

LOCALNEWS

Water takes second at competition

BY SPENSER BICKETT
Staff Writer

The best-tasting water in Minnesota is no longer found here in International Falls. Thanks to a tie-breaker, Duluth is now home to the award for the state's best water, at least until next year.

Duluth's drinking water was named "Best in Glass" at the Minnesota chapter of the American Water Works Association's Annual Conference in Duluth on Wednesday. St. Peter, St. Cloud, Moorhead, Rochester, Mankato, East Grand Forks, and International Falls competed in the event, along with the host.

The final showdown between International Falls and Duluth came down to a tie breaker, International Falls chief water plant operator Bruce Wilson said. The four judges were split between the two cities, and a fifth judge had to be called in to break the tie. Even though the city didn't come out on top, Wilson said he's not disappointed with the results.

"We had a 50/50 chance of winning," he said. "It came down to one person's preference. If they had chosen someone else, they might have had a different preference."

Residents can take solace in International Falls' selection as the people's choice winner

for best tasting water at the 2013 Minnesota State Fair, as well as the city's second place finish in Wednesday's competition. The Falls also won last year's "Best in Glass" competition at the MN AWWA Conference, and went on to finish second during AWWA's national "Best of the Best" drinking water competition.

This run of success at competitions is great for the city, and something residents can be proud of, Wilson said.

"It's a great honor to make water for the city," Wilson said. "It's a valuable asset. These good showings will entice people and businesses to use our water more."

Wilson's been working for the city for 21 years, he said. He started out as a water meter reader, and from there went to work at the water plant as an operator. Over the years, he worked his way up the ladder, and when the former chief retired, he was in a position to take over. He's been in charge of the plant for six or seven years, he said.

This second place finish won't cause any bad blood between Duluth and International Falls, Wilson said.

"There's already a rivalry among all the cities that participate in the competition," Wilson said. "But it's not intense. It's good natured competition."

Finding closure: Resident starts a scholarship in memory of Linda Muggli

BY EMILY GEDDE
Staff Writer

The last time Jan Budris saw Linda Muggli, she knew something was wrong.

Budris recalls asking Muggli if she would be joining her for coffee following a service at the Kabetogama United Methodist Church.

"Linda said, 'No, not today,'" Budris recalled. "Her face looked so strained."

Unable to reach out to her lifelong friend, Budris said she was needed in Rochester to help another friend through radiation treatments. Not long after, Muggli was dead.

"I remember thinking, 'Something is wrong with Linda,'" Budris recalled of that day after church. "Then she was gone. That was the last time I saw her."

Muggli died Nov. 26, 2010 after a totem pole she was carving fell on her. In January, more than two years after her death, Linda Muggli's husband, Carl Muggli, pleaded guilty under an agreement with prosecutors to second-degree unintentional murder of his wife. He was later sentenced to 15 years in prison, the maximum penalty under sentencing guidelines.

Shocked and distraught by the tragedy, Budris said she was unable to find closure following Linda Muggli's death, especially because she was in Rochester during Muggli's funeral.

"I couldn't get back (for the funeral) and that was really hard," she said. "I've been left with a feeling of not knowing how to grieve."

Feeling empty and missing Muggli, Budris said she brainstormed for a way to keep one of her friend's biggest passions alive.

"Linda loved art and nature," Budris said. "So I decided to create a scholarship in her memory that will be given out to someone pursuing a future in the arts."

Budris said when she decided to establish a memorial scholarship in remembrance of Muggli, she sought help from several friends who helped kick start the project.

Among those friends were Phil and Ellen Hart, the owners of the Gateway Store in Kabetogama, who donated a 3-foot totem Muggli carved to be raffled off to raise money for the scholarship.

"It is just gorgeous," Budris said of the totem. "It was fitting to give that away as the first-place prize. Linda worked so hard at creating her business and creating totems that I just thought this is the most perfect prize."

Other raffle prizes include an oil painting by Jim Trandel, a basket of books

Muggli's work on a totem pole at Jim's Ash Trail Store.

"I told them Linda's story and it touched them so much that between the two of them, they purchased 40 tickets," she said.

In addition to what is generated through raffle sales, Budris said half of the proceeds raised by the 5-kilometer race held during the Lady Slipper Festival in June were donated to the Muggli Memorial Scholarship.

And as her eyes welled with tears, Budris said talking about Muggli is a reminder of how much she misses her friend.

"From both sides of this terrible tragedy, it has been tough," she said. "I feel for Linda's family and Carl's family, too."

Budris said the experience of organizing the scholarship has helped achieve the closure she was looking for following Linda Muggli's death.

"I just miss her dearly," she said. "I think she would be very happy to know how much her friends love her."

Raffle tickets are available at the Gateway Store, Bait N' Bite, Ash Trail Lodge, Sandy's Place, the Coffee Landing Cafe and through Jill Kiner.

The drawing for winners is scheduled for Oct. 1 at the Gateway Store.

by Mary Casanova, a basket by LeeAnn Meer and a wind chime made by Marsha Aronson Wall. Budris said Wall and Muggli were best friends and with the wind chime is a personal note to the winner explaining the friendship between Wall and Muggli.

The scholarship will be available next spring to be available next spring to a Koochiching County high school seniors who is seeking higher education in an art-related field.

"It isn't only painting, sculpting and carving," Budris said. "It is music, writing and anything to do with the arts."

Budris said she'd like to generate enough funds to create an ongoing scholarship, but "I don't know if that is possible," she said.

"I'm taking it one year at a time," she added. "I want this scholarship to be right in the neighborhood of \$1,000. We're not there yet, but we're closing in on that amount."

Budris said she wants the recipient of the scholarship to know how much Muggli appreciated nature, creating beautiful artwork and what a soft, sensitive and caring person she was towards others – especially children.

Budris said she sold tickets to a couple from Illinois who she spotted admiring



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The funds will be used to purchase a GE Healthcare MAC 5500 HD portable EKG machine for the Emergency Department at RLMC

A special THANKS to the businesses and individuals who donated gifts for the raffle and other contests, and to all of the VOLUNTEERS!

