

MINE VI

Virginia, MN

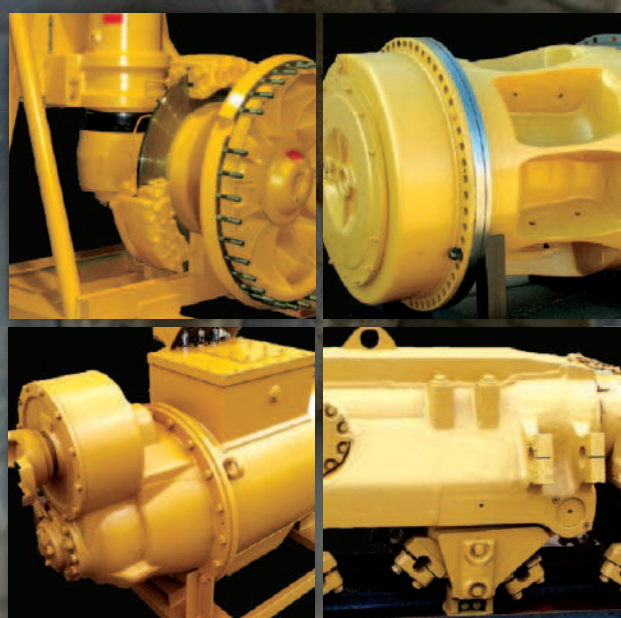
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MARK SAUER/MESABI DAILY NEWS
John Holmes poses next to a painting done by his mother, Gladys Holmes, which now hangs in the conference room at ArcelorMittal in Virginia.

MINORCA MINE MANAGER JONATHAN HOLMES HOME IS WHERE YOUR ROOTS ARE

BILL HANNA
MESABI DAILY NEWS

VIRGINIA — Jonathan Holmes would travel along Highway 53 south from his Cook home to Mesabi Community College in the mid-1970s and enjoy the view and excitement of a new taconite mine being built on the Iron Range.

Holmes had already been bitten by the mining and engineering bugs, which would lead him to the University of Minnesota's mining engineering program and a degree in 1977, following graduation from MCC.

So it was natural for Holmes to do a little daydreaming about his hopeful future as the Minorca Mine — of

Inland Steel at the time — was under construction.

"It was the closest mine to where I grew up. It was new and exciting. And I actually thought at the time it would be a good job to be manager of that mine," Holmes said during a recent interview at the Minorca Mine's offices.

Now fast-forward to September 1994. Holmes had been working as a mining engineer at the Minorca Mine since his first day on the job there on Oct. 1, 1979.

"I got offered the mine manager job ... something I had actually thought about back in college. It's been challenging, exciting and just great," Holmes said.

Holmes graduated from Cook High School in 1973.

"My interests were technical engineering, chemistry and geology. Mining engineering fit them all," he said, about the mining engineering degree he attained at the U of M.

Holmes "dabbled in law" for a bit, but he knew his career path was already determined, and it didn't include writing legal briefs.

He also knew that he wanted to return to the Range and eventually work and live on the Range.

"My home is up here ... I wanted to end up back here," Holmes said.

But first there would be a stint in Grants, N.M., for about 18 months

from 1978-1979, working in an uranium mine.

"It was a difficult experience in an underground uranium mine. It was certainly more dangerous," Holmes said.

Holmes and Larry Lehtinen, currently principal owner, chairman, and CEO of Magnetation on the west Range, were classmates in Cook. And their career paths would now crisscross at the Minorca Mine.

Lehtinen had been working as a mining engineer at Minorca when he took a job at the company's headquarters in Chicago. Holmes would be hired to fill Lehtinen's mining engineering position.

SEE MINORCA, PAGE 6



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



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This aerial view shows the main operations of the Minorca Mine.

SUBMITTED

ArcelorMittal's Minorca Mine in Virginia



Haul roads of the Minorca Mine.



Production trucks at the crusher at the Minorca Mine.



Blasted rock is loaded into a truck to be carried to the crusher.



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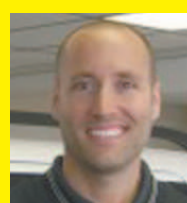
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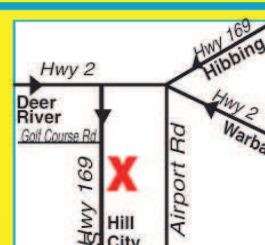
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MARK SAUER/MESABI DAILY NEWS

A scale model of an ore boat from when ArcelorMittal was owned by Inland Steel connects the company to its history.

MINORCA

FROM PAGE 3

"I was back home," he said. Lehtinen would also later return to manage the Inland Minorca. The second succession of Holmes into a position that had been held by Lehtinen occurred when Holmes was named Minorca Mine manager in 1994. The mining tradition of Cook and its positive imprint on the Minorca Mine continued.

Ownership changes during a volatile time for the iron ore and steel industries, which began in the 1970s, would follow for the Minorca Mine. Ispat International purchased the U.S. Steel Inland properties, including the Minorca Mine, in 1998.

ArcelorMittal would then become the largest steel producer in the world through the consolidation of Mittal Steel's existing U.S. business, Ispat Inland, along with the assets of the Ispat International Steel group.

The globalization of the ore and steel industries was at full throttle, with ArcelorMittal leading the way. The company posts some impressive numbers:

- 310,000 employees in more than 60 countries.
- The leader in all global markets, including automotive, construction, household appliances and packaging.
- It has industrial interests in Europe, Asia, Africa and America.
- Ore mining operations are located in the United States, Canada,

Mexico, Brazil, Liberia, Bosnia, Ukraine, Algeria and Kazakhstan.

• Metallurgical coal mining operations are located in the United States and Kazakhstan.

And the Minorca Mine is part of that mix:

- Employs 356.
- Produces about 2.8 million tons of fluxed pellets annually.
- Mines about 18 million tons of ore, rock and waste material.
- Pellets are shipped to ArcelorMittal's Indiana Harbor and are charged into the massive No. 7 Blast Furnace — the world's largest iron producer in the Western Hemisphere, which is capable of producing more than 12,500 tons of molten iron a day.

ArcelorMittal's business and industrial reach is long and far; successful and profitable.



And it includes a boy from Cook, Minnesota, who watched the company's Minorca Mine take shape before it opened for production in 1977, and

who dared to dream about working there, perhaps even managing the operation.

He does so now, after 36 years at Minorca, still with a zest for the job.

"It's changed since that first day at work. It's a different kind of excitement ... now more satisfaction. But I just love coming to work every day," Holmes said.

He especially enjoys the workforce at Minorca, which he called, "superb."

"It should always go both ways with

SEE MINORCA, PAGE 7



John Holmes, gestures during an interview with the Mesabi Daily News.



SUBMITTED

A truck empties a load of ore into the crusher at ArcelorMittal.

ArcelorMittal
Minorca Mine Inc.
Virginia, MN

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MINORCA

FROM PAGE 6

workers and management — we want them to succeed for themselves and their families ... and if they succeed we succeed as a company,” Holmes said.

Holmes said the globalization of the mining business has been challenging and interesting for everyone involved. And through it all, the Minorca Mine has continued to be the most stable mining operation on the Range.

“From 1987 to 2009 ... 22 years ... we had no shutdown of production. In 2009, because of the bad recession, everyone was shut down,” Holmes said.

He said operating costs have “improved as a whole” and “we produce a high-quality product.”

On a recent wind-whipped, bitterly frigid early afternoon, Holmes weathers the elements and looks out on the Minorca Mine operation.

The landscape has a freeze-dried, moonscape look to it. And

the bright sunshine of the cold day has been masked gray by mining’s debris being whipped up in big wind gusts.

It would not be a comforting sight to many people. But to Jonathan Holmes the mine is his most welcome home away from a home in the country near his native Cook, regardless the weather.

It all just came together in a providential way for Holmes.

“There is nowhere I’d rather be living and working. My roots run deep,” he said.



An aerial view of the reach of the ArcelorMittal Minorca Mine.

SUBMITTED



ArcelorMittal

- ❑ World’s No. 1 steel company.
- ❑ 310,000 employees in more than 60 countries.
- ❑ The leader in all major global markets, including automotive, construction, household appliances and packaging.
- ❑ Its industrial presence touches Europe, Asia, Africa and America.
- ❑ Company benefits from quality vertical integration — from iron ore mining at one end to steel service centers and distribution at the other end.

MINORCA MINE:

- ❑ Employs 356 workers.
- ❑ Started production in 1977.
- ❑ Produces about 2.8 million tons of fluxed iron-bearing pellets.
- ❑ It mines about 18 million tons of ore, rock and waste material.
- ❑ Pellets are shipped to ArcelorMittal Indian Harbor, which is North America’s largest integrated steel making complex located in East Chicago, Ind., about 20 minutes southeast of Chicago.
- ❑ The pellets are charged into Indiana Harbor’s massive No. 7 Blast Furnace — the largest iron producer in the Western Hemisphere. It’s capable of producing more than 12,500 tons of molten iron a day.
- ❑ Minorca supplies about 50 percent of No. 7 Blast Furnace’s pelletized iron requirements.

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An aerial of the Ulland Brothers new facility in Virginia shows how much space the company has for its operations.

LAYING THE FOUNDATION

Ulland Brothers plays key role in mining projects

BRIAN AROLA
HIBBING DAILY TRIBUNE

HIBBING — Driving through a city on the Iron Range, you could look left, right or straight down at the road you're

on and likely see a project Ulland Brothers played a role in.

Whether it's infrastructure, site development for a mining company or commercial entity, or utility work, the com-

pany was probably there at some point.

"It's hard to think of any of the mining companies that we haven't done work for," said David Debevec, vice president of Ulland Brothers'

Hibbing operation.

He thought for a second, then went even further.

"It's hard to think of a road in the Arrowhead Region that we haven't worked on over the

years," he added.

When it comes to Ulland Brothers, "over the years" goes back to the early days of the mining industry in the state.

Starting out as a wood-cutting business

in southern Minnesota, the company that was started by Oscar and Palmer Ulland, who soon made it up north and played a key role in developing mining sites in the 1930s.

A more recent example of the company's mine site work came during the early formation of what is now Mesabi Nugget in Aurora.

"When we started out at Mesabi Nugget there was nothing there, just a black piece of dirt," Debevec said.

Ulland Brothers brought in dozers, haul trucks, a subcontractor for blasting, and crushed materials to the site so roads and site pads could be developed on

SEE ULLAND, PAGE 9

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ULLAND

FROM PAGE 8

that piece of dirt.

Even more recently, the company will be working on a new entrance road to U.S. Steel Minntac.

"Minntac supplied the aggregate, we crushed it, hauled and placed it, built the road, paved the road, and now we'll be working on the new entrance road to U.S. Steel Minntac," Debevec said.

Crushing materials on site is something Ulland is able to do through mobile units, which end up producing aggregates of sand and gravel.

So by all accounts, Ulland doesn't just help the mining industry — it does some mining of its own.

"When you look at mining, you've got your metallic mining and your sand and gravel mining," Debevec said. "We're more on the sand and gravel side of things."

The company owns a few quarries in Minnesota and Iowa, closer to the company's Albert Lea, Minn., offices. By undertaking its own mining operations as well as helping out other mining entities and undertaking road projects, the business is able to diversify enough to make sure downturns in any one industry don't sink the company.

"When the road work isn't there, hopefully the commercial sector is doing well and we can look to those customers to provide work for our employees," Debevec said.

Ulland Brothers employs about 275 persons in total, and it's their work and dedication that sets it apart, said company President Michael Welch.

"Ulland Brothers' success is due to having smart, dedicated and thoughtful employees that are able to provide solutions and not excuses," he said. "This allows us to do it right the first time, saving our customers time and money."

It's also what will

allow the company to move out of its current location in Hibbing into bigger digs in Virginia.

The \$9 million project will consolidate the company's employees and operations into a new maintenance garage, warehouse and administrative building just north of Highway 135.

The move, planned to be completed by June, will be the first headquarters in northern Minnesota that Ulland Brothers built from the ground up — a distinction Debevec said the company is looking forward to attaining.

"We're pretty excited about it," he said. "It's going to allow us to serve our customers better, and it's a better place for our employees."

The Hibbing facility on 37th Street has already been sold to Radotich, Inc., but saying goodbye to the building that's housed Ulland Brothers in the northland since the 1980s won't be easy, he said.

"We have mixed feelings about leaving Hibbing for sure," he said. "We've got a lot of great vendors and suppliers that we'll continue to do business with."

What won't be changing with the move is the company's quality promise built up from decades of experience in the business.

The employee-owned company will always stand by the jobs it's undertaken, even if people might not immediately think Ulland Brothers played a part in it, Debevec said.

Often times the company will bulldoze a job site before construction of a big building can begin, which means it's Ulland Brothers laying the foundation for big things to come. And it's the foundation, after all, that makes the building, Debevec said.

"The building will be attributed to a general contractor, but we build the foundation," he said. "A lot of times people say a building is only as good as the foundation."



An aerial of Ulland Brothers' new facility in Virginia.

SUBMITTED



Ulland Brothers works on the foundation of a project.



Ulland Brothers workers bulldoze land on one its latest projects.

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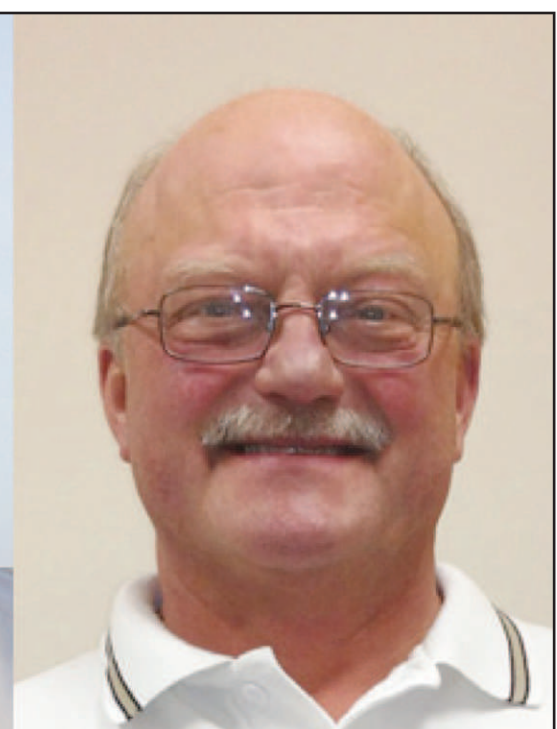
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PROPOSED SULFATE LEGISLATION GOOD FOR IRON MINING INDUSTRY

Proposed sulfate legislation is good for the iron mining industry.

This year is shaping up to be a critical year for the future of taconite mining in Minnesota. There are several issues being discussed that will have significant implications for our industry and the thousands of men and women we employ.

One important issue is the application of the sulfate standard to surface water. In some cases, these surface waters are used for the production of wild rice.

Minnesota is the only state in the nation with a "wild rice sulfate standard." Established based upon 1940s research, the current sulfate standard of 10 milligrams per liter (mg/L) is not scientifically supported. In fact, current state-funded research found that wild rice is not affected by sulfate until levels reach up to 1,600 mg/L. Even drinking water contains safe sulfate levels up to 250 mg/L. Iron Range municipalities would face devastating compliance costs if the current standard is enforced.

In addition to the scientific weaknesses of the sulfate standard, it is not consistently enforced throughout Minnesota.

Currently, U. S. Steel's Minnesota Ore Operations' facilities are the only entities required to comply with the standard at the time of this writing. This unreasonable and erratically enforced standard is targeted at one company and is jeopardizing the future of a healthy and vibrant taconite mining industry in Minnesota.

The Minnesota Pollution Control

Agency (MPCA) should not force compliance with the standard on companies and cities until the research is complete and a modern standard is established to protect wild rice.

That is why the Iron Ore Alliance is grateful that state Legislators recently introduced legislation that would require the MPCA to comply with existing law that requires the agency to initiate a rulemaking process to designate surface waters in Minnesota where the standard applies. That rulemaking would ensure that MPCA fairly applies the standard.

Two years ago, the United Steelworkers and United States Steel 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 1,900

Iron Ore Alliance

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

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. It is our hope that all stakeholders

SEE ALLIANCE, PAGE 12

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Support Sulfate Legislation

Minnesota's wild rice sulfate standard should be fairly applied and based on modern science.



Let's protect wild rice while also allowing for continued taconite mining in Minnesota.



The legislation

The Iron Ore Alliance supports proposed legislation that would ensure fair application of the wild rice sulfate standard. The legislation would require the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to comply with existing law that requires the agency to initiate a rulemaking process to designate waters where the wild rice standard applies.

The facts

- Minnesota is the only state in the nation with a wild rice sulfate standard.
- U. S. Steel's Keetac facility is the only entity currently required to comply with the standard.
- The standard of 10 mg/L was enacted in 1973 and based on research from the 1940s.
- Recent state-funded research found that wild rice is not affected by sulfate until levels reach as high as 1,600 mg/L.
- Failure to update the current standard will result in devastating financial impacts to cities and businesses throughout the state.

To watch a video about this issue:

IronOreAlliance.com/Links

To learn more about the legislation:

- Visit www.house.leg.state.mn.us
- Click "Bill search and status"
- Enter "HF 1000"

ALLIANCE

FROM PAGE 10

will support this new legislation and that a sulfate standard based on current science can be agreed upon and applied fairly.

We plan to continue working with the MPCA and all interested stakeholders to ensure that the sulfate standard is fairly enforced and based on modern science.



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



U.S. Steel's Minntac mine.

MARK SAUER/MESABI DAILY NEWS/FILE

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- Congressman Rick Nolan

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HANDS-ON INDUSTRIAL EDUCATION AT MESABI RANGE COLLEGE

ANGIE RIEBE

MESABI DAILY NEWS

EVELETH — Sean Pelkey recalls helping his dad with rudimentary welding projects in his garage when he was just 7 years old.

