

Pine Knot

News

Vol. 1 No. 10

www.PineKnotNews.com

Friday, December 28, 2018

\$1.25

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Nine months pay for former cop

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Former Cloquet police officer Scott Beckman may not work as a cop for the City of Cloquet anymore, but he will technically remain “on leave” and collect a monthly paycheck

of \$4,500 through Sept. 30, 2019, according to the details of a separation and release agreement approved by the Cloquet City Council Dec. 18. That adds up to \$40,500 before taxes.

The agreement states that Beckman, the Teamsters

union and the City of Cloquet mutually feel “it is in the best interests ... that Scott Beckman amicably separate from employment with the City” in accordance with various terms and conditions.

No one from the city is saying why the separation

agreement was desirable, but the day after the Cloquet City Council meeting, the Carlton County Attorney’s office sent out a press release revealing that the office has been and is still looking into scores of cases he was involved in.

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Man charged with assault of three-month-old baby

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After allegedly assaulting his three-month-old daughter and causing severe injuries, a Cloquet man is in jail with bond set at \$500,000.



Verbist

Orion Harrison Sinclair Verbist, 25, was charged with felony assault in the first degree in Sixth District Carlton County Court Dec. 19. He appeared in court Dec. 20, when bond was set at \$500,000. He was also granted a public defender.

According to the criminal complaint, the baby’s mother went back to work in early November after the baby was born Aug. 1, eight weeks premature.

On the morning of Nov. 6, she left for work at 5:45 a.m., leaving Verbist as the sole caregiver for the baby. A neighbor in the apartment complex where the couple lived with their baby allegedly told police officers he would hear the baby crying and Verbist yelling; he also allegedly told officers that he heard crying on the morning of Nov. 6 and heard Verbist yell “shut the f*ck up.”

According to the criminal complaint, at 9:30 a.m. Nov. 6, Verbist called the mother and told her the baby wouldn’t stop crying and was “breathing funny.” The couple took the infant to Community Memorial Hospital in Cloquet, where Verbist allegedly said he thought the baby was choking and that he had patted her on the back more firmly than normal. After noting that the baby was hypothermic, the infant was sent home. When asked by the baby’s mother what happened, according to the criminal complaint, Verbist allegedly said that he was bouncing the baby like he always does and nothing had happened.

Then, at 7:30 p.m. that evening, the mother heard a strange cry from the baby and said she believed the infant was having seizures, so they took the baby to St. Luke’s Hospital in Duluth.

At the St. Luke’s ER, a CAT scan showed a skull fracture and a subdural hematoma (a collection of blood outside the brain usually caused by severe head injuries, according to WebMD). At that point, according to the criminal complaint, Verbist told the baby’s mother that he accidentally dropped the infant when he was walking her and he fell asleep.

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Family traditions come together at community Christmas dinner

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Most families have traditions at Christmas, whether it’s oyster stew on Christmas Eve or goofy Christmas pajamas for Christmas morning.

Cloquet’s Dave Johnson and his kids have made a tradition of serving others, by organizing an enormous free community meal at Zion Lutheran Church.

It all started 25 years ago, when Dave — along with other members of Zion — decided to host a community meal on Christmas Day. Eventually it got so big the meal became its own organization, although the church still plays a major role. Many individuals and businesses donate money, food and time to help make it happen, but Johnson is always there, pulling the strings, asking for donations, making a list and checking it twice.

Vivi said her dad started the meal in memory of his mother, Agnes Reed Johnson, who was a longtime cook at Zion. His kids have been involved for a long time, but ramped up their efforts a few years ago when Dad, now 78, had a “close call with heaven.”

As a result, the Christmas Day Dinner had to be canceled



Wearing his best Santa hat, Larry Weber waits to serve a helping of B&B meatballs while Julie Beal serves green beans to Mae Line and Lil Abrahamson during the community Christmas meal at Zion Lutheran Church Tuesday. Line said they celebrated at home the night before and decided to attend the community meal with family for the first time on Christmas Day. Photos by Jana Peterson/ Pine Knot News

that year.

They swore it would never happen again.

Last year, Dave got a bad cold and Vivi and Raffy sent him home.

“He finally knew we’d be able

to keep it going in the future,” she said.

This year they fed nearly 600 people, plus 50-some volunteers. More than 100 meals were delivered to people who were unable to leave their

homes.

It was controlled chaos when folks started lining up for food, as volunteer drivers kept taking boxed meals out the back door.

“This is the best part,” said Vivi with a smile, before turning to tell Father Justin Fish, Ted Lammi and others where they would be making their next deliveries.

Dave Johnson and his children have made serving others one of their family traditions at Christmas. Pictured (from left) are Dave, Deborah, Vivi and Raffy Johnson.

