overlooking Bayfield. It also includes a family/recreation run and a youth race. All told, the races bring about 50 competitors, 1,000 spectactors and more than 200 volunteers to town, all organized by the Bayfield Chamber and Visitor's Bureau.

The decision to cancel the 26th annual event was not made lightly, chamber **Executive Director Carol** 

"It was very hard on us

said. "We lost our infrastructure, our trail- and race-marshalling leadership. What people don't understand is, yes we are

the chamber and this is our event, but we don't own the snowmobiles used in the event. We are not experts in trail maintenance and



making sure it is safe. There is so much work that has to go into it before the mushers even get there."

SEE RACE PAGE A5

# Businesses renew shop-local drive

BY TOM STANKARD tstank ard @ashland daily press.net

Jaci Pruitt and Karla

Miller traveled about an hour from Montreal to go grocery shopping and have lunch in Ashland Wednesday, but ended up shopping for Christmas decorations at Home Expressions on a

While browsing the shelves inside the store on Main Street, filled with green and red decorations, Miller picked out a pair of soft, warm gloves and showed them to her friend.

"Feel these gloves," she said. "I think I just bought a new pair of gloves. Didn't

mean too." Moments like that don't happen when shopping online, Miller said. She prefers to shop in-person at

local businesses during the

holiday season, rather than sending her money to a faraway company online.

"I like shopping at local businesses over box stores because you get to come in, see and feel everything," she said, smiling and looking around the store.

That's music to the ears

of Mary McPhetridge, Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce director. She and other business leaders are pushing their buy-local mes-



sage this year with renewed vigor as supply-chain delays plague big-box retailers and local businesses rebuild after the shock of COVID.

SEE LOCAL PAGE A5



Jaci Pruitt and Karla Miller of Montreal shop at Home Expressions in Ashland Wednesday morning. Both said they prefer to spend their money in local businesses, rather than sending it to online or big-box retailers. (Tom **Stankard/Staff photo)** 

# Homeless shelter aims for Dec. opening

BY TOM STANKARD, tstankard@ashlanddailypress.net

John Douglas has not had a place to call his own for roughly seven years.

He's now living in a tent at a campground about 20 miles from Ashland because he can't camp within the city limits without getting run out of town, Douglas said.

While going out to check on him and bring him supplies, Ashland homeless advocate Jeanna Olbekson found his water jugs frozen, it's been so cold out. Being homeless shouldn't be a death sentence, Olbekson said, but as temperatures drop, it could be for people like Douglas.

That's why he, other homeless folks and advocates like Olbekson are so eager

for Ashland's first homeless shelter to open at the former Ashland Motel along Highway Northwest

Wisconsin



Olbekson

Community Services acquired the building in October and it is working hard to get the facility open within the next month, CEO Millie Rounsville said.

"We've been getting work done based on availability," she said. "All the electrici-

ty has been updated in all the rooms. We have heat in all the rooms."

Internet and phone service needs to be set up, a security system needs



Rounsville

to be installed and some rooms need to be adapted for handicap access, Rounsville said. But once it's all done, the building will offer more than 20 rooms for people to stay in for an extended period of time and a laundry room — a service that means a lot more than people think, Rounsville said.

Neither reservations nor a waiting list will be necessary to stay at the shelter, Rounsville said. Applicants need to phone ahead or just show up and pass a background check. Registered sex offenders, those with warrants for their arrest or with recent violent criminal charges will be turned away.

The shelter has been a subject of opposition in recent months, as a number of residents have voiced concerns about it hurting the city's image and security risks it might bring about.

Olbekson, who operates the volunteer homeless advocacy effort Ashland WI Homeless Help, said the city now has about 150 homeless people living in tents like Douglas, in cars or on friends' couches.

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#### » PROJECT

FROM PAGE A1

He said the mud and sand washing into the bay affect both the natural environment and the human population of Chequamegon Bay, destroying fish habitat, increasing the cost of drinking water treatment for Ashland and damaging tourism and recreational use of the lake. Sediment also contributes to bluegreen algae blooms, Hudson

said. "Lake Superior is the coldest and cleanest of the Great Lakes and a place where we never expected to see this kind of thing happen," he said.

Hudson spoke Monday at the site of a \$320,000 project funded by the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative that offers the beginning of a solution to the sediment problem. A series of oak timber cribs, built and tied together with steel cables at the foot of the 80-foot-tall bluff, will keep the creek from further eroding along 600 feet of shoreline. Once the cribs are in place, the streambed will be routed away from the foot of the bluff, pre-

venting future erosion. Work at the site and at a smaller bluff downstream will prevent 5,600 tons of sediment from entering the creek and ultimately Chequamegon Bay every year, Hudson said.

