

BORDER

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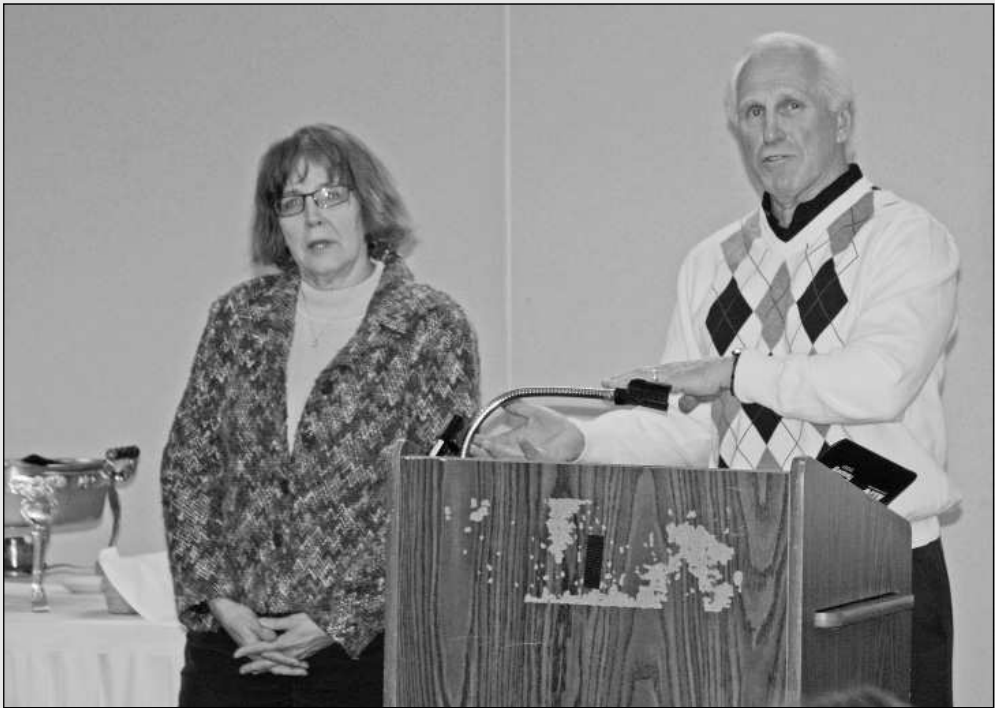
is a workday on both sides of the border, Weidenhoeft said the event will start at 5 p.m. and feature three different kinds of pulls: the celebrity and dignitary pull, the military pull, and the power pull. The celebrity and dignitary pull will hopefully feature Jamshed Merchant, the consul general from Canada, International Falls City Councilor Cynthia Jaksa said.

The military pull will feature the Primary Reserves of the Canadian Forces pulling against the U.S. National Guard, Weidenhoeft said. This pull came about as a remembrance of the War of 1812, he said.

The final power pull is for the coveted peace pull trophy, Weidenhoeft said, and features teams of 44 pulling against each other for the ultimate bragging rights. Following the final pull, the mayor of the losing side will have to cross over to the winning side to present the trophy to the winners.

To avoid rainouts like the two that have happened previously, Jaksa said a contingency plan is in place. If the event is delayed due to the weather, radio broadcasts at 5:30, 6, and 6:30 p.m. will announce whether the event is back on. If the weather is still bad at 6:30 p.m., the event will be cancelled, Jaksa said.

Following the peace pull on Thursday, July 3, is a morning-long cross-border meeting with public officials and medical providers, dubbed the “medical NAFTA” by Jaksa. The idea for the meeting came about as a way to share the medical resources of the two cities, she said, so instead of patients driv-



STAFF PHOTO BY SPENSER BICKETT

**International Falls City Councilor Cynthia Jaksa and Fort Frances City Councilor Rick Weidenhoeft outline the eighth annual peace pull, taking place on July 2.**

ing hundreds of miles for services, they can simply cross the border.

The meeting will take place at La Place Rendezvous hotel in Fort Frances, and Jaksa said invitations to officials organizers hope will attend will be sent out in April. These include the mayors of each city, local medical provider representatives, state Sen. Tom Bakk and Rep. David Dill, U.S. Sen. Amy Klobuchar, Ontario Health Minister Deb Matthews, Border Patrol officials, and others.

A similar agreement of sharing medical resources already exists between Detroit and Windsor, Ontario, Jaksa said. It's important to bring all these people together to come to a similar agreement, she said.

“It’s critical to get the politicians there to provide some pressure on the providers,” Jaksa said. “It’s a humanitarian issue.”

An Independence Day celebration in Interna-

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tional Falls on July 4 is followed on July 5 by Riverfest 2014, put on through a joint effort by Backus Community Center and the International Falls Rotary Club. Headlining this year’s concert is Little River Band, with opens Lamont Cranston Band and the Mike Ure Band.

Rotary President Mike Ward said the event is the club’s biggest fundraiser, and all the proceeds go back into the community to help kids. Also, having the event on the Fourth of

July weekend will hopefully draw more attendees who may be coming back to the area for the holiday, he said.

“It’s a better fit,” he said of the date. “Hopefully it’ll attract more locals and people visiting from Canada.”

Already looking forward to Riverfest 2015, Ward said they’d like to incorporate a winter wrinkle into the event. He said the groups are considering a “Battle of the Bands” competition featuring local acts in the winter at Backus. The winner of this competition would then get a paid opener spot at Riverfest in the summer.

