

OPINION

OUR VIEW

Clearing the path for change

Voyage Forward — Journey to Success: a straightforward direction for our community.

That’s what a local effort to create a community vision and direction for the future has been dubbed. That effort got a big kickoff Thursday at a community call to action that drew about 150 people.

The effort was initiated by the economic response effort that led to the creation of several teams following the layoff of 265 workers at the local paper mill, the shutdown of the Resolute mill in Fort Frances and widespread flooding this spring and summer.

Voyage Forward’s website at www.voyageforward.org reiterates the challenging economic times this larger community has faced.

But it’s not a ‘woe-is-me’ sad song the website is singing. Instead, like its leaders, Voyage Forward states loud and clear the community as a whole must be committed to positively and collaboratively addressing our economic challenges.

“Coming together to find solutions, build hope and work our way through this difficult situation is everyone’s responsibility. Change is inevitable...

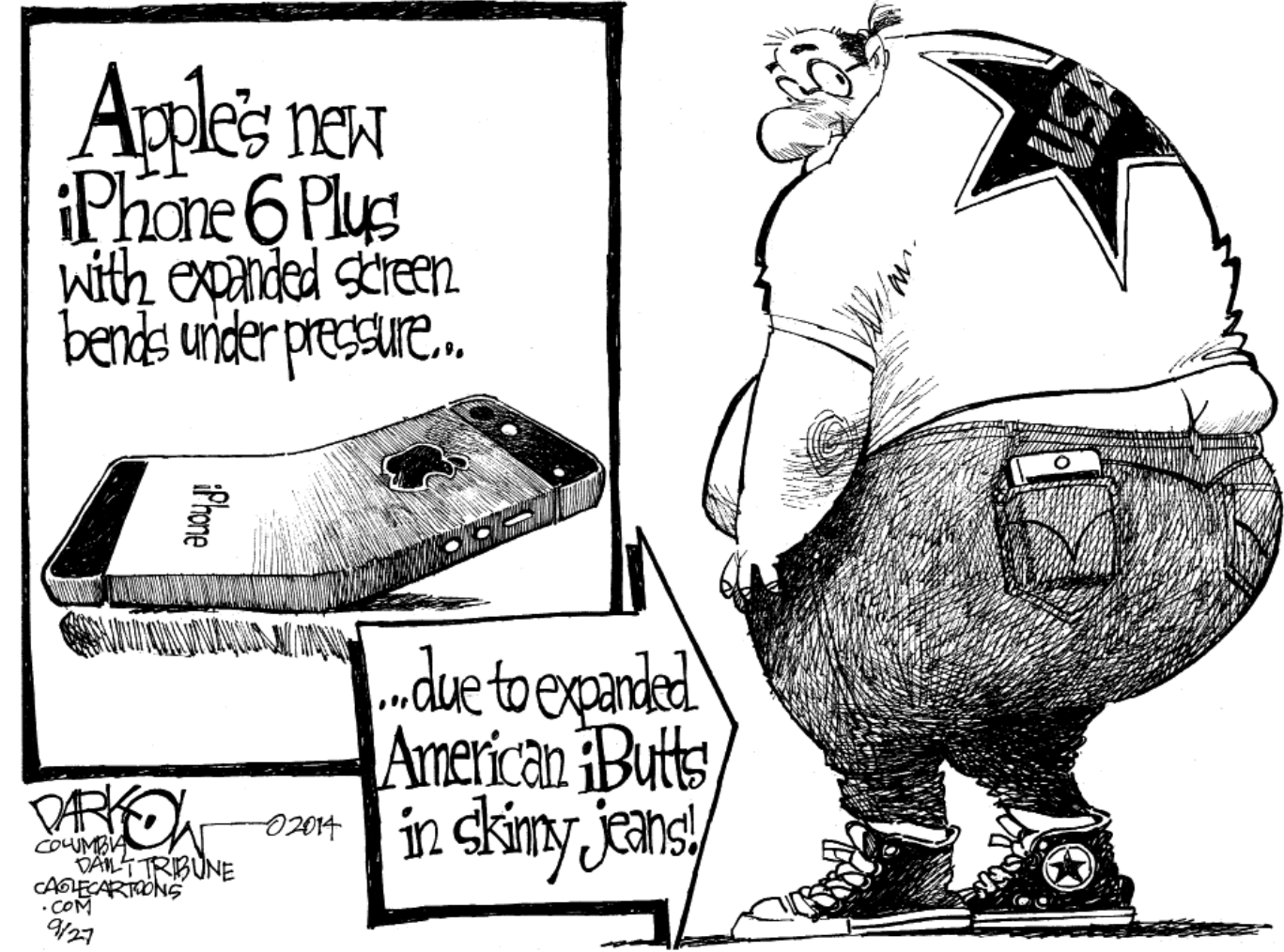
growth is optional. If not now...then when? If not all of us...than who?” asks the website.

Thirty people answered those questions Thursday when they accepted the challenge to get involved. That opportunity to join with other community members to effect a positive change in the community remains open at a 5:30 p.m. Oct. 8 meeting at Backus Community Center.

If you can’t make it to that meeting, or aren’t sure you’re ready to step up to the plate, contact team member Michael Wellcome at 218-286-1357 to get email updates about the activities and opportunities to direct change in this community.

Kudos to the presenters from Hermantown and Bemidji who shared the solutions put into place to define a path for their own communities, and kudos to our local leaders for seeing the wisdom of bringing that information to Borderland.

We urge everyone, like Wellcome said, from from Northome to the Canadian border, from Birchdale to Ash River, to visit the website and consider whether you can assist in this “Voyage Forward — Journey to Success.”