The Mesabi Range Welding program student today plans to open a “small-time repair and fabrication shop out of my own garage.”

But he is also working as a “temp to hire” at Joy Global, Inc., in Virginia, a company that services the mining industry’s heavy equipment.

Pelkey and many of his fellow students in the college’s Welding, Industrial Mechanical Technology (millwright), and Process Automation Systems programs will be part of a workforce that is either directly or indirectly related to mining.

“High quality students come out of here,” said Tom Baldwin, Mesabi Range welding instructor. “They are an asset to the workforce.”

During the past 15 years, the program has had a 99 percent placement rate, he said. “Students have a good work ethic. ... We don’t have a problem placing people.”

The American Welding Society-accredited program offers entry level and advanced welding diplomas, with curriculum approved by the Welding Advisory Committee, which consists of representatives from the industry.

Students can take one or two years of the program depending on their goals.

“It’s a rigorous course,” with some lecture and the majority hands-on learning, Baldwin said. The college has 36 welding booths, and “we hope to expand and add 12 more booths. We keep the equipment as current as possible.”

Many graduates will go on to be boilermakers or iron workers, or take jobs in construction or fabrication. Often students go into fabrication first and then into mining, said the instructor.

“Companies are eager to get them,” he said.





***‘We
don’t
have a
problem
placing
people’***

Sean Pelkey welds a project during class at Mesabi Range College.



Instructor Scott Norcia works with MRC student Mark Youngman.



Jack Stavenger adjusts and repairs an electric motor.

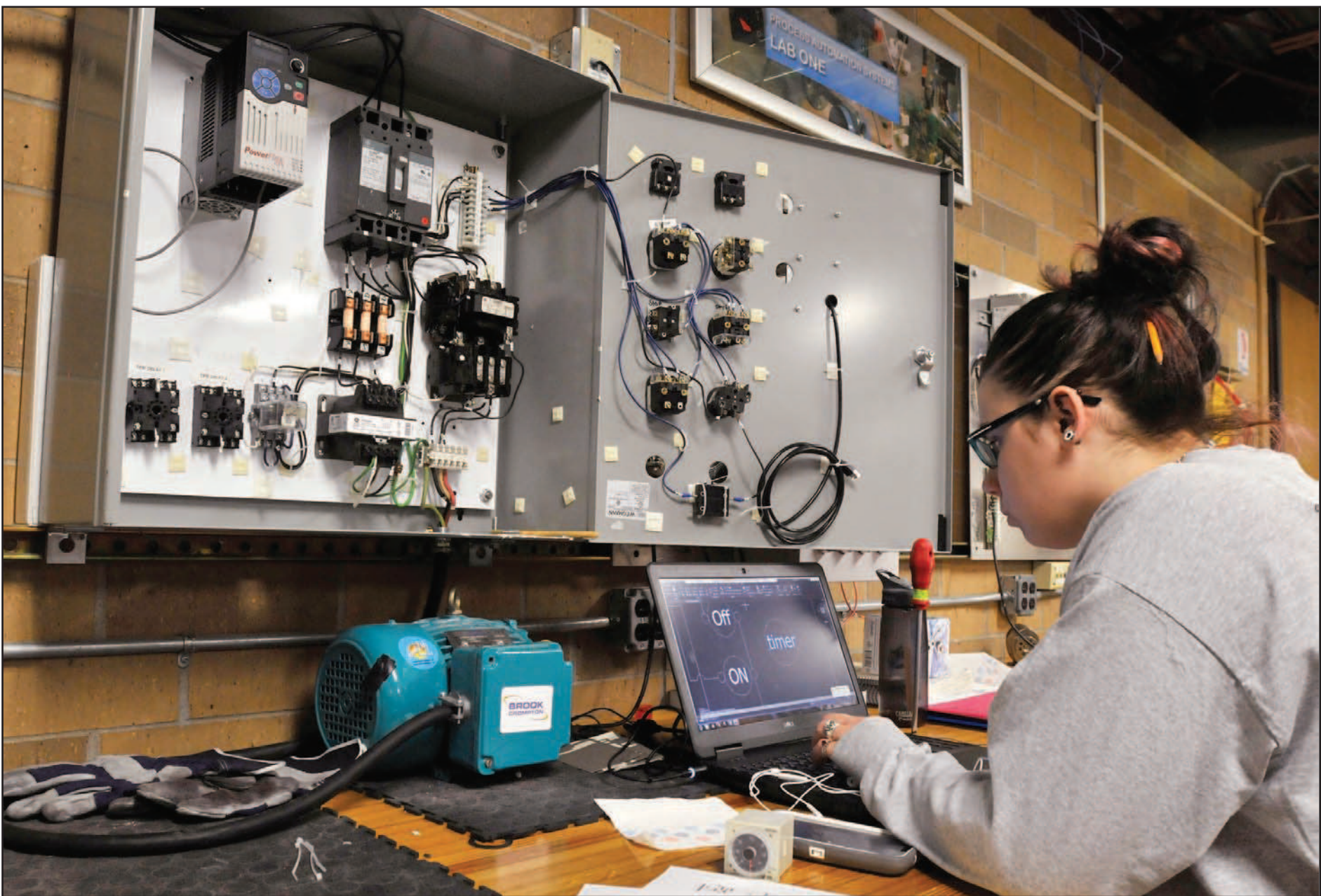


Jon Millett operates a video truck simulator.



Students work in the Mesabi Range College welding shop.

MARK SAUER/MESABI DAILY NEWS



Mesabi Range College student Karly Millen runs a diagnosis on an electrical system. As part of the training program, instructors will sabotage the systems leaving it to the students to find and fix the new problems.

MRC

FROM PAGE 13

Companies such as Joy Global; ArcelorMittal; Ziegler CAT in Buhl, which in part services mining equipment; and TRITEC, a steel fabricating and machining facility in Virginia.

Welding instructors at the college encourage students to think for themselves, Pelkey said. "They teach you what to look for, how to critique your own mold, what a good weld looks like," he said.

Students are able to do "code-level

work" and learn all four positions of welding — flat, horizontal, vertical and overhead.

Second-year students have the opportunity to do actual repair projects, and currently they are "building a motorcycle" — turning a road bike into a cruiser-style, Pelkey said.

"The camaraderie is good" among students, he said, adding that he encourages anyone interested in welding to enroll at the college. Students are ready to get into the workforce. "That's why we're all here," said Pelkey, who previously was employed

SEE MRC, PAGE 16



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Jon Millett uses a 3-D melding simulator to practice his skills at Mesabi Range College.



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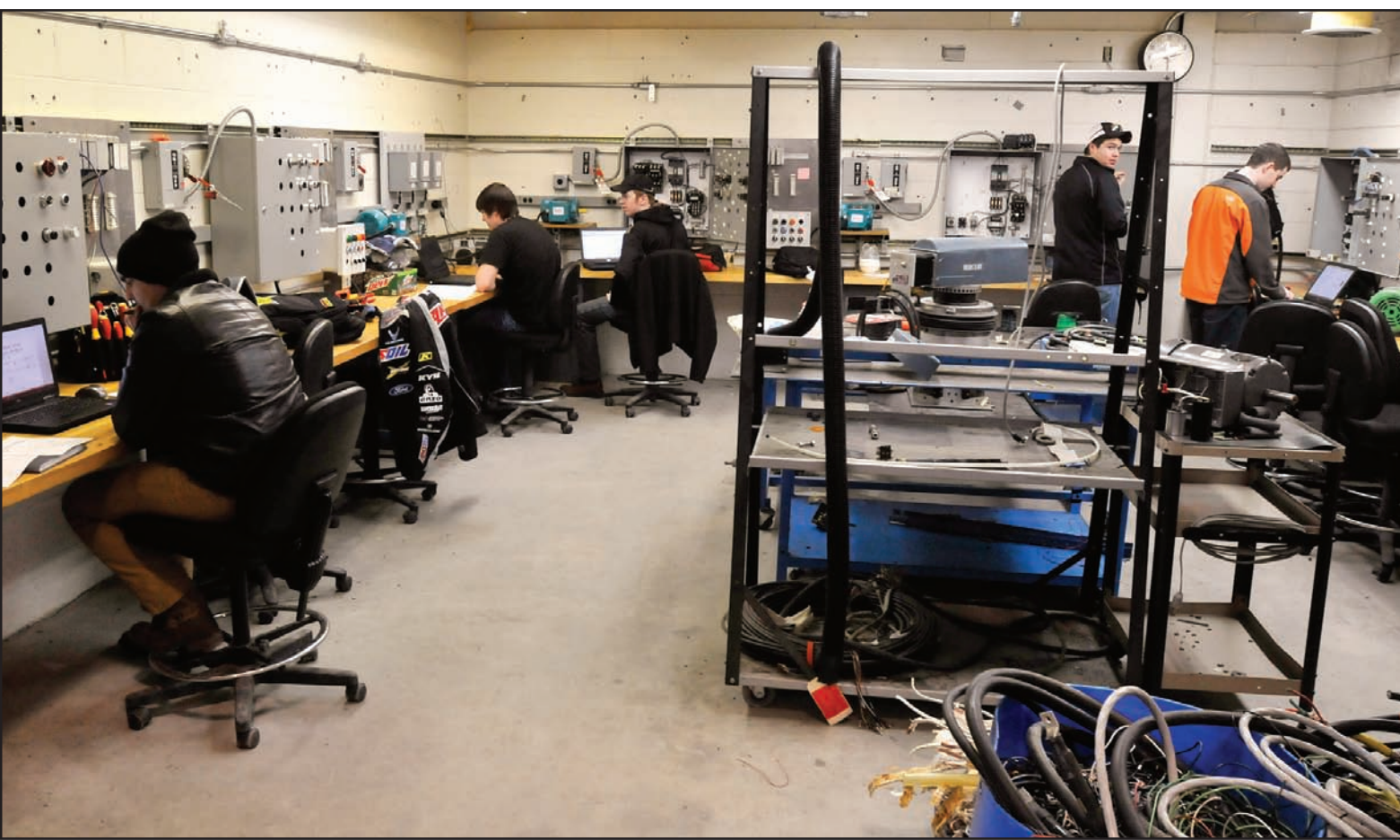
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Mesabi Range College students practice troubleshooting electrical systems.

MARK SAUER/MESABI DAILY NEWS

MRC

FROM PAGE 15

in home health care and as a cook at area restaurants.

His wife prompted him to do something he was really passionate about, and he thus signed up at Mesabi Range, he said.

"There's no ceiling to what you can learn. It's a no-boundary school," he said. Instructors have "an open door policy," and students who want to learn something from another teacher to enhance their knowledge can feel free to ask, he added.

"It used to be that if your mom or dad or uncle worked in the mines, you could get a job there," says Bill Parker, Mesabi Range adjunct engineering instructor.

"Now the mines demand the best in the workforce," added Parker, who worked 32 years at Minntac.

The college proudly offers that top-notch training, he said. While the majority of students are from the area, some come from as far as the Twin Cities or places such as Colorado to learn skills that will provide them with the expertise to take mining or mining-related jobs.

"Electricians, millwrights and welders are big crafts today," he said.

The college's Industrial Mechanical Technology Shop offers space for students to accomplish hands-on learning at its finest, he says on a recent day, showing off the shop where students work on laser shaft alignment, gear, lubrication and crane trainers.

There, instructor Gerald "Chico" Hill, who worked for 38 years as a millwright with U.S. Steel, supervises.

The IMT program covers hydraulics, pneumatics, lubrication systems, heating and cooling systems, and welding. Students learn troubleshooting, repair procedures and use of hand and power tools, and knowledge is put to use in the repair of actual plant and pit equipment such as cranes, pumps, speed reducers and field equipment.

Millwrights and mechanics find work in a variety of manufacturing and processing facilities, in fabrication and at mining companies, and job placement is

SEE MRC, PAGE 17



Mesabi Range College students Ernest Moberg and Devin Rowe work on a biofuel processor.

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Alexx Burke works on a welding project.

MARK SAUER/MESABI DAILY NEWS

MRC

FROM PAGE 16

high since the industry cannot afford to be shut down for too long.

Safety is also of high priority, Hill said. "We work safety into every class."

Students, as well, have a high level of flexibility in the hands-on portion of the program. If they have the materials, "they can bring their own projects in," he said.

The college's Process Automation Systems program also has high job placement, said instructor Scott Norcia.

The two-year program provides training in the areas of electrical maintenance, industrial electronics, process control, instrumentation, fluid power, electrical-mechanical systems and integrated computer control.

Graduates have taken jobs at such companies as U.S. Steel, United Taconite, ArcelorMittal, as well as Minnesota Power, UPM/Blandin Paper, and at wastewater treatment plants, said Norcia, who was a student at the college in the mid-1980s.

"Technology is changing so fast," and with an influx of new automation

systems, there is a need for people to keep them running, he said. "There are many great job opportunities."

Karly Millen, who grew up north of Cotton, is the only female in the program, and that makes the first-year student proud.

She is hoping that she will pave the way for more female students interested in the field, she said.

While students in the program are prepared to work in many industries in addition to mining — including paper and pulp, manufacturing and transportation — Millen comes from a family of miners and would like to follow in their footsteps, she said.

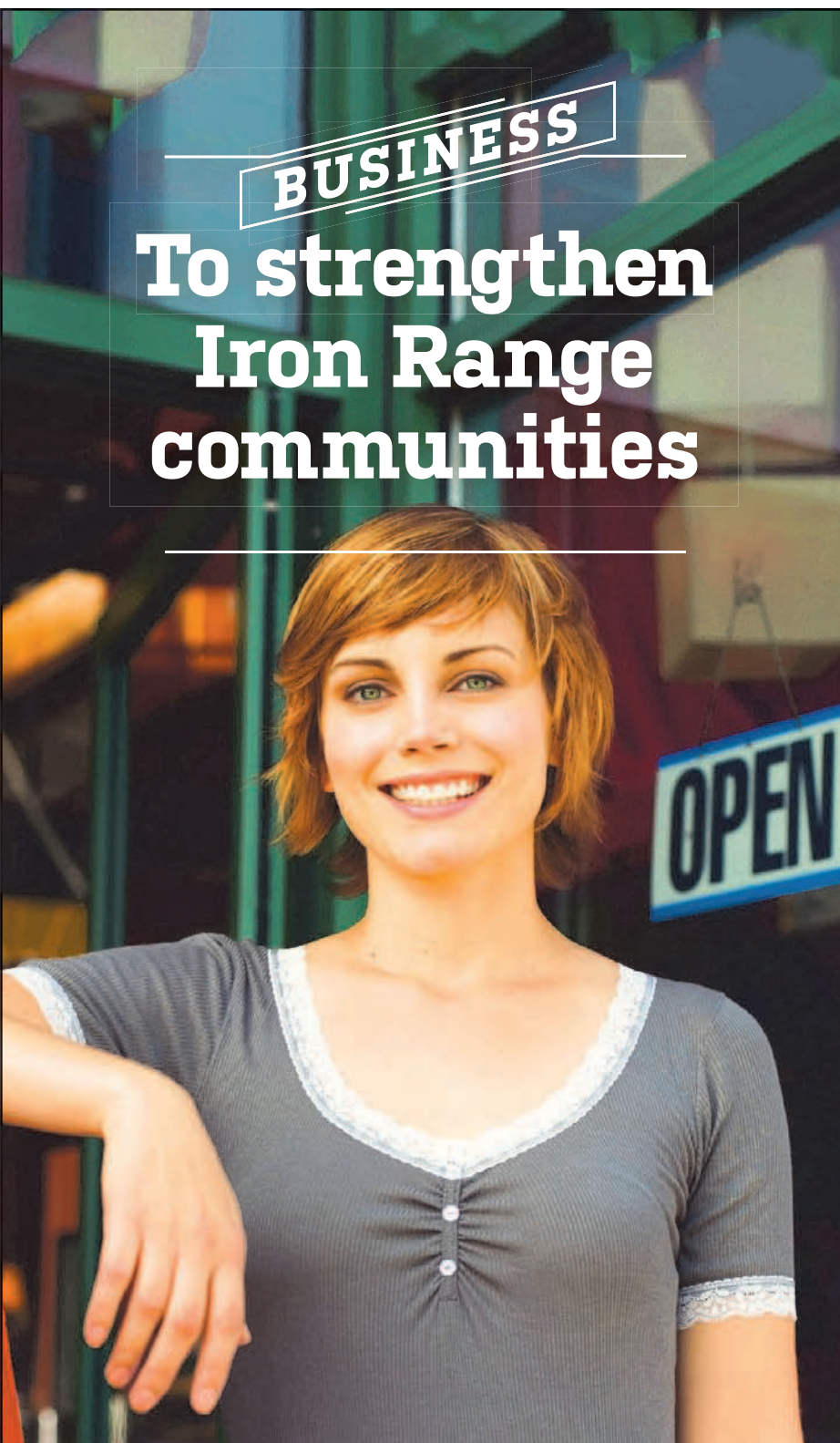
She said she got the "electricity bug" as a child, and was always interested in electrical systems.

The program, like its welding and IMT counterparts, is also highly hands-on.

Students "learn how to learn how to figure things out themselves," Norcia said.

"When there is a problem, you have to figure it out," Millen said. And that surely applies to real-world jobs, where complicated systems need to be repaired, she said.

"So far, I really like the program," she said. "It's a lot of fun."



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SAFE MINING CULTURE

Former Greenway Raider coordinator at Magnetation

TONY POTTER
HIBBING DAILY TRIBUNE

COLERAINE — A desire to be part of the Iron Range's rich mining tradition is what prompted a former Greenway Raider to return home after college.

