

# LOCALNEWS

## Community Cancer Walk scheduled for Saturday

Effort helps with travel costs for people diagnosed with cancer

BY LAUREL BEAGER  
Editor

Everyone diagnosed with cancer in Borderland must travel because of that diagnosis.

People with cancer must travel to see specialists and oncologists, some must travel for radiation treatment, and others may need to go outside Borderland for other treatments.

“Everybody here has to travel, one way or another, they’re going to have to travel,” said Ellen Hart, Rainy Lake Medical Center chemotherapy nurse. “Not just some people, everybody will have to travel.”

The Community Cancer Walk, scheduled for 9-11 a.m. Saturday at Bronco Arena, is an effort to alleviate some of the costs for Borderland residents being treated for cancer. Proceeds from the walk are used to purchase gas cards worth \$150, which are provided to community members undergoing cancer treatment.

Registration costs \$5 and begins at 8:30 a.m. Saturday. Participants who want to collect donations may pick up a packet at the Coffee Landing Cafe, in downtown International Falls. About \$8,600 was raised at the annual event last year. Requests for gas cards should be made to the chemotherapy department at Rainy Lake Medi-

cal Center at 218-283-5484.

While some services associated with cancer treatment, such as chemotherapy and other infusion services, can be provided locally, people with cancer need to travel to see a doctor or to get other services unavailable in Borderland, Hart said.

Wendy Mayer, one of the original organizers of the event entering its sixth year, said the idea for the walk grew from members of a local breast cancer support group. “The Young and the Breastless,” who wanted to give back to the community that supported them while dealing with their diagnosis.

Mayer said any donation — big or small — is appreciated by the organizers as well as the people who receive the gas cards. In the past about 100 gas cards have been given to local people, she said.

“I have been told by many residents who have received a gas card, the gas card was appreciated, but they felt our program makes them feel the community is supporting them during this difficult time,” Mayer said.

Hart said the the gas cards come from a number of different stations and are purchased locally.

“It keeps all the money in the community,” Hart said, who said RLMC will have a team in the walk.

The community has



FILE PHOTO

**Lauren Snyder, 2, participates in last year’s Community Cancer Walk.**

been generous in its support for the local effort, Mayer said.

“The snowmobile club has raised money, the ladies golf group host a tournament, Boise Safety dollars, Rainy Lake Medical Center has a potluck for the workers which raises funds for our walk, a local church has donated funds, and we have been blessed to have received funds through memorials,” she said.

Mayer said people participate in the event for a variety of reasons.

“People come out for friendship, exercise, and to support a local cause,” she said.

Mayer said the timing of Saturday’s walk may be ideal for some people.

“People who want to join us while getting their exercise in can walk eight times around the arena to equal one mile,” she said.

## Shermoen joins drug court team

Program gets high marks from new member

BY LAUREL BEAGER  
Editor

In its ninth year, Koochiching County Substance Abuse Court got a thumbs-up from its new team member.

International Falls City Attorney Steve Shermoen has joined the team made up of community members, District Judge Charles LeDuc, defense and prosecution attorneys, and chemical dependency treatment providers.

Shermoen will represent prosecuting attorneys on the team, replacing Koochiching County Attorney Jeff Naglosky.

“It really is a wonderful program,” Shermoen said last month to the International Falls City Council. “It really is a benefit to our community.”

Graduates of the program are less likely to repeat the kinds of offenses that brought them to the court because the program uses a more holistic approach to substance and alcohol abuse than other programs.

Ages of the 20 active participants in the program now range from 21 to 70, Shermoen said.

People in the program are not first-time offenders, he said. Instead, participants in drug court are people who may have multiple offenses and are at high risk of reoffending.

The program often takes participants two and even



Steve Shermoen

three years to complete because it requires more commitment than simply going to court and serving a sentence, Shermoen said.

Shermoen said the program includes a component that helps participants establish a network of safe and sober friends.

“It’s truly remarkable to see younger participants listen to older ones who have been through it and are sober for five-plus years,” he said. Shermoen noted he defended some of the participants in the program.

Councilor Paul Eklund said he was glad Shermoen would be a part of the drug court team. Eklund served on a steering committee that helped launch the program.

“Those early participants are now buying houses, getting jobs and raising families,” Eklund said.

Councilor Cynthia Jaksa also supported Shermoen’s participation on the team. She said the program uses rewards and punishments to assist participants in avoiding situations that could cause them to reoffend.

Mayor Bob Anderson said he agreed Shermoen’s participation is commendable and

the program is beneficial to the community and the participants.

Lisa Sante, drug court coordinator, said the program has been successful in helping people stay off drugs and alcohol and avoid situations that could lead them to reoffend.

A recent training in Mankato, one which Shermoen also attended, discussed the best practices of drug courts, she said.

“We’re just continuing to provide the service that we currently do,” she said.

Graduation rates for the local drug court are high, 73 percent, compared to the statewide drug court graduation rate of 63 percent.

“We’re doing good,” she said. “We’ve had some tough cases and unfortunately some people are let go, and that’s hard, but overall we’re doing good at keeping people in the program.”

Sante said substance abuse and addiction has no age or income limit and people from all walks of life and ages are involved.

In the last couple years she said the team has worked to establish an alumni group that allows graduates to “give back” to the court and community.

“They provide support for each other, but are active in providing social activities so important for long-term recovery, and they are acting as mentors for new comers,” she said. “We ask people to change their entire social network. They’re not actively using (illegal substances) so they need to learn to fill the gap somehow.”

“It really is a wonderful program. It really is a benefit to our community.”

Steve Shermoen,  
International Falls city attorney

## Boise Paper employees award safety funds

Stores employees presented \$2,625 in safety funds to local food pantries and health service providers in September.

Boise Paper, A Division of Packaging Corporation of America, allocated the funds in recognition of employee safety. Employees distributed the monies to the Falls Hunger Coalition, Salvation Army, American Cancer Society, Community Cancer Walk, and Fairview Hospice.

“I extend my thanks to the organizations that provide valuable services to our community and to stores employees for their safety leadership,” says Jan Klow, Purchasing / Stores manager. “In addition to working over 10 years without a safety incident, 100 percent of stores employees consistently participate in improving mill safety.”

For the past several years, monies have been set aside to assist organizations in Koochiching County based on employee safety participation. Those interested in learning more information about the program are encouraged to call 218.285.5312.



Pictured above L-R: Storekeepers Robin Begg and Todd Gordon, Fairview Hospice supervisor Polly Hebig, storekeeper Rhonda Wimmer, Falls Hunger Coalition director Nancy Anderson, Purchasing / Stores manager Jan Klow, and storekeepers Elaine Akset, Bobbi Bernath, and Kalsie Briggs.

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