

MINEWORLD

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 24, 2015

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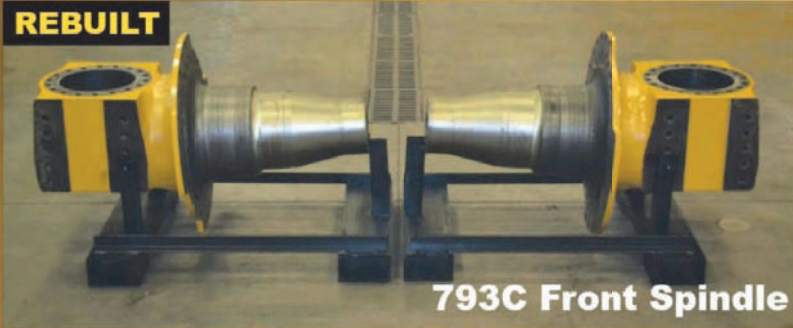
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MINEVII

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MARK SAUER/MESABI DAILY NEWS

Steelworkers build the skeleton of a plant at Essar Steel Minnesota's new facility going up near Nashwauk.

ESSAR STEEL MINNESOTA

\$1.9 BILLION

PROJECT A RAY OF SUNSHINE

BILL HANNA
MESABI DAILY NEWS

NASHWAUK — Madhu Vuppuluri's \$1.9 billion baby is growing up.

And the Essar Mining Minnesota CEO is one proud papa watching the brand new taconite plant and its surroundings take shape while being formed as an 100 percent brand new greenfield venture.

"Yes, it's absolutely my baby. I've been with it every step of the way from 2006. Every minute of my being has been working and thinking of this project," Vuppuluri said.

The Essar site was the bad poster child symbolic of the economic devastation of the mid-1980s on the Range when Butler Taconite was shuttered in 1985.

Now it is cause for hope for an Iron Range once again beleaguered by the fickle economic winds that repeatedly blow through mining areas.

"We are at a very heartening aspect of the project at this stage especially with what is happening in the neighborhood.

"We will do whatever we can to

provide rays of sunshine in what otherwise is a very gloomy marketplace. We do have the right spot here to help," Vuppuluri said.

There is good cause for the Essar CEO's assessment of the current situation — both regarding the overall mining funk on the Range and also his company's flourishing project and a planned second quarter 2016 start-up of a new taconite plant in the region.

Essar's work site is currently a very busy place, with more than 450 construction workers putting their trade skills to good use and earning plenty of paychecks for their families and communities.

That effort is signified by one of the largest cranes in the United States that towers over the construction site. The Manitowoc 16000 is doing a lot of heavy lifting at the site and can bear 440 tons.

The crane is a heavy-duty story onto itself. Consider these statistics:

- It took 20 semi tractor-trailer loads to deliver the crane from Atlanta

SEE ESSAR, PAGE 5



Essar Steel president Madhu Vuppuluri talks about the progress being made during a recent tour of the plant.

Cover and Graphics by Faye Akerman • Pagination and Design by Debbie Conaway
Mesabi Daily News



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MESABI DAILY NEWS



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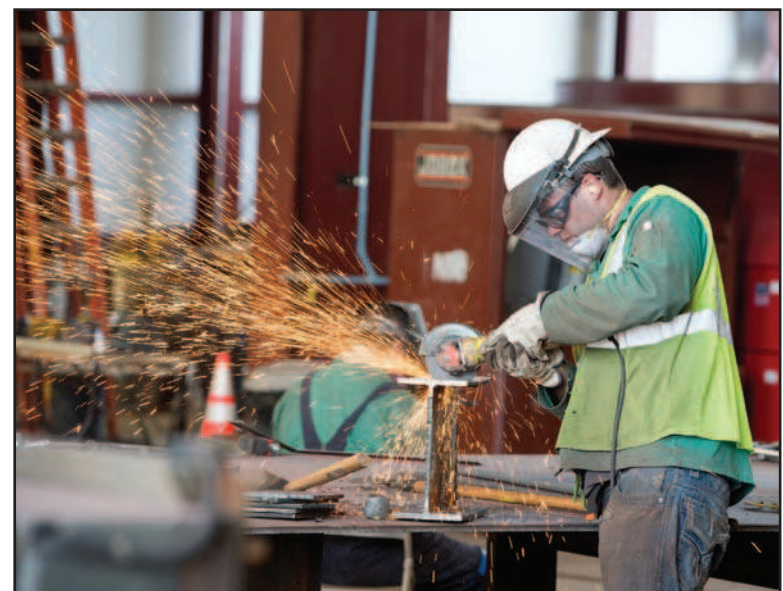


450 CONSTRUCTION WORKERS ON SITE



A surveyor takes a reading from the top of an ore pile at Essar Steel.

More than 450 construction workers on average are working on the Essar Steel site daily.



A steelworker from NIE in Grand Rapids cuts a beam.



NIE Steel Fabricators are starting work on several of the smaller buildings at Essar Steel, in addition to making rapid progress on the facility's main buildings.



Fill rock is placed around an ore processing area.



Tons of steel are being assembled daily at the new Essar Steel site in Nashauk.



Workers shape rebar.



The taconite plant is being built from the ground up. It is a 100 percent greenfield project.

MARK SAUER



MARK SAUER/MESABI DAILY NEWS

Construction crews work on an ore holding area.

ESSAR

FROM PAGE 3

to assemble it on site.

- The crane is configured with 137 feet of main boom and 137 feet of luffing jib.
- It has 332,000 pounds of counterweight.
- The body of the crane weighs 143,000 pounds; its two tracks weigh a total of 144,000 pounds.

"There's a lot of action on the ground. The last few weeks there's been a lot of construction going on.

"We have 455 construction workers and 110 of our own employees ... about one-third of what our staff will be. Every

SEE ESSAR, PAGE 6



A truck hauls 60 tons of taconite ore to be used as fill around a processing building.



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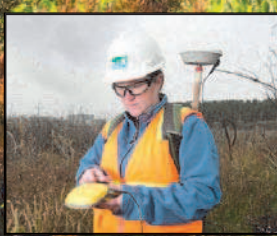
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MARK SAUER/MESABI DAILY NEWS

Crews begin some foundation work at Essar.

ESSAR

FROM PAGE 5

week we are hiring for the permanent rolls," said Vuppuluri.

About 10 construction days were lost in January because of bitter cold, and another 10 in May due to continual rain conditions, Vuppuluri said.

"Now things are looking up. Construction workers are fully deployed. We now have the highest number since the start of the project," he said.

The numbers tell a good story now for the India-based Essar project and a promising one for the near future:

- A \$1.9 billion capital investment for the largest greenfield project (which means it will be all new and without using previous buildings or equipment).

- \$1.3 billion already put into the venture.

- 600 to 800 workers expected to be employed at the site this year.

- Up to 350 permanent workers when fully operational.

- Annual payroll projected at \$25 million.

- 630 spin-off jobs.

- 7 million pellets produced each year.

- Ability to produce

standard, fluxed and direct reduced grade pellets.

- Once operational will spend \$350 million per year in the region.

- Taxes of \$170 million to \$180 million to be generated annually.

Vuppuluri forcefully disputes critics who say Essar will add even more pellets to an already glutted marketplace and damage other Range taconite producers.

"We will not displace one single ton of pellets from Minnesota customers. And we will have one of the finest quality pellet plants anywhere in the world. It will be environmentally friendly," Vuppuluri said.

Essar already has contracts in place that do not take business away from other Minnesota mines.

The CEO said the global steel and mining scene creates a challenging time.

"But it's also exciting. You have to believe in what you're doing," he said.

Vuppuluri believes fully in the project that will exceed \$2 billion once it's operational on Minnesota's Iron Range landscape. And he is doing everything he can to make sure it succeeds.

"These jobs are impor-

tant to people and their families. This is a continuous pursuit for me. I work non-stop on this. I

haven't taken a vacation in the last seven years.

"When I go home to India on some week-

ends I visit banks and then visit my 90-year-old mother on Sundays. Then I'm back at work

on the project," Vuppuluri said.



ESSAR MINNESOTA NASHWAUK PROJECT:

- Projected mine life of 70-80 years
- \$1.9 billion capital investment in our region.
- Largest Greenfield Project in North America.
- More than \$1.3 billion invested to date.
- Hundreds of local construction workers engaged at the site and expected to continue over the next year, with 600 to 800 construction workers expected to be working on the project during 2015 construction season.
- Up to 350 full-time employees when fully operational.
- Anticipated that production and delivery of pellets will be accomplished and will commence in the second calendar quarter of 2016.
- Projected annual payroll of more than \$25 million. Wage and benefit package on par with that of other area mining companies.
- Additionally, the region will benefit from 630 spin-off jobs.
- Total of 15 construction companies awarded 50 construction packages worth hundreds of millions of dollars.
- Will produce 7 million tons of pellets annually. Unique capability to produce standard, fluxed and direct reduced grade pellets.
- Operating at full production capacity, substantial economic engine with spending of more than \$350 million per year in the region (excluding taconite tax and other taxes).
- Taconite mine and pellet plant operation is expected to generate \$170 to \$180 million in new annual tax revenues for the State of Minnesota.

* Source: UMD Labovitz School.

MINE VII

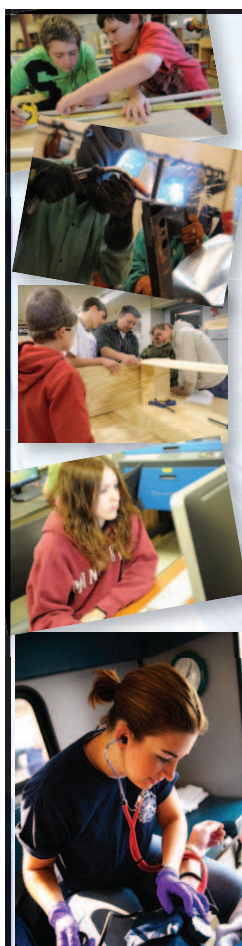
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VENDORS



SUBMITTED

SIM Supply's facility, which features a showroom, warehouse and offices, is located in the North Hibbing Industrial Park.

FROM MINERS TO MOTHERS SIM Supply survives by diversifying

KELLY GRINSTEINER
HIBBING DAILY TRIBUNE

HIBBING — For more than 30 years now — and through five downturns in the mining industry — SIM Supply has thrived.

And even today, as the layoff announcements keep coming, the Hibbing-based business that set its roots in servicing the mining industry continues to grow.

"There is no one key to our success," said President Ron Smith. "It starts the old-fashioned way — by hiring good people and giving them a positive work environment. We empower them to make decisions, which keeps us adaptable and relevant."

Yet, there's more. "We also cross-train our staff using the latest technology which encourages new ideas, and inspires them to exceed the high expectations of our customers," said Smith.

Yet, there's one key to the business' survival — diversification.

The supply company that began with area mines and paper mills as their sole customers now does business across the globe.

"We diversified into an e-commerce business, which is a different division, and it really made a difference in our company," said Smith.

Yet again, there's more.

SIM Supply diversified its industrial business by servicing more markets related to education, health care, manufacturing, government and food service as well as diversified its online business from just having simsupply.com, to selling on Amazon, eBay, Walmart, Sears, Rakuten and NewEgg.

"Our growth in the last five years is trending higher than the economy," said Joe Caldwell, the company's e-commerce manager. "We did this by making our primary goal to make SIM Supply more resistant to recessions and industry specific downturns."

SIM Supply, Inc. began in March 1983 in a cozy brick building in the Brooklyn area. Jerry and Elaine Anderson, of Hibbing, and Dennis and Bernie Mohney, of Virginia, started the supply company.

The foursome pulled in sales of \$386,000 during the first year of business. Smith joined the company in 1984 as an outside salesman, after having spent six years as an industrial distributor at Lakeshore Mining.

"They (the owners) basically pulled out a map of Minnesota and said, 'this is your territory,'" Smith recalled. "At that time, we did it all and wore a

lot of hats."

The business steadily built its reputation on strong customer service.

"We were bird dogs," said Smith. "We were the ones who would find the things that people had a hard time finding. We built from there, and worked to solve people's problems. That's still part of our philosophy to this day. The only difference is now we know better what our customers want and where to get it."

For the next decade, Smith continued in sales while also familiarizing himself with all aspects of the business. In that time, SIM Supply had moved into another location in Brooklyn, increased its number of employees and gained customers.

"As our customer base diversified, our demands also increased," said Smith. "We went from peddling seven or eight lines to more than 25,000 products."

In 1994, Anderson retired, giving Smith the option to purchase his share of the company. At that time, SIM Supply had eight employees — including Smith.

For the next four years, Mohney, Smith and company worked hard to carve a bigger niche for SIM Supply. Smith said that's when they began thinking outside of the box and really trying to diversify.

In 1998, Mohney left the business to Smith.

The business world began to change then, and Smith said he began to realize the potential of the business.

"Technology started kicking in and more money was spent on employees training and new systems," he said. "We started looking to service bigger companies and different markets."

SIM Supply was about 70 percent dependent on the mining industry then. It was also then that the mines opted to consolidate their suppliers.

"We worked to become a single-source supplier to the mines," he said. "We either had to participate or be left behind. Being able to do that and competing with much larger companies is a testament to our people and our business."

Their efforts were rewarded in 2000 when the company was named Cleveland Cliffs' supplier of the year, having provided for the three Minnesota-based mines, which includes Hibbing Taconite, United Taconite and North Shore Mining.

SIM Supply moved to the North Hibbing Industrial Park in late 1999. The former location wasn't quite large enough to handle the expanding business. The company was also at

"There is no one key to our success."

President Ron Smith

its highest number of employees then with 18.

Then the global economy took a turn for the worse, partially as the re-

sult of the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. The closure of LTV and several area mines declaring bankruptcy soon thereafter also had a major impact on

SEE SIM, PAGE 8



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SUBMITTED

A snapshot of SIM Supply's showroom at its North Hibbing Industrial Park location.

SIM

FROM PAGE 7

the business.

With demands at an all-time low, a few employees had to be let go. Smith said he made a concerted effort to retain those he could, but the number of employees dropped to 13.

"My philosophy was to deal with it right away, or ignore it and lose two or three quality people," he said, adding each employee was spoken with one-on-one about the company's situation. "Those were some tough times, and lots of sacrifices were made."

Smith noted that employees went home with less pay for the same amount of hours for about four months.

"We were able to weather it (the downturn) by staying positive," he said. "We're the type of people that look at the glass as half full. Everybody knew where they stood and still looked forward to coming to work. Communication really makes a big difference."

Shortly thereafter, the number of employees at SIM Supply once again grew to 15. The need for more workers was partially in response to Smith's plans to diversify and break into new markets, as he wasn't about to wait for the economy to turn itself around.

In 2003, SIM Supply converted just less than

2,000 square feet of its North Hibbing location into a display room for the company's new rental equipment and supply business.

"We're here to not only service the big guys, but to service the little guys as well," said Smith. "Our philosophy is to offer new equipment that is dependable and of high quality. We want to assist those do-it-yourselfers and contractors, especially with specific jobs."

Sales in the rental center accounted for only 5 percent of the business's profits in its first year. In 2004, rental sales jumped to about 7 percent, thanks in part to the weather.

SIM Supply also hired more personnel to penetrate the food and restaurant sectors.

"We used what we had learned from the mining industry and applied it to others," he said.

In addition to mining, major customers had grown to include construction, municipalities, health and wood product plants, among others.

It was in 2005 that the company was about 40 to 45 percent mine dependent — yet still looking to diversify.

E-commerce — putting a stronger focus on the website and its capabilities — was next.

"The major difference between us and our competition is our abil-



Mike Troop, inside sales manager for SIM Supply, reacts to response from a customer.

KELLY GRINSTEINER/
HIBBING DAILY TRIBUNE

ity to be flexible," said Smith. "We will do what we have to. Change is inevitable."

Enter Joe Caldwell. He was a distributor working with SIM Supply, until Smith decided to hire him to work for SIM Supply. "The main reason I was brought on was to diversify the company by starting another division or department that ultimately would bring in money from outside the local economy," he said.

Hence, the company's e-commerce division was born.

They began selling through the company website. While it worked well for a time, Caldwell said they came to realize that they needed

SEE SIM, PAGE 9

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SIM

FROM PAGE 8

to diversify outside of their own website. That's when they reached out to other sites, and began selling on other sites such as Amazon, eBay and others.

"Our goal was to have revenue coming in from a bunch of different streams, so as to not have to rely on industrial factors, such as downturns in the economy and layoffs," said Caldwell.

The number of industries served also increased, as did the number of products offered.

"We diversified both sides of the business," he said. "That has resulted in the addition of five employees since 2005, growth as a company by 30 percent and the addition of a new division — which today accounts for about 50 percent of the company."

And that revenue, Caldwell noted, is coming from places all over the United States and several other countries.

"Now our customers are anyone with money," he joked.

Today, SIM Supply has 18 employees — tying its peak employment level — and has a second location in Marquette, Mich., based on the needs of customers in that area. Two of the company's employees are located out of state.

"It's a different world now," said Smith. "It just shows that you don't have to be in Hibbing to work for a business here."

Smith also pointed out how just a matter of years ago SIM Supply was a 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday company, but it now does business 24 hours a day, seven days a week and 365 days a year.

"We offer a lot more than people think and at what I believe is a fair price," he said. "We have over 90,000 SKUs that offer free shipping right to your door. The days of having to go to SIM Supply and pick it up no longer exists and is no longer necessary. It's all on your schedule — not ours."

The volume of online, direct-to-consumer products is ever increasing. Products range from home and garden, organizational and office, housewares and seasonal to outdoor, camping and recreation items



Hundreds of items are ready for shipping in SIM Supply's warehouse. The business offers tools, janitorial items, office supplies, paper products, safety gear and much, much more.

and pets supplies and children's toys. Today, through various marketplaces, SIM Supply offers 900,000 SKUs.

SIM Supply has also expanded its e-commerce and marketing to social media. The company has both a Facebook and Pinterest page to share ideas, projects and tips.

"We've found it to be a great way to interact with, particularly, the female market, whom we hadn't previously engaged," said Angie Williams, SIM Supply's social media manager. "Our Facebook fans are approximately 75 percent women and 25 percent men."

And 80 percent of those on Pinterest are women. As a project-oriented site, SIM Supply became a key source for project-related items.

"We went from primarily industrial and commercial to tapping this new female demographic. We found there was a niche for this," said Smith. "Here products are needed that we carry and our subcontractors already have, so we've targeted our marketing to that focus group. A lot of women in the world today are doing their own projects and are in charge of home maintenance. We found a customer that we didn't expect to find."

One thing that hasn't changed is SIM Supply's strong belief in providing top-notch customer service.

"One thing with other sites is that you never talk to a human. The biggest complaint in this type of business is that there's not a person answering the phone when a customer has a question or an issue," said Smith. "... But that's what sets us apart. We put the customer first. When you have a mother who bought something online and needs some help, we are the first one to answer and take care of that customer. We're a little more human."

Caldwell concurred. "Having a number, a person to call that actually speaks has an incredible impact," he said. "We have an old-fashion approach. People are surprised to hear an actual 'hello.' ... As much as we love other sites, like Amazon, this is an area where we are better."

And it's reviews on sites, like Amazon, where SIM Supply gauges customer satisfaction.

"It is our biggest source of feedback, and let's us know how we are doing as a company," said Caldwell. "To have a high rating is difficult. You have to have good staff and be willing to work hard."

Smith said the feedback and the stories he hears of how his business has impacted lives makes the hard work and risks worth it.

"It's very rewarding to hear the success stories — how a person's garden came out or how

we helped someone in planning their wedding," he said. "We get a lot of calls from customers thanking us, and many have since become loyal customers. All people want is someone who cares."

That personal service has led customers to abandon certain e-commerce sites and buy directly from SIM Supply.

"The marketplace has changed," said Smith. "There's a new way to shop local. We're also adjusting to the different generations and the trends."

Mining, however, is still vital to the ever-evolving company.

"Mining will always be important to us," said Smith. "It's the reason we live here. We have families here, and know the people here. We are invested, and are not going away."

Smith noted that it accounts for roughly 50 percent of business today. Yet, in light of the current downturn, that percentage may wane further into the year.

