

DRUG COURT

► continued from A1

theft, or a report made by someone addicted to or selling prescription drugs in order to get more prescription drugs than a doctor would normally prescribe at once. LeDuc encouraged everyone to take a look in their medicine cabinet and bring their expired and unused prescriptions to the drop off. Santee also said the upcoming September event may include visits to schools to discuss how prescription drug addiction can start early.

FUNDING CRISIS

Meanwhile, LeDuc and Santee said funding for the local drug court is concerning. “I think everybody is worried about funding right now,” LeDuc said. The drug court system, he said, was established in Florida in response to cocaine addicts coming into the U.S. from nearby nations. “They found they needed a more human response, less criminal,” he explained. The problem, he said, is that it did not catch on in all 50 states where it would be automatically funded as “business as usual” programs. Minnesota has 41 different drugs courts using different models to provide the same basic services, said Santee. LeDuc said it’s frustrating that funding is not readily available to support a program that works. “There are lots of things we spend money on that don’t work, but this is something that does work,” he said. “It’s gut wrenching to me. I don’t like to scramble around and figure out what we’re going to do next year.” He credited former Con-

gressman Jim Oberstar, who secured two years of funding for drug court through a federal earmark that LeDuc said was appropriate and felt like he “hit the lottery.” Santee said an Otto Bremer Foundation grant supports the alumni group and Briggs’ position. The main source of funding the drug court relied upon was never intended to be a long-term source, but instead “to get good evidence based things going,” she said. She said she is seeking additional grants to help pay in part for probation officers, as well as a grant that can offer a mental health component to the court. The court can accept gifts and donations, but cannot fundraise because it is not a non-profit organization. **EXPANSION** The program has been so successful that the state has allowed it to increase the number of participants from 20 to 25. Considered intensive supervision, the program emphasizes treatment, orders drug testing, and requires frequent court appearances before LeDuc. “It requires a lot of time from people, they are tested a lot, the see a probation officer a lot and they see the judge a lot,” Santee said. Despite that, she said people are asking to be placed in the program as opposed to traditional sentencing. Some people who ask to do drug court believe they won’t do long-term jail time, she said, not realizing that the program may be tougher than jail time. “The feedback we get from the participants is that, in the long term, it is more work, but it is successful,” she said. “If they follow program, the likelihood of

long-term recovery is far higher than if they have an executed sentence and do jail time.” Santee said LeDuc plays a huge factor in the program. “The feedback we get from participants is that they feel the judge understands them and is invested in their success — that’s a key role.” In addition the team that guides the program also is important. “When have you seen prosecution and defense (attorneys) working in the same direction,?” she said of members of the team. Others on the team are probation officers, treatment providers, victims advocates, chemical dependency assessors, social services staff, mental health professionals and law enforcement officers. The program takes a holistic approach, she said, in that the focus is sobriety, but also life issues, including gaining driver’s licenses, employment and stable housing. City Attorney Steve Sher-moen, who has served as both a defense and prosecuting attorney, said Monday the program is a great one. “Before, with substance abuse issues we’d see the same people over and over — there was no way to get themselves out of the system,” he said. He urged county and city officials to consider providing funds for the court should grants not be obtained. Councilor Pete Kalar, who works as a dispatcher/jailer at the Koochiching County Jail agreed, saying that seeing the same faces in his job was once commonplace. But not anymore — because of drug court. Councilor Cynthia Jaksa said the program saves taxpayer money by helping to create product citizens out of people who would not be without program.

Gas prices up 15 cents in past week

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

The national average price of gasoline Wednesday, \$3.67 per gallon, is up 15 cents from where it stood just one week and nowhere in the country has the price climb been any steeper than the Great Lakes region. “Indiana’s prices have risen by 29 cents over the past week, nearly double the rate of increase the rest of the country is seeing,” said Patrick DeHaan, senior petroleum analyst for GasBuddy. “And the price escalation has been nearly

as exasperating for consumers in Michigan, Illinois and Wisconsin.” Additionally, the U.S. Dept. of Energy’s weekly report this week said crude oil inventories decreased by 6.9 million barrels to a total of 367 million barrels, a level that is 10.4 million barrels below last year’s. “If there’s a silver lining in the report it’s that gasoline inventory increased and refinery output is healthy,” said Gregg Laskoski, another senior petroleum analyst with GasBuddy. “But with the

backdrop of current demand and NYMEX crude at \$106 we can only expect retail prices to continue their upward momentum,” Laskoski noted. GasBuddy operates MinnesotaGasPrices.com and over 250 similar websites that track gasoline prices at over 140,000 gasoline stations in the United States and Canada. In addition, GasBuddy offers a free smartphone app which has been downloaded over 25 million times to help motorists find the lowest gasoline prices in their area.

