



Crosby teacher wins Innovative Teacher of the Year award

By Theresa Bourke
Brainerd Dispatch

Crosby

She built the plane while flying it. That's how Cuyuna Range Elementary School Principal Kurt Becker describes Allison Larsen. Formerly a fifth grade teacher and a technology coach, Larsen worked as the school's technology and innovation teacher for the last five years, essentially building a science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics, or STEAM, program from the ground up.

She works with students in kindergarten through sixth grade, implementing elements of STEAM into their education. And she does it so well she won the 2022 Innovative Teacher of the Year award from Innovative Schools Project.

"It's so exciting. It's amazing," Larsen said after being surprised with the announcement during a class Thursday, May 12.

INNOVATIVE: Page 9

Minnesota fishing opener approaches

By Tim Speier
Brainerd Dispatch

BRAINERD — The Minnesota fishing opener is upon the state once again as anglers put their ice shacks away and begin mixing up the 2-cycle boat gas while the industry prepares for another busy year.

Anglers looking to nab a trophy walleye Saturday, May 14, could be in for some long days this year as they search the old hot spots, looking for those early season bites.

With the lakes final-

ly transitioning to open water, Sherree Wicktor, owner of S&W Bait by North Long Lake, is looking forward to one of her busiest days of the season, Minnesota's fishing opener.

S&W Bait will be open 41 hours for opening day, from 5 a.m. Friday, May 13, to 10 p.m. Saturday and returning to regular hours Sunday.

"I think we're gonna be busy and I think the crappies are really gonna be biting," Wicktor said.

OPENER: Page 8

Aitkin County assesses Wednesday storm damage

By Renee Richardson
Managing Editor

AITKIN — Wind creates strange damage patterns at times and the storm cells that went through Aitkin County were a prime example.

The wind picked up in the late afternoon across the lakes region but the most severe damage from the storm fronts Wednesday, May 12, hit the Aitkin area. After 4:30 p.m., the wind gusts hit, downing privacy fences across the city and just north of Aitkin. Toppled trees damaged a building, crashed on a car, blocked roads and knocked out power lines.

At the Aitkin County Fairgrounds there were three new buildings in a row. One had its door blown in with some damage to items stored inside. The second building was untouched. The third building was destroyed.

The Aitkin County sheriff's boat and water building, which is used to store equipment, was flattened. Reached by phone, Sheriff Dan Guida said the wind pulled the roof off the storage building and pulled the green auger system off the feed store roof in town. Some of the steel blew off the



Contributed / Sheriff Dan Guida
An Aitkin County fair building lies in ruins after a Wednesday storm brought damaging winds to the area.

DAMAGE: Page 9

Severe weather in lakes area downs trees, takes out power

By Chelsey Perkins
Brainerd Dispatch

BRAINERD — An ominous-looking shelf cloud portended the arrival of severe weather Thursday night, May 12, in the Brainerd lakes area, which was soon followed by multiple reports of trees down across power lines and roadways.

The cloud, which is associated with a thunderstorm gust front and often appears turbulent, boiling or wind-torn, marched quickly through the sky in Baxter and Brainerd just after 8 p.m.

The storm to which it was attached prompted tornado warnings in its path, including in Todd, Morris

son and Wadena counties beginning shortly before 8 p.m.

It was the first line of severe weather to move in Thursday night, expected to be followed by more stormy skies throughout the night into Friday morning. As the storm front made its way into the area, a 911 caller

reported a tornado east of Pillager and a funnel cloud was reported near Nisswa. The National Weather Service had not confirmed any tornadic activity as of Thursday night.

Campers and others sought refuge from the storm in various shelters

STORM: Page 9

Brainerd mayor dons cucumber costume for kids

Badeaux promotes health benefits 'Vegetable of the Year'

By Frank Lee
Brainerd Dispatch

BAXTER — It's not often children welcome the sight of vegetables.

But they did at the Warrior Early Learning Center in Baxter when Brainerd Mayor Dave Badeaux appeared in

their halls as a life-sized cucumber on Thursday, May 12.

