

## Elves at work

Angel tree gifts distributed

A3



## Leading the way

Indus students attend leadership seminar

B10



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## KOOCHICHING COUNTY BOARD

# Plan adopted to curb aquatic invasive species

## 2015 tax levy has no increase

BY SPENSER BICKETT  
Staff Writer

The Koochiching County Board Tuesday approved a plan to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species in area waters. The board approved a motion adopting a plan to curb the spread of AIS in county waters, using funding from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. According to information from the Association of Minnesota

Counties, the county will receive \$48,963 in AIS prevention aid in 2014, and \$108,805 in 2015. The funding comes from a bill passed in the last legislative session, and is distributed to all counties based on the amount of boat launches in each county. According to House File 3167, a county must use the AIS prevention aid to prevent the introduction or limit the spread of AIS at all access sites within the county. There are 29 public water accesses in northern Koochiching County, according to the DNR. In August, the county board established a committee to come up with a plan for the funding.

The plan needed to be approved by the end of December in order to retain the funding, and was approved Tuesday. Board Chairman Rob Ecklund served on the committee that developed the plan, and he said he was satisfied with it. County Environmental Services Director Dale Olson said the plan will be reworked next year to account for the increase in funding. The highlights of the current plan include:

- Mapping current AIS in county waters.
- Training people working with AIS.
- Educating the public on stop-

ping AIS.

- Developing a monitoring program for existing AIS.
- Collaborating with surrounding groups outside Koochiching County.
- Creating cleaning stations for boaters traveling from one body of water to another.
- Enforcing current best practices for reducing AIS.

The plan doesn't call for hiring any additional staff, which is a stipulation Ecklund said he brought up when the plan was being developed. "The county board would be against this becoming any kind of permanent county position, so

we'll figure out how to do it with contracted employees," Ecklund said. Commissioner Wayne Skoe said county commissioners from Lake of the Woods County had mentioned to him the possibility of collaborating on the issue, with Rainy River running through both counties, and feeding from Rainy Lake and into Lake of the Woods. Ecklund said the collaboration was brought up during plan development, and committee members decided to get the education aspect of the plan implemented

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From the left, International Falls Police Capt. Tom Lynch, officer Mitch Lessard and DARE Officer Dane Olson listen as sixth-grade student Ella Bahr-Jefferis reads her essay on what she learned during the DARE program. The 10-week program concluded Wednesday with a graduation ceremony at Backus Community Center.

# DAREing to make a difference

## JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

West End Elementary sixth-grade students took a pledge to say "no" to drugs, alcohol and tobacco this week. After 10 weeks, the group graduated from the local Drug Abuse Resistance Education program, known as DARE, at Backus Community Center Wednesday. International Falls Police Officer Dane Olson, who serves as the DARE officer, said he was approached this year by the sixth grade teachers about bringing the

DARE to A7 >



Elizabeth Amiot gives DARE Officer Dane Olson a hug during Wednesday's graduation ceremony.



DARE Officer Dane Olson presents Ashley Davis with a certificate acknowledging she graduated from the DARE program.

# KEDA discusses 2015 work plan

BY SPENSER BICKETT  
Staff Writer

The Koochiching Economic Development Authority Wednesday reviewed its work plan for 2015, which sparked a lively discussion on how the organization can improve the local business climate. KEDA Director Paul Nevenen presented the work plan to the board, which guides the organization's efforts over the coming year. The primary goals in the work plan include:

- Pursue projects that lead to job creation and investment.
- Work with outside consultants to develop an economic adjustment strategy for Koochiching County and the city of International Falls.
- Continue to work with other communities and entities to market assets to potential clients.
- Continue to oversee and work with internal KEDA functions or affiliate organizations.

"That's kind of where our focus areas are going to be for 2015, but a big one will be working with the consultants to develop a larger, county-wide plan," Nevenen said. The consultant, Newmark Grubb Knight Frank, is working with local economic response teams, known as ERTs, and the Arrowhead Regional Development Commission to develop a comprehensive county-wide economic development plan. Representatives of the firm will be in Koochiching County Jan. 7-9, KEDA member Rob Ecklund said, to tour sites, interview people, and get a feel for the area. NGKF is a national consulting firm and its focus is on helping counties and cities develop economic plans, in order to spur growth, Nevenen said. The

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