

Secured
airspace

Council acts on
airport security

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Dancing the
night away

Local woman competes
in national event

A6



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Camp Ogichi Daa Kwe Director Kathy Dix shows some of the crafts campers have been working on this summer to a tour group.

The call of the wild

BY SPENSER BICKETT
Staff Writer

Out on Highway 11 East, past the hustle and bustle of the mill and the border crossing, lies a quiet, serene wilderness retreat, one that's been a part of the community for almost 100 years.

Camp Kooch-i-ching, and its newer sister camp, Camp Ogichi Daa Kwe out on Rainy Lake, teach kids the value of community and respect for others, as well as nature. The main goal, according to Tim Heinle, is clear.

"The main goal is to have fun, but also grow from the experience," he said. "We want the kids to develop self-confidence and self-esteem."

Heinle first came to Camp Kooch in 1951 as a 10-year-old, and immediately fell in love with the camp lifestyle, as well as the picturesque vistas. It was at camp that he met his wife, Joan, who is involved with Camp Ogichi, which is wrapping up its ninth summer this year. Tim came back to Camp Kooch in 1980, when he was asked to help the camp out of some financial trouble.

"My goal wasn't to run the camp, but when they said they needed help, I realized I couldn't help part time," he said. "So I sold my business, got them out of debt, and started developing an endowment."

Tim served as camp director

from 1982 to 1995, and has spent his post-retirement years with fundraising, as well as staying connected with campers, counselors, parents, and alumni. There's no one more well-known at Camp Kooch; he's like Santa Claus, everyone knows who he is. It's rare to see someone cross his path without offering a "hey Tim," or a "hey big Tim," and Tim will stop and catch up with them, even if he's stretched for time, which is another foundation of camp.

"We very much stress saying, 'Yes I can,' here," J.R. Verkamp, current Camp Kooch director, said. "We always have time to help the kids out, and we emphasize helping others to them."

Verkamp is a former camper who "grew into the job" of camp director. Having a staff full of former campers creates a self-sustaining culture and a camp that almost "runs itself," Tim said.

The director of the newer Camp Ogichi, Kathy Dix, has been involved with the camp since its inception in 2004, and has overseen the camp's transformation on the site of the old Rainy Lake Lodge property.

"There are 18 new buildings, and we've taken down all but three of the old ones," she said. "There's still two outer buildings and then the main lodge left to be torn down."



A camper at Camp Kooch-i-ching shows off his skills on the climbing wall. Rock climbing is just one of many activities available to campers there.

Camp to A7 ➤

Special
meeting
results in
movement

State grant issues
prompt harsh
exchanges

BY LAUREL BEAGER
Editor

A special meeting Wednesday called by three of five members of International Falls City Council concluded with unanimous agreement that the council would accept the terms of a \$657,000 state grant provided to the city and authorized the mayor to sign the agreement upon clarification of what state officials would accept as in-kind contributions toward a required local matching grant.

The grant was provided to the city, to be used with a local \$300,000 match, to install utilities to the multimodal district, along Highway 155, which is owned by the city's Economic Development Authority, a separate entity governed by an EDA Commission, made up of the city council.

The meeting's agenda called for "Council action for mayor to sign TED (Transportation Economic Development) grant documents and return all four original copies to city attorney within 24 hours, then said grants will be sent to state to be processed."

Councilors appeared tense during the 45-minute meeting and at one point Councilor Gail Rognerud, who serves as the president of the city's EDA Commission, indicated the council would take legal action against Mayor Bob Anderson should he not sign the documents.

Rognerud, who made a motion to instruct the mayor to sign the documents, said the state grant cannot be accessed by the city until it has been signed by the mayor and registered with the state. She said Anderson had been asked more than once by city Attorney Steve Shermoen to provide the signed documents.

But Anderson said he had not signed the documents for several reasons. He said he had not been provided information sent to the state by Shermoen and city Economic and Community Development Director Shawn Mason regarding changes in the plans for the district. That information was sent in an effort to convince the state to extend the grant to

Grant to A7 ➤

Assembly gearing up for annual Labor Day picnic

BY LAUREL BEAGER
Editor

Organizers of what's again becoming an annual tradition say they expect a bigger and better Labor Day picnic next month.

Set for 4-7 p.m. Sept. 2, the picnic is sponsored by the Koochiching Labor Assembly, made up of the unions which have membership working in Koochiching County, and will feature music, activities for the kids and free food.

The International Falls City Council Monday agreed to co-sponsor the event, allow use of Smokey Bear Park as the venue, and provide other park-related amenities.

Joe Schwartz, chairman of the assembly's picnic committee, said the resurrected picnic is a return to the worker pride that the community celebrated in the 1950s with Labor Day picnics that drew thousands of people and included parades, food, and fun.

And, he stressed the picnic is for all members of the larger Borderland community, not just union members.

"This is a way to give back worker-to-worker for Labor Day," he said. "And for the community to get together and enjoy the day."

Mike Holden, assembly president, told the council Monday the picnic is expected to draw about 1,500 people — 500 more than the picnics held in the past two years.

Schwartz said members of unions will cook corn, brats, and hot dogs which will be free to all comers. No beer will be allowed at the picnic and no political speaking will be encouraged, he said.

"If politicians come, shake hands and talk, that's OK, but no microphones and no political speeches. The only thing on microphones will be musicians."

And those musicians will be new to this year's event. Enter-

tainment will be provided by local bands Sloughgrass Family Band, Icebox 4 and Faith and the Believers.

Also new are more kids activities, Schwartz said, including face painting, kids games, a kiddie train ride and a bounce house.

"Everything is free," said Schwartz. "We want people to kick back, relax, visit with their neighbors and enjoy themselves — a true Labor Day."