"We've been able to continue to grow the commercial and industrial side of the business. SIM Supply wouldn't exist if it were not for them and based where it is," said Caldwell. "Given the cycles of the mining and industrial side, we would have struggled a

lot more had the e-commerce not been there. ... The mining, industrial, commercial side has allowed us to stay where we are, and the e-commerce has enabled us to grow."

And as they continue to look ahead and look for new ways to diversify, SIM Supply will never stray from its roots.

"Our message to the mining community is that we are still committed to it," said Smith. "It's about people. We have family and friends that are going through tough times, and we can help by keeping people employed — that's what we do."



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MARK SAUER/MESABI DAILY NEWS

Dave Lislegard poses inside a rail building at the former LTV plant in Hoyt Lakes. With the promise of Polymet Lislegard sees a “light at the end of the tunnel” for the region.



GUEST COLUMN

DAVE LISLEGARD
Aurora City Councilor

It is critical that we stay united

It's well known that mining is a way of life on the Iron Range and that the history and traditions of our region run as deep as the minerals under our feet. We're proud of our heritage because in order to know where we are going in the future, we need to know about the past.

I was a 27-year-old father and third generation miner when LTV Steel closed its doors in 2001. As I reflect on the journey my life has taken since the closure, I can say with all honesty that I didn't fully understand how much this change would impact my family and my community.

Though it's been a long road with plenty of bumps along the way, I've gained a greater appreciation for how all mining positively impacts our way of life. Over time, our determination

has remained strong to keep our rich history alive, and we continue to mine responsibly and ensure there are good-paying jobs for the future generations of workers here on the Range — our children and grandchildren.

My oldest daughter was in third grade when the LTV plant closed. Fast forward 14 years and she has graduated from a technical college as a heavy equipment operator with a dream of coming home to the Mesabi Range to work and raise her family.

But as a councilman for the city of Aurora, a community still struggling from the LTV plant closure, I understand the challenges that face my children as they consider their futures — these are the very same challenges that are currently before our region

SEE UNITED, PAGE 11

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MARK SAUER FILE/MESABI DAILY NEWS

Hailey Lislegard holds a stack of letters she and her classmates wrote to Sen. Paul Wellstone in January 2002 shortly after LTV in Hoyt Lakes closed. Hailey and her classmates asked Wellstone to help their community. Posing with Hailey are Sen. Wellstone and state Sen. Dave Tomassoni.

UNITED

FROM PAGE 10

as a whole. To watch the fear and uncertainty land on the doorsteps of hundreds of families, businesses and small cities across this region is a strong reminder of what we are fighting for — our way of life.

Mining, the lifeblood of our communities, is currently being threatened on many fronts. We've seen countless "jobs vs. environment" stories, all of which have become trite and tired. I can tell you without hesitation that we need to embrace opportunities when they come before us.

We on the Iron Range have been advocating for mining through the ups and downs for generations and we support all responsible mining. We've been engaged for a very long time and we must continue to be engaged in this current fight for mining, because if mining — the main economic engine of our region — fails, so do our communities. We need to focus on the tremendous potential for diversification on the Range through all mining-related opportunities.

As the mining industry evolves, I continue to support our way of life through my business relations role at Lakehead Constructors, a large heavy industrial contractor. I'm proud to work for a company that is committed to northeastern Minnesota and that understands mining's importance to the region.

I'm also a board member for Jobs for Minnesotans, a consortium of businesses and labor groups statewide that initially joined forces in support of copper-nickel mining on the Range, but has morphed into a potent statewide force supporting Enbridge and other broader job-creating endeavors. We are excited for the opportunity we have to advocate, educate and inform others through Jobs for Minnesotans.

But this isn't about any one person, company, organization or community — this issue depends on our ability to work together as a region

to advance our economic future. One of the true strengths of the Iron Range is its people and their tenacity never to give up. We have had some successes at the state Legislature this year and it has been powerful to watch business, labor, communities and government leaders come together in unity and speak with one voice. We need even more of that.

As PolyMet Mining is going through the last phases of the environmental review process before permitting and operation, it is critical that this region stays united. We must be resilient to shape the future of our communities for our families. We cannot afford to be apathetic — we must continue to engage with our neighbors and community leaders on a regional level.

PolyMet represents a rebirth for the region and the idle LTV Steel plant plays a key role in this awakening. The same facilities where I, as a young father, had dreams of spending my career to support my family will be refurbished. These facilities will be brought back to life and have the ability to put people to work, including perhaps my daughter, either directly or indirectly through mining.

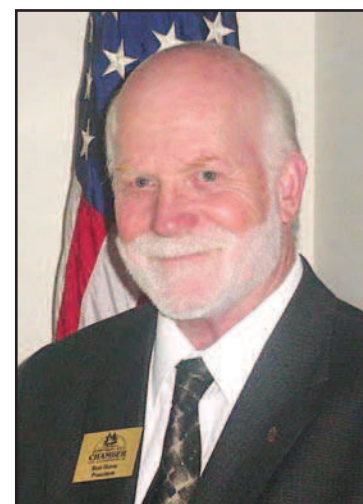
With PolyMet and other mining projects, there is light at the end of the tunnel.

We are literally standing on top of the biggest economic opportunity our region has ever seen. The Duluth Complex, where the PolyMet deposit and other mining ventures are focused, is one of the world's largest untapped resources of copper-nickel and platinum group metals in the world. These are metals that are critical to our national security and green energy, and are essential for our modern lifestyles. There is hope for our region and we have the power, strength and excitement to bring this new opportunity to life.

Dave Lislegard is an Aurora city councilor. He works at Lakehead Constructors and is involved with the group Jobs for Minnesotans.

GUEST COLUMN

BUD STONE
Grand Rapids
Area Chamber
of Commerce
President



TACONITE TIMBER TOURISM

We've heard about the "Three T's" for a long time. But, just what did they look like in the past? Before the first taconite plant was built, iron ore was shipped in a "raw" state.

Technology has allowed us now to ship a "value added" product called taconite. Future technology will change the industry again when we start to ship steel and mine precious metals.

The timber industry has also changed. For many years it was firewood, paper and lumber.

Today, technology allows us to look forward to the "bio-chemical" world. The technology available in today's world will allow us to convert wood cellulose into many of the products now made with petroleum products, like solvents, gasoline, diesel fuel and plastics.

Tourism has also evolved from the "Guys Gone Fishing" era to the family vacation.

From the Chamber of Commerce's point of view, these "Three T's" are

the engine that runs northern Minnesota.

The mining industries, while sometimes an economic bouncing ball, have supported northern Minnesota for more than 100 years providing jobs and economic growth.

The timber industries also support the economy and jobs and provide the revenue to manage our forests for health and recreation.

Our forests, if managed properly, not only provide the raw materials we need for industry, but they also sequester an enormous amount of carbon and provide the water sheds that keep our lakes and rivers clean for our residents and our tourists.

Hand in hand we go with our "Three T's" into the future.

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BRIAN AROLA/HIBBING DAILY TRIBUNE

The exterior of JPJ's new building as seen from Grant Street in Hibbing.

JPJ ENGINEERING CONTINUES TO GROW MUNICIPALITIES, MINES MAKE COMPANY TICK

BRIAN AROLA
HIBBING DAILY TRIBUNE

HIBBING — From Essar Steel Minnesota LLC to Mining Resources, Hibbing's JPJ Engineering has been involved in site development or land surveying for many of the mining operations that dot the Iron Range.

The consulting firm just opened in 2011, but JPJ President John Jamnick's experience in the engineering field stretches back decades.

The experience, along with a loyal staff, has resulted in what's become a diversified business well primed to make it through mining downturns.

A majority of JPJ's clients are public entities, so while the mining industry touches JPJ like so many other businesses in the area, it doesn't cripple them.

The company has growth plans for the next five years, Jamnick said, and advanced technology that JPJ offers will play a major role.

Among the tools currently at the company's disposal is 3D laser scanning capabilities. The process adds another dimension to land surveying, giving builders a detailed look at a building's conditions before it's completed.

The computer-aided design (CAD) drawings produced from 3D laser scanning can even show duct work in the ceilings of a building set to be built.

"It's hard to do that traditionally as a land surveyor," Jamnick said. "But with 3D laser scanning, we survey it and then create the CAD drawings."

Land surveying is one of several services that JPJ offers, and 3D laser scanning makes the process quicker for clients.

JPJ's work goes far beyond 3D scanning. For a recent Essar project, staff worked with the City of Nashwauk on site development and utility improvement.

It was an example of a public/

private project because the City of Nashwauk was tasked with extending utilities to the steel operation. That's where JPJ came in.

"We worked mostly with the City of Nashwauk because they provide water, sewer and electric to Essar Steel as part of the public infrastructure that was put in there," Jamnick said.

JPJ balances clients in either the public or private realm. Municipalities from Ely to Cass Lake, Minn., or Minneapolis to north Wisconsin have received help from the firm in one form or another.

On the Iron Range, JPJ also worked with Mining Resources, where they surveyed a tailings basin with a bathymetric device. The process requires rowing out to the middle of the pit to collect readings on the depth and shape under water. Following that procedure, the mine knew exactly the volume they had, along with how big the pile of concentrate was.

Seeing diversified mining companies, like Mining Resources, left Jamnick optimistic that the industry can bounce back in due time. Despite idles, he said it's just a matter of weathering the storm like the area has done so many other times.

"We've always seen the ups and downs," he said. "So I'm optimistic it's going to turn around or continue to diversify itself like it seems like it is with Mining Resources, PolyMet, Magnetation."

While the mining industry diversifies, JPJ plans to keep itself high on the list of firms to work with. A move into new headquarters on Grant Street in Hibbing was completed in December and the company plans to continue to promote its 3D laser capabilities.

"Our goal is to grow, and we want to expand our 3D laser scanning business some more," Jamnick said. "We got into it a year and a half ago maybe, and we just want to be able to do more of that."

To successfully push the scanning aspect of the business, JPJ will have to inform clients on the benefits of the process, said Cheryl Hanegmon, marketing director for JPJ Engineering.

"I don't think people know about it until you educate them on how easy it makes your job," she said.

As more people learn, Jamnick

said he hopes people come to see JPJ as a local company with dedicated staff that cares about the Iron Range's future.

"We've got a staff of engineers, land surveyors and support people who live on the Iron Range," he said. "... We consider ourselves local."

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John Jamnick, president of JPJ Engineering, poses next to the logo inside the consulting firm's new office on Grant Street in Hibbing.

RESILIENT RANGE

Families cope with ups and downs and uncertainty of mining life



The economic landscape of the Iron Range has been built for more than a century on the often shifting mining good and bad times. Downturns can hit and hit hard, dealing a cruel blow to workers, their families and communities. And businesses that supply the region's No. 1 industry are rocked, too.

But Iron Rangers are a hardy bunch. They know how to take a punch, get back up, shake off the sting and then counter-punch with vigor. Rangers do that well, in great part because that's the history, tradition and character of the people that has been passed on from generation to generation to generation to

We are now in yet another downturn and that resiliency is once again being tested. We will pass this test, too.

In the next several pages of MINE VII, stories depict just how people on the Iron Range are coping and rising to the challenge.

Bill Hanna
Mesabi Daily News





MARK SAUER/MESABI DAILY NEWS

Ryan Roberts, Paul Allen, their daughter, Angelina, and dog, Rorie, are pictured at the family's Hibbing home. The family is coping with its "new norm" after Allen was among about 200 employees laid off when the Mesabi Nugget and Mining Resources plants were idled last month.

'WE ARE MINER STRONG'

Mesabi Nugget layoff forces lifestyle change

ANGIE RIEBE
MESABI DAILY NEWS

HIBBING — Eleven-year-old Angelina Allen smiles sweetly as customers approach the yellow-and-pink-striped wooden lemonade stand in front of her Hibbing home.

Along with cups of the cold beverage, the soon-to-be-sixth grader has a display of handmade bracelets and magnets for sale, along with cookies and a donation can, where patrons can give to a charity for children who have cancer.

But Angelina's stand — complete with a price list written on an oval chalkboard hung with ribbon — is not just an ordinary childhood lemonade venture.

Although she has wanted a stand for years, this summer Angelina insisted it was time to go into business.

This summer it was more important than ever — because her dad no longer has a job.

The 11-year-old, plain and simple, wanted to "help out."

The child's willingness to assist with the family's finances has touched the hearts of her parents — dad, Paul Allen, and mom, Ryan Roberts.

"I don't think I've ever been more proud of her," Roberts said on a recent day at the family's home. When there's a layoff in a household, it affects everyone — children included — and Roberts and Allen know there are also many other families out there hurting with more than 1,000 workers at area mines losing their jobs through layoffs this year.

"This is the new norm," said Allen, who was among about 200 employees who were laid off last month when the Mesabi Nugget iron plant in Hoyt Lakes and the Mining Resources iron concentrate plant in Chisholm were idled.

How a person reacts to the situation is about all that can be controlled, and Allen and Roberts are working to join forces as a family and reach out to others facing the difficulties of job loss.

May 26 was a distressing day for employees of Mesabi Nugget and Mining Resources, when the Indiana-based parent company, Steel Dynamics Inc., announced declining prices in pig iron, which is the end product of the operations, was prompting a minimum two-year idle.

"It was a huge shock," said Allen, who had been at Mesabi Nugget for five years, working most recently as a first helper in charge of the control room computers that ran and monitored the machinery and pumps and valves.

It was not that employees did not think something could happen, especially with the illegally subsidized foreign steel imports, low iron ore prices and recent layoffs at other area mining facilities, including at Magnetation Inc., on the west Range, Keetac in Kewatin, and Minntac in Mountain Iron.

But most expected maybe a one-year closure, not two years or more, with no guarantee of operations ever reopening, he said.

"We have a very anti-industry government," said Allen, adding that it was costing big bucks every

month "just to keep everybody working" at Mesabi Nugget.

Mesabi Nugget, which opened in late 2009 and is partially owned by Japan-based Kobe Steel, was a pioneering initiative in the state to turn iron ore concentrate recovered from old mining sites into 97 percent pure "pig iron" nuggets using an innovative direct-reduction process. Mining Resources had been a joint venture with Magnetation, using patented technology to recover the ore tailings from mining waste sites.

Magnetation had about 40 layoffs early in the year, with all but a handful of those workers quickly finding employment. While the company had to file for Chapter 11 bankruptcy about two months ago, Magnetation remains in operation and did not lay off any additional employees.

Mesabi Nugget and Mining Resources workers learned of the shut-down and layoffs at their plants at a meeting at the Mountain Iron City Hall, and Allen said everyone was "very shocked." He recalls looking around the room at the faces of "people I love and care deeply for" and thinking, "I know it won't be easy for them" — especially those with several children.

The Mesabi Nugget crew "was a lot like a family," he said. "From the guy on the floor to the engineers to management, it was a good group," he said, adding that he felt comfortable walking into the general manager's office to talk.

"When I came home (from the meeting) I told Ryan what happened. We

sat and talked about it," he said.

They did not want to lose the house they only recently moved into, and the couple wasted no time coming up with a plan. First on the agenda was figuring out how to "cut back" on expenses, from rearranging the grocery list to transferring to a less-pricey cell phone company.

But they struggled with how to tell their daughter that some of her activities would have to be trimmed — particularly the martial arts she has practiced for several years.

Upon learning the news after school, Angelina provided her parents with an immediate, selfless response.

"Instead of saying, 'That's not fair' or 'I don't want to

quit martial arts,' she told us, 'That's OK, Mama and Daddy, I can just use what I've already learned and train at home.' And then she went one step further and said, 'I can do a lemonade stand this summer to help out,'" Roberts said. "I don't think they are going to let me give them the money," Angelina said on this recent day.

And she's correct. "We are going to let her keep the money," said her mom.

But the family has always been generous with donating to charities, and that's another thing that is troubling, Roberts said. "We can't give as much now. But we can donate time."

However, Angelina has part of that covered. In addition to collecting

donations from customers for the foundation to help children who have cancer, the 11-year-old is giving a portion of her lemonade sales to the charity as well.

"We will be OK," Allen said. The family is lucky to have been previously smart financially — living within their means and not putting too much on credit.

"Others are hurting more than us," Roberts said. "We are concerned about them — and the community as a whole. ... Business owners are hurting, too."

"There has always been a ripple effect" when mining declines, Allen said. And "SUB-pay and unemployment only lasts so long."

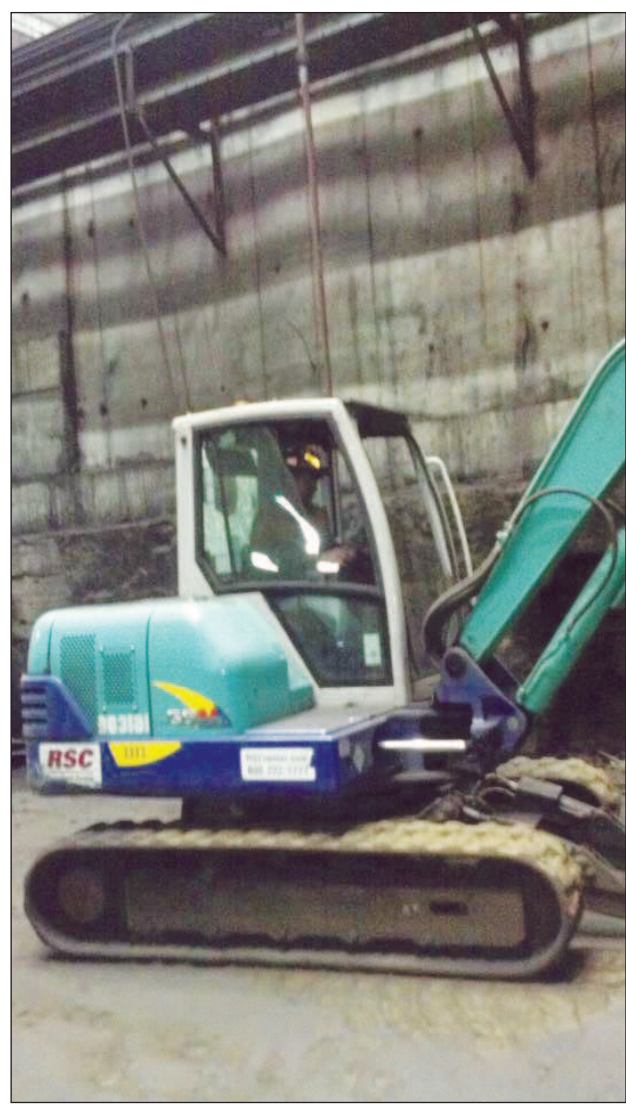
Mesabi Nugget workers were given 60 days

SEE LAYOFF, PAGE 15

ArcelorMittal
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SUBMITTED

Paul Allen is shown operating a mini excavator at Mesabi Nugget. The five-year employee at the plant in Hoyt Lakes recently lost his job when about 200 workers were laid off at the Mesabi Nugget and Mining Resources operations, which have been idled for a minimum of two years.



Eleven-year-old Angie Allen poses at her lemonade and craft stand in front of her Hibbing home. She wanted to go into business this summer because her dad, Paul Allen, recently lost his job at Mesabi Nugget.

MARK SAUER/MESABI DAILY NEWS

LAYOFF

FROM PAGE 14

“W.A.R.N. notice pay” with benefits and severance pay of one week per year worked at the company, he said. Employees entitled to Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act notice of 60 days prior to a mass layoff are provided with W.A.R.N. pay for the period of violation.

However, contributing to Angelina’s college fund will now be more difficult, a scholarship she would have one day received from the company is no longer promised, and finding health insurance once temporary benefits run out is yet a dilemma for the family.

But, “everything happens for a reason,” said Allen, a Gilbert native. “We lost a job, but gained strength.” “We are stronger as a family,” said Roberts, who is familiar with what it means to survive after a mining layoff.

When she was 6 years old, her dad was laid off from a mine in Indiana, and her family moved to the Iron Range, where her dad found work at L&M and her mom was employed as a nurse.

“We will make it through it,” Roberts said. “We are miner strong.”

“There are a lot of downsides” to the job loss, Allen said. Mesabi Nugget “paid very well.”

But the work also entailed 12-hour shifts and 15 hours per day away from home, including commuting. “I’d leave just after 5 (a.m.) and not get back until after 8 at night,” he said.

He now has the summer to spend with his family and to assist with his

daughter’s lemonade stand. “I can be out there with her,” Allen said.

