

the Detroit Lakes
Tribune

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Clayton Jensen

Feb. 29, 1920 - Feb. 8, 2019
DETROIT LAKES, Minn. - Clayton Jensen, 90, Detroit Lakes, died Saturday, Feb. 9, in Ecumen - Emmanuel Nursing Home.

Arrangements are pending with West-Kjos Funeral Home in Detroit Lakes.

Ferdinand Kenneth Bakken

March 19, 1920 - Feb. 8, 2019
FERGUS FALLS, Minn. - Ferdinand Kenneth Bakken, 88, Pelican Rapids, Minn., died Friday, Feb. 8, in Woodland Lodge.

Visitation will be from 1-2 p.m., followed by the service at 2 p.m., today, Feb. 13, at Grove Lake Lutheran Church near Pelican Rapids. Pastor Tessa Hansen will officiate. Burial will be in the church cemetery.

Arrangements by Larson Funeral Home in Pelican Rapids.

Gary Lehmann

Dec. 25, 1935 - Feb. 7, 2019
FRAZEE, Minn. - Gary Lehmann, 83, Detroit Lakes, Minn., died Thursday, Feb. 7, in Frazee Care Center.

Services were previously held.

Arrangements by West-Kjos Funeral Home in Detroit Lakes.

Judith Rae "Judi" Lydell

Dec. 12, 1946 - Feb. 9, 2019
OSAGE, Minn. - Judith Rae "Judi" Lydell, 72, Osage, died Saturday, Feb. 9, in her home.

Visitation will be from noon to 1 p.m., followed by a memorial service at 1 p.m., Friday, Feb. 15, at Jones-Pearson Funeral Home in Park Rapids, Minn.

Arrangements by Jones-Pearson Funeral Home.

Marcella "Marcy" Tabery

Dec. 20, 1925 - Feb. 8, 2019
WADENA, Minn. - Marcella "Marcy" Tabery, 93, Wadena, died Friday, Feb. 8, in her home.

Services were previously held. Arrangements by Karvonen Funeral and Cremation Services in Wadena.

Sharon E. Lavalier

May 14, 1941 - Feb. 10, 2019
DETROIT LAKES, Minn. - Sharon E. Lavalier, 77, Detroit Lakes, died Sunday, Feb. 10, in her home.

Visitation will be from noon to 2 p.m., followed by the memorial service at 2 p.m., Friday, Feb. 15, at David-Donehower Funeral Home in Detroit Lakes.

Arrangements by David-Donehower Funeral Home.

Steven L. Strawsell

Feb. 26, 1948 - Feb. 7, 2019
DETROIT LAKES, Minn. - Steven L. Strawsell, 70, Detroit Lakes, died Thursday, Feb. 7, in Essentia Health - St. Mary's Hospital.

Services were previously held.

Arrangements by West-Kjos Funeral Home in Detroit Lakes.

Thursday, Feb. 14

Chocolate Fantasy: Fill a plate or box with chocolate treats to surprise your sweet heart, friends, employees and more. A variety of plates, platters and boxes are available, at a cost of \$20 for a small plate or \$40 for a large platter. Delivery is available from 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. at business offices in Becker County, for an additional fee. Or you can come to the museum from 4 to 6 p.m. and

INVESTIGATION

From Page A1

this matter, given a full review of the relevant evidence. While the State does not feel that criminal charges can be adequately supported, it is apparent there is enough information available that perhaps the matter merits further inquiry by school authorities," Thomason wrote in a memorandum to Stadium.

Gravalin's attorney Jade Rosenfeldt responded to the allegation on Jan. 31, stating, "We are frustrated that the school is reopening their completed investigation ... He fully participated in the investigation by both the school and law enforcement ... By all accounts, there is absolutely no evidence of any wrongdoing by Mr. Gravalin. On the other hand, this unsubstantiated accusation has caused Mr. Gravalin and his family incredible stress and hardship."

Pelican Rapids Superintendent Randi Anderson confirmed that in addition to the recent complaint against Gravalin, the district received another complaint of unknown substance this past summer. (Under Minnesota data privacy laws, there is very little information a school district can release regarding an investigation into a staff member. Unless the investigation leads to disciplinary action, the nature of any complaint remains confidential.) In Gravalin's case, he has not been disciplined for either complaint, therefore nothing in the school's investigations is public.

The reaction

Following the initial investigation into the player's complaints, Gravalin's return to school on Jan. 17 sparked protest from students and parents in the Pelican Rapids School District.

