

Elling loved Big Sandy Lake and strived for peace

BY JEANNE SCHRAM AND SANDY CURRY

Lynn Elling was just four days shy of his 95th birthday when he died in February. But he left a legacy involving world peace and the Big Sandy Lake Association.

He had been a lifelong cabin owner at Big Sandy Lake. His parents owned a family cabin when he was 2 years old and he and his wife, Donna, bought their lake cabin in the mid 1940s when they were first married.

Elling always felt passionate about taking care of the lake, and embracing and protecting the environment. For many years, he expressed a strong need to involve the youth and the surrounding diverse community to use the lake and appreciate it. Celebrating and recognizing the history of the lake was also very important to him.

In 1993, Elling founded The Big Sandy Lake Foundation which is an affiliate of the Minnesota Community Foundation. This organization has always benefited the people on Big Sandy Lake and McGregor Area and broader community. Elling's childhood friend and fellow lake cabin owner, Jim Mikkelson, partnered with him as a co-founder and helped throughout the years with this organization. These two older members of the lake area were able to offer invaluable personal history, experiences, passions, creative ideas and connections to the wider community to provide direction for the organization.

For many years, the Big Sandy Lake Foundation has made grants to various programs in the McGregor area. The Big Sandy Lake Foundation was originally designed to align with the Big Sandy Lake Association goals and surrounding area enhancing the quality of life and the ecosystem. Its mission was to

support these objectives: Support a healthy sustainable eco system; help protect the quality of water, fish, shorelines, vegetation, trees, birds and other wildlife; and provide eco-education to bring together youth from all segments of the community.

Lynn and Donna Elling were recognized for their leadership, particularly in the establishment of the Big Sandy Community Foundation to help preserve the lake environment and offering programs for youth. (The board recently changed the name of the Big Sandy Lake Foundation to McGregor Lakes Area Foundation to reflect the wider impact of the funding of this organization).

As noted in the Big Sandy Lake Association May newsletter, the broader reach of the foundation funding has greatly impacted the McGregor Schools with over 5,800 students participating in the water institute, and eco-education classes for fifth and sixth graders.

A PEACEFUL WORLD

Elling was greatly impacted during his service in the Navy in World War II. The horrors he observed caused him to devote the rest of his days to promoting world peace.

The Ellings lived in the Twin Cities, but spent a lot of their time at their cabin on Big Sandy Lake. He worked as an insurance agent in Minneapolis.

After the Ellings took a trip to Hiroshima, Japan, in 1954, he became more committed to promoting a peaceful world. He founded World Citizen Inc. in 1972, with a mission to "find a common denominator that binds people together as one human family and find a way to live together in peace."

A Peace Site Program was introduced, with Longfellow School in Minneapolis the first site in 1988. There are

now hundreds of peace sites in the world, including schools, churches, resorts, government buildings and businesses - even the Mall of America, according to Elling in an *Aitkin Independent Age* article in 2011.

Elling was also the co-founder of the Nobel Peace Prize Festival held each year at Augsburg College in Minneapolis. The first was held in 1997. At the festival, K-12 students get to meet Nobel Laureates and peace dignitaries, exhibit displays and present an original dance or song based on a peace theme.

In 2010, Elling received a World Citizen Award at Augsburg College.

A celebration of Elling's life was held at the Universalist Church May 1, a day he observed for world peace.

DOGGED DETERMINATION

Elling was dogged in his determination, which wasn't always helpful to him, according to Dick Bernard, Woodbury, who became acquainted with Elling in 2007. "Lynn was an incredible witness for peace," said Bernard, a past president of Minnesota Alliance of Peacemakers. "As time went on, I noticed something of a 'mantra' constantly on Lynn's lips in one way or another - peace, Donna and children."

Earlier this month, Bernard attended the Nobel Peace Prize Forum in Minneapolis. Part of the program included a 1991 video of Elling talking about peace and the role of children who will one day be leaders.

"Elling challenged me and that was good," Bernard said. "He wore me out toward the end - focused people tend to do that, it seems. I felt a little guilty by keeping my distance, but only a little. I feel energized and I'll do whatever I can to keep after his 'driving dream'."



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

Above, Lynn and Donna Elling in 1992. Below, Jim and Irene Mikkelson with Lynn Elling in 1991.

"Lynn made a difference, a big difference," concluded Bernard.

TENACITY, RESOLVE

"I first met Lynn Elling in 2012 when I was assigned to do a story on the history of his family's cabin on Big Sandy Lake," said Shari Horton, a writer for the *Aitkin Independent Age*. "The original family cabin was built in 1920 and Elling described Big Sandy Lake as 'one of the most beautiful lakes in the state' and the sandy shores that outlined his property as 'one of the most beautiful beaches on the lake.' A summer resident, Elling enjoyed spending time at the cabin and making memories with his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren."

Horton interviewed Lynn again in 2013 when he, at the age of 92, and his son Tod took an extraordinary voyage to Vietnam, the place of Tod's birth.

"Tod had been abandoned in a ditch as a newborn," Elling told her. "Two nuns found him and took him to an all-girls orphanage lo-



ated about an hour south of Ho Chi Minh City (previously Saigon). It was there that Tod was nurtured and 'spoiled' by all of the girls and nuns."

"Lynn and I became and remained friends over the years," said Horton. "I had great admiration for his tenacity and resolve, a driving force in his life, when it came to promoting peace."

"He was a special man - compassionate and full of sheer determination and perseverance when it came to talking about his hope and dream for a more peaceful world. He would often call me to say hello, to fill me in

on his newest endeavors and often to tell me he liked a recent column or article I had written."