"This project will build resilience to our natural systems as a buffer against our changing climate," he said.

Vice Chairman of the Great lakes Commission Todd Ames said nearly \$4 billion has been devoted to Great Lakes restoration projects, with more than \$400 million devoted to projects in Wisconsin.

"There has been broad bipartisan support for significant conservation projects, funding over 5,000 projects, including this one," he said. "We have been able to clean up toxic hot spots, restore wetlands, prevented



Work crews tie together logs with steel cables to form cribbing that will deflect the force of storm waters and reduce erosion on North Fish Creek. The project undertaken by Northland College's Mary Griggs Burke Center for Freshwater Innovation is one of several such efforts that will be needed to fully control silt runoff into Chequamegon Bay. (Contributed photo by **Bob Gross**)



An aerial photo makes erosion on North Fish Creek apparent even top untrained eyes. With every storm, more of the bluff erodes and flows into the bay. (Contributed photo by Bob Gross.)

the spread of invasive species, and restored habitats and reduced runoff at spots just like this one."

He said plans for Fish Creek called for sediment reductions of 16,000 tons a year.

Ames

"Stabilization of this bluff is projected to achieve 28% of that goal," he said.

The key to future sediment-reduction is working with landowners, Hudson said. That wasn't an issue at the current worksite because the land is publicly owned. Work on private land will require cooperation of land-

owners who have to be convinced of the value of the effort to them.

"And then there are a number of landowners who just don't trust the government," he said. He said given the

bipartisan willingness to fund the restoration work on the part of Congress, funding for future projects would likely remain available.

"Cooperation with private landowners is the key," he said.

Burke Center Director Peter Annin said funds have been available

for Fish



Creek because climate change is a driving force for local problems.

"We have been a hotspot for these big storm events. We are seeing some of the most severe climate-related storm events anywhere on the Great Lakes watershed," he said. "As long as these big events keep happening, and the need is there for this kind of restoration work, we are cautiously optimistic that we will be able to continue to bring in the funding for this kind of work."

Hudson said the project demonstrates that halting erosion is possible, despite the remoteness of some of the sites. He reiterated that private landowner cooperation was vital to future project success.

"We are going to need more of that moving forward to see the goals we have set happen," he said.

#### **» SHELTER**

FROM PAGE A1

"I believe and my clients agree that what has happened is that the city council wants an emergency housing shelter and that might be a fine goal, and we take no issue with that goal. But because the proposal was to put it here, the council has decided that 'here it shall go,' largely disregarding the comprehensive plan," she said "So what is the purpose of the comprehensive plan if we are actually just going to develop things on a piecemeal basis and decide things from project to project?"

Rounsville disagrees, saying the issues were carefully considered before the decision was made.

"I believe the Ashland City Council did its due diligence. In terms of the arguments that were raised, they did address those items. It is a permitted activity in that location. And if you tie it to the needs of the community, it was very clear in what everyone who was speaking said last night, we have a need and it is an unmet need," she said. "Ashland needs a shelter and has needed one for at least a decade."

That was the opinion of 20 of the 28 resident comments taken at the hearing Tuesday from people who favored the shelter.

"This is not a 'not in my backyard' issue," said Katherine Morrisseau. "You can't criminalize

homelessness. These are real people who need housing."

Morrisseau said homeless people have been staying at the Ashland Motel for years, reliant on

housing vouchers. Brett Beeksma opposed the project, saying there had been no discussion of security issues for residents who would live near

the shelter. "What will happen when people get turned away? The safety of the neighborhood needs to be spoken for," he said.

Ashland real estate agent Tony Jennings said the homeless shelter is "a hot topic" that likely would draw objections no matter where it was proposed.

Sue Erickson said she opposed the permit because she said the process was rushed and that information about the project "changed from meeting to meeting." She also said the proposed location of the project went against the comprehensive plan.

Following the vote, Rounsville said the vote produced "a historic day for Ashland," and that it would be noted in the history of her agency.

"This is a dream we have had as an agency for 20 years, along with some of our partners," she said.

More subdued was Coleman, who said she would confer with her clients in the near future to determine what course they would take following the vote.



Washburn attorney Linda Coleman speaks in opposition to a permit that would allow Northwest Wisconsin Community Services to repurpose the Ashland Motel into an emergency homeless shelter. The marathon four-hour council session ended with a 9-1 vote in favor of the project.Rick Olivo/Staff Photo

#### **» STATION**

FROM PAGE A1

But that is no longer the case. Motiff was among a contingent of local government and Xcel Energy officials who gathered Tuesday at the parking lot next to the Bayfield County Admin-

istration Building to inaugurate the county's first public high-speed charging station. The event took place

during National Drive Electric Week, a nationwide event to raise awareness of the benefits of all-electric and plug-in hybrid vehicles.

