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Health care fair aims to narrow shortage

Event set for
Thursday

BY EMILY GEDDE
Staff Writer

Less than three years ago, panic was setting in around Koochiching County as a growing need for more health care workers was identified in the area.



**Donita
Ettestad**

Cries for help went out and officials looking to remedy the shortage joined forces. Action plans were put into place and an advisory board was formed. One need realized was to grow the nursing program at Rainy River Community College.

In 2012, the college lost its stature to offer the program, and partnered with Itasca Community College. The program once flourished with 55-60 students enrolled, but only had six by 2015.

RRCC's former provost Carol Helland said the program needed a champion – someone who could dedicate the time and effort needed to grow enrollment and help produce qualified workers to fill open health care positions around the county. By August 2016, Donita Ettestad was hired as the RRCC health care program director and said she was ready to turn things around.

Fast forward to last week. Ettestad sat at her desk in the back room of the college's nursing lab smiling from ear-to-ear about the more than 30 students enrolled in the school's nursing program on some level, including certified nursing assistant, licensed nurse practitioner, registered nurse and phlebotomy courses.

"It's really exciting," she said. "We're pulling people out of the community who maybe hadn't considered a career in health care before."

Nursing to A7 ➤



**Emily Maki
selects food
to sample
last week at
Falls High
School.**

COOKING for change

BY EMILY GEDDE | Staff Writer

MORE PHOTOS ON **PAGE A10.**

Karla Line challenged her students: Create healthy, appealing meals for the school cafeteria using the United States Department of Agriculture website.

And they accepted.

The mouth-watering scent of food was sensed immediately after walking through the doors at Falls High School last week as students in Line's "nutrition for today" class prepared meals to be sampled by their peers in the cafeteria.

"This is really good," Line said, sampling a quesadilla. "I can't believe there is broccoli in it."

The idea didn't come out of the blue. It was spurred by complaints from students that they were hungry and felt portions being served in the

cafeteria were too small.

Line said she used their complaints for a teaching moment.

"I immediately brought out my portion indicators and showed them that we have skewed portion sizes in our heads," she said. "The average size of a piece of chicken is not as big as we think it is — it is actually the size of a deck of cards. I also brought out the sugar models that showed them how much sugar we are ingesting on a daily basis just by eating a cookie. I think it was a shock for some of them to see that portioned size of ranch dressing was 2 tablespoons...not half a cup like some had been using."

The learning experiences



STAFF PHOTOS BY EMILY GEDDE

"Nutrition for today" student Weston Piekarski fills a tortilla shell with vegetables for a quesadilla his group made for a class assignment Thursday.

Cooking to A7 ➤

Bildrite ceases operation

BY EMILY GEDDE
Staff Writer

An International Falls business announced Friday it will discontinue operations after more than 30 years.

Due to market conditions and commodity prices, International Bildrite Inc. has ceased operations, local of-

ficials were told.

"Another dark cloud has visited our community," said International Falls Mayor Bob Anderson. "Our hearts go out to the employees and their families at a time like this."

The family-owned company, employed 43 people, all

Bildrite to A7 ➤



STAFF PHOTO

International Bildrite, Highway 11 east or 101 Fourth St. E., in International Falls, ceases operations.

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