

OPINION

OUR VIEW

Community at its best

The Borderland community can again be proud of its generosity, made apparent when a group of hunting enthusiasts quickly came together this week to make sure a young man from the Twin Cities could accomplish his dream.

These Borderland residents took the time, energy and effort needed to build a special stand and get a wheel-chair bound young man into the woods to hunt for bear (See story on Page A9).

But not just hunt, Cody Felling harvested a 200-pound chocolate bear — the stuff many veteran bear hunters dream about.

The joy that Felling experienced may have been exceeded by those who helped him accomplish his dream. Kudos to these folks, the United Special Sportsmans Alliance and the Minnesota Taxidermy Guild for making Felling’s dreams come true.

And kudos to this community in general for coming to the need of others. Time after time we

hear about area residents turning out in full force for people in need. Many times, we think that the overwhelming support for the fundraisers conducted are members of this community taking care of their own.

But in this case, Felling shared with many Borderland residents something even larger than community — a love of the outdoors and the thrill of the hunt.

As the temperatures cool and more hunting seasons open, take a moment to think about how fortunate most of us are. Most of us can hunt or experience our great outdoors without the assistance of others. And most of us can have that experience close to home. And for those of us who cannot, we have family, friends and neighbors who can give us a hand.

As Felling reminded us, life could be different for all of us, and we are lucky to live in a community where people care not only for one another, but for others outside this special place.

Notice the need: Be a part of change

United Way is there for our community

When the United Way first came to our community, I was oblivious to the suffering and high poverty level in our county. I was employed at Boise in a well-paying, blue collar job and I really didn’t give much thought to the critical need in my own backyard. Then I was invited to take part in a United Way allocation meeting. That was a huge eye opener. I read grant applications from many local nonprofit agencies working to combat the issues in our community and address the root causes of the need. It was during this process when I finally realized the need in our county, and I made a commitment to be a part of the process that would help ease the suffering.

From this first allocation meeting, I joined the United Way Advisory Board and also became a donor to United Way. Contributing is a great way to share in helping our community. Through payroll deduction at Boise, I was able to simply complete a pledge form and have dollars taken from each paycheck, easily and painlessly. This is a good way to help because if you donate a few bucks every pay period, you don’t really notice it. That donation added up to



Mike SILVERS
GUEST COMMENTARY

an amount at the end of the year that I wouldn’t have been able to make in one lump sum. Though this giving method, at the end of the year you will have made a huge difference in your community. My donation was spread throughout the community to the local United Way agencies. You can also choose to designate your donation to one specific agency if you prefer.

We are all part of a community. Since the dawn of time, folks have created and lived in communities. And even in these earliest of times, groups of people have UNITED together to help and protect their community. I get a quiet satisfaction knowing that in some small way, through my contributions and efforts with United Way, I have helped someone in my own community. With the lay-offs at the mill, there is going to be

LIVE UNITED



United Way of Northeastern MN

a huge spike in the number of folks that are going to be thrust into a situation that they didn’t prepare for and had no idea it was coming. Needs are going to be greater and will affect a larger portion of our county. Sadly, as always, it will be the children who suffer the most.

Now that I’m retired, I have even more time to dedicate to supporting the community and United Way. During the school year, I will be delivering food kits throughout Koochiching County for children enrolled in United Way’s Buddy Backpack program. It is through programs like this and by supporting our local agencies that United Way will continue to truly make a lasting impact on our community.

Please consider contributing through United Way to help our community. If you would like to send in a gift, please mail your contribution to UWNEMN, c/o Julie Ehrman, 1303 16th Street, International Falls, MN 56649.