KEDA

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‘likes,’” he said. “The reach of Facebook is incredible. Every week we post jobs available in the area...that has been received really well.” Board members agreed avenues like Facebook are a prime spot to post job listings and good for younger people to see. KEDA member Soren Olesen said many times he “shares” items posted on the KEDA’s Facebook page to his own timeline, ultimately reaching an even larger audience. “That’s how the younger people communicate,” KEDA member and Falls Councilor Pete Kalar said of social media. In related business Wednesday, the board discussed local people who are using contacts to help attract business opportunities to the area following Boise Inc.’s announcement to layoff 265 people at the Falls paper mill. Nevanen reported that Dave Hebig, business officer at Border State Bank, along with other local officials, met with a representative of an unnamed regional manufacturer about local business opportunities. “It was an outreach based on the Boise announcement,” Nevanen said. “(Hebig) wanted to make contact that there is a very capable skilled workforce here and if there’s some way this location could be of value

to this manufacturer.” Nevanen said the meeting was to understand needs of the manufacturer and additional communication will follow. “We don’t know where this is going to go, but I like the notion of somebody in the community utilizing contacts,” he said. Nevanen said a meeting with Ron Fagen, president of Fagen Inc., was held and Fagen shared ideas about biomass and how his company uses it. “He had a couple of ideas that he thought might work here,” Nevanen said. “Again, it’s utilizing our workforce.” Nevanen said he and Jenny Herman, of the Small Business Development Center, met with representatives of the Natural Resources Research Institute regarding manufacturing a high-tech modular housing concept. “It’s basically a house-in-box concept,” he said. “A 1,200-square-foot house can be put on a flatbed or a rail car and be assembled in one day.” Nevanen said there is “certainly” a market available for these types of houses. “This lead came from Congressman (Rick) Nolan’s office,” he said. “They like this area in terms of it being on the border, the rail here and again, the skilled workforce...We’ll continue to pursue that.” Also Wednesday, Nevanen said he met with

county Engineer Joe Sutherland to “bring him up to speed” on the foreign trade zone and the work that has been done at the site. The undeveloped site, jointly owned by the city of International Falls and Koochiching County and managed by KEDA, has been on the back burner for several months, however, is coming to the forefront recently after the Boise announcement. Former Congressman Jim Oberstar is expected to visit the International Falls Economic Development Commission Friday to visit the FTZ, among other local sites. The board agreed to hold meetings in other communities in the county in the fall after the busy summer winds down. Last month, the board met in Littlefork and no members of the public attended the meeting. Nevanen reported the Littlefork Mayor Mike Fort offered his apologies for the lack of attendance. The board agreed that busy summer schedules are the likely cause of no public attendance and plan to hold September or October meetings in other communities. “People in the rural areas (of the county) do care,” Olesen said of issues discussed during KEDA Board meetings. KEDA member and county Commissioner Wade Pavleck agreed. “It is important for boards to reach out to the county.”

AIRPORT

► continued from A1

in the Minnesota State Aviation System. Reasons outlined in Anderson’s letter to be included in the 2014 state bonding legislation highlights what’s known as the terminal’s sterile area. “The issue is since 9/11, the sterile area for passengers that have cleared screening is very small and most of the year, the number of passengers overwhelms the sterile area and crams the passengers into that small room,” the letter said. “Also, the sterile area has no bathrooms and after being cleared in the area, if a passenger has a need for the bathroom, they must leave the sterile and be re-screened before being allowed to board the aircraft.” Anderson said there are times passengers wait up to an hour before going through screening. “Its not a very convenient setup,” he said. In addition, the terminal is in need of a larger area for U.S. Customs and Border

Protection. “We have a large amount of international flights,” Anderson explained. “Right now, they’ve got a facility out there that is about two phone booths big.” He said the number of people that can come in on an international-bound flight is limited to 16 or less passengers. “For awhile, we had the Detroit Red Wings (hockey team) coming in here out of Calgary,” Anderson said. “They’ve been told not to come here anymore...we need a larger area for them and would share it with the sterile area. We would put a wall in there to open up.” Anderson also noted the Rolling Stones were scheduled to come through the Falls International Airport, but because there were about 50 people on board the plane, the rock band was told to find a different airport. “That is just economics for this county and this community,” he said. Soren Olesen, KEDA member, noted the passengers on international flights spend money locally, not only on fuel for the aircraft,

but for food to feed passengers. “There is a lot of money to be made,” he said. “The food (they order) is not cheap.” Anderson’s letter to Dayton mentioned that Boise Inc.’s announcement to eliminate 265 from the local paper mill “puts this city and county in a very challenging, if not difficult position.” “Even with the bonding monies, the city and county would need to raise \$1 million for the local share,” the letter said. And, it continued, air service is vital to the remaining 580 jobs at the mill as well as the local tourism industry and other employers in the area. Anderson stressed the No. 1 bonding request for the area remains the Island View Sewer project. “We need to have that first,” he said of the sewer project. “We’ve got a challenge because...there’s \$2.8 billion worth of bonding requests and they will probably do maybe close to \$1 billion. Whether or not we’re included in that, I guess we’ll have to wait and see.”

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