



PL COUPLE CONTINUES COVID-19 FIGHT

Benefit set Saturday to help with expenses

By Nancy Vogt
Echo Journal

PEQUOT LAKES — Todd Lynes recently started fishing in a summer league with a friend.

At age 47, that's something he likely took for granted a year ago, along with another favorite hobby - camping.

Along with participating in everyday activities and chores with his family.

Along with doing his job at Viking Label & Packaging

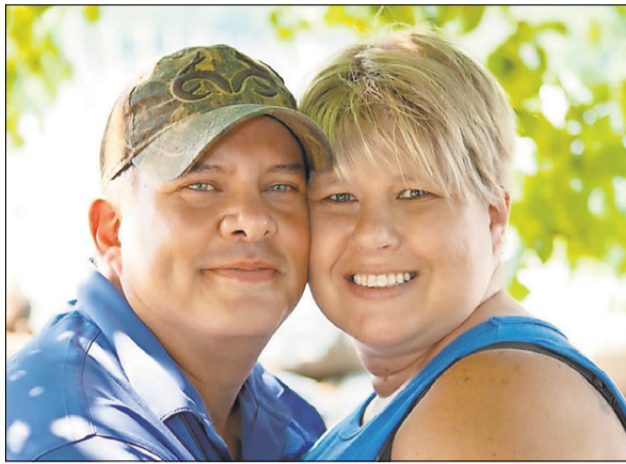
in Nisswa.

Lynes and his fiancée, Bobbie Luchka, no longer take anything in life for granted after Lynes nearly died last winter from COVID-19.

He was sedated and on a ventilator for 52 days in the intensive care unit at Essentia Health-St. Joseph's Medical Center in Brainerd. No one was allowed to see him, except his mom three different times.

"That's because they called and said I wasn't going to make it through the night," Lynes said.

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Contributed

Todd Lynes and Bobbie Luchka, Pequot Lakes, continue to suffer from effects of COVID-19.

BENEFIT INFORMATION

- ▶ **Who:** Todd Lynes and Bobbie Luchka, Pequot Lakes
- ▶ **When:** 4:30 p.m. Saturday, June 18
- ▶ **Where:** Pequot Lakes American Legion
- ▶ **What:** Sloppy joes, potato salad, beans, chips and a drink for \$10; live music by The Nissfits from 7:30-10 p.m.; silent auction.
- ▶ **Why:** To relieve financial stress and help with medical bills after both were hospitalized because of COVID-19.
- ▶ **Donations:** Send monetary donations to First Western Bank in Nisswa for the "Todd Lynes and Bobbie Luchka Benefit." Drop silent auction donations at Viking Label & Packaging in Nisswa.
- ▶ **More information:** contact Michelle Wahoske at michellewahoske@yahoo.com or 218-232-8942.

Area cities prepare for fireworks

Pine River and Nisswa now offer summer fireworks

By Travis Grimler
Echo Journal

Fireworks have long been a traditional means of celebrating big occasions and holidays. This summer the Brainerd lakes area will offer more fireworks shows than in years before with Pine River and Nisswa joining the party.

Every city has its own source of fireworks funding. Some have finished raising fireworks money; others are still in progress.

Pine River

Pine River is getting into the summer fireworks game this year with Dam Days, formerly known as Summerfest.

"The committee was talking about how it would be nice to have some fireworks around here," said Michaela Reed, Pine River Chamber of Commerce executive director. "There's a local guy, Sheldon Speaker, who's doing fireworks. We touched base with him. He had an open date so we're going to give it a go."

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Lake Shore celebrates 75 years



Nancy Vogt / Echo Journal

From left, Arlene and Max Bush, Lake Shore residents for 28 years, talk to Cindy Terwilliger, Lake Shore Park and Recreation Committee member who put together a history display, at the city's 75th anniversary celebration Thursday at Fritz Loven Park.

Temps higher than usual; storms unlikely

By Dan Determan
Echo Journal

After a bitterly cold winter and cooler than average spring, the lakes area is officially in the throes of summer as temperatures will remain "higher than usual" for the next week, according to the National Weather Service in Duluth.

