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IRONWOOD, MICHIGAN — VOLUME 91, EDITION 298

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INSIDE



Care package

Website helps families with daunting tasks

By DAVID SIM
dsim@yourdailyglobe.com
IRONWOOD — Like many other 6-year-olds, Hannah Vakoc, of Wisconsin Rapids, Wis., enjoys T-ball, soccer and Taylor Swift.

Unlike many 6-year-olds, she was recently diagnosed with acute lymphocytic leukemia.

Although the disease has a survival rate of about 90 percent, for parents like Brandi and Bryan Vakoc, the diagnosis can be overwhelming.

Along with trying to help their daughter, they face the daunting task of answering questions from family and community, shifting schedules and working out finances, while struggling through their own emotions.

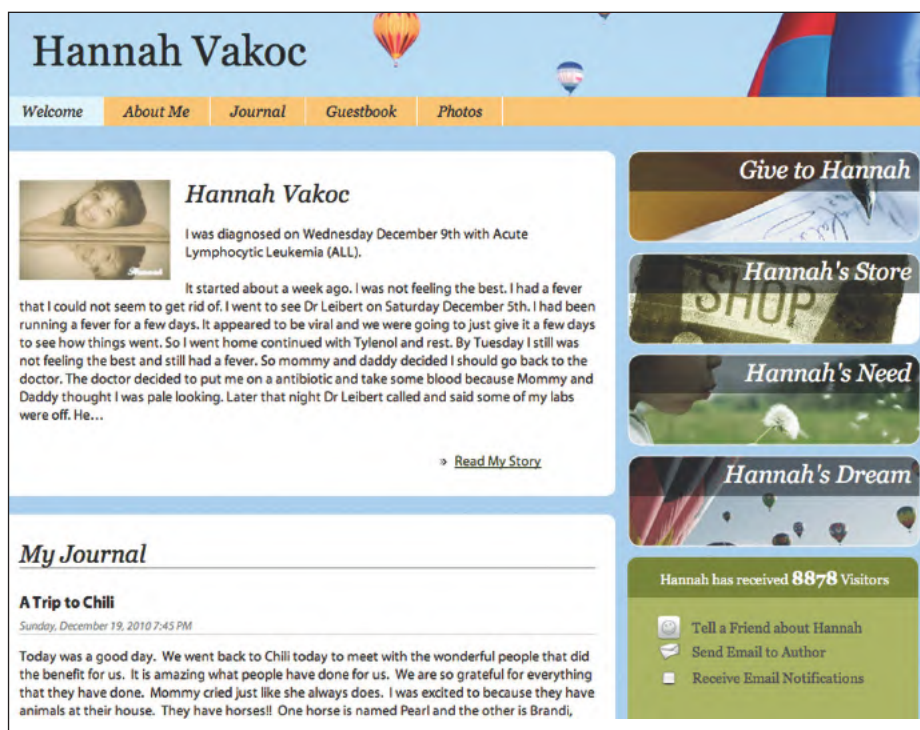
"People kept asking us how they could help us and what we needed," said Brandi Vakoc. "It was nice, but we weren't really thinking about that."

That's when a nurse told them about Cole's Pages, a website made to connect the world outside St. Joseph's Children's Hospital in Marshfield, Wis., with the family.

Two-year project

Colespages.org, created as part of C.O.L.E.'s (Caring openly, loving eternally) Foundation in Ironwood, allows the family to post regular updates, offers a

(See WEBSITE — Page 2)



In this screenshot from the Colespages.org website, Hannah Vakoc's family is able to tell friends, family and community about Hannah's ongoing battle with leukemia. The website has been a two-year project for C.O.L.E.'s Foundation founder Aaron Ruotsala, who designed it to be an easy experience where "all the central information is right in front of you."

Program reaches into schools

IRONWOOD — C.O.L.E.'s Foundation operates out of an office next to Angelo's Pizza, but has made an impact thousands of miles away in other means than the new website.

"Kids Unite to Fight" is a program run nationwide in a classroom setting that Aaron Ruotsala says helps teach "compassion for kids with cancer."

"I think it helps kids look beyond themselves and realize it's about more than me, myself and I."

Students receive a card with con-

tact information on it for another child with cancer.

Students then write to the child with letters of support and a new friend is often made. Communication is often continued by e-mail.

One mother of an ill child wrote back to a student about how much the letter meant to her daughter. "I'll have you know that your letter is actually just as important to Sarah

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Palmer resigns from Ironwood school board

By ANNETTE MANWELL
amanwell@yourdailyglobe.com

IRONWOOD — The Ironwood Area School District Board of Education accepted Monday the resignation of board treasurer Doug Palmetter.

