



## Cass County Economic Development celebrates successes

By Kelly Virden  
Pine River Journal Editor

Cass County Economic Development Corporation supporters celebrated the group's accomplishments, Friday night, including completion of 13 new business projects.

The EDC is a non-profit that provides technical and grant assistance for businesses, recruits businesses to the county and provides educational seminars.

New Pine River businesses assisted by the EDC in 2009-10 included the Caffiend coffee shop, Cool Beans Coffee Shop/Mother Earth's Bounty market, and Master Care Automotive.

Those businesses and others throughout the county were highlighted as party of the annual meeting.

The meeting was held at the Chase on the Lake, in Walker, and included presentations by owners of Walker's Leech Lake Brewing Company and Pillager's Riverside Assisted Living.

### Leech Lake Brewing Company

Greg Smith and his wife, Gina, opened Leech Lake Brewing Company in August. The EDC assisted them with financing, site selection and pricing.

Leech Lake Brewing Company currently offers five beers: Loch Leech Monster, Minobii, Driven Snow, Blindside and 3 Sheets.

Having a small brewery gives them a chance to be very diverse, Greg said. They plan to distribute their beer within a 75-mile radius of Walker.

Currently their beer is on tap at Benson's in Walker and Brigid's Cross in Bemidji.

The Leech Lake Brewing Company tap room is open Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays from 4-6 p.m.

### Riverside Assisted Living

Paula Rocheleau, her husband, Dean, and their business partners, Jerry and Ginny Kapsner, opened a new 20-unit assisted living facility in Pillager this month.

The EDC assisted them with the project. "Gail was a Godsend; she's been a true asset maneuvering through financing," Paula said of Gail Levenson, EDC executive director.

The EDC also helped Riverside Assisted Living secure a Tax Increment Financing plan through the city of Pillager.

Riverside Assisted Living offers 24-hour care, home-cooked meals, laundry, housekeeping, activities, a beauty shop and more, Paula explained.

EDC annual report

At Friday night's meeting, EDC board members and employees reflected on the past year.

Board Treasurer Skip Duchesneau Jr. noted that the EDC's revenues for fiscal year 2009-10 totaled \$146,599 including:

Grants - \$52,306

Memberships - \$50,000

Business counseling - \$19,608

Grant administration - \$10,176

Miscellaneous fees - \$10,462

Interest - \$4,047

Expenses of \$141,768 for 2009-10 included:

Payroll (1.5 employees) - \$105,998

Operations - \$16,438

RLF Investment - \$10,000

Contributions - \$7,624

Fees - \$1,708

EDC Executive Director Gail Levenson reported that the EDC has helped start 67 new businesses since 2004, which resulted in 499 new jobs. Eighty percent of those businesses are still in business after five years.

Friday night retiring EDC board members Neil Smith, Howard Prushek and Skip Duchesneau Jr. were recognized for their service.

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