

BANNER JOURNAL

409 East Main Street, Black River Falls, WI
The Preferred Legal Paper of Jackson County • Established in 1856

Vol. 157, No. 18

Wednesday, May 1, 2013

\$1.50

Foremost Farms closing Alma Center plant

By JoDee Brooke

Foremost Farms USA (Foremost) announced last Friday it would be closing two of its cheese-making facilities. Included in the closure is the Alma Center plant located on CTH FF between Alma Center and Hixton. The plant is expected to close its doors permanently June 30, affecting 52 employees at the Alma Center plant. The company said the employees will be able to apply for openings at the other Foremost facilities.

Foremost's Alma Center plant is a major producer of mozzarella cheese for food-service markets. It has received several awards for its product.

Despite closure of the Alma Center and Wau-

mandee facilities, Foremost is expanding cheese production at its facilities in Appleton, Richland Center, Milan and Marshfield. Production at the Wau-mandee plant is being halted indefinitely and affects about 50 employees.

The farmer-owned cooperative members marketed over six billion pounds of milk in 2012. Consolidation plans went into affect after the company invested \$50 million in order to increase cheese production, as the volume of milk coming into the Foremost continues to increase.

The affected employees will be offered severance packages. Milk from Foremost members will be taken to other Foremost plants.



JoDee Brooke/Banner Journal

Foremost Farms USA announced its Alma Center and Waumandee plants would be halting production of its cheese products. The Alma Center facility will close permanently June 30. The company stated the 52 employees will be able to apply for openings at other Foremost facilities as positions become available.

Local divers helped in search of Eau Claire student

By JoDee Brooke

Jackson County Dive Unit (JCDU) Director Keith Cormican conducts dive rescue and recovery training for the Eau Claire Fire Department.

When Cormican heard about the UW-Eau Claire student believed to have drowned in the Chippewa River Friday, April 19, he called the Eau Claire Fire Department offering his assistance.

"They accepted our offer," said Cormican, "and I went up with two guys Monday (April 22), Gary George from Black River Falls and Jon Borreson from Ettrick. Gary and I are current JCDU members and Jon is a past member."

The JCDU has a sonar unit divers use to locate items underwater. Eau Claire emergency personnel had been using similar equipment during the weekend search.

Cormican spent a few hours searching the Chippewa River with no luck, he said. "The rain came in late afternoon and we hung with it until we couldn't feel our limbs any longer," explained Cormican. "The river is very high and water is moving extremely fast. Trees and large ice chunks are still coming down the river, making it interesting to navigate."

Last Monday's water temperature read around 34 degrees. "The cold water temperatures keep a body from floating," Cormican said. "The many trees and rocks leave several places for a body to get hung up."

Cormican said with the amount of time that has passed with the high water and rapid water flow, the chance of finding someone is extremely difficult.

Despite the odds, Cormican headed back to Eau Claire Wednesday last week to aid in the search again. "The river level and flow was even higher with all the snow they got farther north," Cormican said, "plus all the snow that melted over the weekend. We have worked the most likely area where we feel he would be but no one ever knows what really happens to a body in this kind of current."

"Having the opportunity

See Dive, page 2

Council approves bid for fire hall improvements

By Pat McKnight

Three years after alderpersons were informed the Black River Falls Fire Station needed improvements, the Black River Falls Common Council (BRFCC) approved a bid to renovate the dorm area of the fire hall.

At its April 16 meeting, the BRFCC approved the \$45,508 bid submitted by Gaier Construction Corporation (Gaier) of Black River Falls for the remodeling. Gaier's bid included purchasing supplies and materials from local vendors.

"We understand this is a significant amount of money to invest in a relatively small area of the fire hall, but it's necessary in order for us to provide private housing for employees/members who are

required to stay at the fire hall while on call for EMS (emergency medical service)," said Brad Chown, division chief for the Black River Falls Emergency Medical Service. "We have sufficient funds in our savings to cover the \$45,508 needed for the dorm room and bathroom renovations."

The effort to upgrade the city's fire station began about three years ago, when the members of the BRFCC took a tour of the facility. At that time, the council was informed of the need to remodel the dorm area to provide adequate accommodations for on-call responders.

"We have spent the past two years exploring our options for addressing the

current housing issues, including the possibility of constructing a new building, and we have come down to renovating the current space," Chown said.

Currently, the dorm area has only one bedroom and one restroom. On-call per-

sonnel living more than five minutes away have to stay at the fire station. When the scheduled responders are male and female, the situation becomes problematic.

Because emergency medical personnel must be available within five min-

utes of receiving a call, those living further away must stay at the fire station during their shift. To keep a full roster, the department has had to put responders living more than five min-

See Council, page 2

City approves revamped room tax ordinance

By Pat McKnight

The Black River Area Chamber of Commerce (Chamber) will be able to use larger a portion of the funds it receives from the room tax commission to promote tourism for expenses and administrative costs.

The Black River Falls Common Council (BRFCC) approved changes to the city's room tax ordinance April 16 to allow the Chamber to validly use the funds it receives for office expenses incurred for tourism purposes.

At the Black River Falls Committee of the Whole's Feb. 20 meeting, Barb Brower, Chamber director, asked the city to change the wording of the room tax ordinance to comply with the way the Chamber was using funds it was allocated for tourism promotion.

Brower told the alderpersons the BRACC has been using more than the amount allowed in the ordinance for administrative costs.

"We have spent more than the cap on administrative expenditures," Brower said. "We have been operating this way all along. We just need the language to match."

At the Feb. 20 meeting, Gerry Gadke, manager at the Best Western motel in Brockway, spoke for the local motel managers objecting to allowing the Chamber to have unrestricted use of the funds for administration costs.

Brower asserted administrative services provided by the BRACC help promote tourism, and it is difficult to determine the effectiveness of promotional materials.

In making her request to change the language of the room tax ordinance, Brower asked the BRFCW to remove the limit on the amount of funds that could be used for administrative and operational costs.

The revised ordinance

See Tax, page 2

Salute to county's farmers



JoDee Brooke/Banner Journal

Alma Center-area farmer Emil Giese (center) was one of approximately 110 farmers living in the Alma Center-Humbird-Merrillan School District to receive a gift bag filled with items that might help a regular day of chores go a little bit easier. Shaking Giese's hand and expressing their thanks are Donald Houser (r) and Carl Sadloske. The "Salute to our Farmers" event was a partnership between Lincoln FFA members and their families and area businesses who donated money or items to include in the gift bags. Over \$7,000 in monetary donations and products was collected, an indication of agriculture's important role in the community. (See story page 16-17)