"I'm excited to be back in the area and to work in a profession that is such a huge part of its culture," said Gina Gould, safety coordinator for Magnetation's Plant 4.

She said her love for helping others, combined with some advice from one of her college professors, is what inspires her to bring optimism to the office and the pit each day.

"A professor in college told me, 'You should always go to work with the same twinkle in your eye Monday morning as you do when you come home on a Friday evening,'" she said. "She told us, 'You have every opportunity to go get the job that you want and hopefully you find it.' I think that I have because I do get excited to come to work. I enjoy the people. I enjoy what I do."

Securing a job in the mines was Gould's plan when she first enrolled at the University of Minnesota-Duluth, where she earned both a bachelor's and a master's degree in health and safety.

"I feel that by being a safety coordinator, I can help make a difference in people's lives," she said. "I can train them, educate them and be part of a great company."

SEE SAFETY, PAGE 19

"I enjoy the people. I enjoy what I do."



Magnetation safety official Gina Gould poses at Plant 4 in Coleraine.

MARK SAUER/MESABI DAILY NEWS



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A truck empties a load of ore at Magnetation's Plant 4 in Coleraine.

SAFETY

FROM PAGE 18

Having the opportunity to work directly with all of the employees is the best and most important part of the job, Gould said.

"I love getting to know them and getting to know their stories," she said. "It makes them feel at home, and gives me a better understanding of how I can help them."

Magnetation's culture is built around creating a family-oriented environment known as the "Mag Family."

"We all work so closely

together. We are like one big family here," she said. "That's a big part of my daily routine. It's something I take very seriously."

Gould starts each morning by giving a safety talk prior to employees receiving their daily assignments. She then walks around the facilities to observe and assist employees, as well as to inspect the plant and the pit for potential hazards.

She's worked for Magnetation for about 10 months now, and admits that the job challenging at times. And its those experiences that she truly

SEE SAFETY, PAGE 20



Gina Gould routinely checks chemical storage cabinets looking for safety issues.



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MARK SAUER/MESABI DAILY NEWS

Gould checks in with a repair team to make sure they have all the safety equipment they need.



Gould performs a walk-through inspection of a storage warehouse at Magnetation.

SAFETY

FROM PAGE 19

embraces.

"I have an optimistic attitude to where I take any challenges that come up and work through them," she said. "There's never going to be a cookie cutter day here, but that's part of what makes this job so exciting."

Gould said her positive attitude and willingness to find ways to accommodate the needs of employees makes her a valued member of the Magneta-

tion team.

"We've all done a good job at working together and creating an excellent safety culture," she said. "All of our employees understand the value and need for safety in the workplace."

Human Resources Manager Sean Colter said Gould is a great addition to the "Mag Family."

"A big part of our workforce is culture. I feel she's brought not only the necessary skills, but also the cultural aspects that help make us successful," he said. "Like the rest of our staff, she

SEE SAFETY, PAGE 21



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Gina Gould checks pressure gauges on fire extinguishers.

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NEWS

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Respect	Justice
Stewardship	Teamwork



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Gould walks around a parked truck to make sure it is being stored properly. Gould inspects all unused equipment.

SAFETY

FROM PAGE 20

is very team-oriented. That's something we all take pride in."

That team-oriented culture is part of why Gould said she's proud to tell people she works for Magnetation.

"I feel like I'm making a difference. I'm proud of mining as an industry, and proud to be a part of it," she said. "Women as much as men should take advantage of the opportunity to get into a mining career because it's a solid industry that provides good paying jobs, especially if you enjoy this area like I do."



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SILVER TSUNAMI

Table 1. Northeast Minnesota Industry Employment Statistics, Q2 2014

NAICS Industry Title	NAICS Code	Number of Firms	Number of Jobs	Quarterly Payroll	Avg. Annual Wages
Total, All Industries	0	8,647	142,632	\$1,367,814,133	\$738
Mining	21	30	4,582	\$99,558,157	\$1,671
Mining (except Oil and Gas)	212	24	4,490	\$98,517,485	\$1,688
Metal Ore Mining	2122	10	4,452	\$98,136,037	\$1,696
Nonmetallic Mineral Mining & Quarrying	2123	14	38	\$381,448	\$772
Support Activities for Mining	213	6	91	\$1,040,672	\$880

Source: DEED Quarterly Census of Employment & Wages (QCEW) program

New workers land jobs in a wave of retirements

TONY POTTER
HIBBING DAILY TRIBUNE

HIBBING — The vast majority of today’s mining workforce will soon be swept away in a wave of retirement and replaced by a sea of youthful workers.

About 50 percent of mining employees are ages 45 to 65, which makes the “Silver Tsunami” a viable — yet surmountable — threat to the industry, said Erik White, Northeast Regional Analyst for the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED).

“The impact of these Baby Boomer retirements will have a huge impact on the mining industry and will hit the economy hard as well,” he said.

All mining companies are certainly aware of it, added White, and are preparing for it by currently seeking out the next generation of mining workers.

“This issue is well known and at the forefront of big economic issues for Minnesota and nationally,” he continued. “Considering Northeast Minnesota has an older population, the ‘Silver Tsunami’ might bear a bigger punch here than in other areas of the state.”

Mining provided 4,582 jobs at 30 firms in Northeast Minnesota in the second quarter of 2014 and just under \$100 million in quarterly payroll, according to DEED’s Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) program.

Mining accounts for about 3.2 percent of total regional employment and 7.2 percent of total regional payroll, with average weekly wages that were more than double the total of all industries in the region.

The “Silver Tsunami” refers to how as Baby Boomers age, they will retire and could potentially do so en masse. This poses an issue for the mining industry as its workforce consists heavily of persons from that generation, White said, noting the issue will also affect all other sectors of the workforce.

“An interesting trend with the mines, however, is it has a much older workforce than other industries,” he said. “Those individuals age 50 to 69 will eventually leave a lot of jobs that will need to be replaced.”

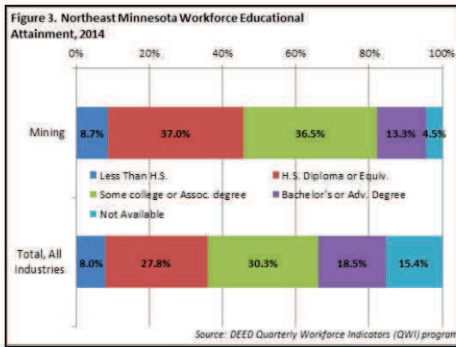
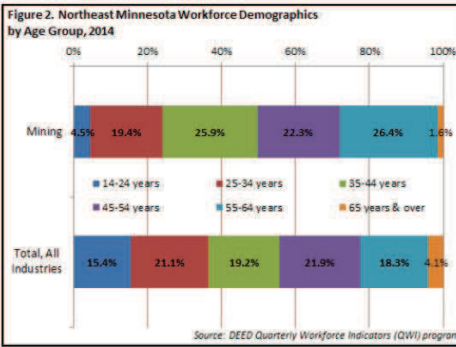
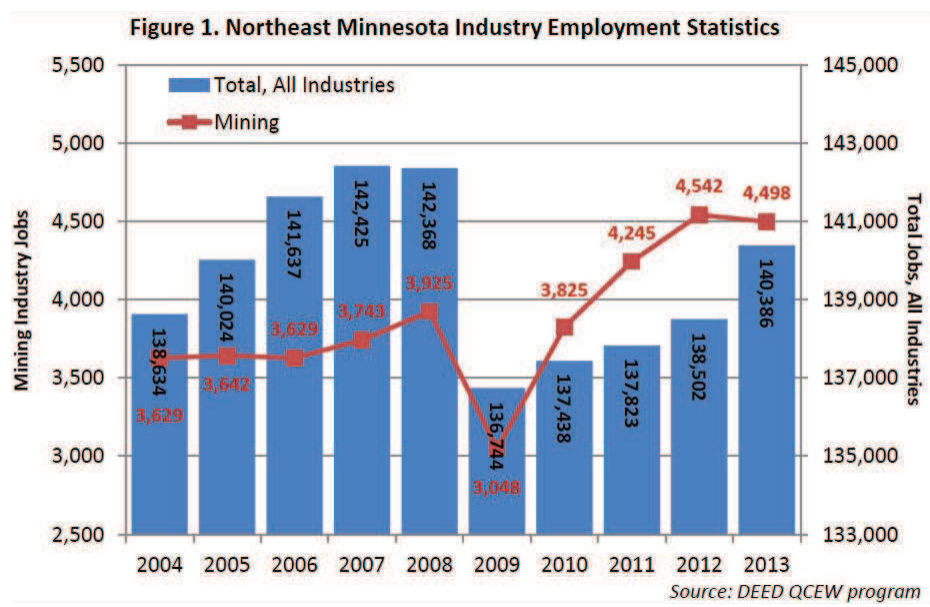
How great of an impact the “Silver Tsunami” will have is unknown.

“Projections are always different than what actually occurs. It’s like being a weatherman and trying to predict the weather for next year,” White said. “One thing I can guarantee is there will be a great need in the mines to replace workers, and it’s never too soon to start preparing.”

Due to the Baby Boomer generation spanning over 20 years, White said it’s safe to expect a healthy dose of retirements from the mines in the next 10 to 15 years.

“The drop out in the workforce from this generation will be significant,” he added. “It will create a major phenomenon over time.”

Annual data shows there is already some transformation in the age of the workforce. In 2000, 12 percent of the workforce was made up of persons age 18 to 35. About 25 percent of the current workforce consists of persons



from that age group, White said. “As the mining industry as a whole gets older, mining companies are investing more and more into the youth,” he said. “This is important because mining is still vital to the success of the entire region.”

After suffering significant job declines during the recession, the mining industry saw huge employment gains in the last five years — gaining 1,450 net new jobs from 2009 to 2013, which is a 47.6 percent increase. Mining accounted for nearly 40 percent of the region’s total job growth during that time frame.

Despite the “Silver Tsunami” readying to wreak havoc on the Iron Range, research by Drew Digby, economic and strategic analyst for the Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board (IRRRB), indicates that the region is in better shape than some may believe. His findings include:

- While the number of younger workers has been declining statewide, Northeastern Minnesota Industries now employ more workers under age 45 than it did in 2003.
- Mining in Northeastern Minnesota has undergone the most dramatic transformation. A decade ago, more than 69 percent of its employees were age 45 or older. Today, with more workers overall, less than half are 45 or older. The number of workers under 45 has increased by more than 1,000 over those 10 years.
- Overall, the percentage of workers in all industries in Northeast Minnesota that are age 45 or older has grown from just over 43 percent to just under 48 percent. While still higher than the state average, the shift to an older workforce has not been as dramatic in Northeastern Minnesota as it has been statewide.
- The number of workers and 65 and older has nearly doubled — from about 2,200 to nearly 4,000.

It was the mines who first start looking into the “Silver Tsunami” locally about 10 years, according to Roy Smith,

here.”

However, it takes more to land a job with a major employer than it used to. Most companies require at minimum a two-year college degree or military experience, Smith said.

“We know there is a need for technical, electrical and mechanical skills, and that’s why we are investing so heavily in education,” he said. “Those industries are growing and expanding, but they need the talent to fill those needs. That’s why it’s important that we’re ahead of the game. We don’t have just skilled workers in our area, but we have a quantity of them.”

Ron Wirkkula retired from Hibbing Taconite in 2009 after 33 years of service. He said it’s good to see local mining companies putting an urgency on reloading themselves with youthful workers.

“The workforce is constantly changing from one generation to the next, but there’s certainly a huge amount of Baby Boomers working in the mines today,” he said. “I’m sure that number has dwindled a bit in recent years, but I still know some of the guys out there.”

But the signs of change in the mining industry are definitely noticeable.

“When I see guys who still work there they say, ‘You would know hardly anyone anymore,’” Wirkkula said. “It seems like every day I see someone around town or hear about someone who has retired from there.”

He said knowing the mines are invested in the region’s youth reassures him that the “Silver Tsunami” won’t have a negative impact on the Iron Range.

“You always need new people to come in and take jobs. You don’t want your town to become a retirement community,” Wirkkula said. “I’m glad that there are more and more new people in the workforce each day. That will keep the industry up and running, which is great for both retirees who have earned their pensions and the economy as a whole.”

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GUEST COLUMN

MARK
PHILLIPS
IRRRB Commissioner

Mining played major role in family history of new IRRRB Commissioner

Like most Iron Range families, mining plays a prominent role in my family history.

Some of my earliest memories involve playing near Fayal Mine in my hometown of Eveleth, not far from the roads that were red from iron ore. Both of my grandfathers were hard rock miners, back in the days of underground mining, when miners barely saw the light of day.

My wife Patty is a native of Buhl, and her grandfather also was a miner.

Patty and I met at the University of Minnesota-Duluth, graduating in 1972 and marrying in 1974.

Unlike our grandfathers, we didn't pursue careers in mining. She followed a career in education, and worked in the Virginia School District for 20 years as a teacher, principal and superintendent. I went into business, following a path more similar to my father, who ran an automotive dealership, a gas station and an oil company.

We chose to raise our family on the Iron Range. Our children Jessica and Joe both graduated from Virginia High School. Jessica now lives and works in the San Francisco Bay area with her husband and two young boys, while Joe lives and works in Virginia.

Over the years, I began to focus my career on economic development, which is my passion. In the mid-80s, I served as the director of community and economic development at Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board. I then worked in banking for a short time before working in economic development at Minnesota Power and Northeast Ventures.

I became a trailing spouse in 2005, when Patty's career path led her to the metro area, where she is currently completing her 10th and final year as superintendent of the North St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale School District. She is looking forward to retiring in northeastern Minnesota, the region we have both always called "home."

I joined the team at Kraus-Anderson Construction Company for several years, until being appointed commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development. I then returned to Kraus-Anderson. All total, I have 25 years of economic development experience in the private sector and eight in the public sector.



Mark and Patty Phillips.

SUBMITTED

Earlier this year, my career in economic development came full circle and brought me back to the Iron Range. I was given the honor and responsibility, as commissioner, to lead the work of IRRRB, continuing the agency's history of exemplary work and all it has accomplished since its establishment in 1941.

With a staff of 57, our mission is to promote and invest in business, community and workforce development for the betterment of northeastern Minnesota. We work diligently to support the existing mining industry, expand the mining opportunities for new companies, and diversify the regional economy.

IRRRB programs and operations are funded by a portion of taconite production taxes, paid by mining companies in lieu of local property taxes on each ton of iron ore products (concentrate, pellets, or nuggets) produced.

Much of the agency's business support is directed toward manufacturing and fabricating industries and companies that help diversify the regional economy. However, financial

assistance provided by IRRRB also has helped create new value-added products such as iron nuggets and iron unit reclamation, creating hundreds of construction and permanent jobs across the region.

Of course, today's mining is not our grandfathers' mining. Production has been improved by both technology and equipment advances. Minnesota is home to six taconite pellet operations: Keewatin Taconite, Minntac, Hibbing Taconite, United Taconite, Northshore Mining, and ArcelorMittal.

Iron ore pellet production in Minnesota averages 40 million tons per year, which is well more than 80 percent of the U.S. domestic demand.

Minnesota is also home to the world's first iron nugget plant, Mesabi Nugget, supplying the electric arc furnace market. Magnetation is reclaiming iron from tailings basins created by our grandfathers. The company has grown rapidly and operates three facilities plus a loading facility.

Beyond iron ore pellets, iron ore concentrate and nuggets, IRRRB supports the development of a nonferrous mining industry in northeastern Minnesota. The Duluth Complex, with an estimated 4 billion tons of crude,

nonferrous ore, is the largest unmined deposit of base and platinum group metals in the world.

I have always been a strong supporter of environmentally-compliant mining. I feel that we need to do it right, by setting standards and then staying the course and not changing the rules as we go along.

There are many reasons to be optimistic about the state of the mining industry in the region. Here are a few:

- In 2013, there was an average of 4,498 jobs in mining compared to a post-LTV peak of 3,925 in 2008.

- Mining jobs are much better paid than a decade ago, up 18.5% after inflation at an average of \$88,816 annually.

- Mining has 1,200 more employees under age 45 than it did a decade ago.

No, today's mining is not our grandfathers' mining. It has clearly evolved into a safer, cleaner and much more high-tech industry.

However, the industry is still fueled by hard-working men and women, who put in an honest day's work and are able to raise their families in the region they love.

I think our grandparents would approve.



The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources works with citizens to conserve and manage the state's natural resources, to provide outdoor recreation opportunities, and to provide for commercial use of natural resources in a way that creates a sustainable quality of life.

In northeastern Minnesota, the DNR's regional management team oversees a multi-disciplinary review of proposed projects to ensure goals for conservation are balanced with the public's need for use and development of natural resources.



DNR NE Regional Management Team: front row (L to R) Darrell Schindler, Planner; Patty Thielen, Forestry; Lori Dowling-Hanson, Regional Director; Traci Cramer, Business Office; Jenny Benes, Office Supervisor; second row (L to R) Cheri Zeppelin, Information Officer; Captain Tom Provost, Enforcement; Pete Clevens, Minerals; Tim Goeman, Fisheries; Jean Dolensek, Operations Services; Scott Kelling, Parks and Trails; Mike Ploquin, Ecological and Water Resources; and Joe Rokala, Lands. (Not pictured: Jeff Lightfoot, Wildlife; Mike Larson, Wildlife Research)



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Rock and dust fill the air as a blast at United Taconite concludes.

