

BRAINERD DISPATCH

SERVING THE BRAINERD LAKES AREA SINCE 1881

Ready, PetSet, Go

Submitted photos Marge Lundquist (left) and her twin daughters Tama Lundquist and Tena Lundquist Faust pose with puppies getting ready to be transported from Houston to shelters elsewhere. Tama and Tena, originally from Deerwood, are co-presidents of Houston PetSet and work with shelters in Minnesota and other states to rehome stray animals.

Texas, Minnesota animal shelters partner to rescue pets

By Theresa Bourke
Staff Writer

Tens of thousands of people lost power, heat and water when Winter Storm Uri ravaged the southern United States in mid-February.

Dozens more died in the weather conditions, which caused mass chaos in states like Texas and Louisiana that are unfamiliar with harsh winters. But the people of

those states weren't the only storm victims. The cold temperatures and abundance of ice wreaked havoc on the areas' pets as well. And in a large state like Texas, where stray animals are already a massive issue, the crisis grew exponentially worse.

Two local sisters are doing their best to help, though, as are Minnesota shelters. Twins Tama Lundquist

and Tena Lundquist Faust, originally from Deerwood, are co-presidents of Houston PetSet, a nonprofit aiming to end animal homelessness and provide stray animals with better lives.

Tena moved to Houston in 1997 after meeting her husband, and Tama followed in 2004 after living abroad for a time. Both sisters were involved with

animal welfare work for a while when they joined the PetSet Board of Directors in 2007. When asked to take on a co-president position on the board in 2012, they thought that was something they'd do for maybe a year. Fast forward to 2021, and sisters are still in their post, doing their best to help the stray animal crisis in Houston.

PETS: Page A15



Tama Lundquist and Tena Lundquist Faust, twin sisters originally from Deerwood, hold two puppies that will be transported from Houston to shelters elsewhere.

A welcoming place for all

CLC initiative shines a light on racial concerns

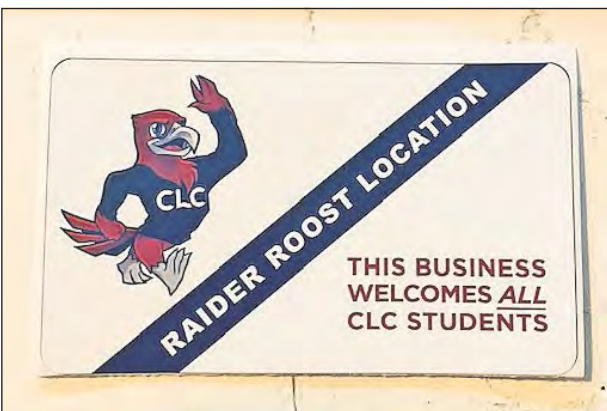
By Theresa Bourke
Staff Writer

Cash Robinson wants everyone to feel welcome in the Brainerd lakes community, especially college students.

Robinson works at Central Lakes College as an equity inclusion retention coach, meaning he works primarily with student athletes to help them get acclimat-

ed to the Brainerd lakes community and make sure they have all the resources they need. Many of the CLC athletes he works with are students of color.

The Raider Roost initiative, where local businesses and organizations promote inclusivity for all students, was born out of conversations with those



Submitted graphic

About a dozen local businesses have identified themselves as Raider Roost locations, noting their dedication to making college students -- especially athletes at Central Lakes College -- feel welcome in the community.

athletes about how they feel at times when going out into the community.

"Like, for instance,

being in a store and feeling like you're being followed around the store, even though

RAIDERS: Page A16

Broadband at heart of connectivity

BLAEDC hosts virtual annual meeting, keynote address

By Renee Richardson
Managing Editor

Access to the internet may never have been more needed, tested or discussed than this past year.

It's not a new issue for rural America, but

2020 moved it to a critical mass.

And it's all summed up in one keyword — broadband.

The importance of connectivity in all areas of life was part of the annual meeting for the Brainerd Lakes Area Economic Development Corp. The session typically brings

BLAEDC: Page A9



Bloomfield

Minnesota to expand vaccinations

COVID-19 shots for all might start later next month

By Dana Ferguson
Forum News Service

ST. PAUL — Another 1.8 million Minnesotans are set to become eligible for a COVID-19 vaccination, the state announced Tuesday,

March 9, with front-line workers and those with preexisting conditions set to be next in line for a shot.

Gov. Tim Walz on Tuesday morning said the state had reached a goal of vaccinating 70% of adults 65 and older and that milestone kick-started the next two rounds of vaccinations. With more doses expect-

ed to come into the state in coming weeks, the governor said Minnesota would expand eligibility to additional age groups and people working in certain professions, as well as to those with more significant health risks.

