

# LOCALNEWS

## Falls native on the shortlist for National Book Award

**BY EMILY GEDDE**  
Staff Writer

Matt Rasmussen said he was in disbelief when he found out his poetry book, “Black Aperture,” has been shortlisted for a National Book Award. “You dream about your book being received well, but I never imagined this would happen,” the International Falls native said of being a finalist.

A National Book Award is an American literary prize administered by the National Book Foundation. According to the National Book website, winners of the award are chosen by a panel that reads all of the books submitted in their category and then compiles a longlist of 10 titles. The list is then narrowed to five, of which Rasmussen is included on. Winners will be announced during a Nov. 20 ceremony in New York City.

“I was Skyping with my mom...who wanted to know what time the finalists would be announced on (MSNBC),” Rasmussen said of discovering he was chosen. “So I called the National Book Foundation and they told me I was a finalist...I had to continue to Skype with mom without letting her know because (until it was announced) I had

to keep it confidential.”

“Black Aperture,” about the 1991 suicide of his older brother, Erik, earned the Gustavus Adolphus College professor the 2012 Walt Whitman Award. Rasmussen, who was 16 years old when Erik died, said recognitions for the book can trigger bitter-sweet emotions.

“Writing the book, reading from it and talking to people about it has definitely made me more comfortable discussing Erik’s suicide, but it also means I have to dredge up those memories and emotions each time, so it’s difficult,” he said. “Being nominated for the National Book Award is a great thing, but it does feel a little strange being praised for a book about such a tragic event.”

The poet said he has struggled with feeling guilty for exploiting the tragedy for a personal gain, “but I think I convince myself it’s OK because at least I’m doing something with it rather than shutting it away or avoiding it.”



**Matt Rasmussen**

He said the family support from his wife, Jana; daughter, Lydia; and parents, Allen and Gail Rasmussen, of International Falls, helps.

“I think everyone is excited for me,” he said. “My parents, wife and daughter are all going to New York City for the ceremony...It will be great for my parents to see New York City and celebrate with me regardless whether I win or not.”

Rasmussen, who now lives in Robbinsdale, Minn., said he is also surrounded by a supportive Twin Cities literary community.

“It has supported me very well,” he said. “I feel extremely fortunate to be part of such a supportive community.”

While he waits for Nov. 20 to roll around, Rasmussen said he is still writing poems and while has doesn’t have a specific project in mind, reading to his 3-year-old daughter has inspired him to tackle a different kind of writing.

“I’ve started working on a children’s book,” he said. “It’s a very difficult genre to write, so I don’t know when I’ll finish it — if ever.”

For more information on Rasmussen, visit his website at <http://matras-mussen.net>.

## LMC’s health improving

**BY SPENSER BICKETT**  
Staff Writer

The cloudy future of the Littlefork Medical Center will become clearer, as Koochiching County and Littlefork officials work to find long-term solutions for the facility.

The center is owned by the city and managed through an agreement between the city and Bigfork Valley, Littlefork Mayor Mike Fort said. The management agreement came about in March after former CEO Kim Perkins was terminated, he said. The initial management agreement was for six months, and is now up for renewal, which Fort said he hopes will happen.

“The direction of the medical board and the city council is to continue with Bigfork Valley until we have a CEO in place,” Fort said. “At that time, we’re pursuing different alternatives of possibilities of the LMC campus.”

On Thursday, the Littlefork City Council approved a resolution to extend the current management service agreement with Bigfork Valley. The Koochiching County Board is expected to support the council’s resolution.

It’s very hard for a municipally-owned health care facility to make a profit, Fort said, and Bigfork Valley has helped turn things around at the LMC in the past six months. Continuing the agreement gives Littlefork more time to find a suitable CEO for the LMC.

“They’ve done a wonderful job on turning the numbers from being in the red for quite some time, to, we’re currently in the black,” he said. “I can’t praise them enough for helping us out the way they

have, it’s been remarkable.”

Finding a new CEO allows the LMC to have a full-time manager on-site, Fort said. The agreement with Bigfork Valley has been good, but it’s only able to provide managers at LMC a few days a week. Now that LMC is working to find a CEO, officials are hoping to extend the current agreement as a service agreement, and not a management agreement. The difference between the two, Fort said, is in the level of involvement Bigfork Valley will have with LMC.

“Anytime that we need help, you’d call them up and ask them, and you’d pay for that, instead of having managers on-site,” he said. “That would be anything: technical, computers, any question on food service, any type of service.”