Some students used Snapchat to organize a sit-in the day Gravalin returned to school. The roughly 20 to 25 students who took part in the demonstration sat in a locker bay, saying they wouldn't return to class unless Gravalin was dismissed.

According to a sophomore who helped organize the sit-in, the group dispersed when one of the two Pelican Rapids High School principals, Brian Korf, put a wrestler on sports suspension for a week for participating in the sit-in.

Anderson declined to comment on the matter and cited data privacy laws when asked to do so.

"Me and a lot of other male students have siblings that are in sports that he (Gravalin) is the coach for, and we do not want him being their teacher or coach," said a Pelican Rapids junior who took part in the sit-in but didn't want his name shared. "We don't want him here ... but we get threatened with detention, and we get told that we need to mind our own business. This is our business."

After the school's initial investigation into the alleged incident with the basketball player, Gravalin resigned from coaching girls basketball in Pelican Rapids, a position he held since he started working for the district in 2008. He has also resigned as the girls softball coach, a position he held since 2015. He is still a paraprofessional at the school.

Past complaints unearthed

Gravalin resigned amidst controversy in Hankinson, as well.

Though Smith said in his investigation report that some of Gravalin's behavior needed to change, Fritz and Tammy Geffre, the parents who made the complaint that sparked the investigation into his conduct, were not satisfied with this result and appealed the matter to the Hankinson School Board. At that time, the district bought Gravalin out of his contract, saying they hoped that would "end the controversy surrounding the girls basketball program."

Rosenfeldt, Gravalin's attorney, also released a statement Jan. 31, addressing the allegations made against Gravalin 11 years ago: "Past allegations against Mr. Gravalin should bear no consideration on the current matter ... In all likelihood, the Hankinson situation is being resurrected to ... create unnecessary salacious material for media outlets."

Through public records requests, this newspaper obtained the investigation report from Gravalin's first go-around with similar allegations in Hankinson, which date as far back as 2006. The report shows that Chad Benson, who is now the superintendent of the Hankinson district but was the athletic director at the time, noted six complaints parents, community members and opposing coaches made against Gravalin,

none of which he was disciplined for. Then, the Geffres, the parents of two players, lodged the seventh and final complaint in Hankinson in 2008.

At the time of the Geffres' complaint, Benson noted in his athletic director's report, "We have had reports similar to this about Coach Gravalin before. ... At this point I am having a very bad feeling about the whole situation. I am starting to hear many of the same things I have heard for two years. Now they are coming from a player and not just rumors around town. ... Their concerns are not playing time or points, they are for the most part mental abuse and sexual harassment."

The Geffres' daughters, Casey, a freshman at the time, and Cody, a junior at the time, wrote letters to Smith detailing their complaints against Gravalin.

"Coach Gravalin walked in on me in the locker room without knocking while I was just in my undergarments. And he made references to them months later," Cody wrote in her letter, adding that Gravalin would frequently place his hand on her lower back, which made her uncomfortable. "Playing basketball used to be the highlight of my life. But right now it's hard to deal with the mental anguish, verbal abuse, and sexual comments."

According to the investigation report, two assistant coaches who worked with Gravalin, Tracy Medenwaldt and Christina Hagen; two former students, Megan Stein and Beth Mauch; a junior varsity player and another former player backed up the allegations the Geffres made against Gravalin. (All minors' names have been redacted from the Hankinson investigation documents, as per North Dakota law, but newspapers named the Geffre girls 11 years ago).

In a letter to the district, Medenwaldt said she witnessed the instance when Gravalin walked into the girls' locker room and saw Cody undressing.

Hagen and a junior varsity player also noted him walking into the girls locker room unannounced. Hagen, in her letter to Smith, wrote that she remembers asking Gravalin once if she should go in before him to make sure the girls were decent, and he responded by saying, "No, they should be ready and know I'm coming in."

Both Monilaws and Medenwaldt stated in the investigation report that the way

Gravalin acted toward the players and the way he touched them made them uncomfortable, and when they confronted him about it, he started treating them poorly in front of the players and stopped acknowledging their input during practice.

"I witnessed a coach verbally humiliate his players on the court. ... I then proceeded to witness him take a girl out of the game and slap her hard on the rear end. ... I agree with Fritz and Tammy Geffre for having concerns regarding their children playing for this man and I would also want to see him stop coaching my girls," Hankinson alumna Beth Mauch wrote in a letter to the district after attending a Hankinson girls basketball game.

These testimonies aside, in his final report, Smith wrote that his investigation "does not support the termination" of Gravalin. He did note, though, that "certain changes be implemented so as to avoid problems in the future."

