

# BUSINESS

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## Leaders tout border collaboration

**BY SPENSER BICKETT**  
Staff Writer

The Beatles urged people to come together, and business leaders from International Falls and Fort Frances heeded those words Thursday night during a brainstorming session.

The International Falls Chamber of Commerce along with the Fort Frances Chamber of Commerce and the Fort Frances Business Improvement Association, hosted a brainstorming session featuring two presentations on initiatives trying to bring interests from both sides of Rainy River together to benefit Borderland.

More than two dozen community members from both sides of the border heard a presentation from Rainy Lake Conservancy president Stephen Challis. A presentation on the Heart of the Continent Partnership from Doug Franchot, Voyageurs National Park steering committee, and Eric Johnson, HOCP supporter, followed.

Challis, a history buff with a lifelong love of boating and canoeing in Rainy Lake and the surrounding area, outlined the Rainy Lake Conservancy, which is a Canadian charity interested in conserving the Rainy Lake basin, he said. The company focuses on four main tasks: land conservation, scientific research, volunteering with preservation efforts and working with other groups that share similar objectives.

The focus of Challis' presentation was the Heritage Waterway System in Canada. This system, he said,



More than two dozen community members from Fort Frances and International Falls attend the cross border brainstorming session on Thursday.

designates and preserves rivers with natural beauty and cultural heritage, and to encourage public appreciation of these waterways. The current Boundary Waters-Voyageurs Waterway runs from Lake Superior and ends 31 miles east of International Falls and Fort Frances. Challis said he wants the designation to run through the border cities because of the historical significance of the route and the opportunity for international cooperation.

"What we're doing here is designating an international waterway," Challis said. "Certainly this is going to be complimentary to the Voyageurs National Park brand."

Extending the current designation could allow businesses to attract more people to the region and to market the history of the region, he said. The designation would allow businesses to "extend the brand of the region."

"That's where the business people come in," Challis said. "It's the business people



STAFF PHOTOS BY SPENSER BICKETT  
**Stephen Challis, president of the Rainy Lake Conservancy, discusses the importance of extending the brand of Rainy Lake in order to foster economic growth.**

who take history, take art and find ways to interpret it and drive revenues."

The Oct. 1 layoffs planned at the Boise Inc. paper mill have led many in Borderland to wonder about the future of the region, Challis said.

"The economy of the border town region is in a period of transition, from pulp and paper to something else," Challis said. "It seems that mining will be a big part of that brand and a part of that future. But this also, I suggest, should be part of that brand."

Johnson and Franchot discussed the Heart of the Continent Partnership. The HOCP is involved in a project with National Geographic which creates an interactive geotourism map of the region, as well as physical maps, too, Franchot said. This project, still in the funding stages, would allow potential tourists to plan their trip online by viewing different accommodation options, as well as restau-

## Former resident named to board

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

A former International Falls resident has been named to the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors for 2013-14.

Dave Baker, owner of Baker Hospitalities, Inc. in Willmar, will begin his term as a chairman of the board Oct. 3 at the Minnesota Chamber's Business Conference and Annual Meeting in Minneapolis.

The volunteer board represents the different kinds of businesses in Minnesota. The board sets public policy priorities for the business community at the state Capitol, and develops resources and strategies to help businesses prosper.

The other Minnesota Chamber officers are chair Jeff DeYoung from Baker Tilly in Minneapolis, secre-

tary-treasurer Todd Paulson from RTP Co. in Winona, and immediate past chair Joe Maher from UPM, Blandin Paper in Grand Rapids.

"Minnesota businesses are challenged to compete in today's global economy, especially considering our current legislative environment," DeYoung said in a news release. "Spending and tax reforms remain at the forefront of our initiatives. Our focus this year is to help Minnesota companies maintain and build their competitive edge."

The Minnesota Chamber represents 2,300 businesses and more than 500,000 employees in Minnesota.



Dave Baker

## Business expands its team

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

A local real estate agency has added another member to its team.

Heather McBride has joined True North Realty Inc. as a real estate agent. McBride, an International Falls local, recently finished training and passed her real estate exams, True North Realty Inc. broker and owner Jordan Pearson said.

Pearson decided to expand his team because the business has "been very busy," he said, and McBride was a "great fit."

