

Local Nordic skier wins home meet

Detroit Mountain hosts Alpine ski meet. A7

the Tribune

Detroit Lakes

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EYES ON THE SLOPE

The people, purpose and camaraderie behind Detroit Mountain's Ski and Bike Patrol



Abby Fostveit / Detroit Lakes Tribune

Lee Massey, director of Detroit Mountain Ski Patrol, stands atop Detroit Mountain overlooking a high school alpine ski race on the run West on Jan. 5.

BY ABBY FOSTVEIT
Detroit Lakes Tribune

DETROIT LAKES
As Lee Massey and Mark Lindquist stood atop Detroit Mountain on Monday night, more than 100 high school ski racers waited their turn to race down the mountain's run, West.

In their bright red coats, walkie-talkies

clipped to their chests, the two ski patrollers scanned the course they had spent much of the day setting up. Lights cut through fog that stretched for miles, and treetops were coated in a fuzzy frost.

"Many of those kids started out with a school group," said Massey, director of ski patrol at Detroit Mountain,

referencing the ski groups that visit the mountain when children are young. "And to see them ski... I've never been able to ski like that."

With his breath visible against the light, Lindquist, an assistant director of ski patrol, said the top of the mountain is not an uncommon meeting point for patrollers to convene before

beginning risk mitigation. Massey explained that this includes skiing the runs before opening and again before closing, ensuring everyone can be, or is, safe.

"We clear every run, and they don't open the mountain until we give the all clear," Massey said. "At the end of the

PATROL on A18

First-ever Big Band Dessert Dance set for January 17 at Holmes Theatre

BY VICKI GERDES
Detroit Lakes Tribune

DETROIT LAKES — Looking for a way to snap out of the post-holiday winter blahs? Meet new people? Learn how to "cut a rug" on the dance floor? The Beachfront Big Band may have a solution for you: Detroit Lakes' first-ever Big Band Dessert Dance.

The local band is planning what they hope will be the first of many such dances for next Saturday, Jan. 17 in the Historic Holmes Theatre's Midwest Bank Ballroom, starting at 7 p.m.

Gary Christensen, who has played guitar with the band for the past

couple of years, came up with the idea after they were invited to play at a "Big Band Bash" hosted by the Fargo-Moorhead Kicks Band at the TAK Music Venue in Dilworth back in February of last year.

"We played fairly early on in that event, but we stayed and watched, listened to the other bands, and people were out there dancing," he said.

That triggered a memory for Christensen, who used to play with his high school jazz band for the annual pie social that took place in his hometown in north-central Iowa.

BIG BAND on A19

Janke's Sew and Vac moves downtown

BY ABBY FOSTVEIT
Detroit Lakes Tribune

DETROIT LAKES — Inside a vacant space of the former Norby's building on Washington Avenue on Monday afternoon, Amy Gress and her family, along with Jeff Janke, her father, were bringing the next chapter of the family business, Janke's Sew and Vac, to life.

Roughly a year ago, Amy and her husband, Justin Gress, took over the business from Janke, marking a new generation of leadership. The couple is now settling into a larger, more visible location at 827

Washington Ave., across from Washington Square Mall, which they hope will bring in more foot traffic and allow them to better showcase their products.

Janke made marks on the walls to mount shelves while Amy scanned the space, picturing how the storefront could take shape.

"I've been wanting to get a bigger space," Amy Gress said.

"We can show off our products better, and people can actually grab a machine and start using it," Justin Gress added, noting that at the old location, there was limited space for people to test



Abby Fostveit / Detroit Lakes Tribune
Amy Gress, left, and her father, Jeff Janke, plan shelving for Janke's Sew and Vac's new location on Washington Avenue on Jan. 5.

out a machine.

The move also allows the family to maintain the knowledge-focused, service-oriented philosophy that has defined the business for decades. Janke started in the vacuum business, selling

Kirby door-to-door before opening a brick-and-mortar shop in Fergus Falls in 1983. By 1988, he and his wife returned to Detroit Lakes and opened the store at 525

JANKE'S on A19

Gated road at landfill causes uproar at Becker County Board meeting

BY NATHAN BOWE
Detroit Lakes Tribune

DETROIT LAKES — Temps flared at Tuesday's County Board meeting over a gated road at the Becker County landfill site — causing one commissioner to offer to tear down the gate himself for \$1, and ending with Detroit Township officials warning the county that it had until March 1 to remove the gate or the township will do the job itself.

The road in question has been gated and locked — for private access only — since the landfill was

capped and fenced in the early 1990s. The road essentially splits the landfill site in two, with the transfer station and recycling center on the west side and the demolition landfill and old Household Hazardous Waste building on the east side.

The general belief is that the road is a Detroit Township road, and that property owners there were doing the county a favor by allowing it to be gated. The property owners were given a key for the gate so they have had continued access.

MEETING on A20

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Photos by Abby Fostveit / Detroit Lakes Tribune



Jeff Janke smiles inside Janke's Sew and Vac's new location at 827 Washington Ave. on Jan. 5.