The new charger, a partnership between Bay Area Rural Transit and Xcel Energy, features a Level 3 fast charger that can charge a newer model electric vehicle from nearly empty to 80% capacity in as little as 30 minutes.

That's far faster rate than the Level 2 facilities that are used in many public facilities or the level 1 charging systems that are used on home chargers for overnight charging. The high-speed charger was installed to serve new BART all-electric busses slated for service later this year.

"It's here so that if the Blue Goose needs an additional charge while it is over here for the day, they can pull in and hook into it and get enough charge

to get back home," BART Director Pat Daoust said, referring to the Blue Goose bus that serves the Washburn area.

The charger is the first of its kind in Bayfield County and the first that is open to the public. It might seem a minor event, but it opens a world of possibilities in the peninsula.

"There is no longer any question that electric vehicles are delivering on increasingly economic transportation," said **Xcel Energy President for** Wisconsin and Michigan Mark Stoering. "You are able to charge your vehicle here for less than the equivalent of \$1 a gallon, and sometimes considerably less than that."

He said that electric

cars offer other advantages over internal-combustion engines such as fewer moving parts, no oil changes and environmental benefits that come from not burning gasoline.

He said Xcel's goal of being completely carbon-free by 2050 is on track and the company's attention has turned to the transportation sector, committing to provide electric charging services to 1.5 million electric vehicles by 2030.

"It is an ambitious goal, but one that is in sight with current technology," he said.

Stoering said demand for charging stations is expected to explode as production of electric vehicles takes off. Ford

Motor Co. this week announced it will build two new facilities to produce electric cars in Tennessee and Kentucky and plans to hire 11,000 new workers and spend \$11 billion on the project.

Larry Loverude, manager of Xcel's commercial electric vehicle projects, said Xcel's goal of being

completely carbon-free by 2050 is on track and the company's attention has turned to the transporta-



tion sector. where it intends to create infrastructure to support up to 1.5 million electric vehicles, about 30 times

more than are on the road he said. "It is an opportutoday.

"He had the end goal in sight from day one," Loverude said. Daoust said that while

the charger is primarily in place to juice the Blue Goose, it will also serve an important role in encouraging more private electric vehicles and other charging stations in the Bay Area.

Stoering said supporting the transition to electric vehicles was part of Xcel's overall commitment to producing cleaner energy.

"It's not only cleaning up our system in the production of electricity, reducing carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions, but it's also cleaning up the transportation sector,"

nity for us to meet a larger societal goal to provide clean air not only through our own operations but downstream in electric vehicle operation."

Motiff said she and local businesses are looking forward to the station drawing more tourists in their electric cars.

"I am super excited to be able to promote the fact that we have a Level 3 charging station in Bayfield County," she said. "This will be great, to be able to promote the area to people who have electric vehicles who haven't been able to travel here. I am hoping this is the beginning of a beautiful partnership and that we get more of them installed.'

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#### **PUBLIC NOTICE**

Invitation for Bids for Timber Sales Department of Natural Resources

Sealed bids will be received by the Forest Property Manager, Flambeau River State Forest (FRSF), at the Forest Headquarters office, until 1:30 p.m. on October 14th, 2021. Sealed bids for tracts not sold on October 14, 2021 will be received at the Forest Headquarters office until 1:30 p.m. on November 15th, 2021.

There will be 10 tracts for sale on the Flambeau River State Forest, 2 tracts on Hay Creek Hoffman Lake Wildlife Area, 2 tracts on Copper Falls State Park, 1 tract on White River Wildlife Area, and 1 tract on Lake Helane State Natural Area These 16 tracts are located in: T36N-R4W (tract 10-21), T37N-R3W (tract 5-21), T38N-R3W (tracts 1-20, 3-21, 4-21, 8-21, 9-21), T39N-R3W (tracts 6-20, 7-20, 12-21), T41N-R1E (tract PKF 1-22), T41N-R2E (tract PKF 3-22), T42N R7W (tract H07-18), T45N-R2W (tracts CF 1-21, CF 1-22), and T47N-R4W (tract WRWA 1-19).

