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Snoftball, anyone?

Six different teams from Carlton County and as far afield as Grand Rapids and Superior took to the softball diamond Saturday for a tournament in the snow.

They call it “snoftball” and it was a ball, said Lee Harris, player, tournament organizer and board member of the nonprofit Kingdom Builders Ministries and its

Common Ground coffee shop.

“The snow was a challenge, but also it was an absolute blast,” said Harris, noting that between tournament play and a special combo team made up of people from all the teams, nearly everyone played five or six games throughout the day. The Northwoods Church League team from

Superior won the tournament.

A snow sculpture of a kid playing softball by local snow artist Tim Young Sr. was the icing on the cake, said Harris.

“We’ve got big plans for next year already,” said Harris, explaining that they’d like to make the tournament part of a larger winter festival in the future.



Ryan Huray leaps to tag out a runner during a snoftball game Saturday at Pinehurst Park in Cloquet.

Photos by Amber Nichols

Text by Jana Peterson



Snow sculptor Tim Young Sr. carved this youthful softball player in a mound of snow at Pinehurst Park in honor of Saturday’s “snoftball” tournament.



Josh Lintula catches the ball to tag out Leah Hammond while Lee Harris watches from second base.

Courts dismiss more cases involving former police officer

Jana Peterson
news@pineknotnews.com

The Carlton County Attorney’s office recently dismissed seven more criminal cases involving former Cloquet police officer Scott Beckman.

The court actions bring the total number of cases dismissed because of Beckman to 26, including 18 that were

dismissed pre-conviction last year, one Feb. 8 dismissal that resulted in a man imprisoned for second-degree assault being set free and now seven more post-conviction dismissals (along with four criminal cases in which no charges were ever filed).

All of the cases were dismissed as a consequence of dishonest behavior by Beckman, who was disciplined after lying on a search warrant application in February 2016, when he included information he had previously discovered to be untrue while under oath. Such behavior falls under

the purview of two different Supreme Court cases — *Brady v. Maryland* and *Giglio v. United States* — which requires prosecuting attorneys to disclose any material that could help exonerate a defendant of guilt, specifically including misconduct findings involving law enforcement officers or information that would impeach the character or testimony of a witness.

County attorney Lauri Ketola told the Pine Knot News that she believes the seven cases will be the last ones dismissed as part of the county’s review of cases in-

volving Beckman since he lied on the February 2016 search warrant application. Charges vacated in the most recent cases ranged from a felony domestic assault conviction to gross misdemeanor charges of giving a false name to a police officer or possessing drug paraphernalia. All charges will be expunged from the criminal record of each defendant.

Sixth District Chief Public Defender Daniel Lew is listed as the lead attorney on each of the most recently dismissed cases.

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Annual township meeting tradition continues Tuesday

Mike Creger
news@pineknotnews.com

One of the oldest traditions in the history of Minnesota carries on Tuesday in the annual township meetings. The township system of government was established as part of the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, which included the northeast portion of today’s Minnesota as a territory. Areas of land were divided into 36-square-mile units called congressional townships.

Today, the term “township” refers to organized but unincorporated areas of the state usually governed by a three-person board of supervisors and a clerk and a treasurer.

The chief responsibility for the boards lies in the upkeep of township roads and bridges. Boards also deal with joint participation in fire protection services and, in areas close to cities, shared municipal services such as water and sewer.

There are 1,781 townships in Minnesota — 19 in Carlton County — compared to 853 cities in 87 counties. There are more than 900,000 people who live in Minnesota townships, about 16 percent of the total population. Of Carlton County’s estimated 35,498 residents, 15,954 live in townships, or 44 percent. There are unorganized areas in the county — in the Pine Knot News coverage area, four of them are west of Cloquet in Sawyer, Corona, Progress and Red Clover. Those areas are governed and taxed via the county.

As seen in the variety across the state, Carlton’s township populations run from sparse to relatively populated. State figures show that 53 percent of townships have a population of 300 or fewer people. The smallest in Carlton County is Beseman Township, with 133 residents. The largest is Thomson, which includes Esko, with 5,141 residents.

The annual meeting — always held on the second Tuesday of March — is a chance for residents to discuss issues, especially the levy amount they will be taxed for services. The meeting has traditionally also been an election day. Today, many Minnesota townships have opted to have elections in the November cycle, chiefly to cut down on polling place costs and to add convenience for residents. In the Pine Knot News coverage area, roughly the northern half of the county, just one of the 10 townships will hold an election of officers on Tuesday.

Residents are encouraged to bring any relevant issues up at the meetings, which begin at 7 p.m. unless, as in Lakeview, there is an election, with the meeting beginning after the polls close

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