Horton added, "Through his organization and tireless efforts, he planted the seeds of peace and I hope that Lynn's legacy will carry on and those seeds will continue to grow and flourish. His loss is profound at a time when our world certainly needs more people like him - people who respect and accept diversity, who value each and every human life and who seek peaceful resolution to conflict."

Corrections director named, programs plan unveiled

BY ADAM HOOGENAKKER
ahooogie@aitkinage.com

Shortly after being named Director of Aitkin County Community Corrections, Liz DeRuyck gave the Aitkin County Board of Commissioners a brief overview of the vision and goals of corrections at the regular meeting of the board June 14.

Aitkin County will begin operating as its own Community Corrections Act county as of July 1, following the dissolving of the Central Minnesota Community Corrections' (CMCC) joint powers agreement with Morrison and Crow Wing counties.

DeRuyck has more than 15 years of experience in the corrections field, including more than eight years as the Aitkin County associate di-

rector for CMCC. Aitkin County Administrator Nathan Burkett said DeRuyck's experience stood out over the four other applications the county received for the director position.

In her presentation to the board, DeRuyck wrote, "we are busy re-working the structure (community corrections) to provide the best possible services to adult and juvenile offenders in Aitkin County."

One of the first changes to the county's community corrections program was the start of the Aitkin County Advisory Board, which began in January. DeRuyck also wrote staff is focused on using evidence-based practices and has been trained in four of the five skill sets (professional alliance, risk assessments, cognitive interventions, case

planning and motivational interviewing).

"Aitkin County struggles with having local resources for the treatment of offenders," wrote DeRuyck, adding the staff utilizes the latest on-line programming for lower-risk offenders and assists the client in locating treatment resources that will lead to the best chance for success in the community, including coordinating transportation. Some strategies include: increased urinalysis testing for high-risk offenders, swift and certain response to those who continue to use controlled substances and regular visits to the offender's home.

DeRuyck told the board she would like to see an adult diversion program in the county, that keeps some of the offenders out of the court process and provides the services they need.

Other areas being reviewed are working closer with human services in treating the growing mental health population and dealing with the county's DWI population (it is the highest rate of offenders, according to DeRuyck).

Board Chairman Mark Wedel said having the county operating as its own CCA puts



ADAM HOOGENAKKER PHOTO

Liz DeRuyck was named Director of Aitkin County Community Corrections at the June 14 meeting of the Board of Commissioners.

the county "close to the threshold of an altruistic service," he said. "We'll have a little more control on where the ship is turning."

BY THE NUMBERS

- 39 - Percent of felony offenders making up the entire offender population in 2016, up from 24 percent in 2006.
- 36 - Offenders on super-

vised release in 2016, up from 22 in 2006.

- 22 - Percent of offenders on supervision that are female.
- 13 - Percent of probation cases under supervision dealing with drugs.
- 13 - Percent of total offender population which is minority.
- 11 - Percent of sex of-

fenders on probation supervision which are juvenile clients.

- 10 - Percent of DWI offenders under supervision who are felony level offenders and 59 percent are repeat DWI gross misdemeanor clients.

Corrections vision and mission

Vision: It is the vision of Aitkin County Community Corrections to reduce recidivism within our community and work with our local stakeholders and other Minnesota Correctional Agencies to promote positive change among our clientele.

Mission: It is the mission of Aitkin County Community Corrections to promote public safety and victim restoration by holding offenders accountable, exercising an evidence-based model of correctional services, and actively providing offenders opportunities to become law-abiding citizens.

County board/ Aqua-/hydroponics growing popular

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satisfactory. Among the changes were a \$3.50 fee to be assessed to the resorts for each of the fish houses being used in the off season.

Neff told the board the resorts would be licensed by the number of spaces, but the fee would be based on occupancy in the previous year.

"Not all sites are used," explained Neff. "To be a fish house, it would have to be moved at least every other year."

Commissioner Laurie Westerlund asked how that would be enforced.

"On the honor system on

moving the houses," replied Neff. "We trust the owners of the resorts."

Representatives from Sherwood Forest in Garrison asked the board several questions regarding its status, but it was not affected by the change in the ordinance.

After closing the public hearing, the board unanimously passed the amendments to the ordinance.

HYDROPONICS AND AQUAPONICS

Ross Wagner, Economic Development and Forest Industry Coordinator, was given the green light by the

board to submit a grant application to the Blandin Foundation for \$5,000 and \$2,500 to the Regional Sustainable Development Partnership to conduct a feasibility study for starting and operating a Aquaponics/Hydroponics facility in Aitkin County.

Wagner said it was not for a specific individual or business, but conversations in the past have ended with interested individuals due to the lack of financial information.

"There's a growing agriculture community in Aitkin County," Wagner told the board. "More people are get-

ting into ag year-round for fresh food in our area."

The funds, which would be matched by an anticipated contribution from Aitkin County Growth in the amount of \$2,500, would be put toward a feasibility study. The board unanimously passed the request.

Wagner also presented the Central Minnesota Housing Partnership, which was passed by the board.

In other business

- The board of commissioners will be sending a letter of commendation to the Governor's Fishing Opener Coordinators and Volunteers, for hosting the event in the McGregor Area. In part, the letter reads, "Aitkin County has all of you to thank for making us look good. You planned and executed a slate of events that showed off all that our community has to offer."

- The Sentence to Serve program was given a donation of \$25 from the Jacobson Community Church.

- A board of appeal and equalization meeting was held following the regular meeting. No changes in valuation were made to George Carlberg, Galen Tveit or Michael Hoffman's requests, although the board voted 5-1 in favor of Carlberg's request (Don Niemi opposing the valuation) and 4-2 in Hoffman's case (Brian Napstad and Laurie Westerlund opposing the valuation).