

# LOCALNEWS

## Mitten mission

Local insurance agent aims to put mittens on area students

BY EMILY GEDDE  
Staff Writer

The generosity of a community member kept the hands of about 700 local children warm this winter.

Cheryl Miller, a local insurance agent, said she donated mittens to children in Koochiching County because it was worth the enjoyment it gave her.

“I love seeing the kids trying on mittens,” she said. “They get so excited over something so simple. We adults could sure learn from them... I love giving back to our community.”

The effort, dubbed “Choppers for Children,” started in 2012 when Miller partnered with a group of her friends before Icebox Days’ Freeze Yer Gizzard Blizzard Run to collect money to purchase mittens. The group dared each other to participate in the race while raising money for a good cause.

“Our customers heard me on the radio and started dropping off \$50,” Miller said.

The first year, the group raised enough money to purchase about 200 mittens. The next year, teachers contacted her hoping to get more, Miller said.

The dare was long over, so Miller took on the project as a solo effort. She contacted a number of organizations that donated about \$5,000.

“I bought from a Minnesota company,” she said.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

**Littlefork-Big Falls first-grade students show off mittens Cheryl Miller brought to them. Miller, a local insurance agent, hopes to raise \$10,000 this year to supply mittens to area children in January.**

“I love it’s a Minnesota company and Minnesota wool.”

This year, Miller was able to collect enough money for 700 pairs. She said the wool mittens went to children in International Falls, Littlefork and Indus.

“I can’t say no to the kids,” she said. “I just love seeing their reactions.”

Others do, too.

Heather Kennedy, secretary at Littlefork-Big Falls School, said Miller’s efforts are appreciated by everyone.

“It’s a relief,” she said of kids having warm mittens. “We see a lot of kids come to school with holes in their gloves or no gloves at all. This way, they all have something warm to wear.”

This year, Miller was able to provide mittens to all L-BF students in preschool through third

grade.

Miller said she and teachers decided the mittens would come in January when a lot of mittens have already been lost or ruined by their owners.

“Essentially, I provide them with their second pair of the winter,” Miller said. “I get so much help from people and businesses to make this possible... The response has been phenomenal.”

Now, she’s on a bigger, better mission. Miller will begin reaching out to businesses and people hoping to collect \$10,000.

“That will give me purchasing power to buy quality mittens in a larger quantity,” she said. “I’d like to see all kids in all schools in our area get a new pair in January... It’s the Icebox of the Nation, our kids need warm clothing.”

### RANIER CITY COUNCIL

## Council approves January construction repairs

### JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

The Ranier City Council Tuesday approved a resolution finalizing the repair of a January water main break.

A Friday afternoon water main break in January left the city scrambling to get the problem fixed quickly, city Administrator Sherril Gautreaux said.



Dennis Wagner

The only local contractor with the capability to fix it was Wagner Construction, Gautreaux said. The other nearest company would have come from Virginia or Bemidji, she said, so because of the time issue, the city contracted Wagner Construction to fix the break.

Ranier Mayor Dennis Wagner’s interest in Wagner Construction would have created a conflict of interest issue, if not for an exception in state law Gautreaux said.

A city can have an agreement where a city official has a “direct or indirect financial interest” if the contract doesn’t exceed \$100,000, which means it doesn’t have to be competitively bid, according to the League of Minnesota Cities. The council then has to pass a resolution laying out the facts of the agreement and the official’s interest, and that the contract price is as low or lower than can be found elsewhere.

The resolution approved Tuesday, with Wagner abstaining from the vote, detailed the emergency, time-

sensitive nature of the situation which prevented the city of Ranier from seeking bids from non-local construction companies.

The council also:

■ Approved account balances for depository accounts as of Feb. 28.

■ Approved profit and loss statements for general, liquor and water accounts as of March 5.

■ Approved claims for February expenditures.

■ Approved the February 2015 municipal liquor store operating statement. The liquor store posted a net income of \$10,616 or 29 percent for February. This compares to February 2014, when the net income was \$3,793 or 11 percent.

■ Approved a resolution supporting dedicated state funding for city streets.

■ Approved a resolution supporting an early voting bill.