In a letter to the district Palmetter cited "personal reasons" for his immediate resignation. He also said, "Much has been accomplished, but there will be many challenges ahead."

Because he was the treasurer and on the finance committee, board member Brenda Agee made the motion to approve Marilyn Nezworski, another member of the finance committee, as the board treasurer. There were no other nominations for the position. The board unanimously approved Nezworski.



Doug Palmetter

(See IRONWOOD — Page 2)

Hurley computer program sets example

By RALPH ANSAMI
ransami@yourdailyglobe.com

HURLEY — The Hurley School District's computer program is becoming a model for other Wisconsin districts.

School district administrator Chris Patritto said Monday Cumberland School District officials will visit Hurley Jan. 26 to view the technology program in which all high school students have received laptop computers.

"It's nice to see that what we're doing is at the top of the ladder," Patritto said. Technology-wise, he estimated Hurley ranks in the top 5 percent of Wisconsin's school districts.

He said Apple representatives contacted Hurley

(See HURLEY — Page 2)

LLW purges library books as part of upgrade

By ANNETTE MANWELL
amanwell@yourdailyglobe.com

IRONWOOD — The Ironwood Area School District is offering free books, to anyone who is willing to bag them, box them and take them away.

District superintendent Tim Kolesar said as long as the Luther L. Wright Middle/Senior High School is open and unlocked, members of the community can enter at the West Pabst Street entrance and go to room 127 to peruse the selection.

There's one catch — the average copyright year of the free books is 1975. But, there are 6,700 books — free to anyone who wants them — of every genre, fiction, non-fiction, reference, poetry, and so much more. Some are 100 or more years old.

"The oldest book I found was 1834," library aide Mary Trcka said.

In August, the district was awarded a \$348,160 U.S. Department of Education Literacy and School Libraries grant. A stipulation of that grant was for the district to purge at least 73 percent of the books currently in the library.

Also, as part of the grant, the district hired a library media specialist, for one year, and will purchase new technology for the library.

Debra Ely came from the Ishpeming Public Library to Ironwood to take the one-year position as the library media specialist. She will help the district purge the older books and order new ones.

The LLW library had about 15,000 books, Ely said. The goal is to purge 11,000 to 12,000, she said, and purchase 5,050 new books.

"It may be more than that,



Annette Manwell/Daily Globe

Debra Ely, the Ironwood Area School District's new library media specialist, looks over some of the 6,700 books that have already been removed from the Luther L. Wright Middle/Senior High School library. These books are free to anyone who wants them. These books need to be moved out soon so an elementary class can be moved in. New books will be bought with the help of a U.S. Department of Education Literacy and School Libraries grant.

depending on the price of the books," she said. "This is a big goal for the school, to get kids in here and reading."

Books are more exciting

Ely and Trcka agreed they have already seen a change in the students just from removing

the "closed stacks" policy. Prior to this school year, if a student wanted to check out a book, he would have to choose a book from the library database on a computer — once by card catalog, now by computer — and request the book from the librarian, who would then find it in the stacks of

books. The students are now allowed into the rows of books, to peruse the selection and pick out books they might find interesting, Trcka said.

"We've got kids checking out books now just because they can," Ely said. This is why the

new books are more exciting than the new technology, she said.

"It's exciting to see their faces, they just light up," Trcka said, about telling the students they can go into the stacks and look around. "It's been fun."

This is before the new books have even been ordered.

Students have also come into the library asking if they can help, Trcka and Ely both said.

"It's been great for them to be able to help," Ely said.

"And they have helped," Trcka agreed.

It's a big job moving all the books out — each one has to be stamped "discarded" and scanned to be removed from the system, Trcka explained. Then they are taken to room 127 and stacked again. Any books not taken by members of the community will be recycled, according to Kolesar.

No books better than old books

"With non-fiction, no information is better than old information," Ely said. "Some things that came out in the (19)70s and 80s is no longer relevant."

"History doesn't change," she said, adding that many of the books that are staying on the shelves are older history books.

"Teachers could take books for references in their rooms," Kolesar said. "That's up to them."

New look, new hours

The LLW library has been open in the evening a few nights each week. Ely said on Jan. 3 the hours will change to Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays from 4 to 6 p.m. and Sundays from 2 to 6 p.m.

(See BOOKS — Page 2)

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WEBSITE

(Continued from Page 1)

store that sells clothing, with part of the proceeds going to the family, accept donations, give others a place to post messages of support and a wealth of supportive resources.

The site, launched only a week ago, was two years in the making. It is the pride of Aaron and Moireen Ruotsala, founders of C.O.L.E.'s Foundation.

They went through a similar experience with their son, Cole, who died in 2008 after a battle with cancer.

