



STAFF PHOTO BY EMILY GEDDE

Before Tuesday, Sharon Little couldn't see Highway 11 from her front yard. But, after so many trees were blown over during Monday's overnight storm, she was given a clear view of the highway.

STORM

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Amazingly, Little admits she didn't hear the storm and was "pretty shocked" to the sight she woke up to Tuesday.

"Whatever it was – wind or a tornado – it stripped the bark right off some of the trees," she said. "It's crazy. I can see some shingles scattered around the yard, but I'm lucky it didn't do any damage to the house, other than the deck."

While it may seem like Little's property fell victim to a relentless twister, Kevin Huyck, meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Duluth, says its unlikely.

"In instances where we have tornadoes go through, we look at the way trees are oriented as they lay down," he said. "If the trees are all kind of laid out in same general direction that's an indication we had straight winds."

Still, the meteorologist said Koochiching County definitely felt the force of Monday's storm.

"It seems as though Koochiching had the most widespread damage of all the areas we've heard reports from," he told The Journal Tuesday. "This morning we're finding pockets of pretty intense wind damage."

Closer to town, the situation was similar to Little's.

"Look at those trees," Tom O'Connell, PGA pro, repeated on a ride through the golf course at Falls Country Club, just west of International Falls, early Tuesday morning.

He said he didn't notice anything but a few branches down along Highway 71 as he drove to the course. Until he began the drive to the clubhouse.

"I never expected anything like this," he said. O'Connell estimated 200 or more trees broken or uprooted.

"We've got roof from this deck by the clubhouse and there are parts of that roof on No. 18 tee, which has to be at least one-quarter mile away, with two by fours still attached to the metal roof."

The storm occurring during the night, when no one was on the course, was fortunate because of the potential for injury from flying debris and falling trees, he said.

The most difficult part of the damage, according to O'Connell, involves trees integral to the design of the course. "Like the right side of 15, in between 4 and 7, so the complexion of the golf course has changed because of this," he said.

As he surveyed the damage, he said staff will compile a list of needs and then reach out to the golfing community for help in cleaning up, an obviously huge undertaking.

The drive into the course showed trees down and a mind-boggling number of branches strewn across the course.

"If this was your yard, it would seem insurmountable," he said gazing at the course.

Planting trees to accommodate the natural design of the course will be a 15- to 20-year project, he said.

"On top of the flooding, this has been a difficult

year made more difficult," he said.

Several golfers were not deterred by the appearance of the course early Tuesday. One man practiced his swing on a green in front of the clubhouse.

Unloading their clubs from a vehicle, four other men prepared to take to the course. They identified themselves as Greg, from Mankato, J.J. Roberson from the Twin Cities, Jerry Scott, Edgewater Colo., and Greg Agho, Windridge, Colo., .

"We can do it," one, and at times, all the men said. "We pulled in here and seen all the trees snapped off. They said we could play and we're going to do it. We'll probably have to have a new set of rules today. There will be a few more obstacles to go around and through."

Koochiching County Sheriff Brian Jespersen said he heard of damage from the Loman area to the Rainy Lake area with no injuries reported.

He said trees were snapped off and toppled, some shingles were blown off roofs and he said he saw a pontoon boat on Highway 11-71 that has been blown over on to its side.

North Star Electric Cooperative staff said power outages were widespread, with customers in Kabetogama and Littlefork areas restored first and work on the Rainy Lake area continuing into Tuesday morning.

Minnesota Power's website showed multiple outages in the International Falls area, but staff did not return a phone call in time for this publication.

SCHOOL

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Grover said, "however, the earlier kids start their education shows good results, too."

Yount, while admitting he is "a little bit biased," said he feels his daughter is a strong candidate for kindergarten and wants her to succeed.

"She's had more than a year of preschool at St. Thomas," he said. "I feel she would be basically wasting a year academically if she went to preschool again."

Early admission into kindergarten will need to fit the following procedures under the new policy:

■ Parent requests will be reviewed after the April 15 school request deadline.

■ A school team will conduct a standardized assessment of the student's social, emotional and behavioral

functioning. Children who appear socially/emotionally ready for kindergarten will be referred to district staff for completion of the assessment process. District and National Special Education Co-op staff will assess academic readiness for kindergarten.

■ Children must demonstrate superior intellectual ability, defined as performance at or above the 90 percentile on a nationally normed, individually administered test of cognitive ability.

■ A fee of \$100 is collected to cover pre-assessment and consultation time with an assessment team. This fee may be waived if the district decides it does not have to do an assessment. A birth certificate also needs to be presented for age verification.

■ The assessment team, consisting of early childhood teachers, special edu-

cation teachers, principal and psychologist, will review all information from all members and provide a recommendation concerning the early entrance request to the superintendent. The superintendent's decision is final.

In other business Monday, the board agreed to move forward with the health and physical education curriculum cycle for the upcoming school year.

"I do not want to delay the curriculum cycle," member Darrell "Boxer" Wagner said.

The board for several months has debated holding money budgeted for the health/physical education department for one year to help address any potential overspending.

Monday, however, the board agreed to allow the department to purchase ePads to replace outdated text books and new cardio equipment.

FAMILY

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Today, it's like 2 percent. I hope the kids will go on and be farmers, because we need agriculture to be able to feed people. Education and providing food is a good thing, and it's going to have to grow."

Jody said she's always wanted to be involved with animals and farming offers that and more.

"I like doing the field work and the haying, but it's fun when you can feed something and have a purpose," she said. "We all love the animals, and the kids do, too. That's why we have so many."

Farming in a place more suited to logging brings with it unique challenges, Jody said.

"Location is huge," she said. "And the climate — constant rain you can't get much field work done."

Colter added the clay soil is also a challenge when it comes to planting.

The boys are homeschooled by Jody, which

allows the family to handle much of the farm work together, Jody said. Having on-site grandparents, George and Carol Reller, when the boys were young allowed her to handle farm chores more easily.

"They like to help from fencing to haying, to be out riding," Jody said of her sons.

While many farm families don't have trusted people to fill in when they need a break, Jody said having Neil's parents available has allowed them to travel, sometimes packing the kids and horses for a North Dakota trail riding adventure.

"It's really a blessing to have them as backup, as well as if you're short on sugar and just need a half a cup," she said, laughing.

Jody said she and Neil hope their sons consider farming as they reach adulthood. The boys said they were interested in a future in farming.

4-H plays a big part in the family's lives. Both Jody and Neil grew up as 4-H members and Jody got involved locally filling in as a

program coordinator when the boys were young, she said.

"From then, I got involved with horse knowledge bowl and when the kids were in kindergarten, they got involved in Clover buds," she said. Earlier this month, the Rellers brought 14 animals, plus project, to the Northern Minnesota District Fair in Littlefork.

Colter said the second day of the fair was the busiest for the family because of the many activities in which they were involved. He noted packing up all they had brought to the fair to bring home required a lot of effort.

The family is also active in the Rainy River Riders Saddle Club and Littlefork Saddle Club. They use their horses to work the cows and for family trail rides, Jody said.

Reller said just about everyone could be a backyard farmer, with maybe just a couple chickens or beef cattle. Raising the food you eat helps a family with food expenses and offers a healthier, fresher supply of food.

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