MARK SAUER/MESABI DAILY NEWS/FILE

KA-BOOM

MORE THAN 100 YEARS OF BLASTING

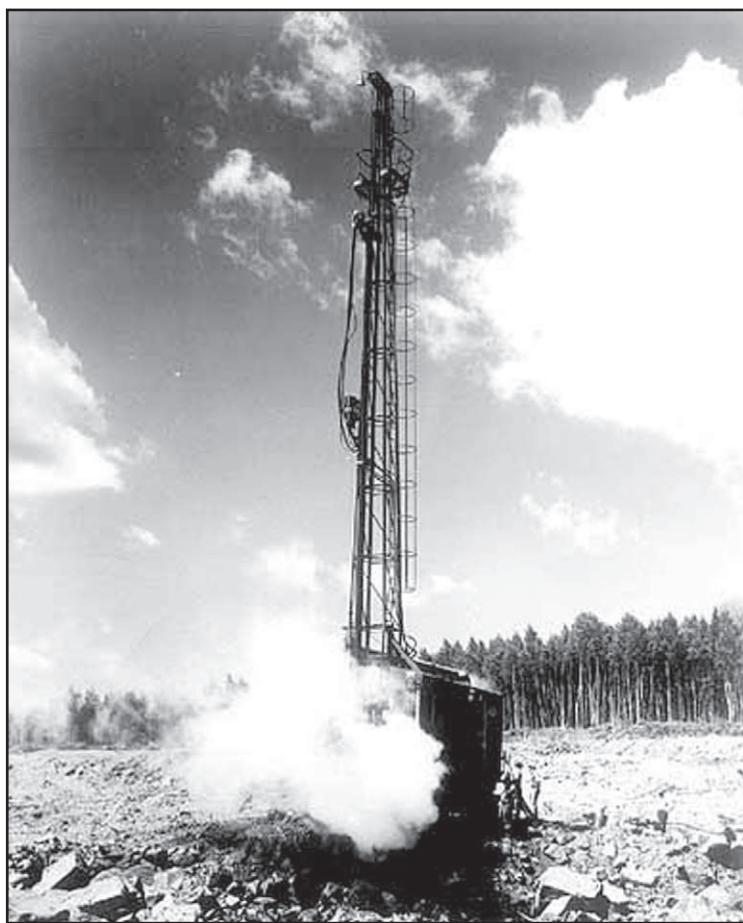
LISA ROSEMORE
HERALD-REVIEW

Long-time Iron Rangers would feel and hear an earth-shaking ka-boom and know. They're blasting at the mines again.

Hearing and seeing those mine blasts today are few and far between, thanks to improvements in technology and technique, but using explosives to mine the iron ore deposits on the Range has been a part of iron mining since the late-1800s.

The University of Minnesota's Minnesota School of Mines Experiment Station published a bulletin in 1913, "Iron Mining In Minnesota" written by Charles E. Van Barneveld. In the bulletin, Van Barneveld described processes of mining by explosives.

While drilling, boulders would first need to be blasted, he wrote. "The ordinary procedure is to use from one to six 8-inch sticks of 7/8-inch 60 percent Hercules dynamite, wire them together, insert an electric exploder and lower this into the hole by means of the electric lead wires connected to a blasting machine of the push-rod type. The (drill) casing is raised out of the way and the blast exploded. Large boulders often



MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

A jet piercing rig burns nine-inch blast holes from 15 to 25 feet deep at the Peter Mitchell Mine near Babbitt around 1960.

need several blasts and sometimes it takes a day or two to pass through one boulder."

Blasting casing could be difficult, Van Barneveld wrote.

"Blasting casing, while seemingly a simple operation, is at times subject to unac-

countable troubles," he wrote. "Cap after cap may go off, failing to explode the charge; sometimes days at a time are consumed in vain attempts. The bottom of the casing may remain intact and unmoved while the casing may split

longitudinally 25 to 100 feet above the point of the blast."

He later wrote that "blasting casing is subject to many mishaps and is apt to be very slow work. One crew of three men, working day shift only, drilled 50 feet in taconite, blasted down and cased the entire distance with 3-inch casing in one week (six days), whereas a crew took over three weeks for the same work, most of the extra time being consumed in blasting down the casing."

After the drilled hole was "chopped out," the charge would be set, he wrote.

"The charge consists of a number of 8-inch sticks of 7/8-inch dynamite," Van Barneveld wrote. "The sticks are wired together so that they will hang straight in the hole, the exploder is inserted in the upper stick; the cylinder is lowered into the hole by electric lead wires."

Working with explosives in the mines in the early days was fraught with danger. The 1930 annual report of the St. Louis County mine inspector recounted two explosive-related fatalities, both in January 1930.

The first death, at the Agnew Mine in Hibbing, occurred when John Knezovich, 42, was "picking" in a

drift after 10 blasts had been detonated that morning. The mine inspector determined that an unexploded portion of the charge was left in the drift and "in some manner was exploded during the picking operation of the deceased."

The second death that January was at the South Agnew Mine in Hibbing. It wasn't an actual blast which killed Louis Levar, 38. The mine inspector's report explained that it appeared Levar was going to blast a large slab of rock and after setting a fuse, was walking on a pile of loose ore when a large boulder, from a fresh blast which Levar and his partner had just earlier performed, broke loose and fell on Levar, killing him instantly.

The mine inspector reports of the day also gave many safety tips and suggestions, and even specifically addressed explosives.

"The prevention of accidents in the use of explosives is a result of careful planning and observation of the best known practices," the reports said. "The explosives user must remember that he is dealing with a powerful force and that various devices and methods have been developed to assist him in direction

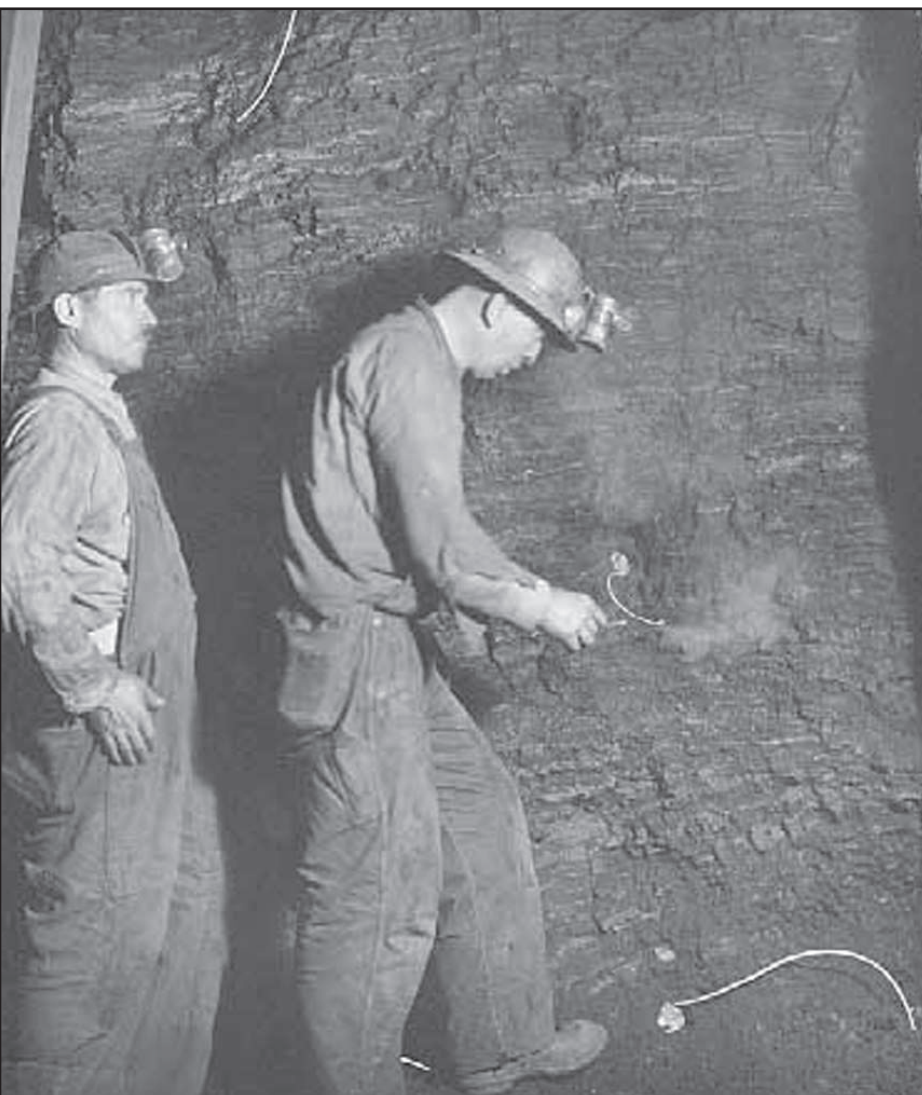
SEE BLASTING, PAGE 26



A blast hole drilling crew at the Mahoning Mine near Hibbing in 1901.



Miners prepare charging holes prior to blasting at the Godfrey underground mine near Chisholm sometime in 1935.



MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Miners prepare to light fuses to blast at the Godfrey underground mine near Chisholm sometime in 1935.

BLASTING

FROM PAGE 25

(sic) this force. He should realize that this force, if misdirected, may either kill or injure both him and his fellow workers."

Safety related to blasting components wasn't always relegated to the mines alone. Several 1950s era stories in the Virginia Range Times newspaper told of either thefts of blasting caps or warned parents of the potential dangers these blasting caps could cause the in hands of mischievous children.

"Police this week have issued a special warning to parents to be on the lookout for any or all of the 5,000 blasting caps and 500 electric caps, wires attached, feared stolen by children from a Duluth, Missabe and Iron Range Railroad freight car on the east end of Virginia," one story stated, calling the caps "highly explosive and dangerous."

Another story told of school presentations in which more than 5,800 students from across both the Vermil-

ion and Mesabi ranges were told of the dangers of picking up these caps.

"The tremendous amount of construction activity on the range and the high level of mining operations increases the possibilities of children picking up the caps," the Range Times story said. "Children were warned not to pick up caps – but to call an adult, preferably a policeman."

As years passed, blasting techniques and technologies were refined and improved. An Oct. 13, 1960 Range Times story told of mine company representatives viewing a "new 'metallized' blasting system" demonstration held by Dow Chemical Company at Jones and Laughlin's Schley Mine near Gilbert.

"Crews loaded and detonated four 10-inch holes approximately 45 feet apart using what Dow officials described as 'a new and novel explosive system developed in more than eight years of research,'" the front page story said. "...Those present seemed favorably impressed with the demonstration."

The story explained that "approximately 40,000 tones of hard, upper



MINNESOTA DISCOVERY CENTER

Miners ready the charging hole for blasting.

cherty taconite was blow from the face in a well-fragmented muck pike by 40,000 pounds of Dow explosives."

The story went on to say that Dow officials, after describing the explosives as a "metallized system: could not reveal further information on the process considerations.

Today, blasting is still used at the mines to release iron ore from the earth, but in today's world, it's much safer than years past.

One of the big changes is the products used, said Ron Shoden, general manager of Viking Explosives in Hibbing. Shoden has spent more than 43 years in the mining industry.

"It's not like the old days," he said. Dynamite, which could be leaky, is no longer used. Blasts are now detonated with bulk blasting agents.

Blasting today is very controlled, very safe, he said, explaining that it's now rare to have unplanned detonations.

Another change is safety and regulation.

"The rules and regulations are unbelievable," Shoden said, pointing out that federal agencies, including

the Department of Homeland Security and OSHA now figure into the blasting industry. "And when we go to the mines, they have their own set of rules."

There's "a lot of safety training" for those working with blasting, Shoden said. The Lake Superior Chapter of the International Society of Explosive Engineers holds a two-day training at Minnesota Discovery Center in Chisholm every year, which draws between 80 to 100 people.

Today's explosive engineers have also reduced the impact of blasts to the surrounding areas.

As years have gone by, "we've gotten smarter about blasting," Shoden said. Miners today pay close attention to weather conditions when planning a blast. One mine will send up a plane and measure air temperatures every 500 feet up to 6,500 feet.

As the plane ascends, the temperature should fall, he said. If it doesn't, that's when a temperature inversion has occurred and that's when the blast sound will carry.

The last thing a mine wants to do is upset its neighbors, he said.

L&L Rentals

Going above and beyond for family

TONY POTTER
HIBBING DAILY TRIBUNE

HIBBING — L&L Rentals takes pride in being a family-owned and operated business driven to serving its extended family from across the Iron Range to the North Shore, International Falls, Bemidji and Cloquet.

"Our employees and customers are our family, and boy that family has grown over the years," said Debra Lind, who owns the business along with her husband, Cliff.

Their son, Kyle, agreed.

"We go to their weddings and birthday parties. They are much more than just our customers," he said. "To still be open after 26 years and to have developed as many strong relationships as we have is awesome."

Established in 1982, L&L Rentals started out as a rental store, offering homeowners lawn and garden equipment. As the business grew, construction equipment was added to appeal to contractors and homeowners alike.

In 1990, merchandise sales were added, which grew to include concrete, masonry supplies, culverts and fabric, rebar and foam insulation.

Today, with a staff of 10, L&L Rentals offers a wide variety of rental equipment for contractors and homeowners for all of their earth moving, concrete and building projects.

It's the quality of their products and services that has helped L&L Rentals create such strong relationships with their customers.



TONY POTTER/HIBBING DAILY TRIBUNE

Owned by the Lind Family, L&L Rentals specializes in everything from the mines and construction to household projects. Pictured from left are: Debra, Tony, Cliff and Kyle Lind.

"These guys will dig and dig until they find what a customer needs," Debra said pointing to Cliff, Kyle and her other son, Tony.

Cliff said there is no doubt in his mind that great customer service is the key to running a successful business on the Iron Range.

"We will go out of our way to help the customer achieve their needs. We truly feel that's what we're here for," he said. "And if we don't have something, we'll find someone who does. We whole-heartedly believe in putting our customers and their needs

first."

Cliff said he had two reasons for starting the business on the Iron Range. After he was laid off from the mines in 1982, there were few jobs available to where he could afford to raise his family and there were few businesses in the area at the time.

"Honestly though, I had always wanted to venture on my own. That just pushed me into actually doing it," he said. "Now here we are 33 years later, and business is still going strong."

L&L Rentals supplies those same

mines that Cliff once worked for with rental equipment and other specialty products for building construction and maintenance.

Kyle said the family feels fortunate to be where they are today.

"We couldn't ask for better employees or customers. That's why we do our best to keep them happy," he said. "It's because of them that we do our best to keep our prices fair and to keep as much of our business local as possible. We're really big on that, which our customers appreciate."

Debra said what truly sets L&L Rentals apart from others in their field is the time they dedicate to each and every customer. She said from the second a customer walks in the door they are greeted with undivided attention that lasts until the customer is satisfied and on their way.

"Cliff will look at their plans and see what we can do to help. He will explain what we have to help them do it on their own, or help them find someone who can do it for them," she said.

Kyle noted they will also go out onto job sites to help troubleshoot problems.

"We've gotten where we are by busting our butts to make sure everyone is happy. We aren't about to stop doing that now," he said. "Our hope is to still be in business when they (his kids) are behind the desk. That's why we do everything from the mines to construction to a snake in your drain."

HOYT LAKES MAYOR

'We are on the right track. And I believe it's our turn.'

ANGIE RIEBE
MESABI DAILY NEWS

HOYT LAKES — Mayor Mark Skelton remembers a beautiful Saturday morning in June, not long after moving to Hoyt Lakes in 1977, when a ruckus outside his home kept him awake.

It's a sound that today he would gladly welcome.

And even on that day decades ago it was a delightful sort of commotion — albeit a little early in the a.m. on a weekend to fully appreciate.

Skelton, a Hibbing native, and his wife, Kathy, had moved from Duluth to Hoyt Lakes to take a retail job at a mining spin-off business. The town was thriving with a population of almost 4,000.

"It was a vibrant, young community," with many families and a workforce tied to the nearby mine. It was a perfect place to raise their two young sons, Skelton said on a recent day from his office at City Hall.

On this particular morning not long after becoming residents of the town, he and his wife — wanting to sleep in and knowing their children would be safe — let their boys join the other children outside.

However, any additional rest was virtually impossible, Skelton recalled. Not with the sounds of children laughing and screaming and the rumble of Big Wheels tricycles on the pavement.

"I kid you not, I counted 50 little kids on the street and in front of the house," Skelton remembered with a chuckle.

Hoyt Lakes was a "project town of the 1950s," built to accommodate the influx of workers at Erie Mining Co., which would later become LTV Mining Co.

"There was a shopping mall and the town was built around it," Skelton said.

The Hoyt Lakes he and his family moved into



MARK SAUER/MESABI DAILY NEWS/FILE

Hoyt Lakes Mayor Mark Skelton talks about the potential economic impact of the PolyMet copper/nickel/precious metals mine, which is planning to open in Hoyt Lakes, during last year's public comment session for the project's Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement at the Mesabi East High School in Aurora. More than 700 people attended the meeting, which was chaired by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Forest Service.

had Sears and Montgomery Ward catalog stores, a grocery store, hardware store, restaurants, a Ford dealership, gas station and repair shop — 20-some retailers along with two elementary schools filled with youngsters.

"You didn't have to leave town if you didn't want to," Skelton said.

"Fast forward to today, and we have about half the population. It's an aging community," said the mayor, who worked a number of years as a cop and spent 21 years on the local fire and ambulance department.

Today that department "is missing the generation" of his own kids and those younger. "We have two times the calls and half the volunteers." While the department does a good job, it — and the entire town — could benefit from a younger population, he said.

Hoyt Lakes no longer has a school, businesses have closed, the few retailers left struggle to keep open their doors, he added.

Of course, the blow to the town came in 2001, when LTV Mining ceased operations of its taconite and processing plant.

Some residents took service jobs, which were a step down in pay. Many were forced to move out of town completely.

Skelton considers his own family lucky, with one son who works for the local sheriff's office and the other who is employed at Minnesota Power in Grand Rapids. But many families are not that fortunate. Many grandparents know their grandchildren mostly from Skype and FaceTime conversations, said the mayor.

