

Photos of the year

See the Herald's choices for its top photos of 2020, Page A6



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SATURDAY, JANUARY 2, 2021

EGF to consider further funds for businesses

By Joe Bowen
Grand Forks Herald

East Grand Forks' economic development authority is set to next week consider a fresh round of COVID-19 business subsidies.

At a special meeting on Dec. 21, city leaders OK'd a \$260,000 payment to the development authority to create a forgivable loan program for non-essential businesses that have been partly or completely closed by Gov. Tim Walz's recent executive orders. The mandate, which was extended Dec. 16, prohibits bars and restaurants from serving customers in-person until the peacetime emergency he enacted last spring expires. Members of the development authority's board are set to meet Tuesday, Jan. 5, to consider the contours of that program.

Minnesota law prohibits the city or development authority from paying businesses directly, but the "forgivable" part of the loans means businesses wouldn't have to repay the development authority if they tick certain boxes. Proposed criteria include remaining in business through 2021, complying with the governor's executive orders, and retaining certain numbers of employees — at least 25% of the people who worked for an applicant in 2019 or 2020 or all of the workers a business had on Jan. 1, whichever is higher.

City and development authority staff put together a list of 17 potential applicants, some of which received money in prior rounds of public aid from the city. Those businesses include the local VFW post and Eagles aerie, River Cinema, and several bars and restaurants, including the Boardwalk Bar and Grill, whose owners flouted Walz's closure orders earlier this month, and The Spud Jr., whose owner is planning a sit-in protest for early January.

Several East Grand Forks civic and business leaders

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Eric Hylden/Grand Forks Herald

In Warroad, Minn., "Hockey Town USA," young players have an abundance of outdoor rinks on which to practice during the pandemic.

HOCKEY, LIKE LIFE, GOES ON IN WARROAD

In Hockeytown USA, kids take to outdoor ice after governor's 'pause'

Editor's note: These two stories are part of the Herald's "On the border" project, which includes multiple stories and a three-part video documentary that can be found grandforksherald.com.

By Ann Bailey
Grand Forks Herald
Warroad, Minn.

The coronavirus pandemic hasn't silenced Hockeytown USA. The thwap of sticks connecting to pucks and the telltale "ksssh-ksssh" of ice skates ring across town as kids skate in small backyard rinks, snow-cleared patches on the Warroad River and two public outdoor rinks all over Warroad.

Two days after Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz on Nov. 20 issued a "pause" order on the state's high school winter sports, Warroad High School

WARROAD: Page A5

Harrowing trip for wedding, and a unique postal route

By Brad Dokken
Grand Forks Herald

Whether it's getting mail or getting married, life at Minnesota's Northwest Angle is never dull.

Just ask Fred Caravetta of Warroad, Minn., long-time mail carrier to the Northwest Angle, that remote piece of Minnesota geography surrounded on three sides by Canada and accessible by road only by driving through Manitoba and from the U.S. only by crossing some 40 miles of Lake of the Woods.

ANGLE: Page A8



Photo courtesy of Janae Krantz-Odendahl Erik Struefert and Janae Krantz-Odendahl of the Twin Cities were able to overcome the challenges of no road access to the Northwest Angle and an early onset of wintry weather to get married in late October on Flag Island.

Pinke's message gave hope throughout 2020

Injured UND football captain named Herald's Person of Year

By Tom Miller
Grand Forks Herald

Hunter Pinke had Dec. 27 circled on his calendar.

He wasn't dreading the one-year anniversary of his life-changing ski accident, though. Nor was he anxious about it.

UND football coach Bubba Schweigert instilled in Pinke a "day-by-day" mantra during his time in college football and the philosophy stuck. That means dealing with the

27th, then moving on to the 28th.

Yet this Dec. 27 was a time to reflect on his growth, Pinke thought. So, he mentally ran down the timeline of events from one year ago, as the now 23-year-old was surrounded by family at his grandparents' farm near Aneta, N.D.

At 9 a.m., Pinke thought back to going up Keystone Mountain in Colorado, to ski with

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Photo by Eric Hylden/Grand Forks Herald

Hunter Pinke is the Grand Forks Herald's Person of The Year.

