

PROUD

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Rooney said the projects Zach works on are somewhat modified from the other students, but not by much.

“When he came in (to the class) he realized and I realized there were going to be some difficulties,” Ronney said. “But I made a point not to treat him any different...I am just astounded at how he does things. He does extremely well.”

Zach admits sometimes he gets frustrated with not being able to do all the things he would like to do. Still, he powers through and enjoys the fun and relaxing aspect art gives him. He added he’s able to express himself in ways he was unable to before.

And that shows.

“I thought his drawings and stuff would just be circles,” Tammy said. “But it’s not like that at all.”

Rooney said art isn’t making something look exactly like we see it. In fact, he said, it’s about each artist expressing his life and his

world in different ways.

“Art is personal interpretation, the desire for decoration to beautify one’s surroundings, or a way of showing to other people what only we as individuals can see,” Rooney said. “Zach has his own style, which is how every other artist expresses their individuality...He has an expression which is unusually fine, and which is difficult to identify.”

In addition to Rooney’s amazement at Zach’s newfound talent, he is also impressed by his positive attitude.

“His attitude is so incredible,” Rooney said, growing emotional. “A lot of kids have everything that they want and they don’t appreciate everything they have. Zach is always cheerful. ..He’s just got the best attitude. I’m profoundly amazed by that.”

Zach’s artwork will be on display near the RRCC theater through the end of the month, and probably longer, Rooney said.

The budding artist said he’s proud of his work and excited to show it off to the community.

Aili takes top spot in U.P. 200

Ryan Anderson finishes second

BY EMILY GEDDE
Staff Writer

Keith Aili is back and stronger than ever.

After returning to the sport of sled dog racing last year after taking about six years off, the musher from Ray clinched the top spot in last weekend’s U.P. 200 sled dog race in Marquette, Mich.

Aili and his team won the race Sunday, finishing the 12-dog, 240-mile race shortly before 2 p.m. in Mattson Lower Harbor Park. It was Aili’s fourth U.P. 200 victory after winning the race in 1998, 1999 and 2000.

It was Aili’s first victory since returning to the sled dog scene. He finished with a total trail time of

26 hours, 20 minutes and 19 seconds.

“It’s nice to get that first win out of the way,” Aili told The Journal Tuesday. “(The race) took me a little longer than I wanted, I think my expectations were too high, but I’m still happy to win. The competition at this race was high.”

Ryan Anderson, also of Ray, finished second in the event and was the winner in the previous four U.P. 200 races.

Since nobody has been crowned a five-time champion of the event, next year’s event could get interesting, Aili said.

Anderson didn’t express a lot of disappointment with his runner-up finish and said his opponent and neighbor deserved the win.

“Keith definitely deserved it,” he said. “It wasn’t like I handed the win to him. He did re-

ally well...I can’t win them all. The odds of winning five in a row are not very good.”

The musher, whose total trail time was 26 hours, 36 minutes and 56 seconds, noted fresh snow made him run the race at a slower pace, but said his dogs performed well.

“This was probably the best team I’ve ever brought to the U.P.,” he said. “They were strong and fast and did really well.”

Aili said he agreed 6-8 inches of fresh snow the area received just before the race began slowed the trail down and created more of a challenge for teams.

“I had a few problems with the type of booties I was using,” he said, adding that slowed the team down, too.

Still, Aili’s team was strong and ready to run.

Just more than two weeks ago, Aili took second place in the John Beargrease Sled Dog Marathon at the end of January.

“My dogs recovered really well from the Beargrease,” he said. “It proves a point you can run both races and still do well.”

In fact, the team did so well, Aili earned the race’s vet award for finishing with the 12 dogs he started with.

“That doesn’t happen too often,” he said.

The musher hopes to be back in action in two weeks at either the Can-Am Crown International Sled Dog Race in Maine, which Anderson will compete in, or the Copper Dog 150 in Michigan.

“I’d like to run four races this year,” Aili concluded. “It all depends on the dogs. I’ll see if they’ve recovered enough.”

RADAR RUN

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“The snow probably kept people from showing up from areas down south, like Ash River and Crane Lake,” he said.

Just going by experience and not by numbers, Bigler said attendance was down compared to previous years. Usually the event starts out slower and finishes fast, he said. This year, the event started out strong and fast, and didn’t finish as strong as usual.

“I’m sure the weather has something to do with that, too,” Bigler said. “People wanted to get going early.”

Even though they’re trying to best each other and see who has the fastest sled on the lake, Bigler said the mood remained light and festive, as it’s for a good cause.

“It’s a fun event, just go out and have a good time, and be safe when you come out there,” he said. “It was another successful

radar run for the Community Cancer Walk.”

The division winners were:

■ 600cc and under; Julie Koester, of Elk River, Minn., hit 79 mph on her Polaris Fusion. Second place went to Chris Heibel of Ranier, who also hit 79 mph on his Ski-Doo Renegade.

■ 800cc and under; Tyce Jackson of International Falls topped the charts at 93 mph on his Arctic Cat Mountain Cat ZRT. Jim Ducharme of Grand Rapids, Minn., took second place with 88 mph on his Arctic Cat XF800 LXR.

■ 1000cc and under; Lane Jackson of International Falls topped out at 93 mph on his Arctic Cat Thundercat. Brent Bzdok of International Falls raced into second place by hitting 90 mph on his Arctic Cat Crossfire.

■ Open; Drew Neupet of Melrose, Minn., hit 97 mph on his Arctic Cat ZR9000. Adam Isaac of Princeton, Minn., took second place with 94 mph on his Arctic Cat RX1100.

KLOBUCHAR

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She said about 50 people now work at the Falls port, while just 18 worked there when it was constructed in 1993. She said the facility is “busting at its seams.”

“It was not built to house staff or the jobs we need to perform after 9/11,” she told Klobuchar. Delaquis said 528,000 vehicles, 18,000 trucks, and more than 3,000 trains passed through the port last year.

Delaquis said she would send Klobuchar and the community information to move forward in the program.

Meanwhile, community leaders discussed other issues Klobuchar could bring with her for discussion in June at an Ottawa meeting with members of the Canadian Parliament.

City Economic Development Authority President Gail Rognerud described a need to share medical resources between Fort Frances and International Falls, citing the July 2 peace pull as a drawing point for discussion.



STAFF PHOTO BY LAUREL BEAGER

Sen. Amy Klobuchar discusses area development projects with KEDA Director Paul Nevanen Tuesday prior to the start of a discussion about a port program. In the background are Falls EDA President Gail Rognerud and Councilor Pete Kalar.

Ecklund discussed rail crossing issues involving Canadian National Railway, and provided drafts of proposals from Ranier Mayor Dennis Wagner, who could not attend Tuesday’s session.

EDA Director Shawn Mason and Koochiching

Economic Development Authority Director Paul Nevanen described projects being developed that may help diversify the economy, which is needed more than ever with the 2013 elimination of 265 jobs at the local paper mill, they said.

Ecklund and Anderson

also provided information about the economic development response teams created after the announcement of the mill job loss.

“I am glad you guys are forging ahead and have not given up,” Klobuchar said. “You’ve got good and positive things happening.”

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