KEDA

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typically the fiscal year-end for many businesses.

Her work with clients isn't limited to the International Falls area, Herman said, as she's worked with clients in Northome, Littlefork and Indus. The focus of her consulting services is varied, but topics have included accounting and budgeting, start-up assistance, business planning and technology and computers, she said.

"One of the things I like to tell my clients is, it's not just me that you have access to," Herman said. "You have the entire network in the northeast region."

The clients who are asking about starting a new business are mostly local people, indicating some interest in starting new businesses in the area, Herman said. She also said she maintains connections with the Rainy River Future Development Corp. in Fort Frances.

"There's people that are interested in starting a business here, so I think that's positive," Herman said.

Herman said she's put together various workshops for local business owners, including a Quickbooks tutorial session at Rainy River Community College and an upcoming business transition workshop in Big Falls focused on loggers.

"A lot of younger people are not getting into the business, and folks know that," KEDA Director Paul Nevanen said. "So I think it's a good fit."

Through the local economic response teams, Herman said there's expert business consultants available who can provide assistance on topics outside her skill set. Those topics include web design, strategic planning, legal issues, bookkeeping and accounting.

She's also starting to learn more about "economic gardening," Herman said, which is a strategy focusing on identifying existing businesses with growth potential, and helping them meet their growth needs. These businesses also sell their goods and services outside the region they're located, and there's about five to six local businesses that would benefit from this strategy, she said.

"They're in second stage, which means they're profitable, they've got level sales, they've got some employees," Herman said. "So those are the ones that are really going to create the most jobs."

Herman also presented an updated report on local economic indicators, which prompted a discussion on the local workforce, as well as employment data in general. Specifically, she mentioned the unemployment rate as an often unreliable indicator of economic prosperity.

"You have to really be careful when you're looking at unemployment rates, per se," Herman said. "Because they don't really tell the whole story."

Labor force participation rates often tell a more complete story, because it accounts for the employed and the unemployed who are looking for a job, she said.

"All of those people that have stopped looking for work, but are still unemployed but have gotten discouraged are included in this figure," Herman said.

The statewide labor force participation rate is around 70 percent, she said, while in Koochiching County the rate is closer to 60 percent. Part of this gap can be attributed to the county's aging population, with 25 percent of the population more than 60 years old, Herman said.

"It includes everyone age 16 and older," Herman said. "So that's why our participation rate is lower than the state's rate."

The goal of the economic indicators report is to accurately measure the local economic situation, instead of relying on anecdotal or qualitative data, Nevanen said.

"It's a good tool and it helps in decisionmaking," Nevanen said. "It helps when people make statements."

There's also a local misconception that there are no jobs available, Herman said. In her talks with area employers, she said the issue isn't a lack of open positions. Instead, she said, it's a lack of available skilled labor.

"There's a shortage of employers that are willing to take some of those semi-skilled jobs," Herman said. "And it's only going to get worse."

KEDA posts a list of open jobs on its Facebook page biweekly, Nevanen said, and the list includes good-paying jobs. The list isn't limited to service industry or seasonal positions, he said.

Younger people also don't want to take jobs that pay $8 to $12 per hour, and think they should get paid more, Herman said. Instead, she said they'll rely on unemployment benefits instead of taking a lower-paying job.

"There's a lot of benefits we provide to our lower-income population here that doesn't really incentivize them to take those $10 to $12 per hour jobs," Herman said. "Even if there's some potential for growth."

In other business, Nevanen's director's report provided an update on the cold weather testing season, which is beginning to wind down. There are two groups left on the schedule for the season, and one upcoming group will be testing electric buses at the facility, he said.

"There's a fair amount of electric vehicle testing, both hybrids and pure electrics," Nevanen said. "I think we're going to see more and more electric vehicle testing here, especially with the challenge of cold weather on batteries."

Nevanen said the facility hosted management representatives from Jaguar Land Rover last month, and the testers came away impressed with the operation.

"They want this facility to reflect all of their other global facilities, so they're measuring us against Dubai, and against China and other places, and we're scoring well," Nevanen said. "So that's a testament to our group on the ground here."

TOURISM

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audiences the natural, cultural and historic attractions that define the region.

Roll-out events for the Heart of the Continent Geotourism Mapguide and website were conducted Thursday and Friday at Glensheen Mansion in Duluth; at Grand Portage National Monument in Grand Portage, Minn.; and at Fort William Historical Park in Thunder Bay, Ontario.

