

Burning rubber

New Superior track offers venue for nontraditional motorsports

in Sports, Page B1



SUPERIOR Telegram

Covering Northwest Wisconsin since 1890

Friday, August 5, 2022

Bennett bash sparks volunteer interest

By Maria Lockwood
Superior Telegram

BENNETT — The Bennett Volunteer Fire Department hosted a National Night Out event Tuesday, Aug. 2. They opened up the fire hall, put all the vehicles on display, shared a meal and offered an array of activities for local kids. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the Douglas County Communications Center were also represented.

Alexandria Anderson, 7, of Bennett kept a tight grip on the hose as she knocked down a simulated fire outside the fire hall. Inside the building, emergency responder Morgan Fowler helped her suit up in gear worn to fight wildfires.

"She's been wanting to come and check this out since we moved here," said her father, Shaun.

A Life Link III helicopter landed outside

the Bennett Town Hall during the event. It was more than a chance for the community to see it up close. The firefighters got training on how to set up for a helicopter landing, and they got to meet the helicopter crew.

"If there's an accident on this highway here, we know that we can use this landing zone and they know how to set it up," said flight paramedic Tanner Arthaud. "It's a training and PR and then we can get to know first responders a little better around here so if we do interact with them on scenes and stuff, we already know them, have a little bit of rapport to help with patient care."

Bennett Fire Chief Travis Theien said the department, which has 13 members, has responded to 56 calls to date this year.

BENNETT: Page A12



Maria Lockwood / Superior Telegram

Janine Laitinen, right, hands out cotton candy as Joy Owskey, second from right, looks on during the National Night Out event on Tuesday, at 4 Corners Store in the town of Superior. Laitinen and Owskey both work at the store, which has become a gathering place for the community.

Connecting neighbors

4 Corners Store hosts National Night Out event

By Maria Lockwood
Superior Telegram

A Town Of Superior crowd gathered Tuesday, Aug. 2, at 4 Corners Store for food, fun and a chance to pet Odie, a 215-pound English mastiff who is the store's official greeter.

"Everyone knows Odie," said Jan Najjar, of the town of Oakland, who had treats in her pocket for him.

Aspen Owskey, 3, of Foxboro, clutched an

Odie trading card as she ate supper on the grass with her family.

"She's probably Odie's biggest fan," said Aspen's mother, Courtney.

The dog wandered around visiting with the crowd during the National Night Out event. Robert Liimatta, a sophomore from the town of Superior, patted the mastiff's head.

He's known Odie since 4 Corners Store owner Raquel Stockey got him

as a pup.

Stockey has turned the store in the town of Superior into a gathering place for the community with Easter egg hunts, Halloween trunk or treat events, a Christmas stocking giveaway and more. Girl Scouts can sell cookies at the store; baseball teams can sell fundraising cards.

"It's really improved a sense of community in the town of Superior, for sure," said Liimatta's

mother, Bettina. "She's always donating, very generous with her store and herself and supporting other organizations and the school ... it's really a nice addition to the community."

National Night Out was added to the shop's event roster Tuesday. It drew people from the towns of Summit, Oakland and Superior, as well as Foxboro and the city of Superior.

NIGHT OUT: Page A10



Maria Lockwood / Superior Telegram

Alexandria Anderson, 7 of Bennett, front, uses a hose to knock down a simulated house fire as Bennett Fire Chief Travis Theien looks on during a National Night Out event at the Bennett Fire Hall on Tuesday.

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St. Luke's nurses vote 'no confidence' toward CEOs

By Laura Butterbrodt
Duluth News Tribune

DULUTH — Twin Ports nurses with the Minnesota Nurses Association have taken a vote of "no confidence" in St. Luke's co-presidents and CEOs Eric Lohn and Nick Van Deelen, the nurses announced at an MNA rally Tuesday afternoon at the St. Luke's campus.

The vote was reached by "well over a supermajority" of MNA nurses at St. Luke's, said Lar-

issa Hubbertt, a registered nurse at St. Luke's. The vote was taken as nurses expressed their frustrations with the health care system for not fixing understaffing and employee retention issues, and as St. Luke's and Essentia nurses negotiate for new contracts.