"Who likes cucumbers?" Badeaux asked the more than two dozen children before reading to them "When Cucumber Lost His Cool" by Michelle Robinson.

The mayoral visit in costume was the first

community outreach event of the year by Crow Wing Energized to promote the cucumber's win as Crow Wing County's Vegetable of the Year.

"One of the points is really to build awareness," said Karen Johnson, a Crow Wing Energized community health specialist. "We want

people to grab that vegetable of the year — especially the younger ages — instead of different food choices, like perhaps chips."

One Vegetable, One Community

The zucchini, green

CUCUMBER: Page 8

Free cucumber seeds locations

- Brainerd Family YMCA, 602 Oak St., Brainerd.
- Brainerd Public Library, 416 S. Fifth St., Brainerd.
- Crosslake Chamber of Commerce, 35446 Crow Wing County Road 3, Crosslake.
- Crow Wing County, Laurel Street, Brainerd.
- Visit Brainerd, 706 Laurel St., Brainerd.



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Warriors stretch conference winning streak



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STORM

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throughout the area as the storm bore down. A dispatcher was heard on the scanner asking someone with a key to meet people in need of shelter at the Deerwood Auditorium, which was apparently locked. At 8:14 p.m., a 61 mph wind gust was reported in Brainerd, according to a local storm report to the weather service.

At 8:18 p.m., Minnesota Power reported 65 outages affecting 5,270 customers, with the majority of those outages occurring to the west and south of Brainerd and some in the Pillager area. At the same time, Crow Wing Power reported numerous outages as well, with more than 1,000 customers impacted in the Baxter area. The number of those affected appeared to grow throughout the night.

As the first round of storms began to dissipate after 8:30 p.m., downed tree reports came fast and furious.

At 8:25 p.m., multiple trees larger than 12 inches in diameter were reported down along Hessman Hill Road in Pine River. At 8:39 p.m., a tree was down on a power line and on fire in Manhattan Beach, which prompted the Crosslake Fire Department to respond.

In Baxter, a spotter reported eight trees down between their location and the next door neighbor on Red Sand Lake. The trees fell over a period of five minutes at the onset of the storm,



Contributed / Sheila Miller

A shelf cloud on Thursday on Big Pine Lake in Crosslake.



Contributed / Joshua Thomas

A shelf cloud on Thursday in Pillager.

according to the report. Several trees were also downed by the winds near the North Memorial Health Ambulance station in Brainerd.

The National Weather Service in Duluth issued an update Thursday evening, noting periods of strong storms, damaging winds and heavy rain were expected. Some areas of the Northland were expected to see multiple rounds of storms, and with heavy rainfall as a threat, a flood warning remained in effect.

Strong to severe storms started in southwestern Minnesota, then spread northeast across much of central and eastern Minnesota into western Wisconsin. Damaging wind gusts and large hail were the primary threats, though a few tornadoes

could not be ruled out. Severe weather potential was highest in western and central Minnesota, with that threat diminishing moving eastward, the National Weather Service in Chanhassen stated.

Numerous severe thunderstorms were possible in Crow Wing, Morrison, Todd and Mille Lacs counties, along with most of Cass and Aitkin counties. Wadena County and western Minnesota counties were expected to see widespread severe thunderstorms. A tornado watch for Wadena and Todd counties was issued at 5:35 p.m. and was in effect until midnight.

"Tonight's storms will likely be stronger and pose more of a damaging wind threat — especially near Brainerd," the

weather service stated Thursday.

The Storm Prediction Center produced a map showing the areas of the state most at threat for damaging winds. Much of the Brainerd lakes area had a 30% probability and was within an area the center marked as likely to see the strongest winds.

The lakes area was also at higher risk than the Arrowhead for flash flooding. Excessive runoff from heavy rains was expected to result in flooding of low-lying and flood-prone areas, along with areas with poor drainage and urban areas.