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WARROAD

From Page A1

hockey coach Jay Hardwick shoveled snow off a 50-by-100-foot area of ice on a pond behind his house across from the Warroad Estates Golf Course, just north of the city.

Clearing the ice is an annual ritual for Hardwick, but this year, the space is twice the normal size. He knew that with the city's Gardens indoor rink closed to skating, per Walz's order, his four children – Abbey, a high school senior; Will, a freshman; Elle, a third-grader; and Emmie, a seventh-grader – and their friends needed a place to practice and play pick-up games.

Abbey is a forward for the Warroad High School girls team, Will is a defenseman on the Bantam team, Emmie is on the 12-and-under team and Elle plays on the 10-and-under team.

"I've got four kids that are playing, and they have nowhere to go," Hardwick said. "The kids are used to being at the rink every day. I'm at the rink every day," Hardwick said, as he watched Will slap the puck into the net.

Herald reporters and photographers/videographers traveled to Lancaster, Roseau, Warroad and the Lake of the Woods area in northwest Minnesota this fall to document how life has changed in the region during the first eight months of the pandemic. What the Herald found during work on the project – titled "On the border" – is that some in the region have struggled, or had to adjust and adapt, due to the border closure and pandemic. Meanwhile, some businesses in the region were seeing upticks in business as summer turned to autumn.

And then there's hockey. What happens in place known as Hockeytown USA when the winter sports season has been put on hold as the state continues to battle the late-year surge in coronavirus cases?

In Warroad, as in so many other communities in Minnesota, the players, coaches and parents have adapted. As public skating facilities have been closed, backyard rinks – common most years in the north country – have popped up nearly everywhere, offering kids a chance to stay sharp while they wait for word that the season can start.

Teams are expected to begin practice Monday, Jan. 4, with the first games likely to begin Friday, Jan. 14. No official practices have been allowed while the pause order is in effect.

But in Warroad, the pause in the season hasn't kept kids from working out and skating on outdoor ice. "They get out there and do whatever," Hardwick said. "There's no set, 'We've got to do this, we've got to do that.' I'm just glad they're out there on the ice."

At the pond behind Hardwick's house, three lawn chairs are set up so kids can lace their skates. They know they don't have to ask Hardwick for permission to use the ice, so sometimes it's sound, not sight, that alerts him when someone is skating in his backyard.

"Yesterday, I was on the other side of the house ... (and) I was like, 'Oh, someone must be out skating.' I could



Photos by Eric Hylden/Grand Forks Herald

Will Hardwick practices his skills on a frozen pond in the family's backyard in Warroad, Minn., on Monday, Nov. 30, while high school athletics were shut down because of the pandemic. Will's dad, Jay Hardwick, is the Warroad Warriors high school hockey coach.



Blake Norris, a captain of the Warroad Warriors high school hockey team, practices with his cousin, Thadeus Jackson, on the family's backyard rink.



Six-year-old Adelyn Abernathy sharpens her skating skills at an outdoor rink in Warroad, Minn. recently. Adelyn started playing hockey when she was 2 years old.

hear it," Hardwick said during an interview shortly after the ice froze this season.

Fortunately, the early-winter weather has been about perfect for outdoor skating – cold enough to freeze the ice, but not cold enough to freeze fingers and toes.

"I have some friends in the Twin Cities who have been jealous because it hasn't been cold enough – one of the advantages of living up north," Hardwick said.

At the same time, it often has been warm enough for his kids to be on the ice for several hours at a time. As the pandemic affects so much of everyday life in these parts, the moderate weather of early winter has been a blessing.

Along state Highway 11, kids have been skating behind Doc's Harbor Inn. Sisters Janet Marvin, Robin Marvin and Randi Oftedahl run the inn, where the public can rent outdoor equipment, including ice skates. This year, the sisters hand-shoveled a section of the river the size of a football field.

"It's a 7-mile walk to shovel the whole thing," Janet Marvin said. Knowing the indoor arena is closed, Marvin figured the extra work would be worth it.

It was. Throughout the day, kids show up to use the ice.

Also on the Warroad

River, residents in the community have cleared a 2-mile-long skating trail, about the width of a city street. The path is expected to be open in early January.