According to Hubbertt, 650 nurses were at St. Luke's in 2019, and the most recent roster has 510 nurses. She said about half of the nurses in the

emergency department have left, and a third of the intensive care unit's nurses left in 2021.

"That's centuries of nursing experience we have lost," Hubbertt said.

When Hubbertt and registered nurse Lorie Olesiak spoke with Lohn and Van Deelen last year, they offered suggestions for ways to improve nurse morale to prevent burnout and nurses leaving.

NURSES: Page A11



Steve Kuchera / Duluth News Tribune

St. Luke's nurse Larissa Hubbertt speaks at a Minnesota Nurses Association news conference outside the medical center Tuesday near other MNA members holding a banner stating a lack of confidence in CEOs Eric Lohn and Nick Van Deelen. The MNA announced Tuesday that nurses at seven hospitals in the Twin Cities and Twin Ports passed "no confidence" votes on their CEOs and other top executives.

EPA: Plant could cause \$2B in climate damage

By Danielle Kaeding
Wisconsin Public Radio

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency says a supplemental environmental assessment for a proposed \$700 million gas plant in Superior failed to fully review the project's potential impact on climate change and greenhouse gas emissions.

Federal environmental regulators claim the planned Nemadji Trail

Energy Center, or NTEC, could — if built — cause around \$2 billion in climate damages from greenhouse gas emissions through 2040.

The 625-megawatt gas plant would be built along the Nemadji River in Superior by La Crosse-based Dairyland Power, Duluth-based Minnesota Power, and a subsidiary of a North Dakota utility. Dairyland Power is seeking a loan from the Rural

Utilities Service within the U.S. Department of Agriculture to help pay for the plant as utilities retire coal plants and shift to renewable energy.

Last year, four organizations, including Clean Wisconsin and the Sierra Club, petitioned the Rural Utilities Service to conduct a supplemental environmental assessment of the plant. They argued the agency didn't fully evalu-

ate climate impacts as part of an environmental review of the project. That review found the plant would have no significant environmental impact.

The supplemental analysis released in June estimated the project would give off 2.7 million tons of carbon emissions each year. However, regulators said the plant would reduce emissions by about 964,000

tons annually because it would displace coal plants and require less frequent firing.

But, the EPA said the additional review "does not fully quantify or adequately disclose" the effects of greenhouse gas emissions. The agency is recommending the Rural Utilities Service analyze upstream, construction-related and indirect emissions from the project.

EPA: Page A12

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OBITUARY

Donald Milinkovich



Donald (Bicky) Milinkovich died on July 25, surrounded by family, with his wife of 50 years, Kay, holding his hand. Don was the son of Steven and Ann Milinkovich of Oliver, WI.

Bicky is survived by his children Dean (Val) Milinkovich, Peter Milinkovich, Scott Penticoff (Renee), Heidi Swanson (Jim), Stephanie McCargar (Greg), and Kristy Masloski (Tim). He was a loving grandfather to his grandchildren, Chase, Riley, Bennett, Allison, Megan, Korra, Christian, Jenna, Olivia, and great-grandson Colt. Bicky owned Don's Auto Detail for over 40 years. He was a lover and restorer of street rods and was a proud member of GSTA, Crusin Customs, and MSRA.

There will be a Celebration of Life at 11AM on Saturday, August 20th at Bluebird Park, 201 Isanti Parkway NW, Isanti 55040.

Please drive your street rod or classic car to Don's Celebration of Life to honor him.

Solon Springs school board considers building referendum

Officials: School grows crowded as enrollment rises

Editor's note: This story first appeared in the Tuesday, Aug. 2, e-edition of the Telegram.

By Maria Lockwood
Superior Telegram

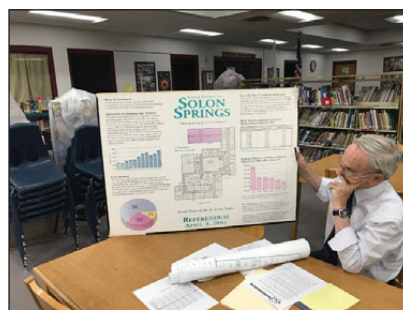
SOLON SPRINGS — The Solon Springs School Board is weighing options for improving the current facility to offer more space for learning and additional safety features. The path could lead to a building referendum.