Based on the conditions as of 5:30 p.m. Thursday, the Mississippi River near Aitkin was forecast to rise to 14.4 feet by the weekend, maintaining its minor flood stage designation. At 13 feet, the boat ramp at the Aitkin city park floods and a few driveways in the Cedarbrook area are covered in water. Minor flooding of farmland also occurs in the area. At 15 feet, a few homes in the Cedarbrook neighborhood near Eagle Road become surrounded by water and the Aitkin city park becomes flooded.

INNOVATIVE

From Page 1

A nonprofit working

with the Region Five Development

Commission and Sourcewell, Innovative

Schools Project aims to

inspire innovation in

students by providing

matching funds or

grants to public school

classrooms within the

five-county region

of Cass, Crow Wing,

Morrison, Todd and

Wadena. The nonprofit

works to remove

financial barriers to

educational resources

and materials that

promote hands-on,

experiential learning.

Last year, Innovative

Schools Project started

the Innovative Teacher

of the Year award,

recognizing a teacher

who has demonstrated

innovative practices with

students. The award

comes with a \$1,000

grant for the winning

teacher to use in their

classroom.

"I'm going to put

the money to good use,

continue to do innovative

things, I'm excited,"

Larsen said.

Clark Marshall, board

chair of the Cuyuna

Lakes Educational

Foundation, nominated

Larsen for this year's

award.

"What she's done has

had a remarkable impact

and visibility, I think,"

Marshall said, noting

Larsen undoubtedly

played a role in the

school's honor as the

inaugural 2018 STEM

Innovation Award winner

from the Minnesota

Elementary School

Principals' Association

four years ago.

"She also participates

in educational

conferences throughout

the country," Marshall

added. "... She passes

on her knowledge and

experiences to others,

which is an important

part of what she does."

Over the past five

years, Larsen looks back

on a lot of 3D printing

projects that have

been popular with her

students, along with

laser engraving, ukulele

building, circuitry and

coding.

"It's really valuable

for them," Larsen said

of teaching students

STEAM subjects early

on in their education.

"Especially because some

students don't thrive in

the traditional classroom.

This is something that

they can excel at and I

want them to be exposed

to all different types

of STEM concepts so

that maybe if that's

something that they're

interested in, they could

pursue it into their

high school years and

then beyond because

it's something they're

good at and something

they might not normally

figure out in a traditional

classroom."

For more information

on Innovative Schools

Projects and its available

grants and programs,

visit ispmn.org.

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DAMAGE

From Page 1

room of the fire depart-

ment's beer garden with-

out causing too much

damage, but then the

wind blew off all the steel

from the Lions' building.

"Those winds can do

some crazy things,"

Guida said.

Guida said they saw a

couple of little spouts at

the bottom of the storm

cell that gave the appearance

of the start of funnel

clouds but nothing actually

came down to form a

tornado. "But the winds

were very, very strong,"

Guida said.

A report to the National

Weather Service in Duluth

and dented with windows

or protective screens

shattered. One snowmo-

bile was smashed and

other equipment sus-

tained damage. The storage

building itself was

sizable but is a total loss.

"It's flat," Guida said.

"There's nothing really

salvageable from it."

At the fairgrounds

buildings, which include

winter storage, a pontoon

was blown on its side.

Thankfully, Guida said,

no one was in the build-

ings and everyone was

safe.

"The plan is to obvi-

ously rebuild them and

get them back," Guida

said of the public build-

ings and hopefully get

them done by fair time,

which in recent years has

been in July. Last year

had a robust return to

the fair after events were

canceled during the pan-

demic.

Guida said last year's

fair was probably one of

the highest attended fairs

they've ever had.

"And so, we're hop-

ing to have another great

event this year," Guida

said. "So we've got some

work to do."

Thursday afternoon,

with the second round

of predicted storms, Ait-

kin County already had

reports of small hail.

Guida said they are hop-

ing the tree damage will

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Please fill out application at www.ornwv.com or email resume to: hr@ornwv.com EOE

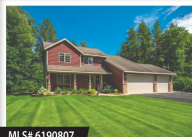
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