A timber sale prospectus and detailed information including maps of each tract, as well as a bid form and copies of sample contract forms, can be obtained by contacting the Headquarters office, viewing the FRSF website, or by calling

(715) 332-5271 ext. 106 or 115. The 16 tracts total 1,560 acres and consist of the following volume

Mixed pulp	27,650 tons	Hard Maple	140 MBF
Basswood	1,550 tons	Red Maple	84 MBF
Ash	7,050 tons	Ash	288 MBF
Aspen	23,050 tons	Basswood	42 MBF
Balsam	3,150 tons	White Birch	8 MBF
Red Pine	450 tons	Yellow Birch	10 MBF
White Spruce	460 tons	Red Oak	10 MBF
Black Spruce	160 tons	Mixed Saw	96 MBF
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The Department of Natural Resources reserves the right to reject any and all bids. Bids will be opened at the Flambeau River State Forest Headquarters office at 1:30 p.m. on October 14th, 2021 and at 1:30 p.m. on November 15th, 2021 for

PLEASE NOTE: Due to the current situation with the COVID-19 pandemic, access to the FRSF headquarters is limited, bids will be accepted by mail or appointment only. In order to protect the health and safety of our employees and the public, the bid opening will be closed to the public. The bid opening will be conducted by a telecommunication system to comply with the governor's order to limit public gatherings and to maintain social distancing. If you are interested in joining the bid opening via conference call, please dial 608-316-9000 then once connected use passcode 4643161#.

State of Wisconsin-Department of Natural Resources For the Secretary: Matt Blaylock, Acting FRSF Property Manager



## Long shot:

A Q&A with Jumberjills best-ever golfer Mikayla Santjer, **B1** 

### **Out Scouting:**

Local pack holds fun day, A7



# Ashland Daily Press

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FRIDAY, OCTOBER 1, 2021

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- > Jerry Servinsky Ashland
- > Lorayne Helen (Hegg) Ylitalo Larson - Ashland
- > Rita J. McCarthy Eau Claire
- > **Thomas M. Zorn -** San Francisco, CA
- > Becky Lou Wiberg Ashland
- > Mark K. Pycha Moore Haven, Florida

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Burke Center project takes on erosion along Fish Creek

BY **RICK OLIVO** rolivo@ashlanddailypress.net

he north branch of Fish Creek runs through a thickly wooded mixed forest of hardwoods and evergreens about 14 miles west of Ashland.

It is a cold, and usually clear Class I trout stream. But when torrential rains strike, as they have three times in the past seven years, the normally placid creek becomes a raging torrent and turns into the largest source of excess sediment and phosphorus feeding into Chequamegon

But if efforts being undertaken by Northland College's Mary Griggs Burke Center for Freshwater Innovation are successful, that destructive erosion may someday be controlled or even halted.

That would be quite an accomplishment. On Father's Day of 2018, the storms were so violent that a bridge culvert on Highway 2 less than a mile upstream failed, sending a tidal wave of water through the narrow valley, sluicing an estimated 45,000 tons of sediment into the bay and creating a plume of mud that could be seen from space.

"Behind us lies ground zero



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS BY BOB GROSS

TOP: A surveyor helps map out the fish creek channel in preparation for the restoration project that will direct waterflow away from the eroding bluffs. ABOVE: The storm-scoured bluffs at several spots on Fish Creek are the primary cause of silt runoff, which harms people and the bay's environment.

for sediment and phosphorus contributions into the bay," said Matt Hudson, associate

director of the Burke Center.

Hudson said the failure of the bridge and the erosion caused by the Father's Day Flood were devastating for the Bay Area.

the Bay Area.
"The failure of this major economic

artery disrupted the flow of

after the storm and serves

people and goods for months

Hudson

as another example of human-built infrastructure all across the country, not just in this region, that is not built to withstand the changes to our climate that we are now experiencing," he said.

Although the highway

Although the highway damage has been repaired, Hudson said havoc caused by the flood downstream has not received much attention, though the damaged riverbank continues to lose an estimated 4,000 tons of sediment a year.

SEE PROJECT PAGE A5

# First public electric car-charging station comes to Washburn

BY **RICK OLIVO** rolivo@ashlanddailypress.net

The age of the electric car has arrived in Bayfield County.

With advances in battery and powertrain technology, the range and performance of all-electric vehicles has expanded to over 400 miles in the top-rated model, with acceleration that rivals gasoline engine models.

The range of even the most modest electric cars allow owners to take them on extended drives, with a very big caveat: They need a high-speed charging station somewhere along the trip.

"I get calls all the time from people in Minneapolis who want to drive to Bayfield County, and they ask if we have a high-speed charging station," said Washburn Mayor and Bayfield County Tourism and Recreation Director Mary Motiff.



Xcel Energy Wisconsin and Michigan President Mark Stoering, left, is joined by Bay Area Rural Transit Director Pat Daoust at a vehicle-charger built at the parking lot of the Bayfield County Courthouse. The station is the result of a partnership between the county, BART and Xcel and is the first of its kind in Bayfield County, capable of charging a vehicle to 80% in an hour. Rick Olivo/Staff Photo

In the past, Motiff has had to tell such callers with chagrin that there weren't any in

the county.

