

BRAINERD DISPATCH

SERVING THE BRAINERD LAKES AREA AND CENTRAL MINNESOTA SINCE 1881



DESTRUCTIVE DERECHO

Contributed / Jessica Kowalke

A shelf cloud denotes the leading edge of a severe thunderstorm on Thursday in St. Mathias Township, south of Brainerd. Shelf clouds are usually accompanied by the gust front and are formed by the downdraft in the storm. This storm met the definition of a derecho, which is a widespread, long-lived wind storm associated with a band of rapidly moving showers or thunderstorms, according to the weather service.

Power outages persist after high winds cause widespread damage

By Chelsey Perkins
Brainerd Dispatch

Brainerd

The power could be out for days for some area residents as utility crews work to clear downed trees and debris or replace lines and poles damaged during severe weather Thursday night, May 12.

About 2,400 customers in the Minnesota Power service area remained in the dark just after 3 p.m. Friday, and a company representative said those impacted in areas around Little Falls, Long Prairie and Browerville should prepare for multiple days without electricity. The majority of customers should be restored by Saturday night, said Amy Rutledge, manager of corporate communications for the power company,

STORM: Page A14

Tornado sirens halt CLC graduation

By Theresa Bourke
Brainerd Dispatch

VIDEO

For video, see brainerddispatch.com



Kelly Humphrey / Brainerd Dispatch

Central Lakes College graduates wave to family and friends Thursday during the career and technical program ceremony at the Brainerd campus. To see more images, go to www.brainerddispatch.com

BRAINERD — A typical graduation ends with a ceremonious turning of the tassel and perhaps a toss of the cap.

But for some 2022 Central Lakes College graduates, the ceremony ended with a brisk walk to the storm shelter.

Tornado sirens sounded just after the last graduate crossed the stage to get his diploma Thursday, May 12, during CLC's Brainerd campus career and technical ceremony.

The chaotic end to the ceremony came not long after CLC President Hara Charlier spoke about the twists and turns in the path of life, how no journey is as straight and smooth as the Paul Bunyan State Trail.

"It's a very predictable, beautiful trail, but the paths in life don't typically look like that,"

CLC: Page A12

Skate park group sets sights on Memorial Park

By Theresa Bourke
Brainerd Dispatch

BRAINERD — Support, donations and plans are mounting for a skate park in Brainerd.

While the project is still in its early stages, the Lakes Area Skatepark Association has preliminary designs for a park and the go-ahead from city officials to eventually build it in Memorial Park.

"The skate park is great for the community," Jake Rennaker told Parks Board members in March. "It fills the need for many youth riders. It's a healthy outlet for people. It creates tourism, and it's a perfect addition for Brainerd because you guys are trying to make positive changes, and we can see that. A lot of people can see that, and the skate park would be a great addition."

Rennaker is part of the Lakes Area Skatepark Association, a non-profit raising money to bring a skate park to the Brainerd lakes area.

SKATE: Page A12

Loved ones remember Linnie Loucks' laugh

By Tim Speier
Brainerd Dispatch

BRAINERD — Goofy, full of color, she had a laugh as memorable as it was contagious.

That's how family members remember Linnie Loucks — a wife, mother and best friend who was infectious with life. Loucks, 43, was murdered April 28 at a residence north of Brainerd.

"Not only did I get a mom, because she was only five years older than me, I also got a



Loucks

best friend," said Trisha Szczodroski, Linnie's stepdaughter. "Somebody who taught me what it was to be a woman, how to do makeup and how to care about dressing up. She loved to dress up."

Linnie Loucks went through life with one goal — making everyone's day better, her family said.

"I just remem-

ber the very first time I met her," said Dennis Loucks, Linnie's husband. "It was right after her mother had passed and ... the thing I remember distinctly was, there's something different about this girl."

Married in 1997, Dennis Loucks said from the moment they met he knew she was a unique person with a joy and vibrancy about her that just isn't seen in a lot of people nowadays.

The couple owned and operated L.A. Portrait

Studio in Willmar for seven years and in the Brainerd lakes area for three more before Linnie went back to school for cosmetology.

