



Jim Fry holds a special device given to those who are legally blind, which allows him to listen to news, books and other programming. In the background is a special radio, which still runs off of analog signals, where he is able to listen to local news.

Photo by Barbie Porter

Lions help keep local residents informed

Radio station provides community news for the legally blind

By Barbie Porter
Editor

Jim Fry appreciates local news. But, without the Lions Club he may have to go without.

Fry has been legally blind his entire life. While he can learn about happenings in the state government and metro area on the radio, finding channels that read community newspapers are few and far inbetween.

The Detroit Lakes resident with strong Frazee ties explained the Lions Club recognized the importance of staying connected with local news and started a radio broadcast for those with visual impairments.

"To hear the broadcast you need a special receiver that is given to those with

visual impairments," Fry said. "It's run on a closed circuit radio system and they have these all over the country."

The Frazee Lions members (since 1977) noted the radio provides 24-hour a day programming that includes national, state, metro and local news, as well as entertainment like the reading of novels or Sunday comics.

Fergus Falls Lions member Ginny Paulson explained the local news program started with the Lions and Lioness clubs in Fergus Falls.

"I believe it was about 1992 we started discussing it," Paulson said. "We went on air on April 1, 1993. I stood outside the room when the first broadcast started. I still get emotional when I think about

how the broadcast reaches about 250 people within a 45-mile radius of Fergus Falls."

Paulson explained in the community-focused program kicked off with just a focus on those living in Fergus Falls. But, as the need increased the newspaper list grew and now includes the Frazee-Vergas Forum, New York Mills Dispatch, Henning Advocate and a few others.

"We focus primarily with what is on the front page and what is considered significant city and school news, as well as other points of interest," Paulson said.

"We also try and read all Lions articles because the club has supported this all these years," Paulson added.

Aside from the Lions

generosity and other private donors, the program relies on volunteers to read the papers Monday through Saturday from 7-8 p.m.

"The only person who gets a stipend is the person who does the scheduling for the readers," Paulson said. "They have to work with about 60 volunteers and schedule two months in advance."

The radio studio space is also a generous donation, as it is held in a church.

"Bethlehem Lutheran was generous to us from the start, and let us use a room in their church," she said.

Paulson added the newspapers that donated to the program also deserve a tip of the cap.

"We wouldn't be able to continue without that," she said.

Anyone interested in volunteering can contact Paulson at (218) 736-5109.

LOCAL FAMILY RESCUED

indow on the backside of the house.

The people trapped inside were identified as one child and one adult. Trieglaff said the deputy pulled the child to safety, while the Frazee officer helped the adult female out of the window.

Once out of the house, both victims were taken to a squad car until Frazee Rescue arrived.

Trieglaff, who is also the Frazee Rescue president, was one of the rescue members that responded to the call.

When St. Mary's EMS arrived, both victims were transported to Essentia Health St. Mary's in Detroit Lakes.

Trieglaff said he did not know the extent of the injuries, but it appeared the victims were suffering from smoke inhalation.

The victims were also reportedly connected with the Red Cross for additional assistance.

Frazee Fire Chief Joe Nelson emphasized his appreciation for the quick actions of the officers and rescue members.

"They did a phenomenal job," Nelson said.

Nelson said when he arrived on-scene there was heavy smoke billowing from the structure and a fire could be seen in the kitchen area that was extending into the living room area.

The fire department went to work attempting an interior attack. During that time a firefighter emerged with a dog that had been reported missing.

"He was still alive,"

Trieglaff said. "He was covered with water and ice so we warmed him in the ambulance and then took him to a neighbor's house."

After a good fight, the fire department recognized the blaze had reached the roofline, so the department went into defense mode.

"That means we were no longer inside the house because it was a safety issue," Nelson explained. "Our focus was worrying about the strength of the structure."

While mutual aid is always a valuable tool, the help played an integral role battling the blaze with the temperatures dropping 25 below zero.

Nelson explained the extreme cold created many complications.

"It is hard to work in those conditions and be quick and physical," Nelson said.

