



STAFF PHOTO BY EMILY GEDDE

Motorists honked their horns in support of the about 30 people making their way down Highway 53 for Minnesota Miracle Saturday.

MIRACLE

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Harvest Heartland, the largest hunger relief organization in the Upper Midwest, and he has also gained support from the AFL-CIO, the largest federation of unions in the United States. The effort has also gained support from the Koochiching La-

bor Assembly, which represents unions working in Koochiching County. While he didn't know exactly how much has been raised so far, Fitch said about \$40,000 is already sitting in the Minnesota Miracle Ending Hunger Fund. The fund, he explained, will be set up as an endowment to generate additional dollars off interest.

"The money (Minnesota Miracle) raises won't even be touched," he said. "We're going to make things happen just using the interest." For now, Fitch will be taking in the sights of Minnesota as he fulfills a mission that started as a dream. "I'm excited," he said. "It all comes down to this. I want other states to look

and see what Minnesota can do. We're going to set some examples." Anyone who wants to walk with Fitch can track him using a GPS device set up on his website, www.minnesotamiracle.com. "Anybody can come out and walk with me," he said. "I'd be honored to have them. They'll know where I am."

HONOR

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didn't want the statue after removing it from an island it purchased, he said, so Ed bought it for \$1 and helped erect it at the entrance to Ranier. "It's at the spot where historically the voyageurs met with the native people and traded," Bernie said. "It's where so much took place, and it's there to greet people coming into Ranier." Like the voyageur statue, Bernie said his father watched over the city of Ranier for many years, and helped influence the city through a variety of improvement projects. The major projects he spearheaded include Ranier Park, the Ranier ice rink, the voyageur statue, and, most importantly, bringing water to the homes in Ranier. People in Ranier used to have to drill wells for the water, or get water from Rainy Lake or Rainy River, if they lived close by, Bernie said. Ed helped drill many wells for people, he said, so he was close to the issue. "His dream was to get water to Ranier," Bernie said. "People had water, but it had a lot of minerals

in it, and it wasn't great for cleaning or washing clothes." In the late 1940s, Bernie said, Ed took a trip to the Twin Cities to look for an engineering firm willing to help him bring water to Ranier. Armed with a bag of maps and a phonebook, he started approaching firms to find one willing to help him with his cause. He got turned down a lot, Bernie said, but one engineer, Bob Ellison, was intrigued by what he saw in Ed. "Bob was intrigued by Ed and by his passion, and he eventually became as passionate about the issue as Ed was," Bernie said. "Bob's firm also had plenty of work, with the suburban expansion going on at that time, but he still took Ed on." In 1954, Ed and Bob presented their plan to the Ranier City Council, complete with three options for getting water to Ranier. The first option was a well for the entire city, Bernie said, and the second option was to draw water from the lake via the beach. The third option, the one they hoped the city council would go for, would be to connect a water line to International Falls. The city council liked the third option, Bernie said, but the plan was too expensive for the city, so

they rejected the proposal. "Ed never forgot about the water, in all his plotting and scheming over the following years," Bernie said. Ed started approaching the people living in French and Jameson additions, and sold them on the idea of bringing water to their homes, Bernie said. They could contribute \$350 to an escrow fund, which would help pay for the water line, and be promised water when the line went in. If the city council didn't approve the plan, they would get their money back. The city council saw another plan from Ed and Bob in 1961, and with some of the funding already in place, approved the project. Ed was appointed water superintendent, Bernie said, and by 1962, everyone in Ranier had city water in their homes. Ed also had an interest in bringing recreational options to Ranier, Bernie said, and one way he accomplished this was by developing the site of Ranier Park. The park was in the original plat for the city in 1907, but it wasn't built until the 1970s. The land the park was on was filled with brush and trees, Bernie said, so Ed brought people in to help clear it out, and also brought in contractors to help with the work.

"Ed was a contractor too, so he knew a lot of contractors who could come in and put fill dirt in to fill out the land," Bernie said. Ed also helped develop southeast Ranier, by clearing trees, opening up the area, and helping build a road, Bernie said. He bought land in the area in the early 1950s, and built cement block houses, and worked to pave the road in the area. The ice rink in Ranier was also Ed's idea, Bernie said. In 1955, Ed brought some people together to fill in land and build a rink near where the current rink sits. They used donated railroad ties to build up the walls, and also built a second rink for recreational skaters who didn't want to play hockey. "He also got a skate sharpening machine, and started sharpening the kids' skates for free," Bernie said. Ed always tried to repurpose materials like lumber or dirt for other projects in Ranier, Bernie said, and was always looking improve Ranier. "He wasn't looking to enrich himself, it was always about what he could do for the city," Bernie said. "He made Ranier so much of what it is today, the transformation is incredible."

COUNCIL

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"They did not support my being there and I think are still certainly trying to give me as much grief as they can," he said. "People can make charges, but need to be able to back them up." He said because he does not talk to them outside council business, that may be what's behind the accusations. "After that one incident, I believe I have been civil in my remarks," he said. "I am not Shawn's supervisor. She reports to Gail and to the city administrator. I certainly don't have any day-to-day contact with her."

A call to city Attorney Steve Shermoen was not returned in time for this publication. Meanwhile, during Monday's meeting Rognerud pointed to items No. 9 and 12 in the 12-point council code of conduct during the council meeting. The code states each member of the city council has a duty to: ■ No. 9: Refrain from abusive conduct, personal charges or verbal attacks upon the character, motives, ethics or morals of other members of the council staff..... ■ No. 12: being willing to censure any member who willfully violates the rules of conduct contained in the code of ethics. Rognerud said she could not continue to stand by and watch the bullying of a city employee and do nothing, similarly how she would not witness and do nothing about bullying on the elementary school playground. While Rognerud said

she was not seeking action Monday because the item had not been identified for action on the agenda, she asked the council to give careful thought about whether it should "do nothing or do something." Rognerud also provided information to the council from the Internet about workplace bullying and it could "bring in someone or do something on our own." She said she was referring to businesses that specialize in workplace issues, which may come to the site, interview people about bullying, talk to the person bullying and being bullied to attempt to resolve the situation. "I think it's our job, as a council, to protect the people that work for us," she said of her motivation behind her statements. She told The Journal Tuesday she takes her accusations very seriously and was given "courage to step and do something" by a TV news series about workplace bullying. She said the situation has bothered her for a very long time. "Somebody has to step up and say enough," Rognerud said. "That's what I did last night — step and say enough. Enough." She said voicing her concern at the council table seated next to the mayor was very uncomfortable, but the other option was to allow it to continue and risk losing an employee who "is there with the best interest of the city at heart, no matter how people think about how she got there." Rognerud, along with Councilor Paul Ecklund, has announced she will not seek reelection.

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