"When we were in the hospital, we kept thinking of all these things that we wish were done," Aaron Ruotsala said. "So our goal was to make a website that was truly for families and give them as much as help as we could."

It seems that goal may soon be realized.

The site makes it easy for families to set up and operate. There are links for things such as wish fulfillment and specific financial information.

"It's all the central information right in front of you," Ruotsala said.

Financial support

The biggest benefit for families may come in the donation system.

Colespages.org gives 100 percent of the donations right back to the family. Donations can be made online and families can withdraw money anytime.

"When we were in Milwaukee at the Children's Hospital, the last place we wanted to be was spending time at a bank setting up an account, so we wanted to do something different and make it easy," Aaron Ruotsala said. "We had experienced all these things and wanted to do something about it."

There's even a section where the child can write his or her dream, with the possibility that someone might come along and fulfill it.

"We really just wanted this to fill the need for families," Aaron Ruotsala said. "Everyone wants



Submitted photo

Aaron (left) and Cole Ruotsala spend bonding time on some heavy equipment. Cole passed away in 2008 following a battle with cancer. Aaron and his mother, Moireen, have since started a foundation in his memory, which has found support nationwide. Ruotsala estimates that more than 1,000 families have come to the foundation looking for help to cope with their children's illnesses.

to help, but you just don't always feel like asking."

Since the site's launching, 12 families have signed up and more than \$2,000 in donations have already been made.

One child, Alex, from Pickerington, Ohio, received an anonymous donation of \$1,500.

"All they had to do was make a page," said Aaron Ruotsala.

Hannah Vakoc's page has already had more than 8,800 views since its launch last week.






"It's really wonderful that

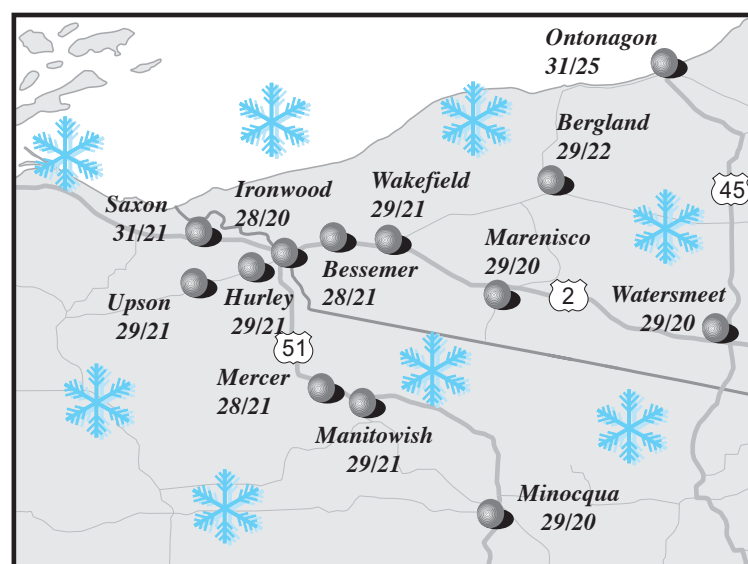
they've done," her mother said Monday. "It's such a relief that people don't have to worry about feeling like they're bugging us."

"Hannah can read messages from grandma and grandpa, and she loves to see all of the notes that people send to her each night. I don't know how much easier it can get."

For more about C.O.L.E.'s Foundation, visit them online at colespages.org. To see Hannah Vakoc's ColesPage, visit colespages.org/hannahvakoc.

FIVE-DAY FORECAST FOR IRONWOOD

TODAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				
Snow Likely	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy	Cloudy	Cloudy
28° 20°	28° 8°	25° 22°	25° 17°	28° 19°
Winds: 5-10 mph E	Winds: 5 mph N	Winds: 5-10 mph N	Winds: 5-10 mph NW	Winds: 5-10 mph NW



ALMANAC

Temperature	Today	Wed.
High	19	11
Low	-8	1
Precipitation	none	none

MOON PHASES

Full	Last	New	First
12/21	12/27	1/4	1/12

REGIONAL WEATHER

Ashland	29/21	sn	25/11	mc
Duluth	29/20	sn	24/9	pc
Eau Claire	30/16	sn	26/12	pc
Escanaba	31/22	sn	30/18	mc
Grand Rapids	31/26	sn	30/15	pc
Green Bay	32/24	sn	28/14	pc
Madison	34/21	cl	28/13	pc
Marquette	32/28	sn	29/22	sn
Rhineland	29/19	sn	26/6	pc
St. Paul	30/17	sn	26/17	pc
Wausau	30/18	sn	26/8	pc

OUTLOOK

Today we will see cloudy skies with a 90% chance of snow, high temperature of 28°, humidity of 80% and an overnight low of 20°. New snow accumulation of 1 to 2 inches possible. The record high temperature for today is 48° set in 1967.

