



EAGLE RIVER, WI 54521



Mistletoe Magic shopping promotion planned Saturday

The Eagle River Area Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Center Downtown Committee recently announced its Mistletoe Magic event to be held downtown Eagle River Saturday, Dec. 10, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Wall Street businesses will be offering significant holiday deals for participants to finish their Christmas shopping.

The Mistletoe Magic giveaway will be available for attendees to sign up at participating businesses for a chance to win in-store gifts. Individuals can obtain an entry form and

may enter at multiple locations.

Participating businesses include Arrow Gift Shop, Eagle Craft and Hobby, Eagle River Pet Company, Fredrick's Corner Shoppe, Grandma's Toy Box, The Hiker Box, Minocqua Popcorn and Puffs, Rustic Allure, Senior Craft Shop, Trapper's Fireplace, Trig's and WalkAbout Paddle and Apparel.

Winners must be able and willing to pick up winning prize in person.

For more information, call 715-479-6400 or visit www.eagleriver.org.

Holiday on Ice show slated this Sunday

The Eagle River Figure Skating Club will present this year's Holiday On Ice performance Sunday, Dec. 11, at 6 p.m. at the Eagle River Sports Arena.

The public is invited to the holiday skating performance by the skating club. Admission is free, but a non-perishable food

item to be donated to Vilas Food Pantry is appreciated.

In addition to the show, the skating club also will host a 50-50 raffle with proceeds benefiting the Vilas County Humane Society.

For more information, contact Megan Hoffman at 715-891-2693.

Popcorn promotion to benefit FORK all through next year

Throughout December and continuing on for all of 2023, Minocqua Popcorn and Puffs will feature a special promotion which will benefit Feed Our Rural Kids (FORK), a local program which helps provide food to local children.

The store, with locations in downtown Eagle River and Minocqua, will offer a \$5.95 grab bag of kid-friendly, flavor of the month popcorn with 50 cents from every grab bag purchase going to FORK.

"Food can be made fun for kids of all ages," said store owner Pam Gleich. "Isn't that what popcorn is all about? Our support of FORK is to help ensure that all kids have equal access to food, fun or otherwise."

"We can only hope that our customers will love our special grab bag flavors and help us to support children from food-insecure homes in both Vilas and Oneida counties," Gleich added.

Both Minocqua Popcorn and Puffs locations are open seven days a week from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., except Sundays when they close at 4 p.m.

FORK is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose mission is to provide nutritional support to children from food insecure homes across Vilas and Oneida counties.

For more information on FORK, visit feedourruralkids.org.

LIVE NATIVITY — Christ Evangelical Church and School put on the annual Journey to Bethlehem live nativity program last Friday and Saturday evenings. The event is free and open to the public and shares the origin story of baby Jesus. Christ Lutheran School is open following the re-enactment with refreshments, and the grounds are decorated to resemble the town of Bethlehem.

Above: Joseph and Mary, holding baby Jesus, lead the crowd of attendees in singing "Joy to the World" at the end of the presentation.

Right: A Wise Man brings his gift offering to the newborn.

Below: Live animals are part of the annual performance.

—Staff Photos By MICHELLE DREW



Not that you asked, but...

By Eric Johnson



End of the road

"We call that person who has lost his father, an orphan; and a widower that man who has lost his wife. But that man who has known the immense unhappiness of losing a friend, by what name do we call him? Here every language is silent and holds its peace in impotence."

—French clergyman Joseph Roux (1834-1905)

For a professional wordsmith, it's been one of those unnervingly awkward times of late, my being utterly at a loss for words.

When death comes calling in your circle of friends, it has a tendency of leaving you speechless — a maelstrom of feelings and a wealth of stories inside and so few words to adequately express them all.

And death came calling in my circle Nov. 19 with the passing of friend, former colleague, traveling partner and kindred spirit partner-in-crime Frank William Keeler, 52, of Watersmeet, Mich.

Frank's funeral was last Friday, Dec. 2, in Menomonie, with a large crowd from the North Woods in attendance, including active and retired colleagues and students and alumni of Lakeland Union High School in Minocqua, where Frank was an excellence-demanding social studies teacher for the past 19 years and a

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Trees For Tomorrow plans series of winter programs

Trees For Tomorrow (TFT) Environmental Education Center in Eagle River has announced its lineup of winter programs available to the public.

The activities are perfect for individuals and groups looking to step outside of the ordinary and into the outdoors to learn about and experience the natural world of the North Woods, according to organizers.