JANKE'S

CONTINUED from A1

Washington Ave. They later moved to the building at 607 Washington Ave., adding sewing machine sales and repairs.

"People come in here and if I'm here, I mean, I'll talk to them for a half hour," Janke said.

The business has long relied on personal relationships, transparency and knowledge of its products. Janke keeps more than two dozen handwritten pages cataloging vacuums sold over

the years.

"People will come in and say, 'Your dad might not remember me, I bought a Miele from him in 2007.' I always say, my dad will remember you," Amy Gress said. "He will remember the year that you bought it, and what it was you had before that vacuum."

Amy Gress said the new location gives them a chance to expand both products and experiences. She's adding a line of handmade and gift items, including mugs featuring old-fashioned sewing machines with clever sayings, T-shirts,

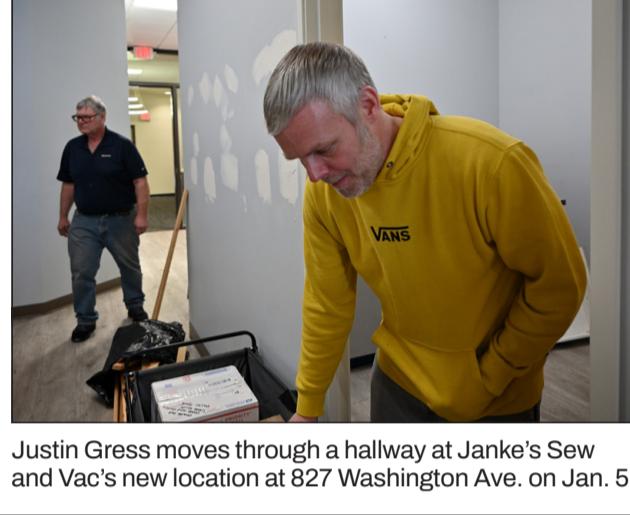
magnets, candles, wax melts and even homemade laundry detergent — all with the excitement of being downtown in mind.

"We're going to be offering gifts... I make all of it myself," she said. She also plans to incorporate fun, interactive experiences for customers, such as a spin-the-wheel game for local events like Crazy Daze, an annual, massive sidewalk sale event that takes over the downtown for one day every summer.

"Now we can actually participate in Crazy Daze," she said.

As a child, Amy Gress recalled learning about the ins and outs of vacuums from her father — lessons that now form the foundation of a unique bond between them.

"It's funny — my dad and I, we have this relationship where we can talk vacuums, and we can be like 'this person came in looking for this?' or 'How do you get that off, how do you repair this?' Amy Gress said. "He's invaluable in that way. Plus, he gives us the space to do our thing too."



Justin Gress moves through a hallway at Janke's Sew and Vac's new location at 827 Washington Ave. on Jan. 5.

BIG BAND

CONTINUED from A1

"The jazz band would play, and people would come in and have pie and dance," he said.

After watching all the people dancing at the Dilworth event, Christensen thought, "Why can't we do something like that here?"

He brought his idea to local nonprofit Project 412, who suggested that he apply for the Hot Dish Microgranting Dinner competition in November.

"I thought, 'What a great idea,'" he said. After putting together his proposal and submitting it, Christensen became one of the four finalists chosen to pitch their ideas at the event.

At the end of the evening, Christensen learned that his pitch had earned the most audience votes — and a \$1,091 check, representing the proceeds from

ticket sales for the dinner.

He said they used the microgrant for things like planning, organizing and publicizing the event as well as upgrading their PA system and paying a small stipend to the Fargo-based non-profit swing dance organization, Lindy of the North to make the trip to Detroit Lakes for the dance. They will be sending some of their dance instructors to give a lesson in basic swing dancing at the start of the evening's festivities.

"We're really excited to be able to do that," Christensen said.

In order to make this and any future dances as accessible to the community as possible, no admission fee will be charged, though there will be desserts and drinks — catered by Detroit Lakes' own Sapphire Sushi, Hibachi and American Cuisine — available for purchase.



Vicki Gerdes / Detroit Lakes Tribune
Gary Christensen, center, beams as he accepts the first-place prize from Hot Dish emcees Greg Johnson and Sarah Hofmann — who went by the names "Tater" and "Tot" during the festivities — after his proposal for "Big Band Dessert Dance" garnered the most votes at the Monday, Nov. 17, 2025 microgranting dinner hosted by Project 412.

A second dance is already planned, for Friday, March 27 at the same time and venue. The band hopes to add at least a couple more to the schedule, with most taking place during the winter months. This will allow them to continue participating in the annual Tuesdays in the Park summer concert series hosted by the Holmes Theatre at the Detroit Lakes City Park. The band, both as Doc and the Scrubs and the



Detroit Lakes Tribune file photo
The Historic Holmes Theatre used to host swing dance classes in its ballroom back in 2016. Dancing will return to the Midwest Bank Ballroom on Saturday, Jan. 17 with the inaugural Big Band Dessert Dance.

Beachfront Big Band, has been playing at least a couple of times in the park each year since it

started in the early 2000s. Visit the website at beachfrontbigband.com for more information.

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