He also will have more time to hone his passion for writing. Allen said he just finished a fictional book he’s been working on for many years and is starting another one.

And he hopes to pursue a college degree.

Trade Adjustment Assistance has been filed for Mesabi Nugget and Mining Resources employees, and the federal program — which provides workers who have lost jobs, as the result of foreign trade, with opportunities to obtain skills to become reemployed — would pay for two years of schooling.

“I believe you work for what you get,” Allen said.

While he is still hopeful Mesabi Nugget will one day reopen — “there’s a huge investment there” — he and Roberts are also considering the closure “a blessing.”

“Everything is unsure. But I get to pursue my dreams and my goals,” Allen said.

□

In the meantime, Allen and Roberts are doing what they can to help others.

Allen started a Facebook page, “Life After Nugget/Resources,” for former employees to share information, support one another, and “keep everybody in the loop.” The closed group has about 160 members.

And workers from those plants still plan to gather for a summer picnic.

Life, Roberts said, is about “sadness and happiness and challenges.” But, most of all, she said, it’s about “being there for one another.”

“If everybody helped each other a little more” — great things could happen, she said, encouraging

people to do their part, including supporting local businesses.

And when you do good things for others, often good things come back to you. This has also been the case for the family.

Darby Sauer, of Hibbing, a martial arts instructor home for the summer from college, has offered to work with Angelina free of charge.

“She is so thankful. We are so grateful,” Roberts said. “It’s nice to know there are so many thoughtful people are out there. It makes all of this so much more tolerable.”

And through the entire layoff situation, one thing has been very clear, she added.

“We are very proud of our daughter. She has become a better person, too.”



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STEELWORKER ADJUSTING TO LAYOFF

Hibbing family staying positive in tough times

TONY POTTER
HIBBING DAILY TRIBUNE

HIBBING — “You’re being laid off” are words that are never easy to swallow.

Tawnya and Tyler Gustafson of Hibbing and their two young daughters know that firsthand.

Tawnya was recently laid off from her job as a production truck driver at Keewatin Taconite.

“My first thought was, ‘How do I support my girls?’ she recalled. “We had to cut cable, cut some vitamins and we can’t buy anything. We put a halt on that 100 percent.”

While Tawnya is currently laid off, Tyler has been able to maintain his job for Ironworkers Local 512. He said Tawnya’s unfortunate news hasn’t worried him too much.

“We’ve ran into hard financial times in our lives before,” he said. “So I knew it would be OK.”

But a smaller budget isn’t all that the Gustafsons have had to endure. Tawnya lost her health insurance because she was employed by Keetac for just shy of two years.

Fortunately for the Gustafsons, they’ve been able to remain insured under Tyler.

“We’re relying on his income and insurance,” Tawnya said. “It’s keeping us afloat.”

Yet the Gustafsons have their fingers crossed that the mining industry downturn doesn’t end up affecting Tyler’s job.

“It’ll be pretty scary if all of the mines get affected,” Tawnya said. “Then it’ll really impact our lives.”

Despite Tawnya being laid off, the Gustafsons said they enjoy working in the mines. As a military veteran, Tawnya said she’s used to labor and has developed the personality for working in that environment.

“There’s no drama in the mines,” she said. “And I do have a great crew that I’ve become close with. They couldn’t be better.”

The pay and benefits are what drew Tawnya to the mining industry. Prior to being hired by Keetac, she had worked as an optical manager for eight years.

“It was about supporting my family,” she said. “We need to make sure

the girls are prepared for their future. They come first, and we’d like to be able to retire eventually.”

Tawnya said she was happy at her previous job, but said she felt more comfortable going to work for a large corporation instead of sticking with a privately-owned business.

“The insurance, the pension, the future outlook is much better in the mines,” she said. “I understand that it’s hard for a small company to offer some of those things, but it’s also hard to make it without them.”

The silver lining of the layoff for Tawnya is she now has more time to spend with her daughters.

“I’m taking advantage of the opportunity, and the girls love it,” she said. “They love having mommy at home.”

Tyler said it’s also made it possible for their daughters to participate in multiple activities, which was difficult with both he and Tawnya working long hours.

“And Tawnya has been able to do many projects with our yard and home,” he added.

grand.”

Tyler said it’s vital to everyone in the area for the mines to get back up and running at full force.

“I’m hoping this is short lived,” he said.

“Not only for our family, but for the rest of the Iron Range.”

But if Tawnya doesn’t return to working at Keetac by the fall, she said she plans to go back to college to become an electrician.

“That opens the door

for quite a few good jobs,” she said. “It would also make me more valuable to the mines.”

And if Tawnya is laid off for longer than anticipated, she said she’ll have to find a job. She noted that she has lots of experience as a bartender and waitress.

“That’s my back up plan,” she joked. “Hopefully it doesn’t come to that.”



SUBMITTED

Tyler and Tanya Gustafson, their two daughters, McKenzie, 4, and Jerzie, 9, and their dog have been affected by the large number of mining-related layoffs around the Iron Range.

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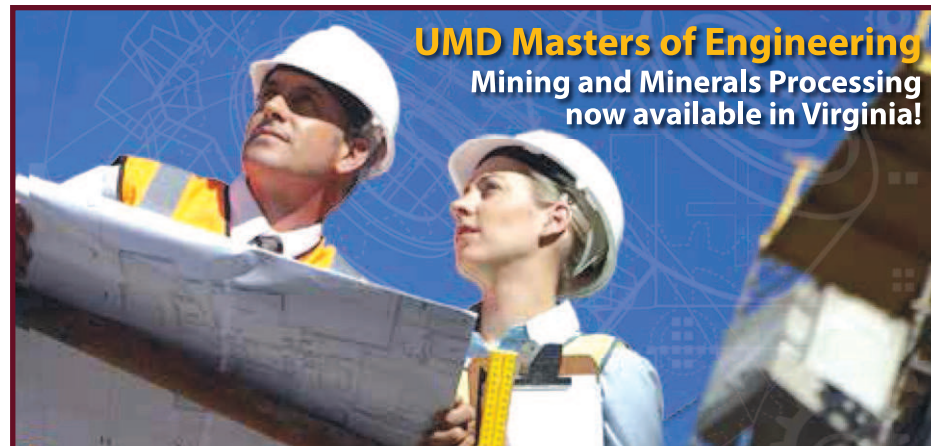
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MARK SAUER/MESABI DAILY NEWS

Heidi Anderson is pictured in her Mountain Iron home. She is among about 200 workers who lost their jobs after Mining Resources and Mesabi Nugget were idled in May.

'I LOVED MY JOB'

Now former Mining Resources worker likely charting new path

ANGIE RIEBE
MESABI DAILY NEWS

MOUNTAIN IRON — Heidi Anderson was sure she had found the perfect occupation.

"I loved my job," she said of the administrative assistant position she held at Mining Resources.

Anderson, of Mountain Iron, had spent several years staying at home to raise her sons, Lane, now 9, and Dylan, 4. But they were finally old enough that she felt comfortable going back to work.

Last September, she started as a temporary worker for the iron concentrate plant in Chisholm, and in February she was hired as a full-time employee.

Then, on May 26, Anderson learned Steel Dynamics Inc., the Indiana-based parent company of both Mining Resources and Mesabi Nugget's iron-making facility in Hoyt Lakes, announced that both plants would be idled for a minimum of two years, prompting a layoff of about 200 employees.

An extreme decrease in pricing for

pig iron, the end product of those operations, was cited as the reason for the closures.

"I hoped that would be my career," Anderson said of the office work she enjoyed.

Her first thought after learning the news was: "Now what?"

It's difficult, she said, "when you find something that fits you so well, and then you have it pulled from under you."

The team she worked with at Mining Resources "was like a little family," Anderson said. "Everybody was very close."

Steel Dynamics — one of the largest domestic steel producers and metals recyclers with sales of \$8.8 billion in 2014 and more than 7,700 employees — assisted some workers in finding jobs at other facilities and subsidiaries of the company.

However, relocating was not an option for Anderson and her husband, Nick, who is a diesel mechanic at the ArcelorMittal Minorca Mine in Virginia.

"As bad as it gets, this is our home," said Anderson, a native of Elk River,

Minn. "Everything I've ever wanted for my children is right here. Up here is where it's at. You can go fishing and hunting and four-wheeling."

Anderson said she is "grateful" for what the company provided to laid-off workers, including severance packages. And employees received 60 days of W.A.R.N. pay with benefits. Employees who are entitled to receive Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act notice of 60 days prior to a mass layoff are provided with W.A.R.N. pay for the period of violation.

Additionally, Trade Adjustment Assistance has been filed for Mining Resources and Mesabi Nugget employees. The federal program — which offers workers who have lost jobs, as the result of foreign trade, opportunities to obtain skills to become reemployed — would pay for two years of schooling.

If TAA is granted — which is expected — Anderson plans to "use the opportunity to go to school and get a degree and make myself more marketable." She would like to study advanced accounting and business, and,

perhaps, one day, find a job again in the mining industry.

When her health benefits run out, Anderson will "go back on my husband's plan." However, that is not an option for everyone, she noted.

"Other families are struggling" following the layoffs, especially those in which both parents lost their jobs, she said, adding that former Mining Resources employees are trying to "help the ones who are struggling and having a hard time with it."

While she will keep her youngest son in childcare during the next several months "to keep a spot," Anderson said she is looking forward to having more time to spend with her family and to accompany her 9-year-old to baseball.

The best-case scenario would be for Mining Resources and Mesabi Nugget to reopen, she said.

But should that never happen, she is ready to embark on another path.

"It will be a new beginning," Anderson said. "I look forward to the next chapter."



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LISA ROSEMORE/HERALD-REVIEW

The Wright family of rural Nashwauk is a four-generation mining family. Pictured, from left: Jerry, Ann, JJ, Tessa, Rick, Jody, and Jody's wife, Susan. Both Jerry and Ann's fathers worked in the mines in the 1940s. The hard hats are those of Jerry and Jody, worn during working hours.

4th GENERATION MINERS A FAMILY'S WAY OF LIFE

LISA ROSEMORE
HERALD-REVIEW

It's a way of life. For the Wright family of rural Nashwauk, mining is a family tradition, which has now filtered into the fourth generation. Ann and Jerry Wright grew up with both their dads working in the mines in the 1940s, with Jerry following their footsteps into the mines in 1950. In 1975, son Rick followed his dad to the mines and younger brother, Jody, followed in 1990. Five years ago, Jody's son, JJ, continued the family tradition when he joined his dad at HibTac. And Jody's daughter, Tessa, is also carrying on the tradition as she interned at HibTac last summer. Despite the economic downturn in the steel industry, Tessa is still hopeful about getting on at the mines. When you belong to a mining family, you know the industry has its ups and downs. Boom and bust, that's just how it is, Ann and Jerry explained from their rural Nashwauk home, some of the old

mine dumps where Jerry once worked off, in the near distance. Boom and bust was part of life, said Jody, adding how his father would tell them, "Keep your neck short so they can't cut it off." When Jerry was 17, he started at the Pacific Isles Mine as a truck driver. "I was 17 and a half when I started at Butler," he said, grinning. "I retired in 1992." "He got out before the strike at National in '93," Ann added. During his 43-year career, Jerry worked at many different mines, and held numerous positions. From laborer to shovel to drill operator and more, Jerry said. And he saw many changes. For example, the trucks went from 20-ton to 240-ton today, Jerry and Jody explained. Jerry, smiling, explained that one of the trucks he drove years ago had no power steering. Education and training have also changed since Jerry started in the mines in the 1950s. Jerry said that when he signed up to be a mechanic, "you

put in 1,040 hours and had a test." "Nowadays," he continued, "to be a millwright, you have to go to college. But that's the way it was at Butler's, you had to earn it." Layoffs happened, they were a fact of life. Ann explained when layoffs occurred, miners would move to other mines. Jerry explained that during one layoff, he and Jim Peluso went to the Danube Mine. "It was pretty cool going over there," he said, explaining that they were there between four to five months. Plants would freeze up in the winter and close down, Jerry recalled. "We'd get laid off, we'd get \$38 every two weeks," he said. "We ate lots of powdered eggs and powdered milk. That was in the late 50s." "We survived," Ann stated. Jerry laughed. "You'd be surprised how good those tasted with Ann's homemade bread," he said with a big grin. "Everyone was in the same boat," Ann added. "No money, but lots of

time." The neighbor kids came over for fresh bread and peanut butter, Jerry remembered.

After Jerry retired, Ann told him he needed to get a hobby. Jerry explained that National had programs for retirees

and it was through one of those programs that Jerry learned his retirement hobby of stained

SEE FAMILY, PAGE 19

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A hat that Jerry Wright was given during his time at Butler.

FAMILY

FROM PAGE 18

glass work. His handiwork, from lamps to wall hangings to sun catchers, decorate the Wright home.

The mines really take care of their people, Jody added.

It was in 1975 when Jerry's son, Rick, followed his father to the mines. Rick spent 10 years working for the Hanna/Butler Mine, but when Butler shut down in 1985, Rick realized that the life of a miner was not for him.

It was the last three years he worked the mines when he saw layoffs and strikes, he said.

"The up-and-down life, it wasn't for us," Rick said. "I saw with Dad, the up-and-down."

While Rick may have turned his back on the life of a miner, relocating his young family to the Twin Cities nearly 30 years ago, he did not turn his back on his family or his home town.

"I'm a weekend warrior," he said, smiling. "I'm only in the Cities five days a week."

Rick paused, then continued.

"I learned a tremendous amount in the mines," Rick said. "It was a highlight to watch Dad, then go to work with Dad at the same mine."

Rick said the layoff was good for him in the long run.

"It was a great background," he said, explaining that he is now the operations manager



SUBMITTED

Jerry Wright with a stained glass window he created. He learned the art of stained glass through a program offered by National to retirees. Jerry said that his wife, Ann, told him he needed a hobby once he retired from the mines after 43 years.

for Rahr Malting, a company in the Twin Cities which makes malt for breweries. He started there in 1985.

"He worked his way to the top," Jerry said, beaming.

While Jody didn't get the chance to work with his brother, he did have the opportunity to work with his dad. Jody was hired at National in 1990 and worked with Jerry for three years. For the past 20 years, Jody has been at HibTac.

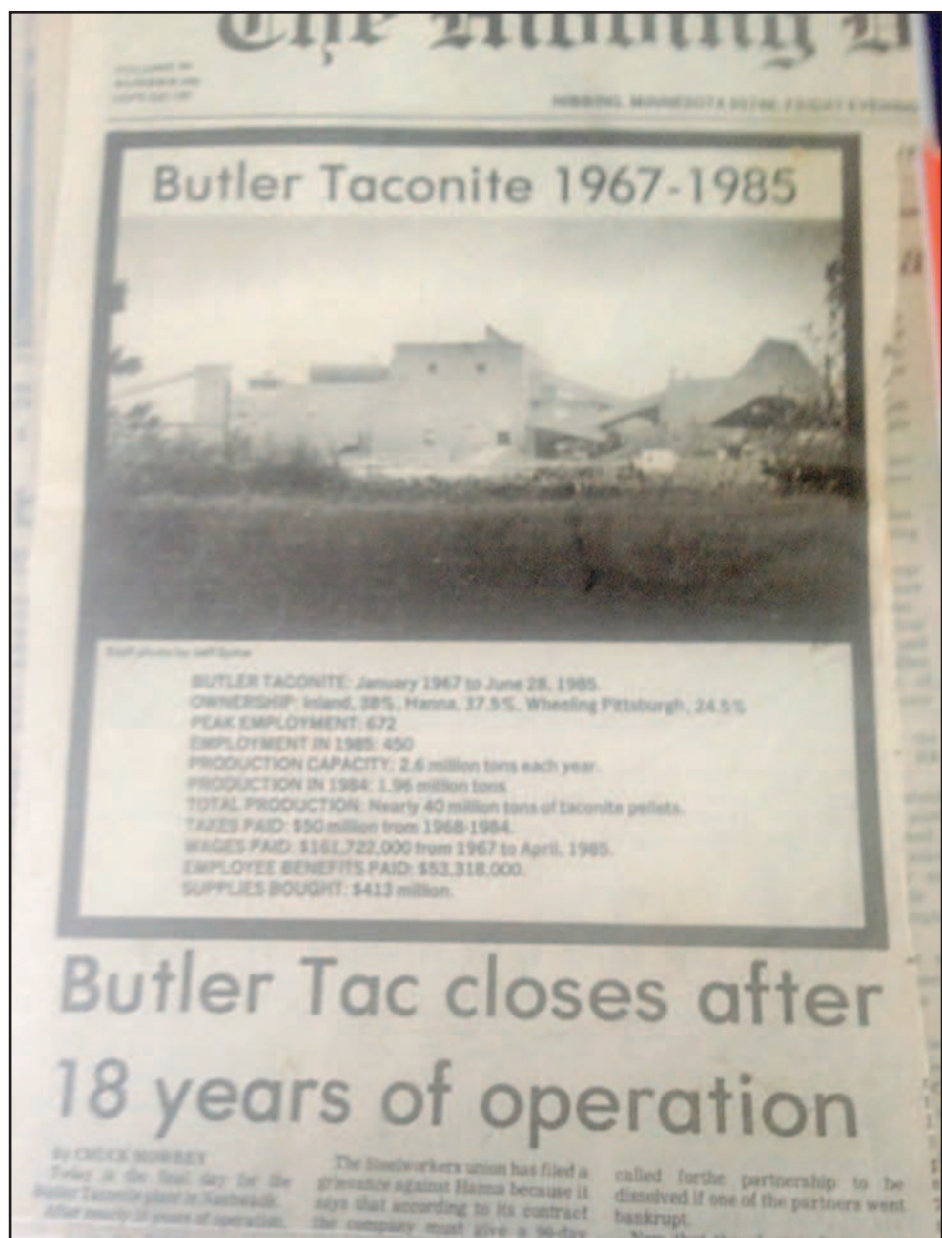
So why follow his dad to the mines, especially knowing about those ups and downs?

It's where the high-paying jobs were, Jody replied.

"I had a chance to work with Dad, with JJ; and last summer, Tessa was summer help," Jody continued. "It's a beautiful cycle, to work with family."

"It was a great day when the kids worked together," Ann said.

After JJ graduated from



Nashwauk-Keewatin High School in 2007, he enrolled in the University of Wisconsin-Superior. After a year away from the Iron Range, he returned.

"I didn't like living away from home," JJ said.

The big question for both his children was "where do you want to live?" Jody said, adding that if it was on the Range, those high-paying jobs were either in nursing or the mines.

"That was both our major decisions," Tessa said of the two siblings.

JJ enrolled in the millwright program at Mesabi Range College and interned at HibTac in 2008.

Tessa, who graduated from N-K in 2012, explained she grew up on equipment.

"It runs in the family," she said.

Jerry looked at his granddaughter with another big smile.

"She showed up the

boys in welding," he said. "She had the experience working with tools."

After working as a summer intern at HibTac, she was hired by a mine vendor company. Eventually, some day, Tessa said she would like to work in the mines.

"I grew up with everything I ever wanted," Tessa said. "And that was because of the mines."

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VENDORS



TONY POTTER/HIBBING DAILY TRIBUNE

Motter Equipment is currently leasing the former Magnum Power Sports building located at 430 E. Platt Ave., Nashwauk.

BUSINESS BOOM AT MOTTER EQUIPMENT

BRINGING NEW LIFE TO OLD EQUIPMENT IN NASHWAUK

TONY POTTER
HIBBING DAILY TRIBUNE

NASHWAUK — What started as a small machine shop in a residential neighborhood in Pengilly in 2009 is now preparing for its second upgrade in just a few short years.

Motter Equipment has been leasing the old Magnum Power Sports building just off of Highway 169 in Nashwauk for three years now, but recently purchased a larger property just down the road of its current location.

“Our plans are to build an even bigger and much nicer shop,” said Dan Motter, who founded the company. “... We need it desperately.”

The planned move of the global supplier of heavy equipment and components may only be a couple blocks in distance, however, there’s no business congestion near the newly-purchased property.

“We’re sandwiched right in between the bank and the clinic,” Motter said. “There’s no room for trucks to back in and out.”

Once Motter Equipment moves to its new location, traffic will be able to enter on one side of the property and exit on the other.

