

Finishing strong

Bronco girls cross-country takes 15th at state

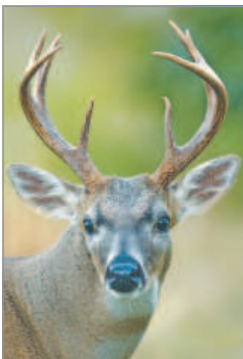
B1



Less Borderland deer this year

Rough winter last year leads to less deer

A3



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Less students means less funding – Falls district faces cuts

District will move into changes at gradual pace to allow for input, comments from community

BY EMILY GEDDE
Staff Writer

Although no decisions will be made for about six months, the Falls School Board this week began to consider spending adjustments to offset the loss of about \$425,000 in state funding.

Reducing staff and eliminating two non-revenue sports teams are among the proposed options.

“The present economic scenarios in our area are dictat-



Nurdy Nelson

of student enrollment from last school year will need to be moni-

ing some needed changes or adjustments that (Independent School) District 361 will need to consider,” Superintendent Nurdy Nelson said Monday during a special board meeting. “The downward slide

tored closely in the next four to five months.”

Nelson said the general education funding formula is student driven and the Falls’ numbers continue to decline. Since the school year began Sept. 2, the district’s enrollment has decreased by 58 students. Less students means less state funding and the loss of about \$425,000 is a number Nelson said he fears could increase.

“The district is no longer in an arrangement where fund balances

will grow,” he said. “The present district offerings and activities cannot be sustained and still keep revenues over expenditures...We need to start addressing these costs this early in the year. We don’t want to come to next March or next April and have (board members) backed against a wall... We need to start throwing some of these (ideas) out there.”

In a list he generated himself, Nelson highlighted options for the board to consider that could save

the district about \$717,800. The superintendent stressed items on the list were only options and didn’t need to happen all at once. Still, the cuts would enable the district to avoid dipping into its about \$3.8 million in reserve funds.

Cost reduction areas for consideration include:

■ **Elementary and secondary staff positions** – Nelson said by eliminating staff positions, a total

School to A11 ►



STAFF PHOTOS BY EMILY GEDDE

Little can be seen of Scott Jean’s face after Owen Peterson covered him with a pie. Eight students at Littlefork-Big Falls School were selected to throw a pie in the face of the teacher of their choice to celebrate surpassing a fundraising goal. To see more photos turn to page A11.

Turning one penny into many

BY EMILY GEDDE
Staff Writer

Students and staff at Littlefork-Big Falls School learned last week every penny really does count.

Students recently completed a month-long fundraising initiative that raised \$2,653 in loose change to be donated to the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society to aid in cancer research and education.

“I’m so proud of our students and staff,” said Angie Williams, L-BF counselor and interventionist, of surpassing the school’s goal of raising \$1,400. “It is amazing how much can be accomplished when we work together.”

Every year, Williams said she selects a fundraising pro-

gram to allow students to give back to others. This year, the school participated in Pennies for Patients, a program that promotes teamwork among students to aid thousands of children and adults in the fight against blood cancers like leukemia.

L-BF principal Christopher Bachmeier said he was not only proud of the students because he is their principal, but also because just nine years ago, Pennies for Patients helped him as he battled leukemia.

“It was a very good organization for my family and I,” he said. “It helped pay for gas, hotel and prescription expenses.”

Bachmeier said he was inspired that the school’s 355 students took fundraising efforts seriously.



L-BF students hold up signs to show the students raised \$2,653.38 in loose change during the Pennies for Patients fundraising campaign. The money will be donated to the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society.

“They literally went door-to-door collecting donations,” he said. “They took a lot of pride in what they were doing.”

Williams said Pennies for Patients allowed students to learn more about how many lives cancer affects and how they can get involved in mak-

ing a difference.

“One little penny can make a big difference,” she said. “It feels so good to give back and I hope our entire school feels the same way.”

To celebrate their achievements, students came together

Penny to A11 ►

City, county move to consider solar projects

Final decisions expected March or April

BY LAUREL BEAGER
Editor

International Falls and Koochiching County may get some help from the sun in powering their facilities, should state incentives be awarded and final costs be approved.

The council Monday and county board Tuesday each authorized nonbinding letters of intent to purchase a solar power system that would save the electrical costs, should the project proceed.

Gary Cerkenik and Justin Skalko of Silicon Energy, Mt. Iron, Minn., met with the council to discuss a proposal to install a solar power system on a city building.

The letter of intent sets the stage for Silicon Energy to assess the city’s potential sites, review utility payments and develop a solar plan.

A similar presentation was made Oct. 8 to a committee session of the Koochiching County Board. The board Tuesday agreed to sign the letter and move forward.

Cerkenik told the council and board a state energy bill approved by the Minnesota Legislature provides governments and business with utility, federal and state incentives to use “made in Minnesota” Silicon Energy solar modules.

He said the approximate cost of a 40 kilowatt system would be \$320,000, depending on details, with a down payment of about \$35,000.

Over 40 years, Cerkenik said the city could save about \$407,000 in electricity costs. It was estimated Koochiching County could save a similar amount over the same period of time should it move forward with the proposal.

The county board will seek an award for a system to be installed on the Forestland Annex building. The city did not specify a building for the project.

Silicon Energy, Cerkenik said, would seek a federal tax credit of 30 percent of the project cost. In addition, he said the city and

Council to A11 ►