SEE STATION PAGE A5

# Ashland homeless shelter moves forward

BY **RICK OLIVO** rolivo@ashlanddailypress.net

Ashland City Council members approved a plan by a 9-1 vote Tuesday to repurpose the Ashland Motel into a 24-unit emergency residential facility, and now the real work begins for Northwest Wisconsin Community Services Agency CEO Millie Rounsville.

Rounsville said Wednesday that the agency's offer to purchase the Ashland Motel on the city's west side from the current owner, SAI, Inc., is good until Oct. 14, and the next step for the project is to complete the sale of the property.

"We will close on the property. We will then begin recruiting for staff and volunteers, and once I can actually physically acquire the property then we can do things like updating the electric service, start to get accessibility issues completed so we can accommodate people with physical disabilities," she said. "We need to move as quickly as possible to get people in before it gets cold."

At Tuesday's city council session, Washburn Attorney Linda Coleman warned the council that the proposed conditional use permit violated both state law and the city's own comprehensive

On Wednesday, Coleman, who represented a number of residents at the meeting, said her clients have not yet decided whether to pursue legal action to halt the project, but she believes there are grounds to take the issue to court.

"State law requires that to approve a conditional use permit, the city council must find that there is substantial evidence that the applicant has met the terms that are outlined in the city zoning ordinance," she said.

Coleman said the council failed to meet that burden in at least three of the six required provisions.

"The most clearly relevant is compatibility with existing uses within 200 feet of the proposed use and 500 feet on either direction down the same street, in this case the highway," she said.

Coleman said the uses on the highway were commercial in nature, and the shelter doesn't fall into that category.

She said the shelter would also violate the comprehensive plan because it would be in an area that is waterfront and also in the gateway – the transition into the city. Coleman said the shelter does not match the uses called for by the plan, and should have been placed in an area that allows congregate housing like apartment buildings.

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# Pilot program aims to reduce drug-laced mail in prisons

RY FMII Y HAMER Wisconsin State Journal

MADISON (AP) — A new mail policy at Fox Lake Correctional Institution aimed at curbing the infiltration of dangerous drug-laced paper could expand to all prisons, but inmates say their concerns about missing and cut-off documents aren't being addressed.

Under the pilot policy, started in April, inmates receive only photocopies of their mail, not the originals, which staff later shred. The policy doesn't apply to legal documents.

Prisoners say they have seen months-long delays in receiving mail, educational materials denied, missing pages and the margins of letters cut off with no way to get the missing material back.

"Our mail is being shredded with no recourse for us to get the mistakes fixed," inmate Joshua Wade

Despite complaints, the Department of Corrections said it could expand the policy given the success it has shown so far in reducing overdoses and violent behavior associated with K2 or "spice."

No inmates at Fox Lake Correctional Institution have died due to an overdose so far this year, Dodge County Medical Examiner PJ Schoebel said.

K2 is an illegal, mind-altering synthetic cannabinoid that can cause symptoms of psychosis, suicidal thoughts, violent behavior, seizures, kidney damage, a reduced supply of blood to the heart, toxic reactions and sometimes death, according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse. Paper can be laced with K2 and then smoked, which is how the drug was getting through the mail, the La Crosse Tribune reported.

DOC spokesperson John Beard said some inmates acted violently toward other inmates or staff while using the drug. Other inmates were found "incoherent or unresponsive" and had to be rushed to the hospi-

"(The mail policy change) was a response to health and safety concerns related to K2 and other synthetic cannabinoids, which can cause unpredictable and dangerous reactions," Beard said. "The incidents among persons in our care at Fox Lake Correctional Institution were alarming."

In April — the peak of the K2 activity - Fox Lake had nine "potential overdoses" and two cases of violent behavior, according to the DOC. By August, both those

numbers had dropped to zero after overdoses and violence trended down over the summer.

There were three potential overdoses in May, three in June and one in July. Violence was less common with one case in May, zero in June and one in July.

Other negative "incidents" included staff catching someone with K2, the discovery of drug paraphernalia, inmates writing letters to from and family asking for K2, and other concerning behavior, Beard

Fox Lake had a total of 42 incidents in April alone, a jump from 14 in both February and March.

The total number of incidents trended down in subsequent months, with 11 incidents in May, 14 in June and nine in July.

Beard said the numbers were high in April when the pilot began likely because prisoners likely still had stashes of K2 that they used throughout the month of April. The mail policy went into effect on April 9, but DOC staff believe inmates continued to use paper tainted with synthetic cannabinoid that had already come through the mail, Beard said. There had also already been a dozen incidents within the first week or so of April.