SUN AND MOON

Sunrise	7:41 a.m.
Sunset	4:17 p.m.
Moonrise	4:48 p.m.
Moonset	8:00 a.m.

NATIONAL WEATHER

Chicago	37/29	cl	33/23	sn
Dallas	74/48	s	63/52	s
Kansas City	41/22	pc	36/26	pc
Los Angeles	60/51	ra	59/48	sh
New York	37/29	s	39/25	rs
Orlando	70/49	s	73/52	s
Phoenix	72/54	mc	68/50	sh
Seattle	48/40	sn	47/40	ra

WEATHER TRIVIA

What type of lightning occurs most frequently?
 Answer: Cloud to cloud lightning.

PROGRAM

(Continued from Page 1)

and her health as a trip to the doctor. It lifts her spirits and makes her happy and there are no ouchies involved."

Another program called "Send a Smile" was designed to send a balloon or gift to a child in the hospital who might be having a bad day, such as surgery or upsetting diagnosis.

"Our whole goal is to put a smile on a kid's face," Ruotsala said.

The program took a very unexpected turn when

a woman from Maryland who had followed Cole's battle with cancer online took the program on herself.

Ruotsala has 10 pages of names of children from all around the country of people who she had mailed items to. The foundation reimburses her for the costs, but the generosity is what means the most to Ruotsala.

"She is really a special person," he said. "This program would not be the same without her."

Many families might be inclined to say the same about the Ruotsalas and their foundation.

an interlibrary loan system, Ely said. Twice a week the library will send out and receive books. So any book not immediately available can be ordered, she said.

"That's going to be huge too," she said.

Norrie Elementary students are moved into LLW.

When the technology is ordered there will be an audio books listening center, Kolesar said. There will also be new computers, he said.

The library will also be part of

HURLEY

(Continued from Page 1)

about scheduling a visit from Cumberland.

"Other school districts are expected, too," Patritto said at Monday's regular monthly school board meeting.

Patritto said it's important that Hurley doesn't stand pat with its technology upgrades. "The big thing is for us to move forward with it," he said.

Hurley's teachers participated in computer training with Apple representatives for the big change before the school year opened.

Hurley's administrators and teachers were taught the ropes of using the new computer programs from a representative of the Kenosha School District. Kenosha had previously initiated a one-to-one laptop program for

its students.

After receiving training at the start of the school year, students were allowed to take the laptops home.

The school board adopted a laptop policy for students that spells out rules for computer use of both at school and at home, under parents' supervision.

Students who use their computers inappropriately face not only cancellation of computer privileges, but possible suspension or expulsion from school.

Hurley's parents must sign a laptop agreement form that states they will accept full responsibility for any loss, theft or damage to the computers issued to students.

Laptops must be returned

prior to the end of the school year.

Hurley school teachers said the conversion to the laptop for every student program has gone relatively smoothly.

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BOOKS

(Continued from Page 1)

The sixth through eighth grade section of the library has been merged with the high school section. That part of the library will now be the third through fifth grade library for when the

IRONWOOD

(Continued from Page 1)

ki for treasurer Karen Kangas was absent. Palmeto did not attend the meeting.

Board vice-president Ed Rickard reminded the board that another person needs to be appointed within 30 days or the Gogebic-Ontonagon Intermediate School District will step in to make an appointment.

In other business, board president Steve Thomas reminded board members who are up for re-election that the petition or filing fee must be turned in by Feb. 8. Board members Chuck Vitton, who won a one-year seat last year, and Kangas, who is ending her first four-year term, are up for re-election.

The board also learned that the Wright Way sub-committee

has requested that the move of the Norrie third through fifth grade students be postponed until Jan. 21. Those classes were supposed to move into the Luther L. Wright Middle/Senior High School after the Christmas and New Year break.

According to a memo from the committee, many teachers are out of town for the holiday break and would not be able "to coordinate an event of this magnitude."

Jan. 21 was chosen because it is the end of the marking period and that day would be the make up exam day. The cafeteria would be empty and could be used and some high school students could be on hand to help.

The extra time will also allow teachers more time to pack their old classrooms and set up their new rooms.

A tentative schedule from the committee shows the third through fifth grade students starting the school day at Norrie and then being bused by class to LLW. On Jan. 24, an assembly will be held to welcome the students to LLW.

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Surgical Center – Closed all day

**Friday, December 31st
(Near Year's Eve) –**
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Surgical Center – Closed all day

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