Representatives of the many sites and attractions that have been nominated and now reside on the website were invited to attend and receive their certificate of participation from National Geographic Society.

The keynote speaker at the events was James Dion, director of tourism programs, Maps Division for National Geographic Society.

The website may be viewed at www.travelthe-heart.org. Residents and visitors may continue to nominate new sites, events and special places for the website, which will be dynamic and constantly changing.

Since the project was launched in February 2014, local people have nominated for inclusion more than 400 of their favorite points of interest; historic, cultural and natural landmarks; events; artisans; and attractions that capture the region's unique character and beauty.

"The Heart of the Continent Geotourism MapGuide and website showcase what makes the region so culturally and geographically significant," said Dion. "More than ever, this project underscores the importance of connecting the local trans-border communities, smartly sharing the region's tremendous scenic, historic and cultural assets, and helping them thrive together for future generations."

National Geographic's acclaimed mapmaking and sustainable tourism expertise helped produce the geotourism website along with the U.S. Forest Service, Ontario Parks, Voyageurs National Park, Fort William Historical Park, Tourism Northern Ontario, Iron Range Resources & Rehabilitation Board, Thunder Bay Tourism, St. Louis County, City of Duluth, Arrowhead Regional Development Corporation, Atikokan Economic Development Corporation and many others.

The Heart of the Continent area designated for the map stretches from the outer boundaries of Duluth, northeast along the North Shore of Lake Superior to Thunder Bay and Sleeping Giant Provincial Park in Ontario, then west to International Falls and Fort Frances and south along St. Louis County's western border, including communities and private and public lands.

The Heart of the Continent Geotourism MapGuide:

■ Is one of only 22 Geotourism programs worldwide.

■ Showcases many of the 400-plus sites nominated by local residents.

■ Is a resource designed to improve local, rural economic development.

■ Provides access to a niche national market of "geo-tourists."

■ Will grow with the addition of hundreds of more sites and events.

■ Highlights the resources of the region encompassing a major portion of northeastern Minnesota and northwestern Ontario, including communities and over five million acres of public land.

■ Provides a long-term resource for promoting the Heart of the Continent to the nation and the world.

"Heart of the Continent Geotourism partners see this project as a great opportunity to work closely with other groups to promote the region and its assets," said Paul Pepe, tourism manager for the city of Thunder Bay.

"The Geotourism strategy for the Heart of the Continent will strengthen the case for responsible, meaningful tourism by embracing all tourism assets uniquely distinctive to the locale. Effective stewardship of these economic assets will produce benefits in a way that encourages the type of investment needed to preserve our unique heritage. We're thrilled to see the partnership that has developed with National Geographic and local organizations in this regard," said Frank Jewell, St. Louis County commissioner.

The National Geographic Society has worked with community-based alliances to develop similar Geotourism MapGuides and websites in other regions around the world. Geotourism MapGuide projects have been completed or are ongoing including in the Central Cascades (Oregon, Washington), Four Corners (Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Utah), Greater Yellowstone (Idaho, Montana, Wyoming), Lakes to Locks Passage (New York, Quebec), Newfoundland, Portugal's Douro Valley, Redwood Coast (California), Sierra Nevada (California, Nevada), and the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia-Herzagovina, Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo and Serbia.)

Founded in 1915 as the Map Department of the National Geographic Society, National Geographic Maps is responsible for illustrating the world around us through the art and science of mapmaking. Today, National Geographic Maps continues this mission by creating the world's best wall maps, outdoor recreation maps, travel maps, atlases and globes that inspire people to care about and explore their world. For more information, visit natgeomaps.com.

RESCUE

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bridge and near County Road 130. Former police officer Willi Kostiuk, who now serves as county emergency management coordinator, was visiting with the two at the time of the call and came along to help. Kostiuk shot photos of the rescue.

Kalstad donned his Mustang survival suit and was tethered to land with a rope. He crawled across the ice and grabbed the dog, said Hedlund.

"Deputy Kalstad did a tremendous job," said Hedlund.

The dog appeared healthy, but extremely cold. His collar had no identification tag, so its owner could not be located, he said.

As Kalstad crouched to check on the dog, Kostiuk said the dog was shaking from exposure, appeared grateful to be out of the water and wagged his tail continually.

Hedlund said the rescuers were going to attempt to locate his owner, but the dog had other ideas.

"He took off playing with other dogs and ran from us," said Hedlund laughing. "It was all good on his part as far as we could see."