The district's facilities committee has been discussing the issue for more than a year and has winnowed down a list of 18 building needs, ranging from bathrooms and classroom space to a controlled main entrance and expanded science rooms. School board members provided feedback on which of the needs to prioritize at the July 18 school board meeting. District Administrator Frank Helquist said the next step will be to bring information to the public for comment.

The district's main building was built in the 1970s. In 1992, Solon Springs voters approved a \$3 million building referendum for an addition to the facility. Referendum attempts in 2000 and 2001 for a building addition project failed.

In 2016, the Solon Springs community approved a \$500,000 recurring referendum to keep the school, which had been struggling with funding cuts, open. Voter turnout was around 80% for the election, with 74% of the ballots cast in favor of the referendum.

"A quarter million of that was put to bring the school district to even, basically, financially," Helquist said. "The other half of it we've been putting into our long-range maintenance plan, a quar-



Maria Lockwood / Superior Telegram
Solon Springs School District Administrator Frank Helquist looks over a 2001 architectural drawing for a proposed addition to the school building on July 26 in the library media center. That building referendum and one in 2000 failed, but the proposed addition is similar to one currently being considered by the school board.

ter million. And so it was really a promise to the community, this is where we need to be, but then keep doing improvements and maintain what we have."

He pointed to the new playground and the refinished gymnasium floor as examples of how that funding has been used.

Following the referendum, a series of community conversations led to initiatives such as the Solon Springs Educational Foundation, the in-school fitness center and the launch of an array of public charter school options for students. Fall enrollment numbers have increased 21%, from 265 in 2017 to 321 in 2021, according to the district.

"Innovation drives a lot of success," Helquist said.

An assessment of the building by the facilities committee showed it was too crowded; every space was being overused; and there was a lack of flexible areas

for specialists to meet confidentially with students, for staff training or for meetings. Some classrooms are too small and the science rooms are outdated. A more controlled main entrance that would limit direct access to the building would improve school safety.

"The facility here has served us well. We've simply outgrown it is the feedback we're getting from the group," Helquist said.

The committee initially considered a freestanding stick built structure where the tennis courts currently are, he said. The most recent design concept involves a 15,000 square foot addition to the rear of the building, pushing out the science and technology rooms toward Baldwin Avenue for a gain of about 3,700 square feet and adding a nearly 2,200 square foot space for a controlled main entrance.

When asked what the price tag could be, Helquist said the current design could cost close to \$14 million, depending on which options were retained.

"The school board and facilities committee ... need some time to think what dollar amount they feel confident going to the public with," he said, and they want to be thoughtful about the process to ensure it's the right type of project for the school community.

The Aug. 8 facilities committee meeting will include input from a financial adviser. Helquist said public meetings are expected to take place in early September.

"We decided going slower is better than doing it faster," he said. "We hope to have a final decision in late fall."

The facilities committee meets at 5 p.m. Monday, Aug. 8, in the library media center.

DEATHS

Timothy A. Carlson

Dec. 13, 1956 -
July 26, 2022
DULUTH, Minn. -

Timothy A. Carlson, 65, Superior, Wis., died Tuesday, July 26, in St Luke's Hospital.

Per Tim's wishes, no services will be held.

Arrangements by Lenroot-Maetzold Funeral Home.

Raymond Johnson

Nov. 7, 1946 -
July 13, 2022
DULUTH, Minn. -

Raymond Johnson, 75, Hawthorne, Wis., died Wednesday, July 13, in St. Lukes.

Services were previously held. Interment was in Hood Hope Cemetery in Greenfield, Wis.

Arrangements by Hayward Funeral Home.

▶ More obituaries on Page A9

NIGHT OUT

From Page A1

The event featured a dunk tank, firetrucks, a rodeo queen, free food provided by the Pattison Park Lions Club and much more.

"It's nice to gather and see your neighbors again, especially after COVID," Bettina Liimatta said.

