ECHOES

From Page A1

"This young lady doesn't have her parents. Jasmine was fortunate to have her mother,"

Wyffels said. "It really hit me hard that this girl doesn't even have her mommy, the one person most girls would want most. She doesn't have her dad, either. They are not there for her and that is sad."

Beating the odds

While following the case, Wyffels said he didn't expect authorities to ever find Closs, let alone find her alive. When he heard the news she had been found and that indeed she was alive, he was stunned.

"Unbelievable. It was just unbelievable. I was shocked. How can this happen twice?" the police chief said. "Wow, just

In an Echo Press story after Jasmine Block was found alive, Wyffels said the percentage of people who are missing for a long time and found alive is low. Only 5 percent live, he said. To have two young girls go missing and turn up alive in such a short period of time is almost unfathomable, he said.

"What are the chances? This statistically doesn't happen. The statistics don't add up," he said. "I am happy she was found alive, relieved, but still sad because of her parents.

Shortly after the Wisconsin girl went missing, Wyffels reached out to the authorities from the Barron area to let them know about Jasmine Block's case. He offered to share whatever information and help they wanted because of the similarities, but Wyffels said he also didn't want to step on any

After Closs was found, he thought about calling the authorities again to share thoughts on the case and about the girl being found alive. But he knows the authorities have their hands full right now. Once things settle down a bit, he expects to make that call.

Wyffels said after hearing that Closs was found alive, he received a very welcome phone call.

"Sarah Block called me and it was touching to us, the department," he said, adding that the news of Jayme Closs being found made the department revisit the

Jasmine Block case and that the department talked about both of the cases. "When Sarah called, she thanked us for everything again. It makes me feel like what we do, our jobs, is definitely worth it."

Heroes

When Sarah Block heard that the Wisconsin teen was found alive, she knew it would make an impact on her daughter so she decided to keep her home from school. She asked her daughter to come sit by her on the couch and told her now 16-year-old daughter about the incident. When Jasmine sees anything about missing kids, whether on the news or through social media, it brings back awful memories, her mom said.

"I explained to her what happened, that Jayme escaped just like she did," Block said. "She said, 'Oh my gosh,' and then said that Jayme is a hero. To this day, however, Jasmine doesn't think of herself as a hero. And Jayme probably won't, either.

Jasmine's mom believes that both young girls will eventually come around to realizing that is what they are. At least she hopes they each will come to understand that.

"They both beat the odds and were brave, and are heroes."

Block said her daughter is interested in reaching out to Jayme Closs. Block is hopeful that the two girls will meet one day, because she has a feeling they would have plenty to talk about.

Details don't matter

Sarah Block said her daughter still struggles daily and that she believes a kidnapping victim will never truly recover or "get over it." It is something, she said, that will stick with them their whole lives.

"Jasmine is now known as that kidnap girl and Jayme probably will be, too," she said. "But people have to realize that this is not just a story. This is real life. It is their life. And it is our life. I'm known as the mom of the kidnap girl. I still get messages all the time.'

Block said so many people have tried to push the details out of her, as well as out of her daughter. Kids have friended her daughter just so they could ask her details of what happened. Block fears Jayme Closs and her family will be subjected to the same sort of questions.

"It becomes intrusive. The

fact is, the details aren't what matter," she said. "These are little girls and they don't need everyone knowing the exact details of what happened to them. ... But what matters is that they survived. They were brave. They escaped."

If Block could give any advice to all of those who have been following the Closs story, it would be to not ask questions about the details. They need to focus on healing and not answering all the questions.

"And don't blame the victim. Don't put blame of any kind of Jayme. That becomes hurtful," Block said, adding that she knows that from experience. "Don't talk bad about the victims because they will start blaming themselves. That has happened to Jasmine."

Block reiterated that the best thing for the people in western Wisconsin and elsewhere is to just be supportive. She said although not everyone was supportive in their case, she has high praise for the way area residents responded to what happened here.