Incidents did not increase when in-person visitation resumed in July.

Beard noted the policy is still a pilot but said it could "potentially" expand to more prisons. Other prisons in Wisconsin have had incidents, but not at the same levels as Fox Lake, he said.

"This is not an issue unique to Wisconsin," Beard said. "Some correctional agencies in other states are considering or have already started making copies of mail across all of their facilities.'

Last October, Michigan implemented the same policy across its entire prison system to prevent drugs from coming into its facilities. Now Michigan prisoners only receive photocopies of their mail instead of the originals.

Pennsylvania started its own mail policy in 2018, routing all prisoner mail through a processing facility in Florida that photocopies the mail before sending the copies back to Pennsylvania's prisons.

Peggy West-Schroder, southeast Wisconsin coordinator for EX-incarcerated People Organizing, an inmate advocacy group, said the pilot will "probably become a permanent solution" to drugs coming through the mail in Wisconsin.

She said the policy is "obviously not ideal," especially for those who are following the rules, but that it's important for preventing overdoses.

"We can't advocate for people getting mail that could kill them," West-Schroder said.

Prisoners say they understand the need to address the drug problem, but that Fox Lake needs to handle their mail with greater care and implement a workable solution for when items are copied incorrectly. That's especially important if the policy gets expanded to the entire prison system, which has been hovering around 20,000 prisoners.

"We're not asking them not to photocopy our mail," Wade said. 'We're just asking for some type of way to get things fixed when they mess up the photocopying."

Beard said any issues with the mail are "reviewed and addressed the best we can when the concern is brought forward."

"We continue to work at ensuring this process at (Fox Lake) is the least disruptive as possible to the persons in our care," Beard said. "Our goal is to ensure they get, as close as possible, a representation of the original mail sent to them, while maintaining the safest possible living and working environment."

While Wade said the problems have improved over the last several months, he still gets letters that are cut off or copied incorrectly, and some of his mail is gone for

Wade received just 11 pages of a 20-page letter sent by his mom. The top half of his religious studies certificate also got cut off, and now the original has been shredded.

He still often gets letters with the margins cut off and rarely gets any of his mail in color.

Jacob Jaeger, who is also incarcerated at Fox Lake, said he believes the new policy has caused delays in him getting his mail, and some of the educational materials he would have normally received have been denied.

Jaeger said he used to receive dozens of manila envelopes from a friend who would fill them with research papers and study guides in physics, psychology, theology and other subject areas. Currently studying to get a degree in theology, Jaeger said he thinks education is "my only way to stay free once I'm out of here." He said it's the key to preventing himself from turning back to selling drugs.

But shortly after the new mail policy went into effect in April, Jaeger said, he stopped getting a huge chunk of the manila envelopes and would receive others "very late."

» SURGE

FROM PAGE A1

MMC Director of Strategy and Patient Experience Kevin Stranberg said one of the problems with getting an exact handle on the number of COVID patients in the hospital at any given time is the changing nature of the

"In the past, and I am talking about 12 months ago, when we were talking about

COVID patients and they were inpatients, they were all so sick that they had incredibly high levels of critical needs," he said.

The cases that are now being seen at MMC ranged from mild ones that never wind up being inpatient cases to moderate cases that get admitted and people with much more severe illness, he said.

given for the disease at the hospital.

"It is a much broader spectrum," Stranberg said, asserting that merely assigning a single number for people being seen for COVID did not reflect the real picture of care being

"If you put in the paper there were six COVID patients in the hospital, then what our community is going to react to is, 'Oh my God they have six people on ventilators and they are going to die.' We don't want that image either," he said.

On the same day that Nuutinen made her comments, Wisconsin Department of Health Services Secretary Karen Timberlake said that hospitals in several areas of Wisconsin are running short of intensive care unit beds, with just 5% of ICU beds available statewide. Data from the Wisconsin Hospital Association showed only 19 ICU beds available for the entire northern half of the state.

On Thursday morning, Memorial Medical Center issued as a press release a letter signed by 42 members of the medical staff urging community members to get vaccinated against COVID.

The letter also recommended that people wear a mask whenever indoors out of their home maintain six-foot social distancing, wash hands and stay home if they are sick.

The letter said that in hospitals and clinics, more people are being seen sick with COVID, some severely ill and requiring life

"This amount of illness is straining our medical resources," the letter said.

#### » SHELTER

FROM PAGE A1

"It should be some place where it is off by itself, where you are not going to see it just as you come into town. We are supposed to have a fine-looking city. Well, it's not going to be a fine-looking city any more."

