



2015 — The Year in Review

Landmark donation to Eagle Center tops year's news stories

by Michael Smith

Let's face it: it's not every day—or week—that we get to report about a donation valued at \$2 million being made to a very worthy local organization or cause.

Come to think of it...we don't recall another one in the 40 years of this editor's term at the

Herald's keyboard, though we certainly have had some very large and generous donation—those to the Eagle Center when it opened among the ones coming quickly to mind.

That might be one reason this contribution, an art and memorabilia donation to the National Eagle Center was a pretty easy choice as the top news story of 2015. But the sheer

value of the donation alone isn't what made this significant. We'll talk more about that later.

Like a snap of a finger, or the passing of a high speed train, 2015 has flown by. This week's edition officially comes out on the second-to-the-last day of the year, out of 365. It doesn't seem possible, but it's true. Was it a good year? A great year, perhaps? That might be for each individual to judge, but if we were to lay it out in general terms, we'd have to say it was a pretty successful 12 months.

Aside from that rather significant donation of art to the National Eagle Center, we had another very successful SeptOberfest, filling us with many weekends of fun, music, shopping and German dining. Can't beat that. The summer's Meet Me Under the Bridge Concert Series had one of its best seasons, both attendance-wise and music-wise, with a great variety of talented singers and musicians each Friday night *Under the Bridge*.

W-K's football team hosted and won its first playoff game in 29 years, and its star runningback, Ryan Wolfe, had an amazing season, setting some school records along the way.

The Star Dancers returned to the State Competition in Minneapolis in February. Tiffany Stumpf and Natalie Schmit made it to State Golf in June and Nick Meyer qualified for State in Cross Country last month.

St. Elizabeth's expanded its retail pharmacy operation, which certainly benefits residents of the community and the City looks to attract residents and tourists with its riverfront development plans, a possible event center and the expected Eagle Center expansion.

We—and the Eagle's Nest Coffee House, specifically—hosted several of the University of Minnesota head coaches and staff back in June. How cool was that?! Top coaches Jerry Kill and Don Lucia were HERE and the coach who likely had the best year of any at the U of M: Head Volleyball Coach Hugh McCutcheon—HERE!

*Turn to YEAR IN REVIEW Page 6



The year's most memorable photos...

To us, the most memorable photo of the year—the first half, at least—was this one taken in June of University of Minnesota Men's Head Coaches Don Lucia (hockey), left, and Jerry Kill (football) at the Eagle's Nest Coffee House during a publicity tour of the state. They joined several other head coaches and staff here for a rally that really excited loyal Gopher fans. It was a memorable day.—File photo by Michael Smith



NEC Director Rolf Thompson with Preston Cook.

Top 10 News Stories of 2015

1. PRESTON COOK DONATION TO THE EAGLE CENTER. Desiring a permanent home for his vast collection of eagle-related art and memorabilia, Wabasha resident Preston Cook and his wife, Donna, donated their collection to the Eagle Center to literally make this THE National Eagle Center. It is a huge contribution, one that will draw interest from eagle aficionados world-wide.

2. AMERICAN LEGION POST 50 CLOSING. While remaining active as a post, Wabasha's famed American Legion Post closed its clubroom/home in October. It was a sad moment for members and residents and the effects of its closing will be felt more and more as the years pass. The post and auxiliary continue to meet at the VFW Clubrooms around the corner.

3. MEDTRONIC LAYS OFF 30 EMPLOYEES. Just three weeks ago, international medical supply manufacturer Medtronic announced that it would be laying off 30 of its Wabasha-based employees, nearly one-third of its local workforce, effective im-

mediately. The company said the layoffs were due to losing a major customer of the Wabasha-made supplies.

4. W-K HEALTH AND SAFETY UPGRADE. The School spent much of the year planning for a major upgrade to its heating, air conditioning and ventilation systems to improve the air quality in its building and effectiveness of those units. In a related move, the board also approved a major energy saving plan in November.

5. ST. ELIZABETH'S PHARMACY EXPANSION. With both the city's needs—and its own need to continue to expand and solidify its standing in the community—in mind, Saint Elizabeth's opened a new, larger retail pharmacy at its facility here in October.

6. SEPTOBERFEST. Just when we thought it couldn't get any better, or bigger, oaula!—organizers surprised us with another amazing seven-week series of festivities. From the sauerbraten to the wienerschnitzel, from The Bandanas to Bugsville and the German Parade, it was indeed memorable!

7. U OF M COACHES VISIT WABASHA. Wow! How can

you do any better than having virtually all of your state university's head coaches drop by for a visit all at once?! The well-known men's basketball and hockey coaches, Jerry Kill and Don Lucia, headlined the event at the Eagle's Nest Coffee House.

8. MOLLIE B HERE FOR ROY'S 77TH BIRTHDAY. It was a party for the ages when RFD-TV celebrity host Mollie B of "Mollie B's Polka Party" showed up at the Theilman Opera House in late November for Roy Eggenberger's 77th birthday party...and then danced with Roy!

9. W-K FOOTBALL PLAYOFF WIN. The Falcons won four games for the first time since 1996 and won a playoff game for the first time since 1986! Some may call those accomplishments "modest"...but then, Rome wasn't built in a day, either!

10. RYAN WOLFE ACCOMPLISHMENTS. Has anyone had a year—and it's far from over—like this senior? In one FB game, he rushed for a school record 309 yards, scored 3 TD's, passed for another, ran for a 2-pt. conversion and kicked an extra point. He also was named Homecoming King that week. Earlier this month, he scored his 1,000th point for the basketball team.