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A SPLASHING SUCCESS

Deerwood celebrates the city's new splash pad

In a city with a population slightly higher than Brainerd High School's most recent graduating class, a decade of community collaboration is making a big splash.

That's what Mayor Mike Aulie told those attending the grand opening of Deerwood's splash pad, the latest addition to a city park that's undergone a transformation. As children laughed

and splashed nearby Friday, July 19, Aulie shared the moments in the past 10 years that led to today: first, new playground equipment; then, a pavilion; now, a splash pad.

It's a project that gained support from local and statewide funders, including the Hallett Charitable Trusts and the Minnesota Department of Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation. But it's

the overall community support Aulie finds most inspiring.

"Almost every business in town have helped contribute to this," Aulie said. "When you think of a town with 530 people, to put together a park like this without using any taxpayer dollars, to me that's really an amazing story. To

SUCCESS: Page A4

Kaleb Nelson peers out through the curtain of water being sprayed by one of the water features Friday, July 19, before the ribbon cutting at the new splash pad at the Deerwood Park playground.

Kelly Humphrey / Brainerd Dispatch

Rural broadband is catching up

One in five rural residents are still without access to fixed high-speed internet service

By Brooks Johnson
Forum News Service

FREDENBERG, Minn. — Here is a story to match the motto of Fredenberg Township: "A pleasant blend of progress and tradition."

The 1,300 residents among the reservoirs north of Duluth now have access to some of the fastest internet speeds available anywhere, thanks in part to taxpayer support — a tradition as old as the New Deal.

"This is like getting rural electrification to all the towns," said Clay Cich, a Fredenberg town supervisor who worked for years to bring broadband to the shores of Fish and Island lakes. "It just

changes everything." Officials say high-speed internet access is a requirement for participating in today's economy, just like electricity. And just as rural areas needed public subsidies for power lines to reach them, so too will taxpayers help bring our far-flung neighbors into the future and lessen the "digital divide."

While nearly every Minnesotan in urban areas has access to basic fixed broadband service, just 80% of rural residents do, according to state estimates.

"Robust and reliable connectivity touches every part of our daily

BROADBAND: Page A4



Ellen Schmidt / Forum News Service

CenturyLink network technician Brandon DeRosier shows the point where a fiber optic cable enters Ron and Nancy McVean's home to deliver broadband internet service on Friday, July 19, in Fredenberg.

Never too late to give back

Crow Wing County honors two outstanding senior volunteers

By Gabriel Lagarde
Staff Writer



Submitted photo

The 2019 Crow Wing County Outstanding Senior Volunteers were announced Wednesday, July 17, during The Center's annual picnic. Jeanne Larson was named the female Crow Wing County Outstanding Senior Volunteer; and Lowell Johnson was named the male Crow Wing County Outstanding Senior Volunteer award winner.

The 2019 Crow Wing County Outstanding Senior Volunteers are a study in contrasting personalities — one characterized by joyful acceptance of public recognition, while the other shies away from the limelight. Yet both serve as models of volunteerism and self-sacrifice.

The recipients were announced Wednesday, July 17, during The Center's annual picnic. Jeanne Larson of Brainerd was named the female Crow Wing County Outstanding Senior Volunteer and Lowell Johnson of Little Falls was named the male Crow Wing County Outstanding Senior Volunteer award winner.

In discussions with the Dispatch, both recipients said they had a feeling they'd won when the Center's director, DeAnn Barry, hinted both volunteers were born in 1948, five days apart in June.

"Oh," Johnson said he thought excitedly at the time. "Looks like its a pretty good chance it'll be me."

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Cashing in on Vikings training camp

Camp brings millions of dollars to Eagan

By Nick Ferraro
St. Paul Pioneer Press

EAGAN — The Minnesota Vikings have been good neighbors to Union 32 Craft House.

Being the closest bar to the team's Twin Cities Orthopedics Performance Center in Eagan, Union 32 saw plenty of purple-clad patrons during last summer's training camp.

"Last year, our two best weeks of the year were the 2 weeks of training

camp," said Dan Redpath, co-owner of the brewpub. "We're expecting it to be even better this year."

While the Vikings have been gearing up to host their second training camp at their headquarters Eagan, so have the bars, hotels and other local businesses that hope to capture the estimated \$4.9 million in economic activity the camp generated last year. Sixteen practices will be open to fans, beginning Friday.

Brent Cory, president and CEO of the Eagan Convention and Visitors Bureau, said his challenge is to not only keep all that spending in

Eagan, but increase it. The bureau's five-person staff has been ramping up promotions and marketing efforts to attract out-of-town fans to Eagan and keep them there.

For instance, a new online tool on the bureau's website is aimed at helping fans plan itineraries to nearby restaurants and attractions, Cory said.

"If someone is visiting training camp, we know they are going to go to places like the Mall of America and the Minnesota Zoo, but we certainly

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