



## BRING THEM BACK HOME

## Moving into the Spotlight: Ready to Shine

Individuals from the county and even the county itself have recently been placed in the national and statewide media spotlight, casting a warm glow over the many positive things happening in Kandiyohi County. In their time to shine, everyone has done a great job of representing the area.

On the national front, **NBC News** sent correspondent **Kevin Tibbles** to Willmar to explore how the city has integrated more than 35 different ethnicities. Kandiyohi County was held up as an example of a successful "melting pot," welcoming people from around the world.



### NBC News: Immigrants turn Minnesota into a melting pot

[www.msnbc.msn.com/id/16301945/](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/16301945/)

By Kevin Tibbles  
Correspondent  
NBC News  
(Excerpts below)



Earlier this spring, **Sports Illustrated** magazine profiled the Willmar high school cross country team, which won the Minnesota state title for the second consecutive year and participated in the Nike Team Nationals in Portland, Oregon this winter.



The passing of **Earl B. Olson** graced the front pages of the **St. Paul Pioneer Press**, the **Minneapolis Star-Tribune** and many regional and local newspapers, paying homage to the 91-year-old turkey industry giant. Earl B. started with a flock of 1,000 turkeys in 1941, and built a company that through acquisition and marketing has become today's Jennie-O Turkey Store, a behemoth that sells 1,500 turkey products and employs 7,000 people.

**StarTribune.com**  
Minneapolis - St. Paul, Minnesota

**PIONEER PRESS**

This spring, **KARE11 News** reporter **Rick Kupchella** visited Kandiyohi County after hearing from Minnesota State Demographer Tom Gillaspay that Willmar is a perfect illustration of what the state will look like in 2020 in terms of diversity and age groups.



These media experiences are highlighted in this edition of the Closer To Home newsletter. As Kandiyohi County continues to change for the better, so do the perceptions of people outside the area, as well as people who are from the area but have moved away. What is all the buzz about? **Now is a great time to live, learn, and do business in Willmar and Kandiyohi County!**

At this year's Christmas pageant, Latino Lutherans invite local Catholics to join in — just another sign of how Willmar's varied cultures strive to include one another.

"Why is it working?" asks resident Idalia Leuze. "Because we have actually come together and have decided that this has to work."

Like most American towns, this one has its general store and coffee shop, but nestled in between, the new face of Willmar: a Somali grocery, a Latino clothing store, a Mexican bakery.

Mayor Les Heitke says there are 37 different ethnicities in his city of just 18,000 — 20 percent of the population. "On Main Street you'll see all the northern Europeans, but you're also going to see East Africans, Somalis, Sudanese, people from Bosnia, people from the Pacific Rim, and they're in and amongst our community," he says.

"They're finding out it's a good place to be," says Gregg Aamot, an Associated Press reporter and author of 'The New Minnesotans: Stories of Immigrants and Refugees.'

"It's an All-American city, it just looks different than the All-American city of 1950," says Aamot. "It's a good thing." A helping hand in the heart of middle America to newcomers from the four corners of the world.

## Help Wanted: Minnesota's Changing Workforce

[www.kare11.com/news/investigative/extras/extras\\_article.aspx?storyid=242112](http://www.kare11.com/news/investigative/extras/extras_article.aspx?storyid=242112)

By Rick Kupchella

KARE 11 News (excerpts below)



Minnesota is about to experience a retirement wave unlike anything we've ever seen before. Beginning in 2008 we'll see a 30-percent hike in the rate of retirement. When we asked the experts where to look today for conditions that mirror Minnesota in the year 2020 — both culturally and in terms of the generational mix — we were told to consider the town of Willmar.

What happened, basically, is this. The town's population aged. There weren't enough locals around to fill all of the available jobs and immigrants came to Willmar from all over the world to fill the jobs. They are now keeping that economy afloat. That's going to happen throughout Minnesota within 15 years. We'll have a million people in Minnesota over the age of 65 — more than any other age group. An exodus of retirees is expected to hit Minnesota, much like it hit Willmar. It will change how we live for a long time to come — and it starts next year.

This wave of newcomers will also have a profound impact on education. It will be more complex and expensive with a large new immigrant population. Willmar has had to deal with this too. The minority population at the school now measures about 40 percent. They've had to develop special programs to bring the youngest immigrants up to speed. In the beginning, some of the workers here hoped this would be just a passing phase. Many have come to see it as a blessing.

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# Closer to Home

"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."

## Earl B. Olson built Jennie-O turkey empire

By Matt McKinney  
Minneapolis Star-Tribune (*excerpts below*)

**Earl B. Olson**, founder of **Jennie-O Foods** and the man credited with playing a key role in making Minnesota's turkey industry the largest in the nation, died at his home. He was 91.