How to contact your lawmakers

FEDERAL OFFICES	
President Barack Obama Democrat The White House 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W. Washington, D.C., 20500 202-456-1111 Website: www.whitehouse.gov E-mail: president@whitehouse.gov	1200 Washington Avenue South, Suite 250 Minneapolis, MN 55415 612-727-5220 Website: www.klobuchar.senate.gov
U.S. Rep. Rick Nolan 2447 Rayburn House Office Building Washington DC 20515 202-225-6211 Website: www.nolan.house.gov Facebook: US Rep Rick Nolan Twitter: @USRepRickNolan	U.S. Sen. Al Franken Democrat Senate Hart Building 320 Washington DC 20510 202-224-5641 Website: www.alfranken.com E-Mail: info@franken.senate.gov
U.S. Rep. Rick Nolan 2447 Rayburn House Office Building Washington DC 20515 202-225-6211 Website: www.nolan.house.gov Facebook: US Rep Rick Nolan Twitter: @USRepRickNolan	STATE OFFICES
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Trustees must earn trust

To the editor,
The Journal’s recent lead article, “Members of RLMC Board plan for independent hospital”, was quality journalism, continuing a recent trend of informative reporting on the uncertain future of healthcare in our community. Hopefully that series will continue to explore the many unanswered questions.

The only journalistic flaw in the article was the headline. First, it is not clear whether the board’s goal is indeed an independent hospital.

(Susan) Congrave herself clearly favors independence, yet there are rumors and signs that the hospital trustees will consider a merger into Sanford or Fairview once the legal agreements being unwound no longer restrict them to negotiating only with Essentia.

The Falls Memorial trustees have declined Essentia’s merger proposal. If that is followed by competitive proposals from all the various potential partners

and contrasted with a plan for independence it should only benefit our community – assuming the hospital trustees give Essentia a fair hearing as well.

Second, there is no indication that the Falls Memorial trustees have any plan, never mind a viable plan, for independence.

National trends and previous studies by Falls Memorial Hospital and Rainy Lake Medical Center strongly suggest that the best path forward for our hospital is merger with a larger partner. It is entirely possible, even likely, that our independent hospital will follow the national pattern of financial decline until it has no choice but to negotiate a merger from a position of weakness.

Wishful thinking and nostalgia for a time when independent community hospitals were the norm and our hospital was profitable do not constitute a plan to buck the trend.

If the Falls Memorial

trustees feel the hospital should remain independent then the burden of proof lies with them. It is a heavy burden of proof — owed to the community which it is their duty to serve.

Until the hospital trustees involve the community in the process we will never have true local control. We will only have control by (Bob) Anderson, (Don) Billig, Congrave, (Bonnie) Erickson, (Jay) Knaak, (Jon) Talsness and whomever they choose to replace themselves.

Those good people do not represent the community unless they trust the community enough to involve them in major decisions or to hold themselves accountable again in local elections.

Anderson and Congrave have expressed support for public meetings with the board.

If the others agree they need only schedule a place and a time.

Trustees must earn trust.

James Yount
International Falls, MN

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@ifalls-journal.com.

Decision on hospital will hinder growth

To the editor,
Due to the recent changes at Boise, the community has stepped up to take a good look at who we are and where we are going in the future. It is time to take the rose colored glasses off in regards to the offer presented by Essentia to partner with the local hospital in which the hospital has declined due to their desire to “remain in control.”

We offer an excellent retirement area for people to realize their dream to fish the day away, smell the pine trees and see the stars clearly at

night but, as you grow older, access to adequate, modern, efficient and timely health care plays an important role in your search to relocate to your dream retirement area.

Essentia Health is a strong and savvy health care provided with the strength and buying power to make sure that a hospital with their name on it has what it needs to provide state of the art health care. The decision of the local hospital board to consider tackling the impossible in order to “remain in control on a local level” will hinder the

growth to the area.

The long wait to see physicians, the need to travel to other clinics if your need is special, the wait the hospital to get care in the early evenings is already a problem for those seeking care today. Attracting new physicians is a challenge that has been discussed across the nation. I admire the board for thinking big ... but, Essentia has man power, tools and a proven track record that we are foolish to ignore.

Debbie Bowman
International Falls, MN