



Closer to Home

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



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High Tech; High Quality of Life

In business, nearly everything now depends on **information technology** to function and improve. According to the U.S. Dept. of Commerce, nearly **half of all capital outlays** are **IT-related**. Thanks to local education efforts, technology improvements, and information access, Kandiyohi County is able to provide everything that bigger cities can provide; but with the one thing that technology can't always help to improve: *personal relationships and quality of life*. Read this issue's stories about two Kandiyohi County **Bring Them Back Home success stories**, and their optimism about the area's gains in technology. Then learn how local high school students are leading the state in applying **engineering technology** – helping them choose careers and earn valuable technical experience in the process.

Bill Jagow: Back into the Great Wide Open

In between the honking horns and screeching tires, the call of the wild came through loud and clear for **Bill Jagow**, the **Chief Information Officer** at **Affiliated Community Medical Centers (ACMC)** in Willmar. "Growing up in the lakes area, I enjoyed a lot of things that had to do with nature," remarked Jagow. "That was something I really missed when I lived in the Twin Cities."

After graduating from **Willmar High School** in 1988, Bill earned his bachelor's degree in computer science and master's degree in organizational leadership at **Bethel University** in St.



Bill Jagow, CIO at ACMC

Paul. He worked for about a decade in the Twin Cities, dealing with the increasing congestion and urban sprawl. But his wife is from the Willmar lakes area too, and the two shared a desire to move back to their hometown. When the opportunity arose in 2001, they jumped at the chance to be back home amongst family, friends, and the outdoors.

"Family is a big reason, obviously – both of our families live here," said Jagow. "But being able to have access to the outdoor opportunities was a prime factor for me." He noted that the Twin Cities also have a lot of lakes, but even those are packed full and prone to traffic jams.

"**Kandiyohi County has a lot going for it**," added Jagow. "Within 5 minutes of work, you can be at the lake or out in the country – away from the congestion." (continued on page 2)

Nick Davis: Growing up 'Famous' is a family affair

Technology has always been a part of **Nick Davis'** life. "Being the son of a software developer, I was intrigued with computers and technology advancements for as long as I can remember," said Davis. "I was acquainted with assembling computers by the age of 9 and I received my first 'Intro to Programming' book at the age of 10 (for Christmas). Other hobbies I had growing up generally consisted of building things. These included Legos, rocketry, amateur radio and small electronics assembly projects."

Since then, Nick has turned his love of technology into a job with **Famous Davis Productions**, a family-run full-service design team offering web site, graphic design, and video production located on the **MinnWest Technology Campus** in Willmar. "The same **information technology** that businesses in New York, Chicago, London and Tokyo use, it is also available to businesses here in Kandiyohi County," noted Davis. "In the business realm, the playing field is being leveled and the smaller businesses and communities for the first time ever have the ability to effectively compete with larger businesses on a national and global scale while keeping costs to a minimum. The local technology service providers are capable of making this possible for our community."

Nick moved back to the area in 2000 with his family, where he now works with his wife, **Jacinda**, and his dad, **Chris**, at Famous Davis. Even as a high level **web developer and designer**, he hasn't had a reason to move because he's been able to develop his skill set locally while working with people and businesses within the area. (continued on page 2)



The Famous Davis Productions team of Nick, Chris, & Jacinda Davis sit in the office at the MinnWest Technology Campus www.famousdavispro.com

Want to move back?

Send us
YOUR RESUME!

The goal of the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission's **Bring Them Back Home** effort is to **encourage and help former residents to move back to the area for job openings with local employers.**

We have an extensive **network of businesses** in the region who are looking for **skilled employees**, all of whom would **love to hire** people with familiarity and affinity for the area.

If you're in a position where you're **ready to move back home**, please take the time to **SEND US YOUR RESUME**, and we will get you in contact with local companies that need your skills and abilities.

Call **320-235-7370** or e-mail us at [edp@kandiyohi.com!](mailto:edp@kandiyohi.com)

Nick Davis: Getting "Plugged In" to the community is easy and fun

"I believe that information technology services providers will only **thrive** in our area. With the technology that is readily available at the consumer level, such as cell phones and the internet, it's very clear: people not only desire information, but they want the information when it's an ideal time for them..." remarked Davis, who **blogs** on the company's website. "And when they take time to access or search for that information, they want it fast. I believe this will only become a more prominent necessity in the future as people are truly relying on **being connected**. For as long as people need this connectivity available in the form of cell phones, the internet and other advancements in technology, there will be a **bright future** for information technology service providers."