"I think it's great," said Jeff Larsen of Summit, vice president of the lions club. "I see a lot of people I know, but I see a lot of people I don't know, and I've lived here all my life."

James and Alasia Knowlton, who live half a mile from the store, biked to the event with their three children.

"We just thought it may be a good chance to meet other people," Alasia Knowlton said.

Firetrucks from the towns of Superior and Summit drew their attention. Son Slade, 4, wants to be a firefighter when he grows up. Soon the kids were buckled into the back seats of a pumper truck, sporting red plastic fire helmets.

Rita Anderson from the town of Oakland brought her super stocks race car to the event. The 34-year-old has been racing for 14 years. She said she's one of three women drivers at the Superior track, and the only one currently in the super stocks



Aspen Oswey, 3, eats a hot dog beside her mother Courtney on Tuesday during the National Night Out event at 4 Corners Store. The family — which includes dad Mike and brother Easton, 7, live down the road from the business and stopped by to meet neighbors and visit with Odie, the store dog.

class. She comes from a racing family; her father Ron raced in the 1960s and 1970s.

"I've been out of it for many, many years," he said. "I never knew I would have a daughter who would want to race cars."

He and his wife Josie are with her every night she races, working on the car.

"There are a lot of racing families, even in Oakland; I would say probably at least a dozen," Rita Anderson said. "And we're just trying to get more community members to come out and watch us race."

They all appreciated Stockey and the 4 Corners Store.

"We love Raquel. Anything and everything, you ask her and she says yes," Josie Anderson said. "I mean, she probably sponsors a dozen (race) cars."

The store is also a convenient place to grab such diverse items as a package of lo mien noodles or a can of evaporated milk, she said, saving area residents a trip into the city.

"I come here for everything. And if she doesn't have it, you don't need it," Josie Anderson said.



Photos by Maria Lockwood / Superior Telegram
Left to right, Davina Knowlton, 2, and her brothers Slade, 4, and Maverick, 6, take a seat in the back of a Superior Volunteer Fire Department tanker truck Tuesday with help from their father, James, during the National Night Out event at 4 Corners Store in the town of Superior.

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NURSES

From Page A1

Rubesch said.

He said Essentia's \$430 million in profits in 2021 are concerning, as charity care reached a five-year low at \$10 million and CEO David Herman received large pay raises during the coronavirus pandemic. Herman's salary is over \$2.7 million.

Keandra Schumacher started working as a nurse at Essentia in 2020, and was told the staffing shortages were temporary and was promised things would get better. She said she frequently was in charge of up to eight patients at one time, despite Essentia claiming the nurse-to-patient ratio is 1:4.

Inadequate nurse to patient ratios significantly increase patient mortality risk, according to numerous studies. The Journal for the American Medical Association stated the odds of patient mortality increased by 7% for every additional patient in the average nurse's workload in the hospital, while an American Heart Association study found patients in hospitals with poor nursing work environments had a 16% lower likelihood of survival. The AHA study stated those odds became 5% lower with each additional patient per nurse in medical-surge units.

"I've been pushed past my breaking point," Schumacher said. "For the past 2.5 years I've picked up extra hours in the hopes that my coworkers and my patients will not have to suffer from the understaffing. ... But it is now my understanding that it is not my problem to solve."

Schumacher said despite her frustration, she is driven to continue working as a nurse because she feels caring for patients at the bedside is her calling in life. She said she's heard "it



Steve Kuchera / Duluth News Tribune

Chris Rubesch and other MNA members acknowledge a supporter's horn honk during their Duluth news conference Tuesday.

will get better" since she started in the profession, and she hopes someday she will see that become the reality.

When asked about the possibility of a strike, Rubesch said it's "not a word we're afraid to say" if management maintains its refusal to engage in negotiations for new contracts.

Essentia Health said in a statement that pay and benefits it offers are competitive in the communities the health care system serves.

"We are continuously exploring innovative ways to enhance the recruitment and professional development of our nurses," Essentia said in the statement. "We have a long history of reaching mutually beneficial agreements with the MNA and we are confident we can do so again."

Rubesch said management has acted as if the

staffing shortage was created by the pandemic, despite nurses' insistence that the problem existed long before and continues to worsen.