At one time the city had a successful hockey team. Now, the Metro area has the privilege of claiming those would-be Hoyt Lakes players on its school teams, he said. "Those are our kids implanted in the Twin Cities."

"You can't replace fourteen hundred jobs that were lost in one day" when LTV closed, Skelton said. But something needs to be done.

And what seems most promising are the new mineral projects in mining and biochemical initiatives in forestry, he said. "What we have are our natural resources." Yes, tourism, too, but those jobs are typically not as high-paying, he

added.

And as far as environmental concerns about copper, nickel, precious-minerals mining at places such as the proposed PolyMet project, "nobody is more concerned" about "doing it right" in an environmentally responsible way than area citizens who, like him, love the outdoors, Skelton said. "We owe it to the world

to do it responsibly."

"It's all about people and jobs," he said.

"And what does Hoyt Lakes have to offer? We have two beautiful lakes, a beautiful campground area, a golf course," and lots of good people, said the mayor.

"Home to me is the Range, not just Hoyt Lakes," said Skelton. The entire Iron Range has weathered plenty of ups

and downs, and it's time for some ups, added Skelton, who remembers growing up in Hibbing in a neighborhood that was also built for the mining industry.

At times, his neighborhood was filled with families. And when times were bad in the mines, the homes on his street were vacant — all except for his. "It was scary walking to school past all of the empty homes," he remembered.

Hoyt Lakes is "a mining town without a mine," said the mayor, who likes to "tease" city employees in Aurora about their neighboring city's reason for existence. Hoyt Lakes was established in the 1950s because Aurora didn't want any more people, and Erie Mining workers had to set down a foundation somewhere.

"I'm very optimistic about the future," Skelton said. "I think there are jobs on the horizon. We are on the right track. And I believe it's our turn," he said, noting that: "One job in Hoyt Lakes is good for Virginia" and so on.

"The story of Hoyt Lakes is a good story," said the mayor. "It's a sad story. And it's time to change that story."

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MARK SAUER/MESABI DAILY NEWS

Arrow Auto in Virginia takes care of the glass needs for the area's mines.

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From pedal-power to 'El Presidente'

BILL HANNA
MESABI DAILY NEWS

VIRGINIA — Clayton Zeidler once used pedal-power to get to work by bike from Mountain Iron to Arrow Auto Glass & Supply on Virginia's northside, just a block down from Chestnut Street.

"I got to know the quickest route. I got it down to where I would make it in 10 minutes or so. And I usually made it to work on time — usually," Zeidler said.

He is now sole owner — "El-Presidente," as he says — of Arrow Auto. And he's continuing a long and proud tradition of 66 years of family owner-

ship of a small business that has a big footprint on the Iron Range.

Hugo Aronen founded Arrow Auto in 1949. It was a real brotherhood — brother Bill was a partner and brothers Larry, John and Bob also worked the business.

Brian Aronen and Ed Zeidler — Clayton Zeidler's uncle and father —

would later partner as owners. Brian Aronen would buy out Ed Zeidler in 2008; and Aronen would sell the company to Clayton Zeidler in 2013.

A very favorable analogy between the brothers Aronen and the Cartwrights of the legendary 1960s television show "Bonanza" was por-

SEE ARROW AUTO, PAGE 29



Retail section at Arrow Auto.

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MARK SAUER/MESABI DAILY NEWS

Arrow Auto owner Clayton Zeidler poses behind a gigantic mine truck windshield which is in for glass replacement in Virginia.

ARROW AUTO

FROM PAGE 28

trayed in a Pittsburgh Plate Glass Co. 1966 publication story. "Bonanza" was set in Nevada in the Old West, where a father and his three sons owned land and rode the Ponderosa.

The article reads in part: **"Five Aronen Brothers Ride the Mesabi Range Country."**

"Like the Cartwrights of TV fame, the Aronen brothers have a lot of territory to cover — about 2,500 square miles to be exact. But they ride a different type of range — their territory is the Mesabi Iron Ore Range in Northern Minnesota.

"Headquarters of the shop — The Arrow Auto Supply — is located in Virginia, Minn., about 60 miles north of Duluth.

By metropolitan standards, the population of the city of Virginia (15,000) hardly seems to provide the necessary potential to support an auto glass specialist. However, the city of Virginia is actually the hub of the 150,000 (people) Mesabi Range trade basin. Within a 55 mile radius of Virginia there's a lot of wide open spaces. But there's a lot of business, too, for those energetic enough to dig it out."



The Aronen brothers are pictured from left, Hugo, Bill, Larry, John and Bob. The inset photo is of their father.

SUBMITTED

The company's reach today touches Hibbing, Ely and even to the Canadian border in International Falls — along with other communities within those boundaries and some just outside that radius.

A satellite Arrow Auto shop in Hibbing was closed in 2014, but the company still has plenty of service in that city, Zeidler said.

The mining industry plays a critical role in Arrow Auto's bottom line. "About 40 percent



This is the first business card of Hugo Aronen.

of our business is with the mines," Zeidler said.

That mining business helps the company employ 10 people, includ-

ing the owner, Zeidler said.

The company also does upholstery work, interior and exterior ve-

hicle maintenance and has a full inventory of auto body supplies.

While "Bonanza" had a 14-year television run — which is lengthy in that fickle business — Arrow Auto is just a few years shy of seven decades of its doors open for business.

That speaks to quality work and great customer service, which have been trademarks of the company from the first day the Aronen brothers rode into the Iron Range business scene.

Zeidler is confident of a healthy future for Arrow Auto. "Business has been good and we certainly appreciate all our customers," he said.

And Arrow Auto's owner, who no longer hops on his bicycle to get to work, also appreciates very much his workers who are carrying on a proud business tradition.

"I have an excellent crew. They are the backbone of the company," Zeidler said.

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Staff with Dom-Ex in Hibbing, and H-E Parts Morgan from Peru and Chile sit at a meeting in January. The two are part of the same H-E Parts International company, and the visit was designed to strengthen best practices from both sides.

SUBMITTED

Iron Range

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Visit by South American Company

BRIAN AROLA
HIBBING DAILY TRIBUNE

HIBBING — A benefit of globalization is how easily it allows innovation to quickly make its way from one part of the world to the next, leading to high quality of performance across the board.

But while ideas can be exchanged through phone calls or email, seeing how a company does business with your own eyes is still crucially important — as companies like Dom-Ex in Hibbing and H-E Parts Morgan can now attest to.

The two are owned by Atlanta-

based H-E Parts, which prompted Morgan representatives from Chile and Peru to come to Hibbing recently to see how the Iron Range business is run.

H-E Parts Morgan has headquarters in both Canada and Santiago, Chile, while Dom-Ex is a part of H-E Parts Mining, the USA division of H-E Parts International.

Stretching from Canada to the thin coastal country of Chile, the business's footprint covers most of the north and south portions of the western hemisphere.

Cesar Jonquet Marsano, general

SEE DOM-EX, PAGE 31

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H-E Parts Morgan representatives from Chile and Peru take a sight seeing tour of Hibbing, which included a stop along Bob Dylan Drive.



Representatives from H-E Parts Morgan in Chile and Peru stand in the snow outside Dom-Ex in Hibbing in January. SUBMITTED

DOM-EX

FROM PAGE 30

manager of H-E Parts Morgan in Peru, was among the South American contingent who made the trip to Hibbing. He said Dom-Ex's experience in the industry can be a great benefit to operations back in his country.

"It's a very similar business, so we're here because Dom-Ex has been around 35 years and is an experienced company," he said. "There's a lot of places where we can learn and understand to use in our country."

Similar process, different product

Both Peru and Chile have areas that are every bit the mining powerhouses that the Iron Range is, but the miner-

als in abundance differ greatly.

While the Iron Range's mineral du jour is taconite, Chile and Peru stand out for their copper, gold and silver. Chile is by far the world's top producer of copper, while Peru ranks highly in silver and gold production.

The mineral resources are different, and so is the size of the cities the companies work out of, said Jonquet. In Peru, H-E Parts Morgan has an office in the capital city of Lima, where nearly 10 million people inhabit.

It's about twice the population of the entire state of Minnesota.

"The funny part is I come from a city where we're something like 10 million, but we come here and everyone knows who you are," he said. "It's very nice."

The guests' stay in Hibbing wasn't very long, but Dom-Ex did give them enough of a tour to make the small-town feel of the Iron Range evident.

Dom-Ex General Manager Dana Ellefson said the welcome crew wanted to give the visitors a good look at the community — which include a stop along Bob Dylan Drive and lunch from Sammy's Pizza — as well as the business.

"They would have a better understanding of what we do in Hibbing — from remanning parts, to our history and our legacy — that we've been doing all these years," he said.

Although there's plenty of overlap, Dom-Ex and H-E Parts Morgan do differ in certain aspects of their operations.

Dom-Ex, for instance, supplies customers

worldwide with quality used and refurbished parts and complete mining machines.

H-E Parts Morgan, on the other hand, manufactures a wide range of in-house engineered materials as well as repairs for the mining, oil and gas, heavy construction and forestry industries.

• Common ground

Along with Jonquet and a colleague from Peru, six from Chile joined in on the trip, including Chile's Manager of Operations Eduardo Fernandez.

Fernandez was one of the couple who spoke English in the group, but said while the language gap may be wide, even the strictly-Spanish speakers understood the presentations given by the Dom-Ex crew.

The reason? Technical language is near universal.

"I speak just a little (English), they speak none," Fernandez said. "But they know what you're saying, the critical parts."

Basically, the sides were on the same page speaking-wise because they both deal with the same concepts in their repair businesses. And likewise, the trip now ensures they're on the same page as partners within the H-E Parts group of companies.

The guests should now know exactly what Dom-Ex does in Hibbing now, Ellefson said, which will mutually improve both operations.

"We're trying to find the synergies of our two companies and how we can help each other," he said.

Fernandez said the

travel time to get to Hibbing was long and the stay was short, but it was undeniably productive.

"The opportunity to be here is very important because they are performing a very good job here," he said. "We have an opportunity now to have good teamwork."

After Hibbing, the group went to Billings, Mont., where H-E Parts Mining is headquartered, and then to Seattle to visit H-E Parts B&G Machine.

Across all companies in the H-E Parts International group, the common thread that ties it all together is the mining industry.

Jonquet said what a visitor would see in Peru and Chile is that the mining industry is much the same no matter where you go. There's regulations you have to meet, along with safety and costs to consider.

"The mining business is the same everywhere," he said. "There's the same rules. Everybody is looking at the same target to save money, to be safe and to take care of the environment."

Soon, representatives from Dom-Ex may get to see for themselves what little difference there is. Talk has already begun on representatives from Dom-Ex returning the favor and visiting the operations in South America.

"That would be probably the follow up, that we would spend some time with them," Ellefson said.

Jonquet said the technology in his home country is up to par with anywhere else, so a trip might lead to a gain in valuable knowledge for

the Americans.

Like the Iron Range, Chile has a long history in mining. Peru is a newer, up and coming market, Fernandez said, which would make for an interesting visit that could lead to important developments to advance the market there.

"They have a very good market," he said. "They're growing up fast, and that's why we have an operation in Peru."

• Small, yet global

Globalization is making cross-continental communication more convenient by the day. But seeing who and what is on the other side of the screen can be just as valuable.

All sides came away from the visit to Hibbing saying they had a better understanding of how their partners run their business in a way that couldn't be duplicated unless it was face to face.

"Sometimes we're so busy doing our thing and they're doing their thing and we need to almost get face to face to get that connection point," Ellefson said.

Jonquet agreed, and said meeting the people they've communicated with so much will help make sure both businesses are using best practices.

For Shane Pence, North Central district manager for H-E Parts Mining, the visit also showed the global reach of Dom-Ex and its partners.

"It's really interesting to see this small community but global reach," he said.



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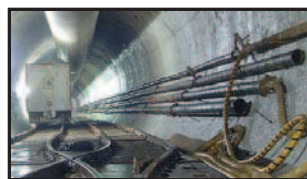


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SUBMITTED PHOTO

Pictured, from left, are Amanda Nelson, Hattie Gould and Deb Adams-Koltes.

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- Connecting families to adult service agencies before a student leaves

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- Helping ensure that services support the youth's goals and lead to successful outcomes; and
- Helping identify and cultivate natural supports in the community.

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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.

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Career path in mining country: ‘I can do that’

ANGIE RIEBE
MESABI DAILY NEWS

AURORA — Bryan Harp grew up in Aurora, the son of a miner. It was never his own dream to go into mining. Yet, his career path has been tied to the industry for years. He thoroughly enjoys his current work. It's work that, in fact, at one time he didn't even know existed.

Harp, 39, father of two daughters and owner of his own Iron Range company, became the self-made man he is today in large part by answering questions affirmatively.

In the early-2000s, Harp found himself working inside a mine — though not a mine where iron ore any longer was being extracted; rather, where scientists were conducting work in the far reaches of a former mine in an underground laboratory.

Harp was among the crew that built the massive neutrino detector for the MINOS project that collects data on subatomic particles on the 27th level of the Soudan Underground Mine.

You could say it was his first connection to mining, he agrees.

Then, around 2005, as interest in the potential of non-ferrous deposits grew — with PolyMet Mining Corp. drilling core samples, and based out of the former LTV Mining plant near Hoyt Lakes — Harp learned of another job.

“My wife was working at Delta Dental (now DeCare Dental), and she knew a guy who did part-time security at PolyMet,” Harp explains.

“They needed someone to haul core samples from a garage in Parkville to the LTV building,” he said.

Harp said, “I can do that.”



Bryan Harp, owner of Core Solutions Concepts, Inc., based in Aurora-Hoyt Lakes, is pictured with core samples, which his company processes.

“It was supposed to be a weekend job,” but lasted longer. And so Harp began hauling core samples.

Some time later, “they needed tables for logging core.”

Harp said, “I can do that,” and he built a prototype. Pretty soon, he was requested to build 30 tables.

“The next question” came from PolyMet’s chief geologist, Richard Patelke, who inquired if Harp had ever cut core samples.

Harp — you guessed it — said sure

he could do that.

Patelke “handed me a catalog and said to ‘Order up what you might need,’” said Harp, whose background was in construction. “I’d cut wood, not rocks.” But Harp soon had a saw and a diamond blade, and he went on to cut core for PolyMet for about two years.

As major drilling for PolyMet decreased, it “freed up the drill rigs for IDEA Drilling (the premier core drilling company in the area) to do major

drilling at Birch Lake,” Harp said.

The Fraconia Minerals Corp. project, directed by the late Ernie Lehmann, drilled for non-ferrous mining samples at Birch Lake near Babbitt.

Lehmann, a well-known geologist dubbed the “grandfather” of copper-nickel mineral development in northeastern Minnesota, hired Harp to work on the Fraconia project.

“Ernie had been around the world. He’d been there and done that,” Harp

SEE CAREER, PAGE 34

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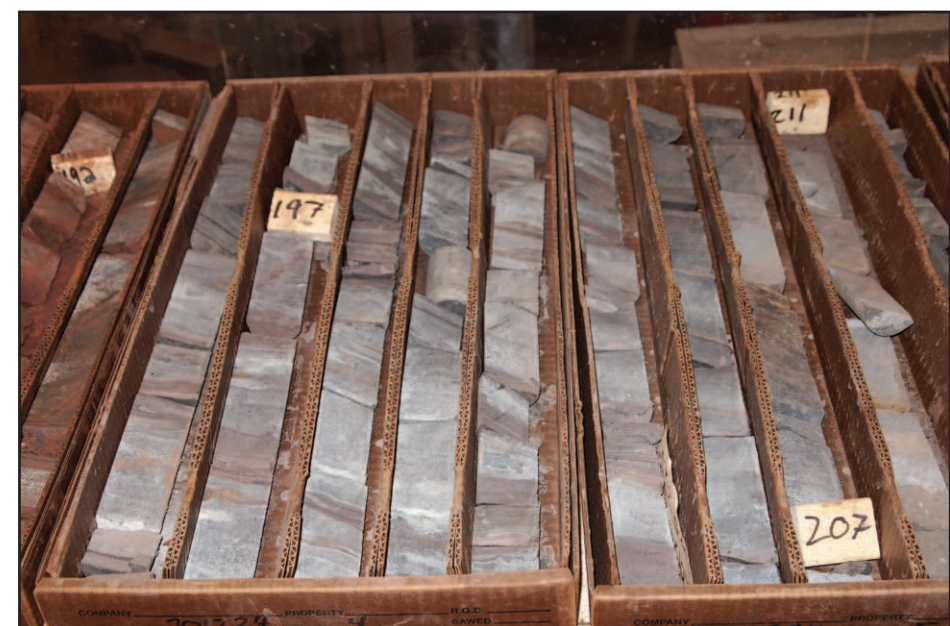


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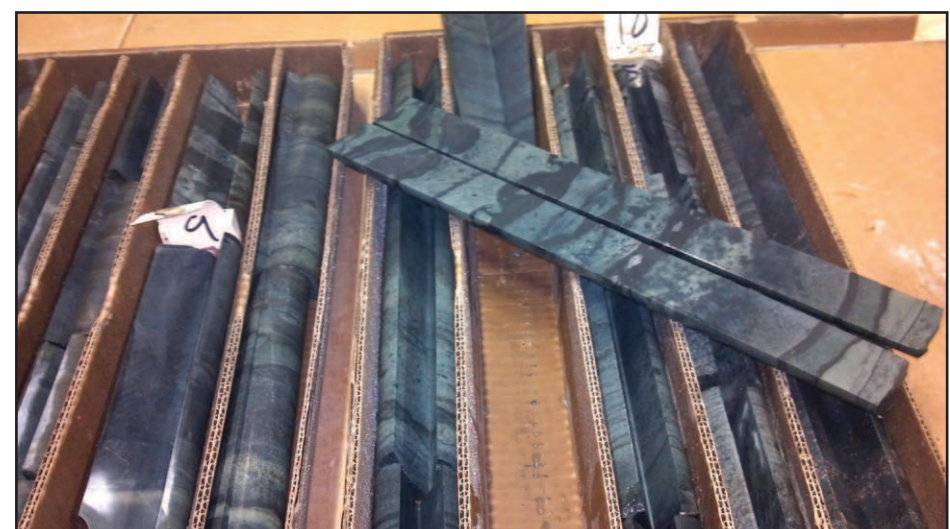
Shown is a one of Core Solutions Concepts' shops, where core samples are processed and logged.