While no water lines froze, the firefighters gear did get covered in water and quickly froze. Plus, the water that hit the ground created many walking hazards.

"The gear is warmer than blue jeans, so there is some protection, but that only goes so far," Nelson said. "The ice was a big problem for firefighter safety and created a huge concern."

The crews devised a rotation plan.

"Fire departments from Frazee, Vergas, Detroit Lakes and Perham were there, so we had a lot of man power and were able to have shorter rotations," Nelson said. "That allowed us to keep moving, and for us to take breaks to warm up."

As for dealing with the

rink that formed, Nelson said they simply, "walked very carefully."

"The team did an amazing job," Nelson said. "And, having the neighboring communities respond and lend a hand made all the difference."

The fire took about four hours to knock down, and crews were on-scene for another four hours to make sure there were no flair ups.

While some firefighters kept a watch at the house, other crew members headed back to the fire hall where hoses were washed and equipment that was used was prepped for the next call.

Nelson shared he had about a two hour nap before waking up and heading to work on Friday morning. While little sleep may make some grumpy, he was in good spirits because no one

continued from 1

was hurt and the fire departments did their job well.

The cause of the fire is under investigation by the fire marshal.

According to the Becker County parcel listing, 606 East Main Avenue was purchased by Deborah Chouard in 1993. The 1 1/4 structure was built in 1901 and had a rock foundation.

BUILDING PROJECTS continued from 1

The meeting began with a review of the recent referendum question number three. This question was approved by district voters in November's special election. The voters approved an elementary renovation bond in the amount of \$3.47 million.

Superintendent Terry Karger and the district's Business Manager Stephanie Winjum were on hand to lead the discussions as the school board planned how to move forward with the bonding process to complete the approved renovation work.

Winjum led the school board through a basic review of the Power Point that had been prepared for the work session and the bonding process.

Winjum went over what the elementary renovation dollars would cover including new improvements listed in the presentation such as: elementary school heating, ventilation, air conditioning (HVAC) improvements, classroom renovations including but not limited to, wall and door replacements, light fixture upgrades, ceiling and flooring finishes, and window replacements."

She also noted that the bonding process would likely proceed with the school board looking to approve the long-term facility maintenance (LTFM) funding in the same bond purchase to benefit the district with pricing and interest rate considerations.

The LTFM amount approved at the December 2018 school board meeting was set at \$2.5 million of the overall levy. These dollars were presented in the truth in taxation meeting and can only be spent on a certain set of specific improvements to existing portions of the building and grounds of the district.

The overall bond could consist then of both the referendum and LTFM funds putting the total bonding figure sought at \$5.97 million.

Discussions turned to cost of interest versus cost impact to taxpayers. A longer term 20-year bond would bring more cost savings to taxpayers in the short run while costing more in interest costs over time. The bonds are available to be repaid in a period as short as seven years.

The timeline for approving any bonds was also included in the presentation and indicated a likelihood that bonds would need to be sold in March. In order to facilitate this, the school board would need to approve a resolution for any bond sales in February to go forward with approval and final sale at the March board meeting.

After the initial discussion of the upcoming bonding process concluded, consultant group, ICS, Inc. was available via teleconference as Lori Christensen addressed the school board at the Monday work session.

"I want to congratulate everyone for your hard work up to this point and I am excited that the voters supported us on question number three," Christensen said.

Question three of the Nov. 6 special election was for air quality improvements and renovations of the elementary school. It was one of three questions put to voters to address three needs identified by the school district as it worked with ICS in strategic planning sessions in 2018.

ICS was hired by Frazee-Vergas School District last year to advise the district in planning and assessing the district's facility needs. They played a central role as the referendum process was undertaken in the past year.

The Frazee-Vergas School Board is now beginning its' initial discussions about whether or not ICS will work in the capacity of project manager through the renovation and maintenance work going forward.

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Registration is going on now through February 11, 2019.
Winners, roughly 14 couples in all, will be named during a KPRW 99.5 FM broadcast on the morning of February 12. The Valentine's opportunity is being conducted by the Perham Event Committee. Participating merchants have Valentine's Day red and white bags and registration slips in their stores.

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