The events include a candlelight hike, cross-country skiing, a wilderness showshoe hike, a skiing and snowshoeing retreat, a maple syrup making experience and the popular KinderWild Camp.

TFT's campus is in close proximity to the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest, Ottawa National Forest, Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest, many county forests, and all the recreational opportunities those lands have to offer.

Scheduled activities are as

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Trees for Tomorrow will host an introduction to cross-country skiing in January which will teach

basic lessons on campus followed by a trip to apply the newly learned skills at Anvil ski trail.

—Contributed Photo

LIFESTYLE



FOOD DRIVE CONTEST — A good-spirited rivalry between Three Lakes and Northland Pines raised roughly 1,500 food items for local food pantries at a recent basketball game. Items collected by Northland Pines went to Vilas Food Pantry in Eagle River and those collected by Three Lakes went to the town's Christian Food Pantry.

Above: Members of the Northland Pines Student Athlete Leadership Team organize collected items during the event.

Right: Three Lakes' table filled up ahead of the game.

Below: Marc Busko, business teacher at Three Lakes, helps a young community member add items to the table.

—Photos By Jennifer West



Columnist Eric Johnson (right) with late Frank Keeler (1970-2022) at the Baltimore airport during a 2017 Model United Nations conference trip to Washington D.C./Williamsburg, Va. —Photo By Eric Johnson

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dedicated and tireless man of 10,000 well-worn hats, including Teen Court, Mock Trial and Model United Nations advisor to name just three, in addition to his famed role as the game-on teacher duct-taped to the wall in support of a good cause.

Rumors ran rampant at LUHS that “Keeler,” as he was affectionally known, was a covert CIA operative — mild-manned social studies teacher by day and cloak-and-dagger spy by night, a claim that Frank, an intensely private man who played his cards close to his chest, neither confirmed nor denied, adding to the mystique of “Frank Keeler: The Man. The Myth. The Legend.”

Over the span of chaperoning three intensive week-long 24/7 Model United Nations trips with Frank to New York City, Washington, D.C. and San Francisco, enough strange things happened along the way that really made me wonder myself sometimes. A CIA baseball hat was among the items decorating the tribute table at his funeral luncheon.

Like a made-for-TV spy thriller, a part of me, not wanting to say goodbye, held out a small glimmer of hope walking into the funeral that Frank's death was faked as part of some secret CIA spy operation.

While that notion would have earned me a wry Keeler smirk, the reality of the funeral, which patriotically ended with our singing “America, the Beautiful,” grounded me in the serious reality of history that was Frank's laser-focused life's calling as a passionate, dedicated educator mentoring the next generation.

“This isn't going to be here forever,” Frank would often say.

And now Frank isn't here anymore. And yet he still is. His impact lives on in those of us who crossed paths with

him — family, friends, colleagues, students, parents. And a bit of each of us lived in him during his all-too-brief time with us.

As Mark Twain once famously noted, “You meet people who forget you. You forget people you meet. But sometimes you meet those people you can't forget. Those are your friends.”

Over the course of a dozen years, Frank played a lot of roles in my own life — teacher of my two children as a district parent, work colleague during my time at LUHS and Lakeland STAR School/Academy, and fellow traveling companion and partner-in-crime on our three shared Model U.N. travels across thousands of miles. But his most treasured role in my life was the enduring friendship that was forged out of those various associations.

Frank was one of those friends that I won't forget, but, admittedly, the road ahead will be a bit lonelier.

As ancient Greek comic playwright Aristophanes once noted, “Our lost friends are not dead, but gone before, advanced a stage or two upon that road which you must travel in the steps they trod.”

It figures. Frank was always a few car-lengths ahead on our Model U.N. trips, seeking out educational adventure just a little bit faster around every bend in the highway.

While the loss remains raw and it's still hard to wrap my head around a world without Frank Keeler in it, I take some comfort in the words of famed English playwright, poet and children's book author Alan Alexander (A.A.) Milne in celebration of the friendship I was so blessed to have had.

“How lucky I am to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard.”

Eric Johnson can be reached at eric@fyinorthwoods.com.

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The Northwoods Singers

Carols by Candlelight

4 pm, Sunday, December 18, 2022

Ely Memorial Church

4302 Co. Road B, Land O'Lakes

Dr. Pamalyn Lee - Director

Linda Brainard - Piano

Beth Hassler - Violin / Viola

Sue Omdahl - Percussion

Admission Free
Free will donations gratefully accepted



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