ÑŶou don't know how big the world is until you have a kid go missing," said Block. "It changes everything."

Vandalism

From Page A1

lakes. Fishing equipment, electronics, heaters, propane tanks and other items were

On Monday, Sgt. Mike Tvrdik of the Douglas County Sheriff's Office said the number of reported fish house breakins has climbed to 24, with thousands of dollars of items reported stolen.

In addition to Moon, Devils and Stowe lakes that were cited in the December break-ins, fish houses on Mary, Blackwell, Cowdry, Freeborn, Mill, Maple and Union lakes have also been vandalized.

However, not all of the reports have come from Douglas County. Earlier this month, several fish houses in Otter Tail County were burglarized or damaged.

The sheriff's office there fielded more than 15 reports of break-ins on Sewell, Jolly Ann

and Ten Mile lakes. Among the items stolen from that group were underwater cameras, ice chisels, spears, fishing rods, tackle and other ice fishing equipment.

Sparking considerable outrage was the break-in and burglary of the Patriot Ice House on Little Detroit Lake from this past weekend. That fish house in Becker County is available for use by all active and veteran military members, first responders, firefighters, law enforcement officers and their families who live in the Detroit Lakes area.

The lock securing the fish house was cut and an ice auger and two fish locators were reportedly taken.

The thefts and break-ins haven't been as much of a problem in other surrounding counties. Pope County Sheriff Tim Riley said Monday that it's been a good year there, with little or no theft or damage to ice fishing houses on county

Remove property

It's not unusual for there to be break-ins on lakes each winter. However, Tvrdik said that people who own fish houses can take steps to limit the chances of becoming a victim. He encourages anglers to take their property and fishing supplies with them when they are done fishing — especially

any expensive items.
"I know it is not convenient to do so, but in today's world it is necessary to keep from being a victim or at least limit your loss," Tvrdik said. "Most of us were taught at a young age not to take other people's stuff. That doesn't seem to apply these days."

He also recommends people check their fish houses as frequently as possible and to report any break-ins, along with any suspicious or unusual activity that is observed while on the lakes.

VanderWeyst believes if those who ice fish band together and watch out for each other, perpetrators could be caught. The

reward money, she hopes, will also help.

Since many of these incidents could involve separate suspects, VanderWeyst said that common sense and good judgment would apply to how much of a reward would be given when information leads to an arrest. The fund may need to be replenished this winter, she said.

VanderWeyst intends to continue the reward fund throughout the year because theft and vandalism at lake cabins and houses happens during the spring, summer and

She said she has contacted businesses such as ice fishing house dealers, those that sell fishing equipment and bait, and other businesses to donate to the reward fund. Vander-Weyst said she is also working with the Fin and Feathers Club of Brandon to distribute information about the reward.

> Rae Yost of the Stevens County Times contributed to this story.

MEETING

From Page A1

of years. "This will be a major undertaking. It's a lot of work, but it is good work and for the kids.

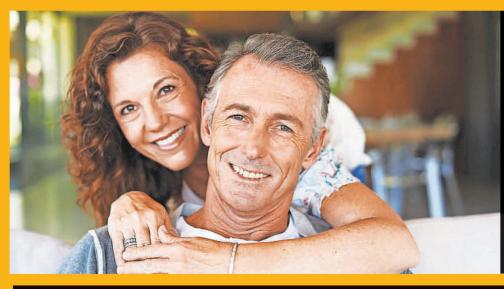
He explained the district would work with the food service program to provide a snack to the students after school, and that the program would also run throughout the summer, in addition to during the school year.

Times are not set in stone quite yet, but day care is expected to be offered from 6 to 8 a.m. and from 3 p.m. to either 5 or 6:30 p.m.

"If we can keep kids in the school district, it's a good thing," said board member Randy Bettermann.

The day care program was unanimously approved.

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