“It’ll alleviate a lot of congestion,” Motter said. “And it’ll allow us to pick up production.”

Motter Equipment was planning to start constructing its new building this summer, but the downturn in the mining industry has delayed those plans

for about a year or so. However, the building located on the company’s new property is scheduled to be torn down in the coming months.

“We’re excited for the future,” Motter said. “There’s not even enough headroom in our current shop for a crane, so we can’t do final assemblies in there.”

The small company, which employs just 13 persons, put a lot of time and effort into turning the former power sports dealership into a machine shop. The show room was converted into offices, the back of the building was made into the machine shop, a carpentry shop was added and meeting rooms were set up upstairs.

But Motter said there’s still not enough room at his current location for his expanding company.

“We’re preparing to service work that we don’t even know is there yet,” he said, noting Essar and Magnation have sites located near his facility. “To have a machine shop on this side of the Range is beneficial to the mining companies in the area.”

Motter said his company’s niche is buying and rebuilding used mining equipment, then selling it on the global market. The company also buys used equipment, disassembles it and pieces it out, as well does repair work, consulting and appraising.

“We’re a nice complement to the Iron Range,” he said. “We’re a well liked vendor.”

That’s because Motter Equipment

seeks out the assistance of a variety of local companies across the region to assist with its projects.

“We utilize a lot of vendors on the Iron Range,” he said. “We do our best to keep business local and to bring money into the area.”

And between Motter Equipment

and the vendors it uses, every piece of each project gets touched up or replaced before the equipment is sold.

“We bring all of the material back to 100 percent original,” Motter said. “It’s like rebuilding a hot rod. You strip it down and redo each piece.”

SEE BOOM, PAGE 21

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Dan Motter, left, poses with members of his staff inside the machine shop at Motter Equipment.



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BOOM

FROM PAGE 20

The company's success goes back to Motter's 40 years of experience in the heavy equipment field. He graduated from the diesel mechanic program at Hibbing Vocational Technical College in 1973, was hired as a diesel mechanic in Hibbing straight out of college and quickly worked his way up to service manager.

Less than 10 years later, Motter was a co-founder of Dom-Ex. He worked there for 20 years before selling his shares and moving to Chile, where he started yet another company, Global Equipment.

Motter ran that company for seven years before he decided it was time to move back to the Iron Range to be with his family.

"My kids started having kids," he

said. "I wanted to be a part of that. I wanted to be with my grandkids."

Following his return to Pengilly, Motter said he saw yet another opportunity to start a successful business. That's where Motter Equipment came into play.

"If I see an opportunity, I take it," he said. "If I find a unique item at the right price, I step up and take it because I know someone will buy it once we're done with it."

But what Motter is most proud of is that his company has become a great place to work and do business with.

"I employ good people and provide them with good wages and benefits," he said. "We're a small company that likes to do good things. We get a kick out of taking old mining trucks that are ready to go out to the pasture and make them shiny, new and usable for a very long time."

GUEST COLUMN



KEITH NELSON

St. Louis County Commissioner

Cooperation imperative to mutual success

Earlier this month in an article printed in the Hibbing Daily Tribune, historian Jack Lynch detailed the battle waged by then Hibbing Mayor Vic Power.

The year was 1915 and the battle was being waged "to defeat a measure that was being fostered by the mining concerns in the vicinity and which boded no good for the citizens in general."

Mayor Power was successful in his efforts and on his return trip from the State Capitol was welcomed back to Hibbing by an impromptu rally and parade.

That was 100 years ago. Today, elected leaders and the mining industry have much improved relationships. There is a shared understanding that cooperation is not just important, it is imperative to our mutual success.

Successful mining operations translate into jobs, jobs for the people of the district I represent and throughout the county and region — direct jobs within the mining industry, supporting industry jobs and spin-off jobs in businesses that earn their revenue from individuals who work within mining and mining-related industries.

Mining success translates into revenue for county-related services. Each year the St. Louis County budget includes \$10 million in revenue from taconite production taxes. That's money paid by regional mining companies in lieu of property taxes and based on a three-year average of tonnage produced.

In 2015, St. Louis County anticipates taconite taxes just more than \$10 million with next year's forecast slightly less at nearly \$9.85 million.

Taconite taxes directly offset St. Louis County's levy, accounting for nearly 10 percent annually. In other words, without taconite production taxes, homeowners, small business and seasonal residents would see a 10 percent increase in their property tax bills.

Additionally, since 2012, St. Louis County has been receiving approximately \$1 million annually in mineral royalties and leases.

When mining is done on tax forfeited parcels, land that the county manages, we get a percentage of royalties. Mining royalty monies have been invested in one-time capital expenditures as well as in strengthening our county surveyor's office. This will help with the accountability of future royalty payments, which we anticipate to show annual increases that will continue for the foreseeable future. This again, provides a huge benefit to St. Louis County taxpayers.

In the past 100 years, the global landscape has drastically changed. There was a time when Minnesota's Iron Range provided much of the world's iron ore. Ore that helped win two world wars, and enabled the Industrial Revolution that transformed the United States of America into the most powerful nation in the history of the world.

But if we are to stay there our national security is absolutely dependent upon the continuance of a viable domestic steel industry.

World market oversupply, illegal steel dumping, and iron ore selling on the world spot market at \$60 per ton after nosediving from nearly \$200 per ton has stressed the steel industry and the communities that rely on iron ore mining and steel manufacturing throughout the United States.

Whereas a century ago we often worked in a confrontational manner with the mining industry, today we work together.

Alongside our state and federal elected officials, as your county commissioner, we have all rolled up our sleeves and are working with the mining industry to ensure the success of the Iron Range and the special people who live and work here.

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BRIAN AROLA/HIBBING DAILY TRIBUNE

Keetac is seen from a hill off Highway 169 on June 10. Smoke can usually be seen billowing from the plant when its operating, but is noticeably absent since the plant idled in May.

IN WAKE OF KEETAC IDLING

COMMUNITY

RALLIES TOGETHER

BRIAN AROLA

HIBBING DAILY TRIBUNE

KEEWATIN — A cloud of smoke from Keewatin Taconite can usually be seen from Highway 169 as you approach Keewatin.

It signals production at the U.S. Steel-owned mining operation.

Since the plant announced a “temporary idle” in May, the billowing clouds — along with the jobs of more than 400 employees — are missing.

How long “temporary” will last isn’t known, leaving residents in a city that very much relies on taconite production tax monies wondering how they’ll make it through this latest mining set back.

Those worries on the surface seem to give way to a deeper confidence in the city’s prospects, however.

It’s a confidence gained by experience in or around the industry, as many — if not all — of the citizenship has been through this process before.

For the experienced, the hope is that this downturn isn’t any different than the others.

Signs indicate it might not be the same though, given the global nature of this steel crisis.

It’s a concern gained from talks with U.S. Steel officials and legislators, said Mayor Bill King.

“To me if felt different simply because what the companies and the state is saying on the global market,” he said. “To me that’s a lot more scary than the past ones.”

There’s even some concern that the idled mine might not ever be able to compete with global steel coming in from overseas, he said.

In that worst-case scenario, temporary could quickly turn into permanent.

□

Citizen speculation

Since the layoffs just took effect — many will still be doing maintenance work at Keetac for weeks — the effect on business downtown and in city hall aren’t noticeable yet.

Residents said life has gone on like normal



Richard Nyhus, Kenny Vogtlin, Dave Milkovich and Denny Eskeli prepare a burger at the American Legion’s Wednesday burger night in Keewatin on June 10. The event serves as a community get-together during the summer for a city still reacting to the idle at Keetac.

since the idles were announced in March, with most expecting the city to make it through just fine.

But negative effects should be expected, said Carolyn Schmoll, a longtime resident.

“It’s not just the miners,” she said. “I don’t think people look at it that way, but it effects all the other people and the whole Iron Range.”

Schmoll has relatives who worked in the mines back when strikes were as common as layoffs. When work wasn’t available back then, she said, her relatives found work in other mines or even in North Dakota at grain silos.

The longer “temporary” lasts, the more business in town will hurt, said Denny Eskeli, a regular volunteer at the American Legion Post 452’s Wednesday burger night.

“If it lasts a while, the businesses like the Legion bar are going to suffer because of less patronage,” he said.

The weekly burger night in the summer serves as somewhat of a de facto community gathering for residents in Keewatin.

Either in spite or because of the layoffs, the

first Wednesday in June drew the most people that have ever attended. A total of 219 burgers were sold that night, in a town with a population hovering near 1,000.

Among the many who volunteer or partake in the weekly get-together are miners who’ve been through many a hard time in the industry.

“Best part-time job I ever had,” joked volunteer Jim Wydra, in reference to the many layoffs, idles or otherwise he’d seen during his time in the mines.

Dave Bath, who lives near Keewatin, escaped this latest downturn by retiring from Keetac last year.

He cited 2003, 2008, 1982 and two other years that escaped him, as examples of downturns he and many others lived through.

Business got slow in town from what Bath remembered of those years, and this time will likely be no different.

Comparing previous shut downs to this one, he said they only seem to gain in impact.

“They always seem to get bigger,” he said. “I think this time because it’s worldwide.”

□

Effects on city hall

The effect the idle of Keetac might have on city hall’s business hasn’t revealed itself yet either.

Like the private businesses in town, it’s highly dependent on how long Keetac is idled for.

“It all depends on the length of time,” Mayor King said. “The last time they were shut down in 2009 was a little over a year, and that financially effected us for three years afterwards.”

When Keetac isn’t producing, the city isn’t reaping taconite production tax dollars. Keewatin’s proximity to Keetac provided helpful funds for city projects.

A city with a larger tax base might raise its levy to make up for the lost dollars. But for a small city like Keewatin, fixing a levy isn’t possible, King said.

“We don’t have the tax base to compensate for that money,” he said. “It’s just going to be money lost.”

Money lost could mean putting projects on hold, including an exploratory process on adding housing in the city.

Other projects, like a major yet necessary waste water treatment project shouldn’t be

effected. Neither should the services the city provides to citizens.

“We just go forward to provide services for our citizens like we always do,” he said. “It would have to be pretty drastic for us to look at cutting services.”

□

Banding together

Despite worries that this idle might be different than ones in the past, King said he still feels confident the city will manage for however long it lasts.

His citizenship felt much the same.

A handful of Keewatin residents worked at Keetac, but the number isn’t nearly large enough that their departures would reduce the city to a ghost town.

Some have even moved to town since the idles started, including Stacy Jarrett, whose backyard overlooks the road leading to Keetac.

To him, it seems like there’s still quite a bit of traffic passing to and from the mine. Neighbors tell him it’s not nearly as much as there usually is.

In Jarrett’s first impression of town — originally from West Virginia, he moved from Hibbing in recent weeks — he

described Keewatin as a close-knit place where people pull together in times of need.

“It seems like everybody is more like your brother or sister than a neighbor and friend,” he said.

King said the reaction around town isn’t much different than in past years, likely because people know the matter is out of their hands. “There’s absolutely nothing we can do,” he said. “How long will they be shut down? No one knows.”

The downturns are a part of life on the Range that everyone should be used to by now, Wydra said as he helped out at the Legion.

“It’s been going on for 125 years, boom and bust, boom and bust,” he said.

Schmoll said it’ll be tough on families for sure, but people in Keewatin and elsewhere in the area are a resilient bunch.

Her friend and fellow resident Pauline Johnson added that folks in Keewatin are tough, and know how to budget in difficult times.

“You’d be surprised what you can do with a pound of hamburger,” she said.

VENDORS



MARK SAUER/MESABI DAILY NEWS

A concrete driveway is being poured outside the newest work shop built at Ziegler. The facility is large enough to fit the biggest pieces of mine equipment.

ZIEGLER CAT IN BUHL Family-owned business committed to customer service and its employees

BILL HANNA
MESABI DAILY NEWS

BUHL — William M. Hoeft fondly recalls traveling to the Iron Range in the early-2000s from Minneapolis to plant trees at the family's Ziegler CAT business.

"I loved it. I was in high school and working there (at the Ziegler facility in Buhl) in the summer. Did maintenance and worked out of the store.

"The trees, the lakes the beauty of the country. Loved it ... still do. Get up there to the plant as much as I can," Hoeft said.

Ziegler CAT is truly a three generation-strong family business passion for the Hoefts.

"My grandpa worked for CAT and bought out Ziegler. Then my dad was part of the ownership. And now it's my brother and I.

"We are extremely fortunate. We want to be the best stewards and help grow our facilities during good times and bad times," Hoeft said.

Here's how the Hoeft family business structure flows:

- Leonard C. Hoeft became president and gained full ownership of company in 1970.
- William L. Hoeft, Leonard's son,

became president in 1988.

• William M. Hoeft and Andreas D. Hoeft are William L. Hoeft's sons. William M. is executive vice president of product support and mining and Andreas Hoeft is executive vice president of sales.

It's an impressive business lineage for a company based in Minneapolis, but with a big footprint in Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin and Missouri.

It's a diversified company that services not only the mining industry, but also construction and forestry.

The 101-year-old company has a total of about 1,800 employees — 117 of them at the Buhl facility. It has been servicing mining since 1921, first out of Duluth and then Hibbing, when a plant was opened there. Ziegler CAT in Buhl was opened in 1979.



WILLIAM M. HOEFT

"We are a one-stop from construction to mining. We have full-service facilities for parts, rental, repair work and hydraulic rebuild capabilities," William M. Hoeft said.

Hoeft said mining is a key component of Ziegler CAT's diversified portfolio.

"Mining is extremely important. Yes, we will feel the impact. We will do our best to ride it out and to help oth-

ers do the same," he said.

Hoeft said the company's diversification helps when one business takes a hit.

"We have a lot of contractors for road construction. And forestry is

growing once again. There's money to be made in forestry again. And with 26 locations we are also able to shift some work among our plants. We've done our best to preserve jobs," Hoeft

SEE ZIEGLER, PAGE 24

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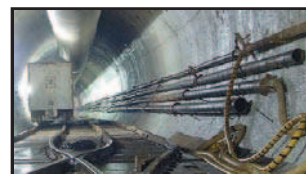
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Ron Cappo cleans an engine block.

ZIEGLER

FROM PAGE 23

said. And the company has managed to do just that at its Buhl plant; so far — no layoffs. “We stay busy there. It doesn’t feel slow,” he said. Hoeft said the family-owned company has seen this story play out before on the Iron Range. “It’s very unfortunate timing and very hard on people. But we’ve been

here before. We’ll ride out this tough wave and be well-positioned on the other side,” he said. And the company has not changed — and never will — its strong commitment to customer service, which means maintaining a top-notch workforce. “We attract quality people and pride ourself on having the best and most committed workers,” he said. And that includes the Hoeft family. “It’s exciting. And it’s a real privilege to be in this job,” he said.



MARK SAUER/MESABI DAILY NEWS
Jim Micklewright removes bolts from a piece of equipment at Ziegler.



An engine is removed from a truck to facilitate repair.



Equipment is moved into a washing chamber at Ziegler in Buhl.



Heavy equipment tracks are rolled up outside one of the main work bays at the plant.



Ziegler has a fleet of service trucks and does much of its repair work in the field.

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IRON RANGE ENGINEERING PIONEERING GRADUATES

ANGIE RIEBE
MESABI DAILY NEWS

VIRGINIA — Christine (Nelson) Kennedy still keeps in touch with many of the students she graduated with in Iron Range Engineering's "first generation" class.

Those pioneering graduates of December 2011 each successfully found jobs, and as far as she knows, "they are all still employed, which is kind of incredible with all the layoffs" that have taken place at area mines this year.

It was an honor to be in that class, said Kennedy, 26, a mechanical maintenance engineer at a local mine. She has since volunteered in area schools with engineering classes, and often "new engineering students know who we are," she said of Mesabi Range College's first class of IRE grads.

"I think it's neat," she said. "We are keeping the legacy for all the generations."

Those initial 12 students were always "very close," and remain that way.

In fact, "I married another first generation" IRE graduate, Kennedy said by phone on a recent day, as she and her husband, Richie Kennedy, who works at an Iron Range engineering firm, celebrated their honeymoon in Hawaii.

IRE — a partnership between MRC and Minnesota State University, Mankato — "prepared me to know how to find a solution to a problem I don't know the solution to," said Kennedy, who was one of three females in the initial class. The program taught her, she said, "how to find that information and how to look for it."

Her current job consists of structural analysis and troubleshooting efforts — much like those "out-of-the-box ideas" she worked on during her time in at IRE.

Students do not take classes in the traditional sense during third- and fourth-year (junior and senior level)



Christine Kennedy, a member of the first class to graduate from Mesabi Range College's four-year Iron Range Engineering program, is shown at the school in this March 2013 photo.

MARK SAUER/MESABI DAILY NEWS

engineering studies. Rather, they work as a team on "real-life projects."

Having completed two years of pre-engineering studies or prerequisite courses, students spend the last two years of the four-year bachelor of science in engineering degree program working with faculty mentors and other students on projects for clients in area industries.

Projects are accomplished during the 16-week semesters, and at the end, teams deliver a final presentation and supply technical documents to the industrial representatives.

The professors are all very approachable and helpful, said Kennedy, whose mining-geared projects included statistical analysis and troubleshooting on high-pressure air systems and a filter bag wash process.

Projects involved building prototypes and changing designs based on results, she said.

"It's not closed-ended. There are not answers in the back of the book," which forces students to use resources and ingenuity to find solutions.

There are oral exams at the end of each course, and presentations to clients are done before managerial teams.

IRE "takes the stereotype out of engineering. ... it helps take a big chunk out of the industry and break it down into an approachable process," said Kennedy.

She realizes now, after being in the workforce for several years, just how much the program educated her about everything from troubleshooting to working with others.

Because of what she learned, she knows who "my audience is" when working on projects, and how those who need her work accomplished "can get the most value out of it," Kennedy said.

"It's very rewarding" she said of her job. "It's nice to work with people. That's one thing that helped" being an IRE student, she said. The program taught students to "develop a lot of interpersonal relationship skills. I enjoy working with people anyway, so that's nice."

But "people skills" are also valuable in the workplace. "As an engineer, you need to get others' input and to be able to work with different personality types," said Kennedy.

During her last semester at IRE,

SEE PIONEER, PAGE 26

PREPARING YOUNG PEOPLE FOR THE WORKFORCE

IRE SEEING HIGH SUCCESS RATE

TONY POTTER
HIBBING DAILY TRIBUNE

VIRGINIA — What started as a mere idea about 10 years ago has blossomed into a dream come true for local legislators, business owners and educators.

Iron Range Engineering (IRE) offers students an opportunity to earn a four-year engineering degree on the Iron Range.

The program has been described as "a bright shining star in the region," according to Ron Ulseth, director of curriculum.

"I feel the same way," he added. "It adds a lot to this area. The graduates make good salaries at the mines and engineering firms. They're able to stay here, build homes here and start families here."

IRE has students go through 40 hour-per-week experiences in an engineering-type office

or lab setting, according to ire.mnscu.edu. About 20 of those hours are dedicated to design execution while the other 20 hours are for technical learning.

Since its inception in January 2010, IRE has a 90 percent success rate. The program has had 80 graduates who have all been hired to work in the engineering field, Ulseth said, noting 60 of them are working on the Iron Range.

Prior to last fall, IRE was only offered to college juniors and seniors. Enrollment for the program is now open to first-year and second-year college students. A total of 110 students will be in IRE this fall, Ulseth said.

Tuition for the four-year program is about \$30,000. Ulseth said that's "quite affordable," especially since the program offers several scholarships.

"It's a good deal for

getting a top-of-the-line education," he said.

"We're not just changing how engineering is being taught in the area, but we're helping reshape how it's being taught throughout the nation."

IRE has caught the attention of several major universities, such as Stanford, Penn State and Texas A&M. Ulseth noted he's even teaching webinars for United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

"We never anticipated on gaining national and international attention," he said. "The fact that we are is very positive."

And the satisfaction surveys from graduates and their supervisors show "they're all highly satisfied" as well, Ulseth added.

The major difference between IRE and traditional engineering programs is it gets students out of lecture

halls and into on-the-job situations.

"We're giving our students the skills needed to succeed," Ulseth said. "They're not just sitting in a row and being lectured at."

The reason for running the program that way is twofold — to provide a highly-skilled engineering workforce at the local level and to make sure future engineers are properly prepared for the workforce.

