



The Ranger



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A new home at home

Spectrum Health's Carefree Living facilities help residents stay in their hometown

VIRGINIA – When the Horace Mann School was demolished in 2007, Jon Monacelli salvaged a brick from the rubble of his beloved elementary school.

Today, the company he helps lead is constructing a new \$5.75 million assisted living facility where the school stood, and Monacelli has plans for his chunk of memorabilia.

“I’m planning to bring the brick back,” said Monacelli, Spectrum Health Companies senior vice president, finance, planning and development. “I have a lot of memories of going to school there in the late 60s and early 70s.”

Spectrum Health Companies’ 25,000 square-foot Virginia Carefree Living facility will serve up to 42 residents and employ 30. It will be de-

signed to visually blend into the colors and architecture of the south side neighborhood.

Based in Eveleth, Spectrum Health Companies owns and operates assisted living facilities in Aurora, Babbitt, Cook, Ely, Orr, Silver Bay, Brainerd, Burnsville, and St. Cloud. The company employs 350 in northeastern Minnesota and a total of 550 throughout the state.

Iron Range Resources & Rehabilitation Board (IRRBB) grants to communities to help with site work along with water and sewer connections, have helped stimulate the construction of nearly \$40 million in new Spectrum Health Companies facilities across northeastern Minnesota.

“This is our seventh as-

sisted living development in the last eight years within northeastern Minnesota,” said Monacelli. “The communities

FAST FACTS

Who: Spectrum Health Companies
www.spectrumhealthcos.com

What: \$5.75 million assisting living facility

When: Opens February 2017

Where: Fifth Avenue and 10th Street South, Virginia

How: 888-741-3013 for additional information or to request to be placed on a “move-in” list at the Virginia facility

we’ve worked with have all been very accommodating, and the IRRRB has been great to work with. The infrastructure grants from IRRRB have

really helped with the math in building these smaller facilities and it’s really an added bonus for job creation.”

Health care – especially assisted living – is a growing need in northeastern Minnesota and nationwide.

In 2016, 2.5 million Americans will turn 70 years old, according to AARP.

Approximately 10,000 baby boomers reach 65 years old every day across the nation, according to Monacelli.

Spectrum’s growth in northeastern Minnesota helps address the health care needs of that population and the desire of people to remain in their community, said Monacelli.

“People who grew up in Silver Bay want to remain in Silver Bay, and people who live in Ely want to remain in Ely,” said Monacelli. “It also provides a continuity of care with the hospitals and clinics in each of the communities where we’ve built facilities.”

The Virginia facility is scheduled to open in February.

“We have a lot of long-term dedicated employees which makes our mission of providing our residents with the best care we can a lot easier,” said Monacelli.

“We remind our employees daily that we are guest visitors in their home. We want to remember that and help them the best we can every day.”

Pro Blast Technology expansion helps broaden customer base



Joe Godwin shows the new Wheelabrator automated sandblasting machine at Pro Blast Technology in Keewatin.

KEEWATIN – “I’m just having a blast over here,” says Joe Godwin as he answers the phone.

An expansion of Pro Blast Technology has helped turn the steel sandblasting and painting operation into one of only three shops of its kind in Minnesota.

Pro Blast provides state-of-the-art sandblasting and painting services to steel structural shops, construction firms, heavy equipment businesses, and mining companies.

“We have come up with a facility in the northern part of the state that has never existed,” said Godwin, Pro Blast Technology owner. “It’s neat to have something up here that’s never been available.”

From its beginnings 20 years ago in a one stall garage to its modern 37,000 square-foot facility on the western edge of Keewatin, Pro Blast has grown into an operation that serves a variety of industrial customers throughout the Upper Midwest.

“We have customers from Wisconsin, North Dakota, southern Minnesota and across the state,” said Godwin. “They’re all looking for places capable of handling their painting.”

With a grant from Iron

Range Resources & Rehabilitation Board (IRRBB) to the City of Keewatin, Pro Blast expanded a “lay-down” area adjacent to the facility.

The expansion makes it easier for the company to unload and load steel and pipe

products, saving time and money.

Until last year, all of Pro Blast’s sandblasting was performed by hand.

“We had to go in and physically blast the pipe,” said Godwin. “That’s hard for our workers to do and hard on their bodies.”

It was also time consuming.

So, Pro Blast also invested in a Wheelabrator, a massive sandblasting machine in which structural steel can be quickly cleaned in preparation for painting.

“It’s a lot faster,” said Godwin. “We can now get a lot more work done, be more competitive, and it’s ergonomically better for the employees.”

Godwin is working hard to expand the company’s line of customers and services.

A recently-completed

certification also allows Pro Blast to perform services for the Minnesota Department of Transportation.

Pro Blast is only one of three such certified sandblasting and painting operations in the state.

The company is also focused on environmental stewardship, using specialized paint and recycling the sand it uses for blasting and paint thinner.

Growing from a garage with no heat to one of the premier sandblasters and painters in the state was a risk well worth

it, said Godwin.

“I couldn’t be happier with the help we got from IRRRB,” said Godwin. “Without the IRRRB and without the City of Keewatin and Mayor Bill King, who both went way above and beyond for us, it wouldn’t have been possible.”

Downtown revitalization a common theme

Over the past few months, IRRRB has been hearing a lot about our downtowns.

Across the 13,000 square-mile IRRRB service area, citizens, community officials and business owners have told us they want to bring new vibrancy to their downtowns.

We agree.

Downtowns are where many small businesses are located.

Downtowns are where banks, post offices, and government service centers serve the public.

Downtowns have historically been the lifeblood of small town America.

Downtowns that look

good and are alive with activity are critical to the health of all our communities.

Under a new IRRRB grant program, we’re hoping that several communities are ready to act to improve their downtowns.

The IRRRB Downtown & Business Corridor Grant Program is designed help support highly visible projects and creative projects that create excitement, encourage citizen involvement and result in visible improvements in our downtowns.

For fiscal year 2017, we’ve committed \$200,000 to the program.

Grants ranging from \$12,500 to \$50,000 will be

available to cities, nonprofits, or grassroots groups which partner with a city or nonprofit.

Projects, such as bike lanes, artist murals, pocket parks, social gathering places, environmental design projects, or rent-a-bike kiosks, are just a few examples of creative improvements.

So what’s your idea to improve your downtown?

We hope you and your community have the vision, the desire and the drive to act on new, creative ideas to better your downtown.

Next June, at the end of our fiscal year, we’ll assess how the program has worked and the impact it’s had on our communities.



Mark Phillips
IRRBB commissioner

We sincerely hope it’s a start in helping to reenergize our downtowns.