

Closer to Home

A newsletter from the Kandiyohi County & City of Willmar Economic Development Commission



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Bob Dickerson: 'Build Sandcastles and Memories'

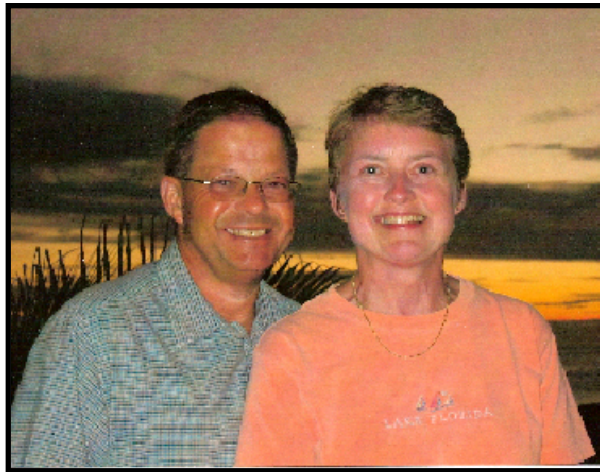
It's fitting that **Bob Dickerson** himself has come back to the area, seeing as his business is built on bringing people back – to **Dickerson's Lake Florida Resort**. Dickerson is the "Director of Guest Happiness" at the resort he owns and operates with his wife, **Connie**.

Bob grew up at **Lake Florida** and graduated from **New London-Spicer** schools in 1965. He was active in scouting and is an **Eagle Scout**. Living at the lake, his hobbies naturally involved water, including water-skiing, sailing, scuba diving, and raking the beach.

After attending **Willmar State Junior College**, where he was active in student government and helped establish a statewide Association of Junior College Student Government, Bob moved to Minneapolis in 1968 to attend the **University of Minnesota** with the intention of being a doctor.

He worked at Century Camera and Brown Photo while attending classes, then was diagnosed with viral encephalitis during his senior year and was forced into a long recovery period where he realized he wasn't ready for more years of class work. Instead, he was recruited by Equitable Life and spent nearly eight years commuting from Columbia Heights to a downtown office.

In 1976, Bob was "growing tired of the hustle and bustle of Twin Cities traffic. My father was ready to retire and sell the family resort, which had been in our family for three generations. As the eldest of four sons, I felt the pangs of heritage and knew I would never have the opportunity again to continue the **family business** if I didn't do it now." (*continued on page 2*)



Bob and Connie own and operate Dickerson's Lake Florida Resort.

Paul Mikkelson: Staying Busy, Even in Retirement

There are warmer places – he lists Florida and Arizona – that **Paul Mikkelson** could have chosen for his retirement, especially considering his full-time hobby is the collection and quality restoration of boats. "But I'm here," said Mikkelson confidently from his **Mikkelson Collection Classic & Antique Boat Museum & Shop** in Willmar.

Born at Rice Memorial Hospital in 1937, Paul grew up on Becker Ave. and was baptized and confirmed at Vinje Lutheran Church. Upon graduation, he attended **St. Olaf College** and then spent a few years in the **U.S. Army**. He got married and had two children, and spent 40 years working in the Twin Cities in the credit and financial services industry, living in Interlachen. Along the way, Mikkelson started several businesses, including some that are still in operation – now run by his children.

When he retired 12 years ago, he and his wife decided to move back to Kandiyohi County. "**There was no reason to retire anywhere else,**" noted Mikkelson, who has always felt a strong connection to the area. They own a home on **Eagle Lake**, and he has other real estate investments in the area. Upon moving back, he dove headfirst into his hobby of locating, collecting, and restoring classic and antique boats, including rare **Larson Falls Flyers**. Not quite ready to slow down, he works on boat projects year-round and runs the museum, despite being "retired." (*continued on page 2*)



Paul Mikkelson driving his 1942 Falls Flyer. (www.fallsflyer.com)

Summer sizzles in Kandiyohi County!

The summer is host to multiple community events and festivals including: Little Crow Ski Show (littlecrow.com), SonShine Music Festival (sonshinefestival.com), Little Crow Anglers Fish Tourney, Kandi is Dandy Days, Atwater Festival Days, Willmar Fests (willmarfests.com), New London Summer Art Fair, Studio Hop (studiohop.org), Spicer 4th of July (spicermn.com), Prinsburg 4th of July, Pennock Fun Days, Cornstalk Fest (cornstalkfest.com), Lake Lillian Fun Days, New London Water Day (newlondonmn.com), the New London to New Brighton Antique Car Run, the Kandiyohi County Fair (kandifair.com), and the New London Music Festival (newlondonmusic.org), and more!