PAID ELECTION LETTERS

Keep Sheriff Jespersen in office

To the editor,

I am writing this letter in support of Sheriff Brian Jespersen because I believe that he is the best candidate for the job.

Brian undoubtedly has the character, values and experience that the job of sheriff requires. In this past year alone he has faced a variety of situations that have proven him to be the man who can not only handle the job, but handle it extremely well.

For example, the flooding this summer is just one instance in which Brian took the lead and, with the help of other agencies and of the community, helped make a horrible situation better—he was even able to get the National Guard to assist in the efforts. His response to situations like this one shows that he is the right person to be the emergency manager, a position he has filled for the past two years.

Brian also successfully worked to obtain the funding and carry out the implementation for a much needed 800 mhz emergency radio system. He understands that better communication systems mean better service to the public and provide more safety for the police and deputies responding to calls.

Brian started a Facebook page for the Sheriff’s Office which provides updates of important town information for citizens. He was also instrumental in getting the Citizen Alert System, which sends out vital emergency messages via phone.

Brian has been involved in almost every situation one can think of, from leading investigations on homicides to looking for lost hunters and searching for victims of drowning.

He has gained valuable experience while supervising the jail. He has the knowledge necessary for the application of civil process. He knows the sheriff’s budget and has worked with the county board on many situations. He knows the outlying county, lakes and rivers, which is extremely important for conducting search and rescue operations. He has gained the supervisory experience needed for the job of sheriff through his last seven years as chief deputy and county sheriff. This might sound like an exhausting list, but these examples serve as a testament for why Brian is an ideal fit for the position of sheriff.

Brian is respected among the other sheriffs in northern Minnesota and has built strong

relationships with these other agencies. In a time of need, these positive relationships can be a valuable resource.

During my years working with Brian as my chief deputy for five years, I could always count on him to handle any situation. I cannot begin to explain how much he did for the Sheriff’s Office. I’ve worked beside him in many stressful situations and, as a result, know that he is a man of integrity and someone who truly cares about the people of Koochiching County.

Brian has been a wonderful son, husband, father, brother, and friend, and he will continue to be a wonderful sheriff. Please get out on Nov. 4 and Vote Jespersen for sheriff.

Brian Youso
retired sheriff
International Falls,
MN

How to contact your lawmakers

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Share your point of view

Make a difference by writing a letter to the editor or contributing to our online discussions. The Journal’s Opinion page is where meaningful community discussions take place.

The Journal welcomes letters from readers

Letters should be limited to 500 words or less. Longer letters may be edited. Letters must be signed and include the telephone number and address of the letter writer. Only the author’s city address will be published.

Mail letters to The Journal, 1602 Highway 71, International Falls 56649. Letters can also be sent by e-mail to laurel@ifallsjournal.com.

Schwartz best for Center Ward

To the editor,

As election day comes closer each year there are many conversations about our friends and neighbors that run for various positions in our community. We as the friend or neighbor of those candidates have various reasons to support our candidate. I am taking this opportunity to tell you my reason for supporting Joe Schwartz for the Center Ward city council position. I have known Joe for 20 years. Joe is a quiet guy with very busy thoughts and ideas that become plans and accomplishments. I have become involved in the community because Joe’s passion and commitment is infectious.

What Joe sets out to do he accomplishes with out a fanfare. He has fought for the rights of workers, families and kids for years. He doesn’t do this for himself but to make life better for all of us, he has no personal agenda. He doesn’t want a pat on the back. I could make a list of his accomplishments but you should speak with him yourself, tell him your concerns. As a citizen of the center ward, Joe wants to be your voice, a servant of the people of the center ward. You of the center ward have the power to elect Joe, a man of the people, for the people, sounds like a political push letter, it’s not, I

believe in Joe Schwartz as a committed, thoughtful, well informed, selfless man that does what he says he will do. If you know him you have seen a man that walks the walk doesn’t just talk the talk. If you don’t know Joe you have the chance to at his meet and greet October 9th.

Please become an informed voter.

Margie Eklund
International Falls,
MN

Brian Jespersen for sheriff, again

To the editor,

Brian Jespersen has been more than a great sheriff; he has also been a great community leader.

I coached hockey with Brian back in the 1980s when Brian didn’t have kids in the Falls hockey program, but he coached anyway and dedicated his time. Coaching when you don’t have kids in the program really impressed me.

Brian served on the Falls Little League Board when I was president. He was a board member you could always count on. Later when I decided to retire from Falls Little League, I needed someone to take the bull by the horns and become the new president. Brian Jespersen stepped up to “home plate” and became the new president. Little League is the largest sports program in International Falls. Hundreds of kids look forward to playing baseball and softball in this program. To be president of Falls Little League you must be dedicated, show great leadership and also have tough skin. Brian showed all this and the program ran great.

As a law enforcement officer he has 27 years experience. Brian has worked in both the city of International Falls Police Department and Koochiching County Sheriff’s Department. Brian as a law officer has shown to be dependable, dedicated and outstanding leadership.

Brian is a former D.A.R.E. officer and K9 officer. He also served as president LELS 105 local union.

Brian is emergency manager for Koochiching County and has connections all over the country in handling

emergencies.

In 2007 Brian was hired as chief deputy with Koochiching Sheriff Office where he successfully investigated minor crimes to murder. Recently, Brian was incident commander for the 2014 flood operations in our area. Brian showed outstanding leadership with his decisions during this extremely difficult time.

Finally, I would like to say Brian Jespersen will give his “all” if elected our sheriff.

Mike Holden
International Falls,
MN