



STAFF PHOTOS BY EMILY GEDDE

Levi Thydean smashes an extra-large pie in L-BF principal Christopher Bachmeier's face.

PENNY

► continued from A1

Friday for a pep rally that got a little messy.

When a student had collected \$10 during the fundraising program, their name was put into a drawing. Before Friday's pep rally, Bachmeier drew the names of eight students who chose a teacher they wanted to pie in the face.

Classmates Friday cheered on their peers

who covered Bachmeier, Williams, Todd Sether, Jack Larson, Jamie Wendt and Dan Beste in pies.

In addition, prizes were awarded to the grade level that collected the most money. Third place was the preschool class; second place was fifth grade, and third grade was the first-place winner.

"This is all about kids helping kids," Williams said. "When you give, you feel good."



Scott Jean braces himself to receive a pie in the face.



A student celebrates after receiving a piece of candy during Friday's pep rally.

SCHOOL

► continued from A1

savings of about \$370,000 could be achieved. "That may be somewhat extreme," he said of the number. Nelson suggested the board consider dropping some grade levels from four sections to three, a move the board made last year to keep class sizes down and stay competitive with neighboring districts. Nelson said as the year progresses, student enrollment will determine where reductions may be necessary. Staff, Nelson added, makes up more than 80 percent of the district's budget.

■ **Reconfigure educational support professional assignments** – Nelson said a year and a half ago, there were about 60 paraprofessionals and this year, there is about 40. "There is a tremendous amount of cost going out with all those personnel and I really question whether we need them there or not," he said. Should assignments be reconfigured, the district could potentially save \$125,000.

■ **Delay curriculum cycle** – Every year, different departments rotate to receive upgrades and improvements and delaying that rotation by one year would save about \$75,000.

■ **Dropping seventh and eighth grade remedial classes** – Math and reading remedial courses are designed to bring underprepared students to expected skill competency levels. Nelson said with changes in the Legislature on what is required for student testing, the classes may not be needed. If dropped, the district could save about \$42,000.

■ **Two non-revenue athletic teams** – The superintendent said he wasn't sure which teams, if any, could be cut, but participant numbers would help direct any decisions. To keep in line with Title IX, if any sports were cut, it would have to be one male and one female team. Cost savings if the board moved forward with cuts, are estimated to be about \$24,000.

■ **Relocate the community education office** – Remodeling in the district offices at Falls High School would create a space for the community ed office, which is currently located on the east end of the building. Nelson said there is concern about the lack of security at the community ed entrance. Relocation would eliminate a secretarial position that would amount to about \$35,000 in savings.

■ **Hall monitoring** – Nelson said since he's been with the school district, he

fails to see a need for a hall monitor. The position, currently held by BethAnne Slatinski, would save about \$21,000, if eliminated.

■ **English as a second language (ELL)** – The superintendent said only one hour of the course taught by Rosa Christianson is offered and he doesn't see a need for the \$8,600 spent on it.

■ **Alternate physics/chemistry every other year** – With only four or five students taking physics, Nelson said it is too expensive to run on its own every year. "There weren't a tremendous amount of students in physics last year either," he said. Again, Nelson said he generated this option without research by Falls High School principal Tim Everson to see if it would work with class schedules. Savings could be about \$8,600.

■ **Contracting out the yearbook** – Eliminating the one-hour class to create the yearbook currently offered for upperclassmen would save about \$8,600. Nelson said there has been a loss of interest in students running the yearbook and suggested Charlie Anderson, who teaches the course, be reassigned to teach keyboarding, which is required in all school districts.

"There are a lot of different things that are nickle

and dime items that are hardly worth looking at," Nelson said of other areas that could be considered for cuts. "(This list) is addressing high-cost items."

While dipping into the district's savings is an option, Nelson said the declining enrollment trend shows cuts in some areas cannot be avoided.

"You have a fund balance that will basically buy you some time," he told board members. "You don't need to run scared as far as losing everything the first year...But, the board will have to address the overspending."

And Nelson continued, withdrawing from the fund one year only gets worse in years to follow.

"If you get into three years of spending even half of what we're running short on now...Pretty soon that fund will really take a hit," he said.

Monday's session, Nelson said, will be the first of many that will follow the regular monthly board meetings to allow for updates in student enrollment.

"All these items need to be discussed," he said of the proposed list. "We need to have time to take in comments, questions, thoughts and whatever else from the community...We need to move into this at a gradual pace."

COUNCIL

► continued from A1

county, each in partnership with Silicon Energy, would jointly apply between Jan. 1 and Feb. 28 for a Minnesota Department of Commerce Made in Minnesota Incentive.

The state incentive would be allocated through a random lottery, which is expected to take place in March or April. Should the city and or county be awarded an allocation, the council and county board would then make a decision on whether to move forward with the project and provide the down payment.

Cerkvenik and Skalko said Silicon Energy uses state-of-the-art solar manufacturing equipment and advanced materials sciences in its Mt. Iron factory

to manufacture photovoltaic modules. He said the company's Cascade solar module's unique double-glass, open-frame design, with a fully enclosed wiring system is ideally suited for Minnesota's weather conditions and allows it to outlast and outperform standard modules. The glass, he said, allows snow to slide off and the enclosed wiring allows the modules to be placed where people frequent.

Silicon Energy offers a 30-year power warranty with a Class-A Fire Safety rating and was shown in recent independent "Test-to-Failure" testing by the Department of Energy's National Renewable Energy Laboratory to have the potential to last 100 years.

"And that's why it is expensive," he said.

Councilor Cynthia Jaksa said the savings make the

project worth considering.

"If it would reduce costs over the long term, and save costs down the road, we need to look at it," she said.

City Attorney Steve Sher-moen told the council he saw no downside to signing the nonbinding letter of intent. He suggested in the meantime, he and a council committee could further review project.

Commissioner Brian McBride Tuesday also said the county should attempt to secure an incentive award and then decide whether to proceed.

County officials said they would contact city officials about whether they would consider seeking an incentive to include a solar system on the animal holding facility the city and county, along with Borderland Humane Society, are expected to construct in spring.

OTHER CITY BUSINESS

In other business Monday, the council agreed to provide use of city property and police for the 10th annual Arrowhead Ultra 135 extreme endurance race.

Ken and Jackie Krueger, race directors, met with the council to ask for use of Kerry Park Arena lobby for registration and the race start on Jan. 27. Ken Krueger has competed in the race for years, but said he will not this year as he serves as director.

The couple told the council that a record field of 169 racers from nine countries and 24 states have registered for the race, which ends Jan. 29 in Tower. They also said the race was recently featured as one of the 50 included in the book "World's Toughest Endurance Challenges."

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