"Before IRE, companies had a problem with hiring from outside the area," he said. "Workers would come in from out of the area, work here for a couple years and then leave. Plus, there's often a misalignment in the skills and knowledge of graduates and what they actually need to be successful in the workforce. We wanted to close that gap."

Brandy Maki graduated from IRE in May, and

SEE IRE, PAGE 26

Iron Range Engineering

A variety of colleges and companies make up the Iron Range Engineering (IRE) program, including:

Educational Partners

- Minnesota State University-Mankato
- Itasca Community College
- Arrowhead University
- Mesabi Range Community and Technical College
- University of Minnesota-Duluth

Industry Partners

- Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board (IRRRB)
- United Taconite
- Medtronic
- Hibbing Taconite
- PolyMet
- Mesaba Nugget
- UPM-Blandin
- Minnesota Power
- TriTec of Minnesota Inc.
- Minnesota DNR
- Barr Engineering
- Jasper Engineering
- Boise Paper
- North Shore Mining

MINE VII

IRE

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she said she couldn't be happier with her experience. It landed her "a great job" as a development engineer for Detroit Diesel Remanufacturing-DMR Electronics.

"It was really good," she said. "I learned a lot of skills, leadership, time management, task management. The program's ability to work with a variety of industries in the area is big, and the instructors' flexibility and willingness to help those who are struggling to understand something is awesome."

Maki said she'd recommend the program to anyone who's serious about becoming an engineer.

"Especially if you're from the Iron Range and want to stay here," she

said. "It's definitely helped me. I probably wouldn't have pursued this degree otherwise."

For the majority of her time in college, Maki was a single mom to two children ages 2 and 6. She also recently gave birth to her third child.

"Being pregnant and having kids makes it tough for me to pack up and leave the area to attend a four-year college or university," she said. "The location of IRE and the fact I could earn something greater than an associate's degree on the Iron Range is what sold the program for me."

Maki actually started her current job in January, well before her graduation date. She said she's happy she took the chance and enrolled in the IRE program after earning her associate's degree in engineering from Itasca Community College.

"It's one of the best decisions I've

ever made," she said. "It's definitely paid off for me and my family. This job has been everything to us. It's allowing me to be able to provide them with a good home, health insurance and everything else they need."

Maki said she hopes her success rubs off on her children.

"I came from a poor family where most of us didn't even graduate high school, let alone go to college," she said. "I hope they see me and what I've accomplished and go onto college so that they are successful in their futures."

Ulseth said it's a great feeling to see the positive impact the IRE program is having on many lives, but said none of it would've been possible without the support it's received from legislators, business owners and educators.

"We've got the perfect storm of leadership," he said. "To be successful

you need government, industry and education. We've certainly got strong leaders from all of those aspects. Everyone stands behind it."

IRE's success has also been measured in awards. It's received several of them, including: the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities' (MNSCU) Excellence in Curriculum Programming Award in 2010, Board of Trustees Celebration of Innovation Award in 2011, Progress Minnesota's Entrepreneurial Award and the Minnesota Cup.

"That's bolstered our evidence for success," Ulseth said. "I hope IRE sticks around well beyond my time. Considering the direction it's going, there's no doubt in my mind that it will."

PIONEER

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Kennedy interned at an Iron Range mine, and she was offered a position partway throughout that internship. She has been there since.

She also has gone back to talk with IRE students as a guest speaker and share what it's like in the "real world."

Kennedy has come a long way, considering she knew very little about mining growing up in Laporte, Minn.

As a child, she did enjoy "tinkering" with things to see how they worked, often conducting her own "science experiments" with things she found around the house.

She enjoyed science, but was not sure exactly what she wanted to one day do.

When her family moved to the Iron Range in the fall of 2009, IRE was just launching on the Virginia campus. Kennedy enrolled in the brand-new, innovative program, and from there, her future became much more clear.

Kennedy said she would encourage students looking to go into engineering to check out IRE.



SUBMITTED

Newlyweds Christine (Nelson) Kennedy and Richie Kennedy are both members of Iron Range Engineering's first graduating class. They both work in engineering positions on the Iron Range.

"As far as I know, it's the best way to prepare you for an entry-level engineering position," she said.

Not only do instructors "guide and help" students on how to approach "real-world situations," but students also learn how to do that for themselves by working with clients, she said. "You get to do that every step of the way."

YOUNG ENGINEER LIVING HIS DREAM

BRITTA ARENDT
HERALD-REVIEW

From a young age, Ron Ulseth, Jr., of Grand Rapids, knew he was probably destined to be an engineer. Now, as an engineer at Minnesota Power's Clay Boswell Plant in Cohasset, he's living his dream.

"I'm a problem solver," he explained. "I've always liked to solve problems, like when the lawn mower breaks - and that's what I do here, if stuff breaks we have to find ways to fix it."

Ulseth was hired by Minnesota Power just a few months after he graduated from Iron Range Engineering (IRE) in 2013. He credits much of his success at getting a job in his profession so quickly to the project-based education he received through IRE. His father, Ron Ulseth, Sr., who was instrumental in establishing the engineering program at Itasca Community College (ICC) as well as developing the curriculum for IRE, also may have inspired his son's enthusiasm for engineering.

Actually, Ulseth said his father was "a huge influence" in steering him toward engineering - it's been "something I've always been interested in."

"When I was 10 or 11, my dad told me how hydropower worked," said Ulseth who remembers making his own hydropower system out of pop cans and a gutter.

A graduate of Grand Rapids High School, Ulseth attended ICC during his senior year then transferred to IRE where he earned his Bachelor of Science degree.

IRE is a four-year degree program accredited through Minnesota State University, Mankato and located in Virginia. IRE is a unique collabora-

tion between Mesabi Range College, ICC, and Minnesota State University, Mankato. Students graduate with a B.S. in Engineering, with an emphasis of their choice. Students are typically community college engineering graduates. Students do not take classes in the traditional sense. Instead, students work on a team project that reinforces engineering concepts. Students work with faculty and clients to both complete the project for the client along with address professional and technical learning throughout the semester. As Ulseth explained, IRE students form groups of 1-5 people to work on a project to satisfy real industrial needs.

From scoping and research to design work and layout, the IRE students follow the project to completion, working closely with industry professionals.

For two consecutive summers, Ulseth interned at Minnesota Power.

"What really set it was when I interned here. I knew I wanted to work here. I've always been interested in power and the internship peaked that interest."

Ulseth worked with Minnesota Power on his IRE project which focused on heating systems. It was his first experience with heating systems so he had to learn everything he could about thermodynamics. With professors as guides and mentors, he was able to confidently find the right path.

"I learned how to learn," Ulseth explained of his experience with IRE. "I learned the right steps to take to teach myself the right concept to solve the problem. In real life, they say you only use a portion of what you're taught; with engineering, you

SEE DREAM, PAGE 27

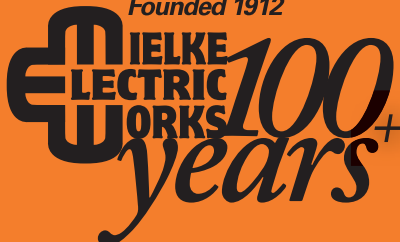
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DREAM

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use most."

Upon graduating from IRE in the spring of 2013, Ulseth discovered there was an open position with the company and he jumped at the opportunity.

The other candidates interviewing for the job may have had an hour or two to interview for the position but Ulseth smiles when he says, "I had six months to interview," with the internship.

Ulseth's work ethic must have captured attention at Minnesota Power where he was hired on full-time.

As an engineer assigned to Clay Boswell's Unit No. 4, Ulseth works hand-in-hand with a team of four responsible for keeping the equipment running smoothly.

"Problem solving - that's the fire-fighting



BRITA ARENDT/HERALD REVIEW
Ron Ulseth stands in front of Boswell Energy Center, where he is employed as an engineer.

part of the job," explained Ulseth of the team's repair work.

The other part of the job is more proactive. This includes operations

maintenance and large capital improvement projects. Ulseth is also part of a group at Clay Boswell that monitors the facility's emissions.

With environmental requirements pushing industry toward cleaner coal operations, this group meets daily to look at emission levels at the plant and works to align them appropriately for the monthly average required.

"If we go over one day, we have to find a way to get under [the required levels]," he said. "Then, we tune in the system to change the emissions."

Without any hesitation, Ulseth confidently asserts that his job is "never" boring.

Just the night before, there was a tube leak in the boiler system that caused Unit No. 4 to go offline.

"That boiler is 40 years old, so we can't fix it unless we come offline," explained Ulseth.

This summer, two interns are working with Ulseth. With the tables turned, Ulseth is now mentoring the interns who are studying at

University of Minnesota-Duluth and IRE.

"Since I got so much out of the internship, I'm helping with the program now," he said. "This is their second summer so they are over the learning curve and are very good engineering interns."

Ulseth's high school girlfriend, and now his wife, Katy, is also a graduate of IRE. She is employed with Magnetation doing similar work as her husband.

When asked if they compare notes at home, Ulseth said the two enjoy talking about engineering.

"We bounce problems off each other."

IRE's success rate is proven in career placements - 90 percent of IRE students have jobs before graduating from the program.

"If people want jobs and have skills to get them," Ulseth says IRE is the ticket.

Not only does the

IRE program teach the technical components of engineering, the school also puts a big emphasis on teaching communication skills.

"It was annoying at first but I'm really glad I learned those skills," explained Ulseth. "As I look at it, why know something if you can't tell people what you know? Communication skills are as important or more than the technical skills to do the job."

With the common goal of living and working close to family in their hometown, Ulseth and his wife are happy with what they've been able to achieve with their education from IRE.

"Minnesota Power has been very good to me as far as guiding me through my career - it's been an easy transition from student to professional," added Ulseth who hopes to stay with the company "as long as they will let me."

FROM MINE SHOVELS TO GARDEN SHOVELS KEETAC EMPLOYEE ENDURES ANOTHER LAYOFF

KELLY GRINSTEINER
HIBBING DAILY TRIBUNE

HIBBING — This is layoff No. 6, at least for Lois Jacobsen.

The 59-year-old Hibbing resident now has to use both of her hands to physically count the number of times she's been without work in her 37-year career in the mines.

And while it's similar to the "bust" times of the past, Jacobsen is taking this one in stride.

"We've never really been laid off in the summer," she said. "We've always had it in late fall or as winter sets in."

If there's an upside to currently being laid off, the timing is it.

"I'm kind of enjoying it — this time," said Jacobsen. "It hit at a good

time, and I've gotten into my gardening. I'm taking advantage of the time now. I can afford to do that now."

But the prior downturns weren't as easy, and the gap between Butler closing and National Steel opening forced her to seek other employment. Yet this feisty, strong-willed gal always made ends meet.

"I can weather this. I like to do my

own thing," she said. "I've learned how to budget. I've saved, put away for my retirement. And I have a fun fund too, because you just never know when you'll want to do something."

It was during a layoff in 1977 that Jacobsen first expressed interest in a mining career. She had known it

SEE LAYOFF, PAGE 28



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LAYOFF

FROM PAGE 27

through her father, Milan Petrich, who was a crane operator at Butler Taconite.

The former farm girl was a beautician at the time and also did catering. Butler officials had asked her to cater their Christmas party and she agreed to, thinking it'd be a foot in the door.

"I went right up to the boss and asked him if I could have a job," said Jacobsen. "He told me to come see him in the spring when layoffs were done and the mine was reopened."

Despite the fact that very few women worked in the mines and her father didn't want her there, the brazen beautician followed through and petitioned that boss when the time was right.

"I called him up, asked for a job and he said come to my office," she recalled. "I went there, filled out the application and he stamped 'hire' on it. Two days later, I went for a physical and was hired."

Jacobsen was shocked, and dad was angry.

"He wasn't happy because he said it wasn't a place for women," she said.

"... He checked on me every day. And, of course, other men weren't happy with us women being in the mine. Lots would speak to us."

Her first official day on the job was May 1, 1978. She began as a laborer, and did tasks such as janitorial duties and then was put on the steam jenny.

"That wasn't an easy job for me," she said. "Being a women, they didn't show me how to do it. They began lining up clean parts, but I was stubborn. I finally got angry enough, walked into the boss's office and said 'I think your SOB parts are clean. And if you don't, then you have another thing coming.'"

She then walked away.

"The next thing I saw was 'Stella the Steamer' written on the door," she said. "From that day on, everyone talked to me because they knew I stood my ground."

The harassment didn't deter Jacobsen. She had found her niche.

"I love my job. It was something I wanted to do," she said. "I'd played in the dirt all of my life. My father had a dirt business and I ran equipment on the farm. This (job) was just me. It was what I wanted to do."

Over the next few years, she engaged in various jobs and learned how to run the equipment. That was until June 10, 1985, when Butler Taconite employees were instructed to finish their shift and walked out the gate for the last time.

The plant, located near Nashwauk, closed permanently 18 days later — the first taconite plant to shut down permanently on the Iron Range.

The closure came after the bankruptcy of the Wheeling Pittsburgh Steel Corporation, which owned nearly 25 percent of Butler, according to an article in the Hibbing Daily Tribune. Hanna Mining Company, Inland Steel Corporation and Wheeling Pittsburgh formed a partnership called Itasca Iron Company. An agreement between the three companies stated that if something happened to one of the companies, such as a bankruptcy, it was up to the other companies to decide the course of action.

Hanna Mining Company and Inland Steel decided to sell off the Butler



KELLY GRINSTEINER/
HIBBING DAILY TRIBUNE

Lois Jacobsen of Hibbing holds a photo of herself as a young miner. She has worked in the mining industry for 37 years.

Taconite property. Hanna Mining Company owned Butler Taconite and National Steel Pellet Plant near Keewatin. The plants operated under a seniority system so that the most senior employees at Butler could bump National Steel employees.

This was Jacobsen's first layoff — but it was permanent.

"Butler was down for good," she said. "Up until that point, everything was new or refreshed. They put a lot of money into stuff. We didn't see it coming. The next thing we know — that's it."

The next several years proved tough.

"I had no job, so I went back to school," she said. "My husband at the time got into a bad car accident, so I was forced to find work because we needed the money."

She snagged a gig at Hibbing Electronics, which paid only a fraction of what she made in the mine.

"It was like \$4 an hour, but it was something," she said.

In 1990, National Steel called the miners — including Jacobsen — back to work. It went by Range-wide seniority between Butler and National Steel since both were owned by M.A. Hanna, she explained.

"We kept sending the letter back saying that 'yes, we'd return,'" she said. "So then we got called back, but I was kind of leery. I wasn't sure if it would be permanent or part-time."

Jacobsen kept her job at Hibbing Electronics too, and did her best to balance both.

"But it got tough," she said. "Eventually I thought to myself, 'even if I work one year there (National Steel), it's still more than three years there (Hibbing Electronics). So eventually I quit.'"

She returned to National Steel as a laborer, and since then has endured a few more layoffs — including the one that lasted about a full year.

"It would make us question 'will we have a job? What do we do now? Do we wait it out?'" she said. "Everyone was laid off. There was nowhere to go. Times are tough on everyone, and no one is hiring."

Jacobsen said she interviewed at Northshore, but that was for a train operator position. Once she learned more about it, she declined it.

"Then they'd start calling us back again," she said. "All the downturns were hard, and unemployment wasn't that great."

Lifestyles changed when on layoff. Jacobsen said she cut back on her groceries, limited her trips into town to save on gas and, as an avid gardener, she opted to do a lot of canning. Vacations and other small luxuries were also nixed.

"You're stuck. You just can't do what you did before," she said. "You have to budget for everything. Both my husband and I worked in the mines, so when one was down, we all were down."

But they always seemed to make ends meet. And when they received those call backs, they were "happy campers," she said.

After returning to work in 1994, Jacobsen took on the job of shovel trainer. But that was only after she had the union intervene on her behalf after she was passed up for the post, which had been offered first to a less-experienced male.

"I deserved a straight days job," she added.

Jacobsen said she was the youngest shovel operator for some time, and she eventually went through MSCH training as well, which allowed her to teach anywhere.

"I run all the equipment — shovels, trucks, back hoes," she said. "I'm gutsy."

She is also one of the only persons to survive an explosion. On March 4, 1998, she hit 1,000 pounds of explosives in a shovel.

"I survived, and am very, very lucky," she said, noting she missed the next two years of work.

The case went through court, and once recovered, she returned to the mine.

"I made my way back to the shovels," she said. "I still enjoyed it then, and I still enjoy it today."

In 2003, National Steel was sold to U.S. Steel and became Keewatin Taconite. That also raised concerns and created anxieties.

"We found out we were going to be sold, and I remember thinking, 'Am I going to have a job?'" she said. "We were allowed to stay through two sales, so that was good because I didn't know if I'd have a job or not."

Jacobsen, of course, went with the sale.

Fast forward to today.

Jacobsen's last day at Keetac was May 15. It was the first time she had received a 60-day warning notice, but the writing had long been on the wall.

"I saw the downturn in the price of iron, and when things like that start to happen, we know something is up," he said. "We saw the signs, and we'd ask the boss if we were going to get laid off. They'd say 'nope' and we kept working."

Then the letter came. Overtime was cut, and 60 days was up.

Again, she questioned: is this it? Is this temporary or permanent?

"I feel bad for the younger kids, the ones who've just started out," said Jacobsen. "They've lost their jobs. They will need to be rehired. Many of them just bought houses, new toys and now have no money."

Having weathered so many layoffs and being more financially stable, Jacobsen said she's now the type of person to take the layoff and give the hours to the younger employees.

"I'd rather let someone else work," she added. "They need the money, insurance and have families."

With more than three decades into mining, she's very familiar with the yo-yo of the industry. Yet she's always come back.

"You just kind of know you're going back," she said. "Unless they permanently shut down like they did Butler."

Jacobsen said Keetac has a long life span, calling it a "gold mine." There have been rumors of a possible return date, but nothing set in stone. She also noted that it's contract time.

"There's still hope. I know we are not done, and the union knows it too," she said. "It's not a matter of 'if,' but a matter of 'when.'"

Jacobsen has a few more years before she can retire. As long as she is able to, she plans to keep working at Keetac.

"It doesn't seem like I've put that many years in. It really doesn't," she said. "But I've enjoyed the job. You have to enjoy it. Some of it was hard, especially the physical work, and being a woman you had to prove yourself. But I've made my way. I'm still doing it, and I enjoy it."

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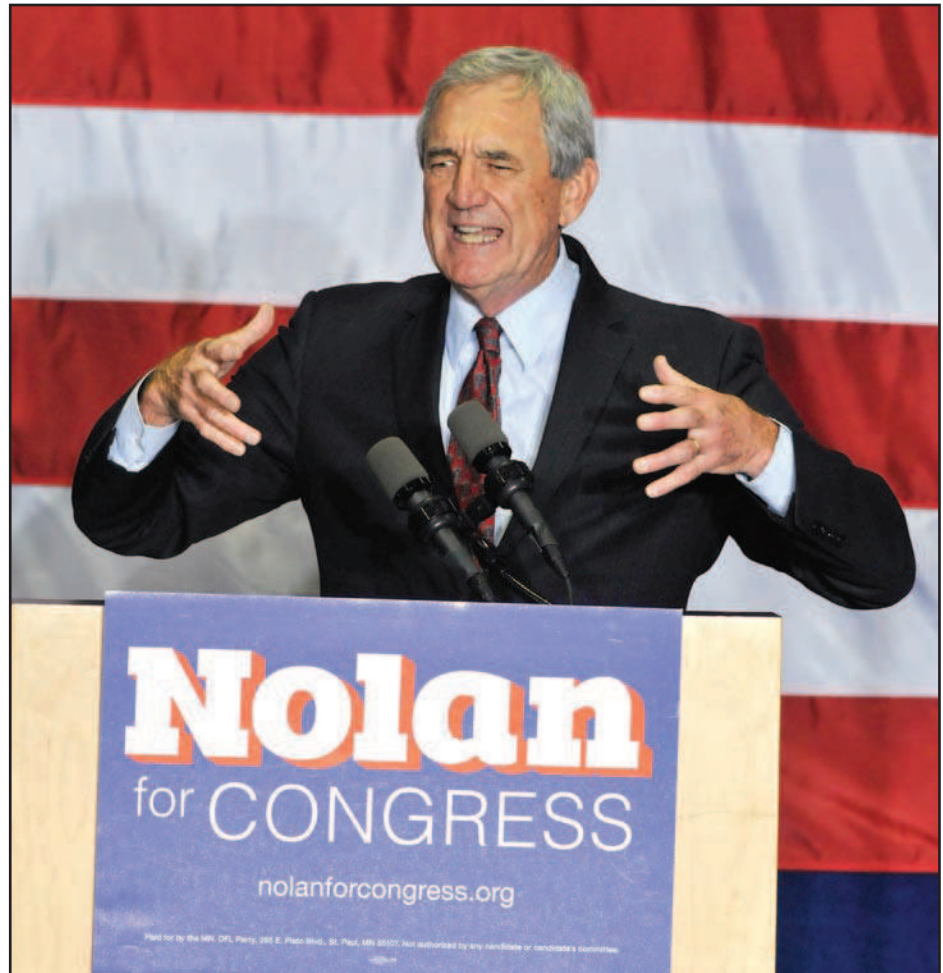
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TPP would cause more layoffs in our mines and manufacturing and send millions of good paying jobs overseas.