"Heather has a lifelong background in customer service and is excited to be able to serve clients with real estate needs," Pearson said in a news release.

True North Realty Inc. opened in April 2013, and is composed of Pearson, Pam Oveson, Pearson's sister-in-law Jacie, and McBride. True North Realty Inc.'s offices are at 445 3rd Street.



Heather McBride

## Hospital works well with women

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

An area hospital has received an award for providing excellent experiences for female patients.

Bigfork Valley Hospital has received the 2013 Women's Choice Award for being voted one of "America's best hospitals for patient ex-

perience" by women for the second year in a row, according to a news release.

The award identifies exemplary institutions by considering female patient satisfaction and what women say they want from a hospital, including quality physician communication, nurse and support staff

responsiveness, cleanliness, and referrals from other women.

Bigfork Valley is proud of the recognition it received for its commitment to providing excellent service, Bigfork Valley CEO H. Daniel Odegard said in a news release.

"We try to teach each patient like we would treat our friends and fam-

ily and truly be a healing place where skill meets compassion," he said.

The Women's Choice Award signifies a hospital meets the high standards of a women's preferences, and the distinction allows women to make an informed decision about where to go for care for themselves or their family.

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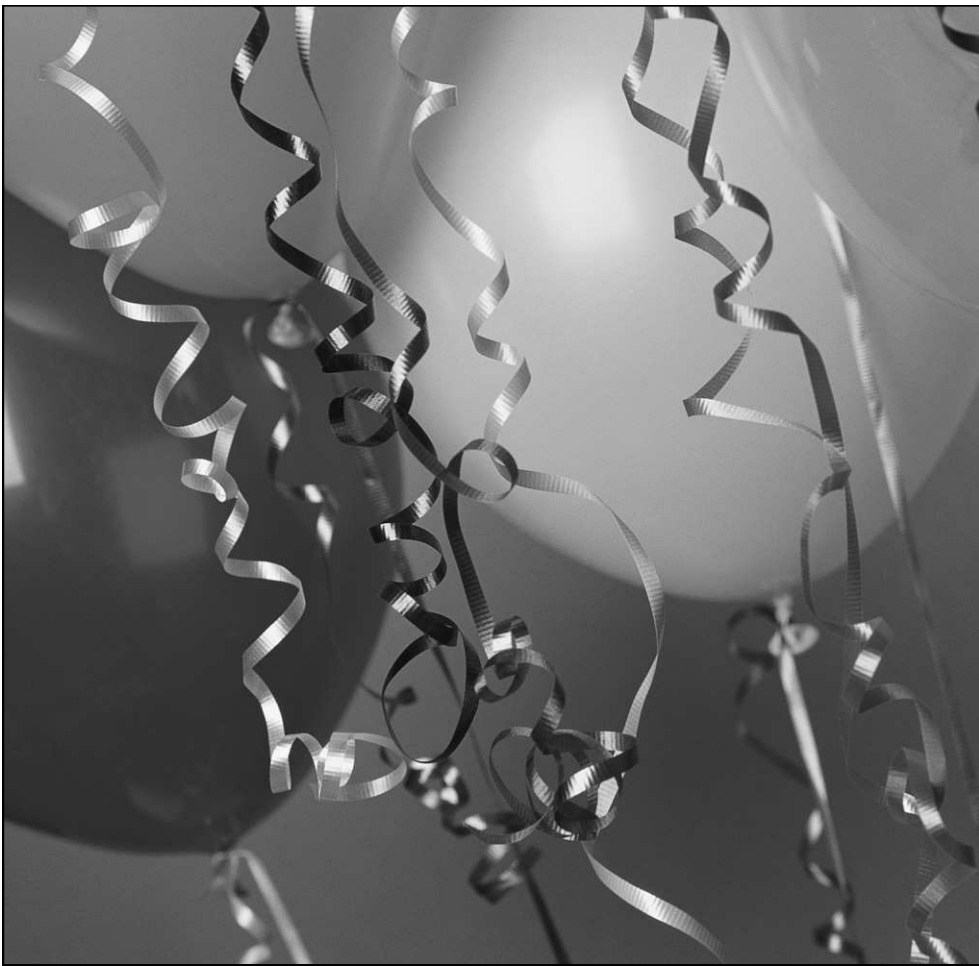


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