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Bayfield pastor leads Lenten-Tolkien mashup, **A3**

Book on!
Your guide to weekend event, **B1**



Ashland Daily Press

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Alla and Viktoriia Rychagov at a Houston hotel as they prepared two years ago to fly to Bayfield and begin new lives. Aid organizations placed them in the hotel after the American government allowed the family to stay in the United States as their asylum petition is considered. (Contributed photo)

Former jail Lt. files grievance, fights for job

BY **TOM STANKARD,**
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The Ashland County jail administrator fired with no explanation in January has filed a grievance against the county and is fighting to get her job back.

The county had until the end of Friday, Feb. 17 to respond to former corrections Lt. Kim Lavasseur's grievance. If the county doesn't agree to return her to work, the matter would go to a hearing before an arbitrator or local lawyer appointed by the county.



Lavasseur

Max Lindsey, the county's lawyer, was in the process of preparing a response to the grievance as of Wednesday.

A grievance hearing would proceed much like any other trial, with Lavasseur and the county calling witnesses and presenting evidence. The hearing officer would then issue a decision within 10 days.

Should the officer rule that Lavasseur's termination was warranted, she then could appeal in a federal court, her attorney said. The hearing officer also could rule that Lavasseur's grievance was frivolous and require her to pay all costs associated with the hearing.

Under its policies, the county may fire employees at any time, with or without cause and with or without notice, Lindsey said.

But because Lavasseur was a Sheriff's Office employee, she has the right know why she was fired, said her attorney, Ben Hitchcock Cross.

Lindsey has told the Daily Press that Sheriff Brian Zupke, who fired Lavasseur shortly after he took office and replaced her with a relative, had reason to terminate her, but he declined to say what that reason was.

Cross said firing her without explanation was irrational and violated Lavasseur's rights as a government employee. Lindsey has said that the jail administrator is not a law enforcement officer, who would have a different termination process.

Neither Cross nor his colleagues can recall a similar case, he said.

"The way this is going, they're going to have to answer questions they're not prepared to answer," Cross said.

He suggested that those questions might revolve around whether Lavasseur was fired because she is a woman, because of her age or because Zupke was giving preferential treatment to a relative.

SEE GRIEVANCE • PAGE A5

OBITUARIES: A6

- > **Rita Susan Collins:** Iron River
- > **Carol Mae (Erickson) Wartman:** Rockford, Illinois
- > **Ann S. Williams:** Ashland
- > **Carol J. Ross:** Marshfield
- > **Rae Ann Koval:** Marengo
- > **Barbara L. Kurilla:** Mason

DEATH NOTICES: A6

- > **MAKI,** Lois Rae

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Глаза боятся

How the Rychagov family fled Russia for Bayfield

Editor's note: This is the second in a two-part story about how the Rychagov family fled persecution in their native Russia, sought asylum in the U.S. and found refuge in Bayfield. To read the first part, see our Feb. 10 print edition or ashlanddailypress.net. Unless otherwise noted, interviews with Pavel Rychagov were conducted through a translator.

On Sept. 29, 2020, the Rychagov family was crouched in Mexico near the U.S. border.

Ahead of them was a barbed-wire fence.

Behind them, a coyote — the Mexican smuggler who had agreed to sneak them into America.

Pavel Rychagov pulled strands of the wire apart so his family could crawl through. Ahead of them freedom beckoned — if the family — Pavel, his wife Alla, son Oleg 16, and daughter Viktoriia, 3, could make it.

"We went through the fence, and Vikka got caught on the barbed wire and started screaming. The man leading us told us to quiet her down, and Alla gave her the breast. That saved us," Pavel recalled.

"We made it to the other side, and we came to a construction area where they were building a wall. We saw a car, and

machines. A person with a radio got out of the car and said, 'My friends, where are you going?' in English. This man saw my family and heard our story and said, 'I can arrest you and take you to a detention center, but I can't guarantee



The family celebrated their second Christmas in the United States in their apartment, which was furnished entirely by donations from Bayfield residents. (Contributed photo)

what will happen next. I asked several times, 'Do we get to go to America?' while coughing up the desert sand, and he said, 'My friends, you are in American territory.' We began to cry."

SEE RYCHAGOV • PAGE A5

More Information

To join Lake Superior Bridge Builders, to be a part of their efforts or donate to LSBB's future efforts to resettle refugees, contact Mary Meierotto at marymeierotto@gmail.com or at LSBB, P.O. box 724, Bayfield WI 54814.



Beadle

Ashland businesses have always benefited from the race, but with it concentrated in Ashland, the Winter Market will bring new opportunities, Main Street Board Member Sara Beadle said. It also brings that



Findlay

a range of businesses from across the region will be offering local goods to people drawn to town by the race. "Almost all of them are from Ashland, Washburn or Bayfield. There's some glassware, prints, jewelry and all kinds of arts and crafts," Findlay said.

SEE MARKET • PAGE A5

Winter Market set for Ashland

BY **TOM STANKARD,**
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The two-story mound that slopes away behind Ashland's library is not the city's latest attempt to store snow hauled from downtown streets.

It instead is the centerpiece of Ashland's inaugural Winter Market, which will bring vendors and other events downtown during this weekend's Book Across the Bay. Main Street Board members have been planning events that will close

down a section of Vaughn Avenue since they learned that the 10-kilometer snowshoe-ski race that routinely draws 3,000 competitors will both begin and end in the city, rather than traversing Chequamegon Bay to Washburn.

If You Go

- What: Winter Market on Vaughn
- When: Sat. Feb. 18 from noon-4 p.m.
- Where: Vaughn Avenue in downtown Ashland

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