Davis points out that Kandiyohi County offers a variety of different services and business types, providing great employment opportunities to almost any person. He also feels that Kandiyohi County is a great area to **start a new business**, as there is a solid population with many different needs. "There are also great professional groups that help a person 'plug into' the community. For example, we have been active in the **Willmar Lakes Area Chamber**, which has been very beneficial to our business," added Davis.

Nick is still actively learning the best practices within his profession, and "loves working in the technology field, more specifically the area of web development and design." He is also active in martial arts (*he has a black belt in Tae Kwan Do*) and currently has an interest in European-style board games.

In closing, he said "**Kandiyohi County is a great area to live, work and play**. I truly believe the opportunities available in this area meet and often will exceed the standards of living elsewhere. We have a **robust foundation** of different services and businesses available, which I believe successfully competes with what is available in larger cities while maintaining an active, safe and clean community."



Nick Davis is a web developer and designer for Famous Davis Productions.

Bill Jagow: Technology allows people to live and work anywhere

"Back when I first graduated from college, there wasn't a lot of opportunity in the area in computer science. But even in the last 7 years, there has been a tremendous opportunity for information technology workers," said Jagow. As **CIO** for **ACMC**, he manages the information systems and telecom systems for the **11-clinic network**, which serves six local hospitals and thousands of patients throughout the region. ACMC has over 150 physicians and mid-level practitioners and features 25 specialty departments with more than 700 support staff. (www.acmc.com)

Because Bill's specialty is in health care, he cited numerous examples of IT opportunities in the industry that are growing in the Willmar lakes area. But beyond that, he also mentioned the **MinnWest Technology Campus** as a great location for technology jobs and noted that technology itself is creating more opportunities for people. "Companies are becoming *placeless*; and with all the congestion in the Twin Cities, and the rising cost of gas, more people want to be out of that. With technology, more people have an opportunity to move out," said Jagow.



Bill Jagow and his family enjoy living in Kandiyohi County.

He sees a **bright future for Kandiyohi County**, especially in the area of business growth and information technology. Jagow thinks that as more companies become interested in locating in the Willmar lakes area, the number of IT jobs will multiply. "Most companies have IT needs on-site," added Jagow, "There are definitely many more opportunities here now than in the past."

In addition to the technology being available, the region has many outdoor amenities that are hard to find in other places. The lakes, the hunting, the sports, and the peace and quiet are attractive to people who have had enough of the congestion of the big cities; yet Willmar has the shopping, health care amenities, and professional career options that people want easy access to. "I would like to see more people in **information technology** being drawn back to this," Jagow noted.

Jagow and his wife are glad to be back in Willmar, where they're able to enjoy the outdoors and see their families more often. "Until you've left the area, you don't really appreciate it," said Jagow, who simply feels at home in the great wide open spaces of Kandiyohi County.

Willmar students impress at state tech tourney

Excerpts from an article by Linda Vanderwerf in the West Central Tribune (www.wctrib.com)

'The Tank' has been a source of frustration and pride for its five builders, a group of **aspiring engineers** who learned a few lessons the hard way on their way to **superior rankings** in the state **Technology Challenge competition**. The team of **Matt Kroneberger, Dane Swartz, Carlos Borges, Marc Zinda** and **Joel Hedlof** started designing their creation in mid-January.

They came up with **The Tank**, a pint-sized, 80-pound metal monster that moves on tracks over an obstacle course and launches a foam football at a target. The Tank is powered by two 12-volt batteries and is operated by remote control.

Earlier this month (May 2008) they took The Tank to the state competition in Eden Prairie, where they earned a **superior rating**. One judge rated them the "**superior of the superiors**," said their teacher **Mike Kroeker**.

Each person on the team keeps an engineering notebook documenting the work they did, Kroeker said. Since **so many students are interested in engineering fields**, they will use those skills later on, he added. Willmar has signed on to a new engineering curriculum called **Project Lead the Way**, which offers classes that are recognized by colleges and offers students a chance to earn college credits.



The Tank maneuvers over an obstacle course at the High School. Tribune photo by Bill Zimmer.

