

All Booked up:
Photo gallery from weekend races,
B7

South Shore soars:
Lady Cardinals finish atop conference,
B1



Ashland Daily Press

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TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2023



- > **Local writer to teach class on memoir-writing:** News, A3
- > **Ashland drug store changes hands, adds pharmacist:** News, A3
- > **AHS athletes team up for Make a Wish:** News, A2
- > **Ashland-Bayfield county dispatch merger nixed for now:** News, A2
- > **Murder mystery raises funds for Bohemian Hall:** News, A2
- > **Winter Market, Kite Fest photos:** News, A8
- > **Ashland gymnasts score head for state:** Sports, B1

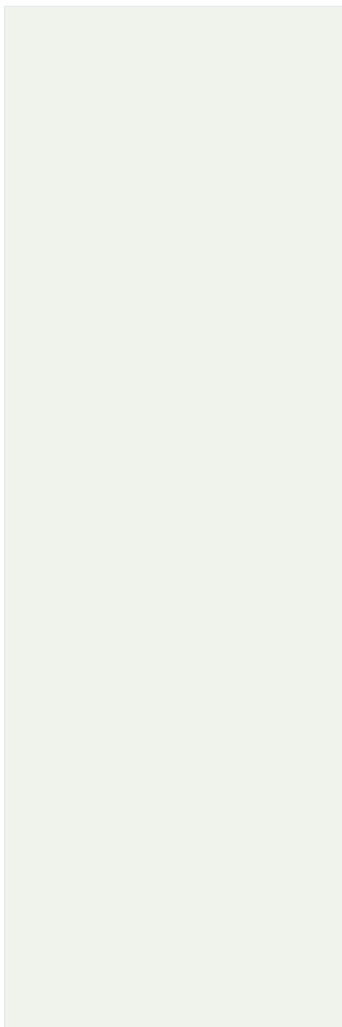
OBITUARIES:

> **None reported.**

DEATH NOTICES:

> **None reported.**

MAILING LABEL ONLY



INDEX

- Local news.....A2-3
- Talk Around Town..... A4
- Ashland history/quiz..... A6
- Law.....A7
- Farm column.....A7
- State newsA6-7
- SportsB1-2
- PuzzlesB2
- Classifieds..... B3-6
- Kids pageB7
- Outdoors..... B8



Ashwabay Ski Team Coach Kathy Radtke with posters of her team's seniors. For the past 35 years, Radtke has been sending students to state championships, and will do so again this year, with both boys and girls teams qualifying. (Rick Olivo/staff photo)

ALL DOWNHILL FROM HERE: Ashwabay ski team coach marks 35th season

Radtke's athletes have qualified for state every year she's coached

BY RICK OLIVO
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When Kathleen Radtke was in middle school, she used to accompany her dad Ed Olson to Mount Ashwabay, where he served as coach of the Bayfield High School Ski Team.

She was known back then as Kathy Olson, and she would train right alongside the high school kids. She got so good that her dad one day offered to let her dress up as a boy and compete in a meet.

"I should have taken him up on it, but to dress up as a high school boy was a little too much for a middle-school girl," she said.

But the seed was planted, and once in high school she did begin competing — earning the title of state high school champion in her junior year of 1977, followed by another state crown her senior year.

Her father, an industrial arts teacher at Bayfield High School, coached alpine skiing from 1971 to 1997 and served as volleyball coach.

Radtke, an English teacher at Washburn High School,

began in 1987 as an assistant coach alongside her father, eventually taking over head coaching duties. Her 35 years of coaching what is now the Ashwabay Ski Team, a cooperative team of students from Bayfield, Washburn, North-western and Ashland high schools, has seen remarkable success: She has sent skiers to the state championships every year for more than three decades.

"When I see my former skiers and find out how old they are, then it does seem like a long time," she laughed. "But this is what really keeps me feeling young."

Radtke has been coaching so long that she now trains the children of some Ashwabay members she coached when they were just kids.