Core samples are processed at Core Solutions Concepts, Inc.



Tables of core samples are shown at Core Solutions Concepts's shop. The company does core processing and provides management and technical services to precious metals exploration companies and the taconite industry.



Core samples are shown at Core Solutions Concepts, Inc., a company Bryan Harp of Hoyt Lakes opened in 2006.

CAREER

FROM PAGE 33

said. "I still considered myself pretty 'green.' I'd cut some core samples. I was kind of the 'go-to' guy as far as core samples."

But when Harp was told: "Here's a project; figure it out," Harp, indeed, did just that. And Lehmann's praise of his work "was a real confidence booster for me."

Harp had been working for temp agencies during those exploration projects, and in 2006, he decided he could start his own company.

And so, Core Solutions Concepts, Inc., was born.

The company does

core processing and provides management and technical services to precious metals exploration companies and the taconite industry.

Harp, with his company launched, continued a contract with the Fraconia project, and began doing work for Lehmann's Vermilion Gold project, which prospects for gold and other minerals across the region.

Harp explains Core Solutions Concepts like this:

"When a company has a mineral lease (to do exploration), they hire IDEA to drill, a geologist to do the logging (analysis) of the core, and I do everything else," he said.

"I'm a kind of boots-on-the-ground person."

Harp does everything from laying out core samples for geologists and providing geotech services to working with investors, giving tours and being the middleman between land owners and drilling companies regarding surface use agreements.

He sets up field offices and workshops, outfits and maintains shops with proper equipment and supplies, establishes vendor accounts, staffs the appropriate manpower and manages the daily operations.

Core Solutions Concepts, Inc., has a shop in Aurora that works with titanium, a shop in Virginia that works

with Vermilion Gold, and a couple shops in Hibbing, where the company has partnered with Lerch Brothers Inc., a lab that does iron ore analysis for the taconite mines.

"As exploration has died down, we do more services for the taconite companies," particularly core processing, Harp said. Core samples "need to be tested to know what the grade of the ore is."

His company has the proper equipment — diamond saw blades to cut core — to "maintain the integrity of the core samples," Harp explained. "It's a meticulous process." Every time a piece of core is handled, there is poten-

tial to compromise its integrity, he said.

Harp's company stores some core samples, but most end up in the core library in Hibbing, he said.

Harp, who lives in Hoyt Lakes with his wife, Alicia, and has two children, Paige, 20, and Brylee, 4, said of his work: At one time, "I didn't even know it was a job."

"There's not a textbook for it. You learn as you go."

And now he can't imagine doing anything else.

"There's nothing quite like picking up core from a drill site and laying it on the table and seeing the minerals. ...

Minerals that could one day be mined," he said with a smile.

Harp added that he wouldn't be where he is today without the help of three important people: Ernie Lehmann, Richard Patelke and Don Hunter, who was a project manager at PolyMet.

And he credits the "good help" of workers he has been lucky to hire through the years, as well.

"At one point I had seven full-time employees," Harp said. However, "since there isn't much happening with exploration, currently I am down to one worker. Hopefully if permits are issued for some of the proposed projects, exploration will see an uptick."

Harp is where he is today all because he was not afraid to be the "go-to" man whose answers to questions were consistently: "Yes, I can do that."

And it makes him proud when he is credited for doing a job well done — when he hears the words: "Harpo, you did a great job."



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'We Should Not Fear Change'

The Steel Economy:

In the first two decades of the last century, almost 200,000 people came to St. Louis County and the Iron Range looking for jobs, many of them related to the mining industry. Infrastructure exploded on the Range in the form of roads, office buildings, libraries, and schools. In the 1930s and 1940s, when my mother grew up around Orr, more than one-half of the iron ore extracted from the Earth came from the Range.

Record amounts of iron ore helped build America's ships, aircraft, armaments, and equipment in World War II. As the war effort escalated, 70 percent of the iron ore produced in America was from Range mines.

In the award-winning documentary, "Iron Range: Minnesota Building America," one geographer stated: "If the iron hadn't been here at all, the United States never would have achieved its position as a world power."

By 1978, seven Iron Range plants produced more than 50 million tons of taconite pellets per year, directly employed 13,000 people who made an average of \$65,000 per year, and supported about twice as many households that served



Minnesota Attorney General Lori Swanson on the job in St. Paul.

the industry and the communities that supported it.

Wage-earners were able to own a home, save for retirement, and get their kids good educations.

Unfortunately, over the next 37 years, the taconite industry faced increasing pressures, including international competition. Today, fewer than 4,500 people are employed directly in mining.

According to the most recent census, the median income on the Iron Range is now below \$47,000 (which is substantially below the statewide median income of \$60,000), the unemployment rate is 7.5 percent (which is substantially above the statewide rate of 3.9 percent), and home values are about 30 percent less than the statewide average.

This means the Range must continue to look for economic development opportunities, and we must support the Range in these efforts.

Reinvention:

President Franklin Roosevelt once said: "There are many ways of going forward, but only one way of standing still."

As iron ore mines depleted, the Range economy re-invent-

ed itself with the taconite industry. Even as world competition cut into its growth, the Range evolved with innovative mining techniques.

This legacy of Iron Range invention and ingenuity not just supported families and communities in Minnesota. It has helped build and sustain America. History has taught us that when the Range succeeds, Minnesota succeeds, and America succeeds.

We need to embrace technology and the economic advancements that come with it. We should not fear change, and we should prudently and without prejudice support new and innovative mining advances when they can be done safely and efficiently. We should not hesitate to support mining techniques that can be conducted in a manner that preserves our natural resources for future generations.

Mining helped build some of the best schools in America — like the school that educated my mother. I am the beneficiary of her good education, and I won't forget it.

And Minnesota should not forget the Iron Range and all that it has done for our state and nation.

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NASHWAUK

Ground zero when Butler closed; Essar offering new hope

BILL HANNA
MESABI DAILY NEWS

NASHWAUK — When a mine closes, the impact reverberates outward from the operation that ceases production and no longer cuts checks for workers and their families.

But there's always an epicenter, where the shock waves are strongest; the lack of activity most noticeable.

That ground zero when Butler Taconite shut down in 1985 was the small Iron Range town of Nashwauk — population 921 today.

Now, 30 years later, there is renewed hope for the former Butler site to once again be in production to mine a rich deposit of ore close to the surface and easily accessible.

"The community is optimistic. We need the project to go and want the plant to be up and running. The area needs the jobs it will create," said Nashwauk Mayor Ben DeNucci.

But he said it's anxious optimism.

"I know there's been a lot of frustration. And there are always some people who will say it won't happen. But when you see the contractors and workers on site, the Public Utilities commissioners dealing with power issues and the equipment rolling through town and going up there, you see it's a pretty impressive project," the mayor said.

DeNucci is talking about Essar Steel Minnesota's \$1.9 billion venture that is giving new life to the former Butler Mine site.

The greenfield project,

which means it will be brand spanking new and not utilize previous equipment, infrastructure or buildings, has had its share of starts and stops that have created a byproduct of doubt.

The project of India-based Essar hit very rocky times during the big recession in 2008 and 2009 and the successive next few years, when businesses globally suffered. Construction at the Essar site was pretty much silenced and vendors went for a while without payments.

But a major infusion of new money from investors in October triggered renewed activity at the mine site, which will continue to ramp up into summer. Essar has already put about \$1.3 billion of its own money into the venture.

DeNucci said Essar Minnesota's CEO, Madhu Vuppuluri, "is very passionate about the project and committed to its success. It's not easy to get all the pieces in place for such a large project of this nature."

The mine, with a 70-year life expectancy, is projected to create 350 full-time jobs — hundreds more of spin-off positions — with a wage and benefits package to be on par with those at other Iron Range mines. It will provide \$180 million annually in tax revenues for the state, while producing 7 million to 8 million tons of pellets annually.

There will, however, be no steel mill on site as had been originally planned.

DeNucci, 39, is hopeful



Nashwauk Mayor Ben DeNucci poses in front of the city's downtown.

MARK SAUER/MESABI DAILYNEWS

ful that the Essar project will create a better future for people of his age-range and younger so they will either stay or locate to Nashwauk and other communities on the west Range to work and raise their families.

DeNucci graduated from Nashwauk-Keewatin High School in 1994. He received a bachelor of science degree from North Dakota State University in facility management, with a minor in business facility management.

He spent 15 years in health care and hospital operations, including stints at Rainy Lake Medical Center in International Falls, Grand Itasca in Grand Rapids, and a facility in Good River, Ore.

He then decided in December 2013 to buy Keewatin Auto Repair with another small businessman. "We are hands-on owners," he said.

DeNucci decided to run for mayor last November and won. He's also a volunteer firefighter in Nashwauk, where he lives with his wife, Kelly, and two bird-hunting Brittany dogs.

He hopes his path

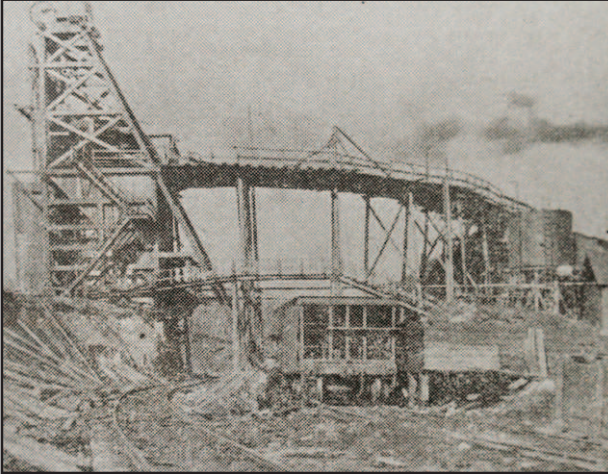


Nashwauk-Keewatin high school students attend class in Nashwauk while the grade school students from both towns have their school in Keewatin.

MARK SAUER/MESABI DAILYNEWS

back home to Nashwauk is a template that will be repeated for others, with the help of projects such as Essar.

"We need to be optimistic that it will come to fruition and we will be able to realize the jobs and opportunities those jobs will create," he said.



An early photo from the Pearson Mine.

SUBMITTED



The Hawkins Pit in Nashwauk.

SUBMITTED



The legion hall in Nashwauk now serves as the town's city hall.

SUBMITTED



The Nashwauk Public Safety building houses both the fire and police departments.



A view down Nashwauk's main street.

SUBMITTED



SUBMITTED

A CAT 992G Wheel Loader, which was purchased from U.S. Steel, is seen here being received at the Ellefson Off Highway properties.

ELLEFSON OFF HIGHWAY

‘Only a handful do what we do’

KELLY GRINSTEINER
HIBBING DAILY TRIBUNE

IRON — The three keys to the success of Ellefson Off Highway are pretty basic. Just ask President Christopher D. Ellefson.

“We employ great people, we put out great products and we work really, really hard,” he said.

That and the fact that Ellefson has been a trusted name in the mobile equipment parts and components industry.

“Our company philosophy is pretty basic too,” he said.

“We value our customers.”

Located in Iron, Ellefson Off Highway specializes in replacement parts and components for Caterpillar & Komatsu mobile equipment. The company’s primary focus is parts or assemblies for large dirt and mining application size machines.

“The machines we buy are purchased from our local taconite mines and from mining companies around the globe,” said Ellefson. “We buy mostly larger wheel loaders, bulldozers and rigid frame haul trucks that are transported to our Iron facilities and dismantled for stock for our parts business.”

From transmissions and fuel tanks to engines and rims, those at Ellefson Off Highway believes in honoring the promises they make and delivering on the products they promise.

“We sell replacement parts in core condition to rebuilders and resellers, good used inspected or repaired as needed to customers looking for an economical option and rebuilt outright or rebuilt exchange to end user mining and construction companies locally and abroad,” said Ellefson.

The largest portion of the company’s customer base is retail or end user customers, which comprises about 65 percent of gross sales annually.

The range mining companies account for about 5 to



Craig Kubasta, sales representative at Ellefson Off Highway, stands next to 793 Axle Assembly that was sold to a company in the western United States.

7 percent of those sales in a given year, he said.

“We market our products to a world-wide mining customer audience, and while it depends on the year, our biggest customer base is usually North America,” said Ellefson, referring to both the United States and Canada.

The company has also sold products into the mining regions of Africa, South America, Australia and most of the countries in the European Union, he noted.

While new and additional customers are added each year, the majority of Ellefson Off Highway’s business comes from repeat customers.

“We have a great team, and that’s really why our customers come back again and again,” said Ellefson. “I think when customers feel they are treated fairly and serviced well, they come back.”

He praised the sales team for having done a great job developing a customer base and the service team for having done a great job putting out excellent products.

“We understand our sustained success is because of our loyal customer base,” he added. “We maintain our customers by providing excellent product and service that is second to none.”

Ellefson said his company is pretty unique.

“There are really only a handful of companies in the world that do what we do,” he said. “We buy large mobile equipment on speculation without an intended customer base. We try to anticipate market demands and we try to build the parts we think will sell.”

While the company reaches the world market, it’s here on the Iron Range where Ellefson chose to deepen his roots.



Cody Matsen, sales manager at Ellefson Off Highway, stands in a 992G Bucket that was sold to a north American mining company.



Mark Troumbly testing a CAT Brake that was rebuilt in the Ellefson Off Highway Shop.

IRON MINING ASSOCIATION

BILL HANNA
MESABI DAILY NEWS

DULUTH — The forerunner of the Iron Mining Association — the Lake Superior Industrial Bureau — was formed in 1913 as a mining companies-only group.

Well, the IMA isn't your grandfather's mining organization.

The group now has 200 members, including all the mines producing and all those under construction, and a lot of vendors serving the mining sector, according to IMA President Craig Pagel.

"The IMA is as strong as it's ever been. The general membership is key to the IMA as their delivery of products and services to the mines is essential," Pagel said in a recent telephone interview.

The IMA president said the industry is going through some big changes, with new technology and updating of the production process to "become more efficient and competitive in the

global market."

Pagel said most of the Iron Range iron ore production is vertically integrated with long-term contracts in place.

"Hopefully, these factors will see us through the iron ore glut and global economic times," he said.

Pagel said the Iron Range workforce is one of the strongest assets of the region.

"We have highly technical employees in the mines and companies to provide the products and services. I am confident we will do well in the future," he said.

Pagel said the IMA's television ad promotion "imagine LiFe without iron" has been well received both locally and statewide. The ads show just how laborious life would be without all the modern conveniences made possible by mining of iron ore.

Pagel is coming up on his eighth anniversary as president of the IMA. He said the time has been "an un-

believable blur. It's a great organization ... the membership does that. I'm extremely thankful," he said.

The IMA's board helps carry out the group's mission "to promote an iron ore industry that will provide long-term growth and prosperity for all stakeholders through profitability in a competitive, global market."

Here's the current board, which was elected in December 2014:

- New board members include: Nels Ojard of Krech Ojard & Associates in Duluth, Jason Janisch of Jasper Engineering in Hibbing, and Jim Perry of Furin & Shea, also in Hibbing.

- Also new to the board for 2015 is Producer Director Mark Lorenz of Mining Resources in Chisholm.

- They join the following board members: William Bond (ArcelorMittal Minorca), Jonathan Holmes (ArcelorMittal Minorca), Patrick Bloom (Cliffs Natural Resources), Sandy Karnowski (Cliffs Natural Resources), Jack Crosswell (Hibbing Taconite),

Tim Tomsich (Hibbing Taconite), Ed LaTendresse (Northshore Mining Co.), Santi Romani (United Taconite), Larry Lehtinen (Magnetation, Inc.), Matt Lehtinen (Magnetation, Inc.), David Bednarz (Steel Dynamics), Tom Lutes (Steel Dynamics), Chrissy Bartovich (U.S. Steel — Minnesota Ore Operations), Travis Kolari (U.S. Steel — Keetac), Mike Patton (U.S. Steel — Minnesota Ore Operations), Larry Sutherland (U.S. Steel — Minnesota Ore Operations), Marci Knight (American Bank of the North), Randy Abernethy (Industrial Weldors and Machinists), Jim Hoolihan (Industrial Lubricant Co.), Steve Harms (Pit & Quarry Supplies), Jeff Washburn (ME Elecmetal), Margaret Hodnik (Minnesota Power), Dwight Day (TUFCO, Inc.), and Bruce Mars (WP & RS Mars Co.).

- The board is headed by Northshore Mining Co. General Manager Ed LaTendresse, IMA board chairman.

And the survey says ... Organization has grown through the years

KELLY GRINSTEINER
HIBBING DAILY TRIBUNE

Nearly 90 percent of Minnesotans are aware that there are active iron mines in the state, and more than 90 percent of Minnesotans believe Minnesotans should continue to mine iron ore.

Those are just two key findings of the 2014 Minnesota State Survey, which included questions posed by the Iron Mining Association (IMA) about iron mining.

That portion of the survey also asks if Minnesotans know what products derive from iron mining and what respondents feel is the biggest issue facing state residents today.

"We knew that people on the Range understood iron mining, but the general public in Minnesota did not seem to know there is iron mining in Minnesota and how they use it every day," said Craig Pagel, president of the IMA.

