

# LOCALNEWS

## Board to take advantage of appeal

Commissioners will encourage state officials to allow Medica to service medical assistance clients

BY EMILY GEDDE  
Staff Writer

Koochiching County commissioners will next month have an opportunity to encourage state officials to allow at least two care providers to service county clients on medical assistance. The county board Tuesday agreed to send commissioners to a Dec. 12 appeal hearing in the Twin Cities regarding the selection of UCare as the only managed care provider to service county clients who qualify for medical assistance. Commissioners said they will use the hearing as an opportunity to encourage officials to allow at least two plans, with Medica being a preference, to provide service to the area. “This is such a huge issue and something we fought so hard for in the past,” said Commissioner Wade Pavleck of attending the hearing in person rather than teleconference. “In my experience, it is always more pro-

found if you’re there in person...We’re only going to get one shot at this.” As of Jan. 1, UCare is the only provider available to the county, which has frustrated commissioners and Terry Murray, director of the county’s Community Services Department. In September, the board sent a letter to Lucinda Jesson, commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Human Services, Gov. Mark Dayton and local lawmakers outlining the desire to establish another provider to service the county’s medical assistance clients. A contract with UCare was terminated about two years ago by the county after Murray said the company could not provide transportation to clients to medical facilities outside the county. The contract was renewed in July, however, Murray has said he wouldn’t have selected UCare had he known other providers would not be available. “If you have to travel

over 30 miles to see a specialist, (UCare) won’t pay for it,” Murray said in September. “We have to call and ask for special authorization to do it every time.” Pavleck said the concern will be discussed at the hearing. “I think we can make a strong argument that we’re discriminated against because of our location,” he said. “All the other counties have multiple providers.” Commissioners plan to bring to the hearing a letter from Gus Christianson, Northland Counseling, which includes his concerns on having UCare as the county’s only provider. In other business Tuesday, the board accepted the recommendation of the Rural Fire Protection Association to set the 2014 annual service charges for the rural fire subordinate service taxing district at the same rate for residential and commercial properties as in 2013. The rate for residential is \$85, commercial rates are based on valuation. The board also agreed to implement an email archiving service at a

maximum cost of \$2,880. According to Jaci Nagle, information systems data manager, email archiving has been allotted for in the 2014 budget. The annual fee equals about \$1.60 per email account, per month. Nagle said the law requires email data be archived to minimize the potential of liability under the Federal Rules of Civil Procedures and other Minnesota laws. In addition, she said it allows county email users to have immediate and independent access to email messages. The policy provides clarifications that email is not considered an official method of communication unless designated as such and preserved in printed form, she said. In response to a question by Pavleck, Nagle said emails sent by county employees through personal accounts would not be included in the archiving system. The board also Tuesday heard from Lisa Santee, coordinator of the county’s drug court, that the program received a state-funded grant that will cover wages of the program’s staff through June 2015.

## PCA invests in elderly care

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

Packaging Corporation of America already showed interest in International Falls by purchasing the local Boise Inc. paper mill, and recently made a donation to a local health care center as well. PCA CEO Mark Kowlzan and International Falls mill manager Bert Brown last week presented a donation of \$100,000 to the Good Samaritan Society-International Falls. The donation shows an investment in the health of the community, administrator Adam Coe said. “We feel extremely blessed to have received this amazing gift,” Coe said. “It truly shows their deep commitment to helping sustain senior health care services in our community.” The donation will help pay for the building costs for the new health care campus and help sustain the following services: short term post-hospital care, long-term



Mark Kowlzan  
Adam Coe  
Bert Brown

care, memory care, outpatient therapy, assisted living and home care services, according to a release. “We are very pleased to be part of the International Falls business community,” Kowlzan said. “We are proud to support the communities in which we operate and especially pleased that our donation will enhance care to a very important segment of the population.”

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**FRIDAY AFTERNOON FUN**  
**PARADE DAY, NOV. 29**  
Shop ‘Til 7 p.m.

**Centennial Park Downtown** (Next to Border Boxes)  
**Music ~ Treats ~ Old Fashioned Wagon Rides ~ Fire Pits**  
**Cutest Holiday Pet Contest**

- 3:30-6:30 p.m. Mann’s Old-Fashioned Wagon Rides
- 3:30 p.m. Caroling by Local Daisies, Brownies & Girl Scouts
- 4 p.m. Cutest Holiday Pet Contest  
Lineup 3:30 p.m. ~ Promenade Judging 4 p.m.  
First & Second Place: \$25 in Chamber Dollars  
Just dress up your pets and come!
- 5-6:30 p.m. Visits With Santa, Supper & Kids Fun- Elks Lodge



Take an Old-Fashioned Wagon Ride Friday 3:30-6:30 p.m.

**7 P.M. ‘Twas the Lights Before Christmas Parade**  
(Register floats, vehicles, animals or walkers until last minute!  
Forms available at the Chamber, required. 283.9400)

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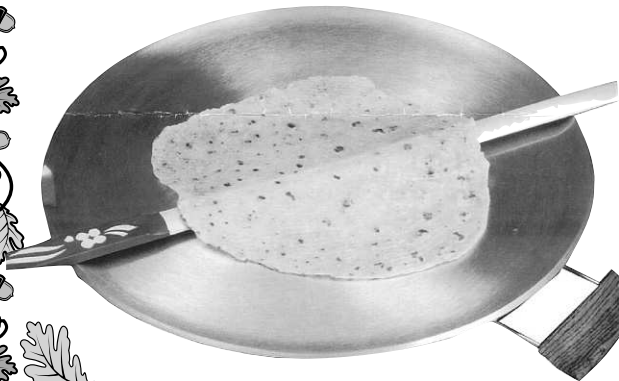


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