

LOCALNEWS



STAFF PHOTO BY EMILY GEDDE

Jeff Pittman, left, and his father, John Pittman, leave the Falls International Airport Friday bound for St. Louis, Mo. The pair is biking from International Falls to Venice, La. to raise money for the Children’s Museum in Denver.

Pedal to the mettle

BY EMILY GEDDE
Staff Writer

And they’re off.

John Pittman and his son, Jeff Pittman, took off on bicycle Friday from the Falls International Airport toward St. Louis, Mo., to raise money for the Children’s Museum in Denver.

The pair, from Denver, Colo., will ride from International Falls to Venice, La., in three intervals to raise money for the museum.

“We thought we’d do this and make it something that is more than fun for us,” John said of raising money for the museum.

John is an owner of Fransen-Pittman Construction, which is the general contractor for an addition being built at the museum. Because he enjoys riding bike, John decided to turn an adventure into a money-maker.

“They do so much with just a little bit of money,”

he said of the museum. “So far, we’ve raised \$7,500 to \$10,000, and that just goes to them.”

And then Jeff jumped on board.

“I had a vision to tag along and had a gut feeling I needed to come for the company and the support of my dad,” he said. “Plus, I enjoy riding.”

Jeff, who works for his dad, said he only has a week off from work and will travel about 500 miles before heading home to Colorado.

Way back when

John is no stranger to lengthy two-wheel treks. When he was 16 years old he rode his bike from Washington D.C. to New Orleans.

“Last summer, I bet Jeff and put a couple thousand miles on our bikes,” he said. “I’ve always enjoyed riding.”

The father-son duo started considering a route to take for an extended bike trip and John looked at

Borderland for inspiration.

“I had never been to this part of Minnesota before,” he said. “And I heard it’s beautiful.”

But he was quick to admit, “I guess I didn’t think there’d still be snow on the ground at the end of April.”

The pair will break the almost 2,000-mile trip into three parts. The first leg will take them as far as St. Louis before taking a break until the fall. Then, from St. Louis, they will travel to Memphis, Tenn., and next spring will finish the journey in Louisiana. They chose the seasons they did to avoid heat and mosquitoes.

“We’re hoping to raise close to \$50,000,” John said.

John added they will travel about 80-90 miles per day and camp along the way.

“We’ll probably stay at a motel every fourth night to charge batteries and shower,” he said with a laugh. “I’m sure we’ll need a shower.”

KOOCHICHING COUNTY BOARD

County combines departments

New health and human services department should benefit clients

BY LAUREL BEAGER
Editor

Koochiching County will join about 40 other Minnesota counties which have combined public health and community services departments.

The county board last week approved the creation of a Health and Human Services Department and appointed Terry Murray as director. Murray has served for years as the community services department director. The change makes the new department the county’s largest, employing the most people.

Combining the departments should bring few changes for clients and result in a closer working relationship between staff, which should benefit clients, Murray said.

The combined department comes with the retirement of Public Health Director Susan Congrave, effective today. Congrave has served as director of the department for 30 years, and before that worked for three or four years as a

nurse in the department.

The idea of combining the departments is the result of a study conducted several years ago by the county board to consider whether departments could or should be combined.

About half of Minnesota’s 87 counties have combined health and human services departments, Congrave and Murray said. Koochiching is the last of the seven counties in the Arrowhead Region, or Region 7, to combine departments.

Because Koochiching works closely with the other Region 7 counties, Murray said it was a natural fit for Koochiching to follow suit.

Congrave’s retirement makes it a good time for the change, she said.

The change will allow the two departments to work more closely together, which Murray said should benefit the community.

“We work with a lot of similar clients,” he said. “Communication is good already, but this will open that up even more. In our team meetings, we will

now have a representative of public health.”

Murray said the structure of the combined department will be refined with time, and a supervisor for public health will be appointed.

“Starting out, public health works like a well-oiled machine already, so there is really no reason for me to do anything but go with what we have now,” he said.

Murray said his knowledge of public health is limited, so he will be on a sharp learning curve.

“Once we get a supervisor in place, they will be knowledgeable in public health and be a big part of making any plans for the combined departments, he said.

Meanwhile, Murray said the state has been notified of the combined departments; the change is guided by a state law.

In other county business, a \$20,000 Conservation Partners Legacy grant was accepted. The money is to be combined with a \$2,000 donation from the Trails End Chapter of the Minnesota Deer Hunters Association to renovate existing grassy openings to benefit wildlife on county land.

MPCA fines Littlefork business

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency released a report on 60 enforcement cases from the first quarter of 2014, with one local company falling on the list of offenders.

Green Forest, Inc., of Littlefork, was fined \$3,900 for stormwater violations, according to the report. MPCA concluded 60 cases in 41 counties in Minnesota during the quarter, with penal-

ties from all cases totaling just under \$345,000.

Owner Bill Nordlund, Jr. said the company was fined because it misplaced a bill from the MPCA and didn’t send it in on time. They company participates in a program where it sends in water samples for testing, and officials forgot to send in the bill for the program, he said. Of the \$3,900 fine, \$2,625 was forgivable, leaving the company responsible for \$1,275.

According to a release,

these environmental enforcement investigations often take several months, with some more complex cases requiring more than a year of investigation. In rare instances they go to court, but are most often negotiated settlements with the goal of compliance with environmental rules. Fines issued are targeted to match the environmental harm, economic advantage gained, or environmental corrective actions, the release said.

HAPPY 4TH BIRTHDAY

Aubrey

LOVE,
DADDY, MOMMY, ANDREW,
WICKET & WEISER

Happy 2nd Birthday

Liv!

Lots of Love!
Mommy, Daddy & Ava
(Lola & Bitty too...)

Happy 2nd Birthday

To Our
“Little Tiger”
Liv

Love
Gramma & Papa

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5 Reasons to Vaccinate:

- Immunizations can save your child’s life.
- Vaccination is very safe and effective.
- Immunization protects others you care about.
- Immunizations can save your family time and money.
- Immunization protects future generations.

Rainy Lake Rural Health Clinic:

- Monday - Friday
- 8:00 am - 4:30 pm

Call **283-5503** to schedule an appointment. Same day appointments may be available.

Rainy Lake RURAL HEALTH CLINIC

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