The 2014 Minnesota State Survey was conducted by the University of Minnesota (UofM). The school has conducted the annual statewide survey of adult (those 18 and older) residents of Minnesota for 31 years. This annual survey is an "omnibus" survey, for which individual organizations pay to include questions of special interest to them.

In addition to iron mining, the 2014 survey included topics such as: quality of life, arts, education, tourism, recycling, health, employment, organizational awareness and bicycling.

Participating in this latest survey was a first for the IMA. It was prompted by a desire to see just how effec-

tive the IMA's statewide marketing campaign "imagine LiFe without iron" has been.

"(We) saw it as an opportunity to reach a statewide audience and gauge how impactful the campaign has been and to see where further work is needed," said Katy Kohlhasse, IMA's media manager.

The campaign was developed to help the general public better understand how iron is used in their everyday lives, and how important iron mining is to all Minnesotans and the United States, said Pagel.

The IMA worked with W.A. Fisher in Virginia to develop the campaign. It was then carried throughout Min-

nesota in various fashions, including TV commercials,

print ads, carrying banners acknowledging 130 years of iron mining in the Range 4th of July parades, and culminating with Gov. Mark Dayton declaring July 31, 2014, as Iron Mining Day in Minnesota.

The campaign was featured heavily in the Twin Cities area throughout the year.

"However no good campaign is good without setting metrics to see if we were reaching Minnesotans," said Pagel. "To help us identify if the campaign was successful and to adjust this year's work, we took part in the University of Minnesota's statewide survey they conduct every year."

The IMA paid to include three questions. They were:

- As far as you know, does Minnesota currently have active iron mines in the state?

- Are you aware of how you use products derived from iron mining in

your everyday life?

- Do you think Minnesota should continue to mine iron ore or not?

The IMA's Public Information Committee helped develop these questions to measure both the level of awareness of iron mining in Minnesota and how it's used, as well as the level of support for iron mining in Minnesota, according to Kohlhasse. The committee is comprised of representatives from the mining companies and companies that supply goods and services to the mines.

Once the questions were determined, supervised, trained UofM students conducted the survey from

the Minnesota Center for Survey Research. Survey data was collected from September to November 2014 using randomly selected telephone interviews via both cell phones and landlines.

A total of 805 interviews were completed for the survey. Interviews were conducted with residents across the state, with the largest representation — 55 percent — in the Twin Cities area.

Here's a breakdown by region:

- Northwest 3 percent
- Northeast 6 percent
- Central 24 percent

SEE SURVEY, PAGE 40

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The Iron Mining Association Board met during the group's annual meeting in December.

SURVEY

FROM PAGE 39

- Southwest 5 percent
 - Southeast 7 percent
- Of those surveyed, half were male and half were female.

The largest percentage of them — at only 30 percent — were 65-years-old or older.

Here's a breakdown by age:

- 9 percent were 18-24
- 10 percent were 25-34
- 13 percent were 35-44
- 23 percent were 55-64

Since the individuals who participated in the survey were randomly selected from the state population, the UofM considers the survey results as generalizations for the entire state. Using the data generated from each question, generalizations can be made to either households or to individuals.

"The results were more than we expected in some cases, and had opened our eyes in others," said Pagel.

Question 1: As far as you know, does MN currently have active iron mines in the state?

Nearly 90 percent of Minnesotans indicated they are aware Minnesota has active iron mines in the state. This result was consistent across all

variables, such as age, location and gender.

"Surprisingly, on an average, 89 percent of the people across Minnesota know we mine iron," said Pagel. "Greater Minnesota and the Metro Area were almost the same. That was a surprise, thankfully."

There were a couple slight dips in awareness for Minnesotans with less than a high school education, as well as households with a single parent. Of those with less than high school education, 76.2 percent said "yes" while 23.8 percent "no." In single parent households, 77.4 percent said "yes" and 22.6 percent said "no."

"Though within both groups, the majority was aware of Minnesota's iron mining industry," said Kohlase.

Since this was the IMA's first time as part of the Minnesota State Survey, she said it's hard to determine if this result is consistent with past years or possibly due to the "imagine life without iron" campaign.

Question 2: Are you aware of how you use products derived from iron mining in your everyday life?

Roughly half answered in the affirmative to this question.

"This survey data revealed the IMA needs to continue to promote how we use products derived from iron mining in our daily lives," said Kohlase.

Pagel said he was surprised that

roughly 50 percent of Minnesotans are not aware how they use iron in their everyday lives.

"The surveying between greater Minnesota and the Metro area was almost the same," he added. "The difference however is younger and lower income knew less how they use iron."

Question 3: Do you think Minnesota should continue to mine iron ore or not?

More than 90 percent of Minnesotans surveyed indicated they believe Minnesotans should continue to mine iron ore.

This proved true within all different variables of Minnesotans surveyed, except for Minnesotans with less than a high school degree (still 89.3 percent answered "yes") and Minnesotans aged 18-24 (84.1 percent answered "yes").

And that's good news to both Pagel and Kohlase.

"This question was the one that would tell the truth about how people in the state view iron mining," said Pagel "... The answer was a surprising 96 percent 'yes.'"

Kohlase said she's happy to see the level of support iron mining has in the state and is grateful for those who have shared their support — whether through "We Support Mining/Mining Supports Us" yard signs and bumper

stickers — or by follows and shares on social media.

While this survey has given the IMA a good gauge of what Minnesotans think and know about iron mining, they can't quite tell just how effective the "imagine life without iron" campaign has been.

Despite that, the IMA plans to continue the mission to promote an iron ore industry that will provide long-term growth and prosperity for all stakeholders through profitability in a competitive, global market and will do just that with its campaign and more.


"This survey has shown we are on the right track with our message," said Kohlase. "We just have to keep it going."

Pagel concurred, adding that we as a society have gotten too far from understanding where things we use every day come from and how iron is used by all of us. He confirmed that the IMA will continue to try to educate, and in some instances re-educate, people about iron mining.

"We will continue to refine our message to assure iron mining continues to play an important role in the everyday lives of Minnesotans and the United States," he said.

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GUEST COLUMN

**MADHU
VUPPULURI**
President and CEO
Essar Steel Minnesota



Essar's \$1.9 billion project moving toward production

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this guest column for your MINE VI publication.

For those of us seeking to bring new mining projects to the Iron Range, the MINE series provides an excellent opportunity to reiterate what your readers already know: The critical importance of mining to the state of Minnesota and to the long-term economic vitality of this region.

Minnesota recently celebrated 130 years of mining in the state, marking the beginning of iron ore mining at the Soudan Mine in 1884.

Against that historic backdrop, I am very proud to submit this guest column about a new, historic mining project for the region with the pending completion of the Essar Steel Minnesota ("ESML") project in Nashwauk.

ESML is poised to continue this region's strong mining culture and

commitment to the iron mining industry well into the second half of this century, with a new taconite mining operation that will support three future generations of miners and their families on the Iron Range.

It is indeed impressive to note that, with a projected mine life of more than 70 years, miners will still be mining and processing ore at the ESML mine site in the year 2084 — 200 years after the Soudan Mine first opened the mining industry in Minnesota.

I first came to the Iron Range on a flight into the Chisholm-Hibbing Airport on a wintry night in December 2006. I arrived here on a mine scouting mission for our parent company, Essar Global. As Essar Global sought to increase its presence in the North American mining and steel industries, I traveled here to inspect the old But-

ler Mine site, which, at that time, was owned by Minnesota Steel Industries. I have now been pursuing the successful construction and completion of the ESML project for almost a decade, with Nashwauk having become my second home.

The Butler Taconite mine, located northwest of Nashwauk, permanently closed in 1985. When Butler Taconite closed its doors, hundreds of employees lost their jobs. The Butler Taconite mine site was reclaimed and eventually all of the production facilities at the site were dismantled. I understand that the closure of Butler Taconite had a devastating impact on the regional economy.

What remained, however, was a good quality ore body. Recognizing this, other enterprises pursued efforts to try to reopen the Butler Taconite mine through the 1990s and into the

early 2000s.

Unfortunately, the site of the former Butler Taconite mine remained a company on paper for many years, with no sponsors being able to prepare and implement a comprehensive plan and raise financing of more than \$1 billion to reopen the mine and to construct new facilities needed to process and pelletize the ore, which became even more of a daunting task with each passing year.

During this time, the other major taconite mining companies on the Iron Range had the opportunity to acquire and develop this asset. For the past 20 years, the annual pellet production from Iron Range mining operations has remained stagnant at approximately 40 million tons annually. Unfortunately for the region, no investment in new projects or expan-

SEE ESSAR, PAGE 42

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MARK SAUER/MESABI DAILY NEWS/FILE

The sprawling Essar Steel plant in Nashwauk is starting to take shape.

ESSAR

FROM PAGE 41

Investment opportunities in northeastern Minnesota anywhere close to ESML's investment has occurred for many decades.

In fact, any other recent investments that have occurred in the iron ore space have been in distant places such as Labrador, Brazil or Australia, some of such large investments have already failed.

In October 2007, Essar acquired the project from Minnesota Steel Industries and changed the name of the company to Essar Steel Minnesota LLC.

ESML broke ground on the construction of this project in September 2008. Unfortunately, in the days and weeks following the ground breaking, the world economy was seriously impacted with the collapse of Lehman Brothers, triggering in turn the collapse of the financial markets and the beginning of unprecedented proportions of global recession. With the recession, there was a significant downturn in the steel markets and obtaining project financing — especially for a project of this size — became a near impossibility.

Nonetheless, from September 2008 to September 2012, ESML was able to raise about \$1.1 billion in financing from its Essar parent and a group of banks to construct a taconite mine and pellet plant with a pellet production capacity of 4.1 million tons.

In that initial four-year timeframe, ESML was able to make significant progress in the engineering, procurement activities, and construction of the taconite mine, crushing, concentrating and pelletizing facilities, as well as construction of the rail, electric, water and sewer infrastructure for the project. ESML also obtained the necessary permits to increase the pellet production capacity of its pellet plant from 4.1 million annual tons to 7 million annual tons. With the increase of the permitted annual pellet production capacity, the total capital expenditure for construction of just the taconite mine and pelletizing facilities increased to approximately \$1.9 billion.

ESML then undertook an intensive two-year effort to obtain the necessary incremental financing to complete the expanded taconite mine and pellet plant project.

On Sept. 30, 2014, ESML succeeded in obtaining its final \$800 million financing package to complete construction and commence operations of the taconite mine and pellet plant with a pellet production capacity of 7 million tons annually. As of January 2015, ESML has already invested a total of approximately \$1.3 billion for engineering, procurement and construction activities at the project site.

With financing in place, ESML has been able work with all its procurement vendors globally spread out and with its various local construction contractors to ramp up construction activities from October and Novem-



Massive amounts of steel construction are underway at the Essar plant being constructed in Nashwauk.

ber 2014. The construction activities currently taking place at the project site are providing winter construction work to more than 200 construction workers.

With construction activities now fully underway again at the project site, this certainly is exciting news for the region and all of us should have a great sense of pride and accomplishment that Nashwauk is home to the largest greenfield project in North America and one of the largest, if not the largest, economic development projects in Minnesota (even bigger than the new Vikings stadium).

As we are now able to move forward to complete construction, I hope that all of us from the region would be able to celebrate the enormous benefits ESML will yield for this region and the community for many decades to come.

A few of these benefits are as follows:

- Once the taconite mine and pellet plant are fully operational, ESML will employ up to 350 full time employees.

- The taconite mine and pelletizing operations also are projected to generate an additional 630 spin-off jobs in the region.

- According to studies conducted by University of Minnesota, Duluth, the taconite mine and pelletizing operations of ESML are projected to generate \$170 million to \$180 million in new annual tax revenues for the State of Minnesota.

- ESML's taconite mine and pelletizing operations will be a significant

economic engine for the economy of northeastern Minnesota, with an infusion of \$350 million per year in new spending in the region (excluding taconite taxes and other taxes).

- ESML will be the only pellet producer in the United States with the capability to produce a standard blast furnace pellet, a flux pellet and a direct reduced grade pellet.

- According to highly acclaimed market research firms such as Metal Strategies Inc., the pellets produced by ESML with long term off-take agreements ahead of production already in place will be replacing the mines announced to be closed in Michigan and the imports from Eastern Canadian region into Great lakes and will not impact any pellet production in the State of Minnesota

ESML's focus now is to complete construction of its taconite mine and pellet plant project and to have a successful start-up of those operations. Once we have the mine and pellet plant operations stabilized and moving forward, ESML certainly will continue to evaluate the possibility of value-added facilities at the ESML site in Nashwauk. We believe that, in a few years, the iron ore and steel markets in North America that have been impacted by the global commodities down cycle, will be set to improve. I strongly believe in the infrastructure rebuild thesis in North America, which will trigger improved demand for these commodities over the next five to seven years.

The difficulties in the iron ore industry globally, with iron ore prices

hovering at \$62 per ton last week, have triggered the shutdown of about 22 new projects in this sector globally in the last six months.

Despite these closures, it is noteworthy to mention that ESML continues to progress with the construction activities at Nashwauk and will strive toward commencement of operations very soon.

As of February 2015, we have more than 250 construction workers from local construction contractors and about 100 Essar employees between the project site in Nashwauk and our current administrative offices in Hibbing working tirelessly to progress with the project. Over spring and summer 2015, these numbers are expected to swell to 600 to 800 construction workers on site.

We at ESML sincerely take pride in the progress of this mammoth project and would like to acknowledge the support of numerous stakeholders, including the community, region and the state, without which we could not have come this far in reshaping history at the former Butler Taconite mine.

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit this update on the ESML project for your MINE VI publication.

I hope that your readers will embrace the energy and excitement surrounding this historic project as it continues to progress and gain momentum towards completion of construction and commencement of operations.

GUEST COLUMN

CHUCK
NOVAK
Ely Mayor



Mayor Chuck Novak poses in the council chambers in Ely.

MARK SAUER/MESABI DAILY NEWS/FILE

ELY: Yesterday and tomorrow

CHUCK NOVAK
ELY MAYOR

My earliest memories of Ely include lumberjacks, tourists and miners.

Ely's main street was jam packed all summer long with tourists and busloads of Boy Scouts visiting the area and camping in the area.

The logging trucks were busy in the winter months and the Forest Service enlisted Boy Scouts to plant seedling pines as part of a forest

management plan. There were three operational mines, namely Sibley, Zenith and Pioneer. The Savoy and Chandler mines had

already closed and the miners from those mines were able to transfer to the other mines.

The school population had grown to a level that a new school had to be built to accommodate all the grade school children now referred to as baby boomers. Mining was the stable, year-round industry that kept Ely's economy vibrant.

The three operating mines were mining a common ore body and eventually the Sibley mine closed and my dad transferred to the Pioneer mine. Later on the Zenith mine closed and those workers transferred to the Pioneer mine.

The ore bodies in Ely and Soudan were some of the richest in the world and the ores mined from them provided the steelmaking

capacity that helped win two world wars.

Ely's economy was hit by the Wilderness Act in 1964 that forced the closure of some 80 resorts that were either relocated or burned to re-create the wilderness that once was. The jobs were gone and the numbers of visitors decreased. Logging was banned in the newly defined wilderness area eliminating a large part of that industry. The Wilderness Act initiated a shock wave in the Ely economy. There were no support activities at the state and federal level to help deal with this downturn and city leaders were forced to attempt recovery efforts on their own.

Ely and the affected communities were unsuccessful in their struggle to find solutions. But we still had mining.

In the early 1900s, word had reached Croatia that iron mining was taking off in Minnesota and there were good jobs to be had. My grandfather brought the family to the U.S. and settled in Chisholm. My dad was born there in 1906.

As it turned out, the jobs were not plentiful

SEE NOVAK, PAGE 44



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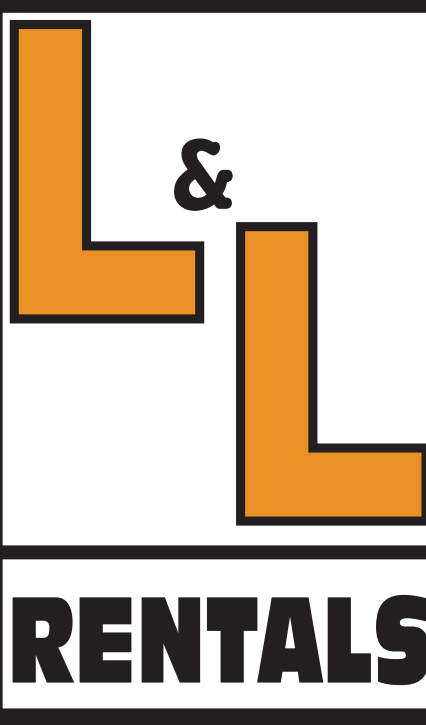
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A photo of the Pioneer Mine Tugger Team. Mayor Novak's dad is at far left.

NOVAK

FROM PAGE 43

and the family moved back to Croatia. My grandfather was conscripted into the army and was sadly killed during World War I. The family struggled and then word reached them that new mines were opening and the mining companies were looking for hard working men.

The family decided to have my Uncle John, the eldest in the family, return to Minnesota and see if this was true. My uncle reported back that new mines were opening in Minnesota and jobs were plentiful.

My dad received his passport from the American Consulate on Sept. 28, 1924, at the age of 18. Arrangements were made and he departed from Ljubljana on Oct.

14, 1924, riding a ship of the White Star Line back to the U.S.

He initially lived with my uncle in Crosby Iron- ton. He moved to Ely when word reached him that new underground mines were opening in Ely. It was here he settled, married my mom and began work- ing at any work he could find. The mining jobs finally came about and he worked in the mines

for more than 33 years.