Ed Wroblewski, whose son Charley is a senior on the team, is among them. He is an enthusiastic supporter of Radtke.

"She's a great coach. Skiing has changed quite a bit in the past 30 years, but she is still there supporting the athletes," he said. "It is special that she was my coach, and also my high school English teacher. It's special that my son, and maybe a couple of other kids of mine, will get the opportunity to be coached by her."

Wroblewski said Radtke draws on her own experience when coaching her students.

"She's a technical expert. She's a really good skier, knowledgeable, and she cares about the kids," he said. "She likes seeing them grow throughout the course of the season. A lot of kids have done that, including myself. She's passionate about seeing kid out there having fun and improving."

The kids she coaches, including Ashland senior Finn Rasmussen, are just as sold on her as Wroblewski.

"She is an amazing coach," he said. "You can really tell that she has been doing this for a long time. I really admire that, because she knows what to say and how to coach people. She can tell what you are doing and what you need to improve on."

Rasmussen has been skiing much of his life, with both of his parents having been ski instructors at Whitecap Mountain in Iron County.

"I've skied with my mom and dad for my whole life, but after I started skiing with Kathy, it has totally improved my ability and my love for it," he said. "I've been able to ski better, and Kathy really helped me."

SEE DOWNHILL • PAGE A5

County: Jail leader failed in her duties

BY TOM STANKARD,
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Ashland County officials are upholding former Jail Administrator Kim Lavasseur's termination, after she filed a grievance earlier this month.

Lavasasseur said in her grievance that she was not given an immediate explanation of why she was fired in January and was given no opportunity to improve whatever performance problems she might have had.

Ashland County Administrator Dan Grady on Friday, nearly 20 days after Lavasseur was terminated, said in a prepared statement sent to the Daily

Press that Sheriff Brian Zupke had several conversations with current jail staff about former Lavasseur's performance and that Zupke attempted to discuss her job status with her before he fired her. It was the county's first comment on her termination, which Grady, Zupke and the county's attorney, Max Lindsey, discussed and upheld last week, Grady said.

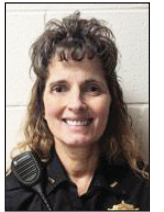
Lavasasseur started working in the jail 22 years ago and was promoted to the top administrative position in May of 2021 when the previous administrator, Lt. Tony Jones, died while under investigation regarding tens of thousands of dollars missing from jail accounts. She was fired just before an inmate was found dead in his cell.

According to the document Grady sent the Daily Press, Zupke, as chief deputy, saw that Lavasseur was not performing her duties as jail administrator. Zupke witnessed Lavasseur frequently on the administrative side of the building and said she showed limited involvement in any direct management of jail staff regarding enforcement of rules, control of inmates and ensuring proper protocol, the statement said.

Zupke voiced those concerns with her, but she made no noticeable improvements, the statement said.

"Lavasseur's management of the jail operations and lack of control over inmates and correctional officer's adherence to jail rules has perpetuated an environment in the jail that is unsustainable and potentially dangerous," the statement said.

SEE LAVASSEUR • PAGE A5



Lavasasseur



Zupke



Grady



Tegan Bermel enjoys a snack after completing her snow sculpture last year. The first effort brought in \$10,000 to help reconstruct Bayfield's East Dock playground. (Contributed photo by Annalisa Bermel)

Snow-sculpture contest to raise funds for Bayfield park

BY RICK OLIVO
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When Bayfield's original East Dock Playground was built more than 20 years ago, John Thiel was among the volunteers who helped put the play equipment and park together.

He and his wife Mary had small children at the time, and they knew how much a new park was needed.

"Since then, our kids have grown up and we are now happy to help the next generation of parents put a new park together," he said.

The Thiels, owners of Bayfield's Howl Adventure Center, are hosting a snow-sculpture fundraiser to help pay for refurbishing the playground at an estimated cost of about \$150,000. Adventure Club Brewing, located at Howl, is pitching in, too.

SEE CONTEST • PAGE A5

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