

STAFF PHOTO BY SPENSER BICKETT

Larry Petersen, left, and Matt Wappler, of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, were on hand at the International Falls Outdoor Expo to answer questions about fish, wildlife, and the forests.

OUTDOOR

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the interest of the next generation of black powder shooters.

What draws him to black powder shooting versus using a modern rifle is the challenge, he said.

“The modern way is too easy,” he said. “This way you’re not so certain things might go right. You can pretty much shoot and kill anything with a new gun.”

Dressed in traditional frontier clothes and an animal-skin hat, Meyers said the allure of black powder shooting is that “it’s fun to be primitive.”

It’s also simple, not complex like most people think, Meyers said. All you really need, he said, is gunpowder, a rag, a spark, and a ball, or something smooth like a rock to use as a projectile. There are

also a variety of different ways to make a spark, if you’re in a pinch and need a simple solution.

Hunting the way Lewis and Clark would have is closer to bow hunting than hunting with a modern rifle, Meyers said. It’s quieter, and there’s less people out in the woods during the black powder shooting season.

Larry Petersen and Matt Wappler of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources had a booth set up at the expo, and Petersen said they come because it’s a great opportunity to meet with the citizens and chat one-on-one with their customers.

Wappler said the expo allows the DNR to highlight the work it does at the state and local level. Their stand featured a posterboard filled with photos and information on the progress of the recent Rat Root River

project, which featured bank stabilization and installation of walleye spawning riffles.

“We work on the behalf of the taxpayers to protect fish, wildlife, and the forests,” Wappler said. “This allows them to ask questions and voice concerns they may have.”

Vendors catering to the outdoors included Antique Trap, DNR Fisheries and Enforcement, JAB Firearms LLC, Minnesota Trappers Association, Outdoorsman’s Headquarters, Sand Creek Firearm Training, and Tinker’s Places.

Community organizations like Backus Community Center, KCC-TV, and faith-based organizations like the Christian Motorcycle Association, Evangelical Covenant Church teen ministry, and First Assembly of Good teen fundraiser also had booths at the expo.

MNsure enrolls nearly 170,000

March enrolls 35 percent of total

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

MNsure officials announced Tuesday that nearly 170,000 Minnesotans have enrolled in health coverage through the state’s program as of midnight Monday, bringing the 2014 open enrollment period to a close.

The next open enrollment period begins Nov. 15.

The number of enrollees surpassed the projection of 135,000 in October, said MNsure’s interim CEO, Scott Leitz.

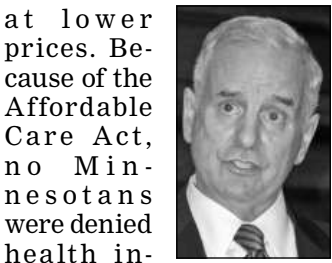
“Our mission every day has been to make health insurance coverage possible for those Minnesotans who are uninsured and underinsured, including those who have been denied coverage up to now due to preexisting conditions,” said Leitz in a news release.

“Though the rollout of MNsure has not been perfect, we have worked hard to make critical improvements — which we will continue to do through the spring and summer, leading up to our next open enrollment period in November.”

To date, MNsure has enrolled 47,046 Minnesotans in a Qualified Health Plan, 34,219 in MinnesotaCare and 87,986 in Medical Assistance.

As many as 36,000 Minnesotans are eligible for an extension, said Gov. Mark Dayton in a statement following MNsure’s announcement of the number of enrolled.

“Many people now have health insurance for the first time ever,” Dayton said. “Others have gained more complete coverage



Gov. Mark Dayton

at lower prices. Because of the Affordable Care Act, no Minnesotans were denied health insurance for pre-existing conditions. All of them are covered for important preventive health care services, such as cancer screenings and immunizations.”

Dayton said MNsure has made major improvements in its system and customer service during the past three months and he said more work lies ahead to continue those improvements.

“However, MNsure has now demonstrated its capacity to improve the lives of many thousands of Minnesotans by offering them access to better health care at more affordable costs,” he said.