On the other side of Warroad, Thadeus, Rodrik and Aaliyah Jackson play hockey with cousins Blake and Benjamin Norris, while the Norris' brother, Brody, tosses errant pucks back into the rink.

The rink, in the backyard of Michele and Rodrik Jackson Sr., is used by about a dozen neighborhood kids, who take turns skating and shooting pucks. Besides the six Jackson and Norris cousins, about 10 other neighborhood kids use the rink, which is maintained by Rodrik Jackson and Gary Tveit, the grandfather of all six kids, along with several neighborhood dads.

"I have kids who love to skate, one in particular," Michele Jackson said, noting that Rodrik is out of bed and onto the rink before he eats breakfast. "He will get up in the morning and head out there and eat something and head back out."

Even before Walz's pause order closed the indoor arena, the six cousins liked to skate outdoors and play pickup games with their friends.

"The older they get, the more pressure there is for children to become a one-sport athlete.

before.

"He's probably the most disappointed because he's a senior," Melissa Norris said.

Since the area closed, Blake has skated a couple of hours a day on the Jacksons' outdoor rink.

Between September and November, he played 24 regular-season games and playoff games in the Minnesota High School Elite League. Norris felt safe, despite the pandemic, because the league put in place various safety protocols. None of the players on his team contracted COVID-19, he said.

After playing hockey for months, news that the Minnesota high school hockey season would be delayed was disappointing for him.

"It was pretty crushing to know you have to wait a few weeks longer," said Blake, who expressed confidence that hockey can be safely played during the pandemic, just as football was. "I think football went pretty smoothly. I think winter sports will, too."

Though his mother understands winter sports were paused to help stop the spread of COVID-19, she said it doesn't seem fair that winter sports were singled out as not being safe, and fall sports athletes were allowed to compete.

"It was more heartbreaking after seeing volleyball successfully completed their seasons and football completed their season," Melissa Norris said before it was announced the season will resume in January. "I'm really hoping this is just a pause."

Though she wants to watch Blake play hockey in person, she's willing to watch his games

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I think it's more important for kids to play than for all the fans to be in the stands.

MELISSA NORRIS,
Warroad parent

virtually, if that's what it takes to allow the season to start, Norris said.

"I think it's more important for kids to play than for all the fans to be in the stands. I would say every parent would pick that," she said.

Hardwick and his players were excited about the 2021 hockey season, especially after finishing fourth in the Minnesota state tournament last season.

"I was really looking forward to the season," he said.

Jude Boulianne, Gardens Arena rink manager, empathizes with youth hockey players, too. Only one bantam team played a game in the Gardens Arena before the Nov. 20 pause order, he said.

"It's very disappointing," Boulianne said. "It's such a team game. They have camaraderie with their friends."

"I work in the rink business because I enjoy hockey, and I also enjoy watching kids skate. I know how important it was to me growing up."

In the absence of being allowed to play in the Gardens Arena, Boulianne is glad that Warroad's young players have somewhere to play.

"We hadn't had that outdoor ice boom for a lot of years," he said. "Times have changed and people are trying to accommodate that. They need some type of outlet. If people can provide some of that to get through this time, I'm happy people were able to help them."

Outside the Gardens Arena is a public ice sheet where skaters of all ages gather.

"It's a piece of ice that people can come and skate on," Boulianne said. "We don't have anything organized – whoever shows up."

Now, it appears the season will finally get underway. During the pause, Hardwick, the varsity boys coach, said he was just glad that his kids and their friends could still play hockey, whether it was on his rink, neighborhood rinks, on the river or on the ice behind the Gardens Arena. For kids, some of whom were ice skating as young as 18 months, the sport is an integral part of life in Warroad.

"It's Hockeytown USA," Hardwick said.

WHO WILL MAKE THE LIST IN 2021?

Prairie Business magazine is accepting nominations for our annual Top 25 Women in Business. We're seeking those women who are making big moves and leading the way in their careers and communities.

If you know a great candidate for this coveted list, go to prairiebusinessmagazine.com and click on the Top 25 Women in Business logo to submit a nomination.

Nominations accepted through January 15, 2021.