

LOCALNEWS

A man with a plan

Minnesota Miracle begins Aug. 2

BY EMILY GEDDE
Staff Writer

His tennis shoes are laced up and Gary Fitch is ready to make a difference.

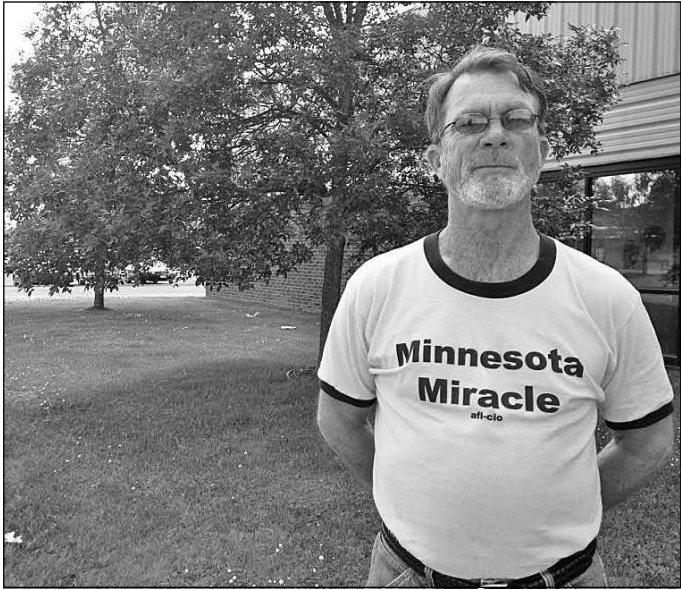
In two weeks, the retired mail carrier will set out on a 300-mile, 30-day walk from International Falls to St. Paul in an effort to end hunger in the state. He's calling the initiative "Minnesota Miracle."

"There are too many hungry kids in this state," he said. "We need to take care of our own. We need to do something about it."

And he intends to. At 10 a.m. Aug. 2, Fitch will start his journey at the Bob Walls Memorial Union Hall and invites anyone and everyone to walk him for as long as they can.

"Even if people can walk the two miles to the city limits line of International Falls, that'd be amazing," he said. "International Falls is the 'if' in Minnesota Miracle. If we can start off well, we can make this happen."

Since the more than two years after the idea of Minnesota Miracle began, Fitch has partnered with Second Harvest Heartland, the largest hunger relief



STAFF PHOTO BY EMILY GEDDE

Gary Fitch will kick off his "Minnesota Miracle" walk to help end hunger in Minnesota at 10 a.m. Aug. 2 in International Falls.

More information

For more information on how to donate to Minnesota Miracle, visit www.minnesotamiracle.com.

organization in the Upper Midwest, and he has also gained support from the AFL-CIO, the largest federation of unions in the United States. The effort has also gained support from the Koochiching Labor Assembly, which represents unions working in Koochiching County.

"It's a grass roots labor movement," he said.

Originally, the walk was set to begin in April, but to allow more time for Fitch to ramp up the behind-the-scenes effort, he moved the start date to Aug. 2. That way, the walk will conclude on Sept. 1 when he will join the labor parade at the Minnesota State Fair.

Fitch also revised his goal of raising \$30 million "to something a little more realistic."

"My goal now is \$1.5 million," he said. "That's only one penny a mile from 285,000 union workers... That's attainable. It would allow me to plug \$60,000 to \$70,000 into the 300 food shelves every year."

So far, \$30,000 has been raised towards the Minnesota Miracle Ending Hunger Fund. The fund, he explained, will be set up as an endowment to generate additional dollars off interest.

"The nest has been built, now I'm working on filling that nest," he said.

"Donated money will never be touched. That's going to stay there. We're just going to use the interest."

Fitch is hopeful Minnesota Miracle generates enough attention to encourage people to donate and get out and walk with him to feed more mouths in the Land of 10,000 Lakes.

"I may not be able to make the state hunger-free, but I'm just a little old 62-year-old guy," he said. "I need everyone's help."

LITTLEFORK-BIG FALLS

L-BF welcomes new superintendent

Christopher Bachmeier will combine principal and superintendent duties

BY EMILY GEDDE
Staff Writer

There's a new face in the top seat at Littlefork-Big Falls School.

Christopher Bachmeier, principal at L-BF, was appointed Wednesday by the L-BF School Board as the district's interim superintendent.

"I'm really excited," he said of the new position.

Combined with his principal duties, Bachmeier will carry out the rest of former superintendent Fred Sebybert's contract, which expires June 30, 2015. Then, he said, he plans to reapply when the position becomes permanent.

"My plan is to stay in Littlefork as long as they'll have me," he said with a laugh.

Seybert's resignation, effective Aug. 31, was accepted by the board in June. He had been working under an interim contract since July 1, 2012.

While Seybert could not be reached for comment in time for this story, Bachmeier said he's been working closely under his predecessor preparing to move into the position when "the time was deemed appropriate."

"Mr. Seybert did a very good job leading the dis-

trict in a way that works," Bachmeier said. "I will miss him, he taught me a lot of things... It makes coming into this position a lot easier."

Keith Knaeble, board treasurer, said "the intent all along has been to groom (Bachmeier) for the position."

"It was the appropriate time for Chris to take over," he said. "We really like Chris and we're sure proud of what he's done for the school."

Knaeble noted L-BF being named as one of the top schools in the nation for two consecutive years and gave a lot of credit to the district's new top administrator.

"Getting recognized as one of the top schools in the nation goes to the staff and students, but Chris played a large role in making that happen," he said. "He's been doing a lot of the work that will be continued in his new position. We're really excited to get him to this point."

Nothing drastic

With more than half of summer vacation under L-



Christopher Bachmeier

BF's belt, Bachmeier said the new school year will be here "before we know it."

"We're going to keep everything going the way L-BF has done for years," he said. "There isn't a whole lot of change that needs to be done. Nothing drastic, anyway."

One of the duties new to Bachmeier will be working with the school's budget and finances. Last year, he attended several workshops to prepare him for the role, but gave a nod to the school's business manager, Pam Josephson, for making the transition less hectic.

"It's nice having a business manager with experience," he said. "I've learned a lot from her in the last two and a half months."

Welcoming newcomers

About 11 new students have enrolled to attend L-BF this fall, and Bachmeier said the district is happy to have them.

"We're excited to have new students come and still keep our small school feel," he said. "It tells me we are doing well."

Going forward, Bachmeier said he plans to lead the district in a direction to be the best of its abilities.

"We'll be keeping the Viking pride alive," he said. "I'm so appreciative the board has given me the opportunity to lead this fine school."

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at the Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce.
(218) 326-6619 or email bud@grandmn.com
Itasca County Fairgrounds Campground: (218) 326-6470.
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7 am-6 pm
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8 am-4 pm
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2014 International Falls
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