Olson started with a flock of 1,000 turkeys in 1941, earning \$1 per bird, as he built a company that through acquisition and marketing became today's **Jennie-O Turkey Store**, a behemoth that sells 1,500 turkey products and employs 7,000 people.

"Earl was a giant in our industry," said Doug McCulley, 88, a retired turkey farmer from Maple Plain. Olson, who in recent years worked out of an office at the Willmar, Minn., headquarters of the Jennie-O Turkey Store as a volunteer consultant, was at the company's board meeting over the Thanksgiving holiday and had continued to meet with farmers who were considering raising turkeys, according to Mike Tolbert, president of Jennie-O Turkey Store.

"Earl had been in some failing health but he had been quite active, and even when I got the news today it was a real surprise," said Tolbert. "He was really an inspiration to have in the office."

Olson, born in 1915, grew up the child of Swedish immigrants. He attended an agricultural high school that today is the Univ. of Minnesota-Morris. Olson bought his first turkey processing plant in 1949 and named it the Farmers Produce Company. Several years later he was told to come up with a better name. His wife suggested that they name the company after their daughter, Jennifer.

Olson's company developed the turkey hot dog in 1984. He sold the company to **Hormel Foods** in 1986. In a video interview shown on the company website, Olson says he started raising turkeys to make extra money soon after getting married. "I thought we'd get to be a good-sized company, but I didn't think we'd get as large as we are today," he said.

<http://www.jennieo.com/company.asp?catitemid=49&id=83>

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## Home on the Prairie: Somalian runners get a new start in MN

<http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/2006/highschool/12/06/hs.somali1211/index.html>

By Bill Syken  
Sports Illustrated (*excerpts below*)

Four years ago the **Willmar high school cross-country team** couldn't even win a local meet. Now Willmar has won two straight state titles, and it qualified for the Nike Team Nationals in Portland. What changed for the little school on the western Minnesota prairie? An influx of athletes from Somalia.

About 1,000 Somalis, made refugees by civil war, have come to Willmar over the last decade, drawn to the town of 20,000 by a Jennie-O turkey processing plant that has hired many immigrant workers. Abdi Awale, now a senior, was the first Somali to come out for the team four years ago. The next year he recruited his friend Kaafi Adeys, and three more Somalis joined the team.

This year Somalian runners had five of the team's seven varsity spots, and last month they won the Minnesota team title by setting a state record with an average time of 15:49.4.

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Bennett Office Tech.  
has openings available:



### Computer Network Technician

Willmar MN (60 mile service area)  
\* Microsoft cert. preferred, some exp. required; comp. benefits, pay based on experience, bonuses available  
\* [jobs@bennettoffice.com](mailto:jobs@bennettoffice.com) or call  
Dean Bouta @ 320-214-3802  
[www.bennettoffice.com](http://www.bennettoffice.com)

ACMC - Willmar  
has openings available:



### Laboratory Technician

Willmar MN ~ Part-time  
\* Current MLT or CLT cert. required; competitive compensation & benefits  
\* Lyle Loge, [acmchr@acmc.com](mailto:acmchr@acmc.com)  
[www.acmc.com](http://www.acmc.com)

Conway, Deuth & Schmiesing, PLLP  
has openings available:

### Senior Accountant ~ Willmar MN

\* CPA preferred; 3-5 years exp.  
\* Heather T., [hthompson@cdscpa.com](mailto:hthompson@cdscpa.com)  
[www.cdscpa.com](http://www.cdscpa.com)

Rice Hospital  
has openings:



### Chief Nursing Officer

Willmar MN ~ Administration  
\* Master's deg. in healthcare admin.  
\* Manages internal functions of Rice Hospital in collaboration with CFO, CAO, CQO, & CMO; under the CEO

### Director, Rice Regional Dental Clinic

Willmar MN  
\* DDS/DMD (or equiv.); min. of 5 years exp.; prev. teaching, community health training, & 10 years of rural clinical exp.  
\* Offer dynamic & visionary leadership; develop relationships with U of MN

### Health Data Specialist

Willmar MN  
\* Associate deg. in RHIT or AHIMA corr. course; coding & casefinding req.  
\* Nancy S., [nski@rice.willmar.mn.us](mailto:nski@rice.willmar.mn.us)  
[www.ricehospital.com](http://www.ricehospital.com)

## Ready to move home?

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](http://www.kandiyohi.com) to learn how to get matched up with local employers!

Also check out [www.willmar.com!](http://www.willmar.com!)