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WHAT’S HAPPENING IN  
COMMUNITY EDUCATION!  
SPRING  
2015

**Scuba Certification:**  
Includes online course and open water dives  
Saturday & Sunday, April 11 & 12  
9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. both days  
Falls High School Pool  
\$169 online  
\$360 payable to Community Ed upon registration  
Instruction by The Dive Depot, Bemidji, MN

**Defensive Driving:**  
Wednesday, April 15, 2015, 5:30 p.m. RRCC  
Theater, \$20/person

**ATV Safety: (youth ages 11-15):**  
Classroom: Monday, May 18  
6-9 p.m. FHS Choir Room  
Field Operating Class: Thurs., May 21  
Beginning at 4 p.m.

**Ink with the Canvas Butcher –  
Mason Wilson:**  
Session 1: April 9, Intro to Inkwash  
Session 2: April 16, Inking Flowers & Foliage  
Session 3: April 23, Inking Birds & Wildlife  
Session 4: April 30, Final Ink  
6-8 p.m. FHS Art Room 120  
\$100 for all sessions & Supplies

**Canvas & Ink at The  
Thunderbird – Mason Wilson:**  
Create your own masterpiece!  
Friday, May 15, 7 – 9 p.m.  
Thunderbird Banquet Room • \$30/person

**Polymer Clay Projects:**  
Create your own beads for bracelets & necklaces  
Monday, May 4, 4 – 5:30 p.m. • FHS Room 130  
Instructor: Darcy Sullivan

**Bike Rodeo:**  
Tuesday, May 19, 5 – 7 p.m.  
Kerry Park Arena • Free & Open to All Ages!

**CPR/First Aid:**  
Adult CPR & AED  
Infant/Pediatric  
First Aid, Adult & Pediatric  
Dates to be determined  
FHS Room 130  
Call for interest & specific times

**Open Swimming:**  
Adult Workout Lap Swimming:  
Sept. through May  
Monday-Friday, 6:30 a.m. to 8:00 a.m.

**Family Open Swimming:**  
Mondays & Thursdays • 6:30 – 8:00 p.m.  
Saturdays • 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.  
All \$2/session or \$20 per ticket  
Purchased from Community Ed

**Driver’s Training:**  
April 7-27, 2015  
Instructor: Tony Casareto  
6:00 – 8:30 a.m. • Mon.-Thurs. • \$100/student  
  
May 18-June 3, 2015  
Instructor: Tony Casareto  
3:30 – 6:30 p.m. • Mon.-Thurs. • \$100/student  
  
July 7-23, 2015  
Instructor: Leon Ditsch  
8:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. • Tues., Wed., Thurs.  
\$100/student

**Tae Kwon Do:**  
Beginners Tues. & Thurs. 5:45 – 6:45 p.m.  
Advanced Tues. & Thurs. 6:45 – 8:30 p.m.  
Falls Elementary Gym or Cafeteria  
Instructor: Ken Krueger  
\$25 for an 8 session ticket purchased  
At class or at Community Ed

**Just One Step:**  
Wellness talk, Yoga Demo, Chaga Tea Instruction  
Discussion on healthy choices and behaviors  
Wednesday, April 22, 6-8 p.m. FHS Room 130  
Free for all ages  
Instructors: Lindsy Barnhart and Shirley Earley

**Yoga:**  
Tues. & Thurs. through May  
5:15 – 6:15 p.m.  
2nd floor of Faith United Church  
Cost: \$20 for a 5 session ticket or \$4/class  
Payable at the door  
Instructor: Shirley Earley

**Chess Club:**  
Now through May 25, 2015  
Grades 3 and up – Mondays 3:30 – 4:30 p.m.  
Grades 6 and up – Thursdays 3:30 – 4:30 p.m.  
Falls Elementary School  
3rd Grade and up  
All levels welcome  
\$15 for 5 sessions or \$4 per person  
One session free for a trial

**Computer Technology Courses:**  
Microsoft Word (Intermediate)  
Monday, Mar. 30 and Tuesday, Mar. 31  
  
Microsoft Excel (Intermediate)  
Monday, Apr. 20 and Tuesday, Apr. 21  
Cost: \$17.50/class  
Instructor: Keith Boelk

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