

Food for thought

Program provides free meals

A3



Setting sun

Colors light up evening sky

B8



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Members of RLMC Board plan for independent hospital

BY LAUREL BEAGER
Editor

Editor’s Note: Susan Congrave, vice president of the Rainy Lake Medical Center Board, met with Journal staff this week to discuss the future of the hospital following the announcement earlier this month that agreements toward fully integrating the hospital with Essentia Health had been ended by a vote of the seven members of the board that represent the former Falls Memorial Hospital Board. Members appointed by Essentia did not support ending negotiations. The process to withdraw from the agreements is underway

and referred to as “unwinding.” RLMC Board President Charles Helleloid listened to the interview via telephone as requested by members of the RLMC Board.

Susan Congrave believes that members of the community won’t see much difference in health care services at the hospital now that affiliation and negotiations toward integrating with Essentia Health have ended.

“I don’t see a whole lot changing,” she said. “One of the things we take for granted and plan is continuing a close working relationship with Essentia and particularly our clinic here. We very much need each other — the clinic needs the hospital and the

hospital needs the clinic and we want to continue that relationship and build on it.”

In announcing the end to the integration talks earlier this month, Dan Nikcevic, president of Essentia Health East, said Essentia received notice from the Rainy Lake Medical Center Board that it had terminated professional and management service agreements with Essentia.

Nikcevic said the offer by Essentia to the RLBC Board included a new hospital, \$2 million to the hospital foundation, a two-year guarantee for existing hospital jobs and reductions in hospital staff contributions toward health insurance.

Nikcevic told The Journal

that the timing wasn’t right for integration, but Essentia would be open to again discussing the idea in the future.

Congrave also told The Journal the timing wasn’t right, but may be someday.

In announcing the decision, Congrave said in a statement Aug. 13 that board members appointed by the former Falls Memorial Hospital “feel the community is best served by maintaining local ownership and control of our community hospital.”

Congrave addressed the local control issue this week.

“Someone mentioned to me, ‘why do you need control?’ I don’t see it as control,” she said. “I am not trying to control anything.

I am trying, as all our current RLMC Board, to furnish services, to provide services. It’s not about control, it’s about how best we can do that.”

She said the \$2 million and a new hospital was a very attractive offer. But what may not be understood is that the board has \$11 million and Essentia wanted it, she said.

The \$11 million was obtained prior to integration, she said. “Falls Memorial Hospital and its employees, and its previous board, did a fantastic job. At one time it wasn’t too successful and they turned it around. It’s revenue. We have the previous board

Hospital to A7 ➤

MOONLIT KAYAKING



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Warm calm evenings and the recent full moon have made for good kayaking conditions. Alan Burchell shared this photo of his wife Miriam Burchell and friend Dale Turner, Palmer, Alaska, kayaking on Kabetogama Lake.

RRCC recognized for its effectiveness

BY SPENSER BICKETT
Staff Writer

A new report from the Minnesota Higher Education Compact found Rainy River Community College to be one of the most effective two-year public colleges when it comes to comparing expected and actual graduation rates.

Historically, graduation rates have been used to evaluate colleges and universities, and these evaluations are tied to funding, administrative evaluations, rankings, and enrollment decisions. But the MHEC study is finding new ways to measure an institution’s ability to turn students into graduates.

RRCC scored in the middle of the pack when it came to efficiency, which was measured by comparing education and related expenses per student and those same costs when adjusting for interstate cost of living differences.

Getting recognition for the one-on-one work college staff do with students was exciting, RRCC interim dean of students Elena Favela said.

“Rainy works really hard to have those kinds of student outcomes, so this (report) was like icing on the cake,” she said.

Sue Collins, president of the Northeast Higher Education District, of which RRCC is a member, said the MHEC is doing a “great job of looking at measures beyond graduation rates.” NHED is a subdivision of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system which covers the northeast section of the state.

“It’s important for communities, legislators, and leaders in the state to know that colleges are focused on delivering student success,” she said.

RRCC’s attitude toward student development contributed to its high effectiveness ranking, Favela said. Connecting with students on an individual level, having an open-door policy, and simple things like knowing all the student’s first names makes for a great learning environment, she said.

“The report did a good job of highlighting the work we do with

RRCC to A7 ➤

Check in: new security systems installed at district schools

Superintendent asks for patience and cooperation from the community

BY EMILY GEDDE
Staff Writer

With the first day of classes set to begin Tuesday, a mix of new security measures have been added in each of Independent School District No. 361’s schools to increase safety for students, parents and staff.

Visitors to Falls High School, Falls Elementary and West End Elementary won’t have the freedom to access the buildings as they did in the past once the bell rings at the beginning of the school day.

“These new changes will require patience and cooperation of the public,” said Falls Superintendent Nordy Nelson.

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The entrances at each school will be locked during school hours and visitors will need permission from school staff before entering the buildings.

The front entrance of Falls High School has been reconfigured and the six front doors will be locked during the day. Once visitors enter the vestibule of the school, they will be seen by office staff who will communicate with them through an intercom system.

“Depending on who the visitor is,” Nelson said, “secretaries will either unlock the door for them

Security to A7 ➤



STAFF PHOTO BY EMILY GEDDE

Falls Superintendent Nordy Nelson stands next to the newly-installed entrance to the Falls High School office. Visitors to the building, along with Falls Elementary and West End Elementary, will need to check in with office staff from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. during school days. All doors to the buildings will be locked and a buzzer system has been installed to allow or deny access to visitors.