



## BRING THEM BACK HOME

### Season's Greetings and Happy Holidays!

On behalf of the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission and the Bring Them Back Home task force, we'd like to wish you **warm holiday greetings** this year!

We know many of you will be coming home over the holidays to see family and friends. While you're here, we invite you to explore the area and look at all of the new development that is occurring in our area – you might be surprised at our growth!

Perhaps you've seen enough change that you're ready to move back as well... We'd welcome you back with **open arms and open jobs!**

If you're interested, please call the EDC at **320-235-7370** or visit our website @ [www.kandiyohi.com](http://www.kandiyohi.com) for more information on how to get linked up with local employers.

We hope you all have a **safe and happy holiday season!**

## Over the river and into Prairie Woods

In the early 1970s, Dave Pederson left Kandiyohi County to pursue education, adventure and employment, never expecting to look back. Along the way he completed undergraduate work at Augsburg College and graduate work at Mankato State University in Minnesota, then embarked on a twenty-five (plus) year career in experiential education. The journey included paddling down the length of the Mississippi River, leading groups on the Yukon River, sea kayaking with the whales in Alaska and soaking up as much adventure as he could. At some imprecise point during a six year stint in Alaska, however, Dave and his wife (and adventure partner), Ruth Fairchild, began to feel the tug of heart-strings to return home and raise children near family and friends.

Their moves have always been made for career advancement and new adventures. Pederson's decision to move in the direction of home unfolded with generous measures of intention and good fortune. A three-year detour through Vermont, where Ruth obtained a second masters degree and the couples' first child was born, reinforced the decision to move closer to home. Good fortune came into play, when "Grandma Pederson" called from Spicer to encourage Ruth, a native of Canby, to apply for an English instructor position opening at Ridgewater College. "Ruth was fortunate to be selected from a strong applicant pool, and we jumped at the opportunity to return home," said Pederson. "We were impressed to see how Ridgewater had developed an array of quality programs and a beautiful campus."

With one position secured, Ruth and Dave felt assured that the move was workable. The intangible benefit of having their kids grow up seeing grandmas, uncles, aunts, and cousins on an almost daily basis far outweighed any negatives of the move. Their move, in 1993, was literally into familiar territory with a network of friends and family that could assist with finding a niche for Dave. He discovered quickly that his education, skills, and experience were valued by organizations and agencies in the area and he connected with a dynamic group of people working to establish an environmental learning center in west central/southwestern Minnesota. Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center proved to be a perfect fit, which drew on Dave's experience and training in program design and development. After serving seven years as the founding director of the challenge course and Adventure Coop at Prairie Woods, Dave moved into the role of Executive Director three years ago. *(continued on page 2)*



Dave Pederson, Prairie Woods

## Santa Claus is coming to town(s)!

With Christmas fast approaching, Santa Claus will be coming to many of the communities in Kandiyohi County. He will be visiting Atwater, Blomkest, Kandiyohi, Lake Lillian, New London, Pennock, Prinsburg, Raymond, Spicer, Sunburg, and Willmar at various times, courtesy of local chambers, organizations, and the Kandiyohi Men's Club. Kids of all ages love the chance to meet Santa and his crew...

Spicer will also be hosting the popular **WinterFest** this year, with events including a giant ice castle and slide, a "Polar Plunge" into Green Lake and Hot Tub Party, winter softball tournament, Frozen 5K run/walk, ice fishing derby, fireworks, art exhibit & wine tasting, and an ice sculpture contest. WinterFest runs every Saturday and Sunday from Jan. 19 to Feb. 4, from 10:00 am to 10:00 pm.

Check out the January events calendar on Spicer's web page: [www.spicermn.com](http://www.spicermn.com)



Winners of the past WinterFest ice sculpture contest

## Walking in a Winter Job Wonderland

A recent report from the Minnesota Dept. of Employment and Economic Development shows a bright economic future for Kandiyohi County. A snapshot of the updated findings includes:

- The Willmar lakes area and Kandiyohi County population increased over 6 percent from 1990 to 2004; and is projected to **expand 16 percent** from 2000 to 2030
- Projected population growth by age group is very similar to the state; Kandiyohi County is home to the **sixth largest** Hispanic or Latino population in the state
- Retail sales in Kandiyohi County **increased 68%** from 2000 to 2004, eclipsing **\$750 million**; while the city of Willmar had retail sales of **\$458 million** in 2004
- Total annual sales in Kandiyohi County **increased 51%** from 2000 to 2004, reaching **\$1.72 billion**; while the city of Willmar had total annual sales of **\$1.15 billion** in 2004
- The city of Willmar and surrounding areas of Kandiyohi County issued permits for more than **700 new residential houses** since 2003 (and well over **100 in 2006** to date)
  - Willmar has had more new privately-owned residential building permits since 2003 than such fast-growing cities as: Rogers, Waite Park, Red Wing, Princeton, Little Falls, Lindstrom, Annandale, Little Canada, Norwood Young America, Waverly, Rice, and Spring Lake Park, among others (*Source: U.S. Census*)
- Construction values in the city of Willmar hit **\$53.3 million** in 2003, with 71 building permits valued at more than \$150,000
- While the Twin Cities Metro area lost almost **-40,000 jobs** from 2000 to 2004, Kandiyohi County was still adding jobs – **adding more than +350 jobs** over 5 years
- Personal income increased twice as fast in Kandiyohi County as in the United States, and Kandiyohi County **ranked 16<sup>th</sup>** in Minnesota for personal income in 2003
- Kandiyohi County has more than **10,800 students** in primary, secondary, and post-secondary institutions in the area, including Ridgewater College
- In 2000, Kandiyohi County reported **less than 2 percent** as many crimes as the 7-county Twin Cities metropolitan area
- Average travel time to work was **13.5 minutes** in Willmar, as compared to 27.2 minutes in Elk River and 28 minutes in Buffalo

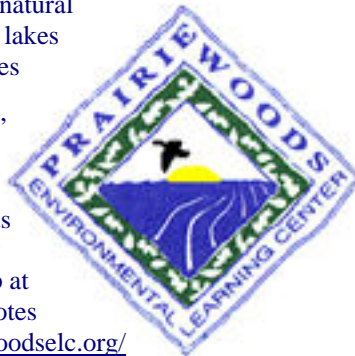
A recent search of Minnesota's Job Bank revealed close to **200 job openings** currently available in Kandiyohi County and its surrounding laborshed area. Jobs ranged from Welders and Line Production to Design Engineers and PC Developers to Sales Managers and Accountants. For more information, see - [http://www1.mnworks.org/jobseeker/willmar\\_jobs.cfm](http://www1.mnworks.org/jobseeker/willmar_jobs.cfm)

## Pederson comes home to Prairie Woods (continued)

Now in its tenth year of offering programs, Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center will serve over 14,000 program participants during 2006 from 60 school districts and from many organizations throughout the region. The center offers six miles of cross country ski trails, a 500-acre outdoor classroom, beautiful meeting and retreat facilities, an extensive challenge course, high quality environmental education programs, a unique Indian History Village, living history programs, a five-stand sporting clays facility, outstanding views, and self-guided interpretive trails.

Pederson expresses enthusiasm for Prairie Woods and the many natural attractions of Kandiyohi County. "We are blessed with beautiful lakes and abundant outdoor recreation opportunities. The Glacial Lakes Trail, Sibley State Park, an extensive county park system, and a multitude of lakes make Kandiyohi County a great place to live."

"We enjoy an extremely high quality of life at a fraction of the cost one would pay in the metro area," added Pederson. "My kids and I can slide a canoe in the water from our backyard near New London and paddle a couple of miles up the Crow River to camp at Harvey Hanson Island where we can hear turkeys gobbling, coyotes calling, and owls hooting." For information, visit [www.prairiewoodselc.org/](http://www.prairiewoodselc.org/)



Kandiyohi County  
has openings available:



### Human Services Director

Willmar MN ~ **\$61,229 - \$102,068**

- \* Master's deg. in Social Work, Psych., or Public Admin.; 3-5 years exp. mgmt.
- \* Administer the soc. service & income maint. programs for approx. 41,500 county pop.; manage 100 employees

### Victim Services Coordinator

Willmar MN

- \* Bachelor's deg. in Criminal Justice or Social Work; 2+ years of exp.

### PACT 4 Executive Director

Willmar MN ~ **\$51,888 - \$87,984**

- \* Bachelor's or Master's deg. in Social Work or Psych.; plus 3-5 years exp. in public or private social services agency
- [www.co.kandiyohi.mn.us/pact4/](http://www.co.kandiyohi.mn.us/pact4/)

### Life-Science Innovations

has openings available:



### Training Specialist

Willmar MN

- \* Bachelor's deg. in HR; 5-10 years exp. in financial sector and business mgmt.
- \* Assist with org. development & training managerial staff & new hires

### Computer Engineer ~ Nova-Tech

Willmar MN

- \* Bachelor's or Master's deg. in Comp. Engineering; 3-5 years exp. designing & developing software systems

### PC Developer ~ Midwest Data

Willmar MN

- \* Associate deg. in Comp Programming; 0-2 years exp. using .NET, VB 6.0, C/C++, C#, SQL server, database skills
- [www.Life-ScienceInnovations.com](http://www.Life-ScienceInnovations.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/)!



Carolers sing in the recent Holidaze Parade