County Commissioner Wade Pavleck, who represents Littlefork, said the LMC is critical to the county, as it provides assisted living, a clinic, a chemical dependency facility, and a nursing home. The in-treatment chemical dependency facility is the only one of its kind in the county, Pavleck said, and without it, the “county would be spending huge amounts of money trying to get the people to treatment in other communities.”

With a growing aging population, losing nursing home beds like those in the LMC would be a major blow to people trying to find nursing home services in the International Falls area, Pavleck said.

“Here we are, with a rapidly aging population, and there’s more demand for those services,” he said. “So Littlefork, with its beds, we can’t afford to lose those.”

At this point, Pavleck and the county are working with Fort to find “any feasible options that make sense and will continue to provide the services at Littlefork,” Pavleck said.

“We’re looking at a wide range of possibilities here to keep this thing viable,” he said. “We have nothing concrete at this point and we’re continuing to work on it.”

In order to remain a viable health care center, the LMC needs structural upgrades and modernization as it moves forward, Pavleck said. Early estimates on the costs of these improvements are around \$3.5 million, though Pavleck stressed no funding proposal has been formally brought to the board.

“To make it clear, there is absolutely nothing to that, there’s no decisions made,” he said. “There has been no type of agreement, nothing’s even come to the board, the county or Littlefork on the topic of the amount of money it would take.”

If the LMC were to go forward with the improvements, Pavleck said they’d need Bigfork Valley and their “infrastructure experts who could help oversee a project like that.”

Currently, the LMC is in the process of hiring a new CEO, with Bigfork Valley’s assistance, Pavleck said. The two parties are trying to find a suitable candidate who can run the center successfully.

The ball is in Bigfork Valley’s court right now, as their decision to continue the relationship with the LMC is key to the center’s prosperity, Pavleck said.

“They’ve been willing, up to this point, to continue extending the management contract,” Pavleck said. “But, they want to know where they’re going, too.”

## Art Hovel to host Reception

**JOURNAL STAFF REPORT**

The Samplicity Art Hovel in Littlefork will host a reception Friday featuring artist Barb Gray.

The reception is 4-6 p.m. Friday at the Art Hovel, 816 McPherson Street in Littlefork, and allows the public

to visit with the artist and view her work. Gray has been a member of the Northland Art Society since 1991.

Many of Gray’s works in paint, glass, ceramic and photography have been on display at the Art Hovel throughout September and October.

A release said her work is inspired by the beauty of nature. She paints in many media, mostly watercolor and has taught many watercolor classes.

For more information, visit [www.northlandart.org](http://www.northlandart.org).

## Police seeking help in robbery

The International Falls Police Department is seeking information from the public about an armed robbery at Koerter’s Amoco Sunday evening.

According to Capt. Tom Lynch, someone entered the business on U.S. Highway 53 at 16th Street at about 7:15 p.m. Sunday, produced a knife and demanded the money in the cash register and fled on foot. An unknown amount of money was taken.

Police ask that anyone who may have been in the area at the time of the robbery and may have seen anything suspicious to contact them at 283-4416.

**Go to ifallsjournal.com**

**Read.** New stuff every day.  
**Register.** Once. You’re done!  
**Remark.** Comment. Blog.

Wedding Invitations

Custom Printed by North Star Publishing

- Invitations and Envelopes
- Programs
- Save the Date Cards and Magnets
- Thank You Cards

1602 Hwy 71 • Int'l Falls, MN  
218-285-7411

**I WANT YOUR**  
Unwanted or broken gold & silver jewelry.  
Come on in and see Rob today!

283-4701 324 3rd St., Int'l Falls  
Celebrating 30 Years!

45 miles of nerves. 630 muscles.  
206 bones. 60 billion brain cells.

Rehabilitating the human body from the effects of injury, illness or stroke is no small undertaking. It requires the help of someone who relies on one other thing we humans have quite a bit of: the human spirit. Rehab therapy from the Good Samaritan Society – International Falls. Recovery in body, mind and spirit.

To learn more about our outpatient rehabilitation therapy services, call (218) 283-1310.

Good Samaritan Society®  
INTERNATIONAL FALLS

The Evangelical Lutheran Good Samaritan Society provides housing and services to qualified individuals without regard to race, color, religion, gender, disability, familial status, national origin or other protected statuses according to applicable federal, state or local laws. All faiths or beliefs are welcome. Copyright © 2013 The Evangelical Lutheran Good Samaritan Society. All rights reserved.