

# LOCALNEWS

KEDA

## CEO report highlights hospital’s improvements

BY SPENSER BICKETT  
Staff Writer

The Koochiching Economic Development Authority Wednesday heard a report from a local leader who’s working to upgrade Rainy Lake Medical Center.

Dan Odegaard, RLMC CEO, met with the KEDA and provided board members with an update on the ongoing improvements and renovations at the hospital.

Odegaard touched on a wide variety of improvements, including renovations to the hospital’s physical structure, as well as adding more specialty services for patients.

“One of the goals of the board is to provide more access to care locally, more specialty care,” Odegaard said. “And to improve the facilities and the services we offer, to expand those.”

Achieving this goal means patients can get the care they need at home, and not have to travel great distances for specialty care, he said.

**Services**

One service the hospital has been working hard to add is dialysis, Odegaard said. For RLMC, it’s a cost issue: there isn’t enough

volume to cover the costs of providing the services, he said. Should the service be added, the hospital would provide it at a loss, which it already does with some other services.

“My personal opinion is the solution is going to have to be a political one,” Odegaard said. “We’re willing to partner with somebody or collaborate with somebody else, another organization or the government.”

Odegaard mentioned the “medical NAFTA” event which took place in July, and centered on finding a way to allow U.S. citizens to access dialysis services in Fort Frances. Nothing came out of that meeting between U.S. and Canadian representatives, he said, so RLMC continues to work on finding a solution.

Another local service void is radiation treatment, KEDA member Wade Pavleck said, adding many patients drive long distances to receive those services. However, he said, the hospital provides chemotherapy treatment, and is working to fill the radiation service shortfall.

**Impact**

Odegaard’s first year as



Dan Odegaard, Rainy Lake Medical Center CEO, addresses the Koochiching Economic Development Authority Wednesday. At center is KEDA member Pete Kalar, at right is KEDA Director Paul Nevanen.

RLMC CEO has had its own economic impact on Borderland, with the hospital adding 12 employees since he took over. Those are good, well-paying jobs, and they create waves of economic impact on other sectors of the local economy, he said.

“As the hospital grows, as the hospital adds services and employees, it feeds all the other (areas),” Odegaard said.

Economic impact isn’t a one-way street, Odegaard said, because the hospital relies on patients to keep coming to RLMC for its services in order for it to grow.

“Hopefully they will do business with our hospital, because it will help us become stronger,” Odegaard said. “As we become stronger, we’re going to be able to invest more in the community.”

All the renovations and construction going on at the hospital also provides work for local contractors, with most from the local area, Odegaard said.

Odegaard’s impact has also spread down to Littlefork, where he played a crucial role in keeping the Littlefork Medical Center open, Pavleck said. Odegaard sent people to Littlefork with the necessary expertise to turn the LMC around, Pavleck said. One of those people, Mike Anderson, is the LMC’s new CEO, and used to work with Odegaard at Bigfork Valley Hospital.

**Improvements**

Odegaard provided a breakdown of the improvements he’s presided over during his time as CEO, including:

- The hiring of a new general surgeon to provide less invasive laparoscopic surgeries.
- Renovations in the new Medical Arts building, which is the old Good Samaritan building adjacent to the hospital campus. These renovations include a private registration area, new entrance and waiting area, new wing for clinic exam rooms, a specialty services

wing and a renovated lounge area for employees and visitors.

- Adding a tomo mammography machine, an advanced mammography system that provides a more accurate 3-D digital mammogram.
- A new MRI port for the permanent MRI trailer currently at the hospital, which provides MRI services Monday through Friday.
- An expanded orthopedic department, which will soon offer total knee replacement surgery.
- Approval as a cost level 2 provider for the Minnesota Advantage health plan, which is mostly for state employees. Participating in this plan puts RLMC at the same cost level of other area clinics.

Odegaard also mentioned a few future projects, which include:

- New in-patient rooms
- A new rehabilitation space for wellness and therapy services, including private treatment rooms.
- A new operating room for orthopedic procedures.
- New registration and emergency department spaces for improved privacy.

FALLS SCHOOL BOARD

## Preschool program changes up fund

Superintendent said costs associated with school readiness are ‘worth it’

BY EMILY GEDDE  
Staff Writer

The preschool program at Falls Elementary School is a main reason for changes in the district’s general operating fund.

International Falls School District Superintendent Kevin Grover Tuesday told the Falls School Board the district will need to budget an additional \$63,000 for the next fiscal year based on changes to the school readiness program.

“It’s mainly because we added another staff member and (educational support professional, known as a paraprofessional) also increased the other para’s hours,” Grover explained.