"In the photography studio I loved, absolutely loved, working with her," Dennis Loucks said. "That was probably the best time of our marriage when we got to be together and work together all the time. And she did very well with that, (she) just got burnt out on the computer."

LYNNIE: Page A13

Seeking justice for Indigenous families

By Tim Speier
Brainerd Dispatch

ONAMIA — Fluttering effortlessly in the wind blowing in off Mille Lacs Lake, 27 empty red dresses lined the fence off Highway 169 as a reminder of all the missing women and Indigenous relatives who should be wearing them.

On May 5, over 150 members of the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, family and friends gathered at

the Health and Human Services Building in Onamia to hear Brenda Moose deliver the invocation on the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives.

During her invocation, Moose started bleeding from the nose as she formed a manidoo, an Ojibwe term for a "deep spiritual connection."

"It's how we know she's the right person for the invocation,"

said a spokesperson for the band.

The dresses hung along the highway are a part of the REDress Project, which started in Canada in 2010 as a way to highlight the epidemic of violence against Indigenous women.

After the invocation, Dan Wind played a hand drum followed by a women's healing circle jingle dress dance.

INDIGENOUS: Page A15

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INDIGENOUS

From Page A1

The jingle dress dance gets its name from the rows of metal cones attached to the dresses. The National Congress of American Indians notes the dresses are also known as prayer dresses and “the cones create another melody as the dancers move, mimicking the sound of falling rain and bringing a sense of peace to the whole endeavor.”

When the women’s healing circle dance concluded, a small portion of cake was handed out to be eaten with care in remembrance of lost relatives.

Juliet Rudie, newly appointed director of Minnesota’s Office of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives, spoke to the crowd about her plans for the newly created position.

“The mission of this office is to seek justice for the victims and their families,” Rudie said. “I will promote the empowerment of Native American women and pursue safeguards for Native American women, relatives and children. The programs and services will foster safety, equity, healing, civil and human rights of Indigenous peoples and communities in Minnesota.”

A tribal member of the Lower Sioux Indian community and former chief deputy for the Ramsey County Sheriff’s Office, Rudie spent 28 years in public safety before taking the position of director of Minnesota’s Office of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives Feb. 28.

“It’s very personal to me,” Rudie said. “I have a cousin that’s been missing since 2017. I have a cousin



Above: Empty red dresses lined the fence off Highway 169 Thursday as a reminder of all the missing women and Indigenous relatives who should be wearing them. **Below:** A women’s healing circle performs a jingle dress dance Thursday at the Health and Human Services Building in Onamia.

Photos by Tim Speier / Brainerd Dispatch

in that was murdered with no justice. I have a friend whose daughter was killed by gun violence.”

With multiple family members missing or murdered, Rudie said she is committed to doing more when she says her office aims to help develop and implement future legislation and policies. She said she will be hiring additional staff to begin establishing an advisory council to work on developing prevention reporting and response protocol.

A 2020 report from the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women’s Task Force to the Minnesota State Legislature led to the creation of the state’s Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives Office, the first of its kind in the nation.

Making sure those lost are never forgot-

ten, members of the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe shared personal testimonies of missing and murdered loved ones, an issue that has persisted for decades, according to state reports.

One of those who spoke about his loss was Monte Fronk, who told his personal story about his daughter Nada’s murder in 2021.

“In my darkest times, all the advocates for the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, who were there for me when the call came in, who were there for her wake and her funeral, they all came to me and said, ‘Monty, when you are ready, you need to tell your daughter’s story,’” Fronk said. “Don’t let Nada’s murder be a statistic, or a check in a box.”

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SEIZE THE AWKWARD

**MONDAY
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MAYBERRY AUDITORIUM
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Parents, caregivers, and area residents are welcome to attend “Seize the Awkward,” a community discussion on mental health. Experts will explain how to recognize the risk factors of suicide and how to watch for warning signs in youth. An open discussion about how to openly talk about suicide and when to take action will be held. After a brief presentation, participants will have the opportunity to ask questions of the mental health professionals.

Visit cuyunamed.org/seizetheawkward for more information and registration

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