Ronning said if the shelter became a reality, he likely would close down his business and move elsewhere.

"There are other places I can go in a different county," he said.

Sandy Marsland, owner of Sandy Shores Cafe at 2524 Lake Shore Drive West, is just as unhappy with the plan.

"It's frightening; you hear about people with needles all over the ground. I am not going to come into my place of business and find that all over my backyard," she said.

Marsland said she was concerned about the impact to the quality of life in the city caused by homeless people.

"I have lived here my whole life and it was a beautiful city. I was never afraid to walk down the streets until the past few years. I don't want to walk down Main Street any more, with people screaming out windows, throwing things, it's just not right," she said.

Ashland Mayor Debra Lewis, who formed the homeless task force that has been seeking solutions for the problem, said fear of the homeless is unfounded. While she can't

promise that nothing bad would ever happen in the city because of a homeless person, she said the shelter would be staffed 24 hours a day and an extensive set of standards would be in place to prevent problems like loitering, alcohol- and drug-related problems or violence at the shelter. Proposed rules for



the shelter say no one with a sexual offense record or an arrest warrant would be allowed to stay, and no one with a conviction related to violence would be allowed until five years after the offense. The shelter would be insured and would have a designated smoking area out of public view.

Drug use, weapons, physical or verbal violence or threats, theft or other crimes all would be prohibited and grounds for immediate removal.

Lewis said she understands that homelessness stirs passions, but asked that opponents take the time to understand what's being proposed.

"The majority of people believe that we need to have a place for homeless people," she said. "But there is all kinds of room to disagree about where that is and how it should look. The concern is that this is going to be some kind of flophouse, or some kind of crack house or detox center. It's not going to be any of them."

Lewis also said that Ashlanders have a responsibility to look after other Ashlanders.

"These are not people coming from other places; Well over 90% of the motel vouchers this year went to people who are local, and they don't all look like skid row bums either," she said.

» MMC FROM PAGE A1

The certification follows the guidelines of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, and is awarded when the hospital achieves certification in at least three orthopedic programs.

It is not a distinction that occurred overnight, Signorelli said.

"It was a long process to get things built up both in equipment and staffing, to be able to serve that many patients," he said.

What makes the designation all the more remarkable is that Memorial Medical Center is just the second critical care hospital in the nation to earn it.

"I think it goes along with our theme of providing the highest level of care in a small-town setting," Signorelli said. He added that the

Ashland area community needs a high quality orthopedic service because of the makeup of its population. While the community has many older residents who need such treatmengt, they are also a relatively active group that is not content to give up favorite activities because of joint issues.

"Whether they are hard-working farmers or more recreation types, they have different expectations of the level of activity and participation



The surgical services wing at Memorial Medical Center is the hospital's newest addition, completed earlier this year. The \$30 million center includes 18 pre- and post-surgery rooms. (Contributed photo)



The MMC orthopedic surgery team is headed up byDr. Joseph Signorelli (left) and Dr. Justin S. Cummins.

in life that were not previously thought possible," he said. "We really look at age differently now. It's become less tolerated

for someone to say, 'Well I have a bad knee, so I guess my biking days are done.' People still want to get out and enjoy the

great outdoor resources the area has to offer."

The orthopedic center was born in 2018 when MMC administration and the two orthopedic surgeons shared their visions about what they saw as key to the future of orthopedics in the region.

Signorelli said the project is akin to a large construction project, requiring planning and an incredible amount of work to bring into being. Nor does the project end here, he added.

"We have a couple of other really exciting projects that we are working on that are close to being announced," he said.



# Back in black:

Pet of the Week kicks off black-cat awareness month, **A2** 

#### Fan fun:

Oredockers stands filled with spirit this season, **B1** 



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MAILING LABEL ONLY

# Ashland to consider homeless shelter permit

### Ashland Motel site draws opposition



The Ashland Motel on the city's west side would be converted to a homeless shelter under a plan going before City Council members Tuesday.

BY **RICK OLIVO** rolivo@ashlanddailypress.net

proposal to purchase the Ashland Motel using federal grant money and turn it into Ashland's first homeless shelter is scheduled to be voted on by City Council members Tuesday.

The shelter would be managed by the Northwest Wisconsin Community Services Agency and already has been recommended for approval by the Ashland Plan Commission.

NWCSA Chief Executive Officer Millie Rounsville said a \$700,000 grant for the proposed shelter's purchase and remodel-

ing has been awarded to the city.

"They won't own or operate the shelter, but in order to apply for the grant, you had to be a local unit of a

you had to be a local unit of government," she said.