Shortly after resigning from Hankinson, Gravalin announced he would be moving to Pelican Rapids and taking a job there as a girls basketball coach. Benson said he was contacted by someone at the Pelican Rapids

school acted toward the players and the way he touched them made them uncomfortable, and when they confronted him about it, he started treating them poorly in front of the players and stopped acknowledging their input during practice.

Going forward

Anderson says in light of new information brought forth during the police investigation, Gravalin has been placed back on administrative leave while the district reopens its investigation into his conduct. She says they will make a decision about his employment with the Pelican Rapids School District when the investigation is concluded.

Gravalin has worked in the Pelican Rapids School District for the last 11 years and held numerous positions, including special education paraprofessional, study hall supervisor, morning gym supervisor, event worker, girls basketball coach, boys basketball coach, boys and girls track coach, football coach, softball coach, and volleyball coach.

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HAPPENINGS

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Friday, Feb. 15

Ice Tee Golf: Grab your friends and co-workers and join other teams from local businesses and community

organizations for nine holes or frozen fun on Big Detroit Lake in front of the Holiday Inn. Cost to participate is \$100 for a four-person team; contact LaCarra Larson at 218-844-4221, extension 116 or lacarra@dlccc.org to get your team registered today!

Welcome to Polartaville: The Lakes Area Parrot Heads will be hosting their annual Welcome to Polartaville fundraiser from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. at the Shorewood Pub, 1743 Long Bridge Road, Detroit Lakes. The proceeds

from this year's fundraiser will benefit the Lakes Area Imagination Library. Event will include dancing and a Caribbean style dinner. Tickets are \$30 each, and may be purchased from any LAPH member. Contact Jim at 218-841-2986 for more information.

Square Dancing: The Country Twirlers will host a square dance from 7:30 to 10 p.m. at the IOOF Hall, 118 W. Holmes St., Detroit Lakes. Charley Huhtala is the caller.



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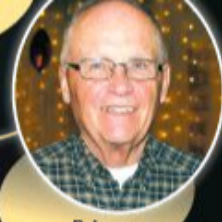
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THE HEROES AMONG US

United Way
celebration honors
Becker County's most
compassionate, caring

By Vicki Gerdes
vgerdes@dlnewspapers.com

The everyday heroes among us are what make this community great," said United Way Executive Director Luann Porter at the conclusion of Thursday night's Celebration of

Heroes, hosted by the United Way of Becker County at the Historic Holmes Theatre Ballroom in Detroit Lakes.

Community involvement, compassion, caring... these are just a few of the adjectives that were used to describe the honorees at

Thursday night's celebration.

"I guess that's just what I do," said Bob Braukmann as he accepted his Community Spirit Award from Porter and United Way President Tonya Clem.

HEROES: Page A10

Crossing home | One man explains how an area treatment center, now with a DL location, helped him turn his life around



By Kaysey Price
kprice@dlnewspapers.com

"It's just amazing now, how I see how I lost everything," said Craig Olson, thinking back on when his life began to spiral downwards into addiction and prison sentences. "We're talking rock bottom."

John Henderson, founder of CrossingHOME, talks about his faith journey and how it led to him starting an organization to help men and women get a foothold in society after spending time in prison.

Kaysey Price / Tribune

The spiral

Olson grew up in a Christian home. His father was a union electrician, which meant the family bounced from one town to another during Olson and his sister's coming-of-age years.

"It was a tough life for a kid," recalled Olson. "You know, you'd get comfortable with an environment And you'd have to go off to the next one."

Right out of high school, he was like anyone else. He got a taste of college, but it wasn't his scene. Olson decided to enter the workforce and began working construction, eventually moving to Reno, Nevada,

“

It's just amazing now, how I see how I lost everything. We're talking rock bottom.

CRAIG OLSON

and opening his own business.

"In the meantime, I got married, had a couple of kids," he said.

But in 2008, Nevada's economy took a decline. Olson struggled to keep his business afloat and also sustained some injuries

CROSSING: Page A10

Overreach? County targets DL's two-mile zoning authority

By Nathan Bowe
nbowe@dlnewspapers.com

Detroit Lakes city government now has the final say in planning and zoning issues in a two miles radius out from city limits, and some at the Becker County level would like to replace that with a joint planning board.

The two-mile extraterritorial zone expands the 10,000 acres inside Detroit Lakes city limits to 47,000 acres under city planning and zoning jurisdiction, Becker County Surveyor Roy Smith told commissioners at a recent county board meeting.

"That's how much bigger this area is than the city — it's not a small area,

it's 58 square miles," he said, showing commissioners a map.

