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Ely Echo Editorial

Business owners will need leeway, unique ideas to survive coronasummer

It's far too early to determine the impact the coronavirus will have on Ely's economy - except to say it is widespread and severe.

Some businesses have been shuttered for weeks while others have had to adjust on the fly to a new and hopefully very temporary reality.

One would be hard-pressed to find any business in the Ely area that hasn't been hurt in one way or another by several weeks of stay-at-home shutdown.

We fear the worst may be yet to come, with the coronavirus continuing to hover like an ominous storm cloud over Ely, which relies so heavily on visitor traffic from May through September in order to survive.

Cash registers don't ring when the sidewalks are empty, events are called off and travel is restricted or merely discouraged. The ripple effects are disastrous: fewer jobs and business owners struggling to keep their doors open.

The future is precarious at best and programs that help businesses meet payroll and extend unemployment benefits are merely stopgaps and not a permanent solution.

We're hopeful that better times are ahead and believe now is the time, more so than any in recent history, where local governments can serve as an ally rather than an obstacle for our business community.

The city can't help business owners make payroll, but it certainly could take some simple steps to help them navigate the treacherous waters 2020 has delivered.

We've already seen an influx of visitor traffic to the region and expect that will continue, and grow, as stay-at-home restrictions are eased and lifted.

Other communities that rely heavily on

tourism are seeing this as well and we were intrigued this week by measures being taken in Duluth.

There, officials are rolling back regulations to give businesses extra leeway to use sidewalks and private parking lots.

According to the StarTribune, Duluth Mayor Emily Larson is asking Duluth's City Council to approve a measure that will waive fees and "accelerate certain review processes to enable restaurants and retailers to get creative as they mull how to sustain business in a way that's safe for customers."

A leading tourism official said the move highlights a "willingness to be flexible and supportive at a time when our businesses need it the most."

Proprietors there are still hoping to see visitors taking trips to Duluth and we anticipate the same holds true in Ely.

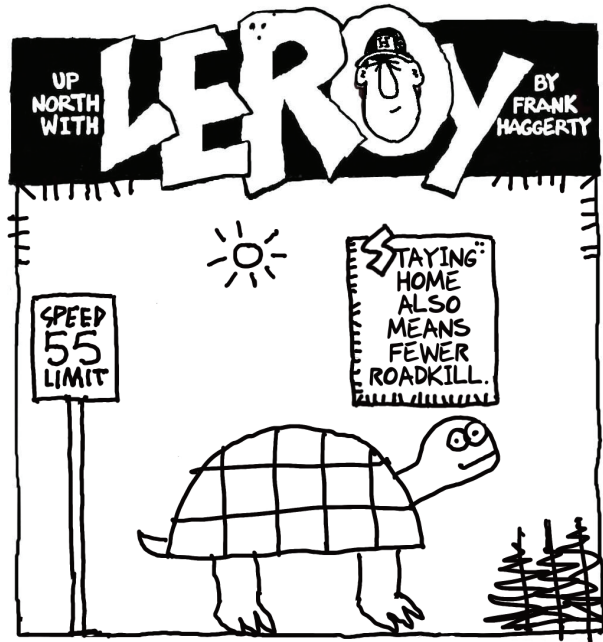
In Duluth, they are looking at expanded outdoor dining, including use of sidewalks and parking lots, to better accommodate customers and make things easier for social distancing.

Retailers there are also looking to expand their operations to sidewalks, and this could be a fix in Ely as well for bar owners, who have been closed completely for almost two months.

In Duluth, the city is exploring a change in city code through the end of the year.

Something similar could certainly be done in Ely and we expect a city council that has prided itself on economic development and being friendly to business would quickly follow suit.

Desperate times call for desperate measures, and creative and previously unexplored means may be needed to keep our business community intact. There's no time to waste.



Letters

...Veteran Memorial Pavilion...vandalized

Editor:
The Veteran Memorial Pavilion on Miners Lake was recently vandalized.

Many thanks to Bonnie and David Starkman for replanting the shrubbery that was damaged.

Also, many thanks to Simon Stouffer who was able to retrieve the furniture that was thrown off the high

ground toward the lake, only a few of which were damaged.

Thanks to the Ely high school workshop students who made the durable furniture.

We appreciate their collective efforts.
Nan Snyder
Ely

...put your money where your mouth is

To the Editor
Giving is not a bad thing to do.

Nationwide I have not heard of a non-profit environmental or anti-mining group give a dime towards food and medical supplies during this crisis. Isn't it funny how much money they can talk people in giving for one cause there non-profits with paychecks for a few board members, staff and officers. That's another reason why all non-profits organizations should not get tax breaks.

These non-profit environmentalists need to start working for society's best interest by working with industry, mining, farming, medical and industry to help finance research and development of new methods going forward into the 21st century.

They have done nothing except fill their pockets and spew the same pessimistic

song.

It's sad these same people are not willing to help solve environmental issues through science and education rather than leaving the blinders on without accomplishing anything.

It goes back to the same reasoning for these people for their cause, we'll spend your money as long as it's not ours.

Why don't your groups start a cause that will truly make an impact on society, put your money where your mouth is and change by working together with solutions not with anti-this and anti-that. Bad Bad Business!

By the way look up what mining like Twin Metals along with industry in giving back worldwide to this epidemic, it's remarkable. Or you can take canoes to the statehouse parade during the outbreak on April 22nd.