The five-day cross-border festival still needs a name, however, so both the International Falls and Fort Frances chambers of commerce have begun accepting name suggestions. Residents can call in or email suggestions, or pick up a form to fill out at either location.

KEDA

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The expansion has also spurred the hiring of more employees, Hamm said. While he couldn’t share the exact number, over the past six months he said he’s hired “a heck of a lot more” employees.

“I hired a new HR (human resources) coordinator, which is something this store didn’t have before,” he said. “She has been busy from the day she walked in the door, and the last six months we’ve been hiring very aggressively.”

Hamm thanked the city of International Falls for its help in securing wetland credits for the construction, and its assistance in navigating that process. He also mentioned with the size of the store’s parking lot and lumberyard, sweeping and keeping it clean is an issue, and he said he’d be open to working with the city on bringing one of its street sweepers in to simplify the job.

“If we could get the city to sweep in there, even for a fee, I got to pay a lot of people a lot of money to be out there

with brooms,” Hamm said. “A street sweeper would be nice to have that roll into there and keep that clean.”

**Cold weather testing**  
In other business, KEDA Director Paul Nevanen’s report gave a summary of the recent cold weather testing season, which he said featured 13 distinct groups using the facility. Now, he said he’ll meet with the users for a post-season assessment, and determine what needs to be done in the off season to improve the facility.

With another successful testing season featuring full capacity operation for most of the run, Nevanen said he thinks the facility doesn’t require any expansion in the near future.

“I would be very hesitant to invest any additional resources without some sort of commitment,” he said. “If somebody came forward with a five-year commitment like Jaguar did, I would entertain that.”

Two cold boxes and a segregated shop at the facility means it can host two groups at the same time, Nevanen said.

“I like our mix of test groups,” Nevanen said. “When you develop rela-

tionships with these folks, that’s one of the questions, ‘What can we further do to support what you do?’”

One of the ways to support those clients is welcoming the testers that come from all over, and providing them with information on the community, Nevanen said.

“As these groups come on, there’s new people all the time,” he said. “So it’s



Paul Nevanen

identifying the team leader and working with a private sector person to make sure they get a packet of information.”

The cold weather testers have also been benefiting the airport by filling up planes during the winter, Nevanen said.

KEDA member Bob Anderson said enplanement numbers are up at the airport. Anderson also serves as the chairman of the local airport commission. “I think we can safely say a good share of that is because of the cold weather testing industry that we have here,” he said.

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FHS

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credit in the high school,” Everson reported to Falls School Board members this week.

Concurrent enrollment classes are similar to PSEO courses except they are college courses taught at the high school. High schools across the state partner with Minnesota colleges and universities to offer students this option, often called “college in the schools.” Classes are taught by high school teachers.

“We have reached a tentative agreement with Rainy River,” Everson said of offering concurrent enrollment courses at FHS. “We just need everything finalized as far as education plans...Students can still go PSEO, but we’re giving them another option to stay in the building and still get a college credit.”

Because the classes are free, students can save time and money earning a two-year degree. According to the Minnesota Department of Education, studies show students who take college courses when they are still in high school are more likely to graduate from college in four years with a bachelor’s degree. The option also allows students to explore subjects at a more advanced level.

“We’re very excited and anticipating have more of our students here next year than this year,” Everson said. “Students will have freedom while earning a college credit and they’ll be able to stay with their peers in the high school.”

The principal explained three-credit courses will run three days per week and four-credit courses will be offered four days per week.

From a parent standpoint, having students take concurrent enrollment classes is beneficial because while their child is earning a college credit, parents are still able to contact teachers and access grades and attendance online.

“It’s unlike PSEO,” Everson said. “I think it’s going to be very positive. Our teachers are very supportive.”

Other changes

In addition to concurrent enrollment classes, Everson said students who remain at the high school will be offered more freedom within the building.

After meeting with the school’s facilities committee, Everson said a storage room next to the cafeteria has been pinpointed as a

potential site for a junior and senior lounge.

“We want to be sure we have a place for students to go during periods of open hours,” he said.

The plan is for the lounge to be fully furnished, and include a Foosball table, wireless Internet access and a flat screen television.

“It’s going to be a nice addition,” he said.

A student-led initiative to have an open lunch period was presented Monday to board members by Tayler Hebner.

Hebner requested the board consider offering open lunch Monday through Friday to juniors and seniors.

The 25-minute open lunch period is now limited to senior students and only on Fridays.

Hebner’s request stated open lunch would offer students more freedom and could act as a reward to students who attend Falls High School.

Everson said there have been no complaints about those who are currently able to take an open lunch and said he supports Hebner’s request.

Positive changes

Overall, Everson said the feeling of excitement about the changes has been shared by everyone involved at the high school.

“We’ve spoken to the 10th grade students who are very excited about this,” he said. “We want to be sure they’re on board.”

With the implementation of a seven-period day set to take effect next year, Everson said specific classes that will be offered for dual credit has yet to be determined. He noted administration is working with the guidance office to be sure the right classes and the popular classes are considered when setting a schedule.

“It’s a big positive change we see coming,” he concluded. “Once we get concurrent enrollment underway, we want to look at how we can increase offerings for students.”

Board member Mike Holden commended Everson’s involvement with the initiative.

“You’re the energy, I’ve been watching you,” he said.

Board member Willi Kostiuik agreed.

“I know you’ve been working really aggressively to try to keep our students in the school,” he said. “That’s very appreciated. I think you’ve got great ideas and think it is going to keep kids...We can compete with the other schools and I think it’s going to make a big difference.”

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