The new groups join health care workers, seniors, school workers and child care providers

in their eligibility for a vaccine. Those populations will continue to be vaccinated as the new tiers come forward for access, Walz said. And those with the highest risk of developing severe complications if they contract COVID-19 will be prioritized for the vaccinations.

VACCINATIONS: Page A9

2/3rds of Crow Wing's 65+ residents get vax

By Chelsey Perkins
Community Editor

More than two-thirds of Crow Wing County's 65 and older population is at least partly vaccinated against COVID-19 as of Tuesday, March 9, while the state moves to expand eligibility to

the next two priority groups.

According to data collected by the Minnesota Department of Health, 67.6% of Crow Wing's residents age 65 and older received at least one dose of vaccine, **CROW WING:** Page A16

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COVID-19 DATA AS OF MARCH 9

- ▶ **Aitkin** — 1,193, with 33 deaths; as of Wednesday, Feb. 17, 4,276 residents have received at least one vaccine dose, representing 27% of the county's population.
- ▶ **Cass** — 2,233, with 24 deaths; 6,536 residents with at least one dose, 22.3%.
- ▶ **Crow Wing** — 5,242, with 82 deaths; 14,102 residents with at least one dose, 22%.
- ▶ **Mille Lacs** — 2,311, with 47 deaths; 5,097 residents with at least one dose, 19.7%.
- ▶ **Morrison** — 3,315, with 51 deaths; 6,412 residents with at least one dose, 19.4%.
- ▶ **Todd** — 2,504, with 30 deaths; 4,007 residents with at least one dose, 16.4%.
- ▶ **Wadena** — 1,322, with 20 deaths; 2,820 residents with at least one dose, 20.7%.

NOTE: These numbers are cumulative since March 21, 2020, and many are out of isolation.

CROW WING

From Page A1

also representing two-thirds of the 14,102 vaccine recipients thus far in the county. The number of vaccinated seniors in Crow Wing County exceeds the statewide figure of 67.1% — just short of Gov. Tim Walz's 70% goal, although reported data is typically two days behind.

Among surrounding counties, Aitkin, Mille Lacs, Morrison and Wadena counties each reported more than 60% of their senior populations are partly or fully vaccinated. Cass sits at 59%, while Todd County lags behind at 53%.

In terms of population as a whole, Aitkin County continues to lead the way regionally at 27% with at least one dose, while Todd again falls to the back of the pack at 16.4%. Crow Wing County sat at 22% of its population Tuesday.

During Tuesday's Crow Wing County Board meeting, County Administrator Tim Houle noted this fig-

ure is somewhat misleading because it will not be possible to obtain 100% for some time, if ever. This is because a significant portion of the county's population is younger than 16 years old — about 15%. None of the vaccines available are approved for this age group, and just one of the three in distribution in the United States is approved for those under 18 years old.

Houle said "snowbirds" — or those who relocate to usually warmer locales during the winter months — returning to the community might have been vaccinated in other states, which he said might also throw off the county's numbers.

"Vaccine supply seems to be rising, and that's a good thing for our community," Houle said. "This past week for the first time, we held a clinic for those over 65 and we had open slots that were not filled. And so I think it's a good indication of where we're at in that vaccination process."

Houle said with vaccine

supplies increasing, county public health and other vaccinators are considering what may need to be in place to take a mass vaccination approach.

"I wanted to assure you that everybody's thinking about that as vaccine supply gets to be more plentiful," Houle said. "We're doing our best to move through the population, given the guidance that we've received and the order in which we're receiving it with whatever supply of the vaccine we're being given."

Peggy Stebbins, spokeswoman for Cuyuna Regional Medical Center in Crosby, said they were thrilled to hear the governor's announcement expanding vaccine access to the next two population tiers, including those with underlying medical conditions and essential frontline workers in a number of specified categories.

"We are hopeful that next week brings large shipments of vaccine," Stebbins wrote in an email Tuesday. "... Our plan is to start vaccinating the next groups, as well as

vaccinating those in the first groups that have not yet been vaccinated."

Behind the numbers

A data correction Tuesday in the state health department's figures showed 140 newly reported deaths due to COVID-19. This data, however, was almost entirely backdated, with four private labs previously failing to report positive test results to the state, according to David H. Montgomery of Minnesota Public Radio News. This also led to a misleading number of new cases reported Tuesday.

Among the 138 deaths previously not recorded were four in Morrison County: a 75- to 79-year-old; 80- to 84-year-old; 85- to 89-year-old and a 95- to 99-year-old.