Rounsville

Rounsville said NWCSA has operated a shelter in Superior since 1999 and has served homeless people with hotel vouchers in five counties. A shelter is a far better alternative for the homeless than a voucher that covers a few days in a motel, she said.

Typically people are allowed to stay at the shelter for 30 days, giving them time to find a more permanent situation.

"We will have case management that will assure that they are getting any benefits they are entitled to and that they may need, and will work with our partner agencies to identify longer-term solutions. It gives homeless people the additional breathing time they need to try and accomplish some of their goals," she

Rounsville said the community has needed a shelter for years.

"There just hasn't been an opportunity that has existed to this point that would allow the financial resources for a building," she said.

That changed when federal COVID funds became available to the city, which agreed to apply through a special coronavirus-related Community Development Block Grant program.

Rounsville began in spring scouring the city for a homeless shelter site, and was able to reach an agreement with the owner of the Ashland Motel.

The motel at 2300 Lake Shore Drive West is in the center of a small group of highway businesses. Business owners spoken to by the Daily Press were unanimously opposed to developing the shelter

there.
"It shouldn't be just as you are coming into town," said Robert Ronning, owner of Hometown Auto at 2525 Lake Shore Drive We



Ronning

Shore Drive West, a used car dealership. "The kind of clientele they are going to have there is not going to be good for the city. It's going to look like a slum."

Ronning said he feared the location would soon wind up littered, and that the neighborhood would see increased thefts and drug use.

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# **MMC orthopedics named Center of Excellence**

BY **RICK OLIVO** rolivo@ashlanddailypress.net

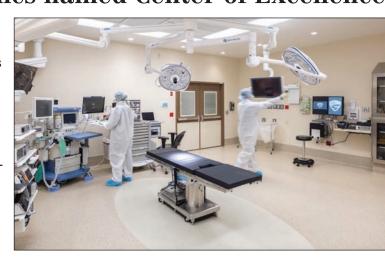
Little more than three years ago, Memorial Medical Center doctors performed about 25 joint replacements a year. Since then, that number has grown exponentially to the point that the hospital performs about 500 joint replacements a year.

That phenomenal growth

That phenomenal growth in orthopedic procedures is being credited to the arrival of two orthopedic surgeons, Dr. Joseph Signorelli and Dr. Justin S. Cummins, who came to Ashland after spending about a decade practicing in Duluth.

"We both got kind of fed up with the corporate medicine model," said Signorelli, who said the multiple layers of administration of a larger hospital made it more difficult to practice medicine the

way they wanted.
"So we were both looking



Memorial Medical Center's new surgical center recently was named an Orthopeadic Center of Excellence. In three years, MMC has gone from performing 25 joint replacements a year to about 500 annually. (Contributed photo)

for an opportunity where we could practice a high level of orthopedic care, but in a small town where the patients were happy to go for care, and all the employees and providers are happy to work there as well," he said.

Under their leadership, Memorial Medical Center recently was designated an Orthopaedic Center of Excellence by DNV, an international certification organization.

SEE MMC PAGE A5

# MMC reports normal ops despite COVID surge

BY **RICK OLIVO** rolivo@ashlanddailypress.net

Officials at Memorial Medical Center say COVID-19 cases are up at the hospital, but that the hospital has not had to make any changes to standard operating procedures and admissions for other medical procedures continue as normal.

MMC Chief Operating Officer Jessica Nuutinen said both COVID and non-COVID cases are up at the hospital, but that the hospital retains enough capacity to deal with

both classes of patients.
"Operation-

"Operationally we have not changed. We continue to do business as usual," she said.



Nuutinen

Nuutinen declined to say how many COVID-19 cases were being treated on an inpatient basis at MMC.

"I'm not going to share that information, and here's the reason why: our census can change on an hourly basis, daily basis. Right now we are able to take care of our COVID and our non-COVID patients," she said.

Nuutinen also declined to give even an approximate number of inpatient COVID patients.

"What I can tell you is that we are not full, we are not at capacity. We are still able to admit COVID patients and we are still able to admit non-COVID

patients." According to the state Department of Health Services. Ashland County recorded more than 60 new virus cases in the week that ended Friday, with 4.7% of those tested coming back positive. It and every other county in the state save Bayfield County was listed as having high transmission rates, and health officials say almost all new diagnoses involve non-immunized patients who contracted the delta variant of COVID. About 70% of Ashland County residents are fully vaccinated and about 65 percent of Bayfield County residents have had both shots.

Nuutinen said it's difficult even to say how many MMC beds are available every day because the hospital has a "surge plan" that allows the facility to use increase the number of beds available if the number of COVID patients threatened to go above the hospital's legally allowable number of patients.

"We can convert other rooms into COVID rooms if we need to, but that has not happened," she said.

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