"After (Tuesday, June 14), it will cool off relatively," NWS meteorologist Ketzell Levens said. "We will still be slight-

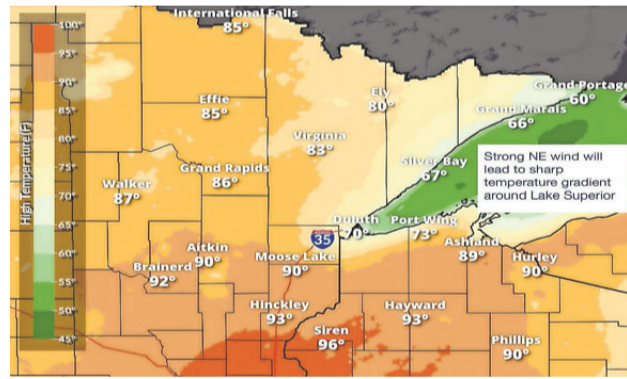
ly above normal, but it should be in the high 70s or low 80s through the rest of the week ... After that, we are keeping a close eye on what will be happening late weekend into next week. So there are some signals that the heat will return, along with the moisture."

Levens said average high temperatures for the lakes area in mid-June stick to the mid-70s, but the remainder of this should exceed that,

and then creep up near 100 degrees Sunday and Monday.

"The first days that get really warm in summer are always something we have to be pretty conscientious about, because many of us are just not acclimatized to this kind of heat," she said. "Even temperatures in the mid-80s are not something that a lot of people are ready for ... The biggest thing is to just pay

TEMPS: Page 11



National Weather Service

High temperatures for Tuesday exceeded the average for mid-June, and may be even higher by the weekend.

Cottonwood fluff posing unprecedented fire danger

By Travis Grimler
Echo Journal

After approximately 18 acres went up in smoke at a grass fire Thursday, June 9, on South

Clark Lake Road, Nisswa Fire Chief Shawn Bailey is warning anyone who will listen: "Don't light the white."

This comes after Bailey has witnessed this

and other area grass fires where the flames spread faster than usual thanks to the thick coating of cottonwood fluff that has blanketed the area for weeks now.

"That cotton stuff is more flammable than gasoline," Bailey said. "I've never seen or experienced anything like it. You could be standing right next to the fire and

the next thing you know it's gone 50 feet, then it holds up, then it catches the next batch and goes another 100 feet."

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COUPLE

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From left, the Lynes-Luchka family includes Michael Zontelli, Lark Luchka, Forrest Hughs, Bobbie Luchka, Todd Lynes, Kody Lynes and Abigael Hughs.

COVID-19 test before returning to work.

"I tested positive," Lynes said. "I didn't really feel sick, but we had to do it for work."

Asked what prompted him to go into the hospital a few days later, Luchka said, "He was delusional."

Lynes added: "I called my boss and apparently I wasn't too pleasant to him over the

phone."

He doesn't remember making the call.

"My oxygen levels were at 21% in the hospital, which is apparently like a miracle I was still alive," Lynes said.

He was put on a ventilator in the emergency room because there was no hospital bed for him.

Besides high blood pressure,

Lynes said he was otherwise healthy.

Luchka, 46, tested negative when Lynes tested positive, yet she landed in the hospital two days after Lynes with COVID-19 and pneumonia.

"I couldn't breathe," she said.

After a one-week hospital stay, Luchka ended up with diabetes, an inflamed heart and a blood clot in her lungs. Her lungs and kidneys are damaged.

Lynes lost 50 pounds and also had pneumonia. He got out of the ICU on Jan. 31, and before returning home he underwent physical, occupational and speech therapy in Fargo. He continues physical therapy, as well as therapy to improve his short-term memory.

He gets winded easily and is on oxygen at night.

He realized he'd lost his ability to write when asked to sign his name, though that came back quickly. He also relearned how to walk and has nerve damage in both legs.

Luchka returned to work part time and started working full

days again about three weeks ago. Lynes returned to work part time just a week ago.

Both Lynes and Luchka said they no longer put off doing what they want to do.

"When the kids ask to do something, we're more likely to tell them to do it," Luchka said, whether it be playing a board game or going for a bike ride.

"Don't let people tell you how to live life," Lynes said.

They both thank their family - including their moms, Jean Lynes and Suzanne Luchka; Lynes' sister, Michelle; and their children - Lark Luchka and her boyfriend Michael Zontelli, Abigael Hughs, Forrest Hughs and Kody Lynes - along with their friends and workplace for helping them.

They also praised Essentia Health and those who treated them.

"I'm very thankful for everybody that had a hand in both of us recovering," Lynes said.

Nancy Vogt, editor, may be reached at 218-855-5877 or nancy.vogt@pineandlakes.com. Follow her on Facebook and on Twitter at www.twitter.com/PEJ.Nancy.