Supermileage team takes second, third in state

Excerpts from an article by Linda Vanderwerf in the West Central Tribune (www.wctrib.com)

Willmar's Supermileage Challenge team brought home trophies and plaques from the state competition in Brainerd earlier this month (May 2008). The team placed **second** in the stock class and **third** in the modified class in the competition on the track at Brainerd International Raceway. The shiny cardinal-red cars were built by a team of 10 students, under the direction of teacher/adviser **Mike Kroeker**.

The students' task is to build the small, lightweight cars to obtain the highest mileage possible, Kroeker said. Willmar's stock car averaged **382 miles per gallon (mpg)** over six runs and had a top run of **450 mpg**. The modified car had a six-run average of **481 mpg** and a top run of **519 mpg**. Team members **Josh and Ed Gesch**, both 18-year-old seniors from Willmar, said the team had a good trip to Brainerd.

"Thanks to this class, **I chose my career**," Josh said. "I'm going into **mechanical engineering**." He and his brother Ed plan to study [engineering in college] next fall. "This class is probably one of the best classes anybody can take if they want to be an **engineer**," Ed said.

Survey shows 85% of Willmar's 274 grads plan to attend college

Excerpts from an article by Linda Vanderwerf in the West Central Tribune (www.wctrib.com)

A huge majority of Willmar Senior High's 274 graduates this spring, about **85 percent** of them, will be headed off to **college** in the fall. One hundred students, 36 percent, said they would be attending **community or technical colleges**. That number is a 50-50 split between male and female students. Forty-four students, 16 percent, will be attending **public colleges or universities** in Minnesota, while 25 of them, 9 percent, will be attending **schools outside Minnesota**. The remainder of the students include 21 who will be seeking **full-time employment** or already have jobs, seven students entering the **military**, six **special education** students, four **foreign exchange** students returning home, and three who listed other plans.

Currently Over 150 Area Job Openings to Move Home For:

Jennie-O Turkey Store - Willmar

Compensation Analyst - \$50,000 - \$58,000

Bachelor's degree in Business, Accounting, HR or a related field or equivalent related exp. Strong organization, written & verbal comm. skills, interpersonal & analytical skills; exp. with HAY job eval. process preferred.

Contact: Elissa Nelson at jocareer@j-ots.com

Marketing Concepts - Spicer

Business Systems Analyst

Excellent problem solving & communication skills. Able to analyze data & provide alternate solutions.

Software Documentation Writer

Technical Writer / Documenter

Marketing Writer / Editor

Contact: Barb Wagner at 320-796-6245 ext. 5163 or

hr@marketingconcepts.com

SpecSys Inc. - Montevideo & Granite Falls

Project Engineer - Montevideo

Design fast track projects. FEA modeling & project management exp. required, preferably in heavy mobile equip. B.S. in engineering or related field, 5+ years of work experience required

Sales Estimator - Granite Falls

Ability to communicate with Sales, Engineering, Manufacturing and internal personnel in a fast paced environment. Exp. levels of mechanical aptitude, spatial reasoning and computer literacy.

Contact: Robyn Leese at hr@specsys.org

Willmar Municipal Utilities - Willmar

Assistant Engineer

2 year degree in electrical control or technology, prefer 4 year degree in either electrical or mechanical engineering. Familiar with Office, Autocad, & command languages.

Contact: Wes Hompe at whompe@wmu.willmar.mn

Avicenna Technology - Montevideo

Information Systems Administrator

Develop, support & maintain integrated software system developed on Visual Studio 2005 .NET & SQL Server 2005 platform. Install, configure, & support Avicenna's networks & IT systems.

Contact: Robin Johnson at rjohnson@avicennatech.com

Southern Minnesota Beet Sugar - Renville

Ag District Management - 18 Counties

Manage a field district & educate growers in producing a premium quality sugar beet crop by advising on land prep., planting, maintaining & harvesting. Competitive salary, company vehicle, & benefit package with 100% emp. paid health & dental ins., life ins. 401(k), & pension.

Contact: Carol Maurice at carol_maurice@smbc.com

Epitopix, LLC - Willmar

Production Lab Technicians

Assoc. degree in biological sciences, or work exp. in a lab setting with sterile/aseptic technique. Working in a production lab setting with machinery producing the vaccine.

Contact: Michelle Lippert at

Michelle.Lippert@Life-ScienceInnovations.com