



# Closer to Home

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



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## For Your Information...

Though it comprises just **2 percent** of total employment in the county, **information** is a *vital piece* of the local economy. Including **newspaper publishers, radio and television broadcasting, cable programming, wired and wireless telecommunications providers, and data processing services**, Kandiyohi County has more than **25 information businesses** providing about **450 jobs** to local workers. The information industry is rapidly changing with the times, leading to exciting opportunities for workers with big personalities and unique skills.

The Willmar lakes area also has a **vibrant local arts and entertainment scene**, ranging from **local theater, art celebrations, music festivals, orchestras and choirs**, and much more. If you're interested in exploring the **numerous job openings** in the area, please **contact us** at [edp@kandiyohi.com](mailto:edp@kandiyohi.com) or **320-235-7370** for information on how to get linked with local employers.

## Paul Stagg is happy to report: "You can come home!"

Every afternoon at 5:00, local radio listeners are once again being treated to a familiar voice on KWLM radio. Adding on to a radio career that has spanned **more than five decades**, newsman **Paul Stagg** returned to the radio station he started at in **1957**. Stagg grew up in Willmar and graduated from **Willmar High School** in 1960. Curious by nature, his broadcasting career started early. "During the summer of '57 I would ride my bike out 'Radio Station Road' on Sunday evenings when English teacher John Esbjornson did part-time announcing on **KWLM**. After visiting and watching him work for a few weeks John asked if I would like to play a few records and talk a bit on the air," Stagg recalled. "I did this a few times that summer and in the early fall KWLM owner and manager **Bill Linder** called me and asked if I would be interested in doing weekend work for the station? I of course said 'Yes' and in November I was officially licensed and went to work. I helped out through the next three years and it was cool!"

Stagg attended Augsburg College after high school but came back to KWLM as an announcer in 1961. He left for **WDAY** in Fargo in 1963, and then moved to the Twin Cities in 1969. Stagg then worked at **WWTC** and at **WCCO FM**, which as manager he changed to **WLTE FM** in the early 80's, then went back to announcing at **WCCO AM** for eight years. In 1992, Stagg and his wife purchased **WQPM** in Princeton, MN. They sold those stations in 1997, so he went back to announcing for a couple of years.

Paul and his wife **Susan**, who is from Morris, decided to move back to the area a few years ago. "We have had a cabin on **Lake Florida** for many years and always talked about what it would be like to live on the lake year-round," said Stagg. "On one of our visits to Spicer I ran into **Steve Linder**, who now is the owner and manager of **Lakeland Broadcasting**. We talked a bit and before I knew it I was working again at KWLM." Stagg now does afternoon newscasts for **Q102, Big Country 100.1, The Train 106.5** and the "**Live at Five**" news and information hour on KWLM every Monday through Friday. *(continued on page 2)*



Paul Stagg is back reporting the news at KWLM radio.

## Jill Benson Reestablishes Her Roots

As an **English Instructor** at **Ridgewater College** in Willmar, **Jill Benson** teaches students how to write and think critically. But her favorite part of her job is getting to know the students: *she admires their fierce desire to learn and succeed.*



Jill Benson performs a song during the Barn Theatre production of "I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change."

After growing up on the **Roisum farm** – which has been in the family for more than **100 years** – between **Kerkhoven** and **Sunburg**, Jill graduated from **KMS High School** in 1984. She met her husband, **John Benson** – a 1984 Willmar High School graduate and fellow **Bring Them Back Home** success story – in college and they were married in 1988. They moved to Ames, IA where she earned a Master's degree in English and he completed a Ph.D. in Chemistry.

From there, the couple lived in Illinois where John did post-doctoral work. "We had each of our three boys in different cities: **Samuel** in Urbana, **Paul** in Charleston, and **Gabriel** in Rockford," said Benson. But they **always dreamed of returning to Minnesota**, with its educated and progressive population. In 1998, a chemistry job at **Ridgewater College** opened up, in a location 15 minutes between each set of their parents.

"Our family moved back because instead of seeing family twice a year, at Christmas and summer vacation, we could see our parents and aunts and uncles **anytime we wanted**, home for birthday parties and graduations, home for births and deaths. **Our roots were here, and if we moved back, our boys' roots would be here too.**" *(continued on page 2)*

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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."

## Jill Benson: Willmar provides exceptional cultural opportunities

Benson believes that **Ridgewater College** is an unheralded asset in the area; employing a number of **passionate instructors** and other employees. She enjoys her job and works hard to not only teach students how to write, but also to think critically and make good decisions. She feels that both Ridgewater and other local schools "need to be more fully supported at the state and local level if we are to **continue preparing a vibrant workforce for our economy.**"



Jill and John Benson both returned to the area to teach at Ridgewater College.