Multi-national corporations and foreign governments have negotiated this agreement in secret to govern 40 percent of all global trade for the benefit of a few huge international businesses and their executives at the top of the economic ladder. It's imperative that Congress put a stop to the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the race to the bottom it promises for us all.

We cannot allow the TPP to move forward because the simple truth is, these trade agreements are not only destroying good paying American jobs and the middle class — they are causing millions more workers to lose wages and benefits. It now takes two or three jobs to earn the same kind of income that one job provided before these trade agreements.

Think about it. Over the last century we've built the strongest middle class in the history of the world with Union labor, living wages, benefits, and protections for health, safety and the environment. However, with the emergence of these trade agreements, American workers and companies are now being asked to compete with countries that offer little or none of these good things. And to compete, Americans would have to give up on all this progress and give up on the

American dream.

Moreover, once we approve a trade agreement, we're stuck with the broken enforcement process that goes along with it.

Following the layoffs at Minntac, Senators Klobuchar and Franken joined me at the White House, where top Administration officials admitted that the process of enforcing our trade policies and agreements against illegal dumping of foreign steel into our marketplace is ineffective. And as we've seen this year on the Range, what enforcement mechanisms we do have are full of loopholes that allow horrific economic damage.

American workers and American companies produce the best products in the world. That's why I've introduced the American Pipeline Jobs and Safety Act to require that all U.S. pipeline projects be built with Ameri-

ca steel that is manufactured with iron ore mined, processed or reprocessed in America.

And that's why I'm continuing to fight hard for "Buy American Steel" provisions for every federal project — most especially in transportation legislation to build and rebuild our highways, bridges, railroads, airports, harbors, pipelines and ports. America produces a superior grade of steel — and buying it is good for jobs, good for our economy, good for our environment and good for our health and safety.

The Trans-Pacific Partnership advances none of these things for America, and we need to send it to the scrap heap of history.

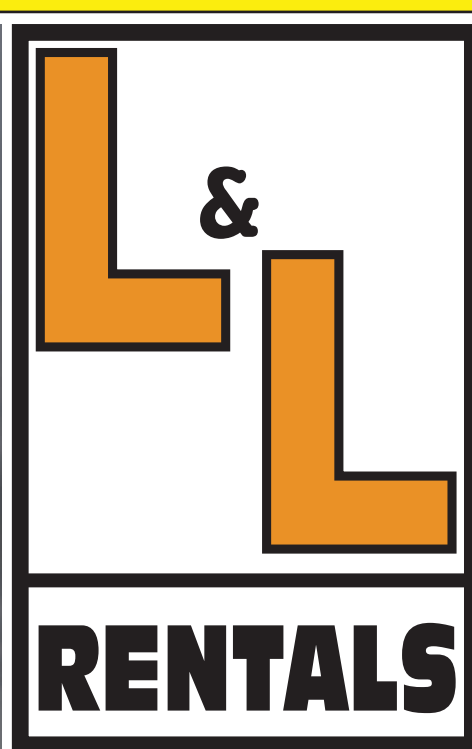
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ALLETE Chairman; President & CEO Al Hodnik in his office in Duluth.

AL HODNIK: ALLETE CEO He's been through mining downturns — 5 times

BILL HANNA
MESABI DAILY NEWS

DULUTH — Al Hodnik has been through these mining downturns before, too many times.

"I've lived through five or six of these. I was laid off in the 1980s from Minnesota Power when things got really, really bad," said Hodnik, who is now chairman, president and CEO of ALLETE Inc., the Duluth-based energy company that includes Minnesota Power.

"It eats at you. You hurt for the

people most affected."

Hodnik, originally from the Iron Range and a former mayor of Aurora, fully knows and understands the uncertainty that comes with a dip in the mining economy.

Iron Range toughness and resiliency is the bedrock of Hodnik's character.

"I was born and raised on the Range. The Range courses through the deepest marrow of my bones.

"I get irritated that so many in the state and nation seem to have forgotten the rich legacy of the Iron Range

and how much we did for the country. It saddens me," Hodnik said.

The current mining difficulties won't last, Hodnik said, just as they didn't during the other times of woe.

The CEO said the challenges to the Iron Range economy are different

with every downturn.

"This one looks uneven and could be a little longer. But you don't know ... things are harder to predict in the global economy that so impacts us now," Hodnik said.

SEE HODNIK, PAGE 32



Al Hodnik is shown with his father and mother.

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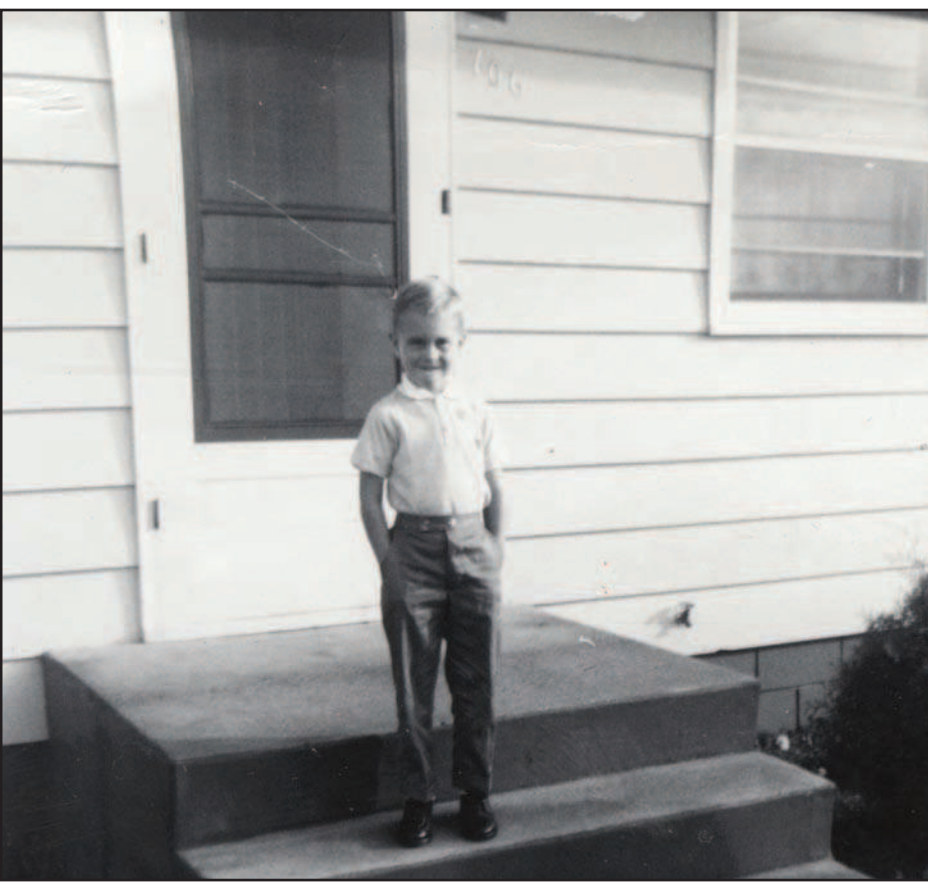
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IDEA DRILLING



Al Hodnik is shown in this 1965 photo when he was 6 years old.



SUBMITTED

Al Hodnik as mayor talks with a Zamboni driver in the 1980s. He was a Minnesota Power employee at the time.



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HODNIK

FROM PAGE 31

"We've been through this before. We will come out of it just as strong. But the downturns now can come on quicker and be steeper and harsher.

"This needs to serve as a message that we need to diversify the economy more ... we need to give people hope," he added.

Hodnik has helped lead a diversification of the company he runs. EnergyForward is ALLETE'S road map to a cleaner energy future while keeping electricity affordable.

The company has already exceeded state mandates on renewables through a diversified energy portfolio that includes wind, solar hydro and retooling coal plants to meet new standards.

"We're bringing more renewable energy on-line, while also realizing the importance of coal to energy production," Hodnik said.

The goal of EnergyForward is sources of



Al Hodnik's father worked as an equipment engineer for Minnesota Power and dumped the first train of coal for what was then the Aurora Steam plant. There was no Hoyt Lakes at the time.

one-third coal, one-third renewables, and one-third natural gas.

And that will help ALLETE through this downturn.

"MP is ALLETE'S biggest engine and MP, like the rest of the suppliers, is impacted and we are having had to make internal adjustments," Hodnik said.

The CEO is concerned about the lack of diversification of the Iron Range economy.

"Diversification is at an inflection point. We've made progress, but not enough. We should always have a strong natural resources-

based economy. But we need a more diverse economy on the Range," Hodnik said.

"The changes and downturns in mining are coming at us much more quickly and the global competition is a big challenge. The rate of change — asymmetrical nature or way forces assemble — is new to our experience. We must meet it."

Hodnik believes the PolyMet copper/nickel/precious metals project in the footprint of the former LTV Mine will be a big help to the Range economy, as will other

SEE HODNIK, PAGE 33

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Al Hodnik is shown in a parade in Aurora. At the time he was mayor.

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The groundbreaking for the retrofit at Boswell 4 in October 2013. Pictured are ALLETE Board Director Jim Hoolihan; Mayor Greg Hagy; Mike Peters; Al Hodnik; John Linc Stine-MPCA; Jeff Paulseth; and Josh Skelton.

SUBMITTED

HODNIK

FROM PAGE 32

nonferrous projects that could follow. Hodnik is on the PolyMet Board.

But the ALLETE CEO feels strongly that Range leaders need to become more dynamic in promoting economic development.

With that in mind, Hodnik is promoting an economic summit on the Iron Range that would need leadership of the Iron Range Resources & Rehabilitation Board and representatives of industry, economic development, government and politics.

"Ours is not a problem of needing more lobbyists, but rather needing a strong organizer and aligner of resources," Hodnik said.

"We need to get agreement on the current state of affairs and alignment. We have foes who are organized to alter our natural resources way of life," he said of certain environmental groups and their liberal supporters, especially in the Twin Cities.

"They are focused and well resourced. Our own lack of cohesiveness, focus and organization in the wake of those challenges is our biggest problem.

Hodnik stressed that community, business and political leaders need to take a good look in the mirror and then develop a common cause.

"We have too many groups and misaligned groups. We must get our act together," Hodnik said.



A relaxed Hodnik is shown with his wife, Erika; and daughters, Alyssa and Carolyn.

Hodnik said he was "blessed" to grow up on the Iron Range and benefit from good schools.

He grew up knowing the environment of Minnesota Power. His dad worked at what was then known as the Aurora Steam Electric Station, before there even was the City of Hoyt Lakes. It would morph into the Laskin Energy Center in Hoyt Lakes.

"I remember bringing dinner pails to my dad who was an equipment operator and locomotive engineer at the Aurora plant. He dumped the first train of coal at Aurora Steam.

"My dad was a tough Iron Ranger. Dad was a good and gentle man and soft-spoken. My mother was more of the organizer. I think I got a good scoop of both of them," the CEO said.

Hodnik's career with Minnesota Power included working at the Laskin Energy Center in

Hoyt Lakes, the Boswell plant in Cohasset and the Duluth headquarters.

"Having been laid off during one of these cycles, I feel terrible for those who have lost their jobs. I suppose it can be said, this CEO knows both the personal and company ends of the problem very personally," Hodnik said.

And now Hodnik is leading a company that he has been with for decades and respects immensely.

"I learned early on that Minnesota Power has the values, principles and strong leadership that I learned from and wanted to live with in the workplace.

"I was humbled being asked by the ALLETE Board to serve in this role back in 2009 and remain humbled today to lead such a storied and impactful 110-year-old company. I feel a real sense of obligation," Hodnik said.



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Mesabi Range Community College graduate Rachel Indihar smiles as she received her diploma.

MARK SAUER/MESABI DAILY NEWS

OUT OF THE MINES AND INTO THE CLASSROOM NHED PREPS FOR POSSIBLE WAVE OF STUDENTS

BRIAN AROLA
HIBBING DAILY TRIBUNE

A perception is that once mining jobs go in the tank, enrollment shoots up at Iron Range community colleges.

Turns out, the perception is true to some extent, as evidenced by higher-education staff gearing up for a potential rush of workers looking to be trained or retrained. With many layoffs taking effect in

the last month, it's still unclear just how many workers might go the education route during their time off. But looking at past trends, an influx might be in store. And it's up to the Northeast Higher Education District

(NHED) — which includes five institutions in Hibbing, Virginia, Grand Rapids, Ely and International Falls — and its partners to prepare offerings to help the laid off workers put them-

SEE NHED, PAGE 35

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Institution	Fiscal Year														
	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015*
Northeast Higher Education District	4,401	4,779	4,720	4,651	4,474	4,188	4,244	4,273	4,315	4,526	4,630	4,400	4,208	4,034	3,742
Hibbing Community College	1,393	1,408	1,414	1,465	1,381	1,176	1,145	1,207	1,315	1,370	1,346	1,247	1,129	1,115	1,042
Itasca Community College	862	961	972	977	1,001	998	1,045	999	969	1,073	1,118	1,075	1,028	1,016	974
Mesabi Range College	1,136	1,372	1,312	1,244	1,151	1,069	1,105	1,148	1,194	1,186	1,216	1,128	1,087	1,043	896
Rainy River Community College	335	362	306	302	323	320	303	304	261	296	307	302	318	267	278
Vermilion Community College	675	676	716	663	618	625	646	615	575	601	643	650	646	593	552

NHED

FROM PAGE 34

...selves in position to work again. Enrollment figures at NHED colleges show modest boosts in attendance in the years after mining downturns began. From 2001 to 2015, the boosts kicked in once the downturns started — 2002 and 2009 — and then rose or stayed steady for a couple years before tailing off after mining bounced back. Hibbing Community College (HCC), Itasca Community College (ICC) and Mesabi Range College (MRC) — the three biggest NHED institutions — show the upticks in particular. Figures for 2015 won't be available until the semester starts in August, but officials know of the relationship between economic downturns and college enrollment. "Overall, when there's higher unemployment, there's higher enrollment," said Tracey Roy, director of institutional research for NHED. NHED officials also know they have to respond to worker needs when layoffs happen. "That's a huge piece of our mission," said Dr. Sue Collins, president of NHED. "It's about what we do. Often times in a period of economic downturn, people decide that they want to start a new career or up-scale." That's where the colleges come in,

whether it's HCC, MRC, ICC, Rainy River Community College (RRCC) or Vermilion Community College (VCC). All of those but VCC offer programs associated with the mining industry. MRC has popular millwright and welding programs, for example, while HCC offers industrial systems technology. Of course the colleges also offer escape routes from the mining industry, such as law enforcement and nursing programs, among others. Collins said many who have had enough of the mining ups and downs retrain for other fields. "When there is a major layoff, often times people come back and say 'I've been in this career for so many years, but now I'd like to redirect,'" she said. NHED's colleges welcome those who want to pursue the school side of things. The Northeast Minnesota Office of Job Training (NEMOJT) works closely with NHED during downturns to help laid-off workers pursue training or class work that will lead to future employment. Michelle Ufford, executive director of NEMOJT, said state grants partly go toward a dislocated-worker program to pay for tuition at NHED during economic downturns. "About 65 percent of all of our tuition funds were spent at NHED colleges," she said. "They really do have their finger on the pulse of what our local employers need." Securing gainful employment is

the ultimate goal of the partners, and outside of credit learning, workforce training is another option for displaced miner workers. For that, NHED's Advanced Minnesota is the place to go. The non-credit courses offered by Advanced Minnesota cater well to those who are laid off. The courses are short — six weeks maybe — and train students in fields where jobs will be available. Trent Janezich, interim executive director of Advanced Minnesota, said miners who find themselves out of work can find options from both NHED and Advanced Minnesota. Many seek out more training or schooling to become more attractive candidates once mining work opens up again. "Say you have an employee from Mesabi Nugget and they're looking and say 'there aren't any mining jobs, so what can I do to get myself a good job when the mines do come back?'" he said. "Utilizing federal student aid, they're able to jump into one of these programs to diversify their skill set and be more marketable." With staggered layoffs at several mines across the Iron Range, NHED and Advanced Minnesota haven't yet seen a rush of miners coming in asking to sign up for courses. "It's going to take a little while to flesh out because a lot of them have staggered lay off time periods," Janezich said. "I think the first ones we'll see now are the Mesabi Nugget or Mining Resources. Those 200 or so

people who are going to be laid off." Group meetings held by the office of job training will help determine what courses Advanced Minnesota should set up, Ufford said. For instance, if 15 workers came to Ufford's outfit and expressed interest in commercial truck driving, the course could be set up and ready for them in a relatively short time period. By the end of the training course or class, a better candidate for jobs should emerge — whether it's in mining or another field. Collins said given the economic importance of mining, it's usually people prepping for that industry. "Clearly a big piece of our economy is the mining industry," she said. "We have a steady stream of people that want to prepare themselves for that job market." With five campuses in all corners of northeast Minnesota, NHED is well positioned to help. "That's the beauty of NHED, five colleges across a wide geography," she said. "We want to be ready to assist and make sure that we're attendant." Ufford said downturns in the mining industry can lead to angst and turmoil, but it can also be viewed as an opportunity. "I always encourage people to consider a dislocation as an opportunity," she said. "And training is a great way to do that."



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Kevin Pylka may be a PolyMet Mining employee, but he's an Iron Ranger first and foremost. He and his wife, Terri, raise two kids here. He wouldn't support a plan to open Minnesota's first copper-nickel mine if it wasn't safe enough for their backyard.




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Frontier Communications Reduces Internet Cost for Laid-Off MinnTac Employees

Frontier Communications has announced a first-of-its-kind discount program in response to U.S. Steel's decision to idle a portion of its workforce at MinnTac in Mountain Iron, Minn. The company is reducing the cost of high-speed Internet access for affected employees who are also existing Frontier subscribers.

"We sympathize with families in the Iron Range caught in this situation, and are offering a discount on Frontier Internet service to ease pressure on the family budget," said Kirk Lehman, Frontier's Minnesota General Manager. "There are sacrifices you can make to extend a household budget. But when you're looking for a job, access to the Internet is critical," Lehman continued.

Frontier is offering a \$15 monthly discount to MinnTac employees who are existing Frontier High-Speed Internet subscribers and can document they are furloughed June 1, 2015.

Frontier, the nation's largest communications provider in rural communities, is offering the discount from July 1 to December 31.

Enrollment in the MinnTac Save Credit Program begins June 1 and continues through June 30, 2015. Applications after June 30 cannot be honored.

MinnTac employees served by Frontier must apply by calling (877) 372-4526 and speaking with Frontier employee Lori Flatgard. Lehman said Flatgard will work with current Frontier customers to answer questions and activate the credit program. The MinnTac save program is not offered through any other Frontier sales channel, including the company website or the residential call center.

Lehman says Frontier also encourages eligible families to reduce household expenses even further by enrolling in Frontier's Lifeline discount program. Households 135% below federal poverty guidelines, or that qualify for enrollment in one of many government assistance programs, can receive discounts on the cost of basic telephone service. An application and details are online at <http://frontier.com/discountprograms/lifelineprogram/minnesota>.

"This effort is another example of Frontier's support for working families. We hope MinnTac employees will be recalled soon, or that Frontier's Internet access helps them find a new career less likely to be affected by competition and demand for raw materials," Lehman said.

