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A DECISION; A DAGGER



Carter Zezulka celebrates a winning touchdown catch Saturday as Esko moved on in the Class AA state football tournament. After a wild, snowy 28-21 win over New London-Spicer in Brainerd, the undefeated Eskomos will play in the semifinals Saturday at U.S. Bank Stadium in Minneapolis. For details on the game, and all the sports action from the week, turn to **Page 9**. And look online for updates from the weekend.

'Beauty' of a story plays in Cloquet

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The Cloquet High School fall musical has returned, and it is a spectacle. In the Disney version of "Beauty and the Beast," wondrous human teapots, clocks, dressers, candlesticks and more come to life on the stage, dazzling audience members and startling the "only human" characters in the show.

The set is also remarkable: creator and handyman Rich Brummer has outdone himself, hanging three massive antlered creatures (that he shot out West) on a Tudor-style tavern wall, and crafting a castle worthy of the Beast himself.

There's plenty of talent to go around too. So much, in fact, that two girls are playing the part of Belle: Olivia Macaulay on Thursday and Saturday, and Martha Stephenson on Friday and Sunday. LeFou is also being played by two actors: Sarah Ellet Cardinal and Sam Remus. The Beast is played by

senior Sam Buytaert, comfortable on the stage he first trod as Oliver when he was a fourth-grader at Washington Elementary School. Ilei Benson as Cogsworth and Jack Liang as Lumière are also magical.

"Beauty and the Beast" is a musical for all ages, with lessons to be learned and fun to be had. For the few who haven't seen it: the story is of an arrogant young prince and his servants, who have fallen under the spell of a wicked enchantress. She turned the prince into a hideous Beast, and the spell can be broken only when he learns to love and be loved in return. When the headstrong and no-nonsense village girl Belle enters the Beast's castle after he imprisons her father, the servants see hope that the spell could be broken. With their help, Belle begins to draw the coldhearted Beast out of his isolation and even teaches him some manners, as the two begin to fall in love.

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Sam Buytaert is the Beast, a once arrogant prince who was transformed into the beast by an enchantress, and only love can set him free. Jana Peterson / Pine Knot News

COVID-19 UPDATE



Covid comes knocking

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Monday's Wrenshall school board meeting began with a palpable moment of silence. Superintendent Kim Belcastro said the family of board member Alice Kloepke reported she had taken a turn for the worse in a battle with Covid-19 and was in an intensive care unit in the Twin Cities area.

Hours earlier, Wrenshall resident Shelly Kilby posted a dire report on her husband Steve. "They needed to intubate Steve. It was a tough decision for him. They have called the six surrounding states to try and find a critical care unit for him. He received a transfer to a critical care hospital and this morning he will be in Minneapolis."

Two numbing cases of Covid in one very small community. It tells the story of the Covid-19 pandemic in Minnesota as cases spike to levels not seen since a year ago, when Covid raced through communities after a summer lull.

For the Kilby family, things got brighter Wednesday. Shelly had said doctors were optimistic because Steve's organs were in good shape and he was a relatively young Covid patient.

On the family's GoFundMe page, a friend reported that "they took the breathing tube out, he is pain-free, awake, talking and responding appropriately. He is still on the (oxygenator) machine and his labs look good."

From Nov. 10-16, 125 Minnesotans died from Covid-19 and 24,448 new cases were reported. Included in the most recent case numbers were 9,433 people who had been reinfecting with Covid, meaning they had a previous positive case at least 90 days before. Breakthrough cases for people who are vaccinated against Covid are also on the rise, with 72,628 total cases reported as of Tuesday. That is still a very small percentage of the total, at 2.245 percent of the more than 3.23 million fully vaccinated Minnesotans, but that number has increased from the "less than 1 percent" touted a month or two ago.

Vaccination can make illness less severe in people who get vaccinated but still get sick.

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