Photos from www.sonshinefestival.com

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"It really says something about our quality of life in Kandiyohi County when people who have their choice of where to live decide they want to come back home to work, live, and play."

Mikkelson: "No reason to retire anywhere else"

"I think it's important to be proud of the area we live in, and to struggle to make it better than we found it," said Mikkelson, who has volunteered his time on boards and committees.

Beyond the boat collection, Mikkelson is also the president of **Willmar Realty Corp.** and the current chair of the **Willmar Design Center**; as well as past chair of the **Willmar Convention and Visitor's Bureau**. He thinks people in the area need to be more public about the many great recreational activities and tourist attractions that exist.



Tour guide Paul Mikkelson points out some of the finer points in the Falls Flyer exhibit (www.fallsflyer.com)

Despite the allure of warmer winter weather to the south, his fondness for the Willmar lakes area remains strong. "I have encouraged my children to think about this area when they think of slowing down," added Mikkelson.

The **Mikkelson Boat Collection & Museum** is located at 418 Benson Ave., Willmar, which is one block from Domino's Pizza. More information is available at: www.fallsflyer.com.

Dickerson: Very thankful for healthy, rural lifestyle

"While the constantly increasing real estate value of lakeshore continues to make it attractive to sell out to development, and low cost airfare to worldwide destinations are attractive to travelers, Connie & I feel there will always be a need for families to 'build sandcastles & memories' on a beautiful Lake Florida beach," said Dickerson.



Dickerson's Lake Florida Resort

Over the years the number of resorts in Kandiyohi County has declined, but new motels and bed & breakfasts, along with an excellent county park system, has continued to make the Willmar lakes area a great place to vacation.

Among other things, Dickerson lists **Sibley State Park, Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center, local golf courses, bike trails,** and 'small town' shopping as enjoyable parts of the vacation experience in the area. He believes that all tourism-related businesses need to work together to create the best possible experience for guests.

"I'm very thankful we live in a community committed to a **healthy, rural lifestyle**," added Dickerson. To visit Dickerson's Lake Florida Resort, go to: www.dickersonsresort.com

EDC Hires New Assistant Director: Jean Spaulding

Excerpts from an article by Anne Polta, West Central Tribune

The **Kandiyohi County & City of Willmar Economic Development Commission** has chosen **Jean Spaulding** as the new assistant director.

Spaulding, of Spicer, is currently the executive director of the Spicer Economic Development Authority. The new assistant director comes with a strong background in economic development. She was director of the Kandiyohi County Convention & Visitors Bureau for 10 years before going to work in 2000 for the Spicer EDA. She also is on the **EDC's business retention & expansion committee**, serves as chairman of the **technology task force**, and is an ex-officio member of the EDC operations board.



Jean Spaulding

Currently Over 100 Area Job Openings to Move Home For:

Christianson & Associates, PLLP

Accounting Software Consultant
Provide accounting consultation & technical assistance to Microsoft Dynamics GP, commodity & related software
Staff Accountant

Analyze financial data & prepare reports in compliance with GAAP & GAAS

Network Administrator

Provide network & server support in a growing IT department

Contact: David Lindberg

dilindberg@christiansoncpa.com

Rice Memorial Hospital

Registered Nurse – Mental Health Svcs.

Casual position with rotating shifts

Polysomnography Technician

Tests patients for sleep disorders, admin.

CPAP titrations

Central Medical Transcriptionist

Full-time day shift

Physical Therapist

Evaluate & plan treatments for patients;

must be a graduate of PT program approved by the APTA; registered in Minnesota

Contact: Nancy Skindellen

nski@rice.willmar.mn.us

Affiliated Comm. Medical Centers

Nurse Practitioner / Physician Assistant

Provide direct patient care in the Internal Medicine Dept.

Contact: Lyle Loge, HR

acmchr@acmc.com

Southern Minnesota Beet Sugar

Web Programmer

Skills in ASP.NET, VB.NET, PHP, XML,

Adobe Creative Suite, Dreamweaver, & relational database technology (SQL)

Programmer / Developer

Skills in ASP.NET, VB.NET, Access 2003,

applied knowledge of T-SQL & SQL Server

Contact: Carol Maurice

carol_maurice@smbc.com

Ready to move home?

Send us your resume!

Opportunities for growth are everywhere, even while our residents maintain our better pace and quality of life.

If you're ready to move here as well, please call the EDC at **320-235-7370** or **888-815-7370** or visit our website @ www.kandiyohi.com to learn how to get matched up with local employers!