Frontier Communications has an 85-year tradition of serving northern Minnesota with reliable voice and data services, relying on its skilled union workforce to maintain its network and serve subscribers.



"We sympathize with families in the Iron Range and are offering a discount on Frontier Internet service to ease pressure on the family budget. There are sacrifices you can make to extend a household budget but when you're looking for a job, access to the Internet is critical."

-Kirk Lehman
General Manager
Frontier Communications Minnesota



BRIDGE OF STEEL



MARK SAUER/MESABI DAILY NEWS

Construction crews are starting to clear the top of the former mine pit next to Virginia for the construction of a bridge which will span the pit.

HIGHWAY 53 RELOCATES OVER ROUCHLEAU PIT

BILL HANNA
MESABI DAILY NEWS

VIRGINIA — “It will be quite a sight.”
That’s how Patrick Huston, Minnesota Department of Transportation’s Highway 53 relocation project director, describes what Iron Range residents and visitors to the region will be seeing in the next couple of years as a Bridge of Steel over the Rouchleau Pit takes shape.

“Understatement,” might be a word to describe Huston’s assessment of what will be a truly incredible sight and project on Minnesota’s Iron Range.

It will be every kid’s Erector Set childhood dream scaled to real-life immense size becoming a reality right in front of them.

The bridge will span 1,100 feet across the mine pit, while rising to a summit that will mark the highest bridge in Minnesota.

And the bridge will also do its part to help bolster a struggling U.S. steel industry.

MnDOT has already ordered \$16 million of steel for the \$180 million to \$240 million project. And when the bridge, designed as a 100-year structure, is complete, 10 million pounds of American steel will have been used in the entire project. U.S. steel will also be used in the shorter Highway 135 bridge, officials said.

“It takes 10 to 12 months to get the steel, once ordered,” Huston said. “The final package plan bid for lighting etc. will go out in January and February (2016).”

Construction will provide a remarkable opportunity for residents and visitors to watch as workers, tethered and hanging far above the pit waters below that plunge to more than 200 feet deep in

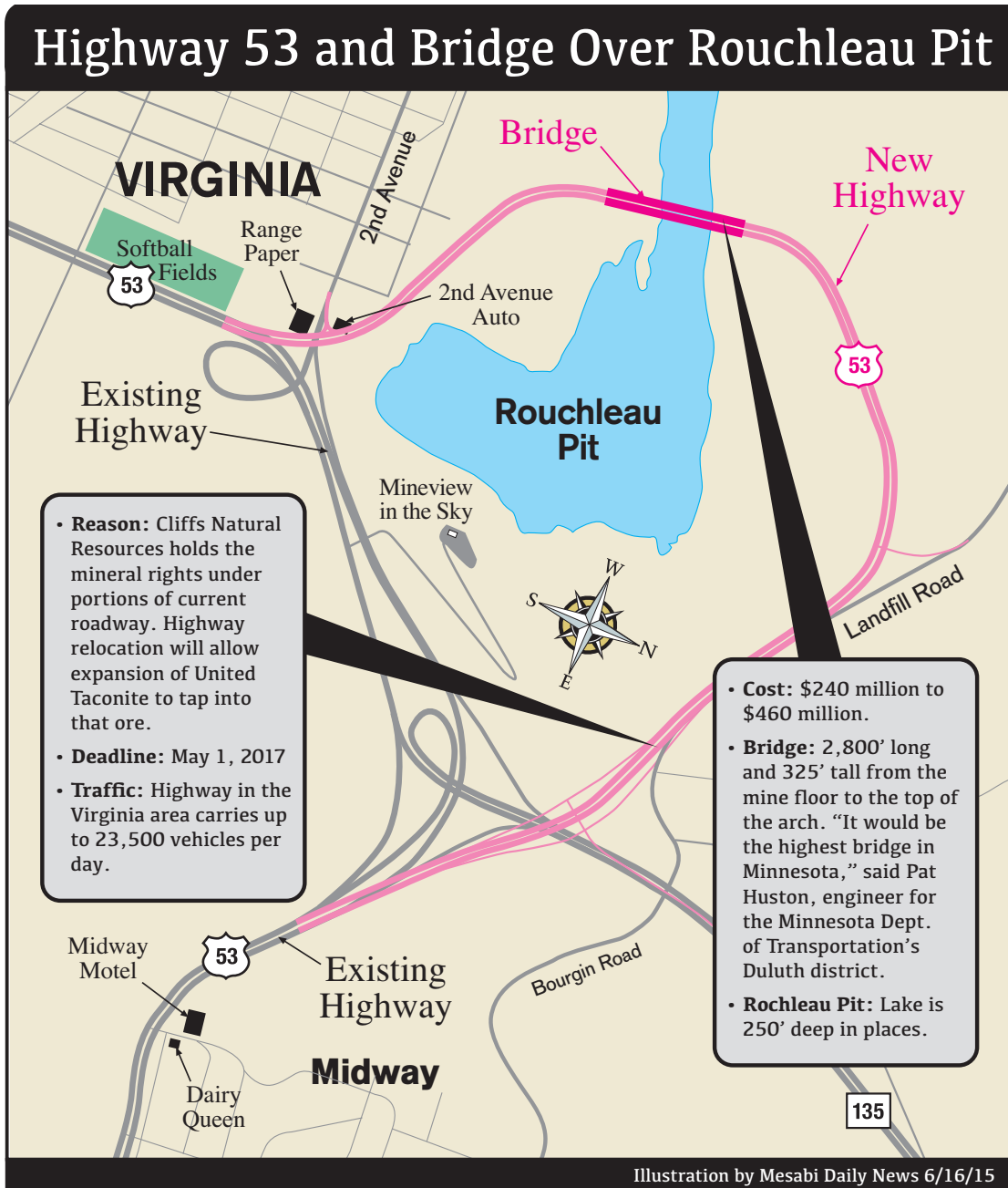


Illustration by Mesabi Daily News 6/16/15

some areas, scale the rugged quarry walls to help forge the Bridge of Steel.

The bridge is necessary because Cliffs Natural Resources owns the ore resource under a portion of the current Highway 53 roadway. The company has exercised its mineral rights to allow for an expansion of United Taconite.

The Bridge of Steel over the Rouchleau Pit, where iron ore was once mined to be shipped east to blast furnaces to become part of the steel-

making process, is truly an enormous project.

Here’s a snapshot look at some other features of the venture:

- Cost of the highway relocation: \$180 million to \$240 million, although it could very likely go higher.
- The 2015 Legislature allocated \$140 million in state bonds. Lawmakers had previously OK’d \$19.5 million as a grant to the City of Virginia to relocate utilities for service to the Midway area.

- The utilities connection cannot be strung along the bridge because of safety concerns.
- Deadline: May of 2017.
- The four-lane bridge will be 14 feet high on the north side, with a 42-inch-high concrete barrier and a 4-foot high ornamental fence.
- MnDOT will provide a total of \$500,000 for aesthetics of the two bridges. But the city would have to pay for any festive lighting on the bridge that would salute a holiday or

a month honoring a medical condition, such as Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

- The water utilities will go underneath the bridge on the north side; sewer utilities on the south side.
- There will be no gas lines on the bridge for safety concerns.
- There will not be room for a work platform under the bridge to work on the utility lines.
- The pilings will not go into the water and down to the pit foundation because of costs.
- There will be no deicing on bridge because it would not be good for the environment and also the pavement. There will be a bumpy coarse-friction surface.
- MnDOT engineers are studying how a bridge will stand up to blasting in a mining area. But wind on the bridge is considered a bigger concern.
- Work on the project will continue through next winter. The bridge beams will arrive and be set up in spring and early summer of 2016.
- Kiewit Infrastructure Co., based in Englewood, Colo., has been named the construction manager/general contractor for the project, a role that allows for an integrated and collaborative approach to planning, designing and constructing a project. Initially, Kiewit will provide expertise into the project design. Once designed, Kiewit will submit a bid to build the project.
- MnDOT also selected Parsons, a California-based engineering, construction, technical and management services firm, to design the new bridge for the project. In addition, Parsons will deliver the roadway, drainage, geotechnical, and structural health monitoring designs for the project.

MAGNETATION: 'Business as usual for our operations'

LISA ROSEMORE
HERALD-REVIEW

For Magnetation, production of iron ore concentrate continues for the innovative company which, despite filing for bankruptcy last month, is still producing both concentrate and pellets.

Matt Lehtinen, president and chief operating officer of Magnetation, said, "It's business as usual for our operations" during a recent phone interview from Indiana.

Plants 2 and 4 are fully-operational, and Magnetation continues to invest capital into Plant 4 for an expansion, he said. Magnetation's pellet plant in Reynolds, Ind., is producing pellets.

Magnetation, which grew very quickly from its beginnings in 2006, announced the indefinite idling of its original plant, Plant 1 in Keewatin, in February. In May, Steel Dynamics, the parent company of Mesabi Nugget, announced the idling of Plant 3 in Chisholm for at least two years. Magnetation is part-owner in Plant 3.

Magnetation, LLC filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy to reorganize its finances in early

May. A statement from Magnetation announcing the filing identified "the drastic fall in iron ore prices" as the general basis for Magnetation's situation.

"Think of it as refinancing your mortgage," Lehtinen said in that May statement. "We're entering into a process to reduce our debt burden...We take pride in being a local Grand Rapids company and through this process we expect our local business to remain intact."

In his recent phone interview, Lehtinen said Magnetation's investors are pleased with the company and that the "bankruptcy process is progressing," but it is unknown how long the reorganization process will last. He also added that Magnetation has a good relationship with its partner, AK Steel.

While global steel markets remain uncertain, Magnetation is still the lowest-cost producer, he said.

"All operations are performing well," Lehtinen said, adding that was due to the hard-working and skilled workforce that Magnetation has assembled.

• Magnetation em-

ploys 457 workers, including those at the Reynolds, Ind., pellet plant.

• Production: 3 million tons per year.

• Taxes: \$7.5 million paid in production tax per year.

• Annual payroll of \$50 million.

• Community involvement: Magnetation has supported the Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation, offered scholarships to area high school students, supported area hockey programs, the Reif Center and the MacRostie Art Center.

• Short history: Magnetation was founded in 2006 by Al Fritz and Rod Hunt. Fritz worked on improving existing technology to develop the ferrous wheel, a machine used to extract iron ore from waste tailings by using high-intensity magnets. In 2008, Larry Lehtinen bought a controlling interest in Magnetation and in February 2009, Plant 1 in Keewatin started production of iron ore concentrate by using the ferrous wheel. In 2010, the innovative Rev3 separator was installed in the Keewatin Plant. Plant 2 near Bovey



LISA ROSEMORE/HERALD REVIEW

An interior view of Magnetation Plant 2 near Bovey in 2013.

opened in May 2012, Plant 3 in Chisholm, a joint venture with Mesabi Nugget, opened in 2013 and Plant 4 outside of Grand Rapids began production in December 2014. The pellet plant in Reynolds, Ind., shipped its first pellets in September 2014.

When Magnetation applied for its first state financing, the company promised to generate 19 full-time equivalent positions. By July 2013,



Pictured is iron ore concentrate produced at Magnetation's Plant 2 near Bovey.

the company had far exceeded that expectation by employing 270 people.



U. S. Steel

Iron Ore Alliance

An alliance between the United Steelworkers and U. S. Steel



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GUEST COLUMN

**LARRY CUFFE
JR.**
Mayor of Virginia



Mining: The economic anchor for Iron Range communities

When mining succeeds our communities prosper. It's the hand-and-glove relationship that has survived since the early 1900s.

Through the years, mining companies have come and gone. There have been mergers, labor adjustments, evolving technology, international pressures, and changes in environmental regulation at both the state and federal levels.

Despite these challenges, mining continues to evolve and remains the most relevant economic factor on the Iron Range and within the Taconite Tax Relief regions.

The production tax that is paid by the mining industry in lieu of property taxes is the primary, if not the sole, revenue stream for the Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board.

Our children experience excellence in education. Businesses and the service industries thrive. Employment opportunities, increased housing stock, expanded tax base, infrastructure improvements, and economic growth are not possible without mining.

There are opportunities on the horizon. New mining ventures and expansions of existing mines are critical to the long-term survival of our communities. PolyMet, Essar, United Taconite, USS Steel — Minntac, ArcelorMittal — Minorca, Hibbing Taconite, Mining Resources, Mesabi Nugget, U.S. Steel-Keetac, Northshore Mining, and Magnetation are primary contributors to our way of life.

Major changes are afoot. The most

important challenge today is the reroute of U.S. Highway 53.

We have unwavering support from our local, county, and state representatives. There has also been opposition to this process from elected officials in metro Minnesota and from extreme environmental groups.

Environmental safeguards are in place. Unreasonable standards, regulatory impediments, and opposition that lack a factual basis are obstacles to a clear path toward economic growth.

Highway 53 is a U.S. highway that provides a direct route to an international border. The construction of a bridge across the abandoned Rouchleau Pit is a huge undertaking. The complex engineering and construction challenges are unique.

The reroute of U.S. Highway 53 is a critical component to not only the survival of the Quad Cities, but for the expansion of mining operations at Cliffs Natural Resources. The results are growth in mining operations, good paying jobs for future generations, tourism, and economic stability for our cities and townships.

Throughout the United States, there are industries that are the major contributors to the economy in their respective regions. Farming in southern Minnesota; technology centers in Minneapolis and St. Paul; health care conglomerates on the West Coast; computer and renewable energy companies in California; seafood fisheries on the East Coast; and cattle operations in Texas are a few examples of

major economic contributors.

Ours is mining. A tradition that has provided good jobs, put food on our tables, helped shape the fabric of our communities, educated our children and provided employees with quality life skills.

Our communities and our ways of life were molded over the years and exist today largely because of mining. That is as true today as it was yester-

day.

Mining in Northeastern Minnesota will continue to be a force in the future and the major economic engine that helps our communities grow and prosper.

With one voice we must support it. With one voice we must promote it. With one voice we must embrace it. And with one voice we must defend it.



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MINING INDUSTRY KEY TO SERVICE INDUSTRY

UNITED WAY BRACES FOR IMPACT IN FALL QUARTER

MARIE TOLONEN
CHISHOLM TRIBUNE PRESS

CHISHOLM — The mining industry and its workforce, along with businesses from spin-off industries, play a vital role in providing funding needed to keep service agencies and programming for families, veterans and children on the Iron Range operational.

In 2014, between 60 to 70 percent of \$1.8 million in donations made to the United Way of Northeastern Minnesota (UWNEMN) came from the workforce, according to the nonprofit's Executive Director Shelley Valentini. A large percentage of those funds came from the mining industry, she added.

For Valentini and UWNEMN staff, the news of layoffs and closures hit

home as they have gotten to personally know so many of the people affected.

With no predictability as to when workers will be called back, Valentini said UWNEMN has to keep an eye on the situation and budget accordingly.

"We can't give out what we don't have," she said.

In March, the UWNEMN Board of Directors was aware of the potential for layoffs and advised potential benefitting agencies that fund allocations would be made based on UWNEMN's availability to do so.

On top of the first round of layoffs, Steel Dynamics delivered the news in May that it planned to indefinitely idle its operations at Mesabi Nugget in Hoyt Lakes and Mining Resources near Chisholm. An estimated 200 people are affected by the closings.

With the closing of just those two plants comes an elimination of around \$121,572. That amount rep-

resents employee giving and a corporate match of the employee donations from the two Steel Dynamics locations, according to Valentini.

She said the company has also been a major sponsor for United Way events, donating close to \$13,500 in sponsorships and a company match to employee participation in UWNEMN events.

Valentini said there is still a skeleton crew at the two operations that continues to pledge.

"We will lose seven month's worth of pledges and corporate match for this year and will not see anything for next year," she said.

It wouldn't be until UWNEMN is set to make its quarterly payments to

benefitting agencies in October that the impact of the recent turn of events

in the Iron Range economy will be realized.

"In October we'll look at how much money we lost and will have to reduce money to organizations," she said. "So, it has a direct impact on services."

Valentini said the UWNEMN is grateful for the support it continues to receive, adding there's more need to operate the programs and services provided through UWNEMN programs and benefitting agencies than ever.

Along with providing funding to service agencies in the area, donations to UWNEMN help maintain programs the agency provides to families in need. They include the Buddy Backpack program, which provides school children in the region with healthy snacks on the weekends, and Smiles Across Minnesota, a free preventative dental program for children in need.

The agency is currently promoting two of its popular fundraisers throughout the region and beyond, Ride the Range and Rampage at the Ridge. They are hoping for a favorable turnout for both.

"We need people to come out and participate," stressed Valentini.

Ride the Range is a motorcycle tour scheduled for Saturday, July 11. Registration begins at 9 a.m. at Five Seasons Sports Center in Eveleth. From there the 200-mile ride will leave at 10 a.m. and take riders on a scenic tour of the Iron Range. A wrap-up party will be held at the Sawmill Saloon & Restaurant in Virginia at the conclusion of the ride. Proceeds from Ride the Range will benefit the UWNEMN's Imagination Library

program.

Imagination Library is a literacy program that helps get books in the homes of preschoolers. It is one of the agency's most popular programs.

"People just love it and the kids just love it," said Valentini.

As evidence of its success, 2,100 have enrolled in the program and 3,395 have graduated from the program. More than 170,000 books have been sent since 2008.

Rampage at the Ridge is a 5K obstacle course scheduled for Saturday, Aug. 22, at Giant's Ridge in Biwabik. The event, which was introduced last year, raises money for veterans programs in the area.

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GUEST COLUMN

IRON ORE ALLIANCE

Chris Masciantonio

United States Steel Corporation

John Rebrovich

United Steelworkers



Thanks governor, legislators for work on sulfate standard

For generations, Northeastern Minnesota's bounty of natural resources has made it possible for hard-working men and women to build a better life for themselves and their families.

Iron mining has long been the backbone of our economy. Our industry helped expand prosperity not only in our region and state, but throughout our entire nation.

The taconite mines on the Range made it possible to produce steel used to construct railroads, bridges, skyscrapers, pipelines, airplanes, automobiles and many other products that have powered America's economy for decades.

Through the years, families and businesses in Northeastern Minnesota have experienced more than their fair share of ups and downs. Today is an especially difficult time for our region. We remain mindful of the many challenges facing the taconite industry right now.

For example, this year's legislative session included a robust conversa-

tion about the application of the sulfate standard to surface water and its impact on our region's economy. We are the only state in the nation with a wild rice sulfate standard — something that was established using research and scientific methods from the 1940s.

In addition to the scientific weaknesses of the sulfate standard, it has not been consistently enforced. During the 2015 session, many people expressed concerns about the sulfate standard's impact on the livelihoods of the men and women who work for Minnesota's taconite mining industry. Fortunately, our Iron Range delegation and Governor Dayton took a stand on this issue to protect the viability of our towns, communities and region while also protecting the environment.

The Iron Ore Alliance would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to state lawmakers for passing legislation requiring the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to comply with existing law that requires the agency

to initiate a rulemaking process to designate surface waters in Minnesota where the sulfate standard applies. This legislation and the rulemaking process help ensure that the MPCA fairly applies the sulfate standard.

Two years ago, the United Steelworkers and United States Steel Corporation formed the Iron Ore Alliance, a special partnership that is committed to promoting and protecting the 130-year tradition of mining in Minnesota. The Iron Ore Alliance is a collaboration in pursuit of a unified goal — for Minnesota Ore Operations to continue employing, operating and investing in Minnesota, in a safe and responsible manner.

Iron Ore Alliance members are good stewards of the environment and want to protect wild rice. It is an important natural and cultural resource that is cherished in our region and throughout Minnesota. We believe that wild rice can be protected while also allowing for continued operations and growth in Minnesota's

taconite mining industry.

In the past decade alone, United States Steel has continuously invested in environmental improvements at its Minnesota mines. Many of the employees are second, third and fourth generation miners. They grew up on the Iron Range, care deeply about our region, and are committed to operating the mines in a safe and environmentally responsible manner.

We look forward to the establishment of a sulfate standard based on current science that can be agreed upon and applied fairly. The Iron Ore Alliance will continue working with the MPCA and all interested stakeholders on this issue — because we believe the families who live and work here deserve the opportunity to build a better life, just like the generations that came before us.