I have fond memo- ries of accompanying my dad to the Pioneer mine on the weekends. This was the time set aside to wash clothes in the washers provided. Washing of mining clothes full of iron dust was forbidden at home because the iron stained the inside of the machines which then stained the good clothes.

We would arrive at the mine, enter through the A shaft entrance and climb down the stairs to the dry house. The dry house was where the miners changed their clothes before and after their shifts.

At the bottom of the stairs was a charging station for the battery- operated lights on the miners' helmets needed underground. Rows of lockers were used by miners to store their personal items. Baskets with hooks that could be raised to the ceil- ing were there to hang dry the mining clothes. And of course I enjoyed listening to my dad and other miners tell stories and talk about many subjects.

Afterwards we would stop at Zaverl's and my dad would have a "bump and a beer" before going home. He always gave me a nickel



ID tag used to collect pay.

to buy candy at the cor- ner of the bar.

My later experience with the Pioneer mine happened in 1965 when I was the photographer for the junior college yearbook. Two indi- viduals working in the mine decided to further their education so they wouldn't have to work in the mine for the rest of their lives.

It was an educational and rewarding experi- ence. It was educational to see the working con- ditions and rewarding because my dad was working that shift and I was able to take his picture. My dad always said he didn't want me to work in the mine. I now understood why

and took his advice to heart.

New mining opera- tions were starting on the Range using a new process called Taconite that was developed by the University of Minne- sota. The closest of these was Reserve Mining in Babbitt.

The Reserve operation provided jobs for those displaced by the Wilder- ness Act and the mindset of the community was set at ease, at least for awhile.

The Taconite pro- cess became the ore of choice for steelmaking. The low grade ore could be mined at the surface instead of the more dan- gerous underground

SEE NOVAK, PAGE 45



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Passport of Chuck Novak's father, Joe.



SUBMITTED Joe Novak and Howard Williams taken by Chuck Novak in 1966.

NOVAK

FROM PAGE 44

operations and the high grade ore was no longer the preferred choice it once was at the steel mills.

This chain of events resulted in the closing of the last underground mine in operation, the Pioneer Mine in Ely. The year was 1967.

This closing sent a shock wave through the community that is still felt today. My dad was 61 years old when this happened and he was fortunate to accept early retirement because of his 30-plus years of service. Others were forced to find new employment and most went to the Taconite plants because mining was the only work they knew. Daily commutes of 30 or 80 miles one way became common.

The railroad line was abandoned and dismantled precluding any large manufacturing operation being established in the Ely area. The Pioneer mine was a wet mine and it was necessary to pump water out at the lowest level so the miners could work in a dry but damp environment. Eventually the pumps were turned off and the pit created by the surface sinking over the collapsing mined levels filled with water to become what is now called Miner's Lake.

The mine shafts were



The safety patch signified an accident free safety record in 1958.

permanently sealed off. And now there no longer was mining in Ely.

The population of Ely has steadily decreased from more than 5,900 when the Pioneer closed to just over 3,400 today. The remaining logging operations pale in comparison to the operations before 1964.

The tourism effect on the downtown economy is about all there is to shore up local businesses that provide the goods and services we all rely on. New business entities in town tend to be tourism-related and that helps attract visitors. The tourist of today, however, is far different than the tourist of yesterday. They come prepared and well stocked.

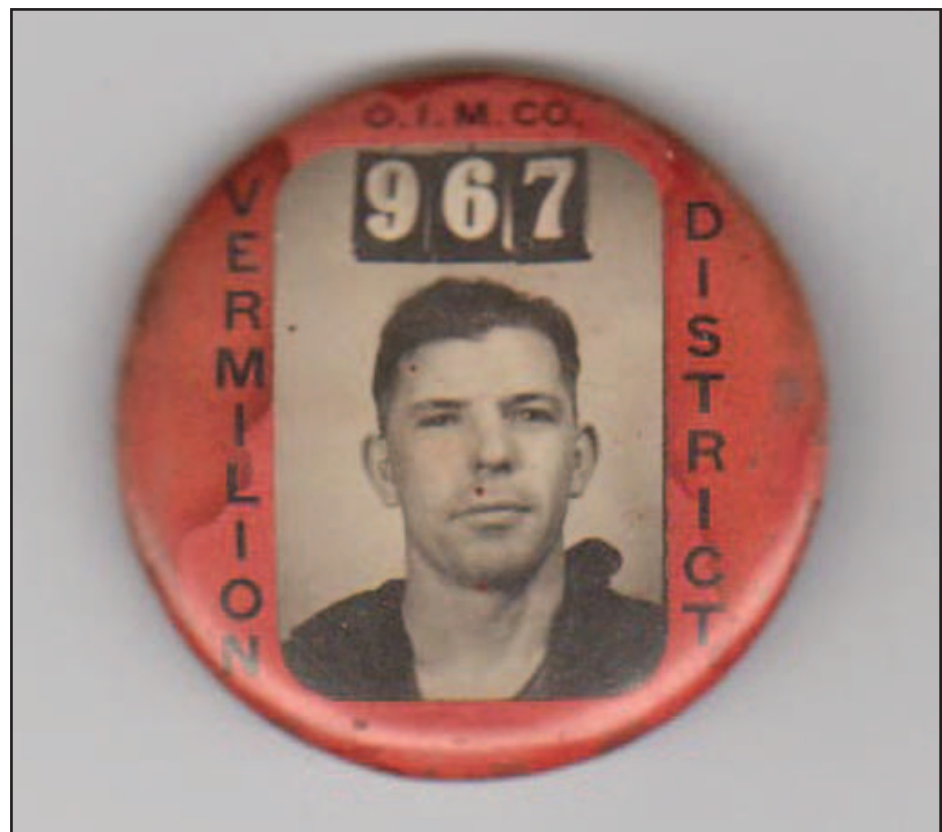
The only large employers locally are the college, high school, hospital and Minnesota

Department of Revenue. All of these rely on government funding to exist. The city and surrounding area have tried hard to attract new businesses into the area but have found it very difficult to be successful.

There is now hope on the horizon. New mining companies have emerged to mine the vast and rich copper/nickel deposits in the area.

The PolyMet project in Hoyt Lakes is moving right along, having to overcome significant resistance from environmental groups.

The Twin Metals project south of Ely has completed its prefeasibility study and is progressing. The Antofagasta purchase of Duluth Metals has provided the reassurance the community needed to believe



A button issued for identification purposes.

this project would move forward.

This new venture has sparked a sort of renaissance in the community. Several vacant business structures have been purchased by a developer intending to remodel the structures and make them ready to lease to potential new businesses.

The city has built a great new public library and City Hall is being renovated to include a long awaited elevator to finally provide for ADA accessibility. Several inquiries from potential new business ventures are coming in through the city's Economic Development Authority.

The surrounding townships and communities are now participating in economic development activities through the local Community Economic Development Joint Powers with the hope of identifying new business opportunities. The local Housing and Redevelopment Authority has commissioned a housing study to prepare for future housing needs. Vermilion Community College has been, and is, open to developing new class curriculums to support the potential new mining opportunity, including businesses that will be needed to support the mining operation.

The pall that has existed over the community for nearly 50 years has started to lift. The potential of a large new mining operation is creating a more positive attitude toward Ely's future. Everyone is on board with the City Council focusing primarily on economic development.

Ely and its surrounding neighbors are being continually vigilant in supporting the efforts of PolyMet and Twin Metals. We must for the future and continued existence of our communities and the great people who live here.



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The view from the observation deck of the Hull Rust Mine View allows one to take in both the mining activities in the pit below and the equipment on display in the yard behind the observation building.



BRIAN AROLA / HIBBING DAILY TRIBUNE/FILE

Shawn Tangedahl, building maintenance supervisor for the Hull Rust Mine View, puts the final preparations into the gift shop ahead of the tourist attraction's May 2014 opening.

Mine pit is no money pit

Hull Rust adds \$4 million annually to local economy

KELLY GRINSTEINER
HIBBING DAILY TRIBUNE

HIBBING — Anne Varda likes numbers.

As director of Tourist Center Senior Citizens, Inc., in Hibbing, she had the distinct pleasure of reporting several numbers — volunteer hours, volume of tourists and overall economic impact — regarding the center and the Hull Rust Mine View. Varda shared those stats recently with the Hibbing City Council.

It's the members of the center who volunteer to disseminate tourist information year-round as well as concurrently volunteer to man the mine view for roughly half the year. The mine view is typically open from April to October.

The Hull Rust overlook provides an invaluable service to the area by giving locals and tourists a peak into the state-of-the art practices of modern

day mining. The overlook is above Hibbing Taconite, the mining operation co-owned and managed by Cliffs.

There are rotary drills, 33-cubic yard shovels and 240-ton production trucks in action on this nationally historic site. Occasionally, one sees the set up of a dynamite blast used to clear away the bedrock and allow access to the iron ore.

Since 1895, more than 1.4 billion tons of earth have been removed from this 2,000 acres of land, and more than 800 million gross tons of iron ore has been shipped from this mine. This pit now encompasses more than 50 individual mines.

At peak production in the 1940s, as much as one-quarter of the ore mined in the United States came from the Hull Rust Mine a testament to the key role the mines played in World War II.

Today, mining officials hope that visitors not only see the jobs and economic viability mining provides

to the state, but that they make the connection between mining in Minnesota and the steel used to make the products in their daily lives.

The Hull Rust Mine View includes an observation building, in which visitors can see a slide presentation about the history of the mine and early mining activities and visit with staff members about past and current activity in the pit and a park that features a 170-ton production truck, mine shovel buckets, interpretative graphics, a walking trail and more.

To know just how many visited the "Grand Canyon of the North," as the Hull Rust Mine View is often referred to, hasn't been easy. Accurate attendance numbers were hard to come by in past years, said Varda.

That's why one of her goals for 2014 was to keep more detailed records.

"We had a guest book set up, but people were not asked or reminded to sign it in past years," said Varda. "Our best guess is that in 2009, when we suffered the severe recession, we saw only approximately 11,500 visitors. Each year after 2009, we saw a gradual increase in attendance."

In 2013, there were approximately 18,000 visitors recorded at Hull Rust — although not everyone signed the guest book, she noted. Volunteers estimated that a couple thousand others stopped by the attraction, but didn't leave their John Hancock.

"So in 2014, our goal was to get a more accurate accounting of our attendance," said Varda.

It was also the summer of Hibbing's All-Class Reunion, so an influx was expected. And at least one wedding was held there.

"Thus, we saw 23,412 tourists at Hull Rust in 2014," she said. "And, again, volunteers estimated that there were a couple thousand others that we couldn't nailed down."

To calculate the economic impact of visitors, Varda also outlined some additional stats.

In 2014, volunteers logged in 6,980 hours of activity at the senior center and 3,333 hours at the mine view.

The senior center also had roughly

1,245 tourists visit.

Varda then explained her calculation process.

A visitor to the Iron Range spends an average of \$770 per trip, according to 2005 study performed on the Iron Range service area, which includes Hibbing and Chisholm. That citation came from the Iron Range Tourism Bureau, said Varda.

"This figure has been adjusted for inflation and is an average based on all group sizes and all lengths of stay," she added. "It also considers what all group-sizes, such as single, couple, nuclear family, extended family and non-related groups such as tours, spent."

In reviewing the Hull Rust Mine View books, Varda said the average size of a "group" there in 2014 was four individuals.

"It also shows that in 2014 we drew from 69 countries and all 50 states — just to show how important it is," she added.

Here's how she crunched the numbers:

- 24,657 visitors (to both the tourist center and mine view) / 4 (the average group size) = approximately 6,164 visitors

- 6,154 visitors x \$770 = \$4,746,473

"So we estimate that visitors to the tourist center and Hull Rust contributed more than \$4 million to our economy," said Varda.

Impressed by the total, Hibbing Mayor Rick Cannata thanked Varda, the volunteers and members of the tourist center for their efforts.

"If it weren't for you and the volunteers, we wouldn't be bringing these people in," he said. "Every little bit helps the city, you know, so from me and the council, thank you."

Varda thanked the city for its financial and physical support of the non-profit. She also acknowledged Cliffs Natural Resources and the Cliffs Foundation.

Membership at the tourist center also increased by 25 percent in 2014, according to Varda.

That helped to top off a great year.



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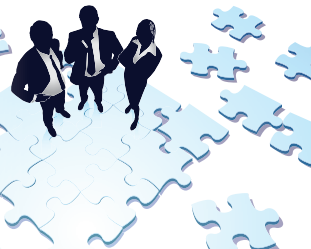


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HILL ANNEX

TRIP BACK TO PREHISTORIC TIME

BRITTA ARENDT
HERALD-REVIEW

It's almost impossible to imagine — a shallow inland sea extending from the gulf of Mexico to the Arctic Ocean with nearly all of the Mesabi Iron Range District infiltrated by this seaway.

However, because much of Minnesota was covered by water for more than 250 million years, some of the oldest rocks on the earth are found here offering glimpses into prehistoric time.

In the Arrowhead region, waters formed deposits from deltas, swamps, lagoons, lakes and rivers. Cretaceous sediments of varying thicknesses are exposed in nearly all of the mine pits throughout the Mesabi, according to more than 100 years of research by professionals with the Minnesota Geological Survey. Evidence has found a transition from marine deposits near Coleraine to terrestrial, or land, sediments in the east near Virginia.

As part of a study undertaken by the Science Museum of Minnesota, paleontologists are mapping, photographing and documenting the geological and paleontological record of this area before the deposits are worked out or covered over by water tables in the mines. One such site where many fossils have been found and continue to be found is a little-known gem of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) State Park system called Hill Annex State Park.

Part of the Minnesota State Park System, Hill Annex Mine is a 300-acre pit, and the eastern most section of the 800-acre Gross-Marble-Trumbull-Hill chain of pits. It is located in Calumet, about 8 miles east of Coleraine. The park features spectacular views of the sheer walls rising 500 feet from the bottom of the pit. A trip through the mine not only offers a chance to see fossils from the sea that covered the area 75-86 million years ago but also rock that is almost 2 billion years old.

According to the paleontologists from the Sci-



SUBMITTED

The former open pit at Hill Annex State Park in Calumet.

ence Museum of Minnesota, a crocodile skull was found at Hill Annex in 1969. Other fossils that have been found here include barbed teeth. In fact, John C. Greenway, founder of the city of Coleraine, had a personal collection of fossils which were on display at Greenway High School.

"We have secured a small exploratory grant for research and community outreach and are interested in developing these ideas into a long term project," explained John Westgaard, with the Science Museum of Minnesota.

As Doug Hanks, also with the Science Museum of Minnesota, states in an abstract he prepared for the proposed project, "Nearly all of the Cretaceous deposits mentioned in earlier reports have been mined out or are underwater and are long since lost to stratigraphic investigation. The most famous and useful site at the Hill-Annex Mine in Calumet, Minnesota contains an extensive in-situ section of the Cretaceous which will be under water within five years due to the rising water table in the mine pit. With new mining opportunities as well as access to data from most of the previous 400 mining localities along the Mesabi, a useful stratigraphic record can now be made of the Coleraine Formation in and around the Mesabi District."

For most of its history, Jones and Laughlin Steel Corporation operated

the Hill Annex Mine with shipments going by rail to the Twin Ports of Duluth and Superior for shipment to the eastern steel mills. For more than 60 years, beginning in the early 1900s, Hill Annex was a working mine, shipping out more than 64 million tons of ore. During this time, it was the sixth largest producer in the state. From the start of mining at Hill Annex in 1913 through 1978, mining technology changed drastically from horse-drawn equipment to eventually steam and then electrical power.

When the high-grade ore finally played out, the mine was sold to the Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board for \$1. The IRRRB developed a tour route at the site, converted the clubhouse into a museum/visitor center and started the tours. The site was entered on the National Register of Historic Places in 1986. And it was in 1988, that the Minnesota Legislature made Hill Annex Mine a state park. The park operates on an annual surface lease of 634.8 acres of school trust land.

State statute specifically recognizes the mineral estate, the potential for resumption of mining, and designates the state as obligated to manage the property as a school trust with its minerals for the benefit of the Permanent School Trust to support area schools. Lease dollars are paid by the DNR to the trust for use of the land. The lease is cur-

rently held by the mining company Essar Hill Annex LLC.

Should Essar decide to mine the stockpiles at Hill Annex, it is uncertain what kind of disruption it would be to the park, according to Scott Kelling, DNR Northeast Regional Manager of Parks and Trails.

Kelling said plans for the 2015 season are to continue for Hill Annex as they have been for the past few years with two days of operation, Friday and Saturday, from Memorial weekend through Labor Day weekend. In 2003, the park's hours were reduced from seven days a week to three and eventually two as funding was stressed and operating

and maintenance costs escalated. At this point, any expansion at state parks will be determined by decisions by the Minnesota Legislature.

The same park manager that oversees Hill Annex also supervises Scenic and Schoolcraft state parks.

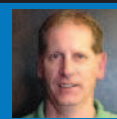
During operating season, Hill Annex Mine offers three tours a day. These tours include a fossil hunt at 10 a.m. where visitors actually get the opportunity to find fossils, dating back as far as 86 million years ago, that they can keep. Two historical mining tours are offered at 12:30 and 3 p.m. which retrace the steps of miners.

The tours begin at

the mine's historical clubhouse where an interpretive center offers insight into the mine operation and the European immigrants who settled and mined the Iron Range. Visitors a step aboard a trolley to begin their descent into the state's history of natural iron ore mining. Traveling past the mine's operation and vintage equipment, the tour includes stories of the immigrants and their determination and dedication to etch a place in local, state, national and world history.

For more information about Hill Annex State Park, visit the DNR website at www.dnr.state.mn.us/state_parks.

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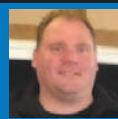
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