New cases continue to emerge in the region, although at a slowed pace more akin to late summer and early fall.

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RAIDERS

From Page A1

you're going to purchase something. And me personally, I know what that feels like," Robinson said during a Zoom interview.

CLC football player Ivory Jones is no stranger to scenarios like that. A Black student originally from Minneapolis, Jones came to Brainerd about three years ago.

While he felt welcomed at CLC, Jones said the off-campus atmosphere in Brainerd was much different. There wasn't necessarily tension when visiting places like grocery stores or public areas in the city, but it was strange.

"I've never been looked at so much," Jones said during a Zoom interview.

He recalled a time when he stepped into an establishment after a football game, donning a bandana and the ripped shirt he had worn under his uniform. Everyone stared.

"I'm not exaggerating at all, I'm not adding anything — everyone in the store was staring at me," he said.

While working at Perkins, Jones said the crowds that came in were pretty fun for

the most part, but there were also rowdier groups who came in later at night and did not want him as their server.

But those were minor incidents for Jones, who said one of the bigger shocks he had in coming to Brainerd from the Twin Cities was the first time he saw a confederate flag on display in person at a party.

He was taken aback at the sight but, as someone who has learned to adapt to his surroundings, didn't feel the immediate need to leave the party. Jones chalks those sorts of displays in this area up to a false sense of history.

"They think the confederate flag is like heritage or something like that," Jones said of the loose grasps he's gotten on the subject from talking to people in the community.

The Raider Roost initiative aims to help students like Jones — and all students, for that matter — feel more comfortable in the community. Participating businesses and organizations display Raider Roost stickers to show students they are welcome there.

"Everybody's expected to be a decent human being anywhere," Robinson said, but the Raid-

er Roost stickers show that business owners understand there are college students in the community who should be welcomed as community members and not outsiders.

The Brainerd Family YMCA is among those participating in the initiative, which Laura Marsolek aligns perfectly with the nonprofit's mission.

"We especially want to welcome these students because a lot of them come from out of state," said Marsolek, assistant aquatics director who also heads the YMCA's diversity, equity and inclusion committee. "We want to make sure that they definitely feel welcome here at the Y because the Y is more than a gym. It's a place to connect, it's a place to meet people. It's a place to really feel welcomed and at home, and so if this is a way to do that, then we are all on board."

One of the YMCA's biggest goals right now, Marsolek said, is to increase inclusiveness, so the Raider Roost program is a step in the right direction.

Robinson hopes the program will also bolster businesses that take part and encourage stu-

dents to stay in the area longer.

"Everything I'm doing is trying to get the students to feel comfortable while they're here and to be productive and at least get their AA (associate of arts degree) and transfer onto a four-year from here instead of going to another two-year," Robinson said.

Jones sees the initiative as a big step for a city like Brainerd and hopes it will bring more awareness to racial issues in the community.

"You can make somebody welcome but if you don't show somebody that you're aware of the issue, they don't feel like their problem or whatever is being addressed," Jones said. "... You have to vocalize that you are aware. This is that vocalization."

And that awareness extends further than just the African American community in Brainerd, Jones said, but also to other minority groups like Native Americans and the realization that racism is still going on to do this day in the area.

As more minority residents move to Brainerd, Robinson said the need for inclusivity

efforts increases. People of color tend to get grouped together, Robinson said, meaning one negative interaction with a person of color brings out racial profiling and discrimination, whether it's intentional or not.

"We can't control what people do, but we can educate others on the difference between people," Robinson said in an email after the interview. "... The Raider Roost initiative is just one step in the process. Once people start seeing students out in the community more, they may engage in conversation and learn from each other rather than judge from afar."

Robinson would also like to see a community center in Brainerd — a place where people can gather, can get along and can communicate openly.

For Jones, communication is the key to addressing issues like race.

"Honestly, people just need to communicate

RAIDER ROOST LOCATIONS

So far, the following businesses have shown support as a Raider Roost location:

- ▶ College Square Gas Station
- ▶ 317 Diner
- ▶ Tires Plus
- ▶ Firehouse Subs
- ▶ Burrito California
- ▶ Four Seas Super Buffet
- ▶ Great Clips in northeast Brainerd
- ▶ Dairy Queen in northeast Brainerd
- ▶ Shep's on 6th
- ▶ Applebee's
- ▶ YMCA
- ▶ Salvation Army
- ▶ Brekken's

and talk to each other," he said. "That's really it because if there were more people talking — actually communicating — with each other, there would be less misunderstanding, less animosity between people."

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