In addition, board action last February eliminated the collection of fees for the program.

“The main increases in the (general) fund are because of the preschool program,” Grover said. “Is it worth it? I think so.”

When considering the fund’s overall projected deficit of about \$254,349, Grover said the board will need to have “in-depth discussions” in the near future.

“Once we get scheduling figured out and sort out staffing at the high school, we’ll have a clearer picture,” he said of the district’s budget.

Meanwhile, Grover also noted to board members the use of substitutes is down this year at the elementary level. While he said he was unsure of the exact reason, he suggested it was a better atmosphere at the school.

“Whatever it is, it’s a good thing,” he said.

A better atmosphere fits the theme of a presentation Tuesday by the school’s Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports, or PBIS, team.

Falls High School teacher Maria Cowman, who serves on the team, said the change in student behavior — for the better — is “neat to witness.”

“There has definitely been a change,” she said. “Children are excited to

be here.”

The program aims to promote positive behavior and was implemented at the high school this fall. Falls Elementary is in its second year of the program. Students who demonstrate positive behavior are rewarded with Bronco power tickets that can be redeemed for prizes, Cowman said.

“The kids have really taken to it,” FHS teacher and team member Kayla Gilbert said. “We asked the senior class to help us lead in example and it has just been a big hit.”

In addition, Gilbert noted support from administration has aided in the program’s success.

Katie Hamers, FHS teacher and team mem-



Kevin Grover

ber, said to promote more school spirit at the school, a Bronco clothing line was launched in January.

“At our homecoming pep fest, there were maybe 15 kids in the whole school who didn’t have purple and gold on,” she said. “This clothing line gives people who don’t have anything Bronco or our school colors access to get something.”

The team partnered with J2M Apparel, in International Falls, for the clothing and a bulk of the profit goes back into the PBIS program. Items already ordered will be available for pickup at J2M or shipped Tuesday and the team said more orders can be made in the future.

In other business, Falls Elementary and West End Elementary Principal Missy Tate said preschool and kindergarten registration begins at 10 a.m. Mon-

day at Falls Elementary. Preschool classes will be filled on a first come, first serve basis, she said.

Grover reported he is seeking grants to help make Bronco Arena handicap accessible, but so far, has been unable to secure any. He did, however, tell the board it will be a project that needs to be completed in the near future.

RANIER

## Council holds brief meeting

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

The Ranier City Council met Tuesday for a brief meeting.

Action was taken on a handful of items, including:

- Approved Minnesota Rural Water Association on-site training for the city clerk’s office. Consultants from the MRWA will be on-site to review the city’s water rate system structures, financial statements and internal procedures for water billing.
- Approval of the Janu-

ary 2015 municipal liquor store operating statement. The liquor store posted a net profit of \$8,370 or 23 percent for January. This compares to January 2014, when the net profit was \$4,478 or 14 percent.

- Approval of account balances for depository accounts as of Jan. 31.
- Approved profit and loss statements for general, liquor and water accounts as of Feb. 4.
- Approving claims for January expenditures.

UP TO  
75%  
OFF

All Remaining  
Fall & Winter  
Fashions

Ladie's & Children's

The Hideaway

Clothing for Women & Children

Downtown • 326 3rd St. • 283-4358

PRESCHOOL AND KINDERGARTEN OPEN HOUSE

FEBRUARY 23RD, 2015 FROM 10 AM - 2 PM AND 6 PM - 7:30 PM

BRONCO PRIDE

KINDERGARTEN

- Small class sizes
- Full academic curriculum
- Small group learning
- iPads and smart boards
- PBIS
- Differentiated instruction
- Music, movement, and art
- A fun and safe learning environment

PRESCHOOL & KINDERGARTEN REGISTRATION BEGINS ON FEBRUARY 23RD AT OPEN HOUSE

NO EARLY REGISTRATION LIMITED SPOTS AVAILABLE

BRONCO PRIDE

PRESCHOOL

- Reading & Math Curriculum used by ISD 361
- Character Education/ Social Skills
- Music and Movement
- Science and Exploration
- Language and Literacy
- PBIS
- iPads and smart boards in every room

Bus provided in the morning and after school.

\*Half day program children take the bus to school for the morning program and can take the bus home from the afternoon program.

FREE TUITION FOR PRESCHOOL

Classes offered:

3 yr. olds

Tuesday-Friday... 8:30-11:00

Tuesday-Friday... 12:30-3:00

Tuesday and Thursday... 8:30-3:00

4 yr. olds

Monday-Friday... 8:30-11:00

Monday-Friday... 12:30-3:00

Monday-Wednesday-Friday... 8:30-3:00

FALLS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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