

Painting party

Kids give pianos some color

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Tick bit: Tiny pests appearing in higher numbers

BY EMILY GEDDE
Staff Writer

Finally, after a seemingly endless winter, warmer weather has arrived in Borderland. But the warmer weather brings the threat of ticks and tick-borne illnesses. It almost doesn't seem fair. Rather than steering the tiny pests away, the snow and cold actually provides more of a survival method for ticks, which are appearing in unexpectedly high

numbers this year. "Things are changing," David Neitzel, a tick-borne disease specialist with the Minnesota Department of Health, said of ticks – especially black-legged or deer ticks – finding their way to northern Minnesota. "Ticks and diseases they transmit are moving more north or northwest." Ticks are vectors of a number of diseases, including Lyme disease, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, Colorado tick fever and

others. The highest risk for exposure to disease-carrying ticks is typically from mid-May through mid-July when the small, hard-to-detect nymphs are active, according to a release from the state health department. "We expect that tick-transmitted disease risk will be high again this year, including in those places that are historically high risk," Neitzel said, pointing to areas around central Minnesota. Last year, a record number —

1,431 — of Lyme disease cases were reported in the state. Other tick-borne diseases were also on the rise. Ticks tend to gravitate toward wooded or brushy areas, which fits the bill for most of Koochiching County. Neitzel said there while there isn't too many reported cases of tick-transmitted diseases in the area, the risk does exist. One International Falls man knows this to be true. The man, who The Journal

agreed not to name to avoid intrusive questions about his health, was diagnosed with Lyme disease Dec. 26. "I woke up on Christmas morning and my elbows hurt so bad, I couldn't move," he said. "I knew it was bad. It was intense pain." The next day, after family members suggested the possibility of Lyme disease, he knew it was time to see a doctor.

Ticks to A7 ➤

TOP OF THE CLASS



Salutatorian Karli Little, left, and valedictorian Brooke Millerbernd, address the Littlefork-Big Falls class of 2014 Friday during the group's commencement ceremony. For more L-BF photos, turn to Page A10.

County board approves tax relief

BY SPENSER BICKETT
Staff Writer

The Koochiching County Board Tuesday agreed to provide tax relief to county residents living in two medical center taxing districts. The board recently created a subordinate service taxing district to pay for critical upgrades at the Littlefork Medical Center. The district, encompassing Independent School District 362, was created to pay back the \$1 million loan the county is giving to the city of Littlefork for LMC improvements. At a May 14 county board meeting, Commissioner Wade Pavleck said he was uncomfortable with the idea of double taxation of Big Falls citizens. Part of the Big Falls area lies within the newly-created taxing district and the Northern Itasca Hospital District, which encompasses Bigfork Valley. The resolution approved Tuesday will use Koochiching Development Authority funds to provide a yearly tax relief grant to the city of Big Falls equal to the amount of tax assessed on properties in the ISD 362 LMC Taxing District that are also in the Northern Itasca Hospital District. "Basically, we're reducing the amount of the loan repayment to the county by using KDA funds," county Administrative Director Teresa Briggs said. Briggs said it's up to the city of Big Falls to create a system for people who qualify for the

tax refund to get it, but the county will assist them in setting it up. To qualify, people will also have to be current on their taxes, she said. "It's intended to refund the current tax year, and the tax has to be current," Briggs said. In other business, the county board approved a motion to send a letter to Coronal LLC asking representatives to compile a study to consider the feasibility of siting the Renewable Energy Clean Air Project in Big Falls. Pavleck said he was frustrated with the lack of communication between Coronal and KDA, the chief public organization behind the RECAP project. A December dinner with RECAP officials discussed the possibility of using the multimodal district as a site for the project, which nearby residents opposed. Pavleck said a report from RECAP on April 30 said it had decided not to move forward with the multimodal district as a site for the project, citing resident concerns as the main reason. The report said Coronal is considering a different site, which is a mixture of land owned by the city of International Falls and private property. However, a January letter sent



Wade Pavleck

County Board to A7 ➤

RECALLING THE SACRIFICE



Members of the Littlefork Veteran of Foreign Wars Post 9641 and ladies auxiliary march into the cemetery at Littlefork Monday for Memorial Day services recognizing men and women who have died while serving in the armed forces. The ceremony included a salute by the color guard, laying of a wreath and reading of the names of the departed veterans by auxiliary members, and remarks by representatives of local veterans groups, concluding with a performance of "Taps." Graves of veterans were marked with American flags. For more photos see Page A7.

INDUS CLASS OF 2014



Indus School graduated nine seniors in a commencement ceremony Friday. Principal Michael Underwood stands with seniors Licia Cress, Sofia Olesen, Amber Zoupas, Heather Krall, Lindsey Reasy, Damien Reed, Anson Payne, Skye Fuller, and Tiffany Gerthofer. For more photos and a story see Page B10