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Temps warm up fishing opener

BY EMILY GEDDE
Staff Writer

There was more ice than boats on the Rainy Lake Saturday for Minnesota's walleye fishing opener, but fortunately, Mother Nature appeared to be in a good mood.

For the second year in a row, Rainy Lake and many of the state's other lakes weren't free of ice for the kickoff-to-summer event. However, despite snow flurries Friday afternoon and evening, the much-missed sun came out and sent thermometers higher than they have been all year.

Although Saturday brought in the first day of 70-degree temperatures of the year, Kevin Peterson, Department of Natural Resources International Falls area fisheries supervisor, said he thinks there was more ice on the lake for this year's opener than there was in 2013.

"I don't have a first-hand observation of what it was like out on the lake Saturday, but I don't think there were a lot of people out," he said. "Just from talking to people (Monday), it is safe to say fishing was light over the weekend."

Many of the "die-hard" anglers, as Peterson called them, ventured out on Rainy's waters in search of some fish, which they reportedly found, he said.

"They had to dodge some ice, but they caught fish," he added with a laugh.

The average ice-out date for Rainy Lake lands around May 5, which cuts it close to being nonexistent for opener on a year with a mild winter. Last year, the ice finally left Rainy on May 16.

Because of Rainy Lake's



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Keaton Maish of International Falls poses with a walleye he caught on Red Lake over the weekend.

northern location and long winters, Peterson said other lakes around the state rank higher in popularity for opening day simply because it is uncertain when Rainy's ice will officially be gone.

Gov. Mark Dayton and Lt. Gov. Yvonne Pretzner Solon kicked off — with some success — the 2014 fishing season and the 67th governor's fishing opener at Grand View Lodge on Gull Lake in Nisswa, Minn.

Closer to home, Peterson said he received reports that Crane Lake experienced "excellent" fishing during the weekend. And Borderland's own Rainy River had anglers catching both trophy-sized walleyes and some to bring home for dinner, too.

Opener to A7 ►

County board creates taxing district

BY SPENSER BICKETT
Staff Writer

The Koochiching County Board Tuesday approved the creation of a subordinate service taxing district, which will pay for critical upgrades at the Littlefork Medical Center.

The city of Littlefork will receive a \$1 million interest-free loan for upgrades at the LMC from Koochiching County, and will be repaid in annual \$100,000 payments over 10 years.

The taxing district encompasses the borders of Independent School District 362, and will result in an increase on taxable properties to pay back the loan. Before approving the resolution, the county board held a public hearing in Littlefork on May 6, and in Big Falls on Monday, as is required by the Minnesota law for creating a subordinate service taxing district.

Koochiching County Commissioner Wade Pavleck said he agreed with the concern Big Falls citizens had that they would be taxed twice if the resolution was approved. Big Falls is part of the Northern Itasca Hospital District, which encompasses Bigfork Valley.

Pavleck said he worked with County Auditor/Treasurer Bob Peterson, and found the people living in the hospital district would pay \$6,600 per year toward the \$100,000 annual loan payments. If it were possible, he said he would like to explore ways to rebate that amount to those taxpayers, possibly by using Koochiching Development Authority funds.

"We're going to pass the resolution, but it doesn't mean we still can't make some adjustments or changes in the issue of fairness," Pavleck said.

Easing the burden on the taxpayers in the two taxing districts would mitigate the controversy of double taxation and the representation issue, Pavleck said. Those were the two major issues Pavleck said he heard at the public hearing in Big Falls.

"So anyways, I didn't sleep (last night), and that's what I came up with," Pavleck said.

County to A7 ►



Wade Pavleck



Falls and West End elementary students hold up handmade signs supporting the fight against cancer as they traveled the hallways of Falls Elementary School Friday.

YOUNG SUPPORTERS

Elementary students help in the fight against cancer

BY EMILY GEDDE
Staff Writer

Young people last week proved they can make a big difference.

Falls and West End elementary students spent last week doing their part to raise money for Relay for Life and the American Cancer Society with a Relay Recess Friday.

According to Principal Melissa Tate, the timing of Friday's event was not necessarily linked to the Koochiching County's Relay For Life event which was held May 3 at Rainy River Community College.

"We wanted to have a Relay Recess, but didn't want it to conflict with MCA testing," Tate said. "This allowed it to conflict minimally."

This was the first year elementary students as a group became involved in raising money to support the fight against cancer. Tate said she thought a Relay Recess would be a good way to give back to the community that gives so much to the elementary schools.

"Relay Recess seemed like a good fit as cancer unfortunately has impacted so many people, both young and old," she said.

At Friday's event, two young cancer survivors spoke to students about their battle with the disease.

Katlyn Briggs, a 2012 Falls High School graduate, said she was diagnosed with cancer when she was 16 years old.



STAFF PHOTOS BY EMILY GEDDE

When asked how many students know someone who has or has had cancer, nearly every hand in the gymnasium was raised.



Third-grade student and cancer survivor Trygg Hemstad talks to his peers Friday about how he overcame his battle with cancer.

FOR MORE RELAY RECESS PHOTOS, TURN TO PAGE A10 OR VISIT WWW.IFALLSJOURNAL.SMUGMUG.COM.

"I was a very angry and very upset," Briggs said of her diagnosis. "At the same time, I felt relief because the doctors had finally figured out what was wrong with me."

Briggs underwent treatments in Rochester for lymphoma and has been cancer-free for three years. Now, at 19 years old, Briggs will graduate this week from RRCC and hopes to continue her education in nursing to help others

in similar situations to hers. She told elementary students she was thankful for events like Relay for Life that helped fund the research enabling doctors to find a cure against her cancer.

Third-grade student and cancer survivor Trygg Hemstad also spoke about his experience with cancer.

Relay to A7 ►