"Currently, our staffing is the worst I have ever seen," Olesiak said. "Our patients deserve better than this. I feel we have an outstanding group of nurses at St. Luke's. These Nurses put the patient above all else, and we need our CEOs to do the same."

Olesiak and Hubbart said they hope the vote of no confidence will make Lohn and Van Deelen take action to solve these problems by listening to nurses. The next negotiations meeting is set to take place Aug. 10, and plans for possible further action will be decided after that. Olesiak said no strike is planned yet, but "it is a tool in our toolbox."

Earlier Tuesday, nurses in the Twin Cities

announced "no confidence" votes for CEO Mark Gorelick at Children's James Hereford and the Minneapolis and St. Paul board of directors at hospitals; and CEO J. HealthEast, M Health Kevin Croston at North Fairview Riverside and Memorial Hospital.

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Johnson & Johnson's Janssen

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Pfizer-BioNTech

Children ages 5-11 years

Pfizer-BioNTech

1 Talk to your healthcare or vaccine provider about the timing for the 2nd dose in your primary series.

- **People ages 5 through 64 years, and especially males ages 12 through 39 years**, may consider getting the 2nd primary dose of an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine (Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna; Pfizer-BioNTech only for children ages 5 through 17 years) 8 weeks after the 1st dose. A longer time between the 1st and 2nd primary doses may increase how much protection the vaccines offer, and further minimize the rare risk of heart problems, including [myocarditis and pericarditis](#).
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Photos by Maria Lockwood / Superior Telegram

People line up to look inside a Life Link III helicopter and talk with flight paramedic Tanner Arthaud, right, during a National Night Out event at the Bennett Fire Hall on Tuesday.



Left to right, Savanna Kirsteatter, 11 months old, and her mother Rachael Kirsteatter of Minong pose for a picture taken by Melissa Hunter of Bennett during a National Night Out event on Tuesday at the Bennett Fire Hall.

BENNETT

From Page A1

“Pretty busy; that was about last year’s total,” he said.

The biggest increase has been in medical calls, something that he said all departments in the area are dealing with.

Theien said one of the big messages he wanted to share with visitors was emblazoned on one of the department’s trucks: “Will this truck fit down your driveway when you need it most?”

The event was also a chance to meet neighbors and possibly spark interest in joining the department.

Shaun Anderson said he’s been considering joining the fire department since they moved to Bennett three years ago.

“It’s just a way of giving back to the community,” said Anderson, who served in the Army National Guard for 18 years.

The visit to the fire hall may have been the push he needed to join.

“I’ll come to the meeting and see what all I need to do to give back,” Anderson said.



Wilson Burfield, 7, of Bennett finishes a freeze pop sitting on the back of a firetruck during a National Night Out event on Tuesday at the Bennett Fire Hall.

EPA

From Page A1

“Federal agencies have a legal obligation to consider direct and indirect impacts including upstream and downstream emissions caused by production, processing, transportation, and consumption of the project’s resources,” wrote EPA staff in a July 26 letter.

The Rural Utilities Service said in its supplement review that specific sources of natural gas transported for the project are unknown and may change.

“Due to this, the environmental impacts of upstream natural gas production are not reasonably foreseeable to predict with any specificity,” the analysis states.

The EPA disputes the agency’s findings. A spokesperson with USDA Rural Development said the agency is reviewing EPA’s comments.

Environmental groups praised federal environmental regulators for their recommendations, saying it demonstrates support for the Biden administration’s climate goals.

“The time for moving away from fossil fuels is now. It’s probably yesterday, so this project shouldn’t move forward,” said Katie Nekola, attorney for Clean Wisconsin. “If USDA’s (Rural Utilities Service) is going to invest in energy, it should be

investing in clean energy — not carbon emitting sources.”

Elizabeth Ward, director of Sierra Club’s chapter in Wisconsin, said environmental advocates want utilities to cancel plans to build the plant. She said the pending \$369 billion climate deal reached with West Virginia Sen. Joe Manchin includes a plan to reduce methane emissions.