Tom Cooper
Ely, MN

... my heart goes out to all the athletes who are currently unable to participate

Editor:
When considered, the construct of sport is cruel. It almost guarantees a bad ending.

In Minnesota there are 1,244 high schools (very quick Google search, not sure of accuracy but for the sake of this, let's go with it).

If the sport you participate in has four different school size dividing classes (as basketball did while I played), there are roughly 300 teams all pursuing the same championship. Meaning 299 team's season will end in a loss. A 99.7% chance to be a "failure."

This fool's errand is quickly recognized once immersed in sport. Yet, the allure of what that .3% would represent easily overpowers the obvious pitfalls.

One of the first sporting events I vaguely remember watching was Ely's High School football team playing for a State Championship in the Metrodome.

While I wasn't in the stands, the hopeful, nervous excitement before kickoff from the group I was watching the TV with was evident. Especially in contrast to the disappointment that followed.

Their loss in the State Championship did not sit well with my not quite four year-old mind. But nor did

it discourage, from that moment I couldn't get enough of EHS sports.

With my house's close proximity to the school, I was able to attend countless events.

The 1990s were a great time to be an Ely sports fan. Football, basketball, and baseball were almost always somewhere between good and very good (no offense to hockey, but you weren't my winter love).

I neighbored Frank Udovich and the Moravitz brothers. Brandon and Ryan were closer to my age and played basketball. If it was the other way around, I have no doubt I would have joined Udo at the rink.

And even in the couple of years basketball wasn't in the top half of the Arrowhead Conference, entertainment was found in seeing how early into a game Coach McDonald would rip his suit coat off in disgust.

But no matter the level of success, heartbreak always followed. Some with earlier than anticipated upset defeats, others coming up short after a long playoff run. I came to dislike both.

My role's conversion from fan to player began soon after I stopped yelling at the refs for not calling pass interference on the Deer River defender who

mauled J.J. Puzel in the 1996 Section Semi-Final football game (I rarely find comfort in blaming refs for defeats, but I remain convinced it was an obvious penalty. The combination of that no-call on 3rd down and Kevin Mattila getting tripped up on what seemed like the perfect fullback dive play call on 4th down will always go down as the most gut-wrenching loss this Timberwolves fan ever witnessed).

And now that I was an active participant, I was determined to be part of a team whose season ended in triumph. I wanted to win a State Championship.

But, despite the ambition and opportunities, we too would experience some success, not all of it. Begrudgingly joining the long list of teams that had their seasons end with losses.

Not long after my playing career ended, my Mom was having a conversation with Bob LaTourell.

I had spent many Sunday nights playing basketball against him at open gym. So, it wasn't surprising he asked my Mom how I was taking the basketball season ending in a fashion that didn't include cutting down nets in St. Paul.

She replied with an answer he probably suspected, that I was still feeling the

sting from sports failure. Bob was a member of many successful Ely sports teams, including the 1987 football team I'd watched on TV.

"Well, if he is anything like me, it will always sting. He will never get over it." My Mom relayed this message to me. 19 years later and I'm still unable to call Bob inaccurate.

I mention all of this to say my heart goes out to all the athletes who are currently unable to participate. Amateur athletics is obviously just one of the endless things being disrupted by COVID-19.

But, I've found myself pondering how I would handle this situation if it was my competitions being cancelled. I have no doubt my comprehension of how this must feel has come up well short.

Although, it hasn't been hard to concluded the inability to play would sting worse than any loss.

That would mean there is little anyone can currently say that makes you feel better. That is how I was after tough losses.

But maybe somewhere down the road the unfortunately true and helpful wisdom that was passed down to me will also help you.

Adam Rannels
EHS Class of 2001



From the miscellaneous drawer

by Anne Swenson

I'm a creature of habit. In the morning it is first- checking my email. When the internet is down or misbehaving, I unplug, wait and re-plug. Sometimes it works, sometimes not.

Next comes breakfast and coffee. Then I settle in my recliner to watch the PBS shows I have recorded from the previous night. 800 Words is a new favorite. It is about an Australian family who re-locates to New Zealand after the mom dies. The 800 words is the father's thoughtful weekly column for a newspaper as they become acquainted with a small town.

Reading with impaired vision in my left eye has become difficult.

I pass by my storage units, cupboards and such, and wish I were motivated to clean them out or at least become aware of what they contain.

Perhaps if you, too, are staying at home in these COVID-19 times, and this is your pattern too.

In my backyard, clumps of friend-planted daffodils are emerging. Unlike tulips, deer leave the daffodils alone. The coming yellow bunches are anticipated with pleasure.

I have seeds to plant, but fear the uneven ground being accessed with my walker.

Who knew an excess of wine would exacerbate my health. I should have. Years of smoking didn't help either.

Political candidates are begging for funds. Seems odd when so many folks are unemployed and low or out of funds. Are the ultra liberals the only ones with money?

What if contributions were based on a reward system, or is that what we are supposed to think our donations are doing?

The whole presidential election system is too long and needs to be condensed into 1-2 months.

Well, that's my rant.

In the Ely Echo for May 5, 2010,

10 years ago, the headlines were:

- Proposed Ely sales tax refined, cut in half;
- Red ink, drastic steps at hospital;
- William Trygg collection donated to Bois Forte Heritage Center;
- Luke Lucas awarded VCC's 2010 Lifetime Achievement Award;
- Without a quorum, discussion held on sales tax between City Council and Chamber.

Time to Rally!

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