The issues

City jurisdiction means that potential land developers in that two-mile area need to meet city requirements, including a full plat, not just the land survey that the county requires, he said. Becker County allows new subdivisions of three lots or less to be created by metes and bounds description, he explained. The city requires a subdivision plat for all lots under 5 acres. This includes creating one-lot plats.

ZONING: Page A8

Resignation under fire

Pelican Rapids coach accused of sexual misconduct quits district job after school reopens investigation

By Kaysey Price
kprice@dlnewspapers.com

Shawn Gravalin, a middle school basketball coach who came under fire for sexual misconduct allegations in December, resigned from all duties with the Pelican Rapids School District



Gravalin

Rapids School District

Monday, April 15. The district was in the midst of a reopened investigation into the allegation that Gravalin inappropriately touched a player's butt during practice.

Investigation reopened

After initially finding no evidence and closing a month-long investigation Jan. 17, the district reopened the sexual misconduct investigation a

couple weeks later, at the urging of Assistant Otter Tail County Attorney Jake Thomason.

When the district reopened the investigation, Pelican Rapids Superintendent Randi Anderson said local law enforcement, who conducted a separate investigation into the matter, "had access to more information regarding

GRAVALIN: Page A8

Back on the job

DL cop back to work after 16 months of paid administrative leave
Page A2



Laker baseball

Detroit Lakes picks up first victory of the season
Page B1



Forecast

TODAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY
PM Rain	PM Showers	Mostly Cloudy	PM Showers	Showers
High: 45 Low: 34	High: 43 Low: 30	High: 50 Low: 34	High: 49 Low: 38	High: 48 Low: 38

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News Staff
The Naytahwaush Charter School will receive \$13,500 in state planning assistance from the Safe Routes to School program.

Planning assistance grants provide communities the resources to convene a team, understand key issues, prioritize strategies and identify solutions that fit local needs.

Hawley, further along in the process, has finished the planning stage and will receive \$300,000 to build 12.5 blocks of sidewalk near its schools, and to leverage five blocks of trail that will be built at the same time with other fund-

ing. Construction will occur in 2021.

Infrastructure grants provide construction funding for projects that promote and encourage more students to walk or bicycle to school by making the routes safer and more accessible. Projects can include sidewalks, trails, crosswalk markings, flashing beacons and other traffic control devices.

In all, 63 schools in Minnesota will benefit from \$2.3 million in planning assistance and infrastructure grants that support the Safe Routes to School program, the Minnesota Department of Transportation announced recently.

Safe Routes to School is an international program to improve safety, reduce traffic congestion around schools, increase physical activity and improve health by making it easier for students to walk and bicycle to school.

"Thousands of Minnesota students will now have more opportunities to safely walk and bike to schools and improve their health," said MnDOT Commissioner Margaret Anderson Kelliher. "Thanks to the Safe Routes to School program we are helping to build the next generation of multi-modal transportation users."

MnDOT announced the

available planning assistance and infrastructure grants in October 2018. The infrastructure solicitation received \$6.7 million in funding requests and 12 projects were awarded state funding for construction projects totaling \$2 million. Regional partners will administer the construction grants.

The Safe Routes to School grants in this solicitation are funded with state and federal Safe Routes to School dollars. Historically, nearly 70 percent of these funds have supported work within Greater Minnesota communities.

Since 2005, MnDOT awarded more than \$38 million in federal and state funds to communities to support Safe Routes to School. The majority of funding was awarded for infrastructure projects. The remainder was allocated for programs and planning that promote walkable and bikeable communities.

More information about Safe Routes to School including Bike to School Day and a map of SRTS projects, available at www.mnDOT.gov/saferoutes or you can go to the SRTS Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/MinnesotaSafeRoutesToSchool/>.

GRAVALIN

From Page A1

the recent allegation... than did the school district."

Thomason cited having "substantial concerns regarding the alleged behavior of Mr. Gravalin, particularly in light of past accusations" as information that "merits further inquiry by school authorities."

Gravalin was the subject of similar allegations 11 years ago, when he was the head girls basketball coach in Hankinson, N.D.

He was accused of mentally abusing and sexually harassing basketball players. He resigned from the position in July 2008, and went on to coach number of sports in Pelican Rapids.

Gravalin resigned from coaching basketball and softball in Pelican Rapids back in January, but he remained a paraprofessional at the school. He was on paid administrative leave, while the district conducted its second investigation.

Alleged victim's mother speaks out

The Pelican Rapids

School Board accepted Gravalin's resignation Monday, April 15, washing its hands of the matter. Superintendent Randi Anderson says the misconduct investigation is now closed. She did not respond to an email from the Tribune sent Tuesday asking if any more complaints were filed against Gravalin after the investigation was reopened.