While the incident had a happy ending, it could have been worse, Hedlund said. He urged people to be aware of where their children and dogs are as ice conditions deteriorate.

"John didn't go through the ice, he had been tied off with a rope, but a simple dog rescue and John put his life on the line," Hedlund said. And he said while the man attempting to save the dog had good intentions, he could have risked his life, as well as the lives of people who may have had to rescue him had he fallen into the water.

No ice is ever safe, especially near current and at this time of year, Hedlund said.

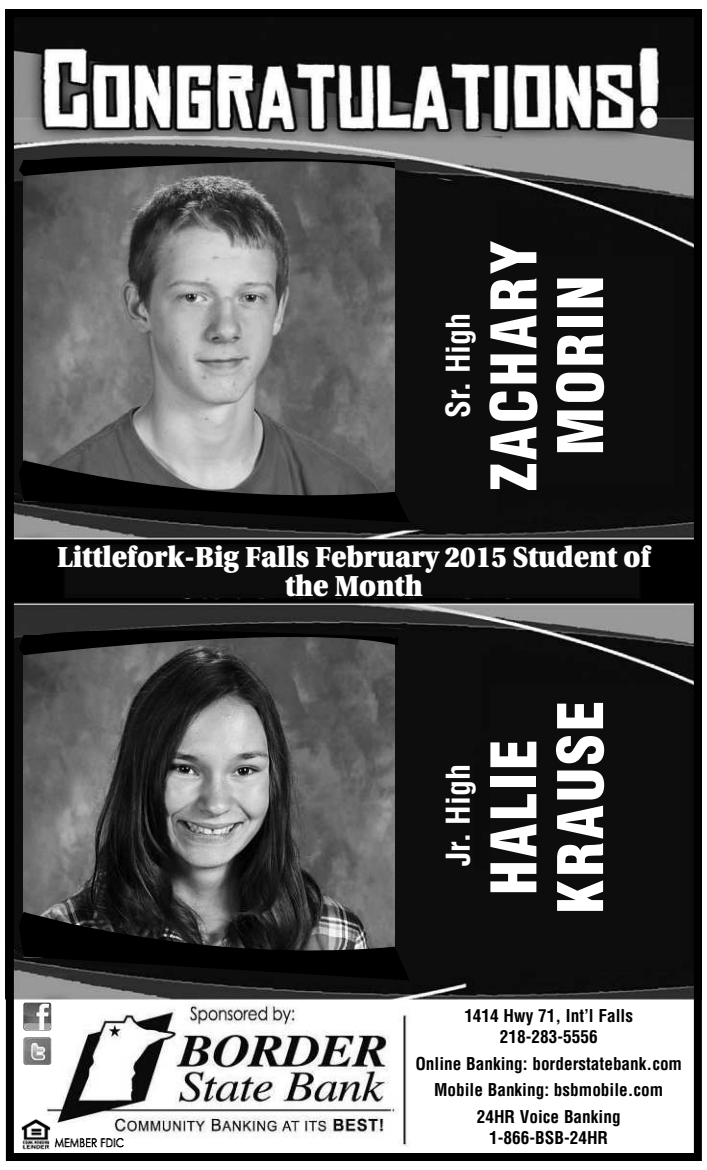
"The ice is starting to go and it's not ever good there," he said of the area around Ranier, where current is swift as the lake narrows to begin Rainy River.

Meanwhile, Hedlund said Kalstad reports the main part of Rainy Lake still appears to be holding, but is starting to deteriorate along the shoreline.

"Me?," asked Hedlund. "I wouldn't be out there."

He said he's heard of no reports on the U.S. side of vehicles or people falling through the ice. However, local people are talking about the front end of a pickup owned by a Falls resident dropping through the ice on the Ontario side of Rainy Lake.

Voyageurs National Park is reacting to the changing conditions and has closed all ice roads and recreation trails within the park.



CITY OF RANIER, MN

PUBLIC HEARING

FINAL PUBLIC HEARING
ON PROPOSED UNIFIED LAND
USE ORDINANCE
MARCH 24, 2015 @ 6:30 PM

City of Ranier
Ranier Community Building
Tuesday March 24, 2015 @ 6:30 PM

Presented by Josh Bergstad, ARDC and Ranier City Council

LITTLE LEAGUE® REGISTRATION

Boys & Girls
Falls Softball &
Little League Sign-Ups

Tues. & Wed., March 24 & 25
5 to 7 pm
Falls High School Cafeteria

Ages 5 and up
(Must be Age 5 by May 1, 2015)