Chris Masciantonio, United States Steel Corporation, and John Rebrovich, United Steelworkers, are co-chairs of the Iron Ore Alliance.



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JOBS FOR MINNESOTANS: Advocating for new jobs, responsible development

KELLY GRINSTEINER
HIBBING DAILY TRIBUNE

For a quarter of a century, Nancy Norr has dedicated her career to working with businesses and communities in our region to drive economic prosperity and development opportunities.

"I am passionate about bringing new business investments to the area that will provide quality livelihoods to families and build healthy communities," said Norr, director of regional development for Minnesota Power, an ALLETE Company.

"As an energy provider, my organization is embedded in the natural resource based industries that have built this region, and we understand that heavy industry will be held to tough environmental standards," she said. "We prove every day that we can have a strong economy and a quality environment."

Norr utilizes that knowledge and experience in her capacity as chair of Jobs for Minnesotans.

"Jobs for Minnesotans brings together individuals and organizations that are equally dedicated to advocating for responsible industry," she said. "It is inspiring to work together with people all across this state that want Minnesota to embrace responsible growth and provide a quality of life for our citizens."

A coalition of business, labor and

community leaders, Jobs for Minnesotans members are committed to advancing job creation through responsible copper-nickel mining in Minnesota.

"Jobs for Minnesotans was created to educate and provide information about the direct and spin-off job creation that copper-nickel mining can produce for the state, and create a platform for individuals and organizations to speak up in support of mining," explained Norr. "This coalition gives a strong voice for the people who support responsible mining — and the positive economic impact mining projects will create for future generations of Minnesota families."

Co-founded by the Minnesota Building and Construction Trades Council and the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce in 2012, the organization has grown to represent the interests of its nearly 100 member organizations and hundreds of individual supporters.

Today, Jobs for Minnesotans members represent 55,000 men and women of the trades, 2,300 businesses and hundreds more mayors, local chambers of commerce and citizens who support the state's mining future.

"Collectively, from the Iron Range communities around Ely to the southern reaches of Austin and Fairmont, our coalition speaks for the thousands of people who believe in the opportunity to mine minerals and produce the materials essential to our quality

of life," noted Norr.

Notable members include the cities of Hibbing, Chisholm, Ely, Hoyt Lakes, Embarrass and Virginia, among others; several chambers of commerce such as Hibbing, Chisholm, Grand Rapids and St. Paul, among others; and a variety of businesses, like Minnesota Twist Drill, Lakehead Constructors Inc., Cliffs Natural Resources and Range Regional Airport, among others.

"My personal goal in life has been to help provide jobs for people so

they can feed their families and live good lives on the Iron Range," said Lory Fedo, president/CEO of Hibbing Area Chamber of Commerce and Jobs for Minnesotans board member. "This is an outcome of my childhood in Upper Michigan where I witness first-hand some difficult mine closures and devastation to families and communities. Here, we have the opportunity to secure a more diverse economic future that includes taconite, copper-nickel and other mineral

SEE JOBS, PAGE 43



NANCY NORR



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JOBS

FROM PAGE 42

mining. I want my personal impact to be seen in mining jobs as well as indirect jobs and businesses available as a result of mining. Jobs for Minnesotans has provided me the opportunity to accomplish that goal."

The board of directors currently includes 11 individuals, who Norr said work tirelessly to ensure there are opportunities for the next generation by advocating for the development of strategic metals mining.

"We understand the challenges of mining as a whole and of developing a new type of mining industry in our region, so we've built a unique coalition that supports the industry and the economic benefits it generates," said Fedo. "A particularly striking area of success is our ability to marshal people and resources to meet challenges whether it be to attend and engage during hearings, provide support and information to key decision makers, or disseminate accurate information on current and future mining projects. There is nothing passive about Jobs for Minnesotans. Our coalition is committed, smart, determined, visionary and hard-working — just like the people who live here."

Jon Cherry, president and CEO of PolyMet Mining, praised the coalition's work.

"Jobs for Minnesotans is a great example of the passion for responsible mining that exists on the Iron Range and across Minnesota," he said. "We remain humbled by the commitment, leadership and tenacity of everyone represented by this coalition. This kind of work is invaluable to make projects move forward and put people to work, and we cannot thank Jobs for Minnesotans enough for their efforts on behalf of all of their stakeholders."

The mission of Jobs for Minnesotans is simple: to support job creation through the responsible development of copper-nickel mining projects.

PolyMet Mining and Twin Metals Minnesota are two companies pursuing the development of copper-nickel mines here in northern Minnesota.

PolyMet is in the advanced stage of a comprehensive environmental review and permitting process to develop a new mine and restore existing facilities, according to Jobs for Minnesotans.

Twin Metals has completed its prefeasibility study (PFS) and the next steps in project development involve further detailed engineering, economic and environmental assessment of the PFS Technical Report mine plan and culminating in the development of a formal Mine Plan of Operation.

"With the potential to create more than 1,000 full-time mining jobs and well over 2,000 spinoff jobs from PolyMet Mining and Twin Metals Minnesota alone, our state has a phenomenal opportunity to provide a needed boost to the economy," said Norr.

Moreover, for each job in the mining industry, an additional 1.8 spinoff jobs are created in other industries, such as manufacturing, retail, restaurants and green energy, according to a 2012 study conducted by the Labovitz School of Business and Economics at the University of Minnesota-Duluth.

"In addition to job creation, copper-

nickel mining projects will generate tens of millions of dollars annually in federal, state and local tax revenues," said Norr. "Our organization advocates for the emerging precious metals industry that represents a new era of mining for the Iron Range and Minnesota as a whole."

The coalition accomplishes this by educating and providing information about the job creation and positive economic impact copper-nickel mining will bring to the state. Coalition members also serve as a platform to drive advocacy, encouraging job supporters to share their viewpoints and take action to support the largest potential job creator in the state of Minnesota.

"Our activities are varied and ongoing," said Norr. "We've met one-on-one with state and federal legislative officials to let them know the importance of this industry regionally, statewide and nationally. Our supporters have mobilized to share their perspectives at public hearings and local meetings. With a very active and connected board of directors, much of our work is based on one-on-one conversations."

Given that mining touches so many in the region on a personal level, Norr describes that the coalition's education efforts as robust.

"Our focus continues to be ensuring our children and grandchildren have the opportunity to have good jobs in mining, raise their own families and thrive in this great state," she said.

According to Jobs for Minnesotans, strategic metals will also bring new investments in education as well as millions of dollars in tax revenues. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) estimates that current strategic metals mining projects will generate more than \$2 billion for the Minnesota Permanent School Trust Fund, which provides revenue for every school district in Minnesota.

While Jobs for Minnesotans aims to reach multiple audiences, coalition members focus primarily on public officials and those in a position of influence, or in Norr's words, "our extensive network of business and labor allies across the state of Minnesota and the communities in our own backyard."

Since formation in 2012, she said the coalition has made great strides. Their efforts have also led to increased engagement from others.

"With education, people understand the importance of responsible copper-nickel mining to our economic well-being. It is very powerful to stand at the podium or visit a legislator's office with a team made up of business, labor and community leaders," said Norr. "Jobs for Minnesotans members have been told that we are finally filling a void for the silent majority who support responsible development, but have not known how to become more fully engaged in a grassroots effort."

And the efforts are not likely to wane any time soon.

"With copper-nickel mining projects still in the pipeline, we're excited to support the communities who eagerly anticipate the thousands of jobs that are on the horizon," she said. "We will be educating, informing and advocating to get PolyMet, Twin Metals Minnesota and other projects up and running to put our neighbors

to work."

The most troubled job sectors in the state have been construction and manufacturing since the recession, according to the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED). The strategic metals mining industry is the economic opportunity and job creator that Minnesota needs.

"No other industry in Minnesota will be able to provide the amount and breadth of well-paying jobs across sectors as the strategic metals mining industry," states coalition materials.

Norr added that jobs and economic development can occur while preserving Minnesota wilderness efforts continue as well.

"Mining and tourism can coexist and have done so for more than 130 years in Minnesota," she said. "Advanced mining technologies allow for future mining to coexist with our beloved environment and there are numerous state and federal regulatory agencies that have a thorough process in place to ensure mining projects are environmentally responsible. We trust the process that guides the approval of these projects and look forward to a new era of responsible mining in Minnesota."

Doug Connell, senior vice president at Barr Engineering Company and Jobs for Minnesotans board member, first learned of the potential economic impact of northern Minnesota's copper-nickel mineral resources when he worked for the U.S. Bureau of Mines and Minnesota DNR while in college in the late 1970s. He said he values the coalition's goals of informing the public about the economic, technical and public policy aspects that are important to well-considered decisions about how to safely utilize these resources.

"As these projects move through the rigorous state and federal environmental review and permitting process, one measure of success can be defined as fair, objective consideration of the projects against the state and federal standards for environmental protection, financial assurance, etc," he said. "This is in contrast to

a failure of these processes resulting in arbitrary decisions that leads to these projects unfairly being blocked or delayed. Ultimately, success will be to see the responsible utilization of these resources and harmonious coexistence of both mineral development and the other amazing natural resources of northern Minnesota."

For Jason George, director of special projects at International Union of Operating Engineers Local 49 and Jobs for Minnesotans board member, real success is only measured in the final score.

"Only when the copper-nickel mining industry is allowed to exist in Minnesota, to mine safely, and to create good-paying construction and operation jobs will we be successful," he said. "In the long-term, success will come when we take this first victory, and the successful model of industry support we established, to win the fight for more good-paying jobs in natural resources industries across the state."

Referring to the opposition as "enemies of progress," George described the opposition as "a serious threat to the economic security and prosperity for millions of Minnesotans."

"We have proven that we can have these jobs and protect the environment in Minnesota," he added. "Business and labor need to stand together and fight so our voices are heard and politicians aren't intimidated into closing off these jobs. I'm doing everything in my power to ensure we are successful and Jobs for Minnesotans is the place we come together to engage in that fight."

Norr encouraged everyone to join in the mining dialogue, and vowed that Jobs for Minnesotans will continue to be vocal.

"We will be successful when the voice of support for responsible development is louder than the opponents who distort the record and create a false choice between jobs and the environment," she said.

To become a member or stay informed about the coalition's efforts and successes, log on to jobsforminnesotans.org.

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MARK SAUER/MESABI DAILY NEWS

Dave Debevec poses over the new Ulland Brothers work bays recently built between Gilbert and Virginia.

ULLAND BROTHERS: New \$8 million facility in Virginia

BILL HANNA
MESABI DAILY NEWS

VIRGINIA — Ulland Brothers employees in northeastern Minnesota are getting used to their new \$8 million surroundings in Virginia. And they like the 40,000 square foot facility.

"It's really good ... really nice. It's going to be a real good deal," said Dave Debevec, vice president of human resources and safety for Ulland.

Debevec, who lives in Mountain Iron and is originally from Eveleth, said the new facility is geared toward the company's employees and customers.

"The reason we went down this road is for a clean and healthy place for employees, including a training room. It will be really good for customer service. It will be clean and healthy and strategic for our employees and customers," said the 14-year Ulland employee.



Ulland Brothers new facility between Virginia and Gilbert.

The facility will be the base of operations for Ulland field work, maintenance and repair projects. It is consolidating the company's operation into a new maintenance garage, warehouse facility and administration building just north of Highway 135 behind the St. Louis

County motor pool. Ulland Brothers is among the largest excavating and paving contractors in Minnesota. The company was founded in 1920, when Oscar and Palmer Ulland began their wood-cutting business with little more than a hand-saw, an old Ford truck

and a simple philosophy: Always keep your word to your customer, always do your best work, and success will follow. Debevec said the mining downturn has had an impact, but Ulland is well prepared for mining ups and downs. "Our workload is

diversified enough to see us through. We do work with airports, cities, townships, counties and schools along with our mining work. "We're busy at the moment. And mining is not shutting down. Mines are still going and need support. And we're a mining company in

our own right with sand and gravel ... mostly to support our own operations," he said. An open house at the new facility will be held on July 11 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. The public is welcome.

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Boom, Bust Cycle

LISA ROSEMORE
HERALD-REVIEW

Layoffs.
Plant closings.
Uncertainty.
Those who live and work on Northern Minnesota's Iron Range know there's a boom and bust cycle to mining, and with the recent layoffs at KeeTac, Minntac as well as plant closings at Magnetation and Mesabi Nugget, it's clear the Range is currently in the bust part of the cycle.

But it's not the first time the Range has seen this happen. The early to mid-80s were economically tough not just in the mining industry, but in other industries as well.

A United Press International story published in the Mesabi Daily News on May 7, 1982, declared that the U.S. unemployment rate "soared to a post-World War II record of 9.4 percent in April, with 10.3 million Americans out of work."

The story explained that "large-scale layoffs among blue-collar workers helped boost the unemployment rate from 9 percent in March to 9.4 percent in April."

Three days before that story ran, a front page story in the May 4, 1982 Mesabi Daily News reported that Eveleth Taconite had announced production cutbacks. Eveleth Taconite was planning to produce 4.8 million tons of taconite pellets, compared with 5.9 million in 1981.

The same story reported that Reserve Mining, which had laid off 2,200 employees on March 7, 1982, would not be calling workers back until May 16 of that year. Several hundred of those workers on layoff were to be notified "by telephone or letter that their layoff is indefinite." The story went on to say that Re-

serve, which had planned on producing 5 million tons of pellets in 1982, was scaling back its projections to 3.5 million tons.

In June 1982, then-Minnesota Secretary of State Joan Grove was in Hibbing for an election judge conference. In a Mesabi Daily News story dated June 17, 1982, she said she saw how everyone state-wide was hurting.

"I've been traveling throughout the state this past month and everyone is hurting, especially the farmers and small businesses. From my last day here on the Range, I see every indication that things are only getting worse. I hope legislators agree, and Gov. (Al) Quie agrees to a one-day special session for providing short term assistance to the Range."

A defiant editorial on the front page of June 17, 1982 Mesabi Daily News proclaimed that the "Range isn't rolling over and dying."

"Contrary to what you may have read or heard via the Twin Cities media, the Iron Range isn't rolling over and dying," the editorial stated. "While the current economic situation is grim, all of us who live on the Range have to be impressed with the never-say-die attitude that's been displayed."

After listing several numerous positive events, referendum approvals, and that area resort and motel owners had reported good business despite the nationwide recession, the editorial said those was just some positive things happening on the Range.

"Does that sound like we're near death way up here in northeastern Minnesota?" the editorial asked. "Hardly."

While today's downturn in the iron ore market is attributed to a glut of global iron ore, illegally subsidized

SEE CYCLE, PAGE 46



HERALD REVIEW FILE PHOTO

Itasca Economic Development Corporation in Grand Rapids has helped many displaced mine workers start businesses of their own or explore new career paths.

A way to survival

NATHAN BERGSTEDT
HERALD-REVIEW

John, like many people in northeastern Minnesota, has carved out a nice life for himself thanks to the prosperous mining industry in the region. Billions of dollars in mineral wealth has been and has yet to be extracted from the ground to be used in the manufacturing of goods that are bought throughout the world; and that process starts right here.

The only problem is that John, like thousands of others like him, is currently running the risk of being laid off from his job. John agreed to an interview on the condition of anonymity, fearful that anything he might say could give his employer reason to lay him off next during this particular bust period of the mining industry. You see, John's story is not unlike any number of other people's when it comes to working in the mines; when it's good, it's great, but you never know when you're not going to have a job anymore due to a downturn in the price of ore.

This, generally speaking, is only ever temporary. Employees at the different mining operations in the area often have a safeguard of several months of pay in the instance of a lay-off, so the hope is that they're able to make it back to work before the severance ends. But the last big downturn, which saw a mass exodus of workers and their families away from northern

Minnesota in the 1980s, didn't allow people to simply count on the cycle of boom and bust before the money ran out.

"At that time, much of the manufacturing base on the Iron Range was closely tied to the mining industry. As a result of that very significant downturn, where 20,000 people left the area, that caused some companies to go out of business," said Sandy Layman, owner of Layman Consulting, former President of the Itasca Development Corporation, and former IRRRB Commissioner. "But the companies that survived — the manufacturers and suppliers that survived — moved to diversify their customer base."

Because companies like U.S. Steel and PolyMet serve as an economic hub in the area, they've been a primary player in an expansion of industry in Minnesota. New businesses were originally developed to help supply the mines, bringing in much needed equipment and other resources to help with the extraction of ore. These spin-offs were the beginning of economic diversity on the Iron Range, which then begat various other services, such as grocers, clothing stores, bars and restaurants, and everything else that makes a community. But in the 1980s, many of the supply businesses, like Industrial Lubricant, realized that they were not going to be able to stay in business if the mines were their only

SEE SURVIVAL, PAGE 46

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Accra Care provides services to individuals with disabilities of all ages, both children and adults. Accra Care is a non-profit providing services that support the independence of the individual.

"We focus on person-centered planning and helping an individual and/or family focus on their vision for a positive future," said Hattie Gould, Home Care Manager of Accra Care. "We've been providing services to people with disabilities since 1991."

Planning for and providing support to a family member who is aging or living with a chronic illness or disability are valuable tools for supporting individuals and families with disabilities. Person-centered planning is empowering and allows for positive possibilities for the future. Accra knows that the individual or family with disabilities need to find high quality caregivers and are determined to keep a high rate of pay for those Personal Care Assistants so that the goal of long term care for the consumer, remains with the same care provider for consistency, familiarity and overall care. Person-centered planning puts the individual and/or family in control of the choices that affect their lives.

Your friends or family can be your caregiver. Having someone you know and trust as your caregiver (PCA) is very important. Most long-term care in the



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Pictured from Left: Hattie Gould, Home Care Manager, QP; Beth Dahline-Sweeney, RN, Case Manager; and Lisa Carsrud, Program Director, Northern Region.

U.S. is provided by family members. Call our Grand Rapids office at (218) 212-7577 if you would like to hire a friend or family member to be your Personal Care Assistant (PCA) – we will help you navigate through the process.

Accra Care offers Personal Care Assistance services for children and adults with disabilities, chronic diseases, behavioral diagnoses and mental illness who need assistance with personal care in their home or in the community. These services are funded through government health care programs to help individuals who

are unable to fully care for themselves, and allow them to stay in their homes. Personal Care Assistance can help with "activities of daily living" such as dressing, grooming, eating, bathing, transfers, mobility, positioning and toileting, as well as other health-related tasks, re-direction of behaviors and "instrumental activities of daily living" such as light housekeeping, laundry and meal preparation for adults.

When young adults with disabilities are preparing to make the transition from high school to work or post-secondary school, services and programs

do not discontinue. At its best, the person-centered planning process can strengthen the transition to post-school activities by:

- Enhancing the quality of assessment and planning activities for both high school transition and adult services for youth with disabilities;
- Fostering positive working relationships between families and professionals;
- Providing a way for educators and case managers from other agencies to better coordinate their services;
- Connecting families to adult service agencies before a student leaves

high school;

- Helping ensure that services support the youth's goals and lead to successful outcomes; and

- Helping identify and cultivate natural supports in the community.

To qualify for PCA (Personal Care Assistance) services, a consumer must receive Medical Assistance (MA), be eligible for the Alternative Care program for qualifying seniors or pay privately. Consumers, who have already identified their PCA, can direct their own care or have a responsible party assist them. They are also able to communicate

these cares to the PCA providing services.

How to Get PCA Services from Accra Care?

1. Do you have Medical Assistance (MA)? If yes, go to step 2. If no, you will need to apply for MA by contacting your county human services office or you can call MN Care State Office at 651-297-3862 or 800-657-3672, or print an application at www.dhs.state.mn.us/health-care or apply online at www.applymn.dhs.mn.gov

2. Have you had an assessment to qualify you to receive PCA services? If yes, go to Step 3. If no, you will need to contact your county or health plan for a nurse to come out to authorize services. Tell the nurse at the time of the assessment that you want Accra Care to be your PCA provider.

3. Do you have PCA with another company, but want to switch to Accra? If yes, the process is easy. We will have you sign a change of agency form and help coordinate the transfer of services to our agency.

Accra Care provides Skilled Nursing, Home Health Aides, PCA (Personal Care Assistance), as well as Homemaking services.

For further information regarding any of Accra's services, call – (218) 212-7577 and speak with Hattie Gould, the Home Care Manager.

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