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College takes another shot at the composites industry

By Shannon Jones
Bay Mills News

BAY MILLS — Bay Mills Community College is breathing new life into the Great Lakes Composites Institute with the addition of Dr. Chris Griffen, PhD, who joined the enterprise in September. Griffen's involvement not only brings expertise in the area of composites to the table, but a wealth of industry contacts.

Griffen has an extensive education in mechanical engineering and has worked with automotive manufacturers for 30-plus years. He will serve as technical director of the Institute.

BMCC first began working in composites in 2007 and acquired the equipment where the composites line is housed on M-28 a short time later. But the college is going to take a different approach to get the composites line moving forward this time around.

According to BMCC President Mickey Parish, instead of creating products and trying to sell them to companies, the institute is letting companies come to them with ideas for prototypes. And the approach, thus far, has worked. A number of prototypes are in testing stages, including work with a major automobile maker.

According to Griffen, who spends half his time in Bay Mills and the other cultivating industry contacts in Detroit, some prototypes are already in the second phase of testing and are doing very well. He predicts a potential contract in approximately three months, which would give the institute the base revenue to move forward with other projects.

Griffen said the composites industry is of particular interest to automakers as they are looking for materials that will give vehicles weight savings and keep manufacturing costs down. This time the composites endeavor will work on specialty products for specific companies.

"We are not going to be everything to everyone," said Griffen, noting the Institute is not a large volume producer. "We are going to zero in on what we can do and do it well."

One key to successful prototyping is product testing. The Institute has received a grant from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation to purchase testing equipment that will also be housed locally. The equipment arrives next month, which will save the step of taking products to Detroit for testing. Rather than just showing potential clients data on paper they will now be able to see the prototypes stand up to testing measures.

While production is expected to take place at the M-28 property, expansion is not being ruled out.

"One good contract could put us at maximum capacity," noted Parish.

The current building houses three lines and two laminators, which has the ability to produce more than 9 million sq. feet of tape per year. That tape can be used to reinforce anything from pipes to industry specific automotive parts.

Currently two people are working the composites line, with Griffen providing oversight. Tim Spencer, a carryover from previous manufacturing projects, has remained on staff as he has the knowledge to maintain the machines. A new hire, Bay Mills tribal member Tamara Munz, is working on the machines providing product to the line and acting in a technical capacity to make sure the machines are running efficiently.

When the composites program picks up speed and contracts, BMCC will once again be offering courses in coordination with the institute. Parish predicts next fall would be the earliest class offering, as he wants to ensure the production line is in full swing for students to get hands on experience.

BMCC is operating under a license it acquired from Bay Mills Indian Community, giving them permission to utilize the patented DRIFT technology. However, the money fueling the BMCC Institute is coming from the college itself.

"There is no additional risk to the tribe. If this works, it's a win-win. We can provide employment and additional revenue sources to Bay Mills. We are looking for support and understanding from the community as we get the project moving forward," said Parish.

Bay Mills election notice

BAY MILLS — Bay Mills Indian Community will hold the General Election for seats on the Executive Council and Conservation Committee on Wednesday, Nov. 6. Inside this issue of Bay Mills News, profiles for ALL candidates who submitted profiles are featured as press deadline fell before the primary election actually took place. In order to provide candidates with an equal opportunity to represent themselves, all profiles were printed. However, the list of candidates moving forward for the Nov. 6 General Election can be found online at www.baymills.org or www.baymillsnews.com. Polls will be open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. at the Armella Parker Senior Building on Nov. 6.

Voters asked to support three measures at the polls Nov. 5

By Shannon Jones
Bay Mills News

BRIMLEY — Voters are being asked to support three local proposals on the Nov. 5 ballot. Each millage would add a little extra to taxpayer bills, but thus far support for all three has been positive from the surrounding community.

The Chippewa County Animal Shelter, a no-kill shelter, is seeking to levy .10 mills on the ballot, which equates to 10 cents for each taxable dollar of a home value. The shelter has the second highest "save rate" in the state of Michigan, according to the Michigan Dept. of Agriculture, at nearly 98 percent. Their success has been largely in part to community support including assistance from local animal welfare groups. However, if these local groups are unable to raise monies to treat the sick or injured animals, the animals at risk would have to be euthanized. Those animals who are caught in traps or suffering from broken bones are treated with monies acquired from the welfare groups, as funds allocated from the Chippewa County budget do not allow for treatment. Shelter Manager Holly Henderson views not being able to continue moving forward and providing vital services to animals as "a step backward." If the millage passes it will fund the shelter for five years.

"Having been in operation for 10 years, we believe that we have shown the voters in Chippewa County that we have made the county shelter a successful and compassionate organization that deserves their financial support. We seem to have the emotional support of the community," said Henderson. "Now, we need the funds to continue to do the right thing on behalf of the citizens."

Chippewa County Sheriff Robert Savoie is also asking voters to pass the plate at the ballot box in hopes of beefing up security in and around local schools. The .55 mills proposal would allow for the hiring of five school resource officers in Chippewa County schools. The officers would be assigned to patrol activities in and around the schools and would be fully equipped with weapons and computers as any other road deputy.

