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CHAMBER DINNER

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Aitkin Independent Age

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Three superintendent finalists selected

BY BRIELLE BREDSTEN
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At the Jan. 21 special meeting, Aitkin School Board accepted a list of seven candidates recommended by School Exec Connect for the open superintendent position. The slate of candidates who underwent the first round of hour-long interviews at special meetings on Jan. 22 and 23 were: Dr. Erich Heise, Todd Meyer, Dan Wroblewski, Daniel Stifter, Dr. Melissa Radek, Shannon Hunstad and Troy

Ferguson.

Following its first round of interviews, the board narrowed the list of candidates down to three finalists to undergo the second round of interviews. The finalists are Hunstad, Stifter and Ferguson.

Round two of interviews will involve each candidate spending a full day in the district: Hunstad on Tuesday, Jan. 29; Stifter on Wednesday, Jan. 30; and Ferguson on Thursday, Jan. 31. Finalists will tour the city and the school district,

speak with students, administration, principals, staff, teachers, have dinner with the board, and undergo a final interview. A full schedule is posted on the ISD 1 website.

All civic, faith, city and county groups are invited to attend the interviews from 8:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. on all three days in the Aitkin High School auditorium. The general community will have the opportunity to meet the finalists at 5 p.m. all three days in the high school media center. For additional

information contact Mary Aulie at 218-927-7106.

The board will choose its top candidate on Thursday evening and is expected to enter into contract negotiations for a conditional job with this individual. The next superintendent will be named at the February board meeting and will assume the role on July 1. Current interim superintendent Charles Rick will remain with the district through the end of his contract on June 30.

See **Finalists** page A2



KBJR PHOTO

The Minnesota Department of Health investigation resulted in 11 substantiated complaints against Chappy's Golden Shores in Hill City.



SHARI HORTON PHOTO

30th Annual Tamarack Sno-Flyers Vintage Run

The Tamarack Sno-Flyers Vintage Run took place Jan. 26. Steve Morgan, Todd Streeter and Todd Schoeben, all of McGregor, have worked on refurbishing the '50 Bombardier B-12 snow bus this past year. See more photos on page B1.



LYNN MIZNER PHOTO

Aitkin Fire Chief Brian Pisarek responds to budget questions.

Fire department, townships meet to review budgets

BY LYNN MIZNER
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Aitkin Fire Chief Brian Pisarek met last week with representatives of Aitkin

County townships served by his department.

City council members were also present for this

See **FD budget** page A2

HHS gives SNAP update

BY BRIELLE BREDSTEN
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At its Jan. 22 meeting, Aitkin County Health and Human Services staff gave an update to the Board of Commissioners about the effects on Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and WIC programs during the federal government shutdown. The shutdown lasted from Dec. 22, 2018 to Jan. 25, 2019.

Income Maintenance Supervisor Jessica Goble said the Minnesota Department of Human Services gave a three-day notice to her office to process each SNAP recertification application by Jan. 15. The office worked

meticulously to complete 128 recertifications, renewals and applications, and finalized all but 17 cases. The county documented additional staff hours, which it may seek to be reimbursed for.

Those who submitted their paperwork by the deadline received benefits early on Jan. 19, but Jessica Goble advised this was not an additional benefit.

Jessica Goble was concerned that food resources such as local food shelves, community meals and Ruby's Pantry would be hit hard if the shutdown continued. Had the shutdown

See **Shutdown** page A3

Investigators say abuse, neglect at Chappy's Golden Shores led to deaths of two clients

BY BRIELLE BREDSTEN
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The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) has released its findings of an investigation that began last November at Chappy's Golden Shores, a long-term care provider located at 540 Park Ave. in Hill City.

On Dec. 6, 2018, the state issued immediate 90-day suspensions of the comprehensive home care and home and community based licenses for Chappy's Golden Shores, owned by Theresa and Keith Olson. Chappy's Golden Shores Manager Lisa Anderson said approximately 72 employees and 38 residents of the facility were affected by the order. The orders are currently under appeal, but both of the suspension orders are still in effect. All of the clients have been relocated to other providers.

A Dec. 11 release from Chappy's Golden Shores Attorney Jason Steck stated, "The Olsons believe that some of the allegations may have come from a disgruntled former employee who was fired for drug use."

The investigation resulted in 10 substantiated complaints including maltreatment findings in the forms of sexual, physical and emotional abuse, neglect and financial exploitation of clients by the facility and its caregivers. Two cases were

believed to have resulted in the eventual deaths of clients of Chappy's Golden Shores.

It was also concluded on Nov. 16, 2018, that Chappy's Golden Shores failed to ensure background studies for employees were conducted as required by state statute. Seven employees were found to have been working in violation, three of which were disqualified due to criminal offenses, including one employee who was a predatory offender. This resulted in a level three violation.

Those interviewed during the investigation repeatedly stated the facility management prohibited staff from reporting suspected maltreatment and staff were not allowed to accurately document what happened.

According to the investigative reports, all alleged perpetrators denied the allegations against them. The MDH reported no action was taken by the facility to prevent further occurrences.

According to the MDH, "Facility leadership promoted a culture that encouraged repeated occurrences of abuse by discouraging staff from reporting suspected maltreatment, falsifying records, and failing to train staff to the needs of the client."

See **Investigation** page A3



REPORTS



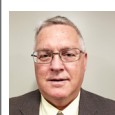
Sheriff
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OBITUARIES

Travis Cartie
Bernice Dangers
Carl Fredrickson Jr.
Juanita Hatcher
Darwin Kliever
Bertha Sanvig
Herman Scharrer

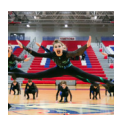
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SPORTS/OUTDOORS



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WHAT'S DOING



2019 Big
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vintage run
benefits
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Section B

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