"I want to put an end to the entire situation," Gravalin wrote in his resignation letter. "The turmoil and stress this has caused my family can never be fully repaired ... It is unfortunate that

even if I return to work, this matter will linger and even possibly interfere with my ability to be an effective educator and/or coach. For those reasons and many more, I am choosing to resign."

The mother of the middle school student who filed the complaint against Gravalin says she is tired of him casting himself as the victim. This newspaper is not identifying the mother, as to not identify the alleged juvenile victim.

"He's the one who brought suffering to my daughter, our family and his family," she said,

adding that her daughter has gone through turmoil and stress of her own, going through trauma counseling, enduring nightmares, and having trouble trusting adults.

She says her daughter

left the Pelican Rapids school for a time during the investigation due to stress but has since returned and is "holding her head up and trying to be a normal, happy seventh grader."

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ZONING

From Page A1

"Platting is expensive and time consuming," Smith said. "I would hope that the city would relax that requirement and only require city planning office review for a single tract."

And Smith said developers have complained that the thousands of dollars they pay to a city park fund goes into city coffers and is not used for green space in the two-mile zone.

Presently the city requires the landowner to pay a park fee of 6% of the land value of the land to be platted, either in cash or to make a land donation of 6% of the land area being developed.

If the land donation does not meet the park needs of the area, the city requires the cash donation.

"The city ordinance reads: 'The cash payment shall be used for the purchase of the land or the development of existing or future playgrounds in the same general area,'" Smith said in the memo. "I believe the city has opted for the park fee in nearly all the subdivisions. If the park fee is paid to the city for a subdivision lying two miles from the city corporate limits, the park fee goes to the city park fund."

"The new owners in the subdivision have to go to the city for enjoyment of a park. The fee is specifically for the development of new park areas or the improvement of existing parks. It is not for the general maintenance of existing parks."

But Smith believes that the most important issue with city-only approval is that "the landowner has limited appeal for non-approval decisions. Their representatives are the township and the county. Since the landowner does not vote

for the city council, he is unrepresented by the people he elects. His only appeal is through the courts."

Once the subdivision is approved by the city, the township and the county then have to police and maintain roads for which they had no input regarding alignment, road class or grade, Smith said. "The city engineer does the road review, so design issues are addressed, but the county and township are bypassed," he said.

Under the current system, for any new subdivision plats in the "ring," Becker County addresses any zone change. As a courtesy, the city of Detroit Lakes sends a copy of the preliminary plat to the County Zoning office for review and comments. However the county has no approval authority of the proposed subdivision. The lot sizes are based on the county requirements.

Although the city has been providing final plat documents to the county board out of courtesy, Smith would like to see a signature block for the county board and township officers required on final plat documents. "This allows the two boards to at least acknowledge the development in their jurisdiction," he said.

The two-mile extraterritorial zone stems from a law designed for the Twin Cities metro area, and is not a good fit for this area, Smith argued.

A better fit, he said, would be a Joint Planning Board, made up of city, county and township representative in the two-mile zone. State law allows for just such a joint board, he said.

The proposal

Smith proposed that the two-mile radius be divided into three rings. The first ring would be all land within a half mile of city limits. All approval would be by the city. However, the preliminary plat would

also be reviewed by the joint board so that the county members could offer comments. The county board and the township board would sign the plat as an acknowledgment. One-lot plats would be allowed. The 6% park fee would remain.

The second ring would be between the half mile circle and a mile circle. Approval would still be by the city, but reviewed by the joint board so that the county members could offer suggested revisions. The county board and the township board would sign the plat as an acknowledgment.

Three-lot subdivisions would be allowed by metes and bounds. The park fee would be 3%.

The third ring would be approved by the county, but the city would be able to submit suggested revisions. Road locations or realignments would be better addressed at a county level. The county board, representatives of the joint board, the township board, and the city council would all sign the plat. There would be no park fee.

Detroit Lakes Community Development Director Larry Remmen said he needs to talk to elected city officials and get the official city position before commenting at length, but that in his opinion, the extraterritorial zone "has been in effect for many, many years, and I don't see any reason why we would discontinue that."

The County Board directed staff to investigate the potential for a Joint Planning Commission for the two-mile zone, with representatives to come from the city, county and townships.

"Technically, the city does not have to agree (to set up the joint board)," said County Administrator Mike Brethorst, "but we want to collaborate and partner with the city on any major decision. It's important to understand where the city is coming from."

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