"I am hoping to have a good mixture of experienced and new young hires that can communicate with our students. The balance would be wonderful," said Savoie, who believes so strongly in the issue he has been funding his campaign out of his own pocket. "A $100,000 home will cost you about $27 a year. That is a cheap price to pay to protect our children. We have too much violence in and around our schools and hopefully Chippewa County will be a leader taking the proactive approach to put tax dollars at work."

The county did have grant-funded school resource officers in the past but the program ended when the money ran out, approximately six years ago. Savoie's attempts to garner county funding to the program have been unsuccessful to date, so his next step was taking it to the voters for support.

Another entity looking for support on Nov. 5 is the Superior District Library. This will be the first-ever regional election for library service according to Bayliss Library Director Ken Miller. The library is seeking a one-half mil for the next two years, which equates to 50 cents for each $1,000 taxable value of your home. Your home's taxable valuable is approximately half of the actual value. With state funding for local libraries decreasing nearly 40 percent, the District Library hopes the voters will continue to support the services provided at the six local libraries.

"Our aim with this modest millage is to provide excellent library service to our users. An added advantage with the new district library is that, for the first time, county residents have representation on the library board," said Miller. "Before, only the Sault Sainte Marie City Commission appointed the library board, because Bayliss was a city library, serving most of Chippewa and Mackinac counties through a series of 30-year old contracts. Now, as a district library, we are all one library district. Each party to the district library agreement (Chippewa County, Mackinac County, and the City of Sault Sainte Marie) appoints two members to the library board, giving out-county area residents representation for the first time."

CORN TO HOMINY — On the beautiful fall day of Oct. 10, Cathy DeVoy, Ojibwe Language and Culture teacher at Ojibwe Charter School, showed students the traditional way that the Aanishinaabe people made hominy. She began by taking kernels from Indian corn and boiling them in water with wood ash added. This removes the outer husk, which makes the corn undigestible. The resulting hominy is then drained and dried for several days in the sun. The ancestors developed this method to make the corn more nutritious and as a means of preserving it for the winter, insect-free. DeVoy plans to make corn soup from the hominy at the upcoming OCS fall feast, as she did last year. SHAR MYERS/BAY MILLS NEWS

Prescription meds still showing up in lakes

By Brian Bienkowski
Great Lakes Echo

Prescription drugs are contaminating Lake Michigan two miles from Milwaukee's sewage outfalls, suggesting that the lake is not diluting the compounds as most researchers expected, according to new research.

"In a body of water like the Great Lakes, you'd expect dilution would kick in and decrease concentrations and that was not the case here," said Dana Kolpin, a U.S. Geological Survey research hydrologist based in Iowa.

It is not clear what, if any, effects the drugs are having on fish and other creatures in Lake Michigan. But this ability to travel and remain at relatively high concentrations means that aquatic life is exposed, so there could be "some serious near-shore impacts," said Rebecca Klaper, an associate professor at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and senior author of the study published in the journal, *Chemosphere*.

In addition, Milwaukee draws its drinking water from Lake Michigan, although no pharmaceuticals have been found in the city's water, according to Milwaukee Water Works.

The scientists tested effluent from two sewage outfalls and water and sediment from Lake Michigan (up to two miles from the outfalls) for 54 chemicals used in pharmaceuticals and personal care products.

Twenty-seven chemicals were found in the lake, with four found most frequently: an antidiabetic drug called metformin, caffeine, the antibiotic sulfamethoxazole and triclosan, an antibacterial and antifungal compound found in some soaps, toothpastes and other consumer products.

"Wastewater treatment plants are simply not designed to remove these chemicals. This tells us we shouldn't assume that dilution solves the problem of putting these into the environment," said Klaper.

Metformin was detected at the highest levels – up to 840 parts per trillion one mile from the outfalls, and up to 160 parts per trillion two miles away.

The researchers reported that 14 of the chemicals "were found to be of medium or high ecological risk," and that the concentrations "indicate a significant threat to the health of the Great Lakes, particularly near shore organisms."

Of those, triclosan has been the most researched; it has proven acutely toxic to algae and can act as a hormone disruptor in fish.

Drug compounds were found in Lake Michigan as far as two miles from where Milwaukee's treated sewage is discharged in the lake.

"You're not going to see fish die-offs [from pharmaceuticals] but subtle changes in how the fish eat and socialize that can have a big impact down the road," said Kolpin, who did not participate in the study.

"With behavior changes and endocrine disruption, reproduction and survival problems may not rear their ugly head for generations."

Previous research has linked other pharmaceutical drugs in fish to slower reaction times to predators, altered eating habits and anxiety.

There is a lot of research measuring pharmaceuticals in water, so "now we need to figure out what impact they may have," Kolpin said.

"The problem is the effluent and water don't have one compound but a chemical mixture soup," Kolpin said. "It's going to be hard to tease out which of these compounds may do harm" to people or fish.

Pharmaceutical and personal care product compounds are found in wastewater around the world. Studies have consistently found prescription drugs in drinking water at parts-per-trillion levels.

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