She is also actively involved in the local arts scene; serving on the **Barn Theatre** Board of Directors and also performing regularly in shows like **Chicago** and **I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change**. Benson notes that Willmar has active community performing opportunities in orchestra, band, jazz orchestra and choir, as well as the six-show Barn Theatre season.

Benson is particularly impressed with Willmar Public School's music program. "We have talented instructors, huge numbers of kids making music, and programs like our jazz band, marching band and junior and senior high musicals. Whether at the adult or student level, our whole family enjoys making music," said Benson. "Living in **Willmar provides exceptional cultural opportunities, as well as proximity to the people we love most.**"

## Paul Stagg: Impressed with volunteerism

"It has been an eye opener returning to Willmar and Kandiyohi County. First I have been **reminded how great the people are here**. This is truly an area where neighbors watch out for neighbors and "**Minnesota Nice**" is found everywhere," remarked Stagg. "I am also impressed with the **volunteerism** in the area. Many people are **giving many hours** of their time to help their neighbors who need it."

Stagg said the population has more than **doubled in size** since he moved. He marvels at the growth of **Ridgewater College, Jennie-O Turkey Store**, all the development south of **First Street** (which were corn fields when he left) and so many other things in the area. "I have found that this area seems to have its own economy. The diversity of ag and businesses keep things on an even keel and have helped the area survive during the last few years of tough economic times."

In closing, he noted that "it still is 'cool' to be on the radio after all these years and **wonderful to work** with a very talented staff."



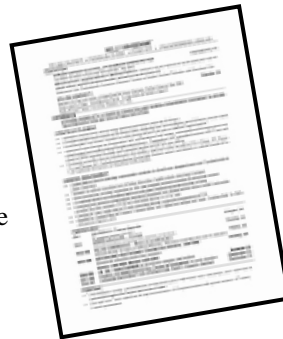
Information about Paul Stagg can be found at [www.kwlm.com](http://www.kwlm.com).

## Ready to move back? Send us *your résumé!*

Despite the recession, there are still many **job opportunities** in the area. Through Labor Day, there were over **300 jobs** listed as available on [www.MinnesotaWorks.net](http://www.MinnesotaWorks.net) within 50 miles of Willmar!

The goal of the **Bring Them Back Home** effort is to **encourage and help former residents move back to the area for job openings with local employers**. Through our **partners**, we have an extensive **network of businesses** in the region that 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 résumé**, and we will get you in contact with local companies that need your skills and abilities. If you want to be the next **Bring Them Back Home success story**, or you know someone else who could be call us at : **320-235-7370** or e-mail us at: [edp@kandiyohi.com](mailto:edp@kandiyohi.com)!



## Currently more than 300 Exciting Career Opportunities in the Kandiyohi County area!

Licensed Practical Nurse  
**Bethesda Health & Housing-Willmar**  
Appropriately & safely do procedures & treatments as per physician or plan of care; monitor nursing assistants  
Info: [www.bethesdawillmar.com](http://www.bethesdawillmar.com)

Business Manager  
**Green Lake Lutheran Ministries**  
Position requires accounting & comp. skills with in-depth knowledge of non-profit fund accounting & all aspects of payroll with supervisory skills; Minimum 2-year post secondary education in accounting & 2-5 years of experience  
Info: [camp@gllm.org](mailto:camp@gllm.org)

Production Supervisor Trainee  
**Jennie-O Turkey Store - Willmar**  
**\$34,000 - \$42,000**  
Through training, recognition & leading by example the incumbent will manage daily production schedules, & integrate quality & safety standards. Written & verbal communication skills, strong organization skills; exper. supervising people &/or a related four-year degree.  
Info: [jocareer@j-ots.com](mailto:jocareer@j-ots.com)  
[www.jennieo.com/careers/](http://www.jennieo.com/careers/)

Business Process/Systems Analyst  
**Prinsco - Willmar**  
IT experience working for several mfg. companies, preferably in extrusion or blow molding. Programming exper. with Crystal Reports, FRx, SQL & MS.Net. IQMS ERP system implementation exper. Lean Manufacturing concepts & practices. Bachelor's degree req.  
Info: [www.prinsco.com](http://www.prinsco.com)

Network Administrator  
**Marketing Concepts - Spicer**  
Cisco Router config., NATing, routing tables etc. • Cisco PIX Firewall config. • Watchguard Firewall config. • VPN Tunneling, Frame Relays, IP Suite • Network Switch config. • LAN/WAN incl. WAN Optimizers • Load Balancer configuration • Microsoft Server 2003 • Network & Server Monitoring Tools  
Info: [www.MarketingConcepts.com](http://www.MarketingConcepts.com)

Justice & Mental Health Planning  
Grant Coordinator  
**PACT 4 Families - Willmar**  
Ensure that grant goals, objectives, major activities & agenda are prepared & completed in a timely manner. Minimum 5 years exper. in mental health or juvenile justice field.  
Info: [www.pact4.org](http://www.pact4.org)