“I think that just adds to the sort of growing awareness about how bad gas and methane pollution is and how we won’t be able to properly address climate change if we don’t do something about it,” said Ward.

In its comments, the EPA further alleges that the plant didn’t analyze potential measures to reduce the effects of carbon emissions through alternate fuels like hydrogen or the use of carbon capture technology. Federal environmental regulators also say the supplemental assessment failed to properly account for the effects of climate change on the project, as well as its effects on Native American tribes and environmental justice.

The Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa wants to see a more thorough review of the project’s direct and indirect effects, said Linda Nguyen, the tribe’s environmental director.

“Like upstream and

downstream considerations of the point of extraction, where the fuel is being extracted from,” said Nguyen. “And, then also to consider climate change effects, specifically the 500-year-flood events, if those are happening more frequently, how are we going to prepare for that?”

Beyond that, the tribe would like to see the Rural Utilities Service consider potential impacts to the remains of ancestors from the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa in Minnesota. In 1918, nearly 200 Ojibwe graves were removed from the burial grounds of Wisconsin Point in Superior on the western edge of Lake Superior. The remains were reburied at St. Francis Cemetery in Superior, which is located near the site of the proposed gas plant.

Red Cliff would also like to see the supplemental environmental assessment consider indirect effects on murdered and missing Indigenous women, who they say may be impacted by extraction and transportation of natural gas for the project.

Nguyen said the USDA has made limited outreach to the tribe about its concerns, adding there’s been virtually no consultation from other state and federal agencies permitting the project.

“It would make sense to us that the regula-

tory and permitting process takes a pause until meaningful and good faith consultation can occur,” said Noah Saperstein, the tribe’s environmental justice specialist.

In a statement, Dairyland Power said it has complied and will continue to follow requirements under state and federal permitting and environmental reviews.

“Dairyland is planning for more renewable resources as we work towards low-carbon goals. However, renewable additions also increase the grid’s need for flexible facilities that can provide reliable, quick-start generation — which will be NTEC’s specialty,” said Katie Thomson, a Dairyland Power spokesperson. “It will be a flexible, low-emitting and highly efficient natural gas facility that will provide on-demand generation and support the rapid expansion of renewable energy resources.”

Thomson added that Dairyland and its partners continue to evaluate technologies that would allow flexibility in the types of fuels used at the Superior gas plant.

The Midcontinent Independent System Operator has also submitted comments on the supplemental assessment, urging the Rural Utilities Service to consider the project’s value in ensuring reliability. The regional grid oper-



Contributed / Minnesota Power

Minnesota Power and Dairyland Power Cooperative have proposed a \$700 million natural-gas power plant, Nemadji Trail Energy Center, which would be located near the Husky Refinery in Superior and provide 525-625 megawatts of power.

ator has said 15 states, including Wisconsin, could see an energy shortage of 2,600 megawatts next year.

“Given the changes to the generating fleet, and the potential shortfalls in generating capacity, it is imperative that reliable generating resources, like those in the NTEC Project, be recognized for the regional reliability value provided to the region’s customers,” said Kristina Tridico, an attorney for MISO in a July 25 letter.

The project’s owners are still reviewing the EPA’s comments and awaiting direction from the Rural Utilities Service, according to Julie Pierce, vice president of strategy and planning for Minnesota Power. But she stressed the need for the project hasn’t changed.

“We still are seeing a tremendous need on our grid, especially in what we’re seeing right now with very high scarce

energy resources as the transformation is taking hold, to ensure that we can keep a reliable service available for everyone here in the region,” said Pierce.

The Rural Utilities Service is accepting public comments on the supplemental review until Aug. 23. AN EPA spokesperson said they expect to provide comments on the final document.

The Nemadji Trail Energy Center has faced legal challenges in Minnesota and Wisconsin, some of which are still ongoing. The utilities had hoped to have the facility in service by 2025, but Pierce said that date will likely be pushed further out as they continue working through the permitting process.

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George of the Juggle (3x)
Great Lakes Timber Show (3x)

Sunday
Escape Room: Noon - 6 pm
Face Painting: 1 - 5 pm
George of the Juggle (3x)
Great Lakes Timber Show (3x)

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