MNsure’s first open enrollment period drew to a close at midnight Monday ending a six-month timeframe for those who qualify for commercial health insurance, or Qualified Health Plans, or QHPs, to enroll in coverage. Exceptions to that deadline include a “qualifying life event that has an impact on the coverage an individual or family needs,” said the release. Life events include the birth of a child, a job change or a change in marital status, and the occurrence of such a life event makes it possible to enroll after the March 31 deadline. Also able to enroll now that March 31 has passed are Minnesotans who are eligible for coverage through a public program such as MinnesotaCare or Medical Assistance, small

business employers using MNsure’s SHOP program, and members of federally-recognized Indian tribes.

As of midnight Monday, more than 36,000 Minnesotans had completed the enrollment attempt form found at MNsure.org. This raw number represents only the number of forms that were completed and has not been analyzed to separate consumers previously in the MNsure system from consumers who tried to enroll for the first time recently.

“I want to emphasize that we will be reaching out to those consumers who made attempts to enroll and were unsuccessful as late as 11:59 p.m. (Monday), provided they completed the online enrollment attempt form or we can otherwise see them in the MNsure system,” said Leitz. “The reality is there are some folks who could not successfully enroll through no fault of their own, and we will ensure they are covered.”

The online marketplace was taken offline at midnight Monday, and will be down until 8 a.m. Thursday for maintenance.

The MNsure Contact Center had received 28,165 calls by midnight Monday, and the average wait time was 31 minutes for the day. For the entire month of March, the Contact Center received 111,121 total calls and the average wait time for the month was just under six minutes. The Contact Center remains open for business, and is the best resource for Minnesotans reporting qualifying life events and changes in income that may impact tax credits or subsidies, in addition to general questions.

COUNTY

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into it for what you’re going to get out of it. I don’t think it’s a good use of resources.”

The building hasn’t been used as an armory since the early 1980s or 1970s, Commissioner Wade Pavleck said. Though the space is old, it’s structurally sound due to the strict federal government standards it needed to meet when it was built., he said.

The college would use the space from August through May, Favela said. This creates a challenge when trying to find a space, Nevanen said, because the college or the host needs to find a solution for the three months the space isn’t being used.

The college already has the classroom space, so the ideal situation would be to expand the space they already have, Pavleck said.

“It would be much more convenient in the long term for you,” he said.

The college could expand the existing space, Favela said, and it’s an



Brian McBride



Wade Pavleck

option officials will have to further consider. The current training space is about 1,500 square feet and the college would need to at least double that size, she said.

Worst-case scenario, Favela said, is using the existing space this fall, while working on finding a better, long-term solution. The college could also try to find a space to use for a year or two while a long-term solution is sought, she said.

During the Koochiching County Board regular meeting following the committee session, board Chairman Rob Ecklund appointed McBride and Pavleck to a committee to work with RRCC to find a permanent space for the course.

Before the course was suspended it had two or three students, Favela said. Now, 22 students have applied for the course in the fall, she said, which is a great improvement.

“If you build it, they will come,” she said.

In other business, the county board:

■ Approved a seasonal liquor license for the International Falls County Club from March 15, 2014-Oct. 15, 2014.

■ Approved the purchase of a 2014 Dodge Grand Caravan SE at \$15,562 after trade in, to replace the county’s van used for transporting veterans to Veterans Affairs medical facilities.

■ Authorized the hiring of Ann Bzdok as interim child support case aide as a 90-day emergency appointment. Bzdok had been working on a 67-day appointment.

■ Approved a request from the Sheriff’s Department to fill a part-time corrections officer position due to the previous part-time corrections officer being hired as a part-time deputy.

HALL OF FAME

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the event by his wife, Lee-Anne, with whom he operates Woody’s Rainy Lake Resort in Ranier, and their children Brule and Mack, each named for locations on Rainy Lake.

During the induction, Woods quipped that Lee-Anne is probably the better angler of the two. “She won’t say that, she’s very modest, and I don’t try to get to her to say that,” which drew loud laughs from the crowd.

The induction was also filmed by crew from a Twin Cities-based production company developing a television show about several local people.

No stranger to the



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

A happy Woods on the water.

sportshow, Woods said it was odd to be there and not have a booth touting his guide service and resorts.

And Woods gives much credit for the recognition

to his beloved Rainy Lake. “Rainy Lake is probably the easiest lake to guide on,” he told The Journal. “It’s so beautiful, even if the fish are not biting.”

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