FIRE

From Page 1

Bailey believes the fluff was a contributing factor to a destructive fire Saturday, June 11, off County Road 137 that damaged siding on a house and destroyed a shed. That same structure fire threatened yet another house, but did not appear to cause any damage.

These flammable balls of fluff are fruit capsules full of seed that float in the wind until they settle to the ground where a cottonwood tree, a type of poplar or aspen tree, could possibly grow. Unlike 2021, most of the area has greened up already, prompting the removal of official burning restrictions. But this cotton is creating an unfamiliar fire hazard other area fire chiefs noted.

"I think all the other (grass fires) we've had up until now have been contributed to by the cotton," said Pequot Lakes Fire Chief Tom Nelson. "We had a couple of our own and a couple mutual aids with Nisswa."

Nelson said the largest cotton fed grass fire in his district ran 200 yards along a roadway, but only about 10 feet wide. In that case, wet grass stopped

the fire from spreading into nearby woodlands. As with Bailey, Nelson has never seen such a thing.

"I've had my own lawn business for 22 years and I can say I've never seen the cotton this thick or a season this long," Nelson said. "I've also been on a fire department for 26 years and I can't think of any other year where the cotton has been kind of a main factor in spreading fires."

Ideal Fire Department Assistant Chief Craig Wallace compared the cotton fluff to gasoline as well.

"You can physically see the fire running through the woods," Wallace said. "It's just hot enough to set the leaves, pine needles and trees on fire. I've never seen that before."

He and his crew responded to a fire Wednesday, June 8, down Butternut Point Road in Ideal Township. He said the green grass outside combined with lack of wind made him think it would be an easy job putting out the fire when he first got the call.

"I was going down and I saw the smoke," Wallace said. "It immediately popped into my head that it might be the cotton."

The fire started when the hot exhaust on a lawn-

mower got too close to a large pile of cotton and began rapidly spreading throughout the yard and surrounding woods. The fire virtually surrounded the house, caught two large wood piles on fire and spread throughout the surrounding woods, threatening the house on the main property as well as two other houses and garages on neighboring properties.

Pequot Lakes, Crosslake and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources responded to the fire as well. The four crews together fought the fire for two hours. Three acres burned but one simple factor saved the house.

"One of the big reasons we were able to save the house was because of their spring cleanup," Wallace said. "They raked up the leaves and pine needles that the cotton was sticking to, so there

was a big perimeter of fire around the house anywhere from 10-20 feet away all around the house."

Nelson and his crew most recently fought a fire Sunday, June 12, in Breezy Point when a bonfire on North Lakeview Drive got away from the person monitoring it. In this situation, the fire was not fed by the cottonwood seeds. Instead, it burned a section of the property owner's yard before catching some dock sections on fire.

The fire burned about a 20- by 20-foot area, but did not result in injuries or structure damage.

Though spring started off with rains that helped with an early green up, currently dry weather and winds have led to a return of dry conditions.

"Up until now, even through Memorial Day, we had quite a bit of rain, Nelson said. "With the

wind and sunshine that we've been having, we are getting into a dry stage. I take care of the grounds here at the school, so I know they have some spots that even with irrigation are starting to dry out already."

Bailey said between the dry conditions and the

cotton, he wouldn't take a risk of lighting a campfire right now, much less a larger fire.

Travis Grimler is a staff writer for the Pineandlakes Echo Journal weekly newspaper in Pequot Lakes/Pine River. He may be reached at 218-855-5853 or travis.grimler@pineandlakes.com.

City of Nisswa Planning & Zoning Commission and Public Works Committee Vacancy

The City of Nisswa has openings for the Planning & Zoning Commission and Public Works Committee. No experience necessary. This is a great way to learn about your community and to participate in the public engagement process!

Planning & Zoning Commission - Nisswa residency or business ownership required.

Public Works Committee - Nisswa residency or property ownership required.

Must be available for approximately 1 evening meeting per month.

Applications can be found at www.cityofnisswa.com. Inquiries may be directed to Jenny at 218-963-4444, via email at jmax@ci.nisswa.mn.us or in person at Nisswa City Hall.

City of Nisswa Public Input Needed Recycling Center



The City of Nisswa is seeking public input on its recycling center. We created a survey that is open to residents, non-residents, businesses and visitors.

The survey link is: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/GW6ZZ35>

Or go to www.cityofnisswa.com to find the survey link on the home page.

The survey will close on Friday, July 8th.

Your input is highly valued and appreciated!



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